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5 GA4 TIPS FOR
CONTENT WEBSITES

GA4 FOR
CONTENT WEBSITES

The typical Google Analytics 4 use case is to track ecommerce purchases or leads/signups which allow you to find and optimise for your best performing traffic. If you run a content website, this might make you think that GA4 can only be used to get basic user engagement data. However, there's still a lot you can do to get actionable reports for how to grow and optimise your content.
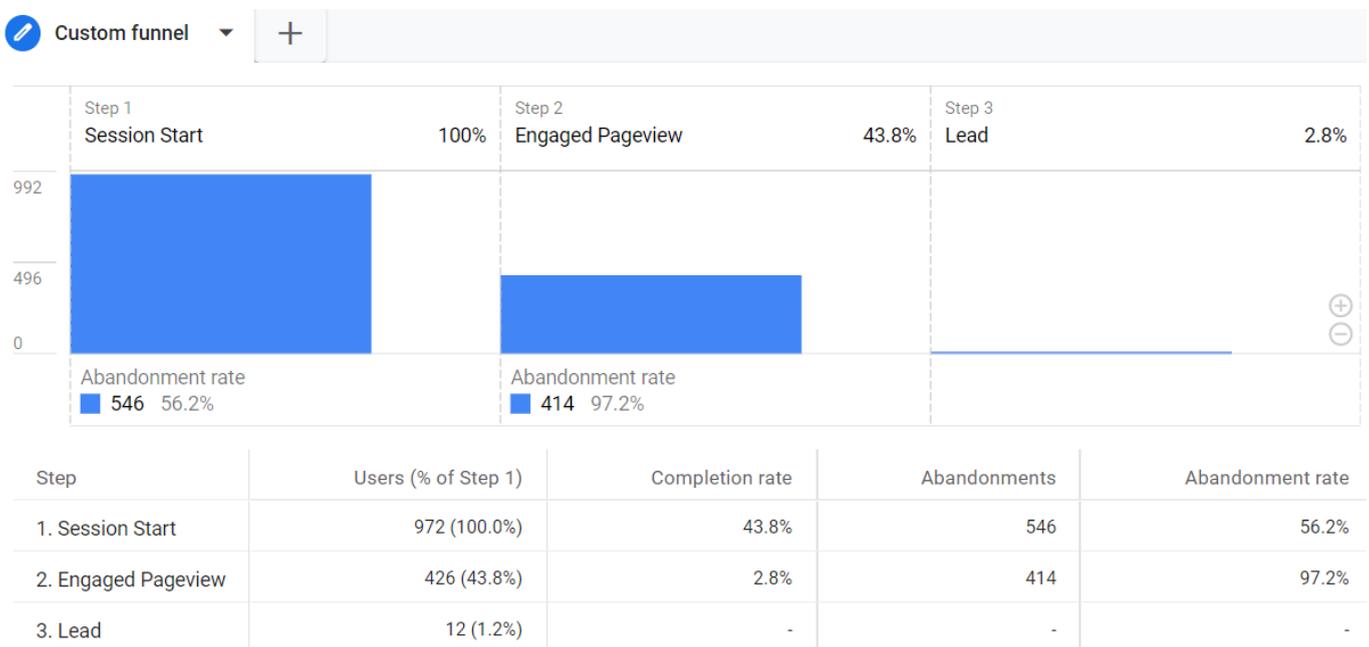

[Image Credit]

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WHAT IS GA4?

Google Analytics 4 (GA4) is the latest release of the free website tracking software, Google Analytics.

Google Analytics is a free service that allows you to track any traffic and engagement that happens across your websites, apps and offline. GA4 contains lots of new updates, including how data is tracked and stored, with the overall goal to give a better view of today's marketing landscape, while also providing more control around data management and privacy.

Step	Users (% of Step 1)	Completion rate	Abandonments	Abandonment rate
1. Session Start	972 (100.0%)	43.8%	546	56.2%
2. Engaged Pageview	426 (43.8%)	2.8%	414	97.2%
3. Lead	12 (1.2%)	-	-	-

TIP #1

TRACK CUSTOM PAGE ENGAGEMENT

GA4's default *engagement time* metric is great for tracking how long people are actually active. However, it can also be useful to track a custom event for however you define an engaged pageview specific to your website. This lets you calculate a custom engagement rate for pages, categories, marketing channels etc. One example of a custom definition of engagement is someone who both stays at least 30 seconds on a page and scrolls at least 50%.

CHANNEL	PAGE VIEWS	ENGAGED PAGEVIEWS	ENGAGEMENT RATE
Google Organic	57,633	15,561	27%
Direct	14,500	4,060	28%
Facebook Ads	77,592	27,933	36%
Pinterest Organic	56,856	19,331	34%

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TIP #2
TRACK VALUES WITH EVENTS

GA4 lets you send a value with every event you track, not just ecommerce events. This is useful if your value comes from people actually browsing your website (eg. external ad revenue). Even without a direct integration, you can for example send your average per-page ad unit revenue to GA4 with each pageview (as well as other events) which allow you to see a per-user value for your channels, demographics etc. This value will reflect the sum of all the website engagement actions that your users have performed.

CHANNEL	USERS	TOTAL VALUE	VALUE PER USER
Google Organic	43,824	$197,208	$4.50
Direct	71,248	$192,369	$2.70
Facebook Ads	82,646	$314,054	$3.80
Pinterest Organic	88,606	$345,563	$3.90

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TIP #3

TRACK ARTICLE METADATA

The more articles you have, the more valuable it becomes to track custom fields about each page. The most common of these are *author, publication date, topics/categories* or *tags*, however you may have additional taxonomies depending on what your content is about. These can sometimes be inferred from the URL but URL structures change so you probably want a more robust solution. Tracking metadata lets you report at scale (see tip #5).

Five Types of Annoying Cliffhangers

Instead of ending your story, have you considered throwing it off a cliff?

About This Article

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Oren Ashkenazi
Author

Topics
Analysis, Storytelling, Endings, Plot

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Episode 427: Mid-Sto Resolution
April 16, 2023

Oh no, Captain Heropants is dangling from the edge of a cliff! I have to keep reading to see what happens to them. Except… that's the last page? There's no more??? I've been cliffhanger-ed!

[Image Source]
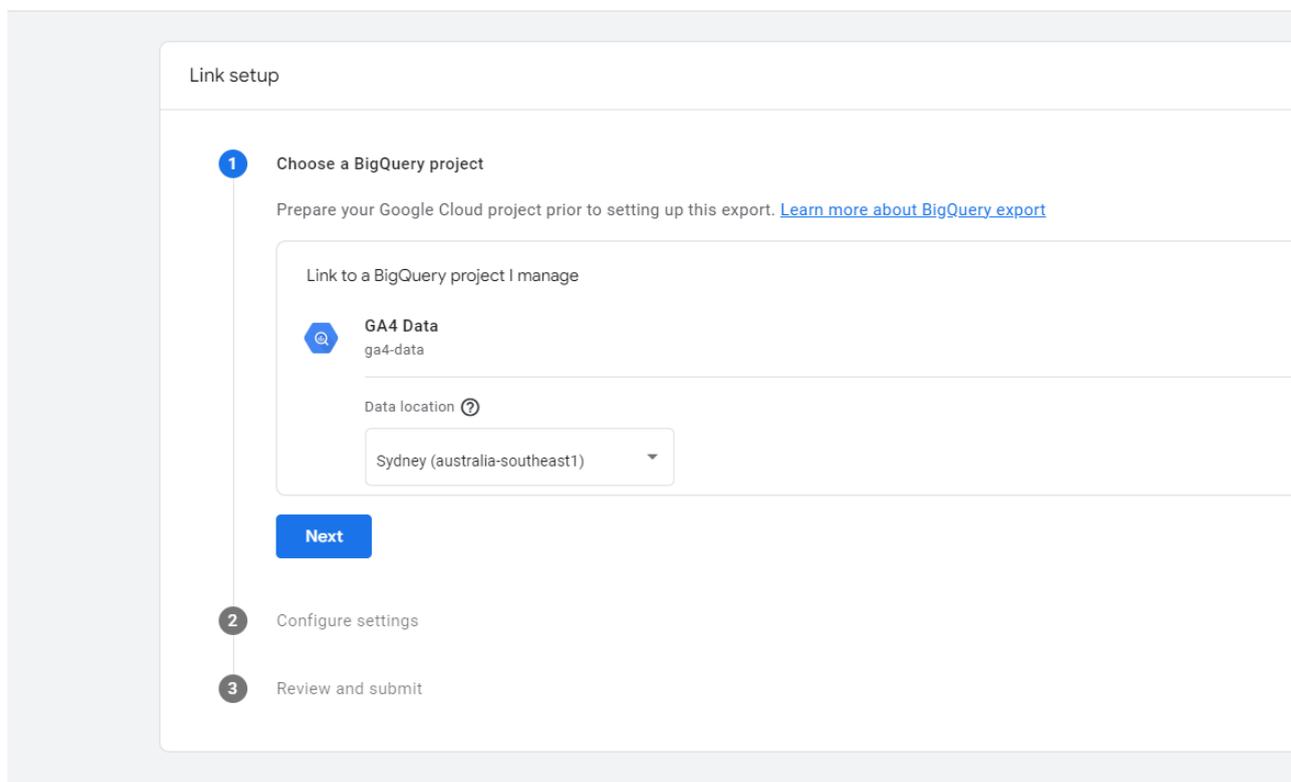
TIP #4

CONNECT TO BIGQUERY

The free BigQuery export is one of GA4's best features. A content website could have hundreds or thousands of pages with more being added each day. If you want to do any robust reporting or analysis in GA4 alone you will quickly run into sampling and data retention issues but with BigQuery, you can own your raw traffic data. This can be very important for reporting that needs to cover your long tail (eg. articles that might not get a lot of traffic each but could still add up to a substantial amount).

Create a link with BigQuery

TIP #5

GROUP YOUR PAGES IN REPORTS

Although it's useful to look at top individual performers, seeing your content grouped by items like categories, authors etc is likely to be more actionable. If you're tracking metadata (tip #3) and linking to BigQuery (tip #4), getting a report like the one below should be easy. Remember to weight each row by the number of articles it represents (see the articles and users/article columns below). Otherwise rows which represent a higher article count will automatically show more traffic.

CATEGORY	USERS	ARTICLES	USERS / ARTICLE	ENGAGEMENT RATE
Science	29,471	756	39	26%
Finance	75,900	986	77	56%
Technology	87,633	1,328	66	21%
Politics	79,197	1,760	45	31%

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- Comprehensive digital expertise
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