

Hyde & Co.

FREE RESOURCE · NO. X

The numbers that *matter*

Analytics and Search Console for people who do not want to learn analytics.

Six numbers, two free tools, and a **thirty-minute monthly review** that replaces staring at dashboards nobody understands. Plus four questions that will tell you whether an agency report is worth reading.

FREE TO USE AND SHARE
COMPANION TO THE WEBSITE PLAYBOOK

AN AGENCY FOR BUSINESS OWNERS
ORLANDO, FLORIDA



Why most business owners give up on this

Analytics tools are built for analysts. You open one, see forty metrics you did not ask for, recognise none of them, and close the tab. A year later you still cannot answer "did the website make us any money?"

This guide takes the opposite approach. **Six numbers. Two free tools. Thirty minutes a month.** Everything else in those dashboards is for someone whose full-time job is looking at them.

One thing to accept up front: the goal is not precision. Web analytics is approximate — ad blockers, cookie consent, multiple devices and privacy settings all mean your numbers undercount reality. That is fine. You are looking for **direction and change**, not exact figures. A number that is consistently wrong in the same way is still useful for spotting when something moves.

Both free. Both from Google. They answer different questions, and people constantly confuse them.

Answers	How people find you <i>on Google</i>	What people do <i>once they arrive</i>
Covers	Google search results only	All traffic, from everywhere
Best for	What you rank for, what gets clicked	Which pages work, what people do next
History kept	About 16 months	Longer, depending on settings
Set-up difficulty	Easy	Fiddly

If you only ever open one, open Search Console. It is simpler, it requires no configuration to be useful, and it tells you things nothing else can — including what people searched before they found you.

Getting them working

Search Console: verify ownership at search.google.com/search-console. Verify it **yourself**, using a method you control — not through your developer's account. (If your developer is the only verified owner and you part ways, removing them from the user list does not remove their access if their verification token is still on your site. Check for verification methods you do not recognise.)

Then submit your sitemap, usually at yourdomain.com/sitemap.xml.

Analytics: get the tracking code installed, then **verify it actually works** — open the Realtime report and visit your own site on your phone. If you do not appear within a few seconds, it is not recording, regardless of what anyone told you two years ago. This is worth checking annually; tracking code disappears during redesigns more often than anyone admits.

Number 1 — how many people came, and whether that is changing

Where: Analytics → Reports → Acquisition → Traffic acquisition

Ignore the daily line. Compare **this month to the same month last year**. Web traffic is seasonal in almost every business, and comparing March to February tells you about the calendar, not your marketing.

What to look for: a trend across three or more months. One bad month is weather. Three is a signal.

Number 2 — where those people came from

Same report. Google groups traffic into channels:

CHANNEL	WHAT IT MEANS
Organic Search	Found you through a search engine, unpaid
Direct	Typed your address, used a bookmark, or the source could not be determined
Referral	Clicked a link on another website
Organic Social	Came from social media, unpaid
Paid Search / Paid Social	Came from an ad you paid for

Two things worth knowing. "Direct" is partly a wastebasket — clicks from PDFs, some apps, and untagged links land there, so it is usually overstated. And traffic from your Google Business Profile is often *not* labelled as such unless the links are tagged, which is why local businesses routinely underestimate how much their profile does.

The useful question: is any one channel more than about 70% of your traffic? If so, that is concentration risk. An algorithm change or an ad account suspension becomes an existential event rather than a bad quarter.

Number 3 — what people actually searched to find you

Where: Search Console → Performance → Queries

This is the most valuable free data any small business has, and most never open it.

Four columns: **impressions** (you appeared), **clicks** (they came), **CTR** (the proportion who clicked), and **average position**.

Three patterns worth acting on:

High impressions, low clicks. You are showing up and being passed over. Almost always a title and description problem — the fix is rewriting them, which takes an afternoon and no developer.

Positions 5–15. You are close. Small improvements to a page ranking eleventh often produce faster results than a new page ranking nowhere.

Queries you did not expect. People search for things you do not think of as your business. Every surprising query is a page you could write.

Number 4 — which pages do the work

Where: Analytics → Reports → Engagement → Pages and screens

Nearly every site follows the same shape: a small handful of pages get most of the traffic, and a long tail gets almost none.

Write down your top five pages, and next to each, what it is supposed to do.

- A popular page with no clear next step is your **fastest available win**
- A page you invested heavily in that gets no traffic is a lesson about demand
- The long tail is normal. Not every page needs traffic

Number 5 — whether people engage

Where: the same Pages report

GA4 uses **engagement rate**, which is a change from the old bounce rate and works differently enough to matter.

Google's definition: a session is **engaged** if it *"lasts longer than 10 seconds"* OR *"has a key event"* OR *"has 2 or more screen or page views."* Engagement rate is *"the percentage of engaged sessions."* Bounce rate in GA4 is simply the inverse — *"the percentage of sessions that were not engaged."*

Read it in context, not against a benchmark. A contact page where people arrive, get the phone number in eight seconds and leave to call you will look terrible and be working perfectly. A service page where nobody stays ten seconds has a real problem.

Compare a page against its own history, not against an industry average you found on a blog.

Number 6 — how many people actually contacted you

This is the only number that pays your bills, and it is the one most often missing.

In GA4 the important actions are called **key events** — renamed from "conversions" in 2024, so any guide using the old term predates that change.

At minimum, set up:

- Form submissions — best tracked by counting arrivals on a real thank-you page with its own address
- Clicks on your phone number link
- Clicks on your email address

Phone calls that do not start with a click on your website will not appear here. For many local businesses that is most of them. Options: a separate tracked number for the website, or — free and surprisingly effective — simply asking every caller how they found you and writing it in a notebook.

The test: can you say how many leads the website produced last month without using the word "probably"? If not, this is the number to fix before any other work on this list.

Same day each month. Put it in the calendar. It survives busy periods only if it is scheduled.

Minutes 1–5 • is anything broken?

- Submit your own contact form from your phone with a real email address. Confirm it arrives — inbox, spam, and CRM
- Open Realtime in Analytics and visit your site. Do you appear?
- Search Console → Pages: any new errors?

This five minutes catches more lost revenue than the other twenty-five combined.

Minutes 6–15 • what happened?

- Traffic this month vs the same month last year
- Channel mix — anything shifted sharply?
- Key events — how many enquiries, and from where?
- Top five pages — any change in the order?

Write the numbers in the same place every month. A simple spreadsheet with five columns beats any dashboard, because you will actually read it.

Minutes 16–25 • what is close to working?

- Search Console → Queries, filtered to positions 5–15. Anything valuable sitting just out of reach?
- High impressions with low click-through — which titles need rewriting?
- Any query you did not expect?

Minutes 26–30 • decide one thing

Pick **one** action for the month. Not five.

- Rewrite one page's title and description
- Add a clear next step to your most-visited page
- Write one page answering an unexpected query
- Fix whatever broke

Write it down. Check it off next month.

A short list of things that consume attention and change nothing.

Daily traffic fluctuations. Noise. Look at months.

"Average time on page." Notoriously unreliable — it cannot measure the last page of a visit properly. Directional at best.

Industry benchmark comparisons. Your business is not the average of an industry, and the samples behind most published benchmarks are undisclosed. Compare yourself to yourself last year.

Vanity metrics. Total pageviews, social followers, impressions in isolation. If the number went up and enquiries did not, the number did not matter.

Bot traffic. Some gets filtered, some does not. As long as it is roughly consistent, your trends remain readable.

Perfect attribution. People search on a phone, visit again on a laptop, ask a friend, then call you. No tool untangles that honestly. Anyone claiming to have solved attribution for a small business is selling something.

If an agency or contractor sends you a monthly report, four questions will tell you very quickly whether it is meaningful.

"How many enquiries did the website produce?" — If the report leads with impressions, rankings or "reach" and never reaches this number, it is measuring effort rather than outcome.

"Compared to what?" — A number with no comparison point is decoration. Month over month is weak. Year over year is honest.

"Which of these did you cause?" — Traffic rises in a busy season whether or not anyone did anything. A good report distinguishes work from weather.

"What are you going to do differently next month?" — A report that does not change anybody's behaviour is a receipt, not a report.

On ranking reports specifically

Rankings are personalised by location, device and history, so a ranking report reflects where the tool checked from — not where your customers are. Google states plainly that there is no way to request or pay for better local ranking, so treat any guaranteed-position claim as either meaningless or based on something that violates policy.

Clicks in Search Console beat any third-party ranking tool, because they are what actually happened rather than a simulation of it.

Before you change anything, record where you are. Without this you will never be able to tell whether anything worked — and you will be an easy sell for whoever claims credit next.

Write down today's date and:

- ☐ Monthly visitors, last full month
- ☐ Percentage from organic search
- ☐ Total clicks from Search Console, last 3 months
- ☐ Your five highest-traffic pages
- ☐ Number of enquiries last month (form and phone)
- ☐ Your Google review count and average rating
- ☐ Where you rank for your three most valuable searches — checked in a private browser window, from your actual business location

Take screenshots. Put them somewhere you will find them in a year.

Then repeat it every 90 days. The movement between those snapshots is the only honest measure of whether the work you did was the right work.

The short version

1. Set up Search Console and verify it **yourself**
2. Confirm your analytics is actually recording — visit your own site and watch Realtime
3. Track form submissions and phone-number clicks as key events
4. Six numbers: traffic, sources, search queries, top pages, engagement, enquiries
5. Compare year over year, never day to day
6. Thirty minutes a month, same day, in the calendar
7. Start each review by testing your own form
8. Pick one action per month, not five
9. Ignore benchmarks; compare yourself to yourself
10. If you cannot say how many leads the site produced without saying "probably," fix that first

— IF YOU WOULD RATHER READ A SUMMARY THAN A DASHBOARD

We watch the numbers, *quietly*.

Thirty minutes a month is genuinely enough, and the routine in Part 3 is written so you can run it without us.

If you would rather have it watched and be told when something moves, that is part of what we do. **Hyde & Co. is an agency for business owners.**

i. We set up the tracking properly, so leads are counted rather than estimated.

ii. We record a baseline, so improvement is provable rather than claimed.

iii. You get a plain summary, and a call when something needs a decision.

No obligation. And we will show you the raw numbers, not only our summary of them.

Book a consultation

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WE BUILD ASSETS, NOT JUST WEBSITES

Sources

USED IN	SOURCE
Number 5 — engagement	Google Analytics Help, <i>[GA4] Engagement rate and bounce rate</i> — engaged session defined as lasting longer than 10 seconds, having a key event, or having 2+ page views; bounce rate is the percentage of sessions that were not engaged
Number 6 — key events	Google Analytics Help — "conversions" renamed to "key events" in GA4 (2024) to distinguish them from Google Ads conversions
Number 3 — Search Console	Google Search Console Help, <i>Performance report</i> — clicks, impressions, CTR, average position; approximately 16 months of history
Part 2 — verification	Google Search Console Help, <i>Manage users and owners</i> — verified vs delegated owners; removed owners can re-verify unless their token is removed from the site
Part 5 — rankings	Google Business Profile Help, <i>Improve your local ranking on Google</i> — no way to request or pay for better local ranking; Google Search Central on advertising being independent of search results

This guide is free to use and share.

The only goal is better websites and better results.