**Thank You to John Allen of Marketing on the Web for Helping Improve Microsoft adCenter**

posted Tue, Apr 20 2010 by Chris Norred - MSFT

John Allen is a search marketing professional from Huntsville, Alabama whose continued persistence, feedback to the product team, and expertise that he shares in the community has helped Microsoft adCenter improve one of its most important product offerings.

John is the most actively engaged member in the community forums using the adCenter Desktop to manage campaigns.

Recently, I talked with John about his experiences using adCenter and adCenter Desktop, his participation and willingness to share in the online communities, and his career path to search marketing.

John’s marketing career spans 25 years and he has earned his stripes as a pioneer in the technical marketing field. In the late 90s, he started marketing products online and began honing his search engine optimization and search engine marketing skills as the profession emerged.

John consulted with a number of small companies and start-ups, including **dealnews.com**. In 2007, he started his own Internet marketing agency, **Marketing On the Web**, **(www.marketing-ontheweb.com**).

Like most adCenter customers, John started using the Microsoft search marketing services looking for more opportunities to grow his customers' business through new search marketing placements. John has a technical product management background, having started working for Lanier Business Products as a sales engineer in the mid 1980s marketing early connectivity technologies, and then worked at

Intergraph in the 1990s on computer networking products. During that stint, he developed a relationship with several Microsoft employees and a familiarity with the company’s software development and customer connection practices.

When the adCenter Desktop released its first beta 2 years ago, it was a natural fit for John to test it in his business, and thanks to his familiarity with Microsoft betas and development processes, for him to start offering his constructive feedback with confidence that it would pay off for his business.

“The product has improved dramatically. The desktop tool was really a welcome addition. When it came out, I was really excited. It’s had some bumps, but this latest version is a very slick tool. I use it for two of my customers and was using it for my own business for a bit.”

John’s favorite feature in the desktop is the city targeting. “By far the nicest of anything similar offered by the others,” he said.

One example of how it’s used, John said, is for a homebuilder in Huntsville. He markets homes nationwide for buyers, mostly military families, moving to Huntsville as the government realigns military bases. One challenge for search marketing is that the city name, Huntsville, is common across the country. Using the adCenter Desktop, John is able to remove all other cities named Huntsville from his target areas. Likewise, he removed all other places named Madison (Huntsville is in Madison County) and thereby greatly improved his campaign performance. “The ability to exclude cities is a super feature and nobody else offers that.”

John has a very consistent process when managing his campaigns.

* He opens the text ads tab and loads stats for a period of time either 3 months or 6 months.
* He examines the click-through-rates and the conversion rates.
* He pauses the ads that are not performing well.
* If he sees opportunities for successful keywords, he may move those words into other ads. Maybe it’s something like “free shipping” that people seem to be clicking on more. He will put those keywords into other ads.
* Then he adjusts bids, looking at the ad position over the last 7 days, and tried to keep his ads on the first page of results.

The Desktop tool offers a convenient, easy way to change the keyword bids for multiple keywords in an ad group. You can select multiple keywords and then enter the percentage that you want to change your bids.

“It’s a good way to adjust bids to try to move keywords back to the first page,” according to John. “Doing that manually, you’d have to do the math on each keyword then enter your bid.”

Likewise, John uses the keyword bid feature reduce bids on keywords that convert poorly. “If the cost is high, but the conversion is poor, I can cut the bid by 50 percent. It’ll drop off the first page. I can still run that keyword, but it brings the conversion cost in line with other phrases in the campaign.”

The feature John would like to see added: “If I could wave a magic wand, I’d have a tool that let me build reports on the fly. Like "MyMSN” I could build reports dynamically, arrange charts and graphs, drop my logo on it, and have it mailed to my customer on a regular basis.”

Cool idea John. Thank you and keep them coming!