

33 Highly Effective Ad Headlines

“The headline determines 90% of the success of an ad”

--David Ogilvy



Introduction

A great headline can out perform a just okay one by up to 18 times (although 2x to 3x is more typical). We've seen this over and over again in our A/B testing for clients. **Headline writing is the most important landing page optimization skill.**

The goal of this document is to **help you recognize great headlines by showing you sets of headlines that advertised the very same product** (one of the headlines did well--as measured by financial results* (see next page)--and the others did so-so or poorly).

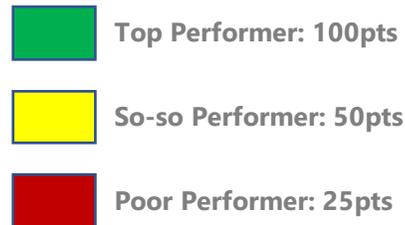
This should help you write better headlines and make your own ads more effective. As a result, you'll get more sales and/or reduce your user/customer acquisition costs.

The 33 headlines were scoured from display campaigns on the web by using an ad intelligence tool known as AdBeat

By Jasper Kuria, Managing Partner, The Conversion Wizards

Methodology: What The Ad Scores Mean

* We used AdBeat to assign a score to the banner ads based on their frequency and longevity. **Advertisers usually test different ads and then let the top performing ones run the longest.** No one runs ineffective ads for a long time.



Key Lessons

- **The WIIFM (What's In It For Me) principle generally yields the best headlines.** Articulate a clear benefit to the prospect. It is so easy to get enamored with our product and service and forget about the customer's needs. Even we have to remind ourselves of this every day to avoid writing cute, clever and meaningless headlines/ads.
- **Specificity usually wins over generality (specific numbers, items).** Gun vs. Weapon. 63% vs. Over 50%. There is a headline writing technique known as 4Us (Unique, Ultra-Specific, Utility)
- **In a mature/saturated market it is not enough to simply talk about benefits.** You must find an angle. See the *5 Levels of Market Sophistication* in our complimentary headline writing course.
- **Sometimes a headline that violates all the principles will do remarkably well.** But you won't know until you test. That said, by writing 'cute' or 'clever' headlines (rather than those that allude to a benefit) you will miss 99 times for every 1 time you hit!

Category: Financial Services

1. Banking: Santander Bank

Santander bank is ran these banner ads to try and get new customers. The message in the banner ad is the headline.



A



B



C



 Top Performer: 100pts

 So-so Performer: 50pts

 Poor Performer: 25pts

Analysis

Headline 'A' outperformed the others because there is a clear tangible benefit—you get \$150 when you open a new account. The other two ads are vague and it is not clear how I stand to gain by clicking on them. A good rule of thumb is to always use the WIIFM principle i.e. "What's In It for Me?" (the end user).

Category: Gaming

2. Gamezone News Site

The site Gamezone.com makes money by selling ads to those in the gaming industry.



A



B



Analysis

Headline 'A' ("Monetize Your Video Content") is clearly meant to attract advertisers rather than site users while 'B' could apply to both. We think A outperformed B in this case because of the specificity and the tangible benefit "monetize your video" content. For those with video content, this is a strong appeal. No wakes up in the morning wanting to "Add their voice to the gaming community"!

 Top Performer: 100pts

 So-so Performer: 50pts

 Poor Performer: 25pts

Category: Ecommerce* (Preparedness & Survival)

3. Insider-Financial-Tips.com

The site sells survival & preparedness gear as well as financial advice information products .

Forget Needing A Gun

This Tactical Flashlight Can Blind A Bear

[Click here](#)

Insider Financial Tips

Detailed description: This advertisement features a tactical flashlight with a blue beam of light. The headline is in red, and the main text is in black. A blue link is at the bottom.

A



Forget Needing A Weapon

The military recently released technology that is now available to the public. Get yours before they run out - limited stock in the US

[Read More>>](#)

Insider Financial Tips

Detailed description: This advertisement shows a tactical flashlight with a green beam of light. The headline is in blue, and the main text is in black. A blue link is at the bottom.

B



Why Is This High Powered Flashlight Selling Out So Fast?

Military leaks new LED technology that is now being called "brightest light ever."

[Read More>>](#)

Insider Financial Tips

Detailed description: This advertisement features a tactical flashlight with a green beam of light. The headline is in black, and the main text is in black. A blue link is at the bottom.

C



Analysis

We think Headline A outperformed B because of specificity. Gun versus weapon. We also believe that A and B outperformed C because they are curiosity arousing rather than overly 'salesy'. Headline C reeks of 'scammy site that is out part me with my money'.

 Top Performer: 100pts

 So-so Performer: 50pts

 Poor Performer: 25pts

Category: Digital Product (Health & Fitness)

4. TheCardiacKiller.com

The site markets a digital information product with health advice on how to prevent heart attacks.



A



B



C



Analysis

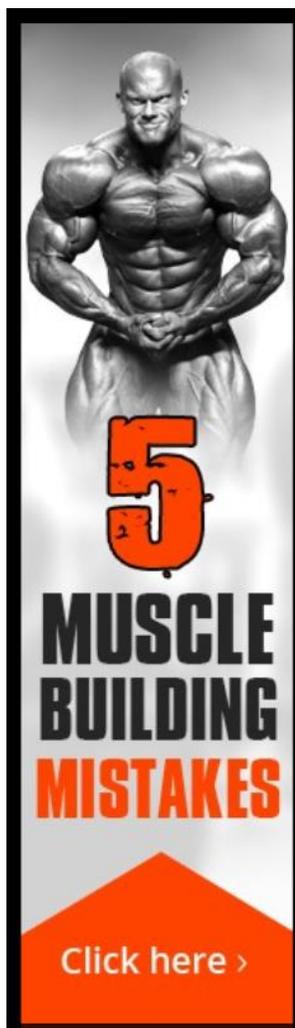
Frankly, if we'd had to pick a winner before the results came in, we would have picked B or C. From our experience, done correctly and tastefully, inducing fear can be a far more effective motivator than merely providing information (4 Stages to a Heart Attack). The lesson here is, even after following good headline writing principles, you must still test.

 Top Performer: 100pts

 So-so Performer: 50pts

 Poor Performer: 25pts

Category: Digital Products (Health & Fitness)



A



B



 Top Performer: 100pts

 So-so Performer: 50pts

 Poor Performer: 25pts

5. BenPakulski.com

Ben Pakuski sells a muscle gain fitness program. He is a competitive body builder, having placed 15th overall in the Mr. Olympia contest.

Analysis

Muscle gain and fitness are saturated markets and it is no surprise that headline A outperformed B. A Arouses curiosity while B is 'missionary lights out' B-o-r-i-n-g! These headlines are a variation on the classic John Caples "Do you make these common English mistakes?" vs. "Grammar tips" headlines. For tips on how to write effective headlines see Eugene Schwartz's *5 Levels of Market Sophistication* (covered in our Landing Page Optimization and headline writing course).

Category: Brands

6. Pepsi

A promotion on a 12 pack of Pepsi



A



B



Analysis

Both of these headlines are just so-so but it didn't matter much because of a strong brand. They are the typical 'meaningless' brand headlines, likely written by a high priced Madison Avenue agency! Our guess is as good as yours on why A outperformed B.

 Top Performer: 100pts

 So-so Performer: 50pts

 Poor Performer: 25pts

Category: Brands

7. Budlight

A Budlight promotion.



A 



B 

Analysis

We would have picked B to win, because at heart we are direct response marketers (and B has a more tangible benefit) NOT brand marketers but sometimes the results will surprise you. As always, make sure you test!

 Top Performer: 100pts

 So-so Performer: 50pts

 Poor Performer: 25pts

Category: Home & Garden (Solar Panels)

8. Solarcity.com

Solar city leases and install solar panels.



A



B



C



D



E



F

Top Performer: 100pts

So-so Performer: 50pts

Poor Performer: 25pts

Analysis

Here, again, we won't pretend to know why the first set of headlines significantly outperformed the second set. We would have certainly picked D as a dud because it tries to be too clever while conveying no benefit!

Other than that, just use the winners for inspiration and the losers as a cautionary tale for what not to do!

Which horse would you have bet on a priori?

Category: Business 2 Business (Cloud/Server Hosting)

9. RackSpace.com

Rackspace sells cloud services and hosting in brutally competitive market now dominated by Amazon's AWS.



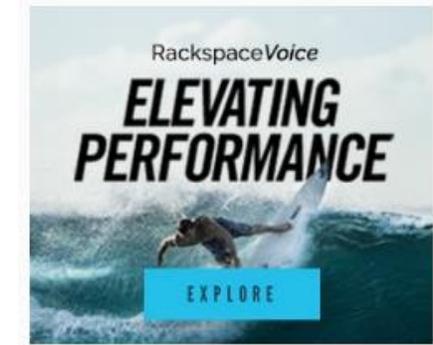
A



B



C



D



Analysis

B, C and D are clear duds, likely written by an overpriced Madison Avenue agency. They are rather meaningless and it is not clear what is on offer. A is okay but could be improved. If we were advising Rackspace we'd advice testing the following headlines:

1. "Why We Are the #1 Managed Cloud Company"
2. "Why 1,837,462 Customers Trust for their Cloud Needs" (specificity and odd numbers do well)
3. "Why Gartner Ranked Us The #1 Managed Cloud Company" (if you have to brag, let someone else do it for you!)

 Top Performer: 100pts

 So-so Performer: 50pts

 Poor Performer: 25pts

Category: Business 2 Business

10. Truthfinder.com

Truth finder markets personal information about individuals gathered from public records.

A



Forget 'Googling' Your Name.
A New Public Records Site Is Leaving
No Stone Unturned.

Type In Your Name (Or Anyone's) To See For Yourself

SEARCH NOW

truthfinder

This advertisement features a woman in a plaid shirt sitting on stairs. The text is bold and direct, with a clear call to action button.

B



See What Just A Name
Can Reveal...

Type In Your Name (Or Anyone's) To Uncover The Truth

ENTER SITE

truthfinder

This advertisement features a close-up of a woman's face. The headline is more mysterious and uses a mix of white and red text. The call to action is 'ENTER SITE'.

Analysis

We would have picked B as the winner before the data came in. The headline is short and bold and evokes more instant curiosity than A.

Suggestions worth testing:

1. What The Internet Knows About You! (type in your name to find out)

 Top Performer: 100pts

 So-so Performer: 50pts

 Poor Performer: 25pts

Category: Business 2 Business (Cloud/Server Hosting)

11. Vistaprint.com

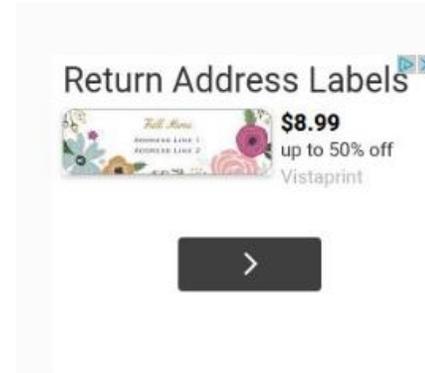
Vistaprint sells business cards and office swag (cups, t-shirts, notebooks)



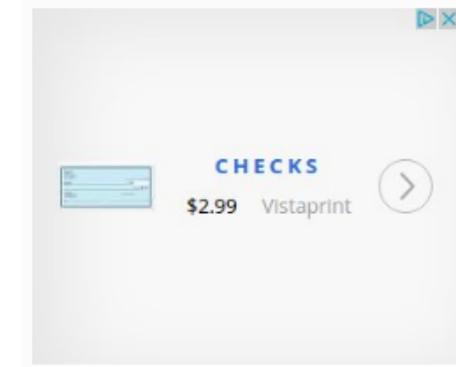
A



B



C



D



Analysis

Headline B performed well because there is a clear offer and value proposition. 500 business cards for just \$9.99 is appealing. **One of the key things we teach in the Landing Page Optimization course is defining and articulating a compelling value proposition.** C and D are poorly designed. Why pay for ad real estate to say nothing? They could have written more compelling headlines and used better graphic design.

Headline A? Maybe great design more than the headline was the key factor!

 Top Performer: 100pts

 So-so Performer: 50pts

 Poor Performer: 25pts

Category: Business-2-Business

12. Lyft

Lyft is the #2 ride hailing service, behind Uber. In these ads they are trying to attract more drivers.



A



B



C



Analysis

Headline A has a clear and tangible benefit and it is no surprise that it won. B tries to be clever while C is vague. I bet C would do better if the "Earn up to \$35 an hour" was more prominent. Suggestions worth testing (assuming it is true):

1. Uber Driver? Earn 20% More Driving for Lyft
2. Uber Driver? Earn 20% More Working for a Company that Treats You Like a Person

 Top Performer: 100pts

 So-so Performer: 50pts

 Poor Performer: 25pts

Category: eCommerce (Consumer Electronics)

13. LG Mobile Phones



A



B



C



Analysis

Headline A has a benefit and a pulse—it makes an attempt to sell. The other two do not. It is not clear why anyone would spend good money on B and C! Clearly the work of someone who isn't spending their own money.

A suggestion: Test headline A in a bigger font and lead with it, placing the phone model beneath it in smaller text. Something like this:

Big Screen. Small Phone.

LG G6

 Top Performer: 100pts

 So-so Performer: 50pts

 Poor Performer: 25pts

Category: eCommerce (Consumer Electronics)

14. Dell Inspiron Laptops



A



B



C



Analysis

We think headline A outperformed B and C because of specificity and a compelling value proposition. We would have voted exactly as the empirical results!

 Top Performer: 100pts

 So-so Performer: 50pts

 Poor Performer: 25pts

Category: Brands, Autos

15. Mazda MX-5 Roadster



A



B



C



Analysis

Here we would have bet on C to be the winner because of specificity and letting someone else who is credible do your bragging for you! C, unlike A and B does NOT have two equally weighted calls to action. **In our testing, a sure way to reduce Click Through and Conversion Rates is to use two equally weighted choices.** But the numbers don't lie, headline A won.

 Top Performer: 100pts

 So-so Performer: 50pts

 Poor Performer: 25pts

Category: Brands, Autos

16. Nissan Versa



Advertisement A features a red Nissan Versa sedan on the left. The text reads: "Starting At \$11,990 MSRP*". Below the car, it says "THE 2016 NISSAN VERSA SEDAN" and "More Price Information". At the bottom, there are two buttons: "SHOP NOW" (red) and "BUILD" (grey).

A



Advertisement B features a red Nissan Versa sedan in the center. The text reads: "Nissan VERSA SEDAN". Below the car, there are two buttons: "Visit Versa Sedan" (grey) and "Learn More" (grey). At the bottom right, there is a Nissan logo.

B



Advertisement C features a dark grey Nissan Versa sedan on the left. The text reads: "0% APR FINANCING FOR UP TO 36 MONTHS FOR WELL-QUALIFIED BUYERS". Below this, it says "PLUS \$1,250 DOWN PAYMENT". At the bottom, there are two buttons: "SHOP NOW" (red) and "BUILD" (grey).

C



Analysis

Cars, watches, houses are trickier to write ads for because they are not bought for simple utility. It is therefore harder for us to understand why one headline/ad outperformed the other.

 Top Performer: 100pts

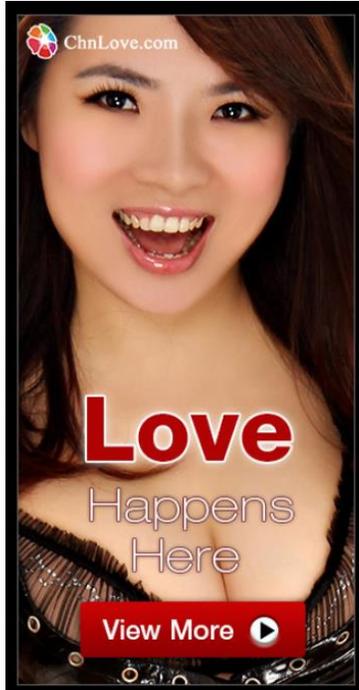
 So-so Performer: 50pts

 Poor Performer: 25pts

Category: Online Dating

18. ChnLove.com

A dating site that connects men to Chinese women. "Me love you long time!"



A



B



C



D



-  Top Performer: 100pts
-  So-so Performer: 50pts
-  Poor Performer: 25pts

Analysis

Here unless you test different headlines with the same image, it is hard to say why one headline would be better than another. This is one of the rare products where the visual is far more important than the headline. These ads were run on Amazon's AWS website, presumably to attract techies to the dating site.

Category: eCommerce, Consumer Packaged Goods

19. Harry's Razors

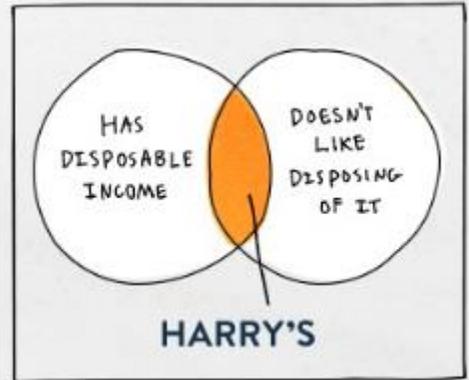
Harry's is an online seller of men's shaving razors and grooming products.



Why shave your face with a faceless razor brand?

Sponsored | Harry's [Read More >>](#)

A



B



Harry's Releases New Razor, Keeps Price at \$2 a Blade.

Harry's | Sponsored [READ MORE >>](#)

C



D



E



 Top Performer: 100pts

 So-so Performer: 50pts

 Poor Performer: 25pts

Analysis

We would have expected E and C to do better than A given that Harry's main value proposition and appeal is their affordability.

Category: Consumer Packaged Goods

20. Coupons.com

This site offers coupons to those who don't want to pay full prices.



A



B



C



D



D



Analysis

This isn't strictly a headline test since they are promoting coupons for different products but we can still learn what appeal angles work best for consumers in general. B ran during the Olympics and we are surprised the promise of \$100 savings didn't push it to the top. Unsurprisingly, a 75 cents discount on a boring product like baking powder was a dud!

 Top Performer: 100pts

 So-so Performer: 50pts

 Poor Performer: 25pts

Category: Financial Services

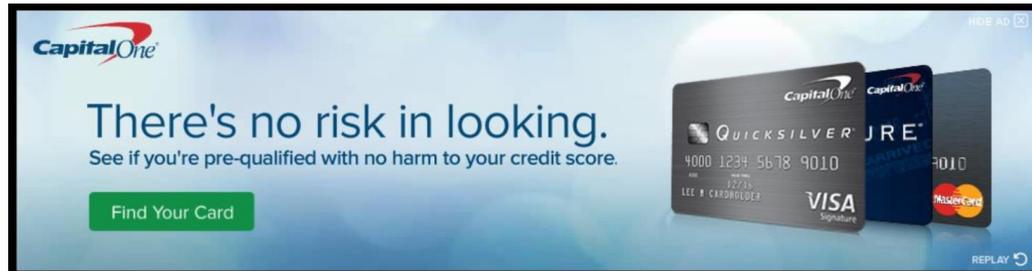
21. Capital One

CapitalOne is promoting credit cards with these ads.

A



B



Analysis

We have nothing insightful to add here!

 Top Performer: 100pts

 So-so Performer: 50pts

 Poor Performer: 25pts

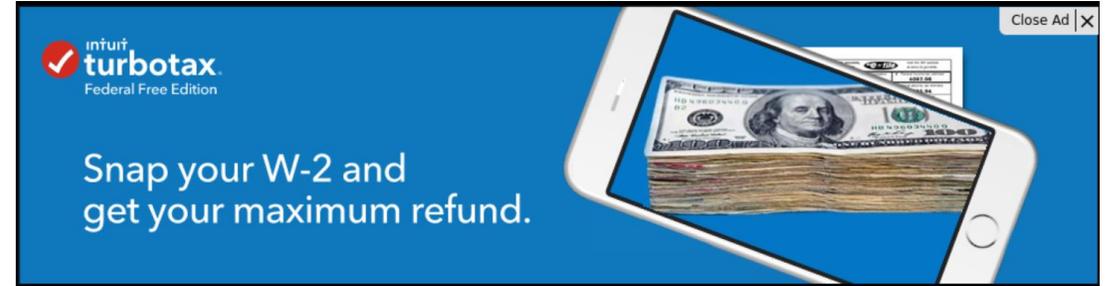
Category: Financial Services

22. TurboTax

Turbo Tax markets tax preparation and filing software



A



C



B



 Top Performer: 100pts

 So-so Performer: 50pts

 Poor Performer: 25pts

Category: Fashion & Beauty

23. Zales Jewelry



A



B



C



 Top Performer: 100pts

 So-so Performer: 50pts

 Poor Performer: 25pts

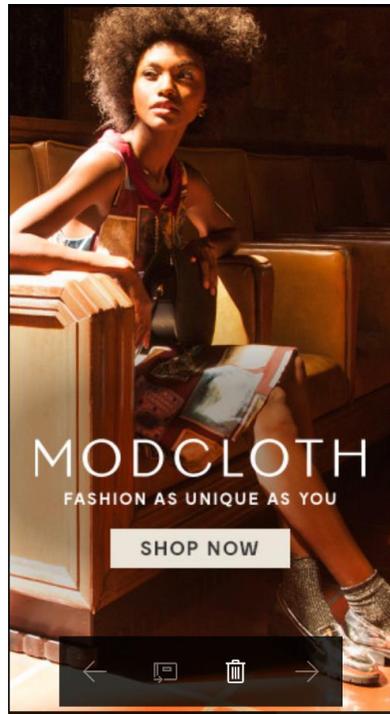
Category: Fashion & Beauty

24. ModCloth

ModCloth sells unique, quirky clothing. They were recently acquired by Walmart for \$75 million.



A



B



C



Analysis

This is an interesting one because we have two different headlines with the same visual as well as different visuals with the same headline. It is about as clean a test as you can get.

The headline "Fashion as unique as you" beat "20% off first purchase".

 Top Performer: 100pts

 So-so Performer: 50pts

 Poor Performer: 25pts

Category: Sporting Goods

25. Revolution Golf

Revolution Golf is the world's #1 seller of online golf instruction videos.



A



B



 Top Performer: 100pts

 So-so Performer: 50pts

 Poor Performer: 25pts

Analysis

I am not a golfer but I am assuming that hitting further is a more pressing problem for golfers than hitting straight. Those are the two different appeal angles used in A vs. B.

Whatever your market is, you will generally write a better headline by focusing on the pain point experienced by most people in that market, that hasn't already been beaten to death. One of the best examples of this is the "Pee Like a Firehose" headline we teach in our headline writing course, an ad for a prostate medication.

Category: Services, Advertising

26. AdTaxi Networks

Ad Taxi networks is an ad agency. These ads are trying to get new customers for their digital marketing services.



A



B



Analysis

Headline A likely outperformed B because most digital advertisers complain that their ads don't work i.e. they pay for traffic to their site but no one buys. Whereas "Let's talk about moments and metrics that matter" is less clear.

 Top Performer: 100pts

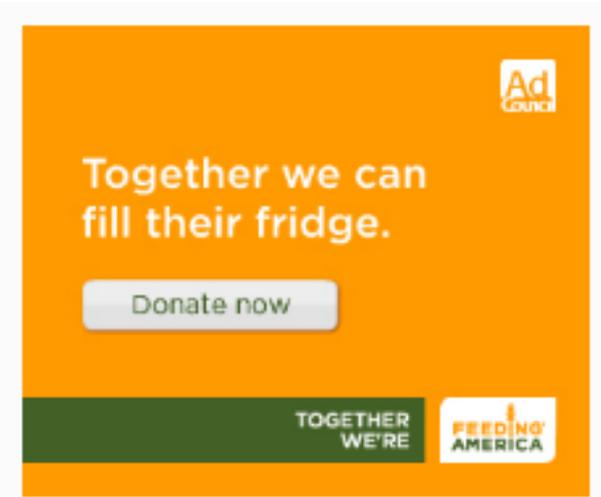
 So-so Performer: 50pts

 Poor Performer: 25pts

Category: Non-Profits

27. FeedAmerica.org

Feed America is a non-profit that aims to eradicate hunger in the USA.



A



B



 Top Performer: 100pts

 So-so Performer: 50pts

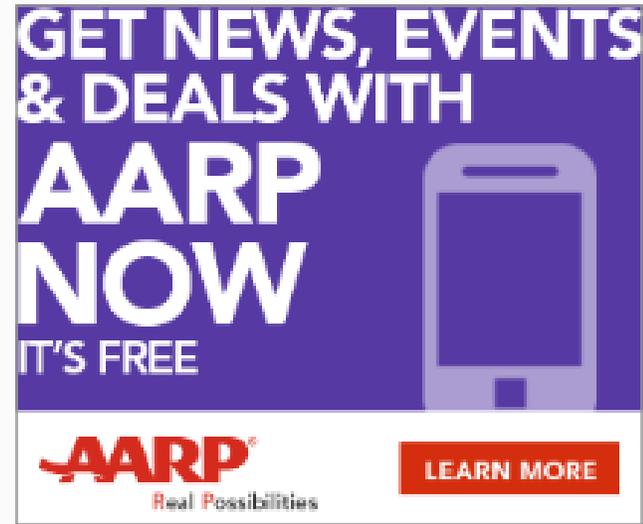
 Poor Performer: 25pts

Category: Non-Profits

28. AARP.org (American Association of Retired People's)



A



B



Analysis

Here, we think A outperformed B because old folks are more wary of scams than they care about news and free information. Fear is a powerful motivator.

 Top Performer: 100pts

 So-so Performer: 50pts

 Poor Performer: 25pts

Category: Services, Slim TV Packages

29. Sling TV

Sling TV markets one of the so called skinny bundles for pay TV.



A



B



Analysis

We believe Headline A outperformed B because of the free tangible benefit, along with the picture of an NBA game. B is one of the 'clever' ads written by Madison Avenue types.

 Top Performer: 100pts

 So-so Performer: 50pts

 Poor Performer: 25pts

Category: Telecoms

30. Verizon

In these ads Verizon is promoting smartphones along with wireless plans

Get iPhone 7
on Verizon LTE Advanced for up to 50% faster peak speeds in more than 450 cities coast to coast.
Order now

verizon ✓ iPhone 7

A



Get iPhone 7 for \$99.99
With trade in of select iPhone models. Limited time offer.
Order now >

New device payment/activation/upgrade req'd. \$649.99 retail price less \$550 trade-in credit applied to account over 24 mos; credit begins in 2-3 cycles & ends when balance is paid.

verizon ✓ iPhone 7

B



Get iPhone 7 for \$0
when you trade in select iPhone models. Offer ends September 30.
Order now

New device payment/activation/upgrade req'd. \$649.99 retail price less \$450 trade-in CIO; 0% APR. 0% credit applies in 2-3 cycles over 24 mos; ends when balance is paid.

verizon ✓ iPhone 7

C



Upgrade to a Droid Maxx 2 and get one 50% off.
Limited time only.

New device payment/activation per device req'd. 50% off retail price on Droid of equal or lesser value.

verizon ✓ **Shop now**

D



Get your dream phone for real.

verizon ✓

E



Analysis

The only conclusion we can draw here is that iPhones are far more popular than Android phones and more effective at promoting Verizon plans.

 Top Performer: 100pts

 So-so Performer: 50pts

 Poor Performer: 25pts

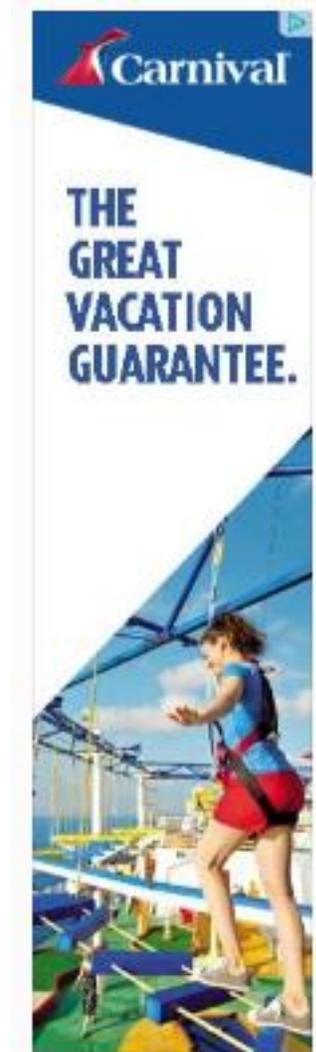
Category: Travel

31. Carnival Cruises

A



B



Analysis

When using incentives to promote a core offer, the true financial result must take into account the additional cost of the incentive.

We are not privy to this information but just know that Headline/Ad A significantly outperformed B in getting responses. The other factor to consider is whether the ads were bought on a CPM or CPC basis.

We teach how to do an ROIc analysis when using incentives in our Landing Page Optimization course.

 Top Performer: 100pts

 So-so Performer: 50pts

 Poor Performer: 25pts

Category: Politics

32. Hillary Clinton



A



B



C



 Top Performer: 100pts

 So-so Performer: 50pts

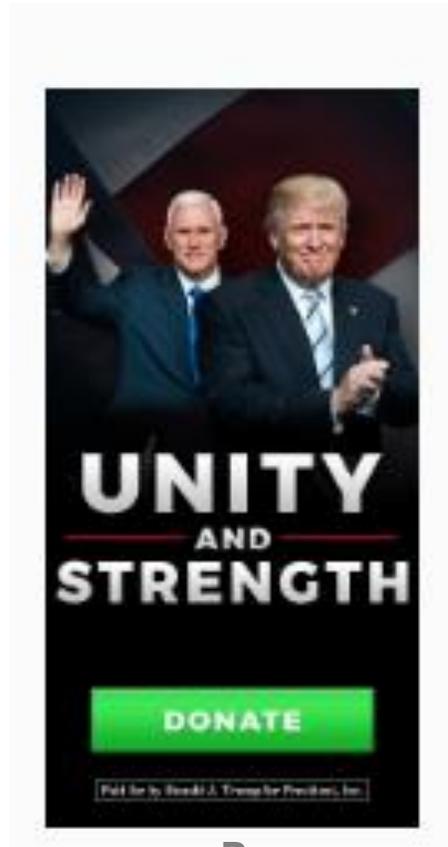
 Poor Performer: 25pts

Category: Politics

33. Donald Trump



A



B



C



 Top Performer: 100pts

 So-so Performer: 50pts

 Poor Performer: 25pts

Are You Burning Money? Let Us Craft Some Killer Headlines for You To Test--FREE



Would you throw a crisp wad of \$100 bills into a fire every morning at work? “Of course not, you dummy”, you say.

But if you are spending money on paid traffic yet not investing in CRO (Conversion Rate Optimization) this is literally what you are doing!

Systematic headline writing/testing is a key part of CRO and can transform your business.

While SEO (Search Engine Optimization) is widely understood, few invest in systematic CRO, arguably more important to your business’ success.

Claim your free set of headlines now. Email:

jasper@TheConversionWizards.com

Free Resource

[Get More Clicks and Sales: 9 Proven “Killer Headline” Techniques](#)