These notes are paired with a Power Point slide presentation. You can follow along with the slides using the red **(Slide #)** references.

Results Tracking – by Chris Leyda

(Slide 2) Why track results on our Web site? We track Web results because they help us improve our Web site performance. Results Tracking helps in two fundamental ways:

- ✓ Firstly, **Results Tracking paints a picture of the visitor experience**. Understanding how visitors experience our Web site is the first step toward improving it – by improving the visitor experience on our Web site, we automatically improve its performance.

- ✓ Secondly, tracking your results is the only way to know if your "improvement" work is paying off. We track results to identify success, understand the reasons, and make sure our efforts are having a positive impact on our Internet strategy.

(Slide 3) This part of our presentation is called "Results Tracking." I prefer to use the term "Results Tracking" as an alternative to the more popular, "Web Analytics." Let me be clear: Web Analytics and Results Tracking are essentially the same project. I use my own term because I think the term Web Analytics needlessly makes the process sound difficult – for gurus alone – discouraging people from doing it.

I would like to see **everyone** doing a little of it, and I prefer to keep the focus on site performance – so Results Tracking is what I call it. We MUST track the results of our Web sites – and for one reason: so that we can understand the online experience of our visitors, and improve it. This serves our social mission.

To be sure, Web Analytics has become a buzz word that is gaining lots of traction these days, particularly since Google has started providing its own Analytics tools, throwing some serious corporate muscle behind the idea. It ***is*** a substantial body of knowledge, and we'll touch on a few of the points here. I do not claim to be an expert in the field, but I do want to raise the discussion here so that the non profit community can build better Web sites by taking better advantage of these valuable tools and techniques.

I'm curious. How many of you are very familiar with "Web Analytics?" **(Slide 4)**

Here is a technical definition of Web Analytics:
"Web Analytics is the assessment of a variety of data, including Web traffic, Web-based transactions, Web server performance, usability studies, user-submitted information and related sources to help create a generalized understanding of the visitor experience online." – Eric Peterson in *Web Analytics Demystified*

(Slide 5) To simplify Peterson's definition: In Results Tracking, we study Web-related data to help us understand how visitors experience our Web site. As Eric Peterson's technical definition suggests, Web Analytics can become very sophisticated and require powerful, expensive tools.

(Slide 6) Nevertheless, we can track our Web Results very productively using tools already available to us with relatively simple techniques - and more importantly, without much cost. As you can see here, to help sort out the options, I categorize them by the level of sophistication – You can use Basic, Moderate and Sophisticated approaches. Each has advantages and costs. Once you go beyond the "Basic" level, the biggest advantage you gain is the ability to do traffic analysis and funnel tracking, among a few other valuables.

The Results Tracking process will be the same no matter how sophisticated your tools and techniques are. More sophisticated approaches will simply present analysis reports with greater depth and detail, and give you more "stuff" to analyze.

(Slide 7) Everyone in this room could set up a Basic Results Tracking program in a matter of minutes.

1. **Basic –**
    a. **What's tracked:** Visitor Traffic totals, Referring Sites, and Search Engine Results tracked and presented in a standardized report
    b. **Setup required:** Very Minimal
    c. **Cost:** None
    d. **Example tools:** AW Stats, Webalyzer

Basic Results Tracking Report Templates are Available for Download at www.netpragmatics.com – NetPragmatics will help you set them up. There is no cost for this service. Send an email to cleyda@netpragmatics.com to get started.

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2. **Moderate –**
    a. **What's tracked:** Navigation (click stream & funnel) and conversion tracking
    b. **Setup required:** Some setup (page Tags or Web Log reader); expect a learning curve, but it's worth it – particularly for complex sites
    c. **Cost:** Free tools are out there; Must learn how to analyze results.
    d. **Example tools:** Google Analytics and Web log analysis software. Net Pragmatics provides consulting services and site audits.

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3. **Sophisticated –**
    a. **What's tracked:** Almost everything trackable; the value comes from versatile presentation of data and reports more than seriously different capability
    b. **Setup required:** Contract with a vendor who installs. Training and experience is needed.
    c. **Cost:** Significant expense for high-end tools and consultant relationships
    d. **Example tools:** WebTrends, Visual Sciences; ZAAZ is an Analyst Consultant.

Next, I want to look at the specific examples of tools and techniques, especially the AW Stats and Google options. **(Slide 10)** Remember: The Results Tracking process will be the same no matter how sophisticated your tools and techniques. The process will involve four steps, which we'll try to become familiar with using examples.

Extra notes and information – Not part of the standard presentation:

Decide what to track
The most important thing you will do in any results tracking or site analysis project, is decide what you will be tracking. As we'll see when we look at data collection, there is an incredible amount of raw data available for you to analyze. Most of it is irrelevant. Most data will not help you improve your Web site. Make careful choices about what data is truly important, or you will dull the impact of your tracking efforts and make it difficult to act on the results of your analysis.

The reason Curtis and I push the concepts of Visibility and Usability is to help focus our attention during Results Tracking. Stick with the visitor activities that

are most obviously associated with the success of your Web strategy.

How to Define Key Performance Indicators

- ✓ Focus your tracking efforts on the visitor activities that drive the success of your Web site (i.e. the "Key" activities).
- ✓ Determine what Web Results data tells you whether visitors are doing these things on your site.
- ✓ Present the data in a meaningful way, so that you can act on it.

Results Tracking starts with data.
There are two principle ways that Web data is collected and made accessible:

- ✓ **Page Tagging –** This technique involves assigning a bit of code onto your Web pages. A form of Java Script, this code transmits information about the web visitor back to a data center. For the most part, the data from page tagging is made available through a Web page produced by a vendor (i.e. Google) and set up as a pre-packaged report area.
- ✓ **Web Server Logs –** All Web servers create what is basically an activity log for the site, recording information about each request made for resources. As a site visitor's Web browser requests information from a Web server, a log entry is written to a text file that can be read or analyzed by a computer program. Every part of your Web site, including the individual pages, pictures, Java Scripts and so forth, is a type of resource delivered by the server to the visitor through the Internet. The Web log records every request. This is what a Web log entry looks like:

555.555.555 - - [19/Jun/2007:18:28:03 -0600] "GET /pageserver/netpragmatics HTTP/1.1" 200 10942 "http://www.netpragmatics.com/" "Mozilla/5.0 (Windows; U; Windows NT 5.1; en-US; rv:1.8.1.4) Gecko/20070515 Firefox/2.0.0.4"

There will be an IP number, a date and time stamp, along with the URL information for the page or resource requested. Also, the server logs what Web browser requested the resource (Mozilla), along with some other tidbits depending on your configuration.

In a Web log, a crucial piece of information is the HTTP Status code, which is "200" on this entry. This code reports whether the server delivered the resources successfully. In the example above, the "200" is telling us that the server successfully delivered the resource to the client. The bottom line: the page loaded properly. If you've ever seen the dreaded "404" Page Not Found pop up on your screen when surfing the web – that is an HTTP Status code telling you that the server cannot find the requested page; this data is also being entered into the Web log to help somebody solve the problem for you.

Comparing Web Log and Page Tag Data Sources
In many respects, the actual data provided by Web Server logs, as opposed to the Page Tagging data source is very comparable. The differences are much-discussed by vendors for competitive reasons. Each of these methods of data gathering has its own unique strengths and weaknesses. Some of them will become clear as we start looking at specific Analytics tools and techniques.

> Explain it

Your ability to Explain Visitor Activities will depend a little on your Analytical tools and a lot on your ability to interpret the data. In our opinion, too much is made of the tools and too little of the analytical know-how. Remember that we're trying to understand the user experience. This means getting a sense for the needs and wants of visitors, as well as the reasons they move around our Web sites in the

ways they do.

In order for the analytics data to be useful, you must learn how to interpret the data so that it explains the visitor experience on your site. I've said earlier that the data "paints a picture" of the visitor experience, but you are the one who paints it, by interpreting the data. This means understanding how the numbers, graphs and trend lines of your analytics data illustrate visitor experience.

It simply takes a little time and thoughtfulness to learn what to make of visitor traffic information, conversion rates, and other data provided by Analytics tools. But make no mistake – the tools only give you information that can help you make decisions and take action. But no matter what a vendor will tell you, the tools do not do the thinking for you, and without some skill in this area you will not get much actionable information from them.

You can do some research to learn how to interpret the data. Combine that with good old fashioned trial-and-error, and you'll be amazed at how quickly you can pick up the tricks of the trade.

One way to get started is to browse Netpragmatics.com in the "Research and Resources" section (www.netpratmatics.com/resources) – you'll find blogs, Web sites and other resources that deal with issues of good Web site development and analytics. We are still expanding on the resources and welcome any suggestions. You can also look at these excellent Web Analytics sites, which are helping to popularize best practices and make Web Analytics more accessible:

www.Webanalyticsassociation.org
www.Webanalyticsdemystified.com

- ✓ Decide what visitor activities to track
- ✓ Collect data that shows what visitors are doing on the Web site
- ✓ Make inferences, attempting to explain why visitors do what they do.
- ✓ Respond in order to improve the visitor experience

End of Results Tracking

1. Introduction
2. Usability Presentation – by Curtis Thomas
3. Visibility Presentation
4. Tracking Results Presentation

Chris Leyda would be pleased to discuss the contents of this presentation with anyone who reads it. For comments or questions, or to learn more about the work of Net Pragmatics, please email cleyda@netpragmatics.com or visit www.netpragmatics.com