

Exploring Market Segmentation, Targeting, and Positioning in Child Support Outreach

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Before the California Department of Child Support Services (CA DCSS) could test digital interventions for the state's grant, several changes were required to improve the state's online presence. First, we needed to establish baseline analytics on website traffic, case openings, and call center volumes. After reviewing the website numbers, we noticed that desktops accounted for almost half of all traffic (in contrast to statistics on cell phone usage in California), so we applied filters, blocking child support office IP addresses to restrict the results to customer activity. We also learned that enhanced search engine optimization would be unnecessary. Organic search for related keywords accounted for 57% of all users; typing in the URL itself accounted for 31%; and links from other websites were another 11%, accounting for 99% of traffic. Even a vague Google search for "child support" consistently produces pages of the state website as the top seven offerings.

Small project turns into full redesign

The original grant proposal included a small stand-alone website that would link to the official state website. That project morphed into a complete redesign and rebuild of the

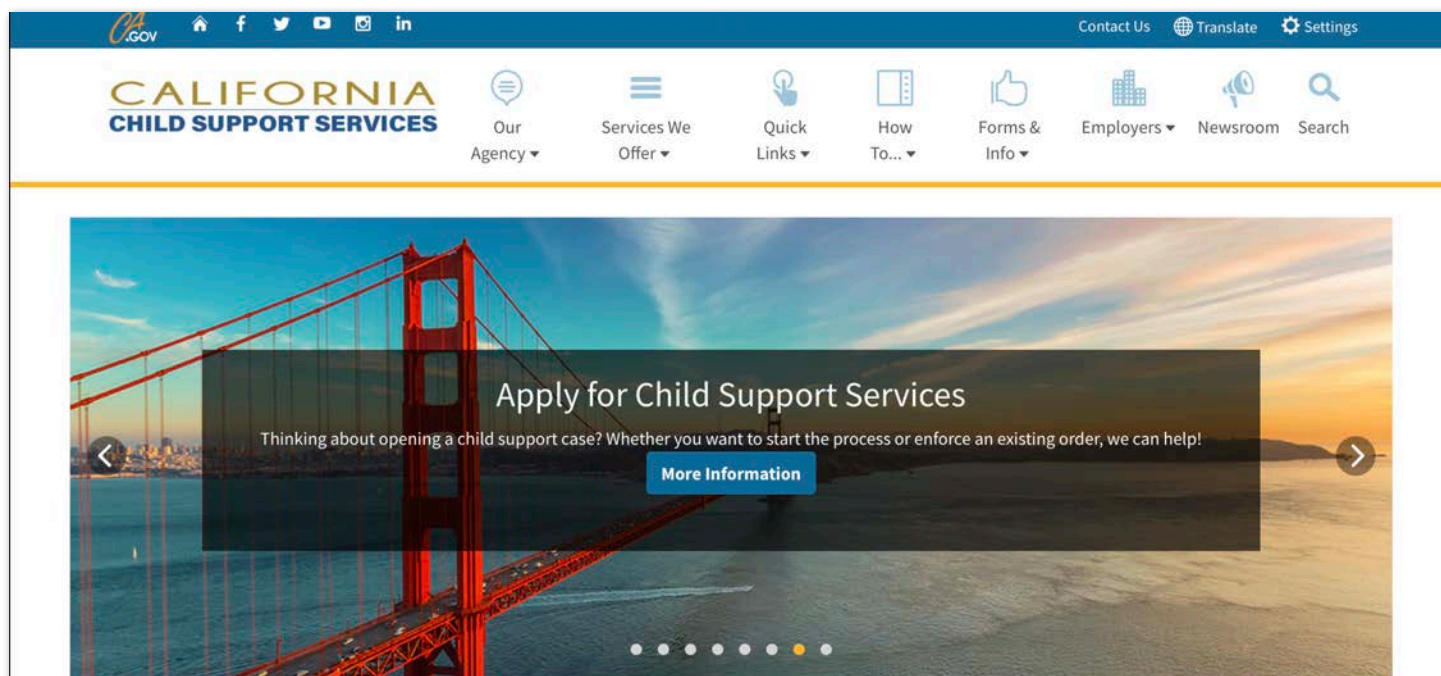
Increasing Awareness of Services through Digital Marketing

OCSE awarded \$2.2 million to 14 grantees through a two-year demonstration called **Using Digital Marketing to Increase Participation in the Child Support Program**. This is one of a series of articles featuring grantees using digital marketing innovations to reach and serve families more effectively.

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California state website, built in 13 weeks on California's proprietary Wordpress template. Our website went from hundreds of web pages down to 65. Besides updating our web address to a simpler URL, we also added these features to the site: made it a mobile-responsive design, added Google Translate, made it handicapped accessible, and added several contact forms. Simultaneously, the CA DCSS Innovation Design Team redesigned and rebuilt Customer Connect, which is the existing self-service platform, delivering improved functionality including mobile-responsive design and the ability to directly email caseworkers and print payment reports. Both the new website and Customer Connect went live on May 20, 2019, as the first phase of the first intervention.

continued



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The baselines on case openings and call center volumes revealed consistent spikes in case openings every March for the four years measured, 2015 through 2018, in all five grant counties and statewide. Investigation unearthed a corresponding data point: divorce decrees in California also peak in March. It's a good thing this was discovered before an intervention was scheduled in March, or we might have been delusional about the success of our results!

A closer look at social media platforms

The second phase of the first intervention was intended to test the responsiveness of various social media platforms and assess the effectiveness of differing design elements. Three messages – one about avoiding court with stipulations, one about help getting medical support orders, and one about assistance with child support paperwork – were tested on Google Search Ads, Facebook, and Twitter with three different graphics for each. All posts were “boosted” – we paid to increase the impressions of each – and each post linked to a unique page on the new website that was not searchable by other means, so traffic to those pages was certain to result from the ads.

The results showed good engagement across all platforms and across all the messages, with minor regional variations. A “bot” attack – high numbers of clicks from foreign computers (in this case, Iran) – clouded the metrics for one county, but the results show that digital advertising for child support elicits a level of interest considered well above industry standards, which we consider success. We did not find a clear preference for any of the messages that altered engagement, although photography edged out the static and motion graphic design options, but not by a significant degree. Our takeaway was that people interested in child support are interested in all of it, and any information is welcomed and earns engagement at encouraging levels.

The second intervention we're currently evaluating builds on the first by adding an influencer campaign in just one county and adding more precise targeting to the desired customer profiles. We recruited two local individuals with active social media presences to share child support messaging in their own words, directing their followers to unique links so resulting activity was traceable back to the blog posts. Fortunately, the activities concluded just before COVID-19 redirected everyone's attention, and we look forward to completing our analysis of the data collected.

LEARNING CYCLE 2 - Details

Goal: Inspire action to open a case rather than just raise awareness.

Implement: Digital ads that test specific messages and track engagement.

Participating counties: Del Norte, Imperial, Merced

Target: Single-parent households, ages 18-40, male and female

Secondary Target: Native Americans in Del Norte County

> Historically difficult to contact through traditional media advertising.

Key message: “Get the facts.” Positioning DCSS as expert helpers in Child Support process.

Display Ads

> In both English and Spanish on Google, Facebook, Instagram

Universal Ads:

Male-Targeted Ads:



Note: Images shown are still images. There are animated versions which have motion to attract the eye – for example, the baseball moves away from the pitcher and the foul card moves into view towards player.

LEARNING CYCLE 3 - Next Phase

