

HomeAdvisor successfully renovates its brand with help from Google AdWords



About HomeAdvisor

Founded in 1999, HomeAdvisor is a leading website and mobile app provider offering resources for home repair and improvement projects. The site has helped over 25 million homeowners connect with prescreened home service professionals. HomeAdvisor is a subsidiary of media conglomerate IAC.

For more information, visit www.homeadvisor.com

At a Glance

Rebranding Results

- Swift return to pre-switch performance
- Lower CPC over time
- 24% more clicks
- 15% higher CTR
- 5% rise in conversions

Renaming an established website

HomeAdvisor is a free website offering comprehensive tools and resources for home improvement, maintenance, and repair projects. The company successfully rebranded in October 2012, from ServiceMagic. HomeAdvisor used Google AdWords as a key marketing channel after the rebranding to smooth the transition and maintain their online awareness.

Facing multiple challenges

While the company's name was ServiceMagic for 13 years, the decision to rebrand reflected a new long-term vision for the business. The risks were significant—ServiceMagic had over 10 million content pages associated with the website and over five million unique visitors a month. A decrease in website traffic might seriously affect the company's revenue. Because search engine marketing (SEM) has long been a vital part of their strategy, HomeAdvisor looked to their Google customer service team for advice on minimizing the inevitable disruption.

"They were looking for our input on the best ways to manage it effectively through AdWords," explains Michael Lanz, Google industry director. "Having that collaboration, open dialogue, and trust really allowed us to be a partner."

"We've seen improvements across all key metrics — overall site usability, engagement with content, and repeat usage associated with the brand."
— Craig Smith, president US, CEO international, HomeAdvisor

Planning for all three phases

Google and HomeAdvisor worked closely to develop rebranding best practices. Google even helped connect HomeAdvisor with other advertisers who had made similar transitions. A key lesson learned was to plan early for all three phases of the process—before, during, and after the switch.

HomeAdvisor conducted extensive research to ensure that the new name would resonate with customers and providers. They also tested several AdWords campaigns before the switch, to understand how traffic and conversion rates might be affected. In addition, they posted a video explaining the name change on the ServiceMagic YouTube channel, and directed viewers to the new HomeAdvisor channel.

Growing even stronger

Trying out these rebranding best practices helped make the transition smoother and shorter than HomeAdvisor had expected. "We've seen improvements across all key metrics — overall site usability, engagement with content, and repeat usage associated with the brand," says Craig Smith, president U.S. and chief executive officer (CEO) international for HomeAdvisor.

About Google AdWords

Google AdWords is a performance-based advertising program that enables businesses large and small to advertise on Google and its network of partner websites. Hundreds of thousands of businesses worldwide use AdWords for text, image, and video ads priced on a cost-per-click (CPC) and cost-per-impression (CPM) basis. Built on an auction-based system, AdWords is a highly quantifiable and cost-effective way to reach potential customers.

To learn more about Google AdWords, visit <http://adwords.google.com>

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—Diana Boyles, director of digital marketing, HomeAdvisor

"We were expecting to see cost-per-click (CPC) really increase, but we actually saw a CPC decrease after the first three months or so following the change," adds Diana Boyles, HomeAdvisor director of digital marketing. Plus, despite a steep initial drop in click volume, "within three months we were back to where we had been, and actually increased clicks by 24 percent." In addition, the clickthrough rate (CTR) rose 15 percent, and conversions jumped 5 percent.

Boyles attributes these results largely to "all the testing we did, and to working with Google to understand best practices."

Rebounding quickly

"The speed with which we were able to get back to parity with our paid and organic search campaigns surprised us. We thought recovery might take a full year," says Smith. Boyles agrees, and adds, "We are on much better footing than we were before we made the domain change. A lot of that is due to the testing, and to working with Google to understand the best practices."

SEM best practices

These are among the set of recommendations for rebranding:

- Plan for the effects on organic search, and use paid search to overcome them
- Consider migrating top-performing terms first, to establish a strong history from the beginning
- Test and iterate—and also consider a "rolling launch" for any new domain
- Bid on branded terms (old and new), and monitor your AdWords performance
- Update your other advertising media: YouTube channel, TV ads, etc.

