



**Weblinkstudio, Inc.**

**Web Design, Internet  
Consultations, Training**

## **A Counter on Your Website is not Enough!**

So you got this real cool counter displaying the number of visitors to your website. You are really pleased with the numbers you are seeing and you think everything goes great with your website. But, wait a minute.... what kind of information can you really get from a counter? The only thing you learn is that a number of people requested your home page. Did the page load correctly? Did they leave before the page finished loading? How many pages did they visit within your site? A counter cannot answer any of these questions.

Many web hosting companies offer free website statistics. However, a surprising number of website owners don't know about it or don't know how to interpret the numbers. They don't know what they are missing. Website statistics offer a wealth of information and understanding what they mean will give you the information you need to analyze the performance of your website.

**Hits:** Usually statistics programs include some numbers you can disregard because they have only little meaning. "Hits" is one of them. A "Hit" is incremented for every item requested from your website. In simplified terms, if you have 20 images on your page, 21 "Hits" are added (20 images and the html file). Therefore, "Hits" don't give you useful information.

**Visitors:** This is the true measure of website activity. Usually the statistics program counts a visitor when he enters the website for the first time. Any additional page requests within a certain time limit are not counted.

**Page Views:** The number of pages that have been visited.

**Entry Pages:** These are the pages visitors see first. Are they coming in the front door (your homepage) or are they entering through other pages they find on the web?

**Exit Pages:** This is the last page a visitor requests before he leaves your site. Well, eventually they all have to leave at some point... But do they all leave on the same page? Does it make sense? Did you expect that? Don't be frustrated when you see some people leaving directly from your home page. But are there still enough people left to look at the rest of your site?

**Average time spent on your site:** This gives you an idea how interesting people find your site. If everyone leaves after a short period of time (less than a minute), you need to evaluate what the problem is. Is the content not interesting enough? Did they expect something else? Does it take too long to load? Is the navigation intuitive? Are there display problems on certain browsers?

Some statistics tools do not display the average stay time of visitors. In this case it helps to take the number of page views and divide it by the number of visitors. For example: if you had 3300 page views and 1100 visitors, the average visitor saw 3 pages. Of course this is not very accurate. As mentioned above, it is normal that a number of people leave your site right after bringing up the home page. These are usually people that ended up on your site accidentally and were actually looking for a different kind of product. However, looking at numbers of the exit page statistics in combination with the number of visitors and page views can give you an idea if your site is interesting to the kind of visitors you are attracting. By looking at the search phrases (see below), you can tell what people expected to find on your site. Are you attracting the right kind of visitors?

**Referrers:** This gives you the URL that referred the visitor to you via a link. What search engines are your visitors using to find you? Which

are missing? Is anyone else bringing you unexpected traffic?

**Top Search Phrases:** These are the phrases people typed in a search engine to find your site. Which phrases are missing? Which phrases are they most interested in? The content and keywords of your pages may need to be adjusted to attract visitors interested in your products.

**Path Through the Site:** Some statistics tools let you analyze the path a visitor takes through your site. By looking at how people “walk” around in your site you can gather valuable information if they find what they are looking for. How many people end up buying a product? Where do they leave the buying process? How many people inquire about your services via a form? Do they get lost somewhere on your site?

The amount of data available in some web statistics programs can be intimidating. With a little patience, website statistics can help you turn your website into one of your most valuable marketing tools.