



Whitepaper

LISTSERV® Maestro and Web Tracking

April 2, 2008

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Introduction

LISTSERV Maestro has the ability to create, test, deliver, track, and report on e-mail campaigns. Tracking and reporting within LISTSERV Maestro can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the e-mail campaign; telling you how many messages were delivered, how many bounced, how many were opened, and what links were clicked. But what happens after your mail recipients click on a link in your message and end up on your Web site? The purpose of this white paper is to demonstrate one of the ways that LISTSERV Maestro can be used in conjunction with a Web tracking application to evaluate the overall effectiveness of a marketing campaign from the initial delivery of an e-mail message to the recipients' final behavior on your Web site.

Setting a Strategic Goal

In order to use LISTSERV Maestro and a Web tracking application to analyze the effectiveness of an entire campaign, it is important to decide what the goal of the campaign is before creating and launching your messages. Next, determine what to measure and how to measure it to assess whether the campaign was successful or not. Based on your outcome, you can fine tune the next campaign for better results.

Setting campaign goals determines how the e-mail job within LISTSERV Maestro is set up, including who the recipients are, how they are identified, tracked, and what the content of the message is. The campaign goals also determine what Web pages are tracked, and what customer behaviors are recorded in the Web tracking application.

One example of a campaign goal is to e-mail people in a customer database who bought items in the past to inform them of the availability of new products, and get them to visit a specific Web site. Contained in the e-mail message are two links to the target Web site. The first link is to view a sneak peak at next year's products and the second link goes to a form to place an advanced order. LISTSERV Maestro and the Web tracking application will be used to see who opened the mail, and clicked on which links. In addition, each recipient's path through the Web site will be tracked in order to analyze customer behavior.

Application Requirements

In order to obtain this type of detailed analysis of customer behavior, each application (LISTSERV Maestro and the Web tracking application) needs to be able to identify individual mail recipients. To save time and system resources, it is extremely helpful for both applications to be able to connect to the database where customer information is stored.



Important Note: There are many database management systems (DBMS) and many Web tracking applications on the market and in use today. Linking systems together so that they can share data can be simple or complex, depending on each organization's IT structure, network, and security policies. Please refer to your DBMS documentation for assistance with database connections and queries. Refer to your Web tracking documentation for setting up Web site data analysis, reporting procedures, and database connectivity. This document only describes one way to link LISTSERV Maestro's e-mail recipients with a Web tracking program in order to evaluate an e-mail campaign. This description is by no means the only way to accomplish full campaign analysis. It should give you a starting point and stimulate ideas for your own analysis.

Levels of Tracking

LISTSERV Maestro supports four different levels of tracking information about e-mail recipients. Each type of tracking will yield different data sets based on the recipient list and any database information available to the system. Available tracking types are:

- **Personal Tracking** – Records open-up and click-through events traceable to the individual who triggered them. Very specific information can be gathered about an individual's interaction with a message such as how many times a link has been clicked. This data can be augmented with information from the database the recipient data was extracted from.
- **Anonymous Tracking** – A unique ID is assigned to each recipient that cannot be followed back to identifying information about the individual recipient, but that is associated with non-identifying demographic information, such as age, gender, or zip (postal) code.
- **Unique Tracking** – Records the number of times open-up and click-through events happen to unique recipients but is not associated with individual users or other identifying data.
- **Blind Tracking** – Collects unspecific tracking data in the aggregate, recording only the number of times open-up and click-through events occur.

The type of tracking LISTSERV Maestro does for e-mail is independent of the type of tracking the Web Tracking application does for customer behavior on the Web site. For example, you can use unique or blind tracking in LISTSERV Maestro to evaluate the overall open-up and click-through rates, and still do personal tracking on the Web site to see who visited which page. The reverse is also true; you can determine who received your message and how they reacted to it, and then measure overall trends on the Web site. The level of privacy used for the Web tracking depends on what parameters are passed to the Web server using URLs in the message.

The example set up in this paper uses detailed analysis of an individual mail recipient using personal tracking. Personal tracking identifies individual mail recipients. Be aware that personal tracking is regulated differently around the world. Make sure you are familiar with and abide by the local, regional, national and international laws regarding personal tracking.

In LISTSERV Maestro, recipients that are eligible for personal tracking can come from a database, a target group, or an uploaded file. Each recipient must be assigned a unique ID that is identifiable and appears as data in a column in the data table. This ID will be used to identify the recipient in LISTSERV Maestro and as a parameter in tracked URLs that will be passed to the Web tracking application. For information on defining recipients and on personal tracking, see the [LISTSERV Maestro User's Manual](#).

To save time and system resources, connecting LISTSERV Maestro to a customer database allows you to use the most current customer data available before your delivery date. You can build recipients target groups (stored parameterized SQL statements) that can be used over and over again. You will also be able to match customer demographic information (as long as you have it in your database) with your customers' reactions to the message. For information on connecting LISTSERV Maestro to databases and on creating recipients target groups, see the [LISTSERV Maestro Data Administrator's Manual](#).

Web Tracking Application

The Web tracking application needs to be able to analyze parameters in URLs. Because the URLs contained in the e-mail message are recorded in the Web server log files, the parameters can be extracted and analyzed down to an individual's click stream. For this example, we selected an application called NetTracker[®] by Sane Solutions. NetTracker has the ability to

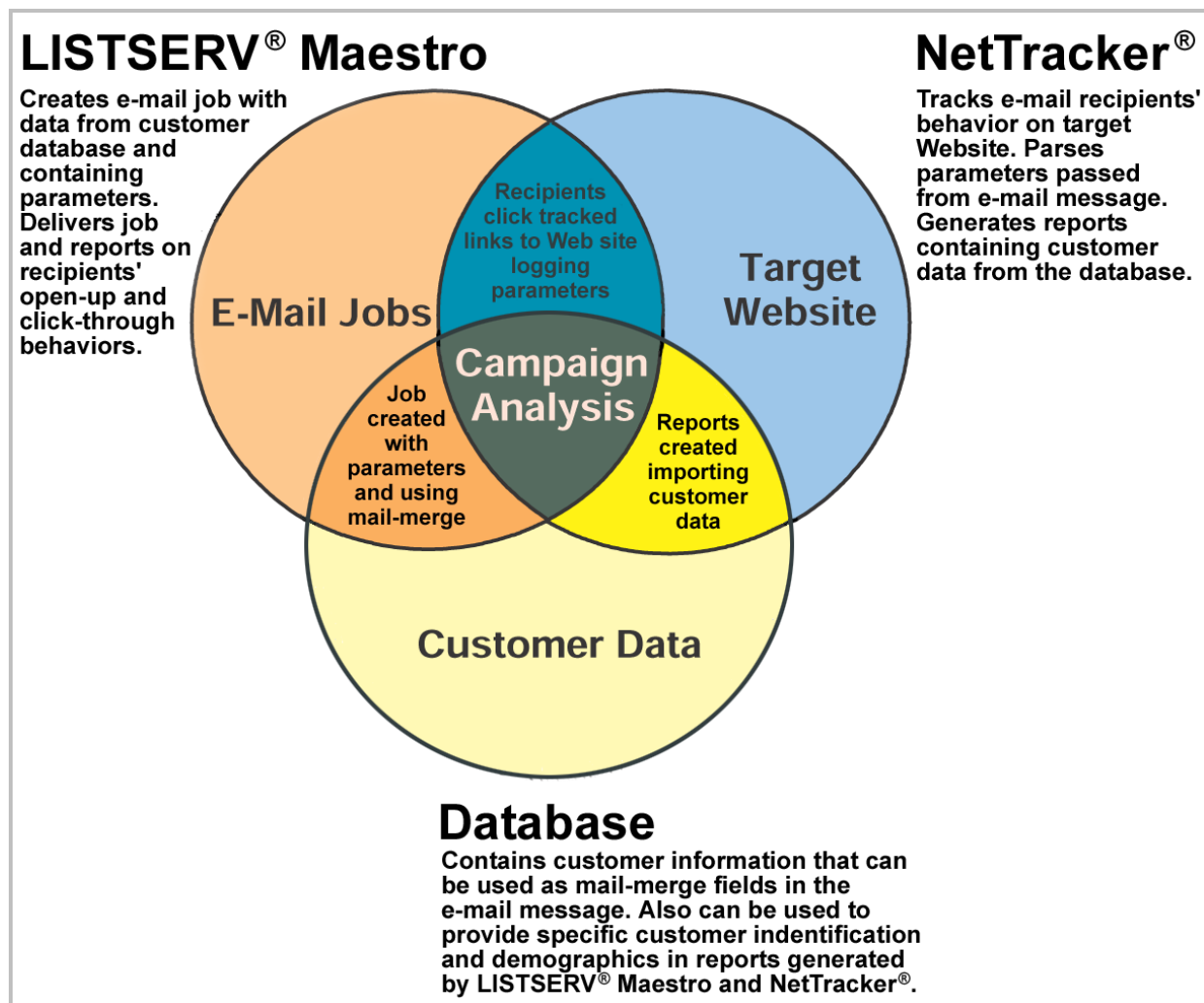
parse Web server log files to generate reports based on the parameter values inserted by LISTSERV Maestro during the mail delivery. NetTracker has the added feature of being able to connect to our customer database so that reports can display the same demographic data that is available to LISTSERV Maestro.

Creating the Email Job

Create your e-mail job within LISTSERV Maestro based on the strategic goals of the campaign. In the example, an e-mail job was designed containing two links to various pages of a company Web site. The message was sent to recipients in the company's customer database. Each recipient was uniquely identifiable with a customer ID. Personal tracking was selected based on the customer ID.

LISTSERV Maestro has the ability to add variable and fixed parameters to tracking URLs. The ID number was pulled from the database and added to the URLs as a mail merge parameter. This is considered a "variable parameter" meaning that it is unique for each recipient. A second parameter was added to the tracked URL identifying the Job ID number generated by LISTSERV Maestro. This will be the same for each recipient of this particular message, and is considered a "fixed parameter".

Figure 1 Total Campaign Analysis



About Parameters

URL parameters are specially constructed parts of a Web address (URL). They are commonly used to allow a single URL to initiate various specific operations by passing particular instructions and data to the Web server. The instructions and data are passed to a script and then executed. In our example, no scripting has taken place, but we are using the format of a parameter in the tracked URLs so that the parameters show up in the HTTP server logs and can then be analyzed by NetTracker.

A URL-parameter is a pair like "name=value" that appears after the path-part of the URL, separated from the path by a question mark "?", similar to the example below:

```
http://host.domain/path?param=value
```

If there are several parameters in one URL, then the individual parameters are separated by ampersand characters "&":

```
http://host.domain/path?param1=value1&param2=value2
```

For step-by-step instructions on how to add parameters to URLs, see the [LISTSERV Maestro User's Manual](#).

Scripting

For the purposes of researching and writing this paper, no scripting was necessary for reporting the parameters included in the URLs in the LISERV Maestro job. Other types of mail jobs can include some scripting in order to take action based on the parameters (for example, to customize the Web browsing experience).

Passing Parameters to the Web Tracking Application

To build upon our example, the personally tracked URLs contained in the e-mail message that lead to specific Web pages contain two parameters. The first uniquely identifies each recipient using a customer ID number. The second identifies the Job ID number generated from LISERV Maestro. The URLs in the LISERV Maestro content definition look like this:

<http://www.widgetcompany.com/sneak.htm?visitorid=&id;&jobid=0311124B>

<http://www.widgetcompany.com/order.htm?visitorid=&id;&jobid=0311124B>

The question mark (?) signals the end of the URL (the specific Web page) and the beginning of parameters, telling the Web server that one or more parameters follows. The first ampersand (&) is part of the merged field for the column "ID" in the database. The semi-colon is the last part of the merged field. Thus, each recipient will have their unique customer ID from the database passed to the Web server when they click on the links. (In cases where a script is used instead of a static HTML document, the Web server may generate a specific Web page for this recipient or do another task based on the visitorid parameter.) The second ampersand (&) signals the beginning of a second parameter, one that identifies the LISERV Maestro Job ID number for this message.

An example of a URL for an individual mail recipient of the sample job would look like this:

<http://www.widgetcompany.com/sneak.htm?visitorid=0001z&jobid=0311124B>

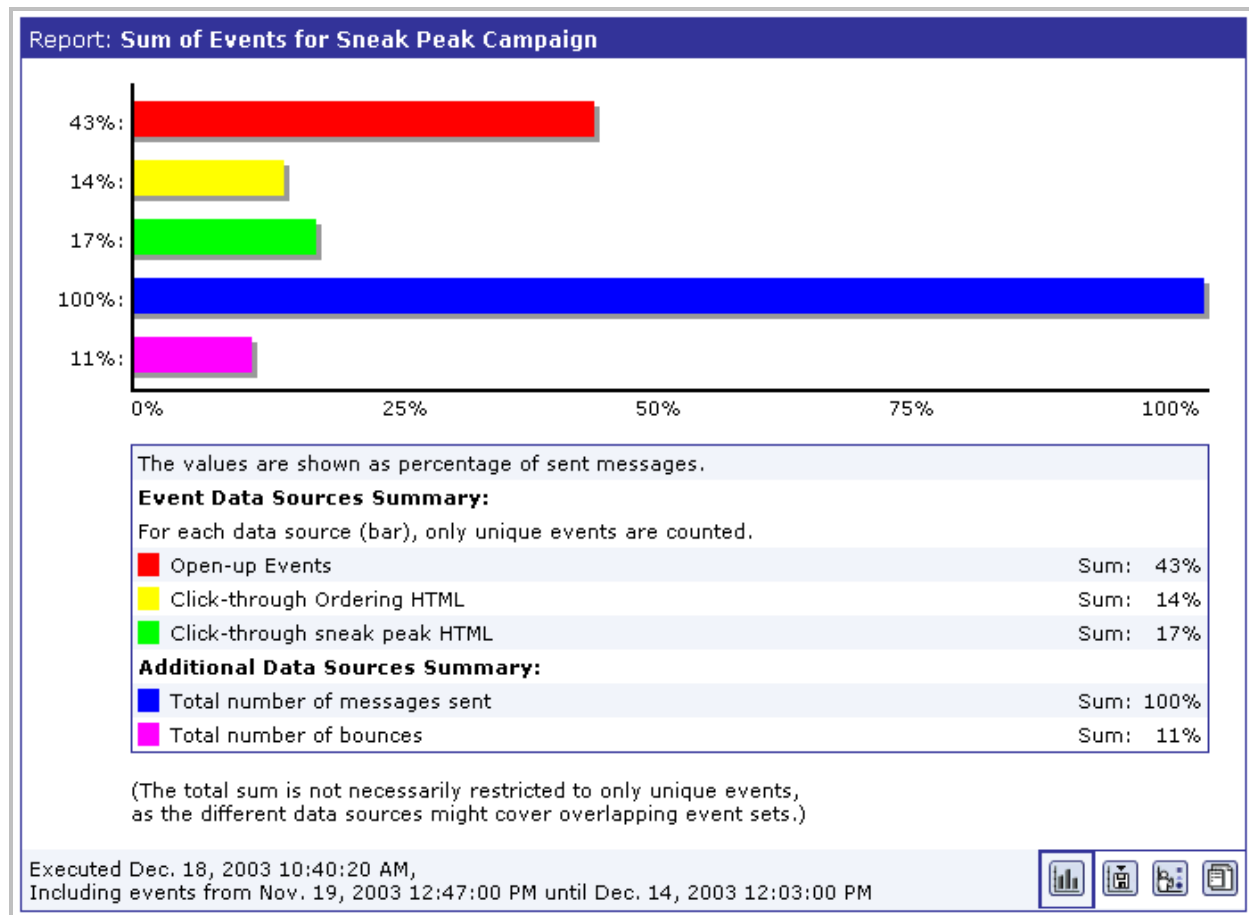
Analyzing Campaign Results

Reports generated in both LISTSERV Maestro and NetTracker are necessary in order to get the entire picture of the results of a campaign. Both applications have rich reporting features that can display standard types of reports and can create custom built reports to fit specific requirements.

LISTSERV Maestro Reports

The reports generated by LISTSERV Maestro can be used to see how recipients reacted to a job as well as how many messages were sent and other job related statistics. Figure 2 below shows the percentages of unique open-up and click-through events based on the total number of messages sent for the campaign. This graph shows that there is a 43 percent open-up rate, a 14 percent click-through rate for the “order” link, a 17 percent click-through rate for the “sneak peak” link and an 11 percent bounce rate for the campaign.

Figure 2 Sum of Unique Events Report



LISTSERV Maestro can provide data on many other aspects of individual jobs or multiple jobs in a campaign. For more information on creating reports with LISTSERV Maestro, see the [LISTSERV Maestro User's Manual](#). Some of the other data available:

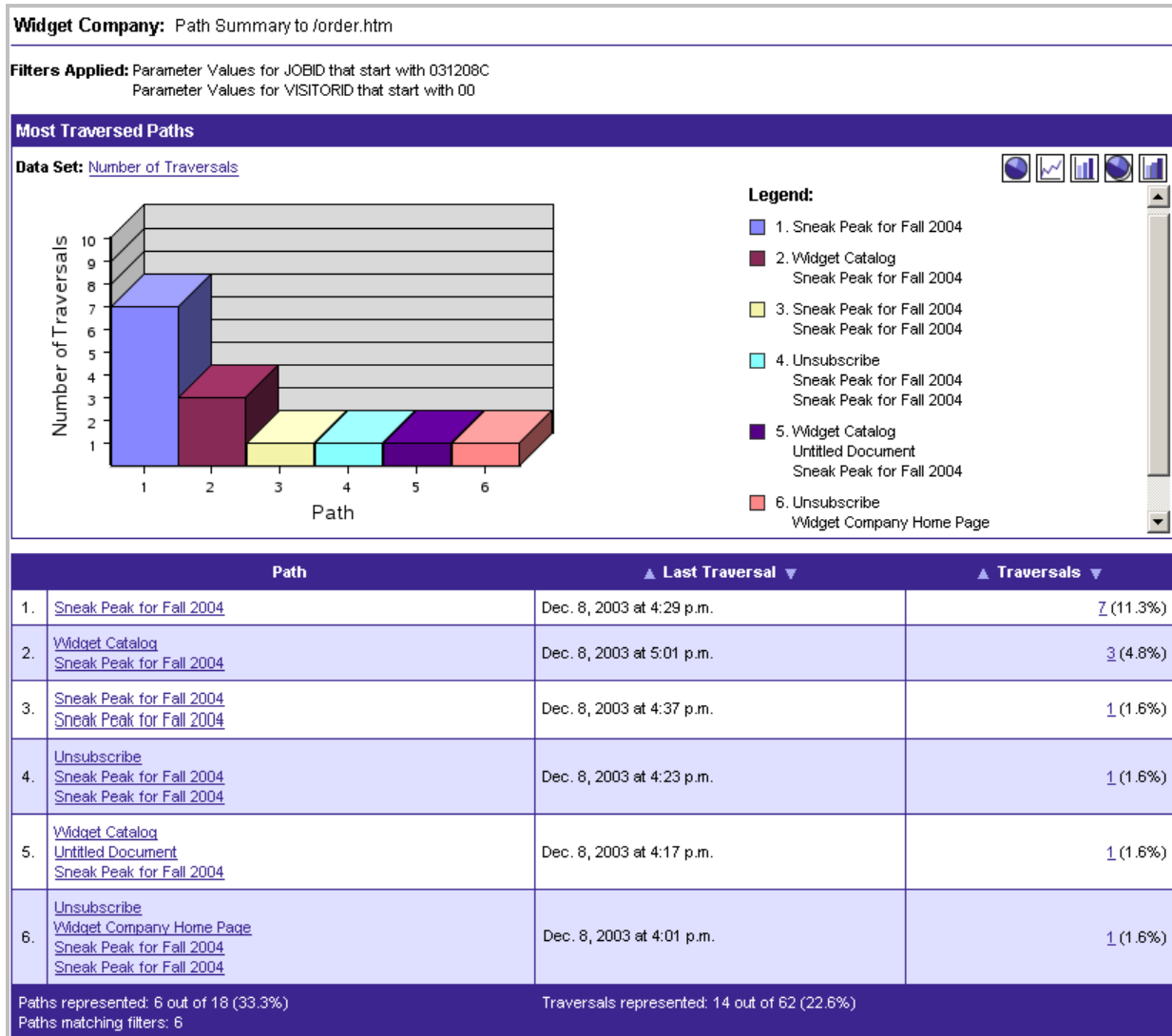
Type of Report	What is being measured
Sum of Events	How many messages were delivered to targeted recipients and how many times each link was clicked
Bounce Details	How many of those messages bounced and the reasons for those bounces (can also report on which e-mail addresses bounced)
Events Distribution Over Time	How many links were clicked or messages opened over time
Event Details	What links were clicked and by whom and when
Recipient Details	Demographic information associated with the recipients and how many times they clicked each link or opened the message

NetTracker Reports

Reports generated by NetTracker can be used to see many different variables, depending on how the application is set up and what it is recording. For the purposes of our example, analysis of dynamic content – content containing parameters – was set up. The parameters in the e-mail message delivered by LISTSERV Maestro were defined in NetTracker. Once defined, the parameters can be used as filters for standard reports and used to generate custom reports. Some of these reports have been augmented with data directly from the customer database so that the unique customer ID is linked with actual customer data and that is shown in the report.

In figure 3, the NetTracker report reflects the six most common paths through the Web site filtered by the customer ID parameter and the Job ID parameter. By manipulating the filters based on the parameters, you can look at the paths mail recipients took through your Web site based on individual customer IDs or groupings of IDs. You could also filter by Job ID in the event that you had multiple jobs using this parameter and wanted to see them combined or separately. If your message is producing the desired path through your Web site, you can reuse the message content in the next LISTSERV Maestro job. If your message is not producing the desired path, you can change the message in your next job.

Figure 3 Summary of Paths Leading to the Order Form Filtered by Parameters
 NetTracker Professional 6.0 Path Summary Report



In figure 4, NetTracker is reporting on the number of visits to the Web site within a campaign. The campaign, called "Sneak Peak" is comprised of two separate jobs, identified by their LISTSERV Maestro Job ID in the form of the parameter "Job ID". From this report you can see that job 031124B generated a higher view rate (a hit to a Web page, excluding error hits and hits to user-defined files such as inline images) as well as a higher visit rate (a series of consecutive views of a Web page by the same visitor), making it a more successful job.

Figure 4 Campaign Summary Comparing Two LISTSERV Maestro Jobs
NetTracker Professional 6.0 Crosstab Report

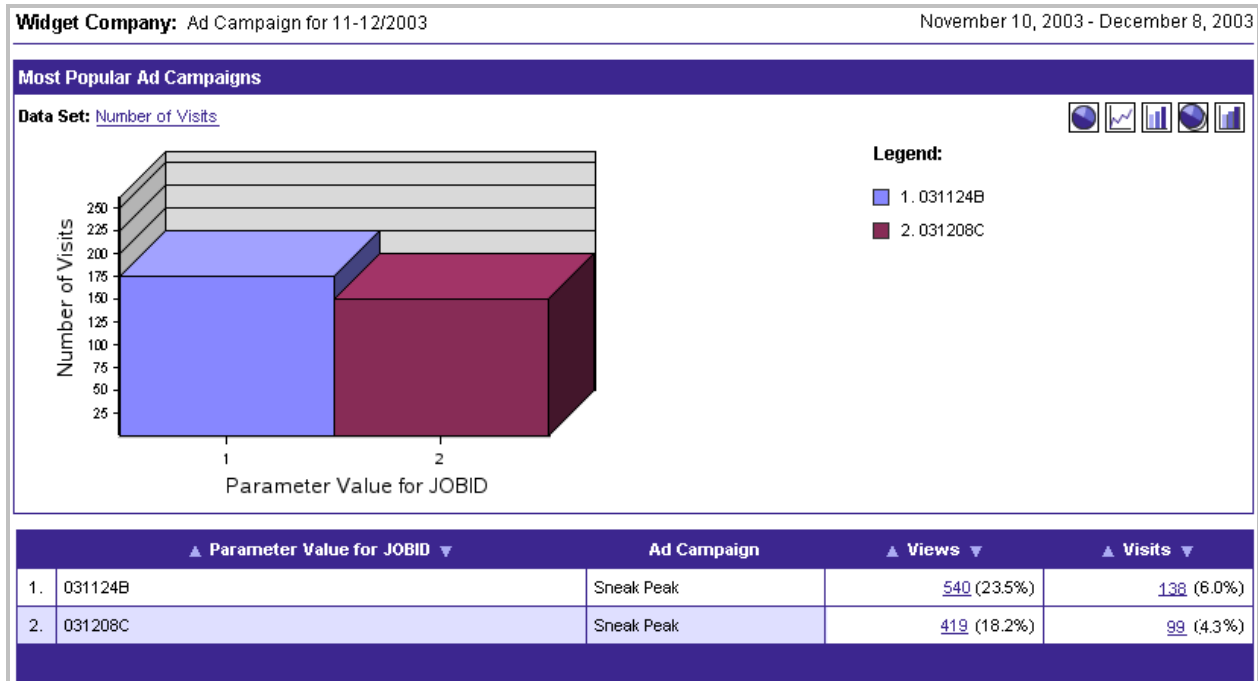
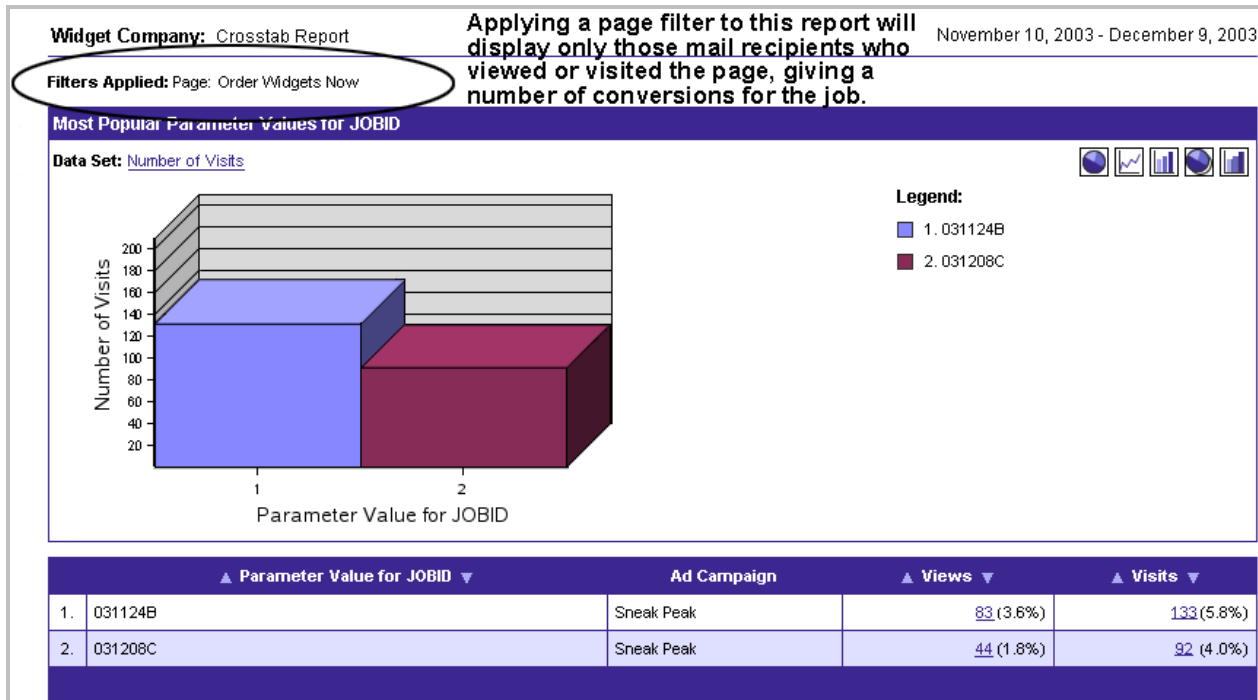


Figure 5 shows the same report, but filtered by the page "Order Widgets Now" so the data now displays only those recipients who actually viewed or visited the order page, reflecting the approximate number of conversions. From this report job 031112B still has a higher view rate and visit rate than job 031208C.

Figure 5 Campaign Summary Showing the Conversion of Mail Recipients
NetTracker Professional 6.0 Crosstab Report

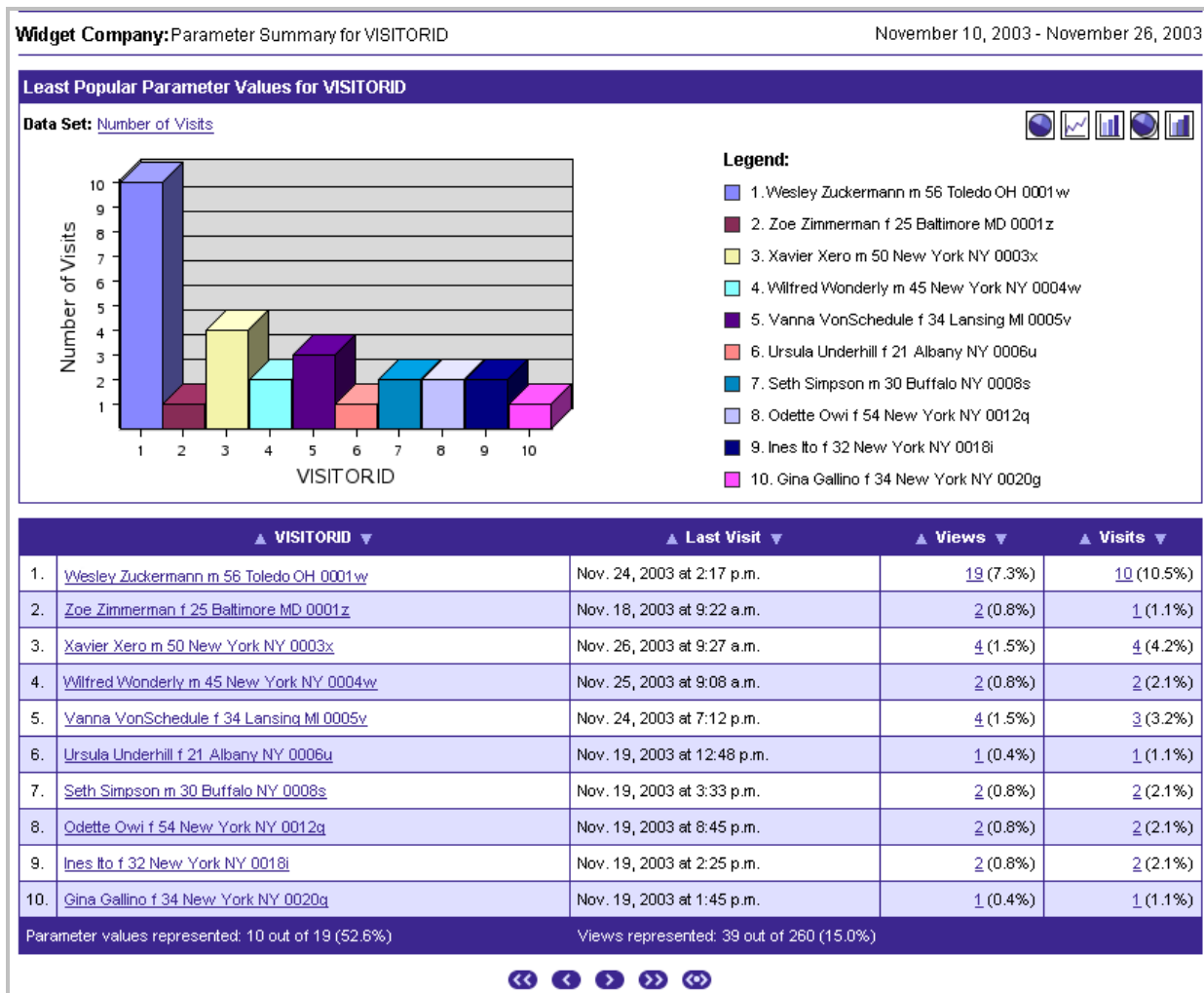


Depending on what the content of the message was and how tracking was set up in LISTSERV Maestro, you could look at the level of personalization for each job, the time of day the mail went out, and the recipient demographics to gauge what made one job more successful than another.

This information can be used in the next job by employing one of the tools within LISTSERV Maestro to reuse recipients, content, and sending information. The information can also be used for another job based on whether the recipients opened the message, did not open the message, clicked on any of the links, or did not click on any of the links in the first job.

In figure 6, the NetTracker custom report is based on the customer ID parameter we generated by mail-merge in the LISTSERV Maestro message from data in the customer database. The report pulls each mail recipient's data from the database. In this case, name, gender, age, city, state and ID number are fields shown in the report.

Figure 6 NetTracker Custom Report on Parameters NetTracker Professional 6.0 Custom Report



Conclusion

There are many ways to analyze data collected by LISTSERV Maestro and Web tracking applications. By combining reporting features of both programs and information from a customer database it is possible to look at the reactions of mail recipients from the initial message to an individual's behavior on a target Web Site. With this information you can gain an understanding of how your customers respond to e-mail messages and how they use your Web site. Future interactions with your customers can be based on this knowledge and fine tuned to a personal level, enhancing your brand name and reputation.

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