

***Simon Rumble - 27 May 2009***

**You wouldn't pay a salesman without having some way to measure his success, but that's exactly how many businesses treat their website. Simon Rumble explains why you need to keep a constant eye on how your website is performing.**

One of the best things about online marketing is, given the time and inclination, you can fairly accurately measure how your marketing spend performs and react quickly with changes to your site or advertising. Even better, many of the tools to do this are free.

In the early days of the web, site owners had little idea who was looking at their site. They could review raw statistics on how many 'hits' their site was receiving, but due to technical limitations these stats gave only the broadest indications of what people were doing on the site. Fortunately, we can now drill down into much more detail and see what people are doing, right down to working out which advertising campaigns result in the most sales or leads.

To get these web analytics tools to track your visitors, add a small piece of code to every page on your site by editing your site's base template. When visitors hit a page, information about the users, their browsers and the pages they are visiting are sent to the analytics tool and recorded. With slightly more complex configurations, you can record sales or uses of tools on your site.

In this tutorial, we'll get you started with Google Analytics, which is Google's free analytics tool. There are dozens of other tools that offer more, for a fee. The advantages of the paid tools tend to be that you can do more customisation of the reports, and the data is processed and available more rapidly and reliably than the free tools. If you advertise through Google's advertising program, Analytics automatically captures clicks and tracks the visitor back to the appropriate advertisement.

## **Step 1: Add the tracking code**

To get started go to [google.com/analytics](http://google.com/analytics) and either log in with your Google account (if you use Gmail or Google Calendar, you'll already have one of these) or create one. Enter the details of your website (see Screen 1) and click through until you are shown a block of code (see Screen 2) starting with `<script type="text/javascript">`. Copy the code and add it to the main template for your site, just before the tag of the template, so that it appears in the source code for every page on your site. Get your web developer to add this, if you use one.

## Screen 1

Google Analytics

Analytics: New Account Signup

Please enter the URL of the site you wish to track, and select a time zone it should appear in your Google Analytics reports. If you'd like to track more than one website, you can add more sites later and account for them in your [Customizations](#).

Website URL:  (e.g. [https://example.com](#))

Account Name:

Time zone country or territory:

Time zone:

**Common Questions**

- How do I track my website with Google Analytics?
- How do I set up Google Analytics?
- What kinds of reports are available for website data, and how do I interpret them?
- How do I track website usage when using mobile devices?
- How do I track website usage when using mobile devices?
- Why will I not see my Google Analytics data?

## Screen 2

Google Analytics

Analytics: Tracking Instructions

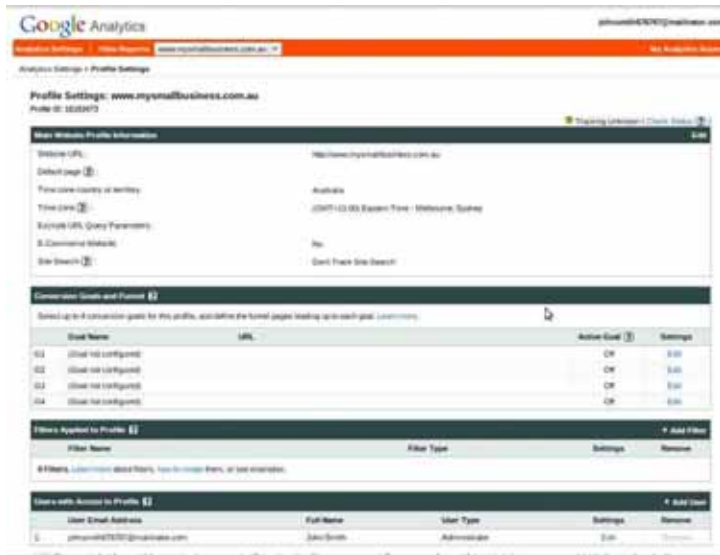
Copy the following code block into every webpage you want to track immediately before the `</body>` tag. If your site has dynamic content also provide a common include or a template. [Learn More](#).

Use the following code to get access to a wide range of exciting new features as they become available.

```
<script type='text/javascript'>
var gaJsHost = ((('https:' == document.location.protocol) ? 'https://ssl.' : 'http://www.
document.write(newScript('urchin.js')) + gaJsHost + 'google-analytics.com/ga.js' type
</script>
<script type='text/javascript'>
try {
var pageTracker = ga_getTracker('UA-8028637-1');
pageTracker._trackPageview();
} catch(err) {}</script>
</pre>
```

You can check that your code is installed correctly by going to the 'Profile Settings' page for your site and clicking 'Edit' next to your site's name. An icon appears in the top-right corner that says either 'Tracking Unknown', 'Tracking Not Installed' or 'Receiving Data'. Refer to Screen 3: Click 'Check Status' and it will test the front page of your site to see if the tracking code has been installed correctly. If it's not working, check the source code of the front page of your site and see that the code appears exactly as shown by Google.

## Screen 3



## Step 2: Dive into the reports

Once the code is working and data starts flowing into your account, you'll start to see data arrive in your reports within about 12 hours. Click 'View Report' from the main page to view the default dashboard. This is where you'll see all the basic information about who's visiting your site and what they're doing when they get there.

Refer to Screen 4: The first graph shows who's been visiting your site over time. You can change the time range for any report by clicking on the date range in the top-right corner, allowing you to view a whole year at a time or drill down to activity for a single day.

Below this you'll see some averages for the site, including visits and the amount of time users spend on the site. To find out more about the people visiting your site, click on the 'Visitors' heading in the main menu, on the top-left of the page.

Refer to Screen 5: The visitors reports show you a bit more about your visitors and what they've been up to on your site. Some of the data is purely technical, telling you about the visitors' web browser and the like, while other metrics tell you how long they stayed on your site, how engaged they were with your content (by how many pageviews there were in each visit) and their location.

### Screen 4



Screen 5



### Step 3: Manipulate your reports

Clicking on any of the blue links in Analytics allows you to drill down into the next level of detail.

Click on the 'Map Overlay' report from the 'Visitors' section to view a world map with countries shaded according to how many visits have come from each country.

The metric reported can be modified by clicking the 'Visits' drop-down in the top-left of the report area and selecting another metric, for example 'Pages/Visit', which will show you the countries that had the most pages per visit.

The table area of reports can also be sliced and diced to show data how you want it. Clicking on any column will sort the table by that column, so you can sort by 'Avg. Time on Site' to see which country gave the longest visits.

Finally, you can drill down to the next level of data, in this case to a narrower geographic area by clicking a country name. You can continue drilling right down to the city and suburb, although the geographic data isn't as accurate at this level of detail.

#### Step 4: Track your campaigns

Drilling down into the reports in the 'Traffic Sources' section (see 'Screen 6') lets you see where people came from to reach your site. This will help you gauge your external marketing activity, whether it be search advertising, search engine optimisation or referrals. These reports show you which users came from search engines, which keywords they used to find you and which referring sites are generating traffic.

#### Screen 6



One of the more important features of any analytics tool is the ability to track campaign activity. This means you can add a campaign code to any link to your site, and you can then isolate any activity by these visitors and associate it back to the campaign.

If my site was [www.mysmallbusiness.com.au](http://www.mysmallbusiness.com.au) and I wanted to direct visitors from an advertising partner to the page/products/widgets.html, you add the campaign coding to the end of the site URL, so for the campaign named 'June upsell', it becomes:

[http://www.mysmallbusiness.com.au/products/widgets.html?utm\\_campaign=June%2Bupsell](http://www.mysmallbusiness.com.au/products/widgets.html?utm_campaign=June%2Bupsell).

Campaign codes can also contain a bunch of additional information identifying the source, medium, keywords, content and name of the campaign. Using some or all of these parameters, you can slice and dice your report data to see what activity has been the result of your campaign.

Google provides a tool to build campaign coding at [www.google.com/support/googleanalytics/bin/answer.py?answer=55578&topic=11097](http://www.google.com/support/googleanalytics/bin/answer.py?answer=55578&topic=11097).

## **Step 5: Optimise your content**

The 'Content' section lets you see what content is most popular, which can help you to drive people towards sales, or cross-sell to other products. A vacuum cleaner retailer might find lots of people hitting its page of instructions for changing the vacuum bag. This may be a good opportunity to push related products to visitors of this page, such as replacement vacuum bags. Even if the visitor doesn't buy immediately, they'll know you sell the product when they need it. Campaign tagging the link you provide on the page would allow you to track this hypothesis.

Other tools in the section let you see what keywords people are searching for when they hit a particular page, helping you to optimise the page for what those people are seeking and provide a strong call-to-action for conversion. Track your bounce rate over time to see if you're getting better at providing what visitors seek, and adjust your content accordingly.

## **Ongoing: avoid data overload**

The amount of data available can seem overwhelming, but remember that you won't be using every report every day. It's worth investing time familiarising yourself with the information available. Once you know how the tool works, put some time aside every week to analyse the reports. Think about what it means and decide what actions you should take from these insights.

You'll soon find yourself dipping into analytics data to try and explain other things in your business. For example, if you find sales of a product spiking on a particular day, both online and offline, you can look for an explanation in your analytics data. By drilling down to that day's data, you should be able to work out if those sales came from a particular source. A blogger might have recommended (and linked to) your product, or your ranking for a keyword in Google might have improved, which helps you further target your marketing

efforts.

## Digging even deeper

This workshop is just the tip of the iceberg of the power of web analytics. Google Analytics also allows you to incorporate online sales into reports, which brings a whole extra level of new insights into your customer behaviour, by allowing you to track back from a sale to see what a customer did to get there.

One of the most exciting developments in recent times is page testing, where you can test multiple versions of a page (or elements on the page) to see which one works best to stimulate the desired activity (sale, lead signup, subscription, and so on). The results can be quite amazing, and can't really be discovered any other way. In my tests, I've found things as simple as the size, shape, colour and location of the 'Buy now' button can have an enormous effect on sales. For more details on this, see Google Website Optimizer at [google.com/websiteoptimizer](http://google.com/websiteoptimizer).

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## Jargon Buster

**hit:** When a single file is loaded from your site. A single page might cause multiple other files, like images, to be loaded and so cause more than one hit.

**pageview:** A single view of a page by a single visitor, which is a more accurate measure of actual people looking at specific pages than hits. **visit:** When a user comes to your site and interacts with it, their interactions (multiple page views) are counted as a single visit. Once the user has been inactive for a period (30 minutes is the default with Google Analytics), any later interactions count as another visit.

**absolute unique visitors:** The total number of visitors over the selected time period, where multiple visits by the same visitor are only counted once.

**campaign:** You can tag site visitors from specific sources (advertising, printed ads, links from partners) with campaign codes and track subsequent actions against those campaigns, so you can work out which campaigns resulted in sales.

**bounce rate:** The percentage of visits where the user only looked at a single page, an indication that visitors aren't finding what they're after.