



## Are you cashing in on search marketing?

Santander is one of the world's top ten banks with over 13,000 branches serving 90 million customers in more than 40 countries. It's also one of the world's largest banks by market capitalisation and the leading corporate bank in Iberia and Latin America.

In October 2008 Santander completed their purchase of the financial group, Alliance & Leicester (A&L). Greenlight started working with A&L in December 2006 before they became part of the Santander Group. As one of the UK's leading retail banks, it appointed Greenlight to ensure its range of personal finance products appeared preferentially in natural search engine results. The agency was engaged at a critical time for the bank, when competition was becoming increasingly aggressive, particularly online.

Following the merger, Santander made the decision to retain Greenlight's SEO expertise; thus transferring the success we had produced for Alliance & Leicester to the newly formed, Santander UK plc.

“Having produced incredible results for us through their SEO campaign for Alliance & Leicester it only made sense that Greenlight should continue with us and improve Santander's online visibility and sales. We are delighted with the new strategy and their ingenious solutions to the site's technical problems. I have no doubt that Greenlight's dedication and enthusiasm for our business will lead to continued campaign success.”

Amanda Mayes  
Senior E-commerce Manager  
Santander



## Our work with Alliance & Leicester

Greenlight devised an SEO campaign focussing on the ten most competitive terms in the finance industry with relevance to A&L products, including 'loans', 'current accounts' and 'mortgages'. A&L wanted to see a rapid improvement in its search rankings in Google, but had significant restrictions on the degree of on-page changes that could be made to its site to help improve those rankings.

To overcome these issues Greenlight devised an accelerated online PR programme through its LinkCatalyst™ service.

- This involved the execution of a variety of link building methods with highly credible and relevant internet sites, designed to increase the site's link popularity, which is a key variable Google uses to decide where sites should rank.
- We approached influential journalists to develop relationships and acted as intermediaries between them and A&L. This helped ensure A&L was included in articles and conversations relevant to its products. This was undertaken on a broad scale and generated hundreds of high quality links to the A&L site from those sites identified by Greenlight as carrying the most power within the context of Google's ranking algorithms.

## Results

In the first three months, Greenlight's campaign delivered outstanding results across A&L's broad product range. During this time, the website gained the highest search engine visibility\* of all high-street banks for the target search terms. As a result of these improved ranks the number of current accounts opened grew by 168%, new savings accounts shot up by 233% and applications for unsecured loans rocketed by 1,264% leading to 1,253% more loans being taken out.

Over the course of three years, A&L achieved page one rankings on Google UK for extremely competitive terms:

Keyword	Number of competitive sites	Pre-Greenlight rank	At month three	Highest rank in 2009
Loans	169,000,000	34	5	2
Personal loans	36,400,000	21	3	1
Unsecured loans	2,480,000	26	4	2
Car loans	17,800,000	69	1	1
Bank accounts	44,600,000	43	3	3
Current accounts	87,300,000	9	3	2
Mortgages	78,600,000	24	4	2
Mortgage calculator	8,170,000	31	4	4

The campaign provides an excellent example of how sales can be significantly boosted using an SEO campaign that is diligently delivered with a focus on achieving tangible return on investment. Furthermore, it demonstrates how fantastic results can be achieved despite limitations such as not being able to make changes to a website.

## Our work with Santander

Having worked with A&L for over three years, and following a four way procurement process, Greenlight is now the SEO agency for Santander in the UK. The objective of our brief is to replicate the same impressive page one rankings for the Santander.co.uk site by mirroring the strategy that we employed for Alliance & Leicester. We are also consulting on and managing the migration of alliance-leicester.co.uk to santander.co.uk later in 2010 to ensure that rankings remain consistent and no credibility is lost as a result of this move.

### New challenges:

- Santander.co.uk was a relatively new domain without a strong base of relevant and powerful back links.
- Content Management Systems (CMSs) are notorious for creating challenges for SEO. They are prone to duplicate page issues and changing URLs which can make achieving high natural rankings for competitive keywords extremely difficult. Santander's enterprise-level CMS was no exception.

### Greenlight's solutions:

Greenlight's strategy provides santander.co.uk with credible and static URLs for the search engines to list within their results

- Greenlight created a layer of additional search engine optimised pages outside the restrictions of the CMS. These pages perfectly replicated the content of the site and were refreshed automatically on a daily basis.
- Greenlight made extensive use of the 'canonical tag' to persuade search engines to recognise in our new pages the authority of the originals. The 'canonical tag' is a new HTML tag specifically designed to compensate for duplicate content.

With our technical solution in place, we were able to go about our work of building a strong inbound link profile to secure the page one ranks for Santander's target pages.

\* To check the overall natural search visibility of Alliance & Leicester, Greenlight's research team looked at the natural rankings of all the sites that appear in the top 100 positions in Google UK on a range of keywords in each A&L product category: Loans, Current Accounts and Mortgages. We then allocated all the monthly search volume for each keyword on page one to the visibility score for each website. The five sites with the highest visibility scores in each product category were almost exclusively finance comparison sites such as moneysupermarket.com, moneyfacts.co.uk, and moneyextra.com. The only high street bank to appear in the top five listings for all terms was Alliance & Leicester.

Greenlight publishes quarterly search reports for various industry verticals. To download the latest visibility report for your sector, visit:

[www.greenlightsearch.com/knowledge/sector-reports](http://www.greenlightsearch.com/knowledge/sector-reports)