

What marketers need to know about Google Analytics 4

Article



Despite complaints, [marketers](#) who use Google for analytics need to understand Google Analytics 4 (GA4) because it's not going away. "This is Google's world, and we're just all living in it," said Colleen Harris, director product manager at Ansira. Here's what marketers need to know in order to maximize GA4's potential.

On July 1, [Google](#) pulled the plug on Universal Analytics for all users, leaving reluctant marketers no choice but to adopt GA4, which has presented a steep learning curve for advertisers.

The main differences between Universal Analytics and GA4 involve how information is tracked and security.

GA4 tracks everything as an event, which means gaining relevant insights from GA4 requires more customization than Universal Analytics did.

- Examples of events might include if a product picture was clicked, if a service appointment was scheduled, or if a piece of content was opened.
- These events present potential for retargeting by building specific audiences. For example, a clothing brand may retarget people who've viewed one product picture differently from someone who has viewed three pictures.
- But the wealth of information event tracking presents can be daunting. "There is so much potential of what you can do, it's hard to figure out what you should focus on," said Harris. "You have to be more strategic about what events you're looking at and what data you're piecing together to tell your story [than with Universal Analytics]."

When deciding what events to track, marketers should start simple. Harris suggested building a list of five questions they need answered with Google Analytics 4 and then drilling down to more specifics within those questions. Questions may include:

- How many users visited a webpage?
- How many leads were submitted on the page?
- Where are users clicking on a page?
- What pages are getting the most views?
- At what point are customers abandoning their journeys?

GA4's other main difference is that its security standards are higher than in Universal Analytics, said Harris.

- Because GA4 does not log or store IP addresses, marketers using the tech are less likely to be noncompliant with privacy regulations.

- But that signal loss also makes consumers more difficult to retarget because marketers can't track behavior on an individual level. "We know less about the person [visiting a website], and that's not coming back," said Harris.

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