

Geolocation – Where am I now Google?

Until recently Google assumed I lived in Cork. Then suddenly I had moved to Dublin. I'm actually in Tramore, Co. Waterford. The fact that I, and many other Internet users are apparently bouncing around the country is playing havoc with what should be a powerful business tool.

Google Adwords, the keyword targeted advertising that dominates online advertising is popular, effective and blind in one eye. Adwords allows advertisers target their advert by time, keyword, country and county – sortof.

This Geolocation is based on the IP address that has been allocated to your computer by your Internet Service Provider. Because most ISPs are nationally based, and someone in the Internet cloud tracks which IP numbers are allocated to which ISP, telling which country a visitor is in is easy. It's when you try to pinpoint more accurately that the system falls down.

What's my IP?

My IP today is 86.45.154.89. Doing a reverse IP lookup reveals this IP number as *86-45-154-89.b-ras2.chf.cork.eircom.net*. Note the *eircom* and *cork*. I checked some of the websites that track location based on IP address and mostly they think I'm in Dublin. It seems that Eircom, and probably some of the other ISPs, allocate IP numbers in an ad-hoc fashion.

So how do I know that Google is blind in one eye? I started using Adwords to attract potential customers in Waterford, Kilkenny and Wexford. Google offered me that option when setting up the advertising campaign. However I noticed that the adverts weren't being shown much. That's when I found the *ras2.chf.cork* issue. When I added Cork to my advertising campaign, I started getting a response. I knew that people in Cork and maybe Kerry were seeing my advert, but because I put Waterford in the title of my advert, I probably wasn't getting clicks from them. Most importantly I was getting enquiries from businesses in Waterford.

Click if you're in Waterford

When you have an advert in Google that is targeted on a county, and Google thinks the person viewing the advert is in that county, Google helpfully adds the county name below the advert. So when my adverts appeared they had 'Cork' under my text. Bit of a bummer, but nothing I could do about it.

Then my adverts stopped appearing very often, and I did a further check. My IP was appearing as Dublin. So I modified my campaign to add Dublin to the list of regions where my adverts should be shown. Then my traffic increased again.

In addition to targeting by county, Google offers targeting by distance from a point that you enter on a map. Which means in theory I could look for customers within 20 miles of a location.

Lovely idea, but no thanks. With that kind of offer, Google is blind in one eye and has difficulty seeing with the other.

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Conor O'Nolan has managed major Internet projects from specification through to completion. Working with **Esat Telecom** in 1999, he launched the portal site for Esat's first Home Internet business.

In 2001 the **Irish Hotels Federation** needed a new website for its 1000 members, complete with online booking and maps for each establishment. Conor was project manager for this large undertaking.

In his earlier career, Conor was involved in CD-Rom development for publishers in Germany, UK, Netherlands and USA, and won a Gold Award from the British Interactive Multimedia Association.

He can be found lurking around his website at www.webwizards.ie