



LateRooms uses Google Maps to provide its customers with a richer, more rewarding visit to its website

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Andrew Pumphrey
Head of Marketing



ABOUT GOOGLE ADWORDS

Google AdWords is the world’s largest search advertising programme, currently used by thousands of businesses to gain new customers cost-effectively. AdWords uses keywords to precisely target ad delivery to web users seeking information about a particular product or service. The programme is based on cost-per-click (CPC) pricing, so advertisers only pay when an ad is clicked on. Advertisers can take advantage of an extremely broad distribution network, and choose the level of support and spending appropriate for their business.

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Based in Manchester, LateRooms.com is the hotel industry’s late availability database, offering over 500,000 deals across the UK and worldwide. Popular with both business and leisure travellers, its range of accommodation is huge – over 14,000 properties, including everything from luxury 5* hotels to bed and breakfasts. LateRooms was launched in 1999 and since 2002 has advertised on the Google search and content networks using AdWords. While preparing for a revamp in 2005, it carried out research to find out exactly what its customers wanted from its site. The most common response was more information – pictures, where the hotel is located, directions – while maintaining the LateRooms look and feel of being able to compare properties on a grid. To accomplish this, LateRooms looked to integrate a mapping solution onto its website, and decided to use Google Maps.

“Google Maps offered a good-value solution,” says Andrew Pumphrey, Head of Marketing, “and an attractive solution – one that fitted well with our branding. The API was free, which was a very strong factor and continues to be, and Google Maps was a good opportunity to give our customers something quite cutting edge at that time.”

By integrating Google Maps with its own search functionality, LateRooms was able to offer customers the wealth of information they desired. “We added hotels to the map, plotted their locations, and offered the zoom-in and zoom-out functionality and satellite images of Google Maps.” Before incorporating Google Maps, LateRooms’s search was keyword-based, which was not always completely accurate. Using the geo-coding built into Google Maps has allowed the company to offer a more robust search and user experience. “You can see exactly how far from the centre of the place you’re visiting the hotel is,” explains Pumphrey. “That’s worked very well, and is very popular with customers. To be able to add more functionality to our search – say, selecting hotels within a one or two mile radius– has really helped us. You’re able to get a much better range of results. The interaction between the Google Maps API and our own systems has worked well.”

All of this added value has been acquired without jeopardising the familiarity or the usability of the LateRooms site, which has been developed over the company’s lifetime. “It’s very important that people can see what LateRooms is about straight away, in one window, when they visit the site,” explains Pumphrey. “Google Maps fit into our website design very well. It doesn’t stand out too much, or slow the website down, or detract from the brand or what the site is about.” LateRooms even brought its own brand into the mapping, by including its logo on the markers indicating a hotel’s location. “The fact we can overlay our own information [such as prices] makes it very interactive for the user.”

Pumphrey says the company has been very happy with how Google Maps has been implemented. “It’s a useful tool for the customer, and the option it provides adds to their user experience.”