



## The Chaffey Column - February 2009

I often find when working with companies, that although Google Analytics is installed, it hasn't been configured to help marketers track and review their campaign or site effectiveness. In fact, when I take attendees at my training workshops through the configuration options, it seems very often, little or no configuration has been done in their organisations!

So, this month's column is a checklist for non web-analytics specialists to steps you through all the main configuration concepts and issues. Here are the 8 steps.

### **Step 1. Review your approach to collecting data from different sites and services**

As the starting point for the checklist, you will have to install the [Google Analytics tracking tags](#). This is straightforward in most content management systems which enable you to paste the Javascript code into a page template across the site.

To report separately on domains, sub-domains or sub-folders you need to apply the concepts of profiles and filters within Google Analytics. You may even want to have different accounts with different unique tracking codes for different countries, particularly if they operate as separate entities and you want to apply different currency and time zones to the report. Each account will use a different unique tracking code, but you will need to remember to include an aggregate tracking code to report all the sites together.

A **Google Analytics profile** will typically be used to produce reports for different sites, subdomains or subfolders. [Google Analytics Help on Profiles](#).

A **Google Analytics filter** is applied to modify data from a particular profile so that it shows a subset of data within the profile. A filter will often be used to show visitor interactions with product information stored in a sub-domain or subfolder. [Google Analytics Help on Filters](#).

### **Step 2. Exclude employees from report**

This configuration is relatively simple! You don't want visitors from a company skewing the results, so these should be excluded unless you want to artificially boost your visitor numbers and have difficulty understanding visitor behaviour.

A filter should be created to exclude a range of IP addresses for company employees and contractors working in different offices.

- [Google Analytics Help - Excluding internal traffic / Employees](#)

### **Step 3. Define conversion goals**

Visitors to a site do not have equal value to a company, they engage to different degrees suggested by the types of pages they visit. A visitor who has visited a product page, registered for an e-newsletter, bought a product or visited the contact page is clearly more engaged - in web analytics we call these "value events".

Within Google Analytics these value events are known as "conversion goals" and they can be setup for an individual page such as the thank you page for an enquiry form or for a folder such as product pages or downloads. Only 4 goals are available, which is a limitation if you have many lead types or want to track individual PDFs. You can apply Ecommerce tracking to non-e-commerce sites to monitor additional value events through tagging individual pages with a call to the Javascript function `getOrderID()`.

You should set a nominal value on each value event, so you can compare how different pages and referrers influence contributing to conversion goals.

Avinash Kaushik has a great post on the [rationale and examples of conversion goals](#).

### **Step 4. Setup conversion funnels (optional)**

Funnels representing the different steps in a checkout process are an essential piece of configuration for retailers and other sites with E-commerce transactions. After these have been setup up you can then visualise the drop-off or attrition at each stage.

They can also be setup for sites showing how many people engage with different parts of the site which then contribute to a lead.

- [Google Analytics Help on Goals and Funnels](#)
- Justin Cutroni has a series of posts on [configuring E-commerce tracking](#).

### **Step 5. Standard digital campaign tracking codes**

Defining a standard set of online marketing source codes is essential to determining the value of different referral sources such as ad campaigns or email campaigns.

Google Analytics uses 5 standard dimensions for a campaign which need to be incorporated into the query string of the URL for each ad placement as this example shows:

[http://www.domain.com/landing\\_page.php?utm\\_campaign=spring-sale&utm\\_medium=banner&utm\\_source=handbag.com](http://www.domain.com/landing_page.php?utm_campaign=spring-sale&utm_medium=banner&utm_source=handbag.com)

The campaigns report in Google Analytics will then enable you to compare media.

The table below explains each of these 5 dimensions which refers to this example:

Variable	Explanation
utm_campaign	The name of the marketing campaign, e.g. Spring Campaign.
utm_medium	Required Media channel (i.e. email, banner, CPC, etc). What is the 'distribution method' that is used to get our message out to our clients?
utm_source	Required Who are you partnering with to push your message. A publisher such as handbag.com, or for paid search, Google, Yahoo, Live Search, etc.
utm_content	Optional The version of the ad (used for A/B testing) or in AdWords. You can identify two versions of the same ad using this variable. This is not always used and is NOT included in the above example.
utm_term	Optional The search term purchased (if the link refers to keywords). This is not always used and is NOT included in the above example. Google Analytics is now used by many companies from the smallest to the largest to track and improve the effectiveness of their web sites.

You can see just how many use it by viewing Eric Petersen's [Vendor Discovery Tool](#) which will show you which competitors or larger companies are using Google Analytics. Many are, often in parallel with other tagging systems.

The [Google URL builder](#) can help with creating these links.

Note that in the major Fall 2008 upgrade to Google Analytics, Advanced segmentation provides some standard source codes for campaign types such as paid search.

- [Google Analytics Help on Campaign Tracking](#)

#### Step 6. Tracking offline campaigns

Many companies will reference promotional URLs or so-called vanity URLs (we hate that term) in offline Print ad, Direct Mail and TV campaigns to make it easy for the customers to fulfil the offer.

Of course, they also want to track the effectiveness of different promotions.

Best practice in such offline or multichannel tracking has been explained well by Avinash in his post: [Multichannel Analytics: Tracking Online](#).

The core technique is to use a 301 redirect which appends a campaign code. He gives the example of <http://www.dell.com/tv> which redirects and appends a (non Google Analytics) tracking code referencing TV:

<http://www.dell.com/content/topics/segtopic.aspx/tv?c=us&cs=19&l=en&s=dhs&keycode=6Vc94&DGVCCode=TV&dgc=TV&cid=1>

As with digital campaign tracking, offline campaign tracking should use standard codes for medium, source and campaign name.

#### Step 7. Tracking outbound or external links and downloads

Google Analytics doesn't record external links and downloads without additional configuration. Help is at hand, since both external links and downloads can be recorded using a similar approach which uses a script developed by ex Google employee Brian Clifton. This uses a similar approach to that described previously for measuring internal links based on a virtual pageview, but it doesn't require individual links to be hand-coded, it is done automatically.

Details on setup are explained by Brian Clifton in this post on [tracking external links and document downloads](#).

#### Step 8. E-commerce tracking (optional)

E-retailers will need to enable E-commerce tracking for their Profiles since this isn't enabled by default. Ticking the tick-box will be straightforward.

The reports summarising E-commerce transactions and revenue within require inclusion of additional tracking code on the checkout completion page specifying order and product information. Including the transaction information about the order and product(s) will be less straightforward, but many popular E-commerce systems will support this.

- See [Google Analytics E-commerce Help Documentation](#)

This post is a summary of a more in-depth article available on Dave Chaffey's blog at: <http://www.davechaffey.com/blog/web-analytics/configuring-google-analytics-guide/>

**About the author**

Dr. Dave Chaffey, is the Director and lead consultant for [Marketing Insights Ltd](#), an independent digital marketing consultancy. He is the best selling author of several [Internet Marketing books](#) used by digital marketing professionals and on many University and College Courses globally. His latest book, Internet Marketing: Strategy, Implementation and Practice, now in its 4th edition, was published in January 2009.