The Measure Pod: #71 The Universal Analytics demine timeline and GA4’s latest updates

Intro - [00:00:15]

Topic - [00:02:55]

Wind down - [00:27:36]

Outro - [00:30:03]

### Intro

[00:00:15] **Dara:** On today's episode, Dan and I do a little recap of the timeline for Universal's demise, talking about what you need to be thinking about and preparing before Universal stops collecting data and you're left with GA4 and GA4 only. And we also have a look at some of the recent release notes for around GA4 and give our hot takes on them.

[00:00:34] **Daniel:** And going from hot takes to hot cakes, Dara. Something that's been selling like them has been our GA4 Immersion cohort training program for April, and we are now sold out. We're now fully booked. So the next cohort we're launching is in June, and we've got a couple of other dates now we're launching on our website as well. So there's some early bird pricing on that, and there'll be a link to the page and all of the available dates and ticket prices in the show notes.

[00:00:57] **Dara:** Enjoy the show.

[00:00:58] **Daniel:** Enjoy.

[00:00:59] **Dara:** Hello and welcome back to The Measure Pod, a place where we talk about analytics and data, especially GA4. We're back after our usual little break after every 10 episodes. This is episode number 71 believe it or not, and it's good to be back, isn't it, Dan?

[00:01:16] **Daniel:** It is good to be back. It does make me feel a bit like a podcaster old timer though. Could you imagine we'll see 71 episodes when we started this endeavour.

[00:01:23] **Dara:** Definitely didn't imagine that. And as a sign of how rusty we are, we haven't even introduced ourselves, but our listeners are so loyal, they probably know who we are. But just for any of those new listeners out there, I'm Dara, I'm CEO at Measurelab.

[00:01:34] **Daniel:** And I'm Dan, I'm an analytics consultant and trainer at Measurelab.

[00:01:37] **Dara:** So, something we've talked about several times before, and we're going to brush over I think, so that we don't drill the point too much. We're going to do a quick recap of a topic we've covered several times, which is the timeline for the demise of Universal Analytics. But because we've covered it, we're going to probably be pretty swift and just give you all a reminder, including giving ourselves a reminder of the timeline, what you need to know about, what you need to be doing. And then we're going to move on and spend the rest of this episode talking about some of the recent releases that have come about for GA4.

[00:02:10] **Daniel:** Yeah we used the pepper in the news of the product updates and the industry updates, and we kind of fell out a favour with it I think. Maybe we just thought it was a bit dry to every now and then suggest the tiniest little update of one product that someone might be using in a suite of many. So yeah, we thought we'd catch up and talk a bit about the most recent updates. I mean, the reality is we've got another couple of months at the time of recording until the 1st of July, which is that deadline that we're talking about where Universal Analytics, at least the free version is switched off. And we expect, or at least assume or need a lot of stuff to happen in GA4 to reach a certain level of parity. And so in a sense, we're expecting the next couple of months to be quite release heavy or feature rich in terms of the updates. And I think what we'll do is we just kind of catch ourselves up to date where we are now, and then maybe we'll check-in in a couple of months or so.

### Topic

[00:02:55] **Dara:** Okay, so let's start by reminding ourselves and everybody else of this timeline. So Universal, standard Universal is going to stop collecting data on the 1st of July this year. So 1st of July 2023. 360 customers get an extra year, so they get until the 1st of July 2024. But for all standard Universal properties, they're going to stop collecting data full stop, on the 1st of July this year.

[00:03:23] **Daniel:** Yeah, absolutely. I mean, this shouldn't be news to a lot of people listening, but it might still be, and I think that's the key date here is that it's the 1st of July 2023, and this is the date that, as you said, the free version of Google Analytics will stop processing data. That's not to say that if you're paying for it, it's going to happen. It's going to be up to a year later, so the official deadline for the 360 version of, or the paid version of GA, will stop on the 1st of July 2024, so you get an extra year. The reality of that might be slightly different just because people's GA360 contracts will come up for renewal during that period of time. And there's a timeline for Universal Analytics 360 now, so there might be, might be long before the 1st of July 2024. But the reality is, any time between the 1st of July 23 and the 1st of July 24, all of the paid customers are going to start having their Universal Analytics properties stopped as well. That's a long-winded way of saying that we've got a couple of months left to figure out a full GA4 migration, a pain-free GA4 migration. Otherwise there might be some tears and some late nights getting stuff happening closer towards that deadline.

[00:04:22] **Dara:** Taking us slightly off on a tangent, but might be worth just talking about the, it would be useful if I could get the name of it right, but the auto-migration? Neither of us are sure. That's basically what it does anyway. It's this auto migration feature, or I'm not sure it actually is a feature as such, but this is kind of Google's way of making sure that any account that has a Universal property to make sure that it's got a GA4 property set up, and this is going to start happening, I think around about now or next month or something, within the next month. This is going to start happening, and there's a setting if you already have your GA4 property set up and you don't want this to happen, then you can disable that feature, but it's enabled by default. So I think I'm right to say we're not entirely sure what problems it'll cause if it creates another one, but it could mess things up because you could end up basically with, you know, duplicate data or it could interfere with anything else you've got linked up to that GA4 account, GA4 property.

[00:05:16] **Daniel:** What we're not sure is the effect it'll have on the existing tracking. On the best-case scenario and the one that does the least destruction, the reality would be it was just create a new GA4 property, which you can then delete. So straight away you can just remove it from your account structure, your property structure. The thing is though, what it's going to do is it's technically using the Universal Analytics tag. It's going to inject another GA4 tag onto your website, so in a sense, it's going to implement another GA4 property on your website via one mechanism. And what we don't know, because it's case by case and website by website is, if it does this and deploys another set of GA4 tracking, is that going to mess around with any of the existing implementation or libraries or cross domain tracking or any of the custom stuff you've got set up? The reality is we don't know, and if anyone has already done some work on GA4, which I on paper, everyone should have at least you know, started at some level of a GA4 migration then this is just going to be a nuisance, an annoyance to us.

[00:06:07] **Daniel:** For the people that have set up a WordPress blog or a Squarespace website and walked away and never even considered Google Analytics, it's probably going to be helpful because they're not going to, you know, going to have the time, the know or the skills to be able to sort of upgrade themselves or spend the money investing in migrating. Whereas I think, you know, potentially anyone listening to this, but especially people in our circles, Dara, that work with Google Analytics most days. I think it's going to be more of an annoyance and disruption for people like us. And again, it's that we've done a lot of work with a lot of companies to get GA4 in a really kind of good place, what we don't want is some automated system to come along and potentially break something because that's going to be the worst case scenario.

[00:06:43] **Dara:** TLDR on that one is if you already have a GA4 implementation, then switch off that auto migrate feature.

[00:06:50] **Daniel:** Yeah, and that's in the Universal Analytics property settings. So go into your UA property right at the top of the list in the admin screen, and then make that toggle, turn it off. We don't want any of that stuff to happen.

[00:07:01] **Dara:** So back to our timeline. We have talked on this podcast before about suggesting a three-month period to migrate, which might sound excessive to some people, especially the kind of people who think it's just a tag, you just put it on the website. Obviously we know, you know, it can be that simple, back to those examples of kind of WordPress sites where you just use a plugin or whatever, but for any kind of complicated website, obviously an implementation is a more comprehensive piece of work than that, and especially a migration where you're trying to map, you know, all the functionality over to new and maybe taking the time to review, like we always advise and actually treating GA4 almost like a clean slate and thinking what you do want to be tracking.

[00:07:42] **Dara:** So to do it right, we tend to suggest, as a rule of thumb, kind of a three-month period. And you can even use the [PIVOT framework](https://www.measurelab.co.uk/blog/pivot-ga4-migration-process/?utm_medium=podcast&utm_source=transcript&utm_campaign=71) that we've talked about on here before. But if you're taking that three-month period, then time really is running out. You would want to be having GA4 implemented and configured as, you know, as good as you can get it by the end of April to give you May to QA and fix any little issues. And then still have June left to have your fully QA'd GA4 data running alongside your existing UA data before that stops collecting on the 1st of July. So really, you know, we're nearly out of February and into March now so anyone who hasn't got GA4 implemented yet, you are running out of time.

[00:08:27] **Daniel:** Yeah, for sure. And I completely agree with that. We always say three months and that gives us a buffer. So generally speaking, it takes two to three months to go through the process, to go through the motions and as you said I speak to a lot of people about the migration itself or the process of migrating, and often you get that you know, the Spock-eyebrow, the one eyebrow raise, when I say three months to do something, but actually the act of deploying a GA4 tag is 20 seconds you know, give or take a couple of minutes for QA. But the reality is implementing the tag is not the hard part, the hard part is all of the other bits around it. So it's the planning, it's the kind of the reset, the rethink, the custom event implementation. God forbid if you have a mobile application or ecommerce where you need to make updates to the data layer rollout changes you know, via the Firebase SDKs, you know, all of these things take time, let alone the QA and the validation part of it. And then of course, getting all of your team familiar with the new tool, which is brand spanking new and moving everything over.

[00:09:21] **Daniel:** And I think that's the bits that are often forgotten is that we've got potentially 15 years of legacy systems built on one platform. The easy part is deploying the code, the hard part is changing systems, process, and people around to a new tool. And I think that kind of education, training, familiarity, familiarisation rather, that's going to be the focus for the migration. And that in itself can take two to three months, end to end. If you want to deploy a tag now you can, it'll take you 20 seconds but the more work you do upfront the easier it's going to go and the less overall time you end up spending on it too. So I just wanted to kind of put that out there, you mentioned the [PIVOT framework](https://www.measurelab.co.uk/blog/pivot-ga4-migration-process/?utm_medium=podcast&utm_source=transcript&utm_campaign=71), Dara, and I think that's a really good framework that we follow, built by one of our colleagues, George. And it just kind of helps lay out those processes to go from, you know, planning, implementation, validation, onboarding and transformation. So kind of going through that GA4 migration end to end, and yes, of course deploying the tag is in there somewhere. It's just everything else to consider before jumping in, it's going to save a lot of time and ease us a little bit into the whole process.

[00:10:18] **Dara:** Yeah, definitely I think the people point is probably, you know, it's up there with being the most time consuming and difficult part of it. Because if you do have, you know, how many businesses have spent time trying to get people even familiar with universal data? So to now be moving over to a different, totally different Google Analytics that collects and processes data in a different way, making sure everybody in the business who's using reports that are based on GA data, that they understand what's different and why. It's not to say that can't still happen, I guess beyond July. But at least until then there is still that backup of the UA data that can be used for kind of comparisons or cross references if needed, but it's getting everybody aware of the fact that there is a change and what that change means and maybe why some metrics have disappeared or why some are reporting slightly different numbers.

[00:11:06] **Daniel:** That's the reality, isn't it? The longest period of time is going to be spent explaining what the difference between users and users are and sessions and sessions, and bounce rate and bounce rate. Like I say, the easy thing is deploying the code and all of a sudden, it's like why is this thing called the same but defined differently, and why is this thing defined differently but it's the same, maybe it's Stockholm Syndrome, maybe it's genuine, but I have come to love the GA4 product. I find it quite familiar now and easy to pick up, you know, objectively simpler to understand as well. But I do have maybe a more of an investment of time in the platform to have learnt its eccentricities quite well. So I think I've learnt the workarounds as it were, anyway the point is that the onboarding and the kind of adoption is the hard thing. I think we're just going to go around and circles agreeing with each other. But yeah, it is 100% from our experience, the hardest part, or at least the most time intensive part.

[00:11:53] **Dara:** And then nothing to say anyone needs to wait until, in fact, we shouldn't be waiting until July for this, but Google have given a slightly vague minimum of six months where the data's still going to be available after it stops collecting. So you won't get any new Universal data, but you will still have access to your Universal Analytics properties in the interface. We talked with this at length before and I think we'll just reiterate what we said before, which is just because you can pull all of that data out of GA through the API using, you know, something like the many tools that are out there where you can do it, that doesn't mean you should necessarily and a bit like migrating everything over from Universal to GA4, you don't necessarily need to export all of your historical data.

[00:12:35] **Dara:** So that's a question for each business to kind of ask themselves, you know, how much historical data is actually useful, especially considering you are going to be comparing future GA4 data against previous Universal data. So some businesses will need all of it, some businesses will need none of it, it's a case by case basis to figure out whether it's worth the time and effort of exporting that data. And then where are you going to store it? And what are you realistically going to do with it? But you do have, back to the timeline, you do have at least six months from July. I just quickly work that out in my head, so that'll take you up to December 2023. So the end of this year, really, you will have at least the end of this year, you'll have access to that historic Universal Analytics data within the interface. After that, we're not entirely sure what happens. Will the properties be deleted? Will they be locked behind a paywall? We don't know. So if you need any of that historical data, you really need to start thinking about getting it out and storing it somewhere else.

[00:13:31] **Daniel:** The most important part of what you just said, Dara, was actually around how you don't need to necessarily export all the data. And I think this reminds me of going into a bar and asking for a beer. You know, it's so ambiguous and generic and they're like, which one? You know, like you have to be quite specific, you have to know what you want to order when you go in somewhere. And I think this is the same kind of thing when it comes to this is that you can't just export, quote, unquote, all data. There is a lot of data and fundamentally, as a free GA user, you don't have access to it. You've got access to kind of summarised data sets and the API can export X number of dimensions and metrics at a go. So if you want more than 10 columns of data aggregated by day and by campaign, then it can be painful. It's going to take a while and it's going to be quite cumbersome to get all that data out.

[00:14:15] **Daniel:** So, first of all actually, do you need this historical data? Because the litmus test here is if you've never looked at it before, you're not going to need it again. If right now you're not looking at the last three or four or five or six years of data in GA, you're not going to all of a sudden need that data next year or later this year, that's just not going to happen. The idea of the data is pretty reactive and it's like, okay, can you optimise off the back of it? Is it telling you anything interesting to make changes? It's not really a storage device for 10 years worth of your business metrics you know what I mean? So that's the first thing, figure out first of all, does it really matter to you.

[00:14:47] **Daniel:** Secondly, once you've figured out that if it does, then what matters? Quote unquote, all of the data doesn't matter. So which parts of the data that you can access, what do they matter? And then you can use things like Google Sheets, man, like the sheets add on for Universal Analytics that exists. Batch it out, pull it out, depends on how much volume you've got and what you're pulling out but that could be absolutely fine. And then either store it in a sheet, or think about storing it in something like BigQuery, but you know, again, you have to pay for it now. I think this is one of the biggest changes of mindset when it comes to GA4 to Universal, is that in Universal, it was almost like this place where Google keeps everything for you for free, forever. GA4 is not quite like that, if you want to keep it, you've got to pay for it. And things like BigQuery are an obvious way of, you know, you get to store your data on your own terms, in your own location forever. It's up to you, but you've got to start paying for it. So the other side is, if you could get all the raw data out, would you want to, knowing that you're going to have to pay for it.

[00:15:38] **Daniel:** So yeah, those couple of questions to start asking yourself really around this kind of process. But the reality is, I can imagine a lot of businesses probably don't need much, if anything, they probably need at most daily, but probably monthly sessions, users, purchases, bounces, whatever you want. But it's just kind of aggregate level data, I can't imagine people are going to need hour by hour, ad campaign by ad campaign level data for the last sort of 10 plus years potentially. So I always start with kind of easy, you know, monthly sessions, and then go from there. One thing to add in though Dara is this idea of the data retention policy and this is a thing that might catch people out when it comes to doing this, and that is that Google Analytics doesn't technically store all of the raw data for you forever. They've got a data retention policy that is defaulted to X number of months, in GA4, it's a lot shorter, but the reality is beyond that window, the data will be deleted.

[00:16:27] **Daniel:** So even if you wanted or could access the raw data in the free version of Universal Analytics, you might find that you don't have data going back as far as you need it to. So there is a very feasible reality where you won't be able to access the data that you've perceived that you might need. So you might actually be limited in that respect. But yeah, I think [we've talked about the data retention window before](https://www.measurelab.co.uk/blog/podcasts/ga-data-retention/?utm_medium=podcast&utm_source=transcript&utm_campaign=71) and there's a lot of resources, I'll try and dig some out and put it in the show notes, but yeah, this is not a new GA4 feature, this has been in Universal too, but a lot of people haven't cared about it, you know, maybe until they need to pull out the data.

[00:16:56] **Dara:** I started by saying we'd pretty quickly brush over that we probably ended up reiterating a lot of stuff but no harm, this is really important. And for anyone who maybe hasn't heard us talk about it before as well and is less familiar with the timeline than I'm sure they'll have appreciated us going into a bit of detail. But out with the old, let's start talking about what's new. So let's have a look through these release notes and see what we think of these, of what's new with GA4.

[00:17:18] **Daniel:** Absolutely yeah, so [I'll stick a link to this in the show notes, but this is on the analytics help centre](https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/9164320) and they've got a what's new page and it just goes through all of the release notes, I suppose for the last couple of years, it's focusing specifically on the GA4 release notes. Well let's have a look at the first thing, so the most recent one we've got, at least at the time of recording is February 15th. It says improvements for large scale data, so there's a couple of points here and sub points for that matter. The first one is that now data quality icons at individual card level. So Dara, how do you feel, how do you feel about that?

[00:17:47] **Dara:** I mean, not particularly strongly. No it's useful, if I'm understanding this right, it's the, you know, the sampling or threshold applied warnings that you get. Whereas previously you only got them in the top right of the, in the actual reports themselves rather than in the cards. So this just seems like a no-brainer. I mean, it's good, but I'm not exactly going to you know, jump for joy at it. It feels like something that should have been there in the first place.

[00:18:10] **Daniel:** It's going to be probably a theme of the rest of this episode, but it's a welcome change, but underwhelming. The next point on this list was something that actually has been probably one of the most talked about things in GA4 for quite some time, and that is the “(other)” row. So if you see a report that's got a lot of data or a lot of unique combinations of data, you'll see a row in your reports and quite often it might appear towards the top of the list and it just has the word other in brackets, and this is something that is affecting everyone, but this is where the idea of cardinality comes in and plays a big part of GA4, and in a sense when there's lots of unique combinations of dimensions.

[00:18:48] **Daniel:** So that's, if you've got lots of unique combinations of things like page paths or devices or cities visiting your website, it will kind of get up to a certain limit, an unknown ambiguous limit, and then categorise everything else as the ‘(other)’ row. But now they are identifying and calling out the other row in the reporting interface so that, first of all, it tells you what it is and why it's being condensed. But there is a nice new feature they're rolling out for GA360 properties where it gives you the option to expand this data set. So expanded data sets is a feature for paying customers where you can undo the other row and you can kind of drill into it. So that's quite a nice kind of feature, odd to have it pay walled, but nevertheless, it's still a welcome feature if you are on the 360 version.

[00:19:31] **Dara:** But you can get the full data set in explore workspace, right?

[00:19:35] **Daniel:** You can get the full data, the only thing you won't have is depending on your data retention window, so which is defaulted to two months. So in the explore workspace, you only get how much data you technically have, also sampling comes in, in the explore workspace, so you might find that in the reporting interface, the reports workspace you might have the other row and the explorations workspace, you might have sampling and I don't know which one's better.

[00:19:57] **Dara:** And the sampling could even cut out some of that data on the lower end anyway. So you may end up kind of pretty much back where you started. Yeah, okay.

[00:20:04] **Daniel:** But if you don't have too much volume, because it's based on the sampling space on a number of events. So if you don't have too much in terms of volume, but you've got a high cardinality, so you've got a high number of variations, then absolutely, I think the explore would be really useful. And what they've done is they've put a little button in there to directly create an exploration of that report straight away. So it kind of jumps you straight in, which is quite handy.

[00:20:25] **Daniel:** The next one on the list Dara is something for 360 customers again, and this is now when you're in the explore workspace and now you can, it's almost like a Universal Analytics call-back. You can decide to have faster results or more detailed results in terms of sampling, so you can have higher sampling with a faster process or less sampling with a slower processing, and you get to have the toggle now inside, just like we used to have in Universal.

[00:20:48] **Dara:** But just for 360?

[00:20:49] **Daniel:** Yeah, just for 360. At least it says 360, I mean, the sampling just like Universal actually in the explore workspace, you get higher thresholds for sampling in 360. I think in the free version, you just take what you're given, and in the paid version you have a choice of the two.

[00:21:05] **Dara:** Yeah again, hard to be too excited about this. It is something we're all too familiar with from Universal. Is a bit of a shame, because if there's different sampling thresholds, that's fine between 360 and standard. But why not still allow you to have the feature, I'm still operating within, you know, whichever sampling threshold you're working with, whether you're standard or 360. I don't get why you would only allow the sampling control within 360. So hopefully that's just a temporary thing and it'll be available to everybody at some point. Otherwise, it seems a bit mean.

[00:21:34] **Daniel:** Yeah, who knows? And that's the end of the updates for February. I mean, a bit underwhelming and a bit okay, fine we'll take them. But at the same time, we're not changing the game at all here, considering we've got a couple of months left before the switch off.

[00:21:48] **Dara:** So February's been a relatively quiet month.

[00:21:52] **Daniel:** Yeah, one hopes that they're just banking all of the exciting changes for March. Knowing Google, they'll kind of shadow drop all of the changes we truly want on like the 28th of June or something like that, just before. But let's move back in, back in time and go into January. So there was two kind of dates of drops in January. Two days they dropped some news around some updates, let's talk about the 30th of Jan. You know what, I'm just going to read through it all because it's going to be quite dull and also I'll make it quick and then we can talk about it. But they've made some improvements to the search functionality in GA4, and you can now find things like your account ID, your data stream name, your stream ID, and your tracking ID just by searching in the search bar. And you can also find other properties by typing in there tracking ID and you can navigate to a different property that way. So there we go, search bar updates, that's the whole of the update for 30th of Jan. Any thoughts on that?

[00:22:49] **Dara:** I got a bit distracted thinking about them linking up their ChatGPT equivalent Bard, I think it's called that. And of them plugging Bard into this search functionality.

[00:23:00] **Daniel:** Could you imagine?

[00:23:01] **Dara:** Yeah, I'd be excited if that was the release. But again, useful, very useful to be able to look for, you know, quickly look for your app stream ID or quickly look for an answer to a fairly straightforward question or something. So yeah, it's useful, but I'm not, maybe I'm just hard to please, but I'm not blown away.

[00:23:20] **Daniel:** It is not that, it's definitely a crappy update. Again, welcome, sure. But revolutionary, maybe not so much. But something that has changed things for a lot of people actually is the first update of the year, which was back on the 10th of Jan. And this is when, and you might not have known that this happened but you might have seen these side effects or the consequences of this happening. On the 10th of Jan 2023, they introduced new ecommerce dimensions and metrics, and it sounds harmless enough, they've introduced a new bunch of ecommerce dimensions and metrics. Cool yeah, thank you we'll add some more data in, that's awesome. However, what it has done has introduced the idea of item-scoped data alongside the event-scoped data. So what this has done is in effect, introduced a new scope into GA4, item scope, whereas everything before was event scoped, we've now got item scoped.

[00:24:05] **Daniel:** It's an upgrade, but what that means is that you can no longer mix scopes. Just like in Universal Analytics, you can no longer do that in GA4. So for example, you can't mix item scoped dimensions with event scoped metrics. The biggest one being item level details with things like purchases or revenue, so we can't mix and match those. It's also renamed a couple of metrics and dimensions as well which is again, just more annoying than anything else. I don't know if it's changed the API names at all, which could break a bunch of stuff, but definitely if you've got any scripts running or pulling anything out or doing anything with the dimension names, it's changed a bunch of dimension names again, to account for the different scopes. For example, it's got ‘item list click events’ and ‘items clicked in list’, for example. They're two different things now, so they had to rename them to differentiate. But yeah, change the name, introduce new scope and as a side effect caused a bunch of reports to break.

[00:24:56] **Dara:** Which is, you know, annoying on top of the [quota limit enforcement, which has also caused reports to break](https://www.measurelab.co.uk/blog/podcasts/ga4-data-api-quotas-breaking-things/?utm_medium=podcast&utm_source=transcript&utm_campaign=71). So, you know, if this was in isolation, it would be frustrating. But when it's, you know, hot on the heels of another change that's also broken, a bunch of dashboards, it is pretty annoying, isn't it? Especially when they're driving people to start using GA4.

[00:25:16] **Daniel:** Yeah, absolutely. And this is something that broke inside of Google Analytics 4 as well, so even the default ecommerce report. So under the monetisation section, there's an ecommerce report and even that had misaligned dimensions and metrics after this update. So if you were to add in that collection and topic and report set inside of the reports library in GA4. It'll all be fine, but you might find some custom reports people have set up inside of GA4 or explorations they've set up in the past that all of a sudden just don't work. And this is the same in the API, so you used to be able to combine two different things together in the API, it worked, and now it doesn't.

[00:25:49] **Daniel:** I think in hindsight, it's actually a good update because they've introduced the whole thing of product-level, sorry item-level now, which means we can get some you know, item-level custom dimensions eventually, or at least hopefully down the line as well as some other bits. But it has broken a bunch of stuff they've already established. It feels quite common actually. I think we might see more of these stories around GA4, which is they've gone in strong, saying no GA4s different, GA4s going to do it this way, and then enough people moan and complain and then they realise that they made a mistake, and they have to kind of revert back and kind of introduce something they had in Universal Analytics. But by doing so, it's kind of undoing something that's now quite established, you know, GA4 came out a couple of years ago, so there's a lot of systems in place built in this framework, and now they're like, oh, actually no, you were right let's put it back in and all of a sudden that is like a, reintroducing something is kind of creating a new kind of disruption in a sense.

[00:26:36] **Dara:** I think we've gone back far enough in time in the release notes and I'd say it's more than fair to say we're agreed that there's nothing particularly mind blowing in there, but as you said earlier, maybe they're holding out and they're storing the big releases for a little bit closer to the end of the life for Universal and just to make everybody happy.

[00:26:55] **Daniel:** This is underwhelming, to say the least. We are almost two months into the year and we've got another four left until the fall, where everyone's migrated whether they like it or not. So I think we've got high expectations for the next couple of months of releases, so hopefully there's a bit more momentum and a bit more grandeur to the updates as well. Not to say that they can't release incremental updates beyond the 1st of July, but I think there's going to be a lot of people that need a lot of stuff to happen before then. I think we did actually at the beginning of the year, one of the episodes I did while you're on holiday, [I was talking to someone around this, around what we need to see this year from Google Analytics](https://www.measurelab.co.uk/blog/podcasts/ga4-features-2023-usman-qureshi-spiralyze/?utm_medium=podcast&utm_source=transcript&utm_campaign=71), so that kind of breaks down a lot of the kind of features that we're looking forward to and all of them we mentioned in that episode are going to be stuff we want to see before the 1st of July to be fair. Fingers crossed, I'm not going to bet my money on it.

### Wind down

[00:27:36] **Dara:** Let's hope they listened. Okay, so we've had a break, you've got no excuse you must have done something fun outside of work since we last recorded, pressures on.

[00:27:45] **Daniel:** There is actually something that I've been doing and it's probably unsurprising to you and most other people, but it's been video gaming, but the catch is I bought myself a Steam Deck. So for those that don't know, a Steam Deck is almost like a Nintendo Switch, but it's a gaming pc, so it's like a gaming PC version of a Nintendo Switch, and I bloody love it. I bloody love it. it's so good, I've been playing so many games. I've got back into my old steam library from, geez, 15 plus years ago, and I've also been buying a few new games. I'm basically working my way back through the old Final Fantasy games as well, so I've just completed Final Fantasy I, just started Final Fantasy II, playing Spyro again, my wife likes playing Spyro, so we're both playing that together. But yeah, it's a handheld gaming PC where I've been playing more video games, Dara. What about you, Dara? What have you been getting up to?

[00:28:27] **Dara:** Well, anyone who knows me and anyone who's listened to this show before probably thinks I just tuned out when you were talking about that because I'm not exactly known as an avid gamer. However, I was listening because I was gaming at the weekend. I was playing computer-based video entertainment games.

[00:28:45] **Daniel:** I know Dara, sometimes it takes us a while to think about something for this episode, but you don't have to outright lie. I'm sure you can think of something.

[00:28:52] **Dara:** No, this is the honest truth. On Saturday night, just gone, we're Monday at recording time. So two days ago I played Mario Party with some friends on the, I believe it's called a Switch, would that be right? Is there such a thing as a Switch? With the little, you take the little things off, the slightly bigger thing and you can play with them. We played Mario Party which we used to play years ago on the N64, that was probably the last computer game I played actually. So we're playing it on the Switch, and also played a game of Mario Tennis as well which I used to love. So kind of retro, retro gaming.

[00:29:26] **Daniel:** Very cool, very cool.

[00:29:28] **Dara:** Am I convincing, do you believe me?

[00:29:30] **Daniel:** I believe you, I believe you. I'm excited, I'm just happy, I was just taken back and in shock and awe to be fair so.

[00:29:36] **Dara:** It's probably the only time maybe ever on The Measure Pod you'll ever hear me say that my wind down was playing computer games.

[00:29:43] **Daniel:** Until the day we get a version of Flimbo's Quest in the office.

[00:29:48] **Dara:** Yeah, but after all the hype, I'll be really bad at it. I could probably never play Flimbo's Quest in front of anybody.

[00:29:53] **Daniel:** That's it, the memory's better than the reality.

[00:29:56] **Dara:** Exactly, exactly. So there we go, we have the same, we were doing the same thing to wind down, computer games.

[00:30:01] **Daniel:** Amazing, well welcome to the club.

### Outro

[00:30:03] **Dara:** That's it for this week to hear more from me and Dan on GA4 and other analytics related topics, all our previous episodes are available in our archive at [measurelab.co.uk/podcast](https://www.measurelab.co.uk/podcast/?utm_medium=podcast&utm_source=transcript&utm_campaign=71), or you can simply use whatever app you're using right now to listen to this, to go back and listen to previous episodes.

[00:30:22] **Daniel:** And if you want to suggest a topic for something me and Dara should be talking about, or if you want to suggest a guest who we should be talking to, there's a [Google Form](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeMwfzg9TdNKeZYRxHci_y0D9up4EyAL5zNMYZNE9P_82fz3Q/viewform) in the show notes that you can fill out and leave us a note. Or alternatively, you can just email us at [podcast@measurelab.co.uk](mailto:podcast@measurelab.co.uk) to get in touch with us both directly.

[00:30:38] **Dara:** Our theme is from Confidential, you can find a link to their music in the show notes. So on behalf of Dan and I, thanks for listening, see you next time.