Google Analytics

Goal Setting Guide

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Google Analytics Goal Setting Guide

Once you've got your Google Analytics account set up, and you've started pulling in some great tracking information, it's time to go a step further and put all of that data to work for you.

These stats on page views, time on site, etc. are important … but essentially useless when we start talking about Return on Investment (ROI).

That's where Google Analytics Goals come in. We'll take this information and use it as our inputs to create measurements that we can use to fine-tune our website.

> If you can't measure something, you can't understand it.
> If you can't understand it, you can't control it.
> If you can't control it, you can't improve it.
>
> **H. James Harrington**
> Author and Management Mentor

Re-Frame How You View Your Website

How do we move from focusing on site visits and page views to focusing on ROI? This is not just a small change in focus … it requires a complete re-framing of how we view our website.

When you're first building your website or blog you're goal is to create the necessary pages that help visitors find out the basic information about what you have to offer. You'll generally have the following dedicated areas set up:

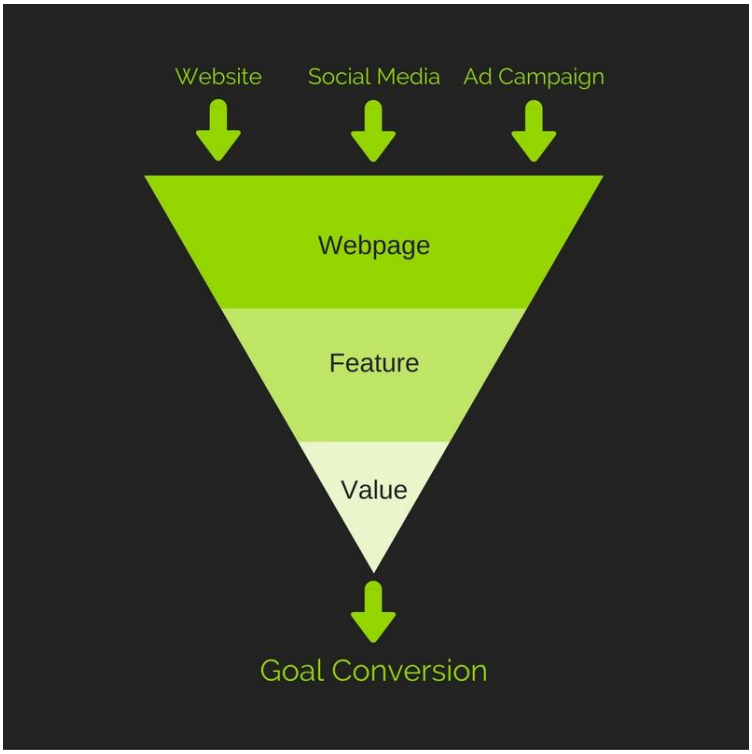
- A section about you and what you have to offer
- A blog, collection of articles, or other value-add materials
- A list of recommended products/services, affiliate resources, or online store

The focus here is on the user experience. You'll ensure that everything flows together seamlessly … within each area. Sure some people will cross between areas, but it's more common that they'll remain in one section of your hierarchy for their entire session.

Want proof? Check out the *Behavior Flow Report* in your Google Analytics account and see how often users move between hierarchical areas of your website.

So how do you get visitors taking the actions you want them to take?

It's time to re-frame your mindset and start viewing your website as a **funnel**, not a hierarchy of pages:



What Do You Really Want?

Now that we're thinking in terms of ROI instead of traditional hierarchies it's time to figure out exactly what outcomes we want from our website visitors. Each page, post, and ad needs to serve a purpose. Everything you create needs to push visitors in the direction of the actions you want them to take.

So what are those actions? Here are a few examples:

- Download a guide like this one
- Watch a video
- Purchase a product
- Signup for an email list
- Fill out an application
- Visit a specific page
- Spend a specific amount of time on your website

Your list of desired actions will likely be very different from mine, and that's the way it should be!

So what do you **REALLY** want out of your website or latest blog post?

Newsletter signups? Ad clicks? Downloads? Product Sales?

What actions do you want your visitors to take, and what are those activities worth to you?

You'll now want to focus on the flow required to complete those actions, which looks something like this:

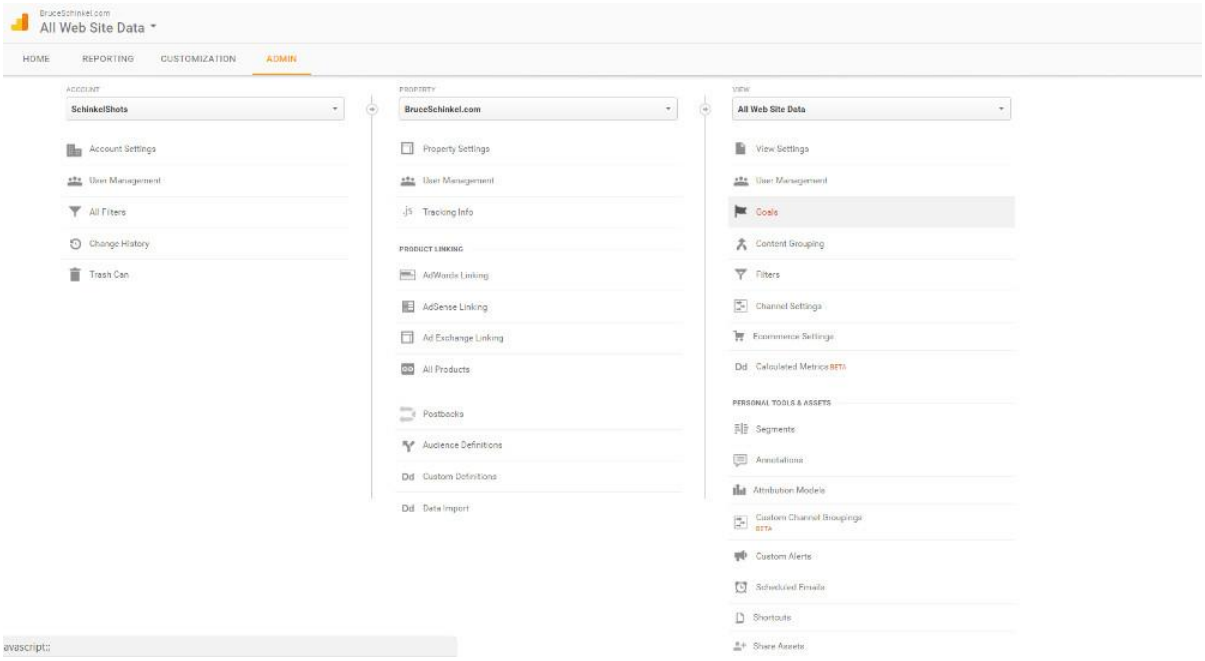
Read a Blog Post -> Visit the About Me Page -> Visit the Work With Me Page -> Inquire About a Product/Service

Now go a bit deeper. Which of those steps is mandatory to reach your end action? Strip away the unnecessary pieces and you're left with the framework of your first funnel!

Notice how people will fall off at each stage, but some will make it all the way through and complete your desired action. This is exactly the behaviour you're looking for because it'll help you find those areas where a small improvement could have a huge impact on goal conversions.

Create a New Goal

Google Analytics will allow you to create up to 20 goals for your website property. To create a new goal, login to your Google Analytics account and navigate to the Admin menu.



You'll find 3 options for creating your goals:

1. Use a **Goal Template** – designed to help you quickly create goals based on your business industry
2. Create a **Custom Goal** – create your own goal based on one of the 4 goal types available
3. Create a **Smart Goal** – not configurable or customizable, but can aid in optimizing AdWords performance

The details for Smart Goals and AdWords are out of the scope of what I'll be covering in this guide, but here's an overview and a few resources in-case that's a direction you're interested in pursuing.

Smart Goals are designed to help AdWords users who don't have enough conversions to use the AdWords optimization tools, such as automated bidding. With Smart Goals enabled, Google Analytics automatically evaluates your website visits and assigns each one a score based on which are most likely to result in a positive conversion. The visits determined to be the "best" get translated into Smart Goals.

Learn more about Smart Goals here

For the remainder of this guide we'll be focusing on **Goal Templates** and **Custom Goals**.

Goal Templates and Custom Goals

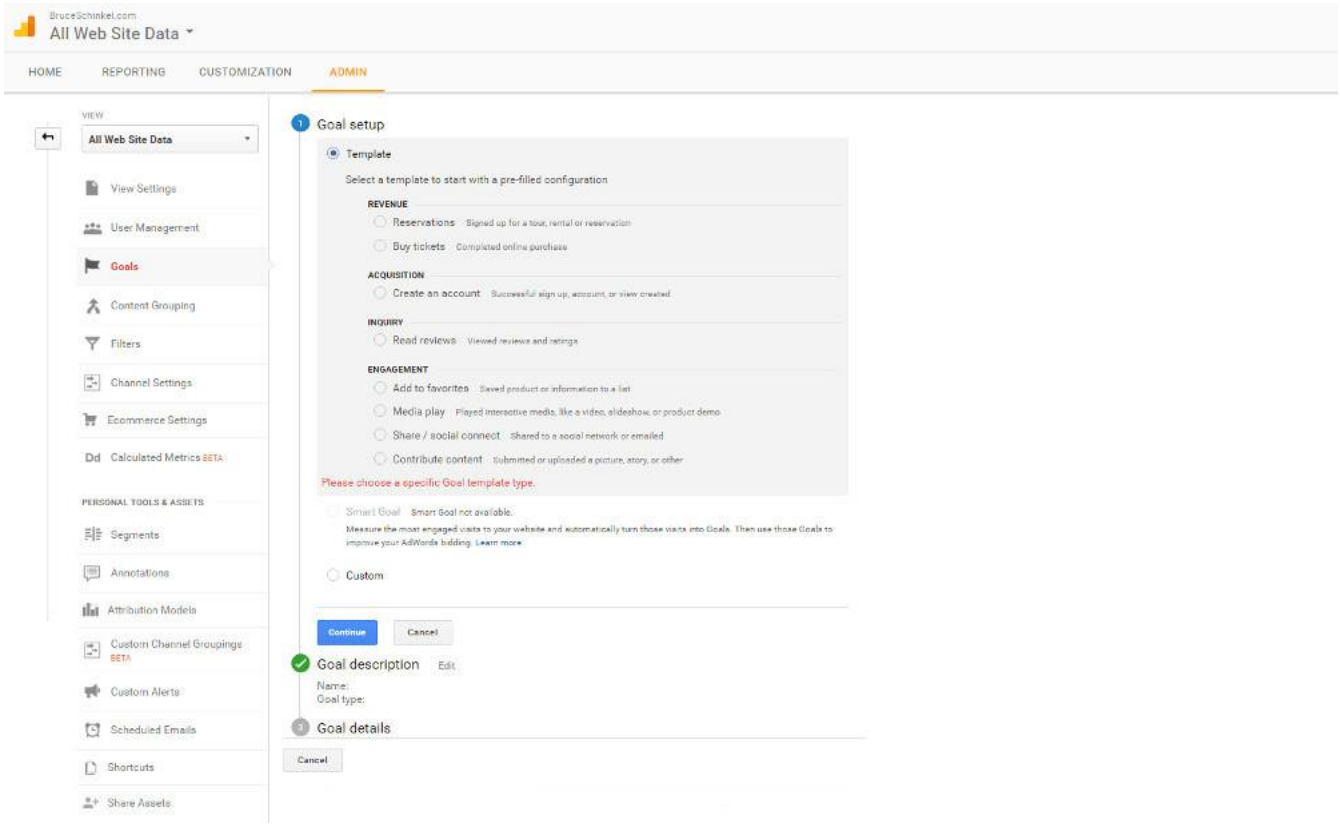
To help us get started quickly, Google has provided some standard goal templates. The templates you see are determined by the industry you selected when you set up your Analytics account. Note that if you don't see any templates offered, or if the templates do not match your business needs you may want to check your industry setting.

Goal templates are organized in 4 categories:

1. **Revenue** - an action that ties directly to a dollar outcome such as reserving an appointment or completing a sale
2. **Acquisition** - when a visitor has created a personal account or view on your website
3. **Inquiry** - indicates visitors are looking for more information such as FAQs or reading reviews
4. **Engagement** - where your visitors are directly interacting with you such as by saving a list of favourites or sharing on social media

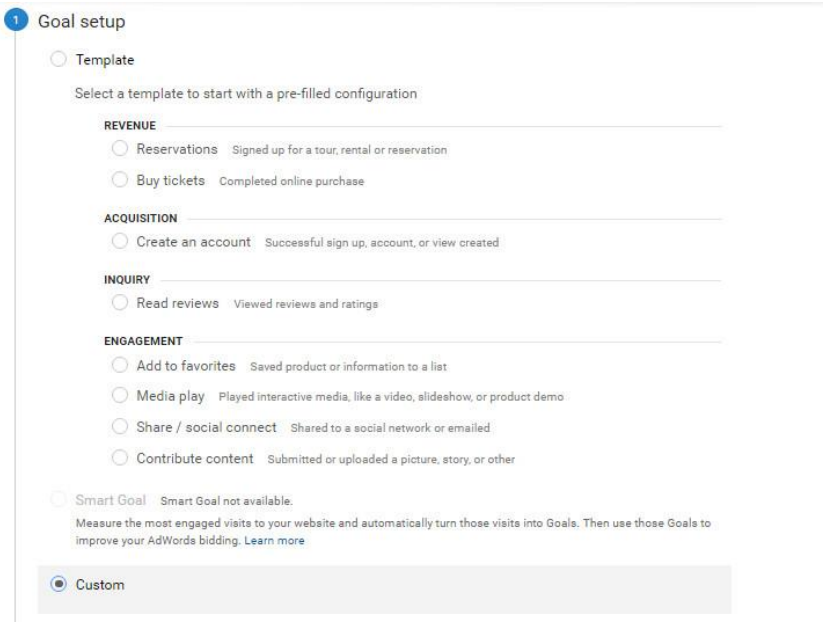
Take a moment to think about the purpose of each goal presented, and use them to gain a better understanding of how visitors will interact with your website. After selecting your Goal Setup, your Goal Description will be automatically populated (see below for more details on this area).

Use this Setup-Description relationship as insight or the future goals you'll be creating. If you choose to continue with setting up a new goal using a template, you'll be sent directly to the Goal Details step.



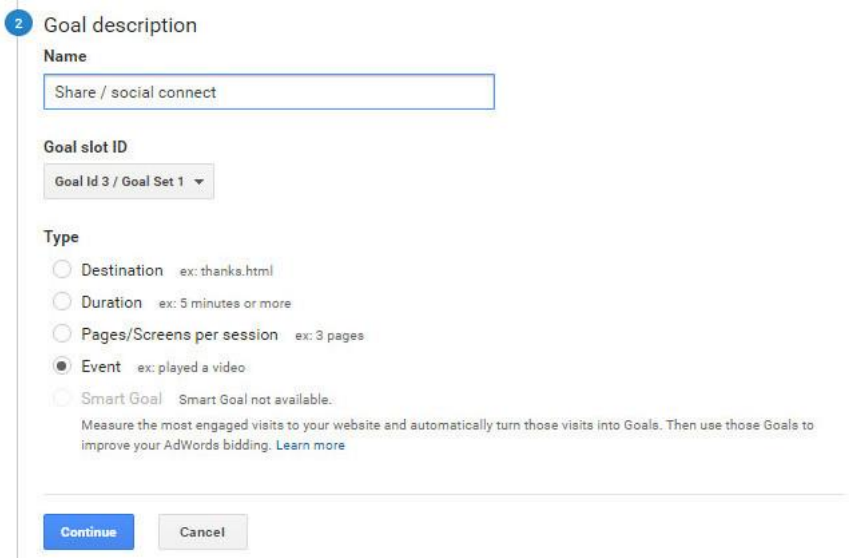
Once you have a feel for the types of goals that are possible using Google Analytics you can start thinking about exactly what outcomes you want to track for your website.

Instead of selecting a specific Goal Template from the Goal Setup section, scroll down a bit and select the Custom option.



Next you'll need to specify your Goal Description, which was done for you when using a template. In this step you'll need to choose from one of the 4 available Goal Types:

1. **Destination** - a specific page is viewed, likely only viewable by completing a specific website flow. An example would be a registration confirmation page
2. **Duration** - used for those times you want to target those visitors who spend a certain amount of time or more in a single session. For example spending 10 minutes or more on a support site
3. **Pages/Screens per Session** - tracking visitors who cross a desired threshold of page visits during their session to compare your super-fans with your tire-kickers. For example visitors who have loaded 5 pages or more
4. **Event** - tells you how often are visitors performing a specified action on your website, such as playing a video, clicking an ad, or downloading a document

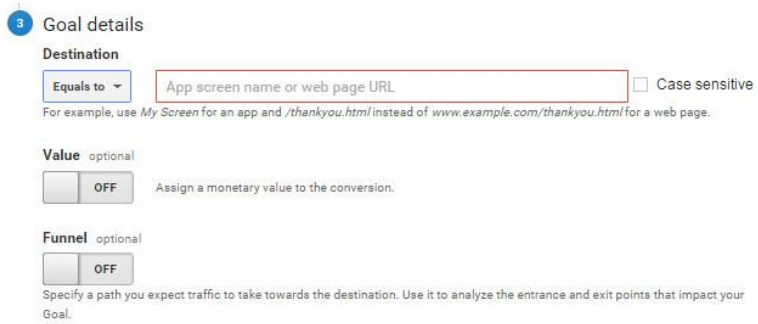


Goal Details

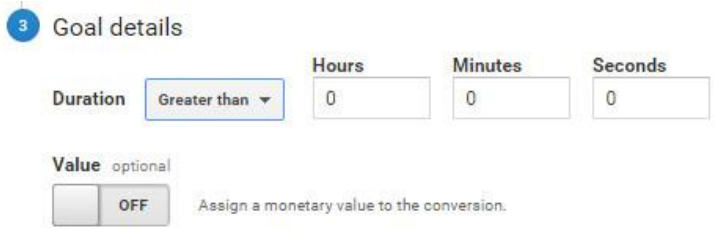
The **Goal Details** step of the goal creation process differs based on the selection from Step 2 (or based on the template you chose in Step 1).

For a **Destination** goal you'll be asked to enter a screenname or URL, as well as given the option to assign a value (covered later in this guide), and specify a path or "funnel".

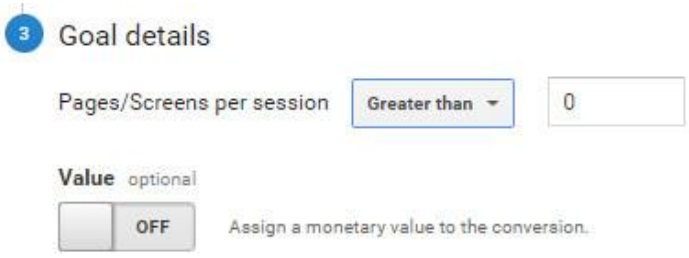
If you fill out the funnel section, visitors must follow that exact path to score a goal conversion. Anyone who goes directly to the destination page, bypassing the funnel, won't count.



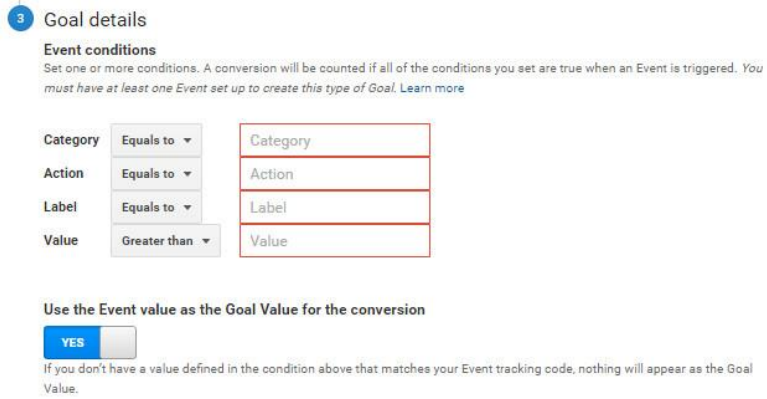
To create a **Duration** goal you'll need to specify a lower limit using hours, minutes and seconds. This limit acts as a threshold to trigger a goal conversion. Again you'll have the option to assign a goal value (covered later in this guide).



The **Pages/Screens per Session** goal is a simple count. Enter the number of pages or screens that a person must visit as the lower threshold to trigger a goal conversion. Again you'll have the option to assign a goal value (covered later in this guide).



Finally, the **Event** goal type requires you to specify one or more pre-set conditions that need to be met in order to trigger a goal conversion. Again you'll have the option to assign a goal value (covered later in this guide).



Event goals can be a little trickier to get setup since they also require you to define an action as an event on your website.

Note that if you're using the **Google Analyticator** plugin for WordPress you have the option to easily setting up tracking for 2 important events: outbound links, and downloads. This is done in the *Link Tracking Settings* section of the plugin settings.

For other events, and for those not using Google Analyticator, tracking is done by passing the "onClick" JavaScript function.

As an example, here is the basic code for the PDF download link of this guide:
** Google Analytics Goal Setting Guide **

The same code using the recommended Universal Analytics Tracking (analytics.js):
** Google Analytics Goal Setting Guide **

For this event, the variables in the tracking code are:
Category = Downloads
Action = Click
Label = Goal Setting Guide
Value = (none)

Replacing our basic link on our webpage or blog post with this new tracking link means that we can now create an Event Goal by filling out the Event Conditions form above with this information.

Set Your Values

The true power of setting up your goals comes when you begin to assign monetary values to them. Suddenly you know what each goal is worth to you, and you're able to work back to see which inputs (campaigns, dashboard date, etc) are responsible for achieving those goals.

This is beyond simply assigning a dollar value to a sale … that tracking can be done using your sales and revenue reports.

Assigning values to your goals requires a bit of creativity, and some data analysis to properly set it up.

For illustration purposes, let's take a look at a quick example:

Say you have found that for every blog post view you have 20% of visitors click to find out more about the offer you're promoting. Of those 20%, you find that about half add your product to their cart, and half of those people complete the checkout and purchase the product.

To keep the math easy, let's say your product is $100.

Then, following the example, if 100 people visit our blog post then 20 of them will click on our offer. Of those 20 people, 10 will start the checkout process, and 5 of them will complete the purchase. The result is (5 x $100) = $500 in sales revenue.

We can then take that $500 and estimate goal values on each step along our sales funnel that we decide matters to us:

- Each person who starts the checkout process provides a value of $50
- Each person who clicks on our offer provides a value of $25
- Each person who visits out blog post provides a value of $5

Any action on your website can be tracked and assigned a value. You may even value some actions more than the actual revenue it creates. It's completely up to you and the only limit is your creativity!

Verify Your Goal

The final step of creating a new goal is to verify it's working as expected. If you're website is new it's unlikely any of your goals would have been triggered in the recent past, so you may want to have someone trigger it for you before running this test.

Before clicking the **Save** button, there's an option to **Verify** your new goal. It's always a good idea click this link and have Google Analytics run your goal against recent website data. It'll come back and let you know how many times this new goal would have been triggered in the past 7 days had it already been active.

If the outcome is what you expected, congratulations, you've created your first goal! If not, tweak the information you entered above and test it again.

Thank You!

I hope you've enjoyed this Google Analytics Goal Setting Guide!

My passion is to serve to inspire you to follow your dreams - in travel and in life. If you're looking for help creating your online business and reaching your Freedom Lifestyle, reach out to me today.

I want to say a ***HUGE thank you*** for reading my blog and connecting with me via email and social media! I'm truly grateful for your continued support.

You are welcome to contact me with any questions, suggestions, or comments. I look forward to hearing from you!

- Bruce Schinkel

Keep in touch!

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