Largest Learnings from Top Websites

Sine Qua Non

#1 To engage advertisers, need at least 1 million unique visitors per month
(Atlantic now at 500,000)

#2 Traffic is built by same readers coming back many times

- Paper #1 15% of visitors account for 80% of page views

- Paper #2 News Junkies..................several times daily
  Loyalists......................once daily
  Casuals........................occasionally
  Search.........................only when search brings them

#3 Periodicity of print publication is irrelevant; web should draw traffic at least daily

#4 Working Goal? – Core user group that comes several times per day

#5 Biggest sites refresh content constantly

- Paper #1 Lead photo changes hourly
  Lead story changes 7-8 times per day

- Paper #2 Changes front page several hundred times per day
  Big changes 6-7 times per day

- ONA Lead story changes 7-8 times per day

- Bloomberg Changes 90 times per day

- Good Blogs 7-8 entries per day

- Best Blogs 20-30 entries per day

The Online Setting

#6   Vast majority of online visits occur from offices during the business day
(time of day when there is no media competition)

#7   Think of online visits as "breaks" or "distractions" or "interruptions" to business day.
Generally last 30 seconds to 3 minutes

- 60 seconds to review breaking news
- 3-4 minutes for unique features
- Onion is momentary office break
- RocketBoom is 3-minute office break

Centrality of the News

#8   Not just news, "breaking news," is what draws traffic to journalism websites

- Multiple Sources

#9   Possible that real draw is comment on, insight into, the news

Magazine   People won't come to us just for the news. Go to the portals for that.
We have to provide original insight or detail.

"breaking analysis, not breaking news"

"We will tell you something new or something new about what you
already know"

Newspaper   Before "the wall" went up, people came for the news but opinion
attracted the most traffic. Opinion pieces are the most e-mailed.

Magazine   Needed daily content. Found 40 bloggers to file regularly. Soon going
to 400 bloggers.

Creating Stickiness

#10   Shared view that news is point of entry but must drive traffic elsewhere on the site
Key is to surround news with other "sticky" features

Devices to Capture Attention, Divert Readers Past the News

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┌──────────── Reader Choice Boxes ────────────┐
│                                              │
│  Most-Emailed List        Most-Saved List    │
│                                              │
│  Most-Read List                              │
└──────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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- Whole Microsite on News Item #1
    - Background
    - Behind the Scenes
    - Photo
    - Map

- Commentary on the News

- Sports and entertainment stories on the front page to draw readers to those sections
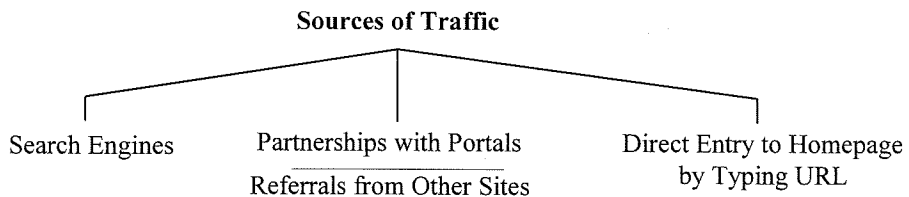
- Message Boards

- Human interest stories

News site: "Come for the news. Stay for all the cool stuff."

Sources of Traffic – Attracting Traffic

#11   Traffic comes from three sources

Sources of Traffic

Search Engines	Partnerships with Portals Referrals from Other Sites	Direct Entry to Homepage by Typing URL

#12   Biggest source is often search engine.
Search engine optimization is easiest lever to pull

Magazine   50%

Newspaper   20%

#13   Second largest source is referrals from partner websites or blogs

- Suggests acute campaign to win over bloggers
- Own blogger should be "genial host" welcoming other bloggers

#14   Big Insight: Avoid assumption that traffic is coming to front page.
                With search engine traffic, every page has to be created like the front page

#15   Possible to build traffic through outbound or push messages

- RSS feeds shifting balance of power away from portals and back to publishers

- "Chunk" whole magazine into small pieces – then distribute (with ads) through viral marketing
  Table of Contents
  Agenda Contents
  Every Article
  Side Bars
  Individual Book Reviews

- "Chunk" every article into small pieces. One James Fallows article might be 15 virally distributed chunks.

Multimedia

#16   Photos are huge hit online
Visitors will go through – quickly – 30 photos on one story

#17   Slideshows are the next big thing
Photos placed in order of story with brief captions or narratives

#18   NB: Every new photo is new reader impression

#19   Video not as popular with consumers.
Requires too much commitment by visitors, too much time

#20   That said, video is a huge hit with advertisers
Extreme excess demand for video, too little supply of impressions

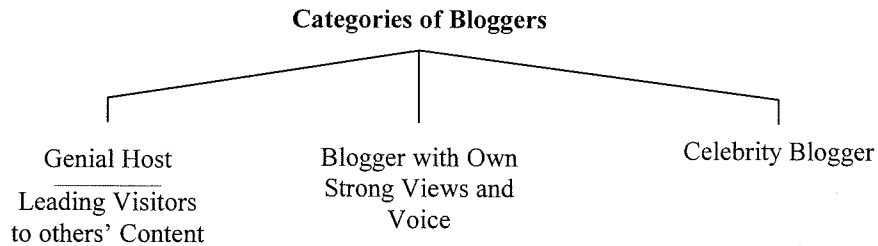|	
2006 Supply	$600 million
2007 Demand	$2-3 billion

#21   Advertisers drawn to video format

- Can repurpose TV commercials
- Get full site, sound & motion

#22   Excess demand reflected in high video CPMs

General News CPM	$5.00
Video CPM	$30-35
	>$100

Blogging

#23   At least three categories of bloggers

Categories of Bloggers

Genial Host	Blogger with Own	Celebrity Blogger
Leading Visitors to others' Content	Strong Views and Voice	

#24   Tip #1: Genial Host Blogger competently directs loyal audience across the web, pointing out articles and commentary of shared interest; works well with other bloggers, referring on own traffic and receiving theirs

#25   Tip #2: Celebrity Bloggers can single handedly dominate whole website's traffic

- 50% of Chicago Tribune traffic comes for Roger Ebert
- Drudge Report is #1 magnet for traffic on WashPost.com

#26   Tip #3: Professional and Expert Bloggers don't need to be paid; it's only the writing professionals – those who make a living on words – who require compensation

Magazine	40 bloggers – almost all free
Website	700 bloggers – almost all free

#27   Known categories of popular blogs with readers

- Politics
- Health
- Crime
- Sports
- Television
- Pets
- Parenting
- Higher Education

#28   Known categories of most successful blogs with advertisers

- Tech
- Gadgets
- Cars
- Travel
- Luxury Goods

NB: Best blog topics are endemic advertising categories

#29   Known categories of advertisers who like the web

- Consumable Goods
- Finance
- Travel
- Auto
- Technology

(very considered purchases benefiting from online research)

#30   Infinite number of special blog ideas

- Send a celebrity to cover a huge event (Jack Welch to cover Davos)
- Have a famous writer write on a private passion – not that for which he or she is known (Tom Friedman on the World Series with his son)
- Use blogging to get behind the scenes (producer of Chorus Line blogs final seven days before opening night)

#31   Shift our writers over to blogging

- Jim Fallows on China generally
- Jim Fallows releases portions of next cover story as he writes it

#32   Some writers might distribute principally through the blog

(Kevin Site, traveling war-zone countries, has traffic of 500,000 to 1,400,00 unique visitors per month)

#33   Advice on Blogging: Future is vertical blogs

#34   Advice on Blogging: Blogging is cheap way to produce daily content

#35   Advice on Blogging: Need not be illegitimate
    Can have experts, authorities, reasonable minds
    Call them commentators or columnists, not bloggers

Community

#36   Community or Web 2.0 (or user participation) is considered the next big wave among the journalism websites

2.0 Examples

- Message boards
- Comment on articles
- Grade articles
- Digg – readers submit articles, grade them and, by vote, control what's on the front page
- Readers file stories
- Readers update stories
- Readers file photos (London subway bombing)

#37   Interesting Argument: Visitors would rather interact with an article than actually (or only) read it; articles become excuses for social outreach

- Forward an article
- Grade an article
- Comment on an article
- Store an article

#38   Much talk of "citizen journalism," "universal authorship" in which everyone can file stories with the website

#39   Possible to get readers involved in major campaigns

Business Magazine   Entrepreneurs upload business ideas and plans
    Other readers comment

Atlantic   Public uploads own fiction stories
    Readers judge the competition

#40   User evaluation of everything considered most valuable, most trustworthy

- Movies
- Music
- Restaurants
- Technology purchases
- Books to read
- Articles to read

CPMs

#41   Earning high CPM matters as much as wining high traffic
Online CPM rates vary as much as 200-fold

50¢ CPM *vs* $100 CPM

#42   There are high and low CPM audiences

High-CPM Audiences $20-$60
Business Executives
C-Titles
Wealthy
Influential
Investors

Moderate-CPM Audiences $5-$10
General Public

Low-CPM Audiences   < $1
Social Networks
(like Facebook and MySpace)

#43   There are high and low CPM editorial placements

High-CPM Placements
Business Site $80-$175 CPM
Business Site $20-$70 CPM
Business Site $10-$60 CPM
Business Site $20   CPM
Business Site $15-20   CPM
Tech Site $20   CPM
Travel Site $40   CPM

Moderate-CPM Placements
General News Sections $5-$10   CPM

Low-CPM Placements
Political Sections $5   CPM
Social Network Sites   50¢   CPM

#44   Video earns highest CPM rates: $20-$100+

Success

#45   All major news websites are thought to have turned profitable in 2004

#46   News websites receiving very high traffic

CNN.com	25m unique visitors
MSNBC.com	25m unique visitors
NYT.com	21m unique visitors
Forbes.com	4x readers of Forbes Magazine Greater C-Title reach than WSJ