

Introduction

“We think we want information when really we want knowledge.”

—Nate Silver, *from The Signal and the Noise*

According to a recent survey of IT professionals,¹ **“55% of big data analytics projects are abandoned.”** Most of the respondents said that the top two reasons the projects fail are that managers lack the right expertise in house to connect the dots around data to form appropriate insights, and that projects lack business context around data. Similarly, the “Online Measurement and Strategy Report 2013” from **Econsultancy² asked companies, “Do you have a company-wide strategy that ties data collection and analysis to business objectives?” Only 19% said yes**, a figure that had hardly changed during the previous five years.

I wrote this book for those managers struggling to make headway—to empower you to make informed decisions and overcome the obstacles.

My goal with this book is to get you to think in terms of *insights*—not Google Analytics data. An insight is knowledge that you can relate to. It’s a story that puts you in the shoes of your visitors, so that you can understand their requirements when they come to and view your website, app, or other digital content.

A company's ability to satisfy the needs of a website visitor depends on two important factors:

- Visitor expectations, discerned from how they got to your content—what search engine, campaign ads, or social conversation drove their decision to seek you out
- User experience—how easy it was to use your content, to navigate around, find information, engage with you (contact you, purchase, subscribe, give feedback)

It is your organization's ability to manage, analyze, and improve these two factors that determines your digital success (or not). In this book I describe how insights are used to pull *all* of the relevant data points together to build a story of your visitors' journey and their experiences. With that knowledge you can improve these: as I show in Chapter 10, improvement can be dramatic performance gains in terms of your online visibility, revenue, or efficiency savings.

Yet Google Analytics doesn't provide insights by itself—no tool can. Producing insights requires an understanding of your business and its products, your value proposition, your website content, its engagement points and processes, and of course its marketing plan. Google Analytics provides the data (and lots of it) that enables you to assess these. However, people—not machines—build insights. This is the role of your analytics team. They sift through the noise to find the useful data, translate it into information to explain what is happening, then build stories of useful knowledge for the organization—the insights.

This book is about showing you how to do that. This book is about knowing what to focus on, what you can expect in return, the talent you need to hire, the processes you need to put in place, the pitfalls to avoid, and how much investment is required in order to make it all happen.

This is a detailed book by necessity. Building an environment where you can trust your data, understand it, and make important decisions based on it requires a deep level of immersion, not an executive summary. However, my approach throughout this book is to focus on the insight gained for the business, not the minutiae.

This book is for you if you are a manager who needs an overview of the key principles of website measurement, the capabilities of Google Analytics, and how to grow and give direction to your organization when it comes to its digital strategy. Your ultimate interest is in insights and knowledge, not more data!

In short, I aim to put you in control and provide a perspective on the entire process of building a *data-driven* environment using Google Analytics.

REFERENCES

- 1 <http://visual.ly/cios-big-data>
- 2 <https://econsultancy.com/reports/online-measurement-and-strategy-report>

