



How Reform created the industry's first search marketing qualification for the IPA

The Brief

Search is the largest and the most complex digital media channel. However, in the absence of any clear standards and qualifications, advertising agencies manage complex requirements from clients using methods and approaches that vary greatly from one agency to another. While search training courses demonstrate best practice and improved performance, they are not all encompassing.

The Blueprints

The IPA Search Certificate is targeted at new members of staff with less than two years' experience in search marketing. No previous experience in search marketing is needed to follow the modules of this qualification but the candidate would need to work in search marketing before and after the completion of the course to benefit from the curriculum.

Initially, Reform conducted market research and substantiated the need for this qualification and advised the IPA on pricing and promotion. Once signed off, we developed the content for the various modules based on SEO and PPC principles as well as creating case studies based on real situations encountered by the member agencies of the IPA. These modules include videos, content walk-throughs, self-tests and other interactive content.

All the modules have interesting and engaging content that explains the fundamentals of search marketing and gives an introduction to advanced techniques in bid management and analytics. Once the candidate has studied the modules, he/she can sit for the Search Certificate exam with the IPA. Reform was thus able to create a holistic understanding of search marketing concepts and their benefits for all member agencies of the IPA.

We created two sections for the Search Certificate exam – a multiple choice section which would test the understanding of fundamental concepts as well as a case study with 10 questions which would test the candidate's ability to correlate all the concepts and construct a clear search strategy.

The Results

Reform has thus created and implemented the first industry wide standardisation for all individuals who work in the search marketing industry. The IPA Search Certificate was launched in March 2010 and the first intake saw 40 candidates study the different modules. The first exam was conducted in October 2010 and of the candidates 3 gained distinctions, 13 passed with credit and 18 gained a pass.

What the client said

"We are delighted with the IPA Search Certificate and the feedback has been really positive from the first intake of students. Reform are a great partner to work with – not only do they know the search marketing medium back to front but they have also been a driving force in helping us to launch this IPA qualification and in communicating and promoting the benefits of professionalisation to our agency members".