A S.T.A.R. Client Case Study: Aspen Skiing Company

eCommerce Sites of Aspen Skiing Company Snowball – Building Traffic, Growing Revenues

Summary

The Aspen Skiing Company was founded in 1946 by Walter Paepcke and his wife, Elizabeth, who fell in love with Aspen upon visiting from their home in Chicago. Their dream for the company was to help transform the town into a cultural center, where visitors could come for a “renewal of the inner spirit.” That mission has persisted through multiple changes in ownership and remains at the core of the company’s guiding principles today.

In recent years, Aspen Skiing Company sought to revamp their digital spending and tracking efforts to ensure their digital spend was delivering a positive ROI, and to justify, establish, and secure an appropriate online marketing budget for the 2012 and 2013 winter ski seasons.

In October 2011, Aspen Skiing Company hired ethology to work with its internal marketing and IT teams to implement paid search ad copy, display ad copy, and creative campaigns, all with accurate digital tracking. The result was a snowballing of the company’s ecommerce site traffic and company revenue.

Task

Ethology’s digital paid media team was tasked with (1) driving as much revenue as possible through paid search and display ad channels, while (2) establishing proper analytics, conversion, and revenue tracking across all of the Aspen/Snowmass web and ecommerce sites. These two tasks required ethology to ensure that appropriate digital content was in place to target the client’s current following and potential consumers, and that proper tracking existed across the various Aspen Skiing Company websites, including:

- One eStore site – tracking of all reservations, sales, and revenue for lift tickets, ski lessons, ski equipment rentals, etc. on store.aspensnowmass.com/estore.
- Two mobile apps – tracking of all Android and iPhone app downloads from Apple iTunes and Google Places.
- All sites – tracking traffic and audience engagement from all channels (SEO, PPC, direct, display ads, and partners/affiliates) with proper Google Analytics implementation.
Within weeks of the engagement kickoff, the ethology team implemented full tracking with Google Analytics and AdWords conversion codes for all websites. The team then developed a paid search and display ad strategy around branded and non-branded keywords to ensure that all efforts would resonate with Aspen Skiing Company’s current customers and ski enthusiasts alike.

Both ethology and the internal marketing team at Aspen Skiing Company worked together to properly allocate available annual budgets to focus on the high-value, high-demand ski season months of January-March with Google and TripAdvisor (for The Little Nell, The Limelight Hotel, and Aspen Snowmass properties), and test other display and paid search media channels, as well.

The joint team broke Colorado into its own paid search and display ad campaign to take advantage of differences in the behavior of local residents versus out-of-state visitors, such as driving versus flying to Aspen, weekend/mid-week/daily trips to the resort versus week-long or longer vacations, etc. With distinct digital content aimed to appeal to both out-of-state visitors and local residents who have a sense of ownership over the special ski town, Aspen Skiing Company was able to appeal to their entire existing and potential customer base. The approved ad copy was used in both paid search and display banner ads to ensure integrated messaging for all current promotions, Aspen events, and snow conditions in the Aspen/Snowmass resort region.

Prior to launching the new creative, ethology’s team of paid media experts ensured that Google Remarketing was in place so the ski company could retarget all web visitors who didn’t convert, keeping Aspen top of mind and building brand awareness for this unique mountain experience.

Compared to relatively flat year-over-year revenues prior to 2012, the 2012 and 2013 ski seasons have been phenomenal for the Aspen Skiing company, with accurate tracking showing gains in both month-over-month and year-over-year web traffic and revenues. January 2013 saw new ecommerce records in sales and traffic across all web properties. Fifteen days into the month of February, Aspen/Snowmass was trending to achieve a 280.5% month-over-month growth (January 2013 to February 2013). Limelight Hotel is trending to achieve 244.4% year-over-year growth for February 2013, and Little Nell Hotel’s revenue is trending to hit 83.6% year-over-year growth.

It takes a lot of effort, coordination, and teamwork to get things moving and integrated with any business and its digital marketing program, but ethology and Aspen Skiing Company put the snowball on top of the hill and pushed it down, and it’s starting to gain great momentum. Book your reservation now, or you won’t get in – this snowball is not stopping anytime soon.

About Aspen Skiing Company & ethology
Aspen Skiing Company operates the four mountains in the Aspen/Snowmass area - Snowmass, Aspen Mountain, Aspen Highlands and Buttermilk - as well as the award-winning Ski & Snowboard Schools of Aspen/Snowmass. The area offers unparalleled nightlife and off-slope activities as well. For more information on Aspen Skiing Company, please call 800-525-6200 or visit aspensnowmass.com

Ethology is the integrated digital marketing agency for evolving consumer brands. Ethologists come from top-tier agency and online industry leaders, such as Omnicom, Google, Facebook, Edelman, McCann and others. Its team of digital marketers are experts at research, strategy, planning, organic search, paid search, display media, social media, email marketing, content strategy, analytics, web development and design. To learn more about ethology, visit ethology.com.