



Digital Marketing

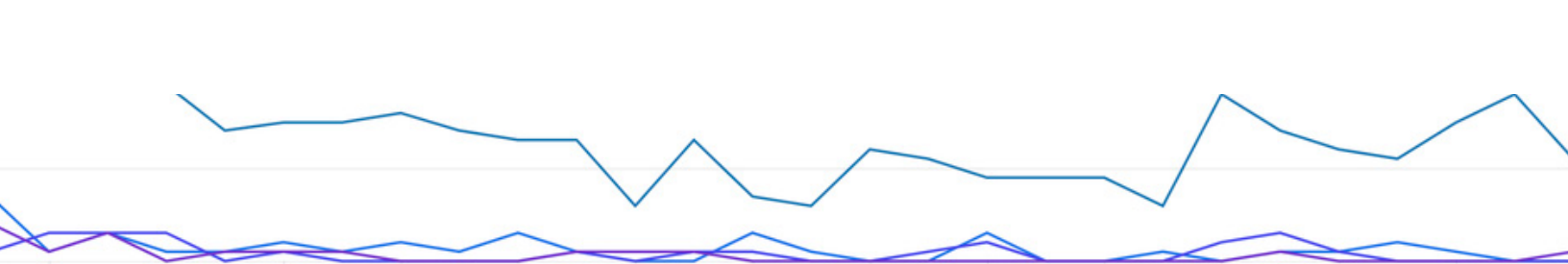
GOOGLE ANALYTICS 4: WHAT IS IT & NEXT STEPS

On October 14, 2020 Google announced that Google Analytics 4 (GA4) was its new default analytics platform for websites, and since then there have been a lot of questions. While it may seem that GA4 came out of thin air, Google began introducing this in beta as App+Web. After its initial introduction and through user feedback, Google worked to improve its features to better align with those that users were most accustomed to in Universal Analytics. While the current data format is still vastly different than Universal Analytics, it has been designed to provide rich insights and predictions in a simplified manner to help businesses make better marketing decisions for the future. Below we've outlined some of the biggest items to consider before implementing GA4 on your site.

What should you know about Google Analytics 4?

The main item to note is that **GA4 is not an evolution of Universal Analytics**, it is a completely different reporting platform.

- Universal Analytics data is session-based and measures sessions, pageviews, and interaction tracking events during a session. It focuses on web interactions for a single session.
- GA4 data is user-based and uses log-style events; essentially, **everything is being tracked as some type of event tied to a user**. It focuses on being able to better track the customer journey across multiple platforms and devices that will be available through Google Signals.
- Additionally, the new GA4 reporting platform is "privacy-centric by design" adhering to stricter data privacy rules enforced by GDPR, CCPA and CPRA.



What does Google Signals mean for you?

When Google Signals is enabled and a user has turned on “Ads Personalization” this will allow for:

- Better user counts across platforms
- Audiences created in GA4 and published to Google Ads platforms to be eligible to show across different devices
- More accurate data to be collected about logged-in users’ demographics and interests

With these, Google can start to provide insights and predictions on behaviors across your entire user base. Also, with GA4’s focus on machine learning, clients will be better positioned for tracking without cookies in the future.

For destinations specifically, this means that when users start planning vacations on their work computer, later continue that research on their mobile device, and finally book a trip or purchase an attractions pass using their home computer, you’ll be able to connect the dots and follow their entire journey.

Is Google Analytics 4 ready to be implemented today?

Yes, and it’s important to keep in mind that the way data is captured and displayed is different. Here are a few features and changes you should be aware of before implementing GA4.

ENHANCED MEASUREMENT: GA4 offers out-of-the-box basic event tracking on the following:

- Pageviews
- Scroll tracking
(defaults to trigger at 90% of page scroll)
- Outbound link clicks
- Site search
- Video engagement for embedded YouTube videos
- File downloads

Important New Metrics:

- **SESSION COUNT:** The count of sessions per user within a given time frame.
- **ENGAGED SESSIONS:** The number of sessions that lasted longer than 10 seconds, had a conversion event, or had two or more screen or page views.
- **ENGAGEMENT RATE:** The percentage of engaged sessions. (Think of this as the opposite of bounce rate: instead of telling you how many users leave your site without interacting, it shows you how many visitors that come to your site do interact.)
- **AVERAGE ENGAGEMENT TIME PER SESSION:** The average length of time that visitors from each of your traffic sources spend on your website.

Additional Areas to Review:

- **CONVERSION REPORTING** (formerly known as Goals): GA4's method of tracking everything as an event now allows you to create better-defined conversions on your site by combining multiple event log parameters. Analytics guru Julius Fedorovicius provides great instruction about [tracking conversions in GA4](#).
- **DATA STUDIO INTEGRATION:** While you can now connect GA4 to Data Studio, its reporting may still be missing some metrics and dimensions. Enhancements will continue to be made.

OTHER INTEGRATIONS:

- [Google Ads](#)
- [BigQuery](#)



What's missing from GA4 or had a complete makeover?

- **GOOGLE OPTIMIZE INTEGRATION:** This is not supported at this time. It's important to note that this will not impact the use of the Dynamic Content module to serve personalized experience through Simpleview's CMS; and for now, reporting for the A/B module will continue to serve from Universal Analytics.
- **SEGMENTS:** Google has replaced segments with "Audiences." Previously you could create a segment and then turn this into an audience; now these two have merged.
- **EVENT TRACKING:** Traditional Category, Action, and Label are gone. Everything is now an event with associated parameters.
- **VIEWS:** Multiple views within a property have been removed. Now every aspect of reporting is associated at the property level.
- **COMBINED DATA:** Data for Web and Apps will now be combined in one spot.

What are the next steps?

1 INSTALL GA4 ON YOUR SITE & START COLLECTING

DATA: Updating to GA4 will not carry over any historical information, with this in mind, we recommend adding GA4 in parallel with Universal Analytics to begin tracking the base elements but continue to report from Universal Analytics until more advanced tracking and measurements are included. While there are no clear plans from Google to deprecate Universal Analytics it is better to be prepared and start collecting data in GA4.

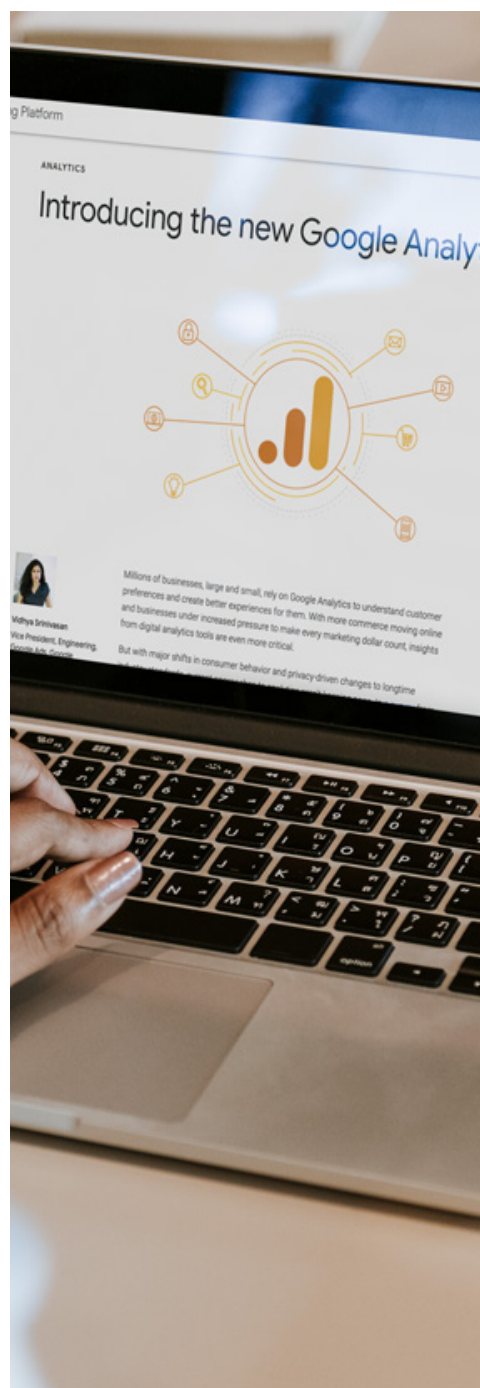
2 START BUILDING AUDIENCES:

The audience feature is quite robust, enabling you to create audiences based on the sequencing of events. We recommend digging into this and starting to build your audiences sooner rather than later. Once your audiences are created, they can be applied to build comparisons and used in Google Ads. [Read more on building audiences from Google Support.](#)

3 BECOME FAMILIAR WITH THE NEW REPORTING LAYOUT:

The reporting interface varies greatly from Universal Analytics and it will take some time to become familiar with where things have moved to, how they have changed, or if they've been removed.

While the differences between Universal Analytics and GA4 will take some getting used to, this is an exciting update that will elevate and enhance the future of online marketing. Even if you're not ready to dive in headfirst, we recommend adding it to your site as soon as possible to start building a record for historical data. Information for how to add GA4 to your site will soon be available in the CMS knowledge base. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please reach out to your Customer Experience Manager.



Additional Tools



[Simpleview Knowledgebase will show you how to configure GA4 within your own CMS.](#)



[Our Simpleview team has also created a video training for GA4 configuration](#)

QUESTIONS ABOUT GOOGLE ANALYTICS 4? Contact your Customer Experience Manager at **520-575-1151** or email cx@simpleviewinc.com