

Searching for Better Web Usability

Mike Steadman

Studies show that an ever increasing number of users begin their web experience with a search, even when presented with intuitive and highly “usable” navigation options. This session covers the emerging field of Search Analytics. Attendees will discover the major features and components to look for (or build), and how many organizations are effectively using search analytics data to constantly improve site design and usability as well as drive content.

About the Speaker:

Mike Steadman brings nearly 20 years of technology industry experience ranging from his work with the US Air Force to his current role as President, Susquehanna Technologies [SusQtech], a Virginia-based Microsoft Gold Partner focusing on SharePoint solutions. Mike is an active speaker and writer within the Association and Non-Profit industry, and is a member of the American Society of Association Executives. Mike holds a B.S. in Computer Science from James Madison University, and an M.S. in Information Technology Management from Virginia Tech.

Searching for Better Web Usability

A simple truth

*After all these years... there are still only 2
ways to “get to” information on the web.*

*You can click to “it”, or you can search for
“it”*

More than 90% of web users search during every online session

(you guessed it; most use Google)

More than 50% of web users *begin* by searching.

(and most quickly become frustrated)

Fewer than 1 in 20 users click to the 2nd page of search results

(and nobody searches more than twice)

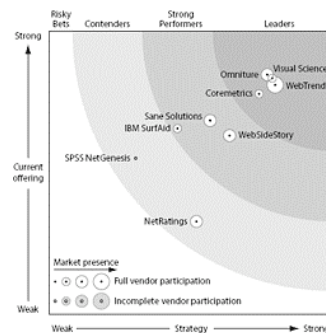
Why then... ?

WEBSIDESTORY®

OMNITURE

WebTrends.

CORE METRICS



..do we continue to emphasize click-stream analytics over search analytics?

Some Answers

Availability

- Fewer COTS Products = higher cost of ownership
- Analytics Market is Highly Competitive and recently volatile (M&A nearly complete – expect focus on Search Analytics to rapidly increase!)

Technology

- Difficult to connect search “devices” and “services” to non-crawl meta-data
- Unlike Click Stream Analytics, there is no consistent mechanism for tracking search behavior (such as Apache or IIS Web Logs)

XML / Web Services integration now standard among most Content Management Systems

(full taxonomy integration: this takes care of the technology issue)

Web Analytics leaders finally offering Search add-ons (mostly due to M&A)

(single tool = consistent reporting interface)

Ever increasing focus on IA/Taxonomy forces Search Analytics to forefront

(Taxonomy now seen as a living process)

The Opportunity



The IDC compares Search Analytics to having a 24/7/365 focus-group for your website's usability

What are your users searching for?

(more importantly – what are they searching for and not finding?)

Are their expectations being met?

(do you know what they do after they click through a result?)

5 Search Must-Haves

Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It's gotta work right
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Search from every page
Customizable Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advanced Search• Filtering / Sorting by Taxonomy
Categorization	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Group Results by Taxonomy
Targeting Intelligence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Key Word/Phrase recognition & Targeting• Synonyms / "Did you mean?"

The Google Factor

Myth: “I can’t control Google!”

*(maybe not – but you can use it to your
advantage)*

All incoming HTTP requests contain:

- 1.Referer
- 2.Query-String

Search Examples (demonstration)

Search Analytics

Search Analytics: Key Features

- Summary Reports Emailed on Scheduled Basis
- Session Details (search-path)
- Watch Groups
- Auto-Synonyms
- Top Search Words
 - Top Found
 - Top Not-Found
 - Top Clicked
 - Top Not Clicked
 - Advancing Terms (hot)
 - Retreating Terms (cold)

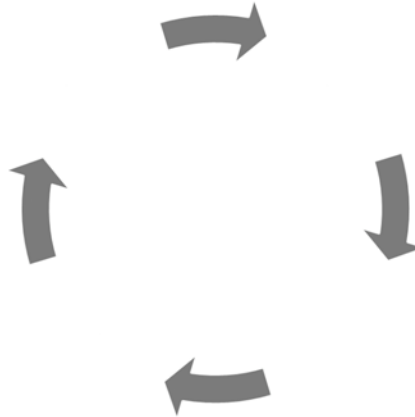
Search Analytics

(examples/demonstration)



What happens after the consultants all go home?

Search Optimization Lifecycle



Optimization Lifecycle

Step 1: Design your Search System

- Initial Information Architecture
 - Remember: This is an evolving process
- Design Internal Search Strategy
 - CMS Taxonomy Rules / Meta-Data Required?
 - Advanced Search Components?
 - Search-Headers / Targeted Results?
- Design External Search Strategy
 - Search Engine Optimization
 - How to handle incoming search-engine hits?
- What do you want to analyze?

Optimization Lifecycle

Step 2: Build/Buy the right system or service

- COTS Product? Hosted or In-House? Custom?
 - Most important step – get this one right
- Implement and Configure
 - Search Categorization
 - Search Synonyms
 - Search Headers / Targeted
 - Watch-Groups
 - Reports (schedule)
 - Advanced Search
 - Multi-Lingual
 - Meta-Data / Taxonomy
 - Sorting
 - Filtering

Optimization Lifecycle

Step 3: Analyze – Distribute and Discuss!

- Top Search Terms
 - Found / Not-Found
 - Clicked / Not-Clicked
 - Advancing (what's hot) vs. Retreating Terms
- User Behaviors
 - Did users search again?
 - If so, what for?
 - How long did they spend on the results?
 - Did user “come in” from Google? What was the original term?
- Watch Groups
 - What are your key audience segments searching for?

Optimization Lifecycle

Step 4: Assign Responsibility and Take Action!

- Create!
 - Missing Content
 - New Products/Services
- Update / Add new Synonyms
- Adjust Content Meta-Data on popular pages
- Adjust Navigation, Placement, and Taxonomy
 - Remove political/emotional “feelings” by leveraging analytics!

THANK
YOU

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