



SIMIAN systems

Multivariate Testing in Sitellite 5

Sitellite Professional Edition

Introduction

One of the most exciting new features of Sitellite 5 is the ability to do Multivariate Testing on web pages with point-and-click simplicity and no custom coding required. This makes Sitellite truly the easiest platform available for Multivariate Testing for website marketers.

Multivariate Testing is the process of testing a series of changes to a web page against live visitors over time to aggregate statistics about which change performs the best. A goal for the test is defined (a link that you want the visitors to follow as their next step on the website, such as a “buy now” button or “contact us” link), and each changed version of the page is sent in rotation to new visitors to that page. Sitellite records how many times each version has been shown, as well as how many times that version resulted in a visitor reaching the goal defined for the test.

After a sufficient number of visitors have seen each change so that you have enough data collected to make an assessment based on the statistics collected, Sitellite will show you how well each change performed and recommend the best-performing change. With one click, that change becomes the new live version of the page and the test ends.

Using Multivariate Testing on key changes to your pages, you can be sure that the changes you make are in fact improving the effectiveness of your website at driving visitors to your desired goal.

What types of changes can be tested?

In Sitellite, literally any change to a page can be tested, including new designs, different sidebar options, different images, or text/wording changes. Sitellite also allows as many changes to be tested at once as you want, and will automatically begin including new changes into existing tests if you think of a new possibility mid-way through a test cycle.

Starting a new Multivariate Test

To start a new Multivariate Test, log into Sitellite and browse to the page you would like to change in Sitellite’s Web View. Next, click on the Edit button to edit that page as you normally would. If you would like the existing live version to be included in the test, which is usually a good idea to see how well changes stack up against the original, then don’t modify the page yet. Instead, click on the *State* tab and set the *Status* to *Parallel*.

A *Parallel* status tells Sitellite that several versions of the page will be created to run in parallel, and any subsequent edits to the page will be

rotated through as new visitors land on that page. This feature itself, without defining a goal which initializes the Multivariate Test, is one way to show rotating content on a page in Sitellite.

Next, save the page and you will be taken back to that page in the Web View.

Setting the goal

Under the editing icons for the page, you'll notice Sitellite has added a new link for you labelled "Parallel: Set Goal". Before clicking on this, choose the link on the page that will be the goal for visitors to reach. Right-click on the goal link and select "Copy Link Location". Now you'll be able to paste the goal link into the next screen.

Now click on the "Set Goal" link and Sitellite will load a form asking for the goal link that you just copied from the previous page. Paste it into the form and click *Save*.

Sitellite will take you to the *Parallel Stats* page, but it will simply say that "There are no stats for this test yet. Please check back later." since the test series needs time to generate statistics. The *Back* link will take you back to the page being tested.

Creating additional changes

The next step is to create your changes. To create a new change, simply edit the page again as you normally would. This time, make any change you want to the page, but leave the *Status* set to *Parallel*. Changing the status would simply cancel the test by creating a new version that supersedes the parallel versions.

When you're done making changes, save the page and the changes will be added to the test automatically. This is how you can also add new changes later on, but that means the test will have to go on longer to generate enough statistics to know which version is best.

For larger changes like setting a different design template to be used, it's still just a matter of setting that property of the page for that change. That's all there is to it. Of course, to test a new design template, you would need to first create and install the new design template into your site's template set.

For changing sidebars, this is also done by changing the design template. You can create a duplicate of the original design template and change the sidebar position names in it just like setting up the sidebar positions when

the site was first created. From there, simply create sidebars for the new position names and when the changed page is assigned the new template, your new sidebars will be shown with it.

Viewing the statistics

Depending on how many visitors you get to your website, a test can take anywhere from days to weeks to gather sufficient data. During this time you can check up on the test at any time simply by logging in and browsing to that page in the Web View. Under the editing icons, you'll see a link labelled "Parallel: View Stats" which will take you to the statistics screen.

Each change is labelled V1, V2, V3, etc. and shown side-by-side. Under that you'll see the goal link that you defined for the test, the number of views and clicks in total, and the number of days the test has been running for.

For each change, you can view that change specifically by clicking its *View* link, or approve the change and end the test by clicking its *Approve* link. Once statistics start to be collected, Sitellite will show the currently recommended change based on the ratio of views to clicks, however you still want to wait until enough data has been collected (several hundred or preferably several thousand visits, so you know the view-to-click ratios are not simply anomalies). But once enough data has been collected that you are comfortable with the recommended version, simply *Approve* it and it becomes the live version shown to all visitors of the site.

There are a couple things to note about the statistics as well. The views are shown randomly, which evens out over time, but that is why the number of views will not be equal for each change. The ratio of views to clicks is what is most important once enough views have been collected.

Also, admin users are not tracked for views or clicks in the test, so you don't have to worry about tainting the test data as you browse the site yourself, as long as you are logged in while you browse.

And lastly, when a particular version of the page is shown to an individual website visitor, that visitor's browser is sent a cookie so that Sitellite knows to always show them that version for their visit to the site. That way they don't come back to the page as they browse around and see it changing on them unexpectedly. Sitellite works to maintain a consistent experience for visitors including during an active Multivariate Test.

As you can see, with the new Sitelite 5 Multivariate Testing capabilities, Sitelite offers a powerful way for website owners to conduct simple marketing tests that yield provable improvements to their websites, with a level of simplicity that any Sitelite user can easily handle. Multivariate Testing has never been easier!