

Digital

Post-click marketing: How to finish a web sale

ion interactive develops system to turn online visitors into customers

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YOU JUST MOVED into a new home and need insurance, so you go to Google and search for "homeowner's insurance." It brings up all sorts of links—some sponsored, some not. You click on one of the sponsored links for Esurance.com, and it opens up a page to give you auto-insurance quotes. Wait, that's not what you're after.

Another example, this one from a *DM News* e-mail where IBM was running an ad for a new printer: It boasts about its "Infoprint color technology" and has a spot to click for more information—only once you click, it takes you to a blurb about the printer from a recent IBM newsletter. No call to action, no next step. Not exactly the kind of payoff that's going to spur a sale.

It's as tricky as handoff as any in marketing: turning a clicker into a customer. One of the reasons it doesn't happen more often? The incongruity of ads and e-mail offers and the sites they link to.

The folks at Boston-based ion interactive call it "message mismatch." And they say it's just the first part of the problem in getting online visitors to become full-fledged customers. One of the bigger mistakes marketers make is not doing enough post-click marketing, said Justin Talerico, CEO-creative director.

"Advertisers and agencies are creating

interest for that first big step"—getting a customer to click on an ad. "But after that, something dramatic happens, because few go beyond that first click," he said. Marketers often can't isolate why because they don't know much about the people who don't convert, only about those who do.

FORKS IN THE ROAD

Post-click marketing, Mr. Talerico explained, means "before conversion, we design forks in the road, and based on behaviors—which forks people take—we build a profile and assess their relative value." That in turn helps reap higher conversion rates but, more importantly, gives marketers better information about their most valuable types of customers.

Take the example of Elite Island Resorts, which was buying keywords on Google but wanted to know what kind of offer it should make to people who clicked through in order to get the largest return on the ad spend. Thinking a \$99-a-night offer would be a big draw, ion set up two landing pages: one that emphasized length of stay and one that emphasized the \$99 price point. Incidentally,



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DIVIDE AND CONQUER: To appeal to different types of vacationers, Elite Island Resorts set up two landing pages. One emphasizes price, the other focuses on length of stay.

the page that emphasized length of stay far out-converted the price-sensitive one—with each conversion worth about \$1,500.

But that kind of information doesn't come free. Post-click means a greater investment in what comes after search—and that makes it a better fit for big-ticket or highly complicated items such as cars, insurance plans, pharmaceuticals and travel.

A rule of thumb is to spend 20% of your online-media budget on post-click, Mr. Talerico said. "You'll get double the return on the media dollars you're spending, and that's not a losing prop unless you have a small number of respondents for a small-ticket item."

Jupiter analyst David Card said some web publishers will employ a somewhat similar trick, which he casually calls "herding the sheep." The idea is that publishers know which parts of their sites make them the most money per impression, and they can use little tricks to guide more people to those areas.