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**Visitor Traffic Statistics 101**

**By Cherie' Davidson**

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by Cherie' Davidson Copyright 2005

As we all know, visitor traffic is crucial to the success of every Website. If you do not know how many views your pages get, how can you know if anyone is seeing your site, product or service? With an online business, you can not afford to guess at how effective your marketing, content, message or Website design is.

Ideally, you need to know what pages are viewed, how long the visitor stays on any given page and what page they click to next. Also, if you can see the keywords they used to search for you, or see what link they clicked to get to your site (referral link), you have great information for SEO (search engine optimization) of your site content and keywords. This is all part of Web analytics. The more you know about site analytics, the better prepared you will be to get the most out of your site traffic and visitor usage. Read through these basics and you will be ready to go look for an effective visitor traffic reporting service, find the best features for the price, and boost your site's effectiveness.

Who are your visitors?

You spend many hours identifying your target market. Through SEO, you spend even more time, and often money, to focus your keywords, search indexing and content for this market. You devote yourself to find the optimal visitors by geography, interest, demographics and other important criteria, all for one purpose ... to get the attention of potential customers or clients.

Once you know your target market, you need to know if your efforts are effective. You do that by tracking your site visitor statistics. Web analytics analyze your site traffic and break down the data into usable information reports. Visitor stats you need for the best tracking include how many total visits ("hits" on your site pages, which means the total number of views by everyone who visits your site), unique page views (views of any given page by the same visitor), and geographic location of your unique visitors. The advantage of geographic location is that you can monitor where your visitors are coming from. For instance, DogWidgets.com (note: fictional company) began by selling to one region

in the US but was getting traffic from Canada and Germany. Owner saw that marketing focus was needed for a more specific geographic area.

What are your visitors searching for?

This area of analytics is a terrific opportunity for SEO and refinement of your keyword strategies. With a good tracking service, you will be able to get a report on search engine keyword usage and clickstream (click path) data. In other words, the report will show a breakdown of the keywords your visitors used to find you as well as the search engine they used. This information is invaluable as it spells out exactly what your visitors are looking for, how effective your keywords are, and lets you know what search engines have you listed. If your chosen service provides it, you can click the report link to see what your page rank is for that engine, in real-time. A good analytics site will also provide the clickstream data, which will show you the path your visitor's took inside your site, from page to

page. This data is invaluable for marketing your site and product or service. To demonstrate, the owner of DogWidget.com has been trying to decide what areas to focus on. Owner's dog widgets have a wide variety of applications, and Owner sees through the keyword report that the search terms are all over the spectrum. There is no focus. This tells Owner that a marketing strategy is needed to grab visitors that want specific dog widgets.

When do they visit my site?

You will also want to monitor your peak traffic hours. This is very easy with a good analytics report. The more detail your reports show, the more information you have to work with. You should be able to have the data on your site visits broken down by year, month, week, day and hour. This is important information, but you really need more than just "visitor totals." You should look for this time breakdown by page views (total views of every page on your site) and by unique visitors (pages viewed by each individual visitor). To show the importance, let's consider our dog widget site scenario: DogWidget.com sells a variety of multi-colored widgets for dogs. Owner notices through tracking reports that there is a much higher page view of the Outdoor widgets on Friday mornings. The Outdoor page seems to compel the highest number of clicks to the order page. No one clicks from the Rainy Day widgets page to the order page. So now Owner has the information to rethink the Rainy Day page, and to begin focusing more advertising to Outdoor topics, advertisers and markets.

Where are visitors coming from?

When you begin marketing your site, whether it is banner and link exchanges, classified ads, posting articles, press releases or pay per click advertising, you need to know what is working for you and what is wasting your time. Referral link reports help narrow this down and allow you to see what active links on the Internet are being used to bring site visitors. For instance, let's see how our enthusiastic and dedicated dog widget owner has been advertising. Being on a shoestring, Owner decided to try SEO and send out weekly press releases. DogWidget.com has been indexed by several major search engines, keywords have been refined thanks to the keyword usage reports. Using the referral reports Owner sees that the SEO is beginning to roll along nicely and is even picking up a little momentum. Now for the press releases. Owner sends out a new press release each week for two months. Without

the referral link report, Owner would be in the dark as to whether the links on the releases were being used, unless it was a paid distribution service (and that info is only for one release on that one site). With the referral report, Owner was able to send out press releases at no cost, and see what sites picked them up and posted them through the clicks on the contact links. So the press release about Vacation dog widgets got a lot of attention, excellent. That was time well spent. So now, Owner focus can shift so efforts are optimized.

Why is all this so important?

I must answer this question with a question: do you know how your site has been doing? If you do not have reports to give you the real-time traffic information necessary to gauge visitor performance, how can you know how your site is really doing? Are you thinking some decent sales is doing well? Or because you get nice feedback, the site is ok? If this is the case, you are settling for inferior results. This is not a solid way to manage any business, and a Website is business. Why would you want to settle for "ok" when you can get the tools at little expense that can make your site soar? Our Owner wanted to quit the "day job" and make a real living from DogWidgets.com, and with diligence and Web analytics, there is a good chance Owner will succeed, and make a lot of dogs happy at the same time! Please don't settle for "ok." Take your site to the next level. All it takes is having the right

information to work with. To paraphrase an old idiom, Visitor Knowledge is Site Success.

How do they use my Website?

Your visitors are valuable. The visitors that buy your product or service are priceless; they are the key element to success. You want to make them happy and keep them coming back. You also want them to spread the word about you. And yes, Web analytics can improve this as well. By knowing how visitors are actually using your site, which pages they visit, how long they view the pages they visit, what pages compel them to continue inside the site (clickstream), and what pages they use to leave your site (exit page) will tell you a great deal. For instance, back to our dog widget site. Owner sees that the Uses for Widgets page seems to hold the visitor longer than other information pages. It was written with humor and has a fun, clean look. Wow, a winner page. However, Rainy Day Widget shows as a big exit page. Not a good page, it appears to kill the site visits. Ok, Owner knows that Rainy Day page needs some redesign and rewriting fast.

Don't let your Website stall like a rainy day widget. As with any business, a Website is needing continual marketing and refinement to stay focused and on target. You need to keep on top of your markets, keep fresh, interesting and compelling content, keep your site available to those who want your product or service. Staying alive on the Web means you need visitors ... visitors who are looking for what you have to offer. With good Web analytics you have the tools you need to put your site in front of your target market, increase your ROI and find success on the Internet. And isn't this why you have a Website?

Cherie' Davidson works as content and marketing manager for VisiStat.com (

<http://www.visistat.com>

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VisiStat is a detailed, real-time site traffic and Web analytics report service that is focused on ease of use and user-friendliness. VisiStat's goal is to help site entrepreneurs make the most of their site marketing and search engine optimization efforts — to be a virtual "goldmine" for marketing. Learn more at

<http://www.visistat.com>

or write Cherie' at

[cherie@visistat.com](mailto:cherie@visistat.com)

## **Web Site Analytics: Read Between The Lines (And Charts, And Graphs)**

**By Marc Travis**

Traffic analysis is a key ingredient in online marketing success. The numbers, charts and graphs provided by your favorite web statistics software are invaluable.

But it's not until you begin to interpret those statistics as part of a larger picture that you'll receive the full value of your web analytics software.

A software package can only return so many lines of data. And most of them do a good job at providing the most important ones. But your real insights will be found at the intersection of two, three, or even more of these statistics.

It's up to you to interpret what you see and turn it into useful information, rather than staring blankly at the numbers and recognizing a trend. When you see a trend you like or don't like, your natural tendency is to try to emphasize the conditions that caused the positive trends and eliminate the conditions that led to negative trends. But how?

By digging. Let's say your visits are down. Now, you have to ask yourself why? Perhaps, upon further investigation, you see that the downturn in traffic is primarily coming from a loss of repeat visitors. Dig a little further, and you find out that visitors on dial-up stopped returning a few weeks ago. Now, think about what could have changed over the past few weeks. Did you switch servers? Add any large images or problematic remote javascript code such as Google Analytics?

Now your digging into the statistics has brought you outside the numbers and into the reality of your site and the way you run it. Get into the mind of your typical visitor and see what they see. Dig around for other statistics that may provide a clue as to why you're getting the results that you are. Chances are, when you stop and think, the answer will come from your own mind, not one of a hundred pretty charts or bar graphs on your web analytics software.

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on web site statistics and analysis.



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