



The Content Man

The information you need to optimize your web content.

Using Google Analytics to help optimize your content

By The Content Man

A lot of Content Optimization is common sense and best practice. But there is a science to it, also. Your website performance can be measured, using Google Analytics or similar tools.

Google Analytics is free, and used by many companies, even large ones. Google Analytics provides user-friendly dashboards that can give you rich information about how your website performs, which you can then use to evaluate and improve the elements of your site. Following are some of the most important statistics you can gather with Google Analytics:

Most popular keywords for finding your site. Knowing your visitors is key to improving content. You want to align your content with the visitors who find you. Or conversely, you may want to change your content and keywords to attract additional or different visitors.

Most popular pages. Find out which pages people are visiting the most. You'll want to evaluate what drove them to those pages, and see if you can apply the same principles to direct people throughout your site. For example, did they click on a link offering a cool video? Were they looking for a specific kind of information? Did they respond to an offer?

Average length of site visit. You can see the average length of time that all visitors spend on your website. This is a very general measurement of content quality. And since it's an average, it could be misleading. For example, 8 out of 10 people might leave quickly, but the other two might stay at your site for a long time. This would produce a low average, but content performance could actually be very good. For example, perhaps the 8 people left quickly because they were at the wrong site (in which case you might want to revisit your keywords.)

Average page views per visit. This is a great measure of how well your content involves people and draws them into your site. A rich, optimized site should lead people into your site and prompt them to click through and drill down. As with all averages, however, be careful to look into the data. Perhaps some people stay for a long, rich experience at your site (meaning you do have good content) , and others are leaving right away (perhaps because they found the wrong site; check your keywords).

Which page are visitors on when they leave your site? This statistic can tell you a lot of things. It may indicate there's a dead-end on your site, something you'd want to fix quickly. If people are coming to your home page, going nowhere else, and leaving from your home page, then that tells you that your home page needs a serious Content Optimization renovation. However, be sure to look at all the different site data. For instance, you may find that most visitors leave on the home page *but only after they've already explored your site*--and that's a fine thing.

Bounce rate. This gives you a percentage of how many site visitors leave after viewing just one page. Bounce rates vary widely for different sites, depending on what kind of product is involved,

marketplace issues, and many other factors. If you compare bounce rates, be sure you compare yours with others in the same industry. A high bounce rate may mean your home page is weak. Visitors may find nothing that involves them and leave. Or repeat visitors could be turning away, because you haven't given them fresh content.

Google Analytics can't tell you how to fix your site, but it *can* give you the data you need to guide your Content Optimization efforts. You can learn more about this tool at www.google.com/analytics/.