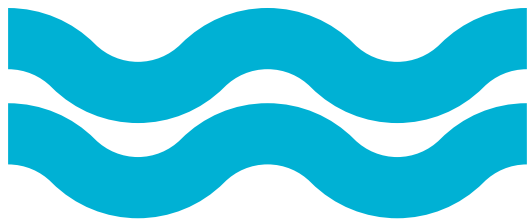


# ScreeningWorks Becomes a Resident Expert in PPC Advertising with WordStream's Guidance and Tools

How a small business with an online service leveraged WordStream's PPC tools to move from traditional marketing to online advertising while tripling sales leads and decreasing the cost per conversion by 75%.

**Challenge:** Prior to embarking on pay-per-click (PPC) advertising, ScreeningWorks relied primarily on traditional marketing channels such as direct mail. When traditional marketing failed to yield tangible results, they looked to PPC to help drive traffic to their website. As a small business, they felt they couldn't afford to hire an outside source to help develop their account and yet, they knew that needed more guidance than what was available to them online as do-it-yourself (DIY) tools.

**Solution:** WordStream offered an affordable solution to train ScreeningWorks on how to properly build their PPC program through keyword research and organization tools. WordStream's knowledge and expertise also helped to close the gap between analysis and action by showing ScreeningWorks how to process the data and take action on keyword suggestions, segmentation and more in order to continuously fine-tune their account.



**WordStream**

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# WordStream Industry Success

A case study in how a small business was able to move beyond traditional marketing programs such as direct mail and make pay-per-click advertising one of their most successful marketing initiatives.

## About ScreeningWorks

ScreeningWorks is a small business that provides online tenant screening for landlords and independent rental owners (IROs). ScreeningWorks makes tenant screening simple by performing a background check, credit check and eviction check in less than a minute and aggregates and translates information regarding prospective tenants into a single, easy-to-read report.

## Background & Goals

Prior to embarking on pay-per-click (PPC) advertising, ScreeningWorks relied primarily on traditional marketing channels such as direct mail. When traditional marketing failed to yield tangible results, they looked to PPC to help drive traffic to their website, where prospects can access an affordable service to screen tenants online.

ScreeningWorks created a Google AdWords account in April 2009 and hoped to see an immediate uptick in online sales. However, several issues prevented ScreeningWorks from obtaining their envisioned success. First, as a small business, they felt they couldn't afford to hire an outside source to develop their account. Instead, they referenced online do-it-yourself (DIY) tools to create one general group of keywords with one corresponding text ad. Next, they failed to establish a method to track web traffic or lead conversions to online sales. The lack of overall reporting made it impossible for ScreeningWorks to capture a snapshot of baseline metrics, making it even more difficult for them to make improvements going forward. As a result, they were spending approximately \$4,500 per month without any ability to see a return on their investment.

Several months after creating the account, ScreeningWorks hired Lauren Grinberg, Manager of Marketing and Product Development, to help manage and fine-tune the PPC campaign and measure the effectiveness of their efforts. Grinberg, who had used WordStream's PPC tools in the past, immediately turned to WordStream to help reconfigure the account, research and organize keywords, and provide expert advice on how to view and analyze PPC reports and take action on the results.

"There are DIY tools out there, but there are no further instructions on how to really maximize ad dollars. Companies are not sure which reports to look at in Google and even the reports themselves can be overwhelming."

Lauren Grinberg, Manager of Marketing & Product Development  
ScreeningWorks

## Challenges

As a small business, ScreeningWorks faced many challenges in PPC. With only one general keyword group and one text ad, and no clear PPC strategy in place, they quickly discovered how easy it was to waste money with AdWords. They were bidding on general keywords such as “rent” – this led to many irrelevant clicks, including visitors searching for apartments to rent. They were also spending more money by bidding on broad, highly competitive keywords. Keywords such as “rent” and “background check” cost more because thousands of other companies, with varying types of services, are bidding on the exact same terms. However, the team was unsure of how to accumulate longer-tail keywords and how best to integrate those keywords into the campaign.

“It’s tough to go through the data and know, ‘What does this mean, what can I adjust?’ There is a big gap between the data and taking action based on that data. Nobody is there to advise you on what action to take.”

Lauren Grinberg, Manager of Marketing & Product Development ScreeningWorks

ScreeningWorks also lacked any real system of organization, so keywords such as “landlord” were lumped in with unrelated keywords such as “credit check,” instead of being separated into two different groups. This hurt their Quality Score, as Google favors smaller ad groups with highly related keywords and corresponding text ads. Using one general text ad across all keywords also hurt their Quality Score and negatively affected their ad positions in search engine results pages (SERPs).

ScreeningWorks knew that they needed help, but with such a small budget, they wondered if they’d be able to afford hiring an outside source for guidance. Online tools weren’t helping much either.

According to Grinberg, “There are DIY tools out there, but there are no further instructions on how to really maximize ad dollars. Companies are not sure which reports to look at in Google and even the reports themselves can be overwhelming. It’s tough to go through the data and know, ‘What does this mean, what can I adjust?’ There is a big gap between the data and taking action based on that data. Nobody is there to advise you on what action to take.” What Grinberg really needed was a solution to close the gap between data and action.

## The WordStream Solution: Keyword Research & Organization for Long-Term PPC and SEO Success

Because Grinberg needed help building the company’s AdWords account but also wanted the ability to eventually take over and manage it on her own, WordStream recommended that ScreeningWorks participate in JumpStart – a sixty-day hands-on learning program that provides each client with a dedicated WordStream account manager to help them get started.

Once Grinberg agreed, WordStream Account Manager Robert Stanley got to work by demonstrating in “baby steps” how to set up an effective PPC campaign – beginning with how visitors are finding the website and then moving on to how to mine that data for the right keywords.

According to Stanley, “JumpStart is a way for small businesses to set up a strong PPC campaign and get expert-level results with minimal time and cost investment. JumpStart clients get active training on how to effectively manage their keywords and optimize their PPC campaigns. The ability to take the campaign into their own hands at the end of the program is a huge benefit for a company with a limited budget. It’s extremely cost-effective for them.”

Stanley first showed Grinberg how to add WordStream’s JavaScript tracker to the company’s website so they could track the keywords visitors were using to find it through search engines. As Grinberg collected and accumulated proprietary keyword data, she immediately began to see relevant verticals unfold such as “online tenant,” “online resident,” “landlord,” and “rental.” Now she had a place to start, based on real customer data.

Taking these different verticals, Stanley helped Grinberg break down their keyword groups even further and identify long-tail keyword terms. For example, the keyword phrase “for rent” could be entered by someone looking for an apartment to rent – which would be irrelevant for ScreeningWorks. Grinberg looked for more specific, targeted keyword phrases such as “online screening for my apartment that’s for rent.” Integrating long-tail keywords in the campaign provided an advantage because the company didn’t have to bid as much for less competitive keyword phrases. Also, because they are so specific, niche key phrases often reflect higher buying intent. In turn, PPC traffic to the website was more relevant, and these long-tail keyword leads were more likely to convert to online sales.

WordStream also helped ScreeningWorks implement conversion tracking to determine which keywords were translating into actual sales so that Grinberg could focus her efforts on the keywords that were generating results and not waste time on underperforming ad groups. Grinberg added, “I could spend an entire day looking at hundreds of keywords but that’s not a good use of my time. I want to focus my time on developing the most meaningful words – the words that drive qualified traffic to the ScreeningWorks website.”

“The ability to take the campaign into their own hands at the end of the program is a huge benefit for a company with a limited budget. It’s extremely cost-effective for them.”

Robert Stanley, Account Manager  
WordStream

## PPC Tools Filtering Out Negative Keywords & Irrelevant Traffic

As the campaign progressed, the WordStream tools allowed ScreeningWorks to effectively filter out negative keywords that were leading to irrelevant clicks. For example, “resident history” proved to be a complicated segment for ScreeningWorks. According to Grinberg, “We wouldn’t have suspected it without WordStream, but many visitors were searching for the history of the house or for the historical names of a house rather than searching for the history on a potential resident. We quickly discovered with the WordStream tools that we were wasting money on clicks from visitors who were not actually in search of the services that we provide.”

What made it tricky for ScreeningWorks is that they didn’t want to put a negative filter on “residence,” but they also didn’t want traffic from visitors searching on the history of a particular building. WordStream helped them to get around that by continuously segmenting the ad groups and creating negative rules for specific irrelevant keywords that continued to show up in the reporting. Each time the tools discovered an irrelevant keyword phrase, WordStream automatically suggested it as a negative term for Grinberg’s review.

“Part of the value of WordStream is that it’s easy to build a list of negative keywords. The process isn’t as intuitive with other DIY tools. In fact, we may have never noticed the effect of negative keywords with DIY tools.”

Lauren Grinberg, Manager of Marketing & Product Development ScreeningWorks

“Part of the value of WordStream is that it’s easy to build a list of negative keywords,” Grinberg said. “The process isn’t as intuitive with other DIY tools. In fact, we may have never noticed the effect of negative keywords with DIY tools. WordStream uncovered keywords that would have never come to mind, including various misspellings, and appropriately categorized keywords automatically.”

## WordStream Solutions for Trusted Expertise & Knowledge

Sharing knowledge was important to Grinberg. While WordStream was helping to set up the account, she participated in extensive training on various topics. For example, Grinberg was trained on how to identify keywords; how to pay attention to new keywords automatically suggested by WordStream’s tools; focusing on conversions; optimizing the content network and more. She was impressed with how each training session had a focus and her account manager always had new ideas and suggestions.

“I trust what WordStream is doing. The expertise level is amazing. I feel confident that they are there to support me and answer my questions. I’ve received a great deal of guidance from WordStream and I trust their experience to help me to be successful in PPC advertising,” Grinberg said.

WordStream's knowledge and expertise also helped Grinberg close the gap between analysis and action. Maintaining a successful PPC campaign is a continuous process, but it's easy to get lost in data without guidance. Stanley helped her to use the WordStream "actalytics" tools (a term that WordStream uses to describe the combination of analysis and action) to take action over time. Actalytics allows clients to view search-focused data on which keywords and results are most relevant to a search campaign's structure. The tools allowed Grinberg to process the data and take action on keyword suggestions, segmentation and more in order to continuously fine-tune ScreeningWorks' account.

"In working with WordStream, I felt that, even as a small business with a limited budget, I had an ally in helping me with my AdWords account. They helped me weed through the vast expanse of keywords and create value in my campaigns."

Lauren Grinberg, Manager of  
Marketing & Product Development  
ScreeningWorks

## Results

What first stuck out to Grinberg was WordStream's knowledge of the paid search space and expertise in effectively managing keywords. ScreeningWorks jumped from 34 keywords in one ad group to 14,000 keywords across 8 verticals with an average of 14 subgroups each. An account that previously had only one text ad for all keywords now has over 200 text ads. The "rental" vertical, for example, now has ad groups with highly related keywords such as "rental applicant," "rental check," "rental history," and "rental report."

Grinberg stated, "In working with WordStream, I felt that, even as a small business with a limited budget, I had an ally in helping me with my AdWords account. They helped me weed through the vast expanse of keywords and create value in my campaigns. Rather than me looking across an infinite amount of keywords, the WordStream tools uncovered keywords for me and even suggested how to break them down."

Grinberg also learned how to effectively manipulate bids. Stanley demonstrated how to review reports and identify the groups performing well to spend more there, while pausing the ad groups that were just burning money. As a result, ScreeningWorks was able to spend the same amount per day but get more for their money. Additionally, the level of granularity in their campaigns made it possible for Grinberg to bid at the ad group level rather than bidding on specific keywords. This saved Grinberg a great deal of time.

## WordStream Results

▶ **Decreased Cost Per Conversion**

Cut from 75% or from \$41 to \$7

▶ **Tripled Sales Leads**

Increased sales conversions by 37%

▶ **Decreased Cost Per Click**

Down by 38% in just one month

▶ **Expanded Keyword List**

Grew from 34 to 14,000 keywords

**End Result: Real ROI** - PPC advertising tripled the number of sales leads more cost effectively than traditional marketing programs and quickly became ScreeningWorks' most successful marketing initiative.

While increasing sales conversions by 37% (due to tighter, more relevant groups and an increase in Quality Score), ScreeningWorks was able to lower their cost per click (CPC) by 38% from December to January. They were also able to decrease their cost per conversion by 75%, or from \$41 to \$7 per conversion.

ScreeningWorks also stopped running their direct mail campaigns as they ramped up on AdWords and discovered that they were able to triple the number of sales leads from PPC advertising. What was once a potential waste of money is now ScreeningWorks' most successful marketing program. Grinberg attributes their success to a winning combination of negative keyword filtering and long-tail keyword integration. Grinberg concluded, "It's beneficial to have a tool like WordStream because PPC is a constant process of discovering and fine-tuning keywords. You never know what prospects are going to enter for a search query and how they are going to find you!"

## About WordStream

WordStream is a provider of innovative, integrated keyword management solutions that simplify complex search marketing processes. Our patented software provides search marketers with a private, scalable online workbench for efficiently and continuously conducting PPC and SEO tasks including keyword research and negative keyword discovery; search query analytics; keyword grouping and organization; search marketing workflow and prioritization; and relevant ad copy and Web content creation.

WordStream believes that organizing, prioritizing, coordinating and executing PPC and SEO efforts around a comprehensive, well-researched and up-to-date taxonomy is the key to achieving search marketing success. The benefits of using WordStream solutions include increased productivity and greater relevance, enhancing the value of both paid and natural search marketing efforts. For more information about WordStream keyword management solutions and to sign up for a free trial, visit <http://www.wordstream.com>.

