What to Measure

Measuring Results · https://sitecrafter.uk/docs/what-to-measure/

Most small business owners know they *should* be looking at their website stats. But open up an analytics dashboard for the first time and it's easy to feel overwhelmed - there are dozens of numbers fighting for your attention, and it's not always obvious which ones matter.

The good news is that you probably only need to watch a handful of metrics regularly. The trick is knowing which ones are relevant to what you're actually trying to achieve.

Vanity metrics vs. useful metrics

Some numbers look impressive but don't tell you much. Total page views, for example, sounds great when it's going up - but if none of those visitors are contacting you or buying anything, it's not actually helping your business.

These are sometimes called vanity metrics - they're nice to have but not worth optimising for. The metrics worth paying attention to are the ones connected to real business outcomes: enquiries, bookings, sales, or whatever success looks like for your site.

Start with your goal

Before looking at any numbers, it helps to be clear about what your website is supposed to do. Most small business websites fall into one of three categories:

- Generate leads (enquiry forms, phone calls, email clicks)
- Drive footfall or bookings (local businesses, restaurants, service providers)
- Sell products directly (e-commerce)

Your most important metrics will differ depending on which of these applies to you. There's no point obsessing over your bounce rate if what you really need to know is whether people are filling in your contact form.

The metrics worth watching

Regardless of your goal, these are the core numbers to review regularly:

- ***Visitors*** - How many people are coming to your site, and is that number growing over time? Don't worry too much about the absolute number - a local plumber getting 200 well-targeted visitors a month can do very well from that.
- ***Traffic sources*** - Where are your visitors coming from? Search engines, social media, direct (people typing your address), or referrals from other sites? This tells you which of your marketing efforts are actually working.
- ***Top pages*** - Which pages are people actually reading? If your services page barely gets any visits but your homepage does, that's useful to know.
- ***Conversions*** - Are visitors doing the thing you want them to do? This might be submitting a form, clicking a phone number, or making a purchase. This is the number that matters most.
- ***Conversion rate*** - Of everyone who visits, what percentage converts? Even small improvements here can have a big impact - going from 1% to 2% effectively doubles your leads without needing any more traffic.

What you can probably ignore (for now)

Bounce rate, session duration, pages per visit - these can be useful in specific situations, but for most small business owners they're a distraction early on. Focus on traffic and conversions first, and only dig into the supporting metrics when you have a specific question to answer.

Keeping it simple

We recommend Independent Analytics for most of our clients - it lives inside your WordPress dashboard, shows you the numbers that matter without the complexity of a full analytics platform, and doesn't require any cookie consent banners because it's privacy-friendly by design.

Once a month, check your visitor numbers, glance at where traffic is coming from, and make sure your conversions are ticking along. That's genuinely enough for most small businesses to stay on top of how their site is performing.

When something looks off - traffic drops, conversions dry up - that's the time to dig deeper. We cover how to do that in the articles that follow.