IGNITE YOUR
Recreational Marijuana Sales

activemarketing

Digital Sales Generation for the Recreational Marijuana Industry

Contents

Introduction

Hi, I'm Mike Myles, founder and CEO of Active Marketing. I've spent nearly 20 years building websites and marketing businesses. Over the years, I've developed a good handle on what works and what doesn't—especially when it comes to web design. Ultimately, you want and need your website to generate leads and be a source of new business for your organization.

Think of it like this: when you make an investment into hiring a sales rep, you expect to see a return on that investment in the form of new business. Likewise, for marketing and other expenses—the asset has to positively affect your business's bottom line. Otherwise, what's the point?

You should view your website as another facet of your sales and marketing team—one that operates 24/7/365. If you're not seeing the return on that investment, it's great that you are reading this right now. It should help you get most of the way there.

As a marketing agency, whenever we undertook a web design project, we found ourselves reinventing the wheel repeatedly when planning out the structure and message of websites. Over time, we realized that we were actually going through a very similar planning process for each site. We wasted hours of valuable time planning website hierarchies that seemed to end up very similar. Looking back, it is clear that we had created an informal formula for the creation of high-converting websites.

This guide is an outline of the best practices we discovered through years of experimentation and measurement. You can use these best practices as a formula to create your own high-converting website. By following this guide, you will be able to move your visitor forward through the conversion process, shorten the time to sale, and increase overall conversion rates.

The Recreational Marijuana Market

Legal marijuana sales in the United States will increase to over $40 billion dollars by 2025. Legal recreational marijuana is the driving force behind that exponential growth. Recreational marijuana is booming and taking market share away from medical marijuana. The worldwide market for legal marijuana will increase to over $70 billion by 2025, too. Claim your share of that market with the right digital marketing foundation!

How Fast is Recreational Marijuana Selling?
Fast – Really Fast

Way back in 2015, Oregon dispensaries sold $14 million of recreational marijuana products in the first month - $11 million of sales in the first week. That's a pretty big number, but it is just a drop of the bucket compared to California.

2018 saw California dispensaries sell $114.5 million in recreational marijuana products - $5.2 million on the first day alone.

Other states had huge sales numbers in their first month, too. In 2017, Colorado dispensaries sold $27 million of recreational marijuana products in the first month. In 2020, Illinois blew past that figure with $40 million in first month sales.

As more and more states legalize recreational marijuana, we will see more first-month sales records broken. Position your business to take advantage of the early surge in sales.
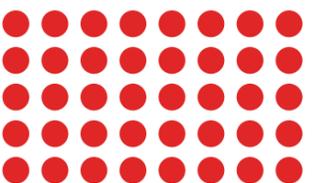
Three Common Hurdles for Recreational Marijuana Marketing

Before we dive into the details of designing and developing your website as an efficient sales-generating machine, let's take a step back and discuss some of the most common hurdles we see in the recreational marijuana market right now.

Breaking Stigma

The U.S. government has demonized recreational marijuana use since immigrants brought the practice to the United States after the Mexican Revolution of 1910. Racist politicians and campaigners effectively linked marijuana with people of color and even manufactured imaginary crimes committed in the name of marijuana. Most Americans fell for the deception and the ideas became firmly entrenched over the last century.

So, your marketing must chip away at over 100 years of public conditioning. Do this by showing people why these outdated ideas are false and replace those ideas with modern evidence of the benefits of recreational marijuana.

Legal Complexity and Fragmentation

It is challenging to educate the public about recreational marijuana when there are so many jurisdictions with different laws and regulations. There are the laws that restrict the marketing of recreational marijuana as well as the laws restricting legal use. You need to be aware of them all so you can build trust with a potential customer that it is legal and safe to buy recreational marijuana from you.

Avoiding Commoditization

Commoditization is when the public believes your product can be found everywhere with the exact same quality, which leads them to search for the lowest price. If all marijuana were the same quality, wouldn't you want the lowest price? Branding and education are your best weapons in the fight against commoditization. Show your brand's unique value to potential customers and continue to reinforce it with content that is consistent, direct, and clear.

NOTE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT'S FIGHT AGAINST LEGALIZATION

Local governments have used many tools to try to slow or stop the sales of recreational marijuana. Some locales try to ban the sale and manufacturing of marijuana in their jurisdictions. Others use zoning to push recreational marijuana dispensaries away from their customer base. This will be an ongoing struggle and your brand needs to stay up to date on the changing market landscape.

THE FOUR
Types of Pages

The Four Types Of Pages

First, let's talk about the real "meat" of any website: its content. We organize our sites' content around four distinct types of pages, each with a specific purpose.

The four types of pages on your website are:

1.

Thought Leadership

2.

Branding

3.

Conversion

4.

Post-Conversion

We'll briefly discuss each in the pages that follow and then we'll touch on converting visitors on mobile.
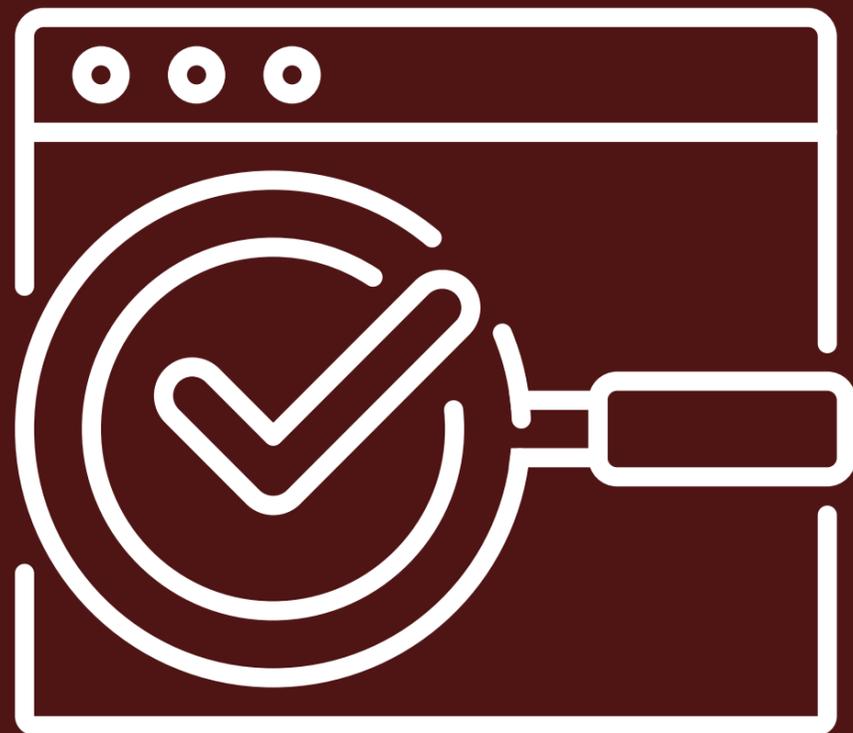
Establishing Trust

Images

Answer the Question

Thought Leadership Pages

Thought leadership pages generate most of the organic traffic to your site and establish credibility with your target market. This credibility improves your rankings in the organic search engines, and it improves the number and quality of leads you can generate on your website.

The best way to drive traffic to your site is by creating thought leadership pages with three purposes:

1.

Answer a question important to your potential clients

2.

Generate inbound traffic to your website

3.

Generate inbound links

The Old Way – Legacy SEO Pages

There was a time when webmasters would create page headings exactly matching the search phrase for which they wanted to rank in the search engines. This was the era of keyword stuffing, thin content and other practices now frowned upon thanks to Google's continuous refinement of its algorithm based on user need. Legacy SEO pages still exist, but they don't perform well and they don't meet your target audience's expectations.

There is a better way, and that better way is called content marketing.

The Better Way – Content Marketing

Blogs, infographics, videos, eBooks and white papers:

It's all part of this thing called content marketing.

Today, in most cases, thought leadership content should be published on a blog or in a separate and dedicated section of the site, like a "Resources" page or a content hub.

Thought leadership content needs to be informative, interesting, and well designed. It won't generate more traffic if it doesn't get read by your visitors. The best way to make sure that the people who land on your site actually stay and read your content is to create only high-quality content. The days of mass producing low-quality, keyword-stuffed content are over. It just won't drive traffic and leads the way that it did a few years ago.

Regardless of where the content is published, it needs to be designed and published in a way that maximizes its benefits as an informative page that builds brand trust and credibility, as well as optimized as an entrance page to the site (we'll get into entrance pages below). Thought leadership content should be continually created and added to the site to keep feeding your target audience new and interesting content.

Additionally, great content marketing is the best way to build inbound links to your website. Link-building and earned media is a separate topic, and worthy of it's own discussion because it is essential to the growth of organic search traffic to your website.

There is no better way to build credibility in the search engines than to increase the quality and number of your inbound links. There is also no better way to build inbound links than to leverage great thought leadership content.
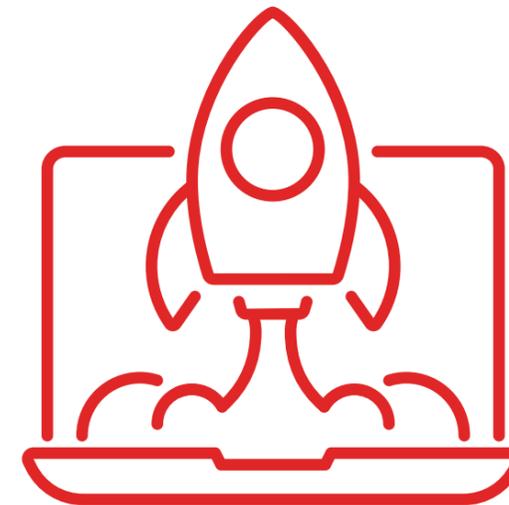
Thought Leadership Pages Are Entrance Pages

The portion of your website that establishes you as a "thought leader" is also where most of your audience will first land, making these thought leadership pages your most popular "entrance pages." You will get entrances on your homepage, but most traffic will arrive on your thought leadership content once your site has significant organic traffic. Your thought leadership pages should be written and designed to address the specific pain points of your target market . The page they land on is determined by what your audience is searching for and how you've optimized your site.

As a rule, these pages should be written and designed specifically to answer the questions of your market and to appeal to that market as a credible source of information. Do this, and your visitors will return when they need more information. They will link to your site and share your site with their peers, and they will have greater trust in your brand.
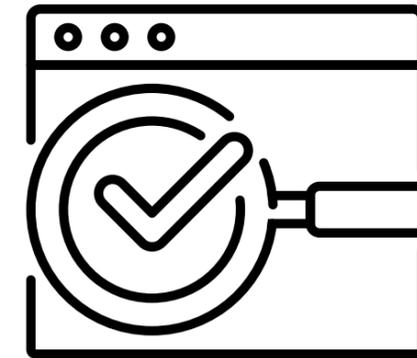
Question: How Do You Establish Thought Leadership?

Thought leaders answer important questions. You establish thought leadership when your target market thinks of you or your business as the source for the best answer to their most important questions as they relate to your brand. It's up to you to answer the questions that your market has, and to provide them with content that they are interested in. If you want to become a thought leader in their minds, you must earn it, and earning their trust will frequently mean that you have also earned their business.

Thought Leadership | Branding | Conversion | Post-Conversion

Consistent User Experience

For most of your thought leadership content, you will want to create a standard layout and use it repeatedly. This saves you time in design and development, and also creates a better, more consistent user experience for your audience. They are more likely to stay on your site and read multiple pages if it's easy for them to find what they are looking for.

Exception to the Rule:
Link Building Content

There are exceptions where your standard format isn't a perfect fit. One example of this is big content that you've invested in heavily. If you've written a piece of content that you think you can build links to, or is exceptional in it's quality, you should take the extra time to create a great design and presentation for it.

Great user experience will help you build more links if you are using your big content as a link-building piece. Even if the piece wasn't specifically designed to generate earned media, a great design will still help to get attention, links, and visitors. There's no substitute for a well-designed piece of content.

There's not a 'formula' for content that is going to have a custom design, but that's not most of your content. Most of your content should be quality, but maybe not quite as long, or represent quite as much investment as your best content.

For the rest of your thought leadership content, you'll want to create a standard format so that your visitors can easily find the content that they are looking for. They don't all have to be the same, but you'll want to try to keep the pages at least laid out in a similar way.

Thought Leadership | Branding | Conversion | Post-Conversion
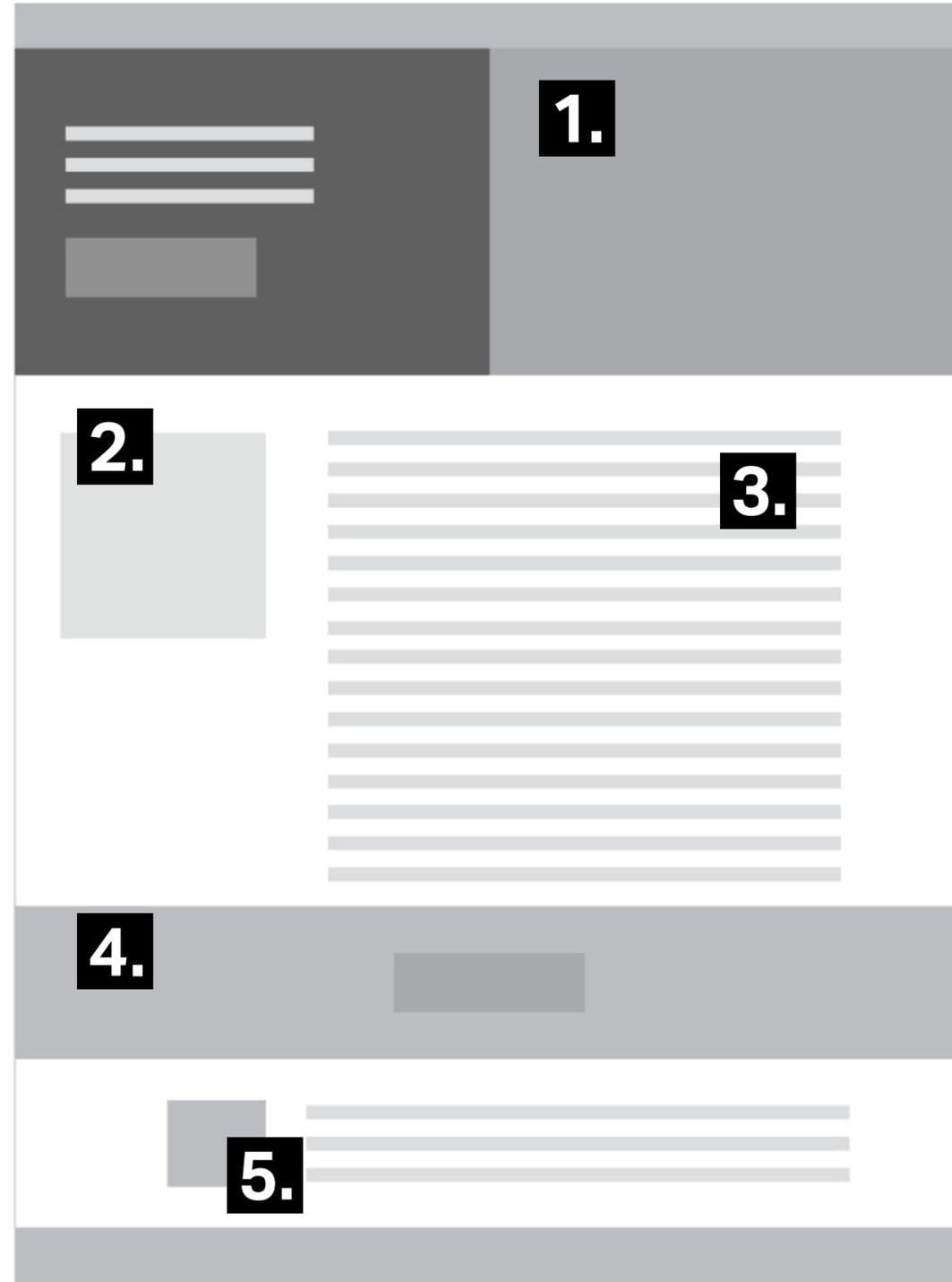
Though Leadership Page Components

Your Thought Leadership page should include the following components:

1.

Images

2.

Table of Contents

3.

Answer the Question

4.

Calls-to-Action

5.

Comments

Thought Leadership | Branding | Conversion | Post-Conversion
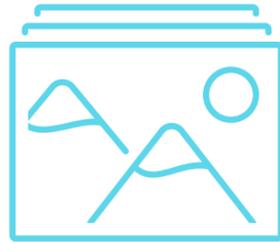
Images

Use a featured image at the top of your post that is interesting. Focus less on making this a perfect match to your content, and more on finding an image that will motivate your visitors to read your post.

Make sure that your images are in line with your brand and the positioning of your company (who you are to your market) and with the voice of the content. If it's a formally written document, choose a formal image. If it's a conversational piece of content, then use a less formal image.

Use illustrations, charts, and photographs to make the content more interesting. If your visitors are bored with your content, they aren't going to stay long.

Table of Contents

If your content is long enough to answer the visitor's questions thoroughly, then you will probably have written a piece long enough to warrant a table of contents. A general rule of thumb is that if your content is more than 1500 words or so, you will want to add one to your page. A table of contents enhances user experience by telling your audience what they can expect to see should they choose to scroll.
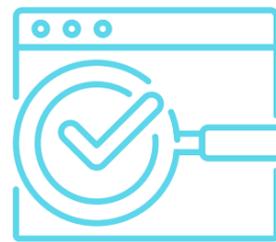
Answer the Questions

This is the main body of your content. Above all else, make sure that the content effectively answers the visitor's question. To comprehensively answer the various questions around any given topic, you will likely need to cover a lot of ground. The key to doing this successfully is to make the content skimmable by adding headings and subheadings. This allows visitors to easily find the answer they are looking for.

Call to Action (CTA)

Your thought leadership pages answer the questions that the visitor came to your site to have answered, but in doing so, you will probably create even more questions that they will want answered. Offer them answers to these questions—but require that they first "convert" before providing it to them. Use calls-to-action to drive your visitors to provide you with more information about them (so you can continue to communicate with them in the future) in return for receiving the answers to their additional questions.

Comments

In addition to social shares, visitor engagement in the form of comments goes a long way toward further establishing thought leadership. Make sure to enable comments on your site and ask visitors directly to post comments. When they do, engage them and participate in a conversation.

If you don't yet have enough traffic to generate comments on your pages, it might make sense to disable comments until you have more traffic. Another reason to disable comments on your thought leadership content would be if you do not have the horsepower to monitor, manager, or otherwise moderate comments left by visitors.

Thought Leadership | **Branding** | Conversion | Post-Conversion
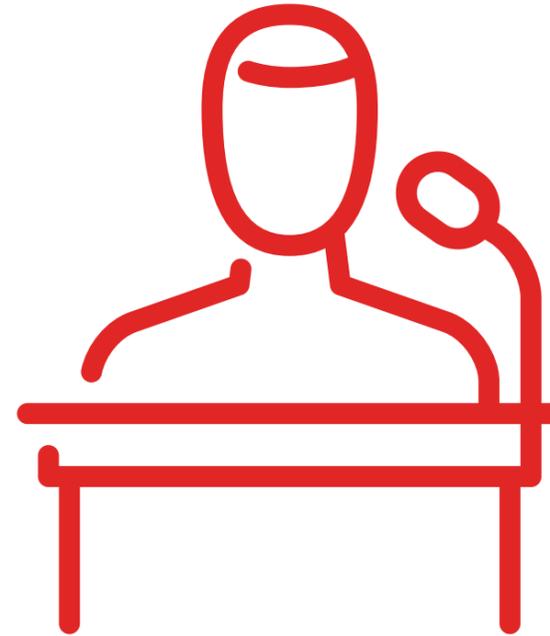
Branding Pages

You've probably seen or heard Amazon CEO & founder Jeff Bezos' quip about your brand being the sum of what other people say about you when you're not in the room.

To a large degree, you don't get ultimate control over that. But you can help set expectations.

Brand is everything. From the way your content sounds to the types of imagery you use and the general look and feel of your marketing collateral, it all must be consistent and fall within the range of what your target audience expects of you.

As this relates to building a site that converts, a key element is your branding pages. While your thought leadership pages help attract visitors to your site and spur them toward conversion (thanks in part to your high-quality content), branding pages impress them with your business's persona, characteristics and value propositions. They help your target audience relate to you and connect with you on an emotional level.

Most importantly, branding pages turn visitors into customers.

Branding pages should help foster the following goals:

1. Long-term loyalty

2. Lower cost-per-acquisition

3. Greater revenue-per-customer

Make an Emotional Connection

The branding pages on your site should be specifically tailored to help your potential clients connect with your business on a personal level. Ultimately, you want your visitors to take some form of "purchasing action" (defined further on), and they are more likely to do that if they connect with your brand in a personal way.

Resources for Resonating with Your Target Audience

To forge those emotional connections, you must first know what your market is most interested in and which questions they need to have answered before they will take a Purchasing Action. This data can be found from multiple sources, such as:
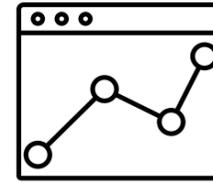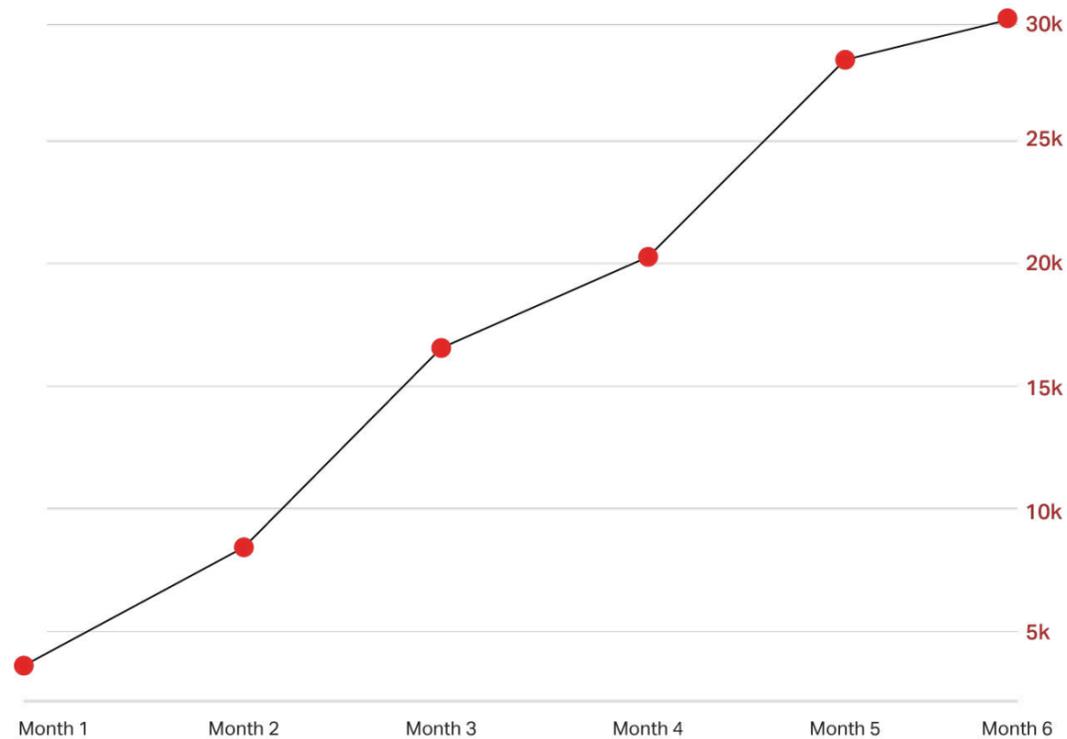
Web Analytics Data

A good starting point for determining what your audience is interested in is looking at your web analytics data. Analyze the way visitors who convert currently flow on your site, and look at the most popular pages.

This data will be biased because your visitors can only see the content that's currently on the site and not necessarily the content that should be on your site, so keep that in mind as you work through the data. The idea is that you want to find out what your visitors need before taking a purchasing action so that you can make sure that information can be easily found.

Visitor Surveys

To more closely determine exactly those topics that your visitors are interested in without biasing your data with the existing website, try a visitor survey. There are several tools that offer user feedback surveys, but they all provide the same result: a better understanding of your visitors' interest.
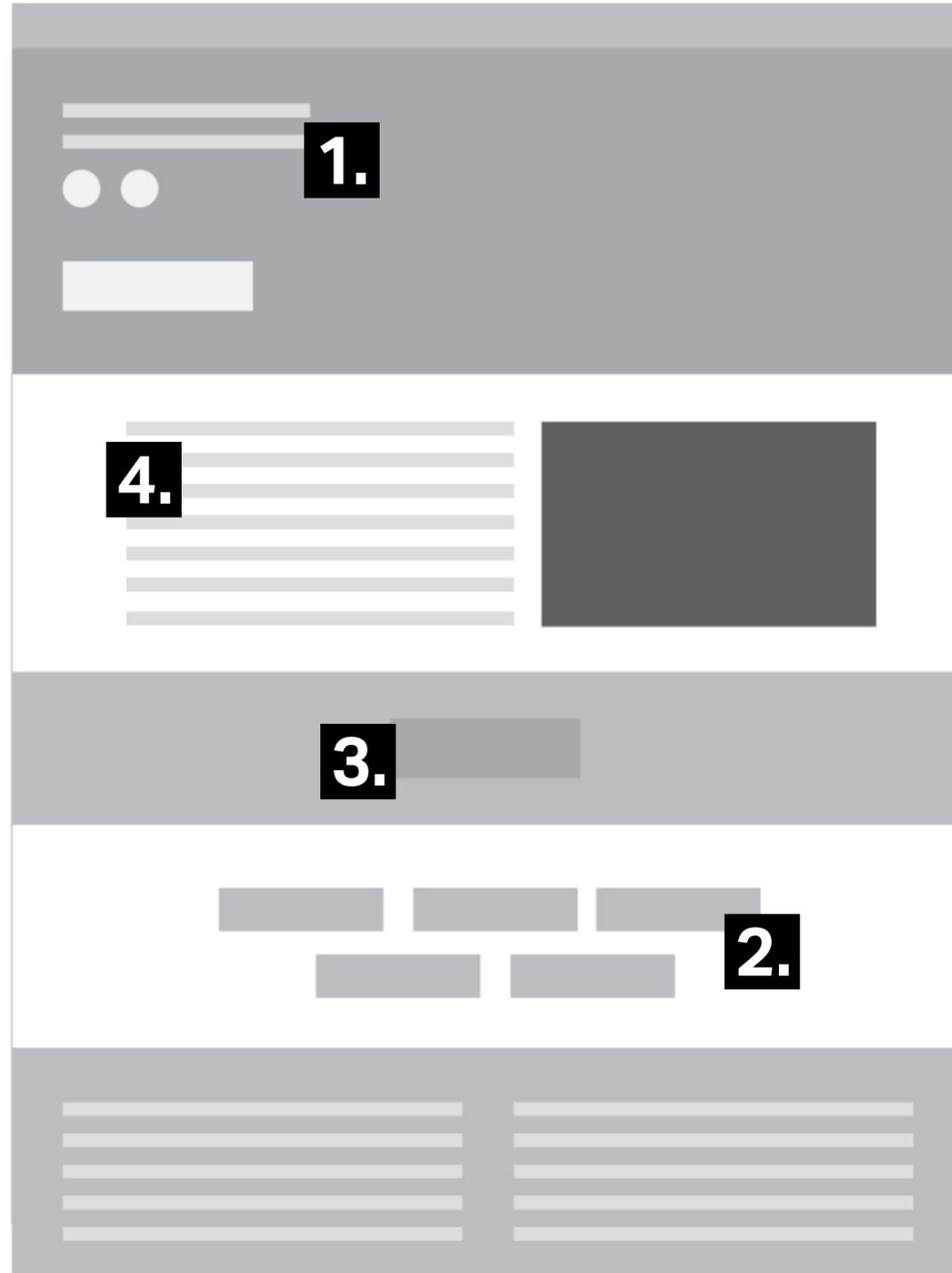
Branding Page Components

By including a standard group of content components on your Branding Pages, you will be able to effectively give the visitor the information they are seeking. You should include the following pieces of content on every brand page:

1.

The Value Proposition

2.

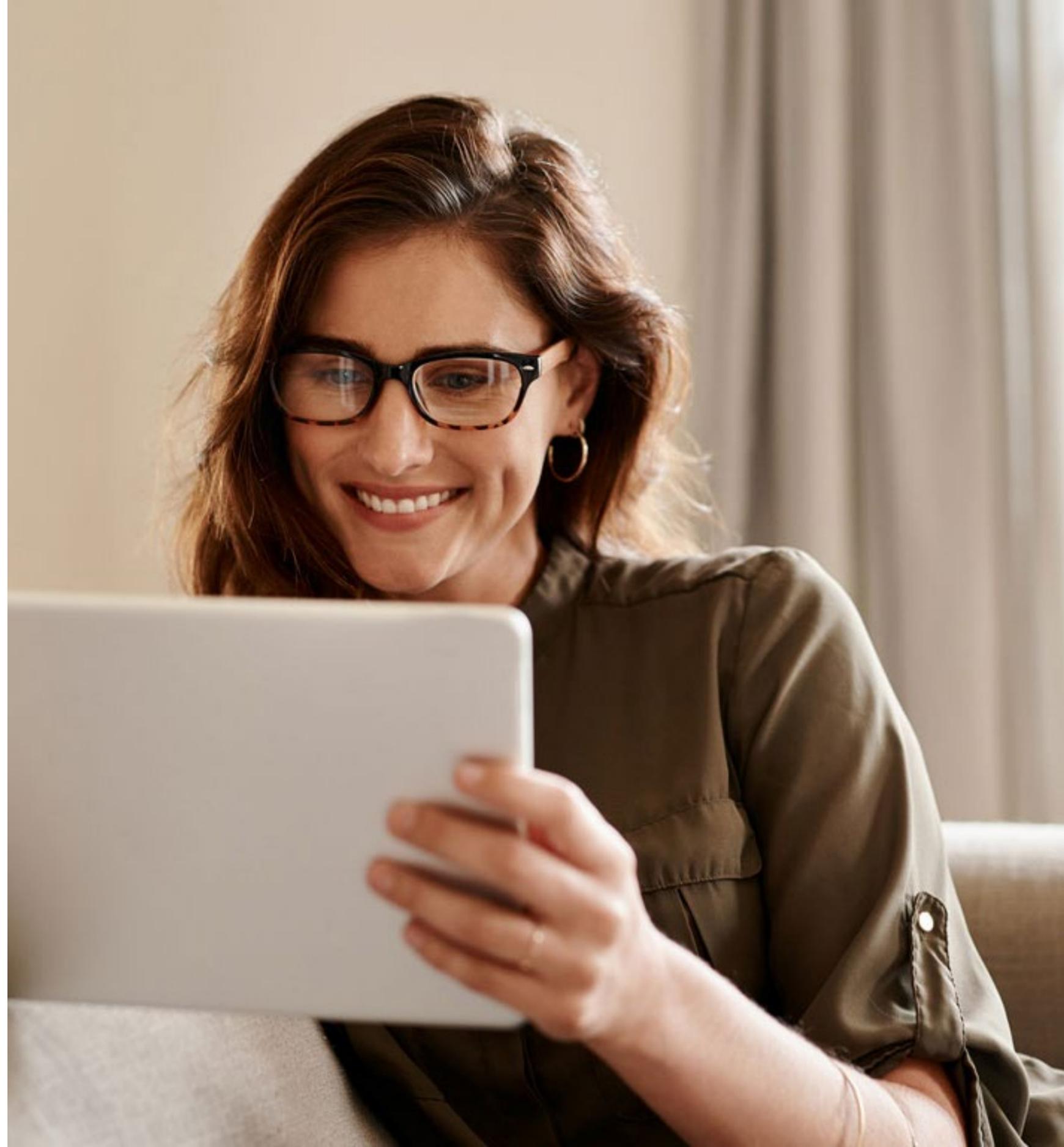Trust-Building Content/Symbols

3.

A Call-to-Action (CTA)

4.

Answers to Frequent Questions

Thought Leadership | **Branding** | Conversion | Post-Conversion

1. Your Value Proposition

Displaying your value proposition is most effectively done with a combination of graphics and text. Try to tell a story that contains the problem, the solution and the outcome. On the homepage, this will be the value proposition of your business. On your branding topic pages, this will be the value proposition of that particular portion of your offering.

Refine how you present your value proposition so that it will best resonate with your market. Consider the stories of your client successes. Theirs are the stories that will best showcase what you bring to the market.

Thought Leadership | **Branding** | Conversion | Post-Conversion

2. Trust-Building Content

To build trust and credibility with your visitors you will want to display what others have said about your business. This may include:

- Case studies

- Who has covered you in the news

- Testimonials from satisfied clients

- Certifications, awards and ratings

Joining respected marijuana organizations builds trust, which is a major challenge in the cannabis industry. We commonly see memberships (and sometimes even help our clients join) in well-respected organizations from NCIA, CBA, HIA, MCBA, and more.

Adding these to your site will almost immediately increase conversion rates, especially if the visitor recognizes the name of the person or organization associated with your business. Remember to place your trust-building content close to your call-to-action on the page.
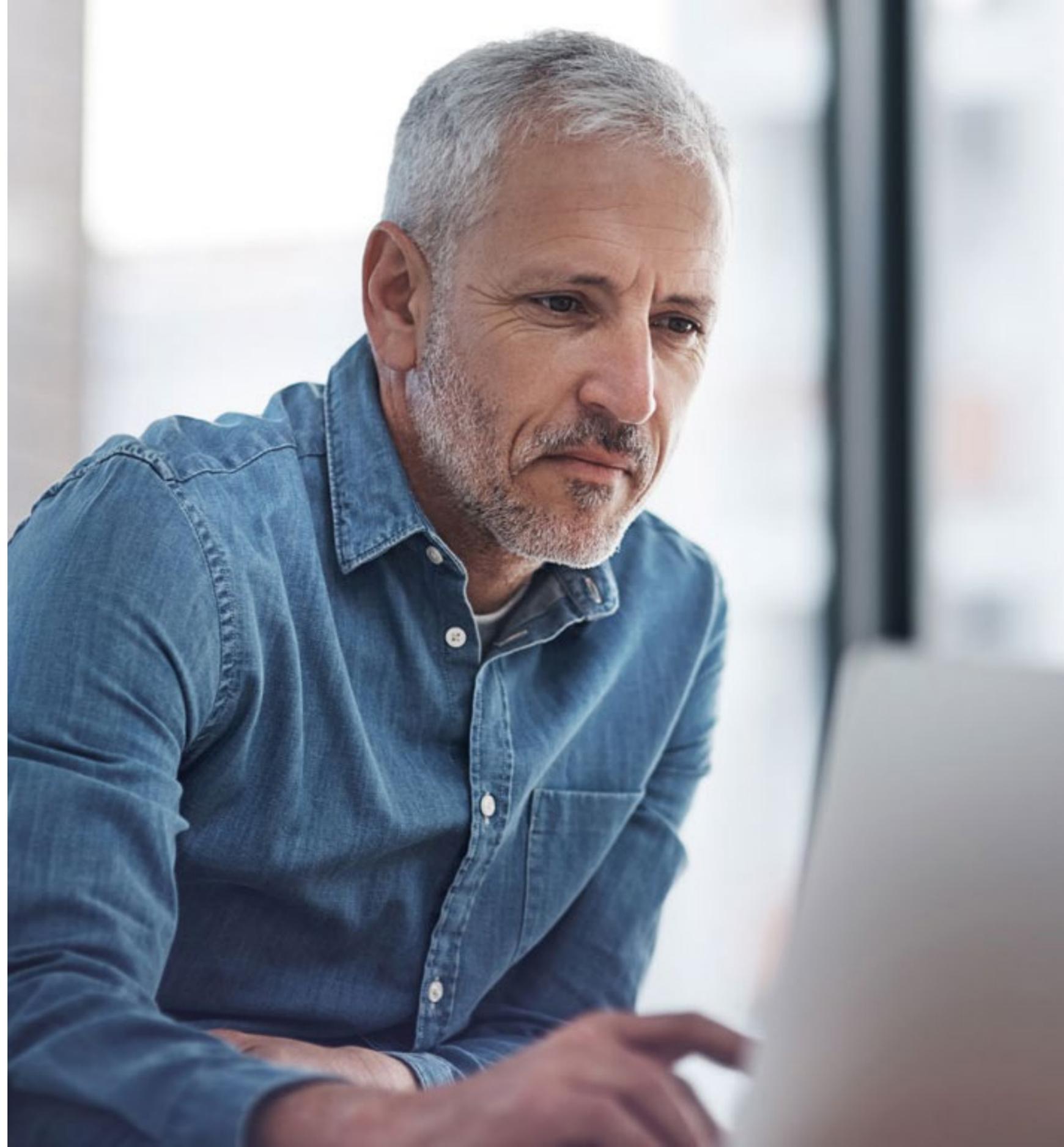
3. Calls-to-Action (CTA)

The point of every page on your site is to eventually turn your visitors into a lead or a paying client. Your calls-to-action should fit the message of the page and be consistent with the value proposition that you display on the page. Use words that focus on your customer (e.g. "you" and "your") and spell out what they can expect to receive or experience if they choose to convert.

Remember, the best way to make a sale is simply to ask for it.

Thought Leadership | **Branding** | Conversion | Post-Conversion

4. Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

The rest of the content on your branding pages should answer your audience's frequently asked questions. Answer those questions in a way that stays on brand while providing them with what they need to make a decision—but don't put too much information in here.

The idea is to give them only the information they need and to make sure you don't overwhelm them by trying to feed them all the information you want them to have. Chances are you have more to say about your product than your visitors have time or desire to hear.

This is a common mistake most businesses make. It's easy to fall into the trap of writing about all the great bits of your business, right down to the finest detail. Doing this, however, will not make for a great visitor experience. If you must put every detail of your offering on your site, make sure you move the detailed content into interior pages. This will allow your visitors to have the option to get more information if they want it and vastly improve their user experience.

Thought Leadership | **Branding** | Conversion | Post-Conversion

The Brand Page Navigation Hierarchy

Your webpages should be structured in a hierarchy with your homepage at the top. Under the homepage will be top-level topics that are answers to broad questions, with links to subtopics that answer more detailed questions within the topic.

In the cannabis industry, an example of this might be:

- Home
  - About Us
  - Menu
  - Resources
 - FAQ
  - Contact Us
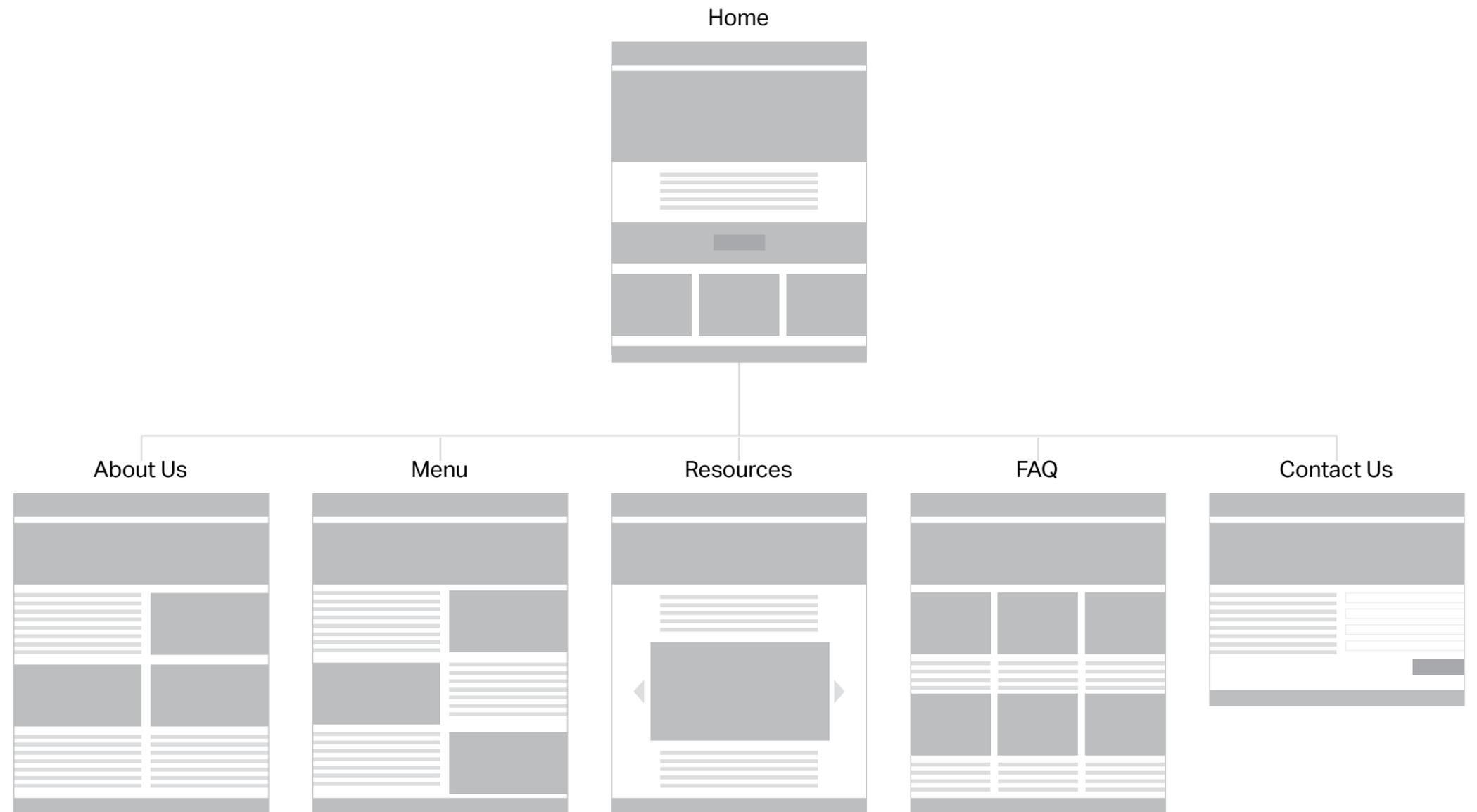
As you add detail to the information on your site, you might be tempted to create a hierarchy that is quite deep. Avoid creating a topical hierarchy that is more than 3 levels deep. By doing this, you keep your offering easy to understand, and you won't overwhelm or confuse your market with nuances.

Home

About Us   Menu   Resources   FAQ   Contact Us

Thought Leadership | **Branding** | Conversion | Post-Conversion

The Homepage

The homepage is the ultimate showcase for your brand. It's where you highlight what your business is all about. Of all the branding pages on your site, your homepage is the most important. Take extra care when communicating your brand and value proposition on this page. On top of the standard branding page components, make sure that you clearly elucidate:

- Who you are
- What you do
- Who you do it for
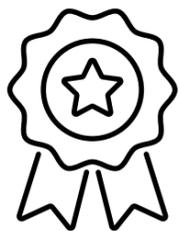
Top-Level Branding Pages

Top-level branding pages answer the questions that you determined are the most important to your market by reviewing your analytics and taking user surveys. These contain the answers to your market's purchasing questions regarding your offering and form the foundation of your website. You will need to create one page for each top-level topic.

Always Remember:
Do What Is Best for Your Visitor

Keep in mind that these shouldn't be looked at as hard and fast rules. It's important that your visitors feel like they are getting the information that they need and that they feel comfortable with your brand. If that means linking from a particular topic on your homepage to a subtopic of a blog, no big deal. This is just a set of guidelines to simplify your decision-making process.

Conversion Pages

The job of every conversion page is to make it easy for your audience to take a purchasing action—right then, right there.

There are several types of conversions and defining them is a matter of determining what is most important for your business. Nonetheless, any webpage on your site that is dedicated simply to generating conversions, and whose purpose for the visitor is to convert, is a conversion page.

The two most common types of conversion pages are landing pages and the standard "Contact Us" page.

In the cannabis industry, "Menu" pages are common, but we also see pages with more urgent calls to conversion, such as "Buy Now" pages.

Types of Conversions

Motivating your customers to take an action is the primary goal of the website. There are many types of conversions. We break them down into three primary categories:

1. **Purchasing Actions**

Purchasing actions are actions that strongly signal the prospect is ready to further a conversation that could lead to future revenue. These often include phone calls and forms that request a personal response.

Purchasing Action:
Online Purchase

This is the most immediate way to generate a sale through your website. In the recreational marijuana market, a growing portion of your target audience starts their purchase journey online. An ecommerce platform is one of the most effective ways to create a seamless user experience that takes your target market from brand awareness to initial sale to customer loyalty.

Purchasing Action:
Phone Call

A phone call from your website is a strong indicator that a customer is ready to make a purchase with just a little more assistance. This gives your expert sales team the opportunity to provide the customer service to close the sale. For nearly every business that has a sales process, this is one of the most valuable types of lead and should be a clearly promoted website conversion.

2.

Communication Permission Actions

Communication permission actions strongly signal that the prospect is interested in learning more about you, your business or what you offer. They may not be ready to buy, but they're warming up and you can use these signals to strategize around how to nudge them toward a purchasing action.

Communication Permission Action:
Online Chat

For those in your target market who would like to learn more information, but may be resistant to picking up the phone, providing an opportunity to engage in a personal online conversation is a great lead nurturing tactic. This direct, real-time back and forth conversation with a website visitor is valuable and, when properly managed by your sales team, can significantly increase sales.

Communication Permission Action:
Contact Request Form Submission

While these don't directly connect the visitor to the salesperson, it's the next best thing. This is a request from the visitor for more information about their personal needs, and they want it to be provided by a person on your team. It's not nearly as valuable as a phone call, but it is the beginning of a conversation with your sales team and is a purchasing action.

Communication Permission Action:
eBook, Whitepaper or Other Download

This doesn't fall into the category of a purchasing action, but it is a sign that your content is compelling and that you are establishing yourself in the visitor's mind as a thought leader. When they download your content, they should provide you with enough information about themselves for you to nurture them until they are ready to take a purchasing action. When they are ready to purchase, it is likely they will give your business the first shot at making the sale.

Communication Permission Action:
Blog or Newsletter Subscription

These may have less immediate value to your business when compared to other conversions, but what they lack in short-term revenue, they make up for in volume of captivated audience. Typically, these leads are just email addresses and are ready to be nurtured like other leads. You will want to share sales promotions, product updates, business or industry news, and your downloadable assets to them - use their subscription to communicate your brand to them over time. Eventually, many will convert in a more valuable way.

Thought Leadership | Branding | **Conversion** | Post-Conversion

3. Engagement Actions

Engagement actions include such things as comments on blogs or follows on social media. While they tend to be the least valuable in terms of leading to future revenue quicker, they do provide useful intel about what kinds of content resonate with your audience.

Engagement Action:
On-Site Engagement

You can typically think of this as leaving comments on a blog post or sharing your content with their social networks. This creates valuable user-generated content (UGC) on your site when comments are posted, and it strengthens your credibility when they share your message with their peers.

Conversion Page Components

After having tested hundreds of conversion pages and having seen what works and what doesn't, we know that successful pages typically include the following components:

1. The Offering: This is what the visitor can expect to receive when they convert.

2. The Value Proposition: This is why the visitor should desire your offering.

3. The Hero Image: This is the main banner on the page. It should be a large, prominently placed image that conveys emotion and matches your value proposition.

4. Conversion Action Opportunity: Provides the visitor with the ability to receive the offering. Typically, this is a 'buy now' button, a phone number, a chat invite, and/or a feedback form.

5. Trust-Building Content: Provides proof and credibility that you can actually provide the offering and that the offering is going to be as good as you say it will be. This is often provided in the form of testimonials, ratings or certifications.

6. Content to Overcome Objections: Provides content that reduces the hesitations your prospects may have that would keep them from converting. This may be confidentiality, time investment or financial investment.

Thought Leadership | Branding | Conversion | **Post-Conversion**
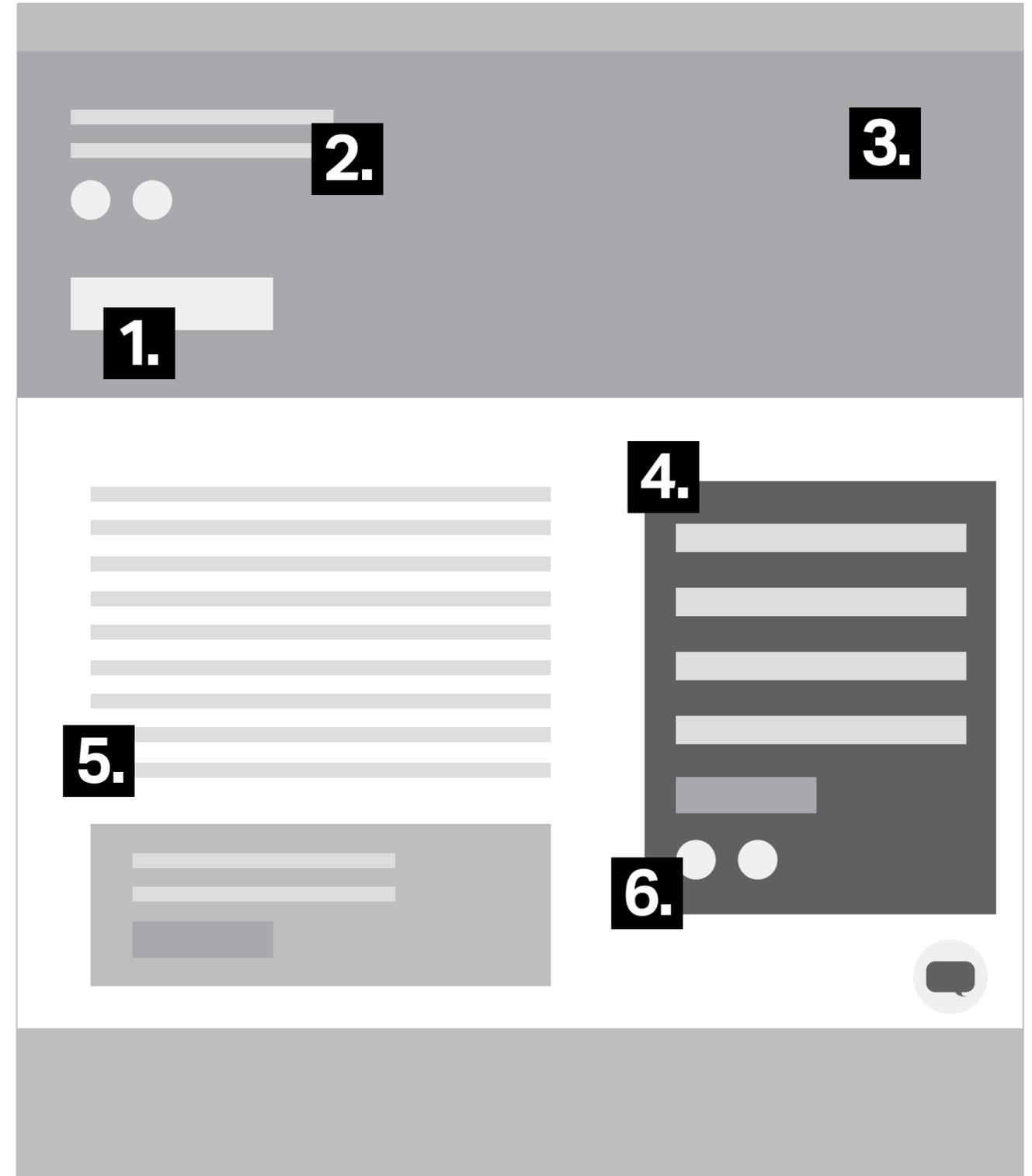
Post-Conversion Pages

Post-conversion pages are typically thank-you pages; they are the pages that visitors land on after they have converted and they are typically not given much thought. However, these pages give you an opportunity to hit your visitor with a perfectly timed message to entice them to take another action that provides your business with even more value.

Thought Leadership | Branding | Conversion | **Post-Conversion**
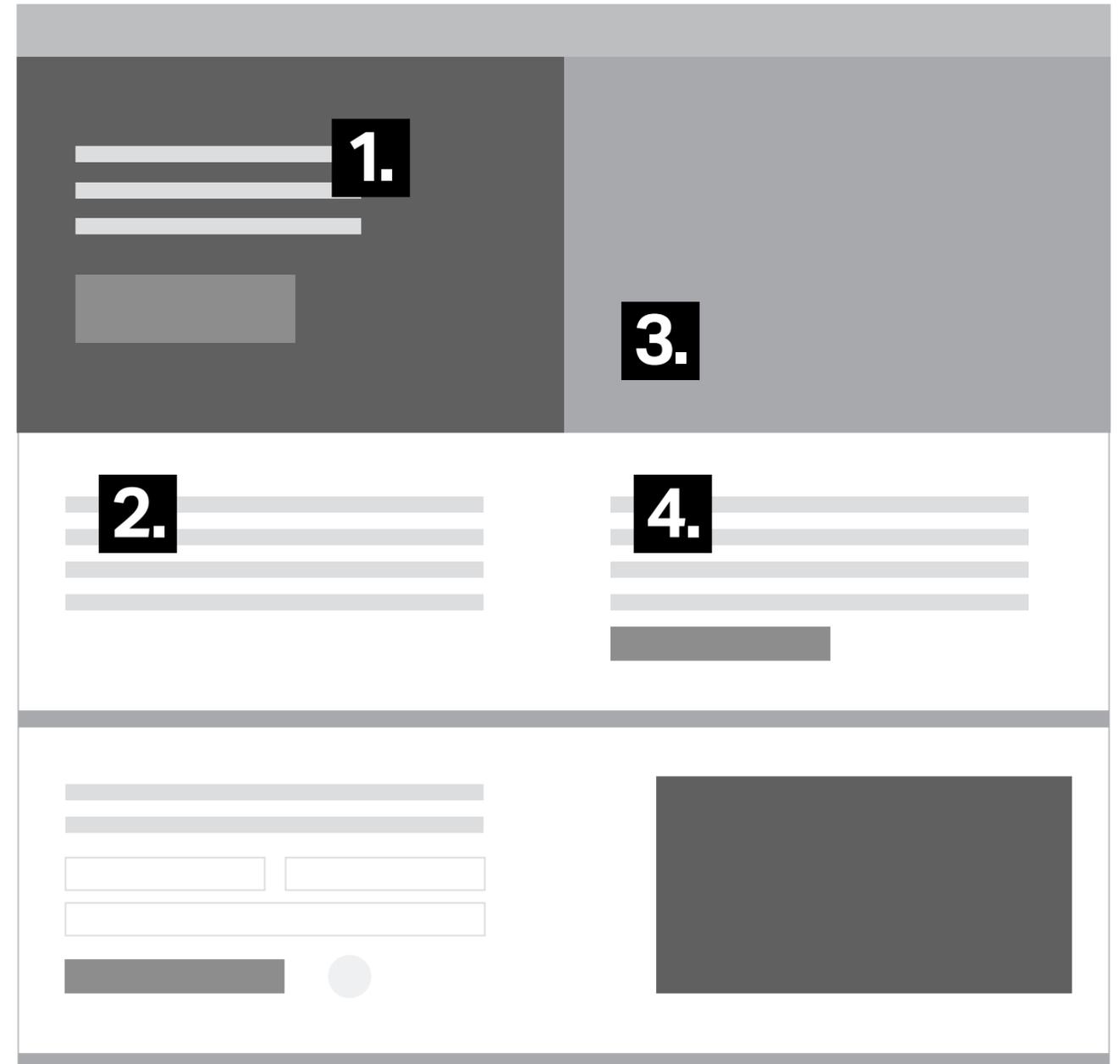
Post-Conversion Page Components

The components of your post-conversion pages are going to vary depending on the type of conversion you have already received from the visitor. In general, your post-conversion pages will include the same content as your conversion pages along with some content to thank the visitor for converting. Your post-conversion pages should include:

1. **Thankful Content:** Always remember to thank your visitor for converting.

2. **Delivery of Promised Offering:** The offering from the previous conversion should be delivered to your visitor here. Receipts, tracking numbers, downloads, videos and other assets should be made available on this page if possible.

3. **The Hero Image:** This is the main banner on the page. It should be a large, prominently placed image that conveys emotion and matches the value proposition of the new offering. Try to also match the hero with the previous conversion page.

4. **A New Offering:** Promote a new, complementary offering to the visitor. Here's where your post-conversion pages start to resemble your typical conversion page. Entice your visitor with another value proposition, conversion action functionality, trust-building content and content to overcome objections.

Communication Permission Actions on Post-Conversion Pages

When your visitors have taken an action that gives you their consent to send them more information, they are essentially telling you that they want to hear more of what you have to say. Psychologically, they are also more likely to agree to provide you with more value if you ask them immediately after they have finished converting.

Conversion Actions on Post-Conversion Pages (Phone Calls and Form Submissions)

Online Purchase

When a customer makes an online purchase, they have proven their trust in your brand. Encourage them to deepen their relationship with your brand in another way such as the following:

1. Continue shopping
2. Join your newsletter or email list
3. Follow you on social media

Phone Calls

With the right technology in place, you can forward your visitors to a post-conversion page after a phone call. This is a great place to link to a page where they can make a payment or sign a contract. Since ultimately this is what it takes to 'close' a sale, those are the next logical steps in the sales process.

Additionally, take this opportunity to further promote your offering and gain more information about the prospect.

Contact Form Submissions

On the post-conversion page for a contact form submission requesting more information about purchasing from your business, you want to promote the following:

1. Fill out a new form and add information to the lead
2. Call on the telephone
3. Take a more valuable purchasing action

CONVERSION
Funnel

The Conversion Funnel

Here's the truth about your website visitors: they are rarely going to come to your site and immediately convert. If that were the case, all we would ever need are a handful of landing pages and a thank-you page.

They're coming to your site because they need something from you. Typically, that something is information—but the specific type of information depends on where they're at in their sales journey.

The following section describes how to leverage the pages we described above to push your visitors through the conversion funnel.

Awareness

Interest

Desire

Action

Thought Leadership Page Conversions

When we talk about conversions from thought leadership pages, our typical conversion is a communication permission action. A good example of a relevant communication permission action on a thought leadership page would be to allow the visitor to download an eBook that gives in-depth detail about a topic that a few blog posts have covered.

Cheat-sheets, worksheets and eBooks that consolidate several blog posts are great ideas for high-value communication permission action conversions.

Make sure that you also encourage your visitors to subscribe to your newsletter or blog, and to leave comments regarding the post they have just read. A great way to encourage commenting is to ask a question as the closing sentence in your blog posts. Also, post a comment yourself, and ask your team and colleagues to comment. Once you get a conversation started others will want to join in.

Pushing Thought Leadership Page Visitors to Conversion

Thought leadership pages should include links to (in order of prominence):

1. Complementary thought leadership content

2. Relevant conversion actions

3. Links to relevant brand pages

Link to Supporting Thought Leadership Pages

Linking to other thought leadership pages is something that you should do with the purpose of better educating your visitor and providing them with the best answers and experience you can. This kind of linking is you giving them something for free: information. They might not realize right away that they are receiving something for free, but if you answer their questions, they will immediately appreciate you for it.

Link to Relevant Conversion Actions

Thought leadership pages are an opportunity to provide your visitors with answers and education. **Visitors don't land on thought leadership pages to purchase or even to learn about your offerings.** They land on these pages to get answers to their questions. Give them those answers, and then try to take them to a tactful next step. You won't want to try to get your visitors to take a Purchasing Action from this section of your site.

Link to Relevant Brand Pages

Linking to relevant brand pages is your way of guiding interested visitors closer to taking a purchasing action. Remember, you shouldn't expect an actual purchasing action from thought leadership pages. Thought leadership pages are your gift to them, so large calls-to-action that promote a purchasing action won't sit well with your audience.

You want to be very careful that you primarily use links to branding pages as references that reinforce your content, and only when extremely relevant to the article. These are not calls-to-action. When in doubt, leave this link out.

Branding Page Conversions

The conversions that you promote also need to be appropriate for where your visitors are in their path to purchase. Since they are ready to experience your brand, you should promote conversions that are more valuable to your business.

In your calls-to-action, promote your purchasing action conversions on your branding pages, but also allow visitors who aren't ready for that yet to take smaller steps. In a less prominent way, promote downloadable assets and other communication permission action conversions to allow those visitors who aren't ready to take a purchasing action to take a smaller step.

Pushing Branding Page Visitors to Conversion

It is your job to facilitate this process by making it easy for your target market to convert right then, or if they aren't ready, to see the next part of your "pitch." This means you want to include the following on all of your branding pages (in order of prominence):

1. A call-to-action that is effective at motivating the visitor to convert

2. A link to the next part of your pitch

3. A link to a subtopic related to the page they are on

Always try to encourage visitors to move toward a purchasing action. Link to the next top-level branding page when possible and leave out links that take them backward in the conversion process. Never link from your branding pages to your thought leadership pages.

A CTA for Your Primary Purchasing Action

For most companies that are generating leads on their website, this call-to-action is going to be your phone number with some text asking your visitors to call. Sometimes, this just needs to be a phone number with a label, like "Help Is Available Now. Call (999) 555-1212."

Most internet users are savvy enough to know to call when they are ready, but you still want to make it convenient and easy for them to reach out to you. Putting your phone number in the header on every page accomplishes this.
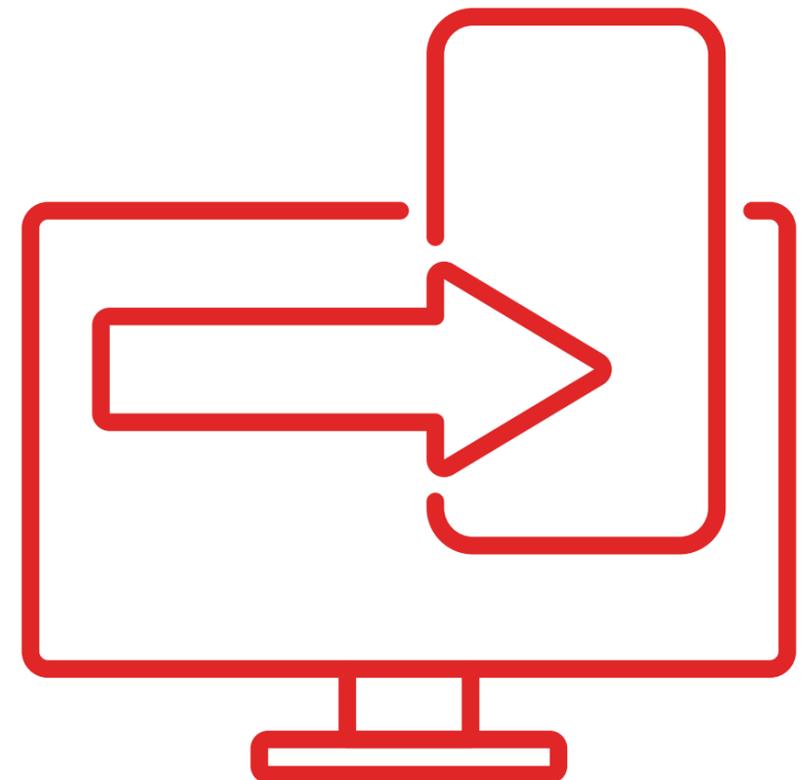
LEAD GEN
On Mobile

Lead Generation on Mobile Devices

Chances are, between 50 and 80 percent of your website visitors will be viewing your site on a mobile device. The popularity of mobile continues to grow, and if your site doesn't take these visitors into account, chances are you'll experience some dips in performance.

Of course, it's one thing to design a site that responds well in mobile (see our note about responsive design, below) and it's quite another to design a site that converts well in mobile. Here, we discuss lead generation on mobile devices.

A Note On Responsive Design

A responsive website "responds" automatically to the screen size on which it's being viewed to improve the user experience. This essentially turns a normal website into a mobile site, but only for those who need it.

Essentials for a Mobile Page that Converts

Make Every Word Count

You should follow this advice whenever you are writing copy for your business, but it is especially true in the mobile world. Your audience will not give you time to be verbose; keep the content tight and sharp.

Keep the Content Readable

Your audience is not going to zoom in on your site so they can read whatever it is you're offering. Use a base font of 16 CSS pixels (per Google) and make sure your buttons (especially those CTA buttons) are nice and big (easy to click with fat fingers).

Use a Shorter Form

Often, a simple email field is enough in the mobile realm. Of course, if more fields are necessary, you can play around with the spacing between fields to give the appearance of a smaller form fill.

Optimize Your Imagery

Slower website performance kills the mobile experience. Images are often the culprit—and while it may look beautiful on a desktop, if it drags your load speed down in mobile, you could be losing out. Most modern websites use software specifically for the purpose of delivering an image optimized for the device on which it's displayed.

CONCLUSION

Conclusion

Hopefully this document helps to give you and your team a set of guidelines and best practices that will help elucidate and streamline the process of creating a high-converting website. Most of the content in here is focused on improving the visitor experience as a means to improving conversion rates. Promoting the right content and the right conversions at the right time is important in maximizing the impact and benefit of your site.

Of course, the information contained herein is only a starting point for conversation. The real trick to creating a site that converts is leveraging the best practices against your unique business needs and objectives. That means sitting down and having a conversation about what those are and how to best accomplish them online (and offline—after all, your website should complement your other marketing efforts, no matter where they exist). We would love to continue this conversation with you, and I even make myself available in many cases to talk about your business goals and objectives. So, take some time to digest what we've presented here, but when you're ready—reach out. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,

Michael Myles, MBA
Founder and CEO, Active Marketing