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RESIDENTS

MEMBERS

Is the state using tax dollars to hijack your internet traffic?

10/26/05

VisitMaine.com, the official web site of the Maine Office of Tourism, is currently purchasing paid advertising from the internet search engine Google, as part of their AdWords program.

"We discovered this when doing some research for one of our clients," said Lance Dutson, owner of Maine Coast Design, a web design and search engine marketing firm based in the Camden/Belfast Maine area. "When searching the term 'Camden Maine', the VisitMaine advertisement popped up at the top of the search results."

Google's AdWords program is a pay-per-click advertising program, one that many businesses in Maine use to promote their websites. The prominence of an ad is determined through a bid system, where the company that is willing to pay the most gets featured most prominently.

"In effect, the Office of Tourism is re-routing web visitors away from Maine businesses, and bringing them to the state tourism site. It doesn't make sense that they are doing this, as these visitors have already expressed interest in coming to the area. The state should get out of the way and let local companies receive the traffic."

Since the Google program is based predominantly on the "highest bidder" model, the VisitMaine site's participation in the program effectively raises the cost to other Maine businesses.

"There are many factors that determine top placement in the AdWords program, and certainly the per-click bid is one of them. The state is using taxpayer money to out-bid local businesses for search traffic. They would be more likely to receive this traffic if the state was not participating," Dutson explains.

"Google AdWords is a fantastic marketing tool. It is a great way to direct commerce to our area. Unfortunately, the state's campaign has put a damper on the program's effectiveness for some of Maine's businesses."

The AdWords program includes many tools for

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The Edge Oceanfront Dining The crew at The Edge looks forward to the excitement of our 2006 season (3/03/06)

[Set Your Business Apart From the Pack](#)

Business growth relies on good customer service. Allow Maine Gold to assist you in recognizing your clients with great made in Maine gifts! (2/27/06)

[SAMOSET RESORT TO FEATURE ESPN GOLF SCHOOLS IN 2006](#)

Samoset Resort in Rockport, Maine announced today it will be the first New England home of the resort programs offered by ESPN Golf Schools presented by Lexus starting this year. (2/24/06)

[Is Global Warming Effecting Your Pancakes?](#)

Read some interesting information concerning Global Warming and Maine's agriculture. (2/23/06)

[FRANTZ FURNITURE & IMPORTS TEA CORNER SERIES](#)

(2/22/06)

[Local Printer Completes National General Manager Training Course](#)

PETER PALERMO, Elm Street Printing & Graphics, Inc. of Camden, ME, recently completed the CPrint™ General Manager Training Course held in Charleston, WV. The three-day advanced management course is the only financial and operational training course available for commercial printing companies that focuses on the tools of running a printing company. (2/13/06)

[Camden Winterfest 2006](#)

Mark your calendars for Camden Winterfest 2006 on Sunday, February 12 from noon to 4 pm to be held at the Camden Library's Amphitheatre & Harbor Park and hosted by the Camden Conservancy. (2/12/06)

[Banff Mt. Film Festival World Tour](#)

Experience the Banff Mountain Film Festival World Tour (BMFFWT) with Maine Sport Outfitters at the Camden Hills Regional HS Strom Auditorium in Rockport on Friday February 10,

targeting specific traffic, including geographic filters. The state site is not only advertising for out-of-state search traffic, but in-state as well.

"I can go into my AdWords account and exclude every searcher from within the state of Maine, and so can the state. But they don't."

"I can see no reason why someone in Belfast, looking for information on Camden, would need to be re-directed to the state tourism site. They are either trying to divert commerce from our area, or the program is being severely mismanaged."

While it isn't certain precisely what towns the state is targeting, Maine Coast Design has noted the paid advertisements on searches for Camden, Bangor, Ogunquit, and Bar Harbor. Dutson says that targeting these specific areas means that the state could be seeking to redistribute tourism dollars.

"These towns have built a tremendous amount of tourism capital over the years, and in most cases, local businesses or town organizations have done a great job of providing the information searchers need to plan their trips. The state site does not provide links to local businesses, but it does provide the possibility of searchers heading to other areas featured on their site."

Google is the world's most-used internet search engine. It is estimated that more than 5 billion searches were conducted through Google in September alone.

"I have clients that derive as much as 90% of their business through the internet. In a tight economy, losing potential business because of something like this is a hard pill to swallow. "

Dutson recommends that local businesses express their concern over this matter directly to the Department of Tourism through their website, VisitMaine.com, or to their local elected official. Lance Dutson can be reached through his company's site, [www.mainecoastdesign](http://www.mainecoastdesign.com), or by email at lance@mainecoastdesign.com.

About Maine Coast Design:
Maine Coast Design is a [web design](#) and [internet marketing](#) firm specializing in providing internet services to Maine- based businesses.

2006 @ 7pm.. (2/10/06)

[New Belfast Web Camera](#)
Rollie's has added a Web Camera showing the Belfast Harbor area. <http://www.Rollies-Bar-n-Grill.com/webcam.html> (1/30/06)

[Big Time Comedy at The Strand on Feb. 18](#)
VillageSoup is proud to present nationally acclaimed comedian Mike McDonald and funnyman Paul Nardizzi who will join comic forces on Saturday February 18 at 7:30 pm for Comedy Night at the Strand Theatre in Rockland. (1/27/06)

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The Jewel of the Maine Coast - The Perfect Maine Vacation