



# CASE STUDY COLLECTION

**From Keywords to Analytics:**  
5 MarketingSherpa PPC case studies

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## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the *Case Study Collection: Paid Search*. The *MarketingSherpa 2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Report* survey found that 58% of respondents expect to increase their budget on SEO, paid search and Google AdWords.

To help you achieve the best return on that investment, this collection of MarketingSherpa case studies covers five core areas of paid search:

**Keywords** – In the first case study, read about keyword selection, bidding and management tactics featuring a specialty hotel that was able to overcome an initially failing pay-per-click (PPC) strategy and eventually uncover impressive results.

**Landing Pages** – The “click” in pay-per-click should take your prospective customer to a landing page that will help drive final conversion. The second case study in this group illustrates how matching the value proposition on the landing page to visitors’ expectations can drive success.

**Mobile** – This case study offers several tips tailored to mobile paid search including: click-to-call rather than click through to a landing page, targeting broader keywords and adding site links below the ad copy.

**Tracking and Analytics** – Tracking and analytics are usually related in that the tracked metrics are then analyzed for insights that can improve campaigns. The next two case studies in this collection feature teams that used information created in PPC campaigns to reduce cost per lead.

Like all MarketingSherpa case studies, each of these featured articles includes the steps taken by each team to address a paid search marketing challenge and the results of their efforts. We hope that you can learn from these case studies and take something to your campaigns to improve your company’s paid search performance.



**David Kirkpatrick**  
Manager of Editorial Content  
MarketingSherpa

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# 7 Tips for Creative Testing & Optimization



For paid search programs, big and small, creative optimization remains the single most impactful strategy for increasing traffic, lowering costs, and acquiring more revenue. Testing helps marketers discover more prospects and often increases visitor engagement after the click.

## 1. Create a Test Plan

Here are some ideas to get you started.

TEST	DESCRIPTION	CONSIDERATION	EXAMPLE
Display URL	Test the keyword as the subdomain or extension of the display URL	Increase CTR by mimicking organic search results	<i>baseball.powpowsports.com</i> <i>powpowsports.com/baseball</i>
Symbols	Test the trademark or registered symbol. Test "and" or "&"	Increase CTR with symbols that draw attention	<i>Pow Pow Sports™</i> <i>Hiking boots &amp; backpacks</i>
Call to Action	Test a call to action	Increase engagement by priming your audience on the action to be taken	<i>Shop today and save!</i> <i>Sign up today!</i>
Price	Test the price of the product or service	Qualify traffic by including price points. Draw attention with numbers	<i>Baseball shoes starting at \$19.99</i> <i>Offers as low as \$120.00 per month</i>
USP	Test unique selling points/propositions	Improve CTR and conversion rates by differentiating from competitors	<i>110% Price Match Guarantee</i> <i>Free Shipping!</i>
Brands	Test popular brands for generic keywords	Increase CTR and relevancy with recognizable brands	<i>Including Nike, Adidas and Reebok</i> <i>North Face snowboarding jackets</i>
Discounts	Test discounts, sales and time sensitive offers	Increase CTR and conversion rates by creating a USP and sense of urgency	<i>Save up to 30% off!</i> <i>Offer ends 7/1/14</i>
Seasonality	Test seasonal events and periods	Increase time of purchase relevancy and create a sense of urgency	<i>Gear up for Summer</i> <i>Shop Cyber Monday deals!</i>

## 2. Consider Dynamic Keyword Insertion

Inserting {keyword:default text} into the ad headline, description line or display URL dynamically populates the creative to include the keyword that triggered the creative.

## 3. Prioritize Tests Based on ROI

To optimize creative at scale, prioritize tests to focus on groups with the most potential to shift overall account performance, e.g., a high share of impressions, clicks or conversions.

## 4. Limit Test Elements

Limiting the number of elements within a creative test makes it easier to identify why one creative performed better than another.

## 5. Check Campaign Rotation Settings

Ensuring even creative rotation is one of the most commonly overlooked steps when implementing a creative test. Google offers three creative rotation settings: optimize for clicks, optimize for conversions and rotate evenly.

## 6. Implement Tracking Before Each Test

Once a new test has been launched, it is critical to take note and track the where and when of each new creative. Where in the account is the creative being tested? And when was the creative activated?

## 7. Reach Statistical Significance And Stop

Online marketers often end creative tests too early or let them run for too long. Achieving significance leaves little doubt that a new creative outperforms the other creative in the statistical group.

Marin Software provides search, social and display advertisers a powerful and easy-to-use online ad management platform. Using Marin Software, marketers are able to create, analyze and iterate campaign tests for maximizing revenue across publishers and channels, including Google, Bing, and Facebook. Advertisers around the world manage more than \$6 Billion in annualized ad spend on Marin. For more information, please email us at [info@marinsoftware.com](mailto:info@marinsoftware.com), subscribe to our blog at [insights.marinsoftware.com](https://insights.marinsoftware.com) or follow us @marinsoftware. **Start a free trial of Marin Software today.**

# KEYWORDS: HOW HEATHMAN LODGE INCREASED SALES 75% WITH KEYWORD-DRIVEN PPC STRATEGY

by David Kirkpatrick, Manager of Editorial Content

Keywords are a primary component to any pay-per-click ad campaign, and keeping track of what works is an important part of the entire strategy.

One hotel revamped its entire PPC campaign with new landing pages and a new approach to keyword management, uncovering top-assisting keywords, and buying paid search ads for high-performing inbound keywords. After just four months, the results were very impressive.

## CHALLENGE

Heathman Lodge, a specialty hotel in the Pacific Northwest, began an unsuccessful pay-per-click ad campaign that suffered from using overly broad keywords, no testing of PPC ad text and clicks led visitors to the hotel's homepage instead of to a customized landing page tied to the ad.

To improve the initial results, the company learned from this initial stumble that it needed to tighten its entire approach based around a complete revamping of its website, new landing pages tied to the PPC campaign, and three strategic search areas – keyword management, uncovering top-assisting keywords and buying high-performing natural search keywords, including branded keywords.

*... the company learned from this initial stumble that it needed to tighten its entire approach based around a complete revamping of its website, new landing pages tied to the PPC campaign, and three strategic search areas ...*

The new PPC effort was exclusively tied to one search engine, was tracked via the new landing pages, and the entire spend was very low, just exceeding \$500 per month for the first four months of the campaign.

### AdWords Ad:

#### [The Heathman Lodge](#)

Ad

Heathman Lodge is rated 'Excellent' by Trip Advisor. Book a room today!

[+ Show map of heathmanlodge.com locations near Vancouver, WA](#)

[www.heathmanlodge.com/Vancouver](http://www.heathmanlodge.com/Vancouver)

[Book a Room!](#)   [Email Offers](#)  
[Plan an Event](#)

The results from this campaign are very impressive. Brian McClary, Director of Revenue, North Pacific Management (parent company for Heathman Lodge), explained, "In January, we had 105 total conversions and we did \$16,040 in revenue."

In October, before the new PPC campaign, Heathman Lodge had only 41 conversions and made just \$6,093 in revenue through PPC ads.

Read on to learn what the team discovered from their initial underperforming efforts, a high-level look at the different types of keyword strategies you may want to consider for your own PPC campaigns, and how Heathman Lodge ultimately drove a significant revenue increase with the new optimized PPC campaign.

## CAMPAIGN

### Step #1. Use keyword management to optimize relevance and ROI

This step was crucial in driving end results, but more importantly, it helped maintain the limited budget.

McClary asked, “How can we get the biggest bang for our buck?”

To do so, it was important to keep track of keywords that had a very high cost-to-click number and weren’t converting to sales. In this case, the keywords that underperformed were general, odd-matched keywords such as “Portland,” “Oregon” and “Washington.”

More specific keywords and phrases like “Vancouver Washington Hotel,” which was not a branded keyword, created both more exposure for Heathman Lodge through the paid search effort, and more conversions (defined as sold hotel rooms).

Identifying the top-performing keywords in the campaign was important because these words and phrases were used to guide the content of the landing pages tied to the campaign, as well as the entire hotel website.

McClary explained that the team built their campaign landing pages based on the ad keywords, and tied the hotel room booking engine to the landing pages to make the entire buying process very easy for prospective guests.

Top keywords were uncovered by looking at clickthrough rate, conversions in the form of a booked hotel room, clicks, cost per click and pausing keywords that weren’t contributing to the bottom line. In PPC campaigns, results can be tracked in real time, so keywords that aren’t performing can be removed or paused from the effort.

In Heathman Lodge’s case, paused keywords typically had a high cost per click, but weren’t generating income.

At the beginning of the new PPC campaign, keywords were used across four match types:

**Broad match** – The ad may be displayed for a search query with any similar phrases or seemingly relevant variations. For example, if you buy “Vancouver Washington Hotel,” the ad may display next to a query of “What is the best hotel in Vancouver Washington?” but also “Washington D.C. hotel.” So, while the number of times the ad is displayed will be high, relevance will likely be lower than the below alternatives. To buy a broad match ad, do not use any punctuation when entering the keyword.

**Phrase match** – The ad will display for searches matching the exact phrase in that sequence, but other words may be included in the search query as well. For example, if you chose “Vancouver Washington Hotel,” the ad will display if a user’s search query contained that exact term by itself, but would also display for “Vancouver Washington Hotel review.” However, it would not display for “Hotel Vancouver Washington.”

For some keywords, this can make a big difference. For example, a user searching for “dish soap” may be looking for Palmolive, but a user search for “soap dish” may be looking for a nice piece of ceramic or porcelain. While search will be lower, relevance will likely be much higher than broad match. To buy a phrase match ad, put the keyword inside quotation marks.

**Exact match** – The search query by the user must be the exact same as the keyword you buy. For example, if you chose “Vancouver Washington Hotel,” the ad will only display if a user’s search query contained that exact term with no extra words, but wouldn’t display for a user that searched “Hotel Vancouver Washington” or “Vancouver Washington Hotel review.” The volume is low, but you can have a high probability that you’re reaching a highly relevant audience. Plus, the cost will likely be lower as well, since you will likely have less competition for those exact keywords. To buy an exact match, you put the keyword inside brackets when purchasing the ad.

**Negative match** – The ad will not display with certain keywords. As above, which keywords the ad does not display next to depends on whether you choose a negative broad match, negative phrase match or negative exact match. For example, if you bought a broad match of “Vancouver Washington Hotel” but added a negative broad match for “DC,” your ad shouldn’t display for users looking for a hotel in Washington, D.C.

To buy a negative match, put a negative sign in front of the keywords, and use the punctuation referenced in the bullets above to determine where it will be negative broad, negative phrase or negative exact.

Successful keywords were uncovered using a keyword tool, and as the campaign created more data on top-performing keywords, those that were underperforming and matched types with low CTR, no conversions or no clicks were weeded out of the effort by pausing or deleting the unsuccessful keywords and phrases from the campaign.

The team is not currently doing any optimization or testing, but does have plans to eventually test both landing pages and the PPC ads.

## Step #2. Uncover the top-assisting keywords

Top-assisting keywords are the first keyword a user clicks, but does not convert during that website visit. When the same user returns through another keyword and makes a conversion by reserving a hotel room, the assisting keywords are those from the initial touch and search query. In effect, the first keyword “assists” in the final click resulting in conversion through a later visit via a new keyword.

It’s important to look at both the broad-match keywords and the phrase-match keywords. For this PPC effort, five keywords were uncovered as the top-assisting keywords through the keyword tool:

- Vancouver WA
- Seattle Washington Hotels
- Vancouver Washington Hotels
- Vancouver WA Hotels
- Hotels in Vancouver WA

These actual phrases drove the best performance, and the campaign utilized every search match type to see if broad, exact or phrase matches generated the most awareness and contact in the campaign.

## Step #3. Buy keywords that already drive organic traffic

There is a certain reluctance to bid on keywords that are already driving organic search traffic. In this campaign, Heathman Lodge realized its customers might not be booking the hotel room immediately so there was some advantage to buying branded keywords along with general keywords such as “Vancouver Hotels” or “Portland Hotels.”

One advantage to buying the branded keywords was the team realized customers weren’t going to necessarily book a hotel room on the first visit. If they find the Heathman Lodge website through a search with general keywords, and later actually search the branded keyword of “Heathman Lodge” because they remembered the website from the initial visit, having the branded keyword in the campaign puts Heathman Lodge’s website “front and center” for both organic search results and for paid search.

This strategy may seem counterintuitive because keywords are purchased for searches reaching the website at no cost, but buying organic keywords that are top inbound channels is effective in a number of areas:

- It helps you “own” the search engine results page because PPC ads appear above organic results and often take up a significant portion of the top of the page real estate
- The strategy protects the brand from competitors (when you buy branded keywords)
- Not all users click on organic search results
- PPC ads allow you to control the messaging
- PPC ads allow you to control your targeting
- This can help improve account quality score

McClary added that this strategy tied into the overall PPC campaign and the revamped website with new landing pages tied to the online ads.

## Step #4. Learn from previous campaigns

The original PPC effort had a number of problems.

It did not use or test all keyword match types, including broad match, phrase match, exact match and negative match, for best performance.

The keywords used in the original campaign tended to be very general and competitive terms.

Some of the PPC campaigns were targeting the entire United States rather than staying focused on the Pacific Northwest region, and this meant it was creating Web visits from less targeted and less ready-to-convert visitors.

It wasn’t a branded campaign. It didn’t include landing pages specific to the ads so clicks were simply going to the hotel’s homepage, and the actual ad text was not being tested.



The current PPC effort addressed all these problem areas by:

- Very specifically geotargeting the Pacific Northwest region (see creative sample below)
- Testing multiple variations of ad text to uncover best performing ads
- Utilizing all keyword match types
- Sending clicks to landing pages that are specifically created for the ad (see creative sample below)
- Including a strategy to really own the search engine results page

Here are some more results:

- 81% increase in return on ad spend over four months
- 75% increase in hotel reservations over four months
- 74% decrease in cost per click over four months
- 2,464% return on ad spend
- Over the four-month period, the total media spend was \$1,909, and revenue generated was \$41,420

Originally published as: *"PPC Campaign: Marketer learns from unsuccessful campaign to deliver 75% increase in sales"*

**AdWords Ad – with Location Extension Expanded:**

**The Heathman Lodge** Ad

Heathman Lodge is rated 'Excellent' by Trip Advisor. Book a room today!  
[Hide map of heathmanlodge.com locations near Vancouver, WA](#)

Find locations near

Example: 10 market st, san francisco

**A** 7805 NE Greenwood (360) 816-6100 - [Direct](#)

**B** 7801 NE Greenwood (360) 254-3100 - [Direct](#)

**C** 6233 NE 78th Court, (503) 251-2000 - [Direct](#)

[www.heathmanlodge.com/Vancouver](http://www.heathmanlodge.com/Vancouver)

[Book a Room!](#) [Email Offers](#)  
[Plan an Event](#)

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**THE HEATHMAN LODGE**

RESERVATIONS SPECIALS/PACKAGES ACCOMMODATIONS SERVICES & FEATURES MEETINGS & EVENTS WEDDINGS DINING SUSTAINABILITY OUR AREA

**Winter Warmer Deal**  
 50% OFF YOUR 2nd NIGHT!  
[CLICK HERE](#)

**BOOK YOUR STAY**

**HUDSON'S**

**VISIT OUR BLOG**

**SIGN UP FOR OUR NEWSLETTER**

**PLAN AN EVENT RFP**

**Bravo!**  
 Heathman Lodge rated "Excellent" by 113 travelers

**iStayGreen**  
 VERY GOOD RATING  
 3 Green Eco-Leaflets  
 The Heathman Lodge  
 Vancouver, WA, Seattle

Discover how the Northwest was meant to be seen at the rustic Heathman Lodge, the best hotel in Vancouver Washington. Built with hand-hewn logs and adorned with decor indigenous to the area, The Heathman Lodge resonates as the true flavor of the Northwest. Conveniently located in the heart of Vancouver, Washington and just minutes from Portland, Oregon, it's been said that with our rustic mountain lodge, comfort of our oversized pine furniture and massive Great Fireplaces, we are "the unexpected urban retreat". We have a great special just for you! Call 10% off our Best Available Rate and stay 3 nights and get one FREE! What a deal! To learn more about this special - [Heathman Lodge Best Hotel Special](#)

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## LANDING PAGES: HOW FIRSTSTREET REDUCED PPC CAMPAIGN COST PER LEAD 20%

by David Kirkpatrick, Manager of Editorial Content

In this B2C case study, we look at why a landing page underwent a major redesign, challenging the prevailing conventional wisdom about the customer. After a couple of mishaps with paid search campaigns, the team at firstSTREET also gained valuable insights about how Google and Bing/Yahoo perform for its audience. The team customized its PPC messages and increased the PPC budget, while driving cost per lead down by 20%.

Steve Parker, Vice President, Direct Marketing Division, firstSTREET, presented this campaign at MarketingSherpa and MarketingExperiments Optimization Summit 2013, and for a MarketingSherpa webinar.

### CHALLENGE

firstSTREET's target audience are baby boomers, and its primary marketing channels skew toward the more traditional – print ads, direct mail, package inserts and Yellow Pages.

Even though the marketing focus is on traditional channels, firstSTREET also maintains a Web presence and is active in digital marketing. Steve Parker, Vice President, Direct Marketing Division, firstSTREET, also regularly conducts testing and optimization on those digital marketing efforts.

In 2012, we presented a case study on one of Parker's radical webpage redesigns that led to a dramatic lift in sales.

This case study is a little different. It illustrates how it's possible to gain important marketing insights when things don't work exactly as planned. Read on to find out what went wrong, what firstSTREET learned from that setback and how Parker's team ended up increasing pay-per-click advertising spending threefold, and reduced the cost per lead 20%.

### CAMPAIGN

The product for this marketing effort was a walk-in bathtub from the Jacuzzi brand. Brand recognition for the target audience was very high, and the purchase was fairly expensive with installation exceeding the cost of the product in many cases.

#### Step #1. Develop the initial marketing strategy

Because the product was expensive, the marketing strategy was a more complex sale than many of the company's other consumer transactions. Parker described the process as a "lead generation game."

Along with the traditional marketing channels, PPC advertising was part of the overall strategy. The messaging was focused on safety.

Parker understood seniors are concerned with safety in their homes, with falling being a particular concern and most of those falls happening in the bathroom.

Also, studies show seniors prefer to remain in their homes as opposed to moving to assisted living.

All of that target audience knowledge informed Parker's idea of messaging around safety in the PPC ads and on the landing page.

The three main drivers of traffic to the landing page in order of importance were PPC advertising, organic search and referrals from the Jacuzzi website.

*The three main drivers of traffic to the landing page in order of importance were PPC advertising, organic search and referrals from the Jacuzzi website.*

## Step #2. Accidents can happen, but make sure to learn from them

For the PPC campaign, firstSTREET was advertising through Google and Bing.

Two accidents involving paperwork issues happened with each PPC vendor causing the ad campaigns to temporarily end on each platform separately.

Obviously, this is not a situation any marketer wants to face, but Parker obtained a key insight from having his Google and Bing PPC campaigns end arbitrarily and at different times.

"What we found out [is] we have a disproportionately effective response out of Bing than we do out of Google," he said.

Parker said he understood the typical industry split was 80% Google and 20% Bing in paid search, but for firstSTREET, that split was closer to 50/50.

The company's data showed AOL was the best driver of organic traffic conversion on the website. Given that, Parker understood his customer base – seniors – probably were PC users who relied on the default search engine on their computer. In this case, Bing.

Even though Parker wasn't able to clearly prove why Bing paid search was driving more than the expected traffic, the two mishaps with two PPC vendors provided firstSTREET with valuable insights into how to market to its target audience.

## Step #3. Be willing to change your value proposition

Learning Bing was performing at a disproportionate level compared to Google in paid search was a key insight on a tactical level. At the same time, Parker was testing the value proposition for the walk-in tub and uncovered another major finding for messaging.

The initial strategy was branding the paid search campaigns and landing page around the idea of safety, appealing to a known concern for the target audience of seniors.

*“Like most good ideas, they come from the consumers,” he said. “They don’t come from all of us sitting around in our ivory towers.”*

Parker listened to firstSTREET customers and found a more effective message.

“Like most good ideas, they come from the consumers,” he said. “They don’t come from all of us sitting around in our ivory towers.”

Parker said he spoke with firstSTREET’s sales team and people who’ve actually installed the walk-in tubs, and found out the Jacuzzi brand resonated with the target audience and was actually a selling point.

firstSTREET’s customers were viewing the walk-in tub as more than a bathroom fixture.

The result of this insight was a redesigned landing page emphasizing the brand, and new messaging for the paid search campaigns (see creative sample on next page).

The value proposition for the marketing message changed from a focus on safety and health to a focus on luxury based on customer insights gained from speaking with people who directly dealt with those customers.

## Step #4. Tailor PPC campaigns for each vendor

Parker said it’s easy to simply replicate PPC advertising across different platforms, but that it’s worth the time and effort to tailor campaigns for different vendors.

“Bing is important enough to us that we actually care about the differences between Google and Bing,” Parker said. “Our best ad isn’t the same on Google and Bing.”


Parker explained:

- Every time we meaningfully increase the conversion rate, our cost per lead and cost per sale go down. This lets us chase the next level of keywords and other cost-per-action media that was borderline or slightly above our target prior to the conversion rate.
- Our learning about Bing/Yahoo’s performance relative to Google certainly boosted spending. We had started using Bing well prior to this case study. However, it was getting very little attention.

Step one was just paying more attention to Bing than simply porting over the best Google campaigns and putting them on autopilot.


Step two was leveraging the higher response rates and lower cost per lead to be more aggressive on Bing than on Google. This affects keyword breadth, bidding strategy and is just starting to affect campaign themes.

Step three, which is a work in progress, was looking harder at what Bing offers relative to Google and taking advantage of their unique capabilities. This includes some targeting capabilities, testing creative differences and generally treating them as equal to Google in importance.



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**Our Customers Say....**

We recently purchased and installed the walk-in Jacuzzi tub. We can't begin to tell you how pleased we are with it. It is everything we expected and more! Your sales people were friendly and helpful. The...

— Laverne & Keith H.

[See More Testimonials](#)


**Finally! Jacuzzi Makes Bathing Safe & Affordable Again**

**Staying independent at home never felt so good!**

There is nothing like the simple pleasure of taking a warm bath. The cares of the day seem to fade away, along with the aches and pains of everyday life.

Unfortunately for many seniors with mobility issues, the fear of slipping and falling has made their bathtub seem dangerous. And with good reason...over 13 million American seniors will suffer a fall this year, with most falls happening in the bathroom. Now there's a simple, affordable solution that combines safety with revitalizing hydrotherapy and protects your independence.

**Imagine that... a bath tub with a door!**



Meet the Jacuzzi® walk in tub. It's unlike any other walk-in tub in the market today.

The low, safe step and easy-to-use door are your gateway to a bath that invigorates your full day. No more stepping precariously over your tub's high side wall. Instead, step into your own personal Jacuzzi hydrotherapy experience.

Close the leak-proof door and relax on the comfortable, raised seat. Let the warm, soothing water fill the tub. The tall walls let you soak up to your neck for total body therapy. Press a button and the Jacuzzi patented jets start their magic.

The patented Jacuzzi PointPro™ jet system features high-volume, low-pressure pumps with a perfectly balanced water to air ratio to massage thoroughly yet gently. Some swirl, some spiral, some deliver large volumes of water and others target specific pressure points. They're arranged in precise locations that deliver a therapeutic massage, yet they are fully adjustable so that your bathing experience can be completely unique.

You've known the Jacuzzi brand for decades as the company that perfected hydrotherapy with their famous hot tubs. Now they've combined their pain-relieving, rejuvenating technology with the safety you need – all in a feature packed, luxurious and affordable tub that fits your unique tub space.

Call Today For More Info!  
**1-888-670-3599**

**Send me free information on a walk in tub for my home:**

First Name:

Last Name:

Email:

Phone:

Zip Code:

[Get My Free Info](#) \*All fields required

**Watch and Learn More**

Walk In Tubs by Jacuzzi YouTube

## RESULTS

Because paid search was the key driver in landing page traffic for this product, there were two key metrics around this effort:

- After gaining insight into what really worked, PPC campaign spending increased threefold
- Even though spending went up, cost per lead decreased 20%

Another important result was even though digital marketing takes a backseat at firstSTREET simply because of its targeted senior citizen customer base, Parker said this effort proved the website can also drive conversion to sale.

Interestingly, once Parker gained insights into the value proposition of the product and was able to quickly test and validate those discoveries on the website and in PPC campaigns, those insights were applied to firstSTREET's print advertising as well.

Finally, about those accidents leading to important takeaways into firstSTREET's paid search?

Parker said, "You know, ignorance is bliss, but it's not good for your business."

*Originally published as: "PPC Marketing: Two accidents reduce cost per lead 20%"*

*Featured in the MarketingSherpa webinar: "Optimization: A discussion about an e-commerce company's 500% sales increase"*



# MOBILE PAID SEARCH: HOW KING SCHOOLS UTILIZED PAID MOBILE SEARCH TO GENERATE 103% MORE CONVERSIONS

by Adam Sutton, Senior Reporter

Smartphones and tablets continue to gain popularity and mobile search is growing right alongside them. Double-digit increases last year caught the interest of many marketers who have started to test mobile PPC ads to find what works.

This marketing team used ads to convince 25% more of its mobile visitors to call on the phone instead of clicking to the website. Learn five tips to help you weigh the opportunity, choose better keywords and connect with mobile searchers.

## CHALLENGE

The use of search engines on desktop computers may have peaked. The number of searches in the U.S. declined in 2012 for the first time, falling 3%, according to comScore.

Mobile search is exploding. It grew 26% from March to December 2012, and searches on tablets increased 19% from April to December 2012, according to the Local Search Association.

Some analysts predict mobile search will soon eclipse desktops in search volume and PPC revenue. Marketers are positioning themselves in front of the trend and 42% are buying mobile PPC ads, according to the *MarketingSherpa 2012 Search Marketing Benchmark Report – PPC Edition*.

*Mobile search is exploding. It grew 26% from March to December 2012, and searches on tablets increased 19% from April to December 2012, according to the Local Search Association.*

Among those marketers is Pamela Olson, Marketing Manager, King Schools. King Schools provides home-study courses for pilots to help them prepare for aviation exams. Almost half of the site's traffic comes from paid search. Smartphones account for 5% of its traffic and growing.

"I've noticed an increase in phone calls coming in," Olson said. "People are driven to call on their mobile device more than they were in the past."

Olson heads the company's PPC program and has overseen an annual increase in conversions on the company's website of about 50% for the last two years. During that time, she's targeted mobile users with search ads to learn more about their preferences and behavior. Below are five tips she shared from her work.

## TIP #1. WEIGH THE OPPORTUNITY

Mobile search traffic is increasing broadly, but not evenly, across the Web. It's only a fraction of the traffic at King Schools, but some companies see 25% or more of visitors coming from smartphones and tablets.

Before you spend hours honing your mobile PPC ads, check your website analytics and gauge the size of the audience. Make sure it's large enough to give you a good return on investment.

Also, check how many visitors are coming to you on smartphones versus tablets. You may find you have to accommodate one device more than the other.

"I find it much more interesting to see who is searching by tablet than by [smartphone] because the tablet market is definitely increasing for us," Olson said.

## TIP #2. USE CLICK-TO-CALL LINKS

Like every other marketing department, resources are tight at King Schools. The size of the company's smartphone audience means creating a mobile site is not a priority. Olson strives to connect with the audience in other ways.

One way she does this is with click-to-call buttons. Since adding them to the team's mobile PPC ads, about 25% more smartphone users call the company instead of clicking to the website, she said.

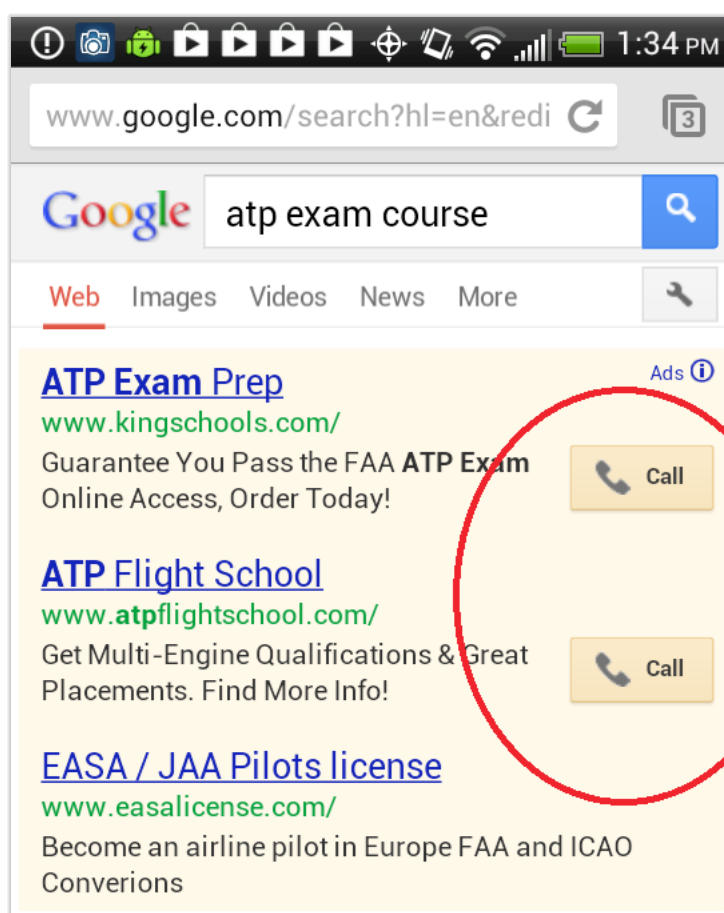
"I really would rather have them speak with somebody than go to the website. I think being able to speak with a peer is more important than flipping through a website as a mobile user," Olson explained.

### Emphasize the value of calling

To encourage mobile users to make the call, Olson writes the ads to emphasize callers will speak with a specialist instead of a generic operator. This is done with ad copy, such as:

- "Call now to speak to a pilot adviser!"
- "Speak to a pilot adviser today!"

"When people can relate and say, 'I'm speaking with another peer, another pilot,' that's going to help them a great deal in their confidence in calling," Olson said.





### TIP #3. ADD SITE LINKS

“Site links” are a feature of PPC ads allowing marketers to include several links to their websites below the ad copy. For example, a retailer can have a main link to a homepage and several links below it promote specific product category pages.

Adding site links to the team’s mobile PPC ads helps people get the information they want faster, Olson said. They can also emphasize appealing aspects of the business (see creative sample on next page).

“I like people to know about us, who we are as a company, and what separates us from the competition,” Olson said. “People can see our guarantee before they even click through to the website.”

Examples of the site links used by King Schools:

- “Your guarantee” – Link to a description the company’s money-back guarantee
- “Legendary instructors” – Link to a description of the company’s founders
- “ATP courses” and “CFII courses” – Links to specific aviation courses

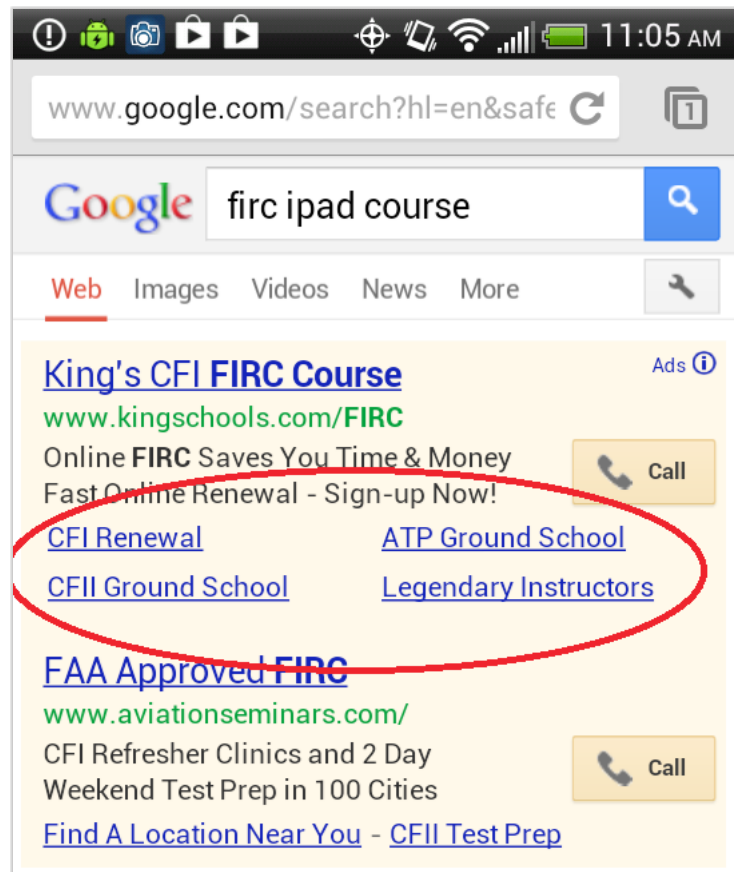
“Provide as much information to your target audience as possible without them having to dig further on your website,” Olson said.

### TIP #4. TARGET BROADER KEYWORDS

Marketers can target PPC ads to specific phrases or general ones by using match types (as seen in the first case study in this collection). For example, you can target the exact phrase “white wine glasses” and only show ads for searches containing that phrase. That’s called phrase match.

You can also target ads to searches that are generally related to “white wine glasses.” That’s called broad match.

“Mobile users are not searching for long, intricate sentences,” Olson said. “I stay away from the phrase match unless it’s a phrase that is a signature phrase everyone uses.”



*“Mobile users are not searching for long, intricate sentences,” Olson said. “I stay away from the phrase match unless it’s a phrase that is a signature phrase everyone uses.”*

## Try modified broad match

For mobile ads, Olson prefers a hybrid of the two called modified broad match. It allows marketers to specify words that must be contained in the search query as well as words that are generally related to it. This allows marketers to target ads more closely than with broad match, but not quite as narrowly as phrase match.

For example, you can specify that a search must have the word “glasses” and something related to “white wine.” This would potentially display the ad for a search of “chardonnay glasses.”

## TIP #5. ADJUST LANDING PAGE DESIGN

For Olson’s team, the costs of creating dedicated landing pages for smartphone visitors outweigh the benefits. Instead, the team is testing landing pages that work well on desktops and that include features to make it easier on mobile visitors.

“It’s not ideal, but when you have limited resources, you make the best of it,” she said.

For example, the team recently tested a new PPC landing page to offer courses for a private pilot certificate. The new page increased the conversion rate 103% over the old page and increased the number of completed orders 125%.

Here are some of the biggest changes the team made:

- **Fewer links** – The original page had more than a dozen links in the left-hand navigation and more than a dozen listed halfway down the center of the page. The links were listed one after the other, single spaced, which made them difficult to click on smartphones and tablets. On the new page, the team cut the left-hand navigation and simplified the list of links, substituting it for a tool with five tabs. Visitors could click tabs that said “What will I learn?” and “What’s included?” to see more about the product.
- **Bigger call-to-action** – The button on the original page was small, green, and titled “Add to Cart.” The team more than doubled the size of the button to make it easier to click, changed its color to red, and changed the text “Buy Now.”
- **Landing page optimization** – The new page was a radical redesign of the first with many other changes. The team added a headline, sub-headline and bullet points that emphasized the benefits and value of buying the course. The new page also reduced visitor anxiety by using a testimonial and an image of five stars next to a link to customer reviews. It also included a video formatted to play on mobile devices.

“We were able to answer the typical customer questions on these landing pages. It’s really important that our credibility is there and the usability and we don’t want information overload. It needs to be clean and not cluttered,” Olson said.

Originally published as: *“Mobile PPC Advertising: 25% more calls, 103% more conversions using these 5 tips”*

# PPC TRACKING: HOW PAYCHEX USED TRACKING TO INCREASE LEADS 98%

by David Kirkpatrick, Manager of Editorial Content

This case study illustrates how adding data points for analysis can dramatically improve marketing efforts.

In this article, learn how Paychex went from a multiyear trend of rising cost per acquisition on its paid search to increasing its lead generation 98% while decreasing CPA 43%, all by adding the ability to differentiate between phone leads and form leads on its SEM landing pages.

The additional data on phone leads also improved testing and optimization efforts and how the paid search team handled PPC bidding and landing page messaging.

## CHALLENGE

Jesse Kanclerz, Online Advertising Manager, Paychex, a payroll, HR and benefits outsourcing company serving the SMB market, joined the company and began analyzing historical data from its paid search campaigns.

He found cost per acquisition in the paid search channel had been rising over several years, and although there had been some rule-based bidding, the team had never explored automated bidding.

Also, there had been no conversion rate optimization on landing pages for paid search.

Read on to learn how Paychex was able to increase leads 98% while decreasing CPA 43%.

## CAMPAIGN

Kanclerz also learned tracking paid search to online form submissions was “pretty solid,” but the team wasn’t able to track another key area.

### Step #1. Uncover problem areas in data collection

That key area was tracking paid search to a phone call generated from the landing page.

Kanclerz said form submission was driving around 65% of Paychex’s leads, and phone calls about 35%. At the same time, those phone calls were valuable leads for the company.

He added the call center would ask callers, “How did you hear about us?” This was not very effective, and many callers would state they reached the company through a search engine, but wouldn’t specify if they came from organic search or a pay-per-click ad.

“So, there is an area there where I recognized that we didn’t have very accurate tracking to determine [if it] is coming from paid search, is it coming from an organic search or an email campaign, or a print piece, or anything like that. So, that was kind of the big decision there, to actually go ahead and use call tracking to kind of fill that gap,” Kanclerz explained.

*“We know that a certain percentage of the calls that are coming in are from a search engine. You know, we are spending ‘X’ amounts on paid search and our cost per acquisition is increasing,” said Jesse Kanclerz, Online Advertising Manager.*

He added, “We know that a certain percentage of the calls that are coming in are from a search engine. You know, we are spending ‘X’ amounts on paid search and our cost per acquisition is increasing.”

“If we can more accurately attribute a phone call to paid search or organic where our cost per acquisition, especially on paid search, was increasing, [and] we were able to decrease our cost per acquisition with the added tracking that we can get from phone call tracking, we can spend this ‘X’ amount of professional service fees on a phone call tracking solution,” he explained.

The important goal was to be able to build the business case through data collection and improve the call center through a professional vendor.

## Step #2. Make sure the technology is in sync

For Paychex, this meant its paid search and call center technology was able to grab and utilize data coming in from paid search clicks, including the values coming in from the URL stream, such as creative ID value and keyword ID value from the clicked ad.

## Step #3. Track the paid search data to individual ads

Kanclerz explained each search engine click leads to a unique URL string that identifies if it is from paid or organic search. From there, a script pulls a unique phone number into the landing page with tracking information tied to that number if the visitor calls it. For the visitor, the unique numbers look like the default number on the landing page.

If the call happens during that website visit, the system knows the keyword and creative from the specific PPC ad, if the visit comes from paid search.

“On the Paychex side, our system is set up where a unique code will then display on the phone rep’s screen,” Kanclerz said. “Maybe it’s a non-brand paid search keyword, or maybe it’s a brand paid search keyword, or maybe it’s from an organic search, and then the rep then writes that down.”

He added the next stage for this program is to automate that final process where the rep doesn’t have to write anything down.

When the phone rep sends the call information to the sales team for follow-up, the salesperson gets qualifying information on the call uncovered by the phone rep, like company demographics and product interest, and they also get the “under-the-hood” data provided by that unique landing page URL.

#### Step #4. Apply the tracking to other marketing channels

Before the tracking system was in place, Paychex thought paid search accounted for 10% to 15% of leads. After the tracking system was in place, the team realized that the number of leads from paid search was really 35%.

That data point immediately reduced the CPA for paid search because a much higher percentage of telephone leads were coming in via PPC campaigns than the team previously could state with confidence.

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*Before the tracking system was in place, Paychex thought paid search accounted for 10% to 15% of leads. After the tracking system was in place, the team realized that the number of leads from paid search was really 35%.*

Kanclerz said once the proof of concept showed this tracking was working well with paid search, it piqued the interest of other teams within the marketing department.

For example, the email marketers were interested in finding out which campaigns were performing better through phone calls rather than form submissions. This was an area the company was still in the process of implementing.

#### Step #5. Use the data to improve bidding strategy, messaging and conversion optimization

Even though Kanclerz said the new insights had a higher impact on bidding strategy, it also altered the messaging strategy on the landing pages.

The main change was how prominent the phone number appeared on the landing page.

These discoveries also impacted conversion optimization because previously, the team was only looking at optimizing form submissions. With the ability to track phone calls, both methods of lead generation were taken into account when testing and optimizing.

“We can look at our landing page test and say, ‘OK, here are our overall conversion rates between version A and version B. But why did version A convert better than B? Was it actually generating more form submissions or was it actually generating more calls?’” Kanclerz asked.

## Step #6. Use new insights to improve automated bidding

Kanclerz said automated bidding based on products and geographics was impacted by new insights into phone leads over form leads.

“The more complicated a specific service is, the more likely that we are able to get a phone call,” he said. “And, usually the higher value that specific call is.”

With geographics, the team was plotting cost per lead by ZIP code and metropolitan areas. Areas with higher margin products impacted bidding strategies accordingly.

Kanclerz said the next step was to adjust bids down to form versus phone leads into this deep data dive on paid search campaigns.

## RESULTS

This entire effort provided Paychex two key results:

- Leads increased 98% from 2011 to 2012
- CPA decreased 43% during the same time frame

Kanclerz said the team does track other KPIs, such as cost per impression, but volume of lead gen and CPA are the two major metrics tracked.

He also said a major takeaway from this effort was having the ability to pull data from the different technology pieces and have them all work together.

The key word for this was “flexibility” – the flexibility in all the various pieces to be in sync so the team could gain insights from all of the collected data.

Originally published as: *“PPC Marketing: Call tracking increases leads 98%, decreases CPA 43%”*

# PPC ANALYTICS: WHY SMARTSHEET PUT AN ENGINEER IN CHARGE OF PPC ADS AND ACHIEVED A 37% REDUCTION IN COST PER LEAD

by David Kirkpatrick, Manager of Editorial Content

Because of the sheer volume of data they produce, PPC ads lend themselves to a great deal of metrics analysis. Everything from information about clicks to ad performance numbers can be obtained on a real-time basis.

In this unique case study, learn how an engineering- and analytics-driven SaaS company took a counterintuitive approach by putting a software engineer in charge of its PPC campaign and created a director of marketing analytics role.

## CHALLENGE

Pay-per-click ad campaigns were an important part of lead generation at Smartsheet, a software-as-a-service company with an online project and work management tool.

Although its numbers were solid, the company desired more from these efforts. They wanted metrics that tracked the value of different campaigns through the sales cycle that could provide performance numbers illuminating what worked, and what didn't work, with its PPC ads.

Learning what worked with PPC campaigns could improve those important lead gen results, and tracking each ad through the pipeline would provide ROI data to justify future ad budgets.

*Learning what worked with PPC campaigns could improve those important lead gen results, and tracking each ad through the pipeline would provide ROI data to justify future ad budgets.*

Finding more traditional PPC efforts lacking, particularly in data collection and analysis, Smartsheet went in a completely new direction and hired one of its internal engineers to take over the PPC function.

In this case study, we'll take a look at why Smartsheet decided to take this route and how the transformation.

You may not want to take such a drastic step with your own PPC function, but this case study offers insights into how an engineering- and analytics-driven company views PPC execution and defines its success.

## CAMPAIGN

The entire idea of changing the role of managing PPC ads at Smartsheet was started by its Management simply wanting more detailed metrics on the performance of each ad campaign.

## Step #1. Understand there is more science than art in PPC results data

Brent Frei, Co-Founder and Executive Chairman, Smartsheet, said the company was getting more than 35,000 people to sign up for a trial version of its product each month, with a significant portion of this number coming from its PPC ads. PPC ads make up less than half – still a significant percentage – of Smartsheet’s lead generation, so completely rethinking its PPC function was a business gamble.

He said the company looked to catch prospects searching for specific keywords around its business area, such as:

- Project management tool
- Simple sales pipeline
- Event management

## What works vs. what doesn’t work

The company’s PPC ad campaigns were handled by its marketing team. By using Web tools, the team knew where those clicks were coming from, and why they arrived at the website. However, the marketing team was, as Frei put it, “just watching the numbers,” and not doing any deeper analysis beyond the number of leads generated and website traffic information.

By only looking at these limited metrics there was no understanding about what was, or was not, working in PPC campaigns. Management knew with the wealth of data coming in for each campaign, questions about performance should have corresponding answers.

## A new approach for more results

The decision was made to tackle the PPC effort in an entirely new way, from how the marketing team had been developing and tracking each campaign.

Frei said the company couldn’t tell why things were working, and what changes made a difference in the performance of PPC advertising.

“That was the initial impetus for us sitting down and thinking that we had to approach this a little differently,” he explained.

## Step #2. Define the role for managing PPC ads

Once the decision was made to take PPC ads in a new direction, Management put together a list of attributes they sought in an ideal candidate:

- No preconceived notion about the approach. This ruled out classically trained marketers.
- Needed to think “like a chess player.”



On this, Frei said, “They needed to think about ‘How will I test down many paths at the same time?’ and how each path has its own branches that can occur until really we are oriented around A/B testing in multiple dimensions.”

- They had to be a “data jockey,” to understand data arrays and analysis.
- They had to be technically savvy.

These four attributes led Smartsheet to one conclusion.

“So when we laid those things out – no previous position [in marketing], a chess player, data jockey and technically savvy – that was effectively almost exactly the senior developer criteria,” Frei explained. “And we just thought, ‘Hey, it’s definitely worth the try.’”

The new PPC position even acquired a new job title in the company: director of marketing analytics.

### Step #3. Find the talent

Because Smartsheet was an engineering- and analyst-centric company, it decided to look internally for a candidate to fill the new position and handle the PPC campaigns.

Management posted the job details through a simple internal email and was quickly approached by one of the company’s best developers – the employee Management was targeting for the job, Todd Jones.

Frei said Jones had been instrumental in the distribution side of Smartsheet’s business, and he felt Jones enjoyed the opportunity of seeing his work directly affect the bottom line.

Jones, now Director of Marketing Analytics at Smartsheet, came to the job with 12 years of experience adding new features to existing products and welcomed the new position as “very interesting and very different.”

“Something that I sometimes miss from the engineering side is the progress of when you are actually building something tangible and seeing the action of people getting to use it for the first time,” Jones explained. “But, this is totally different. It is analytical, and is contributing a lot to the success of the company.”

Frei mentioned one negative about hiring Jones to take over PPC ads – losing one really good developer.

But he added, “[That move] has been more than made up for in revenue generation so I don’t know that we look back and say that there was any downside.”

Frei also said, in terms all too familiar to marketers, that Jones accepting the new position was “going over to the dark side.”

### Step #4. Make the change immediate and complete

The idea was to take PPC ads in a completely new direction, and Jones assumed responsibility over the entire function as soon as he was hired for the new position.

Because the original impetus for the change was Management's desire for deeper metrics, Jones' first task was to benchmark PPC data and track campaign results through the sales cycle. Where Marketing had been providing monthly numbers on the different campaigns, Management now wanted to know when those leads turned into revenue.

"It was a pretty hard cut-over," Frei said. "Many people who had found you in January didn't actually become customers until February or March or April. So we needed to build the waterfall analysis that led back to the leads we originally paid for and generated in January."

Once this analysis was complete, Jones began making decisions on what was working, per the job specifications, and begin testing different elements of the ad campaigns.

Frei said Jones was to "just try a bunch of things, see what works out and just 'pour gas' on the ones that do."

"The new position was really exciting in the beginning," Jones said. "Seeing great results at the beginning of a test and watching the numbers converge as you get more sample size."

## Step #5. Use analytics to shorten the learning curve

This focus on hard numbers and analyzing metrics helped shorten Jones' learning curve in the completely new position.

*Jones said a "good portion" of his initial learning came from heavy use of an online ad analytics tool to quickly see what was going on with ad performance.*

From Management's perspective, it took Jones about three or four months to really get a handle on the new job. At that point, Frei said, "He has just been expanding the footprint of what we advertised and the depth of it."

Jones credits his quick start to having plenty of useful data to analyze provided by online tools.

He said a "good portion" of his initial learning came from heavy use of an online ad analytics tool to quickly see what was going on with ad performance and to begin what he described as "contextual targeting."

He began tracking every change made to an ad, and when, in his words, "something happened and the numbers went down," Jones would immediately undo the losing change and begin new campaigns. He also used a testing and optimization tool to run tests on campaign landing pages by continually modifying losing pages and starting new tests while retaining constant tracking within the system.

Describing pioneering the director of marketing analytics position, Jones said, "I mean I didn't really know what I was doing, but when you have concrete numbers to grade you, you quickly get pointed in the right direction."

## RESULTS

Both Smartsheet's Management and its engineer-turned-PPC marketer are pleased with the move.

From the top floor, Frei said simply, “We think we were brilliant,” when describing the company’s big takeaway from this decision.

Jones said he enjoys the opportunity to have an influence over the larger direction of the company beyond his previous role of adding features to existing products, and actually seeing his contribution to the bottom line.

In the two years since Jones took over the PPC function, the basic numbers support Frei’s opinion:

- Paying customers per month attributed to PPC has increased by 2,900%.
- The above number was partly driven by a bigger budget for PPC. But that is part of the success story, too, since the company now had a stronger analysis to justify investment. Metrics showing PPC’s impact on ROI led to a 1,400% increase in the PPC budget.
- Even with the increased budget, PPC cost per lead decreased 37%.

Originally published as: *“Analytics-Driven Marketing: Putting an engineer in charge of PPC ads reduces cost per lead 37%”*

## FROM KEYWORDS TO ANALYTICS: 5 MARKETING SHERPA PPC CASE STUDIES

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## CASE STUDY COLLECTION: PAID SEARCH

Welcome to the *Case Study Collection: Paid Search*. The *MarketingSherpa 2013 Email Marketing Benchmark Report* survey found that 58% of respondents expect to increase their budget on SEO, paid search and Google AdWords.

To help you achieve the best return on that investment, this collection of MarketingSherpa case studies covers five core areas of paid search: keywords, landing pages, mobile, tracking and analytics.

Like all MarketingSherpa case studies, each of these featured articles includes the steps taken by each team to address a paid search marketing challenge and the results of their efforts. We hope that you can learn from these case studies and take something to your campaigns to improve your company's paid search performance.

### The Heathman Lodge

***Learn how Heathman Lodge increased sales 75% with keyword-driven PPC strategy***



***Learn how firstSTREET reduced PPC campaign cost per lead 20%***



***Learn how King Schools utilized paid mobile search to generate 103% more conversions***



***Learn how Paychex used tracking to increase leads 98%***



***Learn why Smartsheet put an engineer in charge of PPC ads and achieved a 37% reduction in cost per lead***

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