

MATTHEW PELOQUIN

Case Study

Autobytel – Conversion Rate Optimization

The Challenge:

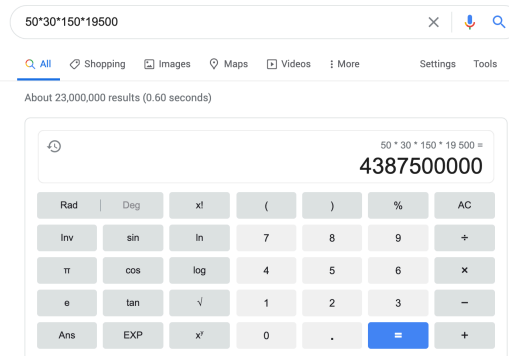
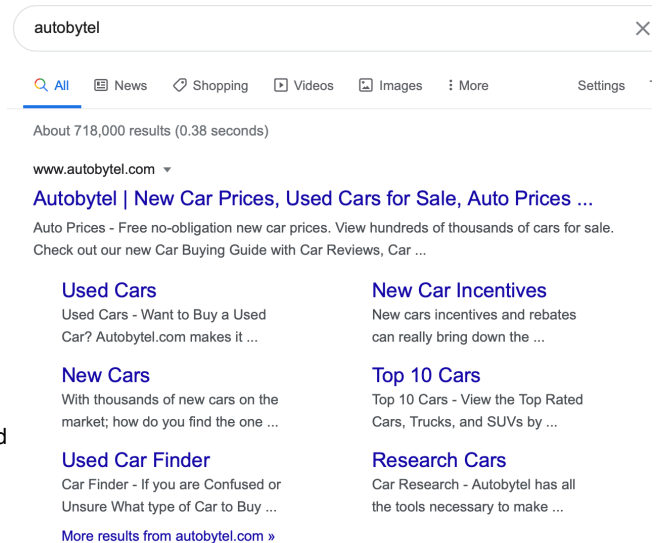
Autobytel was the leader in car quote leads in the auto industry, with paid search driving the highest volume conversions at the best ROI for the company. But paid search leads were driven primarily from expensive “head” keywords such as “car quotes”, and users would be directed to a general home page where they would complete a lead form.

What Autobytel was missing were the millions of automotive search queries that covered the specific locations that potential lead generators lived in. Unlike buying a standard “widget”, a customer looking to purchase a car does so at a local dealer and it was probable that a customer ready to purchase would use the specific location in their search queries to find a local deal.

The challenge was to find a way to create an improved user experience for the customer, so that when they searched for a local auto, Autobytel would be there to serve the user a targeted keyword, relevant ad copy, and visiting the landing page so that they would be encouraged to complete a form. **But how can you create so many combinations of auto makes and towns and cities when the standard tool for marketers working on this task was Excel?**

The Solution:

At the current time, when paid search campaigns were to be created, it was a painful task of manually creating keywords and ad copy in Excel and then uploading to search providers like Google either through the Google Adwords website or via the Adwords Editor tool. This process was fine for creating a handful of campaigns to launch, but it had its limitations. Imagine you’re working in Excel and you are tasked with creating approximately 50 keywords for every make of auto, every model, and every city and town in the United States. To look at the numbers, that’s approximately 30 makes, 250 models and 19,500 towns and cities...not to forget the over 40,000 zip codes. Even the most savvy Excel user would see how daunting it would be to have 4.3 BILLION rows of data that would need to be manually edited.



Matt joined Autobytel for the opportunity to work with some of the best minds in the digital marketing technology space based on the previous work at Autobytel in creating an in-house PPC bidding engine “Black Condor”. With so few third-party bidding engines available on the market, he prioritized learning as much as he could about this technology and adding some marketing insights to find ways to improve this top-performing tool and help boost the Autobytel marketing ROI.

The team that worked on Black Condor was then tasked with a new project: how to create an automated system that could create every relevant permutation for keywords, ping the paid search inventory system to check for available search volume, create high-quality ad copy, and most importantly, create a landing page experience that would leave customers encouraged to input their contact information to generate a lead.

Conversion rate optimization was the core function of this project. The goal being to increase the keyword coverage from 30,000-50,000 keywords, to millions of relevant queries covering every make of auto for every city in town. The user sitting at home in Hermosa Beach, CA already has the geo-targeting set by the search engines to have the coverage of a more expensive keyword like “car quotes” or “honda car quotes”. But with this conversion optimization strategy, Autobyte would have every combination available for low-cost keywords in the \$0.05-\$0.10 range for more targeted queries such as “hermosa beach honda” and “honda in hermosa beach”.

The task of creating millions of “tail” keywords began by creating the seed variable words. Through a variety of statements, these words were then matched. For instance, if “city=hermosa beach, then state=CA”. The automated system would then combine all of the variables from the seed words such as auto makes, car quotes, price, and any other variables of these words to create the massive list exceeding 4 billion unique keywords.

Ad copy formulas were then implemented to create targeted and relevant messages that would connect to the user. Formulas such as “Get Free {Auto Make Name} {Price/Car/Auto} Quotes in {City/Town}, {State Abbreviation} Today” would populate with all relevant variations of ad copy, with 4-5 variations to be used for conversion optimization testing.

Now that the keywords and ad copy variations were set, the next step was in designing a landing page format.

Utilizing PHP, specific values in the URL string were used to call text and image elements on the landing page.

A URL string resembling <http://autobyte.com/hermosa-beach/ca/honda> would call the elements of town, state and auto make to appear on the landing page to the right with a pre-populated lead form with the users city included, and an image of the top-selling Honda model to the left. The introduction messaging was a reflection of the ad copy the user entered on when they decided to click: “**Get a Free Price Quote on a Honda in Hermosa Beach, CA**”.



**Get a Free Price Quote on a
Honda in
Hermosa Beach, CA**



Name
Email
Phone Number
Zip Code
SUBMIT

With all of the targeting and creative elements set on the back end, the next step was to ping the search engine API. The massive list of over 4 billion keywords pinged the API to check for volume. The result was that any keyword that returned 0 volume was eliminated from the list to ensure top quality.

The final step was deployment, with the now refined list of keywords, ad copy, highly targeted landing pages and targeted campaign settings set for launch through the API.

The entire process of building the system, seeding it with the relevant variables, pinging the API for quality check and launch of the live campaigns took less than 2 weeks to complete. A manual effort to create such highly-targeted assets and landing pages for the goal of optimized conversion rate would have taken a paid media team 7-8 months to complete.

The end result upon deployment was an increase in high-quality keywords that converted at a 45% rate upon click, covering the entire United States, and resulting in an overnight ROI improvement of over 100% within the first week alone.

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