



## Best SEO Campaign Finalist

**Campaign:** Nebo 'Lights Up' Gas South's SEO Strategy

**Nominee:** Stephanie Wallace, Nebo

### Why this nominee:

With more than 280,000 residential, business and governmental customers, Atlanta-based Gas South is one of the Southeast's leading natural gas providers with customers in Georgia and Florida. Gas South's customer-first approach is emphasized by their Hometown Value promise – to always provide great everyday low rates, outstanding local customer service and strong support for the communities they serve.

Gas South partnered with Nebo to create an integrated digital marketing strategy that would leverage SEO to create long-term growth, especially during the busy "Light Up" season when the weather begins to turn cold causing many people to sign up for their natural gas services. "Light Up" takes place during Q4, between October – December, and is a critical time for the business as it drives almost 50% of total annual enrollments.

### Strategy

With the weather in the Southeast staying warm for the majority of 2015, Nebo had to exceed expectations in 2016 and craft a data-driven digital strategy to target new customers through search engine optimization (SEO) and content. Nebo's objective was to increase online enrollments through digital mediums during October – December 2016, the "Light Up" months.

After experiencing our first Light Up campaign in 2015, with average temperatures reaching the high 70s/low 80s in the Southeast, Nebo knew we couldn't rely on the weather to drive increased traffic. Nebo had to take an agile approach to reach users prior to the Light Up period, specifically by gaining visibility in the search engine results page for users in the research phase of their buyer journey. Additionally, Nebo had to be quick to capitalize on enrollments during critical cold snaps and use all available insights to leverage SEO to drive increased enrollments in 2016, regardless of the temperature.

Until recently, Gas South had the general assurance that the fall and early winter months would bring a large enough increase in demand to drive the anticipated number of enrollments. Given Georgia's unpredictable changing weather patterns, Nebo had to work to grow enrollments by reaching potential customers throughout the year to keep Gas South top of mind when cold weather struck. Additionally, Nebo had to understand the motivations of consumers beyond heating their homes as well as improve conversion rates during key traffic spikes that could not be easily predicted.

Based on 2015 data, Nebo discovered several key insights that drove our SEO strategy throughout 2016. We learned that customers want straightforward, transparent pricing available throughout their buyer journey. Additionally, in order to reach users at the beginning of their purchase decision, we needed to expand our digital presence through barnacle SEO. Nebo also learned that mobile is a key platform for



driving localized traffic with high conversion rates, and to capitalize on this platform, we needed to improve our local SEO presence and enhance the mobile website experience.

Nebo also knew that winter weather patterns are unpredictable and that we had to be especially agile when cold weather hit. We needed to ensure that the website was optimized well before winter so that the domain had the strength to rank well for competitive queries and that our copy was timely and relevant when users were motivated to convert based on temperatures.

### Execution

Nebo established an integrated campaign strategy that focused on improving the conversion rate and better understanding on-page experience, leveraging new capabilities in SEO to expand our reach and improve efficiency, using SEO to improve local presence and increase visibility on related websites and, finally, leveraging content to communicate consistent messaging across all channels that highlighted the straightforward pricing and overall value Gas South provides.

From 2015 paid search metrics, Nebo learned that “no deposit” and “no gimmicks” messaging resonated most with our audience and wanted to leverage this trend for SEO. Content standardized this messaging across all channels in 2016, including metadata and on-site copy for SEO efforts. To create a more agile approach to weather patterns, prior to the cold months SEO worked with content to analyze search trends and find the key issues consumers were researching. We identified significant opportunity with users searching for ways to save money on gas bills, how to turn on natural gas and general natural gas safety, and utilized these trends in search to craft content that spoke to the problems we knew users were facing. This allowed Gas South to increase our organic reach and ultimately be top of mind when users were ready to convert during the Light Up period.

To improve local visibility, we worked to create consistency with NAP (name, address & phone number) across all local citations – a key local ranking factor – and ensured Gas South was visible on the appropriate local platforms. In an effort to optimize for Google’s Knowledge Graph, Nebo added Local Business Schema Markup throughout the site to better structure location data for search engines and reinforce those local signals. To further optimize for the Knowledge Graph, Nebo leveraged Wikipedia to build Gas South’s authority in the industry by citing them as a reference in existing relevant articles and even creating a dedicated Gas South Wikipedia article and Wikidata entry.

Nebo also worked to significantly expand reach in key markets through SEO by researching websites that were important to the buyer journey where Gas South could not compete organically. Using this barnacle SEO approach, we made sure Gas South was listed on relevant external domains, primarily natural gas pricing and comparison sites. Ensuring we had maximum visibility through these efforts, Nebo was able to dramatically increase authority, visibility and brand awareness.

### Results

Nebo’s efforts in SEO and content drove improvement in online enrollments across the board. From Q4 2015 to Q4 2016, Gas South saw a significant increase in conversion rates. Specifically, online enrollments increased by 689 year over year, driven by a 23.60% and 20.94% year over year increase in November and December, respectively. Enrollments from organic traffic increased by 674 year over year, a 21.20% increase.



Organic traffic also saw significant growth, increasing 24.82% October - December 2016 compared to 2015. Our goal wasn't simply to increase traffic, but to ensure we were driving qualified visits which was reflected in the increase in enrollments as well as a 41.77% reduction in bounce rate, a 46.44% increase in pages/session, and a 43.78% increase in average session duration.

Nebo's emphasis on mobile in 2016 also saw success. Mobile optimizations throughout the year caused mobile enrollments to see an especially significant increase in enrollments in Q4, increasing 27.78% year over year and driving an additional 867 enrollments, with organic enrollments specifically increasing 25.13%.

**External Links:**

<http://www.neboagency.com/work/sem-po-gas-south/?key=4Qj225yM02b47V1z5kIR>

<https://www.gas-south.com/default.aspx>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gas\\_South](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gas_South)

<https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/Q27686347>