

PRACTICAL BUSINESS GUIDE

The Broken Call to Action

Explain how calls to action break, why the failure can remain invisible, and how to separate a visual button from the destination and behaviour behind it.

The Defect Nobody Notices

A call to action is the control that moves a visitor from understanding to doing. Its commercial function is the destination and outcome after the click.

01

Test the destination.

The failure occurs after the visitor has decided to act.

02

Test the device.

Page views continue while the commercial action is broken.

03

Test after change.

Booking routes and campaign IDs can move independently of the button.

[Use this guide →](#)

PURPOSE

The problem this guide helps you see

MISSION

Explain how calls to action break, why the failure can remain invisible, and how to separate a visual button from the destination and behaviour behind it.

WRITTEN FOR

Businesses relying on booking, call, email, enquiry or purchase buttons to turn interest into action.

USEFUL BOUNDARY

This is not a copywriting guide. A perfectly worded button still fails if its destination or behaviour is wrong.

DEFINITION

A call to action is the control that moves a visitor from understanding to doing. Its commercial function is the destination and outcome after the click.

THINK OF IT LIKE THIS

A doorbell wired to nothing. The visitor presses it correctly and the button looks real, but nobody inside knows they tried.

MECHANISM

The Defect Nobody Notices

The useful question is not whether the page looks finished. It is whether the customer can complete the intended task reliably.



A button can look perfect while the destination behind it is stale, malformed or missing. Visual QA alone cannot prove it works.

USEFUL TEST

Measure the live customer task from start to finish. Do not infer success from a polished screen or a technical setting.

COMMERCIAL EFFECT

Why this matters beyond the page itself

The commercial effect comes from making the customer task easier, harder, more reliable or less reliable.

WHAT CHANGES

Intent is already high

The failure occurs after the visitor has decided to act.

WHAT CHANGES

Traffic can look normal

Page views continue while the commercial action is broken.

WHAT CHANGES

External links change

Booking routes and campaign IDs can move independently of the button.

WHAT CHANGES

Syntax matters on mobile

Malformed phone and email links can look correct but fail on tap.

WHAT CHANGES

Paid traffic compounds loss

Ads and social links may send more people to the same dead end.

WHAT CHANGES

Testing is cheap

A short click-through test catches faults analytics may not explain.

Evidence boundary: improvements can change usability immediately, while commercial results still depend on demand, traffic quality and where the fault sat in the journey.

FAULT REGISTER • 1 OF 2

What I would flag

Severity reflects customer impact. Each fault is paired with the visible consequence and what it costs.

CRITICAL

Placeholder link remains

The button points to the current page or a non-destination.

Every click reaches a dead end.

CRITICAL

Destination changed

An external page moved while the old URL stayed live.

Visitors are sent to an outdated or missing route.

CRITICAL

Malformed phone or email link

Visible text is correct but the underlying scheme fails.

High-intent mobile users cannot complete the action.

FAULT REGISTER • 2 OF 2

What I would flag

Severity reflects customer impact. Each fault is paired with the visible consequence and what it costs.

MAJOR

Raw URL is the label

Technical link text replaces a clear action.

The interface looks unfinished and unclear.

MAJOR

Stale date or ID

A hardcoded event, venue or booking ID no longer fits.

Customers can land in the wrong context.

MODERATE

Competing CTAs

Several actions carry equal visual weight.

The visitor must choose what the page should have prioritised.

READ NEXT

The Enquiry Path

See the larger route that surrounds every call to action.

Read next →

CORRECTION

The assumption that keeps this fault alive

COMMON MYTH

“Someone would have told us.”

Better framing: Usually the visitor simply leaves. They came to complete a task, not debug the site, and a broken destination may produce no alert.

WHY IT PERSISTS

No alert

The site may not notify anyone when a destination is wrong.

WHY IT PERSISTS

Traffic persists

Page views continue normally even while action is broken.

WHY IT PERSISTS

Visitors leave quietly

Most customers will try another business instead of reporting the fault.

WORKING CONTROL

Click testing

Manually test primary actions after every change.

WORKING CONTROL

Destination ownership

Record which external links and IDs the site depends on.

WORKING CONTROL

Channel check

Test paid and social links against the same live destination.

Useful boundary: Test the customer’s live task before trusting the assumption.

STANDARD

What a working version looks like

This describes the condition to reach. The exact implementation depends on the live site and business context.

AREA	FAILING PATTERN	WORKING PATTERN
Primary CTA	Looks right but destination is untested	Destination is current and tested
Phone/email	Visible text only or malformed scheme	Link syntax works on a real phone
External system	Old IDs or event links remain	Live destination is verified after provider changes
Campaign traffic	Ads point to untested pages	Landing actions are checked before spend
Priority	Several equally strong actions compete	One primary action is visually dominant

QUICK SELF-CHECK

- Every primary button opens the expected destination
- Phone and email links work on a real phone
- External booking links use current IDs
- Paid and social traffic lands on a working action
- Buttons are retested after site or provider changes

RELEVANT FOLLOW-UP SERVICE

Website Snapshot

Use this when you want the live journey tested, not just the fault category explained.

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DUE DILIGENCE

Five questions worth asking whoever maintains the site

These questions are diagnostic rather than confrontational. Clear answers show whether the live customer journey is being actively owned.

01

Which five buttons matter most commercially?

02

Where does each button actually resolve today?

03

Which actions depend on an external provider?

04

When were phone and email links last tested on a phone?

05

Which campaigns point at these actions?

WHAT A USEFUL ANSWER SOUNDS LIKE

Ask for evidence from the current site, current provider and current route - not what was supposed to be configured at launch.

The Defect Nobody Notices.

Test the destination. Test the device. Test after change. Keep the customer's real task visible and test the live route, not only the design.

PRIMARY NEXT STEP

The Enquiry Path

See the larger route that surrounds every call to action.

[Continue →](#)

Website Fundamentals

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Want help applying this to your business?

Bring me the page with the button you most need customers to use. I can trace where it goes and whether the live destination still matches the action.

[Discuss the task →](#)