

Web & Social Media Analytics

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What are people searching for?

If you've never used [Google Trends](#) before, I recommend you give it a go. It allows you to see the relative popularity of search terms going back to the beginning of 2004. You can segment this by geography and compare different search words/phrases against each other. While this can be fun (you can plot the rise and fall in popularity of celebrities), it does have some practical uses. Marketers use it to track the use of specific words and phrases to help them focus on relevant keywords in their online promotions and to monitor the popularity of brands. Enter the word "CILIP" and you will see an interesting graph plotting a decline in the usage of the word in Google. Of course you need to be careful about interpreting results, as there may be reasons for these changes other than the popularity of the organisation itself. Type in "Facebook" and you will see a decline over the last few years of its popularity as a search term. Based on this it might be assumed that the social network was declining in popularity but a more likely explanation is that as most people now use the service as an app on their smartphone, they are less likely to search for the website on Google. I have been using Google Trends recently as part of a research project on the so-called "internet of things". I wanted to know how general Internet users are referring to this area of technology and plotted it against other, more established terms for similar technologies including "pervasive computing" and "ubiquitous computing". The results were interesting and showed a general decline in the relative frequency of use of the latter two terms and a dramatic rise in searches for "internet of things".

While Google Trends is useful for tracking the relative frequency of search terms over time, it does not give absolute numbers for how many times specific words and phrases are searched for. To find out how many searches are being made for a particular search term you need to use the [Google Adwords](#) Keyword Planner tool. This is a tool designed for companies promoting their products and services via the Adwords service. These are the small classified-type ads you see alongside Google search results. However, you do not need to actually run advertising campaigns to use the Keyword Planner; a normal Google account will suffice. I find it very useful when working with small businesses to help them understand the words their potential customers use when searching for companies like them on the Internet. I often find that the words people inside an industry think their customers use to describe their services are different to the reality. The Keyword Planner helps them focus on targeting relevant keywords and phrases on their websites rather than chasing words that nobody is actually typing into Google. However, the tool has uses beyond the designing of commercial websites. Used in conjunction with Google Trends it allows anyone offering services, commercial or not, to better understand how their users perceive them.

Facing up to Twitter Reach

Following my comments in the last column about Twitter Analytics, Ned Potter, Academic Liaison Librarian at the University of York, has posted on his [blog](#), a short piece about the service being extended to the mobile app. For anyone who uses Twitter in a professional context this is a great development as it allows engagement to be monitored wherever you are. As Ned says and I pointed out last time, when you start doing this you may be surprised at how few of your followers actually see your tweets and how a lot fewer actually retweet or click on embedded links. Ned estimates that, on average, each of his tweets is seen by 11% of his followers. This seems about right although it can vary significantly depending on the content of the tweet and whether it is retweeted by other users. So what does this mean for anyone who uses Twitter to promote their or their employer's services? My advice is to use Twitter Analytics and track the impact your posts are having. Get a feel for which types of tweets (embedded images and URLs, for example) are engaged with and refine your approach based on that. Ultimately, as I have told several business users recently, if you're not generating engagement after doing this then perhaps your efforts would be better spent elsewhere.

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