

Microsoft® Online Services  
Customer Story:  
Staples

I am not  
a tax form.



Microsoft

## A solution for a taxing season.

Nobody likes tax season. A business owner needs to balance the books, settle accounts, and handle payroll—then, come April, there's more. And what about families with equally hectic schedules? With so many responsibilities, who has time to run around town in search of office supplies? But what if customers of all varieties had a way to easily find what they need online in preparation for the infamous April 15 deadline, and, at the same time, had easy access to an array of other products that make life more convenient year-round?

To help its customers reduce the headaches that go along with filing and paying taxes, Staples, the world's largest office products company, hosted a Web page dedicated to the ins and outs of the 2007 tax season. The page included a comprehensive calendar with key filing dates, a chance to ask a tax expert questions, and a list of tax breaks. The campaign also introduced visitors to other products that help both consumers and businesses manage their time and resources more effectively.

"Our goal was to make the tax season as painless as possible for our customers," says Todd Peters, Vice President of Brand/Technology Marketing for Staples. "At the same time, we wanted a way to easily reach our customers and a way for them to easily reach us to address their needs year-round."

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That's where MSN® came into the picture. Between February 2 and April 15, 2007, Staples ran display advertising on MSNBC, MSN Money, and the MSN Tech & Gadgets site that delivered a substantial return on investment for Staples. Overall, the campaign reached 7.2 million MSN users.

The MSN display advertising campaign was successful in capturing both offline and online shares of transactions and dollars from Staples' competitors.

"Our campaign reached a far broader scope of customers than we'd expected it to," says Peters. The millions of MSN users the campaign reached drove significant increases in both offline and online purchases, and online visits. "Our customers genuinely appreciated the convenience during the hectic tax season—and beyond. MSN made it possible for us to reach more people than we would have otherwise been able to."

The campaign drove a 38 percent increase of online sales from the people exposed to the MSN display advertising compared to the people who were not exposed to an MSN display ad during the campaign period. It also drove Staples.com buyers to spend more on average per transaction. While the campaign also ran on two competing sites, MSN emerged as the clear winner in terms of results for Staples and its customers, driving 61 percent of the overall results.

Exposure to Staples' display advertising also resulted in a significant increase in visits to Staples.com, which helped capture a larger share of engagement from competitors. than visits by people who were not exposed to a Staples ad. During the campaign,

there was a 20 percent increase in online visitation among those who saw the MSN Staples display advertisements, including an 11 percent increase in online visits from competitors' customers. Also, there was a measurable increase in online engagement during the campaign, with visitors to the Staples site looking at more pages and spending more time per page reviewing information.

But one of the most impressive results of the MSN Staples campaign is that it also drove offline purchases, inspiring people

The campaign resulted in a 22 percent increase in offline dollars spent per buyer.





to log off their computers and go to the store. As a result of the campaign, those who typically shopped at other stores now shop at Staples. Exposure to the display campaign was instrumental in driving additional Internet users to purchase and spend more at Staples stores, with a 29 percent increase in offline buyers. The campaign resulted in a 17 percent increase in dollars spent per offline transaction and a 22 percent increase in offline dollars spent per buyer due to exposure to the advertisements.<sup>1</sup>



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While the MSN campaign paid off handsomely for Staples, it also delivered considerable benefits to the company's customers, who were able to conveniently

navigate the tax season—and other year-round challenges that go along with running a business or a family—thanks to learning about Staples on MSN.

**Microsoft**

<sup>1</sup> Results based on a third party panel-based study conducted by comScore, Inc.