

Unleash Analytics - How to use Analytics to boost your success online

1 - Introduction

This document has been written in order to support the 'Unleash Analytics' seminar delivered by Charles Ward and Nick Stocks from Internet Consultants Group on behalf of Business Link in June 2009.

Wherever possible we will endeavour to cover each subject covered in the presentation in the order that they appear to both explain the content of each slide and also to point you at additional resources.

You should be aware that implementing analytics is a little technical and that you will therefore probably need the input from your in-house web team or your external website company.

2 - Glossary of terms

This section contains a glossary of terms in order to explain any technical terms or acronyms that appear in this document. Please refer to the table below.

Term or Acronym	Description
Bounce Rate	the Wikipedia definition of bounce rate is as follows. 'Bounce Rate is a term used in web site traffic analysis. It essentially represents the percentage of initial visitors to a site who "bounce" away to a different site, rather than continue on to other pages within the same site.'
Broad Match	This is part of Google Adwords keyword matching options and it allows your ad to show on similar phrases and relevant variations. More help can be found below Broad Match help
CSV	This stands for 'Comma Separated Variable' which is a file format that can easily be imported into Excel.
Exact Match	This is part of Google Adwords keyword matching options and it allows your ad to show for searches that match the exact phrase exclusively. More help can be found below. Exact Match help
Google Adwords	Google's form of Pay Per Click advertising
Google Analytics	Google analytics is Google's free website analytics tool which was produced as a result of Google acquiring

	Urchin Software in 2005.
KPI	Key Performance Indicator.
Microsoft Adcenter	this is Microsoft's offering for paid adverts on the MSN search page.
Phrase Match	This is part of Google Adwords keyword matching options and it allows your ad to show for searches that match the exact phrase. More help can be found below. Phrase Match help
PPC	Pay Per Click - the generic term used to describe sponsored adverts on search engine pages.
ROI	Return On Investment
Yahoo Panama	Yahoo's PPC tool
Negative Keywords	the term 'negative keywords' is used to describe the of adding keywords to your paid search campaigns that you do <i>not</i> want your adverts to show for. More help on negative keywords
Yahoo Web Analytics	Yahoo's recent offerings for free web analytics. This came about as a result of Yahoo's acquisition of index tools in 2008.

3 - Why do we need analytics?

There are three main pillars that support success online and the first of these is about getting the basics right. The questions you need to ask yourself are as follows.

- Is your website to fit for purpose?
- Does it meet your own and your visitor's objectives?
- Is the design and usability of the site on target?
- Have you got the right calls to action?

Having got the basics right you then need to think about how to get traffic to your site and most website owners are obsessed with getting as much as possible. Of course traffic is important But what good is it if they come to the site and go away without doing what we want them to. This leaves us nicely to the last of our three pillars, conversions..

If you think about it it's really important to understand what people actually do when they get your site and to try to work out how you can influence them into a meeting your objectives. This is where analytics fits in to form a vital part of your online strategy.

Analytics will help answer a number of really important questions and enable you to arrive at a combination of factors that will drive success on your website.

You will also be able to find out what is not working on your site and the insight you gain from this should lead to action in order to fix any problems.

The intelligence you gather will also help you get a better feel for what your market is looking for and also give you an indication of what you need to do to improve conversions. Even small iterations and improvements can, in the end, lead to major improvements in the ROI.

Additional Resources

In the past there have been a number of business link seminars like 'Wow Factor Websites' that have covered the elements that underpinned the best practice in website design, usability and branding.

More information on these can be found at the link below.

www.internetconsultantsgroup.co.uk/internet_resources/seminars.html

4 - How do we do it?

So how do we do analytics? In fact there are a number of different ways that it can be tackled and these can be summarised as follows.

Web Stats Packages

These are programs that sit on your web server and use the server logs to track visitor behaviour. Some of the better-known ones are listed below.

[Webalizer](#)

[AW stats](#)

[Analog](#)

These packages use the server log data that they collect to generate graphical reports that are much easier for the user to understand.

Analytics Packages

These systems use JavaScript code placed on each page of the website to send data on visitor behaviour to a remote server where it is then analysed delivered to the website owner in the form of easy to understand graphical reports.

Analytics systems also use cookies placed on the visitor's computer in order to better track visitor behaviour, return visits etc.

Both stats and analytics packages have their pros and cons but we believe that the use of an analytics program like Google Analytics offers a smaller business the best option.

Are they accurate? The answer to this question is that neither stats nor analytics packages are 100% accurate so please do not bet your house for your car on the results! You will often also find that there is a disparity between the results from web stats and analytics packages.

The point to remember is that analytics is about trends and not a precise mathematical analysis. Therefore once you have established a benchmark you need to use it to follow important trends over time.

During this seminar we will be focusing on Google Analytics because it is currently the leader in the 'free' analytics market and it is the tool of choice for most websites.

You should also be aware of the 'new kid on the block' which is Yahoo Web Analytics' which is the product resulting from the Yahoo acquisition of Index Tools about a year ago. This was a paid analytics solution and is now being offered free by Yahoo.

5 - Why Google Analytics?

So why do we like Google analytics? Here are some important facts that need to be considered as part of its appraisal.

- It is offered free by Google but don't underestimate it because of that. It is in fact an excellent tool and more than adequate for most businesses. We have seen many instances where large businesses have gone away from using paid products when they discover that Google analytics will fulfil their requirements.
- Google Analytics gives you the opportunity to track all campaigns, both online and off-line, that send traffic to your website.
- It is a hosted service so those nice people at Google will store your data for you, for up to 2 years!

6 - Before You Start

Before you start it is important that you clearly identify the KPI's that you wish to track. This process can take a little time and it is important that you involve all the main stakeholders in your business who will have a vested interest in the reports that will be generated.

Please remember that often 'less is more' and therefore you do not need dozens of KPI's. As a rule of thumb you should aim to have no more than 10.

7 - How to setup Google Analytics

Setting up Google analytics is a very straightforward process and is done through a simple wizard. If you already have the Google AdWords account we would recommend that you click on the 'Analytics' tab available inside your AdWords interface and run the wizard from there.

If you do not use AdWords then you can set it up by going to the [Google Analytics setup page](#) direct. this will enable you to setup analytics and, if need be, link it to your AdWords account manually.

In our presentation we show a short video that goes through the simple process involved in setting up an Analytics profile and how to generate the code that goes on each page on your website.

Once you have completed your setup you then need to edit the profile in order to ensure that your settings are correct. Firstly you need to ensure that your default homepage is correctly defined because if you do not you will tend to get a number of different versions of your homepage in your content reports.

You also need to check that your time zone is set correctly (this is done automatically if it is done from your AdWords account. We quite often find when checking new clients accounts that the time zone is set incorrectly with the potential to thereby corrupt reports.

If you have an e-commerce site it is extremely important that you enable e-commerce tracking and add the necessary code to the 'thank you' pages on your site. There are huge benefits to doing this.

Lastly you should enable the 'track site search' function in order to understand what people type into the search boxes on your site. Please note that that this will not always work as it depends on the way your site search function operates.

Additional Resources

Setting up the Google analytics

Help on setting up Google analytics is available from these locations.

[Google analytics help centre](#)

[A free guide from Epik One](#)

[A video showing how to use site search](#)

[A video showing how to link Adwords with Analytics](#)

[Help from an official Google forum on how to setup e-commerce tracking](#)

[A video on how to setup e-commerce tracking](#)

8 - Setup Goals and Funnels in Google Analytics

Defining goals and any related funnels is an important part of getting the best out of Google analytics.

A goal represents some sort of action that you would like visitors to your site to take with each goal indicating an objective that you have for them to complete. Some examples are as follows.

- A sale on an e-commerce site
- A newsletter signup
- Some sort of information download like a file download.

To setup your goal you need to edit your analytics profile, go to the 'conversion goals and funnel' section and edit each goal. This involves defining the target page you want people to reach and, if applicable the funnel as well.

The example shown in our presentation is from one of our client's e-commerce sites and is in fact the goal they have that defines a sale. In this instance we were able to define a funnel as well as they were able to clearly identify each step in the sales process.

Additional Resources

Additional resources for setting up goals and funnels can be found here.

[In the official Google Analytics blog](#)

[A useful youtube video](#) showing how to setup goals

[A youtube video showing how to setup funnels](#)

9 - The Google Analytics Dashboard

The Google analytics dashboard is the first screen you will see when you go into analytics. In order to give you a feel for the dashboard we have included a short video that shows you how to navigate through the various reports and how to change the date range you wish to report on.

We have also shown you the high-level data that is available on the dashboard and the additional reports which are customisable.

10 - Top Google Analytics Reports

There are over 75 reports and Google analytics and so trying to find your way through all of these can be confusing. The list we have provided here is intended to help give you a feel for reports that we feel are most important.

The main ones are as follows.

- Visitors - Map Overlay
- Content - Top Content
- Content - Site Overlay
- Traffic sources - Keywords
- Traffic sources - AdWords
- Traffic sources - Referring Sites
- Goals
- Funnel visualisation
- E-commerce reports

When it comes to the distribution of your reports to colleagues and other departments in your organisation please remember that it is not necessary for everyone to be a Google analytics expert in order to read reports.

Each report in GA has a function where you can export it into a format like csv which can then be imported into Excel and reconfigured for distribution to a wider audience.

11 - Google Analytics Case Studies

Chandlers Hotel

Target KPI

The KPI that we were targeting in this instance was the ROI the client got from referring directory sites.

Background Information

the Chandlers Hotel is based in Weymouth in Dorset. For some years now they have had a website that has worked well for them. Part of their online strategy was to pay it to be included in travel related directories like 'Visit Britain' and 'Trip Advisor'.

These services are expensive and therefore it was felt important to properly understand the ROI that was be obtained from each of the services with a view to cancelling those that were not working.

Application of Google analytics

The traffic sources-referring site's report was used to the sites were that were selling traffic to my website based on important keywords like 'Hotel Dorset' and 'Hotel Weymouth'

Much to our amazement we found that of the directories they were using only about a third were delivering traffic that converted and therefore we were able to get rid of those that were not working.

we also used the Content -Top Content report to identify the top performing pages on the site and the Content - Site Overlay report to ensure that the calls to action were visible to the potential client's and were working properly.

Ace Lamps

Target KPI

Track ROI from Google Adwords campaigns

Background information

Ace lamps are a company trading online selling interior and exterior lighting and replacement lamps. Their website went live in August 2007 and they have done very well since then.

When they started out they relied heavily on PPC to drive traffic to their site although now their SEO drives the greatest part of their business.

Towards the end of last year it was becoming increasingly hard to track the ROI they were getting from PPC and so it was decided to setup Google Analytics so that they could develop a clear picture of what was working and what was not working.

Application of Google analytics

Firstly we added a separate profile to Google analytics with a filter that was for AdWords traffic only. By excluding all other traffic we were able to focus clearly on our objectives.

Next we added a filter that allowed us to report on the keywords that visitors actually typed into Google rather than the bid keyword that Google analytics reports on by default.

This allowed us to highlight keyword trends over time and clearly identify specifically what potential clients were looking for. The keyword data was used to setup more tightly focused campaigns and ad groups and to identify potential negative keywords.

We also wanted to show clearly where each transaction was coming from down to individual campaigns, ad group and keyword level and were able to do this by using a special filter.

The end result of all this activity was that over a period of time we were able to reduce the PPC budget by 50% without any loss of business and refine our PPC strategy to concentrate on what worked whilst getting rid of any keywords or campaigns that were failing to perform.

Clothkits

Target KPI

Measure main external referrers.

Background information

Clothkits were a really popular brands back in the 1970s and 1980s manufacturing a range of printed cloth kits for children and adult clothing. They also made a range of kits for dolls and their marketing angle was 'sewing kits made easy'.

Their market started to go into decline in the late 1980s and the company was sold by the founder in 1988 with the new owners continuing until the market fizzled out.

Following a period of hibernation the brand was bought by our client in 2007 and relaunched online in 2008 with a great start and growing success since then.

Google Analytics was used to monitor the traffic to the site right from the launch and soon it became clear that they were attracting a lot of 'social' traffic. This included a lot of attention from bloggers who had an interest in sewing and handicrafts.

Once this became clear it was decided to use Google analytics to help focus on social traffic and develop this market further.

Application of Google analytics

The content -- top content report was used to identify the social media traffic. We then developed a separate profile to isolate this traffic and allow us to measure the return that came from it through the e-commerce reports

In the longer term we intend to use Google analytics to understand and develop a 'social buzz' that is developing around this brand.

12 - Advanced Techniques for Google Analytics

Google analytics is an extremely powerful tool that does a great deal 'out-of-the-box'. However, it is possible to further add a huge amount of functionality to the system in order to customise it to suit your own business model.

Below we have listed a few of these additional functions that you can look at.

Tracking online and off-line campaigns

We mentioned earlier in this document that it was possible to use the analytics to track campaigns, both online and off-line, that send traffic to your website.

This is done through the use of the [Google analytics URL builder tool](#) and we have created a small video in order to show you how to use this. The primary metrics you want to track are the campaign source, campaign medium, and campaign name.

If you wish to track PPC campaigns from Yahoo Panama or Microsoft ad centre, then the campaign term and campaign content fields can also be very useful.

Event tracking

Event tracking can be used to track file downloads, events, and other actions that visitors take on your website.

[Assistance to setup events tracking from the Google analytics help centre.](#)

Google analytics filters

In this document we have mentioned a number of times the use of filters in our various case studies. Filters are extremely useful and a very important part of setting up Google analytics correctly.

Filters can be used in all sorts of ways as described in the case studies, some of the most popular uses are to exclude unknown IP addresses, such as a fixed company IP address, and the segmentation of key data that you wish to analyse in more depth.

More help on setting up filters can be found by 'google analytics filters' in the Google search box.

Google analytics hacks

Google analytics hacks can be used to further extend the functionality of GA through the use of JavaScript code. You upload the code to a subdirectory on your website server and then call it by using a customised Google analytics tracking code.

This does sound complicated but again you can find plenty of help by googling 'Google analytics hacks' in the Google search box.

Advanced Reports and Segmentation

Recently Google have introduced advanced reporting and segmentation into Google analytics custom reports and segmentation to suit your business model.

[Quick start guide for Google analytics custom reporting](#)

[Video on advanced segmentation](#)