

Subject: ROI Marketing News - March 2007

From: Miki Dzugan

Date: Tue, 27 Mar 2007 10:56:16 -0700

To: Undisclosed Recipients

ROI Marketing News is about using the Internet to build relationships for online marketers, published periodically by Rapport Online Inc. Feel free to forward this newsletter in its entirety to a friend or to link to the archived copy. See the end of this message for information about subscribing or unsubscribing.

Attention! Achtung! Atencion! Tools to manage your Google Local Listing!

In this issue:

- * [Google gives business owners control of their local listing!](#)
- * [Marketing Experiments - all kinds of free research into what really works](#)
- * [Developer notes: Change of address is tricky online as well as off](#)
- * [Ask the Search Guru](#)

Google Gives Business Owners Control of Their Local Listing

Google continues to quietly introduce "beta" features for alert webmasters and marketers to discover. Have you noticed that sometimes if you search for a service in a specific location on Google that the Google Maps entry comes up at the top of results with a few businesses and their locations?

Search Google for "pizza cottonwood az" for example and you find a little map with a few pizza places marked on it. The lucky pizza places that are listed have addresses, phone numbers listed and the business names linked to their websites. Sometimes a search for your business name with your city and state will bring up a map entry for your business.

Google doesn't always have it right. One client noticed that their map entry link pointed to a competitor's website! Ouch!

If you see information that needs to be corrected or if you want to add information that can be seen if the searcher clicks on the "More information" link, Google has something called the "Local Business Center" at <http://www.google.com/local/add?hl=en&gl=us> .

You need to have a Google Account, which is a free account you can create. (Click on the "Sign up Now" button to create a Google Account.) Then just log in and fill out the form to add or make changes to an existing listing. Google verifies that you are the owner of the business by phoning the business number or sending a postcard with a PIN number to the business address. Changes will not be accepted without verification with the PIN.

Now, I just noticed that Google has added the ability to create a coupon for your local listing that can be printed out and brought to your location. The coupon can have an expiration date and a coupon code, so maybe it can be used at your website or by phone as well! We are testing this feature as I write, but it sounds like a neat deal! I'll keep you posted.

Marketing Experiments

In the last newsletter I mentioned Marketing Experiments. [Marketing Experiments](#) offers a dizzying amount of information at no charge to subscribers. They offer clinics, briefs, a blog, newsletter and, now, training and certification in website testing. This month I sat in on the free clinic about whether banner ads should try to fit in or stand out from the design of a website in order to get clicked on. Their tests showed that blending in with the site design increased click-through by 127%.

Since 127% of nothing still isn't very much, I would not scrap your pay per click campaigns in favor of banners anytime soon, but I have long been of the opinion that those ads that fit in with how a website is being used will get the best result. I had direct experience with this many years ago, when the average banner ad was still getting a 2% click-through. We placed several banners on a popular discussion board. One banner was animated; one banner was a faux form; and one banner looked like text and quoted an actual post that had appeared on the site. All of the ads did

better than the 2% average, but the quote did twice as well as the others.

But, I digress. If you need to know more about how to get better results from your marketing or web pages, visit the Marketing Experiments website <http://www.marketingexperiments.com/> search for the information you need and sign up for their free newsletter.

The next free clinic is Wednesday, March 28, on the subject of the effectiveness of email copy writing. Participants are encouraged to submit their own copy for review.

Developer Notes: Watch Page Change of Address

Having just gone through a move last year of both business and residential addresses it seems as though we are still updating people on our whereabouts. (Amazing how all the catalogs found us just fine while the accounts receivable departments of our clients and partners are still trying to figure it out.) But the point of this article is that changing the address of a webpage can be just as problematic.

There are still websites out there with links to pages at markneting.com. We have not been Markneting for five years, but we still have the domain name. Trouble is that except for links to the home page, most other links to Markneting end up on our "sorry no such page" page.

Whenever you change domain names (even from .us to .com) many old, unmaintained pages will still be pointing to your old address and nobody is going to change them, but people will still be clicking them and search engines will still have them indexed. The fix for that is easy - keep your old domain name and point it to the new one. Then search for all of the links to the old domain and submit change of address requests to get the ones that are being maintained up to date.

But every page on your site has its own address and referring sites might link to a page within your site, a particular article or a specific product. As long as that article or product exists on your site, you don't want to lose a link into it. Your webmaster may not always understand this.

For example, we recently changed the Rapport Online website from an ASP host to Unix. The address of every page on the site was automatically changed from ending in .asp to ending in .shtml. While your browser will display both of these pages just the same, the hosting computer (the server) regards them as completely different and will no longer be able to find the page if the address it is given ends in .asp. The heroes of this story are our Web developer Casey Crookston and our hosting company [RapidSystem](#). Together they wrote some code that tells our server, "When you see a page address ending in .asp, change that to .shtml." The result is like the change of address card that you give to your post office, except without the expiration date.

Whenever you need to change the file name of a webpage for whatever reason, make sure that some provision has been made for possible referring links to that page if at all possible. The only time that the visitor should get a page not found message is if that page no longer exists.

Dear Search Guru:

The point of this newsletter is to offer practical information to help customers and subscribers have a little edge in online marketing. The "Dear Search Guru" section is to answer questions that people email to me. If you have a question that you think others are likely to puzzle about or something that needs a little research, send me a question with "Dear Search Guru" in the subject and I might include it in the next newsletter. Your name and link to your website will be included when the answer is posted unless you specify that you want to be anonymous. Here is our first question. Bruce Walseth of Church Underwriters Inc (<http://www.chuund.com/>) asks:

What are content ads and do you think they are worthwhile?

Content ads appear on non-search pages. Google and Yahoo have search and non-search advertising partners. So if you run an ad in Google and select the option to include the ad in Google's search partners, it will appear in Ask, AOL search and other search results. If you select to be included in the content ad partners, your ad will turn up on any kind of page that carries Google ads, if one of your keywords appears on that page. These pages can be discussion group pages, magazine/newspaper pages, etc.

My experience with the content ads has been that the click rate is way lower with the content ads than with search ads. That's OK because you are paying by the click. The trouble is, the sites that the content ads are showing up on are also being paid per click and this is where you have the greatest risk of click fraud. Click fraud is where people come up with automated tools or even hire people off-shore to click on links on a site just to get payments for the site owner. Google and Yahoo work hard to detect and eliminate this problem, but where money is involved people can be very creative.

Another problem with the content ad is that I'm not sure how well the search engines do in matching the ad to the content of the site. For example, a news article might discuss a study that shows church members have fewer accidents and are therefore lower risk for automobile insurance. Because the words "church" and "insurance" appear in this article, your ad might show up although this may or may not be an appropriate audience.

Long story short, I look at whether the traffic from the content ads seem to be converting into leads/sales at an acceptable rate. Usually they don't. So usually I turn them off.

We answer questions from journalists sometimes. See the latest quote from me on Microsoft's site:
<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/officelive/FX102174191033.aspx>

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