

White Paper

Tracking Traditional Advertising Results on Your Web Site



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A direct mail campaign is implemented for a professional services company and no one responds.

A new product is promoted with an ad in a related industry magazine and no one calls.

A sale at a retail store chain is promoted by taking an ad in the local paper and includes a percent-off coupon. Only a few people redeem the coupon.

Did these ads fail?

The answer is not as obvious as it would appear. The ad campaigns may in fact have done better than you think. Let me explain.

We all know that the Web has changed the way we communicate, interact with each other, and in many cases learn. It has also changed the way we buy. I am talking not only about online buying itself, but also how we educate ourselves about products, services, companies, restaurants, and stores before we buy.

Consider these facts:

“Research shows that 70% of US adults use the Internet as an information source when shopping locally for products and services” (Constat).

“43 percent of Internet users bought products from a retailer’s offline store after viewing them on the seller’s Web site. The study said that for every \$1 spent online, consumers are influenced to spend another \$6 offline” (Juniper Research).

“114.1 million adults searched for product information on the Web last year, and . . . 98.9 million of this group went on to make purchases either online or offline.” (The Dieringer Research Group)

“35% of shoppers who begin their product research at a manufacturer’s Web site made a purchase within a week of starting research” (Channel Intelligence).

Okay, so let’s look at our three advertising scenarios again, but this time we’ll keep in mind how the Internet has changed the way most people make purchases.

1. Direct mail campaign by a Professional Services Company:

Based on the research above we know that most people check a company out on the Web before making a purchase or a contact. Hopefully, our professional services company included a website URL on their mailing piece. But, how many people, who received the direct mail, visited the site and then, based on what they saw there, made contact during the next six months? We have no idea. Yet it is relatively easy to track how many people make this journey and even what they do when they visit your website.

The solution is to create a subdirectory (www.yourwebsite.com/promotion) on your current website that includes a page of information and access to your entire website. This should be used only for a specific promotion. Then you use a program such as Google Analytics to track how many people visited that page and what they did when there. Google and other web analytic software let you set goals that can be tracked. So in this case I will know that 100 people visited that unique URL and that 10 visited the page on qualifications.

Now we can get a better idea of the real impact of our direct mail piece. We just have to get used to the fact that most people are no longer calling you first (perhaps a fear of being sold) but rather checking you out on your website before calling. The real lesson here is to make sure your web site is a built to move the prospect along the sales trail.

2. New Product Introduction Ad in Magazine:

Once again people are more likely to check out a new product via the Web than to call or e-mail. In this case it is better to create a promotional micro website devoted to the product (www.mynewproduct.com). It should include all the standard information such as features, advantages and benefits and also strong calls to action. If you are using multiple magazine ads then you can also do a subdirectory for each (www.mynewproduct.com/promotion) to track specific ads. Again, we use web analytics to measure the real effect of the ad and whether the visitor has taken an action that you have set up as a goal.

3. Retail Store Sale Promotion

Every retailer wants a promotion to work instantly, but research shows that people may not instantly react even for a discount. Once again we create a unique page on the website and use web analytics to track number of visits initiated from the ad and what visitors looked at on your site. This gives us an idea of what most people are interested in and allows us to craft better messaging that is more relevant.

While this type of measurement is not perfect and doesn't give you actual figures on conversions to sales (unless you sell online) it does provide another point of measurement for the effectiveness of your traditional advertising. These methods can also be used on radio and TV commercials.

If you use online advertising such as banners or Google Adwords the tracking to conversion (goal) is much easier. If you use e-mail marketing you can track who received and opened it the email and if

they clicked on a specific link in that e-mail. There are even services that allow you to see which pages of your web site the specific email addressee looked at. But that is a different white paper.

Here are just a few of the measurements you get with Web analytics:

1. Number of visitors and how many pages they viewed on the average.
2. Which sites or ads referred visitors to your site and what percentage visited a page you set up as a goal. This could be a spec sheet page, a contact form, or a purchase of a product.
3. Which search engines referred the most visitors, the percentage of visitors who visited a goal page, and which keywords they used to find your site.
4. The most viewed and least viewed content, which allows you to tweak your site messaging for better visitor interactions.
5. Bounce rate—how many people visited your main page and then left without exploring your website.
6. New versus returning visitors, and which had a higher percentage visiting your goal pages.
7. What types of computers visitors are using, which browsers, and what their monitor resolution is most used. You can check which version of Flash plug-in they use and even whether the visitor uses cable, DSL, T1, or dialup connection services. This information assists you in deciding on parameters of your site to make it more interesting and useful for the majority.

As mentioned, this is only a small portion of the information that is available. The important aspect of any tracking and research is the ability to apply the findings to help you achieve your goals.

Setting up Google Analytics is not as costly as it may sound. The service is free and there are consultants such as Hallman & Associates who can do the set-up and help you evaluate the data. The money you spend on measurement will be a small percentage of what you will be able to save or generate by employing more effective advertising and marketing.

About Hallman & Associates

Hallman & Assoc. brings you an outside, unbiased viewpoint of your marketing efforts. We design a strategy that incorporates creative concepts for the development of digital and online media to help energize those efforts and provide measurable results. Learn how Hallman can assist you in developing more effective marketing tools.

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