Analyzing Site Traffic

Analytics programs like Google Analytics are wonderful tools for seeing how traffic flows through and around a Web site. However, numbers provide only part of the story. Marketers need to analyze the traffic rates for given time periods, taking into account their current marketing initiatives, past performance, and other variables.

The following is an actual report provided by an agency to its client (real name changed to XYZ Corporation for this publication), analyzing the client's Web traffic. The report first collects and parses the numbers from Google Analytics that matter most for this particular report. Then, based on this data, the report presents an assessment of what is going well with the site, where the problems lie, and what steps the agency recommends taking to improve future site performance.

XYZ Corporation: Web Traffic Analysis—March 2008

Analytics Analysis

The Good News

TRAFFIC TRENDING IS STRONG Traffic remains relatively steady from day to day, with an upward trend. Through March 2008, daily traffic (not including weekends or Fridays, when traffic is lowest) averaged about 1,750 visits per day—up from the 1,400 visits per day averaged in November 2007, the last time an analysis was presented. This upward trending has remained consistent throughout each month, signifying increased interest and increased brand recognition over time. Reasons may include an expanded advertising effort, e-mail
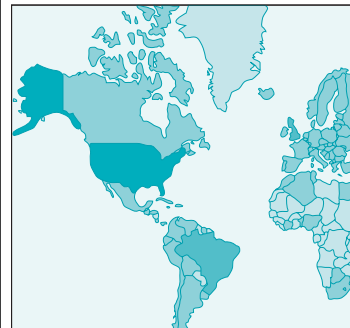
ANALYTICS DASHBOARD

TRAFFIC OVERVIEW

3,000 — 1,500 ... March 3, 2008 — March 10, 2008 — March 17, 2008 — March 24, 2008 ... 3,000 — 1,500
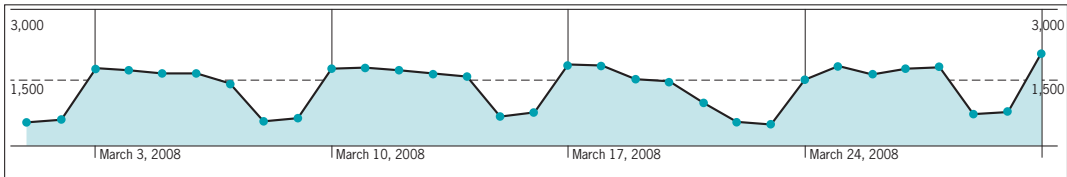
OVERVIEW VS. FEBRUARY, 2008

MEASUREMENT	RESULT	INC/DEC
TOTAL VISITS	41,222	9.70%
TOTAL PAGE VIEWS	113,731	10.52%
TOTAL UNIQUE VISITORS	21,248	24.95%
PAGES PER VISIT	2.76	0.75%
AVERAGE TIME ON SITE	1:32	1.73%
PERCENTAGE OF NEW VISITS	45.16%	15.89%
BOUNCE RATE	58.62%	−3.59%

GEOGRAPHY

LOC.	RESULT	INC/DEC
USA	**25,996**	6.61%
NJ	4,143	41.45%
OR	4,021	−15.72%
PA	3,737	−0.03%
NC	2,552	42.09%
IL	2,128	−13.11
BRAZIL	**5,112**	6.06%
U.K.	**2,929**	4.64%
FRANCE	**951**	0.32%
GERMANY	**826**	1.85%
INDIA	**810**	171.81%
ITALY	**554**	8.63%
P.R.	**360**	133.77%

CONTENT OVERVIEW

#	PAGE	VIEWS	INC/DEC	TIME
1	INDEX	37568	27%	1:11
2	LOCATIONS	6773	6.38%	2:01
3	DEFAULT	4992	2.72%	:40
4	CONTACT	3660	−10.07%	1:00
5	OVERVIEW	3640	4.45%	:53
6	MANUFACTURING	2,694	2.16%	:32
7	PACKAGING	2,376	9.54%	:48
8	NEWSPUBLICATIONS/NEWS	2,111	−4.22%	:31
9	DEVELOPMENT	1,704	4.48%	:49
10	DRUG	1,367	4.67%	:30
15	STERILEPRODUCTS	1,153	237.13%	1:14
18	ORALDOSEFORMS	782	231.36%	:55
19	MANUFACT/SOFTGEL	686	40.86%	:52
20	VITAMINSMINERALS	663	13.92%	:40
33	DRUG/ORAL/SOFTGEL	379	21.86%	1:07
35	PRINTEDCOMPONENTS	344	135.62%	:45

SOURCES

SOURCE	VISITS	INC/DEC
DIRECT	18,887	−3.14%
GGL/ORG	8,631	−0.43%
CAT.COM	3,885	106.87%
GGL/CPC	1,705	N/A
YAHOO	1,247	3.40%
CAT.NET	1,226	119.71%
SRCH.COM	671	−15.70%
CB.COM	412	−16.77%

LOYALTY OVERVIEW

ONE VISIT:	18,603	45.13%	0-10 SECS:	25,807	62.60%

blast campaigns (although these need to be further standardized, scheduled, and campaign-based), and most notably, the installation of the Google AdWord campaign in the U.S. on February 13, and expanded globally on March 13.

While further improvement is needed in some areas, such as time spent by visitors on the site, key measurements across the board have increased versus February results. Most notably is the increase in unique visitors to 21,248—up 25% from February and over 60% from November 2007. The Google AdWord program, and its expansion to global coverage, is the biggest contributor to this improvement: 13,914 unique visitors came to the XYZ Corporation site between March 13 and March 31, compared to 8,325 between March 1 and March 12—a 67% increase (it should be noted that these figures are adjusted to account for the additional six days between the 13th and the 31st).

Repeat visitor trending remains strong with 55% of all visitors coming back more than once, although this also represents an area for improvement.

Two areas that are particularly encouraging are the pages being visited and the new geographic mix. Although the top ten most highly visited pages increased or decreased in relative moderation (with the exception of the Careers page, which is down nearly 70% from 1,976 pageviews in February to only 616 in March), a very positive story is presented in the upward trending of some of key content pages. Packaging had the biggest increase of the top ten pages, with a 10% increase in traffic, while Sterile Products rocketed up a full 237%, Oral Dose Forms jumped 231%, Manufacturing/Softgel gained nearly 41%, Vitamins/Minerals was up nearly 14%, Drug/Oral/Softgel up almost 22%, and Printed Components gained over 135%. These remarkable gains coincide with the Google AdWords click-thru results, analyzed later in this report.

Geographically, Ohio was almost a non-issue in March, accounting for just 409 visits—down from 1,854 visits in February and nearly 5,000 in November. This is an indication that the reported traffic is increasingly more pure, and not muddied by visits from the ABC Corporation servers, as well as a hint that viewers are clearly seeing the separation between ABC Corporation and XYZ Corporation. Further, while Brazil continues to account for over 5,000 visits per month, and the U.K., France, and Germany continue to take the top spots in terms of visitors, India has jumped up nearly 172% since February to take the number six spot (up from its November ranking of 11). It is likely to knock Germany out of the top five in coming months. Puerto Rico has also shown impressive percentage gains, with an increase of nearly 134% in March.

Areas of Concern

METRIC ADJUSTMENTS Although not as bad as in the first report (November 2007), there are still some adjustments that need to be made to the 41,222 reported visits in order to get a clearer picture:

- Brazil again ranked second in terms of the most visitors at 5,112. As we determined at our last analytics meeting, these are coming from XYZ Corporation facilities in Brazil.

- XYZCorporation.com and XYZCorporation.net accounted for another 5,000 visitors.

- Visits from QRS Corporation, ABC Corporation, CareerBuilder, and other such sources continue to skew the results somewhat.

After accounting for these factors, the number of visits drops to just over 31,000—an almost 25% drop from the 41,222 figure reported by Google Analytics, but almost double November's post-adjustment visitor figure of 16,241.

TIME, LOSS, AND VISIBILITY Although the traffic rates continue to increase, and the efforts being taken to drive traffic to the site are showing positive results, the biggest concern continues to be site usage and retention. While the bounce rate has gone down percentage wise from November and February, it has gone down only marginally, and remains high at 58.62%. This means that the majority of visitors that come to the site leave immediately, without viewing any other page (a small positive note about this—we can assume that the majority of visits from Brazil and XYZCorporation.com and .net are part of the group that never sees more than one page per visit).

Time spent on the site inched upward, but only by a few seconds, and remains uncomfortably low at only 1:32 seconds per visit. This is underscored by the fact that an overwhelming number of visitors (25,807, or 62.6%) stay on XYZCorporation.com for less than 10 seconds per visit. Looking at individual pages, similarly low amounts of time make it questionable that visitors could read all of the content, or get as much out of each page as they should.

Similarly, nearly half of all visitors that came to the XYZCorporation.com site in March only came once (a quick look at the cumulative numbers from November 1 to March 31 shows that this number improves when expanded over a longer period of time, but not by much), and almost 40% (67,104) of all viewers over the five-month period have never returned more than once.

PPV (pages per visit) also continues to crawl upward, although slowly, and not by enough. At 2.77 pages per visit, visitors simply aren't getting the total amount of content that they should be.

Of those 2.77 pages, it was less likely in March that the Contact Us page was among them, as that page fell by nearly 11% from February, and in fact remains flat with the number of visits to that page in November, when true visits were about half of what they were in March.

Recommendations

Online Efforts to Increase Traffic

GOOGLE ADWORDS: REDUCE REACH Because we are already at maximum budget capacity, there is little room to add new campaigns or keywords without diluting the results we are already achieving. To free up funds and allocate them elsewhere, we would recommend reducing the geographic reach. This can be accomplished one of two ways:

- Eliminate the use of AdWords in smaller countries, or countries where XYZ Corporation has less interest. Although these do not account for very much, if enough smaller countries are eliminated, it would make an impact.

- Eliminate some of the larger countries that are more likely to be exposed to XYZ Corporation in other ways, such as e-mail blasts, tradeshows, and print ads. The U.S., France, Germany, and the U.K. all increased in viewership of the XYZ Corporation. Web site in March, but the percentage increases in these regions was smaller, and it is highly likely that growth in these countries would continue without Google AdWords support.

Reducing the reach in certain areas where reach is not needed will help us to maximize click-thru rates in other areas and add more keywords and campaigns.

GOOGLE ADWORDS: ADD SHORT-TERM CAMPAIGNS As of now, the Google AdWords campaign is maximized in terms of monthly budget, yet still remains granular (in the sense that we have chosen fairly detailed keywords, rather than general words, which would be more expensive). Because of this granular approach, we've been able to maintain a high traffic rate, while keeping the average cost-per-click well below $1.00. Therefore, we would not recommend opening keywords up to more general audiences at this time.

We would, however, advocate implementing short-term keyword campaigns that coincide with other marketing efforts, and drive traffic to campaign-specific landing pages. These efforts could include trade shows such as Interphex and Vitafoods, as well as upcoming Insights and Innovation webinars.

INCREASE ADVERTISING IN KEY ONLINE PUBLICATIONS Three online publications combined to account for about 400 unique visitors in the month of March. Although their contribution to

site traffic is relatively small, there may be opportunities to better exploit the marketing potential of these publications. Category sponsorship, increased online advertising, direct mail, and e-mail blast partnerships should be explored to better attract their visitors.

Improving the Site

SITE CHANGES AND ADDITIONS Since our last meeting, one major change that we recommended is about to be launched—the reorganization of the XYZCorporation.com Home page. We anticipate that this change, which includes space for three marketing blurbs above the fold, and better visibility to the News section below the fold, will help lead visitors to specific areas throughout the site, and augment overall marketing efforts.

Other changes, however, should also be considered. In our previous meeting, we discussed the following potential changes:

- Search Term Glossary: Having the Search feature on the site is a helpful way to improve site navigation. From the tracking results, in many instances, people might not know exactly what terms they need to use to find what they are looking for. This can be resolved by offering a glossary of search terms link below the search bar, to give users the keyword support they need.

- Headline Color Change: On the interior of the site, the headlines in light blue can be long and difficult to read. We would recommend making each headline shorter and in either a darker blue or black for better readability.

- Interior Quicklinks Navigation: Because there is so much content on the site, we suggest including a "quicklinks" navigation tool to help lead users in the direction we think they should go, to provide an easier means of finding important information relative to their visit.

- Rethinking Sub Navigation: Although the sub navigation is technically interesting, it poses a few problems. It can be difficult to determine the hierarchy, and as the navigation bar expands downward, some of the lower links potentially get lost below the fold. In addition, by being placed along the left side of the page, we lose valuable real estate. By rethinking the sub navigation with a possible move to a horizontal drop down menu, we can gain space across the page and clearly define the hierarchy of information.

- Better Page Titling: This would be strictly to help in the review of traffic and site analytics. As of now, every page title is the title of the category. For example, the title of the XYZ Corporation drug delivery page is "XYZ Corporation - Drug Delivery." Every page

within that category shares that same title, so Softgel technology is also titled "XYZ Corporation - Drug Delivery." If each page had an individual title, that would aid in the review of site analytics.

- Creation of a Media Center: Because XYZ Corporation has already compiled a good amount of video, the creation of an online media center would help improve visitor retention and better explain key messages.

- Change the Start-Up Page in Brazil: As part of the effort to get a clearer picture of the analytics, we should consider asking employees in Brazil to no longer use XYZCorporation.com as their start-up page.