



AVOIDING DATA VOMIT

The ability to measure digital marketing and your website traffic is both a blessing and a curse.

You can very quickly find yourself drowning in analytics data and coping with a firehose full of charts and graphs. You may have found yourself staring into the data abyss in an endless stream of binary numbers, and you're desperately looking, trying, to find the "Waldo." The aim of the game of course, is to see insights and make changes and recommendations to your website and marketing, so you can grow, nail it, win.

Take a moment to plan how you are going to show your work, your data, in a way that is as smooth as silk and as easy to read as your A,B,Cs. As a result, those insights and answers will be easier to see and action.

ANSWERING QUESTIONS...



What's the point of the report?

Your goal here is to make decisions based on the report. Not report for the sake of reporting. Tempting as it may be to throw everything together in a dashboard form. Try to remember, what is the whole point of the report? Of course, a big no-no, is to pull data together, to make your work feel tangible, and to show that "stuff happened."

So what is it that you are trying to say? What questions are you trying to find an answer to in your business, or for your client?

E.g. How is our SEO work doing? Who are our best users on the website? Which content or landing pages are working on the website? How did our last campaign do? How much money did the site make this month, and, are we improving from previous months? Etc.

Who is getting the report?

Just like the idea of having personas (semi-fictional representations of your ideal customer). Think about the idea of having -reporting- personas. Who's getting the report? What is it that they want?

This will give you an idea of how much information to give those people - and allow you to highlight the metrics that matter to them. For example, the CEO or Board may want very high level metrics; like total number of sales, return on ad spend, and conversion rate, but, the Head of Marketing may want to know how many users are on the website, which marketing channels they came from, and the conversion rate for each channel.



What are the key messages?

Let's say you are doing a report to demonstrate how your SEO work is doing, as you've just started working on it and pumping resources and cash into your new found strategic approach.

You may want to show:

- Which search engines are you getting traffic from e.g. Google, Bing, Yahoo
- How many users/sessions come from organic traffic?
- Which pages do they visit?
- What the conversion rate is for organic traffic?

And for context, show the difference between the reporting period that you defined vs previous periods e.g. September 2019 vs October 2019 and the previous year, September 2018 vs September 2017.

How can you make it easy for them to get that message?

Taking a leaf of our favorite usability book by Steve Krug ("Don't Make Me Think"), the person looking at the report should very quickly get to their destination, their 'aha' moment. To get them there, think about how you can visualize the data in a very simple way, don't make them think and ask questions, or be unclear about what they are looking at.

Select the right data style for your message e.g. bar charts, heat maps, pie charts, and make each data point clear - by giving each metric or section a heading in plain english. Never assume that the person knows what they are looking at! Hint: they don't.



WIREFRAME THE REPORT

Creating reports can take time, and let's face it, it's not exactly the most exciting job in the world - sitting building dashboards. So, save yourself time and future amends on your wondrous creation by doing a wireframe of your reports, get sign off, then build it.

You may have used wireframes to sketch out landing pages, websites, or emails, but imagine how you can use this technique to build out a dashboard.

Let's walk through our process questions and see what we come up with...



What's the point of the report?

You want to isolate organic traffic from the website to see how your SEO strategy is working for you.

Who is getting the report?

The CEO who has signed off on the budget.

What are the key messages?

Which Search Engines are we getting traction with? e.g. Google, Bing, Yahoo. How many users are coming from organic search, which pages they visited, and if they converted or not.

How can we make this easy?

Provide headers above each metric and data item. Display the search engines in a pie chart format, for any goals, provide the data as a % point AND real number of conversions, use a bar chart to show the pages users visit. Add a calendar icon so the reader can change the dates, and an option to switch between reporting views. Done!



SO, LET'S GET TO WORK

Using the wireframe example here, you could have someone look at the report and see very quickly that Google is your best search engine and your users are growing month on month, as well as compared to the previous year. You can confirm for them, that your search marketing work is great at driving micro conversions and likely assisting in the big goals too, and that they are seeking out blog and content pages on your site. Once your wireframe is signed off, then you build it! P.S We think Google Data Studio is pretty darn sweet.

Title of report

SEO REVIEW

29th June 2018 - 29th July 2018

WHERE DOES OUR SEO TRAFFIC COME FROM?

Display data in pie chart to quickly see the share of traffic from different search engines

- Google
- Bing
- Yahoo!

DID THEY CONVERT?

GOAL #

GOAL #

Previous Period

Provide goals as a % and actual number of goals eg 2% conversion = 12 goals completed etc

Give context, show goals from previous year and/or previous periods

HOW MANY USERS COME FROM SEO?

USERS NO #

Previous Period/Days

DID THEY CONVERT?

GOAL #

GOAL #

Previous Period

Show macro and micro goals

WHICH PAGES DO THEY LAND ON?

PAGE	PAGE TITLE	NO OF USERS
/url-address	Title Tag	#####
/url-address	Title Tag	#####
/url-address	Title Tag	#####

If you pull in data on your visitors keep it consistent with the other data points, or if you change, make it clear in the heading e.g. this is Users to the site or Session on the site

Make data easy to view in tables, using bars or heatmaps

Add filters to your data studio report to only show traffic from medium = organic, to avoid any data issues

Option to change data range. Tip: agree on date range for report e.g. 7/14/28/30 days etc

Add an option to switch between properties and views

Headers explain the detail, don't make them think!

Select your report on users or sessions, but make it clear in the report which metric you are using