



## **Webinar Follow-Up - March 5, 2009**

To: Measuring Online Audience Webinar Participants  
From: Deb Shaw

There were several questions that came in to presenter Preston Gibson that, due to time constraints, we were not able to address in our March 5 Webinar. But, Preston was good enough to answer them afterwards and herewith are the remaining questions and his responses.

*Re: Most viewed story, most commented story, most e-mailed story*

*Q: Where are those metrics coming from? Google or his CMS metrics?*

A: Those particular metrics are coming from our CMS, which is a Drupal-based platform developed by the Digital Press Consortium.

*Q: Can you elaborate on panel based? How are these panels created? Are these like focus groups in the research world?*

A: Panel-based analytics tools secure volunteers. Volunteers may be secured by a solicitation to participate, or it may be affected via registration access to website features. Since the data is determined by the behavior/actions of the panel members, a large panel is needed to create statistically valid information. For this reason, panel-based analytics will generally post some sort of advisory, or disclaimer, if their panel has delivered relatively little information regarding a queried website.

*Q: Is there any reliable standard for or truly accurate measure of unique site visitors over a period as long as a month?*

A: "Unique visitors" are being measured by the IP address and "cookies" associated with a computer. So, a "unique visitor" is not the same as a "person," because a person may access a given site via different computers (i.e., different IP address) or clear their cookies and look like multiple people. This means the Unique Visitor metric is not objectively accurate, but is relatively accurate. As long as you are comparing unique visitors to unique visitors, you can draw very meaningful conclusions about the popularity and growth associated with a website – at a point in time, and over a period of time.

*Q: Our newspaper saw a great drop in some statistics when we switched from Omniture to Google Analytics, but some stats went up. Can you explain the difference?*

A: The general reason is that you shifted from one means of measurement to another; so, you're looking at "apples vs. oranges" or "Red Delicious vs. Granny Smith," perhaps. More specifically, I understand Omniture uses "server data." Unless filtered, server data reflects all activity on the server, including search engine "bots" and "spiders." Google Analytics does not include this traffic. So, all other things being the same, Google Analytics would deliver lower numbers. I don't know why Google might deliver a higher number, but it wouldn't surprise me – just due to the different approach being used. Again, using an "apples to apples" approach is the best way to achieve a meaningful analysis.

*Q: How well does Google Analytics compare to Omniture SiteCatalyst?*

A: I have no direct experience with Omniture SiteCatalyst. To tap into more informed perspective, I suggest a web search ... you'll find plenty. From what I've read, I understand that, after you've paid a lot of money and worked pretty hard, you can get an appreciably superior analytics tool with Omniture –

especially in terms of producing customized reports. However, your needs for such customized reports must be very great in order to justify the expense and effort. For most folks – especially community websites – it is difficult to justify. This becomes truer as Google has begun developing/offering segmented and customized reporting features. These are still in “beta,” but I am already finding these features to be very useful.

*Q: How does Compete.com handle derivative urls? i.e. tampabay.com/sports? Included in Tampabay.com?*

A: I don't find that Compete.com will deliver a report on a “derivative” url like this. If such a url is entered, it is automatically truncated to the root url; so – as you guessed – it would be included in that report. Compete.com will, however, deliver a report on a subdomain (e.g., subdomain.website.com).