

THE WORD IS OUT.

"The new Yahoo! Search Marketing system has given us phenomenal results, especially when it comes to acquiring new customers."

Paula Drum, Vice President Marketing, H&R Block



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Postcards From The Road: Search Views From Seattle, San Bonita, Milan

by Chris Copeland, Friday, May 11, 2007 4:00 PM ET

If ever there was a week to clone yourself for the sake of search expertise, this was it. In Seattle, Microsoft was holding its yearly Strategic Advertiser Summit. 3,000 miles away in San Bonita, Florida, MediaPost was holding its biannual Search Insider Summit. And while all this was going on, I was traveling to Milan for the launch of the Outrider brand in Italy.

So, for those without the proper invites, credentials or passports, this column is for you.

Microsoft's SAS

Last year marked the coming-out party for Microsoft in the search space. At SAS 2006, the buzz was all about search. AdCenter had just launched and the mood was festive and optimistic. A lot of self-congratulations and posturing for the pending fight with Google was on the agenda. A year later, that fight has turned bloody. The tone of SAS 2007 reflected a shift in strategy, but certainly no less discussion around search. Then

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"I saw a big improvement in results right away and higher sales with the new system."

Stewart Hines, Owner, Hilton Head & Myrtle Beach Home Rentals

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again, press chatter about a possible Yahoo/MSN alliance didn't hurt that buzz, either

What our man in the crowd saw this year was that if Google is winning the game for advertising dollars through usage, Microsoft intends to change the game in the ways advertising is displayed and delivered. Through the introduction of tools like Sea Dragon, Microsoft appears ready to try and truly deliver on one of the most lacking areas of search: the user experience.

Let's face it, we've spent five years with similar results and displays for search. Keep an eye on whether Microsoft can finally generate consumer interest through unique and different delivery options.

Mediapost's Search Insider Summit

There's a new acronym to add to industry events: SIS. Last year, MediaPost got into the search conference game with its Search Insider Summit series. These events, trading on the currency of the MediaPost columns of the same name, have become a hot place for networking and getting insider tips. Largely focused on big brands, they have provided a nice counter to the mass appeal of Search Engine Strategies conferences. Instead, SIS events are all about the conversations, search theory and philosophy debates.

So, in between golf outings and air boat trips to the Everglades, the topics of highest interest were cross-channel integration and speaking more clearly with consumers. The topic of consumer segmentation has been a frequent topic for my Search Insider columns, so this was great to hear. It appears more and more advertisers want better synergy

between their channels of communications and better controls on who they are advertising to at a given time. This is important in light of the new deals made by Yahoo and Google around Right Media and DoubleClick.

Our Italian Job

While all of this was going on, I found myself on a plane to Italy. For U.S.-based search agencies the concept of global search has been a nice bullet on the capabilities slide but little more. As Global 1000 companies awaken to the true power of search, this is beginning to change. Interestingly enough the place it seems to be changing first is with the holding companies. While some players in the space can claim regional capabilities through a London location, few claim the footprint that exists within big media holding companies. IProspect announced the openings of its 4th and 5th international offices this week. Milan marks the 27th Outrider office globally.

And don't kid yourself, this trend is becoming more and more important. In the most recent CMO Survey in *Advertising Age*, globalization was ranked No. 7 on the top 10 concerns of CMOs. This is significant because just a year ago it came in at No. 10. More and more companies are looking for search vendors that have the ability to execute globally through local efforts. It's no longer enough to say "We've got a guy who can translate, then do something remotely or via third-party contracts."

In Europe, Google reaches 91% of all Internet users and has agents standing by to execute campaigns in every market. Companies would rather work directly with them than use someone that has to rely on third-party or regional solutions. The trend we see is global

companies looking for strategies developed at a global level, pushed to regional leads and then executed at a local level. The ability to deliver on this is essential in the new digital marketplace.

Wish You Were Here...

No matter where you are, no matter what role you play, for advertisers, marketers or vendors, the space is alive. Not a week goes by without a major conference, announcement, acquisition, partnership or mainstream media story on the space. But if the events of this week are to be used as a prism to view search's chemistry today, the key hot buttons are: 1) the formats by which advertising comes into the space, 2) the holistic approach to advertising, and 3) reaching consumers as they move through the funnels that exist for decision-making.

And lastly, the view from where I sat this week was a deep desire from advertisers to be able to execute world-class programs, regardless of the location.

All three industry highlights from this week make for picture-postcard views of a bright and sunny search future.

Chris Copeland is senior partner/ managing director for Outrider, a search marketing firm headquartered in St. Louis and a GroupM company. Contact him at Chris.Copeland@outrider.com.

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