



Demystifying Web Analytics

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There's no such thing as a "set-and-forget" WEB SITE.

We have yet to find a successful practice Web site that performs well on neglect. We've written several articles that challenge the "If-I-build-it-they-will-come" fantasy of early practice Web sites — and provided practical direction about what to do instead. But if your practice Web site is still underachieving (or worse, you don't know), here are the basics about traffic, data, and analytics ... plus an information dashboard that tirelessly reports on performance.

Web Analytics and why you need to know. The simple definition of **Web Analytics** is the measurement and analysis of Web site visitor activity in order to understand how well the site fulfills its objectives. Many businesses of all types and sizes use analytics to guide marketing decisions and make site improvements. You probably don't need daily adjustments, but knowing how well your site performs is a valuable tool for several reasons. You can easily tell if visitors:

- Easily **FIND** your site through keywords, phrases, and search marketing
- Naturally **NAVIGATE** your site, flowing easily to important messages
- Confidently **CONVERT** to an appointment or other action you want them to take

Web Analytics is not the same as "traffic," which is a catch-all term meaning how many people came to the site and how many pages they viewed. Nor is it the same as "Web reporting," which simply compiles historic data.

Web Analytics look deeper at data to learn what you didn't know — revealing how to create more visits, more page views, and more conversions into the practice. Here's a simplified example:

Let's say your Web site includes an individual page about each of three key services you offer. Analysis reveals that one of these three has far more page views than the other two; that visitors are likely to enter the site on this page (not the home page); and that most visitors originate from Yahoo using specific keyword searches. Visitor conversions (appointments) from this page are low because contact information is not easily available on this frequently visited page.

Site changes might include more prominent contact information, additional pages about this topic reinforcing the keywords, and fine-tuning the Yahoo Search marketing tool. Result: Increased traffic to the site, more page views, and — most importantly — more conversions into the practice.

Because the Internet has grown into a principal means for the public to find dental and health-care services and providers — not to mention your investment in creating a practice Web site — it's important that you know about and use the available tools to maximize your return on investment (ROI). But if you can't measure, you can't manage.

You may already have an analytics tool on your site. The good news is that your site might already have a reporting or analysis tool installed. Some Internet Service Providers (ISP), such as Network Solutions, include analytics with hosting service packages. Ask your webmaster or call your ISP customer service representative. Important data about your site could be at your fingertips through **WebTrends** or **AWStats** currently connected to your site or hosting service.

Alternatively, you should know about **Google Analytics** — a full-featured tool that's free from the company that captures more than 60% of the online search activity (Google). Although it's a robust system, it's not complicated to install and use. There is a brief registration for the free version that includes an ultra-generous five million page views per month. There are dozens of reports available, likely more than you'll need, but the information is presented in a convenient "dashboard" that is easy to read.

When you discover how people found your site, what pages they explored and other data, you can learn how to improve your site's ROI effectiveness.

A bigger and better marketing role for your practice Web site. If you've been neglecting your practice Web site, it's likely that opportunity has clicked past you and into the office of a competitive practice. Maybe you've outgrown your first-generation Web site and you need it to be a serious partner in achieving your practice's growth goals.

If you don't know how well your Web site is working for you, get acquainted with Web Analytics. And if you're determined to improve your online results, consider site design changes, better page content, and cost-effective keyword marketing. **DE**

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