

**Topic:**  
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## Tracking 'True' Success From Your Online Media

**Guest writer Lames Colborn offers his views on measuring the real value of online marketing and sales methods.**

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With all of the different media types available to the online marketer, the true success of each is often hard to measure. The traditional form of measurement - traffic generation - is fast being replaced by attributing sales to traffic and identifying a conversion rate. But how do you determine what a conversion is, and whether the information reported on is a true representation of success?

This article is written by James Colborn, Senior Account Manager and head of Client Services for [Inceptor Ltd](#) in the UK. James is also the eMarketing Lecturer at South Bank University, delivering the Chartered Institute of Marketing's eMarketing Award. Inceptor provides strategic management of online marketing strategies through their flagship product Excedia.

This article addresses these issues in two sections; the first will give a clear perspective on what to measure as success criteria. The second will look at the measurement of these variables and how to track true success from all of the reporting variables available.

### What to track?

One of the most common mistakes made by marketers is to measure the success of their site on the amount of traffic driven to it. Two years ago this would have been an acceptable measurable; however, with many sites offering more than 'brochureware' the areas of measurement should be more detailed.

So, what to track? The most important factors to consider when tracking the success of your site are site objectives and 'calls to action'. These calls to action are points within a site where visitors are required to perform a task or action(s), such as:

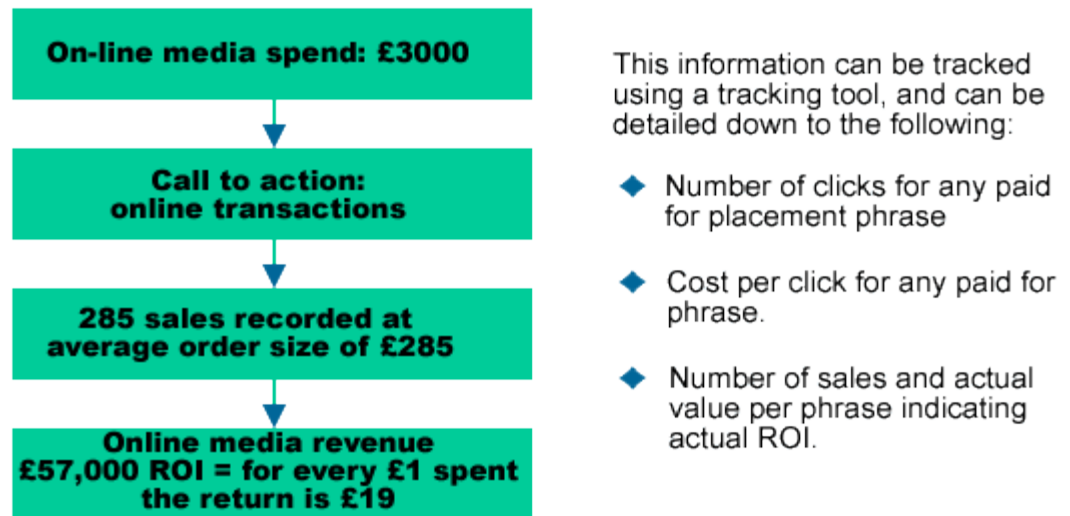
- Transactions
- Registrations
- Download of documents or programs
- Offline triggers such as 'call me buttons'

If the objective of your site is to provide customers with the opportunity to purchase products, then your online media buy should be measured against that point. If your site is designed to offer visitors more information by allowing them to register, then online media buys should be measured against this point. If your site offers more than one call to action, then online media buys should be measured against each point relevant to their purpose.

## Tracking The 'True' Success Of An Online Media Buy

Whatever the online marketing media choice, be it banner advertisement, paid for placement search engine or email campaigns, the true conversion rate must be plotted against the relevant call to action within the site. A true conversion from this media must also be measured accurately to ensure that the media spend is realistically recorded.

To achieve this, online tracking tools must be used to see this information, and to measure your online media mix. Using such tools enables online media spend to be plotted against an individual call to action; once this point has been identified then a value can be isolated and, if necessary, a currency value returned to measure a true ROI. The following example shows how this can be identified.



## Is This The Most Accurate Form Of Tracking?

This form of measurement can be considered one of the most accurate forms of tracking for online media buys, and provides marketers with essential information as to where their budget is working and where it is not. There is, however, one final and vital variable that must be considered: how many people use an online media to research their intended call to action, and then return at a later date to conclude their business?

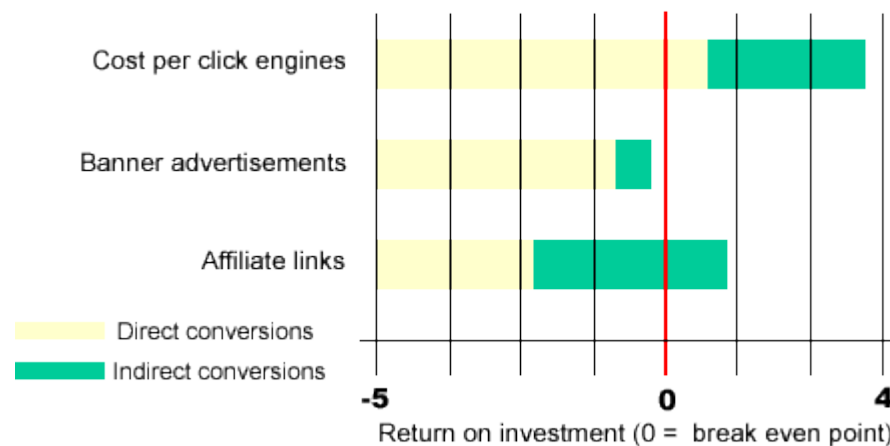
This variable is often referred to as 'direct and indirect' or 'direct and deferred' conversions, and is an important variable to measure when promoting your site, goods or services online. So what does it mean?

If you are using any form of online media to promote your products and services, it's likely that a number of visitors to your site will have viewed details of a certain item and left the site to conduct further research before deciding which supplier to purchase from. If you are recording clicks to a transaction (call to action) then conventional tracking solutions will only record session purchases, i.e. found item and purchased in one visit, meaning all visitors who left the site and returned later are not being recognised.

Tracking tools are available that allow you to measure all media buy conversions, both direct and indirect, giving marketers a greater deal of control over their online spend.

The following diagram illustrates how online media buys which seem unprofitable when measured against direct conversions are sometimes more efficient when indirect conversions are also measured.

**Direct And Indirect Conversions**



In the above example, adding indirect conversions to the equation changes the ROI of the online media types dramatically.

### Summary

When using any form of online media it is important to measure their conversion rates accurately against areas within a site that represents an accurate and relevant indication of their success. Ensure that ALL conversions are recorded so that media types that are first thought to be unprofitable are not removed prematurely.

A version of this article first appeared in [WNIM](#) (What's New In Marketing), the e-zine that offers advice, news, tips and training to marketing professionals. You can contact James Colborn at [james.colborn@inceptor.com](mailto:james.colborn@inceptor.com)



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Pel House, 35 Station Square, Petts Wood, Kent, BR5 1LZ, United Kingdom

**Tel:** +44 (0)1689 873636 **Email:** [info@business-advantage.com](mailto:info@business-advantage.com) **Web:** [www.business-advantage.com](http://www.business-advantage.com)