

Google Rallies Embattled Travel Marketers

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With the travel industry already feeling the pain of the economic downturn, Google on Wednesday convened more than a hundred travel marketing executives at TravelThink 2008 to offer strategies for boosting business, as well as to get feedback.

As one of the industries to embrace search early on, travel has become a key business category for Google, and the search giant plays a big role in driving business to travel companies large and small. Penry Price, vice president for advertising sales, North America for Google, described how search is a core consumer behavior in the travel industry, and how new technologies can create new ways to reach customers.

In survey findings presented by JupiterResearch at Google's TravelThink event in New York, 94% of travel executives said online advertising would provide the strongest return on investment compared to other media in the next 12 months. Some 20% of travel advertisers will spend more than \$10 million in online marketing this year, and more than half will spend \$1 million or more.

Search engine optimization was the top marketing tactic along with e-mail, according to the study commissioned by Google. "Search is like your Yellow Pages, billboard--everything all wrapped up in one," said Emily Riley, a senior analyst at Jupiter.

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