

# Interview with Avinash Kaushik, Analytics Evangelist for Google

Avinash Kaushik is speaking at IMC (Internet Marketing Conference) Vancouver 2009 on September 16–18. He is the author of the best-selling book *Web Analytics: An Hour a Day*. He is also the Analytics Evangelist for Google and the cofounder of Market Motive Inc.

As a thought leader, Avinash puts a common sense framework around the often frenetic world of web research and analytics, and combines that with the philosophy that investing in talented analysts is the key to long-term success. He is also a staunch advocate of listening to the consumer, and is committed to helping organizations unlock the value of web data. Avinash works with some of the largest companies in the world to help them evolve their online marketing and analytics strategies to become data-driven and customer-centric organizations. He is a frequent speaker at industry conferences in the United States and Europe, as well as at major universities, such as Stanford University, University of Virginia, and University of Utah. You'll find Avinash's web analytics blog, *Occam's Razor*, at <http://www.kaushik.net/avinash>.



Lars Johansson, Program Director for IMC, has interviewed Avinash.

## **Have you noticed any effects on the web analytics industry due to the financial difficulties on markets?**

Of course. It's a mixed bag. Some of my dear friends have been laid off, breaks my heart (both for my friends as well as for companies that are being shortsighted).

Decisions around investing in tools are getting pushed off, or in a number of cases people have called their paid analytics vendor to see how they can reduce the code on pages or sample in order to reduce the “pay per page views” cost. As you can imagine, this is not a great strategy.

Yet companies are investing more marketing and sales dollars online (or decreasing it at a much less accelerated rate compared to offline) because of the sheer accountability the channel brings with it.

I think of the current challenging environment as an opportunity for analytics (tools, vendors, professionals) to step in and earn their wings. Let's stop producing reports; let's become analysis ninjas and add value to the business today. Not next month. Today. We have data; we are smart; we are supremely placed to ride this wave on top.

**If you were to give some advice to companies facing a downturn, what would that be?**

For individuals, see the last sentiment above. For companies, now's the time to move away from "faith based initiatives" and exploit the sweetness of data-driven decision making. Save money (reduce cost). Improve revenue (profitability).

**What do you think it will take for all organizations to adopt an analytics-driven business culture?**

A crisis (like this one). Embarrassment (seeing their competitors shame them).

**What insight gleaned from data has surprised you the most?**

One of my greatest was how astonishingly monetizable the Long Tail of Search was. It was this magnificent intersection of marketing strategy and a surprisingly hidden data manifestation. So sweet. If I might add another, Voice of Customer (VOC). I have yet to read a hundred open text survey responses on any site and not find something actionable.

**What's the biggest mistake made by web analysts, or analysts in general?**

Focusing too much on giving decision makers what they want, rather than giving them what they need. Sure it is hard. But at the end of the day, the analyst is smartest about the data and the hidden insights. So start with adding 10% Need to the Want. Over time add more (remember you are in the right; it will get easier over time).

**Being a Google Analytics Evangelist, you are a big fan of giving people equal opportunity to act on data. If you could democratize data one step further than today, what would you do?**

There is a subtle difference in my role at Google. It is not Google Analytics Evangelist. It is Analytics Evangelist, Google. The reason I mention that is my focus internally at Google is to help us create better customer facing data products, be they web analytics (Google Analytics), web optimization (Google Website Optimizer), or competitive intelligence (Insights for Search, AdPlanner, Software Based Keyword Tool, etc). My focus externally it is to help the grander ecosystem be a lot more data driven by using tools in those three areas, to recognize value, and to execute.

That context will help me answer your question better. What I would do is to integrate more/faster. There are great opportunities to integrate to give marketers and analysts a more holistic view of their data, and provide much better insights faster. There are a couple of areas I am very passionate about, very tough problems we are working to solve, but if I tell you what they are, I might have to send an NDA to your entire audience and that would just be too hard.