Getting the most out of Google Analytics

Google Analytics (GA) is a tool that provides data about the volume and nature of visits to your website, how they found it, which pages are most often visited and which perform less well. Your organisation can use these statistics to get a better understanding of how your existing audience use your website and to understand them better. This can ultimately influence the type of content you produce and how it is presented on
your website.

The information available to you from GA can be as in-depth as you like, but to derive the most useful statistics you need to have GA set up correctly. This guide will run you through the basics, and provide instructions on how to get more from GA if you want to.

Basics
Do these things as a minimum

- Apply GA to your website
  - Guidelines here: https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/1008080?hl=en
  - Your organisation's web development team may need to help with this.

- If you haven't already, submit your website's url to Google Webmaster Tools
  - Guidelines here: https://www.google.com/webmasters/tools/submit-url

- Link up your GA account with Webmaster Tools.
  - Guidelines here: https://support.google.com/webmasters/answer/1120006?hl=en

- Keep track of your GA and Webmaster Tools logins - this sounds obvious, but as staff in your organisation come and go it's easy to lose track of logins. This can be time consuming to resolve later, so make sure you either have a generic login for the appropriate staff to use, or ensure new logins are created before key staff members move on.

- Manage your relationships with your suppliers - you will sometimes need support from your web developers or IT team (if you have one). Also if you use a third party for ticketing, or events or any other significant part of your site, you may need to ask them to make small configuration changes in order to improve tracking. It's a good idea to warn suppliers that you may need this support, and it's a good time to review support agreements and contracts to see what is already covered, and what you might need to pay for.

Tweaking the settings to suit your organisation

It's good to do these things if you have time - you results will be more meaningful

- Set up some 'goals' in GA - these help you to accurately measure how often users complete specific actions within the website.
  - Guidelines here: https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/1032415?hl=en

- Enable 'demographics' in GA - this will provide you with data about the age, gender and interests of your users. This can be useful when trying to set the appropriate editorial tone or use of language for your audience.
  - Guidelines here: https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/2799357?hl=en

Further refinements of your settings

It's a bonus to do these things if you're feeling confident with GA and want to get more insights from your data

- Use Campaign tracking - this allows you to see click throughs from things like email newsletters, but you have to set up links with a certain format to follow them in GA.
  - Guidelines here: https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/1033867?hl=en

- Track "events" - events in GA are interactions that can't be measured in terms of whole pages, for example the clicking of the play button on a video or the downloading of a PDF. These require some code to be added to your page templates, but should not be a large task for a web developer.
  - Guidelines here: https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/1033068?hl=en

  We suggest you track events for:
  - Outbound links to other sites
  - Downloads of PDFs and other resources
  - Interactions that don't load a new page (eg viewing an image slideshow)