

Why You Need Web Analytics



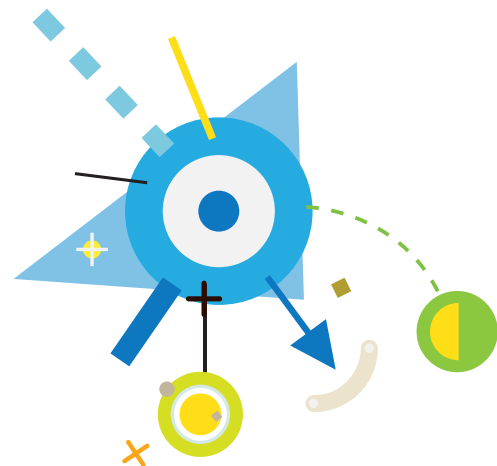
Web analytics is the measurement, collection, analysis and reporting of internet data for purposes of understanding and optimizing web usage.

Source Wikipedia

Introduction: A Weird Analogy

Have you ever heard the expression “if you can’t measure, you can’t manage”? Before the web, the amount of usable information a small business could collect on their customers was very limited. But online, it is easier than ever to gather information on how your target audience is interacting with you and each other site.

Imagine you’re herding sheep... You want to guide them into a particular pen but at first you can’t really tell where your sheep are going to run - they split off from the herd and dart in all kinds of unpredictable directions. An analytics tool is like a well-trained sheep dog. As a sheepdog extends the control you have over your sheep, an analytics tool extends the knowledge you have of your customers. Unfortunately, if you’re new to sheep farming it can take a while to learn all the commands.





Scenario 1 – An Enclosed Field

All of your sheep are in the field with yourself and your sheep dog and you have to master the ability to direct a single flock into pen in the middle. You perfect the technique, learn the commands, bunch up your flock and shear off the wool for market.

Scenario 2 – Field with no Gates

Now imagine you're in another wide open field, sheep are streaming in from an opening with no gate and initially scattering about the field. This time you've got a couple of sheep dogs and your skills have improved... But you have a problem. There is another opening on the other side of the field and you have no way to close it!



You'll lose sheep, for sure, but you need to get as many as you can into the pen for sheering. And you have another challenge. Many sheep have already been sheered by other farmers and you don't want to waste resources on those. Use your dogs (read: analytics tools) to focus on the sheep you need and maximise your woolly harvest. Each day the same thing happens and you get better as you learn more commands and tricks for directing the sheep you need.



Scenario 3 – One Field/Many Openings

This is when it gets weird... You're in an open field and you've trained up a whole pack of sheep dogs. The sheep are streaming in from all sides, multiple openings, and they are leaving just as quickly in all directions. The more information and tools you have for directing the sheep, the more sheep you'll gather up and pen for sheering.

The first thing you have to do is identify the openings most of your sheep are coming in from. Directing your dogs to those openings will help you round them up early and efficiently to funnel them into the pen. Having been sheered by other farmers, many sheep are not ready though, and they often come in from specific openings.

Maximise the total wool collected as a percentage of the total amount that enters and leaves your field (read: website) every day. This is your conversion rating is known as "On-site SEO".

Scenario 4 – An Infinite Countryside



This is the wild scenario. The internet is like an endless countryside, full of fields without gates. The openings between fields are like links online. Sheep are strewn all over the web and you have super sheep dog that can roam all over, herding the particular sheep you're interested in back to your field for sheering.

In web jargon, this is called off-site SEO or web strategy, and requires a whole raft of analytics tools and expertise to master. See our white paper on *Web Strategy: A Beginner's Guide* for a broader introduction. This document will deal with the first three scenarios in the context of on-site search engine optimisation and Google Analytics.

Your Options

Today the tools available for analysing how customers, clients and users are interacting with your business or organisation online are so powerful and simple that there is no longer any valid excuse for not adopting them. They are absolutely mandatory for a properly functioning website to accomplish its intended goals.

What can web analytics tell you?

Who:

- How often they visit
- How people are finding your site
- Where they are geographically
- When they are visiting
- What devices they are using (very important!)

What they like (dislike):

- How long they spend on your site
- What pages are interesting, which pages turn them off
- Give your details on specific in-page interactions

Social media love:

- How many likes and tweets your site is getting
- What popular social media websites are driving most of your traffic

And more... Web analytics is like your website's thermometer!



When people speak of analytics on the web, the first thought is usually Google Analytics as the primary analytics tool. There are others, so feel free to do a Google search and choose the one you like best. [Here](#) is a list of free and paid analytics tools. [Piwik](#) is also quite popular (and free, like [GA](#)). Be careful of adding two analytics tools though into the same page. It might be worth using different tools on different parts of your website to test them out. But the tools use can interfere with each other on the same page and if you're non-technical this will trip you up.

Additional tools can be added such as "seevotultion" or "Crazyegg" – which will heatmap the clicks on various pages to offer a clearer representation of user activity (check out [knowtebook.com](#) for more on this subject). For Social Media activity, it is possible to both manage and monitor your accounts, measuring engagement and feedback over time, using tools like [Sprout Social](#), and you can "listen" to what people are saying about your brand online in real time using a range of free or paid tools ([here](#) is a list of some of the most popular).

Note: These "listening tools" are more effectively leveraged after a few months designing and implementing your online strategy. The more you enhance and increase your online presence, the more insight, feedback and leads you will gather from these tools.

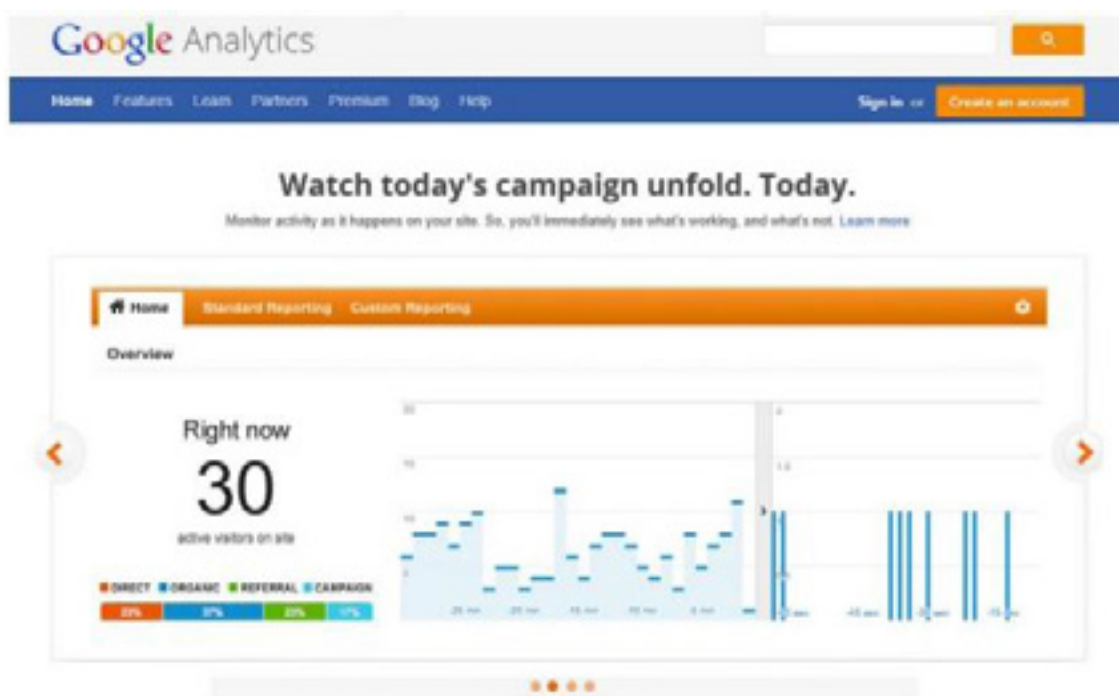
Google Analytics

Purely in terms of understanding the effectiveness of your website in fulfilling its goal, and the behaviour of users when then land there, you could get by without any tool but Google Analytics. It is free, easy to implement, easy to use and easy to understand.

Setup

Setting it up can be a little technical, but here are the steps (You'll need a Google account first):

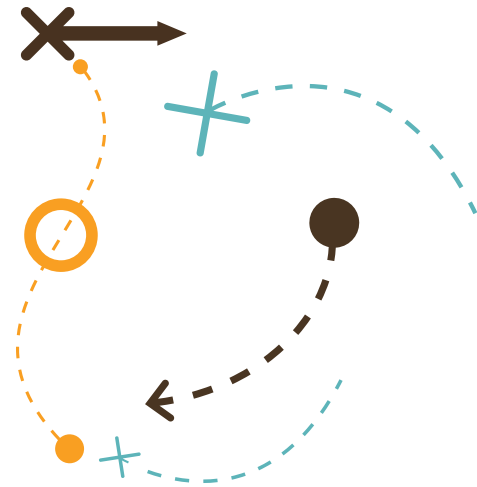
1. Sign up for Google analytics – All they need is some basic information about your website
2. Add tracking code – You'll get a tracking code to paste onto your pages so Google knows when your site is visited
3. Learn about your audience – In a few hours you'll be able to start seeing data about your website's performance



Tracking

What's getting tracked by default?

- Visits and Visitor
- Hit Counts
- Demographics
- Technology
- New vs. Returning
- Content
- Page View Counts
- Bounce Rate (% that jumped on and off your site within seconds)
- Entry/Exit
- Flow/Navigation
- Sessions
- Duration
- Page Depth
- Traffic Sources
- In-Page Analytics



What is NOT getting tracked yet?

- Monetary Value
- Goals & funnels
- Multiple domains
- Multiple domains
- In-page events
- File downloads
- Flash, Silverlight & YouTube
- Mailto links
- Outbound links

When Will Your Data Be Visible?

Activity	Immediately	In Minutes	In 1-4 Hours	Within 24 Hours
Tracking Installed		✓		
Real-time Data	✓			
Receiving Data				✓
Intra-day Activity Data			✓	
End of Day Activity Data				✓

Most Reports (bracketed next to Intra-day and End of Day Activity Data)

Key Reports

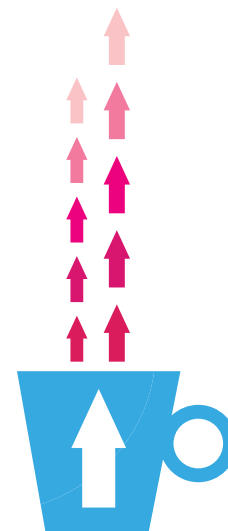
These are the key reports you'll be viewing to understand your website's performance:

Traffic Reports

- Direct
- Type URL, bookmark, link from email client
- Referrals
- Organic Search
- Paid Search
- Campaigns
- Baner ad, email newsletter

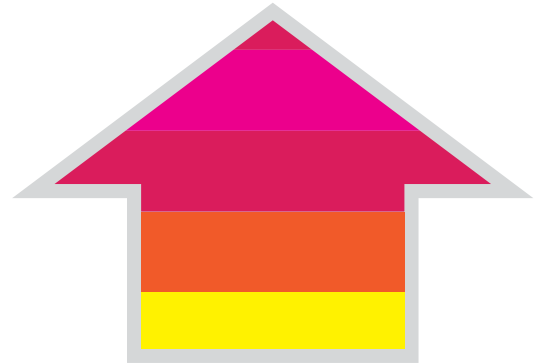
Visitor Flow/Content Reports

- Where do people enter
- Where do people go
- Where do people exit
- How long do they stay
- Did they search?



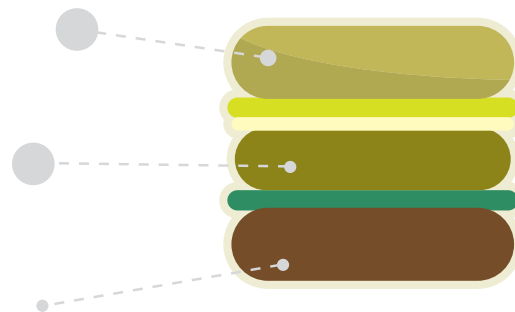
Goal Funnel

- How well does your site help your business goals?
- Goal Types
 - URL Destination
 - Visit Duration
 - Pages/Visit
 - Event



Demographics/Audience Reports

- Overview
- Location
- Behaviour
 - New vs. Returning
 - Engagement
- Technology



In-Page Analytics

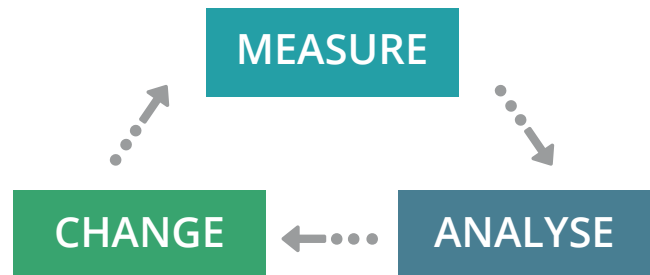
Site-Speed

As this is only an introduction to analytics, we won't be covering any of these in detail, but feel free to Google further resources and material on Google Analytics in order to further your education or check out our Advanced Guide to Google Analytics white paper.

Effective Use

There is no such thing as perfection. Once you learn how to use analytics tools you'll never stop... it will become an integral part of your business. Data driven marketing is the future and you need to be there. Treat it as an endless cycle of:

You must use the data being fed to you to continually adapt and modify the content (and occasionally structure) of your website or application.



Proceed with Caution

Data is not perfect and it still boils down to your interpretation and how deeply you dig into what the analytics is presenting. Look for trends and always be aware of the external context of any given data.

Goal Driven

You can have multiple goals for your website, but until you figure out your goals – You will be lost!

This means fully integrating your online and offline goals, objectives and strategies.

1. Define your business objectives
 - not that you don't know already! But make it explicit)
2. Define website goals
3. Define targets
 - periodic – 1 month, 3 months, 6 months, 1 year, etc...
4. Define segments
 - your key target audience(s) – the different groups you are trying to communicate with and your strategy for each

5. Configure Google Analytics reports

6. GA training, if necessary

- Make sure multiple staff are monitoring the analytics in order to develop dialogue around the data – this is very important for how you interpret and critique the data gathered

Google analytics provides simple tools for analysing goals and their fulfilment so your data is automatically collated and organised for efficient use. We'll consider these tools in more detail in our advanced guide, but the only way you can really learn about them is by trying it out yourself.

