

Local SEO and Google Analytics case study: Ekland Solar

Michael’s work resulted in, “A measurable increase in direct enquiries from serious, viable customers looking for our services.”

This case study describes my success with a 3 month local SEO project for a small, Devon based B2C who hired me.

Background

Ekland Solar, who [install solar panels in Devon](#), hired my company, [360 Thinking](#) for 3 months to [boost their search engine traffic](#). Their 6 month old website was already performing well, but due to the competitive local market, they needed more traffic to generate leads for their business.



Outcome

Organic Search Traffic

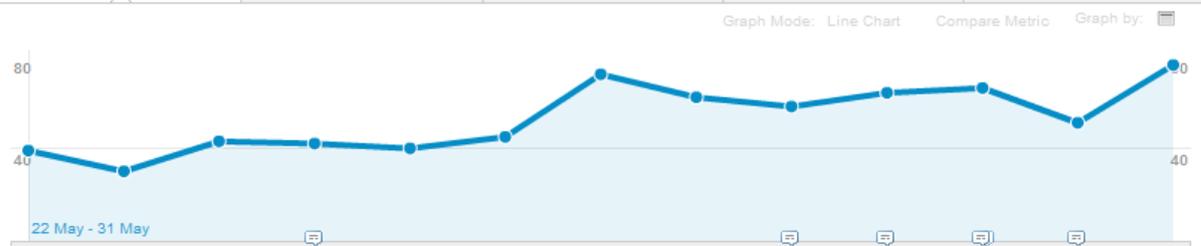
63.53% of Total visits

22 May 2011 - 20 Aug 2011

Explorer

Site Usage Goal Set 1 Goal Set 2 E-commerce

Visits ● 688 % of Total: 63.53% (1,083)	Pages/Visit 2.93 Site Avg: 2.71 (8.29%)	Avg. Time on Site 00:02:32 Site Avg: 00:02:27 (3.38%)	% New Visits 70.49% Site Avg: 64.73% (8.91%)	Bounce Rate 47.09% Site Avg: 48.20% (-2.30%)
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Viewing: Keyword Source Landing Page Other

Keyword	Visits	Pages/Visit	Avg. Time on Site	% New Visits	Bounce Rate
1. ekland	61	3.20	00:03:39	57.38%	45.90%
2. solar pv devon	31	3.77	00:04:28	54.84%	29.03%

Weekly search traffic from May to September (Google Analytics)

My main achievement was to double search traffic and by the second month, there was already a significant increase in viable leads – the goal was to make 1 sale per week – and in one day alone they had 5 enquiries. After the contract ended, Ekland were ‘Very satisfied’, and hired me on an indefinite rolling monthly contract.

Details

As noted above, search traffic doubled in 3 months. Although their ranking for targeted search terms did improve, a significant amount of the extra traffic appeared to be from longer, more specific variations of the keywords (known as the long tail). The number of keywords receiving traffic increased in roughly the same proportion as the total number of search visits.

SEO Metric	April 2011	Sep 2011	Growth
Visits	280	400	+43%
Visits from Search Engines	129	261	+102%
Branded Keywords visits	37	49	+32%
Number of Keywords receiving visits	78	157	+101%
Contact Page unique pageviews	48	81	+69%

Despite already ranking top for their brand terms (except for Ekland, which was harder to rank 1st for due to competition from Britt Ekland!), after my marketing they received 32% more visits to their website from brand search terms (Ekland, Ekland Solar etc).

As my work was Ekland's main marketing initiative, it seems that this extra brand search activity was a result of return visits from people who had found the site through non-brand searches.

Contact pageviews are used above to indicate the commercial value of the extra traffic. This metric improved significantly, though not as much as the search traffic as a whole – it appears that a significant proportion of contact page views were coming from other sources such as Yell.

Later on I helped the client add submission tracking to their contact form to measure lead generation more accurately.

Techniques Used

There are two ways of improving a site's rankings: editing the site to improve its relevance in Google's eyes, and building links on other website to the client's site so the site looks more important and authoritative.

At the start of the project Ekland Solar wanted to improve its rankings without making changes to its site. This meant that I would focus on building links as a method of improving its rankings.

Keyword Research, Analytics and Data gathering

I combined rank tracking and analytics data to allow me to estimate the maximum amount of traffic possible for each keyword. Then I used analytics data, particularly the number of visits to [Ekland's 'contact us' page](#), to predict which keywords would provide the most leads from a top ranking.

Later in the project I helped the client add code to track contact page submissions, clicks on their email address and selection/highlighting of their contact details, as well as clicks on links to their social media pages. This provided additional goal data for estimating which keywords and traffic sources could produce the most leads.

Link Building

The more websites which link to a page, the better that page ranks in search results. Link building is a great option for clients who don't want their site changed, though the effect of links can be boosted further by changing the site to optimise its linking structure.

Once the client and I had agreed three keywords to focus on, I decided on a strategy for building links. There are a wide variety of link building methods, but some are only appropriate when a site has content which is of general interest. Ekland's content focused on its business, so it had a much more specific appeal, which limited my options. 360 Thinking can help its clients create content as part of its SEO services, but at the time Ekland was not ready to start creating more content for its site.

I decided to focus on the following link building methods:

- Commenting on industry and environmental blogs and news sites.
- Submitting a profile to local, industry and environmental directories.
- Blog posts on sites such as Blogger and Posterous.
- Link exchanges with related websites.

[Ekland Solar](#) were concerned about new links harming their online presence and reputation, and wanted to avoid putting mentions of their site on inappropriate or irrelevant sites. So I kept a log of all proposed links so they could be pre-approved. I used these links to help prioritise my link building by which targets were already indexed. Targeted keywords were used for link text, but varied slightly so as to look more natural and also to cover similar, related (long-tail) keywords.

Additional activities

In addition to building links, I rewrote parts of their Google Places page and added images.

I created a live dashboard plus a monthly progress report to show progress with link building, visitor volumes and conversion.

This showed that I was on track to exceed my initial targets early on in the project.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	02/11/2011 11:17:30	Start Date:	16/04/2011			16/07/2011			16/08/2011
2		End Date:	15/05/2011			15/08/2011			15/09/2011
3	First Day of Month:	22	Baseline Month		Last Month	Comparison (to baseline)		Current Month (Visits are Forecast)	Comparison (to baseline)
4	Overall	Links Built	0		7			5	
5		Links Submitted	0		25			2	
6		Visits	238		259	9%		333	40%
7		Visits from Search	138		259	88%		333	141%
8									
9									
10	Keywords	Visits	13		28	115%		65	400%
11	ekland	Average Ranking	2		1	1		1	1
12	google	Visits	6		8	33%		20	233%
13	ekland solar	Average Ranking	1		1			1	
14	pv exeter	Visits	3		0	-100%		0	-100%
15	google	Average Ranking	5		2			2	
16	solar devon	Visits	1		0	-100%		0	-100%
17	google	Average Ranking	10		5			5	
18	solar panels devon	Visits	2		5	150%		5	150%
19	google	Average Ranking	7		8	-1		6	1
20	google	Average Ranking	7		8	-1		6	1

Lessons Learned

1. Tracking conversions is crucial as the highest volume traffic sources rarely convert well. Adding contact form submission tracking showed which keywords, websites and towns were providing the most leads. This showed that the premium advertising with Yell was paying off as over 10% of their visitors from Yell were using the contact form.
2. At the start of the project I was not certain that link building on sites in the US would help Ekland's place page rank on local searches. Online research indicated that Google ranks Place Pages higher if their business's website has high authority from backlinks, and this project's results confirms that this is the case.
3. Optimizing the place page by adding keywords to its various fields, and adding more images, did not seem to provide much benefit.
4. Small changes in ranking often generate more additional traffic than expected due to the site improving its ranking for many related (long-tail) keywords at the same time.