

Google Analytics Breakthrough

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From Zero to Business Impact

Feras Alhlou,
Shiraz Asif, and Eric Fettman

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In Memory of Shiraz Asif

When we embarked on *Google Analytics Breakthrough*, we could never have imagined that Shiraz would no longer be with us for the book's publication. He became ill with the flu and later pneumonia in February 2016, and after battling for several weeks in the ICU, he passed away on the morning of Friday, March 18th. Shiraz is survived by his parents, siblings, in-laws, loving wife and four young children.

Those who knew Shiraz personally and professionally understand that he was among the hardest-working colleagues, most generous mentors, and most thoughtful friends. He was always a catalyst for development and change, and his thirst for knowledge benefitted everyone around him.

Shiraz, we miss you and will always remember you. May your honorable character, kindheartedness, and open spirit inspire us all to embrace each day in gratitude for the gift of life.

Feras Alhlou, Eric Fettman, and the entire E-Nor family



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Foreword

It seems a little crazy that I'm about to recommend that you pay serious attention to data and the power of analytics by buying this book. Simply because what has been hyped more over the last decade than data? Nothing.

We had the promise of being able to collect all the data about everyone. Web servers were practically switched on with data spewing out. Then we went into the hype cycle of data warehouses and then analytics tools and then the Earth was hypnotized by the mesmerizing power of Big Data. Nothing was safe; everything was going to be cured!

And yet precious little has changed.

It is ironic that we live in the most data-rich environment in mankind's evolution, yet we are barely any smarter than we were when none of this existed 20 years ago.

So what's the problem? And why hype this book?

A part of it is a generational divide in how executives made decisions (experience first, data second—ideally optional). This is changing with time (sadly, the Earth moves, we all get old, we retire, move to a golden retirement home in Florida!).

A part of it was our initial approach of taking all the data we could get our hands on and then puking it like crazy (as if the shower of reports and metrics by themselves could make people smarter). Having failed at changing anything beyond local maxima, I feel that people are ready to stop all the data puking.

A part of it was a lack of a holistic understanding of what's possible, and the ability to create a winning strategy where the objective was not to nuclear bomb the world into changing overnight, but rather have a step-by-step approach customized to your amazing and unique business.

These last two reasons are why I'm so excited about Feras, Shiraz, and Eric's book. They take a soup-to-nuts approach to helping you understand the entire landscape of possibilities (from implementation to data collection to data processing to data analysis to deliver insights). They hold your hand and lead you step-by-baby-step in helping you understand each amazing element of a successful analytics strategy (covering tag management, audience segmentation, dashboards, and experimentation). In each chapter

there is a simple way to figure out exactly where you are today, and then create the next few steps required to go from good to great.

There is almost nothing that's missing from the book that you'll need to create an effective analytics and optimization strategy that drives online and offline business profit. The only ingredient that you'll have to bring, is a deeper understanding of your business strategy (be BFFs with your boss's boss's boss) and a hunger to get better every day.

Data awaits. Carpe diem!

Avinash Kaushik

Author: *Web Analytics 2.0*, *Web Analytics: An Hour a Day*

Digital Marketing Evangelist: Google

Acknowledgments

The journey of writing *Google Analytics Breakthrough* started long before we signed the agreement with the publisher. The idea had been brewing in our minds for years.

For more than 12 years in our analytics consulting work at E-Nor, we've had the good fortune of working with some incredibly smart people—marketers, analysts, and executives from some of the most recognized brands in the world. It's very fulfilling when, during our discussions, we see that spark in their eyes when they “get” analytics and have the “aha!” moment. To “get” analytics involves asking great, sometimes difficult questions and then challenging yourself to find the answers. We are sincerely grateful to our clients and training participants for encouraging, nudging, and requiring us (sometimes in that order!) to push the envelope—both for the Google Analytics product and for ourselves—to positively impact their organizations.

We also owe a debt of gratitude to industry veterans and “founders” who helped foster a family atmosphere and shape a cooperative and collaborative analytics community. We especially want to recognize Avinash Kaushik for evangelizing analytics to the non-converted, Jim Sterne for being the one and only analytics godfather, Eric Peterson for writing one of the very first books on demystifying analytics, and Brian Clifton, whose books provided much of the technical foundation that we still leverage many years later. We'd also like to recognize the high-cardinality list (data-geek joke) of acquaintances and friends within the industry for being giants whose shoulders we're able to stand on. You have and will continue to inspire us.

A special thank you to the Digital Analytics Association (DAA) community, volunteers, and dedicated staff for all of your countless hours dedicated toward advancing our industry. Of course, we also want to thank our competitors and “frenemies.” You all know who you are, and we still read your blogs and learn from you!

We wanted this book to include tips and advice from the trenches, so we sought out thought leaders and top practitioners to add more color and a diversity of perspective and experience to the book. Thank you to all the guest contributors for their invaluable input.

We also thank the team at our partner Google, namely the Google Analytics and Google Tag Manager teams. From the technical and marketing leadership to product managers,

to Analytics 360 partner managers, sales, and support, to every Googler who has contributed to making GA the amazing product it is today. Few products benefit companies on such a large scale and in such an irreplaceable way. Keep on innovating!

Special thanks go to the Wiley team: Sheck Cho, who helped us refine our vision for the book, Pete Gaughan and Connor O'Brien for their expert guidance and editorial insight, Michael Henton for easing so much detail into the cover design, and Vincent Nordhaus for getting us to the finish line.

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- **Pat** - Everything is super-sized in Texas, and so is your support and help.
- **Tina** - Too many things to include in one line. You are a rock.
- **Sri** - Content is king, but you'll rule it in 2016 and beyond.
- **John A.** - Our very own Ferrari. How's the beach, buddy? :)
- **Farid** - You can sing and dance, and you have nice hair. You are awesome—no joke.

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With gratitude,

Feras, Shiraz, and Eric

About the Author(s)

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Eric Fettman Drawing upon a wide range of development and marketing experience, Eric positions analytics within a real-world business and technical framework as Director of Training at E-Nor.

At googleanalyticstest.com, which Eric developed, participants have completed more than 100,000 tests. The site has been widely recognized as a leading resource for Google Analytics Individual Qualification (GAIQ) preparation and practical Google Analytics skills training.

Eric has earned certification as a Java Programmer, as well ISO 9000 quality management internal auditor qualification, which strengthened his commitment to customer focus and continuous business performance improvement. He holds a BA with High Honors from Harvard University.

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About the Contributors

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Dan Stone is the lead product manager for user-centric analysis and audience marketing at Google Analytics. Prior to joining Google, Dan's experience ranged from venture-funded consumer technology startups, where he led product and user acquisition, to working with top 100 companies in the telecommunications, media, and technology industries, leading advanced analytics, sentiment analysis, and marketing optimization. Dan holds a BS in management science from MIT.

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Holger Tempel is founder of the German company webalytics GmbH. He has acted as a consultant and trainer since 1991 in the business fields of IT and Web analytics. In 2005 he became one of the first 14 worldwide Google Partners and therefore is one of the leading knowledge carriers for Google Analytics and digital analytics in general. He is also the co-founder and member of the board of the Digital Analytics Association Germany e.V. and the person in charge of developing the certification track to becoming a future digital analyst. Due to data privacy issues in the European area he gained high-level expertise on how to make Google Analytics in European Countries data privacy compliant.