

The Importance of Web Analytics

All too often, we put up a website and then forget all about it.

The copious amount of time, money, energy and grey hairs spent in developing our baby falls by the wayside. The website loses its potential to generate more awareness, more business and transactions for you.

Herein lies the importance of Web Analytics-the process of analyzing the behavior of visitors at your website to enable you to modify, enhance and introduce new features and content to your site so it keeps delivering the results you desire.

Web Analytics on a basic level helps you answer questions like:


- 1) How many visitors come to your site?
- 2) Where do the visitors come from? Are they from affiliates, search engines or some other source?
- 3) Where do they focus their attention?
- 4) If they came from search engines, which words did they use in the search?
- 5) Which pages do they view most often?
- 6) Where do they drop off your site?

Why is this information important?

First, it is important to know whether your site is attracting visitors and if your online marketing efforts are paying off. If you cannot attract traffic to your site, there is something that is not working. It could be due to any of the following reasons:-

- a) Your site is not appropriately marketed online.
- b) Your site is difficult to navigate so people do not want to stay on it.



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- c) Your site takes too long to load and your target market does not have the patience.
 - d) Your site is simply not delivering any product/service that customers are seeking.
- The answers to the above questions gives you useful information as to how to move ahead and the changes you need to make to improve the status quo.

Content developers will also want to know which are the most viewed, and therefore crucial pages on your site. It's like prime real-estate. You will want to use this space prudently by putting as much of the business critical information here as you can.

Next, understanding where your customers come from is a good starting point to consider if Search Engine Marketing is something you can deploy to attract more visitors. Questions the website statistics will answer include:

- a) Where did your visitors come from?
- b) Are they referred to by some search engine or affiliate?
- c) Were there any particular key words that guided your clients to your site?
- d) Are they referring to an ad campaign that you started or an e-newsletter?

Finally, you want to monitor if any of the changes/improvements/marketing programs that you have done on your site are actually improving the business and hence the ROI of the site. This will allow you to focus on the strategies that are actually working for you and abandon the ones that are not adding to the bottomline.

What is important to the user?

The reality is that there is a lot of data available but ultimately, what is important is how you use the data.

- If your data tells you your hits are increasing, that is great, but why?
- Where is the traffic coming from?
- Are they coming from search engines, your affiliates, a directory...?
- You will then be able to spend your advertising/promotions dollars more effectively.

Your data says that people view a particular page more than any other page on your site. **GREAT!** You have found the prime real estate on your site. But how will you leverage this information?

- Will you place more promotional items there?
- Will you put some new items that you have included in your inventory?
- Or will you describe your company expertise?

If you are a company that relies on online advertising and click-throughs to create your revenues, then you will put your best paying links on the page that is most viewed.

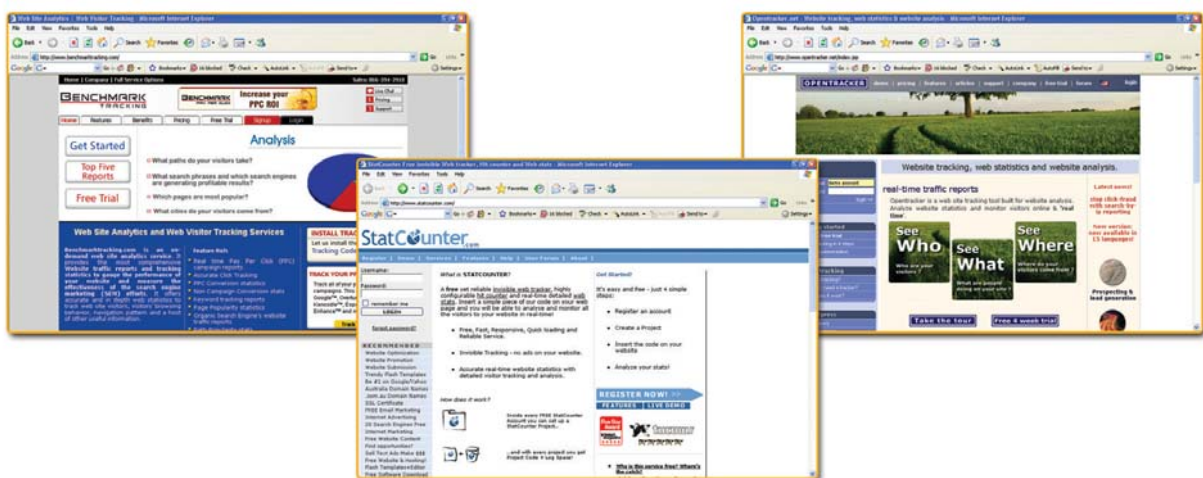
If your data says that people come to the site and leave after 2 page views, that's important information. Are people leaving because the navigation is confusing? Did you advertise using key words that were not representative of your product/service, hence you got the wrong kind of customers?


Suppose you are running an online shop or you had an online form/feedback form that people have to fill out. If you find that people leave after the second or third stage and don't complete the process, you will be able to decipher why. Is the form too long? Is the checkout process too convoluted?

The numbers that are generated and viewed need to point you to the answers of these questions. This will allow you to dynamically improve the process of your site and hence your bottomline.

Some online web analytic tools to consider:

Here are some tracking tools you can try online for free. You will need to add a simple string of code to the webpages you want to track. To check out the details, visit these sites to find out more:



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- ▶ <http://www.statcounter.com/>
 - ▶ <http://www.benchmarktracking.com/> - this offers a free trial period. You can look at buying the product if you like it at the end of the 30 day trial period.
 - ▶ <http://www.opentracker.net> - this offers a free 30 day trial period.

It might also be good to see what information your hosting company can provide you for free. You can then use this information for any improvements to your site before seeking more robust web tracking solutions.

At a minimum, your hosting company should be able to provide you with basic information such as:

- Top Entry Pages
- Top Exit Pages
- Top Users
- Top Key words
- Top Referring URL's
- Time spent on your site etc.

So do make it a point to make web analytics a “standard operating procedure” after your site is built. It's the first step to ensuring that your investment continues to pay off.

Suggestion: Read this article in conjunction with our March 2006 Interact! On “Common Terms Used in Website Statistics Reports”

PS: Found this newsletter informative and useful? Email us with your comments, questions or other topics you would like covered at info@8rewardsroad.com