

BOOK REVIEWS

BY JAMES MOHR

Winning Results with Google AdWords

It is unfortunate for the author of *Google AdWords* that the book is already out of date. The reason is not lack of diligence on the part of the author, but rather the rapidly changing world of pay-per-click advertising. By the time a book of this type reaches the market, Google may have changed the services they offer many times.

One might be thinking, "If the book is already out of date, what's the point in talking about it?" Why not simply get the latest information from Google's web site? The short answer is that, in order to understand what Google provides, you need to already have a good understanding of the material. Without it, you'll probably end up spending a lot of time on trial and error.

The author addresses this by *not* providing a cookbook of steps to carry out

one after the other in order to effectively implement your next advertising campaign. Instead, he provides an in-depth look into both online marketing in general and how it relates to Google AdWords. He doesn't just discuss a methodology for improving your online advertising; he also outlines many of the mistakes companies make.

Still, the author does provide a lot of "how to" information about making the most of your online advertising dollar. For example, he discusses how to choose the right words, how to get to site in the most efficient position in the list (not necessarily at the top), and how to make the text of your ads more effective.

In addition to the technical aspects, I liked the historical background the



author provided. I am fairly new to the online advertising business, so the historical information answered a number of my questions.

The biggest downside for me (aside from the text being a

little outdated) was the fact there was no glossary. I often had to flip back through the book to find specific terms that were defined in a previous chapter. Still, this book is definitely worth your time if you plan to advertise online.

Andrew Goodman

352 pages

McGraw-Hill/Osborne, 0-07-225702-4

£ 16.99, US\$ 24.99, EUR 23.90

Just Say No To Microsoft

Considering the message this book presents, I was tempted to say only good things about it, but I'm aware of the need to be completely honest with such things. Nothing fuels the fire of the operating system religious wars more than dishonesty for a cause.

The goal of this book is to convince you to stop using Microsoft products. The discussion goes beyond which operating system is better and addresses very specific aspects of different applications. It is definitely not a Linux-versus-Microsoft book, as it suggests Macs as a viable alternative. The book also offers a range of non-Microsoft applications *even if* you decide to continue with Windows.

The author does a great job of explaining why one

should keep away from Microsoft products on a technical, moral, and even philosophical level, but I felt he went overboard in a number of cases. For example, the author seems to blame Microsoft for people's inability to create effective presentations. While certain other products might have "better" features that Microsoft's presentation tools, a lot of the problems are caused by the person using the application.

The author also tended to make value judgments about the default behavior of various Microsoft products. I agree, in many cases, that the Windows default security settings are down-right foolish, but I'm not sure it helps to use emotionally charged words, such as describing

the default behavior of an operating system as "arrogant."

As I read more of the book, it became less and less clear what the goal of the book was. Although the author continued his usually justified Microsoft bashing, it seems that, in later chapters, he was explaining how to work around problems with the Microsoft products rather than discussing the alternatives.

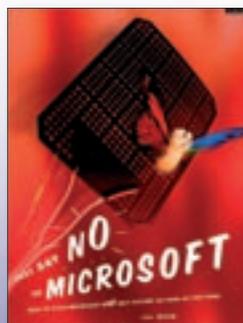
Although I found the book very interesting, I felt that the author did the cause a disservice by using the same fear, uncertainty, and doubt he says Microsoft uses. I would still recommend reading this book, but I would have been a lot happier if he had simply stuck to the facts. There are plenty of them.

Tony Bove

243 pages

No Starch Press, 1-59327-064-X

£ 14.33, US\$ 24.95, EUR 23.90



MySQL Crash Course

Admittedly, my initial disappointment was my own fault. I was expecting more of a hand-holding, step-by-step tutorial. However, that is not the goal of this book. As the title implies, it is intended to give you a “crash course,” which means trying to pour in as much information as quickly as possible. That is definitely something the author achieves in an easy-to-understand style.

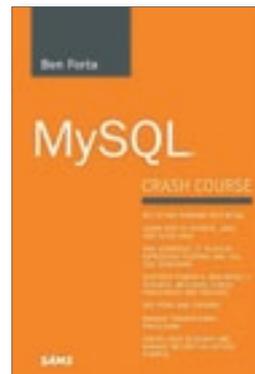
Each keyword and concept is typically presented in one or more blocks of input, output, and analysis. The concept is introduced, followed by an example to input, the output of the query, then an analysis of what you just did. This provides a much better understanding of the material than running a few queries and looking at the output.

Another very useful feature is the different kinds of sidebars scattered throughout the book. For example, tips expand the topic being discussed, usually providing information to help you implement that feature a little more

effectively. Sometimes there are simple notes to add a little tidbit to what is being discussed. The caution blocks provide warnings about potential pitfalls and other problems. The author also often throws in new terms as sidebars in cases where a quick definition is all that is necessary.

This is not a book for the hardcore developer or database designer. Instead, I found it perfect for people like me who need to know enough about MySQL (or SQL, in general) to achieve a particular goal without going into the intricate details. In addition, this book requires no previous knowledge of database concepts. You get a crash course in things like tables, row, columns, primary keys, and so forth, as well as discussions on data manipulation and the basics of administering a MySQL system.

Unfortunately, I am not yet able to make full use of this book, as the author discusses a number of topics that are only available in MySQL 5 and later.



Many (if not most) web hosters have not upgraded and probably won't for a while. So I can only make use of features like cursors, views, and stored pro-

cedures for trivial things I do at home.

If you want to quickly learn about MySQL essentials, get this book.

Ben Forta

320 pages

Sams Publishing, 0-672-32712-0

£ 13.99, US\$ 19.99, EUR 18.95

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