## Where is My Traffic Coming From?
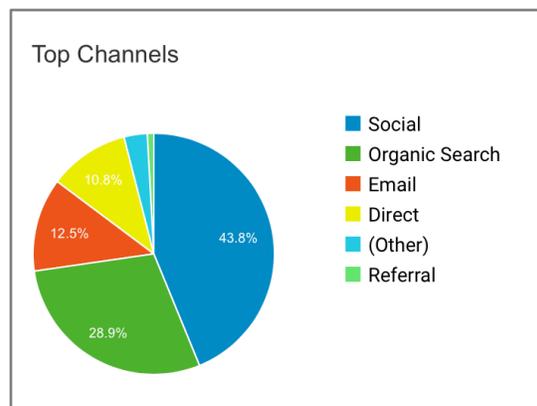**A CNN Newsource White Paper**

Understanding where your traffic is coming from is more than just a matter of curiosity. By knowing who the top referrers are to your site you can devise a proper marketing strategy that takes into account both your current strengths and where you have opportunity for improvement. The result can be more and better traffic to your site.

How do I find my sources of traffic?
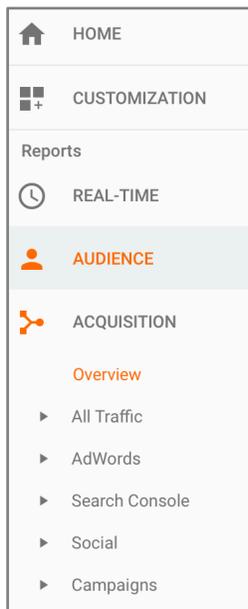
Using your Google Analytics dashboard, you can pinpoint the various sources of traffic to your site. From the main screen, start by clicking on the Acquisition menu, then on Overview (as seen on the left.) This will provide a pie chart displaying the various sources of traffic (below right.)

You can see in the example that a little less than half of this site's traffic is coming from social media referrals, with most of the rest coming from organic search results and email marketing. There is more data in the table that shows the total number of each type of user, bounce rate, pages per session and more.

Take a moment to click through the various metrics to get an overall sense of this top level of referrals. These are good metrics to know, but they really only skim the surface. To gain better insight we'll need to drill down into Google Analytics even further for more meaningful data.

Go back to the main menu and look under Acquisition. Click on All Traffic then on Referrals to pull up a table of specific referral sources. It should look like the table below:

Source	Acquisition			Behavior		
	Users ↓	New Users	Sessions	Bounce Rate	Pages / Session	Avg. Session Duration
	3,541 % of Total: 44.56% (7,946)	2,789 % of Total: 43.44% (6,421)	3,899 % of Total: 44.09% (8,844)	85.84% Avg for View: 79.07% (8.56%)	1.38 Avg for View: 1.77 (-22.16%)	00:00:28 Avg for View: 00:01:01 (-53.82%)
1. facebook.com	1,894 (53.14%)	1,466 (52.56%)	2,029 (52.04%)	87.78%	1.29	00:00:18
2. twitter.com	1,236 (34.68%)	954 (34.21%)	1,367 (35.06%)	88.88%	1.23	00:00:27
3. m.facebook.com	180 (5.05%)	161 (5.77%)	192 (4.92%)	87.50%	2.08	00:01:02
4. t.co	107 (3.00%)	82 (2.94%)	143 (3.67%)	61.54%	1.86	00:01:18
5. l.instagram.com	35 (0.98%)	35 (1.25%)	36 (0.92%)	63.89%	1.81	00:00:15
6. l.facebook.com	19 (0.53%)	12 (0.43%)	21 (0.54%)	66.67%	2.52	00:01:13
7. duckduckgo.com	10 (0.28%)	10 (0.36%)	10 (0.26%)	70.00%	1.40	00:00:22

Here you can see exactly what sites and properties are sending traffic to your site. In the example above you can see that lines 1, 3 and 6 are from various Facebook sites. Twitter is a major referrer as well, seen on lines 2 and 4, with much less traffic coming from Instagram and search engine DuckDuckGo.

You can get even more info by linking your Google Search Console to the Google Analytics account for your site. To do that, log in to your search console, then click on the red Add a Property button in the upper right. You'll see a dialog pop up like the one below:

Add a property

Select the type of property you would like to manage. Learn more.

Website ▾   https://www.example.com/   ⑦

Add   Cancel

Enter the name of your site and click add. You'll be presented with the dashboard for the URL you entered. Click on Search Traffic in the menu bar on the left, then click on Search Analytics. On the right you will see a list of search terms people entered that brought them to your site. And by clicking on the icon next to any of the search terms you'll get a new page of search results for

that term showing where you rank. This can be helpful to understand what people have in mind when they search for your site, or perhaps even terms you would not normally associate with your site that are driving traffic nonetheless. These can aid you in determining how to tag stories to bring even more users in through search.

Analyzing my inbound traffic

Now that you now where you users are coming from, and in general terms, what gets them to your site, how can we put this information to good use? First, let's look at the mix of sources.

There is no set formula for where your site's traffic should come from. However, industry averages show that roughly two-thirds or three-fourths of your traffic should come from social media referrals and search results combined. If you are very active on social media, you may see 50% or more of your traffic coming from the main social sites. If that number is smaller than 30%, then you need to consider better ways to leverage your social presence to get that traffic back to your site where it can be better monetized.

Let's say that your social and search traffic is about where you think it should be. Don't stop there. Dig down into the data and look at what social platforms and keywords are driving the most traffic. Is there a way to leverage those even more? For example, if you see Twitter is driving a lot more traffic than Facebook, look at the offering on each to understand why. Is it the number and timing of your tweets, particularly well-written teases, stories that appeal to that audience? These are just a few of the questions to consider. Once you have an idea of why the traffic is flowing the way it is, see if you can find a way to increase it based on what you have learned.

Another thing to consider is the amount of your direct traffic, that is, users who came in through a bookmarked URL or by typing your URL directly. While this sounds like a good thing, and does show brand loyalty, there are pitfalls associated as well. Saved bookmarks can go out of date as pages are replaced and site structures modified. Direct traffic may also be the result of bad links redirecting users to a home page rather than their desired destination. Traffic coming in directly also may be coming from other sources you want to track, but due to missing or incorrect tracking codes on social sharing or search marketing initiatives, revert to a default page, forfeiting the user data you need. For these reasons if you see a direct number above 20% or 25% for your site, you may want to dig down into that data to find out exactly how those users are coming into your site and fix any errors you may find.

Summary: Where is My Traffic Coming From?

To recap:

- It's important to know where your traffic is coming from, so you can optimize your marketing mix and tackle any technical problems indicated by your analysis.
- It's easy to find how people are coming into your site. In your Google Analytics dashboard click on the Acquisition menu item, then Overview to get the top-level percentages. You can then dig down further to get more refined data on social platforms, search terms and more.
- Analyze, then act. Once you understand where you traffic is coming from consider how you might modify current processes to drive more traffic from your desired sources. And keep in mind your mix in traffic. If one or more areas seem to be vastly over- or underweighted, it may indicate a technical problem that you need to fix.

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