



About The Washington Wizards

- Founded as the Chicago Packers in 1961, the team played for several seasons in Baltimore before becoming the Washington Bullets in 1974. It won the NBA championship in 1977–78. As part of the team’s anti-violence campaign, it changed its name to the Wizards in 1997.
- www.nba.com/wizards

Goals

- Understand consumer needs and demand on mobile
- Adopt best practices for mobile advertising
- Increase leads and conversions on mobile

Approach

- Implemented mobile bid adjustments and call extensions at the ad group level
- Introduced click-to-call ads to personalize service
- Focused on mobile-optimized ad copy and a responsive design to improve mobile site quality

Results

- Mobile calls from click-to-call jumped 59% from 1H 2013 to 1H 2014
- Mobile leads increased 110% from 1H 2013 to 1H 2014

The Washington Wizards Add 72% More New Fan Ticket Sales With AdWords

The Washington Wizards were one of the big surprises of the 2013–14 NBA season, soaring into the playoffs for the first time in five years. Hoping to capitalize on the team’s success, Wizards’ owners, Monumental Sports & Entertainment, looked for ways to boost ticket sales and draw new fans. Prior to this past basketball season, the Wizards’ marketing efforts consisted of traditional print, websites, social media, local news and radio outlets. Now, the company wanted to attract new audiences in the mid-Atlantic region—beyond its existing fan base who typically attend games.

Searching for a better fan experience

In an effort to enhance audience engagement, Monumental turned to Google AdWords, which it was first introduced to at a sports conference in summer 2013. For the 2013–14 season, AdWords accounted for 72% of the Wizards’ online spend and 25% of the brand’s overall marketing budget. Thanks to a flexible budget, it was able to focus online investment on engaging new fans. “Google Search was a way to do that, because it was a channel that we had not been attacking historically,” says Josh Brickman, senior director of strategy and research at Monumental.

Monumental was also intent on improving the fan experience. One of its goals was to thwart ticket sale scams from questionable online brokers. “When fans show up at the box office on a game night and try to scan their ticket and it doesn’t work, our hands are tied if they did not buy it from us. We wanted to take greater control of that issue moving into the new season,” Brickman said.

Fueling fresh audience insights with ad extensions

When it came to determining a strategy for its search campaigns, the company decided not to compete with high-end ticket brokers for the most popular keywords. Instead, it used specific terms in its AdWords ad extensions to encourage customers to engage with the information in its search ads. For example, a fan searching online for the Wizards’ schedule would see an ad with individual game match-ups tailored to his or her interests.

This approach has helped Monumental to better understand the audience purchasing tickets. “AdWords is showing us a truer representation of what transactions actually occur,” Brickman says.

Armed with its new engagement insights, Monumental has revamped its pricing strategy, too. The company now focuses on better pricing for campaigns with higher engagement and is not as aggressive about those with lower engagement.



About Monumental Sports & Entertainment

- Founded in 2010, Monumental Sports & Entertainment is one of the largest integrated sports and entertainment companies in the U.S. The company owns not only the Wizards, but also the National Hockey League's Washington Capitals and the Women's National Basketball Association's Washington Mystic.
- www.monumentalsports.com

Driving more conversions—and bigger crowds

This ad extensions strategy started the 2013–14 season off on a high note. The Wizards' revenue increased and, simultaneously, made the company more visible to its online audience. The success of the AdWords campaigns was evident around the time of its post-Christmas game with the Detroit Pistons; the Wizards drew their second-highest crowd of the season.

Wizards Basketball - Official Site

Ad www.ticketmaster.com/wizards

Buy Your Tickets Today & See The Wizards This Season!

11/1 Wiz vs. Bucks - 11/5 Wiz vs. Pacers - 11/12 Wiz vs. Pistons

Google ad extensions directed Wizards fans to individual games via primary ticketing partner Ticketmaster.

"Just a simple Google AdWords ad drove more conversions than any other campaign that we offered," notes Brickman. And that's just what the campaign results show. The average price of a Wizards ticket sold via AdWords was 20% higher than for other tracked online sales, and the average total transaction with AdWords was 16% higher than that of other online transactions.

From November to February, the Wizards saw a 277% return on ad spend (ROAS), which rocketed to nearly 400% in the last two months of the 2013–14 season. The overall ROAS for the season was 293%. The AdWords campaigns also drew the new fans the Wizards had hoped to attract—72% of ticket transactions came from new customers.

With the 2014–15 NBA season about to kick off, Monumental is already deep into its strategy for the second season of its AdWords campaigns. A key takeaway has been the timing of the campaigns. To align with the buying habits of Wizards fans, new AdWords campaigns have launched early so they will be in front of potential fans via their search results—and to align with the sales cycle.