B2B Web Analytics
Account-Level Visibility for True Business Intelligence
I. Summary

Because the modern website is an increasingly integral component to any organization’s sales and marketing process, the need has never been greater to understand – and respond to – the online behavior of buyers. Unfortunately, the traditional Web analytics services offered in current form. B2Bs fail to deliver the kind of account-based visibility so critical to their online success.

Indeed, while virtually all web analytics programs have come a long way in helping to identify, track and report on the online activities of the individual website visitor, they’ve missed the mark in extending that analytical reach into the businesses those same visitors represent — businesses into which B2Bs ultimately are trying to sell.

As a result the entire B2B market has largely been left in the dark when it comes to identifying, understanding, and adapting to the online behaviors and expectations of the key online buyers most likely to translate into revenue for the organization.¹

What has been needed is a form of account-based Web analytics that, in conjunction with traditional analytical tools, delivers the kinds of online business intelligence B2Bs need to succeed - that is, to ensure their online interactions are effectively leading to sales.

¹ 80% of corporate websites are not performing to their lead generation potential – Demandbase/Focus.com – “2011 National Website Demand Generation Study” The Data Digest: The Power of Video, Aug. 26, 2011
II. ANALYTICS

A. The Opportunity

Despite the hoopla surrounding Facebook, Twitter, mobile applications and other fast-growing digital channels, the corporate website remains the public face and point of universal interaction of today’s corporation.\(^2\)

This is particularly true for sales and marketing efforts, where the company website plays a central role in determining whether or not someone ultimately makes a commitment to buy. In a recent study of more than 1,000 technology businesses, for example, Forrester Research found that the typical business website was ranked first in determining whether a purchase would be made.\(^3\)

As such it is imperative that organizations continue to enhance and refine their websites to ensure that the unique needs of each website visitor is being met. Effective interactions lead to revenue while ineffective interactions lead to lost opportunities. By tailoring their content to the individual requirements of visitors, online visits are more likely to translate into desired actions and, by extension, increased revenues. Analytics is one step towards the goal of making every interaction more meaningful.

A typical analytics package might offer some or all of the following information:

- Total visits to a web site
- Which page(s) of the website were visited
- Which search terms were used to find the site
- The length of time a visitor was on the page
- Actions taken on a particular page
- Point at which an action (such as video watching) was abandoned
- Visitor’s destination after leaving the site
- Where a visitor originated
- Possible geographic home of visitor

This data creates a kind of digital feedback loop, enabling the organization to better understand what is – and is not – resonating with its online visitors and thereby make adjustments to the website’s layout, content, SEO strategy, functionality, navigation and so on and thereby break out of the one-size-fits-all mentality that for so long pervaded the industry.

By understanding which content is most effectively driving which people to a web form or, similarly, at which point they are abandoning that same form, the host organization can make important changes and create alternative targeted content to better meet the needs of its online audience and, by extension, increase conversions and then, ultimately, revenue.

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\(^2\) According to the 2011 Global Web Index Report, a company website is far more likely to be visited (62%) than its Facebook page (22%).

\(^3\) 2011 Social Technographics for Business Technology Buyers Survey

\(^4\) Demandbase/Focus.com – “2011 National Website Demand Generation Study”
B. The Challenge

Next to personal referrals, today’s corporate website is the most important source for generating sales leads. But as B2B corporations watched their prospects, buyers and customers shift their interactions to the Web, they erroneously assumed that existing Web analytics programs and their focus on individuals were sufficient to meet their unique operational needs. And given the easy abundance of data flowing out of even the most rudimentary Web analytics program, it is easy to understand why. Surely amidst this sea of data the B2B can make sense of its online audience?

But data volume isn’t the issue – the quality and usefulness of the data is. While the typical Web analytics application certainly can be of use to both B2C and B2B alike, the very nature of a B2B requires an additional level of analytical intelligence if it is to make an appreciable difference.

To grasp the full extent of the challenge is to understand exactly what the typical Web analytics program is designed to do and for whom, and also what the potential could be when actionable data is pulled from it.

C. Today’s Web Analytics

The science of Web analytics has its antecedents in serving the needs of websites accustomed to lots of high-volume, repeat business – which is to say, B2C websites (think Amazon or eBay, for example). In session data is tracked and with the understanding that a conversion equals a sale. To understand online entry and exit points, time on site, content consumption habits, search criteria, and more is to empower the B2C to optimize its website for maximum performance (which is to say, the highest possible conversion rates, usually defined as ecommerce transactions).

Note here that the B2C is tracking the on-site behavior, browsing habits, and search criteria of individuals, meaning visitors who largely represent their own needs or perhaps those of close personal connections.

Additionally, all of those repeat visits enabled B2Cs to put in place cookies, to track the online behavior of these individuals. These online histories can be of immense value to an organization in tracking online activity of an individual over time. In short, today’s Web analytics applications are literally tailor-made for B2C organizations.

The B2B experience, on the other hand, differs from the B2C in a number of ways including:

- Nature and intent of the online visitor
- Longer, more complicated sales cycle
- Different definition of online conversion/success
- Sale is made to a company or account, not an individual

So while standard Web analytics are helpful to B2B – a higher, account-based layer of intelligence is needed to understand not simply the individual but also the company he or she represents and then map that information to existing sales and marketing processes.
B2B WEB ANALYTICS Account-level visibility for true business intelligence

“People don’t make decisions quickly in B2B. It’s a process.”
— Galen DeYoung, Managing Director, Proteus SEO

III. THE NEED

A. Selling to Accounts

When it comes to Web analytics all online visitors more or less “look” the same, which is precisely why a B2B is underserved by these instruments.

As noted earlier, a B2B sells to accounts vs. individuals, which is to say, the individual being tracked by a typical analytics program is likely visiting that B2B site on behalf of a company. Thus, what is of interest to the B2B marketer is not simply the online behavior of that individual but also the organization he or she represents.

So where a conventional Web analytics application is focused on tying online behavior to individual consumer demographics, a B2B is far more interested in what might be called the firmographics5 of the organization the online visitor represents. Such data might include, but not be limited to, the company’s:

- Industry
- Number of employees
- Annual Revenue
- Company Name

B. The B2B Visitor

Equally important is the unique nature of the B2B sales and marketing experience. B2B websites, for example, generally don’t receive the traffic volume of B2C sites and are typically not, by definition, destinations for repeat business the way an ecommerce site might be. This is what makes it so important for a B2B site to create a good first impression, as most visitors are first timers that are visiting to judge the credibility of the company.

And given the complexity and scope of a typical B2B sales cycle, the successful online conversion usually is measured by an exchange of information vs. an actual ecommerce transaction. B2Bs, for example, will offer case studies, white papers, free trials and other informational opportunities in exchange for receipt of basic contact information through which assigned sales staff can follow up.

All of which explains why a standard Web analytics package, while helping to map the individual online use case, would leave a B2B in the dark when it comes to knowing whether or not its website is meeting the unique needs of its target companies or accounts.

5 Unique characteristics of an organization commonly used in B2B sales and marketing operations, including industry sector, business size, revenues, etc.
Only by extending existing analytics packages to include account-based information can today’s B2B fully leverage the immense importance – and power – of its Web presence.

IV. B2B BUSINESS ANALYTICS

A. Real-Time Identification Defined

The Demandbase Real-time Identification Service was born out of the unique needs of B2B organizations to deliver actionable insights into the nature of the companies visiting their websites. Demandbase can deliver unparalleled visibility into the actions of those companies.

And because it can be plugged into any major Web analytics platform, Demandbase can transform them into the kind of account-based business intelligence suite B2Bs need to:

- Understand which prospect accounts are doing what
- Test and improve website content, layout, KPIs, SEO strategies, campaigns for key industry and company size segments
- Personalize Web content to meet the unique requirements of key prospects
- Allocate sales and marketing resources against most interested companies for optimal results

From a marketing perspective Demandbase Real-Time Identification enables a B2B to associate the online behavior of a company or account with its website history in order to make necessary changes or modifications to improve conversion rates through segmentation and personalization.

For example, the B2B marketer can track whether companies in a target industry – such as healthcare – found a page about healthcare applications or followed some other desired content path resulting in high form completion rates, or whether changes needed to be made to improve such behavior for that segment.

Furthermore, where once the B2B was heavily dependent on an online visitor completing a lead form for further sales contact (a process that often leads to abandonments when visitors get cold feet), Demandbase still is able to deliver account-level information on that company, the content they viewed, and

“...when you can go to your sales team and tell them that specific companies they are trying to sell were on the website, took a demo, or went to the pricing page, you’d be amazed at how interested the sales team becomes in the website and Web analytics.”

— Adam Greco, Senior Director Technology, Web Analytics Demystified
the abandoned form. In other words, RTID in a sense redefines what a B2B can consider a “qualified account.”

From a sales perspective individual reps can be briefed on the online behavior of named accounts and tailor their pitches accordingly. Better still, the Demandbase “Account Watch” application can be applied to analytics tools, which can create and dispatch alerts when certain criteria are met, such as when a key prospect is actually on-site. This can empower a sales rep to immediately interact with the prospect, answer any questions and, of course, guided the sale toward closure.

Demandbase can also be used to help analytics map the history of the companies visiting a web site directly to existing CRM and sales automation applications, empowering sales staff to better understand and associate a prospect’s online interests/focus to the existing sales strategy (for example, by identifying a key named account spending significant time on a pricing page, the sales representative can prepare for and engage the prospect on pricing-related questions).

**B. Getting it Done**

As with any technology investment, the thinking that goes into deploying a solution is just as important as the technology itself. To make the most of an accounts-based approach to web analytics, a B2B should consider:

**Planning**

- Who do you sell to? What is the account profile of your best customers?
- Determine how will the data be used? Analytics is only valuable if the data is actionable
- Which account based data elements will be the most valuable? Industry? Company size? Annual revenue? Employee count? Traffic sources for specific account types?

**Implementation**

- Map the new business attributes to open or custom variables in your analytics database
- Test to ensure the data is being returned consistently
- Create and run the custom reports that will deliver the truth about the accounts on your site.

**V. CONCLUSION**

Today’s conventional Web analytics platforms are insufficient to meet the increasingly complex requirements of the modern B2B organization. Because B2Bs sell to accounts rather than individuals, the need exists for account-based analytics that deliver the kinds of business intelligence that B2B sales and marketing operations need to continuously improve and optimize their investments.

By incorporating Demandbase into a Web analytics platform, a B2B can set itself up to better understand and prepare for the corporate visitors to its website and, as a result, improve its marketing and sales results.
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Demandbase is a technology company that enables B2B marketers to improve conversions through personalization and measurement. Demandbase’s solutions leverage its proprietary Business Resolution Platform, including real-time identification of the formerly anonymous companies visiting a web site, and unique analytics to make customer or prospect interactions more effective, resulting in increased conversion rates and lower cost of sales. Demandbase works as a standalone service or integrated with other sales and marketing technologies to give them new intelligence about their web visitors, and improve overall campaign performance. Founded in 2006 and used by more than 1,000 companies, Demandbase is headquartered in San Francisco, California.

Learn more: http://www.Demandbase.com