



**Massachusetts  
Institute of  
Technology**

**MITOPENCOURSEWARE**  
MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

## Case Study: MIT OpenCourseWare and Google Adwords

### *Situation*

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) OpenCourseWare (OCW) Project offers free web access to 1,600 classes in 35 academic subjects at MIT.

To promote the OCW project, MIT applied for a Google Foundation grant. These grants allow organizations to advertise on Google to publicize their projects.

In August 2006, MIT was awarded a \$450,000 Google Grant.

MIT asked us to manage the Google Adwords account.

### *Recommendations*

We made the following changes:

- Google set up the initial account with 1,400 keywords. To cover 35 academic subjects and 1,600 courses, we added 48,548 keywords.
- The initial ads had a very low click-through-rate (CTR). We wrote multiple ads for each academic subject, targeted the ads to landing pages, and used A/B split testing to find the best ads.
- To reach audiences in China, Germany, and so on, we translated keywords into Chinese, Japanese, Korean, German, French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, and Arabic.
- We also developed a strategy for the account. If professors, university lecturers, teachers, tutors, and instructors learn about MIT OCW, they will use it throughout their teaching career and pass it on to other instructors and top students. So we set up campaigns to create a viral distribution effect.

### *Results*

In September, when the account was set up by Google, the account had 52 clicks per day at \$0.76 per click. We took over in October. The increase in activity was immediate.

- Clicks went from 52 per day to 17,650 per day
- Cost-per-Click (CPC) fell from \$0.76 to \$0.07
- Click-through-Rate (CTR) went from 0.12% to 4.02%

## *Lessons Learned*

- Global multi-lingual ad campaigns are feasible. In most Adgroups, the top 100 keywords were in English, Chinese, Arabic, German, French, and Spanish.
- We were surprised at the success with Arabic. Keywords in Arabic were among the top performers with click-through rates often exceeding 30%.
- German also produced good results. Many students in South America, Asia, the Arab world, and Africa study at German universities. They know their topics in German and search in German.
- The Web doesn't have weekends. Sunday in California is Monday in India. The Arab work week is Saturday through Wednesday. Because we have offices in California and India, we can monitor the account on a 24-hour schedule seven days a week.

## *About MIT OCW*

MIT's goal is to advance knowledge and educate students in science, technology, and other areas of scholarship that will best serve the nation and the world in the 21st century. MIT OCW provides dissemination of knowledge and collaboration among scholars around the world, and contributes to the shared intellectual commons.

- MIT OCW is funded by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and Ab Initio.
- MIT OCW offers 1,600 classes in 35 academic subjects, including mathematics, materials science and engineering, mechanical engineering, aeronautics and astronautics, chemical engineering, electrical engineering, computer science, nuclear engineering, physics, the Sloan School of Management, biological engineering, biology, chemistry, brain and cognitive sciences, civil engineering, planetary sciences, economics, health sciences and technology, history, linguistics and philosophy, political science, science, technology, and society, urban planning, and more.
- Visit MIT OpenCourseWare project at <http://ocw.mit.edu>

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