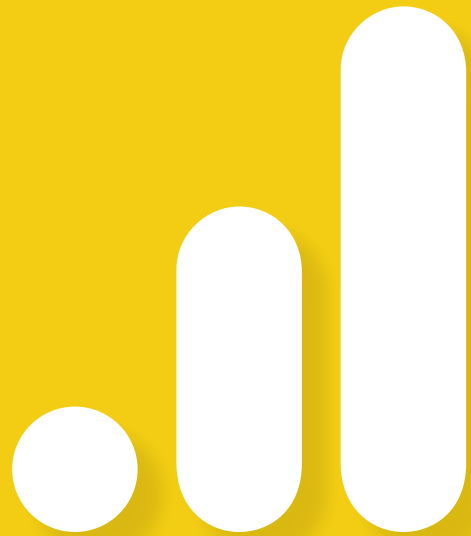


# 21 Point Google Analytics Audit

*ObservePoint*




Regardless of the size of your company, a periodic audit of your Google Analytics implementation is essential for verifying the accuracy of your data.

The 21 points explored in this eBook are all designed to ensure you're capturing the right data at the right times and using that data to drive the right decisions in your organization.

## **Conducting Your Audit**

The points of this audit can be broken up into 4 categories, with some overlap:

- On-Page Audit
- Internal Data Quality Audit
- Conversion Measurement Audit
- Traffic Sources and Site Activity Review

Many of these activities can be performed automatically using a solution like ObservePoint. If you see the ObservePoint symbol  next to one of the following 21 points, that means ObservePoint can automate some portion of this process for you.

## OP 1. Tag Presence

---

If tags are not present on an individual page, no data from that page can be collected. Any page interaction you want to track must have tags that are correctly installed and firing.

Ideally, 100% of a site's pages will have Google Analytics tags and consistent tag versions deployed. You can verify tag presence manually page-by-page or use ObservePoint's Audits feature to scan a large batch of pages.

### Audits

Companies like Adobe, Comcast, Johnson & Johnson, and Hewlett-Packard Enterprise use ObservePoint's Audits to regularly scan their site and discover what technologies are gathering data. Using an audit, you can easily verify that Google Analytics is installed on each page of your site.

## OP 2. Duplicate Tags

---

Just like missing tags, duplicate tags can muddle your data quality because they risk inflating your metrics.

In the worst-case scenario, a single page view may be counted multiple times, causing the page to appear much more popular than it is.

Inflated pageviews can cause conversion rates to look lower than they are in reality. Ensure that you do not have duplicate analytics code deployed on the same page, and that if you do, all tags appear to be loading multiple requests in the manner you expect.

ObservePoint's **Duplicate Tags report** can help you zero in on duplicate Google Analytics tags.

## OP 3. Vendor Compliance

---

Google dictates that tags must be configured within a certain syntax and that certain disclosures are made on the website, like a valid privacy policy. When these standards are not kept, Google Analytics may truncate or discard data. You may also be in violation of data protection laws, depending on the location of the web visitor.

Using ObservePoint's Custom Tag feature, you can automate vendor compliance by running custom JavaScript on each page of your site during an Audit to verify your privacy policy is available and accessible.

## OP 4. Page & Tag Load Times

---

Auditing your page and tag load times is important because load times impact the performance of your site in several ways, causing issues like:

**Limited Analytical Ability.** If a page is slow to load and users navigate away from a page before the page has finished loading, Google Analytics may not execute, reducing the real visitor counts on those pages.

**Inaccurate Data Comparison.** Further inaccuracies with data collection can occur when different sections of your site load tags in different locations (such as at the top or bottom of the page), in which case a page loading dramatically faster or slower than another may cause unequal measurement in your reports.

**User Experience Issues.** Page load time is obviously an important part of user experience, and a slow-load time is a major contributing factor to page abandonment. The web tags on your pages impact how quickly or slowly they load.

Your audit needs to check against the possibility of data loss through long load times or inconsistent tag placement.

ObservePoint's Page Load Time and Tag Load Time reports can give you a quick-and-easy view into which pages/tags are taking a long time to load.

## OP 5. Internal Linking

Redirects and broken links frustrate users and affect search engine rankings. Though not directly tied to your analytics solution, broken internal linking on your site can potentially drive away users and limit your pool of data.

Best practices dictate that no website should have page-not-found (400-series) errors and use redirects (300-series) only minimally. Ideally, all links should land on a regular page.

If your audit reveals a significant number of redirects, you should review your organization's redirect policy and remove as many internal redirect links as possible. You may need to update the internal site linking to point directly to the terminal page and eliminate the need to pass through a redirect.

ObservePoint's Page Status Codes report can reveal which pages on your site have unnecessary redirects or 400-series errors.

## OP 6. JavaScript Errors

If you have JavaScript errors within any of your on-page code, then Google Analytics may not fire, which means no data for you. The best practice is to keep errors at a minimum.

ObservePoint's Console Logs report reveals any and all errors, warnings, and other logs that showed up on each page during an audit.

## OP 7. Tag Validation

Tag validation refers to the process of verifying your analytics implementation (including tags, variables, events, the data layer, and other components) is collecting and transmitting the correct data to your Google Analytics solution.

Many analytics practitioners have some form of documentation like a tagging plan specifying how variables should be configured on each page. Tag validation verifies that your implementation matches the expectations outlined in your documentation.

Validating your implementation can be very tedious and prone to human error, in which case automation will be your best friend.

### Rules

Using **Rules**, ObservePoint users can define expected values for data collection on any given page or section of a site. If during a scan a rule doesn't pass, the user immediately receives a **notification**.

For example, if you expect custom dimension 13 to always have a 5-digit number any time a Google Analytics pageview fires, you can set up a Rule that verifies just that.

## 8. Possible Data Leakage

---

As you audit for Google Analytics data collection, you will likely uncover additional unauthorized tracking technologies on your site. If an unauthorized technology is sending sensitive data to third parties, that's a red flag you need to address immediately.

Another point of concern is whether you are inadvertently passing personally identifiable information (PII) to Google Analytics or another technology. Verify that no such transmission is happening.

Using ObservePoint's Rules with RegEx pattern matching, you can check for **transmission of PII** (such as emails and identification numbers), **unauthorized technologies**, or **proprietary data** and receive alerts if any unauthorized data collection occurs.

### Internal Data Quality Audit

This phase of your audit is a check-up on the internal configurations within Google Analytics that can affect the quality of your data. The following 4 points are specific settings you should evaluate in Google Analytics.

## 9. IP Address Exclusion

---

Certain visitors who don't accurately reflect your target audience, like company employees, may frequent your site and artificially inflate visit and page view counts. Google Analytics allows you to filter out these users by IP address (range).

During your audit, you should review the configured filters to ensure you are excluding appropriate traffic.

## 10. External Data Sources Enabled

---

Google Analytics has access to a wealth of data from some of Google's other marketing technologies. Many of these tools allow you to pull this data directly into Google Analytics.

For example, you can pull in data from Google AdWords for valuable information about how much of your website traffic or sales are driven by AdWords.

Information informs insights, which inform decisions, so do your research about what other data you can pull into Google Analytics.

## 11. Page Naming

---

Relevant and accurate page names are critical to the organic search success of your website. Page names also serve as the title text when a visitor bookmarks your site. Ensure that all the pages you audit have a page title.

Sometimes it is common practice for pages to share identical titles, but to make sure your site is more thoroughly optimized, we recommend you update the title tags on each page to provide a unique name to each relevant URL.

## 12. Internal Search

---

Taking time to verify your internal search configuration during your Google Analytics audit is vital to understanding the findability of the content on your website.

Setting up internal search in Google Analytics allows you to evaluate and verify where visitors search, what they search for, and the quality of the provided search results. Understanding the effectiveness of your internal search is important because visitors who perform internal searches convert at a substantially higher rate.

## 13. Conversion Events

---

Begin your audit by understanding and labeling the conversion events your website has. Your conversion events will likely have custom dimensions and metrics associated with them, so you will want to make sure that when Google Analytics logs a conversion event, the tracking includes those custom definitions.

Ultimately, your audit will require you to simulate those events and verify the corresponding request to the Google Analytics server contains the appropriate data. You can approach this process manually or via automation with ObservePoint's Audits and Journeys features.

**During a scan of your site, ObservePoint can simulate user actions like form fills, selects, clicks, and submits while also validating the analytics requests being sent off as a result of these actions.**

## 14. eCommerce Tracking

---

Through eCommerce tracking, your organization can evaluate the effectiveness of marketing investments and site optimizations.

You will validate your eCommerce tracking the same way you do other conversion events, with a focus on the unique data points sent in an eCommerce event request.

You can also gauge the accuracy of your eCommerce data by comparing it against your company's ordering system data.

Using Web Audits, Web Journeys, and Rules in tandem, ObservePoint users can verify that Google Analytics is capturing and transmitting eCommerce variables correctly.

## 15. Campaign Tracking

Campaign attribution is one of the primary goals of data analytics, particularly for eCommerce companies. Auditing your campaign tracking is perhaps the single most important part of a comprehensive audit.

Campaign tracking errors can occur as a result of one or both of the following misconfigurations:

- Campaign tracking codes (URLs) are formatted incorrectly.
- Google Analytics tags on the campaign landing page don't correctly capture the campaign parameters, such as a campaign ID.

During your Google Analytics audit, you should review both of the above campaign tracking components to ensure that your marketing efforts are receiving proper attribution.

**ObservePoint's Campaign Performance Solution can help protect against both of the above issues, allowing you to confidently rely on your campaign attribution data.**

## 16. Best Performing Traffic Sources

One of the key benefits of using Google Analytics in online marketing is being able to compare the effectiveness of traffic sources. You can evaluate how much of your traffic comes from Google/organic search, direct site access, AdWords, Bing/organic and email campaigns, among others.

## 17. Best Performing Keywords

Understanding how organic search visitors are finding your website is an important part of evaluating marketing efforts.

Within Google Analytics, you used to have a report showing how specific keywords were bringing in traffic. However, for privacy reasons, this report is limited as Google now hides the search keywords of web visitors who were logged in to their Google account.

While directly recreating this report isn't possible, there are alternatives available, such as Google Search Console.

## OP 18. Critical Visitor & Conversion Paths

Understanding how visitors use your website is an important element in optimizing the site. During your audit, consider which pages users most often access after coming to your home page. Are these the pages you expect? What insight does this reveal about user behavior?

If your site has a high-traffic conversion path, such as a booking path, you will want to make sure each page and component in that booking path is consistently available to users.

### Web Journeys

ObservePoint's Journeys make it possible for companies to test their most important web experiences and conversion paths. Journeys replicate your site's user journeys, such as shopping carts or user logins, from start to finish and tell you if anything prevents the path from completing or if the analytics are not tracking the activity.

## OP 19. Top Ten Pages

Identify which pages on your site consistently have the most traffic. Doing so will help you prioritize future auditing efforts. Make sure Google Analytics is properly installed on these top pages, either through a manual on-page audit or via automation.

An ObservePoint Audit can scan your top pages on a set schedule (e.g., every hour, every day, etc.) to verify that Google Analytics is properly installed on each page.

An important tracking limitation to consider is whether the influx of traffic recorded on these pages will exceed your account's data collection limit. According to Google, if you exceed the limit, "there is no assurance the excess hits will be processed." Google provides some **recommendations** on what to do if you currently are exceeding the data collection limits.

## OP 20. Landing Pages Review

Optimizing landing pages is an important step in ensuring marketing spends are being used effectively. As part of your audit, look at the highest-trafficked landing pages and verify whether they meet your expectations. If a landing page is over or underperforming your expectations, conduct an on-page audit manually or via automation to verify that Google Analytics is installed correctly on that page.

An ObservePoint Audit can scan your landing pages at regular intervals or during planned campaign activity to ensure they are available and tracking correctly.



## 21. Worst Performing Pages

---

Normally you might not pay attention to the worst pages on your site, but taking a moment to consider which pages have the lowest performance can help you understand if visitors appear to be using your site as designed or if you need to eliminate irrelevant pages.

Sometimes pages that look like they're not performing well may just have broken analytics tracking. Periodically check your worst pages to make sure analytics tracking is working properly.

**Scheduled audits of your site with ObservePoint can help you catch tracking errors early so you can minimize data loss.**

### **Expedite and Automate Your Audit with ObservePoint**

Clearly, a thorough Google Analytics audit is a significant undertaking and one with a short shelf life at that. Remember, you can trust the quality of your data only as far back as validated by your last audit.

The problem is that for most enterprise websites, a page-by-page audit is nearly impossible to execute manually, which is why automation is so important. Ongoing, automated audits help restore trust in your data quality and can reduce the burden on the teams responsible for verifying the accuracy of their analytics implementation.

ObservePoint's automated technology governance and Campaign Performance solutions can help. Schedule a demo with an ObservePoint rep to learn more.



**SCHEDULE DEMO**

