Cases on Innovations in Educational Marketing: Transnational and Technological Strategies

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Chapter 3

The Google Online Marketing Challenge: A Transnational Comparison of Classroom Learning with Real Clients, Real Money, and Real Advertising Campaigns

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2008, a collaborative partnership between Google and academia launched the Google Online Marketing Challenge (hereinafter Google Challenge), perhaps the world’s largest in-class competition for higher education students. In just two years, almost 20,000 students from 58 countries participated in the Google Challenge. The Challenge gives undergraduate and graduate students hands-on experience with the world’s fastest growing advertising mechanism, search engine advertising. Funded by Google, students develop an advertising campaign for a small to medium sized enterprise and manage the campaign over three consecutive weeks using the Google AdWords platform. This article explores the Challenge as an innovative pedagogical tool for marketing educators. Based on the experiences of three instructors in Australia, Canada and the United States, this case study discusses the opportunities and challenges of integrating this dynamic problem-based learning approach into the classroom.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-60960-599-5.ch003
BACKGROUND

Google Online Marketing Challenge

The Google Online Marketing Challenge is a global business student competition developed by professors in collaboration with Google. Unlike most student competitions with hypothetical scenarios or simulations, the Google Challenge gives students US$200 to work with real businesses, in real-time, to create an online marketing campaign using Google’s advertising platform, AdWords (Flaherty et al., 2009).

Review of Experiential Learning

To maintain student interest and create a memorable encounter, instructors increasingly face the challenge of providing innovative and stimulating educational experiences for students (Elam & Spotts, 2004; Matulich, Papp & Haytko, 2008; Ueltschy, 2001). Scholars argue that “(…) the lecture format is not the most effective educational delivery mechanism, particularly in marketing” (Helms, Mayo & Baxter, 2003, p. 18). Instead, active learning methods that empower students to think and learn for themselves are increasingly recommended as an alternative (Johnson, Johnson & Smith, 1991).

Critics often lament that universities provide insufficient real-world experiential learning (Kelley & Gaedeke, 1990; Thomas, 1995). Traditional learning methods such as lectures still seem appropriate in some environments such as large or introductory-level classes, yet students have different learning styles (Karns, 2006; Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Students often prefer experiential learning, through activities such as field trips, case studies, business audits, internships, simulations, competitions, live projects, community-based service learning and student-operated businesses (Andrews, 2007; Doren & Corrigan, 2008; Drea et al., 1997; Govekar and Rishi, 2007; Hamer, 2000; Karns, 2005; Kennedy, Lawton & Walker, 2001; McIntyre, Webb and Hite, 2005).

Experiential learning is a pedagogical approach whereby students experience “a task or set of tasks, and ultimately learn from their actions” (Neale et al., 2009, p. 7). Simpson and Pham (2007) note that such “learning strategies are based on application (using knowledge to solve problems) and analysis” (p. 1). Experiential learning helps grasp the relevance of information from situations encountered (McKeachie, 2002) and transform knowledge into know-how (Katula & Threnhauser, 1999). Many university educators advocate and incorporate real-world experiential learning in various disciplines including marketing related courses such as: marketing (Bobbitt et al., 2000; Drea et al., 1997; Munoz & Huser, 2008), marketing research (Bove & Davies 2009; Bridges, 1999), marketing communications (Luck & Chalmers, 2007), personal selling and purchasing (O’Hara & Shaffer, 1995), services marketing (Gremler et al., 2000), economics (Hawtrey, 2007), and entrepreneurship and retail management (Daly, 2001).

Students perceive experiential methods, particularly real-world projects, as more effective for their learning (Karns, 2005; Navarro, 2008). Relative to traditional lectures, students become more engaged with problem-based/problem-centered teaching (Gilbert & Andrew, 2004). For example, Rosso et al. (2009) report that MBA students demonstrated a high level of comprehension thanks to a search-advertising project in their course.

One way to link marketing theory with ‘real-world’ application is to involve students in service learning projects or “living cases” (LeClair & Stöttinger, 1999, p. 31), also referred to as client-sponsored projects (Humphreys, 1981). Community-based service learning programs focus on student involvement in community service within a credit-earning educational experience (Berry & Workman, 2007; Govekar & Rishi, 2007; Petkus, 2000). Living cases combine traditional case study elements with a unique real-world business environment in which students learn to
solve complex and unstructured problems (LeClair & Stöttinger, 1999).

Many students are fearful and uncertain when they realize they will work with a real business (Rosso et al., 2009). “Students are not working in a clean, tidy environment when dealing with a live case; rather, they are dealing with variable situations, uncertainty, and incomplete information” (Elam & Spotts, 2004, p. 52). Yet, this fear and anxiety turns into excitement and engagement once students apply their knowledge and make a meaningful contribution for their business (Rosso et al., 2009). Similarly, Bourner, Hughes & Bourner (2001) illustrate that students highly value coursework that incorporates a real organization. Students particularly appreciate the lifetime benefits of real-world projects such as self-confidence, entrepreneurial skills, access to mentors and networking opportunities (Ruscell, Atchison & Brooks, 2008). Compared to classroom education, client projects “challenge students in ways that not even the best-written case study or end-of-the-textbook chapter exercise can duplicate” (McEachern, 2001, p. 211).

Academic literature also suggests that students learn more through competitive projects (Rundle-Thiele & Kuhn, 2008; Stutts & West, 2003; Zabkar, 2008). Flaherty et al. (2009) in their review of student competitions concluded that “extending the classroom experience from simulations to national or global competitions adds the benefits of real world applications, industry standards for grading students, and a compelling learning experience in an industry context” (p. 447). The authors further suggest that competitions enhance education and benefit three different constituents: students, industry and the educational institution (Flaherty et al., 2009).

Experiential learning, however, has critics. Relative to traditional instruction, at its extreme, experiential learning may lead to less effective outcomes due to its self-discovery methods with little or no guided instruction (Kirschner, Sweller & Clark, 2006; Mayer, 2004). Other critics note undesirable student behaviors such as free-riding in groups, recycling student papers from previous terms and repeatedly overplaying simulations (Schibrowsky & Peltier, 1995). The Google Challenge, developed by academics in collaboration with Google, helps overcome these experiential learning weaknesses through guided instruction enhanced by self-discovery (Flaherty et al., 2009; Neale et al., 2009). The Challenge merges marketing education with problem-based and technology-enhanced learning in a real-world environment with real money and real clients (Flaherty et al., 2009; Murphy et al., 2008; 2009a; 2009b).

The developers of the Google Challenge addressed these issues in several articles (e.g. Neale et al., 2009). For example, unlike simulated or fabricated competitions, student teams cannot overplay because the Challenge is a live competition with a finite budget and finite timeline. Students cannot reuse old papers since each team works with a unique organization. A written reflective paper in which students evaluate group dynamics helps address the common free-riding problem. Overall, the Google Challenge leverages the best of experiential learning by blending client-sponsored living cases, community-based service learning and a global student competition (see Figure 1).

Learning Objectives

The Challenge has three main objectives (Neale et al., 2008):

1. To provide students with an engaging and effective real-world exercise preparing them as cutting-edge online marketers;
2. To connect Higher Education institutions with local businesses in the community; and
3. To provide instructors with a theory-based yet commercially practical assessment item for their students.
The Google Online Marketing Challenge

As discussed in the next section, the Google Challenge introduces students to the most important and fastest growing sector in online marketing, keyword/search advertising (Flaherty et al. 2009). Due to the Internet’s rapid growth and evolution, instructors should stay up-to-date with the content and also the delivery of classroom material. Keyword advertising, now essential for many businesses, provides a major revenue source for all search engine companies. For instance, Google derives over 95 percent of its $20+ billion in revenue from search advertising (Jansen et al., 2008; Lavin et al., 2009).

This paid search has become an important topic for all business students – regardless of their major (Rosso et al., 2009) – and offers attractive job opportunities in a growing industry (Levisohn 2009). Students participating in the Google Challenge consult with businesses and provide them with online marketing advice. For example, they collect real-world data and use Google’s AdWords platform to develop a real online advertising campaign for their client. Thus, students both gain practical experience and build a beneficial network when applying for internships and jobs.

Instructors using the Challenge teach traditional advertising concepts such as copywriting, cost per thousand (CPM), return on investment as well as specific online marketing concepts such as click-through-rate (CTR), cost-per-click (CPC) and optimization techniques (Flaherty et al., 2009).

After participating in the Google Challenge, students should accomplish the following learning objectives (see Flaherty et al., 2009):

- Understand the complexity of developing and implementing an online marketing campaign;
- Confidently discuss online marketing and media planning issues with their client;
- Create a practical and successful campaign that fits with the objectives of their client;
- Illustrate the technical and cultural factors that affect the success of online marketing campaigns;
- Maximize targeted and relevant traffic to their client’s website; and
- Use optimization techniques to refine and improve campaign effectiveness over the three-week competition period.
Instructors assess student understanding of these concepts by grading two mandatory Google Challenge reports: a Pre-campaign Strategy Report and a Post-campaign Summary Report (discussed in section 3). Scholars argue that these written reports enhance the academic value of experiential learning as students must reflect and communicate their experiences (e.g., Flaherty et al., 2009; Hawes & Foley, 2006; Matulich, Papp & Haytko, 2008; Young, 2002).

**ONLINE AND SEARCH ADVERTISING**

**Review of Sponsored Search Advertising**

Over the last six years online advertising has had annual double-digit growth (Lavin et al., 2009). The Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) reports that 2008 Internet advertising in the U.S. grew 10.6 percent to US$ 23.4 Billion (IAB, 2009). According to projections, spending will reach US$ 51.0 Billion in 2012 (eMarketer, 2008). Online advertising includes various forms including display, rich media, video, sponsorships, classified, email and search advertising. These ad forms vary in success (Lavin et al., 2009). Search advertising is the leading format, with 45 percent of the total Internet advertising market share (IAB, 2009).

The concept of sponsored search advertising (also referred to as paid search, pay-per-click, keyword advertising, and search engine advertising) aligns online advertisements with a user’s search engine query (Lavin et al., 2009; Murphy et al., 2009a; Rosso et al., 2009). A query refers to (typically one to three) words or a phrase describing the users’ information need (Jansen & Spink, 2006). The user initiates the quest for information by entering a keyword or phrase in the search engine, then the search engine returns a results list (see Figure 1). Each result typically consists of three elements: the title of the webpage, a two-to-three line text description and the web address of the page (Rosso et al., 2009). Besides the normal (or “organic”) search results, specially labeled results (“sponsored ads”) appear on the same page, usually at the top or the right hand side (Note the outlined areas in Figure 2).

![Figure 2. Sponsored search results for the keyword ‘Chocolate’ with Google AdWords](image-url)
Basics of Google AdWords

As the leading search engine with a 72 percent U.S. market share (McGee, 2010) and 83 percent globally (Marketshare.hitslink.com, 2009), Google drives keyword advertising development with its flagship products AdWords (adwords.google.com/) and AdSense (www.google.com/adsense/). AdWords is Google’s text-based system for advertising on search engine result pages such as Google.com and partner sites (e.g. AOL.com). Advertisers create ads for display alongside the keywords related to user queries. AdSense is similar, except that the ads appear on Google’s content network of millions of Websites in over 100 countries and 20 languages (Jansen et al., 2008). For example, the newspaper The New York Times earns revenue by placing ‘Ads by Google’ on Times’ web pages.

The process of a traditional AdWords advertising campaign follows (Murphy, Hudson & Hunter, 2008; Rosso et al., 2009): Advertisers develop simple text-based ads with four lines of copy. Each ad consists of a (25 character or less) headline, a two-line description (each a maximum of 35 characters) and a URL (uniform resource locator) that indicates the landing page. Table 1 illustrates two sample AdWords ads for the fictitious business, Melbourne Flowers. The copy is identical except for the second half of the second line: reasonable prices vs. wedding specials. The first ad should interest value conscious market segments, whereas the second ad targets consumers interested in weddings (Murphy, Hudson & Hunter, 2008; for a similar example see Murphy et al., 2009a).

Google AdWords offers the option to create ad campaigns of one or more ad groups (Jansen et al., 2008; Rosso et al., 2009). Each ad group can contain one or more ads with one or more related keywords. Figure 3 illustrates the basic structure of an AdWords account.

To place sponsored ads on Google, advertisers participate in a live auction with all advertisers who chose a given keyword that determines “which ads run in which positions on which pages and at what prices” (Rosso et al., 2009). First, Google considers the maximum cost-per-click (Max CPC) bid for the keyword entered of each advertiser. Then, Google evaluates the relevance of the keyword, its “Quality Score” or rating of how well each keyword and its related ad match (Google, 2009b). The CPC model is efficient as marketers pay only if the ad is clicked. While AdWords

Table 1. Sample AdWords for a fictitious business, Melbourne Flowers (Murphy, Hudson & Hunter, 2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campaign 1</th>
<th>Campaign 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Melbourne Flowers</td>
<td>Melbourne Flowers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great flowers; reasonable prices</td>
<td>Great flowers; wedding specials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central location near MCG</td>
<td>Central location near MCG</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3. Basic structure of a Google AdWords account
usually operates on a CPC basis, the CPM (cost per thousand impressions) model is also available for placement targeting on Google’s content network (Murphy, Hudson & Hunter, 2008). Scholars argue that performance-based costing, usually CPC, continues to grow while display-based costing, usually CPM, continues to decline (Murphy, Hudson & Hunter, 2008).

AdWords offers several major advantages over traditional advertising media such as print or television. First, the ads are simple and non-intrusive. Second, AdWords offers enhanced segmentation and targeting opportunities (Murphy, Hudson & Hunter, 2008; Murphy et al., 2009a). For instance, advertisers can select keywords and the geographical location in which its ads appear. In the Melbourne Flowers example (see Table 1), results may be limited to people living within 30 kilometers of Melbourne’s central business district. With regard to targeting, the florist could choose keywords such as florist, flowers and weddings.

OVERVIEW OF THE GOOGLE CHALLENGE

Evolution of the Challenge

Neale et al. (2009) overview the evolution of the Google Challenge. The idea originated in March 2007 when a Google employee and his former professor discussed giving students a real-world online marketing exercise. Influenced by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) standards, the “practitioner and academic envisioned the Challenge as a fun and exciting competition that helped students learn experientially, working in groups with real clients and spending real money” (Neale et al., 2009, p. 76). More importantly, the two originators as well as a small team of Google employees and other academics designed the Challenge as an academic exercise, and to target academics more than students or businesses (Neale et al., 2009). Next, 14 academics from eight countries formed a Global Academic Panel (www.google.com/onlinechallenge/panel.html) that helped develop pedagogical materials for students, instructors and businesses. The panel also selects regional and global winners (Neale et al., 2009). The theoretical underpinnings of the Challenge stem from Kolb’s experiential learning theory of experiencing-reflecting-thinking-acting (Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Kolb, 2005, 2008; see also Neale et al., 2009, who discuss the experiential learning cycle and the Challenge).

How the Challenge Works

The Challenge combines an experiential, “problem-based learning approach” (Hmelo-Silver, 2004) with a global competition. Teams of three to six students engage in a facilitated, self-learning experience to solve a complex problem with no single answer (Flaherty et al., 2009). Participating students have a real-world project covering all phases of marketing planning: from market analysis and marketing strategy to implementation and evaluation. Google gives each team US$ 200 in AdWords, to run an online advertising campaign for a small- to medium-sized enterprise. The campaign can run any three consecutive weeks from late January to early June (Murphy et al., 2009a; Neale et al., 2009). As students spend real money for real clients, they employ marketing skills to develop, implement, refine and improve their AdWords campaigns. As a result, students become active learners trying to maximize the targeted and relevant traffic to a client’s website.

The Google Challenge is designed as a undergraduate or graduate in-class exercise for myriad classes, such as online marketing, consumer behavior, advertising, integrated marketing communications, e-commerce, and marketing strategy (Murphy et al., 2009a). Instructors who wish to participate in the Challenge can register their class online starting around October on the Google
The Google Challenge after Two Years

After two years, the Google Challenge has established itself as an ongoing and innovative educational exercise. In the inaugural 2008 Challenge, over 8,000 students participated along with around 340 instructors and 1,620 businesses from 47 countries (Jansen et al., 2008; Murphy et al., 2009a; Neale et al., 2009). In 2009, participating students increased to over 10,000 from 57 countries. In addition, student-led learning communities – open access learning communities initiated and driven by students (Neale et al., 2009) – have evolved around the Challenge (e.g. GOMCHA.com).

Rosso et al. (2009) note that Microsoft and Yahoo also offer search advertising that could be used in the classroom. Thus, keyword advertising as a pedagogical tool extends beyond Google. However, the authors argue that based on (1) Google’s overwhelming search market share and (2) the pedagogical support offered by Google, educators have little reason at this time to prefer another program. However, Microsoft with the release of its new search engine Bing, started in fall 2009 to sponsor the DMEF Collegiate ECHO Challenge...

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Table 2. Major steps of the Google challenge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Student teams</td>
<td>At beginning of the class, instructors divide students into groups of three to six students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. SME recruitment</td>
<td>The teams or professors recruit a SME (profit or non-profit) as a client. The criteria for eligibility as a client for the Challenge are that the SME employs less than 100 people, has a Website, and has not used Google AdWords in the last six months.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. AdWords account and voucher</td>
<td>Teams work with their client to set up an AdWords account for an online marketing campaign. Google then credits each team with US$ 200 for the campaign.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Pre-campaign strategy</td>
<td>Each team develops a campaign strategy. Based on meetings with the client and an analysis of the client’s business and website, each team has to submit a 4-page pre-campaign report outlining the proposed strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Campaign</td>
<td>For three consecutive weeks teams run a real AdWords campaign using the US$ 200 budget that is provided by Google. Groups spend their AdWords budget bidding for keywords. They refine and optimize their campaigns on the basis of real-time campaign results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Post-campaign evaluation</td>
<td>After the end of the campaign teams have to submit an 8-page post-campaign report both to the instructor and to Google. This report contains both campaign results and recommendations for the client as well as a reflection on what students learned by covering three main topics: learning objectives and outcomes, group dynamics and client dynamic.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Google Online Marketing Challenge

Direct & Interactive Marketing Challenge, also for undergraduate and graduate students worldwide (DMEF, 2010). This competition, however, does not provide the execution of an actual campaign.

TRANSNATIONAL COMPARISON OF CLASSROOM LEARNING

Integrating the Google Challenge into marketing courses offers great pedagogical opportunities but also challenges. In the following sections, three marketing educators from Australia, Canada and the U.S. reflect on the classroom preparation and implementation of the Google Challenge as well as lessons learned. In all three cases, the Google Challenge in the course curriculum was overwhelmingly positive. Table 3 briefly compares the three course settings.

Learning Experiences from the United States

The Google Challenge ran in a class of 15 students in the course e-Marketing, an elective for the Marketing concentration at Pacific Lutheran University (Tuzovic, 2009). The course introduces students to the use of the Internet and other online and mobile technologies for marketing, in particular the planning, design and execution of

Table 3. Comparison of PLU, MUN and UWA courses and instructors’ Google challenge implementation in the classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pacific Lutheran University (PLU)</th>
<th>Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN)</th>
<th>University of Western Australia (UWA)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course title</td>
<td>e-Marketing</td>
<td>Two courses: 1. Channels and Internet Marketing 2. Internet Marketing Management</td>
<td>Electronic Marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>Undergraduate and MBA</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of students</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>90 over two years</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandatory or optional class project?</td>
<td>Mandatory</td>
<td>Mandatory</td>
<td>Mandatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>1/3 of overall grade</td>
<td>20-30% (depending on course)</td>
<td>1/4 of overall grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of teams</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>24 over 2 years</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picking teams</td>
<td>Students self-selected their teams</td>
<td>Student selected teams</td>
<td>Students assigned based on nationality, work experience, gender and IT skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruiting clients</td>
<td>Each student team recruits a SME or nonprofit</td>
<td>Clients recruited through alumni affairs to provide list for students to choose from</td>
<td>Two suggestions prior to class and one client aligned with a student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration of Challenge in course</td>
<td>Partially in class, with several class sessions devoted to work on the project</td>
<td>Learning provided though self study, online resources, and class presentations. Execution of Challenge on student time</td>
<td>Partially in class, mostly with presentations of pre- and post-campaign reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview of clients</td>
<td>Cupcake bakery, comic book store, nut-roasting company, electronic medical records and practice management service, nonprofit child placement agency</td>
<td>Wide range of clients from professional services, tourism, clothing manufacturing, engineering firms, educational institutions, etc.</td>
<td>Local private high school (AU), swim wear franchisee (AU) and a forestry company (TH)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
marketing strategies and programs. After discussing topics such as Internet macro-environment, Internet marketing strategy and the marketing mix, the course emphasized different online marketing communication forms, in particular, search engine optimization and keyword advertising. However, Jansen et al. (2008) point out that “the dynamic nature of online advertising and the inherent lag in updating textbooks (…) makes discussing keyword advertising in the classroom a challenging task” (p. 5). Due to the rapid growth and evolution of search advertising, the Challenge seemed a fitting class project.

Based on results of the 2008 Google Challenge Post-Participation Survey Datasets (see http://www.google.com/onlinechallenge/research.html), which show that 51 percent of the instructors incorporated the Challenge as a mandatory class project in their curricula, the Challenge was a mandatory class project worth one-third of the students’ overall grade. In the first week of class, teams were set up. Based on the regulation of teams of three to six, there were five teams. Given that the students knew each other from other courses, students self-selected into teams (see Rosso et al., 2009, for a similar approach). Four of the five teams seemed to work well throughout the semester.

Each team recruited a client from the community: (1) a cupcake bakery, (2) a comic book store, (3) a nut-roasting company, (4) an electronic medical records and practice management service and (5) a non-profit child placement agency and international adoption programs. Overall, client recruitment posed no difficulties for the students.

Google provides free materials, for example, the Student Guide 2009 (Google 2009a) and Challenge Handbook (Google 2009b), which were distributed to the students at the beginning of the semester. Due to a large amount of information to absorb in addition to textbook material, as well as learning the AdWords platform, students worked on their pre-campaign strategy in class during February and March. All teams ran their 3-week campaigns from March 31 through April 21, when students had additional class time to optimize their online advertising strategy. Table 4 shows two sample AdWords ads for the nonprofit organization. The ads differ slightly as two different programs were promoted.

Figure 4 illustrates the results of one student campaign as an example. For the nonprofit organization, students started their campaign with two ad campaigns, one for China adoptions and one for a Nepal sponsorship program. In the first week, the team “tested the waters”, investing above their average budget to find which keywords worked and what they cost. After a few days, the students recognized that most traffic stemmed from ten keywords. As a result, the team monitored those keywords closely each day and adjusted their pricing strategy accordingly. Table 5 summarizes the team’s main keywords and phrases, along with the bid prices after the first week of the campaign.

At the end of the 3-week campaign, the student team generated the following statistics for their client:

- Total Cost: $200
- Impressions: 654,433
- Clicks: 862
- CTR: 0.13%
- Avg. CPC: $0.23

Table 4. Exemplary AdWords ads of one student team

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Client</th>
<th>Ad campaigns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nonprofit child adoption programs</td>
<td>Adopt a Child from China&lt;br&gt;Faith International can help you&lt;br&gt;With adopting a child from China&lt;br&gt;www.FaithAdopt.org/China</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The bounce rate was 55 percent with an average time on site of 2 minutes 7 seconds. The bounce rate measures the percentage of people who come to a website and leave instantly, rather than navigate on to other pages within the same site. In other words, they “bounce” away immediately to a different website. A high bounce rate signals that the entry-page of the website is not effective as users seem not to find the information they seek. Compared to another team that achieved a percent bounce rate, this team performed well with a bounce rate of 55 percent. Figure 4 illustrates the campaign results summarizing the analytical data for each week.

**STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF THE COURSE**

Students widely agreed that they gained valuable knowledge in online marketing, such as the following comments:

*Before taking this class and doing this project I didn’t really know anything about online marketing. This class and project has helped give me a general understanding about how online marketing works and what companies can do to improve their online marketing.*

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**Table 5. Summary of keywords and bid prices of the campaign for the nonprofit organization (based on students’ post-campaign summary)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>China Campaign (End of 3 weeks)</th>
<th>Top bid price/ Average CPC</th>
<th>Nepal Campaign (End of 2 weeks)</th>
<th>Top bid price/ Average CPC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adoption</td>
<td>$0.70/$0.40</td>
<td>Adoption</td>
<td>$0.60/$0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopt a child</td>
<td>$0.90/$0.39</td>
<td>Orphanages</td>
<td>$0.65/$0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International adoption</td>
<td>$0.95/$0.54</td>
<td>Adopting a child</td>
<td>$0.25/$0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese adoption</td>
<td>$0.85/$0.37</td>
<td>Adopt a child</td>
<td>$0.15/$0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopting from china</td>
<td>$0.60/$0.38</td>
<td>Nepal adoption</td>
<td>$0.40/$0.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoption from</td>
<td>$0.75/$0.36</td>
<td>Nepal sponsorship</td>
<td>$0.40/$0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoption from china</td>
<td>$0.80/$0.46</td>
<td>Child sponsorship</td>
<td>$0.15/$0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoption from china</td>
<td>$0.75/$0.21</td>
<td>Overseas adoption</td>
<td>$0.35/$0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orphanages</td>
<td>$0.70/$0.32</td>
<td>How to adopt</td>
<td>$0.15/$0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoption from china</td>
<td>$0.70/$0.32</td>
<td>Adoption information</td>
<td>$0.35/$0.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Google Online Marketing Challenge

It improved my knowledge by using real tools to increase traffic and clicks to a website. Before this project I did not know anything about how Google worked. Now I feel more knowledgeable about Google and how internet advertising works.

Students widely acknowledged the real-world aspects of the Google Challenge:

I liked the fact that we actually got to deal with a REAL company and were given a budget rather than just having a mock project like most other classes have. It helped give you a real sense of how online marketing works and that you were competing with people across the globe.

One thing I found very interesting about this project is the fact that you can see progress. I have worked on many other projects (…) but with this project I was very happy to see progress. It was fun tweaking and estimating costs for this project as well.

It felt like we were a professional team who was hired to do this advertising for a company. We had to make many decisions throughout the campaign that had to be made on the fly so that we could keep things on track as best as possible, and this was a great experience.

Another positive learning experience was the “freedom” students had on this project. Even though teams had to follow certain guidelines, the Challenge provides students with wide flexibility.

I like the freedom that Google gave us to run our own campaign. Yes, there were guidelines, but for the most part we were on our own to try and help the company’s website receive more traffic.

Since this is an online campaign, each member can manage, run, and check the campaign at anywhere and anytime. We all love the dynamic and flexibility of the online service.

CONCLUSION OF THE INSTRUCTOR

A Challenge learning objective was to engage students in creating a practical, hands-on online advertising campaign in a real-world environment, thus extending the traditional classroom experience. In summary, the implementation of the Google Challenge in the course curriculum was overwhelmingly positive. As a result of this experience, the instructor will participate with his e-Marketing course again in the 2010 Google Challenge.

Learning Experiences from Canada

The Google Challenge came to the course professor’s attention in early December of 2007. Although course outlines for both a senior undergraduate course “Channels and Internet Marketing” and MBA elective course “Internet Marketing Management” offered in January 2008 were in place and circulated, the Google Challenge’s potential for students initiated an immediate redesign of both scheduled courses.

As the sole university in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador in Canada, strong connections with the local community exist; the majority of local business leaders with university education earned their degree locally. Opportunities to enhance local connections are always encouraged by the university and received well by the business community. Consultation with Alumni Affairs led to a targeted email for university alumni involved in local businesses, which potentially met the criteria for participation in the Google Challenge.

Although the email was sent at 10:00 am a few days before Christmas, within 20 minutes eight businesses responded that they wanted to be involved! The speed and receptiveness of the response was very positive. Before the classes began in the New Year, over 40 alumni businesses requested to be involved. The diversity and quantity of businesses gave student teams the
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opportunity to select a business that fit their interests to facilitate potential business connections.

Between the two courses that participated in the Google Challenge the first year there were 48 students involved (40 undergraduate and 8 MBA). Students formed their own teams, four per team undergraduate, and two per team MBA. The order of selecting a business was based on the order of team names submitted by email, first come – first served.

The content of the course was delivered through a variety of self-study of the Google Challenge materials and online videos, as well as in class introductions of some search advertising elements. Class time was available during the three weeks that the campaigns were live, for students to discuss and share insights on their trials and tribulations.

At the beginning of the Google Challenge, students met with their client and the course instructor who provided initial guidance and assistance. For many students, this was their first experience with any form of ‘consulting’ and working with real clients.

At the completion of the course, all teams presented to their clients during class. This formal presentation allowed the students to see the different techniques utilized for different types of clients and the impact that the techniques had on the results. Without exception, all clients made the time and effort to come to the class, further enhancing the alumni and student connections.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF THE COURSE

The students in both courses had unanimously positive feedback on the incorporation of the Google Challenge into the course.

Google AdWords was the best part of this course, really puts theory into practice and makes it more interactive.

I can’t believe how much time and effort I am putting into the Google AdWords. I feel that I have to because if I do not do my best, it is not just marks on the line; it is someone’s business. I have never taken an assignment this seriously during my entire degree.

The Google AdWords Challenge was a lot of work but a great way to incorporate a lot of different experiences and tasks into one major project. I think that it could have even been manageable as an individual project.

The hands on aspect with Google AdWords was awesome, it was a good way to learn, in complete control of the campaign was good, nice having a real responsibility for a real business.

Some students recognized the opportunity that participating in the Google Challenge would provide in their quest for employment post graduation.

The Google AdWords campaign was very interesting and I feel it will be beneficial knowledge for my future career path.

The potential benefit for future employment was validated in the months following the initial application of the Google Challenge into the undergraduate course. Of the 40 undergraduate students who participated in the Google Challenge, eight of them either secured a work term appointment or a job offer post graduation specifically because of their Google Challenge experience. The employment impact on the students is summed up in the following student comment.

After a four year degree, what is came down to is that I was able to find a job simply because I had participated in one assignment as part of a
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single course. I am so glad that I had the chance to participate in the Google AdWords Challenge as it was entirely responsible for my ability to secure full time employment after my graduation.”

CONCLUSION OF THE INSTRUCTOR

The feedback from the businesses and students who participated was so positive that the Google Challenge has been included in both the undergraduate and MBA courses for the past two years and 2010. Students are very excited about participating in the Google Challenge once again. There is no doubt in the instructor’s mind that for as long as Google offers the Challenge, that he will be involved, as the benefit of connecting students with alumni and the skills that it provides to students are too valuable to turn down.

Learning Experiences from Australia

Instructors at the University of Western Australia ran the Challenge in their classes in both 2008 and 2009. These classes included undergraduate and graduate classes, on the main campus in Perth and overseas in Singapore. The undergraduate classes ranged from 25 to 200 students and the graduate classes ranged from 15 to 25 students. The campaign results and overwhelmingly positive feedback resemble the United States and Canada examples above. This short section focuses on implementing the Challenge in the graduate classes.

Client recruitment was easy, with the instructor and students nominating possible clients. Furthermore, students that participated in the 2008 Challenge recommended clients for the 2009 Challenge. For example, ex-students suggested a swim wear and forestry company. For the latter, the ex-student worked with the current students. There was an oversupply of clients in both years, which enabled student teams to choose clients that they wanted to collaborate with.

In both years there was an overseas client, from France in 2008 and Thailand in 2009. Students used Skype and email for communication with their clients, who spoke English. These overseas clients reinforced key class themes. Students appreciated, and grasped, that thanks to the Internet they lived in a fast moving and ubiquitous global economy. In addition, these overseas clients underscored geo-targeting via online advertising.

The classes also had an overseas composition. Over half the students were international, particularly from Southeast Asian countries such as China, Malaysia, Indonesia and India. As these students often knew few other students, the instructor assigned student teams. In addition to nationality, gender, work experience and computer skills helped balance the teams. The first few team meetings were awkward but after a few weeks, students relished the opportunity to meet and collaborate with other nationalities.

The Challenge was the major project worth 25 percent of the overall grade. The classes met weekly for three hours and each week the students had five to ten minutes to ask questions and share insights on the Google Challenge. There was no single class devoted to the Challenge or keyword advertising. The Challenge did, however, serve as a great theme unifying online marketing throughout the term. For example, web page content is important in general and for keyword advertising.

Although there was no class dedicated to keyword advertising, there were ten minute formal presentations of the Pre-Campaign Strategy and the Post-Campaign Summary. The client was often present for both presentations, which was great. The local clients attended both report presentations. The overseas clients sort of attended via Skype. The students gave that extra effort to impress their client, and they felt professional. The clients enjoyed being back in the classroom and interacting with students. Perhaps the best part was the short discussion after students presented. The clients got a feel for improvements to their
website and business; the students got a feel for the real world.

CONCLUSION

Reflecting on the authors’ experiences, students widely enjoyed this real-life project and gained important learning outcomes such as reflective and critical thinking, self-directed learning, teamwork dynamics, and the use of cutting-edge technology. Providing the connection to the business community, the real world critique of their work and the reality of the 24-7 operation allows students with crucial experiences to assist with their transition to the real world. As some of the experiences showed, the connections have the potential to provide students with real world experience and significant business connections that can lead to employment opportunities post graduation.

REFERENCES


**FURTHER READING**


Google AdWords Help Center. Retrieved from https://adwords.google.com/support/


**KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

**Bounce Rate**: This term refers to the percentage of visitors who enter a website and exit instantaneously; that means, they “bounce” away within a few seconds without visiting any other pages on the site in between. The bounce rate is a metric used in website traffic analysis. A high bounce rate indicates that the site entrance page (or landing page) is not relevant to the visitors.

**Click-Through-Rate (CTR)**: The percentage of visitors who click on an advertisement they see on search engine result pages and content pages. CTR is calculated as the number of clicks an ad receives divided by the number of times the ad is shown (referred to as impressions). CTR is a way to measure how relevant keywords are. Compared to traditional banner ads which have a very low CTR, ads on search engines have a higher CTR since they are highly relevant to the associated search.

**Cost-Per-Click (CPC)**: This is the amount of money an advertiser pays each time when a user clicks on an advertisement on search engines and content pages.

**Organic Search Results**: The unpaid, algorithmic search engine results which appear because of their relevance to the search terms.

**Pay-Per-Click (PPC)**: This refers to a pricing model for advertising on search engines (e.g. Google, Bing, Yahoo!) in which advertisers pay their host every time someone clicks on their advertisement.

**Quality Score**: A variable used by Google that can determine the rank and the cost-per-click of ads placed in Google AdWords.

**Search Marketing**: The marketing of a website on search engines. This includes search engine optimization (SEO) and pay-per-click advertising.