

28 SEO METRICS THAT YOU CAN SELL AND REPORT TO CLIENTS

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What clients want

As an SEO, you know that when it comes to reporting results, every client wants something different. Some clients want every detail; some just want highlights.

But all clients want to meet business goals.

If a client understands the connection of your SEO work to their business goals, they're far more likely to pay you — and keep paying you.

What SEOs need

In this whitepaper, we explore 28 metrics that SEOs can use to demonstrate their value in terms that clients can understand easily. We have divided them into three categories to help SEOs focus on the client's target audience and business goals.

The metrics in each category help answer these questions:

1. *REACH: Are you making it easier for the target audience to find your client's website? How visible is your client's website — i.e., how wide is its reach — as a result?*
2. *ACTIONS: Once you have reached the target audience and they visit your client's website, what are they doing there? Are they the actions you expected or that your client needs? What changes would prompt more actions, especially the most desirable ones?*
3. *RESULTS: Specifically, how has your SEO work to improve Reach and prompt Actions resulted in conversions that meet your client's business goals?*

Traditionally, SEO work and reports have concentrated on Reach metrics. More and more, SEOs are expected or need to influence Actions metrics, too, particularly by creating quality content and identifying technical issues. They now add those metrics and recommendations to their client reports.

But reporting only Reach and Actions metrics could leave clients knowing the how, what, where and when of SEO without knowing *why* SEO matters in terms they care most about — their specific business goals. Reporting Results makes the connection between your SEO work and a business meeting its goals.



In a nutshell

Reach is your SEO work toward visibility and traffic.

Actions are things website visitors do and the ways an SEO could influence them.

Results is the outcome of both.

All can be measured and reported.

Results matter most to a client, and they should be the focus of your client education and communication. But help them understand that without hard work on Reach and effort to influence Actions, there wouldn't be any Results.

REACH METRICS

Reach metrics help SEO clients understand:

1. *How SEO influences how their target audience finds their website.*
2. *How visible their website is — i.e., how wide its reach is — as a result.*

As an SEO, you probably use many of these metrics to diagnose problems, find opportunities and form strategies. They are the building blocks of your work. Reach metrics don't directly measure the effect of SEO on meeting your client's business goals, but without your work to improve them, there would be no Result metrics to report.

Metrics 1-3 determine whether or not your client's website can be found by search engines, how well and what technical problems need to be fixed.

Metrics 4-11 help determine the scale of your SEO work, the keyword lists you might develop and the measurements of link building success.

Metrics 12-16 help demonstrate the actual Reach that results from SEO work on metrics 1-11.

Consider using the definitions and "why it matters" paragraphs for each metric when explaining or reporting them to clients. Also, unless otherwise stated, "How to measure it" sections refer to metrics available in Google Analytics or Google Webmaster Tools.

1. Crawlability

DEFINITION

How quickly and accurately automated search engine bots find your website and its content. These bots continually crawl the entire internet. What websites they find and how the search engine's algorithm rates them make up search results.

WHY IT MATTERS TO SEO CLIENTS

If search engine bots can't see your website, or there are errors preventing bots from accessing your website, then your website won't show up in search results. If your website isn't in search results, then no one looking on a search engine will find it — or any of the content on it. The same goes for individual pages on your website.

HOW TO MEASURE IT

- *Number of pages that are blocked by your robots.txt file (this could be your entire website)*
- *Number of pages that are blocked by noindex meta standards*
- *Number of pages with 404 Page Not Found errors*
- *Number of pages that have server errors, and what type of errors they are*
- *Number of pages that have redirects, and what types of redirects they are*

Some of these measurements are available in Google Webmaster Tools, although SEO tools such as Raven's Site Auditor, Screaming Frog and Xenu can help you audit a website on a larger scale.

Questions to consider:

- Is your robots.txt file set up correctly? Is it blocking search engines from accessing certain pages they should be able to access? Are there errors in it that might be preventing snippets from showing up on search engine results pages (SERPs)?
- Are you using noindex meta standards to control search engine bot access to individual pages on your site? Has it been formatted and used correctly?
- How do you plan to handle 404 errors? Who will decide whether that content gets restored or redirected—you or the client?
- If there are a high number of pages with server errors, is it an issue with the code or with the hosting provider? If it's the latter, would your client consider another hosting provider? Do you know which hosting providers are most reliable to make an informed recommendation?
- Are you using the best kinds of redirects for search engine visibility (i.e. 301 redirects for content that has permanently moved)? Are there other redirects that are more appropriate for your client's website? How will those affect crawlability of your client's site?
- After you have fixed errors, have you requested that the search engine fetch and re-crawl a page?

2. URLs Indexed

DEFINITION

How many of your website's pages—a.k.a. URLs—that a search engine has added to its catalog—a.k.a. index. If a page is in the index, a searcher could find it on that search engine.

WHY IT MATTERS TO SEO CLIENTS

The larger your website, the more pages that search engine bots have to crawl. The more pages that search engine bots crawl, the more likely that an engine will consider your website reputable and put your website's pages in its index.

To a point, that is. If you have too many pages that the search engine bots consider low-quality, they will ignore those pages and could devalue your website overall. Low-quality pages include:

- *Stubs: Pages with little to no content for the bot to crawl, such as pages with fewer than 250 words.*
- *Duplicate pages: Pages with content that substantially duplicates content on another page or website.*
- *Orphan pages: Pages that aren't linked very well (or at all) from other sections of your website.*
- *Error pages: Bots have to be able to crawl a page before they can index it (see "Crawlability").*

Also, Link Value, Link Velocity and other link metrics described in this whitepaper can affect whether or not your website is indexed.

HOW TO MEASURE IT

- *Google Webmaster Tools (GWT): Review the Index Status, including the advanced view, to see how many pages of your website Google has indexed and how many pages are blocked by your robots.txt file. To find orphan pages, go to the Internal Links section of GWT and look for pages with only one or two links.*
- *Bing Webmaster Tools: Review the Index Explorer, which provides a deep view of how Bing understands your website's architecture and content.*
- *SEO tools such as Raven's Site Auditor, Screaming Frog and Xenu can help you audit a website on a larger scale.*

Questions to consider

- Have you properly created and submitted a sitemap to the search engines via their webmaster tools?
- Have you accidentally blocked your site from being indexed via robots.txt?
- Are some pages not being indexed because they're not well-linked to from other pages on your website?
- Is your site architecture creating duplicate or error pages?
- Is the site's architecture creating stubs? For example, if your site runs on WordPress, do you use tags and categories excessively?
- How are internal and external links affecting URLs indexed?

3. NAP Citations

DEFINITION

Literally, NAP stands for name, address and phone number. These three items are commonly called NAP citations by professionals who focus on local SEO.

WHY IT MATTERS TO SEO CLIENTS

Search engines use NAP citations to confirm the physical locations of businesses and match them to the listings they store in their own indices. NAP citations are critical for businesses where location is an important factor for search. For example, Nashville Boots might want to be found in local search for anyone searching “boot stores in Nashville.”

NAP citations can drive a significant number of people to brick-and-mortar-only businesses (i.e., those that don’t sell any products online).

HOW TO MEASURE IT

- *Number of search engines that display your client’s website for local searches*
- *Number and quality of directories that your client’s website is listed in*
- *Number and quality of non-directory websites that have your client’s NAP information*
- *Accuracy of NAP citations*

Some of these measurements you will have to review and track manually; other SEO tools such as GetListed.org can help you get the big picture at a glance.

Questions to consider

- Is the business name, address and phone number on your client’s website?
- Have you claimed your Google Local + profile (formerly known as Google Places and highly likely to be called something else in the future)? Have you claimed your local profiles on Yahoo!, Bing and other search engines?
- Have you listed your client’s NAP information in major directories that search engines use to gather data for local searches, such as SuperPages, YellowPages, LocalEZ, InfoUSA and Axiom?
- Does your client have business partners, charities, affiliations or other third parties that might not offer a link but would list your client’s NAP information?
- Has the business moved recently?

4. Geographic Influence

DEFINITION

Where visitors to your client's website are located.

WHY IT MATTERS TO SEO CLIENTS

This metric is directly related to your client's target audience and business goals.

Think small: Many businesses have specific, local service areas. The biggest impact on their business goals would come from website traffic from those areas.

Think big: Many businesses have international audiences or customers, and even if everyone reads English, some content just might not make much sense, hindering conversions.

Measuring the amount of traffic by location and comparing that to your client's target audience and business goals can help you determine if you're using the right SEO strategy with the right content in the right places.

HOW TO MEASURE IT

- *Number of countries that sent traffic to your client's website.*
- *Number of cities that sent traffic to your client's website, according to Google Analytics. Then break those down by province, state, county and ZIP codes.*

Questions to consider

- Are people from your geographically targeted audiences actually visiting your client's website when you start your work? If not, how do you plan to change that?
- Do the top countries visiting your client's website matter to your client's business goals? If so, what do you know about International SEO best practices, and how can you apply it?
- Does my client really just need visitors from a narrow, local audience? If so, what do you know about Local SEO best practices, and how can you apply it?

5. Keywords

DEFINITION

The words and phrases that are a) relevant to your client's business and b) actually used by searchers.

WHY IT MATTERS TO SEO CLIENTS

Searchers use keywords and phrases to find the content or website they're looking for via search engines. It is critical that SEOs research the keywords that are bringing traffic to a client's website and look for opportunities to reach the client's target audience with better or different keywords.

You may find that your Results SEO metrics underperform if you focus on keywords that may bring traffic but aren't used by the target audience, that are too competitive for the size of your client's business (for example, a mom-and-pop pharmacy hoping to perform well for "Viagra") or that are seasonal in nature.

Some logical keywords for your client's business may have duplicate meanings and, therefore, aren't all that great for building relevant traffic. Take "Raven," which a searcher could be using as a keyword to learn about the Baltimore Ravens, birds, Edgar Allen Poe or Raven Internet Marketing Tools. SEOs periodically should search manually for a client's keywords to make sure the target audience's searching intent matches what the search engine displays as a result.

HOW TO MEASURE IT

- *Google AdWords Local Keyword search volume*
- *Google AdWords Global Keyword search volume*
- *Google AdWords Advertiser Competition*
- *Google Trends Interest over time*
- *Number of unique queries as reported by Google and Bing's webmaster tools*
- *Number of unique impressions in Google and Bing's webmaster Tools*
- *Volume of organic keyword traffic as reported by Google Analytics*

Questions to consider

- What words and phrases describe your client's product, services, industry and location?
- What keywords does your client's website have in common with the competition? How can you get ideas from the competition for potential keywords?
- Does your client want you to use (or not use) certain keywords just for vanity's sake, even though those keywords don't drive their business goals? How can you refocus them on the keywords that do affect their business goals?
- Is your keyword list informed by research, available data and performance, or is it just based on opinion?
- Does your keyword list match the keywords that your target audience might actually use?
- As searchers get smarter about how search engines work — and may use a string of standalone key words to get a desired result — are you evolving your keyword list?
- What content would your client's target audience like to see when they search your keyword? Does your client's website have that content?
- What kinds of maps, images, videos, books or other search engine results are triggered by keyword searches? Is there sufficient variety?
- Do any of your keywords have duplicate meanings or secondary uses that you want to beware?

6. Anchor Text

DEFINITION

Anchor text is the actual text of a hyperlink, such as [What I Want from a Restaurant Website](#) by The Oatmeal.

WHY IT MATTERS TO SEO CLIENTS

Search engine algorithms use anchor text to understand the content of your website or its pages and its relevance to phrases that searchers use. In other words, do links to and from your website use the words that your target audience uses to search?

In the past, some SEOs would use the same anchor text over and over and over in an effort to get better search engine visibility. Search engines caught on to that tactic and often considered it a sign of spammy websites.

Now, search engines emphasize using diverse, natural-sounding and relevant anchor text for better user experiences online. People are more likely to click on relevant links, which leads to more traffic.

Also, content that links to relevant content with relevant anchor text helps search engine bots make connections that would be helpful for better search results.

Diverse, natural-sounding and relevant anchor text is important for internal and external links.

HOW TO MEASURE IT

- *Number of links that use anchor text*
- *Number of brand-related anchor text links*
- *Number of non-brand-related anchor text links*
- *Number of location-related anchor text links*
- *Number of anchor text links that match your target keywords*
- *Diversity of anchor text*

Questions to consider

- As content is written for your client's website, does the anchor text used for links make sense in the context of the sentence/paragraph/article/page? In other words, does the content match the anchor text?
- How often are you using "Click here" as anchor text instead of anchor text that describes the destination?
- In link building outreach, are you asking for specific anchor text? Should you be? Instead, are you appropriately prompting your recipient to share a link using the most relevant anchor text?
- Do you have a list of synonyms for your keywords? Do you share that list with copywriters so that they don't repeat the same keywords excessively?

7. Link Value

DEFINITION

What an external link is worth toward reaching your target audience, either from referrals from another website or via search engine traffic.

WHY IT MATTERS TO SEO CLIENTS

Links are how the web connects itself. Search engine algorithms rely in part on links to determine which content to show in search results. They prefer to display high-quality, relevant content, which means high-quality, relevant links are very important for SEO.

Enter link value. A valuable external link — meaning a link from another website to your client's website — is one that's considered trustworthy and relevant in the eyes of readers and search engine algorithms. Readers are more likely to click the link, and search engines are more likely to display the content that the link points to.

HOW TO MEASURE IT

- *Domain-level: the number, diversity and quality of all links to your client's website*
- *Domain-level: the age and linking history of the domain that links to your client's website*
- *Domain-level: the number of .EDU and .GOV links, which search engines consider very trustworthy, to your client's website*
- *Page-level: the number, diversity and quality of all links to your client's website page*
- *Page-level: the placement of the link on the page that links to your client's website page*
- *Page-level: the number of other links on the page that's linking to your client's website page*
- *Page-level: the number and diversity of links to the page that's linking to your client's website page*

Sound complicated yet? There are tools that mix and match these factors to give you a simple score for the value of a link to your SEO work, including Majestic SEO and SEOmoz. The link value data from each of those companies is included in Raven's Research Central.

Questions to consider

- Does your client's website have content that high-quality websites would want to link to?
- Does your client interact regularly and build relationships with peers, influencers and those trusted by your client's target audience? Will those people link to your client's website?
- How often is your client's website linked to from online media outlets, which search engines may consider highly valuable?
- Where could you share links that are highly likely to reach your target audience, even if they might not be highly valuable to search engines? For example, is there a niche forum in which your client's target audience regularly participates?

8. Link Velocity

DEFINITION

How quickly your message is spreading to your target audience, whether through search engine traffic or referral links from other websites.

WHY IT MATTERS TO SEO CLIENTS

Remember, search engine algorithms rely in part on links to determine which content to show in results. Besides the value of links to your client's website, those algorithms consider the volume of links to your client's website. A high volume of high-quality, relevant links is good. A high volume of low-quality, irrelevant links is bad — especially when they appear suddenly — although there are legitimate ways that can happen.

For example, a search engine algorithm might assume that a sudden deluge of links with identical anchor text from low-authority sites are paid links. (Buying links is a high-risk SEO tactic, as search engines consider that a step too far.) On the other hand, what if something on your client's website hits the online news circuit, or even gets picked up by Google News? A sudden spike of links from such trusted news websites could be great for search engine visibility.

A link building campaign for particular content on your client's website that's designed to drive traffic more than to influence search engine results can also lead to high link velocity. That's especially true if the content is popular with readers.

HOW TO MEASURE IT

- *Number of links to your client's website measured over time*
- *Type of links to your client's website measured over time*
- *Diversity of links to your client's website measured over time*

You'll need to keep track of the type and diversity of the links to your client's website. Tools that use tags or categories may help.

Questions to consider

- Why are you buying links?
- Could the speed at which you're attaining links look unnatural to a search engine algorithm?
- Are your events and content promotions bringing in the amount of links and traffic that you expected?
- Has traffic to a particular page on your client's website suddenly spiked, all coming from different sources? If so, have you discovered the initial source? If so, have you reached out to thank that source?
- What content does your client's website need to help improve link velocity? Could certain aspects become more popular (and shared via links) if they changed formats?

9. Deep Links

DEFINITION

A link on another website pointing to a specific page on your site, such as a blog post, as opposed to a link to the root domain, a.k.a. the home page.

WHY IT MATTERS TO SEO CLIENTS

There are two reasons that deep links are important.

First, to search engine algorithms, a link to a non-root domain page indicates that the link is highly relevant to the content at its destination. Highly relevant link = quality link. Quality link = more trusted by search engines. More trusted by search engines = higher link value. And once link value kicks in, the cycle begins anew.

Second, a portion of your target audience will find your client's website from links on other websites, not from search engine searches. They might be less likely to click links that use your brand name or home page for anchor text than they would links to content that's very relevant to their interests.

HOW TO MEASURE IT

- *Number of links pointing to pages other than your client's home page*
- *Number of websites linking to pages other than your client's home page*
- *Amount of traffic to pages other than your client's home page, broken down by source*
- *Changes over time to any of the above*

Questions to consider

- What is reaching the target audience most: deep links or your client's home page? If it's the latter, how engaging is the home page, and how likely is it to encourage visitors to visit other portions of the website that they might share with links?
- How much content is there on your client's website to link to in the first place? Are there ways to add content that would drive deep links without creating a large burden for your client or creating confusing navigation for visitors?
- What is your strategy for obtaining more deep links in industries some might consider boring or straightforward, content-wise? Is a blog the only idea you have, or are there other ways?
- Are you creating content worth linking to deep within the site?
- If a reader ends up on a page deep into your site, can they easily navigate to other parts of your site? Will they find the rest of your content interesting?

10. Referring Domains

DEFINITION

The websites that are carrying your message to your target audience via links to your client's website.

WHY IT MATTERS TO SEO CLIENTS

Having a large, diverse set of reputable sites that link to you is a positive indication of your client's content quality and your effective outreach. Search engines may give preference to your client's website as a result.

Why else the volume of referring domains is important? If only a small number of sites link to your client's website, and they lose the trust of search engines or are closed down, that could cause a rapid drop in traffic.

That said, you may find that just one link from a related, well-trusted website to your client's website drives more conversions than many links on unrelated, poor-quality websites.

HOW TO MEASURE IT

- *Number of domains that link to your client's website*
- *Type of domains that link to your client's website, broken down by industry and content focus*
- *Diversity of domains that link to your client's website*
- *Quality/authority/trustworthiness of domains that link to your client's website*
- *Changes over time to any of the above*

You may need to track the diversity and quality of referring domains manually, but tools that use tags or categories may help. Also, quality data from Majestic SEO and SEOmoz is included in Raven.

Questions to consider

- Are you using outreach marketing to get links from trusted, relevant sites?
- Are you interacting with active writers and bloggers in your niche on social media who would be likely to link to your content?

11. Sitelinks

DEFINITION

Links to pages in your client's website other than the home page that a search engine automatically displays for some keyword searches.

WHY IT MATTERS TO SEO CLIENTS

Although SEOs cannot set up or request sitelinks — they are provided at the sole discretion of the search engine — SEOs can take steps to influence which of a client's pages are likely to get sitelinks and how accurate the titles of those links are. They can also remove them.

Sitelinks tend to be triggered when your client's domain ranks well for brand-type searches, such as Apple, Samsung or Raven Tools. Search engines like to provide them because they can help searchers find the content they're looking for faster.

Sitelinks are a good measurement of an SEO's work on brand development and attention to detail. Why? The client's website must be optimized so that:

- *It is most often the top result for brand keywords.*
- *It has a significant number of quality links with anchor text matching those keywords.*
- *It is well crawled and indexed.*
- *It has clear, accurate and specific page titles and descriptions of the content on those pages.*

HOW TO MEASURE IT

- *Number of times that sitelinks appear on search results pages for your client's brand keywords.*
- *Number of pages from your client's website that are sitelinks.*
- *URLs of the pages from your client's website that are sitelinks, categorized by type of content.*

Yes, this is manual work. Although you can tell Google or Bing webmaster tools which sitelinks you want removed, neither tool reports which sitelinks you have.

Questions to consider

- Do the sitelinks send your client's target audience to useful pages? If not, should you consider removing them through Google and Bing's webmaster tools? When is a fewer number of sitelinks actually a better thing?
- Have you updated the page titles and content descriptions of your client's website to be as clear, accurate and specific as possible? Do searchers who click on the sitelinks that are based on those titles and descriptions find the content they expect to find?
- Have you built a significant number of quality links with brand-related anchor text for your client's website?

12. SERP Ranking

DEFINITION

The position in which your client's website appears on a search engine results page (SERP) for a single keyword search.

WHY IT MATTERS TO SEO CLIENTS

Of all SEO metrics, clients likely are most familiar with rankings. A SERP ranking is a tangible thing a client can see. A metric that's expressed from 1 to 10 is easy for them to understand. And to double-check your work, all they have to do is search for themselves.

However, any SEO who has been around knows the difficulties in explaining to clients the many factors that influence the ranking of a website for any given keyword. Not only are there signals to a search engine's algorithm to explain, you now have to cover differences in results because of personalization based on their location, search history, social interactions, click behavior and more.

That's why there is now much debate in the industry about the value and accuracy of a single ranking for a single keyword. Although many professional SEOs have moved away from rankings as key measures of performance, many like to include them in reports because clients expect to see them.

HOW TO MEASURE IT

- *There is no authorized source of data for Google SERP rankings. There are third parties that scrape Google and report the position that their software saw when it searched for any given keyword.*
- *Another way to approach rankings is to shift focus from the rankings of single keywords and instead create an index of related keywords — much like mutual funds for stocks. Then observe the general movement of a group of keywords for a big-picture view of success.*

Questions to consider

- What content is ranking now on the SERPs for the keywords that might bring searchers to your client's website? How is that content changing over time?
- Are results like videos, images, maps or local listings influencing rankings for your client's target keywords? If so, what kind of change in strategy do you need to make? Should you consider creating content in multiple formats?
- Does your client understand that a secret search engine algorithm makes final decisions on rankings? That SEO work on factors that could influence the algorithm to select your client's website for a SERP takes time?
- Does your client need basic education about the factors that influence rankings — including many of the Reach metrics in this guide?
- Does your client need education about the difficulties in providing detailed reports on ranking changes, especially sudden ones?

13. Average Rank/ Keyword Position

DEFINITION

The average position — a.k.a. average rank — in which your client's website appears in the search engine results pages for a single keyword search.

WHY IT MATTERS TO SEO CLIENTS

As search engines and their algorithms have gotten more sophisticated, not only are there more than 10 actual results on a page for most results, but, as discussed on page 17, those results are customized based on the searcher's location, search history and more.

Also, Google does not make rankings available as authorized data. Any 1-10 Google ranking you see in an SEO tool has been scraped from Google's search engine results pages. The rankings reported by those tools have the same issues as those reported by individual searches, with the additional factor of the date and time the SERPs were scraped.

For a metric that's provided directly from Google, some SEOs have turned to average rank / keyword position to report to clients instead.

HOW TO MEASURE IT

- *Google Webmaster Tools provides average keyword position data for your client's website. The average keyword position — which could be something like 2, 5.3 or 11.2 — is an average of the ranks of your client's result in SERPs for all searches for a particular keyword. It's an average because not every searcher sees the exact same results in the exact same order every time.*
- *You could use an Event in Google Analytics to provide the actual position when real searchers actually clicked a SERP result and arrived on your site. Over time, you can evaluate if a keyword that sends traffic to your site is increasing or decreasing in visibility on searches related to your client's site. This method assumes that you don't mind how (not provided) clouds your results. Note: GA can only display position data if searchers clicked through to your client's site for that keyword.*

Questions to consider

- Have I authorized Google Webmaster Tools for my client's site?
- Can I implement event-based Google Analytics code on my client's site?
- What keywords are actually productive for my client in terms of meeting business goals?

14. Traffic from Organic Keywords

DEFINITION

Traffic to your client's website from organic search results, broken down by the keywords that people searched.

WHY IT MATTERS TO SEO CLIENTS

One of the steps of assessing how a website can be optimized for search engines is to understand what's happening before you start. This saves time later measuring progress.

Knowing which keyword searches are already sending the most traffic to your client's site gives you a baseline; then you can measure the effect of your efforts. You'll know how much traffic is coming from new keywords you selected to focus on, as well as any increased traffic to existing keywords that you specifically targeted.

Also, you may find that your client's site has high traffic from unexpected, irrelevant keywords that could be skewing performance metrics. Or you might find that most of the site's organic search traffic is for a few key phrases related directly to your client's brand — great if your client is Nike, bad if your client's brand isn't well-known to the target audience.

Tracking this metric over time helps you make better decisions about which keywords (or existing content) to drop and which ones to add.

HOW TO MEASURE IT

- *Number of different keywords that are sending traffic to your client's website, according to Google Analytics.*
- *Change in traffic to keywords over time, according to Google Analytics. Then use tags or another method outside of Google Analytics to create keyword groups, such as keywords you're targeting and keywords you're ignoring.*

Questions to consider

- What content is driving the majority of keyword traffic? Does that match your expectations? Does it match the business goals of the client?
- Have you used keyword research tools to identify potential content opportunities that might drive more targeted traffic?
- Can you still get an idea of the site's primary traffic-driving keywords despite the increasing challenges—and frequency—of “Not Provided” as a keyword result from Google Analytics?
- Have you used keyword research to identify potential content opportunities that might drive more traffic?
- How often should you revisit your keyword list to keep improving optimization? Have you scheduled time for that? Have you built that frequency and time into your client proposal?

15. Brand versus Non-branded Organic Keyword Traffic

DEFINITION

Traffic to your client's website from organic search results, broken down by the brand-related keywords that people searched compared to the keywords that match the site's content.

WHY IT MATTERS TO SEO CLIENTS

When a person searches a brand keyword, they're searching directly for your client's business. When they're searching a non-brand keyword and end up at your client's website, they're looking for an answer to a question.

For someone to search specifically for your client's brand name or brand-related words, they must have had prior exposure to your client's product, services, employees, customers or marketing. Brand-specific keyword traffic is more likely to convert because searchers knew enough about your client's brand to seek out the website.

A less well-known brand could target people searching non-brand keywords and offer content that search engines might show as a prominent result for that search or related ones.

One way to know where an SEO could focus content efforts at first is to compare traffic from branded versus non-branded keywords. Over time, the SEO could make adjustments as gains are made in one kind of traffic versus the other.

HOW TO MEASURE IT

- *Number of organic brand-related keywords that are sending traffic to your client's website, based on the Google Analytics advanced segments you have created.*
- *Percentage of the overall organic keyword traffic to your client's website that brand-related keywords have*
- *Percentage of the overall organic keyword traffic to your client's website that non-brand-related keywords have*
- *Changes over time to the percentage of brand-related and non-brand-related organic keyword traffic*

Questions to consider

- How will you know if and when your client's brand is well-known enough that you should focus on non-brand-related keywords? Have you set targets accordingly?
- If focusing on non-brand-related keywords is a better SEO strategy, what content does your client have that's related to those keywords? If the answer is "little or none," what kind of content recommendations would you make?
- Are there times when you need to make significant gains for both kinds of keywords simultaneously? If so, how will you balance your work between building online brand awareness and optimizing non-brand-related but relevant content?

16. Click Through Rate from SERPs

DEFINITION

The metric is not the same as traffic from search engine results — not exactly. It breaks down like this:

1. *People search a keyword.*
2. *The search engine decides what results to display, and your client's website is (at least) one of the results.*
3. *Of all the people who searched and saw the results for that keyword, how many of them chose to click through to your client's website instead of any other option?*

No. 3 of that breakdown is the click through rate (CTR).

WHY IT MATTERS TO SEO CLIENTS

Looking at the CTR for your client's keywords can help an SEO fine-tune the messages that might show up in the search results. The more directly relevant and/or appealing the content that your client offers to the search results page, the more likely that searchers will click on your client's website instead of anyone else's.

This metric is useful to spot trends of specific content with a higher CTR. Monitoring this metric over time can help an SEO confirm that the optimizations are having an effect. It can also help the SEO or the client make decisions about what content would drive better engagement from searchers.

HOW TO MEASURE IT

- *Google and Bing webmaster tools provide CTR for organic keywords that received traffic.*

Questions to consider

- Have I optimized my client's website's page meta titles and page descriptions to make sure that search engines have relevant and appealing information to display—i.e., snippets—in the results?
- Although I don't have complete control over exactly what words Google uses for the link to my client's website, am I using the latest best practices for title lengths and word choices?
- Have I used schema markup when it's appropriate to increase the chances a search engine will display a snippet that includes ratings, locations, event details and other information that may drive more click through?
- Have I implemented Google Authorship when appropriate? Am I looking to see if articles with Google Authorship have higher CTR because of the small author photo that Google displays in the snippet?
- How attractive is my client's website, from a design perspective? When searchers roll over results and get image previews of the actual website page for results, does my client's page look professional, interesting, and especially legitimate (i.e., not spammy)?
- What content does my client need that would stand out from other search results for their target keywords? How creative could it be?

ACTION METRICS

These days, SEO work isn't finished simply because you reached the target audience and drove traffic from them to your client's website. A client could hire an SEO thinking that traffic is all they need to meet their business goals.

The truth is, there's someone more powerful than the SEO to the success of the client's business: the website visitor.

The bad part? No one can force a website visitor to do anything. They take the actions they want to take. The good part? To an extent, SEOs can influence visitors to take the "right" actions.

Action metrics help SEO clients understand:

1. *What visitors actually do on their website.*
2. *Which actions by visitors are most desirable to help meet the client's business goals.*
3. *What changes to the website's content, structure and/or design would prompt more of those desirable actions.*

Also, Action metrics can help an SEO figure out which Reach strategies are working best and which need adjustment.

Consider using the definitions and "why it matters" paragraphs for each metric when explaining or reporting them to clients. Also, unless otherwise stated, "How to measure it" sections refer to metrics available in Google Analytics or Google Webmaster Tools. The metrics should be measured for organic and/or referral traffic only.

17. Visitor Loyalty

DEFINITION

How many returning visitors your client's website has compared to new visitors.

WHY IT MATTERS TO SEO CLIENTS

As an SEO, you could focus your efforts exclusively on acquiring new visitors. But add returning visitors to the mix, and your client's business could benefit even more in the long run. Why? People who return to a website a few times are more interested in the information, products or services on that website than one-time visitors are.

Regular, frequent visitors are highly interested in something on that website. They might be big fans of your client's brand. They could enjoy the blog. They might be thoughtfully, deliberately considering a purchase.

In any case, ideally the most loyal visitors will talk positively about your client via word of mouth or online. They will share content on social networks often. They will link to your client's website — all great for improving those Reach metrics. And those considering a purchase will finally make it.

All of those actions should create more new visitors who could be turned into recurring visitors who could be turned into loyal visitors. Then the cycle starts anew.

As an SEO, try to engage first-time visitors with appealing value propositions or content that will encourage them to return a second or third time. Then consider how could you extend your campaign turn occasional visitors in frequent, loyal ones.

HOW TO MEASURE IT

- *Number of new visitors*
- *Number of returning visitors*
- *Number of times visitors returned, on average*
- *Amount of time between visits, on average*

Questions to consider

- Does your client's website have more recurring visitors or more new visitors? What ratio is ideal for your client's business goals?
- How much does this ratio fluctuate, and do you know why? Has a special SEO link building campaign attracted many new visitors, as you had intended? Or was it an online advertisement or email marketing promotion that could be repeated? In other words, how much does SEO contribute to this metric?
- How often does the content change? Would frequent updates improve loyalty without confusing frequent visitors?
- Are your social media channels driving more new or returning visitors? What is the goal for each channel?

18. Page Views per Visit

DEFINITION

How many pages a person views in a visit to your client's website, on average.

WHY IT MATTERS TO SEO CLIENTS

Multiple factors influence this metric. People behave differently based on the type of service, product or content your client is providing online. The ratio of new versus recurring visitors matters. Site problems, such as slow page load times or frequent 404 error messages, affect it.

That being said, you can monitor this metric to identify patterns and diagnose problems. Over time, you could determine if the site has such engaging content visitors want to explore more or a website so confusing that visitors click around trying to get what they want.

Engaging content that visitors want to explore is content they are more likely to share with others or link to, bringing fresh traffic to your client's website. Confusing content is not only, well, confusing, it makes it more likely that the visitor won't recommend your site or come back.

HOW TO MEASURE IT

- *Number of pages visited per person per visit for the entire website*
- *Number of pages visited per person per visit for sections of the website*
- *Pages visited per person from organic and referral traffic as compared to other sources*

Questions to consider

- What are the baselines when you begin SEO work for a client's website? How often will you evaluate it over time?
- What causes fluctuations up or down? Has new content proven to be very popular, as intended, leading visitors to explore more? Has newly streamlined content helped people find product information faster, as intended? Or did something technical change about the website that you didn't know about that caused a sudden drop?
- Can you make your client's most engaging content more accessible, perhaps by promoting it to the home page or removing pages or content that appear to be obstacles?
- Are long page load times causing your visitors to visit only one or two pages before leaving?

19. Time on Site

DEFINITION

How long a person spends on your client's website during a visit, on average.

WHY IT MATTERS TO SEO CLIENTS

Just as for the pages per visit Activity metric, multiple factors influence this metric. People behave differently based on the type of service, product or content your client is providing online. People who have been to the website before might have learned how to get to what they want as quickly as possible, whereas new visitors might take more time finding their way. And, again, site problems, such as slow page load times or frequent 404 error messages, affect it.

That said, you can monitor this metric to identify patterns and diagnose problems. You can also use this metric to decide if visitors are spending the amount of time you would expect for the type of website and its content. For example, are people spending understandably little time on a restaurant website because all they want are hours and menu information? Are people spending too little time on a news or longstanding blog, considering the volume of content for them to explore?

It's important to note that time on site is a best guess by any analytics program. When and how the analytics software time-stamps visitors and the pages they view matters. How many visitors use tabs in browsers matters. Different analytics programs handle these factors differently.

It may be an imperfect metric, but it can be a valuable one for some types of clients. The key is to be consistent with analytics tool you use and be consistent in evaluating patterns and change over time.

HOW TO MEASURE IT

- *Visit duration*

Questions to consider

- What are time-on-site baselines when you begin SEO work for a client's website? How often will you evaluate this over time?
- If the content on your client's website logically takes time to digest and understand — perhaps because it's highly technical — are people taking that time? If not, is the content too dense for the target audience; should it be reformatted? Or, if not, is the target audience even visiting the website in the first place?
- How much time do people spend on site before making a purchase decision? Can that time be shortened for faster, easier purchases?
- Are long page load times causing unnecessary time on site?

20. Bounce Rate

DEFINITION

The percentage of visitors who return to search results without viewing additional pages on your client's site. In other words, visitors who looked at one page and then left.

WHY IT MATTERS TO SEO CLIENTS

When a person decides that they will find what they're looking for on your client's site, they're not likely to bounce back to search results to try another website. Low bounce rates could indicate your client has a trustworthy-looking website design (read: non-spammy-looking), clear headlines or immediately appealing content.

Also, a low bounce rate could indicate that visitors liked the first content they saw on your client's website so much that they decided to explore more.

High bounce rates could indicate the opposite of all of that, leaving room for improvement in each area.

From an SEO Reach point of view, bounce rates factor to some extent into search engine algorithms and what websites they display in results. Exactly how is a matter of some conjecture.

HOW TO MEASURE IT

- *Number and types of pages with high bounce rates*
- *Number and types of pages with low bounce rates*

Questions to consider

- Are there pages with high traffic and high bounce rate? Does that indicate that the content is helpful for the keyword searched, but not bringing the target audience to the website?
- If the target audience is visiting the website, are they finding the information they want as quickly as they want? Is that too quickly? Could you add links to relevant content on your client's site to reduce bounce rate?
- Are long page load times causing unnecessary high bounce rates?

21. Below the Fold

DEFINITION

The percentage of visitors scroll down below the part of the website that initially loads on their screen.

WHY IT MATTERS TO SEO CLIENTS

It's true that for desktop and laptop hardware at least, more people have larger display space and can see more of a website at first load than ever. (Even mobile phones are increasing display space as much as possible.)

Still, it is good to know if visitors are engaging with site content all the way down the page. If they aren't, there are many website design strategies that encourage visitors to scroll down the page.

What's more, if visitors interact with calls to action at the bottom of a page — for example, a signup button on a blog post — then that probably means the content was engaging enough to get them there. The copy, design and proposition of the call to action do the rest.

If you change nothing about the CTA but make changes to the content, and interaction with the CTA goes up or down, you'll know if the content has become more or less engaging as a result. (Do the opposite to test the CTA's effectiveness.)

HOW TO MEASURE IT

- *Percentage of clicks below the fold*

Questions to consider

- What visual elements encourage visitors to scroll down the page?
- Do articles have subheads or block quotes to break up dense, intimidating blocks of copy? Are there bulleted lists that draw the eye downward?
- Is there so much content on the page that a visitor might think it's so much to digest they don't bother scrolling? Is the content so sparse that there's nothing to hold a visitor's attention, much less to encourage them to scroll?
- Are there links below the fold for visitors to click? How many is enough?

22. Comments and Interaction

DEFINITION

How many comments or other interaction your client's content generates onsite and on social media networks or forums.

WHY IT MATTERS TO SEO CLIENTS

This looks beyond replies of "Good post!" to the visitors who are so engaged with your content that they pose additional questions to further the discussion or offer additional resources that aren't just shallow ploys for a quick link.

An engaged community of users will share your client's content and then interact with it where they share it. Identify them, store contact information and tap them to be resources for collaboration.

In turn, that will build even more activity on and engagement with your client's site.

HOW TO MEASURE IT

- *Number of comments per blog post*
- *Number of visitors who made more than one comment on more than one post*
- *Number of social shares*
- *Number of comments on social shares*

Questions to consider

- On which types of content should you expect comments and interaction? Is there enough of that type on your client's website?
- Is content designed to be engaging prompting detailed responses from readers? Is that level of engagement increasing over time?
- Do you have a comment system that allows you to respond quickly to comments made?
- Do you engage with those who comment about your client's content on social media? Do you add them to your contacts and build those relationships?

23. Site Search

DEFINITION

How visitors use the search function on your client's website to find specific content.

WHY IT MATTERS TO SEO CLIENTS

This is an often overlooked gold mine: visitors are telling you exactly what they're looking for on your client's website that they cannot find at a glance or through simple navigation.

HOW TO MEASURE IT

- *Unique searches*
- *Search Exits*
- *Search Refinements*
- *Time after search spent on site*
- *Terms searched*

Questions to consider

- Is there content that matches the search terms that visitors use frequently? If not, can you create it?
- What content is available but, based on its search popularity, apparently not very findable? How can you make it easier to find? Could certain content be grouped into frequently asked questions sections or common searches on the home page? Better yet, could that content be promoted to the home page or linked to frequently from other pages on the site?
- Could site structure, menus and navigation element be improved to make finding content so easy that search isn't necessary?

RESULTS METRICS

When a client stares at a report and thinks, “What’s the bottom line of all this?” what they’re really wanting to know is, “Is your work improving my business? Are you helping me make more money or be more successful? Should I keep paying you?”

Results metrics help clients understand:

- 1. Your SEO work has directly improved conversions that meet their business goals.*
- 2. If they are not getting the results they want, they may not be giving your SEO campaigns enough time to compound gains over time.*

Good Results metrics prove the value of SEO toward helping them make money.

And that, yes, they should keep paying you.

Consider using the definitions and “why it matters” paragraphs for each metric when explaining or reporting them to clients. Also, unless otherwise stated, “How to measure it” sections refer to metrics available in Google Analytics or Google Webmaster Tools. They should be measured for organic and/or referral traffic only.

24. Overall Goal Completions/Conversions

DEFINITION

A goal completion and/or conversion is an action the client has identified as important to the bottom line.

WHY IT MATTERS TO SEO CLIENTS

Every good website has a purpose toward which you as the SEO is working. It could be product sales for an ecommerce site, lead generation for a professional service firm or donations for charity.

Google Analytics allows you to set criteria for goals ranging from making purchases to filling out a form, with a limit of 20 per Google Analytics profile. Google Analytics also allows you to assign a monetary value to that goal.

Setting up a variety of goals can help you measure the effectiveness of new content, new outreach efforts or changes you've made to the site.

HOW TO MEASURE IT

- *Goals completed*
- *Goals completed per page*
- *Goal value*
- *Change in goal completions after modifications*

Questions to consider

- Have you selected by goals in advance and set them up properly in Google Analytics?
- Which goals are most closely aligned with the business goals of your client? Which goal completions will pay off monetarily in the long run, and which goal completions should generate revenue immediately?
- What is it worth to your client's business to add one person to an email newsletter list or other lead-generation goal? \$1? 10 cents? A penny?
- Do you have goals set and valued for even little indicators of engagement or process in the customer lifecycle, such as more time on site?

25. Goal Completions/Conversions from Calls to Action

DEFINITION

A visitor converts after they were specifically prompted by content on your client's website.

WHY IT MATTERS TO SEO CLIENTS

No matter all the educated, informed analysis you perform on Action metrics, you don't truly know if your visitors are engaged with your client's content unless you ask them to take an action and measure how many do.

Calls to action could include encouragement to view specific content, to sign up for a newsletter, to share something socially, purchase an item or make a phone call. Effective calls to action can directly result in goal completions / conversions or move a visitor along the path toward goal completions / conversions.

Even if your client's website only gets passive revenue from advertising, measuring the willingness of visitors to take prompted action can help you determine their level of interest in and engagement with your client's brand, products or services. The higher the level of interest and engagement, the more pages you could encourage them to visit or share and the more contact information you could gather for more specifically targeted campaigns.

HOW TO MEASURE IT

- *The number and types of calls to action on your client's website*
- *The number and types of calls to action on specific pages on your client's website*
- *Which specific calls to action result in the most goal completions and/or conversions*

Part of this you'll track manually; the actual goal completions and/or conversion data you'll find in Google Analytics.

Questions to consider

- Are you purposefully adding a variety of calls to action to your client's content to appeal to visitors in different stages of the conversion process?
- Does your client's website have any calls to action in its actual copy via a link — not just a graphic button or image?
- Is the content that visitors find most appealing and likely to share the content that is mostly likely to help them convert? Or is there a disconnect?

26. Goal Completions/Conversions from Referrals

DEFINITION

How many goal completions and/or conversions occurred from traffic brought to your client's website from a link on another website.

WHY IT MATTERS TO SEO CLIENTS

A well-placed link on a trusted site can send quality traffic that is ready to convert. When you match your link building efforts to their impact on conversions, this helps your client understand the non-search-engine related benefits of link building.

HOW TO MEASURE IT

- *Number of referral traffic conversions (measured by Goals or Events) by source*
- *Value of referral traffic conversions*

Questions to consider

- What type of content is most likely to be linked to and convert visitors from those links?
- What are the best opportunities to get links from sources that are part of or highly influential to your client's target audience?
- After you have obtained a link from a specific traffic-driving source, can you tailor the rest of the content on the page to drive immediate conversions?

27. Goal Completions/Conversions Assisted by Social Media

DEFINITION

The number of goal completions and/or conversions that at some point were directed to your client's website by a social media channel.

WHY IT MATTERS TO SEO CLIENTS

People share content they like or find useful with others via social media channels. Many potential customers in your client's target audience especially trust the content that industry insiders or influential people share.

If your client understands that more shares means more visibility means more traffic means more actions means more conversions, then social shares directly justify the cost they pay to add social management to your list of tasks for SEO.

HOW TO MEASURE IT

- *Number of social assisted goal completions and/or conversions*
- *Number of social assisted goal completions and/or conversions where the last interaction before conversion happened via social media*
- *Assisted Conversion Value*

Questions to consider

- What social media channels does your client's target audience predominantly use?
- Is the content distributed via through social media channels appealing enough to attract visitors? Which content appeals best to which channels, in terms of attracting and engaging visitors on your client's website?
- Are you positioning quality content to be shared by industry influencers most likely to drive a conversion-ready audience to your client's website?

28. Return on SEO Spend

DEFINITION

The amount of revenue your client's website is generating from SEO goal completions and/or conversions minus your professional fees for SEO work.

WHY IT MATTERS TO SEO CLIENTS

A client needs to be reassured that they are gaining more from SEO work than they are paying out for that SEO work.

The size of the business, the industry and the scope of work will influence how a client views this metric. For example, to evaluate gains, a nonprofit might consider revenue from fundraising campaigns for which you created link building campaigns as well as high turnout you drove for an event that builds awareness of their issue.

HOW TO MEASURE IT

- *Number of SEO goals completed and/or conversions*
- *Monetary value of SEO goals completed and/or conversions*
- *Cost of SEO campaign*

Questions to consider

- Have you reviewed and do you monitor all of the revenue influencing elements of your SEO Reach campaigns?
- Are your SEO efforts to influence desired Actions paying off in goal completions / conversions? Is your client getting goal completions / conversions that drive the most revenue?
- Are you keeping up with the scope of work you're asked and paid to perform? Does it match your proposal, or do you need to request another signed agreement?

Maintaining the client relationship

SEO helps because:

- *More Reach means more visitors.*
- *More visitors take more Actions.*
- *More Actions lead to more Results.*

And then...

- *Results can be improved with more targeted Reach.*
- *More targeted Reach leads to more qualified visitors.*
- *More qualified visitors take more desirable Actions.*
- *More desirable Actions lead to better Results.*

And so on.

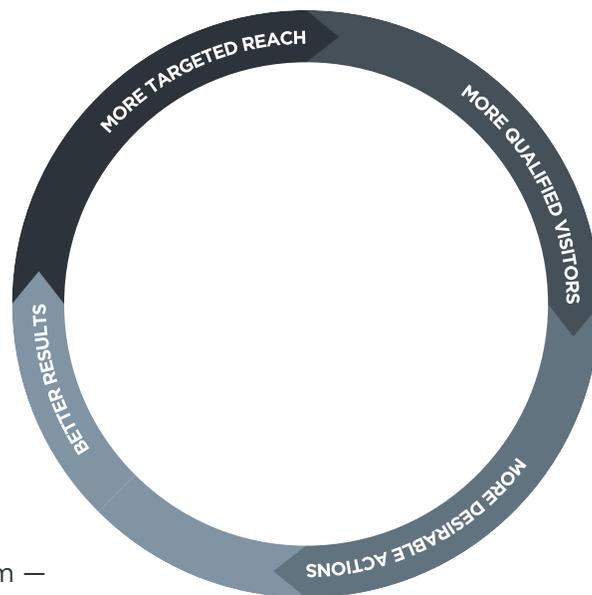
While the client might value Result metrics the most in a routine report — and you might front-load a report with them — you may still want to show Reach and Action metrics as backup for your current strategies and suggestions for future improvements.

For example, are you successfully increasing Reach metrics, but there's not a parallel increase in Actions over time? Perhaps the website's visitors aren't the business's target audience, and for SEO reasons you need different or better content to reach the target audience.

Or let's say that both Reach and Action metrics are improving, but Results aren't. Perhaps your client's website needs improvements to its navigation, content, forms, shopping cart and so on — all things that your online marketing agency can test and optimize.

The bottom line: measure and report metrics that you can sell and a client will buy because the need for your SEO services is obvious. Once the initial need is filled, your reports will indicate the next obvious need in the cycle of online marketing.

Chances are, your client will hire you again.



ABOUT THIS PAPER

Research and co-author

Jeremy Rivera
Product Marketing Manager
Raven Internet Marketing Tools
jeremy@raventools.com

Editor and co-author

Arienne Holland
Communications Director
Raven Internet Marketing Tools
arienne@raventools.com

Consulting editors

Jon Henshaw
Chief Product Officer
Raven Internet Marketing Tools

Brannan Atkinson
Chief Marketing Officer
Raven Internet Marketing Tools

Creative director

KC Jones
Raven Internet Marketing Tools

ABOUT RAVEN INTERNET MARKETING TOOLS

Raven Internet Marketing Tools is online software that helps customers quickly research, manage, monitor and report on SEO, social media, PPC, content and other Internet marketing campaigns. Its collaborative, multi-user features and fast, professional reports make it the platform choice of thousands of online marketers worldwide. Raven Internet Marketing Tools, a privately held Nashville-based company, was founded in 2007.

Raven Internet Marketing Tools customers can discover, analyze and/or report on many of the metrics in this report.

Also, Raven built the free GAConfig.com, which automatically configures key Google Analytics code to help webmasters, designers and developers, and the free Schema-Creator.org, which automatically creates schema markup for those interested in the semantic web.