Google Analytics

Google Analytics is a free data collection and reporting tool. However, implementing, analyzing, interpreting, and making website changes all require a resource outlay at your end.

5 - 10 percent of your total online marketing budget should go to analytics measurement.

Analyzing web metrics is like going to the gym. If you go on an infrequent basis, you don’t get measurable results.

In business - what gets measured, gets fixed. If you want better cash flow, then measure cash flow. If you want better closing ratios, then measure closing ratios. What gets measured, gets fixed.

What do you want to measure?

Imagine for a moment that you’ve got a traditional bricks-and-mortar store. You enjoy watching folks come in and browse the isles. Some, walk up and down the isles - you can tell they’re looking at your merchandise, even though they never actually pause or pick anything up.

Some stop and look knowingly at a product. Some actually pick an item from the shelf looking intently before setting the item down. Some actually make their way to the checkout counter and make a purchase.

You ring sales all day. Clear the register. And repeat the process again tomorrow.

What if you could accurately determine what visitors to your store actually looked at? Even while you were busy answering questions for someone else, or ringing up a sale? What if you could tell how many visitors looked at the same product - and - are returning visitors?

Imagine being able to recap your day knowing:
How many visitors arrived.
How long they stayed.
Which item they examined first.
Which item they examined last.
Which items they examined in between the the first and the last.

Imagine that there are 150 Dimensions (Describe Data) and 126 Metrics (Measure Data) across 23 different groups that can be utilized in over 100 standard reports and countless custom reports to segment, filter, and report on what your visitors are looking at and buying from your store.
Your bricks-and-mortar store may not have this kind of reporting capability - but your website does. Your website does, if you have Google Analytics installed.

Web analytics is a thermometer for your website, constantly checking and monitoring your online health. As a methodology, it is the study of online experience in order to improve it; without it, you are flying blind. How else would you determine whether your search engine marketing is effective, or even sufficient, for capturing your potential audience or whether your investment in creating social media buzz has been worth it? Is the visitor experience a good one, encouraging engagement, repeat visits, and sales, or are visitors bouncing off your website after viewing only a single web page?

If your website is an important part of your business strategy, then website measurement is also important to that strategy.

Universal Analytics (still in Beta - not a forced upgrade yet) really provides 4 big controls; Organic Search Sources, Session and Campaign Timeout, Referral Exclusions, and Search Term Exclusions.

Additionally, Analytics is now positioned to enable property owners to track metrics from websites, mobile applications, Kiosks, Video Game Consoles, Smart TV’s and any number of other Internet Devices.

From the Admin page, you can configure and control the following items (Property settings - Tracking Info):

**Organic Search Sources**
Analytics automatically recognizes the most popular search engines, and attributes traffic to these sources. Traffic that finds your site through any of the 41 default search engines appears as organic search traffic in your reports.

Traffic that finds your site through any search engine not included in this list is considered referral traffic, (not as organic search traffic), in your reports.

You can add, delete, and reorder the list of recognized search engines to modify how organic search traffic is attributed in your account and how the data appears in your reports.

Analytics attributes incoming traffic to one source. Organic search traffic is assigned to the first search engine on your list that matches the domain name and query parameter of the incoming visit.

For example, if you list google.com first and images.google.com second (and both sites use the same query parameter, like q), all searches that happen on images.google.com are attributed to google.com. To change this attribution, you can reorder these search
engines in the list to prioritize how visits are attributed. In this example, you could list images.google.com before google.com so searches are properly attributed.

You can also remove search engines from this list. Traffic arriving from any search engine you remove appear as referral traffic instead of as organic search traffic.

Sessions and Campaigns

Sessions and campaigns end after a specific amount of time passes. By default, sessions end after 30 minutes and campaigns end after 6 months. You can change the settings so sessions and campaigns end after the specified amount of time has passed.

The length of a session and campaign depends on your site and business. Here are a few ideas to get you started thinking about session and campaign timeouts:

- If your site automatically signs a visitor out after being inactive for a certain amount of time, set the session timeout to match that length of time.

- Lengthen the session time if you have a lot of content and expect visitors to take a long time engaging with that content (for instance - you have a lot of video content that runs longer than 30 minutes). Conversely, shorten the session time if the site has a small amount of content.

- Set the campaign timeout handling to the same amount of time the campaign is going to run or expected to be relevant. Clicks to a social media micro-campaign might not be relevant for more than a few days after launch.

Campaign timeout cannot be greater than 2 years. Sessions cannot be less than 1 minute or greater than 4 hours.

Referral Exclusions

Referral traffic is the segment of traffic that arrives at your site through a link on another site. Analytics automatically recognizes where traffic was immediately before arriving on your site, and displays the domain names of these sites as the referral traffic sources in your reports.

A common use for Referral Exclusions is to exclude traffic from a third-party shopping cart to prevent customers from being counted in new session and as a referral when they return to your order confirmation page after checking out on the third-party site.

Google Analytics recognizes the URL you use to set up a new property in your account and automatically excludes this domain from your referral traffic, so you won’t see self-referrals in your Analytics reports.
You must, however, manually add all other domains (including sites in a cross-domain tracking or third-party shopping cart setup) to exclude traffic from those domains from being recognized as referral traffic in your reports.

Search Term Exclusions
You can exclude specific search terms from being identified in your Analytics account. When visitors find your site using an excluded term, that traffic isn’t included as search traffic in your reports. Instead, it’s counted as direct traffic. You might, for example, want to exclude your own company name or your domain as search terms. Any traffic that finds your site by searching either of these terms then appears as direct traffic in your reports.

When you exclude search traffic that arrives at your site using specific keywords, other activities from that traffic, like triggering Events or completing Goals, are still recorded in your reports.

Custom Dimensions and Metrics
And now back to standard analytics.

You can create up to 20 custom dimensions (text strings that describe an item) and up to 20 custom metrics (numbers that can have conditional operators applied to them) to collect data that’s unique to your business. Custom dimensions and metrics are set at the property (Custom Definitions) level in a Google Analytics account.

Creating custom dimensions or metric is a two step process. When you’re done setting them up in your account property following the instructions in this article, you must also modify your tracking code to collect and send data to your account.

Filters
When you attach a filter to your camera, it changes what is captured on film. Likewise, when you set a view level filter on your Analytics account, you change what is processed and stored in the Analytics database.

Best practice calls for keeping an Unfiltered View that collects all data. Then you can create additional views that filter data as needed for reporting and analyzing.

* Do not confuse a view level Filter with the filtering that is available inside most analytics reports. The report level filtering doesn’t affect what is stored in the database, it only affects what is output from a report.
Five Common Filters

• Include only your websites traffic
• Exclude certain known visitors (your employees, ad agency, etc.)
• Include only specific geographical regions
• Include only specific campaign, medium, referrer, email campaign, etc.
• Specific content (i.e. purchase sections or support sections)

Advanced Segments

One of the most popular and powerful features in Google Analytics is Advanced Segmentation. Segmentation lets you isolate and analyze subsets of your traffic. You can select from predefined segments such as "Paid Traffic" and "Visits with Conversions" or create your own segments with a flexible, easy-to-use segment builder.

Then, you can apply one or more of these segments to current or historical data, and even compare segment performance side by side in reports. The current per-user limits on segments are: 1,000 segments per account, 100 segments per view.

A view level filter, segments data out before it gets processed into the Analytics database. A segment, segments data that appears on a report.

Example Segments

• Screens under 600 pixels wide
• Keyword length of 3, 4, 5, 6+ keywords
• Blog bounce remover
• Conversion rates: Business hours vs. Off hours
• Brand interest pages (about, testimonials, team pages, etc.)

Goals

“Goals” are why you put up a website in the first place. Why was that? Was it to sell directly, to generate leads, to keep clients up to date, to attract new staff? Don’t forget about negative goals; zero search results returned, lack of sufficient time spent on pages that are meant to directly support existing clients, or lack of page depth.

Google Analytics supports up to 20 goals per view. Once created goals cannot be deleted, but they can turned off.
Other Stuff You Can Do or Track

• Use Analytics to create “virtual” pages.
• Track site searches that return zero results.
• Monitor 404 pages.
• Track Events (Flash and AJAX elements, data load times, file downloads, etc...).
• Determine which of three links on a single page, all of which point to the same content, perform the best.

Smart people are analyzing to optimize their website. The advanced people are using web data to optimize all of their marketing.