ADSENSE SECRETS 4

WHAT GOOGLE NEVER TOLD YOU ABOUT MAKING MONEY WITH ADSENSE

UPDATED AND EXPANDED FOR 2008!

NEW YORK TIMES BEST SELLING AUTHOR
JOEL COMM

What Google Never Told You About Making Money with AdSense

4th Edition

Joel Comm
www.AdSense-Secrets.com

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Dear Friend...

Thank you for downloading your copy of "What Google never told you about making money with AdSense: 4ᵗʰ Edition"!

Yes, this is really the fourth edition of a book that has become the world's most read guide to Google AdSense. The first edition of this ebook came out in January 2005 and was just 66 pages. Much has happened since that time and I am pleased to say that this updated and expanded fourth edition is over 230 pages!

I write like I speak. I like to keep things simple so that anyone can apply what I teach quickly and easily. However, if you are new to AdSense, you might want to check out Google's AdSense Support Pages or occasionally refer to their online Glossary.

I have tried to keep this book concise and very focused on the objective of increasing your AdSense income. In this book you will find hands-on solutions to many of the concerns and challenges faced by content publishers in their quest to **attract targeted traffic**, **improve content relevance** and **increase responsiveness to AdSense ads** — using easy and legitimate techniques that have worked for me and many others.

No matter what type of website you have or the nature of your content, you will find hands-on ways to increase your AdSense income.

Through the pages of this book, I will teach you the exact-same techniques that I used to create a TEN-FOLD increase in my AdSense earnings — almost overnight! Techniques that you can apply yourself and see real results.

To those of you expecting a fat Dummies-style book with entire chapters devoted to "What the heck is AdSense?" or "A brief history of contextual advertising" this manual might come as a bit of a surprise. But there's a reason for that. And the reason is that I don't want to lose you before you get to the real meaty parts. I will disclose my proven step-by-step techniques to increase your AdSense click-throughs.

Isn't that the real reason you bought this book? If so, you won't be disappointed.

I don't want to hide these golden nuggets of wisdom under piles of fluff that you can read for free on the Internet. In fact, if you want to brush up on the basics, there's nothing like Google's own quick guide to AdSense, available here. You may also find some of the material in this ebook repeated on

various web sites and forums. I find it interesting when people tell me that this material is available at other places, because I know where many of those sites got their information in the first place! ;-)

If you are just getting started with AdSense, there is a short section at the beginning. If you don't have a website, I'll tell you how to build one, get it online and start earning with AdSense fast.

If you're already online and using AdSense — but want to know how to use it to earn much, much more — you can just skip straight past those pages and dive right into the gold! That's because getting set up with Google AdSense is the easy part. The harder part is making real money with it. And that's where this book comes in!

You'll also find some chapters on search engine optimization, traffic acquisition, content writing, ad formats and a whole host of other useful techniques that you can implement right away.

In this fourth edition, you'll also find more information about Google's referral programs, strategies for combining AdSense with other advertising programs, tips for targeting advertisers through your Channels (really!), new Public Service Ad alternatives and a whole heap more.

I guarantee you will find insights here that you wouldn't find anywhere else. My AdSense story — right from the sluggish $3/day times to the explosive $500/day — when AdSense pays off my mortgage, car payment, cable (and a whole lot more actually)… has taught me a great deal about how to make my web pages more profitable.

Every page is bursting with AdSense tips, tricks and proven strategies — gleaned from successful publishers who have very generously shared their money-making ideas with me.

Read. Apply. And don't forget to report your results!

Send me your comments and ask your questions if you like at www.AskJoelComm.com. I can't answer every question, but I do like to hear your success stories! Your unique problems and real-life results will help subsequent editions stay current and useful. I appreciate your input!

Joel Comm

Introduction

How To Make More Money With Google AdSense

Google wants a slice of your traffic. And they're willing to pay big bucks!

For those who have been complaining of high traffic and low sales, there's simply no better way to cash in on those hard-earned visitors to your web pages.

AdSense makes it so easy!

There's no complicated software to install, no need to scout for affiliates, nothing to buy and no need to even have a merchant account. So…

Why isn't everybody doing this? More importantly, why isn't everybody making the most of it?

It's "Hidden Money"

"Seeing is believing", they say. Most webmasters love to obsessively track their visitors, earnings and CTR's several times a day. They love to see what's there, but they often miss what can be.

AdSense doesn't give you ultimate control over which ads are served, how the ads are rotated or what each click is worth. That's a good thing, because it's hands-free income. (It does give you some control though, and I'll tell you how to use those controls in this book.)

But many webmasters still think that once you've stuck the AdSense code on your page, there's little you can do except wait and watch.

Nothing could be further from the truth! Google gives you a great deal of control over your ads, and especially their visual or graphic elements. By tweaking these elements to your advantage, you could easily — in as little as a few minutes — multiply your click-throughs many, many times over!

My Experiments with AdSense

I signed up with AdSense in June 2003, starting small by serving AdSense off just a few of my pages.

By the end of the day, I'd delivered several thousand AdSense impressions — which netted me the princely sum of... $3.00. I didn't exactly burn down the house.

While I didn't see a great deal of potential based on this initial figure, I figured it couldn't hurt to place AdSense code on more pages. Over the period of a couple months, I increased my impressions 25-fold, but the clicks just weren't happening. That was when I hit my lowest point as an Internet publisher. My click-through ratios were so bad, I needed thousands of visitors to net about $30 per day.

At that point, I knew something had to change — and I was going to change it!

It was as late as April 2004 — ten months after I signed up with AdSense — that I had my eyes opened to what I had been missing all along. It was one of the "Ah-Ha!" moments where I felt as though I was being hit by the proverbial two-by-four. Immediately, I began experimenting with my Google ads, testing various placement and colors to see if my assumptions would hold water.

The results were fast — and fantastic!

By applying the same easy tweaks discussed in this book, I nearly tripled my click-through rate, and my income shot up to $600 PER DAY! I still remember that golden day in April 2004 — and for me there's been no looking back.

From my early days of being an "AdSense nobody" to becoming a leading AdSense guru, when a five-figure monthly income no longer surprises me... it's been an eventful journey full of learning experiences.

Little cogs run the AdSense machinery!

It's easy to get carried away when you're making so much money. But I never lose sight of the little things that make me big money with AdSense. Every AdSense partner — however big or small — knows that at the end of the day, it all boils down to one thing: stats! Your AdSense stats might not be amazing to start with, but make it a habit to go through it with a fine-toothed comb. As you start making sense of those 'little numbers'... the big checks with follow!

Monday, November 1, 2004 - Tuesday, November 30, 2004					Download CSV file
Totals					**$15,675.87**
Date ▼	**Page impressions**	**Clicks**	**Clickthrough rate**	**Effective CPM [?]**	**Your earnings**
Monday, November 1, 2004					$412.35
Tuesday, November 2, 2004					$439.37
Wednesday, November 3, 2004					$461.97
Thursday, November 4, 2004					$481.92
Friday, November 5, 2004					$432.30
Saturday, November 6, 2004					$406.33
Sunday, November 7, 2004					$403.16
Monday, November 8, 2004					$506.53
Tuesday, November 9, 2004					$491.95
Wednesday, November 10, 2004					$466.11
Thursday, November 11, 2004					$476.14
Friday, November 12, 2004					$484.19
Saturday, November 13, 2004					$451.72
Sunday, November 14, 2004					$489.48
Monday, November 15, 2004					$570.66
Tuesday, November 16, 2004					$578.23
Wednesday, November 17, 2004					$563.87
Thursday, November 18, 2004					$547.42
Friday, November 19, 2004					$554.34
Saturday, November 20, 2004					$518.52
Sunday, November 21, 2004					$554.55
Monday, November 22, 2004					$649.62
Tuesday, November 23, 2004					$599.04
Wednesday, November 24, 2004					$571.45
Thursday, November 25, 2004					$508.12
Friday, November 26, 2004					$603.66
Saturday, November 27, 2004					$563.82
Sunday, November 28, 2004					$589.80
Monday, November 29, 2004					$663.84
Tuesday, November 30, 2004					
Totals					**$15,675.87**
Averages					$522.53

Actual Google Adsense Report!

$663.84
$635.41
$15,675.87
$522.53

Stats are the holy grail of Internet Marketing. This is a real screenshot of my AdSense stats page taken back in 2004. You can see what I was making daily then— and believe me, I'm making much more now—but specific details such as CPM and CTR have been blacked out in keeping with Google's terms of service.

Hitting the AdSense Jackpot!

As you can see, today AdSense takes care of my car payment, mortgage, cable bills and a whole lot more besides.

Aren't you dying to know...

WHAT was it I did to AdSense — and my website — that turned it overnight into a cash-cow on steroids?!

More importantly, what can YOU do to shoot your AdSense income through the roof- right NOW!

My advice to you is quite simple...

Don't be passive about your AdSense income; work hard to increase it. But before you try out that hot new idea you read about at an Internet Forum, be sure to check out Google's AdSense TOS. Some web publishers have forever relinquished their fat AdSense paychecks, just because they were too busy to pay attention to something so fundamental to their AdSense survival.

I like to play by the rules and have taken adequate care to ensure that my AdSense tips and tweaks are legit. Making what I do from AdSense, I have little incentive to go on a rule-breaking spree and get my AdSense account suspended.

For many Internet site owners, AdSense is like the goose that lays the golden egg. Take good care of your goose — don't slaughter it in the mad rush to increase your AdSense income!

PART 1. GETTING STARTED WITH GOOGLE ADSENSE

1.1 The Basics: Building Your Site

Since 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.

I'm going to give a brief introduction here to creating a website from the ground up. You can find plenty more information online and I'll tell you where to look. A good place to start is my own book How To Build Profitable Websites Fast, available at www.buildawebsitefast.com.

If you already have a site up and running, you can just skip this bit, head down to 1.10 and begin reading about how to improve your AdSense revenues.

1.2 Naming Your Site

The first thing your site will need is a name. That's easier said than done these days. All the best 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 and buy it for a song. Putting two words together with a hyphen can work (like http://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.

Your first stop should be www.DomainAnything.com. This is a nuts and bolts service that lets you hunt and buy names, order hosting plans and even submit your site to the search engines. When you're looking for a name, you can just toss in ten options and the site will tell you which (if any) are available. Find a good one, and you can either buy it there or pick it up at www.godaddy.com (they can be a bit cheaper). All in, buying a name from one of these service won't cost you more than about $9 a year.

If you can't find a name you like and that hasn't already been grabbed, you can take a look at sites like www.moderndomains.com and www.bestnames.net. These are companies that buy domain names and sell them for a profit. There's a good chance you'll find some good names here 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.

1.3 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?) Again, there are lots of different options available depending on how much you want to pay and what you need.

In general, you'll want to make sure that you have about 50 megabytes of space (that's enough for 100 pages!), full statistics reporting and most importantly, 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.

You 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. Twenty bucks a month is a reasonable price to pay and GoDaddy.com and NetworkSolutions.com both offer good programs.

1.4 Designing The Site

It used to be said that absolutely anyone could create a website. That was true: absolutely anyone who knew HTML. Today, you don't even need to know that. Programs like Microsoft's FrontPage or NVU (which is free; you can download it at www.nvu.com) let you create sites without you needing to know your tags from your tables. If you can use Word, you can create a website.

You can either have fun playing with the programs and designing the site yourself or you can hire a professional designer to do it for you.

Freelance sites like www.elance.com and www.guru.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.

1.5 Creating Content

In Chapter 11, I talk in detail about building content and optimizing what you write to attract traffic and maximize your AdSense revenues. There are all sorts of ways to do that but for the moment just bear in mind that the ads that appear on your site will depend on the content on your pages. That's how AdSense works: users click on the ads because they're relevant.

And that's why it's not worth putting up a site just to cash in on particular keywords. Google doesn't like it and neither do users. If your site doesn't genuinely interest your visitors, you'll find it hard to get traffic, links and clicks on your ads.

But there are still a lot of different ways to create content very easily that improves your income. I'll tell you all about them in Chapter 11.

It's also worth remembering that Google doesn't place ads on particular types of sites, so if you're thinking of building a casino site stuffed with AdSense ads, you can forget about it; it's not going to happen.

Before you build a site that contains any content that's remotely controversial, check out the AdSense Terms of Service (TOS) to make sure that it's allowed. It will tell whether your idea is sound or whether you need to think again.

1.6 Getting Started With Blogger.com...

Want to get up and running with AdSense really fast? One way is to open an account at Blogger.com.

Blogger is like those old free websites that you could set up in a flash but which looked like they'd been cobbled together from bits of left-over graphics that no one else wanted. Except that the blog you create at Blogger.com is the real McCoy. It's professional, it looks great... and it takes just seconds to put together.

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 get 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. All that's left for you to do is write... 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 preview of where your ads will appear and how they will look. While you're waiting for your approval, you can play with fonts and colors so that you're all set up and ready to start earning.

Of course, once you've done that, there are all sorts of ways to play with the layout and content. You can easily move the ads into the sidebar by clicking the Template tab and looking for the line that says:

```
<!-- Begin #sidebar -->
<div id="sidebar"><div id="sidebar2">
```

Just paste the AdSense code directly beneath it. But that's certainly not all. In Chapter 11, I explain lots of different, advanced strategies that you can use to maximize your AdSense earnings on your blog. You should certainly use them but more important is that you make a start.

With Blogger.com, you can do that in seconds. It's a great way to get started, but you should think of it as blogging with training wheels. After a bit you'll want to move to your own domain so you can really pick up speed!

1.7 ... Or Google's Page Creator

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 Page Creator makes building a website as simple as point, click and type.

Again, you get a template that you can edit freely, and you can also break into the HTML to paste the AdSense code. Check to see

how it looks, publish, and all you'll have to do next is let people know where you are.

Fig. 1.1 Pick your Google page.

And that's where the disadvantages of creating a website using a free tool like Page Creator kicks in.

With a website created through Page Creator, Search Engine Optimization becomes difficult. Your URL will be [yourname].googlepages.com, 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.

Page Creator 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.

If you're keen to get started though, if you have an audience already set up… or if you just want to see your stuff online fast — and with ads — then it's a fun toy to play with.

And you can always move your content onto your own URL when you're ready.

1.8 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 MSN. In Chapter 21, 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.

1.9 Links

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.

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

There's a range of other strategies and services that you can use. You can find out about those in Chapter 20.

2. AdSense — Making The Money!

Once you've done all this, you'll be ready to start using — and profiting from — AdSense. I'm going to talk you right through the process of signing up to AdSense from reaching Google to being ready to place your first ad.

If you've been putting off signing up until you get time to figure out how to do it, you've just run out of excuses!

2.1 What Is AdSense?

Before signing up to AdSense, it's important to understand what you're signing up to. Many of the principles and strategies that I describe in this book make the most of the way that AdSense works. If you can understand where AdSense are getting their ads, how they assign those ads to Web pages and how they fix the prices for clicks on those ads or for ad appearances on those pages, you'll be in a great position to manipulate AdSense in a way that gives you maximum revenues.

Unfortunately, I can't really do that.

Much of the way that Google runs the AdSense program is kept under wraps. I know a few things — and enough to do a great deal with our AdSense ads. But I don't know it all. No one outside Google does. And for good reason. If it was clear how Google figured out the content of each website and which ads suit that site best, there's a good chance that the Web would be filled with sites created specially to bring in the highest paying ads instead of sites built to bring in and inform users.

People do try to build sites for ads not content, but they tend to make less money than high quality sites that attract loyal users who click on ads.

The fact is, we can make the most of both AdSense and our own ad space without knowing the algorithms that Google uses to assign ads and pay sites.

That's because AdSense is pretty simple. **At the most basic level, AdSense is a service run by Google that places ads on websites.** When you sign up to AdSense, you agree to take the ads that Google gives you and receive a fee each time a user clicks on that ad (or for each thousand ad appearances the ad receives on your site, depending on the type of ad).

The ads themselves come from another Google service: AdWords.

If you want to understand AdSense, you will need to understand AdWords.

Advertisers submit their ads to Google using the AdWords program. They write a headline and a short piece of text — and here's where it gets interesting — they choose how much they want to pay.

Advertisers decide on the size of their advertising budgets and the amount they're prepared to pay for each click they receive. Google then decides where to put those ads.

So a company that has a website selling handmade furniture might create an ad that looks like this:

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

The company's owner might then say that he's prepared to pay $1000 a month for his advertising budget but not more than $1 for a click. He can be certain now of getting at least a thousand leads a month.

But that's where his control over the ad ends. Google will figure out which sites suit an ad like that and put them where it sees fit, charging the advertiser up to a dollar a click until the advertiser's budget runs out. (Of that dollar, how much the publisher receives is a Google secret. *The New York Times* has reported Google pays publishers 78.5 percent of the advertising price per click. The figure hasn't been confirmed but it is around what most people in the industry expect that Google pays.)

That makes AdWords different to more traditional form of advertising. In the print world, an advertiser chooses where it wants to place its ads and decides if the price is worth paying.

The newspaper too decides how much it wants advertisers to pay to appear on its pages. Any advertiser that meets that price gets the slot and the publisher always knows how much his space is worth.

Neither of those things is true online.

When an advertiser signs up to AdWords, he has no idea where his ads are going to turn up. **When you sign up to AdSense, you've got no idea how much you're going to be paid for the ad space on your page.**

You leave it to Google to decide whether to give you ads which could pay just a few cents per click or ads which could pay a few dollars per click.

Google says that it always assigns ads in such a way that publishers receive maximum revenues, and that advertisers get the best value for their money.

So if you have a site that talks about interior design and which mentions "homemade furnishings" a great deal, Google will assume that your readers will be interested in the sample ad above. But that won't be the only ad that could appear on your page. There could be dozens of others. Google will give you the ads that it thinks will give you the highest revenues.

That might not be the ad with the highest possible click price though. If a lower paying ad gives you more clicks and higher overall revenues, you should find yourself receiving that ad instead.

In theory then, you could just leave it to Google to decide which ads to give you and at which price.

In my experience though, that just cuts you out of a giant opportunity. You can influence the choice of ads that you get on your page, both in terms of content and in terms of price. You can certainly influence the number of clicks you receive on those ads. Google leaves that entirely up to you — and it's a crucial part of the difference between earnings that pay for candy bars and earnings that pay for cars.

In short then, while signing up for AdSense can be both the beginning and the end of turning your site into income, if you're serious about making serious money with your site, it needs to be the beginning. You'll want to make sure you're not getting low-paying ads, and you'll want to make sure that you're getting the clicks that turn those ads into cash.

If you want an in-depth look at Google AdWords, I recommend Perry Marshall's training materials.

2.2 Signing Up Made Easy

First though, you have to sign up. Here's how you do it.

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 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'll also be able to choose between three different ways of receiving your money: Electronic Funds Transfer, local currency check or Secured Express Delivery. **In general, it's better to get your money by direct deposit using the Electronic Funds Transfer; Google charges for express mail checks.**

(What you won't be able to choose is whether you're paid per click—on a "CPC" basis—or for every thousand times you show an ad—on a "CPM" basis. Google decides that for you. Some ads will be CPC and others will be CPM.)

Fig. 2.1 The AdSense sign up page

The next piece of information that Google demands is your URL. There's only room for one URL, which can be confusing if you have more than one site and want to put AdSense on all of them. Don't worry about it. It won't affect how you use AdSense at all, so just submit your biggest site for now.

The next question is about whether you want content-based ads — the type of small text ads I've been discussing so far, search ads or both. **(Content-based ads are better but I'll tell you how to benefit from each so I recommend that you choose both.)**

Once you're approved, you'll just have to copy and paste a small piece of code into your website and you're done!

2.3 Google Policies

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.

That's important. 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. The things to look out for in particular are:

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 rocket your income) so why bother playing with Google's HTML? It's not necessary and it could get you a lifetime ban.

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 strategy right and they'll do just that.

You <u>can</u> encourage your users to download the products your referral buttons promote or to use your search bar, but <u>never</u> encourage your users to click your ads.

Content
Google is pretty picky about where the ads are displayed. They don'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.

Prohibited Clicks
And nastiest of all are the people who either click on their own ads or create programs to do it for them.

The bottom line is that you don't need any of this stuff. Maximizing your revenue *within the rules* is a breeze!

2.4 As Easy as 1-2-3!

The bottom line is that there are three ways to increase your AdSense revenue.

1. **By Tweaking the Ads**
   to make them more appealing to your visitors;

2. **By Optimizing your Website**
   for better AdSense targeting (or what the Google folks call 'content relevance');

And the only sure-fire way to get 1 and 2 right is by

3. **Tracking 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!

The right tracking tools 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, bingo! You're on your way to big AdSense bucks!

But it isn't as straightforward as it seems. If it were, there wouldn't be so many grumpy people on AdSense forums, complaining about their low AdSense 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 all my techniques seriously.

3. How To "Tweak" Your Ads To Make Them "Click"!

3.1 Ad Formats: "Dress" your ads for success!

How would you like your ads served? Banners? Skyscrapers? Rectangles? Squares? What about borders and background colors?

The choices can be overwhelming. Many people let Google decide for them-preferring to stick with the default settings. Big mistake! From my own experience I can tell you that it's like swapping a hundred-dollar bill for a ten-dollar one.

For almost one year I settled for just a tenth of what I could have been making — just because I didn't bother to control the looks and placement of my AdSense ads.

The various ad formats, colors and their placement on the web page can be done in thousands of combinations. You can literally spend hours every day experimenting with every possible combination. But you don't want to, do you?

Let me give you a few 'ground rules' that have sky-rocketed the CTRs on my top-grossing pages:

3.2 Don't "Look" Like An Ad

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, that makes them easy to recognize as ads — and people work extra hard to avoid them.

The same goes for ads that are tucked away in the top, bottom or some other far corner of the page. So easy to ignore!

If you want people to click, make the ads look like an integral part of your content.

Today's visitors are blind to banners, mad at pop-ups, weary of ads and skeptical of contests and giveaways. So how do you win their confidence? Simple. Don't make your ads look like ads!

Let's begin by reviewing each of the different types of ad available from AdSense and explaining their uses… then I'll introduce you to a few simple choices that zoomed my CTRs to incredible heights.

3.3 Meet the AdSense Family

Google serves its ads in several flavors, with each of those flavors coming in a range of different shapes and sizes. It is very important to understand the differences between each of these ads. Some are ideal for particular locations. Some should never be used in certain locations. And some should be used very rarely—if at all.

The sample page at www.google.com/adsense/adformats lets you see all of the different kinds of ads at once. It even has links to sample placements that demonstrate how the ads can be used.

For the most part, I'd recommend that you ignore those sample placements.

I'll talk about location in more detail later in the book, but for now just bear in mind that many of the ads in the samples are just too out of the way to be noticed.

You can use them as a starting point if you want but you'll save yourself a lot of time — and money — by taking advantage of the experience of myself and others, and following the recommendations here.

3.4 Text Ads — Google's Finest

Text ads are probably the types of ad that you're most familiar with. You get 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.)

There are eight different types of text ad. The most popular is probably 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. 3.1 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 more there and bring better results.

And I think 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.
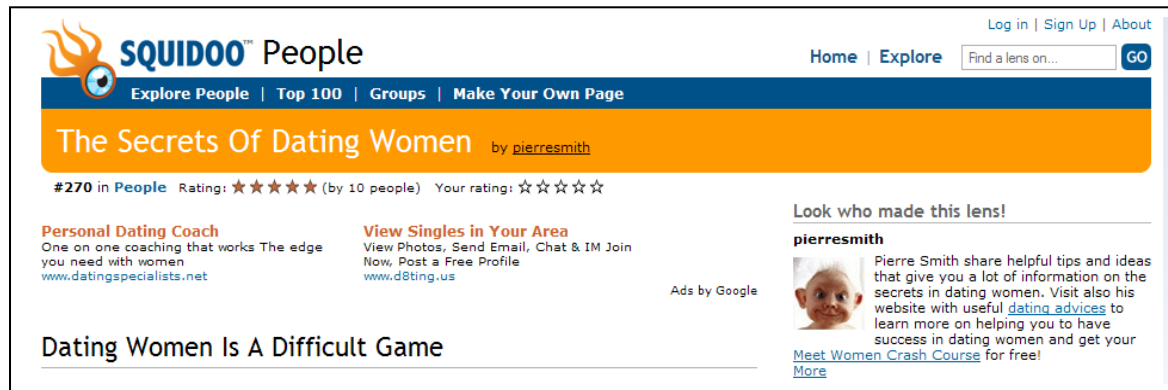
Fig. 3.2 A nicely optimized half banner on this Squidoo page.

Banners (468 x 60) and **half-banners** (234 x 60) are 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.
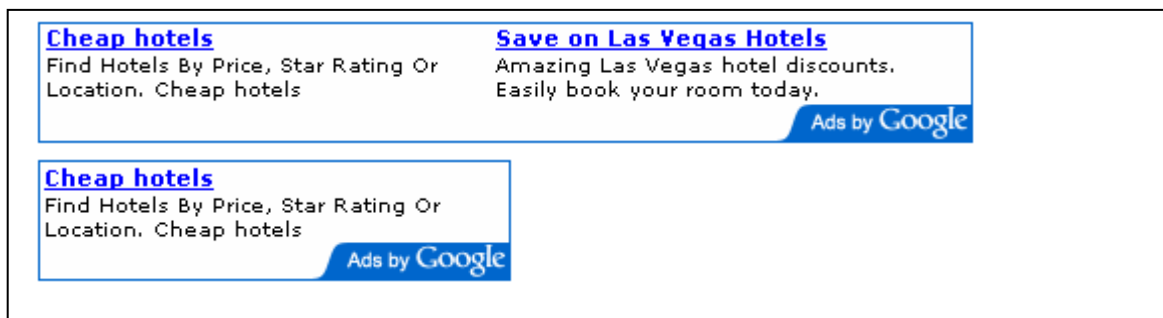
Fig. 3.3 A banner and a half-banner.

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, a half-banner can be just the ticket.

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 for the most part, stay away from 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.

Big mistake.

I have a theory about why they do this. It's the same theory that explains why the 468 x 60 block does *not* entice clicks.

Most site owners have the mindset that when they put Google ads on their site, they must place the code that conforms most to traditional web advertising. And that would be…? Yup, 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 block looks absolutely nothing like a traditional banner ad.*

At my site, WorldVillage.com, I've done that by surrounding the ad with text. Because there's no border around the unit, the ads blend into the text and look almost as 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.

(Note, 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 works 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.

Fig. 3.4 Banner ads at WorldVillage.com. Note how the ad links come immediately after an article link so that the ads look like part of the site.

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 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.
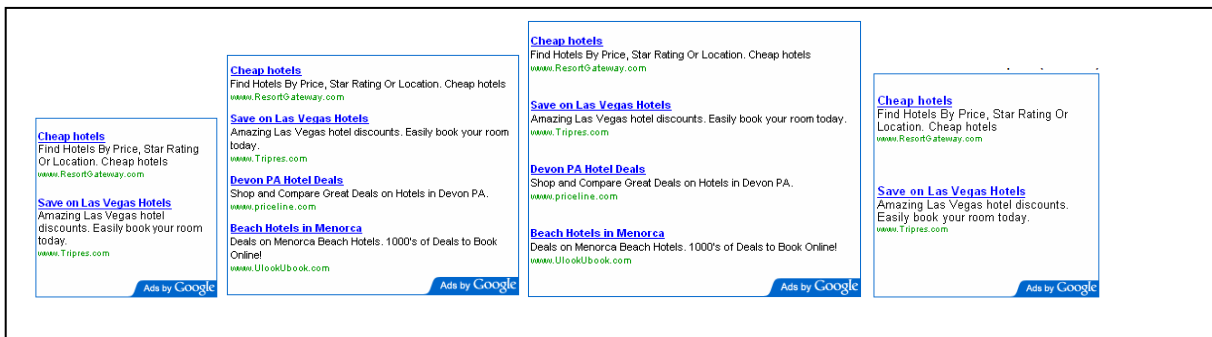
Fig. 3.5 Small, medium and large rectangles… and the square.

Why should you choose the 336 x 280 ad block? Simple. It gets the most clicks! 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. That's all I need to know!

Second best is the 300 x 250 rectangle.

Fig. 3.6 A typical use of a rectangle embedded into the text at www.joelcomm.com…

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.
Fig. 3.7 … and an atypical use of two rectangles at Dealofday.com.
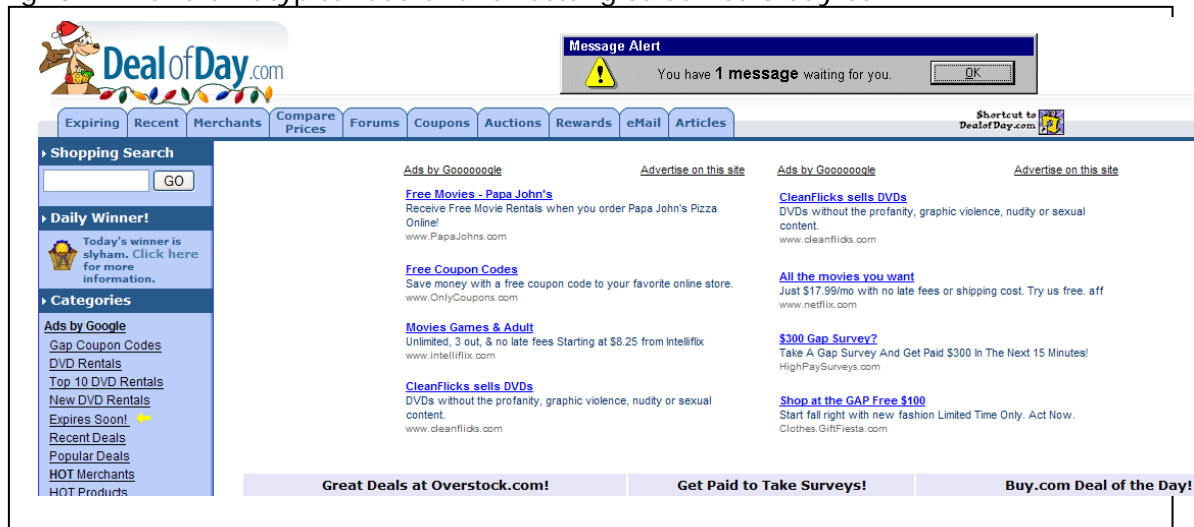
Buttons should generally be used in a different way to other rectangles. Like the half-banners, they're distinctive for their small size. While that means you could slot them in anywhere, I think they work best when slipped into the sidebars.

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.

If you think about it, nearly all PC users are right handed (even left-handed people like me control their mouse with their right hand because it's how we were 'brought up' to use a mouse.) By placing the ads on the right hand edge it's psychologically 'less distance' between your right hand and the screen.

This 'closeness' in my opinion 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.

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 (like at JoelComm.com).

I think 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.

3.5 Image Ads — Built To Be Ignored

Text ads should always be your first pick when you start to load up your site. Image ads should always be your last choice.

A text ad offers many advantages over image ads:

A. With the right formatting, **a text ad 'blends in' with your site content**. An image ad will not give you the same freedom with its appearance, as the only thing you can play with is the size and positioning.

B. **You can squeeze more text ads into the sp**ace 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 with your content.

I just can't think of a reason why anyone would want to take an image ad from Google. Text ads perform so much better, in my opinion, you're better off sticking with those and ignoring image ads altogether.

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 ve an ad at all, why not maximize the chance it'll have something of interest to your

Fig. 3.8 This banner ad stands out, but will it get clicked? Dave Taylor, best-selling technology writer and AdSense partner, stands up for text ads in this article at: http://www.free-web-money.com/000449.html
You can read more of his AdSense articles on this page.

3.6 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 and for sites that get them, they can bring 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.

Fig. 3.9 Play-per-click: a scene from Google's sample video ad.

And it's fine too if you're being paid on a CPM basis; you won't care then how often someone sees the video. But you're not always paid on a CPM basis; you might also be paid on a CPC basis.

Unlike Google's other ad formats though, 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.

In fact, you can't even track the number of times the film is shown. (Although that does mean that you can watch the film yourself without getting rude messages from Google, and it also means that CPC advertisers are less likely to get free branding at the expense of your page space.)

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.

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 ads on an ad unit in one of these sizes:

- Medium Rectangle (300x250)
- Large Rectangle (336x280)
- Square (250x250)
- Small Square (200x200)
- Leaderboard (28x90)
- 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'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 <u>can</u> 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 about the only time I can think of 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, 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.

You could also encourage advertisers to build their own video ads specifically for your site. In Chapter 6, I talk about Google's "Advertise on this site" feature and recommend that you make use of the landing page to help advertisers create effective ads for your site. You could also add a line or two there about video ads.

Video ads are still fairly new on AdSense, but I'm really excited about them. I think we're going to be seeing a lot more of them in the future and they're going to really prove their worth.

3.7 Gadget Ads — Clever But Are They Effective?

I'm optimistic about video ads. I'm not sure yet about Gadget ads.

These are rich media ads that might contain animation, Flash games and interactive content. At the moment advertisers are big brands like Coca-Cola and I suspect it's likely to stay that way. Ads like these cost a lot more to design and program than a text ad, a graphic ad or even a home-made video ad.

They can pay by impression or by click but I'm skeptical that you'll get many clicks. An early test showed that only a third of one percent of viewers actually interacted with the ad.

The problem is that they just look too much like ads. Most users have learnt to ignore them.

If you do want to test them though, you'll need to opt in to receive image ads. Apparently the most popular sizes for gadgets are rectangles, leaderboards and skyscrapers.

Some ads might do well — such as those for movies or which have an attractive built-in game — but on the whole, I expect you'll find that a well-blended text ad unit will do better.

Fig. 3.10 This kind of Gadget ad could do well. But will others — and how much will it cost you to find out?

3.8 Link Units — Great Little Stocking Fillers

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.

Ad Link units have the potential to be equally profitable.

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

Ad 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 are really meant to be placed on a sidebar.

Because you can place both Ad Link units as well as other ad units on the 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 Ad Links differ from other types of ads 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.

It can be argued that the Ad Links are ineffective because like video ads, people have to go through two clicks in order for you to get paid. That's right, once again, you're only getting paid for the *second* click (but that does mean you can check to see which ads your users are being served.)

But it can 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 an Ad Link will click on the ads that appear on the next page.

I have tested Ad Links on multiple sites and have seen vast differences in results. That makes it more difficult to say whether or not they are for you.
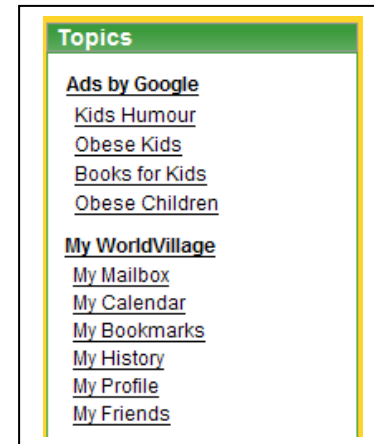
Fig. 3.11 A cunningly disguised link unit at Worldvillage.com.

In the first case, I placed the Ad Links on an information-based site with a very general audience. The results were nothing to write home about. Let's just say that you could just about buy a large candy bar with the CPM I saw.

In the second case, I placed the Ad Links on a product specific site with a narrow audience. The results were fantastic! We're talking about a CPM that is greater than what someone might make flipping burgers in one day.

The conclusions should be obvious. If you're going to use an Ad Links unit campaign. You need to put them:

1. **On a site with a specific field of interest.** A general site will give you general ads — and few clicks.

2. **Above the fold with few other links.** For Ad Links, this is crucial: If your users are going to click a link, it should be a link that gives you money.

It's also a good idea to keep your Ad 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.
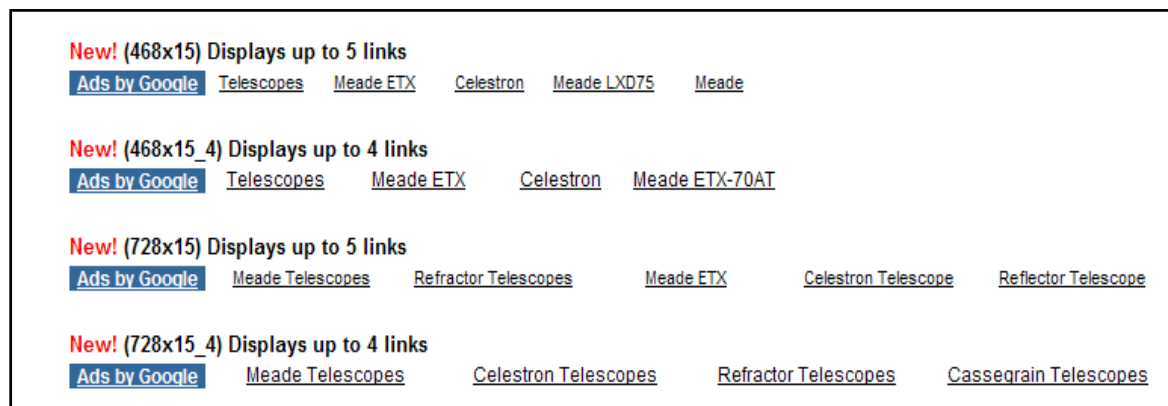
Fig. 3.12 Horizontal Ad Link units are great for inserting into articles and show very clearly which keywords your site is generating.

You can still only use one Ad Link unit per page and users still have to click twice before you get paid but they're definitely worth slipping into a long article. You probably shouldn't put them at the bottom of a page where they'll be very easy to miss, but there are plenty of other places where these sorts of ads can work very, very well.

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. 3.13 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.

3.9 Expanded Text Ads — Shrinking Control Or Expanded Income?

Take a look at the ad format samples on the AdSense site 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.

You might be surprised then to put a skyscraper or a leaderboard on your site and find just one giant ad, written in super-sized text.

Fig. 3.14 You can't miss that! An expanded text ad strikes JoelComm.com.

All the effort you've put into picking the right ad 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 just screams "Don't click me!"

This can happen sometimes, but it's not a reason to panic. It might even be a reason to celebrate.

There are two possible reasons that Google is sending you these expanded text ads.

The first possible reason is that you've been <u>keyword-targeted</u>. Google keeps track of your results (just like you should be doing) and tries to serve up the number of ads for your page that will bring in the highest amount of income. That might be four ads in a unit. Or just the one.

Frankly, I'm a touch skeptical that showing one ad is going to bring me more revenues than showing several. But I'm prepared to give AdSense the benefit of the doubt.

If I see that Google is giving me one ad, I'll compare the results for that one 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 either block that ad using my filters or just ask AdSense not to give me any more single ads.

But if I find that the expanded text ad is giving me more money, I might still be worried. I know that users are more likely to click ads that look like content. I also know that they prefer to have a choice of ads rather than just one option.

If I'm getting more clicks then with just one ad, it could well be that I have been doing something wrong with that ad unit in the past. I would want to look at how well it's been optimized and whether it's in the right place to bring in the best income.

It could well be that this single ad is a high-payer and works better with little competition. But it could also be that getting that one ad is a warning that something was wrong with the way you've laid out that ad unit on your site.

You might want to try some different strategies to see if they'll increase your revenues when the multiple ads come back.

There is another possibility though. You might have been <u>site-targeted</u>.

This is a whole different ball game. It means that an advertiser has spotted your site and asked Google to run their ads on it on a **pay-per-impression** (CPM) basis.

You're no longer dealing with tempting people to click, so you don't care how much your ad looks like an ad. In fact you might even want it to look like an ad, if that's what will keep the advertiser happy.

The most important point to bear in mind here is that you want to make sure that you're not losing money. It might be very nice for the advertiser to have exclusive control over a particular spot on your page but if you can make more money serving CPC ads in that space, then you need to make sure that your site is working for you and not for the advertiser.

Again, watch your stats for a week and see if the revenues you receive for your impressions are higher than those you receive for your clicks.

Most publishers do find that ads that pay by CPM 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.

If you find the revenues are lower though, then you'll want to boot that ad off and go back to serving conventional ads. You can do that by opting out of showing site-targeted ads (you're automatically opted in).

In general, the biggest problem with these sorts of campaigns is not lower revenues; it's that you've got no idea how long they're going to last, which 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 don't care about CTR, You could also lay off the optimization and focus on making your site more attractive to users.

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 site-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!

3.10 Seasons Greeting With Themed Units

There is one more type of 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.

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

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.
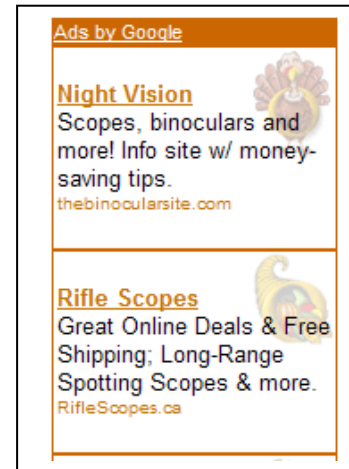
Fig. 3.15 A Thanksgiving ad that isn't a turkey.

To sum up the different types of ad format then…

- **Leaderboards** are best at the top of the page;
- **Squares and rectangles** can be embedded into text itself;
- **Vertical ads and buttons** should slip down the side of the page;
- **Vertical link units** should be placed next to link lists;
- **Horizontal link units** can go at the top of the page, between blog entries or above and below directories;
- **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!

4. Using Colors To Increase Your Clicks

4.1 Design Your Website To Highlight Adsense

I once went to a fashion show where each model wore the exact same black outfit for the entire duration of the show. Boring? Hardly! The show was intended to showcase platinum jewelry, and the outfits were designed to enhance the jewelry — instead of distracting the audience.

You don't have to make all the pages on your website identical (or black). But you do want to make sure that the look of your page draws attention to the ads — and makes them appear as attractive and as valuable as platinum jewelry.

Many websites have strong graphic elements that catch the eye — usually at the expense of the AdSense units.

> If you're using AdSense, be judicious in the selection of fonts, font size, colors, images, tables and other visual aspects of your website.
>
> **Draw subtle attention to your AdSense units. Make them the stars of your show!**

Fig. 4.1 On this website, Tim Carter employs subtle design and placement to make AdSense the center of attraction. Check it out at:
http://www.askthebuilder.com/457_Tar_and_Chip_Update_-_It_Rocks_.shtml

4.2 Make The Border Go!

You can more than DOUBLE your click-throughs with this one simple tweak!

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.

Fig. 4.2 It's always easier to work with a white background. If your page background is white, you can instantly see the results with the **Example** ad next to the color palette.

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.

> Google provides an extensive color palette in your administrative area. Use it to tweak the look of your ads to suit your web page.

With just one simple click, you can match the color of your ad's border with the background color of your web page. When the border blends with the background, it frees up loads of space. The page looks instantly neater and the ads look more inviting.

Make sure you also pick a matching background color for the ad. The ad's

background must match the page background on which the ad will appear.

If the ad appears in a table, match the table background color with the ad background color.

The key is to blend the background and border color with the page, so that the text looks like an integral part of your web content.
Fig. 4.3 Don't forget to match the <u>background color for your ad</u> with the background

color of <u>your web page</u>. Even with a matching border, the ad in the **Example** above sticks out against the white background.

4.3 Text Is Design Too!

That's right: the text size, font, color and the color of your ads must match the other text elements. If the text color of the ads is the same as the text in the body of your page, it'll help the ads blend into the site and make the reader feel that you've endorsed them.

And if the size of the font in the ads is the same as the size of the main body of the content, it will have the same effect: they'll look like part of your site and not something brought in by Google.

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

Fig 4.4 **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. See more at http://www.joelcomm.com

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!**

4.4 Blue Is Best

So you want to get rid of the border. You want to get your ads the same color as the text on the rest of your page and the background matching the background color of your Web page.

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

That's an easy one: blue.

I used to say that *all* the text in the ad should match the text on your page, including the link. After seeing an article about the benefits of keeping the links blue — and testing extensively — I don't say that any more.

The logic is that users have come to 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 blue.

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

The line in your AdSense code that sets the color of your link is the one that says:

Google_color_link = "#color";

"#color" is the hexadecimal number for the color you want to use. You should make sure that number is #0000FF.

Keep your link blue and you can experience an increase in click-throughs as high as 25 percent!

4.5 Where Did My URL Go?

You can change the color of your text and you can make sure that your links scream, "I'm a FREE road to where you want to go!"

But you still 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 click-through link less obtrusive is to change the URL display color to match the text description color. Now the link will blend in with the text description and the eye will be drawn to the hyperlink instead of the URL. Google provides these tools for you. Why not use them?

Note that the 728 x 90 leaderboard and the 468 x 60 banner do not display the URL line by Google's design. It is not a mistake and you will not get in trouble for the URL not appearing with these ad blocks. It's just the way it is.

4.6 Deliberate Mismatching

When it comes to choosing colors, I recommend 3-way matching and using blue for the links. But there is another strategy that you can use.

You can deliberately mismatch your ad colors and styles, *provided you keep it to the top of your page.*

This distinction generates two powerful 'zones' and therefore 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 colors match colors found in the banner graphic heading. (Important — the URL links are hidden, so only certain text ads will allow you to do this.)

The end result is that these ads, placed above the banner graphic look like key control points for your site and are just more likely to be clicked. The visitor feels that they are visiting another major area of that site.

Fig. 4.5 www.dressesforthewedding.com has two zones: an ad zone at the top and a free article beneath. Implementing this design increased their revenues FIVE-FOLD!

4.7 Changing The Look Of Your Ads

The strategies I've provided in this chapter will all help to improve your clickthrough rates. That's what happened when I used them and it's what happened when other people used them.

But one of the most important strategies you can use with AdSense is to experiment.

If you find that a slightly larger ad format gives you better results, for example, then obviously, you should use the bigger one.

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.

5. How To Maximize Visibility And Response

5.1 Ad Placement: Where To Put Your Ads?

Location is everything. The world's best ad won't deliver if it isn't visible in the first place. 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 get ignored as 'blatant advertising'.

What does work is *wise* placement. Put them where your content is most

likely to interest and engage your visitors.

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 people.

Here are a few simple tips to make your ads 'click'!

5.2 Go With The 'Flow'

Identify the reading patterns of your visitors. What draws their attention first? What makes them 'click'?

Like I said, you want to put your ads in areas that draw your visitors in with interesting content. There's no point in putting your ads in some out of the way place where no one ever looks. Your users will follow your content, so you need to make sure that your ads follow that content too.

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 at
https://www.google.com/support/adsense/bin/static.py?page=tips.html
sums up the options pretty well:
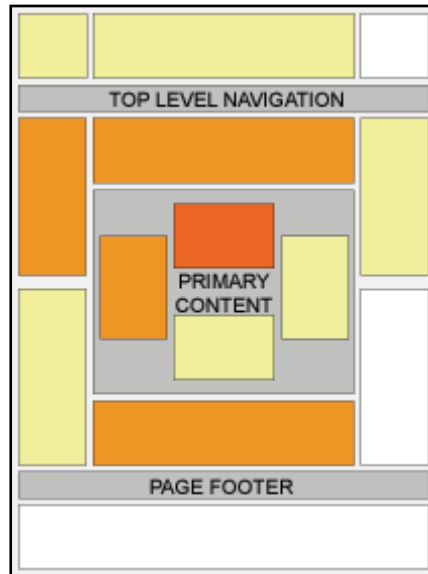
Fig. 5.1 Google's Heat Map shows an "average" site's hot spots. The darker areas are the regions where people look most frequently. But remember, no site is average. Where do your visitors look most?

Google says that certain areas are more effective than others. Researchers have also 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.

All of this is true but the hottest areas can vary from site to site. You will need to experiment to find the very best places for you.

5.3 Above The Fold

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

The first thing people do when they reach a website is to absorb as much information as possible before they start scrolling. The part of the page that they can see without scrolling is called "above the fold."

That's where you want your ads.

The number of links that appear above the fold affect how likely people are to click on your AdSense ads. *That's why m*ore ads doesn't always mean more money!*

Google always puts the top-paying ads on the top and the lowest-paying ones at the bottom.

If you have a stack with three or more ads, the cheaper ads might steal attention away from high-paying ads and clutter up your website.

You don't want ads and links competing against each other. If you want to increase your earnings per click, remember: Less is More! And that's particularly true above the fold.

Let's take a look at two sample pages:

Fig. 5.2 www.MegaBookshop.com has a search form, a featured product, category links and AdSense ads, all above the fold.
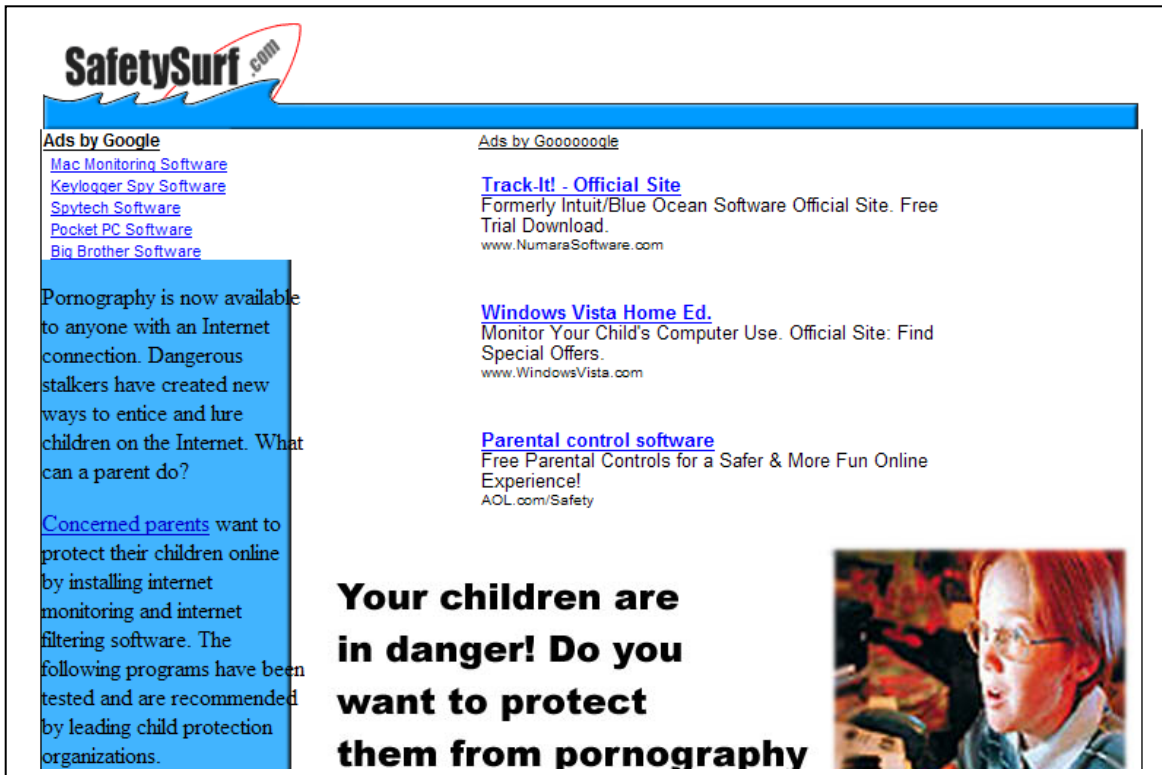
Fig. 5.3 www.SafetySurf.com is not the most attractive site, but ONLY has AdSense ads above the fold.

Now, which of these sites' ads do you think brings a higher click-through rate? You guessed it. The second site has *triple* the click-through 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!

5.4 Using Tables

I've already mentioned that one of the principles of a high click-through rate is to make your sites blend into the page. The more you position your sites to blend into the page, the better your click-through rate will be.

One very neat way to help your ads blend into the site is to place them in tables.

In the example below, Chris Pirillo again skillfully dropped his AdSense into a <table> for a clean and attractive look that turns AdSense into a new focal point.

Fig 5.4 Note how clean the tables make the ads look.

Want to get the same results with your web page?
Dave Taylor (www.intuitive.com) shares this simple code to create a left-aligned table containing AdSense. Just paste this code where you want AdSense to appear.
Easy!

Left-aligned table with AdSense:
<table border="0" align="left"><tr><td>
Google adsense code goes here
</td></tr></table>
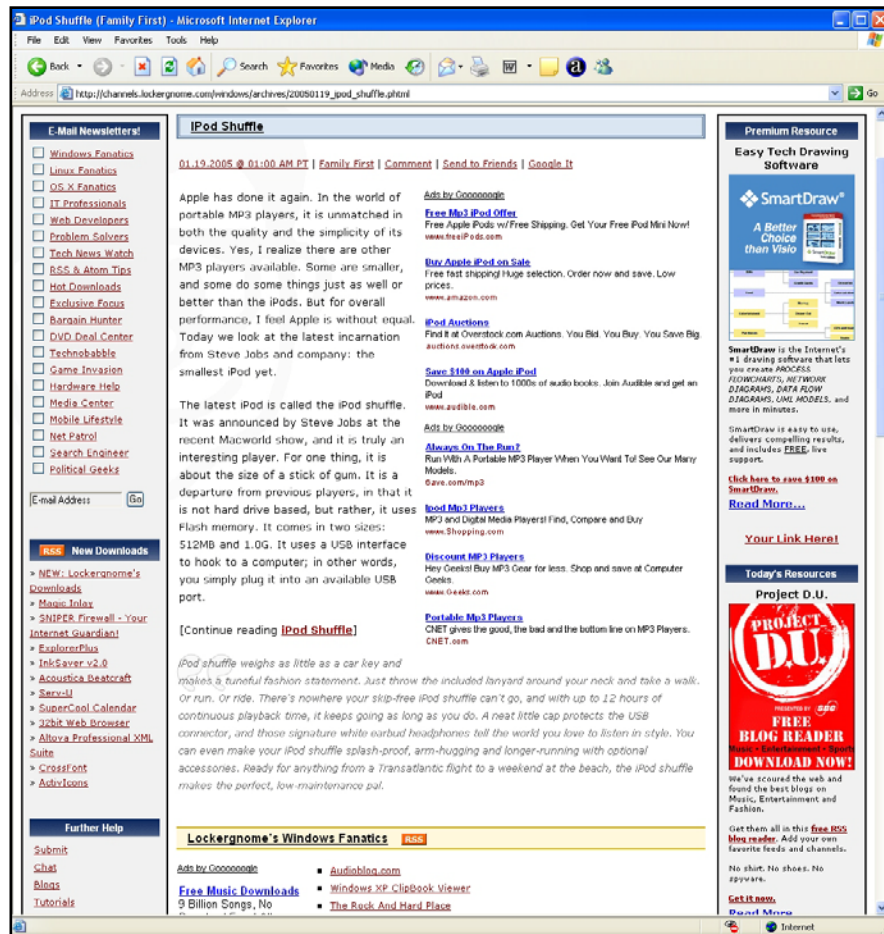
Right-aligned table with AdSense:
<table border="0" align="right"><tr><td>
Google adsense code goes here
</td></tr></table>

5.5 Complementing Your Ads

Everything I've discussed so far has been about placing your ads where your users will be looking. 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 though. 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.
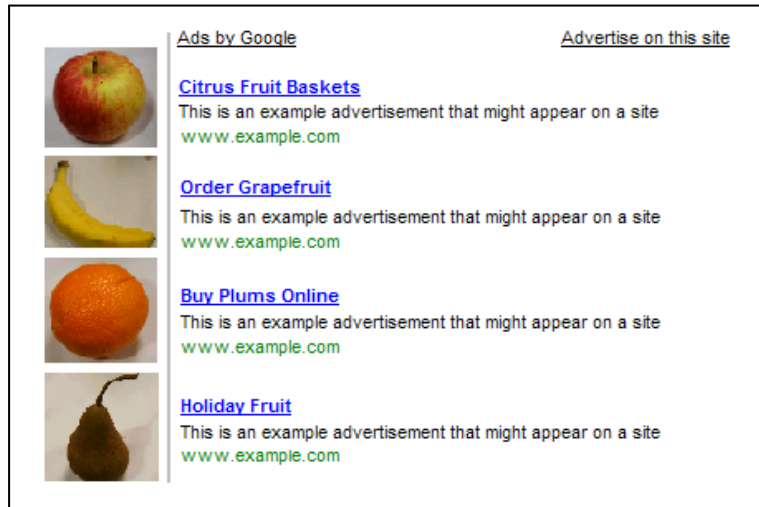
Fig. 5.5 Google says: "Don't try this at home…"

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. 5.6 One way to place an image next to an ad SafetySurf.com.

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

Fig. 5.7 A new use for a search box at FamilyFirst.com.

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.

6. Controlling Your Ads

6.1 Attracting Relevant Ads

Getting the color and placement right will help improve your click-through rate. But neither of those will affect which ads your site serves.

In theory, Google controls the ads that appear on your site. 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 ensure that you get the ads that give you 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 obviously 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 page.

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.

6.2 Keep The Title, Directory And Headlines Relevant

How exactly the crawlers read pages 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 as 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.

Another place to look is your headlines. Instead of using a <font> 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 at all, try adding some.

6.3 Finding Keywords

We know that Google's crawlers search websites for keywords, then reports back and tells the company what kind of ads to send to the site. If your site is about pension plans for example, then your keywords would be things like "retirement", "401k" and "pension".

Getting the right keywords on your site won't just make your ads relevant; it will also help you to make sure that the ads you get are the ones that pay the most.

There are all sorts of tools available on the Web that tell you how much people are prepared to pay for keywords. www.overture.com and www.googlest.com let you see how much people are prepared to pay, and keywords.clickhereforit.com also has a list of keywords with their prices.

On the more professional side, WordTracker provides a wealth of keyword research tools that unearth pure gold. You can check it out at www.WordTracker.com.

Again, you don't want to build a site just to cash in on a high paying keyword but if you know that "401k" pays more than "retirement" for example, then it makes sense to use the higher paying keywords more than the lower paying ones.

See Chapter 17 for more on finding the most up-to-date high paying keywords.

6.4 Keyword Density

You'll need the right keywords to get the right ads. But you'll also need the right amount of keywords.

There's no golden rule for putting the right number of keywords on a page to get the ads you want. You'll just have to experiment. 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 for car rental, a higher-paying keyword, you might find that you need to produce several pages about car rental before you get the ads.

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 all finely focused. For example, talking about "fire extinguishers" is likely to get you better results than talking generally about "safety equipment."

6.5 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 amount of 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 gets.

The most important place on your webpage is directly beneath the AdSense box. The keywords you place there could influence your ads.

For example, mentioning clowns in the space directly beneath the AdSense box could give you ads about circuses and red noses!

Keeping 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 box could give you ads for sites with that sort of content too.

Bear in mind though that you'll often find that you get ads that try to combine the main thrust of your site with the words in that keyword space below the ad box. 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 about 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.

6.6 Keyword Frames

One of the reasons that websites don't always receive relevant ads may be that all the navigation and other non-content words affect the way Google reads the page. If your links and other words take up lots of space, it could well skew your results.

One way to avoid your navigation affecting your ads is simply 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 (google_page_url = document.location), so your keywords won't be diluted by non-relevant words.

6.7 Section Targeting

Probably the most effective way to ensure the crawlers read the keywords you want to emphasize though is to use Section Targeting. This is a fantastic technique. By simply 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.

It's definitely something that you want to play with.

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.

6.8 No 'Baiting'!

Often I've clicked through a 'promising' website, only to find reams of keyword spam, interspersed with AdSense. Websites like these make AdSense look bad.

Keyword spam may trick search spiders, but your human visitors will leave disappointed.

People hate being 'baited' by a web site. Offer content that makes their visit worthwhile. **Address the needs and concerns of your visitors with original content.**

Quality content builds trust and loyalty — and that, in turn, makes people want to click. Search rankings may change, but loyal visitors keep coming back for more!

6.9 Changing Metatags

Metatags certainly 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.

I've already mentioned that the title of your page will have an effect. It's also very likely that the description does too.

But 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 still play a role in search engine optimization and getting your site indexed faster.

6.10 Inviting The Robot

So far in this chapter, I've explained some of the ways that you can tweak your page to keep your ads relevant. But the changes you make won't have any effect until Google's robot stops by and re-indexes your page. What will generally happen is that once you upload your new page, you'll still get the old ads and you might have to wait some time before the robot visits it again and you can find out whether your changes have the right result.

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 before attempts.

This doesn't always work but with a bit of luck, you should find that you receive new ads within a few minutes.

6.11 Google Ads Preview

Don't want to wait for the robot? No problem. The Google Ads Preview tool at http://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. That's not just because it also works with Firefox (Google's preview tool only works in Internet Explorer) but mostly because 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 eMiniMalls it's useful to see what effect a single change can have across the different ads you're displaying.

You can also compare the AdSense ads with those served by Yahoo! Publishers Network.

And here's the real kicker: **the Google Ads 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 criterion 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 get 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 get with a certain keyword and you've got a guide to where those keywords can take you.

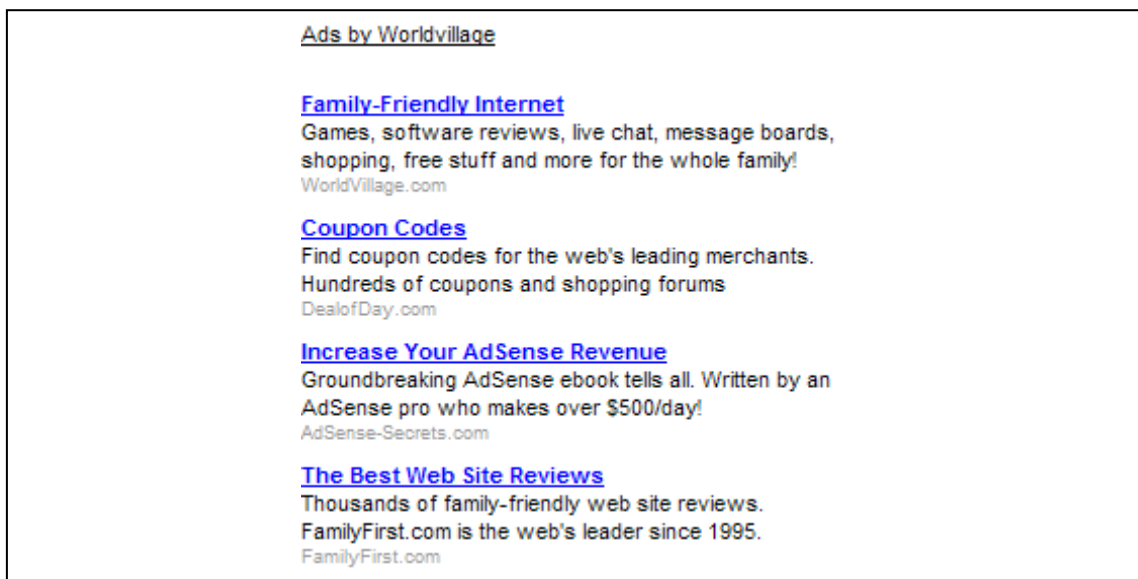Either way, you've got a very useful tool.

6.12 Public Service Ads

The penalty for not getting your keyword placement and density right isn't just irrelevant ads. It could also be no ads at all. If Google can't find any relevant ads to give you, it could use your space to present public service ads, which 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 rather than give space on your site to a cause that Google chooses.

Google lets you get rid of that space by collapsing the ad, tossing in an image or by creating a color block in the same tone as the background color. But that seems like a waste to me. That space can earn you money. If something goes wrong with your contextualization, you want a back-up that brings revenue.

The most obvious solution is to specify an alternate URL in the event that Google has no ads for you. You can do this from your AdSense account. Instead of linking to the Red Cross or whoever it may be, you'll receive a link to a site that you've pre-chosen.

I've created my own default set of ads for various block sizes. You can see an example of this at www.worldvillage.com/336x280-1.html.

Fig. 6.1 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.

A great replacement for pesky PSAs, right?

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 WebSponsors.com. You can signup for a free account 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

It's really very simple and very effective.

6.13 Blocking Ads

Another useful way to control the ads you see on your site is to block ads you don't want.

Google gives you a limit of 200 URLs to block, which isn't much. You might well find yourself burning through them pretty fast, especially if you try to block lower paying ads in favor of the higher-paying ones.

Playing with keywords, content and placement will give you much better results.

6.14 "Advertise On This Site"

Editor's Note: Google has discontinued this service since the time of publication.

Finally, there is one more way to influence the ads that you show on your site through AdSense: by placing a link inviting users to "Advertise on this site."

In the past, as long as you hadn't opted out, the link would appear with your ads automatically. Now you have to add the link manually. AdSense's Help Center explains how to do it, but it's quite simple. You'll just need to use this line of code, replacing "NUMBER" with your AdSense publisher ID number and "YOURSITE" with the name of your site:

> <a
> href="https://adwords.google.com/select/OnsiteSignupLandingPage?cl
> ient=**NUMBER**&referringUrl=http://www.**YOURSITE**.com">Advertise
> on this site

Google even says that you can't change the text. It has to say, "Advertise on this site."

Although that's certainly more work than simply choosing to uncheck a box, as we used to be able to do, it does provide a lot more flexibility. You can now put the link anywhere. Publishers often expect to see these sorts of things at the bottom of the page.

And what will happen when they click that link? They'll be sent to a special landing page that invites them to sign up to AdWords and place their ads on your site. You'd be paid for those ads on a CPM basis.

You can edit that landing page!

Google sees this page as a co-brand: they host and supply it; you can do what you like with it. Advertisers that don't yet have an AdWord account will be shown how to sign up and place their ads on your pages, and advertisers that do have an account will be shown how to advertise on your site.

Google lets you make three kinds of changes to this page:

- You can add a logo;
- You can set the color scheme;

- And you can write your own welcome message.

Do you see why these options are so important?

This is the only place in AdSense where publishers get to talk directly to advertisers.

That's crucial!

AdSense is structured so that Google stands between the network of advertisers and the network of publishers. Ads go in one end, Google sorts them and sends them out the other end.

Advertisers have no way of telling publishers to put their ads at the top of the page or next to relevant pictures or only on pages that contain positive reviews of their products, or anything else. Once they've submitted their ads, they just have to trust the publisher to promote their sites in the best way possible.

Similarly, as publishers, we have no control over what the advertisers write in their ads. We can't tell them to use particular keywords, to write certain things in their headlines or to produce their copy in a particular style.

If we get an ad with bad copy, we just have to put up with the lower CTR until we either block it or see it replaced by a more profitable ad.

Edit the landing page, and *you can tell the advertisers what they should write to get the most clicks with an ad on your site.*

You can even include your email address and contact information and invite them to contact you directly.
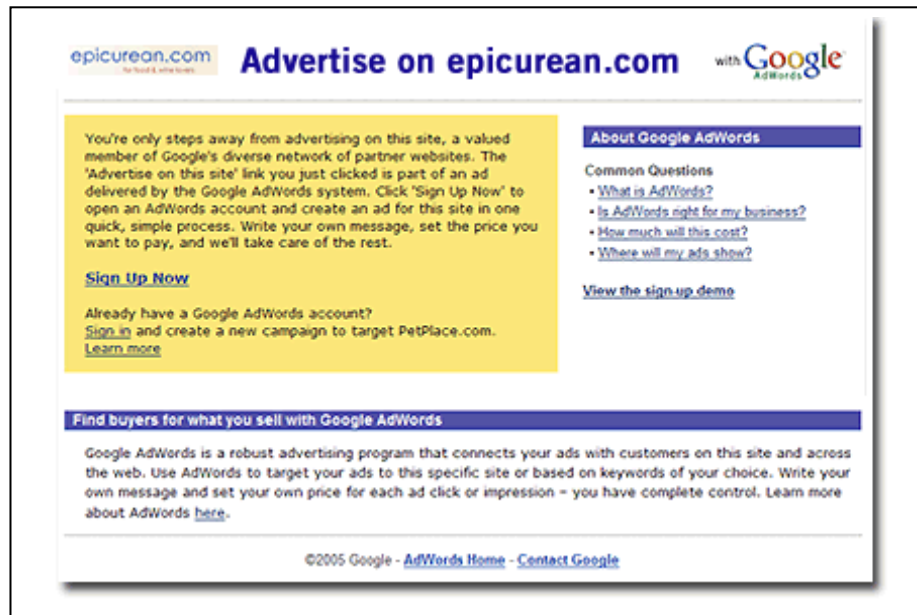
Fig. 6.2 The "Advertise on this site" landing page. Your communication channel to advertisers.

You want that page to look like part of your site. If an advertiser has clicked on the "Advertise" link on your site, it's because they've liked what they've seen. *You've* impressed them, not Google, not Google's robot and not Google's method of matching ads to publishers.

Google understands that means they've got more chance of signing up an advertiser if they let *you* do the selling.

You should certainly add your logo to this page. It appears in the top left-hand corner and makes the landing page look like you've endorsed it — which, of course, you have. If you don't have a logo, this is a good time to create one. You could just use any graphic that appears on your site; the effect will still be to draw a link between the landing page and your site.

And that's the effect you want.

You only get one landing page per account. If you have multiple sites, the ads will only appear on the site whose URL you inserted in the link, but you might not want to mention a site name on the landing page in case you confuse the advertiser.

The color scheme, of course, should match the colors used on your site.

It's in the welcome text that things can really get interesting.

You don't really want to give advertisers a list of keywords that they should use. It's unlikely that they're going to be impressed by a bunch of demands from someone who has yet to earn them a dime.

But they will appreciate information about the sorts of words that are likely to attract the most clicks. They'll still feel that they've got the freedom to decide on their own ad copy — but they'll be more likely to write the sort of copy you want.

For example, if you have a site about cars and you know your users are particularly interested in models that suit families, you could let the advertisers know. If your blog mostly attracts Republicans you could suggest issues that are likely to get your users clicking an ad. If you've got a site about pets, you could point out that your users are more interested in accessories for dogs than for cats.

No one knows your users better than you. This is the place to share that information so that you can share some higher revenues.

And finally, you could also encourage advertisers to sign up for a targeted-site campaign.

While it's likely that most of the advertisers who click on the link will want to advertise exclusively on your site — and Google has set up the system to encourage that result — it's also possible that some advertisers who are new to AdSense will decide to spread their ads over a number of different sites in your field.

That means you're only getting a fraction of their advertising budget. A targeted-site campaign will give you all of it.

Just tell them that a targeted campaign on your site is likely to give them the best results.

Does all that sound hard? Don't worry, I'll make it easy for you. You can just take the text below and adjust it for your site, swapping the underlined sections for details relevant to your site:

Thank you for advertising on FamilyFirst.com, the web's leading site for family-friendly web site reviews. Our users are typically traditional families, stay-at-home moms and parents of children aged between 3 and 16.

We've found that users respond most favorably to articles and links about filter software, children's DVDs and computer games, toys and family entertainment.

Highlighting these aspects of your business in your ad is likely to earn the highest number of clicks and the best conversions.

We'd also recommend that you focus your advertising with a targeted-site campaign. We look forward to helping your business grow! If you would like more information about advertising on FamilyFirst.com, please write to sales@FamilyFirst.com.

See how easy that is?

The page should be available within 24 hours, and once you've created it, you can put links to it anywhere you like; you're not restricted to the little line under the ads. So you could put them in your emails and on your Web pages in places of your choice.

Why would you send potential advertisers to Google's advertising sign-up page instead of your own? Well, you might not want to. You might prefer to just vet each advertiser yourself and set your own price. But bear in mind that any advertiser who follows that link has to outbid other advertisers on Google who want that same space. You don't know what exactly the current highest bid is; the most you can know is how many clicks your ads received and how much money you earned in the previous days and weeks.

You certainly can't tell how much you're *going to* receive in the weeks to come.

Sending potential advertisers to your Google sign-in page will ensure that you're always getting the highest-paying ads for those spaces.

6.15 Does Location Matter For CPM Ads?

In a word, yes! This is what Google has to say about CPM ads, the type of ads you're likely to get from a site-targeted campaign (my emphasis):

You'll earn revenue each time a CPM (cost per 1000 impressions, also known as *pay-per-impression*) 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*.

So if you were thinking, "Great! I'll encourage click-throughs above the fold *and* get paid per impression with an expanded text ad at the bottom of the page…" think again.

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. If advertisers are paying less for a CPM ad at the bottom of a page, it's less likely then that you're going to get one down there.

Now, how Google is figuring out where on the page you're putting your ads beats me. Their love of Smart Pricing (see Chapter 13) 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.

7. 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 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: 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...

Step 3: 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 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 20 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 An Ad-Supported Commercial Site With Zlio.

Writing content is just one way to fill a site that will earn from advertising. Another is to display products for sale. That might sound hard but with a website, it's very, very easy.

You don't have to see the products, store the products, touch the products or mail the products. All you have to do is market the products… and take a cut of the sales price.

Usually, ads on commercial sites don't work too well. You want people to buy from you, not from a competitor. When you use Zlio.com— an online store-building service — to build your site though, you don't need to care who gives you the money… as long as someone does.

Step 1. Sign Up And Choose Your Store Name
Zlio's registration page is very simple. The only thing you'll need to consider is the name of the store. You might want to think about that for… maybe a minute. Just choose something that's simple to remember and which sums up the products you plan to sell.

Step 2. Pick A Template
There's no programming with Zlio. Pick one of eleven ready-built templates and you're ready to go.

Step 3. Add Products
Zlio has over three million different products that you can add to your store and receive commissions on sales or even payment for clicks. I'm sure you can find something you want to sell…

Step 4. Add AdSense
In addition to placing units containing products for sale, you can also include AdSense units. And Zlio's AdSense API makes it a breeze. You don't even have to go back to the AdSense site to get the code. It's all automated from Zlio's own site.

Step 5. Start Marketing
Building the site is easy. It will take about five minutes. Bringing in customers will be a bigger challenge and take a little longer. But it's nothing that can't be overcome with some hard work and steady learning.

AdSense QuickStart Guide #3: Building A Site From Scratch

Using an automated system like Blogger or Zlio is the easiest way to get started with AdSense but it's not for everyone. Create a complete website from scratch is going to take a little longer... but not a lot longer.

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.

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. Yahoo! has a program called SiteBuilder (http://webhosting.yahoo.com/ps/sb/index.php) 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. If you're in a rush, it's a great way to get online and earning fast.

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?

PART 2: BEYOND BASIC ADS

8. Catch Fickle Visitors With The Google Search Box

8.1 Finding Money With Search

What happens when your visitors can't find what they want on your website? They might be bored, probably they're hungry for more or they might want to refine their search. If you have a Google Search Box, you can now retain these 'quitters' — and make money from ads they click from their search results!

The Google Search Box isn't just an added convenience for your visitors — it can actually make you money! **When your users enter a search term, you'll receive a commission for any ad they click on the results page.**

If your AdSense ads are being ignored then, add a link at the bottom of the AdSense ads, inviting visitors to try Google search. A simple note should do the trick. Try something like: "Can't find what you're looking for? Try Google Search!"

A Google Search box allows your visitors to specify their exact search terms, thereby "pulling" more relevant ads to your page. Using the Search feature, you can pull up **on-demand AdSense ads** at the top of the search results.

At the bottom of the Google text ads, place a link to the Google Search bar, inviting readers to Search for better-targeted content and offers. When visitors click an ad, YOU get paid!

You can invite users to search within the website or the entire web.
As far as possible, **use a staid gray button for the Google search feature**. It looks more believable — and legitimate! Note that Google has not played around with its own search buttons, although the logo itself has undergone many theme-based transformations.

Fig 8.1 The "Search" feature is an important part of content-rich websites. On my website above, users are invited to search different threads within the website 'by keyword' and 'by username' creating a good potential to merge in a Google search box.

Google Search Boxes are getting increasingly popular with Internet Forums, enabling users to pull up relevant text ads "on demand"!
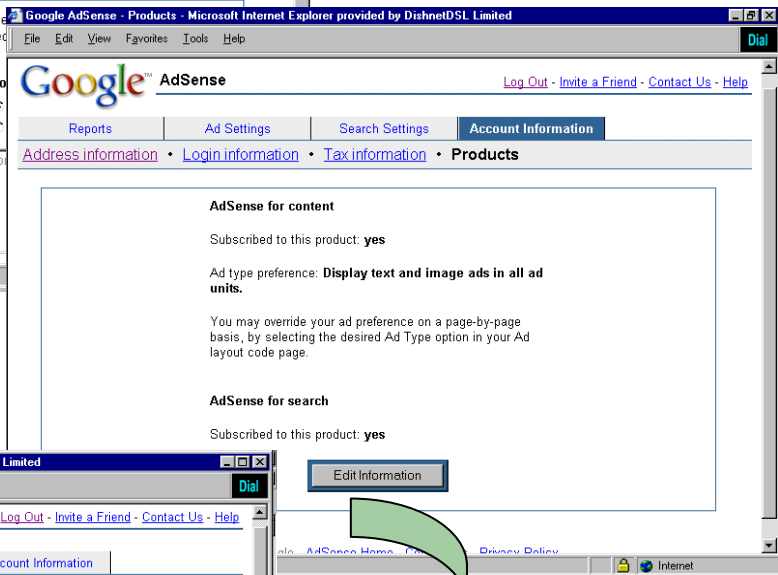
8.2 Learn How To Add Google Search To Your Web Page

Adding Google Search to your Web page is very easy. This Step-by-Step Tutorial shows you how:

How to... **Add Google "AdSense for Search" to your Web Page!**

1. Log in to your AdSense Account and click the "**Account Information**" tab.

2. From the **Account Information** Page, click on "**Products**" and then the "**Edit Information**" button to Subscribe to **AdSense for Search.**
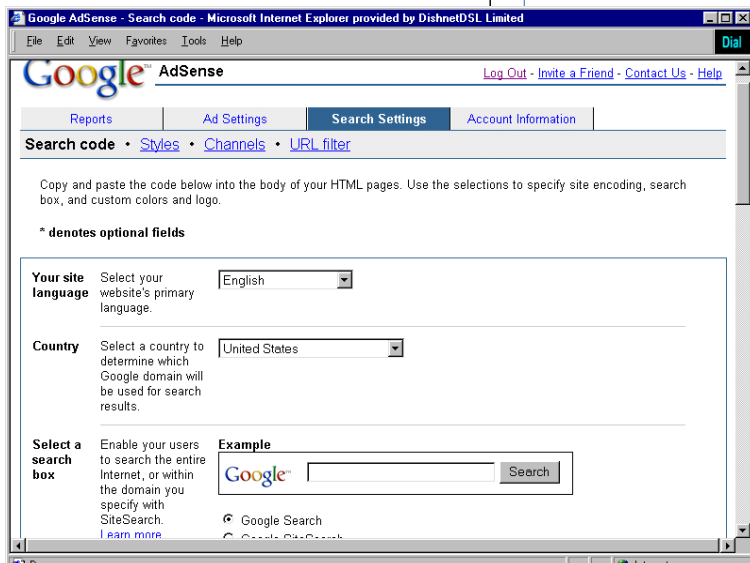
3. Click the "**Search Settings**" tab to specify your search preferences and results. Paste the html code on your web page and start turning those clicks into AdSense cash!

8.3 Showing Your Results On Your Site

One of the decisions 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**.

Clearly, the last option is the best. You'll be given two codes: one for the search box and one for the results. You'll need to paste the search box code in the appropriate location on your Web page. The search results code goes on a page that you'll have to create specially to hold the results.

Not only will you be able to offer your users a search option and earn from the ads that appear on that page, you'll also be able to show your own internal links and AdSense ads to keep them on your site.
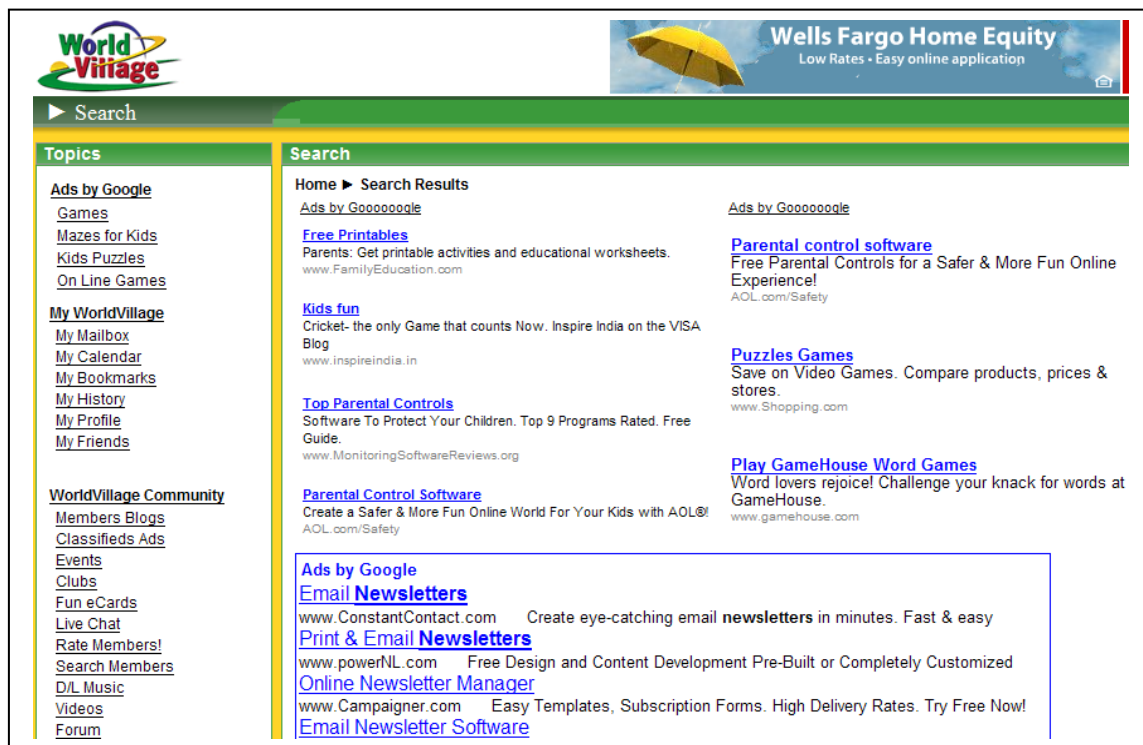
Fig. 8.2 Users have to scroll past an entire screen of ads and links to reach the search results at WorldVillage.com.

8.4 Flavoring Your Search Results

Another easy decision is whether or not to "site-flavor" your search. This is a real no-brainer. Site-flavoring lets Google figure out what your site is about so that searches made from it are better targeted.

So if you have a site about music, someone tossing "bass" into your search box is more likely to get results about guitars than singing fish.

That's an option you'll definitely want to switch on!

8.5 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. The user chooses the keyword so the results are going to be right in line with what the user wants.

On the other hand, that means you've got no control over the keywords they choose so you can't try to promote high-paying keywords. You have to take what you're given. You could have a high click-through rate but low revenues (although there's still no guarantee that the user will click on an ad rather than an unpaid listing on the search results page.)

But your users will leave your site at some point anyway. Why shouldn't you try to make money when they do click away? 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!

8.6 Home Page Searching

One way to increase your revenues from searching is to encourage your users to use your site as their home page.

Many users have Google as their home page. If you're offering the same service as Google, using their search box and delivering their results, there's no reason why they shouldn't be searching from your page — and giving you revenue from the ads.

Just encourage your users, especially users with Google as their home page, to switch to you, and you'll be able to make the most of your search function and your ads.

8.7 Customizing Your Search

Google lets you customize the search box to match your site in the same way that you can customize your ad units. But a different principle applies here that applies to your ads: you want your search box to look like a search box.

You can certainly make the box look like part of your site so that it looks attractive but as I said, keep the button grey.

People trust Google to deliver results that they want. If the search box reminds them of Google, they're more likely to use it than go to Google.com and search from there.

8.8 Google's Custom Search Engine

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

I've never been very enthusiastic about Google's Search boxes. I've always seen them more of an added functionality for my users than a way of earning extra revenue.

Google's Custom Search Engines though change all that. These let you limit the scope of a user's search to sites that you've selected.

What's the advantage of that?

Enter any keyword into a Google and only a fraction of the results are going to be relevant. Google might be a very powerful search engine, but to get the information you need, you'll still have to filter out the sites with poor content, little information and ads instead of text.

A custom search engine lets you do that for your users so that they don't have to do it themselves. Not only will they then be more likely to leave your site through your search box, they might even come back to your site every time they want to search for information on your topic.

Building your own search engine is very simple. You can start here: http://google.com/coop/cse/. You can even format your search results page

to match the look of your website and invite your readers to submit the sites that they like to make your own filtering easier.

Finally, place the line: "Didn't find what you're looking for? Search the [your subject] sites that we recommend" next to your search box, and guide your users to the tip box at your site's exit.
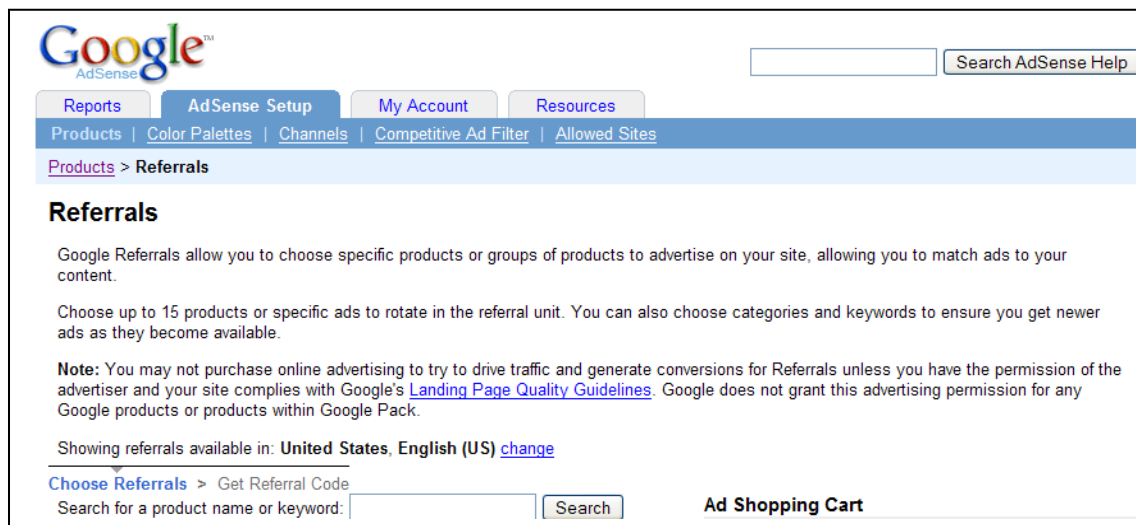
9. Google's Referral Programs

Fig. 9.1 Google's Referrals let you add another revenue stream to your Web page.

One of the biggest changes that Google has made to the AdSense program since the last edition of this book came out is in its referral programs. Initially, these were pretty poor. The products were Firefox, Picasa, Google Pack — a collection of different programs — and the AdSense program itself.

If you had users that included publishers interested in signing up for AdSense then you might be able to make some money. (The AdSense referral pays $5 for a publisher who makes the same amount within 180 days, another $250 if the publisher makes $100 and a very nice $2,000 bonus if you refer 25 of these kinds of users).

Most publishers though, don't write content for other publishers. They were left hoping to earn a dollar a download for Firefox. Most found it more cost-effective to use that spot on their page for something else.

It turned out that those early referral products were just filling space.

Today, Google offers referral products in more than 26 categories, from animals to travel. Those products come in every format you can imagine and pay different amounts for different actions.

It's a whole other way of making money on your website

9.1 What Are Referrals And How Do They Differ From AdSense?

The biggest difference between AdSense units and referral ads is why you're being paid. Most AdSense ads pay for each click they receive. Some pay each thousand times they're shown.

Referral ads pay on a cost-per-action basis, or CPA for short.

It's not enough to get a click on an ad to earn income. The user has to do something when he reaches the advertiser's site. That might be downloading a program, leaving an email address or even making a purchase.

It's very similar to an affiliate system in which you're paid a percentage of a sales price for a product. The only difference is that payable actions aren't limited to buying.

Clearly, whatever the action the advertiser demands, it's going to lower your success rate in comparison to your AdSense units. If 5 percent of your users click a referral ad and only 5 percent of those users take the action the advertiser wants, then you might generate only a few of these actions each month.

Higher payment rates should make up for the lower conversions.

We've already seen that the AdSense referral program can pay out $5 quite easily once you get the referral, but the payouts available on other referral products can be much, much higher than that.

Although most seem to fall between $10-$15, it's not hard to find referral products that pay more than $50 for each user that takes action.

Fig. 9.2 J.G. Wentworth pays almost $77 for users who complete a form.

That already makes them attractive. But referral ads are attractive for another reason…

You should be building multiple revenue streams by placing different kinds of ads on the same page.

Ideally, each Web page should use at least three different types of payment system. Those could be cost-per-click ads, cost-per-mille ads and cost-per-action ads. That would help to ensure that you get something out of all your users.

A few users will take action on the referral ads and generate the most money per click for you.

Some will click your AdSense ads and generate larger numbers of small payments for you.

And your CPM ads will make sure that you get paid even if your users do nothing but look at your content and leave.

9.2 Signing Up For Google's Referral Program

Putting referral ads on your site is very simple. Just click the Referrals link on the AdSense Setup tab and search for an ad by product, keyword or by category.

Search by product and you'll be able to pick exactly the ad you want.

Search by keyword and Google will choose the ad for you, giving you what it thinks is the best performing ad to match the keywords you choose. You can enter up to ten keywords.

Search by category and Google will choose the best-performing ads within that category.

You'll also need to select your ad format — the formats available vary from product to product — and create a channel so that you can track the ad's performance.

Finally, place the ad (the category or the keyword) in your "Shopping Cart" and past the code.

Start the process by deciding where you want the ad to go. It might take a bit of experimentation to find out which really is the best spot on the page — you'll have learn whether that location will perform better with a referral ad or an AdSense unit — but you'll have to put it somewhere.

In general, you'll probably find that it pays to keep the ad as close to the text as possible but the only way to find out which is actually the best setup for your Web page is to try different combinations and follow the results.

If you find that over a week, an AdSense unit earns more income embedded in your text than a referral unit, try using a different referral unit to see if the problem is the product rather than the placement.

And if the AdSense unit still performs best, move the referral unit somewhere else.

One good option is to use a square or rectangular AdSense unit at the start of an article and place a smaller referral unit lower down as though it were illustrating the text.

You can put up to three referral units on a single page but if your page isn't very long, you might be better off sticking with one unit and optimizing it properly (I'll explain how to do that below). You want your referral ads to be closely tied to your content and you don't want them to compete with each other.

9.3 Choosing Your Referral Ads

Category		
You can browse and refer the items in any category or choose an entire category to refer.		
All products	View products	
Google Products	View products	
⊞ Animals	View products	Add category to cart »
⊞ Arts & Humanities	View products	Add category to cart »
⊟ Automotive	View products	Add category to cart »
Auto Financing	View products	Add category to cart »
Auto Insurance	View products	Add category to cart »
Auto Parts	View products	Add category to cart »
Car Shows	View products	Add category to cart »
Car Stereo	View products	Add category to cart »

Fig. 9.3 So many choices, so many ways to make money...

Obviously where you put your ads will be important. But choosing *what* you advertise will be even more important.

One option is to go for the highest paying ads, put them on your site and hope.

You'll probably be hoping a lot and earning little.

Unless your referral ads are closely linked to the content on your page, you're not likely to get many clicks, let alone many conversions.

It might be tempting to put J.G. Wentworth's $76.92 ad on your site, for example, but unless you have the sort of users who are likely to want structured settlements, you'll just be wasting valuable space on your page.

It might also be tempting to choose keywords or categories and let Google do the thinking for you. It does a pretty good job with the ads in AdSense units, so why shouldn't it do a good job with the ads in Referral units too? Google even gives you a checkbox marked "Pick Best Performing Ads" that overrules your choice and places what it thinks is the best ad for your site.

(Actually, that box does something else too: it automatically serves up a different ad if your chosen advertiser ends his campaign. Leave the box unchecked and you'll be left with a empty space. The best solution is to pick a big company with a big budget and keep a close eye on your referral ads.)

There are a couple of reasons why you should be choosing Referral ads yourself, by product, and not leaving it to Google.

The first is that the referral inventory is smaller than the AdSense inventory. That means there's a much better chance that Google will get it wrong and give you something that's close but not close enough.

It also means that there aren't so many ads available that you can't browse them yourself and make your own decision.

The choice you make should be a compromise between the price you can earn for the action and the closeness of the ad to your own content.

That's going to be a calculated risk at first, followed by experimentation to make sure you've made the right decision.

The other reason you should be picking your own individual ads yourself *is that you can recommend the products in your referral units.* That's an important difference in comparison to AdSense units and it's a crucial element in optimizing your ads to get maximum conversions.

9.4 Getting The Most Out Of Your Referral Ads

Like AdSense units, referral units need to be optimized.

The same principles don't necessarily apply. The fact that you can recommend the products in your referral ads changes everything.

You can recommend them because advertisers aren't paying for the click. They're only paying for the action. If a user reaches their site and does nothing, it's cost them nothing. They don't risk anything then, by having you send them users if those users turn out not to be interested.

Recommending products that you advertise is the number one most effective way of rocketing any ad clickthroughs. You're only allowed to do it for CPA ads such as referral ads and affiliate ads.

Once you've chosen your ad then, try to mention the product in your text.

Ideally, you'll choose a product that you've actually used and enjoyed. That will make the recommendation personal — and that's the best kind. Your readers trust you, so they'll trust your judgment.

If you haven't used the product though, try to find a website or a blog that gives it a good review and mention that someone else has said these people have done a great job. That's not as powerful as saying that you've tried it and loved it yourself but it's better than nothing. It's certainly better than

abusing your readers' trust by talking up something that you haven't used and which might be poor.

But here's the thing…

Once you've mentioned a product, people are going to look for it. Even if they see a banner and know it's an ad, there's still a good chance that they'll click because you'll have made them curious.

That affects the format you choose.

The range of formats available for each ad varies. But try to choose either a text link that you can slip right into your article, or a graphic ad that will attract ads.

Usually, I don't recommend graphic ads. But if you're recommending a product — and if you keep the image close to the recommendation — it will more look like an illustration than an ad.

Fig. 9.4 Free Junk Car Removal offers a text links, an AdSense-style text block and a banner. Choose the link or the banner.

9.5 Creating Content For Referral Ads

I've said that you should choose ads that match your content as closely as possible.

I've also said that you should be recommending the ads in your referral units.

The easiest way to do both those things is to write a post, choose a referral ad that's related to the post and add a sentence or two mentioning the product.

That's very simple.

An alternative approach is to choose an ad that *matches the content of your site*, then write a post that matches the product.

The page can't read like an ad. It has to be the same quality as all your other content otherwise users won't read it and they won't click the ads. The post would just find a reason to say something positive about the referral product.

It's a very easy way to create a revenue-generating Web page.

In practice, you're not going to be able to do this too often. You'll probably find that there's a limited number of ads that match your site. But even two or three pages like this on, easily reached and well-marketed, could give you some very nice extra income.

10. Using Multiple Ad Blocks

Google lets you place more than one ad unit on each page of your Web site. In fact, you can place:

<div align="center">

3 ad units
3 link units
3 referral units
2 AdSense for search boxes

</div>

What does this mean for web publishers?

A real bonanza: you now have many more chances to hook readers with new ads as Google will show unique ads in each ad unit!

With multiple ad blocks, you can also decide which ads are served in the best places for your site.

10.1 How Many Ads Is Too Many?

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.

The only caveat to this is 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 more of a problem for small Web pages than for larger pages such as those on blogs. On a short page, all those different ads can quickly outweigh the content; on a long page, you can scatter them about so that they're less likely to get in the way of a user's reading.

One great solution is to have a long home page with lots of ads but which contains 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.

That page would have fewer units. But because those units would be influenced by just one article, the ads would be better targeted.

10.2 What To Do With Three Ad Units

The actual number of ads that you'll choose 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 usually three.

Most sites for example, have room for a leaderboard (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.

10.3 Where To Put The Search Boxes

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

You could try putting the second one 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.

They're a good way to capture revenue from users who don't click on the ads and are about to leave, but 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.

10.4 Google Is Generous With The Link Units

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.

You do want to be careful about not overloading your page with so many ads that users stop seeing them, so if you don't have space for all three use just one or two.

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.

10.5 Put Referral Ads Near The Recommendation

Referrals work will in all sorts of places. The old Google product referral buttons were most eye-catching when kept together. The new product referrals can work in sidebars but you'll probably get the best result when you put them close to a recommendation in the text.

10.6 Putting It All Together

Deciding where to put one ad can often be difficult. There are so many different options. Get it wrong and it will cost you money.

While having multiple ads lets you tempt users wherever they are on the page, it also compounds the problem. What's the best combination of ads and where should the different ads go?

Experimentation and close tracking is the only real way to know for your site but you have to start somewhere. I've put three suggested starting points below. These aren't meant to be final versions that will yield you the greatest income. They're just meant to get you started quickly. You can then try swapping the locations of different units and see how those changes affect your CTR.

10.7 Putting Multiple Ads In Articles
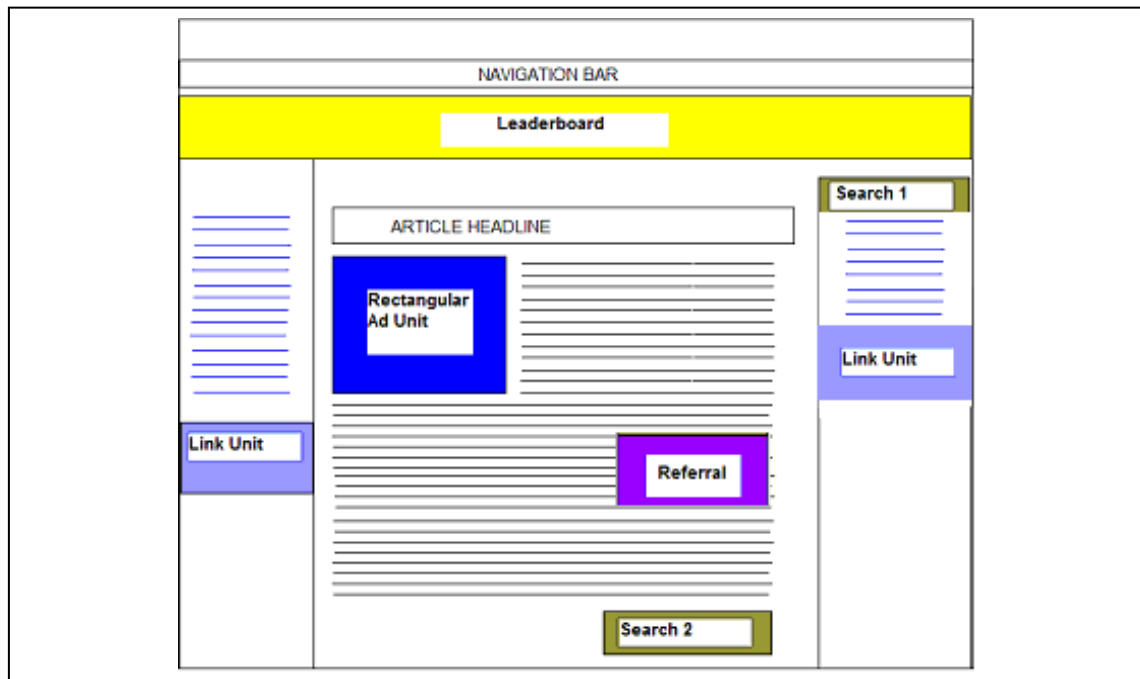
Fig. 10.1 Distributing multiple ads on an article Web page.

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, RSS content or news) followed by a link unit, and you could put a referral ad inside the text either as an image ad or a text link.

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 just taking out some of the ads to see if that brings in more clicks.

10.8 Putting Multiple Ads In Blogs
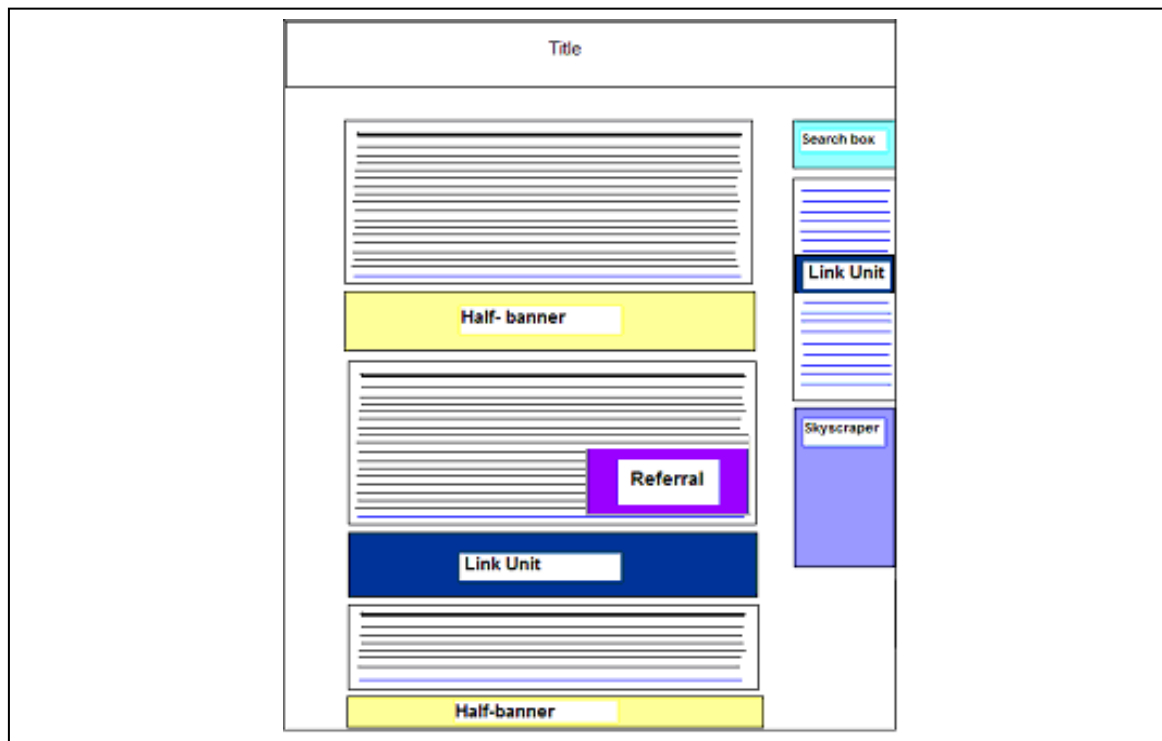
Fig. 10.2 Distributing multiple ads on a blog.

The best places to put ads on 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.

10.9 Putting Multiple Ads In Merchant Sites
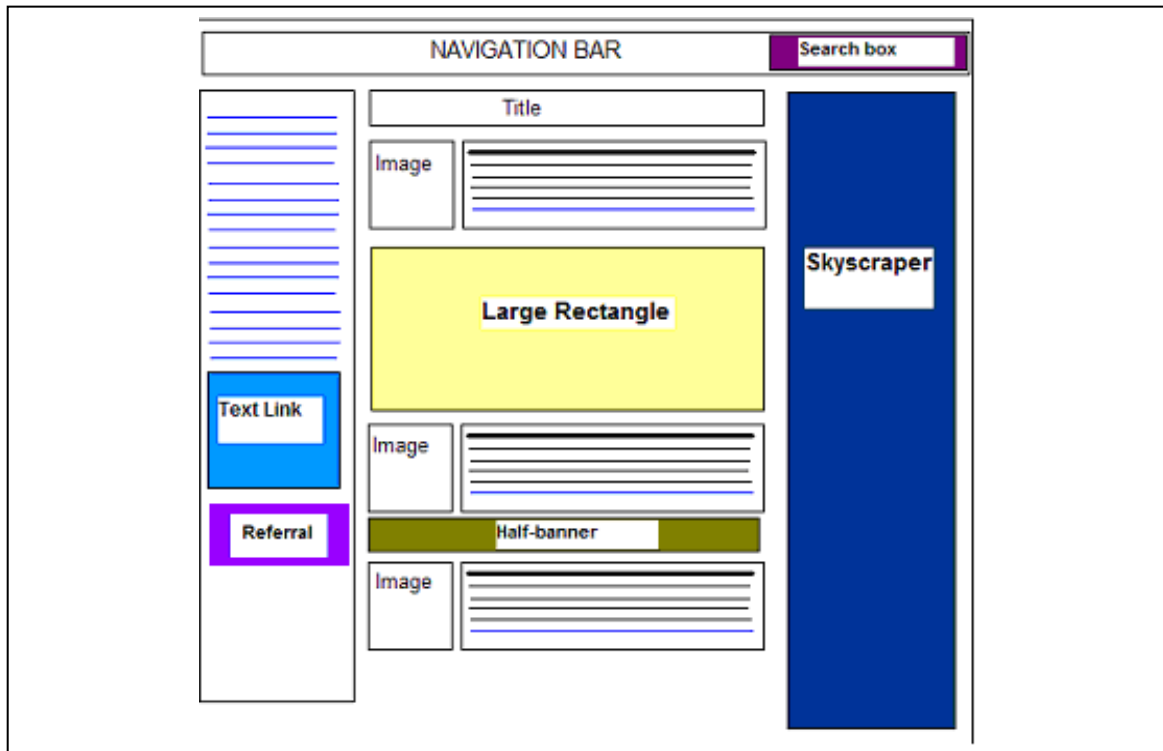
Fig. 10.3 Distributing multiple ads on a merchant site.

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 referral ads on the side.

Alternatively, you could use graphic referral 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.

10.10 Ordering Your Ads

These strategies make for useful default placements. But there's one more factor that you should consider when you're planning your ads: the way that Google distributes ads to multiple units on a page.
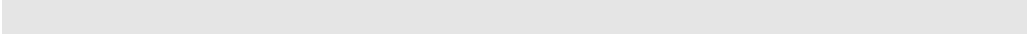
The first ad unit to appear on a Web page always shows the ads that placed the highest bids. In other words, **the higher an ad appears on a page, the more that ad is worth.**

Because ads that are above the fold tend to get more clicks than those lower down the page, you won't usually have to do a thing to make sure that the ads that receive the most clicks are those that pay the most.

If your Channels do show you that an ad unit at the bottom of the page is picking up more clicks than ad unit at the top of the page though, you might want try moving that unit to a higher position.

Frankly, I doubt that's going to happen very often. A bigger problem is if you've placed your ad units inside DIV tags, tables or other positioning codes. As far as AdSense is concerned, the first ad unit is the first one the robot comes across in the HTML code, even if that HTML code places the unit at the bottom of the page.

When you place multiple ad units on a Web page then, it's important to make sure that the AdSense codes appear in your HTML in the same order that they appear on your Web page. That should ensure that the ad units with the highest clickthrough rates are always the ones with the highest value ads.

11. Building Content

11.1 Writing Content

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.

And they come back and click on them *again* because they find your content interesting.

If your site doesn't have good content, you're going to struggle to attract users and links, and you won't be able to persuade anyone to come back to your site.

Having the right content then is crucial to having good revenues with AdSense. It's also crucial to the relationship you have with Google's indexing mechanism. Remember, Google is a search engine first and foremost. Their purpose is to provide the web user with the best search results for the terms they are seeking. If you are providing quality content, you have a greater chance of seeing your search results come up higher on the page.

Fortunately, it's also easier than ever to fill your site with page after page of sticky content, each of which contains ad units and opportunities to earn revenue.

The most obvious way to create content is of course 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 stuffed with reviews, news and walkthroughs, and write all the articles yourself. 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.

But remember, if you've created your site to make money, then writing the content yourself means that you're *working* for that money. When you count your revenues, you have to factor in the time and effort it took you to make those revenues.

That's one of the reasons that many people look for other, easier ways to get content around their ads. (The fact that they just don't like writing is another good reason.) Fortunately, there are plenty of ways of creating effortless content and some of them are even free.

11.2 Making Bucks With Blogs

Writing 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.

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 <$Metainfodata$> 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.

11.3 Adding AdSense To Your Blog

Not all blog sites use the same template so how you add AdSense to your blog will depend on the company you're using.

For users of Blogger.com, which is owned by Google, one option is put the ads in the template section of the site:

```
<!-- Begin .post -->
<div class="post"><a name="<$BlogItemNumber$>"></a>
<BlogItemTitle>
<h3 class="post-title">
<BlogItemUrl><a href="<$BlogItemUrl$>" title="external
link"></BlogItemUrl>
<$BlogItemTitle$>
<BlogItemUrl></a></BlogItemUrl>
</h3>
</BlogItemTitle>
<!--Your AdSense code -->
```

You can see on my own blog at www.joelcomm.com how I put ads directly above my text. http://crayfish-info.blogspot.com does the same. The ads here are centered above the <div> tag and he's added a <br> break tag to add a gap between the head and Google and help his ads to stand out.

To do the same thing to your blogspot blog, click "Change Settings" on the Dashboard and then click "Template Tab." Somewhere on the page, below the CSS material, you should find a section of code that begins:

```
<p id="description"><$BlogDescription$></p>
</div></div><br>
```

The code should then look like this:

```
<div align="center">
<script type="text/javascript"><!--
google_ad_client = "pub-xxxxx09818xxxxx";
google_ad_width = 728;
google_ad_height = 90;
google_ad_format = "728x90_as";
google_ad_channel ="117893460x";
google_ad_type = "text_image";
google_color_border = "336666";
google_color_bg = "669966";
google_color_link = "CCFF99";
google_color_url = "003333";
google_color_text = "FFFFFF";
```

```
//--></script>
<script type="text/javascript"
 src="http://pagead2.googlesyndication.com/pagead/show_ads.js">
</script></center></div>
<!-- Begin #main — Contains main-column blog content -->
```

Before uploading, check the preview to make sure that the ads are where and how you want them, then "Save Template Changes" and "Republish" to refresh the blog.

Of course, you don't have to place AdSense directly above the text. **Another option is to embed the ads *within* the text so that they appear after particular entries.** That would limit you to three entries per page (if you wanted an ad unit after each entry) but it could increase your click-throughs.

Blogger now lets you do this 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.

11.4 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. Give your old work a new lease of life by throwing it onto the Web!

For example, "Low Fat Linux" by Bob Rankin was written years ago. You may be able to find it on Amazon.com, but it's not likely that many people are buying it because 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?

Fig. 11.1 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.

You might have an ebook of your own that isn't selling very well. Instead of attempting to sell your ebook for $19.95, why not turn it into web pages and make it available for free for all to enjoy? Paste your AdSense code on the pages and you may make more from the ads than from sales of your ebook. Repurposing old content is a fantastic way to draw water from your own well.

I did this with a book that I'd written about online dating. The home page contains a list of chapter headings with a skyscraper ad on the left and a Google search box beneath it. There's also a banner on the top, which I expect people largely to ignore. That ad does however make the ad unit look less commercial and the text ads match the list of chapter headings (although I used red for the links to match the color scheme of the page).
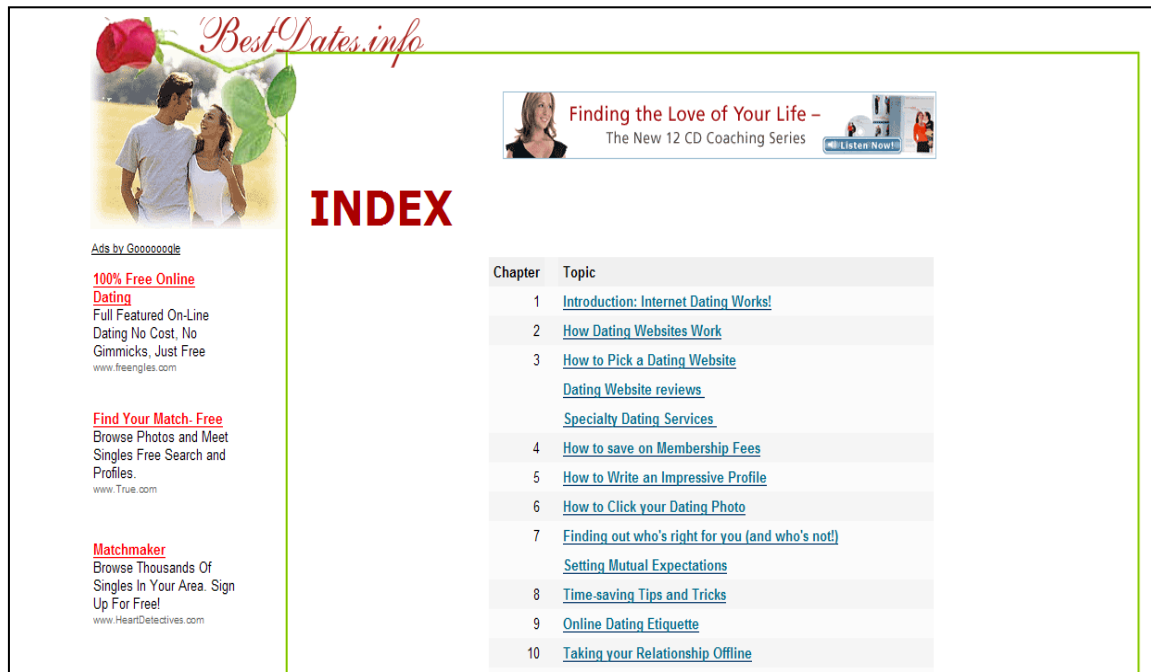
Fig. 11.2 BestDates.info — Making money by using old content to bring people together.

Note that this is a professional-looking website. That's important. The fact that you're using old content is no excuse for using an old design. You still have to make the page look good and pick up high-quality traffic if you want to get the clicks and the revenues.

On the internal pages, I've pushed the ads a little harder. Above the fold, there's no real content except for ads. To stop people from scrolling away immediately though, I've used a nice big picture. I know that users will stop to look at that image. They'll then look at the ads and only after they've done that will they scroll down to read the page.

I've 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.
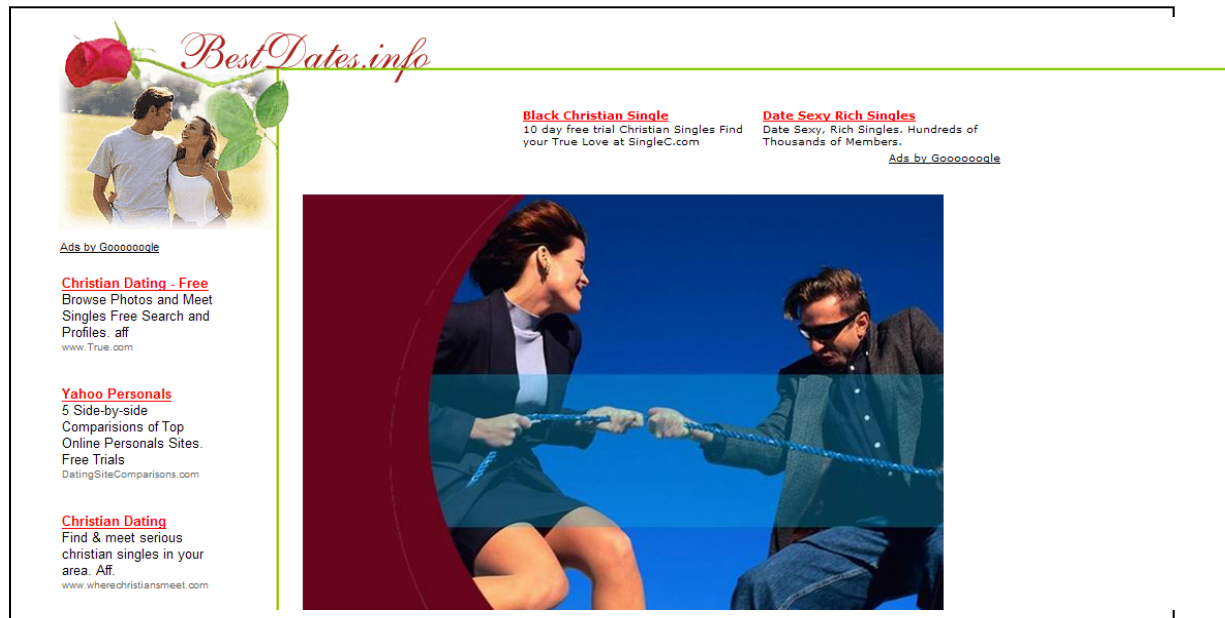
Fig. 11.3 Ads and an image above the fold at BestDates.info

And the best thing about this strategy is that I've got so many pages of content to use. Each page is 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.

11.5 Volunteer Writers

To use old content, you have to have content in the first place. If you don't happen to have any out-of-print books that you've written lying around — and you don't feel like writing something new — another option is to ask people to write for your site for free.

Lots of people like writing. Just look at Amazon. They didn't pay a penny for all those book reviews. Their users write them for free and Amazon benefits.

When I started www.WorldVillage.com, I didn't have money to pay the people who reviewed software for me. Instead, I contacted the game companies and received complimentary copies of their computer games, which I then forwarded to a staff of volunteer writers. The agreement was that they would provide me with a written review of the game and they would keep the game as payment. I've got dozens of game reviews that bring users to my site and get them clicking on my ads. I didn't pay a penny for them but years later they continue to generate revenue for me.

You don't have to use reviews though. Whatever the subject of your website, you can add a line asking people to send in their thoughts and comments.

You can just say something like: "We want YOU! We want your thoughts, articles and comments. Send your submissions to editor@yoursite.com and 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.
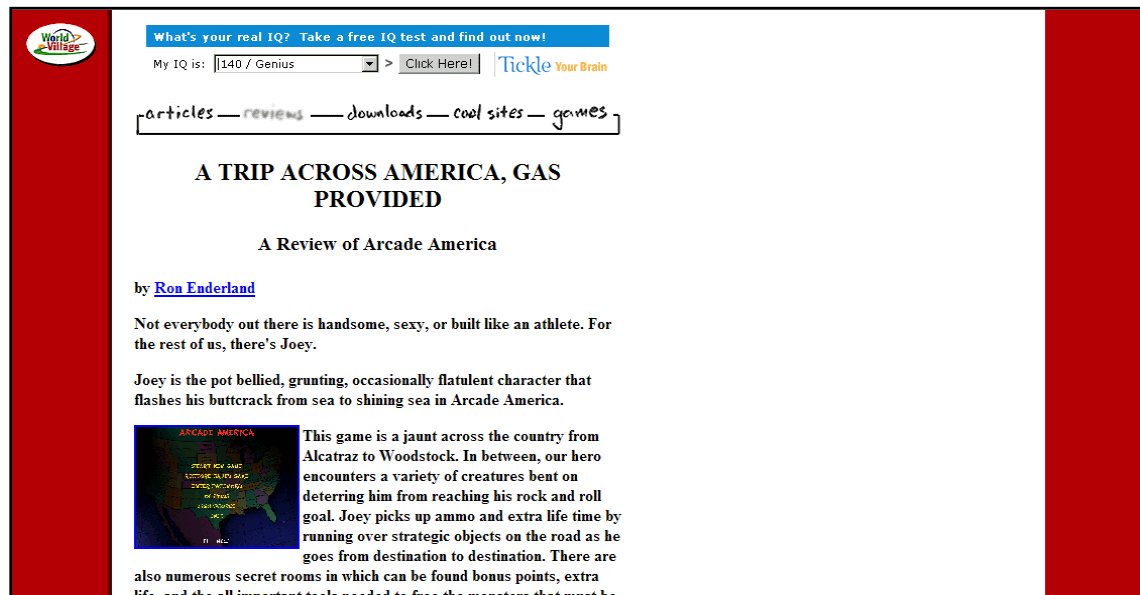
Fig. 11.4 Game reviews at http://www.worldvillage.com/softwarereviews/index.html
Mmm... free content.

11.6 Build Thousands of Pages with Other People's Content

What is the focus of your web site? Is it all about parenting? Do you help people with their finances? Does your newsletter introduce people to new web sites? Or is your focus on the legal field? Regardless of your niche, you can benefit from taking advantage of one of the little-known secrets of AdSense experts... FREE syndicated articles.

Many writers want nothing more than to have their work published and read. Syndicated content is a dream-come-true for writers AND publishers. For the writer, it exposes their work to a larger audience. And for the publisher (that's you!), it means more quality content for your site. You might not be aware that there are literally THOUSANDS of articles available online which you can easily add to your web site!

Of course, the trick is knowing where to find these articles. Below is a list that can get you started by showing you where you can find over 30,000 articles that are ready to be placed on your own web site.

Please note that each site has its own restrictions and rules for using its content. In all cases, you must leave the author's name and web site link intact. Some sites require that you also link back to the site where you found the article. This is critical! Remember that while you are allowed to use the articles on your pages, the content is still property of the author. Please give credit where credit is due!

You may wish to publish articles only relevant to your topic, or you may wish to become a publishing powerhouse, adding thousands of new pages to your site. Regardless of how you wish to approach it, here are a few sites that provide you with thousands of FREE articles that you can republish on your web sites.

EzineArticles.com
http://www.ezinearticles.com
A fantastic resources featuring over 21,000 articles covering a huge range of topics. However, they do have a limit of 25 articles/year for each site. Look through the categories and you can select some gems.

DotComWomen.com
http://www.dotcomwomen.com/free-content.shtml
Nice selection of articles targeting women.

John Watson
http://members.tripod.com/buckcreek
John offers his stories for site owners to enjoy and place on their sites.

ValuableContent.com
http://www.valuablecontent.com/
The site name delivers as promises. Dozens of categories with hundreds of articles for you to publish. Marketing, business, humor, internet, legal, computing, sports, travel and many more.

Patricia Fripp
http://www.fripp.com/articleslist.html
Patricia Fripp is a businesswoman, marketer and motivational speaker. Her site offers over one hundred articles perfect for any business-oriented site.

ArticleCity.com
http://www.articlecity.com
This one is a source of articles that will keep you busy for weeks on end. ArticleCity offers over 12,000 articles that you can place on your site. If the topic exists, you can bet that this site will have an article on that topic. I recommend spending a great deal of time selecting articles for your site here.

Want to find more? Simply do a Google search for "free articles" and see what turns up. Fine tune your search for your topic to find articles relevant to your site, such as "free parenting articles" or "free financial articles".

Now that you know where to find free content, you can build hundreds or thousands of keyword relevant pages and place your AdSense code on them to generate more revenue.

11.7 Add Public Domain Works To Your Site

One of the best kept secrets of free content comes in the form of Public Domain works. Basically, these are books, articles, recordings and pictures whose copyrights have expired. Since they have not been re-registered with a copyright, they enter the public domain. What does that mean? It means ANYONE (including you) can publish, re-publish and/or sell the works without paying a commission to anyone!

Think about this. You can 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.

I have two sources that you will want to investigate to find Public Domain works that you can begin using immediately

Idea #1 — Project Gutenberg

Project Gutenberg is the oldest producer of free electronic books on the Internet. Their collection of more than 15,000 eBooks was produced by hundreds of volunteers. As of this writing, the top 10 most popular works on Project Gutenberg are:

- Manual of Surgery by Alexander Miles and Alexis Thomson

- Egyptian Ideas of the Future Life by E. A. Wallis Budge

- Manners, Custom and Dress During the Middle Ages and During the Renaissance Period by Paul Lacroix

- Kamasutra by Vatsyayana

- Searchlights on Health by B. G. Jefferis and J. L. Nichols

- Little Journeys to the Homes of the Great - Volume 01 by Elbert Hubbard

- [Fifteen Thousand Useful Phrases by Grenville Kleiser](#)

- [Great Britain and Her Queen by Annie E. Keeling](#)

- [Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen](#)

- [The Notebooks of Leonardo Da Vinci — Complete by Leonardo da Vinci](#)

Check out their entire library at **www.gutenberg.org/**

Please note that while you may republish these works on your site, you are not allowed to resell the works themselves.

The downside of using works from Project Gutenberg is that hundreds of other people may already be using them. You might opt for less popular works in order to get better search engine placement.

Idea #2 – [Public Domain Riches](#)

Very few people have mastered the art of turning public domain works to cash like Yanik Silver. Yanik has made a ton of money with public domain and his course shows you how you can do the same.

From Yanik's web page, here is what you will learn in Public Domain Riches…

* The best places online (and off) to actually find public domain works. (I'll hand you over my best resources on a silver platter.)

* How to find a slew of public domain works in 3 minutes or less on just about any subject you want with just one click!

* How to determine exactly if a work is in the public domain. (Especially where to research if a work from 1923-1963 is really in the public domain. Remember, this is where the real bonanza of recent material can be found - but this can also be a dangerous "gray area" for many works if you're not careful).

* How to tap into the vast repositories of government publications. Yes, Uncle Sam publishes more content than anyone else and much of it is - can I hear the magic word again? - FREE!

* What to do if someone challenges your public domain claim.

* How to wade through the deliberately misleading copyright notices on many works that should really be public domain. (But on the flipside - you'll want to know how to look threatening so any "Two-bit Johnny" won't rip off the material you found in the public domain.)

* The 7 different ways to profitably use public domain info.

* How to quickly and easily put public domain works into a "saleable" format.

* The secret to modifying public domain works so they are exclusively yours alone and then selling them for hundreds of dollars!

Yanik knows public domain, so you might want to check out Public Domain Riches.

11.8 AdSense In RSS Feeds

One of the biggest changes to take place on the Internet recently has been the growth of RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feeds. These let 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.

The good news is that Google is starting to put AdSense ads in RSS feeds.

The system is new and Google is still testing it as I'm writing this book but if you've got an RSS feed on your site (or want to set one up) and you've got more than a hundred subscribers, your site can join their team of Beta testers.

There seems to be little room for tweaking the ads, although it's a safe bet that the same principle of blending the ads into the page would apply as much here as on a Web page. At the moment though, the ads only appear after the content, at the bottom of the URL. You can apply for the program at http://services.google.com/ads_inquiry/aff

Alternatively, if you don't want to be a Google guinea pig, Kanoodle is ahead of them. You can use their program at www.kanoodle.com/about/brightads.cool.

11.9 AdSense On Mobile Phones

RSS could prove to be a powerful revenue source for
AdSense publishers. It can certainly be a good way to
inform users that you've got new content and bring
them back in to view it.

I'm not sure about AdSense on mobile phones.

AdSense started allowing publishers to place one ad
unit on mobile Web pages in September 2007. You
can select the colors, specify the kind of code your
mobile page uses ("wml (WAP 1.x)", "xhtml (WAP
2.0)", or "chtml"), and choose ad units with one or
two text-link ads (although the double unit can only
appear at the bottom of the page.)

It's currently available in thirteen countries, including
US, England, France, Italy, Germany, Spain, Ireland,
Russia, Netherlands, Australia, India, China, and
Japan.

It sounds like a good idea, but AdSense for mobile has its challenges. Phones
have not shown themselves to be good ways to surf the Web.

The screens are tiny, the downloads are slow and it's very expensive. Most
people are prepared to wait until they get home or to the office to look at a
website, rather than do it on their mobiles.

There are exceptions though. Surfing on phones is fairly popular outside
America (especially in Japan). In the United States, it might be used for
information that changes quickly such as sports news or finance. If you have
a site on either of those topics or which is popular in Asia, you might want to
create a page that will work on a mobile, offer breaking news and place an
ad on it to see how much it earns.

My feeling is that it won't be worth the effort but it's still early to say for
sure.

Much depends on what happens in the mobile phone market. If phone
companies copy the iPhone and offer built-in wi-fi, then publishers won't
need to build special pages for mobiles. Doing so would be a waste of time —
and if you have to pay programmers, a waste of money too.

On the other hand, if Google's phone software makes mobile browsing more popular then the market could become large enough to make building special mobile sites worthwhile.

Although you'd still want to be sure that Google's mobile ads do better than AdMob's, a rival service. At the moment, reports are mixed, suggesting that results depend on the content.

In general then, my feeling is that if you currently have a mobile website, AdSense for mobiles might a pretty useful addition although you'd want to test it against AdMob. Optimize the ads as much as you can and put them on the sort of content people on the move are likely to need.

If you don't have a mobile site though — or a Japanese audience or breaking news — you might want to wait before looking for a programmer to help you with the coding.

11.10 Google's Video Content
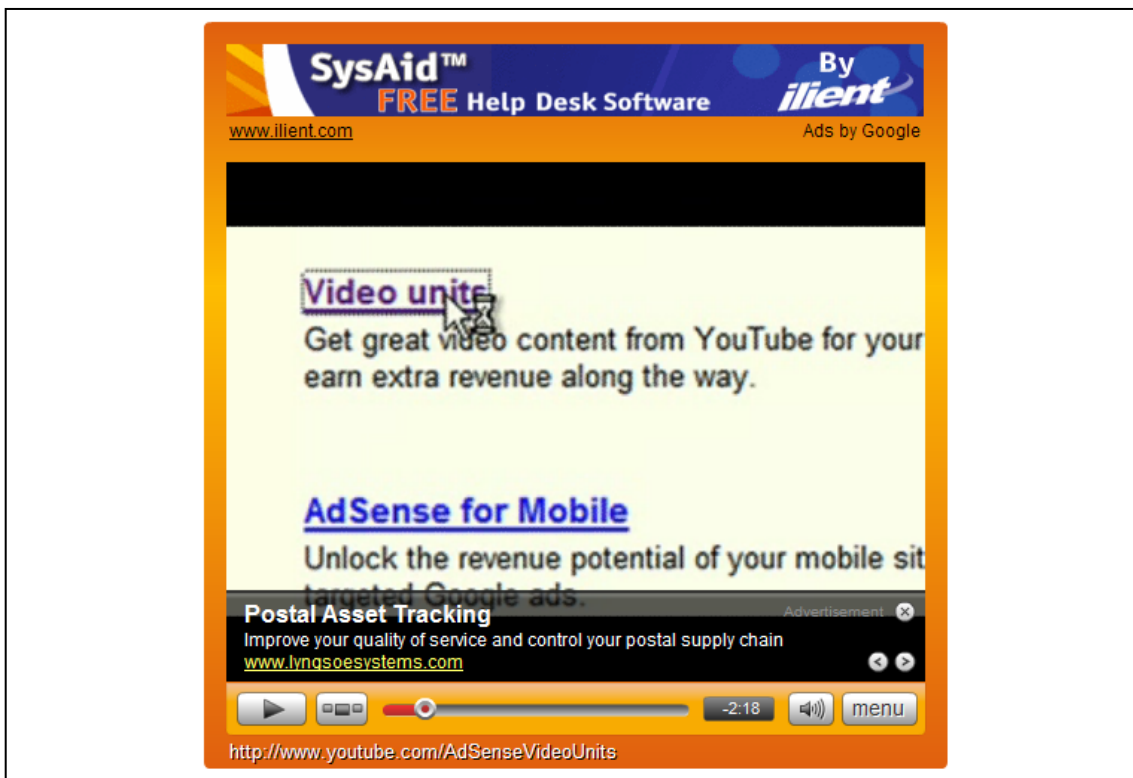
Fig. 11.5 Google's video content come from YouTube and come with two kinds of ads.

The future of the Internet on mobile phones might be a little unclear. The future of video on the Internet seems to have been settled.

Users love it.

They watch television on YouTube and they've become used to seeing videos on blogs and websites. Even Oprah has now launched her own YouTube channel.

That's both a challenge and an opportunity for publishers. It's a challenge because creating original video content can appear difficult and look expensive. Actually, it doesn't have to be either, although at the very least, you will need a digital camera.

And after putting together "The Next Internet Millionaire," I can tell you it's also a lot of fun!

But video is also an opportunity because you don't need original content. There are tons of clips available on the Web that you can place on your own site and earn from the ads on your page and embedded ads in the video itself.

Two of the best places to find videos like these are Revver and Google itself.

Revver doesn't have as big an inventory as YouTube, but it does share ad revenue. The site embeds an ad into the video, lets publishers place the clip on their own site and gives them 20 percent of the income. That might not sound like much, but don't forget, you're getting the content for free and you can still put AdSense units around it.

The alternative is to use Google's video content… which is drawn from YouTube.

The videos come with companion ads placed above the screen, which can be either text or image-based, and overlay ads which appear at the bottom of the screen. Both can pay by impression or by click.

Interestingly, the overlay ad changes as the film progresses and users can even choose to move back and forward through the ads. They can also choose to close the overlay, which might not be so good.

You can only place one video unit on a page but you can change the surrounding color to blend the unit into your site, choose from three different sizes and select content by category, creator or receive it automatically targeted to keywords you supply.

Have you noticed what's missing?

That's right, at the moment, **you can't choose individual clips yourself**.

That's a huge hole in the plan and there have been complaints that Google has been serving automated video that isn't very relevant.

If you'd like to give it a try, click the AdSense Setup tab and choose the video units link. You'll have to link your AdSense account with a YouTube account — you'll only have to do that once — and you'll then be free to create your AdSense player, choose content and paste the code onto your page. You won't even need to host the video on your own site.

I think these video units can be a great way to enhance the content on any website. They're very simple to use, offer additional revenue streams — and give you one less content post that you have to create yourself.

Much though will depend on the sort of creators available in your content field or the clips that Google decides to give you.

Test to see whether Revver or Google gives you the most revenue — I suspect that it will depend on the content of the video, so make a point of searching both for good clips — then get into the habit of offering films about once a week.

11.11 Use Your Newsletter To Drive Traffic!

Newsletters are fantastic tools **to drive repeat visitors to your pages!**

Here's one way to use them: Instead of mailing the entire newsletter, save a few juicy tid-bits for your website and provide a link for your visitors to click.

When subscribers click-through to get the full story, they're likely to click your ads. And send you another AdSense bonanza! For example, Prizepot (www.prizepot.com) is a contest and sweepstakes site with a new item each day. Their free weekly newsletter is sent with a teaser for all the new items posted that week. In order to find the entry form, you must click the link in the newsletter. Of course, when you arrive at the destination page, not only do you receive information about the contest, but you are greeted by AdSense ads. For a sample newsletter, send an email to join-prizepot@lists.worldvillage.com.

If you have a big, responsive mailing list — start turning it now into extra AdSense cash!

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 highly recommend Aweber.com. With Aweber, you can 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.

11.12 Buying Content/ Hiring Writers

One of the problems with free content is that you can get what you pay for. And if your site doesn't have valuable content, it's going to have an effect on your click-throughs.

The alternative of course is to pay professional writers to write for you. I've already mentioned www.elance.com as a good place to find designers but it's a good place to find writers too. You can also ask ConstantConversions.com to write articles and blog posts for you.

The advantage of hiring writers of course, 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.

Try testing a writer to see how much profit a series of articles generates. If you pay $200 for five articles but find that your new pages don't give you a $200 increase in revenues, you either need a new idea — or a new writer.

11.13 Automated Content

Finally, another option you can use to build a website is automated content. This will let you cut through the hassle of creating a website from scratch, dreaming up content and driving traffic. For a fee, you'll be able to launch

without delay a website filled with information and already optimized for search engines.

As long as your ads are bringing in more money than you're spending for the program, you're making a profit.

There are a number of programs you can use to do this. **ArticleBot** at www.articlebot.com automatically rewrites existing articles to create brand new versions that you can post on your site. While you can't take copyrighted articles as your originals, you can certainly use the tool to rewrite your own material and earn more cash by broadening your marketing, or by revamping public domain content.

While ArticleBot provides content, **MetaWebs** (www.metawebs.com) gives you the whole caboodle. You get a pre-built website already packed with content and SEO-optimized. In my opinion though, it's a good idea to swap the content that you get with the site for your own. It will bring you more dedicated users — and that's more likely to give you a higher income.

It's not a bad idea though to use a MetaWeb site to bring in money while you're creating your own material.

While MetaWeb and ArticleBot can certainly be used to generate AdSense revenue, **CashPageBuilder** was built specifically for AdSense. This is a very simple program to use. You can simply toss in a keyword phrase, choose the keywords and before you can say "How much is that worth?" you've got a site ready to roll.

And even if you choose a high-earning keyword that other people have chosen, you'll still get original content.

But there's a difference between original content and top-quality content.

The folks at Google aren't crazy about pre-fabricated, useless content and it's unlikely your users will be either. If all you're doing is building a site to earn money — and not because you're genuinely interested in the subject of your site — then maybe it doesn't matter. You can still launch your pre-fabricated site, post your ads in good places and send traffic to your advertisers.

It's worth remembering though that Smart Pricing was introduced precisely because of sites like these: sites with low-quality content get low advertising price. 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.

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.

If you are going to use pre-fabricated content though, then you can still try to keep the cost of your advertising space high by attracting good quality traffic. The users might not stay on your site for very long — and you don't really want them to — but if you can lay out your ads in such a way that when those users click off the site, they end up at an advertiser who does have the content they want to buy, you should still make money.

One thing you do have to be concerned about though is combining sites with pre-fabricated content in the same AdSense account as sites with high-quality content. If your Smart Pricing value does fall, then your income could fall across the board.

The best strategy if you're going to use these programs, I think, is to try to keep the sites you create with them in a separate account, when possible, and just make sure that your income is always higher than any monthly fee.

On the whole though, you'll probably find that it's more enjoyable and more lucrative to create websites that you enjoy maintaining and that users like visiting. Those are the sort of sites that make the most money.

PART 3: FOLLOWING THE FIGURES

12. Response Tracking: Your Hidden Pot Of AdSense Gold!

In the last chapter, we talked about content. Google won't let you ask visitors to click on your ads, or use other deceptive ways to make them click. But good content is an endorsement in itself. Some of its charm rubs off on the ads, making the ads more believable — and interesting!

If you have a website with impartial product reviews, for instance, visitors are more likely to click the ads to learn more about a product, check out the latest prices or order online.

It's crucial to create content that's genuinely interesting. But your work doesn't stop there.

After setting up your AdSense Account, the first thing you want to do is play with your ad formats and placement to make the ads blend in. That's where the bulk of the "easy-money" is hiding.

But once you've got that right, what next? You start tweaking the text and making all sorts of other changes to improve your CTR.

But every time you make any sort of change to your ads, you must track the results.

Consider this example:

Joe Drinker has a great website about "How to make Beer at Home". It's doing well on AdSense, but not well enough. His week's stats look something like this:

Date	Page Impressions	Clicks	Page CTR	Page eCPM	Your earnings
3/2/07	40930	1516	3.7%	5.62	229.92
3/3/07	40358	1574	3.9%	6.59	265.99
3/4/07	38962	1517	3.9%	6.11	238.01
3/5/07	33563	1381	4.1%	6.38	214.21
3/6/07	32978	1325	4.0%	6.76	223.81
3/7/07	28207	1294	4.6%	7.52	212.01
3/8/07	27322	1251	4.6%	7.47	204.20

Joe is pretty happy with his CTR but wonders if he can raise his CPM 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 Impressions	Clicks	Page CTR	Page eCPM	Your earnings
3/9/07	32744	985	3.0%	4.21	137.95
3/10/07	32286	1023	3.2%	4.94	159.59
3/11/07	30954	986	3.2%	4.59	142.08

3/12/07	26850	898	3.3%	4.78	128.52
3/13/07	26382	861	3.3%	5.08	134.28
3/14/07	22566	841	3.7%	5.63	127.20
3/15/07	21858	813	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!

Now, does that make it a bad idea to optimize your website for AdSense?

Not at all. It is actually a good idea, if you do it right. And by that I mean… No Shortcuts!

There is a simple, step-by-step process to optimize your website for high-paying search terms. And this method is almost fool-proof! So why isn't everybody doing this?

Simply because very few web publishers know how to use **Tracking** to their advantage.

Tracking will not only help you minimize your mistakes, it will also reveal hidden pockets of money that you would have never found otherwise.

Read on to find out how YOU can use Tracking to sky-rocket your CTRs and increase revenues per-click.

TIP: [Click here](#) **to learn about FREE tools to optimize your website for high-paying search terms.**

12.1 How To Track With Channels

Google has its own FREE tracking feature called "Channels". Channels remind me of spy movies, where a smart chip is planted in the arm of a super sleuth, making it easier to track his activities or whereabouts.

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 etc. You can use any other factor that might impact their effectiveness, based on the type of website you have.

> **Channel those clicks!**
> Google tells you many things about each Channel, such as the ad impressions, click-throughs 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.

12.2 How To Create A URL Channel

Google lets you create two kind of channels: URL channels and custom channels.

With **URL channels** you can 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 <u>on one specific page</u>.

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, the first thing you'd do is 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 ad block you wanted to track. Many AdSense partners complained about these pesky old channels until Google launched the URL Channels to make life easier.

Now all you have to do is sign in and click the tab marked "AdSense Setup" followed by the "Channels" link.
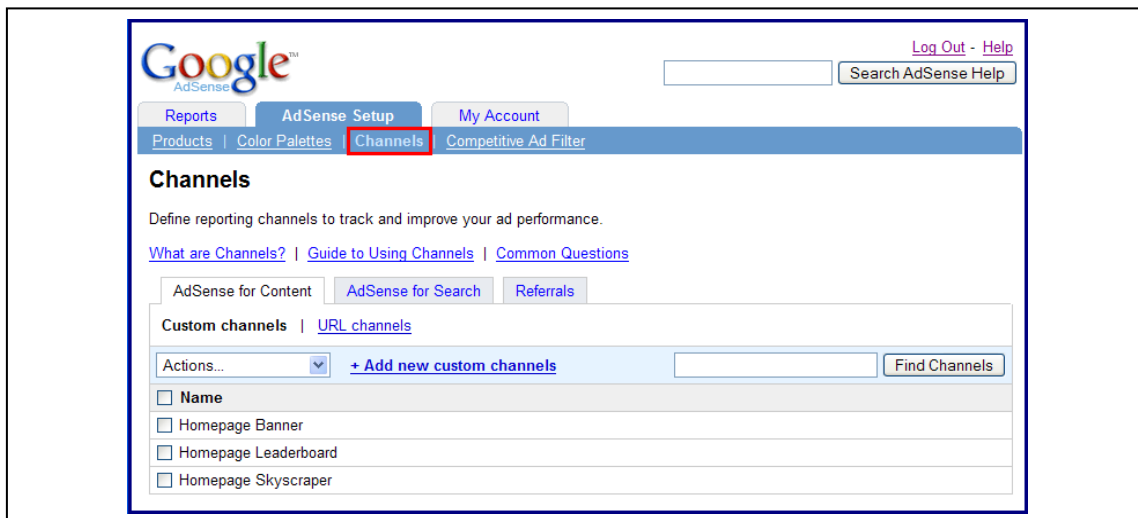
Fig. 12.1 Spot the Channels

And 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.

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.

12.3 How To Create A Custom Channel

The URL Channels are especially useful if you have several websites, and have a general idea of the formats, colors, alignment etc. that works best for you.

Remember though, you still need the original, **Custom Channels** if you want to track ads across different domain names, based on ad sizes, formats, colors etc.

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.

First, I name the new channel:

Fig. 12.2 Here comes a new channel…

Then I choose the Ad Type, Layout and Color of the ads I want to track:

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**.

Fig. 12.3 Defining the ads to track in my new channel.

Of course, I would then have to repeat the process if I wanted to track ads of a particular color or size.

That's very different to the process you use to create a URL Channel.

URL Channels are tracked automatically without the need for you to paste code. With Custom Channels, you're going to have to go back to your own site, add the code in the appropriate pages and upload the changes to your server.

While that's a bit of a headache, it's a headache worth having.

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. 12.4 Creating the code for my new Channel.

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.

12.4 What 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 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.

While Google can now track ad performance for your specified domain name, please don't expect URL or Custom Channels to give you data about your visitors, such as who referred them to your website or which web browser they use. These are details only your server logs can tell you.

12.5 Creating Multiple Channels

In the past, one of the biggest challenges for publishers was to decide which characteristic they should track on each of their ad units. Should they follow an ad unit's color? Its position? Its size?

Now those decisions are much easier.

It's possible to paste up to five Channel codes into one ad unit, allowing publishers to collect different information about the same ad. When you check your Channels, you'll be able to 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.

12.6 Your Channel Names — How To Keep Your Channels Secret And Win Channel 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 appears in your source code.

That's unlikely to cause you any serious problems but it is something you need to know. There are two reasons for that.

First, you always want to maintain your privacy and create a professional impression. If you're making your site available to the public — which is the only way it's going to make money — you don't want anything on there that you wouldn't want the world to know. That includes the terms you've used for your Custom Channels.

But the second reason is that when you create your channels, you'll also be asked to mark a checkbox that says: "Show this channel to advertisers as an ad 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 attractive for them to do so**. Something like: "Ads will appear in our top-performing units: above the fold and embedded in our main article."

That should help to encourage users to place your ads.

Of course, you also want to make your approach as attractive as possible. Advertisers aren't going to be too interested in trying to get their ads into a leaderboard that you've put at the bottom of the page. Let them try to get into the best positions on your page — and raise the overall price of your clicks too. You do that by **targeting your highest-performing ad units for Channel-based advertising.**

And finally, you should **use ad placement invitations on Channels you've created for different topics**. That will make it clear to advertisers that their ads will only appear on relevant pages.

12.7 How To Read Your Server Logs

Various AdSense Tracking programs are currently sold on the Internet. This type of software runs on your own server which means it has access to vital visitor information.

These packages are not affiliated with Google, but you can use most of them without violating the AdSense TOS.

External tracking software can tell you many things that the Channels don't reveal, such as:

- Where your visitors are coming from;
- Where the ad-clickers are coming from;
- What search keywords led them to your web page.

Your stats package should compile and interpret your log files. It will tell you how many people visited your pages, how long they stayed, which are the most popular pages, what countries/domains they visit from, and how many bookmarked your site.

Just about all the information you need.

One thing that external Tracking software **cannot** do for you, is to tell you **exactly how much MONEY** a specific ad (or a group of ads) is making for you. Only Google's Channels can tell you that.

External tracking software can tell you an ad's CTR, but your AdSense income also depends on factors such as the earnings per click, content relevance, your ranking on Google Search Results and many other factors besides.

> I do recommend the use of external tracking software in addition to Google's Channels.

Why? Because Channels can be quite confusing if you use them by themselves. Consider this example:

In this hypothetical case, Jim has a website about fast cars, where 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 called "Blue_Border". He finds that the blue-border ads generated a 5% CTR (click-through ratio), while the rest of the ads generated around 2% CTR on average:

Channel	Ad Unit Impressions	Clicks	Ad Unit CTR	Ad Unit eCPM	Your earnings
Blue_border	11378	569	5.0%	7.24	82.38
Green_text	11205	525	2.0%	6.29	70.54
Tall ads	12963	302	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	590	5.0%	7.24	86.50
Green_text	11765	55	2.0%	6.29	74.07
Tall ads	12315	287	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? The Channels won't tell.

Jim now decides to install an external tracking software on his website. After looking through his server logs, he finds that ads with the term "Car Accessories" are getting the maximum click-throughs. How does Jim know that?

Simple. His tracking software tells him which ads his visitors are clicking. He also knows which sites his visitors are going to.

Jim found that of all his visitors, those who searched for the term "Car Accessories" were generating the maximum click-throughs on his web pages. 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	729	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 software has helped him uncover two great "leads". Which of these will lead him to his top income generator?

The plot thickens...

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. It might LOSE him 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 — optimize for BOTH search terms!
Jim knows the old saying that if you try to please everyone, you end up pleasing no one at all. That's why he decides to play his cards carefully.

Jim understands visitor behavior. He knows that his visitors like to read in

"bite sized" portions. They take a bite here and a nibble there. But they never read a web page like a book, starting from the top and reading right through to the bottom.

He tweaks his layout to make the "Car Parts" articles more visible. He smartly uses the hot car photos on his website to create several points of interest in his neatly laid out website.

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 side-bars with juicy tid-bits 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 hot new offers on Car Accessories.

A specially designed "Accessories I love" section invites visitors to scroll down for more. Here Jim provides news, updates and impartial reviews about the Car Accessories Market. He entices visitors to check out new product launches with an integrated Google 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.

Jim used his channels and server logs to drill deep and come up with a real gold-mine of information. You too can use these secrets to **zero in on ads that make you the most money —** and to find hidden sources of AdSense income.

12.8 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?

Well, now 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.

12.9 Tracking Tools

There's a whole range of different tracking tools available to fill the gaps left by Google's Channels. Here is a quick run-down of the main ones:

AdSense Log
http://www.metalgrass.com/adsenselog/index.html

Created by MetalGrass, this stats analyzer has easy-to-read graphs and charts. They also use Google's own stats rather than tapping into your server's MySQL.

You can check your account as frequently as you want and the log will even you give you a sound, an email or a pop-up window when new data is available.

Price $50. Free 30-day trial.

AsRep
http://www.asrep.com
AsRep lets you track all of your stats in real time. That includes each of your three regular ad units, an AdLink unit and up to two search boxes on each page.

The program also captures colors, format and channels, and whether the units are showing ads or alternates.

Price $50. Unlimited evaluation version available.

CSV AdStats
http://www.nix.fr/en/csvadstats.aspx

CSV AdStats is less of a tracker and more of a number-cruncher. You can download Google's CSV data file and conduct a full stats analysis to check averages and create charts.

A useful way to squeeze more sense out of your stats.

FREE

Google AdSense Tracking Script
http://www.biz-directory.org/adsense/

The Google AdSense Tracking Script lets you see the domains and files where clicks occurred, hourly and daily stats and who clicked what, where and when.

Price $100.

TWO TOOLS YOU CAN'T DO WITHOUT!

If you are serious about making money with Google AdSense, there are two tools that you really need to download.

I was closely involved in the production of both of them.

I'd like to say that I didn't create these tools to make a profit, but that's not really true. I did create them to make a profit… but a profit as an AdSense publisher not as a software developer.

The fact is, none of the tracking software that I saw on the market was giving me all the information I wanted.

And I want to know everything!

I want to know where my users are coming from, what they're looking for, which ads they're clicking, how many unique visitors I'm receiving, which colors work best etc. etc.

With AdSense, I don't think it's possible to have too much information. No one was really willing to supply me the tools to gather and analyze that information. So I built them myself.

AdSense Detective
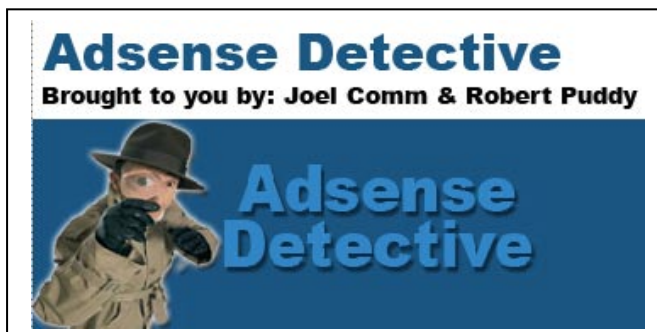
The first of these tools is AdSense Detective. You can signup for a free trial at

http://www.adsensedetective.com/members/register.php

I developed AdSense Detective together with my good friend, Robert Puddy, who's really another AdSense giant. We wanted that program to fill in all the knowledge and data gaps that we possibly could.

That's why in AdSense Detective, you'll be able to discover:

Which domains, directories and pages of your websites users clicked;

The referring domains, pages and search terms that sent you visitors;

Which ad units, colors and formats were bringing you the most clicks;

The precise copy of the AdWords that you can check against page relevance;

The search terms used by visitors to find your page; and…

The exact AdSense channels of every ad clicked so that you can see which position on your page is bringing you the most money!

If you've got all that information, then frankly you've got everything you need to bring home the bacon.
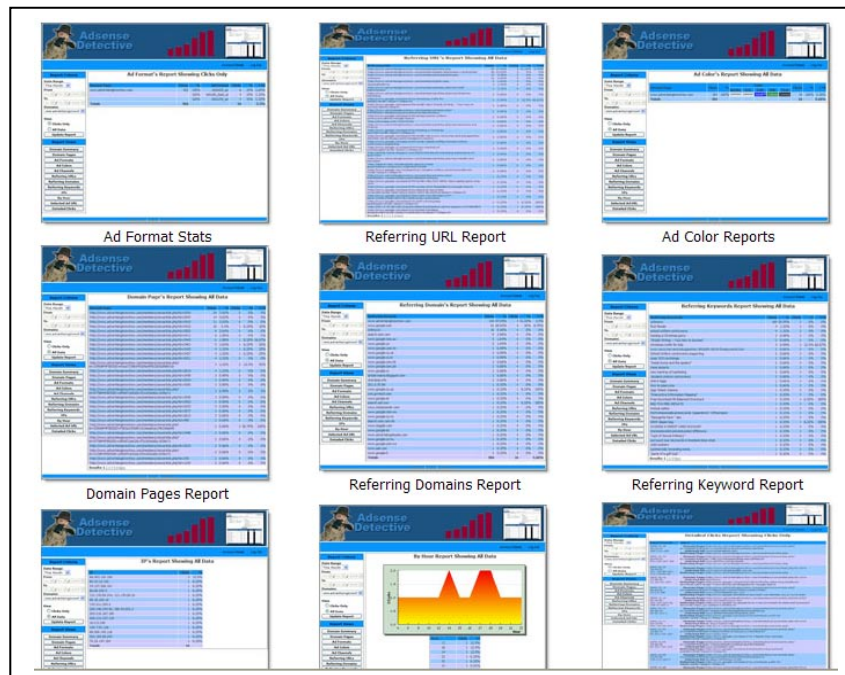
Fig. 12.5 More data than you can shake a stick at from AdSense Detective.

AdSense Buddy

Of course, you still have to analyze and process all that data.

That's what my next tool does, and you can download it for no charge at all.

At time of writing, it's in beta. By the time of reading though, it should be available for download at www.AdSenseBuddy.com.

The idea of the program is to make it as simple as possible for you to make sense of your stats. And because the program has been created by someone who not only knows AdSense, but uses it every day, you can be sure that it was made with the end user in mind so it should give you everything you could ask for.

If there's something I've left out, you probably don't need it.

You'll be able to follow your CTR and note your impressions. You'll be able to see your results by just rolling over the task bar. And I've even included an AdSense journal so that you can keep track of what's working and what isn't.

That alone makes it worth downloading.
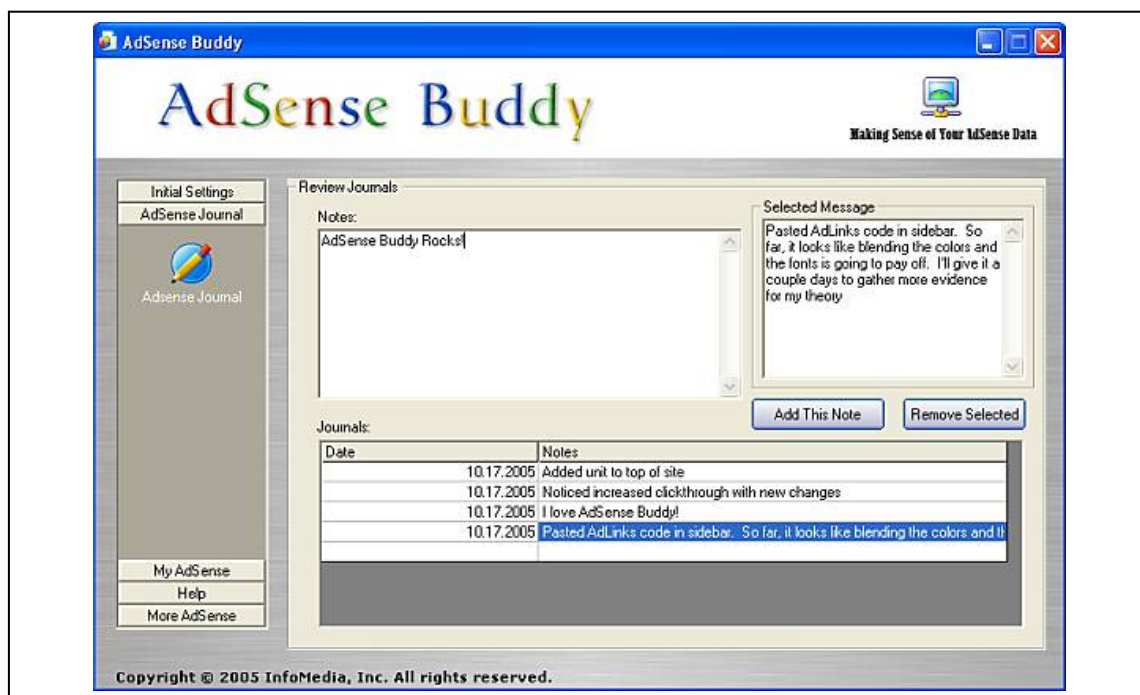
Fig. 12.6 AdSenseBuddy's journal makes it a breeze to keep track of your changes.

And it's really simple to use. Once you've received your registration key, you simply enter your AdSense email address and password. Immediately, you'll see a pop-up summarizing your latest stats. (Want to see them again? Just mouse over the icon in the system tray.)

Below those stats, you'll also get links to the latest discussions at AdSenseChat.com. That will make sure you're always up to date and that you've always got something to read! You can also download data to cover any time period you want and view the information as graphs to make your analysis a breeze.

But it's really the journal that I'm most proud of. The fact that you can keep a record of your changes together with the results of your changes makes following your stats very, very easy.

I don't know how I managed for so long without it.

And like I said, it's absolutely free, so enjoy! Click here to download AdSense Buddy.

13. 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 in April, 2004: Google introduced Smart Pricing. We've already felt some of its effects in this book. Now we're going to explain exactly what it means…

First, let me just say that Smart Pricing *was* a pretty smart move, especially for advertisers. The principle is simple: 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, particularly Yahoo!, 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, 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.

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.

13.1 What Google Has Said About Smart Pricing

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 <u>not</u> 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.

13.2 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 tell 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 wasn't letting on.

Fortunately, publishers caught a break. Jennifer Sleg, the author of an excellent contextual advertising blog at www.Jensense.com, (you should definitely make this site a part of your regular reading) was contacted by an advertiser who was being tempted back from Yahoo! to Google. He told Jen 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.**
  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.**
  Few serious publishers 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 lower than the minimum quoted.

- **Conversions accounts are tracked by advertisers opting into AdWords Conversion Tracking.**
  But we still don't know what Google is tracking or how it's making calculations with its results.

13.3 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.

And that's where you're most likely to find the underperforming pages. **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.

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 Mel Gibson. 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 Mel Gibson DVDs

is less likely to actually buy than a Mel Gibson 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.

> **Don't remove the AdSense code from pages with low CTR; remove it from pages with low ROI!**

14. How To Make AdSense Work With Internet Communities And Commercial Sites

Maximize your AdSense Revenue from Internet Forums, Message Boards and Discussion Groups!

Earlier in this book, I mentioned making revenue from blogs. But blogs certainly aren't the only types of content online or the only types that can use AdSense.

In an active Internet Community, users generate most of the content. You cannot completely control the keywords or the topics, which means AdSense might spring some surprises with the ads that show up. (Just have some Alternate Ads handy, in case AdSense pulls up a series of non-paying public service ads.)

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.

Many publishers that play host to Internet Communities complain of negligible CTRs, scattered keywords (low content relevance) and low cost per click. What they don't realize is that Internet Communities are a hidden gold-mine which inspire 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!

14.1 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 their suggestions at http://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.
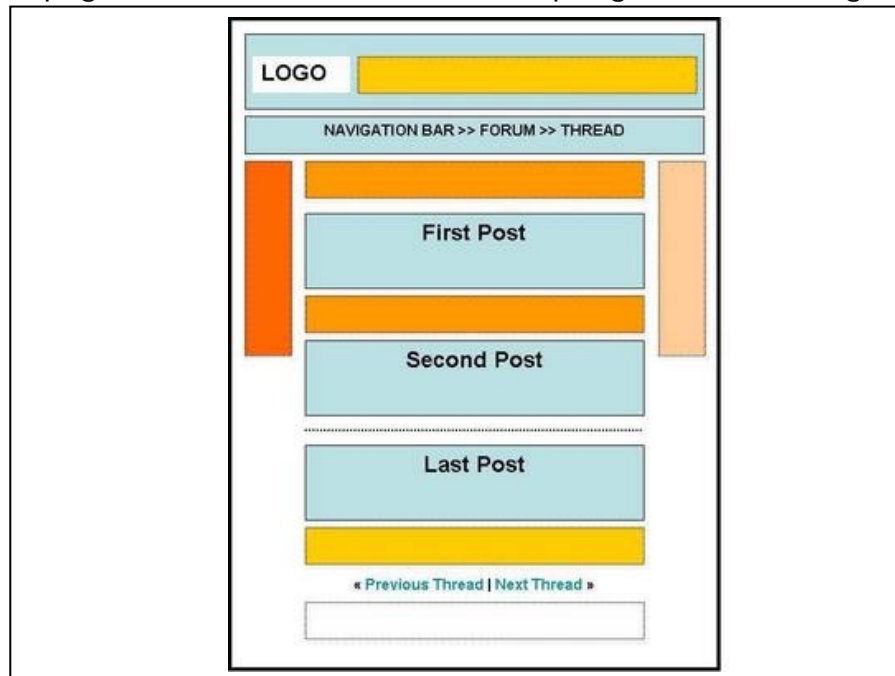
Fig. 14.1 Google's Forum Heat Map.

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 example:

Fig. 14.2 Ad units on the DealofDay.com forum.

There are two kinds of ad units on this forum page at DealofDay.com.

First, I've 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 time 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. 14.3 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!

- 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 click-throughs 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.

- **Don't lump a bunch of ads together in the middle of the page.** It works well with 'passive' visitors, but your forum members will read right around them!

- **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, **the Google Search Box is an added convenience, welcomed by most users.** It makes your visitors stay! And if they click an ad from the results page, you make money!

Which of these strategies will work for your Forums?

Only time can tell — but don't forget to track your results with Google's FREE AdSense Channels. There are publishers who have made a fortune with their community pages. It doesn't take rocket science. But a little persistence goes a long way!

15. How To Read Your Visitors Like A Book

15.1 Making Sense Of Stats, Logs And Reports...

Stats are a vital part of your success. If you can't follow the results of all the changes you're going to be making to your ads and your pages, then you're never going to maximize your revenues.

But reading your stats can be confusing. You're going to be staring at all sorts of tables filled with all kinds of numbers which can be rearranged and reorganized in all sorts of different ways.

That's why it's crucial to know how to read your stats and understand the figures.

15.2 The Most Important Stat Of All

There's one figure that's more important than any of the others. Know which one I'm talking about?

Revenue! If you aren't making money, no other stats matter.

If you are making money though, the next stat you want to watch is your CTR. The higher the percentage of clicks to page impressions you receive, the higher your CPM will rise — and the higher your revenues will become.

When you make a change to your ad placement, to your keywords, to your ad colors or anything else, wait a week and check your stats to see the result. And look first at your revenues.

Bear in mind too that when you have multiple ads on a page each ad unit counts as one impression — but you won't be able to get three clicks from them! Multiple ad units then can reduce your CTR while still giving you good revenues.

You might also want to translate your results into charts. If you do want to do that, the most important things to look for are trends in CTR and in earnings. Tracking impressions too will also let you see any radical fluctuations in traffic.

15.3 Optimum CTR

Much of your success will depend on lifting your CTR as high as possible. Obviously, the more people who click on your ads the more money you should make but it's not always easy to know when you're inviting as many people as possible to get clicking. I've gone from less than 1% CTR to over 8% on some sites but I know of some sites that are getting over 30% CTR!

Your CTR will depend on a number of different factors, including:

- **Site Content** — Some types of content get more clicks than others (but don't necessarily make more money per click…)

- **Site Design** — We've already talked about the importance of where you place your ads and how you place them.

- **Number Of Links** — Why give your ads competition? If people want to click away from the page, you should get paid for it.

- **Ad Relevancy —** If you're not getting served ads that are relevant to your content, you're going to have a low CTR.

15.4 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 $1500.

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 content, as long as you spend less than 30 cents for a click to that page, you're going to make a profit. And 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.

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%).

So if you can see that you're getting a 16% CTR, buying advertising on AdWords to send traffic to your AdSense ads could be a good deal.

Or not.

The second problem with arbitrage 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.

Results from using arbitrage vary. Some people report that the clicks they buy on AdWords give them less revenue, others report that they've increased their CTR.

The real key to arbitrage success is buying traffic based on the right keywords. And to do that you need…

15.5 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!

Fig. 15.1 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 www.wordtracker.com.

16. What To Do Before You Apply To Google AdSense

Guidelines for new web publishers

Imagine this. Mr. Big Google Advertiser is surfing the net, looking up some trade-related keywords. He clicks through lazily to land 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 picks up his phone and dials a number. "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.

To make a sizable income from AdSense, you need unique content, 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 and Don'ts before you Apply:

16.1 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.

16.2 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 is 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.

16.3 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.

16.4 DON'T Build A Website Specifically To Target High-Value Keywords <u>Unless</u> 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 http://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	18,040	3,090,000	171	50 +	9.8
4	real estate license	$8.73	23,626	6,390,000	270	42	61.2
5	orlando real estate	$8.45	13,584	4,680,000	345	50 +	14.0
6	real estate lawyer	$7.75	13,414	9,740,000	726	38	6.2
7	real estate school	$7.22	37,674	16,300,000	430	46	52.2

Fig. 16.1 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. Read more about it at www.adsense-secrets.com/topkeywords.html

16.5 Websites That Rank Higher In A Google Search (SERPS) 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 21.

16.6 Increase 'Readiness To Buy'

Advertisers prefer websites that qualify visitors for the purchase.
Allow me to explain with this simple example: A search for "cell phones" 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 DVD's it makes sense to produce content that encourages people to buy DVD's 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.

Fig. 16.2 **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. Check out this example at: http://www.askthebuilder.com/535-Installing-Large-Ceramic-Tiles.shtml

16.7 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.

PART 4: ADVANCED TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

17. Recommended Resources: Try These Tools And AdSense Utilities (Some Are FREE!)

Making life easier for AdSense Partners

17.1 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 www.digitalpoint.com/tools/adsense-sandbox. 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.

Fig. 17.1 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!

[Click here](#) to try it, Free!

17.2 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 http://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.

17.3 Overture BidTool

While Google won't disclose what each click is worth, you can try indirect methods such as the Overture BidTool to find out the relative cost of different keywords [here](#).

Overture BidTool displays the relative amounts that each [Overture](#) advertiser is willing to pay 'per click' for a specific keyword. You can compare maximum bids for different keywords to arrive at an educated guess about the most profitable keywords for your website.

Remember that what Google actually pays you may vary greatly. But you *will* get closer with practice! ;)

http://uv.bidtool.overture.com/d/search/tools/bidtool/index.jhtml

17.4 Overture Keyword Suggestion Tool

Enter a search term and Overture tells you how many times it was looked up on Overture during the previous month. It will also give you a related list of

keywords including how many searches were carried out for each search term in the list.

http://inventory.overture.com/d/searchinventory/suggestion/

17.5 Ultimate SEO Tool

Just feed it your website address and hit Enter. This amazing tool will show you a list of the most frequently used words and phrases, including detailed reporting of the number of times it 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?)

http://www.Googlerankings.com/ultimate_seo_tool.php

17.6 Google AdWords Traffic Estimator and Bid Tool

If you are an AdWords Advertiser, you can use this tool to get the estimated bid price and traffic for your desired list of search terms.

https://adwords.Google.com/select/TrafficEstimatorSandbox1

17.7 Keyword Rankings Tool

How does your site rank on Google search for a specific search term? Find out with this free tool.

http://www.Googlerankings.com/index.php

17.8 Mass Keywords Search

Find out how your website ranks on Google for up to ten different keywords — in one go! If you'd also like to study the top 100 sites for your specific search keyword, you'll get the results even faster!

http://www.Googlerankings.com/mkindex.php

17.9 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!

http://www.Googlerankings.com/Googlefriendly.php

18. Keeping Track Of What Works — And What Doesn't Work — For You!

Start An AdSense Journal

People who want to lose weight often keep a "food diary". Without a food diary, it's easy to forget that late-night snack or the extra sugar in your fourth cup of coffee. A food diary keeps you honest. It helps you figure out the real reasons behind those little ups and downs in your weight.

I'm sure that after reading this book, you would be eager to try out many of the tweaks discussed in here — including some of your own.

Without an AdSense journal, it would be easy to undo your successes, or to repeat your failures. Remember the program that I mentioned earlier, AdSenseDesktop. This tool provides everything you need to keep an ongoing journal of your AdSense activity!

Every little tweak counts, but don't try to do everything at once.

Take the step-by-step approach. Write your own AdSense plan for the first week. Log into your AdSense account once a day, to track your click-throughs and earnings.

Don't be rigid about your plan. Make room for inspiration. If you've got a great idea, write it down to implement it later. Don't implement your ideas all at once and DO give every idea some time to prove its mettle. You'll find out

within a day if you have thousands of visitors hitting your web pages. If that is not the case, give it a few days. Preferably one week!

Don't be discouraged by minor, day-to-day fluctuations in your click-throughs and earnings. It's normal and probably has nothing to do with your latest tweak.

Join an AdSense forum, several if possible. Share your tips with other members. Discuss what works and what doesn't work for you. Every once in a while, a forum member might alert you to a possible violation of the [AdSense TOS](#). It could be just a false alarm, but I prefer to be safe than sorry!

When in doubt, dash an email to AdSense support, at: **adsense-support**@Google.com

Most emails are answered quickly by a real person. They won't suspend your account for asking them, but they might if you don't ask!

Read all you can and jot down every good idea. It will keep your interest levels high and give you something new to work on all the time.

Every new 'tweak' is your stepping stone to AdSense success.
Once you've reached a certain level, it's easy to say 'Cool! I've figured it all out!' But take it from me — Internet Marketing keeps changing and the rules will change for you too.

Don't be like the two lazy little-people in "Who moved my cheese?" Keep looking for new ways to make money with AdSense. Replace ideas that no longer seem to work with new ideas and inspiration. Some people I know are still rubbing their backsides after the dot-com bust.

It's always easier when you see it coming, than when it takes you by surprise!

Remember the story about 'The Emperor's New Clothes'? There's a lesson in it for all of us Internet Marketers, and it's this:

It doesn't matter how much money you've made with AdSense or what the IQ tests say about you: **It ain't working till your stats say so!**

18.1 A Sample AdSense Journal

For example, let's say you have a website about Bonsai trees. You read this book and you decide to start implementing the strategies that I've been talking about.

Your original stats might look something like this. You print these out and use them for comparison:

Date	Page Impressions	Clicks	Page CTR	Page eCPM	Your earnings
5/1/07	8020	160	2.0%	5.04	40.04
5/2/07	8186	172	2.1%	5.53	45.27
5/3/07	8071	153	1.9%	4.92	39.76
5/4/07	7792	156	2.0%	5.50	42.89
5/5/07	6712	154	2.3%	5.76	38.65
5/6/07	6596	132	2.0%	5.70	37.65
5/7/07	7134	157	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 336 x 280 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:

Date	Page Impressions	Clicks	Page CTR	Page eCPM	Your earnings
5/8/07	8123	236	2.9%	5.08	41.27
5/9/07	8135	244.05	3.0%	6.02	48.97
5/10/07	8024	249	3.1%	5.90	48.65
5/11/07	7926	238	3.0%	5.92	46.93
5/12/07	7865	252	3.2%	5.62	44.26
5/13/07	6645	193	2.9%	6.10	40.52
5/14/07	7103	220	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:

Date	Page Impressions	Clicks	Page CTR	Page eCPM	Your earnings
5/15/07	8365	343	4.1%	5.93	49.65
5/16/07	8296	324	3.9%	6.04	50.09
5/17/07	8032	321	4.0%	6.42	51.59
5/18/07	7920	317	4.0%	6.30	49.93
5/19/07	7853	306	3.9%	6.20	48.67
5/20/07	6725	282	4.2%	6.68	44.92
5/21/07	7145	293	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. A look at your server logs supports your hunch that these aren't getting any clicks at all.

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	10	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 page	1098	45	4.0%	6.56	7.20
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.

19. Other Contextual Advertising Programs And How To Use Them With AdSense

AdSense is probably the easiest way to generate revenue with your website — I know it's making me a fantastic amount of money — 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.

19.1 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.

Fig. 19.1 Mousing over to bring up ads with Kontera at JoelComm.com.

I use 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.

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 lets you place up to six ad links on each page and recommends that you take all of them.

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 to place their mouse over them.

You could try using blue as your link color if you want. I use them 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 is going to be key.

Making sure that the ads appear in the best locations on the page is 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:

**

before the text, and the tag:

**

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.

19.2 Intellitxt's Eye-Catching Ads
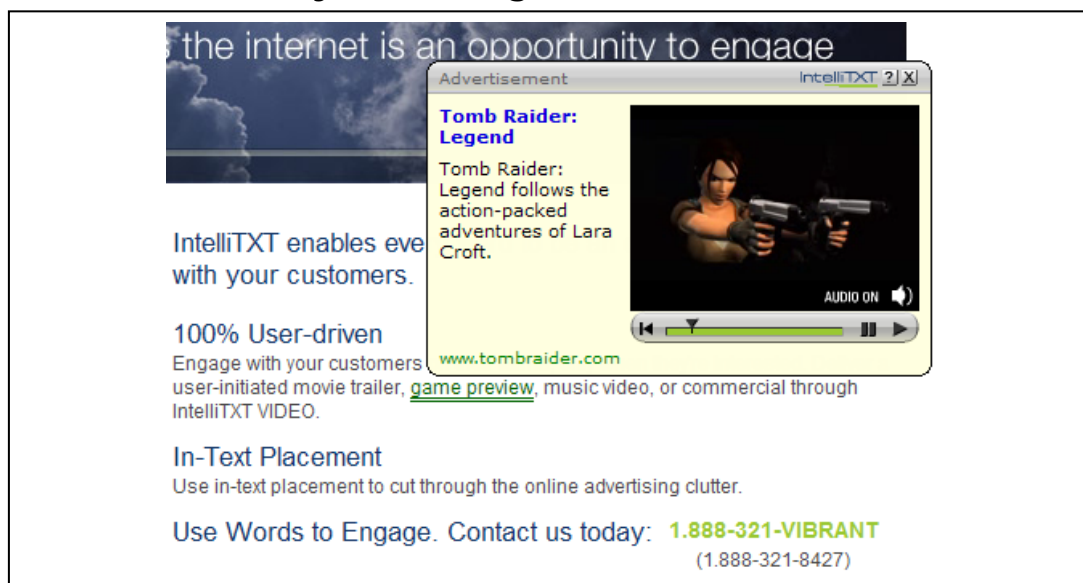
Fig. 19.2 Intellitxt's video ads grab your attention.

Intellitxt 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 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.

Unfortunately, they're only for really big sites. If you have fewer than 500,000 page views a month, you don't qualify. That's a shame because some advertisers have reported CTRs two and three times higher for these ads than for AdSense ads. And you can be sure they're paying a lot more too.

If you do have lots of users though — or think you will soon — those video ads might have been a good reason to choose Intellitxt over Kontera, but Kontera has now produced its own line of rich media ads. (Although again you need to be big to benefit from them.)

The same placement and keyword strategies that work with Kontera should work with Intellitxt too but I'd always turn to Kontera first. It's the system that I use on my blog. First thing you'll want to do is get signed up at http://www.adsense-secrets.com/kontera.html

19.3 ContextCASH — Affiliate Revenue The Easy Way

If you don't like either of those though, you could also look at ContextCASH (www.contextcash.com). This system looks pretty similar to Kontera and Intellitxt but it works in a very different way. You still get the highlighted words that appear in your text but instead of bringing up an ad when you mouse over, these links lead directly to affiliate sites.

Again, the links are unobtrusive, they don't clash with your ad units and they're compatible with AdSense.

And they can also bring in good money too… provided you get the sales that win the commissions.

Remember, with ContextCash, you get nothing if users click out of curiosity. You only get paid if they buy. While that will give you more money than the small amounts you'd get on a CPC basis, you have to make the sales.

The factor that is likely to have the greatest influence over whether or not you get sales is the context of the page and — like any affiliate system — whether or not you've recommended the products.

And with ContextCash can be a problem. Usually, the best way to generate income with affiliate products is to choose them carefully and talk them up in your content. ContextCash's affiliate ads though could change constantly so it will be difficult to recommend them.

That doesn't mean they aren't good though. Far from it. If the ads are contextual enough, the sites reputable enough and your content geared towards buyers you could see some great rewards.

And you do have some control over all these elements. Not only can you optimize your links in all sorts of ways making them easy to blend in, you can also pick the keywords yourself, filter the source of your ads (most come from Amazon or Clickbank), view the list of ads that would fit your site and choose which ones to place on your page.

In short, if you're thinking of using affiliate ads on your site, this is a pretty unique way to do it. I think it's worth testing them on one site and seeing how you get on.
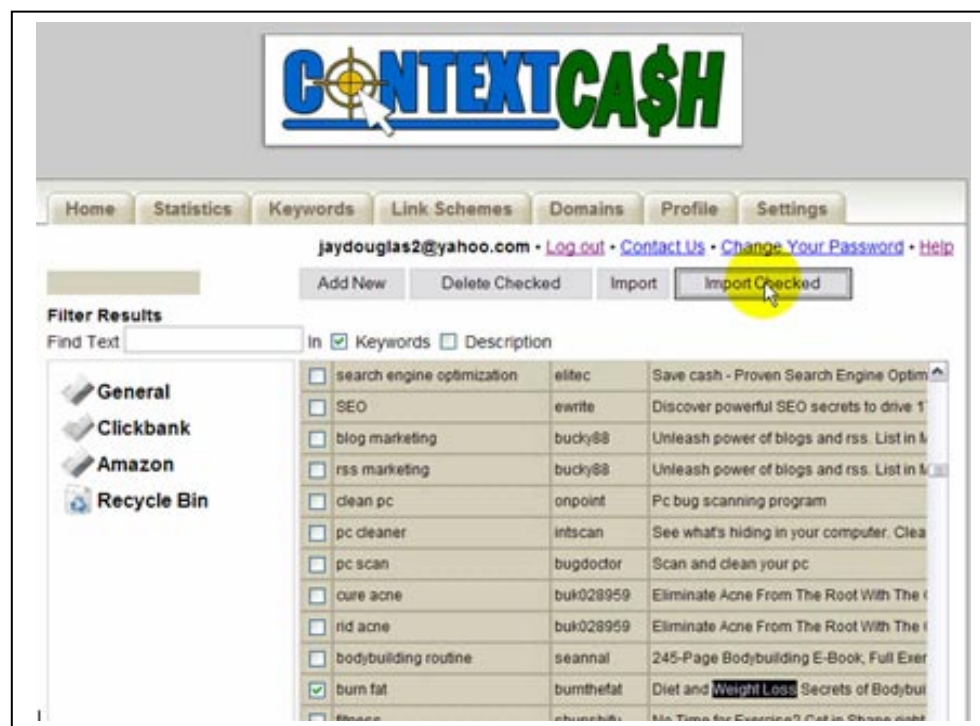
Fig. 19.3 Choose affiliate links to scattered across the page with ContextCASH.

19.4 Chitika — All Malls, More Money

Kontera, Intellitxt and ContextCash 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 eMiniMalls 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.
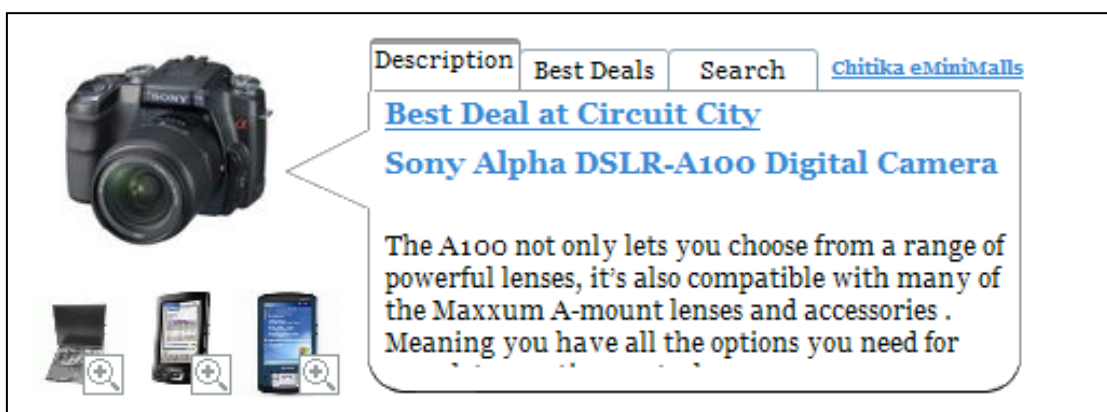
Fig. 19.4 Chitika's eMiniMalls. Smile!

The eMiniMalls are product ads that come with a number of different tabs. Those tabs include a list of Best Deals (with paid links to advertisers), a description of the product, reviews and a search box that draws on Chitika's catalog. The tabs bring up different content when they're moused over and each ad also comes with a picture of the image.

Although you can let Chitika serve you contextualized ads, you can also turn off the contextualization engine and choose the ads you serve yourself.

That's a huge benefit: no more messing around with keywords or playing with text. You can just do a search, find an ad you like and start presenting it to your users.

Again, there are all sorts of factors involved in making eMiniMalls work at their best, from deciding which tabs to display (you can choose those too!) to choosing the right ad format for your page to figuring out how to use the ads

together with AdSense ad units. There are some great ways to make them work together.

One of the biggest issues though is where on the page to place your eMiniMalls units. For the most part, what's true for AdSense is true for Chitika too. Ads above the fold get more clicks. Ads embedded into articles do well too.

You could, for example, create an eMiniMalls shopping zone at the top of your page or slip a horizontal unit at the bottom of each article. But that might mean that your ads are going to be competing against each other for the same spots. Although you can test each type of ad to see which earns you more, you can often combine the two and increase your earnings. Darren Rowse's Digital Photography Blog for example, is the perfect model to follow.

Fig. 19.5 Darren Rowse's photography blog shows the way to mix AdSense with eMiniMalls.

In general, you can expect to find that eMiniMalls do particularly well on sites that focus on products. But Darren has put the picture of the product in the center of the page, blended an AdSense unit next to it and complemented the review with eMiniMalls ad.

Chitika's eMiniMalls are an excellent product. I've used them at my site DealofDay.com and been very pleased with the result. But Chitika has some other products that are very attractive too.

If you have a blog that focuses on products and has a lot of traffic, you should certainly take a look at their **ShopLincs** program. This lets you create an online store stuffed with products for users of your blog to purchase.

If you don't qualify though—and Chitika's restrictions are tight enough to make sure that few people will—you can still put their **ShopCloud$** units on your pages.

These let users search for products, see results on your page... and earn you a commission when they click.

I've spent a lot of time playing around with Chitikas ads as well, come up with some very effective strategies and written them up as another book. You can find that book at www.chitikasecrets.com.
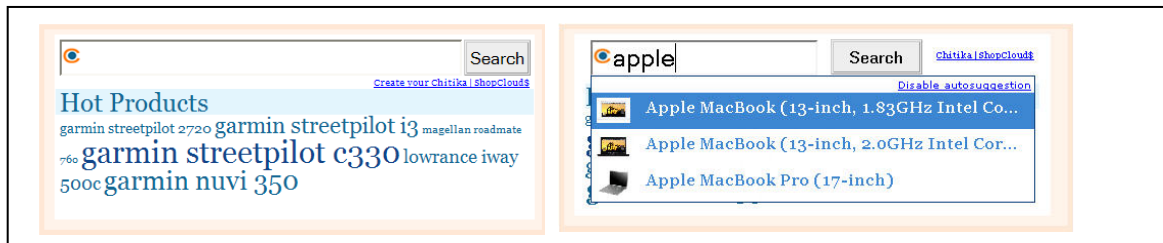
Fig. 19.6 Chitika's ShopCloud$ offer a new way of earning for clicks.

Want to get signed with Chitika? Easy! http://www.adsense-secrets.com/chitika.html

All 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...

19.5 Yahoo! Publisher Network

Yahoo! Publisher Network (YPN) (http://publisher.yahoo.com/) is probably the number one competitor to Google. In fact, they pretty much copied what AdSense had done... but didn't do it quite as well.

On the plus-side, their ad formats are largely the same. So if you need to switch from AdSense to YPN, you should be able to keep the exact same optimization, at least as regards how the ads look (although YPN doesn't have Ad Links or Search, so you'd lose those.)

They also have ads in RSS which could bring in some extra revenues if you're using that on your site.

As to which ads you get served though, that's a whole other ball game. One of the biggest problems with YPN is that the first ads they serve are often Run-Of-The-Network (RON) ads, Yahoo!'s answer to public service ads. These are just ads for companies that seem to have struck a special deal with YPN.

They pay well, when you get a click out of them, but they're not contextualized so you don't get many clicks. They occur much more frequently than public service ads and they're much harder to get rid of.

And there are no CPM ads on Yahoo!, which can be a good thing or a bad thing depending on the size of your site and your experience.

Most publishers find that they get better results with AdSense than they do with YPN… although we all keep a close eye on YPN to see if they improve enough to attract us.

19.6 AdBrite

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.

The idea behind AdBrite is that people tend to ask popular sites to advertise their links. You've probably had that happen to you. Instead of asking for a link in return though, you could ask for money.

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.

For advertisers, the advantage over Google is that they know exactly where their ads are appearing and for exactly how much money each time.

Publishers — like you — get to set your own ad rates, and you have the right to approve or reject every ad before it's placed on your site. That gives you the power to choose your ads and your price instead of relying on whatever Google gives you.

Those are the advantages. The disadvantages are that it's just not in the same league as AdSense… or YPN.

You can learn more about AdBrite at www.adbrite.com.

19.7 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 offer a number of options that Google doesn't offer — or at least not yet. Its RSS advertising program has been around for a while, it has a focus on local sites which might be attractive to businesses with local markets (or sites with content of local interest) and it also serves ads related to previous user behavior. 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.

That's all creative stuff and it's nice to see new ideas. It would be nicer though to see revenues that compete with Google's and I haven't heard of anyone earning more with BrightAds than they can earn with Google.

BrightAds might be worth looking at if you want to make money with your RSS feed but I'm not convinced they're going to give Google or Yahoo! any worries.

Learn more about Kanoodle's BrightAds at
http://www.kanoodle.com/about/brightads.cool

19.8 Searchfeed

Searchfeed is slightly better, especially for international publishers. It also supplies contextualized ads to advertisers but offers geotargeting services which gives them a wide global reach, useful if you're based outside the United States.

You can integrate the ads smoothly into your site, either by cutting and pasting the HTML from their site or even by asking their own specialists to help you increase your CTR. And they have a good reputation for paying on time.

Whether they'll give you more money than Google is a different question though. The only way to find that out is to try it but if you find that you're doing well with Google, then why would you bother?

If, for some reason, you don't want to use Google — or can't use Google — and YPN isn't your cup of tea either, then you might find Searchfeed a good alternative.

You can learn more about Searchfeed at www.searchfeed.com

19.9 The Big Boys: eBay And Microsoft

One of the great things about contextualized advertising is that outside of Google and Yahoo!, the best competitors are all start-ups. Or should that be up-starts?

A couple of big boys though have begun to muscle in on the market.

Fig. 19.7 eBay's ad selections.

eBay now has its own contextualized affiliate system. The system scans publishers' Web pages, identifies keywords and serves related ads drawn from its online auctions. Publishers receive between 40 and 70 percent of eBay's commission on the sale.

Unlike ContextCash though, these ads aren't embedded into text. They appear in units, like AdSense ads. And like AdSense ads, you're free to change the color scheme and ad size, and place the code wherever you want.

But they're always going to look like ads. When the most eyecatching part of the ad is the price, there's no hiding the fact that any user who clicks is heading to a sales page and not to a site that will give him information.

And because the ads will change with the auctions, unless you're writing specifically about a product that someone is always selling at eBay, you'd probably do better promoting new goods with an Amazon affiliate ad.

That's especially true as long as eBay make it difficult for people to join the program. The system is currently only available to eBay's affiliates. But you can become an affiliate at www.affiliates.ebay.com and check out the ad program at http://affiliates.ebay.com/ads/adcontext/index.html.

The other big company stepping into the filed 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 (it's invitation only), 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.
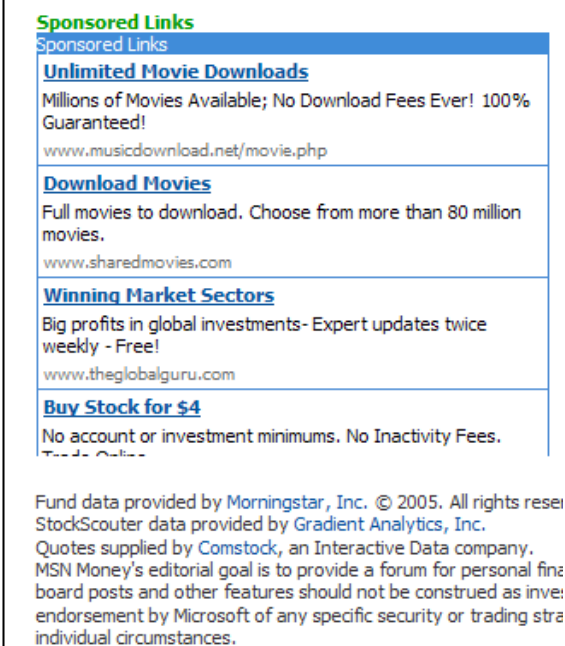
Fig. 19.8 A contextualized ad unit at the bottom of moneycentral.msn.com.

If Microsoft can build up advertisers and iron out the bugs, they could be a good alternative to Google and YPN. Until then though, it's still AdSense plus text links and affiliate ads.

20. Getting Traffic To Your Web Site

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.

20.1 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.

For example, the minimum price for advertising at Overture is ten cents per click and you must spend at least $20 each month. If you can see that the ads being served on your site are generating less than ten cents per click then you're never going to make a profit.

Exactly the same is true of any other pay-per-click advertising campaign.

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.

It might well pay to advertise, but before you buy make sure it pays a profit.

20.2 Reciprocal Linking

Many people focus on linking in order to improve their search engine rankings. That's important but don't forget that the links themselves can be one of your biggest sources of traffic!

Probably the easiest way to invite links (apart from searching out related sites and writing to each one) is to add a "link" section to your pages where webmasters can choose a banner, button or text link to place on their site. On the same page, they can also submit their own site for linking. That should help you swap links without being swamped by sites looking for free placement.

The most critical factor when requesting a link though is where the site places it. Links on the home page always do better than a link buried on one of the internal pages and a good banner or graphic link on a site with content related to yours will usually get more clicks than a text link.

If you find that your links aren't appearing on the pages you want, there are a couple of simple remedies that you can use.

The first is to ask for a better position! If you have a good relationship with the webmaster or if it's a small site, there's a good chance that they'll agree. It certainly won't hurt to ask.

Not everyone is so generous though, and another option is to offer something in return. A link in a similar position on your own site can make a good deal if your sites are of similar size but you can also offer content or even a special page for that site's users.

If you have a site about furniture for example, and you want a link at a top directory for home furnishings then you could create a special welcome page for users of that site to draw them deeper into yours and deliver targeted ads. You might even want to go as far as creating a sort of co-branded version of your site for their users to click into. As long as you're getting paid when the users click on the ads, what do you care whose design they're looking at?

20.3 Send A Friend

There's nothing like viral marketing to promote your site! It's free, it comes with trusted recommendations and it gives you great CTR.

Each of your content pages should have a link marked "Send a friend" which opens a form so that the user can send your URL onwards. Until Google

allows ads in email, there's little point in AdSense members sending actual content but there's no reason why you (or your users) can't send links to pages with ads.

20.4 RSS Feeds

One of the challenges of keeping your user base is that readers can be pretty forgetful. Adding an RSS feed to your site is a great way to let people 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 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 themes, 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. When the goal of the feed is to get people back to your site to click the ads, you might think that there's little point in giving them the whole article in their feed reader. But readers will often unsubscribe if they can't see the whole article. That would reduce your subscriber base. You might be better off giving them the whole article and inviting them back to your site to add and see comments. Test both options and see which works best for you.

20.5 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.

You should make sure that your URL is listed on all of your marketing material: your business cards, Yellow Pages ads, flyers, envelopes, freebies and just about anything else you can think of.

You should certainly have your site address in your email signatures.

20.6 Promoting Your Blog

I've talked quite a bit about blogging in this book, mostly because I know from experience that it's possible to make a very nice income from a good blog but also because a lot of people aren't making the most of the blogs they have.

If you've got AdSense on your blog, there's a whole range of different things that you can easily do to increase your traffic and earn extra cash.

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.

You should also set up an RSS feed to let people know when you update. Apart from the fact that you can now place ads on your feeds, it will also keep your regular users coming back to see more ads (and to see your latest posts).

Instead of linking to the previous month's or the previous week's posts, each page 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.

You should certainly comment on other people's blogs, especially those that write about the same sort of things as your site, but ultimately the best way to get traffic to your blog is to make it good. If your writing is dull or difficult to read, it doesn't matter how hard you push it, no one will want to read it — and those who do stay won't stick around to click the ads.

20.7 Public Relations And Publicity

Just about all 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 to get yourself promoted through Overture.

Publicity can be free.

It doesn't have to be of course. You can 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 can 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 them 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.

21. 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. I have had experience with a number of strategies that could help you improve your ranking. I'd like to share them with you now.

21.1 Robot.txt

The first thing you need to know about indexing your site at search engines is that you control which pages are indexed and which are excluded. You do that with a file called robots.txt.

Robots.txt contains nothing more than 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/").

Robots.txt just allows you to control which robots index which pages. It's important to have in your directory but it won't really increase your search engine rankings.

Titles, URL's and links are much more important.

21.2 Titles And URLs

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.

21.3 Links

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 place 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.

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. www.searchengineforums.com is one good place to browse and http://forums.seochat.com is another. You should also check out my own forum www.AdSenseChat.com. Although this is mostly about AdSense optimization, not surprisingly, SEO issues are discussed often, especially as they relate to AdSense. It's a great source to dig up new ideas.

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.

Don't forget to check out the SEO blogs too. www.seobook.com is a good one, www.bradfallon.com is another and of course there's my own blog at www.joelcomm.com. You're welcome to leave your links there!

It's not just blogs and forum that that let you leave your details though. There **are plenty of sites that welcome free content and would be happy to display your link** if it means that they get an article in return. Start by looking at other sites on your topic and then try www.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.linkmetro.com 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.Adzaar.com, 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'm still hungry by the way, so feel free to sign up, improve your rankings and make my dentist happy!)

Fig. 21.1 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. Here are some additional examples:

www.buyleoalatte.com
www.buybarbaracoffee.com

You can actually acquire the "Buy Me A Drink" script that all these sites run on. Click here!

And finally, one resource that I highly recommend is **WebRing** (www.webring.com). This is such an easy way to gather links on relevant sites that I can't believe it's not the talk of the net.

The idea is to link together sites on similar topics so that users can quickly find topics that they're interested in. Nice for them. But it's nicer for you when a bunch of links from similar sites rocket your SEO ranking. That's exactly what Google and other search engines are looking for when they rank sites.

That makes WebRing a hugely powerful tool.

Fig. 71. WebRing makes linking easy.

21.4 Create Gateways

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."

21.5 Automatic Submissions

Submitting your site to all of the search engines from Google and Yahoo! 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 MSN are important, in that order.

21.6 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 http://toolbar.google.com/googlebar.html.

Fig. 19.2 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 http://pages.alexa.com/prod_serv/quicktour.html
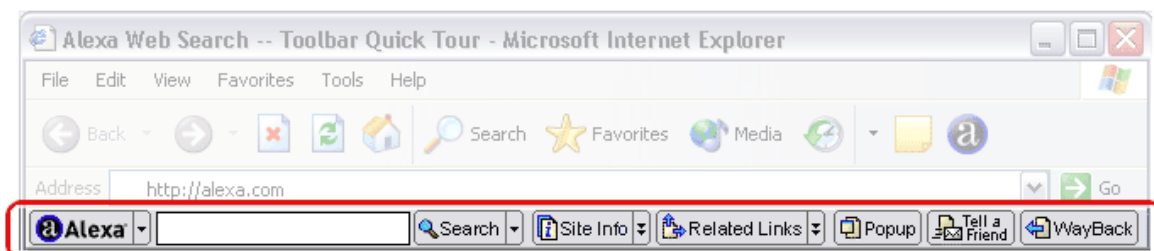
Fig. 21.3 The Alexa Toolbar: Is your site number one yet?

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 from www.adsense-secrets.com/seoelite.html

Reciprocal Manager

Reciprocal Manager takes much of the headache out of managing your links. As you continue to optimize your site, you will find yourself winning yourself more links on other sites and being asked to host links from other site. Reciprocal Manager creates a professional-looking, neatly organized links directory that's good for both your link partners and your visitors.

The program also lets you offer sites the option of placing their links on more than one site at the same time and, most importantly, to search for other sites to link to based on search word or phrase.

Learn more about Reciprocal Manager at http://www.reciprocalmanager.com.

Stomping The Search Engines

Finally, Brad Fallon is one of the biggest experts when it comes to SEO optimization. His wedding favors site grossed over $1,000,000 within a short time of launching, mainly due to his ability to get his site prime placement in Google and the other search engines.

I've met Brad and chatted to him about his SEO optimization and I can tell you, he knows his stuff! I thought I knew a bunch about SEO, but after spending a couple of hours with Brad, I feel like a novice.

You can have thousands of web pages, but without a great search engine optimization plan, you many not be making the money you want to with AdSense. I HIGHLY recommend picking up Brad Fallon's 10 audio CD series, Stomping the Search Engines. It is over 8 hours of Brad's teaching on how to duplicate his success for your web site(s).

I own the set and have begun listening to it. It is truly FULL of incredible material that you will find very useful to helping you reach your goals.

To read more about Stomping the Search Engines and acquire your own copy, click this link: http://www.adsense-secrets.com/seoexpert.html.

21.7 A Word About Cloaking

One issue that surfaced recently in the contextualized advertising world is "cloaking": presenting a different site to the Google bot than the one you present to users.

There can be good reasons for doing this. If you've got a forum for example, the bot 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 bot comes, it only reads the content.

Of course, you could also fool the bot 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.

21.8 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 and see what he has to say.

You won't regret it.

PART 5: QUICK TIPS

22. 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 YPN usually sends a warning to sites that it believes have broken its terms and conditions, Google has been known to cut people off right away.

And that 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 though, 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. You might want to open a separate account in a spouse's name or open more than one business.

- **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.

- **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.

- **Ads cannot appear on pages that are "under construction," used for registration, chat, contain adult, objectionable or illegal content. And they can't be used in emails either.**
  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 on every page of a website. 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.

- **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 Goooogle" 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 draws 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 or some part of the site.

- **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 cannot communicate to advertisers directly concerning the ads on your site.**
  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…

  Interestingly though, you can do all of this on your "Advertise on this site" landing page.

- **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.

22.1 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 and to 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 AdLink 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 AdLink 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 AdLink 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 letter). 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 Throwaway 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 an AdSense, 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: <u>Only</u> 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 it 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 use Chitika's eMiniMalls if you have a good product-related site. 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.

22.2 What To Do If Your AdSense Account Gets Closed

Fig. 22.1 Google's court of appeal. You don't want to come here.

Most of the mistake 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?

Well, the first thing to remember is that you've pretty much got no power 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 not 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 https://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 Yahoo! Publisher Network combined with Chitika and Kontera ads.

It's unlikely you'll make as much as you did with AdSense, but you will still make something.

23. 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 big fat check 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.

And if you can't find a solution here, check out AdSenseChat.com. Whatever I've missed here, you should be able to find there.

23.1 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.

23.2 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 20 — 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.

23.3 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.

23.4 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. Browse keyword sites such as Overture.com 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. **Buy better traffic**
    Your Smart Price suffers when your users click but don't buy. One solution is to buy 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.

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.

23.5 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 Crawler 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 crawler with a username and password.

23.6 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. You can specify an

alternate URL to show, use GoogleAdSensePlus or try Google Backfill to make sure that you're still earning even when the keywords aren't working.

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.

23.7 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.

23.8 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!

24. 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.JenSense.com**
  Jen's contextual advertising blog is a great read. She's always coming up with useful information and sometimes manages to dig up a real scoop (like what lies behind Smart Pricing). This should definitely be in your favorites.

- **www.ProBlogger.net**
  Darren 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.

- **http://Forums.DigitalPoint.com**
  And the forums at Digital Point are at least as good, if not better, with plenty of information on AdSense.

24.1 Talking AdSense at AdSenseChat

Finally, there's my own forum at www.adsensechat.com. You'll find plenty of people here swapping advice and sharing news about AdSense and other contextualized advertising systems… including me.

I don't want to blow my own trumpet too much here, but if you're finding this book useful you'll certainly find AdSense Chat useful. It's like having your book updated constantly with several thousand smart, experienced AdSense users in addition to my own contributions.

Discussion threads range from how to make use of the latest releases from Google's stable (you can be sure that in the time it takes you to read this book, Google will have brought out something new that I'll need to discuss in the next edition) to what's happening with Chitika and all the other contextualized programs.

Fig. 24.1: Talking tools at AdSense Chat.

I can't stress enough how important forums like AdSense Chat are to publishers. I can only update this book once every six months or once a year. It's just too much work to do more often than that. But the forums let publishers talk AdSense all the time.

It gives me new ideas, lets me see what problems other publishers have encountered and — more important — lets everyone weigh in with answers.

Part of being a successful AdSense publisher means visiting forums, posing questions, reading responses and adding your own experience. We want to know what you've been doing and how you've been doing it.

| View First Unread | | Thread Tools ▾ | Search this Thread ▾ | Display Modes ▾ |

Yesterday, 12:20 PM #1

bigcactus ⊙
AdSense Pioneer

Join Date: Feb 2006
Posts: 3

Attracting Higher Paying Keywords

Hello there fellow click pals!

Would you please be so kind as to take a 10 second look at the following page I've created...

http://www.carauctionphotos.com/2006AZKruse1.htm

After collecting a number of high paying keywords from Keyword Explosion, I created an article with many of the keywords throughout hoping they will attract the higher paying Adsense ads. So far it really hasn't worked.

Any suggestions as to how I can attract the higher paying keyword ads to actually show up?

Gratefully Yours,

Mark~

Quote

Yesterday, 12:52 PM #2

tsutton ⊙
Super Moderator

Join Date: Aug 2005
Location: UK
Posts: 153

Try using content/section target code in the text.
_____
- Tony Sutton
- HyperBoard - Games, Hardware & Software
- Deaf Forum - Discussion Board for Deaf, HoH and anyone who wants to know more.

Quote

Yesterday, 01:02 PM #3

bigcactus ⊙
AdSense Pioneer

Join Date: Feb 2006
Posts: 3

Try using content/section target code in the text.

(Try using content/section target code in the text.)

I'm not familiar with that...would you please advise me on how to learn more?

Thank you so much!

Mark~

Quote

Fig. 24.2: Forums are a great for everyone to lend a hand.

And did I tell you that AdSense Chat is free to join? Hope to see you there soon!

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25. 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.

25.1 JourneyAustralia.com — Unmissable Ads Down Under

Fig. 25.1 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?

25.2 Great Ideas For Integration From FreeAfterRebate.info

Fig. 25.2 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.

25.3 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.
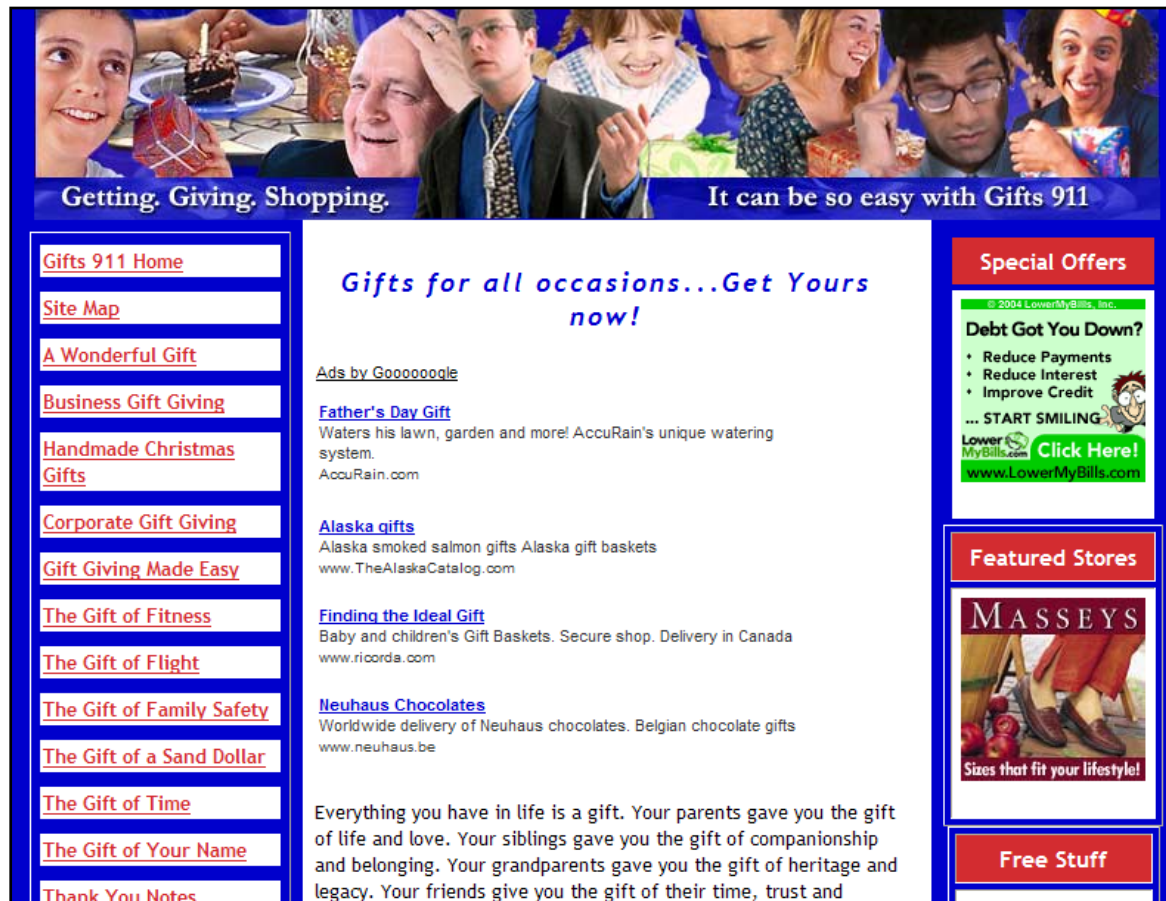
Fig. 25.3 Gift-911.com gives its own revenues some first aid above the fold...

25.4 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. 25.4 Lots of ads, lots more blending at firefoxpluginreviews.blogspot.com.

25.5 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.
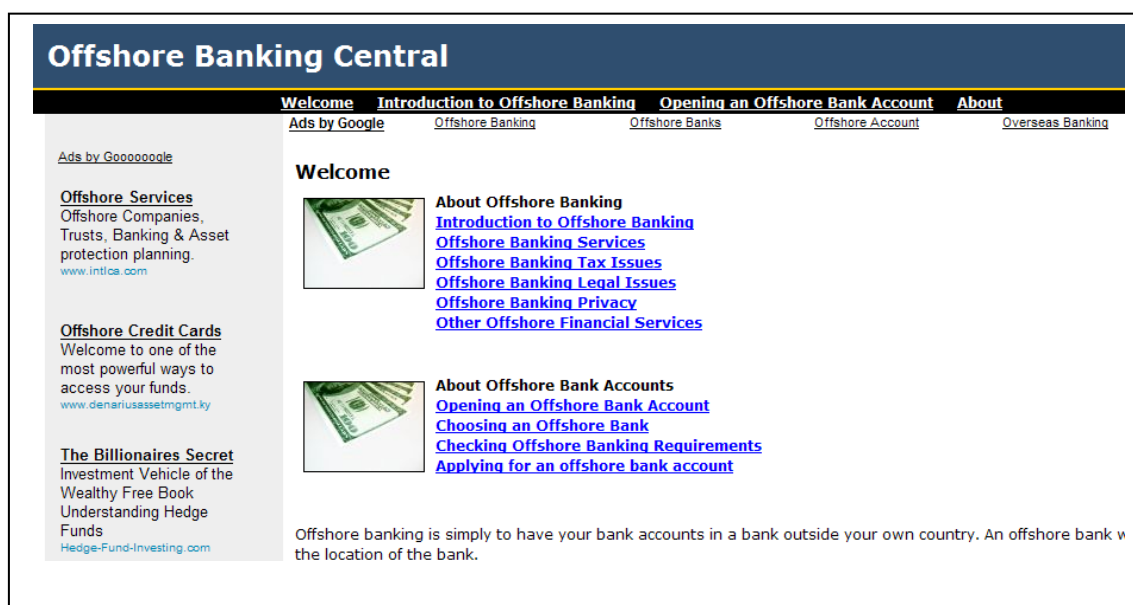
Fig. 25.5 A link unit disguised as a nav bar at OffshoreBankingCentral.com?

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.

25.6 Subtle Ad Linking At Sudoku Links

Fig. 25.6 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.

Fig. 25.7 …but not too much content.

25.7 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. 25.8 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.

Fig. 25.9 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!

25.8 Smart Ad Placement At DogToysMart.com

Fig. 25.10 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 looks 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.

25.9 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 line — just like the ads.

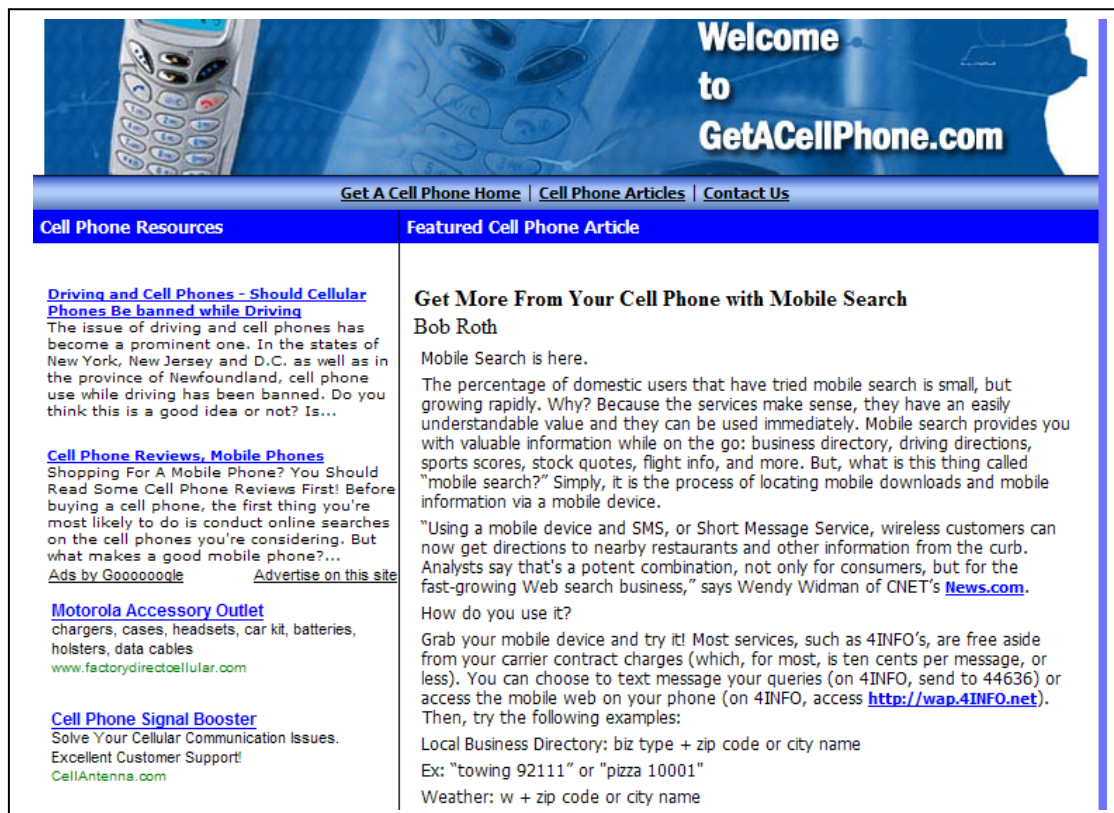Make the rest of the page look like the ads and you'll do some great matching.

Fig. 25.11 Play "spot the ads" at GetACellPhone.com.

25.10 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.

Fig. 25.12 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".
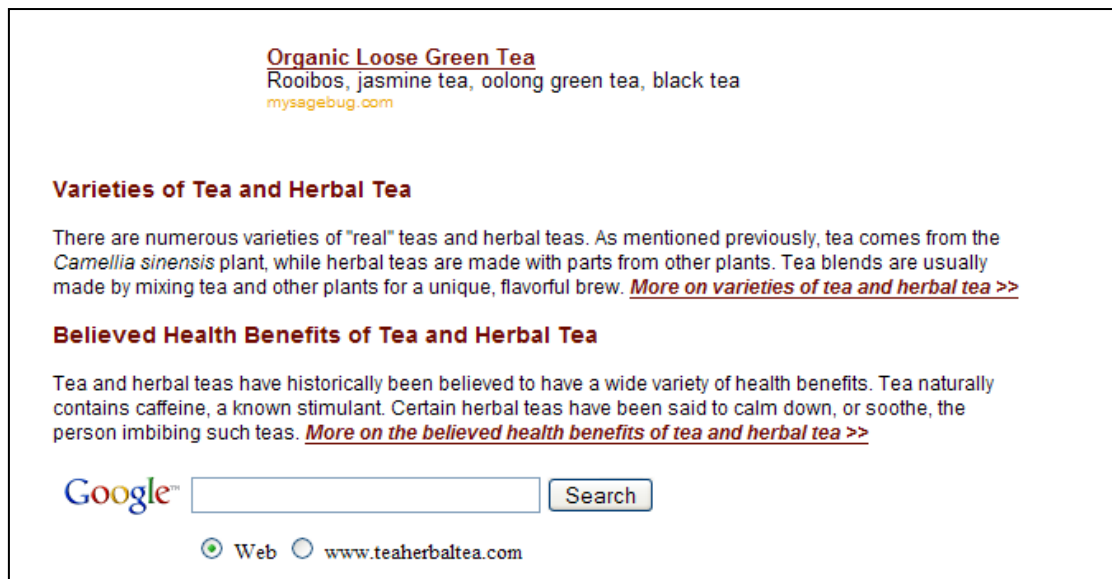
Fig. 25.13 …and rounding it all off with a search box.

25.11 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. 25.14 Just a perfect example of a camouflaged ad unit. How long did it take you to find it?

25.11 Mixing AdSense With Kontera On DealOfDay.com

Ever since Google changed its policy to allow publishers to combine different ad programs on the same page, finding ways to make the most out of multiple ad units has proved an exciting challenge.

I talked about how I blend horizontal ad units into my forum on DealOfDay.com but recently, I've also been playing around with adding Kontera's ads on those pages too.

Earning revenue from forums isn't easy. I'm more likely to plan a forum as a way of supplying a service to my readers and building a community than as a way of earning income. People are just too focused on looking for answer to their questions to spend their time clicking ads. CPM ads often do better here.

But blending AdSense into the forum can work very well. And now I've found that adding link ads helps even more.

Notice how the two sets of ads look different and offer different things too. The AdSense ads look like category headings. In fact, this thread category was specifically about bargains on baby products, so I couldn't have asked for a better keyword there.

The Kontera ads though focus on specific products. That's their strength, and that's why it pays to use highly targeted terms when you're using Kontera (so "Tylenol" not "painkiller," "Playstation" not "video game system").

The result on this forum was that I got to offer my readers a range of different types of ads… and picked up two different kinds of income.

Fig. 25.15 Increasing my earning potential by combining ad systems on the DealOfDay.com forum.

25.12 Google Ads And eMiniMalls At GPSReview.net

Of course, Kontera isn't the only extra revenue source that you can use with AdSense units. For many sites, Chitika's eMiniMalls can make a very profitable addition.

GPSReview.net is a great example of the sort of site that can benefit the most from Chitika's services — as well as a great example of the right way to do it.

And again, it's a very simple optimization.

The first thing to note about the site though is that it's product-related. Sites that focus on products are always going to be the best option for eMiniMalls. Chitika produces very specific ads that will appeal most for people looking for products rather than simply further information. That's what AdSense does, and like Kontera, it's why Chitika's ads work so well with Google's.

Fig. 25.16 AdSense finds eMiniMalls at GPSReview.net.

That doesn't mean though that you can only put eMiniMalls on product-related sites. You can put them on any site. But publishers with pages that talk about products are likely to see the best results with them.

There's no reason, in fact, that you couldn't add a sub-directory to your website that offers reviews of the products related to your topic. So if you blog about television shows, you could offer DVD reviews. If you write about mortgages, you could offer reviews of home furnishings. If you write about coffee, you could offer information about coffee machines… and provide ads that let people buy them.

Once you've done that, you'd be able to copy what Tim Flight of GPSReview.net has done on his site.

Tim has put a big leaderboard right across the top of the page. By giving it a frame that matches the rest of the site, he's done a great job of blending it in and it's in a very prominent position.

And do you see how it's only showing one ad?

That's probably because he's been site-targeted by an advertiser who's prepared to pay a premium to be sure of appearing on Tim's site.

Tim has then placed a small eMiniMall between the title and each content article so that it looks like part of the post. It's totally unmissable — and raised his income by 200 percent!

Personally, I'd have gone a little further and experimented with a well-blended AdSense half-banner at the bottom of each post to give readers a place to go if they don't want to go to the article. (On the article itself, Tim prefers to use another eMiniMall, followed by a Recommended Product Unit, an exclusive link unit supplied by Chitika to select publishers).

I'd also want to put a small link unit in the sidebar… but that's just me. Even keeping it simple though, Tim's GPS site is earning him great revenues.

With AdSense though, you should always be looking for ways to earn even more.

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!

If you want to keep learning about AdSense, you might want to check out my AdSense and Internet marketing course called "AdSense Premier" This is my all-in-one course that teaches you everything I know about making money online!
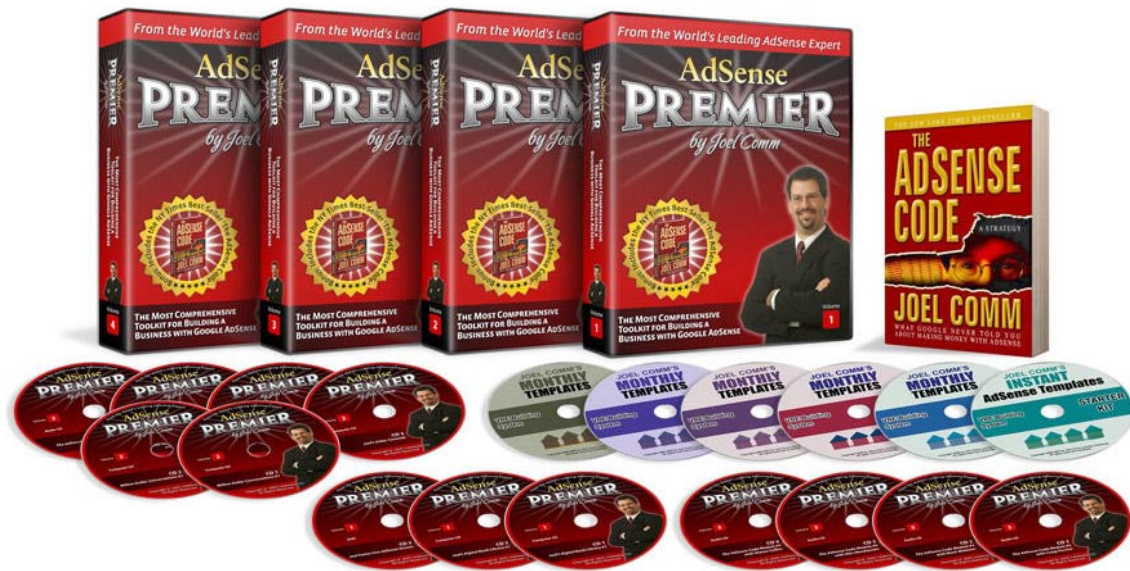
Click here for AdSense Premier!

Want to start a bit slow?

I'd like to offer you a FREE DVD of my live presentation. You pay only a low shipping and handling fee to get this one-hour presentation and enjoy it on your own television or PC.

Click here for your Free DVD!

May your AdSense revenue explode!

Joel Comm

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).

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.

Site Targeting — A strategy used by advertisers to choose on which sites they would like their ads to run.

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.

I regularly receive email from readers. Everyone is so excited when they apply my tips and see their AdSense revenue increase! Here are a few emails and comments I received recently.

"I hate 'Get Rich Quick' schemes - but by doing the 'quick' items covered in his book, I quadrupled my daily earning average. Yes, you read that right. My income went up *four* times!" — Raymond Camden (www.fusionauthority.com/Reviews/Article.cfm/ArticleID:4509)

"I don't know if you remember me but I was the "skeptic" that purchased your book a month ago. I wanted to give you the an update on the results of implementing some of the changes you recommended. In the month since Owning AdSense Secrets, my click-through rate has more than TRIPLED and my daily earnings have QUADRUPLED, just like the calculator on your page said! Thank you SO much!" — Name withheld by request

"I purchased your eBook yesterday. By 2:30 this afternoon I've already generated TWICE my average daily AdSense revenue. Although I've only implemented the first step recommended in your book, it looks like I've already tripled my AdSense income. Thank you!" — Kenn Nesbit

"I just wanted to tell you that I have tripled my stats after buying your ebook!" — Shawn Mcgarvey

"I really am benefiting from buying your book! My AdSense click-through rates have increased 100% within a week of using the tips and tricks from your book! I have already made my money back that I invested in your book. As a result I am presently making more money with AdSense on a daily basis than ever before. Thank you for sharing your insights." — Kamau Austin

"Joel, I bought your e-book, and immediately tried some of your suggestions. (From the time I started reading it, I couldn't put it down until I was done.) To say my results were exciting is putting it mildly. We made over $500 in March on numbers that are still climbing! I've never written a referral letter before, but your book was such an excellent value I felt obligated." — Chris Bartram

"Just writing to say "THANK YOU" for your wonderful ebook. I've increased my AdSense income by almost 300%, by applying your tips." — Bingwen Lu

> "I'm flat EXCITED about your book. I just downloaded it late last week, read it on Saturday, and started making your recommended changes in my AdSense Ads and some of the design on some of my sites to make the ads look less like ads. Unbelievable, but after only one day of changes on three of my sites, my click-through ratios have nearly tripled today! I have printed and read your book three times and plan to tell all of my clients about it." — Ed Hudson

I love to receive email like this and I hope you will take the time to write me and share your AdSense success story! You may send write me at www.AskJoelComm.com or call My toll-free testimonial recording line at 1-800-609-9006 x9257. International callers may use 678-255-2174.

May your Google AdSense revenues multiply! (That makes Google AND You happy!)