MakeupAlley.com improves user experience, grows revenue with a simplifying, reorganizing makeover.

MakeupAlley

About MakeupAlley
- www.makeupalley.com
- New York, NY
- Online beauty community, product review database

Goals
- Improve user experience
- Increase user engagement

Approach
- Revamped landing page with simplified design
- Grouped, highlighted affiliate links, related content
- Made product ratings, reviews stand out
- Reorganized AdSense ad units
- Used Google Analytics to conduct A/B test

Results
- 171% increase in on-site interactions
- 21% more clicks on affiliate links
- 50% lift in AdSense revenue
- Deeper understanding of using Analytics to assess user experience

Whether it's to trade opinions on a skincare line or to sing the praises of an underrated lipstick, beauty-savvy consumers do so at MakeupAlley.com. Founded in 1999, it's one of the largest online beauty communities connecting makeup and skincare enthusiasts all over the world. Users can consult more than two million reviews of upwards of 130,000 products while interacting with fellow cosmetics consumers. MakeupAlley.com earns revenue primarily from advertising and affiliate programs, and has been using Google AdSense since 2003.

Enhancing user experience with a light landing page makeover
Looking to improve user experience and increase user engagement on the site, MakeupAlley.com decided to test some simple changes to its main landing page. "The main goal was to better the experience of a new user who is coming to the site in search of information and reviews about a specific beauty or skincare product," says a MakeupAlley.com team member. To measure the effectiveness of this experiment, the MakeupAlley.com team set up Google Analytics Custom Variables to track and compare visitor activity, as well as Event Tracking to evaluate in-page interactions. The team also created custom channels in AdSense to track the performance of ad units.

Simplified, organized design puts critical content front and center
MakeupAlley.com's makeover focused on its main landing page, the product review details page. Using Google's tips and resources for publishers, MakeupAlley.com organized and streamlined its content and design to make relevant information easier to find. Knowing that most new users arrive on the product details page looking for ratings and reviews, MakeupAlley.com made the product name and rating statistics larger and more prominent, making it easier to gather product information at a glance. MakeupAlley.com also improved the organization of product reviews, restructuring the layout to separate review content from member profiles.

To encourage deeper engagement and provide more helpful information to users, MakeupAlley.com grouped and clearly labeled related content. For example, a "Where to buy" section at the top right of the page features affiliate links for purchasing products. A "Top Rated" section features other popular products in the same category, and a "Most Popular" section shows items currently trending on MakeupAlley.com. While reorganizing the landing page, MakeupAlley.com moved an existing AdSense unit to a more visible placement just below the navigation and created space on the page for a new ad unit.

Revenue lifts 50% from improved user experience, optimized site
To evaluate the results of these changes, MakeupAlley.com ran a month-long A/B test, splitting traffic between the original and new landing pages. By tweaking its landing page to be more user-friendly, MakeupAlley.com saw increased interactions from visitors, as well as a boost to affiliate link clicks and AdSense earnings. Featuring related content in a clear way helped grow on-site interactions, like viewing similar products and clicking on other categories, by 171%. Organizing

affiliate links in an easy-to-find "Where to buy" section generated a 21% increase in clicks on these links. And the new ad unit placements, combined with the improved user experience, resulted in a 50% lift in AdSense revenue. "We also received some user feedback that the site looks fresher and more contemporary," says a MakeupAlley.com team member.

The right tools and methods for continuous improvement

In addition to these direct benefits and improved usability, MakeupAlley.com also values its experience using Google Analytics to track user behavior. "We have increased confidence in our ability to use Google Analytics to perform A/B testing to see how users react to changes in the interface," says a team member. As site content and design continue to evolve, MakeupAlley.com is considering applying its landing page optimization takeaways to other parts of the site. As one team member adds, "We are excited to continue improving the usability of our site using this methodology."

Offer an excellent user experience with these best practices

Want to improve your site's usability and deepen user engagement like MakeupAlley.com? Try these tips from Google's UX principle's guide to create a great experience for your users. Simple changes can result in more interaction with your site and increased AdSense revenue.

- **Focus on your users' goals and your goals.** What are your users looking for, and what can you offer them? Focus on one or two of your site's key offerings.

- **Employ a clear structure to guide the user.** Give your page a simple hierarchy to guide users and highlight what you want them to see or do.

- **Ensure that users know what actions to take.** Always provide a clear next action, whether it's making a purchase or clicking on a related product.

- **Tailor your site experience to users' situations.** Are they visiting from a desktop or from a mobile device? Create an optimized experience for any situation.

- **Turn casual visitors into loyal users.** Keep them coming back for more by creating new content and staying in touch via social networks and newsletters.

Get tips and best practices for content and design from Google's Webmaster Guidelines: http://support.google.com/webmasters/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=35769

Learn more about measuring visitor activity with Google Analytics, Custom Variables and Event Tracking: http://www.google.com/analytics/

Learn more about using Google AdSense custom channels to group and track ad units: https://support.google.com/adsense/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=65083