

Google Analytics 101

Learning how to view and use your website analytics tool can be a daunting task, but with a bit of help it becomes manageable. Visionary Services typically offers two analytics solutions: Urchin and Google Analytics. Urchin provides a useful, on-demand statistics tool, but we recommend most clients use Google Analytics to measure their site's success and find trends.

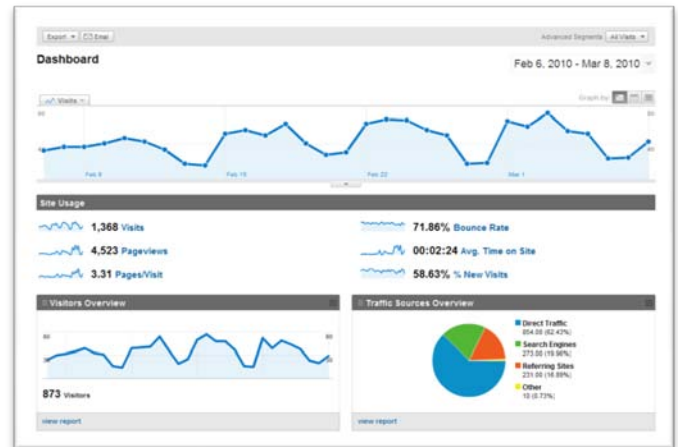
As part of our web development and website design services, VSi installs and sets up your site's analytics solutions. To get you started monitoring your site we will take a quick look at several of the most powerful tools and statistics Google Analytics offers.

Site Performance Overview

The first page to get familiar with is the **Google Analytics Dashboard**. You will see the Dashboard every time you log into Google Analytics. The Dashboard provides a quick glance at your overall site statistics, including visitors, traffic, content, and more. Visionary Services customizes each client's Dashboard with several popular tools.

First, let's define a few stats we'll spend some time with:

- **Visits** – a visit is started each time an individual enters your website
- **Pageviews** – a visit can contain multiple pageviews, or the number of pages viewed during the given date range
- **Pages/Visit** – a ratio displaying the number of pages each visit generates
- **Bounce Rate** – a bounce is defined as a visitor entering the site and leaving without performing any additional actions (such as viewing another page or submitting a form)
- **Avg. Time on Site** – just what it sounds like, Average Time on Site is how long a normal visit lasts
- **% New Visits** – the percentage of visitors that have not visited your website in the past 6 months



The Dashboard displays data from the last 31 days by default, but you can update the date range by clicking on the displayed dates and using the calendars to choose your desired range. Also, note the **Compare to Past** checkbox; checking this box will add a second set of data for the date range that immediately precedes your date range (very useful for seeing the growth of your site).

Now, for a closer look at the tools displayed on your Dashboard.

1. Customizable Top Graph:

The large graph displayed at the top of the page is highly customizable. Click the **Visits** button (top left) to choose alternative metrics (stats), or to choose multiple metrics. Try out the **Graph by** options to change the view (daily, weekly, or monthly).

New to Google Analytics – Annotations. Click the small gray box with an arrow below the top graph to view and add annotations. An annotation places a marker on the graph at a certain date with a custom message. This new capability is great for remembering important events (like sending a newsletter, the start of a marketing campaign, or a site upgrade).

2. **Visitors Overview:**

Displays the number of visitors your site received on a day-by-day basis. Feel free to move your cursor over the line to view date-specific stats or click the **view report** link to see more details.

3. **Traffic Sources Overview:**

Each color in this pie chart represents a different traffic source (such as Search Engines, Referring Sites, and Direct Traffic). We'll go into more details later.

4. **Content Overview:**

Shows the top five most popular pages on your site and their respective pageviews. Click the **view report** link for a complete list and more information.

5. **Map Overlay:**

This world map gives a fast overview demonstrating where your site's visitors are located. A darker color equals higher traffic levels.

6. **Keywords:**

A quick listing of the keywords used most often to access your site from search engines like Google, Yahoo, and Bing. Related to Traffic Sources, we will visit this topic later.

7. **Goals Overview:**

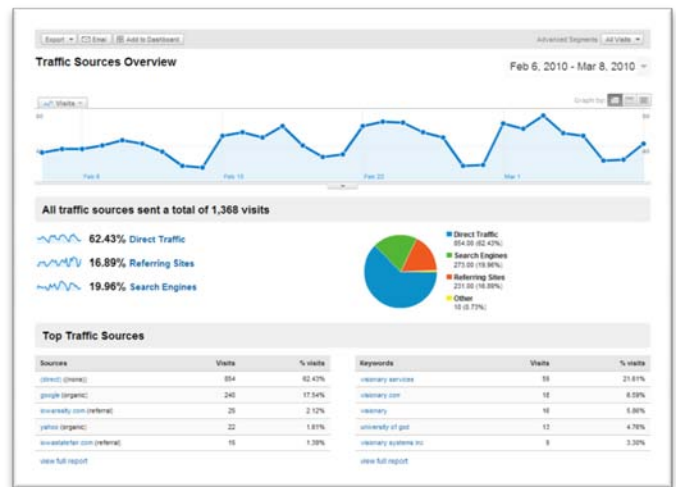
If goals have been created for your website this box displays the number of times your goals have been completed. (*Note:* Visionary Services often creates custom goals for our clients)

Traffic Sources: Search Engines, Referrers, and Keywords

The Traffic Sources tools offer top level and highly detailed reporting to help you determine how your visitors are finding your website. Click **Traffic Sources** in the left menu to access the tools.

The **Traffic Sources Overview** report provides an immediate look at how people are entering your site. There are three major source types:

- **Direct Traffic** – visitors typed your domain into their browsers and went directly to your website
- **Referring Sites** – sites that include a link pointing to a page on your website. These sites are often clients, vendors, or business partners.
- **Search Engines** – traffic that reaches your website after performing an online search is included in this grouping



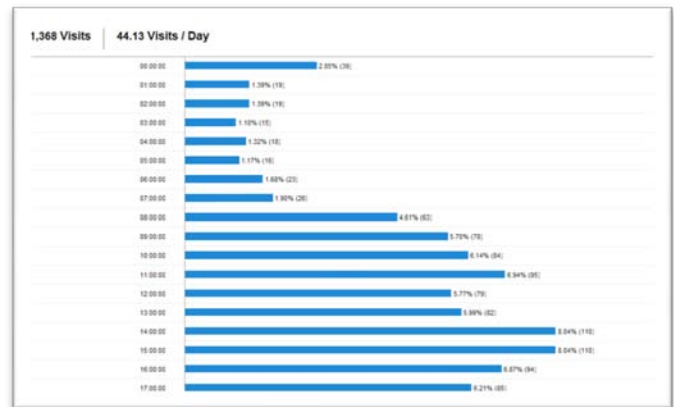
A useful report is the **All Traffic Sources** listing displaying the top sources for your website. You can sort the listing by a variety of metrics including Visits, Pages/Visit, and Bounce Rate. This tool will help you answer the question *What source performs the best/worst?*

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is an important aspect of any website design project. So, how do you measure its successes or failures? Use the **Keywords** tool to see the most popular search terms used on the major search engines to find your website.

Daily Trends

Many clients can benefit from knowing what their hourly trends are. When should you send a marketing campaign? What time of the day are your customers visiting your website?

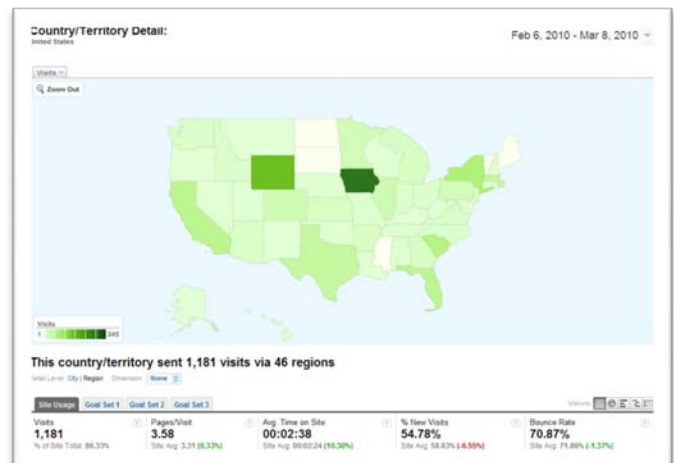
To view your hourly visits click on **Visitors > Visits**, then select **Hourly** from the **Graph by** options above the large line graph (*Note: the Hourly option is available on many reports throughout Google Analytics*). Also, the **Compare to Past** tool is very useful to see how your site is growing.



Geography: Where are your visitors?

If you are marketing your product or service in key geographic locations, the **Map Overlay** report can help you measure the success of your campaigns. Open the **Visitors > Map Overlay** tool to view a world map. Click on each country to drill further down to state and city levels to see where your site's traffic is originating from.

The data contained in the Map Overlay reports can be cross-referenced with other metrics (dimensions) such as Source, Keywords, Landing Pages, and Visitor Types.



Closing Thoughts

Learning to use Google Analytics (or any analytics software) can take time and patience, but will help you use and market your website more effectively. Take some time and just browse all the reports offered by your analytics solution and make note of any reports/tools that you find interesting.

Don't be afraid of contacting a trained and experienced professional. These companies and individuals offer specialized training and can create completely customized reports to precisely match your needs. BizSite Solutions staff includes several highly experienced Google Analytics administrators; for more information on BSS's analytics solutions please feel free to give us a call!

Google Analytics: www.google.com/analytics

Google Analytics Conversion University: www.google.com/support/conversionuniversity

Visionary Services: www.bizsitesolutions.com

For more information on setting website goals, please contact BizSite Solutions. BSS specializes in web site development and design with an emphasis on data-driven integrations. Located in West Monroe, LA, BSS provides web development, design, and consulting services on Business Catalyst content management systems and a variety of platforms.

Visit www.bizsitesolutions.com for more details or to contact the BizSite Solutions team.