Transcript: Making the most of data analytics

Welcome to another episode in the Digital Master Class series, part of Glen Era City Council's Digital Enablement Program. Today's topic: what are web analytics, and how can they help my business? This webinar will be an introduction to web analytics, and will focus on how they can help your business – and help inform business decisions.

In the agenda:
• Why are web analytics important?
• What are web analytics, and how can they help a business?
• What do web analytics look like?
• What other platforms use analytics?
• And how to get started with analytics.

To begin, here is a quote from the late, great Arthur Conan Doyle, citing his famous character, Sherlock Holmes:
"It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data. Insensibly one begins to twist facts to suit theories, instead of theories to suit facts." This quote, although it is from 1891, is worth keeping in mind when considering how data that comes from web analytics can help inform business decisions. Why are web analytics important?

Unlike 1891, businesses in 2021 have access to more information about their customers than at any previous moment in history. This customer information is derived from websites, social media accounts, apps, and many other sources.

The info can help inform business decisions, from seasonal trends to customer behaviour – even decisions about where to spend marketing budget – and much more. Nonetheless, even though this information is generally free, many people either don't know about it, or may even feel overwhelmed by it all.

What are analytics? In digital marketing, analytics refers to measuring and drawing conclusions about user behaviour. In other words, monitoring and acting on information about the behaviour of customers and prospects. This can occur on websites, social media accounts, apps, ecommerce platforms, and so forth. Today, we'll introduce the concept with Google Analytics, a free and popular tool that measures website traffic and engagement.

How can analytics help my business?
For a start, knowing what your website visitors do can lead to better business decisions. Google Analytics can help you measure and understand things like:
• How many visitors come to your site?
• What pages they click on?
• How long they spend on your site?
• What pages they don't click on?
• What pages they look at the longest (and shortest)?
• What brought them to your site? Email? Facebook? Google? Links from other sites?
• The commercial effectiveness of each channel.
• And much more.

The following fictitious example will help illustrate how Google Analytics data can help inform and steer business decisions. This example is Lee's Drop Bear Repellent, a company that is running a promotion to coincide with the impending drop bear season. Although this example is clearly not

real, consider how something like it may apply to your business.

Lee's website features a special offer to coincide with the season. A promotion runs across email, social media, and Google Ads. A local mail campaign with a QR code also directs people to the page.

Here are some of the ways in which Google analytics could help you acquire more customers, and get a better return on marketing spend. Google Analytics could reveal:

• What channel sent the most visitors? Important because: each channel has a promotional cost; knowing which sent the most visitors can help inform where to allocate a marketing budget.

• How many people use the QR code? Important because: you can track QR code interactions, showing whether this was an effective medium.

• How many return visitors were there? Important because: this implicitly shows how many people already knew about Lee's Drop Bear Repellent.

• What proportion of people clicked on the promotional page, but then left immediately? Important because: driving customers to a website is often just half the battle; too many customers dropping off before they transact suggests the page layout, or some other element, may need improving.

• What is the most cost-effective channel? Important because: it may be, for instance, that social media sent the highest overall number of visitors, but Google Ads actually had the highest number of recorded transactions (something that can often be accurately measured).

What does Google Analytics data look like? Quite simply, the information you see in Google Analytics can be as simple or sophisticated as you need it to be. Shown is a very simple example. What you see here is a single metric. It shows Google search traffic to the author's (now defunct) personal blog. A single article about a famous musician recorded a sharp increase in Google traffic after the subject of the article died in 2015.

A basic overview, with simple information like this, can give you a general idea of how many people are clicking on your website. For instance, a simple view can show you if your website is recording seasonal traffic changes; or, you could see whether an important article is receiving traffic (or not receiving traffic).

At the other end of the scale: here is a sophisticated example for an e-commerce site. It summarises the total number of visitors, versus visitors who made a purchase. This information is drawn from site-wide metrics data. In this example, the site had 97,000 visits, of which 20,000 looked at a product (using the e-commerce functionality). Out of those, 7,000 used the site's online shopping cart. However, 4000 did not complete their purchase.

Detailed information like this can help businesses make better decisions. In this instance, why did almost half of prospective purchasers not finish their transaction? Google Analytics can help, because it allows you to see the exact pages from where people drop off. Are they dropping off from the shipping page? In that case, perhaps postage rate is a factor. However, if they are dropping off from the credit card payment screen, that might suggest an unidentified bug is stopping people from completing their transactions.

Other platforms also offer analytics data. Google Analytics is one of the most common applications for websites, however, other platforms – including social media, e-commerce, and even huge multichannel

'big data' business applications – also have analytics functionality. For instance, Twitter

analytics provides extensive engagement data. Facebook Insights and LinkedIn analytics likewise do the same. With social media analytics, users can determine what content works best, what time is best to post, what content gets the best reception and the most engagement, and so forth.
How to get started with web analytics?

If you don't have (or you're not sure) if you have Google Analytics installed on your website, ask your webmaster or your agency to do so. Ask the person who installed it to also provide what is called a dashboard. This is a condensed version of your data, typically available via a web page or an app. Google Analytics also allows you to receive customised traffic reports, available as PDFs or spreadsheets, emailed to you regularly.

You can also do some tutorials, and watch instructional videos. The learning curve is admittedly rather steep, however, there are many excellent resources available for beginners that explain the terminology and the shortcuts. Stick to it, have a go, and once you're feeling confident, start looking into your data.
And then? Start making more informed decisions about your web presence, using Google Analytics data.

Finally, you're encouraged to follow some of these links, containing helpful resources. Thank you for listening and watching, we hope you have found this presentation helpful.