



**BEYOND SEARCH:  
MEASURING THE IMPACT OF YOUR SEARCH ENGINE VIA ANALYTICS**

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## Beyond Search

Quicker than you can say Sarbanes-Oxley or regulatory compliance, the enterprise search market has gone from serving a relatively quiet existence as a nice-to-have technology to playing a critical role in today's emerging information management solutions. And while government compliance might be the most obvious catalyst for the industry's growth, the need for search extends far beyond satisfying the demands of the public sector.

To begin with, the amount of information the average employee deals with on a daily basis is continually increasing. What's more, these workers are being asked to make key decisions on the fly, which requires instant access to data that helps them make the best decisions possible.

For organizations requiring enterprise search, the good news is the market's evolution has spawned rapid innovation, greater interoperability with other enterprise systems, a broader range of solution providers and more favorable pricing. The bad news is the landscape is muddier than ever, leaving you with the difficult task of making sense of the market and its players.

### Search Technology's Basic Value Proposition

Vendors can be evaluated on any number of criteria, but when you get right down to it, there's one basic function that *all* suppliers should satisfy – help people find information fast. This means giving your employees tools that drastically reduce the time spent looking for information while also eliminating the duplication of content that already exists. Together, these translate into higher employee productivity.

This is the basic value proposition of search, and the foundation on which all successful solutions are based. Unfortunately, vendors tend to cloud the picture by placing too much emphasis on bells and whistles, despite the fact that analysts routinely agree that 80 percent of search comes down to simply getting the fundamentals right first.

### Analytics: The Next Generation of Search

And what of the remaining 20 percent? If rapid and accurate retrieval of internal data makes up the lion's share of any viable search solution, then the remaining 20 percent refers to the incremental value an organization can achieve beyond the key retrieval component.

Enter search analytics.

Similar to a good web analytics package that illustrates what visitors do while navigating your website, search analytics provides you with insight into your users' search patterns, behaviors and trends. Although the potential for these reporting tools has not been fully realized, the ramifications of search analytics are quite tangible and far reaching.

## Search Analytics 101

The ability to analyze search behavior is nothing new. Whether you wanted to learn more about your employees' use of your intranet search or your customers' use of the search function on your website, the ability to take raw search log files and translate them into meaningful reports has existed for some time. Of course, that meant writing database scripts with various conditions and creating a presentation interface for illustrating these results.

Although not as pervasive as one might think, enterprise search vendors are increasingly bringing this functionality out of the shadows and presenting it to customers in the form of out-of-the-box reporting. From an administration standpoint, this often requires little more than pointing the search software at a blank database.

And what precisely can be measured? Consider the following list of possible reports.

### Standard Reports

- Most popular searches over a given period of time
- Top searches with no results found
- Searches with no results viewed
- Top ascending and descending searches
- Search volume (peak and quiet times)

On the face, the list is straightforward and readily understood. However, the true value of search analytics isn't found in the 'what you can analyze' but in the 'why.' Before addressing this, it's important to first understand the basic differences between standard web analytics and its younger sibling search analytics.

### Web Analytics Vs. Search Analytics

Web analytics software such as ClickTracks gives webmasters and website administrators the ability to monitor user "clickstreams," or the navigation path users take on your site. This information can be measured and analyzed on an individual or aggregate basis, presenting an organization with the data needed to better understand how its target audiences are traversing its sites.

For example, web analytics will tell you that of the 1,000 people who visited your homepage, 65 percent clicked your Products page link, and of those 650 people, 40 percent opted to download your latest product brochure. While these reports help you deduce what your users are thinking and seeking as they navigate your site, they lack the explicit data that helps you make stronger inferences about what these individuals truly seek. Search analytics, by its very nature, overcomes this hurdle by capturing what your visitors are looking for, and in their own words.

## Implications of Search Analytics

Aside from the fact that search analytics enables you to learn more about the users who opt to search your site rather than navigate it, the benefits of these reporting capabilities are broad in nature and have yet to be fully leveraged in the modern workplace. For starters, these metrics can be applied to any standard ROI calculation to help you determine the value of your search investment. Additionally, analytics can help provide direction to various members of your staff. The following table presents some of the standard reports mentioned previously and the implications they have on various professions within a typical organization.

**Figure 1: Organizational Impact**

Report	Description	Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Top Searches</li> </ul>	Highlights the most popular search terms over a given period of time.	<p><b>Marketing Professionals</b> Presents terms that can be leveraged for pay-per-click advertising programs such as Google AdWords.</p> <p><b>Executive Management</b> By better understanding what users want, management team can make stronger strategic decisions.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Top Searches With No Results Found</li> </ul>	Outlines the top terms that yield NO search results.	<p><b>Administrators/Webmasters</b> Often the result of misspellings, these terms prompt administrators to create custom synonyms to associate errors w/ correct spellings.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Top Searches With No Results Viewed</li> </ul>	Searches that prompted results that yielded NO clicks from users.	<p><b>Content Managers</b> Highlights content deficiencies, prompting content managers to either create new content or tweak metadata of existing content, which in turn yields stronger results.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ascending and Descending Trends</li> </ul>	Increasing and decreasing popularity of search terms over a period of time.	<p><b>Merchandisers and Marketing</b> Rising and falling trends in certain search terms help generate new ideas for marketing campaigns and product promotions.</p>

## Checklist: Assessing the Value of Search Analytics

The extent of the benefit that can be derived from the search analytics capabilities of your enterprise search solution depends on how your employees interact with your various online properties. The following checklist helps highlight the various ramifications of search analytics in your organization. The more options you check, the better suited you are to gaining value from search analytics.

### Calculating the Benefit

1. What types of sites are in use at your organization? Check all that apply.

- Public Website
- Corporate Intranet
- Partner Portal/Extranet
- Subscription-Based Site
- E-commerce/Online Retail Site

2. Check each option that describes a particular function or system in use at your organization.

- Web Content Management
- Web Analytics
- Google AdWords
- Yahoo! Search Marketing
- Network Performance Monitoring
- Product Merchandising
- Online Marketing

3. Check each option that is true in your organization.

- We currently use one or more search engines to locate our internal data
- Our current search technology lacks search analytics capabilities
- We employ content managers to optimize the structure of our content
- Our marketers and merchandisers actively use web analytics in their daily jobs
- We maintain one or more pay-per-click advertising programs
- Search engine optimization is a priority for our organization
- Our executives are interested in how our users interact with our Internet sites
- We have an interest in learning when search activity is at its highest
- We require a stronger understanding of trends in our users' search patterns

## About ISYS Search Software

Established in 1988, ISYS Search Software is a global supplier of enterprise search solutions for business and government. The company's award-winning software suite offers a broad range of products designed for searching desktops, networks, websites, intranets and custom applications. ISYS has been deployed by thousands of organizations operating in a variety of industries, including government, legal, law enforcement, financial services, healthcare and recruitment.

ISYS serves its global base of customers via operations in the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom. The company's customers include the US Department of Homeland Security, Cisco Systems, Boeing, EMC Legato, Perkins Coie, the IRS, the US Department of Justice, the Miami Police Department, TOWER Software and Blue Cross Blue Shield.

### About ISYS SearchTrends

ISYS SearchTrends serves as a core component of the ISYS:web 7 search solution for websites, intranets, portals and custom web applications. Providing out-of-the-box, browser-based reporting capabilities, ISYS SearchTrends delivers detailed insight into user behavior, search trends and patterns, and overall search activity. Through this functionality, organizations and their employees can extend the value of their enterprise search solution by applying the insight gained to their everyday work lives.

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