



SUCCESS STORIES



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Directline Holidays

Directline Holidays experience 40% annual growth for three consecutive years through Google AdWords

Chosen as one of the top 20 online travel agencies by Hitwise UK, Directline Holidays showcases 12 million holidays from some of the key established industry names, along with a range of ancillary services from car hire through to insurance. Following the industry-wide slump after 9/11, Directline Holidays was forced to rethink its marketing strategy, and it decided to focus on the Internet. "We changed all of our advertising from offline to online," says Matt Adams, Marketing Manager. "We put more and more resources into our website and in Google AdWords, and found that the value of the traffic was very effective and targeted. Ever since, Google has been a core part of our success."

AdWords allowed Directline Holidays to carve out its space in the online marketplace. As an early adopter, the company quickly realised how effective AdWords could be in generating more qualified leads if the ads were shaped to be specific and tailored. "We don't go after generic keywords, but instead go after phrases around the brands and products we sell," says Adams. "It's not just about volume – it's about quality."

Furthermore, as purchasing a holiday isn't usually an impulse buy, and customers tend to research before they buy, relevancy is important in capturing and converting visitors. "We try to send users to the right page. It's important they have all the information they need on the page based on the type of search they do."

This approach generates so many leads that Directline Holidays often finds itself overwhelmed. Fortunately, the flexibility of AdWords provides a solution to this positive business challenge. "We are able to pause and manage our advertising and so can control the level of traffic passing to our call centre," says Adams. "That's one of the great things about AdWords: it's pretty much all real-time, so you can be really adaptive. It's a tap we can turn on and off."

Directline Holidays has also used a number of AdWords tools to garner deeper insights into the business. For example, Analytics allows them to see how the website is performing. "It's been really important for creating pages, creating content, and understanding where we're converting and where people go. It influences our product development." AdWords also helped the team come up with an overarching strapline for their business. They trialled a selection through the AdWords ad rotation feature, and the best-performing one is now used in a wide range of other marketing material. Adams is in no doubt that AdWords has benefited Directline Holidays enormously in a short space of time. "As a result of using AdWords our company has grown by 40% a year for the last three years," he says. "It's a big part of what we do."



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Foneshop.com

Foneshop.com now call on Google to bring in over 50% of their customers

Foneshop.com – 'The online phone shop you can talk to'

Foneshop.com is one of the UK's leading online retailers of mobile phones and accessories. Established in 2003, Foneshop.com represents the online, consumer direct branch of Excalibur Distribution, a commercial mobile communications supplier. With exceptional emphasis on customer support and service levels, Foneshop.com are proud to be known as 'the online phone shop you can talk to'. They overcome the impersonal element of online shopping by providing full phone support to existing and potential customers. This, combined with competitive pricing, 99p delivery rates and one of the largest product ranges available in the UK today, has seen Foneshop.com go from strength to strength since their inception in 2003.

The Early Challenges

"When we started the website we were very new to the online business, we didn't really understand it", comments David Hyett, Group Marketing Director, Excalibur Communications. He adds that they were "scraping in... 10 orders a day".

Foneshop.com initially sold contract phones, before identifying in 2004 non-contract phones and accessories as being the market niche in which they wished to excel. From then on, their aims were threefold as Hyett explains: "The idea was always to be the online phone shop you can talk to... the second thing was to home in on the accessory market... and the biggest barrier for us was to try and get over 100 orders per day".

Getting Results with Google

Working with AdWords, Google's targeted online advertising program, has assisted Foneshop.com in meeting and exceeding their goals. "In terms of training... we now understand how the online market works through AdWords", states Hyett. "We're doing at least 150 [orders] a day now" and "have three people manning the phones".

Hyett estimates that 50 percent of all customers find Foneshop.com through Google, and as a result the company invest 60 percent of their total monthly advertising budget in AdWords. He also notes that in a twelve month period, from November 2005 to November 2006, the number of orders received by Foneshop.com rose by 56 percent, the average value of each order increased by 54 percent and their conversion costs were lowered by 29 percent. "Higher conversion rates and higher return on investment... that's what [Google AdWords] facilitated".

With regards to the tools and support provided freely with the AdWords product, Hyett pinpoints several as having made a difference to their business. "The keyword insertion tool has had a great effect on our adverts and conversion rates". He also refers to AdWords Editor as being "invaluable" due to the ease with which it can be used to make advertising account changes en masse.

Speaking about the dynamic nature of online advertising, Hyett remarks upon how well this is reflected in the constant evolution of available AdWords features. "[There is] always something to learn... and things are constantly changing".

Looking towards future plans to further grow and develop Foneshop.com, Hyett states that as far as use of Google AdWords goes he "can't ever see that stopping".





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Lighting Direct

Lighting Direct cuts costs and triples Clickthrough Rate (CTR) with Google Analytics

Founded in 1991, Lighting Direct is regarded as the number one online lighting company in the UK. With over 6000 products on the company's website, Lighting Direct has established itself as a one-stop-shop for everything from the grandest chandeliers to novelty Christmas lights. The company also prides itself on providing value-for-money and helpful information that caters to both indoor and outdoor lighting.

The challenges facing Lighting Direct have been in constant flux as the company transformed from an Internet new-comer to an online leader in its field. As late as 2002, the company had just three staff, of which only one was full-time. The man at the helm was Gary Berg, "I put together a little website with about 200 products on it. Then we started getting a bit of interest and I started looking for ways of how I could let people know I was there...we really just wanted to drive traffic to our site. I found AdWords was the best way of doing that."

As an Internet newcomer, Lighting Direct had shown that they could use Google AdWords to drive traffic to their website and build their company. However, with business growing rapidly, Berg soon decided that to scale Lighting Direct efficiently and to make sure that all keywords were profitable, emphasis needed to shift from simply driving traffic and brand awareness to also creating conversions and increasing return-on-investment. To make the advertising better pay for itself and to better track user behaviour, Berg turned to the free tool Google Analytics to help him adapt his advertising. The results were dramatic. The highly targeted ad texts and keywords resulted in many campaign clickthrough rates sky-rocketing to 20%–30%. It was not unusual for campaigns to see their clickthrough rate triple in the period after the review.

On the changes made, Berg says, "I was able to take out quite a few keywords and make the campaigns leaner. There has definitely been an increase in business since using Analytics." This latest advertising drive is just one such initiative taken in a highly successful relationship between Lighting Direct and Google AdWords. As the company has grown they have found different tools and techniques available through AdWords. "When we first started with this exercise we had two part-time people and now we employ ten people. We are now doing about seven or eight times the turnover compared to four years ago thanks to AdWords and Analytics."



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PurelyGadgets

PurelyGadgets use AdWords to grow their brand in the highly competitive electronic goods market

PurelyGadgets is one of the UK's leading online retailers of electronic goods. Established in 2004 to capitalise on a rapidly expanding internet market, PurelyGadgets found their niche through using an in-house team of expert buyers to source the best value products from around the world. A combination of competitive pricing, fast delivery, and reliable pre and after sales facilities have proven popular with customers. The final strand however was growing their online presence – and it was to Google they turned to achieve this.

The challenge, and how Google AdWords fits in

Acquiring business and recognition in a highly competitive market was the key initial challenge that PurelyGadgets faced. Initially PurelyGadgets toyed with the idea of taking a hands-off approach to their advertising, by hiring a company who would take care of it for them. This approach wasn't successful however, as Lim explains. "We believed that we could do this better [than an outside company] because we know our products and services." Instead, PurelyGadgets turned to Google AdWords to assist them in creating an online presence. "I actually learned about online advertising from Google," admits Lim. "We find Google very easy to use. The main reason is that we can control the budget so easily. We were a very new start-up company then and we were very concerned with costs and Google let us see...results within twenty-four hours."

Advancing with AdWords

Having begun trading from home in 2004, as a company of four to five employees, PurelyGadgets now employs over 40 people in their London based offices. "We grew about 700% over the past two years," declares Lim. "Without using Google we would not grow this fast."

Expanding further on this point, Lim says "Google initially put us on a par with other big brands...I think Google is a trusted brand...the demographic feels more confident buying from us...because they see us from Google...If you're looking at increasing market share, branding...and also customer acquisition... Google is a much better choice because it has a much bigger audience."

Google tools

Given the competitiveness of the market in which PurelyGadgets operates it is necessary for them to be both extremely dynamic and make full use of all AdWords features available to them. This is something which they do to excellent effect, as Lim explains. "We eliminate a lot of unqualified leads with negative keywords...Although it's a very simple functionality, I find negative keywords extremely useful."

"We use Google Analytics which is fabulous," he further comments. "AdWords Editor is very good as well...we change our prices every day...only Google allow us to have that sort of flexibility."

Future Plans

Not content with entering into new territories from a retail perspective, PurelyGadgets intend to do so geographically as well. At present due to a lack of viable payment platforms, PurelyGadgets restrict their activities to the UK market. However, Lim is enthusiastic and optimistic about the imminent launch of the Google payment platform, Google Checkout. "I think that once the Google Checkout has been launched [we will] have a payment platform all across the world. I think that will open up our market totally'.

Speaking of future plans to continue growing with Google AdWords, Lim states "It feels like you do have somebody working for you in Google...I can't find anything better."

