#23 How to keep up with analytics

[00:00:17] **Dara:** Hello, and thanks for joining us in The Measure Pod, a podcast for analytics enthusiasts. I'm Dara MD at Measurelab, joined as always by Dan, an Analytics Consultant also at Measurelab. It's really great to be back on the show for me after a couple of weeks off. I know things were in very safe hands, obviously with Dan, but also shout out to both George and Tom who joined the show in my absence, I'm very glad to be back Dan. So tell me how you, and what's new in the world of analytics?

[00:00:49] **Dan:** And it's very good to have you back, Dara. The last time that we did a full episode like this together, it was last year. So there's a couple of things that have happened over the last couple of weeks. So the conversation with Tom last week was all because Google Analytics made an update to roll out data-driven attribution, as well as some other non last click attribution models within their interface. That happened around the 7th of Jan, so the first week back really.

[00:01:13] **Dara:** So I missed all the fun while I was away.

[00:01:15] **Dan:** Yeah, it was a pretty big update actually. Although in reality, it didn't change too much. So if anyone's used it hasn't actually changed too much in the standard reports. It's only a couple of places that it gets changed. More recently Server-side Google Tag Manager had a small update where you can actually now load all of the client side, JavaScript libraries for the Google tags from your server. And it sounds a bit of a mouthful and confusing, but ultimately what it means now is your Google tags on your website can be fully first party, rather than making a call to Google to grab the GA or GTM JS file. Or you can actually call all of those JavaScript files from your server. So yeah, it's a small backend thing that may not affect our lives in any meaningful way, but actually is quite an important step to becoming a first party data collection tool.

[00:02:00] **Dara:** Yeah, we've mentioned this before I know, but server-side GTM is a topic I think we're both really keen to discuss further on the show. Ideally bringing somebody on who's more clued up, not saying you're not, but bringing someone on who's even more clued up on this to really dig into it and talk about where it's at, and what the benefits are. Basically to help me understand it a bit better.

[00:02:19] **Dan:** And me. I sound like I might know what I'm talking about, but I'm just reading up and listening to what everyone else is saying about this. I'm in no way an analytics developer. So I would love to have someone school, both of us on server-side GTM. And the last thing to mention Dara, is that we spoke about this many weeks ago now on the pod, but Google Analytics for Firebase has been deprecated and you need to go into the Firebase console and update the terms and conditions, or at least accept their updated terms of conditions. What that does is it turns your GA for Firebase into a full GA4 property. Otherwise, if you haven't done that by February the 15th, your GA data is going to be deleted.

[00:02:56] **Dara:** And that's it, click a button, they do the rest. It's a bit of a no-brainer isn't it? Unless you want your property deleted and you can't be bothered deleting it. So you're just going to go this route instead.

[00:03:06] **Dan:** Yeah, exactly. The lazy route. But yeah, exactly. I, I, I can't imagine anyone not having done this where the data's business critical right. If this is important to you, you would be aware of it and they would have let you know, a hundred different ways.

[00:03:18] **Dara:** Yeah, so quite a bit. Onto our topic for this week. So what are we gonna talk about?

[00:03:24] **Dan:** So, this is a question that we get asked quite a lot, and this is just, how do we keep up to date with analytics. So where do we get our news from, how do we know what's going on, and what sources we consume to make sure that we know what's going on in the world of analytics. It's just a conversation really for us to go through all the different sources, events, forums, meetups, other podcasts that we listened to, that we read that we watch to keep up to date with the analytics goings ons.

[00:03:52] **Dara:** Nice, yeah. As you say a question that gets asked quite a lot, and suddenly it changes over time as well, because what I'll I'll probably talk about is, is all the ways I used to keep up to date and maybe you'll talk about ways that are a bit more current.

[00:04:04] **Dan:** Or at least I try. Obviously we're going to be missing a hundred different sources here. So apologies if your favorite source isn't here, just ping us a message and we'll add it onto our list. When we put it on the website, that'd be really useful actually. And we are UK based and we're down predominantly in the south coast of the UK. So it's going to be a little bit regional, there are going to be things that you've never heard of and probably would never attend. And there's probably stuff close to you that we will never have heard of, and we will probably never attend. But please send all the links and the different events and meetups and different podcasts and newsletters our way. We'd love to, like I say, compile a list of these and stick it all in one place for everyone to have a central resource. So we're going to go through our side of things. So Dara, me and you, we've done a bit of work before just collating links and lists and things together. So I think it's just a matter of us having a bit of a chat going through this and probably turning this into a blog that we can point people to, that we can keep up to date and refreshed when people send us their stuff.

[00:05:00] **Dara:** Yeah, and I was just thinking silly thought, but this would be like a time capsule. You can look back on this in the future and see how things have changed and what resources are still around, which ones stand the test of time.

[00:05:12] **Dan:** Well, Yeah. in doing this, I had fond memories of an event that no longer exists or at least I can't find any reference of it anymore.

[00:05:18] **Dara:** I'm going to start with a question then. What's your go-to resource for keeping up to date or getting updates on, I guess whether it's either. Cause one thing I was thinking is that it could be two parts to this. How do you keep up to date on updates to GA, versus how do you keep up today on the analytics industry as a whole.

[00:05:37] **Dan:** Yeah, they're two very interesting sides of the same coin, and two very different answers actually. I get my industry updates from LinkedIn and specifically from following a handful of people that will go through in a moment I'm sure. But the product knowledge, the product developments are actually from the products themselves in most cases. So either if you're partnered with a platform like we, you know, we're Google partners, whatever products we're partnered with, you get access to a bit of the inner circle, the behind the scenes, that's one form of updates. But actually within Google specifically, they have release notes for each of their core products. So specifically the ones that I check, I actually have a reminder in my calendar every Tuesday morning, after our standup, I do the rounds and I check GA4, Tag Manager, Data Studio, and Firebase release notes. Just to see if anything's changed in the last week.

[00:06:25] **Dara:** Yeah, and even the, so you're right about the release notes, even something that I've always used and still do now is just the official help center on the developer documentation. Especially if it's a case of trying to keep up to date with new functionality, especially to do with the tagging side, often there's no better place. Sometimes there can be kind of gaps in it, because obviously it must be a difficult job to kind of keep it up to date. There's even mistakes in it from time to time, but nobody's infallible. The thing with the help center is it can seem really obvious and sometimes the obvious stuff is the stuff that you need to remind yourself of. There's been lots of times where I've looked in there and I've actually discovered something that I didn't really understand previously about how GA works. So, as well as the release notes, it's like the actual help center and the official development documentation are really great resources.

[00:07:14] **Dan:** Yeah, I have to agree because I occasionally find a hidden gem, a diamond in the rough, when you go through there. Because they don't really publicize when they make updates or new pages in their documentation. And you will go through And all of a sudden there's a whole new subsection around a feature that you've been trying to explain in a certain way or use or understand. They, they make a big song and dance about new features rolling out, but less around the usage of existing features or the feature itself. There are gaps, but on the whole is a really fantastic resource.

[00:07:42] **Dara:** I'm going to sound a bit old here, but I'm going to say more recently, but it's probably been years now, but Measure Slack obviously is a great resource these days.

[00:07:50] **Dan:** Yeah, yeah absolutely. It's almost like the go-to for everything really. For anyone that's unaware, Measure Slack is a slack channel that you request access to, and then there's thousands of people in there working on analytics. And there are channels on everything you can imagine from Google Analytics, Tag Manager, Adobe, app analytics. There's the lobby bar for people just to have a little chat or rant over a virtual beer, all sorts of stuff. It's a really amazing community of analytics specialists, obsessives, nerds like us. If you're in the analytics space and you're not in there, I highly recommend it. If you love this stuff, then it's a good place to be.

[00:08:26] **Dara:** Yeah. And in terms of getting responses to questions, it's probably the best place to go.

[00:08:31] **Dan:** Yeah, exactly. People are really friendly. People love talking and helping and assisting each other. But yeah, check it out, I'll post the link to where you can request access and then yeah, go from there.

[00:08:43] **Dara:** And then maybe on a similar ish note, you've got the likes of Stack Overflow. Um, not quite as interactive, and maybe not quite as friendly as Measure Slack, but there's, you know, there's often questions around GA, especially around the tagging or the code side of things is there's often GA questions. And again, as a resource, because you'll often find when you're actually Googling something, when you're trying to figure out why something isn't working or you're seeing some discrepancy, someone will have almost certainly asked that question before on Stack Overflow.

[00:09:11] **Dan:** It's not a resource that I use often at all. I think that the measure slack has just completely eradicated the need for it, to be honest for me. A really useful feature is just searching the measure slack for the question that you have, because it's probably been asked a hundred times and it's probably been at a thread of 20 people answering it and given your resource to help understand what your problem is. So speaking of people, like we mentioned that LinkedIn is a really good place to find out industry updates, and actually LinkedIn itself is not, it's just a network. But there's a couple of people I wanted to just pull out this worth following. The first one is a previous guest of ours, Steen. Steen Rasmussen. And Steen is really vocal, got some great ideas and opinions, and he really understands things in a really unique way, that helps me form ideas and understand things that are happening in the industry. So if you haven't heard the episode with Steen, it's a really, really interesting conversation around maturity frameworks, how that rubbish and great at the same time, I highly recommend listening to it.

[00:10:09] **Dara:** Yeah and thought provoking. I think he likes to challenge conventional views, some of his posts get you thinking about things and get you challenging maybe your own thoughts about certain things around the analytics industry.

[00:10:22] **Dan:** So we've got Steen, previous guest, we'd love to have the rest of them on as guests as well, of course, but it has to be Simo. Simo Ahava from 8-bit-sheep and also his own company Simmer. And Simo is just, well the godfather of GTM in a way. If you've Googled any question about how to do anything in Tag Manager, you've probably found his article somewhere, or you've probably been to his website. So it's worth checking him out, follow him on LinkedIn, but also checking out the website and signing up to the newsletter. And he just does a digest, I think it's monthly, it could be more frequent than that, but just kind of consolidates down the industry news from a technical marketing perspective, and boils that down into a newsletter that's easy to receive in your inbox completely passively.

[00:11:06] **Dara:** Yeah, there's few better people to follow really. Especially as you said around GTM. That's what he's best known for, but obviously his knowledge stretches further than that. But yeah, certainly around anything GTM related, Simo is the, he's the guy.

[00:11:19] **Dan:** Also a couple of other people that are worth following that have their own websites and blogs and newsletters as well is Krista Seiden. She used to work at Google, she actually helped develop the Google Analytics 4 product when it was in its infancy. She's since left Google, I believe and started her own thing called KS Digital, but she's got a fantastic website, blog, newsletter. And again, it's another digest that can be sent to you completely passively into your inbox that you can consume in your own time. She still does lots of work with Google themselves to release new features on their YouTube channel. You're probably familiar with Krista indirectly, if not directly. Also there's a couple of other guys that are worth following, Charles Farina and Ken Williams. They know a lot about Google Analytics, you'll see them both popping up on the Measure Slack as well as their own websites and blogs and newsletters. So what we'll do is I'll ping a link to all of these websites in the show notes, and you'll be able to go sign up to the newsletters, but for me, signing up to newsletters from analytics experts is by far the best way of getting news sent to you without you having to be engaged on a social media platform or having to watch something on YouTube. It's just a really easy way for you to get the highlights as it were.

[00:12:27] **Dara:** And list of people's obviously huge. You've mentioned a few, but there's countless others. And I think if we do get input from people we'll end up with a very big list of people who are worth following. Um, the other thing obviously you can do is attend actual events and meet some of these people as well. And maybe meet us. You never know, we might be at some of these. So there's events, regional ones, online ones, more international ones that we like to go to. But some of the ones that we tend to go to, or at least that we're aware of and we like to appear at. MeasureCamp is the first one that comes to mind for me. Which I think is in about maybe like 40 or 50 cities across the world now. It was all set up by Peter O'Neill, who's another very knowledgeable analytics person, someone else worth following. But we've been to the MeasureCamp London several times. And during COVID times, just like a lot of other events, it moved to a virtual event, which we also attended. So that's the first one that comes to mind for me. How about you Dan?

[00:13:27] **Dan:** Keeping it super regional, super local to us in Brighton on the south coast of the United Kingdom, there is Brighton Data Forum and also BrightonSEO. One of which is a lot smaller. The other one is maybe more well known, but Brighton Data Forum is an amazing local meetup for data people in the local area. There's been conversations and talks on all sorts of subjects from data science and analytics and visualization across the board. But the other one you might have heard of is BrightonSEO. And it's a huge, now it runs every six months. They've just gone back to being an in person. They have a multi thousand seat venue right on the sea front and Brighton, it is amazing. And yeah, the next one's coming up in April, I was at the last one, the first actual event I attended since the pandemic actually. And it was awesome. Uh, it's always a good, fun, lots of lovely people. And that we're an analytics podcast and we're talking about BrightonSEO, but there are, I promise you, talks about analytics in there.

[00:14:21] **Dara:** Well, I have done, so that's the proof. I have talked at us about analytics. So it does happen. Although that was more than one year ago.

[00:14:29] **Dan:** And I've even run the Google Analytics training at BrightonSEO, and I know you have as well Dara. It's good fun and to be able to talk about marketing and data and have maybe a couple of beverages as well.

[00:14:40] **Dara:** Yeah, optionally.

[00:14:41] **Dan:** Related to BrightonSEO though, something that is spurred off from BrightonSEO and is now technically what they call a fringe event is MeasureFest. And that is a dedicated analytics conference from the same people behind BrightonSEO. So MeasureFest is run about the same kind of time, every six months, the next one's coming up in April, and I'm talking at it. So do it a bit of shameless self promotion, I'll be at MeasureFest this year, talking all things Google Analytics and the future of MarTech stacks and all that jazz. So probably more of this, maybe in a bit more of a thought-through and visual format, to be honest.

[00:15:16] **Dara:** And you won't be talking to me at the time.

[00:15:19] **Dan:** Well, if you're in the audience, I can pretend I can just pretend it's me and you.

[00:15:22] **Dara:** I can have my microphone and my headphones on, and then we can just pretend we're having a chat.

[00:15:26] **Dan:** I'll record it. And it'll just be another episode. There we go. We get a week off, how about that.

[00:15:30] **Dara:** And then of course there's also SUPER WEEK, which is a really big deal and all the big hitters go. It's coming up at the end of this month actually, up in the snowy mountains in Hungary. I haven't personally been, I'm almost embarrassed to say that. I know people who have gone and they say it's brilliant, brilliant networking event, lots of smart people talk. And also it's in the mountains in Hungary, and lots of fun is had. There's still tickets available I believe. I'm doing a plug on their behalf. I think there's still early bird tickets available for the one coming up at the end of this month. Um, which somebody I know might be thinking about going.

[00:16:05] **Dan:** Yeah, I might be, that is all to be decided. If you're listening to this, when this comes out, it's next weekend and it's a bit short notice, but we're going to try and make it work and try and try and make our way over to Hungary and just get involved. Like I say, all of this stuff is super fun.

[00:16:20] **Dara:** If you don't have the option of traveling too Hungary to learn about analytics, you can do so from the comfort of your own home with your favorite podcast player. So there's a number of podcasts that, full disclosure, I'm not the biggest podcast listener. Which is a crazy thing to say, given we're producing one. But I know you listen to several analytics podcasts Dan, so I think you're going to be more in the know on this one than me.

[00:16:48] **Dan:** Yeah, I absolutely love podcasts. Ever since I got a taste for them, I think I've had a constant backlog of about 30 hours of queued up podcasts in my player that I've ever, I never seem to get through. So, yeah, I'm a huge fan. So there's a couple that I'll just read off. Uh, I have to start with the OG, and that's the Analytics Power Hour. That's Michael Helbling, Tim Wilson and Moe Kiss all co-host and get guests on talking about amazing things and everything within the world of analytics. There's some smaller ones that you might not have come across or you might already, so first of all, there's Analytics Neat, with a guy called Bill Bruno. He does it solo every week, he just gives a quick roundup of all the industry news and updates and acquisitions and things that are happening. It's way more broad than just the Google Analytics, GMP, MarTech stack. He covers everything and it's a quick 15 minute episode once a week. Also got something called the In-Ear Insights. So this is a podcast from Trust Insights, Katie Robbert and Chris Penn both co-host that together. It's two people, talking about cool analytics things, random things that they've been thinking about or questions that have been asked. It's a really good, really easy listening actually. If you're into this stuff, it's a really fun conversation between the two of them. Lots of technical expertise and experience there to get a lot from. And the last one is back to Simo again. So Simo has a relatively young podcast called the Technical Marketing Handbook. And, Simo talks sometimes by himself, he has guests on occasionally as well. And he digs into very specific subjects, all around the concept of technical marketing. So he's had someone from the Google team, one of the developers from Tag Manager on there talking about server-side GTM that was really interesting. Worth checking out and catching up with as well.

[00:18:32] **Dara:** That's been a good whistle stop tour of the, at least our favorite resources for keeping up to date on the product news and general analytics industry updates. There's also the legislative side, which is maybe less sexy, but equally important. And so we've got some resources that we keep an eye on to keep up to date on the user privacy legislation side of things. So if you're in the UK, like we are, and you want to be GDPR compliant, then the ico.org.uk website is your best reference. It's the information commissioner's office and they've also got a newsletter, which you can sign up to, which will keep you up to date with any significant updates or any changes to the legislation. And then you also have the IAB, iab.uk.com, which is the internet advertising bureau. Which is the industry body for internet advertising. Another resource again, not one to necessarily be looking at day to day. I'm sure they've got a newsletter you can sign up to too.

[00:19:37] **Dan:** And one last one to add Dara, that's the Digital Analytics Association, the DAA for short. And not only they have a newsletter and loads of information and interesting stuff, as well as training on lots of digital analytics related products and tools and tech. But it's also something you can get membership to, which gives you access to all these other things, and you'll actually become part of the digital analytics association. They have mentoringship programs and all sorts of other resources to help you develop your career within digital analytics.

[00:20:06] **Dara:** Yeah. And it, and you can go further than that and actually get certified as well. So they run a web analyst certification program, which is, you know, a recognized certification, within the industry.

[00:20:16] **Dan:** Yeah absolutely.

[00:20:17] **Dara:** All right, wow. I think we got through quite a bit and this is the shortlist. Just wait until we have, this is going to be a whopper of a blog post.

[00:20:24] **Dan:** Maybe it will be short just with loads of hyperlinks. Um, but to be fair, like once you've followed people on LinkedIn, once you've signed up to newsletters, it's then done. It's actually really easy to keep because you don't have to actively engage if you don't want to. It can be a real passive activity of keeping up to date. You don't have to actively do much unless you wanted to sort of be that half a step in front, but there's absolutely no reason why you can't sign up to all this stuff and get the digest once a week or month.

[00:20:51] **Dara:** True and dig deeper into the ones that interest you and ignore the others.

[00:20:55] **Dan:** Oh, one thing we didn't mention Dara is that we have a newsletter. We have a monthly newsletter, which you can sign up to on our website and it just collates some technical how to some opinion pieces we've written, but also probably more so actually, a bunch of industry news and things that we've found over the last month. It's once a month, there's no harm, you can always delete it I suppose.

[00:21:17] **Dara:** That was entirely intentional. We wanted to create a separate space to mention that. So it stands out.

[00:21:23] **Dan:** Yes. Yeah. It was deliberately forgotten until the end. Sorry. I mean, left, left and right.

[00:21:27] **Dara:** Tactical. Yeah. Um, alright, brilliant. Um, this is going to, yeah, it'll be a great, great resource and we'll get it shared as well. Once we've built it and made it even bigger. So that's enough chit-chat on analytics for this week. What have you been doing outside of work to chill out?

[00:21:45] **Dan:** Well surprise, surprise Dara, I've been playing video games. And this, yeah, you're right. Um, this week, uh, over the last, well, maybe over the last couple of weeks, I've been getting back into Fallout 76. And you probably don't know what fallout 76 is. But this one had a bit of a rocky launch, it came out a couple of years ago and it was just awefull. I don't think anyone loved it when it first launched, but I'm coming back into it fresh eyes many years later, and it is a fully fledged, built out game with a nice story. And yeah, I've, I've found a new love for it.

[00:22:19] **Dara:** I swear you talked about Fallout six or five or a low number before. And now Fallout 76, that can't be right.

[00:22:31] **Dan:** Yeah, well, it is too complicated to go into, but there's been many Fallout games. The fallout 76 represents the vault number that you come out of at the beginning. So you would come out of vault 76.

[00:22:40] **Dara:** I'm sorry I asked.

[00:22:42] **Dan:** Anyway, Dara, how have you been doing. Obviously you've just come back from holiday, so how have you been over the last couple of weeks? Tell us what you got up to.

[00:22:51] **Dara:** I've been great. I mean, what a way to unwind. I, I took a long break over Christmas and after Christmas, and we went to Costa Rica for a few weeks. So we were there for Christmas and new year and into January as well. Always like to get away at Christmas, just do something different. And it was, it was amazing. I love wildlife. I love nature. I love being out and about and Costa Rica, I can't think of too many places that would be, would be better for those things. I'd never been before. I had an absolutely amazing time. Saw lots of weird and wonderful animals, swam in the Caribbean sea and the Pacific ocean, was up mountains, uh, in jungles and even did a bungee jump.

[00:23:32] **Dan:** Wow.

[00:23:33] **Dara:** Yeah. Which was mildly terrifying, but lots of fun.

[00:23:38] **Dan:** Yeah. I bet that's something that was on my bucket list for sure.

[00:23:41] **Dara:** Yeah. I mean, Well, I think I maybe had a minor heart attack halfway through, but, um, I recovered quickly. Um, but no, had a really great time and, um, I feel very rested, recharged and ready for the year ahead.

[00:23:56] **Dan:** Awesome.

[00:23:56] **Dara:** All right, that's us for this week, you can find out more about us over at measurelab.co.uk, or you can get in touch with us via email podcast@measurelab.co.uk, or just look us up on LinkedIn if you want to suggest a topic, or even if you want to join us on the show. Otherwise join us next time for more analytics chit-chat. I've been Dara, joined by Dan. So it's bye from me.

[00:24:19] **Dan:** And bye from me.

[00:24:20] **Dara:** See you next time.

[00:24:38] **Dara:** My mind, always wanders.