

Case Study

Online Ad-Tracking



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ROI was 289% in a year

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Drawbacks of ad-tracking service

- ✓ Ad-tracking was often slow
- ✓ Lengthy process to create a new link
- ✓ Long delay time from creating tracking link to link activating
- ✓ Links sometimes failed and would not go to the destination site
- ✓ Reporting lacked convenient summaries
- ✓ No automated email distribution functions

Executive Summary

In early 2004, Weil Lifestyle, LLC, the managing company for the popular online destination for health and wellness information, DrWeil.com, saw an opportunity to improve the tracking and reporting of their sponsors' banner advertisements by better utilizing RTmetrics™ which they had been using for web analytics since 2002.

With RTmetrics™, they've been able to replace a frustrating and costly third party ad-tracking service as well as improve reporting efficiency and accuracy. Estimated ROI of the first year was 289%.

Business Profile

DrWeil.com is the flagship web site for Dr. Andrew Weil, M.D., an internationally recognized expert on Integrative Medicine, often seen on Larry King Live, Oprah, PBS, and the author of several best selling books.

It is one of the most popular online destinations for information, products and services for those seeking health and wellness, with partnerships with Drugstore.com, MSN and Yahoo, among others.



The screenshot shows the DrWeil.com website interface. At the top, there are several banners: one for Andrew Weil, MD, one for BRUSH CREEK Organic Golden Flax Seed, and one for Natural Health. Below the banners is a navigation bar with links: Home, About Us, Contact Us, Member Login/Profile. The main header features the DrWeil.com logo and a search bar. A horizontal menu contains categories: Ask Dr. Weil, Mind/Body/Spirit, Health Centers, Natural Health, Healthy Kitchen, Community Boards, My Optimum Health Plan, Vitamin Advisor, and Marketplace. The main content area is divided into several sections: 'Today on DrWeil.com' with a featured article 'Does Aspirin Cause Cancer?' and a 'Daily Tip' about C-Reactive Protein and Heart Health; 'Mind/Body/Spirit Breathing: Exercises'; 'Vitamin Advisor' with a recommendation for Dr. Weil's Vitamins Daily; and 'My Optimum Health Plan' with a promotional message 'Ready For a Change? Re-Discover Yourself in 8 Short Weeks'.

Challenge

With over 2 million unique visitors per month, and a circulation of 700,000 and 500,000 for their weekly and daily email bulletins, respectively, Weil Lifestyle, LLC, the managing company for DrWeil.com, has leveraged their popularity by offering banner advertising placement to qualified sponsors.

To ensure a fair accounting of the number of click-throughs to their sponsors, they employed a link based ad-tracking service. The basic methodology was to create a redirect link that would first take the visitor clicking on an ad to the ad-tracking server which in turn would direct it to the sponsor's destination web site.

Although serviceable, this process had some distinct drawbacks.

In order to set up the tracking link for a new ad, Chad, the IT manager, would have to "login to their (ad-tracking service) URL...go to ad placement, add link, choose month, date range..." "It was like 8 steps and every time someone would give me a new ad, I would have to go over the same process all over again. Each time, it would take about 10 minutes for each tracking link."

Even once the tracking link was created, it would take "at least 40 minutes for it to activate" and sometimes the "link would go nowhere." Placing the actual banner ad onto the DrWeil.com website would always be delayed until they could be assured that the tracking links were not only working but working correctly.

The reports themselves also had much to be desired, as "the weekly reports generally couldn't include the current day. It wasn't real time." If they wanted to include today's date, "it would be about 3 or 4 hours behind." Also, no tools were provided for easy email distribution of the reports and required that someone login each time and pick and choose what they needed. "It couldn't just default to a summary report."

With its lengthy setup process, inconvenient reporting options, and monthly service fee, the link based ad-tracking solution was a source of frustration for the management at Weil Lifestyle, LLC.

Solution

In early 2004, a solution to their ad tracking woes presented itself in an existing tool, AuriQ's RTmetrics™, which DrWeil.com had been using since 2002 for their web analytic needs. Primarily, they had been using RTmetrics™ to get detailed reports on their site statistics such as pageviews, visitor session counts, average pageviews/session, and more.

During a routine new features demonstration offered by AuriQ's support services, they recognized that RTmetric™'s unique ability of extracting query information in a URL (POST and GET data) could be an alternative to using the link based ad-tracking service. Moving quickly, they scheduled a one-day, on-site training session from AuriQ to work out the best possible methods to extract and receive reporting on the various categories of advertisements. Using a combination of Group Controls, Site Settings and Mapping, they were able to utilize their already existing redirects, but instead of redirecting to an ad-tracking server, they would simply redirect to the sponsor's destination site and use RTmetrics™ to extract the following information from the redirect URL:

- Category (Advertisement, Vitamin Advisor, My Optimum Health Plan Online)
- Location of banner ad on web page
- Sponsor's destination URL

With the reporting targets defined, the delivery was fine tuned, utilizing the Summary and Mailing List features in addition to the normal login through the RTmetrics™ Interface.

Key benefits of using RTmetrics™

- ✓ Reduced operating costs
- ✓ Real-time, immediate reporting results on newly placed ads
- ✓ Tracking new ad requires no change to settings in RTmetrics™
- ✓ Better analysis of data for determining success of website and email campaigns
- ✓ Simplified reporting through user-defined summaries
- ✓ Daily and Weekly summaries sent via email

Results

In the time following the implementation of the new RTmetrics™ settings to monitor the advertising links, Weil Lifestyle, LLC has been able to reduce their operating overhead by being able to cancel the link based ad-tracking service as well as reduce the time spent on setting up tracking for a new ad.

ROI Analysis: Cost vs. Benefits of using RTmetrics™ in place of ad-tracking service

Item	1-Year ROI	2 Year ROI	3-Year ROI	Payback Period
Online Ad-Tracking	289%	387%	432%	92.4 days

Chad stated, "There's really nothing to it now. We've setup three different redirects that we use for tracking types of banners, whether it's advertising, Vitamin Advisor, or MOHP. Anytime someone gives me a new URL, I just place that in front of the redirect and track. I mean there's virtually no time involved." And once in place, the tracking and reporting through RTmetrics™ was immediate and in real-time, without any of the delays waiting for activation of links as experienced with the ad-tracking service.

Getting report data has also been greatly simplified, allowing them to either login to access very detailed reports on their advertisers' performance, or by scheduling an automated email summary sent on either a daily, weekly or monthly basis to requisite personnel. Utilizing the drill down and OLAP features, they are able to identify which types of advertising is most successful (i.e. – home page, top nav banner, top right banner, or right nav banner) over any specified length of time.

In addition to tracking the success of advertising banners on their website, they've also used RTmetrics™ to track the success of their email bulletins. They get reporting on banners, text links, email subject lines and date of delivery that result in the most click-throughs and sessions, allowing them to fine tune what works and remove what doesn't.

Afterwards, when asked about their impression of RTmetrics™ and AuriQ's support service, Pam, the operations manager said, "We're so happy with the way RTmetrics™ is working for us. I think it's an excellent product, excellent service."

If you wish to obtain further information, please contact us at the following:

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