

Using ClickTracks *Part 1: Getting Started*

If you're just getting started with ClickTracks, you'll find it's a very versatile tool. It presents information by overlaying it on your actual Web pages. It also allows you to create reports "on the fly" so that you can look at your visitors' behaviour on your site in very different and detailed ways.

But if analyzing Web metrics is new to you, the charts, figures and mass of potential data can still be quite overwhelming. It's helpful to have some starting points and questions in mind as you study the reports so that you can find the most useful information.

This article offers some ideas and examples to spark your thinking:

Navigation Report

This report shows you (among other things) how many visitors clicked on each link, and how long they spent on this page.

If you have links that receive few or no clicks:

- Is the link image or the link text too small?
- Is it in a colour that doesn't show up well or could pose problems for visitors with visual impairments?
- Is it badly placed or hard to find on the page?
- Is it too far down? – check the time spent on the page to get an idea of whether
- visitors are reading most or all of the content. Remember that the first screenful of the page has the best chance of being seen.

If none of the above seem true:

- Is the link text confusing – perhaps the wording is different or not included on other pages?
- Is the link not attractive or engaging to your visitors?
- Or, is the content behind the link simply not of interest?

Links that receive many clicks:

- Should the content behind this link be highlighted even more on your site, since it is clearly of interest?

Placements to think about:

- If you have an internal search engine on your site, is it linked in a prominent place on each page?
- Featured products or other items – can you increase the clicks that they receive by improving their position?

Time spent on the page:

- Does the average time on this page seem too short, especially if the page is long? – check the number of visitors who are exiting the site from this page.
If a lot of people are spending a short time on a page and leaving, consider splitting the content across more pages:
- This can be especially helpful, e.g. when displaying a list of items for purchase – showing each on a separate page allows you to track which offerings are the most interesting to visitors, and to highlight them better
- Shortening pages also reduces the risk that visitors will miss items further down if they choose not to scroll

Search Report

This report shows the keywords and phrases that brought visitors to your site, broken down by individual search engines.

Which keywords or key phrases are most effective for you:

- Which search words or phrases draw the most traffic?
- Which search words or phrases result in the most time spent on your site?
These are the visitors who are most engaged in your content, but what were they looking for when they came to you?
- Are there any surprises?
Sometimes search engines pick up keywords from your site copy that you may not have thought of as significant – these can be valuable information about how your visitors



describe or think about what you offer. A lot of demand for something on your site can give you ideas for enhancing or expanding your products and services.

Which search engines are the most effective?

- If your site is optimized for one search engine in particular, is that engine bringing you traffic?
If you're paying for search engine optimization (other than pay per click), is your service providing a justifiable return on investment?
- If you have very effective keywords on one search engine, can you improve their position on others?
- Do you recognize your non search engine referrers?
- How are you linked to?
Are the references to you legitimate? Are there sites that link to you that you're not comfortable with – either because they're not describing your site offerings correctly, or perhaps you simply don't want to be associated with them!
- Should you thank the referrer?
Often, sites will link to you without letting you know. If you appreciate them for doing this, you can create an even stronger – and potentially more profitable relationship.

For help in creating specific ClickTracks reports, see Part 2: Labeling Options. For help in using ClickTracks to evaluate your "must-see" pages, see Part 3 of this series.

Part 2: Labeling Options

ClickTracks allows you to segment your visitors in many ways using the “Create Labels” tool. You create instant reports to answer questions about the patterns of specific types of visitor, and track their responses to your site.

Here are some ideas for using this option:

Comparing Search Engine / Non Search Engine Traffic

Visitors come to your site either from search engines, from other sites that link to you, from e-mail marketing messages or e-zines, or perhaps from their own bookmarks.

Use the ClickTracks “Create Labels” tool, and select “referred from any search engine” as your criteria to track all search engine visitors. Then, create another label using the same criteria, but select “Inverse” to identify all the visitors not referred from a search engine.

Now you can investigate:

Are search engine visitors more responsive to your site than those who find you in other ways:

- Which type of visitor spends longer on the site?
- Which type of visitor is more likely to reach one of your “goal” or “must-see” pages? (see Part 3 of this series for more on this topic).

If you have very specific keywords, then probably search engines will produce your most valuable traffic.

However, if you are publishing content on external sites that link to you, visitors from these sites may be more valuable than those from search engines, since they already know about your products or services, maybe have read something that you’ve written, and are more ready to do business with you.

Comparing Short / Long Visits

Looking at the amount of time spent on your site can give clues as to how well it’s meeting visitor expectations and engaging their interest.

Use the ClickTracks “Create Labels” tool, and select “had a certain session length” combined with “at most 5 seconds” as your criteria to track people who left your site almost immediately.



Then, create another label using the same criteria, but select “at least 60 seconds” (or your preference) to identify all the visitors who spent some significant time on your site.

Now you can investigate:

Which are your best performing keywords and referrers:

- Which keywords and referring sites result in long visits?
- Which result in short visits?

If you have a lot of traffic from certain keywords, but these result in very short visit lengths, check the landing pages for those searches (see Part 3 of this series for more on this topic). It may be that the first page that visitors see is not meeting their expectations, and should be modified.

If you have keywords that are very successful in generating visitors who stay on your site, check that you’ve optimized them for as many search engines as possible.

Which pages do the people who stay on your site (long visits) see:

- Which pages engage your visitors the most? (check the time spent on the page from the Navigation report). Then ensure that you have appropriate calls to action on these pages to drive your traffic to the next step, so that visitors are not leaving from these points.
- Are these pages attracting enough traffic?

If you have pages which are clearly successful once you’ve got visitors to them, are there ways to increase the number of people who see them? Is the navigation to these pages sufficiently attractive from other parts of your site? Should they be better positioned?

For help in using ClickTracks to evaluate your "must-see" pages, see Part 3 of this series.

Landing Pages

It's important to know the exact pages of your site that the various search engines link to for each of your major keywords and phrases. These are called "landing pages", and are the first pages that visitors see when they click on search results.

Landing pages are critical for initial impressions and credibility, especially for people who are not familiar with your business. It's also important to ensure that these pages fulfill the visitors' expectations based on their search terms.

Use the ClickTracks "Create Labels" tool, and select "used a certain search engine query" combined with the keyword or phrase as your criteria to track people who came to your site with that search.

Now you can investigate:

What are the Top Entry Pages (i.e. "Landing Pages") for this search term:

- Is the search term included in the page content? Often, visitors will be looking for their keywords to confirm that they're in the right place. If your page doesn't seem relevant to them, they'll leave.

Combine the landing page information with Top Exit Pages or Short Visits for this term for clues as to whether your landing page is sufficiently engaging.

Does the Landing Page drive visitors into the rest of your site:

- If you do have relevant content on the page, but visitors still leave, could there be other reasons for their lack of engagement?

Landing pages are also those that you link to in your e-mail marketing messages - and again, are the first thing that the reader sees when they click through from one of your campaigns.

Often, site owners assume that every visitor sees their home page, which is the primary means of navigation. Your landing pages are the first that visitors will see, so they need to act as mini-home pages too.

Use this information about what visitors are seeking when they arrive at your site and what their expectations may be to direct them to other pages that will meet their needs.

Goal or "Must-See" Pages

The key pages on your site where people make decisions to buy a product, download a sample, subscribe to your newsletter, etc are known as "goal" or "must-see" pages. These are the places to which you drive your traffic to in order to achieve your site objectives.

Use the ClickTracks "Create Labels" tool, and select "visited a certain page" combined with your goal page name as your criteria to track people who visited that page.

Now you can investigate:

Is this page hard to find?

- Do visitors take a long time to reach this page? (check the average time to the page from the Navigation report)
- Are there other "must-see" pages that are critical on the path to this page? (check the "Previous Page" information in the Navigation report)

These findings can give you ideas for improving the navigation to, and positioning of your "Goal Page".

Does how the visitor found your site affect the success of the "Goal Page"?

- Are there critical keyword searches or referring URL's that generate better traffic in reaching your goal?

Combine this information with your most effective keywords data to ensure that you're paying for the best return on investment in generating quality traffic.

Philippa Gamse, CyberSpeaker, is a Web strategy consultant and professional speaker. To shed more light on your own web traffic and increase sales contact Philippa at (831) 465-0317 or at pgamse@CyberSpeaker.com and visit her Web site at <http://www.CyberSpeaker.com> for more information.

