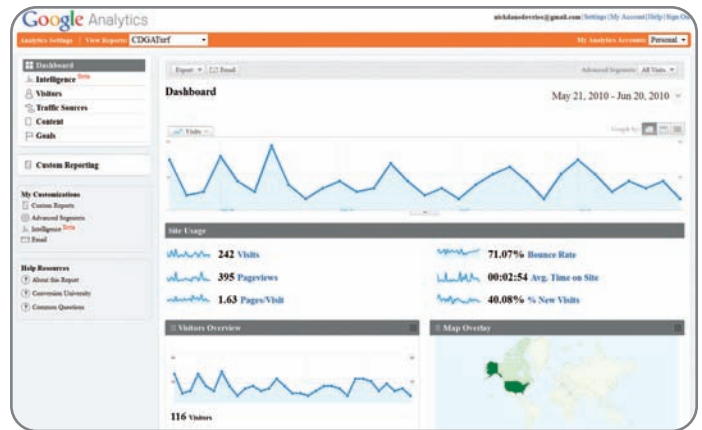
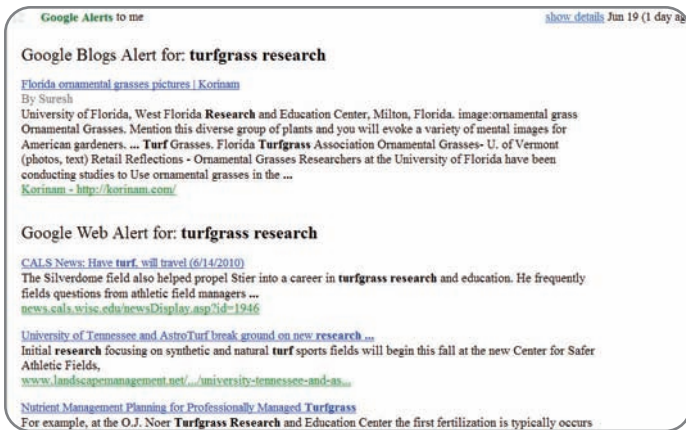


Powered by Google

If having your company's name added to the English dictionary isn't enough, Google has also earned recognition from Fortune magazine as the best place to work in the United States. Google is best known for its informal corporate culture that creates a healthy environment for creative minds to succeed. High employee morale is achieved through offering amenities including rock climbing, foosball tables, and a workout gym all at the corporate office. But all this pampering has paid off because Google employees have produced some very innovative web tools. Tools that benefit everyone from the Craigslist bargain shopper to search engine optimizers – and you can use them all for free.



Google Alerts

Google Alerts is a tool that gives you email updates on the latest relevant Google results (web, news, blog posts, etc.) based on your choice of query or topic. Alerts allow you to know instantly when any content hits the web containing the keywords you select. Use Google Alerts to monitor a developing news story, keep current on a competitor and/or industry, get the latest on a celebrity or event, and keep tabs on your favorite sports teams.

I also think it is smart to use your name or your business name as a search term. By doing this you will be the first to know when anything on the web is created about you or your organization. If you are interested in search engine optimization – aka ranking higher in a Google search – then you can use alerts to see how aggressively competing websites are targeting keywords that you are interested in.

To get started using Google Alerts visit google.com/alerts.

Google Analytics

Google Analytics is another free tool that gives statistics and other useful information about the visitors to your blog or website. It is easy to setup and you only need a Google email account to get started. There is an education section filled with videos and seminars on how to get started, but in reality, the statistics and user interface is pretty self explanatory.

For anyone that uses reciprocal linking as a means of search engine optimization – Google Analytics can be used to see if your reciprocal links are active and also how much traffic is driven from sites that refer to your site. For example, through Google Analytics I found out that the Greens Department at Naperville Country Club linked to the CDGA Turfgrass website on their blog – www.napervilleccgrounds.blogspot.com – Dap to Tim and Steve! Google Analytics also informed me that the largest website to drive traffic to www.cdगतurf.com is our twitter account (twitter.com/CDGATurf). Seeing this statistic was very reassuring to me because I sometimes feel like Twitter is a waste of time.

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Below is some additional information you can receive about the visitors to your website for FREE using Google Analytics*.

- Browsers – Internet Explorer - 60%, Firefox - 35%, Safari - 4%, Chrome - 2%
- Screen Resolution - 1024x768 - 18.5%, 1280x960 – 15%, 1280 x 1024 – 12%
- Traffic sources
- Direct - 60%
- Referring Sites – 21%
- Search Engine – 19%
- Mobile Devices – iPad - 50%, iPhone – 25%, Android – 25%

*These statistics were taken from visitors to the CDGA Turfgrass website.

Visit google.com/analytics to get started.



Google Reader and RSS

Real Simple Syndication (RSS) is a way to easily view headlines, updates, and content from multiple websites in one location. An RSS Feed is what you subscribe to on a website to receive notifications when new content has been posted. Blogs are the most common RSS feeds because they are constantly updated with new posts. RSS serves two major functions: to inform you as soon as new content has been posted and to present the information in a standard format.

RSS Readers. An RSS Reader or Aggregator is a computer program that works on your behalf to watch for new content on websites you care about. When something new is posted on a website you have subscribed to, the aggregator will display a notification that includes the article title, short description, and link. This allows you to quickly glance through multiple headlines and move on if you are not interested. Let's say for example you have ten websites that you like to read on a frequent basis. You could visit each website one at a time to maybe find new content, or you could subscribe to the RSS feeds on those websites (if they have them) and receive notifications when fresh material has been posted.

Craigslist and RSS. Anyone that uses Craigslist knows that the best deals on everything from apartments to electronics go to the person that replies first to a listing. When making a big decision like where you are going to live or what you are going to drive – you want the upper hand right? That is why Craigslist adding a RSS feed to their search results page is such a big deal. It means that you no longer have to search again and again for new listings; the results can come right to you. Search

Craigslist for what you are looking for just as usual, but when the results are created click the RSS link tucked in the lower right corner to get matches sent straight to your aggregator.

Some search feeds that I made include:

- Vinyl for under \$5 in Chicago
- Weird stuff in Forest Park
- Free stuff in Downers Grove
- One bedroom apartments with hardwood floors and a view for under \$1200 in Chicago

Ways to Subscribe. There are two ways to subscribe to an RSS feed. The first way is to visit the website you want to subscribe to and click the orange RSS icon. A window will pop up asking which RSS aggregator you use, then just select your program and you are now subscribed. The second option is to subscribe to an RSS feed through your aggregator by searching for the website you want to subscribe to.

There are a lot of different RSS Aggregators but I use Google Reader because it is simple and also connected to my Gmail account. Visit google.com/reader. -OC


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