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ABOUT GOOGLE ANALYTICS

Google’s web analytics service enables advertisers and publishers to make their marketing campaigns more efficient and their websites more effective. Advertisers can increase their return on investment by optimizing online marketing campaigns, tracking referral sources, improving web design and content, and identifying visitor preferences. Google Analytics’ intuitive interface makes it easy to segment customers, identify top performing ad campaigns, and understand user preferences.

For more information, visit
www.google.com/analytics.

Discount Tire increased online sales by 14% in the first week using Google Analytics.

Business

Discount Tire provides people with a wide variety of choices and low prices for tires and wheels, either at retail locations or for purchase on the Internet. In business for 40 years, Discount Tire is the largest independent tire dealer in the nation, with 600 stores selling only tires and wheels.

In addition to retail stores, the Internet is becoming one of Discount Tire’s most successful sales channels. Online shoppers can try wheels virtually, seeing how wheels will look on specific vehicles with an Interactive Wheel System. They can also save time and money by ordering tires or wheels without paying for shipping, or by purchasing tires and making appointments for installation at their local store—all online. Combined, Internet and retail stores bring in \$2 billion in sales through operations in 18 states.

Approach

Driving qualified buyers to the website for direct sales and getting more buyers into local stores are vital goals for Discount Tire. Google AdWords™ search-based advertising campaigns are pivotal in achieving these aims. AdWords is particularly effective because of its ability to precisely target local customers with regional and seasonal messaging, but no campaign goes unmeasured.

As a results-driven company, Discount Tire is focused on metrics. The company has a full-time metrics analyst and uses web analytics tools to gauge the effectiveness of all of its Internet-based marketing efforts, including AdWords. “We’ve used everything from log file analysis to cookie tracking and pixel tagging to measure the effectiveness of our website and of Internet advertising. Unfortunately, they all had major shortcomings,” says Travis Unwin, Managing Director for Blue Ribbon Consulting, Discount Tire’s online marketing agency.

“Funnel reports in Google Analytics are crucial to our success. We work constantly to improve the user experience. Google Analytics gives us the insight we need to quickly see which step in the online sales process is broken so we can fix it immediately.”

In particular, log analyzers and other analytics tools required a substantial amount of customization to work effectively, putting a drain on Discount Tire’s IT resources. In addition, everything Discount Tire tried delivered mixed or unreliable results. “We wanted sophisticated analytics and reporting we could rely on, but found that the tools we tried to date required too many modifications for each web page,” says Mike Bolland, E-Business Supervisor for Discount Tire. Based on these disappointing results, Discount Tire searched for another alternative and decided to try Google Analytics.

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Results

Fast start, inexpensive maintenance

According to Unwin and Bolland, Google Analytics was easy to implement, required almost no customization, and provided the in-depth metrics the company needed right away. The primary means of driving traffic to the website is keyword-driven, search-based advertising. Google Analytics provided easy integration with AdWords campaigns for accurate results measurement, as well as the ability to tag keyword destination URLs with the click of the button. The Discount Tire team easily set up conversion funnels and goals within Google Analytics, instead of having to add different tags to pages on the website—a key advantage in maintaining the company’s dynamically driven site without straining IT resources.

“Google Analytics is much easier to implement than other web analytics products we’ve tried,” says Unwin. “It costs almost zero and takes almost no time to implement and maintain—and goals and funnels can be changed instantly.”

Streamlined site design

Since implementing Google Analytics, Discount Tire can track marketing campaigns in fine-grained detail, down to the return on investment from specific products. The team can also gauge purchasing patterns of each customer using the funnel conversion and site overlay features. Google Analytics also provides actionable information on site navigation. Bolland and Unwin track the top 10 access points to any web page, and follow where customers go from these points to help streamline customer interaction on the site.

In July 2005, Discount Tire began selling tires and wheels online. Google Analytics was pivotal in enabling marketing staff to track and measure results of the new initiative. For instance, Google Analytics helped the team measure the effectiveness of site design in driving sales conversions. Google Analytics pinpointed the most successful language for the checkout button. “Purchase and make a reservation” resulted in a huge drop in sales, but a change to “check out and make a reservation” resulted in an increase in online sales of 14 percent in a single week.

The marketing team also discovered that people were abandoning their shopping carts if items were not in stock at their local store. By adding language reassuring customers that Discount Tire would locate and stock the item, abandonment rates for out of stock items plummeted and sales increased by 36 percent.

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Increased marketing effectiveness at lower costs

The marketing team also uses key performance summary screens in Google Analytics to keep company executives informed about the progress and sales results achieved from online marketing efforts. Because of its effectiveness and measurable impact, Discount Tire is applying more resources toward online marketing.

“Online marketing is becoming a more important part of the Discount Tire marketing strategy”, said Unwin. “Search based advertising, particularly Adwords, is the cornerstone of our approach and area we continually look to grow.”

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According to Matt Greene, President of Blue Ribbon, “from a strategic perspective, Blue Ribbon has been focused on working with its clients to better understand the enormous value inherent in online marketing (in addition to the clear benefits of trackability and positive results generated from Search) so that they shape-shift more and more of their offline ad dollars and re-allocate to online marketing. Clearly, Google Analytics toolset enables this education process and provides proof-of-concept”

Actionable data for continuous improvement

In 2006, the company plans to increase its focus on local targeting based on information obtained from Google Analytics. Local advertising is less expensive and Discount Tire can quickly respond by fine-tuning messages to customers, targeting regions with specific seasonal ads or changing search keywords or bidding strategies on AdWords to increase traffic and results. Local targeting, in particular, has had a tremendous positive impact on Discount Tire’s sales on both the website and in stores. According to Unwin, local search marketing is three times as effective at generating online transactions than their national campaign, which makes sense for a company that does the majority of its business at a store location-- not via direct shipping to consumers.

Additional plans include changing purchase decision logic on the website to facilitate a more consultative sale and using online marketing to help strengthen the Discount Tire brand. Based on information from Google Analytics, Discount Tire can make broader business decisions by spotting trends and continually shaping and strengthening its marketing strategies.

“Every new piece of information we get from Google Analytics gives us 10 new ideas that can help our customers find what they need online,” says Bolland. “Google Analytics helps us prioritize what to try first and then track success metrics around each change to make sure our assumptions are correct. Google Analytics is key to continuously improving our site and our customer experience.”

About Blue Ribbon Consulting

Founded in January 2002, Blue Ribbon works with dominant-in-category retailers, manufacturers and service companies with a core concentration in developing and leveraging new customer acquisitions strategies on behalf of its clients. Blue Ribbon provides a full-suite of online media planning and buying services and possesses deep expertise on Search Marketing, in addition to other critical media channels such as Display, Internet Yellow Pages, Shopping Comparison, Local Media and emerging channels such as Podcasting and RSS feeds.

