5 Tips to Get More from Google Analytics

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Google Analytics has given you many great new features for your website visitor, source, and conversion tracking. And there's even much more you can do when you take full advantage of your data from Google Analytics.

Ask and answer deeper questions: How well does the respondent audience in your web visits correspond to your target audience? What traffic sources yield the most valuable customers, not just one-time conversions? How can you enable colleagues who are not web-analytics gurus to more fully use and benefit from your website data? What new insights to gain and retain customers can you learn by blending your Google Analytics data with Salesforce.com data or other sources?

And how can you do all this quickly, without a lot of manual work? See these five tips to get more from your Google Analytics data.

1 Automate your cohort analysis

Many organizations use cohort analysis to understand a class of website visitors, often segmented by a specific action over a defined time period. Cohort analysis can include cross-platform data from the web, mobile web, and offline. For example, when a customer makes the first purchase in a desktop browser and follow-up purchases in a mobile browser and in-store, what is that customer's lifetime value to date?

If you're not already using cohort analysis, a *blog post* by Google Analytics advocate Justin Cutroni offers suggestions to get started. Begin by inserting activity conversion dates. Then use custom variables or events to create cohorts[1].

For experienced cohort-analysis pros, you may want ways to simplify the process. In a *Google Analytics blog series*[2] , E-Nor President Feras Alhlou and Analytics

Solutions Architect Shiraz Asif shows how to automate cross-platform cohort analysis. This can save you time and reduce the manual work of integrating online and offline data. And you can visualize the cohorts as custom variable keys across a date range.
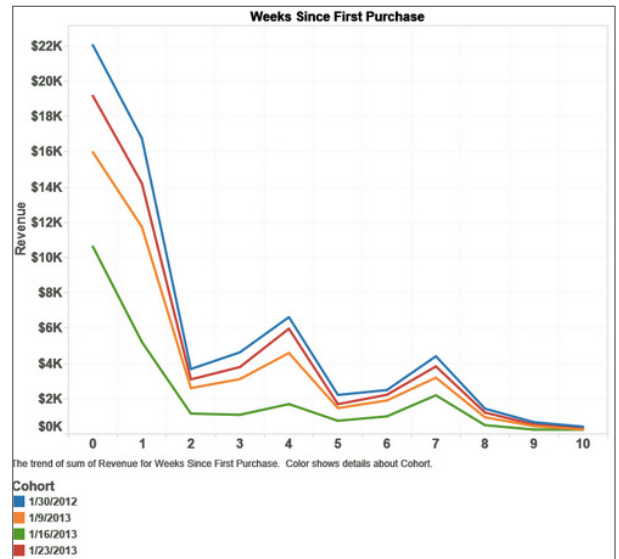

Figure 1. Cohort Analysis in Google Analytics + Tableau.

See revenue since first purchase for weekly cohort groups. Interested in how to automate cohort analysis for your website data? See how-to tips in an E-Nor blog.

2 Drag & drop advanced analytics

Peaks and valleys are interesting, but sometimes what you really want to know are the trends in the overall volume for your website, pages, or groups of pages. If you export to Excel, you can select a line chart in Chart Tools and then follow the Microsoft Office help guide for trend lines. Just grab your favorite caffeinated beverage first, because for something that should be easy, the interface and steps are less than intuitive. Or, if using Tableau Software, simply bring in your data via Tableau's direct connector to Google Analytics, right-click on your chart, and select trend lines.
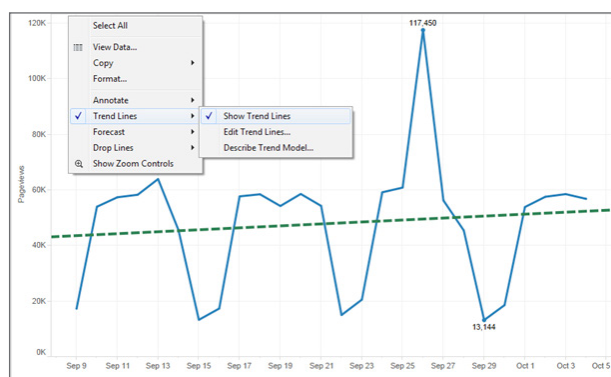
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[1]Justin Cutroni, "Cohort Analysis with Google Analysis", December 11, 2012.
[2]Google Analytics blog, Shiraz Asif, "Get Useful Insights Easier: Automate Cohort Analysis with Analytics & Tableau", March 12, 2013; and E-Nor blog, Feras Alhlou, "Cohort Analysis using Cross Platform Data: Web, Mobile and Offline", February 27, 2013.

Figure 2. Add Trend Lines.

See progress in growing total page views despite wide variances by day and week.

3 Do previous page & next page analysis

With Google Analytics *flow visualization reports*, you can see how your visitors navigate through content. Flow visualization maps the starting page and subsequent pages. Nodes represent points through which traffic flows. A node can be a single page, a directory, an event, or a dimension. With the Visits Flow report, you can see how visitors follow a storyline, such as going from a campaign page to a video and then to a purchase page. Click on any of the nodes and select to see traffic from or to that node.

Unfortunately, what you can't do in the flow visualization reports is filter to see how multiple variables affect previous and next pages. For example, are previous-to-next-page trends different by geography? What about time periods or days of the week? What if you wanted to add even more variables such as customer segments?

To filter previous-to-next-page data by multiple variables, you'll want to export your data from Google Analytics. You may already be exporting from Google Analytics to Excel or column-separated value (.csv) files. Or to save time and reduce that manual work, give Tableau's *direct connector to Google Analytics* a try.
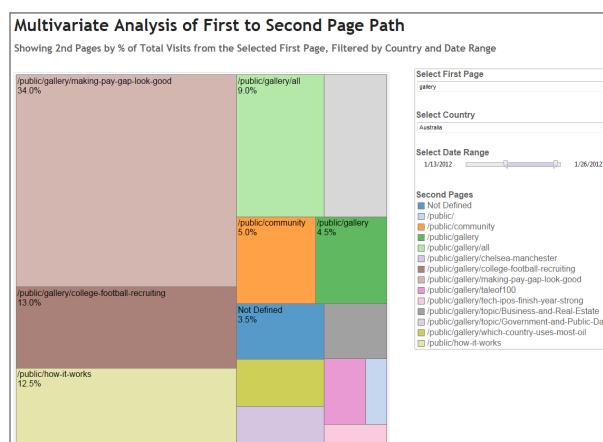

Figure 3. See First to Second Page Path filtered by Multiple Variables.

In this sample dashboard showing data for Tableau Public, see second pages filtered by the first page, country, and date range.

4 Blend data

Google gives you lots of options to bring data into Google Analytics. However, you may have Salesforce.com or other customer relationship management (CRM) data, customer records, market research, demographics, or more data sources that you would like to combine with your website data for fuller insights.

Consider integrating market research with your website data. In a *blog post*, Semphonic President and CTO Gary Angel advocates holding a small tight survey to digital responders to recover one or more core demographics and in some cases even explore some of the offer and creative elements. And you can measure targeting precision – how well does the respondent audience in your web visits correspond to your target audience.[3]

For more on website data blending, see this Cardinal Path *video* with Senior Director of Analysis and Insight Melaine Fuentes and Director of Strategic Services Stéphane Hamel.[4] Fuentes and Hamel discuss how they drive actionable insights by blending a brand's website traffic data with additional data sources.

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[3]Semphonic, "Targeting Precision – Using Opinion Research for Campaign Measurement", March 10, 2013.
[4]Available on *YouTube* or at the Tableau Software *Google Analytics solution page*.

5 Share with colleagues

Power users can blend Google Analytics and offline data, then share dashboards with colleagues who can filter to areas of interest and answer their own questions. This is a huge time savings for the power users. Retitle jargon into easily understood business terms and group pages, while offering full drill down to individual web pages. This empowers colleagues to more fully use web data and gain insights in their own work.

Conclusion

There you go, a roundup of five tips to get more from your website visitor, source, and conversion data. Have other suggestions? Email us at *solutions@tableausoftware.com*. New to Tableau? Download a full functioning free trial at *http://www.tableausoftware.com/products/trial*.
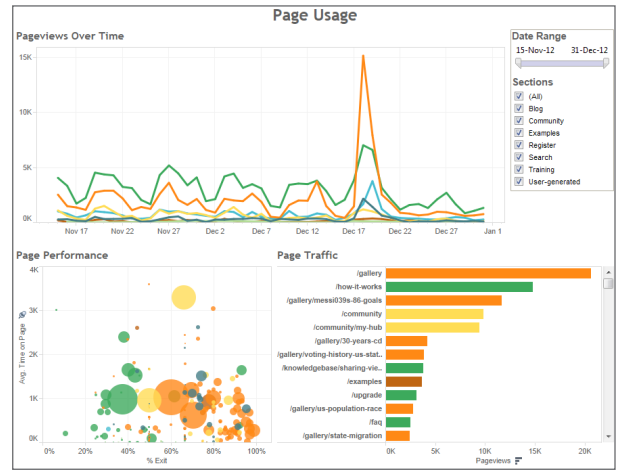

Figure 4. Page Usage.

In this example dashboard, give colleagues who author web content the opportunity to see which content has the most visits and the longest view times. See the live visualization on the Tableau Software website at the Google Analytics solution page.

About Tableau

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