

BP buying search terms to point Web surfers to own site

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Crude oil is shown in a marsh area near Brush Island, Louisiana, in May 2010. BP, facing a tidal wave of bad publicity over the Gulf of Mexico oil spill, is buying search terms on Internet search engines to point users to the company's official website.

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Searches on [Google](#), Yahoo! and Microsoft's Bing for "oil spill," "Gulf oil spill," or related phrases deliver a "sponsored link" at the top of the search results page to BP.com and the message: "Learn more about how BP is helping."

Clicking on the sponsored link takes a user to BP's website, where the

company outlines the measures it is taking to combat the damage from the greatest environmental calamity in US history.

Sponsored links are purchased by advertisers and feature prominently at the top of a search results page or along the side next to results delivered by the search engine's algorithms, such as links to news items or other material.

A BP spokesman, Toby Odone, confirmed to ABC News that the company was purchasing [search terms](#).

"We have bought search terms on search engines like Google to make it easier for people to find out more about our efforts in the Gulf and make it easier for people to find key links to information on filing claims, reporting oil on the beach and signing up to volunteer," Odone told ABC.

Scott Slatin, who runs the New York-based [search engine](#) marketing company Rivington, told ABC he estimated BP was paying more than 10,000 dollars a day to maintain the various search terms.

"They paid to lock themselves into the first position against the oil spill terms, essentially putting a positive message on top of the news," Slatin said.

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