Diagnosing My Best- and Worst-Performing Pages
A CNN Newsource White Paper

It's a simple fact that you're in the business of putting out news. And you put out a lot of it. You're probably doing it multiple times per hour on your web site, in social media, and of course, covering all the newscasts and editions as you've done for years. And when you finally get done today you're going to turn around and do it all over again tomorrow.

The constant churn of the news cycle doesn't leave a lot of time for reflection on what's working and what might be improved. But it's vitally important to look back and analyze what you're putting out to see which pages or stories are bringing in a big audience and which aren't. Once you understand what's driving traffic on your site you can consider making changes to underperforming pages to improve your audience numbers, and possibly your revenue as well.

What kind of insight to look for

Here are some typical aspects of your web traffic that you can analyze with an eye towards improving performance:

- Which pages have the most views? Do they have common elements like video or slideshows? Do they tend to fall under certain topics?

- What's the source of traffic to a certain page? If social media is driving much of the audience is there a certain kind of content on that page that has appeal to that audience? How is this content being promoted on the social sites?

- Are certain pages entryways to your site? Likewise, where are people leaving your site, and why?

These are just a few common questions to ask. Once you start to dig into your metrics you're sure to come up with others based on what you discover.

Understanding how my pages are performing

To find the data to understand some of these questions we'll start at your Google Analytics dashboard. From the main menu on the left, select Behavior, then click on Site Content, then All Pages to get an overview of your entire site. You'll see the individual pages of your site, ranked by total page views with other metrics listed to the right (see below.)

Page	Pageviews ↓	Unique Pageviews	Avg. Time on Page	Entrances	Bounce Rate	% Exit	Page Value
	15,677	12,942	00:01:19	8,844	79.07%	56.41%	$0.00
	% of Total: 100.00% (15,677)	% of Total: 100.00% (12,942)	Avg for View: 00:01:19 (0.00%)	% of Total: 100.00% (8,844)	Avg for View: 79.07% (0.00%)	Avg for View: 56.41% (0.00%)	% of Total: 0.00% ($0.00)

You can click on any of the columns to resort the table by that metric, using attributes such as average time spent on page, bounce rate, and exits, the percentage of the time users left your site from that page.

Take a moment to scroll down your list of pages and look for common elements among the pages that performed well. You can start by looking at total page views to see what stories were consumed most, looking for what they may have in common. You can also sort the data various ways to glean additional insights. For instance, sort by the Avg. Time on Page column and look for the pages where users spent the most time. What do these pages have in common? Do these pages contain video or other linear content that would cause users to stay on the page for a longer duration? Take some time to analyze what is driving favorable user behavior and think about how that might be applied to other pages that did not fare as well with this metric.

Some other metrics along with things to consider when analyzing them:

- Page Views or Unique Page Views

  Look at the pages that are getting the most views. What is driving that traffic? Is it the content of the page, or maybe how it was promoted? In particular, compare the stories you are featuring on social media to see if you are getting an appreciable boost in page views. If not, then reconsider the kinds of stories you are touting on social platforms or re-evaluate your promotion methods.

- Entrances

  Stories that score high on this metric are the entry points to your site. Traffic here may be driven by social links, search results, or other deep linking sources. Look at the commonalities among these stories to see if there are things you can extend to other stories to make them perform better as entry points.

- Bounce Rate

  The bounce rate shows the percentage of users who left your site from a certain page. When a user sees a link on social media or a search results page and follows it to your site, often you will see a high bounce rate for that page as users leave as soon as they get what they came for. However, since we want to keep that traffic on our sites, let's flip this metric and look at the pages where people don't leave as much. To do that, click on the Bounce Rate column heading again to flip the percentages putting the low bounce pages on top. Look for common

elements on these pages to see if there are reasons people aren't leaving your site from them. It may be due to a good tease for another story or a prompt to sign up for a newsletter. There may be ways to implement more widely page elements like these to keep people on your site longer with more pages consumed per session.

- % Exit

  These are the pages from which users are leaving your site. Take a look at a few of them and try to understand why people aren't choosing to consume more after a certain page. In many cases it may be that search or social sent the user in just for that story. (You'll be able to determine that if the page also ranks high on the Entrance metric.) In these cases, you should think about what else you could put on the page to get people to click just one more time and stay on your site. Consider this: if the average number of pages consumed per session (found under Behavior > Site Content > Landing Pages) for a given story is just 1 or 2, getting a user to click on one more page during a session can result in a 50% to 100% increase in that metric! And since it is always easier to get an existing user to consume more compared to bringing in new users, focus your efforts on expanding pages per session, thereby lowering the % Exit metric on your stories.

One thing to keep in mind as you look at the page metrics is context. Certain stories are going to be unique and won't provide information that would necessarily apply to others. For example, a big breaking news story such as a school shooting will drive a tremendous amount of traffic to your site from several sources. But by its very nature the behavior spurred by that type of story is not replicable across your entire site. As you encounter those pages on your dashboard it's best to exclude them as outliers and not waste time trying to learn a lesson that's not there.

These are just a few things you can discover from the top level of your Google Analytics dashboard. The insights provided can go a long way towards giving you actionable information to help your pages perform better while supplying your audience with more of what it has already shown it wants.

Summary: Understanding Page Performance

To recap:

- It's important to know which of your pages are performing well and which could be improved.

- Basic page performance is easy to find on your Google Analytics dashboard. Go to Behavior > Site Content > All Pages to find a list of all pages on your site with the ability to rank performance in several key metrics.

- Analyze, then act. Look for what the best-performing pages have in common and see if it can be extended to other pages that don't score as well. Filter and sort the results to get a clearer understanding on what is driving user behavior and how you can leverage it to your advantage.

- Keep in mind that no two stories or pages are exactly alike, so don't spend a lot of time trying to replicate results from outliers. A big breaking news story is not going to teach good lessons on how to modify other pages, but a recurring feature or well-leveraged social media connection might.

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