

Skeptics For Charity (SFC) Report

We have declared Skeptics For Charity as a niche marketing strategy a failed initiative. Below is a report unpacking our methods and discussing the relative successes and shortcomings that ultimately led us to declare this particular project as a strategy not worth pursuing any further.

Top Reasons For Failure:

Among the ~9 pledgers, all were non-counterfactual pledges totalling between \$15,500 and \$22,300. Even for non-counterfactuals, these numbers are underwhelming to say the least. Below are the suspected reasons for failure split between four broad categories:

- We may have deviated too much from the 'recipe' of other successful initiatives
- We failed to attract non-EA supporters
- Poor coordination between Google Analytics and Adwords
- Failure to convert traffic from social media and Adwords

Reason #1: Deviating too much from the 'recipe' of other successful initiatives

- Skeptics somewhat similar but also quite different from the [REG model](#) that we tried to emulate to a certain extent
 - Certain elements of the REG model were not captured by our niche marketing strategy and had the likely effect of working against our efforts
- Unlike poker players who have the chance to incur windfalls of cash, skeptics in our demographic range have very regular incomes and therefore they are more likely to need income to pay essential bills and have less income generally
- High-touch fundraising is potentially better. We had very few high touch contacts

Reason #2: Failure to attract non-EA supporters



- Possible reasons for this include:
 - Pledging might be a big ask for non-EAs. It has been theorized that a recurring donation might be more appropriate
- The conceptual mechanism was perhaps too complicated for incoming traffic. Too many steps with different probabilities of success involved
- Skeptics as a demographic may simply be too skeptical to support something en masse
- Donor stewardship indicates that all pledgers were already donating as EAs and perhaps wanted to simply show support for the cause. There is no

evidence of increased donation rates or counterfactual dollars from non-EAs

Reason #3: Poor coordination between Google Analytics and Adwords

- Unfortunately, Adwords and Google Analytics on the site were set up far too late
 - All Google Analytics information provided is only about one month of data with not enough visitors to make statistically significant conclusions
 - The Google Adwords campaign was never adjusted throughout the short duration of SFC
- Transitioning from one project leader to another resulted in too much time sunk into revising website rather than proceeding from the start of the transition period with a cohesive strategy

Reason #4: Failure to convert traffic from social media and Adwords

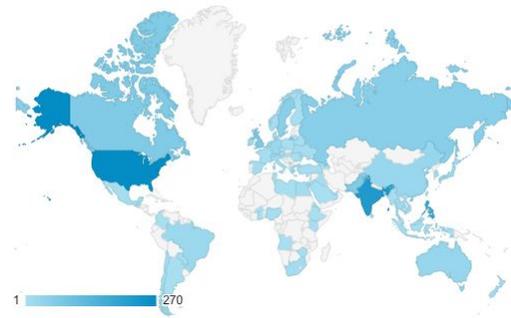
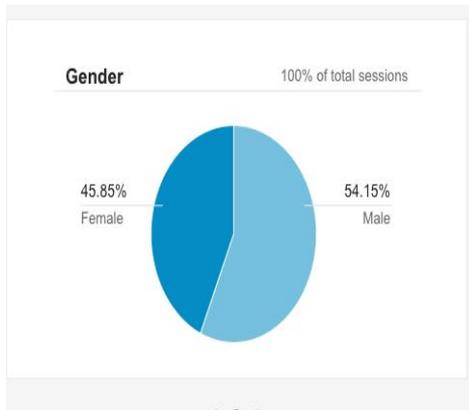
- Our group posting method (gaining entrance into niche Facebook groups and posting articles) definitely drove traffic (see Web Analytics section below), however, the counterfactual numbers would suggest that this method was not compelling enough to generate conversions.
 - Articles may not have been a direct enough pitch
 - Article links back to SFC were often deleted by online editors
 - Articles self-hosted at SFC posted in Facebook groups likely received less attention
 - People only may come to read article, less inclined to act (reflected in analytics below)

Web Metrics

The following section is intended to provide further justifications for conclusions 1-4 using web metrics derived from Google Analytics.

Website Visitor Demographics

- Our demographic was slightly more male (54.15%) than female (45.85%)
- Visitors were mostly from the US, a surprising amount of hits from India and parts of southeast Asia
- The vast majority of visitors were between 18 and 34 years of age

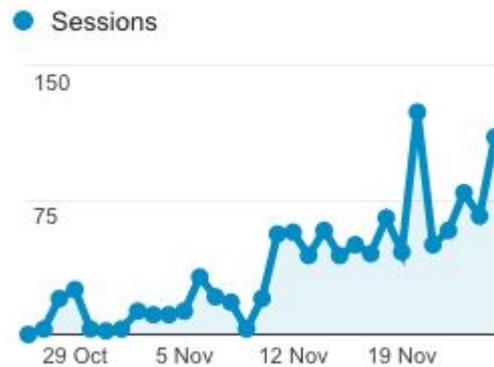


Visitor Acquisition

Top Channels



Sessions

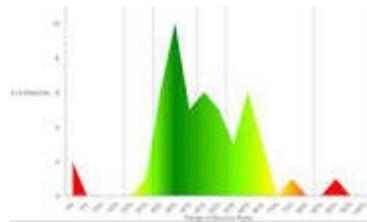


- Traffic generally increased steadily throughout the campaign
 - Likely due to consistent social media exposure and Adwords
- Paid Search traffic (Adwords) was actually quite successful in generating traffic
 - However, the bounce rate for paid search was quite high, meaning that most people potentially didn't find what they were looking for or the site was unappealing
- Referral traffic is a false metric because of dummy websites that try to drum up traffic. Further coding/filters are needed to get an accurate picture of referral traffic

1	Paid Search	533		93.81%	
2	Referral	325		90.46%	
3	Social	167		83.83%	
4	Direct	107		66.36%	
5	Organic Search	18		33.33%	

- A cursory survey of top web articles revealed that our bounce rates are exceedingly high with this website for most channels of traffic—social media being the lowest

As a rule of thumb, a bounce rate in the range of 26 to 40 percent is excellent. 41 to 55 percent is roughly average. 56 to 70 percent is higher than average, but may not be cause for alarm depending on the website. Feb 25, 2014



Paid Traffic

- The paid traffic was the most consistent, although it does have an extraordinarily high bounce rate. We should be optimizing every so often (for CharityScience.com as well) for the ones that bring in the most traffic and the least amount of bounce rates

Keyword ?	Sessions ? ↓	% New Sessions ?	New Users ?	Bounce Rate ?	Pages/Session ?	Avg. Session Duration ?	Goal Conversion Rate ?	Goal Comp %
	678 % of Total: 45.97% (1,475)	89.09% Avg for View: 84.88% (4.95%)	604 % of Total: 48.24% (1,252)	94.54% Avg for View: 92.61% (2.09%)	1.11 Avg for View: 1.20 (-7.33%)	00:00:09 Avg for View: 00:00:23 (-59.01%)	0.00% Avg for View: 0.00% (0.00%)	0
1. discovery science	181 (26.70%)	88.40%	160 (26.49%)	93.92%	1.14	00:00:09	0.00%	0
2. science daily	85 (12.54%)	87.06%	74 (12.25%)	94.12%	1.16	00:00:15	0.00%	0
3. daily science	68 (10.03%)	91.18%	62 (10.26%)	100.00%	1.00	00:00:00	0.00%	0
4. science news daily	65 (9.59%)	87.69%	57 (9.44%)	96.92%	1.05	00:00:05	0.00%	0
5. about the scientific method	49 (7.23%)	93.88%	46 (7.62%)	97.96%	1.04	00:00:01	0.00%	0
6. science daily articles	47 (6.93%)	93.62%	44 (7.28%)	95.74%	1.11	00:00:02	0.00%	0
7. new science discoveries	45 (6.64%)	93.33%	42 (6.95%)	97.78%	1.02	00:00:01	0.00%	0
8. latest science discoveries	39 (5.75%)	84.62%	33 (5.46%)	100.00%	1.00	00:00:00	0.00%	0
9. charities to help poverty	34 (5.01%)	79.41%	27 (4.47%)	91.18%	1.09	00:00:17	0.00%	0
10. best poverty charities	13 (1.92%)	92.31%	12 (1.99%)	92.31%	1.08	00:00:01	0.00%	0

- “charities to help poverty” has the lowest bounce rate obviously but “discovery science” has a nice balance of both a lowish bounce rate and a high number of hits

General



Social



- Our Facebook group pushes definitely spike traffic, especially the very latest push on December 1

- It does seem that social traffic does enjoys lower bounce rates, although that could be because people are reading the article and not necessarily going to convert.

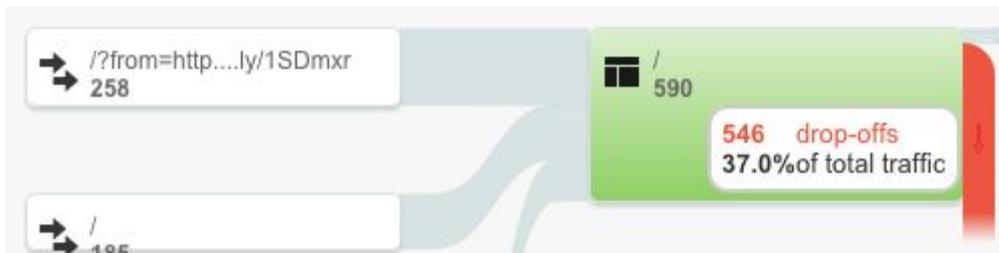
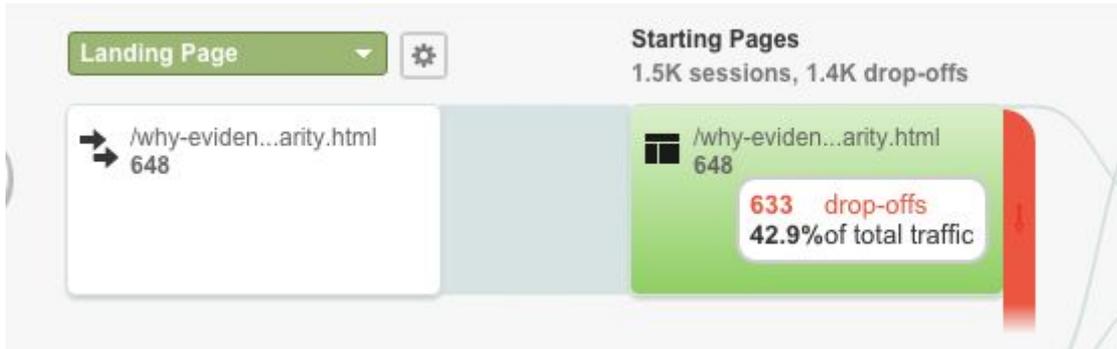
Social Network ?	Acquisition			Behaviour			Conversions	
	Sessions ? ↓	% New Sessions ?	New Users ?	Bounce Rate ?	Pages/Session ?	Avg. Session Duration ?	Goal Conversion Rate ?	Corr
	155 % of Total: 10.51% (1,475)	78.71% Avg for View: 84.88% (-7.27%)	122 % of Total: 9.74% (1,252)	90.32% Avg for View: 92.61% (-2.47%)	1.37 Avg for View: 1.20 (14.52%)	00:00:32 Avg for View: 00:00:23 (40.44%)	0.00% Avg for View: 0.00% (0.00%)	
1. Facebook	148 (95.48%)	77.70%	115 (94.26%)	89.86%	1.39	00:00:34	0.00%	0
2. Twitter	7 (4.52%)	100.00%	7 (5.74%)	100.00%	1.00	00:00:00	0.00%	0

Traffic Flow

- Aside from the home page, the “evidence-based charities” page is interestingly the most popular. Despite our blog posts being pushed throughout the FB groups, “evidence-based charities” still gets the bulk of traffic.

Page	Page Views	% Page Views
1. /why-evidence-based-charity.html	694	39.21%
2. /?from=http://adf.ly/1SDmxr	258	14.58%
3. /	229	12.94%
4. /sfc-blog/what-makes-the-new-atheists-so-charitable	110	6.21%
5. /evidence-based-charities.html	93	5.25%
6. /sfc-blog	76	4.29%

- As far as behavior on each page is concerned, when people landed on “why evidence based charity” they were much more likely to stay on and go to another page than compared to other means
- This is likely because people actually interested in the concept are more prone to reading more about it



Note: skepticsforcharity.com/?from=http...ly/1SDmxr is just the home page. I'm not sure why it looks like that



- Of 103 people tracked to SFC a huge amount of them simply drop off after reading the article rather than explore more
- The blog does, however, seem to keep people on the website much longer when they didn't get there to read the blog (e.g. if they come in by the homepage, they are somewhat more likely to be curious about the SFC blog).



Conclusions From Web Metrics

- Setting up Adwords and Google Analytics with clearly defined goals is essential to the beginning of projects like this.
- Adwords campaigns need to be constantly adjusted and evaluated
- Paid traffic had higher bounce rates than social traffic
- Posting in Facebook groups is very handy for generating a short-term spike in traffic, which may be useful
- Having a blog section that reposts previous content may be good for SEO results and certainly seems to pique the interest of visitors to the site
 - Traffic that enters through blogs is typically not valuable in terms of conversions
- The appropriate filters and coding should be initiated with Google Analytics to avoid bogus referral data

Donor Stewardship

We were looking to run an experiment on donor stewardship that included following up with randomly selected pledgers either by phone or email within 48 hours of submission. Very few conclusions relating to donor stewardship are likely to be drawn from this experiment. The sample size is far too small and since the project is shutting down, we will not be following up with the skeptics that have pledged.

- Half of pledgers were contacted by either email or phone within a 24-48 hour window.
- It was difficult to get a hold of people, especially with such a strange time difference
- So far with only 8 pledgers, there's not much to report

- “Country” became a required field in Causevox in order to take the guesswork out of where these numbers are coming from
- Open rates as indicated by Mailchimp for the emailed donors were between 0% and 33.3%
- Calls for testimonials were sent out with a 0% response rate

Reaching out to other Atheist Giving Schemes

This approach was similarly unsuccessful for a number of reasons. Very few requests for re-posting relevant blogs to their websites were answered and none were allowed.

- The feeling with this was that we had nothing to offer a lot of these websites except listing them on a sort of ‘allies’ page
- Selling people on skepticism and then evidence-based charity might be too large an inferential gap for skeptical websites to take seriously

Top Reasons For Failure Recap:

- **We may have deviated too much from the ‘recipe’ of other successful initiatives**
- **We failed to attract non-EA supporters**
- **Poor coordination between Google Analytics and Adwords**
- **Failure to convert Adwords and social media traffic**

Recommendations For Future Niche Marketing:

- Try to model our niche marketing as closely as possible to prior successful campaigns
- Perhaps engage in more high-touch types of communication and have multiple avenues for reaching a specific group
- User test beforehand about whether pledging or recurring donations is better for the ask
- Try to avoid too large of inferential gaps
- Pursue a demographic that has more potential for being excited about a cause and spreading it via word-of-mouth (skeptics might be less willing to adopt a cause wholeheartedly)
- Establish comprehensive short, medium and long-term goals with regards to various web metrics
 - This obviously includes Google Adwords by constantly adjusting approach based on various metrics of success
- Have a clearer idea of qualified leads (i.e. people who are most likely to convert)
 - Traffic from social media and articles is unlikely to be the type of website visitor we’re pursuing
- Have a self-hosted blog section to keep interest of visitors and keep the website from looking static, but don’t rely on it to attract qualified leads