

How to Read AWStats

Welcome to the world of owning a website. One of the things that both newbie and even ‘old time’ website owners get overwhelmed by is their analytics and understanding the data.

One of the great things about Mom Webs Hosting is we use cPanel which comes with an analytics software already installed – AWStats – that doesn’t require you to do anything to set it up.

AWStats is a useful tool – but not our number one choice for monitoring your traffic numbers. Because of the different way numbers are generated, AWStats tends to over-report your traffic in our opinion. We much prefer Google Analytics – which we’ll mention at the end of this tutorial.

You may be thinking, okay great there’s a tool installed that tracks my statistics but where do I find that information? And more importantly, why should I care what the stats say?

Why it’s important to know your stats

Without knowing the information your visitors are consuming and most interested in, your content creation plans will be hit or miss. It would be pointless to write things your audience isn’t interested in. Why would they come back if you aren’t offering them information and solutions they need?

Think about Netflix for a minute. I’m going to assume you’re a member or at least familiar with their service and how they work. They *know* what you watch. How do they know? Because they’re tracking your activity (what you’re viewing).

Sometimes tracking software can be a little creepy but in the case of Netflix (and our websites) then tracking my activity isn’t creepy at all. In fact, I enjoy it. Why? Because then they give recommendations on other shows or movies that may interest me based on something I’ve already watched.

For example: I recently watched Prison Break, Orange Is The New Black & Scandal so I loved that when I logged into my account they had recommendations of other shows I may be interested in based on that viewing activity.

It looked like this:



Netflix is an awesome example of how they track their customers (audience) and give them more of what they want. And that's *exactly* what we want to do with our website visitors.

Now that you understand why it's important to know your stats, let's take a look at the inside of your cPanel account and AWStats. Here are step-by-step instructions on how to access them as well as the four main metrics you'll want to pay attention to.

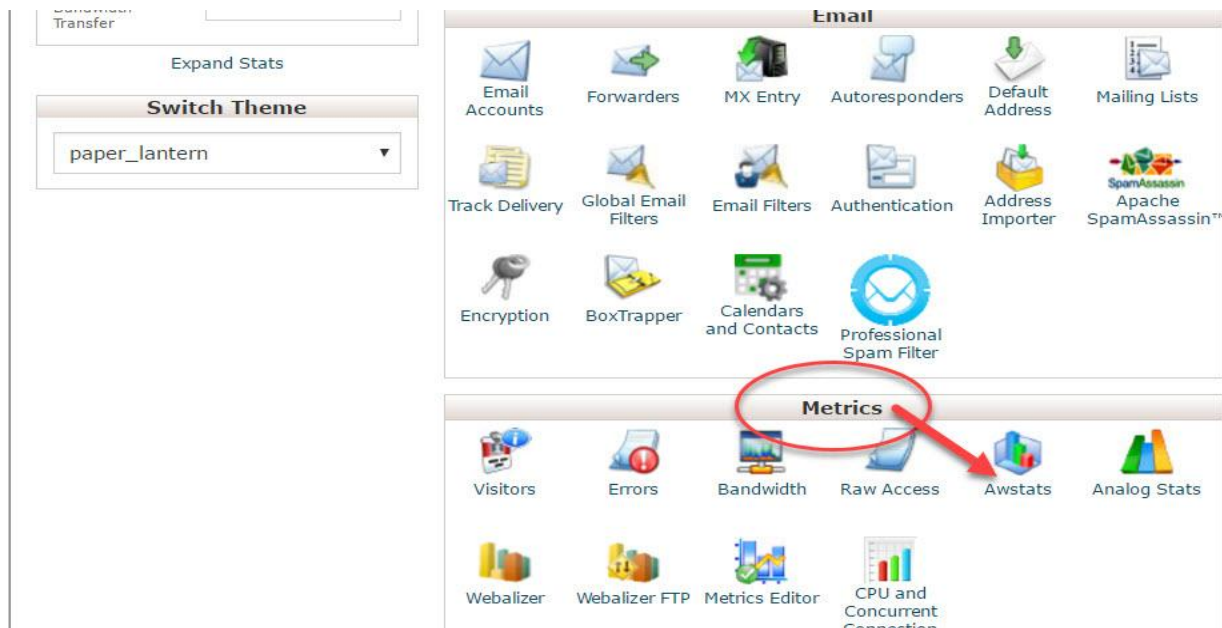
Step 1: Login to your cPanel account.

Go to yourdomainname.com/cpanel.

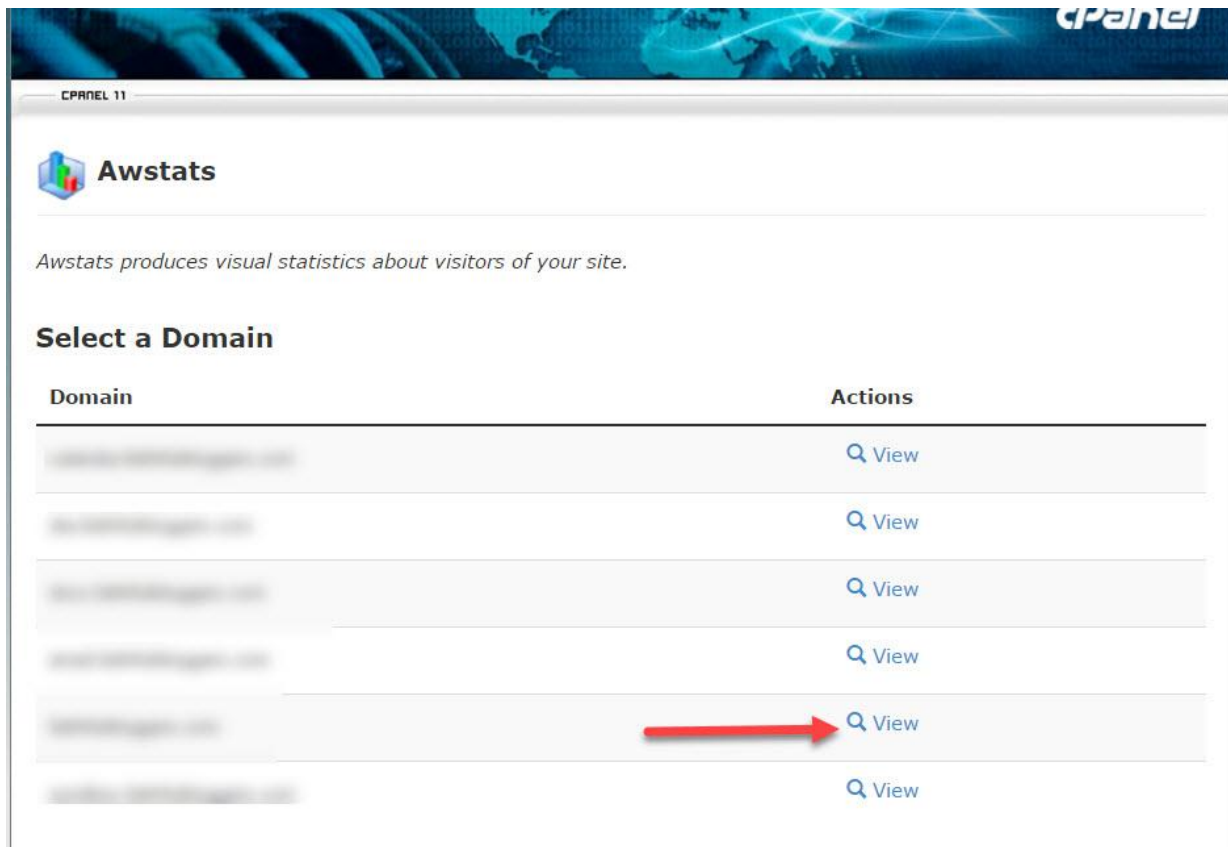
When you get logged in, you'll see a screen that looks like this:



Step 2: Scroll down to **Metrics** and click on **Awstats**.

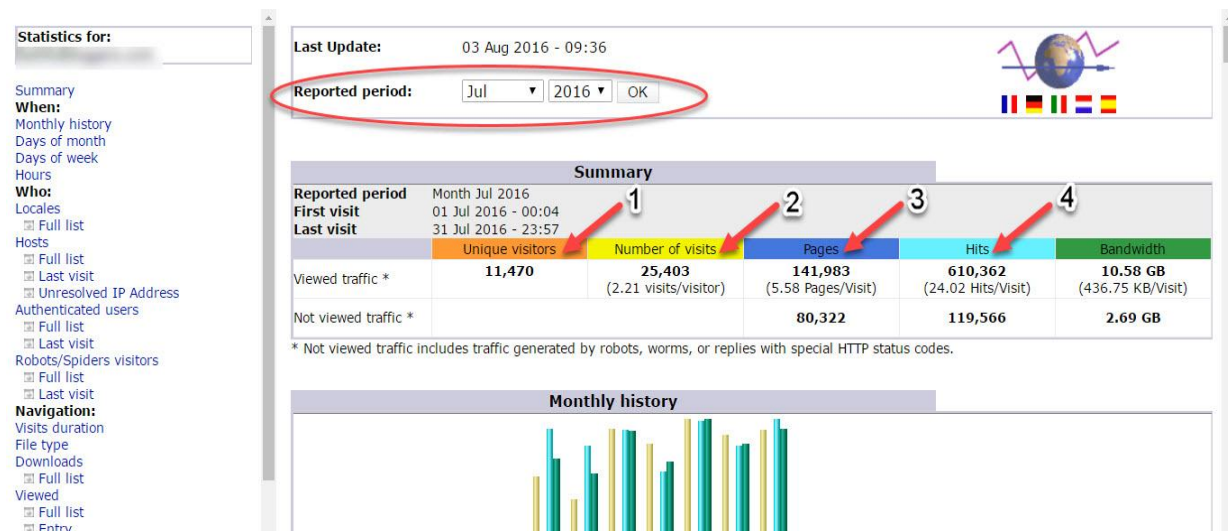


Now you will see a page that looks similar to this (you may only see one domain option to choose from).



Step 3: Click on **View** next to the domain you want to see stats for.

Your screen will look similar to this:



For the reported period (red circle) I chose July 2016 for the data to view. It shows **unique visitors (1)**, **number of visits (2)**, **pages (3)**, and **hits (4)**. But what

exactly does each one of those mean? Here is the definition (according to AWStats) of each one:

Unique Visitor (1):	A unique visitor is a person or computer (host) that has made at least 1 hit on 1 page of your web site during the current period shown by the report. If this user makes several visits during this period, it is counted only once. Visitors are tracked by IP address, so if multiple users are accessing your site from the same IP (such as a home or office network), they will be counted as a single unique visitor.
Visits (2):	Number of visits made by all visitors. Think "session" here, say a unique IP accesses a page, and then requests three other pages within an hour. All of the "pages" are included in the visit, therefore you should expect multiple pages per visit and multiple visits per unique visitor (assuming that some of the unique IPs are logged with more than an hour between requests)
Pages (3):	The number of "pages" viewed by visitors.
Hits (4): how many times something has been downloaded from your site (image, video, etc.)	Any files requested from the server (including files that are "Pages") except those that match the SkipFiles config parameter.

SOURCE: http://awstats.sourceforge.net/docs/awstats_glossary.html

Feeling confused by those definitions? Let me put things in a simpler to understand context:

Unique Visitor: the amount of individuals (new visitors/prospects) that come to your page.

Visits: the number of times the above person comes back (the unique visitor comes back more than one time).

Pages: the number of individual pages on your site that have been viewed.

Hits: how many times something has been downloaded from your site (image, video, etc.)

Back to the example screenshot above (of my stats for July 2016), let's break it down and dig in a little deeper.

Summary				
Reported period	Month Jul 2016			
First visit	01 Jul 2016 - 00:04			
Last visit	31 Jul 2016 - 23:57			
	Unique visitors	Number of visits	Pages	Hits
Viewed traffic *	11,470	25,403 (2.21 visits/visitor)	141,983 (5.58 Pages/Visit)	610,362 (24.02 Hits/Visit)
Not viewed traffic *			80,322	119,566

* Not viewed traffic includes traffic generated by robots, worms, or replies with special HTTP status codes.

So for the month of July:

Unique visitors (1): 11,470. This is new people that have never been to my website before. That's not too bad of a number for one month but of course I'd like it to be even higher than that!

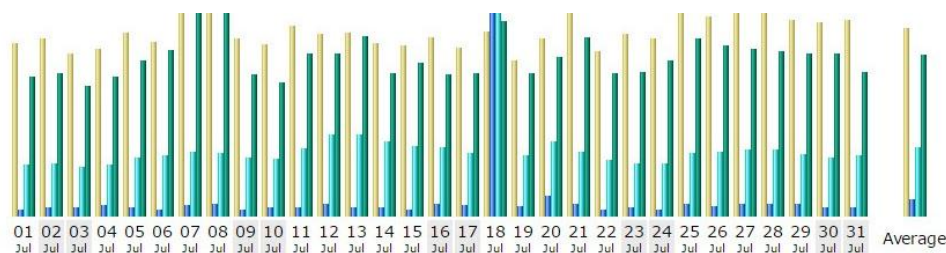
Number of visits (2): 25,403 (2.21 visits/visitor). Let's pay attention to that visits/visitor number of 2.21 because that's important. This means that of all those unique visitors 2.21 of them are coming back more than once. That's a pretty good number, but again I'd like to see a higher number there.

Pages (3): 141,983 (5.58 pages/visit). Let's talk about the 5.58 pages/visit. This simply means when someone visits my site the average number of pages they're visiting before leaving the site is 5.58. Again, this is a pretty good number but it can always be better (higher).

Hits (4): 610,362 (24.02 hits/visit). I'm not even going to break this down/focus on it because honestly, this metric isn't really all that important.

Other data that can be helpful:

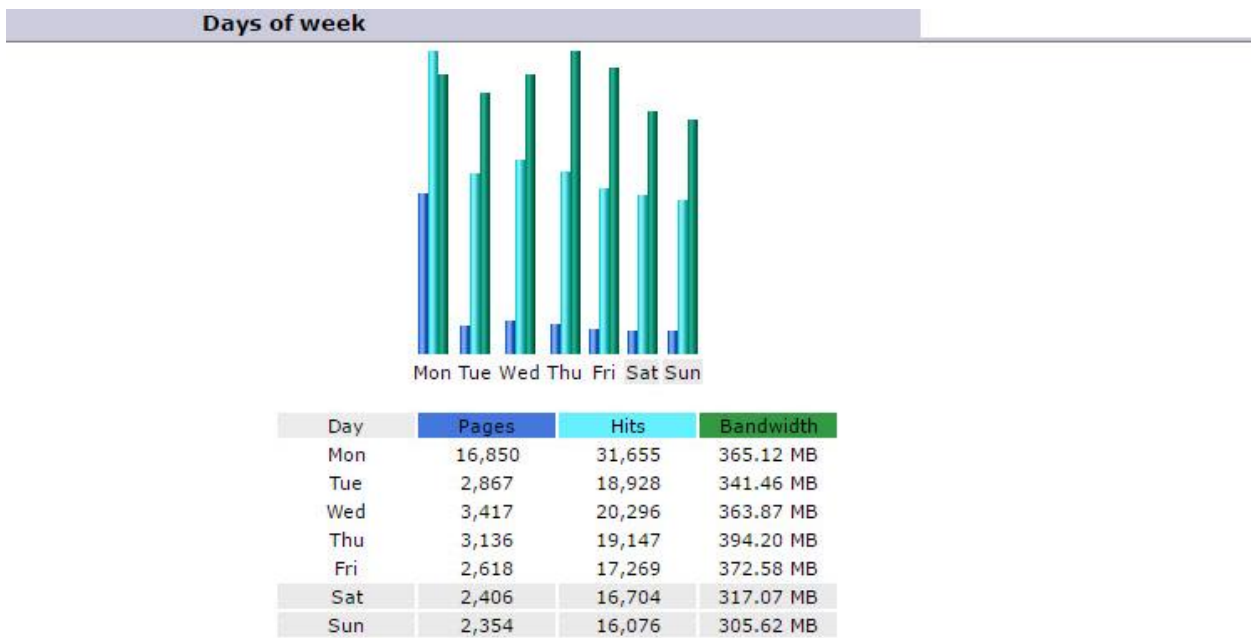
You can get even more detailed when reading your stats too. For example, it can be broken down into daily information:



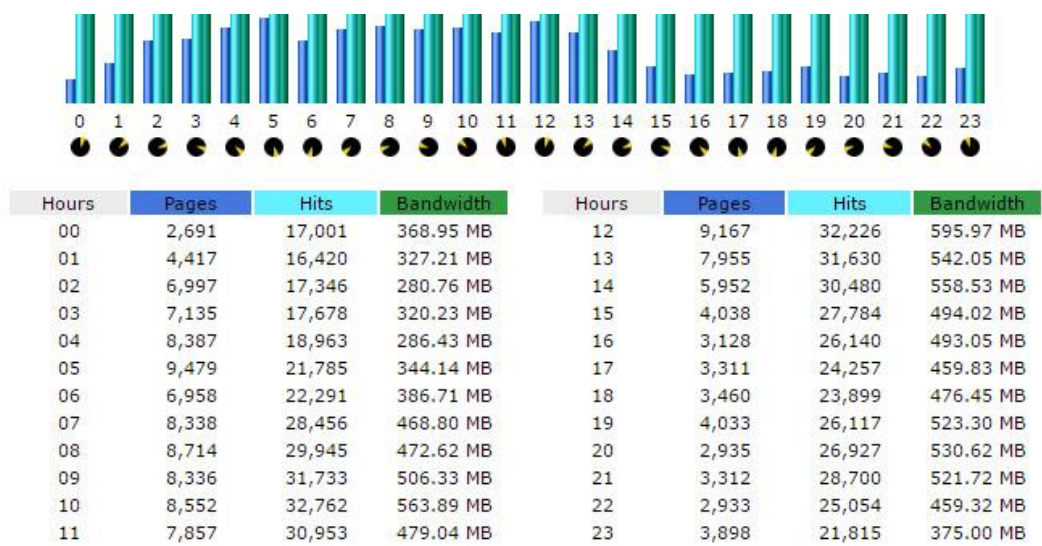
Day	Number of visits	Pages	Hits	Bandwidth
01 Jul 2016	755	1,973	14,756	303.30 MB
02 Jul 2016	776	2,192	14,962	309.11 MB
03 Jul 2016	713	2,283	13,709	280.67 MB
04 Jul 2016	727	2,939	14,790	301.32 MB
05 Jul 2016	798	2,429	16,589	336.13 MB
06 Jul 2016	764	2,041	17,345	359.81 MB
07 Jul 2016	1,025	3,207	18,405	525.35 MB
08 Jul 2016	1,039	3,616	18,194	564.89 MB
09 Jul 2016	771	1,820	16,810	306.05 MB

You can see I had quite a bit of traffic on July 7th and July 8th. So I should go back and see what content I published on those two days to see why so many people visited on those two days.

You can even look at traffic on days of the week. I don't personally use this stat, but it's interesting to see that on Mondays I tend to get the most traffic, at least in July that was the case.



You can get even more specific and look at traffic per hour. Again, this is one I don't personally use.



You can also look at your traffic based on countries. I was surprised to see Turkey listed higher in traffic than the United States:

Locales		Pages	Hits	Bandwidth	
Turkey	tr	56,404	56,667	92.99 MB	
United States	us	49,093	399,036	7.39 GB	
China	cn	8,938	9,967	384.94 MB	
France	fr	4,969	7,396	134.26 MB	
South Korea	kr	4,107	5,801	47.49 MB	

One of the pieces of data you may want to review is the keyword searches. This information will be especially helpful if you're focusing on SEO optimization on your site. It'll tell you the keyphrases as well as the top keywords people use in finding your site.

Search Keyphrases (Top 10)			Search Keywords (Top 25)		
Full list			Full list		
8 different keyphrases	Search	Percent	30 different keywords	Search	Percent
	2	22.2 %		5	10.6 %
	1	11.1 %		4	8.5 %
	1	11.1 %		3	6.3 %
	1	11.1 %		3	6.3 %
	1	11.1 %		2	4.2 %
	1	11.1 %		2	4.2 %
	1	11.1 %		2	4.2 %
	1	11.1 %		2	4.2 %
	1	11.1 %		1	2.1 %
	1	11.1 %		1	2.1 %

In the end, when it comes to understanding your AWStats it basically boils down to are your numbers increasing or decreasing? Pay attention to the stats and then tweak and make changes where needed.

In the screenshot below you can see that my traffic has been pretty consistent. That's a good thing; you don't want to see a big drop off in your traffic from one month to the next.

Month	Unique visitors	Number of visits	Pages	Hits	Bandwidth
Jan 2016	9,945	19,742	80,958	583,933	9.08 GB
Feb 2016	8,095	17,062	56,271	537,595	8.38 GB
Mar 2016	10,518	25,465	82,620	583,095	10.45 GB
Apr 2016	10,174	23,726	76,078	466,761	8.94 GB
May 2016	11,197	26,602	118,925	606,858	11.03 GB
Jun 2016	10,432	24,751	78,898	536,229	9.86 GB
Jul 2016	11,470	25,403	141,983	610,362	10.58 GB
Aug 2016	1,425	1,925	6,778	40,391	757.53 MB

Now, before you go I have one other thing I want to mention. Google Analytics. I know – nothing like throwing one more thing at you. But, Google Analytics is an excellent resource when it comes to tracking your traffic. Most people choose to use Google Analytics rather than their AWStats and I actually encourage people to use it over AWStats.

To get started with them you do need to set up a Google Analytics account. If you have a main Gmail account, you don't need to set up an account you can just login to analytics with that email address. Once things are set up in the analytics account there is a piece of tracking code that has to be installed on your site but it's fairly simple to do (especially if you're using Genesis theme). Or if you aren't tech savvy and don't feel comfortable doing it, you can [hire someone](#) to do it for you for a reasonable rate.

Why Google Analytics?

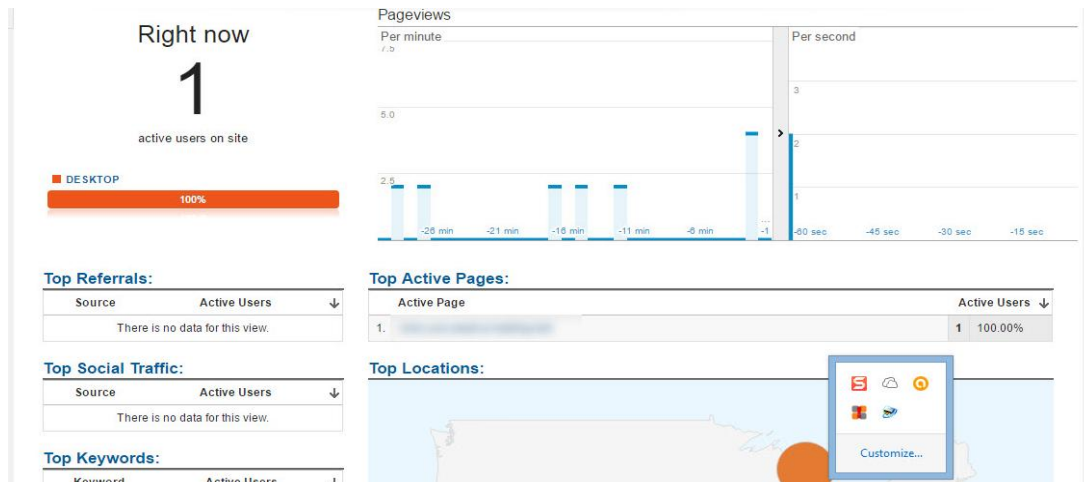
I recommend Google Analytics because not only is it one of the top resources available there are more tracking options available than AWStats offers.

Here are just a few benefits of Google Analytics:

- Really detailed demographic and geographical information about your audience:
 - country they're from
 - the city
 - age range,
 - gender
 - language
 - what browser they're using
 - screen resolution
 - and more!
- The dashboard can be set up so you see the most important analytics first.
- You can set up goals. This will help you test, track and tweak different campaigns.
- Identify your worst performing pages.
- Determine where people abandon the shopping cart.
- Discover if you need a mobile site.
- You can track exactly how people get to your site (the routes they take to get there).
- What devices people are using to get to your site.

And one of my favorite things about Google Analytics is the ability to see traffic in real time!

Here's an example of what the real time data looks like. Keep in mind, this is just me on my site so there isn't much data to look at:



This data can be useful (and fun!) to you if you've just sent out a mailing to your list about a new product or service – head into the dashboard and watch visitors come and go, look at the pages they're on, and more. In other words you get to “peep” on your visitors and see what they're doing. It's pretty cool!

There's so much more to Google Analytics than just the few things listed here. I highly recommend you check it out.

By the way, if you decide to use Google Analytics and don't want to mess with the set up and making sure you have everything configured properly, for just \$25 (for one website) you can have it done for you by Tishia Lee – a skilled Virtual Assistant who's been around since 2006! [Click here to get more info.](#)