

# Chapter 5: Measuring Blogging, Podcasting, and Vlogging Metrics

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## *In This Chapter*

- ✓ **Measuring effectiveness**
- ✓ **Evaluating stats, comments, video, and RSS**
- ✓ **Measuring your return on investment**
- ✓ **Tracking incoming links**

**S**uppose that you've built a blog site or created a podcast and you've nurtured and fed it with posts and episodes. You've promoted your creative endeavor to the applicable parties, and now you want to know how many people have visited your blog or podcast. Or, if you're a vlogger, you want to know how many people have downloaded your vlog or viewed it on a video sharing site. After all, you've made a time investment and unless you're doing all the grunt work, you've dedicated some payroll funds to your effort. Therefore, in any of these areas, you must determine the return you're receiving on your investment. Video sharing sites make estimating the popularity of your vlog fairly easy, but you may need to know about your blog or podcast. In this chapter, we show you how to solve these mysteries.



Book VIII is devoted to measuring your entire marketing campaign success.

## *Measuring the Effectiveness of a Blog, Podcast, or Vlog*

If you have a blog, podcast, or vlog, how do you know whether your message is getting out there? How do you measure your results? Sometimes you have no clue other than seeing that people are finding your media by way of your social media marketing efforts on Twitter or Facebook. How viral is your message? Is it being broadcast to people other than those who are being reached through your efforts?

If these questions are bouncing around in the three pounds of gray matter inside your head, we offer some suggestions in the following sections on how to measure the effectiveness of a blog. Your Web site stats reveal the most information, but you can also glean effective information from other areas.

## *Web site stats*

You can find an amazing amount of information about how effective your site is using the program that tracks your Web site statistics. We give you an overview of Webalizer, one such program, later in this chapter in the “Viewing General Statistics with Webalizer” section.

You can peruse the stats to find these types of information:

- ◆ **The number of visitors who land on the home page of your blog:** Tells you if visitors found your site through a search engine
- ◆ **The number of visitors seeking specific blog posts:** Tells you that visitors found the post through an external link, or perhaps a very specific set of keywords in a search engine.
- ◆ **The locations where visitors are coming from:** Someone might have begun a search at a search engine, for example, or followed a direct link from another blog or Web site.
- ◆ **How long visitors remain on a specific post page:** If the duration of a visit is shorter than the potential length of time spent reading the post and pondering its contents, the post wasn’t effective.

Capitalize on effective posts by creating similar posts. When you analyze your Web statistics, you’ll know which posts are effective.



- ◆ **The number of unique visitors to your blog or podcast compared to the number to your Web site:** Blog posts can consist of unique information about your products or services. If you have more unique visitors to specific blog posts, or to your blog in general, it’s a sign that the information is well received. If your blog attracts more unique visitors than your site does, consider creating links in your blog posts to related information on your Web site. If your site receives more hits than your blog, add some links from the specific products or services you offer to blog posts about these specific items.
- ◆ **The geographical location of your blog visitors:** If the majority of visitors are from a country other than your target market, change your message.
- ◆ **The number of people viewing your podcast:** Tells you how effective your marketing efforts are. When you have lots of visitors, you’ve created informative media that is in demand.
- ◆ **The number of unique page views in your podcast or blog:** You can figure out which episodes or posts are being received well. Use this information for planning future episodes of your podcast.

- ◆ **Whether blog posts with embedded videos get lots of hits:** If the blog posts with video are getting lots of hits and the video is also getting lots of views on the video hosting service, you've created an effective video. If you're seeing lots of positive comments on these posts, as well as lots of comments on the video hosting service, you've hit a home run.
- ◆ **Number of incoming links in your WordPress Dashboard:** Getting lots of incoming links means that you're getting noticed, and that's a good thing.
- ◆ **The direction of traffic:** If you have an established blog or podcast, your traffic rate and number of incoming links should be increasing. If they aren't, consider shaking things up a bit by offering different content. Look at which posts or episodes have been popular in the past. Expand on those topics or put a new spin on them, and carefully monitor the results.

If you host your blog on your own domain, you can find out a little bit more about your visitors:

- ◆ **How much time visitors are spending at your site and on individual posts:** You have to decipher this information. Your Web server lists the actual page name, which is not that same as the title of the blog post. For example, a post entitled "The Early Bird Gets the Photo" on [www.dougplusrox.com](http://www.dougplusrox.com) is referenced by the following URL: `http://www.dougplusrox.com/?p=369`.
- ◆ **Which pages are most frequently used to enter or leave the site:** If visitors are entering and exiting the home page and spending only a short length of time on your site, they're skimming only one or two posts before getting out of Dodge. If you're in this situation, it's time to rethink your message. Visitors entering your site on a specific page, however, have honed in on a specific post from either a search engine result or an incoming link. If you have lots of these and visitors are spending a fair amount of time on your site and exiting from a different page, you have an effective blog.

## **Comments**

An important way to measure your site's effectiveness is by looking for the following information in the Comments section:

- ◆ **Number of comments on each blog post:** This information is important if your goal is to stimulate interaction with potential customers. If certain blog posts are drawing more comments than others, this information is more relevant to your subscribers.

- ◆ **Comment length:** If you've written a lengthy post and you receive lengthy comments, you've struck a chord with subscribers and presented useful information. If comments are sparse, however, indicating that you haven't given your user base food for thought, consider changing the nature of your posts or the type of information you post.
- ◆ **The tone of comments on your posts:** If comments on the majority of your posts sound positive and you have lots of comments, you're sending the right message. You can be somewhat controversial at times and stir up provocative comments, but unless you're Rush Limbaugh or another shock jock, make it the exception and not the rule. If, on the other hand, the comments aren't flattering, you know what you need to do.
- ◆ **An increasing number of comments with each post:** If you're seeing more comments on posts, it means that
  - You're putting the right message out there.
  - The number of visitors to your blog is increasing.



If the number of comments for new posts is decreasing, you're losing your audience — and you must change your message.

Interesting or controversial videos garner lots of comments. If comments are positive, your message is being received well. If the majority of comments are negative, change the tone of your videos or create videos about different topics.

If you're receiving comments on individual podcast episodes, people are downloading the podcast from your Web site rather than using a subscription. Analyze which episodes reward you with the most comments — and then include that type of information in future podcasts. If a particular episode draws lots of positive comments, see whether you can create a follow-up episode or create a series based on the topic.

- ◆ **Number of visitors versus the number of comments:** If you have a fairly high ratio of comments to visitors, you're creating interesting material that gets visitors thinking.

### *Videos*

When you've posted a video to a third-party site (such as YouTube or Vimeo), you can look there for some stats about these categories:

- ◆ **Number of subscribers:** At YouTube, you find this information on your channel. If you're creating relevant videos, you should notice a steady increase in subscribers with each new video you upload.

- ◆ **Growth in the number of subscribers:** You should experience steady growth as you regularly add new videos to your channel. If you notice a significant spurt after you post a video, analyze its content to determine why the video caused the growth spurt. Chances are good that you did something different or found a topic of particular interest to your subscribers. If, on the other hand, you notice a decline in new subscribers or a decrease in subscribers after posting a video, figure out what you did wrong and refrain from posting similar videos.
- ◆ **Number of people viewing individual videos:** You can find this information by visiting your home page. On Vimeo, you see the number of plays for each video. On your YouTube channel, view your channel to see the number of plays for each video (see Figure 5-1).

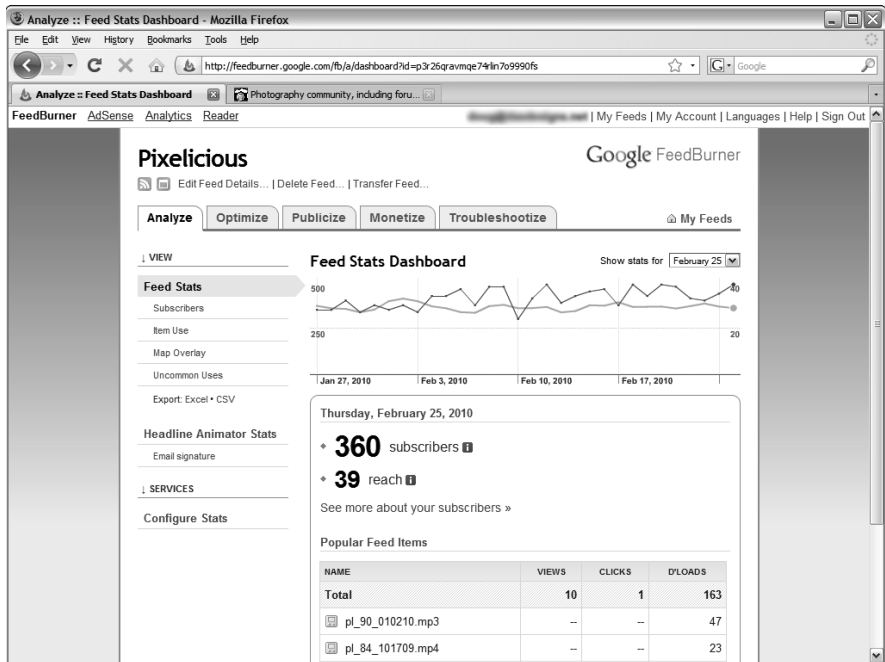


**Figure 5-1:** Viewing the number of plays for your YouTube videos.

## RSS

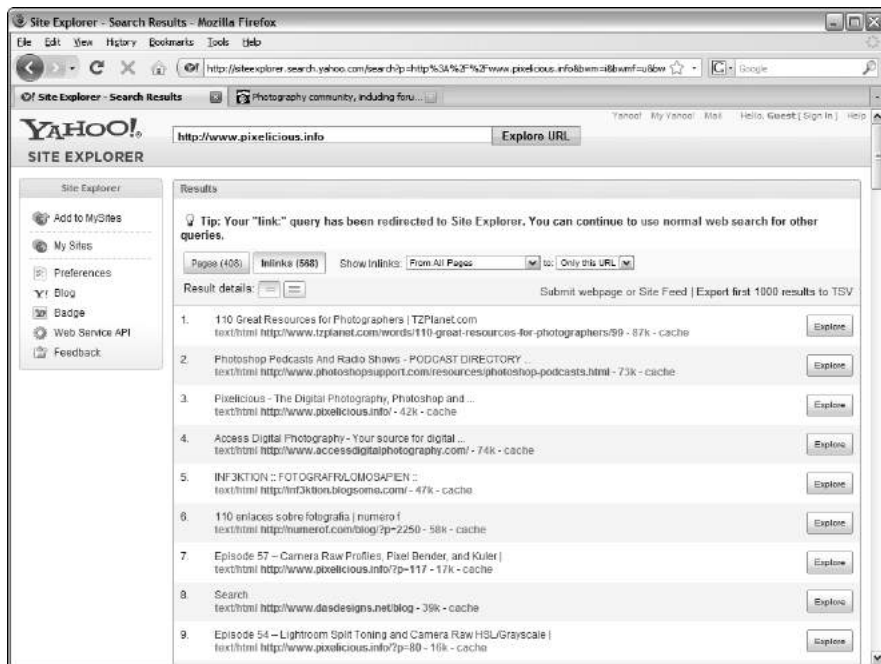
When you distribute your blog or podcast by way of Really Simple Syndication (RSS), you can find out these stats:

- ◆ **Access methods:** Determine how many people are getting your information from your FeedBurner feed by checking the stats at [feedburner.google.com](http://feedburner.google.com) (see Figure 5-2). For more information on Feedburner, see Book III, Chapter 2.



**Figure 5-2:**  
Using  
FeedBurner  
to analyze  
stats.

- ◆ **Reach:** This statistic tells you how many people are viewing or downloading specific episodes. You can find this information if your podcast feed is burned through FeedBurner.
- ◆ **Traffic patterns:** Does the graph show dramatic peaks and valleys? Does it show a sharp rise or a steady rise? Has the graph reached a plateau? Peaks and valleys signify the popularity of content. When you see a sharp peak in the graph, you've struck a nerve with a popular topic. Sharp valleys indicate content that went over like a lead balloon. If the graph has been relatively flat for a while, it's time to rethink your content. If the graph has been continually rising, you've found a good mix, which means it ain't broke, so don't fix it.
- ◆ **Appearance of your posts in social bookmarking services:** Check Delicious, reddit, or StumbleUpon.
- ◆ **Who's talking about you:** Find out whether your domain is garnering attention by checking out its ranking at Technorati (<http://technorati.com/>).
- ◆ **Number of incoming links:** Go to Google, Yahoo!, or MSN.com and type **link:http://www.mysite.com** in the Search text field. You see a list of incoming links to your content, as shown in Figure 5-3.



**Figure 5-3:**  
Tracking  
incoming  
links to your  
podcast or  
blog.

- ◆ **Number of people using a service to be notified of new posts or podcast episodes:** If you don't have a lot of takers, consider offering something of value, such as a free e-book, in exchange for an e-mail subscription.



Make sure that your privacy notice tells subscribers that their e-mail contact information will be kept private and used only to notify them whenever new content is posted.

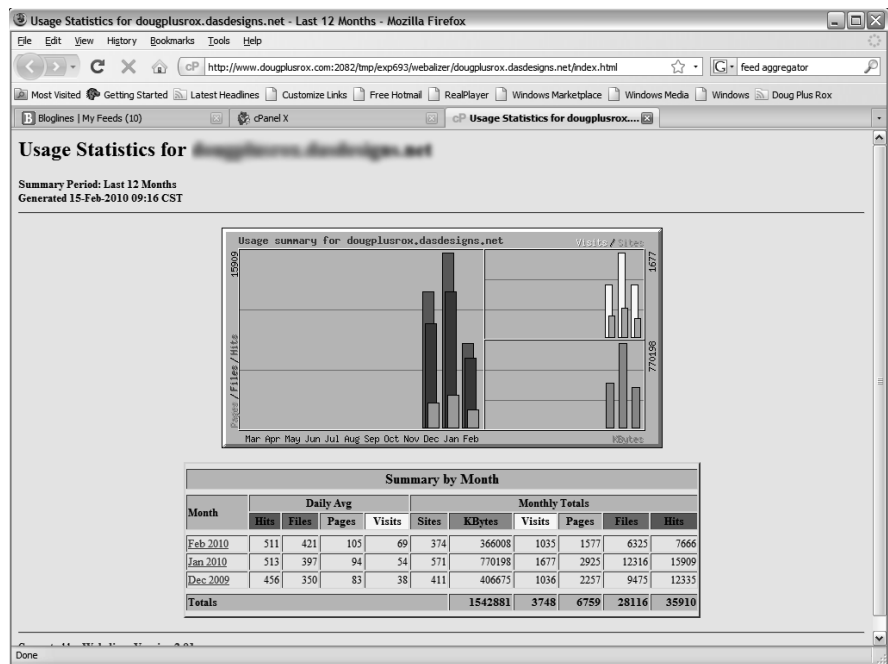
## Viewing General Statistics with Webalizer

As we outlined in the previous section, a way to keep tabs on the amount of traffic your blog receives is to view statistics from your Web server. To do so, you have to visit the URL associated with your site's control panel. Your Web hosting service tech-support team can lead you in the right direction.

The number of statistics you can access depends on your Web hosting company. Many of them use Webalizer; its graph shows you how many visitors stopped by your site on a specific day. The application also tallies stats by month. Figure 5-4 shows general Webalizer stats for a blog.

You can also analyze statistics by month, to see more detailed information such as the number of hits or visits per day and the referring URLs. You can also view the keywords visitors use to find you and the Web browser they use to view your site. The latter information is important if you make any major design changes; you can optimize the changes for the Web browser that's most often used to view your site (see Figure 5-5).

If you're interested in seeing which countries' residents are accessing your blog, check at the bottom of Webalizer stats page in the tastefully decorated pie chart, shown in Figure 5-6. (Mmm, pie.)

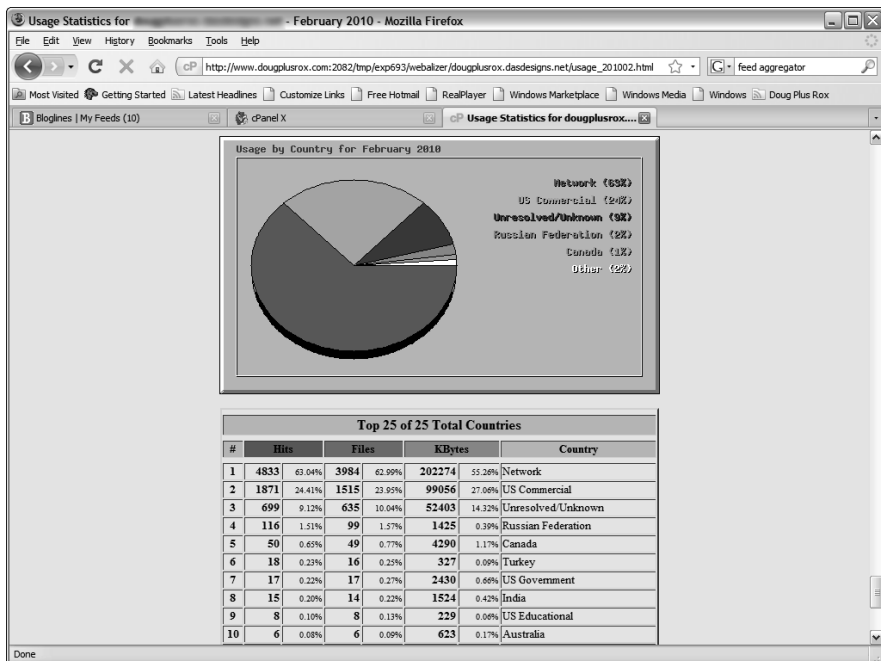


**Figure 5-4:**  
Viewing statistics for a blog.





**Figure 5-5:** Viewing detailed statistics for a blog.



**Figure 5-6:** Seeing from where in the world visitors come.

## *Comparing Hard and Soft Costs versus “Income”*

Smart businesspeople don't spin their wheels. If something doesn't gain traction, they do something else. After analyzing the number of visitors your podcast or blog receives, or the number of views your videos receive, you have to factor in your *return on investment (ROI)*, or the amount of revenue you're receiving in return for your hard work.



As long as your media generates more interest and awareness about your product or service, as time goes on your efforts will turn into cash. If you have the right content and you've drawn lots of people to view your content, the rest will come in time.

To help calculate your return, consider these two types of costs:

- ◆ **Hard:** The number of man-hours needed to create content for your podcast, blog, or videocast. Next would be the cost to host any media online, which would be Web hosting fees and any fees you pay to a designer to get your media online. If you're paying for premium video hosting such as Vimeo Plus, you have to factor this cost in as well.
- ◆ **Soft:** This is the amount of time you personally spend creating content. Did that time take you away from any other profitable activities such as hobnobbing with the rich and famous, or other potential clients?

After you calculate the number of dollars you've invested in social media, you have to determine whether it has all been worthwhile. The only way you can do it is to track where your business is coming from. If you have a bricks-and-mortar presence, ask your customers: "How did you hear about us?" If you also have an online presence, include a required text field on your checkout form that asks the same question. Then you'll know exactly where your business is coming from and how much of it can be attributed to social media. If you want to fine-tune it, have your Web designer create a drop-down list that shows the different social media you're using. The purchaser can then choose which social media, if any, sent him to your online store.



You can also include a question at your online checkout that asks the user which forms of social media she's involved with. If you aren't involved with a social media network that a large number of your customers belong to, you may want to consider joining the network and seeing whether the potential exists for increasing your business.

## Checking iTunes Subscribers

When you make your podcast available from the iTunes store, you're out there with the heavy hitters. You have no way, at least for now, to find out how many iTunes users are subscribed to your podcast, but you can find out how popular your podcast is, by following these steps:

- 1. Launch iTunes.**

The lovely iTunes interface graces your computer.

- 2. Click Store.**

The iTunes Store appears.

- 3. Click Podcasts.**

The most popular podcasts are listed. If yours is on this page, you've made the big leagues. If it isn't, you have to do a little more work to find out how popular your podcast is.

- 4. Enter a keyword that's associated with your podcast.**

If you're a photographer, *photography* is the key. After you enter the keyword, a list of podcasts appears, as shown in Figure 5-7.

- 5. Analyze the list of podcasts to see where your brainchild appears.**

You can also sort podcasts by podcast name, episode name, release date, duration, popularity, or price. You're looking for popularity: When you see bars extending all the way across the Popularity column, you know that the episode is quite a popular one.

You can also use iTunes to determine which of your episodes are most popular. This information is useful in planning future episodes. To rank podcasts by popularity, follow these steps:

- 1. Launch iTunes.**

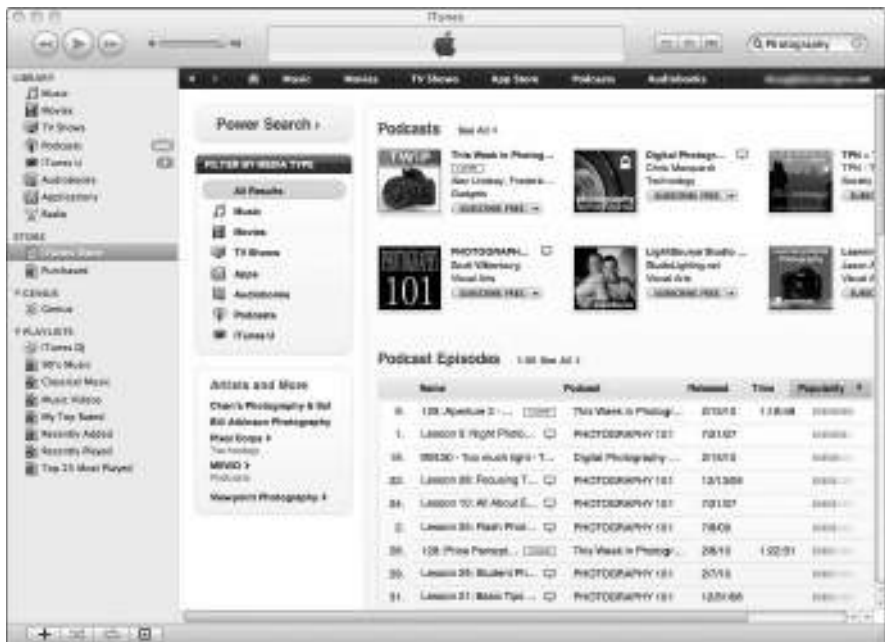
The iTunes interface appears.

- 2. Click Store.**

The home page of the iTunes store appears.

- 3. Click Podcasts.**

The most popular podcasts are listed on this page.



**Figure 5-7:** Determining the popularity of your podcast.

- 4. Enter the name of your podcast in the Search text field.**  
Your podcast description page appears.
- 5. Hover the cursor over the artwork representing the show.**  
An Information icon appears.
- 6. Click the Information icon.**  
Information about your show, including its ratings, appears in another window, shown in Figure 5-8.
- 7. Click the Go to This Podcast.**  
Your podcast appears against a lovely black background and displays any comments left about your podcast.
- 8. Click the Popularity icon.**  
Your episodes are sorted by popularity, as shown in Figure 5-9.

**Figure 5-8:**  
Extra,  
extra —  
read all  
about it!



**Figure 5-9:**  
Episodes  
are  
sorted by  
popularity.

