

Identifying and Tracking Metrics for Online Outreach

A **smart strategy** starts and ends with listening to your audiences through analytics.

Strategize

Why guess what your target audiences want when you can know for sure by listening to them? Each action they take on your website, email or social media can be tracked, analyzed and incorporated into a new or existing digital strategy. As with any strategy, you should first establish your objectives and research your target audiences to determine what they care about, the language they use, where they are, and how to reach them. The **Spitfire Smart Chart®** can help you think through these questions and incorporate analytics into your overarching communication strategy.

Website

A website strategy should always reflect the values of your target audiences. Use **Google Analytics** to gain insight on overall website performance, behavior of audiences, sources of traffic and evaluation of content. Adjust your strategy when needed.



Dashboard

Your main Google Analytics dashboard should contain the following metrics for your overall website performance. These should be included in every analytics report.



Unique Visitors by Traffic Type Pie Chart: This metric allows for a quick summary of your visitor type (i.e. organic, direct, referral, email). How did this change from last month?

Unique Visitors: Use this metric, rather than unique pageviews, because it provides an accurate count of your audience for a specific time period.



Average Session Duration: Tracking the time visitors stay on your site is a good metric for monthly analytics reports.

Bounce Rate: This is when people leave from the same page they landed on. Bounce rates vary widely, so it's best to check your sources to see where bouncing visitors came from and what your goals are for that page.



Goal Completions: Set up goals to track online actions, such as email sign-ups, donations or downloads. You can also track the most popular paths that led people to take action.



Audience

The audience section shows how you are targeting new and existing audiences. It also allows you to learn more about your visitors' demographics (i.e. location, gender and age) as well as how many of your users are using a phone or their desktop to access your website.

New Visitors: If you published an op-ed in an outlet with a new audience, did you receive new visitors? How long did they stay on the page compared to return visitors? Did they go deeper into your website?

Returning Visitors: This metric is helpful when determining if your website is reaching your primary audience.

Pages/Session: How many layers of your site are visitors exploring beyond the entry page?



Acquisition

Direct: This type of traffic could be from clicks in your emails, in online pdfs, or if someone typed your website directly in a browser.

Referrals: What other websites are directing visitors to your site? Which outreach activities are the most or least effective? Are your social media efforts paying off?

Search: To increase the rank of your site in a Google search, mention the words listed in this section in your website's content.



Behavior

Determine what content is engaging users by tracking behavior on pages.



Overview: This lists the 10 most viewed pages, showing the main content people are coming to see. Are these the pages on which you want heavy traffic? These pages also present an opportunity to drive people further into your site with links to other relevant or popular pages.

Behavior Flow: This diagram can help you visualize how visitors are navigating through your site.

Email

Email is a vital communication channel for many organizations and their supporters. The following metrics should be tracked to determine what drives high open rates and encourages action.



Open Rate: Track this over time to determine your norm. Studies vary widely on the average open rate for nonprofits. The [2016 M+R Benchmarks study](#) reported a 16 percent average open rate, while [MailChimp](#) found a 24.88 percent average open rate.



Click-through Rate: This shows what content in your email is getting the greatest response. Often this is the top story in a newsletter or the action link. The 2016 M+R Benchmarks study reported an average click-through rate of 3 percent for advocacy emails and 1.6 percent for email newsletters.



A/B Testing: Split your list in half and test different versions to determine the most effective subject lines, timing and content selection. Alternately, test different approaches in different emails and compare the open and click-through rates.



Forwarding Rate: Your metrics should show who has been forwarding your emails – a good indicator of your most engaged users who could be segmented. Studies confirm that, when it comes to spending, people listen to those they know.

Social

The Google Analytics social section can be used to determine the amount of referral traffic to your website from **Facebook** and **Twitter**. To evaluate these pages individually, you could use the following tools and metrics and experiment with the time and content you are posting to learn what works best for your audience.



Facebook

The Insights section on Facebook shows performance metrics about your page and posts.

Reach and Engagements: Sort your posts by “Reach” to determine which posts are reaching the most people and by “Engagements” to see which posts are receiving the most likes, comments and shares. The type and age of a post, and the relationship between your organization and its fans affect the rank of your posts in news feeds. To increase reach, be sure to post pictures and links and to interact with your fans.

When Your Fans Are Online: Use this graph to pinpoint the best time to reach your target audiences.

Your Fans: Here you will find basic demographic data of your fans including age, gender and location. Are these your target audiences? If not, it may be necessary to increase your use of promoted posts and ads on Facebook.

Top Sources: Use this to determine where people who are viewing your page are coming from.



Twitter

Twitter offers **analytics** on an individual or organizational Twitter account. Be sure to check the overall dashboard section for your monthly top tweet and new follower. For more detailed and ready to use reports, use **TweetReach** for viewing the reach, top contributors and impressions your organization’s handle or hashtag has recently received.

Mentions and Retweets: This indicates if your content is sparking conversation with your fans and encouraging them to share your tweets with their followers.

Demographics: What age and gender make up your Twitter following?

Impressions: This is the combined number of potential users who saw any content associated with your Twitter page. How did this compare with last month? What were your top three tweets this month?



Implement

How often you track these metrics depends on the nature of your campaign and the level of need for insight. For a short and fast-moving call-to-action drive on your website or social media, you may want to check your metrics daily or weekly. For weekly check-ins to senior staff, short reports with only the dashboard metrics and a few email and social metrics could suffice.

Start by assigning staff to collect the metrics, analyze the data and develop actionable goals. Ideally, the person creating the content does his/her own analytics, whether that’s email, social or web. Lastly, ensure decision makers for your overall communications receive analytics reports.