

SPG Solutions Enters Pay-Per-Call Arena

by Shankar Gupta, Tuesday, Mar 15, 2005 7:00 AM EST

MARKETING TECHNOLOGY COMPANY SPG SOLUTIONS is launching its own pay-per-call technology for online publishers, the company said Monday. The company intends to sell the product, called ZiffLeads, to publishing sites, which will be able to offer this marketing option to advertisers. Pay-per-call is aimed at serving the millions of small and medium businesses in America that don't have Web sites, but still want to benefit from online advertising and e-commerce. It follows a similar model to pay-per-click, with ads posted on a publisher's Web site, but the advertiser doesn't pay unless the customer makes a telephone call.

Another pay-per-call player, Ingenio, signed a deal with AOL in January to provide technology for pay-per-call ads served on AOL's search pages, starting in April. "AOL's stepping up because we have a lot of confidence in the model," AOL's Executive Director for Search and Navigation, Brendan Benzing, said during a panel on pay-per-call at this month's Search Engine Strategies Conference. "At the end of the day, businesses know the value of a call, and they're willing to pay."

SPG Solutions founder and CEO Gopesh Kumar said that ZiffLead's technology platform offers users a number of customization options. For instance, partners can adopt a bid-per-placement system similar to pay-per-call competitor Ingenio's, but might also choose other options, such as a flat, pay-per-call scheme or a set rate bundled with other advertising options, Kumar said. "They can use this technology platform to incorporate it any way they want, and we provide the Web interface," Kumar said. "That's where this current leads technology is creating a lot of interest with these partners." And the way in

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which the call is placed is also customizable, Kumar said. ZiffLeads offers two options. The first option, which is also used by competitor Ingenio, is to assign a toll-free 800 number to the ad, and when a customer calls the number, the call is tracked and the client is billed.

The other option is to add a function on the Web site that will connect the customer and the client without either party having to dial a number. The customers enter their name and phone numbers, and whatever other personal data the client wishes to solicit; customers are automatically called at the numbers they provided. After that call is accepted, the client's phone is dialed in, connecting the customer and the client.

ZiffLeads has also included an application programming interface, which allows clients to further customize the second option. If the client's site already collects the necessary personal data, they can program a 1-click call, without the necessity of the customer entering their phone number.

According to Kumar, ZiffLeads has already signed up four clients for the technology platform when it launches tomorrow, coming from sectors such as real estate and finance. They are also in talks with the major local search engines, he said.

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