INTRO TO GOOGLE ANALYTICS

What metrics matter to your organization? Are you using data to drive your digital strategy? After years of experience working with nonprofits and technology, we know this much is true – what you measure, you improve.

Website data is key for successful online fundraising and marketing. For example, do you know how visitors are finding and interacting with your website and digital campaigns? Analyzing this data will help you make informed decisions when improving your online presence, launching new fundraising campaigns and measuring engagement strategies.

Google Analytics is critical to the success of your digital marketing initiatives. Regardless of your analytics experience, we'll show you how to use Google's free tool to track key metrics, and set up goals so you can compare user behavior with site objectives. We'll also cover how to interpret key reports with confidence by setting up an easy to read dashboard so you can view all your data in one place.
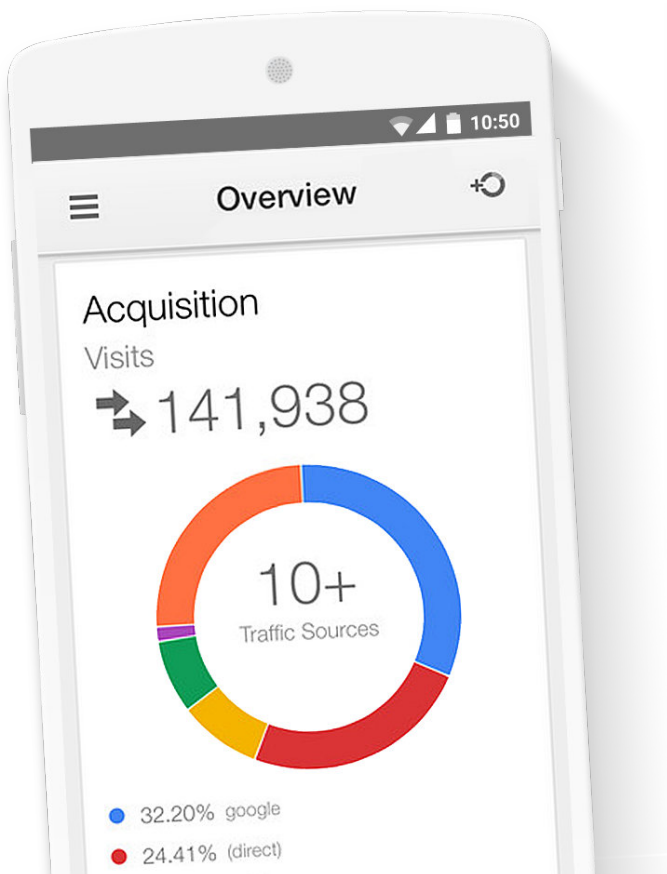
The amount of reports you can configure from Google Analytics is nearly endless, but we've broken it down for you to simplify the process. If you're not a "data person", have no fear! We've created this guide for you to get the most out of your data and improve your digital strategy today!

IN THIS GUIDE

Here's what you'll learn:

The sooner you start tracking your data, the more information you'll have to make smart decisions on your site.

Let's dive in!

Analytics Matter

How will you know what's working for your organization if you're not tracking it? You won't.

Tracking data allows you to better serve your current audience and reach more people with your mission. If you don't know how effective your website is at building awareness, generating new email subscribers and raising donations, then you might be wasting time and resources on tactics that aren't moving the needle.

Analytics is a crucial component of any digital strategy. It allows you to measure and compare how users interact with your website over time and make data-driven decisions to reach your organizational goals. However, many nonprofits are not leveraging the sophisticated, yet simple (and free) Google Analytics platform.

Did you know...Analytics, in general, is one of the most under-utilized marketing components among nonprofits.

Data provides you with insights to...

- Gather a holistic view of your digital strategy
- Measure and compare how users interact with your website over time
- Understand the critical components of your websites:
    - Where does your traffic come from? What channels? What referring sites?
    - What actions are users taking on your website?
    - How long are users staying on your site?
    - What geographical regions are people visiting from?
    - How well are your landing pages performing?
    - Are visitors using a desktop, tablet or mobile phone?
    - What content is effective?
    - How do people engage with your apps?
- Make smart data-based decisions
- Produce content your audience responds to
- Personalize the website experience based on what users are looking for
- Measure ROI including what strategies yielded the greatest return
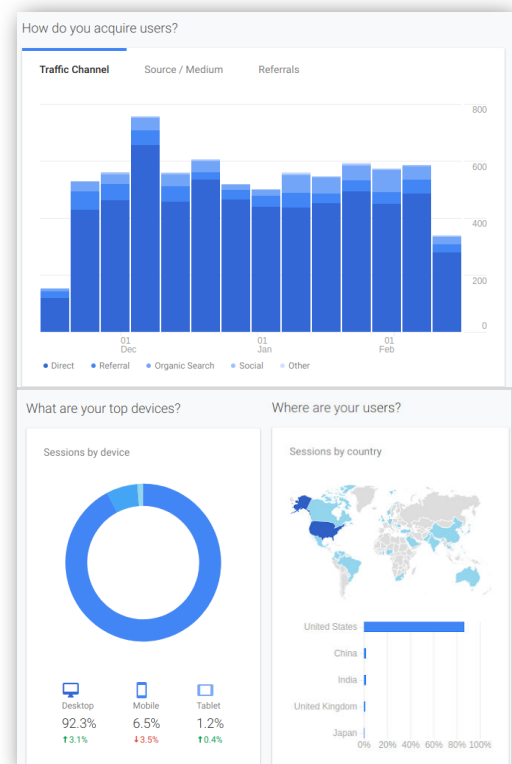
As you can see from the list above, analytics matter.

First, determine your goals; then, you'll be able to create a better online experience for your audience. Do you want to increase traffic? Get more email subscribers? Sell more products? Recruit monthly donors?

Determining your goals allows you to track the right metrics and compare trends across your data. Setting specific goals is the first step to conquering the overwhelming world of data and uncover insights about how campaigns are performing.

What is Google Analytics?

Google Analytics is a data platform that tracks what's happening on your website. It helps you get to know your audience better by gaining a deeper understanding of user behavior. This allows you to build on what's working, and eliminate what's not, so you can deliver a better digital experience and boost results.

Google's free analytics service offers a treasure trove of data all in one place. Get a complete picture of your data to improve marketing performance with insights only Google can provide. Google Analytics allows you to do more than just track important metrics -- it's built to work with Google's advertising platform so you can connect your ads account and your audience insights will go to work for you. Additionally, it integrates with other tools and systems saving you time and increasing your efficiency.

Google Analytics is designed with an easy-to-use interface so you can navigate your data quickly and share reports across your team. It offers many ways to organize, layout and visualize your data to fit your preferences, and contains invaluable insights which, when applied correctly, can have an impressive impact on your digital strategy.

Advanced Features to Set Up

Google Analytics provides 'advanced features' to hone in on audience specifics including behavior, advertising, acquisition, and conversion funnels. If analyzing data is new to you, start with these five configurations to set the foundation for your data tracking. Each feature is a one-time setup with the exception of the UTM Tracking feature which will need to be configured for each campaign. These features are called "advanced features" because they are not automatically configured.

E-Commerce Tracking

This fundamental feature tells you which marketing channels are driving revenue and donations. By setting up e-commerce tracking on your website, you can see the transaction activity on your site and/or app including revenue, average order value, conversion rate, affiliations, time to purchase and other key data.

For nonprofits, revenue may come in a variety of forms such as the sale of products (books), events and donations. For education institutions, revenue data may include classes, books, products, and donations.

The revenue populates through your e-commerce tracking reports. This is key because not all donations are created equal. As you can see in the image to the right, the first channel (i.e. email) generated 548 new transactions totaling $94,077.27 in donations. While the next channel (i.e. website) generated 162 transactions but significantly less revenue. If you didn't have the revenue component, you wouldn't know which one was driving more revenue for your organization.

Ecommerce Conversion Rate	Transactions	Revenue ↓
0.51% Avg for View: 0.51% (0.00%)	548 % of Total: 100.00% (548)	$94,077.27 % of Total: 100.00% ($94,077.27)
1.34%	316 (57.66%)	$65,256.69 (69.36%)
6.01%	162 (29.56%)	$19,075.16 (20.28%)
36.36%	52 (9.49%)	$7,074.00 (7.52%)

Therefore, e-commerce tracking tells us:

1. Which marketing channels are driving donations.

2. Not all donations are equals so it's critical to track revenue.

3. The number of transactions and conversion rates.

4. The source of donations for each campaign.

To view e-commerce data in your Google Analytics, setup will require a developer to enable e-commerce tracking in your reports by adding a code to your site or app to collect the transaction data.

Access e-commerce metrics by signing into your Google Analytics, and visiting your E-commerce Explorer tab. Navigate > Reports > Conversions > E-commerce.

Conversion Tracking

A conversion is any kind of action you want a user to take. For example, this might include signing up for a newsletter, registering for an event, downloading a guide, filling out a volunteer form, watching a video, or requesting an annual report. Conversions are metrics that add value to your organization. This type of conversion tracking is associated with non-revenue goals, though the concept is similar to e-commerce tracking (minus the exchange of money).

User actions are referred to as "goals" and they will show up in Google Analytics as "goal completions". Conversion tracking gives you visibility into how all your channels are working together to accomplish your website goals. This necessary information provides insight into how users interact with your site, where they get stuck or drop off, and unexpected loops on your site.

Conversion tracking also unveils what sources, referral sites, and ads are driving traffic to your website. Tracking your conversions (or goals) is a key component to analyzing your data from a holistic perspective. It shows you how your marketing channels work together to accomplish your goals.

It's easy to configure in the Admin section of Google Analytics. Select the pre-configured "Goal Set-Up" template and complete the form to get started.

To create a new goal, in the VIEW column, click Goals. Click +NEW GOAL or import from Gallery to create a new goal, or click an existing goal to edit its configuration. You have three options for creating goals: using a goal template, creating a custom goal or creating Smart Goals.
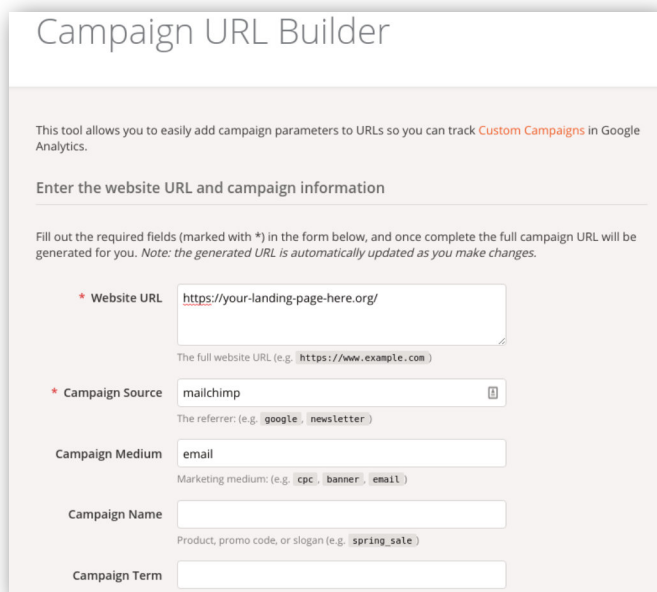
UTM Tracking Parameters

UTM tracking parameters are added to specific URLs to track data within your campaigns. Parameters associate your marketing efforts to different campaign channels, sources, and referrals in your Google Analytics report, so it's critical to set up tracking parameters for all of your campaigns.

For example, the following URL below includes tracking parameters to identify the traffic going to your donation landing page from a link included in your summer e-newsletter.

https://example.com?utm_source=news4&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=summer

This link tells Google Analytics where the visitor is coming from (i.e. Google, Facebook, newsletter).

Use Google's easy URL campaign builder to generate parameters for your campaigns. Start by entering your landing page URL in the form.
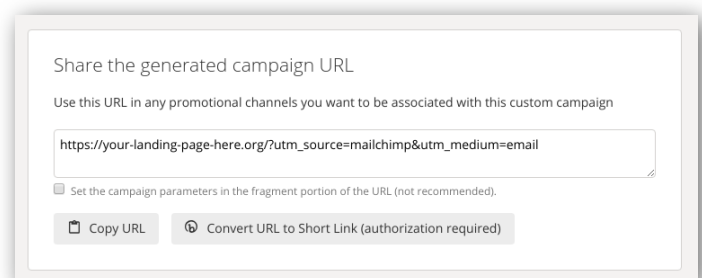
Next, add the Campaign Source (Google, website, email newsletter, Jourinty popup). The source is the origin of your traffic, such as Facebook or a search engine. This is also referred to as the "referrer site" and it's the only required field in addition to the campaign landing page URL.

We recommend filling out the Medium field on the URL Builder also. This will identify the type of campaign of the source. For example, Medium may include a banner ad, email link, cost-per-click or organic search.

Additionally, you can add a Campaign Name and Term. These fields are helpful when referring back to past campaign data. By including a Campaign Name and Term, you'll be able to quickly search and identify the campaign by its name (i.e. Easter2018). However, Campaign Name and Term are not necessary if you're just getting started or want to keep it simple.

Next, Google will generate a URL for you. Everything after the "?" is the official "UTM Tracking Parameters". These parameters tell Google Analytics what campaign the click-through data is associated with on your reports.

UTM tracking parameters are not visible to the user. If you like to keep your URLs simple and keyword focused (i.e. https://nonprofit.org/give), the user will think they're going to /give.

However, with UTM parameters in place, Google Analytics will be able to track who visited from different sources. Furthermore, you don't need to add parameters within your website pages - only when you're off your website (Facebook, Google, MailChimp E-Newsletter) and promoting a campaign that is directing people to a landing page within your site (i.e. /give). For example, you'd want the parameters on the banner ad, but not on your site.

You can convert UTM tracking parameters into a bit.ly link and convert without any issues.

PRO TIP

Keep in mind, this feature will have to be configured for every campaign. To find the URL Builder, go to Google Analytics Demo & Tools.

Custom Segments

Google Analytics offers the ability to create custom audience segments based on characteristics such as demographics or behavior. Custom segments allow you to group your audience into segments and analyze users most important to your organization. Think of a segment as a subset of your audience data (i.e. past donors, volunteers, visitors in a geographical location). For example, if you're trying to gain new users, you can set up a segment for new users to see how they compare to the general traffic on your website.

Another example is mobile versus desktop users. Create custom segments based on the type of device your audience is viewing from - mobile, tablet, or desktop.

The use of mobile continues to grow rapidly across all industries, including nonprofits. However, the number of mobile users varies greatly among nonprofits. Some organizations have over 90% of their traffic coming from mobile and others have less than 15%. This is why it's important to analyze data for your specific audience and not rely on generalized nonprofit data.

Custom segments allow you to isolate specific data to identify trends and make data-driven decisions based on your campaign goals.

Google Analytics has several filters available for creating custom segments. Building custom segments may take more time upfront because filters can isolate characteristics based on users, sessions, and hits. With a clear goal and metrics in mind, custom segments will provide you with key insights to better serve your audience.

To create a segment, open the View tab, then the Reports tab (you can start with any report), and click the +Add Segment.

Ads Account Linking

One of the great things about Google's marketing platform is its ability to link your ads account with your analytics account. Whether you have the Ads Grant or use Google Ads, link your accounts as soon as possible. By doing so, Google Analytics will read conversions in your ads account for you - saving you time and improving your big-picture data analysis.
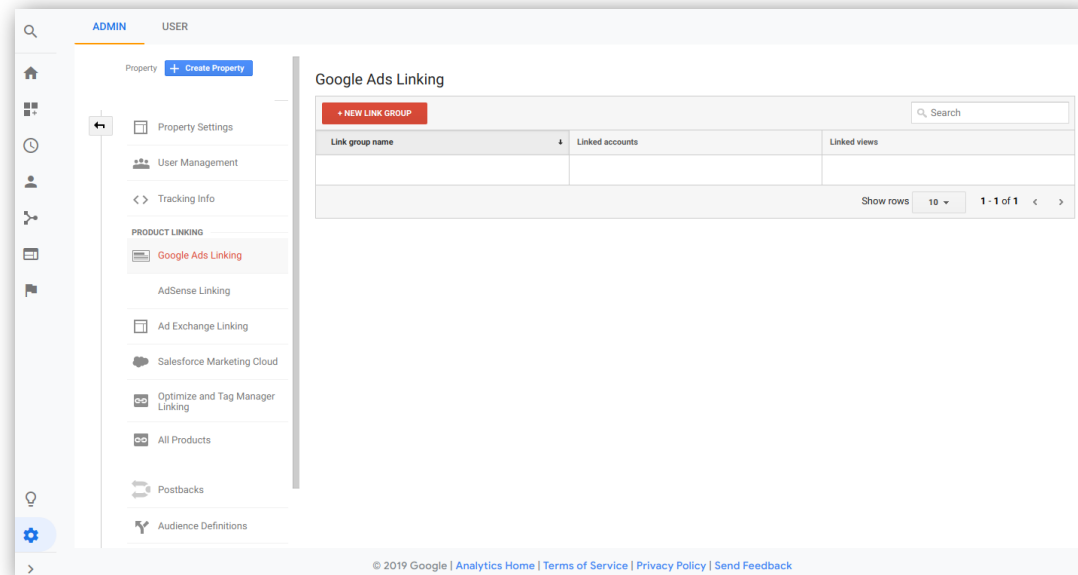
One requirement of the Google Ads Grant is to have conversion tracking setup. Simply, go into your analytics account and connect it to the ads account (or multiple ads accounts). Google makes it really easy to sync platforms so you can get a complete view of your data, connect your insights to results and make the data work for you.

If you missed our previous webinar on Google Ads Grant, check it out here. Don't forget to download our Google Ads Grant guide!

To get started, link your accounts today through your Admin in Google Analytics. In the Property column, click Google Ads Linking and follow the prompts.

Key Reports to Tell You Exactly How Your Campaigns are Performing

Once your configurations are set, accounts are linked and custom segments are established, you'll be ready to dive into reports. We've hand-picked the top three reports to tell you exactly how your campaigns are performing. Our digital experts estimate roughly 80% of your value will come from the three reports mentioned below.

One great feature of Google Analytics is the ability to compare data over historical periods. For example, you can analyze how your spring campaign performed against last year's fall campaign. This allows you to see how different campaigns perform at different times of the year. Simply change the date range to review data across different time periods.

Source/Medium Report

This report allows you to view the results of tracking parameters on specific campaigns. Gather insights into how different sources (website, Google, Facebook, email) and mediums (organic, cost-per-click, referral) are performing across your campaigns and ongoing marketing initiatives. For example, how much revenue is Facebook driving compared to your email list, website, and Ads Grant campaign?

You can organize the Source/Medium Report by source and type to get the most out of your data. Therefore, if you added additional dimensions, like campaign name or keywords, you can filter to compare specific campaigns and terms.

PLEASE NOTE: If you see the word "direct" listed in the Source/Medium report, it means Google couldn't determine the referral source. If you're not using UTM parameters, you'll see some people included in the direct channel from email, as well as, some listed as gmail.com or mail.yahoo.com. These will come through as the referral source. This is why it's important to use UTM parameters in your campaign to group all email referrals as "email" source conversions. It will give you a much cleaner report and more effective data.

To access the Source/Medium report, go to Acquisition > All Traffic > Source/Medium.

Attribution Model Comparison

This report compares different attribution models that are not visible at first glance through your Source/Medium Report. The Attribution Model is a set of rules that credit conversions from different marketing channels.

By default, Google attributes conversions to the last user interaction. For example, if someone first comes to your site

through Facebook, and later visits from a Google search, then receives an email from you and clicks through to make a donation, by default Google Analytics will credit the donation came from email (aka last interaction before conversion). Even though your social media and organic SEO rankings both contributed to the conversion.

Therefore, we recommend looking at the last interaction and position-based Attribution Model Comparison. Positioned based gives credit to the very first channel as well as the last channel. Hence, you'll be able to determine which channel is filling the highest quality leads into your conversion or donation funnel.
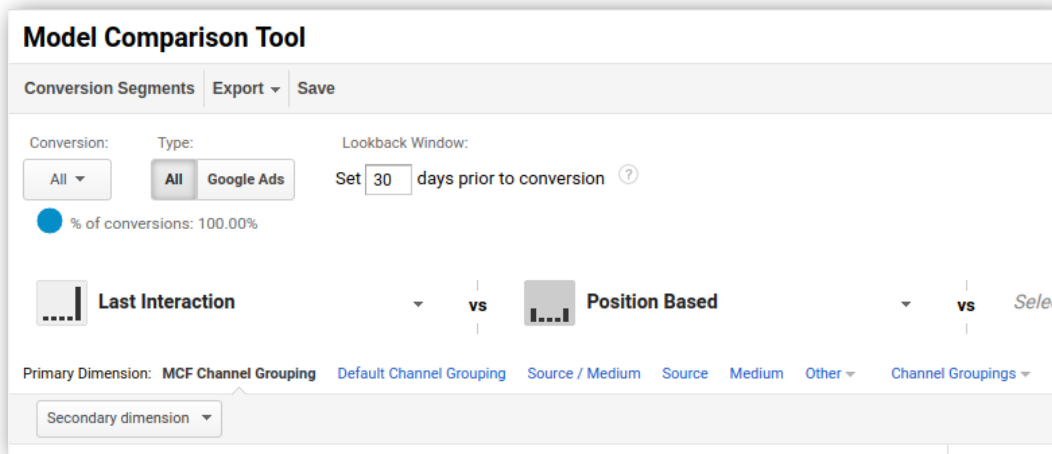
This is crucial because similar to e-commerce tracking, you can see not all donations are the same, some channels appear as low performing, but those channels are initiating the relationship that leads to the conversion.

Several organizations will stop advertising on social media because they misunderstand how conversions are attributed in the data. Oftentimes, when nonprofits stop social media advertising, all other channels stop converting also. This happens because they didn't look at their position based attribution model report. In this example, if the organization would have focused on the position based, they'd recognize social media was providing high-quality leads on the front end.

As a rule of thumb, look at both the last interaction and position-based models to get a complete overview of what's happening within the customer journey.

Funnel Visualization

Analyze the pathways users take to perform actions on your site. For example, what's the user journey from the moment he lands on your site to the moment he hits submit on your volunteer form? Funnel Visualization provides you with insight into how people journey through your donor funnel and where they drop off at each stage.

Funnel analysis helps you improve conversion rates by fixing areas of your funnel where users bounce. Whether it's a form or another touch point within your campaign, if you know where users are stopping, you'll have the insight to make adjustments or test a specific part of the funnel.

For example, if you have several steps for people to make a donation (i.e. select an amount, click to access the form, select a specific outreach initiative, visit another page to enter credit card information), Google will recognize each step as a point in the overall donation funnel.
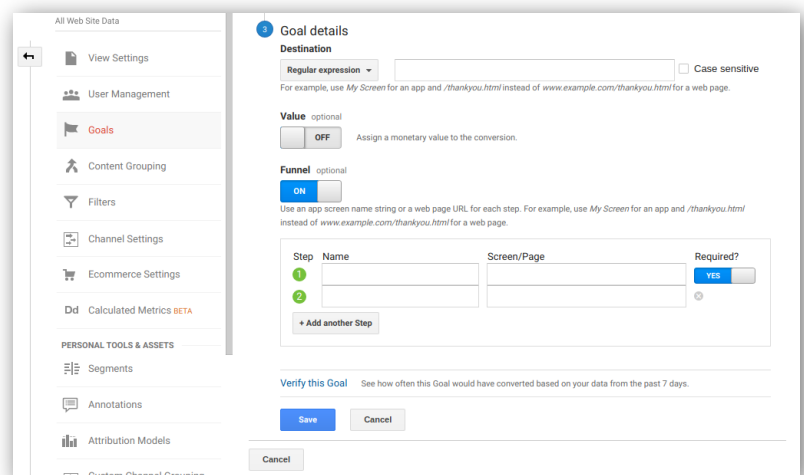
Funnel visualization within Google Analytics will show you where people get stuck on their path to conversion. By improving the form and minimizing the steps to donate, you'll boost conversion rates resulting in greater success of your campaign.

Within funnel visualization, there are a variety of ways to view your data by creating customizable and shareable dashboards to collaborate across your team. This is a great way to reduce inefficiencies in your visitor flows and re-engage users who drop out of your funnels.

To find Funnel Visualization in your Google Analytics account, go to Goals > Funnel Visualization.

Spotting Trends (even if you hate math!)

Oftentimes nonprofits are eager to tell us about their Google Analytics account even if it's underutilized by their staff. Come to find, many organizations are leaving money on the table because they aren't using data in Google Analytics to drive their digital marketing initiatives.

However, we've seen first-hand the importance of data. The insights in Google Analytics can create a significant impact on fundraising success. If you ignore the data, you won't have the insights you need to propel your organization forward.

Learning how to understand analytics and recognize simple trends will help you capitalize on opportunities as they present themselves. These opportunities may come in the form of acquiring new email subscribers, recruiting volunteers, raising online donations and much more.

Look for Big Changes

When it comes to analyzing data, the first step is to look for big changes. If you see a spike, investigate. A spike may represent an opportunity, a big change or provide insights to valuable information.
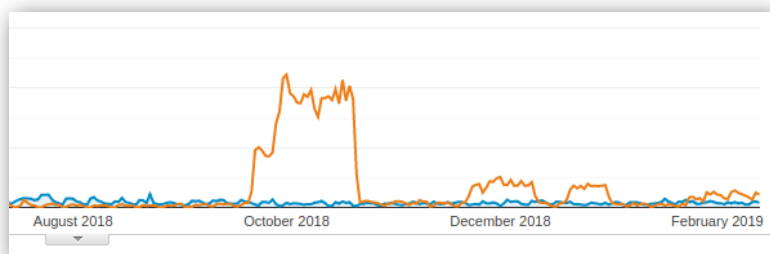
For example, a past campaign might have performed really well at one touch point within the funnel before people dropped off. Pay attention to spikes in your data, oftentimes they unveil key insights many marketers miss.

Set up alerts by visiting the Source/Medium report. On the top left, you can configure notifications.

Look for Inconsistency

Another key to spotting trends in your data is to look for inconsistency. The chart on the right is comparing the number of users to goal completions. In February, you can see the number of users and goal completions climb steadily. However, in April, the number of users stays somewhat consistent while goal completions drop off completely.

Below is an example of inconsistency. If users remain consistent, you'd expect the goal completion to follow the trend. However, this inconsistency should raise a red flag and prompt you to further investigate. Did you change something on your website? Is the conversion tracking not working? Are users not finding your donation or checkout button?

Google Analytics includes automated alerts. Sign up for notifications and Google will automatically alert you when key indicators spike. This will save you time looking for big changes because they'll regularly be sent to your inbox. For example, you can be notified if there's more than a 20% change in your organic search traffic.

BONUS TIP

Analyzing inconsistencies gives us a direct view of where a problem might have originated. Fluctuations in trends are a great starting point when it comes to taking a deeper dive into your data even if you aren't a data person. Look at the trends, make tweaks, and test to see what's working for your audience!

Set KPIs

Key performance indicators (KPIs) are your guideposts when prioritizing what data is most important to your organization. Here are five tips to consider when determining your KPIs for each campaign:

1. Align KPIs with organizational and digital marketing goals

2. KPIs may be different for each campaign throughout the year

3. Select data points easily available

4. Choose meaningful KPIs to make the greatest impact

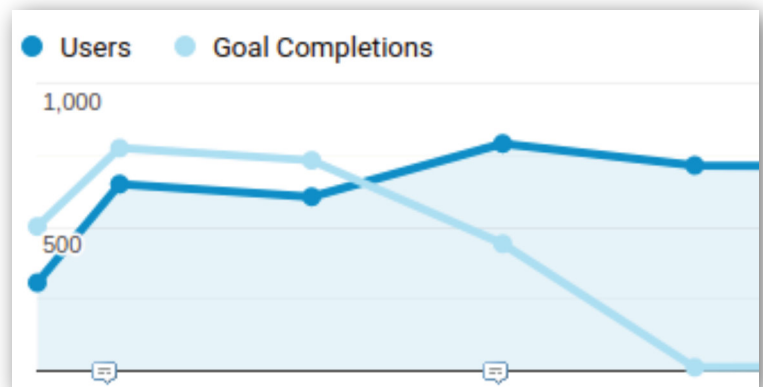5. KPIs must have context to provide a big-picture view

For example, you might focus on building awareness and increasing your email subscriber list early in the year so you have several months to nurture new subscribers before inviting them to donate at year-end. If the goal is to grow your email list as part of a spring campaign, you'd select "new subscribers" instead of "donations" as a KPI.

KPIs Worth Considering

1. **Cost Per Acquisition (CPA):** In most cases, this is how much it costs to get someone to donate or purchase. For example, if it costs you $50 to get a donor online and the average donation is $25, it's not a good return. However, if your average donation is $500, then the campaign is performing well.

2. **New Users:** If your goals include building online awareness, the number of new users to your website is an important metric to track.

3. **Returning Users:** Donor and volunteer retention are critical for sustained growth. Retargeting visitors who have dropped out of your funnel is key. By inviting these people back to your site, you'll have the opportunity to re-engage them with relevant and timely content.

4. **Engagement:** Engagement KPIs can be a variety of metrics such as email subscribers, resource downloads, event registrations, petition signatures and more. This includes any type of website engagement you're aiming to improve.

PRO TIP

Configure custom reports to appear in your dashboard so when you open Google Analytics, you'll get the most important data upfront. You can start with a blank canvas or a starter dashboard. Google also includes a gallery of dashboards to customize the data most important to you.

If you can only choose one report...

We get this question often – "Where do I start if I can only choose one piece of data to analyze?" Our answer… choose two.

1. First, configure e-commerce tracking. Tracking revenue is very important to the bottom line. To further your mission and make an impact, you need financial support. E-commerce tracking allows you to see the revenue generated by your digital marketing efforts.

2. Then, get acquainted with the Source/Medium report. This report will give you the most actionable data to make fundamental marketing decisions and an overview of how people are finding and interacting with your website.

Want a deeper understanding of your data?

If you're feeling overwhelmed or want to dive deeper into your analytics, contact our expert analysts for a digital growth plan.

Digital Growth Plans including four reports.

1. First, we do a comprehensive *Google Analytics Audit* on your website(s). During this process, we'll review your account, make sure all your data is populating correctly, configurations are set up properly, as well as, identify opportunities and concerns we see in the data.

2. Next, we put together a *Conversion Rate Optimization Plan*. Our team of experts will analyze your conversion funnels and makes recommendations based off of your data. This may include testing forms, implementing best practices, and fixing usability issues.

3. The *SEO Site Audit* includes all technical website issues that may be impacting your search rankings and performance.

4. Finally, we lay out a comprehensive 12-month plan including strategies and key metrics to help you confidently step into new opportunities and reach your digital marketing goals.

This is a done-for-you solution to get your data on the right track and skyrocket your digital marketing performance.

Contact us today to get started!

References:

https://support.google.com/analytics/?hl=en#topic=3544906
https://donorbox.org/nonprofit-blog/google-analytics-for-nonprofits/
https://www.google.com/nonprofits/

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