



How Designer Hospital Gowns increased sales 20 percent in six months.
Case study : Designer Hospital Gown : www.hospitalgowns.com

The name of Cliff Shakun's website, HospitalGowns.com, may describe his product clearly enough. But it doesn't reveal his passion for providing colorful and comfortable designer hospital gowns and surgical caps. The customer testimonials on his site demonstrate that Shakun has struck a chord with customers around the world. Scores of people have written enthusiastic endorsements and heartwarming stories about facing health emergencies and anticipated surgeries, and how much better things seem to go when wearing his memorable designs.

Doctors, dentists, veterinarians, nurses and other healthcare professionals also buy his surgical caps to inject some color and fun into their workplace. Perhaps the mission statement on the site says it best: "Our lives are measured in memories, not in time, so our products are made with love and pride to form a shield of protection in life's most challenging moments."

Approach

HospitalGowns.com's sales are mostly to individuals and family members when they want to brighten up a hospital stay or recuperation. Prior to online advertising, the four-year-old business relied strictly on word of mouth for sales. At first, the plainly descriptive name gave Shakun a reasonable amount of business. But people need Hospitalgowns.com products for a specific and limited time, so many merely visit the site once, and might return to buy.

To increase sales, the company needed to get in front of more prospects so they would return to buy when the need arose. He did so by initiating a Google AdWords™ program in June 2002. "It only took 5 minutes to sign up, and under half an hour to set up my whole campaign and go live with an ad," he says.

Results

In less than six months, traffic at HospitalGowns.com has increased dramatically, from under 6,000 visitors a month to 10,000 today. Fully half of these are referred by Google searches. Shakun believes this is casting his net wide – and productively. "It's worth it to have that AdWords billboard on the Google highway," he says. "I'm getting four times as many people 'driving by' on Google than anywhere else." But, he continues, "The number that matters is clickthrough – and now [in Dec. 2002] I'm getting 6.1 percent. That is really, really good."

Using just 10 keywords, Shakun reports a 20 percent sales increase in just six months. "Those results are more than impressive," he says. "They're stunning." The company is also seeing a greater volume of international business. "I just sold 100 surgical caps in Sweden," he says, and other orders this month have come from Nicaragua, Venezuela, Germany, Puerto Rico and Italy. "With Google's help, I'm able to help people all over the world."

Shakun says he's been won over by keyword advertising using Google AdWords. "Google's only going to get bigger, and that means I'm going to win even bigger. I'm paying a very, very reasonable price to get many new eyeballs, and eventually, I will convert them to sales." Showing his entrepreneurial spirit, Shakun continues: "It's a big deal when a basic small businessman can compete with the big guys toe to toe."