

How Hemera sharpened its focus with Google advertising.



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Sue Schoolcraft
Marketing Manager,
Hemera



ABOUT GOOGLE ADWORDS

Google AdWords is currently used by thousands of businesses worldwide to gain new customers in a cost-effective way. AdWords uses keywords to precisely target ad delivery to web users seeking information about a particular product or service. The program is based on cost-per-click (CPC) pricing, so advertisers only pay when an ad is clicked. Advertisers can take advantage of an extremely broad distribution network and choose the level of support and spending appropriate for their business.

For more information, go to www.google.com/ads

Founded in 1997, Quebec-based Hemera is a veteran in the digital image and stock photography business. Early on, the company sold images via boxed CD software. Today Hemera sells downloadable images direct to consumers and offers a subscription-based service to professional customers. In an industry dominated by two very large leaders and numerous small specialty vendors, Hemera seeks its target customers selectively and cost-effectively.

Approach

Hemera Marketing Manager Sue Schoolcraft describes an age-old problem for small companies in a crowded field. “We are a small player, with a team of 40. We don’t have the marketing budget to compete head-on with the big guys,” she says. “So our challenge is to get in front of as many of the most interested and likely prospects in order to drive as much traffic to our site as possible.”

In September 2002, Hemera launched AbleStock, its professional product line. AbleStock is sold as a six-month subscription, primarily to design and ad agencies requiring a large supply of extremely high-quality images that must reproduce well in every medium. During their subscription period, customers buy access to unlimited downloads among more than 23,000 photos.

To build traffic to AbleStock after its launch, Schoolcraft engaged media buying firm Vector Media of Ottawa to work with Google’s Toronto office to initiate a Google AdWords™ campaign. This campaign is part of a marketing mix that also includes targeted banner ads on professional sites, sponsored email ads, email list rentals and paid-inclusion advertising. Offline advertising is not of interest, Schoolcraft says. “It’s much more expensive than online advertising, and it’s not measurable.”

Results

After working with the Google AdWords team to develop about two dozen targeted keywords for Google AdWords, Schoolcraft quickly saw dramatic clickthrough rates — and new business — pick up for AbleStock. Using phrases like “royalty-free” and “stock photography,” she reports an increase of 20 percent in Google clickthroughs in just the first few months. “Our hurdle has been exposure, and Google is very important in getting people to our site,” she says. “Now we’re steadily getting more traffic, really qualified traffic, from Google.”

“Google is our top-performing marketing vehicle,” Schoolcraft continues. “Based on results so far, we’ve reduced our ad banner spending 25 percent and increased our ad spend with Google 120 percent in just three months. The fact is, people go to Google when they need information and products they’re willing to buy. That’s why we’re staying with Google AdWords. Clearly it’s playing a crucial role in making the AbleStock subscription model viable.”