

PERFORMANCE MARKETING TO MAKE UNIT ECONOMICS FOR ONLINE EDUCATION SUSTAINABLE

How we used SEM & SEO interventions on Aakash's online learning platform (iTutor) to increase revenues by 30X, reduce acquisition cost by 16x, and improve organic traffic by 2.8x over a 9 month period

The Brand

Aakash iTutor is an e-learning portal of Aakash Educational Services Pvt. Ltd. The brand has emerged as a benchmark in the test preparation domain with its excellent performance in various medical and engineering entrance exams held across India. For the last 22 years, it has been producing 1st rankers in various Medical & Engineering Entrance Exams across India. The brand launched its e-learning platform, aakashitutor.com to make education accessible to those who cannot make it to the classroom programs and therefore scale the business.

Challenges

Being an online portal, digital as the primary source of customer acquisition is natural. However, the unit economics of customer acquisition using digital was not working due to a very high cost of acquisition relative to the revenue. The primary challenge therefore was to make the unit economics sustainable and then scale.

- **High cost per acquisition:** 2X spent on digital was generating 1X revenue. Digital marketing campaigns were generating large number of leads but conversions were abysmally low
- **Low conversion rate:** The volume of customers were also at a scale which did not make the e-learning business vertical attractive.

Objectives

- Get digital to yield better ROI and then scale the digital channel exponentially

GenY Medium's Category insights

The category is an high involvement category, therefore multiple touch points, persuasion at different stages of conversion is needed to convert. **Multiple, online-offline connects would be needed.**

The category required a habit change, which is always difficult and expensive to bring about. **Automation would therefore be key.**

Inducing trial and then attempting to sell the full-fledged product would be important. **Therefore 'sachet-pricing' would be needed.**

The comfort and confidence derived from speaking with a counselor would be important. **Therefore, a connect with a real person immediately before the transaction would help.**

Overall strategy

Short term

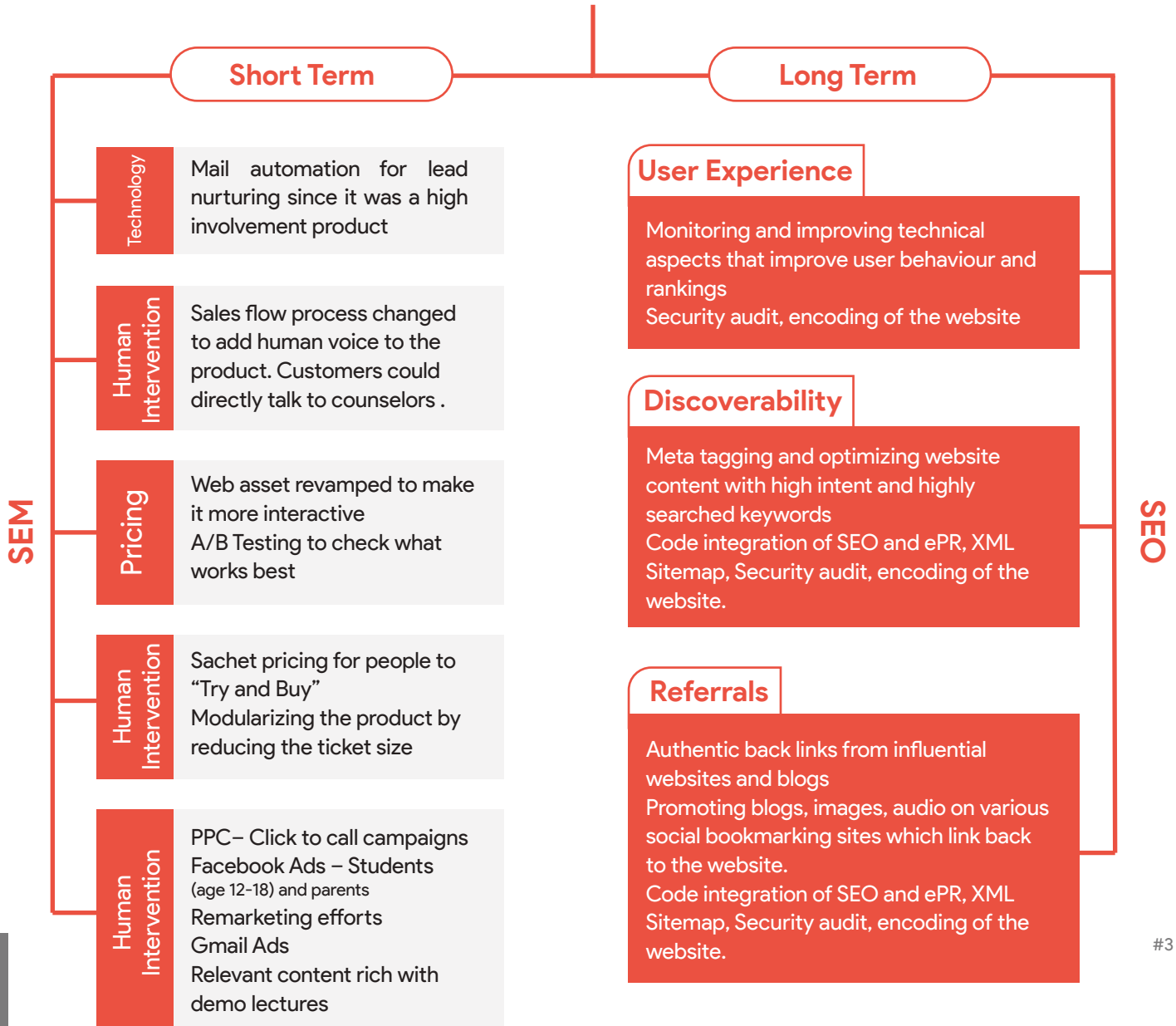
Fix the unit economics of customer acquisition through optimized paid campaigns and automated lead nurturing

Execute multiple experiments, A/B tests, pitch scripts to get to an attractive ROI

Long term

Work on a search engine optimization strategy so that the customer acquisition costs are brought down significantly.

Strategy



Creativity & innovation

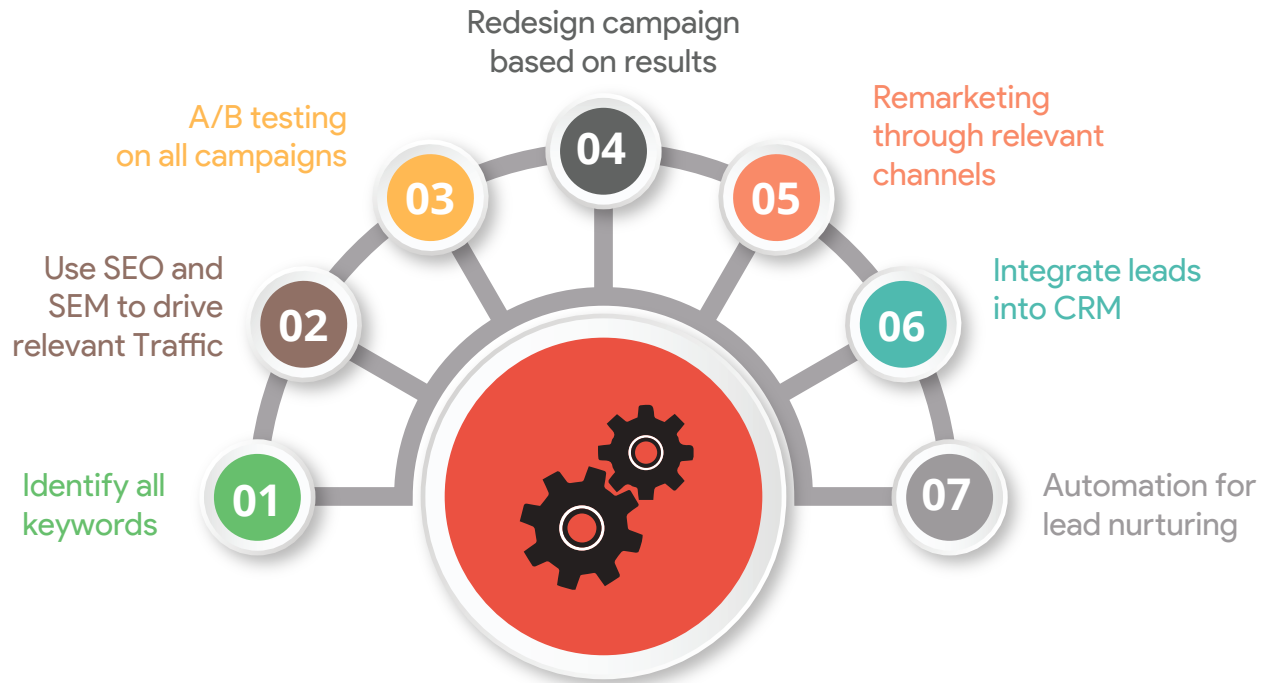
A/B testing was done over a period of three months. Source tracking was put in place to study all the leads and acquired customers. Based on those insights, path ahead was planned.

- **Tele calling process:** It was found that all the leads were sent to a common tele-calling team creating difficulty in tracking which leads came from digital
- **Communication:** Various types of ads were tested with focus on various features including larger logo sizes, etc.
- **Location:** Campaigns categorized to metro and non-metro cities to identify any impact of internet penetration on final conversions
- **Channels:** Various digital channels (search, display ads, social media) used with multiple targeting options

The experiments helped in identifying the major factors contributing to higher number of conversions. It was discovered that the channel **Click to Call** was generating maximum engagement. Consumers found it convenient to directly call the telecalling team if they found a “click to call” button.

Building upon this insight, new campaigns were designed. **The ROI from the campaigns witnessed a significant jump. Conversion rates shot up from 0.42% to 5.7%.**

Execution



Technology

Google Adwords – Advertisements through search and Gmail; display ads for remarketing

Zoho CRM – Leads management

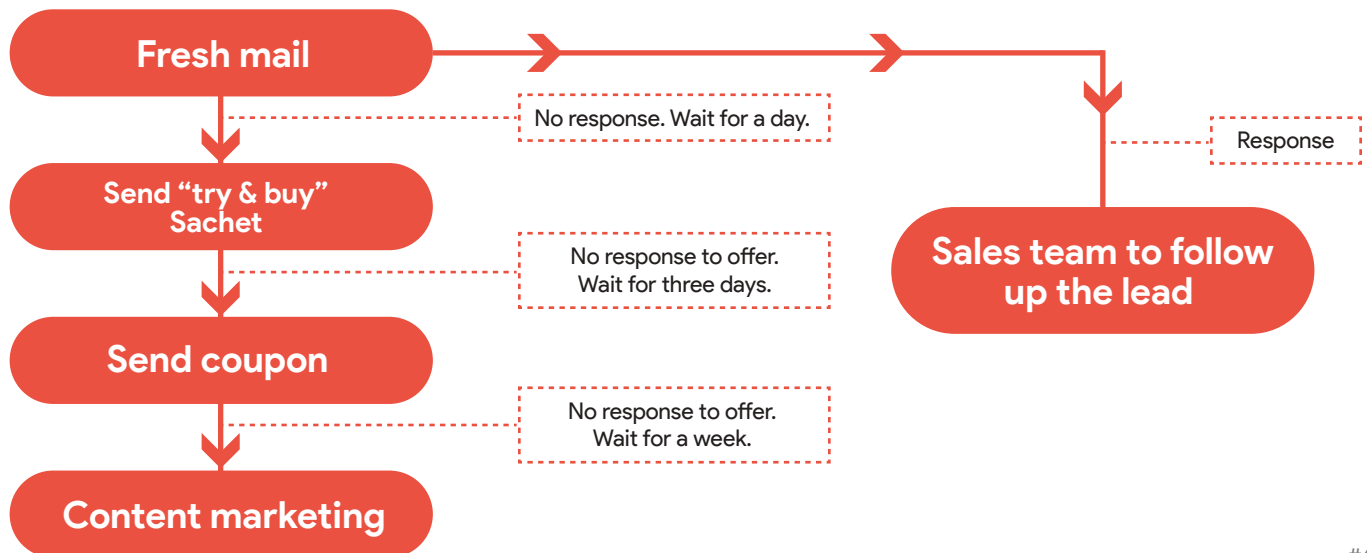
Facebook Business Manager – used for Facebook advertisements

Google Analytics – Analysing the website traffic

Google Webmaster – Analysing the keywords that the website was ranked for

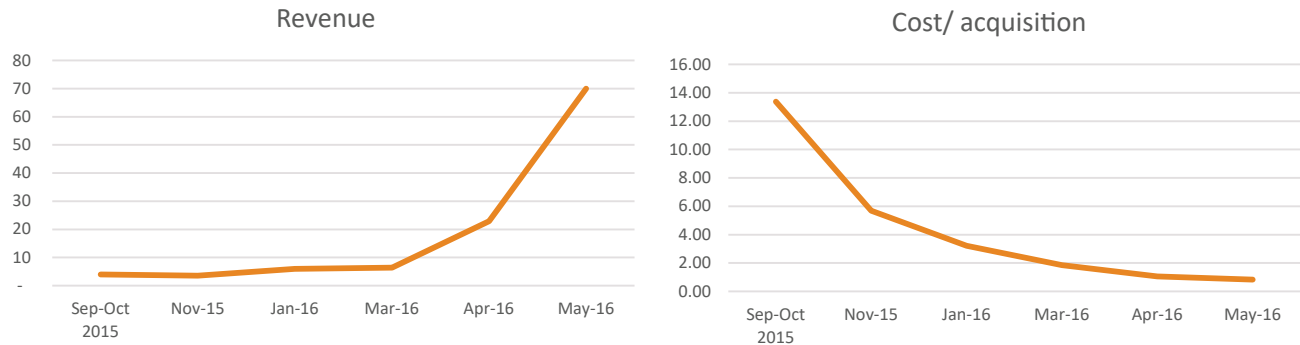
Virtual Mobile Number – Each “Click to call” linked to respective mobile numbers at the backend

Mailchimp Email Automation – Automation for lead nurturing



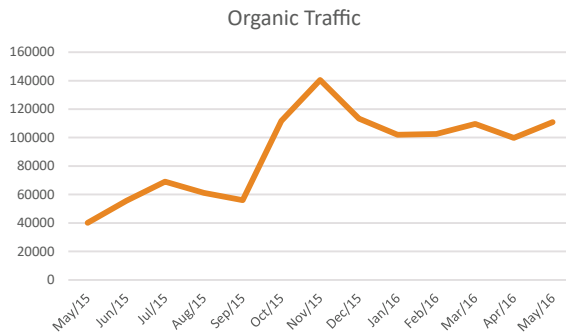
Results

Time taken to act on a lead reduced by 11X.
 30X growth in the revenue numbers and 16X decrease in the Cost/Acquisition over a span of 9 months.



Note: Figures are normalized to conceal actual revenue numbers

Improved rankings of all key coaching related keywords through SEO strategy.
 The organic traffic increased 2.8X during this period due to improvement in Keyword Rankings.



Keywords	May-15	Apr-16	May-16
iit jee online coaching	39	1	1
jee online coaching	30	1	1
online iit coaching	39	1	1
iit coaching online	52	1	1
iit jee coaching online	31	1	1
aiptm online coaching	27	1	1
online aiptm coaching	33	1	1
jee main online coaching	25	3	2
online iit jee coaching	31	1	2
online coaching classes for iit jee	31	3	2
online coaching classes	-	10	3
iit jee coaching	-	7	3
online iit jee coaching classes	33	5	4