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Small Business Guide to
MAKING THE GOOGLE ANALYTICS4 SWITCH

Why mess with a good thing?

The deadline to switch to Google Analytics 4 is coming up fast. Starting July 1st, Universal Analytics will no longer collect new data for campaigns, effectively forcing this platform into retirement.

Despite the numerous benefits and upgrades promised by the new GA4 platform, many local businesses have been slow to transition to a new analytics platform. We get it: if you're happy with the results and the user experience on Universal Analytics, why mess with a good thing?

But with just weeks to go before Universal Analytics is sunset, this transition can't be delayed any longer. There's good news, though: between a simple setup process and Cox Media's expert support, your business has all the resources it needs to make a seamless switch over to Google Analytics 4.

To help you out, we've put together an easy 11-point checklist that guides you step-by-step through the migration process. Keep this guide handy as you move your analytics over to GA4.

Switching to GA4: New Value Awaits

Change can be uncomfortable. But as local brands have learned over the past few years, flexibility to this change can be rewarded with better business prospects, more viable business models, and more promising opportunities for long-term growth.

Similar value awaits businesses when they transition to Google Analytics 4. **The platform promises to improve the quality of your ad campaign insights through the following capabilities:**

- **ACCESS to better, more comprehensive campaign data.** Compared to the fragmented data available through Universal Analytics, GA4 fills in data gaps to tell a more complete story of campaign performance.

- **PREDICTIVE audience targeting.** GA4 offers new tools to identify your target audience and connect with them through your campaigns. These capabilities improve the precision of audience targeting, leading to better ROI potential for digital ads.

- **FASTER, more impactful ad optimizations.** With better analytics and better tools for refining campaigns, local businesses can optimize campaigns faster and drive more significant improvements than what was possible through Universal Analytics.

Step-by-Step Guide to Moving to Google Analytics 4

We'll walk you through everything you need to do to switch to GA4 and connect your Google Ads account to your new analytics platform. Ready? Let's begin:

STEP 1: Consider your account structure.

Google Analytics 4 offers a number of alternative account structures to support different business setups. From brands with a global footprint to parent companies operating a number of independent subsidiaries, these account structures offer the flexibility certain businesses need to effectively advertise and analyze performance across multiple entities and geographic regions.

For most local businesses, the basic account structure offered in GA4 is enough. If you are one business with one website, this step is straightforward—no special account structures are required. Even if you're a local chain running separate ad campaigns for multiple locations, the standard account structure should be enough to meet your analytics needs.

STEP 2: Create a GA4 property and data stream.

Even if you have a property already set up in Universal Analytics, you'll need to create a new property in Google Analytics 4. Fortunately, this new property can be set up alongside the Universal Analytics property, so UA can continue collecting data and conducting analytics while you set up GA4—sparing your business any disruption in your analytics.

The GA4 Setup Assistant can walk you through the steps required to create a new property and data stream. You can access the GA4 Setup Assistant through Admin platform by navigating to the Account column, selecting your business account, choosing your business property from the Property column, and clicking GA4 Setup Assistant.

STEP 3: Collect website and application data.

In many cases, the GA4 Setup Assistant can reuse your existing Universal Analytics tags to collect data for your new GA4 property. But it's possible that GA4 will not be able to reuse these tags, meaning you'll have to add new Google tags on your own.

This process can be initiated through the GA4 Setup Assistant. Once you reach the Set up a Google tag page, you can instruct the setup assistant to use the Google tag detected on your existing website. Once the tag is detected, you can click confirm and finish the creation of your GA4 property.

If you are wanting to add a new Google tag, you can reference Google's guide for installing a tag with a website builder or CMS.
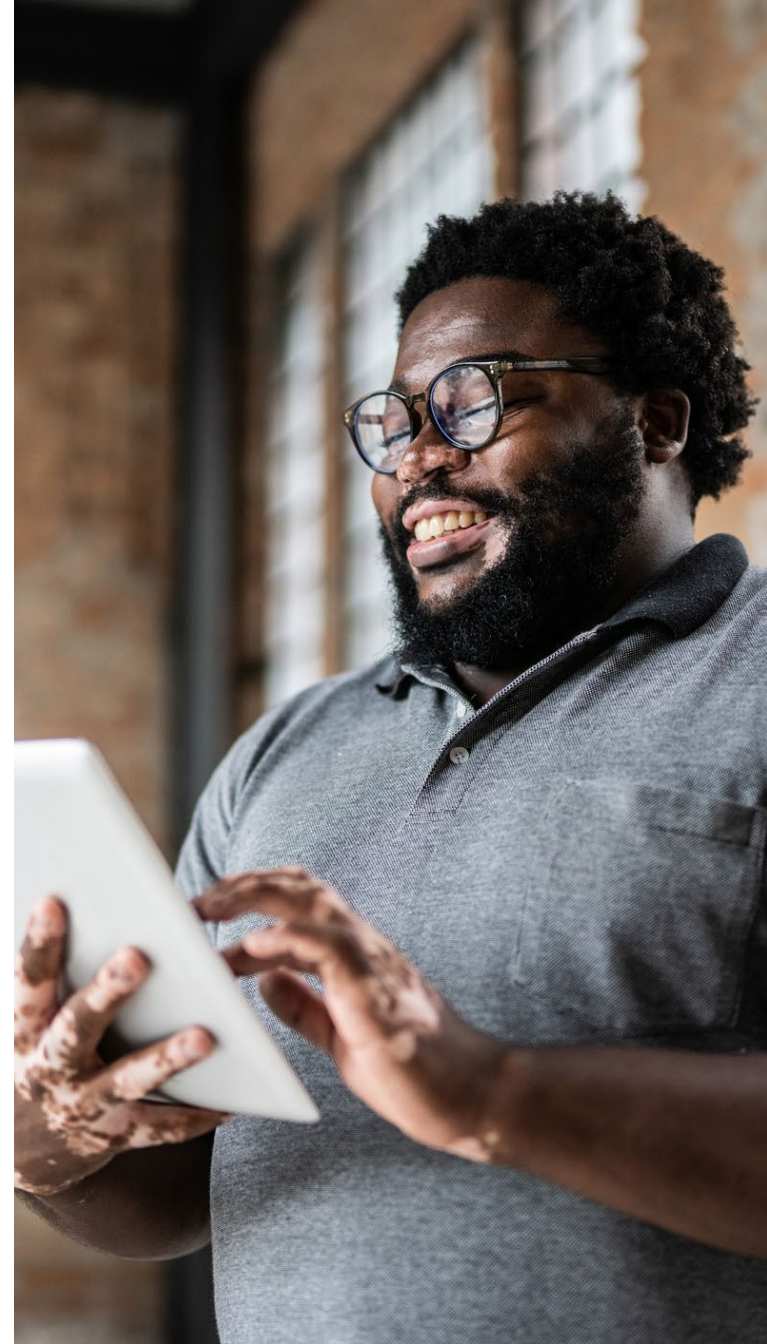
STEP 4: Turn on Google signals.

Google signals is the term for [website and application session data](#) that Google connects to users who are signed into their Google accounts and have opted in to Google Ads Personalization. GA4 uses Google signals to increase the amount of data collected from these users, which your business can then use to improve its audience targeting and ad personalization for campaigns.

Google signals are most valuable to your analytics reporting and any remarketing campaigns you run. All you have to do is click on Manage Google signals under the Actions menu in the Setup Assistant, then switch the status of Google signals data collection to "on."
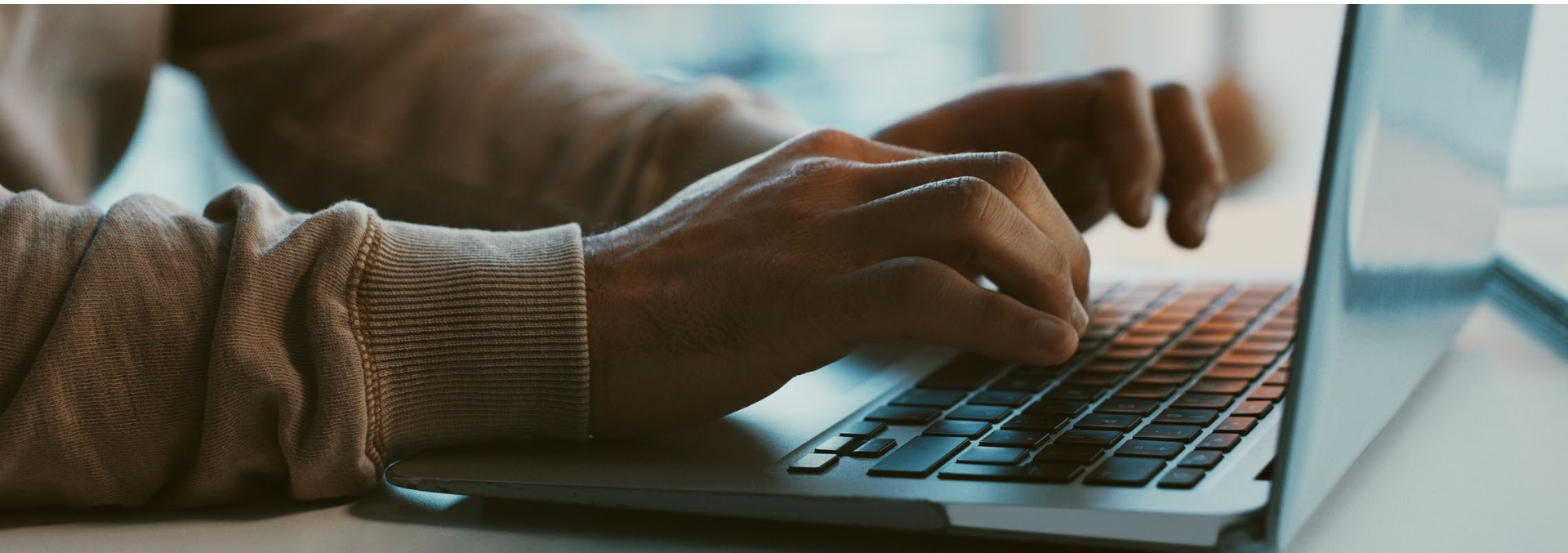
STEP 5: Set up conversions.

One difference you'll notice between Universal Analytics and GA4 is the disappearance of "goals" as a tool for tracking various conversion events that take place on your website or app.

In GA4, "goals" have been rebranded as "conversions." While you can set up conversions manually in GA4, the easiest solution is to use the goals migration tool in the GA4 setup assistant, which will automatically convert your UA goals into GA4 conversions.

Keep in mind that only destination and event goals can be migrated to GA4. Other goals, such pages/screens per session, duration, and smart goals, can't be migrated. After you've used the migration tool to switch over all eligible goals to conversions, you may also decide to create new conversion events on your own. Google Analytics offers step-by-step guides for creating a number of common conversion events.

STEP 6: Set up users.

As the administrator of your Google Analytics account, you are responsible for migrating all other users from UA to GA4. The GA4 Setup Assistant facilitates this migration through a Google Sheets add-on, letting you review users and their permissions before you add them to the new GA4 property.

During this process, you can also change the permissions of individual users and/or remove user accounts that shouldn't have access to your GA4 account, such as former employees. Use this tool to quickly update user permissions while improving the security of your Analytics account.

STEP 7: Link to Google Ads.

Once your GA4 analytics account is set up with your property information and account users, you will want to link it to your company's Google Ads account. A migration tool in the GA4 Setup Assistant can automate this process for you, allowing Google ads data to appear in your GA4 reports.

This connection between GA4 and Google Ads also allows you to use Google Analytics 4 data to inform the creation of your ad campaigns. Before you can use this data, though, you'll need to complete steps 8 and 9 to ensure proper data-sharing between the Google Ads and GA4 platforms.

Keep in mind that Google Ads links can only be imported by a user with the role of Editor or higher.

STEP 8: Migrate audiences.

If you're keeping the same audiences used through your property on Universal Analytics, you'll need to manually recreate these same audiences in GA4. There's no automated process for doing this, so make sure each audience you want to transition over to GA4 is created with the same parameters.

Refer to Google's guide to creating audiences in GA4 when migrating these audiences over to the new platform. Once added, these audiences will be available in the library shared with Google Ads, and can be used to target ad delivery through Google Ads Personalization.

STEP 9: Validate your conversions.

Since you are switching over from goals to conversions, you'll want to make sure the new conversions you've created are roughly equivalent to the goals you were previously using in Universal Analytics. While the exact data figures for GA4 conversions will feature small variations from UA goals, due to the subtle changes in how conversions are being tracked, these numbers should be roughly equivalent to one another.

Run both UA goals and GA4 conversions alongside one another for two weeks, then compare the results of each. If numbers are identical or close across both methods, you can have confidence that the newly created conversions are working properly. If you find dramatic differences in this data, take another look at the conversions you've created, and compare them to their UA goals counterparts to see if you can spot the cause of these discrepancies.

If you're struggling to identify the cause of this disparity, refer to this support article about importing Analytics conversions into Google Ads.

STEP 10: Import conversions into Google Ads.

After conversions have been validated, you will need to go into Google Ads and import conversion events from Google Analytics 4. This makes those conversions available for bidding and for use in campaign performance reports.

To import these conversions, log in to Google Ads, click Tools and Settings, and navigate to Measurement > Conversions. Click to add a new conversion, then click important and select your GA4 property or properties. Select all of the conversion events you want to add, then click import and save.

Since UA is set up to continue running while you manage the transition to GA4, make sure you stop bidding on UA goals before you switch over and start bidding on GA4 conversions. If you don't, you may end up suffering duplicate conversion counts that distort your ad campaign analytics.

STEP 11: Add an analytics audience to a campaign or ad group for remarketing.

If you want to use Analytics audiences to power a remarketing campaign, you need to add at least one of your Analytics audiences to a campaign or ad group. This makes that audience available to the remarketing campaign you create in Google Ads.

To add an audience, log in to Google Ads, click the Campaigns icon, then navigate to Audiences > Audience Segments. From there, click on Edit Audience Segments and search for the campaign or ad group you want to update. Once you've found that campaign or ad group, find and select the audience segment or segments you want to target, then click save to add them to the remarketing campaign.

Once you've finished that step, you're all set! Congratulations—you're now ready to start using Google Analytics 4.

GA4 Quick Reference Checklist

☐ Step 1: Consider your account structure

☐ Step 2: Create a GA4 property and data stream

☐ Step 3: Collect website and application data

☐ Step 4: Turn on Google signals

☐ Step 5: Set up conversions

☐ Step 6: Set up users

☐ Step 7: Link to Googls Ads

☐ Step 8: Migrate audiences

☐ Step 9: Validate your conversions

☐ Step 10: Import conversions into Google Ads

☐ Step 11: Add an analytics audience to a campaign or ad group for remarketing

You're Just a Few Steps Away From Better Ad Performance

Once you follow through and ditch Universal Analytics for Google Analytics 4, it won't be long before you start to reap the rewards of better analytics and improved campaign performance.

For an even better experience—and higher ROI for your [digital ad strategy](#)—it's worth your time to coordinate a GA4 switch with a marketing strategy consultant that understands the ins and out of Google Analytics 4, and can help you develop a sensible plan for migrating your analytics onto the new platform.

At Cox Media, our in-house experts help you harness new, powerful GA4 insights to quickly optimize digital video, remarketing and other digital ad campaigns. Access to impressive analytics reports is a great asset, but your business can only realize the value of that resource when you understand how to apply those insights to your digital ad strategy.

From switching to GA4 to creating smarter, more effective ad campaigns, we'll help your business turn Google Analytics 4 into a launchpad for advertising success.

Contact us today to get started.

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