



Google Analytics

The Non-Technical Manager's Guide to Successful Google Analytics

Release Date: February 2009

Author: Helen M. Overland, Director, Search Engine Marketing

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Step 1 – Gather Website Intelligence.....	3
Step 2 – Customize the Account for YOUR Organization’s Needs.....	4
Step 3 – Track Your Advertising.....	5
Step 4 – Convert the Data into Actionable Information.....	6
Step 5 – Consider Your Privacy Policy.....	7
Google Analytics Checklist.....	8
About non~linear creations.....	9

Introduction

Google Analytics is a complex and powerful analytics package that can (falsely) appear simplistic due to its easy copy-and-paste code implementation. In actual fact, there are an incomprehensible number of ways that Google Analytics can be implemented and customized, depending on your needs. It is important not to underestimate the power of this seemingly simple tool.

Many organizations don't even know that they can customize their analytics implementation, let alone that it's a necessary step in producing usable information. Typically, website owners believe that installing an analytics package is a simple case of "dropping in some code"—but the default Google Analytics code is usually insufficient for KPI-focused organizations.

In addition, if your analytics package is not installed correctly, you could be looking at numbers that are missing vital data. While it's great to know how many people entered their email address to download a whitepaper, how many people then actually downloaded the PDF? Do you know? How about pages in a

subdomain...are they being tracked? Are your advertising campaigns being tracked correctly? Is the intelligence gained from analytics providing you with positive and measurable steps forward in terms of your ability to reach your market?

Remember, once information has been entered into the Google Analytics database, it cannot be changed. Incorrect or incomplete information in your account is incorrect forever. This is why it's essential to have a solid strategy in place before launching an analytics package.

Before you implement Google Analytics on your website, make sure you have taken the following **5 simple, high-level steps** to help ensure your analytics will meet your organization's needs. Having a strategy can help increase the odds that your analytics implementation will provide **relevant, useful** and **actionable** information that can be used to streamline and improve the performance of your online efforts.

Step 1 – Gather Website Intelligence

Before launching an analytics package, it is important to determine what you are going to track. This is the appropriate time to address questions such as whether or not to track on-site searches, off-site advertising, and any third party sites, such as off-site shopping carts.

While a Standard Google Analytics implementation does tend to track most html-based pages on your website, there are many types of content that may not be tracked.

These might include PDF files, flash, video and sound files (such as podcasts). It's good to know in advance that pages using frames and other features can present challenges to successfully implementing analytics on your site.

It is important to make a complete list of the content you would like to receive information on to ensure that this content is included in your overall analytics strategy.

Action Items

- Before implementing an Analytics package on your website, make a list of the content that should be tracked. This content may include:
 - PDF files
 - Images
 - Sound files
 - Video views
 - On-site searches
 - Advertising campaigns
- Speak with technical staff in order to identify possible challenges, such as the use of frames, multiple domains, subdomains and third-party applications such as shopping carts, session variables or other random characters in the URL.

Step 2 – Customize the Account for YOUR Organization's Needs

An effective Google Analytics implementation is customized for the needs of a specific organization. Many people do not realize that all the data going into the tracking account can be altered, manipulated and customized for the organization's needs.

For example, Profiles in Google Analytics are a good way to segment data and drill down to a select group of visitors. In Google Analytics, each subdomain on a website could be tracked in a separate profile in order to determine exactly how that subdomain is performing. It is possible to filter out traffic such as internal visitors, and to specifically segment groups such as job seekers for analysis or exclusion. There are an infinite number of ways to customize the data going into analytics.

For organizations running Pay-Per-Click (PPC) campaigns, it can also be helpful to leverage analytics to increase the effectiveness of your campaigns. Google Analytics allows integration with Google AdWords (PPC), and can offer increased information about the effectiveness of each campaign. Google Analytics is also capable of tracking additional PPC campaigns, such as Yahoo PPC Campaigns (to a certain extent).

The creation and customization of the account can have a dramatic effect on how useful the analytics data can be to your organization over time. Therefore, it is important to ensure that the campaign is properly set up, in accordance with your organization's needs.

Action Items

- a. Where possible, set up the Google Analytics account with the same email address as your Google AdWords account, and link the accounts together. This can provide increased information about the effectiveness of your campaigns.
- b. Consider segmenting specific audiences, such as customers vs. job seekers. This can provide valuable information about how visitor behaviour varies between various audience segments.
- c. Consider setting up profiles to track specific information, such as traffic that specifically visits a subdomain, or traffic reports which filter out internal traffic.
- d. Consider setting up tracking to see which links are causing people to exit your website, such as links to partners, suppliers or sister sites.
- e. Consider setting up internal search tracking, to see what people are looking for on your site. This can help you to determine if people are having trouble finding content on your website.
- f. Create links on your website to track your non-html content in your Analytics account. This can include tagging your off-site flash and widget applications, updating the links that point to PDF, video and audio files, etc.
- g. Create profiles with different access privileges. Not every member of your organization might or should have access to every tidbit of analytics information. Consider using the Google Analytics profiles and access privileges to control which data specific individuals can see.

Step 3 – Track Your Advertising

How well are your advertising campaigns performing? How many people convert from the banner, and how many people visit your sign-up page from an email blast? Do you know? What about facebook or twitter...are you getting quality traffic?

This information is critical in determining how your advertising dollars should be spent—what you don't know could be wasting your budget! Consider integrating analytics into your advertising campaigns so you can be armed with the knowledge to more effectively stream your marketing dollars.

Action Items

- a. Make a list of all online advertising and outreach conducted by your organization, including banners, text links, email blasts, email signatures, facebook, twitter and other social media outreach efforts
- b. Tag each link from these outreach efforts so your analytics package can effectively track and analyze this data

To make link tagging easier, use the **Google Analytics URL Builder Tool**:
<http://www.google.com/support/analytics/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=55578>

Step 4 – Convert the Data into Actionable Information

It is not enough to just set up an analytics account and install the tracking code. Data sitting unseen on a server is not going to do anything for your organization. If you want to understand how people are using your website and how you can respond to your audience's needs, it is

vital that the data be examined and understood as actionable information. Once analytics is installed, ensure that at least one person will be signing in to the account regularly—someone who is able to understand the information and present it back to the organization.

Some basic metrics that are typically worth monitoring include:

- Total visitors
- New vs. returning visitors
- Paid visitors vs. organic visitors
- Popular content
- Keywords that bring traffic
- Geographic location of visitors
- On-site searches

It is important to be able to turn the data into meaningful action items that can be used to increase the performance of the website. This allows you constantly improve your response to your online audience.

Action Items

- a. Commit a minimum of 2 hours per month for reviewing and analyzing the data in the analytics
- b. Commit a further 2 hours per month (minimum) to generate an action plan based on the intelligence gained from the traffic analysis
- c. Follow through on the action plan and measure the results the following month
- d. Lather, rinse and repeat!

Step 5 – Consider Your Privacy Policy

Google's Terms of Service require that anyone using Google Analytics "*must post a privacy policy and that policy must provide notice of your use of a cookie that collects anonymous traffic data*". Having a notice disclosing this information is a requirement of using Google Analytics.

Therefore, before launching an analytics package on your website, ensure that you have covered the legal bases as well as the technical ones. Depending on your

organization, it may be worthwhile to consult a lawyer to update your terms of service so that they're in harmony with both your organization's needs, and Google's terms of service.

You can read Google's Terms of Service here:

<http://www.google.com/analytics/tos.html>

Action Items

- a. Ensure your website's privacy policy is up-to-date.
- b. Ensure that Google's requirements for disclosing aggregate cookie usage in your privacy policy is met.

Google Analytics Checklist

The following steps should be taken to help increase the effectiveness of the Analytics package to produce *relevant*, *useful*, and *actionable* information to help improve the performance of the web channel.

CHECKLIST ITEMS	
Make a list of content to be tracked	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Consult technical staff to identify possible technical challenges (such as multiple domains, URL session ID's, etc)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Link the AdWords account with the Analytics account for increased intelligence	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Set up profiles to track specific information	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Segment key audiences, such as customers vs. job seekers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Set up profiles and filters to track information such as "external visitors only"	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Set up tracking to see which links are causing people to exit your website	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Consider setting up internal search tracking	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Set up links to track non-html content activity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Identify authorized GA report viewers and set up profiles and access accordingly	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Make a list of all advertising and outreach efforts to be tracked (including social media)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Tag each advertising and outreach link to be tracked before the campaign goes live	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Commit minimum 2 hours per month for reviewing analytics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Commit minimum 2 hours per month for analysis and generating an action plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Follow through on the action plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Measure the results of the action plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Ensure your website's privacy policy is up-to-date	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Ensure that Google's privacy policy requirements are met	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

About non~linear creations

non~linear creations (NLC) provides e-business consulting services to an international clientele. Since 1995, we have helped our clients leverage the power of Internet technology to achieve tangible business benefits.

NLC leads seven Solutions Groups

Our **Business Performance Group** provides services in strategic consulting, information architecture, web analytics and content governance.

Our **Enterprise Content Management Group** has world-class proficiency in the technical planning and deployment of web content management systems, document management and records management solutions.

Our Gold-Certified **Microsoft Solutions Group** specializes in successful implementation of Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007, Microsoft Commerce Server and Microsoft Search solutions.

Our **Enterprise Search Group** partners with search vendors such as Google, Microsoft and Endeca to ensure information is effectively stored and easy to find—both inside and outside the enterprise.

Our **Custom Application Development and Integration Group** builds custom solutions when off-the-shelf offerings aren't sufficient for an organization's business needs. This group also specializes in legacy integration projects.

Our **Digital Marketing Group** provides services in organic search optimization, pay-per-click search management, email management and social marketing.

Our **Design and Multimedia Group** continues to win awards for their high impact online design projects, which achieve the goal of compelling design without sacrificing functionality and ease of navigation.

Each Solutions Group leverages proven methodologies and extensive technology partnerships to deliver effective, individualized solutions that satisfy customers worldwide.

Visit our website at www.nonlinear.ca to learn more about the results we've achieved for a number of high-profile clients.

Reaching non~linear creations

Toronto Office

info@nonlinear.ca
416.203.2997
524 Front St. West, Suite 200
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
M5V 1B8

Ottawa Office

info@nonlinear.ca
613.241.2067
987A Wellington St., Suite 201
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
K1Y 2Y1

New York Office

info@nonlinear.ca
1.866.915.2997
55 Inwood Rd.
Port Washington NY USA
11050