

## Fun with Analytics

### Chapter 1: Overview

#### *Introduction*

Welcome to Fun with Analytics. If you've come across this material on its own – it has two homes – one is a site where you can download copies of the chapters or read them online, at <http://tinyurl.com/casa-mktg> - the other is a LinkedIn Group, Learning Google Analytics, where you can discuss the material and ask questions: <http://tinyurl.com/learning-ga>

#### *In This Chapter*

LinkedIn showed Digital/Online Marketing as a top skill that got people hired in 2013, and Web Analytics is one of the core skills for online marketing - being able to understand the performance of Websites and ad campaigns. Analytics is considered a part of Business Intelligence, which also figured prominently on the list:

- (6) User Interface Design
-  (7) Digital and Online Marketing
- (8) Recruiting
- (9) Business Development/Relationship Management
- (10) Retail Payment and Information Systems
-  (11) Business Intelligence
- (12) Data Engineering and Data Warehousing

In this chapter we'll take a look at what analytics is, and introduce related concepts. This chapter, and the entire book, is oriented towards beginners. My goal is to encourage you to consider learning more about analytics, including a tool called Google Analytics, and to see if I convince you that it actually is fun.

Web Analytics is becoming increasingly important to online marketers, as they seek to track return on investment, and optimize their websites. We'll learn about Google Analytics, starting with creating a blog, and monitoring the number of people who see the blog posts and where they come from.

## **Author/Experiment**

My name is Todd Kelsey, and I'm the author of these chapters. Here's a picture of one of the things I like to do when I'm not doing online marketing.



I've worked professionally in online marketing for some time now, and I've also authored books on related topics. You're welcome to look me up on LinkedIn, and you're also welcome to invite me to connect: <http://linkedin.com/tekelsey>

The purpose of these chapters is to provide a free simple, focused introduction to Web analytics, for interns/staff who may be working at a company or non-profit organization, for students at a University, or for self-paced learners. The approach is the same that I've taken in most of the books I've written, which is conversational, friendly, with an attempt to make things fun. Currently I'm helping neebo.com with Marketing Strategy, and I'm also an Assistant Professor of Marketing at Benedictine University in Lisle, IL ([www.ben.edu](http://www.ben.edu))

The experiment is to find a way to help people get started with Web analytics, in a way that is fun, and also helps you to find work, or work better – through an internship, paid work, volunteer work, freelance work, or any other type of work. So the focus is on skills and approaches that might be immediately useful to a business or non-profit organization. I'm not going to try to cover everything – just the things that I think could be most helpful.

The other goal is to “leave intimidation in the dust”. I used to be intimidated by marketing – and now look at me, I'm a Marketing Strategist, and an Assistant Professor of Marketing! But I remember the intimidation, so part of my approach is to try to encourage any reader who may feel uncertain about the field.

## ***Don't Be Alarmed: Analytics Can Be Fun***

So I remember when I started working in various jobs after college, that one thing I knew for certain is that I didn't feel like I was a "numbers" person. Accounting, finance, or any other type of numbers always seemed forbidding, and outside my experience and comfort zone. It was the last possible door I would want to walk through, and to get me through it, you'd have to drag me.



But the interesting thing was that I got my first taste of analytics without even realizing it.

I had made a website with a friend, and we wanted to know how many people were visiting, and where they were coming from, so we searched for a tool that would help us with that, and it became a part of our "toolbox":



And it was *fun*. Getting to see who was coming, what the traffic was like. It was really interesting.

And then, in later work experiences, including some where there had been transition in the companies I worked for, including layoffs, I became more sensitive to how the roles I was in related to the overall business.

At one point, a mentor gave me some advice that really helped me. She was experienced in the world, and she said to me, “Todd, you need to follow the money trail”.

So she wasn’t saying, “bow down to money” – she was just saying, it’s good to understand how money flows through a business, and what makes money, and what costs a business money.

My perspective on money and finance was challenged, and I realized that it would probably be a good idea to consider not just what I felt like doing, but what would be a benefit to a business or organization – especially during hard times, such as a recession, or competition, etc. And I also started to see that the kinds of skills and roles that had a more direct impact on helping a company succeed, were also in high demand.

This was partly an influence that led me to pay more attention to marketing and online marketing in particular, as well as social networking to a particular degree. In the midst of hard economic times, Google was going straight up in their value, at a time when many or even most companies were having serious issues. And it was partly because Google was helping companies to do a good job of tracking ROI, with Google ads – Adwords. Adwords helps business to know what they are making based on what they are spending in terms of online ads.

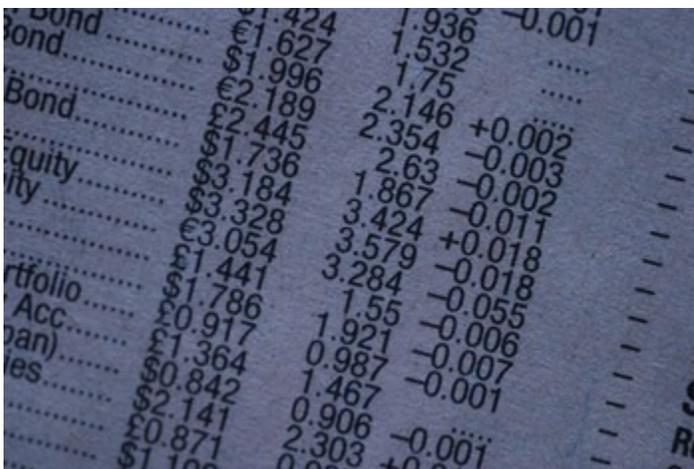
So as I grew and matured, I also realized that Web Analytics was an important skill – and I started learning more about it, and it helped me to find work, and to be competitive.

So while I’m still not “passionate” about numbers, I do see things like Google Analytics as an important tool.

And maybe I’m in touch with my inner analyst.

So my recommendation is, seriously consider learning Web Analytics, in order to help you strengthen your career. It won’t hurt, and it can also be fun.

Another thing I’d suggest is that with Web analytics in particular, and in any situation where you are dealing with numbers based on purchases, it may look like a bunch of numbers:



But it's really not about the numbers, in the end. It's about the people:



### ***Personal ROI: How Analytics Will Help Your Career and Your Organization***

So learning analytics can have a significant impact on your career. See the top skills that got people hired in 2013. Things will change over time, but there's a very strong presence on the list for social media marketing, digital marketing, and business intelligence, all of which relate to analytics:

- ➔ ① Social Media Marketing
- ② Mobile Development
- ③ Cloud and Distributed Computing
- ④ Perl/Python/Ruby
- ⑤ Statistical Analysis and Data Mining
- ⑥ User Interface Design
- ➔ ⑦ Digital and Online Marketing
- ⑧ Recruiting
- ⑨ Business Development/Relationship Management
- ⑩ Retail Payment and Information Systems
- ➔ ⑪ Business Intelligence
- ⑫ Data Engineering and Data Warehousing

For more insight, see:

<http://blog.linkedin.com/2013/12/18/the-25-hottest-skills-that-got-people-hired-in-2013/>

Social Media Marketing: it's increasingly important for social media marketers to understand how to measure and optimize the performance of campaigns – you might call this “social analytics”. If you haven't read the (free) Social Media Marketing Primer yet, you might want to look at it – it's available on the same site as this

book, and it includes some cover of social analytics. You could also work your way through this book and then head on over to that one, to see the connections.

**Digital/Online Marketing:** the goal of digital marketing is often to sell something, or at least to get people to visit and sign up for something. So Web Analytics is a crucial tool for monitoring how your efforts are going.

**Business Intelligence:** you could think of this as “advanced analytics”. Business intelligence might include Web Analytics (reviewing the performance of your website and associated marketing), but it can also extend into other areas, such as “competitive intelligence”, using a tool like [compete.com](http://compete.com) – or just looking at financial trends. In my own experience, starting out with Web analytics helped me to understand how online marketing and reports fit into overall business intelligence. It would be fair to say that business intelligence is ROI.

You don’t need any required skills - and you *don’t* need to be a “numbers person” – this book is for anyone who wants to get a job in online marketing or who wants to learn how to see how the performance of websites fits into business. Google Analytics is one of the top tools, and Web Analytics can be a competitive differentiator in the job market, either as a skill set or as a dedicated role.

The course helps students to view Web Analytics info and learn how to develop insights. Skills in this course connect to other areas, such as search engine marketing and social media marketing, and provide a "network effect", to help students become more effective online marketers, and more employable.

And here’s a suggestion and invitation, for your “personal ROI”, that I want to invite you to consider – become “Google Analytics Qualified”. This book is an introduction to concepts and the tool, and then I’ll point you to more learning material that Google has, which you might want to pursue to “get qualified”.

Basically, having this qualification on your resume or linkedin profile will help to show your credibility, to your colleagues and potential employers. In short, it will help your career.



Some certifications cost thousands of dollars to prepare for, and the tests can be expensive too – at the time of writing, Google Qualification is only \$50, a really good deal.

## **Org ROI**

I don't know if "organizational return on investment" is really a term, but I guess now it is.

What I mean is that even if you already have a job somewhere, going for Google Qualification can help any company or organization you are a part of. Not only will it help with credibility when people interact with you on sites like LinkedIn – but it will also help you to think more about tracking ROI – it's a mindset that will be a benefit to any business, to help you make good choices about what direction to go in.



## **Tools: free, corporate**

There are a variety of Web analytics tools out there, which people use on a free and paid basis. For grins, what you might like to do is go on LinkedIn, do a job search, and search for "web analytics" and see what comes up. Chances are that one or more of these programs will be mentioned.

## **Google Analytics**

Google Analytics is free, and is always increasing in power, to rival and in some cases exceed the performance of the "paid" tools. For example, in some companies, you'll often see companies using a combination of Google Analytics and paid tools. Google Analytics can't do everything, but it's a good place to start.



## **Adobe Analytics - Omniture**

Adobe Analytics/Omniture has long been considered one of the top "enterprise" Web analytics tools. It was a lot of power, sophistication, and customization. In theory, there are things that Omniture can do, that Google Analytics can't, and vice versa. It's also a program that if you know it, could definitely help you get a job, or get a higher salary. It's a somewhat chicken and egg situation – because it is an expensive program, with no trial version at the time of writing – so there aren't a lot of people who know it. Hence it is harder to find people with this skill, therefore the salary can be higher.

So if you are going into online marketing and you can find a company to intern at or work with, where you come in knowing Google Analytics, but could have the opportunity to try Omniture/Adobe Analytics, that could be a good opportunity.

More recently, larger companies have been consolidating smaller companies, and developing integrated “marketing clouds”, so if you look into Adobe Analytics, you might look at some of the tools it is connected with.

See [www.adobe.com/analytics](http://www.adobe.com/analytics)

Other “enterprise” options include tools like WebTrends. Hopefully at some point enterprise folks will wise up and offer trial versions to help people get access and learn them.

## Open Source Analytics

For people who are interested in completely controlling your own data, open source analytics programs may be an option. In certain cases, they may allow you to have the functionality you need, without giving up any of the value. For example, most people and companies accept the value proposition when using a Gmail address, or doing a Google search, or using Google Analytics, that Google will analyze the data, and make money off of it. In other words, when you search for something, Google might display an ad based on your behavior, which you might be interested in. And Google isn’t in the business of selling your contact information, per se – but with analytics, it might gather your information, make it anonymous, and group it with a lot of other data, and make money off of it. Or Google might somehow use related “cookie” information.

So Google isn’t doing anything illegal, and personally, I don’t think there’s anything to worry about. But you might be interested to just take a peek at some of the open source options out there, in case you end up being more concerned about the data someday, or you end up with a client or employer who is. There’s some more value propositions on their sites:

<http://piwik.org> and <http://www.openwebanalytics.com/>

As for me, and many thousands of businesses – I’m cool with Google Analytics.

## Social Analytics

So social analytics is an area where particular social media channels, such as Facebook, YouTube, etc., will allow you to get information on how your social media efforts are going – such as the number of people who “like” your page, or follow you, or talk about you, kind of thing. There aren’t any dominating “all in one” social analytics tools as of yet, but you might be interested to take a look at Adobe’s “social analytics” offering, to see an example of an attempt to become one.

In general, the social analytics tools are free, and built into social media – and in some cases there are low cost tools like Hootsuite (which also has a free version), that will draw some of the material together for you.

If any of that sounds interesting, take a look at the Social Media Marketing Primer, and in particular, the Hootsuite chapter. <http://tinyurl.com/casa-mktg>

My general advice for beginners is to have some fun learning Google Analytics, and also try a bit of social media marketing, and get your feet wet with social analytics.

## **Things Change**

As you explore these areas, be prepared for things to change, but don't worry – you don't need to learn every tool. I'd just recommend taking an incremental, gradual approach.

As with social media marketing, there's a lot of options out there, and if your eyes started to glaze over in the last section with the mention of all the analytics tools – don't be alarmed! Don't try to learn them abstractly – try them out. And I'll try to introduce them to you in a way that is fun.

## **Search Drill**

If you're just getting acquainted, I'd suggest doing a few related google searches to see what's out there, and reading anything that looks interesting to you:

“youtube google analytics intro”

“learning google analytics”

“understanding web analytics youtube”

“what the heck is adobe analytics”

## ***Learning More***

If you would like to just click on a link and learn something, try these videos:

“Web Analytics – the Basics”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1IfnOYu0zxA>

“Successful Web Analytics”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bpDxGrSqA-E>

## ***Conclusion/Discussion***

Congratulations on making it through this chapter! I’m trying to make the approach in this book as friendly and relevant as possible, based on the intimidation I used to feel. Please feel free to let me know if it’s working, or if you feel like you’re still intimidated – or if you feel like it’s “too fluffy”. Best wishes in learning analytics!

## ***Invitation***

You are welcome to visit and join the LinkedIn Group at <http://tinyurl.com/learning-ga> - if you want to come on and say “huh?” or if you would like to set me straight on something, or just have some feedback.

Remember, there are NO DUMB QUESTIONS. If you have the question, someone else surely also did.