



Greatest HITS & Smarter Website Visitor TRACKING

By Matthew A. Perosi



Many small businesses are not aware of the sophisticated ways website visitors can be tracked. Tools exist to capture valuable data and insights that can help you make improvements to your site every week.

Tracking users has been part of the web since the beginning, although the original hit counter tracking was pale by today's standards. A "hit" is the simple measure of how many times

a single file was served by your website. That measurement quickly became convoluted and businesses were ecstatic, albeit mistakenly, by reports of thousands of hits per day. In reality, there were only a handful of people visiting those websites and responsible for those hits.

Hits are now a useless measurement, replaced by a "visitor" counter, which is a method of counting the number of people who visit your website in a single day.

Google Analytics is a free website tracking option for businesses. It's easy enough for the beginner to understand; yet advanced users can tap into thousands of built-in hidden features. They have improved methods of counting your website visitors, showing you popular pages on your site, and even showing users in real time.

Advanced implementations of Google Analytics allow you to bridge your internal point of sale data to your website tracking. Expensive implementations can even help you track users from first point of contact on social media right through to when they step into your store.

Other types of website tracking can quickly become expensive too. Several provide similar reporting, making it easy to accidentally pay for duplicate services.

CrazyEgg provides a fantastic way to visualize where people look and click on your website, called heatmapping. They also provide great reporting of how people arrived on your website in relation to what they clicked on. On the other hand, the services ClickTail and HotJar provide the same heatmapping report in addition to video recordings so you can watch how people use your website. You would have to carefully evaluate and pay for only one of these three services that is best for you.

Visual Website Optimizer (VWO) and Optimizely are two similar services that allow you to easily edit small things on your website while measuring visitor reactions to those changes. This

is known as A/B testing. Google Analytics also has A/B testing built-in, however, that feature only works if your website has the ability to produce the A and B versions of the same page. Sadly, implementation of A/B testing with most content management systems is difficult or even impossible, allowing VWO and Optimizely to charge premium fees to make the process easy.



I recommend all website owners to invest the time and money into at least four different tracking and reporting applications. Analytics, heatmapping, A/B testing, and any paid reporting tool that explains what effect social media has on your business. The cost of using these tools, and paying someone to decipher the results, will probably be your most expensive monthly website service fee.

These tools will help you better understand your customers and provide the business intelligence you need to grow in this digital age.

You may not realize it, but you've been doing this type of customer tracking in your brick-and-mortar store since you opened. Watching customers walking around the store, and rearrange inventory to change customer traffic flow are both ways to make your store better.

You notice what they are interested in and you talk to them to find out what they'd like to see more closely. Your future inventory selection changes based on how you interact with customers offline and in person, but on a website you don't have that; you must use customer tracking tools to accomplish the same objective.

It takes several months of customer tracking before there's enough data to make sense of it, and a full year before you have a true understanding of what's happening online. The holiday season always has fantastic data that's deeper and richer than the rest of the year.

The takeaway from this is that website analysis will help you improve your business, so do it.



Matthew A Perosi

Matthew Perosi reports the latest Internet trends and methods that are most relevant to the jewelry industry in his 5-day per week newsletter, available through jwag.biz. Tap into the more than 1,100 free newsletters to guide you towards better usage of websites, social, and mobile. Matthew invites your feedback and questions at matt@jwag.biz or 973.413.8211. Many questions from TRJ readers have turned into great newsletter topics.