



How Vavra's Made in Italy clothing import business quit banner advertising and tripled sales in six months.

Case study : Vavra's Made in Italy : [www.VavralItaly.com](http://www.VavralItaly.com)

### Business

For more than 15 years Las Vegas entrepreneur Ge'Lena Vavra worked in radio, television and advertising, all the while cultivating a personal style she describes as "clotheshorse." In 1999 her interest in fashion and shopping led her to start selling consigned clothing on a large auction site. Vavra quickly discovered that it's "extremely rewarding to sell a tangible item like clothing." Her years of clothes-buying also convinced her that "the extreme markup for retail clothing is both excessive and unnecessary." She felt so strongly about this that she quickly evolved her hobby from selling consignment to selling imported new Italian clothing for men.

Just three years later, Vavra's Made in Italy <[www.VavralItaly.com](http://www.VavralItaly.com)> is a seven-figure business complete with a warehouse and showroom. Vavra now deals exclusively in current-year Italian designer wear for men ranging from suits and dress shirts to sweaters and accessories, all of which she buys through wholesalers and importers. They verify the authenticity of the designer goods and ship directly to her. Her stated goal is to "offer the best quality at a fair price without overpaying, with personal customer service unlike large outlet websites. Customers should feel as if they're shopping at a boutique from the comfort of their home." With her low overhead, Vavra's prices are 50-70 percent below standard retail, and she still makes a very comfortable margin. A staff of two and a half fulfills the orders.

### Approach

Based on her initial success selling apparel via online auction, Vavra opted to create a vehicle for direct sales to grow her business from intermittent avocation to full-time vocation. She launched the Vavra's Made in Italy site late in 2001. Marketing consisted largely of a banner advertising campaign through a major ISP, a two-month experiment that yielded a \$6,000 ad invoice – and no new customers. Equally frustrating was the fact that she could not easily manage the campaign or track user activity. Thinking that meta tags were a key to success, Vavra attempted to have her webmaster optimize the keywords for the site within numerous directories and search engines. He dissuaded her, knowing that such optimization is a constant, labor-intensive process that may yield neither sales nor qualified leads.

Before launching her own web business, Vavra was spending nearly 20 percent of gross revenues each month on various advertising and listing fees at the auction site. After her own site opened, Vavra discovered Google AdWords™. Hoping for a better result than she had seen with banner ads, she started her first campaign using simple keywords, including designer names ("Hugo Boss") and descriptors ("men's suits").

### Results

Vavra soon noticed that Google AdWords effectively targets prospective buyers. "I get more qualified buyers by advertising on Google," she says, "people who are ready and able to buy when they come to my site." She learned how easy it is to create and post keyword-based ads that go live within just a few minutes of setup. Vavra also learned to eliminate keywords that don't perform well in terms of clickthrough or conversion. Monitoring traffic and ordering patterns, Vavra discovered that men shop at the office on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Through Google AdWords, the number of these shopping excursions quickly led to a large increase in orders. Three years ago, Vavra processed the occasional weekly purchase. Today, she fulfills a minimum of 10 orders each day. "Since last May, sales have increased 20 percent every month," she says. At the end of 2002, Vavra learned

that her business had broken the \$100,000 mark in monthly sales. "Who do I have to thank? Google!"

Equally satisfying, Vavra notes that instead of spending 20 percent of her revenue for advertising programs as she once did, Google AdWords has dramatically lowered her cost of advertising to just 5 percent. Vavra can now manage her web business more strategically and effectively than ever. She controls the total spend and can adjust it any time her business demands. "Google AdWords is a godsend," Vavra says, "and I expect to have a long-term relationship with the program."