"How a $500 Monthly Spend on Google Adwords Generated Over $1,000,000 in Software License and Consulting Fees"

During my first year in sales at a company called TaxStream, a fast growing software company that ranked #51 on the Inc 500 list in 2007, I took over the company's Google Adwords or Pay Per Click advertising as a side project.

Before I got access, the account suffered from the usual beginner mistakes - mainly not tracking conversions.

What's attractive about Adwords and Internet Marketing in general is the ability to measure results in real time. However an advertiser can only do this if they install the proper conversion tracking scripts.

This is a very simple cut and paste from the code the Adwords system generates. An advertiser would do this so they can optimize their ads, based on what works and what doesn't.

Prior to me getting control of the account, the spend to date was just about $30,000 - again this was $30,000 spent that was never optimized.

Dec 30, 2007-Dec 31, 2007

g. ?	↓	Conv. (1-per-click) ?	Cost / conv. (1-per-click) ?	Conv. rate (1-per-click) ?
7		33	$241.93	2.27%
4		28	$218.19	1.61%
7		10	$306.43	2.06%
3		4	$254.90	0.35%
1		2	$207.48	3.23%
4		1	$1,394.64	0.34%

Other factors caused wasteful spending like poor geo-targeting and account organization.

For example, software being sold was mostly used by US based corporations that file a tax provision. For larger companies, Excel Spreadsheets become very inefficient and do not provide defense during audit - meaning they are too easy to manipulate.

Before I took over thousands of dollars were spent advertising in countries like the UK and Canada, when selling to foreign companies was much more

the exception than the norm.

Leads were few and far between, even I started tracking conversions, lead costs were well over $200. While this might not be so high considering the ROI, costs were driven up, not because of competition but because the 5-6 players in the market threw money at the problem.

Shortly after I took on Adwords so did a member of our business development team, and our head of sales gave us free reign to spend as much as $5,000 per month.

Having the budget does not justify the expense, in this case generic words like "tax software" were running up the bill plus all the clicks from non-US countries.

The main problem was sending all the traffic to the home page.

The average home page of a B2B software company has 27 or more options the visitor can choose from - too many choices leads to fewer responses.

In early 2008 I discovered this thing called a landing page. A landing page is minimal version of a web page with scaled down navigation.

Rather than leading with "chest beating" ads like this:
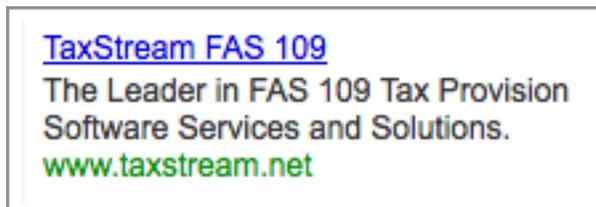
TaxStream FAS 109
The Leader in FAS 109 Tax Provision
Software Services and Solutions.
www.taxstream.net

I advertised a problem solving guide that would attract prospects at various stages of the buying cycle like this one.

TaxStream Tax Solutions
Revealed: Free Whitepaper on FAS
109 And FIN48 Integration. Find Out
www.taxstream.net

The account went on a spending spree between July and December 2007, during that time $22,440.02 was spent and a total of 78 leads were generated at a cost of $287.69 cents per lead.

One year later the results were dramatically different.

Between July 1 2008 and Late Feb 2009 lead volume was the same however cost per lead was now $22.86 cents. This budget was also allocated to keywords that worked and limited to the United States only. **Over $1 Million in total revenue can be traced to this campaign.**

Conv. (1-per-click) ?	Cost / conv. (1-per-click) ?	Conv. rate (1-per-click) ?
38	$12.23	4.73%
13	$39.17	5.20%
11	$23.62	7.86%
4	$20.21	3.31%
2	$18.16	8.70%
1	$4.32	20.00%

Pay Per Click is just one method of getting (Internet) traffic. There's direct traffic which is when people type in your web address and there's natural or free traffic often called Search Engine Optimization.

For example the a winning combination of Google Ad copy and (PPC) landing page like I just outlined can be implemented on the rest of the website to drive more lead flow, or any other actions you may want visitors to take such as white paper downloads, or attending webinars.

The kicker is that you can even take a working pay per click campaign and use it as the basis of a direct mail piece.

In B2B, print can be even more useful than the web.

Unfortunately while I was able to transform the account from loser to winner this story does not have a happy ending.

The company was acquired in January 2008 by Thomson Reuters, and the "central marketing" department took control of the Adwords campaign around March 2009.

They did not have the know how to take what I had done and run with it. What I was doing was a direct response campaign and the central marketing department was mostly concerned with branding than making money.

Branding is important as acquisitions were a large part of the growth within Tax & Accounting at Thomson Reuters so there's definitely a need to rebrand acquired companies.

However the folks in central marketing didn't understand how a website can be used to turn leads into sales.

"How can we as marketers help you generate more leads?" said no one ever in the marketing department.

Sadly one of the biggest levers in turning the campaign around was not taking traffic to the home page, but using targeted landing pages. As of today, November 7th 2012, the ads I wrote almost 5 years ago have remained un-changed and someone in "central marketing" decided it was a good idea to send all traffic back to the home page so the campaign went back to losing money rather than generating leads.

It took me about 1 year to figure out how to make Adwords really work - keep in mind it was not "Adwords" skills but skills like copy writing, persuasion, and the ability to craft a good unique selling proposition that made the campaign successful.

Often times a B2B website is nothing more than a boring brochure. It's only relevant to prospects _after_ sales reps have labored away hours at a time prospecting and presenting. Typically websites are not effective at capturing initial interest - and NOT getting as much lead flow from people _already_ interested is like letting cash slip through your fingers.

More and more, your customers are using the web as a tool to research purchase decisions and research shows that buyers have done 60% of the research before talking to a rep.

Your website needs to communicate your unique selling proposition and make your prospects aware of problems that ONLY your company can solve.

If you'd like to further explore ways of using your site as a selling tool contact me today.

Thank You for Reading.

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