



Baseline Web Metrics for an Industrial Website

This white paper analyzes referring and search engine traffic, keywords and website conversions for websites in the industrial marketplace.

Ecreativeworks, Inc. *March 2009*

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Executive Summary

Analyzing industrial websites' online performance requires specialized knowledge of the industrial market. An industrial website often has a different purpose than a typical consumer or ecommerce website. The long sales cycle and the highly technical nature of the products precipitate different website browsing patterns and visitor intent. An industrial website primarily serves as a vehicle for lead generation. It also serves as a resource for potential business buyers and engineers to understand the product specifications and capabilities of a given industrial provider.

When analyzing the web metrics of an industrial website, one must view the measurements in terms of those unique marketplace factors. A high volume of traffic is ideal for any website. The average monthly traffic for an industrial website is just over 3,200 visits. But looking further into overall traffic numbers, it is important to analyze the following details of that traffic to determine if it is relevant and qualified traffic:

- **Bounce Rate.** Bounce rate helps to indicate the success of the site content, usability and visitor engagement with the site. The average bounce rate for the industrial marketplace is 50%.
- **Conversions & Lead Generation.** Conversions for industrial websites are different than in traditional ecommerce sites. Instead of an online sale, a conversion for an industrial site comes in the form of a new lead acquired when a visitor fills out a Request for Quote or Contact Us form. These conversions can be tracked through website analytics, and are as important as an online sale of a product. Acquiring a visitor's contact information enables an industrial sales team to follow up with the visitor, discuss the product, and eventually close a sale.
- **Search Engine Traffic & Keywords.** Search engines are the gateway for industrial clients to reach industry specific websites. Search engines direct almost two thirds of all industrial traffic to websites. Creating an industrial site which speaks well to the search engine algorithms is essential to achieving a large number of qualified visitors to a website. A search engine friendly industrial site contains rich content with product specifications, industry related articles and press releases.

Web content in any form helps to attract the search engines because the content contains keywords which a searcher might type in to the search query box. By adding large amounts of varied content, the site will contain many keyword combinations. When a searcher types in "long tail" or long strings of keywords, a content-rich site has the most opportunity to appear in the results page.

- **Industrial Directories.** Another important channel directing visitors to industrial websites are industrial directories. Inclusion in these directories sometimes requires payment while other listings are free. Businesses should weigh the pros and cons of paid directory inclusion and monitor the traffic referred to determine its quality and conversion rate.
- **International Traffic.** The international community also directs visitors to industrial websites, and optimizing a site for an international audience can help a company move forward into new, exciting sectors. 20% of a website's traffic comes from international visitors.

Introduction

Over the last 10 years, Ecreativeworks has developed over a thousand websites for industrial businesses nationwide. Our web applications, databases and RFQ carts have brought great success for many of our customers. Once an initial project has launched, numerous clients move into a monthly search engine optimization program. As of February 2009, we are working with over 50 monthly SEO clients in the industrial marketplace. Each month we analyze data from Google Analytics, Omniture SiteCatalyst and other tracking software to measure and report on each website's progress.

In our experiences with our SEO clients, we have found that our clients were interested in more than just how their site was performing; they wanted to know how their site's performance stacked up to their competition and other websites in the industrial marketplace. The most important web metrics our clients are interested in are the following:

1. Keyword ranking reports and actual keywords used to access the site.
2. Bounce rate for website traffic, specifically from the search engines.
3. Traffic reports to reflect direct, search engine and referring site traffic sources.
4. Website conversions through an RFQ or Contact Us Form.

The research conducted for this white paper provides statistics based solely on industrial websites that can be used to measure the success of our clients. It also provides insight into the most effective ways to optimize and market an industrial website.

Our Process

Data for the analysis was taken from websites using Google Analytics from October 1st, 2007 - September 30th, 2008. Within Google Analytics, the following pieces of information were compiled and analyzed: all visitor types, top browsers, top 10 countries, top 10 languages, all traffic sources, top referring sites, search engine traffic, top keyword referrals and conversions from search engines and industrial directories. The most relevant and useful findings are reported in this white paper.

An industrial website most often provides detailed information about product specifications, qualifications and industry guidelines. The target audience for an industrial website is engineers, buyers and specifiers. In order to track the conversions received from the website, Contact Us, Request a Sample, and Request for Quote forms are usually implemented on the site to generate action from the end user.

Data was compiled from 20 industrial websites ranging in size from 16 to 233 pages. The average number of pages was 51, the median number is 37.5. Industries covered a wide range, including sheet metal fabrication, robotic palletizing, deflashing and deburring, roll forming, cnc machining, material handling and packaging, die casting, and many more. All domains are .com extensions and are at least 2 years old.

Visitor Traffic Overview

An industrial website averages 3,212 visitors per month; nearly half of these visits originate from search engines. The remaining visitors come from referring websites, like industrial directories, and direct traffic, such as bookmarks. Since search engines provide the most traffic, it's important to ensure that your industrial website is search engine friendly and optimized for your company's most important keywords.

Pages per Visit and Time on Site: Web analytics measure the number of pages a visitor views while on your site and the amount of time the visitor spends on your site. These two metrics can be an indicator of the quality of your content. Is your site easy to navigate and does it contain compelling copy? Do you offer industrial web applications such as product configurators, distributor finders, and online catalogs? These enhancements to site content and product offerings will encourage your visitors to browse more pages of your site and to remain on those pages longer. The overall average for the amount of pages viewed per visit is 3.2. The search engines are generally a little higher than other traffic sources as the visitor is generally placed into the section of the website that is most relevant to what they are looking for. The average time on site is 1 minute and fifty five seconds; again the search engine average is a little higher.

Bounce Rate: A website's bounce rate percentage refers to the number of single page visits divided by total visits to the website. A low bounce rate is desirable, because it indicates that most visitors enter your site and continue to click inside and look around. On average half of the visitors to industrial websites leave a site from the page they entered. There are several reasons a visitor will "bounce", or leave from the landing page. These include (but aren't limited to): the page is loading too slowly; the content on the page does not support or interest the visitor; or the page content isn't relevant to the keyword used. The average bounce rate from all traffic sources is 50.34%.

New Visits: A new visitor is one who has come to your site for the first time. The percentage of new visitors is important as it is a new business opportunity for the company.

Average Monthly Visitor Overview

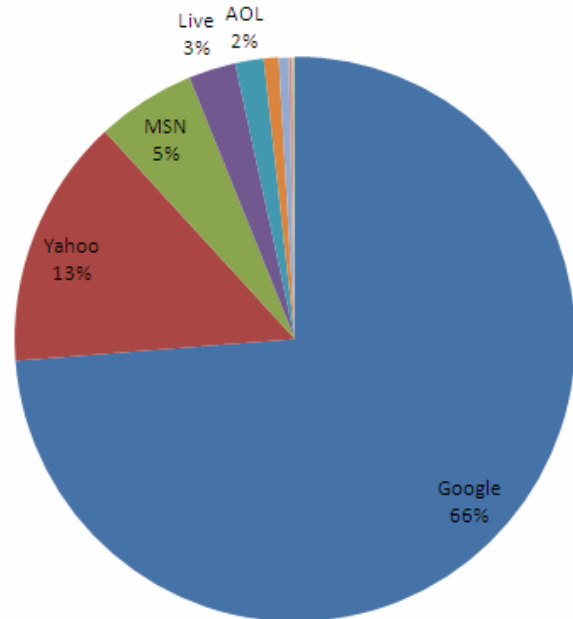
| | Visits/ Month | Pages per Visit | Time on Site | Bounce Rate | New Visits |
|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------|
| All Visitors | 3,212 | 3.2 | 1:55 | 50.34% | 79.41% |
| Referring Sites | 1,226 | 3.1 | 1:50 | 48.11% | 83.62% |
| Search Engines | 1,573 | 3.3 | 1:58 | 49.18% | 82.53% |
| Google | 1,226 | 3.3 | 1:57 | 49.85% | 81.59% |
| Yahoo | 202 | 3.5 | 2:08 | 45.27% | 85.05% |
| MSN | 80 | 3.7 | 2:02 | 45.11% | 83.03% |

Search Engine Traffic

Google earns almost two thirds of the total search engine traffic for the industrial market, making it the most important search engine by far in the industrial and the broader consumer market. There doesn't appear to be any competitor that will surpass Google's position as lead search engine in the next few years, so optimization techniques will continue to focus around Google's algorithm. Yahoo and MSN make up close to 20% of the traffic so there is significant value in optimizing for these search engines as well. A monthly optimization program is the best way to consistently improve and increase your search engine traffic.

Average Monthly Visitors from the Search Engines

| Search Engine | Visitors | % Search Engine Traffic |
|---------------|----------|-------------------------|
| Google | 1,035 | 65.80% |
| Yahoo | 202 | 12.84% |
| MSN | 80 | 5.09% |
| Live | 38 | 2.53% |
| AOL | 23 | 1.46% |
| Search | 12 | 0.76% |
| Ask | 8 | 0.51% |
| AltaVista | 3 | 0.19% |
| Netscape | 2 | 0.13% |



These search engines referred less than one visitor a month

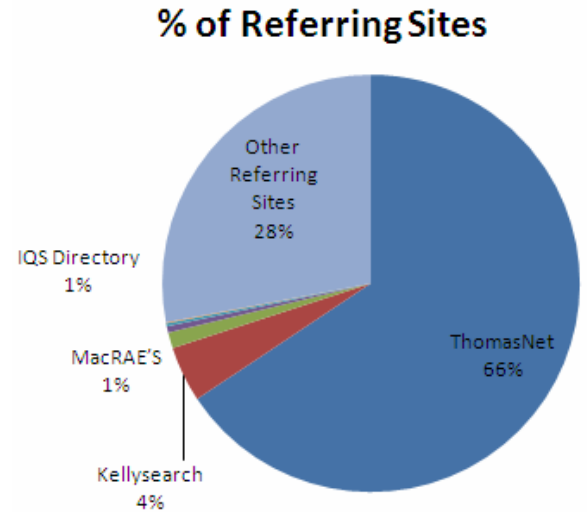
| | |
|-----------|-----------|
| CNN | Yandex |
| Alltheweb | Baidu |
| Seznam | Mamma |
| Alice | Viola |
| Lycos | Gigablast |
| Terra | Kvasir |
| About | Yam |

Top Traffic from Industrial Directories

The top industrial directories refer 27% of total traffic to industrial websites. It is clear that companies competing in the industrial market should host a listing in all or most of these directories. Industrial directories are beneficial because they provide qualified traffic and back links that can help boost search engine rankings. ThomasNet drives almost two-thirds of the referring site traffic, by far the most of any industrial directory. Kellysearch follows with 4.2%, next is MacRAE'S with 1.2%.

Average Monthly Visitors from Industrial Directories

| Top Industrial Directories | Visitors/Month | % of all Referring Sites |
|----------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| ThomasNet | 805 | 65.66% |
| Kellysearch | 53 | 4.32% |
| MacRAE'S | 15 | 1.22% |
| IQS Directory | 6 | 0.49% |
| Global Spec | 3 | 0.24% |
| Process Register | 1 | 0.08% |



Website Conversions

The ultimate goal of your industrial website is to convert visitors to buyers. In the industrial market, the buying process is a lengthy one. Industrial products and services are not typically sold on the website; instead, websites function as lead generators. There are many ways industrial websites can generate leads, but the two most common ways to obtain business leads are the Contact Us and Request a Quote pages.

One way to improve conversions on a website is to improve the “calls to action”. A call to action is asking or telling a visitor to take a specific action. Encourage visitors to contact you several ways on every page of your site through hyperlinked text which says “Contact Us” or text that highlights a product or service.

Conversions from Search Engines

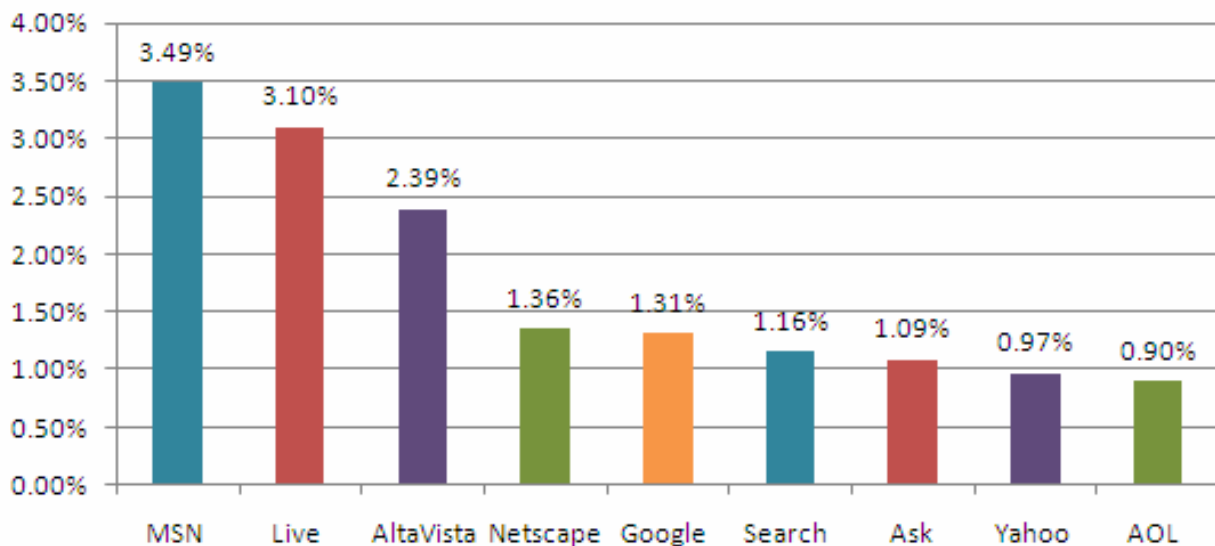
It is surprising to note that MSN boasts the best conversion rate, and that Google falls well below average compared to the rest of the search engines. Google is considered to offer highest quality search results – less spam – so the expectation would be to see better conversions based on Google’s reputation for quality. But this statistic emphasizes that even though MSN only refers 5% of search traffic, it’s still important to optimize your industrial website specifically for this search engine.

Tips for MSN: MSN places a strong emphasis on keywords in the title tag. It is also important to put keywords in the meta description and keywords tag. Link popularity is also a key factor of the MSN algorithm. Almost every link will benefit your rankings there; this information differs from Google, which takes link quality into account. It seems MSN values quantity of links.

Contact Us

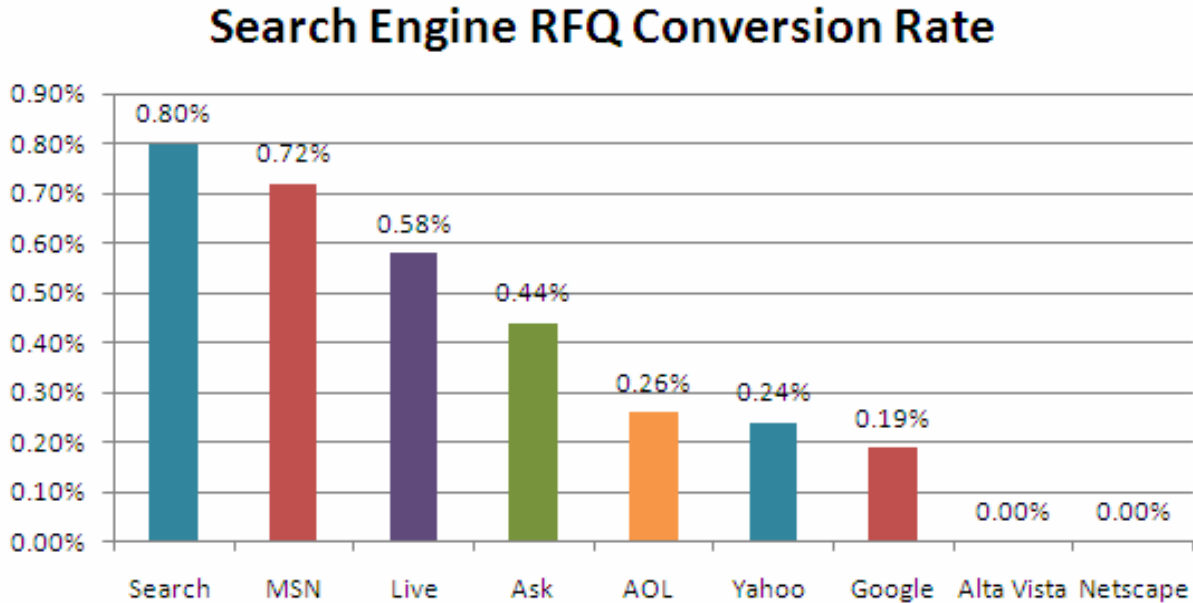
Overall, the average conversion rate for the Contact Us is low, but that is not surprising as many site visitors come to a site more than once before they convert, or they contact a company via the telephone instead of converting online. The overall site traffic average for conversion from the contact us form is 1.19%. The search engines’ average is the highest with 1.75% and the industrial directory conversion rate is the lowest with 1.11%. The graph below displays the conversion rate from the contact us form from each of the different search engines. MSN, Live and AltaVista are the top three search engines in terms of conversion rates.

Search Engine Conversion Rate



Request for Quote¹

The conversion rate for the Request for Quote is also low. Overall, the site average is 0.20%; the search engine average is 0.36%; and the industrial directory is 0.09%. In the graph below, Search, MSN and Live are the top three search engines with the highest RFQ conversion rates.



¹ Note:

- Not every website has a Request for Quote page, therefore conversion percentages are lower for Request a Quote
- Live is another version of MSN Search. MSN is the portal site, where Live is just the straight 'search' site.

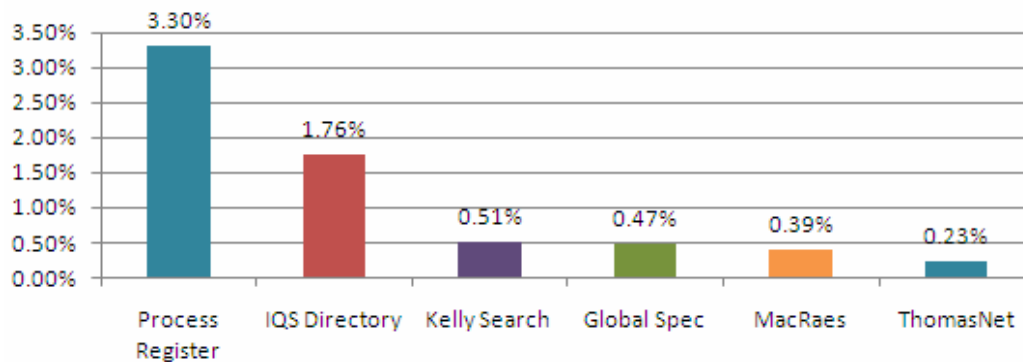
Conversions from Top Industrial Directories

Conversion rates for the industrial directories are lower on average than conversion rates from the search engines. We assume these directories are sending highly qualified traffic and expected to see better conversions. Conversions on the company website may be lower due to the type of listing a company has, some of the directories have RFQ or Contact Us forms within the listing or link to a catalog with RFQ capabilities. Conversions may also be lower because not every website in our data set has listings with one or more of the vertical search engines we analyzed. However, listings in industrial directories are still valuable and we recommend adding your website profile or link within these directories. For smart allocation of SEO resources, be sure to compare your spending in search engine optimization to your directory inclusion fees to make sure you have a healthy balance.

Contact Us:

The conversion rates from the industrial directories are lower than those from the search engines. For the Contact Us pages, the site average was 1.19%, with the industrial directories averaging 1.11%. This is well below the 1.75% conversion rate from the search engines. Process Register, IQS Directory, and Kellysearch have the highest Contact Us conversion rates for industrial directories.

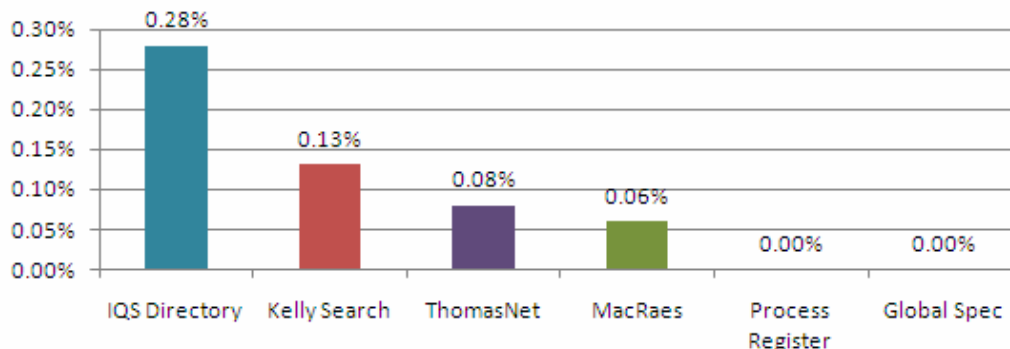
Contact Us Conversion Rate



Request a Quote²:

The Request for Quote forms have an average .09% conversion rate from the industrial directories. This is compared to the site average of .20% and the search engine average of .36%. Request for Quote conversions are highest from IQS, Kellysearch, and ThomasNet.

RFQ Conversion Rate



² Not every website has a Request for Quote page, therefore conversion percentages are lower for Request a Quote.

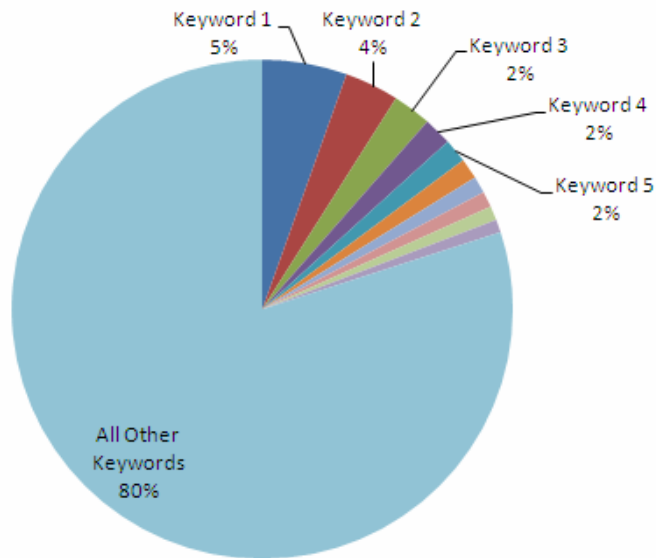
Keyword Searches

The top 10 keyword searches only referred 20% of the total traffic to the average industrial site. This means the majority of visitors found the website through hundreds of other keyword searches. Many of these keyword searches are 'long tail' keywords. Long tail keywords are generally three to five words and are very specific. Often they will include one or part of your most important keywords.

Although they don't bring a high level of traffic on their own, long tail keywords are quite powerful in the overall picture. While you optimize for your most important keywords, make sure you're also taking advantage of long tail searches. We stress copy development, 300-500 words per page, and unique meta data throughout the site to encourage these types of long tail searches. Remember, every single word you put on your site is a potential keyword.

Top 10 Keywords³

Keyword 1 - 5.46%
Keyword 2 - 3.50%
Keyword 3 - 2.49%
Keyword 4 - 1.82%
Keyword 5 - 1.54%
Keyword 6 - 1.33%
Keyword 7 - 1.09%
Keyword 8 - 1.02%
Keyword 9 - .91%
Keyword 10 - .84%



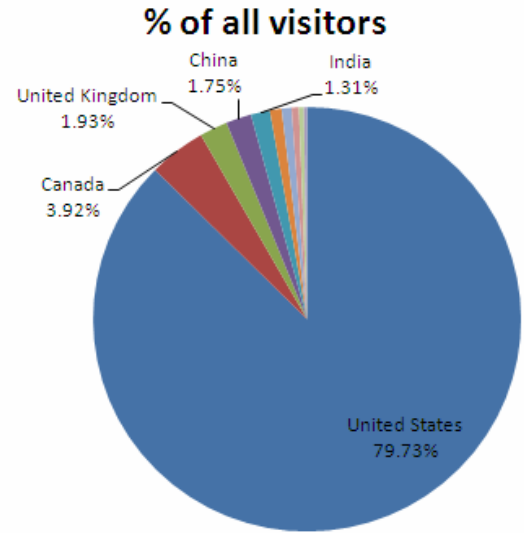
³ Company names were eliminated from all top 10 keyword information. Best efforts were made to eliminate company name information from the rest of the keyword data, as well.

International Visitors

Although these websites are in English and optimized for the US search engines, 20% of the visitors come from outside the US, and almost 10% do not speak English as a first language. This shows a great opportunity to expand into industrial markets outside of the US. Ecreativeworks currently helps clients market their websites in China, Germany, France, Singapore and India.

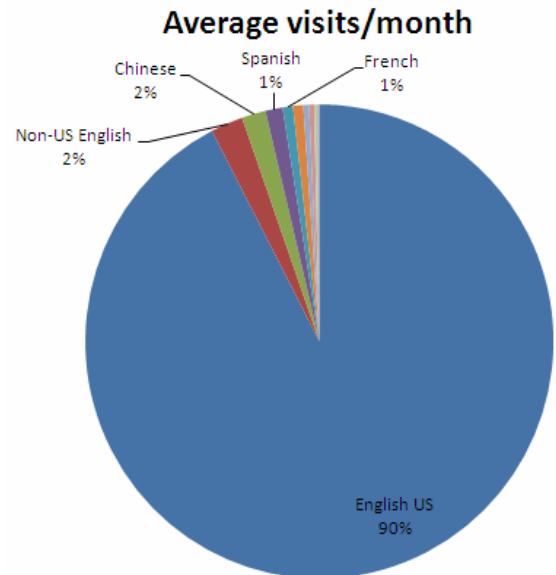
Top 10 Visitors by Country

| Country | Average Visits/Month | % of all Visitors |
|----------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| United States | 2,561 | 79.73% |
| Canada | 126 | 3.92% |
| United Kingdom | 62 | 1.93% |
| China | 56 | 1.75% |
| India | 42 | 1.31% |
| Mexico | 26 | 0.81% |
| Turkey | 22 | 0.68% |
| Australia | 16 | 0.50% |
| Germany | 11 | 0.34% |
| South Korea | 7 | 0.22% |



Top 10 Languages Used by Visitors

| Language | Average Visits/Month | % of all Visitors |
|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| English US | 2,862 | 89.10% |
| Non-US English | 69 | 2.15% |
| Chinese | 51 | 1.59% |
| Spanish | 37 | 1.15% |
| French | 22 | 0.68% |
| Turkish | 22 | 0.68% |
| German | 12 | 0.37% |
| Chinese Taiwan | 11 | 0.34% |
| Korean | 7 | 0.22% |
| Brazilian Portuguese | 4 | 0.12% |



Analysis & Conclusion

While the amount of monthly traffic to an industrial website may be small when compared to a consumer-oriented website, industrial visitors often know what they're looking for and are very educated concerning the products and services they need. The averaged amount of visitors in a month is 3,212. 1,500 of those visitors come from the search engines, and 1,200 come from referring websites. The average time spent on an industrial website is close to two minutes.

The average bounce rate of the websites surveyed is 50%. This high bounce rate could be attributed to the visitor simply looking for a contact number, address, or has a specific page bookmarked for future reference. Content that isn't relevant to a search or doesn't meet the exact needs of the industrial visitor also contribute to bounce rates. In any search engine optimization program, the goal should be to lower the bounce rate and encourage the visitor to stay on the website longer.

The average conversion rate is lower than expected and the request for quote form is much lower than the contact us page. This information should not be discouraging as the sales cycle for the industrial market is longer than any other cycle. There are many people involved in making the final purchasing decision and it involves numerous quotes and much research. We have also found that while the calls to action or contact forms are on the website, many visitors will pick up the phone and talk to a representative in person.

It is important to have both the contact us and request for quote form on the site even though the RFQ form has a lower conversion rate. Many visitors respond differently to a contact us, request for quote, survey, sample or questionnaire; it is beneficial to offer more than one way to contact your company. The conversion rates from the industrial directories are also low. Many industrial directories have their own methods of conversions such as a catalog, request a quote, or email correspondence within the listing for a company. Each directory offers a different conversion and tracking depending on the type of listing.

Analyzing the keyword traffic we found that only 20% of the traffic is generated from the main keyword or services of each website. 80% of the keyword traffic coming from the search engines is made up of long-tail search terms. This is where the importance of content is stressed. If more content is provided to the end user and the search engines, the higher chance there is to gain visibility for keywords outside of the initial optimization group.

There is a great deal of potential for online business growth internationally; on average, 20% of an industrial website's traffic originates from outside the US. The ability of a company to handle international clients should be considered carefully. If growing an online presence abroad is a primary goal, it is recommended that websites follow good international search optimization practices, including website translation. The research brings insight to industrial clients on opportunities abroad, but also opens the door to further investigation and analysis.

Overall, we have established baseline performance for industrial websites, paying special attention to conversions, international traffic, and referring sites such as industrial directories. This information can be used to evaluate traffic patterns and sources to other websites, and to improve conversions and leads for clients in the industrial marketplace.