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Google Analytics Should Be Your Company's Best Friend

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Having a business website and not using a free service known as Google Analytics is like buying a Ferrari and putting it up on blocks in your driveway. I don't understand why someone would do that, nor do I grasp why companies would invest thousands in a website without using Google Analytics.

I suspect it's because many business owners know that a website is something they "need," but really don't care to understand how it works or how customers and prospects connect with them. They assume that a website is something that gets designed and posted, and then you can check off that box and move on to the next challenge.

That's a bad idea on two counts. First, a website shouldn't be static. Your business and marketplace change constantly, so it's important to keep the content fresh and updated. I'm amazed at how many companies post a website and don't revise it for several years. When you glance at the bottom of the page and see "Copyright 2016" or go to the "news" page and notice that the last item is from 2017, you can only assume that the rest of the information in the site is stale.

The second reason is the very purpose of the website. You invest in a site so it will help you grow your business. A website promotes what you do and offer to the world. It's a sales tool with the potential to reach more prospective customers than a sales force of 100 reps. These days, prospective customers won't start the process by calling you or looking for your literature. Instead, they'll immediately go to the web and search for your company. What they see when they get there determines whether they'll consider doing business with you. If your site is second-rate or outdated, you may be out of the running before you even knew you had a chance.

Ask most business owners whether their website is helping them grow their companies, and you'll get a shrug and a halfhearted "I guess so." That's a clear sign they're not using the power of Google Analytics. How can I say that with confidence? If they were using this free tool effectively, they would know exactly how well their site was working for them.

Because Google Analytics is free, you might assume that it's not all that valuable. Actually, it's an amazingly powerful tool that can give you access to far more data than you'll ever need. The good news is that you can access many of the most valuable features with a minimum of knowledge (or a partner who intimately understands how it works, its impact and how to leverage it to your business' advantage).

What many business owners may not realize is that Google and other search engines are completely driven by data and mathematical algorithms that review and analyze that data in nanoseconds. Google Analytics gives you an easy way to look at your website the way search engines see it, as well as valuable information about how visitors to your site are using it.

What sorts of things can you learn with Google Analytics? For starters, how many people are visiting your website, how they got there, which pages they're reviewing, and how much time they're spending on each page. You can tell whether they're visiting for the first time or whether they keep coming back.

How can that be useful? Suppose your company offers three products and has a page on your website for each. Two of the pages get very little traffic, while the third is much more popular. The data shows you that most of the people who arrive at your pages do so through Google, which suggests there's a much stronger interest in the third product. That may suggest a need to step up marketing of that product.

So what are those visitors looking for? Google Analytics can show you the keywords those visitors entered into Google that led them to your page. Those keywords can provide clues into what prospects are seeking. You can also use those keywords to run targeted online ads.

I've barely scratched the surface of what Google Analytics can do for you, but I hope you now have at least some sense of why your company should be using it. Again, on the surface it's easy to use, but keep in mind that Google and the other search engines constantly change their algorithms. Rather than try to keep up on your own, you'll probably be better served by working with a marketing partner who can help you make the most of your company's new best friend.

Deborah Daily is co-owner of Buckaroo Marketing | New Media, a Fishers-based advertising agency established in 1999. She can be reached at dldaily@gobuckaroo.com.



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