Book VIII

Measuring Your Results; Building on Your Success

Chapter 1: Delving into Data

*W*eb analytics is the practice of analyzing performance and business statistics for a Web site, social media marketing, and other online marketing efforts to better understand user behavior and improve results. Some might call Web analytics more art than science; to others, it's black magic.

The amount of data that can be acquired from online marketing efforts vastly exceeds the amount available using traditional offline methods. That statement alone makes online marketing, including social media, an attractive form of public relations and advertising.

In the best of all possible worlds, the results of your marketing efforts should appear as increased profits — in other words, as an improved bottom line with a nice return on investment (ROI). You're more likely to achieve this goal if you make your analytics program part of a process of continuous quality improvement.

For more information on measuring the performance of Web sites and online marketing campaigns, see *Web Analytics For Dummies,* by Pedro Sostre and Jennifer LeClaire.

TIP

Before getting mired in the swamp of online marketing data, assess the performance of your central Web hub. If you aren't making a profit from that core investment, it doesn't matter whether you fill the funnel with fantastic traffic from social media, exhibit a soaring click-through rate, or tally revenues through the roof. If you aren't sure how your hub site is performing, use the tools in this chapter and ask your Web developer and bookkeeper for help.

Planning a Measurement Strategy

The basic principle "You can't manage what you don't measure" applies doubly to the online universe. Do you know whether Facebook or LinkedIn drives more traffic to your site? Whether more people buy after reading a

blog posting about pets than from a blog posting about plants? If not, you're simply guessing at how to expend your precious marketing dollars and time.

To make the most of your effort, return to the goals and objectives you established on your Social Media Marketing Goals form (see Book I, Chapter 1). Ask yourself what you need to measure to determine your accomplishments. Would interim measurements help you decide whether a particular aspect of a social media campaign is working?

For instance, if one of your goals is to substitute social media marketing for paid advertising, compare performance between the two. If you initiated social media activities to improve a ranking on search engine results pages, you must measure your standing by keywords at different times. In either case, of course, you might want to track visitors to the site who arrive from either a social media or natural search to see whether they continue to a purchase.

Fortunately, computers do one thing extremely well: Count. Chances are good that if you have a question, you can find an answer.

WARNING!

Because computers count just about everything, you can quickly drown in so much data that you find it impossible to gather meaningful information, let alone make a decision. The last thing you need is a dozen reports that you don't have time to read.

Unless you have a very large site, monitoring statistics monthly or quarterly is usually sufficient. You might check more often when you first initiate a specific social media or another online marketing activity, if you invest significant amounts of money or effort into a new campaign, or if you support your site by way of advertising (in which case, monitoring traffic is the *sine qua non* of your existence).

REMEMBER

Add to your Social Media Marketing Plan (from Book I, Chapter 2) your choice of measurement parameters and analytical tools and the names of the people who will be responsible for creating reports. Schedule the frequency of analytical review on your Social Media Activity Calendar (see Book I, Chapter 3).

Monitoring versus measuring

For the purposes of this book, we discuss only quantitative data as part of the measurement process. Use monitoring tools to review such qualitative data from social media as

✦ The degree of customer engagement

✦ The nature of customer dialogue, sometimes called *sentiment*

✦ Your brand reputation on a social network

✦ The quality of relationships with your target market

✦ The extent of participation in online conversations

✦ Positioning in your industry versus your competitors

If you have no monitoring tools in place yet, turn to Book II, Chapter 1.

REMEMBER "Real people" usually review subjective monitoring data to assess such ineffable qualities as the positive or negative characteristics of consumer posts, conversational tone, and brand acknowledgment. Notwithstanding Hal in the movie *2001: A Space Odyssey,* we don't yet have analytical software with the supple linguistic sophistication of the human brain.

Setting aside the "squishy" qualitative data, you still have two types of quantitative data to measure:

✦ **Internal performance measurements:** Measure the effectiveness of your social media, other marketing efforts, and Web site in achieving your objectives. Performance measurements include such parameters as traffic to your social pages or Web site, the number of people who click-through to your hub presence, which products sell best, and *conversion rate,* or the percentage of visitors who buy or become qualified leads.

✦ **Business measurements:** Primarily dollar-based parameters — costs, revenues, profits — that go directly to your business operations. Such financial items as the cost of customer or lead acquisition, average dollar value per sale, the value assigned to leads, break-even point, and ROI fall into this category.

Deciding what to measure

Most of the key performance indicators (KPI) and business criteria you measure fall into one of these categories:

✦ **Traffic:** You must know the number and nature of visitors to any of the sites that are part of your Web presence.

✦ **Leads:** Business-to-business (B2B) companies, service professionals, and companies that sell expensive, complex products often close their sales offline. Online efforts yield prospects, many of whom — you hope — will become qualified leads as they move down the conversion funnel.

✦ **Financials:** Costs, sales, revenue, and profits are the essential components of business success. Analytics let you track which sales arrive from which sources, and how much revenue they generate.

✦ **Search marketing:** As discussed in Book II, Chapter 2, optimizing social media can improve visibility in natural search. Not only do many social media sites appear in search results but your hub site also gains valuable inbound links from direct and indirect referrals.

✦ **Other business objectives:** You may need customized analytics to track goals and objectives that don't fall into the other categories.

Book VIII, Chapter 2 discusses KPIs in depth.

Don't plan on flying to the moon based on the accuracy of any statistical Web data. For one thing, definitions of parameters differ by tool. Does a new visitor session start after someone has logged off for 24 minutes or 24 hours? For another, results in real-time tools sometimes oscillate unpredictably.
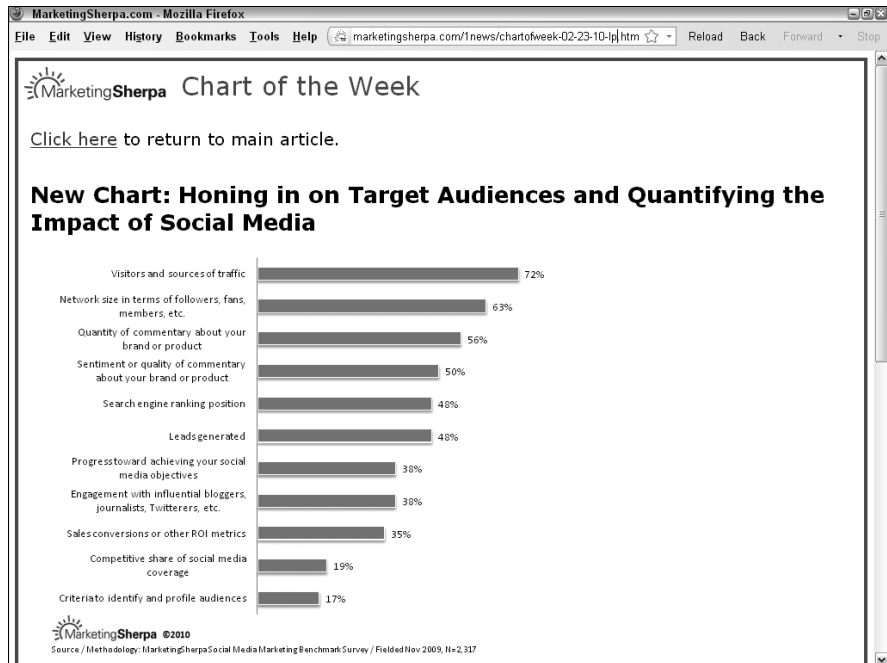
TIP

If a value seems "off," try running your analytics again later, or run them over a longer period to smooth out irregularities.

Relative numbers are more meaningful than absolute ones. Is your traffic growing or shrinking? Is your conversion rate increasing or decreasing? Focus on ratios or percentages to make the data more meaningful. Suppose that 10 percent of a small number of viewers to your site converted to buyers before you started a blog, compared to only 5 percent of a larger number of viewers afterward. What does that tell you?

Figure 1-1 shows what most businesses are measuring online. You can find lots of research about typical performance on different statistical parameters. Though it's nice to know industry averages for benchmarking purposes, the only statistics that matter are your own.

Figure 1-1:
This chart shows what most other businesses are measuring and monitoring. Note that two of the criteria (sentiment and engagement) are qualitative.

MarketingSherpa.com - Mozilla Firefox

File Edit View History Bookmarks Tools Help marketingsherpa.com/1news/chartofweek-02-23-10-lp.htm   Reload Back Forward Stop

MarketingSherpa Chart of the Week

Click here to return to main article.

New Chart: Honing in on Target Audiences and Quantifying the Impact of Social Media

Metric	Percentage
Visitors and sources of traffic	72%
Network size in terms of followers, fans, members, etc.	63%
Quantity of commentary about your brand or product	56%
Sentiment or quality of commentary about your brand or product	50%
Search engine ranking position	48%
Leads generated	48%
Progress toward achieving your social media objectives	38%
Engagement with influential bloggers, journalists, Twitterers, etc.	38%
Sales conversions or other ROI metrics	35%
Competitive share of social media coverage	19%
Criteria to identify and profile audiences	17%

MarketingSherpa ©2010

Source / Methodology: MarketingSherpa Social Media Marketing Benchmark Survey / Fielded Nov 2009, N=2,317

Source: MarketingSherpa.com

Regardless of how you go about the measurement process, you must define success before you begin. Without some sort of target value, you cannot know whether you've succeeded. Keep your handy, dandy Social Media Marketing Goals (see Book I, Chapter 1) accessible as you review this chapter.

A good measurement strategy determines how much data to leave out as well as how much to measure. Unless you have a huge site or quite a complex marketing campaign, you can focus on just a few parameters.

Establishing responsibility for analytics

Chances are good that your business isn't large enough to field an entire team whose sole responsibility is statistical analysis. Even if you aren't running an employment agency for statisticians, you can still take a few concrete steps to ensure that the right data is collected, analyzed, and acted on:

1. Ask your marketing person (is that you?) to take responsibility for defining what needs to be measured based on business objectives.

   Consult with your financial advisor, if necessary.

2. Have your programmer, Web developer, or go-to IT person select and install the analytics tools that will provide the data you need.

   Make ease of use, flexibility, and customizability important factors in the decision.

3. If it isn't part of the analytical package, ask your IT person to set up a one-page *dashboard* (a graphical "executive summary" of key data).

   Try the Google Analytics dashboard, shown in Figure 1-2, or the Hub Spot dashboard for multiple social media, shown in Figure 1-3. A dashboard displays essential results quickly, preferably over easy-to-change time frames of your choice.

4. Let your marketing, IT, and content management folks work together to finalize the highest-priority pages (usually landing pages and pages within your conversion funnels). When possible, set up tracking codes for links coming from social marketing pages. IT should test to ensure that the data collection system works and adjust as needed.

5. Your marketing person can be responsible for regularly monitoring the results, adjusting marketing campaigns, and reporting to you and other stakeholders. Have your IT person validate the data and audit tracking tags at least twice a year — they can easily get out of sync.

6. Be sure to integrate the results of your social media and online marketing efforts with offline marketing and financial results for a complete picture of what's happening with your business. Compare against your business goals and objectives and modify as needed.

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Figure 1-2:
A typical Google analytics dashboard displays key Web statistics.

Courtesy Screenshot © Google Inc. Used with permission.

Figure 1-3:
A HubSpot dashboard page provides a high-level summary showing the flow from visitors to leads to sales distinguished by source type for a B2B company.

Courtesy HubSpot® www.HubSpot.com

Aggregate all analytics into one place. You're unlikely to find a premade dashboard that includes everything you need to measure for your specific campaigns. Your programmer may have to export data into Excel, PDF, or e-mail format and save it all in one place. Then build a custom spreadsheet to generate combined reports for your review.

Selecting a Statistical Package

Ask your developer or Web host which statistical packages are available for your site. Unless you have a fairly large site or need real-time data, one of the free packages in Table 1-1 should work well. Review your choices to select the best fit for your needs. In many cases, Google Analytics is the best answer.

Table 1-1	Free Statistical Packages	
Name	*URL*	*Notes*
AddFreeStats	www.addfreestats. com	Graphical display; real-time, adjustable time frame
Analog and Report Magic	www.analog.cx	Displayed by www. reportmagic.org
AWStats	http://awstats.org	Log analysis tool
FeedBurner	www.google.com/ support/feedburner /bin/answer.py?hl= en&answer=78948	Analytics for RSS and other forms of social media
Clicky	http://getclicky. com	All the basics for small, single sites; data storage limited to 30 days. offers paid options
GoingUp!	www.goingup.com/ features	Customizable dashboard with graphs and charts
Google Analytics	www.google.com/ analytics	Can include social media
Piwik	http://piwik.org	Open source analytics, including RSS
SociafyQ	www.sociafyq.com	Social network analytics
StatCounter	www.statcounter.com	Accepts and analyzes WordPress traffic
Webalizer	www.mrunix.net/ webalizer	Simple graphical display that works well with small sites

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(continued)

Table 1-1 *(continued)*

Name	URL	Notes
Woopra	`www.woopra.com`	Basic version, designed for blog analytics and social media
XinuReturns. com	`http://xinureturns. com`	Used for quick estimates on social media
Yahoo! Web Analytics	`http://web. analytics.yahoo.com`	Can include social media (formerly IndexTools)

WARNING!

If your developer or Web host tells you that you don't need statistics, find another provider. It's nearly impossible to measure success without easy access to statistics.

Depending on what you're trying to measure, you may also need data from some of the specific social media analytical tools described in Table 1-2, or statistics from social bookmarking sites such as AddThis (`www.AddThis. com`) or URL shorteners such as bit.ly. Gathering analytics for Facebook (Book V) and WordPress (Book III) is particularly challenging. See specific books about each major social media network for additional tools.

Table 1-2   **Social Media Specific Analytics**

Name	URL	Description
Facebook	`http://www.facebook. com/help/?page=914`	Information about using Facebook Insights for data gathering (must be logged in)
Facebook Grader	`http://facebook. grader.com`	Assess power and reach of Facebook pages
Flickr	`www.flickr.com/ help/stats/?search= statistics#1863`	Statistics available only with Pro account
Kontagent	`www.kontagent.com`	Free Facebook analytics
LinkedIn	`http://linkedin.com/ network?trk=hb_tab_net`	Network statistics
MySpace	`http://faq.myspace. com/app/answers/list/ kw/statistics/r_ id/100061/search/1`	Dashboard statistics
TweetStats	`http://tweetstats.com`	Free Twitter metrics

Name	URL	Description
Twitalyzer	`http://twitalyzer.com`	Free and paid Twitter analytics packages
Twitter Grader	`http://twitter.grader.com`	Assess power and reach of Twitter profile
WordPress	`http://en.support.wordpress.com/stats`	Free internal stats

REMEMBER

Register for optional statistics whenever you can. Take advantage of bit.ly and AddThis and other sites that provide data not available anywhere else. The availability of stats may influence your choice of tools. (See Book II, Chapters 2 and 3 for more information.)

Unfortunately, you can't count on getting comparable results when you mix and match different tools. Each one defines parameters differently (for example, what constitutes a repeat visitor). Consequently, you need to watch trends, not absolute numbers.

If you have a large site with heavy traffic or extensive reporting require-ments, free packages — even Google Analytics — might not be enough. You can find dozens of paid statistical programs in an online search; Table 1-3 lists a few. Several are fairly inexpensive, but the ones marked "Enterprise-level solution" in Column 3 can escalate into real money.

Table 1-3	Paid Statistical Packages	
Name	URL	Cost
Chartbeat	`http://chartbeat.com`	$10 to $150 per month based on pages views, including blogs
Coremetrics	`www.coremetrics.com`	Enterprise-level solution; includes social media
eXTReME Tracking	`http://extreme tracking.com/?npt`	$4.50 per month
Log Rover	`www.logrover.com`	$99 to $499
Lyris HQ	`www.lyris.com/solutions/lyris-hq/web-analytics`	$200 per month; enter-prise-level solution; includes social media
ObjectiveMarketer	`http://objective marketer.com`	Varies by number of users; targets medium-size businesses

(continued)

Table 1-3 *(continued)*

Name	URL	Cost
Omniture Site Catalyst	`www.omniture.com`	Enterprise-level solution; includes social media
PostRank	`https://analytics.postrank.com`	$9 per month; good for social media analytics and blogs; integrates with Google Analytics
Sawmill LITE	`www.sawmill.net/lite.html`	$99
Site Stats Lite	`www.sitestats.com/home/home.php`	Cost varies by traffic; starts at $15 per month
Site Meter	`http://sitemeter.com`	Premium starts at $6.95 per month
uberVU	`www.ubervu.com`	$30 per month
Unica NetInsight	`www.unica.com/products/enterprise-web-analytics.htm`	Enterprise-level solution
VisitorVille	`www.visitorville.com`	Real-time 3D statistics; $6.95 per month
Webtrends Social Measurement	`www.webtrends.com/Products/Social Measurement.aspx`	Enterprise-level solution; includes social media

REMEMBER

Not all marketing channels use the same yardstick, nor should they. Your business objectives drive your choice of channels and therefore your choice of yardsticks.

Some paid statistical packages are hosted on a third-party server. Others are designed for installation on your own server. Generally, these solutions offer these benefits:

✦ Real-time analytics (no waiting for results)

✦ Sophisticated reporting tools by domain or across multiple domains, departments, or enterprises

✦ Customizable data-mining filters

✦ Path-through-site analysis, tracking an individual user from entry to exit

✦ Integrated traffic and store statistics

✦ Integrated qualitative and quantitative analytics for multiple social media services

✦ Analysis of downloaded PDF, video, audio, or another file type

✦ Mapping host addresses to company names and details

✦ Clickstream analysis to show which sites visitors arrive from and go to

REMEMBER

Don't collect information for information's sake. Stop when you have enough data to make essential business decisions.

Getting Started with Google Analytics

Google Analytics is so popular that it justifies some additional discussion. It's popular because this free, high-quality analytics tool works well for most Web site owners. It now incorporates many social media services as part of its analysis and scales well from tiny sites to extremely large ones.

TIP

Start with the free Google Analytics and switch to an enterprise-level solution when and if your Web effort demands it.

Among its many advantages, Google Analytics offers

✦ More in-depth analysis than most other free statistical packages

✦ Plenty of support, as shown in Table 1-4

✦ Easy-to-set specific timeframes to compare results to other years

✦ Many of the more sophisticated features of expensive software, such as path-through-site

✦ Customization of the dashboard display

✦ Conversion funnel visualization, shown in Figure 1-4

✦ Analysis by *referrer* (where traffic to your site has linked from) or search term

✦ Tracking of such key performance indicators as returning visitors and *bounce rate* (percentage of visitors who leave without visiting a second page)

✦ Customizable reports to meet your needs and be e-mailed automatically

✦ Seamless integration with AdWords, the Google pay-per-click program, though you don't need a paid AdWords campaign to take advantage of it
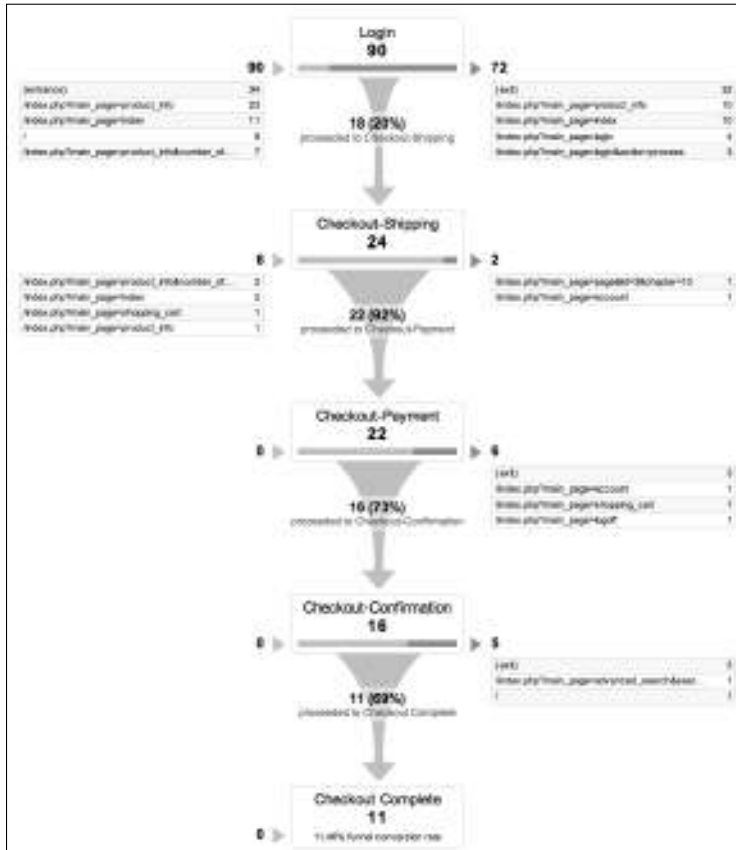
Figure 1-4:
A sample
conversion
funnel.

WebReach Ireland Ltd. (www.webreach.ie)

Table 1-4	Helpful Google Analytics Resource URLs	
Name	*URL*	*Description*
Analytics Blog	`http://analytics.blogspot.com`	Google blog for all things analytic
Conversion University	`www.google.com/support/conversionuniversity/bin/static.py?hl=en&page=iq_learning_center.cs`	Online Google Analytics training
Analytics Goal-Setting	`http://analytics.blogspot.com/2009/05/how-to-setup-goals-in-google-analytics.html`	Setting up interim and final goals needed to track path to conversions

Name	URL	Description
Analytics Guide	`www.smashingmagazine.com/2009/07/16/a-guide-to-google-analytics-and-useful-tools`	All-in-one guide for using Google Analytics
Analytics Support	`www.google.com/support/analytics/?hl=en`	Google Analytics help center
Analytics for Video	`http://youtube-global.blogspot.com/2008/03/youtube-reveals-video-analytics-tool.html`	Analytics for YouTube channel
Garmahis.com Blog	`http://garmahis.com/tips/google-analytics`	Useful Google Analytics tips and tricks

TECHNICAL STUFF

You must tag each page of your Web site with a short piece of JavaScript. The tagging task isn't difficult. If your site uses a template or a common server-side include (for example, for a footer), you place the Analytics code once and it appears on all pages. You should start seeing results within 24 hours.

REMEMBER

Web analytics, from Google or anywhere else, are valuable only if you use them to improve users' experience on your site and your bottom line.

Google offers plenty of directions for setting up Analytics for your Web site. Two elements, however, are worth special attention: how to integrate statistical results from other social media services into your reports and how to set up conversion funnels for social media.

TECHNICAL STUFF

Installing Google Analytics

Google provides steps for installing Analytics at `www.google.com/analytics/sign_up.html`.

Some of these steps involved in setting up Analytics are geeky. This task definitely isn't for anyone who is faint-of-programming-heart.

Get help from your developer. For detailed information on installing Google Analytics, refer to the help sites listed in Table 1-4 or go to `www.google.com/support/analytics/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=66983`.

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Integrating social media analytics

You have four ways to integrate social media analytics into Google:

✦ Some social media services, such as Ning (`http://help.ning.com/cgi-bin/ning.cfg/php/enduser/std_adp.php?p_faqid=3003`) and Twitter (Twitalyzer at `www.twitalyzer.com/dashboard.asp`) already have their own statistics or are compatible with third-party statistics that you can integrate with Google Analytics. Of course, the Google-owned Blogger and FeedBurner are already compatible with Analytics.

✦ Install tags on links (see Book II, Chapter 2) or use filters and events within Google Analytics to track visitors who arrive from various social media sources. After you set them up, your referrer reports include social media data. Figure 1-5 shows a referrer report with social media sources.

✦ For geeks only! Implement workarounds that integrate social media data with Google Analytics. First, export the results from third-party analytics programs (refer to Tables 1-1 and 1-2), such as data from Facebook Insights (see Figure 1-6) or from Woopra (see Figure 1-7). Then integrate those data in a spreadsheet with similar data downloaded from Analytics. This is a near-geek solution.

Figure 1-5:
The referrer report in Google Analytics can include multiple social media sites. You can group all social media sites into one category by using a filter.

Screenshot © Google Inc. Used with permission.
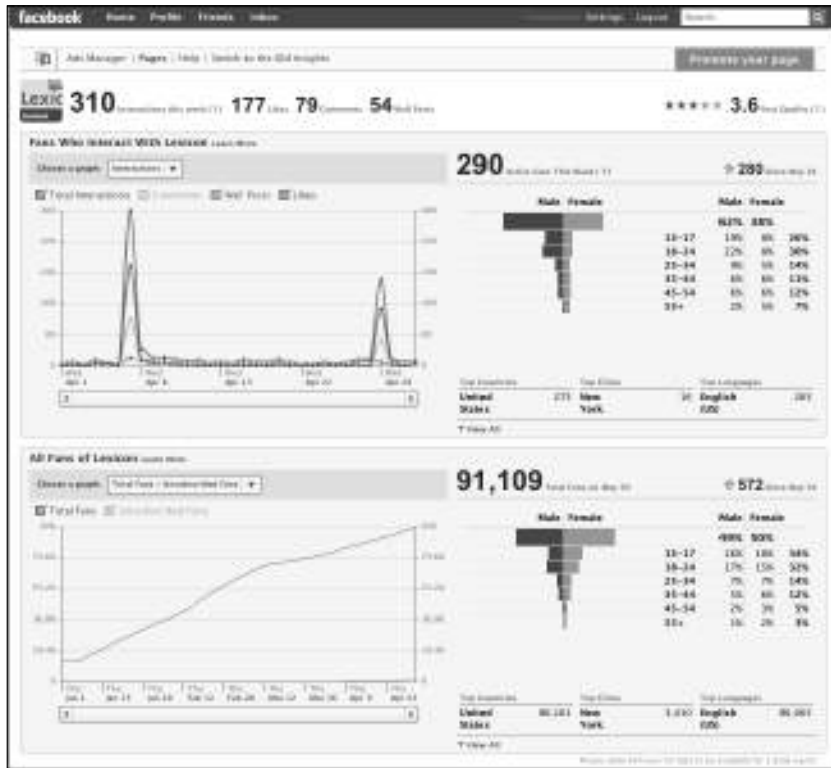
Figure 1-6: The Facebook Insights dashboard provides basic information about a Facebook fan page.
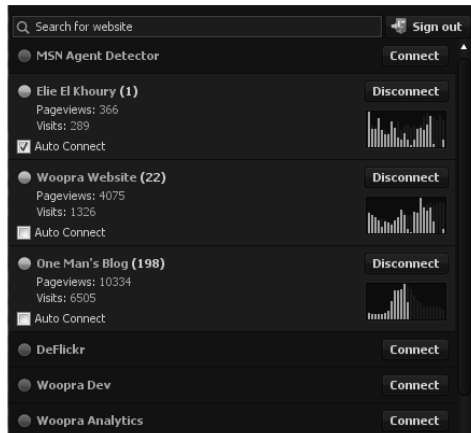

Figure 1-7: A Woopra dashboard compares data from multiple social media sources in real-time by clicking on each one.

Courtesy iFusion Labs, LLC

For a good example of how to track social media campaigns with Google Analytics, read the story about the 2009 Lollapalooza Music Festival at `http://analytics.blogspot.com/2009/05/lollapalooza-tracks-social-media.html`. Lollapalooza, whose social media strategy appears in Figure 1-8, incorporated Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, e-mail sharing, and AddThis social bookmarking. The results of campaign analytics for 2009 helped in the formation of 2010 marketing plans.

Figure 1-8:
The Lollapalooza Music Festival used Google Analytics to track the results of its social media campaign.

Courtesy Lollapalooza.com

TECHNICAL STUFF

You can find a shareware or freeware version of Social Media Metrics Plugin for Google Analytics at `http://userscripts.org/scripts/show/35080`. It pulls social media metrics from Digg, Sphinn, Mixx, reddit, StumbleUpon, Delicious, and Yahoo! Site Explorer Inlink Data service.

Installing filters to track social media sites in Analytics

Google Analytics automatically tracks referrals from Facebook, LinkedIn, and other networking services in the Traffic Sources section. However, each social media service appears individually; minor social sites such as Plaxo or reddit may be buried in a long list of referring sites. For the purpose of measuring your social media activities, you may want to group together the referrals from all social media sites.

By default, Google groups traffic into three categories (or *mediums,* in Google-speak), in its Traffic Medium report:

✦ **Organic traffic** for nonpaid visits from search engines

✦ **None** for direct traffic when a visitor types your URL or uses a bookmark

✦ **Referral** for everything else, including social media

By using a filter, you can move social media sites from the Referral category to a new category or medium.

WARNING!

Always create a duplicate profile before playing with any changes to your Analytics settings. (See `www.google.com/support/googleanalytics/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=55493`.) Make changes to the new, duplicate profile. Then no mistakes mess up your historical data.

After you duplicate your profile, follow the steps listed at `www.zencart optimization.com/2010/02/11/how-to-track-your-social-media-roi-in-google-analytics` (check that site for additional information and other solutions). During the process, you should see an entry such as `stumbleupon|facebook|twitter|linkedin`, that includes each of the social media referrers you want, separated by a vertical bar. At the very end, choose Traffic Sources⇨Medium to find a report that displays a category title that you have specified (for example, "All Social"). When you click it, you see aggregated visits from all the social media referrers you selected, separated from your other referrals.

Creating a workaround for Facebook fan page analytics

If you search, you find a number of free workarounds to bring third-party social media analytics into Google.

For instance, the Facebook Insights statistics program offers access to limited demographic and usage information for your Fan page but nowhere near as much information as Google Analytics. To view the Insights page (refer to Figure 1-6), click the Insights button in the left margin of your Facebook page. You can also use the Export Data command to run an external analysis on your Corporate page. For more information on Facebook Insights, go to `www.facebook.com/help/?search=insights`.

Unfortunately, you can't put Google JavaScript code on Facebook fan and profile pages to track usage, though you can place it on self-created tab pages that accept HTML code, as discussed in Book II, Chapter 2. Social Media Examiner published a solution for moving statistics for Facebook fan pages into Google Analytics on its blog at `www.socialmediaexaminer.com/how-to-add-google-analytics-to-your-facebook-fan-page`.

TECHNICAL STUFF

Alternatively, you can implement a workaround, by using Google Analytics code as an image rather than as JavaScript, on custom Facebook (FBML or HTML) pages you create (see `www.webdigi.co.uk/blog/2010/creating-a-custom-facebook-page` for directions on creating these pages). First, in Analytics, set up a new Web site profile for Facebook, with its own name, and generate Analytics tracking code. Second, create a custom HTML `<img>` tag for *each* Facebook page you want to track. (Use the Webdigi tool at `http://ga.webdigi.co.uk` to generate the tag code.) Third, paste the custom HTML `<img>` tag at the bottom of the code for each of your Facebook FBML fan pages

(for example, above the closing `</body></html>` tag). In about a day, you start to see results in Analytics. For more information, see `www.webdigi.co.uk/blog/2010/google-analytics-for-facebook-fan-pages`.

Creating goals and funnels for social media

The process of establishing conversion goals and funnels for social media, such as a blog or Ning community, is the same as though you were doing it for your Web site in general. You may be able to do it yourself. If it's too confusing, ask your Web developer for help.

To create a goal, follow these steps:

1. **Identify your business objectives and associated visitor action.**

   You might create a post, join a group, sign up for a newsletter, upload user-generated content, register for a white paper, or buy a product.

2. **Identify the steps users must take to complete an action.**

   Write down the URLs for the specific pages they need to pass through (for example, open shopping cart or enter billing information). These steps become your conversion funnel.

   Usually, a specific page (for example, `thankyou.html`, `registration_comfirmed.html`) "counts" as the completed action.

3. **Configure the Goal Setting information for each profile that shares this goal, whether it's for your Web site, Ning community, blog, or other social media service.**

If you haven't already established separate profiles for each subdomain or domain name, you may need to create them first. Follow these steps:

1. **Go to the Google Analytics Account Overview page.**

2. **Click Edit next to the profile account you want to change. (It's under the Actions column on the right.)**

3. **Click Add Goal on the right end of the row labeled Goals (Set 1).**

   A new screen opens, labeled Enter Goal Information.

4. **For the goal name, enter the phrase that will appear in your conversion reports.**

5. **Set Active Goal to On. The Goal Position drop-down list indicates only where it will appear in the list on the Reports page.**

If this is your first goal, you can leave it as is. Otherwise, adjust as needed.

6. **Select the Goal Type — usually, URL Destination.**

   This step opens another dialog box for Goal Details on the same page.

7. **Complete the Goal Details box. Under Match Type, choose Exact Match if you don't have any parameters in the URL (usually there's an =); choose Head Match if the content is generated dynamically.**

   For help with this, ask your developer or go to `https://www.google.com/support/googleanalytics/bin/answer.py?answer=72285&hl=en_US`.

8. **For Goal URL, enter the concluding URL without the domain name (just use the part that appears after the "/").**

   Do not check the box for *Case Sensitive* unless it's necessary. If your goal has a dollar value, enter it next to *Goal Value* (optional).

9. **Under Goal Funnel, click Yes, Create a Funnel or This Goal.**

10. **Enter the URL and a name for each step in your funnel.**

11. **Save your goal.**

12. **Wait a few days for results. From the Goals section in your Analytics results, open the Funnel Visualization Report.**

    Figure 1-4, earlier in this chapter, shows a funnel example: 90 users logged in; 18 proceeded to Checkout-Shipping (plus 6 who arrived from a different route), 22 continued to Checkout-Payment, and 16 successfully completed their purchase.

13. **See which percentage of people who start the process complete it.**

    Find out whether they're getting "stuck" somewhere.

14. **Use the funnel information to guide design or wording changes that might improve the conversion rate, if necessary.**

    For ideas, try using the Google Website Optimizer at `www.google.com/websiteoptimizer`.

> **TIP**
>
> The URLs for funnel and goal pages don't need to have identical domain names, as long as the correct tracking code appears on the pages. The thank-you page for a purchase is sometimes on a third-party storefront, for instance. Or, perhaps you want to track how many people go from a particular page on your main Web site to post a comment on one of your social network sites or blog.

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Pink Cake Box ices social marketing

Pink Cake Box, at `PinkCakeBox.com`, seen in the nearly figure, bakes spectacular cakes, cupcakes, and cookies for special occasions such as weddings, bar and bat mitzvahs, birthdays, baby showers, and bridal showers. Its cakes have been featured in *Modern Bride, People, Elegant Bride, The Knot,* a Martha Stewart TV special, and two of TLC's Ultimate Cake-Off competitions. It recently won one of them with their Legoland Birthday cake. Pink Cake Box typically delivers within 100 miles of its Denville, New Jersey, storefront, but ships cookies nationally.

Founded by pastry chef Anne Heap in 2005, the company has ten employees plus interns, with revenues of more than $700,000. (That's a lot of cake!) Though primarily a B2C company, it has B2B clients such as wedding halls, caterers, and party and wedding planners.

Chief information officer Jesse Heap says that Pink Cake Box debuted socially immediately after it opened, starting its blog, at `http://blog.pinkcakebox.com`, in 2005. "At the time, many competitors had relatively static sites that lacked the interaction and connection that social mediums like a blog could provide," he explains. He wanted "to encourage our users to interact with and share our content through their own, personal channels."

Plus, Heap notes, a blog can support syndication, using an RSS feed to repurpose content across multiple sites with minimal effort. "A single post on the blog will be repurposed into different sections on the Web site depending on its category and shared externally with other social media sites . . .to build brand recognition and drive traffic."

The blog, which remains the centerpiece of the Pink Cake Box social media strategy, now has more than 350,000 unique visitors a month; Internet-originated inquiries constitute the majority of orders.

Pink Cake Box has a vibrant social presence, as the list at the end of this sidebar shows. It also participates in other specialty social media sites such as Project Wedding (`www.projectwedding.com`), CookEatShare (`http://cookeatshare.com`), Foodbuzz (`www.foodbuzz.com`), BakeSpace (`http://bakespace.com`), and WeddingWire (`www.weddingwire.com`). "It does sound like a lot," but Heap insists that updating all these sites is easy with RSS syndication.

Given its limited resources as a small business, Pink Cake Box "participates actively in the top three external social media sites that generate the most qualified traffic, while we participate passively in others that allow us to republish our RSS feed. These 'other' social media sites typically fall into the food category, which complements our company's products. Currently, our top three sites are Facebook, YouTube, and WeddingWire. So, for these sites, we try to stay engaged and responsive to customers' questions and inquiries."

The marketing strategy is more sophisticated than sheer numbers, however. Heap focuses on sites such as WeddingWire, which targets brides, for lead generation, and others, such as YouTube, with its broader audience, for brand identity.

Heap uses social media strategically to help position Pink Cake Box in search engine rankings, which now include video, images, and social media. By developing a strong following on YouTube (as of April 2010, the branded Pink Cake Box channel had more than 1,350 subscribers and nearly 700,000 views), it has generated additional organic search engine rankings. "Ultimately," says Heap, "our goal is to channel traffic back to PinkCakeBox.com." For him, all these external sites are filling the funnel.

Pink Cake Box uses Google Analytics to track the number of visitors who submit online inquiries,

but doesn't yet track how many inquiries turn into orders. Although this approach doesn't track Web visitors who phone, it's close enough for tracking purposes. However, Heap notes, this approach doesn't always work. Because links cannot be displayed on individual YouTube pages, he uses YouTube Insight tool to confirm that the videos generate interest.

SEO is a major component of the Pink Cake Box marketing strategy. Heap actively monitors traffic and certain high-value keywords to maintain traffic growth on the terms that contribute most to revenue. "There is an interesting relationship between SEO, social media, and content," he observes.

As the company grew, it shifted from an initial approach of "The more traffic, the better." "We began focusing our content on products that lead to better order conversions," Heap explains. Rather than measure aggregate traffic, they studied traffic from their strategic focus areas. "Put simply, we examined which products generate most of our revenue and made sure our marketing strategy focused on those products." That meant featuring varieties of their best-selling products on the blog, ensuring that they targeted social media sites catering to people who like those products, and using Analytics to monitor keyword traffic. Heap is justifiably proud of the results. "We've successfully grown our total Web properties to nearly 500,000 unique visitors a month, and have experienced double-digit revenue growth since our start in 2005. We attribute a lot of this success to our digital marketing strategy."

Though Pink Cake Box staff members handle most social media tasks in-house, the blog and Web site receive an outside technical boost. The Web site, which runs off the WordPress. org blogging platform, is customized with unique features, such as the "most popular cakes of the day" based on user views (`http://blog. pinkcakebox.com/todays-popular-cakes`). Features such as those require more

programming and design knowledge than they have on staff. Heap estimates that the staff spends, on average, 10 to 15 hours a week on online marketing. Though it's hard to delineate how much effort qualifies as social media, the majority of their time is spent creating content for the blog. "Admittedly, our product lends itself well to social media. Our cakes are unique and inspire much conversation and excitement." Obviously, small businesses with less photogenic products may need a different strategy.

Pink Cake Box also uses pay-per-click ads and attends bridal shows and cake competitions, but hasn't needed standard press releases. "Our strategy of saturating the Internet with photos and videos of our products helped spark initial interest from CNN, Martha Stewart, and the Food Network. Since then, we've continued to build relationships with media contacts to open additional doors," Heap notes. They also send personalized e-mail newsletters to an "influencer" customer list when big news occurs.

Finally, the site does a lot of on-site cross-promotion to connect users to multiple social marketing experiences. In addition to standard calls to action for social sharing, the Share Pink Cake Box page shown in the nearby figure (`http://blog.pinkcakebox.com/share-pink-cake-box`) has two widgets that allow users to syndicate photos and videos of their cakes on their own blogs. The same page includes SweetTweet, a Twitter application that allows users to tweet virtual birthday cakes, and a cake delivery map displaying where Pink Cake Box has delivered.

Heap has found only one problem with sharing content so openly, but he's philosophical about it. "There are individuals who exploit that trust either by taking our photos — or copying our cakes and passing them off as their own without proper credit. We've come to accept this as the cost of the strategy we've taken for digital marketing. We could have taken the approach

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(continued)

of strictly controlling our content and not allowing users to share it. But that goes against the democratization of the Internet and the Web 2.0 movement. As the saying goes, a few bad apples do not (and should not) spoil the entire batch." (Watermarking photos with the company logo may be an unobtrusive means of discouraging this problem.)

"The biggest piece of advice I can give," says Heap, "is to focus on content. The best social media strategy in the world won't generate much interest if the content isn't compelling and worthwhile to the end user. Our company produces outrageous and unique cakes every week. That's the foundation. [It] drives our entire digital marketing strategy."

Pink Cake Box URLS

www.pinkcakebox.com

http://blog.pinkcakebox.com

www.blogcatalog.com/blogs/pink-cake-box.html

www.flickr.com/photos/pinkcakebox

www.youtube.com

twitter.com/pinkcakebox

www.facebook.com/pink cakebox

www.weddingwire.com/biz/pink-cake-box-denville/1be8dde9d853b1d0.html

http://m.pinkcakebox.com (mobile blog version)

http://es.pinkcakebox.com (Spanish blog version)

Courtesy Pink Cake Box www.pinkcakebox.com