

# KNOW YOUR NUMBERS

Knowing how to read website statistics could prove extremely useful to your overall business and marketing strategy.

WEBSITE statistics are an endless source of joy, wonder and mystery. Many website operators love to look at them, check the totals, admire the rises and lament the falls. They are the most important tool in the online marketing toolbox. Through understanding the statistics, a website can be in a constant state of improvement based on measured, proven observations.

All web hosting companies have statistics software running on the websites they host, so first thing to do is find out how to access these. Hosting stats are often very basic, and sometimes lack the detailed information required for a thorough analysis, but they're good enough to get started.

Most people are keen to see how many people have visited their website, and are often shocked at how high the number is. The number which is most interesting to look for is the number of unique visitors. This number represents the people visiting a website within a given timeframe, usually a month. By comparing the number of unique visitors for each month over the course of a year, seasonal trends can easily be seen allowing comparison with the same season in previous years.

Keywords are the next most exciting part of website statistics. These are the words people have typed into a search engine to find a website. Compare these against a list of desired keywords to see where the website might need more optimisation and content.

The most startling thing about examining a keywords stats list for the first time is that for most websites, 80 per cent of the traffic comes from keywords that have only been searched once or twice. It is for this reason that internet marketing experts encourage businesses to include more pages on a website and to write articles, newsletters and blogs in order to capture the many highly relevant website visitors who search for niche and specific things.

Search engines and link partners which have sent visitors to a website are referrers. Most businesses will see Google as their top referrer, and this reflects Google's position as having the lion's share of search traffic within Australia. Websites which have unique content, and have actively sought quality link partners will see many websites in their referrer lists.

## Quick statistical analysis

Monitor keywords by grouping them into themes. Compare the performance of these themes between months, checking changes against the number of inquiries, bookings or sales the website received. Using this method will quickly establish which themes are the ones that make money.

Monitor referring websites that deliver significant amounts of traffic and observe fluctuations. This is particularly important where online advertising is being paid for. Consider talking to referring webmasters about fluctuations in traffic, especially if a spike in sales has been experienced during this period. In the same way, pay close attention to new websites that have recently become referrers.

When comparing analyses to previous years, be sure to check against the season to observe trends.

## Acting on analysis

Sometimes analysing stats reveal website advertising that isn't working. Ensure you check how much traffic you're receiving from any paid advertising and report this to sales staff when you're asked to renew your advertising. Don't be swayed by any numbers of hits or visitors the website might claim to receive. What matters is how much traffic you receive from the advertising.

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Changes in country demographic groups are easy to monitor and quite interesting to investigate. Check to ensure website customers match target demographics of the business, otherwise changes to the website text might be in order.

#### **Statistics software**

While hosting stats are quick and easy, many people prefer the deeper information that can be gathered from beefy statistics software such as Google Analytics.

Google's software is completely free to use and install and has strong customisable features which allow you to exactly track sales and inquiries to the city of origin, the keywords searched

for within a search engine or the referring website. It also links with pay-per-click advertising programs such as Google AdWords.

Many business owners don't get the chance to even give their website statistics a cursory glance, but serious web businesses will spend hours each month pouring over the numbers and tweaking their website for maximum results.

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