Crocs steps into online display with DoubleClick Ad Planner

About Crocs, Inc.
- www.crocs.com
- Headquartered in Niwot, CO with sales in 125+ countries
- 3,500 employees
- Crocs is a world leader in innovative footwear for men, women and children, with 120+ styles to suit every lifestyle at work, school and play

Goals
- Increase online sales to carefully targeted prospects
- Broaden awareness of new designs with higher prices
- Meet specific CPA and ROI goals for online campaigns

Approach
- Used DoubleClick Ad Planner to research target websites
- Used Ad Planner to monitor results of online display ads
- Optimized results by adding and dropping sites from campaigns

Results
- Display ads helped boost 2009 online sales 38% to more than $60 million
- Solid Christmas sales made it easy to justify spring campaigns
- Easily shifted target to slightly different audience

Though the online advertising team at Crocs runs at a hard pace, they find using DoubleClick Ad Planner as easy as slipping on a pair of their comfy shoes.

"We operate very much with a sleeves-rolled-up, 12-hours-a-day mentality, just like an up-and-coming interactive agency," notes Jay Custard, Crocs' global online marketing director.

Jay's 22-person team has a unique deal with management: As long as their online campaigns hit rigorous CPA and ROI metrics, they can spend an unlimited amount. But they get credit only for immediate sales triggered directly by online ads; not for pull-through retail, branding or lifetime value.

Smooth path to success
Partway through 2009, Jay's team took the first tentative steps beyond search marketing into online display advertising.

"We never really wanted to venture into display, because we didn't have the resources to do much," admits Jay. "So when we first started, we were a bit out of our comfort zone."

What could have been a rocky road turned smooth, with Google's tools to help research audiences, build campaigns and monitor results. The free DoubleClick Ad Planner helped Jay's team focus on their target prospects and place ads on selected websites their potential customers were likely to visit.

"It's a really interesting tool for us to get a pulse on what people are doing online," says Jay. "Being able to target our core demographic made it a no-brainer for us to start doing display."

"The targeting that Ad Planner offers, the speed with which we can optimize, and the support from the Google team made our campaign a complete success," he says.

The online display ads kicked in during fall 2009, when many other retailers were losing steam. To build Christmas sales, Crocs targeted several demographics, chiefly the "Soccer Mom," whom they saw as a busy, college-educated, 35- to 45-year-old buying clothes and presents for her family.

With fresh research for spring 2010, Jay wanted to shift targeting to the "Moxie Mom"—aged 25 to 40, with two kids and many interests such as gardening, travel and yoga.

"The 'Moxie Mom' is not a demographic, it's a mindset," says Jay. "And you might think that Ad Planner would fall short with a target based around psychographics. But we haven't found that."

The flexibility of the tool made shifting targets a simple task.

"With Ad Planner, you can go in and segment by all these psychographic interests, not just by age or income or geography," says Zach Olsen, the Crocs search engine marketing analyst who is most hands-on with the tool. "You can say, 'What kind of

sites do people like who are into traveling?' So that gives us a better idea of how we can target these Moxies the best way possible."

Zach likes the pre-built audiences from Google, which are selections of websites already picked to reflect certain interests. These provide an ideal starting point for sites to target and tweak over time as results come in.

"I really like that there are no barriers to entry, that anybody can open up this tool and instantly become a semi-expert media planner," says Zach. "No matter how big or small you are, everybody can use Ad Planner to run really targeted display ads."

Robust data at no cost

From his advertising background, Jay is familiar with "the big, bulky media-planning tools" that agencies used in the past.

"But what really attracted me to the Google platform was the robustness of the data, without all that expense," he says. "Ad Planner provides all the functionality and all the information we need."

His team appreciates the clear, visual interface of Ad Planner and its smooth integration with other Google offerings, from AdWords to the Google Display Network, which helps advertisers reach millions of topic-specific sites featuring high-quality news, videos and blogs.

A year after starting with display, Jay's team still marvels at how many insights they get from Ad Planner. For example, this spring they rolled out multi-lingual advertising for several other countries.

"The fact that we're sitting in Colorado building display plans for the German and French markets is incredible," he says. "We don't even have to know what a site is saying to see whether it's doing well for us or not."

"We couldn't do this without Google's continued support. It's really allowed Crocs to be very efficient and spend money on the parts that actually drive revenue, as opposed to the operational, research and services side," adds Jay. "I couldn't be happier with the way things are working out."