Empire Covers achieves steep decline in CPA with Product Listing Ads on Google Shopping

Located outside Philadelphia, with manufacturing and distribution facilities in Kentucky, Empire Covers is an ambitious online retailer offering protective covering for cars, trucks, boats, RVs, and motorcycles. It also offers accessories for outdoor living. The company sells direct to online consumers and maintains a fully staffed call center. The Empire Covers team continually implements the best online tools to support its website, and found success as an early adopter of Google Shopping.

Google Shopping, a forum for relevance

“At Empire Covers, we work closely with Google and always try to stay on top of the newest betas and opportunities for expanded customer reach,” says Robert Brous, Empire Covers' SEM marketing manager. “We understand that traditional AdWords advertising is only one modality for reaching our customer base. When Product Listing Ads (PLA) beta was introduced to us, we immediately understood the power of coupling product images with our company name on the search-results page. Additionally, showing prices allows for immediate comparison shopping, resulting in lower bounce rates, more time spent on the site, and better conversion rates.”

Google Shopping provides online customers with a new shopping experience within Google search, giving PLA advertisers more control over when and where their products appear in search results. “The commercial model of Google Shopping creates a forum for the greatest relevancy,” Brous says. “When spending ad dollars, we are always concerned with placement – the quality, cost, and relevance of the placement, plus the controls and monitoring of performance,” he adds. “Under the Google Shopping model, we have more control to set pricing and bids on product-specific categories. We know that we will be served in the most relevant places. We can quickly and easily maneuver to capitalize on product categories that beckon niche companies like ours and can compete intelligently.”

As for the actual ad dollars spent, with the implementation of PLAs, Empire Covers saw a steep decline of 36 percent in cost-per-acquisition (CPA) from April to August, 2012. Cost-per-click (CPC) dropped by 11 percent from July to August, 2012, and by a total of 16 percent from second-quarter lows.
After Empire Covers launched its PLA campaign on Google Shopping in the spring of 2012, the click-through rate (CTR) climbed 55 percent from July to August. This represented an increase of 16 percent from the previous high in the second quarter.

“PLAs have taken their place at the table in our paid-search strategy along with search campaigns and re-marketing,” Brous says. “These three techniques make up the backbone of our paid-search strategy.

“As we develop new products and new sites, and as we sit in photo shoots and design new catalogs and ads, we have to leave room in the conversation for PLAs and Google Shopping,” he adds. “And it’s only over the past four months that this has been a major part of our strategy.”