

An Executive's Ten-Minute Guide to Website Statistics

by Kevin Leavell
Pyron Technologies, Inc.

First things first, what are website statistics? Website statistics are metrics collected about the visitors coming to your website. Taking a look at your website statistics and then figuring out how to apply that information to your website can be a daunting task. Here are a few basic concepts to help make it a little easier.

The most commonly referred to metrics are hits, visitors, and sessions. Hits used to be a common metrics but were quickly replaced by more meaningful metrics. Unless you are a network engineer, you can disregard hits. Website Visitors is a great core metric that can tell you how many people have come to your site. Depending on the statistics package your website has, you can even tell if a visitor is new or a repeat visitor.

The next question you might have is: "How do you track each time a visitor comes to your site?" This metric is called a Session. You can have one visitor who came to your site 100 times and created 100 Sessions.

While what we have discussed thus far are basic, core metrics, there is a lot you can do with the information. The obvious would be tracking the information and trying to increase both visitors to your site and sessions. The less obvious would be assessing what you are doing to increase the number of repeat visitor sessions. Are you providing an experience that draws visitors back? Sites with high repeat visitors and sessions usually have content that changes on a regular basis.

So now we are tracking people when they arrive at the site and how many times they come to the site. But what do we use to talk about what they do once they arrive at your site? Visitor Pageviews is a metric to understand what pages a visitor looked at during each session. Pageviews becomes useful when you look at how many Pageviews per session on average you have. The more Pageviews per session, the more value visitors are getting from the content on your site. Track your Pageviews per session and review the metric when you add or change content. It can be a great indicator of how well your changes or additions are being received.

Another core metric to look at is Requested Pages. This shows the most and least viewed pages on your website in any given period of time. Requested Pages can be used to gauge the short-term effectiveness of an ad campaign to drive visitors to a particular page or product on your site. It is also a great way to compare what you believe is valuable content on your site versus what your visitors are actually finding useful.

Referrals is a metric that tells us who is sending traffic to your site via a link. This could be another website that posted a link to your site or it could be search engine traffic. You may use this metric to determine how many visitors you received from an ad you ran on another website.

Search Terms is a metric that can tell you what terms visitors actually typed into a search engine to find your website. Looking at Search Terms can be useful in many different ways. Ultimately, it tells you the terms you are being found for in the search engines. If you are working on Search Engine Optimization, this is a great way to determine if your efforts are paying off. It is also a great way to determine if you are being found for words and phrases that are important to your business.

So now you have a little better understanding of the core metrics used to measure activity on a website. Although we have only scratched the surface, these are a few ways to pull value out of your website metrics and improve your online business.

Kevin Leavell is the SuiteFin Product Manager at Pyron Technologies. He offers over thirteen years of practice in the website development industry, including work with local organizations such as Northwestern Energy, Town Pump, Vanns.com, and Saint Patrick Hospital. Pyron Technologies, Inc. of Missoula, Montana, provides network solutions, medical technologies and website development to companies in Montana and throughout the U.S. Learn more at www.pyrontechnologies.com.