

# DIRECT

Magazine

## The Name Game

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**Prospective parents are accustomed** to lots of tests: for the health of the baby, for its gender, and for the mother's wellness. And so when [BabyCenter.com](http://BabyCenter.com), a content site aimed at parents-to-be, wanted to optimize search traffic, it took a leaf from that baby book and did some testing of its own.

BabyCenter is one of the leading parenting sites on the Web; its combination of expert content, interactive tools, online community and e-commerce shopping attracts more than 4 million visitors a month, according to comScore Media Metrix. Expectant parents can enter their due date and then sign up for e-mail newsletters, including a popular one called "My Baby This Week" that details the developmental stages of their child from pregnancy through preschool. There's no co-registration for these newsletters; revenue is drawn primarily from on-site ads, the sale of content sponsorships and some selective lead generation using sweepstakes and special offers.

The site offers a number of useful tools, including an ovulation calculator and a pregnancy calendar, but one of its most heavily used features is the Baby Name Finder. It's actually a suite of resources including lists of top 100 names, a search engine for finding names by origin or meaning, and a poll maker that lets parents test out possible names on their friends and family.

"Baby names are also an important part of our search marketing program," says Heather Wajer, BabyCenter's senior marketing manager. "Right now, 11 of our top 20 keywords are related to baby names."

But until recently, visitors who clicked through those search ads didn't arrive at a landing page relevant to baby names. As a result, BabyCenter was seeing a high dropoff from that page.

"It was a very general landing page with creative that talked about our developmental content, our newsletters and our free print magazine," Wajer says. "The baby-name tool was only referred to by default in our site search query box. There was nothing to reassure visitors that they'd arrived at a page relevant to their name search."

So BabyCenter needed a new landing page for its name tool. That meant testing different layouts and creative. Site testing had proven too big a job for the small BabyCenter staff in the past, so they reached outside the company for **Offermatica's** multivariate testing capabilities.

Using **Offermatica's** platform and hosted content server, BabyCenter uploaded four new layout modules for the baby-name landing page and began measuring their performance, using the old landing page as a control. One of these choices simply displayed the headline, "Looking for baby names?" and added, "Find the perfect baby name and much more at [BabyCenter.com](http://BabyCenter.com)." It also provided a search box that defaulted to baby names and a BabyCenter sign-up box.

The other three test pages added details about the naming information users could find on the site. One described the ability to learn names' meanings, find the hottest trends in baby names and poll friends and family; another provided that list but added data about the site's other services. The last one listed the top five names for girls and boys in the previous year.

Wajer says BabyCenter could spot a winner within eight days of starting the test. The simplest version produced the biggest lift in conversions (defined as users clicking through to the actual name-finder tool), with an increase of 67% over the old page.

Wajer's team wasted no time in adopting the optimized landing page. They plan to run similar tests for the site's content-specific pay-per-click ads and its e-commerce store using a monthly subscription to **Offermatica's** hosted service.

“As marketers, we all think we know what's going to improve conversions, but consumers often behave differently than we expect,” Wajer says. “With a testing service such as **Offermatica's**, we can settle those issues within a week or two.”

And testing helped resolve one long-standing Web question early on, to Wajer's relief. “For as long as I've been here, there's been this dispute as to what converts better, a picture of a baby or a picture of a pregnant woman,” she says.

As it turns out, the baby photo does much better. “Pregnancy is a very aspirational time,” Wajer says. “People want to see pictures of the beautiful child they hope to bring home. I was especially glad to get that issue wrapped.”