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# SPECIAL REPORT

## Evaluating Website Optimization

How to outline the analytic tools and strategies that produce the most insights

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### Evaluating Website Optimization

US \$97.00 / ISBN: 978-1-936390-56-4

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## A TACTICAL APPROACH TO EVALUATING WEBSITE OPTIMIZATION

With its potential to deliver dramatic gains in online ROI, website optimization is a growing focus for marketers. An important step in realizing website optimization is *evaluating* your website optimization process, using analytic tracking tools and ongoing testing to monitor the digital “footprints” that people leave along their online path.

Deployed correctly, data analysis allows marketers to harness this unprecedented consumer insight, and to use this material to design websites that precisely address the needs of their ideal client.

Website optimization can measurably change your company’s overall bottom line, yet more than 50% of marketers do not know how to track the ROI of their website optimization strategies.

This Special Report addresses this challenge. We present the value of a data-driven culture, detail which data to track, and outline which analytic tools and strategies produce the most meaningful insights into your website optimization campaigns.

Highlights of this report include:

- Why data matters
- Using data to find low-hanging fruit
- Segmenting your site traffic
- Selecting analytic tools and solutions
- Generating reports

As you go through this report, remember that data is the grounding force in website optimization and the benefits of comprehensive data review cannot be overstated. It is the language that optimizers use to evaluate the ROI of their online strategies, and to communicate the success of these strategies to the C-suite.

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### ***Special Reports***

MarketingSherpa Special Reports provide marketing executives with concise research, insights and actionable advice, derived from unique market segments for guiding strategic and tactical decision making.

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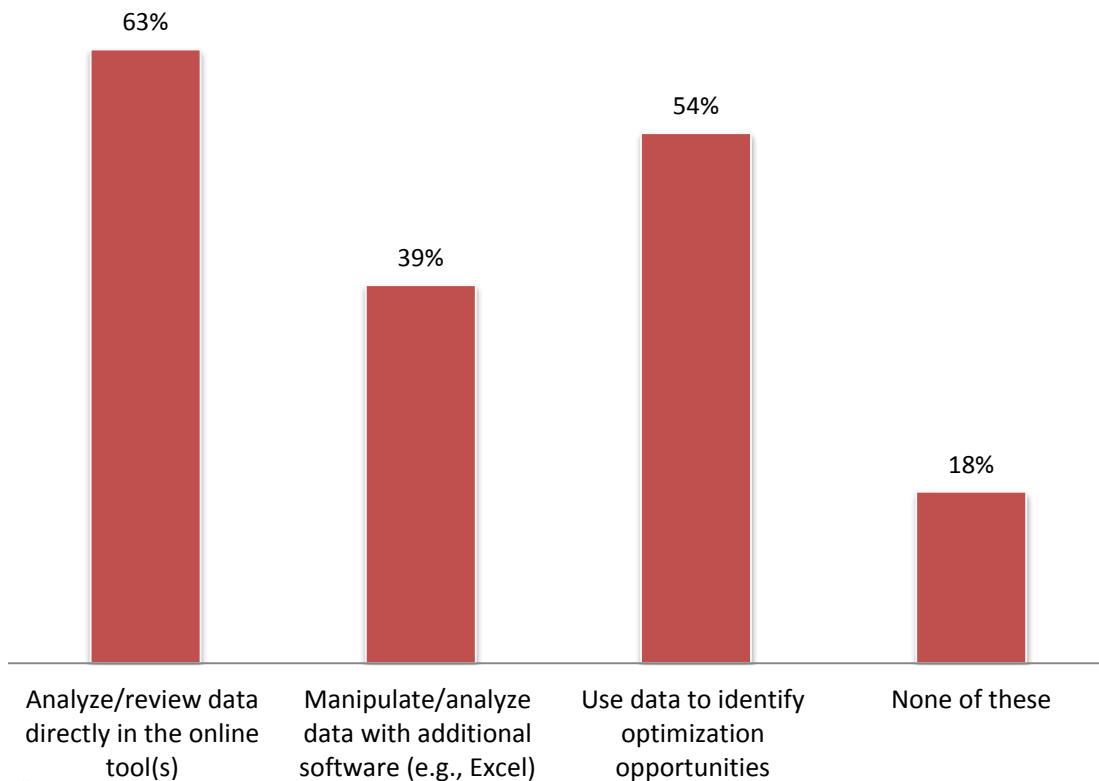
## WHY DATA MATTERS

Online marketing has a unique advantage over other departments. Digital marketers don't need to guess their ideal prospects wants through intuition or focus groups. The revolution of website marketing lies in how everything a visitor does online – from purchases, to browsing history and social media engagement, to ZIP codes, and even the operating system used on their computers – can be tracked.

Specifically, data analysis serves marketers in three key areas: understanding target customers, identifying optimization opportunities, and assessing test outcomes. Optimization opportunities are found in these key areas. By detecting low-hanging fruit and unwanted behaviors – such as visitors not clicking where they should, or dropping off when they should be moving along – you can identify what users are doing online, and measure if this information fits with assumptions you have made.

The 2011 Landing Page Optimization Survey asked marketers which data evaluation strategies they used in their existing website optimization campaigns. In addition to reviewing the deployment of the top three data analysis functions, the rate of this deployment is impressive. Nearly two-thirds of all marketers review information directly within their online tools.

**Chart: Data analysis functions related to optimization performed in 2010**

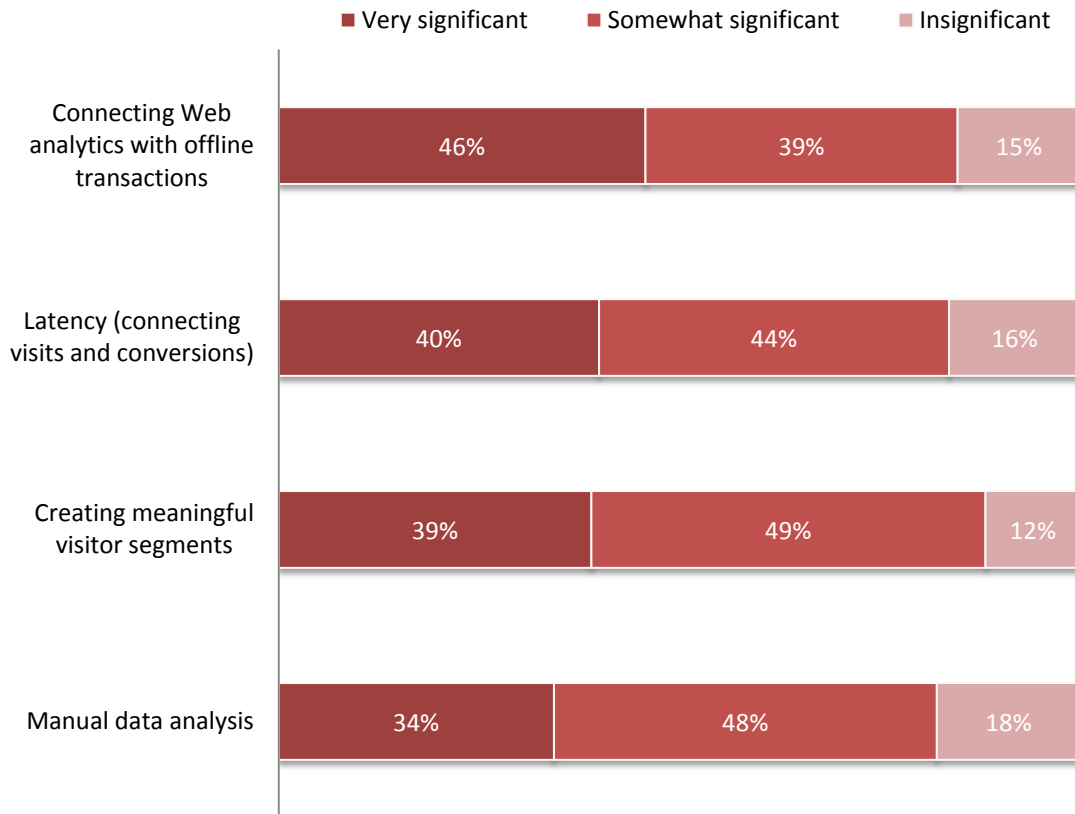


Source: ©2011 MarketingSherpa Landing Page Optimization Benchmark Survey  
Methodology: Fielded February 2011, N=2,673

Given the proliferation of data, and its significance to company executives, it is perhaps surprising that so few marketers currently engaged in website optimization measure the ROI of their online campaigns – 13% and 20% for B2C and B2B marketers, respectively.

To understand what ails digital marketers deploying website optimization strategies, the 2011 Landing Page Optimization Survey also reviewed the top data analysis challenges marketers faced in their optimization campaigns.

**Chart: Top data analysis challenges for Optimization in 2010**



Source: ©2011 MarketingSherpa Landing Page Optimization Benchmark Survey  
Methodology: Fielded February 2011, N=2,673

It seems the abundance of information available online leads to confusion among marketers, who struggle to identify which metrics are important, and which metrics simply result in a pile of reports and no useful data.

Again, our research suggests the **challenges in data analysis arise from bad organization of marketers' data analysis processes, and not from a failure to understand what the data means.**

Organizing a website optimization campaign is complicated, and the data analysis functionality alone can measure thousands of possible data points. Expanding insights from simple Web analytics reporting, to more complicated metrics requires planning. However, allocating time to plan and correctly structure your analytics tracking, to connect data with offline transactions, latent conversions and visitor segmentation will

address more than one-third of the significant data processing challenges facing website optimization practitioners.

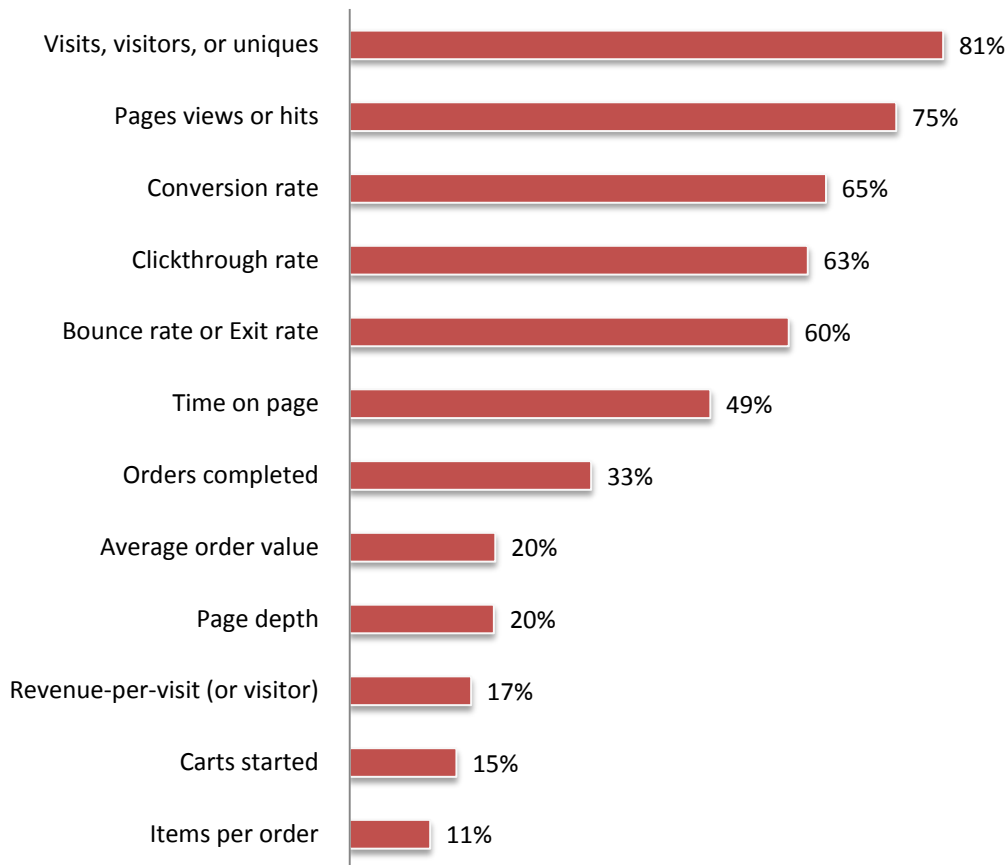
This is the premise of implementing a data-driven culture – making analytics a core process of Web optimization instead of an end-stage add-on. Being able to track this data requires not only additional technology investment, but also careful data modeling to make this information meaningful and actionable. **When you trade this investment of time and technology against the ability to pinpoint the return on this investment, data analytics is hard to ignore.**

# DETERMINING WHAT DATA TO TRACK

How do you identify which site metrics you will use to measure your website conversion goals? To begin to answer this, the *2011 Landing Page Optimization Survey* asked marketers which key performance metrics they tracked online. The top twelve metrics are listed on the following page.

Understandably, this is a lot of information to track, and it can be easy to “lose the forest through the trees.” You cannot reasonably hope to measure everything. The analytics your firm chooses to track depends on your business objectives. Begin with the basics and then expand your exploration from there.

**Chart: Top website optimization metrics tracked in 2010**



Source: ©2011 MarketingSherpa Landing Page Optimization Benchmark Survey  
Methodology: Fielded February 2011, N=2,673

Your company’s time and energy is at a premium. Rigorously focus your core analytics to concentrate your resources on the most relevant data. To prevent yourself from being buried under a mound of data, group your key performance indicators into four elements you can measure:



1. The **Amount** of activity on your site: Page views, visitor sessions, returning visitors, etc.
2. The **Source** of that activity: Referrers, search terms, languages, countries, organizations, etc.
3. The **Nature** of that activity: Entry pages, exit pages, browsers, platforms, JavaScript versions, cookie support, screen resolutions, page refreshes, page load errors, average time per page, etc.
4. The **Results** of that activity: Click trails, most requested pages, number of page views, signups, orders, etc.

Using these four elements, compile a list of the key performance indicators (KPI's) that matter to your individual business goals. For marketers that don't know where to begin, here is a list of common conversion metrics to track:

- Traffic data
- Clickthrough rate
- Conversion rate
- Bounce rate
- Sales
- Cost-per-click
- Cost-per-action

Here are some additional metrics that you may choose to review:

- Time on the page
- Exit rates
- Abandonment
- Form completion rate
- Top entry pages
- Most viewed pages
- Downloads (e.g., whitepaper, video demo, etc.)
- Registering for a newsletter or webinar (for a lead generation site)
- New or returning customer
- Affiliate links
- Email open rates
- Links (or likes) on social profiles
- Links which visitors click (e.g., header, footer, icon, etc.)
- URL destination pages (e.g., a thank-you page redirect once a visitor makes a purchase)
- Number of pages per visit
- Are visitors navigating between two pages (i.e., can they find what they're looking for?)
- Cart activities
- Organic traffic keywords
- PPC ad clicks
- Referring pages
- Keywords
- Personas
- Roles
- Visitor's screen elements (size, browser or connection speed)

- Visitor's connection speed
- Time/day segments
- Geographic location of visitor
- Past site traffic
- Click density analysis (site overlay analysis)
- Funnel metrics
- Reactivation pop up campaigns

Data analysis is all about finding optimization opportunities, and these will vary depending on your website and business. The common conversion metrics that most marketers track will give you a baseline. Look for numbers that stand out, as these will tell you where to begin correcting gaps on your website.

Check to see if there is a single page has a very high comparable bounce rate to the rest of your site. For example, if most of your traffic drops off once visitors reach your shopping cart page, there is obviously an issue with that page. This is the ideal page to begin optimizing.

Also check your channels. Beginning at either your organic or paid search ads, look at your conversion path, and follow the visitor step-by-step through their conversion process. Based upon this path, decide which metrics best track your primary conversion goal, and make sure your analytic reports are set up to measure this data. If you have secondary website objectives, ensure that you structure your data analysis to measure these as well.

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# USING DATA TO FIND LOW-HANGING FRUIT

Digital marketing is incredibly measurable, but **it's what you do these measurements that will move the needle.**

As we have discussed, one of the primary benefits of online marketing is the magnitude of data available to informing marketers' optimization strategies. Robust analytic tools track every click, every browser and every cookie that interacts with a website. Every single click tracked by your analytic tools provides additional detail on your target clients' preferences and motivations.

**As marketers, our goal is to deliver timely, relevant material to engage our ideal clients** – we want to capture their interest or their imaginations, and deliver the most interesting material possible, to move our visitors forward along the conversion path.

Analytics tools and testing help understand visitor preferences and motivations. This data will:

- Identify pages or paths that contribute to conversion
- Identify “leaks” in paths toward the objective
- Identify significant visitor segments

Given the universe of possible tracking metrics, how can you decide which data will best serve your website optimization strategy? It can be overwhelming to review the total list to track site metrics. **Condensing your website optimization analytic efforts into manageable chunks allows you to measure and digest the analytics specific to your website optimization campaign.**

Use the following recommendations to review your site analytics. Gauge these buckets for the major problems on your website, such as underperforming traffic segments, conversion road blocks, or layout problems. By looking at Web analytics conversion reporting, you can also detect which paid traffic landing pages do not convert well, and consider them as candidates for tests or redesign.

## ID “LOW-HANGING FRUIT”

Use data analysis to identify your page's low-hanging fruit, and determine how to design optimized pages to appeal to your ideal audience. For example:

- **Top Pages**: Look at your top converting pages: What are your top products? Are these the products you expected to receive the most clicks? Is there something in the construction of your website driving this traffic?
- **Top Bounces**: Which pages have the highest bounce rates? These are most likely the pages with worst functionality or message match, and are the likely candidates for your first optimization processes.
- **Total page views**: If 600 people came to your site, but only two clicked a call-to-action, there is likely something wrong with that page. Conversely, pages with the highest traffic also provide the

highest chance to make a significant impact with your first website optimization program.

- **Navigation**: A high amount of clicks to the navigation on your site – as opposed to the call-to-action button – may tell you that your website is not addressing its core value proposition – and visitors are instead hunting around in your site navigation for the information they came to your site in search of. Navigational issues themselves can be identified using click stream analysis.
- **Engagement**: Analytics that track the depth of your visitors' interaction with your site – including time on page and number of clicks – will help you profile the determination and motivation of the visitors on your site. You will also see motivation reflected in how many times a visitor returns to your site.
- **Segments and Funnels**: Look at your segmentation and funnel information. Does your page actually pull in your target audience? Where are visitors coming from, and where are the buyers lost?

Ultimately, understanding your visitor preferences and motivations is how you design relevant, value-driven online experiences for your ideal client.

## EXPANDING YOUR DATA ANALYSIS

Beyond using basic data to formulate your website optimization strategy, you can also take an archeological approach to your data. **Successful optimization efforts look at how all your marketing channels, and all their corresponding pages, work together.**

Experienced optimizers look at which sites have the highest exit rates and where visitors typically exit their sites. Then they move to analytic metrics such as clickthrough rate, cost-per-click and cost-per-action (analytic metrics that come from your Google accounts, or other tracking software).

Following the visitor through their entire conversion allows you to glean key insights into your visitor segments. These insights could include:

- Using the visible browser window and screen resolution to determine what copy will appear above the fold on your target client's screen.
- Looking at the top referring keywords to align your PPC keyword strategy with conversion success. Keyword research can identify which ads produce the highest traffic or clean up your keyword groups.
- Considering viewing data (screen resolution, internet connection speed, and support for various plug-ins) to inform site design. A dense site with a lot of high-resolution images may be appealing, but **if your average client is browsing on a 10-year old PC, the load time will probably be prohibitive**. However, if your target market is comprised of younger ad executives, with iPads and high-speed connections, you likely have more design flexibility.
- Web analytics related to content offer important clues. For example, reviewing your most visited content will reveal which content is getting the most exposure, and allow you to reposition or optimize any content that isn't attracting the attention you want.

If you don't have any major drop-off points, consider optimizing your top sites. Marketers often ignore their "successful" sites because they are already driving significant traffic. **The key to website optimization, however, is to discover *why* your prospects are coming to your sites.**

You may have one insurance product ideally priced for the market, and the site would convert sales even with a "bare-bones" layout. Through optimization testing, you can improve this site, and eke the maximum revenue out of even top-performing webpages. Often, your highest traffic or largest revenue drivers also have the most potential upside.

Appropriate tracking tools in place to measure your data are paramount. If your conversion action typically has a long delay, then you will need mechanisms to record your visitors' progress, and return them to their most recently viewed (and relevant) page in their ensuing visits. Tracking analytics will help you to understand the behaviors of your stragglers.

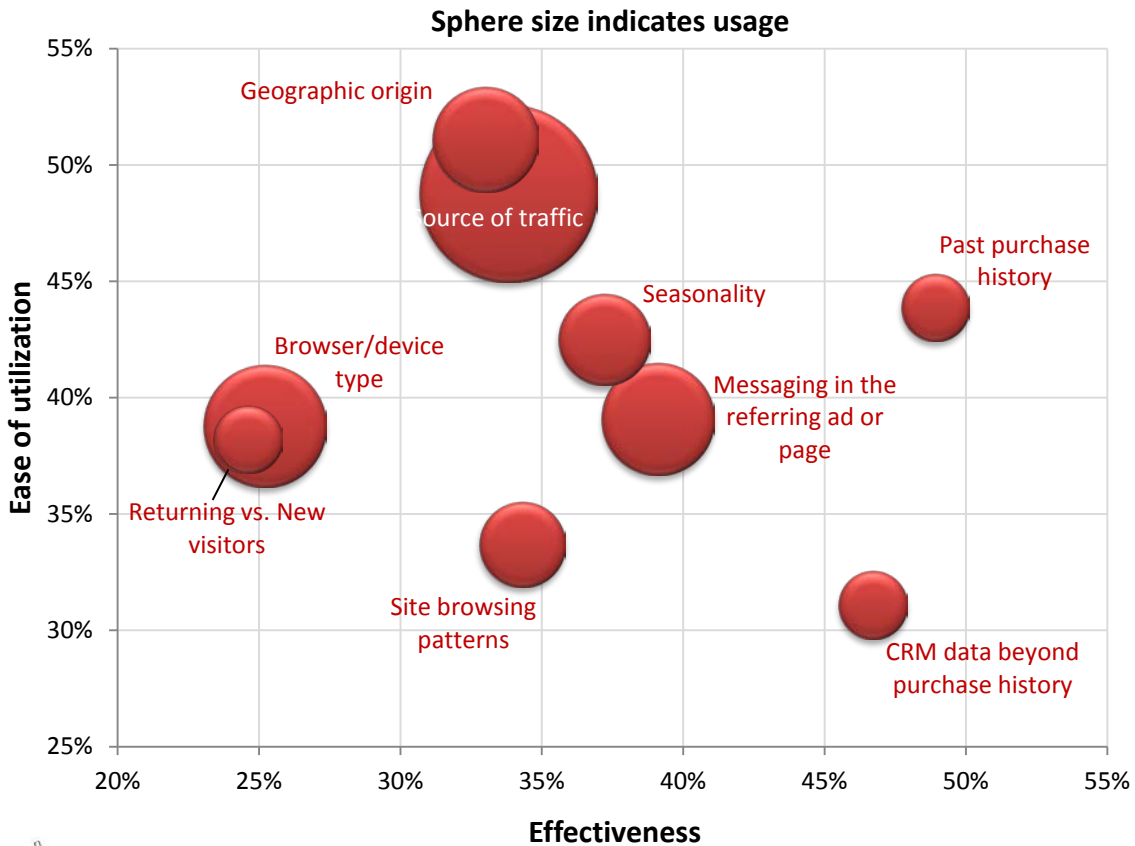
# UNCOVERING YOUR MOST RELEVANT SEGMENTS

Data analytics is valuable because it offers insights into the people visiting your site. To maximize your website ROI, you need to uncover your most relevant audience segments, and design pages to appeal directly to this audience. Once you have identified which data your firm will track, you need to use it to identify the core segments your website will serve.

For some marketers, this is easier said than done. The online marketing universe houses a wide spectrum of websites, each falling somewhere along the relevance spectrum, from static and stale websites at one extreme, to dynamic, CRM-driven dedicated landing pages with custom content for each customer segment at the other. Teasing out a client segments based upon visitor behavior can be challenging, but it is also highly rewarding. **Combined with testing, segmentation allows you to fine-tune your sites to deliver relevance – not only in terms which content you select, but also how that content is presented.**

Marketers are becoming increasingly sensitive to website traffic diversity. In our 2011 Landing Page Optimization Benchmark Study, we asked marketers how successful they found their efforts to address their audience segments, and how easy they found the tracking of this data.

**Chart: CMOs' top segmentation and relevance tactics**



Source: ©2011 MarketingSherpa Landing Page Optimization Benchmark Survey  
Methodology: Fielded February 2011, N=2,673

In terms of current industry-wide trends to segment user experiences, we found that **marketers believe delivering a custom page to a user, based upon past purchase history, is both relatively straightforward and extremely effective.** Beyond that, we found CMOs reported varying degrees of success with the diverse and often complicated analytics that inform messaging and customer tracking.

Listed by overall effectiveness rating, here are some of the segments that many marketers used to classify their data in 2011:

- Past purchase history
- CRM data beyond purchase history
- Messaging in the referring ad or page
- Seasonality
- Source of traffic
- Site browsing patterns
- Geographic origin
- Browser/device type
- Returning vs. new visitors

Not surprisingly, the segmentation data marketers use most frequently is also among the least difficult to apply. It also requires the least input from IT and other resources in order to design relevant, optimized pages. **Using the messaging in the referring ad or page can be especially easy to apply when the marketer also controls that messaging, making it a highly efficient way to segment.**

Since personalization is a factor of relevance, it is surprising that cookie-based personalization of website content for new vs. returning visitors was rated as the least effective tactic overall. Potentially, the level of effort required to execute such a tactic makes it too complicated to deploy it effectively. Often, installing cookies and other tracking codes requires marketing to collaborate with IT, and may involve a lengthy roll-out period.

## SEGMENTING YOUR TRAFFIC

The core of online marketing is a conversation between your key prospects and your company. Once you have completed a thorough review of your website funnel, it is time to take a careful look at the various sources of traffic that come to your website. Work to design user experiences and conversion channels that meet the needs of people engaging with your company from their computers.

**Creating the optimal message and thought process for the target customer is the essence of optimization.** Identifying your segments early allows marketers to appeal to each segment in the most effective way, resulting in greater improvements than those afforded by optimizing for an aggregate website. In multi-product scenarios, **segmentation analyses helps determine the right offer, the right up-sell and cross-sells, and the right prices for each segment.**

You will have to select how to identify your traffic sources/audience depending on your business constraints. If you have a very popular product that appeals to a wide array of people, consider segmenting your audience using the widest possible cross sections, which will help improve performance across the board. However, if you have a more-targeted ideal client – perhaps a lead generation site looking for Pharmaceutical Sales Managers – you will more specifically segment your audience.

There are a number of ways to identify your audience segments:

- Channel mapping
- Traffic sources
  - Direct
  - Referred
  - Search
  - Paid
- Data mining
- Dynamic content presentation
- Clickstream analysis
- Geo-targeting
- Personas, roles or other behavioral frameworks
- Timing of Web visits (seasonality, weekends, etc.)

Each of these segmentation tactics will give you different information about your potential audience. Each tactic also requires various degrees of sophistication to execute. **Regardless of which segmentation tactic you select, you want your traffic to come from recurring, controllable and stable sources**, in order to design effective optimization and testing strategies.

According to our 2011 Landing Page Optimization Survey, here are the most popular traffic sources (in order of effectiveness) that marketers employ in their segmentation efforts:

- Paid: Affiliate referrals
- Paid: Social media site ads
- Paid: Display ads (except social sites)



- Paid: Search or context ads
- Free: Organic search
- Free: Social media sites (not ads)
- Free: Referring sites
- Paid: Email to purchased or rented list
- Free: Email to in-house list

Ideally, you will design a separate landing page for each segment you optimize. Rather than a “one-size-fits all” website, segment optimization will help you create specialized landing pages that each focus on pleasing a particular segment of your audience.

Segment optimization helps you determine how many different landing pages your website or campaign requires, and decide which content and layout each of these sites should use to speak to your different audiences.

To get started on segmenting your audience, follow these steps:

**Step 1: Look at your current audience**

List your possible audience segments. Who are the different types of people who look for you online – and why? Don’t restrict yourself to the way you may have segmented people in your database or your business plan. Brainstorm what’s important and relevant from the respondent’s point-of-view, by considering any or all of the following issues:

- The specific “problem” the respondent wants to solve
- The demographic/psychographic “persona” of the respondent
- The respondent’s stage in the buying process
- The role of the respondent in their organization
- The respondent’s geographic location
- The respondent’s industry or the size of their organization

These are the initial buckets into which you could segment your site traffic. Don’t worry if there’s overlap between buckets, as these won’t necessarily be either/or choices.

**Step 2: Review your existing website**

Next, review the landing pages, search marketing keywords, ad creative, or email campaigns you are currently running. In each instance, ask yourself – is there a particular segment to which these respondents clearly belong? If the answer is “yes,” add it to that bucket along with the number of clicks per month it generates. If the answer is “no,” leave a question mark next to it – perhaps with a handful of segments it might appeal to.

**Step 3: Design a landing page**

For each audience segment you select, create a dedicated landing page focused on the needs, wants, and characteristics of that particular segment. (We discussed dedicated landing pages in Chapter 3.)

**Step 4: Test to optimize**

Here you can use content optimization such as A/B or multivariate testing to find the best headline, imagery, layout, etc. for each page.

## CHANNEL MAPPING

In the 2011 Landing Page Optimization Survey, most marketers reported dividing their ideal client segments into groups to help them better understand their needs, and then creating DLPs to address these demands. A subset of segmentation, channel mapping is another tool to slice your audience into measurable cohorts.

Optimizing a website for a channel involves teasing out the primary goals and motivations for each incoming audience group, and then designing a conversion path and visitor experience that appeals to that person or group using tools such as dedicated landing pages.

Segmenting your potential audience by channel is one of the easier means to classify your target demographics. Channel mapping entails tracking how the visitor arrives on your site. Based upon the referring channel (website, ad or other source), marketers make strong inferences about visitor preferences, create specific content and messaging for each referring segment, and establish triggers to deliver different landing pages to each visit, based upon the traffic source.

Similar to segments, the potential referring channels for your website include:

- Paid search
- Organic search
- Email
- Affiliates
- Social media

Each channel will employ different navigation, content and calls to action. The look, feel and layout of a site designed to appeal to an institutional investor who found you through an affiliate partner is inevitably different than one aimed at a technology CMO clicking on a PPC ad.

Website optimization by channel looks at conversion statistics and channel statistics, and ties them together to determine which channels are the most profitable. Through testing and analytics, you can determine the channels that are the highest performing for each distinct customer segment, and then create unique pages for these channels.

Remember, the Ad Groups and keywords that deliver prospects to your site will be different. When conducting a Google search, one customer segment will search for your product using one name (landscaping), while another will use a completely different one (tree demolition). Each of these segments would react best to distinct landing pages and conversion channels.

## COMPLICATIONS WITH CHANNEL MAPPING

Designing a customized user experience based exclusively on a referring channel can be a little confusing. First, you need to clearly understand your funnel, and what you are trying to achieve with your website. Then, you can move on to audience segmentation.

Furthermore, some marketers haven't clearly defined their segments, or the referring channels have some overlap in terms of the kinds of audience that they attract.

Designing DLPs based on channel mapping is not a precise science. It is hard to predict why an audience will react to one page over another, and you can guess incorrectly. Alternatively, relying upon channel data may not provide enough information for a marketer to design a complete user experience.

As with every optimization effort, optimizing channel traffic requires testing to ensure you deliver the appropriate pages to the right audience. (We will discuss advanced segmentation, audience profiling techniques and testing in later sections.)

## USING SEGMENTATION TACTICS WITH CAUTION

These advanced analytics can occasionally cause more trouble than they are worth. Most of the time, optimization testing will identify major leaks in your website funnel that you need to first address before you launch into channel optimization or any other kind of distinct landing page design. It is wise to be in the strategic phase of website optimization, before you spend time and resources educating your team on channel mapping.

Evaluating multiple variables makes analysis more complicated, but not necessarily more productive. If you are ready to look into advanced segmentation or channel mapping, remember – always review your efforts through an ROI lens. While channel mapping can help boost conversions by delivering relevant content, it also comes at a cost. If you are driving increased traffic from your Google PPC ads, make sure you take the ad costs into account. From a net profit-per-unit perspective, driving more traffic to specific ads could end up being more expensive, depending on how much the click costs.

If you are just starting out, this advanced analysis can be confusing. From a website optimization standpoint, the key is to remember that different sources of traffic will react differently to your website.

For example, what works for a domestic website will not necessarily translate to an international audience. As online marketers increasingly speak to a global audience, they need to account for the needs of their international constituents. The need to target messaging to different international segments will continue to grow as online communities broaden their reach.

Languages, download times, operating systems, cultural norms and audience motivation vary significantly from country to country. Conduct testing to assess these core segments, or you risk alienating a sizeable portion of your visitor pool.

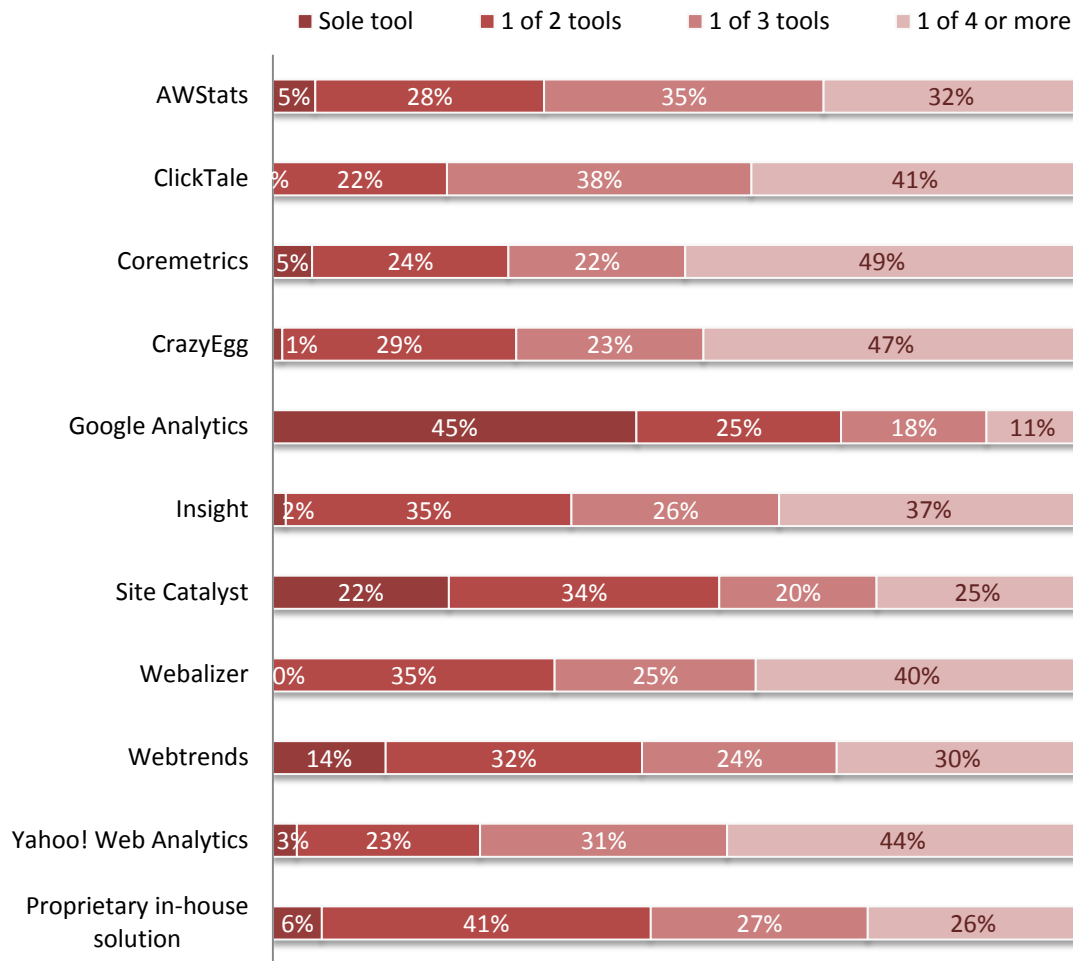
# SELECTING WEB ANALYTICS AND TESTING PLATFORMS

Once you have identified the key performance indicators, segments and channels you need to track, the next step is selecting which data analytic platform you will employ to compile these metrics.

Marketers face a vast array of competing software and testing tools, each with its own approach, vocabulary, strengths and limitations. When it comes to recommending one product over another, MarketingSherpa is vendor-agnostic. Our approach to website optimization emphasizes the science behind testing and analytic tools. If you correctly structure your data analysis, you can really use any commercial-grade Web metrics or testing solution – and can also compile data insights across different systems.

In the 2011 Landing Page Optimization Survey, we asked marketers which Web analytic tools they utilized to track their optimization campaigns.

**Chart: Most popular Web tracking and analytics tools among survey respondents in 2010**



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powered by MECLABS

Source: ©2011 MarketingSherpa Landing Page Optimization Benchmark Survey  
Methodology: Fielded Feb ruary 2011, N=2,673

The chart above represents the top ten testing tools plus the “in-house solution” option that marketers are currently using. However, the number of available analytics tools available to marketers runs easily in the hundreds.

As you can see, Google Analytics is the most popular primary tool for website optimization practitioners, followed by Omniture site catalyst, Webtrends and proprietary in-house tools. In fact, according to the survey, Google Analytics, was in use by more than 80% (not shown) of survey respondents.

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*“Always test. Never assume.”*

- CMO quote

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This data further indicates many marketers are simultaneously utilizing multiple solutions. Some of these tools complement each other’s features, while others could serve as a back-up system. Marketers with greater resources at their disposal may be able to integrate multiple data sources and use redundancy in their tracking to increase the depth and reliability of their data.

Still, nearly half of the marketers that responded to the 2011 Landing Page Optimization Survey were using just one tool. With data analysis posing one of the key challenges to website optimization and testing, these marketers may be finding that dealing with a single system is more efficient.

# STRUCTURING YOUR ANALYTIC SOLUTIONS

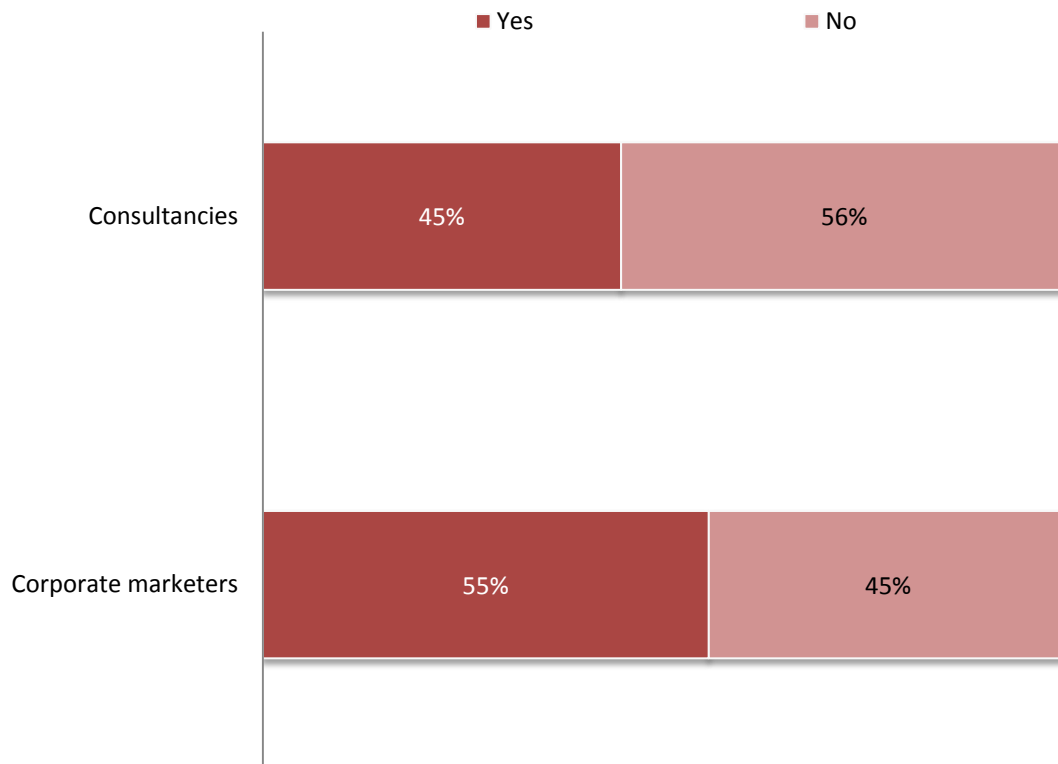
Once you have determined which analytic metrics your firm will track, it is vital to structure your analytic tools so they can measure the data points you have selected.

While tracking website conversion data is often as simple as adding code to track an email or lead generation form download rate, many marketers have omitted this crucial step when setting up their marketing campaigns, likely because this requires code sourced from their IT teams.

**Without a culture of optimization, and an emphasis on using data to make informed marketing decisions, even large firms with dedicated marketing teams can overlook correctly setting up their analytic tools.** This is the one of the major challenges for marketers trying to communicate the ROI of their optimization efforts – in short, if you don't know what your conversion rate is, how do you know which campaigns are successful?

The 2011 Landing Page Optimization Survey asked CMOs if there were any metrics they were not evaluating, due to improperly structured analytic solutions. **Approximately half of all marketers were unable to track certain metrics, only because the technology piece is broken.**

**Chart: Improper Web analytics setup limits marketers' tracking capabilities**



Source: ©2011 MarketingSherpa Landing Page Optimization Benchmark Survey  
Methodology: Fielded February 2011, N=2,673

Work with your technology team to properly install your analytic tools, and verify they are tracking your selected metrics. Beyond appropriate set-up protocols, the diversity of analytic tracking creates a number of data tracking considerations:

- **Activate tracking tools in your analytic software**: Online analytic tools have embedded code to track a variety of visitor behaviors using browser cookies and other Web analytics tracking devices. Refer to your selected analytic tool and review the account setup instructions to make sure to activate all the necessary tracking for the metrics your business wants to review.
- **Embed the necessary code to measure your data**: Work with your IT team to embed the appropriate HTML or other programming code to tie the statistics you want to collect to your analytic software tools. Create custom tags for each link so you can individually track your tests.
- **Centralize data in one system**: Many multichannel online marketers struggle to tie all their reporting statistics together in one central depository. Selecting a single system to warehouse and report on data from all sources will streamline the data analysis of all your online campaigns, including website optimization. Focus this data reporting on the few key tests and segments most relevant to improving conversions.
- **Identify any specialized tracking considerations**: Many website optimization campaigns integrate several different marketing campaigns. Make sure you have structured your tracking to measure any offline or lagging conversions. For example, if you are tracking lead generation calling, create separate toll-free numbers for each landing page test, and tie them to your analytic solution.

Further, consistently monitor your data tracking to ensure that you don't have any issues with your analytic tools. Tim Ash's book, *Landing Page Optimization*, offers the following tips to ensure your data is collecting the information you need to make business decisions:

- Check data recording to make sure your analytics are working.
- Check data rates to see if they make sense. Very high or low data rates mean you are either too restrictive with your segmentation, or you haven't filtered out the right traffic sources.

## GENERATING THE RIGHT REPORTS

Generating the right reports is essential to evaluating your website optimization efforts. In order to track your vital KPIs you need to make sure your analytic tools are producing reports that deliver those numbers. Once you make sure your reporting is in place, structure these reports in a way that allows your team to digest the data.

**Website optimization tracking efforts don't fail because of insufficient tools to measure data – most website optimization campaigns already have some level of analytic tracking in place, but rather because the website optimization team hasn't set up reporting.** Other times, reports aren't effectively tracking the KPIs (such as conversion rate or bounce rate) business units need to make smart optimization decisions.

**For data-based website optimization to work, it needs accurate, consistent reporting to inform optimization decisions.** Once your marketing team decides which key metrics matter to your website optimization success, you need to regularly measure this data, and use the information from your analytic reporting to make strategic choices about which parts of your campaign are working, and which need to be tweaked. **Whether you are changing keyword groups or ad spends, or deciding which treatment was more successful during Cyber Monday, you need to ground your choices in data.**

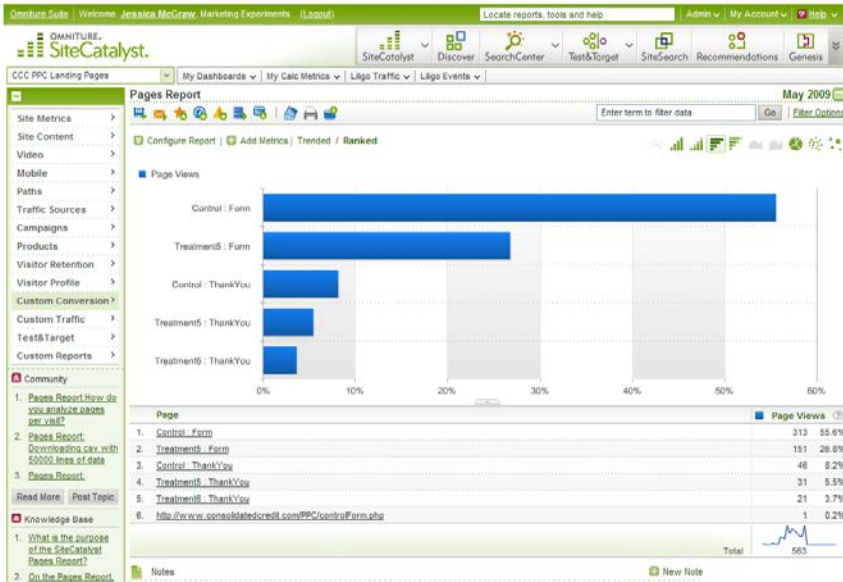
A data-based culture prioritizes information as the key to making smart website optimization choices. **Decisions steeped in hard numbers, rather than marketer intuition, are simply more effective, and facilitate communication with your executive sponsors.** Most website optimization campaigns fall apart when they lose operational momentum. Making the case to continue website optimization efforts, increase website optimization's reach, or explain why one treatment failed to produce a lift are all more compelling using actual comparative data.

**While your reporting provides proof that your website optimization campaigns are successful, the reports themselves will help you make the case for website optimization to your executive sponsors.** A visible optimization campaign generates investment in the process. Many successful website optimization programs deliver regular, manageable reports to their C-suite, who then look forward to seeing how much more revenue website optimization is generating for their bottom line.

Which reports you review on a regular basis will depend on your analytic software. Here are two examples of data reporting from top analytic tools:



EXAMPLE: A TEST AND TARGET SCREEN SHOT SHOWING THE EXIT RATES ON A SELECTED PAGE



EXAMPLE: A GOOGLE ANALYTICS SCREEN SHOT SHOWING GOAL COMPLETIONS, GOAL VALUE, CONVERSION RATE AND ABANDONMENT RATE FOR A SITE

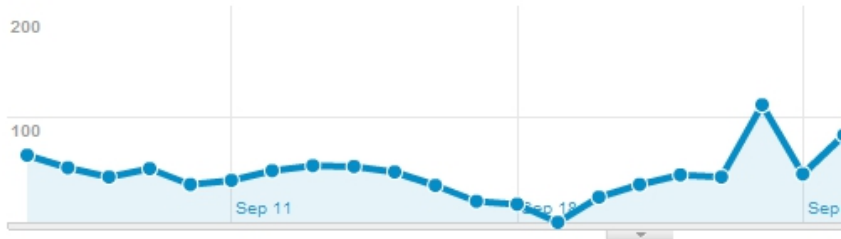
Overview

100.00% of total goal completions

Goal Option:

All Goals

Overview



- 1,406 Goal Completions
- \$400.00 Goal Value
- 4.69% Goal Conversion Rate
- 0.00% Total Abandonment Rate

(Source: <http://sproutsocial.com/insights/2011/10/how-to-google-analytics-goals/>)

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# WORKSHEET 1: REVIEWING YOUR KEY PAGE METRICS

Use the following worksheet to review your data tracking and identify your key page metrics:

**What are your biggest data analysis challenges?**

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## Key Page Metrics

### Who visited my website?

1.	Unique Visitors
2.	Referring URLs
3.	Referring Search Phrases

<b>What pages did they view?</b>	
1.	Entry Pages
2.	Page Views
3.	Average Time on Pages
4.	Page Views per Visitor

<b>Did they have any trouble with my site?</b>	
1.	Browser Versions
2.	Platform Versions

<b>What did they buy or sign-up for?</b>	
1.	Orders (average amount, number, total revenue)
2.	Sign-Ups

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## WORKSHEET 2: IDENTIFYING LOW-HANGING FRUIT

Answer the following questions to identify your low-hanging fruit using data analysis:

**Look at your top converting pages:**

- What are your top products?
- Are these the products you expected to receive the most clicks?
- Is there something in the construction of your website that is driving this traffic?

**Do you have any navigational issues?**

**How long does your average visitor stay on your site?**

**What are your top three visitor segments?**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**Where in the website funnel are you losing the most traffic?**

**What browser does the majority of your traffic use to view your site?**

**What content generates the most clicks?**

**What content generates the longest time on page? Is this information surprising?**

**Given these answers, which pages should you optimize to begin your website optimization campaign?**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

# About MarketingSherpa LLC

MarketingSherpa is a primary research facility, wholly-owned by MECLABS, dedicated to determining **what works in marketing** via exclusive case studies, surveys, and results data analysis. Then we publish what we learn so our community of marketers and weekly readers can improve their results and train their teams.

Praised by *The Economist*, Harvard Business School's Working Knowledge Site and Entrepreneur.com, MarketingSherpa is distinguished by offering **practical, results-based marketing** information researched and written by a staff of in-house reporters.

MarketingSherpa features:

- **Best Practices:** 1,000+ brand-side marketer case studies and 3,500+ creative samples
- **Research:** 2,000+ marketing and research abstracts
- **Instruction:** 800+ how-to articles
- **Newsletters:** 230,000+ marketers read weekly case studies on topics such as email, search, social, lead generation, lead nurturing, optimization and content marketing
- **Training:** 100+ live, hands-on training sessions providing practical and proven solutions
- **Summits:** 3 annual vendor-neutral, research-based marketing events

## About MECLABS

MECLABS is a science lab that uses real-world research and training to **help business leaders get better use out of sales and marketing technology and resources**, including Internet marketing, website optimization, and lead management. We have been involved in direct research partnerships with companies throughout Europe and North America since 2001.

MECLABS deploys a rigorous methodology to conduct research. This research is compiled from:

- More than **10 years** of research partnership with our clients
- **1,300** experiments
- Over **1 billion** emails
- **10,000** landing pages tested
- **5 million** telephone calls
- **500,000** decision maker conversations

MECLABS has consulted with companies like Cisco, Johnson & Johnson, *The New York Times*, 1-800-Flowers, and NetSuite to optimize sales and marketing processes and achieve triple-digit ROI gains.

Register for Summits and Workshops at [MECLABS.com/training](http://MECLABS.com/training) or contact:  
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