



## **More Measurement is Marvellous**

**The two extremes of website measurement for the B2B Centre's SME clients are summed up in the following scenarios:**

**Firstly, when we ask the question "Do you look at your web statistics?" many people shuffle awkwardly and tell us that they don't get any or that they looked at them a few months ago but haven't checked recently.**

**In the second scenario, our clients come to us saying their site is no good because they're not selling anything or generating any enquiries.**

**Both these situations flag up, in different ways, that website owners' need some help thinking about measuring website performance. Gareth Edwards, B2B Centre Associate eMarketing Consultant, examines what to measure, how to measure and what to do about the results.**

### **Never Mind the Quality, Feel the Width**

In previous articles such as "[A website is for life and not just for Christmas](#)", we have explored the concept that just getting a website designed, built and launched is such a big deal for SMEs that there is a tendency to think "Phew, thank goodness that's done" when the site is live. Measurement is not a big issue.

The site is judged on what it looks like, first and foremost. After that, performance is measured on a) sales, if it's an e-commerce site and b) enquiries if it's a "brochure" site. What constitutes success for either sales or enquiries has often not been defined and clearly no other metrics are being looked at. The problem with this approach is that we're not looking widely enough to really understand what's going on, let alone do something about it.

These issues are compounded by the fact that people are unaware of the tools that are available to help them. Basic website statistics are almost always available from hosting companies and, as we shall see, there are some other very useful ways to find out what's going on.

### **Benefits of Measurement**

So why should you spend more time on website measurement? Well, it's quite straightforward really. By measuring the right factors you can:

1. Set up your website correctly in the first place. So if you have an objective of attracting customers from new market sectors, then having focused landing pages and including market-related questions in registration forms might help you to measure success in this area.
2. Find out what's really happening with your website in terms of technical, business and visitor performance. Is the site profitable, are your directory entries generating traffic and your calls to action effective?



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3. Understand why you are getting your particular results. Lack of sales could be down to poor keyword performance so no-one gets to your site, lacklustre website copy that doesn't grab visitors' attention or a problem with your online payment facility.
4. See where you have issues so that you can do something about them. As the saying goes "You can't manage what you don't measure."
5. See where you are achieving success so that you can repeat the gains elsewhere. If you are generating traffic from a high ranking keyword then find out how you have got that ranking and repeat it for other keywords.
6. Monitor performance over time and see the effects of changes to the site infrastructure, new product launches, marketing campaigns etc.

## What to Measure

The first step in the B2B Centre's website planning process asks users to spell out their business (and marketing) objectives. Even if you're not starting from scratch, this is a good approach.

Two things are really important in this process. Firstly, including quantifiable objectives (e.g. number of customers, sales, new products etc.) that give you both a measure and a target and secondly, ensuring that you drop down to as great a level of detail as possible. For instance, use your knowledge of the market to define the number of enquiries (for all sources) that you will need to achieve a given level of sales.

For some of our clients' personnel, this exercise can be a bit of an eye opener as well as something of a challenge since it forces them to consider their business model. It is an essential introduction into the next step which is defining specifically what the objectives of the website are and therefore what to measure.

Let's split out some of the measurement areas to throw more light onto possible factors to look at. We'll start with the business side of things and then move on to look at some of the underlying factors that are worth measuring, including more technical aspects such as site traffic and search engine performance.

Remember this isn't an exhaustive list; we want to prompt you to think about what measures are relevant to you.

### **Business**

Here, we need to consider the role the website is going to play in meeting the previously defined business objectives. For instance, if you want to increase sales to existing customers, how much of the increase do you expect to come from the website in terms of direct sales or enquiries and how will you measure it?

Some examples of business related metrics that you might need to observe and set targets for are:

- Sales (by product line, customer, country or region etc.)
- Revenue
- Profitability (by sale, product line etc.)
- Prospect conversion rate
- Enquiries (by form, email, phone or even Internet Messenger)



This list is highly dependent on the nature of your business. So think about what's important and involve business advisers and accountants to help make the choice.

### **Website Traffic**

This section is concerned with how many people get to your site and how they get there. These are indicators as to the effectiveness of search engine optimisation and eMarketing.

- Number of site visitors
- Geographical location
- How did they get to the site?
  - Typed in a URL (was it a promotional URL on packaging or in a print ad)
  - Referral from a directory, another website, an affiliate programme or a banner ad.
  - Pay Per Click (PPC) click through
  - Natural search via a search engine and which search engines were used
- Search terms used: literally what keywords and phrases people have used to get to you

### **Site Related**

Site related metrics will help you understand how effective the structure, navigation and usability of the site are. They may also point to shortcomings in your website copy. Is your proposition articulated strongly enough and are your "calls to action" effective?

- Bounce rates per page - did visitors hit a page and then navigate away from your site or did they follow a link to another page on your website?
- Navigation paths – what path did visitors take, was it what you expected and what were visitors interested in?
- Subscription/registration – to eMail newsletters for instance
- Repeat visits
- Downloads (e.g. product information or location maps)

### **SEO (Search Engine Optimisation)**

SEO measures have been included to emphasise the fact that optimisation is an on-going process. Performance needs to be checked regularly because other people are likely to be competing against you for the same keywords and phrases and the same audience. At least check the following:

- Visibility – how many pages on the site are indexed by the search engines?
- Number and quality of inbound links - from directories, affiliate programmes and partners
- Keyword ranking – where does your site appear in the search engines for your targeted keywords

### **Customer Related**

Last in the list but not least in importance are measures related to customer experience.

- Brand awareness – does your target audience really know what you do?
- How did they find you?
- Where else do they look?
- Why did they buy (or not)?
- What did they think of the website experience?
- What else would they like to see (products, information, support etc.)?



## How to Measure

The previous section might have been a lot to take in and you could be forgiven for thinking that it would be an impossible job to collect, monitor and analyse all of those figures. Fortunately there are a variety of tools and techniques to help. Let's run through them quickly.

### Website Statistics

We have never had a situation where stats weren't available from a hosting company – and they are invariably free. If you don't get them automatically then check on their website to see if they have a "my account" or "user console" that gives you access. If not, contact them for details of how to get to them via a web browser.

Web stats give some raw information to work with. They usually provide details about visitor numbers, search terms, entry and exit pages, the most popular pages and, sometimes, referring sites.

The great strength of web stats is that they give you a baseline from which to measure activity over a period of time. Don't treat them as gospel truth because they will be distorted by, for instance, visits by search engine spiders.

It is important to look at the page view number as a *more* accurate figure for numbers of real visitors.

It's best to ignore page hits because they count the download of individual elements of the website (e.g. graphics) separately.

### Analytics

A separate B2B Centre article is dealing in more detail with web analytics, specifically [Google Analytics](#), which outlines how you can use it in your business and how to register .

Fundamentally web analytics are extremely powerful tools that give real insights into how visitors get to your site and, most importantly what they do when they get there. Analytics make it possible to see what paths visitors take through your site, what links they click on and at what point in the process they decide to abandon the site. You can set goals (such as getting a visitor to a contact page or product page) and then analyse the conversion rate.

The B2B Centre strongly recommends that you use analytics to measure website performance – don't forget that a number of analytics tools are completely free. You might need the help of your website developer to install them if you don't have control over your website.

### B2B Centre SEO Tool

The B2B Centre has recently launched an [SEO tool](#) to help you review the performance of your site in search engine terms. The specific measures available include the number of inbound links, keyword rankings and keyword competitiveness. It also allows you to see details such as numbers of H1 headings which are an important part of improving the competitiveness of your site.

Some people find the topic of search engine optimisation confusing. Try ignoring the jargon and thinking about search engines as one of your live customers. SEO metrics can then be seen as indicators as to the usability of your site and how effectively you are promoting it.



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### Site Feedback & Surveys

You probably have your email address and phone number on your site. But are they specific to the site so you can differentiate contact generated from a site visit? Do you have different contact details for different aspects of site operation (e.g. sales or customer service)? Plenty of our clients tell us that their website isn't generating any enquiries.....and then admit that they have no way of telling if a call or email was inspired by an initial visit to their site.

Getting direct information from site users and customers is very valuable. It will tell you what works and what doesn't. Some of our clients make a point of asking their customers what search terms they use and how they qualify searches to get to what they want (e.g. do they type in the name of a town or a designer label?).

On the website, it's easy to add a feedback email address or a simple response form. There are also a variety of online survey tools (e.g. [Key Survey](#)) that add a professional and structured approach to getting real customers' views. Check around for free trials and the best packages to suit your needs.

Direct customer information can be so powerful that it's worth offering an incentive to get it; a free download of a reference manual, entry into a prize draw or even a discount on a purchase.

### Making Changes

Measurement results will tell you how your website (and probably your business) is doing. What they also give you is an indication of where to make changes. Some of these changes may be to the website itself, for instance reviewing page titles to enhance search engine performance or altering website copy to promote a company or a product more effectively.

Other changes might be external to the site. Increasing the number of quality, inbound links is an obvious example. Looking at the wider online and offline promotion of your business is another. It might even lead you to reviewing competitor activity (see the B2B Centre article on ["Online Competitor Activity"](#)) to see if that reveals anything about your own performance.

The key to website measurement success is to establish your checklist of metrics and targets and set the timescale for checking for each one. It should be possible to prioritise your measures, based on the nature of your business, to give you an indication of how frequently to check them.

### And Finally

The intention of the article was to flag up why it is so important to think beyond the very basic measures of website performance. As we have seen there is plenty that you could look at and a variety of ways to capture and monitor the statistics. What we ask you to do next is think about your business and your website and consider what specifically you should be measuring.

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