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THE POWER OF DEDUPLICATION: Thomas Cook saves 25% on affiliate commission payments with TagMan

OVERVIEW

Thomas Cook is one of the largest holiday businesses in the world and, as such, a massive online advertiser. As part of its efforts to drive converting traffic to its web site (www.thomascook.com), the company uses affiliates on a large scale and employs two affiliate networks to manage and pay its affiliate partners.

However, like many online advertisers, Thomas Cook found it was forced to pay duplicate commissions to affiliates where more than one had delivered ads to the same customer on their journey to buying from the website.

By implementing TagMan on its site, Thomas Cook found it could immediately identify which channel and affiliate delivered the 'last click' and now saves 25% of its spend on affiliate commissions through effective deduplication.

OBJECTIVE

In November 2008, Dane Higgins, head of performance, optimisation and personalisation, e-commerce, at the Thomas Cook group, hired TagMan to help deduplicate affiliate commission payments. Higgins rightly suspected that many of the commissions Thomas Cook was forced to pay to its affiliate network partners were duplicates – where a customer had clicked on links from two or more affiliates (and performed other actions such as seen a display ad or clicked on a paid search ad) on their way to buying from the site, and both networks

claimed commission from the sale. Higgins wanted to avoid this problem by being able to track converting customers better and identify the channel and/or affiliate network that delivered the 'last click' – the final link through which a customer arrived on the Thomas Cook site and bought – and assign credit and commission on the sale only to this channel.

STRATEGY

TagMan worked with Higgins to implement its universal tagging system and house the tags from both affiliate networks, as well as its other activities such as paid search and display, in the same place.

One TagMan tag was placed on the 'thank you' pages of the Thomas Cook site where, previously, tags from both affiliate networks, plus display and PPC tracking tags, were located to track sales. The pre-existing tags were then removed and housed inside the TagMan system where they could be added, edited and removed much more easily.

By having all these tags in the same system, Higgins could produce a straightforward report to identify each click on a customer's complete path to conversion and, most significantly, see which channel and/or affiliate network delivered the 'last click'.

HIGGINS SAYS:
"Quite simply, TagMan saved my business money from the moment it was installed. I can now accurately identify which channel delivers the last click in any user journey and pay commission appropriately..."



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RESULTS

The use of TagMan produced savings of 19% on the first day it was fully installed and, in its first full three weeks of operation, saved Thomas Cook 24.1% on the amount of money it would have spent on affiliate commissions. With the costs of using the TagMan system factored in, Thomas Cook's return on investment in just the first month of use, was 9.5:1.

At the same time, Higgins can now see the complete role his affiliate partners – as well as other channels such as his own display and paid search advertising – play in any user's path to conversion.

Higgins says: "Quite simply, TagMan saved my business money from the moment it was installed. Not only can I now accurately identify which channel delivers the last click in any user journey and pay commission appropriately, I am able to understand more clearly the path those users typically take and plan my ongoing marketing spend and activity better. I thoroughly recommend TagMan to anyone looking to solve the same kinds of problems."

ABOUT TAGMAN

TagMan is a tag management system that solves the problems associated with site tagging and tracking of online marketing campaigns – including deduplication and marketing attribution – by acting as a single system and interface through which tags can be deployed to an advertiser's web site.

Clients include Thomas Cook and Alliance & Leicester in the UK, as well as digital agency Didit in the US. It won the 2008 Econsultancy Innovation Award in the web analytics category where the judges said: "The creation of a single system and interface through which tags can be deployed is a significant innovation which can help to remove the burden caused by the proliferation of tags as well as enabling complete campaign tracking."

A single TagMan tag is installed on any page that needs tracking and all other tags that need to sit on that page – whether display, paid search, natural search, affiliates or site analytics – can be plugged into the site through it. Since the tags from all channels sit in the same system, advertisers and their agencies can track the full customer journey and tell which channel delivered a particular user much more effectively.

The browser-based technology allows tags to be added, edited or removed direct from the web page in question in minutes, minimising errors and reducing the huge amount of time and energy it can take to implement online campaigns.

Also, since tags can be easily added and removed from TagMan, it allows advertisers to move between suppliers as they see fit and, as the data sits in a system controlled by the advertiser/agency, they are able to control which campaign data they share with different partners and suppliers.

Find out more at <http://www.tagman.com>



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