


[Home](#)
[All About Google](#)
[Google Advertising](#)

Getting Started

[Contact sales](#)
[Worldwide offices](#)

Learn More

[Industry metrics](#)
[Success stories](#)
[AdWords FAQ](#)
[In-depth look](#)
[Glossary of terms](#)
[Demos and Guides](#)
[Preview your ad](#)

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[Campaign login](#)

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Hands On Technology Transfer found twice the revenue using AdWords

Since 1995, Hands On Technology Transfer, Inc. (HOTT) has offered hands-on IT classroom training throughout North America. As the need for technology in business has grown, so has HOTT.

Today, the Chelmsford, Mass. company offers courses to more than 10,000 students a year in over 70 cities in the United States and Canada, covering over 30 technical subject areas ranging from programming languages to network and system administration. HOTT (www.traininghott.com) also offers Microsoft, Java, and Linux certification programs, as well as classes for accredited post-secondary degree and other certificate programs.

Approach

Traditionally, HOTT relied on direct mail and mass advertising to market its classes. President Roland Van Liew says that initially, company practice was to drop 2 million pieces of mail every year at a cost of more than \$1 million. Even though HOTT could target these mailings by region or field of interest, inevitably the response rates topped out as mailing lists and messages were refined. Meanwhile, in the 9 years since HOTT began, competition in the IT training business has heated up. Online training and certification is now common, and the number of venues for hands-on training has grown dramatically. An economic downturn in 2001 put additional pressure on many technical training firms.

"Using Google for both search engine results and paid placement has cut our marketing budget in half, while it's doubled our sales. I've been looking for that magic bullet for 9 years. Now I've found it with Google."

Roland Van Liew
President, Hands On Technology Transfer, Inc.

Van Liew says one source of leads was via search engine listings, and at first he relied on those. But he felt this might be short-sighted. "Even though a substantial number of our leads came from search results, I wanted to find a way to lessen our dependence on expensive marketing methods," he says. "We have a number of competitive advantages, but not enough potential clients were receiving our message." To augment searches, Van Liew opened his first pay-per-click (PPC) advertising campaign in 2001 with a provider other than Google. But, he says, "We've always watched Google, hoping that a Google advertising program would help us even more with quality leads."

Van Liew's team opened a Google AdWords™ campaign in the summer of 2002. HOTT's goal was to increase its growth rate, drive down marketing costs, and increase profitability.

Results

Van Liew quickly recognized the value of AdWords PPC advertising. "We had more control over our campaigns than our CPM program gave us," he says, adding, "Because HOTT has rolling open enrollment for its courses, it's terrific that AdWords campaigns are set simply to run all the time." When necessary, he says,

HOTT can quickly optimize any of its nearly 3,000 keywords. Gaining visibility for schedule updates and product rollouts is now possible in days, or even hours.

Unlike his experience with direct mail, Van Liew has learned that AdWords actually gains efficiency over time: "The marketing engine only gets stronger," he says, "because our results continue to improve. I love that." He says that HOTT now generates twice as many qualified leads as it did just months ago – and notes with satisfaction that HOTT spends less than 5 percent of the marketing budget of a major competitor. Even better, he reports that HOTT gets 4 times more business for each marketing dollar than this same competitor, making HOTT the more profitable company. Overall, the results of using AdWords exceeded Van Liew's expectations of a 20 percent revenue increase – and helped to double the company's profits.

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Van Liew has put his new-found marketing success into perspective. "Using Google for both search engine results and paid placement has cut our marketing budget in half, while it's doubled our sales," he says. "I've been looking for that magic bullet for 9 years. Now I've found it with Google."

About Google Advertising

Google AdWords is currently used by thousands of businesses worldwide to gain new customers in a cost-effective way. AdWords uses keywords to precisely target ad delivery to web users seeking information about a particular product or service. The program is based on cost-per-click (CPC) pricing, so advertisers only pay when an ad is clicked on. Advertisers can take advantage of an extremely broad distribution network, and choose the level of support and spending appropriate for their business. For more information, go to www.google.com/ads.



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