Google Analytics 4 and what it means for ecommerce

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Williams Commerce

LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM, June 8, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Google recently announced that support for Universal Analytics (UA) will end on 1 July 2023, to be replaced with Google Analytics 4 (GA4). So, from summer 2023 new traffic to your ecommerce site won't show in your normal Google Analytics account and by the end of the year Google will start to delete old data. Users of Analytics 360, which was introduced in October 2021, have an additional three months to continue processing UA data, until 1 October 2023.

That's a pretty major change for data-driven businesses and something you will want to be prepared for.

Moving on from Universal Analytics
The landscape of digital analytics has changed alongside increasing concerns about privacy. Universal Analytics measures predominantly desktop web activity comprising independent sessions and easily observed cookie data. In response to international data privacy requirements and modern customer behavior, Google Analytics 4 will focus on interactions.

While Google says the move is designed to provide deeper insights into customer journeys, GA4 users are likely to find the changes to data collection and reporting a challenge.

How is Analytics 4 Different?
Google Analytics 4 was introduced in July 2019 to address evolving measurement requirements and to help businesses to measure different kinds of data. It's a cookie-less, privacy-focused tracking tool designed to allow businesses to analyze user journeys across all their websites and apps.

GA4 operates across multiple digital platforms and devices using an event-based data model instead of cookies to deliver user-based measurements. With more comprehensive controls for data collection and use, it's designed to help businesses meet their evolving needs as well as user expectations for choice and privacy. It uses machine learning (ML) to improve attribution and predict changing behavior.

Customer touchpoints – GA4's event-based measurement model is designed to provide a view of customer lifecycles rather than information about platforms or sessions. For example, you could use it to measure activity across your ecommerce site and apps to understand how your customers progress through your sales funnel. This could help you to reduce drop-off during the journey and increase click-throughs and conversions.

Attribution – you can use data-driven attribution to analyze each step of your customer's journey to understand the impact and actual contribution of each interaction. To help you understand how each of your marketing activities has influenced conversions, attribution credits are assigned rather than using just the last click in your Analytics data.

Compliance – in response to the latest country-level privacy controls, you can manage and minimize data collection at the user level and still maintain key measurements.

Insights – machine learning is used to provide predictive insights about user behavior and conversions. It can help you to define new audiences on the basis of their likelihood to purchase and you can automate data collection to improve your marketing.

You can integrate this information with other Google products such as Google Ads and combine it to use across your website and apps to optimize your campaigns.

Integration will be available to all Google customers, so any Google Analytics 4 property can use data collected about conversions and audiences in the Google Marketing Platform to integrate with Search Ads 360 and Display & Video 360.

Properties – new roll-up- and sub-properties in Analytics 360 allow you to customize the structure of your Google Analytics 4 information to meet your data governance needs. Different teams within your business or partners such as advertising agencies can access the curated data they need. You can now have up to 125 custom dimensions, 400 audiences and 50 conversion types per property.

How to Prepare for Analytics 4
If you created your property before 14 October 2020 you are probably using UA and you will need to get ready for the change. Properties created after that date are most likely to be GA4 properties already, so you won't need to take any further action.

For the time-being Analytics 4 can run in parallel with your UA account. However, to get ready for the change, you should aim to have GA4 live on your site before the end of May 2022. This will give you more than a year's worth of data before the switchover, even if you decide to move away from reliance on GA4 later.

Manual configuration is more important with GA4. While UA allows you to collect a lot of data to use later, GA4 provides you with a limited amount of curated data that you must manually maintain. It will provide top level reporting on acquisition, engagement, monetization and retention, along with some demographic and technical information. These reports can't be filtered or changed easily although 'explorations' can be used to generate customized reports in advance, based on your own requirements. Explorations can't be imported from the gallery so you will need to set this up manually.

You need to be aware that GA4 only retains data for two months as the default, which will be the limit of your customized reports unless the maximum of 14 months is manually configured. Even then, it won't be possible to create a manual year-on-year report.

Work with Google Experts
The Williams Commerce digital marketing team is well-versed in digital analysis. We understand Google's search algorithms so we can help you improve your organic search results. We are also Google AdWords specialists who can deliver great paid advertising performance too.

Speak with one of our experts to be sure you'll be ready for the switch to GA4 in 2023.

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