

CASE STUDY

KOHLER CO. WEB SITES BOOST NATURAL AND PAID SEARCH-GENERATED TRAFFIC

Summary

Kohler has a number of sites representing its various businesses. These sites were of high quality and attractively designed, but for technical reasons much of their content was inaccessible to the web crawlers that search for content on behalf of search engines. As a result the sites were appearing less than they should in the natural search engine results and, because the sites were taking a passive overall approach to search, were not appearing at all in the paid results. Kohler engaged 24/7 Search to improve these outcomes, beginning with the main Kohler site, and progressing from there to the Sterling Plumbing and Kohler Rental sites. While its SEO consultants went about analyzing the sites with a view to adjusting them to be more “search friendly,” 24/7 Real Media’s SEM specialists instituted a keyword-based campaign that resulted in an immediate increase in traffic to the sites. Once Kohler had made the changes to its sites recommended by the SEO consultants, those sites’ presence increased in the search engines’ natural results, and traffic began to flow from that source too.

The Brief

The Kohler family of companies, best known as a worldwide leader in plumbing products, also includes engines and generators, furniture and accessories, cabinetry and tile, and resorts, recreation and real estate. These diverse businesses were all represented on the Web by attractively designed, content heavy sites featuring extensive use of images and Flash components.

Early in 2006 Kohler made the decision to change from a passive stance to the active pursuit of search marketing as a means of driving additional traffic to its site. Kohler had been a 24/7 Real Media client for a number of years, and chose 24/7 Search to provide the advice and technology needed to make its pursuit of search successful.

The Approach

24/7 Real Media approached the problem using a combination of Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Search Engine Marketing (SEM) techniques, the latter utilizing its market-leading Decide DNA technology. Their ultimate aim was to maximize the number of clicks-through to each Kohler site that result from natural searches (the result of successful SEO), while using keyword-driven paid search SEM techniques to boost traffic in the short term and wherever SEO was chronically unsuccessful. This would achieve the best possible combination of cost and effectiveness.

Web crawlers can read neither pictures nor any text that is included in a Flash animation. Since the Kohler sites relied heavily on both of these and had not previously been optimized for search in other ways, when 24/7 Real Media began work all of the sites were under-represented in natural search results. This was the case even when users were entering search terms (e.g. “Kohler shower door”) that featured the company’s own name.

In response to this, 24/7 Real Media’s SEO consultants began an ongoing process of analyzing each site and suggesting changes that Kohler could make to design and content to maximize site visits resulting from natural searches. To date they have completed this analysis for Kohler’s main site and also for the Sterling Plumbing and Kohler Rental sites, and their recommended changes have been made.

Meanwhile, with the aim of providing an immediate boost in traffic, of raising the profile of Kohler brands in search engine results, and of driving business to specific pages (such as online reservation or ordering pages) 24/7 Real Media’s SEM specialists began a keyword-based paid search campaign for the same sites.

Although no specific target was set, 24/7 Real Media’s consultants also recommended building into the sites the ability to track and measure definable events such as completion and sending of sales contact forms, searching for a dealer through the site’s dealer locator or making an online purchase or

reservation. By analyzing the results, Kohler has been able to gauge the effectiveness both of the new campaign as a whole and of its individual elements.

The Results

“Our participating sites have seen an immediate boost in traffic as a result of the paid search effort,” said _____, Kohler’s _____. “Particularly marked were the landings on specific, narrowly targeted, pages. It took a little longer, and some work by our own people, before we began to see results from the SEO element of the program, but that too has produced excellent results both numerically and qualitatively—and once the initial investment is made, it is very satisfying to see that those results just keep on coming.”

The Kohler sites on which 24/7 Search has worked so far have seen an overall increase in clicks-through from search engine results of ??%. [This has been maintained even as the overall contribution of SEM (paid search) has been reduced and the improved natural search results stemming from successful site optimization have come on stream.]

The Meaning of the Results

Web sites can be attractive and informative, but they need to show up in search results in order to be effective for their owners. This can be achieved without changes to site contents using paid search techniques (SEM) involving bidding for keywords and paying for clicks, or with greater effort but at ultimately lower cost by optimizing a site’s contents so that its pages will both be read by search engines’ crawlers and will appear high up in the engine’s natural results. For most sites, a combination of the two methods will provide the best ongoing results, with SEO forming the core of the approach and SEM being used to boost traffic wherever necessary and to drive traffic towards specific pages. 24/7 Search offers the best of both: highly experienced consultants to advise customers on the most effective possible optimization, and the most powerful technology in the business, run by the some of the most skilled SEM specialists in the world, to deal with the highly complex business of paid search.

About 24/7 Real Media, Inc.

24/7 Real Media, a pioneer in interactive marketing and technology, targets and delivers audiences for publishers and marketers. Our customers generate increased revenue and profits through media and search services, coupled with one seamless platform of serving, targeting, tracking and analytics technologies. The company is headquartered in New York, with offices in other major U.S. cities, Canada, Europe, Australia and Asia. For more information, please visit www.247realmedia.com. 24/7 Real Media: Delivering Today, Defining Tomorrow.

About Kohler Co.

Founded in 1873 and headquartered in Kohler, Wis., Kohler Co. is one of America’s oldest and largest privately held companies. Kohler is a global leader in the manufacture of kitchen and bath products, engines and power generation systems, cabinetry, tile and home interiors, and international host to award-winning hospitality and world-class golf destinations.