

The 101 of Website Analytics

Websites provide marketers with a tremendous source of meaningful, actionable data that can direct new marketing initiatives, correct usability issues, and track the effectiveness of both online and offline campaigns. Some of the best-designed analytics programs were created with marketers in mind. The information below is based on Google Analytics program which is available at no charge from Google.

It's all in the details.

Take a look at your web analytics data and you'll quickly discover how effective your website is. Drill down a little further, and you can find out *why* it's working . . . or *why* it's not. Most web analytics programs provide you important, overview data regarding how many visitors came to your site, how long they spent there and where they came from; however, the more valuable information is in the detail that feeds this summary. It's a lot of data, but a feast for a marketer.

What do my visitors look like and why is that important?

A robust program like Google Analytics can provide you a lot of information about the various individuals who visit your site. You can distinguish between first-time and returning visitors which may be important to your selling process. Are you working on new sales, loyalty or both? You'll also learn how much time they spent on your site and how many pages they viewed. Time-on-site is a good metric for site relevance. If they're spending sufficient time on your site, then you're probably providing value which may positively influence a sale. Also examine how many pages your visitor has viewed. This speaks to both the effectiveness of your navigation as well as the appeal of your content. You wouldn't expect a visitor to view every page in your website, but if they leave after one page, you really have a challenge.

Where did they come from?

Two great insights available here: *How* did they find your website and *what* is the geographic location of the visitor? Google Analytics helps you understand how a visitor reached your website. This includes *Direct*, in which the URL was typed in directly (think business card or brochure), *Referral* which includes other websites that list your website (Chamber of Commerce, associations, etc.) and *Search* which includes both natural (organic) search and paid search. You also have access to some creative sales intelligence when you study the geographic source of your visitors. Try overlaying data from specific cities, states, or countries with the various marketing efforts you have underway in those same areas.

What were they doing on my website?

Sometimes a hard pill to swallow, but you have to ask "did my visitors do what I hoped they'd do?" Was your goal to have them complete and submit a form? Call a sales rep? Review 4-6 pages of content relevant to the sales process? View a video? Download a whitepaper or article? All of this information is captured by your web analytics program. By assessing the data against your website objectives, you can now make changes that will enhance the success of your website and your online marketing efforts.