

## GOOGLE ANALYTICS – Using Statistics to Improve Your Site's Performance

Google Analytics is an awesome free tool with so many features to use. Perhaps too many for most of us!

Statistics by themselves serve a limited purpose. It is when we start using the information to improve certain aspects of our efforts that they come into their own.

Where Google Analytics (GA) becomes user-friendly and interesting, though, is where we can arrange the data to see **and compare** various bits of information.

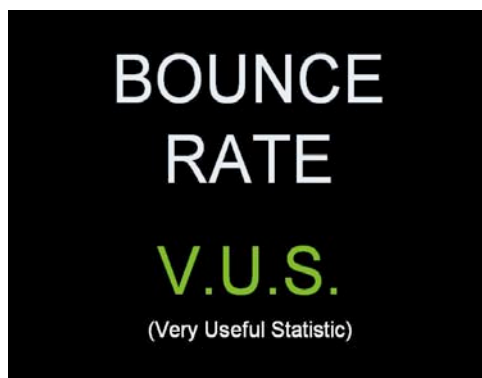
OK. Google Analytics will give us our daily unique visitors, numbers of pages visited, referrers, countries, keywords used, (etc.). That's pretty much the same as SBI!. There are a couple of extra and very useful reports in Google. However, as with anything else, we need to **focus on the 80-20 principle** here and use the stats judiciously to truly increase our site's performances.

So, we'll be focusing today on just a couple of stats that I've earmarked that are easy to use and can add value. Before we start though:



**NOTE: The top thing that adds value to your site will always be more content.** Using GA to tweak pages should not be your main focus whilst you are still building your site into a reasonable information resource. Besides which, you simply do not have enough data to base decisions on.

However, once your site has a substantial base, there is huge merit in listening to what your visitors are telling you, and GA is a great tool to use for that. So let's start **Analyzing!**



**Bounce Rate...** That's a biggie for me as it's a very useful stat in Analytics to use. Why?

Google says: "Landing pages should provide the information and services that were promised in the ad copy (site description and title)." I'm sure that bounce rate is one of the on-site criteria that Google uses to rank pages, so it makes sense to aim for a lower bounce rate.

Yes, it will differ for various types of sites and various pages and we need to understand that and take it into consideration:

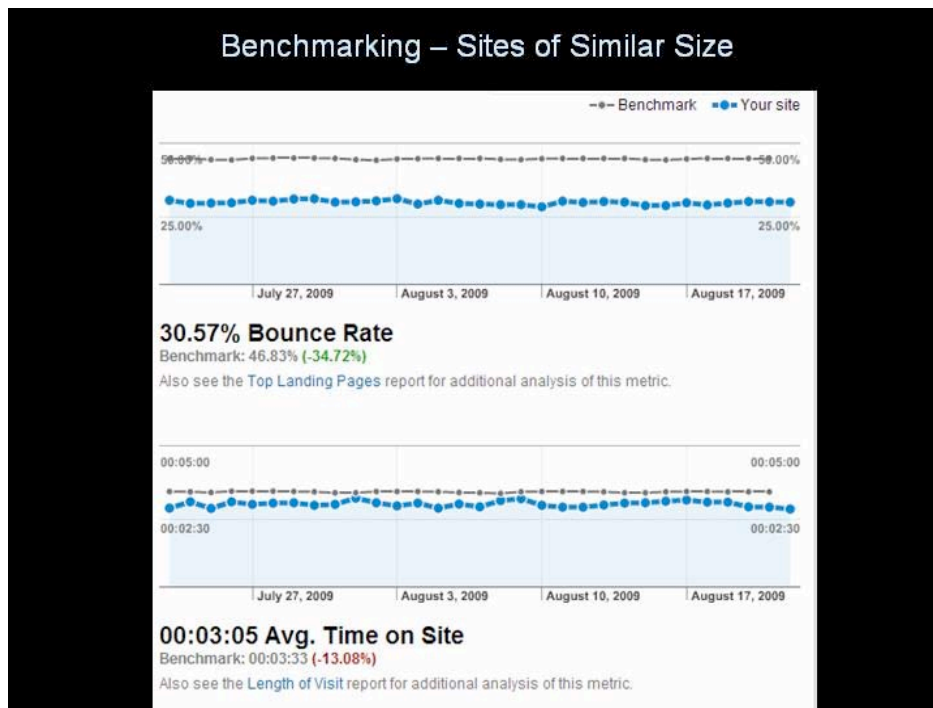
For example: A **weather** or **exchange rate** or **race horse results page** is likely to be bookmarked and will get a quick visit and high bounce off. (For these types of sites, measuring **returning** visitors will have more value.) The majority of the sites represented in SBI!, do not fall into the above categories though and that's why we need to look at bounce rate.

**So, what would be considered a low bounce rate and a high bounce rate? What bounce rate would you settle for as a minimum?**

Google Analytics specialist Avinash Kaushik has stated:

*"It is really hard to get a bounce rate under 20%, anything over 35% is cause for concern, 50% (above) is worrying."*

Let's remove the guesswork for a minute and have a look at **Google's Benchmarking** tool (in GA) where we can get a good idea where to position ourselves.



This first slide compares all TYPES OF SITES of a similar size. Note how the bounce rate is great (well below the benchmark) but the time spent on the site is below par.



If we look at **specific categories** (legal sites in this example), the picture changes a bit, where **both the bounce rate and the time spent on site** compares very well with the benchmark.

I'm showing both the **bounce rate and the average time** on the site here, because we must never look at any figure in isolation, as I will show you in a minute.

The above applies site-wide. However, if you look at just the **home page** and the **main concept keywords**, I think the bounce rate figures should be much lower. My home page has a bounce rate of 16% and for my main two concept keywords, the bounce rate is 16% and 13% respectively.

These figures will typically start out quite high with a new site (with just a few pages up) and should improve as one is able to satisfy a variety of searches for one's topic - more content!

So, let's drill down into the site itself:

### Time Spent vs Bounce Rate

medical consent form child	329	2.57	00:01:59	86.02%	41.03%
rental lease agreement templates	329	3.37	00:03:23	92.40%	19.45%
free temporary guardianship form	303	3.71	00:02:51	79.87%	33.99%
car bill of sale	294	2.55	00:01:42	93.88%	31.29%
letter of appointment	291	1.59	00:01:29	91.41%	78.01%
bill of sale car	288	2.83	00:01:48	95.49%	28.12%
free auto bill of sale	253	3.32	00:01:58	92.49%	24.51%
bill of sale auto	250	2.72	00:01:47	92.80%	28.80%
free legal contracts	250	5.22	00:04:17	87.60%	17.20%
car sale agreement	244	2.80	00:02:48	88.52%	37.30%
revoke power of attorney	244	2.20	00:01:57	85.66%	62.70%
loan agreement template free	15	3.00	00:00:33	80.00%	40.00%
referral agreement	15	1.33	00:00:44	86.67%	73.33%
bill of sale template free	14	3.93	00:00:42	85.71%	28.57%
employee warning letter	14	1.21	00:00:13	92.86%	92.86%
employment application form free	14	4.86	00:03:44	92.86%	7.14%

Per keyword **and** per page URL: If the bounce rate is low, I'm obviously satisfied. If the bounce rate is high, I don't panic. I analyze it. If it is a "destination" page – for example, a specific contract (using my site as an example) and the time spent on the page is relatively high, I understand that this is what my visitor wanted, got it and left. NO tweaking needed.

If the bounce rate is high **and** the time spent is low (as in the second slide above), I need to ask myself if I deliver what my visitor expected to see.

1. I may be "misinterpreting" that keyword. Back to brainstorm and click on the www icon to see what visitors "generally" expect to find with that keyword. So how about writing another page for that then?
2. Is my internal linking up to scratch to guide them to another page that may answer their question as they expected to find initially?
3. Do I have elements on the page that take a long time to open (graphics, weather button, gadgets and gizmos) that irritate my visitors and make them leave? Fix it.
4. Home page: Do I give them a good overview of my site and entice them to click through or do I scare them off with an in your face sales pitch?

5. Keywords: Sometimes Google will post one of your pages in their results for a keyword, which is not quite spot on. Example: for "bill of sale," Google may send them to my automobile bill of sale, but the visitor is in the market for a bill of sale for personal goods. I need to show them clearly that I do have other forms too - either by internal linking or good NavBar titles.

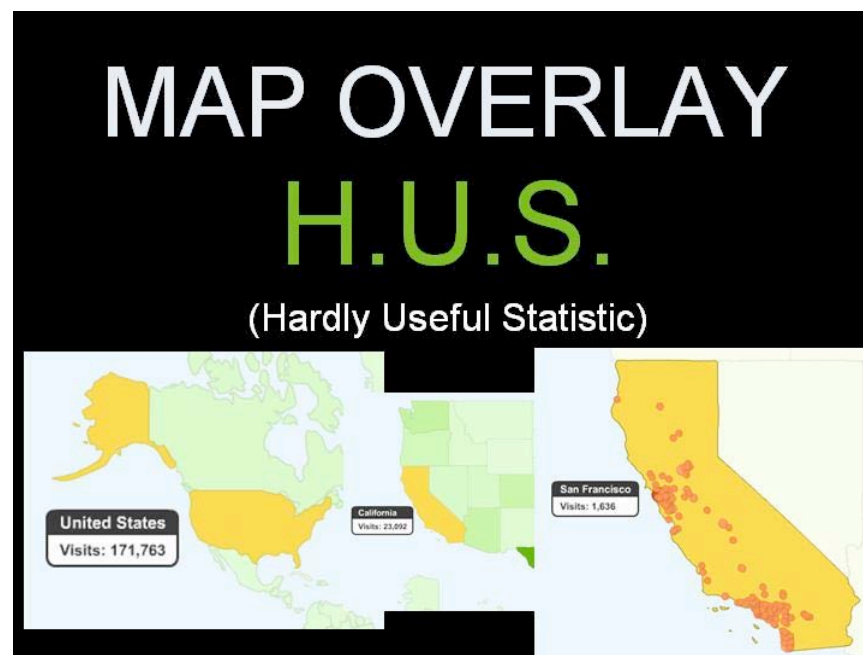
6. Is my page bland looking and does not draw my visitor in? Do I have a captivating headline and opening paragraph? Should I add some graphics? People in the forums reported a drop in bounce rate after adding graphics to a page. I do have a high bounce rate on my bathroom site (about 50%). I can see though that my image visitors (who account for about 21% of my traffic) do have a high bounce rate, so I don't think at this time I'll be spending a lot of time tweaking. I hope my "normal" visitors will increase, and I shall be monitoring that bounce rate.

Look for the **high bounce rate** pages and try to reduce them, look at the **low bounce rate** pages and learn why they cause people to continue through your site.

Do this methodically. Select a couple of pages with high visitor numbers and high bounce rate and target them first. You can then test a number of changes that you make to see which ones worked best, and apply that to other pages. There's another neat tool to do this **testing**, which we'll get to in a minute.

### *Like for Like on Your Site*

This reduces the "panic factor" for me quite often and is easier to find in GA than in SBI!. For example: how did this current drop in traffic over the festive season, weekend, Thanksgiving, Halloween, July, etc. compare to last year? Same dip? No panic.



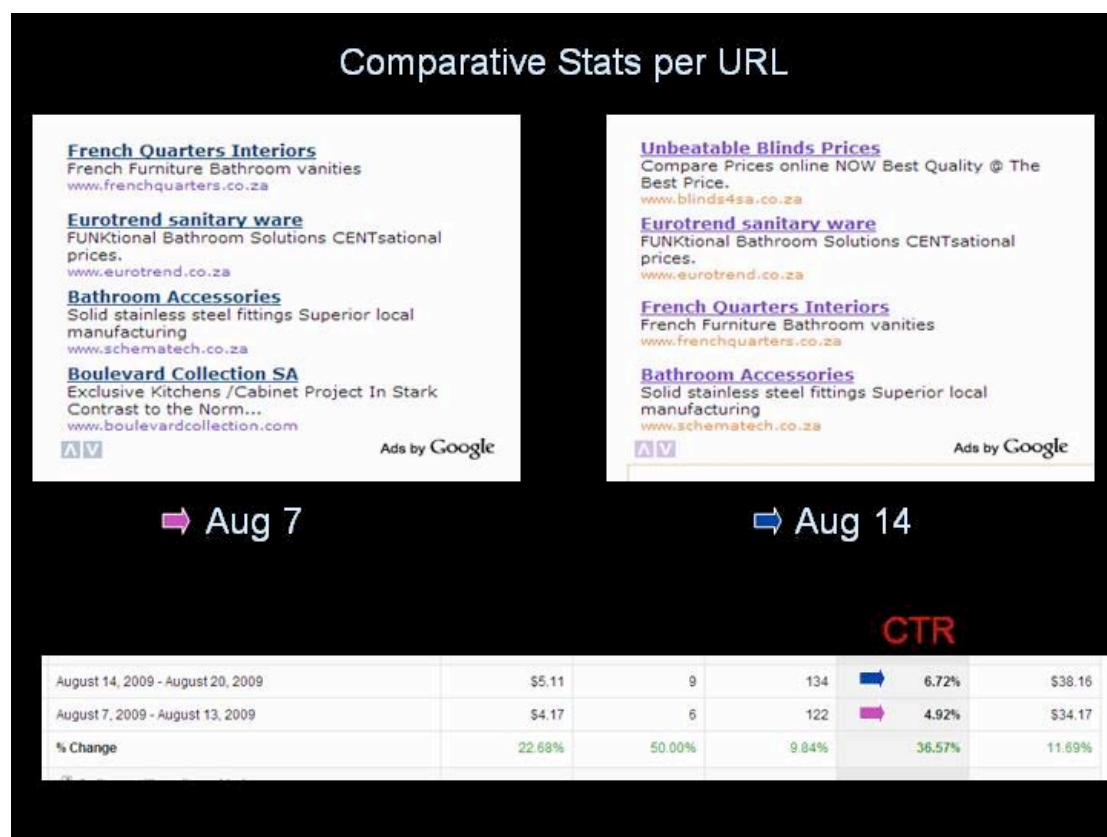
### MAP OVERLAY

It's nice to understand where your visitors come from but does it really matter? I'm pretty sure that the bulk of your visitors will come from the US, if you have a .com site. It does become a useful stat for localized businesses for example, to measure offline advertising of the website, etc.

## SHOW ME THE MONEY

I love the reports in Analytics for AdSense - they are very detailed and user friendly. Again, there are some So What? stats too, **if** you look at them in isolation.

For example: Unit impressions per visit/per day/per hour - compared to another day = "so what" on its own but good data **if you compare it to a period when you added Infolinks, for example, to your pages** and you want to measure the effect.



The one aspect I enjoy most about tracking my AdSense data in Analytics is the comparative data which you can get at the click of a button. (In AdSense, you'll have to do this manually.)

For example: if you change the colors of your ads, you just need to make a note of the date, and you can get results by CTR, eCPM, Revenue generated, etc.

Incidentally, you can also use this URL-specific report to help you calculate costs for advertising (if you want to place ads for companies that approach you) on any page. It will show you what you are earning through AdSense, and I will add a premium if an advertiser wants me to "endorse" his product or if they want exclusive advertising on that page.

You can also click on your keywords - then click on the AdSense tab. It will show you the **value of your keywords** used. You will have to do the sums though to get the value **per click** (no good looking at the eCPM). Not too sure how accurate this report is, BUT it does seem to give you a good guideline on where it will be worth your while to create more content.

Another nice report which you cannot get in AdSense is your referring sites report:

## REFERRALS

Again - more detailed than SBI! and more importantly, showing their bounce rate. If you spend a lot of time on Yahoo! Answers and get a lot of visitors from them, but the bounce rate is very high and the time spent on the site is very low, you may think you are wasting your time with Yahoo! Answers.

**The 20/80 Principle**

Dimension: Source		Visits ↓	Pages/Visit	Avg. Time on Site	% New Visits	Bounce Rate			
1.	answers.yahoo.com	3,915	3.25	00:03:19	87.77%	25.75%			
2.	webcrawler.com	1,158	3.17	00:02:46	84.02%	34.97%			
3.	dogpile.com	332	4.04	00:03:51	87.05%	22.29%			
4.	google.com	310					Dimension: Source		
5.	ehow.com	269					1.	answers.yahoo.com	\$263.16
6.	my.att.net	219					2.	webcrawler.com	\$106.58
7.	spotbikes.net	212					3.	dogpile.com	\$28.47
8.	search.mywebsearch.com	201					4.	my.att.net	\$27.09
9.	search.rr.com	166					5.	google.com	\$24.89
10.	charter.net	124					6.	search.mywebsearch.com	\$23.49
11.	goodsearch.com	94					7.	search.rr.com	\$23.11
12.	myembarq.com	94					8.	ehow.com	\$19.50
13.	au.answers.yahoo.com	88					9.	ww2.cox.com	\$13.18
14.	ask.reference.com	87					10.	charter.net	\$12.97
15.	forums.sitesell.com	79					11.	verizon.net	\$11.51
16.	search.myway.com	73					12.	webmail.aol.com	\$10.72
17.	ww2.cox.com	72					13.	au.answers.yahoo.com	\$9.48
18.	righthealth.com	67					14.	goodsearch.com	\$9.12
19.	verizon.net	64					15.	myembarq.com	\$8.98
							16.	google.co.uk	\$8.83
							17.	optimum.net	\$8.66
							18.	ww23.rr.com	\$8.39
							19.	search.myway.com	\$7.77
							20.	ask.reference.com	\$7.07

Having said that: I can see from my Analytics for AdSense that the "Yahoo! Answers Crowd" is my highest referral earner - so they do bring in quite a bit of money. (Referrals in this case does not include organic search such as Google, Yahoo!, Bing, etc.) This information is not available in the AdSense reports.

Incidentally, I have not answered a question in Yahoo! in 18 months. I used to do it quite a bit in the early days of this site, but it has now gained its own momentum. So,

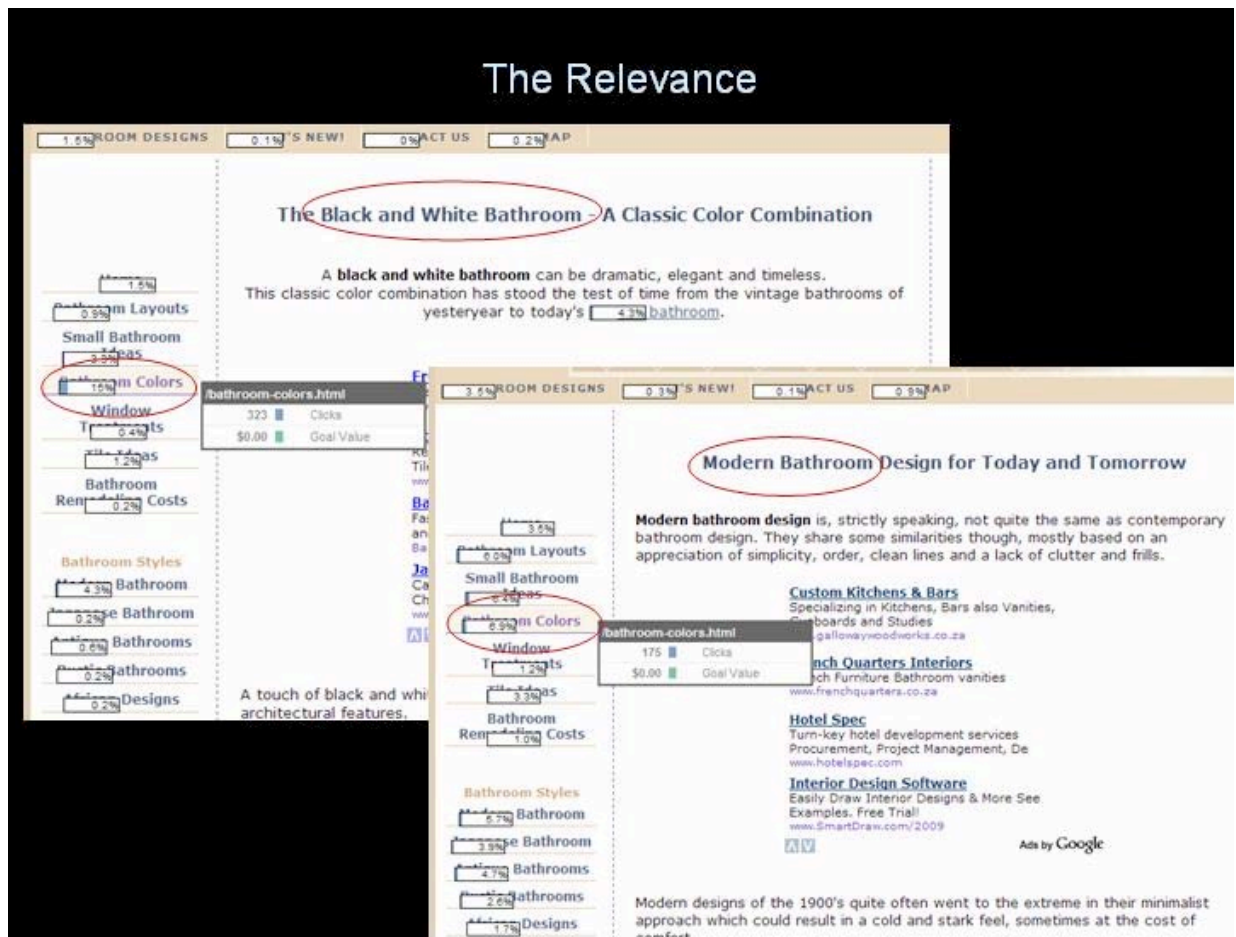
it's nice to see in measurable money value where efforts are paying off. You can similarly measure forum posts, articles, etc.

I just love it when for 20% of overall effort (now 0% effort) I can still see such a high Return on Time Investment.

### Site Overlay Click Throughs

There is a cool tool that shows you the CTR on each link on your page. It overlays the click % on top so you can see where your visitors are going. Let's take a look at a screenshot:

Note how two pages will have different click areas. Example, the **Black and White Bathroom** page = lots of clicks on **bathroom colors** navbutton whereas the **Modern Bathroom** page = less clicks on **bathroom colors**.



### SO WHAT?

Well, I understand from this that there is absolutely no point in adding gratuitous links to unrelated T3 pages for one. I'm just leaking link juice for nothing.

It also tells me that an ebook or affiliates focused on bathroom vanities, will probably not sell well on a page about colors and vice versa.

If you get a lousy CTR on affiliate links, that may not mean that the affiliate product is not selling well - it may mean that your placement of it on a specific page does not make sense to your visitor. To use an extreme example, even with the best marketing, the best cans of baked beans will not sell in a hardware shop.

It can also help you make decisions on **where** to place NavBar buttons, how to name them and can also give you a good idea of what content your home page visitors are after, so it guides content-building, too.

Just a quick note about the accuracy of this tool...

It seems as if it duplicates the data for the same link, regardless of where it is located (for example, nav, in-content and a link to the same page in the right column) so bear that in mind - ideally you should only have it tested in one place at a time to see what works best.

Another thing... it also shows you where your visitors are **NOT** clicking, so perhaps you need to remove/rename/reposition some of your links or make your site more user-friendly.

Have a look at how many visitors click on your RSS feed / "Powered by SBI!" footer. Do they perhaps prefer the old-fashioned bookmarking way?



## **WEBSITE OPTIMIZER**

Website Optimizer is a very sophisticated tool and not one that is likely to be used by the majority of infopreneurs who have a straightforward site and only rely on AdSense.

However, when you start expecting your visitors to do MORE than simply clicking on an advert, this is a great tool to help you guide your visitors to do **certain actions**.

**Those actions may be to:**

- Sign up for a newsletter
- Complete a survey
- Download something
- Make a Purchase
- Submit an Article
- Complete a Lead Generation Form

When you start monetizing (with more than just AdSense) and **especially when you start paying** (with AdWords) to draw visitors to your site, it's time to step up to the next level and analyze your efforts and adspend!

The frequent problem is that we do not know our audiences like we should or think we do. For example: The accountant in the firm will want to see graphs on the page to show monetary advantages; the advertising dept want fancy flash and graphics; the sales dept wants to see product shots and testimonials.

**LET YOUR AUDIENCE TELL YOU WHAT THEY WANT.**

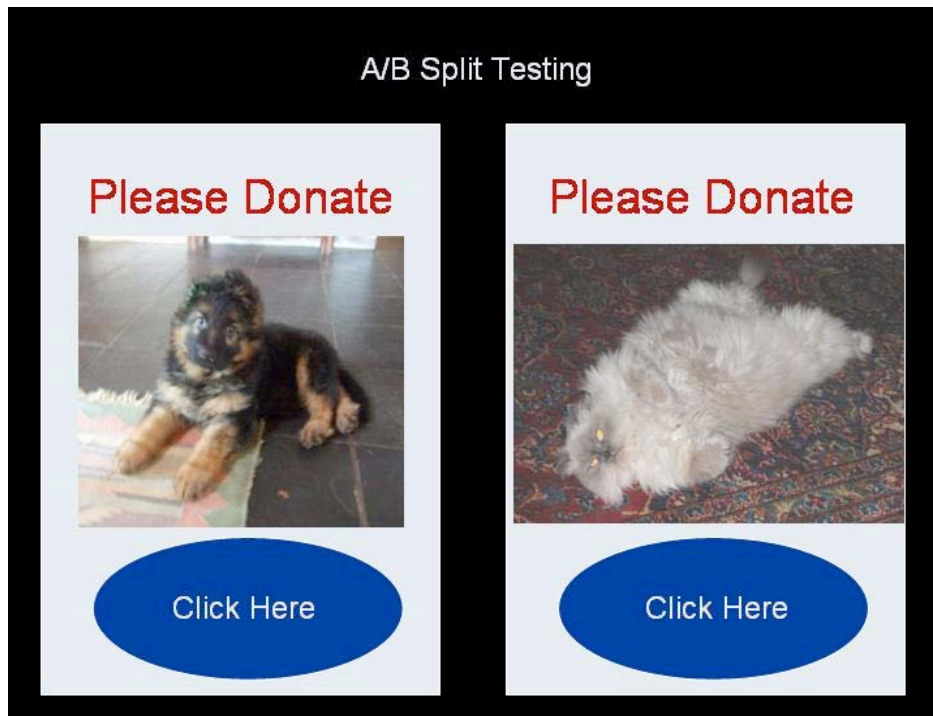
You are doing this to improve your Most Wanted Response (those actions that I mentioned before).

Enter Google's **FREE Website Optimizer which forms part of GA** (this sort of sophistication could conceivably cost thousands of \$\$\$ per month).

In a nutshell, this is what you can do with it:

You can do a simple A/B split level test....

Compare one headline with another, or compare one ezine name with another, or you may want to compare one layout of your product page with another (% of visitors see one version and rest see another version)...



This tool is great for **lower traffic** sites because you don't need such a high number of visitors to conduct this type of test. You will have to create the alternate pages though and upload them.

It is important to test only **ONE variation** at a time. If you change a variety of elements, you will not know which change affected the outcome.

The **more sophisticated test** can be used when you find yourself with a low conversion rate with whatever your MWR may be.

You may think the following: I need a longer page, I need a shorter page, I need more graphics, I need less graphics, I need a different headline, I need a bolder headline.

As you can see, there are a thousand variations and how will you know which one caused the change, without laboriously changing one element at a time and measuring it over time in Analytics? This will be a huge challenge for the best mathematicians amongst us.

The problem, though, is that over time, all things are not equal: orders do go up and down from one week to the next anyway, so how would you know to ascribe it accurately to anything that you changed on your page?

The tracking of the changes becomes easy though with a **multivariate test** in Google.

The beauty of this tool though is that you do not need to create a gazillion different pages. You will **demarkate the different test fields on your site** with script and then use the **Section Fields IN GOOGLE** to enter the variations.

The process is simple:

1. **Name** your experiment, then choose your test page (for example, on your Ebook sales page, add the Google codes).
2. Identify your **result** (I want my visitors to click through to the Order Form Page - add the Google codes).
3. Add section scripts around specified elements on your **Test Page**.
4. **Provide alternatives** for those sections (Google makes it very easy with the blocks they provide).
5. Preview.
6. Validate.
7. Launch your test!

Google's multivariate test is also the closest to keeping all things equal. The only challenge here is to decide on **WHAT** to test and that depends on **YOUR TYPE** of website:

For example, for **lead generating websites** you may want to:

- Test shorter or longer inquiry forms
- Test different descriptions of your offering

For **ecommerce** you may want to:

Test different sized product shots or test different images (with people, etc.) or test a zoom-in button or different product descriptions.

- Test discount offers, coupons, add-ons.
- Test your guarantee: Return policy, free trial, etc.
- Test your price: You may be surprised to find that a higher price sells better because it better conveys a sense of value!
- Free shipping or 10% off if they buy before a certain date.

(Note: this tool is so clever that a second visit from the same customer will show the same page again.)

Think like a marketer and really consider which elements may contribute to a higher conversion rate.

Go and take a look with an **analytical eye** at your competitors/successful sites:

- Which color combinations do they use?
- What added value do they offer? How do they word it?
- What types of graphic elements do they use etc., etc.?

Don't test the small stuff... test big and bold changes. Elements that are very close in nature will not show significant changes - therefore inconclusive - therefore a waste of time.

## Section and Relevance Results

Combinations		Page Sections					
Analysis for: Aug 21 2006 - Aug 21 2006							
Sort By: <input checked="" type="radio"/> Relevance Rating <input type="radio"/> Order Created				Download: <a href="#">T</a> <a href="#">E</a> <a href="#">G</a>   <a href="#">Print</a>   <a href="#">Preview</a>			
Relevance Rating [?]	Variation	Estimated Conversion Rate Range [?]	Chance to Beat Orig. [?]	Chance to Beat All [?]	Observed Improvement [?]	Conversions / Impressions [?]	
Section 2 4 / 5	Original	29.1% ± 1.0%	—	0.11%	—	951 / 3273	
	Variation 2	32.5% ± 1.0%	99.9%	99.8%	11.9%	1099 / 3380	
	Variation 1	29.1% ± 1.0%	52.8%	0.13%	0.26%	975 / 3347	
Section 3 4 / 5	Original	28.3% ± 1.2%	—	0.02%	—	684 / 2417	
	Variation 1	32.6% ± 1.2%	100%	89.7%	15.2%	833 / 2555	
	Variation 3	30.9% ± 1.2%	97.9%	10.1%	9.33%	758 / 2450	
	Variation 2	29.1% ± 1.1%	73.2%	0.18%	2.80%	750 / 2578	
Section 1 1 / 5	Original	30.8% ± 0.8%	—	89.4%	—	1529 / 4960	
	Variation 1	29.7% ± 0.8%	10.6%	10.6%	-3.71%	1496 / 5040	

The first result will show in graph form which elements performed the best to reach your conversation goal **and the relevance of those specific elements**. For example, closing paragraph B performed better than C, but the closing paragraph itself played a very small role in getting the job done.

Don't end your test too soon, even if you have a couple of bad conversion days. Don't make assumptions either (e.g. Headline B, Picture C and Price D did the best, so I will use them in combination). It does not work like that.

Wait for the **combination results** to show you the way before you make a decision.

## Combination Results

Combinations		Page Sections				
Analysis for: Aug 21 2006 - Aug 21 2006						
View: <input checked="" type="radio"/> Best 23 Combinations <input type="radio"/> Worst 23 Combinations				Download:       Print    Preview		
Combination	Estimated Conversion Rate Range [?]	Chance to Beat Orig. [?]	Chance to Beat All [?]	Observed Improvement [?]	Conversions / Impressions [?]	
<a href="#">Original</a>	31.2% ± 3.0%	—	0.41%	—	125 / 401	
<a href="#">Combination 11</a>	38.9% ± 3.1%	99.0%	85.4%	24.9%	160 / 411	
<a href="#">Combination 4</a>	33.6% ± 3.0%	76.8%	4.12%	7.74%	133 / 396	
<a href="#">Combination 23</a>	33.4% ± 2.8%	75.9%	2.82%	7.17%	153 / 458	
<a href="#">Combination 16</a>	32.7% ± 2.9%	67.8%	1.56%	4.75%	144 / 441	
<a href="#">Combination 10</a>	32.6% ± 2.9%	67.5%	1.69%	4.67%	139 / 426	
<a href="#">Combination 8</a>	32.4% ± 2.9%	64.6%	1.30%	3.90%	137 / 423	
<a href="#">Combination 22</a>	32.0% ± 3.0%	60.0%	1.03%	2.69%	129 / 403	
<a href="#">Combination 7</a>	31.6% ± 2.8%	55.1%	0.45%	1.27%	143 / 453	
<a href="#">Combination 14</a>	31.4% ± 2.8%	52.2%	0.41%	0.57%	137 / 437	
<a href="#">Combination 21</a>	31.1% ± 2.9%	49.1%	0.40%	-0.20%	126 / 405	
<a href="#">Combination 18</a>	30.3% ± 2.8%	39.1%	0.11%	-2.79%	130 / 429	

NOTE: This is a continuous process. What worked this past month will not necessarily work next year. This tool automates it beautifully though!

### GOAL SETTING

The other tool that I will briefly mention, but we will not be discussing in this article is the Goal Setting that you can set up in Google Analytics.

It may be as simple as measuring your email signup, where your "Thank You" page will be your **goal page**.

Or you may want to measure the efficacy of your purchase process. For this you can set up Sales Funnels. For example, to purchase something you will have a landing page and then a product page with shopping cart and then a review cart page and then a checkout page. All of that equals a sales funnel.

This tool allows you to monitor the percentage of customers that follow and deviate from these funnels. This is a more advanced feature, but for people that are starting to monetize, it's a fantastic tool and will yield even better results when used in **conjunction with Website Optimizer**.

Just a couple of quick notes on things to consider when you test that may improve your Most Wanted Response. This information comes from a company specializing in optimizing pages to achieve results:

1. **Decrease the number of steps required to complete the conversion.** This is the first place to start. Simple but so often overlooked. Why does billing information need to be on a different page than shipping information? Some of the strongest converting sites use a one-page checkout process that has proven itself with higher conversion rates and lower cart abandonment.
2. **Decrease the amount of information you ask the visitor for.** Do you really need to know everything you're asking for? Think about what you're asking for. Is it realistic? Is it a turnoff to website visitors? This is especially relevant to lead generation conversions. Often our real estate clients want to know everything about a potential converter (age, income, size of house, timeline for moving, etc.). This is great info for the marketer to collect, but it's off-putting to the website visitor. Think about what you're asking for and question whether it's really necessary for the lead generation process, or whether it should be determined during the sales process instead.
3. **De-Clutter.** Are visitors distracted by cluttered navigation and special offers? Use clean, simple navigation and good design to lead customers by the hand through the checkout process. Forms should be clean and above the fold. Don't expect visitors to go hunting for the conversion form. Use large text but avoid cluttering the form with too much of it. Use simple language and clearly label what's required and what isn't.
4. **KISS and test it on your users**

We all know our sites intimately and we think our layout or process makes perfect sense. Do a usability study to test. For example, ask your colleague to go to your site and complete a certain task: buy something, subscribe, find information or whatever. Watch them (without helping them) or let them report back about how user-friendly your site is.

- Did they pick the correct navigation option first time? If not, the choices are not clear enough.
- Do they take a long time considering choices? Too many choices perhaps.
- Do they need multiple clicks to get to the destination? You may need additional navigation tools or useful shortcuts.
- Do they quickly discover the absence of certain information and then use your contact form?

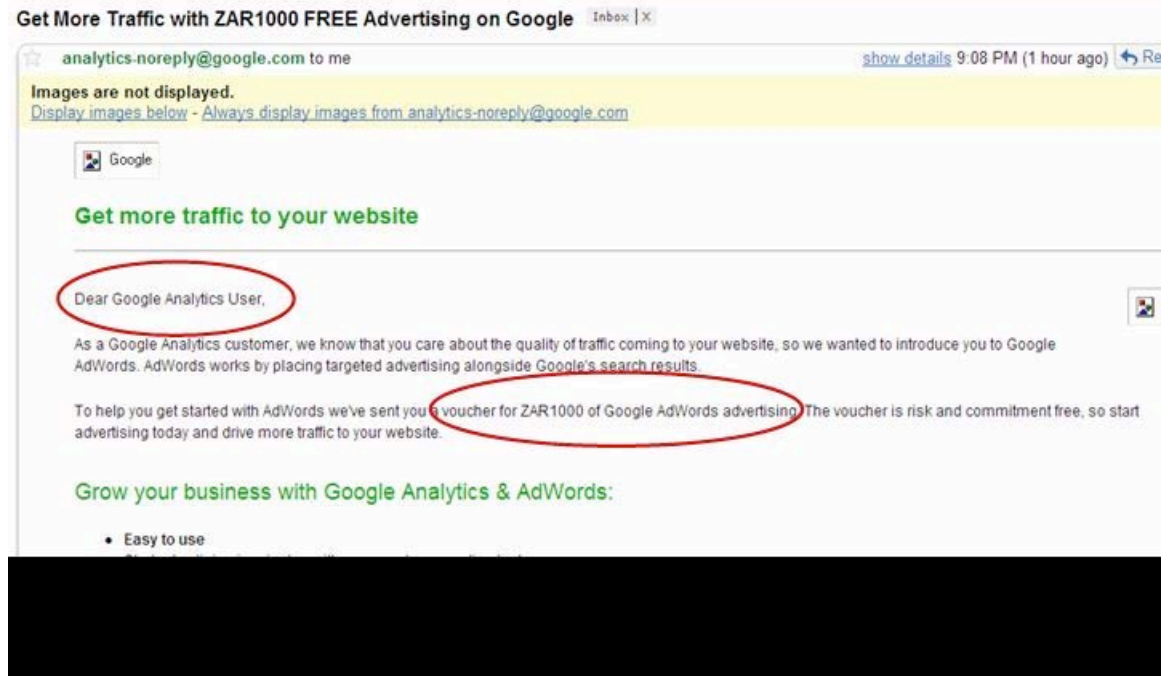
In closing...

I hope you found at least one useful stat amongst the ones discussed here, that you feel you can use to your advantage. Analytics is great, and you may even be paid to use it!

Be sure to tick the "Special Offers" box in your account settings and you may just get an email like the following:

**ANALYTICS MAKES CENTS**

# ANALYTICS makes CENTS



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