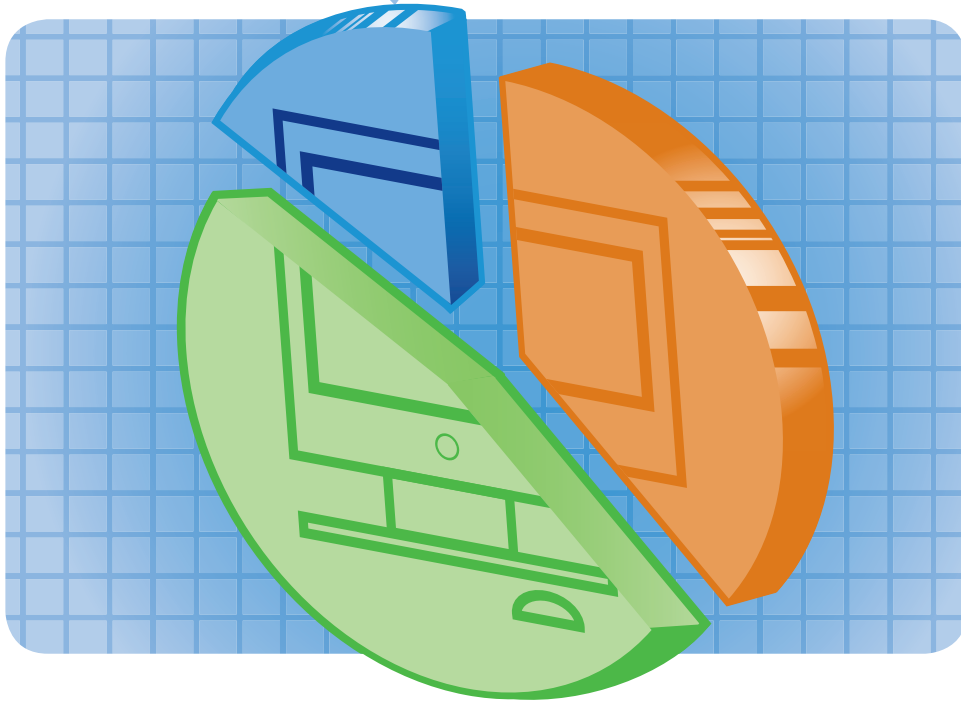


GROW your business



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02/2009

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MEMORABLE QUOTATION

There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work, learning from failure.

– COLIN POWELL

What Lies Behind – Making Use Of Your Website's Customer Information Gathering Capability

Websites are pretty much a prerequisite for marketing a business these days but are the dollars you are investing in it delivering enough sales to make it a worthwhile investment? Is it bringing new visitors? Are they buying? Could it be performing better? It can be hard figuring out just how successful your site is. To begin to answer these questions you need to take an in-depth look at what visitors are doing on your website - you need web analytics.

WHAT WEB ANALYTICS CAN TELL YOU – AND WHY YOU NEED TO KNOW

Web analytics is the study of visitor's behavior on a website. Marketers can learn a lot by utilizing web analytics. Here is a list of the main reasons why any business with a website should be using the analytic data it is capable of gathering:

Identify and invest in the best lead sources: Three analytics in particular are worth tracking for this purpose: direct traffic, referring sites, and the keywords people are using to search for your site.

Direct traffic refers to visitors who have either typed the business' web address or name directly into their browser or clicked on a bookmark. The percentage of direct traffic you receive is an indicator of how well your brand is known. If few of your visitors come direct it may be time to increase marketing of your products to make them more familiar and to promote your website more widely.

Referring sites are those that have a link to you on their pages. Link analytics will tell you how many visitors came to you from each source plus the quality of the lead – whether visitors

from one source were more likely to buy than those from another. If only a few websites are sending you good traffic, you probably want to build up a good relationship with those sites and extend link partnering relationships to similar sites. If they are ad placement sites you pay for, then you'll know which ones to spend with and which ones to drop – they may be sending you a lot of traffic but if it's not converting there's no point in paying for their service.

You can track which keywords visitors have used in search engines looking for your site. Cross reference this data with conversion rates and you have the information to tweak your marketing text and keywords for search engine optimization and attracting the most likely prospects. Analyzing referring keywords and conversion rates is especially important when



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running paid ad campaigns. Why pay for clicks that don't convert?

Conversely if you're getting a lot of search engine traffic on particular terms that you don't necessarily want to show up for, maybe because they are peripheral or irrelevant to your business and the visitors just click away again anyway, you might want to spend some time on de-emphasizing them in your content and marketing.

Track campaigns channel effectiveness and buying patterns: How successful was your last email marketing campaign? Could you determine if a particular sale came from your initial email or from a follow up? Did the second follow up bring in any business at all? If you track each campaign using the web analytics data they generate you can establish answers to questions like these and plan future campaigns more precisely.

If you take a look at the analytics on sales by day of the month - you can even drill down to times during a day - you'll know when to launch a new product, promotion or project. You want to launch before traffic peaks so the information gets seen by the most visitors.

Identify under performing webpages: In the world of online marketing many site visitors are likely to leave again immediately after landing. That's a bounce - an exit by a new visitor before going any deeper than the page they landed on. Bounce rate is an indication of how well a webpage is delivering its marketing message in terms of how long people stay on it and if they perform the desired action e.g. go on to make a purchase. If you're selling pool salt and, even though people are finding you using those words, they still bounce away, then it suggests there is something wrong - the content isn't very good, you're attracting the wrong audience, or your customers couldn't quickly and easily find what they were looking for. Establish the reason and tweak the text, the navigation or whatever so it does hold them.

Web analytics is another area where the saying 'what you can measure you can manage' holds true and the better the information you have about your website, the better the decisions you can make to get the most sales out of it.

Hard Times Increase The Likelihood Of Theft By Employees

It's not a pleasant thought but harder times mean some employees will be looking for ways they can cut down their expenditure and one that they may resort to is pilfering business assets. We aren't talking the odd roll of toilet paper from the washroom here.

Some real life cases on report include an employee responsible for utility bill payments who set aside a few hundred dollars each payment to cover her home electric bill; one who wrote his family vehicles into the company's vehicle insurance plan; and another who stole thousands of dollars of tools from a job site to sell later. Even highly trusted and proficient employees have been known to crack under financial strain and resort to stealing from their workplace. In the US, a 2008 FBI report labels employee theft 'the fastest growing crime in America!', a story beginning to be emulated in other countries as their economy worsens.

Processes and routines that remove temptation and opportunity - or internal controls as accountants refer to them - have been identified as the most effective way of deterring internal theft, or limiting the amount that can be lost before the problem is recognized, to the bare minimum. The knowledge that someone is looking at the details in your business keeps honest people that way and prevents dishonest people from even thinking about it.

Here are some of the major internal controls you can apply to prevent suffering from theft by your employees.

- **Conduct regular physical inventories.** Reconcile sales to inventory on a quarterly basis, or at least annually. Use a third party to carry out inventories.

- **Keep track of equipment.** Keep an asset register of business property and inventory it annually. Require workers to sign out company tools before taking them to job sites. Lock doors to storage and supply rooms to limit access to authorized personnel. Keep an up-to-date register of keys issued and

ensure terminating employees return those in their possession.

- **Control petty cash transactions.** Designate those who can access the petty cash reserve. Keep it to a couple of people. Require a signed receipt for all petty cash disbursements and receipts of payment. Regularly reconcile the petty cash fund.

- **Keep control of credit cards.** Limit and track the use of any business credit cards. Require all credit cards to be signed out and all credit card expenses to be authenticated by a purchase order.

- **Segregate financial duties.** Don't let the same person who processes checks also reconcile the checkbook or manage the accounts receivable. Limit the number of people who can sign checks. Keep blank checks under lock and key. Do not use a signature stamp. Have one person open the mail and record checks and another person make the bank deposit.

- **Safeguard financial data.** If you are using a computerized accounting application make sure it doesn't allow entries to be changed - it should only allow offsetting or correcting entries, and should provide a report on what entries have been altered. Use passwords to limit access to authorized employees.

- **Control purchasing, receiving and paying functions.** To maintain a system of checks and balances assign responsibility for different tasks in the order/receive/pay chain to different employees. Spot-check receiving and shipping functions to ensure that what's invoiced is equal to what's received or actually

In the US, a 2008 FBI report labels employee theft 'the fastest growing crime in America!', a story beginning to be emulated in other countries as their economy worsens.

HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR NEWSLETTER

Be sure to read each article with the mindset "How could this apply to our business?" Thinking of it that way will guarantee that you get value. Better yet, take notes as you read and commit to having the ideas implemented by the time the next edition arrives. Also, make copies for each team member. To really make sure something positive happens, work with your business development specialist to talk your team through the ideas and how to set a schedule for getting them implemented. We're here to help you get started.

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE

While every effort has been made to provide valuable, useful information in this publication, this firm and any related suppliers or associated companies accept no responsibility or any form of liability from reliance upon or use of its contents. Any suggestions should be considered carefully within your own particular circumstances, as they are intended as general information only.

going out. Use numbered sales receipts, invoices and register receipts.

• **Personally review monthly bank statements.**

Have the bank statement sent to your home rather than the business and review it yourself before passing it on to your bookkeeper. Look for checks payable to employees or to payees you don't recognize, signatures that don't look right, returned checks and suspicious credit card charges. Ask your bookkeeper to explain them so employees are aware you keep your eye on things.

One of the best things you can do is provide a good example yourself. As a role model for your employees, if they see you padding your expense account or walking out with work stationery and other equipment it will only licence them to do the same thing.

Implementing procedures like these is a good start to preventing theft but it's possible to plug the holes tighter still. For instance, there are a whole set of activities just around handling the cash register tray that are straightforward to implement and will protect your hard earned sales cash. For advice on how you can improve your internal controls talk to your accountant. For ideas on how to prevent physical theft contact your local police, they will provide both documentation and advice on methods for preventing and dealing with theft.

Keep Your PC At Peak Performance – Managing Your Computer

TIDY THE REGISTRY (NOT DIY UNLESS YOU ARE A COMPUTER EXPERT)

The computer's registry acts like a huge database that holds the complete inventory and location of every file, folder, program and process that resides on it. This information is used to tell programs how to run and to locate the files needed to perform particular tasks. As files or programs are added to or removed from your PC the registry is modified to reflect these changes. Over time the registry becomes larger, the data more fragmented and can end up including errors, conflicting settings and leftover items like broken shortcuts. These diminish the performance of the computer.

PCs have an inbuilt utility to repair and maintain the registry manually. But it is an extremely complex task, certainly no job for the untrained. Delete the wrong thing and you will lose critical data and personal information, or maybe end up with a computer that doesn't work at all. You can purchase a registry scanner utility that will include safety net features but even they are not foolproof. Fortunately, the good ones come with an Undo function so you can put back what they remove. Still, it's a job best left to the expert.

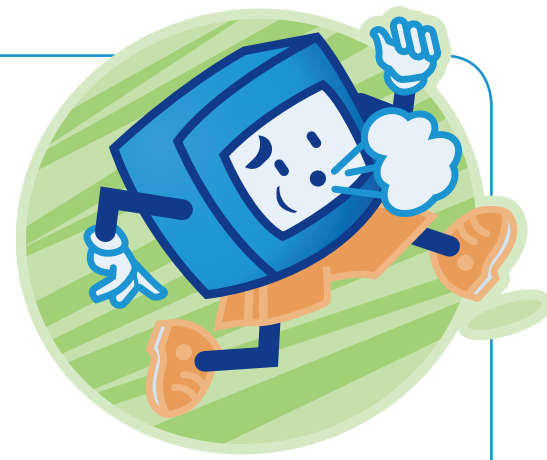
INCREASE VIRTUAL MEMORY (DIY SAFE)

Virtual memory is the disk space your computer will start to use when it's short of RAM (Random Access Memory). But disks are slower than RAM so operations take longer. Worse, if the computer runs low on virtual memory your computer will freeze or crash.

Resetting the virtual memory usage on your computer through the built in utility can speed up the computer but DO NOT exceed the limit suggested in the properties box of your Windows system.

SHUTDOWN CORRECTLY (DIY SAFE)

Your computer performs a number of maintenance functions during the shutdown process. If this process isn't carried out correctly files meant to be eliminated will be left in the cache, configuration information can be lost and programs, or even the operating system itself, corrupted. The cumulative effect will be a slower, possibly damaged, computer.



The proper procedure for shutting down the computer operates through the Start button option to 'Turn off computer'. If you need to turn off your computer reasonably quickly then use the Control-Alt-Delete key combination to open Task Manager and utilize the Shut Down option. Windows will make a record that it will need to do some cleanup on its next boot up sequence. A sudden shutdown, for instance by unplugging the computer and cutting power, can damage components and cause the computer to fail - never deliberately turn it off that way. If there is a power cut that shuts it down there's a good chance that the PC's self diagnostics will allow it to repair any corruptions automatically the next time it reboots.

REBOOT REGULARLY (DIY SAFE)

PCs need to be restarted periodically in order to reset configurations after new programs or peripherals have been installed so that they work correctly. Restarting also clears out memory and closes down unnecessary processes and services. In fact, rebooting is the all-time techie favorite suggestion as the first step for remedying all sorts of computer problems. Reboot returns all the software and most of the hardware to a known initial state, which in theory should eliminate fluctuating problems.

SCAN FOR DISK ERRORS (DIY SAFE)

If it's going to go wrong, the hard disk is the likely location of the trouble. Your computer will have a built in tool (ScanDisk or Error-checking depending on the operating system version on your PC) for performing a disk scan to check the hard drives for errors. These errors can derive from a number of sources. Most common are system crashes, applications that have been improperly closed and harboring harmful programs such as viruses.

If it finds an error it attempts (usually successfully) to fix it. It's a good idea to run a scan on a regular schedule, about once every month or so.

10 Ways To Trim Your IT Budget

Cash is tight so every SME owner is looking for ways to cut outlays. IT could look like an easy target. Trouble is, your IT is one of those things with the potential to fuel real efficiency increases in many areas of operation thus ultimately being a dollar saver. Besides, sooner or later you will be forced to refresh old technology, either because it's stopped working or is so slow that it's cramping your productivity. Here are some suggestions for how you can rein in the IT budget without sacrificing opportunity.

1. Postpone non-essential purchases – then bargain shop. Let the lifetime of hardware extend out a little past the recommended upgrade date and stick with the current version of your software programs. If you do need to buy, don't just settle for the first price you're offered. A number of websites specialize in price comparing IT products. They often include details about discounts and other offers that can reduce the price of a product substantially.

2. Use open source software. Not only does Open Source software enable you to create more customized solutions to better fit your needs but it's way cheaper than proprietary products (often free) so you can spend your budget on upgrading hardware infrastructure. You and your team will need training to make it work and there's a migration process involved but it is definitely a money saver.

3. Set up a client/server system to run your computers. Invest in a robust server (to do all the processing on behalf of all the individual terminals you have) and hang even your obsolete computers off it as thin clients (they

don't require their own hard drive now).

4. Virtualize applications. Virtualization enables you to run multiple operating systems and applications on a single server rather than several. It can dramatically reduce costs for IT management, hardware, power consumption and maintenance.

5. Compare your internet service provider costs against the offerings of other providers.

6. Get the best deal on communications. Consider amalgamating your business, mobile/s and internet services with the one provider – amalgamating accounts usually means better pricing. Compare provider's plans – there are great plans available out there in the market that could save you a lot of money.

7. Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) hardware costs are dropping and quality is improving making it a fast growing resource for small businesses intent on cutting communication costs.

8. Investigate moving to software as a service solutions (SaaS). Outsourcing via SaaS can provide savings on software and maintenance

as well as other benefits such as automatic backups and data security.

9. Assess alternatives to new computer purchase. Consider upgrading e.g. adding memory and removing unwanted software and files to improve performance; buying refurbished hardware; in the case of most PCs, the hardware, packaging and even warranty coverage are literally identical to those you would buy new, only with a lower price tag.

10. Turn your computers and monitors off at night. Make sure everyone in the office does this as well. It will save you money, your equipment will last longer and it is much better for the environment.

Most SME owners aren't IT wizards and the learning curve necessary to make a smart IT decision often leaves them with less than the best setup. That can mean a lot of unnecessary expenditure in the longer term. So, invest your time first up in finding a vendor able to understand your business and tailor their recommendations to particular needs – it will be time very well spent.



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