



DIGITAL GROWTH

# The transition to Google Analytics 4



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**W**HEN I DISCUSS THE NEED to measure online advertising performance with people I am often met with various forms of disinterest.

The problem with traditional marketing and advertising is best expressed in this old quote: “Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted; the trouble is I don’t know which half.” Once I explain that measurement and analytics help us know precisely what is working and not working, most people want to know more.

Online measurement tools such as Google Analytics 4 (GA4) are powerful management tools that help us know if the money being spent is effective, or if we should shift this spending elsewhere. Too many people make their marketing decisions based on their interest or how they feel about things.

Analytics and online measurement help us make rational decisions about where to spend our money and resources. In an area that was once undefinable, being able to precisely define and understand performance is a huge advantage. The people and companies that use these tools have a significant performance edge.

## A revolutionary concept

This all started in 2005 when Google purchased the startup “Urchin” and morphed this into the original Google Analytics. This was the first time we were able to measure the performance of our marketing activities. This was a revolutionary concept that changed how we market and sell products. This matured to the last version of Google Analytics, Universal Analytics, over 18 years.

Unfortunately, Universal Analytics was “too good” and started to get very detailed information on what people were doing online, their interests and associations online and offline. This culminated with information mined by political consulting firm Cambridge Analytica, who utilized these tools to target individuals or groups very precisely or in some cases avoid undesirable people or groups.

During the 2016 election there was literally a tool that told people canvassing neighborhoods for political campaigns which houses were likely to be receptive as well as the ones to avoid. This type of technology proved to be a bridge too far and caused a privacy backlash that resulted in the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and United States hearings and legislation around personal privacy.

## Privacy-friendly version

Out of these hearings and legislation, Google negotiated the terms of a new, safer analytics system that protects personal privacy. This became GA4 and public testing started in 2020. There was a hard stop on Universal Analytics and a forced switchover in August 2023.

The new GA4 is a privacy-friendly tool that does not include some of the invasive personal details that Universal Analytics once did. GA4 now provides better information about your customers, their activities online and consumption of media like radio and TV. This new tool makes it much easier to create reports that give you the information you need to make more informed decisions about your

sales and marketing activities.

With this transition and availability of GA4 here are some things you should do:

Check with your team or digital marketing (website) professional to see if your Universal Analytics was migrated to GA4. If not, it is important to do this simple migration by logging into your Universal Analytics and using the migration tool. If this has not been done, Universal Analytics is no longer measuring anything and your company is no longer gathering any information. It is important to start gathering information again in GA4 by performing this migration.

If you check and your company does not have any type of Google Analytics measurement, get GA4 installed.

Migration is the first step, you still need to set it up to measure things the way you want to and provide the information your company needs in easy-to-read reports. This set up can be done by someone on your team or you can hire a professional to do this.

Whether you get help or not, this tool will be more useful if you get training. I highly recommend that any manager that plans marketing activities understands and uses this tool to make better decisions. Fortunately, Google provides simple and free online training. You can access this through this link, [TinyURL.com/AnalyticsTrain](https://TinyURL.com/AnalyticsTrain).

Once you get GA4 rolling you will have a new set of powerful tools to help your company focus on the sales and marketing activities that provide the most benefits. Get started today! ☺