



iStockphoto Optimizes the User Experience with Testing from SiteSpect

Search



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Bill Bauer

Manager, Site Optimization
iStockphoto

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Challenge:

With millions of creative stock images for sale on its website, iStockphoto needed a way to see which formats and layouts its site visitors preferred in order to create a stickier site and reduce bounce rate.

Solution:

Non-intrusive multivariate testing and targeting from SiteSpect gave iStockphoto total control over the variations presented to visitors and increased downloads by 11.8%.

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In just under ten years, iStockphoto has gone from a small-scale photo sharing site to the world's busiest royalty-free image, video, and audio market. iStockphoto's simple idea — empowering amateur, hobbyist, and professional artists by giving them a global platform to share their work — has completely transformed the graphic design landscape and made imagery affordable and accessible like never before. Using the most advanced search in the business, customers download a file every second from a collection of more than eight million iStockphoto files for business, marketing and personal projects.

With such a huge inventory of creative files, iStockphoto needed a way to showcase the right ones in the right format to the right customers. It was a tall order, and the company turned to SiteSpect when it realized that a full-scale optimization program would help them achieve the goal of a measurably better user experience.

"We selected SiteSpect because it was the only multivariate testing solution that enabled us to easily test and optimize every aspect of our site," said Jay Boehm, Vice President of Technology at iStockphoto. "Because of its non-intrusive approach, we can test anything — multimedia, site navigation, conversion funnel, usability, search, and display — without the hassle of page tagging, and without having to get IT staff involved."

iStockphoto's heavy use of dynamic content and interactive functionality multiplies the number of "moving parts" on the website, and heightens the value of testing and optimization. In order to avoid missing potentially significant opportunities for improvement, it is important to be able to test all types and locations of content. Since SiteSpect doesn't require any site modifications in order to build campaigns and test dynamic content, marketers aren't limited to testing only certain elements of their sites.

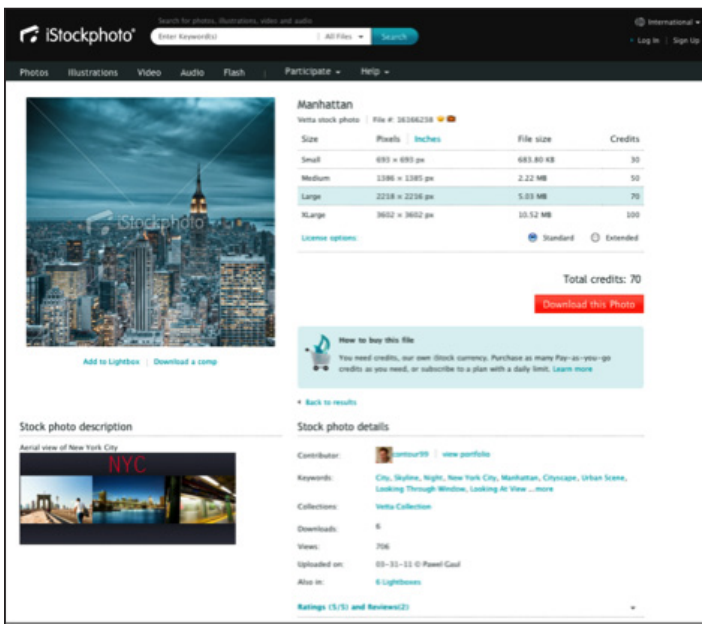
SiteSpect’s unique technology is able to test content variations on pages that are formatted using virtually any mark up language (e.g. HTML, WML, XML), stylesheets (CSS), or scripting languages (e.g. JavaScript). Within those pages, SiteSpect can test variations of any type of content, whether it is static and/or dynamic, including audio and video files as well as Ajax and Flash-based applications — all without page tagging, JavaScript, or site content changes.

SiteSpect’s patent-pending technology allows iStockphoto to create A/B and multivariate test campaigns and optimize conversions. This approach eliminates the need for ongoing IT or web design involvement before, during, and after running tests — allowing iStockphoto to focus on achieving its website optimization goals.

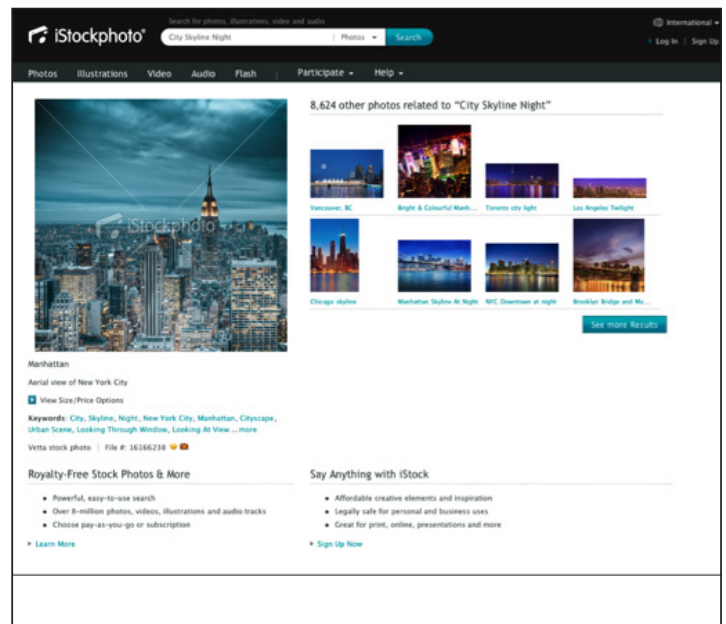
“We love the fact that with SiteSpect, we don’t need a developer to put code on the page to be tested,” said Bill Bauer, Manager of Site Optimization at iStockphoto. “Instead, we can create prototypes directly in SiteSpect and push those variations live ourselves.”

One of those variations is the winner in a recent multivariate test campaign that iStockphoto ran on its product pages. The company found that it was incurring a higher-than-expected bounce rate on those pages from image search queries. Bauer hypothesized that making several changes, such as increasing the image size and giving more results per page, would pique visitors’ interest and keep them looking longer.

So the company created four different variations to address the issue, and the winning variation with additional images not only increased downloads by 11.8%, but simultaneously decreased bounce rates by 12.1%.



iStockphoto’s “control” product page



The winning variation treatment that reduced bounce rate by 12.1%.

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In addition to experiments on iStockphoto's product pages, Bauer is also testing copy length on partner landing pages, and running tests on the home page, purchase pages, additional product pages, and search. "A major redesign of the homepage would be great, but it takes lots of resources. With multivariate testing, however, you can make many small adjustments which can produce just as large of a result."

Another SiteSpect feature that Bauer appreciates is the ability to conduct ad hoc segment analysis. Unlike alternative testing tools in which users must identify segments prior to testing, SiteSpect enables users to build segments before, during, or after tests. "This kind of flexibility is key for iStockphoto," Bauer says. "We might not know ahead of time what we want to segment for, and SiteSpect gives us the functionality on-the-fly so we don't have to worry about it."

iStockphoto will continue to refine its testing efforts on its product pages as well as run inclusion/exclusion tests on its homepage to see exactly which elements users are interacting with. "All the creative treatments in the world are great, but at the end of the day, if the user doesn't respond, they're not working well enough. Optimizing with SiteSpect truly enables us to understand what works and what doesn't," Bauer concluded.

About iStockphoto

iStockphoto offers easy, affordable inspiration with millions of vetted, royalty-free photos, illustrations, video, audio and Flash® files. Using the most advanced search in the business, customers download a file every second from a collection fast approaching 10 million files for business, marketing and personal projects. iStockphoto started in 2000, pioneering the micropayment photography business model, and has become one of the most successful and profitable user-generated content sites in the world. iStockphoto pays out more than \$1.9 million weekly in artist royalties. iStockphoto is headquartered in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, and is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Getty Images.

About SiteSpect, Inc.

SiteSpect provides the world's only non-intrusive optimization platform, enabling web and mobile marketers to significantly improve key metrics such as conversion rate and engagement. SiteSpect's solutions include rapid A/B testing, multivariate testing, behavioral targeting and personalization, landing page optimization, mobile web optimization, and web performance optimization. With SiteSpect, marketers enjoy unmatched speed and flexibility without the need for ongoing IT involvement. SiteSpect's patent-pending technology and professional services are used by many of the world's leading online businesses, such as Wal-Mart, Staples, Mozilla, JCPenney, MTV, ASOS, Overstock.com, VEGAS.com, and leading financial services companies. For more information, visit www.SiteSpect.com or call 617-859-1900.

