



Rakuten's Play.com

Cambridge, United Kingdom
www.play.com

Results

- Automatically generated millions of new product-specific keywords for 17 paid search accounts in less than three months
- Increased visits from PLAs more than 40%, leading to a 60% uplift in gross merchandise sales
- Improved pay-per-click returns, increasing visits by 300% and overall gross merchandise sales by 200%
- Realized 200% return by amplifying Facebook posts to target audiences

Rakuten's Play.com

Magnifying search marketing returns

Forward-thinking U.K. online marketplace achieves two-fold and greater increases in site traffic and campaign returns using Adobe Media Optimizer

As one of the top three online marketplaces in the United Kingdom, Rakuten's Play.com has grown from selling DVDs and CDs to having more than 7.2 million active customers browsing and purchasing from a digital catalog of more than two million products. Driven in large part by the company's acquisition in 2011 by global online retailer Rakuten, Rakuten's Play.com today is expanding its product lines and supplier relationships grow as quickly as possible alongside its global counterparts, such as Rakuten.com in the United States and Rakuten.de in Germany.

The dynamic business now aggregates product information online from many sellers so customers can quickly compare and purchase the products best suited to their needs. By partnering with Rakuten's Play.com, third-party vendors are finding a strong channel to expand their product sales, benefiting Rakuten's Play.com, as well as its partners and customers. In the past few months alone, the company has added more than one million merchant stock-keeping units (SKUs).

Integral to Rakuten's Play.com's successful integration and merchandizing of so many new products is Adobe Marketing Cloud, including Adobe Media Optimizer. "With Adobe Media Optimizer for Search, we can effectively manage keywords and paid search campaigns to keep pace with our rapidly expanding product offerings," explains Hollie Underwood, Head of Online Marketing at Rakuten's Play.com. "We evaluated Adobe Media Optimizer side by side with our previous tools and other solutions. The powerful capabilities, including advanced campaign management and product listing ads management, were the best fit in our demanding environment."

Impressive uplifts in traffic and sales

With its commitment to remaining an online marketplace leader, Rakuten's Play.com is continuing to expand its product lines and target new customers. To help achieve its goals, the company enlisted the support of DigitasLBI and Adobe Consulting, realizing impressive results along the way.

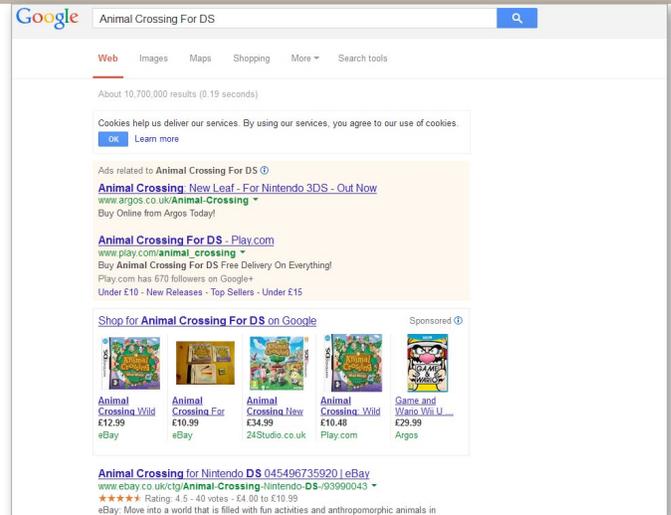
Working with LBI, Rakuten's Play.com—in only three months—successfully restructured 17 paid search accounts, which included a large-scale rearrangement of keywords and their placement into new ad groups. By taking advantage of advanced campaign management (ACM) capabilities in Adobe Media Optimizer, Rakuten's Play.com created more than 500,000 new product-specific keywords in each of the 12 product categories. In addition, Rakuten's Play.com created several product-specific ads and landing pages that incorporated up-to-date prices, availability, and other essential details.

Currently, Rakuten's Play.com changes more than 1,600 bids for product listing ads (PLAs) each day through Adobe Media Optimizer. The rules-based ad management and optimization capabilities in Adobe Media Optimizer allow Rakuten's Play.com to split campaigns into various portfolios to maximize efficiency, and each portfolio can be adjusted daily to map to multiple targets for specific metrics, such as budget and revenue.

"Since standardizing on Adobe Media Optimizer, customer visits from PLAs increased 40%, which led to a 60% uplift in gross merchandise sales (GMS)," says Underwood. "Our focus on improving pay-per-click also saw a considerable return, increasing traffic by 300% and GMS 200%. We initially expected to increase activities by 20%, so the results far exceeded our expectations."

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Hollie Underwood,
Head of Online Marketing,
Rakuten's Play.com



Challenge

- Efficiently transition to a leading online marketplace offering millions of different products across categories
- Deploy a proven, scalable environment to optimize delivering and bidding on millions of product keywords

Solution

- Leveraged Adobe Media Optimizer for Search to improve both PLA and PPC results as Rakuten's Play.com transitioned to a leading online U.K. retailer
- Implemented Adobe Media Optimizer for Social to improve engagement and returns on social channels
- Used Adobe solutions to better forecast marketing portfolio accuracy with automated simulations, including spend and revenues

Systems at a glance

Adobe Marketing Cloud, including Adobe Media Optimizer solution. Capabilities used include:

- Adobe Media Optimizer for Search
- Adobe Media Optimizer for Social

Engaging customers via social media

To continue reaching more customers and better engaging existing ones, the Rakuten's Play.com marketing teams are becoming more active in social media. So far, the winning formula for advertising management and optimization has been to amplify Facebook postings—highlighting positive actions such as purchases, light-touch interactions, or full reviews—and sharing them with targeted groups.

For instance, if a customer posts on Facebook that he had a positive experience buying electronics on Rakuten's Play.com, the online marketplace targets that post to existing fans, their friends, and any audience that the automated campaign management suggests will be interested in the post, such as previous electronics purchasers. "Adobe Media Optimizer helps us to quantify the value of matching specific products to the Rakuten's Play.com core fan base and to other Facebook audiences. We're finding that, like for like, on average a sponsored page post generates 104% uplift in GMS compared to an unsponsored page post," says Underwood.

Based on this success, an expanded role for paid social advertising is being considered at Rakuten's Play.com. It is likely to be implemented once the website has more fully integrated data collection across search and social activities.

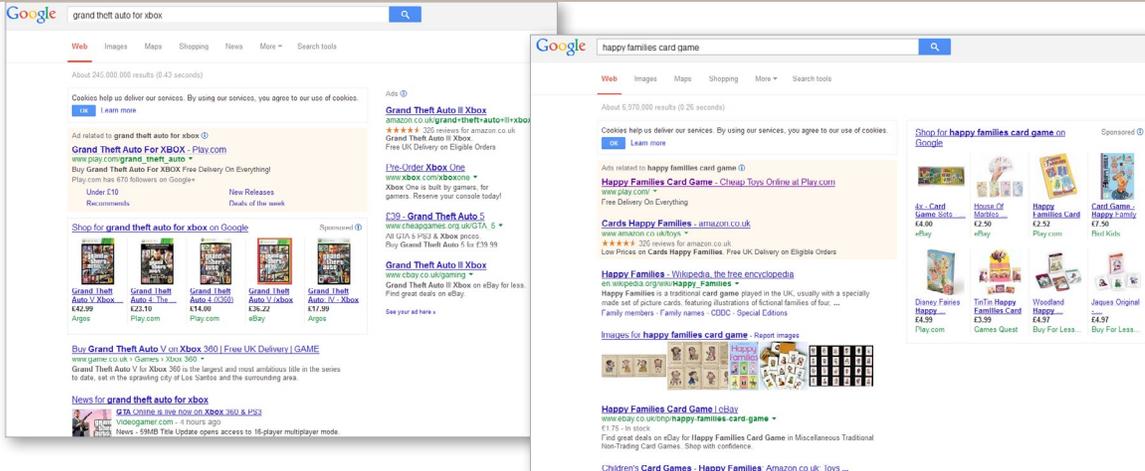
Scaling for rapid growth

Given the company's increase in product volumes, Rakuten's Play.com needed campaign automation that could perform at an industrial scale. With Adobe Media Optimizer, Rakuten's Play.com is now accomplishing many key tasks through automation and advanced functionality, including optimizing keyword selection, bidding, and follow-on attribution.

For example, the ability to use the Adobe solution to automatically generate more than 500,000 new product-specific keywords for each new product category on Rakuten's Play.com proved invaluable for the busy team. "If we had done that manually without Adobe Media Optimizer, it would have taken us well over 5,000 hours," says Underwood.

The advanced campaign management capabilities in Adobe Media Optimizer also give Rakuten's Play.com the flexibility to dynamically show product pricing on CDs, DVDs, and other popular items, which often make up the top of the company's online sales funnel. By immediately showing customers competitive pricing for an item as part of their search results, Rakuten's Play.com is further increasing conversion and revenue.

Adobe Media Optimizer helps Rakuten's Play.com keep pace with the company's growing number of products, keywords, and campaigns with its rules-based ad management and optimization capabilities.



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A foundation for current and future success

With an ongoing stream of new products coming to market, the Rakuten's Play.com digital marketing team needs to be agile and build its strategies on flexible, highly scalable optimization solutions. As such, the team continually evolves its approaches. For instance, to help ensure proper attribution and improve performance, Rakuten's Play.com works closely with LBi to refine the data fed back into Adobe Media Optimizer. At the same time, the company is exploring the additional impact of social media and looking to test Facebook posts to determine whether specialized messages to different audiences drive traffic and sales.

Rakuten's Play.com is also tapping into simulation capabilities with Adobe Media Optimizer. Powerful algorithms in the Adobe solution are helping Rakuten's Play.com uncover the best media mix and predict which scenarios will move customers from awareness to purchase. "The scenarios we have run are already more than 96% accurate," says Underwood.

For more information
www.adobe.com/solutions/digital-marketing.html



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