

"Measuring the Impact of Your Web Presence"

by Leanne Bergey, September 2006

The question is often asked: "How do I know what our website is contributing to our bottom line?"

Showcasing the Return on Investment (ROI) of your website and Internet communications is one way to demonstrate why your site is a resource worth cultivating. Here are some easy, basic ways to show decision-makers how much impact your web presence has.

1) Report What Visitors Are Doing

Find out how to access the website usage tracking software that should be offered by your Internet Service Provider. Even the most basic usage tracking software will offer "Web Server Statistics." Most often these include easy-to-read graphical displays summarizing your website's traffic in graphs and bar charts. Concentrate on these points:

- > **"Pages" or "page views":** Unlike "hits," which calculate all graphics, photos and file clips that may appear on requested pages, the "page views" number is the most accurate way to judge the amount of single HTML pages viewed by your visitors.
- > **Referrer:** Where visitors came from (tracks success of advertising and reciprocal links).
- > **Increased activity after promotion:** Any spike in activity indicates the success of your promotional efforts. Be sure to print out reports and label the specific promotion dates.

2) Keep an Internal Log of Your Form Submissions

Showing that your administrative staff spends less time answering common questions or responding to requests over the phone or by mail because of your website's functionality is a great way to showcase the success of your efforts. These forms may include: "Contact Us," "Request for Information," "Register Here," and any other business functions you've put online.

3) Watch search engine results

There are two ways to use search engine results to determine the effectiveness of your site.

- > Every month, check the major search engines for your placement. Search on key words you suspect visitors might be using to find you and take note of your placement. For the most specific terms (including your organization's name!) you will want to be on the first page of returned results.
- > Regularly "backlink" your website. In a search engine, such as Google, type link: www.yourdomain.org in the search field to see what sites offer links to your website.

4) Do surveys

Survey your key stakeholders at least annually. Ask questions about both the usability and the content of your website. Ask them about the service your website provides. Ask for suggestions. Valuable information can be gleaned from a good survey. Use this to document your successes; to connect with your members, donors, volunteers; and to respond to stakeholders' needs.

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