

NEW LIFE FOR PAID SEARCH

How we helped an SaaS firm grow leads and revenue,
making them an attractive target for acquisition

CLIENT

- ◇ SaaS firm specializing in HR and learning management systems
- ◇ 3,500 customers (many in the Fortune 500) and 49 million users worldwide
- ◇ Complex sales process

CHALLENGE

- ◇ Competitors were attracting more, better-qualified leads
- ◇ Initial paid search results had been so inconsistent and disappointing that they completely suspended paid search four years before approaching us

SOLUTION

- ◇ Restructure account for efficiency and quick lead generation
- ◇ Improve user experience to convert more leads
- ◇ Manage account with high-touch, detail-oriented customer service

OUTCOMES

2,215
LEADS
IN FIRST YEAR

FIRST-YEAR CPL
3%
LOWER THAN GOAL

1,432%
RETURN ON
AD SPEND

72%
MORE LEADS
IN SECOND YEAR

SECOND-YEAR CPL
10%
LOWER THAN THAT

233%
MORE MQLS
IN 7 MONTHS

After a 2-year engagement with (un)Common Logic, this company's volume of paid search leads and marketing-qualified leads (MQLs) had grown so much and contributed so much revenue that not only were they leading their market segment for companies their size, they were acquired by that segment's global, enterprise-level leader.

An SaaS firm approached us about improving lead quality and quantity. They had suspended all paid search activity four years earlier, and in the meantime, their competitors had embraced paid search and made the most of it.

This company was positioned to be a leader in building SaaS solutions for e-learning and HR management. However, in the previous four years, their competitors had embraced paid search and leveraged it

to attract and convert quality leads. If the client was to retain and improve its position, they would need to scale up the quantity and quality of their leads quickly.

AUDIT

This audit was somewhat unusual. Usually, we examine a client's currently operating paid search account for short- and long-term trends, opportunities for efficiency and increased revenue, and wasted spend.

As this company had suspended paid search 4 years earlier, we modified our approach slightly:

- ◇ We reviewed their account's status as of the last time it was active to determine its structure and organization

- ◇ We paid special attention to the landing pages to which their paid search ads had linked to find the greatest opportunities to improve the conversion rate for leads once they came to the client's website
- ◇ While we always conduct a competitive analysis as part of our audit, we expanded the scope of the analysis to include competitive activities over the past four years to get a sense of how much ground the client might need to make up

AUDIT RESULTS

After examining the history of the client's activities, we agreed that their decision to suspend paid search had been correct. Their account had been working against them, costing them considerable amounts of money, time, and energy.

We found a number of problems, including:

- ◇ An inconsistent, disorganized account structure limited their lead-gathering capacity and did not support their complex sales process.
- ◇ Their PPC strategy was unfocused, making it difficult for potential customers to find products that best suited their needs.

- ◇ Potential clients were directed to generic web pages, making it difficult to find what they wanted
- ◇ An overall lack of consistent account management led to significant inefficiencies and made room in the market for competition to thrive

While our in-depth analysis did reveal significant problems, it also revealed major opportunities. We determined that paid search was the most effective, efficient lead-generation channel, as long as it was set up and managed correctly, consistently, and strategically.

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

For most of our clients, our 3-phase plan for improving their digital marketing goes as follows:

- ◇ Phase 1 delivers short-term fixes with visible results in less than 1-2 months
- ◇ Phase 2 focuses on rebuilding the account structure to maximize effectiveness and efficiency
- ◇ Phase 3 expands the reach, power and capacity of the client's paid search activities through continued optimization; this phase lasts as long as our engagement with the client because optimization never truly stops

While the steps in our plan tend to follow this pattern, each step is highly customized for the individual client's priorities, concerns, industry, initiatives, and goals.

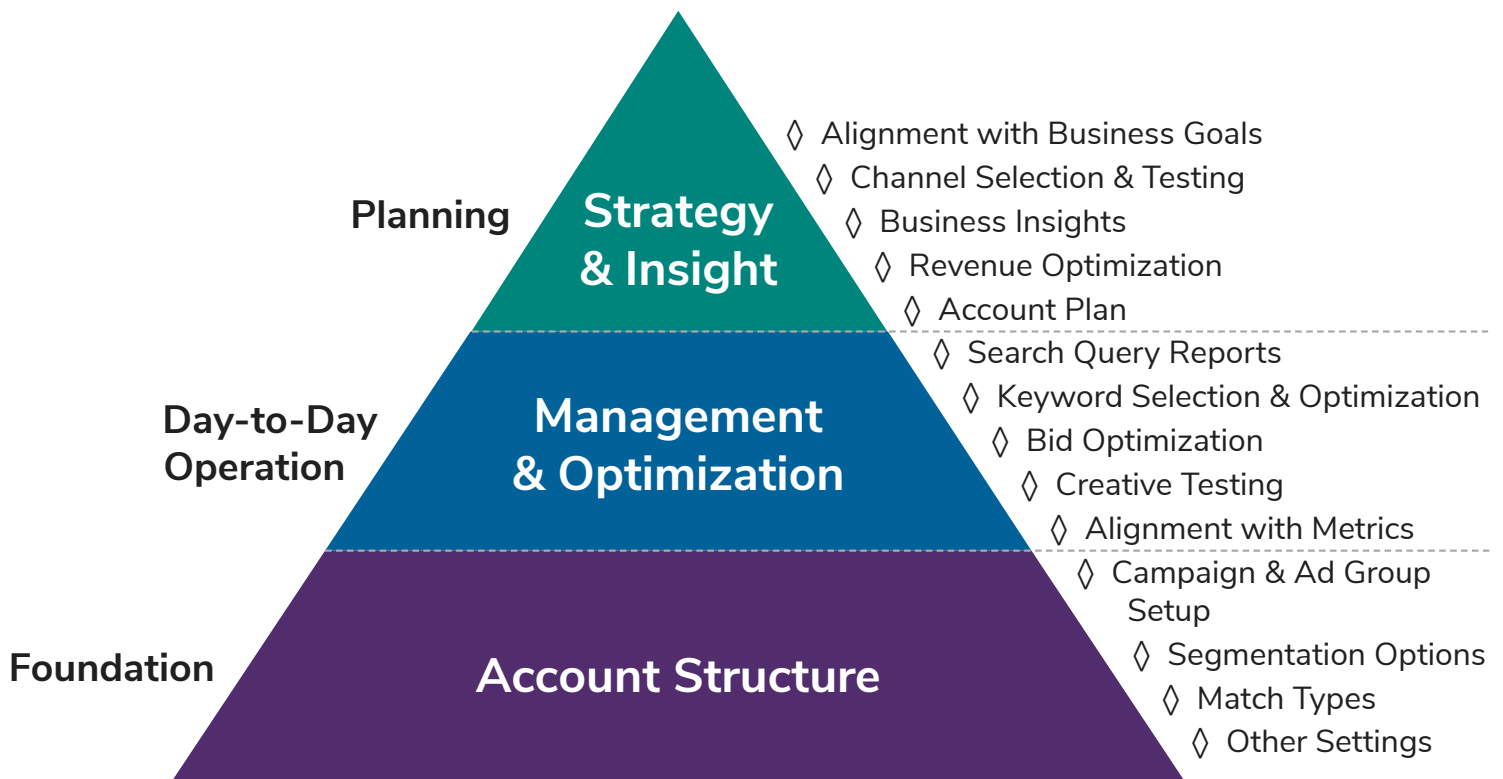
However, once again, this client's unique situation called for a customization of the plan itself. For this engagement:

- ◇ Phase 1 would be the account rebuild, to give their renewed commitment to paid search a strong start and deliver lead-oriented traffic quickly
- ◇ Phase 2 would focus on increasing their on-site conversion rate by improving the user experience and removing friction in the conversion process
- ◇ Phase 3 would retain its focus on constant optimization, regular testing and improvement of the client's site, consistent management of paid-search efforts, and our usual excellent customer service

PHASE 1: ACCOUNT REBUILD

The client's circumstances afforded us a rare opportunity to essentially start from scratch with their account structure and apply our best practices to it.

Through our years of experience and expertise, we have developed a model of an ideal paid search approach:



ACCOUNT REBUILD STRATEGIES

Our account rebuild process doesn't begin in the account itself; it starts with research and data.

- ◇ We build a custom keyword list for the client to capture high-volume traffic from the audiences the client wants to capture
- ◇ We research the bids on these keywords to maximize cost-effectiveness and ROI

Next, we organize the account, using our proven best practices.

- ◇ We structure the account by client campaigns rather than products or even audiences for two reasons:
 - ◇ This gives us apples-to-apples data on how individual campaigns function
 - ◇ It also separates brand campaigns (which have lower CPLs and higher conversion rates, but don't attract many new customers) from higher-funnel campaigns
- ◇ We divide each campaign into tightly themed ad groups, each of which has 5-10 keywords; again, this helps us get useful data on which concepts and offers appeal most to users



- ◇ We set up tracking throughout the account, tying paid search to website analytics and client results such as MQLs and revenue

Finally, we create the customer-facing elements that are so crucial to conversions.

- ◇ We write custom ad copy that aligns with the client's business goals for audiences, searcher intent, and desired actions
- ◇ We produce dedicated landing pages that closely match the image or text of specific ads to unify the searcher experience

Only then do we launch the account, with all the pieces in place for success.

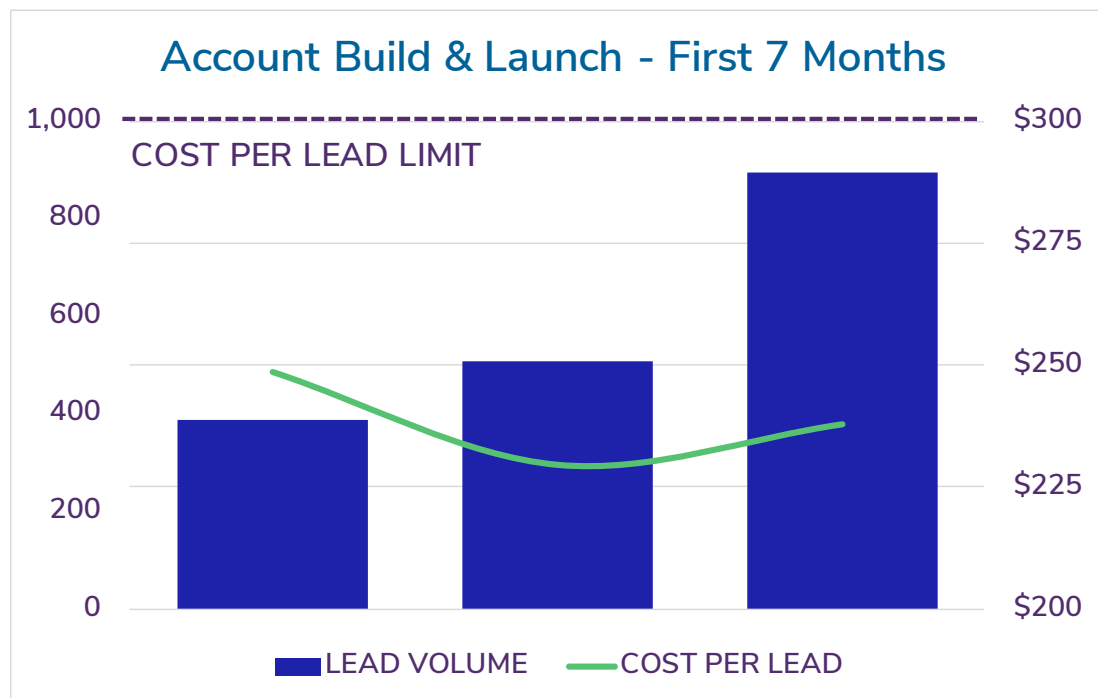
ACCOUNT REBUILD RESULTS

In the first four months after the account launch, starting from zero, we generated:

- ◇ 389 total leads
- ◇ \$248.65 average CPL, 17% below the \$300 CPL limit

The following three months produced:

- ◇ 507 total leads
- ◇ \$229.76 average CPL, 23% below the \$300 CPL limit



PHASE 2: USER EXPERIENCE IMPROVEMENTS

In addition to our paid search services, we also offer conversion rate optimization (CRO), a data-driven practice that continuously improves a client's website

to increase on-site conversions and, most importantly, revenue.

USER EXPERIENCE IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES

For this engagement, we used our CRO expertise to amplify the value of paid search leads by enhancing the user experience.

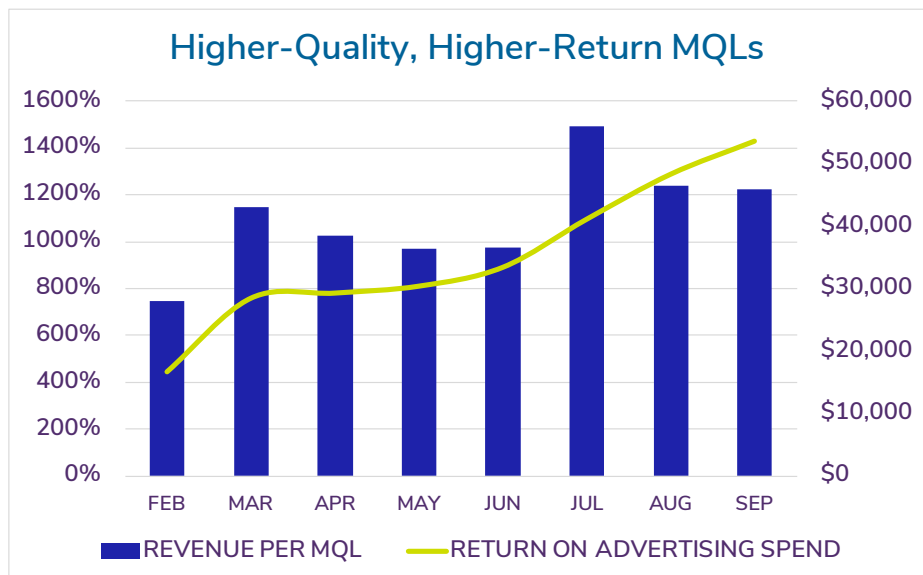
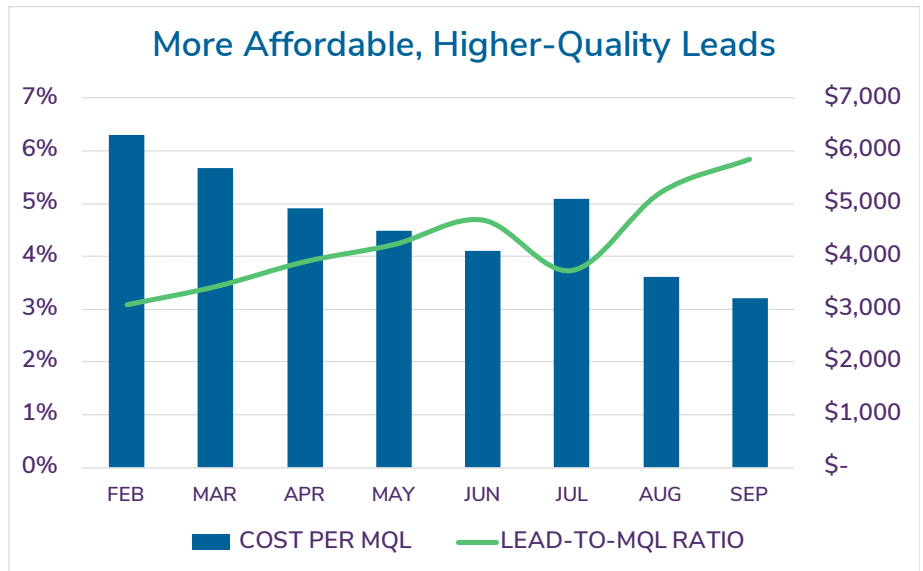
- ◇ We directed users to pages that closely matched the text or image of the ad they clicked on, rather than generic pages that frustrated visitors
- ◇ We redesigned existing landing pages to present

benefits clearly, request only the minimum needed information, and visually guide the user to respond to a compelling call to action

- ◇ We provided ongoing A/B testing and optimizing for the landing pages to keep improving the quality and return for paid search leads and marketing-qualified leads (MQLs)

USER EXPERIENCE IMPROVEMENT RESULTS

We saw these results over the course of seven months. As our paid search efforts increased the number of leads while reducing their average cost, our on-site improvements increased the conversion ratio from paid search leads to MQLs. As the volume and revenue of MQLs increased, the client's pipeline grew efficiently, achieving a return on advertising spend of 1,432%.



PHASE 3: ONGOING IMPROVEMENTS

HIGH-TOUCH MANAGEMENT

The strength of our approach to digital marketing is how we leverage our team members' abilities:

- ◇ Our analysts have years of experience, deep expertise from focusing exclusively on data-driven digital marketing, ingenuity and discernment to test new concepts intelligently, and a drive to keep learning, growing, and delivering better results to our clients
- ◇ Our account managers use their training in customer service and communication to provide consistent, customer-focused management in the frequency and style that works best for each individual client. They also have the knowledge and experience of our analysts, making them strong strategic partners to guide our clients' digital marketing at every level

OVERALL RESULTS

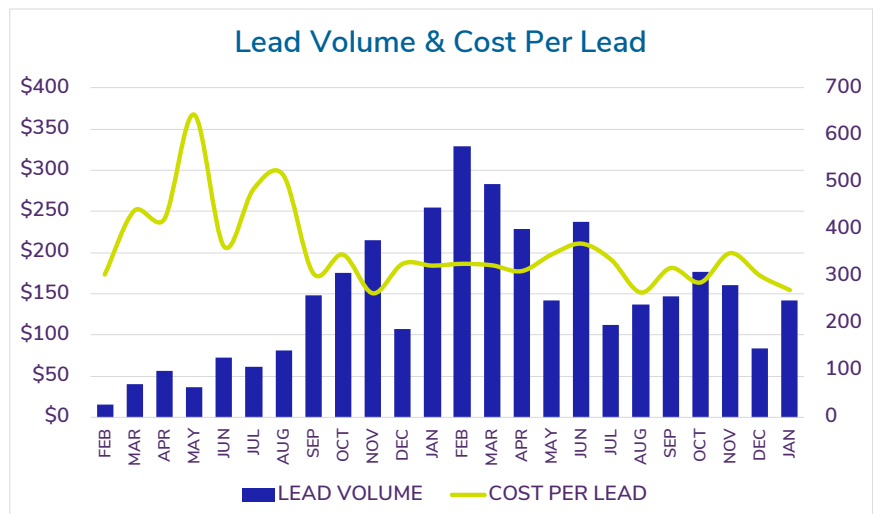
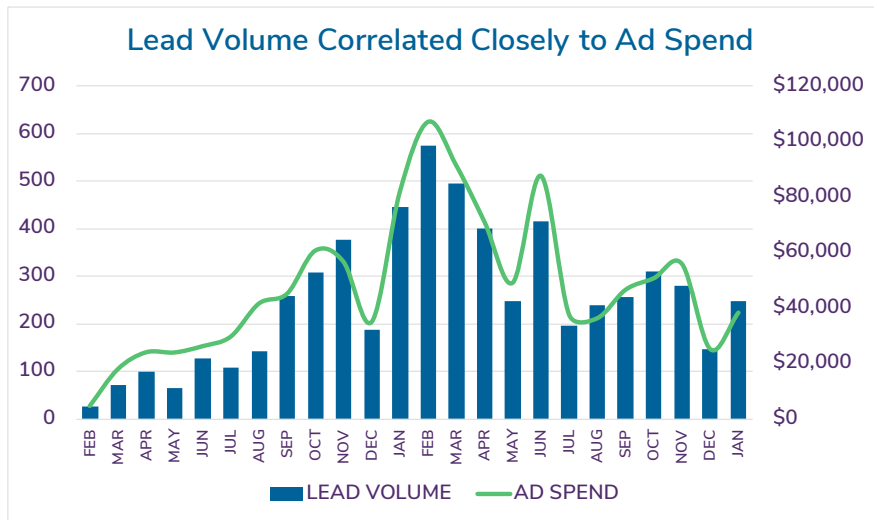
Almost immediately after we restarted their paid search account, this client experienced a surge in leads. By the end of our first year with them, they had 2,215 leads at an average CPL of \$202.84—more than 30% below their \$300 CPL limit.

Lead volume correlated strongly to spend: as the budget fluctuated, so did the extent to which we could capture leads through paid search. However, as shown by the decreasing CPL, we captured as many leads as possible for the client's budget.

ONGOING OPTIMIZATION

We monitor client accounts daily, test new ideas and tactics regularly, and report the results weekly. It's a high level of involvement, but the results are consistently worth it.

- ◇ We rarely, if ever, set paid search placements to automatic control. Instead, we use human intelligence to select the best matches
- ◇ While we do use some automatic bid management tools, we always maintain close oversight on them, so we can tailor spend to maximize conversions within CPL goals
- ◇ This granular approach gives the client both strong, steady growth and fast responses from us when company goals or priorities change



TAKEAWAYS

At the end of our two-year engagement, the client was acquired by the global leader in their space. This company does their digital marketing in-house, so we prepared an extensive transformation packet to get their team off to a solid start.

The results we got for this client were a natural outgrowth of our paid search philosophy:

◇ **Build it right, sleep at night**

A good account structure provides a strong foundation that supports sustainable growth.

◇ **Remove friction**

Make it as easy as possible for your visitors to convert. Create a cohesive experience from the ad to the landing page and guide the user to the desired action.

◇ **Always be optimizing**

There's a risk to settling for "good enough." Keep seeking ways to improve targeting and performance, scale intelligently and introduce beneficial innovations.



(un)Common Logic solves the hard problems in digital marketing by using data to uncover surprising details, then using human intelligence to leverage that information for uncommon results. Visit www.uncommonlogic.com or reach us directly at contactus@uncommonlogic.com.