

## YES! Website Analytics For Small Business Websites

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Do you have Web analytics installed on your small business Web site? If not, you should. How will you know how your Web site is performing if you aren't measuring the plethora of data available?

Cost is no longer an excuse for not having Web site analytics. The free options are quite robust; Google Analytics, for one, is quite comprehensive. In addition, Yahoo last year acquired IndexTools, and has made a version of that available for free to its advertisers.

Obviously, there's a learning curve involved in analyzing your data. But it's worth it because the analytics information will help you increase your conversion rate, maximize your ROI, and make more money in less time.

Once you know what you should be looking at, your online business will thrive with just a little effort. You'll be less "in the dark" about what is and isn't working for you.

Let's outline four of the more important metrics you should be looking at. Keep in mind -- depending on what you're selling and what action you consider a "conversion," these may vary a bit, but they're a good place to start.

### Conversions

Conversions are the be-all and end-all for me. Are you making money, signing people up, sending people out (if you're an affiliate and you make money on advertising clicks)? Your traffic can be the best in your industry -- but it won't matter, if you're making zero dollars from that traffic?

By measuring your conversion rate, analyzing sticking points, and clearing the paths to and through your sales pages, you're making sure your conversions are on their way to being the best in the industry.

### Referring Sites & Keywords

When fine-tuning your conversion paths, start at the beginning. Where is your traffic coming from and how are they getting to your site? Referring keyword data tells you what keywords are searched and clicked upon to send a visitor to your site. Use this data to analyze which keywords have the best conversion rates.

Analyzing referring keywords and conversion rates is especially important when running search ad campaigns. Why pay for clicks that consistently don't convert? It's insane, but we see it happening again and again. There's a place for branding in that equation -- but gambling \$4 a click on terms that may never convert is a huge waste of money.

Brand your site on the long tail terms that are much less expensive, but much more relevant.

Knowing which sites are sending you traffic is a great tool to have when

deciding where to cultivate future ad relationships and marketing dollar spends. If a site sends you 50 unique visitors a day -- and 25 percent of those convert -- it's worth renewing or buying a better ad placement to increase exposure, CTRs, and conversions. If a site is sending you 100 unique visitors a month with zero conversions, it may be the wrong opportunity for you -- or you might consider a different placement within that ad buy.

### Bounce Rate & Time on Site

Not all visitors will like what they find at your site, or stay on your Web site for long. It's a given that you're just not going to be relevant to every user that visits your landing pages. That being said, bounce rate is a great measure of how well a page is delivering the message. Bounce rate is defined as the percentage of entries on each page that resulted in an exit from your site -- without clicking any deeper into the site.

If you're selling dog treats, and 70 percent of the visitors that come from search terms that focus on "dog treats" leave your site as soon as they hit a landing page -- it's time to analyze what's wrong with that page and fix it.

Bounce rates aren't standardized. You can't really say 20 percent is good, or 80 percent is bad. My gut feeling is that a 30 percent bounce rate is pretty good, but even then there's room for improvement after the click.

Visitors who don't bounce may still not be booking. Take your research a step further and look at the average time on site. Visitors may not be bouncing as soon as they hit a page, but are they staying long enough to read, absorb, and move on in the process? Time on site is a great indicator of how well you are engaging your visitors.

### Unique Visitors

I was talking to some people who were astonished by the 442,000 page-views they had in the first quarter. It's a large number -- but they were concerned that conversions seemed to work out to be .03 percent of their total page-views.

I showed them how to dig into their analytics to find the number of unique visitors they received. When we looked at the unique visitors for that period of time, it worked out to be a conversion rate of around 1 percent. For a relatively high-ticket item (over \$2,000 an action) that's not a bad conversion rate, but there's room for improvement.

Measuring the number of unique visitors gives you a better idea of the "people visits" to your Web site versus the number of pages they viewed on the site. Think of it this way:

1 people visit = 100 page views = 1 conversion

Pushing past the initial confusion and finding the hidden gems in your site analytics is going to make the time you take well worth it.

Most analytics programs offer one or two things to help you learn how to use their service better -- live training to help you navigate the system or a

robust help section can do wonders for educating you on better ways to use and improve upon your analytics. It's a learning curve, but definitely worth it -- so don't be afraid of analytics, embrace them!