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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.

Visit Web Analytics Guide

<http://www.analyticsguide.com>

for more valuable insights, articles and FAQ

on web site statistics and analysis.

Website Analysis 102

By Richard D S Hill

Last month we published Website Analysis 101 and said we would return to the subject. So I guess this is Website Analysis 102?

So, have you ever asked yourself, or have others ever asked you, questions like those below, and others? If you have, did you know how to answer them or what the answers are? If not, shouldn't you be able to? If the answer to that is no, why have you got a website?

- How do I increase revenue from my site?
- Can I increase the number of leads generated on my site?
- How do I optimize keywords for my site?
- Can I decrease my web based customer acquisition cost?
- How do I decrease my online support costs?
- Does "Free Delivery" or a "BOGOF" for web sales increase my margin?

Web analytics provides the foundation for effective online business and marketing decisions about these sorts of question through accurate measurement and analysis of visitors' actual behaviours.

Overall, there are probably four site types.

- Content: Content sites revolve around advertising, with the goal of repeat visits and thus increased advertising exposure. Analytics is about click tracking the ads by content pages.
- Customer Support: It is about self-service model and giving customers the answers they need to reduce call centre or other costs. Analytics is about click tracking the FAQs etc. and marrying the information with other company information to establish what can and cannot be answered effectively this way.
- Lead Generation: Here your goal is to get visitors to submit their contact information so that they can be contacted. Analytics is focused on lead capture to help understand how to increase lead conversion.
- ECommerce: The goal is to get customers to fill their shopping cart and buy. Analytics is about

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purchases and looking at how the customer reached the point of purchase.

Which type of site is yours?

Not only that what is it you want people to do when they get to your site?

What is the 'target action' for your site?

This is what you need to measure.

Once you have decided that you can move on to the next stage and measure what matters. Then you have to decide how to measure what matters and how to interpret it once you have measured it.

How to measure is to find a good package such as Click Tracks or Google Analytics. Then you need to add the page tags to all pages and gather page-level data for at least 6 to 12 months. You need plenty of data because visitor onsite times are often very short and you do not want or need erroneous results. When you interpret the information, all those pretty pie charts and graphs, make sure you know what else was going on in the timeframe. Your own events such as ad campaigns and PR can influence site traffic, as can world events such as 9/11 so you need to put site traffic into context for the period you are analyzing.

Richard Hill is a director of E-CRM Solutions and has spent many years in senior direct and interactive marketing roles. E-CRM [

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] is involved in ECommerce and Emarketing and

helps you to grow by getting you more customers that stay with you longer. We provide practical solutions that pay for themselves.



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