

20 Key Web Analytics Metrics and How to Use Them

Web analytics programs provide access to a lot of valuable marketing data. Let's look at how you can leverage those insights to grow your business and better document your ROI.

Key components to evaluate.

The marketing intelligence you gain from web analytics can help you more effectively manage the marketing of your organization and its various products or services. Web analytics programs provide nearly real-time data which can document your campaign successes or empower you to make timely adjustments to your current marketing strategies.

While web analytics provides a broad range of metrics, there are four categories of metrics that are generally actionable and can directly impact your business objectives. They include:

- Website Usability
- Traffic Sources
- Visitor Profiles
- Conversion Statistics

Website Usability

Beginning with your website, let's take a look at how well it works for your visitors. This is where you can learn how "user-friendly" it really is or whether or not you are providing the right content.

1. Pageviews

The most basic of measurements, this metric is usually presented as the "average pageviews per visitor". If they come to your website and don't view many pages then your website may have issues with its design or structure. Another explanation for low pageviews is a disconnect in the marketing messages that brought them to the site and the content that is actually available.

2. Time on Site

Similar to pageviews, it's a fundamental measurement of a visitor's interaction with your website. Generally, the longer a person spends on your website, the better it is. That could mean they're carefully reviewing your content, utilizing interactive components you have available and building towards an informed decision to buy, respond or take the next step you've provided. On the contrary, the time-on-site also needs to be examined against the number of pages viewed to make sure the visitor isn't spending his or her time trying to locate content that should be more readily accessible.

3. Downloads

This includes PDF's, videos and other resources you make available to your visitors. Consider how accessible these items are as well as how well they're promoted. If your web statistics for example, reveal that 60% of the individuals who watch a demo video also make a purchase, then you'll want to strategize to increase viewership of that video.

4. Click Map

Most analytics programs can show you the percentage of clicks each item on your webpage received. This includes clickable-photos, text links in your copy, downloads and of course, any navigation you may have on the page. Are they clicking the most important items?

5. Click Paths

Although an assessment of click paths is more involved, it can quickly reveal where you might be losing visitors in a specific process. A well-designed website uses a combination of graphics and information architecture to encourage visitors to follow “pre-defined” paths through your website. These are not rigid pathways but rather intuitive steps that align with the various processes you’ve built into the website. One process might be that of “educating” a visitor who has minimum understanding of your product or service. Another might be a process of “motivating” a returning visitor to consider an upgrade or repurchase. A third process might be structured around items you market online. You’ll have as many process pathways in your website as you have target audiences, products and services. Each can be measured through web analytics to determine how effective they are.

Traffic Sources

Your web analytics program is an incredible tool for identifying where your web traffic originates. Basic categories such as search engines, referral websites and visits from bookmarked pages (i.e. direct) are compiled with little involvement by the marketer. With a little effort however, you can also identify web traffic that was generated by your various offline or online advertising campaigns.

6. Referral Websites

Other websites that contain links that send visitors directly to your website are considered referral websites. Your analytics program will identify each referral site your traffic comes from and a deeper analysis will help you determine which referrals produce the greatest volume, the highest conversions, the most new visitors, etc.

7. Search Engines

Data in the search engine category is divided between paid search and organic (or natural) search. You can review the top keywords that generated web traffic to your site and see if they are representative of your products and services. Depending upon your business, you might want to have hundreds (or thousands) of keywords that draw potential customers. Even the simplest product search can have multiple variations based on how the individual phrases the search query.

8. Direct

Direct searches are attributed to two sources. An individual who bookmarks one of your webpages in their favorites and clicks that link will be recorded as a direct search. Another source occurs when someone types in your URL directly into their browser. This happens when someone retrieves your URL from a business card, brochure, print ad, radio commercial, etc. That’s why it’s good strategy to use coded URLs.

9. Offline Campaigns

If you utilize advertising options other than web-based campaigns, your web analytics program can capture performance data if you’ll include a mechanism for sending them to your website. Typically, this is a dedicated URL that you include in your advertisement (i.e. “www.mycompany.com/offer50”) that delivers those visitors to a specific landing page. You now have data on how many responded to that ad by visiting your website.

10. Online Campaigns

If you are running a banner ad campaign, search engine advertising campaign or even email campaigns, you can measure individual campaign effectiveness by simply using a dedicated URL similar to the offline campaign strategy.

Visitor Profiles

One of the ways you can leverage your web analytics into a really powerful marketing tool is through segmentation. By blending data from different analytics reports, you'll begin to see a variety of user profiles emerge.

11. Keywords

Within your analytics report, you can see what keywords visitors used in search engines to locate your website. If you aggregate your keywords by similar attributes, you'll begin to see distinct visitor groups that are using your website. For example, the particular search phrase that was used can indicate how well they understand your product or its benefits. If they use words that mirror your own product or service descriptions, then they probably are already aware of your offerings from effective advertisements, brochures, etc. If the terms are more general in nature, then your visitor is seeking a solution for a problem and has happened upon your website. If this second group of searchers is sizable, then you'll want to ensure that your sight has a strong education component to convince them they've found their answer and then move them into your sales channel.

12. Content Groupings

Depending upon how you group your content, you may be able to analyze sections of your website that correspond with specific products, services, campaigns and other marketing tactics. If you conduct a lot of tradeshow and drive traffic to your website for specific product literature, then your web analytics will highlight the activity in that section.

13. Geography

Analytics permits you to see where your traffic geographically originates including country, state and city. This can be especially useful if you use geo-targeted campaigns or want to measure your visibility across a region.

14. Time of Day

Web traffic generally has peaks at the beginning of the work day, during lunch and toward the end of the work day. It's not unusual however to find strong web traffic entering your website up until the late evening. You can analyze this data to determine when people browse versus buy and also make decisions on what hours you should offer customer service.

15. Landing Page Profiles

If you structure your various advertising campaigns properly, you can drive each of your targeted groups to a different landing page which your web analytics will capture and measure. By combining these numbers with the demographics of your campaign media, you can know what percentage of your visitors fit each demographic.

Conversion Statistics

Each organization will define a "conversion" according to its specific marketing objectives. Some web analytics programs use the term "goal" to benchmark certain website objectives whether that be a certain number of visitors to a page, a completed registration form or an online purchase.

16. New Visitors

If you're working to increase visibility, you'll want to study the trends in your New Visitors data. Analytics identifies all visitors as either new or returning.

17. Returning Visitors

If you're involved in loyalty programs or offer a product that has a long purchase cycle, then your Returning Visitors data will help you measure progress in this area.

18. Leads

Once a form is submitted and a thank-you page is generated, you have created a lead. Web analytics will permit you to calculate a completion rate (or abandonment rate) by dividing the number of completed forms by the number of web visitors that came to your form. A low completion percentage would indicate a page that needs attention.

19. Sales/Conversions

Depending upon the intent of your website, you can define a "sale" by an online purchase, a completed registration, an online submission or any number of other web activities. Monitoring these figures will alert you to any changes (or successes!) that occur further upstream.

20. Abandonment/Exit Rates

Just as important as those moving through your website are those who began a process and quit or came to your website and left after a page or two. In the first case, you'll want to analyze where the visitor terminated the process and if there are a number of visitors quitting at the same place, then investigate the situation for resolution. In the latter case, a high exit rate on a website or a specific page generally indicates an issue with expectations. Visitors click to your website based on some message contained in an advertisement, a presentation, etc. and expect some continuity in that message. Make sure you're advertising a message that your website can reinforce and deliver.

Conclusion

Within each of the items above are metrics that can be established for your specific organization. You can create a weekly dashboard that includes specific numbers or percentages that will indicate where you're succeeding -- or highlight a marketing challenge that should be addressed. When these metrics are evaluated consistently and used in conjunction with other available marketing data, they can lead you to a highly-quantified marketing program.