

DMNNews

May 12, 2008

Bad Ideas in Search Management



Chris Copeland

During its more than year run, Saturday Night Live has made the parody commercial a staple of its repertoire. One such commercial was the [Bad Idea Jeans sketch](#). The sketch featured Phil Hartman, Mike Myers and David Spade, among others, trading comical suggestions of things they had done, which most would consider being absurd. After each suggestion, the television screen would go black with the words “BAD IDEA” appearing.

About once every two weeks, someone shares with me a situation which makes me quote a line from this faux commercial. Below are a few of the bad ideas I am amazed to hear or see on a frequent basis.

“Our IT department says they can't put pixels on the site, so we just won't track anything.”

BAD IDEA.

“We can't control the message as well, so we just want to focus on paid search.”

BAD IDEA.

“We want to use this creative because Google says it will really drive traffic.”

BAD IDEA.

“Our creative agency built us a single landing page to use for all digital media. Let's just drive the traffic there for our entire program.”

BAD IDEA.

“People know our brand already. Let's skip buying our brand terms.”

BAD IDEA.

“Building out keyword lists takes too much time, so let's just put all our terms on broad match.”

BAD IDEA.

“We've got this proprietary bid management tool which does all the heavy lifting for you.”

BAD IDEA.

Ask anyone in the search space who focuses on search strategy day in and day out and they will tell you that search is laborious and data rich. The attention you pay to the details is the difference between a good program and a great one. Because of the complexity, it is easy for agencies and clients to cut corners and convince themselves that because search is more successful than any other media channel, they are still getting the best deal possible.

Search has the potential to change the conversation for advertisers in how they think about communicating with consumers. Few advertisers and agencies seem up to the challenge. The majority would rather continue to carry on as they have in the past. And yet, they expect the revenues and fees to incrementally grow as the industry continues to grow, without any further expenditure or increased intelligence in their strategy and approach.

That, above all else, is a bad idea.

Chris Copeland is CEO of GroupM Search – The Americas, a division of GroupM. Reach him at chris.copeland@groupm.com.