



Using Google Analytics to fine-tune your Web site

A free service from Google can show where your Web site is strong, and where it needs work

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As a plaintiffs' law firm, your livelihood is dependent upon your ability to attract individuals who need representation and convince them your firm is the right one for the job. In today's world, the Internet offers law firms a vibrant platform for business development. Your firm's Web site acts as a storefront for promoting your practice and converting visitors to possible clients.

Like a brick and mortar retail location, just having a storefront isn't enough to successfully acquire new clients. Your potential clients first need to be able to find your Web site. Once they discover your Web site, they need to stay on your site long enough to consume the information that will motivate them to contact you.

I've talked to partners in law firms who believe that having your site rank near the top of a Google search for your most relevant keywords is the most important goal for your Web site. Others think that a high volume of traffic is all that matters. While both of these are important elements for successful marketing, there is so much more that law firms should be looking at to determine how well their Web site is doing as a business development tool.

Luckily, our friends at Google have made it possible for every Web site owner to understand how its site is performing through a free service called Google Analytics. Once your Webmaster has embedded the necessary tracking code to each page of your Web site, you will have access to detailed statistics about your Web site's traffic, traffic sources, content consumed, and where and how conversions (visitors who contact you via the online form) are taking place.

Google Analytics

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The statistics are tools that help you to understand what is going on with your Web site. Review them often. If you see a trend that indicates a problem, you can make changes to your Web site immediately and potentially turn things around in a positive direction quickly. If no one on your team is reviewing the statistics, you relinquish your power to maximize the results of all your marketing efforts.

Establishing goals for your Web site

In order for plaintiffs' law firms to best leverage the Web site in business development, the user experience must always play a significant role in your decisions about copy and design. Are you giving your Web visitors content that enables your firm to stand apart? Does your site load quickly? Is it easy to navigate? Does the design communicate a professional image? Do you make it easy for potential clients to contact you?

It is likely your ultimate goal with the Web site is to land new clients. Your Web site then needs to lead visitors to complete the contact form or pick up the phone to call you. Therefore, your site should be designed with that goal in mind. Be sure that your phone number is displayed prominently with a contact form on every page. Each additional click necessary to contact you increases your risk of losing the visitor.

Now that you have identified your goal, you can leverage Google Analytics to help measure how effectively your site is achieving your goal. Since Google Analytics only tracks visitor activity on your Web site, you are unable to gain much intelligence on where the phone call conversions came from and how they navigated your site. You are, however, able to gain some detailed insights about conversions generated via contact forms.

To set up goals on Google Analytics, go to the Admin portion of your Google account. Click on the Goals tab and hit the Create a Goal button. Under the Inquiry section, click the Contact Us dial and hit the Next Step button. To track people who have completed the contact form, input the URL for the page that is returned to the visitor after they submit the form. This may look something like www.yoursite.com/thank-you. Insert this URL in the destination field. Now your account is set up to report detailed information about the source and activity of your online conversions.

Analyzing your goal performance

When you log into your Google Analytics account, the default reporting period is the last 30 days. This timeframe provides a good snapshot of what is happening with your site now. You can also adjust the timeframe to view long-term trends or to isolate a shorter-term period.



The Google Analytics service itself can be overwhelming at first with such a depth of statistics offered. By focusing first on only the most important details, you can get the key intelligence you need while gradually becoming familiar with the data available to you.

Some basic trends to evaluate

• **Traffic** – Where is the traffic to your Web site coming from? The answer to this question can be found in the Traffic Sources section on the left side of your report. Google groups traffic into four categories:

1. Direct – Visitors are typing your site's URL into a browser or clicking on a bookmark to arrive directly on your site.
2. Referral – Another site is directing traffic to your site. This may be from links distributed on Facebook or Twitter, digital ads you may be running or links mentioning your site on another site.
3. Search – Visitors are coming to your site by way of a search engine such as Google or Bing. Search can be organic or paid. You obtain organic search traffic when pages of your site are richly keyword-optimized for terms people would use to find your area of practice. Paid search comes from Google programs, where you pay for ad placement for keywords and pay on a per-click basis.
4. Campaigns – This traffic comes exclusively from Google paid campaigns.

The Overview report of the Traffic Sources section will provide a breakdown of the various sources along with top keywords driving traffic to your site. Unfortunately, keyword reporting is being partially masked today by Google to protect the privacy of visitors who are searching while they are logged onto one of their various Google accounts. These undisclosed keyword searches are reported under Google's designation, 'not-provided.'

Drilling down further into the Traffic Sources section will provide more details on specific traffic sources. One crucial understanding is identifying which traffic sources are converting visitors to contact

you. You can gain this intelligence by going to the All Traffic report. Once you have set up your goal in the Admin section as described earlier, you will see Goal Set 1 at the left top of the All Traffic report under the Explorer tab. Clicking on this feature will display report results with conversion statistics for each dimension.

For example, the All Traffic report will display your traffic sources and number of visits. Next to "visits" is a Goal Conversion Rate column which displays the percentage of visits that have completed your goal. This intelligence is vital for determining which sources are most worthy of your marketing time and expenses.

• **Content** – Do not underestimate the importance content has in converting visitors into clients. The Content section of Google Analytics will enable you to see what content is being consumed and how engaging it is to visitors.

The All Pages report will display how many visitors consumed each page. Another detail to evaluate on this report is Avg. Time on Page. The more time a visitor stays on a page, the more engaged they are with your information. Bounce Rate (visitors who leave the site from the page) is another statistic to observe as it will help you to understand what pages should be tweaked for better performance.

To learn which pages are aiding in conversion, go to the Landing Pages report. Click the Goal Set 1 link at the top left to display conversion data. The report default will display results in order of pages with the most visits. Clicking on the Goal Conversion Rate cell enables you to sort the report by pages in descending or ascending order of conversion rate. Use this information as a guide for learning which pages need some work.

The statistics don't provide all the answers, but they do point you to where improvements are needed for your goal achievement. You can open to a landing page directly from the Landing Pages report by clicking on the icon to the right of the page's URL. Once you reach the

page, you can evaluate why the page is missing the mark. Is it not delivering the information the visitor is looking for immediately? Is there a photo that the visitor may not be relating to? Is the contact form easily seen and accessible without a click?

What may seem like minor changes can make a significant difference in results. Take a look at what is working on other pages and apply that understanding to pages that need work. Make it a goal to increase your overall conversion rate and keep experimenting with improving results.

How visitors navigate your site

Unless you are running extensive marketing campaigns with dedicated landing pages, the home page of your Web site is likely to be the first page most visitors see. Consequently, your home page is prime real estate and any content displayed should be information that will help inspire potential clients to contact your firm. The content section above discussed how to learn which pages are contributing to conversions. Another important process lies in understanding what content interests your site visitors the most.

The In-Page Analytics report in the Content section of Google Analytics will provide a visual snapshot of your home page along with the percentage of total traffic that each navigational page generates. This can be an eye-opening tool. You may find that some sections on your home page are not generating any traffic and, therefore, are not contributing at all to the conversion process. Learning what content visitors are looking for gives you the opportunity to provide more information that will engage them. Discovering that some of your content isn't being consumed enables you to free up space that can be utilized with content that visitors want.

The mobile user experience

It's no secret that mobile Internet consumption is on the rise. We are seeing



law firm mobile usage (mobile phones and tablets) running from roughly 20 percent to 30 percent of overall traffic. As these numbers grow, it becomes increasingly important that your Web site be optimized for mobile devices.

Google Analytics can provide you with a quick understanding of the volume of your mobile traffic through the Audience section of the reporting. The Mobile Overview breaks traffic down by desktop, mobile and tablet. This report also enables you to view the Goal Set 1 conversion data so that you can see how conversions are occurring via the various devices. If you are generating conversions on desktops, but not from mobile phones or tablets, this may suggest that your site could be better optimized for the mobile experience.

No longer is it necessary to develop separate desktop and mobile Web sites. Today's standard in Web site development utilizes responsive design. Responsive Web design is an approach aimed towards providing an optimal viewing experience across a wide range of devices. The site recognizes which device is being used and then calls on the style rules to deliver the appropriate layout.

Getting a responsive Web site does not have to be an expensive proposition. Wordpress is a free open source content management system that began as a blogging tool and has grown to become a standard for Web development. Wordpress works on a template system which enables you to change the look and functionality of your site through themes. There are a host of third-party developers who provide professional looking themes for less than \$100. These themes can then be customized to support your marketing and functionality needs. More and more developers are now offering responsive design themes.

If you are currently operating a Wordpress Web site, the complexity of moving to a new responsive theme will depend on your current theme. Moving to a responsive theme from the same developer of your current theme will likely make for the simplest transition. If your Web site is not powered by Wordpress, you may want to consider making a change for the benefit of gaining a responsive site. The development costs for a Wordpress site should be far less expensive than a site that was built from scratch.

While responsive design has eliminated the need to maintain multiple Web sites, the need still exists to keep the user experience in mind for all devices when building and updating your site. Although your responsive site layout will display fully on a mobile phone, the display size will be small. The user will be able to pan and scroll the mobile site, yet it is important that elements on your site such as telephone number stand out. Also keep required fields on contact forms to a minimum so that you don't lose a potential client to the frustration of typing on a mobile phone.



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