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CH8- Tracking Results and Measuring Success

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The task of SEO experts is not clear to many people. From SEO experts view, he or she is the one who knows what goals to achieve and what are the results. The main key here is expectation of the management people.

For that, effective communication between time of getting things done and development is important. It plays a vital role in success of SEO projects.

- In other words, you need to measure whether you have been successful, and then get a sense as to how successful.
- The first thing you need to do is define the primary purpose of the site.

Here are some possibilities:

- Generating sales
- Obtaining leads
- Generating ad dollars
- Getting people to read specific articles
- Obtaining donations

Closely connected with the goals of the site are the direct drivers of results.

These include parameters such as:

- Total site traffic
- Traffic to your most popular pages
- Keywords driving the traffic
- Keywords driving conversions
- Pages receiving the search traffic
- Pages resulting in conversions down the line
- Traffic per page and conversion rate per page
- Traffic per keyword and conversion rate per keyword

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Why Measuring Success Is Essential to the SEO Process

- Although quantifying deliverables and measuring progress are important for external reporting purposes, it is just as important for SEO practitioners to measure the efficacy of their own efforts so they can make timely adjustments as necessary.
- As you will see in this chapter, numerous tools are available to aid in this process.
- At the beginning of any SEO project, it is wise to establish baseline data points for the website.

This includes the following:

Quantifying organic search traffic by search engine and keyword
Quantifying a baseline of the major keywords that are driving traffic by search engine
Quantifying a breakout of what sections are getting the current organic search traffic by search engine and keyword
Quantifying data on conversions broken down by search engine and keyword
Identifying poorly performing pages
Identifying the best-performing pages (in terms of traffic and conversions)

Tracking search engine crawler activity on the site
Determining the number of indexed pages
Determining whether the indexed pages are getting search traffic
Determining whether best-selling product pages are indexed and getting search traffic
Identifying 404 error pages and external sites linking to these pages, if any

In the world of web analytics, this is referred to as picking actionable **key performance indicators (KPIs)**. The best data measurements are those that potentially result in an action being taken in response. Think of this as data-driven decision making.

The Tracking Cycle: Produce, Launch, Measure, Refine

Measuring Impact

- ❖ Create a measurement plan
- ❖ Document technical infrastructure
- ❖ Create implementation plan
- ❖ Implement analytics configuration
- ❖ Test, feedback and refine plan



In summary, the basic process usually looks something like this:

1.	Define an SEO campaign and set goals. What are you going to accomplish, and what is the strategy for accomplishing it? How will you measure progress?
2.	Discuss your strategy. The marketing and business development teams are your allies here—you want to ensure that your SEO objectives are based on the overall business and site objectives, both long- and short-term.
3.	Establish a baseline. Now that you are about to start and you have decided how you are going to measure progress, establish a baseline by recording the current stats prior to beginning work. Make sure you don't get a false baseline due to seasonal factors or some other unusual event. Comparing year-over-year data will usually help you eliminate fluctuation due to seasonality. However, you must also consider how changes in the market, new competition, competitors exiting the market, industry consolidation, and changes in your business strategy may have affected that year-over-year data.
4.	Proceed with your project Implement the new pages, the site changes, the link-building campaign, or whatever else you may have planned. Put it in place and execute it.

5.	<p>Collect data.</p> <p>Collect the newest data for each metric you decided to focus on. Since SEO can take days to show results, make sure you wait long enough for your efforts to have an impact. Many factors could influence the length of time you should wait.</p> <p>Here are some of them:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If your site is brand new, it may take longer for your changes to take effect. • If the scope of the change is drastic (such as a complete redesign), the time it takes to see results will probably be longer. • Sites that get crawled at great depth and frequently will probably yield results faster. • Sites seen as authoritative may also show faster results.
6.	<p>Compare the baseline data to the new data.</p> <p>The new data has little meaning unless it is compared to your baseline. This is the time when you can really assess your progress.</p>
7.	<p>Refine your campaign.</p> <p>Now that you have compared your old data with your new data, you can make some decisions. Is the campaign a bust? If so, abandon it and move on to the next one. The old business axiom "fail quickly" applies here. The faster you diagnose a failure and move on to the next thing, the better.</p>

How to Establish a Proper Baseline

- Most important part of SEO campaign is on what proper starting point it is. This depends on the type of business. First we need to compare year by year results of the business and then check whether there is a huge change in result from the previous year
- Finally based on the results, we can set a starting point for the business.
- And if this process generates a positive result, then we are in the right direction and invested efforts are worthy.

Using Analytics as a Business Case for SEO

- You can use a properly structured plan as the business case for an SEO project.
- The way to do this is to express the target results of an SEO project in terms of financial impact.
- **You could include a variety of metrics in a business case, such as:**
 - Revenue
 - Lead generation
 - Margin
 - Branding value
 - Reach
 - Other action triggers (newsletter sign-ups, contact requests, demo requests, accepting a free trial, viewing a specific piece of content, etc.)

Measuring such things requires that you tie organic search engine visits to the revenue and other conversions that result.

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Measuring Search Traffic

- Classic web analytics data is an incredible asset to SEO.
- Here are some examples of ways to utilize this data for SEO purposes:
 - Look at your daily referral reports to detect newly received inbound links (the great majority of webmasters click on a link after implementing it, to make sure it works).
 - Look at the search terms people use to come to your site to spot long-tail search opportunities.

- Measure the results of your campaigns by tracking the increase in conversions you are driving over time.
- Try to find missed opportunities—that is, search terms and phrases that people used to come to your site that did not result in a conversion.

Web analytics are a must-have for any web publisher.

Basic Overview

- Your hosting company most likely provides a free web analytics solution, such as **AWStats**, **WebaLizer**, or something similar.
- Although these tools provide valuable data, they are very limited in scope, and other tools out there provide significantly more data. Here are some of the best-known options:

• Google Analytics
• Woopra
• Clicky
• Piwik
• Yahoo! Web Analytics
• SiteCatalyst (enterprise-level solution)
• IBM Coremetrics (enterprise-level solution)
• IBM NetInsight (enterprise-level solution)
• Webtrends (enterprise-level solution)

- Web analytics platforms track your site's **traffic in two major ways**.
- The older of the two methodologies is to use software that analyzes your web server logfiles, which contain detailed information of all the traffic on your website.
- Setting up this type of solution generally involves installing the software on an internal server that is able to gain access to the logfiles.

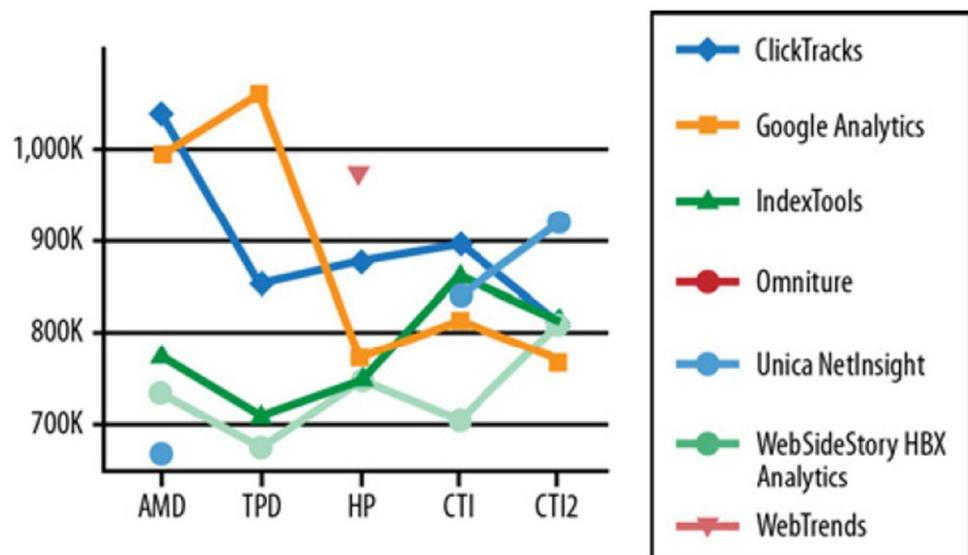
Selecting the Right Analytics Package

- Log file tracking and JavaScript tracking are equally valid methods, and each has its own strengths and weaknesses.
- The biggest advantage of the logfile method is that it allows you to track search engine crawler activity on your site.
- This is something you cannot do in JavaScript implementations, because search engine crawlers do not execute the JavaScript.
- Another major advantage of a logfile-based solution is that you run the software in-house, so no third party has a copy of a logfile with your proprietary traffic data on it.
- This distinction can be a big win in terms of security for some organizations.
- **In addition, logfile analysis allows you to track all of the following:**

• Users who don't have JavaScript enabled (or are using privacy or ad filters)
• Media types beyond HTML
• Partial requests (incomplete page loads and load errors)

Some other key advantages of JavaScript tracking include the following:

• Tracks outgoing link requests
• Tracks events that don't involve HTML requests, such as playing a video
• Records visitors' screen resolutions



A Deeper Look at Action Tracking

- Action tracking is one step deeper than basic analytics. Rather than simply observing what pages are visited and how many unique sessions are logged, action tracking allows you to narrow down groups of visitors based on the actions they take on your site.

➤ For ecommerce sites:

Add to Cart button

Studies have shown us that users who "add to cart," even if they do not complete the checkout process, are more likely to return to make a purchase. This is also a good way to calculate shopping cart abandonment rates and figure out where you can make changes to refine and improve the process.

Complete checkout

An obvious one, this action will show you what percentage of each user group is converting into sales. It is also of interest to measure what percentage of people start the checkout process but do not complete it.

Save to wish list

Ecommerce sites offering wish lists are still in the minority, but wish lists are a great way to track interest of those who are not yet ready to purchase.

Send this to a friend

Many sites offer a "share this page" function, and it is a great action to be aware of. If folks are sending out your link, you know you have a hit.

➤ For B2B sites:

Subscribe to newsletter

A subscription is a tacit endorsement of your brand and an indication of a desire to stay in contact. It may not be a conversion, but for B2B, it may be the next best thing.

Contact form submission

Filling out a contact form can be even more valuable than a newsletter subscription, in some cases. Though some of these forms will report support issues, many may contain questions about your products/services and indicate a desire to open a sales conversation.

Email link

As with contact forms, direct email links have the possibility of becoming sales contacts.

The best thing you can do is clearly label sales-related emails and track them separately from those raising support or business issues.

➤ **For blogs:**

Subscribe to RSS feed
Add comment
Social bookmark/share

➤ **forums or other sites based on user-generated content (UGC):**

Sign up for an account
Contribute content
Add comment
Vote/rate
Social shares

➤ **Common analytics mistakes**

- Because of the complexity of web analytics, there are plenty of opportunities to make mistakes. Even if you are laser-focused on actionable **KPIs**(Key Performance Indicator), you can still draw wrong conclusions from the data.
- **Here are a couple of examples:**
- **1. Making a decision based on too small a sample size**
- **2. Not recognizing when you have enough data**
- **3. Working with biased data**

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Tying SEO to Conversion and ROI

As we discussed previously in this chapter, it is important to tie your SEO campaign to the results it brings to the business. Key to that is measuring the conversions driven by organic SEO traffic. **Here are some of the most common types of conversions:**

1. Sales/sales revenue

- This is the one most people think of when they think of conversions. Sales and sales revenue (or better still, margin) conversions can be the simplest things to track, provided you are not selling many different products at different price points and in different quantities. In that case, the process needs to be a bit more sophisticated.

2. Email/blog/newsletter subscriptions

- Any time a user signs up to receive regular communications from you, it is a win. Even though this action does not have direct financial consequences, it is still a conversion.
- Someone who has subscribed to something you offer is more likely to become a customer than a first-time visitor to your site, so you need to credit this type of conversion.

3. Sign-ups

- Closely related to subscriptions are other types of sign-ups. Perhaps you offer a service such as a tool that people need to sign up to use. Even if the tool is free, you should track this as a conversion.

4. Downloads

- Many sites offer free downloads, such as white papers, or free downloadable tools. Even if you do not require a sign-up of any type, you should still count a download as a conversion. You are getting your message out there with the downloads you offer.

5. Contact forms and phone calls

- When someone contacts you, or requests that you contact him, it may count as a conversion. This contact can take the form of filling out a "contact me" request form, or a phone call. Phone calls can be tracked through unique numbers per type of action or landing page.

6. Visitors who share

- This kind of conversion happens when a visitor shares the information she found on your site with someone else. This includes Facebook Shares, Google+ Shares, and links on Twitter. In addition, if your site has a "**share with a friend**" or "**email to friend**" feature, you could keep track of conversions by noting each time a user uses that feature.

7. Visitors who link

- Users who visit your site and find its content useful, entertaining, or otherwise compelling may link to it from their own sites. Linking counts as a conversion.

8. Visitors who publicize

- Visitors can publicize your site by mentioning it in forums or blog comments, on social media sites such as Google+, Twitter, and Facebook, or by writing about it on their own sites. These actions also count as conversions.

Attribution

Another issue to be aware of is that of attribution. The issue is that there is a tremendous amount of interaction between types of media.

Here are some examples:

- A user does a search, clicks on an organic search result, reads a few things on the page, and leaves. The next day, she remembers what she read, does another search, and this time clicks on a paid search ad for the site and buys a product. Organic search should receive some credit for this sale.
- A user does a search, clicks on an organic search result, has a look around your site, and leaves. A few days later, because of what he learned, he goes into a store and buys one of your products. Organic search should also receive some credit for this offline sale.
- It goes in the other direction, too. For example, if a user sees a TV ad, then does an organic search to find your website, and buys your product, the TV ad should get some credit for the sale.

Setting Up Analytics Software to Track Conversions

- One of the great things about tracking conversions is that you can use the resulting data to focus your efforts.
- If certain keywords, pages, or referrers are showing much higher conversion rates than other sources, you may want to focus more of your SEO efforts on those rather than on something else that does not convert as well.
- Alternatively, you can use this information to identify underperforming areas where you might be able to make improvements.

Conversion tracking strategy

- An important step in conversion tracking is deciding what you want to call a conversion. As we outlined earlier in this chapter, it is important to consider all types of conversions, such as sign-ups, contact requests, downloads, and so forth.
- There is one other decision you need to make, though: how to value each conversion.

- | |
|---|
| - Conversions by keyword —what keywords are bringing the best results? |
| - Conversions by referrer —which traffic source is offering the best conversion? |
| - Conversions by web page —which pages on your site result in the highest conversion? |
| - Conversions by initial entry page —which initial entry pages drive the most conversions? |
| - Conversions by keyword and landing page —taking into account the highest-converting landing pages on your site, what keywords are the big hitters for those pages? |

Determining Project ROI

An effective SEO process is one that continuously works toward a positive return on investment. A basic SEO ROI business case would include these elements:

Number of people searching for your keywords

This can be hard to estimate, because you cannot completely map out the long tail.

Expected click-through rate from organic search

This points to the position that the SEO experts think can be achieved

Average conversion rate

Once you have captured the visitor, how successful are you at completing a conversion?

Typical conversion rates for a website might be between 2% and 5%. It should be easy to get this data from your analytics. You should already know what your conversion rate is!

Average transaction amount

Last but not least, factor in the average transaction value. Again, this is data you should already have.

Ultimately, the formulas look like this:

SEO revenue =

People searching for your keywords * click-through rate * average conversion rate * average transaction amount

For example: 10,000 per day * 10% * 5% * \$100 = \$3,000 per day.

SEO ROI = SEO revenue / SEO cost (use total \$ spent for salaries and consulting, or number of hours spent)

For example: \$3,000 per day / \$500 per day = an ROI of 6x.

Competitive and Diagnostic Search Metrics Key Performance

Thus far in this topic we have focused on the basics—the dollars and cents of determining whether you have succeeded in your SEO campaign.

1. Search Engine and Competitive Metrics

- Numerous tools allow you to monitor your site and those of your competitors, providing insight into your SEO progress.
- You can also use these tools to figure out what your competitors are doing from an SEO perspective.
- This type of intelligence can provide you with new ideas on how to adapt your strategy to get better results.

2. Site Indexing Data

It is valuable to know how many pages in your site are in a search engine's index. This is interesting for two reasons:

- To determine whether important parts of your site are not in the index (if key parts of the site are not in the index, you can embark on an effort to determine why)
- To learn about your competitors' sites and strategies

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3. Link Building, Link Tracking, and Link-Based Metrics

- Measurement of link-building campaigns is another must for the expert SEO practitioner.

- This can help you refine your campaigns to bring better results, compare link growth to your search rankings, and perform analysis to see how your campaigns are faring compared to the efforts of your competitors.

4. Search engine-supplied tools

There are three basic tools for checking backlinks:

- **Google Webmaster Tools is a powerful start.** With Google WMT, a website publisher can easily download a spreadsheet of all the links Google has in its database to that site (note that Google might not include some links that it does not consider significant). Publishers can see only the links to their own sites.

- **Bing Webmaster Tools is also a great asset.** It offers a similar capability for downloading a spreadsheet of the links that Bing has in its database for a site. Once again, publishers can use this tool only to see the links to their own site.

- **For quick and dirty link totals,** you can use a Firefox plug-in known as SearchStatus. This plug-in provides basic link data on the fly with just a couple of mouse clicks.

There are advance third party tools available for getting links

- 1) LinkScape
- 2) Stone Temple Consulting LinkFocus
- 3) Conductor SearchLight
- 4) Google Blog Search
- 5) Exiled

5. Measuring the value of a link

- One of the big questions that people ask is what the value of a particular inbound link is.
- There is no simple way to answer that question, but there are some metrics you can look at that can give you a feeling for how important a link might be.
- Here are some of the most important elements **in determining a link's value:**

Where does the linking page rank for the term/phrase you want to rank for?

If the page is ranking #1 at Google for sliced bread and you want to be #1 at Google for sliced bread, guess what? That's the #1 most valuable link you can get. Keep going down the list to about positions 25 to 30, and you're still getting solid gold in link value.

Where does the linking page rank for one to two important, competitive terms in its title tag?

This will give you a very solid idea about how much overall link juice and respect the search engines are giving the page. It is also a good way to identify the global link value that could be provided by a link from this page.

Where does content on the linking domain generally rank for competitive terms in its pages' respective title tags?

As in the preceding list item, we're trying to identify how positively the engines view pages on the domain. If the pages generally rank in the top 20 results, you can rest assured that search engines think the domain's value is pretty high, and that links from that domain will pass significant value.

How many keyword phrases do the linking domain and page rank in the top 20 results for?

Sites that rank for a very small set of keywords may be overoptimized, causing their links to be of lower value, whereas sites that rank for a larger set of relevant keywords provide your site with more relevant links.

Does the linking site carry any brokered sets of links?

Sites that sell links may lose their ability to pass link juice. This really applies to any type of low-quality, manipulative linking.

What is the relevance of the linking page/site to your target page?

Answering this question requires you to think critically about the visitors to both the potential linking page and the domain. If the relevance of the subject matter to your site is high, the link will provide more semantic and topic-specific value.

When was the last time Google crawled the page?

A fresh timestamp is a great indicator of the importance of the page. The older it is, the less likely it is to be relevant to a modern search query. You can check a page's timestamp by looking at its cached version in Google.

6. Ranking

- Many people get obsessed with checking their rankings.
- Rankings do have some correlation with traffic.
- However, do not spend too much time on this activity.
- For one thing, many tools that are available today for checking rankings scrape Google results, which is against Google's Webmaster Guidelines.
- Google results vary by user, and the scraped results do not represent what everyone is seeing.
- Therefore, rankings data is not as useful an indicator as many of the other metrics we have discussed.

Rankings data can be helpful in a few scenarios, however:

- Where a #1 (or a very high) ranking for a trophy search term provides brand value
- When there is a sudden significant change (such as a move from position #5 to #50, or a similar change in the other direction)
- Where a long-term trend can be established, such as a steady improvement in position, or a steady decline
- In aggregate, where you can measure a site's overall activity and popularity

7. Crawl Errors

- **Complex websites will eventually develop errors.**
- For example, the publisher may move pages and forget to redirect the old pages to the new ones, or make a mistake in the robots.txt file that prevents the crawling of key parts of the site.
- It can also happen that outsiders who link to the publisher's site implement those links incorrectly and link to a page that does not exist (perhaps as a result of a typo).
- Fortunately, there are tools that can help a publisher identify and correct these types of errors.

8. Tracking the Blogosphere

- There are four major uses for tracking blogs

- 1. Reputation Monitoring**
- 2. Tracking Buzz and Public Relations Campaigns**
- 3. Identifying Potential Influencers**
- 4. Competitive Analysis**

9. Tracking Your Blogs

- Blogs can offer a variety of benefits to online marketer.
- Blog give us with a great way to position our self as a site expert, enabling us to reach large number of influencers and large audience at the same time.
- Blog can be a good source of links as a part of the link building campaign
- **1. Blog Subscribers**
- **2. Blog Links**

10. Search Engine Robot Traffic Analysis

- As an expert SEO practitioner, you should know how robots are spidering your site.
- For one thing, spidering frequency is a clue as to which pages on your site have the highest PageRank and trust, because Google crawls the Web in reverse PageRank order.
- Monitoring this can also help you detect spidering problems on your site.

11. What is crawl efficiency and why is it important?

Analyzing search bot behavior involves three main goals:

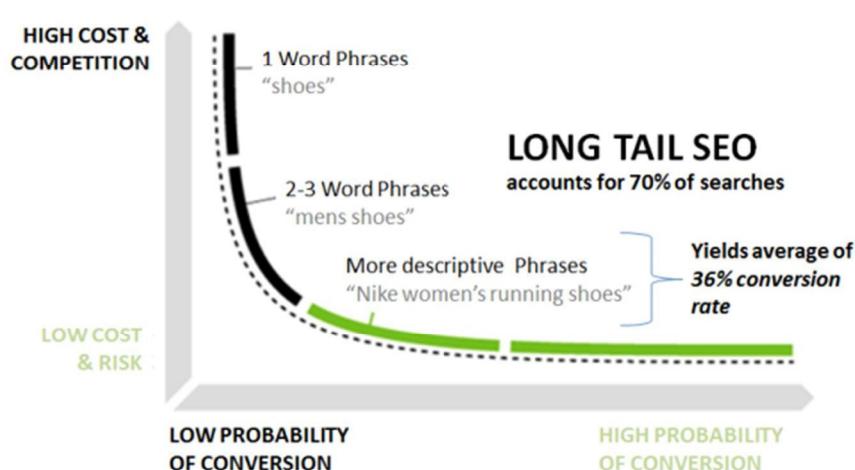
1. Ensuring that all of your important pages are found by the bots
2. Preventing PageRank from being diluted by duplicate content problems
3. Enabling rapid indexation of time-sensitive content (ads/promotions, breaking news)

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Indicators for Long Tail SEO

As we have discussed throughout this book, the long tail is an important part of SEO. Metrics are available for diagnosing the health of your long-tail search traffic. Here are some that were **developed by Brian Klais of Netconcepts**:

Search Demand



1. Branded-to-nonbranded ratio

- This is the percentage of your natural search traffic that comes from branded versus **nonbranded** keywords.
- If the ratio is high and most of your traffic is coming from searches for your brand, this signals that your SEO is fundamentally broken.
- The lower the ratio, the more of the long tail of natural search you likely are capturing.

2. Unique crawled URLs

- This is the number of unique (**nonduplicate**) web pages on your site that are crawled by search engine spiders such as **Googlebot**.
- Your website is like your virtual sales force, bringing in prospects from the search engines.
- Think of each unique page as one of your virtual salespeople.

3. Search visitors per contributing page

- This is the percentage of unique pages that yield search-delivered traffic in a given month.
- This ratio essentially is a key driver of the length of your long tail of natural search. The more pages you have yielding traffic from search engines, the healthier your SEO program is.
- You can think of these nonperforming pages as "freeloaders."

4. Keywords per page

- This is the average number of keywords each page (minus the freeloaders) yields in a given month.
- Put another way, it is the ratio of keywords to pages yielding search traffic.
- The higher your keyword yield, the more of the long tail of natural search your site will capture.
- In other words, the more keywords each yielding page attracts or targets, the longer your tail is.

5. Search visitors per keyword

- This is the ratio of search engine-delivered visitors to search terms. This metric indicates how much traffic each keyword drives and is a function of your rankings in the SERPs.
- Put another way, this metric determines the height or thickness of your long tail.

6. Index-to-crawl ratio

- This is the ratio of pages indexed to unique crawled pages. Just because Googlebot crawls a page doesn't guarantee it will show up in Google's index.
- A low ratio can mean your site doesn't carry much weight in Google's eyes.

7. Search visitors per crawled page

- Calculated for each search engine separately, this is a measure of how much traffic the engine delivers for every page it crawls.
- Each search engine has a different audience size.

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