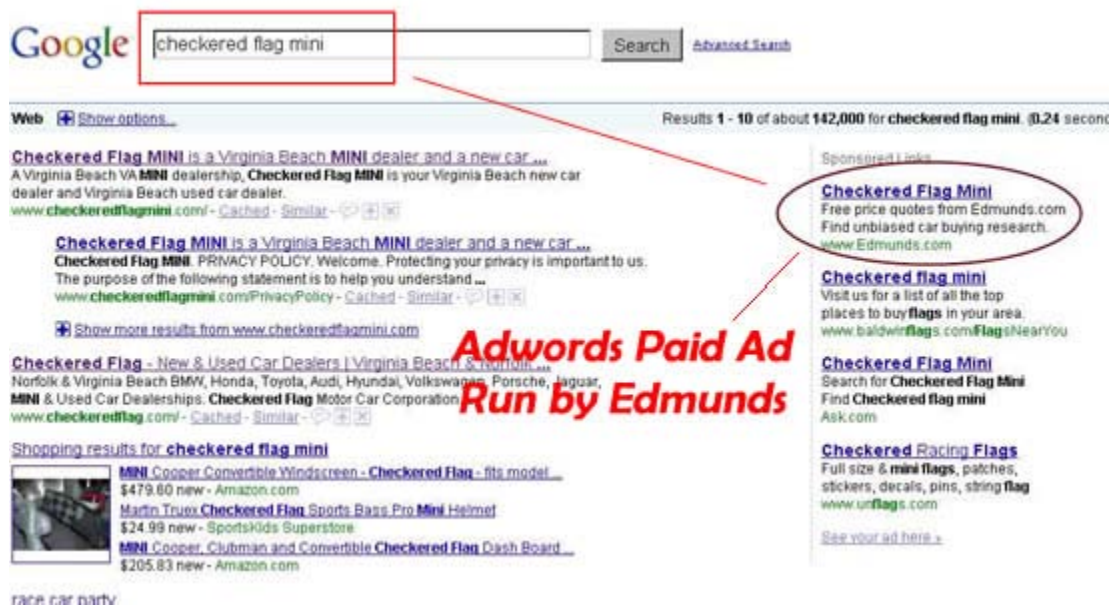


Your Online Brand is Leaking by Brian Pasch

Most dealers are unaware of the "brand" leakage and revenue that is being drained away from their own pockets every day online. A great post by Alex Snyder at www.dealerrefresh.com caught my attention. Alex is one of the few dealers that is now aware and very pissed. He's justified in his anger because the commonplace brand "leakage" took on a new face this past week.

[Alex's post](#) is well worth reading. Recently Alex was searching in Google for his own MINI store name (Checkedred Flag MINI) and he found that Edmunds.com was running a PPC campaign, in his own backyard, for his dealer name and the Ad was using his brand. See screen shot below:



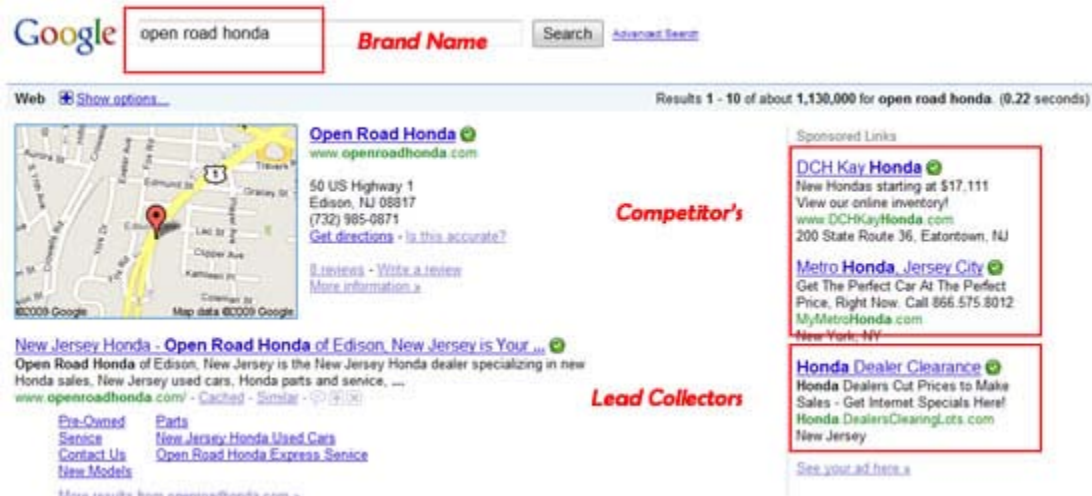
Alex did not authorize the use of their brand name nor could understand why a vendor he was already doing business with, was competing directly with his own Google Adwords campaigns.

Fight Back

This is the first time that I heard of Edmunds.com running PPC campaigns with visible dealer names and ads that target a dealers' own PMA. **Alex and members of the forum have suggested that dealer's unite** to get an official statement from Edmunds that this practice will stop immediately. If you feel the same way, join that action by sending an email to Edmunds.com sales representative.

All the reasons why Edmunds.com would run such a visible PPC program are unknown. However, there are a few very well known secrets that SEO consultants and online advertising professionals can share about the lead collection business that can shed some light on the practice. Lead reselling is a multi-million dollar business; you'll see why in a minute.

The fact that they used "**Checkered Flag MINI**" in their visible ad was **unprecedented**. Most PPC campaigns will buy the dealer name as a "keyword" and have a generic ad that claims that they can save money on their brand. Test it yourself and type in your dealership name and see how many people are running ads tied to that search. It did a test to show you an example below:



PPC Is NOT the Major Leak

I understand Alex's concern that Edmunds.com is using his multi-million dollar brand in a PPC campaign. The bigger question from an industry insider; "Is this really much different than what Edmunds.com and other content/lead collection portals, review sites and business directories have been doing for years via SEO?"

For example, type into Google "**Checkered Flag Honda**" and you will see on Google Page One a search optimized page for Checkered Flag MINI from Edmunds. This optimized page doesn't cost Edmunds anything when consumers click on the link. In fact, since it's on Google Page One and if your brand marketing is strong, this link would be clicked on a regular basis. Think cash register.

<http://www.edmunds.com/dealerships/Virginia/Norfolk/CheckeredFlagHonda/index.html>

On this page, you can post a review or get a price quote for a MINI or any car that competes with Checkered Flag MINI. Why would Edmunds optimize a page on their website for your dealership? Why would they take the time to create a page for most dealerships in the USA? Add review pages?

They are using dealer "brand" name to generate traffic and leads every single day. Dealers spend thousands of dollars each month to create brand awareness. For most dealerships this cost over time runs in to the millions of dollars.

Using [Automotive SEO](#) for lead capture pages has been going on for years and its a multi-million dollar business that drains equity from a dealer's brand.

“If dealers allow lead collectors on Google Page One for searches on their brand name, they diminish the ROI of their marketing budget”

Is using Automotive SEO to capture leads illegal? No. The Internet is still the "wild wild west" of marketing and savvy online companies are using SEO to draw traffic on established brand name. In fact, Edmunds.com is not the only online player that is draining the ROI on Checkered Flag MINI's brand investment.

YellowBot.com has an optimized page for Checkered Flag MINI :

<http://www.yellowbot.com/checkered-flag-honda-norfolk-va-1.html>

And so does Yelp.com:

<http://www.yelp.com/biz/checkered-flag-honda-service-department-norfolk>

So does SuperPages.com:

<http://www.superpages.com/bp/Norfolk-VA/Checkered-Flag-Honda-L0116347619.htm>

Notice how all three of the companies listed above are running Google AdSense to generate revenue on your name. In fact, Paul Rushing added a comment to Alex's original article on DealerRefresh.com that these 3rd party websites can be used in a competitive strategy. If these sites are optimized for your competitor's names, why fight them? Paul suggest that by targeting Adwords campaigns on these third party websites, it may be a cheap way to generate leads through the content network.

SEO Lead Optimization and AdSense Pages Are a Billion Dollar Business

The companies listed above are using Search Engine Optimization techniques using Checkered Flag MINI's multi-million dollar brand to generate Google AdSense revenue and/or to collect leads that they can sell for \$15-\$20 on the wholesale market.

These leads are then purchased by companies that we all know and sold to 3 dealers for a total of \$60. There are millions of dollars tied up in leveraging car dealership brand name. During the Cash for Clunkers program, my website generation thousands of leads over a 60 day period and were sold to brokers. I made money and so did the resellers.

The Edmunds PPC campaign is nothing compared to the **organically optimized pages** that Edmunds has on most dealers in the USA. The PPC ad's use of "Checkered Flag MINI" caught Alex's eye but the real money is that Edmunds.com is showing up on Google Page One for in the organic listings for searches on many dealer names.

When a website gets MILLIONS or unique visitors a month, can you imagine the millions of dollars that are generated by selling leads to car dealers? In Alex's case it looks like Edmunds just got a bit too aggressive to expedite the filling of their coffers.

As long as there are no "rules" about organically optimized content pages or profile pages, the only way to diminish the brand drain is to make sure lead collectors DO NOT show on Google Page One or two for searches on your brand name.

That's what I do for my clients who want to OWN page one. It is possible to push off of Google Page one third party lead collectors which will stop the brand drain from third party website.

Marlboro Nissan Fought and Won

If you type into Google "[Marlboro Nissan](#)" you will see that their dealership owns 9 of the 10 organic listings. The one that they don't control is DealerRater.com and we decided to allow that site to stay on Google page one. Marlboro Nissan has 275 reviews on DealerRater.com so this site is brand enhancing for them. Timothy Martell, Digital Marketing Director at Marlboro Nissan, hired my firm and [TK Carsites](#) to dominate organic search results in their PMA and our progress is very encouraging.

I want to thank Alex Snyder for starting this discussion because it's one of the lesser know reasons and a contributing factor why dealer websites **DO NOT** get the number of local leads that they should normally receive. As an SEO consultant, I would use the same techniques used by Edmunds to protect my client's brand.

Edmunds.com is **brilliant** in using SEO to generate revenue. I have used the same techniques to help my clients. They are very good at what they do for online advertising.

"This article is not an attack on Edmunds.com but a wake-up call for all car dealers that if they **do nothing** to guard their brand, one of many online companies will surround their brand and create a revenue leak."

How much leakage is going on with your brand?

About The Author



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