

Reporting Best Practices

As mentioned in the Benchmarking section, it can be very tempting to compare your own website and results to others, however, in our experience, ***the best approach is to focus on your own website's performance and growth.***

By regularly monitoring your own website's activity, making informed updates, and reviewing changes from:

- month-to-month,
- year-to-year, and
- year-on-year

you can see the impact your strategic updates are making, and the results they create.

Recommended reports to focus on

The **most relevant and important reports** will vary slightly from site to site, depending on your type of website, industry, audience, aims etc.

However, these are the reports that we find offer a valuable overview of your website's health and performance, and allow you to identify any significant changes or trends that then may warrant further investigation into other areas.

Audience > Overview

This report gives a great snapshot of key visitation and activity metrics on your website.

By comparing it from month-to-month, you can see the growth and improvement, and quickly identify any drops that may be of concern.

Please note: A slight variation either up or down per month is quite normal, however sustained decreases in visitation or engagement should be seen as of concern and investigated further.

Audience > Geo > Locations

Depending on your target audience, it is useful to monitor your traffic by Country, Region (state) or City.

If you have a very specific geographic audience, it may be more useful to create a dedicated Region or City segment, and concentrate on only visitation and activity of that segment.

Audience > Mobile > Overview

Internet browsing habits are fast changing, and it is valuable to understand what devices visitors are using to access your website, especially if it is not mobile responsive.

It is also very useful to view reports using the Desktop and Mobile segments to understand if these visitors are using your website differently.

Acquisition > All Traffic > Channels

This report provides a simple overview of the different channels visitors are using to access your site.

Monitor not only the percentage of visitors using each, but how engaged each of the different audience types are. If your Social Media visitors are fewer, but more engaged, it may be worthwhile to invest time in attracting more of them.

If Goals are enabled, also monitor how many of your Goal Conversions are occurring per channel.

Acquisition > All Traffic > Referrals

Which sites are referring the most traffic to your website? (especially if your proportion of Referral visitors is large). Weed out the spam referrals and focus on the genuine ones. Is it worthwhile investing time in more quality backlinks to encourage more referrals? This is incredibly valuable for SEO...

Acquisition > All Traffic > Source/Medium

Specifically in the Source/Medium report, we like to focus on how much traffic each of the different search engines are driving to the site.

The Organic Search dimension groups all visitors from Google, Yahoo, Bing etc together. While Google is likely to be the dominant one, there are a small portion of Internet users who use other search engines. You don't need to spend a long time on this, but ensuring your website is indexed by Yahoo and Bing, and seeing how much traffic is coming from these search engines should be a consideration of your SEO strategy.

Acquisition > Social > Network Referrals

If you invest time in social media, it is valuable to understand how much traffic different social media channels are driving to your website. This may also help understand which social media network audiences are most engaged with your content and brand.

If you aren't active on social media, this report can provide useful insights into which naturally occurring social networks may provide the best opportunities for you.

Behaviour > All Pages

A review of this report will provide understanding of what pages your visitors are viewing most.

Are they what you expect? Are there any surprises? Is there a high performing news article or blog post that provides insights into what type of content your audience enjoys most? If so, create more of this type of content. Is a page achieving high page views, but also high bounce or exit rate? Is there an opportunity to update the content on the page to help keep these visitors on your site longer through links to more content, or restructuring the page?

It is also worthwhile to glance regularly at:

- Behaviour > Landing Pages
- Behaviour > Exit Pages

to keep an eye on how visitors are entering and leaving your website.

Conversions > Goals

If Goals are set up within the website, these will appear within your other reports, however valuable information is provided in this section.

Reports to focus on include:

- Goals > Overview: What days are your goal occurring on? Any patterns here? Or relationships with any other marketing activities? (keep track of them as Annotations).
- Goals > Overview > Source/Medium: If you aren't monitoring this in Channels, know which traffic sources and mediums are contributing to your goal conversions
- Goals > Reverse Goal Paths: What pages are visitors viewing before completing your goals? Are there any interesting patterns? Can you improve this experience further?
- Multi-Channel Funnels > Time Lag and Path Length: How long does it take for a visitor to complete your goal? How many interactions do they make? Are there any patterns here, or information that can assist with your marketing efforts and expectations?
- Attribution > Model Comparison Tool: (*I like to set this to First Interaction vs Last Interaction model*) Is there a difference between how visitors first accessed your website, and then returned (if relevant) to complete your Goal? What can be learnt or improved from this?

Reporting template and best practices

Google Analytics provides an incredible wealth of data, but often there is too much which distracts us, and it only enables us to focus on one period, or one period compared to another.

By pulling out the relevant data into a separate file at a regular basis (e.g. monthly) we have a better understanding of trends, and can use this to monitor a greater period, using any stand out changes to delve deeper as required.

Our recommended approach to website analytics is:

1. Identify the dimensions and metrics that are most relevant to your website.
2. Define a regular reporting period to review these metrics (we recommend at least monthly, however quarterly may suit your needs better).
3. Review your Google Analytics reports, typing the period's metrics for your key dimensions into a separate report, such as our Excel spreadsheet.
4. Compare the month-on-month change, and if possible, compare the year-on-year change.
5. Look for any significant changes that highlight an interesting trend.
6. Delve deeper into more specific reports if required.

e.g. we had a large increase in the quantity of referral traffic from New South Wales. Let's isolate this segment and identify where it came from, what page it landed on etc. Is this an isolated incident? Or something we can learn from or improve on?

7. Use results and change trends to identify any strategic website changes.

e.g. this particular old blog post continues to attract a lot of traffic, but it also has a high bounce rate. Firstly, can we add any additional calls to action on the page, or links to other similar blog posts that may entice these visitors to stay longer on our website? (monitor results in the coming months). Can we create any more similarly themed blog posts that may also attract more visitors to our website?

8. Continue to review and report at regular intervals, adapting the focus reports depending on your needs, or what you learn is of value to other parties within your organization.