

What Google Never Told You About Making Money with AdSense: 5th Edition

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INTRODUCTION

In January 2005 I published an ebook called *AdSense Secrets: What Google Never Told You About Making Money with AdSense*. The book explained everything I'd discovered over the previous months while testing and experimenting with Google's AdSense system.

It contained all the strategies, ideas, methods and approaches that I was using on my websites to generate five-figure checks every month from Google.

The book was just 66 pages long — and as soon as it hit the Web, it flew off the servers. Internet publishers couldn't download it fast enough. They wanted to know what AdSense could do for them.

The success of that first edition took me by surprise. I was stunned at the rate at which people snapped it up.

But I shouldn't have been surprised at all.

Google had launched AdSense in June 2003, eighteen months before the ebook came out. Until then, Google had been known mainly as a search engine that produced better results than AltaVista and was easier to use than Yahoo (which shows how long ago 2003 was!). It was running ads on its search results, which seemed to be doing well, but no one was sure what effect its content advertising program would have or whether it would be beneficial to anyone at all.

There was a lot of suspicion — and for good reason. It hadn't been long since the Internet bubble had burst, shattering dreams of dotcom fortunes and wiping out millions of dollars of venture capital. After being told that buying a domain and picking up users would build an asset that could be sold for enough cash to buy a house in Cancun — heck, to buy half of South America — Internet companies suddenly discovered they didn't have enough money to meet payroll.

I was just a small publisher when the crash happened, but I wasn't the only one left wondering what to do next.

So when a company produced a product that promised it would change the Web, turn websites into cash cows, and allow people to give away content and still earn money, it was hardly surprising that it met with a touch of cynicism.

We'd heard it before.

Critics wondered whether Google would be able to parse pages well enough to serve ads that users found helpful.

Experts questioned whether Google would be able to pick up enough inventory to fill all of the slots that would become available on the Web if anyone could place ads on their pages that easily.

And writers noted that contextual ads were all well and good, but it was user behavior that mattered more. A site about literature, for example, might serve ads for first editions but if it's used by readers who have come from music sites, it might be smarter to serve ads for study guides and student loans. Google wasn't tracking that data. (It does now.)

My first experiments with AdSense suggested that the critics were right. AdSense was a waste of time.

My Experiments with AdSense

I signed up with AdSense in June 2003, as soon as it became available, serving AdSense off just a few of the pages on my early websites.

By the end of my first day with AdSense, I'd delivered several thousand AdSense impressions and earned the massive sum of... \$3.00. I didn't exactly burn down the house.

I didn't see a great deal of potential based on that figure, but I figured it couldn't hurt to place the AdSense code on more pages. Over the next couple of months, I increased my impressions 25-fold.

But my earnings didn't go up 25-fold. The ads were on my site and people were seeing them, but no one was clicking them. And because of the way that Google was paying for the ads — on a cost-per-click (CPC) basis rather than the old cost-per-mille basis that paid a set amount for every thousand impressions whether users clicked them or not — those ads weren't making money. My click-through ratios were so bad I needed thousands of visitors to net just \$30 per day.

So I took the code off.

That was a big mistake. Just how big came clear a few months later.

In April 2004, ten months after signing up for AdSense, I attended an Internet conference. There were about two dozen entrepreneurs there, all looking for ways to make money online. As I was sitting in the conference

room, the person next to me had his laptop open and was looking at his AdSense report.

I could see he was making between \$200 and \$300 a day — more than ten times what I'd made on one of my best days!

It was one of those eureka moments, one of those times when you wonder how you could have missed something so obvious and so good.

I pulled out my own laptop and right there in that conference room I did what I should have done at the beginning. I started playing with my AdSense code.

I looked again at the different ad unit sizes. I tried out different color schemes. And I adjusted where the ads appeared on the page. That day, my AdSense income rocketed to \$80, about four times a typical day's earnings that I had been making from AdSense. All of those impressions I'd been generating were starting to convert into clicks — and those clicks were bringing me real money.

That was when I realized that there really was something to AdSense, that this system really did have the ability to change the Internet.

It could let publishers write about whatever they want, give their content away for free, and still make enough money from advertising to make a very good living.

The critics were wrong. I'd been wrong. AdSense could work.

So far though, I'd just made a few quick changes to my AdSense units, based on instinct and curiosity. If I was going to maximize my earnings, I needed to know which were the best places on the page for which ad formats, in which colors and on what content. I wanted to understand exactly how AdSense worked so that I could be sure that my Web pages were always making all the money they could.

Guesswork is fine when you want to play, but I was trying to build an Internet business and that meant taking measurements, keeping records and coming up with strategies that had predictable, repeatable results. I needed to take an industrial approach to my revenues in the same way that a retail store tracks sales to know which products are the most popular and which shelves they need to put them on.

So I kept testing. I kept trying new strategies and I kept notes of everything that happened. When an idea succeeded, I extended it to all of my other ads. When it failed, I made a note, and dropped it.

After a few months I was making at least \$500 a day from AdSense and sometimes even \$1,000.

And I found that once the ads were optimized, I didn't have to do another thing. As long as I continued to put up content, the ads — and the revenues — would take care of themselves.

I wasn't the only one doing this though. Internet forums at the time were filled with people swapping ideas about what they had found worked for them while using AdSense. Whenever someone came up with an optimization technique that worked, they'd put it on a forum. Whenever someone asked how they could increase their earnings, their question would pick up a long list of answers.

I was sharing my findings too but the forums weren't particularly user-friendly. If you were already using AdSense, the Internet marketing forums could help with troubleshooting and provide ideas to squeeze more money out of a site. But for people starting up, it was a horrible experience. The forums weren't guides, and they weren't meant to be.

A lot of the people I knew, though, needed information that was easier to use. They wanted to know what AdSense was and how it worked.

That was why the first edition of this book was such a success. Publishers were beginning to realize that AdSense could bring their sites money. It could do everything that the Web had promised in terms of freedom, independence, enjoyment and revenues, too.

In fact, the traditionally published edition of AdSense Secrets was a book titled *The AdSense Code*. The book went on to become a New York Times Best-Seller in the business category. That shows that hunger to learn hasn't changed.

If anything, it's grown as increasing numbers of people have come to understand what AdSense is, what it can do and what it can do for them.

What is AdSense?

AdSense is an Internet advertising system run by Google. It's the flipside of the two-headed Google advertising coin. Advertisers sign up to Google's AdWords program and use the system to create an ad. That ad is usually a short text commercial, like a classified, that includes a headline, two short lines of text and a link to a Web page. It might also be in a rich media format such as graphic image or a video.

Usually, the ad looks something like this:

[Handmade furnishings](#)
From baby cribs to walnut
bookcases, we do it all.
Traditional quality, low prices.
www.handmadefurnishings.com

The advertiser sets a monthly budget and decides the maximum amount that they're willing to pay each time someone clicks on their ad. If no one clicks on their ads, they don't pay.

The advertisers though don't usually choose the sites that those ads are going to appear on. It's an option, but most advertisers don't take it, preferring instead to influence placement generally through the use of keywords and bid price.

They rely on Google to look at all the relevant websites in its AdWords content network and decide which are the best sites to run their ads.

That's where AdSense, the other side of the coin, comes into play. Publishers sign up to AdSense and receive a code that they paste onto their Web pages. That code communicates with the Publisher's account to show the type of ad they've chosen to display, filters out the ads they don't wish to display, and allows AdSense to keep track of impressions, clicks and earnings, among other things.

But the most important task that the AdSense code does is to tell the AdSense system to place an ad in that spot.

AdSense takes the ads that it's received from AdWords' advertisers, and distributes them among the publishers and websites that have signed up to AdSense. Google is pretty secretive about the number of publishers that AdSense serves but in a blog post in 2010, the company mentioned a figure of over one million. Consider each publisher has multiple pages and sites, and that's a lot of places to serve those ads.

What makes AdSense really special though isn't just its size — which helps make it attractive to advertisers. It's the matching technology.

Google matches its AdWords ads to its AdSense publishers through a combination of different criteria. The keywords the advertiser has included

with their ads will be one criterion. AdSense “reads” each Web page in its content network — the pages that carry AdSense’s code — and matches the keywords on those pages with the keywords supplied by AdWords’ advertisers. It also matches the ads to the keywords entered into the Google search engine, posting the ads next to the search results.

User behavior is another criterion. A page about astronomy, for example, could show ads for books and telescopes but if AdSense can see that the last three sites the user visited were about astrology, then it might offer an ad for astrology charts as well.

And price will be a factor, too. AdSense multiplies the maximum cost-per-click set by the advertiser with a score based on the ad’s click rate to determine the order in which ads appear in a unit and, in part, on which sites they appear.

Exactly how AdSense makes all these calculations is complex stuff, and Google doesn’t explain exactly how it does everything. As we’ll see, it *is* possible to influence the ads that appear on your Web pages — and it’s important to use that influence — but for now imagine AdWords as a funnel into which advertisers pour their ads, and AdSense as the tube through which Google directs the flow outwards onto Web pages.

Once the ads are on the site, Google charges the advertiser for each click an ad receives. The company passes 68 percent of that revenue to the publisher, keeping 32 percent for itself.

The calculations used to distribute the ads might be complex but the principle is simple enough. And it works. In the third quarter of 2010, Google reported revenues from AdSense *alone* of \$2.2 billion — 30 percent of the company’s total revenues.

That means that just in July, August and September of 2010, Google paid out to its website publishers a total of \$1.5 billion.

Clearly, not all of those publishers are making a lot of money. But many are. Google doesn’t cap the amounts that it can pay its publishers so those publishers who know how to optimize their AdSense units, produce content that people want to read or use and bring in visitors can end up holding giant checks.

Back in 2006, Markus Frind, owner of Plentyoffish.com, a free dating site, showed off a check that he’d received from Google for \$901,733.85. That check represented just two months’ income.

What AdSense Is Not

So AdSense is an advertising system. It's a program that matches ads submitted by advertisers to publishers who have signed up to receive them.

It's the matching technology that ensures users see ads they're interested in that has made AdSense such a huge success.

But AdSense is open to everyone. Google will check a site that applies to join the AdSense program but as long your site isn't pornographic, hateful, violent or generally nasty, Google will give you the chance to earn from AdSense.

And that's the best description of AdSense: it's an opportunity.

It's an opportunity that anyone can take and anyone can make the most of. You don't have to be a website developer, a technology geek or the neighbor of someone who once went to school with a leading venture capitalist to use it. You just have to be willing to create a website, place content on it, add AdSense and bring in the visitors.

Anyone can do it, and anyone can use it to earn money with a website.

But AdSense is not a get-rich-quick scheme. As we'll see in Chapter 1, you can be online with a website in minutes. You can have ads running on that site a day later. But you won't be making a lot of money yet.

You might make a few cents as your friends and relations take a look at the site and click an ad. But that's not going to be enough to make a difference to your life. Clicks from friends and family won't be enough to let you give up the day job. And as you'll discover later on, having friends and family click your ads can cause your AdSense account be permanently closed.

It will take time to produce enough content to attract visitors.

It will take time to build a reputation that will keep visitors coming back.

It will take time to optimize your ads and figure out all of the best ways to turn your site into revenue.

It will take time, in short, to start generating significant income.

And how much you get will depend on how much work you're willing to put into earning that money. Once the site is up and running, it can become a

passive revenue stream. You can go on vacation for a week, come back and find that while you've been lying on the beach, your site has continued to bring in money.

But when you're just starting out, that's not going to happen. You'll have to keep posting content, keep looking for new traffic sources, and keep testing ad options if you want to keep your income rising.

It's work. It's work that's enjoyable, and it's work that pays. But AdSense won't make you rich quickly and it won't make you rich effortlessly.

It can start paying some bills and much, much more though if you're willing to invest time into learning how to use it, and putting it to work for you.

How To Use This Book

That's what this book will help you to do. AdSense has changed a lot since the first edition of this book came out, but the basic principles remain the same: optimize your ads and produce good content, and you should find that you're making money.

I'll start then by talking you briefly through setting up a website. When I first came online, you had to read an HTML manual the size of a telephone book before you could build a website. Today, there are [templates](#) out there just waiting for people who have never programmed anything more complex than a video recorder to pick up and publish. They'll get you started — and I'll tell you where to find them — but I'll then point you in the direction of building a site that's all yours, and bringing in traffic.

Then I'll get down to the details of AdSense. I'll explain the service's policies, the ad formats, and talk you through the principles of AdSense optimization. I'll explain how to choose your formats, arrange them on your Web pages, and even tweak your content to ensure that you're getting the kinds of ads that bring in the highest revenues.

That alone should be enough to give you the foundation of a functioning, revenue-generating website. But there's more you need to know to ensure that your pages are earning the most money you can for each user you bring in. That means learning how to read your figures, both those that AdSense supplies and the stats about your site that Google delivers through its Analytics service.

It means learning how to bring in targeted ads through placement targeting and understanding how Smart Pricing works, an opaque system that Google

uses to reward sites with good content and punish those that were created to do nothing but serve ads.

And that's why I'll also explain how to create the kind of content that AdSense — and your users — will love.

If all you want to do is update your website and earn from your AdSense units, you could stop reading right there. But you'd be missing an opportunity to grow even further.

AdSense for Content might be Google's main product, but it's not the only one. Google also offers AdSense units for RSS feeds, empty domains, mobile content, games, and video, opening up a whole load of new opportunities for entrepreneurs looking for new challenges. I'll explain how to make the most of each of them.

And while AdSense remains the most effective way to turn users into cash through advertising on a website, it does have competitors, and some of them can complement rather than compete with AdSense, giving you yet another way to monetize those readers.

Of course, bringing those visitors in will be an important part of your success with AdSense, so I'll also provide a brief section of traffic generation strategies, including some advice on using social media to bring in visitors.

Finally, towards the end of this book, you'll also find a bunch of case studies and appendixes that can act as a useful guide for preparation, troubleshooting and tools that can help you to get more out of AdSense.

All of the information in this book has been based on the strategies that I've used with AdSense, that other publishers I know are using on AdSense and that I've seen being used around the Web to make AdSense work.

They're approaches that work for me and for others.

But I can't guarantee they'll work for you. The most important lesson that you can take away from this book isn't that you need to blend your ads into the page or that ads above the fold work best.

It's that every site is unique and you have to test different strategies to see which approaches work best for you.

Your content will affect how readers react to ad units.

Your traffic sources will affect how readers react to ad units.

Certainly your optimization will affect how readers react to ad units.

I can show you what usually works for most publishers but I can't tell you what will definitely work best for you. You can only discover that for yourself by trying one approach, tracking the results, and comparing the figures to an alternative approach.

It's a vital part of AdSense publishing, and I'll explain how to do it in this book too.

It hasn't been long since I produced that first edition of *AdSense Secrets*, the ebook that went on to become *The AdSense Code*, a New York Times bestseller. But in Internet terms it's been an age. Some things have stayed the same time but much has changed. Whether you're new to AdSense or looking to catch up with the latest opportunities and strategies, you should find everything you need to know about AdSense right here.

1. THE BASICS: BUILDING AN ADSENSE-READY WEBSITE

After the first edition of this book came out lots of people started asking me how they can make money with AdSense. I'm always happy to help people make the most of Google, but many of these people didn't even have a website!

Here's the bad news: to make money with AdSense, you've got to have a website. There's no getting around that. The good news though is that it's never been easier to create a website from scratch and use it to generate real revenue.

There are all sorts of ways to build that site. The option you choose will depend on the level of your knowledge, on the size of your budget, and on the speed with which you learn and get to grips with the Internet and the way it works. I'm going to discuss all of those options here.

If you already have a site up and running — and you're happy with it — you can just skip this bit, head down to Chapter Two and begin reading about how to improve your AdSense revenues... but I don't recommend you do that just yet.

Few people use all of the methods now available for building websites. Most people will pick one — such as hiring a designer or using Wordpress, a content management system — and go back to it each time because it's familiar and because it worked the first time. But each of these methods produces a different kind of site. Knowing at least *about* all of the different options will let you know that you have more tools available for growing your business.

If you want to get a new site up and running in a couple of hours — to test an idea perhaps or catch traffic from a specific link — you'll know how to do it.

And if you want to branch out into a new niche with a slick, professional-looking website that you'll still be able to control, you'll know how to do that too.

The more you know about the different ways of building websites, the more power you'll have over your Internet business.

1.1 Up and Rolling with Training Wheels

Let's begin with the easiest methods. One of the most dramatic changes to have taken place on the Internet over the last few years has been the simplicity of creating certain kinds of website. Today, it's possible to have Web pages online, publicly visible and even AdSense-ready in the space of minutes.

That's a real revolution. It's one of the changes that has put the Internet into the hands of anyone who wants to make the most of it. You don't need to spend months pouring over an HTML manual to learn how to create websites any more. You don't need to find a developer and shell out thousands on a site if you don't want to.

You can simply write what you want, put it online and everyone will be able to see it immediately.

It really is that simple.

And there's no shortage of ways to do it.

Simple Blogging Services: Blogger and Wordpress.com

Probably the simplest method is by blogging.

While traditional websites have tended to need unique designs and layouts, and required developers who know their way around code to create novel pages, blogs place a greater emphasis on content than on appearance. That doesn't mean they're ugly. But it does mean that users come to a blog expecting to read words on a page.

And that means that it's possible to use templates that allow publishers to simply type in the posts they want to write and publish them directly onto the Web.

There are no technical requirements, and nothing more complicated than the ability to point and click. Success or failure depends primarily on the quality of the writing and the ability of the publisher to build an audience.

Although weblogs in one form or another had been around for a while the term "blogging" really originated with Blogger.com.

The service was created in 1999 by Pyra Labs, a San Francisco firm formed by a couple of freelance developers who had come together to create some project management software. According to co-founder Meg Hourihan,

Blogger was originally an internal weblog used by the firm's employees whose codebase was spun out with the aim of making it "easier for people to publish online no matter where one's content was hosted."

Blogger's rise wasn't smooth. It ran out of money, shrank to the size of co-founder Evan Williams' bedroom, grew again, until by 2002 it had several hundred thousand users — and six staff supported by a paid version of the software.

Then, in 2003, Google bought it.

The sum that Google paid hasn't been revealed but it was certainly a good deal for the cash-strapped company. It was also good for publishers. The kind of financial support that Google could supply meant that Blogger could be made free for everyone again.

And it was good for Google too. Making it easy for everyone to create Web pages meant more spots and easier integration for AdSense. (Money aside, the deal was also pretty good for Evan Williams. He worked for Google for a while before leaving to form Obvious Corp., then podcasting company Odeo. There, he would go on to create Twitter with Biz Stone and Jack Dorsey.)

Simplicity remains Blogger's greatest strength, but since Google's acquisition, that simplicity has been enhanced by the ease with which it's possible to integrate AdSense onto Blogger's pages.

Rather than think of a blog on Blogger as a website, it might be best to think of it as a notebook that's online and which anyone can read.

All you have to do is choose a name and title for your blog, take your pick of the good range of templates available and start writing.

You don't have to worry about coding or design work or images or anything else. If you change your mind about the way your blog looks, you can just pick a different template. Even rearranging the elements on the page is a breeze.

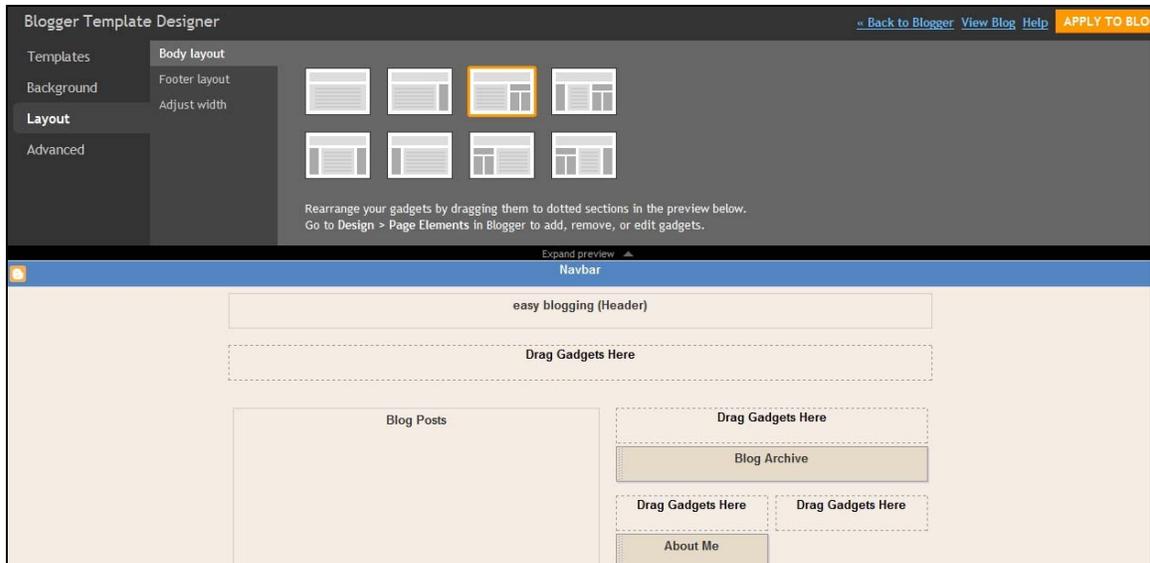


Fig. 1.1 Blogger provides a range of different layouts to choose from. Make your selection then drag in the elements you want to place on the page.

All that's left for you to do is create the content... and add AdSense.

Even that's been made easy for you.

Blogger.com lets you apply for AdSense directly from its site. It even gives you a choice of locations to place the ads, with one option clearly recommended: a layout that places one ad beneath each post so that the reader sees it as soon as he's finished reading, and another ad in the sidebar.

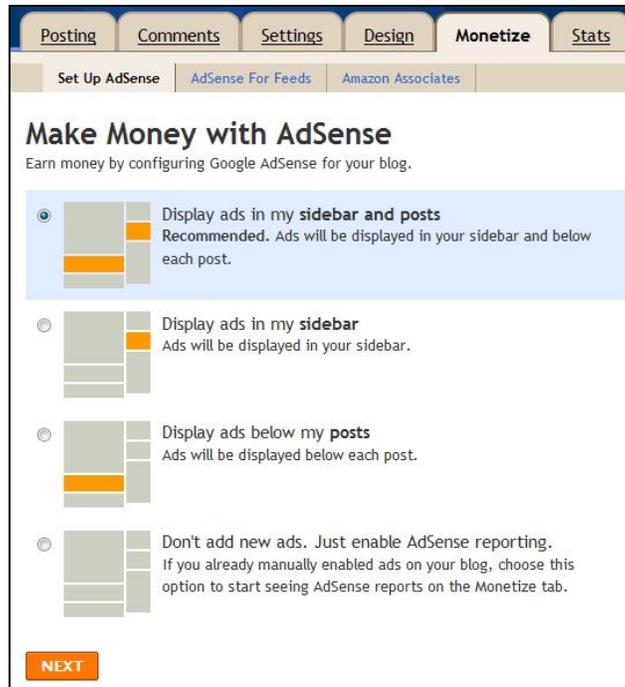


Fig. 1.2 Blogger even tells you where to put your AdSense units.

You can certainly use that option to begin with. It's a great way to get started, but there are plenty of limitations with this layout and with Blogger in general.

The layout, for example, leaves plenty of additional monetization strategies behind, and it doesn't touch on optimization. It only deals with two ad formats in two spots. There's a lot more to making money with AdSense — even on blogs — than that!

Using Blogger with your own domain name, with all of the search engine benefits that can bring is difficult, and some publishers have reported that their sites were deleted by Google who mistook them for spam sites.

When you use a free service to build your site, you're always a guest, which means you can be asked to leave at any time.

But Blogger is still a great place to begin. If you've never built a website before, it will let you feel the thrill that comes with seeing your content online for the first time, and it can even give you the buzz that comes with your first paid clicks.

And it's fun to use too!

Wordpress.com

The biggest like-for-like rival to Blogger is probably Wordpress.com, a free and simple offshoot from Wordpress.org. **I'll come back to Wordpress.org later because it's the next step on the publisher's development path.** Wordpress.org is publishing with the training wheels off and my #1 recommendation

Unlike the original open source program, Wordpress.com doesn't require the publisher to already have a hosting service. There's no installation and no documentation to read through before you can call yourself a "Wordpress expert."

Like Blogger, it's just a matter of signing up, choosing a template, writing your content and having the pleasure of seeing it online right away.

But... there is a very big "but."

There are also no ads. At least, none for the publisher. Wordpress.com supports itself and pays for the hosting by placing ads on its publishers' sites but it doesn't allow those publishers to support themselves by putting ads on their own sites.

If you're getting 25,000 views a month, Wordpress.com will let you split any revenues 50/50 — so they'll let you keep half the money your successful site makes. If you want to become a VIP member, you can put on all the ads you want in return for a cool \$15,000 to \$150,000 a year. I can't imagine that there are even many big firms willing to pay that.

Wordpress.com is really for small-scale bloggers who don't want to make money from their websites. If it offers any advantage at all over Blogger, it's that it lets you play around with the site without paying so that you'll be ready to dive right in when you want to move up to Wordpress.org.

Otherwise you can do exactly the same thing on Blogger.com, and get paid for it.

Simple Sitebuilding Services: Google Sites, Moonfruit and More

But blogs aren't for everyone. Although they're now one of the easiest ways to get online, they have to be updated regularly and aren't the best option for static content.

Fortunately Blogger isn't the only way to get online fast. Google's Sites, the replacement for its Page Creator, makes building a static website as simple as point, click and type.

Again, you get a choice of templates that you can edit freely and simply by clicking buttons and typing in text boxes. It's little different to using Word or any other piece of user-friendly software. And because its run by Google, placing your AdSense code onto the site is pretty painless too. Just click the "Insert" tab and one of the options, hidden alongside the calendar, document, map, and photo widgets, is to place the AdSense code.

Again, it's all very simple stuff. The foundation of the site is ready. All you have to do is paste in the content and you're online.

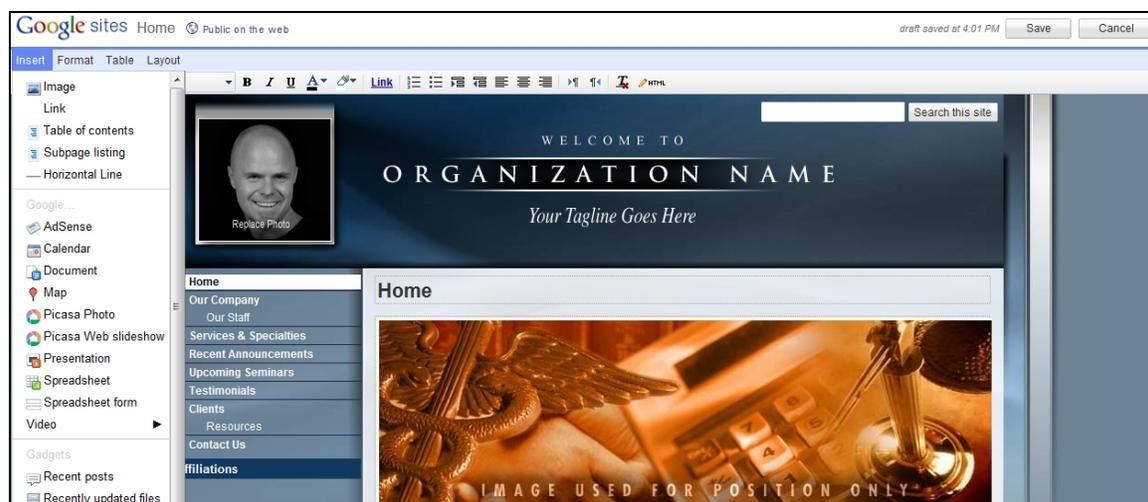


Fig. 1.3 Google Sites give you a choice of templates and AdSense in the drop-down menu.

All you'll have to do next is let people know where you are. And that's where the disadvantages of creating a website using a free tool like Google Sites kicks in.

With a website created through Google Sites, search engine optimization becomes difficult. Your URL will be [https://sites.google.com/site/\[name\]/](https://sites.google.com/site/[name]/), which is about as catchy a ball of slush. It's unlikely to get very far in search engines and when you try to spread it around, it will simply make you look unprofessional, however great the template looks.

Google's instant website machine can be a useful place to get started but it's really designed to help people like teachers display information to a closed audience. It's not a good way to earn a lot of money, and even for professionals that URL is going to be so off-putting on a business site that you'll be better off buying your own domain name and finding a host.

Moonfruit

One way to do that and still keep the simplicity of Google Pages is to use a service like [Moonfruit](#)'s. Like Google Pages, Moonfruit — and there are plenty of other companies now offering similar services — provides templates and an editor that lets you move elements around on the page, write text and upload images, all without ever seeing a line of code — except for the AdSense code which you can also handle through the site itself.

You'll have to figure out a design, something that might take a little effort but it's good, creative fun, and you can do it for free as well, provided you're willing to go in and make a change every few months. Moonfruit deletes free sites that it thinks aren't being used.

If you're willing to pay as little as \$4.49 a month though, you can also buy a domain name (again, you can do that without even leaving Moonfruit, if you want) and pay Moonfruit for the hosting.

You'll have your own site, with your own domain, with AdSense and even Google Analytics, without seeing a line of code or going anywhere near an ftp account.

One disadvantage with Moonfruit and its competitors though is that the reason you don't have to see any code is that it's built with Flash. You're working with a graphic interface rather than the website itself.

That matters for two reasons: search engines can't read Flash sites; and Apple devices such as iPhones and iPads can't display them.

Moonfruit gets around those problems by translating everything you put on the site into an HTML version. That keeps the search engine robots happy but the translation isn't great so the small number of people who reach the site with an Apple gadget are going to see something pretty unattractive.

But that's not the biggest problem. If you're looking to set up a simple business-oriented website, perhaps to sell services or pitch products, then a template service like Moonfruit's will be fine. But if you're looking to earn from advertising in general and from AdSense in particular, you need your visitors to keep returning so that they can continue clicking the ads. That means presenting dynamic content, articles that are updated and refreshed regularly. You'll find that easier with a blog.

1.2 Off with the Training Wheels!

Whether you decide to begin with a simple dynamic service like those supplied by Blogger or Wordpress.com, or whether you go for an easy static site like the ones you can create with Google Sites or a website creator like Moonfruit's, you'll be up and running with your own website in minutes.

That's exciting.

If you're building your first site, it really is a thrill to see something you've created on the Web. And when you realize how easy it is, you'll wonder why you didn't start earlier.

And once you've been doing it for a while, you'll start to feel the restrictions of using services that have been supplied by other companies, that require you to use templates, host the site on their servers or limit what you can put on your pages.

You'll want to pull off your training wheels and head out on your own.

Buying a Domain Name

That begins with buying a domain name.

Your own domain name is an essential part of your branding, and it's a vital element in search engine marketing too. It's the address by which the world knows you.

Finding a name though is easier said than done these days. All the best words in the dictionary — in fact, just about all of the words in the dictionary— have either already been bought and built by developers or they've been bought and offered by speculators.

But that doesn't mean you can't create a good name out of more than one word and buy the domain for just a few bucks. Putting two words together, sometimes with a hyphen, can work (like www.adsense-secrets.com) and there are plenty of good names available if you're prepared to move outside the world of .coms into .net and .biz, etc. One recent trend has seen companies take advantage of the suffixes used by countries with relatively little Internet traffic such as Northern Mariana Islands (.mp) or Western Sahara (.ee). They still have plenty of words available — or at least they used to —and combining a word with .ly (used by Libya) or .is (used by Iceland) can make for some interesting domains that are easy to remember. It's a strategy that's worked well for URL shortener bit.ly and sports

streaming service willow.tv. However, (.com) is the gold standard and if you're going to buy a domain, (.com) is the way to go.

You can buy domains from any number of companies, and a lot of sitebuilding firms will even handle the sale for you. If you want to keep your independence though, GoDaddy.com is one of the biggest domain and hosting services. (I don't recommend their hosting or their numerous upsells though) You'll be able to test a bunch of different options and the site will tell you which (if any) are available.

If you can't find a name you like and that hasn't already been grabbed, you can also find domain name marketplaces where you can purchase domains that are for sale. For example: Sedo.com or Flippa.com

There's a good chance you'll find some good names at Sedo but they can cost you anything from \$50 to \$50,000. Before you part with a penny, think about the advantage that a good name can bring and ask yourself if you can't get the extra traffic a cheaper way. Often, you can. At Flippa you can also buy sites that are already earning AdSense revenue. Please proceed with caution if you've never bought a site before.

Choosing a Hosting Service

Your site is going to be stored on a hosting company's server. (You didn't want thousands of people dialing into your computer every hour, did you?) Space on those servers is available for rent and again, there are lots of different options available depending on how much you want to pay and what you need.

But you will get what you pay for with Web hosting. "Free" services will cost you more than you save in lost revenue, and you can pay up to \$200 a month for dedicated servers. It's unlikely you'll need that until you're handling cityloads of users an hour.

I'm a big fan of HostGator and use them to host a number of my own sites. Their "baby" plan is \$9.95 per month and offers free Wordpress with unlimited domains and disk

A promotional banner for HostGator's Wordpress hosting service. The background is dark blue with a subtle grid pattern. At the top, the text "Wordpress Hosting" is written in large, bold, yellow and white letters. Below this, "UNLIMITED BLOGS" and "1-CLICK AUTO INSTALL" are written in yellow and white. A price tag says "STARTING AT \$4.95 /mo" in yellow and white. On the right, there is a large, stylized white "W" logo for Wordpress. At the bottom, a cartoon blue alligator mascot is holding a Wordpress logo. To the right of the alligator, the text "1-866-96-GATOR" is written in white on a dark blue background. Below that, "HOSTGATOR" is written in large, bold, red and blue letters, and "www.HostGator.com" is written in white below it.

space.

Due to my relationship with [HostGator](#), I have been able to negotiate a special offer for my readers. If you purchase the "baby" plan for \$9.95 and enter coupon code "thejoelcommcode" at checkout, you will get your first month of hosting for one penny. Not a bad deal at all.

Most importantly, whichever hosting service you use should have 24-hour service. If your site goes down, you'll be losing money every hour it's offline. If there's a problem with the server, you want to make sure it's fixed right away.

While HostGator makes hosting fairly simple, other hosts aren't always as straightforward. If you haven't done it before, it's going to feel a little unusual. But the steps are few and it's actually very difficult to make a mistake. Placing a domain name that you've bought onto a host's server, for example, will usually require filling in your personal details, choosing a payment plan, then providing your domain's "nameservers" when asked. They will look something like this: "NS1.[domainname].com." They just tell the new host where to find your domain name so that it can bring it onto its own server. You should receive that information by email when you buy the domain.

That will give you name and a place on the Web. But you still have to upload your content. The username and password supplied by your hosting company will give you access to a control panel, usually a program called cPanel, and it's intuitive enough, with buttons for uploading and directories for organizing files and folders of information.

This is where learning about the Internet really begins. It's not difficult, but it is a little technical and there are plenty of guides and manual around that will explain what the various buttons do, how you can create an FTP account to make the management easier, and even how to create sub-domains if you want them.

But coming to grips with this stuff will take a little time. It will take patience, practice and a little effort but it's nothing that requires any major skills that the average person doesn't possess. You just have to be willing to sit down and try it without being afraid to make mistakes.

The result of that practice will be complete control over your website — and that's a goal worth attaining.

Once again, Hostgator's support is incredible and you can get help via Live Chat 24/7 and usually within a minute.

WordPress.Org, Movable Type — and SocratesTheme

I've already mentioned WordPress.com as one way to get online with a dynamic website quickly. WordPress.com though is a simplified, hosted version of Wordpress.org, an open source content management system that has been around since 2003. More than 12 percent of the largest million websites on the Internet are believed to have been built with WordPress, and the latest version, 3.0, has been downloaded more than 12.5 million times.

The biggest strength of WordPress is that it's open source. Because any developer can access the source code, they can add to it, creating applications, themes and plug-ins that extend the functionality of the program.

It's also yours in a way that WordPress.com isn't. Create a site using WordPress.org, and you can put all the ads and monetization tools on it you want, help yourself to all of the plug-ins, themes and extensions you need, use your own domain name, with all of the branding and SEO benefits that can bring, and choose your own hosting service instead of relying on the one supplied by WordPress.com.

Like WordPress.com, it is also free but you'll have to pay your own hosting fees — which, again, are usually around \$5-\$10 per month.

To use WordPress.org, you'll first need to have bought a domain name and signed up for a hosting service. You can then either download WordPress on to your desktop from WordPress.org, or simply install the program by choosing the option in the host's cPanel.

There are other services that work in a similar way. MovableType is WordPress's closest competitor and is said to be more secure from hackers than WordPress. But that might be because it's targeted less — and it's targeted less because it's used less. The last few years have seen MovableType chasing WordPress, even mimicking much of WordPress's design and usability.

It's a service that's popular with some large media companies but I find WordPress easier to use, and it's more than enough for most AdSense-supported businesses.

In fact, I've tried to make it easier still. WordPress is such a hugely flexible system that it can be easy to go wrong, to use a theme that isn't best for AdSense or end up with a design that doesn't do your content justice.

And you'll still have to look for and install all of the plug-ins and extras that will make your site more powerful.

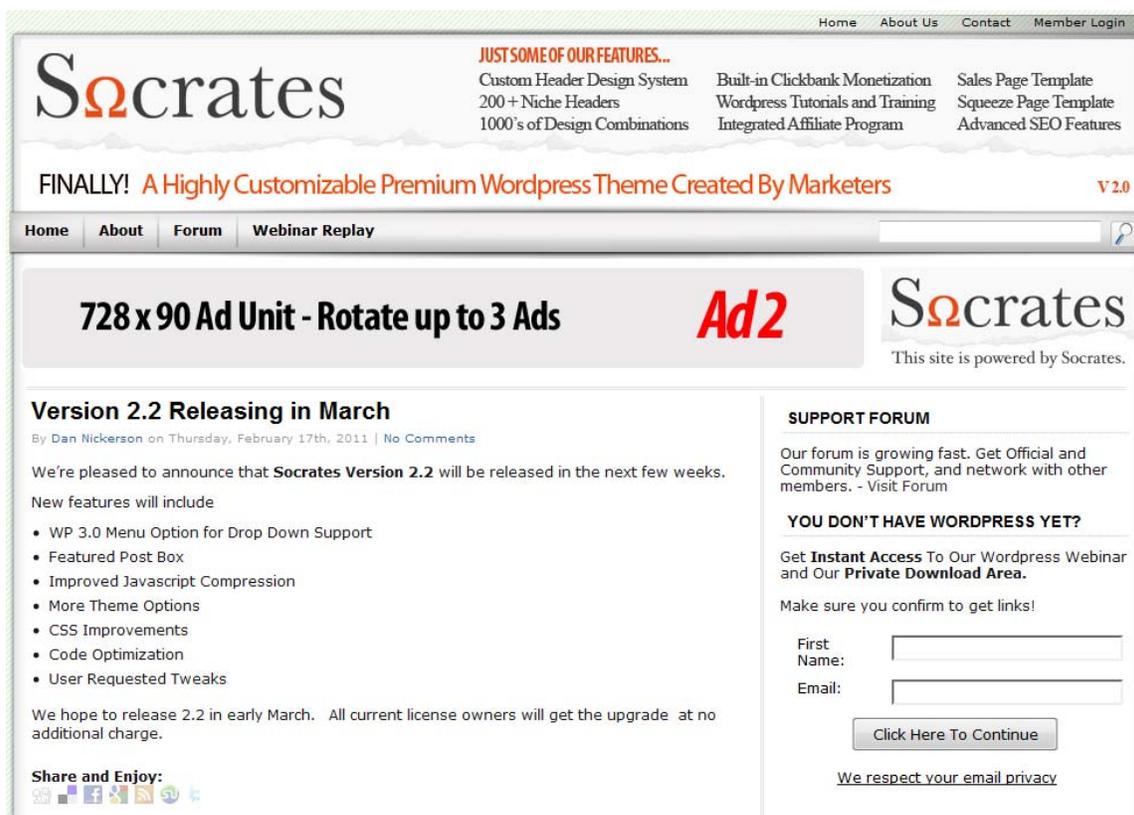
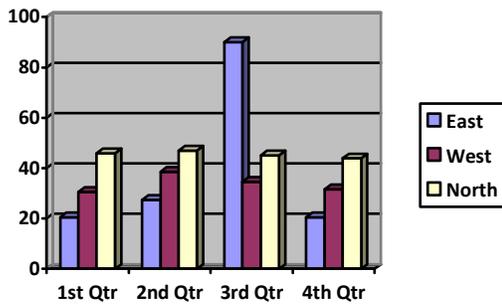


Fig. 1.4 A sample blog created using my [Socrates Theme](#). Banners can rotate, designs are varied, and placement of AdSense units is completely down to you.

So together with Dan Nickerson, I produced [SocratesTheme](#). It's a flexible theme for WordPress that was built with monetization in mind. It contains over 220 niche header designs, multiple sidebar layouts and built-in AdSense, affiliate and ClickBank ad bars.

It's a complete AdSense-ready website in a box.

For a single domain, it costs just \$47 — and that includes access to a whole stack of tutorial videos that will talk you through WordPress set-up with cPanel, WordPress plug-ins, AdSense for WordPress, and everything else you need to get started and move forward, including a very active member support forum where you can get answers to questions and see examples of other's Socrates sites. The best offer is for the \$77 unlimited license. This allows you to install Socrates on as many sites as you wish! There is also a free trial option available. You can find it at [SocratesTheme.com](#).



1.3 Designing a Site from Scratch

Programs like WordPress will provide a platform into which you can insert all the elements — the spaces for text and images, for headers and graphics, for menus and social media buttons, and for ads — that you can use to build a professional website.

You'll always be working within the limitations of a set format — blogs, for example, are expected to look a certain way — but for the most part, those limitations are broad enough to give you enough room to do everything necessary to create a successful AdSense-supported website.

But what if you want to create something truly unique, a website that doesn't depend on Blogger or WordPress, that's been created completely from the ground up?

You can still do that, of course. You can install Adobe's Dreamweaver or Microsoft's Expression Web. You can learn about HTML5, PHP and CSS. You can create the site you've always dreamed of — if creating a site from scratch is something you've always dreamed of doing.

Or you can hire a professional Web designer to do it for you.

Freelance sites like www.elance.com, www.guru.com and www.scriptlance.com are good places to advertise. You can invite designers to give you quotes and pick the best based on price and talent. (Be sure to check feedback and portfolios though; a low bid is often low for a good reason although there are plenty of offshore developers who can provide a lot of coding power for a relatively small price.) You can also combine two approaches by hiring a designer to create a unique site based on WordPress or Movable Type.

You'll need to know what you want built and what you want the site to do, but most importantly, you'll need to have a good reason for paying thousands of dollars for a unique handmade site instead of using a free service or a low-cost theme that allows for customization.

If you're just hoping to monetize content, you really don't need to hand-build any more.

1.4 The Basics of Search Engine Optimization

However you decide to build your first site, people have to know you're there. One of the most important ways to do that is get yourself a high-ranking in a search engine.

There are lots of different search engines, but only three are really important: Google, Yahoo! and Microsoft's Bing. In Chapter 17, I'll talk in more detail about improving your search engine rankings.

If you want to take a shortcut, there are plenty of companies which will make the submissions for you, and they'll even optimize your site to get you as high on the rankings as possible.

In general though, your search engine ranking will depend on a number of factors. One of those factors is the number of sites that link to yours. As far as Google is concerned if lots of sites about model railways link to your model railway site, that must be a pretty good sign that people who like model railways think your site is good. So they'll want to offer it to people who search for model railways, bringing you lots of free traffic.

It's a model that Google's founders, Sergei Brin and Larry Page, based on academia: the more researchers refer to a paper or a professor, the more important that paper or professor must be.

Once you've got your site up and running then you'll want to persuade other sites to give you links. You could offer to exchange links with other websites and you could even set up a page that contains recommended links so that you'll have somewhere to put them.

Guest posts on other blogs can help as well, as can a "lens," a kind of expert Web page, on Squidoo, a site created by marketing expert and author Seth Godin.

Links are only one aspect of SEO though. Metatags — keywords that someone might use to search for a page like yours — are important, and so are the titles of pages and their headings.

Search engine optimization is a field in its own right, a practice that will be ongoing and time-consuming for a publisher. There's a reason that many companies choose to outsource it. Initially though, just focus on getting your website up, filling it with content, and making money from AdSense.

Another reason I recommend Wordpress is that a lot site SEO is handled for you and as a Socrates Theme customer even more.

1.5 From Blogger to Publisher

So how should you start? How should someone who wants to make money from AdSense publishing, but who has never built a website, begin?

You can start wherever you feel most comfortable. If you're confident enough to dive straight into WordPress or even create a site from scratch yourself, than that's fine. Many people are likely to find that the best way is to begin with Blogger. Sign up, play with the templates, write some content, join AdSense and add some AdSense units.

Do it just for the pleasure of seeing your content online and of feeling the excitement that comes from receiving your first ad clicks.

Then, before you've produced too much content, sign up for your own hosting service and install WordPress (and ideally, upload SocratesTheme too.) You can copy your existing posts, get used to the interface and the way it works, and you are off and running!

You'll have a professional site that's all ready to make money — and you'll be a publisher with a box full of money-making tools.

2. ADSENSE — MAKING THE MONEY!

So creating your website can be pretty simple — and even the complicated stuff isn't difficult. But you'll also need to sign up for AdSense. If you're using Blogger or a sitebuilder like Moonfruit, you'll actually be able to join AdSense from within those programs. Choose to insert an AdSense unit and you'll be asked to sign in to your AdSense account to fetch your code. If you don't have an account, you'll be offered a link to sign up.

Alternatively, you can join AdSense directly from Google itself at: <http://www.google.com/intl/ln/ads/>

If you already have a Google account the process is faster.

Here's how you sign up.

2.1 Signing Up Made Easy

The sign-up page asks for a relatively small amount of information, not all of which is as obvious as you might like.

First, you'll have to tell Google the "primary" site on which you want to place your ads. If you have more than one site, just pick the one that has the most traffic and content. You'll also need to tell Google the language of your website so that they can assign the site to the right person for review.

You'll then be offered two checkboxes. One of them requires you to state that you won't be placing the ads on sites that contain pornographic content. The other indicates that you agree not to "place ads on sites that include incentives to click on ads."

At the bottom of the page, you'll also have to agree not to "click on the Google ads I'm serving through AdSense."

Both of those are important and they're themes that will run throughout your time as an AdSense publisher.

If you click on one of your own ads — even to see which companies are advertising on your pages or to make sure that the system is working — you'll cost your advertisers money. They'll have to pay for that click. Google can track suspicious clicks, and while it will take a few "mistakes" into account, deducting those clicks from payments, it can be pretty unforgiving towards publishers who try to make money by clicking their own ads, or encouraging their users to do so for them.

Many publishers have found that they've been permanently banned from AdSense for those sorts of practices, a very costly mistake.

You can — and should — encourage people to click on *affiliate* ads because they only pay if someone actually buys. But you can never encourage people to click pay-per-click ads, like AdSense.

Google AdSense

Welcome to AdSense [What is AdSense?](#) | [I already have an account?](#)
Please complete the application form below.

Website Information

Website URL: ⓘ
• Please list your primary URL only.
• Example: www.example.com

Website language: Select a language:
• Tell us your website's primary language to help our review process.

I will not place ads on sites that include incentives to click on ads.
 I will not place ads on sites that include pornographic content.

Contact Information

Account type: ⓘ Select an account type:

Country or territory: Select a country or territory:

Important - Your payment will be sent to the address below. Please complete all fields that apply to your address, such as a full name, full street name and house or apartment number, and accurate country, ZIP code, and city [Example](#).

Payee name (full name):
• Your Payee name needs to match the name on your bank account.
• Payee must be at least 18 years of age to participate in AdSense.

Street Address:

City/Town:

Postal Code: ⓘ

• To change your country or territory, please change your selection at the top of this form.

I agree that I can receive checks made out to the payee name I have listed above.

Telephone Numbers

Phone:

Email preference: We'll send you service announcements that relate to your agreement with Google.
 In addition, send me periodic newsletters with tips and best practices and occasional surveys to help Google improve AdSense.

How did you find out about Google AdSense? Choose an option...

Policies

AdSense applicants must agree to adhere to AdSense program policies ([details](#))

I agree that I will not click on the Google ads I'm serving through AdSense.
 I certify that I have read the [AdSense Program Policies](#).
 I do not already have an approved AdSense account. (Click [here](#) if you do.)

Fig. 2.1 The AdSense sign up page

Once you've completed your website information, you'll need to provide contact information. The only tricky question here is whether you want an "individual" account or a "company" account — whether you're a company with more than twenty employees or practically a one-man show that's just you and up to nineteen others. That's important for just one reason: it tells

Google where to send the money. Take a business account and the payments will be made in the name of your company; take an individual account, and they'll be paid directly to you. You might wish to consult with a CPA to decide which is the most advantageous way for you to go.

Once, you've completed the basic details, you'll be asked to confirm them. (Do check that the address is correct. Google likes to send out checks, so if you've put the wrong address, your neighbor will be receiving your AdSense payments instead of you. I like being nice to my neighbors... but not that much!) And you'll be asked to log in using a Google Account such as your Gmail username and password, or to create a username and password if you don't have one.

Google will then send you an email with a link to confirm that your details are correct. Click the link and someone will review your website to make sure that it's appropriate for AdSense.

That process can take two or three days, although often it's a lot faster, but it does mean that for those first two or three days, you won't have any ads. Use that time to create more content so that you'll have plenty of space to put your ads once the site has been approved. And the more original quality content you have on your site, the better. Likewise if your site is loaded with other advertising already it may not be approved.

2.2 Google's Policies — They're Important!

There are two fields on the AdSense registration form that are particularly important. The first is your address. You want to receive those AdSense checks!

The second is the check box that indicates that you've read AdSense's program policies. (Google even makes reading the policies the first item on its checklist that can help to guide you through AdSense.)

That's because those policies are important. You have to follow them and you have follow them without looking for shortcuts.

AdSense works. I know it works because I've got the stats, the checks and the bank balance to prove it. And all of the methods that I used to increase my AdSense revenues were completely legitimate and in line with Google's policies.

It is possible to cheat AdSense. But you'd have to be crazy to do it. You can make so much money working within Google's rules that to risk getting

thrown out by putting ads on pages without content or by persuading users to click on the ads is just plain crazy.

I've put a detailed list of Google's "do's and don'ts" at the back of this book but the things to look out for in particular are:

Incentives

When the ads appear on your page, you have to leave them completely alone. You might be tempted to tell your users to "click here" or support your sponsors but if Google catches you, they could well cut you off. They want people to click because they're genuinely interested in the ad. Get your optimization strategies right and they'll do just that.

Content

Google doesn't want advertisers complaining to them that their services were being promoted on a site that supports gambling or is filled with profanity or contains more ads than content. If your content doesn't come up to scratch, you'll need a site that does.

Code Modification

You have to paste the AdSense code onto your site as is. And you don't need to do anything else! Your AdSense account will let you play with colors and placements (and getting those right is what will really boost your income) so why bother playing with Google's HTML? It's not necessary and it could get you a lifetime ban.

Prohibited Clicks

And nastiest of all are the people who either click on their own ads or create programs to do it for them. It's true that you could give yourself some easy cash with just a little click as you're sitting in a café somewhere. But you're taking money away from an advertiser. He wants to buy a lead not satisfy your curiosity. And Google might just take away your cash cow.

Most of the policies are pretty straightforward and if they were opaque once, they're now clearly explained. The principles are clear: your users should be visiting your site to see your content and clicking your ads because they're genuinely interested in what your advertisers are offering. Your job as an AdSense publisher is to make your content interesting enough to attract users and the ads clear enough to lead your visitors to click on them.

There are a couple of other things to pay attention to on the policies page though that are less clear.

In theory, you could insert the AdSense code onto a Web page as many times as you wanted. But Google limits the number of ads you can place on a page. You can place up to three content ad units and up to three link units; no more than two Google AdSense for search boxes; and a single link unit or another search box on the search results page.

You really shouldn't need more than those but as you start thinking about the best places to put your AdSense units, it is worth remembering that Google does have limits.

The other interesting rule is that Google does not allow AdSense to be "Placed on pages published specifically for the purpose of showing ads."

That can sound a little strange. When you're building an Internet business, every page is published specifically for the purpose of showing ads!

Google is referring to pages that have very little content or no content at all but it does hit on an important point.

AdSense will support your site and it will turn your content into cash. But your site will be built on content, and that should always be your main focus. Keep that in mind as you build your business, and AdSense should always be working for you.

2.3 AdSense in All its Forms

When AdSense started it only came in one flavor: as content ads that placed text ads alongside search results and articles. Now Google comes in a variety of different forms that allow publishers to place AdSense units on a range of different platforms.

That provides for a huge amount of flexibility, and a great deal of opportunity. Some of those forms you will certainly need to understand and use if you're to maximize the revenues your site can earn.

Other forms you might never use, but they're still worth knowing just in case the opportunity arises.

And some of those forms come in a number of different sizes, shapes and formats.

Putting the right ad type in the right place on the right platforms is the key to earning money with AdSense.

AdSense for Content

AdSense for Content is the richest of the different AdSense products both in terms of the size of its ad inventory and in terms of the range of different ad types available to publishers (not to mention the wealth it provides to those publishers.) These are the ads that run alongside content — the articles and copy that appear on your Web pages. Targeted by Google’s clever software, they’re unobtrusive, distinctive and they appear to add information to a page rather than get in the way of the user experience.

They can come in the form of **text ads**, **link ads** and **display ads**.

Text Ads

Text ads are the type that users are most familiar with. They take the form of a box containing one or a number of ads with a linked headline, a brief description and a URL. You also get the “Ads by Google” notice that appears on all AdSense ads. (Google changed this notice recently and it now blends in much better than it used to, sometimes disappearing to a single letter.)

There are now twelve different types of text ad. They include horizontal units and vertical units, square units and rectangular units, large units and small units.

You won’t use all of them but you will need to know which units deliver the best results for the way your website is laid out. While that will vary from site to site, there are general guidelines that you should know when you start your testing.

One of the most popular formats is the **leaderboard**. At 728 x 90, it stretches pretty much across the screen and while it can be placed anywhere, it’s mostly used at the top of the page, above the main text.



Fig. 2.2 The leaderboard.

That’s a great location. It’s the first thing the reader sees and it offers a good selection of ads to choose from. When you’re just starting out and still experimenting with the types of ads that work best with your users, it’s a pretty good default to begin with.

Of course, you can put it in other places too. Putting a leaderboard ad between forum entries for example can be a pretty good strategy sometimes and definitely worth trying. On the whole though, I think you'll probably find that one of the smaller ads, such as a banner or half-banner might blend in better there and generate more clicks.

And you can often forget about putting a leaderboard at the bottom of the page, despite what Google's samples show you. It would certainly fit there but you have to be certain that people are going to reach the bottom of the page, especially a long page.

You might find that only a small minority of readers would get that far, so you're already reducing the percentage of readers who would click through.

Overall, I'd say that leaderboards are most effective blended into the top of the page beneath the navigation bar and sometimes placed between forum entries.



Fig. 2.3 A nicely optimized half banner on this Squidoo page.

Banners (468 x 60) and **half-banners** (234 x 60) are short versions of the leaderboard and much more flexible.

Like leaderboards you can certainly put these sorts of ads at the top of the page, and lots of sites do it. Again, that's something worth trying. You can put up a leaderboard for a week or so, swap it for a banner for another week or so, and compare the results.

But at the top of the page, I'd expect the leaderboard to do better.

A banner or a half-banner would leave too much space on one side and make the ad stand out. It would look like you've set aside an area of the page for advertising instead of for content. That would alert the reader that that section of the page is one that they can just ignore.

When you're looking for an ad to put in the middle of the page though or if you're using a narrow text area, a half-banner can be just the ticket.

Leaderboard (728 x 90) - View sample placements

Cheap hotels
Find Hotels By Price, Star Rating Or Location. Cheap hotels
www.ResortGateway.com

Save on Las Vegas Hotels
Amazing Las Vegas hotel discounts. Easily book your room today.
www.Tripes.com

Devon PA Hotel Deals
Shop and Compare Great Deals on Hotels in Devon PA.
www.priceline.com

Beach Hotels in Menorca
Deals on Menorca Beach Hotels. 1000's of Deals to Book Online!
www.UbookUbook.com

[Ads by Google](#)

Banner (468 x 60) - View sample placements

Cheap hotels
Find Hotels By Price, Star Rating Or Location. Cheap hotels

Save on Las Vegas Hotels
Amazing Las Vegas hotel discounts. Easily book your room today.
[Ads by Google](#)

Dutton (125x125)

Cheap hotels
Find Hotels By Price, Star Rating Or Location. Cheap hotels
www.ResortGateway.com

[Ads by Google](#)

Half Banner (234x60)

Cheap hotels
Find Hotels By Price, Star Rating Or Location. Cheap hotels
[Ads by Google](#)

Skyscraper (120x600) - View sample placements

[Ads by Google](#)

Free Cheddar Cheese
4.4 lbs Of English Cheddar Cheese. Shipping Included. Act Now!
Food-Offer.com

Vermont Cheese
Made Fresh and Aged Slowly for a Great Taste. Variety of Types!
www.vermontcountrycheese.com

Lost Garlic Bread Secret
A long, lost Italian recipe for marvellous old country garlic bread.
www.GarlicValleyFarm.com

Cheese Info
Get info on Cheese from 14 search engines in 1.
www.info.com/Cheese

Wide Skyscraper (160x600) - View sample placements

[Ads by Google](#)

Free Cheddar Cheese
4.4 lbs Of English Cheddar Cheese. Shipping Included. Act Now!
Food-Offer.com

Vermont Cheese
Made Fresh and Aged Slowly for a Great Taste. Variety of Types!
www.vermontcountrycheese.com

Lost Garlic Bread Secret
A long, lost Italian recipe for marvellous old country garlic bread.
www.GarlicValleyFarm.com

Cheese Info
Get info on Cheese from 14 search engines in 1.
www.info.com/Cheese

Home Cheesemaking Secrets
Making Camembert, Brie, Blue cheese is easy with my Kit and eBook.
www.thecheesemaker.com

[Ads by Google](#)

Small Rectangle (180x150)

Cheese Superstore
The internet's Cheese Store free shipping, 700 varieties!
www.cheesesupply.com/

[Ads by Google](#)

Vertical Banner (120 x 240)

[Ads by Google](#)

Downtown Los Angeles
Hotel Offers Great Rates, Weekend Packages and Specials
www.wishgrand.com

Save on Las Vegas Hotels
Discount Las Vegas hotel rooms. Make your reservation today.
www.Tripes.com

Small Square (200 x 200)

Cheap hotels
Find Hotels By Price, Star Rating Or Location. Cheap hotels
www.ResortGateway.com

Save on Las Vegas Hotels
Amazing Las Vegas hotel discounts. Easily book your room today.
www.Tripes.com

[Ads by Google](#)

Square (250 x 250)

Save on Las Vegas Hotels
Discount Las Vegas hotel rooms. Make your reservation today.
www.Tripes.com

Find Local Area Hotels
Find Local Hotels, Room Rates & Much More with Superpages
www.Superpages.com

Book Hotel Online
Find Great Deals on Hotel Rates For Your Travel Needs. Book Online Today
www.Booking.com

[Ads by Google](#)

Medium Rectangle (300 x 250) - View sample placements

Cheap hotels
Find Hotels By Price, Star Rating Or Location. Cheap hotels
www.ResortGateway.com

Save on Las Vegas Hotels
Amazing Las Vegas hotel discounts. Easily book your room today.
www.Tripes.com

Devon PA Hotel Deals
Shop and Compare Great Deals on Hotels in Devon PA.
www.priceline.com

Beach Hotels in Menorca
Deals on Menorca Beach Hotels. 1000's of Deals to Book Online!
www.UbookUbook.com

[Ads by Google](#)

Large Rectangle (336 x 280) - View sample placements

Cheap hotels
Find Hotels By Price, Star Rating Or Location. Cheap hotels
www.ResortGateway.com

Save on Las Vegas Hotels
Amazing Las Vegas hotel discounts. Easily book your room today.
www.Tripes.com

Devon PA Hotel Deals
Shop and Compare Great Deals on Hotels in Devon PA.
www.priceline.com

Beach Hotels in Menorca
Deals on Menorca Beach Hotels. 1000's of Deals to Book Online!
www.UbookUbook.com

[Ads by Google](#)

Fig. 2.4 Google offers a dozen different kinds of text ads in its AdSense for Content product.

While a leaderboard will stretch over the sidebars of your site, just like the navigation bar, a 234 x 60 half-banner will fit neatly into the text space on most sites.

This sort of ad should be your default option for the end of articles and the bottom of blog entries.

But think twice before you use the 468 x 60 banner ad block!

One of the first things people do when they sign up for AdSense is to grab a 468 x 60 ad block.

It's a big mistake and a common one.

Most site owners feel that when they put Google ads on their site, they must place the code that conforms most to traditional web advertising: the 468 x 60, the ubiquitous banner format that we have all come to know and love and... ignore.

Everyone is familiar with the 468 x 60. And that's exactly why the click-through rate on this size is very low, even among advertisers who use images on their banners.

The 468 x 60 blocks screams, "Hey! I am an advertisement! Whatever you do, *don't* click me. In fact, you should run from me as fast as you can!"

In all but a few special cases, I have found the 468 x 60 ad block to be completely ineffective, and recommend ignoring it the same way your visitors do.

Now, that doesn't mean you can *never* use it. You just have to know what you're doing and do it smartly. *You have to do everything you can to make sure that that ad unit looks absolutely nothing like a traditional banner ad.*

At my site, WorldVillage.com, I've found it to be effective when I surrounded the ad with text. Because there's no border around the unit, the ads blend into the content and look almost as though they're a part of the article.

If I had left that unit in the middle of some empty space — at the top of the page for example — it would have looked exactly like the sort of banner that users have trained themselves to avoid.

It wouldn't have picked up any clicks at all. (Of course, I could probably have used a half-banner here too but in general, I like to give my users as wide a choice of ads to click as possible.)

While this use of a 468 x 60 has worked for me — and it can work for you too if you blend it into the page properly — I'd stick to other formats, like the half-banner if you're not 100 percent sure that you can pull it off. When this ad unit fails, it can fail big.

Google also offers six different kinds of rectangular ads: **buttons** (125 x 125), **small rectangles** (180 x 150), **medium rectangles** (300 x 250), **large rectangles** (336 x 280), and two sizes of **squares** 250 x 250 and 200 x 200.

In fact, all of the rectangles can be slotted into the same spots on the page... with the exception of the button.

Probably the most common use of rectangles is at the beginning of articles. You can wrap the text around the ad, forcing the reader to look at it if he wants to read the article. That's very effective.

But you can really put these sorts of ads anywhere on the page. On the forum of my site, DealOfDay.com, I've put two rectangular ads right at the top of the page so that they take up the bulk of the space the user sees before he starts to scroll. That's a very aggressive approach that might not work on every site. It's worth trying though because if it works for you, you can find that it brings in great revenues.

If you're wondering which size of ad would be best for the position you've got in mind, my advice is to start with the large rectangle, the 336 x 280. My studies have shown that this format looks most like real content added to a page. I've dabbled with every size Google offers and this is the size that consistently has the best results. Other people have told me the exact same thing.

Second best is the 300 x 250 rectangle.

This ad block size is really useful when you want to have two sets of ads side by side. They fit on most web pages just perfectly.

Buttons should generally be used in a different way to other rectangles. Like the half-banners, they're distinctive for their small size. While that means you could slot them in anywhere, I think they work best when slipped into the sidebars.

The Grand Canyon Skywalk

Digg It! ■ It's Del.icio.us! Furl It!

[Skywalk Grand Canyon](#)
Find and book tours to the Grand Canyon Skywalk on Viator.
www.viator.com

[Grand Canyon Tours](#)
Tours Leaving From Las Vegas to Grand Canyon South Rim \$89!
www.GrandToursLV.com

Ads by Google

Last time I visited Arizona, I had the pleasure of visiting the [Grand Canyon](#).

Undoubtedly, one of the most moving experiences of my life, there is absolutely nothing on the face of the earth that compares to standing on the edge of the canyon face and looking down one mile into it's deep, deep enormity. It was an experience that actually moved me to tears. (Hey, when you spend the majority of your life on the plains, natural beauty is a rare thing!)

After years of construction, the Hualapai indians are getting ready to unveil the grand opening of the [Grand Canyon Skywalk](#), a glass bottom structure that juts out 70 feet into the canyon, 4000 feet above

Fig. 2.5 A typical use of a rectangle embedded into the text at www.joelcomm.com...

For example, you might have a list of links to frequently-read articles or other sites on one side of your page. Putting a button ad at the end of a list like that could help it to blend in well.

The final types of text ads are those that run vertically. These come in three sizes: **skyscraper** (120 x 600), **wide skyscraper** (160 x 600) and **vertical banner** (120 x 240).

Clearly, these are useful options for filling up the sides of the page.

I would also recommend using the 'wide skyscraper', text-only ads on the right hand edge of the screen — in conjunction with the 3-Way Matching I discuss later in the book.

That's because most people are right handed, and even left-handed people like me control their mouse with their right hand —it's just what we're used to doing. Placing the ads on the right side of the page creates less distance between the right hand and the screen. This 'closeness' makes the user feel more comfortable and therefore more likely to click through to a link. They feel more in control of their visit experience. It works!

On the whole, you can often divide sites into those that have plenty of content at the sides (especially on some blogs), and those that have nothing on the sides.

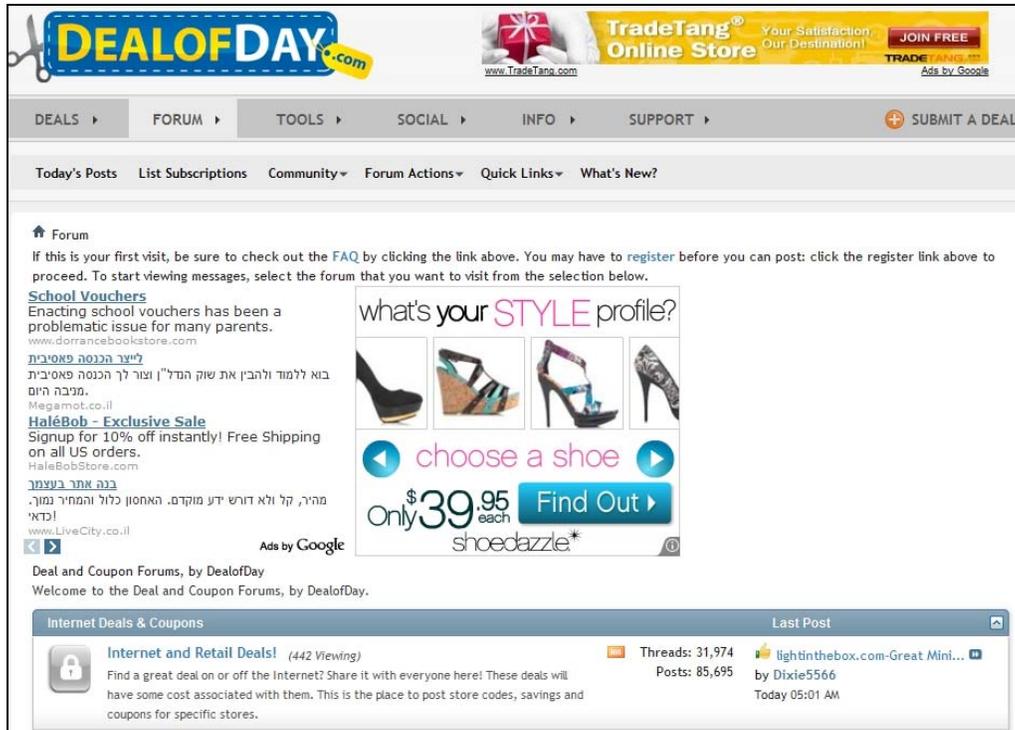


Fig. 2.6 ... and an atypical use of two rectangles, one text, one graphic, at Dealofday.com. (Note the graphic leaderboard at the top of the page next to the logo.)

Putting vertical ads in space so that they form the border of the main text makes the page look a lot cleaner. But that doesn't necessarily mean that they're going to get more clicks. If you're putting a vertical banner in an area where you have other content then just make sure, as always, that you blend them in well so that they look like the rest of your content.

Themed Units

There is one more type of standard ad unit that you can use on your site. You just can't use it all the time. Every time a holiday rolls around, Google brings out new ad units with seasonal themes. It's a bit like the way the company changes the logo to match special occasions.

The designs themselves vary according to season and location (users in Europe, for example, won't see Thanksgiving ads), and they're always tastefully done.

In general, I always say that your ads should be unobtrusive but I like these themed ads. They're eye-catching without looking like banners.

When it's holiday-time, it's always worth checking out the format page again and seeing what's available.

Link Units

An ad format that has already proved its worth, when used correctly, is link units.

If you've ever bought Christmas presents for children, you've probably bought stocking fillers. You dole out hundreds of bucks on some state-of-the-art electronic gizmo, toss in a couple of toy cars that cost a dollar each just to fill up space and give the kid more to unwrap... then watch him spend 90 percent of his time playing with the car that cost 10 percent of your total gift budget.

Link units have the potential to deliver returns that are equally surprising.

They're very small, almost unnoticeable... but when used well, they can be extremely effective.

Link units let you place a box on your site that contains four or five links. They come in sizes ranging from 20 x 90 to 200 x 90, and can be particularly powerful placed on a sidebar.

Because you can place both link units and other ad units on the same page, you might find that the choice helps: if a user doesn't spot something interesting in one type of ad block, he might spot it on another.

Where these units differ from other types of ads though is that they only display *a list of topics* that Google believes are relevant to the content of your pages. They don't display the ads themselves. When a visitor clicks on a topic, Google pops up a new window with targeted ads.

Link units then should be less effective than text ads because they require users to click twice to earn revenue for the publisher: you only get paid for

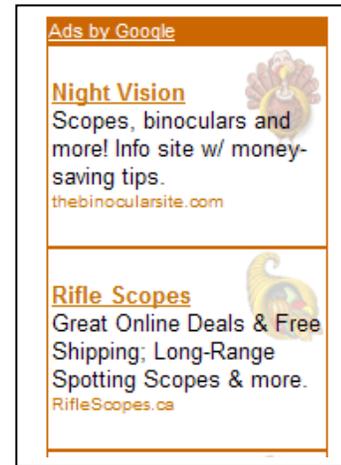


Fig. 2.7 A Thanksgiving ad that isn't a turkey.

the *second* click (but that does mean you can check to see which ads your users are being served.)

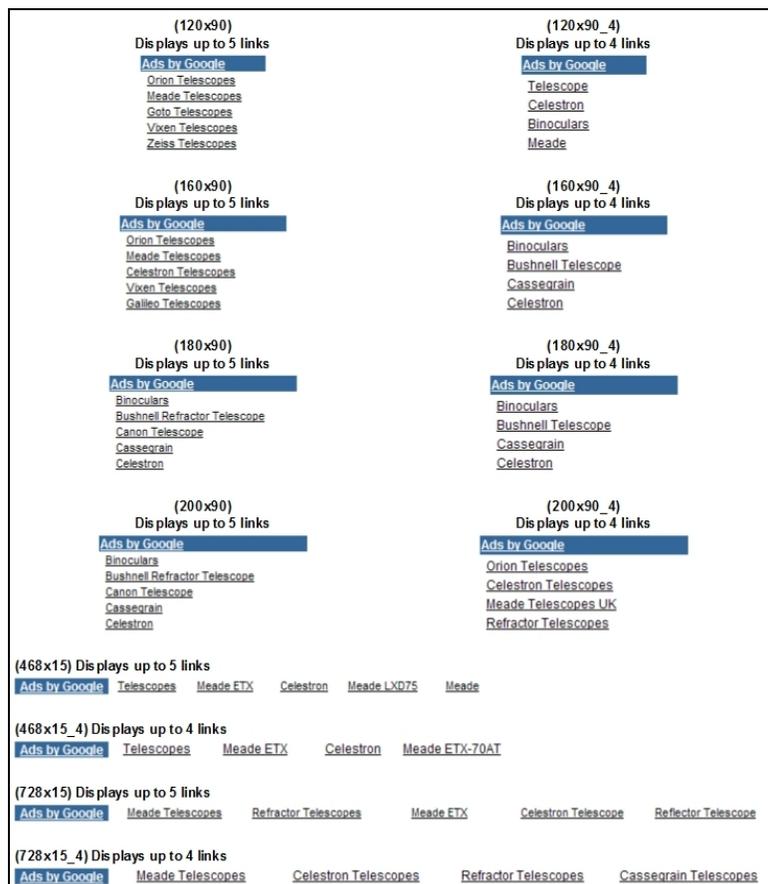


Fig. 2.8 AdSense’s link units come in twelve formats... and two stages.

But it could also be argued that if someone is taking the time to click on a topic, then they are probably very interested in the link, and are likely to click an actual advertisement on the resulting page. Some people have found that just about everyone who clicks on a link unit will click on the ads that appear on the next page; others have had mixed results.

I’ve tested link units on multiple sites and have seen vast differences in conversions. That makes it more difficult to say whether or not they are for you.

In the first case, I placed the link units on an information-based site with a very general audience. The results were nothing to write home about.

In the second case, I placed the link units on a product specific site with a narrow audience. The results were fantastic!

The conclusions should be obvious. If you're going to use link units, you should put them:

1. **On a site with a specific field of interest.**

A general site will give you general ads and few clicks. (Although in early 2010, Google announced that it had completely revamped the algorithm that governs link units. It also started to place display ads at the bottom of the ad page. I'm still not sure it's going to make a huge difference but it might just make some testing worthwhile if you've previously had poor results on a general site.)

2. **Above the fold with few other links.**

For link units, this is crucial: If your users are going to click a link, it should be a link that gives you money.



Fig. 2.9 One way to cunningly disguise a link unit as content.

It's also a good idea to keep your link units for sites with high-paying keywords. If someone comes to your site seeking out information or a product on a top-notch keyword, they tend to be more likely to click as a result.

There are two kinds of link units: **vertical units** and **horizontal units**. Vertical link units are great slotted into sidebars. They just look like a natural extension of the link list.

But horizontal link units can be at least as effective. Since they were introduced, they really have become an extremely useful tool.

Some users have reported increases in CTR as high as 200 percent using these units!

Instead of piling the links one on top of the other—which is great for putting above lists of links but stand out too clearly when placed in text—the horizontal ads blend in perfectly when placed on pages with articles.

You can use two link units per page but you probably shouldn't put them at the bottom of a page where they'll be very easy to miss. Above content can work though and embedded in sidebars can be effective too.

For example, a horizontal ad unit can be a great alternative to a leaderboard. It's much more subtle and takes up less space on the page — definitely

something to experiment with to see which of the two brings you the highest revenues.

Or you could use them to separate forum or blog entries. As a horizontal unit, they can be very effective as frames that give people somewhere easy to go when they reach the end of a text unit.

One great use for horizontal link units though is on directory pages. If you have a Web page that contains tables of links, slipping a horizontal link unit above or below them — or both — can make the ads look like a part of the directory.

It almost makes you want to build a directory just to try it out!



Fig. 2.10 A horizontal link unit at the top of the page at BetaNews.com. Would a leaderboard have produced better revenues in that position? Again, something that can easily be tested.

Display Ads — Graphic, Video and Flash

Text ads should always be your first pick when you start to load up your site. Link units are also worth taking, and they'll be available when you come to pick a size of ad.

But when you choose the types of ad you want to put on your site, you'll be given three choices: text & image/rich media ads; text ads only; and image/rich media ads only.

In addition to text ads then, you can also receive image ads, video ads and Flash ads.

There are eight formats that offer static graphics instead of text — and you should avoid all of them.

You might think that's strange. A graphic ad will always be more eye-catching than a text ad. It will stand out on the page, it can look attractive, even be witty and amusing.

But it probably won't work.

At least it won't work for the publisher. The advertiser might benefit from the views, the recognition and the branding. And if he's only paying for the clicks, he'll receive all that for free... because users don't click on graphic ads.

They know they're ads. They can see they're ads. So they ignore them completely. And more people are ignoring them than ever.

I've experimented and I can tell you that these two steps (putting the ad in the middle of the content and removing any overt border colors) can at least *double* your click thru rate (or CTR) and that means that you'll be making more money with the same number of visitors. And that's a good thing.

So let's have a look at how to do this.

First off, have a look at [the different ad formats](#). Most people seem to go with the default "banner" format ads, which is too bad: after the last few years of surfing, I think people have been trained to ignore these banner adverts. Even the spiffy new graphical banners, like this:



: how you can get creative with the placement. Also, if you're going to have an readers and have a layout that has at least four ads, if not five? Really, the one-ad /e an ad at all, why not maximize the chance it'll have something of interest to your

Fig. 2.11 This banner ad stands out, but will it get clicked? Dave Taylor, best-selling technology writer and AdSense partner, stands up for text ads.

Between July 2007 and March 2009, the percentage of American Internet users who clicked on a graphic ad fell from 32 percent to 16 percent. Eighty five percent of those clicks came from just 8 percent of users. According to

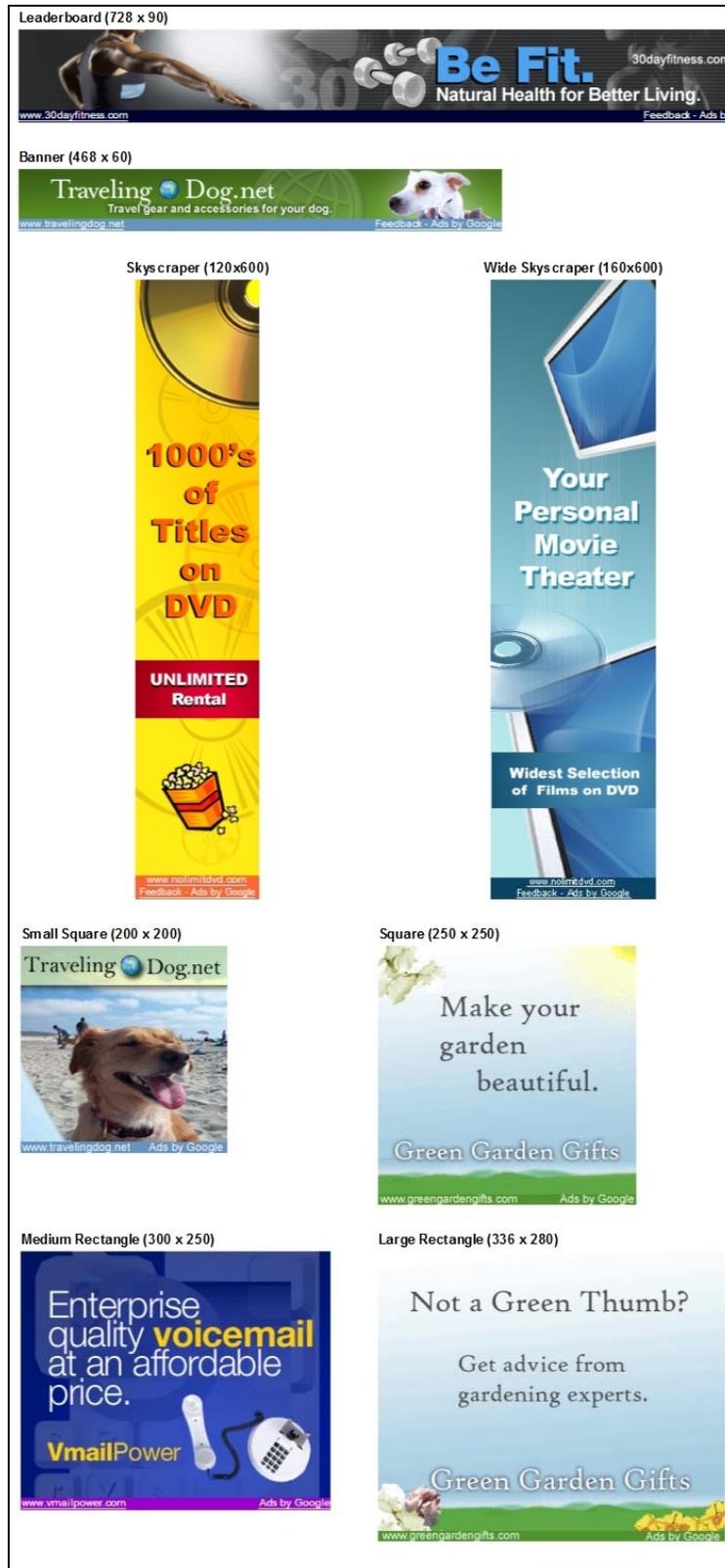


Fig. 2.12 Eight display ads. Try to avoid all of them.

Andrew Lipsman, the director of industry analysis at comScore, the company that conducted the survey, those low click rates underestimate the value of the ad. Just looking at a graphic ad increases the chance that a viewer will search for the brand and make a purchase later.

So the advertiser gets a sale, but the pay-per-click publisher gets nothing. As we'll see, Google does sometimes provide graphic ads on a CPM basis — a deal that pays for impressions rather than clicks — but display ads are usually CPC units. If the user doesn't click — and very few will — you don't get paid.

Text ads then offer many advantages over image ads:

- A. With the right formatting, **a text ad 'blends in' with your site content**. A display ad will not give you the same freedom with its appearance — the only thing you can play with is the size and positioning.
- B. **You can squeeze more text ads** into the space that a conventional banner takes. People love to have more choices!
- C. **Properly formatted text ads don't look like clutter**. Banners do!
- D. **People hate banners** and avoid them at sight. Many tests confirm that people are much more receptive to text ads related to your content.

There may be times when graphic ads deliver good results. Some publishers of gaming sites, for example, have reported that graphic ads perform two to three times better on their pages than text ads, presumably because they blend in better on pages with little text. But for most sites, text ads will perform so much better that in my opinion, you're better off sticking with those, copying your users, and ignoring graphic ads altogether.

Video Ads

There is however, one type of image ad that you should welcome on your website: Google's video ads.

These are an excellent addition to Google's inventory. Sites that receive them can see some very impressive returns.

Instead of receiving the sort of static image that just gets ignored, you'll receive the opening still of an online video. The video is stored on Google's

servers so your download times won't be affected, and it only plays when the user clicks the Play button, minimizing distraction to the user.

That's a good thing. If a user's eyes keep drifting to a moving image when he's trying to read your content, he's going to get pretty frustrated and not want to come back. Other advertising firms start the video running immediately, and it doesn't create a great experience.



Fig. 2.13 Play-per-click: a scene from Google's sample video ad.

If the ad is running on a CPC basis, like link units, you won't be paid for just one click. Users first have to click the Play button — which won't pay you a dime — and then click either the screen while it's playing or the link underneath the screen before you'll earn money.

That extra step might sound like it's going to hit your clickthrough rate for that ad unit but I'm not sure that's true.

As soon as someone sees a button anywhere, they want to click it. In fact, I'm sure that if you put a big notice next to the Play button saying, "DO NOT PUSH THIS BUTTON" you can be sure that your clicks would go through the roof. (But don't try it; it's unlikely that Google will appreciate it.)

People will want to click that Play button, and many of them will want to learn more about the company that created the ad. And even if your CTR does drop for that unit, it's likely that the click price for video ads will be higher than for other units competing for that space.

Video ads are more expensive to create than text or image ads. That's why they tend to be created by big companies like car giants or Disney. They might even be offering their television ads. If those corporations have gone

to the trouble creating an original video ad or formatting a television ad for the Web, there's a great chance that they'll go to the trouble of outbidding their nearest rival for exposure.

If you're getting a video ad, track how long it appears on that page and compare the revenues it brings with the days on which no video ad appeared.

You should expect to see a spike in earnings.

If you don't see that spike, you can always opt out of receiving rich media ads altogether.

Unlike text or image ads though, there's no guarantee you're going to get a video ad. To qualify, you have to be opted in to receive image/rich media ads for an ad unit in one of these sizes:

- Rectangle (300x250)
- Large Rectangle (336x280)
- Square (250x250)
- Small Square (200x200)
- Leaderboard (728x90)
- Skyscraper (120x600)
- Wide Skyscraper (160x600)

(It's worth noting that with video ads, the bigger the format, the better the results).

If you're receiving those kinds of image ads *and* AdSense has a video ad to match your content, you might receive one.

But what if you don't? You can't choose to receive only text or video. There's always a chance that you'll be receiving the sort of image ads that earn a poor clickthrough rate. That would cost you money.

There are two things that you can do to minimize any losses from fishing for video ads and not getting them.

The first is to stop fishing fast. If a week has gone by and your image ad unit hasn't acquired a Play button, it's probably not going to. So turn that image ad back into a text ad.

The second is to follow the strategy I use at DealofDay.com. **I've placed two rectangular ads at the top of the page to make them unmissable but one of them is an image ad.**

Google no longer allows publishers to place related images right next to ad units to draw attention to them but you can put an image ad next to a text ad. If that image ad becomes a video ad, you're going to earn more money. If it stays an image ad, it's going to pull eyes into your ad zone.

This is one of the few times when an image ad might be better than a text ad.

And when you do get video ads, there are also a couple of things that you can do to make the most of them...

Adding video to your Web pages for example, is a breeze. There are millions of clips available for free use on the Web, including the giant inventory on YouTube, and there's nothing to stop you from shooting your own short.

If your site regularly receives a video ad from AdSense, placing one or two more videos on those pages would help the ad blend into the site and increase clicks.

Flash Ads

Take a look at the list of ad formats that Google provides and when you reach the Flash ads, you should notice something interesting. While every other ad format has a little notice telling viewers that they're looking at "Ads by Google," the Flash ads only have a little "i". Mouse over that letter and it expands to deliver Google's message.

That's surprising. Just because Flash allows Google to hide its notice, doesn't mean the company has to. It's usually pretty fastidious about making sure that users know they're looking at an ad.

I don't know the real reason that Google chose to mask its message on this ad, but I can't help but feel that it's got a lot to do with the results of Flash ads: they don't work.

In fact, they're even worse than graphic ads.

While graphic ads can deliver results on some occasions and on some sites — enough to make testing them worthwhile — Flash ads have proven so ineffective that publishers have been asking Google to allow them to disable them completely.

Not even advertisers like them, a fact that makes the situation even worse. Flash ads make up only a small proportion of Google's ad inventory which means that the chances of landing a well targeted ad are small too.

Flash won't just scream that they're ads then, they might also be irrelevant ads.

So when it comes to choosing your ad type, which of the three options should you take?

Don't choose image/rich media ads only. If you have a website that's graphic heavy, such as a gaming site, then they might deliver the best results for you but for just about every other site, cutting out text ads would mean cutting out the most reliable source of revenue.

Start instead with text only, pick up at least a couple of weeks of results then allow graphic ads and compare the results. It's a simple change that will tell you for certain which is the best option for you — even if it does send you the occasional Flash ad.

AdSense for Search

AdSense for Content comes in a range of different forms, types and formats, from simple, small link units to large video ads. But all of those different kinds of units represent only one of the seven AdSense products that Google provides. It's a product that's intended to run alongside website content and use algorithms to match ad inventory to the subject matter on the page.

It's the product you're likely to use the most and generate the most income for you.

But you should also be using AdSense for Search.

When Google first rolled out this product, it wasn't very profitable — at least not for publishers. Recently though, Google has been working hard to improve results, allow better website blending and give publishers greater control.

It's now much more powerful than it used to be, and it should be an essential part of your website monetization.

The product itself is much simpler than all of the different AdSense for Content units. You'll get a search field (whose length you can define), and a choice of notices declaring that users are looking at a "Google Custom Search" box.

You can place two search fields on your website (although you'll probably only need one). When users search using that search box, ads are placed

next to the results in the same way that they appear next to content on a website.

It's a simple product that complements AdSense for Content nicely. But that doesn't mean it's simple to optimize. In addition to defining the search box, it's also possible to choose where the search results appear, to design the results page, position the logo, and — most importantly— customize the search.

Understanding how to optimize all of those elements isn't difficult but it does require a little learning. You'll find a full discussion of AdSense for Search in Chapter 4.

AdSense for Domains

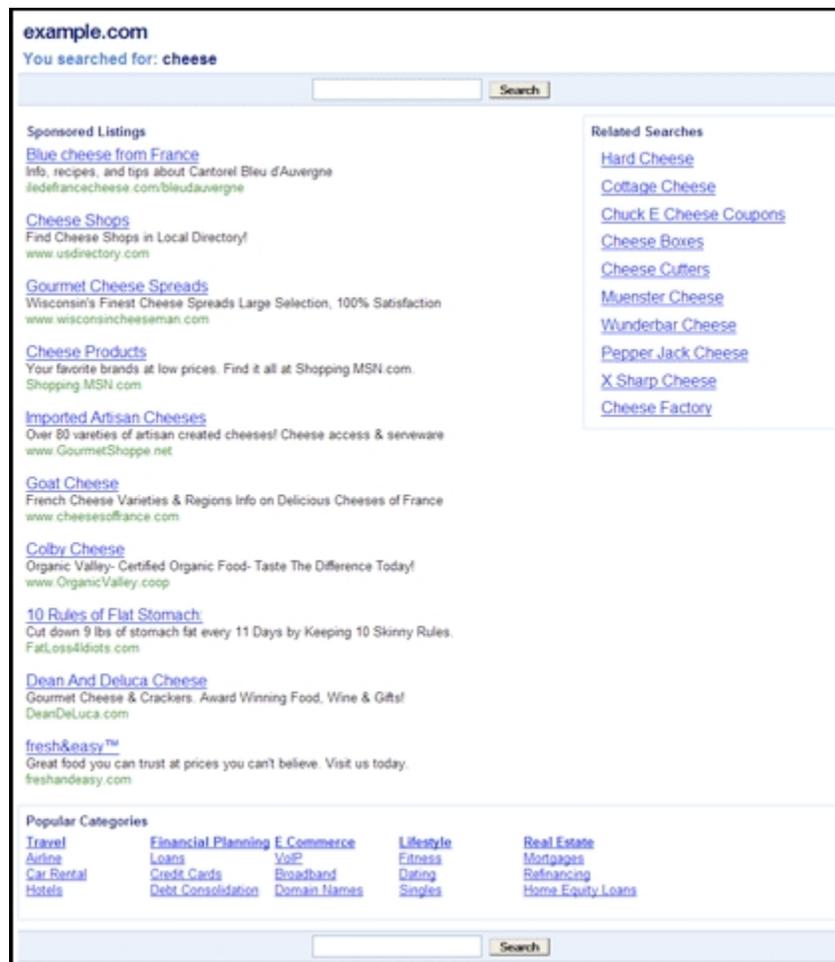


Fig. 2.14 AdSense for Domains makes money out of nothing.

All of the different forms of AdSense for Content have one thing in common. They rely on the presence of content. Google reads the text on the page and matches the subject to the ads.

AdSense for Domains is unique in that it requires that a site contains no content at all.

Targeting is done through a combination of keywords submitted by the developer and the search terms used to reach the site. Instead of content, when users arrive at the site, they see a page of sponsored listings.

The product is intended for use on parked domains — websites that have yet to be developed. Instead of seeing a sign saying “page under construction” or a 404 error message, they get the chance to continue surfing and the publisher gets a chance to win some advertising clicks.

But not many advertising clicks. A site that has no content is unlikely to have much in the way of traffic. Any visitors that do stop by will either come from users typing the URL directly into the browser or from people following old links to content on a site that no longer exists. If you’re lucky, you might just manage to generate the ten dollars or so a year it costs to keep the name registered.

You might increase that income by playing with the keywords, choosing related terms that have a low search volume, for example. But you’re not allowed to develop links or try to promote the empty site in any way. If you try to build content to attract visitors then you’ll need to use AdSense for Content instead of AdSense for Domains.

AdSense for Domains is useful if you have a domain waiting to be developed or sold but don’t expect it to do more than contribute to the name registration fee.

AdSense for Feeds

Trends come and go on the Internet faster than teenage fashions, and one trend to rise and fall since the last edition of this book is RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feeds. RSS lets subscribers see when a site has been updated and sends them information, instead of waiting for them to come to the site to see it for themselves.

At one time, it looked like it was going to be a very important complement to traditional ways of surfing the Web — and a vital way for publishers to ensure that loyal readers keep coming back to websites.

It is still important. Users do still sign up to receive RSS feeds and they can make pushing content onto social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook very simple. But the use of RSS readers to read feeds has declined massively over the last year or two. According to research firm Hitwise, visits to Google Reader fell by 27 percent in 2010. Bloglines, once one of the most popular readers, fell by 71 percent. Its owner, Ask.com, has now shut it down completely.

The decline of RSS Readers — and the rise of social media — has come at a bad time for Google. Not just because the company owns the most popular RSS reader, but because it rolled out its AdSense for Feeds product relatively late. Yahoo! had been offering the same product for several years before Google got around to it.

That “late” now looks more like “too late.”

But that doesn’t mean AdSense for Feeds is useless. You should be trying to pick up subscribers on your blog. You should be using that feed to send them teasers to your new content.

And if you’re sending that RSS content, you should be including an AdSense unit too.

You don’t have a lot of room for optimization, but you can choose the size of your unit (big is good), opt not to include image ads (a wise choice), and select the position of your ad (the bottom of the post is best so that users have somewhere to go after they’ve read your content.)

Don’t expect giant returns from this product, but you should be using it to add a little extra to your income, depending on the number of subscribers you manage to pick up. You can learn more about AdSense for Feeds in Chapter 13.

AdSense for Mobile Content

While RSS Readers are falling, a new trend is rising: the ability to consume online content on mobile phones. That isn’t entirely new. Mobile phone owners have long been able to surf the Web using WAP but it was expensive and slow, and few people were desperate enough for online content to do it. Most users, except perhaps in Japan, were happy to wait until they got home to go online.

Google offered AdSense units that fitted WAP content but few publishers saw serious returns with it.

Smartphones with big screens, like the iPhone, have changed all that.

It's now possible to surf the Web comfortably, from anywhere, and using a screen small enough to fit into the palm of your hand. In fact, according to one survey, owners of iPhones and iPod Touches now spend more time online with their mobile devices than they do in front of their PCs and Macs.

That's a real challenge for Google — and for Google's publishers. Google is rising to that challenge. Publishers need to, as well.

AdSense for Mobile Content now places an AdSense unit optimized for mobile phones on Web pages viewed on high-end devices like iPhones. You get one ad that appears at the top of the page, but you can choose from a wider range of sizes than before, and even include graphic ads if you want. (As Apple's own iAds catch on, that might be a good idea. If users come to expect graphic ads on mobile devices to be that immersive, even simple AdSense image units may benefit from curious clicks.)

The implementation is simple, but you don't need to do it. Google says that it's capable of detecting when its ads are being served on high-end mobile devices and returning a large ad automatically.

It's also worth noting that in addition to AdSense for Mobile Content, Google also puts ads on mobile applications. That's not done with AdSense though but through AdMob, a mobile advertising platform that Google bought in May 2010. Its main competitor is now Apple's own iAds system.

Advertising on mobile platforms is becoming a hot business and it's something that AdSense publishers do need to learn about. You can find out more in Chapter 14.

AdSense for Games

And games aren't doing too badly either. If you've created a Web-based Flash game that serves 500,000 games a day and picks up 80 percent of its traffic from the UK and the US, then you may be eligible to serve AdSense units within your game.

That's not something that's as open an opportunity as AdSense for Content or even AdSense for Mobile. You'll need to know how to program Flash games that people want to play and you'll need to have a very large audience of people who want to play them.

Optimization is going to come down largely to placement. Interrupt the game play and gamers will become frustrated and stop playing. Even clicking the ads will whisk users away from the game.

For the relatively small number of online games publishers who qualify, it might represent a useful opportunity but I suspect making \$1 games for the iPhone and supplementing that income with iAds will produce more revenue.

AdSense for Video

Most publishers though aren't going to be using AdSense for Games, and even fewer will be using AdSense for Video. Back in 2007, Google did allow publishers to place YouTube videos on their websites and split the ad revenues with the company and with the video maker. It was never a great program and a year later it was retired.

Now if you want to place AdSense on your video content, you'll need a minimum of 10 million streams every month. If that's you, you can enjoy those revenues. Otherwise you're likely to be using primarily AdSense for Content and AdSense for Search, and perhaps AdSense for Mobile too.

If you do want to earn advertising revenues from video content, you can either place the videos on an AdSense supported site (with enough text to trigger ads) or use another service such as Revver.com to earn from the ads.

One the whole though, video tends to be more useful as a form of promotion than a way of generating advertising revenue.

AdSense is simple... in principle. Ads go in, ads come out. Optimize the ads correctly and you'll generate clicks. But the range of different ad types can be confusing. With so much choice, it's very easy to put the wrong ads in the wrong places and end up with less income than your site can generate.

That's the mistake that many new publishers make. It was certainly the mistake that I made when I first started using AdSense.

That's why it's important to know about all of the different AdSense products and each of the formats and flavors in which AdSense can be served. Even if you don't use them all — and I doubt if any publisher gets to use all of the different kinds of AdSense units — you should be aware of all the tools that you have at your disposal.

And then you need to know how to use them. You have to know which units to use when, how to tweak them for best effect and what to do with them to maximize your earnings.

How much you earn from those will depend on how successfully you optimize those units.

That's what I'll discuss in the next two chapters.

3. How To Tweak Your Ads To Make Them Click! — The Principles of Optimization

The choice of AdSense formats can be overwhelming. Many people let Google decide for them, preferring to stick with the default settings that AdSense provides.

Big mistake!

From my own experience I can tell you that's like swapping a hundred-dollar bill for a ten-dollar note. For almost a year I settled for just a tenth of what I could have been making just because I didn't bother to control the look and placement of my AdSense units.

The various ad formats, colors and locations on the Web page can make up thousands of different combinations. You can literally spend hours every day experimenting with every possible combination. But you don't want to, do you?

In this chapter I'm going to explain the formatting rules and techniques that have sky-rocketed the CTRs on my top-grossing pages.

Ultimately, there are three ways to increase your AdSense revenue.

1. **Tweak the Ads**

Even small changes to the appearance of your AdSense units can have a dramatic effect on the clickthrough rate;

2. **Optimize your Website**

The context in which the ads appear is important too. What Google calls 'content relevance' will affect the kinds of ads you receive, and the value of the clicks on those ads.

3. **Track Visitor Response**

If you don't know what works (and what doesn't work) in trying to increase your AdSense revenue, you're shooting arrows in the dark! Analyzing your stats can reveal a great deal about your visitors and answer fundamental questions such as what they're looking for and what makes them click. Once you've figured that out, you're on your way to big AdSense bucks!

Let's start by looking at how you can tweak your ads.

3.1 The Goal of AdSense Optimization

AdSense optimization — the practice of maximizing AdSense clicks and revenues — has a golden rule:

Don't let your AdSense units look like ads!

People don't visit your website for ads. They want good content.

If you make the ads stick out with eye-popping colors, images or borders, they'll be easy to recognize as ads — and people will work extra hard to avoid them.

Today's visitors are blind to banners, block pop-ups, weary of ads and skeptical of contests and giveaways. They know what an ad looks like, and they know how to look away.

If you want to win clicks, the ads that Google delivers have to look like an integral part of your content.

It's a straightforward policy but it's not as easy as it sounds. If it were, there wouldn't be so many grumpy people on AdSense forums complaining about their low earnings.

It's not that they aren't doing anything about it. They simply aren't doing the right things.

Let me assure you that in the time that I have been using AdSense, my earnings have only gone up — and so will yours, if you apply the right techniques seriously.

3.2 Changing the Look of Your Ads

Tweaking your ads so that they blend into the page and look like content begins with altering their appearance. While you can't hack into the code itself, Google does provide AdSense publishers with a range of options to change the way an ad unit appears.

In addition to the format, you can change the colors used in the ad; the fonts chosen for the text; and the corner styles of the AdSense unit.

The general principle is always to match the characteristics of the ad unit with the characteristics of the Web page on which the ad unit will appear.

Using Colors To Increase Your Clicks

Log in to your AdSense account, click the AdSense Setup tab, select Get Ads from the menu, and you'll be offered a page load of options. You can choose to see each of these options one at a time using the "Wizard" or you can go through them all on a single page. I find that a single page lets me see everything at once but it makes little practical difference. If you're using the new interface, which is Google is currently rolling out, you just have to click the My Ads tab, followed by New Unit.

To create an AdSense for Content unit, you'll first have to choose between an ad unit and a link unit, and — if you choose an ad unit — whether you want both text and image ads, just text ads or just image/rich media ads. Once you've made your choice (just text ads is a good place to begin) you'll have to pick a format. This is a whole issue in itself which I'll discuss in Chapter 5, but it will depend on where you're planning to put the ad. In general though, big is good.

You'll then choose your color palette.

An AdSense unit has five elements whose colors can be changed: the border; the title; the background; the text; and the URL.

When it comes to the border, the basic principle is simple:

Make the border disappear!

I've found that this one simple tweak can more than double clickthroughs!

Even before the Internet, ads in newspapers and magazines were marked off with a thick, heavy border. No wonder borders and boxes have come to symbolize advertising messages.

Ads with prominent borders make your pages look cluttered. They distract the eye from the ad text, while marking off the ad blocks from the rest of the content.

Match the color of your ad unit's border with the background color of your web page.

When the border matches the background, it disappears. The page instantly looks neater and the ads appear more inviting.

Slow Running Computer Fix – How To Speed Up Your Computer Quickly With No Technical Knowledge

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Ads by Google

Everyone at some point has problems with their computer running slow. There are several reasons this could be happening. You can fix them and make it run faster and stop your [computer running slow](#).

#1. There are just too many programs installed. Some are never used and some are so badly written they hog all your memory. Slowing your computer to a crawl.

#2. Programs have been installed and removed so often the registry is full of invalid entries and junk for programs that are no longer on your computer.

Fig. 3.1 Two AdSense units on my site WorldVillage.com. Neither the link unit above the article nor the text unit alongside the article have borders. By making the border and the background white, the ads look just like content.

Of course, you'll also have to choose a background color for the ad that matches the background of the page on which the ad will appear otherwise you'll create a new kind of border. But it's a very simple technique and very, very effective.

It's possible that there are times when you'll want to throw a border around your ad units. If your website design has borders around articles, for example, then adding a similar border to your ad units might also make them look less like ads. For those, you'll want to make sure that you choose a matching corner style (AdSense provides three options.) But most sites, especially most blogs, don't mark off content — so don't mark off the ads.

That leaves three more color elements to choose. Clearly, the text of the ad should match the color of the text used in the articles.

But what about the title, the line the user is actually going to click? What color should that be?

Blue.

The title isn't just the title of the ad; it's also a link and users still expect links on websites to be blue. Just as they expect stop signs to be red and warning signs to be yellow, so they expect their links to be blue.

That means people are more likely to click on a blue link than a link in any other color.

The default link color is #0000FF. Keep it that way initially, especially on home pages of blogs whose headlines are blue links that lead to the entire article. If you use a radically different color for the titles of your articles, you might want to test blue titles against titles that match the color of your headlines. But it's best to keep all the links blue. If a fancy design costs you clicks, then it's not doing you any favors.

That just leaves the URL. You have to display the URL. It's one of Google's rules. But you don't have to display it in a way that people can see it.

One legitimate trick to make the URL less obtrusive — and reduce the chance that a user will type it directly into the browser instead of clicking the ad — is to choose a URL display color that's lighter than the text description color.

The text — and the link — will stand out; the URL that shows that the unit is an ad will fade into the background.

Note that some formats do not display the URL line. That's not a mistake and you will not get in trouble if the URL does not appear on these ad blocks. It's just the way it is.

3.3 Text Is Design Too!

As well as the color of your font, the font family itself and the size must match the other text elements. AdSense gives you the option of using its "default font family," Times, Arial or Verdana. Make sure that you choose the same type of font as the one you've used on the site.

The same is true of size. It might be tempting to make your ads look a little bigger so that they stand out on the page — but all they'll so is stand out as ads. You want them to blend in so make sure that they match the size as well as the font.

That's the sort of blending that translates into clicks.

« [Having the Last Word](#) | [Main](#) | [The Great Global Warming Swindle?](#) »

Planning Your Work and Working Your Plan

Ads by Goooooogle

[Succession Planning](#)
Find talent & help employees with career planning. Promote within.
www.SuccessFactors.com/Succession

[Leadership Development](#)
New Productive Interactions Series Build better teams now!
www.2130partners.com

[Improve AdWords Results](#)
Professional Setup & Management. Maximize Results. Save Time & Money
www.JumpFly.com

[Competency Modeling - IDP](#)
Ensure you have the right people in the right positions with Meridian.
www.meridianksi.com

Vince Lombardi once said, "A man can be as great as he wants to be. If you believe in yourself and have the courage, the determination, the dedication, the competitive drive and if you are willing to sacrifice the little things in life and pay the price for the things that are worthwhile, it can be done."

Take inventory of yourself...

Are you where you want to be?

If not, why not?

Tommy Lasorda once said, "The difference between the impossible and the possible lies in a man's determination."

The truth is, most people give up WAY too easily.

Why?

Fig. 3.2 **Format your text ads to maximize clicks!** On my blog, I have removed the border and matched the ad's background color and fonts to my content

This **3-way matching** (titles, text and background) can generate excellent click-through rates.

Too many text styles add clutter and can confuse your visitors. Instead, try every legitimate way to make the ads look like a part of your web content.

In other words use the colors to make sure that your ads don't look like ads!

3.4 Deliberate Mismatching — Breaking the Rules

When it comes to choosing colors, I recommend 3-way matching and using blue for the links. That's the Golden Rule — and you should always know the rules.

But once you know the rules, you don't always have to follow them.

It is possible to deliberately mismatch your ad colors and styles, *provided you put the ad unit at the top of your page.*

This generates two powerful 'zones' and two types of experience for the

visitor.

The first zone is always at the top of the first page, above the main site banner. The titles and text match colors found in the banner graphic heading. When you use a form that contains no URL links, the result is that the ad unit looks like a key control point for your site. The visitor feels that they are visiting another major area of that site.

The screenshot shows a website layout with a black border. At the top, the heading "Want the Wedding Gown of your Dreams?" is displayed in a bold, black font. Below this heading, there are three distinct ad units, each with a blue title and green text. The first ad unit is titled "Beautiful Wedding Dresses" and includes the text "Wedding guide winks to stunning wedding gowns & bridesmaid dresses." and the URL "YourWedding101.com". The second ad unit is titled "Chinese Dress For Wedding" and includes the text "Chinese Style Wedding Dresses Cheongsam, Chinese Style Clothing" and the URL "www.eaststore.com". The third ad unit is titled "Sophisticated Lady" and includes the text "Informal & Formal Wedding Dresses Starting Under \$100.00!" and the URL "www.sophisticatedlady.us". Below these ads, there is a free article titled "All the Bridal Gowns" with the text "All the Bridal Gown Savings! Smart Bridal Shoppers Start Here" and the URL "Bridal.Gown.AlltheBrands.com". The article text continues with a quote from Amanda Porter, owner of Bridal Gowns Wholesale, and provides contact information for Amanda Fornari.

Fig. 3.3 This example site had two zones: an ad zone at the top and a free article beneath. Implementing this design increased their revenues FIVE-FOLD!

3.5 Make Your Ads Look Neat with Tables

One very neat way to help your ads blend into the site is to place them in tables. It's a simple technique that gives you a little more control over the appearance of the ads without touching the code — something that Google strictly forbids.

In the example below, Chris Pirillo, a veteran of online marketing, skillfully dropped his AdSense into a table for a clean and attractive look that turns AdSense into a new focal point.

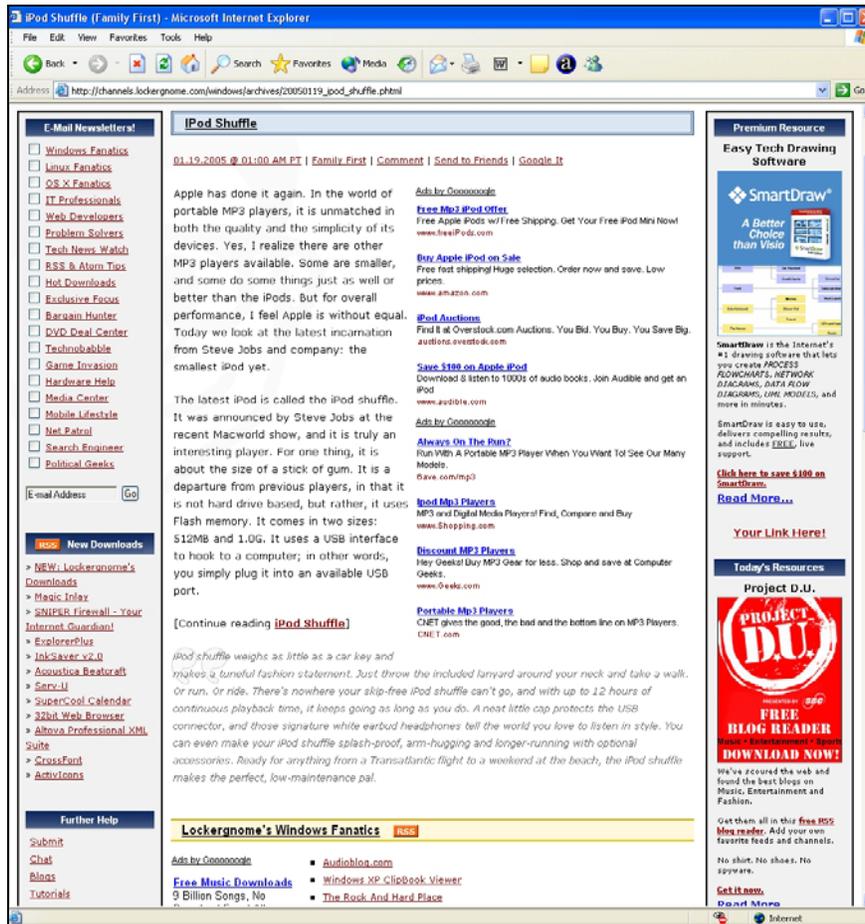


Fig. 3.4 Note how clean the tables make the ads look.

To get the same results on your Web page, you just need a simple bit of code. Dave Taylor of www.intuitive.com uses this code to create a left-aligned table containing AdSense. Just paste it where you want AdSense to appear.

For a left-aligned table with AdSense:

```
<table border="0" align="left"><tr><td>
Google adsense code goes here
</td></tr></table>
```

For a right-aligned table with AdSense:

```
<table border="0" align="right"><tr><td>
Google adsense code goes here
</td></tr></table>
```

That's very simple and very neat. In the [Socrates Wordpress theme](#) you can do this trick without any html code

3.6 Complementing Your Ads

Everything I've discussed so far has been about making your ads appear similar to the content that users will be reading. That's pretty easy. But there's an alternative strategy, which can be very powerful: bringing your users to your ads.

You have to be careful here. Google forbids you from saying to users "Look over here and click on the ads... I want the money." And that's reasonable. But with some clever design work, you can still guide your users to look in that direction.

The rule to remember here is that **elements attract eyes**. When a user loads a Web page, he's always going to look at various things on the page, not just the text. That's especially true of images, which is why one popular strategy was to place pictures related to the content of the ad right next to the ad unit.

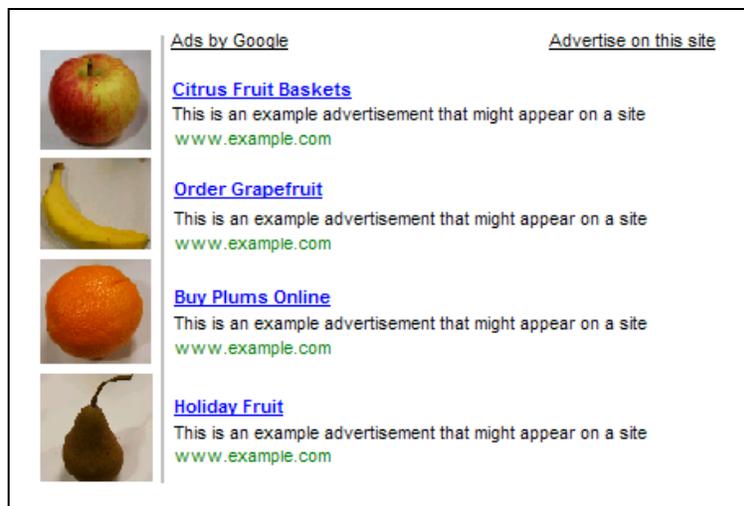


Fig. 3.5 Google says: "Don't try this at home..."

Google has now got wise to that. It's changed its terms to forbid that practice specifically.

Not surprisingly, when Google brought out that rule, it created a mild panic among publishers who rushed to change their page layouts. It didn't help that Google doesn't specify how far images should be from the ad units. The company just says that the images and the ads should not be lined up "in a way that suggests a relationship" between them.

That's vague enough to give Google plenty of latitude to ban publishers who think they're doing nothing wrong.

Fortunately, I haven't heard of anyone being banned for failing to move their ads, and I suspect that you'd get a warning letter before any action was taken.

So if you can't put related images next to ads to draw attention to them, what can you do?

I've already talked about placing a text ad unit next to an image ad unit. That's one strategy you could use.

You could also place an *unrelated* image next to an ad unit. Again, as long as there's no suggestion of a relationship between the image and the ad unit, you'll be safe.

For example, at SafetySurf.com, I put a link unit at the top of the page. It's above the side bar, which is where many people put link units, but it's also directly beneath the icon.



Fig. 3.6 One way to place an image next to an ad SafetySurf.com.

I've since changed this site over to Socrates, but image is still a great example.

People are always going to look at the icon. When they look at the icon, they'll see the ads.



Fig. 3.7 A new use for a search box.

There are all sorts of ways you can do this, but probably the best method is to first place your ads and then think about which images you can place near them.

Of course, you don't just have to use images. You could also use a "Submit" button, a "next" link or anything else that users will have to look at on your page.

A search box for example is an excellent spot. You know your users are about to look for something and click away. Why not offer them some of your own options?

There's a good chance that pulling your users' eyes in this way will increase your click-through rates.

Getting the appearance of your ads right is usually fairly simple: forget about Google's Default Palette and its other weird combinations. Make each of the five color elements match the colors that you've used on your page; make the font family and size match the font family and size of your text; and knock out the border.

Your ad units will look like your content. Users will trust them in the same way they trust your content.

And they'll be willing to click on them too.

These rules apply to AdSense for Content units, but those aren't the only AdSense units you're going to be using. You'll also want to offer a Google Search unit — and not just to pull users towards your Link Units.

4. Catch Fickle Visitors With The Google Search Box

What happens when your visitors can't find what they want on your website? They might be bored, hungry for more or they might want to refine their search. If you have a Google search box, you can make money from ads that they click as they search for somewhere else to go.

The Google search box isn't just an added convenience for your visitors. It's a valuable money-making tool! **When your users enter a search term, you'll receive a commission for any ad they click on the results page.** And because those ads will be targeted to the keywords they've entered, you can be sure that they'll be relevant.

That makes search a huge complement to your AdSense units. Only a small percentage of your users will click your ads so Search provides the opportunity to deliver some more units to people as they leave your Web page.

You can even encourage those searches. Add a simple note to the bottom of your search box saying something like: "Can't find what you're looking for? Try Google Search!"

With careful optimization, Google's search box will be more than a useful function of your website. It will be a valuable part of your ad space.

If you have Wordpress there are plugins that make this integration a snap.

4.1 Google's New Custom Search Engine

One of the things I love most about Google is that the company is always improving its services and coming up with new ways of earning money through websites.

When I first started using AdSense, I didn't see much point in using Google's Search boxes — not for making money, anyway. They just didn't bring in very much. I saw them more as an added functionality for my users.

Then Google started pushing its Custom Search Engine. The product had actually been around since 2006, and was a fun little tool that allowed publishers to create their own search engines based on Google's technology. By choosing which sites the engine drew on, you could create specialized search engines for niche topics that only took results from trusted sources.

Someone looking for information about *Star Trek*, for example, might only see articles and reviews from true fan sites, skipping any flaming, mockery or affiliate sites selling accessories.

In July 2010, Google realized the flexibility offered by its Custom Search Engine made it a much better product for publishers looking to earn from AdSense. The company phased out the old AdSense for Search, with its “Powered by Google” slogan, and required every AdSense publisher using an AdSense search box to move up to the Custom Search Engine.

That delivered some big advantages.

First, a Custom Search Engine will let you do the filtering for your users so that they don’t have to do it themselves. Not only will they be less likely to leave your site for another through your search box without leaving something in the tip jar, they might even come back to your site every time they want to search for information on your topic.

It also means that you can send users to other sites *you own* instead of watching them surf away across the Internet if they don’t click an ad. Publish more than one site on a topic — one site about photography technique, for example, and another with camera reviews — and you can keep your users on your network of related websites.

Most importantly though, you can even format your search results page to match the look of your website, invite your readers to submit sites that they find useful, and decide where on the results page to put the ads.

That’s critical. Search on Google and the results appear on a page that Google itself has designed. Use the Custom Search Box, and you can brand the results page and optimize the ads so that they benefit from the trust your users already have in your content.

That’s made a big difference.

4.2 Adding a Google Custom Search Box To Your Web Page

If there was one advantage that the old AdSense for Search had over Custom Search, it was the ease of implementation. There were no tricky decisions to make and not much choice in the way of optimization. You kept the Search button grey, picked a size that suited your website and pasted in the code.

If someone searched and clicked you got a little money as they left. If they didn’t search, or they didn’t click, you got nothing.

The Custom Search Engine offers a heap of formatting options — and those are only the ones available from within AdSense. Skip around AdSense and come in through the Custom Search Engine's own site and you can go really wild with the optimization.

Sign in to your AdSense account using the new interface, and on the left of the screen, you'll find a link marked "Content." Below it is a link marked "Search." That link opens up to two other choices: Custom search engines; and Custom channels.

The first of those two will put you in the search engine business.

You'll need to give the search engine a name — any name will do — then decide whether you want the engine to search "the entire web" or "only sites I select."

That's not as easy a choice as it sounds. Choose the entire Web, and you'll give yourself an easy time. You won't have to run around looking for sites to recommend, and you won't have to think about keywords to help target your search. But you also won't be tweaking the search to make the results relevant, and you'll be increasing the chances that the user will be served ads that are less than completely relevant too.

The problem for many new publishers though, is that the list of sites that they might want to include could be fairly small. You'll want to include your own site, of course, and there could be a handful of others that you know and respect, but you're going to need a good twenty or thirty sites at least before your search engine can deliver helpful results.

Start with just a handful to get going, and your search engine could pick up a reputation for being ineffective. Returning users who searched once and failed to find a good result because the pool of searched sites was so small will know to ignore it in the future, cutting you out of the income from their searches.

Using a Custom Search Engine properly then takes a little time and a little thought. A better option is to choose "the entire web" initially, then set aside a couple of hours to come back later, plug in the list of websites to search, add the keywords, and do all of the refinements that you can only do when you search selected sites.

That selectivity is particularly important for **keywords**. These aren't difficult but they are vital. The keywords you provide for your search engine give Google a clue about the nature of your site's topic. The example that Google likes to provide is a search for "tiger." List keywords related to animals, and the search engine will list results about big cats. List keywords related to

Macs, and Google will return results for operating systems. List keywords related to golf, and Google will return results about Tiger Woods.

You should throw in a few keywords initially to help keep your results focused but do come back and add to the list later. The more you can target your search results, *the better you'll target your ads* — and that means more clicks.

Choosing the **country** should be fairly straightforward but remember that your choice should match the location of your users rather than your own location. A publisher based in the UK whose users come from the United States, for example, would be better off picking the United States as his country or territory.

Custom Channels are important, but you'll want to create a unique channel for your search box. Just hit the "Create new custom channel" link, enter a name and you'll be able to track the clicks your search engine generates separately.

That just leaves the **Search box look and feel**; and the **Search results and ad location**

The Golden Rule that applies to AdSense units doesn't apply to the search box. You don't have to blend the search box into the page in the way that you need to do with ad units. The Search box is an element on your Web page, not an ad, so it doesn't matter if it stands out.

In fact, you want users to be able to find it.

When it comes to "look and feel" then, choose the option that best suits the style of your site. Usually, that will mean ignoring the gray and black background options, sticking with white... and scratching your head about where to put the "Google Custom Search" tag.

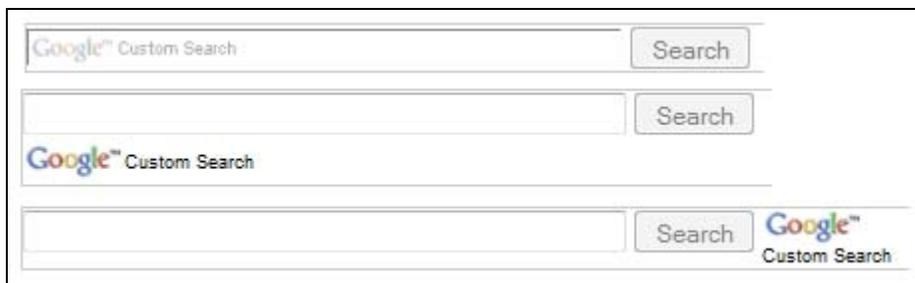


Fig. 4.1 Google's Search options. Which of these will make you rich?

Putting the tag inside the field is a pretty good default and saves you real estate space on your Web page. But it's easy to see how the title might help

a link unit to blend into a hot spot just beneath the search box. Start with the tag inside the field then, and if you're thinking of placing a link unit nearby experiment with placing the tag outside afterwards.

The width of the field should match the width of the column in which you'll be placing the search field. You want it to look nice.

The "Search results and ad location" is much tougher. You've really got two choices: stick with the default Google palette and you'll send your users to a page that looks like something from Google, giving you the kind of clickthroughs that Google satisfies itself with.

That might be fine, especially if you're offering to search the entire Web. It's not a bad place to start your testing.

But the results will depend on the behavior of your users. If you've added keywords then the results should be better targeted. That might mean better targeted ads, but it could also mean better search results — and therefore less reason to click the ads.

Use the color palette to match the search results page with the design of your own website, adding your logo to the page as well, and the results page will look like content rather than a list of results from Google. Even the ads will look like links to articles on your site. That might give them some more clicks.

The only way to know for sure which of those two approaches — a Google page of search results or a branded page of search results — will be to test them. Start by letting users search the Web and see the results on a page that looks like Google. Next, restrict the users to seeing results from sites that you've chosen. Finally, match the design of your search results page to the design of your own site. Compare the results and you'll know which option works best for your users.

The last decision you'll have to make when you put an AdSense search box on your site is where to bring up the results page. You have three choices:

- On a Google page in the same window;
- On a Google page in a new window;
- On a page on your website, inside an iframe.

Combined with a branded search results page, I've found the last option to be the best. Not only do I get a page of search results that look like they've come from my site, I also get to surround them with my own navigation — and more ads too, I want.

You'll need to tell AdSense the URL of the page on which to place the frame, the width of the results area and, most importantly, whether to put the ads top and right, top and bottom, or right.

Top and right is usually best, but once you've got the frame working on your site, those three positions can be tested easily.

You'll be given two blocks of code: one for your search box; and the other for the search results.

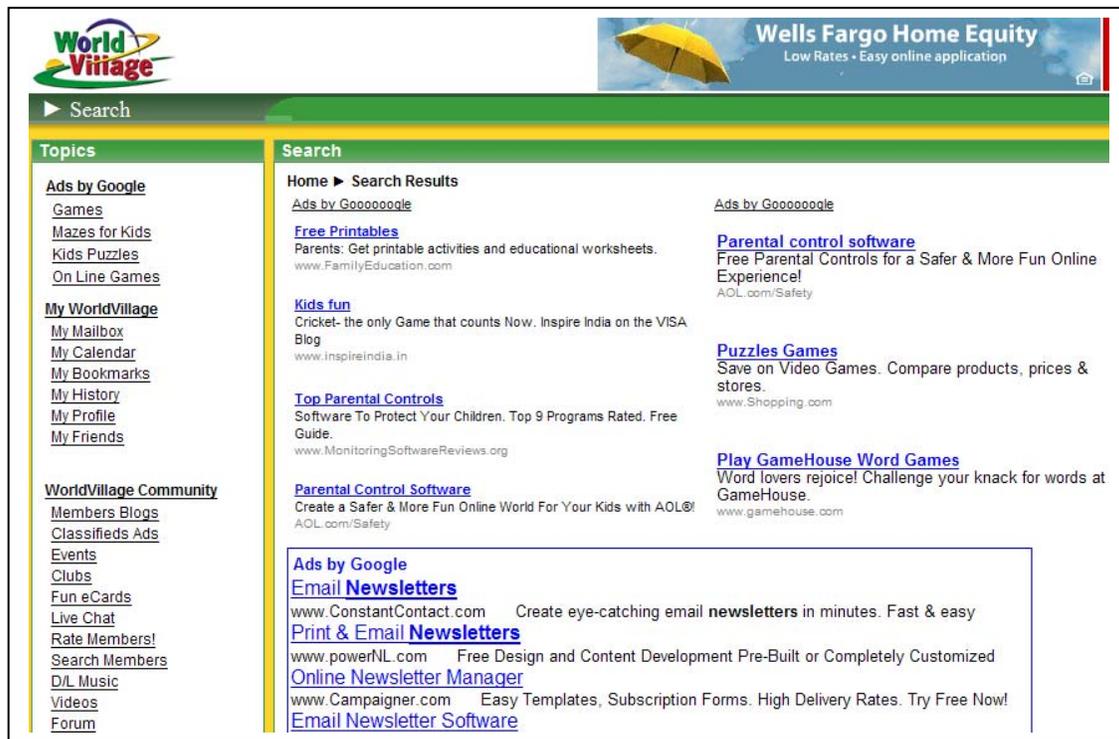


Fig. 4.2 Users had to scroll past an entire screen of ads and links to reach the search results on one design of my site WorldVillage.com.

4.3 How to Further Customize Your Custom Search Engine

Create a Custom Search Engine through the AdSense interface, and you'll be able to optimize both your search box and the search results page. For most AdSense publishers, those choices are more than enough to win extra ad clicks from users who leave a site through a search box.

But you can do even more.

The formatting and refinement choices that Google provides through AdSense are only a small portion of all the options available to Custom

Search Engine publishers. Create your own search engine not through AdSense but through the search engine's own website at www.google.com/cse/, and you'll have a lot more possibilities.

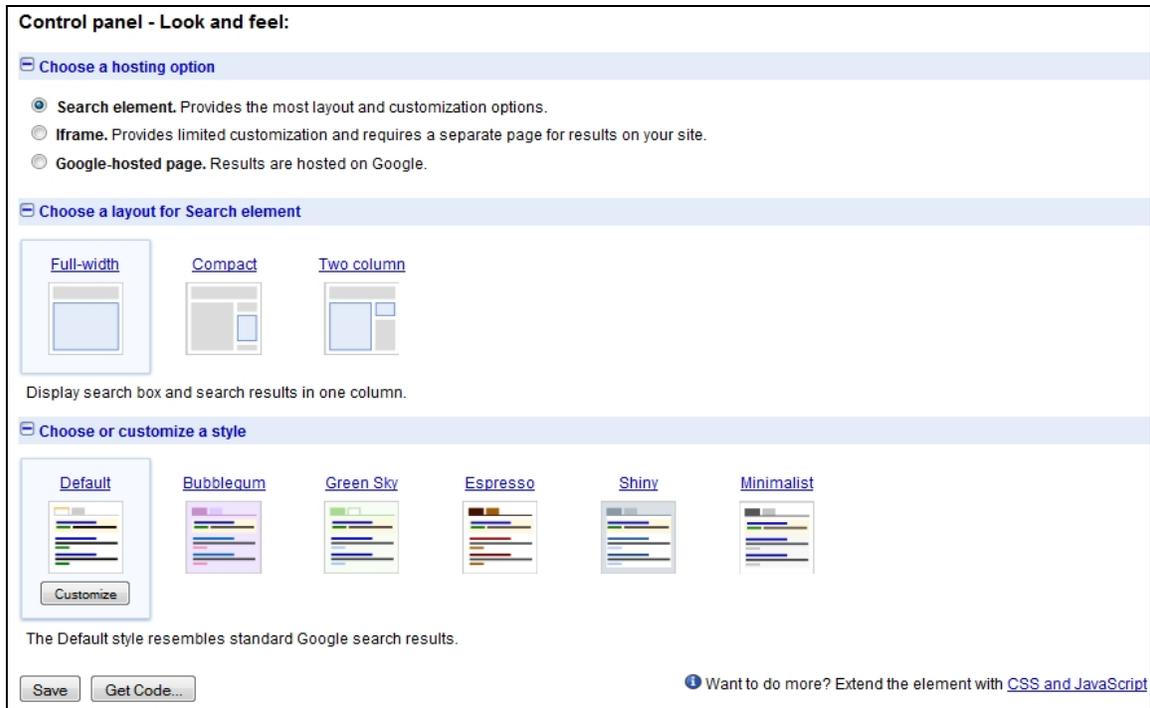


Fig. 4.3 Google's Custom Search Engine site lets publishers choose a style and customize their search engine themselves.

The first thing you'll notice is that you'll be asked whether you want to pay a fee to Google. You don't. The fee is for sites that want to use a search engine without ads. If you want to earn from AdSense units next to search results, then you don't need to pay anything. You can create the search engine you want, then earn income by connecting it to your AdSense account and pasting in the code.

If you're using a Wordpress blog, select the iframe as the hosted option and use the Google Custom Search Plugin. It's an extension designed specifically for the Google Custom Search Engine.

Don't forget to link your search engine with your AdSense account! Forget to make the link and Google will take all of the ad revenue for itself.

You'll then be offered a range of different options that affect the search engine's look and feel, including a number of different colored styles, each of which can be customized. You can even use CSS and Javascript, if you know how, to tweak the search engine element even further so that it matches your site.

The appearance of the search box itself though is less important than how the results appear. As long as users can find the search box and recognize what it does, those that want to search will do so. Whether they click an ad once they've made that search will depend on the look and layout of the results page. The control panel of the Customer Search Engine will give you plenty of options to make the results page look like a trusted part of your site.

Where the Custom Search Engine's control panel really makes a difference though is not in the appearance of the search engine but in its **refinements**, its **autocompletions** and in particular, its **promotions**.

Refinements are really an additional help for your users. They allow you to apply labels to the sites you've listed. The sites that match that label can then be searched exclusively or links to results within those sites may be placed above the general results, allowing the user to narrow his or her search.

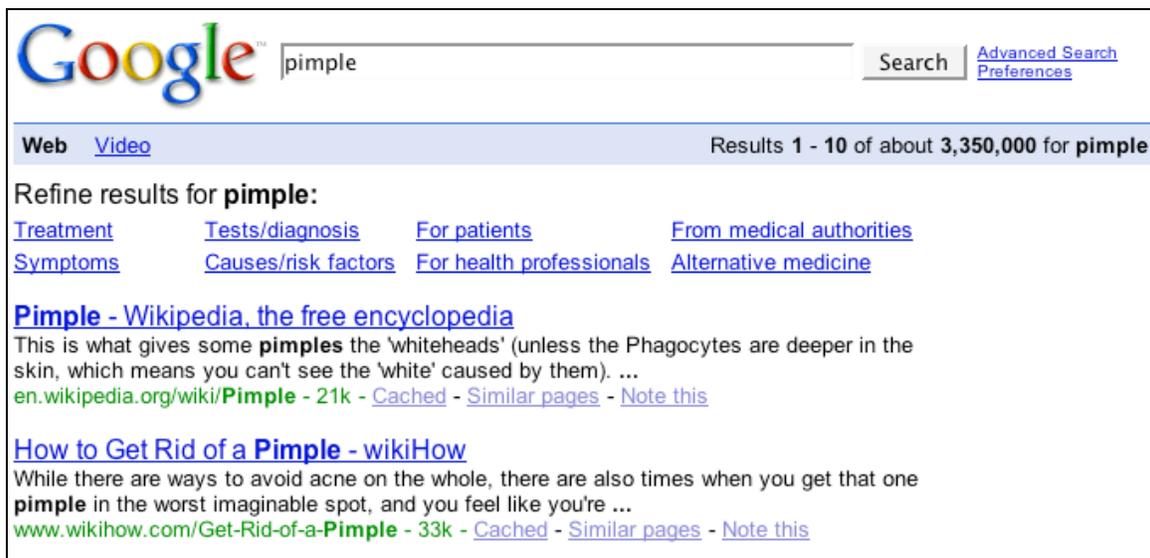


Fig. 4.4 Refining a search.

Refinements will help your users to find what they're looking for, but that might not benefit you. After all, if a user searches, finds a good article and clicks through, he's not clicking an ad. You've given the user a valuable service, but he hasn't paid you for it. Helping the user then to reach the best link by offering sets of refinements might end up costing you ad clicks.

On the other hand though, clicking a refinement link serves another page with more ads — and the more ads a user sees, the more he's likely to click.

In practice, the difference between ad clicks generated by a search engine that uses refinements and one that doesn't is likely to be fairly minimal. It might be worth starting without refinements and tracking the results, then adding half a dozen refinement labels, and comparing the revenues. You'll probably find that the choice of whether or not to add refinements has less to do with revenue and more to do with the number of sites your engine searches and the amount of time you want to invest in improving your site's search facility.

More important in terms of income is **autocompletion**.

Conduct a search on Google, and as soon as you start typing, the search box will start offering suggestions. Some of those suggestions may be way off but others can help you to enter your keyword phrase faster, or suggest phrases that you might not have considered.

As the owner of an ad-supported search engine, that can become very helpful. It means that you can influence the searches being made on your search engine.

One of the biggest challenges of using AdSense is trying to persuade AdWords to serve up higher-paying ads. There are things that you can do, but there are few direct levers that allow you to pull out ads with the highest-value clicks.

The autocompletion feature of the Custom Search Engine is one of those rare levers.

If you had a website about The Beatles, for example, you could suggest "Sergeant Pepper album cover" to anyone who searched the site for information about the album. While some users will still continue their search for general information about the record or go on to look for the lyrics to the songs or whatever information they might be searching for, some will be intrigued enough to use the suggested search.

That will generate three opportunities for revenue.

The first will be revenues from the AdSense units on the pages that appear in the search results. If your website had an article describing all the people on the Sergeant Pepper album cover, and the other sites listed in your search engine didn't have an article about the cover, then your Web page will appear high in the search results. It will take the user back to your website and serve him or her some more ads on that page.

The user though, might not be tempted by the link in the search results — or he might have already read it — but he may be tempted to click an ad on the

search results page. If the ads triggered by a search for “Sergeant Pepper album cover” have the highest eCPM of ads generated by other “Sergeant Pepper” searches then you’ll be directing more traffic towards those ads, and increasing your revenues.

And finally, you can combine an autocompleted search with a **promotion**.

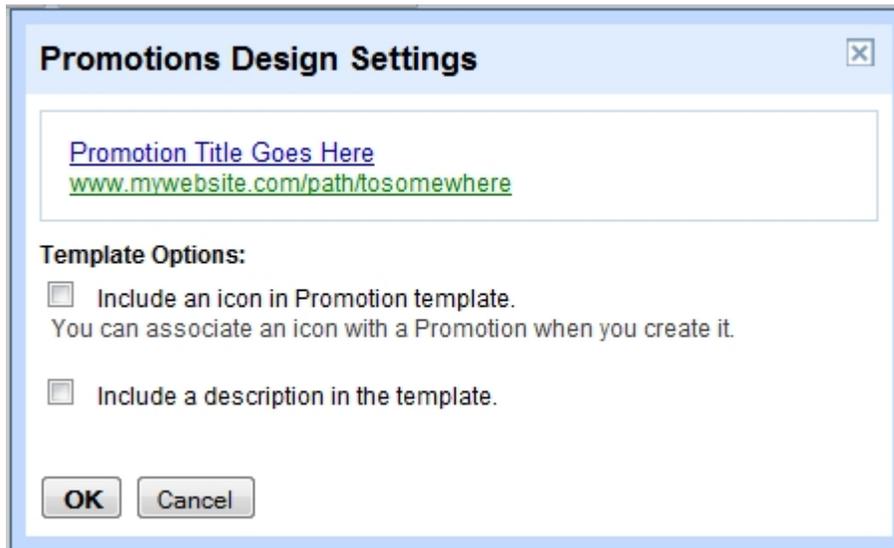


Fig. 4.5 Promotions let you place your own ads with your search results.

In addition to the ads generated automatically by Google, you can create an ad of your own. That could include an affiliate link, lead to a product sales page, or ensure that one of your pages is placed above those of other search results.

You could even sell that spot directly to advertisers for a fixed term. Enter an autocompletion that matches a promotion and you should find that you’re promotion is shown more often — and you make more sales.

4.4 To Search Or Not To Search

Putting a Google search box on your site brings advantages and disadvantages. The big plus is that all the ads the user sees are going to be relevant to their search. The user chooses the keywords so the results are going to be right in line with what they want.

The disadvantage used to be that you had no control over the keywords those users chose. You had no way to promote high-paying keywords and no influence at all over the ads those searches generated. If users were looking for subjects that generated low-paying ads, then you were giving them a way

out that led past bargain stores when you might have been better off making it harder for your users to leave your site.

With Google's Custom Search Engine, you do now have some control over the searches and even over the ads themselves.

But there's another problem. A click on an AdSense unit on your site will give you 68 percent of the revenues that that click earns. A click on an AdSense unit generated by a search will only give you 51 percent of the revenues earned. And while customizing a search engine to a basic level isn't difficult, choosing the sites you want to index, optimizing your autocompletions and refinements, and selling or selecting promotions can take time and effort.

Whether that effort is worthwhile for the lower revenues provided by AdSense search units will depend on the number of searches you receive and value of the ads they generate.

But your users will leave your site at some point anyway. Even if Search doesn't bring you huge amounts of money, you should still use it as an added revenue source and to bring extra functionality to your users.

I look at it this way. If a visitor doesn't find what they want on my site, I'd prefer that they leave some change in the tip jar on the way out the door.

Start then with a search engine customized simply, perhaps one that searched the whole Web. Then gradually refine the search engine, indexing selected sites, refining results, and adding carefully chosen promotions. Keep track of the revenues as you make each change and you'll know whether you're moving in the right direction and raising your revenues.

Once you've put in all of that of effort, you won't just have a more effective and optimized search function for your website though. You'll have something much more valuable.

The Google Custom Search Engine was created to allow publishers to create their own niche search engines — tools that would allow users to get better results faster by searching only sites selected by an expert in the field.

A search engine like that is an asset.

Once you've got it working on your asset, you could then add the code to a dedicated website and market it separately as a search engine for your field.

Your sites will benefit from the extra traffic generated by the promotions and your income will rise as users click the ads in the search results. You'll be creating two revenue streams from one project.

So we've seen all of the different kinds of AdSense for Content units. And we've seen too how your own Google search engine can turn a small space on your Web page into revenue.

We've also seen the importance of optimizing those units so that they look like an intrinsic part of your website.

But optimizing isn't just about appearance. Placement — the locations on your website on which you put those units — is a vital part of increasing your revenues.

I'll explain how to choose the best spots for your AdSense units and search boxes on your Web pages in the next chapter.

5. The Principles of Ad Placement: The Best Places to Put Your Ads?

Location is everything. The world's best ad won't deliver if it isn't visible to viewers. But after much experimentation with Google AdSense, I know that the most visible ads aren't always the most effective. In fact, they're likely to be ignored as blatant advertising.

What does work is *wise* placement.

Put ads where your content is most likely to interest and engage your visitors and you'll get the best results.

You can create several points of interest with the wise use of graphics, tables and other layout techniques.

Once you have your visitor's attention with engaging and meaningful content, they are most likely to read and click on relevant ads. And that is precisely what Google wants: "educated" clicks from real prospects, not random visits from bored readers.

In this chapter, I'm going to discuss placement: how to choose the best locations for your ad units so that they're seen by readers and clicked by people interested in their content.

5.1 The Rules of AdSense Placement

You need to put your AdSense units where your users will be looking. You need to blend them into your website so that they look like content. Those rules are clear. But Google has created different formats of ads to suit different areas of a Web page. There are also some general rules that can guide you to the smart use of the various AdSense formats:

- **Leaderboards** should go at the top of the page.
- **Squares and rectangles** should be embedded into text itself.
- **Vertical ads and buttons** should appear on the side of the page.
- **Vertical link units** should be placed next to lists of links.
- **Horizontal link units** should go at the top of the page, between blog entries or above and below navigation links.
- **Image ads** should rarely be used at all.
- **Themed ads** can be slotted in at holiday time.
- And **Video ads** should be used whenever possible.

Those are the general rules governing ad formats. They're worth knowing because they're a good place to start.

They're also worth knowing because you can't break the rules until you know what they are... and that's when the fun really begins!

5.2 The Action Takes Place Above the Fold

One general rule on the Internet is that people spend most of their time on a website "above the fold."

It's a term that comes from the days of print newspapers. (Remember them? They were popular once.) A large newspaper is folded across the middle with all of the big stories at the top and the minor stories at the bottom... below the fold. To see those stories, the reader had to flip the newspaper.

Websites work in a similar way. A browser window tends only to show a small amount of the of the content on a page. Users need to scroll to see the rest of the page.

The first thing people do when they reach a website then is to absorb as much information as possible before they start scrolling. Many of your users won't even bother scrolling. They'll glance at the opening window then click away.

All of your users will see the content above the fold. Not all of them will see the content below the fold.

So you certainly want ads at the top of the page. But you don't want *all* of your ads at the top of the page.

When Google starts doling out the ads, it lists them according to a set order. The most expensive ads come first. **The very first AdSense link that you see on your Web page then is also the most valuable link on that page.**

That's important information because you need to treat that link with respect.

You need to make sure that it's visible and that it's not competing for attention with other links and AdSense units.

If you had a stack with three or more AdSense units, all piled into the area above the fold, the cheaper ads might well steal attention away from the high-paying links and clutter up your website.

And if you have your top-earning ads crammed into a section of the page with plenty of other links on offer, then you're giving that link competition and reducing the chances that it will win a click.

Let's take a look at two sample pages, please note these sites have both changed since publication, but the lesson learned is the point.

The screenshot shows the MegaBookshop.com website. At the top left is the logo "MegaBookshop.com". To the right is a search bar with a dropdown menu set to "Only within this Category" and a "Search" button. Below the search bar is a welcome message: "Welcome to MegaBookshop.com, your complete book store with millions of titles available. View the best-sellers below, select a category from the left side, or use our search form to find the book title you want." On the left side, there is a "Featured Product" section for "The Complete Far Side 1980-1994 (2 vol set)" priced at "\$85.05". Below this is a vertical list of category links including "Arts / Photography", "Biographies / Memoirs", "Business / Investing", "Children's Books", "Computers / Internet", "Cooking, Food / Wine", "Engineering", "Entertainment", "Health, Mind / Body", "History", "Home / Garden", "Horror", "Law", "Literature / Fiction", "Medicine", "Mystery / Thrillers", "Nonfiction", "Outdoors / Nature", "Outlet", "Parenting / Families", "Professional / Technical", "Reference", "Religion / Spirituality", and "Romance". The main content area is titled "Books > Medicine" and contains three AdSense ads: "Online Book Store" (over 70 million books from 15,000 bookstores), "Bibliophile Bargain Books" (booksellers since 1978), and "Shopping On Top Stores" (books, clothing, shoes, bags, gifts). Below the ads is a "Bestselling" section with a "Sort" button. The first item is "Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders DSM-IV-TR (Text Revision) (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders)" by the American Psychiatric Association, with an Amazon price of \$64.00. The page number "Page 2000" is visible at the bottom.

Fig. 5.1 Search form, a featured product, category links and AdSense ads, all above the fold.

SafetySurf.com

Ads by Google
[Mac Monitoring Software](#)
[Keylogger Spy Software](#)
[Spytech Software](#)
[Pocket PC Software](#)
[Big Brother Software](#)

Pornography is now available to anyone with an Internet connection. Dangerous stalkers have created new ways to entice and lure children on the Internet. What can a parent do?

[Concerned parents](#) want to protect their children online by installing internet monitoring and internet filtering software. The following programs have been tested and are recommended by leading child protection organizations.

Ads by Goooooogle
[Track-It! - Official Site](#)
 Formerly Intuit/Blue Ocean Software Official Site. Free Trial Download.
www.NumaraSoftware.com

[Windows Vista Home Ed.](#)
 Monitor Your Child's Computer Use. Official Site: Find Special Offers.
www.WindowsVista.com

[Parental control software](#)
 Free Parental Controls for a Safer & More Fun Online Experience!
AOL.com/Safety

Your children are in danger! Do you want to protect them from pornography

Fig. 5.2 Not the most attractive site, but ONLY has AdSense ads above the fold.

Which of these sites' ads do you think brings a higher clickthrough rate? You guessed it. The second site has *triple* the clickthrough rate of the first site. The moral of the story? If you want to maximize your AdSense clicks, give your visitors fewer choices above the fold!

5.3 Presenting Your Ads

So when it comes to the way in which you present your ads, some general guidelines should be coming clear:

- You want at least one ad unit above the fold.
- You want the format to match the position.
- You want to blend the ad unit into the content.
- You don't want too many links competing with your most valuable AdSense link.

Anything else that you can do to subtly make your ad unit stand out, be noticed and look like content can only be a good thing.

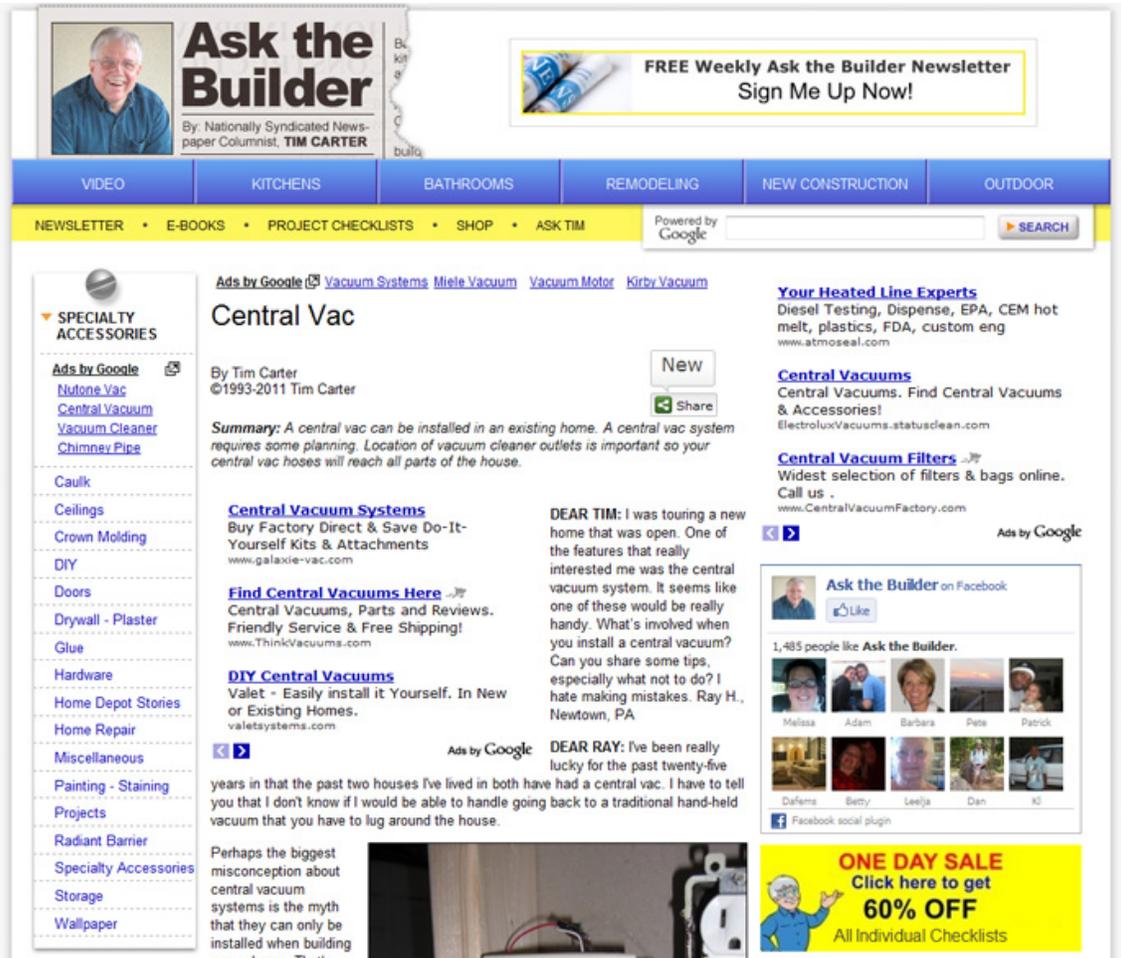


Fig. 5.3 On this page, Tim Carter employs subtle design and placement to make AdSense the center of attraction.

Take a look at the page above, for example. It's from AsktheBuilder.com

The link units fit nicely in sidebar and on top of post. Ad units within content and at top of sidebar above the fold.

5.4 Adding AdSense To Your Blog

If you're using Blogger there are preset ad units to get you started, but all themes are different so if you want to achieve custom positioning you'll need to do some research to discover how to implement your ads effectively

Blogger now lets you add AdSense to posts automatically. Click the Template tab, then the Page Elements link and finally, Edit in the Blog Posts section. You'll find a check box that lets you show ads between posts on the home page.

You'll even be able to format the ads from that same control panel, making the whole process very, very simple.

I do suggest that you only use Blogger as an interim solution, and use Wordpress.org as your blogging platform on your own hosting platform.

You will then be able to ad AdSense using AdSense plugins, inside the html of your posts or via text widgets.

If you use a premium wordpress theme like Socrates, AdSense placement is built into the theme and you simply need to copy and paste your AdSense code where prompted.

5.5 Does Location Matter For CPM Ads?

All of these design and placement factors are intended to ensure that an ad unit receives clicks. But not all of Google's ads are served on a cost-per-click basis. Occasionally, you might receive an ad that pays on a cost-per-mille basis. It won't matter then how many people click that ad as long as you bring enough people to the page to see it.

So does it matter where you put it? If you spot a CPM ad on your site, surely you can push it to the bottom of the page, and put a CPC ad in its place giving you the highest amounts of both kinds of revenue.

In a word, no. It does matter where you put the CPM ad! You can't just move it to the bottom of the page.

This is what Google has said about CPM ads, the type of ads you could receive from a placement-targeted campaign (my emphasis):

You'll earn revenue each time a CPM ad is displayed on your site. You won't earn additional revenue for clicks on these ads.

Please note that the placement of CPM ads on your pages can affect the amount an advertiser pays for that impression.

Placing your CPM ad units *below the fold*, or in an otherwise *low-impact location*, may result in *lower earnings than if the ad unit was placed in a conspicuous location*.

Google claims that CPM campaigns have to bid for space on publishers' websites in the same marketplace as CPC ads, and that therefore you would only receive a CPM ad if it's the highest paying option for that slot. You

shouldn't need to move them around to maximize your earnings from those kinds of ads.

Now, how Google is figuring out where on the page you're putting your ads beats me. The company's love of Smart Pricing (see Chapter 10) though, suggests that they could be comparing advertisers' sales results with the number of impressions and assuming that sites with high impressions and low sales have put the ads in out-of-the-way places.

Whichever method they're using, the end result is that you're still going to see higher revenues from ads in the best locations and less from the worst spots.

5.6 Going With The 'Flow'

So what are the best spots to put AdSense units? Where on the page should you put your ads?

According to Google's research, certain areas of a Web page are naturally more effective than others. Researchers have found that when people look at a website, their eyes start in the top left hand corner and then travel down the page from left to right.

Users naturally track the expected direction of content, so you need to make sure that your ads follow that content too. You need to identify the reading patterns of your visitors, know what draws their attention first and understand what makes them click.

Look at the design and layout of your webpage, identify the places that you think most of your users look — and mark each of them as a likely spot to put your ads.

Google actually offers a pretty neat tool to help you identify where your users are most likely to look. Their heat map, available through AdSense Help, sums up the options pretty well:

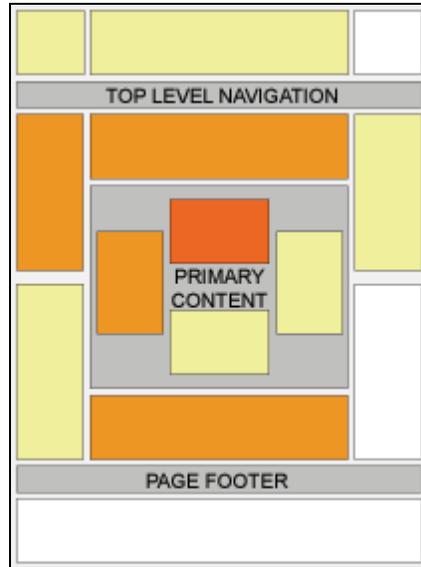


Fig. 5.4 Google's Heat Map shows an "average" site's hot spots. The darker areas are the regions where people look most frequently. But remember, no site is average. Where do your visitors look most?

All of this is true but... there are a lot of buts.

All websites are unique, no website looks like Google's heat map, and understanding the general direction in which users flow through a Web page won't help you to solve the real issue faced by AdSense publishers: how do you deal out *multiple* ad units on the same page, putting different formats in different places to maximize earnings?

Google lets you place on each page of your Web site:

- 3 ad units**
- 3 link units**
- 2 AdSense for search boxes**

That's a real bonanza. It means you have lots of chances to hook readers as Google shows unique ads in each ad unit.

In general, I recommend that you put as many AdSense units on your page as possible. The more choices you give your users, the more likely they are to click.

But there's a price for all of those units. In fact there are two prices.

The first price is the effort you're going to have to put into deciding where to place them all and testing the results. That's just part of your job as a publisher.

The other price though affects your revenues rather than your time. Put lots of ads in your site, and it starts to look ugly. The ads get in the way of the reading. They interrupt the user experience. They turn users away.

It's just like the ads on television. If there were no commercials on television, there would be no television shows. But viewers hate the commercials. They want shows without any ads at all. The networks and cable channels have to use the number, duration and timing of the ads they show to balance their need for revenues with their viewers' desire to watch entertaining content.

As an AdSense publisher, you're juggling the same two balls.

On the one hand, you'll want to make your revenues as high as possible by putting as many ads on the page as possible and making them as intrusive as possible.

On the other hand, you want readers to enjoy their experience so that they come back, tell their friends and continue to click the ads.

It's a fine balancing act, and when you get it wrong — when you put up too many ads — the cost can be expensive. You won't just lose readers, you can also generate ad blindness. Put lots of ads on your site and users are just going to ignore them. And when they ignore one unit, they're likely to ignore them all.

This can be a real a problem for small Web pages. Large pages such as those on blogs leave more room to space out ads but on a short page, all those units can quickly outweigh the content.

(One solution is to use a long home page with lots of ads but which offers only the headlines and the first paragraph or so from each article. To read more, the user has to click to a page with just that one article and fewer ad units. Because those units would be influenced by just one article, the ads would also be better targeted.)

The actual number of ads that you'll choose then will depend on the design of your site. But considering the range of different formats, you should find it pretty easy to squeeze in at least two ad units and often three.

Most sites for example, have room for a leaderboard at the top of the page (although you should also experiment with a link unit to see which of the two in that position gives you the best results).

It's also not too difficult to insert a rectangular unit into an article. You can do that with just about any article.

That's two units already.

The final unit, a button or vertical banner, could do very well in a sidebar.

Most people choose to keep the ads far apart, but you can also have some pretty dramatic effects by putting your ad units together. This isn't a strategy that's going to work for everyone, but creating a zone — at the top of your page maybe or between blog entries — can really make those ads look like content.

After all, users are used to seeing ads in single blocks. When they see a whole section of the page given over to ads, there's a good chance they'll assume it's content and give it some extra attention.

The search boxes are usually easier. The most popular place for these is one of the top corners or in the sidebar.

You could try putting the second search box at the bottom of the page if you want to give users somewhere to go when they've finished reading, but to be frank, I doubt if you'll make any more money with a search box down there than you would from the one at the top.

In general, I don't think that putting two search boxes on a page is going to give you more income than one. It's possible and you can try it. But I wouldn't expect any massive results.

Two search boxes might not make much of a difference, but I think that three link units might. They're small enough to squeeze into all sorts of spots and they look so good at the top and bottom of a list of links that you could probably have fun with three of them.

And because link units look very different to ad units, I don't think you have to worry too much about them competing for clicks — and ending up with nothing. They go very well with other ad units.

5.7 Putting It All Together

The only guaranteed way is through experimentation — to put each suitable format in each location and test to see which combinations actually produce the best income. That was how I maximized my AdSense income, and it is something that you're going to have to do to some extent too.

But it takes time, and the weeks your AdSense units spend in less than optimal positions are weeks they're not earning the most amount of money they can.

The layout and ad placements that work for one niche might not work in another.

I recommend you start with these three ad units.

- Leaderboard (728 x 90)
- Medium Rectangle (300 x 250)
- Wide Skyscraper (160 x 600)

Those are the units that have consistently delivered the best results for me over time, and you'll find some layout designs in the next section.

It's very easy to get excited and plaster your site full of ads, but you also have to think of your users.

Your goal is not only to generate clicks but for your visitors to come back to your site again and again.

5.8 Layouts for Web Page Types: Articles, Blogs and Merchant Sites

I'm going to provide you with a few more templates. Again, I can't promise that these layouts will bring you maximal income. You'll have to test them for yourself. But they're good default starting points for each of three different kinds of websites.

Articles

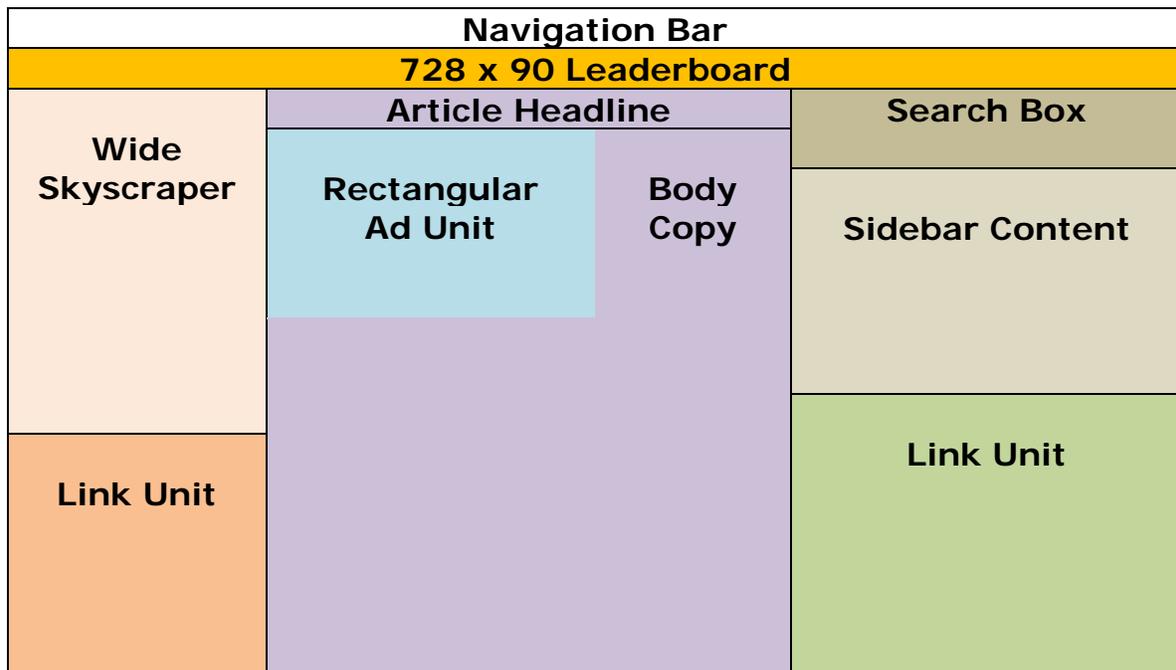


Fig. 5.6 Distributing multiple ads on an article Web page.

On a Web page that features just one article, you could place a leaderboard beneath the navigation bar, a rectangular ad unit embedded at the beginning of the article and a link unit in a list of links in the left-hand sidebar.

On the right, you could place a search box, another link list (perhaps to archives, a Twitter widget or news) followed by a link unit, and you could put a third ad inside the text.

You could also try a second search box at the bottom of the page.

Possible alternatives to try:

- Swapping the leaderboard or the second search box for a link unit;
- Replacing the link unit on the left with a vertical banner;
- Placing a half-banner at the end of the article instead of the second search box;
- Moving the link unit on the left to the top of the sidebar;

- Using a skyscraper on the right instead of a link unit;
- Or taking out some of the ads to keep users happy!

Blog Home Page

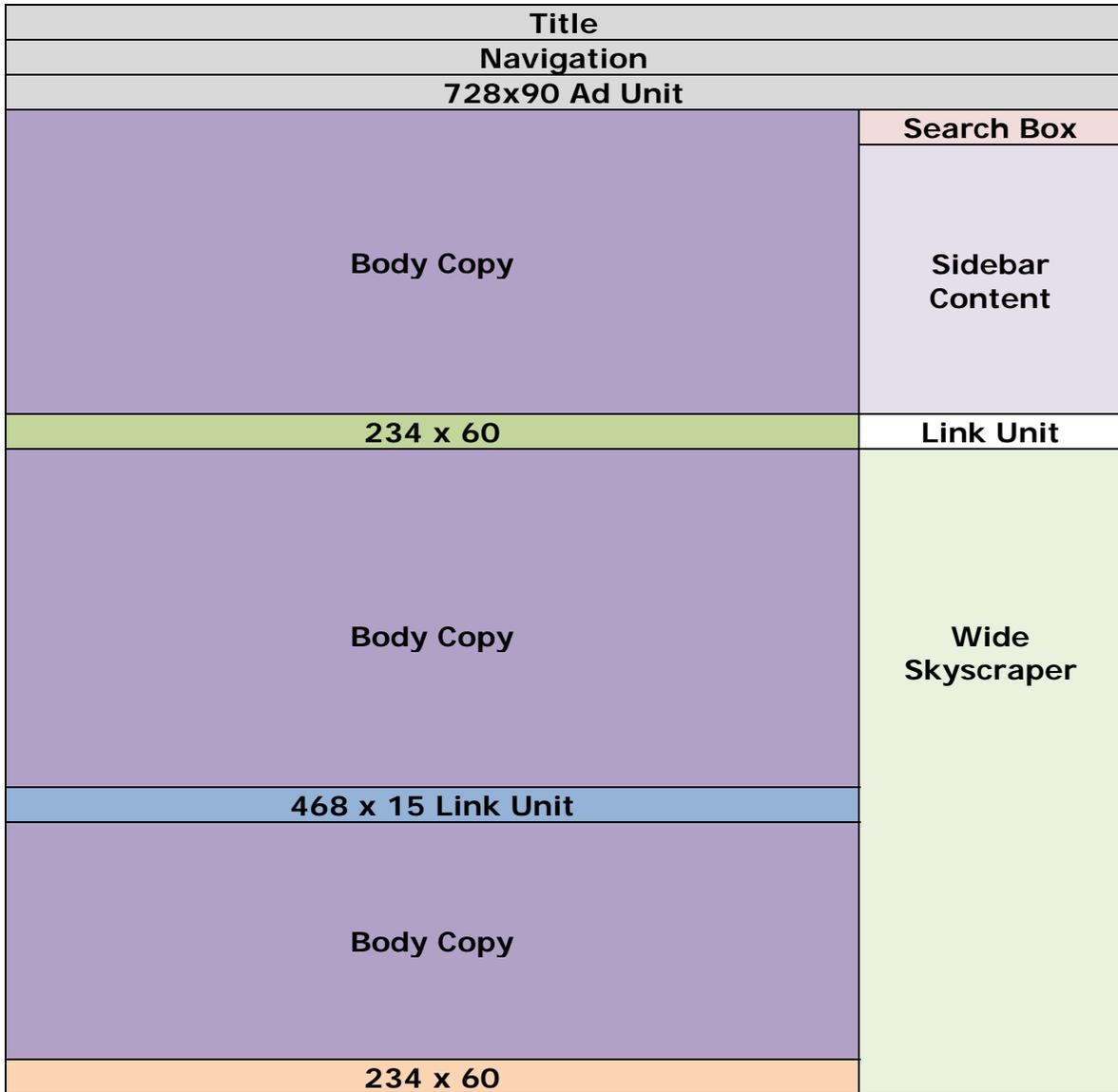


Fig. 5.7 Distributing multiple ads on a blog home page.

The best places to put ads on the home page of a blog is between the blog entries. Link units would probably be ideal here... but you've only got one of them. Instead, you could start with a half-banner or even a full banner and use a link unit in between two of the blog entries.

A search button can be placed at the top of a sidebar on the right with a skyscraper blended into the second of two lists of links, and a second link unit between them. Again the referral unit can be placed inside one of the blog posts if the teaser is long enough.

Possible alternatives to try:

- Swapping the link unit for another ad unit and using a link unit in place of the skyscraper;
- Using banners instead of half-banners;
- Embedding a rectangular ad unit into the text of the blog;
- Placing ad units next to photos in the blogs;
- Putting a referral ad in the sidebar;
- Adding an extra search box to the bottom of the right-hand sidebar.
- Switching sidebar to left side

Merchant Sites

Navigation Bar		Search Box
Link Unit	Title	
Body Copy	Image	Body Copy
	Large Rectangle	
	Image	Body Copy
	Half Banner	
	Image	Body Copy
		Skyscraper

Fig. 5.8 Distributing multiple ads on a merchant site.

There are really two approaches you can take to using AdSense on merchant sites. The first is simply to treat them in the same way as blogs: put a link at the end of each section of advertising copy and place a banner or half banner beneath it. That ad unit should blend into the text above and below. You can use a skyscraper on the edge of the screen, a link unit beneath a list of

navigation links, a search box at the top of the page and affiliate ads on the side.

Alternatively, you could use graphic affiliate ads as images and write text about the products. That would give you an instant online store!

In the sample layout above, I've placed a large rectangular ad unit directly beneath a featured product. The feature would create the most attention and users would have read past it to reach the rest of the page.

Whenever you're using AdSense on merchant sites though do keep a close eye on the ads you're serving; you don't want to advertise your competitors!

Possible alternatives to try:

- Using a text link instead one of the ad units between the marketing copy;
- Placing a large picture of a product on a page... and an ad unit right next to it;
- Using banners instead of half-banners;
- Placing a leaderboard either at the top of the page or at the bottom;
- Separating each piece of marketing copy with a large square unit.

And if you're worried you've put in too many ad units... just take one out and see if your CTR changes.

With such a huge variety of different ad formats available and an infinite type of content to place them on, publishers are always going to struggle to find the best combination of formats and placements to maximize earnings. Now at least, there's enough information available from publishers who have already done the testing to enable new publishers to start closer to the finish line.

Choose one of the default placements that have been tested by Michael Campbell or one of the layouts that I've found effective, and tweak them to focus on the best positions for your site.

As you're doing this optimization though, you'll have complete control. You'll be able to choose where to place the ad units and which units to place there.

You won't be able to choose the ads that appear in those units. But you can influence them. I'll discuss that in the next chapter.

6. Influencing Your Ads

Google controls the ads that appear on your site. In theory, you don't get to choose them at all. In practice, there are a few things that you can do to stop irrelevant ads from appearing and influence the results so that you get the ads that give you the most cash.

The more relevant the ads, the greater the chance that a user will click and you'll earn money.

The most important factor is going to be your content. Google's crawlers will check your site and serve up ads based on the keywords and the content on your pages.

Bear in mind that Google's crawlers can't read graphics or Flash or pretty much anything that isn't text. I'll talk about content in detail in Chapter 11 but for now, remember that if you want to keep your ads relevant, you've got to have the sort of page that Google can understand and use to give you the ads you want.

In this chapter, I'm going to talk about the steps you can take to influence the ads that Google serves.

But I can only talk about *influence*, not control, and the strength of that influence is always going to be limited.

One key factor that affects the ads shown, for example, is your visitors' own browsing histories. What Google calls "interest-based marketing" involves using a cookie to track the behavior of visitors across the Internet and serve them ads based on previously expressed interests. AdWords advertisers can even use a technique now called "remarketing" to show a follow-up ad to a visitor who has already clicked an ad once. For those ad links, visitor behavior is going to be more influential than keyword placement or site optimization.

But interest-based marketing is only a small part of AdWords and AdSense. There is still plenty that you can do with keywords, placement and other strategies to influence the ads that appear on your site.

6.1 Keep The Title, Directory And Headlines Relevant

How exactly Google's crawlers read pages to decide which types of ads to serve is a secret guarded about as closely as Coca Cola's special syrup

formula. One thing that does seem to have an effect though is the title of your URLs and files.

When you create your pages and view them on your computer before uploading them to the server, you should find that AdSense serves up ads related to the name of the directory that holds the page. That gives a pretty big clue to at least one of the things that Google is looking at: the name of the directory.

Actually, it's not just the name of the directory that's important. The name of the file plays a big part too.

If you have a website about wedding trains and the title of one of your pages is trains.php for example, there's a good chance that you'll get ads about Amtrak and Caltrain. That wouldn't give you many clicks. Change the name of the file to weddingtrains.php and there's a much better chance that you'll see ads related to weddings.

If you find that the ads that are appearing on your site have nothing to do with your content, the first places to look are your directory and your title. Make them more relevant to your content and you should find that you get better ads. Breaking up linked words with hyphens instead of running them together will also help to tell Google what it's looking at.

Another place to look is your headlines. Instead of using a tag for your heading, try using the <h1> tag with headings that contain your keywords. That should help them to stand out to the crawlers.

And if you don't have any headlines and sub-headline sat all, try adding some!

6.2 Finding High-Paying Keywords to Target Your Content Creation

We know that Google's crawlers search websites for keywords, then report back and tell the company what kind of ads to send to the site. If your site is about pension plans for example, then Google would spot keywords like "retirement", "401k" and "pension" in your content and deliver ads that match based on the keywords advertisers have chosen.

The better those ads match the content on your site, the more clicks you'll receive. But some keywords pay more than others. If you can identify the highest-paying keywords in your niche, you can target your content to ensure that it's delivering the most valuable ads.

Getting the right keywords on your site won't just make your ads relevant then; it will also help you to make sure that the ads you get are the ones that pay the most money.

There are all sorts of tools available on the Web that tell you how much people are prepared to pay for keywords. WordTracker is one commercial service among many, for example. But the easiest (and the cheapest) place to turn is... Google. The search giant provides a boxload of tools that lets publishers identify the best keywords to target.

You will need to use all of them. Each of Google's various tools provides part of a picture and they can be difficult to use. If you start with the clumsiest implements to begin hacking your way through the thicket of keywords, then move to more precise tools to find the low-hanging fruit, you should find that keyword targeting isn't too much of a problem.

A good place to begin isn't, in fact, a keyword tool. Google's Wonder Wheel is a visual way of presenting search results but it functions like an automatic mind map for keywords.

Enter a search term into Google as usual, then open the "More search tools" link in the left sidebar. Instead of "Standard view," choose "Wonder wheel." Search results will move to the right of the screen while the middle of the screen is replaced with a keyword surrounded by spokes leading off to other related search phrases. Clicking the keyword phrases at the end of each of those spokes pulls up more of those phrases and generates new, connected wheels.



Fig. 5.1 Google's Wonder Wheel creates keyword mindmaps.

You can do something similar by looking at Related Searches but the Wonder Wheel makes following a train of thought simple and visually memorable.

But the Wonder Wheel will only provide a list of options. It will help you to identify the most obvious keyword phrases related to your subject, but it won't tell you which is the best or the most valuable. You can get a better idea of which of those phrases are better than others by comparing them on Google Insight.

While the Wonder Wheel is intended to make searching — rather than publishing — easier, Google Insight, available at www.google.com/insights/search, is a tool aimed specifically at the Internet publishing industry. The service allows users to compare different search terms to test their relative popularity.

The results don't appear as hard data. Google Insights won't tell you how frequently the different search terms that you found on the Wonder Wheel were typed into Google. But it will tell you which of the phrases are more popular than others.

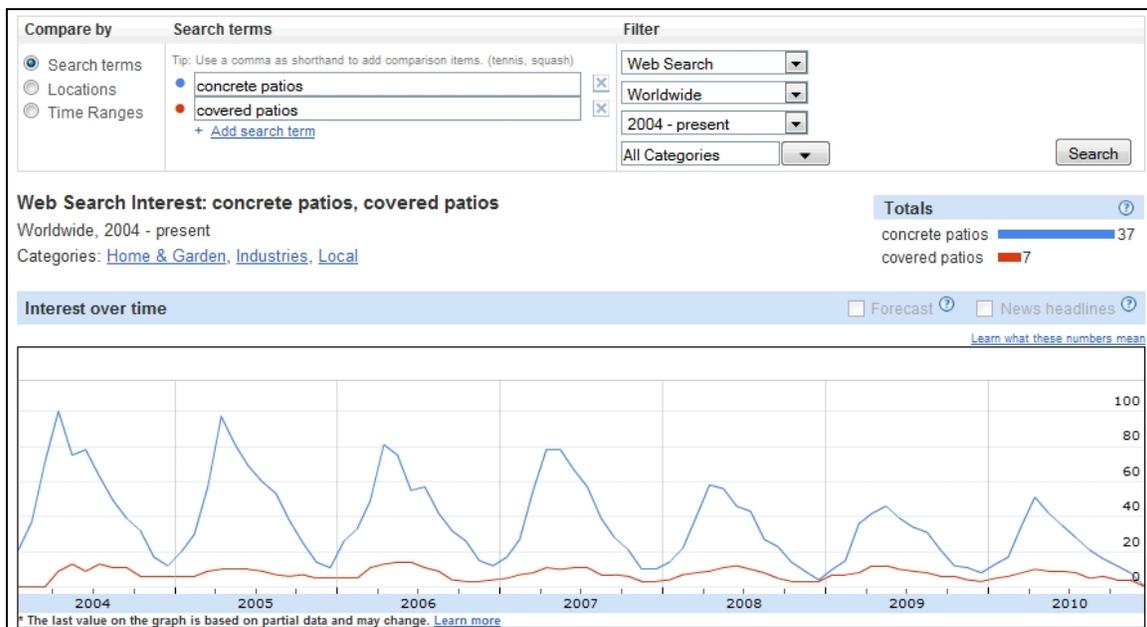


Fig. 6.2 Google Insights compares search terms on a scale from 0-100, letting you cut down the options and focus on the most popular terms.

A search for "patios" using the Google Wonder Wheel, for example, would generate a number of related keyword phrases, including "concrete patios" and "covered patios." Both of those terms could be easy subjects for posts on a blog about home improvements, bringing in AdSense units that generate cash.

Put both of them into Google Insights though, and you can see that while “covered patios” has a steady level of interest, “concrete patios” is always a more popular search term. A post about concrete patios then has a larger potential audience than a post about covered patios.

But we’re still only talking about a *potential* audience. If every other home improvement website is running articles about concrete patios to cash in on that larger audience, then any new article is going to face a great deal of competition.

The best keywords aren’t just the most popular terms then, but popular terms that generate few relevant pages and offer less competition to searchers. Create articles that target those phrases and you’ll stand a good chance of landing a significant chunk of the search traffic. Google Insights will provide a quick snapshot and give an overall view of the landscape, but the Google AdWords Keywords Tool, available from inside an AdWords account, will start to deliver the details.

You’ll still be able to compare multiple keyword phrases but now the results will show hard numbers: the number of searches *on average* for those phrases over the last twelve months.

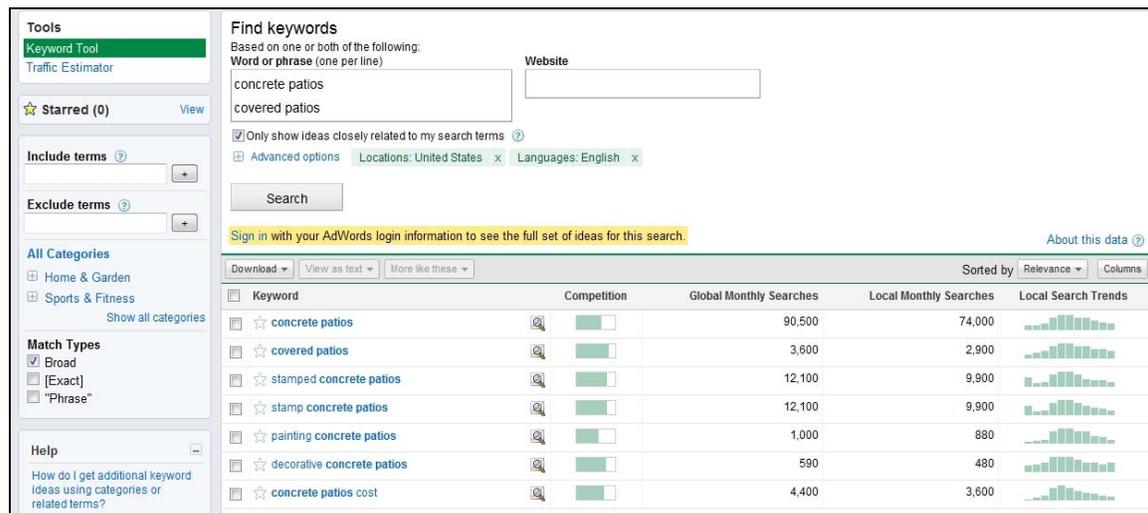


Fig. 6.3 The AdWords Keywords Tool provides some hard data but remember that it’s aimed at advertisers, not publishers.

That average is important and marks a vital difference in comparison to Google Insights. A glance at the AdWords tool reveals that “concrete patios” were searched for 90,500 times over the previous year, while “covered patios” only generated 3,600 searches over the same period, Google Insights also shows that interest in concrete patios appears to be declining.

Google Insights delivers a useful view of trends over time while the Keywords Tool shows hard figures averaged out over twelve months.

Those hard figures though don't extend to the column marked "Competition" which only appears as a partially filled bar. Nor does the bar refer to the difference between a search term and the number of articles that term might generate but to the "number of advertisers bidding on each keyword relative to all keywords across Google."

The AdWords Keywords Tool is, after all, intended to help advertisers choose keywords rather than point publishers in the direction of under-served subjects.

Fortunately, measuring the competition *for viewers* that an article might have is fairly straightforward. A quick Google search reveals 394,000 results for "covered patios" and 344,000 results for "concrete patios."

So the AdWords Tool has told us that for every search for "covered patios," about 25 searches will be made for "concrete patios" — the ratio of 3,600 to 90,500. And Google Search has told us though that for every four Web pages about covered patios, there are five about concrete patios — the ratio of 272,000 to 344,000. Either there's room for plenty more articles about concrete patios... or there are far too many pages about covered patios.

Whichever is the case, the figures so far seem to suggest avoiding covered patios: there are too few searches and too many results.

And yet, the Keyword Tool shows there's a lot of competition. According to the tool, there's "high competition" to place an ad on a page about covered patios and only "medium competition" to place an ad on a page about "concrete patios." What effect will that have on the price that could be earned for each click?

There is a place you can find out.

Click the "Columns" button above the table of the Keywords Tool and you'll be able to add the "Estimated Average CPC." That shows that *on average*, advertisers are paying \$1.34 for an ad on a page about concrete patios but \$1.93 for an ad on a page about "covered patios."

That explains why there are so many pages about a topic that receives so few searches! Other publishers have spotted the high click price, supported perhaps by more expensive products or a higher purchase rate, and created pages to target that keyword.

In fact though, those publishers may be making a bad decision. A page about concrete patios has a potential audience 25 times larger than a page about

covered patios. With 344,000 search results for 90,500 searches, each page has to compete with just 2.8 other pages for every search. Each page about covered patios, on the other hand, has to compete with 74.5 other pages. While the price earned for each click is 18 percent higher, the chances of showing the ad to a user is 26 times higher on a page about concrete patios.

The high click price doesn't compensate for the large number of pages chasing a small number of searches.

It would be great if Google had a tool that simply allowed publishers to toss in subjects and see a list of the best keywords to target. The tool would list the number of pages available for the term; the number of searches made each month; the average price per click a publisher can expect to receive; and ideally, the number of ad clicks an optimized page could hope to generate. And you expect that Google has the data to provide something that produces at least rough figures like those.

But there's a good reason it doesn't do that.

Google wants advertisers to choose their keywords carefully, with an eye on generating clicks and cash. It doesn't want publishers to choose their topics with their eyes on the money.

It wants publishers to write content that they find interesting and important.

You should be doing both. Choose a subject that interests you and create pages that target high-paying keywords. Pick topics that you can see have a potentially large amount of search traffic, little competition from other sites, and a relatively high click price.

Put all of that together with the correct math, and you'll have pages that bring in visitors who click ads that pay decent amounts of money.

6.3 The Black Hole of Keyword Density

You'll need the right keywords to get the right ads. But you might also need the right number of keywords on each page.

Different experts seem to disagree on the optimal number of times a keyword phrase should be sprinkled through a page of content, both to ensure a high ranking in search engines and to influence AdSense units. Some experts talk about figures as high as 4 or even 5 percent, which would mean mentioning the phrase as often as 25 times in a 500-word article. Even a 1 percent keyword density would require five mentions.

You can certainly find pages on the Internet that follow those formulas.. But they're almost unreadable. They were so clearly written for robots that few humans can make it to the end of the second paragraph without feeling that they're being beaten repeatedly over the head with a giant keyword cosh. Those are the sorts of sites that bring views but don't build audiences. Whether they generate clicks — and whether those clicks are worth anything — is a whole other matter.

That's why other keyword experts recommend ignoring keyword density. Instead of aiming for a set figure, they say, publishers should simply aim to write naturally. Google, they argue, is smart enough to read a page of content and figure out what it's about without having the keywords pushed in front of them.

And writing naturally can also churn up related keyword terms that both help search engine ranking and generate new ads for keywords the publisher might not have considered.

As if all that's not enough, it also seems to be the case that keyword density is counted across pages, especially for high-paying keywords. If you have a site that's generally about cars and you write a page about car rental, a higher-paying keyword, you might find that you need to produce several pages about car rental before you start picking up the ads from Avis and other car rental firms.

In general though, if you find that your ads are missing the point of your page and that your titles are all correct, then the next step would be to try mentioning your keywords more often and make sure that they're priced right. For example, talking about "fire extinguishers" is likely to get you better results than talking generally about "safety equipment." But talking naturally, without worrying about the number of times you've tossed in the keyword phrase the article is targeting, is usually a better strategy.

There are better ways to influence ads than density, such as placement and "Section Targeting."

6.4 Keyword Placement

It shouldn't really matter where you put your keywords, should it? As long as the right words are on the right page in the right numbers, that should be enough to get you relevant ads, right?

Wrong.

One of the strangest results that people have had using AdSense is that putting keywords in particular places on the page can have an effect on the ads the site receives.

The words used in the page's URL will help Google to identify the subject of the content. The titles and subtitles are important place-holders for keywords, too. And there's some evidence that mentioning the keyword at the beginning of the article — in the first few words, ideally — and at the end of the article can also play a role.

If you're going to think about placement, then your titles should certainly be one area to which you pay attention.

Metatags though aren't what they used to be, and in AdSense they're barely anything at all. There's a good chance that when it comes to deciding ad relevance, your metatags have no effect whatsoever.

That doesn't mean that your metatags are completely irrelevant when it comes to AdSense. They aren't. They're only seem to be irrelevant when it comes to serving ads; they may still play a role in search engine optimization and getting your site indexed faster but don't depend on your metatags alone to deliver the ads you want.

One place you can try dropping a keyword though is directly beneath the AdSense unit. I have found that playing with keywords in the text that appears close to the AdSense code has had an effect on the ads that appear in the unit.

With that in mind, you could play with your ads in all sorts of ways. If you had a site about camping for example, you might find that you're getting lots of ads about tents and sleeping bags, which would be fine. But if you also wanted to make sure that one or two of your ads were about Yosemite or mobile homes, then mentioning those keywords once or twice on the page directly below the AdSense unit could give you ads for sites with that sort of content too.

Remember though that you'll often find that you get ads that try to combine the main thrust of your site with the specific keywords. So if you had a site about gardening and you mentioned "cabbages" beneath the ad box, you're more likely to get ads about growing cabbages than ads for cabbage recipes.

Experimenting with the placement of the keywords could allow you to control at least one or two of the ads you receive and help keep them varied. That's definitely something to try.

6.5 Keyword Frames and Section Targeting

One of the reasons that a website isn't receiving relevant ads may be that other words on the page are confusing Google's robot. In particular, the navigation text and other non-content words could be affecting the way Google reads the page. If your links and other words take up lots of space, it could well skew your results.

A simple solution that cuts out interference from text in sidebars and on other parts of the page is to create frames. You put all of your content in your main frame and the navigation material in a separate frame. Only the "content frame" has the Google code so your keywords won't be diluted by words that aren't relevant to the ads you want to serve.

It's a simple solution but it's a little technical, it can affect the look of your website... and it isn't necessary.

The most effective way to ensure the crawlers read the keywords you want to emphasize is to use Section Targeting. By inserting a couple of lines of HTML code into your Web page, you can tell the crawler which parts of your site are the most important and ensure that you get ads relevant to that content.

The lines you want to use to emphasize particular sections of your Web page are:

```
<!-- google_ad_section_start -->
```

Section text.

```
<!-- google_ad_section_end -->
```

The rest of the page won't be ignored, but those particular lines will receive a heavier weighting. If you want to tell the crawlers to ignore particular sections, you can use these lines:

```
<!-- google_ad_section_start(weight=ignore) -->
```

Section text.

```
<!-- google_ad_section_end -->
```

You can highlight (and de-emphasize) as many or as few sections as you wish, but what you can't do is use these instructions solely to highlight keywords. So you can't put them around particular single words or phrases on your page and hope to see ads that relate only to those terms.

In fact, Google recommends that you highlight a sizeable portion of text — as much as 20 percent — for the targeting to be most effective. The result of targeting small amounts of text could be irrelevant ads, public service ads... or even a banning if you deliberately tried to bring up ads that have nothing to do with your site.

Section Targeting is probably most useful if you have a Web page that covers lots of different topics. So if you had a blog about MP3 players but had written an article about rap music for example, you could use Section Targeting to ensure that you didn't lose ads about the music players to ads about rap music. Or you could tell the crawlers to ignore your readers' comments and focus on your own entries.

And presumably, there's nothing wrong with stuffing a paragraph with keywords related to your subject and telling the crawlers to focus on that section to ensure that your ads stay targeted.

If there's one problem with Section Targeting though, it's that it can take up to two weeks before you see the results — the time it can take for the crawler to re-visit your page. So it's not a fast process and that can make it a bit of a blunt tool. But it's not blunt enough to be ignored.

6.6 The Pain of Public Service Ads and How to Avoid it

The penalty for not getting your keyword placement and density right isn't just irrelevant ads. And it's not just low-paying ads. It could also be no ads at all. If Google can't find any relevant ads to give you, it uses your space to present public service ads — links that lead to sites like the Red Cross or other good causes. Those are very nice but they don't pay you a penny. You might prefer to earn money and give it to a charity of your choice than give space on your site to a cause that Google chooses.

There are all sorts of reasons that you might spot a public service ad (PSA) on your site. Sometimes it happens immediately after you sign up because the page hasn't yet been indexed. It can happen if you've chosen only to receive an image or video ad and none are available for the subject of your page. It can happen too if the page uses a "session ID," a special tag used frequently on merchant sites. It can happen if the robot is asked for a password before it can reach that page. In short, it happens whenever Google can't figure out what sort of ads to serve.

You have to ensure that Google always knows what sort of ads to serve — and you have to ensure that you have an alternative to serving PSAs.

Google provides a number of options. The first is to place a block of color instead of the ad unit. Make the block the same color as the background color, and there will just be a big space where the ad should be. You can even have that space collapse if you want. But both of these seem like a waste to me. That space is valuable. If something goes wrong with your contextualization, you want a back-up that does something, a replacement that can earn you money.

The other option is to specify an alternate URL. Create a new Web page, place a block of content on that page that fits the size of the ad unit, and enter the URL into the "backup ads" section of your AdSense interface.

You'd need to create one page for each format of ad you plan to use on your site.

For my site WorldVillage.com, for example, I once created a series of links that look like AdSense units but which lead to other sites in my publishing network.

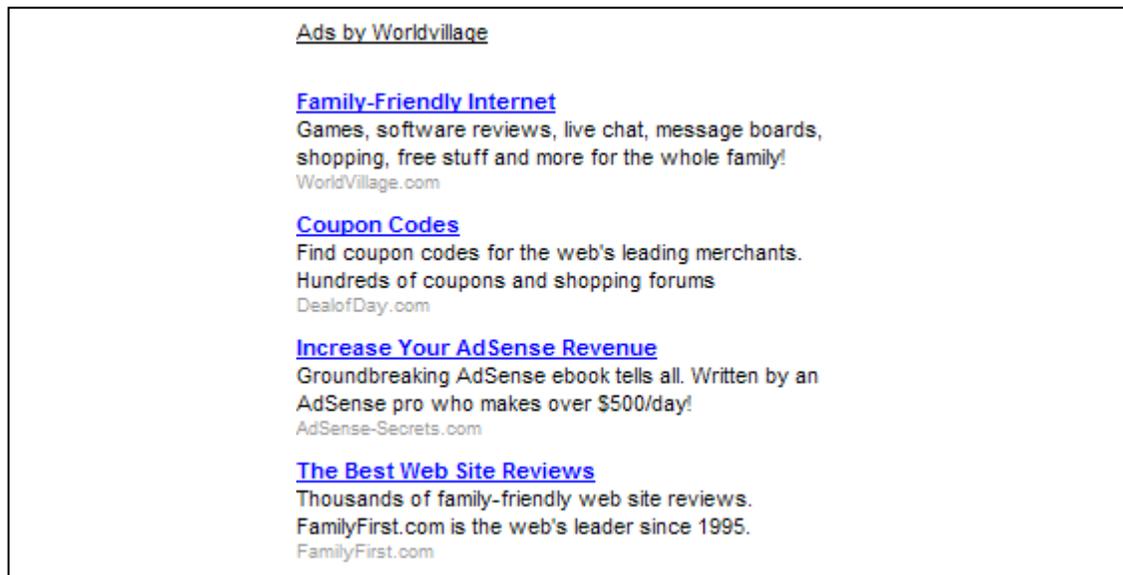


Fig. 6.4 My own version of AdSense. Just don't run it on the same page as real AdSense ads or Google will be unhappy with you.

Just remember that Google doesn't like it when publishers use ad units that mimic AdSense ads on the same page as live AdSense ads. That's why I only use this format for PSA replacement.

But there are plenty of other options.

For example, you could use this space to deliver image-based ads that come from your server. For offers that pay per action (clicks or signups), I like to use Hydragroup.com. You can signup and find new ways to monetize your unused ad space.

Probably the best way to turn that wasted space into revenue though is to place a Chitika ad there. I talk about Chitika later in this book, in the chapter about other ad systems. The company has some fantastic looking ad units, and they can be used in conjunction with AdSense.

Having a Chitika ad automatically replace a PSA ad is, I feel, the perfect solution until you manage to sort out the problem with your AdSense unit.

The principle is the same as the AdSense-like ad units I used to use: create a blank page on your site, add your Chitika code and use the URL as your alternate AdSense URL

6.7 Blocking and Reviewing Ads

Another useful way to control the ads you see on your site is to block ads you don't want.

Google has been making some pretty big changes to the way that publishers can block ads from appearing on their sites, and some of those changes are still being rolled out and tested.

The established tool is the Competitive Ad Filter. Google lets you enter up to 500 URLs that you can block certain ads from appearing on your site. You can enter a specific page if you're prepared to show other pages from the same domain, or you can add the domain itself and stop anything from that site from showing on your website. Blocked ads are banned from your site within thirty minutes.

If you have a merchant site that also runs AdSense, then you're likely to find yourself using this filter to make sure that you're not sending leads to competitors. For sites that rely on advertising though, blocking any ad will reduce the competition for a spot on a page, possibly lowering prices overall. Ad-supported

Inviting The Robot to Review Your Keywords

The changes you make to your keywords won't have any effect until Google's robot stops by and re-indexes your page.

To get the robot to stop by earlier, reload the page in your browser, and then again a few minutes later. Do not click on any of the ads just reload and wait a few minutes between attempts.

This doesn't always work but with a bit of luck, you should find that you receive new ads within a few minutes.

sites will need a good reason to block an ad from a specific advertiser.

That reason could come in the form of ads for “get rich quick” schemes, “work from home” scams and other forms of advertising that just look like AdSense spam. Ads like these don’t turn up too often and while they can deliver clicks even when they do turn up, you might not want to advertise a service on your page that you feel promises something it can’t deliver.

Blocking URLs is only going to have a limited effect against ads like these because the domains change so quickly. Block one and another will pop up to take its place. You’ll soon burn through your 500 URL limit.

A better option then might be Category Filtering, which lets publishers block entire *categories* of ads including those for ringtones, weight loss products, drugs and supplements, get rich quick schemes, anything to do with sex, and more. You can even see the percentage of impressions those categories contribute and the percentage of recent earnings so you’ll know how much they contribute. (Bear in mind though that a removed category will be replaced by other ads so you won’t lose all of that income.)

In addition to being able to block those “sensitive categories” Google also planning to allow publishers to block as many as 50 from 170 sub-categories of different types.

It looks like an ideal solution to the problem of AdSense spam and a way to stop ads from veering off-subject but it’s something that Google is taking its time to distribute. At the moment, it’s only available as part of the Ad Review Center, a part of the control panel that allows publishers to check Placement Targeted ads.

As we’ll see in the next section, Placement Targeting allows advertisers to place an ad directly on your site — they can even choose the ad unit on which to put the ad.

When you’re being targeted that directly by an advertiser, you might well want to know who’s interested in you and what they want to put on your site.

The Ad Review Center provides a way to hold the ads for 24 hours while you decide whether or not to accept them.

Even if you don’t have access to the Ad Review Center though, you can still block ads one more way: by refusing to accept certain ad networks.

Google accepts bids for your ad space from other advertising companies. It’s a system run through DoubleClick, a firm that Google bought in 2007 for over \$3 billion. Without knowing which ads the giant list of “Google certified

ad networks” are trying to put on your site though, there seems little point in trying stop specific networks.

In general then, despite the changes being rolled out to publishers, most AdSense users are likely to find themselves still using URL filters to keep competitors away from their merchant sites and play whack-a-mole with spam-like advertisers promoting products that no one wants. As the Ad Review Center expands, publishers of large, successful sites — the ones that are most likely to win Placement Targeted ads — will be able to check the ads that advertisers want to deliver to them specifically.

And, more importantly, everyone will soon be able to bat away both spammers and irrelevant advertisers in one hit.

Until then though, publishers are stuck with refining their ads with keywords, content and placement.

6.8 An Introduction to Placement Targeting

Most of the ads that appear on your site will have been placed there as a result of Google’s contextualization program. AdSense figures out what your site’s about and serves relevant ads. That’s how the system works.

Some of the ads though might appear as a result of Placement Targeting.

Instead of crossing their fingers and hoping that their ads appear on good sites, advertisers are able to choose the sites on which they place their ads. They can even choose the *Channels* on which to place their ads.

Channels are a vital part of smart AdSense use, which is why I discuss them in detail in the next chapter. Even though it’s unlikely that your site will be targeted until it’s established in your niche, you should know about Placement

Targeting *before* you begin creating your Channels. Because advertisers will be using the name of your Channels to choose where to place the ads, it’s worth remembering that those names are public and should be useful to others as well as to yourself.



Fig. 6.5 You can’t miss that! An expanded text ad.

The idea of Placement Targeting is to give advertisers control over where their ads appear. If they know of a website that suits their topic, they can ask that their ads enter the bidding for that site and they can use the Channels to choose the location of those ads.

Create a Channel for all ads embedded in text, for example, and advertisers can ensure that their ads are always right where users are going to be looking.

That's important because Placement Targeted ads can be paid on a cost-per-mille basis, which is also why they can look different to regular AdSense units.

Take a look at the ad format samples and you'll see a bunch of squares and rectangles filled with ads. Most of those ad units will contain more than one ad. On those units that do contain just the one ad, like the button or the half-banner, the ad will fill the space neatly and look pretty subtle.

Placement Targeted ads might contain just one giant ad, written in super-sized text.

The problem is that ads like these scream "Don't click me!" All the effort you'll have put into influencing the right ads for your site, testing to see which formats work best and calculating which will give you the most clicks will have gone right out of the window.

You've prepared your site to serve multiple ads that look like content, and instead you're handing out a single ad that looks like an ad.

I'm generally skeptical that showing one ad is going to bring me more revenues than showing several ads. But I'm prepared to give AdSense the benefit of the doubt.

If I see that Google is giving me one ad, even if it's Placement Targeted, I'll want to compare the results for that ad to the previous results that I've had serving multiple ads in the same unit. If I find that my revenues have dropped I can block that ad using filters to remove that advertiser's URL or use the Review Center to disapprove that advertiser.

Most publishers do find that Placement Targeted ads — even those that pay on a CPM basis — pay better, especially sites with high traffic rates. After all, you're getting paid for every visitor who comes to your site rather than just those that click, so all you have to do to increase your revenue is increase your traffic. As long as each impression pays more than you're paying for the traffic, you're going to be making a profit. That should be easy to calculate.

The biggest problem with Placement Targeted CPM campaigns is not lower revenues; it's that you've got no idea how long they're going to last. That makes it difficult for you to take advantage of them. If you knew, for example, that you were going to get paid per impression for the next two weeks, then you'd want to buy in as much traffic as possible for that period, provided that you were paying less than you were earning.

And because you wouldn't care about CTR for those CPM campaigns, You could also lay off the optimization and focus on making your site more attractive to users so that they'll come back when that unit turns back into a CPC ad.

But you can't tell when your site is going to be used for a CPM campaign and you can't tell how long it's going to last either. That means there's little point in making major changes to your optimization; you might have to rebuild it the next day.

The best strategy then when you spot a placement-targeted ad on your site is to keep a close eye on the cash flows. Buy in more traffic if you can do it profitably but for the most part, just enjoy the extra income!

Receiving a Placement Targeted ad then is usually a reason to celebrate. But it's also a time to ask whether you shouldn't be cutting out the middle man. If an advertiser wants to place an advertisement on your site, they shouldn't need to go through Google — which will take a large cut for itself — to do it. They should be able to come directly to you.

In the past, AdSense gave publishers the chance to place an "Advertise on this site" link next to their ads. The link led advertisers to a landing page that they could stuff with information about their users. Google no longer offers this option but it doesn't mean that you shouldn't do it anyway.

Place the link at the bottom of the page, so that it's not in the way, and invite advertisers to submit their own ads. You'll need a landing page that offers information about your users so that advertisers will know what they're getting — but most importantly, you'll need to know how much you're currently receiving on average per click or per thousand impressions.

There's not much point in accepting ads that pay less than those that Google is giving you!

Instead of requiring placement advertisers to go through Google, they can talk to you directly saving themselves a commission and giving you more revenue.

6.9 Keeping Your Blog Content Targeted

Writing personal blogs isn't exactly effortless, but it is something a lot of people do for fun and because they're updated regularly, Google loves them. If you're going to write a blog anyway, then you should certainly be making money out of it.

The biggest challenge when writing a blog is getting ads that give you good revenues. Because your entries are going to be talking about all sorts of different things, there's a chance that you're going to get ads on all sorts of random topics.

That's fine, unless your ads are barely giving you enough revenue to pay for the blog.

In Blogger for example, if you find that you're getting lots of ads related to "blogs" for example, instead of what you're blogging about, you can try changing the meta name in your template. Delete the <meta name="description" content="Your keywords" /> tag and replace it with your own keywords and description:

```
<meta name="robots" content="index, follow" />
<meta name="keywords" content="Your keywords" />
<meta name="description" content="Keyword-rich description" />
```

Make sure that your blog has plenty of keywords and use lots of headlines containing key phrases, repeating them throughout the blog.

Above all though, make sure that your blog has plenty of text. It might be fun to stuff your pages with pictures of friends, family and pets but Google can't read them and you'll end up with public service ads instead of revenue.

6.10 Previewing Your Ads

The problem with tweaking keywords to influence your ads is that it can take a while before you can see the results. The Google Ads Preview tool at googleadspreview.blogspot.com lets you see the ads your site is likely to receive right away.

Google has its own tool for this, but this program by Digital Inspiration is much better. It lets you compare different programs and formats side by side.

When you're just starting out, that's not really important. But when you're combining AdSense with Chitika, for example, it's useful to see what effect a single change can have across the different ads you're displaying.

And here's the real kicker: the Google AdSense Sandbox, which you can reach from the Preview Tool also lets you toss in keywords and see which ads turn up.

Try it! Surf over to the site, toss in a keyword relevant to your site and see what ads you're likely to receive.

Note that I said which ads you're likely to receive, not which ads you *will* receive.

That's an important difference. Google uses all sorts of criteria to decide which ads you're going to get. I'm not sure which criteria this preview tool uses to choose ads for keywords but I can't see it emulating Google completely.

Use the tool to preview the ads on your site and you're on pretty firm ground. You'll get a great impression of the ads you're likely to receive and you can either match your content to it or change your content to bring up some different ads.

Use it to preview the ads you're likely to show with a certain keyword and you've got a guide to where those keywords can take you.

Either way, you've got a very useful tool.

Google gives you limited control over the ads you receive but you should make full use of the control you do have. The good news is that if you do get it wrong, you don't have to worry too much any more. Some ad units now come with "next" and "previous" buttons that let users scroll through additional ads. It's a change that Google implemented after months of testing which suggests that it improved clickthroughs but it's hard to say by how much or what effect it's likely to have. I haven't noticed a dramatic rise in earnings since the system was launched across the network.

It's likely that these buttons are used by the sorts of users who are keenest on clicking ads. Now some of them can find better ads... and without you having to play with keywords.

Even if you don't want to play with keywords and trust Google to deliver the ads you want, you'll still have to check your stats. That's what I'm going to discuss in the next chapter.

7. FOLLOWING THE FIGURES — UNDERSTANDING YOUR ADSENSE STATS

I talk a lot in this book about testing and experimenting. It's the only way to know for sure whether you've managed to optimize your website.

AdSense publishers who have achieved success with their sites can tell you what they did. They can explain the principles that they applied as they set about creating their online business. But they can't do it for you, and they can't tell which formats in which positions, targeting which keywords would suit *your* site best.

Only you can do that — and that means experimenting with different layouts and tracking the results.

Every time you make any sort of change to your ads, you must track the results.

That can be fairly complex. Google's Performance Reports, the stats that it shows when you log into your AdSense account, deliver a stack of different figures and data. The main columns show Page Views, Clicks, Page CTR, CPC, Page RPM and Estimated Earnings.

Most of those terms are fairly straightforward. "RPM" is what publishers used to call eCPM — "Effective Cost Per Mille." The new term stands for Revenues Per Mille (Mille is Latin for thousand) but measures the same thing: the amount earned for every thousand page views. It's calculated by dividing estimated earnings by the number of views and multiplying by 1,000. Google explains that if you had made \$0.15 from 25 page views, then your RPM would be:

$$(\$0.15 / 25) * 1000 = \$6$$

In other words, every time your site served 1,000 pages, you'd make six bucks.

CPC is the average you're earning for each click. And "Estimated Earnings" show the amount AdSense believes that you've earned for those clicks overall. That amount can change a little though, which it's only "estimated." At the end of every month, the system checks the clicks for accuracy, makes sure you didn't click your own ads by mistake and makes any adjustments necessary. Usually, the changes are fairly minimal.

You can look at a bunch of the different reports Google supplies broken down in different ways.

The most general is a Product report. This breaks down your data according to the different products that Google offers. You'll be able to see how much you're earning from AdSense for Content, how much from AdSense for Search, how much from AdSense for Mobile, etc.

You can also break your account down by day, week or month, view results by ad type, by ad size, by bid type (CPC ads or CPM ads), targeting types (contextual ads versus Placement Targeted ads), and even for individual ad units.

Does all of that sound confusing? Performance Reports aren't just vital they're also confusing enough to be misleading.

Consider this example:

Joe is a publisher with a great website about "How to make Beer at Home". It's doing well on AdSense, but not well enough. He looks at his report for one week and finds something like this:

Date	Page Views	Clicks	Page CTR	RPM	Your earnings
3/2/11	40930 15	16	3.7%	5.62	229.92
3/3/11	40358 15	74	3.9%	6.59	265.99
3/4/11	38962 15	17	3.9%	6.11	238.01
3/5/11	33563 13	81	4.1%	6.38	214.21
3/6/11	32978 13	25	4.0%	6.76	223.81
3/7/11	28207 12	94	4.6%	7.52	212.01
3/8/11	27322 12	51	4.6%	7.47	204.20

Joe is pretty happy with his CTR but wonders if he can raise his RPM and in the process, lift his earnings. So he looks up high-priced keywords related to his subject, and works the term "beer cans" into his content.

A few days later he logs into the stats on his AdSense account and finds that that change has actually *hurt* his income:

Date	Page Views	Clicks	Page CTR	Page eCPM	Your earnings
3/9/11	32744 98	5	3.0%	4.21	137.95
3/10/11	32286 10	23	3.2%	4.94	159.59
3/11/11	30954 98	6	3.2%	4.59	142.08
3/12/11	26850 89	8	3.3%	4.78	128.52

3/13/11	26382 86	1	3.3%	5.08	134.28
3/14/11	22566 84	1	3.7%	5.63	127.20
3/15/11	21858 81	3	3.7%	5.60	122.52

Joe has not only disappointed a lot of collectors who come looking for beer cans — his site contains lots of keywords but little in the way of good content — he has also discouraged visits from people who want to make beer at home.

His search ranking has gone down, making his website harder for people to find him and lowering his impressions. It's also hurt his earnings per click as the people who visit the site leave faster. What's worse is that he's also risked his AdSense standing!

That doesn't mean that it's a bad idea to optimize your website for AdSense or that you should stick with whatever default options that Google give you.

It means you have to optimize properly, know how to read the figures, know which figures to read — and know what to do with them once you've read them.

There is a simple, step-by-step process to optimize your website for high-paying search terms. And this method is almost fool-proof! It all comes down to tracking.

7.1 How To Track With Channels

Product reports provide the most general picture of your AdSense performance. But you can also show the data by URL channels and by custom channels.

Channels remind me of spy movies in which a smart chip is planted in the arm of a super sleuth, making it easier to track his activities or whereabouts. On AdSense, they're just lines of code added to the AdSense code that convey information about what exactly is happening to that unit.

AdSense now hands you 200 such chips. Use them to track ads on specific domain names or to group ads according to specific ad formats, keywords, their location on the page or any other factor that might impact their effectiveness, based on the type of website you have.

Google tells you many things about each channel, including the ad impressions, clickthroughs and earnings data. You can use the channel reports to find out which channels are making you the most money — and how to increase your earnings for other channels.

You can even use channels to bring in placement targeted ads.

7.2 How To Create A URL Channel

Of the two kinds of channels you can create with AdSense, URL channels track clicks across your site's pages. You can do this by entering four different kinds of URL in the "create new channel" box. Each type of channel gives you information of different accuracy:

example.com tracks all the pages in your site and gives a general picture of what your site is doing;

subdomain.example.com tracks all the pages in one particular subdomain;

subdomain.example.com/widgets tracks all the pages in a specific directory;

and **subdomain.example.com/page.html** tracks the clicks on one specific page.

That's a huge range of choices, from an overview of a site that might have hundreds of pages through groups of pages that concern particular subjects to the clicks you're getting on just one page.

So if you had three sites, one about custom cars, one about custom bikes and one about speedboats, you would create a general channel for each site.

You should always create a channel for each one of your sites.

That will let you see not just how much money you're making overall, but how much money each site is making. You're not going to get too far without that sort of information!

Now, let's say that the custom car site had tabs for American cars, European cars, Japanese cars and classic cars. Each tab is a subdomain and you could create a channel for each subdomain too. Now you could see which topic is making the most money.

And if you discussed one car on each page, you could also create channels for the individual pages and see which cars are the most popular and deliver the highest earning clicks.

Sounds good, right?

And it's now very easy to do.

Back in the bad old days, Google required you to manually change AdSense tags for each block of units you wanted to track. Many AdSense publishers complained about these pesky old channels until Google launched the URL Channels to make life easier.

On the old interface all you have to do is sign in and click the tab marked "AdSense Setup" followed by the "Channels" link.

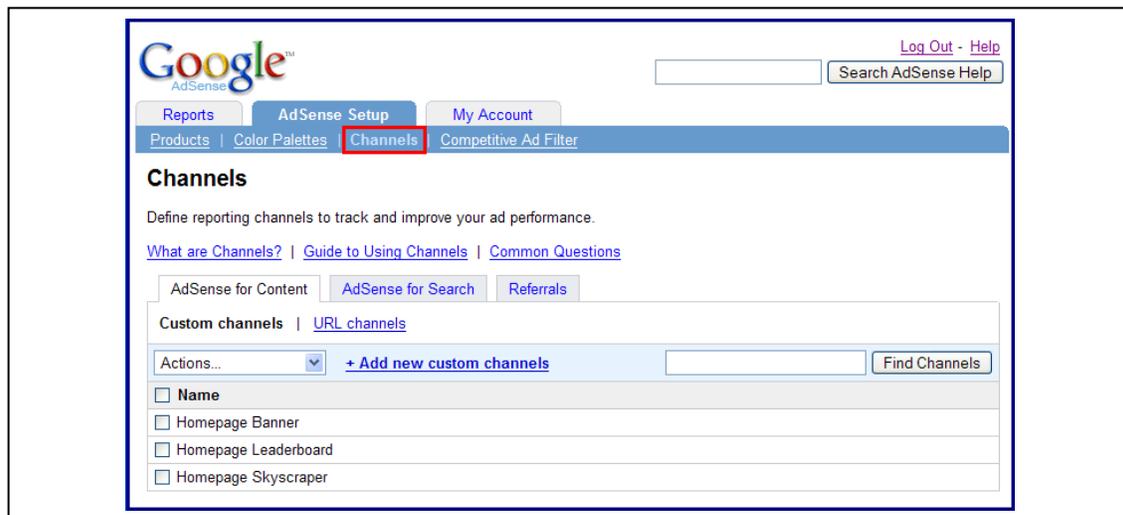


Fig. 7.1 Spot the Channels

The next step is to use the link marked "URL Channels" and enter the URLs you want to track.

That's it! You don't have to do anything else. Google will start tracking the URLs you've added automatically.

On the new interface, URL channels are added from the Performance Reports. Click the "URL Channels" link on the left, then the "Add URLs to track" button at the bottom of the screen. That's pretty simple too.

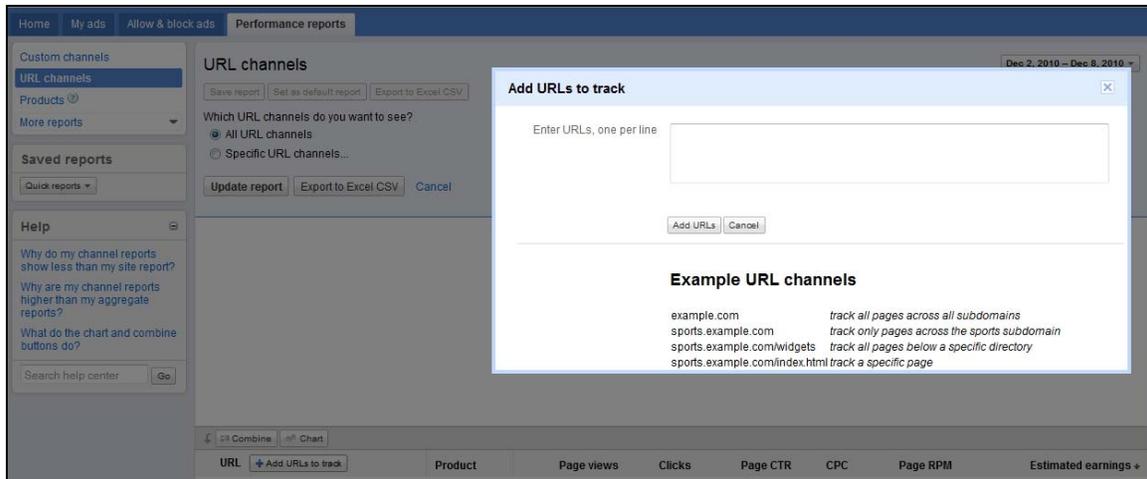


Fig. 6.2 Creating URL Channels in the new interface.

So apart from creating URL Channels for each of your sites, which of the other URL Channels should you create?

As far as I'm concerned, you can't have too much information. Major areas should certainly be covered and if you can go as far as tracking each page without going over the 200 channel limit, so much the better. It's certainly worth tracking a few individual pages to make sure that the revenues are spread out across different parts of the site.

If you find that one page is making lots of money and another is making none, you'll want to know the reason why.

7.3 How To Create A Custom Channel

The URL Channels are especially useful if you have several websites or different topics discussed on different sections of your website, and you have a general idea of the formats, colors, alignment etc. that works best for you.

But you still need Custom Channels if you want to track ads across different domains based on placement, color, keyword or any other factor not included in the Performance Report.

For instance, if I want to track left-aligned ads across all my websites (sites with different domain names), I need to group them together into a single channel and manually change the channel code for each page. On the old interface, which many publishers are still using, it looks like this.

First, I name the new channel.

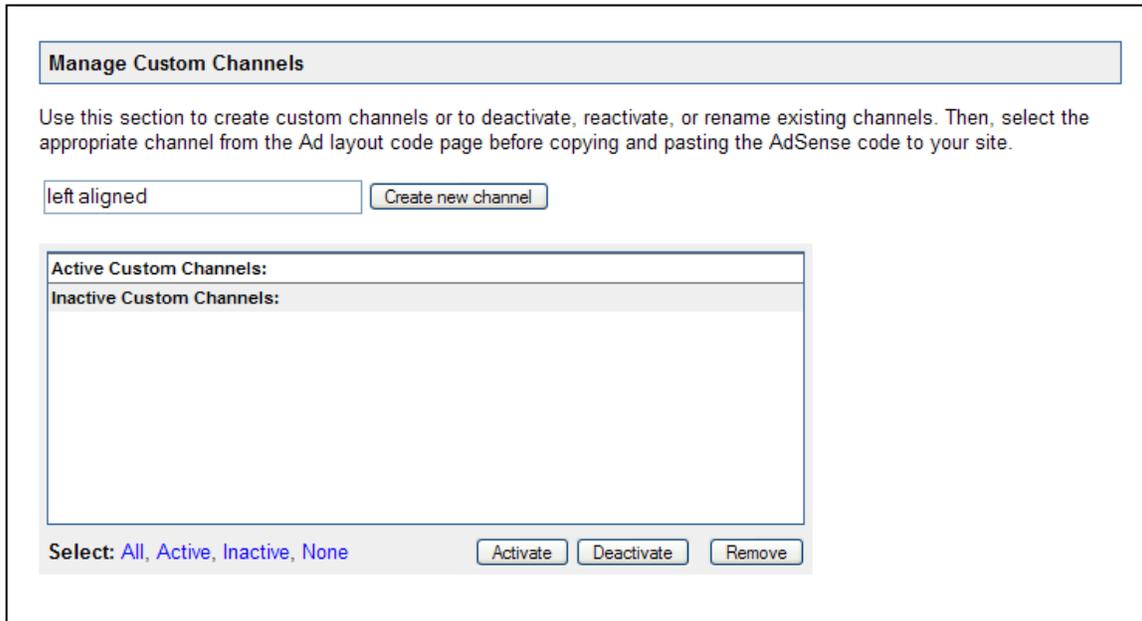


Fig. 7.3 Here comes a new channel...

Then I choose the ad type, layout and color scheme of the ads I want to track:

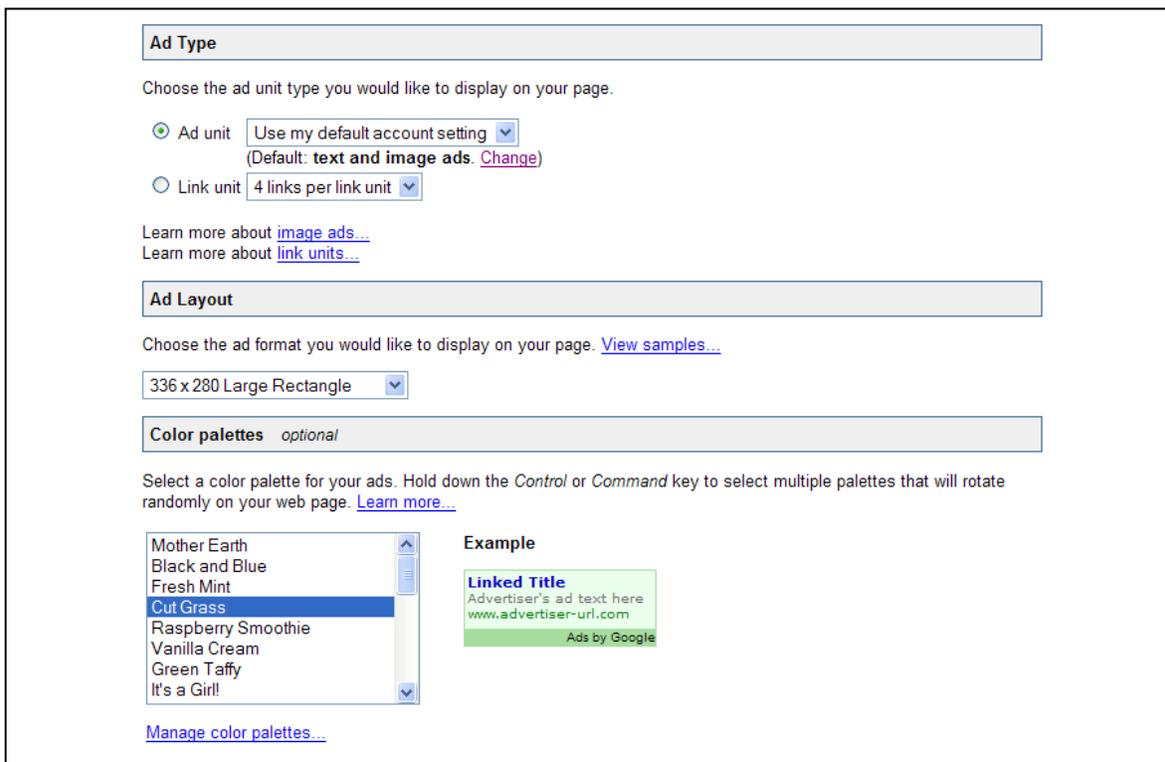


Fig. 7.4 Defining the ads to track in my new channel.

Finally, it's simply a matter of allocating an alternate URL if I don't want public service ads, selecting the channel and copying and pasting the code onto each of the pages that contain these kinds of ad.

Channel *optional*

Select the channel for this group of pages. [Learn more...](#)

left aligned

[Manage channels...](#)

Framed pages *optional*

Select this option if your page uses frames. [Learn more...](#)

Ad will be placed on a framed page.

Your AdSense code

Click anywhere in this box to select all code.

You may copy-and-paste the code into any web page that complies with our [program policies](#).

```
<script type="text/javascript"><!--
google_ad_client = "pub-5618107640131804";
google_ad_width = 336;
google_ad_height = 280;
google_ad_format = "336x280_as";
google_ad_type = "text_image";
google_ad_channel = "3158925550";
//--></script>
<script type="text/javascript"
  src="http://pagead2.googlesyndication.com/pagead/show_ads.js">
</script>
```

Fig. 7.5 Creating the code for my new Channel.

The new interface makes things a little easier. Click the My Ads tab at the top of the page, and when you create a new unit you'll be offered a list of channels to add to that unit. You'll also be able to create a completely new channel.

That layout is very useful because it means that you're less likely to forget to add a channel to every unit you create.

More importantly the My Ads tab also includes a custom channels section where you can create new channels even without creating new units and assign those channels to your current units without playing with any new code.

So if you wanted to track all of the ad units that you've placed next to the navigation bar on your sites, for example, you could create a new channel, and add those units you've placed next to the navigation bar. It's very straightforward and very useful.

You can use up to five channels on one ad unit, letting you collect different information about the same ad. When you check your channels, you'll be able to see how all your leaderboards or doing, as well as all your ads related by topic or color.

That's a huge help when it comes to understanding what your site is doing.

Custom channels provide such a broad range of information — from how different locations are doing to how particular types of ad units affect your revenues — that without them, you're working in the dark.

7.4 Which Custom Channels Should You Create?

With the range of Custom Channels limited only by your imagination, it's not always easy to figure out which channels you need to create.

I'd recommend that you build channels based on the following:

Location

Do ads do better at the top of your blog pages or on the side? Do you get more clicks from ads that you've slipped into the article or from the ads at the bottom of the page.

Try creating different channels for each sort of location so that you can track how different locations are doing.

Ad Unit

Different ad units can deliver different results. You might be using four or five different types of ad units across your sites. Make a channel for each type of unit so that you can get an idea about which units are the most attractive.

Of course, location and ad unit are related but you won't be able to untangle the data unless you have it!

Color

I keep saying that the color of your ads should match the color of your site. But not all your sites are the same color! You might well find that

some color schemes win you more clicks than others — a fact which could influence your overall site design.

Create different Custom Channels for different colors and you'll have a better idea of how your designs affect your income.

Link Units

It's certainly worth creating a channel to track the performance of your link units. These are special in their own right and you should know how they perform in comparison to your other ad units. AdSense now delivers this information separately but you should also be creating channels for different link unit placements so that you can see how the units do in different locations on the page. That will also let you compare the performance of a link unit to a regular unit placed in the same spot.

7.5 Your Channel Names — How To Keep Your Channels Secret And Win Placement Targeted Ads

Channels are extremely useful tools. You won't be able to make the most of your site unless you're using channels to track the performance of your ad units — and acting on what you find.

But there is one small problem with using channels: the channel name may be visible.

When you create your channels, you'll also be asked to mark a checkbox that says: "Show this channel to advertisers as targetable placement." If you mark that box — and you should — advertisers will be able to try to place their ads across that channel. (They'll still have to bid in the usual way but if the advertisers are keen enough to choose your site by channel, there's a good chance that they'll also be keen enough to bid high enough to win.)

So if you've created a channel for all of the ad units placed at the top of your Web pages, then an advertiser who chose to advertise across that channel could be sure that his ads would get prime placement.

That mean your channel names should be clear not just to yourself but to anyone else looking in too. If a channel that tracks the ad units embedded in articles about Toyota cars for example, is called "Toy_art," an advertiser could get the wrong idea... if he has any idea at all. If the channel were called "Toyota_articles" though, he'd know exactly where his ads would appear.

But getting the name right isn't the only thing you should do to tempt advertisers to bid on channel-targeted ad placements. You should also add a description that makes it both clear to advertisers what exactly they'll be getting when they bid and makes it attractive for them to do so. The more information you provide, the more the advertiser will understand what he's receiving for his bid — and the more likely he is to bid for the spot.

You'll want to include a number of different pieces of information:

- The subject of the website;
- The format and location of the ad;
- User demographics.

The subject should be pretty straightforward. You'll just need a sentence telling advertiser what your site is about.

The format and location are a little more complex. In the new AdSense interface, publishers are given a choice of homepage or the opportunity to list the other kinds of pages on which the ad appears. They can also choose the ad location from a dropdown menu or choose "multiple locations" if the ad unit is used in different spots on the page.

The screenshot shows the 'Add new custom channel' form. The 'Name' field is filled with 'Muscle Cars Leaderbc'. The 'Ad units' section shows two empty lists with the text 'No ad units to add' and 'No ad units added'. The 'Targeting' checkbox is checked, with the label 'Show this custom channel to advertisers as a targetable ad placement'. Below this, a section titled 'These fields will be shown to advertisers' contains: 'External name' with the value 'yoursite.com >> Homepage, Top center'; 'Ads appear on' with radio buttons for 'Homepage' (selected) and 'Other pages' (with an empty text input); 'Ad location' with a dropdown menu set to 'Top center'; 'Description' with an empty text area; and 'Site language' with a dropdown menu set to 'English'. At the bottom left are 'Save' and 'Cancel' buttons.

Fig. 7.6 There's plenty of room on the new interface to introduce your channel.

Advertisers are likely to prefer their ad to run right across the site, or at least right across that part of the site that's relevant to them rather than on a single page. They'll also want it to appear in the same place or at least above the fold.

As you're creating your channels then, it's worth creating channels specifically for marketing — rather than tracking — purposes. Those could be separate channels for all of your leaderboard ads, all your text-embedded ads or all of the top ads that appear on pages of one particular subject. Then describe clearly in the channel exactly where that ad would appear.

Finally, if you know something about your users — information you can easily pick up with occasional on-site polls — then you should add that information too.

That might give you a description that looks something like this.

"BigMuscleCars.com is a site about Mustangs, Corvettes and other great American muscle cars. This ad unit is a leaderboard that runs across the site, above the fold, on articles submitted by our professional contributors. Our audience is primarily American men aged 21-33 earning between \$35,000-\$65,000."

Think of the description as a place to describe features — but without a hard sell — and you should be able to increase the chance that someone will be there raising the bids.

Bear in mind though that if you change the ad units within that channel, you will have to go back and change the description too!

7.6 Reading the Stats For Link Units

Many publishers used to create a specialized channel to track the results of their link units.

That's still a good idea. But because link units require two clicks — one on the unit and one on the ads the unit brings up — when you look at the reports for link units separately, you'll see a bunch of different data.

"Link unit impressions" shows the number of times users see a link unit.

"Link clicks" shows the number of clicks the unit receives. That figure will be the same as the number of impressions for the ads themselves as each click on a link unit pulls up an ad page.

“Ad clicks” describes the number of clicks received by the ads.

“Ad CTR” is the clickthrough rate of the *ad page*. It’s measured by dividing the ad clicks by the link clicks.

Link CTR is the clickthrough rate of the link unit, measured by dividing link clicks by impressions.

And Link eCPM is measured by dividing earnings by link unit impressions and multiplying by 1,000 to show how much those units earn for every thousand views.

If all of that sounds a little confusing, it’s a lot more accurate than looking at link units together with standard units. When you look at your stats that way, “clicks” refer only to clicks made on ads. “Impressions” however, include both the link unit and the ads that appear on the ad page.

What you find when you look at the stats for your link units can be pretty interesting.

It’s always been believed the CTR of the ad page is much, much higher than the CTR of the link units themselves. Now we can see that’s true. What we can’t do though is take action to improve the ad page CTR. We can’t change the layout of the ad page or optimize it in any way to make it more attractive to users. We can only change the design of the link unit itself.

That means that only one factor will determine whether lots of people click the ads, or whether they click away.

The ads themselves.

You can’t choose the ads either but what you can do is create channels for different link units on different keyword-optimized Web pages. You’ll then be able to see which keywords have the best ads and the highest clickthrough rates.

Most importantly, you’ll be able to see whether it’s worth replacing those link units with other ad units, or targeting different keywords on the page using AdSense’s Section Targeting.

7.7 Fast Decision-Making With A/B Testing

One of the problems with tracking channels is that collecting all the data you need can take time. If you wanted to know whether you should put a

skyscraper or a small square in your sidebar, you'd have to start with one type of ad unit, collect results for at least a week to make sure that they're representative, replace that unit with the second type, follow those results for a week and compare.

Sound tough?

There's an easier way.

Normally, playing with the AdSense code is a big no-no. But this script comes right from Google itself and has been approved for this specific use only:

```
<script type="text/javascript">
  var random_number = Math.random();
  if (random_number < .5){
    //your first ad unit code goes here
  } else {
    //your second ad unit code goes here
  }
</script>
<script type="text/javascript"
src="http://pagead2.googlesyndication.com/pagead/show_ads.js"></script>
```

Simply, replace the lines that say "your first ad unit code goes here" and "your second ad unit code goes here" with the ad codes for each of the two units you wish to test.

The result will be that the two ads are rotated randomly so that each will appear half the time. As long as those two ad units are similar in every respect but one and each has a unique channel name, you'll be able to see exactly which type of ad unit is earning more after about a week or so.

This is an extremely useful exception to AdSense's rules about changing its ad code, but I wouldn't recommend that you do it across your entire site. It's always best to do your testing on a separate page or group of pages and then make the changes across the site once you've got the information you want.

That would minimize your losses if the original ad unit works better.

And when you do find that one ad unit performs better than another, making the change right across your site is now very easy.

In the past, changing your ads meant copying the code and pasting it into your site again.

Today, things are a bit easier than that.

When you create your ad code, you'll be asked to give that code a name. *Make sure that name tells you exactly where the ad will be placed and its format.*

Whenever you want to change the way an ad looks, you'll be able to pull up that code on your AdSense center and make the changes. Your ad will be updated automatically within the next ten minutes.

Unless you want to change the size of your ads. That you'll still have to do manually by pasting in the new code.

7.8 The Two Most Important Figures: CTR and Revenues

Creating a profitable AdSense-supported website involves two different kinds of work: creating content and reading numbers.

You're going to be looking at a lot of numbers. But two are more important than all the others.

The first is your clickthrough rate, the percentage of impressions that convert into clicks.

Producing a good clickthrough rate for new publishers to aim at isn't easy. It's not easy because Google forbids publishers from sharing their CTRs. A publisher who puts his or her CTR on a blog post discussing their strategies risks being banned. No smart publisher is going to take that risk so there's little hard evidence on which to base average rates. There is however plenty of anecdotal evidence that publishers with optimized sites generally see CTRs of 2-5 percent.

It's also difficult to come up with a hard figure though because those rates can vary tremendously, affected by a number of factors.

- **Site Content**

Some types of content simply win more clicks than others. A number of publishers have optimized a template, used the same design to create a website on a different topic... and seen completely different results. Sites that discuss products, for example, tend to generate more clicks than sites about more general topics, probably because users are in more of a buying mode than users looking for something to read.

That doesn't mean though that you should rush out and delete all of your informational sites and create product sites instead. The cost per click can

vary too, and the competition is likely to be higher giving you lower traffic and lower clicks overall.

- **Site Design**

We've already talked about how where you place your ads and how you place them will affect your CTR. But because the same design might have different results across different topics, you'll still need to know the principles of testing and tracking to keep your revenues high.

- **Number of Links on the Page**

Some publishers who place few links on a page have found that they receive higher CTRs. When the only ways for a user to leave a page are to hit the "Back" button, close the browser or click an ad, you raise the chances that they'll click the ad.

The rise of tabbed browsers that let users keep multiple pages open easily might well have reduced the benefits of this strategy though and the lack of links does make search engine optimization difficult. What you gain in click rates you might lose in search engine traffic.

- **Traffic Type**

That loss of search engine visitors could be particularly damaging. In general, CTRs tend to be higher for visitors who reach a site through a search engine than they are for regular visitors. That might be because search engine traffic is looking for information; if they don't find everything they want on your page, they're willing to click and look again. It might also be because regular visitors become blind to ad positions and ignore ads easily.

On the other hand, regular visitors are more likely to buy your affiliate products and send you more of their friends, so you really should be looking for both kinds of visitors.

- **Ad Relevancy**

If you're not getting ads that are relevant to your content, you're going to have a low CTR. That's mostly Google's job, but as we've seen, there are a few things you can do to help Google help you.

- **Seasons**

Even the time of year can affect your CTR. Expect higher clickthrough rates at weekends and in the run-up to Christmas — just when you need the money most!

There is another figure though, that's even more important than CTR.

Revenue!

If you aren't making money, no other stats matter.

And as long as your earnings are rising, you're doing fine.

7.9 AdSense Arbitrage

Once you get to grips with the numbers that you see on the stats pages and your logs, you might notice something interesting. You might see for example, that you're getting 5,000 ad clicks on a page each month and that page is generating \$1,500.

Divide \$1500 into 5,000 clicks and you'll realize that each click for that type of content is bringing you 30 cents.

That means that when you come to buy traffic, as long as you spend less than 30 cents for a visitor that clicks on an ad, you're going to make a profit. One way to do that is to open an AdWords account and buy advertising space on Google's search pages. You could pay as little as 5 cents per click, giving you a profit of 25 cents each time your 5-cent users click on your 30-cent ads.

That's AdSense arbitrage and it sounds like a foolproof way to increase your revenues.

If it were that easy, everyone would be doing it. Or at least trying to do it.

Arbitrage is possible but it's never been easy and Google works hard to make it even harder.

The first problem with arbitrage is that you can never get a 100% CTR. Not every 5 cent click you buy is going to give you 30 cents back — and every impression that doesn't result in an ad click is going to eat into your profits.

With these kinds of figures (and obviously, yours are going to be different), you'd need a 16% CTR to break even. (If every ad click costs 5 cents and gives you 30 cents, you can afford to lose five out of every six clicks, or 16%, before you're in the red).

So if you can see that you're getting a 16% CTR (and very few publishers are seeing clickthrough rates that high), buying advertising on AdWords to send traffic to your AdSense ads could be a good deal, although you'd need lots of traffic to make the profit on each click meaningful.

The second problem with arbitrage though is that your CTR rate is based on users coming from your current traffic sources. The users you buy through AdWords might behave differently. They've already clicked on an ad once so they might not want to click on an ad again.

Or alternatively, because you know they're the type who do click on ads, it's possible that they're *exactly* the type who'll click on the ads on your page. You won't know until the program is running.

And spotting the opportunities will take a lot of effort and some headsplitting math.

Arbitrage works by exploiting gaps in bid prices for advertising space for select keywords. Advertisers looking to promote their sites that sell "grass fertilizer," for example, might have entered the following bids:

Bid 1	\$2.37
Bid 2	\$2.25
Bid 3	\$1.95
Bid 4	\$1.55
Bid 5	\$0.75

Pay 76 cents for a click on an AdWords unit then and that user could be earning you anything from 80 cents ($\$1.55 - \0.75) to $\$1.62$ ($\$2.37 - \0.75), minus the losses from users who don't click the ads, of course.

Google though doesn't reveal all of the bid prices it receives. Throw a keyword into the AdWords traffic estimator and you can see *the average estimated CPC*. (For "grass fertilizer" the range was actually a much narrower $\$1.07$ to $\$1.47$).

But that range can hide a lot of information. If those are the only two bids then the difference is 40 cents, which might provide some scope for arbitrage. But if there are 40 other bidders each bidding a cent more than the last then it's possible that you'd be paying $\$1.08$ for a user and selling only a small fraction on for $\$1.09$. You'd be losing money.

In the past, it was possible to gain a fuller picture of bid prices using Overture's Keyword Tool but Yahoo!, which bought the ad firm in 2003, disabled the tool in 2007. Now publishers who want to practice arbitrage need to use Wordtracker to gain a more detailed idea of keyword prices.

But even that's not going to be completely accurate because of Smart Pricing.

As we'll see in Chapter 10, Smart Pricing is an algorithm used by Google to adjust the price that a publisher receives for a click on an ad. The better the publisher, the more he or she earns.

How exactly Google decides which advertisers to pay more and which to pay less isn't clear but it appears to have a lot to do with the actions that users take after they click the ad.

For arbitrage practitioners though it throws a huge unknown variable into the calculations — exactly what Google intended. A large gap in bid values may be filled by Google lowering the fee paid for a click even when an advertiser has agreed to pay more.

So where does this leave AdSense arbitrage?

It leaves it as a challenging practice but not an impossible one. The principle still applies: if you can find keywords that generate higher payments on your website than you have to pay for them — and you're not losing the profits through a low CTR — then it might work for you. But those users have to convert as well as click and you're going to have to work hard both to identify those keywords and track the figures to make sure you're not losing money.

The stats that Google provides directly through AdSense are vital information. But they're not comprehensive, and they're not the only data that Google supplies. In the next chapter, I'm going to discuss another Google tool that reveals important information about your site, including its AdSense performance.

Warning: It may sound appealing to buy cheap traffic and send it to your site in hopes of big AdSense profits. This technique rarely works and is likely to get your account banned.

8. Reading Google Analytics for AdSense Optimization

The data that Google supplies directly through AdSense's Performance Reports only concern AdSense itself. It won't tell you all sorts of useful information that you need to know about your website. It won't tell you:

- Where your visitors are coming from;
- Where the ad-clickers are coming from;
- What search keywords led them to your Web page;
- How users navigate your site to reach the ads that interest them.

None of that information concerns AdSense directly, so AdSense doesn't track it. But knowing what's happening on your website, how users reach it and what they do when they arrive is clearly going to be important to its optimization.

In the past, some of that information could be picked up through server logs. Your hosting company supplies access to a bunch of tables and stats that you can wade through and try to make sense of. It's always been difficult to use, and depending on the hosting company, hard on the eyes.

Spotting an opportunity, as always, Google has come to the rescue with Google Analytics, its branded version of a service first created by Urchin software, a firm it bought in 2005. When Google first released Analytics later that year, subscription was so high that the company was forced to close the doors after just a week and use a lottery model to allow entry to new users as capacity increased.

Since then, it's been estimated that around 57 percent of the top 10,000 sites and just under half of all of the top million websites, use Google Analytics to track user behavior.

For any website publisher, the program's simplicity and comprehensiveness make it indispensable. For any publisher using a Google service such as AdWords or AdSense, the integration makes the service even more vital.

It's also free. You can sign up at www.google.com/analytics, collect a piece of code and embed that code into your website. You'll then have access to all sorts of information about your site in easy-to-read graphs.

The basic information you'll receive shows the number of visits the site has received over a time period of your choice; the number of page views those visits generated; the average number of pages per visit; the bounce rate

(the percentage of users who left after looking at just the landing page); the average time spent on the site; and the percentage of visits that were new. You can also see the number of views each page received, and which countries those visitors came from. The main graph shows the rise and fall of your traffic over time and you can combine different metrics to make comparisons.

The Traffic Sources Overview shows the origins of your visitors: the numbers that came as direct traffic, from referring sites (and the sites that referred them), and from search engines (including the keywords that brought them to the site.) You can even create goals, such as downloads, newsletter registration or a set number of pages per visits, and track the percentage of users who reach those goals.

In short, you'll have all the information you need about your website, including:

- the number of people who visited your site;
- where they're coming from;
- how long they stay;
- in which parts of the world your site is most popular;
- what searchers and looking for;
- which content wins the most attention.

What Google Analytics can't tell is how much your ads are earning — at least not until you integrate your AdSense stats with your Analytics data.

8.1 Integrating AdSense with Analytics

Log into your AdSense stats using the old interface and you'll find a link right in the middle of the page inviting you to integrate your AdSense account with Google Analytics.

The people at Google clearly understand the importance of placement!

If they've put that link in a spot that you just can't miss it's because they think it's important for you to use it, and they want you to do it. You should do it.

But you have to be a little careful. If you've got just one site, it's all fairly simple. If you have more than one site though, you need to make sure that you match each URL channel with the URL of each account you're tracking in Analytics. Match up the channels wrongly and you're not going to get the data you want.

It's all very simple to do, but it's also very simple to make a careless mistake and end up with code that doesn't work.

Once you've done the matching, you should find AdSense as one option in the left menu of your Analytics page. You'll be able to see an overview, the top AdSense content, the top AdSense referrers, and AdSense Trending.

All of that is valuable.



Fig. 7.1 A brand new account as it appears in the AdSense Overview section on Google Analytics. Now to lift those numbers!

Overview

The Overview actually provides no less than *ten* different statistics. Some of those figures, such as Revenue, number of ad clicks, CTR, and Impressions should be familiar from the AdSense Performance Reports — they're just easier to see here. Other data such as the number of AdSense impressions shown during each visit and the revenue per thousand visits (as opposed to per thousand impressions recorded in the AdSense eCPM) are also interesting.

Now you can see at a glance how many ad units a typical visitor sees and how much each of your visitors are worth to your AdSense revenues.

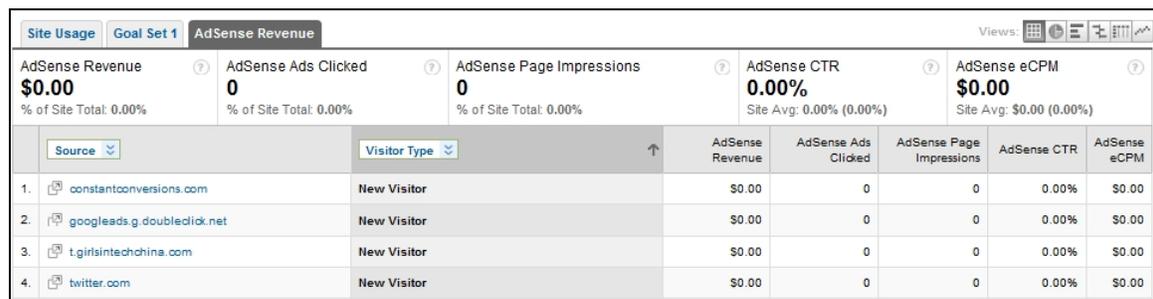
That last statistic creates all sorts of new opportunities. If you can see clearly how much money you're earning for every thousand visitors, you know how much you can spend on traffic.

But that figure is an average. Dig a little deeper and you can see where you should be spending that money and how much you can spend in different areas.

Top AdSense Referrers

Click the link marked Top AdSense Referrers, and the information starts to get really interesting. Here you can see a list of traffic sources, the revenue generated by visitors from each of those sources, the number of ads they clicked, the AdSense page impressions, the CTR, and the eCPM. You can even add an extra column and insert more data of your choice, including whether the visitors are new or returning, the keywords they used, their geographic location and more.

It enables you to see who exactly is clicking your ads — and who is clicking them the most.



AdSense Revenue		AdSense Ads Clicked		AdSense Page Impressions		AdSense CTR		AdSense eCPM	
\$0.00		0		0		0.00%		\$0.00	
% of Site Total: 0.00%		% of Site Total: 0.00%		% of Site Total: 0.00%		Site Avg: 0.00% (0.00%)		Site Avg: \$0.00 (0.00%)	
Source	Visitor Type	AdSense Revenue	AdSense Ads Clicked	AdSense Page Impressions	AdSense CTR	AdSense eCPM			
1. constantconversions.com	New Visitor	\$0.00	0	0	0.00%	\$0.00			
2. googleads.g.doubleclick.net	New Visitor	\$0.00	0	0	0.00%	\$0.00			
3. tgirlsintechchina.com	New Visitor	\$0.00	0	0	0.00%	\$0.00			
4. twitter.com	New Visitor	\$0.00	0	0	0.00%	\$0.00			

Fig. 8.2 Google won't allow me to show real revenues but just imagine if visitors from these sites had clicked. I'd know exactly where to focus my marketing.

In terms of AdSense stats that counts as a goldmine.

But it's still only part of the story.

Top AdSense Content

If the Top AdSense Referrers page shows who is sending you the traffic that does the most clicking, the Top AdSense Content page shows *where* they're doing that clicking. You'll be able to see which pages are winning the most AdSense clicks, revealing which content is the most valuable to you —and what kind of articles you should be focusing on.

Now we're really starting to get somewhere. We know which pages are the most valuable and we know which kinds of users are the most valuable.

What else can we know?

AdSense Trending

The AdSense Trending data looks like it should be the least valuable but it's actually very important. It shows revenues broken down by day.

Your AdSense revenues will always fluctuate at least a little and it's never been easy to know what causes traffic or clicks to rise sharply one day rather

than another. Traffic reports online have always been a bit like traffic reports on the road: sometimes it's busy and sometimes it's quiet, and you can never quite tell why until you've passed the accident. Using all of the data that Analytics provides we now know where to look — at least online.

If we see a sharp rise in traffic on a particular day, for example, and we know that one site in particular sends a lot of traffic in general, then we can go back to that site to see if they put up a new article that day or issued a newsletter. If that becomes a regular thing, it even becomes possible to synch the website to the habits of other traffic sources.

So if you know that your most important traffic source sends a newsletter every Thursday, that some of that traffic clicks through to your site, and some of those clicks convert on your pages, then you could make sure that you have content that suits those visitors ready for when they arrive.

There's a whole heap of useful information here, and you can spend hours playing with the graphs and dicing up the data. One thing that Google Analytics cannot do for you though, is to tell you exactly how much money — or even how many clicks a specific ad unit (or link) is generating for you.

Or rather, it can tell you but I wouldn't want to depend on it.

The new In-Page Analytics shows pages of your website overlaid with the percentage of clicks each link has generated. (It even continues to do so after you've left Analytics. To turn it off, you have to close the browser and reopen it.) That should reveal which units are receiving the most clicks, and it will do so in a way that's much clearer than a list of channels, however well-named.

But it doesn't. In-Page Analytics only tracks internal links. While you can add a bit of Javascript to track outgoing links in Analytics, additional code also has to be added to the link itself — so you can't add it to an AdSense unit.

And even for internal links, the information isn't entirely accurate. Different links on the same page to the same destination are merged together, and sites with Flash seem to confuse it. Channels might be less visual but until In-Page Analysis comes out of beta, they're going to be a lot more reliable at telling you which units are performing the best.

Where In-Page Analytics is useful though is in tracking traffic flow. Add a filter to restrict traffic to one source and you can see where those users are clicking and what they're interested in. When it comes to optimizing a site for your users, that's valuable information.

8.2 Combining Channels and Analytics

Let's take a look at how channels and Analytics might work in practice.

In this hypothetical case, Jim has a website about fast cars on which he discusses his passion with thousands of like-minded visitors. He decides to find out which ads are doing better than the others.

Jim groups all ads with a blue border into a specific channel, which he calls "Blue_Border." He finds that the blue-border ads generate a 5% CTR while the rest of the ads generate around 2% CTR on average:

Channel	Ad Unit Impressions	Clicks	Ad Unit CTR	Ad Unit eCPM	Your earnings
Blue_border	11378 56	9	5.0%	7.24	82.38
Green_text	11205 52	5	2.0%	6.29	70.54
Vertical ads	12963 30	2	2.3%	1.22	15.78

Next morning Jim tweaks all his ads to give them a blue border. The result? The ads in the "Blue_Border" channel continue to generate 5% CTR, while the rest of the ads (which also have a blue border now) are still generating 2% CTR. Very confusing!

Channel	Ad Unit Impressions	Clicks	Ad Unit CTR	Ad Unit eCPM	Your earnings
Blue_border	11606 59	0	5.0%	7.24	86.50
Green_text	11765 55		2.0%	6.29	74.07
Tall ads	12315 28	7	2.3%	1.22	14.99

Clearly, there's something else that's making Jim's visitors click — and it probably has nothing to do with the blue border.

What is that hidden ingredient that's jacking up those click-through ratios? Jim's current channels won't tell. So he creates additional channels based not on format but on the subject of the pages the ads are placed on.

A week later, Jim finds that ads on pages about "Car Accessories" are getting the most clickthroughs. To confirm that data, Jim looks at his Analytics reports, and views the keywords that his search traffic used to reach his site. He finds that of all his visitors, those who searched for the term "Car Accessories" had the lowest bounce rate, the highest page views and were staying on his site the longest. Naturally, ads with the term "Car Accessories" were doing better than the others.

Should Jim now optimize his website for the search term "Car Accessories"?

For most web publishers, that's good enough to get down to work.

But Jim is skeptical. Jim wants to know if his "Car Accessories" ads are also his top income generators.

To find out, he creates a channel to track the earnings of all ads with the term "Car Accessories" in it. He calls the new channel "Car_Accessories".

A few days later, Jim logs in to his AdSense account to check his earnings. He finds that about 30% of his income is drawn from visitors looking for car accessories.

Channel	Ad Unit Impressions	Clicks	Ad Unit CTR	Ad Unit eCPM	Your earnings
Car Accessories	14577 72	9	5.0%	4.9	71.43

That's significant, but it raises another question in Jim's mind.

Where is the remaining 70% of his income coming from?

He looks through his tracking reports once again and finds that ads with the term "Car Parts" are also doing well. He found that while "Car Accessories" took the lead with 5% CTR, the "Car Parts" ads were generating a healthy 3% CTR.

Jim is excited. He knows he's on to something big!

Jim's tracking has helped him uncover two great "leads." Which of these will lead him to his top income generator?

To find out, Jim now creates another channel called "Car_Parts." A week later, he logs in to compare his earnings for each channel.

Here are Jim's results:

Total AdSense income for one week = \$1666.67

"Car_Accessories" Channel = \$500 (30% of total AdSense earnings)

"Car_Parts" Channel = \$1000 (60% of total AdSense earnings)

Remaining Ads = \$166.67 (10% of total AdSense earnings)

Incredible! Jim now knows that his "Car_Accessories" ads might be getting him the most clicks, but his "Car_Parts" ads are making him the most money!

Google won't tell you all reasons why the "Car_Parts" ads are making Jim more money. But Jim knows that the keyword "Car Parts" is probably more expensive, and that his website ranks better for that term.

Finally, Jim is ready to act on this information. Let's take a look at his various options:

1. He can use it to optimize his page for the search term "Car Parts" so that his content is more relevant. Jim knows from experience that when his ranking for the search term "Car Parts" goes up, so will his earnings per click.

But it does have a downside: he could lose his "Car Accessories" traffic! Jim knows that the price of keywords keeps fluctuating with the bids placed by AdSense advertisers. A keyword that's not so hot today can trigger a frenzied bidding war tomorrow.

Jim doesn't want to lose his most responsive visitors, earning him a decent \$500 per week.

2. Jim can optimize his page for "Car Accessories." But that comes with the huge risk of losing a whopping 60% of his earnings.
3. Jim can launch dedicated web pages for "Car Parts" and "Car Accessories".
4. Jim can optimize his page for both search terms.

Jim decides to go with option 4, spreading the risk.

He tweaks his layout to make the "Car Parts" articles more visible and smartly uses the hot car photos on his website to create several points of interest on his site.

Jim knows that people will instinctively look at the car photos, then be drawn in by detailed information about car parts — followed by the strategically placed Google ads.

To leverage this opportunity, Jim creates new space for content by tweaking the framework of his web page. Now Jim can capitalize his page layout by drawing people in with short, interesting 'content hooks' that build interest in the Google ads.

He adds new sidebars with information about hot new car accessories. These will act like instant magnets to visitors looking for car accessories. More importantly, they run right alongside the AdSense ads, which tempt people with offers for car accessories.

A specially designed "Accessories I love" section invites visitors to scroll down for more. Here Jim provides news, updates and impartial reviews of car Accessory products. He entices visitors to check out new product launches with search box, which enables them to search within his website or search the entire web for relevant content.

These changes not only make Jim's web pages more relevant; it makes his visitors more receptive to the ads. And there's more. Jim can now create new income streams for himself by plugging in new links to pages dedicated to car accessories, car parts and other keywords that are already attracting highly responsive visitors to his existing pages.

The mass of data that Google now provides publishers is going to have different uses. Some of it allows publishers to design their pages better. Some allows them to target their marketing better. Some tells them which content they should produce and even when to launch it. And most of the data churned out by the Performance Reports will tell them which formats and units are producing the best results.

It's a huge amount of information, and you're going to need almost all of it as you test different strategies to optimize your site.

Try not to feel overwhelmed but take each test and each task one at a time to improve your site bit by bit.

9. Keep Track of Your Improvements with an AdSense Journal

People who want to lose weight often keep a "food diary." Without that diary, it's easy to forget that late-night snack or the extra sugar in their fourth cup of coffee. A food diary keeps them honest. It helps them figure out the real reasons behind those little ups and downs in their weight.

I'm sure that after reading this book, you'll be eager to try out many of the tweaks discussed in here — including some of your own. Without an AdSense journal though, it would be easy to undo your successes, or to repeat your failures. Only by keeping track of each change that you make to your site, and recording the result of each test, whether it succeeds or fails, can you gain a clear understanding of the way your site works and how it can work the best.

Let's see how this could work in practice.

9.1 A Sample AdSense Journal

Let's say you have a website about Bonsai trees. Your original stats over one week might look something like this. You print these out and use them for comparison:

Page Impressions	Clicks	Page CTR	Page eCPM	Your earnings
8020 16	0	2.0% 5.04		40.04
8186 17	2	2.1% 5.53		45.27
8071 15	3	1.9% 4.92		39.76
7792 15	6	2.0% 5.50		42.89
6712 15	4	2.3% 5.76		38.65
6596 13	2	2.0% 5.70		37.65
7134 15	7	2.2% 5.81		41.45

Clearly, your goal is going to be to lift up those CTRs, and by now you should have all sorts of ideas about how you're going to do that. You write down your first three:

- **3-Way Matching** — Text color, background and text size.
- **Layout** — Moving ads above the fold where they'll be most prominent.
- **Targeting ads** — Changing titles to improve relevancy and improving keywords.

You're already using large rectangular ads so you decide to start with 3-Way Matching and change all your ads so that they blend in with your page. You make the background color of the ads match the background color of your site and the size and color of the ad text the same as the size and color of your body text.

A week later, your stats look like this:

Page Impressions	Clicks	Page CTR	Page eCPM	Your earnings
8123 23	6	2.9% 5.08		41.27
8135 24	4.05	3.0% 6.02		48.97
8024 24	9	3.1% 5.90		48.65
7926 23	8	3.0% 5.92		46.93
7865 25	2	3.2% 5.62		44.26
6645 19	3	2.9% 6.10		40.52
7103 22	0	3.1% 6.06		43.05

Already your weekly incomes have risen from \$285.71 to \$313.65 and your average CTR has gone up by a full percentage point. That's a good start, but you've still got a fair way to go.

You print out this week's report and write next to it "3-Way Matching" so that you know exactly what you did to create those changes. Now you know how much 3-Way Matching is worth to your incomes.

Next, you move the ads that you have at the bottom of your pages to the areas above the fold and place them in prominent positions. A week later, you print out the following stats:

Page Impressions	Clicks	Page CTR	Page eCPM	Your earnings
8365 34	3	4.1% 5.93		49.65
8296 32	4	3.9% 6.04		50.09
8032 32	1	4.0% 6.42		51.59
7920 31	7	4.0% 6.30		49.93
7853 30	6	3.9% 6.20		48.67
6725 28	2	4.2% 6.68		44.92
7145 29	3	4.1% 6.51		46.55

Again, your CTR has risen by another percentage point and your weekly income has gone up to \$341.40. Next to this set of stats, you write "Layout" and you place them in your journal after your second set.

Now things are getting a little trickier. Your ads are blended onto the page and they're in prominent positions. But you find that they aren't always

showing the most relevant ads. On your page on growing bonsai from cuttings for example, you find that you're getting lots of ads about scrapbooking.

You create a channel for that page and follow your stats for a week. The original stats look like this:

Channel	Ad Unit Impressions	Clicks	Ad Unit CTR	Ad Unit eCPM	Your earnings
Cuttings page	829 8		1.0% 1.44		1.20
Cuttings page	764 9		1.2% 1.89		1.44
Cuttings page	801 7		0.9% 1.22		0.98
Cuttings page	712 7		1.0% 1.37		0.98
Cuttings page	758 1	0	1.3% 1.85		1.40
Cuttings page	652 5		0.8% 1.07		0.70
Cuttings page	704 6		0.9% 1.19		0.84

That's pretty weak but as few of your users are likely to be interested in scrapbooking, it's not too surprising. So you change the title of the page from www.bonsai.com/cuttings.html to www.bonsai.com/tree_cuttings.html and turn the word "cuttings" into "tree-cuttings", especially in the area beneath the ad box.

You upload, wait for the robot to index your page again and check that you're now getting ads from gardening and horticulture sites.

After a week, you find that your stats for that page look like this:

Channel	Ad Unit Impressions	Clicks	Ad Unit CTR	Ad Unit eCPM	Your earnings
Cuttings page	1300 52		4.0% 6.40		8.32
Cuttings page	1423 58		4.1% 6.52		9.28
Cuttings page	1346 52		3.9% 6.18		8.32
Cuttings page	1256 50		3.9% 6.40		8.04
Cuttings page	1156 44		3.8% 6.09		7.04
Cuttings	1098 45		4.0% 6.56		7.20

page					
Cuttings page	1247 49		3.9% 6.29		7.84

Again, you'd want to print out this page and place it in your journal.

So far in the last three weeks, these simple tweaks would have already increased your weekly income by over \$104.

And there's still plenty more you can do!

You can make sure that every page is optimized, you can look for higher-paying keywords and you can experiment with different colors and layouts, search boxes and multiple ads to increase your revenues.

And of course, you can create more pages and more sites.

Note that only in the last example (when you changed the keywords, improving your position in the search engines) did any of the changes affect your impressions. These tweaks simply made the most of the traffic you already have!

Of course, if you add more traffic, you'll make more money.

The important point to remember is that you should be recording everything you do and keeping a close eye on the results. Within a few weeks, you'll have a complete record of all the changes you've made and what they're worth to your bottom line.

10. Smart Pricing... and What It Means for Your Income

One of the more difficult aspects of using AdSense is keeping up to date with changes that Google likes to introduce from time to time. Most of these changes are pretty minor. That doesn't mean that you can ignore them — you will need to be aware of them. But you won't usually have to make massive changes to your site and the way you've optimized your ads when Google adjusts its policy.

One change that did have a dramatic effect on publishers took place way back in April, 2004: Google introduced Smart Pricing. We've already felt some of its effects in this book. Now I'm going to explain exactly what it means.

Before Smart Pricing, advertisers paid the price they had bid for each click their ad received on a website regardless of whether that click resulted in a sale. The result was that some advertisers were receiving large numbers of clicks — for which they were paying large sums of money — but were seeing only a low return on that investment (ROI).

Not surprisingly, they were drifting away to other ad distributors — Yahoo! then, Facebook now — in the search for visitors who wouldn't just click but buy too.

To improve advertisers' ROI (and win them back from Yahoo!), Google lowered the price of ads on sites that tend to give advertisers few sales, even if they give them large numbers of clicks.

To put it another way, the same ad can now cost different amounts when it appears on different sites. And of course, that same ad will pay publishers different amounts too.

Before Smart Pricing then, publishers had focused solely on attracting as many clicks as possible. With Smart Pricing, a site with a high CTR can still earn *less* than a site with a low CTR if that site sends good, converting users to its advertisers.

So how does Google measure an advertiser's conversion rate and what can publishers do to increase their conversion rates to ensure their ad rates remain high?

This is where things get tricky. Google is playing its cards pretty close to its chest when it comes to the methods it uses to calculate Smart Pricing and even measure ROI.

This is what Google has officially told us about Smart Pricing:

- **The price of an ad is influenced by a number of different factors.**

Those factors can include: the bid price; the quality of the ad; competition from other ads in the same field; the location of the ad as part of a marketing campaign; "and other advertiser fluctuations."

- **The ad price is not affected by the clickthrough rate.**

Sending advertisers large numbers of clicks will *not* increase the bid price. (That doesn't mean that CTR isn't important at all for your revenues; it's just not important in determining the amount you receive for the click.)

- **"Content Is King."**

Google makes it pretty clear that sites that will benefit most from AdSense are those that "create compelling content for interested users." They also emphasize the importance of bringing targeted traffic to look at that content. Those are two different factors which together create a site with loyal, appreciative users. Just the sort of thing that every serious webmaster wants.

10.1 What Else Do We Know About Smart Pricing?

What Google has told us about Smart Pricing isn't much. It also raises at least as many questions as it answers: How does Google judge the quality of an ad? How can they assess the role an ad plays in a marketing campaign? What are the other "advertiser fluctuations"? And perhaps most importantly, how do they track the results of the clicks?

All of those pieces of information would be very useful to a publisher. But Google isn't letting on.

Fortunately, publishers caught a break. Jennifer Slegg, the author of an excellent contextual advertising blog at www.Jenniferslegg.com, (Even though she hasn't updated in awhile there are a lot of great articles posts) was contacted by an advertiser who was being tempted back from Yahoo! to Google. He told Jennifer what the AdSense salesman had told him about Smart Pricing. She told us.

This is what it boiled down to:

- **Smart Pricing is calculated across an AdSense account.**
So if you have a number of different sites covering a range of different topics and one of them delivers a low ROI, all of your ad prices may be lowered.
- **Smart Pricing is evaluated weekly.**
That's good news. If you believe that an ad is delivering a low ROI, you can remove it from your site and you should see higher ad prices within a week.
- **Smart Pricing is tracked with a 30-day cookie.**
Users don't have to convert immediately into a sale (or whatever will count as a conversion) for you to benefit. They can think about it for a month and you'll still get the benefit.
- **Image ads are affected by Smart Pricing.**
Many serious publishers choose not to use image ads except when they're receiving CPM campaigns. Was this a reference to ads in low locations receiving lower rates?
- **Prices may be reduced even below an advertiser's minimum bid.**
So looking up the bid prices for targeted keywords won't help you very much; if your ROI is low, your rates could be *even lower* than the minimum quoted.
- **Conversions accounts are tracked by advertisers opting into AdWords Conversion Tracking.**
But we still don't know what exactly Google is tracking because we don't know what action qualifies as a "conversion." Nor do we know how what calculations Google is making with those figures.

10.2 Strategies To Benefit From Smart Pricing

The challenge for publishers trying to keep their ad rates high is that there's no way to know exactly how many of your clicks are converting into sales for your advertisers. You can't even tell what would *count* as a sale for the different advertisers you're promoting.

The best you can do is keep track of your clicks and your revenues, and make sure that they rise and fall at the same rates.

If following your stats was always important, Smart Pricing has made it absolutely vital. There's little point in spending hours trying to increase your CTR if the value of your clicks is dropping like a rock.

So what should you do if you notice that your income is dropping but your CTR rate remains the same?

The first thing you should do is protect yourself.

Because one site with a low ROI can affect all the sites in your account, dividing your sites between different accounts would prevent all of your revenues falling if one site underperforms. Officially, that's a breach of TOS, so you can't really do it. But I don't see why two different sites can't be owned by two spouses.

If you own more than two sites though... well, I guess you're stuck.

Next, if you suspect that one page has a low ROI, try removing the AdSense code from that page, wait a week and see if you can spot an improvement in your ad prices.

If there's no improvement, replace the code and try taking the code from a different page. You want to find the page that's poisoning your earnings and keep AdSense ads off it until you can bring in the kind of traffic that suits your advertisers.

It's a bit like looking for the allergen in food that's making you feel ill: it's not fun and it's not fast, but you're going to keep feeling below par until you figure it out.

Fortunately, there is a clue you can use.

The pages that are most likely to have the greatest conversion rates for advertisers are those that have the most loyal following. The closer the connection between your site and the interests of your visitors the more likely they are to click on your ads — and buy when they click.

Pages with a bigger gap between traffic and topic are likely to have the lowers conversions, and the lowest Smart Pricing score.

So it's also a good idea to create niche sites that appeal to niche audiences, rather than general sites that bring in audiences interested in a bunch of different things. Those sorts of users will also only have a vague interest in some of the things on your site and could lower your conversion rate.

You might have a blog, for example, in which you discussed your interests in... oh, dogs, computer games and the movies of Leonardo DiCaprio. That would bring in users with three different kinds of interests... and three different kinds of ads. But a dog-loving user who clicks on an ad for Leonardo

DiCaprio DVDs is less likely to actually buy than a Leonardo DiCaprio fan. Your conversion rate would drop and the value of every ad you promote would fall too.

But if you created three separate blogs, one for each of your interests, you would receive fewer false clicks, and a higher rate of conversion.

Ultimately then, the ideal strategy is, as always, to create good content that attracts genuinely interested users.

And don't remove the AdSense code from pages with low CTR; remove it from pages with low ROI!

Smart Pricing is opaque. Google doesn't tell you your Smart Pricing and while you can feel its effects, it's not easy to track down or influence. One thing you do have complete control over though — and one thing that's more important than any other for the success of your site — is content.

That's what I'm going to discuss in the next chapter.

11. Building Content — The Key to a Profitable AdSense Website

AdSense works better than just about every other type of online advertising for one simple reason: the ads are relevant to the content on your page. Users click on the ads because they find them interesting.

But those users come to your site because they find your *content* interesting.

If your site doesn't have good content, you're going to struggle to attract users and links. You won't be able to persuade anyone to visit your site, and without those visitors, you'll have no revenues.

Having the right content then is crucial to having good income from AdSense.

It's also pretty important to the relationship you have with Google's indexing mechanism — and it's vital for the success of your site.

That's why if you spend any time at all researching Internet-based opportunities, you'll come across the phrase "content is king" again and again.

It's a sensible position to adopt. No one visits a website to see ads, just as no one buys a magazine to look at the ads, however glossy they might be. Those pages of relative dullness are the price subscribers and buyers have to pay for the articles they want to read. The more they want to read the articles, the more they're willing to put up with the inconvenience of looking at ads for cars, perfumes and pet food.

When the articles isn't good enough and the ads are irritating enough, they put the magazine back on the shelf.

That's the challenge faced by any producer of content, and it's the same challenge that you're going to face as an Internet publisher.

The better you make your content, the larger your audience will become, the more willing they'll be to put up with the ads — and the more you'll be able to earn.

But just as the content of magazines and television shows cost money to create so your content will cost money to create too. You won't be able to charge hundreds of thousands of dollars for a minute's placement or a full-

page ad to cover those costs but you will need to know how much your content is costing you and what you can do to cut the costs.

11.1 The Value of Content

One company more than any other has understood the true value of content and what it takes to make money out of it online. Demand Media was launched in May 2006 by Richard Rosenblatt, a serial entrepreneur who had once been the Chairman of MySpace. Armed with \$355 million of start-up funds, he set about creating a giant online publishing company.

Today, as the owner of eHow.com, Livestrong.com and a host of other online properties, Demand Media's ad revenues are believed to top \$200 million. That income is generated from the 5,700 articles and videos produced daily by the company's 10,000-plus freelance contributors.

What has made Demand Media such a giant success — and what has made it such a controversial success — isn't just Demand Media's scale though. It's an approach that inverts the usual way in which publishers have made money online.

Publishers usually try to produce the best content they can, assuming that the higher the quality of their content, the higher their advertising revenues will rise and the greater their profits will become.

Demand Media works differently. It caps the price it pays for content, limiting the amount of time that writers will spend on it and restricting its quality.

The company has developed a series of algorithms that use search data to look for underserved subjects, develop titles that are likely to generate traffic, and predict — based on clickthrough rates, traffic flows and keyword values — the lifetime revenues of each article it might produce.

When the algorithm finds a subject that can generate more than the flat \$15 fee the company pays a freelancer to produce it, the article is added to a list for writers to accept and complete.

The result, not surprisingly, is content that's not particularly good, and Demand Media has come in for a lot of criticism for flooding the Internet with mass-produced, low-quality articles and videos.

But it is making streams of cash.

Without a \$355 million investment or an understanding of the kind of algorithms that Demand Media uses to spot content opportunities and assess

their value, the company's business model isn't one that small publishers are going to be able to emulate completely. But the principle is something that you can hold on to: content costs money to produce and the amount of money it will generate has as much to do with the size of its potential audience as the quality of the work itself.

You have to know how much you're investing in each article you're producing and how big an audience you can bring to it if you're going to create content that turns a profit.

That investment in production can come in two forms.

It can come in the time you take to produce the content yourself; and it can come in the fee you pay others to produce content for you.

11.2 Turn Your Passion Into Content — Choosing Your Site Topic

The most obvious way to create content is to write it yourself.

Pick a subject you like and pour your heart out. If you know everything there is to know about video games, you could set up a site filled with reviews, news and walkthroughs, and write all the articles. Your AdSense units will give you ads related to gaming and as long as they're positioned properly and look right they should give you more than enough revenue to fund your video gaming habit and then some. You can do the same thing for any topic you wanted. (note: it's tough to generate income in the gaming niche)

This is one of the important differences between a content farm like Demand Media and a small publishing company running a single blog or a small number of sites.

Demand Media doesn't just look at the keyword value of the articles it commissions. It also looks at the gap between the number of searches a subject generates and the number of Web pages that search engines offer in response. The fewer the pages offering rival content, the lower the competition and the greater the chances of landing on the first couple of pages of search results.

That kind of keywording targeting will be an important part of any for-profit website but the people who write Demand Media's content care little about the subject. They might be writing about cleaning radiators one week and brass rubbing the next. It will then be up to Demand Media to put those articles where people can see them.

It shows. It shows in the quality of the articles and in the usefulness of the content.

When you're creating a site of your own, it's going to take time before it generates reasonable income. It's going to take work to produce the content.

And it's going to be easier see through the time it takes for your site to build momentum by writing content you really enjoy producing.

That will also make it easier to produce good content. You'll already know the subject — whether it's fast cars, scrapbooking, or sailing — so you won't lose time doing extra research.

You'll be able to build a closer connection with readers and partner sites when you're on the same wavelength and share a genuine interest in the topic.

You'll stand a better chance of creating the kind of site that's able to pull in traffic naturally and build a permanent audience.

Most importantly, when you choose to write about a topic that you're passionate about, you'll enjoy yourself.

That's vital. You can make money with an AdSense-supported website. But you can also make money walking dogs, painting walls and flipping burgers. If you're going to go into business for yourself then you may as well choose to do something that makes you excited. That tends to happen most when you're talking online about something you'd want to talk about with your friends. It's when work feels least like work.

As you create a website then — whether it's a blog or a traditional site — your first challenge, the one you have to overcome before signing up for AdSense, before formatting your units or even picking a template, is to choose the subject of the site you want to create.

The good news when you ask yourself what you should be writing about, is that your first answer is usually the right one.

It could be sport or religion, hiking or bookbinding or anything else. The first thing you think of is likely to be the activity that's on your mind the most and the one that interests you the most.

That means it's also likely to be the one that you'll enjoy writing about the most.

But don't stop with the topic you first thought of. Most people have more than one interest, and those different interests will have different values and represent multiple revenue streams.

You could create one content site based on your professional knowledge. You could create another site based on your weekend activity, a third that draws on your particular family situation and a fourth on your campaigning.

That could give you a list of possible content topics that looks something like this:

1. Aesthetic dentistry.
2. Mountain biking.
3. Mixed vegan/omnivore families.
4. Finding homes for homeless dogs.

All of those topics would be interesting to you, and you could happily create content writing about all of them. You could produce a blog that explains dentistry techniques, discusses dental care and offers advice on finding a good dentist. There's a good chance that you'd pick up some valuable ads for toothpastes and tooth whiteners, and once your audience builds you might be able to add some affiliate relationships to local dentists.

Choose a niche within aesthetic dentistry, such as a site that focuses on children or a particular dental problem, and you'll be able to stand out from other sites and secure a slice of traffic looking for information about teeth.

If you preferred to write about mountain biking, you could put up a post filled with accounts of your latest trips, include pictures and trail tips or discuss equipment. Again, give the site a niche by localizing it or focusing on one particular kind of cycling and you'll find it easier to pick up traffic and retain a loyal audience.

Search on Google for "mountain biking," for example, and you'll have to wade through over 9 million results. Michael Green, publisher of www.bikeblognyc.com, ensures that his blog stands out by focusing on "urban bike culture in nyc and beyond." The blog has no shortage of ads and Michael is even adding a store, a simple way of increasing revenues.

Whichever of those four subjects you chose to write about, you'd be enjoying yourself, writing with passion and starting with a pile of knowledge already gathered that you can draw on for your posts.

The value of that knowledge though will vary, which is why keyword values will play a role. In general, you can expect that your professional knowledge — whether that's dentistry, plumbing or the laws concerning mergers and

acquisitions — will produce higher value ads. After all, you depend on that knowledge now to make a living. But it's worth checking keyword values and competition, and you might decide you'd rather work on a blog about your hobby than spend more time working on a professional field that you're keen to leave.

Once you've made your list of possible topics then, use Google's AdWords Keywords Tool to check the values of keywords associated with those subjects and identify niches within the subjects that you could focus on.

Then choose the topic you want to be spending your time on, because that time and the effort you're going to be putting into your blog do count.

Pick the wrong topic, choose a subject that you find dull or about which you have little to contribute, and there's a good chance that you'll run out of steam long before you've managed to build up an audience, let alone an income.

But what if writing isn't your thing? What if you're attracted to the idea of creating a publishing business, building an audience and turning it into cash, but don't want to write the content yourself?

You've still got options.

11.3 Buying Content and Hiring Writers

If you want to be a publisher rather than a content creator, then you can always pay someone to do the writing for you. That's Demand Media's approach and it clearly works for them. You can find freelancers on sites like Elance.com and Guru.com, or you can turn to a specialist content creation company like ConstantConversions.com to ask them to assign a writer to write articles and blog posts for you.

Social media can be a good place to look too. SendBlaster, a company that produces distribution software for email marketers, was able to pick up a number of expert bloggers after it put out a call on Twitter for contributors to its new blog.

The advantage of hiring writers is that you can be sure you're getting good content with little effort. On the other hand, you have to make that money back.

That's going to be the tricky bit. Rates can vary tremendously, and there's no shortage of offers on Elance for writers willing to accept \$5 for 300-word articles.

There is a shortage though of writers with English as their first language willing to accept them, and the number of *good* writers who are willing to work at that rate is just about zero.

When it comes to bottom-end rates, Demand Media's \$15 for 300 words is big enough to set the standard. At the higher ends — the amounts you'd have to pay for content good enough to combine with your marketing to build a loyal audience — you can expect pay 7-10 cents a word for posts of 500-1,000 words.

When you're adding at least one post a week — the minimum you need to keep an audience coming back regularly — that can get pretty expensive. And when your audience is small, as it will be at the beginning, you can quickly find that you're burning through savings much faster than the ad money is coming in.

The option taken by many publishers is to start cheap. They buy a bulk-load of five-dollar posts and use them to bring in the ads, win a place on the search engines and start to attract traffic and clicks.

I think that's a mistake. Become known for producing poor content and you'll struggle to rebrand your site in the eyes of your niche audience. When you're ready to move up to higher quality content, you'll probably need a complete redesign, with all that entails for placement testing and ad formatting.

And making that move won't be easy. Smart Pricing will already have pushed the values of your clicks down, making it even harder to turn a profit on those cheap posts. It's a slow way to get a site off the ground.

A better option is to choose a niche that you *can* write about yourself, even if you don't want to do it the long term. Get into the habit of writing at least once a week and use your own posts to give your blog a solid foundation.

If you're not confident of your writing ability or your spelling, make sure you use a spellchecker to clear out the typos, and you can even think about passing your articles to a copyeditor for review before publication. For between \$5 and \$10 a post, you'll be able to say what you want to say about a topic that interests you and still make it read professionally even if you're not a professional writer.

Once the blog is up and running, has an audience that trusts it, and ad revenues that are starting to look comfortable, then you can begin looking for paid contributors.

You might even find that because your blog already has a name, looking for those writers will become much easier.

In fact, when you have a big audience for your website, you might even discover that people want to contribute their articles for nothing.

11.4 Gathering Volunteer Writers to Contribute Content for Free

I started in publishing with a print magazine. The *Fort Worth Software Review* never made much in the way of ad revenue and as for its subscribers, I couldn't even persuade my mom to order a copy. But it did persuade software companies to send me a steady stream of free games to review.

Eventually, I had more games than I could play so I looked for other keen gamers who wanted free software in return for writing down what they thought.

I kept that concept when the Internet took off. I put the newsletter online, called it WorldVillage.com, and expanded into every topic about which people wanted to contribute.

Today, that site still gives me some valuable revenues — and I still don't pay the thousands of contributors who post their articles every month. Instead of games, they receive 50 percent of the AdSense revenues their articles generate.

But you don't even have to share advertising revenues with contributors to benefit from free, original content. Once your site is doing well, contributors will want to have their articles on your site because of the search engine optimization benefits those appearances will generate.

Instead of you paying them, you agree to add a bio that includes a link to their website. The higher the ranking of your own site, the more the link will raise their site — and the more direct traffic the link will generate. It pays more for the contributor to write the odd free post that includes a link than pocket a few bucks for the writing effort.

This kind of free contribution has become something of a standard practice on the Internet and once your blog becomes well-known, you should find that people are actually writing to you to offer guest posts.

Convert a few of those guests into regular contributors and you'll be able to cut back massively on the cost of production.

You can encourage people to write in by adding a tab or a link on your site soliciting guest posts. Even a line that says something like this can do the trick:

"We want YOU! We want your thoughts, articles and comments. Send your submissions to editor@yoursite.com and as long as they meet our criteria, we'll post them here."

You can then create a whole new set of pages for your users' submissions and put AdSense on each one of them.

While accepting guests posts can be a valuable way to generate free content, the best contributors will only offer posts in return for a link once your site has a good amount of traffic.

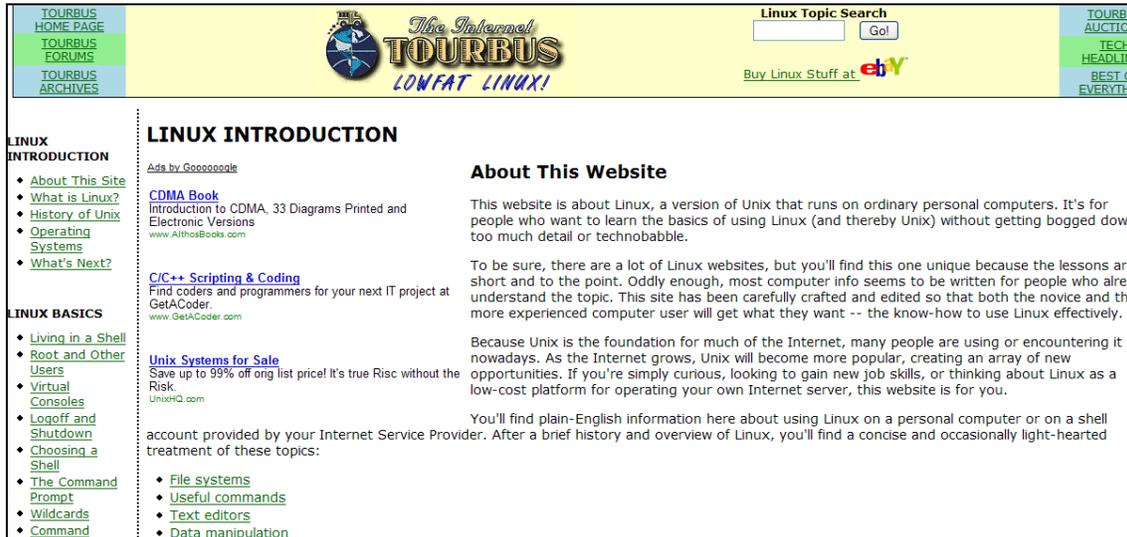
But there are other ways to find similar kinds of free articles.

The screenshot shows a webpage layout for an article. At the top, there is a navigation bar with icons for YouTube, a globe, a soccer ball, a computer monitor, a mail icon, and a car. Below this is a category menu: Arts, Business, Computers, Family, Games, Health, Home, Recreation, Science, Society, Sports, Technology. The article title is "Nifty Nemo Takes Off!" with a sub-header "Rate This Article: ★★★★★ (No Ratings Yet)". The author is "niftynemo" and the date is "Friday, November 19th, 2010". The article content includes a "GAME CHANGER" banner for "Pro Flight Simulator Review" with a video thumbnail showing a flight simulator cockpit. The text describes the simulator as a "GAME CHANGER" and provides a review. The sidebar on the right features a "Village Built By" section for "niftynemo" (joined November 19, 2010, 1 village) with buttons for "View Villager Profile" and "Send A Private Message". Below this are several sponsored links: "Investing In Gold", "Foreign Exchange Trading", and "bond funds". A "Recent Villages" section at the bottom of the sidebar shows a link for "Nifty Nemo Takes Off!" by niftynemo.

Fig. 11.1 Game reviews at www.worldvillage.com/softwarereviews/index.html. Mmm... free content.

11.5 Breathing New Life into Old Content

Blogs have to be written all the time, but if you've ever written anything in the past, don't just let it gather dust on your shelf — or on your hard drive. You can't make any money if no one reads it but you can make money even from old works once you put advertising on it.



The screenshot shows the homepage of 'The Internet TOURBUS LOWFAT LINUX!'. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links for 'TOURBUS HOME PAGE', 'TOURBUS FORUMS', and 'TOURBUS ARCHIVES'. A search bar is located on the right, labeled 'Linux Topic Search'. Below the navigation, there are several sections: 'LINUX INTRODUCTION' with a list of links like 'About This Site', 'What is Linux?', and 'History of Unix'; 'LINUX BASICS' with links like 'Living in a Shell', 'Root and Other Users', and 'Virtual Consoles'; and 'About This Website' which contains text about the site's purpose. There are also several advertisements, including one for 'CDMA Book' and another for 'C/C++ Scripting & Coding'. The layout is somewhat cluttered with many small text links and ads.

Fig. 11.2 Bob Rankin makes money from old notes. Note the position of his ads. They're prominent but could he get more clicks by putting them on the right? He could also have added an AdLink unit above the list of links on the left.

Low Fat Linux by Bob Rankin, for example, was written years ago. It's not even available on Amazon any more, but you can read the entire book for free at www.lowfatlinux.com.

Bob's content has done its job of selling copies. Now it's doing a second job, selling clicks to ads.

What have you got lying around that could be earning you money?

You might have an ebook of your own that isn't selling very well, for example. Instead of continuing to push it for \$19.95 on a sales page that rarely converts, why not turn it into Web pages and make it available for free? Paste your AdSense code on the pages and you may make more from the ads than from sales of the book.

Repurposing old content is a fantastic way to draw water from your own well.

For a long time, I did this with a book that I'd written about online dating. The home page contained a list of chapter headings with a skyscraper ad on the left and a Google search box beneath it. There was also a banner on the

top, which I expected people largely to ignore. That ad did however make the ad unit look less commercial and the text ads matched the list of chapter headings (although I used red for the links to match the color scheme of the page).

The screenshot shows the BestDates.info website. At the top left is a large image of a couple in a field with a red rose. The site title "BestDates.info" is in a cursive font. Below the image is a large red "INDEX" heading. To the right of the index is a table of contents with 10 chapters. On the left side, there are three advertisements for dating services. At the top right, there is a banner for "Finding the Love of Your Life" CD coaching series.

Chapter	Topic
1	Introduction: Internet Dating Works!
2	How Dating Websites Work
3	How to Pick a Dating Website Dating Website reviews Specialty Dating Services
4	How to save on Membership Fees
5	How to Write an Impressive Profile
6	How to Click your Dating Photo
7	Finding out who's right for you (and who's not!) Setting Mutual Expectations
8	Time-saving Tips and Tricks
9	Online Dating Etiquette
10	Taking your Relationship Offline

100% Free Online Dating
Full Featured On-Line Dating No Cost, No Gimmicks, Just Free
www.fleingles.com

Find Your Match- Free
Browse Photos and Meet Singles Free Search and Profiles.
www.True.com

Matchmaker
Browse Thousands Of Singles In Your Area. Sign Up For Free!
www.HeartDetectives.com

Finding the Love of Your Life –
The New 12 CD Coaching Series
[Listen Now!](#)

Fig. 11.3 BestDates.info — Making money by using old content to bring people together.

On the internal pages, I pushed the ads a little harder. Above the fold, there was little real content except for ads. To stop people from scrolling away immediately though, I used a nice big picture. I knew that users would stop to look at that image, then look at the ads, and only after they've done that will they scroll down to read the page.

I also put a long list of links on the left under the skyscraper to help the ads blend in and placed a third unit at the bottom of the page next to the free download.



Fig. 11.4 Ads and an image above the fold at BestDates.info.

The best thing about that strategy was that I had so many pages of content to use. Each page became a separate chance to capture more clicks. I could even spin off the content on those pages and market them as individual articles or websites.

Eventually though, once the content had been online and static for years, traffic and revenues started to fall, so I used my old content in a completely new way.

I took the book off individual pages, promoted the ebook as a free giveaway to bring people to the site, then offered them a bunch of free AdSense articles about dating.

The clicks and the articles just keep coming.

BestDates.info

Welcome to BestDates.info, your source for online dating site reviews and information. We can help you find the love of your life! Browse our [articles](#), read reviews of the best [online dating services](#) and check out our ebook, [Online Dating Secrets](#). We hope you enjoy the site!

Online Dating is For You [www.antangle.com](#)
Find and meet new friends Simple, Clean, Easy online dating

Army singles [ArmySingles.com](#)
Official site. Connect worldwide. 100% Register free. No spam ever.

Free Love Numerology [www.pasqualina.com/free](#)
Your birthdate to tell your future. Free online prediction.

Ethiopian online dating [www.JustEthiopian.com](#)
Matches adult Ethiopian for date with a prospect of marriage

Ads by Google

Free Ebook!

Download a FREE copy of the ebook, "Online Dating Secrets: The Guide for Real People Who Want Real Relationships". This fantastic 66-page PDF document tells you everything you need to know about selecting a dating site, creating a great profile, taking your photo, preparing for your dates and more. It's all FREE, so click here to instantly download your copy! [Online Dating Secrets](#)

FREE Online Dating

DATING ARTICLES
[Should You Send Save The Date Notices To Your Guests?](#)
[Maintaining Up To Date Medical Records and Emergency Information](#)
[Improving Customer Relationships: Beyond the Buzz](#)
[The Relationship Between Colour & Sales](#)
[How Do We Know When A Relationship Has A Future?](#)
[Dating Online - Can Be Less Stressful](#)
[Online Dating](#)
[Dating/Relationships](#)

Fig. 11.5 Free ebook, anyone? Give out old content again and get to serve ads — and could they be more prominent than that?

11.6 Add Public Domain Works To Your Site

You can do whatever you want with your own old content, but here are a couple of really amazing facts: you can also do anything you want with other people's old content; and you own a lot more content than you know.

You own the copyright to anything you create. It happens automatically. While registering your pictures or written works with the copyright office can deliver some benefits in the event of infringement, it's not necessary.

Write an article and it's yours. No one else can do anything with it without asking you first... for a while at least.

The length of that "while" varies from country to country but it's usually around the lifetime of the content creator plus 50 or 70 years.

What does that mean for you?

It means that all of those classic works of literature, all of those old books, articles, recordings and pictures are free for anyone to reproduce.

Publishing companies have been doing this for years. When you bought a Jane Austen novel in a bookstore, not a dime of the cover price went to Jane Austen. She's long dead. Not a dime went to her family or to her estate. Some money went to the bookstore. Some went to the printer and to the guy who packed the book in a box and brought it to the store.

But most of the money went to the publishing company, even though that company wasn't even around when Jane Austen was writing.

The same is true of the works of Shakespeare, the metaphysical poets and just about any work of literature you can think of. It's all available for anyone to use.

Anyone (including you) can publish, re-publish and/or sell the works without paying a commission to anyone!

You could build a site with hundreds of pages just by publishing one public domain book on your site! Think of all the AdSense impressions you can deliver. The possibilities are endless.

There are a couple of very useful sources that are packed with classic works that are out of copyright. (They're also good for reading, by the way...):

Project Gutenberg

Project Gutenberg is the oldest producer of free electronic books on the Internet. Its collection now numbers more than 33,000 ebooks produced by hundreds of volunteers. You can check out the entire library, which includes formats for a bunch of ebook readers, at www.gutenberg.org.

You can't download the ebooks and sell them — someone has put effort into creating online versions of the books' content. But you can download HTML and text formats of the books and republish them on the Web surrounded by ads.

Public Domain Riches

Very few people have mastered the art of turning public domain works into cash like marketer Yanik Silver has, and he's put together a course that shows others how they can do the same.

If public domain works is something you want to look at, then it's worth picking up all the information you can. Yanik explains how to tell whether a work is available and what copyright notices mean, among other useful information. You can sign up at www.publicdomainriches.com.

The downside of using works from Project Gutenberg is that hundreds of other people may already be using them. You can try picking less popular works to get better search engine placement but you're also likely to pick up fewer readers.

Reading on a computer screen isn't very comfortable either, and the growth of e-readers and mobile devices now give people a better alternative, even if it means reading Kindle books on their iPhones.

Worse, the kind of keywording and clickthrough rates you're going to see on a page of classic fiction are going to be pretty low. People come to books to read, not search, and certainly not to buy. The content will be free but you'll have to work hard to put several hundred pages on the Web, and wait for quite some time before you have enough ad clicks to make that work pay.

One kind of free content that might produce better results is government-produced content.

That might not sound very interesting — and a report about road improvements in California reproduced in full on the Internet might not pick up a huge amount of traffic — but there is plenty of very interesting content that was produced by the US Government, and which is now in the public domain.

Photographs, in particular, can make for some fantastic website eye-candy.

All of those pictures produced by NASA, shot by military photographers or created on behalf of government bodies belong to the public and can be used by the public — even to make money.

NASA's website at www.nasa.gov has a page regarding photo guidelines that's worth reading but for the most part, those restrictions consist of little more than providing credit and not using the NASA logo.

You can find some images to use on their website, but photo-sharing site Flickr has a section called The Commons which includes thousands more. It contains images provided by institutions that include the Library of Congress, The Smithsonian and dozens of others who are using the site as a form of crowdsourced image-tagging. Flickr's members are encouraged to add keywords to the images to help others find them.



Fig. 11.6 NASA's shot of the world from Apollo 17 showed the southern polar ice cap for the first time. Yes, you own it, your taxes paid for it, and if you put some text and an ad around it, you can earn from it. Source: NASA.

Not all of the images are in the public domain but many are, including photos from NASA, photographs by Ansel Adams, works created during the Depression and museum-loads of other historical pictures.

It's the kind of content that can easily build an audience and attract visitors — and it's all free.

While the images themselves can be very impressive, Google can do nothing with them. The site isn't capable of indexing photographs, neither for the search engine nor for AdSense. The challenge that comes with plundering Flickr's Commons images — or any other free photographs — is adding text that's interesting enough to put the picture in context and which contains enough keywords to please the search engine and generate good ads.

That's not too difficult though and with millions of images available, there's no reason you couldn't be adding a free photo a day, tossing in a 200-word description and enjoying the benefits of images that you own.

11.7 The Sin of Article Spinning

Finally, one strategy that a number of publishers use as a content shortcut is article spinning. They take articles already online — often content posted on the websites of competitors — and pay a freelance writer perhaps five bucks to rewrite the article.

It's known as article spinning and the idea is to change the words just enough to beat the search engines, an accusation of copyright infringement and claim that the publisher is not really plagiarizing the work of others.

They really are, and the results are rarely worthwhile. For five dollars you'd struggle to find a writer with English as their first language who's willing to spend time looking for another way to say the same thing that someone else has already said while stealing their work.

There's nothing wrong with taking your own content, rewriting it and submitting it to different websites. That can be a useful strategy if you're posting old articles to syndication services as a way of building traffic, for example. Spinning can be used to make old indexed content, look like new content to Google.

But that content is yours, and you can do anything you want with it. Articles that others have written aren't yours and rewriting them for your own website just feels wrong — and it's unlikely, too, to bring you much in the way of way of traffic, audience or clicks.

After all, you're choosing to operate in a field in which you know there's competition, and that competition knows the subject much better than you ever will. That's like settling for being number two when you could pick a subject at which you genuinely excel and aiming to be number one.

The same is true of automated content, which is really just a form of computer-generated spinning. There are a number of programs you can use to do this, although the numbers have fallen over the last few years as publishers have come to understand that a site filled with low quality, barely readable content doesn't cover the cost of the software bought to create it.

The folks at Google have never been crazy about pre-fabricated, useless content and it's unlikely your users will be either. And it's worth remembering though that Smart Pricing was introduced precisely because of sites like these: sites with low-quality content get low advertising prices.

It's quite possible that having built your site, you'll find that the prices you receive will drop because you're not sending the advertisers users who are genuinely interested in their products.

Worse, if you use spun content in the same AdSense account as sites with high-quality content your Smart Pricing could fall right across the board.

The best way to ensure a high result from Smart Pricing is to give advertisers traffic that wants their product. Good content is the best way to do that.

12. Making AdSense Work with Internet Communities and Forums

Throughout this book, I've talked frequently about making revenue from blogs. That's only because a blog is the easiest type of website to create and monetize with AdSense, but it's certainly not the only type you can monetize with AdSense.

Other valuable places to put AdSense include community sites and forums.

On sites like these, users generate most of the content. That gives you a break from having to think up new content every week, although you will have to moderate the discussions, or find volunteers dedicated enough to your site to do it for you.

More worrying from the point of view of advertising is that when users are creating the content, you cannot completely control the keywords or the topics. AdSense might toss out some surprising ads and you'll need to make sure that have some alternate ads handy in case AdSense pulls up a series of non-paying public service ads.

However, unlike passive surfers who like to explore your website for relevant information, forum members are very focused on their messages and the responses they attract.

Some publishers that play host to Internet communities have complained of low cost per click, scattered keywords with low content relevance, and negligible CTRs from users who visit a site so regularly that they become blind to ads promoting products in which they have little interest. But done correctly, Internet communities and forum pages can be a hidden gold-mine which inspires fanatical loyalty, repeat visits, unique content and a high level of user involvement with the content.

Mega-brands such as Apple and Harley Davidson were built on the same foundation: a deep sense of personal bonding, high involvement with the product and strong referrals. You can achieve the same result with your website!

While all Internet communities are not the same, they do have the same key strengths. You just need to recognize them and find new ways to cash in on them — as some savvy web publishers are doing already!

12.1 Creating Your Forum

Creating a forum used to be the kind of thing that required weeks of careful planning, lots of liaising with a developer and enough testing and squishing bugs by hand to make you wonder whether the whole thing was worthwhile.

Not any more.

Now, even if the only website you own is a Wordpress blog, you can just download a plug-in and install it on your site, and you'll have the framework for your forum.

There are a number of forum plugins available for Wordpress. The oldest and most popular is WP-Forum but it hasn't been updated for a while. For small forums that may not matter but really large communities might want something a little more secure.

In that case, you can choose between Tal.ki (which even detects your theme and matches it), bbPress, Simple: Press, and Zingiri. There are plenty of options there and they all have their strengths and weaknesses, but after just a few hours of effort, all of them will add a forum to your Wordpress blog.

If you're not using WordPress, you can still easily add a forum to your website. Forumotion.com is a free software service that lets anyone create an attractive forum. PHPBB.com comes included with most hosting accounts and can be installed in just a few clicks.

My preference for forum software has always been Vbulletin and I'm using that for our Socrates Theme Forum.

But while anyone can build a forum, it doesn't mean that anyone should. There's little point in creating a forum until you have plenty of traffic and, more importantly, active users.

A forum functions as a club room. It's a place where your users can expand on the issues you raise on your site by asking their own questions and weighing in on the answers to questions raised by others.

There's no hard traffic figure that you need to pass before you can create a forum but if you're finding that your articles are generating page loads of comments, if you have lots of Twitter followers and Facebook visitors, and if your users want to talk both to you and among themselves, then you're ready.

Load up the forum, get the discussions rolling, and be sure to join in from time to time with your own expert insight.

12.2 Google's Forum Heat Map

Just as Google produced a heat map for standard websites, they've done the exact same thing for forums. You can find that map, together with the company's own suggestions at adsense.blogspot.com/2005/10/six-adsense-optimization-tips-for.html.

On the whole, Google's tips are quite sensible. They recommend that a skyscraper on the left is a good idea and that horizontal ads should be placed beneath each forum entry. They also suggest putting a leaderboard at the bottom of the page, but before the footer, and opting in to take image ads.

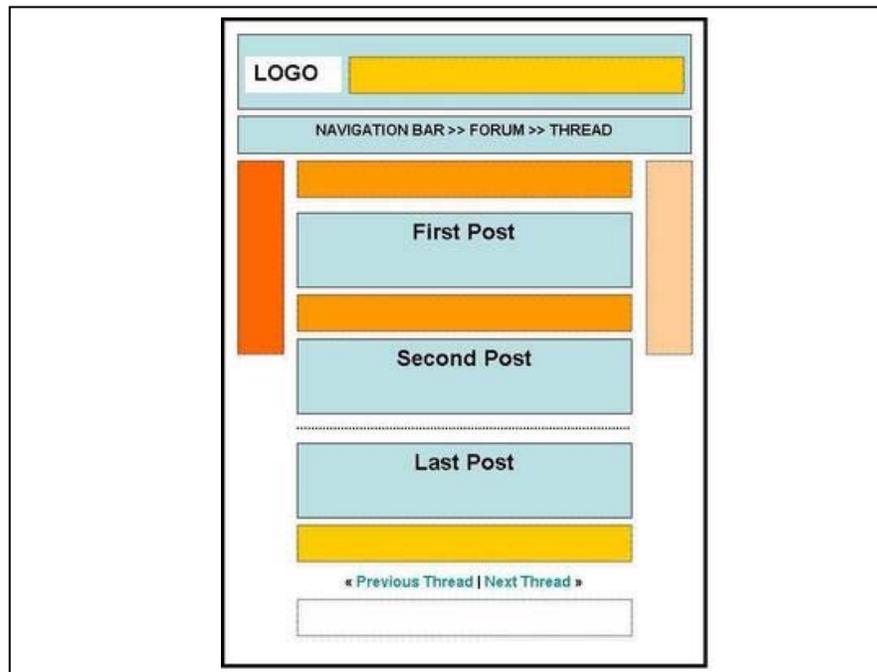


Fig. 12.1 Google's Forum Heat Map.

I'm not sure about all of those suggestions though. Here's why:

- Forum Members are very focused on their topic of discussion. Ads that appear on the top, bottom or side margins of the page may not distract them from their main objective — which is to read and write the posts.

- The best way to capture their attention is to put your ads at the end of the top posting on each page. Posts that appear on top are read more often, and usually set the tone for the rest of the discussion.

Many web publishers swear by Google's 728x90 leaderboard ad with two ads trailing top-of-the-page posts.

- What gets the most clicks in any forum? The forum buttons of course! Put your ads close to these useful buttons, sought out by users to search threads, create a new thread or post a reply. Check out this simple example that I used for a long time and with great success on DealofDay.com:

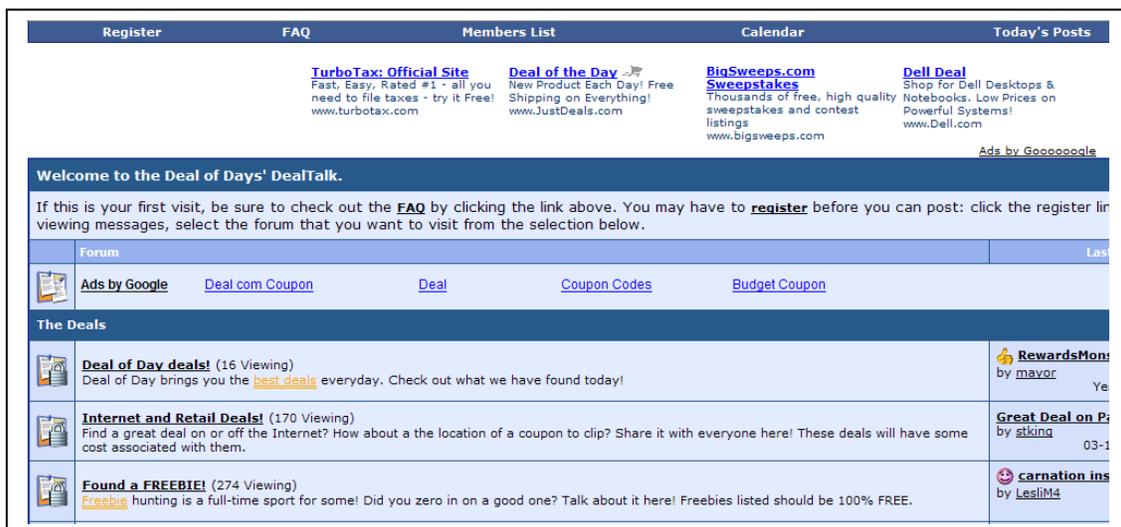


Fig. 12.2 Ad units on the old DealofDay.com forum.

There are two kinds of ad units on this forum page. First, I placed a leaderboard immediately beneath the navigation bar. It's impossible to miss there. Users have to look at the navigation bar and when they do, they'll see the ads.

But just look at the second ad unit. Can you see it? It's a horizontal link unit embedded in a space usually used to describe the thread.

I've even managed to make the "Ads by Google" line — which is usually a click-killer — match my thread titles. And because the ads are so relevant, there's a great chance they'll generate clicks. Even better, users on forums are used to clicking several times to get the content they need. They'll click on the general title of the forum thread, then the entries and the user profiles and so on.

That means that when they click on a link unit, there's a very good chance that they'll also click on the ads that turn up.

So that's two great ways to use ads on a forum: by placing them beneath the navigation bar; and by embedding them in the thread table.

There's another method though and it's so easy you'll be amazed that everyone isn't doing it...

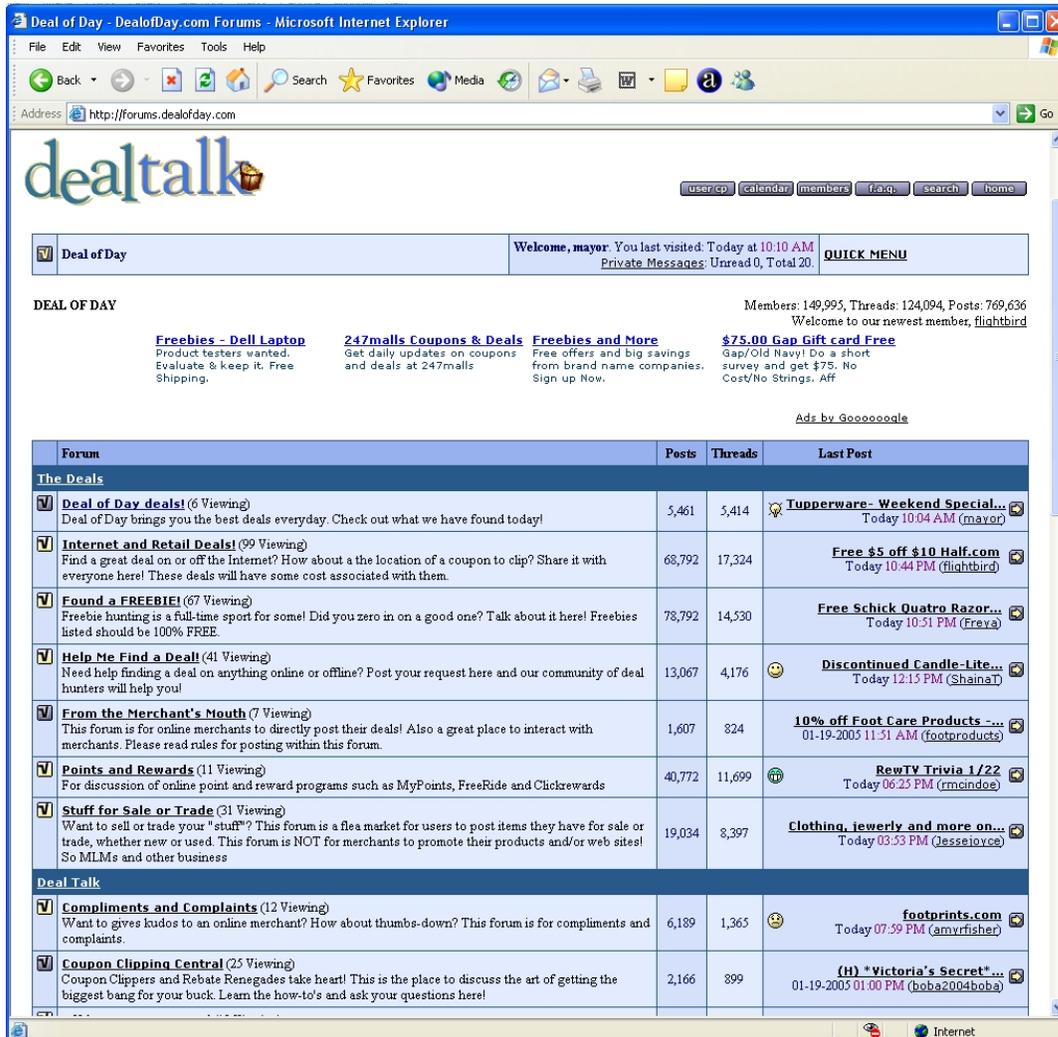


Fig. 12.3 Spot The Deal of the Day.

Do you see that little title above the ad unit, the one that says "Deal Of Day"?

Without ever asking users to click, the heading "Deal of Day" turns the Google Ads into a recommended resource for finding the day's top deals.

Impressive forum stats, such as the number of members, threads and posts appear alongside the ads, making them look more legitimate. The sheer number of users creates a sense of urgency to check them out before other members get their hands on the coveted deals!

When you're looking to place ads in your forum then, here are a few guidelines you can follow:

- **Make sure you apply the same text formatting as the user-generated content.**
It's important to gain your users' attention first — then pitch your message when they're all ears!
- **Try putting the ads at the bottom of each post.**
If users spot the pattern and your clickthroughs start to drop, try putting the ads at the bottom of every alternate post. The key is to keep them guessing!
- **Don't break up a post by putting ads in the middle.**
Since forums have user-generated content, people are more sensitive to these intrusions and might be offended if you make it seem as if the ads are their personal recommendations.
- **Allow users to pull up targeted ads with a Google Search Box.**
How often has a forum posting piqued your interest enough to launch a Google search? Once? Twice? All the time? If you're anything like me, you'll find that the Google Search Box is an added convenience, welcomed by most users. It gives your visitors a reason to stay, and if they click an ad from the results page, you make money!

Which of these strategies will work for your Forums?

Only testing will tell because different users in different niches on different sites may react differently to these forum placement guidelines. Regular visitors on forums that have been online for a while, for example, may eventually become accustomed to the ad placements and ignore them. A strategy that appeared to be working well then can suddenly fall away as users get used to seeing the ads and stop clicking them.

At that point, you might have to think of a complete redesign. While the content of the site itself will remain the same — it will still have primarily user-generated questions, news and answers — the new look will be enough to deliver a refresh to users' habits. They'll start to see the ads again.

This is what I did on DealofDay.com. The site has been online since 1995, an incredibly long time in the timespan of the Internet, and while it's grown, it has also maintained a solid user base which loves the site, enjoys the bargains but clicked ads at a decreasing rate.

To solve the problem, we totally revamped the site, putting the ads front and center. This is what users now see when they enter a forum post:

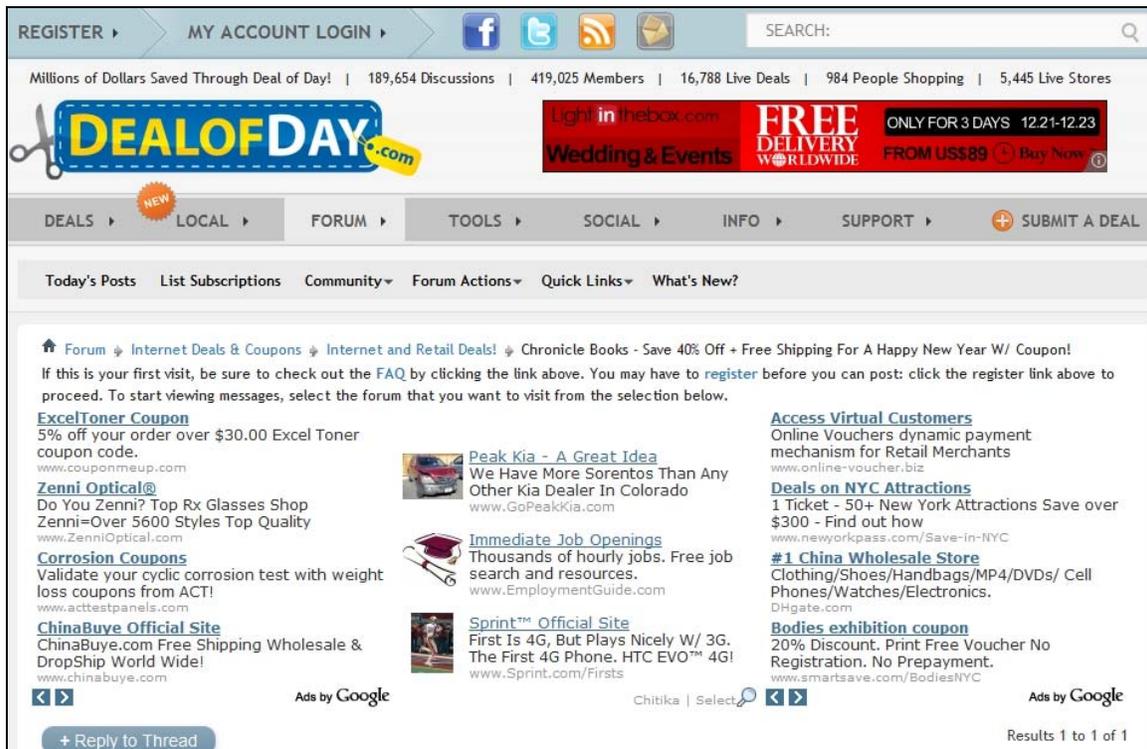


Fig. 12.4 The new DealofDay.com puts it all above the fold.

Now there's a graphic leaderboard at the top of the page. Those sorts of ads usually do poorly but by placing it next to the logo and squeezing it between interesting facts about the forum and navigation bar, we make it unmissable. Users have to look right past it if they're to reach the search bar or the social media buttons.

The bulk of the area above the page though is dominated by ads. We've placed them in frames to keep the neatly separated, and placed a Chitika unit in the middle. The graphic images that come with Chitika ads help to break up the space and make the ads look like content.

This is about as in-your-face as you can get.

Or almost as in-your-face as you can get, because it gets even better. This is what happens below the fold:

Today 05:08 AM #1

[Ads by Google](#) [Coupon Deal](#) [Promo Coupon](#) [Coupon Codes](#) [Rebate Deals](#)

mayor: Chronicle Books - Save 40% Off + Free Shipping For A Happy New Year W/ Coupon!

Chronicle Books now offers 40% off on all calendars, planners, journals and more to kick off the New Year. Plus take advantage of a free shipping. All you have to do is use coupon code "CAL40" at check out.

Get this deal here: [Chronicle Books - Save 40% Off + Free Shipping For A Happy New Year W/ Coupon!](#)

Related DealofDay Deals

- [Shop4tech - Get The Black Mini Square Metal Clock with Spy Camera Motion Detection DVR For Just \\$33.96 + Free Shipping W/ Coupon!](#)
- [Shop4tech - Get The Red Microsoft ZJA-00002 Arc 2.4G Wireless Laser Mouse For Just \\$25.49 + Free Shipping W/ Coupon!](#)
- [Shop4tech - Get The Alarm Clock W/ Fun Gun For Just \\$28.86 + Free Shipping W/ Coupon!](#)
- [Ice.com - 1 Carat Black & White Diamond Sterling Silver Bracelet For Only \\$175!](#)
- [Ice.com - Enjoy 68% Off Savings On A 4 Carat Garnet, Amethyst & Blue Topaz Sterling Silver 3 Ring Set + Christmas Shipping!](#)

Share with Facebook (0) Reply With Quote

+ Reply to Thread

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Peak Kia - A Great Idea
We Have More Sorentos Than Any Other Kia Dealer In Colorado
[www.GoPeakKia.com](#)

Get 10% Off Instantly
Electricque Boutique instant discounts, hottest fashions, lowest prices
[ElectricqueBoutique.com/DiscountCode](#)

Discounts
New Local Coupons Daily - Sign Up For Weforia Today.
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Chitika | Select

Peak Kia - A Great Idea
We Have More Sorentos Than Any Other Kia Dealer In Colorado
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Chitika | Select

« J&R - Save 70% Off On A Panasonic 4GB SDHC Memory Card Class 10 + Free Shipping

Fig. 12.5 Spot the content below the field.

Now there's a horizontal link unit immediately above the main post, followed by more content, then two more big Chitika ads. Beneath that are the links to related threads that lead to more content.

You could say that this new DealofDay design takes the exact opposite approach to the usual AdSense strategy. Instead of blending the ads into the content, we now blend the content into the ads!

That's a pretty extreme example and it works for us not just because there are so many so well blended ads on the page and in such prominent positions but also because the site itself is about deals. The content itself is similar to the ads.

That might make it difficult to copy exactly, but you can experiment with prominent ad placement on forums, especially on those forums that have been around for a while.

And there's one more feature that's worth examining closely on DealofDay: the use of Chitika ads.

Not only do those ads look different to AdSense units, they also allow me to place more ads on the page than Google alone permits.

I'm going to talk more about supplemental ad programs in Chapter 15.

13. EARNING FROM ADSENSE IN RSS FEEDS

So we've seen how you can put AdSense on websites and blogs, and we've seen how you can use them on forums, a useful addition to a growing website.

You can now also put AdSense in RSS feeds.

Google came late to this party. One of the few advantages offered by Yahoo's Publisher Network was the ability to place contextualized ads in the posts that Real Simple Syndication pushed to users who preferred to pick up their content in a specialized reader instead of on a website. For publishers, that was always an option that brought serious benefits: although RSS subscriptions maintained audiences, those audiences weren't seeing ads. Being able to deliver ads together with each RSS post then looked like the perfect solution.

And for some publishers AdSense in RSS has indeed turned out to be a valuable addition to their revenues. Professional blogger Darren Rowse has said that a full 10 percent of his AdSense earnings are generated through clicks on his RSS ads.

That might suggest that Google's delay in producing an AdSense for Feeds product gave them time to get it right. But it's not as simple as that. The truth, in fact, might be that they took too long and turned up just as the train was leaving the station.

Back in 2004, when RSS feeds started to take off, Bloglines dominated the market with its reader. The service appeared to have such potential that Ask Jeeves, now Ask.com, snapped the company up a year later for an undisclosed sum. Google too, quickly weighed in with its own reader and rapidly shot into first place. By 2007, Google had a full 59 percent of a growing market and Bloglines was still in second place with just 33 percent.

By 2010, that battle was over. Ask.com shut Bloglines down completely but the reason for the closure wasn't the competition generated by Google's reader. It was a change in the way people used the Internet.

Announcing the end of Bloglines, Ask.com wrote on its blog:

"The Internet has undergone a major evolution. The real-time information RSS was so astute at delivering (primarily, blog feeds) is now gained through conversations, and consuming this information has become a social experience. As Steve Gillmor pointed out in TechCrunch last year, being locked in an RSS reader makes less and

less sense to people as Twitter and Facebook dominate real-time information flow.... As a result, RSS aggregator usage has slowed significantly, and Bloglines isn't the only service to feel the impact. The writing is on the wall."

Instead of using their readers to find content they want to see, users are now relying on links placed on Facebook and recommendations made by the people they follow on Twitter.

That decline could be seen in Darren Rowse's figures. While an overall share of 10 percent of AdSense earnings isn't bad — especially when you're a six-figure blogger like Darren — those figures were actually maintained by rising impressions, and there was a big difference between the eCPMs reported by his AdSense for Feeds units and those supplied by his AdSense for Content units.

Worse, that gap was growing.

While the content placed on Darren Rowse's Web pages were becoming more valuable, the content sent through his RSS feeds was becoming *less* valuable.

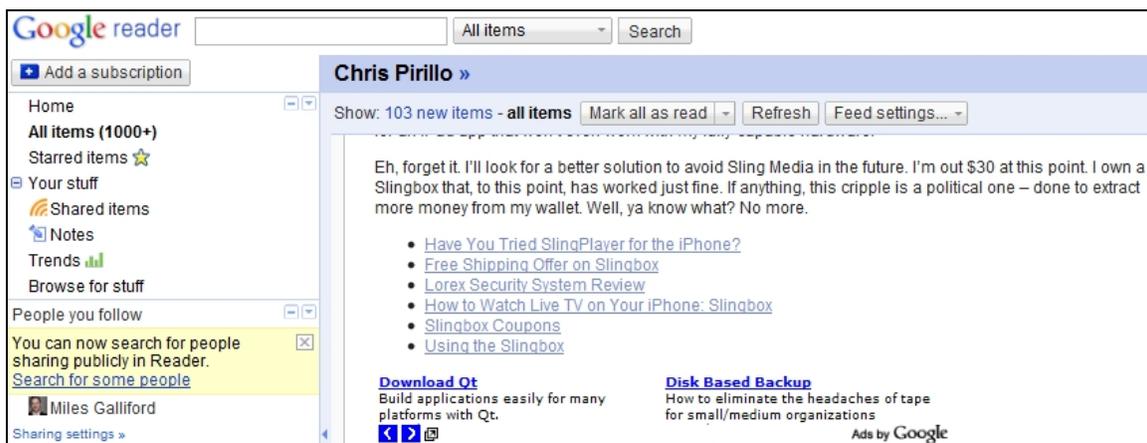


Fig. 13.1 An AdSense unit appears at the bottom of a Chris Pirillo post in Google Reader.

So does that mean AdSense publishers should tiptoe straight past the AdSense for Feeds product?

Not necessarily. RSS feeds might be in decline but they haven't faded away completely. Some people do still read them. They do still enable publishers to hold on to readerships and bring visitors back to their sites — and you'll also want to use RSS to send automated headlines and links to Twitter and Facebook streams.

As long as some of your users are picking up your content in readers instead of on websites, you'll want to make sure that they can see your ads.

You just have to make sure that you optimize your ads in order get as much as you can out of that declining eCPM.

13.1 Get Your RSS Feed Content Right

The fall in Darren Rowse's AdSense for Feeds eCPM was to be expected. As RSS usage has declined so has its value to advertisers, pushing prices down. Less predictable was the big gap between the different kinds of feeds.

According to Darren Rowse, the feeds sent by his ProBlogger account — articles sent to professional Internet users — have twice as many subscribers as the feeds sent by his Digital Photography School blog.

The photography feed though earns *ten* times as much as the ProBlogger feeds.

Those are two very different kinds of blogs providing very different kinds of content to very different kinds of readers.

The people who pick up content about blogging through RSS feeds are going to be fairly sophisticated. They're used to seeing AdSense units, they're familiar with them, and they know to ignore them. They're also looking for information rather than a purchase so the kinds of special offers and products that are likely to appear in the AdSense units are less likely to appeal to them. They're a much tougher sell.

Readers of Darren's photography blog however are enthusiasts willing to make purchases related to their hobby. Because they're being offered products, and because the ads they see match their desire to buy, those ads get clicks.

That might suggest that feeds that contain content about products will do better than feeds that offer information. But that isn't necessarily true. Another site that reports doing well out of AdSense for Feeds is MoneyWiseMoms.com, a blog published by "Gina," a stay-at-home-mom who provides recipes and homemaking advice interspersed with links to special offers.

This is a blog that primarily delivers information rather than product reviews, but it does talk to an audience that's looking to make purchase a — although

frugal ones — and Gina’s About page stresses the value of an RSS subscription as a way of staying up to date with the blog.

Gina has reported that AdSense for RSS delivers as much as 15 percent of her AdSense revenues.

There’s no shortage of other publishers though who have reported that they put AdSense in their RSS feeds, saw that it was generating pennies and took it off again. Much will depend on the kind of content you’re sending, and you’ll have to test to see if AdSense for Feeds works for you.

But to give the service a chance, you will have to make sure that you set it up right.

13.2 Formatting AdSense for RSS

Google provides a range of formatting options for its RSS ads. Some of them are fairly difficult and will need testing to get right.

On the new interface, you can find AdSense for Feeds directly under the AdSense for Content link. The name of the unit is chosen for you, although you can change it later if you really want, but so is the size of the ads. Google matches the size and the format of the ad to the format of the RSS feed.

That’s a real problem. You can end up with ads that look like half-banners and you can end up with square ads that look completely different — but you have no control over either. Google doles out the ads and if you happen to know that one type of ad will do better than another, tough luck.

Or rather, tough tweaking, because there are a few things you can do to influence the size and formats of the ads you receive.

While you can’t choose the format of the ad, you can choose whether it appears as an image or as text. Most publishers, I think, will do better with text ads than image ads. RSS subscribers tend to be looking for the information in the content, not for pretty pictures. They want simplicity and they’re more likely to react to the links in a text ad than the picture in an image ad.

Choose to receive only image ads, and you’ll not only be drawing on a smaller inventory — and therefore receiving less well-targeted ads — you’ll also be restricting your ads to the image formats. Choose either to receive only text ads or a combination of text and image ads and you’ll increase the

chances of receiving ads in a horizontal format that might suit your content best.

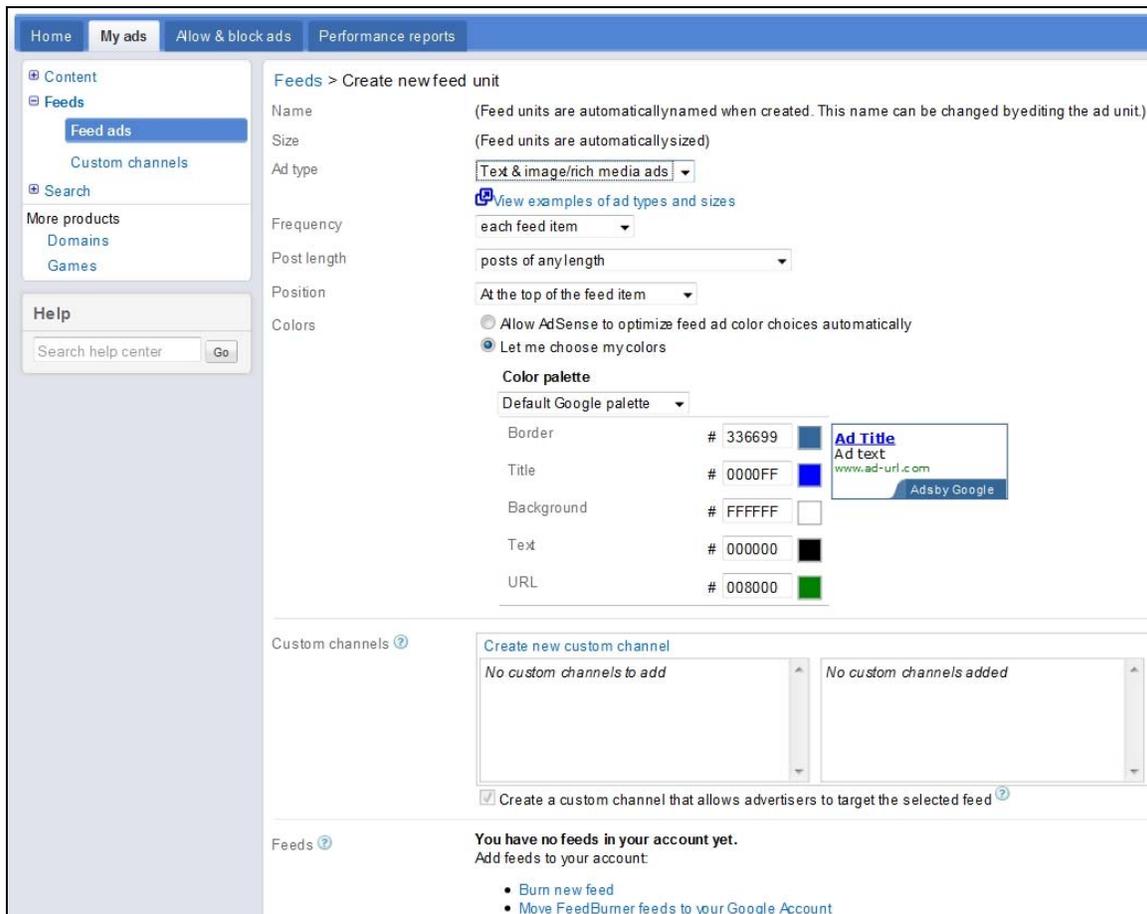


Fig. 13.2 AdSense for Feeds presents some tough optimization choices.

The only way to know which is best for certain though is to test and tweak. You can create channels for your AdSense for Feeds ads, so set up one channel for text-only ads and monitor the results for a week. Then switch to image and text ads, create a second channel and compare the results.

The remaining choices are much simpler. Google lets you restrict the appearance of the ads by frequency and by length. You can show the ads as infrequently as one post in four, and only in posts that are longer than 500 words, if you want.

The benefit here is that showing too many ads too frequently may lead to ad blindness but I think the risk is relatively small. The default position should be to show ads on all of your posts.

There may be exceptions to this rule though.

When you set up your RSS feed, you can choose whether to show only a headline and a small amount of text, forcing subscribers to come to the site to read more, or to put all of the article into the feed, allowing subscribers to enjoy all your content in the reader.

Before the arrival of AdSense for Feeds it made sense only to show a part of the content, and force subscribers to visit the site to read on. There was no point in giving away content for free. Now that you can place an ad on an entire article though, it is possible to give away everything through a feed and still make money.

But I wouldn't recommend it. Those falling eCPMs suggest that you still want your subscribers to come to your site and click ads rather than use the cheaper ads in the RSS feeds. AdSense for Feeds then should be seen as a way of supplementing your regular AdSense income, not replacing it. If you have more than one feed, you could experiment by showing ads only on longer posts or on occasional posts, generating most of your income on the site and preserving a high clickthrough rate on the feeds. When the ads do appear, they might just look unusual enough to generate clicks out of curiosity.

My feeling though is that you may as well offer as many ads as possible by putting ads at the bottom of article introductions in feeds. That should increase your chance of winning clicks.

You can't choose the format, but you can choose the position of the ad unit: you can put the ads at the top or you can put the ads at the bottom.

That's not much of a choice. What you really want to do is embed the ads in the middle of the article and force readers to look around them. But you can't do that, so of the two options available, the best one is usually to put the ads at the top.

That's surprising. The bottom of the post feels more natural and it's the option taken by many publishers. You can even end a post with a list of links and blend the ad neatly into the post. That's easier to do at the bottom of an article than at the top.

But not everyone reaches the bottom of the post and the advantage of appearing above the fold outweighs any benefits that blending might bring at the bottom. When blogging expert John Chow moved his AdSense for Feeds to the top of the post, he found his clickthrough rate doubled.

It really was as simple as that.

Finally, you can let AdSense choose your color scheme for you or you can do it yourself.

Do it yourself. Lose the border, of course, and match the color scheme to the colors used on your feed. You won't be able to see how it all turns out just by refreshing the page but you should still check to make sure that it all turns out exactly as you want.

AdSense for Feeds is a relatively new product and it's one with an uncertain future. The use of RSS readers is falling and that drop in popularity is being reflected in the falling value that advertisers are placing on ads that appear in feeds.

But they haven't faded away yet, and they're unlikely to fade away completely. Social media might be a good way to receive content recommendations from friends and even to receive automated link updates from favorite blogs but they're not as organized as RSS readers.

While their use may decline, it is still worthwhile for an AdSense publisher to push out headlines and small amounts of text to subscribers as a way of bringing them back to the site. And despite the falling eCPMs, it's also worth including an AdSense unit in those feeds.

14. ADSENSE ON MOBILE PHONES

RSS readers may be on the decline but mobile usage is on the rise — and rising fast. According to one estimate, content delivered on mobile phones is set to generate more than \$19 billion in 2011. About half of that is likely to come from music downloads alone but advertising is a large and growing proportion of that money. Estimates for spending on mobile advertising and marketing around the world in 2009 ranged from \$1.4 billion to \$7.5 billion. Just in the United States, mobile ad revenues are expected to reach \$1 billion in 2011 — which is about what Google announced that its mobile advertising section had generated in 2010, primarily through mobile search.

That mobile platforms are showing such promise is down entirely to the improvements in phone technology. Mobile Web browsing isn't new. It's been possible to surf the Web using a WAP network for years, but outside of Asia few bothered. The screens were too small, the connection too slow and the fees too high to make the experience pleasurable. Most users, especially in prime advertising markets like the US, were happy to wait until they got home to go online.

The launch of smartphones like the Blackberry and the iPhone has changed everything. Now the Web is no longer something that you access only through a PC or a Mac. You can carry it in your pocket, browse while you're waiting in line, check out a site while you're eating lunch and even pull out your phone and compare prices at Amazon or read reviews while you're shopping.

For publishers, this new way of consuming content is not something that can be ignored.

But it is complex. Mobile publishing today is where Internet publishing was ten or fifteen years ago. Creating a mobile site isn't simple or straightforward in the way that creating a website or a blog is now. Advertising inventory is smaller which may lead to fewer targeted ads. We don't always know how much of the revenue share we're receiving from ad clicks, as we do now with AdSense.

And, most importantly, there isn't one dominant advertising network in the way Google hands out ads on PCs and Macs. That doesn't make mobile advertising at all easy. But it does make it a field that's dynamic, exciting and with great potential.

14.1 Creating a Mobile Web Page

In theory, you don't actually *need* to create a specific mobile Web page. Part of the genius of smart phones is that they do allow users to read standard Web pages comfortably. A pinch or a double-tap is enough to let iPhone users zoom in and out of articles at will — and see standard AdSense units in the process.

But optimizing Web pages for the smaller screens of mobile phones does make the browsing experience more comfortable. While Web pages are made for large computer monitors, mobile pages are designed for the vertical scrolling that suits handheld devices.

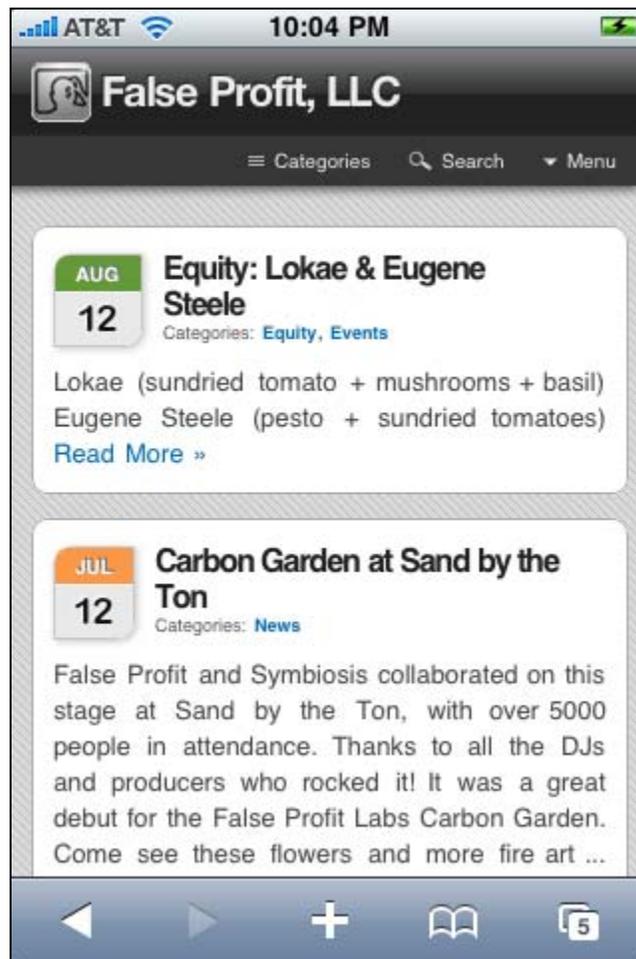


Fig. 14.1 False-Profit.com, a lifestyle site, rendered its pages for the iPhone. (Image by Benjamin Chun.)

The ads too, are formatted specifically for mobile devices, appearing not as units embedded into the content but as strips that are usually positioned at the top or bottom of the screen.

To get those strips though, you must have a mobile-compliant Web page. Google suggests rewriting your site in a mobile mark-up language like XHTML, WML or CHTML, and using server-side scripting like PHP or ASP.

If you know how to do that — and are willing to invest time in it — then you can certainly try doing it yourself. If you have the funds to pay someone to do it for you, that could well be the best option. But if you have neither expertise nor spare cash, you can turn to one of the many services that will translate your site into mobile-optimized content.

Wordpress bloggers can use plugins. WPTouch and Mobilize by Mippin, for example, are just programs that detects when a user has reached the site from a mobile browser and shows it in a format rendered for that platform. It's also free. Other mobile site-building services, such as Zinadoo (www.zinadoo.com), Wirenode (www.wirenode.com) and MobiSiteGalore (www.mobisitegalore.com) also offer free packages but they tend to be so restricted that commercially they're of little use. MobiSiteGalore limits the site to just three pages while other services place ads on their free versions, pocketing the revenues for themselves.

The fees for mobile hosting can also vary quite a bit. Zinadoo, an Irish firm, charges the equivalent of around \$66 to turn the ads off for a year. MobiSiteGalore demands \$25 per month for unlimited pages with all the features.

To make those fees pay, you'll need to make sure that you are receiving sufficient numbers of mobile users. Your Google Analytics stats will tell you how many of your users are already accessing your site from their mobile phones. That number is likely to rise once you have an optimized page so you could start by using one of the free packages to see what effect that rendering has on visitor numbers before dipping into your pocket for the full optimization.

14.2 Adding the Mobile Ads

AdSense for Mobile isn't available to publishers in every country but it is available to publishers in the main advertising markets in North America, Oceania and Western Europe. If you can find Mobile as an option in the product list in your AdSense interface, you're eligible. (And if you're not eligible, don't worry. You still have options.)

The set-up requires taking some tough decisions. First, you'll need to choose your device type and ad type.

Google lets you choose between showing your ads on all phones or only on high-end devices such as the iPhone. The default is to show them only on high-end devices, and that's probably the best option for most publishers. While you might want to display the ads to as many people as possible, in practice, there will be very few users seeing your ads on small phones over WAP connections. People who want to surf online are likely to invest in the high-end phones that do it properly.

Restrict your ads only to high-end phones, and you'll be rewarded with a greater choice of ad formats: a leaderboard, two squares and a rectangle. All Phones only lets you choose between single ads and double ads — and puts the double ads at the bottom of the page.

As always, you can also choose between showing both text and image ads or just one of the types. Google recommends selecting both, and again that's probably wise, at least for now. While mobile ad inventory is growing, it is still smaller than AdSense inventory as a whole, and that inventory is also spread out among lots of different advertisers. Choosing just one option then may well have a serious effect on your contextualization.

And while image ads tend to be ignored on traditional websites, that may not be the case on mobile phones. Apple's iAds, a network created specifically for the iPhone and iPad, were meant to bridge the gap between the interactivity of Web ads and the storytelling of television commercials. If users come to expect the ads on their phones to be as complex as the ads they see on television then they might well react to the image ads better than they react to text ads. The ability to show local ads and for clicks to prompt a phone call rather than just a trip to a Web page may make optimizing ads on mobile devices very different to optimizing them on websites where you want them to look as little like ads as possible.

At the moment, it's all too new to come up with any hard and fast rules, except to stress the importance of creating channels, tweaking the choice of ad sizes and colors — another option you can change — and expecting different results on different websites with different kinds of content.

Optimizing the appearance of the ads is something that's going to have to be done through trial and error.

14.3 Choosing an Advertising Network

The most important characteristic of mobile advertising though isn't how the ads look. It's which ads you receive. When you're placing ads on a regular site, you can only influence your advertisers through keyword choice and by making your site good enough to attract premium placement ads. With most

advertising coming through AdSense, there's little opportunity to shop around.

When it comes to mobile advertising though, you're really spoiled for choice. MobiThinking.com, a site about mobile marketing, has identified fifteen different networks in addition to Apple's iAds and AdSense for Mobile. One of the biggest is AdMob, which is now also owned by Google who paid \$750 million for it, the company's third biggest acquisition.

That variety is likely to change. Lots of small companies battling for market share is fairly typical of a new industry. The least effective companies then fade away and the most successful companies swallow up the less effective ones until there are only a handful left standing. In the meantime though, you're not restricted to using AdSense for Mobile to show ads on your mobile site — and you will need to evaluate each network separately.

MobiThinking.com recommends that publishers ask five questions of advertising networks:

1. What is the revenue share?

This can range from less than 50 percent at MadHouse to as much as 85 percent at AdModa. But not all networks reveal the revenue share — Google keeps it a secret at both AdSense and AdMobs — making real comparisons difficult.

2. Who are the advertisers?

An ad network's website will boast of its biggest advertisers but the bigger the marketing budget, the more agencies are going to spread it around. A big brand at an advertising agency then might not mean very much — giant corporations are as confused about the most effective channels as publishers are. What you want to know is whether you're going to get advertisers who will appeal to your audience. The site — or the site's agent — might give you an idea but you won't know for sure until the ads are up.

3. What control do you have over the ads?

Unless you have a very large site, it's unlikely that you'll be able to choose your advertisers but you should be able to block ads placed by competitors and ensure that you're not showing content that isn't appropriate to your audience. Just about all networks should have some kind of filtering function in place, so you can safely steer clear of anything that doesn't provide that option. And you'll also want a way to place alternate ads in case the inventory doesn't match your sites. Google provides this, and AdMobs can serve AdSense if it doesn't have enough ads.

4. What is the fill rate?

AdSense for Mobile is a CPC network but other services provide both CPC ads and CPM ads. In terms of actual revenue, there may be little difference but you should know what you're receiving, and how likely you are to receive it.

5. Does the network suit your site?

That's a very broad question, and one that covers whether the network reaches your geographical area, whether it serves sites like yours (some networks only work with the largest publishers) and whether it shows image ads, text only, search ads or ads of every kind.

Clearly, your choice of network is going to be important. But remember that you can change, and that the industry is likely to change quite a bit in the coming years too. You can try starting with AdSense or AdMob, if only because they're the best known, and if you find that you're not getting good results, start shopping around while you still can.

14.4 Turn Your Website into an App

Another way to shop around is to deliver your content in a completely different way. Users of Android phones and iPhones can access content in two ways: by surfing to the publisher's website or by opening an app.

Publishers can place ads on both of them.

Delivering your content through an app does offer some benefits. The icon sits on the screen where it's always visible. Access to the site is never more than a click away. You can pack more functions into an app, including games and greater interaction.

And the ads themselves can be more exciting and more valuable too.

Your choice of ad network will be smaller, mostly it will be down to AdMob and iAds, but those are two vital networks.

iAds, in particular, has set a new standard for mobile advertising. When Steve Jobs announced the network in April 2010, he emphasized the ads' interactivity and their ability to engage users. The ads appear as AdMob-style banners but open up, without taking the user out of his app, to show games, graphics and all sorts of other goodies that pull the user in.

The ads though were expensive. Apple insisted on creating the ads themselves and charged agencies for the privilege. If the advertiser was

spending less than a million dollars, creating the ad alone would cost between \$50,000 and \$100,000.

And placement was pricey too. According to a report in *Advertising Age*, an industry magazine, rates for placing an ad on the iAds network were \$10 at launch for every thousand impressions plus \$2 per click. By way of comparison AdMob might charge \$10-\$15 for every thousand impressions or 15-30 cents per click — and often a lot less. (Publishers receive 60 percent of the revenues generated on iAds; AdMob isn't saying how much it shares but Steve Jobs described the cut as "industry standard.")

Those high prices ensured that the first advertisers were giant brands. They also ensured that the ads looked great, were widely spread and generally clicked. Jason Ting, the developer of a free app that turns the flash on the iPhone 4 into an LED flashlight, reported a return of \$1,372.20 on the first day he ran iAds. His app had only been downloaded around 9,000 times.

He had a clickthrough rate of 11.8 percent and an eCPM of \$147.55.

And the ads he was showing weren't even contextual. They were for brands like Dove soap and Nissan cars.

That probably means that those high revenues and huge CTRs were generated by curiosity rather than desire. iAds on apps are the opposite of banner ads on websites. People see them, recognize them as ads and want to play with them. That's not likely to last though. Apple has since opened its iAds development program, allowing even small developers to create ads and distribute them for small budgets. That will generate less money on both a CPM and CPC basis, and as users get used to seeing the ads, they'll become less inclined to click them. Advertisers will have to work harder bring in those clicks.

But it will still make sense to deliver your content as an app, as well as online.

That doesn't have to be hugely expensive. While you can pay thousands to an app developer to code an app from scratch, a number of companies offer subscription models for apps. iSites (www.isites.us) charges \$9.99 per month (or \$99 per year) for a basic app but ten times that for an app that will make it through the App Store. (Otherwise, users have to download from a unique URL.) MyAppBuilder (www.myappbuilder.com) demands \$29 per month or, if you're feeling really brave, you can download PhoneGap (www.phonegap.com), an open source development framework that lets you build apps in HTML and Javascript. It's free but hands-on.

Mobile content and mobile advertising are still in their early days. When it was first rolled on WAP networks and tiny screens, both could be easily ignored. While it looked exciting, the impressions and revenues were too small for most developers to invest the time needed into optimizing their sites and generating clicks.

Technology has changed that. Smartphones have made mobile content comfortable and cool. Ad networks are piling into the space to deliver advertisers, and publishers are trying to figure out the best strategies to deliver maximum revenues.

Those strategies still aren't clear, and you can expect to be doing a lot of testing and tweaking.

And there's a good chance that once you figure out a strategy that works, the field will change again. Everyone has a mobile phone but more and more people are now buying tablets, which could generate a whole new opportunity for a new kind of ads.

But it's still worth moving into mobile publishing now. Website advertising isn't going away but the mobile world is where the growth is happening and publishers used to earning from advertising should be there. Once you see that you're getting a significant portion of users accessing your site from a mobile device, build a website and offer an app as well.

You want as many people as possible accessing your content and seeing your ads. Once again, chances are the average website owner will not need an app, but if you have the traffic, income and mobile users to support one, it's worth investigating.

15. Other Contextual Advertising Programs and How to Use Them with AdSense

AdSense is probably the easiest way to generate revenue with your website but it's certainly not the only way you can make money using contextualized advertising.

At the beginning of 2007, Google changed its Terms of Service to allow publishers to place other contextualized ad systems on the same pages as AdSense units. There's just one restriction: those other systems' ads can't look like AdSense units.

That still leaves you a huge range of possibilities.

In this chapter, I'm going to look at some of the other programs that you could use — either instead of AdSense or as well as AdSense. I'll explain how they work and how you can make them work with AdSense.

15.1 Kontera — Making Your Words Pay

Kontera (www.kontera.com) is a great way to make extra revenue. Instead of putting ad units on your site, like AdSense does, Kontera highlights particular keywords in your text and brings up an ad when the user mouses over them.

The words are marked out from regular links by an underline and a second dotted line, and you can change the colors of the text and the links. For some of the biggest publishers, the ad inventory even includes some very high-earning video ads.

I've used Kontera on my personal blog at JoelComm.com and I've been pretty impressed with the results. The ads are fun to bring up, they're relevant and they're totally unobtrusive.

But like AdSense, you will need to play with them to maximize your revenues. There are so many different factors that affect your incomes with Kontera, such as which keywords you want highlighted, where you want those words to appear on the page and which colors to choose for the best results, that it took me some time to figure out all of the best combinations.

It also took me a few phone calls directly to the people who'd created it to get an idea of what happens behind the scenes of the program so that I can maximize my income.

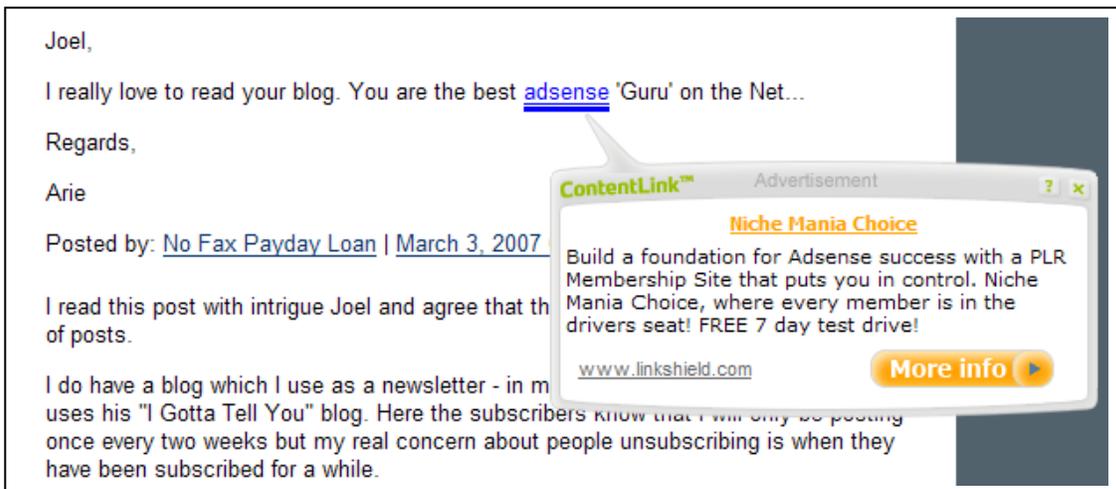


Fig. 15.1 Mousing over to bring up ads with Kontera at JoelComm.com.

The key issues are the number of links you should place on your Web pages, the color of the links and how those links are distributed.

The first issue is pretty simple. Kontera says that there's no one magic number of links; too much depends on the length of the web page and the amount of text it contains.

I don't see any reason to argue with that. In general, your best strategy when building a website that earns income through advertising is to keep the pages relatively short and focused on just one topic. That will keep your ads relevant. If you're following that strategy, then it's unlikely that your page is going to look overstuffed with Kontera's ads. You'll probably find no more than three or four on a page, and because they only appear as links they won't distract the user.

The color of the links is a tougher question. Usually, it's best to choose a different color to the one you've used for your AdSense units. That's because Google and Kontera tend to pick up on different keywords. Offering different links in different colors helps to emphasize that variety and lets Kontera's links stand out.

If you're thinking that the goal of optimization is to blend the ads into your site, you're right. But these links are going to be *embedded* in your content. They're also going to be double-underlined so that they'll look different anyway. You want people to see them and feel curious enough about them to place their mouse over them.

You could try using blue as your link color if you want. I've done that sometimes on my blog. But I suspect that if you tested different colors, you might well find that a tone that matches your site's design will give you better results. Testing blue against your site's color scheme is going to be key.

Making sure that the ads appear in the best locations on the page is also easy to do but might require a little work. For the most part, Kontera's software should distribute the ads fairly evenly across the page. But if you want to make sure that you don't get any ads in particular places on the page, you can use Zone Tags. These simply tell Kontera: "No ads here please."

To define certain text areas as off-limit simply add the line:

```
<span name=KonaFilter>
```

before the text, and the tag:

```
</span>
```

at the end.

If that sounds to you like AdSense's Section Targeting, you're on the right track. But Kontera's filters aren't exactly the same as Section Targeting. Placing these filter tags won't prevent Kontera's contextualization engine from checking that section for keywords. The contents of that section will still be used to assess the meaning of the Web page. Kontera just won't place ads on any keywords it finds there.

While that's useful for keeping ads away from the bottom of the page, the sidebars or spots right next to AdSense units, you can also use the tags to control which terms are highlighted.

Kontera doesn't let you choose which terms and phrases you want turned into ads. But it does recommend that you make the phrases you use as specific as possible. Talking about the "Nokia 5300 XpressMusic myFaves Black Phone" from T-Mobile is likely to get you better ads and more clicks than talking about "mobile phones."

There are a lot of different strategies that you can use with Kontera, far too many for me to describe in detail here. That's why I put them together in a short book that lets other publishers can shorten their learning curve. You can find that book at www.konterasecrets.com.

If you're going to put Kontera on your site in addition to AdSense — and I can't think of a single reason why you shouldn't — you will need that book to shoot straight to the high revenues.

15.2 Vibrant Media's Eye-Catching Ads



Whilst it's not usually a good idea to buy into developer hype about how their videogame creation is a piece of pure art that's been divinely imbued with a commanding majesty, fathering something so holy it demands players to excuse anything that resembles a bug or gameplay hindrance. You'll usually just end up disappointed. In spite of this, I'm convinced Epic have created exactly something of that magnitude. [Xbox Gears of War 2](#) is a title so meticulously designed to push graphical boundaries that every object in the game, from scattered paper to entire scenic vistas, must have been carefully and measurably placed to gently eke out the optimum level of performance. Because whilst Gears of War 2 is confident, beautiful and aesthetically diverse, it's also a bit of a slowpoke, slowing down to a crawl and suffering the kind of slowdown that has a habit of making the action heats up.

Advertisers already using Vibrant In-Text Advertising

WB SONY Microsoft at&t SAMSUNG TOYOTA Johnson & Johnson charles & johnson

VIBRANT Advertisement

www.gamespot.com/xbox360 CLICK TO LEARN MORE

Fig. 15.2 Vibrant Media's video ads grab your attention.

Vibrant Media's Intellitxt service is a direct rival to Kontera. The company's system works in a similar way: by picking keywords, turning them into links and producing floating ads when users mouse over.

When Kontera was first rolled out it was probably fair to say that Intellitxt was at least as good, if not better. Their ads looked great (Kontera's were a bit bland initially) and they turned up some very good ads.

These days I'm not so sure. The people at Kontera have put so much work into improving their contextualization engine that Intellitxt certainly doesn't have an edge there. In fact, you can often find that the ads will match the keyword but the keywords won't be the most relevant terms on the page.

Nor can you define the link color, which is stuck on green, or be certain that an ad will contain an image, the most attractive part of these sorts of floating ads.

What you might get though is a movie. And those movies are great. Unlike Google's video ads, these start automatically and they're impossible to miss.

About 6,000 publishers around the world are showing Vibrant Media's ads but not all of them are showing all of the company's formats. CPM versions of its ads — called Vibrant InterestAD — are only placed on sites with more than half a million page views a month.

The big advantage of IntelliTXT though is the pay. Publishers have reported CPC rates as high as \$3. While clickthrough rates were low, the high fees more than made up for the small number of clicks.

15.3 Infolinks Joins the Fun

My own preference is for Kontera. It's the service I've used and I've found that, once optimized, it delivers the most relevant ads and good enough revenues per click to make it a valuable part of my monetization toolbox. While IntelliTxt can deliver more bucks for the click, those high prices can lead to smaller inventory and therefore less relevant ads.

Infolinks (www.infolinks.com) though is a relatively new service that might just give both of its direct competitors a run for their money. The service was launched in 2007 and has received some good reviews from some publishers.

The system works in exactly the same way as Kontera and IntelliTxt, turning keyword phrases into links that produce a floating ad when moused over.

Reports from publishers have suggested that while the ads themselves are less attractive than those of IntelliTxt and Kontera, and can sometimes be less relevant, the customer service is very responsive and the revenues were reasonable.

The problem with choosing between these text-based services is knowing whose inventory would suit your site the best. They all work in a similar way, but they don't all deliver similar ads and they use different matching algorithms too.

Vibrant Media can be selective about its publishers — one way to keep those CPC rates high — but it is a good idea to test at least Kontera and Infolinks to see whose inventory suits your site, delivers the highest clickthroughs and, most importantly, the most money.

15.3 Chitika — No More Malls, Lots More Money

Kontera, Infolinks and Vibrant Media's Intellitxt all fit so neatly into your site you'll hardly notice the difference to your page.

You will notice the difference in your revenues though.

Chitika's ads are more intrusive than text links but that's not necessarily a bad thing. One of their greatest advantages is that they are just so eye-catching and attractive.

They've gone through a few incarnations over the last few years. The original eMiniMalls, with their pictures and tabs, were a great start. But they weren't perfect. On pages that didn't talk about products, the units were largely ignored. I tended only to use them on product pages.

And it turns out that advertisers weren't completely happy with them either.

Even though they were generating plenty of clicks, those clicks weren't producing large numbers of sales. So the advertisers told Chitika that they wanted more. They told Chitika that they didn't just want clickthroughs of at least 2 percent; they wanted *conversion rates* of at least 2 percent.

That's some tall order. Chitika has no control over what users do once they've clicked the ad. It's not the ad system's job to persuade users to buy. That's the seller's job. All a good ad system can do is serve ads that match users' needs and make the units look appealing.

Chitika's eMiniMalls were doing that very well.

But faced with the loss of advertisers unhappy at paying for leads that didn't convert, Chitika was forced to do a little re-thinking.

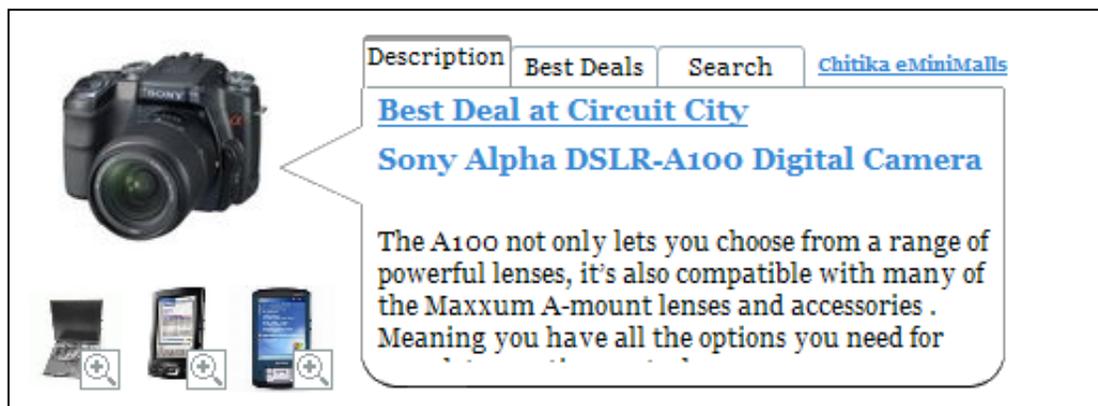


Fig. 15.3 Chitika's eMiniMalls made me smile. They're gone now.

So they replaced eMiniMalls with Premium ads, which look a bit like AdSense units but with embedded images. We've already seen them on DealofDay.com.

To ensure those high conversion rates though, Chitika chose not to make all of these ads available to every user. If you lived in the United States or Canada, entered a keyword into a search engine, clicked the link and reached a page with Chitika's code, you'd see Chitika's Premium ads.

If you entered the URL directly into the browser bar, clicked a link to reach the site, or if you weren't in the United States or Canada, you'd see... nothing. Well, you might see an alternate ad but you wouldn't have seen an ad unit from Chitika.

That was revolutionary. Until Chitika launched Premium ads, all advertising systems worked on the principle that every good user saw the ads. The ads themselves might vary depending on their location — AdSense does use geolocation, noting the user's IP address and serving ads for local businesses and in local languages, and Chitika isn't the first service to cut out entirely users in some low-earning locations — but how you reached the site was never a factor in determining whether you saw an ad at all.

The ads themselves were very different to the old eMiniMalls units. They no longer contained the reviews and different shopping sources for products. They also told the user which phrase he or she had searched for, so that the ads looked more like search results than ads. That's a neat bit of optimization.

Most importantly of all though, Chitika's Premium units covered many more topics than the old eMiniMalls. Because the ads they served were a direct response to whatever phrase was entered into the search engine, the inventory wasn't restricted to products. That meant that they were good for every publisher to use, not just owners of review sites and product pages.

Chitika predicted that that targeted, high value audience would increase earnings for advertisers and for publishers.

And that's pretty much what happened. According to Chitika, publishers who used optimized Premium units together with AdSense reported earnings as much as 25 percent higher than those who used AdSense alone.

But even publishers with lots of North American search traffic understood that using Chitika Premium meant finding other ways to earn from their non-search traffic. Chitika Premium didn't want them and didn't show ads to them.

So Chitika did some more thinking and in March 2010, it did away with Premium units and launched a new kind of ad unit.

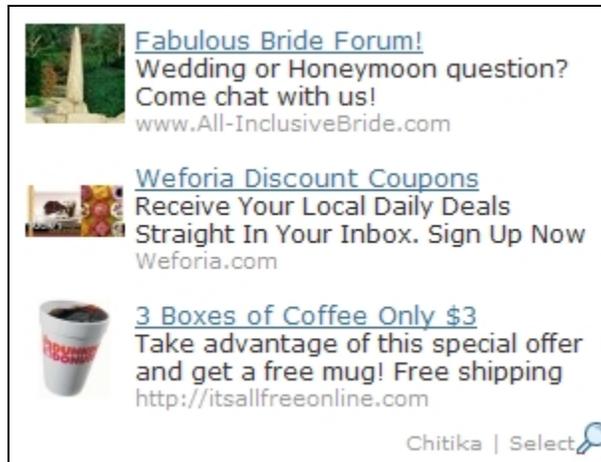


Fig. 15.4 A Chitika Select ad as it appeared on DealofDay.com. This ad was shown to a user outside the US, using Firefox, who reached the site directly.

Chitika Select ads look very similar to Premium units. You don't even need to paste any new code and if you were using Chitika Premium you were automatically opted in to receive them.

The difference is behind the scenes.

Select units are based on some smart technology that looks at user behavior and tries to predict the chances that a visitor who reaches a site directly or through a link will click an ad.

While Premium units would simply disappear when a certain type of user came along, Select units are clever enough to assess that user and, if the technology believes he or she is likely to click an ad unit, it shows an ad from Chitika's inventory.

Those predictions are based on a host of different factors, including operating system and browser. Chitika has found that Internet Explorer users, for example, are more likely to click an ad than Chrome users so when a user reaches a site with Chitika's code, the technology crunches the user's data together and produces a score. If the score is high enough, it delivers an ad. If it's not, and the user doesn't qualify to see an ad, Chitika disappears and pops the alternate.

It's all smart stuff and it's allowed Chitika to show more ads to more people.

It hasn't closed the gaps completely though. Users that don't meet the Select unit's prediction score or who are not based in North America will still see alternates. But Chitika believes that the Select units may increase overall impressions on its publisher network by as much as 40 percent — and increase revenues for publishers by 5-10 percent.

I've spent a lot of time playing around with Chitikas ads, come up with some very effective strategies and written them up into another book. You can find that book at www.chitikasecrets.com. It is a good system that allows you to draw on another tool to convert your visitors into cash.

And I'm not the only one who thinks highly of Chitika. When Yahoo! retired its publisher network — one of AdSense's biggest rivals — it didn't recommend Microsoft's AdCenter, as you might expect of its search partner. It pointed its publishers in the direction of Chitika.

Each of these programs work with AdSense. I think it's pretty unlikely that they'll give you more money than AdSense but they can be very useful ways to bring in a little extra income.

Let's talk now about programs that aren't compatible with AdSense.

15.4 AdBrite — An Advertising Clearing House

Google's big thing is serving contextual ads. Their program checks the content of your site and delivers ads that they think your users will like. AdBrite is much simpler.

AdBrite is a clearing house for sites that want to sell advertising space on their pages and for advertisers who want to choose where they want to place their ads. From the point of view of the publisher, it's a bit like AdSense's Placement Targeting with the added benefit that they can choose exactly how much they want to charge for their advertising on their pages.

For advertisers, the advantage over Google is that they know exactly where their ads are appearing and for exactly how much money each time.

Those are the advantages. The disadvantages are that the number of advertisers and publishers just aren't in the same league as AdSense. It's worth knowing about, but you wouldn't want to rely on it as your main source of advertising revenue

You can learn more about AdBrite at www.adbrite.com.

17.5 Kanoodle – Bright Ads



The same criticism can be made of Kanoodle's BrightAds service, which is similar to Google's. It's a search engine that delivers contextual ads to publishers' websites.

The contextualizing isn't quite as accurate as Google's but BrightAds does have a focus on local sites which might be attractive to businesses with local markets (or sites with content of local interest). That's a field that looks set to grow in the near future.

It's also been serving ads related to previous user behavior for longer than Google has. If a user visits a lot of real estate sites, for example he could continue to receive ads about real estate even if he's on a site about sport. That means your site could be displaying ads that have nothing to do with your content.

Kanoodle works pretty well but it only has a tiny fraction of the search market and an inventory that's much smaller than anything Google has to offer. It would be nice to see revenues that compete with Google's but I haven't heard of anyone earning more with BrightAds than they can earn with Google.

If, for some reason, Google closes your account, then Kanoodle is one company that can help to put you back in the game, but again, as long as AdSense is working, that's always going to be your first choice.

Learn more about Kanoodle's BrightAds at ads.kanoodle.com.

15.6 The Big Boys: eBay And Microsoft

One of the great things about contextualized advertising is that the best competitors to Google are all start-ups. (Or should that be up-starts?) If Yahoo! can bow out of the market and recommend Chitika instead, it really does mean that change can happen at any time, to anyone and come from any direction.

A couple of big boys though are trying to muscle in on the market.

eBay's Partner Network (EPN) is combination of affiliate and CPC advertising system. You'll only be advertising one site — eBay — but you could be driving traffic to lots of different stores within the site. Payments are based on Quality Pricing, an algorithm like Smart Pricing which pays different amounts based on actions users take when they reach the auction. A website that sends lots of users that make a lot of purchases is likely to see more money than one that just generates clicks.

The creative for the ads is very broad, allowing publishers even to hot link text within content, like Kontera and IntelliTxt, making for completely embedded ads and an unobtrusive advertising experience for readers.

There are a couple of challenges to using EPN though. The first is that the similarity to an affiliate network makes it tempting to use affiliate strategies to improve sales and CPC values. But because auctions change frequently, you can't recommend a particular product so much as a class of products. For EPN, the best strategy is actually to focus on improving the quality of the traffic, bringing in people looking to buy — especially collectors — using the content to generate desire, then pushing them into the auction.

The other challenge is that eBay is selective about its partners. You'll need to show that you can send good traffic by demonstrating that you have a good quality site with plenty of interested visitors.

My own feeling is that combining CPC and affiliate-style earnings in one unit isn't a great idea. I want both affiliate earnings and CPC earnings, but I want them separate so that my site is making money in a variety of different ways, and I can optimize each in a way that suits that channel best.

But that's not always the case.

Dee Barizo is a blogger who runs a blog about the collectible card game *Magic: The Gathering*. Writing on Performancing.com, a site for bloggers, he described how AdSense would respond to mentions of "card decks" and "Magic" championships on his blog, www.magicgameplan.com, by serving ads for patio decks and magic tricks.

He could have used AdSense's filters to train the system to deliver ads that were more relevant to his content, but instead, Dee abandoned AdSense and turned to eBay, a site on which collectors auction their cards. His income rose by a factor of 22.

That's a very specific example, and it's not going to apply for every website. There was a close link between Dee's blog about a particular class of collectible products and eBay, the main store through which those collectibles are sold.

But if AdSense is continually delivering irrelevant ads, and you know your readers could be interested in the sales happening on eBay, you might just find that it works for you too.

You can find EPN at publisher.ebaypartnernetnetwork.com.

The other big company stepping into the field is Microsoft. They'd been talking about rolling out a contextualized ad system for a long time but only really got going in 2006.

They're still far behind.

There's nowhere for publishers to sign up at the moment (you have to send an email asking to join), the ads are only running on MSN's own network and the inventory looks pretty limited.

Although we know that the system is going to use demographic and geo-targeting to keep the ads close to users, that advertisers can choose keywords and will pay per click, we know nothing about how the contextualization system is actually going to work. Some of the results turning up on some of MSN's sites are way off.

What we do know though is that the ad units are going to look a lot like AdSense units.

If Microsoft can build up advertisers, iron out the bugs and make use of Bing's growing strength, they could be a good alternative to Google. Until then though, it's still AdSense plus text links and affiliate ads.

Sponsored Links
Sponsored Links

Unlimited Movie Downloads
Millions of Movies Available; No Download Fees Ever! 100% Guaranteed!
www.musicdownload.net/movie.php

Download Movies
Full movies to download. Choose from more than 80 million movies.
www.sharedmovies.com

Winning Market Sectors
Big profits in global investments- Expert updates twice weekly - Free!
www.theglobalguru.com

Buy Stock for \$4
No account or investment minimums. No Inactivity Fees.
[Trade Online](#)

Fund data provided by Morningstar, Inc. © 2005. All rights reserved.
StockScouter data provided by Gradient Analytics, Inc.
Quotes supplied by Comstock, an Interactive Data company.
MSN Money's editorial goal is to provide a forum for personal finance board posts and other features should not be construed as investment endorsement by Microsoft of any specific security or trading strategy in individual circumstances.

Fig. 15.5 A contextualized ad unit at the bottom of moneycentral.msn.com.

16. Getting Traffic To Your Website

One of the most frequent questions I am asked is “Will your ebook teach me how to get more traffic to my web site?” Lots of people have written books — and series of books — on generating traffic. The focus of *this* ebook is to show you how to maximize the traffic that you already have. And while tips for building pages through forums and free content are excellent ideas, they are no replacement for a solid course on how to get more people to visit your site. Because this question is so common though, I will address it briefly in this chapter. I’ll give you the basics, describe some unusual ideas that some people are using and tell you where you can get all the information you need.

In the next chapter, you’ll also find a quick run-through of search engine optimization and the in the chapter after that, I’ll talk about one of the most effective — and enjoyable new ways of promoting a website: social media.

16.1 Advertising

Let’s start with the obvious: buying advertising. We’ve already talked about AdWords/AdSense arbitrage but exactly the same principle applies to buying your traffic from other sources too.

Whenever you run a pay-per-click advertising campaign to bring traffic to your site, the amount you pay for the traffic has to be less than the amount it earns for you, regardless of the source.

One of the advantages of following your AdSense stats is that you can estimate how much the clicks on your ads are worth. That can tell you how much you can afford to pay for clicks from other sites when you buy advertising, keeping your clickthrough rate in consideration.

It might well pay to advertise, but before you buy make sure it pays a profit.

16.2 Generating Quality Backlinks

A backlink is a link back to your site from another site or even from a pdf like this one. Backlinks are valuable in two big ways. They drive traffic to your website from other sites when clicked, and search engines like Google use them to help determine search engine rankings.

When another website owner links back to your site, they are effectively endorsing your site and Google makes note of that in their search results.

The better quality of the sites that link back to your site, the more weight Google gives your site. Likewise if the poor quality sites link to you Google may give you less weight.

Your goal should be to generate quality links on a consistent basis from sites in your general niche. You can do this by commenting on blogs in your niche, creating forum signatures or writing articles for other sites which contain a link back to your site.

There are many ways to generate links, just avoid link schemes and generate them as organically as possible.

16.3 Social Media

This is a book all to itself, and in fact my book "**Twitter Power**" is The Definitive Guide to Building Relationships, Enhancing Your Brand and Growing Your Business with Social Media.

Learn more at: <http://www.twitterpower.com>

If you're going to get started in Social Media the sites you need to focus on are:

Twitter - <http://twitter.com>

Facebook- <http://facebook.com>

YouTube - <http://youtube.com>

LinkedIn - <http://linkedin.com>

Create accounts and setup your account profiles. Include links back to your site and start engaging with other users. When I say engaging, I don't mean tell them to go to your site, but engage in valuable discussions in your niche and let users find your links naturally.

Once you have your accounts setup you can then add social media widgets to your site such as "Sociable" or "AddThis". This allows your site visitors to share your website or individual articles with their friends and followers.

And don't forget to add a Facebook "Like" button to your articles as well.

16.4 RSS Feeds

RSS feeds might not be as big as they used to be but they are still around and people do still use them. Adding an RSS feed to your site then is a good

way to let some of your readers know that a new post has gone up and that they should stop by and take a look

You'll want to make sure that your headlines are attractive and inviting. Many users don't look past them, so if they don't do the job, the post won't be opened or read and the user won't click to your site. Images can also help your feeds to stand out.

It's rarely a good idea to send more than one RSS post to a subscriber each day. The most common reason that users unsubscribe isn't poor content or too much advertising, but too many posts.

One good strategy then is to divide your RSS feeds by theme and let subscribers only receive posts on the topics that interest them most. If you're writing about a range of different subjects, that should already help to keep the deliveries down to a manageable level.

The only other choice you'll have to make is whether to include the whole post in your feed or just a teaser to bring people to your site. Before AdSense allowed ads in RSS feeds, the only the goal of the feed was to get people back to your site to click the ads. At that time, you might have thought that there was little point in giving them the whole article in their feed reader. But readers would often unsubscribe if they couldn't see the whole article, reducing your subscriber base — and your potential audience.

Some publishers found that they were better off giving them the whole article and inviting them back to add site to add and see comments. Now that you can also place ads in the sites, you can give away the entire article and still make cash... but offering just the introduction would allow you to put more ads in front of your readers.

While the question is difficult, finding the answer is relatively easy. You can test all of the different options and see which works best for you.

16.5 Offline Marketing

One of the biggest mistakes that people make when they build an Internet business is to forget that there's a world outside the Internet. Just because you make money out of traffic doesn't mean you have to source all of that traffic online.

Of course, your email should include links to your most important sites in the signature but you should make sure that your URL is listed on all of your marketing material: your business cards, Yellow Pages ads, flyers, envelopes and just about anything else you can think of.

Freebies are good. Useful items that people keep on their desks like mousepads or coffee mugs help to keep your name visible and memorable to partners and affiliates. Give them away at conferences and you'll help to stand out and stay in the minds of other publishers.

Or you can give them away as bonuses when you sell products or to encourage traffic.

When I launched my book *KaChing*, for example, I promoted the launch by giving away big green buttons that made a "KaChing" sound whenever someone pressed them. The buttons themselves cost little to make—factories in China will produce them in bulk for a song—but they helped to drive people to my sales page, delivered pre-orders of my book and got people talking on social media.



Fig. 16.1 I gave away freebies to promote my book. Could a few, low-cost freebies boost your blog?

For popular sites, printed t-shirts can be a good way to make a little extra cash too, and as people walk around with your URL on their shirts, they spread the name of your website. It's a little like the way stores print their logos on shopping bags so that everyone can see it.

Some sites, in fact, have used the offer of free t-shirts in all sorts of creative ways to get people onto their pages. TeachStreet.com, an education site, gave away a free t-shirt to any US-based publisher that placed one of their widgets on their sites. Instead of offering the freebies to users then, they gave them to people who could bring more users in.

Mailchimp, a free newsletter distribution service, gave away 5,000 t-shirts (with a neat picture of a monkey) to people who followed the service on Twitter or Facebook or who downloaded the app — a useful way of keeping people engaged and connected.

And this doesn't always have to cost anything. Teenormous, a t-shirt company, offered a free t-shirt as a giveaway prize to be used by large websites to reward their readers. The t-shirt company got some free publicity and the website had a way to make its users happy.

16.6 Promoting Your Blog

The best way to promote a blog is through interaction. Link to similar sites run by other bloggers, write articles that provoke discussion and win links back, post original content that people want to read — even if it's not always the highest earning — and as people come to see your blog as an important contributor to your field, you'll find that your audience starts to grow.

There are though a few simple things that you can do to help things along a bit.

The first thing you should do is make sure that your blog is set to ping rpc.pingomatic.com as soon as you've updated. Pingomatic.com offers a free all-in-one pinging service that covers all the large blog directories and search engines. On Blogger.com, you can find this in your settings; other blog tools, such as Movable Type and Wordpress have a similar option.

Each time your blog is updated, it will send out a quick alert to let the most important specialist search engines in your field know right away.

And you do want them to know.

Instead of linking to the previous month's or the previous week's posts, each page of your blog should also have its own link. Sounds obvious, right? And yet how many blogs have you seen with one link to about twenty different entries? One link per entry means more pages for ads, better links from external sites and higher search engine rankings.

But promoting a blog is always going to be a gradual process that depends on the quality of your content as well as the degree to which you can engage other bloggers in your field.

16.7 Public Relations And Publicity

Many of the methods that you use to bring people to your site will cost you money. You'll have to pay for ads on other sites, you'll have to give up valuable real estate on your site to lists of links and you'll have to decide how much you want to pay for an AdWords campaign or.

Publicity can be free.

It doesn't have to be of course. You could pay a PR expert to publicize your site for you and place articles in the press on your behalf... but it's not necessary and they can be too expensive for most sites, especially at the beginning.

Or you could simply create a good quality press release yourself, fax it out to the media and wait for reporters to call.

Sound difficult?

It really isn't. A press release is just one page and will take between twenty and forty minutes to write.

There are a number of rules you have to follow: you need a gripping headline; you have to include a quote; and you have to be available for the interview to name just three.

Most importantly, though, you have to have a story the press wants to run.

Telling reporters that you've just launched a new site isn't going to cut it. Telling them that your new site is going to set a new trend or change some people's lives just might.

Think about the effect that your piece of "news" will have on the public and you've got the beginnings of a great story.

And what do you get in return for doing that? Well, not only do you get the name of your business in the press, you also get the halo that comes with it. When you're in the media, people assume that you're an expert. You become the number one source for whatever your website offers.

And to underline that fact, you can even put a button on your home page that says something like: "As Seen On CNN!"

Sound good?

The real expert on marketing through free publicity is Paul Hartunian. This is the guy who bought a hunk of wood that had been cut from the Brooklyn Bridge during renovations, cut it into one-inch cubes and wrote a press release with the headline "New Jersey Man Sells Brooklyn Bridge For \$19.95".

He was on CNN for two days and the story was run as far away as Peru.

He now lives on a 30-acre estate and teaches people how to use publicity for their businesses. You can order his publicity kit at www.hartunian.com.

Website promotion can be complex. At its simplest, it happens naturally when you produce good content, the type that gets other people talking. At its most difficult, it can involve promotions, conferences, offers and targeting AdWords campaigns to bring in visitors that cost little but pay much.

That complexity, and its potential cost, is why many publishers look to search engine optimization, a source of free traffic, as their main way of bringing in visitors.

17. Search Engine Optimization

In the previous chapter, I talked about a number of different ways that you can increase your traffic. Probably the most important method though is to get a high ranking on search engines. That's free traffic.

Again, there are all sorts of books and experts who can help you improve your SEO and win a top spot for a site but there are also a few simple things—and a number of creative things—that you can do for yourself.

17.1 Control Your Search Engine Appearances with Robots.txt

One little-known fact about search engines is that you get to say which pages are indexed by the search engines.

Or rather, when the search engines' robots come around, you can, if you wish, tell them to go away.

You do that with a file called robots.txt.

Robots.txt simply contains a record of which robots should index which pages.

Without going into too much detail, there are two conventions used in a robots.txt file:

User-agent: [Defines which robots the site is addressing.]
Disallow: [Allows you to list the sites or robots you want to exclude.]

In general, you're probably going to use "User-agent: *" to make sure that you're addressing the robots of every search engine and you'll probably want include all of your pages (although you might want to exclude your directories: "Disallow: /cgi-bin/").

That will be the default setting on most websites and it allows all of your pages to be reached by search engines.

So when would you want to access the robots.txt file and start keeping pages and robots away?

If you're charging for content, you might not want to allow people to access your articles through search engines, and especially their cached entries. When News International put up its paywall, for example, it also prevented

Google and other search engines from showing its content in search results. If people want to know what's on their sites, they have to visit and pay.

The same would apply to membership sites. If you're keeping a part of your content behind a paywall for premium members, then you might want to restrict access to that content as much as possible.

Apart from that though, I can't see any reason why you'd want to keep your content secret from search engines. It's hard enough reaching the top of the search engines without keeping some pages off them altogether.

And besides, Robots.txt only allows you to control which robots index which pages. It won't really increase your search engine rankings.

Titles, URL's and links are much more important.

17.2 Titles And URLs Tell Search Engines Who You Are

I mentioned earlier that Metatags just aren't what they used to be. I also said that it's important that your titles and URLs contain the most important keywords for each of your pages in order to keep the ads relevant.

But those titles and URLs don't just influence your ads; they also affect your search engine rankings.

A page about toy cars called cars.html might have a low ranking when someone looks for information about cars. Change the name to toy_cars.html and you should get a much higher ranking when someone looks for "toy cars".

The more relevant your URL is and the easier it is to read, the better. www.domain.com/page is always an improvement than http://domain.com/page.php?newsid=1234583373. That's why on my website www.familyfirst.com, I use URL's like www.familyfirst.com/miss_abigails_time_warp.html rather than strings of number which confuse the robots.

One of the first places you should look when you want to improve your rankings then is your titles and URLs, and make sure that they contain the keywords you want to target.

That can be a problem on some template sites. If you're using a website-building service make sure that you can name each page you add individually instead of relying on the automated numbers that the program create for you.

And remember too that as with AdSense targeting, hyphens can be a good way to cram more keywords into a title while still making it legible to a search engine robot.

17.3 Links Bring Visitors As Well As Page Rank

The more links you have, the better. And the better the sites that list those links the more they'll be worth. It is always worth aiming to put your links on sites that look good and have high rankings. In fact, being listed on a poor site can bring your ranking down.

One of the best places to put links to improve your search engine rankings is on forums. This isn't an exchange; you post your links on their site, they don't post their links on yours.

Make sure you browse forums regularly, add comments and include your URL in your signature. You're likely to get the best results on good forums related to your topic but don't be fussy. Even unrelated forums can help to improve your search engine ranking. (Although the post in which you place that link should still be a valuable contribution to the debate. No one like spammers and unrelated comments will be usually be quickly removed.)

Google's spiders love forums and review them every week. And because these sites tend have quite high ranking, those posts will do wonders for your listings.

Of course, you shouldn't ignore the SEO forums themselves for some good tips. DigitalPoint is always one good place to browse and forums.seoachat.com is another.

And if you're going to putting your links all over the forums, why not do the same thing for blogs?

You can think of blogs as places to read someone's writings if you like, but don't forget they also let you add your own feedback. That means that as an AdSense publisher, you should also be thinking of them as free places to post your links. Again, any blog is good but top blogs on your topic are probably the best.

It's not just blogs and forum that that let you leave your details though. Those free content services that can make publishing easy can also be good places to spread your links. That is, after all, what the authors of those articles you're taking are getting out of the service.

Start by looking at other sites on your topic and then try Ezinearticles.com. You don't even need to write anything original when you do this. If you write a new entry to your blog, submit it to an article site at the same time as you upload it to your blog. Who knows where your links will end up?

The easiest way to put your links across the Web though is to do a link exchange. If you've got friends who have websites, start there. That's very easy.

While linking from friends' sites is straightforward and cost-free, www.LinkMarket.net makes the whole link exchange process very formal. There's a giant range of different sites that you can exchange links with so you can keep your links relevant and your ranking good and high.

You can also buy links on sites like www.AdBrite.com, and www.LinkAdage.com. Again, these allow you to choose sites on which you can place your own links but charge a fee for the process.

On my own site www.buyjoeldessert.com, for example, I give page links to people who satisfy my sweet tooth with a donation to my cause. (I've been losing weight recently but the staff are always hungry, so feel free to sign up, improve your rankings and make them happy!)

The screenshot shows a webpage titled "BuyJoelDessert.com" with a yellow border. At the top right, it says "Ads by Google". Below that, it says "Select and click the button below once." There are five dessert items listed, each with a small image, a name, a description, a price, and a checkbox:

- 3 Musketeers Bars** \$2.00
Love that chewy nougat
- Chocolate Chip Cookies** \$3.00
Homemade are best
- Hot Fudge Sundae** \$5.00
With whipped cream, yum
- Caramel Corn** \$7.00
Crunchy goodness!
- Chocolate Cake** \$10.00
Gotta have a whole cake
- Rowenas Double Delicious Chocolate Cake** \$25.00

Below the list, there is a text input field labeled "Or Define Your Dessert:" and a "Feed Joel Comm!" button. On the right side, there are two sections: "Sponsors" and "Fed By:", each containing a list of blue hyperlinks.

Fig. 17.1 Links for sale on BuyJoelDessert.com.

I know of several associates who have done something similar, allowing their visitors a tangible way to say "thank you" for their online efforts. Smart site

owners see opportunity in this strategy as you can acquire quality links rather inexpensively. Barbara Feldman of www.buybarbaracoffee.com, for example, uses it to load up on beans, which is probably a better idea than filling up with hot fudge sundaes.

17.4 Create Gateways to Bring in Visitors from All Directions

Usually, your links will lead directly to your home page. That's where you see your site as starting and that's where you want them to enter.

But if the content the user wants to see is on one of the internal pages, there's no reason for them to have to click around to find it. Fill that page with keywords that relate to the content on that page and it will have its own search engine ranking — and well-targeted ads.

So if you have a site about cats and one of your pages was about cat food, it would make sense to put plenty of cat food keywords on the page. That would get you cat food ads and a high ranking on search engines when someone does a search for "cat food" rather than just people who wanted to know about "cats."

This is a strategy popular with product marketers on the Internet. Before email marketers, for example, send out a marketing message, they'll often create a landing page dedicated to that promotion. The email creates the desire and the landing page makes the conversion.

You might want to do that for your promotions too, but even for an AdSense-supported website you want to consider every page that you create as one gateway into your site. It's another way to bring users in, another way to get a listing in search engine results and another way to win links from other sites.

17.5 Automatic Submissions to Search Engines

Submitting your site to all of the search engines from Google, Yahoo! and Bing right down to the smallest ones, and optimizing each of your pages for high ranking can be a drag. You also have to keep submitting the site on a regular basis and constantly check your position if you want to keep it.

The search engines are always re-indexing and reorganizing. A site that can be in the top spot one week can be a couple of pages over a week later. (Good news if you're low down, not so good if you've spent hours changing your pages to climb the rankings.)

That's why many webmasters simply outsource their SEO so that they can concentrate on content.

There are lots of companies that do this. Search Engine Blaster for example, lets you choose from over 600,000 engines but there are plenty of others.

Personally, I think that's a bit of a waste of time. Only Google, Yahoo and Bing are really important. My own feeling is that paying for SEO is only really worthwhile if you're running an online business with a static website that sells products. In that case, you might want to focus on the product and leave it to a professional to bring in the traffic.

For ad-supported sites though, because you're constantly producing content, Google will keep revisiting and reindexing your site. If you're using the right keywords to bring in good AdSense ads, those keywords should also be noticed by the search engine robots.

And because you're producing quality content that gets links naturally, you should find that you're rising up the search engine rankings anyway!

17.6 Use Your Newsletter To Drive Traffic!

Newsletters are fantastic tools to drive repeat visitors to your pages. Collect visitors' emails and you'll be able to create a list of your readers and invite them to come back on a regular basis.

It's a vital part of traffic generation — and it's also the most effective channel for online product marketing.

And if that isn't a good enough reason to start producing a newsletter, it looks as though Google are also testing AdSense in the newsletters themselves. They've already been doing it for iVillage.com and there's a good chance they'll be extending it to other users soon.

You can either create a newsletter yourself — and mail it using a mass mailing system like Intellicontact.com — or you can ask someone to write it for you. ConstantConversions.com (www.constantconversions.com) is a copywriting service that specializes in newsletter writing. You can tell them about your site and they'll do it all for you, from concept to inbox. You can even tell them you want it optimized for AdSense. They'll know what to do.



To start your own email newsletter and auto-responder for your site, I use Aweber.com. It's a service that lets you build unlimited lists with unlimited autoresponders. That means you can have your list set up to automatically send email to certain groups at

predetermined times. Along with their email broadcast services, Aweber is my first choice for many of my lists.

17.7 SEO Tools

There are a number of tools that I recommend to help with search engine optimization. The first is the Google Toolbar, which will let you keep track of your page ranking. You can download it for free at toolbar.google.com/googlebar.html.

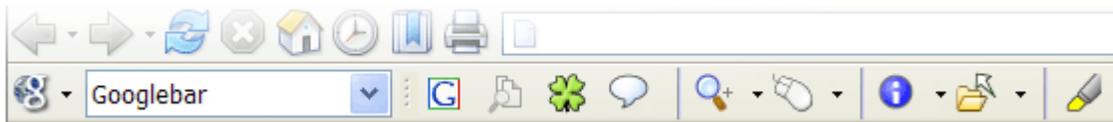


Fig. 17.2 The Google Toolbar: Pretty and useful too.

The Alexa toolbar is also useful and will show you how your site ranks against others. You can download the Alexa toolbar at www.alexa.com/toolbar.



Fig. 17.3 The Alexa Toolbar: Is your site number one yet?

SEO Elite



SEO Elite is a really excellent tool for learning from your most successful competitors. You can discover the optimum number of times to repeat keywords, where you should put them, whether or not to use h1 and h2 tags and even your competitors' link strategies, and a huge amount more.

In short, you can find out exactly how your competitors have got to the top of the search engines, learn what they did — and do the exact same thing to swipe their spot.

You can learn more about SEO Elite and pick up your copy of the latest version, Version 4.0, from www.adsense-secrets.com/seoelite.html

Direct Rank

SEO has become both an art and a science over the years. There are a number of services that promise front page placement on Google, but no one can truly guarantee it. Since I and my team have been doing SEO for over fifteen years, we actually offer a service that gets the job done. If you want to talk to a member of my team about getting your site listed on the front page of Google, Yahoo or Bing for your selected keyword terms, check out our Direct Rank service at: <http://www.imdirect.com/directrank/>

17.8 A Word About Cloaking

One issue that surfaces occasionally in the contextualized advertising world is "cloaking": presenting a different site to the Google robot than the one you present to users.

There can be good reasons for doing this. If you've got a forum for example, the robot could read all the information on your page related to forums, links and the design etc., find that it outweighs your forum content and serve you ads related to forums in general instead of your site in particular.

You could also find that your search engine listings are affected too: instead of appearing nice and high on the results page following a search for your topic, you might only appear to people looking for forums. That's not likely to win you much traffic.

One solution is to strip the site down using Javascript or one of the tools available online so that when the Google robot comes, it only reads the content.

Of course, you could also fool the robot into thinking that your site is about... well, anything really. You could spam Google into showing your site to anyone who was searching for anything.

And that's why Google banned the practice altogether.

Any form of cloaking, whether it's to get better targeted ads, improve your search engine rankings... or spam the search engines is a breach of Google's TOS and could get you banned.

So what should you do if you find that your design has a bigger influence on your ads and ranking than your content?

The best — and simplest thing to do — is to make sure that the description and keyword meta tags are all filled in properly with terms relevant to your content.

Section Targeting can de-emphasize problematic areas of your website and might well affect your search engine rankings (it's certainly worth a try).

And if these don't solve your problem, you might want to think of a redesign.

17.9 TrafficAndConversion.com

I said at the beginning of this chapter that this book is about AdSense and not about SEO rankings. That's because I know much more about AdSense than I do about search engine optimization.

We all have our strong points and AdSense is mine.

If you're looking for someone whose strong point is search engine optimization though, I recommend Mark Widawer at www.trafficandconversion.com.

Many of the ideas in this chapter came as a result of me raiding his brain for some great strategies. If you're looking for more of the same, you should definitely check out his site (which is built on the Socrates Theme) and see what he has to say.

18. SOCIAL MEDIA AND ADSENSE

Perhaps the biggest change to have hit the Internet in the years since the first edition of this book has been the rise of social media.

When the Internet took off, communication was one way. Publishers wrote articles, readers read them, clicked and moved on. Blogging and easy website-building tools allowed anyone to become a publisher but the relationship remained one-directional: publishers served up the content and consumers either liked it or they didn't. Other than sending a private email there was no way for the two sides to communicate.

Forums went some way towards filling that gap, and comments forms at the end of articles allowed readers to send back public responses to the content, creating something close to a conversation.

Social media though has changed everything. Everyone is now a publisher. Everyone is now the subject of their content. And the content itself is now created in public communication between groups of contacts.

That means the content isn't created by one person. It's created by a community. The "publisher" gets to build their own page and chooses the subject of the conversation by writing status updates or posting information, but without feedback, nothing has happened.

The conversation is everything.

For an AdSense publisher, social media is a conundrum. MySpace, the biggest of the social media sites, was also the first to fail and is fading away without contributing anything to publishers hoping to make money from advertising on their websites. The service has been used mostly by teenagers who might not be the sort of people most likely to click on your ads or buy what they saw at the end of the link. It's a good way for bands to promote themselves—but it's been an equally good way for teenagers to share pirated music.

YouTube can offer a direct opportunity for AdSense publishers. The company's direct link with Google means that it's possible to place ads on the videos themselves and earn money from clicks in the same way as any other kind of content—but only if those publishers are already generating millions of views.

Other video publishers have to use sites like Revver which have less of a social function. For most publishers, YouTube works mainly as a source of new traffic than a way of creating valuable content than generate ad clicks.

But even that link between YouTube and direct ad revenues is unusual. On most social media sites, earning from advertising is difficult although possible. Usually, social media works as a way of cementing a connection between a publisher and his or her audience, and driving traffic back to the site.

In my own business, I use three social media sites in addition to YouTube: Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn. In this chapter I'll explain how I use them, and what I get out of them.

18.1 Twitter's Real Power



Fig. 18.1 My Twitter page contains links to content on my websites and promotions of my products.

When Twitter launched in July 2006, no one really knew what it was for — not even the people who created it. The idea came during a brainstorming session at which members of podcasting firm Odeo, a company created by former Blogger founder Evan Williams, were looking for an idea more interesting than the project on which they were supposed to be working.

Jack Dorsey had previously created communication software for taxis and couriers, and suggested a system that allowed people to share their SMS messages publicly. Initially, it was used internally by Odeo employees but a massive rise in the site's popularity at the 2007 SxSW festival put the service on the map. The company, then part of Obvious Corporation, a firm created by Jack Dorsey, Evan Williams and colleague Biz Stone, had placed two 60-

inch plasma screens in the in the conference hallway on which they streamed tweets to conference attendees.

Usage rose from 20,000 tweets per day to as many as 60,000. By September 2010, the service had grown to 175 million registered users who were sending 95 million 140-character messages every day.

And still people wonder what it's for.

One definition of Twitter is very simple: if Facebook is a way to stay in touch with people you already know, Twitter is a way to get in touch with people you'd like to know.

That's certainly one valuable benefit of Twitter, but it's only part of the story. Another aspect is direct revenues. There are certainly plenty of companies tweeting special offers in their timeline, and sites like TwtQpon.com and TwitterCoupons.com make it very easy for sellers to create coupons specifically for Twitter users to find them.

For retailers, café owners and sellers of just about every kind of service, Twitter has been a direct marketing gift.

For businesses looking to earn from advertising though, it's been a little harder. Twitter has slowly been integrating advertising into its own layout, adding promoted tweets to search results, trends and follow suggestions but there's no natural way to incorporate any third party advertising — let alone a contextual system like AdSense — into a Twitter stream.

But that doesn't mean it's impossible. I use SponsoredTweets.com, a service that lets me choose and approve ads that are placed automatically in my Twitter stream.

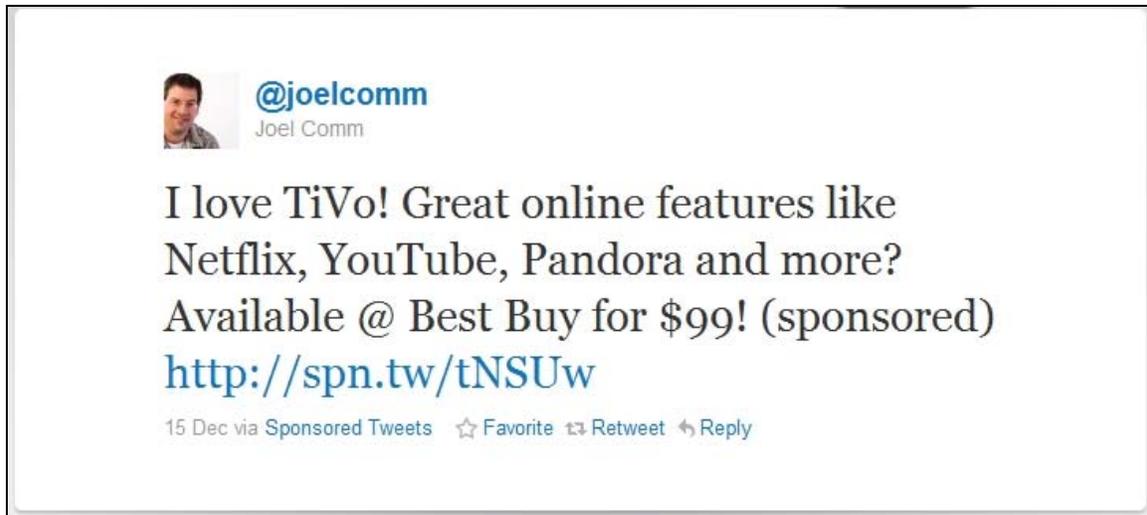


Fig. 18.2 SponsoredTweets did that. But it's true, I do love TiVo!

It's a pretty neat thing, but even with more than 60,000 followers, it's not going to make me piles of cash. If that's all that Twitter had to offer AdSense publishers, it wouldn't be very useful.

A more effective way for publishers to use Twitter though is much simpler. While users are turning away from RSS readers, those same users are picking up content through Twitter. Services like TwitterFeed.com allow publishers to send their RSS content directly to their Twitter followers instead of hoping that someone picks it up in their reader.

It's not something that will generate money directly but you should find that tweeted headlines lead to a spike in views — and a spike in earnings from AdSense units on those pages.



Fig. 18.3 AdSense-supported articles on FamilyFirst.com shown to my Twitter followers.

But the real benefit of Twitter isn't really its ability to send users to an ad-supported website, although it can certainly do that. It's in the connection it can create with a publisher's audience.

The four stages of selling are "know me, like me, trust me, pay me." Even if you're not selling directly from your site — and there's a good chance that eventually you will be, even if it's only in the form of affiliate products — the same principle applies.

Twitter lets readers get to know you, like you, trust you... and want to buy the content you're offering. They won't be paying for it, but they will be consuming it, telling their friends about it and clicking the ads on it.

It is possible to measure the effect of different Twitter strategies on views and clicks, but the growing benefit of continually building trust and a warm relationship with your readers is something that can't easily be measured. It can, however, be easily enjoyed.

18.2 When Facebook is More than Fun

Twitter's strength is its simplicity: short messages and quick communications. Facebook is much more complex and has far more features. It's much easier to embed videos and multiple images. Entire conversations can be seen at a glance while Twitter still requires a series of clicks to track messages and responses.

That makes it a hugely valuable tool for businesses, who have come to see a page on Facebook as vital as a page on the rest of the Web.

But it does mean that it might be less effective for AdSense publishers. Like Twitter, you can't place ads alongside the content in the way that you can on a regular website. And like Twitter, you're restricted to sending users from your page through your links to your AdSense-supported articles.

It's certainly worth doing though. Facebook provides another channel through which to send your content through RSS, and it gives you a platform on which to sell any other products you might want to offer.



Fig. 18.4 [My Facebook page](#). There's the syndicated content, the product promotion... and the conversations. It would be nice if the ads on the page were mine too, but you can't have everything.

18.3 Connecting with LinkedIn

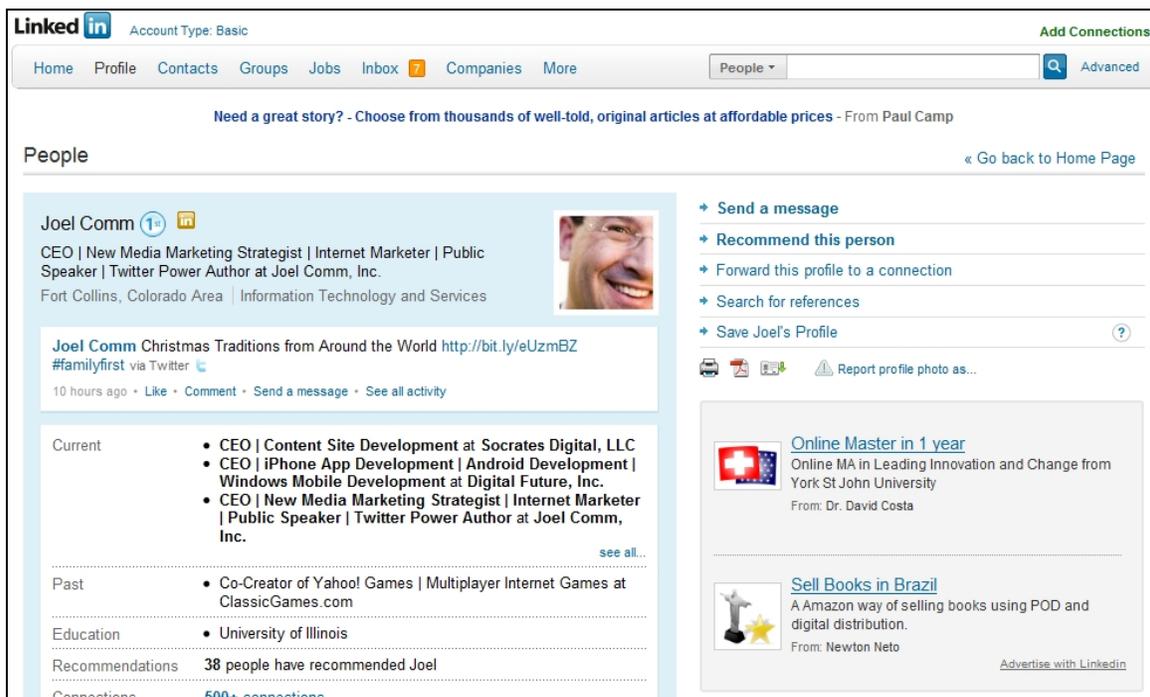
Twitter and Facebook are both fun products that can effectively be put to serious use. LinkedIn is a business product that can also be a lot of fun.

Again, it's not going to deliver AdSense revenues directly. But you can send your blog content (as well as your Twitter posts) through the service and, more importantly, you can build connections.

This is where LinkedIn really comes into its own, and what marks it out from other social media services.

When you start publishing online, the quality of your content and your ability to promote it will determine the relationship you create with your audience. As you continue publishing, that relationship may extend from your site to you personally.

That doesn't happen to every publisher. Many publishers prefer to stay in the background, keeping a distance from their sites. But when your readers can feel that they're connecting with a person instead of a website, the connection is deeper, more powerful and lasts longer. That's why even Pete Cashmore, the founder and editor of giant technology blog Mashable, allows himself to be associated so closely with his site's content even when he writes only a small part of it.



The screenshot shows a LinkedIn profile for Joel Comm. The profile includes a header with the LinkedIn logo, account type (Basic), and navigation links (Home, Profile, Contacts, Groups, Jobs, Inbox, Companies, More). A search bar is visible with the word "People" and an "Advanced" search option. Below the header, there is a banner for "Need a great story?" and a "Go back to Home Page" link. The main profile section features a profile picture of Joel Comm, his name, and his current title: "CEO | New Media Marketing Strategist | Internet Marketer | Public Speaker | Twitter Power Author at Joel Comm, Inc." His location is listed as "Fort Collins, Colorado Area" and his industry as "Information Technology and Services". A recent post by Joel Comm is shown, titled "Christmas Traditions from Around the World" with a link and a hashtag #familyfirst. To the right of the profile, there are several action buttons: "Send a message", "Recommend this person", "Forward this profile to a connection", "Search for references", and "Save Joel's Profile". Below the profile, there is a section for "Current" and "Past" experience, listing various roles and companies. The "Education" section lists "University of Illinois". The "Recommendations" section shows "38 people have recommended Joel". The "Connections" section shows "500+ connections". On the right side, there are two sponsored posts: "Online Master in 1 year" and "Sell Books in Brazil".

Fig. 18.5 No AdSense units on LinkedIn but it is an important part of my publishing business's personal marketing strategy.

One mistake that LinkedIn users often make is to regard their LinkedIn profile as nothing more than a kind of online resumé. It's a lot more than that. By filling it up with content from your blog, your Twitter stream, your YouTube channel and even your Amazon reading list, you show your audience who you are and take them along the path from knowing and liking you towards being a regular part of your readership.

It would just be nice if you could put your own ads on here too.

Social media then is an important element in building an Internet business and it's even important when you're focusing on creating an ad-supported website. It can provide another place to generate traffic but most importantly it lets you build relationship so that your readers stop being "traffic" and start being people.

That won't just help you to produce better content. It will also make the whole business-building experience a lot more fun.

19. AdSense Prohibitions, Mistakes And Problems

Google is very protective of its AdSense program and is a pretty strict ad provider. It has a relatively long page of Terms and Conditions (www.google.com/adsense/terms) and monitors sites pretty closely. While Yahoo was known to send a warning to sites that it believed had broken its terms and conditions, Google has been known to cut people off right away although you can expect to receive an email first.

Being kicked off though can be pretty painful.

I do recommend that you read the AdSense Terms and Conditions. I realize that they're not much fun and they're hardly a gripping read, but they are important, especially when you start really pushing your ads to their limits. To make it easier for you, I've gone through those terms and pulled out the most important restrictions contained in them.

This list is not a replacement for reading the Terms page — you're still going to have to do that. They just might make it clearer so that you're less likely to make a very costly mistake.

- **One individual or entity cannot hold more than one AdSense account; all accounts will be closed.**
This is important if you have many sites covering different topics and are worried about the effects of Smart Pricing. While you could open a separate account in a spouse's name you can't create new accounts for every site you launch. You'll just have to make sure that you use channels to make sure that you know exactly what's happening on each site you build.
- **You cannot modify the JavaScript or other code provided in any way.**
Google is pretty strict about this. Cut into the code and you risk the axe. The only exception is the code supplied for A/B testing — which actually only surrounds the AdSense code and doesn't affect it all. Any formatting changes you want to make have to be done within the AdSense control panel.
- **Web pages cannot contain solely ads, a Search Box or a referral button.**
Blank pages with nothing more than AdSense ads are pretty rare; pages which contain only ads of different types are much more common. Google is working against these sorts of things and you'll probably find yourself if not banned, then almost certainly Smart

Priced out. If your site is under construction, you can use AdSense for Domains, but then you can do nothing to promote the page. You can only do that once you have content on it — and are using AdSense for Content.

- **Ads cannot appear AdSense code may not be placed in inappropriate places such as pop-ups, emails or software. And they can't be used on pages that contain adult, objectionable or illegal content.**

If you have a site that's in any way morally objectionable, then AdSense isn't for you. That's the bottom line.

More relevant for most people though is the idea that you can't put AdSense everywhere you want on your site. There are all sorts of pages on many people's sites that really don't contain any content, like password pages or error messages. You can't use them as places to put ads and you can't try to slip the code into your emails.

- **You cannot generate searches, clicks or impressions by any method other than genuine user interest.**
So no automatic bots or clicking your own ads or any of that nonsense. That's just fraud and Google will spot it in a second.
- **You cannot display anything on your Web page that could be confused as an AdSense ad.**
That's an interesting rule that prevents people from putting up affiliate links that look like ad units to try to cash in on Google's brand. In theory, this rule could cause a problem for someone who blended the ads into the page by making link lists that looked similar to ad units. As long as those links aren't ads though, and as long as you don't write "Ads by Google" on them, I doubt if Google would have a problem with them.
- **You cannot put related images right next to an AdSense unit.**
The old strategy of using images related to the ads to draw attention to ad units has gone. Google doesn't want any picture next to an ad unit that looks like it's part of the ad. There's no clear definition of how far the images should be or how it defines 'confusing'. The best bet is to use common sense, and if you're going to put an image near ad unit, make it a logo, unrelated to the content of the ad unit, some part of the site—or a Chitika unit that contains images.
- **If you're using a Google Search box, you cannot use any other search service on the page.**

Again, Google wants a monopoly of services on your site. You can't offer your users the option of searching through Google or Yahoo; it's either-or, not both-and.

- **You cannot put anything between the ad link and the ad site.** So if you were thinking of trying to capture your lost traffic by redirecting ad clicks to another of your sites, think again. But who thinks of that?

- **You agree to direct to Google, and not to any advertiser, any communication regarding any Ads or Links displayed on your Sites.**

That would have been quite useful. You could have written to an advertiser and suggested ways in which they could make their copy more effective for your users.

Of course, you could also suggest they advertise directly on your site and cut out the Google middleman...

The clause though only related to communication regarding an ad or link already on the site. There's nothing to stop you from talking to advertisers who aren't yet on the site. You can still add a link to your page inviting advertisers to advertise with you directly and manage your own advertising program.

- **You cannot change the order of the information in an ad unit.** This is pretty well covered by the ban on changing the code. But again, it might have been nice to put the ads that are most likely to get the most clicks at the top of the list, even if they pay less. But putting the ones with the highest bid price there though isn't a bad idea either.

- **You cannot reveal your click-through rates or any other information about your site performance.**

Which is why I haven't quoted my own CTR figures in this book. But you can reveal the amount of Google's gross payments to you, which I have done.

These rules are all pretty straightforward and for the most part, easy to follow. Usually, if someone has been banned from AdSense it's because they've clicked on their own ads and Google didn't believe that it was an accident. That's just rotten luck.

19.1 The Biggest Mistakes That AdSense Publishers Make... And How To Avoid Them

Clicking on your own ads isn't the only bad luck AdSense publishers have run into. There are lots of different ways that you can make a mistake when using AdSense and while some of them Google will be pretty quick to tell you about, others you'll only feel in your pocket.

Here are some of the biggest mistakes you can make when using AdSense. Be aware of them...and beware of them!

Big Mistake #1: Not Being Familiar With Google's TOS

On the one hand, this is an easy mistake to make. The terms of service change all the time and what's legal one day could be illegal the next — and you could know nothing about the change.

On the other hand though, if something you've been doing is suddenly made illegal you probably shouldn't be doing it anyway.

The bottom line is to check the TOS regularly, read the AdSense Blog and make a habit of browsing the AdSense forums. Even if you miss a change, it's unlikely that other people will.

It's a mistake not to stay informed.

Big Mistake #2: Inviting Others To Click Ads

That clicking your own ads is a mistake is pretty clear. There's no reason to do it and no excuse for doing it.

That also includes asking other people to click on the ads for you.

For site owners used to asking their users to support their sponsors, this can take some getting used to. Once the ads are up and optimized, there's nothing more that you can do to persuade people to click.

If you've got a line on your website that asks people to support your sponsors or if you've been asking people to click on your ads in any sort of way, you're making a giant mistake.

That's the sort of mistake that can get you banned.

Big Mistake #3: Using The Wrong Ad Blocks

Those first two mistakes will get you banned. The remaining mistakes will "only" cost you money.

Choosing the wrong ad blocks is one of the easiest mistakes to make. Almost any block can fit in almost any space but only one block will give you the highest revenues possible.

Use this book as a guide to which blocks suit which locations best and check out the case studies to see how other people are using a similar spot. Even if you're happy with your results so far, it's always possible that you could do even better.

Sitting on your laurels with the wrong ad block is certainly a mistake.

Big Mistake #4: Using The Wrong Colors

Exactly the same is true of your choice of colors. Forget about looking for some nice contrast or coming up with some snazzy design, you want the colors in your ads to match the colors on your site.

The background color should be the same as the background of your site and the font colors should match too.

Any other color is usually a mistake.

Big Mistake #5: Poor Page Placement

Some places on your page are much more powerful than others. You want to put your ads where your users are going to be looking, not where they'll make the page look good.

That might be at the beginning of an article, in the sidebar, at the top of the page, next to an image or any one of several dozen other spots.

Don't be shy about putting your ads front and forward. As long as they're blended into the site, they won't be anything like as obtrusive as you think. They'll be right in front of your users and attractive enough to click.

Big Mistake #6: Not Using Link Units

A common mistake that people make when they first start using AdSense is to assume that only the ad units are worth taking.

That's a big mistake.

Clicks on link units make up a serious part of my AdSense earnings. When used properly, they should be a serious part of your AdSense earnings too. Don't overlook link units just because they're small. Put them in the right place and you'll find that they can be very, very powerful

Big Mistake #7: Not Checking And Analyzing Stats

One of the biggest differences between AdSense publishers who get the big checks and AdSense publishers who earn pennies is that the big earners are addicted to reading their stats — and they understand what they're reading.

It's very tempting once you've set up your site and put on your ads to just kick back and look at the bottom line. But the other lines tell you what's working and what you should be doing.

Read your stats carefully and regularly.

Big Mistake #8: Ignoring Channels

If you're not sure how to use channels, don't let it ride. Read the chapter on channels again, build some and play with them.

For some people channels can look a little scary. You have to build them from scratch, you might not be too sure which channels you should create or what you should do with the data the channels should give you.

None of those is a good excuse. Channels are easy to build and they give you heaps of information about the way each of your Web pages is operating that you just couldn't get anywhere else.

If you're not using channels, you need to start.

Big Mistake #9: Not Keeping An AdSense Journal

When you were at school and your English teacher told you to keep a journal, you probably groaned, ignored her... and made up a month's worth of entries the day before you were supposed to bring it in to class.

When you're trying to make a lot of money with AdSense, keeping a journal is vital. It's the only way to keep track of your changes and what happened when you implemented those changes.

Every time you use a different ad block, push a different keyword or try a new location on the page, write it down, wait a week and write down the effect. If you're doing the same thing time and time again because you forgot what happened when you did it last time, you're wasting your time and your money.

Big Mistake #10: Building Huge Sites Overnight

It's possible to go from no site to AdSense site in just a few minutes (plus the time it takes to get the confirmation email). But it will take a little while longer to build the sort of massive site that keeps users coming back and builds a loyal base.

Sure, you can use free books to fill dozens of pages and you can use already prepared content, but neither of these methods are as good as creating a huge site filled with original material.

That takes time.

Rush it and it's more likely you'll end up with a lot of trash that kills your clicks and ruins your Smart Pricing than a quality site that makes you money. It's better to be small and good than big and bad.

Big Mistake #11: Building Throwing Sites

And if it's a bad idea to build large trashy sites, it's a terrible idea to build small, trashy sites.

Check out the AdSense forums long enough and there's a good chance that you'll come across plenty of publishers who believe not in creating good quality sites but in building small garbage-y ones and trying to squeeze as much revenue out of them as possible.

The advantage is that you can throw up a lot of them in a small amount of time and for little cost.

The disadvantage is that the returns are small too — and most important, they're just no fun to do.

I thoroughly enjoy managing every one of the sites I've created. It's because I enjoy them that my users enjoy them. That keeps them coming back and it keeps them clicking. And it keeps me coming back too.

If you're building throwaway sites just to make a quick buck, you're working too hard... and that's a giant mistake.

Big Mistake #12: Doing AdSense Halfway

This was the big mistake that I made for a long time. It's also the big mistake that about 95 percent of AdSense publishers are making.

They create their site, put up AdSense units, maybe they'll optimize it a little (and maybe not), and then they'll wait for the checks to come in.

Making a lot of money with AdSense will take a lot of work. It can make you more money than most people will make in most full-time jobs but it's not the sort of thing you can throw up in a morning and then spend the afternoon shopping for your beach house in Cancun.

You can start earning in the morning. But if you want to make real money, you're going to have to go all the way.

Anything less is a big mistake.

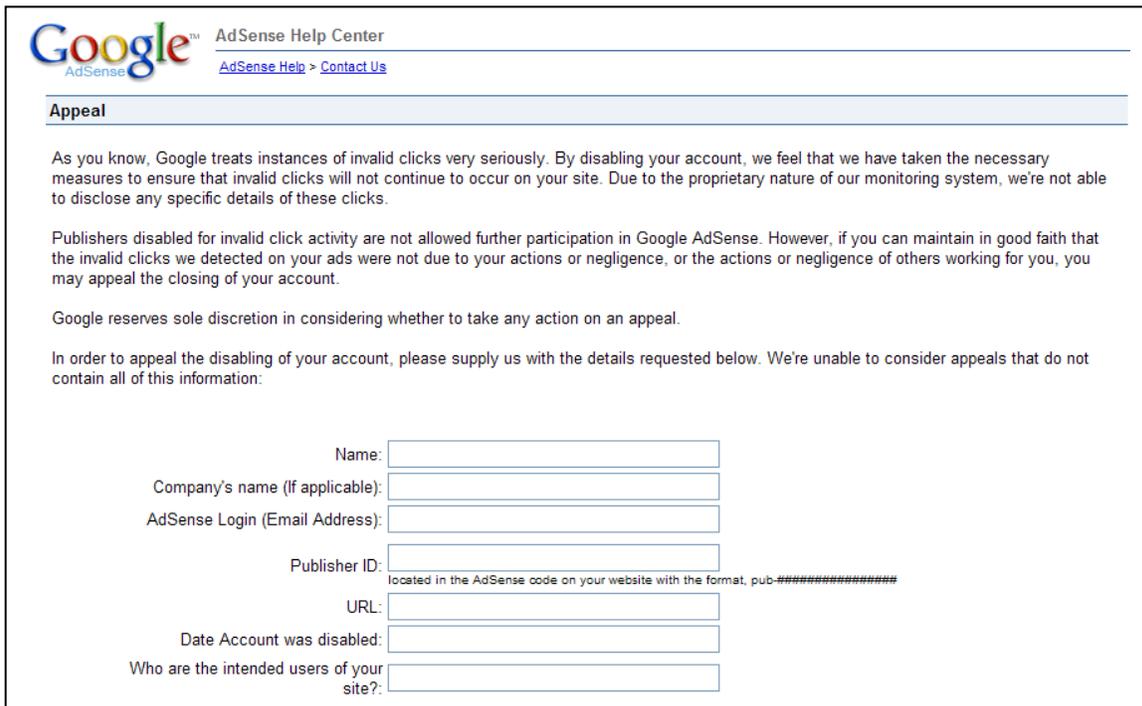
Big Mistake #13: Only Using AdSense

Don't get me wrong, I still think that AdSense is the greatest way to earn money from a website short of buying Google.com. But ever since Google changed its TOS to allow other kinds of advertising systems on AdSense pages — even other kinds of contextualized advertising systems — I've been happily mixing, matching and earning even more.

You should certainly use one of the text link services like Kontera. You can also use Chitika to give more variety to your revenue systems. You can recommend affiliate products. You can mix different payment systems so that your pages are earning by impression, by click and by sale.

You should have every base covered and every income stream up and running.

19.2 What To Do If Your AdSense Account Gets Closed



Google™ AdSense Help Center
AdSense Help > Contact Us

Appeal

As you know, Google treats instances of invalid clicks very seriously. By disabling your account, we feel that we have taken the necessary measures to ensure that invalid clicks will not continue to occur on your site. Due to the proprietary nature of our monitoring system, we're not able to disclose any specific details of these clicks.

Publishers disabled for invalid click activity are not allowed further participation in Google AdSense. However, if you can maintain in good faith that the invalid clicks we detected on your ads were not due to your actions or negligence, or the actions or negligence of others working for you, you may appeal the closing of your account.

Google reserves sole discretion in considering whether to take any action on an appeal.

In order to appeal the disabling of your account, please supply us with the details requested below. We're unable to consider appeals that do not contain all of this information:

Name:

Company's name (If applicable):

AdSense Login (Email Address):

Publisher ID:
located in the AdSense code on your website with the format, pub-#####

URL:

Date Account was disabled:

Who are the intended users of your site?:

Fig. 19.1 Google's court of appeal. You don't want to come here.

Most of the mistakes people make at AdSense hit them in the wallet. Some mistakes though can hit where it really hurts and get your account closed. So what should you do if you get that dreaded email from AdSense informing you that your account has been shut down?

The first thing to remember is that you've pretty much got no power and no rights at all. Google's Terms make it very clear that they have the right to kick someone out of their program whenever they feel like it and you have to prove your innocence.

But the people at Google aren't a nasty bunch and they will listen to you if you feel you've been hard done by. Your first step then should be to send them an email asking why you've been banned.

The most likely reason will be invalid clicks.

That might mean that you've accidentally clicked your own ads. Google accepts that accidents do happen and takes occasional clicks like these into account. They'll show up as clicks in your stats but you won't earn revenue from them. Nor do you need to inform them every time your cursor accidentally lands on one of your ads.

But if it's more than occasional, you could be in trouble. It's possible that someone else might have been clicking ads on your site repeatedly — perhaps a competitor hoping to hit your earnings or a family member who didn't know it was forbidden.

It's also possible that someone has stolen your AdSense code and placed it on their own site. It sounds strange, but publishers have been concerned about this so Google now lets you create a list of Allowed Sites. Only those click on those sites will count towards your income.

And at least one publisher has been banned because the previous owner of the domain had clicked his own ads before the domain was sold.

Whatever the reason, the next step is to appeal. Google has an official appeal form. It's available at www.google.com/adsense/support/bin/request.py?contact=invalid_clicks_appeal

Be sure to fill in all the fields in the form and provide as much information as possible.

Be polite. Remember, Google's system has detected a strange pattern in your click rate and is acting to protect its advertisers from paying for nothing. When advertisers start to feel that Google isn't looking after their budget, none of us will make money. If Google has made a mistake, you want to help the company correct it, not annoy it so much it won't want you back.

Someone will read your form, and you want to stay on that person's good side.

Provide proof of your innocence if you can and show that you're genuinely trying to help them get to the bottom of the problem. If you spotted a click spike in your stats, tell them when you saw it and what you think might have caused it — if you have any suspicions. If you happen to know the IP address of the source of the multiple clicks, block it, supply it to Google and tell them you've blocked it.

And remind Google that you think its service is great and that you'd like to keep using it.

There are plenty of stories around about publishers who got banned but were reinstated after appeal. If you can produce a good explanation of the events that led to your site being banned, there's a good chance that you'll be allowed back in.

And if all else fails and you find yourself cut off, there's always Chitika and Kontera.

It's unlikely you'll make as much as you did with AdSense, but you will still make something.

20. Troubleshooting — What To Do If You're Not Getting The Results You Want

Follow the advice and strategies I lay out in this book and you should find that you get the results you want: a nice check (or direct deposit) every month from the nice people at Google.

But it doesn't always work out that way. There will be times when you'll be scratching your head and wondering why things just aren't going the way you'd like them to. When that happens, check out the list of problems here and see if you can find a solution.

20.1 Low Revenues

This is the bottom of line of AdSense advertising and if your revenues are low then it couldn't be clearer that you're doing something wrong.

Unfortunately, it's going to take a bit of work to make clear what exactly it is that you're doing wrong.

If your revenues are much lower than you'd like then there are a number of different possible reasons and you need to check each of the following in turn:

- ☑ **Your traffic levels.** If you don't have the traffic, you won't get the revenues. A low level of traffic could be one reason why you're only making a low level of income.
- ☑ **Your CTR.** Increasing your traffic might not raise your income as much as you want if your clickthrough rate isn't all it should be. Once you've checked your traffic levels, take a look at how much of that traffic you're converting into clicks.
- ☑ **Your click price.** When the ads change all the time it's not always easy to figure out how much each click is worth but if you divide your daily income by your daily clicks you can get an idea of how much you're earning per click. If that figure is hovering around five cents, you're not making much — and you need to be making more.

You won't be able to make a move until you've figured out which of these potential problems is yours, and it's likely that your problem will be a mixture of more than one of them.

Your first move then, when you're not making the money you'd like, is to check each of these possibilities. Your next move is to solve the problem you've found.

20.2 Low Traffic Levels

If your problem is that your site isn't getting the traffic it needs, there are a whole range of different options you can take. I've covered the basic ideas in Chapter 16 — and you can take another look to see if there's anything you've missed — but you also might want to try one of the courses or books that specialize in generating traffic.

It might cost you a few bucks but when it comes to making money with AdSense just about any investment is worth the effort. You should be able to make it back in no time.

20.3 Low Clickthrough Rates

When your clickthrough rates are very low, you're really in AdSense territory. This is all about getting the right ads in the right places. There all sorts of possible strategies that you can do and again, you're going to have to check each one in turn.

Are you using the right ad units?

Compare your site to the case studies in this book, to other sites on the Web and to the recommendations I make about where to put each of the different kinds of ad units. Those examples and recommendations should be your starting point.

If they don't work for you though, you're going to need to do some experimenting. This can take a bit of time, but it's well worth the effort. Try replacing an ad unit with one of a different size and follow the stats. If they improve, you're on the right track.

Are you using the right colors and font size?

This is a very easy one to fix. If the colors of your ads don't match the colors on your site, change them.

Are there better places on the page to put your ads?

Even if you're getting the right ads and they're well-blended, if no one sees them, no one will click them. Check to make sure your ads are in the most prominent positions. If you think you might do better if they were in different spots, move them and follow the results.

20.4 Low Click Price

Raising your click price is one of the trickiest challenges in AdSense. Because Google decides how much to charge advertisers for a click on your site, you can only affect their decision indirectly. Again there are a few things that you can do:

1. Target different keywords

Different keywords pay different amounts. It's possible that your site is bringing up the lowest paying terms in your subject. Use the AdWords Keyword Tool to see what people are paying for words in your field and try creating a page that focuses on the highest paying term.

If that page brings in good revenues, you've got a keyword problem — and that's easy to fix. If you're still getting a low click price, you've got a low Smart Price rating, and that's going to take a bit more work to fix.

2. Source better traffic

Your Smart Price suffers when your users click but don't buy. One solution is to source better targeted traffic that's more likely to be interested in what your ads are offering. For example, you could try working backwards and target your traffic to the ads you're currently showing, or make a connection with another site in your field to get a link on their pages.

3. Build better content

Or it could be that people are clicking your ads not because they're interested in them but because they're not interested in what's on the page. Good quality content will deliver high quality clicks from people who are motivated to buy from your advertisers.

There are no shortcuts to building great content. You can try to focus on a topic that genuinely excites rather than building a site just for the money. You could try buying in some professionally written articles by taking a freelancer from Elance, and seeing if that raises your click price. Or you could just take another look at what your best competitors are doing — and do the same.

4. Remove poor-performing ads

Your Smart Price is affected by all the sites in your account. One poor-performing site then can bring down your prices across all your sites. If you own lots of different sites and your ads aren't getting the price you think they deserve, one strategy could be to remove the ads from the sites that you think aren't doing so well.

Whichever strategy you choose, the goal will be to get more of the users to click on the ads to buy from your advertisers. You should start to see a change in your price within a couple of weeks.

20.5 Low Ad Relevance

If your ads aren't relevant, people won't want to click them. Try Section Targeting to focus Google on the ideas you want to emphasize. (If that works you might want to take things a little further by turning each section into a different page. That will give even more ads and more opportunities to earn).

Alternatively, you can play with the keywords on your page, change the title of each page so that they include a keyword you're trying to target or include more section titles. All of these options should help to keep your ads on track.

It's also possible that at least part of your site requires users to log in. Google's AdSense robot can't do that so it can't tell Google which ads to serve on those membership pages. So you get irrelevant ads.

The solution is to use the Site Authentication link under your AdSense Setup tab. You'll have to confirm that the site is yours but once you've done that, it's just a question of providing the robot with a username and password.

20.6 Too Many Public Service Ads

Public service ads are another sign of a keyword problem. You might not be hitting the keywords you want, or it could be that there simply aren't any ads for the keywords you're aiming for.

The first thing you need to do is make sure that you've got something to show instead of public service ads, nice though they are. The best option is to specify an alternate ad to show, or even a list of links to your other sites.

Your next step though, is going to be to fix the problem. Make sure that Google does have ads for the keyword you're targeting (you can use one of the preview tools such as googleadspreview.blogspot.com to do this). If nothing comes up, you'll need to throw different keywords onto your page.

If something does come up — and it's not what you're getting — you can just use all of the keyword strategies I mentioned earlier to dump those PSAs.

20.7 My Ads Have Disappeared!

When Google made it possible for publishers to name their ad units and change them all automatically without repasting the code, it wanted to make sure that publishers didn't accidentally delete them.

So Google didn't create a delete feature.

Instead ads that aren't shown for seven days are automatically made inactive.

If your ads are on a page that gets no traffic at all — perhaps because it's a test page or because it's just been built — those ads might disappear. You'll need to make the ads active again... and look at them at least once a week until you show the page to users.

20.8 Too Few Ads In A Unit

Sometimes a four-ad ad unit will only show one or two ads. There's nothing you can do about this and it's not really a problem. If you're getting just one ad, you could be earning by CPM instead of cost-per-click. If you're getting two ads — as Google likes to serve them sometimes — you just have to hope that they're doing it because it pays better.

With AdSense, you don't get to control everything!

21. Staying up to Date and Learning the Latest AdSense Tips

AdSense changes all the time and lots of people are following those changes. They're talking about what those changes mean for publishers and how you can take advantage of them.

They're also discussing the new contextualized advertising systems that appear from time to time and commenting on how well they work.

Most serious publishers pay close attention to these blogs and other sites. They're an invaluable source of first-hand information from people who have been there and done that. They'll save you a huge amount of time — and money.

I've put a short list of some of the most important sites to look at below. This isn't meant to be a complete list — that would be way too long — but these are a good place to start. They'll keep you in the loop and make sure your questions get answered.

- **www.WarriorForum.com**

The Warrior Forum has been around a very long time and it's an incredible resource for online marketers. Just be careful to use it wisely and do not get distracted by all the latest offers or programs being discussed. Focus on the information that produces traffic and conversions.

- **www.ProBlogger.net**

Darren Rowse is a blogger making a healthy six-figure income with his online thoughts and his advice about how to do the same thing. If you're running a blog, you really need to be reading it... and if you're not running a blog, you'll still find enough great advice to keep you busy too.

- **www.AssociatePrograms.com/discus/index.php**

Forums are a really great place to swap ideas and most importantly, ask questions. Publishers who are old hands at making serious money with AdSense are usually more than happy to share their knowledge. The forum at Associate Programs is a great place to pick up tips about everything from links to marketing.

- **Forums.DigitalPoint.com**

And the forums at Digital Point are at least as good, if not better, with plenty of information on AdSense.

22. Case Studies

Throughout this book, I've been explaining all the different ways that you can optimize your site and boost your revenues. In this chapter, I've collected some examples.

All of these are real sites that employed the techniques that I describe in this book to make more money. I'll talk you through them so that you can see exactly what they did, why they did it — and how you can do the same.

It is worth remembering though that sites do change. It's possible that by the time you read this book, these sites will have been redesigned, often to keep up with changing online fashions.

Each of the principles outlined in these case studies though remain the same.

22.1 JourneyAustralia.com — Unmissable Ads Down Under



The screenshot shows the JourneyAustralia.com website. At the top is a banner with a smiling woman and a hand applying sunscreen, with the text "JOURNEY AUSTRALIA" in large yellow letters. Below the banner is the heading "Australia: Your First Choice Holiday Destination". The main content area features several prominent ads:

- Free \$250 Pair Uggs:** Famous Australia Uggs Gift card Buy Your Favorite Pair Today. www.yourtopbrands.com
- Escorted Australia Tours:** Our Australia tours are up to 40% less than traveling independently. TourVacationsToGo.com
- Flight Deals To Australia:** Exclusive, Web-Only Deals To Australia. Don't Wait. Book Now! www.airnewzealand.com
- Australia Packages Travel:** Great Deals for Vacations. A Limited Time Offer. SideStep.com

On the right side, there is a "FREE Newsletter" sign-up form with the text: "Sign up for FREE and we will write a webpage that answers your Australian travel questions (for a limited time) (first come - first served) (advertisers excluded)". The form includes fields for "Email:", "Name (preferred):", and "Country (optional):", along with a "Subscribe Me" button and an "RSS" link.

At the bottom left, there is a paragraph of text: "Australia should be your first choice for a holiday. We have clean white beaches in abundance, modern cosmopolitan cities, unspoiled rainforests and national parks, the worlds greatest marine attraction and an unequalled number of marine parks, as well as huge tracts of outback for you to explore. Not to mention our [weather!](#)"

Fig. 22.1 JourneyAustralia.com puts its ads front and center.

It can take some courage to make your ads the most important thing the user sees when he looks at the page, but that's the approach that JourneyAustralia.com takes.

You can't miss these ads! They're right above the fold and slap-bang in the middle. They're the first thing the reader sees even before he knows what the site is about.

Note too the picture right next to the ad unit. That helps to keep users' eyes in the ad zone, but you have to be very careful doing that. Google's ban on "misleading" images is vague enough for them to act on any picture placed next to an ad unit any time they want. That doesn't mean they will but you don't want to give them an opportunity. JourneyAustralia.com seems to have found the right sort of image to use. If you're not sure about your image though, it's best to leave it to one side.

The strategy of placing an ad unit in the middle of the page though is very simple. It's about as subtle as a slap in the face but it can be very, very effective.

Do you have the courage to try it?

22.2 Great Ideas For Integration From FreeAfterRebate.info

EagleBit USB 2.0 Ultra Slim 4-Ports Self Powered Mini HUB

March 13th, 2007



EagleBit USB 2.0 Ultra Slim 4-Ports Self Powered Mini HUB \$19.99, free after rebate, at EagleBit. EagleBit provides **free standard shipping!** [Rebate form](#)

This deal expires March 21, 2007.

Categories: [Computer Accessories](#), [EagleBit](#) | [Email/Share This Deal](#)

[Ads by Goooooogle](#)

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Gift Program- No Repayment Required Most So Cal Home Buyers Can Qualify
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www.chrysler.com/crossfire

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Top 10 Reader Picks

1. Kingston 1GB U3 DataTraveler USB 2.0 Smart Drive
2. Norton Internet Security 2007 / Norton Ghost 10.0 / Norton Partition Magic 8.0
3. CSIT DP-0031 12-in-1 Sudoku Push-Button Game with Backlight
4. Greeting Card Factory 4.0
5. Free Printable Coloring Pages
6. Ultra Wizard Black Mid Tower Case
7. SanDisk 256MB SD Card
8. PNY Attaché 1GB Flash Drive
9. DriveScrubber 3 by iolo Technologies
10. CA PC Protection 2007 Bundle

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Fig. 22.2 Perfectly blended ads at FreeAfterRebate.info.

Few sites do a better job of integrating their ads with the text as FreeAfterRebate.info. The ad units have lost their borders, the text matches the text of the content and the background color is the same as the background color of the Web page.

The content itself is short as well. In fact, it looks a lot like an ad! That's a great strategy to use. Instead of blending an ad unit into a Web page, you can create content that matches the ad unit. I'm not sure whether this is what FreeAfterRebate.com did but there's no reason why you couldn't do it.

First, you'd decide on the format of your ad units, then you'd create very short articles that follow the appearance of those units. Because you wouldn't be able to include much more than a headline, a sentence or two of text and a link, you could really only use this strategy on pages that discuss products, or home pages that offer teasers to longer articles.

Look too though at the way this site uses an image. Instead of placing a picture right next to an ad unit, FreeAfterRebate.com puts it *above* the ad unit. That's another great solution to copy.

22.3 Gifts-911.com Gets Emergency Treatment With Multiple Ad Units

The most Adriana Copaceanu's site Gifts-911.com had made in one month was \$31.19 — not much more than a dollar a day. She put a main ad unit above the fold, a second unit at the bottom of the page and an Ad Link unit on the right.

After making the ads more prominent and adding more of them, revenues doubled the following months and reached as high as \$200 in the month after that!

That's was so simple. It's a great example of how just a small change in AdSense can yield massive results.

Could Adriana do more? Probably. But this is a pretty good start!

Check out Gift-911.com at www.Gifts-911.com.

The screenshot shows the Gifts 911 website. At the top, there's a banner with a collage of people and the text "Getting. Giving. Shopping." and "It can be so easy with Gifts 911". Below the banner is a navigation menu on the left with links like "Gifts 911 Home", "Site Map", "A Wonderful Gift", "Business Gift Giving", "Handmade Christmas Gifts", "Corporate Gift Giving", "Gift Giving Made Easy", "The Gift of Fitness", "The Gift of Flight", "The Gift of Family Safety", "The Gift of a Sand Dollar", "The Gift of Time", "The Gift of Your Name", and "Thank You Notes". The main content area features the headline "Gifts for all occasions...Get Yours now!" and several gift suggestions with links and descriptions, such as "Father's Day Gift" (Waters his lawn, garden and more! AccuRain's unique watering system), "Alaska gifts" (Alaska smoked salmon gifts Alaska gift baskets), "Finding the Ideal Gift" (Baby and children's Gift Baskets), and "Neuhaus Chocolates" (Worldwide delivery of Neuhaus chocolates). On the right side, there are two sidebars: "Special Offers" with a "Debt Got You Down?" ad from LowerMyBills.com, and "Featured Stores" featuring "MASSEYS" shoes with the tagline "Sizes that fit your lifestyle!". At the bottom right, there's a "Free Stuff" button.

Fig. 22.3 Gift-911.com gives its own revenues some first aid above the fold...

22.4 FireFox Plugin Reviews — Getting Your Clicks Faster

This blog offering tips and reviews for users of Firefox also has some pretty good examples for users of AdSense.

Just see how long it takes you to find the ads in the screenshot below. Do you notice how you just don't spot them right away? But as you read the content — and it's great content — you just can't miss them.

Again, the ad unit's text and background colors match the design of the blog's content, blending the ads in perfectly. And by placing the ads inside the articles, users can't help but read them.

There are a couple of other things to watch out for though.

First, the referral button is right in the middle of the article. But it's an article about Firefox so that's likely to get a lot of clicks.

The second thing to look at is the fact that this blog also uses Kontera's ad system. All of the links relate to Internet terms — the topic of the blog — and by just moving the color up a tone from the color of the content, they stand out and look inviting.

That's a great mixture of ad unit blending, referral buttons and contextual ad systems that can bring great results.



Fig. 22.4 Lots of ads, lots more blending at firefoxpluginreviews.blogspot.com.

22.5 OffshoreBankingCentral.com Brings Home The Bacon

One of the great things about optimizing your AdSense ads is that with a little bit of thought, you can really come up with some very clever ways of blending the ads into the page.

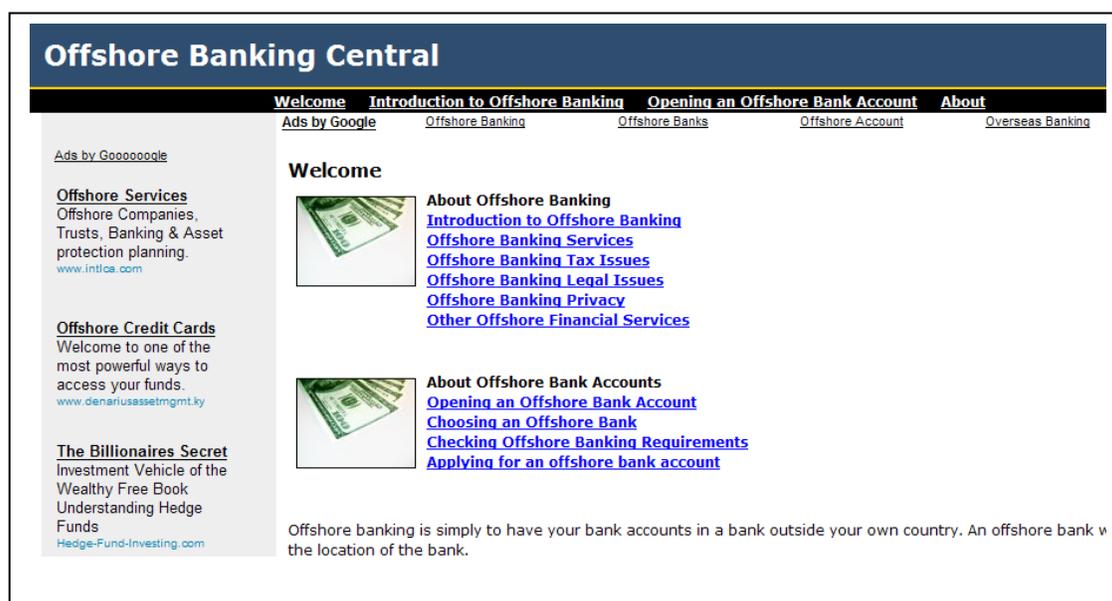


Fig. 22.5 A link unit disguised as a nav bar at OffshoreBankingCentral.com?

It's easier to do this with some ads than others.

Leaderboard text links, for example, can be very useful. A lot of people turn their nose up at horizontal text links. They think that because they're so small not enough people will see them to click on them. While vertical link units can be easily integrated into a list of links, there's no good place to put a horizontal unit.

That's a big mistake.

OffshoreBankingCentral.com shows just how powerful a well-blended horizontal link unit can be.

This site has two sets of ads: a vertical ad unit on the left separated from the rest of the page with a gray background (I'd be interested to know how well those ads perform but I suspect they'd do better with a white background); and horizontal link unit at the top of the page.

That link unit just does an outstanding job.

The unit displays four links right beneath the navigation bar. Each one of those links contains either the word "offshore" or the word "banking." Even though "Ads by Google" is still there right next to those links, they still look like another line of navigation links leading to relevant parts of the site.

I think there's a very valuable lesson there about the value of link units.

While it's true that link units contain very little information, used correctly that can be an asset. Had there been another line or two describing the site those links lead to, it would have been clear that those links are ads. As it is, they're perfectly blended.

How can you copy what Offshore Banking Central did?

Easy. Create a very simple navigation bar made up of links rather than tabs and place your horizontal link unit directly beneath it. You'll need to make sure that you're hitting the keywords in just the way you want but if you pull it off, you should see some fantastic results.

22.6 Subtle Ad Linking At Sudoku Links

The screenshot shows the SudokuLinks.com website layout. At the top is a black navigation bar with the text 'SUDOKU LINKS' in white, spaced-out letters. Below this are several vertical columns of links. The columns are:

- Sudoku Puzzles:** A list of various puzzle links including 'Sudoku Hints', 'Sudoku Of The Day', 'Fiendish Sudoku', 'Print Sudoku', 'Daily SuDoku', 'BrainBashers Sudoku', 'Number Logic', 'Free Sudoku', 'Sudoku Shack', 'Sudoku Puzzles', 'sudokusite.eu', 'Web Sudoku', 'Sudoku Fun', 'Sudoku-san', 'Daily Sudoku Puzzle', 'Su Doku-A-Day', 'Sudoku Master', 'Sudoku Quest', 'Sudoku Grandmaster', 'Sudoku Place', 'tiscali.games', 'Daily Sudoku', 'Sudokus-Online.com', 'Goobix Sudoku', 'sudoku.name', 'sudoku.com.au', 'Play Sudoku', 'Sudoku Online', 'sudoku.cc', 'ComputerEdge Sudoku', and 'Knoxxed Sudoku'.
- Games:** A section titled 'Games' with the text 'Play Your Favorite Games Free. Start Playing Now!' and the URL 'www.FunGamesCentral.com'.
- Unlimited Free Games:** A section titled 'Unlimited Free Games' with the text 'Over 8 Thousand Games Unlimited Free Downloads' and the URL 'FreeGamePalace.Com'.
- Games puzzle:** A section titled 'Games puzzle' with the text 'Play Unlimited Free Puzzles! How Many Can You Solve?' and the URL 'www.MrSuperGames-Jump.com'.
- Christmas Puzzles:** A section titled 'Christmas Puzzles' with the text 'Searching for Christmas puzzles? See our Christmas puzzles guide.' and the URL 'Christmas-Puzzles.com'.
- Free Puzzle & Word Games:** A section titled 'Free Puzzle & Word Games'.
- Sudoku Tutorials:** A section titled 'Sudoku Tutorials' with links to 'sudoku.com How To Solving Sudoku', 'Astraware Sudoku', 'Conceptis Puzzles', 'SadMan', 'Solve Sudoku', and 'Nikoli (Flash)'.
- Samurai Sudoku:** A section titled 'Samurai Sudoku' with links to 'Samurai Sudoku solver', 'Samurai Sudoku', 'Top Notch Gattai-5', 'SudokuPortal.com Samurai', 'Su Doku-A-Day', 'Sudoku Online', and 'sudoku.heebie.co.uk'.
- Printable Sudoku Grids:** A section titled 'Printable Sudoku Grids' with links to 'Large Pencilmark Grids', 'Sudoku Hints (5 grid sizes)', 'sudoku.org.uk', 'Four blank grids (PDF)', and 'Samurai sudoku blank grid'.
- Sudoku Forums:** A section titled 'Sudoku Forums' with links to 'sudoku.com forum', 'sudoku.org.uk forum', and 'sudoku programmers forum'.
- Sudoku For Kids:** A section titled 'Sudoku For Kids' with links to 'sudoku 4 kids' and 'Sudoku For Kids'.
- Sudoku Solvers:** A section titled 'Sudoku Solvers' with links to 'Fiendish Sudoku', 'Sudoku Hints', 'Sudoku Online', 'Number Logic', 'Sudoku Assistant/Solver', 'BrainBashers Sudoku', 'SourceForge Su Doku', 'Sudoku Master', 'Web Sudoku', 'Sudoku Shack', 'Sudoku Scratch Pad', 'Free Sudoku', 'Sudoku Helper', 'Sudoku Prime', 'Su Doku Solver', 'sudoku.name', 'Su Doku Solver (Perl)', and 'Sudoku Solver (Java)'.

 In the bottom right corner, there is a small 6x6 grid with some numbers filled in:

	4	3			6	2
7			4	3		8
6			2	8		7
	7	5			3	4
	9	8			5	7
9			5	7		3
1			6	2		5
	8	7			2	6

Fig. 22.6 Columns of ads at SudokuLinks.com...

You have to look hard to spot the ads at SudokuLinks.com. The entire site consists of a series of vertical columns, filled with links. One of those columns is a vertical AdSense column which is placed in the middle of the page, not at the side where it would be ignored.

This is certainly a striking example of one way to blend an ad unit into a Web page but I doubt it's going to work for everyone. You might be able to follow this strategy on a Resources or Links page on your website but clearly the biggest problem is the lack of content.

The only content on the page consists of a small column right beneath the ad unit explaining how to play Sudoku.

That could be the sort of thing that drives down click value; Google prefers sites with lots of content rather than pages that contain nothing but links.

But you could still use this strategy on a site with dynamic content by, for example, placing teasers to articles in vertical or horizontal columns, that match the AdSense unit. And you could make those content columns more obvious than pushing them to the bottom of the page.

In general though, this looks like an extremely effective strategy. If you can make it work for you, you should see some great results.

The screenshot shows a website page with several vertical columns of content:

- Column 1 (Left):** A list of links including "Krazydad Sudoku", "SudokuPuzzles.org", "Sudoku Addict", "Sudoku Prime", "Sudoku Puzzles", "Sudoku Player", "Online Sudoku", "Sudoku Live", "Sushi Sudoku", "Sudoku Chimp", "Sudoku Madness", "Sudoku of the Day", and "Sudoku (Flash)". Below this is a "Top 50 Sudoku" graphic and a "Newspaper Puzzles" section with links to "The Guardian (UK)", "The Times (UK)", "The Hindu (India)", "USA Today", "Cambridge Evening News (UK)", "Chicago Sun-Times", "derStandard (Austria)", and "The Daily Mail (UK)".
- Column 2 (Middle-Left):** A text block stating "Playtoad.com has the largest Game selection on the web. Totally Free! www.Playtoad.com". Below it is a section titled "How To Play Sudoku" with text explaining the rules: "Sudoku is easy to learn, but sudoku puzzles can be very hard to solve. Enter digits from 1 to 9 in each empty cell. Every row, every column, and every 3 x 3 box should contain one of each digit. True sudoku puzzles should each have a unique solution that can be deduced purely by logic with no guessing involved. Sudoku can vary tremendously in difficulty and most puzzles are graded into categories depending on the type of logic that is required to solve them."
- Column 3 (Middle-Right):** A section titled "Sudoku For Kids" with a link to "Daily SuDoku for Kids". Below it is a "Sudoku Books" section with links to "Amazon.com Sudoku books" and "Amazon Sudoku calendars". This is followed by "Sudoku Gifts" (links to "Sudoku Place (T-shirts, mugs)" and "Sudoku-Style.com (shirts, ...)"), "Sudoku Competitions" (links to "Sudoku \$50,000 Tournament", "sudoku.org.uk (daily)", "sudoku.com (monthly)", and "Sudoku League"), "Miscellaneous Sudoku" (links to "Wikipedia", "Yahoo! Sudoku Directory", "Sudoku Solutions", and "How many sudoku puzzles?"), and "Sudoku Variants" (links to "Sudoku Variations", "Sudoku Puzzles", and "Top Notch Two Doku").
- Column 4 (Right):** A section titled "Downloads for Windows" with a list of software including "AB SuDoKu (free)", "Simple Sudoku (free)", "Sudoku Susser (free)", "SuDoku (free)", "Sudoku Solver (free)", "Sudoku Solver (free)", "Su Doku Puzzler (free) (.NET)", "Pappocom Sudoku (\$)", "Sudoku (\$)", "SadMan Sudoku (\$)", "The Sudoku Challenge (\$)", "Sudoku World (\$)", and "Su Doku Live (\$)". Below this is "Downloads for Mac" (links to "Sudoku Fun Widget (free)", "Sudoku Susser (free)", "Sudoku Companion (\$)", "MacSudoku 2.1 (\$)", "UniSudoku 1.3 (\$)", and "Su Doku Live (\$)") and "Downloads for Linux" (links to "Sudoku Susser (free)" and "SuDoku (free)"). At the bottom is "Downloads for Phone/PDA".

Fig. 22.7 ...but not too much content.

22.7 Go4th.org Takes AdSense Forward

Go4th.org also uses vertical columns, but this site has a much heavier focus on content and still manages to blend the ads in well. In fact, placing a

vertical ad unit on the side of a blog has become pretty much a standard layout for many online publishers. You have a sidebar full of links, a link unit under the blog entry headline and a skyscraper on either the left or the right.

It's the obvious way to lay out a blog page, and it works.

But that doesn't mean you still can't be creative and come up with new ways to blend those ads into the page and make them more attractive to users.

Go4th.org does this in a really interesting way.

The blog entry — or rather, the articles that the site posts — are positioned in a wide space in the middle of the page sandwiched between two sidebars. The sidebar on the left is where the ads go. The sidebar on the right contain a bunch of links to external sites.

And this is where things get clever...

The design of each of those areas is exactly the same. Even the "Ads by Goooogle" line has been copied and turned into "May lead to external sites." That helps to draw the two parts together, an idea which is polished off by putting the word "More" above the ads and "Links" above the external links.

Those ads just don't look like ads any more; they look like the same sort of recommended links that are on the right hand side.



Fig. 22.8 More links... sorry ads, at Go4th.org.

This isn't the only place that the site blends ads well into the page. There's a second set of ads at the bottom of each article entry. What's nice about these ads is that they follow a little author bio that includes links itself. That helps users get used to reading content that contains links and might be ads.

Could the site get more clicks by replacing that banner ad unit with a square unit at the beginning of the article? Maybe. But that's exactly the sort of thing that can easily be tested.

The Little Girl Who Saved My Baby

by Brenda R. Paul

I was at home with my nine-month old baby. He was on the couch while I went to the bathroom. While there the doorbell rang and to my utter amazement a little girl who looked to be around ten-years old stood there at the screened door with my baby in her hand. I was shocked, wondering how she had gotten my baby out of the house.

When I went to open the door, she said, "Mamn, your baby was crawling on the porch and almost fell down the stairs." I was in total shock wondering how did he get off of the couch and out of the screen door. I thanked the little girl over and over again and she said don't worry and have a nice day then turned to walk away. I turned to go into the house with my baby and thought about giving the little girl some money for my appreciation. But when I turned around she was gone.

I looked up and down the street but she was gone as if she had vanished. I never saw that little girl again. I described her to people in the neighborhood but no one seemed to know whom I was talking about.

My family members that I told the story to did not believe me, however that was the day I started to really believe in angels. In my heart, I knew that God had sent his angel to protect my son. He is now ten years old and very wise and interested about God and his word.

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<p>What Type of Mom Are You? 15 fun questions that will tell you what type of mom you are! Ads by Gooooooglr</p>	<p>God Loves You Too Much Daily devotion to build your faith. Read it on the web or by email. Advertise on this site</p>
---	---

Fig. 22.9 From bio to banner.

If you wanted to use a similar strategy on your site though, all you would need to do is put two sidebars on your site, make sure that they both look exactly the same but put ads in one and links in the other.

Easy!

22.8 Smart Ad Placement At DogToysMart.com

The screenshot displays the DogToysMart.com website layout. On the left is a vertical sidebar with sections: 'Information' (listing products, categories, hits, prices, and navigation links), 'Resources' (with useful links and a Firefox toolbar promotion), and 'Sponsored Links' (listing links for dog toys and chews). The main content area features three sections: 'New Products' (showing pet products like Rose Petal Pooch and Honeysuckle Hound), 'Featured Sites' (highlighting 'Kong at Wholesale Prices'), and 'Recommended Reading' (featuring the book 'Secrets Of A Professional Dog Trainer'). On the right sidebar, there is a 'J-B Wholesale Pet Supply' advertisement, a 'Newsletter' subscription form, and an 'Advertise on this site' link.

Fig. 22.10 Featured ads at DogToysMart.com

The challenge for AdSense publishers is to persuade people to look at your ads without letting them realize that what they're looking at is an ad. One general strategy to do that is to camouflage them on the page.

DogToysMart.com does this in a truly fantastic manner.

It's got the usual vertical ad unit in a sidebar and a link unit at the bottom of a list of other links. But above each section, the site also has a very neat header which it carries into the ad sections.

So the left-hand side bar contains sections called "Information", "Resources" and "Sponsored Links."

"Sponsored Links"?

You got it. That's where the link units are.

The right-hand sidebar does the same thing, calling the links in its ads "Featured Sites."

But it's in the middle of the page that this technique works the best. There's an introduction, a section marked "New Products", a section marked "Featured Sites" and a section marked "Recommended Reading." By sandwiching the ads between two sections offering valuable products, the site makes the ad section look like it contains something valuable too. It looks like it's been put there by the site itself and not by a third party and I'm sure it's going to deliver great results.

The moral of this story is that one method of promoting your ads is to put them between two other valuable areas instead of at the bottom of the article or whatever it may be. That might require that you create those sections specially for the purpose... but it could well be worth the effort.

22.9 Matching Articles To Ads... And Cell Phones

The usual way to blend ads into the site is to do 3-Way Matching: to make the ads match the rest of the site in terms of background color, font color and font size.

It is possible to take a different approach though: you can make the site match the ads — or at least elements of it. Chris at GetACellPhone.com provides a fantastic example of this.

He's put one ad unit in the left-hand column but right above it and right below it, he's also put introductions to two articles. The headline of each article is a link to the rest of the piece further in the site and matches the headline of the ad.

That makes the ads look like links to articles, and it's a great idea.

What I really like about this set-up though is that there's no space between the two introductions and the "Ads by Google" line. It makes the articles look like the ads, leaving the ads free and clear.

As a strategy, it's very easy to copy, but I'd take it further. You can match the color of the URL under the ad to the color of the links on the rest of the page and restrict the size of the introduction to just two lines — just like the ads.

Make the rest of the page look like the ads and you'll do some great matching.

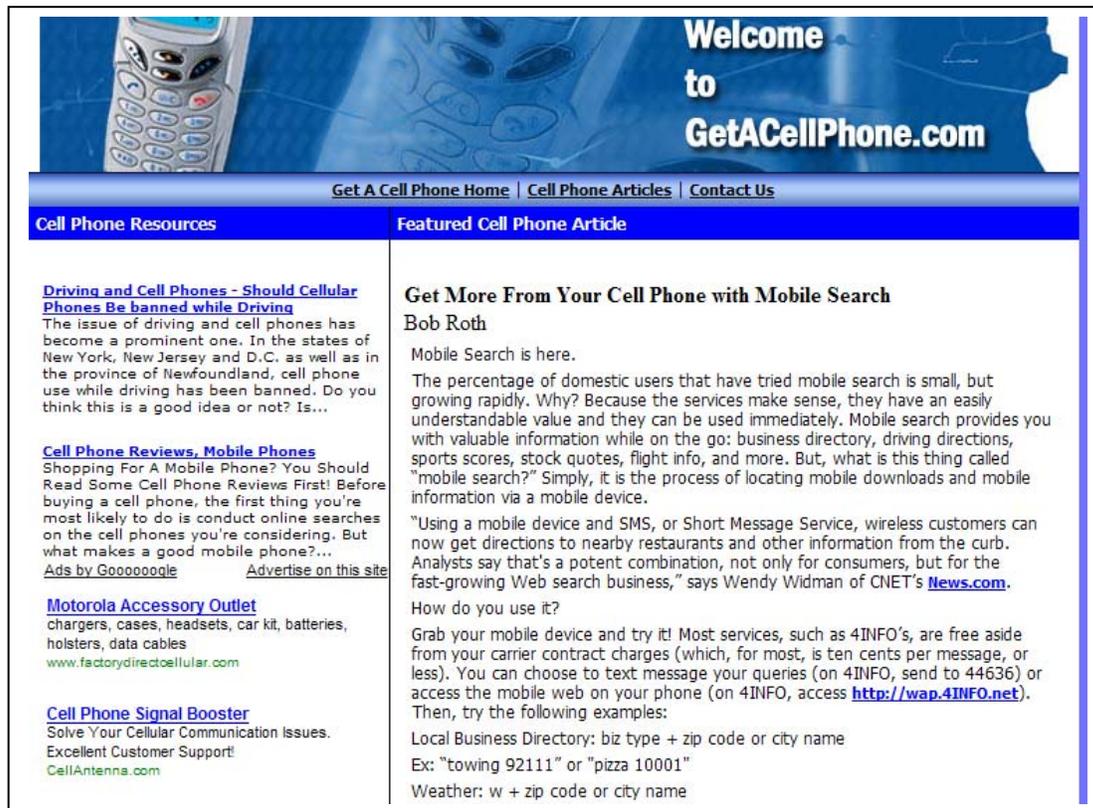


Fig. 22.11 Play "spot the ads" at GetACellPhone.com.

22.10 Brewing Up Profits With Herbal Tea

Some of the most effective optimization strategies are very simple. Some are very creative. At TeaHerbalTea.com, we get both types.

The site has three ad units above the fold: a banner ad immediately beneath the header; a horizontal text link above the content; and a large rectangle embedded in the content.

But look at how each of those units is blended into the site. The banner's background is lime-green, the same color as the site's background, the titles match the color of the site's header and the URL is kept just a tone or two above the background to make it almost invisible.

The unit embedded into the article follows a similar strategy. The title of the links match the title of the article, the description is kept black and the URL is a light color so that it almost disappears into the background.

It's in the text links though that things get really interesting. The site has been designed so that it looks like there are little tabs above each of the links. That's great idea. Would Google like it? It's hard to say. So far, it's not doing this site any harm, and it's not an image, but you might want to clear it with your friendly AdSense rep before you put in your site.

The image shows a screenshot of a website with three blended ads. The top ad is a banner with a green background and the text "Herbal Tea" in large, stylized letters. Below the banner are three columns of text, each with a small image of tea. The first column is titled "Herbal Tea" and describes gourmet caffeine-free herbals. The second is titled "Real Okuma's Wu-Long" and warns of cheap imitations. The third is titled "Organic Slimming Tea" and claims to help lose weight. Below the banner is a navigation bar with tabs for "Herb Tea", "Ginseng Tea", "Green Tea Cafe", and "Tea Plant". The main content area includes a sidebar with navigation links, a "Tea, Herbal Tea Navigation" section, and a "Herbal Tea" article with a sub-header "What is herbal tea?".

Fig. 22.12 Three superbly blended ads at TeaHerbaltea.com...

It's worth asking about.

The site's ads don't end there though. There's another ad unit below the fold in the middle of the page, a Google search box at the bottom of the page and even a couple of referral buttons and an Amazon ad on the left. And with that second square ad unit turning up such well-targeted ads, there's a great chance that they'll get clicked.

If you're wondering about that "Ads by Google" logo in the first embedded ad unit, Google does have a habit of testing different approaches on its ad units. It looks like they were doing a little experiment here. Let's hope they keep it; it looks a lot better than the long "Ads by Goooooogle".

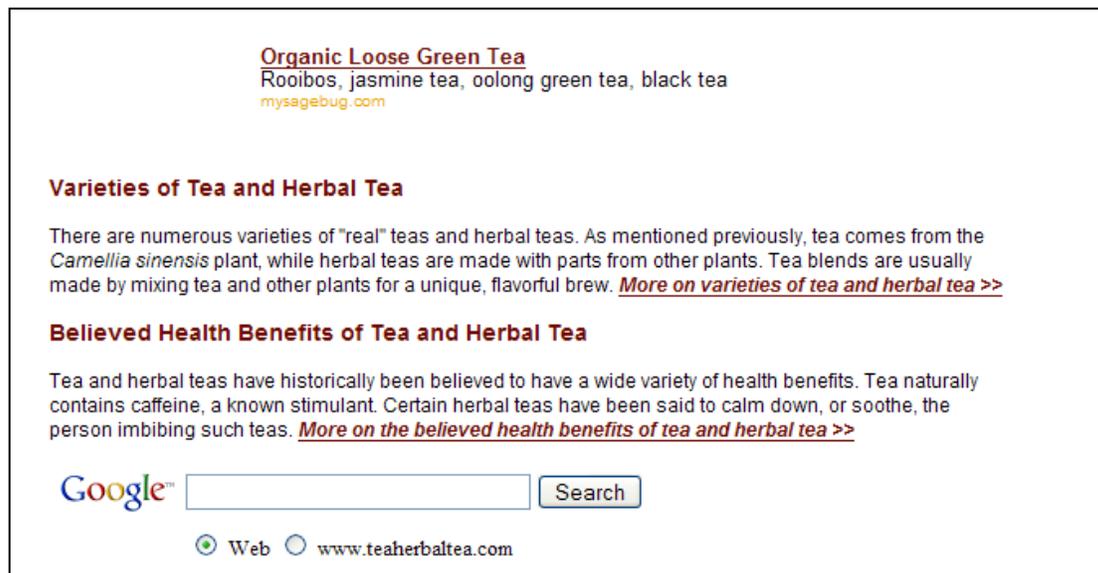


Fig. 22.13 ...and rounding it all off with a search box.

22.11 Whispy Makes Ad Units Disappear!

Sometimes, you really don't have to do too much to get the sort of optimized ads that bring fantastic results. Whispy.com has done a great job of blending its ad links into its site.

First, it's used links in different colors. In general, that's not a good idea; your users expect to links to be blue so that's the color you should make them — and the color you should make your ad links too.

But Whispy is only using two different kinds of blue: a bold blue which functions as the title for the profiles, which link to the content; and a lighter blue for the links in the sidebars.

When the user sees ad links in exactly the same color, he'll just assume he's looking at more content links.

This is a very simple strategy that anyone can copy: just make sure that your ad links are the same color as the rest of your other links... and hide those ad links in a list of content links.

Very simple. Very, very effective.

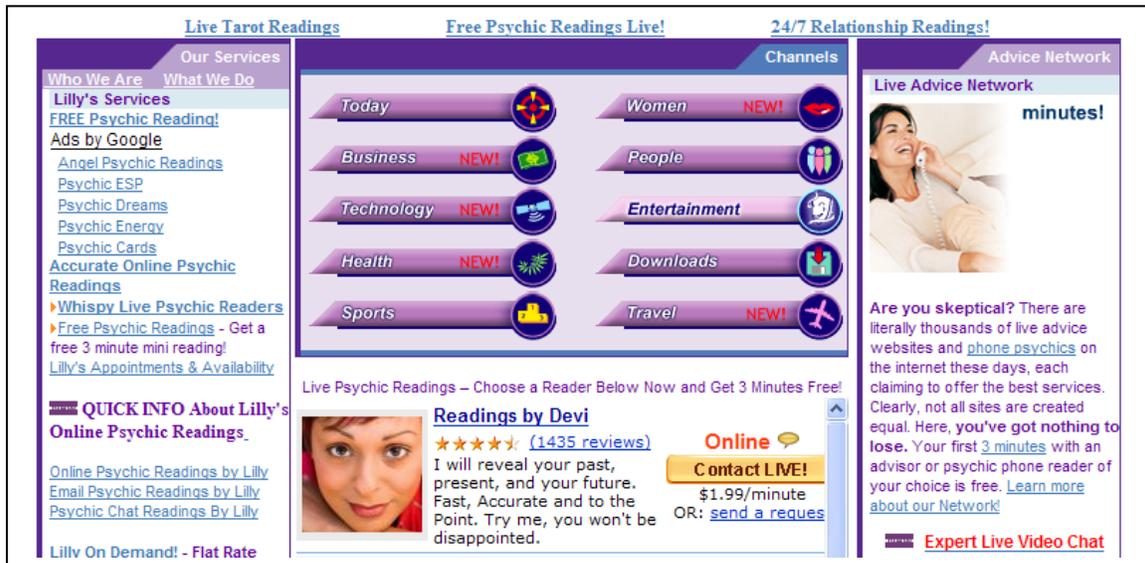


Fig. 22.14 Just a perfect example of a camouflaged ad unit. How long did it take you to find it?

22.12 Putting Everything Together at WorldVillage.com

WorldVillage.com is my own blogging network. Anyone can contribute, posting their own content and including their own AdSense code. My own company's AdSense code is also placed on the page and both codes are displayed alternately so that revenues are shared on a 50/50 basis.

Contributors get the benefit of not having to look for traffic — we handle that and the site is well-established; we get the benefit of free content and a share of the ad revenues.

But WorldVillage can only work if the ads are optimized in the best way possible.

It's possible then to look at the pages on WorldVillage as models for the best way to optimize short articles of content.

They may not be though. They are the best way that we've found to monetize a site that looks like WorldVillage and has our kind of users and this kind of content. But it's still an excellent starting point for any site that aims to produce ad-supported content.

Sign In

search

Join Now
Villages
Villagers
Recently Built
What's Hot!

New Year's Eve Party
in Berlin City. Hotel only 15 min from central station. Book Now...

A view to the old city
Mount Zion hotel on the Biblical landscapes of Jerusalem

Ads by Google

Village Built By:

lawrenceniryholland
Joined: December 23 2010
Villages: 1

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The Beauty Of Thailand In Phuket Hotels

Built by lawrenceniryholland on Wednesday, January 5th, 2011

Ads by Google
[Phuket Ladies](#)
[Thailand Women](#)
[Phuket Women](#)
[Kamala Phuket](#)

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[www.jctour-phuket.com](#)

If ever one has heard of the Phuket experience from a friend or colleague, then the words beauty cannot be defined in simple terms. This is because the island of Phuket is simply breath taking and a creation that each person alive should strive to see. The **Phuket hotels** are known for their tourism which has invited citizens from far off countries who visit the coastal location at different times of the year. The hotels are numerous and will fit each budget that you may try to be working with. The more glamorous one's lifestyle is, then the more likely they will prefer to set up shop at a leading hotel chain or luxury hotel.

Recent Villages

The Beauty Of Thailand In Phuket Hotels
By: lawrenceniryholland

Ads by Google

At times though, travelers may pick a brand name hotel which they know off simply because they do not really know much else of the other hotels available. A local hotel could prove to be great but if the traveler does not make the time to research, they end up where they know they can get certain level of services. Phuket hosts stunning beaches which have the most stunning tropical sunsets that one can only dream of ever seeing, but are viewable right from their hotel rooms. The mix of Thai culture and cuisine together with the location has been known to be the reason for many to travel miles and miles in anticipation.

The culture of the Phuket residents is pleasant and very hospitable which makes a traveler feel all the more welcome to the location. The hotels can get rather busy during the peak periods, especially when the weather is just right. Many activities are on offer from the hotels of Phuket such as snorkeling, day tours to neighboring islands, additional tours exploring the interior of Phuket on horseback, and an even more exciting night life which entails various shows and local cultural performances. Because there is a lot that goes on in this little island, the hotels constantly update the hotel rates which will allow the discount offers to be made available at different times. Snagging a great hotel rate can make a big difference to the stay one has on the island.

Hotel staff is known to be extremely polite to all visitors, making sure that the best customer service is on offer for visitors in Thailand. The hotels are able to also provide information on the festivals, and when they are happening, to ensure that one can book their holiday in time for it. Phuket hotels are able to organize various different kinds of packages for visitors, thus one can chose from half board basis, full board basis and all inclusive basis. Again this depends on the nature of traveler one is. If one plans on often being out exploring the island during the day, then perhaps it would be beneficial to plan a half board stay, allowing one to eat at local spots across the islands.

If you love the beautiful beaches of Phuket, then you should book yourself [Krabi hotels](#) and fly to Krabi as it is also another fascinating island in Thailand.

Report Article

Recent Villages

Hazel Contact Lenses For Dark Eyes
By: julisakana

Freshlook Colorblends Contact Lenses
By: julisakana

Beautiful Color Contacts Hazel Eyes
By: julisakana

Non Prescription Special Effect Contact Lenses
By: julisakana

The Beauty Of Thailand In Phuket Hotels
By: lawrenceniryholland

Ads by Google

Club Med Thailand
Enjoy a world of Generosity and inclusive luxury experience!

Hotels in Panwa
Book your hotel in Panwa online No reservation costs. Great rates!

Quick Links

affiliate marketing, blog, Business, business1, bussines,

Tags: generalblog, generalblogno, personal, Travel

Fig. 22.15 A typical article page at WorldVillage.com. Can you spot all five ad units on the page?

The first thing to notice isn't actually the ads themselves but the headline of the article. At WorldVillage, we don't have the kind of algorithms that Demand Media uses to target keywords but we do have contributors who understand the importance of smart keywording to affect search engine placement and influence ads.

This headline then, includes three important keywords: "Thailand," "Phuket" and "hotels." The writer, "lawrenceniryholland," could have titled his article "The Beauty of Phuket" or "Finding a Hotel in Thailand" but by working all three keywords into his headline he tells Google what kind of ads he wants to show and to which kinds of users he wants to display his article.

You can see the results in the very first ad, a 468x60 leaderboard right at the top of the page which is showing ads for hotels around the world.

Leaderboards high on the site can be ignored but look at how the design of the site gives the ad a frame. The unit hasn't been placed right at the top of the page but in its own background that seems to round off the content area. And putting the unit right above a navigation bar, the ads will be seen by anyone looking for more content.

These are also the only ads which use white for the links. In part, that was a practical decision: once we'd decided on the dark blue color scheme for that part of the site, a standard blue link wouldn't have stood out. But look at how that white matches the heading in the sidebar.

Now the ads look like an integral part of the site.

The second ad unit is much more subtle. It's a link unit placed beneath the byline of the article. The byline is a single line, the link unit is a single line so the two match neatly. Note how the link unit stretches over the next ad unit though, so that some of the links float over the content and stand out.

The big advantage of link units is that they only show links. You don't get any hard sale ad copy or offers of discounts that tell the reader they're looking at an ad. They get that when they click. For a reader of this article then, they're just seeing link to pages that offer more information about a place they're interested in.

The third ad unit is a rectangular 300x250 ad unit. This is a standard size and a standard placement for articles. Readers expect to start reading on the left so they'll have to look past the unit to see the content they want. It matches the text, it's borderless, the URLs are light gray to minimize the appearance of an ad, and it's unmissable.

It's also the third ad unit the reader will have seen before they've even started reading the content. None of the units were obtrusive and all of them were relevant to the content.

But there are still two more units on the page. The last AdSense unit is at the bottom of the page. It's another 468x60 placed above the comment box. I don't expect to receive too many clicks down there — most will come from the three units above — but I do want to offer an ad unit to anyone who reaches the bottom of the page and wants to know where to go next.

And the last unit isn't an AdSense unit at all. It's a Chitika Select unit placed in the right sidebar.

There's actually very little information in that sidebar but it looks like there should be. You'd expect to find a list to further reading but I've pushed those links further down the page and inserted this ad unit here so that it looks as much like content as the name and details of the author. The little images that Chitika includes help to draw the eye and I think they make that sidebar very attractive too.

The only problem is that Chitika Select doesn't always show relevant ads to all of my visitors. But that's fine because I've got four AdSense units doing that already.

There is even more that I could do here. I prefer to use my own search engine rather than Google's, for example, because WorldVillage is big enough to offer plenty of my own results. I want to keep users on the site where contributors can also earn and the revenue share is higher.

I could also use Kontera's links in the content but that can be difficult when people are uploading articles.

Those are things that you can try though, when you start experimenting with a standard content layout like this.

Conclusion

AdSense can give you huge amounts of money. It can pay your mortgage, make your car payments and send you on the sort of vacations you've only dreamed of. If you want, it can even let you give up the day job and look forward to a life of working at home, in your pajamas with no boss other than yourself.

Or it can give you enough money to buy a couple of candy bars each week.

The secret of AdSense success isn't complicated. You don't have to spend years in a classroom learning a new skill or head out to get a diploma. The principle is very basic:

Serve interesting ads to users in a way that makes them want to click.

You do that with layout. You do that by choosing the right size of ads. And you do it by blending the ad into the page.

Choosing the right keywords is important too, and so is bringing traffic to your site at a low price before selling them on to advertisers for a higher one.

Most important though is to keep a close eye on the results of everything you do so that you can see what works and what doesn't.

In this book, I've told you everything you need to know to supercharge your AdSense earnings. Apply the techniques I've described here, *track the results* and you should see your incomes rise as quickly as mine did!

May your AdSense revenue explode!

Joel Comm

Appendix I. QuickStart AdSense: A Step-By-Step Guide

You can be up and running with AdSense in just minutes. Sure, you'll need a bit more time if you want to use all of the advanced strategies and techniques I discuss in the rest of this book, but you don't have to wait until you've figured everything out before you can start earning with AdSense.

Remember, every minute that your site isn't showing online or isn't showing ads, you're tossing money down the drain.

If you don't have a site yet, or if you're not showing ads on your site, before you move on to the rest of this book, follow one of these guides. You'll be amazed at how easy it is to start making money with ads!

AdSense QuickStart Guide #1: Building A Blogger Blog

Blogging is probably the easiest way to get online with AdSense fast. The sites are already online, you don't have to worry about graphics and the domains are all set up.

All you have to do is sign up, write and earn!

Step 1: Surf to www.blogger.com

Complete the registration page, choose a name for your blog and pick a template.

Step 2: Write Your First Blog Entry

Not sure what to write? Start with your family, spout off about a story in the news, put up pictures for your friends to see... it doesn't matter. Everyone has something that occupies their mind, that interests them or that they're good at. Put up anything. You can change it later but for now just get in the habit of writing to the Web. Once you've done it once you'll see how easy it can be — and how addictive.

Step 3: Apply For AdSense Through Blogger

Another form, another five minutes. It will take a day or two before your application is approved. In the meantime, you can play with Blogger's AdSense preview tool, and post more quality content. The more quality content you post the more likely you'll get approved.

Step 4: Play With Your Ads

Once AdSense has approved your application, you'll be able to start playing with your ads. You can change the colors, fix the font size, remove the border and move them into the sidebar if you wish. You can get everything geared up and ready to...

Step 5: Bring In The Traffic

It's taken you minutes to get your site set up. Now you have to let people know you're online. Chapter 16 will tell you how to bring in the traffic but for now you can start by telling your friends, swapping links with your favorite sites and submitting your site to the search engines. Hold off on the paid advertising though until you've got enough content to make it worthwhile. You're rolling!

AdSense QuickStart Guide #2: Building A Site From Scratch

Using an automated system like Blogger is the easiest way to get started with AdSense but it's not for everyone and it's not my recommended solution.

Step 1: Pick Up A Name

The first thing you'll need is a domain. You grab one of those at either GoDaddy.com or NetworkSolutions.com. GoDaddy is much more affordable.

Step 2: Build Your Site

You can build your site yourself or hire someone to do it for you. Or you can take a pre-built template and pack it with your own content. Hostgator has a program called SiteBuilder that's packed with a good range of templates that you can use and play with but you'll have to upload the finished site onto their servers.

Or you can install **Wordpress** inside Hostgator's control panel (recommended).

There are thousands of free themes and literally thousands of developers who work to make Wordpress better every day.

My premium Wordpress theme Socrates was designed specifically with new AdSense advertisers in mind. You can sign up for a trial account for free at SocratesTheme.com and watch the video tutorials and webinars which will get you setup in no time at all.

Socrates also has the best forum support in the industry at: <http://www.socratestheme.com/forum/>

Step 3: Create Your Content

Keep it simple! You don't have to pack your site with Flash images or anything fancy. Write about what you like! If you're into fun at the beach, create pages with reviews of your local sand spots. Into skiing? Discuss your favorite ski equipment. Everyone's got something that lights their fire. Find yours and put it on your first site. You'll find that a site that interests you interests all the people like you... and gets you the sort of following that wins clicks.

Step 4: Apply For AdSense

Once your first pages are up and built (and none of this should take you more than a few hours) you're ready to apply to AdSense. Fill in the form and wait for the approval.

Step 5: Bring In The Traffic

While you're waiting for the first ads, you can start submitting your site to the search engines and building up the traffic.

Step 6: Play With Your Ads

When the ads come in, don't forget to optimize them for your site. It's very simple and will have a massive effect on your CTR, even at this early stage.

And that's all there is to it, apart from the final step... spending the money! I don't think you need my help for that, do you?

Appendix II. What To Do Before You Apply To Google AdSense

Guidelines for new Web publishers

Imagine this. Mr. Big AdWords Advertiser is surfing the net, looking for content related to his field. He lands on a strange website. The logo looks amateurish. The content is full of typos. Heck, some of the links don't even work. And then, he sees something he least expects to find.

He seems to freeze for a second. His eyes pop wide open and you can see a muscle going in his cheek. He slaps his forehead. "I can't believe it!" He booms, "I can't believe you put MY ad on THAT website!"

Uh oh.

Google has a reputation to live up to. A reputation for providing quality content, targeted traffic and good value for money to their advertisers.

The way to meet these requirements is to provide content that meets their requirements and goes one step further to add something unique, which other websites might not offer.

Before you apply to Google AdSense, make sure you haven't cut corners on the layout and the quality of content. Google is quick to reject websites that are built specifically to attract search spiders or that trick people into clicking AdSense Ads.

At best, you'll earn less as Smart Pricing cuts you down to size. At worst, you'll be out.

To make a sizable income from AdSense, you need a true commitment to your visitors and **focused content** — which makes it easy for advertisers to target their audience.

To sum up, here are a few quick Do's, Don'ts and Didn't-Know-That's to consider before you apply:

1. Don't Build A Website That Specifically Targets Search Spiders, With Nothing Unique To Offer Human Visitors.

I've already discussed the importance of creating content that your users are

genuinely going to find interesting. If you have interesting content, you'll have higher CTR and higher revenues.

With so many legitimate ways of creating revenue-generating content, you're only cheating yourself when you take a short-cut. You reduce your CTR and you increase the odds of being banned by Google.

2. Don't Build A Website Just To Make Money From AdSense

The easiest way to produce genuinely interesting content is to produce content that genuinely interests you!

You might feel that the more pages that you can throw up, the more money you'll make but if you can't produce the sort of content that can compete with companies who produce genuinely good material, you're not going to get the traffic or the revenues.

But there are plenty of topics that you know about and enjoy. That's the kind of material that can give you money.

It will also make earning that money a lot more fun.

3. Provide Targeted Content That Will Help Google Advertisers To Capitalize Your Traffic

But writing about what you enjoy rather than what can help you earn doesn't mean you should forget about using your content to bring you targeted ads.

If you know that there are certain keywords in your topic that are worth more, then you can certainly write about those. You can also make sure that you toss in plenty of keywords and headings to keep those ads targeted.

4. Don't Build A Website Specifically To Target High-Value Keywords Unless You Plan On Developing Quality Content!

Not all advertisers bid high on the same keywords.

Just as it's a bad idea to create more content simply to create more money, so it's a mistake to focus on particular keywords to create lots of money!

If you are prepared to produce good content and want that content to include high value keywords, one VERY useful report reveals those high-value keywords. You can find it at www.adsense-secrets.com/cashkeywords.html

#	Keywords	Avg Bid	Searches	Results	R/S Ratio	Google Ads	CPD
1	new orleans real estate	\$19.74	11,147	2,310,000	207	45	7.0
2	cleveland ohio real estate	\$12.16	14,779	1,550,000	105	39	0.9
3	nashville real estate	\$9.07	16,040	3,090,000	171	50 +	9.8
4	real estate license	\$8.73	23,628	6,390,000	270	42	61.2
5	orlando real estate	\$6.45	13,564	4,680,000	345	50 +	14.0
6	real estate lawyer	\$7.75	13,414	9,740,000	726	36	6.2
7	real estate school	\$7.22	37,674	16,300,000	430	46	52.2

Fig. II.1 Sample report revealing high-value keywords.

If you want to aggressively build sites, another very useful tool you might want to look at is **Top Keyword Lists**.

This is a 'plug and play' monthly membership service offering twenty-five high-paying AdSense markets each and every week. With a simple page generating application, you can turn out twenty-five sites quickly and easily from each week's updates. If you prefer to spend a little more time building your site with articles, they offer a unique keyword research tool that allows you to pinpoint the key phrases you should concentrate your articles on for maximum payout through AdSense.

5. Websites That Rank Higher In A Google Search Will Get A Better Per-Click Payout Than Websites Which Rank Lower For The Same Search Term

I don't know if that's because Google just wants to reward sites who meet their criteria for high search listings or because they assume that sites that rank higher are going to have better users for advertisers than lower-ranked sites.

Most likely though, is that it's all about content relevance. A top-ranking website is considered more relevant than a lower-ranking one. So keep an eye on your Google Search Ranking for your targeted search terms and work continuously to optimize your website. The upshot is that when you've created your site, you need to pay attention to search engine optimization.

That won't only win you free traffic, it will also get you more money for the traffic you receive.

You can learn more about search engine optimization in chapter 17.

6. Increase 'Readiness To Buy'

Advertisers prefer websites that qualify visitors for the purchase. A search for "cell phones," for example, can throw up a page about the perils of cell phone radiation, a university professor's treatise about messaging technologies and a buyer's guide that compares features and prices of top-selling cell phone models.

For an advertiser looking to target cell phone buyers, the buyer's guide offers the most relevant (and therefore valuable) advertising space.

This is part of targeting your content.

You want people to click on your ads. So do your advertisers.

If you can keep your content focused on the products your advertisers are selling then you should be able to increase your CTR.

Of course, it's also Google's job to make sure that your ads match your content, but if you're writing about DVDs it makes sense to produce content that encourages people to buy DVDs because those are the sort of ads you know you're going to be served.

If you were writing about homebuying, you can be sure that you'd get ads about mortgages and real estate agents. Put up pages about finding the right mortgage or how to pick a real estate agent and not only do the ads look even more relevant, they'll also appear more attractive.

The screenshot shows the 'Ask the Builder' website. At the top left is a photo of Tim Carter, the author, with the title 'Ask the Builder' and a sub-headline 'By: Nationally Syndicated Newspaper Columnist, TIM CARTER'. To the right is a 'Design Your Kitchen' banner with a 'Start Designing' button. Below this is a navigation menu with categories: VIDEO, KITCHENS, BATHROOMS, REMODELING, NEW CONSTRUCTION, and OUTDOOR. A yellow bar contains links for NEWSLETTER, E-BOOKS, PROJECT CHECKLISTS, SHOP, and ASK TIM, along with a search bar and 'Powered by Google' text.

The main content area features an article titled 'Kitchen Remodeling Ideas' by Tim Carter, dated ©1993-2011. The article includes a summary: 'There are many kitchen remodeling ideas that can save you money. Painting kitchen cabinets will save a bundle compared to replacing cabinets. Watching for sales will help lower the kitchen remodeling price.' It also contains several links for related content: 'Kitchen Remodel Estimates', 'DirectBuy® of Denver CO', 'Cabinets and Counter Tops', and 'Denver Kitchen Remodeling'. A 'New' badge and a 'Share' button are visible next to the article title.

On the right side, there is a large advertisement for 'RockSolid Surfaces' with the headline 'Does your Garage Floor need Repair?' and a 'Click Here' button. Below the ad is a Facebook social plugin showing 1,502 people who like 'Ask the Builder' and a grid of profile pictures.

At the bottom of the article, there is a 'DEAR MANDY' section: 'DEAR MANDY: Kitchen remodeling can create some financial stress as well as friction in your personal life. Most people simply don't appreciate how much they use a...'.

What the advertiser wants!

Tim Carter is a living example of how content relevance builds loyalty. As an expert in his field, he adds relevance and credibility to the ads appearing on his pages.

7. Don't Cut Corners!

Watch out for typos, amateurish layouts, malfunctioning links, poor-quality or plagiarized content.

Users expect to reach professional websites. Those are the ones they spend the most time on and pay the most attention to. Those are also the ones that Google rewards the most.

It pays to put effort into improving your website. It pays to have a good design and a site that's attractive and well-maintained.

Appendix III. Recommended Resources: Try These Tools And AdSense Utilities (Some Are FREE!)

You can get by building an AdSense-supported website with nothing more than the tools that Google provides. But you don't want to just get by and you don't have to. Toss a few more tools in your toolbox and you'll be able to fine-tweak your optimization — and make more cash.

1. Google's Website Optimizer

As you build your site, you're going to be doing a lot of A/B testing, creating different layouts and placements and tracking the results. Usually, that takes time. You'll need at least a week of results before you can make a meaningful comparison — which means you'll need to wait two weeks before you have an answer.

Unless you put both pages up at the same time and divide the traffic evenly between the two of them.

That's what Google's Website Optimizer does.

It's really designed for merchants where sellers really need to know which sales page delivers the best results but there's no reason you couldn't do the same thing with AdSense. Use the service to divide send your users to pages showing two different optimization strategies and you'll soon know which is the best.

It's free and you can find it at www.google.com/weboptimizer.

2. WordTracker

WordTracker is a great way to find keywords to target for arbitrage. The idea is simple: if you can find popular keywords that few sites are targeting, you can increase the CTR of the ads you buy *and* improve the chances that users will click on the ads on your page. It's those keywords that will give you the best revenues for arbitrage—and the most clicks from search engine listings.

WordTracker actually helps in four different ways.

First, you enter a keyword — say, “football”. WordTracker will then give you a list of *hundreds* of different keywords related to football — words like “stadium” and “team” and “football player”. Some of those words you’ll probably have thought of, but lots of them you won’t.

Now you’ve already got more keyword options than when you started!

WORDTRACKER
KEYWORDS

The Ultimate Tool to Increase Your Website Traffic

Home Tour Trial Price Testimonials Partners Help About Us

Find the **best keywords** for your **website**.

[Tell me more](#)

Member Login

[Wordtracker Tour](#)

Current Top Keywords

1. paris hilton
2. playstation 2 cheats
3. games
4. funny jokes
5. google
6. yahoo
7. anne bancroft
8. ebay
9. top 100 baby names
10. poetry

[More current keywords](#)

Wordtracker News

Wordtracker's advanced tools
Learn how Wordtracker's multiple tools and features support the

The Wordtracker Academy
Test your search engine marketing knowledge and build your skills

Download top search terms
Keyword Reports offer the latest Top 20,000 to the Top 500,000 search terms.

Develop your own applications
Integrate the power of Wordtracker into your own services or

WordTracker: “Find the best keywords for your website”. Says it all really!

The next step is to see how popular these keywords are. WordTracker looks across all of the main search engines and tells you how many people searched for each keyword in the last 60 days. That’s certainly interesting information in itself but there’s not much point in targeting a word that 1,000 people search for every couple of months if a million Web pages are already targeting it.

Your ad would appear on page fifty-something of a search engine listing and get very few clicks.

The next stage is where things get really interesting. Wordtracker compares the number of searches that people are making for each keyword with the number of sites targeting that keyword.

It even awards each keyword a score that indicates the size of the opportunity for new pages that want target that particular keyword. It then becomes easy for you to see which words are likely to give the best search engine listings—and which will get the most clicks for the lowest prices when you pay to advertise.

For example, if you asked WordTracker to look up the word “football,” you might find that 3,474 people look for “shoulder-pads” each day but only 2,375 Web pages are targeting that word. If one of the pages of your football site targets that keyword, you’re almost certainly going to find yourself high on the search engine listings, giving you plenty of free traffic.

But if you also choose to pay to advertise your site on a GoogleAd, you can be confident that you’ll get plenty of clicks—and great revenues.

WordTracker is a fantastic tool. It should definitely be in your money-making toolkit. Take a look at it at <http://www.adsense-secrets.com/wordtracker.html>.

3. Test Your Mettle With The AdSense Sandbox!

Before you apply to AdSense, put your web pages through a 'mock-test' with a FREE web utility called the AdSense Sandbox at <http://tools.digitalpoint.com/adsense-sandbox.php>.

It's a great way to determine what type of ads your pages pull up. You can also estimate your earnings potential from the keywords in the ads.

The AdSense Sandbox is free to use, requires no subscription and displays results with a single click.

Web Page Address or Keywords:

The Ads Displayed Are Served Up In Test Mode, Which Means AdSense Credit Is Not Given For Impressions Or Click-Throughs

<p>Tech Support Software Remote PC Control in 10 Seconds Online Support Through Any Firewall www.networkstreaming.com</p>	<p>Remote Support Software Remote control & admin tools to quickly solve PC/server issues. RemotelyAnywhere.com</p>	<p>Tech Support Software Web Based solution for 1/3 the price of competitors: See Free Demo www.ebsuite.com</p>	<p>Instant PC access over a LAN, WAN Screen control, li www.netsupportn</p>
<p>Computer/Network Services Affordable Professional Services Certified Microsoft and A+ Techs www.tekforward.com</p>	<p>Web-Based PHP Help Desk Manage your support emails Download your free 2-week trial! www.h2desk.com</p>	<p>WhizTech Computer Repairs \$35/hr PC & Network Troubleshooting We come to you. Call 619-251-2712 www.whiz-tech.com</p>	<p>Network Mainten Remote Monitori System Support www.akctech.co</p>
<p>New Support Solution Save Money, Lower Call Volume, Increase Customer Satisfaction. www.lithium.com</p>	<p>Software Help Compare Prices of Comprehensive Software Help Products Here. www.Software-Finder.org/Help</p>	<p>Managed Technical Support comprehensive outsourced technical support solutions www.vinciti.com</p>	<p>Help Desk Softw help Desk Softw: resources, and h www.allfreeinform</p>
<p>Tech Support 24/7 computer tech support for the hardware/software challenged. Free! www.freecallcenterquotes.com</p>	<p>Corporate Tech Support Premier outsourcing services for Companies & Government agencies www.pchelpine.com</p>	<p>Technical Support Guide Directory of websites offering info on technical support software www.webpagehosting.ws</p>	<p>Web-based Help Powerful Helpdes Enterprise Level : www.medialand.r</p>
<p>Free Antivirus Scanner If your computer is slowing down or crashing, free scan. Kills worms! www.Stop-Sign.com</p>	<p>Get Technical Support Now Live Help - Risk Free & Guaranteed Call 1-888-Geek-Help (888-433-5435) www.888GeekHelp.com</p>	<p>Help Desk Software Get info on solutions available custom and pre-packaged software. www.SoftwareSystems.us</p>	<p>Support Tech Discount new & i Search for suppo www.eBay.com</p>

I tested the AdSense SandBox with Chris Pirillo's website LockerGnome.com and was presented with a list of 20 ads. The actual website has 4 ads, all of which were displayed by the Sandbox.

Many AdSense partners are already using it — with excellent results!

4. Google AdSense Preview Tool

If you have Windows Internet Explorer (version 6 or higher), you can now install this neat tool provided by Google to check out ads that are most likely to show up on your web page.

You can check the destination of ads that are likely to appear on your site without being penalized for clicking your own ads, preview your color choices and see what geo-targeted ads are likely to show.

You might find that googleadspreview.blogspot.com/ does it better but if you use Explorer and only plan to use AdSense, Google's own tool certainly has its uses.

It takes just a few clicks and works with any web page — even if you still haven't got AdSense.

5. Ultimate SEO Tool

Just feed the Ultimate SEO Tool your website address and hit Enter. You'll see you a list of the most frequently used words and phrases, including

detailed reporting of the number of times they appeared, as well as the keyword density. Then, hit the "Create Position Report" button to check how your website ranks for each search term. (Can you ask for more?)

www.Googlerankings.com/ultimate_seo_tool.php

6. Keyword Rankings Tool

How does your site rank on Google search for a specific search term? Find out with this free tool.

www.Googlerankings.com/index.php

7. Mass Keywords Search

You can also find out how your website ranks on Google for up to ten different keywords at once. If you'd also like to study the top 100 sites for your specific search keyword, you'll get the results even faster.

www.Googlerankings.com/mkindex.php

8. Guide to Google-friendly Design

You see a beautiful website with great content. But Googlebot spots heaps of nonsense code hidden behind the scenes. Your Google ranking depends on a combination of words, design and programming. Find out how to create a relevant, clean and clutter-free website: the kind that Googlebot loves!

www.Googlerankings.com/Googlefriendly.php

Glossary

The online advertising world uses all sorts of jargon to describe different bits of the process. If you're confused by a term, you should be able to find your answer here.

3-Way Matching — A method of blending ads into a Web page by matching the ad's background color, font color and font size with the surround page content.

AdSense Code — The instructions to display ads on a Web page are contained within a piece of HTML code that is copied from Google's AdSense site. The code must be pasted onto each page on which you wish to display an ad.

Ad Rank — The order in which the ads appear in an ad unit is determined by Google. The ads at the top of the list should give you the most money based on cost-per-click and clickthrough rate.

Ad Unit — A group of ads displayed together as a set. You can display up to three ad units on one page, in addition to a search box and referral buttons.

Alternate Ads — Pre-determined ads that are served in place of public service ads when Google is unable to find contextual ads.

Channel — A method of tracking results across pages, sites, domains or any criteria set by a publisher.

Click — A click by a user on an ad. In stats reports, the clicks column may include invalid clicks but not clicks on public service ads.

Clickthrough Rate (CTR) — The number of clicks an ad receives divided by the number of impressions the ad receives. The higher your CTR, the better.

Contextual Advertising — Ads that are related to the content of the Web page on which they appear (as opposed to traditional banner ads that are served regardless of the content of the page).

Cost-Per-Click (CPC) — The amount an advertiser pays for each click his/her ad receives. AdSense uses a range of different types of Cost-Per-Click:

Maximum Cost-Per-Click — The maximum amount an advertiser is prepared to pay for each click.

Actual Cost-Per-Click — The amount an advertiser is charged for each click. The rate will vary according to the Smart Pricing rate of your site and the bidding price of competitors. Google always tries to charge advertisers the lowest rate possible.

Cost-Per-Thousand Impressions (CPM) — The amount an advertiser pays each time his/her ad is displayed. Like CPC, AdSense refers to different types of CPM:

Maximum Cost-Per-Thousand Impressions — The maximum amount an advertiser is charged for an impression.

Actual Cost-Per-Thousand Impressions — The amount an advertiser is charged for each impression. In general, this will be one cent more than the price required to keep the ad in its position on the page.

Effective Cost-Per-Thousand Impressions (eCPM)— The cost of 1,000 ad impressions. Used by publishers to compare income rates across channels (and advertising programs). To calculate your eCPM, simply divide earnings by impressions (so \$200 earned from 50,000 impressions would yield an eCPM of \$4.00).

Filters — Used by publishers to block specific ads or groups of ads.

Google AdWords — Google’s advertising program. Advertisers submit their ads to Google, specifying their maximum CPC and total advertising budget. The ads are distributed across AdSense publishers.

Impression — A single display of an ad somewhere on Google’s ad network.

Page Impression — A single display of an ad on a publisher’s Web page.

Pay-Per-Click — Often used interchangeable with Cost-Per-Click. Refers to a method of online advertising in which advertisers pay only when action is taken by the user and not only when an ad is served (CPM).

Placement Targeting — A strategy used by advertisers to choose the sites, locations and Channels they would like their ads to run on.

Public Service Ads (PSA) — Ads for non-profit organization that are served on Web pages when Google is unable to find relevant ads or cannot read the content on a Web page. Publishers are not paid for displaying public service ads.

Publisher — A member of AdSense whose sites display the AdSense code and Google’s ads.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) — A process of raising a site's rankings in the various search engines. This usually involves creating links from other sites, targeting keywords and building traffic.

Section Targeting — Lines of code used to focus Google's robots on specific, keyword-rich areas of a Web page.

Smart Pricing — A system used by Google to determine the value of the traffic sent by your site to advertisers and to price your ads accordingly. Sites that deliver high conversion rates to advertisers earn more than sites with low conversion rates.

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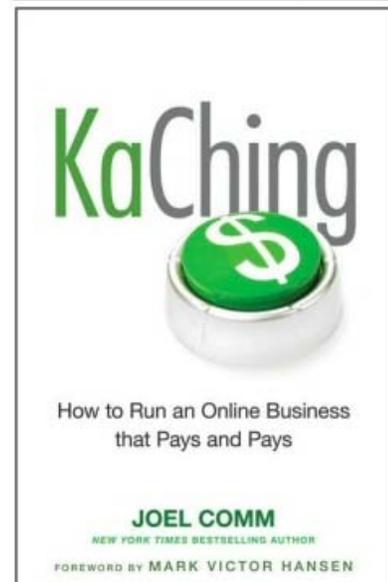
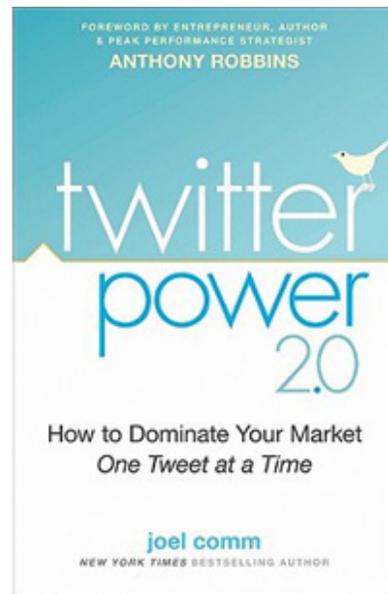
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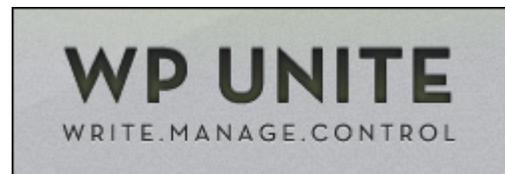
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