NO. 01 THE STATE OF PAID MEDIA — APRIL 2026

The 2026 *Paid Media* Benchmark Report

Landing page conversion rates, Google Ads benchmarks, cost per lead by industry, page speed impact data, and the diagnostic frameworks that tell you what the numbers mean.

6.6%	$213.60	−9.28%	3×
MEDIAN LP CONVERSION RATE	AVERAGE CPL (ALL INDUSTRIES)	GOOGLE ADS CVR YOY	1-SECOND PAGES VS 5-SECOND PAGES

DIAGNOSTIC WORKSHEET · CTR × CVR MATRIX · CPL DIAGNOSTIC CHAIN

ALL DATA SOURCED AND DATED. SOURCES LISTED ON FINAL PAGE.

§ 00 INSIDE THIS REPORT

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§ 01 WHAT THE YEAR'S DATA SAYS

Ads are working better. Pages are working *worse.*

The 2026 paid media landscape tells a contradictory story. Ads are getting better at earning clicks. Pages are getting worse at converting them. The problem has shifted from the ad to the page.

+7.49%	−9.28%	+12.35%	−10.03%
CTR YOY WORDSTREAM	CVR YOY WORDSTREAM	CPA YOY WEBFX	ROAS YOY WHITE LABEL AGENCY

The compounding problem

Conversion rates declined in 13 of 14 industries tracked by WordStream. CPCs increased across 87% of industries. Customer acquisition costs are up 60% over the past five years. The compounding effect of rising CPCs and falling conversion rates is why CPA increases (12.35%) are steeper than either individual metric.

> WHAT THIS MEANS
>
> If your CTR is at or above benchmark but your conversion rate is below, you don't have an ad problem. You have a page problem. The ad earned the click. The page lost the visitor.
>
> This report gives you the benchmarks to diagnose which variable is broken — and the frameworks to fix the right one.

§ 02 LANDING PAGE CONVERSION RATE

Conversion benchmarks by *industry*.

Median landing page conversion rate: **6.6%** across all industries. Source: Unbounce Q4 2024 analysis of 464 million visits to 41,000 landing pages.

BY INDUSTRY

INDUSTRY	MEDIAN CVR	NOTES
Events & Entertainment	12.3%	Highest. Urgency + clear intent
Financial Services	8.4%	27% above overall median
Education	7–8%	Lead gen (form fills)
▸ Cross-Industry Median	6.6%	Unbounce Q4 2024 baseline
Automotive (Dealer)	6.0%	Test-drive, quote, trade-in offers
Automotive (Repair/Service)	7.5%	Local services, high intent
Healthcare	5–7%	Varies by offer type
SaaS / Technology	3.8%	Lowest tracked. Long sales cycle
Ecommerce	~2.35%	Purchase conversion (higher bar)
B2B Professional Services	1–3%	MQL-level conversions (FirstPageSage)

SOURCE · UNBOUNCE Q4 2024 · FIRSTPAGESAGE 2025 · LANDERLAB 2026

§ 02 · CONTINUED BY TRAFFIC SOURCE

Traffic source beats industry, *every time.*

BY TRAFFIC SOURCE

TRAFFIC SOURCE	AVG CVR	NOTES
Direct	3.3%	Visitors who know the brand
Paid Search	3.2%	High intent, ad-dependent
Referral	2.9%	Context varies by source
Organic Search	2.7%	Intent varies by query
Email	2.6%	77% higher when page matches email
Social	1.5%	Lowest intent. Cold audience

SOURCE · UNBOUNCE Q4 2024 · BACKLINKO JAN 2026 · LANDERLAB 2026

KEY INSIGHT

Traffic source has more impact on conversion rate than industry. A 3% blended rate could be a 5% paid-search rate dragged down by a 1% social rate. Always segment by source before diagnosing.

§ 03 GOOGLE ADS BENCHMARKS BY INDUSTRY

Average *CPC* by industry (Search).

INDUSTRY	AVG CPC	TREND
B2B SaaS (non-brand)	$8.50–$14.00	+9% YoY
Legal Services	$5.90–$8.58	Rising
Dental Services	$7.85	Stable
Home Improvement	$7.85	Rising
Education	$6.23	Rising
Insurance	$5.25	Rising
Real Estate	$2.50–$3.50	Rising
Automotive	$2.46	Dealer & sales avg; service slightly higher
Restaurants & Food	$2.05	Stable
Travel & Hospitality	$1.53	Stable
Ecommerce	$1.16	Stable

SOURCE · WORDSTREAM · WHITE LABEL AGENCY · GROWTHSPREE

> **READING THE SPREAD**
>
> The 12× gap between B2B SaaS ($8.50–$14) and Ecommerce ($1.16) reflects intent value, not bidding skill. Use the closest peer for diagnosis, not the cross-industry mean.

§ 03 · CONTINUED CONVERSION RATE BY INDUSTRY

Average *CVR* by industry (Search).

INDUSTRY	AVG CVR	NOTES
Healthcare	24.30%	Service-based, high intent
Automotive (Repair/Service)	14.67%	Local services advantage
Animals & Pets	13.07%	Emotionally driven
Legal Services	12.70%	High urgency
Automotive (Dealer/Sales)	6.03%	Considered purchase, longer cycle
▸ Cross-Industry Average	3.75–4.40%	Down 9.28% YoY
B2B SaaS	2.5–4.0%	Top quartile: 5–8%
Ecommerce	2.81%	Product consideration
B2B (general)	1.42%	Lowest. Complex buying

SOURCE · WORDSTREAM · GROWTHSPREE · NORTH COUNTRY GROWTH

§ 03 · CONTINUED COST PER ACQUISITION

Average *CPA* by industry.

INDUSTRY	AVG CPA	YOY CHANGE
Technology	$133.52	Rising
Legal	$130+	Rising
Real Estate	$116.61	Rising
Consumer Electronics	$36.88	Rising
Business Supplies	$35.37	+33.56% YoY
Automotive	$33.50	Stable
Travel Accessories	$28.23	+40.74% YoY
▸ Median (all industries)	$23.74	+12.35% YoY

SOURCE · WEBFX · WHITE LABEL AGENCY

> **WHY CPA OUTPACES EVERY INPUT**
>
> CPA = CPC ÷ CVR. When CPC rises and CVR falls in the same year, CPA compounds — which is why the 12.35% median CPA increase exceeds either underlying movement on its own.

§ 04 COST PER LEAD BENCHMARKS

The cost of *a lead*, industry by industry.

$213.60	+7.6%	+60%
AVERAGE CPL ALL INDUSTRIES · 2026	CPL YOY INCREASE	CAC INCREASE OVER 5 YEARS

CPL BY INDUSTRY (ALL CHANNELS)

INDUSTRY	AVG CPL	TREND
Higher Education	$900–$982	Rising
Manufacturing	$553–$608	+10% YoY
IT & Managed Services	$503	Rising
Software / SaaS	$503	Rising
Legal Services	$131–$649	Wide range, rising
Ecommerce	$83–$109	+19.8% YoY
Real Estate	$54–$57	Stable
Automotive	$43–$67	Dealer leads; trade-in higher
Home Services	$34	Up from $30.57
Restaurants & Food	~$30	Stable

SOURCE · FIRST PAGE SAGE · MARTAL · AXZ LEAD · AMRA & ELMA

§ 04 · CONTINUED COST PER LEAD BY CHANNEL

CPL *by channel.*

CHANNEL	AVG CPL	NOTES
Google Ads	$79.14	+18.7% YoY
Facebook / Meta	$26.43	+20.2% YoY (Andromeda)
LinkedIn	$50–$130	B2B premium; SaaS $150–$310
Organic Search (B2B)	~$164	Lower cost, higher quality
Paid (B2B blended)	~$310	Higher cost, faster scale

SOURCE · PPC CHIEF · ADAMIGO.AI · STACKMATIX · FIRST PAGE SAGE

HOW TO READ THE CHANNEL MIX

Google Ads CPL rose 18.7% and Meta CPL rose 20.2% in the same window. Cheap-channel arbitrage is closing. The CPL gap between channels is narrowing — and the gap between paid and organic widening.

For B2B specifically, the paid-to-organic CPL spread (~$310 vs ~$164) makes a strong argument for treating organic as the volume engine and paid as the velocity lever, not the other way around.

§ 05 PAGE SPEED IMPACT ON CONVERSION RATE

Every *second* costs you conversions.

THE HEADLINE NUMBERS

FINDING	SOURCE
53% of mobile visitors abandon at 3+ seconds	Google
4.42% CVR drop per additional second (first 5 seconds)	Portent (27,000 pages)
7% conversion loss per second after 2-second mark	Unbounce (41,000 pages)
1-second pages convert 3× higher than 5-second pages	Portent
1-second pages convert 5× higher than 10-second pages	Portent
0.1-second improvement = 8.4% CVR increase (retail)	Deloitte / Google
0.1-second improvement = 10.1% CVR increase (travel)	Deloitte / Google
63% bounce rate from 4+ second pages	Yottaa (500M visits)
Mobile users **2.5× more likely to convert** at <2 seconds	WIRO

§ 05 · CONTINUED QUALITY SCORE & AI MAX

Speed compounds through *Quality Score.*

Page speed directly affects landing page experience — a Quality Score component. Core Web Vitals improvements alone have produced 20–25% CPC reductions in documented cases.

A 1-second speed improvement lifts conversion rate by 7% *and* reduces CPC through better Quality Score. The effects compound.

CORE WEB VITALS TARGETS

METRIC	GOOD	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	POOR
LCP Largest Contentful Paint	≤ 2.5s	2.5 – 4.0s	> 4.0s
INP Interaction to Next Paint	≤ 200ms	200 – 500ms	> 500ms
CLS Cumulative Layout Shift	≤ 0.1	0.1 – 0.25	> 0.25

THE AI MAX ANGLE

AI Max reads your landing page content to generate ad headlines and determine query matching. AI crawlers (GPTBot, ClaudeBot, PerplexityBot) cannot render JavaScript. An analysis of 500M+ bot fetches confirmed zero JS execution by non-Google AI crawlers.

Slow pages with client-side rendering starve AI Max of content — and are effectively invisible to non-Google AI engines.

§ 06 DIAGNOSTIC FRAMEWORKS

Three ways to find *the broken thing.*

FRAMEWORK A · THE THREE-VARIABLE DIAGNOSTIC

Every conversion problem comes from one of three sources. Diagnosing which one is broken determines what to fix and prevents wasting time on the wrong solution.

SIGNAL	DIAGNOSIS	FIX
Low CTR across campaigns	**Ad problem** — ads aren't earning quality clicks	Rewrite creative, review targeting, check search terms, add negatives
High CTR, low CVR across *all* campaigns	**Page problem** — ads work but page loses everyone	Check speed, mobile, CTA, form friction. If structural basics are fine, test messaging
High CTR, low CVR on *specific* campaigns	**Match problem** — ad promises something the page doesn't deliver	Compare ad headline to page headline per campaign. Fix the mismatch

FRAMEWORK B · THE CTR × CVR MATRIX

The 2026 data makes the **High CTR + Low CVR** quadrant the most common. CTR rose industry-wide. CVR fell. The problem has shifted from the ad to the page.

	HIGH CVR	LOW CVR
HIGH CTR	EVERYTHING WORKING Scale budget. Maintain page and creative cadence.	PAGE PROBLEM Ad earns clicks. Page loses them. Audit message match, speed, mobile, CTA.
LOW CTR	ADS NEED ATTENTION Page converts well. Rewrite copy, fix targeting and audience.	SYSTEMIC Wrong audience or misaligned offer. Validate product–market fit.

§ 06 · CONTINUED FRAMEWORK C

Framework C · The *CPL Diagnostic* Chain.

CPL = CPC ÷ Conversion Rate. High CPL is a *symptom*. The chain below identifies the root cause.

01	**Your CPL is high**	→	You need too many clicks per lead
02	**You need too many clicks**	→	Your conversion rate is low
03	**Your conversion rate is low**	→	Your landing page doesn't match your campaign
04	**Poor page experience**	→	Also drags down Quality Score
05	**Lower Quality Score**	→	Means higher CPC
06	**Higher CPC + lower CVR**	→	Compounds into expensive CPL

> THE COMPOUNDING FIX
>
> Fix the landing page and conversion rate goes up — CPL drops directly. Better page experience improves Quality Score. Better Quality Score reduces CPC. Lower CPC at a higher conversion rate compounds the CPL reduction.
>
> One fix at the page level cascades through the entire chain.

§ 07 DIAGNOSTIC WORKSHEET

Fill in *your* numbers.

Pull these numbers from your Google Ads account and GA4. Compare to the benchmarks in this report. Circle the ones below benchmark. Follow the diagnostic to identify your fix.

STEP 1 · YOUR ACCOUNT METRICS

Your industry	_____
Your average CPC (Search)	_____
Industry benchmark CPC *(from § 03)*	_____
Your average CTR (Search)	_____
Industry benchmark CTR *(from § 03)*	_____
Your conversion rate (Search)	_____
Industry benchmark CVR *(from § 03)*	_____
Your average CPA	_____
Industry benchmark CPA *(from § 03)*	_____
Your average CPL	_____
Industry benchmark CPL *(from § 04)*	_____
Your landing page load time (seconds)	_____
Your Quality Score (landing page experience)	_____

§ 07 · CONTINUED DIAGNOSE & ACT

Diagnose.

STEP 2 · WALK THE QUESTIONS

Is your CPC above benchmark?
If yes and CTR is also low, you have an **ad problem**. Fix targeting and creative.

Is your CTR at or above benchmark?
If yes, the ads are doing their job. Move to the next question.

Is your CVR below benchmark for *all* campaigns?
If yes, you have a **page problem**. Check speed, mobile, CTA, form friction.

Is your CVR below benchmark for *specific* campaigns only?
If yes, you have a **match problem**. Compare ad headlines to page headlines for those campaigns.

Is your landing page experience "Below average"?
Confirmation: the page is your bottleneck. It's costing you both conversions *and* CPC.

Is your page load time over 3 seconds?
Fix speed first. Everything else improves when the page loads faster.

STEP 3 · YOUR DIAGNOSIS

My primary issue is (circle one):

AD PROBLEM PAGE PROBLEM MATCH PROBLEM

STEP 4 · PRIORITY FIXES BY DIAGNOSIS

DIAGNOSIS	FIX 1 — HIGHEST IMPACT	FIX 2	FIX 3
Ad problem	Rewrite ad creative	Review search terms + negatives	Check targeting alignment
Page problem	Fix speed (< 2 seconds)	Simplify form (3 fields max)	Improve mobile experience
Match problem	Align headline to each ad	Test messaging per campaign	Campaign-aware personalization

§ 08 SOURCES & METHODOLOGY

Sources.

All statistics in this report are sourced from the following publications and datasets. Dates indicate the most recent data available at time of publication — April 2026.

LANDING PAGE CONVERSION RATES

- Unbounce Q4 2024 Conversion Benchmark Report (464M visits, 41K pages)
- Backlinko / Semrush Landing Page Statistics (Jan 2026)
- FirstPageSage Landing Page Conversion Rates by Industry (2025)
- Landerlab Landing Page Conversion Rate Benchmarks (2026)

GOOGLE ADS BENCHMARKS

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- White Label Agency Google Ads Benchmarks 2026
- WebFX PPC Benchmarks Report
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- LocaliQ / WordStream Industry Search Benchmarks — Auto Repair
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COST PER LEAD

- First Page Sage Average CPL by Industry 2026
- Amra & Elma Top 20 Cost Per Lead Statistics 2026
- AxZ Lead CPL by Industry: 2025 Data & 2026 Forecasts
- PPC Chief Google Ads CPL 2026
- AdAmigo.ai Meta Ads CPL Benchmarks 2026
- Stackmatix Google Ads vs Facebook Ads CPL 2026

PAGE SPEED

- Google / Marketing Dive: 53% Mobile Abandonment at 3 Seconds
- Portent Site Speed Impact on Revenue (27,000 landing pages)
- Deloitte / Google Business Impact of Core Web Vitals (web.dev)
- Yottaa / WP Rocket: Website Load Time Statistics 2026
- ClickRank AI Crawler JavaScript Rendering Study (500M+ bot fetches)
- WIRO: 1-Second Delay Conversion Impact

§ 08 · CONTINUED

Sources *cont.*

QUALITY SCORE & AD PERFORMANCE

- Google Ads Help: Quality Score Documentation
- Optmyzr: Does Quality Score Still Matter in 2026?
- Uncommon Logic: Quality Score Impact on CPC and ROAS
- GrowLeads: Quality Score Fix Guide (2025)
- Adalysis / DataFeedWatch: Quality Score Component Weighting
- RUMvision: Core Web Vitals & Google Ads Impact
- GROAS: Dynamic Landing Pages Industry Benchmarks

MARKET CONTEXT & TRENDS

- Digital Otters: Why Google Ads CPC Is Rising 2025–2026
- Nostra: Core Web Vitals Introduction & Ranking Impact
- Lucky Orange: Website Speed Impact on Conversions
- Leadpages: How Landing Pages Affect Ad Conversion Rate
- Genesys Growth: Landing Page Conversion Stats 2026

COLOPHON

This report was compiled by **FoundryCRO**. All data is sourced from third-party research and publicly available benchmarks. Statistics represent the most current data available as of April 2026.

Set in *Instrument Serif*, *Inter*, and *JetBrains Mono*.

QUESTIONS

Questions about the data or methodology?

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