

## How To Track All Your Website Traffic For Free

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Do you know:

- \* Exactly how many people are visiting your website?
- \* How long they're staying on your site before they move on?
- \* Exactly where those visitors are coming from, each day?
- \* How much of your website traffic is repeat visitors?
- \* The exact paths people take as they click their way through your website?

Here's what I'm getting at:

If you don't know your visitors, it makes it *very* difficult for you to improve the performance of your website and turn more visitors into customers - AND - get more quality traffic. For the simple reason that you're effectively working blind.

Without knowing how people visit your site and what they do on your site, any attempts at growing your traffic and improving the profitability of your website is working with one armed tied behind your back, at least.

And unfortunately - the web stats that come with your web-hosting are generally not enough these days.

Depending on your web host, chances are you've either got Webalizer, Analog Stats, or AWStats installed on your server. Here's how that software works:

It takes the "raw" (unreadable to the human eye) information your web server stores of everyone that visits and presents this in an easy to understand way.

Unfortunately, due to a number of technical reasons, this information is often presented in quite an inaccurate way.

And in my personal experience, these software packages don't present this information in a particularly helpful way either for someone trying to improve the conversion ratios and profitability of their website.

What I personally do, and what I would suggest you do is use a "Tracking Solution" that accurately tracks and reports all your visitors in an easy to read and understand way. These solutions come in two forms: Software & Services

Both these options have their pros and cons, but what they both do very well is present exactly what's happening on your website right up to the minute, and in a way that's very helpful to you for making good (and profitable) decisions for your business.

To start with here's a software solution you can install and use for free on your website:

Now before you go and install it, you should of course be familiar with installing software on your server. If you're not comfortable installing software on your website, a tracking service (which I'll come to in a moment) would probably be best for you.

And it's also important to note that installing software on your website can often put more strain on the server. This is particularly true if you're on shared hosting.

I've personally used the following free tracking software and it works well. See what you think. Go to <http://www.curve2.com> and look for "TrackPro". As I write this, version 2 is in Beta and is downloadable from the site at the following address: <http://www.curve2.com/trackpro.php>

You'll also find many further free tracking software solutions at <http://www.hotscripts.com>.

But personally speaking, what I've found works very well and avoids putting any increased strain on my existing websites is using a third party tracking service.

The only things really to worry about when using a third party service are:

- \* How long will this service be around? (If they stop their service after a year, you wouldn't be able to access your past data and will have to change all your tracking codes on your pages too.)
- \* What is their privacy policy regarding my web stats? (Are they honest and trustworthy in other words. You don't want the service owners studying and then duplicating your successful business plan.)

Over the past month I've been using ecommStats. Now, this service isn't free, but at this time they give you 50,000 free page views per domain, and depending how busy your site is those page views can last you a very long time.

The service works great and is very easy to add to your pages -- simply add three lines of code at the bottom of each of your pages (you can easily do this with Server Side Includes if you're comfortable with that) and all your visitors get tracked accurately and in great detail.

Alternatively - an entirely free (at this time) and very established service is StatCounter. It even has a rave review from Tucows.com (one of the largest download sites on the internet) which speaks for itself and adds a lot of credibility to the service.

And just in case you're wondering how a free service like StatCounter makes money, well - since it's such a popular service with many webmasters logging in every day (and many I'm sure even more than once a day just like me) that it's made it very easy for them to sell a lot of advertising on their site. They also offer an upgrade to their advanced paid service.

But thinking beyond free services, as your business grows you may choose to upgrade to high end paid services that provide even more in depth information about your visitors...

Services like Urchin (Urchin.com - owned by Google) or Deep Metrix (DeepMetix.com). However, to help you grow your business to that point you need to keep a close eye on what your visitors are doing and where they're coming from and free tracking software and services is a great way for you to start to do this.

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