Seven Forces in Web Site Analysis

Utilizing Web Site Analysis to
Drive Digital Roadmap Success
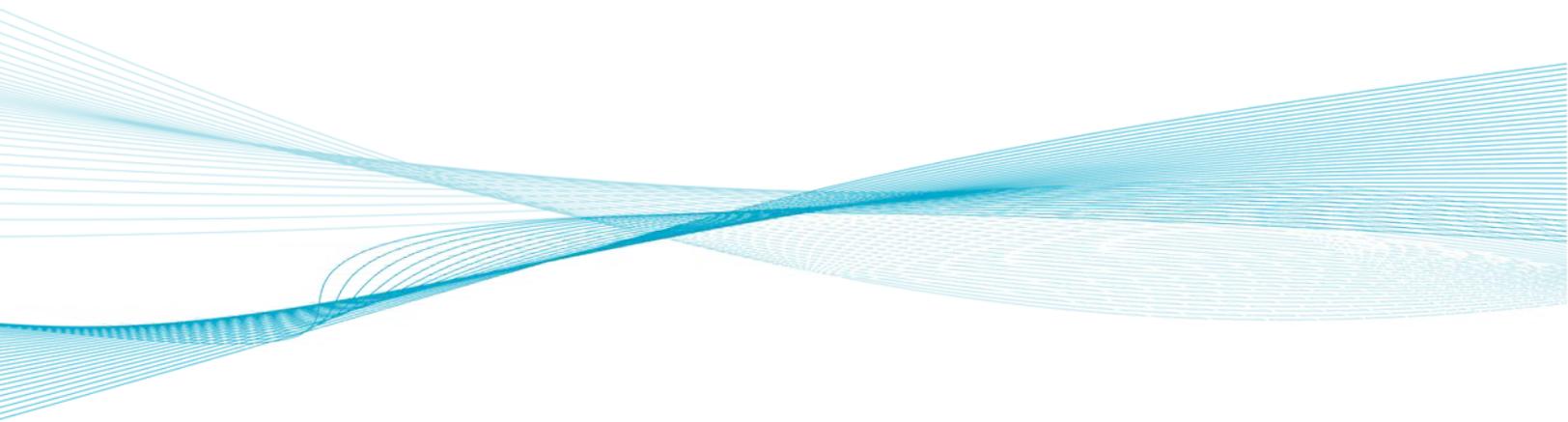
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Executive Summary

As a marketing technologist - or the person responsible for the technology direction of marketing in your company - building a technology roadmap and tracking to it is undoubtedly part of the job description. What to focus on first can be a serious point of discussion with numerous perspectives from your stakeholders. The decision on how to spend more technology dollars in marketing should be an informed one.

This can be challenging because of the amount of noise in the marketing technology landscape. We are inundated with Marketing Technology choices to enable our business. We have to take into account the future by reviewing the latest hype cycle while also managing the day to day operations.

So how do you build a better roadmap? We have proven Web Analysis can certainly help as no doubt your web site is a key component in your technology landscape.

Web analysis involves an assessment of seven forces related to the overall effectiveness of your company's web presence. Some of these forces overlap with each other, but a proper web analysis takes into account the questions and concerns of the business to formulate an analysis.

Whether a broad discovery effort or a more targeted approach is needed, a web analysis helps inform the roadmap and develop a business case to justify your requirements and improvements.

For example, website speed is one of the seven forces we discuss. In 2012 Amazon calculated that a 1 second slowdown in their website would cost them $1.6B. In 2016 that number is probably closer to $2.5B. Let's discover how a web analysis can help.

> *"In 2012, Amazon calculated that a 1 second slowdown in their website could cost them $1.6B."*
>
> Fast Company – March 15, 2012

Problem Statement

What good is your website if your users can't actually use it?

What good is your great video if no one ever finds it?

What good is the great Super Bowl campaign or NASCAR sponsorship if your site is unreachable?

What kind of Brand equity is lost from a site being defaced? What kind of data could be lost if a security compromise occurs?

The problems are many, but being proactive can help reduce your risk substantially.
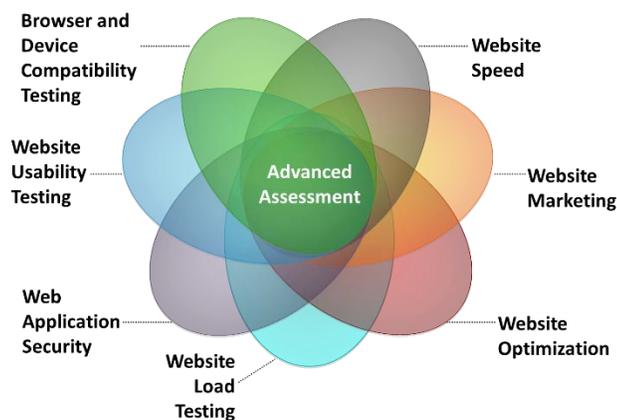
Considerations and Concerns

WEBSITE SPEED

Since April 2010, Google has ranked site speed as key component of customer satisfaction and their ranking algorithm takes this into account. User Experience suffers on slow web sites. Users don't like to wait, and page abandonment means customers will go elsewhere while bounce rates rise. As connection speeds on desktop and mobile increase, slow sites become more obvious. Customers expect a similar experience of speed on both mobile and desktop.

Speed is a differentiator for consumers making purchasing decisions… including whether they will be back for follow-up purchases. The level of satisfaction a customer has with a site and your brand goes down with slower speeds. For example, one tracking system provider discovered that every one second in delay caused a loss of 7% in conversions for one e-commerce site.

The underlying site complexity seen on today's web is the number one reason for performance issues. Conflicting components including plug-ins, http calls, JavaScript, jQuery, and fonts are typical issues that impact or prevent sites from working efficiently and effectively. Sites being hosted by shared servers can also greatly impact speed as well as sites that load all content from a single server source.

For SMBs and larger enterprise systems, Content Delivery Networks, or CDNs, may be leveraged. This includes a distributed system of servers deployed in multiple data centers across the Internet. The goal of a CDN is to serve content to end-users with high availability and high performance. Most web site properties buy their CDN capability from providers (e.g., Akamai) who can provide high service levels with uptime of 99.999 percent. Organizations that have content delivery at its core (e.g., Netflix) often opt to build their own network.

For most companies, delivering assets such as videos, pictures, fonts, and standard jQuery code sets is the basic need. For most web properties, distributed delivery of these digital assets from a server other than the one hosting your main content will allow the user to download more information faster.

WEBSITE LOAD TESTING

Website Load Testing is a close relative to Website Speed and a component of a larger Application Performance Management landscape. Load testing puts a synthetic load on a web site system to see how it will respond. Load Testing can inform the roadmap in numerous ways. For example, load testing is important when understanding the size of infrastructure needed for your hosting environment to support the desired traffic levels. Load testing can and should be aligned with the geographies of your target audience which can help support campaigns. Load testing can help identify Denial of Service vulnerabilities for remediation which helps with the security stance and availability of your site.

WEBSITE MARKETING

Websites help build awareness which is a large component of a potential customer's decision making process. Without awareness, your products and service may never be found in a web search. Analysis typically takes into account blogging, social media interaction, search engine optimization (SEO), lead, and responsiveness.

Search Engine Optimization – one of the facets of website marketing - is a key part of building that awareness. There are several types of SEO, such as "Off-Page SEO", which are links coming in from other pages, and "Social Media Optimization - SMO", which is what happens when search engines get results from social media feeds like Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn.

"Organic" or "Native" SEO is the result of when a search engine such as Google indexes your website and thus it shows up for a particular keyword… this is not the same thing as paid advertisements. This practice is commonly known as "on-page" SEO and relies heavily on your website's actual content and structure. When it comes to getting the best SEO results, the old saying "Content is King", from the early days of the web, still holds true today. Prioritize opportunities for unique content creation and curation, even if that means adjusting the organization to do so.

WEBSITE OPTIMIZATION AND QUALITY

Site quality is a signal to both users and the search engine robots whether or not your site is properly maintained. It can impact user experience and crawls from search engines which ultimately impact how people find your business or product. For example, some sites have infinite loops that can cause crawls to timeout, missing critical content for indexing.

Type	Count	Percentage
Good	393 URLs	91.4%
Not Found	37 URLs	8.6%
Other Errors	0 URLs	0.0%
Total	430 URLs	100.0%

Site quality is "table stakes" to enter the game. If we were to look at a marketing maturity model for your website, quality should be among the first things on the list. Quality is a gatekeeper to performing more complex initiatives. Quality is not free, it requires monitoring and action from empowered individuals to optimize your website.

What about a "Super Bump" in website traffic?

Lessons from Super Bowl 50

At 3 seconds, visitors consider leaving your web site.

	Beyonce's Web Site (Crashed)
	Mini Cooper (9.459 s)
	Death Wish Coffee (5.924 s)
	Marmot (6.44 s)
	Mobile Strike App (2.062 s)
	Heinz (1.890 s)
	Audi (1.572 s)

The average Website response time during the Super Bowl according to Dynatrace.

"Quality means doing it right when no one else is looking."

-Henry Ford

There are several other important points to consider when optimizing search engine results including:

Keyword Research – Make sure you do your keyword research to know what content you should prioritize. There are many analytical tools that can help make an informed decision.

Site Structure – Good site structure is obvious. The old "3 clicks" to any content is still good advice.

Technical components such as Redirects, Error Pages, and JS Navigation – This makes navigation easy for the simplest of web crawlers. This is also where over-design can get in the way.

Specific Campaign Management – Content specific to the campaign and the message, followed closely by the channels and technology used to deploy and measure that campaign.

Market or Geographical Targeting – It is imperative to get good content based on the market segment a product serves or regionalized content.

Having documented processes and procedures along with routine training of these standards is critical for managing a successful SEO program.

SECURITY

Web site security testing is about reducing risk, no site is 100% secure. Our goal with site testing is to reduce the risk around such concerns as unauthorized access to data, defacement, reflected attacks and search engine resource poisoning.

Of course, high severity vulnerabilities should be addressed ASAP after the proper analysis.

Some detected vulnerabilities may be false positives.   Have a skilled analyst understand the root cause before proceeding with remediation such a configuration changes or technology swaps.

> *"I am regularly asked what the average Internet user can do to ensure his security. My first answer is usually 'Nothing; you're screwed'."*
>
> –Bruce Schneier

Routinely tracking and implementing upgrades are a key component to maintaining a secured system. On Content Management Systems like WordPress for example, unused and outdated plug-ins can provide weakness in the WordPress system for attackers and spammers, since open source code is publicly available.

WEBSITE USABILITY TESTING

Usability has nexus with many of the forces we've discussed today. Usability discussions can also be sliced numerous ways, but we can consider the following in relation to our web site testing.

Accessibility of the website relates to those who may have physical impairments and is especially important in consumer facing businesses and governmental web sites. Content on the website is scored in relation to its trust and authority, coverage and accuracy. Interactivity for the user is measured, including navigation and information architecture which relate to how users navigate and get back to where they want to be. Search and visibility measures if the results are relevant and if users can get where they need to be. Mobility quantifies mobile access.

> *"If you want a great site, you've got to test. After you've worked on a site for even a few weeks, you can't see it freshly anymore. You know too much."*
>
> –Steve Krug

WEBSITE BROWSER AND DEVICE COMPATIBILITY

Browser and device compatibility has to do with the widest number of individuals being able to use a website. You don't want users to go away because a web site is not performing on their choice of platform. We are in an era where there are so many differing device resolutions that websites need to be designed first with mobility and responsiveness in mind. Still, we can't test every possible combination, so we take the 80/20 approach and focus on the more popular browsers and devices at essentially random resolutions to determine the failure points that require remediation.

CONCLUSION - DRIVING THE DIGITAL ROADMAP

With the wealth of knowledge gained from a targeted analysis or a discovery assessment, new items can be added to the digital marketing and technology roadmap. These roadmap items may include break fixes or tactical short term items that land more in the release management side of the house. Alternatively, some may be used to build the business case related to longer term initiatives. Regardless, these roadmap items should align with your larger strategies and objectives.

The examples of use cases for web analysis are varied, but some that we have seen include:

- Targeted web application security assessments
- Competitor Analysis
- Pre/Post M&A activity
- Campaign Readiness
- Site Optimization and Quality
- Speed, Bounce Rates and Conversions
- Geographic Content Distribution
- Content Management System Selection/Validation

WE HELP DIGITAL MARKETING LEADERS WITH PROJECT AND VENDOR MANAGEMENT TO DELIVER BUSINESS REQUIREMENTS, ENTERPRISE ARCHITECTURE, TECHNOLOGY ROADMAPS, CMS SELECTION AND SPECIAL PROJECTS.

For more information about using our Web Analysis to Drive your Digital Roadmap, please reach out to us via www.brightmill.com