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Maximizing ROI via Web Site Traffic Analysis

By Lee Traupel

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We are clearly well past the innocent golden age of the Internet Darwinian economics have become the order of the day today. Any company worth their salt must maintain a web site as an information resource and/or to generate incremental ecommerce revenue. Qualified traffic is the name of the game, as its the oxygen that keeps a good ecommerce web site thriving. Consequently, its very important to have an understanding of your web site traffic or visitor activity; i.e. baseline information that includes the number of visitors during specific time periods, originating location (domain), where the visitors went on a site and how long they stayed on specific sections or pages of a web site. The de facto industry standard traffic analysis tool application is Web Trends, manufactured/supported by netiQ, Inc., which we will focus on in this article.

Fundamentals and Jargon Watch

All traffic analysis tools rely primarily upon information that is extracted from log files; i.e. files that are maintained on your server which show where a visitor came from, what keyword(s) they used to find your site (if applicable), what Operating System and Browser versions they are using, etc. There are literally hundreds of excellent log file analysis tools that can be located via CNETs Download.com or TuCows both sites are excellent resources for software and information.

Its critical in todays bottom line business environment to have the ability to analyze web traffic (visitors) and patterns and then integrate this knowledge with your overall business processes what do you pay for traffic, is it converting (people are buying your goods and services), how long are people staying on specific sections or pages of your web site, what marketing expenditures are working and which arent!

You know your entering the reality distortion field (we marketing types need to justify our fees & services) and need to raise your jargon filters to stun level when you here and/or see these keywords; i.e. clickstream traffic (fancy way of saying traffic or visitors delivered via mouse clicks to your web

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site), ebusiness solutions (meaning – selling your products/services via an ecommerce site) or my all–time personal favorite, ebusiness intelligence (whats ebusiness and what determines if its intelligent).

Traffic Counter Applications

First and foremost, do you really need a comprehensive product like Web Trends (more on the different applications later) or can you get by with a click (traffic) counter application like the Hit Box? The latter company provides a free plain vanilla traffic counter which can be easily set up in minutes via your web site. Hit Box is a great product and used by hundreds of thousands of web sites, so it may be sufficient for your business, if you just want very basic info (Page Views and Daily Unique Visitors) and dont mind advertising for another company via your web site.

But, there are some downsides to utilizing Hit Box, you must install their button on your Index (home)

page and it only provides you with basic traffic information (how much per day with a forecast based on these numbers). You can upgrade to their HitBox Professional which is very similar to Web Trends basic application (Web Trends Log Analyzer) but, you have to pay for this service on a traffic basis which can get expensive, depending on your overall traffic

Web Trends Applications and Interface

Web Trends (the company) was acquired by netiQ, Inc. the parent company about 18 months ago due to their strong market leadership position with web traffic analysis software. Like many good web–focused software companies, netiQ enables you to download all of their apps for a 30 day trial period. Estimates range from 60–80% market share for one of their three primary products; i.e. Web Trends Log Analyzer, their baseline \$500. USD application which is a good solution for most web sites that have a single domain or under 25 in total; Web Trends Analysis Suite (SRP \$2.5K USD), which incorporates the functionality of the Log Analyzer product and adds more features for managing bandwidth usage (interior and external), monitoring and alerting an IT Manager or Department for server related problems and handles up to 100 domains (sites); the Web Trends Intelligence Suite is their top of the line product (pricing varies depending on bundled services) geared for enterprise customers, it includes integration and training services for integrating the application with Online Analytics Processing Tools (OLAP yes another ebiz acronym) or other types of reporting tools.

Weve been using and recommending Web Trends to clients for years primarily because of its interface and functionality. Its a browser–enabled app, meaning anyone with a browser (IE or Netscape) can view reports and data. The reports are presented in a straightforward manner that includes basic pie chart or bar types of graphics you can easily tell at a glance what your visitor traffic was for a given period, where they came from, what pages they visited and how long they stayed on specific pages. You dont need to be a technologist or a marketing geek to use this application see below for practical tips.

Practical Usage

So what do you want to measure and what type of custom reports do you want to run once you get the software installed? You will want to measure how much traffic (visitors) is coming to your web site per day, week, month, where they are coming from (country of origin), and where visitors going on your web site; i.e. home page, internal pages and of these what specific pages; i.e. About Us Products, Services your Shopping Cart, etc. Pay careful attention to usage times, how long people are staying on specific pages; too long may indicate they cant figure out your content, or your content is so good its meaningful and educational. For example, if your White Paper Resource section is the most frequently visited and the visitor sessions (time elements) are long (2–4 minutes) then this means your content is being well received. But, if everyone is just reading your White Papers but not filling out your response forms then you may need to alter some aspects of your business processes and how you communicate them via your web site.

Web Trends compliments ongoing advertising campaigns and processes – it lets you capture critical ROI (Return on Investment) information by giving you an accurate picture of traffic and usage patterns that should correlate with what your ad agency or marketing partner is telling you or confirming with their own reports. For example: If your deploying an opt–in e–mail campaign and bringing people to a specific landing page (specific page where people are directed to that may include an offer) you need to carefully monitor if people are clicking through to the page and how long they are staying and/or going to your shopping cart to purchase a product or a registration fulfillment

page. If the session times (how long they stay on a page) are short and people arent filling out a form or converting (purchasing or taking a specific action) then you clearly have some work to do on your web site content and or business processes.

Lee Traupel has 20 plus years of business development and marketing experience – he is the founder of Intellective Communications, Inc.,

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company providing proprietary services to clients encompassing startups to public companies.
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Internet Marketing Just Got Easier, NEW Web Traffic ROI Calculator Launched

By Brent J. Dreyer

What is your web traffic worth? The iMarketingStrategy.com interactive calculator lets you test numbers and instantly see a "real time" indication of value. The calculator is helpful for planning Internet Marketing campaigns and projecting ROI.

With the growing popularity of Internet Marketing as an alternative or parallel path to Direct Marketing, executives are demanding a measure for the Return on Investment (ROI). In response to these demands, iMarketingStrategy.com developed a simple to use Web Traffic ROI Calculator, built in Flash and 100% interactive.

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The variables needed for calculating the value of web traffic are straightforward and they are critical for planning a profitable Internet Marketing strategy. The Web Traffic ROI Calculator found on the iMarketingStrategy.com web site is easy to use. First, enter your estimate of Projected Web Traffic. This can be done on a weekly or monthly basis. Next, enter the following marketing variables;

Conversion Rate - The percent of visitors to a web site that typically make a purchase.

Average Order Value - The average amount the a purchaser is expected to spend.

Average Profit on Sale - The difference between cost and sale price, or percent margin.

Customer Purchase Frequency - The number of times that a customer buys per year.

Customer Life - The number of years that a customer remains loyal and continues to buy.

With these five variables, a cumulative net profit can be calculated for web traffic. This estimate of value can be useful when planning Internet Marketing strategies and determining ROI on targeted marketing campaigns.

Another important indication of value emerges out of this calculation, the value of each web visitor. By dividing the cumulative net profit calculated for web traffic by the number of visitors added per year, the value of each visitor can be estimated.

Here is an example that starts with the projected addition of 500 web visitors per week. The conversion rate is estimated at 2%, or 1 buyer out of every 50 visitors. The average order is \$150 and the profit margin is 50% of each sale. The average customer will make a purchase on the web site twice a year and they will remain a loyal customer for three years. With these variables in mind, a net value of \$234,000 may be assigned to the 500 web visitors that were added. Furthermore, based on the sales conversion numbers, each visitor to the web site is worth \$9.00.

The Web Traffic ROI Calculator can be found on the iMarketingStrategy.com web site and is available

for free public use. The web address for the calculator is:
<http://www.iMarketingStrategy.com/roi-calculator.htm>

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