

Getting the Most Out of Your Monthly Site Analysis Reports 3rd & 4th Quarter 2002

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Many of you subscribe to our monthly maintenance program, ensuring that your site is re-submitted to the search engines regularly and providing you with valuable analysis reports that quantify your site's performance and its change over time. I want to discuss the monthly site analysis reports this quarter – how to read them and how to use the information contained in them to maximize your site's performance. The explanation is divided by the two reports that you may receive.¹ This newsletter, combined for the 3rd and 4th quarters, is a little longer than usual, but the topic is critical to getting the most out of your monthly reporting and your site overall; a shorter treatment of the issue would not cover all the important points.

Why is the information in these reports important? The answer is simple: so that we can measure the effectiveness of our efforts. We can read these reports together and understand what impact our search engine optimization (SEO) efforts are having on the site's traffic. For example, by looking at the referring URLs and keywords in the traffic report, we can learn which keyword phrases and search engines are driving the most traffic to the site and re-focus our efforts accordingly. We can also determine if your paid advertising on other sites is driving a meaningful amount of traffic to your site and make strategic marketing decisions armed with accurate information. Tracking and using this valuable information ensures that you maximize the return on your Internet investment.

Search Engines – Submission & Analysis

We use a program called Web Position to submit pages within a site to the search engines and track our positioning progress within those same search engines. The program allows us to define a set of keyword phrases to monitor. WebPosition then checks the ranking of your site for those specified phrases in the chosen search engines. It is important to note that just because we don't track a particular phrase does not mean that visitors will not find your site using that phrase. Please review the list of phrases tracked on your last report. If you would like to add or delete certain phrases, or otherwise modify the list, please let me know. Your knowledge of your business, industry, and customers is critical to our success, and your feedback will push our search engine efforts forward. Typically, we choose the phrases to track based on our research of your industry, the META² data in your site, competitive sites, and the search behavior of users employing keywords related to your site or business. In addition to general search terms, we typically track the name of the business and any key partners or personnel.

To help you better understand the report, we include below portions of a sample report, featuring the overview section called "Visibility Statistics" (found at the top of your report) and the results for one search engine, Google. For this sample case, we have used the site the maker of the analysis software program, WebPosition.

Visibility Statistics

The first two rows of information in this section provide you with a snapshot of the site's position and its change in position over the last reporting period. The top row of the Visibility Statistics section shows how many rankings the site enjoys in each of five categories: First Place, Top 5, Top 10, Top 20, and Top 30. The second row gives you an overview of your gains and losses over the analysis period (our reports are done monthly). Fluctuations in both directions are a very normal component of this process; some downward movement should not be of concern as long as the overall trend tends upward. For more information on a particular topic or to obtain a definition of something, you can click on any hyperlinked item in the report.

Visibility Statistics				
First Place Rankings: 13	Top 5: 25	Top 10: 34	Top 20: 42	Top 30: 43
Moved Up: 0	Moved Down: 0	Same: 106	Total: 106	Gain/Loss: 0
Keywords: 4	Engines: 23	Visibility Score: 790	Visibility Percentage: 28.62%	Online Help

Search Engine Results

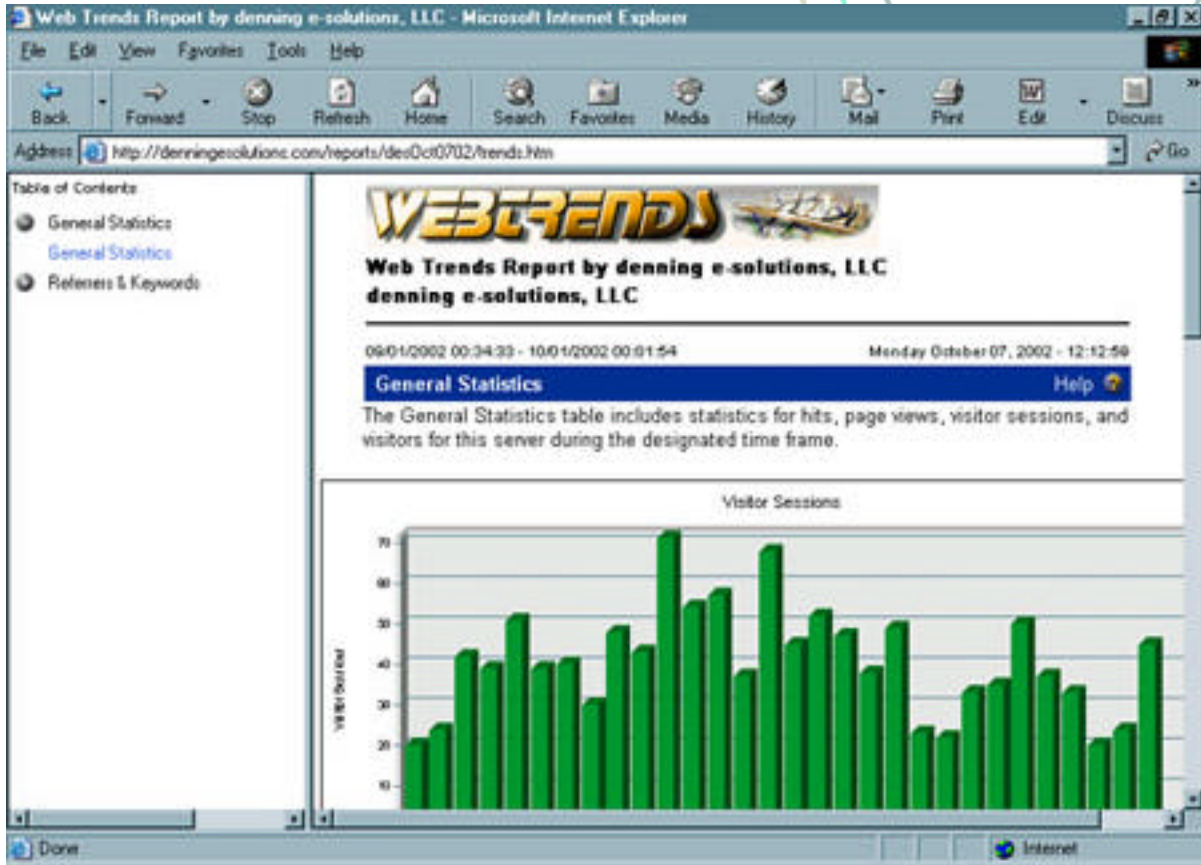
In the sample positioning results below, four keyword phrases were tested in the popular search engine Google. The monitored keyword phrases are listed in the far left column. The next two columns show the exact position, if any, of the site for that keyword phrase. These two columns show the page and position on that page in which the site listing appears. The next two columns (Last Position and Change) show the position of the site for the particular keyword phrase in the last reporting period and the change in position between the two periods. The final column on the right shows the exact page within your site that appears in the results. We submit all content-relevant pages to the search engines, not just your home page. Therefore, it may be that a sub-page within your site shows up as the more exact match for a particular keyword phrase.

Google					
Keyword	Position	Page	Last Position	Change	URL
WebPosition	1	1	NA	NA	www.webposition.com/
"WebPosition Gold"	1	1	NA	NA	www.webposition.com/
"WebPosition Analyzer"	1	1	NA	NA	www.webposition.com/&e=921
"FirstPlace Software"	2	1	NA	NA	www.webposition.com/

Tracking Site Visitors

We are able to track your site's visitors and important information about those visitors—including where they came from, and what keywords they used if coming from a search engine—by analyzing the site's log files. Log files are records or electronic footprints of the visitors that come to the site. The server that hosts your web site creates and stores these log files. When someone tries to access your web site, the server records certain pieces of information about that visitor. We can then analyze those log files to gauge the effectiveness of our search engine and other e-marketing campaigns.

Many of my clients receive a link to a Web Trends log analysis report within their site each month. A sample report screen is shown below. Pay particular attention to the Table of Contents choices down the left side of the screen—this is where you access the various sections of the report.



Below you will find an explanation of each of these sections:

General Statistics – The graph and table of information in this section gives you an overview of the site’s traffic level. The Visitor Sessions section of the Statistics table gives you the best idea of the level of traffic. For example, if your site’s average number of visitor sessions per day is 40, then you can estimate that your annual site traffic is roughly 15,000 visitors (40 * 365 days, rounded slightly). You can also see what impact your increasing search engine rankings have on your traffic by checking your daily average in past months or for the same month the previous year.

For more information, there is a help section with definitions for each of the items listed in the Statistics table under the Visitor Sessions graph.

Referrers & Keywords – By clicking on the Referrers & Keywords section in the Table of Contents on the left side of the screen, you will get a drop down list of choices that includes: Top Referring Sites, Top Referring URLs, Top Search Engines, Top Search Phrases,

and Top Search Keywords. You can jump straight to any of the sub-sections of information or simply click on the main heading and then scroll through the results.

Top Referring Sites and URLs – This section details those sites that are providing the most referrals to your site. This can help when considering the most effective ways to attract visitors. For example, if a particular site sends an especially large number of referrals to your site, you may consider boosting your presence on that site. Or, conversely, if pay for an ad on another site, and you only receive a few referrals from that URL, you may decide to discontinue that advertising campaign.

If there is a “No Referrer” listing in this section, it means that the visitor typed in your web site address directly into their browser’s address line.

Top Search Engines, Search Phrases and Keywords – These three sub-sections tell you which search engines are sending traffic to your site and what exact keywords and phrases the visitors used to get there. By examining this information, we know if the traffic you are receiving is targeted to your business and products. In addition, we gain important insight into *how* people are searching. If we see a new keyword phrase that we have not used in the META² data of the site, we can adjust that aspect of your site to better capture others who may search using the same phrase.

If you do not subscribe to the monthly maintenance program and it is something you are interested in, please contact me by email or phone. For more information about what is included in this program, you can visit our web site at www.denningsolutions.com - simply go to the Internet Services tab, then follow the link to the subsection for Site Analysis & Monthly Reporting.

As always, I want to take this opportunity to say “thank you” to you for your business. Please let me know if you have any additional questions regarding the discussion above or if I can help in any way with you site.

Thank you and Happy Holidays!

1 Depending on your web site hosting arrangements, you may only receive one report, or you may receive a different traffic analysis report from that detailed above. However, the terminology and basic information will be the same in either case.

2 The META data is included in the <head> section of the html code that makes up a web page. It includes both a description and a set of keyword phrases. It is, in part, these tags that tell the search engine spiders what the site is about, helping them to categorize properly your site within their databases.