

Monitoring and reporting on website traffic guidelines for Staff

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Note, this document is available in alternative formats upon request including electronic or audio format.

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Policy Statement

This Policy provides a set of guidelines to ensure consistency of reporting and monitoring of website traffic and SEO practices. Consistency is absolutely a prerequisite for maximising maintainability and reporting of website traffic. All users of Organisation IT services are required to comply with the principles outlined in this policy.

What is website traffic monitoring

Web traffic monitoring is the process of analysing users that visit your website. Manual and automated techniques allow you to collect basic data, such as the number of users that visit a page within a certain period. Marketers also view analytics, such as the devices visitors use to access your website, the time they spend on each page and the actions they perform while on a page. Web traffic monitoring is usually an ongoing process that people use to optimize the performance of their website and improve its overall user experience

Improve website performance

Web traffic monitoring reveals crucial data, like page loading speed and bounce rate, or the frequency at which users leave your website after visiting one page. You can often find correlations between these statistics to improve your website performance. For instance, if you notice a high bounce rate, it might be because of a page's slow loading speed. Knowing this information allows you to increase page speed by compressing images and improving server response time. The result is improved website performance that encourages search engines to rank your pages higher in search results.

Optimise user experience

When you use web traffic monitoring tools, you can better understand your audience. Demographic data provides insight into your visitors' ages, genders, interests and shopping habits. This information helps you determine who's interested in your content and where there might be a disconnect between your actual visitors and target audience. If you want to increase traffic from a specific segment, you can conduct additional market research to appeal to this unique audience.

Optimise advertising budget

Many websites rely on organic traffic to obtain visitors, but you can give your pages a boost via a paid ad campaign. You pay a fee for every click or impression the campaign generates, making it important for you to optimize your budget. Web traffic tools analyse

who clicks on your ads and whether the consumers complete desired actions on your site, such as buying a product or subscribing to a newsletter. This information allows you to create more compelling copy and ensure visitors have a good user experience on your site.

Website monitoring tools

How to track traffic on my website?

First things first, a look at some of the most popular website traffic analysis tools...

GA4

Google Analytics 4 (GA4) is an analytics service that allows you to measure traffic and engagement across your websites and apps. It replaced the longstanding Universal Analytics (UA) in July 2023.

GA4 collects data from your website, creating reports that provide insights into your business. These reports can be used to monitor traffic, analyse data, and understand your website users and their activity.

The reports can either be the overview type, summarising data about a specific area, such as revenue from online purchases or number of web forms submitted. Or they can be detailed reports, providing a more in-depth view.

The main difference between UA and GA4 is that GA4 is user and event-based rather than session-based. This means that all user interactions are captured as 'events' rather than the old UA 'hit types' such as page hits, etc.

Shifting the focus from sessions to events provides significant benefits to marketers, such as the ability to conduct cross-platform analysis and the power to predict user behaviour.

Search Console

[Search Console](#) is another Google tool, this one focused on helping website owners to understand how they are performing on Google Search, and what they can do to enhance their appearance in the search results and attract more relevant traffic to their websites.

Search Console provides insights into how Google crawls, indexes and serves a website, helping you to monitor and optimise your search performance. It is useful in that it sends you an alert to let you know of any issues it detects, allowing you to take action to resolve them.

Using Search Console, you can see whether your site has had any Google Search manual actions issued against it. You can tell Google about a site migration, for example if you move your site to a new domain, allowing you to migrate your Google Search results from your old site to your new site more easily. You can also review

any issues with your structured data courtesy of insights into which rich results Google could or could not read from your site.

Ahrefs

[Ahrefs](#) is a web traffic analysis tool that allows you to analyse competitor traffic. With this platform, it's possible to track the keywords that your competitors are ranking for in the search engines, and see the volumes of traffic that come with them. Being able to see the content that brings competitors the most traffic is a very valuable advantage, which can serve as a source for keyword research and help shape highly competitive organic SEO campaigns.

SEMrush

[SEMrush](#) works in a similar way to Ahrefs, although it is renowned as the best tool for keyword research and analysis, whilst Ahrefs is known more for its backlink monitoring capabilities. SEMrush allows you to analyse keywords and the volumes of traffic going to competitor sites, which reveals the overall competitiveness of the industry. You can also track the likes of traffic sources and unique visitors.

Website traffic metrics

The following metrics are, we believe, the most important you should be tracking:

Engagement rate

in Google Analytics 4, this replaces the old 'bounce rate' used in Universal Analytics. Engagement rate is the percentage of meaningfully engaged sessions on your website, whereas bounce rate is the opposite, in other words, the percentage of sessions that did not engage with your website and 'bounced' off.

If users do not match the criteria of an engaged session, i.e. the session lasted less than 10 seconds, no conversion event occurred, and there were not a minimum of two page views, then the session would not count as an engaged session. If this was the only session on your website, then the engagement rate would be 0%, and the bounce rate would have been 100%.

Page views

a page view is an instance of a page being loaded or reloaded in a browser. This metric is defined as the total number of pages viewed.

Organic search traffic

this is the number of visitors who landed on your site after finding you in the organic search results. If you are running a PPC campaign, you'll be able to compare how much traffic lands on your site from organic versus paid-for sources.

Conversions

this shows the number of users who entered your website and completed actions corresponding to your predefined marketing goal. Such goals could be visiting a page, spending a certain amount of time on that page, completing a form, requesting a call back, sharing a post or clicking to call a phone number.

Visits or sessions

a visit or session is the one-time journey of the user on your website, beginning with their first point of entry and ending when they leave.

Number of pages per visit

this refers to the number of pages that a single user visited during a single session on your website.

Traffic source

this is a very important metric, as it enables you to see precisely which of your online marketing activities are the most effective. Whether it's a search engine, a referrer or direct traffic, you'll be able to identify which of your campaigns are most worthwhile, so you can ditch anything that's not working.

Definitions and Acronyms

Term	Definition
SEO	Search Engine Optimisation
SEM	Search Engine Marketing
SERP	Search Engine results page
XML	Extensible Markup Language is a markup language and file format for storing, transmitting, and reconstructing arbitrary data. HTML5 is a subset of XML.

Related polices and other relevant documents

Staff Code of Conduct

Related legislation

There is no legislation regarding the monitoring or reporting of website traffic.

Review Date

June 2024

Contact Information

Chief Information Officer

Revision History

Version No.	Approved/ Amended/ Rescinded	Date	Approval Authority	Amendments
1.0	Approved	January 2024	ITC MD	