



# Chapter 3

## Analytics

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## Chapter 3: Analytics

Embark, weary traveler! The next stop on our digital marketing pilgrimage is really a beginning in itself. As a business owner or marketing professional, you may find the raw data and metrics associated with analytics to be too complex to devote any of your time. Or, of course, the mere image of that incessant stream of bar graphs and scatterplots can be enough to place your team in a boredom-induced coma.

Granted, it's been our experience that marketing data and analysis aren't exactly high on the average CEO's list of priorities. For us though, this fact also represents the massive opportunity that data can afford. Before we begin, we ask that you clear your mind of these common misconceptions associated with analytics and your business.

### 1. Analytics isn't worth your time (or your dollars)

This is often the first point of contention when it comes to deliberations regarding analytics adoption. Will the work, the time, and the insights be worth it in the end? In our experience, we can tell you that this is most certainly the truth. Analytics, when planned strategically and deployed properly, offers your business the insights that allow you to answer some of the most mystifying marketing conundrums, including:

- "Are my customers responding to my marketing messages in the way I expect?"
- "What are their behaviors on my website?"
- "Have my marketing campaigns been flawless, or are there areas in need of a major overhaul?"

In short, once you begin to collect data, you'll wonder why you wasted so much time and money on ineffective campaigns.



Rev: 05-18-14

## Chapter 3: Analytics

### 2. Analytics is boring and unappealing stuff.

Okay, so data may not be the sexiest thing in the world. But analytics doesn't stop at raw numbers, especially when your audience is made up of the top executives who don't really care for much beyond the difference between their profits and expenses. As an analyst-in-training, it will be your job to make sense of the data that will be at your disposal. It will be your job to build bridges between what your boss expected and what actually happened on the ground. The best part? With analytics, you'll be able to take your marketing a step further—by digging up the insights that equate to better decisions in the future. Better decisions = better marketing = higher revenue = happier bosses = happier you.

### 3. You can't do anything with the data you're collecting.

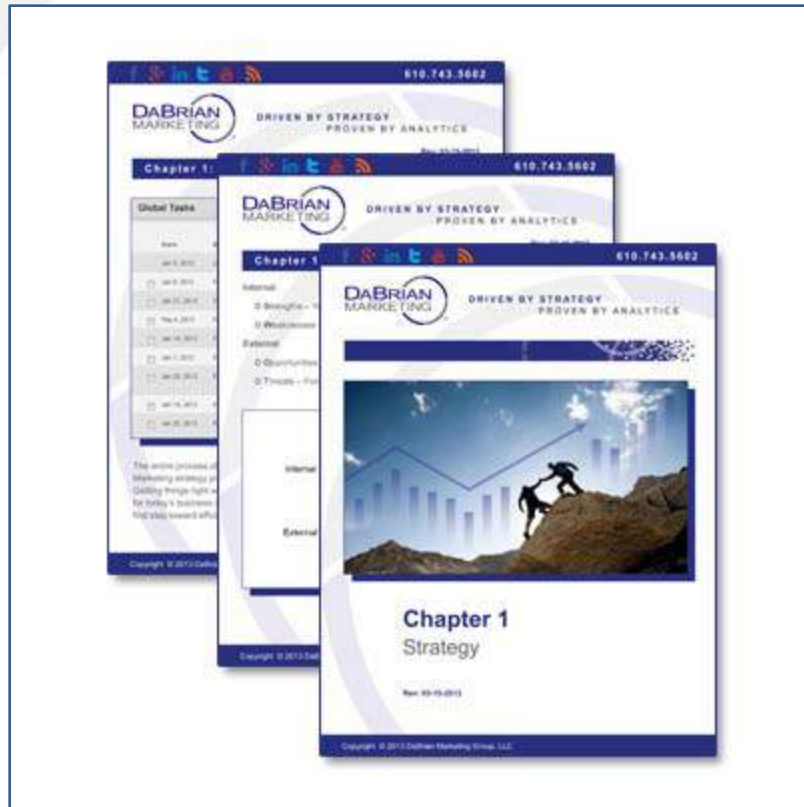
On this point, we actually agree (with one small revision). You can't do very much with the data you collect **in isolation**. Data is just data without analysis, comparison, and context. In other words, it's one thing to collect information around a particular marketing campaign. It's another entirely to put the pieces together to tell a compelling story that actually means something to your business.

Think about it. If you've made the courageous decision to venture into social media, the number of "likes" you generate may seem like an important measurement, but certainly not on its own. It's about attaching meaning, intent, and more information to those "likes" that show you're making progress toward the goals outlined in your strategy. You...do have a strategy, don't you? If not, we urge you to [read our first chapter in this series](#) and then come back before going any further!



Rev: 05-18-14

## Chapter 3: Analytics



Click the cover for access to chapter 1!

We'll get into more about defining the right metrics soon, but first, let's talk about the solutions and platforms that will allow you to slice and dice marketing data like the analytics ninja you were born to be.

### Analytics Platforms

Simply put, there are a host of tools and platforms that promise the all-inclusive and "effortless-measurement-and-analysis-guaranteed-or-your-money-back" analytics experience. The truth is, for a majority of businesses, [the free analytics suite offered by Google](#) more than fits the bill. Some advantages to the Google Analytics\* ("GA") platform include:





Rev: 05-18-14

## Chapter 3: Analytics

- A plethora of features that allow you to track and measure almost everything that happens on (and off) your website
- Customization and audience segmentation to more easily gain insights you'll actually use
- Reports focusing on social media, SEO, content, PPC, mobile, email marketing, and more
- As we mentioned, this beast is completely free and maintained by Google (i.e. [your data is in safe hands](#))
- Mobile app measurement and other integrations

These are just a few of the features packed into this free tool.

[Click here for the complete list!](#)

Like we said, you'll find more tools touting a completely transparent analytics experience than words in this paragraph, but it's our experience that it makes more sense (and saves more money) to become familiar with Google Analytics, customize its reports, extract the appropriate data, and gather the insights you desire. Unless you're in a situation where enterprise-level number-crunching is required, GA is packed with more features than you can shake a budgetary stick at.

As with any situation in which you must select software or a tool for your business, it pays to have a few components in place. Ideally, this should revolve around a process in which your organizational needs and wants are assessed, time is allocated to research and select candidates, regular evaluations are conducted of the chosen product, and so on.



Rev: 05-18-14

## Chapter 3: Analytics

\*Note: From this point on, we'll be covering the finer points of measurement as they exist in Google Analytics. What follows is in no way endorsed by Google, but their analytics platform is one of the most common. It's also our preference, and like we said, it should work in the majority of cases.

For info on the other tools available, [feel free to drop us a line!](#)

### The Implementation Process

We'll be honest. The title of this section is a bit misleading, as implementation of analytics and implementation of Google Analytics are slightly different balls o' wax. At a high-level, analytics is a process by which you (and your team) capture and evaluate data to make better marketing decisions. Google Analytics implementation is just one part within this all-inclusive process. It's like the difference between capital-T Turkey and lowercase-t turkey. One's a constitutional republic, and one's for dinner. Here, we'll break down the former for you.

#### 1. Strategic planning

Yep, your strategy is the first thing out of the gate. As we've said, please refer to our past chapters for the best practices on doing the research, getting the right people in the room, and establishing business goals that make sense for you. You can't measure progress if you haven't decided what you want to accomplish, right? With your goals, objectives, and official strategy in hand, you're ready to begin...

#### 2. Measurement Planning

A measurement plan can be as simple or as complex as your business requires. Essentially, this step involves taking the goals and objectives that resulted from your strategic meetings and deciding the best ways to measure them. This is most often accomplished by establishing what are known as Key Performance Indicators (or "KPIs"). The analogy we most often use to describe KPIs is that of a barometer (the kind your local weatherperson talks about). Whereas a meteorological barometer gives you



Rev: 05-18-14

## Chapter 3: Analytics

insight into whether the weather will be pleasant or stormy, a KPI offers marketers insight into whether their business is on the fast track to success or has some ground to make up.

Don't forget what we said earlier—your KPI metrics don't mean a heck of a lot without intent and action associated with them. For this step, we'd recommend devising very specific action items for your team to take when your KPIs fall short of certain thresholds. Here's a quick 'n dirty example of how this could work:

Let's say you're in the business of selling bedazzled picture frames (we know, you're bringing it back, and we respect that). As your marketing strategy came together, you decided that one of your business objectives is to gain national brand visibility by evoking a sense of ironic nostalgia among the emerging "former hipster, current home buyer" demographic.

Your strategy describes some tactics for completing this objective, one of which is a series of purposely-low-budget, overly-filtered, "indie" online videos. At this stage, you'll want to know whether your budding social media audience responds positively to these videos. Engaged viewers means brand awareness, right? How may these users do this? The answers, my friend, are the KPIs you've been looking for (and will start measuring):

- Above-average view retention in all west coast DMAs (action items: revisit video concepts, institute surveys, shorten video length)
- Social media shares (action items: more frequent posts, more broad hashtags, utilizing existing followers for amplification)
- Converting referral website traffic (action items: shorten path to conversion, design unique landing pages, embed videos more prominently on website)



Rev: 05-18-14

## Chapter 3: Analytics

Now, before these videos get created (and you taste the bittersweet success of having your product go “mainstream”), you’ll need to get your technical components in order.

### 3. Setup and Deployment

Once your KPIs are fleshed out, you’re ready to *implement* Google Analytics (the tool, not the process) across your digital assets, primarily your website. This process can get a smidge complicated, so we’ll give you the no-nonsense, fully-linked-to-the-appropriate-source-material version to make it as easy as possible.

First, sign in with the Google account you’d like to attach to your data. If you don’t have a Google account, you can sign up for one here: <https://accounts.google.com/signup>.

A screenshot of the "Create your Google Account" page. The page is divided into two main sections. On the left, there's a header "Create your Google Account" and a sub-header "Own account. It's all you need!". Below this, there are icons for various Google services like Gmail, YouTube, and Drive. Further down, it says "Meet Google+ yours" and "Set up your profile and preferences just the way you like". On the right, there's a registration form with fields for "Name" (first and last), "Choose your username" (with a dropdown for @gmail.com), "Create a password" (with a red arrow pointing to it), "Confirm your password", "Birthday" (month, day, year), "Gender" (a dropdown menu), and "Mobile phone" (with a country code dropdown).

What you'll see when creating a new Google account.

Next, navigate your web browser of choice to [google.com/analytics](http://google.com/analytics), log in using your Google account, and follow the process of setting up an analytics account for your business. This will include giving your account a name (your brand name, that is), your website URL, and some data confidentiality and privacy policies.





Rev: 05-18-14

## Chapter 3: Analytics



The welcome screen for setting up GA for the first time.

After you've set everything up, GA gives you a unique tracking ID, which will be incorporated into a unique tracking code, which you'll want to add to every page of your website that you'd like to track. Essentially, if the code isn't installed on a page, there's no way for data about that page to get to Google.

### New Account

What would you like to track?

Website

Mobile app

Tracking Method

This property works using Universal Analytics. Click *Get Tracking ID* and implement the Universal Analytics tracking code snippet to complete your set up.

Setting up your account

**Account Name** required

Accounts are the top-most level of organization and contain one or more tracking IDs.

Setting up your property

**Website Name** required

**Website URL** required

http://

**Industry Category** ?

Select One

**Reporting Time Zone**

United States

(GMT-08:00) Pacific Time

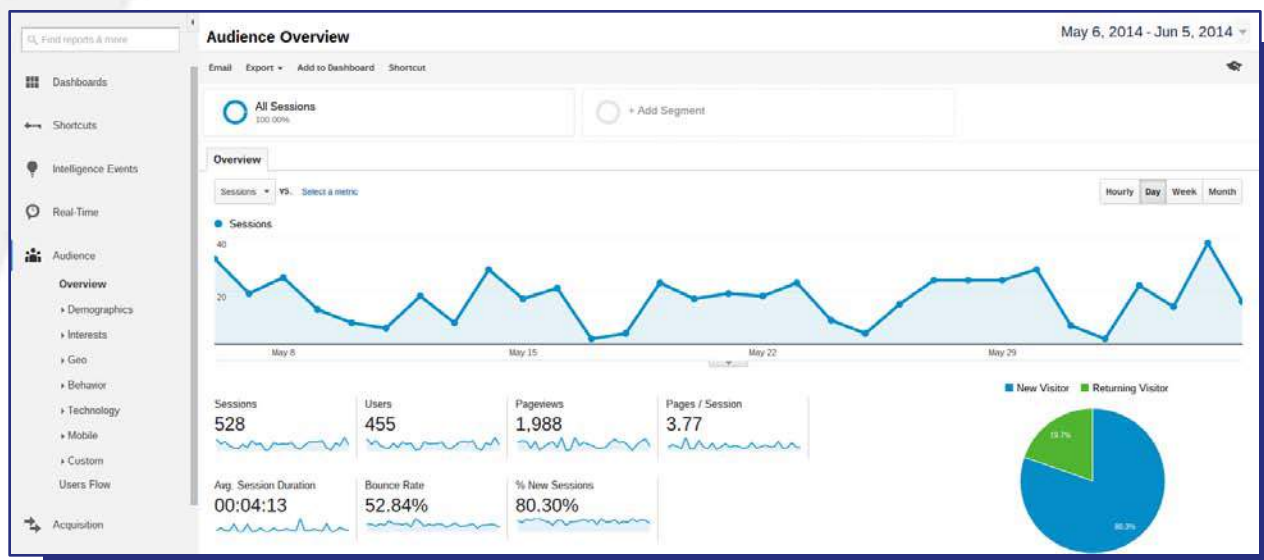
Your account name, website name, and URL are required to generate your Analytics tracking code.



Rev: 05-18-14

## Chapter 3: Analytics

Upon implementing the tracking code snippet across your website, you'll want to test that your deployment is successful\*. Thankfully, this part of the process will also serve as your introduction to the GA reporting interface.



A look at a standard Google Analytics report.

If your reporting view (accessible from the top, orange primary navigation) contains quantitative information (like you see in the screenshot), your connection is likely working. If it's not, verify that the code appears exactly as it should. Also ensure that the code is placed in the opening <head> tag of each page. There are a few other ways to check that your code is functioning properly, and [this help article from Google](#) covers them all. Now that the data is flowing, we'll move on to best practices regarding collection.

**\*Note:** This step is absolutely crucial to the informed kind of decision-making we're striving toward. Verifying your data populates correctly and accurately means your decisions will be more effective. Those decisions will spell the difference between more revenue and more guessing.



Rev: 05-18-14

## Chapter 3: Analytics

### 4. Data Collection and Reporting

Now that your *GA deployment* (getting the tracking code set up and attached to your web properties) is up and running, it's time to get your data looking the way you want it. Consider what follows your basic analytics best practices crash course:

#### Setting up a Filtered View

Because your customers aren't the only one interacting with your website on a regular basis, you'll want to make sure you isolate your internal traffic and remove it from your reports. In GA, this is accomplished via what's known as a view filter. Filters act in a way you'd expect. They take the data flowing into GA, evaluate its attributes against certain criteria, and either include, exclude, or in some way transform it before it shows up in your reports.

For your internal traffic, the best practice is to filter by IP address (or range of IP addresses, depending on how your network is configured). This filter can be set up by heading to the Admin section (via the topmost navigation), and choosing "All Filters" from the Account Settings.

A screenshot of the 'Add Filter to View' configuration window in Google Analytics. The window has a title bar 'Add Filter to View'. Below the title, there are two radio buttons: 'Create new Filter' (selected) and 'Apply existing Filter'. Under 'Filter Information', there is a text input for 'Filter Name'. Below that, there are two radio buttons for 'Filter Type': 'Predefined filter' (selected) and 'Custom filter'. A red rectangular box highlights the configuration for the predefined filter: 'Exclude' (dropdown), 'traffic from the ISP domain' (dropdown), and 'that are equal to' (dropdown). Below this, there is a text input for 'From ISP Domain' with the example '(e.g. mydomain.com)'. At the bottom, there are radio buttons for 'Case Sensitive': 'Yes' and 'No' (selected). At the very bottom, there are 'Save' and 'Cancel' buttons.

An IP address filter is a best practice for capturing accurate analytics data.



Rev: 05-18-14

## Chapter 3: Analytics

Once the filter is added to the view of your choice\*, you're ready to collect clear (and more importantly, accurate) data.

**\*Note:** While we're on the topic of best practices, it is highly recommended that you always maintain an unfiltered view of your analytics data. Filters operate one-directionally; that is, you can't remove the filter for historical data if something went awry during setup. Once the data is changed, it stays that way.

### The Importance of Tagging

Just as filters make your analytics data easier for you to analyze and understand, there are ways to make it more accessible to Google Analytics itself. In most cases, this involves a process known as *tagging*, which essentially segments data (by individual marketing campaigns, for instance) so you can slice, dice, and gain the insights you need. Let's throw down another example to show the value in tagging.

Your "indie, but not *that* indie" videos seem to be taking off, but you've found that you have limited visibility into reconciling users' interactions with the videos and your newly-designed website. "Of course," you say, triumphantly pointing your finger to the heavens. "I'll include calls to action in every video (and in every video's description) linking viewers to a relevant page on my website."

This sounds like a stupendous idea, but a question you'll likely find yourself asking is, "How can I prove that this decision paid off?" The answer, of course, can be found in your new analytics platform. By creating and attaching specific information to your new hyperlinks, you can differentiate when users visited your website using that URL vs. every other *traffic source*: the specific channel, page, or campaign that preceded in a visit to your website.

Once you know that (x) visitors came from video (y), you'll be able to dive deeper and determine if these folks downloaded a PDF, subscribed to your email newsletter, or



Rev: 05-18-14

## Chapter 3: Analytics

took some other action that puts them on the path to purchase. Attributing this content to value (whether monetary or otherwise) can help you decide whether these videos were worth the production costs.

Now, all this manual tagging requires a bit of research and more time than you’ve probably got available. Thankfully, Google offers a tool that makes it easy. Just gather up the links you need, [visit this page](#), fill in the appropriate fields (to tell GA that your campaign is coming across via a social media post vs. a video description, or a spring sale vs. a fall sale), and presto-magnifico, Google produces a perfectly-formatted URL. Just make sure every tagged link points to a page you’re tracking with GA tracking code (because you wouldn’t point your audience to a website you’re not actively monitoring).

**Step 1: Enter the URL of your website.**

Website URL \*

(e.g. http://www.urchin.com/download.html)

**Step 2: Fill in the fields below. Campaign Source, Campaign Medium and Campaign Name should always be used.**

Campaign Source \*

(referrer: google, citysearch, newsletter4)

Campaign Medium \*

(marketing medium: cpc, banner, email)

Campaign Term

(identify the paid keywords)

Campaign Content

(use to differentiate ads)

Campaign Name \*

(product, promo code, or slogan)

\* Required field

Your campaign’s source, medium, and name are required for tagging a URL.





Rev: 05-18-14

## Chapter 3: Analytics

### Goals and eCommerce

Okay, you've got folks making their way to your site, you can actually see the data begin to filter into Google Analytics, but that's only half of the data needed to balance your cost vs. expense equation. The missing piece falls to the actions you want your audience to take. If you're at the helm of a start-up, you may want your audience to recognize and associate your brand with a certain level of expertise. In this case, you could consider a newsletter signup or blog consumption as a desired action. If you're selling the world's shiniest photo frames, you want those actions to be online purchases.

In GA, these actions can be incorporated into your reports by way of Goals and eCommerce Tracking. Goals represent a broad category of user actions that you designate as useful or valuable (such as visiting a certain number of your website's pages, spending an extended period of time on your site, or subscribing to receive additional information). eCommerce is similar, but is strictly tied to products your visitors can buy. In both cases, you have the ability to set actual dollar amounts to these events (either in terms of the amount of potential leads your sales team closes or the price of individual products) to more accurately calculate your return on investment.



Rev: 05-18-14

# Chapter 3: Analytics

**1 Goal setup**

**Template**

Select a template to start with a pre-filled configuration

**REVENUE**

- Reservations Signed up for a tour, rental or reservation
- Make a payment Completed online payment
- Make an appointment Scheduled a visit or meeting
- Become a partner Requested or submitted partner, affiliate, or dealer information

**ACQUISITION**

- Create an account Successful sign up, account, or view created

**INQUIRY**

- View more Viewed product or service details
- Contact us Viewed phone number, directions, chat or email
- Get estimate Requested price or time estimate
- See available Checked inventory or schedule
- Find a location Viewed location or dealer information

**ENGAGEMENT**

- Media play Played interactive media, like a video, slideshow, or product demo

**Custom**

**2 Goal description**

**3 Goal details**

Goals can be accessed through the settings found under the View-level settings in the GA "Admin" panel.

For our custom-blinged-out frames company, you may wish to set up a combination of Goals and eCommerce conversions in Google Analytics. For brand awareness and thought leadership, you can have goals related to PDF downloads and contact form submissions. Your online store (where you actually sell the custom frames), would fall under eCommerce. In this example, the intention is the same (to analyze marketing effectiveness and true ROI), but the features and the reports in which the data will appear are different. In your reports, you'll find conversion information throughout (for individual marketing channels, traffic referring sites, etc.)



Rev: 05-18-14

## Chapter 3: Analytics

### Data Integration

In the marketing space, we're almost always drowning in a torrent of articles and blogs that focus on the "buzzword du jour." Synergize-this, Optimize-that, so on and so forth. "Integrated marketing" was once among this classification of words that don't technically *say anything*, but do succeed in giving off the impression of marketing omniscience. With the analytics tools now at your disposal, you'll be able to rise above the "happy talk" and actually integrate your marketing—you guessed it—using data.

We've discussed how to filter, manipulate, and differentiate your data so you'll have crystal clear insights into which marketing campaigns are worth your budget, and which will certainly not be in your next strategic discussion. Where GA stands out is in its ability to widen the scope of the data it uses to serve up reports, and this includes data you collect from outside sources. Time for an example!

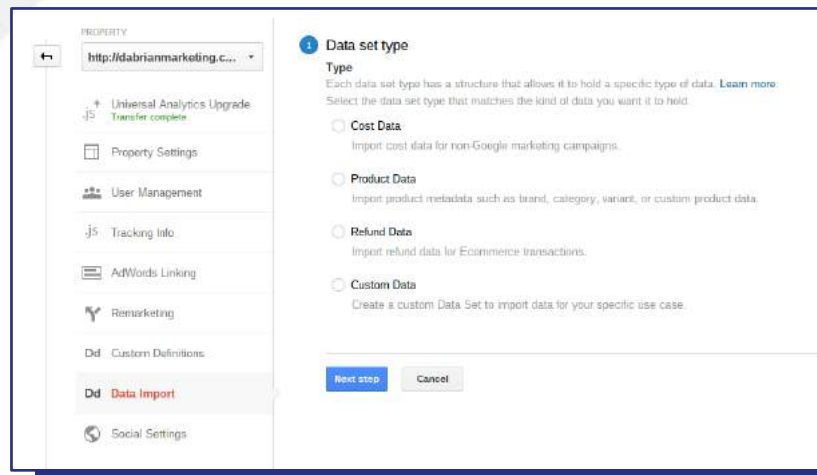
Let's say when your sparkling photo frame business was still operating out of your garage, you purchased a microsite from 1-Site-1, a small web development firm that "builds websites with a click of a mouse" (for *shame*, by the way). Being the forward-thinking entrepreneur you are, you decided to back up all historic data from 1-Site-1's third-party analytics integration prior to cutting ties and adopting your current design.

With a feature known as *Dimension Widening*, you have the ability to add additional variables or, in this case, historical information to your reporting. Because your old site did not use GA, you'll need to take care of some formatting issues to make sure GA can properly read your file's information (the file must also be in CSV format). We've offered a really broad look into this concept, so we would highly recommend referring to [Google's official guide](#) on the subject for more info.



Rev: 05-18-14

## Chapter 3: Analytics



Dimension widening can be accessed under the Property-level settings in the GA “Admin” panel.

### Additional Features

Now that we’ve got the basics fairly well covered, we can talk about some of the most outstanding features Google Analytics offers for marketers. What follows is essentially an overview of the “Analytics Advanced Course,” so proceed with caution if you’re just starting out in the wide, wide world of data. For the seasoned vets who have been bored up to this point, first: way to stick with us. Second, this section’s all yours. Off we go!

### Advanced Segments

If you’ve been paying attention thus far, you’ll begin to understand that the analytics equivalent to a hole in one is the ability to drill down and understand your marketing data at a very granular level (filters, tagging, and other forms of data differentiation all work to accomplish this sort of specificity). We thrive on it as marketers, because the closer we can get to saying, “Yes, marketing tactic (X) definitely succeeded in driving (Y) incremental sales,” the happier we’ll be (because it means our business will be more successful and efficient the next go around).



Rev: 05-18-14

## Chapter 3: Analytics

In Google Analytics, segments are yet another great way to delve into the particular audiences visiting and interacting with your website. Segments allow you to isolate visits by attributes associated with an individual audience (e.g. users browsing on tablets or users from Iowa). The more important (and useful) aspect of these segments is that you can define them on your own. Using Google's "Segment Builder," you can specify audience segments by attributes such as date ranges, geographical region, past goal completions, and so on.

A screenshot of the Google Analytics Segment Builder interface. The interface is divided into a left sidebar and a main content area. The sidebar contains a "Segment Name" input field at the top, followed by a "Visibility" toggle. Below this are several filter categories: "Demographics" (selected), "Technology", "Behavior", "Date of First Session", "Traffic Sources", "Advanced", "Conditions", and "Sequences". The main content area is titled "Demographics" and contains the text "Segment your users by demographic information." Below this are several filter options: "Age" with radio buttons for 18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, and 65+; "Gender" with radio buttons for Female, Male, and Unknown; "Language" with a "contains" dropdown and an input field; "Affinity Category (reach)" with a "contains" dropdown and an input field; "In-market Segment" with a "contains" dropdown and an input field; "Other Category" with a "contains" dropdown and an input field; and "Location" with a "Continent" dropdown, a "contains" dropdown, and an input field.

The Segment Builder can be found under "Personal Tools & Assets" in the View-level settings of GA's "Admin" panel.

Whereas online users always seem to be in the same bucket of murky anonymity, segments can enable you to group users together, analyze those with similar behaviors, and improve upon your tactics at a more granular level. For more information on segments, we recommend this [GA Support Article](#).





Rev: 05-18-14

## Chapter 3: Analytics

### Custom Alerts

One function within GA that seems to receive the “set it and forget it” treatment from the average, everyday marketer is “Intelligence Events.” These reports provide automatic email alerts when certain events take place on a property you’re tracking. For example, if website traffic jumps by a significant margin, GA will alert you. Because Google creates and sends these alerts automatically, most folks fail to give them a second thought.

A screenshot of the Google Analytics 'Alerts' configuration page. The form is titled 'Alert name: Test Alert'. Below this, it shows 'Apply to: Master View - DaBrian Marketing Group and 0 other views'. The 'Period' is set to 'Day'. There are two checkboxes: 'Send me an email when this alert triggers.' (unchecked) and 'Setup your mobile phone to receive a text message about Intelligence Alerts' (checked). Under the 'Alert Conditions' section, 'This applies to' is set to 'All Traffic'. The 'Alert me when' section has a dropdown for 'Bounce Rate', a 'Condition' dropdown set to 'Is greater than', and a 'Value' input field containing '50'. At the bottom, there are 'Save Alert' and 'Cancel' buttons.

Alert me when	Condition	Value
Bounce Rate	Is greater than	50

Custom alerts can be found under “Personal Tools & Assets” in the View-level settings of GA’s “Admin” panel.

As they say, “variety is the spice of life.” Well, we’re here to say that data customization is the spice of analytics (we can just see the billboards now). Google’s Custom Alerts let you define the kinds of notifications that are sent to your inbox. You specify the frequency and exact conditions to meet your unique needs. Opening a new location in



Rev: 05-18-14

## Chapter 3: Analytics

San Francisco and want to be notified if website traffic from the east coast takes a nosedive? A custom alert can make it happen. In GA, nearly every metric can have a trigger associated with it, at any threshold you've assigned. This gives you an added layer of security and a greater sense of control over your digital assets.

### Dashboards

Like we said before, we know you're probably going to be too busy to sort through 19 different analytics reports. Alerts can offer some insight that you can use as digital damage control, but the reports themselves can quickly fall by the wayside (at time of writing, this author has 10+ tabs open in 2 browser windows. Trust us, we know your pain). Google solves this problem with special views known as "Dashboards," which grab elements within numerous different reports and places them all into a single, easy-to-digest, automatically-emailed view.

Oh yes, we said automated. If data customization is the spice of analytics, then automated reporting is like a dash of nutmeg. It just adds that little "feel-good" level of enhancement, and even a tiny bit can go a long way, particularly for your team's time management. Configuring a dashboard in GA can happen in two main ways: you can drill down, grab the exact report you need, and select "Add to Dashboard." Select a new or existing dashboard to add the information.

Your other option is to manually designate the information you'd like to appear in your dashboard. This is done using a widget-based system, meaning each piece of data makes up a separate piece of the entire dashboard. After selecting "Dashboards" from the left-hand menu in the "Reporting" section, you can customize how much real estate each widget should take up. The information contained in a widget can be as simple or as complicated as you like (though if you're creating one of these for the first time, we'd recommend the former process for creating widgets).



Rev: 05-18-14

## Chapter 3: Analytics

A screenshot of the 'Add a Widget' dialog box in Google Analytics. The dialog has a title bar with a close button (X). It contains several sections: 'Widget title:' with a text input field containing 'New Widget'; 'Standard:' with a row of six widget type buttons: '2.1 METRIC', 'TIMELINE', 'GEOMAP', 'TABLE', 'PIE', and 'BAR'; 'Real-time:' with a row of four widget type buttons: '2.1 COUNTER', 'TIMELINE', 'GEOMAP', and 'TABLE'; 'Show the following metric:' with a dropdown menu showing 'Add a metric'; 'Filter this data:' with a link 'Add a filter'; 'Link to Report or URL:' with a text input field and a small icon; and a bottom bar with 'Save' and 'Cancel' buttons on the left, and a 'Clone widget' link on the right.

Dashboard widgets can be customized by the type of visual, metric, or report.

Psst. If neither of these options really appeals to you, head over to [Google's Analytics Solution Gallery](#). They've got a ton of pre-made dashboard templates that you can import into your GA account. After any minor tweaking (or widget-editing), you'll have a slick dashboard to call your very own!

Once your dashboard is configured how you like it, you have the option to immediately export it, share it with others, or send automatic emails containing the information (we're quite fond of this last option). The best part? Nearly every report view in GA (including the advanced segments above) can be incorporated into a Dashboard. You just have to make sure the data makes the most sense to your team and in the context of your goals, objectives, and KPIs. From there, you'll have no problem capturing the right information every time. When it comes to making decisions about your budget, consistency in your argument is pretty important, wouldn't you say?



Rev: 05-18-14

## Chapter 3: Analytics

### Mobile and Universal Analytics

Just as GA can track information about users that visit and interact with your website, the platform also caters to mobile-specific users. If you've developed an application for mobile devices, you have the opportunity to access analytics data, including real-time reporting, conversion path information, traffic sources, as well as goals and eCommerce via a Software Development Kit (or SDK). These resources allow you to capture data specific to an application (with integrations set up both for [Android](#) and [iOS](#)).

One other point about enabling this type of mobile measurement is the need to adopt Universal Analytics. This upgrade, [according to Google's definition](#), represents "a set of technological innovations that improve the way data is collected and processed in Google Analytics." In simple terms, Universal Analytics allows you to retain all the functions we've discussed thus far, meaning no data is lost if you find yourself transitioning from the so-called "Classic" configuration.

A screenshot of the Google Analytics upgrade interface. The title is "Upgrade to Universal Analytics". Below the title, it states: "Universal Analytics is the new operating standard for Google Analytics. When you upgrade, you can still access all of your historical data in the same reports you use today, but you also get:" followed by a bulleted list: "Custom Dimensions and Metrics", "New Tracking Code", and "More Reporting Features". Below this, it says: "All Google Analytics properties will soon be required to use Universal Analytics. Properties that aren't transferred will be auto-transferred to Universal Analytics in the future." The interface then shows the "Universal Analytics Upgrade Center" with a progress indicator. The steps are: 1. "Get details and learn more at the Universal Analytics Upgrade Center." (with an information icon), 2. "Transfer to Universal Analytics" (with a green checkmark), and 3. "Implement the Universal Analytics tracking code" (with a blue gear icon). A highlighted box shows "Property transfer complete" with a green checkmark, stating: "Implement the new tracking code to get all the benefits of the Universal Analytics. Visit the Universal Analytics Upgrade Center for details." At the bottom, there is a note: "(Optional) Configure your session and campaign timeout handling. These settings let you control how long sessions and campaigns can last before they expire. Configure these settings before the property transfer is complete to ensure data continuity."

Older Google Analytics accounts can quickly upgrade to Universal Analytics by navigating to the Property-level settings in the "Admin" panel.



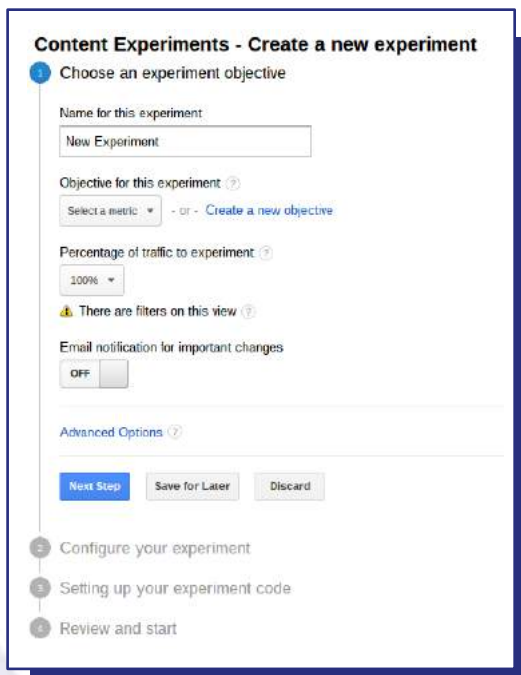
Rev: 05-18-14

## Chapter 3: Analytics

This upgrade also gives you some more robust ways to capture and process data, including custom metrics, the ability to exclude search terms or certain referral sites, and tracking across any digital device (including smartphones and tablets). Universal Analytics is the new standard for Google, so if you start up a new implementation today, you'll already have the new version (you'll also be up-to-date when Google releases more goodies). More info on Universal Analytics and its new mobile capabilities can be found [here](#).

### Testing

Around our office, we have a phrase that we throw around pretty often. "If at first you don't succeed, don't stress—test." A huge advantage of digital marketing is the ability to readily create and implement campaign variations for testing purposes. Is your newly-designed banner absolutely tanking in its ability to drive conversions? Alter the design, swap it out, and give it a whirl again. It's as simple as that.



Content Experiments can be found under "Behavior" in the standard "Reporting" view.





Rev: 05-18-14

## Chapter 3: Analytics

When Google Analytics rolled out Content Experiments, we agency folk rejoiced in the opportunities that came with this feature. There may have been parties. And no, we won't show you the pictures. Content Experiments gives you the ability to test variations of pages on your website for your actual visitors in a live environment. Does a more forward call to action (i.e. "Click Now") or a more inviting one (i.e. "Learn More") prove better at compelling your audience to continue exploring your site? Does a more professional visual experience retain first-time visitors more so than abstract imagery? Remember what we said. "Don't stress—test." And with Google Analytics, it just got a whole lot easier to test almost anything you can think of.

### Action Items (Read: What you should be doing right now)

We won't sugarcoat this last part with our usual witty interjections, amusing anecdotes, or any annoying alliteration. Oh. It seems we can't help ourselves. Sorry about that.

Throughout this analytical journey, we've offered up the best practices and official resources you can use to make sure your data is accurate and your insights worthwhile. Below you'll find a more specific checklist of steps to get you started.

- **Do your research.** We can't stress this enough. Don't think you'll be able to get buy-in from your team unless you can show tangible value.
- **Start the discussions around analytics.** From a marketing standpoint, make sure you discuss why and how it'll help your business understand what works and what doesn't.
- **Select the right platform.** Remember, just because it costs money doesn't mean it's automatically better.



Rev: 05-18-14

## Chapter 3: Analytics

- **Allocate time to implementation.** In many cases, proper setup at the outset will avoid lots of future headaches.
- **Center reporting on KPIs.** When you tie your data to actions that will affect your business's definition of success, you can't lose.
- **Stay up-to-date.** This is the Internet we're talking about. As updates come through and new features are released, it's in your best interest to make sure you're keeping up ([Google's official analytics blog](#) is a great place to start).

There you have it, analytics in a nutshell. With this information, you'll soon be on your way to gathering data, customizing it to your heart's content, tying it to your campaigns, and extracting what you need to make your marketing better and your business more successful. No magic wand required.

So what's your take on analytics? Still on the fence, or do you think you'll be just fine keeping things status quo? Either way, let's talk! Hit us up at [dabrianmarketing.com](http://dabrianmarketing.com) or around the socialsphere!