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LESSON 1: SEARCH MARKETING CONCEPTS
SEARCH ENGINES

3i principles

The 3i principles are the foundation tenets of the Digital Marketing Institute framework for successful search marketing. They stand for **Initiate, Iterate, Integrate**. By keeping these 3is in mind as you progress through this course, when the time comes to develop your own search marketing strategy, you will find it much easier, more accurate, and well-informed. The core value of the DMI 3i methodology is the centrality of the consumer, who we optimize towards and seek out wherever they are. Let’s take a look at what exactly each of these 3is mean.

- **Initiate**: Rather than starting with yourself, start with the customer - with what they are actually doing - and work backwards towards your search strategy.
- **Iterate**: This involves continually learning from your online search engagement with your customers and acting on that.
- **Integrate**: This involves integrating all of the search channels coherently.

What is a search engine?

A search engine is a program that searches for and identifies items in a database that correspond to keywords or characters specified by the user, used especially for finding particular sites on the web. Search engines are an applied form of information retrieval, which is a field of study in computer science.

Search engine results page (SERP)

A search engine results page (SERP) is displayed by a search engine in response to a query from a searcher. Search engines have one major function: they provide answers to user queries through lists of relevant pages that they have retrieved and ranked for relevancy.

Paid advertising

Paid advertising makes up the bulk of a search engine results page above the fold, because this is where search engines like Google make most of their revenue. When people click on ads, Google gets paid, and that’s the bulk of their profits. These paid ads are the result of Google Ads advertising.

Organic results

Organic search results are shown on a SERP below the paid ads. Google feels these are the most relevant and trustworthy results to show for any given query. The order in which they appear represents the relevance and trust Google accords to these results. A high ranking on Google means that a webpage is shown near the top of the organic search results.

Users tend to click more on the organic search results than on the paid ads, as the former are considered more trustworthy and relevant. Usually when users recognize an ad as a paid ad, they’re less likely to click on it, and prefer to click on the organic results below it.
Search engine processes - organic

Generally speaking, all search engines have three main processes: the crawler, the indexer, and the query engine.

- **Crawler**: The crawler, which in Google is known as Googlebot, is a piece of software that continuously crawls the web trying to find new links and updated pages.
- **Indexer**: When the crawler finds something new, it sends them on to the indexer, which tries to make sense of what the crawler has found, and sees what kind of keywords that page could be ranked for. The indexer then builds an index of rankable webpages.
- **Query engine**: The query engine is the front end of Google, where the user enters search terms, and where Google interprets what the user has typed in, and selects the best possible results from the index to show in its search result. Again, relevancy and trust are the key factors that Google uses to determine which of the new results deserves to be ranked near the top.

Search engine processes – paid advertising

The process for paid advertising is very different from the one for organic search. Advertisers choose keywords that they want to advertise on. Whenever their keyword is searched for, it triggers a live auction.

Google determines which ad is shown first and second and third, depending on the bids that the advertiser has put in for that particular keyword, as well as the quality score of their ad and their landing page. Those combined result in an ad rank, and the ad with the highest ad rank is shown as the first ad.

**TRENDS IN SEARCH**

Changes in search

In the last couple of years, we have seen some major changes in search. For example:

- **Knowledge graph**: We see a lot of direct answers provided in Google’s search results, so the searcher doesn’t have to click through to the actual websites that contain the answers.
- **Contextual search**: We also see more contextual search. For example, pro-active notifications on your Android phone about traffic conditions or delayed flights, without you having to go and actually query those in Google yourself.
- **Voice search**: We also see more voice search, where people will ask a query directly to the Siri, or Cortana, or other mobile voice device, for specific queries. When you do a voice search you only get a single answer from Google, which is of course very different to a list of 10 blue links.

These changes have a profound impact on SEO. When user behavior changes dramatically, a previously profitable area of SEO can suddenly become obsolete, and you will need to change your SEO strategy accordingly.
COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

Search engine submissions

There are many misconceptions about SEO, what it can do, and how you can get websites to rank.

First, search engine submission services have become useless and often lead to spam. You don’t need to submit your website to Google or other search engines anymore. Google and other search engines will discover your website automatically, through mechanisms such as:

- Your domain name registration
- Links from other sites to your site

Meta keywords tag

The meta keywords tag is a tag in a webpage’s source code, where you can include keywords you want your site to rank for. Google and other search engines have stopped using the meta keywords tag, because it was abused a lot by spammers, who included a lot of irrelevant keywords to try and get more traffic to their websites. Generally speaking, the meta keywords tag is no longer useful for SEO. The only exception is for news websites, where a specific news_keywords meta tag is still being used to identify the topics of news articles.

Keyword density

Keyword density or keyword stuffing – the number of words on a page divided by the number of instances of a given keyword – is not used by search engines for relevancy and ranking calculations. Search engines use advanced semantic analysis technologies, so there is no need to stuff keywords on to a page. In fact, it can lead to a page being classified as spam. Aim to write high-quality, in-depth content instead, ensuring that Google has enough words and material to work with and recognizes that you’re writing high-quality content that deserves to be ranked in the search results.

Paid search and organic search

Another common misconception is that, if you spend a lot of money on paid advertising, you will also be rewarded with high rankings in organic search results. That is not true. Google, in fact, keeps its Google Ads division very much separate from its organic search division. No matter how much you spend on paid advertising, you will never get an advantage in organic search as a result of that. Instead, what you see happening a lot is that when a company spends a lot on paid advertising, it also tends to have quite a large budget allocated to SEO, so that it can claim high visibility in Google in both Google Ads and organic results.

Web spam and guaranteed rankings

There are a lot of SEO companies that claim they can guarantee you a number one ranking on Google. However, no SEO can actually guarantee a first, top ranking on Google. Instead, you should focus on producing high-quality content and doing all the right things, which should see you rewarded in Google’s organic search results over time.

Whenever someone promises you top rankings on Google, you tend to have to rely on web spam tactics to get you there. Those sorts of tactics can result in penalties on your website; or your website will actually be deindexed after an amount of time, when Google detects that you’re using
web spam to get to the top of its search results. So don’t believe it when anybody claims to guarantee you a number one spot on Google.

**HOW PEOPLE USE SEARCH ENGINES**

**Types of search queries**

Generally speaking, all searches that people make on search engines can be classified as one of three types of searches:

- **Transactional** queries, where people actively want to do something, like buy a plane ticket or download a song.
- **Informational** queries, where people want to know something, for example, the name of a new band or a good restaurant in New York.
- **Navigational** queries, where people want to go to a specific website or webpage that they know exists on the web, such as Facebook or the homepage of the NFL.

Search engines will identify the type of query - transactional, informational, or navigational - and will show the best possible results to satisfy that particular user’s query.

**Search process users go through**

Here is an outline of a common process people go through when using search engines:

- First, someone experiences the need for an answer, solution, or piece of information.
- They formulate that need in a string of words and phrases, which is the query, the search term, or the keyword.
- They enter that query into a search engine.
- They browse through the paid and organic results to find the best match.
- They click on the most appealing result.
- Once on the website, they scan for a solution, or a link to that solution.
- If unsatisfied, they return to the search results and browse for another link.
- Or they perform a new search with refinements to the query.

Generally speaking, users will go through this process several times before their query is satisfied.

**LANGUAGE AND SEARCH**

**How search engines interpret human language**

Search engines have become very good at understanding human language and can interpret it quite accurately. This makes things a lot easier for us, because now we can build webpages and write content primarily for a human audience. We don’t need to focus on specific tricks and tactics like keyword density any more. We can just focus on writing great copy aimed at the end user.

Some of the technologies that search engines use to understand human language are:

- LSI: Latent Semantic Indexing
- LDA: Latent Dirichlet Allocation
- TF-IDF: Term Frequency – Inverse Document Frequency
- Topic Modelling
However, search engines are still machines with imperfect language processing, so on occasion we do need to help them and simplify things to ensure that our content is properly understood.

**Entities and relationships**

Another important aspect of modern search engines is **entities**. An entity is basically any concept, or idea, or item, that exists in the real world.

Search engines can understand entities and the relationships between them, to help serve the best possible search results. For example, you could ask a search engine, where does Donald Trump live? This question has several entities and relationships embedded within it. For example, Donald Trump, as the main entity of the search, is the president of the United States.

This again, has several other entities associated with it, like the office of president, the country of the United States. The word ‘live’ in your query relates to the entity of a residence, and a search engine can interpret all of these to arrive at the correct answer in this case: the White House.

**Personalized results**

Search engines like Google also heavily personalizes its search results, based on what it knows about the person doing the search:

- **Location**: It knows, for example, where the user is based, and will try to localize the search results based on the geographic location of the searcher.
- **Search history and browsing history**: Google knows what you've searched for before, especially if you use an Android or a Chrome browser, and will use that data to determine which websites you like to visit and will feed that into the search results.
- **Social networks**: Google knows a lot about your social networks and connections, and where appropriate, will feed that into the search results pages as well.

So when you do a search, you might see entirely different search results than someone else, based on the personalization that search engines apply to it.

**Search engines as answer engines**

The key purpose of a search engine is to provide its users with the correct answers. Google often shows direct answers in its search results, so that users don’t have to click through to the website providing the answer. Now, with the growth of voice search, Google will provide these direct answers without any search results page at all – just as a voice answer to the person asking the question.

This could dramatically change how users engage with search engines, and how websites can generate traffic and sales.
LESSON 2: USING ORGANIC SEARCH IN MARKETING CAMPAIGNS
SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

Definition

Search engine optimization (SEO) is the process of improving the visibility of online content in organic SERPs to help achieve the goals of your organization.

SEO is a process, so it is not something you do once and forget about. SEO needs constant attention and focus. Your website is not a static finished thing. It’s something that requires constant effort to improve and optimize.

SEO objectives

What can you accomplish with SEO?

It’s important to set objectives before you start doing any SEO work. You should start with establishing a baseline of performance to measure progress against. How is your website currently performing? How much traffic is it getting from organic search? And how many sales or leads is it generating?

We can look at several key metrics to determine SEO success:

- **Improve traffic from organic search**: Use web analytics to analyze the visits per traffic source.
- **Improve sales or conversions from organic search**: Again, web analytics will tell us what kind of sales and conversions we’re getting on the website, and what traffic sources those sales and conversions are coming from.
- **Improve visibility in search engines**: We can do this by tracking how we rank in Google’s organic search results. We can either use a rank tracking tool or use a platform like Google Search Console to see exactly how well our website is performing.

TECHNICAL SEO

Making your website easily crawlable and indexable

Technical SEO is about making your website easily crawlable and indexable. There are a lot of different technical SEO elements. Some of the most important ones are:

- Site speed
- HTTP status codes
- Geo-targeting
- Site structure and internal linking
- Duplicate content and canonicalization
- Content structure
- Structured data
- XML sitemaps

To assess a website’s technical SEO, we usually emulate a Google crawl of the website. We can use a variety of different tools for that. These tools will generate reports on what went well in the crawl, and what went wrong. We can then use that data to determine how well optimized the website’s technical SEO is, and what needs to be done to improve it further.
**SEO tools: Google Search Console**

Google Search Console is a great tool to start with. This is a free tool that Google will give you access to once you've proven that you own a website. Usually, if you're an administrator on a website's Google Analytics account, that is sufficient for Google.

In Search Console, which was formally known as Webmaster Tools, you can find a variety of different reports that give an indication of a website’s technical health. The Crawl Errors report is one of the most valuable reports, as it tells you what Google found wrong with your website when it tried to crawl it.

**SEO tools: Screaming Frog SEO Spider**

Another great tool is Screaming Frog SEO Spider. This tool will emulate a Google crawl of your website and generates reports of everything that it finds. It’s a very flexible tool that can be used for all kinds of technical analysis. The free version can crawl up to 500 pages, and there is a paid version that unlocks unlimited crawl capabilities.

The downside of Screaming Frog is that you will need to interpret the data yourself. So it does require a certain amount of basic SEO knowledge and technical understanding.

**SEO tools: DeepCrawl**

DeepCrawl is another technical SEO tool that, like Screaming Frog, will crawl your website and generate reports. Contrary to Screaming Frog, which you need to download and install on your PC, DeepCrawl is a cloud platform that you use on a subscription basis.

While not as flexible as Screaming Frog, DeepCrawl does generate useful reports that give you a clear indication of what might be going wrong on your website. This makes it a bit more useful for beginner SEOs who might not necessarily have the technical understanding to interpret the data that Screaming Frog generates.

**SEO CONTENT**

**Content marketing**

When your website is technically sound, the next thing to look at is the content on your site. It's important to understand that search engines rank webpages rather than websites, and that every page on your site should be optimized for its own topic, which can be a keyword or a set of keywords. Content marketing is the tactic that we use to grow a website’s relevance and authority in search engines by publishing and promoting great content.

**A perfectly optimized page**

A perfectly optimized page for SEO has all of the following elements:

- A strong **title tag** that describes the topic and contains the main keyword that you want to rank for.
- A **meta description** that contains a short summary of the page’s content.
A strong **headline** that aligns with the title tag and also contains the main keyword.

- **Well-written body content** that explains the topic in detail, the more content, the better. Structure the content using sub-headers, to make it easily scannable.

- Any images on the page should have optimized **alt-attributes** to help with the page’s relevance. An alt-attribute is a little code that tells search engines what the image contains.

- The page should also contain **links** to other pages on your website, as well as to relevant external sources that you can trust.

- Lastly, ensure your page has strong **calls-to-action** that tell your readers what you want them to do next, like buy now, click here to read more, add to cart, contact us, and so on.

**Content types**

Content comes in all kinds of different formats, and each has its own strengths and weaknesses. For example, how-to guides are great to educate readers on a topic, and quizzes and competitions can entertain your visitors. It’s important to pick the right format that suits what you want to accomplish with your content.

**Content types and search**

Search engines will show all kinds of different content formats in its search results. It’s important that you understand the SERP you wish to rank in, and what the search engine shows for each keyword you are optimizing for, so that you can make sure your content aligns with what your audience is looking for and what the search engine wants to show.

Search results can be in the form of:

- Graphs
- Images
- Text
- Blog articles
- News
- Videos
- Apps
- Booking forms
- Books, and more

Google has various types of search verticals and will integrate these in their search results. You’ll also see so-called **rich snippets** in Google results, which are enriched search results that show additional information from the website. For example, when you search for event tickets, Google is likely to show you rich snippets showing event dates and locations for available tickets.

**TRUST AND LINKS**

**Google’s PageRank algorithm**

Great content alone is not enough to rank in Google.

Your website also needs to be seen as a trustworthy and reliable source. Google calculates the trustworthiness of your website through its **PageRank algorithm**. This is what made Google unique when it first launched and remains an important part of its ranking algorithms to this day.
Basically, PageRank means that your website needs to be linked to from other trusted websites to show Google that your site is important and authoritative, and that your content can be trusted. Without links, it’s very hard, if not impossible, to achieve high rankings in Google.

**Homepage versus deeper pages**

Most often, other websites will link to your website’s homepage. However, that’s not always the best page to rank for a keyword. For specific queries about products and services, you want those pages to show up in Google’s search results.

The way the value of external links is distributed to your website is important, so that Google knows it can also trust your deeper pages.

Ideally, you want some links from external websites pointing to these deeper pages. This not only helps those webpages rank better in search results, it also helps Google’s crawlers to find those deeper pages, and then the other pages linked to from there.

**Link analysis: Google Search Console**

Google Search Console will give you some data about the links from external websites that Google has found. It doesn’t present a complete list, but gives you an overall idea of how your content is linked to and which websites link to yours. This can be useful to find possible broken pages on your site that have links from external websites. You will want to fix those broken pages or redirect people to relevant active pages.

**Link analysis: Majestic**

A great third-party tool to help with link analysis is Majestic. This tool has its own crawlers and creates a searchable database of all the links that it’s found on the web. You can use this to analyze your own site’s links, as well of those of your competitors.

**Metrics**

Majestic has some proprietary metrics that can be useful indicators of a website’s link profile. These metrics are:

- Trust Flow
- Citation Flow

The higher these metrics, the stronger your website’s link profile and the more trusted your website is.

Majestic is free to use for websites that you are a verified owner of, and has a paid subscription option as well.

**Link analysis: Moz Open Site Explorer**

Another third-party link analysis tool is Moz’s Open Site Explorer. It has its own link database and link metrics such as Domain Authority, which is used by many SEOs to evaluate the strength of a website’s link profile.
Open Site Explorer has some features that you can use for free, but it requires a paid subscription for most of its data.

It’s important to know that links are most valuable when they are from websites that are topically relevant to yours. If you sell shoes online, you’ll want links from websites that are about shoes and fashion – not necessarily from a used car website. So look at a site’s content, its title and headline and body copy, to evaluate if it is a topically relevant website.

**Improve link profile and increase trust**

So how do you go about getting more links to your website? There are roughly four main tactics you can use to get other websites to link to yours:

- **Trusted online business directories**: Trusted online business directories can be useful. While most directories are pure spam, some like Yell and Scoot still have value. If you do a search for ‘business directory’ on Google, the top-ranked websites tend to be the ones that are worth listing your business on, because Google obviously trusts these sites.

- **Blogger outreach**: Blogger outreach is the process of engaging with bloggers and writers to get them to publish articles about you, your content, your website, and your products. Sometimes you can offer to write a guest post for their site, or they can review one of your products and link back to your website. Google doesn’t like it when bloggers link to company sites for some kind of payment – either cash or a product – so you need to tread carefully.

- **Link bait**: Link bait is content that is so awesome that people will want to link to it voluntarily. It can be something really useful, funny, controversial or insightful, or anything that really grabs people’s attention. If it’s good enough, people will love it and link to it from their own websites.

- **Digital PR**: Digital PR is about getting coverage on news websites and online publications, hopefully with links back to your website. Good digital PR focuses on newsworthy things you’ve done or interesting research that publishers can write a story about. With digital PR, you can get high-value links from news websites.

**Link schemes**

While you need links to rank in Google, Google really doesn’t like it when you go out there to get links. Google wants you to earn links the hard way. In their guidelines, Google states that any link intended to manipulate a site’s ranking can potentially be seen as a violation of their guidelines, and could lead to a penalty. That would rule out nearly all link-building tactics. So you need to be careful and make sure that any link you get to your website looks like it’s a perfectly valid earned link.

**Google penalties**

If you’re not careful, Google can penalize your website for violating its guidelines. A penalty will have an effect on how the website ranks in Google search results. You could get:

- **A partial penalty**: This means the website is penalized for a specific topic or site section, and will no longer ranked for keywords that apply to that topic or section.

- **A site-wide penalty**: This applies to the entire website. This could result in your whole website disappearing from Google’s search results. That’s the worst kind of penalty you can get.
Generally speaking, Google will penalize your website for:

- Blatant paid-for links
- Using link networks
- Spamming websites to get links

Links need to look natural, earned endorsement from one website to another.
LESSON 3: USING PAID SEARCH IN MARKETING CAMPAIGNS
**PPC**

**Definition**

PPC stands for pay-per-click, which is the most common way of advertising on the web. It’s called PPC because you, as the advertiser, only pay when someone clicks on your ad. So you’re only paying for actual visitors to your website.

**Terminology**

PPC has a lot of specific terminology. Here are some of the most important acronyms and phrases:

- **Keywords**: Search terms that users might type into search engines that you want to advertise on.
- **Impressions**: How often your ad is being shown on a search results page.
- **Clicks**: How often your ad is being clicked.
- **Click-Through Rate (CTR)**: The percentage of impressions that lead to a click.
- **Cost-Per-Impression (CPM)**: The cost to show your ad 1,000 times.
- **Cost-Per-Acquisition (CPA)**: How much it costs in PPC advertising to generate a single sale or conversion on your website.
- **Placement**: Where your ad is shown on a search results page.
- **Landing Page**: The page on your website that your ad links to.
- **Conversion**: A sale or other desirable action on your website.
- **Conversion Rate**: The percentage of visits that lead to a conversion on your website.
- **Product Listing Ad (PLA)**: A special type of pay-per-click ad for e-commerce products.
- **Dynamic Search Ad (DSA)**: An automatically generated ad based on the content of your landing page.

**GOOGLE ADS**

**PPC bid strategies**

Google Ads is an advertising service by Google for businesses wanting to display ads on Google. When you first start with Google Ads advertising, you’re going to have to decide how to manage your advertising budget. Google Ads offers many different ways to spend your budget, such as:

- A maximum cost-per-click
- Targeted search page location bidding, or
- Budgets related to cost-per-acquisition

**Maximum budgets and ad scheduling**

You can also control exactly how much you want to spend on a daily basis, so you'll never spend more than you've budgeted for. Additionally, Google Ads allows you to control when your ad is shown - for example, the times of the day and the days of the week - so you can make sure your budget is spent when it has the biggest impact.
CAMPAIGNS AND AD GROUPS

Google Ads campaign

A Google Ads campaign is a collection of one or more ad groups, and each ad group can contain one or more keywords you want to advertise on. Any ad group can also have one or more ads that are shown whenever your keyword is searched for in Google. As a rule, it’s wise to keep your ad groups tight, with not too many keywords per ad group. This allows you to craft targeted ads and send traffic to the best possible page on your website.

If your ad group is too broad, your ads might not be optimally relevant for all keywords, and the landing page your ad links to might not be the most relevant page on your website.

Campaign targeting

Google Ads campaigns come in all kinds of different flavors:

- Search network (Google search and search partners)
- Search network with display
- Video

We’re only going to look at search network campaigns.

Google Ads allows you to target a campaign to specific devices, like desktop computers, tablets, or smartphones. Google Ads also allows you to adjust your bids and ads for different devices.

Geographic targeting

One of the most powerful features of Google Ads is its geographic targeting. You can target your campaign for specific areas, as big as continents or as small as individual postcodes. This allows you to target your ads very accurately to the best possible audience.

Language targeting

You can also target specific languages in Google Ads, for example, a French-speaking audience in Switzerland, and make sure your ads are not shown for German-speaking users in the same country.

Google Ads in SERPs

So what happens when your ad is shown in Google? Whenever someone searches for a keyword that you advertise on, and it matches your campaign and ad group’s targeting, a live auction will take place. Here, Google looks at what every advertiser is bidding to advertise on that keyword (max CPC bid), and what the advertiser’s quality score is.

The quality score is basically a measure of how relevant your ad and landing page are to the keyword. Google does this to ensure it only shows relevant ads, and its users aren’t bombarded with ads that have nothing to do with what they’re searching for.

Each advertiser’s quality score is applied to their bid, and each ad gets a resulting ad rank. Google will then show these ads in proper order, according to the ad rank, with the best ad shown at the top.
**PPC METRICS**

**Measuring PPC success**

You will need to measure the success of your PPC campaigns.

- The number of **impressions** shows how many times your ad has been shown in a Google search result.
- The **clicks** indicate how often people have clicked on one of your ads.
- The **click-through rate** is the percentage of clicks from the total number of impressions.

In the end, it all comes down to conversions on your website: sales or leads. You can determine if a PPC campaign is successful by evaluating the money you spent versus the profit you make from the sales or leads that it’s generated.

Sometimes advertisers willingly overspend on PPC to achieve top ad rankings and get that initial sale, even if they lose money on it. They know they’ll earn it back during the course of the whole customer life-cycle due to up-sells and cross-sells.

**Multi-channel advertising campaign**

There’s more to PPC than just advertising or search results. Google Ads also allows you to do:

- Display advertising on websites
- Video advertising on YouTube
- Sponsored promotions in Gmail

This makes Google Ads a very powerful advertising platform that allows you to create multi-channel ads for a targeted audience. For example, you could create brand awareness with display and video ads, encourage interest with Gmail sponsored promotions, and then get interested visitors to your website with search ads.
LESSON 4: MEASURING SEARCH CAMPAIGNS
WEB ANALYTICS BASICS

Definition

Web analytics is a term that applies to all forms of online measurement. Generally, we use it to refer to analytics tools like Google Analytics or Adobe Omniture. But there are many more forms of web analytics that allow you to understand exactly how people engage with your website. We’ll focus purely on Google Analytics, because it’s free to use and it’s the most-used web analytics platform on the web.

Benefits of web analytics

Web analytics allows you to understand three things:

- How people find your website
- How people engage with your website
- What your website’s strengths and weaknesses are

This is incredibly valuable information, which allows you to improve your website, as well as improve your digital marketing efforts. Without web analytics, we’re just guessing what works and what doesn’t.

Web analytics allows us to make informed decisions based on actual data. That’s what sets digital marketing apart from other classical marketing activities.

The key benefits of analytics are that it enables you to:

- Get closer to the customer
- Accurately gauge user experience
- Gain insights from real customer experience

Google Analytics interface

The Google Analytics interface shows you the top-level metrics of your website’s performance in the last 30 days. Here, you can see:

- The total amount of sessions
- The amount of users that have visited your site
- How many pages they viewed
- The amount of pages a visitor looks at, on average
- How much time they spend on the site
- The average bounce rate

APPLIED ANALYTICS

Key features of a web analytics account

Google Analytics has four main reporting areas:

- **Audience**: This section provides information about your website’s visitors.
- **Acquisition**: This section shows how your visitors found your website.
Behavior: This is where Google reports on what your visitors do on your website.

Conversion: This section reports on any conversions that may happen, such as e-commerce sales or submitted contact forms.

Audience

Let's look at the Audience section. Here, we can find out what languages our visitors speak, where in the world they come from, what kind of device they've used, who their internet service provider is, and so on. You can distill all kinds of insights from these data sources. For example, if your audience primarily uses Internet Explorer on Windows 7 desktop PCs, you're probably looking at an elderly demographic; whereas if your audience uses the latest Chrome browser on an Android device, you have a much younger and technically savvy audience to work with.

Acquisition

The Acquisition section shows how your visitors found your website. There are four main primary sources of traffic:

Search - organic and pay-per-click: These visitors come from search engines, either from the paid advertising results or the organic results.

Social media: These visitors come from social media websites like Facebook and Twitter.

Referral sites: These are visitors from other websites that may link to yours, such as business directories or news articles.

Direct traffic: This is traffic that comes directly to your website via a bookmark or typing in your website's address, or any other traffic where Google Analytics doesn't know where it originated from.

Additionally, there's also a section for campaigns, which shows visits from specific online campaigns, such as pay-per-click advertising or email marketing campaigns. Google Ads will usually connect to your Google Analytics to show you the campaign data here, but for other campaigns, you might need to use special tracking URLs to make sure Google Analytics can report accurately.

Tracking URLs

You can tag your marketing URLs in email marketing or other channels with specific tracking codes to enable reporting in Google Analytics.

You can create special tracking URLs using an URL-builder tool.

To create a tracking URL, you start with the actual address of the page that you want to send users to, and then you add certain extra elements to it.

The three main elements you need to add are:

- **utm_source**: the traffic source of your campaign, such as your email newsletter or display ads
- **utm_medium**: the type of traffic, for example email or advertising
- **utm_campaign**: the name of your campaign, for example, “Christmas offer” or “Seasonal specialty”
When you use URLs that are configured like this, Google Analytics will report on them in the **Campaigns reports** of the Acquisition section.

**Behavior**

The Behavior section tells us what visitors do when they arrive on your website. Here, you can see which pages they visit the most, how long they spend on each page, how users click through your website from page to page and so on. This section also has reports on how your visitors use your internal search feature and how fast your site loads.

In this section, you can also look at specific events on your website that you may have configured.

**Conversions**

The Conversions section is where Google Analytics shows you whether your visitors turn into actual customers. Here, you see data about goal completions or online transactions, depending on what kind of website you have. You can determine exactly which traffic sources drive the most conversions, as well as how many visits a person needs to become a paying customer.

**Goal conversions**

Goal conversions are important because they allow you to determine if your website is delivering value to your business. Traffic numbers are fine but without conversion data, we still won't know if your website is generating business.

If your site is not an e-commerce site, you will need to set up goals to measure. Example of goals are when someone:

- Fills in a contact form
- Downloads a brochure
- Looks up your contact information

Basically, any desirable action on your website can be configured as a goal, allowing you to track and report on it. There are different types of goals:

You can configure goals based on a URL that people visit or based on an event that you've configured. If your website is an e-commerce website, you can enable e-commerce tracking, which allows you to track exactly what has been sold on your website, the value of those products, the amount of transactions, and so on.

**E-commerce conversions**

When configured properly, Google Analytics will show you precisely how many e-commerce sales are happening on your website, how much money you’re making from those sales, what the average order value of those sales is, and where those sales come from in terms of traffic sources. This allows you to see exactly how your e-commerce website is performing, and what its strengths and weaknesses are.
DIGITAL MARKETING MIX

Search marketing

Search is the biggest driver of traffic and sales on most websites. That’s not to say you should only focus on search. Other channels have their own strengths and weaknesses, and you need to utilize the best possible channels for your specific scenario. But suffice to say that without search marketing, your digital marketing efforts will leave a lot to be desired.

Multi-channel conversions

Each digital marketing channel is not an isolated silo. People use all kinds of different channels in conjunction. For example, they might read an email newsletter, then Google the company, maybe look them up on social media, then Google them again, before visiting the website and converting.

We have so-called Multi-Channel Conversion reports in Google Analytics to help us visualize these multi-channel customer journeys.

Multi-channel marketing

It’s important to invest in multiple channels when doing digital marketing, because you minimize risk and maximize your return. You could lose traffic from one channel entirely, for example, if your website is hit by a Google penalty or your emails end up on a spam list. But with multi-channel marketing, you will have other channels to fall back on. Additionally, each channel amplifies the other and helps spread your brand and your message further.

Social media marketing

Social media marketing is a form of internet marketing that utilizes social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, as a marketing tool for direct and indirect sales.

Social platforms like Twitter and Facebook have enormous reach and can help you establish your brand.

With social media marketing, you can:

- Grow your brand awareness
- Promote your website’s content
- Provide customer support
- Create an audience of loyal followers

However, they are poor sales platforms.

Email marketing

Email marketing is a structured, systematic process to deliver marketing messages to targeted subscribers. It’s the grandfather of all digital marketing channels. Email has been around the longest, and often people forget about it as a viable channel. That would be a mistake, because email marketing is still incredibly powerful.
Email is an opt-in channel, which means you have an audience at your disposal that wants to receive information from you. It doesn't get much more targeted than that. Email is a great way to:

- Enhance customer loyalty
- Encourage repeat conversions
- Promote your content to an audience that you know is interested

You can identify email marketing visits to your website in web analytics by looking at Direct Traffic and segmenting according to device and host or network data.

If you've tagged your URLs with the right analytics tracking code, you will also see your email marketing visitors show up in the Campaigns section in your Google Analytics dashboard.

**Affiliate marketing**

Affiliate marketing is another one of those neglected channels that is still immensely powerful. With affiliate marketing, you pay affiliates a commission when they generate a sale for you. So you’re only paying when you’re actually getting new customers.

Affiliate sites can also help you claim more sales from search. If the top-ranked websites on Google are all affiliate sites offering your products, you can make sure you get all the sales, even if your own site doesn’t get all the traffic.

So with affiliate marketing, you can:

- Generate more sales on a commission basis
- Utilize affiliate sites to promote your brand online
- Claim more SERP space when affiliate sites rank for competitive search terms

**Different channels support and amplify one another**

Using multiple channels will amplify your digital marketing and drive sales across the board. It also contributes to a brand's presence online and establishes a sense of trust and authority.

Search often comes into play towards the latter stages of the sales funnel, when people already know your brand or the product they want to buy, and then will use Google to search for it. Thus, search gets most of the credit, while other channels may have played a strong part in creating that awareness and creating that interest in the first place.