Designing A Measurement Framework Before You Touch GA4 via @sejournal, @bngsrc



In most cases, Google Analytics 4 projects start as a technical request. A marketing team, client, or stakeholder asks for tracking to be set up. Someone gets access to the property and assumes the data will eventually tell a story worth listening to.

Maybe sometimes it does. But most of the time, it produces a collection of numbers that feel precise but answer questions nobody actually asked.

The measurement framework should come first. Everything else should follow from it. Because it gives the technical setup a purpose before anyone starts measuring.

The core issue is that there’s too much data and not enough action. And that is the gap a measurement framework is meant to close.

Frame The Work Before You Track The Work

1. Define Success In Plain Language First

Before you create an event required to answer the question, define success. Success needs to be described in a way that people can recognize when they see it.

If your goal is lead generation, does success mean more total inquiries, or better-qualified inquiries?

Focusing on content performance? Then, define the success metrics as more organic traffic, returning visitors, more commercial page visits, or getting more of the assisted conversions.

If you want ecommerce growth, does success mean more purchases, higher average order value, fewer checkout drop-offs, or more repeat customers?

Each answer leads to a different measurement plan.

This is why I do not think analytics planning can be separated from business context. The same data can be useful, irrelevant, or misleading depending on what the company is trying to achieve.

2. Start With Questions, Not Metrics

This is the point where I would still delay building reports before I get the answers to important questions that will define the measurement framework. Interrogate your business like it’s a crush and get that data! But first, set a clear list of questions and don’t stop until you get the answers.

Well, now you may think, what does the business need to answer more confidently?

For example:

- Why are users dropping off before submitting an inquiry?
- Which landing pages generate valuable inquiries?
- How does returning visitor behavior differ from first-time visitor behavior?
- Which product or service pages need improvement?

At this stage, the goal is shaping the measurement setup. Because a dashboard should help people decide what to do next.

That sounds obvious, but it is where many reporting setups become messy. They include metrics because the metrics are available, not because anyone has decided what action they support.

The exercise here is simple but sometimes skipped: Write down every question your leadership team would ask if they had access to unlimited, perfectly clean data. Then look at that list and identify which questions your current setup could answer.

The gap between those two lists is your measurement framework's job to close. Once those questions exist, the framework can move into defining what a result actually looks like.

3. Work Out What Could Help Answer Those Questions

Once success is defined, the next question is: What might be happening on the website? What is the user going through?

A good measurement framework should try to identify the behaviors that show someone is moving closer to a meaningful action.

For example, if the question is, "Why are users dropping off before submitting an enquiry?", there are a few things we

might need to understand first.

Are people reaching the call-to-action? Is the drop-off worse on mobile? Does it happen more from a specific landing page or traffic source?

Those are the behaviors that sit behind the question.

The same applies to a question like, “Which landing pages generate valuable enquiries?” The answer is probably not just in the number of sessions. You may need to look at what users do after arriving on the page.

Your questions become more useful for measurement when you can connect them to something observable.

4. Do Not Treat Every Metric Like A KPI

One reason analytics reports become confusing is that tracked actions get treated as if they all have the same level of importance. They do not. For example, a purchase is not the same as a product page view, undoubtedly.

That does not mean smaller actions are useless. But they play a different role.

I like to separate measurement into three layers:

Business Outcomes:

These are the results the company ultimately cares about: revenue, qualified leads, pipeline, purchases, subscriptions, retention, or customer acquisition.

Performance Indicators:

These help show whether users are moving toward those kinds of outcomes: demo request rate, checkout completion rate, trial signup rate, returning visitor conversion rate, or movement from content to commercial pages.

Diagnostic Signals:

These help explain why something may be happening: form abandonment, device-level drop-off, filter usage, internal search behavior, CTA clicks, or engagement with specific page types.

This matters because not every number belongs in the same report. Stakeholders need outcomes and a few performance indicators. Marketing teams may need channel, landing page, and content-level signals.

Analysts may need diagnostic data to investigate problems. Developers may need event-level detail to validate whether the implementation is working.

→ *See also: GA4 Metrics Every Advertiser Should Pay Attention To*

5. Decide What Not To Measure

This may be the most overlooked part of planning. However, a good measurement framework should also say what does not need to be tracked.

That can feel uncomfortable because analytics tools make so much tracking possible. But more tracking does not automatically mean better measurement.

Sometimes it just means more maintenance. Because every event has a cost. Someone has to implement it, test it, document it, explain it, and eventually decide whether it still matters.

If nobody is going to use the data, it probably does not belong in the core setup.

At this point, a simple test can help. If this number changed, would anyone do anything differently? If the answer is no, it may not be worth tracking yet.

6. Keep In Mind That GA4 Is Not The Whole Measurement System

Another important conversation needs to happen before implementation: What should GA4 be trusted to answer and where does another system need to be treated as the source of truth?

Because GA4 can tell you a lot about digital behavior. It can show where users came from, which pages they visited, which actions they took, and where they dropped off. But it should not always be treated as the final answer for everything.

As Rémi Kerhoas has argued, choosing a single source of truth can become an attribution trap because each system has its own model, limitations, and blind spots.

Therefore, for example, for ecommerce businesses, the ecommerce platform may be the cleaner source of truth for orders and revenue. For B2B businesses, the CRM system may be the better source of truth for lead quality.

Therefore, my recommendation here is that, when considering a measurement framework, you determine which questions GA4 can answer, which questions require another system, and where data needs to be compared.

7. Turn The Framework Into An Implementation Brief

Once you know what success means for the business, which questions need answering, which behaviors can help answer them, the technical work becomes much easier.

This is the point where GA4 belongs in the process.

Now the team can decide:

- Which events need to be tracked.
- Which events should be marked as key events.

- Which parameters are needed.
- Which audiences or segments matter.
- Which reports should be created.
- Which data needs to be compared with CRM, ecommerce, sales, or product data.
- Which interactions should not be tracked yet.

This is much cleaner than opening GA4 first and trying to make decisions inside the tool.

The framework becomes the brief. The implementation is still technical, but it is no longer guesswork.

8. Validate Before Anyone Uses The Data

Even with a strong framework, the data still needs to be checked. An event appearing in GA4 does not automatically mean it is reliable.

It may fire twice. Or it may fire too early. It may be affected by consent settings, etc.

This is why validation should not be treated as a small technical task at the end.

The goal is not perfect data. Perfect data rarely exists. The goal is data that is defined clearly enough and trusted enough to support decisions.

The Tool Comes After The Thinking

I always find that GA4 capabilities are genuinely useful. However, the process should begin with the success definition and business questions that need answering. When teams determine these first, the analytics setup becomes far more focused.

Events gain a purpose, dashboards serve a specific function, and explaining reports becomes easier.

If you skip these first steps, GA4 turns into a repository of ambiguity. That is why the measurement framework comes first.

More Resources:

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https://www.searchenginejournal.com/designing-a-measurement-framework-before-you-touch-ga4/580767/