

# **Securing Online Advertising**

Benjamin Edelman

# Banner Ads

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1:40 PM

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For every  
person there  
is a gift.

# The New York Times

Saturday, November 22, 2008 Last Update: 1:34 PM ET

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season, but for  
all time. Shop  
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Weddings/  
Celebrations  
TRAVELBlogs  
Cartoons /  
Humor  
Classifieds  
Corrections  
Crossword/  
Games

## THE 44TH PRESIDENT

### Obama Vows Swift Action on Vast Economic Stimulus Plan

By JEFF ZELENY and JACKIE CALMES 53 minutes ago

Barack Obama offered a broad sketch of a plan to create or save 2.5 million jobs by investing in public works programs and alternative energy.

- Text of Address | Video
- Saturday Word: Obama Aims for 2.5 Million Jobs

#### NEWS ANALYSIS

### Obama Tilts to Center, Inviting a Clash of Ideas

By DAVID E. SANGER

President-elect Barack Obama's reported selections for two major cabinet jobs suggest a preference for pragmatists, not ideologues.

- Clinton Is Said to Accept Secretary of State Position
- Fed Official Is Said to Be Choice for Treasury



Eric Grigorian for The New York Times

#### TRAVEL

### Ry Cooder's American West

By LAWRENCE DOWNES

El Mirage Dry Lake sounds like a place one step from nonexistence, but it's a critical stop on a journey into the idiosyncratic world of the influential rock and blues artist.

- Audio Slide Show: Journey to El Mirage Dry Lake

### U.S. Strike in Pakistan Kills British Militant

By ISMAIL KHAN and JANE PERLEZ 4 minutes ago

The militant, who served as a liaison to Al Qaeda, was a key suspect in a plot to blow up trans-Atlantic airliners.

### Shares Falling, Citigroup Talks to Government

By ANDREW ROSS SORKIN and LOUISE STORY

Options discussed included a public endorsement from the government to support Citigroup's bid to buy the bank.

#### SPORTS »

### College Football

The top storylines in college football, including the Big 12 showdown between Texas Tech and Oklahoma, are on the Quad blog.

- Video: The Pregame Huddle
- Utah and B.Y.U. Collide
- Unlikely Texas Tech Combination
- Scoreboard | More Coverage »



#### OPINION »

- Herbert: Veterans Comments (105)
- Collins: Bush Has to Go Comments (271)
- Op-Ed: On Eric Holder
- Editorial: Detroit Flails Comments (112)

#### BUSINESS »

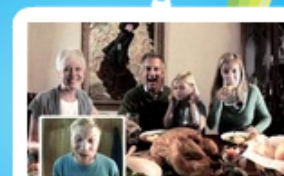
### G.M.'s Long Road Ahead

Joe Nocera examines the arduous road that General Motors would travel in bankruptcy.

Citi never sleeps™

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video calling.

sound on



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Address [http://inqwire.com/index\\_tiny.asp?st=6755&sc=947&lc=60&ld=20&sf=1&flc=5&fld=26&sp=0&fd=5](http://inqwire.com/index_tiny.asp?st=6755&sc=947&lc=60&ld=20&sf=1&flc=5&fld=26&sp=0&fd=5) Go Links



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\$44

weekend  
on SUV  
Chevy T

Find the  
weekend



# Universal – The Fun They Never Outgrow.



Kids Stay Play and Eat FREE!

```
<iframe src="728x90.asp?jscode=...">
```

```
<html>
```

```
<head>
```

```
<meta http-equiv="Refresh" content="9;  
url=728x90.asp?jscode=...">
```

```
<body leftmargin=0 rightmargin=0 topmargin=0  
bottommargin=0 >
```

```
<p align=center valign=bottom>
```

```
<SCRIPT TYPE='text/javascript'
```

```
SRC='http://ad.yieldmanager.com/rmtag2.js'></S
```

```
CRIPT><SCRIPT language='JavaScript'>var
```

```
rm_host = 'http://ad.yieldmanager.com';var
```

```
rm_site_id = 2578;var rm_section_code
```

```
=4400;var rm_iframe_tags =
```

```
1;rmShowAd('728x90');</script>
```

```
</p>
```

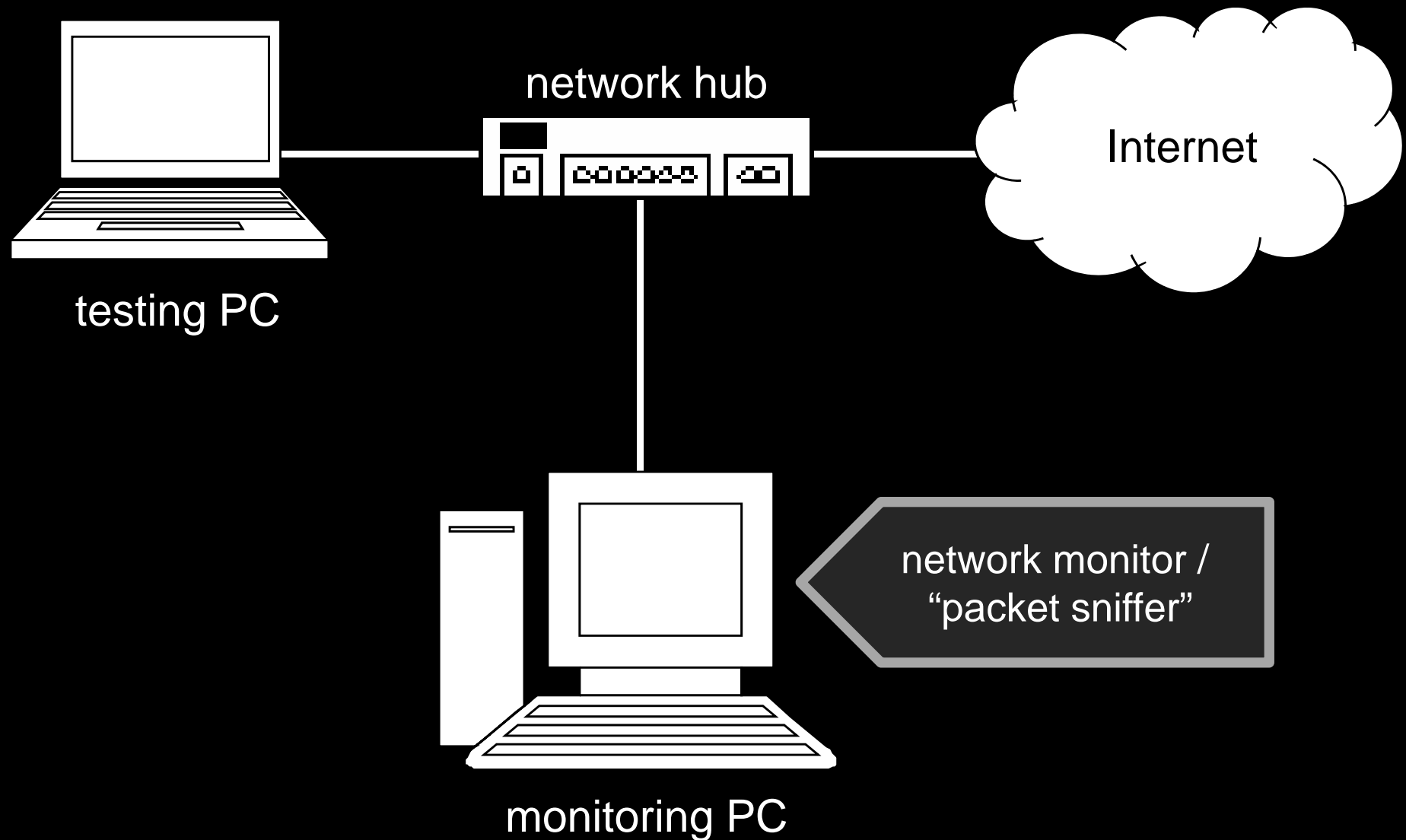
```
</body>
```

```
</html>
```

# Inqwire Ad Relationships



# Investigator's tools





Feb '09

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Go Links >>



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Wall Street Survivor™ is a product of Stock-Trak Group, Inc. (**OTCBB: STKG**)

Wall Street Survivor™ is the Web's best fantasy stock trading game and investment contest portal where players can manage their own fantasy stock portfolios and



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## 2 Rules To A Flat Stomach: (obey)



Done

Start



WIN \$50000 BUCKS IN...

Unknown Zone (Mixed)

11:09 AM

```
→ GET / HTTP/1.1
Host: www.mytoursinfo.com

← HTTP/1.1 200 OK ...
<html> ...
<script src="/js/counter.js" type="text/javascript"></script>
<script src="/js/stat.js" type="text/javascript"></script> ...
```

```
→ GET /js/stat.js HTTP/1.1 ...

← HTTP/1.1 200 OK
document.write("<iframe width=0 height=0 src='http://www.pointtrip.com/florida_tour.html'>");
document.write("<iframe width=0 height=0 src='http://www.fluentcall.com/pda_phones.html'>");
document.write("<iframe width=0 height=0 src='http://www.webhotshop.com/shopping.htm'>");
document.write("<iframe width=0 height=0 src='http://www.freebiespack.com/freebies_insider.htm'>...");
document.write("<iframe width=0 height=0 src='http://www.onlinemoneytrading.net/forex_trading.ht...");
document.write("<iframe width=0 height=0 src='http://flafungame.com/top_fun_games.htm'>");
document.write("<iframe width=0 height=0 src='http://www.multimediasolutions.in/digital_multimed...");
document.write("<iframe width=0 height=0 src='http://www.bxbex.com/Featured_Schools/index.html'>...");
document.write("<iframe width=0 height=0 src='http://www.ramblepace.com/denmark_travel.htm'>");
document.write("<iframe width=0 height=0 src='http://www.journeyidea.com/journey_tips.htm'>");
document.write("<iframe width=0 height=0 src='http://www.go-bay.com/search/cs_location.php'>");
document.write("<iframe width=0 height=0 src='http://www.willhealthy.com/willhealthy.htm'>");
document.write("<iframe width=0 height=0 src='http://www.fitnessan.com/bu.htm'>");
document.write("<iframe width=0 height=0 src='http://www.investdady.com/vc.htm'>");
document.write("<iframe width=0 height=0 src='http://www.9truck.com/semitrucks.htm'>");
document.write("<iframe width=0 height=0 src='http://www.healthykey.com/Bacteria-Improves-Your-I...");
document.write("<iframe width=0 height=0 src='http://www.volcars.com/hybrid.htm'>");
```

```
→ GET /bu.htm HTTP/1.1
Host: www.fitnessan.com

← HTTP/1.1 200 OK ...
<iframe ... width=728 height=90 src=http://www.fitnessan.com/code 728 90.htm>
...
```

# Relationships

advertisers



Ad-Flow   Burst   Icon   Rubiconproject   Tribalfusion  
ValueClick / FastClick   Yahoo / Right Media

ad networks

Pointtrip   Fluentcall   Webhotshop   Flafungame   Fitnessan   ...

ad loaders

traffic

Mytoursinfo

money

traffic loader

# Solutions to banner fraud

- Limit where ads may appear.
  - But networks prefer not to say.
- Enforce IAB standards on reload frequency.
  - Imprecise. AJAX-style apps challenge norms.  
Publishers can push the limits.
- Don't pay per impression.

# Paying per click

laptop - Google Search - Windows Internet Explorer

http://www.google.com/search?q=laptop

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

laptop - Google Search

Web Images Maps News Shopping Gmail more Sign in

Google

laptop Search Advanced Search Preferences

Web Shopping Groups Results 1 - 10 of about 232,000,000 for laptop [definition]. (0.33 seconds)

**Laptop**  
[www.BestBuy.com](http://www.BestBuy.com) Laptops Make The Perfect Gift. Shop Wide Selection Online At Best Buy®!

**Laptop at Circuit City**  
[www.CircuitCity.com](http://www.CircuitCity.com) Save up to \$150 on Laptops. Free Shipping On Orders \$24 and up.

**HP Laptops**  
[www.hp.com](http://www.hp.com) Find out about Powerful, Reliable & Affordable Laptop PCs from HP!

Related searches: [laptop deals](#)

**Shopping results for laptop**

<a href="#">Apple MacBook - Core 2 Duo 2 GHz - 13.3" - 1 ...</a>	\$1,185 to \$1,456 - 6 stores
<a href="#">HP Pavilion Dv6910us Entertainment - Turion 64 ...</a>	\$649 to \$940 - 18 stores
<a href="#">Lenovo ThinkPad X61 Tablet 7767 - Core 2 Duo 1 ...</a>	\$1,374 to \$1,736 - 21 stores

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LAPTOP Magazine is your complete mobile gear guide. We review the latest mobile tech products and provide expert buying advice, plus breaking industry news.  
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**Apple - MacBook**  
The new MacBook laptop features a precision aluminum unibody enclosure, more powerful NVIDIA graphics, a 13-inch LED-backlit display, and more.  
[www.apple.com/macbook/](http://www.apple.com/macbook/) - 18k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#)

**Laptop** - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

**Acer Laptops**  
Save More on Acer Laptops. Holiday Deals are at Walmart.  
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[Google Checkout](#)

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**The New Samsung Notebooks**  
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[www.samsung.com/notebooks](http://www.samsung.com/notebooks)

**Laptop Computer**  
Laptop Computer Sales. Discount Laptop Deals Online.  
[LaptopsComputersDeals.com](http://LaptopsComputersDeals.com)



laptop - NYTimes.com Search - Windows Internet Explorer

http://query.nytimes.com/search/sitesearch?query=laptop&srchst=cse

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

laptop - NYTimes.com Search

Welcome to TimesPeople  
What's this?

Share and Discover the Best of NYTimes.com

3:34 PM

Get Started  
No, thanks

# The New York Times

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All Results | Articles | Multimedia

1-10 of 10,000+ Results

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[ToshibaDirect.com/Laptops](#)

[Laptop at Circuit City](#) Save up to \$150 on Laptops. Free Shipping On Orders \$24 and up.  
[www.CircuitCity.com](#)

### Personal Tech: Computers

News about computers, including product listings, multimedia and articles published in The New York Times.

[Battery Maker Is Betting on Silver-Zinc for Laptops - Green Inc ...](#)  
Ross Dueber, the company's chief executive, says a top-tier laptop manufacturer will release the first computer designed to accept silver-zinc batteries in ...  
December 2, 2008

[One Laptop Per Child Gets a Marketing Push](#)  
Media companies are donating television time and magazine pages to help the organization's effort to provide laptops to children in ...  
November 17, 2008 By STEVE LOHR Technology

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Save More on Acer Laptops.  
Holiday Deals are at Walmart.  
[Walmart.com](#)

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Wireless Printers. Free Shipping!  
[www.shopping.hp.com](#)

[Laptops at TigerDirect](#)  
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\$1.99 Same Day Shipping, Shop Now!  
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[Laptop Computer](#)  
Laptop Computer Sales. Discount  
Laptop Deals Online.  
[LaptopsComputersDeals.com](#)

[\\$160 Off Laptop Computers](#)  
Save on Notebook Computers Now  
Great Gifts - Free Shipping  
[www.OfficeMax.com](#)

Done, but with errors on page.

Internet 100%



CPC gone wrong

# Click fraud

My Documents iWatchNow Media Center

C:\Documents and Settings\

File Edit View Favorites

Back

Address C:\Documents and Settings\

Name

- index.dat
- bedelman@adopt.hotbar[1].txt
- bedelman@kanoodle[1].txt
- bedelman@bestoffersnetwor...
- bedelman@btg.btgrab[2].txt
- bedelman@cliks[1].txt
- bedelman@doubleclick[1].txt
- bedelman@offeroptimizer[1].txt
- bedelman@overture[2].txt**
- bedelman@smartbargains[2].txt
- bedelman@42435556[1].txt
- bedelman@ehg-lowermybills....
- bedelman@hitbox[2].txt
- bedelman@server.iad.liveper...
- bedelman@tooltips.hotbar[1]...
- bedelman@tiahahat.lowermybills

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Online shopping for brand names at discounted prices -- find the best bargains at SmartB...

Brought to you by the Zango Search Assistant - Microsoft Internet Explorer

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Back Forward Stop Reload Home Search Favorites Media Print Mail

Address http://www.smartbargains.com/default.aspx?aid=47&tid=82136

Price Comparisons Bargains Clearance Overstock Coupons Consumer Reports

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Search by keyword Search

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# Tracing the redirects

→ POST /showme.aspx?keyword=%2esmartbargains%2ecom+...  
Host: tv.180solutions.com 1

← ad\_url: ... value=http://popsearch.nbcsearch.com/metricsdomains.php?search=smartbargains.com

→ GET /metricsdomains.php?search=smartbargains.com  
Host: popsearch.nbcsearch.com 2

← HTTP/1.1 302 Found  
Location: http://ww2.ditto.com/red.php?mc=T%2FgSdHBNM%2Bg2%2...

→ GET /red.php?mc=T%2FgSdHBNM%2Bg2%2B3AyiVWsqV5cRprOptbkiRRrZ...  
Host: ww2.ditto.com 3

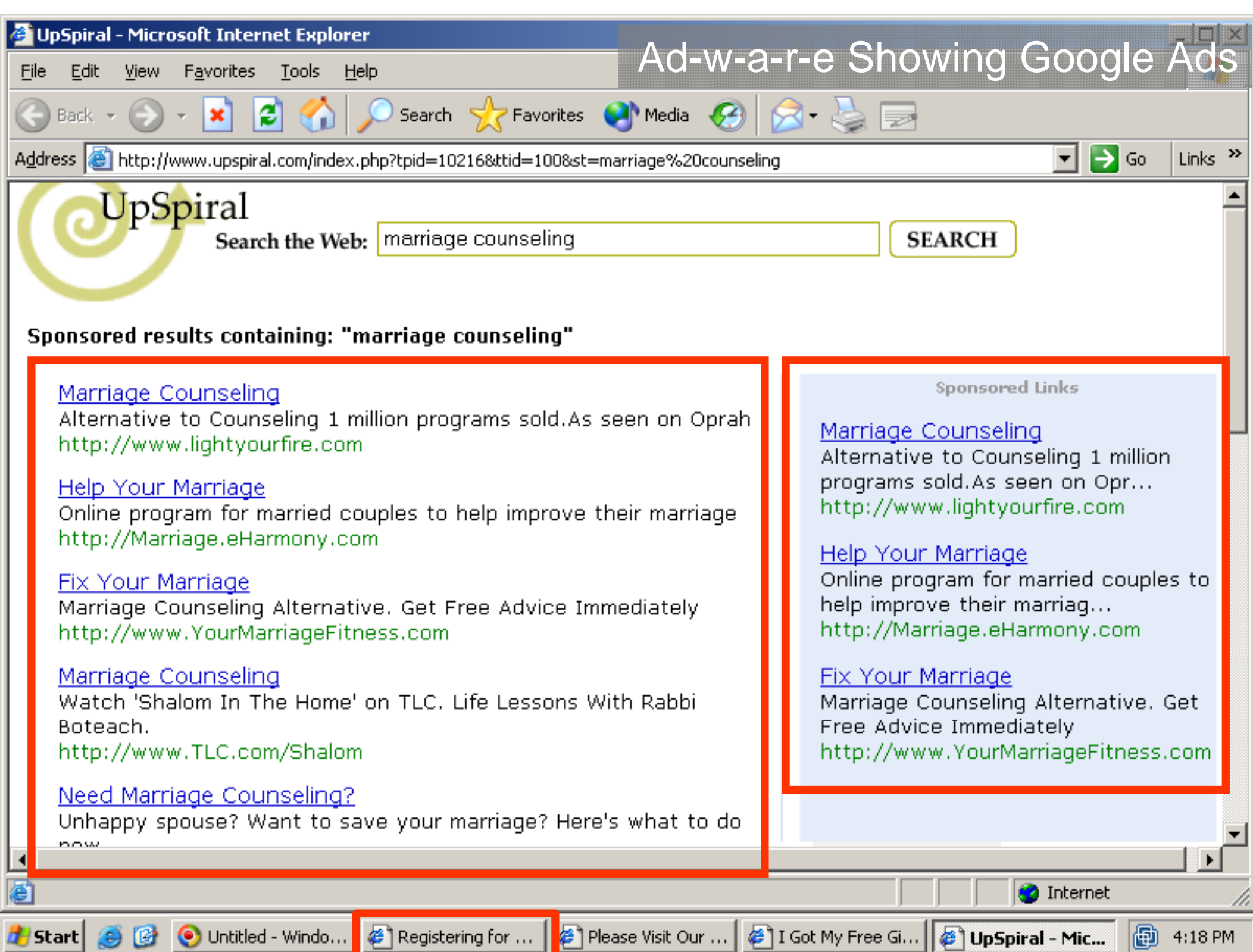
← HTTP/1.1 302 Found  
Location: http://ww2.ditto.com/click.php?mc=T%2FgSdHBNM%2Bg2...

← Location: http://www24.overture.com/d/sr/?xargs=15KPjg1%2DpS...

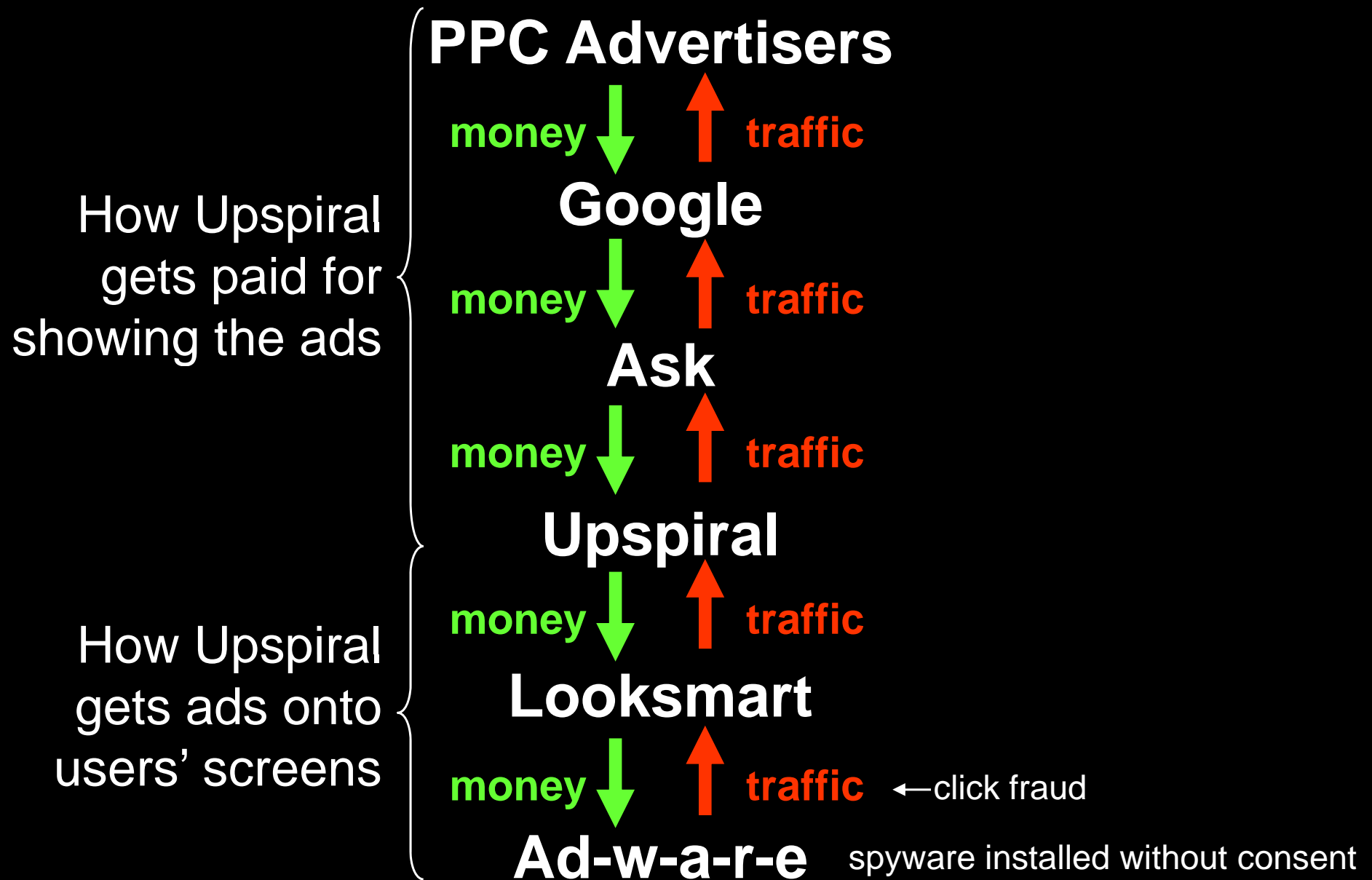
→ GET /d/sr/?xargs=15KPjg1%2DpSgJXyl%5FruNLbXU6TFhUBPycz2tpk%5...  
Host: www24.overture.com 4

← HTTP/1.1 302 Found  
Location: http://www.smartbargains.com/default.aspx?aid=47&t... 5

# Syndication fraud

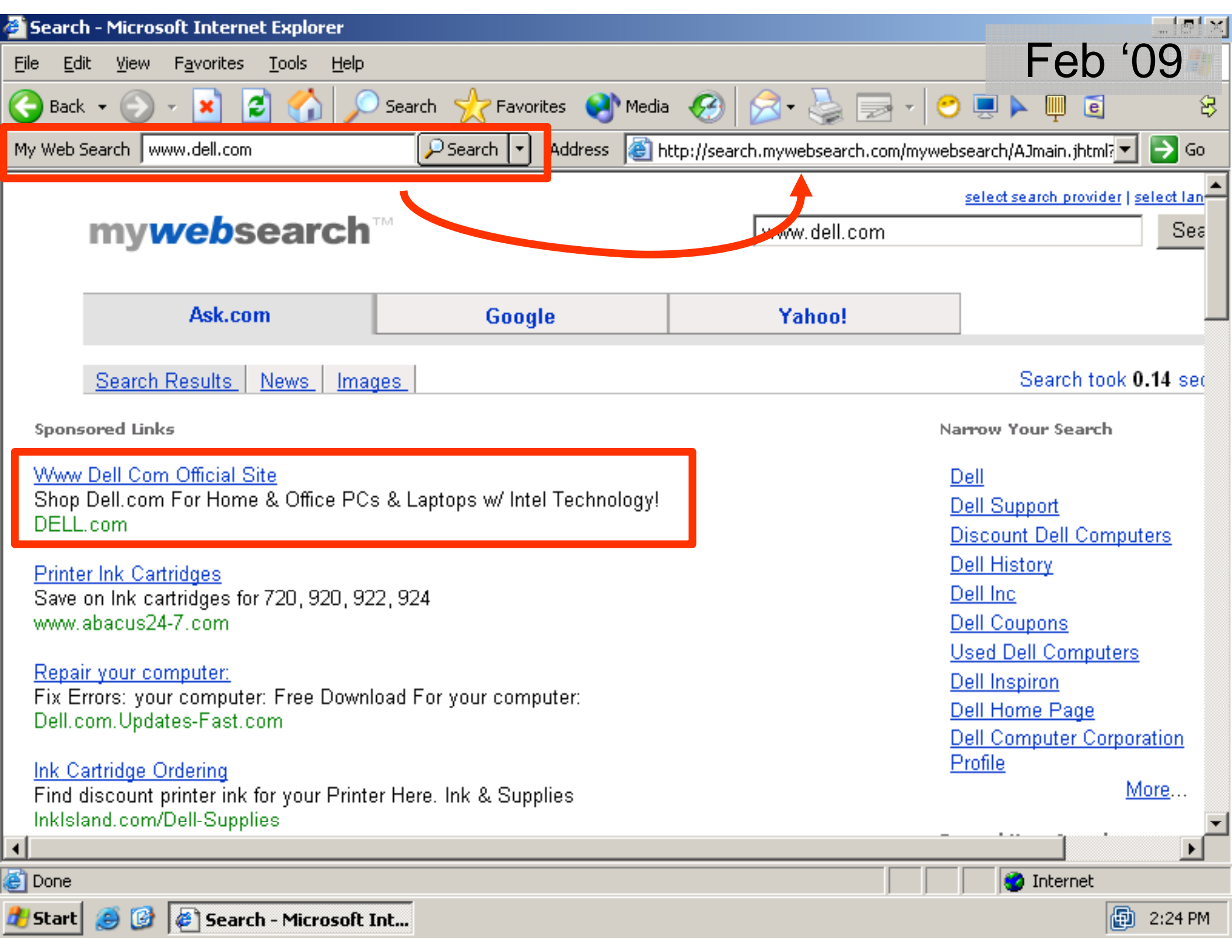


# Ad-w-a-r-e Showing Google Ads





# Inflating CPC conversion rates



Feb '09

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Google

Yahoo!

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[www.abacus24-7.com](#)

[Repair your computer:](#)

Fix Errors: your computer: Free Download For your computer:

[Dell.com.Updates-Fast.com](#)

[Ink Cartridge Ordering](#)

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[InkIsland.com/Dell-Supplies](#)

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[Dell Inc](#)

[Dell Coupons](#)

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[Dell Inspiron](#)

[Dell Home Page](#)

[Dell Computer Corporation](#)

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[More...](#)

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Internet

Start

Search - Microsoft Int...

2:24 PM

Feb '09

WhenU Offer - Microsoft Inter

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[www.RoadRunnerOffers.com](http://www.RoadRunnerOffers.com)

### Verizon DSL Official Site

Vz High Speed Internet - \$17.99/mo Price Guaranteed to Never Go Up!

[Verizon.com](http://Verizon.com)



This offer is from  
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Any questions? [Click here](#) or call toll-free customer service: 1-866-WHENU-11

Opening page <http://servedby.pr>

Start Verizon | Residential & B... WhenU Offer - Microsoft... Special Offer

4:52 PM

# WhenU-Google Relationship

**Google Advertisers** e.g. Verizon

money ↓ traffic ↑

**Google**

money ↓ traffic ↑

**Infospace**

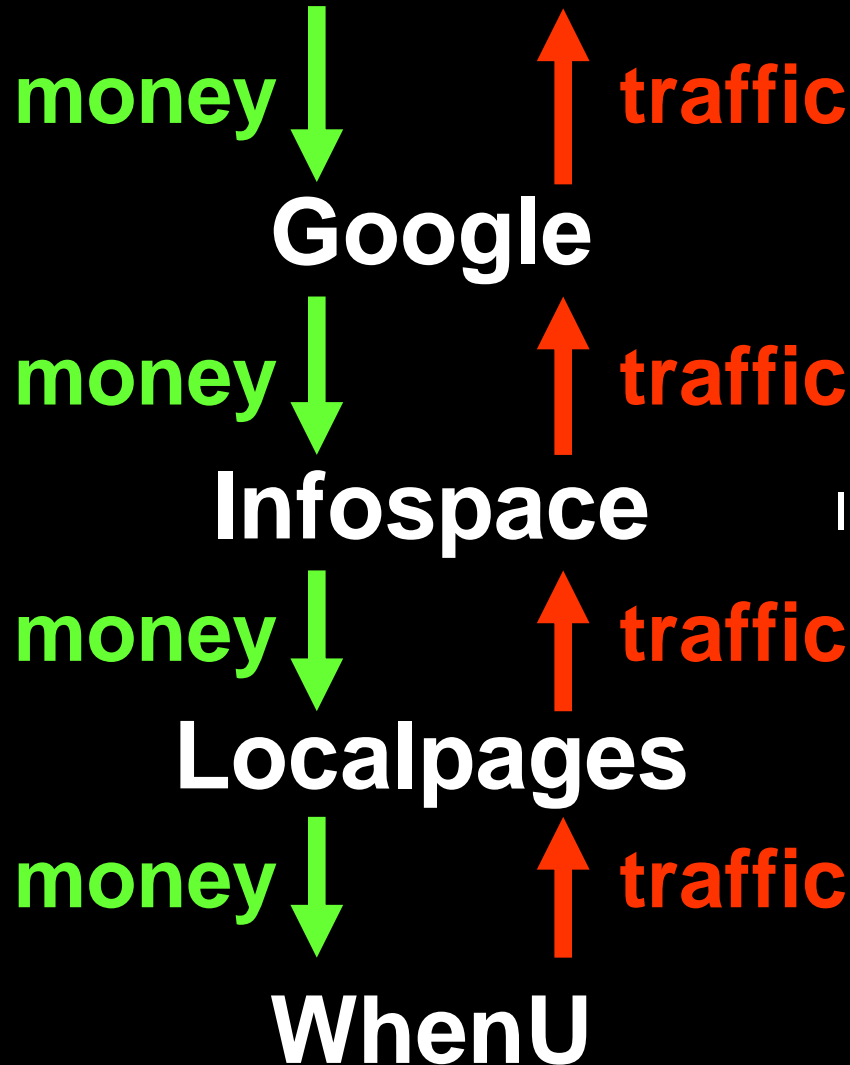
Idearc Media / Superpages

money ↓ traffic ↑

**Localpages**

money ↓ traffic ↑

**WhenU**



# AdWords Terms & Conditions

Customer understands and agrees that ads may be placed on any other content or property provided by a third party ("Partner") upon which Google places ads ("Partner Property"). Customer agrees that all placements of Customer's ads shall conclusively be deemed to have been approved by Customer unless Customer produces contemporaneous documentary evidence showing that Customer disapproved such placements in the manner specified by Google.

Customer understands that third parties may generate impressions or clicks on Customer's ads for prohibited or improper purposes, and Customer accepts the risk of any such impressions and clicks. Customer's exclusive remedy, and Google's exclusive liability, for suspected invalid impressions or clicks is for Customer to make a claim for a refund in the form of advertising credits for Google Properties within the time period required under Section 7 below. To the fullest extent permitted by law, refunds (if any) are at the discretion of Google and only in the form of advertising credit for only Google Properties. Nothing in these Terms or an IO may obligate Google to extend credit to any party.

# Protecting CPC advertisers

- Click-fraud detection services
- Contract & insertion order specificity
  - Limit syndication and subsyndication
  - Identify and reject improper placements
- Pay per conversion, not per click

# Paying per conversion



Negotiation Genius - Buy the Book - Microsoft Internet Explorer

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Address <http://www.negotiationgenius.com/5.html> Go McAfee SiteAdvisor

# Negotiation Genius

The Book

The Authors

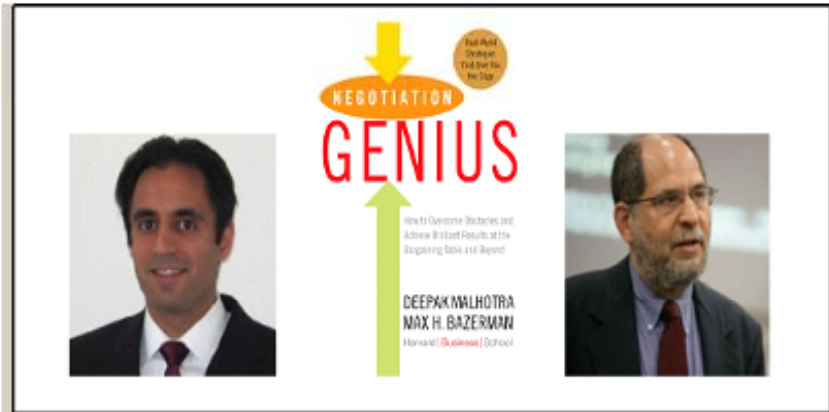
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Chapter Descriptions

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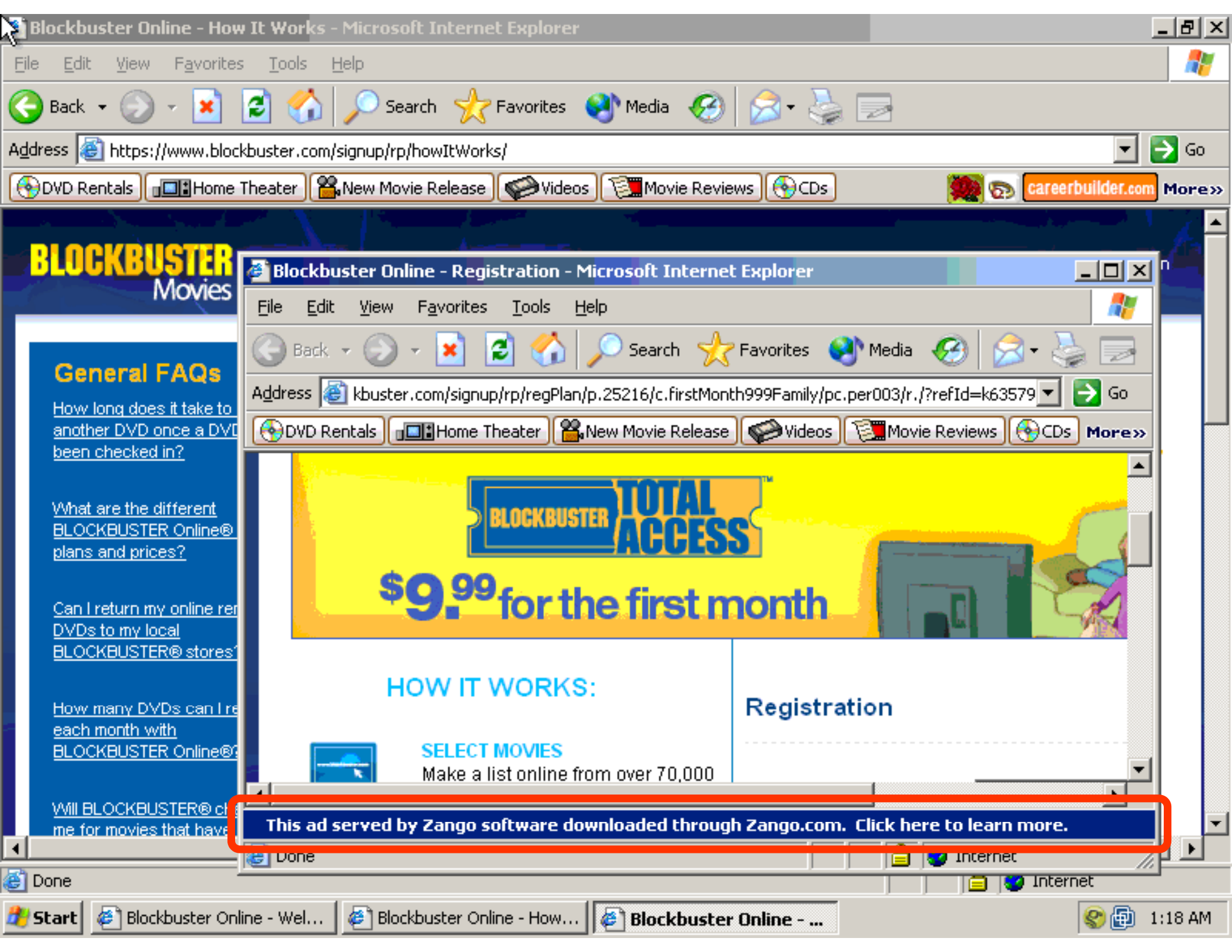
Done Internet

# Affiliate earns commission if ...

- User requests affiliate web site
- User clicks affiliate's link to merchant /and/
- User makes a purchase

→ Merchant can safely partner with anyone?

# CPA / affiliate fraud



→ POST /showme.aspx?&SID=XEHON...&CD=www.blockbuster.com  
&keyword=%2eblockb%2aster%2ecom+%2eblockbu%2ater%2e...  
Host: tvf.zango.com ...

← HTTP/1.1 200 OK ...  
ad\_url: .. http://ads.roundads.com/ads/clickcash.aspx  
keyword=.blockbuster.com><br> ...

→ GET /ads/clickcash.aspx?keyword=.blockbuster.com ...  
Host: ads.roundads.com ...

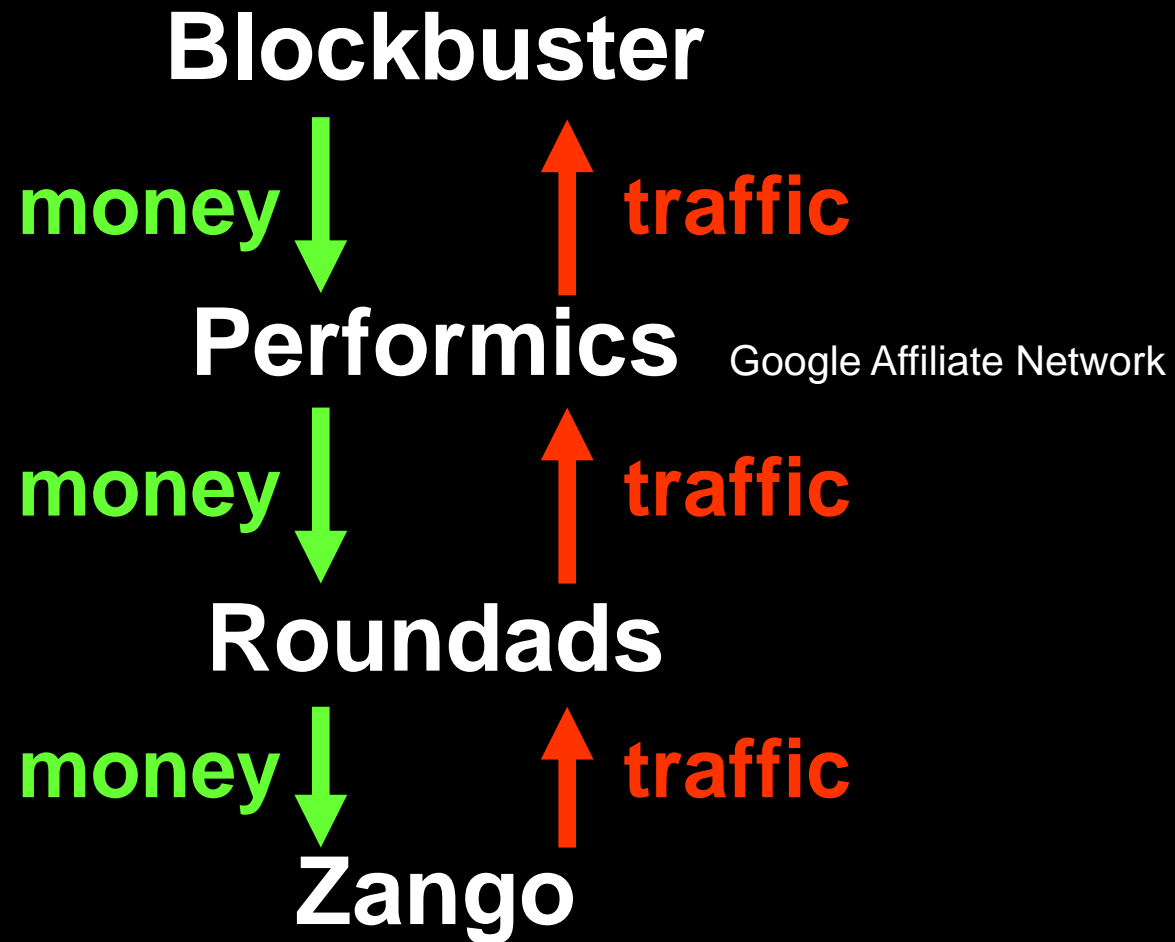
Performics / Google Affiliate Network

← HTTP/1.1 301 Moved Permanently  
Location: http://clickserve.cc-dt.com/link/tplclick?  
lid=41000000005307215&pubid=21000000000063579&mid=...

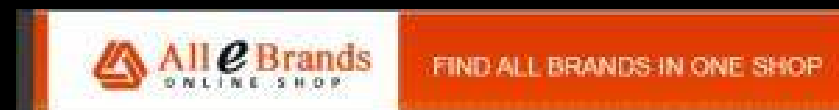
→ GET /link/tplclick?lid=41000000005307215&pubid=2100...  
Host: clickserve.cc-dt.com ...

← HTTP/1.1 302 Found ...  
Location: https://www.blockbuster.com/signup/rp/reg...

# Blockbuster self-targeting adware fraud



→ GET /iframe3? ...  
Host: ad.yieldmanager.com ...



← HTTP/1.1 200 OK  
Date: Mon, 29 Sep 2008 05:36:02 GMT

...  
<iframe src="http://allebrands.com/allebrands.jpg"

→ GET /allebrands.jpg HTTP/1.1 ...  
Host: allebrands.com ...

← ...

<a href='http://allebrands.com'>

<img src='images/allebrands.JPG'></a>

<iframe src='http://click.linksynergy.com/click?id=0v83T/v4Fsg&offerid=144797.1&subid=0' width='0' height='0'>

<iframe src='http://www.microsoftaffiliates.net/t.aspx?kbid=9066&p=http%3a%2f%2fcontent.microsoftaffiliates.net%2fWLToolbar.aspx%2f&m=27&cid=8' width='0' height='0'>

<iframe src='http://send.onenetworkdirect.net/z/41/CD98773' width='0' height='0'>

McAfee

Microsoft OneCare

Symantec



# Affiliate earns commission if ...

- ~~User requests affiliate web site~~
- ~~User clicks affiliate's link to merchant~~ /and/
- User makes a purchase sometime after
  - Visiting a web page
  - Visiting a discussion forum
  - Seeing a banner ad /or/
  - Becoming infected with spyware/adware

# Guarding CPA campaigns

- Know your affiliates.
- Question your affiliate network.
  - Hold your network accountable for its shortfalls.
- Do not assume perfection or infallibility.

# Why advertising fraud?

- Strong financial incentives
  - Pay is in USD
- Easy pseudonymity
- Limited investigations of partners
- Limited incentives to uncover fraud
  - Ad agencies  “10% of spend”
  - Ad networks
  - Affiliate managers  “10% of year-over-year growth”
- Limited actions to obtain restitution

# What is being done

- Nothing / cost of doing business
- Revising *Terms & Conditions* rules
- Auditing
- Litigation
- Compare ad networks based on quality

# What more could be done

- Demand repayment. Sue. (Feasible?)
- Push back on ad networks' one-sided T&C's.
- Pay more slowly → penalties when caught

# Takeaways

- Every ad metric is targeted.
  - Paying per impression
  - Paying per click
  - Paying per conversion
- Incentives impede efforts at fraud prevention.
- Litigation and threatened litigation do not solve the problem.
- Good publishers lose when others cheat.