

**WHICH  
TEST  
WON** 

---

# **HOW TO PICK CONVERSION TESTING TECHNOLOGY**

## Introduction

Testing technology platforms are a great help for marketers who want to get more online, mobile, and/ or email conversions without having to drive more traffic. Most have easy-to-use interfaces that allow you to run tests without heavy involvement from IT, web designers or developers.

All you need to do is decide what pages and what page elements to test in order to see which changes get the highest conversions – and more money for your bottom line.

Which platform is the best match for your organization? There are more than two dozen testing technology platforms out there, with new ones launching each year. Prices range from free to thousands of dollars per month. And each one offers a different feature set, from the very basic to loaded with all the bells and whistles.

No one tech is perfect for every site. To pick the one that's best for you, you must weigh your own testing needs and available resources against the features, pricing, and support offered by each vendor. This Report covers the key factors to consider when comparing different testing platforms.



Natalie Myers Tomasso, Sr. Reporter,  
WhichTestWon.com

P.S. Got questions or feedback? Contact us at [NatalieM@WhichTestWon.com](mailto:NatalieM@WhichTestWon.com) ... and now on with our Guide!

## Part I: Why Pay for Testing Tech When Google is Free? Top 7 Reasons



Google Website Optimizer (GWO) is a free testing platform with more than 100,000 users, which raises the question: Why not just use a free platform like Google's? Well, you might want to ...or not. Here's what to consider.

Though it's a fantastic platform, GWO has some limiting features:

- #1. You won't get test results in real time or be able to see daily conversion data, only aggregate data. In other words, the results report won't show you if conversions were higher on the weekend vs. week days, which may be important information if your company has very different prospects on different days. You may not want to implement a page that got higher conversions on the week days, for example, if you know your weekend visitors spend more or eventually convert to customers at a higher rate.
- #2. GWO won't differentiate between multiple conversion actions in the results. If you're measuring lands on a thank you page after a purchase and lands on a confirmation page after submitting an email address, GWO won't show you what percentage of people took each action. It only records the total number of completed actions in the results report.
- #3. You can't optimize for continuous variables such as purchase order values unless you find a way to manipulate the system. For example, you could set up a tracking code that measures each visitor's actions from test page to purchase. You could use that code to see visitors' order sizes and values in your ecommerce platform, but there's no way to directly measure it from GWO.
- #4. You can't run segment tests. In other words, if you want to define segments by traffic source such as pay per click traffic and see which version of a page is the winner for that segment, there is no way to set up that kind of test using GWO.

- #5. You'll have to create a new URL for each test page and host A/B tests on your servers. (Multivariate tests get hosted on Google's servers.)
- #6. It's not as robustly integrated with Google Analytics as you might hope.
- #7. There's no user support. You have to look at user forums or various canned training tools to figure out how to set up a test or fix a problem you've encountered.

Whether you're looking at GWO or a free, basic version of a paid platform, it's important to evaluate what you don't get – and what you need to pay for.

## Part II: 8 Factors to Consider When Picking a Testing Technology Vendor

### Factor #1. Pricing



Prices range from free to \$8,000 or more per month. Some of the lower-cost platforms start at \$19, \$25, and \$49 per month. Pricier platforms start at \$1,295 to \$3,000 or more per month. Some platforms base pricing on the amount of traffic you have – so if you have 10,000 unique visitors per month, you'd pay less than if you had a million unique visitors per month.

Most of the terms are monthly, though some offer annual terms. Pricing usually includes the basic testing platform, which includes the ability to perform A/B and multivariate tests. Segment testing and geotargeting usually don't cost extra.

Additional fees may be required for:

- Additional training
- Behavioral targeting
- Custom programming
- Email testing

Budgeting for testing depends on how much functionality you want to pay for. If you're just starting out and want to see if testing is worth an investment, we suggest starting with one of the free testing platforms. These are great for running simple tests and getting results that let you know if it's worth paying for additional features. Advanced tests may require more programming or IT support on your end. When you start wanting more functionality with less IT involvement, that's when we suggest looking at the paid options.

## Factor #2. Ease of Use

Most of the testing platforms have an easy-to-use interface that doesn't require a ton of technical experience or advanced skills. Some have WYSIWYG editors that make changing elements on a test page as easy as clicking on the area you want to change and modifying it directly in the platform. They don't require any HTML knowledge.

Others have drag and drop functionality that allows you to click and drag the creative you want to add to a test page, or move the elements around. Some allow you to build new creative, such as buttons and headlines, within the platform. Others require that you build them outside and upload them into the platform.

You should always ask to test drive the platform before purchasing it. That way, you get a feel for the usability of the interface and you can ask questions. Several platforms offer live demos that show you exactly what the testing tech can do. Some may also allow you to test it yourself, if you ask.

### Types of Training

Several platforms offer both canned (recorded, on-demand video) and live training sessions to help new users get up and running. Others offer just one or the other.

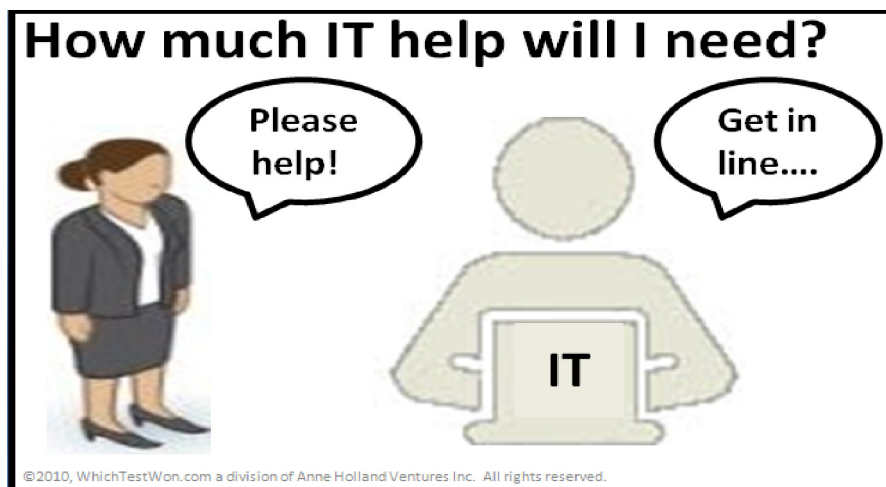
The benefit of live training is being able to ask questions. Canned training in the form of video tutorials, articles, case studies, forums, and FAQs, are also helpful – but you may still need to contact user support to get your questions answered.

### User Support

Each vendor provides a different level of user support. Some allow users to contact the support team via email, phone, and live chat. Others may offer just one of the three options. Some say you'll get a response within 24 hours. Others do not specify.

More expensive platforms may provide customers their own account manager to directly handle all your questions. Free platforms may not provide any contact directly with the support team – they may only provide user forums.

Ask vendors about user support features. Consider how long it will take to get a response, whether the support team is in a different time zone, and the different ways they allow you to contact support.



Many marketers dread having to ask the IT team for much assistance. Luckily, many testing tech platforms are so easy to use that you'll need little IT help.

### Factor #3. Ease of Set-Up

Almost 100% of the testing technologies out there are Software-as-a-Service (SaaS), which means you don't have to install anything on your site. You just need a Web browser and login details to access the software and start building your tests.

(Please note: Some technologies also offer an installed or on-premise version of the software for organizations that prefer to keep all data secure on their servers. Public companies or companies at risk of security breaches might find this option appealing.)

Most testing platforms require you to paste a snippet of HTML code, JavaScript or CSS somewhere on the backend of your site. If your site was built from scratch by a team of web developers, you may need IT involvement to set up a test. If your site was built on a content management system (CMS), such as WordPress, or ecommerce platform and you have access to the backend, you may need less involvement from IT.

Several platforms have made it as easy as possible to set up a test without IT involvement. Some require only a one-time copy and paste – meaning you set up a test, the platform provides the snippet of code, and tells you exactly where to put it on your site. All you have to do is copy and paste it where the system tells you to.

Even if you don't have access to the backend and you don't know anything about page coding, this would be a simple task for any IT pro to figure out in a matter of minutes.

Other platforms require you to copy and paste new code for each test. For a multivariate test, you may even need to copy and paste section-specific code multiple times on a page and on a conversion page. Generally, the more code you need to copy and paste in various locations on a page, the more help you may need from IT.

#### Factor #4. Ease of Integration with Other Technology

You may want to integrate the testing technology – especially the reporting functionality – with site analytics and ecommerce platforms to see additional data about test page visitors. Some testing vendors make this type of integration easy, mostly through the use of an application programming interface (API).

About half of the testing platforms out there offer an API. Very few have an API that allows you to fully integrate and run a test through another platform such as a CMS, email service provider, or ad server. More often you'll find one with an API that allows you to export results to another platform's dashboard, such as an analytics or ecommerce platform. An API is something you might need to ask for, though it shouldn't cost extra.

#### Factor #5. Custom Programming

Some platforms support custom programming. When is it necessary? Mostly when setting up tests that involve the transfer of data from your site or other technology platforms to the testing platform. Suppose you want to test a form with 5 form fields vs. a form with 3 form fields, for example. If you're using an embedded form from a third party software, such as FormStack, you may need help from IT to change the way the form is viewed on the page you're testing. And IT may need some custom programming from the testing platform to coordinate this kind of test.

The same situation may occur if you're testing a page with dynamic content, such as a personalized landing page that shows visitors' first names. Or, if you have a shopping cart plugin, you may need custom programming to carry data from the plugin to the testing platform.

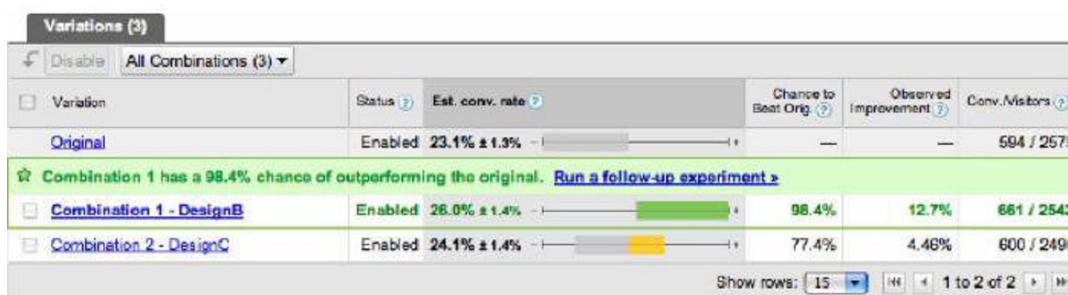
Custom programming might also be needed when integrating the testing platform with other technologies, such as ecommerce platforms. Most of the time this would require your IT team to work with the testing platform programmers.

Testing platform vendors typically charge for custom programming by the hour or bundle of hours. That's why it's a good idea to ask for pricing before purchasing.

Note: Some of the less expensive tech providers don't offer any custom programming.

### Factor #6. Reporting Functionality

Even the least expensive platforms' results reports provide data on how many visitors landed on each test page, how many converted, the conversion rate, and chance to beat the original (i.e. the rate of conclusiveness or confidence level of each page).



The screenshot shows a table of test variations. The 'Original' variation has a 23.1% conversion rate. 'Combination 1 - DesignB' is highlighted in green, indicating it is the winner with a 26.0% conversion rate and a 98.4% chance to beat the original. 'Combination 2 - DesignC' has a 24.1% conversion rate and a 77.4% chance to beat the original.

Variation	Status	Est. conv. rate	Chance to Beat Orig	Observed Improvement	Conv. Visitors
Original	Enabled	23.1% ± 1.3%	—	—	594 / 2575
★ Combination 1 has a 98.4% chance of outperforming the original. <a href="#">Run a follow-up experiment &gt;</a>					
Combination 1 - DesignB	Enabled	26.0% ± 1.4%	98.4%	12.7%	661 / 2542
Combination 2 - DesignC	Enabled	24.1% ± 1.4%	77.4%	4.46%	600 / 2490

Example of results report from Google Website Optimizer.

That doesn't mean they will save your past test results and creative in a library. You may need to keep track of that on your own. The good news is that most of the testing platforms provide a library of past test results and creative. However, you should ask how long they hold past test results and creative. Is there a time limit? Can you download results and creative onto your computer for safe keeping?

Most mid-range to expensive platforms offer fancy reporting features such as charts and tables that allow you to see test results by date. And, if they offer segment testing, you will also see test winners per segment.

If the platform offers behavioral targeting, you'll see different stats based on how you set that up. If they offer multivariate testing, you'll see a much different kind of results report that provides stats on how each page element performed.

Be sure to ask to see sample reports so that you'll know, in advance, if you need help deciphering them in your training session. Some reports may not be as straightforward as others. You may want to ask if there is a way to download the results into a PDF or spreadsheet so that you can share the results with others on your team.

Also, find out if the tech allows you to run a follow-up test. A best practice is to run the same test twice, one after the other, to make doubly sure the results are conclusive.

### Factor #7. Types of Testing Offered

Do you need a platform that offers A/B/n (also known as A/B) and multivariate testing? Or do you need a platform that offers just one or the other? What's the difference?

A/B testing lets you test one or more versions of a page against an existing page at the same time to see which version gets the biggest lift in conversions. Multivariate testing lets you test multiple versions of individual elements on a page to see which combination of elements gets the most conversions.

Although both let you make an unlimited number of page design changes, multivariate tests give you data about how each page element converted visitors.

With A/B testing, if you make multiple changes to the design of the page, you won't know which change was most responsible for the conversion lift. That said, you can test changing one page element at a time to see which version of the element gets more conversions.

Other types of testing include (but are not limited to) online display ad testing, email testing, mobile testing, segment testing and video testing. Take a look at the table for more details about the differences between these types of tests and insight into how to decide which ones are right for you.

**Table: Types of Testing**

Types of Testing	Brief Description	Supported By Most Tech?	Good For?
A/B/n Testing	Allows you to test different versions of a web page against each other at the same time to see which page gets more conversions.	Yes	Marketers who don't have a lot of testing experience and want to run tests that are relatively simple to set up.  Great for: lower-traffic sites, single change tests, big idea tests.
Multivariate Testing	Allows you to test each page element version against other page element versions at the same time to see which combination of elements gets the highest conversion rate.	Yes	Experienced testers -- multivariate tests can be more complex and challenging to set up than A/B/n tests.  Requires more traffic than A/B/n.
Full Factorial	A multivariate test that allows you to test every combination of page elements.	Yes	Analytics purists - i.e., those that need to know exactly which combination of page elements is the statistically valid winner.  Good for sites that get a ton of traffic and want to test lots and lots of changes for (often incremental) improvements.
Fractional Factorial	A multivariate test that allows you to test a portion of pages created as a result of combining different page elements	No	Marketers with less traffic who still want to know which page elements have the most impact on conversions. Results aren't as statistically valid as the results of a full factorial test.
Mobile Testing	Allows you to test different versions of mobile web pages against each other at the same time to see which increased conversions most.	No	Sites that get a lot of traffic via mobile web devices and want to maximize conversions on to those visitors.
Web Display Ad Testing	Allows you to test multiple ad creative against each other at the same time to see which optimizes conversions most.	No	Marketers who use online display ads to direct traffic to their web pages and drive conversions.  Note: This is often included in ad serving packages, which are purchased separately from testing platforms.

Segment Testing	Allows you to define segments (such as visitors coming from pay per click ads) to see which version of the creative appealed most to each segment. Once completed you can then target a different winning page per each segment.	No	Marketers at medium- to large-sized orgs who already have pre-defined segments that they market to, or segments for which they want to optimize web pages.  Also good for marketers who don't have pre-defined segments, such as time-of-day segments or demographic segments, but want to see how a test affects the conversion rates for different segments.
Video Testing	Testing that involves online video on your site or landing page.	No	Marketers who want to optimize online video conversions, no matter where the video is displayed.  Video testing firms typically create the video and test it for you using their own proprietary tech platform, rather than offering self-service testing tech.
Email Testing	Allows you to test different versions of email creative against each other at the same time to see which outperformed the other.	No	Marketers who want to improve their email response rates.  Nearly always included with email service provider (ESP) technology although will not track conversions all the way through your site or cart unless you do special integration of ESP and Web analytics.

### Factor #8. Special Testing Features Offered

After deciding which basic types of testing you want, you should consider whether or not you need any special testing features, such as:

#### Behavioral Targeting

This feature analyzes visitor behavior and automatically serves visitors relevant pages, offers, ads, etc., based on past activity, such as page-view history, traffic source, or time spent on a page. For example, past behavior can tell you if the visitor is searching for a particular product or wants to contact user support.

Behavioral targeting will serve them a relevant ad or contact us page.

Security is a concern, so be sure to ask if the technology stores visitors' IP addresses. If it does, that's definitely a problem. Reporting is also important: Ask what kind of data you'll see in the reports and in what format – or even better, ask to see a sample report.

Note: Only a handful of testing platforms offer behavioral targeting. It's mostly for those who want to take optimization one step further. It is not an essential feature for most sites.

### Heatmaps

Some platforms offer a visual representation of aggregate activity on a page, known as a heatmap. Basically, it's a mouse tracking or click tracking feature that maps hot spots of activity – either where people click the most or where their mouse hovers most on the page you want to optimize.

Other platforms offer eyetracking simulator software that uses proprietary algorithms to predict where visitors' eyes travel on a page within the first few seconds of landing there.

No matter how they're generated, heatmaps may be useful because they can give you a visual representation of the data.



Example of a heatmap.

If there's a hot spot on a particular link in your navigation bar, you could test replacing it with a link to a relevant offer.

Note: Very few testing technologies offer heatmaps as a feature. It is often something you must purchase separately. There are several, low-cost heatmap Software as a Service (SaaS) options out there. Though heatmaps aren't a necessity, they are nice to have since they could help you visualize the data.

### Geotargeting

This feature allows a site to serve content based on visitors' geographic location. For example, if someone visits from Australia, an ecommerce site could show them the correct shipping and other costs in the Australian dollar. The site could also tailor offers with specific language, imagery, or products that might appeal to Australians.

Note: This type of targeting is only offered by a few testing platforms. Again, it's not a must-have feature, but it might be important if you're a global ecommerce site or you target visitors in several geographic locations.

## Part III: The 5-Step Testing Technology Buying Process

When you're ready to start your search, we suggest following these key steps:

### Step #1. Navigate Office Politics

If your organization is not on board with the idea of testing, you may need to start the process by running a simple test (using free technology) on a page that gets plenty of traffic but isn't the "special pet" of powerful stakeholders within the company.

Definitely test changes you think will have a big impact on the page. There's lots of useful information out there about what to



test. Check out free resources such as “[What’s Worth Testing?](#)” and case studies on WhichTestWon.com for ideas about what makes a high-impact test.

Then, put together a 20- to 30-minute presentation about why testing could be valuable to your organization. Include the results from your test. See our PDF on “[Office Politics & Battling Budgets](#)” for more ideas on what to include in the presentation.

### Step #2. Identify a Buying Committee

Assemble a team to help you choose a platform. Be sure to include anyone in your organization who would freak out if they discovered you started the buying process without them.

It’s very, very, very important to involve IT. Most companies have overworked, overstretched IT staffs that work on projects based on priority. If they find out that they weren’t consulted about the purchase of a testing platform that may require some IT involvement, you could find yourself hard pressed to get much, if any, prioritization for testing projects.

Check out our PDF on “[Office Politics & Battling Budgets](#)” for ideas on how to get your IT team onboard.

### Step #3. Estimate the Value of a Testing Program

It’s pretty easy to estimate how much money you could gain or save by testing. If you measure revenue per lead, you could show how much you could gain if a test boosted conversions by as little as 2%. Ecommerce sites can use average order value to get the same estimate. Always underestimate, never overpromise.

We’ve noticed that B2B lead gen pages that have never been tested before generally get an average 30%-40% boost in conversions after a round of testing. Ecommerce pages that haven’t been tested get an average 20%-25% conversion lift after a series of tests.

You can also show how much your organization stands to save from testing. If you measure cost per conversion, you can estimate how much money you'll save by getting more conversions from the same amount of traffic.

#### Step #4. Research Companies & Identify Prospects

To find out which platform is right for your company, check out our client name index to see which companies use specific platforms. Look for companies similar to yours. Then, click on the platform and review its profile.

Make a shortlist of vendors and reach out to them for more information. Ask to see a demo. Ask to see sample reports.

#### Step #5. Six Questions to Ask During Your Demo

Once you've reached out to potential platforms and set up demo sessions, you may want to ask some key questions, such as:

1. Does the platform require separate URLs for each test page?

For example, the control URL may be <http://www.control.com/> and the test page URL may be <http://www.control.com/versiona/>. This becomes problematic because if someone were to bookmark a test page, you'd have to make sure you implement the winner on each test page URL.

2. Does the technology offer a preview feature that allows you to see test versions as they would appear to a visitor?

This will help you catch errors and edit the pages before launching the test.

3. How easy it is to pause and stop a test after you've launched it?

4. Are you're able to choose how much traffic you can split for a test?

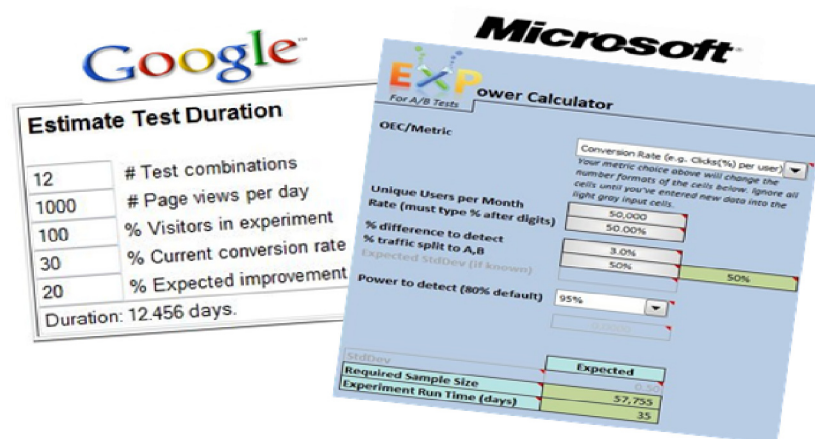
For example, if you've got 500,000 visitors to a page, you may not want or need to split 100% of that traffic between the test pages. You might only need to split 50% or 25% of the traffic, depending on how many versions you're testing.

5. How easy it is to set up segments?

Some platforms have pre-defined segments you can choose from, such as traffic source. Others allow you to define your own segments, such as people from New York who visit between 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. Some offer both kinds of segmenting. You also might want to ask when you're allowed to add segments. Can you add one during the test if you forgot one?

6. Is there a calculator to help you determine how much traffic and time will be needed to reach conclusive results?

This is not an essential feature, because you can find free *calculators from Google* and *Microsoft* on the Internet.



After completing the demo and asking all the pertinent questions, put together a brief presentation or fact sheets of the different prospects for your buying committee. Weigh in all the feedback and choose the best fit!