

Marketing Breakout Session One

Google Analytics: What's All the fuss?

Speakers: Chris Unitt & Ash Mann

This session focused on the information you can get if you use Google Analytics with Chris Unitt from digital analytics agency, One Further, and Ash Mann, Strategic Director at the digital agency, Substrakt.

They started the session by suggesting that “digital activity without analytics is like driving at night without headlights” as without knowing the impact of your marketing campaigns and your website, you don't know how successful you are (slide 2). Google Analytics is free and the best way for you to find out what your customers are doing on your website and how they're interacting with your marketing. While it's a very important tool to use, Ash and Chris did recognise that it's not the friendliest of user environments! It can be difficult to get the most out of it, but when you do, you'll find the information you get to be invaluable.

A lot of the difficulties people have is around deciphering the jargon (slide 5). Once you can get past this, things might become a little bit clearer. Historically, the arts haven't had a lot of training or success in using analytics, which isn't helped by the requirements from the Arts Council who often ask for quite useless statistics from organisations.

They find that often arts organisations aren't getting value out of Google Analytics because it is set up incorrectly. They also find that there are some very common errors people make:

- Not using Google Tag Manager can make things very difficult as it means analytics aren't being deployed from your website correctly. Find out more about it here.
- Getting self-referrals right! If your website is at the top of the referrals list, then it's not setup correctly. Luckily, this is a very solvable problem, but it can be very frustrating. It means that you don't have proper visibility on where your ticket buyers are coming from and it can look like all your revenue comes from people who go directly to your website.
- There is no ecommerce or campaign data. If your Google Analytics isn't setup correctly with your email provider or AdWords then it won't be able to populate the campaign data but if you got that sorted out, it is possible to easily have a report or list of email campaigns showing how many people came to the site and how much they spent. Find out more about ecommerce data here.
- Not using custom reports. The standard reports in Google Analytics aren't very useful so it's really important to take time to work out what information you want and will need in order to take action, and then set up custom reports to get it. If there's something you'll need regularly, you can setup automated PDFs to be emailed to you so you don't even have to go into the tool itself!
- Chris very helpfully gave everyone a link - <http://bit.ly/gaspektrixtroubleshoot> - that will tell you whether you've got the right data coming into your analytics or not. Just go to the link, find your website and see if you're collecting the correct data.

According to Chris and Ash, marketing and ecommerce happiness is

- Knowing how much money your campaigns bring in.
- Knowing which traffic sources perform best.
- Finding your biggest spenders and targeting them. Are your biggest spenders also your biggest fundraisers?
- Spotting the weakest parts of your sales funnel by finding out where a common source of abandoned sales is found on your website and how much this is costing you.
- Knowing how people behave differently on different devices.
- Identifying problems early on - are people going to your 404 page often? Are people clicking on broken links?
- Knowing what's worth putting on your production pages. What do you customers need to know and what are they clicking on? There's no need to clog up web pages with info they don't need.
- Seeing what productions get the most visibility. Are your sold out shows more visible than shows still selling?

Here's some ways they think you can achieve this:

1. Collect useful data
 - It's really easy to collect ecommerce data in Spektrix.
 - Make sure you're getting the correct data from your email service providers as they will have data that will show what people are clicking on, where they're linking to, etc.
2. Proper website design build
 - Website design isn't just about how it looks. You should make sure that your web agency knows what information you need to get out of it so that it's built correctly.
 - Some things to include in your website briefs are:
 - To include nice looking URLs.
 - Make sure that the code is marked up nicely with useful data.
 - Make sure Google Tag Manager is set up from the beginning.
3. Set up useful reports
 - Google Analytics reports are trying to service millions of websites so the reports are Google's best guess at what will be useful.

Chris and Ash will be doing a Spektrix workshop in the New Year to talk more about Google Analytics. Keep an eye out for more information.

Q & A Session

Q: Our website is too big and expensive to change, but Google Analytics shows that customers are getting lost. What can we do?

Ash: Your website is not a monolithic thing, it is made up of lots of moving parts. What are the specific customer journeys that people are encountering problems with? And what are the causes of those problems? It may be something as simple as content (imprecise language can often result in users getting lost and frustrated) or it may be that a few small developmental changes will result in significant improvements.

Chris: Also Google Analytics can show you what's happening, but it can't show you why. Sitting down with some real people and asking them to complete some ordinary tasks on your site (find an event, book a ticket, find directions, etc) can be really useful for spotting the little amends that will make all the difference (I'd recommend doing it regularly, whether you think you need to or not). Beyond that, start with content (hopefully you can control this). Make sure there are no broken links tripping people up, make language very clear and unambiguous (check with people who don't know your organisation - cater for your first-timers and the regulars will look after themselves), and cut back anything that might be getting in the way.

It might also be possible to solve some problems with a few gentle tweaks to your design by making amends to your CSS. This determines the look and layout of your content (rather than the underlying website code) so could be used to improve things like navigation, calls to action, font sizes, and so on.

Finally, it sounds very much like there's an institutional problem here. Why's the website been allowed to get into this state? How much revenue does your website currently bring in? How many people access information from it every day? How much are lost customers costing you? In short, is it more expensive to bring the website up to scratch, or keep it as it is?

Q: Are all the things you've spoken about possible on the free Google Analytics platform?

Chris: Yes, absolutely. The paid version of Google Analytics gives you more accurate data if your website gets a very (very) large number of visits per day. It also makes it easier to export your data to external databases if you want, and has fewer limits on things like views, calculated metrics, custom dimensions and custom metrics.

If you're bumping up against those limits then it's for you to decide whether you'd get enough value from upgrading. Even if you are, then there are plenty of actionable insights you can get from the free version and you'd probably get better value from hiring a couple of analysts instead.

Q: If there was one key metric for ecommerce or on analytics, what would you look at?

Chris: Your key metrics should always relate to your business objectives/mission, and the aspects of your operation that you have the power to affect. Pushed for one thing that's broadly applicable, I'd say online revenue. The healthier that number (and digging down, that'll be made up of all sorts of things), the more likely your organisation is going to be around next year.

Some people might balk at that, but chances are your website sells tickets better than it does any other single task. I'd also highly recommend running some sort of customer satisfaction survey. There are plenty to choose from (I like Customer Effort Score) and they're a great source of very easily understandable insights.

Q: What are the top three metrics outside of the Overview that you find arts orgs find the most useful?

Chris: In the session I mentioned that the Overview report (the first thing that you see when you log in to Google Analytics) is broadly useless. I'll spare you the rant, but if you're regularly reporting any of those numbers then you're wasting your time.

However, rather than three metrics, here are three standard reports in Google Analytics that I think will provide value:

- Acquisition - All traffic - Source/Medium (although I'd recreate this as a custom report and replace Goals with Revenue)
- Behaviour - Site Content - All pages (good for digging through pages on your site)
- Behaviour - Events - Top Events (this is where you'll find information about file downloads, form submissions, video plays, scrolling, javascript errors, and other types of custom tracking - as long as you've set them up)

Although I still urge clients to create these as custom reports so they're easier to find (and can be tweaked to their needs).

Q: Can we identify individual customers from their browsing behaviour and link to ticket sales? What is the most cutting edge activity in this area?

Chris: It's technically possible. If a person logs in to your website then it's theoretically possible to capture an ID number for that person and either store it as a custom dimension against their session, or make use of the User ID feature in Google Analytics (please excuse the jargon - feel free to Google these things).

You could then export the browsing history for a given ID number and match that with your CRM data. Once you're doing that there all sorts of options for using CRM data for smarter email and remarketing lists. This isn't simple stuff, and you'd need to think about how you

notify your users of what you're doing. You also need to make sure you're not overstepping Google terms and conditions around personally identifiable information.

Ash: The way that most arts organisations' online systems are configured means that it isn't very straight-forward to do this. It becomes easier if you have a persistent login, and much easier if you have a website that people always log in to. There are also some paid-for products that are more suited to this job.

Q: As a Spektrix client we get a lot of analytics through ROI reports, etc. I feel like GA is repeating a lot of the same stats. Is this the case?

Ash: Some of the details will be similar (or even the same) but much while Spektrix will contain information that Google Analytics can't track (such as personal customer info, historic transactional data etc), Google Analytics holds data that Spektrix can't track as well.

Chris: For instance, it'll show you a broader range of traffic sources (organic search, PPC, affiliates, referrals, and social), areas of the site where people are dropping off on the way to a purchase, content that people are devouring (or ignoring). Ideally, you'll be using a range of tools to make sense of what people are doing online, because no one tool will give you the whole picture.

Q: I find Google's interface for analytics confusing, as well as the user guide. Is there anywhere else you would recommend for help online?

Chris: I feel your pain - the learning curve is pretty steep, but it's a mountain (well, a large hill) that's worth climbing. It's only going to make you more of an asset to your organisation (and a better candidate for any other jobs).

I'd start with the videos and resources in [Google's Analytics Academy](#) and start reading the posts on [Avinash Kaushik's blog](#). You might get on better with his slightly higher-level strategic approach, so that when you come to the nuts and bolts you'll have a stronger idea of what you're trying to achieve.

Q: Our outgoing Marketing manager doesn't know what analytics is, let alone how to use it. What questions do I ask re. analytics to recruit someone who knows their stuff?

Ash: Ask them if they use it in their current role, how comfortable they are customising it and how they use it to inform their thinking/planning/activity. Another question, is if they have an example of a situation in which insights from analytics has resulted in specific, measurable success?

Chris: I would ask:

- Have you got your Google Analytics Individual Qualification?
- How do you keep up to date with developments in digital analytics?
- What's a recent development that will improve how you're able to work?

- What analytics tools, apart from Google Analytics, do you have experience with?

Further Reading

If you have questions about how to apply any of the concepts discussed in this session to your Spektrix system, please get in touch with the Spektrix Support Team to discuss further. In the meantime, take a look at our support articles looking at how to integrate Google Tag Manager with Spektrix:

- [Using Google Analytics and Google Tag Manager with Spektrix - Part One.](#)
- [Using Google Analytics and Google Tag Manager with Spektrix - Part Two.](#)
- [Google Tag Manager Glossary.](#)