

Using Your Web Stats

Webmasters will tell you that website tracking and statistics is crucial, but the real challenge is knowing what to do with the information once it has been gathered. Keeping in mind that the object is to improve your website with the information you collect, the question to ask is: *How can you use statistics on a daily basis to manage your website?*

On typical stat analysis sheets 'Recent Visitors' allows you to see all visitors to your site along with all relevant data collected about that visitor; search term, referrer, location, etc.

Obviously the stat analysis will need to have something to count - meaning that you will have to generate traffic to your site. One benefit of this analysis is that it will tell you which way works best for you by evaluating how well your search optimization efforts are working.

Some key specific metrics are Unique Visitor Counts, which tell you how many new visitors you are attracting, and Returning Visitor Counts, which tell you if you are reaching the right people, and keeping their attention. A third important metric is average number of pageviews per visit, because not all visitors are created equal. When comparing campaigns, one can very quickly determine the quality of the visitors that are visiting by the average number of pageviews. The better targeted the visitors, the more pageviews they will generate.

How can I keep track of my campaigns and banners? Here is an important piece of advice for tracking your efforts:

- 1) separate landing pages whenever you can - the landing page is where links to your site lead, for example your homepage or a special page for readers of a newsletter;
- 2) customized urls in the links leading to your site. The url is the actual link that you place in banners, which can be customized to tell you exactly where the visitors come from. This is a

standard feature available from major PPC providers. This will allow you to see all the visitors coming from any specific source or landing on any specific page. The Visitors Entering report will show you all visitors organized by their landing page.

If you use a separate landing page, you can then see all visitors from any source, campaign or referrer, and drill-down to look at each visitor's behavior. A Top Referrers report will show you all referrers to your site in order of popularity, it is possible to view the report with or without search engines.

Here Are Some Important Measures of Stats:

1. *What do your visitors look for?* This is the first step is to reach your target audience - interest people and get their attention. The search terms that visitors use to find your site will tell you this. Use the stats reporting to show you which visitors are interested in your website based on the search terms they use. Additionally, if you would like to stimulate growth for your business you can provide content and services on the subjects and keywords that are bringing people to your site.

2. *What are your visitors doing?* When you first start to generate traffic, just knowing the numbers of people who come to your site is not interesting, because numbers will not tell you anything about the quality of your visitors. Once people have found your site and you know which search terms bring your target audience, it's time to look at their clickstreams, because specific visitor behavior is the key to determining quality. Look at the click paths of visitors who enter on your exact product key words and look for patterns. See your site through the eyes of your visitors, and follow their movements click-by-click.

3. *What site content is working?* The mantra is "content, content, content", as this is the key to attracting visitors through search engines. In turn, statistics will tell you which part of your content

actually pulls visitors in, a) from which sources, and b) resulting in what behavior. Ask yourself questions about why visitors stay on some pages longer than others. What do people who come back to your site look at? Are they trying to make up their mind about a purchase or a subscription? Is there a piece of information that you offer which generates interest on the internet?

Remember to trust the numbers: you may think your content is fascinating, but the numbers will tell you if this is true.

A great bonus of using a tracking system that identifies and monitors human visitors is that you will be able to detect click fraud by looking at visitor behavior. For example, when fraudulent traffic is purchased, hundreds, or even thousands, of browser windows may open continuously on a single page without visitors clicking through into your site. You will also be able to see if the same visitor is repeatedly clicking on your PPC advertisements.

In conclusion, the process of building a healthy site, placing it online, and attracting visitors is ongoing and iterative. Website statistics will act as guide poles in this process of improvement. -

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