

Analytics data is not Audited data

Setting the standard

Online businesses need trusted data for two key reasons:

- 1) To support effective internal management decision-making;
- 2) To deliver confidence to external customers (advertisers, agencies and investors)

Web analytics data is not the same as audited data – audited data is trusted data.

Below are recent examples where, as the result of an audit, we have re-stated claimed figures from clients using ABC 2-star web analytics products:

1. A B2B website – required a downward adjustment of 78% to Page Impressions because of double counting and robotic traffic.
2. A leading news website – required a downward adjustment of 10% to Unique Browsers because the claimed figures were incorrectly calculated.
3. A public sector website – required downward adjustments of 54% to daily Unique Browsers 59% to Page Impressions and 51% to Visits because of robotic traffic.
4. A jobs website – required downward adjustments of approximately 20% to its Unique Browsers every month for the last 9 months because the claimed figures were incorrectly calculated.

Robotic traffic has continued to be an issue for many clients and the arrival of the Google Preview Bot created a new problem as it affected Unique Browser claims as well as Page Impressions. This Bot affected many leading UK websites and in several cases took up to 6 months to fix. I.e. Claimed Unique Browser metrics were overstated and adjusted for every month during this period.

We have also noted that publishers have the ability to change their Cookie expiry dates to short periods, such as a few days, and so artificially inflate their Unique Browser metrics.

An ABC 2-star web analytics product can produce reliable web traffic reports but only if it's configured and maintained properly by the publisher, and of course is confirmed by independent auditing.

Remember, even using “best of breed” web analytics is no guarantee of trusted business intelligence!