

# Top Google Analytics Strategies

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## Overview

Google Analytics has become the industry standard in reporting for everything that is happening on our websites. Most third-party tools that supposedly simplify reporting will, as a first step, ask you to link your Google Analytics before that tool can do anything. This should tell us that all the information that we need is already at our fingertips. The trouble most of us face is how to find the exact information we want.

This paper is designed to share some of my top strategies when using Google Analytics, in any capacity.

## One

### Link All Your Accounts

One of the best features of Google Analytics is the ability to link together multiple accounts to get an accurate view of your website traffic. With a single login, your Gmail account provides you access to all Google tools. It is important to note that to use Google Analytics properly, the Analytics code block should be placed on every page of your website.

### Google Search Console (Webmaster's Tools)

You should start by logging into your search console and make sure that your site is verified with Google. This is not only good for your SEO, but will allow you to see information not normally available in Google Analytics. This could include who is linking to you, Malware or other problems on your site, and which keyword queries your website is appearing in search results for.

On a side note, one of the best features inside of Google Search Console is the ability to fetch your website, as if you were a Google bot, and see what problems might exist with your site.

### Google Tag Manager

The Google Tag Manager is a tag management tool that allows you to quickly and easily update tags and code snippets to track events on your website. This programmable tool goes far beyond the standard goals that you can define in Google Analytics, and allows you to track items that are usually difficult to track in Google Analytics such as downloading a PDF file or linking off to another site.



The best feature of this tool is the ability to install one block of code and then manage all your tags and code from within the Google Tag Manager interface. Another nifty feature of this package is the ability to install Google Analytics via the Google Tag Manager.

Please see the reference section at the end of this paper for more information.

### Google Adwords

When running paid campaigns, you should always link your Google Adwords account to your Google Analytics account for accurate reporting. While it is true that you can use UTM parameters in your campaigns, I have discovered that they are best used with external campaigns such as email campaigns, Facebook or Twitter. It is always best practice to build a direct connection between Adwords and Analytics to completely automate your campaign tracking.

Adwords data can be tracked in the Campaigns section of your Analytics account and will use the same titles as defined in your actual Adwords account. This provides consistency in reporting and ease of identification.

## Two

### Setting Goals and Goal Values

Goals are the most important feature to become familiar with in Google Analytics. Many people ignore this feature and this adds to the confusion when attempting to learn how to retrieve the information that really matters. Goals contribute to your conversion reports and these reports include the actual number of conversions, conversion rates per goal and the goal value if it has been defined. This is critically important when attempting to gauge the success of your organic or paid campaigns and defining your return on investment.

A goal can be defined when a user fills out a form, visits a specific web page, or stays on a page for a certain length of time. Goals are extremely flexible and learning to use them will drastically improve your Google Analytics experience. A goal value is simply a dollar amount that you associate with the successful completion of that goal.

The top three benefits of goals are:

- Primary goals will help you learn to optimize your website.
- You can optimize, report, and analyze numbers for multiple departments.
- Multi-channel strategies can easily be developed by learning to use goals.

## Three

### Using Google Analytics Automated Insights

In late 2016, Google announced the ability to retrieve Automated Insights from Google Analytics. This was part of their push to incorporate Artificial Intelligence and machine learning into their repertoire of tools. Being connected to your data is extremely important for business owners, product designers and marketers. By itself, data can be overwhelming and hard to decipher. Automated Insights is available from the Assistant screen and provides you a wealth of data in a few minutes that used to take hours to comb through and discover.

What Automated Insights does:

- Searches data to provide meaningful insights and suggestions.
- Provides fast tips on how to improve your data.
- Learns from your feedback and improves over time automatically.
- Allows you to share these insights so your entire team can act on it.

Insights can provide improvements and suggestions that enables faster, better informed decision-making to impact your business.

## Four

### Build Custom Dashboards

The ability to build custom dashboards has always been one of my favorite features of Google Analytics. Many people use the default dashboards simply because that is what is presented to them when they first log in to Google Analytics. They don't realize that they can create their own custom dashboards and, even more, share them with others.

Custom dashboards are built by using widgets which you can drag and drop and position them on your screen as you wish. Each widget is also customizable through a wide variety of choices that can report on any of the metrics that are available within Google Analytics. These widgets can be either standard or real time. Moreover, linking reports directly in the dashboard is a possible and convenient feature.



Each dashboard is completely customizable and sharable with other members of your team. For a full review of what is possible, see the reference section at the end of this paper.

## Conclusion

A thorough analysis of your business data is critical to anyone in business and Google Analytics can provide a wealth of information. Learning to use this information to make informed decisions should be the goal of anyone who has a website for any reason. Knowing where your traffic comes from, why it is on your digital real estate and where it is going are three viable questions to ask yourself. Google Analytics helps us to answer these questions as well as define methods to optimize our websites, our campaigns, and our businesses.

### References

Installing Google Analytics via Tag Manger

<https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/6163791?hl=en>

Building Customizable Dashboards

<https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/1068218?hl=en>

Expanded Analytics Tips & Trips via kissmetrics

<https://blog.kissmetrics.com/15-google-analytics-tips/>

## Author



### Bob Cristello

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Bob joined Davidson Belluso with 30+ years working experience in web development. Born and raised in Boston, Bob is a U.S. Army veteran. His resume includes being a former Microsoft Developer Days keynote speaker, Head of Internal Development for Rebar International, Team Lead at Sally Mae and the Head of Computer Sciences at the Hyde School. Bob's articles on technology have appeared in Visual Basic Programmers Journal, Byte, InfoWorld and Computer Telephony. His skill set includes database design, complex SQL query design, and an impressive list of CMS software with a focus on WordPress. Bob handles clients Search Engine Optimization (SEO), Social Media Optimization (SMO) and Digital Advertising, holding all six Google Analytics and Adwords certifications. Bob loves spending time with his family, enjoys the performing arts and plays several instruments.



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