

Google Suite's Top Features for Maximizing Analytics

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Google Analytics is an indispensable tool for any business to better serve its customers, achieve business goals, and build successful marketing campaigns. Since [Google Analytics](#) launching in 2005, it has undergone many updates with added features. By integrating additional elements of the Google suite, one can optimize the data collected via Google Analytics. Organizations that are not taking advantage of these features are missing out on the full power of Google Analytics and forsaking valuable information that can help to better understand its customers.

Google Analytics is specifically useful in the arts to track customer's interactions with online collections, ticket sales, event registrations, or donation pathways. Yet, in 2015 Capacity International stated that over "90% of arts organizations indicated on a recent survey that they are not using Google Analytics to its potential." This is likely due to limited time and resources in the sector. In organizations with limited resources, however, investing in efficient data collection through Google Analytics is even more important so that the crucial decision-making can be better informed with less room for error.

Organizations with limited resources can improve their data collection methods by integrating other components from the Google Suite to better utilize their [Google Analytics capabilities](#). Below is a list of seven useful tools to integrate with a Google Analytics account. Each feature includes a description of why it is beneficial and how to go about integrating it into a Google Analytics account.

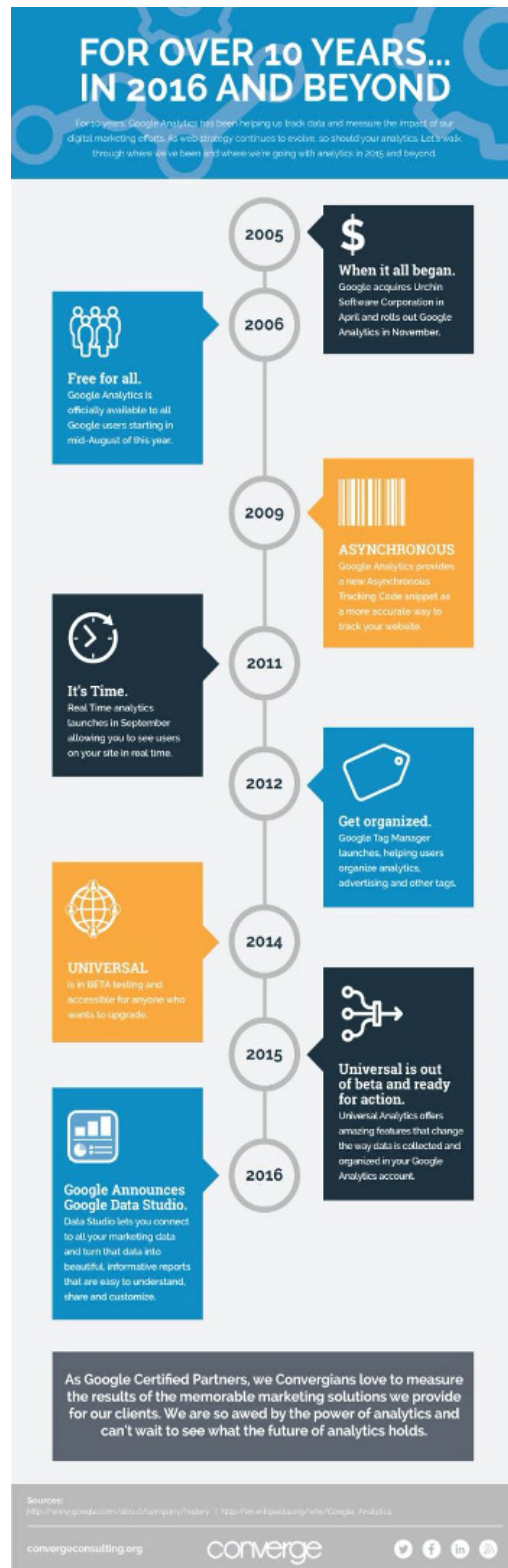


Figure 1: The history of Google Analytics ²

¹Yosaif Cohain, "Google Analytics: Powerful or Useless? That Depends on You," Capacity International, February 19, 2015, <https://ideas.capacityinteractive.com/google-analytics-powerful>.

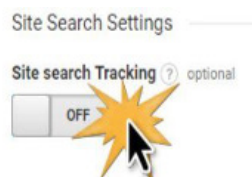
²Ryan Lindsay, "The History of Google Analytics," RNL + Converge, September 21, 2016, <https://convergeconsulting.org/2016/09/21/infographic-the-history-of-google-analytics/>.

Enable Google Site Search

If an organization's website has a site search on it, learning what keywords are being searched on the website can be very informative. This can help identify what topics customers are most interested in, what customers are having a difficult time navigating to without the use of a search, or what content may be missing.

Enabling site search is quick and easy to setup. Simply go to Admin -> View -> View Settings. At the bottom of the page turn ON the Site search Tracking button and set parameter. This is what will signal to Google Analytics that it is a site search and should be tracked here. To determine what parameter to enter, go to the website and do a search for something. From the url generated from the search, look for the character immediately before =searchterm. Enter that single letter or character as the query parameter.³

For arts institutions, this can help website managers and marketers determine what is of interest to visitors or where barriers exist. Enabling Google Site Search can help understand user design and whether the site contains the necessary information. For example, if there are numerous searches for a specific exhibit, artist, or performance, it may be useful to feature it on the homepage of the website, making it more easily accessible. There could be searches for terms like 'student tickets,' or 'accessibility,' signaling that these terms need to be more prominently labeled on the website.



After turning on site search tracking, you'll see a field to enter a Query parameter.

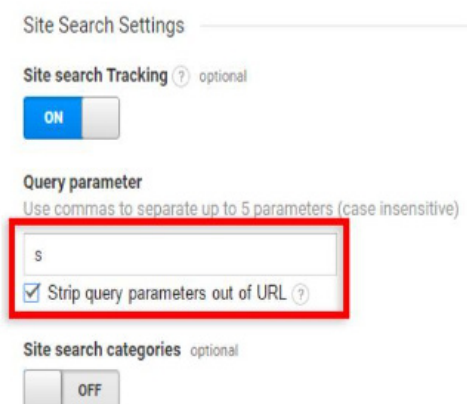


Figure 2: : How to enable Google Site Search on a website.⁵

⁴Krista Seiden, "Three Actionable Analytics Tips to Implement Today," Digital Debrief, October 13, 2014, http://www.bloggerchi.ca.com/three-actionable-analytics-tips-to-implement-today/?utm_campaign=e-nor-book&utm_medium=print&utm_source=e-nor&utm_content=site-search.

⁵"How to Set Up Site Search Tracking," Monster Insights, Updated March 10, 2017, <https://www.monsterinsights.com/docs/how-to-set-up-site-search-tracking/>.

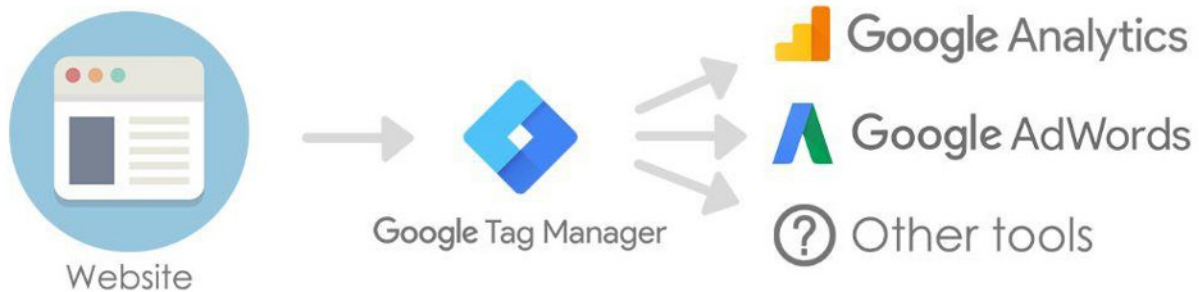


Figure 4. How Google Tag Manager works with with your website ¹

GOOGLE TAG MANAGER

Google Tag Manager is a tool that uses tags—or types of code—on a website to track interactions such as events (like when a video is played or a pdf is downloaded), Adword conversions, or remarketing tags.⁶ When an interaction occurs on the page, such as a page view, the code is sent to Google analytics via a snippet of JavaScript.⁷ If a marketer wants to track something more specific on a certain page, like purchasing a ticket, then they must create a custom tag that will signal to Google Analytics that the action has been completed. In the past, these would have to be hard coded into Google Analytics on each individual page where an interaction is being tracked. Google Tag Manager is a tool that allows one to create these custom tags more easily and store them in one place. It eliminates the need to use a web developer and allows for immediate tracking of desired information. Google Tag Manager is not to be confused as an alternative to using Google Analytics. Rather, it is a way of easily creating tags via containers that will collect information and is sent to Google Analytics.

Enabling Google Tag Manager and creating a new tag is slightly time intensive, but once

⁶Julius Fedorovicius, “11 Reasons Why You Should Use Google Tag Manager,” Analytics Mania, March 2, 2018, <https://www.analyticsmania.com/post/reasons-why-you-should-use-google-tag-manager/>.

⁷Julius Fedorovicius, “Google Tag Manager vs Google Analytics: What’s the difference?” Analytics Mania, August 2, 2018, <https://www.analyticsmania.com/post/google-tag-manager-vs-google-analytics/>.

it is created adding future tags are quite simple.

The first step is to create a GTM account. You must then link the Analytics account to the GTM account. This is done in 2 steps:

1. Adding the Google Analytics ID into the container of GTM.
2. Adding the GTM code to the body and footer to each Google Analytics page you are planning to track.

It is important to note that although GTM eliminates the need to create specific tags in GA, it is not a replacement for GA. The tracking information resulting from the tags created in GTM, are then tracked directly in Google Analytics.

Creating a tag is quite intuitive once the accounts have been linked. There are many tag types to choose from, while also giving the user the ability to create custom tags. When setting up the tag you must chose a track type (an event, timing, social are a few options) and chose a trigger that signals when you want the tag recorded. This could be every time a video is played, a file is downloaded, or page is visited. After creating the tag GTM allows you to test the tag to make sure it is functioning properly. The final step is to publish the tag.

Implementing GTM can be very beneficial to arts institutions. If you are selling tickets, this can be used to track specific actions like purchasing tickets or clicking other buttons on the purchasing pathway. If you are putting videos on your website, you can track how many times the videos have been played. This can be useful for gauging whether adding multimedia content affects engagement or ticket purchases.

GOOGLE SEARCH CONSOLE

Google Search Console is a free tool that provides insight into how Google is viewing the site. It allows one to view top search terms, find the highest-ranking pages, and see what the top performing pages are on a website based on Google searches. From on this information, features of a page can be adjusted to optimize its ranking on Google.

To use Google Search Console, sign up for a free account and verify ownership of the account. It will then be linked to Google Analytics under Reports -> Acquisition -> Search Console.

Here, information such as top landing pages with various metrics can be found.

Google Search Console itself is another platform that must be tracked along with Google Analytics. It contains a performance overview that includes total impressions, total clicks, an average CTR, and a term's average position in Google search results. This is especially important for managing marketing campaigns or using Google Ads.

Google Search Console can be especially useful to arts institutions that processes ticket sales online. A marketing campaign can become more effective because it helps determine what search terms are leading to the website and where the search result is appearing in Google searches. This feature could be particularly helpful when planning for an event to see how customers are navigating to a website to buy tickets. Furthermore, this could help a marketing team to better understand terms to boost in a Google ad campaign. If certain terms are leading to greater CTR than expected, then it may be beneficial to boost those terms.

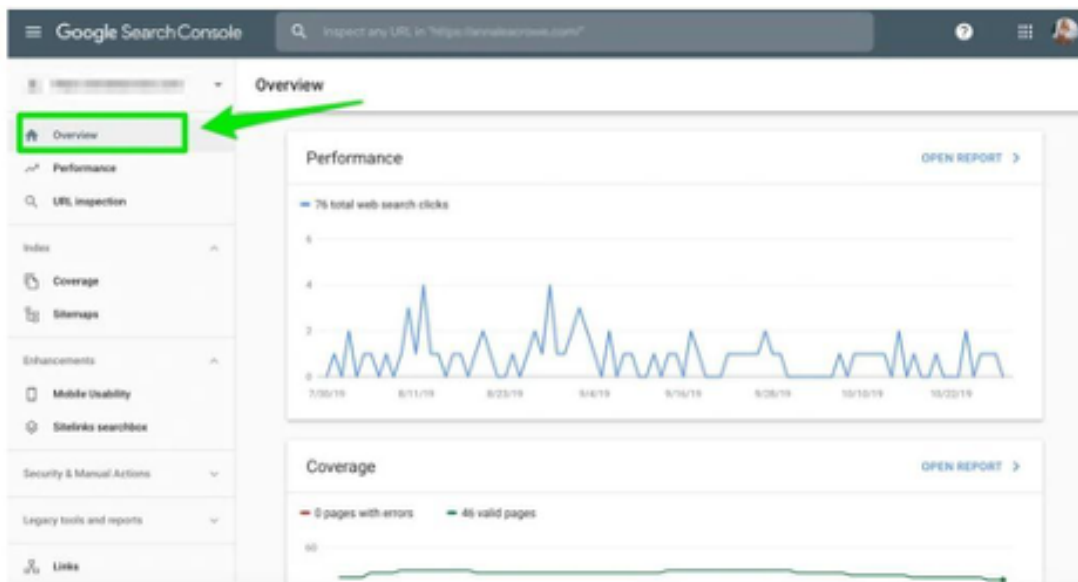


Figure 5. The Google Search Console platform homepage⁸

⁸ Anna Crowe, "A Complete Guide to the Google Search Console," Search Engine Journal, September 13, 2018, <https://www.searchenginejournal.com/google-search-console-guide/209318/#close>.

GOAL SETTING

When collecting data, it is always important to define the purpose in which it's being collected. Google Analytics is a useful tool, but without proper goals one cannot maximize the information that is being provided from it. Google Analytics allows the user to set unique goals directly in the platform itself. This can help to immediately track and evaluate how well the website is meeting its goals at any time. Example goals to track can be the amount of time on the site, number of times a page is visited, number of times a video is watched, or a specific transaction occurs. There are four ways goals can be tracked: URLs, time, page/visits, and events.

To set up a goal in analytics, go to the admin section of the Google Analytics account and click goals. Add a goal and give it a distinct name. Most organizations will set numerous goals, so it's important they are clearly labeled especially if multiple people will have access to the account.

GOOGLE ADS

A Google Ads campaign can be created without linking the information to Google Analytics. Google Ads, however, only shows HOW customers get to your site when seeing an ad, not what they do on the site after. Google analytics goes a step further and shows what customers do on a website once they get there via Google Ads. A Google Ad campaign could appear successful, but in reality the traffic arriving to a site via ads may have a high bounce rate.

By Integrating Google Ads with Google Analytics, a marketer can determine if an ad campaign is truly successful.

It takes just one extra step to connect the two interfaces together. To link Google Ads with Google Analytics, sign into the Google Ads account and click on the tools icon. Under the setup heading click on 'linked accounts.'

GOOGLE DATA STUDIO

Google Data Studio is a dashboard reporting tool for building customized reports directly from the data in Google Analytics. [Graphs and visualizations](#) can be easily created using custom metrics and dimensions and selected time periods. One of the benefits of using Google Data Studio is the ease in which reports can be shared with a team. There are settings that enable certain members to view only or permission to edit. Although charts and graphs can be displayed directly through Google Analytics dashboards, it limits results to 12 widgets and will only connect to data in particular dashboards. Google Data Studio can allow more than 12 widgets, an unlimited number of pages per report, and can connect to multiple Google Analytics accounts.⁹ It has a built-in live data connection so there is no need to schedule updates for reports.

Google Data Studio does not have the capabilities of other Business Intelligence tools like Tableau, however. Its ease of use and smooth integration with Google Analytics still make it a useful tool to consider, depending on an organization's reporting needs

⁹ "Google Data Studio: What It Is, What's Working & What's Missing," Seer, June 12, 2017, <https://www.seerinteractive.com/blog/google-data-studio-whats-working-whats-missing/>.

GOOGLE OPTIMIZE

Google Optimize, released in early 2017, is a testing tool that allows “you to experiment with different ways of delivering your content” on a website. It integrates directly with Google Analytics to gather data on different versions of a website. There are three types of testing that the user can do: A/B testing, multivariate testing, and redirect testing. A/B tests are random experiments that test an original page (A) against another page with at least one variation. These variations could include a different shaped button, different colors or images, or placement of features on a page. Redirect Tests is like an A/B test, but it allows pages to be tested against one another. In redirect tests, page versions are identified by their individual URL rather than by specific elements, which can be useful for testing landing pages. Multivariate Tests experiment with multiple elements at the same time to determine which combination of elements is most successful.

These tests can help improve the UX and optimize conversion rates.

There are two main features to Google Optimize, which include an Editor and Reporting Suite. The Editor is where different versions of a website are made, while the Reporting suite uses data from a linked Google Analytics account to assist in setting up new experiments in the Editor.

Google Optimize is a free tool, unless used in enterprise version through Google Optimize 360. The free version allows an account to run up to 5 experiments at a time. It is quite simple to use and its optimize visual editor allows changes to be made to the website through its simple drag and drop feature.

According to a Google survey, “45% of small and medium businesses don’t optimize their websites through A/B testing. The two most common reasons given were a lack of employee resources and lack of knowledge to get started.” As many arts organizations are similarly struggling for resources, this is a useful tool for the field to start optimizing their websites. Testing simple changes on a website could lead to a higher conversion rate, resulting in more traffic or ticket sales.

¹⁰ “What is Google Optimize,” Target Internet, Accessed December 8, 2019, <https://www.targetinternet.com/what-is-google-optimize/>.

¹¹ “The Definitive Guide to Google Optimize,” Devrix, September 8, 2019, <https://devrix.com/tutorial/the-definitive-guide-to-google-optimize/>

¹² Anika Anwar, “Google Optimize 360 Vs. Optimize: What You Need to Know,” Seer, September 26, 2018, <https://www.seerinterractive.com/blog/google-optimize-360-vs-free/>.

¹³ Rotimi Iziduh and Jon Mesh, “This is Not a Test: Google Optimize Now Free — For Everyone,” Google Marketing Platform, March 30, 2017, <https://www.blog.google/products/marketingplatform/analytics/this-is-not-a-test-google-optimize-now-free-for-everyone/>.



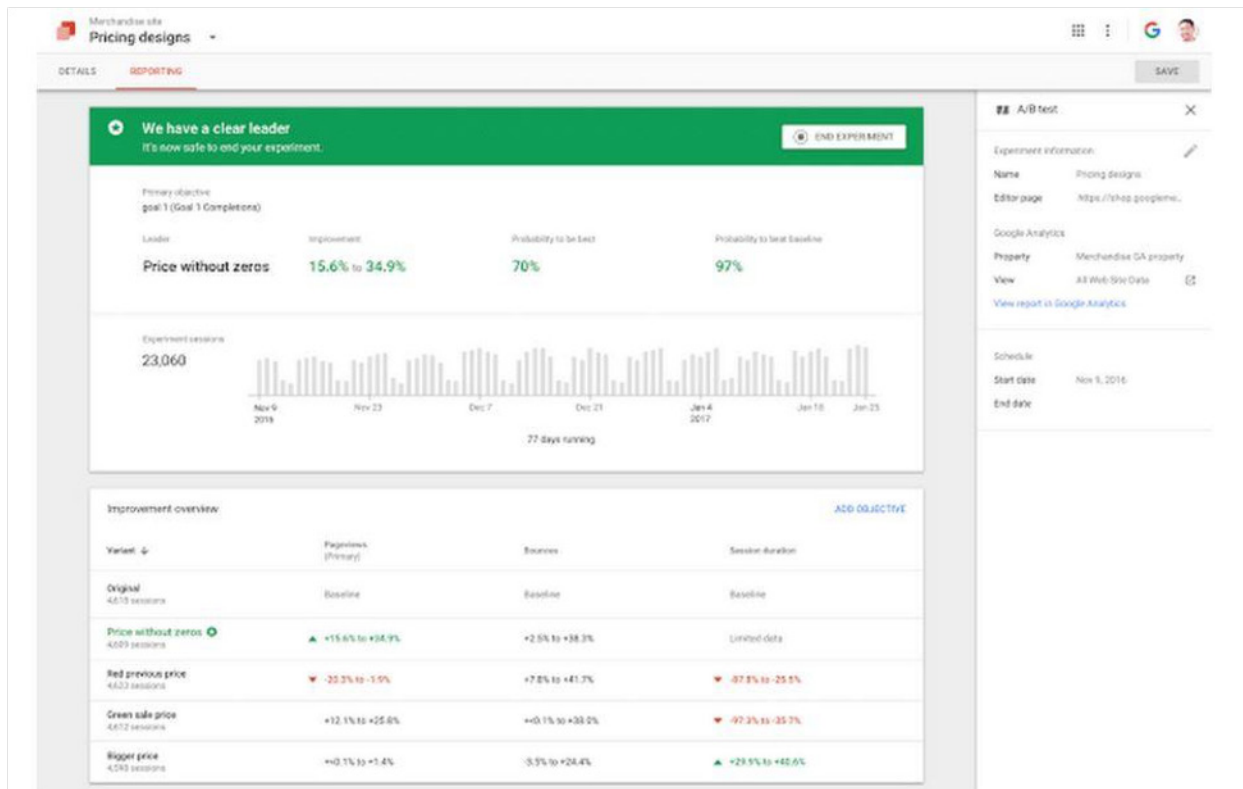


Figure 6: An A/B test for determining pricing on a website using Google Optimize¹⁴

CONCLUSION

Google Analytics is a powerful tool that can be useful for anyone with a website. Although it has been around for over a decade, Google frequently comes out with new updates and programs to increase functionality. It is essential for marketers to stay up to date on Google Analytics latest capabilities. Frequently arts organizations fall behind integrating these latest capabilities due to lack of resources and staff. Yet, they are competing against other websites and businesses that are optimizing their analytics capabilities. By adopting the changes outlined in this paper, arts organizations can become more competitive by collecting more data and better understanding their customers.

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