FitforCommerce™

eCommerce Diligence™ Checklist

Web Analytics Best Practices

1. ***Identify and understand your business's key performance indicators before you start.*** Before you start looking at solutions, it is important to think about what information you need and what metrics are most relevant to your business. Without this step, you will spend time analyzing the wrong things.
2. ***Identify events needed to track underlying user patterns, throughout your site.*** Some need only tracking of users on a page. Others require detailed tracking of which link they followed to provide meaningful data. You may only need to track page views of your shipping rate page, however, tracking all clicks on a category page with cross-sells and promotions is needed to understand buyer behavior.
3. ***Don't underestimate internal resource requirements.*** Conduct an internal requirements session to identify each department's needs and work with them to implement, test and improve. You may need IT to integrate analytics or modify your site to test different scenarios to get meaningful comparison data.
4. ***Make sure you can accurately tie all site traffic to your online sales.*** Without this, you'll never be able to determine your best traffic sources and pinpoint where you should increase your marketing budget. The analytics javascript tag must be properly placed on all site pages including the entire checkout process.
5. ***Configure the analytics system to screen out robot and internal traffic.*** This traffic filtering will provide the cleanest view of customer and prospect activity. Otherwise KPIs can easily get distorted.
6. ***Constantly review and adjust metrics to improve ROI.*** Tracking ROI for Pay-Per-Click advertising, affiliate networks, email campaigns, etc., will show which initiatives work best, and for how long. When calculating ROI, include online sales, returns, and post-sale metrics (e.g., calls to support) as they affect long-term ROI. Communicate results with advertising service providers, affiliates, etc., so they can help improve your ROI.
7. ***Take the time during implementation to ensure your numbers match.*** Create processes to verify that all the numbers from your CRM and order entry systems tie very closely to your analytics systems numbers. Use the same denominator across channels to calculate the same metrics (for example, calculate conversion using the same denominator across analytics platforms). Double-counting (or non-counting) is very possible and can completely skew analysis. Make sure you measure demand versus sales and can differentiate between the two.
8. ***Establish web analytics governance practices.*** Don't leave this responsibility to Marketing by default. Properly integrated, analytics offers powerful management and control tools relevant to the entire organization. Work with your product management and marketing teams to create policies around analytics management, including regular automated reporting tuned to each stakeholder's needs.
9. ***Implement first-party cookie-setting, where possible.*** Rightly or wrongly, these are deemed more secure and less subject to user deletion. User deletions are increasing; thereby, skewing analytics results.
10. ***Be sure to use analytics to test variables.*** Isolate changes to the variable tested. There's a lot going on with your site and, if you test multiple factors simultaneously, you'll never know what was truly responsible for any change in performance.
11. ***Run additional metrics after significant content changes.*** Whether you introduce a new product line, new online catalog, or change order process flows, make sure you "live test" these changes to see how your customers respond. This will allow you to quickly react before your conversion rates are significantly impacted.

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Web Analytics Key Questions to Ask Providers

Company

1. How long have you been in this business?
2. How many clients have you sold? How many have you lost, and why?
3. What clients fall into your "sweet spot"?
4. What peripheral or support services do you offer (e.g., integration, consulting, SEM services, training)?

Products/Services

1. Is your solution offered as perpetual licensed software or on-demand multi-tenant solution?

   If perpetual license:
   a. What are the hosting requirements?
   b. What should I expect regarding upgrades (both timing and pain)?
   c. Do you provide customization/implementation services? Can a third party be used?

   If SAAS/ASP:
   a. Do all tiers include maintenance and support?
   b. What features do I lose by not subscribing to a higher tier?
   c. What can I do if I need a feature you don't have or plan to have soon?
2. What internal resources will I need to maximize the value of your product?
3. What is your SLA for support issues?
4. What technical support services are available?
   a. Are there human beings I can reach during reasonable hours (chat or phone) or do I have to wait over 24 hours for an email response or callback?
   b. Is your support team located in the US?
5. What ROI should I expect from implementing your solution?
6. Do you have a support knowledge base, community forum, or applications shared by customers?
7. How do I ensure I own and control my data in the event I need to change platforms?
8. How do I import past data to ensure continuity when I launch your platform?

Features

1. What key features are included in your solution?
   a. What features are currently missing?
   b. What features are on your roadmap?
   c. What features does management love?
2. What is your product's competitive advantage over other packages? Why?
   a. Price? Dashboard? Ease of use? Flexibility? Don't say "all of the above".
3. Why should I pay for your service when Google Analytics is free?
4. What events does your tool report against?
   a. Clicking on links in HTML, video, Flex, JavaScript, Java apps, etc.? Please list.
   b. Does your tool require code to be added to links within these asset types?
   c. What steps need to be completed to integrate into rich media assets?
5. Can user data be added to your reporting tool (e.g., order amount, ship to zip)? How?
6. What other metrics are reported against as part of your tool?
7. Does your platform publish and support APIs for integration with other systems, such as CRM, lead scoring, help-desk/trouble ticketing? If not, how do I integrate?
8. At what volume of transactions (e.g., searches, keywords, orders, visitors) do the more sophisticated functions start to yield return on the investment it will take to launch them?
9. Please describe your reporting capability?
   a. Batch vs. real-time
   b. Ad hoc capabilities
   c. Do you have a reporting dashboard?
   d. What are your standard reports?
   e. Can your system pull data from outside sources into reports?
10. Can your tool import data from other systems?
11. Does your system provide verification tools to verify that the data is accurate against external systems?

Pricing

1. Do you price by page views, bandwidth, servers or other? Does that include support and maintenance?
2. Is there any cost based on the number of users accessing the data?
3. Are there any additional fees (implementation, transaction costs, overages, etc.)?