

# Case Study: How La Quinta Captured Travelers—and Increased Conversions—by Leading With Data

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When consumers are faced with a travel decision, price is often the determining factor. It's difficult for brands to foster loyalty, even among their most frequent visitors. La Quinta, like many travel brands, wanted to capture new customers as well as encourage loyalty. This is how they did it.

## **RESULTS**

- 131% higher click-through rate (CTR)
- 27% higher conversion rate (CVR)
- 83% increase in conversion volume compared to typical seasonal volume<sup>1</sup>

## **THE CHALLENGE**

What does customer loyalty look like in the hotel business? Not like much, really. Eighty-two percent of leisure travelers and 65% of business

think with 

travelers are open to considering multiple hotel brands at the onset of trip planning,<sup>2</sup> and a staggering four out of five hotel loyalty members say they would book outside of preferred hotels if they found better prices.<sup>3</sup>

With more than 870 hotels across the U.S., Mexico, and Canada, La Quinta Inns & Suites knows it is crucial to drive early consideration and re-engage with travelers throughout their trip research. That's why they work hard to ensure the company's various marketing channels are working optimally together.



**Four out of five** hotel loyalty members say they would **book outside of preferred hotels** if they found better prices.

Source: Google/Phocuswright, "Leisure Traveler" study, base: U.S. leisure travelers, n=930, Oct. 2015.

### **THE APPROACH**

To identify which customers were most likely to book reservations, La Quinta implemented a solution that combined audience targeting, data-driven attribution, and Smart Bidding.

First, the company put data from La Quinta Returns, its customer loyalty program, to good use by incorporating it into Google AdWords with Customer Match. This enabled La Quinta to bid higher for its most valuable customers when they searched for a hotel on Google.com.

Next, it used remarketing lists for search ads (RLSA) to bid differently for customers who had previously visited the brand's website. The goal: to stay in touch with those prospective customers as they move from research to booking mode. By pairing this strategy with targeted CPA bidding, La Quinta was also able to take previous visits and other signals into account in real time to drive more conversions at a lower cost—and

avoid bidding on unprofitable clicks.

The crowning touch? La Quinta integrated these signals with data-driven attribution in Google AdWords.

Previously, if a traveler searched for "hotels in Dallas" or "cheap hotels" but didn't immediately book a room after clicking on a served ad, La Quinta might have assumed that its keyword targeting was off. But in the context of a traveler's subsequent searches, "hotels in Dallas" or "cheap hotels" might have just been the first of many typed phrases that ultimately led to a conversion. By applying data-driven attribution with Smart Bidding, La Quinta could gain valuable insight into how other search terms might influence an eventual booking.

While many companies only bid on their brand terms in search—prioritizing a paid presence when someone searches for their name as opposed to generic terms such as "San Francisco hotel"—La Quinta is now armed with a more comprehensive keyword strategy. By valuing generic terms differently and going beyond the last-click conversion, La Quinta can better understand how travelers are researching throughout their journey and use that information to better tailor its messaging.

### **THE RESULT**

Harnessing audience signals has allowed La Quinta to connect early with travelers, drive additional consideration throughout the research process, and ultimately generate more direct bookings at a higher return on investment.



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These newly implemented audience strategies now drive 32% of La Quinta's paid hotel bookings through Google. And Ted Schweitzer, La Quinta's senior vice president of digital commerce and media, said he is eager to build on early successes with audience solutions and data-driven attribution.

"We believe the ability to customize marketing messages at the right time to our customers is key," Ted said. "And as a result, we're planning to expand our audience strategy even further to take full advantage of our data."

## Sources

- 1 Conversion volume increase was reached by combining data-driven attribution and AdWords Smart Bidding, while maintaining a cost per acquisition within 10% of seasonal averages.
- 2 Google/Ipsos MediaCT Travel study, U.S., n=5,000 consumers (3,500 consumers who have traveled at least once for personal reasons and 1,500 consumers who have traveled at least three times for business purposes in the past six months), Aug. 2015.
- 3 Google/Phocuswright, "Leisure Traveler" study, base: U.S. leisure travelers, n=930, Oct. 2015.