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Internet Marketing & Web Development Resources

Driving Traffic

Converting Visitors

Tracking and Testing

Analytics in Context

Google Analytics

Conversion University  
Learn. Explore. Profit.

Source:[http://www.google.com/analytics/conversionuniversity\\_dt.html](http://www.google.com/analytics/conversionuniversity_dt.html)

Learn about marketing and content optimization and read web analytics tips from industry experts at Conversion University, the Google Analytics companion resource.

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## Google Analytics – Conversion University

# Chapter 1

## DRIVING TRAFFIC

Regardless of how you drive traffic to your site - paid search, search engine optimization (SEO), print, or any other medium - your challenge is to get more of the visitors you really want for the lowest cost possible. This section of Conversion University focuses on marketing optimization: how to target your marketing and get the most out of your spend.

### **Sitemaps for Search Engine Optimization (SEO)**

*by Shaluinn Fullove*

Have you taken every step to optimize your site for natural search? Learn five Google Sitemaps tips that can help drive traffic to your site and improve the visibility of your content.

### **AdWords Targeting and Tracking Tips**

*by Alden DeSoto*

Do you know your AdWords ROI for each of your geographic markets? Looking for the optimal mix between Search and Content network delivery? Here are five tips for targeting – and tracking – your ads effectively.

### **Optimizing your AdWords ROI with Google Analytics**

*by Alden DeSoto*

By looking at a single report in Google Analytics, you can see the ROI for each keyword you buy, spend confidently on the keywords that perform, and drop the ones that don't. Here's how.

### **Intelligent Advertising for Small Business**

*by Alden DeSoto*

You're a small business owner. You'd like more visibility for your site, and you've had a salesperson tell you about the benefits of buying a listing on her advertising or portal site. It sounds like a good deal, but how do you know?

### **A Benchmark Strategy to Search Engine Marketing (SEM)**

*by Alden DeSoto*

In the frenzy to attain or maintain the highest ranking, it's easy to get caught up in keyword bidding wars. Don't give in to this temptation. There's a better way and it begins with finding a break-even cost-per-click benchmark.

# Sitemaps for Search Engine Optimization

BY SHALUINN FULLOVE

Have you found it difficult to rank favorably for the keywords important to your business? Are all of your web pages visible in the natural search results? Here are five ways Google Sitemaps can help you drive more potential customers to your site and improve the visibility of your content.

## #1. Submit all of your pages to the Google index – for free.

Let's start off with a quick look at what Google Sitemaps is – and isn't. Google Sitemaps is a service that allows you to submit ALL of your pages to the Google index. It's particularly useful for making sure that dynamically generated URLs or pages that are not adequately linked to on your site get indexed. By submitting your URLs in a Sitemap, you help Google's web crawler do a more complete and efficient job of crawling your site.

A Sitemap is simply a file with a list of all the URLs you want crawled in your site. You can create it manually or use Google's Sitemap Generator or another third party program.

But, it's important to note that submitting a Sitemap will not guarantee inclusion or influence your PageRank. And, submitting a Sitemap isn't a replacement for creating compelling and useful content; using Sitemaps should complement, not replace, your SEO activities.

To create and submit a Sitemap, just go to <https://www.google.com/webmasters/sitemaps> and sign in with your Google account (the same account and password you use for Google Analytics, Gmail, and other Google services). Add your website URL where it says "Add Site," and then follow the instructions at the "Add a Sitemap" link .

You don't have to submit a Sitemap to use Google Sitemaps. Even without a Sitemap, you can still get reports that provide insight into your site's visibility on Google and how to make your pages more crawler-friendly. Simply sign in and add your site.

## #2. Find out how you rank on the top search queries.

You can use the CPC vs Organic Conversion report in Google Analytics to find out your total visits, pages viewed per visit, conversion rates, and other metrics for each of your organic keywords. But, what you can't see is how you ranked for those keywords. This is where Sitemaps reporting can help.

When you sign in to Sitemaps, from the My Sites overview page, click on your website URL, then click on the Statistics tab. The right hand column of the report shows how you rank organically for the top searches to your site. You can put this ranking information together with clickthrough information from Google Analytics to understand how visibility for specific keywords has translated into conversions.

Again, you don't need to submit a Sitemap to see this information. Just sign in to Sitemaps and add your site.

### #3. Find out how Google sees your site.

See common anchor words -- the common words used to link to your pages, and see the common words that Google sees on your site. Click "Page analysis" in the Statistics tab. This helps you see trends in your site's content and the keywords that others are using in external links to your site.

### #4. Unblock your site.

If your site has a robots.txt file, you may be blocking Google from crawling some of the pages you want to be included in Google search results. Sitemaps provides a robots.txt tool where you can enter a list of URLs to see if your robots.txt file is blocking them from being crawled. You can also test changes to your robots.txt file by entering them here and then testing them against the Googlebot. This lets you experiment with changes to see how they would impact the crawl of your site, as well as make sure there are no errors in the file, before making changes to the file on your site.

### #5. Get re-included.

If your site has disappeared from the search results, you may have been penalized for violating the Google quality guidelines. Once you have corrected the problems on your site, you can request re-inclusion from your Sitemaps account. Simply sign in, click "Submit a reinclusion request", and fill out the form. This form is also available from the Summary page for sites that show violations. Remember, if your site hasn't violated the webmaster guidelines, there's no need to submit a reinclusion request.

The reinclusion request form is only available to Sitemaps users. Although, you can send an email to Google user support requesting reinclusion, a request from a registered, identifiable Sitemaps user is generally taken more seriously.

### There's more.

Google Sitemaps is an evolving product with more features added frequently. Stay up to date on the most newest features with the Sitemaps blog (<http://www.sitemaps.blogspot.com/>) and get your questions answered on the Google Sitemaps Group (<http://groups.google.com/group/google-sitemaps>).

## AdWords Targeting and Tracking Tips

BY ALDEN DESOTO

Do you know your AdWords ROI for each of your geographic markets? Looking for the optimal mix between Search and Content network delivery? Are your ads sufficiently targeted? Here are five tips for targeting – and tracking – your ads effectively.

### Tip #1: Target geographic markets with AdWords Campaigns.

Your AdWords account comprises one or more Campaigns. You always have at least one Campaign, which, by default, is named something like "Campaign #1" unless you change it (from the Edit Campaign Settings link). By customizing a Campaign's settings, you can target the ads and keywords within it to a specific geographic region and to speakers of a particular language.

So, if you target advertising to diverse markets, for example, California (U.S.) and Mexico, you might consider setting up a separate Campaign for each one. You can even select a target language for each Campaign. Note, however, that you'll need to write your ads in the language you've selected for that Campaign.

### Tip #2: Track ROI by geographic market.

Separating your geographic markets into AdWords Campaigns makes it easy to track each region's ROI in Google Analytics. This can be helpful as you tailor your keyword buying for each market. The Campaign ROI report (in the Marketing Optimization: Marketing Campaign Results section) shows your total advertising cost, revenue, and ROI for each AdWords Campaign. For Campaign conversion rates, look at the Campaign Conversion report.

(Note that all of the Google Analytics advice in this article assumes that you've linked your Google Analytics account with your AdWords account and that you've enabled autotagging. If you are unsure about this or you'd like a complete discussion of how interpret AdWords ROI, read [Optimizing your AdWords ROI with Google Analytics](#).)

Even if you don't break out your AdWords Campaigns by geography, you can still split out each keyword in Google Analytics and see where your visitors for that keyword came from. From the All CPC Analysis report (in the Marketing Optimization: Search Engine Marketing section), drill down on the google[cpc] line item. Click the red button at the left of any keyword, click Cross Segment Performance and select Country, Region, or City. You'll see the number of visits, the pages viewed per visit, and the conversion rates for the keyword, broken down by country, region, or city.

### Tip #3: Target and track "Search" and "Content" networks.

You can set up your AdWords Campaigns to target Search (search engine results exclusively), the Google content network, or a combination of Search and Content. If you select Content, your ads may sometimes appear on partner sites such as The New York Times and MarthaStewart.com, as well as many smaller niche sites covering thousands of topics.

The All CPC Analysis report shows both keyword ROI and Content network ROI. And, the Overall Keyword Conversion report shows conversion rates. You can find both of these reports in the Marketing Optimization: Search Engine Marketing section.

In the All CPC Analysis report, drill down on the "google[cpc]" line item. You'll see a line item for each of your keywords. If you received any clicks from the Content network, you'll see a line item labeled "content". If you are unsure how to interpret this report, read [Optimizing your AdWords ROI with Google Analytics](#).

The Overall Keyword Conversion report lists all of the keywords you buy (whether on AdWords or not). As with the CPC Program Analysis report, your clicks from the content network will show up in the "content" line item.

### Tip #4: Use AdGroups to target your ads.

Instead of putting all of your keywords into a single AdGroup, group them into "themes", and create an Ad Group for each theme. For example, let's say you are a professional portrait and wedding photographer. In this case, you might create two AdGroups, one for portrait photography and another for wedding photography. Then, within each AdGroup, you can write one or more ads targeted to the appropriate audience.

In your portrait AdGroup, you might create the following ad:

[Fine portrait photography](#)  
Book your session with premier  
Hollywood fashion photographer  
[www.abcphotostudio.com](http://www.abcphotostudio.com)

While, in your wedding AdGroup, you might create this ad:

[Glamorous Wedding Photos](#)  
Book premier Hollywood fashion  
photographer for your wedding  
[www.abcphotostudio.com](http://www.abcphotostudio.com)

In the portrait AdGroup, you'd buy keywords such as "portrait photographer" and in the wedding AdGroup, you'd buy keywords such as "wedding photographer". This way, when someone searches for "portrait photographer", they'll see an ad that specifically addresses their needs.

If you offer wedding photography in Los Angeles and you also offer "travel destination" wedding photography, you might decide to set up a "Los Angeles Wedding" AdGroup and a "Destination Wedding" AdGroup, each with specifically targeted ads. So, when someone searches for "destination wedding photography", you can show them an ad that says you are available for destination weddings. And, when they search for "wedding photographer Los Angeles", your ad can mention Los Angeles.

## Tip #5: Track each ad's conversion rates.

You can monitor conversion rates for each AdWords ad you run, regardless of which AdGroup or Campaign it's in. As long as the headline (the first line of text in each ad) is unique for each ad, you'll see a line item for each ad in the Overall Ad A/B Testing report (in the Content Optimization: Ad Version Testing section).

Look in the first column (the Content column) of the report. The headline of each ad that received clicks will appear. This report shows you the number of visits generated by each ad, the average number of pages viewed per visit, and the conversion rates for each of your goals.

## Putting AdWords and Analytics to work.

By doing a little bit of organizing up front, you can make the most of the synergy between AdWords and Google Analytics. Now, think about how putting these ideas into action with *your* ads can help you target – and track – your markets.



## Optimizing AdWords ROI with Google Analytics

BY ALDEN DESOTO

If you buy keywords on Google AdWords, you'll want to focus your spending on the keywords that drive the highest quality traffic to your site and provide the best return for your business. By looking at a single report in Google Analytics, you can see the ROI for each keyword you buy, spend confidently on the keywords that perform, and drop the ones that don't. Here's how.

### Link your AdWords account to your Google Analytics account.

Once you've linked your Google Analytics account to your AdWords account, you'll begin to see your spending for each keyword, as well as other cost metrics, appear in your Google Analytics reports. By linking the accounts, you've basically allowed yourself to compare your keyword spending with what happens after visitors click on your AdWords ads. Behind the scenes, Google Analytics starts importing the clickthrough and spending data from your AdWords account while tracking all the associated visitor activity.

So, if you haven't done so already, link your AdWords account to your Google Analytics account now. It's also a good idea to make sure that autotagging has been automatically enabled (more on autotagging). This allows each click on your AdWords ads to be automatically associated with the appropriate keyword and AdWords campaign.

One additional benefit of linking your accounts is that you can access Google Analytics simply by clicking the Analytics tab in your AdWords account.

### Do your goals have values?

Wait! Before you decide to skip this part because you don't sell anything, let me remind you that this is an article on ROI. If your goals don't have values, you won't be able to measure the return on your investment. Your investment is your AdWords spending. So, where does your return come from?

Of course, if you have an e-commerce site, your return comes from your e-commerce revenue. But, even if you don't have an e-commerce site, you can probably come up with intelligent values for your goals. For example, if you know that 1 out of every 100 PDF downloads results in a \$500 sale, you can assign a value of \$5 to that PDF download.

If you haven't already assigned values to your goals or set up your e-commerce shopping cart to report revenue, there's a [Help Center](#) article to walk you through the steps.

## Analyzing AdWords

The best report for tracking keyword ROI is the All CPC Analysis report, under Marketing Optimization: Search Engine Marketing. (The AdWords Analysis report contains the same data, but broken out by AdGroup. You can use either report, but we'll discuss the All CPC Analysis report in this article.) In this report, the "google[cpc]" line item summarizes your overall AdWords ROI. Click the + sign to the left of "google[cpc]" and you'll see ROI for each keyword you buy on AdWords.

If you are not getting any cost data (i.e. if Cost is 0) make sure you've linked to your AdWords account and that you've enabled autotagging. If Revenue is 0, make sure that you've either set goal values or that you've enabled your shopping cart reporting.

### Which keywords lose money?

Click the + sign to the left of "google[cpc]" to see each of the keywords you buy. To identify the losers, click the ROI column header twice so that the lowest ROI keywords are at the top of the list. Do you have any -100% ROI keywords? These are keywords on which you lost all of the money you spent. But before you delete or pause any of these keywords in your AdWords account, consider how much you spent and whether you have enough data yet to make a decision. Very often, -100% ROI keywords are those that have only received a few clicks. You might want to wait until you receive more than one or two clicks on a keyword before you decide to cut it. And if you've only spent a few cents on a keyword, it's probably worth waiting to see if the keyword pays off. But, if you've received a large number of clicks and spent real money on the keyword, you'll be able to instantly increase your overall AdWords ROI by deleting it.

An ROI of 0% means that you earned in revenue the same amount of money you spent. An ROI of 100% means that you spent, say \$5, and made \$10. In other words, you spent X and received 2X in revenue. It's not uncommon to get 300% or 400% or even 1000% ROI. These kinds of numbers simply indicate that your Revenue is many times greater than your Cost.

### Short date ranges may obscure your true ROI.

Using the All CPC Analysis report can become addictive. Before you know it, you're checking the report every day or two and obsessing over every little change in your keyword ROI. This is fine, as long as you step back to gain perspective before making snap decisions. It's generally not a good idea to make keyword changes on the basis of a few days worth of data. You'll make better decisions if you also take into account your sales cycle and everything else you know about the specifics of your business online.

Consider your return customers, those that find you via an AdWords ad and then return later to buy again. You'll miss these repeat conversions if you set too short of a date range. And, it may take a few days for many of your visitors to become customers. By making snap decisions based on a date range that is shorter than your sales cycle, you might actually lower your ROI.

Try out different date ranges and see how ROI is affected. Try the most recent days, week, month, and then look at this year's data. You'll have more -- as well as more interesting -- information upon which to base your decisions.

## How popular are my keywords and ads?

The Impressions column shows the number of times your ad was displayed. The Clicks column shows the number of clicks the ad received and for which you paid. CTR, or clickthrough rate, is the percentage of time that a searcher clicked on the ad. These numbers give you a good idea of how frequently people search on a particular keyword and, when presented with the search results, how likely they are to click on your ad. If you want a higher clickthrough rate, you might consider bidding for a higher position and/or rewriting your ad so that it is more relevant to the searcher.

## Which keywords drive revenue?

Click in the Revenue column header (you may have to click twice) so that the highest revenue keywords are listed first. The high revenue keywords may or may not be your highest ROI keywords. If your ROI shows that you are losing or making no money on a high revenue keyword, you may wish to try lowering your bid. Although you'll probably receive less traffic after lowering your bid and probably decrease your Revenue, the decrease in CPC (cost-per-click) will increase your ROI.

## Google Analytics is your feedback tool.

By keeping your eye on the All CPC Analysis report, you'll be able to see how effectively you are using AdWords to drive your bottom line. By making small changes to the keywords you buy, the amount you bid, and your ad text, and tracking the effect of these changes, you'll be able to optimize your AdWords campaigns for maximum ROI.

## Intelligent Advertising for Small Business

BY ALDEN DESOTO

Perhaps you own a café or a spa, or you build swimming pools. Not an online business, but you have a website that describes what you have to offer. You'd like more visibility for your site, and you've had a salesperson tell you about the benefits of buying a listing on her portal site. It sounds like a good deal, but how do you know? Here are a few tips that will help you make an informed decision.

### Find out what's already working for you.

The first thing to do, if you haven't done it already, is to install Google Analytics on your site. Google Analytics is free and gives you important information about what is already working on your site - for example, which sites refer visitors to your site, and which keywords your visitors are searching on. Knowing exactly how many visits you get, and what those visitors are looking at on your site provides an important baseline to improve on. And, you may find some pleasant surprises - perhaps an article about your business or a site that you didn't know existed is referring important traffic to your site.

Installing Google Analytics is easy, but if you don't edit your own site, ask your hosting provider or web site designer to do it. For the vast majority of sites, the installation takes no more than five minutes.

### Find out how highly the advertising site ranks.

Most potential customers will find your site by either searching on the name of your business, or by searching on keywords that describe your business. For example, they might search on "spas in phoenix" or "car detailing west hollywood". Run some test searches. In order to gain visibility for your site, the site from which you are considering buying advertising needs to rank highly for the keywords that apply to your business. If the portal you are considering doesn't show up on the first page, you probably won't gain much from advertising with them.

It's a good idea to get the specific page your ad will appear on. If your salesperson wants to sell you advertising on [www.special\\_spas.com](http://www.special_spas.com), ask the exact page that your listing will appear on, such as [http://www.special\\_spas.com/newyork/dayspas.html](http://www.special_spas.com/newyork/dayspas.html). Then, make sure that this is the page that comes up for your desired keyword searches.

Another thing you can do is to check the "Page Rank" of the page. Page Rank is a measure of how Google's algorithms assess the importance of a page, on a scale of 0 to 10, with 10 indicating that the page is considered very important. You can see the page rank of every page you visit if you download and install the Google toolbar on your browser. Information about the toolbar and a free download is available at <http://toolbar.google.com>.

The most important point is that advertising space on a page that does not rank favorably may not provide much visibility to your business. Representatives from these sites may explain that they have a strong brand name and that thousands of visitors will see your listing. If they claim this, ask them to prove it (see next point).

## Evaluate the traffic.

Advertising fees vary significantly from site to site. What allows one site to charge two times what another site is asking for a similar listing? Theoretically, more expensive listings should perform better. The bottom line is this: how much traffic can you expect to get and does the fee make sense? To help you determine this, try asking for a trial period of a week or two so that you can evaluate the traffic.

Once your ad or listing is live, you'll be able to use Google Analytics to get all the information you need to make an intelligent decision. Use the Source Conversion report (under Marketing Optimization→Marketing Campaign Results) to see how many visits the new listing is sending you. Also, look at the P/Visit (Average Pages Viewed per Visit) to see how much of your site these visitors are looking at.

You can also tell if the visitors referred from the ad are seeing the pages that you want them to see. If you have specified in your Google Analytics account that these pages are goals, the Marketing Campaign Results report will show you the percentage of visitors that saw these pages.

But, even if you haven't specified goals in Google Analytics, you'll still be able to tell if the visitors from the ad saw the pages. Go to the Content Optimization reports and look at Content Performance→Top Content. Click the Analysis Options button next to one of the pages, click Cross Segment Performance and select Source[Medium]. The resulting report shows, for the page you selected, the number of viewers that came from each referral source. If any visitors from your ad saw this page, the ad will be listed. Using this feature, you can cross segment any page on your site by Source[Medium] and see how many of the visitors who saw that page were referred by your new ad.

If you are concerned about a single clicker masquerading as multiple visitors, go back to the Source Conversion report (under Marketing Optimization→Marketing Campaign Results), click the Analysis Options button next to your ad, and cross-segment for multiple factors. For example, if you cross segment for "visitor type", most of your visitors should be new visitors. You should also see a variety of entries when you cross segment for "Network Location", "City", and "Platform". If all of the visitors are coming from the same network, live in the same city, and are all using the same platform, you may have cause to be suspicious.

## The web empowers you.

The great thing about the web is that it is a trackable medium. Instead of making guesses about which ads and links work, you can use your analytics to identify the right advertising opportunities for your business.

# A Benchmark Strategy to Search Engine Marketing (SEM)

BY ALDEN DESOTO

In the frenzy to attain or maintain the highest ranking, it's easy to get caught up in keyword bidding wars. Don't give in to this temptation. There's a better way and it begins with finding a breakeven cost-per-click benchmark.

## Cost-per-click the sensible way

Let's say that you sell golf clubs online. A set of golf clubs retails for \$500. Your cost to manufacture or purchase the clubs is \$300 per set. If you reserve an additional \$100 per set for other operating expenses, you are left with \$100 per unit to spend on marketing efforts such as cost-per-click campaigns.

Now assume that of every 100 visitors to your website, one visitor buys a set of clubs (a 1% visitor-to-customer conversion rate). You have \$100 to spend to attract those 100 visitors, which translates into a \$1 break-even per-click benchmark. If you exceed \$1 per click, you will lose money. If you pay less than \$1 per click, you will make money.

It's essential to understand this benchmark when buying cost-per-click advertising. When you know the conversion rates for each of your keywords, you'll be able to bid the appropriate amount - more for the keywords with higher conversion rates, and less for the keywords with lower conversion rates.

Now, let's look at this in action. The Google Analytics Revenue per Click (RPC) metric can give you insight into how much you should spend per click on a given keyword or cost-per-click campaign. You should not assume that Revenue per Click by itself provides the correct number for your business. Revenue per Click assumes that you can spend 100% of your revenue on cost-per-click advertising. Since you will want to factor in your production and business operating costs, you should consider what percentage of your revenue you can actually spend on cost-per-click advertising, and adjust your bid accordingly.

For example, let's say that you have an RPC of \$11.66 per click for "beginner golf tips". If you can spend 10% of your retail price on cost-per-click advertising, your actual bid should be 10% of \$11.66 or \$1.16 per click. Spending more than \$1.16 per click for this keyword would cause you to lose money. Spending less than \$1.16 per click for this keyword would result in profit.

## I don't understand how my competitors can afford to outbid me

Maybe they can't afford it - and haven't yet discovered that they can't afford it. They may simply be caught up in the bidding war machinery. But, it's also possible that lower operating costs or higher profit margins allow them to spend a larger chunk on cost-per-click. Or, they may be getting higher conversion rates for certain keywords than you do. Study their search ad copy and research their website - you might pick up some tips on improving the conversion side of the equation on your site.

In the meantime, know that you are bidding the amount that fits your business requirements and your conversion rate.

## But, I don't sell online

Even if you don't sell online, you may be able to attach some monetary value to each of your website goals. Consider how much each lead you gain from your website is worth and use that to determine how much you should be spending for cost-per-click.

If you are a B-to-B site, you may convert your leads into sales offline. If you know that your sales staff closes 5% of your website leads for an average transaction profit of \$1,000, you can calculate your break-even benchmark as follows:

Break-even benchmark = website conversion rate x 5% x \$1,000

For a keyword that yields a visitor-to-lead conversion rate of 2%, and assuming that you can allocate \$1,000 per transaction for cost-per-click, your break-even benchmark will be:

$2\% \times 5\% \times 1,000 = \$1$  per click

## Managing, not just measuring

Getting the most out of cost-per-click means that you must continually monitor your results with Google Analytics so that you don't over-bid. Think of web analytics as an online marketing management tool - experimenting, testing, and always improving your cost-per-click strategy to maximize your website ROI.

## **Chapter 2**

### CONVERTING VISITORS

It's easy to overlook the importance of content optimization, creating a site that visitors enjoy using and one that converts visitors into customers. This section of Conversion University provides tips and best practices on creating landing pages, writing effective website copy, and retaining the customers you already have.

#### **Design Your Website for Increased ROI**

*by Alden DeSoto*

It's easy to over-focus on driving traffic to your site while overlooking another equally important key to website ROI - content optimization. Make the time, money, and effort you've spent developing your online marketing pay off. Design a website that gets visitors to take action.

#### **Five Tips for Writing Effective Web Headlines**

*by Ginger Makela*

You're successfully driving traffic with AdWords, but 91% of your visitors leave your site after viewing just a single page. Clearly, you need to optimize your landing pages, but how do you know which changes to make?

#### **Six Steps to Conversion Health**

*by Susan Minniear*

Once a visitor lands on your website, the clock starts ticking and you have only a few seconds to convince them to stay there and make a purchase. Consider these six points and convert more visitors into customers.

#### **Divide and Conquer – Segmenting Your Visitors**

*by Dan Daugherty*

Learn how you can listen to your visitors with these Google Analytics segmentation tips.

#### **Preaching to the Converted**

*by Lance Cotton*

It's almost always cheaper to keep a current customer than to acquire a new one, and often your current customers will be your most profitable. If you have an online store, consider these tips for retaining customers and increasing conversions.

#### **Five Objectives of Website Copy**

*by Alden DeSoto*

Effective copy is a critical component of most successful websites. What should you write about? Here are five important points you can cover with website copy.



# Design Your Website for Increased ROI

BY ALDEN DESOTO

It's easy to over-focus on driving traffic to your site while overlooking another equally important key to website ROI - content optimization. Make the time, money, and effort you've spent developing your online marketing pay off. Design a website that gets visitors to take action.

## 1. Set your goals

Today, website ROI is measured by conversions -- how frequently visitors reach your goals. Goals are activities on your website that are important to the success of your business. Obviously, a sale is a goal if you sell online. A request for a sales call is another example of a goal. So is an email registration. Even if you have a purely brochure-ware site, you might consider viewing the Contact page or a Product Spec page to be a goal.

The point is that if you haven't built one or more key activities - goals - into your site, no amount of site re-working is going to help. Without goals, you haven't created any connection points with your prospects and customers and you'll have no way of knowing how well you meet your visitors' needs or of measuring your website ROI.

## 2. Get that first click

How successfully does your site entice visitors to make that first click towards conversion? Everything on an entry page must be designed and written to entice a visitor to click.

It is likely that your home page has several audiences. Potential customers, partners, investors, journalists all may have an interest in your company. Speak directly to each need and make the next step clear. Use active words such as "Learn", "Ask", "Browse", "Sign up". Use "you" and "your"; avoid "we" and "our". Keep copy short and to the point. Remember, you just want them to make that first click and start down the path.

Look at your Entrance Bounce Rates report and your Site Overlay. The Bounce Rates report will show you how many visitors you lose from each entrance page. Do everything you can to lower the number of "bounces", visitors who leave your site after viewing just a single page. Next, look at the Site Overlay for each entrance page. This will show not only where visitors are clicking, but how frequently visitors who click there convert to each of your goals (in terms of a conversion %).

## 3. Call your audience to action

Buy Now. Add to Shopping Cart. Calls to action, obviously, but not the only ones you should have on your site. Make sure your visitors always know what to do next, so that they aren't left standing in your store, overwhelmed by choices. Add calls to action on every page of your site: Learn More, Help Me Choose, Compare, Next Step. Gently lead visitors down the conversion path, and you'll earn more from the visitors you get.

## 4. Simplify conversion steps

The easier it is for a visitor to reach her objective, the more likely it is she'll convert. Obviously, you need to provide the information that the visitor needs before she'll buy or ask for a sales call, but consider carefully how much information you need to ask for. Do you really need to ask your visitors to select a city from a form when they already give you a zip code?

The Google Analytics Defined Funnel Navigation report will help you identify where you are losing visitors on the path to conversion. The center column shows the conversion path that you expect visitors to take. The right hand column shows where the visitors who leave the funnel go. The left hand column shows where the visitors who enter the funnel come from.

Use this report to identify steps where visitors lose interest. Go back and tighten up these critical pages. Make sure the next steps are always clear and that you aren't asking for too much from your visitors.

## Maximum ROI = Effective Marketing + Content Optimization

To summarize, you'll maximize return from the visitors you attract if you do the following things:

- 1) CREATE KEY ACTIVITIES (GOALS) ON YOUR SITE.
- 2) GET THAT FIRST CLICK TOWARDS CONVERSION.
- 3) CALL YOUR AUDIENCE TO ACTION ON EACH PAGE.
- 4) SIMPLIFY THE CONVERSION PATH.
- 5) EXPERIMENT AND MEASURE!

## Five Tips for Writing Effective Web Headlines

BY **GINGER MAKELA**

So, you've refined your keywords, optimized your bids, and written AdWords text ads that pull in tons of targeted clicks, but after looking at your Google Analytics reports, you realize that your landing page has a bounce rate of 91%.

Which means that 91% of the users coming to your site are quickly glancing around and leaving, deciding immediately that this site isn't for them.

With a bounce rate like that, it's time to optimize your landing page to keep people on your site longer. But, how do you know what changes to make?

One of the easiest, low-tech ways to make users stick around and look at your products or services is to catch their attention with an engaging headline.

Recent research suggests that users decide to stay or leave your site in 8 seconds or less, and headlines are the one piece of copy that users will actually scan in that short amount of time.

That makes your headline a key piece of real estate on your site. So, writing headlines that engage users is going to be an important part of your landing page optimization plan.

Here are five tips for writing headlines that will pull user attention.

### **Include your paid keyword in the headline.**

And as close to the beginning of the headline as you can. When users land on your site after clicking on a text ad or organic listing, they're a bit nervous.

They have a good idea of what they're looking for, and hope that your site will deliver it, but they're a bit skeptical. And they have a good reason to be; there are a lot of junky sites out there that don't deliver.

Putting the keyword in the headline provides split-second assurance to visitors that they are in the right place. It will make them relax a bit and be more receptive to your message.

## Don't sound like an ad.

The average American is bombarded with thousands of advertising messages per day and our brains have developed sophisticated filters to keep most of those messages out.

Sometimes, the best way to get past that filter is to not sound like an ad. Instead of sounding like an overbearing salesperson, try to sound like a friend delivering valuable information.

### **For example, instead of:**

Fabulous Skin Cream that Makes a Difference!

#### **Try**

5 Ways to Reduce Wrinkles in 30 Days.

## Highlight benefits rather than features.

Instead of rattling off the cold facts about your product or service, think about what problem your product or service will solve for your user.

### **Instead of**

E-mail with up to 2GB of Storage

#### **Try**

Never Throw Another E-mail Away

## Make headlines look easy to read.

When our eyes are moving fast looking for something particular, we tend to ignore copy that looks like it will take too much effort to read.

So, make your headline as simple and direct as possible.

Instead of using 3- and 4-syllable Latinate words whose meaning is not obvious at a glance, try using choppier, punchier Anglo-Saxon words.

### **For example, instead of**

Deploy Robust Data Recovery Solutions and Enhance Network Availability

#### **Try**

5 Things You Need to Protect Your Data

## Don't forget subheads.

Subheads are another easy way to quickly offer more information about your product. Similar to headlines, they're usually a piece of text users will be likely to scan.

Let's say you're an e-tailer and your landing page is a specific product page, with the product name serving as the page's headline. A subhead that offers visitors a quick preview of product benefits saves them the trouble of digging benefits out of user reviews and product descriptions that are often visually buried on the page.

### **Instead of**

Unwired Skoba™ Computer Satchel

### **Try**

Unwired Skoba™ Computer Satchel

Patented protection system cushions your laptop with shock-absorbing, air-filled pouches.

## One more thing.

Try testing different headlines to see which ones minimize bounce rates and result in the most clickthroughs to conversion. For example, you might set up different versions of the same landing page and send visitors at random to the different versions. You could then compare the bounce rates for each of your landing page versions. You might also review the Top Content report to see how long people stayed on each version of the landing page. And, you can review the Site Overlay for each of these pages to see exactly where the visitors are clicking and how frequently those clicks resulted in an eventual conversion.

## Six Steps to Conversion Health

BY SUSAN MINNIEAR

Are you planning a site re-design? Is your landing page not converting well enough? Hopefully you've got the basics covered, and your landing page has a search function, contact information and a strong marketing message. But what else can you do to improve your conversion rate?

Once a visitor lands on your website, the clock starts ticking and you have only a few seconds to convince them to stay there, let alone make a purchase. At first glance, a user should know that they are in the right place and that their transactions will be secure. Sound daunting? With only a few easy changes, you can convert more visitors. Consider these six points as you assess the strengths and weaknesses of your current site and plan your re-design.

### 1.) Custom Landing Pages - Add a Personal Touch:

Does your landing page have a navigation bar or feature multiple product lines and promotions? If so, you are committing conversion suicide. You must convince the visitor that the landing page is just for them. Avoid using home pages or all-inclusive multipurpose landing pages. Create specific landing pages for every ad and paid search term. When you land a visitor on your home page, sure, they may stay longer and check out more of your pages, but chances are they won't make a purchase. Instead, consider taking your visitors to a custom landing page. They'll stay on your site a shorter amount of time, but they'll convert about three times more often. And whatever you do, do not include a navigation bar on your landing pages - it's completely unrelated to your sale and can dramatically lower your conversion rate.

Custom landing pages are so important for pay-per-click advertising because you are creating consistency from keyword to ad to landing page. Many campaigns fall short of their goals due to an overly general landing page which does not meet the customer's expectations of relevancy. Just make sure you include some branding elements that will help consumers understand who you are and what you offer.

### 2.) Images - Size Really Does Matter:

It turns out that product image size is actually one of the most important conversion factors on your landing page. The bigger and more detailed a product image is, the more inclined the consumer is to make a purchase. Make sure the picture is clear and full-color to contribute to the professional appearance of your landing page. In addition to product images, pictures of people can also increase conversion rates.

### 3.) Confidence Messaging - Counter the Fear Factor:

Retailers must gain trust from shoppers. A large percentage of consumers won't buy online because they're absolutely terrified of giving out their credit card information. They've heard stories on the news about identity theft and with increasing spyware and phishing threats, consumers are rightfully concerned. Smart marketers counter customer fears by placing third-party endorsements such as "VeriSign secured" or "BizRate.com customer certified" on their landing pages to give visitors confidence to buy.

#### 4.) Readability - Make it Fast and Easy:

More information is not always better. When you scrunch too much copy onto one landing page, you make your visitor's eyes hurt and they are more likely to leave. Keep your font size over 10 point type and try just one column of copy. Few visitors will scroll down, so your marketing message should be short and sweet and above the fold. Your goal is to not confuse your visitors so your conversion activity should be in a clear and prominent location. Overall, the design should be clear, uncluttered and easy to read. Don't try to jazz things up with flashing buttons, overly bright colors or artsy fonts.

#### 5.) Registration Forms - Don't Scare Them Away:

Not only are visitors worried about their privacy, they're also a little "work averse". So keep your registration forms short. Limit your page to six or seven fields and don't require too much personal information like Phone numbers. Include e-mail privacy information so the visitor knows that you won't share their information with other marketers.

It's also important to have the reg form on the landing page above the fold so the user doesn't have to click to convert (remember, they may be concerned that a program will download if they click).

Another tip is to not require registration for free downloads like white papers. Instead, on the thank-you page, offer a sign-up for further updates and offers.

#### 6.) Newsletter Subscriptions - Keep Them Coming Back for More:

Conversions don't always happen right away. Keep your visitors coming back by having an easy e-mail newsletter sign-up on your landing page. You're also more likely to keep your customers converting when you build a relationship with them by sending various offers, news and discounts directly to their in-box.

#### Test it.

In addition to these six steps, the most important action you can take is to test, test, test. Try changing the most obvious items on the page such as images, promotions, marketing messages and headlines. With time and careful testing, you'll be able to discover your magic formula to conversion success.

## Divide and Conquer – Segmenting Your Visitors

BY DAN DAUGHERTY

What is "visitor segmentation"? Segmentation is simply breaking your visitors into groups and examining traffic and conversion data for those groups. In Google Analytics, you can see the number of visits, the average number of pages viewed per visit, and conversion rates for different groups of visitors, such as visitors from different cities.

You can see this information in two ways. The first way is to use the Visitor Segment Performance set of reports (under Marketing Optimization). The second way is to cross-segment an entry on a report. (You can cross-segment specific line items on most Google Analytics reports.) So, for example, you could find out how many of the visitors referred by Google came from each city. To do this, you'd simply go to the Source Conversion report, click the Analysis Options button that appears at the left of the entry for Google, click Cross Segment Performance, and select City.

Here are just a few examples.

### Hola, Bonjour, Hello

Wouldn't it be great if you knew your visitors' language preferences? Imagine the possibilities. Knowing which languages your customers prefer to speak and read can dramatically increase customer satisfaction and increase return visits. Google Analytics shows you the language preferences of your visitors in the Visitor Segment Performance section of the Marketing Optimization reports.

Marketing Optimization → Visitor Segment Performance → Language

You might decide to create a separate landing page, splash page or micro site tailored to these specific languages. You might find it worthwhile to ramp up your call center or customer service department with multilingual employees.

### Where do your customers live?

Let's say that you offer free shipping to anyone anywhere in the United States. Your reports show that 20 percent of your traffic comes from Canada, but that conversion rates are much lower than in the US. You might, as a result, decide to test a "Free Shipping" promotion to Canada and see if this increases conversions.

Marketing Optimization → Visitor Segment Performance → Geo Location

As you use the Geo Location report to review conversion metrics for different cities and regions in Canada, you might be interested to see how conversion rates vary for French speakers versus English speakers in Quebec. To do this, you'd click the Analysis Options button next to Quebec and select Cross Segment Performance → Language.



## 20/20 Vision. Perhaps not.

What screen resolutions are most common for visitors who were referred from your blog? You can easily find out by going to the Source Conversion report and cross segmenting the entry for your blog. From the report screen, click the Analysis Options button next to the entry for your blog, click Cross Segment Performance and select Screen Resolution.

## New prospects or old friends?

How many users are new to your site, and how many are return visitors looking to buy more? This is easily answered with the New versus Returning report.

Marketing Optimization → Visitor Segment Performance → New vs Returning

If most of your visitors are new, you might consider adding a newsletter signup to your site or creating a marketing initiative that targets existing customers.

## The Importance of Testing

Customers tell you a great deal about themselves by the way they interact with your site. So use your web analytics and stay alert. You'll be better equipped to give your customers what they want.

# Preaching to the Converted: You Can Create Online Customer Loyalty

**BY LANCE COTTON**

Recent research conducted by Bain & Company across a variety of business categories revealed that increasing a customer retention rate by only 5% can increase the average customer lifetime value by an incredible 35% to 95%. Further, a recent study by Mercer Management Consulting finds that the Web can "stimulate increased consumer spending and lead to greater customer loyalty," which translates to higher profits for companies that create strong relationships with customers.

But setting up an online store isn't easy. Online shopping comparison sites make pricing transparent and customers willing to look at several different stores when choosing a vendor. Some estimates put the average cost per customer acquisition for an e-store over US\$30. If profit margins are 10 percent, the average site must generate over US\$300 per customer just to cover acquisition cost.

## Focus on the Basics

Focus on the fundamentals first. Online consumers are just like brick-and-mortar consumers in some ways. They will come back to your store if they:

- 1) CAN EASILY MAKE RETURNS
- 2) RECEIVE EXCELLENT, SPEEDY CUSTOMER SERVICE
- 3) FIND A WIDE SELECTION OF PRODUCTS

As the Internet population grows, online shoppers are becoming less Internet savvy on average and therefore less tolerant of confusing website designs, order and fulfillment mistakes, and poor customer service. Your time is best spent eliminating the causes of an ugly customer experience.

## Creating an Attractive Site

As online shoppers become more experienced, they're more likely to go directly to a particular online store, rather than use a search engine or shopping comparison sites like Froogle. 61% of web users with more than 2 years of experience will go directly to their preferred shopping sites as compared to 35% of users with less than one year experience.

Contrary to what you might think, more people come to the Internet looking for product information than low prices. 82% of survey respondents to the Mercer survey said they found the Internet valuable for providing "information to make better decisions." By contrast, less than 50% of online shoppers said they used the Internet because it saves them money. Therefore, you can keep visitors coming back to your site by providing them with as much product information as possible.

Some things to consider about your site:

- 1) HOW EASY IS YOUR SITE TO NAVIGATE? USE THE NAVIGATIONAL ANALYSIS REPORTS IN GOOGLE ANALYTICS (UNDER CONTENT OPTIMIZATION).
- 2) DO YOU OFFER ALL THE PRODUCT INFORMATION ON THE SIDE OF THE BOX, LIKE FEATURES, SPECIFICATIONS AND WARRANTY? WHAT ADDITIONAL INFORMATION DO YOU OFFER ABOUT THE PRODUCT?
- 3) ARE PRODUCT REVIEWS EASILY ACCESSIBLE? USE THE CONTENT PERFORMANCE REPORTS (UNDER CONTENT OPTIMIZATION) TO SEE HOW FREQUENTLY THE PRODUCT REVIEWS ARE READ.
- 4) CAN THE CUSTOMER EASILY NAVIGATE TO THE PURCHASE PATH ONCE THEY'VE MADE A DECISION? USE THE ALL NAVIGATION REPORT (UNDER NAVIGATIONAL ANALYSIS IN CONTENT OPTIMIZATION) TO SEE HOW VISITORS GET TO KEY PAGES ON YOUR SITE AND WHERE THEY GO AFTERWARDS. ALSO, USE THE DEFINED FUNNEL NAVIGATION REPORT (UNDER GOALS AND FUNNEL PROCESS IN CONTENT OPTIMIZATION) TO SEE HOW MANY OF THE VISITORS WHO BEGIN A CONVERSION PROCESS ACTUALLY COMPLETE IT.
- 5) DO YOU OFFER A SCANNED COPY OF THE MANUAL?
- 6) DO YOU OFFER MORE THAN ONE PRODUCT PHOTO? DO YOU OFFER PHOTOS OR VIDEOS OF THE PRODUCT BEING USED?

## Rewards Programs

Rewards can and do build customer loyalty. You probably know someone who only travels on one airline because they get rewards mileage, even if another airline offers a more direct flight or a cheaper ticket.

But a rewards program must be designed to give value to your most profitable customers. In general, the customers who are most likely to buy again are:

- 1) CUSTOMERS WHO PURCHASED RECENTLY
- 2) CUSTOMERS WHO PURCHASE FREQUENTLY
- 3) CUSTOMERS WHO SPEND THE MOST MONEY
- 4) CUSTOMERS WHO ARE SOME COMBINATION OF THE THREE ITEMS ABOVE

Customers view rewards as valuable in different ways. Some rewards to consider offering:

- 1) CASH VALUE
- 2) UPGRADES
- 3) CONVENIENCE OR PREFERENTIAL SERVICE
- 4) BUY X, GET Y FREE
- 5) FREQUENT BUYER DISCOUNT
- 6) POST-SALE THANK YOU EMAIL INCLUDING A COUPON OR SPECIAL OFFER
- 7) POINTS, OR POINTS WITH EXPIRATION DATES

If your program uses a point system, customers must see the value; if they feel they will never reach a reward level, they will not be motivated to participate. Some things to consider when implementing your rewards program:

- 1) IS THE CUSTOMER CLEARLY INFORMED THAT THEY ARE BEING GIVEN POINTS?
- 2) CAN THEY EASILY FIND OUT WHAT THEIR REWARDS CAN BE, AND HOW MANY POINTS THEY'LL NEED TO ACCUMULATE TO GET A REWARD?
- 3) CAN YOU SEND PERSONALIZED EMAIL TO YOUR CUSTOMER INFORMING HIM THAT HE HAS ACCUMULATED POINTS?
- 4) HOW ACHIEVABLE ARE YOUR REWARDS? CAN YOUR CUSTOMER CASH-IN AFTER AS LITTLE AS 2 PURCHASES?

Remember that rewards programs may require long-term management, so make sure you're ready to commit.

## Email

When customers opt-in to being contacted via email, inactive customers can be re-activated by offering them discounts or other special offers.

If customers like your site or products enough to opt-in to a newsletter, they can be a great vehicle for staying connected and reinvigorating customer interest. Some suggestions for making newsletters engaging include:

- 1) OFFERING BIG DISCOUNTS DURING SLOW PERIODS FOR YOUR BUSINESS.
- 2) SHARING INFORMATION THAT ONLY YOU HAVE: IF YOUR SITE IS AN INFORMATION OR PROFESSIONAL SERVICES SITE, ABSTRACTS OF PAPERS OR OTHER SPECIAL DATA THAT MAY PIQUE YOUR CUSTOMER'S INTEREST AND BRING THEM BACK TO YOUR SITE.

## Conclusion

It's almost always cheaper to keep a current customer than to acquire a new one, and often your current customers will be your most profitable. Focus on creating a positive customer experience first, then reach out and build the bonds that will keep your best customers coming back.

## Five Objectives of Website Copy

BY ALDEN DESOTO

Many businesses put a great deal of emphasis on website graphics and on creating a visually interesting site, but many sites don't have enough text. Informative text is reassuring to visitors and it gives search engines something to crawl. So, where should you start? Let's look at five things you can accomplish with text.

### Establish your points of difference.

Why would a customer choose to buy from you rather than from one of the many other businesses just like yours? If you bristle at the idea that any business could be "just like yours", you've found something important to communicate on your site.

You don't need to disparage your competition - this isn't necessary, or in most cases, even advisable. Instead, tell visitors about what makes your approach to the business unique. If you specialize in a certain area or approach, tell them how - and why. Establishing your points of difference helps your visitors become more informed buyers of the services or products you offer.

### Satisfy their need to know.

Studies have shown that searchers often use the web to do basic research first, only later going back to convert on the site or look up your business. To the extent that you anticipate and answer research questions, you give your visitors exactly what they are looking for and begin to earn their trust and loyalty.

To create this content, ask yourself, "What would I need to know if I were in the market for this product or service"? Then, think of different ways to present the information. To help your visitors see how your service could benefit them, consider adding one or more case studies to your site, each of which describes how a customer was able to solve a problem and overcome challenges with the help of your service or product. You might also add a "Frequently Asked Questions" page. Such an FAQ page can be a powerful marketing tool that raises the questions that you think customers ought to ask.

Sometimes, just by raising an issue and providing information, you will be able to establish a point of difference. As visitors research other sites, they may look for more information on issues, benefits, and features that they learned about on your site. If a competitor's site doesn't adequately address something that they have become interested in, you will have gained a little bit of an edge.

### Teach.

You may not consider yourself an expert in your field, but you probably know a great deal more than you give yourself credit for. Chances are that visitors will appreciate any advice you care to give. Writing articles related to your business and publishing them on your site can put you in the enviable situation of being perceived as an authority.

Consider asking visitors for their email address in return for access to your articles. You'll build a targeted contact list that allows you to create an ongoing relationship with qualified prospects, send special offers, and continue to provide useful information.

## Increase your visibility.

To a search engine, the best sites consist of many HTML files, each one text rich. If one of your articles mentions a topic for which you have more information, embed links to the extra information like this: "learn about [painting with oil-based paint](#)." Then, on the page with the extra information, make sure that you have a <title> tag with the appropriate title, in this case, "Painting with Oil-based Paint". This helps search engines to index your content, which in turn can help give you some visibility.

Even more important, you'll find that other sites like to link to pages with useful information. Having lots of sites pointing to your articles on art techniques will help artists find your online art store and can improve your natural (unpaid) search engine rankings.

## Learn what is interesting to your visitors.

One of the great things about adding a lot of text based information to your site is that you can find out which topics and issues are most interesting to your visitors. In Google Analytics, the Top Content report (under Content Performance in the Content Optimization section) shows you how many visits to your site resulted in pageviews of each page and the average amount of time that visitors spent on the page.

The Content by Titles report shows the same information, but aggregated by page title. So, if you have an article with several pages of content, and each page has the same <title> tag, the pie chart will show the percentage of total visits and total pageviews that relate to the article.

You can also look at the Site Overlay (under Navigational Analysis in the Content Optimization section) for any page to see which links visitors click on the most. This gives you an idea of what's most interesting to visitors, given the fixed set of choices on any particular page.

Try to improve your content mix using what you learn from these reports. By keeping an eye on what the analytics are telling you, you'll learn more about your visitors and be able to provide just the information they are looking for.

## **Chapter 3**

### **TRACKING AND TESTING**

The more you know about testing online initiatives, the more strategic your marketing becomes. The articles in this section provide specific measurement, tracking, and testing techniques you can use with Google Analytics.

#### **Qualitative Measurement for Brand Lift Campaigns**

***By Aiden DeSoto***

Beyond conversion rates, average visit values, and ROI, it's sometimes useful to gain a qualitative impression of how well your site and marketing perform. Here are five Google Analytics reports you can use to assess how well your brand lift campaigns engage your visitors.

#### **Monetizing Non-Ecommerce Sites**

***By Brian Clifton***

Demonstrating website value is key to obtaining buy-in from upper management. With executive support, you can procure investment for content, infrastructure, and online marketing. Learn two Google Analytics techniques for monetizing your site.

#### **Attributing Downloads to Campaigns**

***By Brian Clifton***

Learn a simple and effective technique for tracking campaigns that drive traffic to PDF documents or downloads.

#### **Successful A/B and A/B/A Testing**

**by Brett Crosby**

A/B and A/B/A testing offer scientific approaches to creating highly effective ads. Learn when to use each approach and how to set your test up successfully.

#### **Email Campaign Best Practices**

***by Christine Lee***

When you launch an email campaign, get clear on your objectives and make sure that you can effectively track them with the campaign. Here are some tips and best practices.

#### **Tracking Offline Campaigns**

***by Amit Singh***

If you run offline campaigns, for example on TV or in print, you may be wondering how to track campaign ROI. Learn four approaches to tracking offline campaigns using Google Analytics.

#### **Testing Keyword Landing Pages**

***by Aiden DeSoto***

Converting traffic begins with effective landing pages – ones that reassure visitors that they've found what they are looking for. If you can match the right landing pages to the right ads, you'll increase conversions and profitability. But how do you start?



# Qualitative Measurement for Brand Lift Campaigns

BY ALDEN DESOTO

Beyond conversion rates, average visit values, and ROI, it's sometimes useful to gain a qualitative impression of how well your site and marketing perform. Here are five Google Analytics reports you can use to assess how well your brand lift campaigns engage your visitors.

You'll find these reports most useful if you isolate the data for each campaign you want to examine. We'll look at how to do this in a minute, but first, here are the reports.

## View the wide range of visitor behavior

The common thread throughout these reports is that they show the range of visitor interaction on your site, instead of the averages.

### Depth of Visit

*(in the Content Optimization: Content Performance section)*

How many visits to your site result in only one or two pages being viewed? The Depth of Visit report displays the range of visitor interaction, from single page visits to 20 page visits and beyond.

### Length of Visit

*(in the Content Optimization: Content Performance section)*

How much time do people spend visiting your site? You can see visits of a few seconds through visits that last more than 30 minutes on the Length of Visit report.

### Visitor Loyalty

*(in the Marketing Optimization: Unique Visitor Tracking section)*

How many of your visitors are returning for the 2nd, 3rd, 10th, or 200th time? You can see this information in the Visitor Loyalty report.

### Visitor Recency

*(in the Marketing Optimization: Unique Visitor Tracking section)*

How frequently do your visitors come back -- daily, weekly, every 12 days? The Visitor Recency report shows how long it's been since your visitors' previous visits.

### Top Content

*(in the Content Optimization: Content Performance section)*

Are visitors looking at the content that you'd expect them to look at for this particular campaign? This is a good place to review traffic for all of the pages on your site.

## Break down the data by campaign.

You'll notice that these reports aggregate all of the data in the profile. So, if you want to isolate this data for specific campaigns, you'll need to set up a separate profile for each campaign you want to examine. Fortunately, there's an easy way to do this using filters.

For example, let's say that you want to confine your analysis to visitors who are referred by a particular site, such as [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) :

- 1) From Analytics Settings, click Add Website Profile.
- 2) Select Add a Profile for an existing domain.
- 3) From the pulldown menu, select the domain you want to track, enter a name for the new profile (such as "Google referrals"), and click Finish.
- 4) Edit the new profile.
- 5) Click Add Filter.
- 6) Select Add new Filter for Profile, provide a name for the filter (such as "Google Only"), and click Finish.
- 7) Scroll down, find the new filter you have just created, and click Edit filter.
- 8) For Filter Type, select Custom Filter.
- 9) Select the "Include" radio button. For Filter Field, select "Campaign Source". In Filter Pattern, enter "google" (without the quotes). Save these changes.

Once the data has been collected and processed, you'll have a profile that only includes visitors referred by Google.

## Track offline brand lift campaigns.

What if you want to use these reports to analyze visitors from an offline campaign? Consider an offline promotion that instructs visitors to type in a special URL: [www.mysite.com/superbowl](http://www.mysite.com/superbowl)

In this case, you'll need to create a profile just for these visitors. Here's how.

First, create the "superbowl" landing page on your site. This page will redirect your visitors to the actual page to which you want to send them, but only after appending campaign and source tags on which you can filter.

So, your "superbowl" page would look like this:

```
<HEAD>
<TITLE>SPRING</TITLE>
<META HTTP-EQUIV="CONTENT-TYPE" CONTENT="TEXT/HTML; CHARSET=ISO-8859-1">
INSERT YOUR GOOGLE ANALYTICS ACCOUNT CODE HERE
<META HTTP-EQUIV="REFRESH" CONTENT="2";
URL=HTTP://WWW.MYSITE.COM?UTM_SOURCE=SUPERBOWL&UTM_MEDIUM=OFFLINE&UTM_CAMPAIGN=SUPERBOWL">
</HEAD>
```

Once you've got this page set up, you can create a custom Include filter (exactly as in the previous example), but filtering on "superbowl" instead of "google". This will create a profile that includes only your offline "superbowl" referrals.

# Monetizing Non-Ecommerce Sites

**BY BRIAN CLIFTON**

For non-ecommerce web sites, understanding and demonstrating website value is key to obtaining buy-in from upper management. With executive support, you will be able to procure investment for content, infrastructure, and online marketing. Many executives' eyes glaze over when they see yet another set of charts on visitor metrics. "Our site does not sell anything, so who cares?" is a common response. However, identifying the monetary value of your visitor sessions is a proven way of getting executive attention and can help keep the company website from becoming just someone's pet project.

Google Analytics provides two mechanisms for demonstrating website monetary value: (1) assigning goal values and (2) enabling ecommerce reporting for your non-ecommerce site.

## How much is it worth?

The key to both approaches lies in knowing how much goal conversions are worth to your business. If a PDF brochure is downloaded 1000 times and you estimate that 1 of these 1000 downloads results in a customer with an average order value of \$1000, then each download is worth \$1. Equally, if 1 in 100 downloads converts into a customer, each PDF download is worth \$10.

For each goal, you simply need to ask yourself, how many of these goal conversions does it take to create a customer and what is the average value of that customer? The Goal Conversion report within the Content Optimization section shows how many conversions you get to each of your site goals. Initially, you'll need to estimate the percentage of goal conversions that result in paying customers, but you'll be able to fine-tune your estimates as you collect information. Once you can estimate the value of each of your site goals, it is straightforward to monetize your website.

## First Approach: Assign values to your goals.

Every site has at least one goal and quite often has several. Even non-ecommerce sites have PDF documents and other files to download, product demonstrations, brochure requests, quote requests and subscription signups. Even the humble mailto link (email address link) can be considered a goal and clicks on the mailto link can be tracked in Google Analytics as goal conversions.

Assigning a goal value is very simple. (Read [How do I setup goals?](#) in the Google Analytics Help Center.) Adding values to goals allows you to see metrics like average per-visit value (\$/Visits) and revenue per acquisition (RPA) in the Marketing Optimization reports. However, you can get far more detailed reporting by using the technique outlined in the second approach, below.



## c. Pseudo ecommerce form fields for contact form

```
<FORM STYLE="DISPLAY:NONE;" NAME="UTMFORM">  
<TEXTAREA ID="UTMTRANS">  
UTM:T|[[ORDER-ID]]|5|[[SHIPPING]]|[[CITY]]|[[STATE]]|[[COUNTRY]]  
UTM:I|[[ORDER-ID]]|[[SKU/CODE]]|FORM COMPLETED|CONTACT|5|1  
</TEXTAREA>  
</FORM>
```

In this last example, I have assumed a value of \$5 per request. I've also assumed that your contact/request form asks for the address details of the visitor so that these fields can be completed. Consult with your web designer/developers for the actual name of the form fields used on your form and how to extract the values from them.

Next, you need to decide how to call these values into Google Analytics. You can do this using the javascript: \_\_utmSetTrans() function.

For the above examples you would probably use:

```
<A HREF = "MAILTO:EMAIL@ADDRESS.COM" ONCLICK = "JAVASCRIPT: __UTMSETTRANS()">  
<A HREF = "FILE.PDF" ONCLICK = "URCHINTRACKER('DOWNLOADS/FILE.PDF'); JAVASCRIPT: __UTMSETTRANS()">  
<FORM ACTION = "FORMHANDLER.CGI" ONSUBMIT = "JAVASCRIPT: __UTMSETTRANS()">
```

Note the use of urchinTracker here. This is not directly related to what we wish to achieve, but should be used as a best practice technique.

## Approach #2 provides significant benefits.

By emulating an ecommerce site, you can easily see, for example, the total number of goal conversions (transactions). If you were using Approach #1, you would need to add up each goal total manually.

Also, you can see at a glance the referring sources that lead to goal conversion, latency and recency, average order value, and which keywords convert best. If you wish to track fifty PDF whitepapers, a mailing list subscription, quote request form and "contact us" form, you'll find Approach #2 much more efficient and informative!

# Attributing Downloads to Campaigns

BY BRIAN CLIFTON

Often, emails and other specialized types of marketing campaigns refer visitors directly to a document or a download, instead of a website landing page. In order for Google Analytics to detect and track a visitor from a campaign, landing pages must be tagged with the Google Analytics code. So, what if your campaign sends visitors directly to a PDF document, .exe download, or another kind of file that does not accept JavaScript page tags and therefore cannot be tagged with the Google Analytics code?

## The Technique

You can address this challenge by using an intermediate landing page to capture the campaign variables before forwarding the visitor to the actual PDF document or download. A PHP example of this is shown below, but the technique is equally applicable for any server side web scripting language you might use (ASP, .NET, CGI-Perl):

### Example email link to your web site:

[www.domain.com/forwarder.php?file=download1.pdf&utm\\_id=10](http://www.domain.com/forwarder.php?file=download1.pdf&utm_id=10)

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| forwarder.php | Name of the dynamic page that will forward the visitor to the correct file |
| download1.pdf | Name of file requested by visitor  |
| &utm_id=10    | Campaign identifier (i.e. master tracking code) or campaign tags           |

In this example, the forwarding page, forwarder.php, would need your Google Analytics page tag and the following code in the body tag:

```
<BODY ONLOAD="JAVASCRIPT:URCHINTRACKER('/DOWNLOADS/<? ECHO  
"$FILE?UTM_ID=$UTM_ID');WINDOW.LOCATION.HREF='$FILE' ?>">
```

## The Result

You'll now be able to see each PDF download as a page view in your Google Analytics reports. And, each referral that sends a visitor to your PDF documents or .exe downloads will be correctly attributed to the referring campaign, medium, and source.

# Successful A/B and A/B/A Testing

BY BRETT CROSBY

As you probably know by now, it's extremely important to track each of your ads and keywords to see how well it performs. But, how do you design a highly effective ad in the first place? One of the most interesting approaches to ad optimization is the A/B split test and it's sibling, the A/B/A test. Both of these involve testing different creative, such as multiple versions of an email newsletter or multiple versions of an ad, against each other.

So, what is the difference between A/B and A/B/A testing and when should you use each approach? And, how do you actually go about setting up a test? Let's start with an example of A/B testing in AdWords.

## A/B Testing in AdWords

There are two ways to run an A/B test in AdWords. The first approach, and the approach we currently recommend if you rely on AdWords autotagging, is to create two different versions of your ad, making sure that each version has a different headline. Autotagging will then automatically allow you to compare conversion metrics for each version of the ad in the Keyword Specific Testing report (under Ad Version Testing in the Content Optimization section). For each keyword, you can drill down and compare the performance of each version of the ad, because each ad will be differentiated by a unique headline.

The second approach gives you a little more flexibility because you'll be able to have the same headline for both versions of your ad if you wish. However, you should not use this approach if you have been using autotagging. (Note: In order for to run this test, you will need to disable autotagging in your AdWords user preferences. To ensure equal delivery between destination page URLs, be sure to set up all of your test ads in a single Ad Group. Also, make sure that you turn off "Automatically optimize ad serving for my ads" from the AdWords Campaign Settings. This allows AdWords to deliver your test ads equally.)

To conduct the A/B test, set up multiple versions of ads and set your AdWords account to randomize their display. Let's consider the following case in which the marketer has set up two ads:

### **Text Ad #1**

#### [Designer Cookware](#)

Recommended by Seattle's top chefs.

[www.abccustomcookware.com](http://www.abccustomcookware.com)

#### **Destination URL:**

```
HTTP://WWW.ABCCUSTOMCOOKWARE.COM
?UTM_SOURCE=GOOGLE
&UTM_MEDIUM=CPC
&UTM_TERM=DESIGNER+COOKWARE
&UTM_CAMPAIGN=ADWORDS05
&UTM_CONTENT=SEATTLECHEFS
```

### **Text Ad #2**

#### [Designer Cookware](#)

Recommended by Seattle's top interior designers.

[www.abccustomcookware.com](http://www.abccustomcookware.com)

#### **Destination URL:**

```
HTTP://WWW.ABCCUSTOMCOOKWARE
?UTM_SOURCE=GOOGLE
&UTM_MEDIUM=CPC
&UTM_TERM=DESIGNER+COOKWARE
&UTM_CAMPAIGN=ADWORDS05
&UTM_CONTENT=INTERIORDESIGNERS
```

The ads have different copy in the descriptions and are tagged with a different utm\_content tag. The different tags allow you to view conversion metrics for each version of the ad in the Keyword Specific Testing report (under Ad Version Testing in the Content Optimization section). For each keyword, you can drill down and compare the performance of each version of the ad.

## You can use the same approach with email campaigns.

The same tagging approach is easily used for emails. Create one or more versions of your emails, and tag the links in the email with a `utm_content` tag that identifies the particular version of the email. Your results will be visible in the Ad Version reports under Content Optimization.

For example, to conduct an email A/B test, you send the "A" version of your email to one half of your group, and the "B" version to the other half. If you have a large number of recipients, you can even test three or more versions of your email. Your results will be most useful, however, if each group contains at least 5,000 recipients.

## The case for A/B/A Testing

Although A/B testing is adequate for many situations, the results will be misleading if you have introduced any bias into the experiment. In other words, you might see a difference in the performance of your "A" and "B" versions not because of the emails themselves, but because your target audience groups differ in some important way.

You are unlikely to encounter bias in a randomized AdWords campaign such as the one outlined in the example above, but it is possible to unknowingly introduce bias in email campaigns. Even more common is the bias introduced by different versions of an ad on a single page. How can you be sure that differences in how the ads perform is actually due to the different creative, and not to the differences in location on the page?

To guard against this kind of bias, you can use an A/B/A test.

An A/B/A test splits your target audience into three groups. One third receives the "A" creative, one third receives the "B" creative, and one third receives the same "A" creative. This approach allows you to compare results from the two "A" groups against each other to determine how much bias may be introduced by other factors. Theoretically, clickthroughs and conversions from the two "A" groups will be virtually identical. If they are not, this means some other factor other than the ads themselves is at work.

## Start testing.

Using A/B and A/B/A testing, you can test ad copy, images, design and layout, colors, and many other factors. The key to doing it successfully is to vary one thing at a time. If the ads you test are completely different, you won't know which factors contribute to your success. Remember to tag each of your links within your ads and use a unique `utm_content` tag within each link.

As with other kinds of tracking, expect to learn a great deal about what motivates your audience. The more you test, the more you'll learn.



# Email Campaign Best Practices

BY CHRISTINE LEE

When you launch an email campaign, make sure that you can effectively track it from beginning to end. Here are some tips to creating a successful email campaign.

## Measure success.

Before sending out an email campaign, consider what you're attempting to accomplish. Are you promoting new products? Attempting to increase membership? Encouraging inactive members to reactivate their accounts? Maintaining contact with your customers?

Now think about quantitative metrics that can help you measure the success of your email campaign.

| <b>Metric</b>   | <b>Measures</b>   | <b>Where to find it</b>                       |
|---|---|---|
| Conversion Rate<br>(number of desired actions divided by number of visits from the email) | How effectively your emails work in tandem with your site to drive specific actions, such as a purchases or signups | Source Conversion report in Google Analytics. |

## Create multiple calls to action, in the form of tagged links.

Your email campaign should contain tagged links so that you can view clickthroughs in your Google Analytics reports. When tagging your links, the best practice is to set `utm_source` to the email title (for example, `spring_news`) and `utm_medium=email`. If you tag your links this way, the visits and conversions will be shown in the line item `"spring_news[medium]` in the Source Conversion report.

Any and every type of link should be tagged-links to your site, links to specific sections or pages, email links, clickable images, you name it. The more trackable links you have embedded in your email campaign, the more information you'll have about your campaign.

Here's an example of a trackable email campaign using Google Analytics:



Do you see all the links embedded in this email campaign?

**"...Click here for more flower quotes":**

[HTTP://WWW.ELEGANTEFLOWERPAVILION.COM/FLOWERQUOTES.HTML ?UTM\\_SOURCE=NEWSLETTERSPRING05 &UTM\\_MEDIUM=EMAIL &UTM\\_CONTENT=FLOWERQUOTES &UTM\\_TERM=EM &UTM\\_CAMPAIGN=SPRING05SPECIALS](http://www.eleganteflowerpavilion.com/flowerquotes.html?utm_source=newsletterspring05&utm_medium=email&utm_content=flowerquotes&utm_term=em&utm_campaign=spring05specials)

**Sunflower image:** [HTTP://WWW.ELEGANTEFLOWERPAVILION.COM/SUNFLOWERPROMO.HTML ?UTM\\_SOURCE=NEWSLETTERSPRING05 &UTM\\_MEDIUM=EMAIL &UTM\\_CONTENT=SUNFLOWER\\_IMAGE &UTM\\_TERM=EM &UTM\\_CAMPAIGN=SPRING05SPECIALS](http://www.eleganteflowerpavilion.com/sunflowerpromo.html?utm_source=newsletterspring05&utm_medium=email&utm_content=sunflower_image&utm_term=em&utm_campaign=spring05specials)

**Sunflower image caption:** [HTTP://WWW.ELEGANTEFLOWERPAVILION.COM/SUNFLOWERPROMO.HTML ?UTM\\_SOURCE=NEWSLETTERSPRING05 &UTM\\_MEDIUM=EMAIL &UTM\\_CONTENT=SUNFLOWER\\_CAPTION &UTM\\_TERM=EM &UTM\\_CAMPAIGN=SPRING05SPECIALS](http://www.eleganteflowerpavilion.com/sunflowerpromo.html?utm_source=newsletterspring05&utm_medium=email&utm_content=sunflower_caption&utm_term=em&utm_campaign=spring05specials)

**"wide array of over 100 spring flowers":** [HTTP://WWW.ELEGANTEFLOWERPAVILION.COM/SPRING2006/ ?UTM\\_SOURCE=NEWSLETTERSPRING05 &UTM\\_MEDIUM=EMAIL &UTM\\_CONTENT=BULLETEDLIST &UTM\\_TERM=EM &UTM\\_CAMPAIGN=SPRING05SPECIALS](http://www.eleganteflowerpavilion.com/spring2006/?utm_source=newsletterspring05&utm_medium=email&utm_content=bulletedlist&utm_term=em&utm_campaign=spring05specials)

etc...

There are many more links in the email, but you get the idea.

## **Before sending it out, check the mechanics of your email.**

Are the links being tracked properly? Send out a few test emails and have the recipients click on each link. Check to see if these links are all recorded.

Are all the links valid? Make sure the email campaign references the correct URLs in each and every link.

Are there any typos? Get a fresh pair of eyes to proofread your email and avoid typos.

## **Make your copy as good as it can be.**

Subject line of your emails: Recipients use the subject line of your email to decide whether or not to bother opening the email.

Sender of your emails: Like with the subject line, customers will look at the email sender and decide whether to open it, delete it, or mark it as junk mail.

Time of day and/or day of week you send out your email campaign: If you are you targeting your email campaign to businesses, a Monday morning 9am email may not be the best strategy.

Graphics: It may be tempting to beautify your email campaign with nice graphics, but consider how the customer on a 28.8K dial-up connection will feel having to download a large email full of graphics. Find a balance between email size and graphics.

Layout of the email elements: Will users respond better to your email if the text surrounds the image or is to the right of the image? Experiment with the design and layout of your email.

Content: Is your content engaging, or are users losing interest? Experiment with tone and style.

A/B Testing is a simple and efficient way to conduct your testing. Learn more about how to set up A/B Tests with Google Analytics. Get creative with experimenting; you never know what you'll find and better yet, the results may surprise you.

# Tracking Offline Campaigns

BY AMIT SINGH

If you run offline campaigns, for example on TV or in print, you may be considering how to best track campaign ROI. Offline campaigns that refer the reader or viewer to a URL can be tracked using Google Analytics. Here are four approaches you can use.

As an example, let's imagine that [www.googlestore.com](http://www.googlestore.com) runs an offline print campaign which points readers to [googlestore.com/coolstuff](http://googlestore.com/coolstuff). The purpose of the hypothetical Coolstuff campaign is to market unique Google gift items. The Coolstuff marketers want to see conversion rates and measure revenue and ROI on their offline campaign. Specifically, they want to be able to see a line item in the Campaign Conversion report and the Campaign ROI report for the Coolstuff campaign.

## Approach #1 - Meta Refresh

When a browser client requests a URL associated with an offline campaign (for example, the [www.googlestore.com/coolstuff](http://www.googlestore.com/coolstuff) for our hypothetical campaign), the web server can return an HTML document containing a meta-refresh tag which redirects the visitor to the appropriate landing page.

### The HTML code is

```
<HTML>
<HEAD>
<TITLE>COOLSTUFF</TITLE>

<!-- INCLUDE THE GOOGLE ANALYTICS TRACKING CODE TO ADDITIONALLY TRACK PAGE VIEWS OF /COOLSTUFF I.E.
THE REDIRECT PAGE. THIS STEP DOES NOT AFFECT OFFLINE CAMPAIGN TRACKING.-->

<!-- INSERT YOUR GOOGLE ANALYTICS TRACKING CODE HERE -->
<!--
USE META TAG TO REDIRECT THE CLIENT TO THE ACTUAL LANDING PAGE/DETAILS/COOLSTUFF.HTML
2 ADDITIONAL QUERY PARAMETERS HAVE BEEN ADDED

UTM_SOURCE    OFFLINE    SOURCE OF THE CAMPAIGN IS OFFLINE.

UTM_CAMPAIGN  COOLSTUFF  NAME OF THE CAMPAIGN.

THE BROWSER WILL WAIT FOR 2 SECOND BEFORE REQUESTING THE REDIRECTED WEBPAGE.

__UTM.JS MUST BE INCLUDED ON THE DESTINATION PAGE.-->
<META HTTP-EQUIV="REFRESH" CONTENT="2; URL=/DETAILS/COOLSTUFF.HTML ?UTM_SOURCE=OFFLINE
&UTM_CAMPAIGN=COOLSTUFF">
</HEAD>
<BODY>

.
</BODY>
</HTML>
```

While this approach will satisfy most needs, it has the following drawbacks. First, there is no guarantee that the JavaScript tracking code will complete execution before the page redirects. One solution to this is to wait two seconds before redirecting, thereby reducing the chance of the pageview not being tracked.

The second drawback is that it does not exclude visitors who may have clicked the link and who were therefore not really referred by the offline campaign. There is, however, a way of excluding visitors who clicked the link online; see Approach #2.

## Approach #2 - Exclude Referrals.

Use this approach if you want to include in your campaign tracking only visitors who actually typed the URL into their browser.

### The HTML code is

```
<HTML>
<HEAD>
<TITLE>COOLSTUFF</TITLE>

<!--
INCLUDE THE GOOGLE ANALYTICS TRACKING CODE TO ADDITIONALLY TRACK PAGE VIEWS OF /COOLSTUFF I.E. THE
REDIRECT PAGE. THIS STEP DOES NOT AFFECT OFFLINE CAMPAIGN TRACKING.
--> <!-- INSERT YOUR GOOGLE ANALYTICS TRACKING CODE HERE -->

/*
FUNCTION REDIRECT(DESTINATION, SOURCE, CAMPAIGN)
REDIRECTS USER TO THE DESTINATION PAGE.
IF USER TYPED URL IN THE ADDRESS BAR, ADDITIONALLY ADDS CAMPAIGN VARIABLES. DOES NOT ADD CAMPAIGN
VARIABLES FOR USERS COMING FROM CLICKS. READS THE DOCUMENT.REFERRER PROPERTY TO CHECK IF USER
TYPED WEB ADDRESS.

PARAMS:

DESTINATION - URL OF DESTINATION PAGE. MAYBE ABSOLUTE OR
RELATIVE.

SOURCE - CAMPAIGN SOURCE

CAMPAIGN - CAMPAIGN NAME.

*/
FUNCTION REDIRECT(DESTINATION, SOURCE, CAMPAIGN) {
IF ( ! TOP.DOCUMENT.REFERRER || TOP.DOCUMENT.REFERRER == "" ) {IF ( SOURCE && CAMPAIGN ) {
DESTINATION = DESTINATION + "?"+"UTM_SOURCE=" + SOURCE + "&" + "UTM_CAMPAIGN=" + CAMPAIGN;
}} WINDOW.LOCATION.HREF = DESTINATION; }
</SCRIPT>
</HEAD>
<BODY>
ONLOAD="REDIRECT('/DETAILS/COOLSTUFF.HTML', 'OFFLINE', 'COOLSTUFF')">
</BODY>
</HTML>
```

## Approach #3 - No redirect is needed because the destination URL contains the content.

Let's assume that [googlestore.com/coolstore](http://googlestore.com/coolstore) contains all the content and there is no need for a second page. In this case, you'll need to reload the page with the campaign variables appended to the URL.

### The HTML code is

```
<HTML><HEAD><TITLE>COOLSTUFF</TITLE>
<!--INCLUDE THE GOOGLE ANALYTICS TRACKING CODE TO ADDITIONALLY TRACK PAGEVIEWS OF /COOLSTUFF I.E
THE REDIRECT PAGE. THIS STEP DOES NOT AFFECT OFFLINE CAMPAIGN TRACKING.-->

<!-- INSERT YOUR GOOGLE ANALYTICS TRACKING CODE HERE -->

/*
FUNCTION ADDCAMPAIGNTAGSANDREDIRECT(SOURCE, CAMPAIGN)
ADDS CAMPAIGN TAGS AND REDIRECTS TO SELF. CHECKS IF CURRENT URL HAS CAMPAIGN TAGS TO AVOID SELF-
REDIRECTING LOOP DOES NOT VALIDATE INTEGRITY OF PASSED IN PARAMS. EXPECTS CURRENT URL TO NOT
HAVE QUERY PARAMETERS.

PARAMS:

DESTINATION - URL OF DESTINATION PAGE. MAYBE ABSOLUTE OR
RELATIVE.

SOURCE      THE SOURCE OFTEN TERMS LIKE 'PRINT-NYTIMES'

CAMPAIGN    NAME OF CAMPAIGN.

*/
FUNCTION ADDCAMPAIGNTAGSANDREDIRECT(SOURCE, CAMPAIGN)
{
  VAR URL = TOP.LOCATION.HREF;
  IF (URL.INDEXOF('UTM_SOURCE') == -1 && URL.INDEXOF('UTM_CAMPAIGN') == -1)
  {
    TOP.LOCATION.HREF = URL + '?' + 'UTM_SOURCE=' + SOURCE + '&' + 'UTM_CAMPAIGN=' + CAMPAIGN;
  }
}
</SCRIPT>
</HEAD>
<BODY ONLOAD="ADDCAMPAIGNTAGSANDREDIRECT('OFFLINE', 'COOLSTUFF')">
..
</BODY>
</HTML>
```

To prevent duplicate visits from affecting report data, you will need to add an exclude filter ignoring request stems of type `/coolstuff` (i.e. without the query parameters). Add this filter to your profile.

Note that a call to `urchinTracker('/coolstuff?utm_source=print&utm_campaign=Coolstuff')` will not work. The `urchinTracker()` function is not designed to handle campaign variables.

## Approach #4 - Use the redirecting functionality of your web server.

Web servers often allow the creation of aliases for documents that they serve. For example,

```
/COOLSTUFF => /DETAILS/COOLSTUFF.HTML?UTM_SOURCE=PRINT &UTM_CAMPAIGN=COOLSTUFF
```

redirects requests to [www.googlestore.com/coolstuff](http://www.googlestore.com/coolstuff) to [www.googlestore.com/details/coolstuff.html](http://www.googlestore.com/details/coolstuff.html) and adds the campaign tracking variables. Please note that this syntax is just used to illustrate the concept, for exact syntax, refer to your web server documentation.

Google Analytics uses JavaScript to track campaigns; make sure that your redirect approach allows the campaign variables to appear in the browser's address bar.

# Testing Keyword Landing Pages

BY ALDEN DESOTO

How successful is your site at keeping and converting the traffic it gets? Converting traffic begins with effective landing pages - ones that reassure visitors that they've found what they are looking for. If you can match the right landing pages to the right ads, you'll increase conversions and profitability. But how do you start?

## Minimize "bounces".

The more compelling your landing pages, the more visitors will stay on your site and convert. Unfortunately, it's common for visitors to leave a site as soon as they arrive, or "bounce".

The first step to optimizing your landing pages should be to check the Entrance Bounce Rates report in Google Analytics. The Entrance Bounce Rates report is under the Content Optimization section, under Navigational Analysis. The first column in the report shows the number of entrances on each page. The second column shows the number of times that an entry was followed by an immediate exit (or bounce) from the site. The last column shows the percentage of entrances that resulted in bounces.

If you drive traffic with paid search, bounces are expensive. For a paid keyword, the bounce rate represents the percentage of lost opportunity that you'd like to regain. If a large percentage of your visitors leave after viewing only a single page on the site, you'll want to do a better job of targeting your landing pages.

## Test multiple landing pages for each ad.

If you manually tag your keywords, here is a useful technique for testing different landing pages. Let's consider a hypothetical company called [abcvintageguitars.com](http://abcvintageguitars.com) that wants to test two different landing pages: v1.html and v2.html. Both are landing pages for the keyword "vintage guitars".

(Important Note: This technique is not recommended if you have been using autotagging in AdWords. In order for to run this test in AdWords, you will need to disable autotagging in your user preferences. To ensure equal delivery between destination page URLs, be sure to set up all of your test ads in a single Ad Group. Also, make sure that you turn off "Automatically optimize ad serving for my ads" from the AdWords Campaign Settings. This allows AdWords to deliver your test ads equally.)



Create an ad group with the keyword "vintage keywords" and create two different ads:

#### Text Ad #1

##### [Collector vintage guitars](#)

Order instruments from the 50's though the 80's online.  
[www.abcvintageguitars.com](http://www.abcvintageguitars.com)

##### **Destination URL:**

```
HTTP://WWW.ABCVINTAGEGUITARS.COM/  
V1.HTML?UTM_SOURCE=GOOGLE  
&UTM_MEDIUM=CPC  
&UTM_TERM=VINTAGE+GUITAR  
&UTM_CAMPAIGN=ADWORDS05  
&UTM_CONTENT=LANDING-V1
```

#### Text Ad #2

##### [Collector vintage guitars](#)

Order instruments from the 50's though the 80's online.  
[www.abcvintageguitars.com](http://www.abcvintageguitars.com)

##### **Destination URL:**

```
HTTP://WWW.ABCVINTAGEGUITARS.COM/  
V2.HTML?UTM_SOURCE=GOOGLE  
&UTM_MEDIUM=CPC  
&UTM_TERM=VINTAGE+GUITAR  
&UTM_CAMPAIGN=ADWORDS05  
&UTM_CONTENT=LANDING-V2
```

Note that the ads are identical, except for the destination URLs. One URL points to v1.html and the other points to v2.html. Also, note that the URLs are tagged with differing values for utm\_content. The first URL is tagged with "utm\_content=landing-v1", and the second is tagged with "utm\_content=landing-v2". This different utm\_content tag allows us to easily compare the performance of the ads in the Google Analytics reports. Follow the same practice and tag each of your own URLs with a unique and distinguishable value for utm\_content, one that indicates which landing page the URL points to.

## Evaluate the test ad results.

Once the ads have been running for a while, review the conversion metrics for each of your keyword/landing page combinations. You can do this in the Keyword Specific Testing report (under Ad Version Testing in the Content Optimization section). For each keyword, you should be able to drill down and see a list of your landing pages, each identified by the utm\_content value you assigned.

As you review the report, compare the number of visits the site received for each keyword/content combination. You should have roughly the same number of visits for each test. If one of the keyword/content combinations has most of the visits, it's likely that you forgot to turn off "Automatically optimize ad serving for my ads" for the AdWords Campaign.

Next, compare the number of pageviews per visit that each keyword/landing page combination yielded. This is shown in the column marked "P/Visit". A number between 1 and 2 indicates that you probably had a large number of bounces. The higher the number, the more pages the visitors viewed, on average.

The next columns, marked "G1/Visit", "G2/Visit", etc, show the percentage of visitors for each keyword/landing page combination that converted to your goals. This tells you how frequently visits that began with each landing page resulted in a goal conversion.

## Review where people are clicking on each landing page.

The next step is to find out which links on your landing pages are most effective. You can easily do this using the Site Overlay on each of your landing pages. Site Overlay is found under Content Performance, in the Content Optimization section.

By clicking on the graphic bars beside each link, you can see the number of clicks the link received, and the percentage of clicks on the link that resulted in an eventual conversion.

Using this information, you'll be able to decide which links on the landing page should be most visible. For example, if you have multiple offers on a landing page, you'll be able to see which ones work the best.

## Make testing part of your design.

Every time you create a new ad, think about what the visitor expects to see on your site. Generally speaking, the more targeted the page, the better your results will be. If you test each page that you create, you'll learn what works best for your site and business, and you'll maximize ROI from the clicks you buy.

## **Chapter 4**

### **ANALYTICS IN CONTEXT**

To use web analytics effectively, we often have to look at larger strategic principles. Authors in this section share insights into the broader applicability of web analytics.

#### **Increasing Conversions with Internal Site Search**

***by Matthew Kulick***

By combining the Google Mini's internal search capabilities with the informative reporting of Google Analytics, site owners can begin evaluating their site search experience from a visitor-centric perspective.

#### **Monitoring Visitor Conversion**

***by Jim Novo***

Few people use visitor analysis in an actionable way. Learn how to create key metrics that you can act upon and learn how to use them by measuring, managing, and maximizing.

#### **Two Metrics For You**

***by Jim Novo***

Learn two metrics that are useful regardless of what kind of site you have. Both are focused on the biggest problem most sites have - getting visitors to go past the first page they see on your site.

#### **The Four Parts of Web Optimization**

***by Neil Mason***

Web analytics doesn't exist in a vacuum. Learn how market research, surveys, and technical site analysis can complement web analytics.

# Increasing Conversion with Internal Search

BY MATTHEW KULICK

The Internet today is a fundamentally different place than it was even three years ago. The search revolution has changed the paradigms of navigation and user experience, and even the ubiquitous search box, long the domain of queries of all types, is being used in new ways. Site search is receiving attention both as a navigation scheme and as a barometer of user behavior. Savvy site operators are using these trends to address issues of visitor profiling, behavior and conversions. This makes sense because real search usage data goes beyond traditional web analytic metrics to open a whole new area for content optimization: search-centric navigation.

Instead of being an afterthought, search should be regarded as an integral part of your web analytics and conversion plans. You should be able to answer questions about how site search is leading to conversions with real usage data and reports. Optimization might involve studying the efficiency of conversions based on particular searches, or on addressing factors that cause user confusion, such as misspelled words, mangled syntax or brand names that don't communicate product attributes.

Briefly, I will outline how you can use Google Analytics to grow your conversions by optimizing Google Mini (or Google Search Appliance) site search, rather than by sifting through raw search logs or conducting time-consuming and costly usability studies. In this article, I will concentrate on introducing the main ideas of Analytics integration with search and then discuss some currently available methods that may be helpful in improving conversions.

## Introduction to the Google Mini

The Google Mini is an enterprise search solution designed to help your organization make its digital content easily accessible, in a number of ways and across multiple document structures. The Mini supports website and intranet search integration, information collection and organization, front-end customization, the ability to crawl and index over 220 file formats, and a simple turn-key installation. Simply plug it in, enter a few network configuration details, and the Mini can start indexing your content. It has a 100% web-based configuration and a variety of options for customizing the way it organizes and returns search results. Small and medium-sized businesses have seamlessly integrated the Mini into their websites and have used it to dramatically reduce customer complaints about information accessibility.

## Integration with Search

Google Analytics and the Google Mini are capable of simple integrations. Using built-in features already available on both the Mini and Analytics, users can add Analytics tracking code to their search results. Simply editing the Mini search results page template to include the Analytics reporting code is sufficient to integrate with Google Analytics; it then collects the same data for the Mini search results page as for any other page it tracks. More advanced Analytics features allow the aggregation and manipulation of Mini search results pages and user search terms, for more intuitive and efficient reporting. It is recommended that large sites with heavy traffic or large, prominent search features take advantage of the ability to filter and customize search page reporting.

## Enhanced Conversion Analysis

Pairing Google Analytics with the Google Mini enables conversion analysis based on the results of user searches. Analytics reporting uncovers visitor navigation data and couples it with contextual information and goals in various types of return-on-investment analyses. Implementing Analytics on the Google Mini can reveal correlations linking specific search results pages with particular visitor actions, site goals and session data. Searches performed on the Google Mini, as well as navigation to and from the search results page, can be studied through Analytics reports to determine which AdWords™ or keywords are most effective.

### Goals, Funnels and Search Results

Defining conversion goals and navigation funnels in Google Analytics allows you to investigate how often search leads to a conversion. For example, a funnel could be defined that starts on any search results page and which ends on the conversion goal page. Another option is to define a set of funnels that start on search results pages with particular search terms, and which end in conversions. In the latter scenario, you can investigate how often particular search terms end in conversions. One report to pay attention to is "Defined Funnel Navigation." The "Reverse Goal Path" report may also help identify search terms to investigate by presenting popular navigation paths stemming from certain search results pages. These analyses will require a combination of defined goals, defined funnels (with regular expressions), and profile filters which transform the URLs of the search results pages for easier processing and viewing in Google Analytics.

### Panoptic Search Results Navigation

The ability to track user navigation from page to page also allows you to track visitor movement from your search results pages to other areas of your site. The "Initial Navigation" and "All Navigation" reports allow you to view user navigation paths, based on pageview URLs. The "Initial Navigation" report provides a ranked list of the most popular navigation paths, detailing the sequential URLs users visited on your site, sorted by popularity. The "All Navigation" report provides a hierarchical, folder-based view of your site and allows you to see the top 10 pages that users visited by entering and leaving each page on your site, including the search results pages. Adding filters to your website profile allows you to clean up the search results page URLs and makes it easier to see where users went from the search results pages. For example, you can use a filter and the "All Navigation" report to see the top 10 places that users went to after being presented with a particular search results page. You would be able to see both the search terms in the title of the search results page and the most popular search results that the users clicked on. You would even be able to see what percentage of clicks on a particular top 10 URL led to a conversion. The navigation reports are an easy way to analyze user behavior originating from search results pages. The search results pages can be made more comprehensible in these reports by applying a profile filter. Having an overview of user navigation on your site enables you to begin to understand why users do what they do, and what role search plays in the conversion process.

## Search Performance Metrics

Search is an important navigation paradigm for websites, intranets and document collections. Empirical evidence indicates that users are increasingly relying on search results to judge the availability of information and site quality. Integrating Google Analytics with the Google Mini provides search-quality feedback. Analytics can help you determine whether users are able to find what they are looking for, and thus enables you to evaluate search effectiveness. Particularly useful search performance metrics can be obtained by simply and effectively using Analytics reports to understand search results pages. Search page traffic data, visitor volume and entrance and exit ratio reports (which are already available through Analytics), can help differentiate searching from non-searching visitors, reveal patterns in the most visited search results, and speak specifically to overall site search performance. Site overlay reporting and results page exit ratios can be useful in evaluating the relative performance of different designs and implementations.

### Popularity and Visibility with Search Results

A simple way to find the most popular search terms is to look at the Top Content or Content by Title report. Like any other site page, search results pages with a relatively high number of unique views will rise to the top of the list. The more users that start a search, the more users will view the first page of its search results. Depending on your site search's popularity, these search results pages will rise to the top of the Top Content report. If the search results pages are not in the first 10 of the report, you can expand the report to include results with much lower popularity.

As with the other reports, it makes good sense to use a profile filter to clean up the search results URL so that it is easier to read and find in the Top Content list. It is also important to remember that if site search is your most popular area, search results pages for different search terms will come to dominate the Top Content and Content By Titles reports. On the other hand, if site search is less popular than a number of regular site pages, you may have to look through a longer list of Top Content or Content by Titles to see how your search results pages have performed. It may also make sense to use a filter to modify the titles of search results pages for the Content by Titles report.

In general, the popularity of search terms can be compared across search results pages as well as across your entire site.

### Exits, Volume and Time

A variety of Google Analytics reports also provide three vital statistical reports: Exit Percentage (% Exit), Pageviews, and Average Time. These three numbers can provide insight into site search performance by addressing how users respond to search results. Percent Exit records the percentage of users that left your site after viewing a page, Pageviews counts the number of times a page was viewed, and Average Time gives an indication of how long a visitor stayed on a page before moving on. Applying these three statistics to search results pages, you can use each to explore a different area of site search quality. A high exit percentage may be an indicator of poor search results, which left users frustrated or with a poor impression of your site, causing them to leave. A relatively large number of Pageviews, combined with a low number of Unique Visits, may be a sign that site search is failing to provide the right information. Finally, if users are spending a large average amount of time on a search results page, the results they are finding may be confusing or poorly matched to their needs.

## Conclusion

By combining the Google Mini's internal search capabilities with the informative reporting of Google Analytics, site owners can begin evaluating their site search experience from a visitor-centric perspective. Analytics, when used with the Mini, can help answer questions like, "How is my search performing?" and, "Are users finding what they're looking for?" Search is an important navigational paradigm, and maximizing your content and conversion performance by pairing Google Analytics and the Google Mini is the first step towards an optimized search experience.

# Monitoring Visitor Conversion

BY JIM NOVO

Jim Novo is author of Drilling Down: Turning Customer Data into Profits with a Spreadsheet and co-author of The Marketer's Common Sense Guide to E-Metrics

I keep getting more and more requests for information on how to use visitor analysis to improve web site profitability. And that makes sense, because people are beginning to discover you can dramatically improve profitability, double and triple it, just by understanding which traffic is most likely to convert, what it is people do (and don't do) on your web site, and how to measure the effectiveness of changes you make on the site to improve visitor conversion.

Visitor analysis is very important, but it seems like few people are using it in an actionable way. By actionable, I mean something other than just cranking out reports on page views and server geek reports for the sake of it. When you generate reports, they should tell you something that leads to taking an action (or reversing an action taken). So I'm going to show you some of the data I use and the metrics I create from the data, along with explanations of how to use this information to get more visitors to do what you want them to do.

## Be Trendy

People seem to complain a lot about the quality of web data, and some hard-core stats people have various problems with the way both log-based and tag-based analyzers measure activity. I say, get over it. What matters most in tracking interactive behavior is trends, and even if the data is not 100% accurate in some way, as long as you continue to use data collected in the same way each time, you can still build trend charts.

People obsess way too much about finding an **absolute** answer (hard exact numbers), wasting a lot of time and resources, when a **relative** answer (is it getting better or worse) can be just as insightful, if not more. Trend charts are a great way to look at **relative** performance stats; that's what I use. So do the best you can to get clean data to work with, but don't waste a lot of time and effort looking for needles in the data haystack.

## Think Action

If you want the results of your analysis to be actionable, you should create **key metrics** around your objectives. If the objective of the site is product sales, counting page views is not very meaningful; your page views could go up or down and sales remain flat.

When you create a key metric, you want it to be actionable, directly related to the objective of the site. What would be meaningful for a site selling products? How about sales per visit? If you are tracking sales per visit, you have a metric related directly to the objective of the site. Sales per visit is a productivity metric, it tells you how good you are at converting traffic into sales. If you can improve sales per visit, you make more money. The metric is directly related to the objective of the site.

Key metrics are usually a ratio of something measuring an "action" to visits or visitors. What percent of visits signed up for the newsletter? What percent of visits lasted for more than 20 minutes? What percent of visits viewed more than 10 pages? These are examples of key metrics that might be aligned with the objectives of your site. Think about what your objective is - what action you want people to take at the site - and then think about how you might measure the success of this action.



## Know Your Data

Traffic analyzers don't really create many metrics by themselves, they generate raw data you can use to build metrics. It is worth the time to really understand how this data is generated, so when you create your metrics, you understand exactly what you're looking at and can draw accurate conclusions.

For example, if you want to study sales per visit, do you want to include visits from spiders and robots, which (at least for now) don't have a clue on how to make a purchase from you? If you include these visits, you artificially decrease your sales per visit. So make sure you know what you are measuring. In the case of visits, you may want to filter out robots and spiders, link checkers, uptime pingers, and your own development activity if you want a "clean" visit number in the end.

Also, when you create a metric, make sure you are using data from the same time period for each part of the metric. If your metric is "Percent of Visitors Bookmarking the Site," make sure the "Number of BookMarks" and "Number of Visits" you use are calculated over the same time period each time - a day, a week, a month. Otherwise comparing them and looking for trends won't work.

## Get Continuous

How do you use metrics? Measure, manage, maximize. First you measure and track to see where you are. Then you try to manage the metric by making changes to the site - when you make changes, did the metric get better or worse? Then using what you learn, you try to maximize the metric by making further changes. It's a cycle of continuous improvement, of ongoing testing. Every time you learn something new about your visitors, think to yourself: what could I change to take advantage of this new knowledge?

I have a client who started out with sales per visit at about 70 cents, which is pretty high to start with. She now does about \$3.50 in sales per visit. How did that happen? First we **measured** total sales per visit, and tracked it over time. Then we started testing changes to the navigation, one change at a time.

Make a change, track the result. Did sales per visit go up or down? During this **managing** process, we learned what kinds of changes made the biggest difference in sales per visit, and began building a picture of what visitors wanted and what caused them to buy. We made it up to about \$1.50 in sales per visit this way - more than a double, but we couldn't get it to go any higher working on the "whole site," in this case, with the persistent navigation.

So then we starting the **maximize** process - instead of looking at the whole site, we began breaking down traffic into different segments. Sales per visit by search engine, for example - some search engines produced much higher sales per visit than others. Some pay-per-click ads produced higher sales per visit than others - for the exact same search term! Some products on the home page produced higher sales per visit than others. And so on. At the end of this process, which still goes on today, she was doing \$3.50 sales per visit.

**Measure, Manage, Maximize.**

## Two Metrics for You

BY JIM NOVO

Jim Novo is author of *Drilling Down: Turning Customer Data into Profits with a Spreadsheet* and co-author of *The Marketer's Common Sense Guide to E-Metrics*

I've developed two metrics I think are among the most important you can track, no matter what kind of site you have or what the objective of the site is. They are designed to focus in right on the biggest problem most sites have - getting visitors to go past the first page they see on your site. Underlying these metrics is the idea someone who comes to the site and views just one page was likely a lost opportunity - a pretty fair assumption for most business models on the web. I'll also toss in a third metric which might apply to your site at the end.

An important part of these metrics is the way they are constructed - not using "average behavior," but instead focusing on specific visitor behavior, and screening out "data noise" as much as possible.

### Percent One-Page Visits

#### What is it?

One Page Visits divided by Total Visits

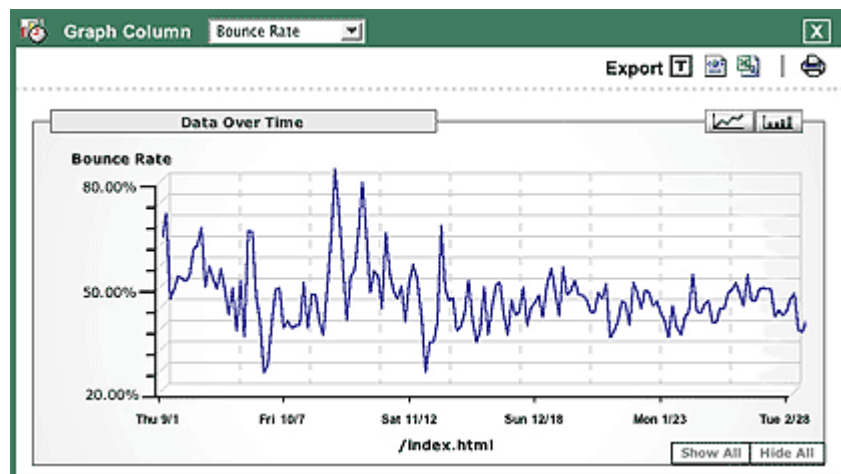
If I only had time to look at one metric, this would be it. This metric is usually tied to global navigation issues; it literally measures the percentage of visits bouncing off your site like it was Plexiglas (yea, one "s"). Since you often can't control which pages people enter your site through, you want to make sure if they don't find what they're looking for on the first page they hit, they know how to get to the information they want. Navigation is both a design and copy issue, since you can always write hyperlinks into copy that lead to related topics in other site areas.

Here is why I use visits instead of visitors or unique visitors as the "base" of a metric. It's the biggest, most reliable number available, so whatever "dirt" there is in it, it's not as dirty as unique visitors can be, which is complicated by visitor identity issues. I don't want complexity at this level; I want it clean and simple, the most accurate it can be. You could argue visits are inaccurate, because someone at work might only be able to read one page at a time, but might read 3 pages in a day more than 30 minutes apart. This would have the effect of making the metric look worse than it really is.

Yea sure, but compared with the problems you can run into with dynamic IP's, multiple users of a machine, and so forth, that's nothing. And I would add, does it really matter? What does that level of hand-wringing get you, is it actionable in any way? Can you do something better if you spent all the time and effort to get the absolutely exact number?

What's important is the trend, and as long as you use numbers calculated in the same way each time, the trend is actionable. If you have a super tracking system / you are really only interested in tracking authenticated users and you want to use visitors or unique visitors - and this really is important to your objectives - than go right ahead.

Here is what my Percent One Page Visits graph looks like.



The trend is generally down, meaning the percentage of visits having only one page is falling. The changes I am making are working - a higher percentage of visits are going deeper into the site because navigation is improving.

What's quite interesting is the first trend down ending around November 15 then spiking upward. This was the end of optimizing the original site, which was replaced with the new site, which caused a sharp spike upward again. Hey, that redesign was a great idea, right? Not! But over time (and lots of re-writing), I've been able to bring it back down. There is a lesson here - do you actually measure the success of design and other changes you make to your site? You should and you can, as long as the metric you are using ties to the objective of your site.

Another interesting feature on this chart is the 2 spikes in October - know what that is? Less targeted advertising. I primarily advertise by buying specific keywords on Google AdWords and Yahoo Search Marketing, but decided to test some contextual display ads in targeted content areas of About.com.

Huge click through, bogus customers (high one-page visits), ruined my stats - and very expensive. Do you see why tracking this stuff is so important? I don't have to calculate the ROI on that ad spend to know it's worse than I normally get - the customer behavior tells me it is. By switching dollars out of About.com back into Google and Yahoo, I automatically increase ROI - without ever having to calculate it. Folks, relative measurement (comparing the trends) rather than absolute measurement (calculating the ROI to the last cent) can save you a lot of time and effort. By the way, I don't think there is anything wrong with About.com - the audience is apparently just not right for my b2b site. Might be good for yours; you won't know until you test **and** measure.

## Percent Single Page Access

### What is it?

Single Access Page Visits divided by Entry Page Visits for a page

The Single Access Page report counts visits to a specific page where it was the only page looked at, and pages are ranked by number of visits. This is very much like One Page Visits from the last article, except the tracking is by each page as opposed to the entire site. In other words, if you added up all the individual Single Access Page Visits for each page you get One Page Visits for the whole site. This data can be an indicator of poor design or weak content on specific pages, and is great for identifying pages you probably need to work on.

To turn this data into a more actionable metric, I divide these Single Access Page Visits for a page by the total number of visits where that page was the Entry Page to the site.

This ratio is the metric Percent Single Page Access, which measures the ability of a specific page to pull visitors into the site. Compare this with the previous metric Percent One Page Visits, which measures the ability of the site as a whole to pull visitors further into the site.

On my site (probably yours too), the home page is the primary Entry Page, so I start my measurement efforts there. As time allows, I move on to other important Top 10 Entry Pages, tweaking the message on each to minimize Percent Single Page Access visits on each page. On most sites, 80% - 90% of the traffic is coming in through the Top 10 Entry Pages. Start with these and you get the most bang for your buck on your efforts.

My objective on the home page is click-through / conversion - I want to pull the maximum percentage of people into the next level of the site that hit this page. I want to know how many people saw this page when they first hit the site and clicked through to another page. By dividing Single Access Page Visits by the Entry Page Visits for a page, I get a percentage that most accurately measures the objective - initial conversion from home page to another page.

The above is an example of really thinking about your objective and what you are using to create your metrics. Follow this: if I used total views of the home page instead of Entry Page Views, I would be introducing "noise" to the conversion ratio objective, because some of these people would have seen other pages before they see the home page. I don't want that, because it's not important to the objective. I want to specifically measure the ability of the home page to take a visitor and get them to click deeper into the site. Don't use total visits to or total views of a page you are looking to optimize for conversion because then you are including traffic that was there for a different reason. If you want to measure the ability of a page to pull visitors into the site, use only visits where this page was the Entry Page.

Then you track this percentage, make changes to the page, and look for trends. Each page will have some "beginning" percentage, and what you would like to see is the Percent Single Page Access visits fall over time as you tweak design, navigation, links, and copy.

As a behaviorist, I don't trust what customers say they want or will do, I watch what they actually do. It's a simpler and much cleaner form of testing. If I write what I think is killer copy, and the Single Access Page Visits percentage rises, I was wrong. If it falls, I was right. Too much time is spent on agonizing over surveys and other inconclusive evidence. Track the customer data. It will "speak" to you and tell you the answer. If you want to further qualify the behavior, then do your surveys. But always get the behavior first so you understand the issues and ask the right questions.

Another interesting feature of the Percent One Page Visits chart is the wide fluctuations within the general trends. You know what those regular spikes up and down are caused by? Weekends. I get much higher "abandonment" of the home page on weekends, and much higher penetration into the site on weekdays, especially midweek. Makes sense; my site is really a business-to-business kind of thing.

Don't ever let anybody tell you time of day or day of week don't matter - the audience changes significantly by time of day and weekend versus weekday, and it may be in your interest to move with those changes, changing featured articles, products, or site functionality. It's not for me, I'm too much of a "niche player," but if you're running a more general interest site, particularly if you are a retailer, it could be in your interest to test this.

## Bonus Metric: Percent One Minute Visits

### What is it?

One Minute Visits divided by Total Visits

A very similar idea to the first one, only using length of visit instead of page views as the controlling number. This metric speaks to the general "pull" of your site to a visitor overall, an aggregation of all the copy, content, design, and functionality issues rolled into one.

Track this percentage over time. For an info-site like mine, you would assume that the longer people stay, the better you are serving them.

On my site, the trend is generally down, which is what you want to see. Visitors are staying longer with the site. I can really see the change in performance around day 67, again, when the new site went up. This was a very significant change, and confirmed my suspicion that even though many people don't want a lot of "fluff design" on a web site, they may not trust a site that is so bare that only a "celebrity" like Jakob Nielsen can pull it off. The old site is pretty sparse on design, but is still around to service people with slow connections and alternative or older browsers.

Around day 151, I can see the effect of a home page re-write I did that dramatically increased % One Minute Visits. Interestingly, this was an attempt to drive down **One Page Visits** by shortening the home page length, figuring people were not making it through and abandoning the page before they saw content they wanted. Wrong; the customer behavior tells me so.

One page visits didn't really budge; but one minute visits climbed substantially due to the shorter page. And **Single Page Access** was flat to higher! So the shorter home page hurt more than it helped. As a behaviorist, I don't try to argue with the behavior (that shouldn't have happened, darn it!), I react to the evidence and change my approach.

The deep spike down at day 21 was the posting of one of my articles on a highly targeted CRM site, and it looks like it worked as a high quality customer acquisition tool. People coming from this site on average stayed a long time, driving down the percentage of one minute visits, and this was an indicator of their "quality" - I sold a ton of books the next several days.

Percent One Minute Visits is a more rigorous number to use than "average visit length," because you are focusing in on the "worst case" and screening out as much as noise as possible from measuring your true objective.

For example, your average visit length might be rising with your one minute visits rising at the same time because a small group of hard core users were spending huge amounts of time on the site. If you focus on reducing one minute visits, average visit length will take care of itself over the longer run.

Depending on your site, one minute visitors may contain a large percentage of new visitors, so it's worth keeping an eye on. For some sites, it might be better to try to **increase** one minute visits, if the goal is "quick service" of some kind.

## Conclusion

Are these stats great? Well, they are for my site, because they're getting better. I don't think you can specify across different businesses with different ad strategies and business models that 60% Single Home Page Access is bad, or 40% One-Minute Visits is good. What matters is **where you are today and where you're headed**. For example, take my site.

Since I am using the most rigorous metrics possible (daily and very tightly defined), some of these numbers may seem high. But what if I told you I have a 70% repeat rate over longer time frames (30 days)? That close to 50% of visitors bookmark the site?

Now you have a different picture of the user and how they behave. By focusing in laser-like on the key conversion metrics, I know if I can fine tune those, the longer term metrics will take care of themselves. When you're looking at interactive behavior, "point of first contact" measurement is one of the most important metric areas you can study, because it very frequently has implications for the longer term behavior of the customer.

You have to track this stuff, folks. Otherwise you're flying blind. The customer data will tell you most everything you need to know. And you'll notice, not once during any of this have I personally identified a customer, or asked for any personal information. I don't need to. I know what advertising I'm running, I know what changes I'm making to the site, and I make sure that I **only change one thing at a time when testing new concepts**.

Then I watch the stats, and look for a reaction to the changes I make. If they improve, the changes were good. If they get worse, the changes were bad. The customers in the aggregate tell me through their transactions what the best course of action is.

Visitor metrics are all about **getting** customers. Once you've mastered visitor metrics, some of you might be interested in making more money from and keeping customers; that is what my other book, [Drilling Down](#), is all about - the metrics you need to create and track High ROI customer marketing programs.

# The Four Parts of Web Optimization

BY NEIL MASON

Web analytics can sound kind of scary. For most people running businesses, the word "analytics" can seem a bit "techy" or "geeky". There's no question, however, that in the world of online marketing, web analytics is becoming more and more important.

For a long time, no one really knew how to think about web analytics. Forums hosted heated debates about what "web analytics" was and wasn't. Some asserted that web analytics was essentially about what came out of web analytics tools, whilst others promoted it as a broad discipline.

Today, we have an excellent definition of "web analytics" as published by the Web Analytics Association:

"Web Analytics is the measurement, collection, analysis and reporting of Internet data for the purposes of understanding and optimizing Web usage."

This definition gives a good indication of the capabilities – and limitations – of web analytics. Because, as important as it is to use "quantitative Internet data to optimize websites and web marketing initiatives", web analytics is even more powerful when used in conjunction with other kinds of information.

## Seeing the complete picture gives you a strategic advantage.

An effective strategy for measuring and optimising sites and marketing initiatives has four key components:

- 1) VISITOR BEHAVIOUR ANALYSIS (PRIMARILY WEB ANALYTICS)
- 2) MARKET INTELLIGENCE (COMPETITIVE CONTEXT FROM MARKET RESEARCH)
- 3) USER PROFILING (SURVEYS)
- 4) SITE PERFORMANCE TRACKING (DEEP TECHNICAL ANALYSIS WHICH MAY INCLUDE WEB ANALYTICS)

What are these sources of information and why are they useful? The first of the four, web analytics, is essential for describing what happens on the site, but says less directly about the people who use the site, i.e. consumers. Let's take a wider perspective.

## Get market-smart.

Market intelligence is the context for business performance. Whilst the majority of an online marketer's time can be spent focussed on the brand and the site, remember that neither brand nor site operate in a vacuum. External factors and forces are at play, including natural growth in the market, competitive activity, and new technology development.

Market intelligence factors are likely to have an influence in the way you develop, execute, and assess the success of your marketing plan. For example, are your assumptions about growth rates in line with overall market performance? What would the impact of rising media costs be on the expected ROI? What competitive scenarios might impact your ability to meet targets?

Market intelligence data often comes from third party data sources such as panels (Nielsen NetRatings, ComScore), aggregators (Hitwise) or large scale surveys (Forrester's Technographics).

Basically, market intelligence adds a real-world context to the site-centric world inhabited by exclusively-digital practitioners. It allows you to understand and assess your businesses performance in the context of the overall development of the market and the performance of your competitors.

## Profile your visitors.

The basic principles of marketing are about understanding your customers and meeting their needs. User profiling is the process of getting to know the different kinds of customers that use your site and why they use it. The idea is to:

- 1) TARGET AND ACQUIRE MORE OF YOUR MOST VALUABLE TYPES OF USERS OR CUSTOMERS
- 2) DEVELOP THE SITE IN LINE WITH THEIR NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS
- 3) DELIVER MORE TARGETED AND EFFECTIVE MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS AND OFFERS
- 4) MAKE YOUR SITE MORE ATTRACTIVE TO ADVERTISERS LOOKING TO REACH YOUR PARTICULAR TYPE OF AUDIENCE
- 5) ANTICIPATE AND ACT ON LIKELY CUSTOMER BEHAVIOUR (I.E. CHURN)

Data on users usually comes from users. This includes the use of surveys, observation and focus groups, as well as looking at behaviour on the site. Surveys are one of the most common methods of understanding what customers think and how they feel. Developments in the usability and affordability of online research tools make conducting research amongst the customer base easier than ever before. But, keep in mind that there is a huge difference between deploying surveys that generate useful insight and pulling together a few questions or doing a poll on a website.



There are many different forms of surveys that an online business might run and they can vary on a number of dimensions. For example, you might survey visitors versus customers on your site, you might collect general background information, or you might ask about a specific issue. The survey might be a once-off survey or it may run on a continuous basis. Some of the different dimensions that might be involved and considered in the development of an online survey include:

- 1) PURPOSE OF THE SURVEY
- 2) TARGET AUDIENCE FOR THE SURVEY
- 3) TYPE OF SURVEY AND HOW THE RESPONDENTS ARE RECRUITED
- 4) NUMBER OF RESPONSES NEEDED
- 5) EXPECTED RATE AT WHICH PEOPLE RESPOND

Conducting research online can have many advantages over the more traditional approaches such as using face to face interviews or telephone research. Online data collection costs are typically half of what they would be to collect the equivalent data using face to face or telephone interviews. Also, project times can be significantly reduced. With some of the tools available for conducting online research, it's possible to write your questionnaire into a system and have it "in the field" within a day or so.

Regardless of how you deploy your survey, you'll still need to spend adequate time and effort designing it. A badly designed survey is still a badly designed survey, whether the data is being collected face to face, over the telephone, or on the web.

## Measure technical performance.

Technical site performance measurement looks at the how effectively the site is able to service visitors and customers. It involves aspects of the site such as the speed of page delivery, site availability and the responsiveness of transactional processes. Although often seen as a "technical" issue rather than a "business" issue, site technical performance can help explain visitor behaviour on the site and provides the context for marketing and site strategy.

You can get started on this kind of analysis with the Web Design Parameters reports in Google Analytics. These reports will tell you which screen resolutions, connection speeds, and browser platforms you should optimize your site for. For other data such as page download times and site availability, you will probably need to subscribe to a performance management service such as Keynote or Gomez. One advantage of these types of services is that they also allow you to benchmark your performance against a range of other sites or your competitors.

## Beyond measuring traffic

In conclusion, evaluating online initiatives is not just about analysing website traffic, but about understanding the "why" and the "what for". As you use web analytics, remember to take advantage of other data sources – sources that help you put your visitor and customer at the centre of your thinking.