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Hugh Duffy • Kristy Short • Feb. 08, 2012



[NOTE: Attached image needs to have the spelling changed on two of the circles: Optimise should be Optimize, and Analyse should be Analyze.]

Website analytics offer immense insight to help you fine tune your web presence.

More firms are beginning to understand the necessity of having a website. In an

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Web analytics are still a fairly new concept in the profession, so we compiled the following questions and answers to help you. Hugh Duffy, noted web analytic and SEO guru at Build Your Firm, offers helpful, seasoned advice.

Question: *What are website analytics? And why should firms care?*

Answer: Website analytics provide you with diagnostic feedback about how many people are visiting your website, where they are going, where they came from, how much time they are spending on your site, and other visitor behavior such as:

- How many pages visited while on your site
- What page were visited first or from which page they exited
- Where they came from— another website, search engine, organic listing in search engine results page, pay per click ad, or where in the country or outside the US
- What keywords were typed in (if coming from a search engine)
- What types of browsers used—IE, Firefox, Safari, Chrome

This diagnostic information can help you diagnose problems and better understand the path users take while on your website. Ultimately, this type of information enables you to improve a visitor's overall website experience.

Question: *What is a common misperception that most accountants have about their website?*

Answer: Most accountants believe that everyone comes to their website at the home page. Website analytics indicate, however, that search engines and advertising drive website visitors to a wide variety of pages. In other words, they may come in the front door, side door, or back door. For example, search engines may drive most traffic to the About Us page, which is not typically the most appealing page and may result in a visitor hitting the back button and proceeding to the next accounting

website. This means websites need to be designed so that a user can easily get to the

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adequate for a firm's needs. To set up a Google Analytics account, simply go to google.com/analytics.

There are fee-based analytics programs on the market; however, most firms may not wish to invest the time and money required to adequately support them. For those interested, a few fee-based tools include Omniture to Webtrends.

Question: *What are the types of items to examine when analyzing a website?*

Answer: The key items to analyze are as follows:

- **Bounce Rate**—The bounce rate is the percent of visitors that land on a page and do not advance (dead-end) or hit the back button. This is a flag that the initial landing page may not be meeting visitors' expectations and should be adjusted to better draw them into the website and visit multiple pages.
- **Exit Page**—Analyzing the primary page where visitors are exiting is key. You will want to examine exit pages to see if you've failed to deliver some type of needed information.
- **Click Path**—This represents the traffic flow that website visitors take after arriving at the website. Looking at the path of the user will tell you a lot about how visitors navigate your site.
- **Average Length of Session**—Over time, you want to increase the average number of pages per visitor and expand the length of time the visitor spends on your site. The longer they are on your site, the more likely it is that their needs are being met.
- **Unique Visitors and Average Number of Pages Per Unique Visitor**—You will want to monitor the total reach of your website by monitoring the number of unique visitors in combination with the average number of pages per unique visitor. For example, a person that comes to your website five times in one day accessing fifty pages only counts as one unique visitor.

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traffic sources—QuickBooks Certified Pro Advisor directory, online yellow pages, and social media outlets such as LinkedIn, Facebook, YouTube, and blog? There are still other sources to consider like your Local Chamber of Commerce, placement in local accounting associations, and miscellaneous articles that have been published online. Lastly, how much is coming from advertising sources like Google Adwords, Yahoo, and Bing? Based on all this, you can examine which sources are generating the most qualified leads and adjust accordingly. For such a large-scale task, it may be easier to enlist a web analysis or SEO expert.

Question: *What other areas are important to analyze to improve website productivity?*

Answer: Another area to investigate is broken links to a missing page and error pages. In other words, you want the analysis to highlight how many pages are coming up as broken links (e.g., page not found). Most sites have broken links now and again, but it's critical to make sure they are fixed quickly.

Question: *How can a firm identify website pages that are not performing well?*

Answer: The key indicator for a poorly performing page is a high bounce rate or high percentage of exits. Most analytics packages provide a report of the top exit pages for you to monitor.

Because websites are the new front door to your firm, it's more important than ever to ensure that your door is working properly, is aesthetically pleasing, and always inviting! You not only want people to come in, but you also want them to stay. The longer a visitor is on your site, the more likely they are to engage and eventually contact you.

By properly analyzing your website, you are better equipped to apply needed enhancements and stay in front of issues, such as broken links or poorly designed

pages. Just like your firm, you want to keep your site running efficiently. Web

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