



www.nationalholidays.com

Executive Summary

National Holidays is a leading coach holiday operator offering a wide variety of coach holidays to destinations in the UK, Ireland and Europe in a growing but highly competitive market currently worth £2.3bn, and carrying 8 million passengers a year. The company has grown quickly to become one of the UK's leading coach holiday companies. A number of regional reservation centres deliver telephone sales and customer service, with an improved website catering for a rapidly increasing number of online sales both from direct customers and travel agents.

National Holidays instructed us to begin a PPC campaign in May 2010 with the aim of delivering online bookings within an agreed cost per acquisition (CPA) target (cost per booking). From a starting point of over five times this amount, through ongoing optimisation the campaign posted a cost per booking low of 31% of the agreed target. The return on investment following the period of optimisation was over 850%.

Background

The client runs extensive marketing campaigns incorporating brochure, direct mail and email marketing which direct traffic to their website, aside from search engine optimisation which we also run on their behalf. The client had previously tested a campaign using Google AdWords but had not achieved the desired cost per acquisition targets. The client had recently redesigned their website and was keen to prove the effectiveness of new digital marketing initiatives with the intention of diverting more marketing budget from more traditional offline campaigns.

Client Brief and Objectives

- ❏ To bid on keywords covering the whole business to identify the top-converting opportunities.
- ❏ To install conversion tracking to measure KPI targets including online booking cost per acquisitions, total sales value, new versus returning traffic and brochure and email sign ups.
- ❏ To achieve an agreed CPA (cost per booking) target.
- ❏ To test, measure and optimise the campaign to identify new opportunities for conversions.

Strategy Implementation

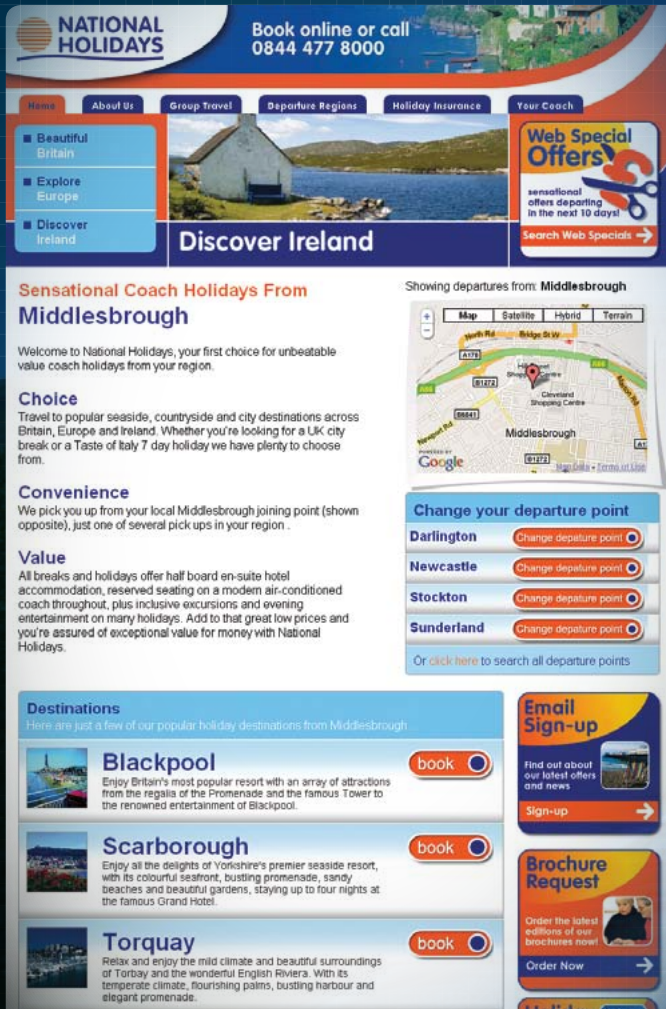
- ❏ We performed keyword research across the range of company coach tours targeting general and long tail type keywords, compiling a list of over 3,200 keywords covering head as well as long tail keywords.
- ❏ We provided recommendations on how to set up conversion tracking within Google AdWords (including the dynamic sales value) and also Goals within Google Analytics to track email signups, brochure requests and funnel visualisation to understand where people were leaving in the sales process.
- ❏ Consulting with the 3rd party developers of the content management and booking system to implement the conversion tracking.



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From the search query analysis it became apparent that the most general coach holiday type keywords were not converting within target. We therefore used the geo-targeting settings within Google AdWords to tie specific destinations from specific departure points. To increase the chances of conversion, we designed and installed new landing pages for this exact purpose. See the example below of one of these landing pages that we created:



In addition to ongoing optimisation and bid management, we made use of the latest features in Google AdWords to maximise return on investment from this campaign, including Search Funnels. We saw that the average conversion time was taking 5.4 days, that there was 1.79 average ad clicks to conversion and 2.81 average ad impressions to conversion. Looking at first click analysis, last click analysis and the top paths (ad impressions and clicks leading to conversion) at the campaign, ad group and keyword level, we were able to structure the campaign to best match the various stages in the buying process. We used ad extensions to highlight some of the top converting destinations tied with geo-targeting to specific departure points.

As a certain percentage of bookings are taken over the telephone, we have recommended third party call tracking software which fits into Google Analytics as a means of establishing the true return from Google AdWords spend. This solution is currently being considered as a next step for the campaign.

Results

- A reduction in cost per acquisition (cost per booking) of up to 94% from the initial starting point.
- As evidence of the extent to which we were able to create relevant ad text based on the targeted keyword searches, click through rates for the campaign continued to rise to a high of over 28%.
- The return on investment following the period of optimisation was over 850%.

Conclusion

This campaign was developed as a test to measure the effectiveness of Google AdWords for this company. The client is now in a position to consider diverting more budget from other marketing channels into paid search as a cost-effective method to generate bookings.

A principal benefit of using Google AdWords for this campaign has been the ability to track the exact return on investment and we have made use of all the tools available for this purpose, delivering measurable ROI for the campaign within the client's target range.

“The Blueclaw team demonstrated an advanced understanding of paid search and have worked well with us to deliver impressive results. Ongoing optimisation, campaign structure and bid management are the keys to making paid search work and this company have proved themselves successful in all these areas.”

Andrew Talbot
Head of E-Commerce
National Holidays

