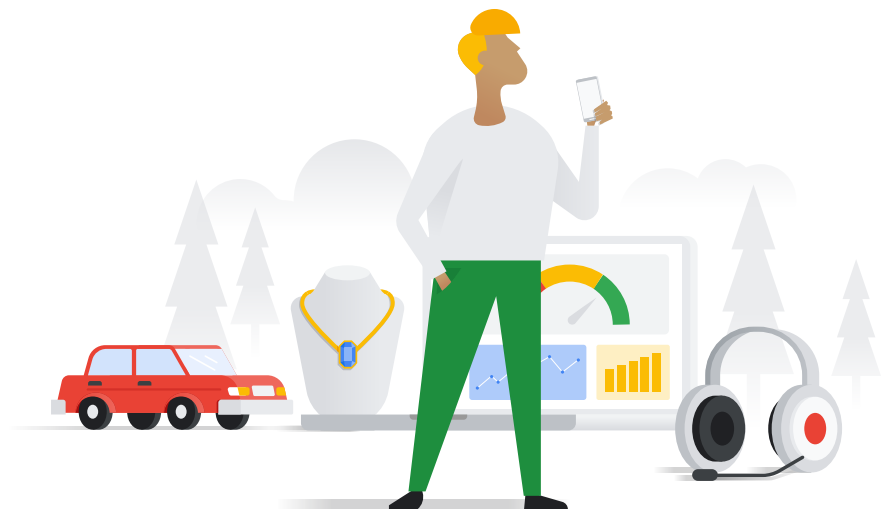


SOLUTION GUIDE

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# Linking analytics and ads

The solution to today's marketing challenges



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# Introduction

Gone are the days of the traditional marketing funnel. While the funnel once showed us how a customer would gradually narrow down their product search along the path to purchase, this standard has changed. Or more accurately, *there is no standard path*. Today's customer journeys might resemble anything from a pyramid to an hourglass — and according to a [study](#) conducted by Google and Verto Analytics, no two journeys look the same.<sup>1</sup>

Advances in digital technology and the ubiquity of mobile devices have empowered customers. With mobile devices always at the ready, consumers know they can get just the information they want instantly and effortlessly. That's why they're researching extensively before making purchases. This research isn't limited to buying big, expensive items — mobile searches for "best earbuds" have grown by over 130% over the past two years.<sup>2</sup>

Customers expect a lot now, so the best marketers are figuring out ways to anticipate customer intentions and meet these rising expectations. The brands that are growing are gaining a deeper understanding of today's non-linear and fast-paced customer journey, and they're using this knowledge to deliver relevant, personalized experiences.

In this guide, we'll explore the solutions that are helping teams accomplish this and drive growth. We'll first learn how linking Google Analytics and Google Ads helps you optimize bidding and tailor your message to your audience. Then we'll highlight the machine learning and cross-device capabilities in Google Analytics and Google Ads that help your team work smarter — and show how you can get the insights you need to turn today's marketing challenges into a winning opportunity.



**Jonathan Meltzer**  
Director, Ads Marketing, Platforms

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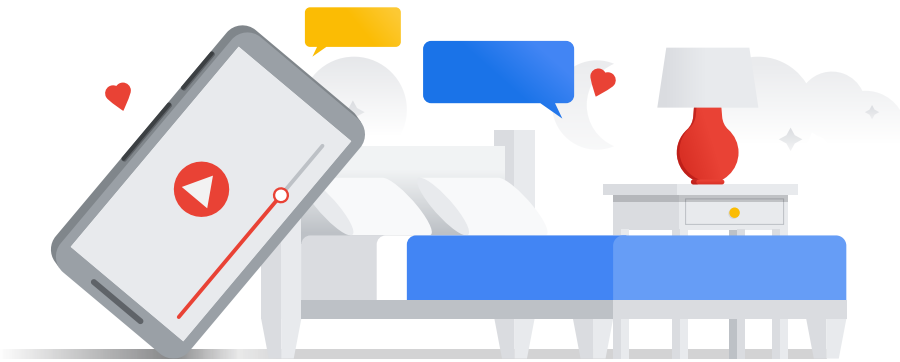
1. Google/Verto, Journey Finder, U.S., Sept 2017 - Feb 2018, n=2,989 A18+  
2. Google Data, U.S., Oct 2015 - Sept 2016 vs. Oct 2017 - Sept 2018.

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## Part 1: New challenges, new solutions

### Today's curious consumer

Imagine a user who learns about a new mattress brand from a friend. Intrigued, they search for reviews of this brand on YouTube – and discover three other interesting mattress brands after watching related videos on their phone. To compare these brands, the user reads more reviews over the next few days, then finally completes a purchase on their desktop. Today this kind of multi-step, curiosity-driven customer journey is more common than ever.

Google looked at over a thousand users' clickstream data as part of an opt-in panel and we found that no two customer journeys are exactly alike. In fact, even within the same purchase category, journeys take multiple shapes.<sup>3</sup> For instance, while the above mattress search took about a week and involved hundreds of touchpoints, another consumer's mattress purchase might involve double the touchpoints and take a month of careful searching and comparing.

While the evolving customer journey presents challenges for marketing teams, leading marketers are embracing technology that helps them turn this challenge into an opportunity to deliver better customer experiences.

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3. Google partnered with Verto Analytics to analyze the consumer opt-in Verto Smart Cross-Device Audience Measurement Panel for click-stream data of n=2,989 individuals over a period of 6 months.

# The leading marketer's response

## Letting insights lead the way

In order to create relevant and helpful experiences to assist curious consumers like the mattress buyer above, successful marketers are using insights to anticipate intent and deliver the right experience at the right time.

Leading marketers are keeping track of critical marketing metrics and monitoring performance more closely. According to [research Google conducted in partnership with Bain & Company](#), marketing leaders were 1.7X more likely than laggards to refresh their marketing metrics and dashboards at least weekly.<sup>4</sup> And they are sharing these insights regularly among their teams — so that there's a single source of truth.

Of course, any insights work must be done in a way that protects user privacy. Marketers need to use a responsible approach to handling user data. They also need to be thoughtful about how they collect data, and should invest in a first-party measurement solution where they can measure user interactions directly. Lastly, marketers need to be privacy-safe when managing their customer data, making sure the right safeguards are in place to protect the confidentiality of that data.

## Prioritizing integrated technology

The brands who show up with the right message at just the right moment are the ones on the path to growth and revenue. They aren't looking to speak to customers in vague terms — they want to personalize their message. According to Google's research study conducted with Greenberg Strategy, 88% of consumers favor brands that provide helpful information along every stage of their journey, from research to purchase. Despite that clear preference, only 47% of brands customize and serve information across the customer journey.<sup>5</sup>

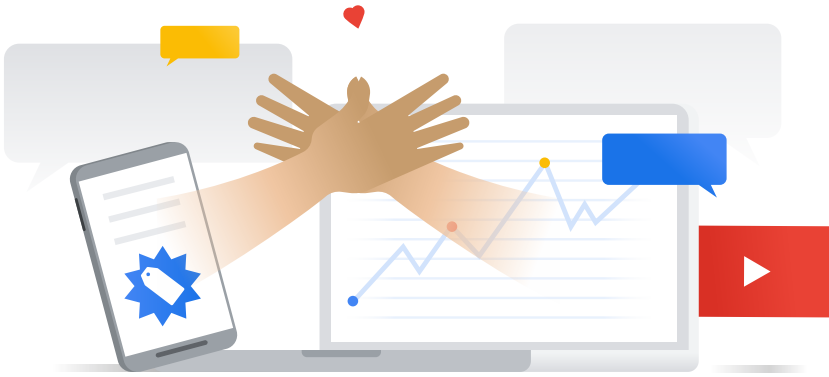
So how are leading marketers identifying and acting on the user insights they need to create great experiences? By integrating their solutions for analytics and ads, marketing teams can see the whole customer journey and work to improve it. They can quickly surface insights, then seamlessly apply those insights as they build a customer experience that is relevant to customers' needs — and the right technology makes it easy to deliver this kind of experience.



Marketing leaders were 1.7X more likely than laggards to refresh their marketing metrics and dashboards at least weekly.

4. Bain/Google Marketing Leaders Study, North America, n=516 marketing and advertising media and technology executive decision makers. Marketing Leaders (n=123) were defined as the top 20% based on a composite score of revenue and market share growth.

5. Google/Greenberg Strategy, Google Connected Consumer, U.S., 2018, n=1200, Age18-54.



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## Part 2: Google Analytics and Google Ads – The Power Couple

### Create insights-driven ads

Google Analytics helps you gain a deeper understanding of your customers and how they're engaging with your site, content, and products. Analytics gives you powerful insights – and the ability to put them to work quickly thanks to its integration with Google Ads.

Google Ads helps you create ads to promote your products or services, then get them in front of people likely to buy from you across Google Search, YouTube, and Google's network of partner sites and apps.

The integration between Google Analytics and Google Ads helps you get a clear view of how your ads are leading to conversions – and then quickly adjust creative and bidding accordingly. You can also use the products together to pinpoint your most valuable customer segments, then engage these customers with customized messaging.

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## Optimize your bids

When you link Google Analytics and Google Ads, you get access to a new set of ads reports in your Analytics account which give you a more complete understanding of a customer's path to conversion, whether that's a purchase completed or a lead captured. These reports help you measure what happens after users click on your ads, so you can learn what's working and what's not, and take steps to improve your campaigns. For instance, are you noticing in Analytics that certain keywords are driving more users to convert? If so, you can increase your bids for your high performing keywords in Google Ads. Or you can explore why users didn't convert by reviewing the bounce rates and site engagement metrics for non-converters, and figuring out where and why they abandoned.

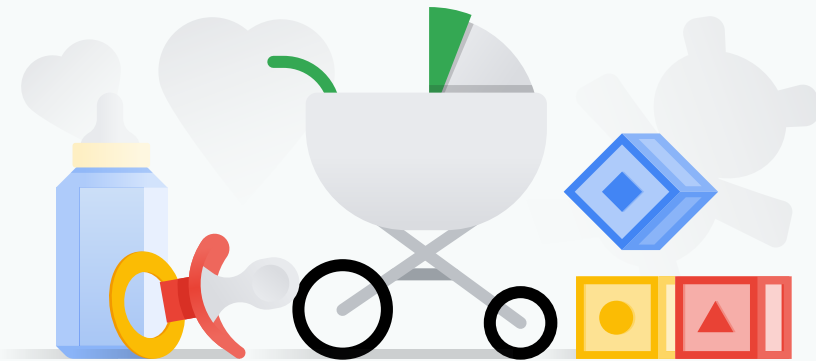
## Tailor to your audience

Google Analytics and Google Ads work together to help you show ads that are tailored to your audience. Say you want to reach high value cart abandoners, which you've defined as customers who've added at least five products to their shopping cart but haven't completed a purchase. First, build an Analytics audience based on that behavior, then create a search or display campaign in Google Ads that delivers a special promotion to them — encouraging a conversion.

## Use advanced machine learning

Google Analytics uses machine learning to help you get the most out of your data, surface insights more quickly, and act on your insights in an informed way. You can even ask Analytics a question in plain English such as "Where is my traffic coming from?" or "What's the average time spent on this landing page on mobile versus desktop?" — and get a helpful answer back quickly.

Another Analytics machine learning capability is Smart Lists, which helps you find and reach your most valuable customers. Smart Lists consider a variety of signals from your Analytics data — including location, device, browser, referrer, session duration, and page depth — to create audience lists of visitors that have the greatest chance of converting on their next session, and then dynamically manage your Google Ads campaigns to focus on these audiences.



## Case Study

### Challenge

When Mumzworld, an online retailer selling baby products, wanted to increase online sales and lower the cost of user acquisition, they turned to Google Analytics. First they used the Enhanced Ecommerce feature in Analytics to better understand which parts of the digital shopping journey – such as homepage banners – drove sales.

They also used Enhanced Ecommerce to monitor inventory and ensure they weren't wasting ad spend on out-of-stock products. Then they created Analytics audiences of users who had visited the site but not made a purchase and delivered ads to this audience to re-engage them and drive conversions.

### Results

Together these strategies drove a 128% increase in revenue, 11% increase in Ecommerce conversion rate, and a 300% return on ad spend.

**128%**

increase in revenue

**300%**

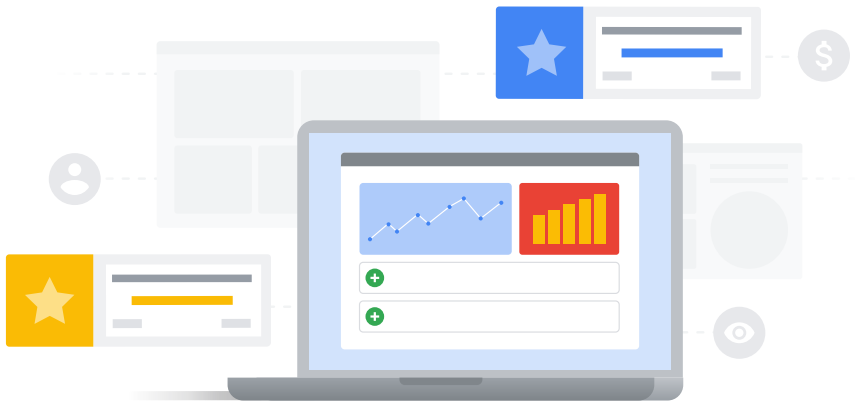
return on ad spend

**mumzworld**  
#1 mother, baby & child site in the Middle East

[Learn more](#) about how Mumzworld used Analytics to drive growth







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## Part 3: Working together to improve media performance

Seeing the whole picture – and ensuring you know the impact of every impression, click and conversion – is valuable for any marketer. To get this level of visibility, you need to [link Google Analytics and Google Ads](#).

Once you've linked Google Analytics and Google Ads, you'll be able to see detailed data about your ads campaigns right alongside your site metrics and conversion data in Analytics – meaning you no longer have to move between different products to get a full understanding of the customer journey. And once you have those insights, you can quickly build campaigns that are informed by them. You can also bring site engagement data from Analytics into Google Ads for increased visibility, enabling your team to make informed decisions about campaign optimizations. Here's how you link Google Analytics and Google Ads, step by step.

### Link Analytics with Google Ads:

- › Sign in to Google Analytics and click **Admin**.
- › Go to the PROPERTY column and click **Google Ads Linking**. Then click **+ NEW LINK GROUP**. Select the Google Ads accounts you want to link, then click **Continue**.
- › Turn linking ON for each view in the property in which you want Google Ads data.  
Make sure *auto-tagging* is enabled in your Google Ads accounts. It will give you the ability to analyze your data directly in Analytics, which adds more dimensions to your ads visits.  
[Here's how you enable it.](#)
- › Click [Link accounts](#).

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# Google Analytics and Google Ads: Best practices

With your accounts linked, you'll be able to understand your audience on a deeper level, gain detailed knowledge of how your campaigns are performing, and use these insights to power smarter marketing. You'll also be able to carefully assess campaign performance and adjust bidding and creative accordingly. The following are some powerful use cases to leverage now that your accounts are linked.

## Activate cross device capabilities in Analytics

In Google Analytics, you can learn how customers engage with your brand across different devices. For instance, you can see if users browse your site on their phone and then go to their laptop to complete their purchase. You might decide to increase your mobile ad spend once you've learned that many of your desktop conversions start with a mobile interaction.

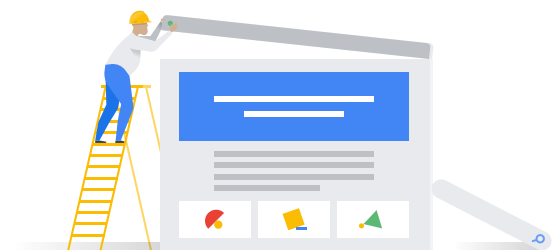
You can also access four new reports that help you better understand the journey your customers are taking across their devices. These cross device reports only display aggregated and anonymized data from people who have opted in to personalized advertising (as always users can [opt out](#) at any time). Once you better understand the actions people take on various devices, you can create smarter audiences that deliver more relevant, useful site experiences.

These capabilities and more are possible when you choose to [activate Google signals](#). By activating this setting, you can market to signed-in users who have turned on [Ads Personalization](#).

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## Create personalized website experiences with Google Optimize

Looking to personalize the landing pages for your ad campaigns? Google Optimize helps you create different versions of your website for different audiences so that you can deliver customized experiences. Linking Optimize and Google Ads helps you improve the return on your ads campaigns by better aligning your advertising and site messaging. Learn more about this powerful integration [here](#).



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## Create audiences in Analytics and share with Google Ads

An audience in Google Analytics is a segment of users with common attributes in a particular time frame. For example, an audience could be defined simply as current shoppers or it could be defined as shoppers who viewed the page for Product A, and then within x days returned to purchase the product.

There are three ways to create audiences in Analytics:

- › Analytics preconfigured [audiences](#) are one way to get started with audiences. Analytics preconfigured audiences include all users who have visited your site, new users, returning users, users who made a purchase, and more.
- › [Smart Lists](#) are a second option. Smart Lists let Google manage the audience for you by using dozens of dimensions (such as how long users were on your site and how many pages they visited) to build a list of the users who are most likely to convert in subsequent sessions.
- › You can also build your own custom audience definitions in Analytics. Here are just a handful of examples of audiences you can create in Analytics:
  - › Visitors who added items to the shopping cart but abandoned before purchase
  - › Visitors who searched the site but didn't make a purchase
  - › Visitors with fewer than x sessions on your site
  - › Visitors who visited your site in a specific time period
  - › Visitors in a certain location

Creating an audience list in Google Analytics and sharing with Google Ads enables you to focus your marketing efforts on those users. You can view this audience in your Analytics reports to explore how they engage with your marketing efforts. Here are the steps to [share audiences](#) in Google Ads.



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## Create and import Goal completions

While a conversion in Google Analytics usually represents a purchase completed or a lead captured, a Goal can represent any metric you find valuable, such as the amount of time spent on a site, a specific action taken on a page, or a conversion. When a visitor to your site performs an action defined as a Goal, Analytics records that as a conversion. Using Goals gives you a better understanding of how customers are engaging with your site and helps you measure the effectiveness of your marketing strategy.

Importing your Google Analytics Goals into Google Ads enables you to:

- › Analyze user activity on your website after an ad click or impression.
- › View Google Analytics site engagement metrics—like Bounce Rate, Avg. Session Duration, and Pages/Session—on your Google Ads Campaigns and Ad groups tabs.
- › Access conversion data directly in Google Ads to adjust bids, potentially increasing conversions and lowering costs.

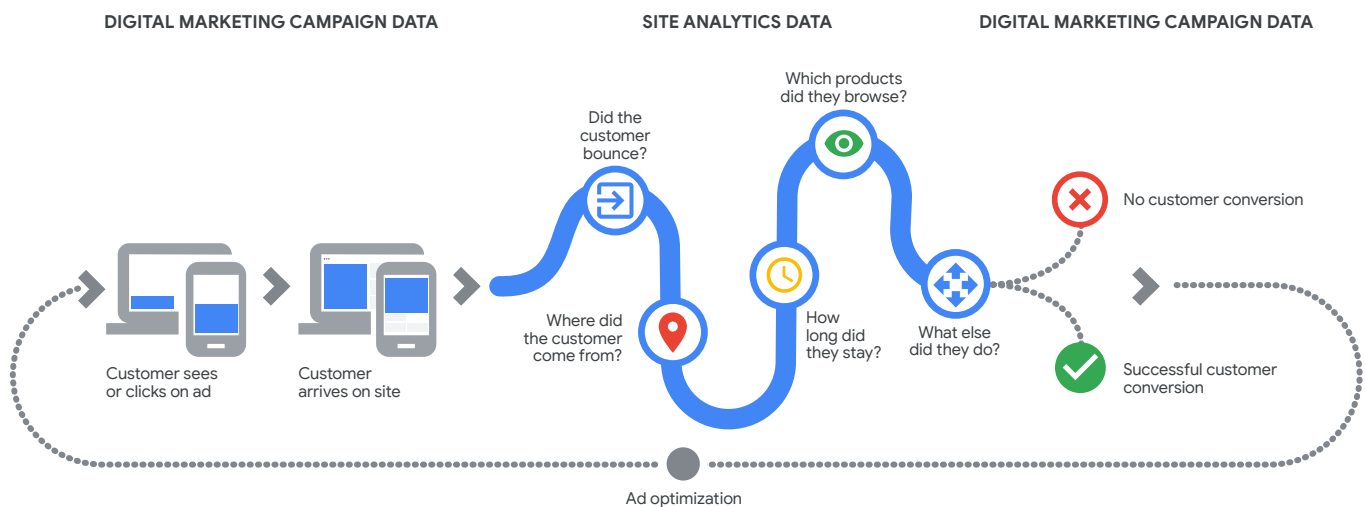
Follow these steps to [create Goals in Google Analytics](#) then [import them into Google Ads](#).



# Informative Reports

Now that you've implemented the best practices listed above, it's time to explore the multiple reporting options available in Google Analytics so you can understand how your marketing is performing and take steps to improve. For example, knowing how your website, ads and other channels like email and social are working together helps you optimize your messaging and creative.

Analytics gives you a full view into the process that leads to a conversion. Even though the customer journey is complex, getting insights can be as easy as **A-B-C: Acquisition, Behavior, Conversion**.



## Acquisition reports

Google Analytics offers the following predefined reports in the sidebar under [Acquisition](#), which help you better understand how users who click on your ads campaign got to your site.

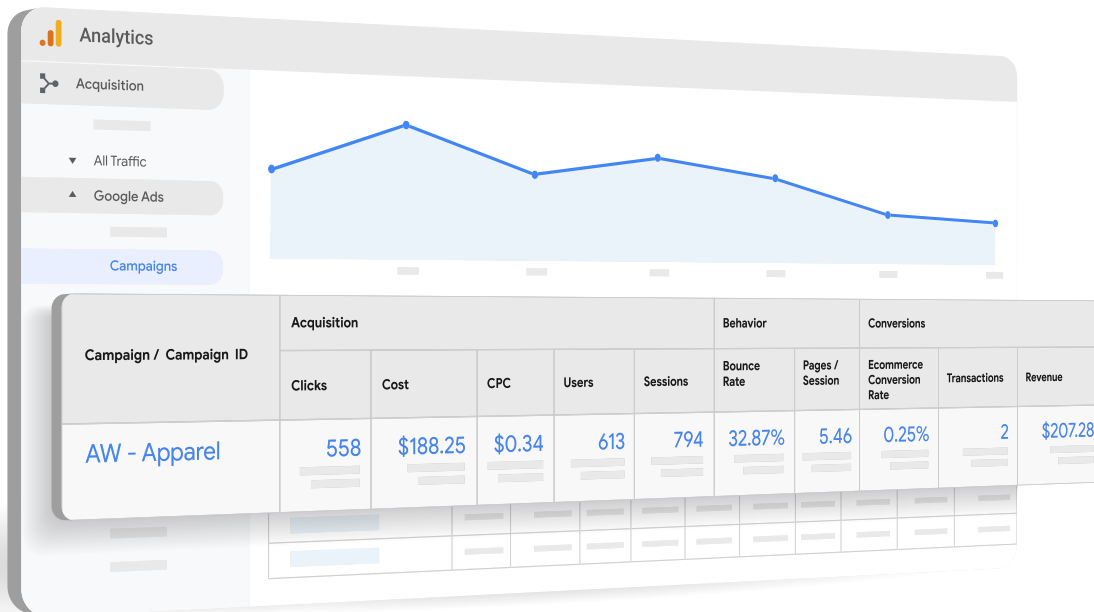
**All Traffic:** How effective are your campaigns? Are the campaigns you're running via email more effective than your search campaigns? In "All Traffic," you can understand the source and medium of your traffic, i.e. the advertiser or marketing channel that is sending traffic your way. In general, your data reflects how you've set up your campaign structure.

So we recommend [auto-tagging](#) for Google Ads to help you easily understand your site’s traffic. For non-Google media, [Custom campaign](#) naming can help improve the reporting you conduct by source and medium.

**Google Ads:** Google Ads reports provide you with post-click performance insights about users who clicked on your ads and then came through to your website. Here are a few examples of Google Ads reports:

- › [Campaign](#): Want to know how effective your Google Ads campaigns are at attracting new users and driving actions on your site? This report analyzes traffic from your Google Ads campaigns to answer these questions and give you a better idea of how your campaigns are performing.
- › [Keywords](#): Are certain keywords driving traffic but have a high bounce rate? Which keywords are driving revenue? This report helps you understand the performance of different keywords including the relative performance of related keywords.
- › [Search Queries](#): Which search queries resulted in your ads being displayed? This report answers these questions, which helps you refine the ways you reach your audience.

 Acquisition > Google Ads > Campaigns

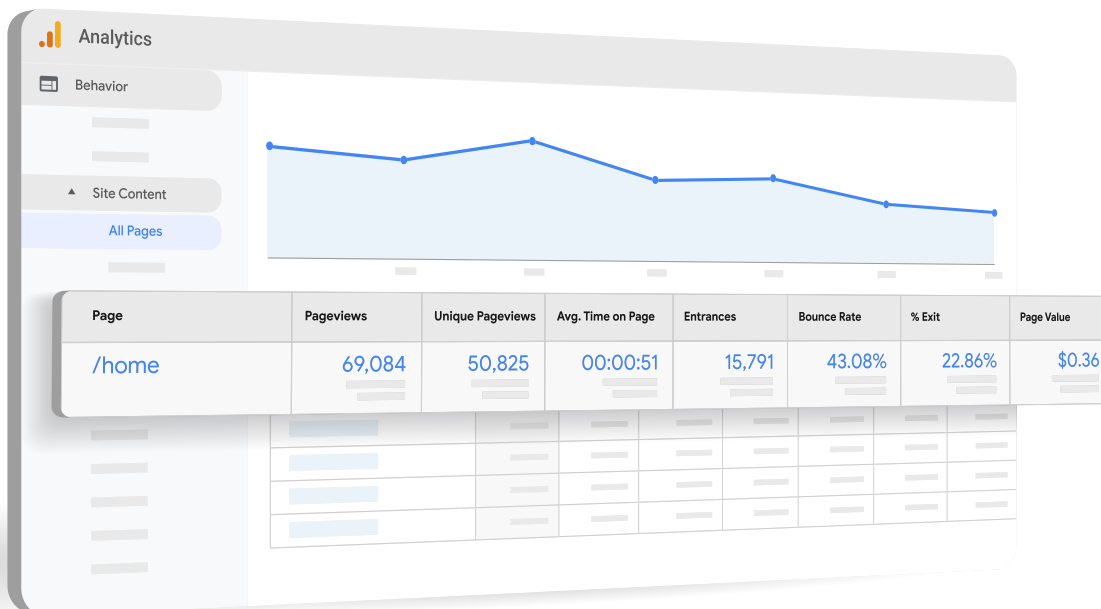


## Behavior reports

[Behavior reports](#) help you better analyze user behavior on your website after people click on ads, so you can discover which content is performing best. Here are a few examples of Behavior reports in Analytics.

- › [Site content](#): Site grouping helps you compare how different parts of your site’s content are performing. How many page views is the men’s clothing section of your site getting? Or how is the outerwear section performing? You can find out when you create [content groups](#) that reflect the logical structure of your site’s content. Then view performance metrics aggregated by content group.
- › [Events](#): What actions are users taking on your site? Are they downloading content, signing up for newsletters, or watching videos? When you [set up](#) Events, you can see data about user interactions and measure the Top Events on your site.

### Behavior > Site Content > All Pages



## Conversion reports

In Google Analytics, a conversion is the completion of an activity that is important to the success of your business, such as a completed sign-up for your email newsletter or a purchase.

Goals help you see the steps users take on their path to purchase. While your primary objective might be to drive conversions, understanding the site interactions that precede conversion is necessary for effectively running your business. In Analytics, [Goal Flow reports](#) can help you see the path your users take toward conversion and if there are drop-off points as users navigate your content.

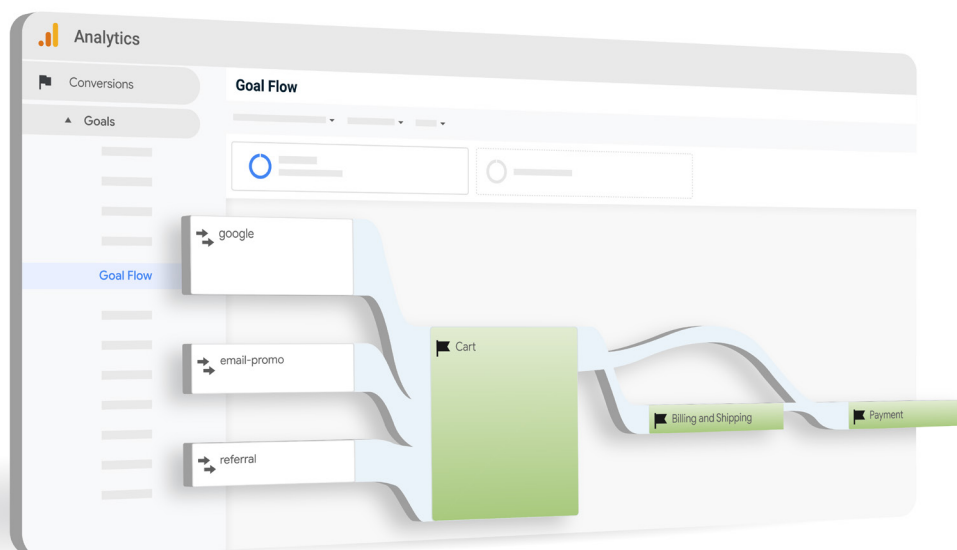
For sites where users will be making purchases, [Ecommerce reports](#) help you get a better idea of the conversions happening on your site. Gain useful insights about your products and the transactions happening on your site, your users' time to purchase, average order value, and other useful information about your users' purchases.

Once you've analyzed your Goals and/or Ecommerce performance, you can use the [Multi-Channel Funnels](#) reports to see how all your channels work together to create sales. The Multi-Channel Funnels reports are generated from conversion paths, which are the sequences of interactions (clicks, referrals from channels, etc.) during the 90 days that led up to each a conversion. Analytics records up to 5,000 interactions per conversion path.

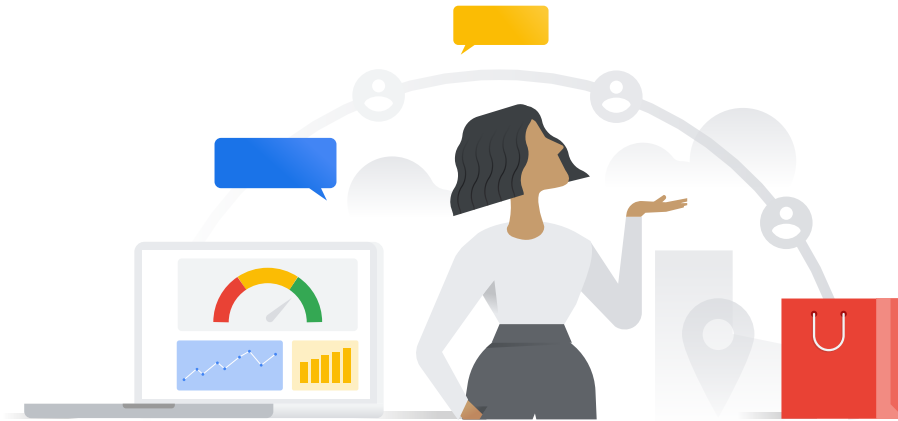
### Analytics Reporting in Google Ads

Google Analytics metrics can also be accessed within Google Ads reporting. These metrics give you the insights to help you optimize your campaign. For more information on adding Analytics columns to your Google Ads reports, see [here](#).

## Conversions > Goals > Goal Flow







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## Conclusion

Today's consumers are curious and impatient – but savvy marketers are turning that restlessness into an opportunity to build stronger customer relationships. The solutions are available for any brand to take their marketing to the next level. How are you going to put insights at the center of your strategy, then use them to deliver relevant, timely marketing? Getting the most out of your technology by linking Google Analytics and Google Ads is a crucial first step.

[Get started by linking today](#)

And to learn more about Google Analytics and Google Ads, visit our website: [g.co/analytics](https://g.co/analytics)

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## 'Get Started Now' Checklist

Here's what you need to get started:

- Link Google Analytics accounts to Google Ads accounts**
- Activate cross device capabilities**
- Create an Analytics audience and share with Google Ads**
- Create and import Goal completions**
- Take action on your data with better reporting**

### **About Google Analytics**

Google Analytics gives marketers deep insights about websites and audiences. Powerful, flexible, and free, Analytics helps savvy marketers find the messages and channels that earn the best results. State-of-the-art conversion attribution and testing tools help businesses large and small build better user experiences and maximize digital strategies.

[Find out more](#)