



How Clever Zebo doubled new appointments for CHS

A Case Study

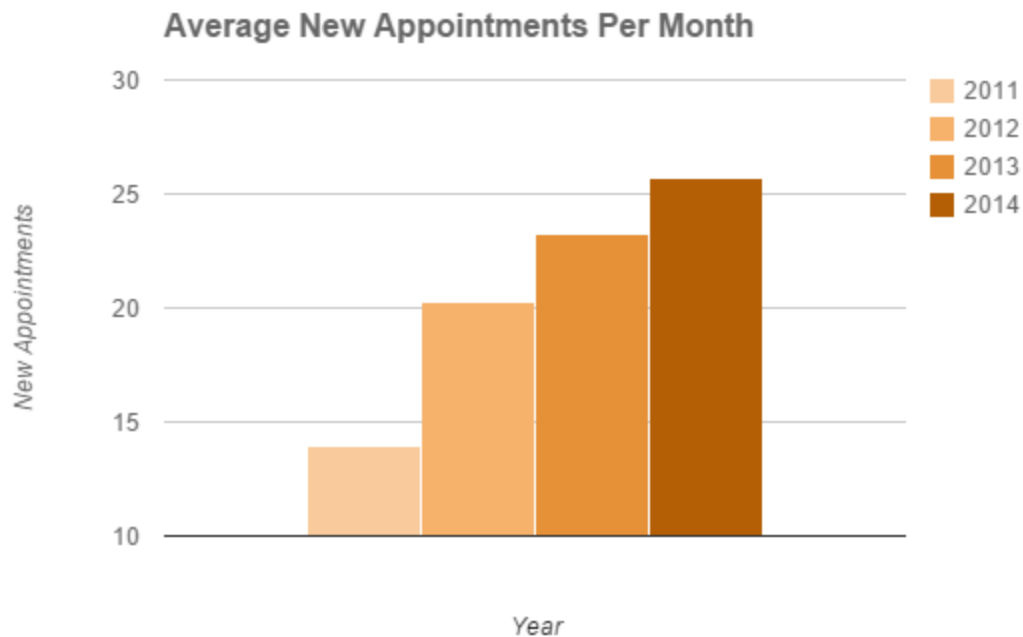
Overview

We all start somewhere. Clever Zebo became a real company when we were hired by our first customer: Center for Healthy Sex (CHS). CHS is a psychotherapy clinic in West Los Angeles that treats anxiety-based sexual concerns for men, women and couples.

Although in many ways, CHS is now atypical for Clever Zebo as our clients have come to skew more heavily toward B2B SaaS and eCommerce, the 4-year journey we've been on together has informed and fueled much of Clever Zebo's innovative spirit and test-and-learn willingness to make mistakes, knowing they're the only path to genuine break-out success.

This is not a puff-piece. While ultimately the story has a happy-ending, the process has had many twists and turns. There were some scary moments when Google seemed to hate every move we made and some exhilarating times when we felt like we could do no wrong. Above all, though, this case study is about the simple truth that a relentless, can-do, never-give-up but learn from missteps and optimize marketing approach wins big.

In this case, winning big was increasing new booked appointments per month by 10-40% year-over-year for an overall doubling of new booked appointments since we began working together.





Background

Holiday time 2010, I realized it was time to make a personal change. I'd gained fantastic experience working for larger companies, but the call of entrepreneurship was too strong. It was time to start Clever Zebo.

I started from a simple premise. While larger companies can afford highly specialized agencies in addition to more generalist marketing staff, it wasn't always clear that specialization benefits all companies. In fact for many startups and businesses getting their bearings in online marketing and specifically conversion optimization, specialization can be harmful when it ignores or prevents a test-and-learn mentality.

Many smart people I talked to argued that the only way to build a successful new agency is by becoming highly specialized in terms of channels and tactics. I couldn't quite articulate it back then, but I had a gut feeling that there are more ways to specialize as marketers than just by tactic and channel. Clever Zebo's specialization was going to be in systematic, numbers-driven, out-of-the-box-thinking, test-everything-and-learn marketing.

CHS is the country's leader in treating and understanding sexual addiction. They had built a successful and influential practice based on referrals from people whose lives had been positively impacted and professionals in the field. However, CHS was struggling to make itself visible and findable directly by people with a need.

Clever Zebo's job: figure out how to help CHS connect directly with prospective clients.

Tracking

Problem #1 was clear. CHS had phone calls coming in and Google Analytics reporting on website traffic but no way to tie either to who actually showed up for an appointment. In many lead gen programs, people often fill out a form and then connect via phone later. But for CHS, almost all leads that closed came in via phone call. We considered call tracking but realized that on their budget and technical infrastructure, the best solution was simple -- use a Google Doc and make sure we always ask people how they found CHS.

Although low tech, it worked. By asking good questions, building a reliable process for entering information into the Google Doc and validating with web analytics, we built a reliable reporting platform. Although this might not be the right solution for larger organizations, for CHS it was an ideal fix.

The Challenge

Historically, there had been a few results trends.

1. Inconsistency. Some months would be great for new appointments, but others the phone never seemed to ring.
2. Web-based leads were the small minority of appointments.
3. Lead quality was highly variable



Our mission was to do whatever it took to solve these challenges.

Google

CHS had some visibility on Google, but the question was whether we could get more. We tried every trick in the book:

- Website redesigns
- Meta tag optimization
- Link building
- Guest blogging
- Content sharpening
- Keyword targeting based on keyword research
- Social integration
- Getting the site map right
- Etc.

Many of the same moves that had reliably created positive results for other companies seemed only to make things worse. Literally, every time we made a change, organic traffic suffered. We brought in multiple independent outside SEO experts and tried their ideas. Same pattern: change equaled problems.

During this organic search testing period, we also played around with paid search. It was hard to find evidence that paid search was really driving tangible results. So we paused all paid search, and it had no effect on organic search or conversion volume.

And then we made the best non-decision I've ever been a part of as a professional. We decided to completely stop making any SEO-driven website changes for at least a month and focused on other initiatives.

A couple weeks later ... the organic search trend line in Google Analytics started to rise. We'd been through many traffic fluctuations so didn't get too excited but after a few more weeks, it was clear something real was going on. Not only was overall organic search volume increasing but on some of the target terms we just hadn't been able to budge.

Admittedly, there could have been many things going on: an algorithm penalty we couldn't detect being lifted, the last set of changes being the right ones, change in the competitive environment, accumulated algorithm changes, etc. Ultimately what matters is that we were seeing radically better organic search performance BY DOING NOTHING.

Multi-pronged Approach

Meanwhile, we were jointly investing time and energy in a number of tests:

1. A/B testing popups and calls to action
2. Participating on Quora
3. Building a live webinar-style monthly meditation discussion group
4. Producing great articles and videos



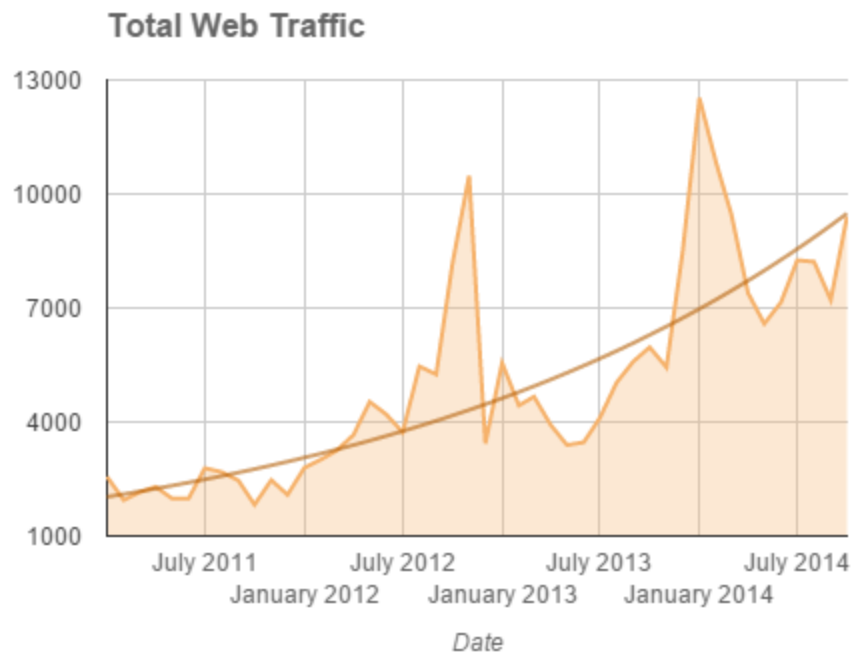
5. Collaborating with other organizations

What we found was that although every individual activity might not be a slam dunk in and of itself, the aggregated activity blitz seemed to be having a positive impact.

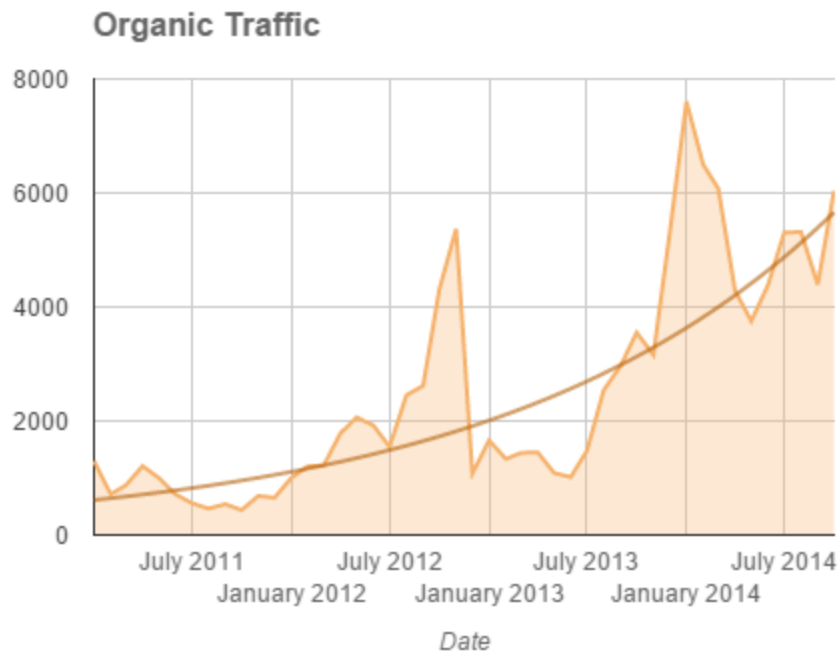
Results

Ultimately, we've seen improvement in a number of key performance indicators:

1. Traffic: Although conversions are what count, CHS has seen a significant overall upward trend in site traffic with total traffic up over 4X.

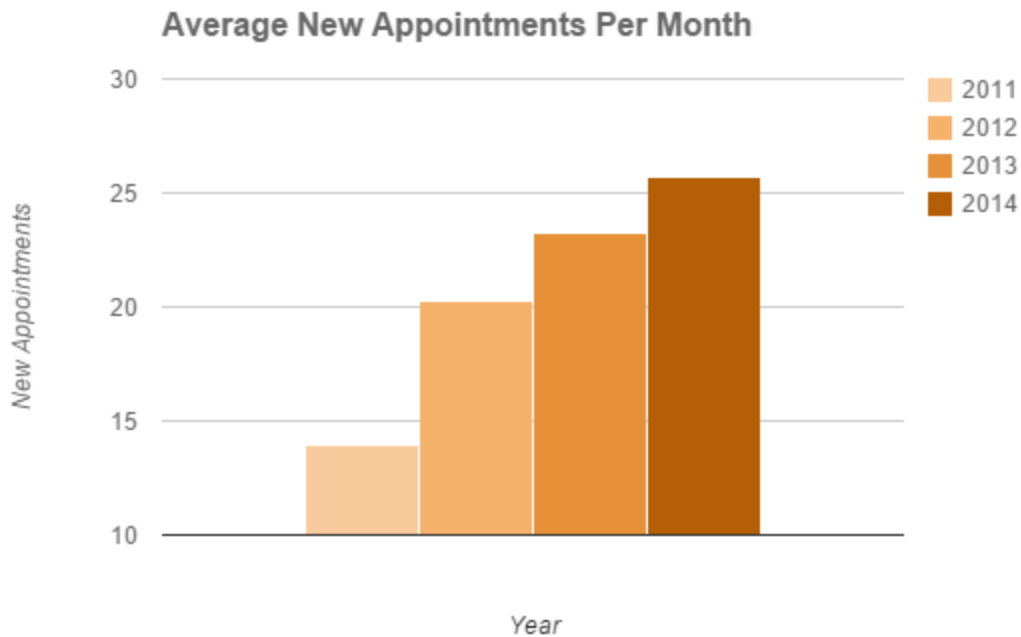


In large part, overall traffic fluctuations are heavily driven by organic search.



If you follow the numbers closely, you'll notice that overall conversion rate growth did not keep track with traffic growth. While not all of the web traffic is new appointment conversion grade, there has been a corresponding large uptick in newsletter and online test registrations, producing a mailing list numbering in the thousands.

2. Attribution Control: CHS gained the ability to understand what sources are driving new appointments and which aren't working or optimized.
3. Overall New Appointments: Depending on what time periods you use for comparison, CHS appointments have on-average doubled or more.



4. New Web Appointments: As overall new appointments have gone up, web-based appointments have kept pace growing to 40% of all new appointments.

The trend line on appointments at any point in time might be up-and-down, but over the past 4 years there has been a fundamental upward shift in not only total appointments booked but also consistency from month to month. The result has been impressive growth in nearly every measurable statistic.

Take-aways

Rather than panic during the moments when a particular tactic wasn't working, everyone stayed calm, did our best to understand the issue and created a clear plan of attack for creating a solution or testing into a new tactic. The result has been incredibly lucrative for CHS.

It reinforced a basic truth for us in online marketing. Whether your business is mature or just starting up, ultimately you can only control so much. A test-and-learn approach means that you operate strategically and keep going until you reach success. The reality is that ups-and-downs are part of the process. Problem-avoidance isn't a growth strategy, and it can hold your company back.

The real key to successful marketing is always to put your best foot forward, recognize challenges early so that they don't grow into problems and fearlessly keep testing until you figure out what works.

A big Thank You to CHS for taking a risk on Clever Zebo.

If you'd like to discuss how Clever Zebo can be helpful to your organization, drop us a note at <http://cleverzebo.com/contact/>.