

## **WEB TRENDS LOG ANALYSER**

WebTrends Log Analyzer is a Stats package that provides a meaningful, interpretive interface to the reams of information that is generated and recorded on your web server in log files. WebTrends is developed and distributed by NetIQ.

The WebTrends package is highly configurable, and provides many reports to choose from, all performing different levels of analysis on your site. The reports can also represent most information graphically, making it even easy to see trends. Please see below for descriptions of some of the more useful reports that can be generated using WebTrends.

### **GENERAL STATISTICS**

This report gives you the most eagle-eyed position from which to view the activity on your site. It gives a high-level overview of the site's general performance for the period that you specify.

While lacking in detail, this report lists statistics that play a vital role in benchmarking, giving you information that allows you to judge your site's progress at a glance. It can also be used to determine which other reports might be most useful to you.

This report may include the following statistics:

- Hits – may include total number of hits, the average number of hits per day, and the number of hits specific to your Home Page.
- Page Views – may include the total number of page views, the average number of page views per day, the average number of page views per unique visitor and document views.
- Visits – may include total number of visits, average visits per day, average visit length, median visit length, and specific information that records visits from international visitors, local visitors, unknown visitors, spiders and search engines.
- Visitors – may include total number of unique visitors, visitors who visited once and those who visited more than once.

Note: Hits should not be confused with visits. While you might be looking at a figure of 200,000 hits to your site in a week, in reality, a hit is defined as 'a single action on the Web Server as recorded in the log file'. The best way to define this meaningfully is probably to look at an example. If a single visitor visits a page on your site, and that page contains 10 images, your Web Server will perform a separate action for each image that it downloads. Hence, that single visit might result in a minimum of 11 Hits – one for each image, and another for the page itself. While these figures may sound impressive, in reality they are too unreliable to be used for anything but the broadest analysis of traffic. The Visits category of information is much more useful.

## RESOURCES ACCESSED

This report gives detailed information on the pages that make up the site and how popular they are with your users. Using these statistics as a guideline, you may be able to see patterns in your most popular pages that can then be used to spice up the rest of your site.

This report may include the following statistics:

- **Top Pages** – Lists the pages of your site in order of most popular to least popular. This section also lists the number of visits to each page and the average time each page was viewed. If you're seeing traffic on pages where the average time viewed is less than a second, it might be time to think about how to improve these pages and retain your visitor's attention. Perhaps these pages do not contain enough useful content to service your visitor's needs, or the content is so obfuscated that it is difficult for users to find.
- The other thing to have a look for is error pages, and other generic pages that you use on your site. For example, if you have help pages on your site, or a page that is displayed when a user's search fails, it might be worth doing some further detailed investigation of why these pages are showing up so frequently. Perhaps your pages are difficult for users to navigate instinctively, or you may not be inserting enough keywords into your text.
- **Top Entry Pages** – lists the first page viewed when a visitor visits your site, in order of popularity, including the total number of visits that these pages were entry points to your site.
- **Top Exit Pages** - lists the last page viewed before a visitor exits your site, in order of popularity, including the total number of visits where these pages were exit points from your site. You'd certainly hope that your Home page was not towards of the top of this list – if it is, you may not be satisfying the needs of many first-time visitors.
- **Single Access Pages** – lists pages, in order of popularity, where visitors visited your site and then exited from the same page without navigating any further through the site.
- **Top Directories** – lists the most popular directories on your site in order of popularity. This information can be especially useful if your site is structured so that different types of functional information is stored together in directories. For example, if you store all the pages relating to different types of content under different directories, you may be able to see that a particular type of content is more popular than other categories. This gives you a broader view of what your visitors are interested in. Use this information to focus your efforts, or arrange your content more effectively.
- **Top Paths Through Site** – lists the most popular paths that users take when visiting your site.

## **VISITORS AND DEMOGRAPHICS**

This report can be used to ascertain how many new visitors are visiting your site for the first time, and how many visitors are returning to your site for repeat visits.

This report may include the following statistics:

**Visitors by Number of Visits** – lists the number of unique visitors, and how often they re-visited your site over the reporting period. Use this information to see if visitors are returning to your site. Perhaps your content could be updated more often to attract more repeat visits.

**New vs. Returning Visitors** – lists the number of first-time visitors vs. new visitors to your site, although please note that this information can only be recorded if your site uses identifying cookies, and these cookies have not been discarded by your visitors. You can use this information to see if your site is attracting enough repeat business.

## **ACTIVITY STATISTICS**

This report really caters to either a technical web master, or whoever else may be involved in the mechanics of hosting your site. It does record which are the most popular days of the week, and weekend activity vs. weekday activity. It might be useful for timing the launch of campaigns on your site, or for pinpointing problems that your customers might be reporting regarding load (for example, if they are getting timeout errors when the site is not at its peak-capacity, there either may be problems with the site, or, it might be time to upgrade in order to support a growing number of visitors).

## **REFERRERS AND KEYWORDS**

One of the most interesting reports – how are users finding your site? This report lists which sites are referring visitors to your site. If your visitors are using search engines, it also lists which keywords and phrases they are searching on. This report often brings surprises. The number of times I've found keywords that I wasn't even aware of on our site in the list of Top Search Keywords...

Use the information in this section to ascertain the success of your online advertising and the effectiveness of your content (and whether it was a good idea to pay all that money to those search engines!).

## **A FEW NOTES ON FILTERS**

Filters are used to narrow the scope of your report to only include the information you are interested in. For example, your number of visits might be looking healthy, but in reality, most of them are coming from people internal to your company. You can use filters to block traffic coming from particular domains and/or IP ranges, and therefore limit your statistics to relevant traffic.

Filters can be very useful. If you find that the reports are not giving you enough information specific to your requirements, speak to your hosting company about tuning the filters more efficiently. This process might take a while, and it might be several weeks of trial and error, but eventually, you'll find that you have a much more meaningful set of figures to learn from.