Google Best Practices

Better Together

Combine AdWords with Google Analytics for
Better Insights, Bidding and Results

Introduction

Like sunshine and the beach, or dogs and tennis balls, Google AdWords and Google Analytics are great by themselves but even better together.

You'll get high-performance insights into your ads and your website when you link your AdWords and Analytics accounts. Google Analytics does a vital job in this pairing: it shows you the AdWords traffic that *didn't* lead to a conversion. If you assume that the average site conversion rate is around 3%, that leaves 97% of traffic that can be understood better. *A lot* better.

You can start gathering those detailed insights now by <u>linking your accounts</u>. We'll begin with working with Google Analytics metrics in AdWords, then we'll move on to working with AdWords metrics in GA. Across both platforms, remember that these strategies should be used in tandem for maximum success.

10 ways to drive results from linked AdWords and Google Analytics (GA) accounts

First, pull Google Analytics metrics into AdWords for deeper insights.

1. Import goal completions and ecommerce transactions.
Why: *You can perform richer analysis on customized analytics goals (including micro-conversions), and then optimize to those GA goals right in AdWords.*

2. Create custom remarketing lists.
Why: *Create highly-specific remarketing lists based on pages viewed, goal completions or other GA segmentations.*

3. Use Smart Lists to automatically group your site users that are most likely to convert.
Why: *Reach engaged (but not yet converted) users of your site without needing to segment those audiences yourself.*

4. Understand which Adwords campaigns, ads or keywords drive on-site engagement.
Why: *Conversions only tell part of the story. GA tells you more about how users engage with your site, and the keywords that do (or don't) bring them in.*

5. Monitor '% new sessions' to learn which keywords attract new users.
Why: *Spotting new users from AdWords tells you how to focus your efforts, especially when they're coming into contact with you for the first time.*

Second, analyze your AdWords performance right in Google Analytics.

6. Auto-tag your ads.
Why: *Auto-tagged ads generate more richly-detailed GA reports.*

7. Segment behavior to understand your AdWords target audience.
Why: *Discover the right messages and landing pages for each kind of user.*

8. Layer GA's secondary dimensions onto your AdWords-specific reports.
Why: *Secondary dimensions help you see which devices, keywords, placements and more drive high-quality users.*

9. Use AdWords Secondary Dimensions in GA Reports.
Why: *Find AdWords-specific insights using any of your favorite reports in Analytics—insights that can improve your account's performance.*

10. Use Benchmarking to see how your site stacks up to the competition.
Why: *See what's possible in your industry and how your own desktop and mobile sites compare.*

Pull Google Analytics Metrics into AdWords for Deeper Insights

You can get a deeper understanding of the interactions your customers have with your site by working with Google Analytics metrics within the AdWords interface. That means insight into detailed conversion behaviors, clearer audience profiles, and a better sense of the customer's journey from their first ad click right through to the conversion you want. Let's look at some places to start.

1. Import Goal Completions and Ecommerce Transactions

A conversion is usually a purchase completed or a lead captured, but a goal can be many things: a visit to a given page, a certain amount of time spent on a site, or a host of other things you find valuable.

Google Analytics provides you with flexible goal tracking, and those goals can be imported into AdWords as conversions. This helps you perform richer analyses, and also create goals that double as profiles for specific audiences.

Those goals can be certain actions you consider important. For instance:
- **Destination:** A visit to a specific page on your site, like a visit to a new /blog page on your site if you're trying to build a community with your customers.
- **Duration:** The time someone spends on your site. You might use this if you want users to engage deeply; or, on the other hand, if you want them to find information as fast as possible.
- **Pages or screens per session:** How many pages each user visits—useful if you'd rather measure engagement by page visits instead of by time on site.
- **Event:** The moment when someone watches a video, adds a product to a cart, shares a page through a social button, or takes any other action. Helpful if you want users to complete a specific action beyond a destination page view.

All these goals can be imported into AdWords as conversions, so you can see and measure the actions your ads created.

Additionally, you can track the value of your conversions in AdWords. But did you know that you can go even deeper with that tracking in Google Analytics? Ecommerce tracking in GA includes detailed information about products (including revenue generated by each), transactions (revenue, tax, shipping and more), and time to purchase (number of days and sessions it takes to finish a sale). In AdWords,

you'll be able to see the number of transactions and their associated revenue by importing your GA ecommerce transactions, and from that you can connect your account's performance directly to your sales data.

Define Micro-Conversions

Micro-conversions are small (but valuable!) actions that users take on your site. They may add something to their cart, for instance, or download a newsletter.

These things may not have the value of a $2,000 purchase, but they capture user actions from different parts of the research and buying process—and show you how best to speak to that audience.

Once you import these Google Analytics goals into AdWords, you're free to customize them further. You can decide how to count them, or what the lookback window should be:
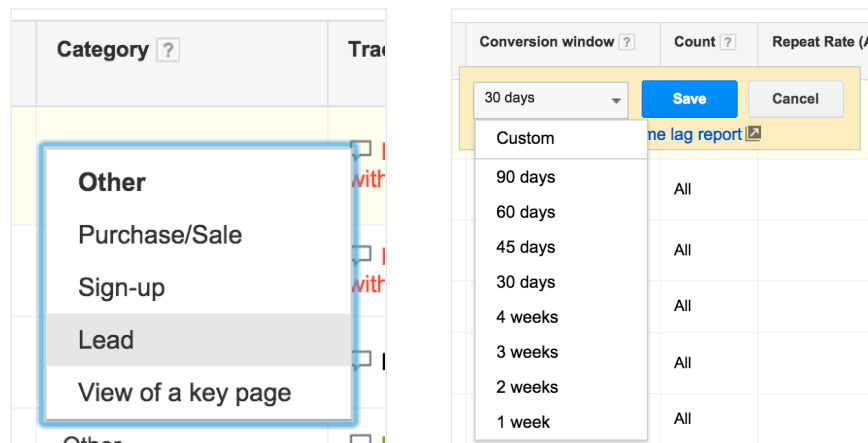
You can monitor these different conversions and micro-conversions using the 'Segment' feature to see reports by conversion name.
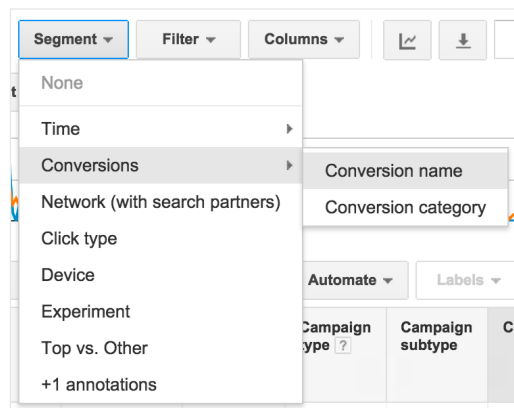
2. Create Custom Remarketing Lists

Remarketing lists help you stay in front of users who have expressed interest in what you offer. Combine AdWords and Google Analytics and you'll be able to build smarter [remarketing lists](#) to use in your campaigns.

3. Use Smart Lists to Automatically Group Your Site Users that are Most Likely to Convert

[Smart Lists](#) are a good option if you don't have time to segment your audience yourself. Google Analytics will automatically build a list of users on your site who are most likely to convert, and you can then use remarketing to bring them back to your site.

Using pre-defined audiences

If you prefer to create your own custom remarketing lists, try to find your ideal audience using Google Analytics segmentation capabilities like pages viewed, location, on-site activity and goal completions. (Build your audiences under Remarketing in your Admin tab in GA.) You can pick from predefined lists, or create your own, and instantly see the estimated size of the list that results.

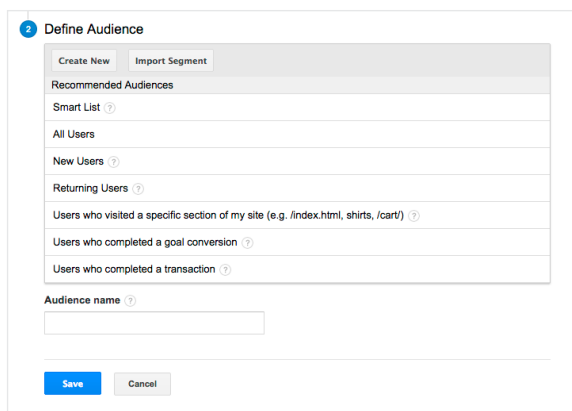

Creating a custom remarketing list

Your goal is to create groups that you can reach effectively in the future: groups like homepage visitors, product page viewers, conversion abandoners or past converters. All of these, and others like them, are groups you can speak to with specific remarketing messages that will bring them back to your site.

For example: people who first came to your site through a non-paid link on another site haven't clicked your ads, so they may have different expectations when they see your remarketing ad. Or, if users have watched a video on your site once before, you may send them to a landing page with a video on it.
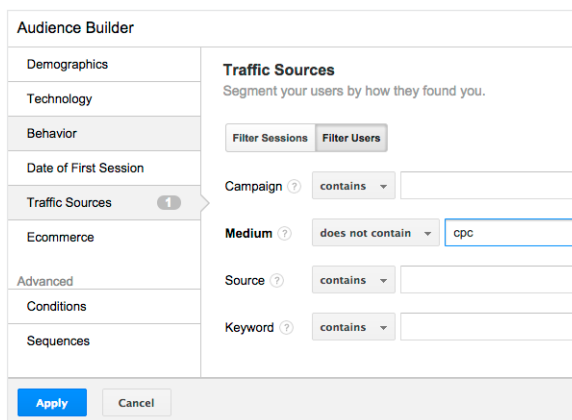
You can use any of Google Analytics' 250+ dimensions and metrics to build these kinds of highly-specific remarketing lists. The sky's the limit, and the power is yours: you decide what's most valuable for your site and your business, and build your audiences to match.

4. Understand Which AdWords Campaigns, Ads or Keywords Drive On-site Engagement

With your accounts linked, you can add Google Analytics metrics directly to your AdWords reports. Adding Analytics' site interaction metrics to standard AdWords metrics like CTR and conversion rate will take things to a higher level.
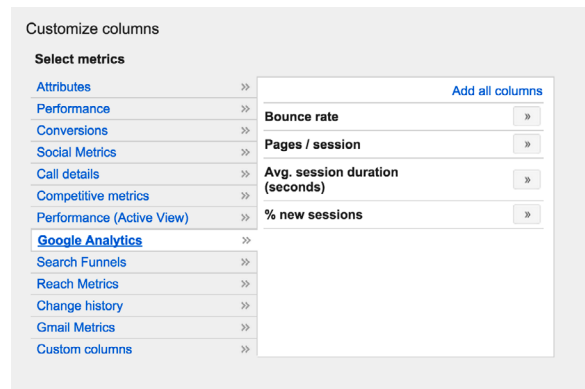
Most clicks don't turn into conversions. (This is that 97% we spoke of earlier.) Google Analytics metrics can help you see what happened when things didn't turn out quite the way you hoped—and test ways to change that outcome.

For instance, you might try out:
- **A new call to action in your ads.** How does your message prepare users to interact with your site? Does their pages viewed or session length change when you change your call to action?
- **A new set of keywords.** Do your keywords deliver on users' expectations? Are bounce rates in line with your core keyword base...or better?
- **A new campaign landing page.** Does a different landing page draw users deeper into your site? Is their average session getting longer?

More data is better when you're analyzing performance, as long as that data is really relevant. Keep the focus on the metrics that matter most to your account. Then use Google Analytics when the primary metrics in your account don't give you enough insight to make effective decisions.

5. Monitor '% New Sessions' to Learn Which Keywords Attract New Users

To see and understand where your campaigns reach customers in their journey, the **% new sessions** metric can be a big help.

This metric can be a proxy for new customers to your business. You may have a general idea of which keywords are driving new customers to your site, but % new sessions will help you prove or disprove your hypothesis. Try it when you're setting goals for your account and also when you're gauging the success of a keyword or a campaign.

Certain keywords will bring new users your way. Those users have a different value than someone who is returning to re-engage with your site. So plan your messaging and bids appropriately.

As you learn more about how familiar each user is with your site or brand, you can improve the overall strategy for your account.

TIP:

Want to know even more about how customers find you? Take a look at Multi-Channel Funnels and Attribution Modeling in Google Analytics. You'll see how different channels interact with one another as they bring new users to your site.

Analyze AdWords Performance in Google Analytics

You can take action by viewing your Google Analytics stats within AdWords, and you can perform deep analysis by reviewing AdWords performance directly in Google Analytics.

6. Auto-tag Your Ads

Before we get into the reporting details, let's start with one piece of technical advice: plan to use auto-tagging on your ads. Save manual tagging for special cases. This will simplify your life and create more reporting flexibility. There are more benefits to auto-tagging than we can get into here, but you should plan on using it.

Analyzing your data directly in Google Analytics will add more dimensions to your AdWords visits. Something as simple as finding non-converting keywords that still bring in above-average quality traffic (low bounce rate, high time-on-site, etc.) can lead to big optimizations for your account. The analyses and reports we'll look at here are just scratching the surface of what's possible. We hope they'll inspire your own unique custom insights as you work with your linked accounts.

7. Segment Behavior to Understand Your AdWords Target Audience

Google Analytics has a powerful segmentation engine. Instead of looking at your audience in large bunches, you can break it down into its component parts and understand how each part interacts with your site—then bid, message and direct traffic accordingly. (You can even build them for yourself with the Segment builder.)

TIP:
Create your own custom segments for even deeper analysis. Or, import additional segments (here are some for Paid Search) to your account from the Google Analytics Solutions Gallery.

Here's an example: How do users coming from AdWords react to your site on their first visit? To find out, run a Destination URL report in Google Analytics, then segment it by New and Returning Users.

In this case you may also learn which pages on your site could double as good landing pages for AdWords traffic.

You can also learn helpful AdWords lessons from the rest of your traffic. Check out some suggested segments and analyses on page 11 that you could run in your account.
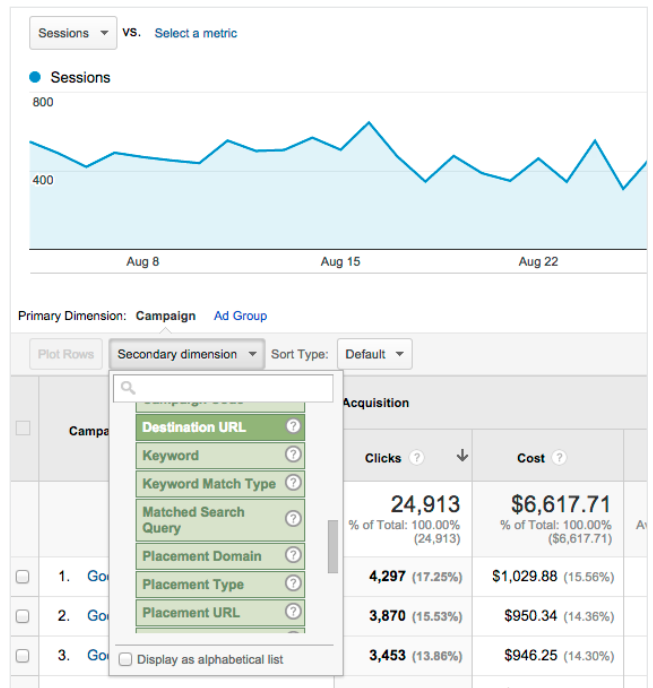
TIP:
Try creating your own [custom dimensions](#) if you have information about your logged-in users from outside of Google Analytics, such as from your internal systems. You'll see how distinct sets of those existing customers perform.

8. Layer GA's Secondary Dimensions onto Your AdWords-specific Reports

Want to know where your most profitable customers come from? Try layering GA's flexible secondary dimensions onto your AdWords-specific GA reports.

Secondary dimensions in GA work like AdWords segments, except that there are more of them and they're more flexible.

First, pick a question—any question. Then investigate the right dimensions to find the answer. For instance:

Question: Do users behave differently on my site if they came there by clicking an ad from the top of a page?
To find the answer: Add an *Ad Slot dimension* on your campaign/ad group reports.

Question: Should I add more exact match keywords to my campaigns?
To find the answer: Try *Query Match Type* layered onto your campaign reports.

Question: Are there certain keywords that perform better on mobile?
To find the answer: Try *Device Category* layered onto your keyword reports.

9. Use AdWords Secondary Dimensions in GA Reports

Now let's put your AdWords account performance into perspective by layering AdWords secondary dimensions on a Google Analytics report.
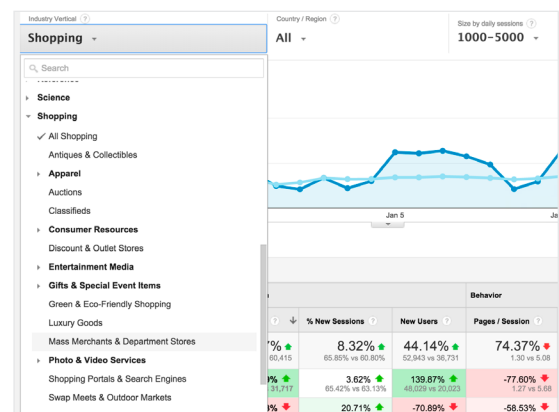
No matter which report you run in Analytics, you can add AdWords dimensions onto that report for a deeper level of understanding of your AdWords traffic. These reports will not only be insightful—they'll help show you what to do directly in AdWords. Determining bid adjustments through a Geographic report is just one example. Think about the reports that you value most in GA and then see what that report can teach you about your AdWords account.

What you learn from those secondary dimensions will show how you how to message to AdWords users and where to send them to on your site.

Here's one example: Run a report for <u>Audience > Demographics > Age</u>. Then add the *Ad Slot* secondary dimension onto your report. Now look to see: Are more younger than older people clicking your AdWords ads on the top? Is there a clear reason why? How can you use that reason to improve your AdWords bidding and messaging?

10. Use Benchmarking to See How Your Site Stacks up to the Competition

"How'm I doing?" <u>Benchmarking</u> reports show how your site stacks up against aggregated industry data from other companies who anonymously share their data. Benchmarks put your performance into context. They help you set meaningful targets, learn about trends in your industry, and see how you compare to the competition.

For example, try benchmarking your Channels to see if you're driving less paid search traffic than your peers. There may be interested users out there that others are drawing in, but that you haven't discovered yet.

Define your performance against the competition

TIP:
GA reports can also help you determine the right AdWords bid adjustments for location, device and time of day. GA will show you details about acquisition, behavior and conversions to layer on to what you'll see in AdWords.

NOTE:
This report may require you to <u>update your Analytics tracking code</u>.

TIP:
<u>Enhanced Ecommerce</u> can help you dig even deeper into your on-site transactions. You'll learn more about what users view and add to their carts, and what happens when they abandon a purchase.

Recapping the Ideas

We've mentioned many different analyses to run in this paper. Here's a complete list of the ideas we've discussed. It's just a start: use these as inspiration as you think about looking for insights in your own account.

Insight from Google Analytics	Analysis to Run *Links are case sensitive*	Dimension or Segment Added
Are any of my non-converting keywords still driving high quality traffic?	Acquisition > AdWords > Keywords http://goo.gl/4KxIlR	Search for 'Goal Conversion Rate' equals zero
Do users who click ads on the right-hand side of a page behave differently from those who click at the top of search results?	Acquisition > AdWords > Campaigns http://goo.gl/OBHrVX	Ad Slot dimension
Should I add more exact-match keywords to my campaigns to better manage that traffic?	Acquisition > AdWords > Campaigns http://goo.gl/OBHrVX	Query Match Type dimension
Are there certain keywords that perform really well for mobile users?	Acquisition > AdWords > Keywords http://goo.gl/4KxIlR	Device category dimension
Is there behavior beyond on-site conversions that I should factor in as I set my AdWords bid adjustments?	Acquisition > AdWords > Bid Adjustments http://goo.gl/4AVDfa	Choose between Device/ Location/ Ad Schedule
How do first-time users from AdWords react to my site?	Acquisition > AdWords > Destination URLs http://goo.gl/r1lt1F	New and Returning Users segments
Which pages deliver strong Page Values or low bounce rates for my organic traffic? Could they be used as landing ages for AdWords traffic?	Behavior > Site Content > Landing Pages http://goo.gl/szQs77	Organic or Referral Traffic segment. (You could also create a custom segment with a collection of non-paid channels)
Are my users from AdWords fundamentally different from the rest of my traffic? Should that change my messaging?	Audience > Demographics > Age http://goo.gl/vljc5w	Ad Slot secondary dimension
How does my site handle mobile users compared to my peers?	Audience > Benchmarking > Devices http://goo.gl/x3XMQQ	
How do my mobile users from AdWords compare to the rest of my mobile users?	Audience > Mobile > Overview http://goo.gl/jZyEGT	Default Channel Grouping dimension

Conclusion

We mentioned dogs and tennis balls at the start of this guide. But let's be clear: linking AdWords with Google Analytics is about a lot more than chasing data back and forth. It's about finding insights that will give you an edge in the marketplace.

Those insights come from people who don't convert on your site as much as from those who do. That's where Google Analytics really shines. It helps you see how your AdWords account does and doesn't reach the customers you want most. That will help you change your bids, ad copy, even the time and place you run your ads to reach the people who will convert for you.

AdWords and Google Analytics really are better together. Best of all, it's easy to link them. You can do it right now, right here.

To view other Google Best Practices, check out the full collection at g.co/GoogleBP.