P.S.

Website Traffic: It's in the Analytics

There are hundreds of millions of websites out there, and it sometimes seems there are just as many different ways for people to discover them. And by "people" we mean the more than 3.5 billion people worldwide — about half the world's population — who are active internet users. So how do customers find their way to your site? It's important for businesses with an online presence to understand the whys and wherefores of searches and other paths to their online door, as it can support ongoing activities and future success.

A number of avenues and platforms exist to help direct internet users to specific websites. A study by BrightEdge, a content marketing firm based in California, found that about 50 percent of website traffic for B2B and B2C companies is derived from "organic search" — simply put, this is when people find you through a search engine such as Google, Yahoo or Bing. Chicago-based MAXDigital, a developer of cloud-based digital marketing and retailing software, notes that organic traffic typically comes from two sources: those who searched a company's name specifically, "which means they were familiar with [the] brand," or those who searched a term that relates to a specific company, which indicates a "strong search engine optimization performance for that term."

According to IT Business Edge, a news and information network for the information technology industry, these are among several main types of web traffic.

Another is "direct traffic" — that which has not come from a source-referring website, such as in an organic search. This traffic is by those who type the company's website URL directly into the address bar in a web browser or who have bookmarked the company's website URL. Typically, such visitors are people who are already aware of the

To attract followers, be engaging and share more information.

company, notes U.K. integrated marketing firm and website developer Cognique. This could be the result of seeing the company's name and/or products in an advertisement or by word of mouth.

There are instances when some of the traffic's origin can't be determined; using an app or a referral code to reach a website can cause this uncertainty.

A company's own advertising and marketing campaigns serve to originate website traffic, too. Known as "paid search/display traffic," The Mayoros Agency, a South Carolina-based advertising agency that specializes in internet marketing and web design, says this encompasses all online paid advertising campaigns — display and pay-per-click ads, as well as search engine-centered campaigns such as Google AdWords and Bing Ads.

Social media — Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and others — can drive website traffic, reaching existing and potential customers and clients from around the world. The more information you share and the more engaging you are, the more followers you will attract. And this will lead to "referral traffic," which originates from not only word of mouth, but also from people clicking on a company's link that's on another website.

Banner advertising can also drive traffic. According to iBec Creative, a Maine-based developer of websites, apps and digital marketing programs, advertising your company on other websites serves to drive high-quality, targeted traffic to yours. Specifically, creating a branded banner ad is a good route to take. To be most effective, Traffic Masters — a web traffic provider in the U.K. that also assists with geographical and contextual website targeting — suggests choosing other websites within a similar niche to your own. For instance, Photonics Media's photonics.com site consistently features banner ads by companies within the photonics industry.

What's Inside

Getting to know the analytics

Gathering statistics on your website's traffic is a key component in its success. International website developer Yola has found that "website analytics provide you with extremely helpful data, which if interpreted correctly and acted upon, could mean great improvements to the performance of your website."

The analytics can gauge the effectiveness of a website's content and promotion techniques, helping a company to determine if the traffic matches its principal audience. Based on this, they can adjust their approach to suit customers' needs. Obtaining and examining the statistics can also assist in maintenance of the website. Yola notes that if traffic from a specific source (that has typically been consistent) stops, there may be an issue with the link that refers visitors to the website. Or, if there is "100 percent drop off in a customer path," the web page could be down.

A number of website metrics services now exist, including Google Analytics and Alexa Internet. Services such as these provide statistics on organic search traffic, referral traffic, direct traffic and ad campaigns, in addition to social media, referrals and email promotions. According to Cognique, there should be "a good balance of traffic from different places, so that if one traffic source were to disappear … then you would still have a steady flow of traffic from other sources."

Analytics also provide information on existing and new visits/sessions, bounce rate (the percentage of visits to a single page before leaving) and visit duration, as well as ecommerce conversion rates, the number of transactions, and sales revenue.

Strategy

So you've gathered the analytics for your website — now what do you do with it? Examining the metrics is important, and so is using that data to enhance visitors' experience and cater to their needs. Experts suggest that before delving into the data, it can be helpful to determine the goals of the website. That way, you will know what metrics matter to you, according to Yola, and exactly where you should be investing your time and marketing efforts.

It is equally important to pay attention to the areas of a website that may appear floundering among the metrics. A cluttered website could be at least partly to blame, according to the Content Marketing Institute (CMI), a global content marketing organization that offers education and training. There may be pages or sections of the website that visitors are not viewing; is this because the information is no longer relevant or useful? Or perhaps it is simply buried among other things on the page.

CMI suggests that "once a quarter, move to the bottom of the page view list [analytics] and see what you might be able to lose. You won't regret it and it will make the rest of your data more meaningful." Some have found that checking this data frequently can help in keeping a website's content fresh and relevant for visitors, while others, such as Pole Position Marketing — an Ohio firm that offers digital marketing and web presence optimization services — make it a point to look at website analytics monthly. This allows them to "easily see how things change month to month. This makes it easier for us to see what is working and see trends over time."

So use the website analytics to your advantage. "Uncover what works based on meaningful measures such as page views, time on page, and conversion, and create more of it," said Barry Feldman, founder of California-based online marketing strategists Feldman Creative. "'More' may mean more content on that topic, more of a form or style, more from the content creator, and so on. Essentially, I'm saying double down on your winners."

From the Vice President

Don't overthink web traffic

This was a complicated newsletter. We've taken our 20+ years of experience in producing a top-tier website, along with some knowledge from experts in the field, to offer a crash course in web traffic and what it means for your company.

So much information on this subject can be daunting, so I'm going to tell you to take a deep breath, take a step back, find your inner Zen, and escape the complexity.

You should be monitoring your traffic and your campaigns but this shouldn't be your endgame. There is so much more to your business than a website visit, and if you are making decisions based solely on that metric, you're missing the bigger picture. If the boss is telling you that this is the only metric he cares about, you're going to have a tough job when he questions why sales are falling and you have to explain that it was his fault.

Think — but don't overthink — your web traffic. You need traffic, but you shouldn't buy a banner ad that only appears on a certain page, with a certain keyword, when a certain user at a specific timeframe and from a certain place visits.

So remember: the overall metric for your business should be your bottom line. Keep this in mind when monitoring your marketing budget and performance.

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Unraveling the Mysteries of Website Metrics

A website's analytics — discoverable via services such as Google Analytics — can help in boosting marketing and other content, identifying website traffic origins, and knowing where to focus efforts that will give visitors the best possible experience. There is much to decipher in those metrics, so it's important to understand the pieces.

Hits
This is a request to a web server for a file, such as an image file. A web page typically has multiple elements that need to be downloaded in order to be viewed, so the hit numbers can be high.

Visits
Put simply, this means the total number of times a website has been visited overall. For example, if one person visits a website four times, it will be recorded as four visits.

Unique Visitors
This is the number of individual visitors to a website within a specified time period. If one person visits a website four times during that particular period, for instance, it will be recorded as one unique visitor.

Page Views/Impressions
This denotes total number of times a web page has been viewed. Specifically, this represents when a visitor lands on the website and clicks through to view multiple pages. Each of these web pages viewed is categorized as a page view/impression. If the same page is viewed more than once by the same person, it will be counted multiple times.

Pages/Visits
Pages per visit is the average number of pages viewed during a visit to a website. This shows how engaged a user is with the content on the site. If the same page is viewed more than once by the same person, it will be tallied multiple times.

Average Duration/Time
This is simply the average amount of time (in seconds or minutes) that users spend on the website.

Bounce Rate
This rate is a percentage that is calculated by taking the number of single-page visits (i.e., visits in which the person left the website from the entrance page without interacting with the page) as a percentage of the total visits.

Click-Through Rate
This rate shows how often search engine users click on a website listing, out of all the times it gets shown in search results.

Traffic Sources
This is a breakdown of where and from what sources the website visitors originate. Such data can then be broken down into organic traffic from natural search listings; pay-per-click traffic from paid search campaigns; referral traffic from other websites, blogs, social media, etc.; direct traffic from a user who has typed in the web address into the browser or arrived at the website via a bookmarked link; or email marketing or social media ad campaigns.

Audience Reports
These reports offer insightful information about website visitors. For example, data for this can show what percentage of visitors are new users and what percentage are returning users. In addition, it can provide information about what countries or cities visitors hail from, what type of internet browser they are using, and whether they're using a mobile device or desktop.

Conversion Rates/Goals
This metric derives from a sale or purchase, completion of a form, a sign-up to a service, an appointment made, or a downloaded item.

Grow With Photonics Media!

WEBINARS

Bring your technology leadership to the next level with a custom webinar or webinar sponsorship! A custom webinar with Photonics Media puts your expertise in the spotlight, and drives attention and traffic to your website and brands. These webinars also draw qualified attendees and build solid leads from the industry's No. 1 global audience.

Your company is the sole sponsor of a **custom webinar**, and allows you to connect directly with those interested in your products. Custom webinars can also attract new customers. And your expertise is in the spotlight as it builds solid leads. You choose the topic and develop your message, while Photonics Media promotes and produces the webinar, and helps gather the audience, as well.

Webinar sponsorship is another way to highlight your company. In sponsoring, your company's logo (linking to your website) is displayed alongside the webinar description on photonics.com. Your company is also mentioned in promotional emails and e-newsletters, as well as social media posts and potentially in other Photonics Media publications. Full contact information for all registrants is part of the package, too.

Quick Stats

- Popular web series to educate the industry
- Cutting-edge technology topics
- 3,600+ registrants in the past 12 months
- Consistently high registration-to-attendance ratio
- Full-contact lead generation

UPCOMING WEBINARS

April 6, 1 pm EDT
Ultrathin Optics Fabrication. Presented by Kimani C. Toussaint
of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

April 20, 1 pm EDT
Large-Scale, Deep-Tissue Neuronal Imaging. Sponsored by Semrock;
presented by Lingjie Kong, Ph.D., optical engineering.

April 26, 1 pm EDT
The CAOS Smart Camera: Empowering Extreme Imaging.
Presented by Nabeel A. Riza, Ph.D., University College Cork.

April 27, 1 pm EDT
Simulating Metamaterials in the Terahertz Regime. Custom COMSOL webinar;
presented by COMSOL's Ulf Olin and Jiyoun Munn.