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# **Using Goals in Google Analytics to Create Actionable Insights for Your Website**

Written for Webmasters and Marketing Managers

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If you have not already created a Google Analytics account, you can sign up for a free account here: <http://www.google.com/analytics>. Once you have created an account, follow the directions and place the JavaScript tracking code on all of the pages on your website that you want to track.

## **Introduction:**

An enterprise-level analytics program like Google Analytics is an essential element in a well-crafted online marketing strategy; however, studies have shown that over 70% of businesses that install Google Analytics fail to get beyond using basic features and standard metrics like unique visitors, search engine keywords, website referrals and bounce rates.

To truly unlock the huge power of Google Analytics' tracking and reporting capabilities, you will need to set up Goals that can accurately measure the performance of your website. Analytics software provides pages and pages of extensive data, but to interpret this data in constructive ways you will need to establish an analytics strategy and define which business objectives you wish to accomplish online: Do you want to generate new leads, increase brand visibility or make Ecommerce sales directly on your website? All of the above can be tracked using Goals.

To give an example, if your website sells products online, you will want to be able to track which referral websites, search keywords and internal content pages are most effective at delivering paying customers. If you don't sell directly on your website, you will want to understand how sales leads are generated. Or, if your website's purpose is simply to increase brand awareness and facilitate interaction with your visitors, you will want to measure level of interaction with your visitors.

## **In this paper you will learn:**

- How to filter out internal traffic from your company so that you have accurate data for your analysis.
- How to define an effective Google Analytics strategy to focus your online marketing efforts.
- How to set measurable Goals that will track how your visitors navigate your site and how successfully your website is achieving your business objectives.

## **Analytics Strategy: Defining Your Goals**

To be successful with Google Analytics, you need to narrow your focus and clearly define what you are trying to achieve with your website. Many businesses make large investments towards the construction of their websites and consider the project to be complete, but in reality the construction of a site is only the beginning. Once you have a well-designed website online, you need to develop a strategy that defines how you are going to track its success.

The type of Web Analytics strategy and the kinds of Goals that you define in Google Analytics will depend on how your site is structured. Regardless of whether it is an ecommerce site, a lead-generating site or simply a publishing platform that promotes your company's brand, Goals allow you to target specific objectives that will help you to maximize the return from your online marketing efforts.



In this paper, I will show you how you can customize your Google Analytics account to gain actionable insights from your Analytics data. As you will see, setting Goals in Google Analytics allows you to interpret your visitor's data based on which visitors you can successfully convert. Through the lens established by your conversion Goals, you can see which websites, social media platforms and search engine keywords are referring you traffic that is directly impacting your company's sales and profitability.

We will cover three broad Goal frameworks for accurately tracking, measuring and reporting on the success of your website. Each represents a different kind of website and a different set of business objectives:

**Brand Awareness and Engagement:** These websites are based on building awareness about your company's brand, products and services. This type of website generally doesn't sell directly online, so success is measured in the effectiveness of visitor engagement. Goals to track the success of this kind of website can include: comments on your blog, user account signups, sharing of your content on social media sites, or newsletter signups.

**Lead Generating Website:** These websites are based on persuading visitors to contact you for further information about products and services. Goals to track for this kind of website include: contact form completion, newsletter signups, or requests for a quote or estimate.

**Ecommerce Sales Website:** These websites are based on selling products or services online. For this kind of website you want to be able to track your ROI (Return on Investment) from each of your online marketing initiatives. You also want to constantly improve your sales process in order to increase your online store's profitability. Goals to track for this kind of site include: transactions completed, file downloads, newsletter signups and account signups.

## Filter Your Internal Traffic to Ensure Accurate Results

Before you set up Goals on your website, an important initial step is to create a filter in Google Analytics so that internal traffic originating within your company is not tracked in your Analytics account. To ensure that your Analytics data is accurate as possible, we recommend that you begin by filtering your traffic to exclude the range of IP addresses that are used by your company. We also recommend that you create a second, unfiltered profile in Google Analytics, so that you have one profile containing your raw Analytics data and another for the data that is filtered to exclude internal traffic.

**To set up the 'Internal Traffic' filter:**

1. Login in to your Google Analytics account.
2. Click on "Analytics Settings" in the top left corner of your account.
3. From the "Analytic Settings" page, click on the "Filter Manager" link in the bottom right-hand corner.
4. In the "Filter Manager" choose the "+ Add Filter" link.
5. For the "Filter Name" use something like "Exclude IP Address".
6. For the "Filter Type" choose "Exclude all traffic from an IP Address".

At the very least, you should be excluding the IP of the webmaster and the employees who do the editing on your pages. You can easily do this by excluding the IP address range of your company's network. If you don't know your IP address, use What Is My Ip? Once you have your IP address handy, Google has created an excellent tool to exclude traffic from a range of IP addresses.



- Next you will need to copy the IP address range into the IP address field.

**Create New Filter**

**Enter Filter Information**

Filter Name:

Filter Type:

IP address  (e.g. 631.2121.1711.1)  
What kind of special characters can I use?

- Click the "save" button and you now have a filter enabled that will filter out your internal traffic.

## Creating Conversion Goals and Funnels

Once you have successfully set up your Google Analytics account and placed the tracking code on all the pages of your website, the next step is to configure the Goals and Sales Funnels for your account. This is the most important part of a Google Analytics setup. By defining a set of conversion Goals and Funnels you can easily monitor the success of any online marketing strategy.

### What Is a Conversion Goal?

A Conversion Goal is usually defined as a page that a visitor reaches when they have completed a specified action such as signing up for e-mail newsletter or making a purchase.

### What is a Funnel?

A Funnel is a way to monitor the sequence of pages and actions that a visitor takes to complete a specified action. For example, you can create a Sales Funnel that tracks visitors from the moment they arrive at your site and follows what they do and where they go until they make a purchase.

By defining these steps, Google Analytics creates a Funnel visualization report that provides you valuable data to improve the volume of your online sales. Funnel visualization also allows you to closely monitor where in the Funnel process you are confusing or losing the attention of your visitors.

## Step 1 - Setting up the Goal Information

To set up Goals tracking:

- Login in to your Google Analytics account.
- From the Reports Dashboard of your Analytics account, choose "Goals" from the Dashboard menu on the top left of the page.
- After reading the Goals Overview, click on the "Set up Goal and Funnels" link at the bottom.



4. From the next Profile Settings page you can create up to 20 conversion Goals for your website. You can organize your Goals into 4 sets with up to 5 Goals available in each set.
5. To get started on your first Goal, click on the "Add Goal" link under Goal (set 1).

Some examples of Goals you can create are:

- Newsletter Signups
- User Account Signups
- About Us Page Views
- Comments on Your Blog
- A Completed Transaction
- A File Download
- Leads Form Completed

1. **Goal Name:** Determines what will appear in your conversion reports, so choose a relevant name like "Newsletter Signup" above.
2. **Active Goal:** Set to "On".
3. **Goal Position:** Useful if you are creating multiple Goals in the same set.
4. **Goal Type:** The most common Goal type is "URL Destination", which measures when visitors visit a specified page on your website. If you want to improve the "stickiness" factor of your content and measure the improvement of your efforts to improve your website's content, "Time on Site" and "Pages/Visit" Goals can also be useful.
5. **Match Type:** It is recommended that you use the "Regular Expression Match". The Head Match and Exact Match are converted to regular expressions in Google Analytics' back end, so the "Regular Expression Match" provides you with the most information.
6. **Goal URL:** The URL for the conversion page.
7. **Case Sensitive:** Set to "off" by default and should only be enabled if you have two pages on your site with the same name and different cases (lowercase and uppercase) something which is very rare.
8. **Goal Value:** This metric is important because it allows you to do ROI calculations on your Goal Reports page. If you know or can estimate the value of a Goal, you should add a dollar value here. For example, if a lead is estimated to be worth \$5 and someone fills out your "Contact Us" form, then you should set the Goal Value as 5.0. If you are unsure of the value of a Goal, set this to 1.0.

**Enter Goal Information**

Goal Name:   
Goal name will appear in conversion reports.

Active Goal:  On  Off

Goal Position:

**Please select a goal type**

Goal Type:  URL Destination  
 Time on Site  
 Pages/Visit

---

**Goal Details**

Match Type:  (?)

Goal URL:  (?) (e.g. For the goal page "http://www.mysite.com/thankyou.html" enter "thankyou.html")  
 To help you verify that your goal URL is set up correctly, please see the tips [here](#).

Case Sensitive:  URLs entered above must exactly match the capitalization of visited URLs.

Goal Value:  optional



## Step 2 - Defining the Goal Funnel

Once you have filled out the "Goal Information", you can create a Goal Funnel by clicking the "+ Yes, create a Funnel for this Goal" link at the bottom of the Goal page. At this point, you can create up to 10 steps toward achieving the Goal, or as few as a one steps. For many simple Goals like newsletter signups or leads generation form completed, a Goal Funnel is optional.

Funnels are most important for e-commerce sites that want to track the process that customers go through when making a purchase. It is possible to track the entire purchase from the initial product information page, through the process of adding items to the shopping cart, creating an account, placing the order and finally reaching the Completed Order Goal page.

If you have a well-defined path for your visitors to follow prior to completing the Goal, a Sales Funnel like the one to the right can be very effective in giving you insights into the Goal achievement process.



## Tutorial: How to Setup Specific Goals:

### Part I: Goals for Brand Awareness and Engagement:

To effectively measure the level of interaction on your website, here are some ideas for Goals that you may want to measure. Once you have these Goals set, you will be able to see where your most engaged traffic is coming from and how many visits it takes your visitors to complete desired actions such as the following:

- Blog Comments
- RSS Feed Subscriptions
- Social Media Bookmarking
- Newsletter Signups
- New Account Signups

### Goal #1: How to Track Blog Comments

If you have a blog and you want to track the success of your engagement with visitors, tracking comments on your blog posts is a great place to start. To do this you need to set up what is called a Virtual Pageview to track the times when the user clicks the "Submit Comment" button. If you are using Wordpress, you need to edit your comments.php file.



1. Log into your Wordpress Admin backend.
2. From the Wordpress Dashboard click on "Appearance" on the left sidebar menu.
3. Under the "Appearance" menu click on the "Editor" link.
4. On the right side of the Theme Editor you will see a listing of the Theme Files. Click on the comments.php link.
5. In the comments.php link, do a search for the following code snippet:  

```
<p><input name="submit" type="submit" id="submit" tabindex="5" value="Submit Comment" />
<input type="hidden" name="comment_post_ID" value="550" /></p>
```
6. Once you have located this code, add the following code snippet just below:  

```
onclick="javascript: pageTracker._trackPageview('/Goal/comments.html');"
```

This snippet of Javascript code creates a "Virtual Pageview" in Google Analytics that will track the event of the click on the "Submit Comment" button. After you have inserted this code, you will need to add the Goal in your Google Analytics account.

7. To add the Goal, you need to access the "Analytics Settings" page and click "Edit" so that you can change your profile.
8. From the "Profile Settings" page, you will see Goals listed in the box below "Main Website Profile Information". Click "+ Add Goal" and enter the Goal Information seen in the screenshot below:

**Enter Goal Information**

Goal Name:   
Goal name will appear in conversion reports.

Active Goal:  On  Off

Goal Position:

**Please select a goal type**

Goal Type:  URL Destination  
 Time on Site  
 Pages/Visit

**Goal Details**

Match Type:

Goal URL:  (e.g. For the goal page "http://www.mysite.com/thankyou.html" enter "/thankyou.html")  
 To help you verify that your goal URL is set up correctly, please see the tip [here](#).

Case Sensitive:  URLs entered above must exactly match the capitalization of visited URLs.

Goal Value:  optional

## Goal #2: How to Track RSS Feed Subscription

Using the virtual pageview code again, you will need to create a Goal that tracks when someone signs up for your RSS feed. You can do this by adding a virtual pageview to the Subscribe button of your RSS feed.

1. To do this, add the following code to the javascript snippet to the RSS feed subscribe button or link:  

```
onclick="javascript: pageTracker._trackPageview('/goal/rss-feed.html');"
```



2. Once the code is added, you can enter this Goal Information in Google Analytics:

Match Type: Head Match

Goal URL: /goals/rss-feed/ (this is the virtual pageview you are setting for the Goal).

Goal Name: RSS Feed Subscription

### Goal #3: Tracking Social Media Bookmarking

If you want to track when visitors share your content on social media sites like Digg, Reddit, Facebook and Twitter, you need to track the clicks on the outbound links.

1. To accomplish this, you will need tag the outgoing link with the following code (replacing "digg" with the social media site that you are linking to):  
onClick="javascript: pageTracker.\_trackPageview('/outgoing/digg)
2. In the Goal Information in the Google Analytics, you need to once again track a virtual pageview:  
Match Type: Regular Expression  
Goal URL: /outgoing/.\*/ (this is the virtual pageview you are setting for the Goal)  
Goal Name: Social Media Bookmarking

### Goal #4: Track Newsletter Signups

Newsletters are an easy tool that allows businesses to communicate with their online audience. Since most newsletters involve going to a third-party site to sign up, you need to track your newsletter subscriptions with a virtual pageview. For example, we use a snippet of code from AWEBER for our newsletter, so I have added the following code displayed in italics:

```
<script type="text/javascript" src="http://forms.aweber.com/form/30/800727330.js"></script> <onsubmit="javascript: pageTracker._trackPageview('/Goal/newsletter.html');">
```

**Enter Goal Information**

Goal Name:   
Goal name will appear in conversion reports.

Active Goal:  On  Off

Goal Position:

**Please select a goal type**

Goal Type:  URL Destination  
 Time on Site  
 Pages/Visit

**Goal Details**

Match Type:

Goal URL:   
(e.g. For the goal page "http://www.mysite.com/thankyou.html" enter "thankyou.html")  
To help you verify that your goal URL is set up correctly, please see the tips [here](#).

Case Sensitive:  URLs entered above must exactly match the capitalization of visited URLs.

Goal Value:  optional



## Goal #5: Track New Account Signups

The easiest way to track new account signups is to track the "Thank You" page that is displayed when users answer the new account confirmation e-mail.

1. To do this, you need to identify the URL of the page on your website that is displayed when they confirm their e-mail address.
2. Next, you need to enter the following Goal Information in Google Analytics:  
 Match Type: Regular Expression  
 Goal URL: /accounts/thank-you.html (insert the URL of the new account thank you page)  
 Goal Name: New Account Signup

## Part II: Tracking Goals for a Lead Generating Website:

### Goal #6: Track Completed E-Mail Contact Forms

In addition to the 5 Goals already listed, you will want to have some more specific Goals set up for a lead generating website. This next Goal can track any kind of contact forms such as a request for call-back, request for product information or a request for a sales quote.

An e-mail contact form is generally very easy to track since you can simply use the "Thank You" page provided as the destination URL.

To do this, you need to track the page that is served when the contact form has been submitted. In this example, we have used the "Thank You" page that visitors receive after they have submitted their contact information.

Enter Goal Information

Goal Name:   
Goal name will appear in conversion reports.

Active Goal:  On  Off

Goal Position:

**Please select a goal type**

Goal Type:  URL Destination  
 Time on Site  
 Pages/Visit

---

**Goal Details**

Match Type ?:

Goal URL ?:  (e.g. For the goal page "http://www.mysite.com/thankyou.html" enter "/thankyou.html")  
To help you verify that your goal URL is set up correctly, please see the tips [here](#).

Case Sensitive:  URLs entered above must exactly match the capitalization of visited URLs.

Goal Value  optional



## Goal #7: Track PDF, White Paper or File Downloads

Unless you have a "Thank You" page that is displayed after a file is downloaded, you will need to create a virtual pageview to track this kind of action. If you do have a "Thank You" page, you can set up this Goal in a similar way to the previous example with the e-mail contact form.

1. To track the download of the file or PDF, add the following snippet of JavaScript to the file download button:  
onclick="javascript: pageTracker.\_trackPageview('/Goal/downloads.html');"
2. With that code added you can now enter the Goal Information in Google Analytics, in similar form to the visual example below:

**Enter Goal Information**

Goal Name:   
Goal name will appear in conversion reports.

Active Goal:  On  Off

Goal Position:  ▼

**Please select a goal type**

Goal Type:  URL Destination  
 Time on Site  
 Pages/Visit

---

**Goal Details**

Match Type (?):  ▼

Goal URL (?):  (e.g. For the goal page "http://www.mysite.com/thankyou.html" enter "/thankyou.html")  
 To help you verify that your goal URL is set up correctly, please see the tips [here](#) .

Case Sensitive:  URLs entered above must exactly match the capitalization of visited URLs.

Goal Value  optional

Instead of tracking all downloads as one Goal, you can also track individual file downloads. For instruction on how to do this, visit the Google Analytics Help Center: <http://www.google.com/support/analytics/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=55529>



## Part III: Tracking Goals for an E-commerce Sales Website:

### Goal #8: Track Sales Conversions

For an E-commerce site, it is vital to track which visitors are purchasing your products and how they are arriving at the checkout. E-commerce tracking in Google Analytics is a very powerful tool for understanding visitor behaviour on your website. For this Goal, we will also show you how to set up a Sales Conversion Funnel so that you can properly measure and analyze how purchases are made on your website.

### Activating E-commerce Tracking

To active E-commerce tracking, you need to edit your "Profile Information" page and enable the "E-commerce Website" features:

#### Edit Profile Information

Profile Name:

Website URL:  (e.g. http://www.mysite.com/)

Default page <sup>(?)</sup>:  (e.g. index.html)

Time zone country or territory:

Time zone: (GMT-08:00) Pacific Time - Vancouver

Exclude URL Query Parameters:  (e.g. sid, sessionId, vid, etc...)

Currency displayed as:

**E-Commerce Website**


**Yes, an E-Commerce Site**

**Not an E-Commerce Site**

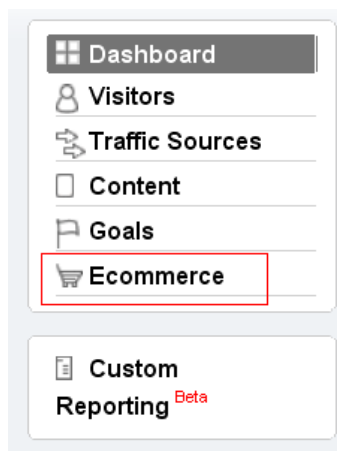
**Site Search**

Do Track Site Search

Don't Track Site Search

 [Add a Google site search engine to your website](#)  
Create a search engine for your website with Google Custom Search or a Google Mini.

Once you have enabled E-commerce tracking, the E-commerce menu will appear on your Google Analytics Dashboard.



Now, to track your E-commerce transactions, you need to add the Google Analytics tracking code to the receipt page that customers load after they make a purchase. It is very important that you add this tracking code after the main Google Analytics tracking code so that it loads in sequence. The code that you need to add will look like this:

```
<script type="text/javascript">
```

```
pageTracker._addTrans("order-id", // required"affiliate or store name",
"total","tax","shipping", "city", "state","country"); pageTracker._addItem("order-
id", // required "SKU", "product name", "product category", "unit price", //
required"quantity" //required); pageTracker._trackTrans();
```

```
</script>
```



There are three parts of your Ecommerce tracking code.

The first section, “\_addTrans()”, creates the transaction and stores information related to the transaction.

The second section, “\_addItem()”, is used to add items to the transaction. You need to create an \_addItem() for each different item in the transaction. The “order-id” in the \_addItem() function should match the one in \_addTrans().

The third section is the “\_trackTrans()” function, which sends the data to Google Analytics.

This can get very technical, so we recommend you visit Google’s Help Center for more detailed instructions: <http://www.google.com/support/googleanalytics/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=55528>

## **E-commerce Reports:**

The true value of E-commerce tracking lies in the reports that it generates. In Google Analytics’ E-commerce tracking, you can measure the individual performance of each of your products, see your conversion rate (the % of visitors you are able to persuade to buy from you) and even track the visits or days that passed before a visitor came back to make a purchase.

All of this valuable data can help you to improve your sales process and dramatically improve the ROI generated from your website. When your online business objectives are measured, it is easy to constantly improve the performance of your website.

We provide Online Marketing, Social Media Marketing and Analytics consulting services to businesses of all sizes. Operating since 1994, we have provided Internet connectivity and marketing consultation to thousands of businesses across Western Canada.

For a more in-depth analysis of what Google Analytics can do to increase your business’s online profitability, contact one of our Google Analytics Certified Experts. Please visit our website at [www.marketingsmartt.com](http://www.marketingsmartt.com) to learn more about our Analytics services.