

About Us

**Bridgeline Digital**

Rapidly growing developer of unified web application management software and award winning interactive technology solutions

**iAPPS Product Suite**

- iAPPS Content Manager
- iAPPS Commerce
- iAPPS Marketier
- iAPPS Analyzer
- iAPPS Rapid Site

**Web Based Solutions**

- Digital Strategy
- Web Design
- Web Development
- SEO and SEM
- Managed Hosting

**Locations**

- Atlanta
- Bangalore, India
- Boston (Headquarters)
- Chicago
- Denver
- New York
- Philadelphia
- Washington DC



# Budget Rent-a-Car: Using Multivariate Testing to Improve Conversion Rates



## The Challenge

Rental car companies are in a fiercely competitive industry, with the major players vying for customers in a \$20 billion market, of which online bookings now contribute significantly. comScore Media Matrix reported that the online car rental category was the top-gaining online sector in the summer of 2008, with 6.5 million visitors during the peak summer travel period.

The challenge today for rental car companies is not only how to compete on features, service and price, but how to move an even larger share of their business online. In 2007, Budget tackled that challenge head on. It embarked on an ambitious plan to measurably improve the user experience with its Budget.com website and surpass its competition in the areas of customer experience, brand impact and overall customer satisfaction.

## The Objectives

Recognizing that its online channel represents a key customer touchpoint, Budget’s primary goal was to improve the customer experience at Budget.com and ensure that the site was both a reflection of – and a response to – the needs of its current and prospective customers. Specific objectives included:

- Improve customer service, making it easy for customers to quickly search and locate the most accurate and useful information;
- Increase overall usability, reducing the number of clicks required to find and reserve the right vehicle

- Improve the reservation process by making it easier for customers to compare different rates, thereby increasing the conversion rate;
- Strengthen the brand perception of Budget.

## The Solution

By focusing rigorously on usability and putting customers at the center of the design process, Bridgeline's user experience experts worked with Budget to identify the key factors that were driving user behavior on the site. A multivariate site testing tool implemented by Bridgeline enabled Budget to meticulously analyze consumer interactions with the site and let their opinions drive refinements to the user interface and feature set. Multivariate testing enabled Budget to test more than 2,000 different permutations of the home page and make both subtle and dramatic changes to the design based on observed user behavior. Budget continues to analyze and re-architect its site using this model, making incremental changes in direct response to user feedback.

A key interface enhancement was made to reflect Budget's shift in approach to customer service, which is widely considered a critical success driver in the online rental market. A context-sensitive search engine integrated by Bridgeline gives customers the option to type in a question and get three possible answers that most closely relate to the question asked. Photos and links are provided as well. To promote the search tool, Bridgeline's designers bumped up the size of the search box on the home page, which encourages more customers to ask questions.

To further enhance the user experience, Bridgeline assisted Budget in integrating a feature that instantly notifies customers via email whenever a promotion is offered that matches their profile. Using the Budget RSS Feed, customers can request to receive instant alerts for special offers for up to three travel destinations. If a lower rate for a planned destination appears in the RSS feed window, the customer can instantly click a link and lock in the new rate.

## The Results

Budget is recognized today as a leader among branded car rental sites in most customer experience rankings. In the 2008 Keynote Customer Experience Study for rental car websites, Budget beat out its competitors in virtually every user experience index, including overall customer experience, brand impact and customer satisfaction. In its detailed driver rankings, Budget finished first in Customer Support, Reservation Process, Design and Organization, Visual Appeal, Car Description and Details, and Locate Help. More panelists associated "helpful" with Budget than any other website in the study, which included online travel agent sites such as Expedia, Travelocity and Orbitz.