

SEO Case Study: Leading Movie Site

Background

This client of The Search Agency (TSA) provides movie times and sells movie tickets to more than 15,000 screens. The site offers exclusive film clips, trailers, celebrity interviews, fan reviews and news, while offering customers the ability to quickly select a film and conveniently buy tickets in advance.

Challenge

Before partnering with TSA, the client was driving the majority of its traffic through offline media, PR-driven brand awareness, and a costly paid search campaign. With the rising costs of PPC marketing and the hyper-competitive nature of the 'movie ticket' vertical, it was imperative for the client to focus on driving qualified traffic from non-branded keywords via organic search. At the time of our engagement, 99% of the website was invisible to the search engines due to poor site architecture, lack of unique content/meta data and limited links from authoritative sources.

Solution

The client's SEO account team immediately went to work on the low hanging fruit, such as recommending simple architecture changes and revised title tags on the homepage. Working closely with the client's marketing/technical team, TSA implemented the changes and by the end of the first month, the site went from having 150 pages indexed to over 146,000 pages. Within days of changing the homepage title tag, the client moved from position #4 to position #1 in Google for the important term 'movie tickets'.

• Architecture

- **Created new site maps linked from the home page-** These hierarchical site maps allowed spiders to fully crawl the site and provide specific link text in links pointing to each page of the site.
- **Redesigned the URLs to be SEO friendly-** Implemented ISAPI (Internet Server Application Programming Interface) rewrites to hide extraneous parameters and put high-performing keywords into the URLs.
- **Eliminated JavaScript redirects-** Photo and poster galleries could not be crawled by the search engines. By eliminating JavaScript, the search engines could begin browsing these pages, and new external links could help increase their PageRank.
- **Implemented content formulas to auto-generate title tags-** This created dynamic title tags featuring the name of the movie along with targeted keyword phrases (buy movie tickets, movie show times). This strategy enabled the client to have the name of the movie and high-converting keywords on every movie overview page and significantly increased their ranking on these short-duration keyword matches.
- **Implemented site wide formulas to generate unique meta description tags for every page of the site-** These tags repeated the primary keywords of the page and were developed to generate unique metadata across all the pages.

These changes to the site architecture led to immediate and dramatic increases in the number of pages indexed and organic traffic. The client found that the vast majority of their organic traffic was coming from branded keywords and a small handful of category keywords (e.g. movies, movie times, movie tickets, etc.) With a solid architecture in place, TSA worked with the client to build out new content to grow traffic on a broader array of non-branded keywords.

- **Content**

- **Microsites-** The Search Agency created a series of microsites focused on a particular genre of movies. For example, the site on comedy movies includes a history of the genre, well-known actors and writers, and reviews of the latest movies. With prominent links from these unbranded sites to targeted pages on the client's site, the client was able to increase their ranking on these tail terms and increase the overall PageRank of their site.
- **Valuable onsite content-** TSA's content development team drafted new site pages featuring unique content on popular actors, trailers, movie photos to increase their reach on non-branded keywords.
- **Geo-targeted content-** Created new pages to list movie theaters by city and zip code. This strategy dramatically increased traffic on geo-modified keywords.

- **Linking**

- **Developed viral links with fan networks-** The Search Agency created new widgets, e.g., top ten lists, to stimulate links back to targeted pages. The Account Team then added an RSS feed to enable frequent users and bloggers to update their sites with current, relevant content.
- **Added a Top 5 Box Office link box on every page-** This created a rotating batch of thousands of internal links to the most popular movie pages and significantly increased PageRank on these high traffic pages.

Results

Within the first year of its engagement with The Search Agency, the client saw an increase in organic traffic of 148 percent and organic conversions of 61 percent. Within the first two years, the client had a 307 percent increase in organic traffic and more than doubled the number of organic conversions.

This growth in organic traffic was fueled by a significant increase in branded keywords, but an even more remarkable growth in non-branded keywords (e.g. movie times, The Dark Knight movie tickets). By improving the site architecture and developing an array of current, topical content, the client was able to increase traffic on non-branded keywords 583% in two years.

Conversions and Organic Traffic

