7 Metrics You Might Track in Your Traffic Dashboard

Are you on top of your numbers? TeachTraffic's Ilana Wechsler shares seven key website metrics she thinks serious online business owners should track.

Ilana Wechsler

James: James Schramko here. Welcome back to SuperFastBusiness. This is episode 915. Today, we're chatting with Ilana Wechsler from TeachTraffic.com. Hello, Ilana.
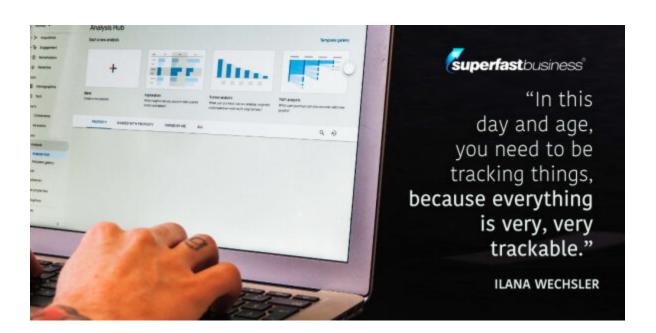
Ilana: Hi, James. How are you?

James: I can remember your website easily now, it's on your T-shirt. There you go, Teach Traffic. Fabulous website, of course, to learn all about driving traffic and conversions, you're doing multiple platforms there, Facebook, Google, YouTube, working with people, sort of done-with-you elements, which obviously come from your agency and spending a lot online and being a great educator.

The two tracking mistakes business owners commit

But of course, I'd love you to come along and educate us today. A question I get asked a lot is, what should I be tracking? You know, do you have a dashboard? If you do have a dashboard, what should be on it? What can we use for dashboard? These questions come up a lot. Unfortunately, a lot of business owners are not really tracking anything.

And then I see the extreme where they're just over-tracking, like just tracking way too many things. And then it just is meaningless. And I've actually let go of some tracking tools where they were too comprehensive, and I never understood what I was looking at. So what I'd love to arrive at today is sort of a Goldilocks version of, what would be the seven essential metrics that you should track, and how we might go about doing that?

Ilana: Yeah, exactly. And I think we're in an era now, where there is an abundant amount of data, and it can be very overwhelming for people. And I guess my goal from this episode is, try to distill a lot of the overwhelm that people have, and just focus on these seven kind of key metrics. And obviously, they're not exclusive.

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"In this day and age, you need to be tracking things, because everything is very, very trackable."

ILANA WECHSLER

You can track more, you could probably even track less. But I think these seven ones that I've chosen kind of give a bit of a broad brush view of what's generally going on, because I think in this day and age, you need to be tracking things, because everything is very, very trackable.

And if you're not, well, you might just not be in business in the future, because the hard part I think that people struggle with is determining what's important. Like, once you decide you want to know something, finding that information, it's actually kind of the easy part. But the hard part for people is knowing what they should be tracking, you know? So, yeah, that's what I think we should talk about.

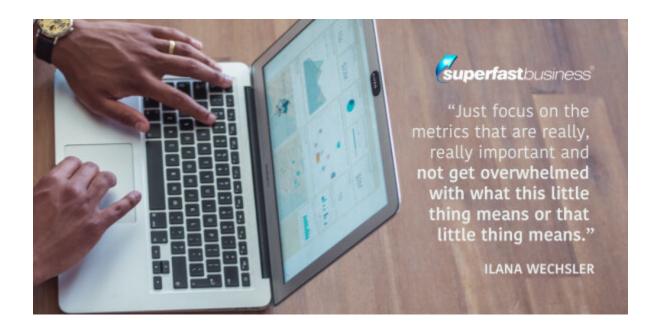## A former data analyst's take on tracking

James: Yeah, I guess even beyond that is the awareness of that tracking is probably a good idea. You know, it's like, you're so data-driven, of course, you came from a data background, you used to be a data analyst.

Ilana: It's true, data is my love language.

James: Yeah, like, you probably take for granted that we should have data. So I think the first step is like, data is actually good to have. And then beyond that, it's like, of which, you know, there's certain data that's better than others, and that's what we should focus on.

Keeping in mind that if we ended up with the seven data elements or the metrics that you talk about today, we'd be in a great starting point to figure out if they're going to help us or not, and then we could add or subtract, according to that, right?

Ilana: Yeah, exactly. It's funny, like, I used to actually teach Google Analytics at Sydney University here in Sydney. And like, unanimously, everyone felt the fact that looking at this data was like eating glass, you know, whereas like, for me, it was like, it's fun and exciting and insightful.

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So I can appreciate the aversion that people have with it, which is why I think it's so important to just focus on the metrics that are really, really important and not get overwhelmed with what this little thing means or that little thing means.

The tools that make it easier

And now, you know, as somebody who's run an agency for a very long time, and now more just teach people rather than do it for them, like, we've created dashboards that are a template that just feed this data in automatically. And literally, you just got to plug your Analytics account in the back end of it, and all the data just pops up beautifully. And that just makes it a lot more palatable for people.

James: What are you using for that?

Ilana: So, my favorite tool is a free tool called Google Data Studio. Because it's a free Google product, it talks really beautifully with Google Analytics. So we use Google Analytics as our source of truth for data. So obviously, one needs to have their Google Analytics account kind of set up properly. But Data Studio is such a fantastic tool because it can incorporate other platforms as well.

So for example, if you're running Facebook ads, with a connector, you can connect your Facebook Ad Account to Google Data Studio to feed in your spend and conversions and all that, so you can really have a dashboard that feeds in data from multiple sources, and create something that is really, really useful for you and your business. And it populates automatically. So once you set it up, you know, you change the date range, and the data automatically populates.

James: Love it. And this is what you help people do in Teach Traffic.

Ilana: So, yes, so actually, I enlisted the help of a friend, who you introduced me to, James, Irene from Rumble Media. I'm getting her this month, actually, or this week, we're going to be recording, she's going to do a training session on how to do this, and she's also providing a template for Teach Traffic members with exactly this kind of information, so they can literally just plug in their account.

So yeah, full credit to Irene. She's a Data Studio expert. I know enough to be dangerous, but she's created a whiz bang template.

James: I know Irene is extremely passionate about dashboards. It's sort of renewed my interest in it too, having had conversations with Irene. I'm so glad you have been able to hit it off. And of course, you can't do anything with paid traffic unless you have reporting metrics.

The first metric you want to see

So why don't you share with us the first metric you'd like to see on a dashboard?

Ilana: Yeah, okay. So I've tried to distill these things to be for people who aren't even necessarily running paid traffic. So the first thing that I always look at is what's called the **traffic source report**. But ideally, what I'm looking for is the conversion rate of each individual traffic source.

So when you log into your Analytics, or if you've set up the Data Studio report that feeds in this report from Analytics, it's going to have, like, a table that says, you know, Google organic, Google/CPC. CPC is Google ad traffic, direct traffic. And so you want to rank by the portion of your overall users per traffic source, but then correspond that with the conversion rates.

So really, what you're trying to understand is, where is the majority of your traffic coming from? What is the source of the majority of your traffic? And does it convert? That's really the business question you want to ask. Many people think, you know, I've got to invest in SEO traffic and rank organically for something.

So if you can see your Google organic traffic as the highest traffic source in terms of the number of people coming, but the conversion rate of it is actually quite low, then that kind of warrants further investigation, which we're going to sort of talk about a little bit later. But really, overall, you want to look at your overall traffic sources, and how they are converting.

So another example, you might see that your Google CPC traffic, which is your Google ad traffic, is owning, let's say, so this is in one client account, for example, 22 percent of their traffic, so you know, a fifth of it, overall traffic, but it accounts for 70 percent of their sales, well, then that kind of tells me that actually converts really well, we need to spend a little bit more time there, you know?

On the flip side, if it accounts for five percent of their sales, then possibly it's not converting very well and we need to diagnose the traffic. So that's kind of like what I really look for in the traffic sources report. It's such a treasure trove of information.

Now, ideally, if you're running Facebook ads, for example, you would have created trackable links, or even, you know, you can have trackable links in emails, I've had many clients who've done that in the past. And that will separate your traffic sources as per your trackable links. And so once again, you want to compare them to the conversion rate. And if you are doing trackable links, I urge you to create some kind of universal naming convention, because otherwise, it can get a little bit crazy.

James: Yeah. So of course, Google has their own URL builder that you can use to create those for free. Any kind of tracking software is going to have a convention or suggestion or URL appendage thing that goes on. But this is critical. And of course, you need to track goals, right? If you want to know which caused sales, you've got to actually track the goals and have someone set that up for you if you can't set it up.

Ilana: That's exactly right. And this applies to e-commerce or even lead gen, you know, you set up a goal for whatever it is, the success metric that is important to you for e-commerce, that would be purchase, for lead generation, it's whoever lands on your thank you page or whatever it is the goal. And then in that traffic sources report, you can see the quantity, like how many people did that, as well as a percentage of the total and the conversion rate, which is obviously equally important.

James: Love it. Now, we'll also publish this as a checklist where you see episode 915. So don't worry if you lose track of some of the acronyms that are about to come your way, because I can see number two is going to have a bit of fancy wording.

What kind of return are you getting?

Ilana: Okay, well, the second one does relate to people spending money on ads, which is the return on ad spend or otherwise known as ROAS, that's obviously for e-commerce people, or your cost per acquisition for lead gen people. So I think, though, my belief and maybe others would disagree with me, but I believe in 2022 at the time of this recording, we live in an era where it is multi-device and multi-platform.

For example, someone might see a Facebook ad, I know even I do this personally, I see a Facebook ad, I'm like, Oh, is this someone, like, pretending to be this business? I then Google search their business to kind of check they're legit, because I bought dodgy things online before.

And so this concept of direct return on ad spend, so the return as a result of directly ad spend, which is what the ad platforms report versus a blended ROAS, which is, what have you made overall, revenue-wise from all your traffic sources, divided by, what have you spent in total? Like, has the rising tide lifted all the boats, essentially?

And I like to report on both of those elements, the direct ROAS versus the blended ROAS. And truthfully, I think the truth lies somewhere in between that metric, you know?

James: Probably hard to track every single specific thing. Like, you go to the site, you click on a link, you start seeing little ads following you around, like, it might be quite some time later, but they might attribute your sale to that one little remarketing ad that you clicked on, if they're going direct, right?

Ilana: That's exactly right. And so maybe they don't even click on it. But that sort of prompted their, you know, Oh, that's right. I was looking at those pair of shoes. And then they're going to Google search the brand, and click on the organic link. And so Google Analytics is what's called last click attribution. What was the last click that they did before they did whatever they're tracking? And so the lines are blurred in terms of kind of what's called the assisted conversions.

James: Oh, it's like I've been stalked to death by one particular surfboard manufacturer, and like, one day, I might go and get a haircut, and in a weak moment, walk into the store next door and see that exact board and like, it would have been 50 times I've seen it till now that caused me to, I need to have that in my life.

But they would think, Oh, it's our street sign or whatever. Like, there's no way that will ever get recosted back to the ad, but it is actually a result of there. So the blended, I can see why that's important to have a bit of that.

Ilana: Yeah. And I had a situation, one client in particular, who, you know, we were struggling to really have direct attribution. And, you know, she was like, I can't determine how effective these ads are. And actually, I said, Let's just turn the ads off, and let's just see what happens. I mean, that's going to be the ultimate test. I mean, I was talking myself out of a job. But, you know, I thought, this is the ultimate way. So we turned all the ads off, three days later, Turn the ads back on!

James: So they weren't seeing it. And there's some companies I think that turn off all their marketing, and sometimes there's no change, was it Airbnb or someone like that?

Ilana: Interesting.

James: So, you know, it could have been wasted, or there could have been too much emphasis on brand building or just amplifying content.

There definitely can be a lag time. I remember, in some of my other conversations on this podcast, someone quoted a metric of 60 days average return on ad spend across a billion dollars' worth of ads. Sixty days. So a lot of people expect, Oh, I'll just buy this ad now and then within minutes, I'll be making a sale, and then I can attribute it straight back to that ad. It just doesn't pan out that way.

And I guess also depends on your strategy, because maybe you're building an email list. And then six months later, you do a broadcast offer and make sales to that house list that you stored energy from earlier. And I do that in my own database.

Occasionally, we'll make offers, but someone might have been on my list for three years, may have come from an ad that you helped me set up for my YouTube channel, or from a banner to get my book for free, and then months later, they buy something even through a partner of mine. So yeah, you've got to take a long-term game.

Is the funnel your goal?

Okay, so return on ad spend or cost per acquisition either direct or blended. What else do we want to look at? What would be the third thing?

Ilana: The third thing I personally love looking at is, hopefully, your listeners have set up what's called the funnel in as their goal. So when they've gone to set up their goal in the admin section of Analytics, they had set up a funnel, and then Analytics reports on how people have progressed through that funnel. And importantly, what you're looking at is where or if people have dropped off somewhere in that funnel.

Now, this is like an extra step that you do need to set up. So for e-commerce, you know, step one of the funnel would be maybe landing on the homepage, step two would be landing on the product page, step three would be adding it to the cart, step four would be checkout and all that kind of stuff. And you can see the drop-off points.

And that, I just find visually, is incredibly powerful. And you can visually see where your funnel or your bucket is leaking people out. And, yeah, so you do need to take that step to do it. But it's such a treasure trove of information. And that kind of leads me into the number four metric that I want people to look at, which is new versus returning people.

Newcomers versus return visitors

And what we like to do as well is to create, look at the funnel compared to new versus returning. So that's sort of like a segment within a segment to some degree, you know? So we want to compare the behavior of someone who's never come to the website before versus a return visitor. And obviously, your return visitors are going to convert higher.

But then we want to see the funnel of new versus returning. And ideally, what we want to see is that your funnel is doing its job of converting new people. And we want to compare the funnel conversion rate for new versus returning people. Does that make sense?

James: It does. So basically, the funnel is good. And if you're doing lead gen, a lot of people these days are doing things like sequential sales pages with multiple page steps or reverse squeeze pages, and you want to see where people drop off.

And it makes me laugh, about the new versus returning. I think I used to have a lot of returning visitors. But I sometimes felt like maybe I wasn't doing a good enough job with new visitors, you know? The first time they were there, I'd wanted to understand how they're behaving differently, and why I wasn't able to have them become a customer on that first visit. So I guess this is really the difference between cold and warm traffic.

Ilana: Exactly. And I think this is probably maybe not so applicable to you, James, because you publish a lot of content, and people want to read a lot of your content. So hence, a lot of your returning visitors are just consuming content, versus an e-commerce store that really, like, not many people are reading their content, if they're not really remotely interested in buying.

James: You haven't seen a surfer market, then.

Ilana: It's true. That will apply to everyone.

James: I tell you what it's like, it's fascinating to me how many people buy second-hand surfboard from me, and they go, I know this board, I've seen it. I've visited that site many, many times where you've done a review on it.

These surfers, I've never met a market where when you list something for sale, people want to just start having a conversation with you and sending pictures of their other boards and telling you where a good surf spot and who they met back in the day. I'm like, Dude, do you want to buy it or not? It's really fascinating.

But yeah, I get your point. Depending on what you're trying to do with your website, this metric could be very informative to see how different pathways are performing. You know, different cold or hot, if they're doing different things.

Ilana: Yeah, and if your funnel for new visitors is not converting, then it might be a function of, you've got to improve the copy on your landing page or the product pages. You've got to maybe add reviews, you've got to have copy that's more benefit-driven rather than feature-driven, maybe add a video, you know like, just trying to improve the overall conversion rate.

The pages that bring in and convert people

Or possibly, it's a function of traffic, which actually kind of leads me to the next one, the metric that we like to look at, which are the pages that people enter your website on and if they convert, and specifically, these are for businesses that have a blog, okay, that generate SEO traffic.

And actually, we've got this client at the moment, somebody I'm helping, rather, who, 28 percent of their overall traffic is from this one blog post. Like, for whatever reason, Google is giving them a lot of love and ranking for this particular term, which is one of their blog posts. But it doesn't really convert to sales. It converts at .04 percent. So what do you do with that?

I think a few things you do with that. I think you've got to possibly change the copy on that blog post, like, leverage the fact that 28 percent of all your traffic is coming into this page. So whatever you could do to convince them to buy your product is good.

Or you then also, you know, it might be diluting your retargeting lists and maybe you possibly exclude the people who've entered on that page as if you've just for whatever reason can't get them to convert. But yeah, you definitely want to look at the pages that people are entering on and how they perform.

James: This has come up in dealing with Gert from seoleverage.com. He shows sometimes we do get a lot of traffic to a page, but it doesn't do what we want it to do. So we do rewrite it or update it, or add elements.

Sometimes we've got too much traffic to, like, a category page. So we just switch that off. And then we try and rank our longer form page, and like, repaste the exact same words and stuff. So there's some things that you can do. But, of course, all of this relies on you actually knowing this is happening. And if you don't track this, you won't ever know. So it'll be a big secret.

Ilana: That's exactly right. Yeah. And this all obviously hinges on you having set up the goals in your Analytics, so that you can then have always that as like, the reference point of what we're looking at. And so I'm just a big believer in focusing on the 80:20, you know? So if a huge portion of your traffic is coming on this one page, rather than updating all your blog content, you just start with your highest pages that get the most amount of visitors, and possibly you can work through them that way.

It's just about being really smart about the work that you do, rather than just creating an endless list of stuff that you're going to do with maybe three people land on it in a month, because it's not worth it, versus one page that ranks really well, that's the page you focus on, maybe you even hire a copywriter or whatever. But that would move the needle much more rather than updating all your blog content. You know?

James: Love it. So what about number six?

What age and gender are your best customers?

Ilana: The other thing I like to look at are demographics, and specifically, this is to see, is there a certain segment of age or gender that converts really well, that if you're running, let's say, Facebook ads, you can just focus on that area of the market? So this other person I was helping, the product that they sell is, for whatever reason, it's for a home office, okay?

And for whatever reason, 75 percent of their transactions are from men, according to Google Analytics. Obviously, you know, it's not foolproof, that data, but you know, 75 percent is pretty high. And even we can do a segment within the agenda to see what age brackets of men convert really well. And then for Facebook ads, you just focus on that end of the market. It's just being really clever about it of like, right, where's the 80:20 here, you know?

James: So we've got the age and the gender. And that's basically, we're going to try and match that up to our targeting. And there might be certain platforms that work better for different genders as well, right? If we wanted to sort of move further afield than the general ones?

Ilana: Yeah, exactly. I mean, if you've got a very female market, you might focus on Pinterest as a platform. But then I would also then go back to your traffic sources report. And hopefully, you can see the Pinterest traffic, maybe that's coming, and does that convert?

But obviously, it's not just about conversions. Another thing you want to see is like, do they bounce straightaway? Do they view more than one page? Like, what's the quality of the traffic? Like, that's really what you want to look at. Are they engaged visitors?

James: Yeah, that's a huge thing. You know, when I had my YouTube channel looked at by a friend of mine, and there was some videos where people were clicking on it, but not watching it. And that's really dangerous for the channel, and they dropped straight off. So it's like, the lesson there was, you've got to carry the promise.

Maybe you've got click baity titles or really compelling titles, but you're not delivering on the content. So you might want to improve the content if you're getting all these people disappearing on you. Or clearly you're paying for traffic that's not resulting in an outcome so you might want to change the ad creative, for example.

Ilana: Exactly, yeah. There's many interpretations you can have for this. Interpretations and applications as well.

Pay attention to your mobile traffic conversions

James: So let's talk about number seven, then.

Ilana: Number seven, I believe in 2022, we need to focus on how our mobile traffic is converting. More and more people are doing everyday stuff on their mobile. So I personally like to see the proportion of traffic that is from a mobile and how that traffic converts. So if 80 percent of your traffic is mobile, but it has a very, very low conversion rate compared to desktop, then possibly the mobile experience isn't very good for people, you need to create a mobile-optimized site that's better.

I would probably install some heat mapping software like Hotjar, you could just do a free account, set up the recordings, and you can watch the recordings to see what the user experience is like for people. We've had situations in the past where for some certain types of phones, it just like, threw everything out, and people just got, oh, my God, terrible experience. And so I think, you know, mobile is only going to keep heading more and more in that direction. So you need to have a good mobile experience for people.

James: And where do tablets sit?

Ilana: Yeah, I never find tablets to be a huge proportion of traffic, actually, which is interesting.

James: I feel like that's what you sort of put on your lap when you're watching TV. Or maybe they're more of a place where you view content, like, videos and stuff.

Ilana: I guess, maybe, I don't know. In my house, the tablets are all my kids'. So like, I don't even have a tablet. It's either a phone or laptop.

James: I have a tablet, but I hardly use it. I might use it to watch a video or a Formula 1 race or something at three in the morning, if I feel compelled to, if it were like, down to a season finale. And I just don't want to watch it on the TV. But yeah, it's like, I don't use it. I'm using my phone for everything.

What sort of trends are you seeing with the mobile phone? Because I know we use our phones like, twice as much as we did a few years ago. Are people buying on the phone?

Ilana: They are, actually. And typically, whenever I help someone with Analytics, and I go into this mobile report, I'm anticipating to see mobile traffic to convert at least half. But there have been many situations, actually, where I've seen mobile traffic convert higher than desktop.

James: I mean, something happened to me the other day that I thought is indicative of the changes. A few years ago, I would have gone into this room where I'm recording, to use my iMac to purchase a luggage bag that I wanted, because I'd know I probably have to pull out the credit card or type in PayPal stuff.

But I was on my phone the other day, and I was looking up a bag model that I used to love, but it actually got stolen a few years ago in California, and I never replaced it. And they stopped making it. And then I thought, I wonder if they remake them. And then I found that they're actually remaking a version of it.

And it was on there. And it showed me the Apple Pay thing. And I think I clicked on it. And it did a face ID, and I just clicked on my phone, and it was coming to my house. It was all done instantly. It just all hooked up, probably, in Shopify.

Ilana: Seamless.

James: Seamless, it was so easy to purchase. All I needed was my face and two clicks. I didn't have to carry around my credit card, I didn't have to enter any detail. So I believe I'll be purchasing on the phone more now because it's so easy. And the other thing that I've noticed, it's so much easier now to send money from your phone from these online banking type things and stuff, just a few clicks, it stores and remembers everything. So that's where we're going, I think.

So we will call this, like, a traffic and conversions dashboard, right? Of course, there's other things you're going to track in your business. And maybe if there's interest in that, I might cover that in a separate episode, like the things that I track in my business outside of this, and I'm talking about things like the number of emails sent, the number of visits to your site the last 30 days, how many paying customers you have in your subscription membership.

There are other reporting metrics. But this is the ultimate seven metrics you would want to track in your sales and conversion dashboard, which you've suggested, Ilana. We can do it quite easily in Google Analytics. We can use connectors and put it all into the Google Data Studio. There you go.

If you want help with this, of course, I'm going to recommend Ilana. Data is her love language. So let's mention where we can go and get help.

Ilana: Yes, so as mentioned, Irene has created a template for Teach Traffic members. That will be available as of next month, which would be April or May. And yeah, so you can go to teachtraffic.com and obviously get access to all my training courses, as well as other things that guest experts provide as well.

James: Of course, once you've got the dashboard, you're going to want to know how to move the needle, so to speak, and change your metrics or even interpret them and say, Well, is this even good or bad? And that's where Ilana, you're so valuable. You're like, Oh, that's fantastic. Or, Gee, I think we could do some things here. These are the top three things I would change. And of course, turn up that turbo engine on your paid traffic and conversions.

I love it. I appreciate all of your insights. It's so fun to get you back on, and I'm learning every time you come on. I really appreciate it. This is episode 915. We'll put this handy seven metrics checklist at SuperFastBusiness.com. And of course, head over to Teach Traffic and get some help from Ilana with your paid campaigns.

Ilana: Thanks so much, James.

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