

Is Your Web Site Working?

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THE RIGHT TOOLS DO MORE THAN MEASURE A WEB SITE'S SUCCESS.



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Online retailers and wholesalers can measure their online marketing and sales success by the volume and variety in their customers' electronic shopping carts. Lacking such "vehicles" for their precisely targeted professional audience of "customers," pharmaceutical brand Web site managers face unique challenges in evaluating their sites' success. But with a clear purpose, realistic goals, and the right tools, pharma companies can measure the success of their brand Web sites—and be well on the way to ensuring it.

"Our site got 50,000 hits last month," brand managers often say when asked about their achievements on the Web. But sophisticated marketers want to know who the visitors are behind

those "hits," or page views. Were there 50,000 "unique" visitors, or 25,000 visitors who returned twice? Did they find the information they wanted? Did they go beyond the home page?

Skeptical brand managers may ask, "How is my site really working for me?" Frustrated by the limited amount of interaction allowed within DTC guidelines, many brand managers resort to simply remerchandising brochures. That practice results in a conservative, less effective Web site.

Scott Kisner wrote in a recent issue of CIO magazine, "Customers are not distinguishing between branding efforts online and offline." With consumers and professionals relying more and more on the Web, brand managers need to realize that a brand Web site may be the first and only

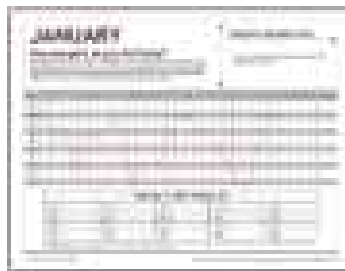
To evaluate a site's success managers must move beyond counting hits to a multifaceted approach.

interaction their customers have with a product. Brand sites that fail to entice users will be quickly "clicked over."

Not All Clicks Are Created Equal

Tracking "hits" on Web server logs assesses only one aspect of a site's success: the number of visitors, unqualified by context. Web servers create log files that track the number of pages visited, the order in which they were visited, and how much time the visitor spent on each page. Those logs provide extremely detailed traffic reports, recording every click, graphic, and page download. And although traffic is a relative measure of a site's popularity, popularity may not reflect its success.

One way of adding context to server log reports is to appropriately identify the information in a site. A page offering an interactive "find a



doctor" application invites a level of visitor interest different from a page giving general product information.

By categorizing a site's information, pharmaceutical marketers can better determine if it is helping to forge brand relationships. They can categorize visitors by the degree to which they bond with a brand, based on how deeply they delve into a site's content.

Investment

A more reliable measure of Web site success involves differentiating between types of visitors. For example, a visitor who leaves a site after viewing its home page is distinctly different from one who fills out an online health assessment.

Those who visit an anemia-related site for a "monthly energy calendar" have a stronger relationship with the brand than those who visit only the home page. Although brand managers know that intuitively, most statistics packages treat both groups as unique. But

visitors develop different relationships with sites based on the personal relevance and appeal of their content and brands.

As people increasingly understand and trust a brand through successful interaction with a site, they may explore it further. Those who have the strongest relationship with the brand are more likely to use applications that require registration and user-maintenance to be effective. Visitors who aren't as knowledgeable or interested in the brand won't invest the time.

Growth

Visitors will adjust their relationship with a brand through continued interaction with its site. They may initially view only general product information but later seek more involved applications on return visits. Such growth in the relationship will result if a brand site's design and organization are effective.

If visitors are interested in a site's message, they will return and spend increasing amounts of time interacting with the brand. Rather than showing the two visits as independent events, it is important to measure the visitors' increased interest. Charting that relationship growth—or lack of growth—will highlight the content areas that deliver desired results and those that are need improvement. ➤

Quality Checklist

Marketers should keep four elements of a brand Web site's quality in mind when evaluating its effectiveness:

✓ **Focus.** Know the number-one reason visitors go to your site and continue to meet their expectations. Although research may demonstrate that 63 percent of asthma sufferers also enjoy playing golf, resist the temptation to dilute the professional content of your site by including information about the game.

✓ **Search Engine Optimized.** Users must be able to find your site within the top ten results of a Web search. It doesn't matter how innovative,

interactive, and strategically planned your Web site is if nobody knows it exists. (See "Directing Traffic," page 132.)

✓ **User-Friendly Interface.** Consider the audience and target your message accordingly. Few households have the bandwidth necessary to handle today's cutting-edge animation and graphics, so keep it simple.

✓ **Consistency.** Make sure your Web site's look is consistent with that of your brand's marketing campaign. A Web site is not the place to try out new logos or color schemes.

Frequency

As with all other communications media, frequency of consumer return is still important. Does the site create a reason to come back? Rarely do people connect with a message overnight; to make a lasting impression, repeated deliveries of a brand message are necessary. Not every pharmaceutical requires a lifetime of message exposure, but repetition is still an important

element of brand success. Even a limited number of repeat exposures could achieve the desired outcome—converting consumers into brand advocates.

Advertising in print and traditional broadcast media assumes that the brand message is surrounded by editorial content that is interesting and relevant to your target audience. Simply running an ad a second time boosts exposure. In

Directing Traffic

Your company printed its URL on all its materials, placed fancy banner ads and hot links in relevant sites all over the Web,

and launched its Web site with all the bells and whistles of a presidential inaugural ball. But the only visitors you've welcomed so far are employees, marketing partners, and a sprinkling of surfers.

What's happening? More than 75 percent of Internet users employ search engines and directories to traverse the Web, and 46 percent of surfers find new Web sites through search engines, reports RealNames. According to www.goto.com—a “pay for placement” engine—the top-ranked spot in search results is three times more likely to be clicked on than the fifth-ranked spot. Many Internet users fail to extend their search past the first 30 listings or the first three pages of search results. Considering that worldwide there are 374.9 million people online, of which 135.7 million reside in the United States, it's a wonder that anyone can ever find your site.

What are search engines? Search engines and directories are Web sites that allow users to search for information using words or phrases. Search engines such as Yahoo!, Google, AltaVista and

Lycos use technology to add Web sites automatically to their indexes, and directories are human-edited indexes to which Web sites are added manually.

What is optimization? Search engine optimization is the process used to make your Web site search-engine friendly. Optimization professionals work closely with designers, programmers, and marketers to get Web sites properly indexed by the Internet's top search sites. They also keep abreast of search engine news, navigation cues, emerging trends in search engine technology, and Internet changes that have a direct bearing on how people search for information.

How do they work? No two search engines work the same way. Some use preprogrammed “relevancy” formulas, or algorithms, to determine a Web site's placement or ranking among a list of “found” items pertaining to a search. With directories, a human being determines the relevance of your site's content to search words, terms, or phrases. Some search engines use “robots” or “spiders”: software-driven searchers that follow links in a Web site, selectively adding content to their databases. Those robots subsequently judge content based on relevancy formulas that include factors such as HTML text, meta tags, key word placement, link text, and title-tag text that populate the Web site.

Meta-what? Meta tags are lines of HTML code embedded in Web pages. Such tags are hidden from Web visitors, but they are visible to the “robots” that use proprietary HTML tag formulas such as title tags, Alt tags, comment text, meta description, and meta key words when indexing a Web site. The Internet user types in key words and phrases when looking for a Web site to visit, and the search engine examines meta tags for a match.

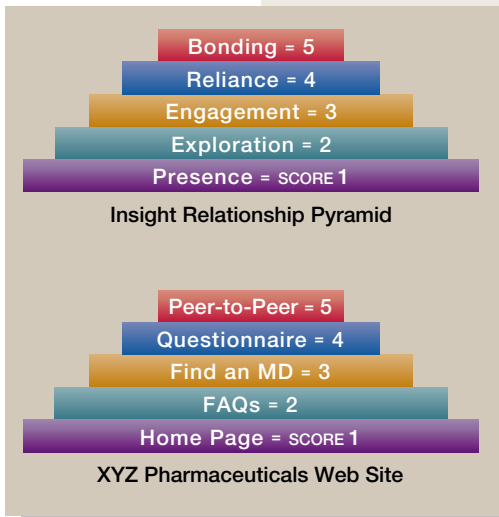
The best key words? To further enhance your search site listings, determine the key words your customer would type into a search box to find your site, then create relevant text for your home page and key interior pages. Test several top search sites—AltaVista or Google—to discover how many Web pages (or results) are returned for a particular key word. If more than 25,000 results are returned, you have chosen a very popular key word that may make it difficult for you to get a top ten listing. If more than 250,000 results are returned, you should use a more focused keyword. Because some search sites allow only a few key words, choose wisely, and avoid generic terms such as *drug* or *health*.

—Jeannette Kocsis is a search engine optimization program manager for Harte-Hanks Interactive, a division of Harte-Hanks, based in Lake Katrine, NY.

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<meta name="description" content="Welcome to Allergis.com, your...>  
<meta http-equiv="keywords" content="Allergis, Allergan, Fevertin
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The "Quantify" Method

The Insight Relationship Pyramid categorizes online content and pages. Typical consumer behavior begins at a presence level—a cursory exploration of the home page—and, as the level of trust and acceptance of the brand increases, it travels up the pyramid toward bonding, such as sharing a personal testimonial. Each level of the pyramid is scored numerically, with presence at 1 and bonding at 5.



Hypothetically . . .
XYZ Pharmaceuticals has categorized its simple five-page site using the Insight Relationship Pyramid.

Consumer A visits the XYZ Pharmaceuticals Web site, spends several minutes on the home page, and leaves. Consumer B visits the site, spends 45 seconds on the home page, two minutes on the Frequently Asked Questions page, and 25

minutes in a peer-to-peer message board area before leaving. Consumer A would receive a score of 1 and Consumer B a score of 5, based on their levels of brand bonding.

Combining selectively placed spot surveys with consumer scores allows marketers to draw general conclusions about participants at particular pyramid levels. For example, brand managers may determine that the typical consumer receiving a score of 5 has a potential purchasing level of \$15,000 for their product and is likely to recommend their product to an average of four other people. The potential value to the brand for consumers scoring 5 would be \$75,000.

The insight relationship model can serve as a road map for site development and can help XYZ Pharmaceuticals determine the cost-effectiveness of developing and implementing strong, yet potentially expensive, bonding applications. Mapping a brand site onto the pyramid model can help identify obstacles and illuminate pathways to visitor bonding and contribute objective insights for future planning and investment.
—Insight Interactive Group.

those media, publishers and broadcasters focus on creating interesting content. On the Internet, the Web site is the content. Site visitors who find nothing but “brochureware” are unlikely to return. The addition of a daily allergy forecast to an asthma site creates compelling content that invites return visits.



Analysis of brand site effectiveness should group consumers by numbers of visits, discounting those who visit only once over a given period. That grouping gives a better picture of the number of people actually receiving the brand message. Frequency sorting is critical in differentiating between a site with the kind of promotion that drives traffic and a site with the kind of content that retains users.

Drawing Conclusions

Marketers can employ the same user-sampling tools that they use to assess the value of advertising in traditional media to assess the value of interactive media. Short, anonymous surveys administered at appropriate times can assess the impact a site has on brand awareness and prescribing habits as well as highlight classifications of visitors who require more targeted outreach.

Traditional surveys offered at the beginning of a visit or at certain pages throughout the site provide only generic information about the audience. By classifying visitors based on their relationship levels, surveys capture information about visitors at different stages of their relationship with the brand. A survey of visitors who have been using the online headache diary of a migraine site, for example, would provide insight into all users who have that level of relationship with the brand.

Pharmaceutical brand sites both educate consumers and build relationships between brands and their target audiences. Through patient compliance, new patient introduction, or professional prescribing habits, brand sites inform and influence visitors with their content and applications. Evaluating a site's success in achieving any of those goals must move beyond counting hits to include a multifaceted approach consisting of monitoring, collecting, classifying, and analyzing data generated from the varying relationships of site visitors. ■