

Measuring the Success of Communications WITH GOOGLE ANALYTICS



The University of Vermont

How do we measure success in communications?

1. The communication is 'delivered'
2. The communication is 'opened'
3. The communication is 'read'
4. The communication generates a desired outcome (conversions)
5. The communication assists in the attainment of departmental or institutional business goals

Using Google Analytics to measure success

1. Look for increases in traffic after a communication is delivered
2. Identify traffic coming from individual communications
3. Evaluate the quality of traffic generated by these communications
4. Measure traffic from communications against business goals
5. Compare the relative value of various communication channels

The case for link tagging

- Google Analytics divides traffic to your web content by source, most traffic will fall into three buckets:
 - Organic Search
 - Referral (other websites)
 - Direct (the analytics grab-bag)
- Direct sessions occur any time analytics cannot determine the source, it can be:
 - Clicking a link from an email (depending on email provider/program)
 - Clicking a link from a Microsoft Office or PDF document
 - Accessing the site from a shortened URL (depending on the URL shortener)
 - Clicking a link from a Mobile social media apps like Facebook or Twitter

Uncovering direct traffic using UTM parameters

To properly allocate “direct” traffic we can add tracking parameters or to tag URLs used in certain communications.

For example, you can prevent traffic from your April email newsletter from being categorized as direct by adding UTM parameters to links. This ensures all sessions generated by the newsletter will appear as “email” in the analytics acquisition report.

UTM (Urchin Tracking Module) parameters assist in tracking the effectiveness of communications across a broad range of traffic sources including email, social media, and even print.

Google's 5 UTM parameters

1. **Source:** the referrer of the visits (eg. facebook, mailchimp, newsletter)
2. **Medium:** the marketing medium (eg. email, post, pdf, postcard, cpc)
3. **Name:** unique name for the marketing campaign (eg. commencement-announcement, alumni-news)
4. **Term** (optional): keywords for paid search, for other platforms can be used for audience segment, or the level below the campaign
5. **Content** (optional): used to differentiate multiple links in a campaign or versions of a campaign

The anatomy of a tagged link

http://www.uvm.edu/xxx/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=spring2017

<http://www.uvm.edu/xxx/> - "the desired link"

? - precedes the UTM parameters

utm_source = where the link lives

utm_medium = type of communication channel

utm_campaign = specific name for this particular communication

Campaign URL Builder

This tool allows you to easily add campaign parameters to URLs so you can track **Custom Campaigns** in Google Analytics.

Enter the website URL and campaign information

Fill out the required fields (marked with *) in the form below, and once complete the full campaign URL will be generated for you. *Note: the generated URL is automatically updated as you make changes.*

* **Website URL** The full website URL (e.g. `https://www.example.com`)

* **Campaign Source** The referrer: (e.g. `google`, `newsletter`)

Campaign Medium Marketing medium: (e.g. `cpc`, `banner`, `email`)

Campaign Name Product, promo code, or slogan (e.g. `spring_sale`)

Campaign Term Identify the paid keywords

Campaign Content Use to differentiate ads

! Fill out all the required fields above and a URL will be automatically generated for you here.

Google's URL Builder

Use this online to easily create properly formed tagged links. The tool also optionally integrates Google's link shortener.

<https://ga-dev-tools.appspot.com/campaign-url-builder/>

(or simply type URL builder into Google)

When to tag using UTM parameters

- Links in email communications
- Links in a PDF or other non-HTML document
- Links in social media posts
- Links on print pieces
- Links in banner ads, paid search, and other display ads
- When in doubt, tag links
- You do **not** need to tag links on web pages

Using parameters with third party services

Third party solutions including advertising platforms such as Facebook often have built-in mechanisms for incorporating UTM parameters and other tags to links. Be sure to check with your third party service for options and instructions. For example:

- URL parameters can be added to your ads on Facebook
- Social media sharing platforms, such as HootSuite, can be configured to assist in tagging links with UTM parameters

Best practices for naming parameters

1. Use the KISS principle
2. Stick with lower case
3. Use dashes to separate words
4. Don't repeat yourself (eg. don't use the same name for source and medium)
5. Stay consistent (refer to our naming conventions for UVM)

UVM recommended naming conventions

SOURCE

Always use the name of the platform, affiliate, email service or publisher for the source tag. For example, facebook for Facebook or mailchimp for emails sent using MailChimp. For communications you produce and distribute yourself, use a general descriptive term such as newsletter, invitation, memo, etc.

MEDIUM

- email
- post, cpc, cpm (for social media)
- print
- banner
- pdf, doc

The name parameter

- Names should be descriptive but simple and easy to read
- Names should be unique so that you can easily distinguish between campaigns (include dates when appropriate)
- Retain the name when a single campaign is delivered via multiple channels (eg. an invitation to an event shared via email, social media and in print) and change the source, medium and/or term
- If you produce a large number of campaigns, consider using a naming system that naturally group similar campaigns together when listed alphabetically

Some additional examples

	Email	Social media	Print	Banner ad
Source	listserv	facebook	postcard	amazon
Medium	email	post	print	banner
Campaign	fall-award-nominees	smith-climate-change	invite-vip	promo-college
Term [optional]	current-students			
Content [optional]			qrcode	engineering

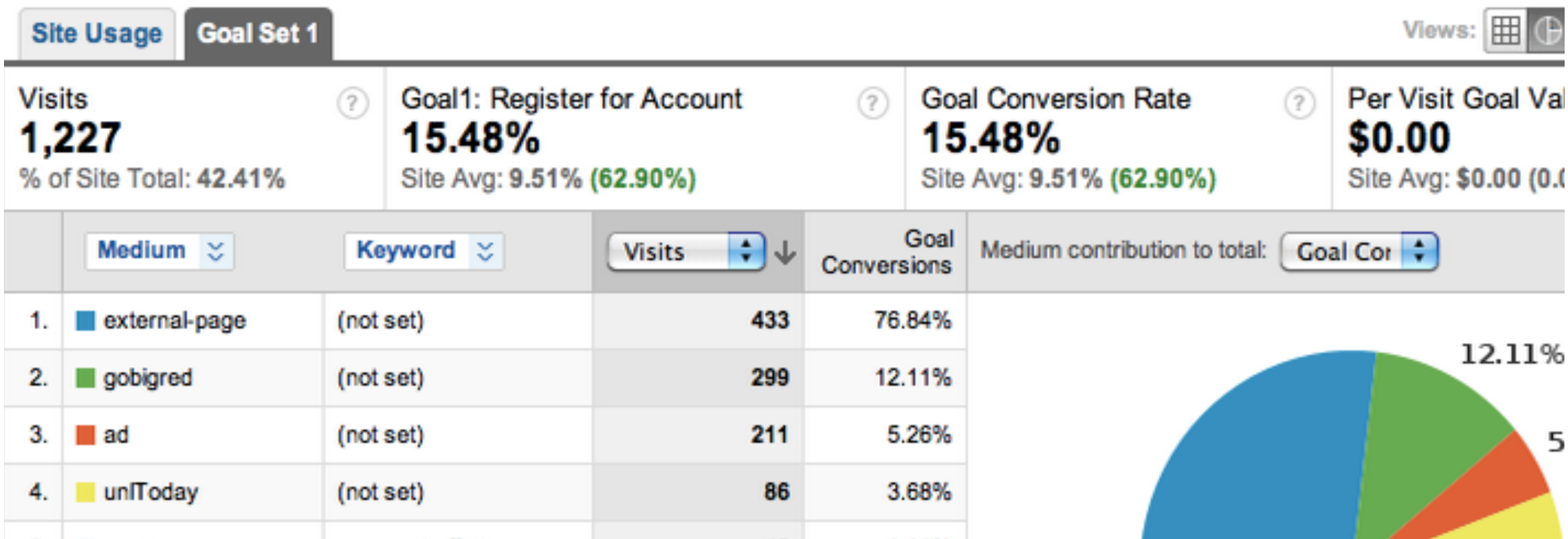
Special considerations for print communications

- Tagged links are long and ugly and not suited for print.
- Use a link shortener to create short links that are easy to type from your links containing UTM parameters. Try the go.uvm.edu service for custom short links.
- QR codes can easily include UTM parameters and are a fast and easy way to publish link information in print.
- Try to avoid the temptation to recycle shortened links for print. Print pieces often have a much longer self life than digital and are more costly so it's important to specifically identify traffic and conversions rates for print.

I tagged my links, so now what?

- Maintain a spreadsheet that stores and catalogs your UTM parameters.
- Information on your communications will begin appearing in the institutional campaign reports in Google Analytics. We can evaluate the relative success of various campaign channels and types of campaigns can be assessed relative to institutional goals.
- Information on your communications will begin appearing in the departmental campaign reports, if you use Google Analytics. You can delve deeper into the value and success of your various communications.
- Over time you can identify trends, both long-term and seasonal, in communications efforts.

Analytics campaign reports



Why goals and conversions are important

- Not all traffic is created equal
- Goals allow you to determine traffic quality by identifying interactions on your site that align with your business goals (eg. student recruitment, brand awareness, revenue generation)
- Goal completions and conversion rates help identify which channels and campaigns have the greatest success
- Goals can be monetized to assist in assessing ROI (return on investment)
- Goal reports help justify communications budget requests

Getting help with tagging and analytics

- Online resources are available in the Creative Styleguide and Webguide portions of the UVM website, see https://www.uvm.edu/creative_styleguide/evaluating_and_measuring_success_communications.
- In-person help is available in the Web Team's weekly help sessions, currently on Wednesday morning (see the webguide for details).
- E-mail assistance is available, write to webteam@uvm.edu.
- Workshops and classes frequently available through UVM Professional Development and Training.

Questions?

