

## Using search as an awareness/preference medium

By Neil Monnens (May 2009)

Search excels as a direct response medium, but can also be used as an awareness/preference tactic. I used search as an awareness/preference tactic for Microsoft Windows OneCare anti-virus software campaign and the campaign recently earned the Festival of Media's "Best use of Search" award.

Norton and McAfee have the majority market share and awareness in the anti-virus software category. But imagine a visitor searching for anti-virus software and seeing eight separate ads about OneCare, an anti-virus solution they were unaware, and if the visitor had awareness, the ads moved them closer to consider OneCare as their anti-virus solution.

Google does not allow a paid keyword to appear more than once per root URL. To get around this requirement I worked with Microsoft PR to identify positive Windows OneCare third party online articles and I opened separate Google accounts for each third party editorial article. A bonus is the hypothesis that third party editorial is more 'believable' than advertiser web sites.

At the beginning of the search campaign, I used the same OneCare branded text creative for each link to measure the CTR among the various publishers. The CTR results allowed me to set bidding based on the worst to best CTR to determine the optimal bid amount per link, minimizing the overall spend while maximizing the click volume.

Sites with the highest CTR were sites that directly related to software content (PCWorld.com, MicrosoftWatch.com) compared to NYTimes which has a great brand, but doesn't directly relate to anti-virus software (a 20x difference in CTR was common). As per 'normal' search results, branded keywords performed better on a CTR basis than non-branded keywords (a 10x difference was common).

On branded keywords, it was easy to cost effectively road block all the ads. For non-branded keywords, it was more costly to roadblock all the ads but depending on your keyword conversion and the CTR of each creative, you can strategically bid per keyword and by creative to maximize your lead volume and minimize your budget while driving your competitors out of the market.

Overall, the campaign generated over 12 million 'impressions' and 66,000 clicks at a cost-per-click of \$4.27 per positive Windows OneCare review.

Based on the results, future tests could include measuring Google only vs Google search partner sites, contextual targeting (rotating creative per keyword), branded vs non-branded text creative (to measure cost of branded creative), increase/decrease of editorial links, as well as using third party ad serving (this buy drove directly from Google to editorial articles) to measure unique clicks (reach/frequency).

The idea for this test came about early last year as I wanted to test Google's rule of not allowing a keyword to be purchased by two advertisers appearing on the same page in the same Google Adwords account. I purchased wine keywords for WineBlueBook, a wine buying guide I publish. I bid on wine keywords that drove to WineBlueBook and the same

keywords driving to an editorial piece about WineBlueBook that appeared in The Napa Valley Register. The article was about WineBlueBook but had no links to WineBlueBook. Google did not allow both ads to run but the surprising result was the paid search traffic sent to The Napa Valley Register converted as well as the paid traffic sent directly to WineBlueBook (I measure successful conversions as a request for a free sample issue of WineBlueBook). Therefore a visitor clicked on The Napa Valley Register paid AdWords link, read the article, then manually typed in WineBlueBook.com in their browser, visited WineBlueBook.com and provided their email address to receive their free issue.

Given the supply and demand pricing model of search and the vast amount of information on the Internet which makes search a daily task for Internet users, building awareness and preference using search is not only achievable but also cost effective.

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