



**BLAST**<sup>x</sup> |

# What is GA4 and How to Prepare For It

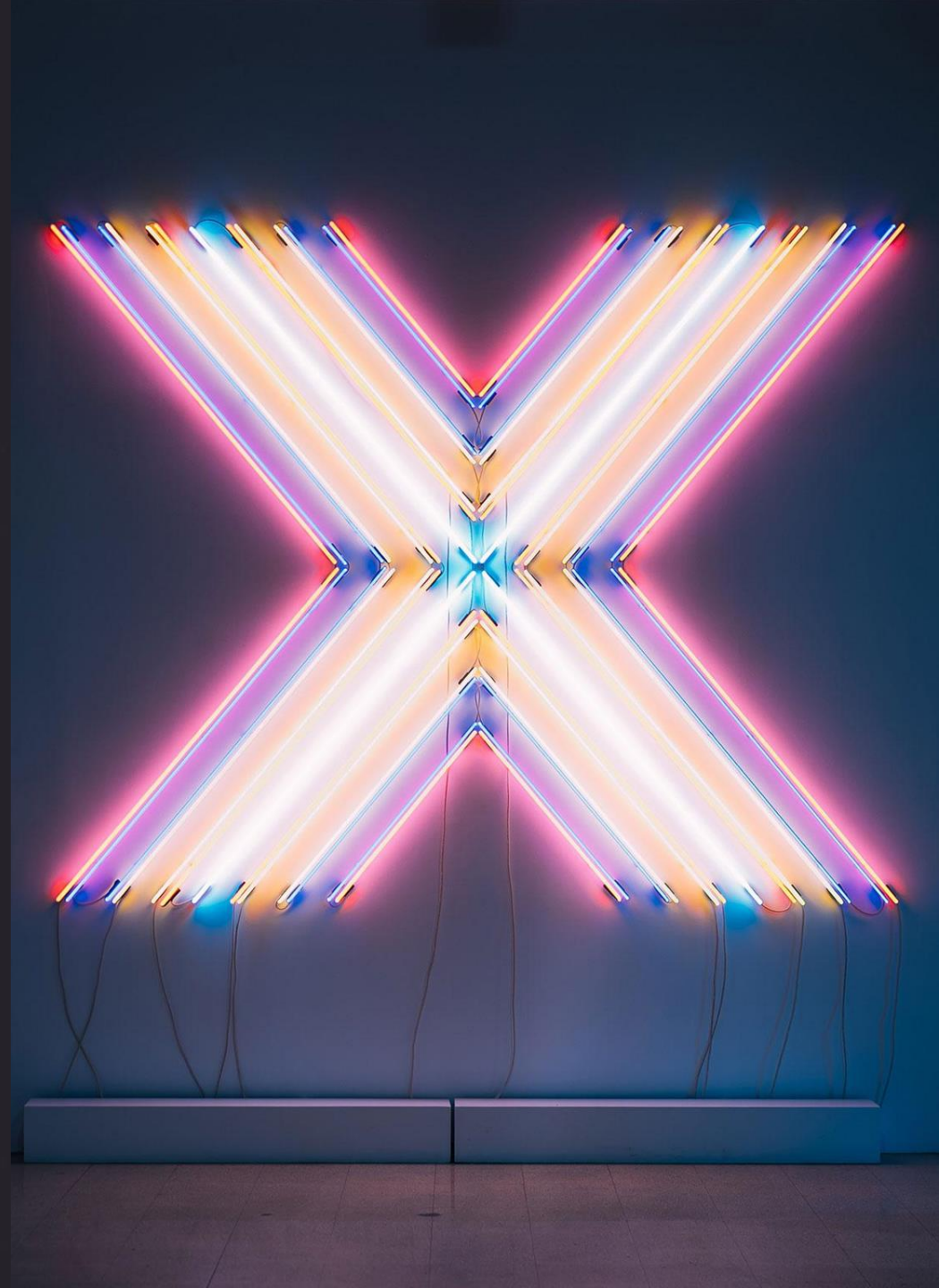
**RBFF**

**December 8, 2022**

Optimize Digital Experience for Seamless Journeys

# AGENDA

01. GA4 Overview
02. GA4 New Features
03. Backing Up GA Universal Data
04. Removal of 3rd Party Cookies
05. How You Can Use Data Effectively



# 01. GA4 OVERVIEW

# A QUICK HISTORY LESSON



Google Analytics

## 2005 Google Acquires Urchin

- Web analytics tool
- The “U” in UTM
- Name changed to Google Analytics



Firebase



App + Web



## 2015 Google Acquires Firebase

- A collection of mobile tools
- Included in this is a modern analytics tool
- Name changed to “App+Web”
- Later renamed to GA4

# ACCOUNT STRUCTURE

## Google Universal Analytics

Account

Data collection happens at the property level

Property

Reporting happens at the view level

View

## Google Analytics 4

Account

Property

Data collection (via data streams) and reporting happen at the property level

# DATA COLLECTION: EVENTS AND PARAMETERS

## Google Universal Analytics

Event Category

Event Action

Event Label

Custom Dimensions

Pages and  
Other Reports

## Google Analytics 4

Event Name

Event Names: the actions a user can take that you want to track

Parameters and  
Custom Dimensions

Parameters (also called custom dimensions in GA4) are all the details of the actions you want to know.

Parameters and  
Custom Dimensions

You have up to 25 parameters per event (100 for 360 users)

Parameters and  
Custom Dimensions

# WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

GA4 is not just a version update, it's a **platform switch**

As with any platform switch:

- Metrics calculations will change
- Administrative options will be different
- The underlying data model is different
- Old ways of doing things might not be possible
- New possibilities emerge

We will have a different slide deck that will be uploaded and shared with you that goes over more of this information.

## 02. GA4 NEW FEATURES



# CROSS-PLATFORM TRACKING

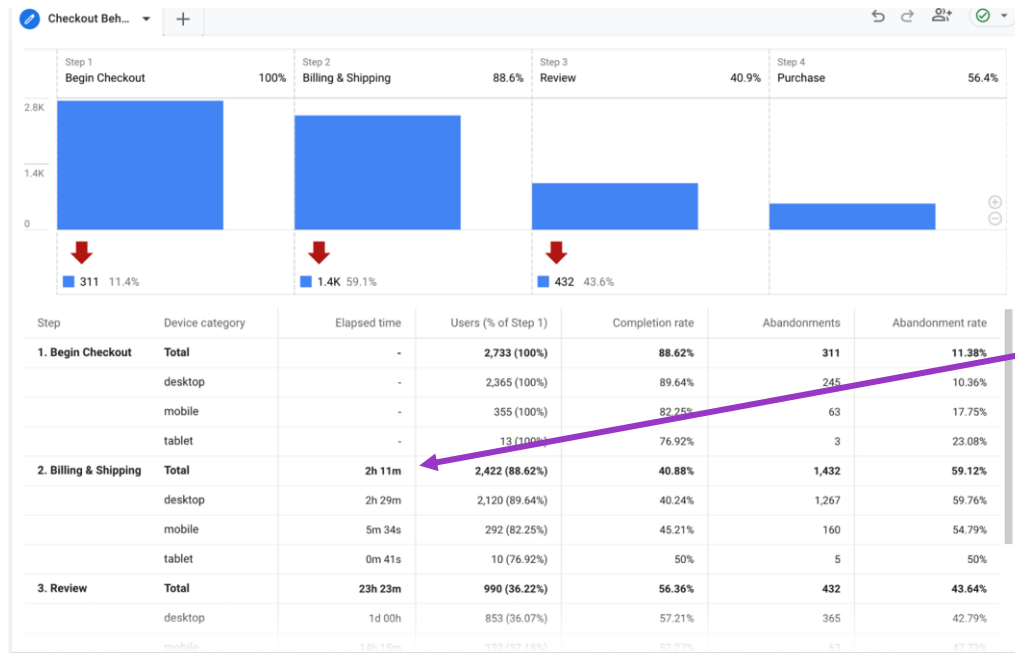
- Organizations are using GA4 capabilities to see both app and web data together to see how users move between them, how similar functions stack up between the two platforms, etc. This alleviates manual data aggregation and pulling data into multiple systems to see the data together.
  - Business question examples:
    - Finding the total unique users regardless of platform
    - How many total conversions happened across all platforms
    - Which platform is performing better with conversions

# THE NEW BOUNCE RATE AND ENGAGEMENT RATE

- Organizations are taking advantage of new metrics in GA4
  - Bounce rate in GA universal at times can be seen as a negative engagement when in reality depending on the content viewed and the user's needs, the engagement was actually positive for the end user.
    - Example: A user views a page (say a fish stock status page) they have bookmarked to look for updates, they got the update they needed and left. GA: negative, bounce. Reality: positive, user intent successfully completed.
  - Engagement Rate is a new metric that solves for this issue in GA Universal's bounce rate.
    - Engagement Rate is the number of sessions that were considered engaged sessions. Engaged session are sessions that last 10 seconds or longer (can be adjusted up to 60 seconds), have one or more conversion events, or have two or more views.

# TIME ELAPSED ON FUNNEL STEPS

- Organizations are taking advantage of new report features in GA4
  - The new “time elapsed” metric on the funnel reports can help you understand how long it is taking someone to go from one step in the funnel to the next, giving you deeper insights into what is working and what isn’t, even if the user doesn’t fully drop off.



You can see the total of each step along with a breakdown based on other dimensions you choose such as device category or city.

# 03. BACKING UP GA UNIVERSAL DATA

# GA UNIVERSAL SHUTDOWN

- Google has announced GA Universal will eventually stop longer processing data
  - July 1, 2023 for unpaid accounts
  - July 1, 2024 for paid accounts
- Google has noted that users will have access to their data for at least 6 months post shutdown; however, they have also alluded that at some point that access would be gone
  - This is most likely due to storage availability and liability of old data no longer supported
- In preparation for this shutdown it is important to backup your most needed data

# THINGS TO CONSIDER BEFORE BACKING DATA UP

- How long back do you realistically need to capture
  - Generally recommended 1 year, 2 years max, beyond that you get into stale data where things have changed both internally (site functionality, layout, content, etc) and externally (political changes, industry changes, or general life changes such as pandemics, etc). Too many changes mean too many factors to account for that may lead to misinterpretation and data no longer able to be compared to newer data.
- Where do you plan to store the data and how much room do you have to store the data
- Privacy changes or security concerns

# WHAT REPORTS/DATA TO BACK UP

- Look at what reports are most important to you and what data you would realistically use for comparisons and benchmarks
  - Standard reports and metrics such as users, pageviews, etc.
  - Ecommerce reports
  - Custom reports you created
- Think about breakdowns or segments you might want to understand
  - Example: Do you need to know how many new vs returning users came from each device type (mobile, desktop, tablet) 6 months ago, or would knowing those metrics on their own (new users and mobile users) be sufficient

# BACKING UP THE DATA

- Start by chunking into manageable timeframes
  - This helps with any possible sampling - ideally you would download unsampled reports
- Formats for tables/raw data
  - CSV/Excel will be the most flexible formats that can be used without internet or uploaded to Google Sheets later for a cloud storage approach
- Formats for visualizations (when you don't want to recreated visuals or need an reminder of one you liked in order to recreate it)
  - Downloading excel/csv/Google Sheet will only give you the table data. To get an image of the graphs you will need to download via PDF.
  - Blast recommends doing a CSV/Excel and a PDF, this way your data is in a flexible format but you get a PDF of the image for more visual representations

## 3 Key Factors

Unsampled Reports



Data Tables



Graphs/ Visuals





## 04. REMOVAL OF 3RD PARTY COOKIES

# FIRST VS THIRD PARTY COOKIES

- Cookies are small text files used by browsers to save information relating to users
- **First-party cookies** are set and used by the host domain of a site. For example, first-party cookies on portal.ct.gov share data with only portal.ct.gov.
- **Third-party cookies** report to a website separate to the one a user is on. Traditionally they have been heavily used by advertisers to develop comprehensive profiles of users.

# THE DEATH OF THIRD PARTY COOKIES

- **Third-party cookies** are limited by many browsers already. Google Chrome will stop the use of third-party cookies by the end of 2024. This is considered to be the ‘death’ of third-party cookies!

# GOOGLE ANALYTICS' USE OF COOKIES

- Google Universal Analytics and GA4 uses **first-party cookies** and therefore should not be impacted by the loss of third-party cookies.
- **Third-party cookies** are used more frequently for marketing efforts such as display and paid search, helping advertisers show relevant ads to users.

# WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOUR TRACKING

- Google Analytics tracking should not be impacted
- Digital marketing efforts may not be as effective in future as they have been historically. This is because the removal of third-party cookies will make it harder to serve relevant ads to users as advertisers will have less user profile data.

# WHAT SHOULD YOU DO

- Continue deploying and using Google Analytics/GA4 as usual
- Review digital marketing efforts to ensure they're set up for future success, post third-party cookie removal. Good options include:
  - Building a strong foundation of zero-party (data users knowingly provide you, such as responses to quizzes/surveys onsite) and first-party (data relating to users that you own, such as purchase history) user data for use in marketing campaigns
  - Launching personalized digital marketing campaigns driven by zero and first-party data so that campaigns are well targeted to known segments of your audience

## 05. HOW YOU CAN USE DATA EFFECTIVELY

# BUBBLING UP CONTENT

Data can help organizations understand what exactly users are looking for and if they can actually find that information.

When you take data and combine it together you can take separate data points and create a fuller picture, which will allow you to make content and layout adjustments to bring that information to the user at a much quicker pace and smoother experience.



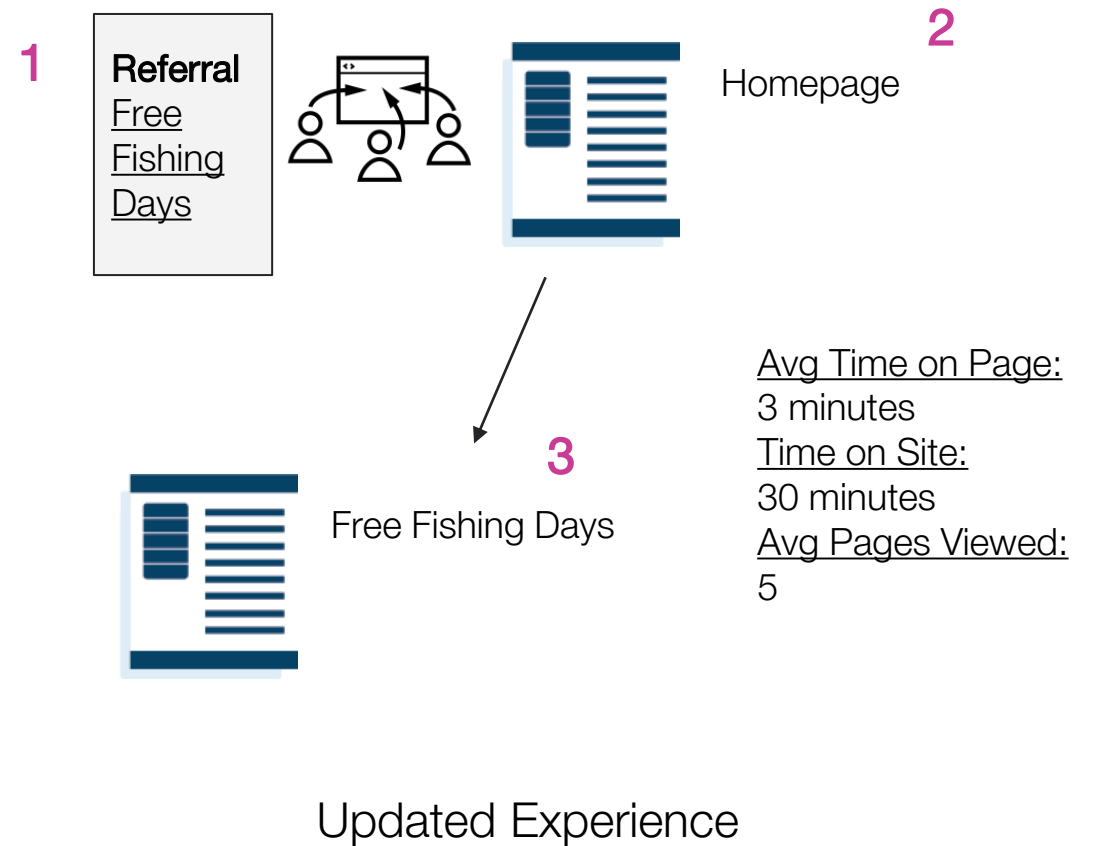
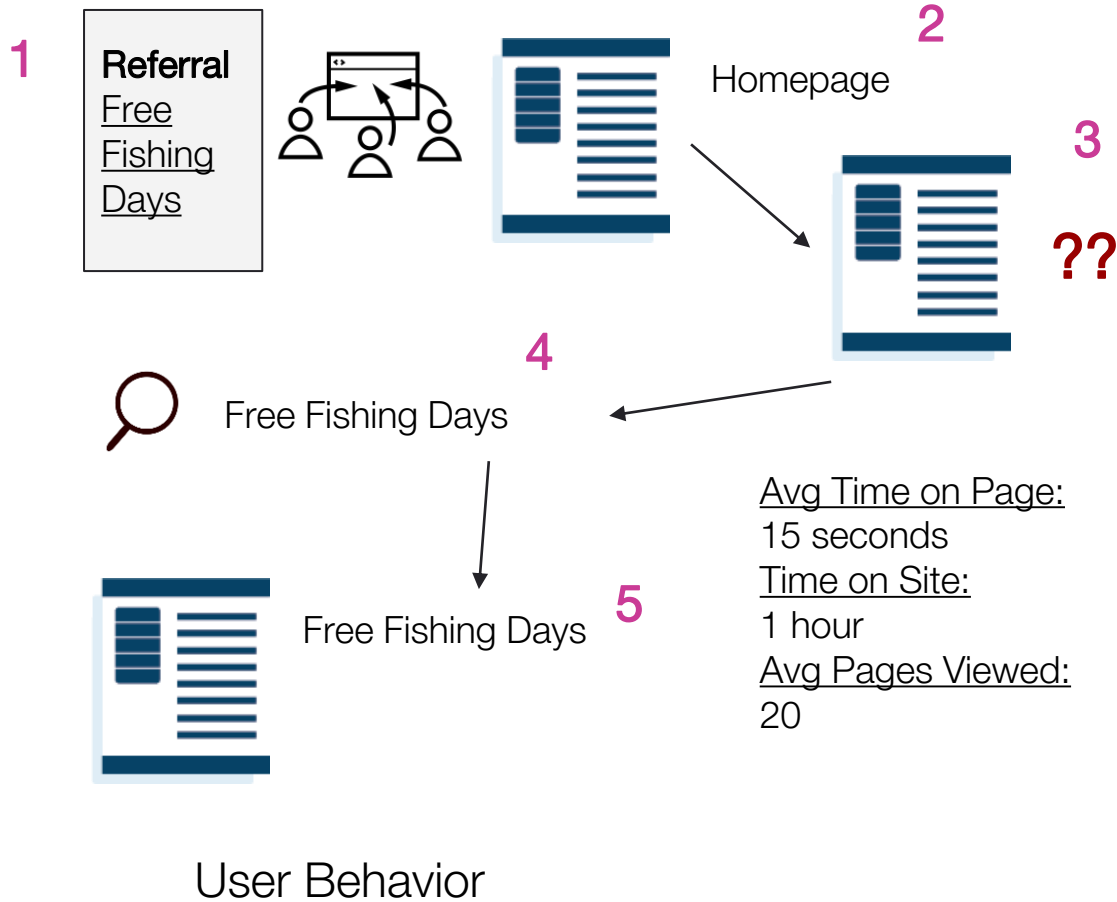
# BUBBLING UP CONTENT

## Example Use Case

When looking at the data recently you notice that the search term for “free fishing days” has increased from the 10th highest term to the 4th highest term. You also noticed that pageviews for the page with the dates for the free fishing days have increased recently. Lastly, you also noticed that there has been a large increase of users coming from one referral source in particular and those users are spending a lot of time on the site but have very short time on page numbers. Taking each of these elements separately you might think they are interesting but when you connect them together you find more nuggets of information that gives you a larger picture. When digging into things, you find that your site has been linked to from this particular referral source; however, while the text is about “free fishing days” the link goes to your homepage not the direct page. When a user lands on your homepage, they find it hard to find that information browsing for a while (long session with short time on page as they can’t find the right page) before conducting a search. With this information, you now know that you need to bubble up that content either on the homepage or a clearer path from the homepage, allowing users to find the information faster with less frustration.

# BUBBLING UP CONTENT

## Example Use Case



# STREAMLINED APPLICATIONS AND FORM SUBMISSIONS

When a website has an online form or application, it is important to ensure that it is as painless to complete for the user as possible.

This can include removing obstacles that are blocking users from completing the information, auto-filling fields they have already filled out in previous steps or from a logged in experience, and making sure the user understands everything they need to complete the form.

Data can help find those areas that are not working well, bringing to light opportunities to increase submissions.

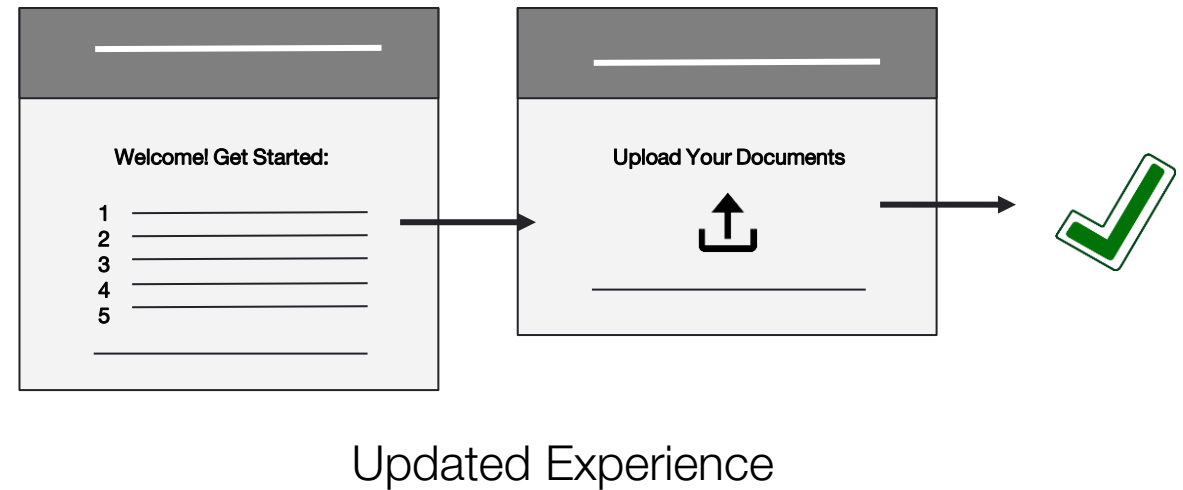
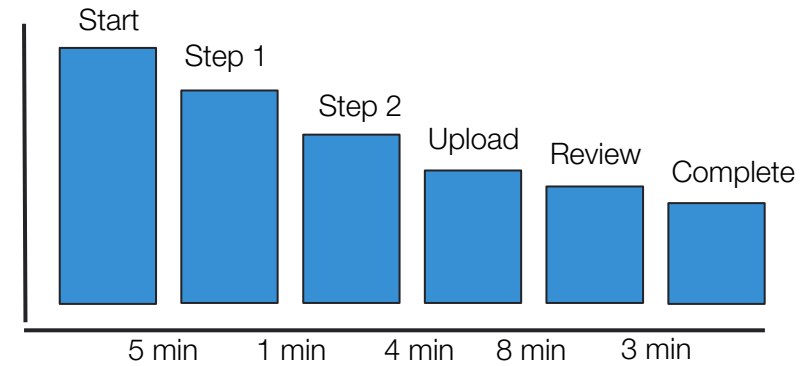
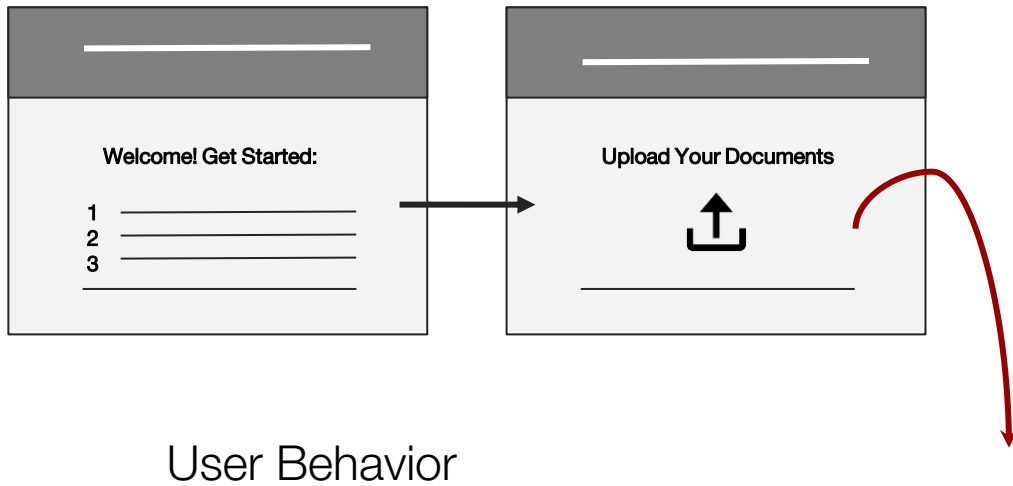
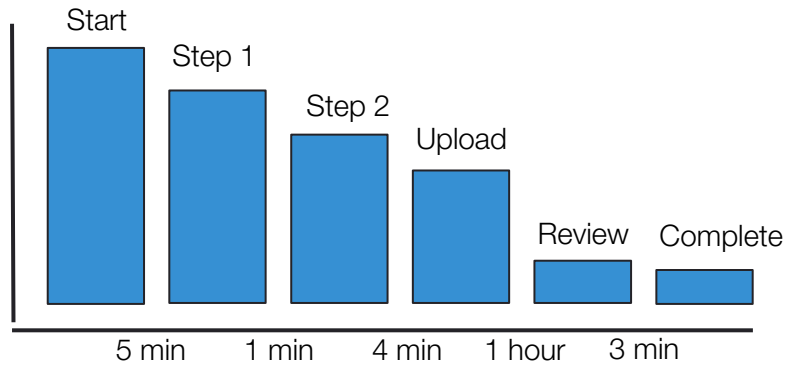
# STREAMLINED APPLICATIONS AND FORM SUBMISSIONS

## Example Use Case

Creating a funnel report based on your application process, you see that a lot of users are dropping off at the document upload page and never returning. You also notice that this step also has a particularly long “time elapsed” before users reach the next step. When looking at the application you notice that the intro page only has 3 of the 5 needed documents listed, causing people to be misinformed. You update the text and see less people drop off and less time being taken at this step.

# STREAMLINED APPLICATIONS AND FORM SUBMISSIONS

## Example Use Case



# PERSONALIZATION

Personalization is becoming more and more common, from Amazon showing you things you would want to buy based on previous purchases to streaming services recommending things to watch based on previous watched shows and movies.

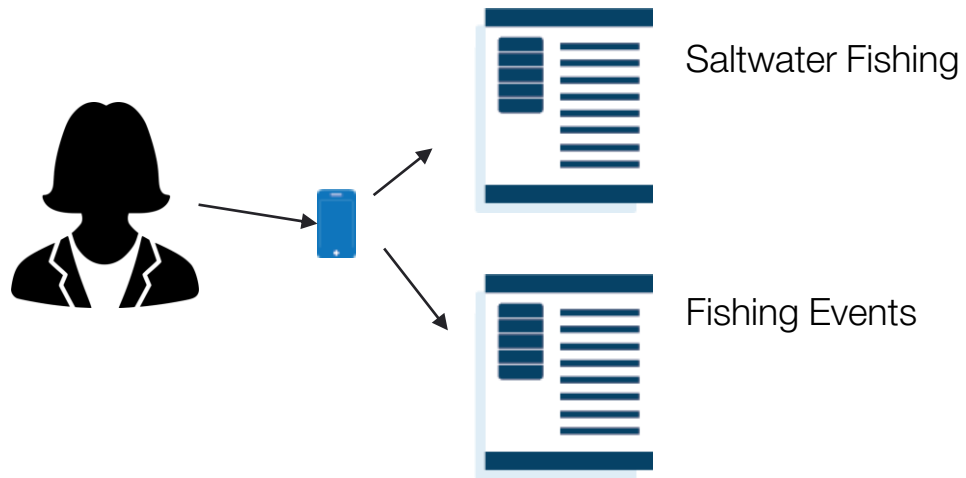
Having a good base data can help you integrate with other platforms and services that offer personalization capabilities.

## Example Use Case

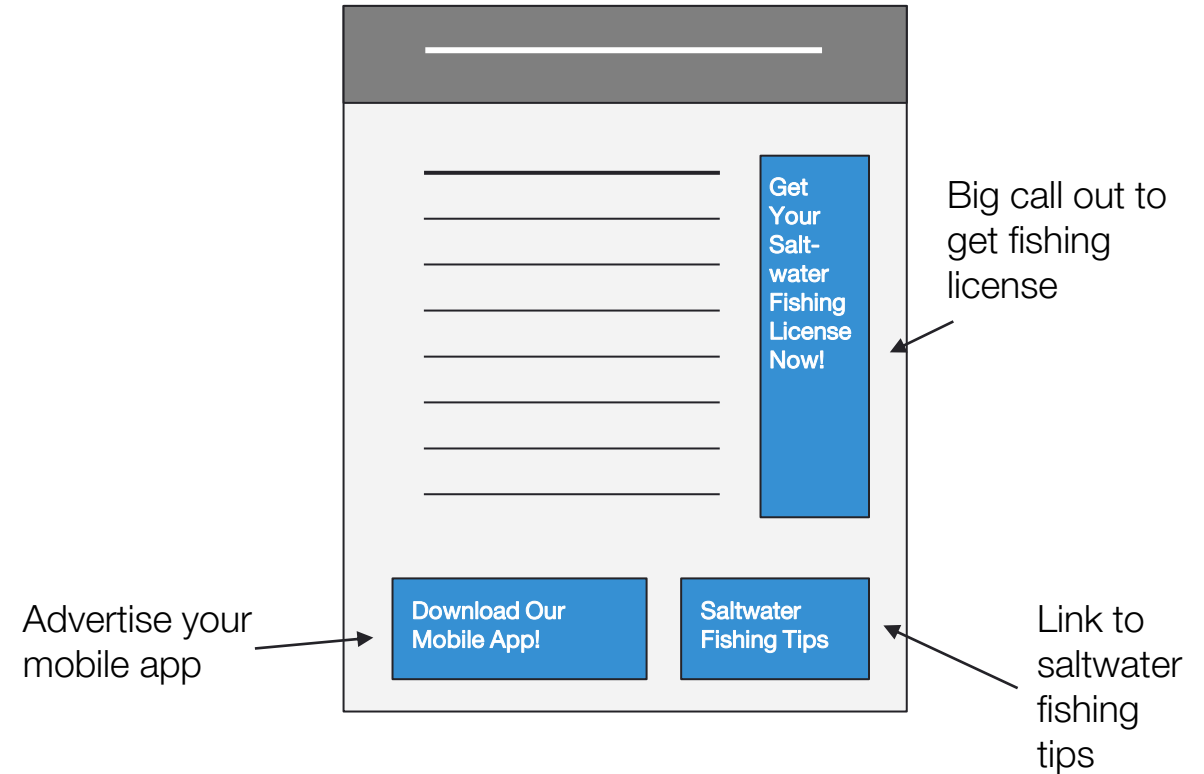
You have recently allowed for a logged in experience for citizens to conduct their government business. You notice certain users are viewing pages on saltwater fishing and fishing events. You also notice most of these users are from a mobile site. Based on this data you can then use personalization to serve them with CTAs on saltwater fishing licenses, tips on saltwater fishing, and a CTA about your new mobile app that allows them to interact with other saltwater fisherman and register for exclusive saltwater fishing events.

# PERSONALIZATION

## Example Use Case



User Behavior



Personalized Experience



# GA4 and Your Digital Data



## Prepare for GA4

Get GA4 in place, backup needed data before the GA Universal shut down, and get familiar with the GA4 platform.



## 3rd Party Cookies

Be aware of the removal of 3rd party cookies but don't be afraid of losing your data.



## Use Data to Your Advantage

Don't let your data go unused! Connect the dots and use your data to create better user experiences.

An aerial night view of a city skyline, likely Dubai, with numerous skyscrapers illuminated. Overlaid on the city are numerous vertical lines of varying colors (blue, purple, pink) that extend upwards from the buildings, each topped with a small glowing dot, resembling a data visualization or network diagram. The sky is a deep blue with a hint of sunset or sunrise on the left side.

**THANK YOU**

**Questions? Reach out to:  
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