A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO DATA STUDIO

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INTRODUCTION

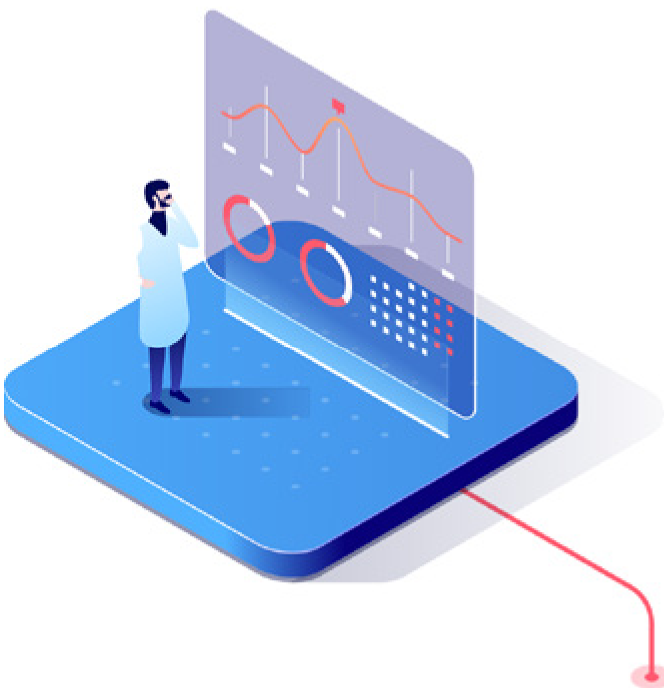
Whether you are working at an agency or on the client side, in all likelihood, you are spending at least one day a month poring over your Google Analytics (GA) account to pull together reports for various parts of your site. Even people who know there is a better way will often postpone report automation over and over again because of the initial investment of hours needed to set things up.

Most of the time we will excuse the work to ourselves and others by pointing out that the monthly report is pulled together much quicker these days as we have been doing it for so long and we are used to the process. Other times, we will point out that spending the time automating reporting will set us back in other tasks. For others, there is the issue of not knowing where to start or fearing possible costs (sometimes even the worry that it may not work).

One of the best things about Data Studio is that, with effort and patience, anyone with a good knowledge of Google Analytics can (and arguably should) automate their monthly reporting – and Google are adding more functionality all the time.

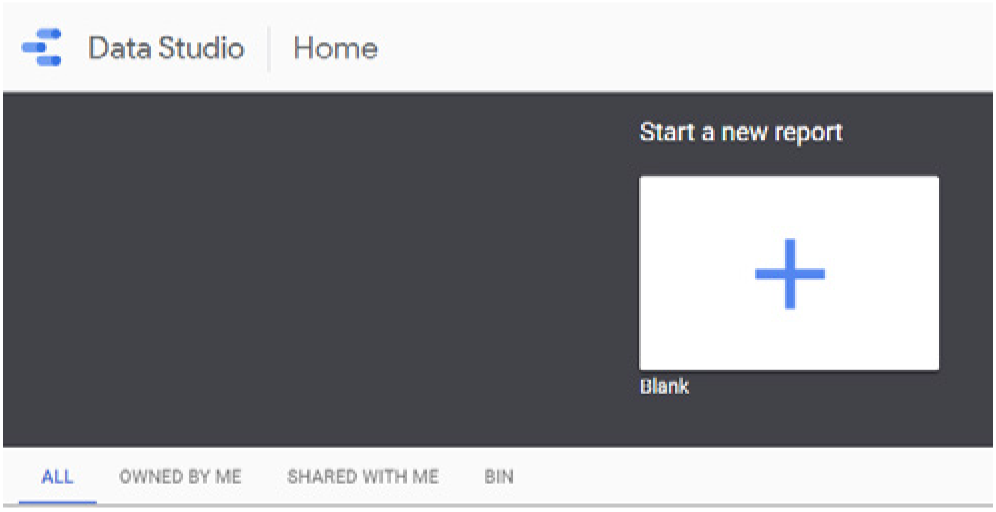
WHAT IS DATA STUDIO?

Part of the "Google Analytics 360" package released in March of 2016, Data Studio is a data visualisation tool that allows you to create and maintain a host of report types in more easy to comprehend visual formats which can be shared via a link or downloaded as a PDF.



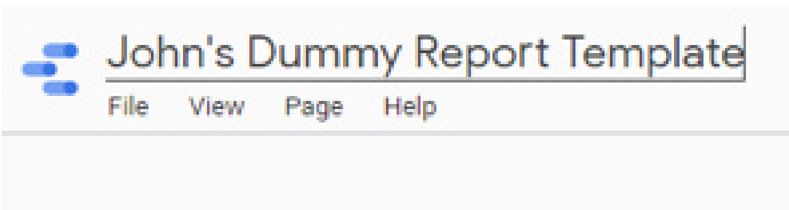
SETTING UP A BASIC DATA STUDIO REPORT

First things first, you'll need to ensure you have your access to Google Ads and Google Analytics, but assuming you have these set up and linked to the account you will be using for Data Studio, the next step is to sign in to Data Studio. Once there, you'll have the option to create a new report – which you can select:



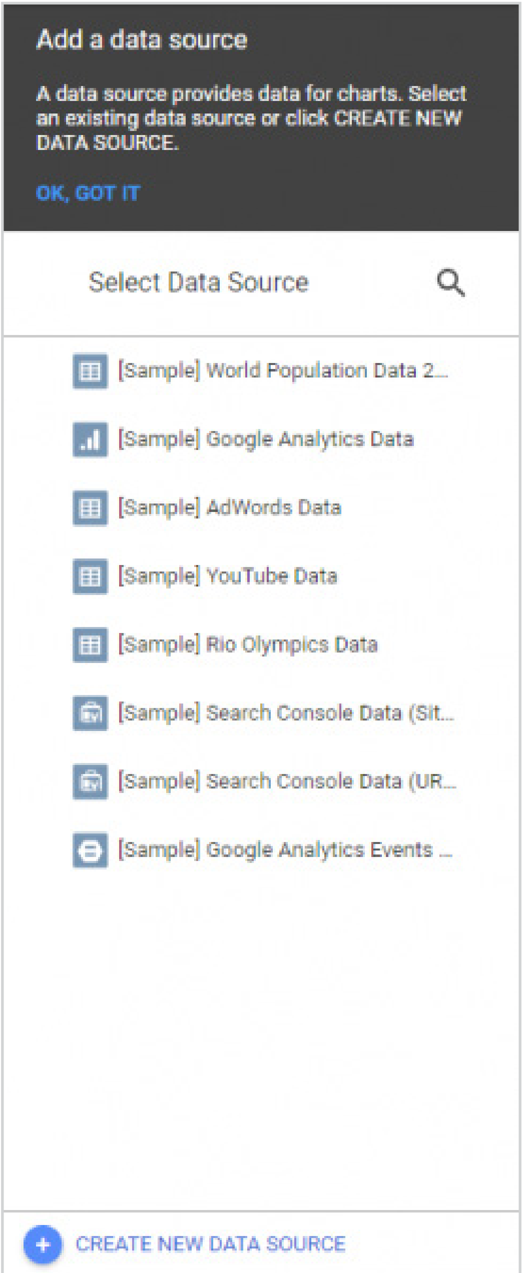
TITLING YOUR REPORT

You'll then be taken to an ominously blank page – name it and make it your own. Bear in mind the audience for your report and what you intend it to contain. While you can rename your title, it's important to make sure it is clearly named – not only for ease of rediscovery, but for ease of comprehension.

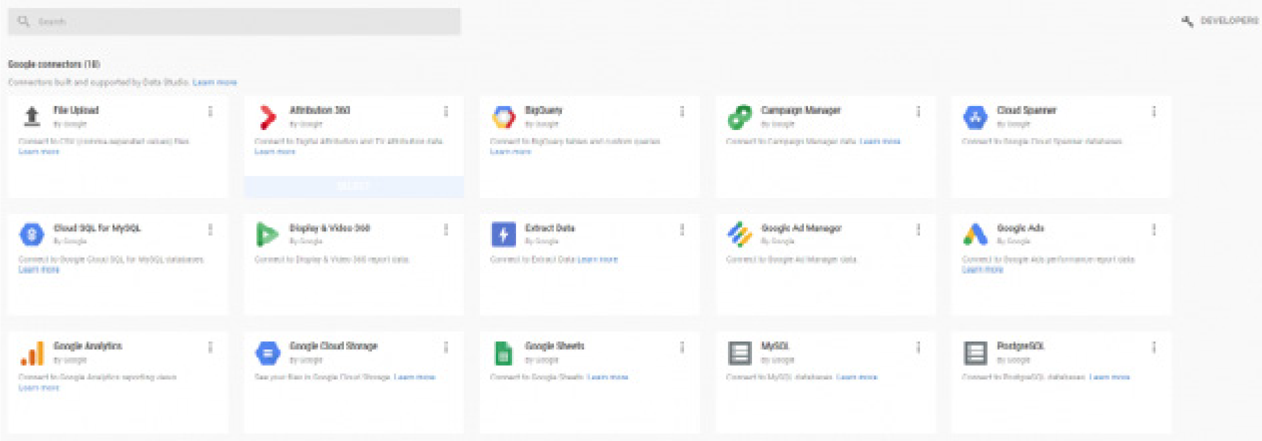


CONNECTING TO ANALYTICS

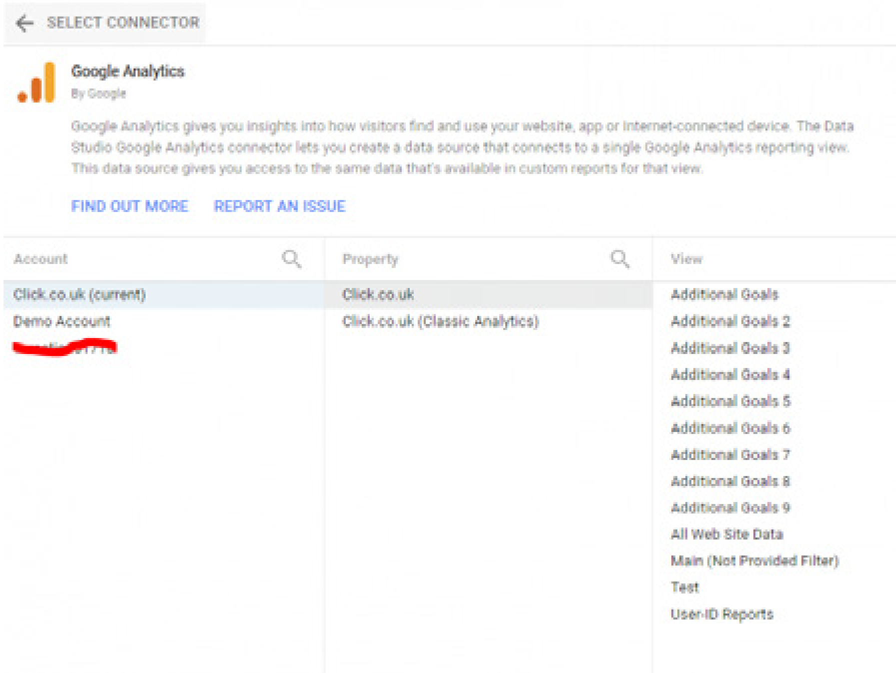
Once this is done, you can connect your Analytics and Google Ads accounts by creating a new data source using the menu bar that should be to the right of your blank page.



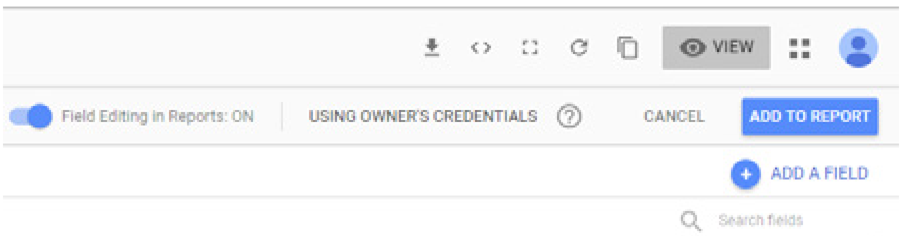
This will then bring a list of the currently available (built by Google) data sources – you can then select Ads or Analytics. These data sources can also be augmented by third party tools – like Supermetrics – if you want to add in things like social media followers without taking the long road.



You will then need to authorise the connection, then select the account, property and view.



This will auto load the dimensions/metrics etc that are currently part of that view in analytics or Google Ads. Select 'Add to report' to make these available to you when setting up the report.



Once you have allowed Data Studio access, it will return you to your blank report – this will now at least have some gridlines to ease your mind, it will also have a new menu bar on the right with 'layout' and 'theme' as tabs.

Using these two tabs, you can choose the colour palettes and other various presentation attributes – useful if you're looking to use brand colours or, unlike me, have any kind of design aptitude.

Once you've set your theme and layout, you can then begin creating your report using the various chart types in the top toolbar.

You begin by selecting your chart of choice then drawing the area it will occupy – the chart types (from left to right) are:

TYPES OF CHART

- Time series – a line chart plotting a metric over time.
- Bar chart – showing comparisons of a metric vs. a stated dimension.
- Combo chart – literally a combination of the previous two types.
- Pie chart – showing the share of a metric apportioned to a chosen dimension.
- Table – a versatile format allowing multiple metrics to be shown according to their relationship with a dimension.
- Geo map – allowing you to display the spread of a metric across a map (you can refine the level from global down to various subcontinental areas).
- Scorecard – a simple return of a count or total for a metric.
- Scatter chart – allows you to plot a source on a chart with an x and y axis that are both metrics.
- Bullet chart – used for showing progress toward a target (goal completions for example).
- Pivot table – allows you to show a metric distributed between two or more dimensions (with a minimum of one per column and row).

POPULATING YOUR CHART

To begin with, I'm going to set up a table – with a view to then refining this in the next two sections using either a segment or a filter.

Whenever I draw a table (this may not be standard, but always happens for me), it auto-populates with the Data Source I nominated initially (the view), the dimension 'Source' and the metric 'Sessions' and looks like this:

	Source	Sessions ▾
1.	google	33,254
2.	(direct)	5,960
3.	Act-On Software	1,536
4.	digitalagencynetwork.com	168
5.	bing	102
6.	LinkedIn	96
7.	Facebook	48
8.	(not set)	42
9.	Twitter	34
10.	eBook	31
11.	m.facebook.com	22
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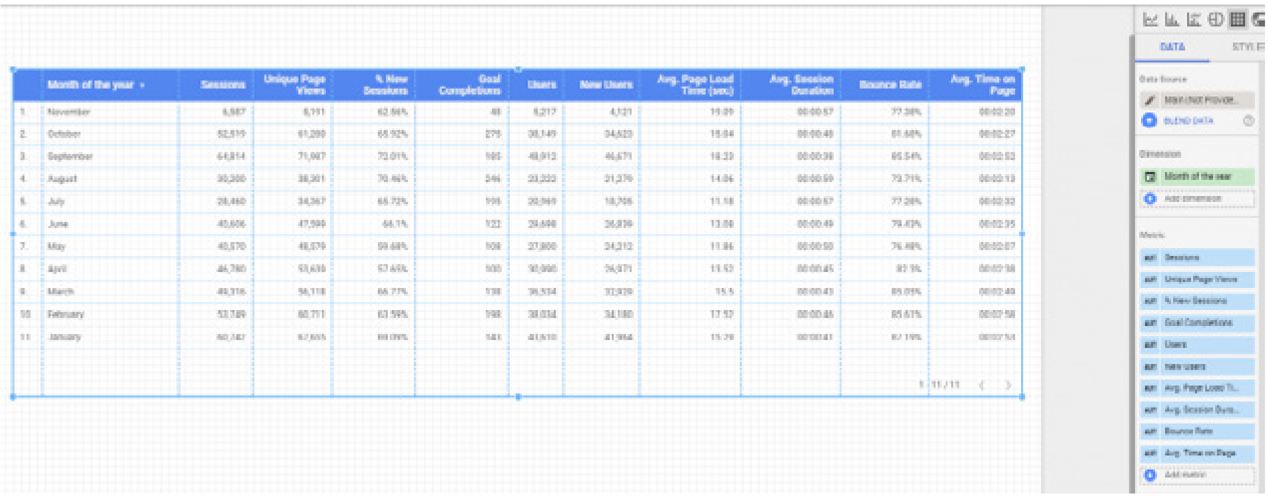
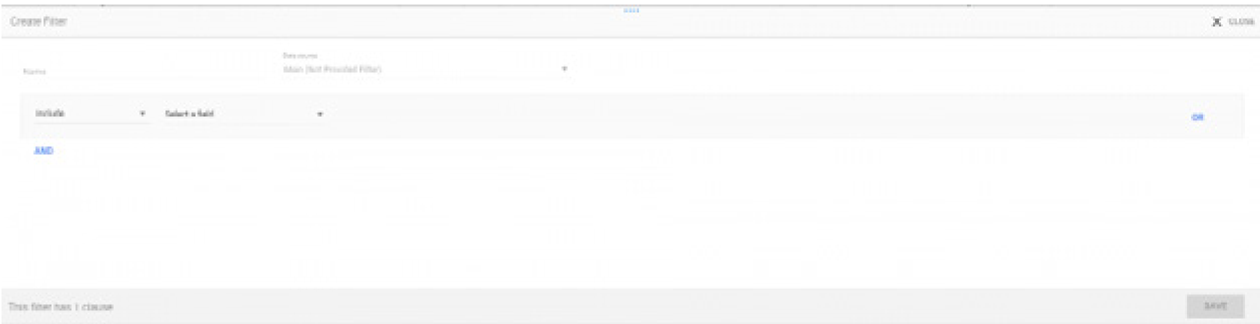
For a top level report table, however, using the menu on the left, I'm going to select some of the most important metrics and use the dimension 'month of the year' to create a month by month breakdown which will be sorted using the dimension in descending order to place the current month top of the list.



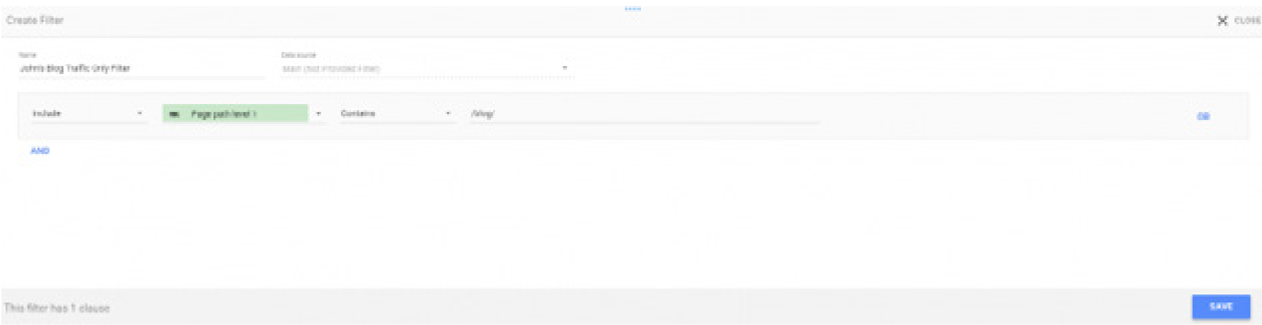
USING FILTERS

With this table giving us a starting platform, we can then look to narrow our focus and initially we'll do this using a filter – which you can do by selecting 'add a filter' in the right hand menu (under the 'data' tab). So, having copied the table and pasted it in to a new report page, you can select the 'add a filter' option. This will bring up the filter creation menu:



You can use the basic include/exclude options with any metric or dimension, refining it with 'contains', 'equal to', 'starts with' and other options. The full row is referred to as a 'clause' – which can be augmented with additional clauses to refine the filter further.

If, for example, you wanted to look at a specific subfolder on your site, you would use the following options (where '/blog/' is equal to the specific name of the subfolder you want to look at):



This gives us the same report as previous, only this time it will only include sessions that include a visit to that particular subfolder:

1 Jan 2018 - 31 Dec 2018

Month of the year	Sessions	% Δ	Unique Page Views	% Δ	% New Sessions	% Δ	Goal Completions	% Δ	Users	% Δ	New Users	% Δ	Avg. Page Load Time (sec)	% Δ	Avg. Session Duration	% Δ	Bounce Rate	% Δ	Avg. Time on Page	% Δ
November	640	-66.5%	762	-65.6%	83.28%	-0.4%	0	-	627	-66.9…	533	-66.7…	4.96	-69.3%	00:00:39	-27.7…	87.34%	-1.4%	00:02:34	-32…
October	2,712	33.8%	3,292	38.0%	83.77%	3.5%	0	-	2,768	41.4%	2,326	38.3%	29.63	27.7%	00:00:44	-17.1…	83.69%	-0.7%	00:02:54	-14…
September	1,925	21.4%	2,437	31.0%	83.64%	-1.7%	0	-	1,931	21.1%	1,610	19.3%	10.21	-18.2%	00:01:07	21.7%	83.43%	-4.2%	00:03:23	-11…
August	2,133	10.7%	2,589	14.2%	81.01%	-7.7%	0	-	2,023	4.3%	1,728	2.1%	8.31	-11.8%	00:01:08	44.7%	83.87%	-5.0%	00:03:50	14.9%
July	2,281	-1.9%	2,629	-1.3%	83.6%	-3.4%	0	-	2,191	-2.4%	1,907	-5.3%	13.68	10.4%	00:01:01	7.3%	84.27%	-2.0%	00:04:04	11.7%
June	2,162	30.1%	2,469	35.0%	84.51%	-1.5%	0	-	2,111	33.6%	1,827	20.1%	16.40	10.0%	00:00:53	-1.2%	86.08%	-1.1%	00:04:20	-7.4%
May	2,659	49.5%	2,985	49.4%	78.26%	-10.1%	0	-	2,468	42.3%	2,081	34.4%	13.16	44.8%	00:00:55	20.0%	79.58%	-10…	00:03:09	-13…
April	3,040	100.7%	3,494	102.3%	71.58%	-15.0%	0	-	2,678	87.9%	2,176	70.5%	13.17	-9.2%	00:00:50	12.5…	87.63%	1.6%	00:03:26	-9.1%
March	27,244	1,479…	27,669	1,350…	59.98%	-30.0%	0	-	19,441	1,08…	16,340	1,00…	19.74	33.8%	00:00:32	-32.8…	93.28%	7.6%	00:05:28	36.8%
February	42,087	3,115…	42,509	2,749…	61.94%	-27.2%	0	-	29,120	2,18…	26,068	2,24…	20	75.9%	00:00:30	-39.7…	93.07%	8.6%	00:05:23	60.4%
January	2,245	12.0%	2,626	14.4%	78.84%	-4.3%	0	-	2,208	18.1%	1,770	7.2%	19.40	56.2%	00:00:48	-20.9…	85.7%	1.9%	00:02:59	-21…

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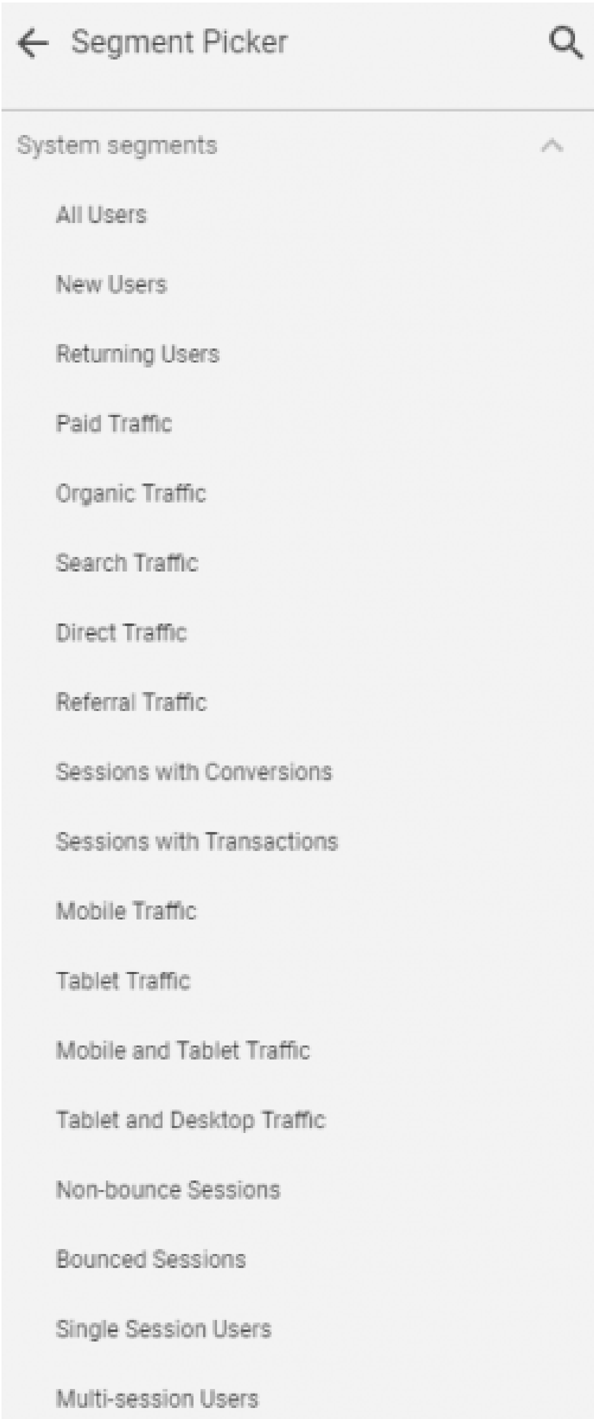
USING SEGMENTS

We can then refine this report further using ‘segments’, so if we copy the table across to a third page, then select ‘add segment’, we’ll be presented with two options in a ‘segment picker’: ‘System segments’ and ‘Custom segments’. We’ll be using the former here – the latter is defined in Analytics, so you will be aware already if you have any and what purpose they could be used for.



This list is fairly self-explanatory if you’ve spent any time in Google Analytics – allowing you to restrict the data in your table by one of a number of factors – ranging from user specific, like ‘New User’ and ‘Multi-session User’, to general source, like ‘Organic Traffic’ and ‘Paid Traffic’.

By using the ‘Organic Traffic’ segment, we now have a table which shows the organic traffic, to the specific subfolder, as part of the overall site – giving us different levels of depth to a fairly basic chart type.

1 Jan 2018 - 31 Dec 2018

Month of the year	Sessions	% Δ	Unique Page Views	% Δ	% New Sessions	% Δ	Goal Completions	% Δ	Users	% Δ
November	338	-75.3%	349	-75.8%	92.31%	2.2%	0	-	321	-75.3...
October	1,919	36.5%	2,073	34.3%	90.67%	1.8%	0	-	1,849	37.5%
September	1,338	25.5%	1,500	31.0%	91.03%	1.1%	0	-	1,318	25.4%
August	1,529	12.0%	1,691	16.2%	90.12%	-2.9%	0	-	1,468	10.3%
July	1,610	9.4%	1,700	6.3%	92.42%	0.0%	0	-	1,565	10.8%
June	1,588	25.2%	1,681	26.0%	91.69%	2.1%	0	-	1,528	28.1%
May	1,728	36.0%	1,830	33.1%	90.22%	0.1%	0	-	1,648	35.1%
April	1,777	84.7%	1,880	76.0%	91.22%	-1.6%	0	-	1,714	82.1%
March	1,390	46.1%	1,735	50.1%	90.38%	-3.4%	0	-	1,320	43.3%
February	1,313	42.1%	1,444	44.4%	92.08%	0.6%	0	-	1,286	43.4%
January	1,425	44.4%	1,501	35.6%	92%	-1.2%	0	-	1,371	40.8%

Month of the year	New Users	% Δ	Avg. Page Load Time (sec)	% Δ	Avg. Session Duration	% Δ	Bounce Rate	% Δ	Avg. Time on Page	% Δ
November	312	-74.7...	4.95	-70.8%	00:00:37	-13.5...	89.35%	-0.9%	00:05:47	13.7%
October	1,740	39.0%	33.74	206.7%	00:00:43	-17.4...	87.39%	-0.5%	00:03:13	22.9%
September	1,218	24.2%	10.59	24.8%	00:00:49	19.0...	86.1%	2.5%	00:04:17	26...
August	1,378	8.8%	7.79	-43.7%	00:00:59	32.9%	85.55%	-4.1%	00:04:57	0.5%
July	1,488	10.3%	6.74	-63.7%	00:00:50	-2.0%	86.27%	-1.0%	00:05:39	22.1%
June	1,456	27.8%	13.35	2.6%	00:00:53	6.0%	86.78%	-2.4%	00:05:30	-3.1%
May	1,559	36.2%	10.57	-0.4%	00:00:51	2.5%	76.85%	-13...	00:03:21	-23...
April	1,621	81.7%	14.97	10.2%	00:00:47	-5.3%	88.8%	2.7%	00:04:47	33.0%
March	1,437	41.2%	9.99	-27.5%	00:00:47	-4.3%	89.23%	1.4%	00:04:11	-10...
February	1,209	42.9%	9.39	19.2%	00:00:38	23.0...	90.78%	4.3%	00:03:52	1.6%
January	1,311	42.7%	21.56	57.5%	00:00:42	-9.8%	90.18%	3.3%	00:04:12	30.8%

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This process – or, at least, a similar one – can be used across the full spectrum of available charts, allowing you to produce geo maps for conversions, device specific traffic reports and a whole range of others that can help you to better communicate your success with stakeholders.

CONCLUSION

While this is the first of what will likely be several eBooks on Data Studio, the information should enable you to recreate most of your Google Analytics reporting. Not only this, once you replicate your reporting, you will be able to run the report with minimal effort from then on. Not only is this beneficial to the person compiling the report, but proper use of a data visualisation tool such as Data Studio should render your reports clearer and more readily understood.

In addition to this, it pays to keep up to date with trends – and since Data Studio left beta status in mid-2018, it is becoming more widely adopted by search and digital professionals across verticals, meaning that not only is it easier than manual reporting, but it is likely to become a requirement by employers and clients alike.

GET IN TOUCH WITH US TODAY

ABOUT US

Click Consult is a multi award-winning digital and search marketing agency with a focus on organic (SEO) and paid search (PPC). Part of global consumer brand business Ceuta Group, we have a team of 70-plus specialists and a portfolio of more than 60 clients worldwide.

Our complementary services include content marketing, outreach, social media, conversion rate optimisation (CRO): and international/multilingual search marketing. We can also offer training and consultation to support your teams or existing strategy.

Click was named Search Agency of the Year 2018, adding to our long list of other awards and accolades, and also ranks within Econsultancy's 'Top 100 Digital Agencies', and Prolific North's 'Top 50 Digital Agencies'. We're also a Google Premier Partner, a Bing Select Partner and feature in The Drum Recommends.

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