Eliminate these 5 Google Analytics Mistakes with Kissmetrics
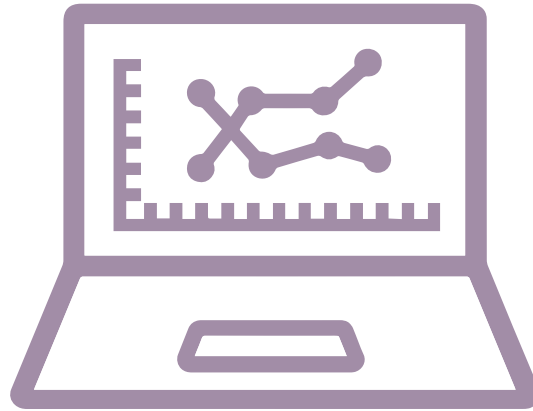
kissmetrics

Google Analytics covers the basics. But here's how Kissmetrics picks up what it leaves behind.

Everyone uses Google Analytics.

For a reason.

It's good; ready to use out-of-the-box by giving you insight into how people are arriving at your site, which channels are sending you traffic, and how many people are hitting Goals like newsletter opt-ins or eCommerce purchases.

(Oh – and it's free. Which doesn't hurt.)

Google Analytics covers the basics. It provides rich 'top of the funnel' information that even we here at Kissmetrics use it for some things.

But...

Unfortunately for all the good it does, Google Analytics does leave a few glaring gaps that go unnoticed.

And these gaps result in only incomplete (or misleading) information that can (and will) lead your marketing decisions astray.

Here's how to plug those gaps by *complementing* Google Analytics with Kissmetrics.
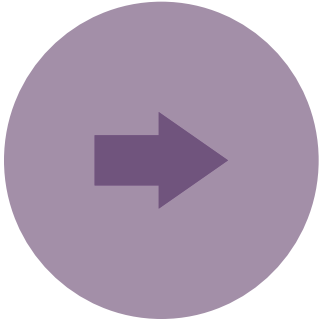
Where Google Analytics Excels

Want to quickly impress your bosses and clients?

Look for easy wins.

For example, you *could* try explaining why these Quote Request landing pages (that are kinda, sorta, mobile responsive) are holding you back.

You *could* try explaining that despite their protests to the contrary, mobile usage eclipses desktop and that more searches occur on mobile vs. desktop too.

You *could* try to explain funnel economics and complicated marketing theories that will undoubtedly make their eyes glaze over 30 seconds after you open your mouth.

Or, you could just *show* them.

Open up Google Analytics, click on the *Audience* section and look towards the bottom for *Mobile.*

You can view sessions now in aggregate by the device they used to visit your site. Then you can look over to the far right-hand side and see – clear as day – the total conversions and conversion rate for that Quote Request form on each device.

The *difference,* or the comparison of that low conversion rate on mobile vs. desktop, is your gold mine.

If mobile would have converted as well (or even in the same ballpark) as desktop, conversions and therefore revenue would have increased by $X or Y%.
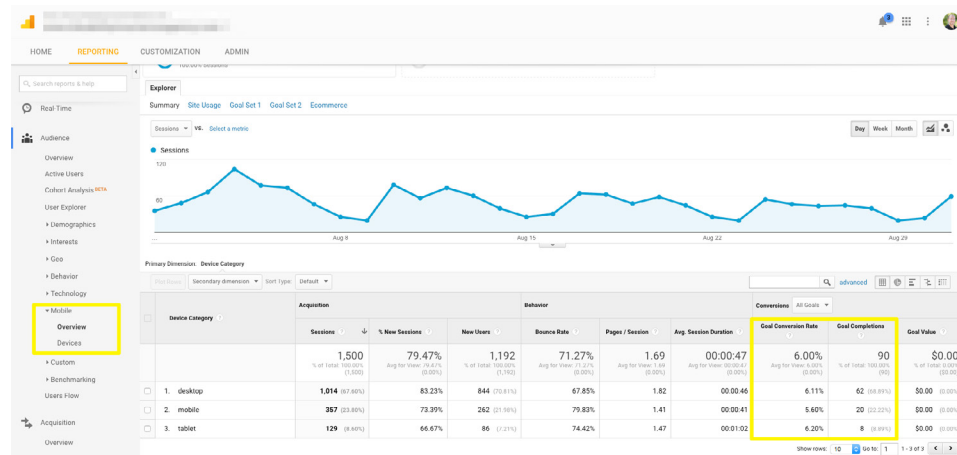
So far so good.

You've armed yourself with one valuable piece of information. Verifiable proof of a larger trend that hints at a larger rehaul required.

Now, let's seal the deal.

Let's jump back into Google Analytics, but this time head over to the *Behavior* section.

Here, click on *Site Content* to bring up *All Pages*, which displays your top pages and posts in descending order.

We're after proof that specific pages aren't performing like they should be; requiring more resources behind UX, development and even conversion optimization to bring up the slack.

You'll find this information now looking at basic user behavior, like Bounce Rates. And you can even cross-reference that with 'secondary information' like the Source or Medium (so you can see how pages with visits from organic Google searches differ from Facebook referrals for instance).

Bounce rates of 90%+ on your most visited pages? That ain't good.

Because unless the goal of those pages is to get people to convert as quickly as possible, it sounds (and looks) more like people aren't finding what they're looking for and instead are leaving in droves.
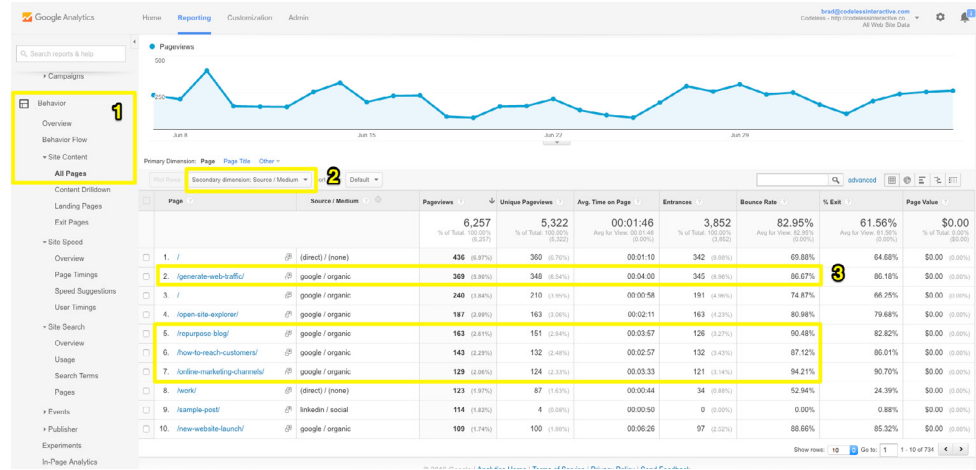
These basic trends and problem areas are easy to spot in Google Analytics (assuming you know your way around the clunky interface of course).

You can see, relatively clearly, how well the top of your marketing funnel is performing. You can see where the majority of site visits are happening and how they're flowing through your website.

You can even start to see some conversion data for lower-priced products and lead-gen forms, where Google Analytics will show Goal Conversions along with the number of people over that date range and the channels that drove them.

However…

That's where your visibility into the conversion process (and your customer's) ends.

And it's where problems start occurring, because you're forced into making important business decisions based on understanding only a fraction of what's really going on.

While Google Analytics leads a valiant effort, it falls short; requiring something else to compliment these 'information gaps'.

Here are some of the biggest ones to deal with (and how Kissmetrics helps plug them).
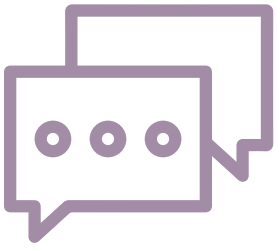
Gap #1. Getting Started with Installation

Here's what a Google Analytics installation session typically looks like:

Marketer: "Hi! Can you please help me install this javascript snippet for Google Analytics?"

Developer: "No problem! Send it over."

Three days later.

Marketer: "I don't see any data coming in yet. Were you able to get that script set-up?"

Developer: "Oh yeah, sorry. Got caught up with stuff. Will do it later."

A week later.

Marketer: "Can you please help me set-up Events for this new campaign going live next week?"

Developer: "Maybe in a little bit. Some A-hole consultant they just brought in found all these problems with our current landing pages so I'm having to go back and try to fix them."

Marketer: "So... what's a 'little bit'?"

Developer: "Maybe EOW."

Marketer: "Cool, thanks!"

Next Monday.

Marketer: "Did you get a chance to set-up those events for me?"

Developer: "What do you think?"

This scenario plays out, in-person, over email and on Slack, every single week, in every single marketing department ever.

The simplest things, like getting JavaScript on a site or a new campaign event set-up, takes *weeks* – despite the fact that it should take *seconds* – because:

1. Many marketers aren't technical or don't have the right access to the site, and
2. Developers are already understaffed and overworked as it is, without the pesky, uppity marketing people throwing more stuff on their plates.

What seems like a simple request for marketers, *isn't* to your engineering team. Because they're already overwhelmed with trying to accomplish bigger, more important tasks on impossible timelines.

It doesn't help that Google Analytics has an awkward process for setting up basic events that will require more back-and-forth than normal, either.

Fortunately, Kissmetrics' Click to Track makes this entire pain point disappear.

If you (or your marketing team, or even bosses), want something tracked, they can literally point and click on a key element from your website (like a button or a video).

That means there's no bottlenecks for marketers slowing the process down so they can get that campaign live ASAP.

Engineers and developers aren't hassled or distracted by low priority issues keeping them from bigger and better things.

And your company gets better, more nuanced 'customer journey' metrics that shows which website actions leads to more, or less, sales (which we'll explore in a bit).

- VISITED SITE
- ADDED TO CART
- ★ PURCHASED
- LOGGED IN

Trick question:

What happens to the data if you can't (or don't) get a Google Analytics installation up-and-running fast enough – missing your short window of time because creative people and technical people seemingly speak different languages?

It's gone. For-ev-er.

In Google Analytics that is. But with Kissmetrics, you can recover a lot of this data and still perform a retroactive analysis.

Shopping cart abandonments are a perfect example. A $4 trillion dollar one actually according to Business Insider.

If you don't already have shopping cart abandonment in Google Analytics, you're S-outta luck. You can set it up to track everything that happens today, tomorrow and next week. But you won't be able to recover any historical data or information.

On the other hand, using the Kissmetrics People Search feature will allow you to travel back in time to pinpoint exactly WHO did or didn't do WHAT (no DeLoreans or flux capacitors required).

Once the report runs, you'll get a list of all the recorded people who've performed that task or even on your site over the past few weeks or months.

The funny looking, nonsensical strings of numbers and letters you see in the image below are people who haven't registered or provided you with their email address just yet. Don't worry though, because when those people DO register with an email address, their anonymous ID will update automatically.

This basic info is cool, but what's even cooler is that you can take the next step with is; exporting the data (or sending it to MailChimp – one of the featured integrations will explore in the last section below) to follow up with these people through email (or run retargeting ads to reach them) and get them back to your site ASAP.

There's one last technical difference between the two platforms for power users.

Kissmetrics cookies expire only after five years, allowing you to track people – anonymously – for years and years and years and years and years (renewing for another five years if someone returns using the same device). Google Analytics on the other hand only stores cookie data for two years, which may not cut it for large, complex purchases with long sales cycles.

Last but not least, cost.

The standard version of Google Analytics is free. They have a revved-up, Premium version. But that sucker runs $150,000 a year according to some reports.

In contrast, Kissmetrics provides almost all the data and insight you'd need to make better marketing decisions and pricing runs somewhere between $220 and $1,400 a month (on the high end).

Gap #2. Channel Attribution

Google Analytics will show you conversions. It's true.

It will even show you *where* (or which channels) those conversions came through. So you can easily see that 10 leads came through Organic Search, while 15 came through AdWords.

Those two channels in particular will probably be your top two performers.

Here's why.

Search is based on intent. So people type "red Nike men's running shoes" into Google. They click on the first result or on an ad. And then guess what? They buy red Nike men's running shoes.

Their visit is so specific. They're not browsing at this point.

And so they go from Search to Purchase within a single visit.

Unfortunately for us both, this ain't how it typically works.

In fact, the vast majority of the time, people are just hanging out. Browsing around. Checkin' stuff out and gathering research or information for later.

That's why it takes at least 7-13+ touches before someone purchases anything. It's also common for these touches to happen over the course of a few weeks or months. That's why 63% of customers use multiple channels – on multiple devices – prior to buying anything.

This is where things get tricky, misleading, and flat-out incorrect with Google Analytics.

Because one of its big weaknesses is the inability to piece-together information from various sessions over various channels over various devices to get an accurate view of where that sale originally came from.

(In fact, their Terms of Service actually prohibit you from tracking any personal information, as we'll unpack in the last section below.)

Here's what's happening technically. Each time a person comes back to your website on a difference device, Google Analytics is giving them a brand new Client ID (treating them as a brand new, unique visitor) instead of using the same one over and over again.

WITH GOOGLE ANALYTICS:

1 First visit on desktop	**2** User registers	**3** First visit on iPad	**4** Second visit on iPad	**5** User logins
↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Create a new Client ID *(device100)*	**Assign User ID** Tie User ID *(anon456)* to Client ID *(device100)*	**Create a new Client ID** *(device500)*	**Identify a Client ID** *(device500)*	**Assign User ID** Tie User ID *(anon456)* to Client ID *(device500)*
Correctly assigned to user		*Not assigned to user*	*Correctly assigned to user*	

As a result, Google tends to overemphasize 'last-touch attribution'; where you're only able to see data from the session that drove the visit (and not all of the other ones before it that contributed, assisted, and ultimately generated that final sale).

So even though a sale yesterday came from an organic search query (and will show as such inside Google Analytics), it actually originated from a Facebook ad campaign you ran two months ago.

Clients and bosses weren't impressed with that Facebook campaign, so they cut further funding. Even though in reality, it was driving great results and they were just being underreported (while your organic search results were overreported).

However if you were able to see a more complete view of your funnel, and all of the various steps or channels that played a role into how customers find you prior to buying, you wouldn't make this common mistake.

Kissmetrics on the other hand will use the same Client ID, merging new information and data gathered on each subsequent visit so that if and when someone does convert, you can accurately see how different channels are delivering revenue.

You can even segment reports based on the 'first' or 'last' property.
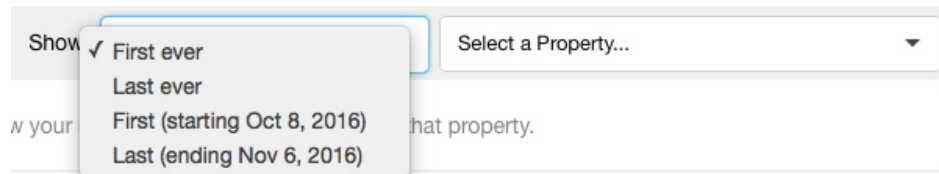
For example, you can specifically look for: Channel, Channel: Origin, Origin, or any UTM. Kissmetrics will first look for the medium set using a UTM parameter (discussed below) before determining the referral source and placing the appropriate visit in AdWords, Organic, Referral, or Direct.

This way you can see how different channels have 'added up' or assisted the final conversion, along with how each channel's profitability looks in aggregate.

This report is for an ecommerce company that's segmenting revenue by product collection. We can see which collection brings the most revenue, customers, and average churn rate.

Collection	Total Revenue ▾	Avg Revenue/Person	Lifetime Value	Paying Customers	Avg Monthly Churn
In-House Generic Tees	$630,082	$64.92	$101	9.705 people	14.8%
premium tees	$151,385	$85.87	$107	1,763 people	1.8%
outerwear	$89,753	$81.22	$102	1,105 people	2.5%
cotton sweaters	$62,703	$90.74	$111	691 people	5.8%
wool sweaters	$45,359	$75.33	$90.88	602 people	6.4%
belts	$26,233	$101	$133	357 people	4.9%
sleepwear	$15,815	$91.42	$108	173 people	3.7%
jewelry	$8,153	$98.23	$122	83 people	16.1%
ties and bows	$731	$34.81	$40.61	21 people	10.6%

Gap #3. Campaign Measurement Difficulties

According to Google Analytics, your website probably has two primary drivers of traffic (outside of advertising).

Organic search will be up there, which isn't too much of a surprise. Search is widely touted as the top driver of traffic and new customers in various studies.

But the other, is 'Direct'. Which sounds vague and mysterious.

In theory, Direct is supposed to be the people who literally type in your website's address in the URL bar and hits *Enter.*

In reality, there's a whole bunch of other junk that gets thrown into your Direct source too, acting more like a placeholder for anything and everything that can't be attributed properly.

Here's the problem.

Analytics programs sometimes have a hard time figuring out where a visit came from. Links from desktop programs like Outlook are especially notorious. Sometimes the referral data gets stripped out when someone clicks on that link, and it doesn't pass any insightful information about where it's coming from back to your analytics program.

So instead of attributing a visit from Outlook to email (or even Referral), it'll go under Direct.

There's a few ways to solve this problem.

First and foremost, make sure all campaign URLs are tagged properly before they go out. These are your basic, run-of-the-mill UTM parameters that allow you (the marketer) to explicitly state which campaign, channel, content, or even term a link came from.

Where possible, you can (and should) follow up UTM-tagging with underline inbound funnel segmentation to make absolutely sure your results will come out crystal clear (preventing any pesky analytics errors of omission before they happen).

Here's where the Kissmetrics updated funnel reporting tool, fresh with a brand new spankin' facelift like your favorite OC Housewife, comes into play.
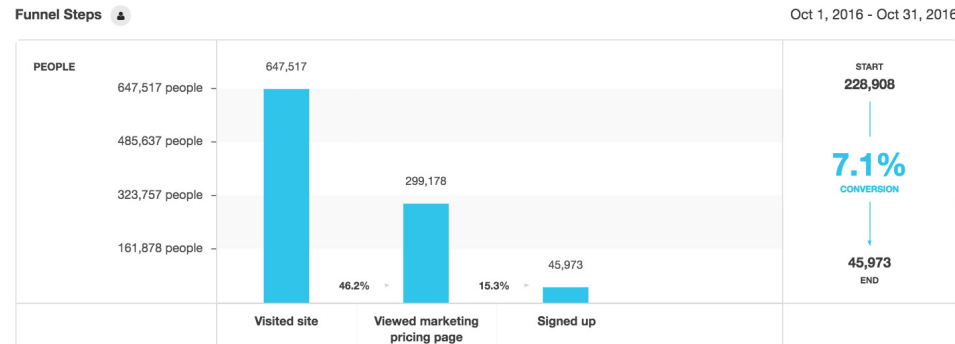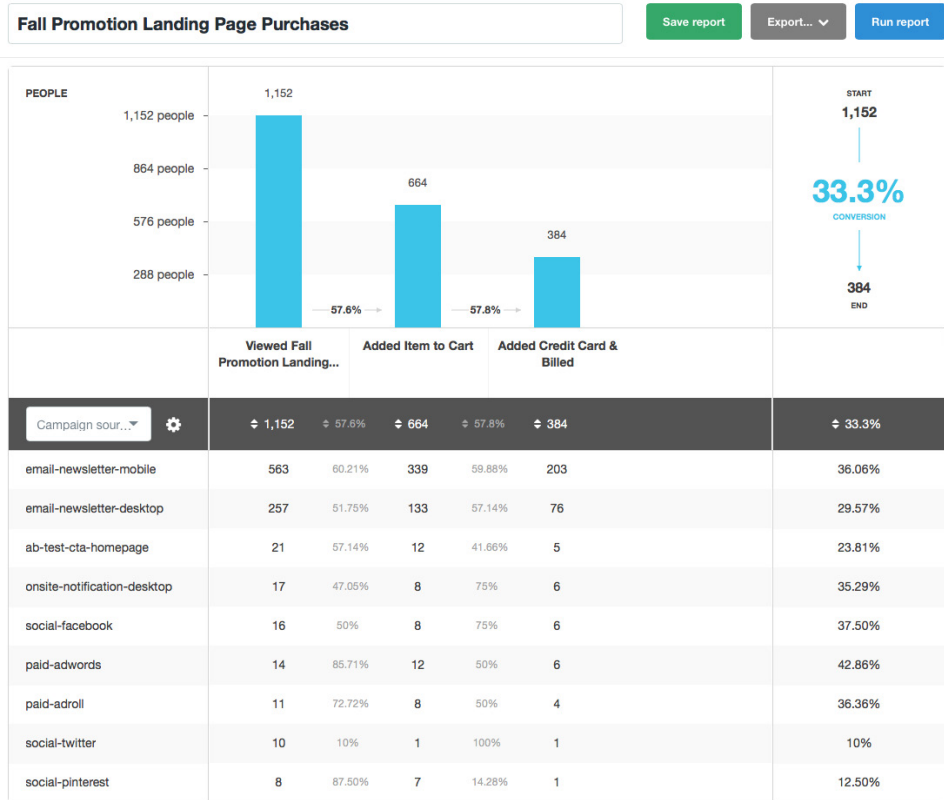

Campaign tagging along with inbound funnel segmentation (where appropriate) will help you ensure a single campaign is being tracked properly.

But how do you compare and contrast the performance of different campaigns against each other?

This way you'll know, beyond the shadow of a doubt, if your allocation of internal resources like team members, hours and money are being spent properly.

For example, even a single campaign might have several different ways to complete the desired action (e.g. add product to cart).

The new funnel report helps you catch all of these people who might bounce around (and browse around) before ultimately taking you up on that new offer.

Fall Promotion Landing Page Purchases

| Campaign sour...	⇕ 1,152	⇕ 57.6%	⇕ 664	⇕ 57.8%	⇕ 384	⇕ 33.3%
email-newsletter-mobile	563	60.21%	339	59.88%	203	36.06%
email-newsletter-desktop	257	51.75%	133	57.14%	76	29.57%
ab-test-cta-homepage	21	57.14%	12	41.66%	5	23.81%
onsite-notification-desktop	17	47.05%	8	75%	6	35.29%
social-facebook	16	50%	8	75%	6	37.50%
paid-adwords	14	85.71%	12	50%	6	42.86%
paid-adroll	11	72.72%	8	50%	4	36.36%
social-twitter	10	10%	1	100%	1	10%
social-pinterest	8	87.50%	7	14.28%	1	12.50%

Some companies will have multiple ways to complete a 'conversion' too. For example, someone *Scheduling a Demo* on your site might be the same end goal as *Signed Up.*

But which is better?

The simplest way to increase conversions on your site is simply to (a) figure out what's working and (b) get more people there.

On a website, that means taking people from an underperforming conversion point or path (like Scheduled a Demo at a 0.0% conversion rate)…
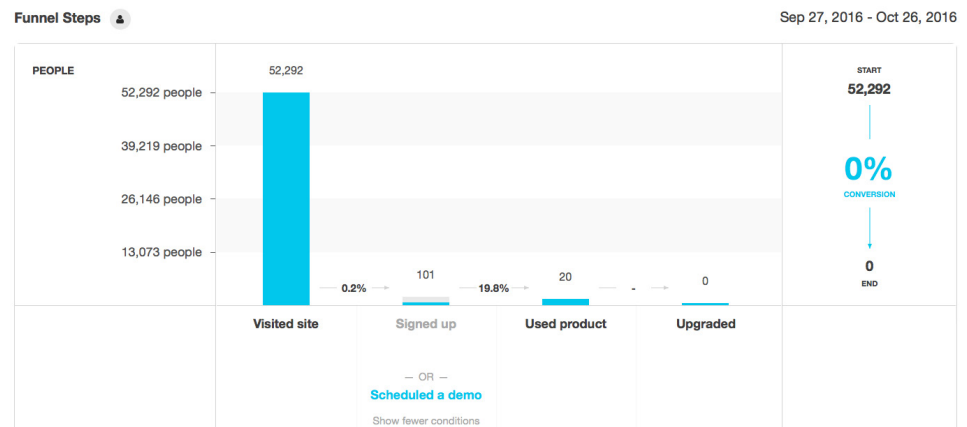
...and instead pushing them over to the Signed Up one (which converts better at 0.1% and nets you 54 more customers).
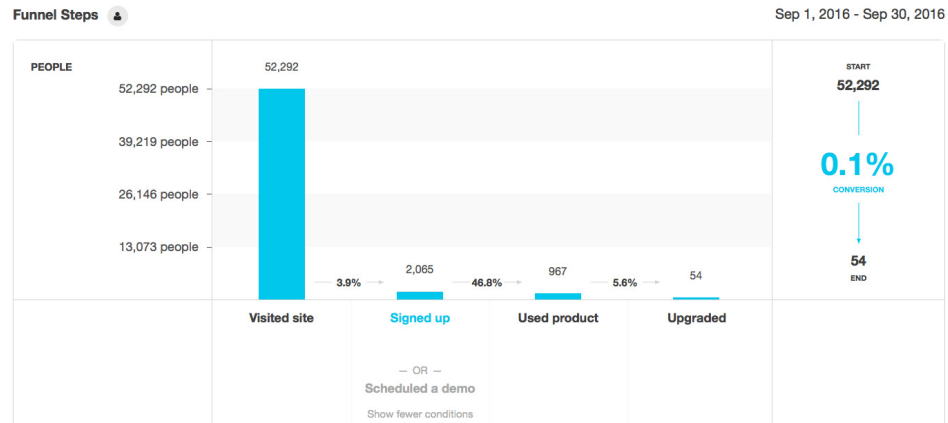
A few minutes in the Funnel Report, along with a couple hours worth of work can have a huge impact if 100, 1,000 or 10,000 people are now being redirected to a higher-converting point.

Changes like this seem so simple and obvious. And they are... if you have the visibility in the first place.

Which you commonly don't with an aggregate-reporting tool like Google Analytics that only offers surface-level data.
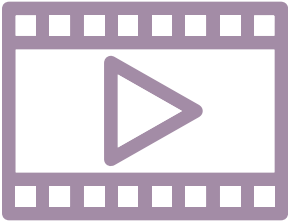
Gap #4. User Flow Optimization: Lead to Sales Paths

Many small companies shouldn't waste time on A/B testing.

That's because you should have at least 1,000 monthly conversions before starting and a minimum of 250 conversions prior to successfully declaring a statistically significant result, according to Peep from ConversionXL.

Besides, the top performers, or 'Unicorns' as Larry Kim calls them, aren't wasting time A/B testing either. Instead, they're busy making big changes to drive above-average conversions.

Like?

The path of conversion.

Most big conversions, like a new lead submission or a product sale, are 'macro' events. And as we've seen, it typically requires a ton of intermediate steps in between the point when someone finds out who you are for the first time, and when they actually pull the metaphorical trigger.

All those little interactions between are 'micro' events. They're like tiny commitments, or baby steps that get your site visitors a little bit closer to ultimately converting.

Here's a perfect example.

Videos are proven to uniformly increase conversions:
- Video in an email increases click-through-rates by 200-300%
- Putting one on a landing page increases conversion rates by 80%
- And as if that's not enough, users are 64% more likely to buy a product online after watching a video.

See, marketing's not that hard after all. Just do more videos!

Google Analytics will tell you how many people watched a video. BUT it gets challenging to see a breakdown of the number of people who've viewed a video and converted vs. those that haven't watched it (but still converted).

Again, the Kissmetrics Funnel Report comes to the rescue with an easy way to simply grab your event variable (like watching a video in this case) and putting together a custom path to analyze the results.
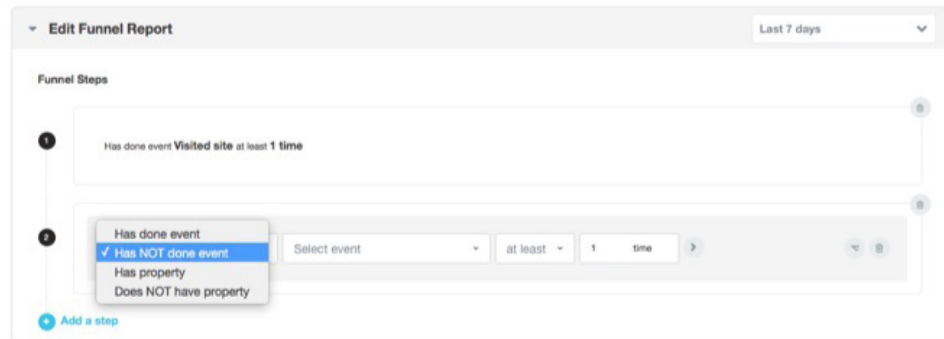
So if clients and bosses don't care about the research statistics, you can now show them the black and white difference in conversions when people watch a video vs. when they don't.

You should even be able to calculate that difference or discrepancy, multiply by a theoretical Average Cost Per Conversion, and come up with a dollar amount that you're losing by not producing more videos.
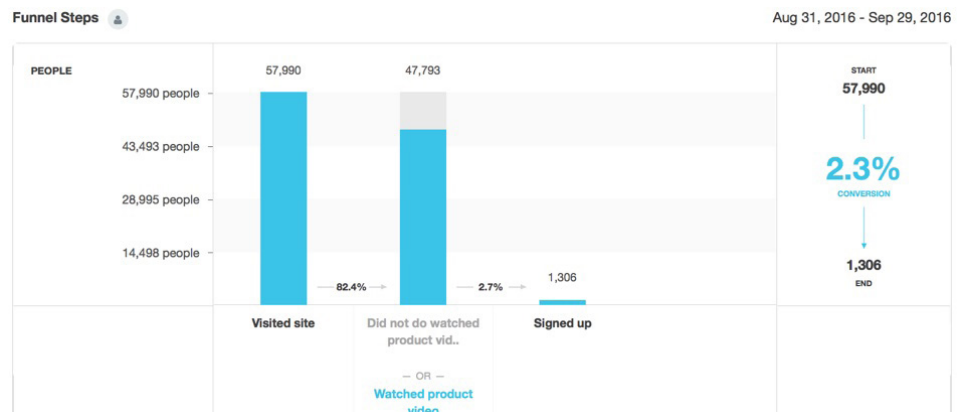
Making significant changes to your conversion path or funnel has the power to increase results. But if done carelessly, it also has the power to lower them too.

A more prudent approach would include split testing these variable changes at each micro-step along the way to determine how they impact conversions down the line.

For example, not requiring a credit card when new users sign up for a SaaS app will undoubtedly increase conversion rates. Free loaders love 'free' after all.

But does that increase on the front-side (free trials), result in an increase down the back-side (paying customers)?

Not always, as one Totango study found that 70% of free trials are worthless.

Google Analytics allows you to split test a single page variation. But you can only see how those changes affect the next step (like free trial sign-ups) and not anything further down the funnel.

You can do this in Kissmetrics though, allowing you to test more significant variables (like credit card required vs. no credit card) and see which results in most total customers or highest revenue.

The Kissmetrics A/B Test Report can help you figure this out, making sure to differentiate between tests that only improve your vanity metrics (like free trials) instead of those that actually move the needle (like more revenue).

Best of all, you can use your favorite A/B testing tools. So you would actually create and run the test over there, while using Kissmetrics for tracking the results and making better decisions. Here are the current A/B tool integrations:

- AB Tasty (integration details here)
- Convert (integration details here)
- Optimizely (integration details here)
- Unbounce (integration details here)
- Visual Website Optimizer (integration details here)

Here's an example of selecting an event (like someone Signs Up) and selecting where that event happens in your tool (Optimizely, in this case):
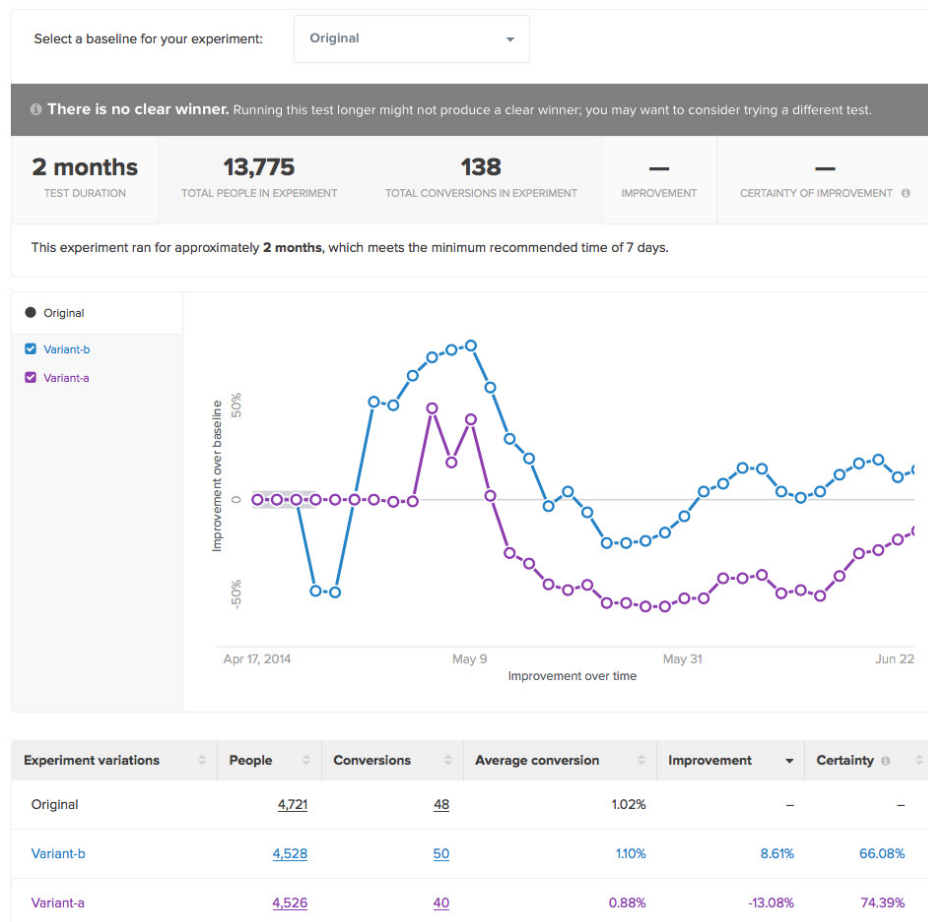

Not only can you see how tests affect key conversion events down your funnel (so real customers or sign-ups, not just useless free trials), but you can also run multiple variations at the same time as well.

Gap #5. Closed Loop Analysis

If you've learned nothing else to this point, at least you can take away the fact that reading about analytics will surely cure insomnia.

The other thing though, is that new sales don't happen overnight. They don't (typically) happen during a single website visit. And it's too simplistic (or just plain wrong) to assume new customers click and buy immediately.

Instead, conversions follow a long, drawn out process that typically isn't picked up by Google Analytics.

This entire view of a customer's journey to purchase is referred to as 'closed-loop analysis'. The objective is to take new customer and sale information, and bring it all the way back to the campaigns and channels or tactics that delivered them in the first place.

In other words, figuring out the ROI of your marketing.

In order to do 'closed-loop analysis', you need to be able track people's personal information so you can see that John Smith paid $4,000 after coming to the website six times over three months (originating from a tweet).

As alluded to earlier, one reason Google Analytics falls flat in this case is because of their own Terms of Service. Don't take my word for it. Here's <u>exactly what it says</u> about tracking personal information:

"The Analytics terms of service, which all Analytics customers must adhere to, prohibits sending personally identifiable information (PII) to Analytics (such as names, social security numbers, email addresses, or any similar data), or data that permanently identifies a particular device (such as a mobile phone's unique device identifier if such an identifier cannot be reset).

Your Analytics account could be terminated and your data destroyed if you use any of this information."

TL;DR? Use personal info from Google Analytics and your account will be terminated.

The latest version of Google's Universal Analytics will give you much more control over someone's visit information.

But according to these terms, you're not allowed to use (or store) any of it. And in some cases you even have to go out of your way to prevent it from happening.

(Let's sidestep the hypocrisy for now, shall we?)

The only way to truly compare ROI is through closed-loop analysis. But based on Google Analytics terms, that ain't happening.

Kissmetrics can help you view this data together though, so you're able to see how and where revenue came from. You're able to see which channels (truly and accurately) generated the most money, or highest paying customers, And then compare all of that back to which promotional strategies, campaigns and tactics performed from those that didn't.

Channel	Total Revenue	Avg Revenue/Person	Lifetime Value ▾	Paying Customers	Total Churn
Email	7,816	390.80	22,988.23	20 people	1.7%
Referral	7,768	287.70	13,077.27	27 people	2.2%
Organic	10,768	347.35	10,854.68	31 people	3.2%
Direct	8,178	371.72	9,066.34	22 people	4.1%
None	3,188	212.53	9,066.34	15 people	2.8%
Social	4,659	232.95	7,514.51	20 people	3.1%
Paid	5000	333.33	6,802.65	15 people	4.9%

By Segment for Jan 1 to Dec 31 — Show: First ever — Channel

One of the ways this is accomplished is through integrations with third-party vendors that continue to help close all of these aforementioned gaps.

For example, the CallRail and Kissmetrics integration helps you connect offline activities (like phone calls) back to your online campaigns that drove them.

Invoca found that 70% of phone calls originate from digital channels. But without call tracking setup, you have no idea which ones generated them.

And that's a big problem, as phone conversion rates hover around 30-50% (blowing your site's ~2% one out of the water).

The MailChimp integration is another popular one, allowing you to segment people who aren't completing certain actions on your website (like upgrading from Trial to Customer) with a perfectly timed automated drip campaign.
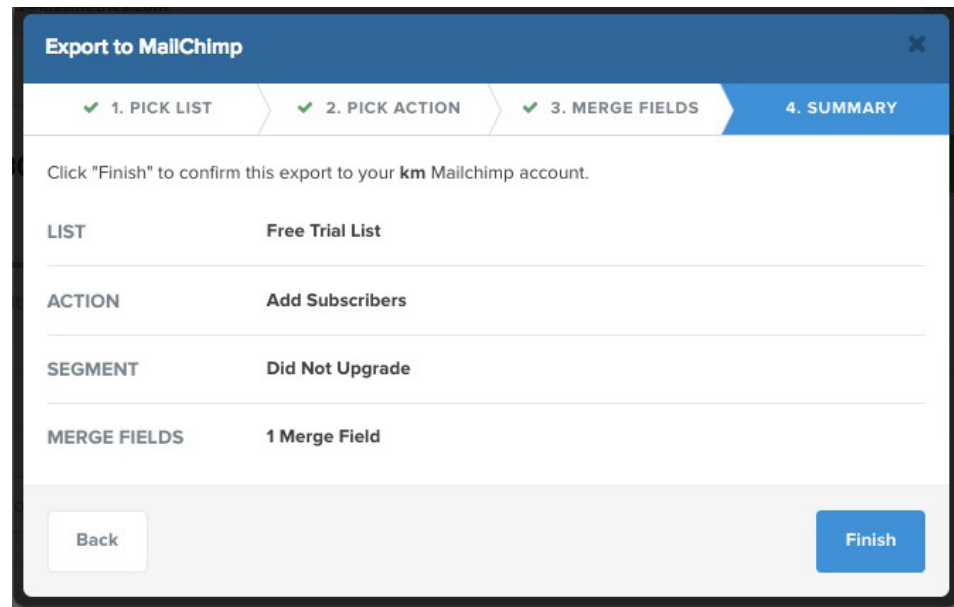
In the People Search feature, you can grab a list of email addresses and seamlessly send them over to a specific MailChimp list (without exporting or messing with .CSV files)

There's even an upgraded integration for Salesforce users, so Kissmetrics can receive additional information on how and where customers are coming from, like the lead status of each user (which would help with funnel reporting discussed earlier).

For example, a SaaS company could analyze their funnel:
• Visited Site
• Signed Up
• Activated/Used Product
• Closed Account

And they could even look at how leads flow, from the 1st step a lead took, all the way through to a closed or lost account (to get an idea of what went well or what went wrong).

The point of tracking analytics and data at all, is to learn how to improve your future performance. The most important aspect of that, campaign and channel ROI, can't be gleaned from just Google Analytics alone.
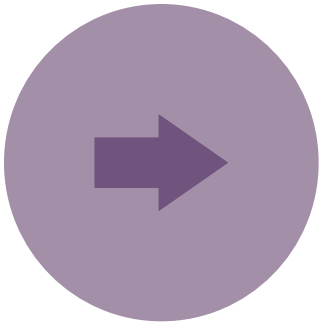
Conclusion

Google Analytics makes it easy to find quick, at-a-glance information about how certain aspects of your marketing are performing.

It's so good at diagnosing some 'top of the funnel' activities that you should never truly abandon it.

The problem is that the data provided by Google Analytics has many gaps that ultimately mislead and misinform your marketing decisions.

That's where augmenting it with tools like Kissmetrics make perfect sense. You're able to see detailed information on individuals, along with where they came from and how they got there (over the last few months, across different channels and campaigns).

You can also then see which aspects of your website are helping or hurting bottom of the funnel results, and quickly figure out how to act on improving.

The goal of analytics after all isn't data or raw numbers.

But the marketing insights that come from the data so you know exactly what's working well, what's not, and how to improve it going forward.

Error-Proof these Analytics Gaps Today

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