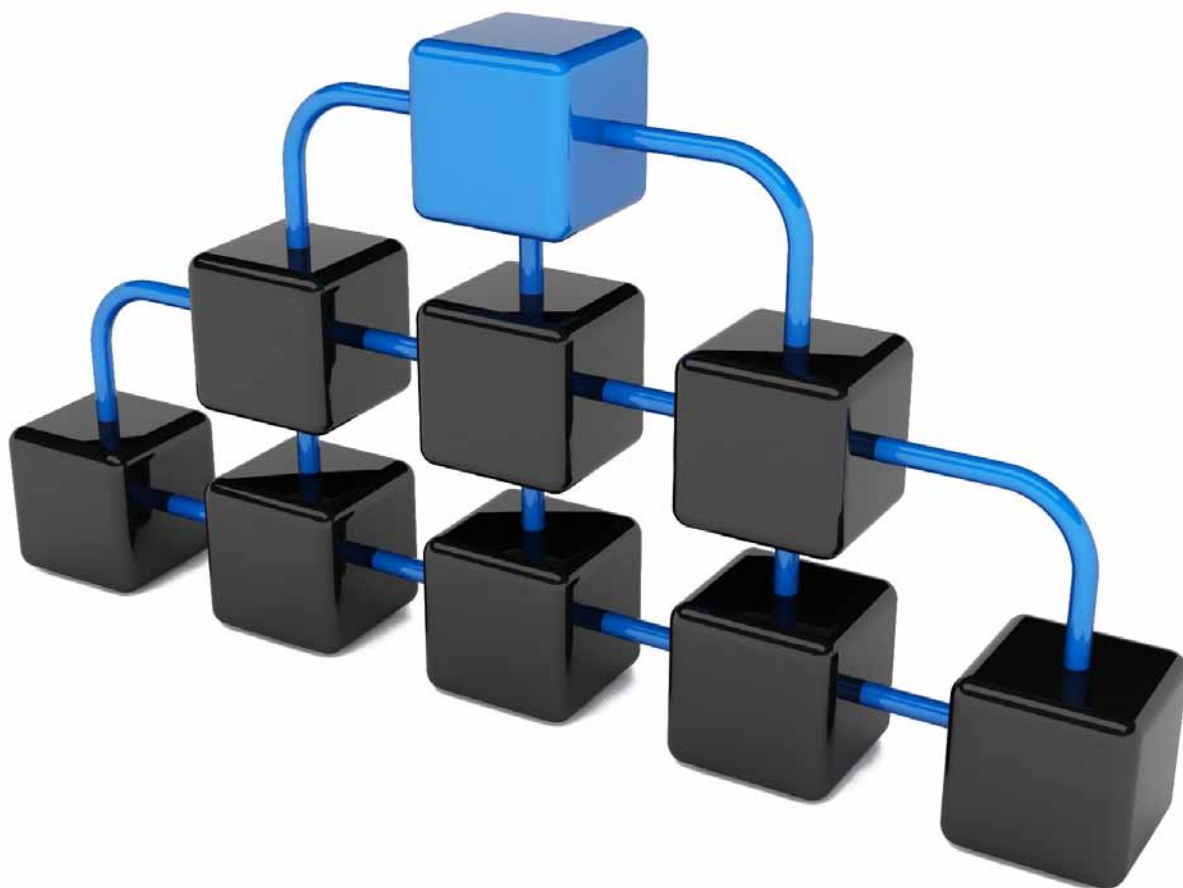


Technology Solutions

Volume 8, Issue 2.



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Be S.M.A.R.T.

Lee O'Conner // President // @Lee_Ellipse

There is a framed poster of Pinky and the Brain that hangs in the hallway of our office. I obtained this one-of-a-kind print from the now closed Warner Brothers art collection store. This adorable cartoon ran in conjunction with the Animaniacs also from Warner Brothers. The duo of genetically-engineered lab mice consisted of the Brain, an over intelligent mouse scheming to take over the world, and Pinky, his silly, dim witted sidekick. During every episode, Brain would ask Pinky, "Pinky, are you thinking what I am thinking?" And to that Pinky would reply some sort of unrelated thought that was going through his head at that time. This would then frustrate The Brain and he would say, "Focus, Pinky, focus".

This is my perception of what is happening with "social networking" and "social media." There are a bunch of brains out there asking questions and telling everyone: "Are you thinking what I am thinking" and everyone is responding with thoughts of their own. There are countless bloggers, people to follow on Twitter, websites such as Google reader, MySpace for the early adopters, Facebook, for the masses, FourSquare, Yelp and a host of other location services devices. We have laptops, desktops, iPads, iPhones, smart phones and smart cards. And all this gives us endless content, and by content I mean opinions.

- *So what does it all mean?*
- *How can it make a difference in the multifamily industry?*
- *How does one decide which applications to use or how to present ourselves on the web?*

I think it comes down to a few basic principles: Use Simple, Measurable, Attainable Realistic and Timely goals.

Be S.M.A.R.T about it!

Simple; Pick one medium to start with such as Facebook, Twitter, a blog or MySpace (it could come back).

Measurable: Decide on what you want to accomplish: Number of fans per week, number of retweets, number of readers. Make sure that you have a measurable outcome.

Attainable: Is the goal realistic and can you manage the media daily? If a goal is not achievable, you are likely to feel overwhelmed and discouraged. Trying narrowing down which tweeters you would like to follow by their demographics, for example.

Realistic: Trying to get 50,000 fans for an apartment community might be an unrealistic goal. Consider using a percentage of your total number of current residents.

Timely: Set a timeline for accomplishing the goal. You may find that you will need to reevaluate your goal and your media. By reevaluating both the goal and the media you may find that the media doesn't have access to the person's age or gender, for example. You may find that the goal wasn't measurable, attainable or realistic.

Newsfeeds do not stop once you get up and walk away from a computer. These same



concepts apply to the mobile markets as well. Smartphones drive just as much traffic to the web as do traditional computers. And if you want to capture that mobile traffic, the best way to do so is to create a separate mobile XML site map and ensure that it is convertible to mobile. This way you can still focus on your S.M.A.R.T. goal, and be able to measure both traditional web traffic as well as mobile traffic.

Will social networking, social marketing and mobile marketing ever really be measurable in terms of income? We will not be able to tell until we figure out exactly what we want to achieve with something as open as the Wild West when it comes to conversations, content management and control. So keep it smart, keep it simple and keep your focus. ☺

Lee O'Conner



www.facebook.com/EllipseGroup

www.twitter.com/TheEllipseCow

Location, Location, Location: Harnessing GeoSocial Location-based Services

Joe Foster // Training // @Joe_Ellipse

Hobo Code: A secret pictorial language invented by American itinerant wanderers after the Civil War. An unobtrusive mark on a fence post or drawn in the dirt, imparting messages such as "good food", "mean dog", "religious" etc, left by the last hobo as a warning or suggestion to the next.

On August 19, 2010, Facebook introduced "Places" for mobile users. The smart phone Global Positioning System technology that gives turn-by-turn directions will now allow "check in" to locations. Facebook decided to introduce this feature in part because a number of smaller firms offer variations on this same scheme. Facebook, it seems, may have ended the Location Service (LS) gold rush before most Americans knew it had started.

Except, of course, that it hasn't.

Rather than ejecting BrightKite, FourSquare, Go.Wal.a and the rest in favor of Facebook Places from the Location-Game, it is popularizing, normalizing location services. Many services create a game out of check-ins that Facebook Places is not exploring currently, but the LS's themselves push their users' triumphs, badges, "mayorships", to FaceBook status updates (Go.Wal.a supports Places itself.) Consider how many FarmVille players Zynga collected as a result of those status updates.

In the beginning... There Was Marketing

Internet users spend an inordinate amount of time avoiding marketing. Bulk marketing email programs—we call them "spam"—have been a scourge of the online experience for almost twenty years. We are popup-blocking, message filtering, junk-folding—actions that represent but one section of the arms race that the marketing side has been leading for some time. Just how different is your "Favorite Books" section of your Facebook from a comment card or online survey? The chief distinctions are a far more efficient delivery/reporting system and the infinite potential of further data collected from Facebook friends. You're no longer coerced or bribed into submitting marketing data; you're telling your spin class instructor or your 7th grade shortstop how important Eat, Pray, Love is to you.

People who don't consciously benefit from marketing data might find these things unsettlingly

Orwellian. They need to buckle their seatbelts, because the LS explosion that prompted Facebook to join the fray entails using our beloved smart phones to tell the Internet:

- **Where we are**
- **What we are doing**
- **Why we are there**

Why is this taking a foothold? Simply put, the dropping price point for mobile internet access has dovetailed with the "overshare" epidemic social networking has enabled. We can no longer wait to get home to tell our social circle what we just saw, bought, and thought about buying.

The marketers won. Congratulations.

"Cookies for FourSquare Check-Ins!"

What does this mean for a leasing team on the ground?

In August 2010, not a whole lot.

Pre-Facebook Places, the most inciting news with regard to Location Services was a widely-disseminated July 2010 report from Forrester Research indicating that a mere 4% of Americans are using Location Services. While it can easily be argued that these early adopters also represent a cross-segment of those vaunted "influencers", their numbers do not support a management company offering Rent specials for Foursquare check-ins.

The internet used to be a place one went for interaction and information through tiny windows punctuated by tinny modem chirps and "You've Got Mail". Patience was a virtue, as the windows were small and we were forced to wait.

People liked what they found. They wanted more.

The windows got bigger, the sounds quieter, the waiting dropped. Patience became anachronism.

We liked what we found. We wanted more.

Pictures gave way to music, and soon after video.

We wanted more—the windows that had grown so large were now in our pocket.

Now, there is no window. There is no "place". We don't go online because we are never offline.

Location Services put the world on the internet while inserting the internet into the world.

The internet has gone outside, and digital hobo code is being scrawled on every conceivable surface. ☹

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Privacy and Security are Everyone's Responsibility

Lisa Benson // CEO

In February 2010 Facebook reached 400 million active users. During the same month of the same year there were 32 million apartment dwellers in America according to the US Census projections. Industry professionals got to wonder:

- *What percentage of our residents are active Facebook users?*

- *How much of our community information is presented in simple user content and personal posts?*

Needless to say, an email to the press department of Facebook went unanswered.

Taking this concept even further with regards to privacy and security on the Internet along with its extended mobile networks, what exposure points are being generated by our user base, such as employees and residents?

Obtaining these thought provoking details and statistics will likely go unanswered, lest websites such as Facebook, Google, Twitter or Blog Spot are mature enough to engage in some form of marketing in support of revenue requirements and/or the investment community is no longer interested. **Though we can't get support from the social centers themselves to validate our levels of contribution or exposure, there definitely are engaging ways to keep our consumers and team members protected.**

Just as our industry sector must establish onsite community policies and procedures

to keep our properties safe and secure, our professional teams must establish intrinsic systems of common sense practices when interacting with our electronic peers. Internet technology encompasses different platforms for extended communications, including both private and public wireless broadband, along with mobile interfaces and Internet Protocol telephony. Each system requires end user awareness to privacy programs and security handling procedures. As technology continues to become ubiquitous to our society, our sensitivity to safety becomes lower and mistakes are frequently made. This human characteristic gets even more adventuresome as our **younger population doesn't think twice about confidential information being posted in a public forum, let alone employer liability due to their actions.** The depth of this previous statement was recently addressed by Eric Schmidt, President, Google, Inc. when he told the *Wall Street Journal* "Let's say you're walking down the street. Because of the info Google has collected about you, 'we know roughly who you are, roughly what you care about, roughly who your friends are.' Google



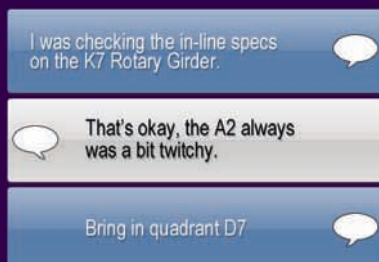
also knows, to within a foot, where you are."

When dealing with employees at work and off the clock, simple corporate guidance and training is cost effective and results filled. Incorporating a signed Privacy Policy for online and off line communications is the best way to control innocent, yet derogatory posts; as well as unwanted behavior from unscrupulous terminated employees. Encourage employees to not use personal email addresses when conducting company communications or Internet based messaging, this will keep their professional identity affiliated to the company. Email records saved for a lengthened tenure will allow for monitoring and coaching if necessary, while providing records if a security concern arises. Review risk management ideologies when allowing personal cell phone use during

G is for Generation:

Joe Foster // Training // @Joe_Ellipse

What is it about combining a single letter and a single digit that immediately creates an air of insularity?



In an effort to bring digital natives, mobile mavens, and everyday people to a semblance of common ground, we can eliminate any confusion around what cellular networks mean. We are inundated with marketing materials that use these terms yet don't bother to explain what they mean or offer much context.

1G - Analog Voice Introduced in the 70s, prevalent through the early 90s—Zack Morris snuck a 1G handset into Bayside High on "Saved by the Bell".

2G - 2.5G (2G+) - Digital Voice and Data As cellular usage began to creep into the consumer market, Cellular towers needed expanded capabilities to deal with higher volume. Digital voice offered this, and as a side effect, digital handsets were able to offer rudimentary email and internet access. Though functional, this technology was not especially attractive to the general public: tiny, low-resolution screens offered snails-pace access to difficult-to-navigate web pages. Morpheus guides Neo out of his office building in *The Matrix* on a 2G device (note you never see the screen!)

company time, checking into Four Square at work might trigger a concern with an old boyfriend or employee relationship. Harris Interactive recently published a survey stating that employees openly admit they would take company data, customer data and product plans when leaving a job. Including online personal queries of social sites is a great way to vet a future employee, while adding that **employee confidentiality agreement** to each new hire packet sets the tone for management ideologies on corporate privacy. A quick departure letter from the corporate attorney including a reminder of such will go a long way in second thoughts to this type of activity, or in the worst case facilitating the clawing back what was stolen.

Creating a successful risk exposed community, online and onsite, is relatively easy to implement. Posting a website **privacy policy** will provide confirmed consideration for residents using your services, without fear of reprisals. Issuing community based cell phones and or wireless devices, such as I pads or netbooks, will allow for security settings such as login keys, disabled GPS tracking, prohibition of unauthorized apps and exclusive company related communications. Screen capture tracking or content controls **will keep roaming eyes and fingers off** line during weekends when management oversight is not available. Communities must install property based access and network controls to prohibit the resident computer center or wireless network from accessing **interoffice domain computers and data** centers. Wireless routers absolutely need to include enabled encryption settings and password protected authentication to prohibit

snooping parties from crawling personal data and network mac addresses. This consideration was recently elevated when Google admitted to intercepting unsecured wireless content while completing their street view photography and street mapping. It is good practice to use separate computers for **social networking and corporate financial** management, especially since key stroke recording Trojans are regularly distributed through infected cross scripting posts on social sites such as Facebook or Xenga.



Residents pose an interesting query to this discussion, because we need to them to buy our products, use our community amenities, engage in our technology all while sharing with their friends on how great we are. Well, at least we can only hope so. The power of the disenchanted resident is multiplied greatly since the inception of the Internet **and social networks enflamed this vehicle** exponentially. Previously pest control was a valued service, today a requirement, because one roach can become not just that consumer post but that Facebook image representing

your apartment community. The rules for resident communications changed over the past year, and if we are not proactively engaging in online social messaging before **the lease is signed**, it will be difficult to open that channel once they publicly chastised us for our handling of their concern. Operating in a reactive mode with renting echo boomers will result in competitive economic loses, as virtual social relationships are just as important as the dweller across the landing. Taking advantage of our insightful Gen Y leasing team's Internet knowledge delivers in high scores when it comes to 24-hour resident services, but successful only when operated in a protected environment.

Sure this type of stuff is new to us as executives, but look at it this way, apartment management has been around for the past thirty years and much remains the same. **The Internet's been around for a couple of decades** with the speed of change at millennial exchange, so no wonder we struggle. Applying core professional insight will keep any management company and its **associates out of harm's way**, but processes and procedures must be with 100% compliance. Remember the bad guys only need one exploit, no matter how small, to ruin a good thing for everyone. ☹

3G - Higher Speed Data, worldwide roaming (largely) The Present: 3G Wireless networks were popularized in concert with the growing ubiquity of the Blackberry. Screens grew larger, and as the raw computing horsepower of smartphones began to meet the pace of home computers, so did the availability of high-speed wireless data networks. 3G networks also grew because domestic service carriers began offering

a payment plan that has since fallen out of favor: all-you-can-use data access. **4G** - LTE-Advanced (LTE-A) Harder, Better, Faster, Stronger As we approach the end of 2010, a growing number of metropolitan areas support the next G. Chiefly, this is for mobile high-speed access for traditional computers and laptops—the first 4G smartphone is Sprint's HTC Evo.

**Apple's iPhone 4 does NOT 4G, though with no reason whatsoever to discontinue issuing a new model every year (indeed, the antaennaegate debacle with the iPhone 4 almost guarantees this), there is every reason to expect the next iPhone will.* ☹



Mobile Marketing and the iTrashFlash World

Heather Blume // BTL D Consulting // @artchickhb



The iPhenomenon isn't going away. Having a strong contingent of hard core Linux users as my main group of friends makes it dangerous for me to have made that statement. Oh, how they

hate that little once rainbow-happy apple. I hear the complaints all the time. "The products are flawed, they're made for people who don't understand how they work, they're 3 times as expensive as they need to be... insert generic computer nerd comment here." And yet, they remain popular, while most of the people reading this are still trying to figure out what the heck LINUX is.

Schools are buying up and dealing out iPads instead of textbooks. 1.5 million new generation iPhones were sold on the first day. All of this despite the fact that users are locked in to AT&T's spotty service (coverage which, if you believe their commercials, is generated by giant orange satin sheets

reaching across America, coincidentally somewhat explaining why their service is so unreliable. If you want better coverage, install taller towers. Sheets do not disperse this coverage very well.). And while Mac phones only accounted for 22% of the second financial quarter market share (BlackBerry had 28% and Android had a whopping 33%), according to the NPD Group, if your target market is people who are under the age of 35, this 22% is very important to you. So important, in fact, that you might need to redesign your website.

Why? Because, as my Linux friends would say, "Steve Jobs hates Flash."

You know that really cool rotating montage of pretty property pictures that you have on your website? Or that neat little animated map of all the local stores in the area? Or the video tour of your property that automatically starts when someone clicks on to your homepage? Those page enhancements are made with flash programming, and they don't show up on mobile devices like most smart phones and the iPad. iPad users won't be able to see your webpage for the same reason that they can't watch video content from Hulu through their browser and have to download

an app to view it - these platforms weren't made to support flash. In all fairness, it's not just Steve Jobs who is the forcing hand in website redevelopment - It's HTML5, who is slowly phasing out the use of flash plug ins on browsers. (But it's more fun to blame Steve Jobs because it gets the Mac Fanboys all in a frenzy.)

How do you make sure that your website is ready to be viewed on a mobile device? Simple. Try viewing it on one. If you've got service and the site doesn't come up, you have some retooling to do. One of the easiest ways to overcome this issue, if you're not ready to do a whole web-redesign, is to make a mobile version of your website using W3C standard web technologies (such as HTML5, CSS3 and JavaScript) rather than plug ins. On the whole, it's much simpler than redoing your entire site, and best of all, it lets you experiment with the effect that integrating a touch type interface can have on the way that people interact with you online. Touch is a sense that has a high impact on the buying process in the human psyche, so if you can find unique and interesting ways for people to interact with your apartments online, via touch, all the better for your rental numbers!

Contact Responses - Up and Down, Yes or No?

Julie Ramey // Net Mystery ShopperSM Director

A prospect contacts your property through your website and shows interest in becoming a resident. You immediately respond, right? The Net Mystery ShopperSM Complete Benchmark Report tells us differently. The percentage of onsite teams responding to leads from the contact form on their websites was 60.29% for the first quarter of 2010. This was followed by a significant drop to 57.6% in the second quarter of 2010. The third quarter has rallied nearly 10% and is the strongest yet with a 67.28% response rate.

Will this rally have the momentum to bring even better response rates for the upcoming fourth quarter of 2010? The value of capturing leads through online

sources cannot be underestimated. As more and more people shop for communities online, future residents often look at your property website before deciding to visit in person. This opens outstanding marketing alternatives for your community. Showcasing amenities, flattering photography, event posting and other interactive options allow you to put your best foot forward. The possibility is there, it is up to you to make the best of it and to use every opportunity available to gain valuable leads for potential residents.

This Net Mystery ShopperSM Complete Benchmark Report reflects quarterly the results from 544 website mystery shops

representing 75 Management Companies. Net Mystery ShopperSM performs multi-family specific mystery shops. Websites are checked for updated floor plans, bulletin boards, calendars, etc. The shopper inquires as a prospect and response time, type and content are measured. If you're interested in knowing how you measure up, we can help. Contact Julie Ramey, Net Mystery ShopperSM Director, jramey@ellipseinc.com for more information.



Do You Know the Metrics Behind Your Site?

Dan LaMendola // VP of Production

So, you've just come from a meeting with your Regional Manager where you were told something along the lines of, "We really need to understand how our customer base is segmented and then break that down into revenue rich keywords that will drive increased convertible traffic to our site. Afterwards, we can follow up and make certain that customer behavior patterns matched our goal structure where we can then check for gaps in order to gain additional conversions". What?

As a company, the purpose of creating an on-line presence is to maintain contact with your customers in an effort to "convert" that contact into continued, or future, sales. In short, your web site is a marketing tool...whether that tool is your grandfather's 20 pound sledgehammer that you left in the yard all last week, or a surgeon's scalpel is dependent upon your understanding of two critical pieces of information:

- What is the overall objective of my web site?
- How do my customers, and potential customers, react?

Fortunately, there are products out in the marketplace to help you ascertain and refine the answer to both of these questions. Urchin, and Google Analytics (both produced by Google) are two such programs. Above we established that the primary purpose of most commercial web sites is to drive sales. Once we accept that, the next question is naturally "How?", and that is where programs

like Urchin come in to help you to understand how your web site is helping you to achieve your objectives.

Typical questions that prove valuable all relate back to customer behavior, and customer related metrics (meaning, measurable results):

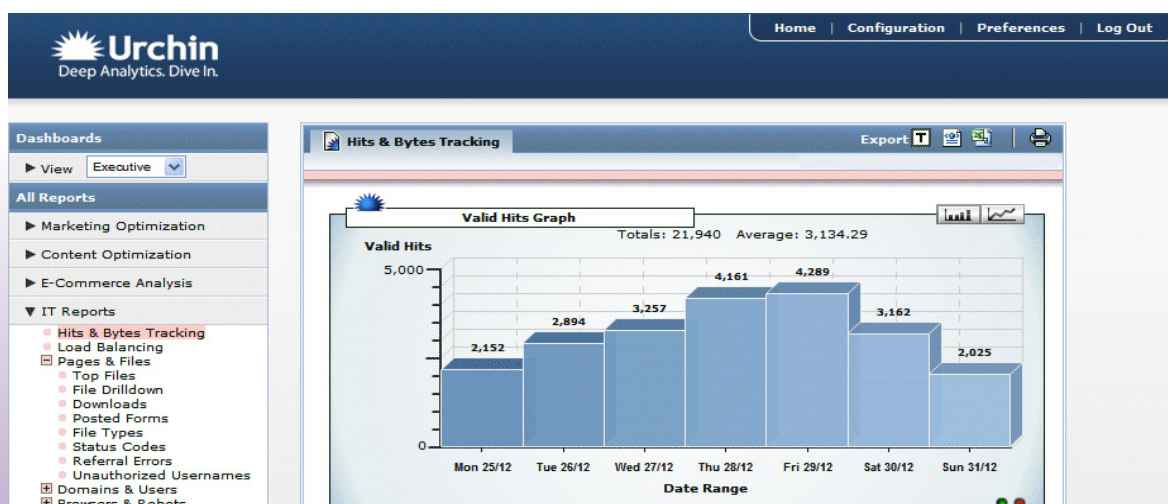
- How popular is my site? How many people visit it each day?
- Of the people that visit, how many are new (or "unique")?
- Where are these people navigating from? Where are they located physically?
- Is there any trend, or pattern, to the number of visitors or the types of visitors that my web site receives over a specified time period?
- Where do people go once they arrive at my site?
- Of the people that visit my site, how many end up buying goods and/or services? What is the average "buy"?
- If I were to "follow" the path that a person takes once they arrive at my site, is there a relationship between the path they take (meaning the pages they view while on your site) and a purchase? Do different paths influence the amount of the purchase?
- How do people who visit my site find it? If they use a search engine, are there certain

search words (or "keywords") that are more successful in driving people to visit my site? What happens then?

- If I own, or control, multiple web sites is there a way for me to compare them? Is one more effective than another in accomplishing my goals? Why – what are the details behind the visits to each?
- Am I paying a third party to help me drive traffic to my site using certain "keywords"? If so, how do these different vendors compare in terms of cost and efficacy? Am I getting the best use of each dollar spent?
- How do I fare against my competitors? Are they visiting my site? If so, when? How long do they stay? Where do they go?
- I have all this information about my customer...who controls it? Do I have it so that I can manipulate it and study it at any time? Does a third party own it or have access to it? If so, is that okay? Is there anything confidential or proprietary regarding this information?

By understanding your customer's behavior, you are better able to craft and refine your web site to cater to their needs, thereby (hopefully) increasing the number of sales (or retaining future sales) generated by your site. Furthermore, your customers' behavior can be captured for study at a later date.

These metrics, these measurable behaviors captured by your web site, are key to making sure that your message is on target.



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- Tell-A-Friend Postcard
- "Flash" Introduction
- Virtual Guest CardSM
- Resident Links with Image Control
- Welcome Text Editor
- Resident Referral Center
- Photo Upload
- Resident Links Center
- Specials Coupon Control
- Click to Call
- Click to Chat

Tell Us About You

Company Name: _____

Contact Person: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____ Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____ Current Website: _____

Special Comments: _____
