

University of St. Thomas Case Study

Tripling PPC, Advertising and Email Conversion Rates with Microsites



"Before ion we had anecdotal conversion metrics. Now we have 3x improvement, higher quality leads, more tailored campaigns and better forecasting. People believe it's a magic bullet."

-Mykola Sarazhinsky, Marketing Manager, The University of St. Thomas

BACKGROUND

The University of St. Thomas is a private, 124-year-old university based in the Twin Cities of Minneapolis-St. Paul Minnesota. The school uses pay-per-click (PPC), banner advertising and email marketing to generate leads for many of its 200+ non-degree executive education and professionals development programs. A core team of three online marketers: a designer, a content manager and a senior strategist were searching for a platform to empower them to manage and test microsites.

TARGETED, HIGH-QUALITY MICROsites

The University of St. Thomas is proud of their high-quality executive education and professional development programs. The problem was that their frontline web experiences weren't living up to the standards of the programs themselves. The University of St. Thomas had a user experience problem. They knew they needed program-specific tailored microsites to tell each program's story as clearly as possible. They also knew that their cobbled-together CRM + Website Optimizer solution was far too cumbersome and inflexible to make it happen. MVT wasn't working. They needed agility and practicality and they needed it fast.

The University of St. Thomas identified three core post-click campaign management requirements that needed to be satisfied by web-based technology:

1. The ability to deploy, test and manage a wide array of highly usable program-specific microsites
2. Actionable analytics enabling reliable testing and performance comparison
3. The ability to test forms, collect lead data and seamlessly link that data to their CRM

They chose ion's platform to help them reach their goals.

TRIPLING CONVERSIONS IN JUST A FEW MONTHS

The University of St. Thomas' three-person team quickly went to work. They had one version of a microsite launched in short order and, over the course of five months, they have tested 12-15 versions per program. The flexibility and speed afforded by ion's no-code approach to creating and testing enables them to focus on what they're testing instead of how they're testing it. The results speak for themselves:

- 3x conversion rate improvement
- Higher quality leads
- Tailored, long-tail campaigns
- Improved forecasting
- PPC, advertising, and email spend moved to most efficient vehicles, messages and keywords

ion's platform has given the The University of St. Thomas team the freedom to try completely new approaches.

Recent testing showed that video testimonials more than doubled conversion, extended time spent on pages and extended the number of pages browsed in the microsite. What started as a one-off idea has blossomed into a focused direction and powerful results. In addition to video testimonials, in just a few months, The University of St. Thomas has tested:

- Long-tail messaging
- Discounting and other narrow incentives
- Second-level segmentation
- Three levels of narrowing by user intent

Mykola says "Now the web reflects the quality of our brand and our programs. We never had that before". All in all The University of St. Thomas has deployed and tested more than 15 different experiences across over 20 campaigns. And they're just getting started.