

A More Complete View of Your Web Users

Knowing who your users are and what they are doing is critical to anyone with a major web presence. Web analytics tools provide some important information, but even the best tools can't do their job effectively if they are missing key pieces of the puzzle. Pion helps you find those missing pieces and assemble to provide a more complete picture of your customers.

To understand why web analytics tools struggle to get the right data let's look at how they acquire that data. Most web analytics tools acquire data from one of two sources:

Page Tags

Most web analytics packages ask you to tag your pages with bits of code to be executed by the browser and return data on what the user did.

Popular Because:

Enables better client-side data capture and easily creates both session and page data

Used By:

Omniure, Coremetrics, Google Analytics

Drawbacks:

Developers must embed code snippets in pages making the accuracy of your reports entirely dependent on the user's web browser

Many people have blockers for scripting languages and "spyware"; a significant number of users are missed entirely because their browser didn't report back to the server

Data comes with a cost in additional bandwidth, development effort, higher response time and greater processing overhead.

Errors such as a broken image or missing page, or errors that are reported by your web application are not captured

Visitor Logs

Many web analytics tools give you access to the web server logs which provide high-level information about the HTTP requests (hits).

Popular Because:

Easy to implement and requires nothing of the client or network

Used By:

WebTrends, Fireclick, most open source tools

Drawbacks:

Puts high overhead on the web servers to collect the data (often 10-20% per server)

User sessions are almost impossible to identify correctly these days because a majority of web server logs do not include cookies

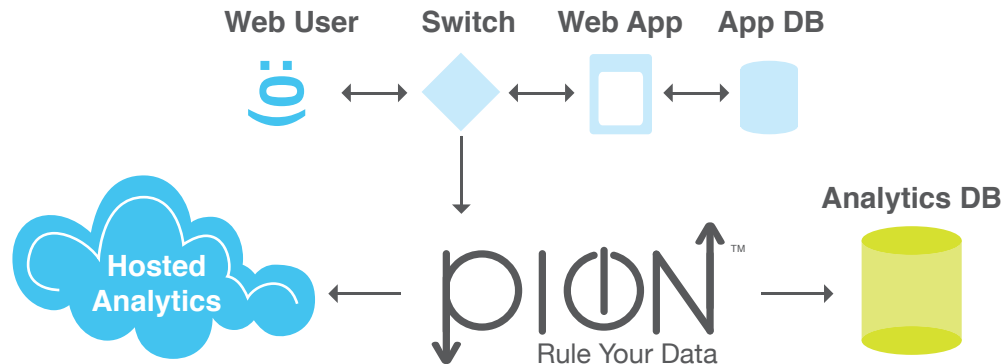
Using server logs makes it very difficult to handle common elements like proxies or network address translation

If your server goes down you'll never know what you missed because the web server couldn't process the hit to log it



Pion Works Differently - Listen to Your Web Data Directly

Pion listens to the conversation between clients and the server rather than relying on page tags or log files. Seeing directly inside the content of the traffic allows it to parse out critical pieces of information like a session id, a user name, transaction value and other content. This provides a depth of information not available in the visitor logs while requiring no code changes or tags of any kind. Pion cannot be blocked or seen by the client, and even works if the web server can't respond, so your data is more complete. This visibility comes with no cost to your web applications because Pion is architected to be completely invisible. It has zero impact on performance, availability or systems overhead.



Google + Pion = Better Insight



Pion delivers more customer visibility from Google Analytics without the page tagging.

Data captured by Pion can be sent to Google Analytics using the same web service APIs as the normal JavaScript tags.

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How Will Pion Fit Into My Environment?

Pion sits just off of a network switch in your data center between your web users and your web applications. Pion takes a network copy of the traffic from the switch either via a network tap or a span depending on your environment. The traffic can only move one way along the span or tap which ensures that Pion cannot interrupt or modify the communication between the web client and web server in any way. Once Pion has processed and cleaned the traffic, the data can be sent to your existing web analytics database, flat file or hosted provider. In organizations that want different pieces of the data in different places or formats Pion can handle the real time updates as needed to ensure that you have the latest information when you need it.

Does Pion Work with Page Tags?

Yes. Pion can work in conjunction with page tags to get client-side operations that may be important for user interface design but do not generate any server traffic. For example, if a user moves their mouse over a particular area, Pion cannot see it unless they click something. Therefore page tags do offer some advantages in particular situations where client side UI details are key. A vast majority of the time, however, these details are not tracked by page tags and Pion can capture exactly the same or greater detail. Therefore, we provide solutions that allow for peaceful co-existence of page tags and passive monitoring.

Will Pion Play Nice With My Existing Web Analytics Applications?

Pion connects easily with your hosted solutions from Google, Omniture and others, capturing and calculating all of the user traffic and sending that information to the web services just like the end user script normally would. Better still, you can do more because the data can also be written to your own internal systems or data warehouse for additional analysis not possible with hosted analytics tools.

How Will SSL, Load Balancers and Network Address Translation Impact Pion?

Pion decrypts SSL on the fly using your normal SSL keys just like a regular web server in reverse. The only difference is that Pion is more secure because nothing can communicate with it from the outside, so the Pion server can sit in a more secure location. As for load balancers and network address translation, Pion looks at much more than the IP headers. Pion actually sees into the content and the HTTP headers so it can detect who the originator of the traffic was or even the actual user's name from content.

Contact Atomic Labs today to learn how Pion can help you in your environment and receive a free proof of concept.