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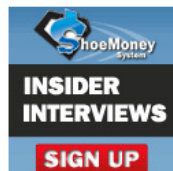
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## Google Analytics and your bounce rate



SEO

Written by Jessi Johnson

Tuesday, 02 November 2010 00:00



If you've checked your Google Analytics report lately you may have noticed that one of the reporting stats is your website's bounce rate. Google Analytics Help defines bounce rate this way: "Bounce rate is the percentage of single-page visits or visits in which the person left your site from the entrance (landing) page."

Over the years we've come to realize that bounce rate can mean different things on different sites. Striving for a bounce rate below 40% is our general goal when optimizing client websites and developing content. A low bounce rate suggests that visitors are finding useful content and engaging with the site.

If an explanation process is required, before visitors will be able to complete a desired action, you can't have them bouncing. If your website markets a product or service, requiring multiple page views to complete the conversion process, bounce rate is very important.

When might high bounce rates be acceptable? If people aren't likely to be entering the keywords required to find your site (ie: you're breaking new ground with a revolutionary site concept, product or service) you may have to target keywords similar enough to generate traffic. Bounce rates may be quite high until enough buzz has been generated to stimulate relevant keyword searches. Pursuing a low bounce rate too soon, in a case like this, could spell the death of the site. Another instance may be an affiliate site. You want your visitors to begin reading, find a link that intrigues them and then click through to a merchant site.



### Why are they bouncing?

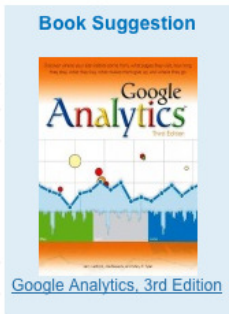
- ◆ The home or landing page does not include any 'teasers' to encourage additional page views.
- ◆ The site's primary offer or advantage has not been presented clearly and in a compelling way.
- ◆ The site's navigation is too confusing.
- ◆ Too much information. An overwhelming site can be as off-putting as a sparse one.
- ◆ There may be a mismatch between the targeted keywords used in building a search engine ranking and the actual information available on your site. Very often, this is the result of SEO's (search engine optimization professionals) attempting to impress clients with high rankings far too early in the process.

◆ There may be technical issues. The site may or may not be 'broken'. One recent technical challenge surfaced with the introduction of the iPad. If your landing page uses Flash, without providing alternate content, iPad users will see a blank area, which can result in an immediate bounce.

### What can you do?

◆ To be effective on the Internet your content must be more than informative and well written. It must effectively target and rank well for the right keywords. What is de-optimized is as important as the content selected for optimization. For example, a website that targets keywords surrounding 'vancouver dog grooming' may include a blog post about a charity golf event the owner was recently involved in. Stories like this are excellent for showing the human side of the people behind the website. A common mistake is to optimize the page or post for keywords like 'golf tournament vancouver'. Doing so can water down the site's relevance for the keywords it is actually targeting. The golf blog post should therefore be de-optimized. Consider hiring an SEO copy writer to make sure your content brings the right traffic to your site.

◆ Make sure your landing page has compelling content. If there are technical issues that prevent your message from being available to everyone, consider providing alternative content for users that may not have JavaScript turned on, the Flash player or QuickTime installed, Java, etc.



◆ Design a conversion strategy. Where do you want the visitor to go from the landing page? If there are three options you'd like them to choose from, those options should be presented clearly on the landing page. Your site's visitors are busy people and they are looking for the path of least resistance. Don't make them hunt through the menu or search for information or solutions; take them by the hand. A conversion strategy covers all the steps required to reach the desired action and then presents the next action clearly. Including an incentive, a 'teaser', can dramatically increase conversions and reduce your site's bounce rate.

Bear in mind that bounce rate is only one metric to consider. Your website does not live or die based upon bounce rate alone.

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