

case study Optimized for Search

Problem: NRS wanted to improve online conversion rates.

Solution: It implemented Site Champion, a search engine optimization solution.

Results: Sales generated from on-site searches and external search engines increased markedly.

NRS, a multichannel merchant of paddling equipment for rafting, kayaking and canoeing, wanted to gain more exposure to online consumers, make it easier for visitors to shop from its site, and convert more site visits to sales. It determined it needed to improve its search functionality, both its on-site (or internal) search and its rankings in search

engines (external search).

In September 2004, Moscow, Idaho-based NRS implemented Site Champion from SLI Systems.

Site Champion tracks what search terms customers use most often, analyzes those words, and reports search results based on customers' changing search criteria. "For example, keywords now

bring up the same products from both internal and external searches," says Keli Keach, e-commerce manager at NRS. Site Champion delivers online shoppers from a search engine deep into the NRS site's product pages. "That helps us to keep consumers on our site after they've gotten there from a keyword search in Google."

Shaun Ryan, CEO of SLI Systems, describes Site Champion

as a way to automatically optimize a large number of keywords, especially tails, unique or little-used words in your keyword list.

"It's hard to optimize tails, because you don't want to spend too much on them," he notes. "Site Champion tells you which words in the tail are good to optimize and have high conversion rates." In this way, he continues, customers help merchants select keywords to use.

Keach says the system helps her take words being used by searchers and decide how to use words better in her copy. She offers an example: "I can look for searched words that came back without search results. I get an actual list of those words, so I can plug them into my copy. Within a week of doing that, our external searches for those terms usually have improved, because the system is constantly indexed."

This feature, in turn, has helped Keach streamline her paid search program. "I know the words people are using to search," she says.

NRS' conversion from internal search to sales went from less than 1 percent before Site Champion to 2.96 percent, Keach notes. Conversion from external searches also has increased, although she wouldn't reveal by how much. And 26 percent of site visitors now use the merchant's search functionality, up from 20 percent before Site Champion was implemented.

—Donna Loye



Cut Ups

BY BILL SHELLY



"There must have been a hike in postage rates. Your blood pressure is up."