

Google Analytics

— EXPLAINED —



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GOOGLE ANALYTICS EXPLAINED



ANALYTICS INTRODUCTION

Google Analytics is probably the most well-known and widely used of all the web analytics application. It is a publicly available free tool provided by Google that can be used to analyze your web traffic to your website or blog. Since its inception, Google Analytics has added more and more plug-ins and features, making it perfect for just about every type of user. Because of its straightforwardness and high level of usability even for its more advanced features, it is a tool that can be used by both website owners and professional SEO marketers.

If you are reading this, you are probably one of the many people who use Google Analytics for the basic statistics and user tracking. You probably stick to the reports that can be found on the dashboard. You are probably thinking to yourself: yes...and? It probably feels like you don't need any more analytical information than that.

However did you know that your friendly neighborhood Google Analytics can create up to 90 different reports? Did you realize that this single tool can help you analyze all of the data you can possible think of when it comes to your website traffic? It can not only track all the visitors that peruse your site, the numbers of page views and clicks, but it can also tell you which content on your site gets the most

hits, how much time is spent on site per visit, which of your ads drive the most guests to your site, and, if that is not enough, it will track for you the performance of your various web marketing campaigns via AdSense and other advertisement tools.

In order to get the full functionality out of Google Analytics you may want to take a stroll around the Google Analytics Blog at: [http:// analytics.blogspot.com/](http://analytics.blogspot.com/). The website gives you a lot of useful pointers for making the most out of your tool. It provides tips, hints, hacks, etc to get you making the most of the tool that you have, as well as, provides sneak previews of plugins coming down the pipe. It allows for comments, support, and creates a lot of guidance for the novice user.

Remember, you don't have to be a power user, to get power functionality. Google Analytics no longer requires a "hack" to get the items you need, be it social media tracking or reports.



WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Are you one of those types of people that loves to quote statistics, do reports put you in your happy place? If you're one of those people and you own a blog or website you are probably already using Google Analytics or you really need to start! Google Analytics gives you all of the statistics you could ever need about visitors to your site.

Traditionally website reports were rather limited. This is mostly due to the fact that reports of this nature are generally hard to inter-pret (it's true) and the fact that they were usually supplied in narra-tives, IE Word documents. Google Analytics shook up the program with live, detailed reporting so that you could see an up to the minute look at all the traffic to and within the site and better measure your success.

You're finally open for business, or maybe even you've been up and running for a month. You can see that customers are coming in and peeking around, but you don't know what exactly it is that they are looking at, so you don't know what (if anything) you've put on the website was effective and held their attention. You want to know which pages your customers are visiting, you want to know if those customers come back to the website and what they look at when they

do, you also want to see all of the customers that link back to you— well, if you're a stats junkie you probably want to know a whole lot more than that!

Google Analytics has the ability to answer these and other questions, and present those answers in lovely charts and graphs so that you have a visual representation of what is actually happening on your website. The GA reports are all real time and web-based so you can check them out at any time of day. You can even look at them over morning coffee or while watching the Late Show if you wanted. Not only does Google Analytics give you all of the great chart, graphs, and stats you need to really impress the other kids at the office, but it gives them to you on demand!

The up-to-the-minute reports provided by Google Analytics and their easy to read format is just one of the many reasons why Google Analytics is the right tool for you. Pretty graphs are nice—who doesn't love pretty graphs? However, you can usually get someone to provide you with a pretty graph. It is the fact that you can get these pretty graphs at any time of day that makes this tool a winner. The canned reports that come with the tool are useful and provide you with the typical statistics needed to make site-based decisions.



IT'S NOT JUST THE SOFTWARE, IT'S THE ANALYSIS

Whether you are using Woopra, Omniture, or Google Analytics it is not just the data, but what you do with it that counts. Most successful businesses use a tool to track website traffic, numbers and types of visitors, number of pages viewed per visitor, and the various web traffic sources. Google Analytics is a free tool with innumerable plug-ins to help you accomplish this. It's a good tool right out of the box, but it still hasn't gotten quite up to speed with tracking the wealth of data that can be had on social media. As social media began to rise as the premier marketing tool, new plugins and hacks have been created to give you the best datasets available from social media sites and networks.

For example, there is the "Social Media Metrics Plugin" by GreaseMonkey. This extension was created for the purpose of adding a social media layer to the Google Analytics tool. It provides information and statistics on Digg, delicious bookmarks, stumbles, etc. It isn't perfect by any means but it is a good jumping off point.

A proactive web owner would set up specific web campaigns that target these social media tools using the custom campaign function within Google Analytics. There are methods such as Tiny URLs that allow you to track specific Twitter campaigns or even Digg. Estab-

lishing email reports for specific social media information is another positive, proactive step. You'll want the statistics from top social media websites like Digg, Facebook, Twitter, and even Tumblr. As more and more people are feeding their Twitter and Facebook pages with Tumblr blogs it is another means to consolidate campaign information.

Last but not least, you will want to do the actual analysis of what all the statistics you are receiving actually mean to you and your website. There is an art to web analytics. It takes years and dedication to truly understand all the subtleties and nuances to web trending. However, tools like Google Analytics do provide key and critical information to truly understanding how each and every variable affects your website traffic and how even the tiniest of changes can have an impact on "user engagement". By seeing all of this data in one place, by looking at it graphically you can pick up trends and make tiny changes to your campaigns and website that will have an impact on site traffic, visits, and which products receive buzz.



WHY GOOGLE ANALYTICS

Google has created a product for the geek in all of us. If you love and crave statistics, or even if you hate them but find them a necessary evil, then Google Analytics is the tool for you. Google Analytics gives you the ability to view all of your website's statistics in pretty little graphs and charts. The good thing for you is that these graphs aren't just pretty, they actually mean something. You can find out about your visits and page views (how many folks visited the website and how many pages within it they checked out while there), the source of the visit (what they clicked on to get to you), visits by "new" and "returning" (which visitors are repeat customers and which ones are brand new), and you can also see visits by "Geo Map" (what part of the world visitors come from). These basic stats are enough information to give you a basic understanding of what you need to enhance, change, or create on or for your website to increase visits and hold customer's attentions while they are there. All of this is provided in the canned "Executive Over-view", however for the solid stat geek Google Analytics doesn't stop there. If you can think of a report you'd like to have, they've probably thought of it, too.

Google Analytics provides a basic understanding of all of the the

traffic to and within your website. Using Google Analytics provides you with the best insight into the mind of your customer by allowing you to see exactly what the visitors to your web site are looking at and doing.

One of the things that most site owners want to know is where folks are coming from and who is linking up to your site. The Marketing Summary tool within Google Analytics provides you with the top sites that link to you and it shows you what were the top five keywords that visitors used to find you. You will also want to know where visitors begin and end their visits to your website. The Content Summary tools provides an overview of which of your webpages are the most popular so that you know where to add a promotion, link, product image, etc.

Analytics can help you business by showing you what is important to your customers and what you need to target to bring visitors back to your website.



HOW TO GET STARTED

To access Google analytics go to www.google.com/analytics.

SET UP A GOOGLE ACCOUNT – If you do not already have a Google account you will need to set up an account to continue -click on the link “Sign-up Now” and complete the requested information.

Once your have established an account, login. Click on the “Sign Up” button and you are on your way. It is important to note before proceeding that you must be the owner of the website that you are wishing to track or have the permission of the website owner.

Blog sites such as Wordpress often will have resources that will allow you to place code on your particular Blog page(s).

SETUP GOOGLE ANALYTICS – You will be directed to a series of input forms that will ultimately provide you the coding to produce tracking data for your website.

- **GENERAL INFORMATION** – On this page you will be asked to submit your website’s URL, a name to serve as a domain identifier and finally your country and time zone. (You can elect to identify your locality based on your physical location or your target audience/primary user location.)
- **CONTACT INFORMATION** – This will simply request your name and your physical location.
- **ACCEPT USER AGREEMENT** – Naturally, Google will request that you approve their Terms of Service. If they are acceptable to you check the box and click on “Create New Account”.
- **ADD TRACKING** – Finally, Google Analytics will produce a Javascript code for your domain. This should be added to each page of your website at the very end of your page coding between `</body>` and `</html>`.

TRACKING YOUR WEBSITE – Once you have inserted the information onto each page, you will return to the Google Analytics page. Click on the link for the website you are wishing to review. This will bring you to the main “dashboard” and provide a wide range of general information including – daily usage, bounce rate, new visits, geographic locality of users, most viewed pages, etc.

You can receive more detailed information by clicking on various menu items. Detailed information will include specifics like what browser your visitors were using, by what means they accessed your page (directly, search engines, etc.), what keywords were used when accessing via a search. Google Analytics offers an area for users to establish goals to focus on specific areas of interest and particular campaigns.

Google Analytics is a powerful tool which offers the user such a wide range of in depth data the greatest risk is becoming over-whelmed by the amount of information received.



GOOGLE ANALYTICS IS YOUR FRIEND

Google Analytics is not only a powerful Internet tool, but... it's also free. You can track visitors to your side and can view useful trending and viewing habits. However, in order to receive the most out of Google Analytics you should learn how to use all of its tricks. For it to be useful you will need to better understand its tracking features and how to create the custom reports you need to track all the different items on your personal radar.

Google Analytics tracking is very robust, not only does it allow you to optimize your site by tracking internal clicks, but you can also see who is clicking what ads. Want to improve Adsense and Adwords tracking? There are websites out there with cut and paste coding (free, by the way) that will allow you to track Adsense clicks by creating another "goal" in the GOAL URL field. How about Twitter and Facebook? If you are Google Analytics URL Builder savvy you can set it up to see how visited your site via a "tweet".

The neat thing about this tool is that it's been out long enough to find code for just about anything. For example, if you want to check which images people click on. Google Image search will provide you with referral URL's that Google Analytics isn't too happy with and doesn't associate it with a "keyword". However, people have written

JavaScript enhancements to make this possible. Do a search and you'll find the code.

If you would like to track Flash then there is a component called: Google Analytics Tracking for Adobe Flash. It makes it very easy to implement Flash tracking in Google Analytics. This component was actually developed by Adobe and contains the necessary functionality of the Google Analytics JavaScript code.

Speaking of plug-ins, there is a "Social Media Metrics Greasemonkey Plugin" that will automatically pull social media into the Google Analytics Content Detail reports and it includes links to the social media websites. It will also pull in data from Digg, Reddit, Mixx, and Del.icio.us. There are plug-ins for iPhones, Firefox, GoogleDocs, and even plugins for Python code. In fact, by the time you read this there will be plugins for everything!

Not really, but close.

Understanding the full breadth of Google Analytics is important. It allows you to create custom reports, and bring web development and web marketing to a whole different level.



ANALYTICS VS URCHIN

The use of Web Analysis is crucial for anyone wanting to promote a new business or for established businesses to stay abreast on what kind of traffic is on their website. The Urchin Software Corporation are the original developers of the web statistic analysis program. In April 2005 the Urchin Software was modified by Google and then became Google Analytics. Although the Urchin Software is still available and can still be downloaded, Google Analytics is seems to appeal to some more than others for a variety of reasons.

Unlike the Urchin Software, the Google Analytic Program is a free service and is in use roughly at 60% of the most popular websites. This program can be used not only to track traffic statistics, but can also let you know which ads are attention grabbers and which aren't. This program is so amazing because it doesn't take long to set up which is definitely a plus because who honestly wants a program that is too complicated and time consuming. The program gives a great deal of information about who is taking the time to check out your website. The information that is available really does gives great insight about what people are looking for and how they got onto your website.

Now, let's get in to some of the details about the pros and cons of the Google Analytic Program as opposed to the program that the Urchin Software Corporation originally developed. As I have already mentioned, the Google Program is a free service to people and the original Urchin Program is not. The cost of the Urchin 6 version is roughly \$2,995. As opposed to Google, the Urchin program uses your web server to record and store the data which have some pretty great advantages. Some of those advantages include the ability to hold to and check that data anytime you want, the data can be audited by an independent third party which doesn't happen with the Google Program and it works behind a firewall. On the other hand the Google Analytic Program is maintenance free and much easier to implement if you are the type of person who is concerned about degree of difficulty with handling this program.



GOOGLE ANALYTICS LOVES TWITTER

Tweeting, twittering, or whatever you want to call it has become one of the major ways that websites receive traffic. People will chit-chat about whatever and do it wherever and whenever (as Twitter has proven over and over again). When Twitter started this form of marketing was purely organic. “Check out this cool website!” Used to be the earnest cry from one friend to the other. Now it is the tagline of the savvy social media expert. Because people are linking their Twitter page to their MySpace, Facebook, and Tumblr accounts and vice versa there is a large network of opportunities to send and direct traffic from one website to the next.

In other words, Nirvana for marketers has been attained.

What does this mean for you, your website, or your blog? Well, it means there are hundreds of new ways to get traffic to your website—if you know how to appropriately navigate the waters of social media.

If you don't already own Google Analytics, then download it. It's free and probably the best tool around for giving you the lowdown on your site from a user perspective (but that's a whole 'nother article). If you do own it, then you know that traffic from Twitter is tracked and logged as “referral traffic”. For example, if a Twitterer clicks a link to your website from any tweet or retweet Google Analytics will provide

you will see 'www.twitter.com' in its "Referrals" reports. There are also ways to see if a Tweet was the originating source even if it was passed along via email. For example, you may decide to use Google Analytics campaign tracking tool. Anyone visiting the site via a tweet can be tracked through the use of the "tiny" URLs. The "Tiny URL" services are out there to meet the needs of the Twitter community by shortening a URL (it creates a redirect hosted at: www.tinyurl.com). The "Tiny URL" is applicable and can be added to the Google Analytics campaign tracking parameters. When a fellow Twitterer forwards or retweets your tweet using an email or other mechanism the "Tiny URL" will have all of your campaign information on it. Clever, eh?

Marketers have known from the break that Twitter has its advantages. The potential to chat about products and affect a wide audience is there. By using Google Analytics you can figure out how to get the most bang for your Tweets, which Tweets "scored", and where you need improvement.



THE NECESSITY FOR MONITORING

For your marketing website Google Analytics should be the virtual “butter” to your bread. One is so much tastier with the other. Google Analytics is easily one of the best free tools to access all the marketing information any sales website needs. It should be astounding to the newbie marketer and much appreciated by even the biggest web-based sales site. With minimal setup and training everyone searching for their target audience can benefit greatly from using Google Analytics.

Don’t underestimate the value of testing and analyzing your site. At the most basic level the data gleaned will help ensure that you’re on the right track. Who isn’t using analytic tools? You’d be shocked. There are marketing VP’s out there who can hardly tell you the number of visitors their site gets or how they are getting there, much less conversion rates.

Not only does Google Analytics provide detailed information regarding where your traffic comes from, it provides the data to make improvements to your website overall by targeting what is working and what is not. Knowing who is visiting your site and what they do while they’re there is key to the success of any website with some-thing to offer. This information is vital. That’s why it’s essential to

have good analytical tools that will provide you with that information and enable you to use it. There are lots of tools available with different features and different prices. Google Analytics has a long-standing reputation as being the best free analytics tool available. Google Analytics is possibly the most popular free analytics tool available as well. Although Google Analytics provides so much information that it can sometimes be overwhelming, you'll find it is easy to understand, easy to use, and with a simple search user advice is at your fingertips from savvy gurus to glad-to-share "newrus". Google Analytics users can actually check so many things about their site that no amount of time would seem sufficient, but with familiarity it will become an easy to use and vital part of your strategy for the success of your site.

Google Analytics is a wonderful web analytics package that can help small and large businesses find out exactly what is happening on their websites. It's easy to implement. It's easy to understand. It's not only free it is also flexible and customizable. Not your ordinary free web analytic software.



FINDING THE RIGHT TOOLS IN THE TOOLBOX

Understanding web trends is an art form. With the rise of social media comes the advent of social media analytics. If you are new to website ownership you will want to take some time and invest in an understanding of how each social media facility can affect web traffic, and how to utilize traffic and analytics data to create social media campaigns. One of the best tools for this is Google Analytics. Not only does it have out-of-the-box features, but it's free. Moreover, because of its association with Google there are many companies that create add-ons that will promote using their products and features, so be it analyzing RSS feeds to visual representations of where site visitors go and what they click to counting various page views there are tools and plug-ins for Google Analytics.

Think of Google Analytics as a toolbox. You don't grab a wrench first. You have a problem that you need the wrench for. If you are in the e-commerce business then your problem is increasing sales. If you are in the business of creating newsletters then your problem is one of getting customers to register for the newsletter. Once you know and define the problem then you know which tool (or can decide upon which tool) is necessary to fixing it. The first step is to turn the problem into a goal. Next, you can establish the goal and the

tools to accomplish it. Google Analytics forces you to establish your business goals, and once established, it allows you to view an inordi-nate amount of data relative to the goal.

There are plenty of tools in the toolbox. You can compare site traffic day to day, week to week, month to month. You can see how your website is faring in various cities. You could be doing well in the South, but not so good in the Pacific Northwest. This feature or tool will help you tailor marketing campaigns to your customers. Google Analytics allows you to see how long a visitor stayed, how often he clicked links, what pages held his/her attention, etc. It will also enable you to compare keywords to ad campaigns for effectiveness. Keywords are what people are using to discover your site. If certain keywords are more useful than others, you know to use them more often.



SO YOU LIKE TO BLOG DO YOU

So you like to blog. Of course you do! Blogging is fun. It's fun to write whatever you want as the feelings come to you. It's your own personal vent space. Blogging is more fun, however, when people read the vent. There is no satisfaction in the world like reading supportive comments from a swath of readers after a tirade on poor customer service. Wait—yes, there is! Having someone from a book publisher write you and offer you money to create a book from your blog is probably much more satisfying than a few scattered comments by visitors that don't happen to think that your writing is fit for a middle school yearbook. Visitors rule. You like them. You want more of them.

But how do you attract them?

Most bloggers have this quandary, especially if they are new to the blog game. That's why Google Analytics is probably a good down-load choice if you are trying to increase traffic to your blog. Google Analytics can tell you things about your blog like:

- Which of the referring sites sends you the
- most traffic Which of your articles have the
- lowest “bounce” Which keywords reel them in

- Which visitors are subscribing to your site and your email list
- Which of your articles made the most money from AdSense

It can tell you a lot more than that, but these are just the essentials that most people use Google Analytics for. If you are a geek, or a geek-in-training, there are tools that help you see what your visitors do within the blog so you can move things around to make it easier for them to click on links.

Knowing what to write about to bring in the most AdSense dollars is a very big deal if your blog was created for the purpose of generating a little revenue. It's also important if you are trying to be the next "Julia and Julia". Attracting return readers is important. You want to show those publishers that you have content that readers enjoy and that you already have a build in fan base. It's not enough anymore to have a good idea, you have to show that you are half-way there.

Installing the tool isn't difficult. Some blogs already have standard Google Analytics plug-ins waiting to go. Perhaps, you already have it and want to become a power user—there's a Google Analytics blog provided by Google to help you make the most of this incredible (and free) tool.



UNDERSTANDING THE CUSTOMER: GOOGLE ANALYTICS

Knowing the behavior of your customer is key. Knowing the viewing and traffic patterns of visitors to your website is probably the key to the success of all web-based projects, be it entertainment, e-commerce, specific content or even just a company's corporate web-presence. Knowing the preference and profiles of your visitors and site users helps you design and focus your website, your marketing campaigns, and your products to match user preference and increase your company or website's chances of success in its goals.

Google Analytics is probably the most usable and popular tool used for website analytics and marketing research. Google Analytics provides a basic set of statistical tools for the novice user, as well as, the type of advanced analytical reports that most marketing firms salivate over. Google Analytics provides reports on:

- About Visitors –this gives you the basic rundown (geographical statistics, repeat visit statistics, loyalty to product or company, time spent by visitors, etc). Traffic—
- this allows you to view the trends of traffic (whether or not they are coming directly to your website

or through referring sites, or if they arrived via search engines and/or other online advertising and marketing campaigns).

- Content—this report allows you to better understand which are the more popular pages on your website so you know where to place ads or promotions.

These are but the basic reports, but many more can be created if you know your way around the tool. There are plug-ins for social media, like how many of your visitors arrived due to a “Tweet” or via Facebooking, Digging, Reddit, etc. In fact, this tool is not only free, but its wide use has created a whole bunch of free code and plugins out there so that companies can be sure that you are using their products. Flash? There’s a plug-in. Want to see tracking on an image? Plug-in. There are even plug-ins for iPhones so that you review your reports while checking out jeans at The Gap.

Perhaps the best aspect to the remarkable tool is the fact that it’s free. Yes, free. Free looks at who is coming and going. Free statistics on what people do on your website. Free, free, free, free, free. So if your site needs work and you can’t afford a marketing guru, know that there is help out there for you.



SITESCAN AND URL BUILDER: TWO TOP GOOGLE ANALYTICS TOOLS

U RL Builder

Google Analytics is only as effective a tool as the individual who sets it up. In order to track an SEO or marketing campaign effectively all of your online ads must be tagged correctly and with the right information. You need to know exactly which of your ads or marketing campaigns is paying off. To make this process easier there is a tool called “URL Builder” provided by the Google Analytics Help Center.

Tagging all of your marketing campaign links normally would require coding that consisted of a URL address, a “?” and other variables. Using the URL Builder form allows you to just input the name and hit the “Generate URL” button on the toolkit. This tagged link that you’ve just generated will be ready for you to copy and past into the ad. This saves you oodles of time when fine tuning your marketing campaigns because it helps you get it right the first time.

SITESCAN

The Google Analytics SiteScan tool allows you to ensure that the tracking code for all of the pages on the site is working and imple-

mented. It picks up the major indicators that the code wasn't properly implemented such as there not being data in the account (this would mean that the code used for tracking has either the wrong or incomplete account number or the tracking code never got implemented), or, for example, you're looking at a high bounce rate and you aren't a blog or simple web page then you've probably only remembered to tag your homepage (if this is the case your Google Analytics account won't be able to identify other page views). Without Sitemon you might not have picked up on this until it was too late. Sitemon is one of those tools that makes it easy for you to locate the various pages that have tracking issues so that you may fix them and better manipulate the Google Analytics Tracking codes and their site implementation.

The good thing, or one of the good things about Google Analytics, is that there is always someone, be it Google or a partner, that is refining the current tools or creating new diagnostic tools for the users to make the most of. Currently there are hundreds of tools, plugins, and even hacks that allow you to create just about any report you can think of.



SOCIAL MEDIA AND GOOGLE ANALYTICS

Social media is a the latest web phenomenon. Facebook, Twitter, Digg, StumbleUpon and other social media sites and tools have become a vital conduit for web traffic, creating a huge demand for any data that is related to social media and social media outlets. Every web owner wants their site to be the one that people “Digg” or “Tweet” about; they want to know where these chatty users are coming from, what makes them tick, and what topics or issues will excite them enough to Tweet home about it. Knowing this will make the difference between a successful web venture and something that tanks a year in.

No one wants a to own the website that no one talks about; no one wants to sit on top of a failed social media campaign. However, it is such a relatively new field in marketing that there isn't a history of trends and analytics yet to create a campaign without help. If you don't know where to start, or you're not sure yet if you want to invest money in SEO or Social Media experts just yet, then its probably best to download Google Analytics.

Google Analytics has some of the best free tools to assist you with gathering and analyzing social media statistics. Before setting up your plug-ins and reports you should probably try to understand

what it is, exactly, that you will want to track. It is hard to succeed at something if you don't understand your own goals.

If a goal is creating a buzz about your website then you will want to understand how netizens share information. Do your hits come mostly from search engines? Have you been Tweeted about? You may even want to look at analytics for popular websites and model your response around them. Are you interested in better understanding the trends that are related to social media or net memes? If you are, then you should know that each one of these will require a different set of tools and focus. Will you track traffic statistics via social media sites like Twitter, or will you be tracking campaigns by Tiny Urls? Do you want to see the results of good "Facebooking" and what it can offer you? All of this can be accomplished within Google Analytics if you know exactly what you want.

Prior to using Google Analytics to measure social networking results you will want to make a list of goals that you want to accomplish from your marketing campaign, and then figure out what statistics you need to gather to make that happen.

