Gilt Groupe embraces the advanced functions of Google Analytics Premium and experiences a company-wide culture shift toward data-driven decision making

At a Glance
About Gilt Groupe
- Private shopping site
- Based in New York City
- www.gilt.com

Goals
- Capture more detailed information at user level
- Obtain detailed data for every customer visit and touch point
- Connect website data to data warehouse
- Drive more qualified traffic to website and improve ROI
- Cross-reference user purchase behavior with demographic data

Approach
- Ran unsampled reports to ensure statistical soundness of large data sets
- Set 20 custom variables and applied these in segmentation and analysis
- Used attribution modeling to understand value of marketing touch points at different stages
- Created goal funnels to understand each step of conversion process

Results
- Company-wide usage expanded from a small group to 100+ employees
- Regular dashboards developed for each department, along with hundreds of on-the-fly reports each week for specific business questions
- Fresh data every four hours, driving better and more responsive decisions
- Employees empowered to investigate and analyze, bringing analytics to the forefront of all decisions

Background
Gilt Groupe is an innovative online shopping destination offering its members special access to the most inspiring merchandise and experiences available. Gilt provides instant insider access to top designer brands at up to 60% off retail. Products span fashion, décor, artisanal ingredients, travel experiences, and unique activities in a growing list of cities.

From its launch in 2007, Gilt has worked to create the fastest, most exciting shopping experience online. The company strives to ensure that all customers receive unparalleled service from the moment they enter the virtual doors to the instant a gleaming box arrives on their doorstep. As an inherently digital company focused on user satisfaction as well as growth, it's vital for Gilt to have a comprehensive web analytics solution in place.

Ramping up on reporting
Gilt Groupe implemented Google Analytics in 2011, replacing a previous solution. Driven by the desire to make every single customer interaction count as much as possible, Gilt was subsequently attracted to Google Analytics Premium. The main incentives to upgrade were to access unsampled data and capture more detailed information at the user level in order to make decisions on statistically sound data. Having already integrated the standard version of Google Analytics into the Gilt website and its back-end systems, stepping up to the premium version required only very limited implementation, service, and support, but delivered a host of advanced features that Gilt now uses every day.

Unsampled data
While in the standard version Google Analytics samples data on custom reports that require analysis of more than 500,000 user visits, Google Analytics Premium allows Gilt to request unsampled reports. This access to more accurate data is instrumental in obtaining a clear view of results from both tests and campaigns. When the company went from viewing sampled data within the Google Analytics interface to pulling unsampled data, it was able to remove uncertainty and act on test and campaign results with confidence.

Custom variables
The standard Google Analytics package offers the ability to create five custom variables, but Gilt wanted to examine a wider variety of key metrics in order to gain a more holistic view of customers. Today Gilt is using 20 or more custom variables, which enable more opportunities for comparison and analysis, as well as A/B testing. Examples of metrics now in use include user IDs, partitions for testing, time stamps, page types, demographic, testing variants, hit times and more. The company takes all this data to construct a clickstream and to reconstruct visitor pathing across their different domains, analyze both onsite and external sources of traffic to sales, do site personalization, and view test results in Google Analytics.

Predictive modeling

Gilt is leveraging these advanced features of Google Analytics Premium to take its efforts to the next level. For example, Gilt uses clickstream data from Google Analytics to create decision models to predict buying behavior. By collecting detailed data points about each session related to timing, pricing, sale position, and so on, Gilt is able to feed these variables into a model and predict the probability of a purchase. This would not have been possible without Google Analytics Premium, as it enabled 45 extra custom variables for collecting these additional ecommerce-related attributes.

Attribution modeling

To fill their sales funnel from top to bottom, Gilt has embraced attribution modeling. "GA really shines here," explains the company's web analytics senior manager, Ana Kravitz. "The Google Analytics standard version provides several multi-channel funnel reports that give a very intuitive way of understanding how users pass between different marketing touchpoints. Google Analytics Premium provides an attribution modeling tool that lets you quickly view and compare the results of different attribution models." Among other web analytics tools available on the market today, Ana describes this feature as more intuitive and easier to use.

In using attribution modeling, Gilt learned that according to the last click model, affiliate revenue is very high. Using the first-click model, however, affiliate revenue is much lower. This highlights the danger of basing marketing efforts solely on last-click results. The attribution modeling tool shows that reducing other marketing expenditures to focus on affiliate marketing would reduce the ability to acquire new users and Gilt would slowly lose customers through attrition. On the other hand, marketing programs such as referral – in which existing users refer friends to join Gilt – generate newcomers while rarely getting credit for last click purchases. In this way, attribution modeling enables Gilt to pinpoint the best ways to fill both ends of their marketing funnel effectively.

Learnings spread fast and wide

The previous analytics tool at Gilt was accessed primarily by a small group of analysts who filtered the data and sent out reports to the rest of the company. Because Google Analytics Premium is so easy to access and understand, adoption has now exploded to over 100+ now regularly making the most of what the tool has to offer. One of the effects of the migration is that web analysis is now deeply ingrained across the company, with employees throughout all levels and departments taking an active role in using data to drive decisions. The service level agreement that's in place also guarantees data is refreshed every four hours, which means that the ability to make informed and timely decisions has been boosted too.

These factors have had a tangible effect on company culture; since so many people are looking at Gilt's web analytics now, whenever a new feature or test is rolled out it's always tagged so that it can be monitored in Google Analytics. Product teams create analytics dashboards for new launches, and share these so that employees from all over the company can log in to observe performance. Today, analytics perform a central role in meetings and discussions. "GA has incredible strengths in terms of segmentation, marketing attribution, and enabling users to investigate ideas on a whim," Ana explains. Thanks to its ease of use, as Ana sees it, the implementation of Google Analytics Premium means that the emphasis is no longer just reporting, but true analysis. The bottom line for Gilt? Better, faster data-driven decisions at every single level of the organization.