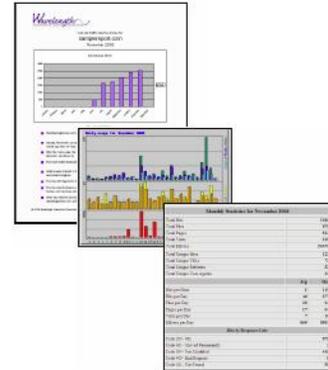


The Five Things Your Web Site Traffic Report is Trying to Tell You

If you have a typical Web site hosting company, you receive a periodic Web site traffic report from them with all sorts of information. Visitors, hits, URLs... you name it. But what is your report really trying to tell you? What's important? This month, we'll run through the five most important things you can glean from your Web site traffic report.



How many people are visiting my site?

Easily the most popular stat, every Web site traffic report tells you how many people visit your site during a given time period. Although a lot of people measure their Web site traffic by the number of "hits," the number of "visits" is generally a more accurate statistic. Hits usually measure the number of pages, images, and other files viewed, while visits measure the number of times a user visits your site. A visit usually consists of many hits, especially if your site has a large number of images. So while it may be more impressive to cite the million hits your site received, it is much more accurate to talk about the number of visits.

When are people visiting my site?

Your Web site traffic report is a good way to determine when people are visiting your site. Are people checking out your site during the typical workday? Do they look at it once they get home? Are your visitors night owls? In addition to the time of day, your report should tell you the days of the month when your site gets the most visits. In addition to establishing natural trends in your Web visitors, this is a great way to track how your external advertising is working. Do your site visits spike after your radio ad airs or your magazine ad is published?

What are people visiting on my site?

A very important component of your site traffic report is the most visited pages section. This section tells you what sections of the site people find the most interesting, or at least the most accessible. If you spent a lot of time on a gallery section that no one is visiting, you may need to promote it via a banner ad on your home page, a news item about it, or some other method. If it turns out that people know about the section and are still not visiting it, it probably isn't the type of thing people are looking for on your site. Look at what people are viewing and make sure it is interesting and up-to-date.

How are people finding my site?

The "Top Referrers" section tells you what Web sites people were visiting that led them to yours. Although many visitors probably type in your Web address directly, many others are referred from other sites that have links to yours, as well as from search engines. This is a great way to tell if your Web site marketing efforts are working. If you are paying another site to link to yours, you should expect that site to be one of your top referrers. If it's not, it's probably not worth the money you're paying.

Why are people visiting my site?

The search engine keyword report will tell you what people expect to find when they come to your site. This will help you decide what to focus on when you updating and developing the content on your site. Chances are, if search engines are directing visitors to your site based on specific keywords, you've already got content regarding that subject on your site. But if you don't have enough up-to-date content on that particular subject, those same visitors will leave quickly.

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Brian Florip is a founding member of Wavelength Interactive Communications, LLC, a full-service interactive communication firm specializing in custom Web site design and hosting, search engine optimization, and e-mail marketing. Contact Brian at brian@wavelengthinteractive.com for a free performance evaluation of your Web site.