The Marketing Huddle Podcast #30 - How to Get More from Google Analytics with Andy Crestodina

http://themarketinghuddle.com/google-analytics-with-andy-crestodina

Stan Smith: This is The Marketing Huddle, Episode number 30.

[Intro Music]

Laura Click: Hello, everyone. And welcome back to another episode of the Marketing Huddle were we give you proven advice to help you up your marketing game. I'm Laura Click and I'm here with my awesome co-host and friend Stan Smith and one extra special person we're doing an interview today with our friend and colleague Andy Crestodina. We are so excited to welcome him to the show today. We have both watched Andy for a good while and we had the pleasure of seeing him speak out at Social Media Marketing World back the spring. And he is just someone who is super smart that we both have just long admired and think quite a lot of and so, when we talked about the idea of doing a special episode with a guest, Andy was always at the top of our list. We are just, so thrilled to have him on the show today. Before we get started I just want to tell you a little bit about Andy. He is the co-founder and strategic director of Orbit Media Studios, a digital marketing agency based in Chicago. He's also the author of Content Chemistry and as a regular speaker in Chicago and across the country. We can attest to this, but his talks are always well-attended. We saw that in Social Media Marketing World. I think, I was one of the people on the over flow in the hallway because there wasn't enough room.

Stan Smith: And I was one of the guy who was jealous and I was like, "He's got some serious mojo."

Laura Click: That's right. That's right. It was a podcast. You guys, we have such a treat today, we are just so excited to have Andy on the show. Andy, welcome, we're excited to talk to you, excited to have you on the show today.

Andy Crestodina: Thanks for having me. I've wanted to collaborate with you guys forever, so I'm glad to finally be jumping on a call like this. This is great.

Laura Click: One of the things we want to talk about today and I think this is an area that you've just become really known for. You own a digital marketing shop and a design shop, you do a lot of website design. But yet, you've really become known for content marketing, obviously written a book called Content Chemistry. But, you've also really become known in the area of analytics and I think that's where we're going to focus a lot of our conversation today because marketers still struggle with this even though it's something that we're all on the hook for, something that continues to mystify people. That's what we're going to spend a little bit of our time. But, before we dive in to that I just really love to know, how you got into analytics? And here you are, a design shop and you've really kind of taken the deep dive into becoming known as an analytics expert. I'd love to hear a little bit of that that back story.

Andy Crestodina: Sure. I quit the job in 99 and started building websites in January of 2000. And it was really only months after we lau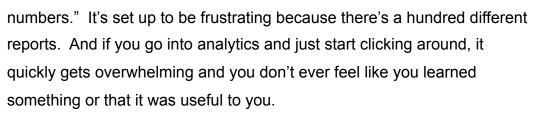nched the first site that I realize it wasn't enough just to build websites that I needed to better understand how search worked, I needed to better understand how to measure results for clients and know if we got ROI.

Andy Crestodina: Back in the day, this is 2000 and 20001, but there wasn't Google Analytics at all, I don't think, that they didn't exist. There was tool called Urchin which Google later acquired. And there are little artifacts of Urchin still in analytics if you know where to look. I know there was Webtrends which was hilarious in hindsight, it was like installed software that downloaded the log files and it took like a half hour of number crunching before it gave you back this word document with pretty charts. Just out of necessity, it was something I knew that I would have to learn more about. I can almost tell you the day like I woke up and got out of bed and thought, "Wow I just have this huge blind spot. I need to learn much more about this." And after that it was hands-on. Just each client, each question, each prospect, each conversation, each presentation just knowing that I needed to push my skills to learn more, to be able to teach, but also to measure ROI for our clients.

Stan Smith: That's awesome. And I think that I love how you said, it just kind of blind spot there. Because I think it's the same thing for clients, they kind of -- for the clients that we talked to and just for marketers in general is that you spend so much time getting the site up and running and then you're like, "Wait a second. Is this even worth it?" Trying to understand the analytics of the backend. But, let's talk about that blind spot a bit. I just would love to get your take on - how does someone ease into analytics specifically without getting overwhelmed?

Andy Crestodina: Yeah. I think that there's a psychological trick here because a lot of people just, people joke sometimes, "Hey, I got into marketing because I don't like numbers." It's set up to be frustrating because there's a hundred different reports. And if you go into analytics and just start clicking around, it quickly gets overwhelming and you don't ever feel like you learned something or that it was useful to you.

Andy Crestodina: If you sort of jump in and just look at reports without real purpose, I think the trick to getting smarter and getting more comfortable and really leveling up and feeling more adept with analytics is about using it with purpose. Don't just open it and click around and look at reports, I would suggest asking a question and then going into analytics to look for an answer. And that you can find that answer then you really just will gradually become more confident, you just solved the problem, you just did something productive. If you use, it sort of like, I compare it to the dashboard in the car, if you just go out to a parked car and look at the dashboard and say, "Wow. There's numbers here I just don't, I'm not sure I understand what this is doing." That's kind of pointless. It's really a tool that we should be looking at whenever we need information to support a hypothesis or to make a better decision or to see if something is working or not. If you use it with purpose, I think you gradually will become more confident in your skills and it won't be long before, you're the go to person in your organization and then you're really going to start to ramp up that learning curve because everyone will come to you with questions, you'll know how to find the answers.

Laura Click: I love that you gave the dashboard analogy because I think that's a true with analytics, so that it really can be a fantastic dashboard. But, I think one of the things, you hit on the fact that there are hundreds of reports in there. You can do so much with it because it's so robust, that's the very problem I think. People don't know which numbers to focus on or what should be part of that dashboard. Do you have a list of five or even 10 different things that you recommend that should be on people's dashboard, do you have a place for people to start? Like, "If you look at nothing else, these are three or five numbers or reports that you should paying attention to."

Andy Crestodina: Yeah. Another way to think of it is what questions can I answer most easily using analytics or what are the most useful questions to ask and answer?

Laura Click: Yeah.

Andy Crestodina: Examples might be, which sources are sending us the most traffic? Which sources of traffic are the best traffic or most likely to take an action? Which of our piece of content is the most effective for us and attracting the most visitors and inspiring the most action? Which of our campaigns is working best? Anything that's related to results and either of those two main areas either the traffic side or the conversion rates, you can check your traffic sources and your content and your campaigns and every effort you take. You can measure the effectiveness against one of those two numbers. This is the key to optimization. An example of an answer might be, which traffic source is sending us the best visitors? Facebook visitors convert from visitors in the Newsletter subscribers at a rate of one-half of 1%. But, LinkedIn visitors convert into subscribers at a rate of 1%. Therefore, attracting visitors from LinkedIn might be worth twice as much to me in terms of list growth as Facebook. Now, I know that I can allocate resources I'm going to be a more efficient marketer next week than last week.

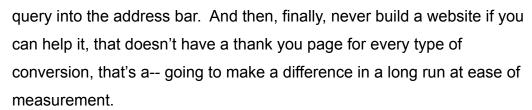Stan Smith: Nice.

Laura Click: I love that.

Stan Smith: Let's a -- the question I have is more about the questions that you ask and you look for answers in Google Analytics. Does those questions differ if you are a small business versus a large business?

Andy Crestodina: That's a really good question. I think the questions are mostly the same, but the set-up of analytics will often be different. A large business is more likely to have a website that is more complicated. Maybe their conversions happen on other websites or they have subdomains, or they're running different kinds of campaigns, maybe they're doing some paid. For a simple website, setting up analytics is so basic. You just create goals and maybe funnels for those goals and you filter out your own traffic from your own office or home office. And that's the most of the setup that you need to do. Now, your data is going to be accurate and as accurate as possible because you filtered yourself out and it's going to measure conversion rates because you setup those goals. But for a big business, there might be lots of other little things. They might have a site search tool, they need to set that up, they may have cross-domain tracking, fancy term for conversions that happen on other websites, they may have lots of Javascript code, tracking all kinds of things not just Google Analytics but maybe other packages, they can use Google Tag Manager to manage that. It just gets a little bit more technical, but fundamentally, the questions and answers should be mostly the same. What campaigns are working in what ways? What sources of traffic are working in what ways? What type of content is -- what's the ROI of our efforts? That's when you glance down at the dashboard on your car. It's to know how far you're going, how fast, how hot is the engine running, are we marketing efficiently or not? It's a great question. I think setup is more complex, but the questions and answers maybe are not.

Stan Smith: Right. Right. And just really quickly I was going to ask follow up questions to that is that some companies are going in the 2016 they're either going to redesign their site or they're going to build their site for the first time. Having analytics conversation, is that better to have it right at the beginning or towards the end when most of the content is laid in and the structures laid out, when does that conversation happen?

Andy Crestodina: There are a few ways in which the construction of the website could affect how easily you can measure results later. Google Analytics is really kind of like a giant ball of duct tape. It's crazy that it works, it's all based on Javascript and URLs and cookies. In some ways, it's just a like kludgy kind of tool compared to looking at actual log files and websites. The kinds of websites, the little decisions made during development that could affect how easy results are to measure, here's a short list. Is the blog in a directory? Which is SEO best practices, a directory is not a sub domain or a separate domain. If you have all your blog content and content marketing content at slash blog, it's going to be easier to filter out just those pages when you run reports later. If your site search tool like this little search box on your website, if when you type in a search query there, if it pushes that query into the address bar. In other words, the search results page shows the query. That's going to make it easier to measure an analytics your search terms, your search queries for your site search. Another example, the final one might be here be and this is true for every website almost exclusively. The conversions from visitor into lead or customer or a subscriber or event registrant or new member or donor or whatever the thing is, all those conversion should have their own thank you page, not a little thank you message that appears on the same page, but a separate thank you page. Now, that's going to make destination goals, easy to setup they take two seconds to setup, making it tracking and measurement much easier. There should always be thank you pages even for other reasons, right? That thank you page can be a chance to do additional marketing, you got another message, another call to action, you're sending people to more content. Those three areas I would say the URL structure for blog content, the site search tool if you have one should push the query into the address bar. And then, finally, never build a website if you can help it, that doesn't have a thank you page for every type of conversion, that's a-- going to make a difference in a long run at ease of measurement.

Stan Smith: Laura did you that, did you that? Did you build a website without thank you pages? That's awesome advice. Awesome advice.

Laura Click: So good. So good. I want to, speaking of building websites, that's what your business is. That's what you do. One of the things it was interesting about, you're looking at your bio, Andy, is that you talked about how you use analytics to help people do a better job with the websites they already have. I'd love to know, when do you decide or when should a company decide that it's time to overhaul a website? How do you make that decision or how do you even help your clients make that decision and how do you use analytics to inform that?

Andy Crestodina: Well, it's really interesting because a lot of people redesign their websites for sort of emotional reasons maybe their competitors redesigned or someone -- they looked at it and just they don't like how it looks for some reason that day and it triggers the conversation. As a general rule, people will disagree with this. But a lot of websites, the life span of a typical website should be three or four maybe five years at most. That's a long time on the internet. The factors that would determine how frequently that should happen or how soon, how long or short the life span would be, things like were there lots of changes in the business, were there big changes in the internet like mobile or are you like an industry where design is super important like our industry for web design or fashion or certain industries that just kind of need to design more often because design expectations change more quickly. Another huge factor though in the life span of a website is just kind of I think of it is a rust. People are always just polluting their own site by adding weird little features and cramming more stuff on there and they can't make a decision about what the most important feature is of a page.

Andy Crestodina: They just keep adding things. Sites get old and rusty and need to redesign partly because people don't have the discipline during content management or while making enhancements to not keep adding stuff to pages. Only one thing can be the most prominent thing on a web page. It's a mistake to just, to keep adding more stuff without removing something else. There are companies that have huge teams of marketers and their websites need to be redesigned more frequently than maybe they would have to have been. Because those people are not good at making tough choices about what the primary focus is of a page or a part of a page and they just, you've seen them, right? We all seen them people just add tons of stuff to pages and then its like, "Wow." That's when they wake up and they're like, "Hey, these needs to be redesigned. I love modern design. I like clean white space design. I like apple.com. Let's get a redesign." Well, your old site was kind of like Apple before you added 22 things to that page.

Laura Click: The new design doesn't necessarily solve the problem of that restraint, if you didn't have restraint before like how can you have restraint on the…
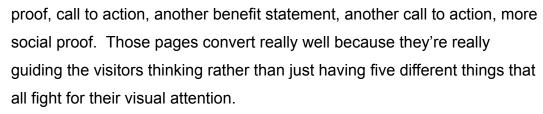
Andy Crestodina: No.

Laura Click: … new site. How do you help clients with that? Because I love your point about, there should only be one point of focus on each page and I think that's where so many people stumble on that. You start to have, I think Stan has used the phrase like your side bar becomes like the junk drawer, like you have in the kitchen, like you just throw everything in there because you have nowhere every else to put it. How do you help people have that restraint to have focus that each page really only have, one key focus, one call to action?

Andy Crestodina: Well, there are reports that will support the case. The classic engagement and behavioral metrics and analytics are bounce rate, time on page and pages per visit. Another place you can look in analytics to help people understand that they have polluted their own website is to look at the behavior flow, it's under behavior, it's in behavior section or user flow in the audience section. And it chose where people are traveling to the website, are they going from one page to another page and then back, what's the top path through the website. Web design is kind of -- it's like a mind control trick where you're deliberately creating a flow of pages through which the visitor just gets more educated and more trusting until they get to the end and they see more evidence and they answer more, get more questions answered. And then, they finally see that call to action and they're ready. If you have a page with a sidebar with 22, a whole bunch of things in it. Then, you're not doing as good of a job of helping guide people through a series of steps that sort of emulates the sales process. A website's job is to take people through a psychology using empathy where they get their most important questions answered in the most important order they have them and evidence is added and calls to action are added throughout. Now, if you're not, if you keep adding things then you're not guiding people, if you use giant drop downs, you're not guiding people. But, one good trick and Laura, you see this a lot now? Is to make pages that are tall, scrolling pages for which there's really just one most prominent thing at every scroll depth, it could be a tall page but if you get rid the side bar and make a one column layout here's a design trend that has lead to some web design, redesign projects. You can build this tall, super high converting pages by mixing in together at every scroll depth, one most prominent thing which might be a benefit statement, social proof, call to action, another benefit statement, another call to action, more social proof. Those pages convert really well because they're really guiding the visitors thinking rather than just having five different things that all fight for their visual attention.

Laura Click: Yeah. I love that. And I love that. I think is on that, it used to be a few years ago that the design trend was everything, it had to be above the fold. I think with social networks, we've all been trained that scrolling is good and okay and we're all very used to that. I love how you framed how that that concept still works in a construct of those long pages.

Andy Crestodina: Yeah.

Stan Smith: Awesome. I was wondering, I kind to see this a lot when I'm working with clients they setup their analytics in a way that's not really that useful to them. I'm just curious to know, are there any analytic pit falls or mistakes that you see most often?

Andy Crestodina: One of the things that breaks my heart is when I look in an analytics account and there's no, there aren't goal setup. There might be a reason for this, if the conversion happens in another website or if the goal is, if the conversion triggers a thank you message not a thank you page. But, most people they have a thank you page. They just haven't gone and copied and paste to the address of that page into the destination goal which takes just minutes to do. Another thing that I see often is people haven't filtered themselves out which we mentioned. But, then there is basic tools, basic ways to make all the reports more useful. One of the under used tools in analytic is the annotations. There's that little drawer that slides out underneath that each timeline report, each timeline trend line. It's like the tiny arrow in the center underneath the trend line. And if you click on that, it just pulls out this place to add tiny notes, they don't affect anything they're just annotations, they're just notes.
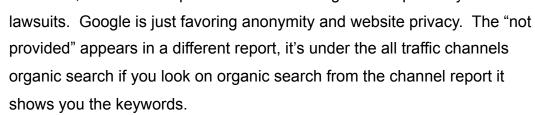
Stan Smith: Right.

Andy Crestodina: I see accounts all the time, well that's like a huge spike in traffic or there was a crash in traffic like a blackout. In analytics, you can't click like there's no data, it's like what happened? If it's recent, the client or a company can kind of tell you, "Oh, that was when we got written up in Tech Crunch. Great." Or that was when our site got hacked. But, if it's like more than a few months or few years old they can't remember anymore. If they're part of a team, people should just really add annotations for big events like that, a campaign starts, a campaign ends, an email was sent, you're running an ad, you got a big PR hit. Annotation are another way to make analytics more useful for everyone. All you have to do is type in what happened on that date. Another frequent mistake in setup common pitfall is you don't get to use analytics for one of its most to valuable SEO reports unless you link it to your Google Search Console formally known as Google Webmaster Tools. There's a report under acquisition in a category Search Engine Optimization. It's the queries report. It shows you all the phrases that you're ranked for, that's killer marketing data. But you don't get it unless you link those accounts together. It only takes a minute, but most people haven't done it.

Stan Smith: Is that, I know I've always, I've had a love-hate relationship with some of those reports because the, uh, "not provided" or "not set", I'm not sure the exact verbiage they used. It seems like 90% of the traffic is in the "not provided" area. Which totally, to me, makes it useless. But does connecting it with the Google Search Console clear that up, Andy?

Andy Crestodina: Well, no. The "not provided" is something where - probably to avoid lawsuits. Google is just favoring anonymity and website privacy. The "not provided" appears in a different report, it's under the all traffic channels organic search if you look on organic search from the channel report it shows you the keywords.

Andy Crestodina: And it's like 85% to 95% of searches - it just doesn't show the keyword because the visitor's search results were encrypted. If you ever see those there's an HTTPS at the beginning of the URL in a Google search. That means that the Webmaster or website owner isn't getting the data, the keyword data, which is fine. When we had that back in the day, you could connect the dots between a search query and behavior metrics like bounce rate and time on page and conversions. Like, what percent of people convert it after searching for which phrase. Okay. They don't give us that data anymore, fine. There's no reason to complain about that, it's like a farmer complaining about weather, what are you going to do? There's no point. Instead, in the queries report, we don't get the behavior data, but it still shows us all the stuff that used to be on Webmaster Tools. The query, the impressions, number of times it's appeared on search, the clicks, how many clicks you got from that keyword and the average position which is the ranking. It's really useful just -- and analytics is telling you, if you just make this little connection between those tools. How high you are ranking for which phrase. Because that's the definition of optimization, you can now go back and make small changes such those page is to rank a bit higher. It makes a huge difference. I think it would be really hard to do SEO without that report, but most people just haven't finish setting that up.

Stan Smith: Nice.

Laura Click: I think you've, I've seen you have written about this Andy. Now, I have totally followed your blog post and talked about this. And I remember in one in particular where you were talking about that report and the ranking in particular, how you're ranking for different phrases. I'd love for you to share just some of the thoughts around that.

Laura Click: That was one of the things I recall you saying if you're wanting to improve with your search results, let's start there and make some tweaks and you can very easily watch how you're going to go up in rankings for this different terms. Do you mind sharing a little bit about some thoughts around that and what you would recommend to folks, if they're wanting to improve their search results for a certain phrase?

Andy Crestodina: Happy to. Most websites that have been around for a little while rank for hundreds or thousands of phrases. It's just that the website owner doesn't know about it yet. Which means as an opportunity because they're maybe a lot of phrases for which you ranks sort of accidentally, but don't rank that high. This might be page two phrases. And the old joke is where's the best place to hide a dead body, page two of Google, no one's going to be going to page two of Google. What that report will tell you is what you're ranking for on page two. All you need to do is to create a little filter. Now that filter box above the data in analytics is normally going to show just the things that include the word you type into the filter box. But if you click on advanced filter, little links has advance next to that, now you could tell it to exclude, not include but exclude certain things, which is fun, or to include other things which is what were about to do. If you set the advance filter to include not the query, the default is going to be the query there, that's the search term but the average position when it's greater than 10. This is what the advance filter looks like, include average position greater than 10. In other words include only the phrases for which I'm ranking higher than 10. In other words on page two. When you're looking at that report you then sort it by average position and it will give you … you're now looking at the list of all the phrases that you rank for high on page two. Just copy and paste that phrase into Google and confirm your ranking. You should make sure that it's not to see what page it's ranking and if it really is ranking that high for you.

Andy Crestodina: You want to be careful not to de-optimize the page for a good phrase as you do so, so you should have a general sense for what your rank is, for which of your page is but you'll probably find all kinds of low hanging fruit and things that you had no idea you are ranking and you're ranking right there at the top of page two. Now let's go back and tweak the page. Did you use that phrase in the title? Did you use that phrase in the header? Does it even appear in the body text? Often with minutes of work on that page, you can better indicate relevance, which half the battle, moving from page to the page one. Which will likely quadruple traffic, within the few, days to that page.

Stan Smith: That's awesome and now I'm thinking about, man, how do I use that page and is this overlooked. I looked a lot of the behavioral stuff but how you just outlined, how to filter for that page for some low hanging fruit I think is awesome. Is there another useful feature of Google Analytics that a lot of people overlook?

Andy Crestodina: Absolutely. We touched on this earlier. I think if you have your goals set up then you'll be able to measure the value or quality of traffic from different sources which is hard to change. You can kind of see well visitors from search are - X percent of them take these actions, visitors who are direct X percentages and take these actions but social is really useful., and you guys are pros at social so I'm not going to try to teach how to do social media. But if you just look at the value, In other words the likelihood of this people taking which action of visitors from different social networks, it's sometimes really interesting. So you go t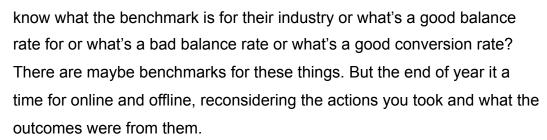o acquisition, all traffic channels and then click on the social link there and it will show you all the different social networks. Those all kinds of reasons why this traffic isn't perfect, this data isn't perfectly accurate but still, scroll over to the right and chose from the dropdown whichever goal you have in mind, maybe newsletter subscribers.

Andy Crestodina: And I can I see here, glancing at my own analytics, one half of 1% of visitors become subscribers. 1.2% of visitors from Facebook become subscribers. The rate at which people from different social networks take different actions often varies wildly, right? That's a big difference. Now, it's going to help guide decisions about how active to be in different networks perhaps. You might be spending time every week or every month in the network that are driving almost no results. That doesn't mean that it's not a good network to be in. Maybe you're getting indirect benefits. Maybe you're networking, you're making friends. You enjoy that network for some reason or you're just doing some influencer marketing there. Lots of the good things about marketing don't ever show up in your analytics. But still if the goal is to get traffic from that network and get that visitor to take an action, it's very useful to know the likelihood of which actions from which networks.

Laura Click: I love that and I love how you talked about how … I think that the tendency is when you look at numbers, it's not just looking at these numbers, it's how do you use those numbers to inform changes and actions. I think that's really timely for right now as folks are preparing to wrap up the year and what they're planning for 2016. What are some of the top things that you would encourage folks to look at in their analytics? As they try to figure out where they should spending their time and attention next year. Do you have any favorites or as you talked your clients about a year-end review, where do you suggest people spend their time?

Andy Crestodina: I think of benchmarks when you ask that and a lot of people want to know what the benchmark is for their industry or what's a good balance rate for or what's a bad balance rate or what's a good conversion rate? There are maybe benchmarks for these things. But the end of year it a time for online and offline, reconsidering the actions you took and what the outcomes were from them.

Andy Crestodina: It's a good time to just look at benchmarks and kind of set the bar for what you plan to do, which of these analytics ties directly to our life or your business and therefore what you're going to be focusing on. It's a good time to reconsider your activity in different social networks or your success rate of growing a list, which type of content inspired which actions. I think the New Year is just a time to kind of clear your head and just think fresh about what worked and what didn't and revisit your content strategy, revisit the content on your top pages. Probably, we should all be, at the end of the year and the beginning of next year, looking at just very simply the top pages report. That's under behavior, site content, all pages. There's almost always like a kind of a curve like the top pages get way more traffic than the least popular pages. If you're going to, maybe you're doing a content audit for 2016. Just doing, in Q1 you're going to begin a rolling audit where you edit the different section of your website every quarter or something. Start with those pages that are getting the most traffic. The work spent time on those pages will have a higher ROI than all other pages. Some of these pages get 10 times or 100 times as many visitors as others. If you're going to prioritize your efforts, I would focus on those things that will make the biggest difference that get the most views. It is a good time to maybe just revisit what's working and focus on that because that's where the efforts will get the best results.

Stan Smith: That's awesome and I'm having trouble doing the interview because I'm writing so many notes.

[Laughter]

Laura Click: I'm with you. I feel like we're cheating, were getting free consulting with you …

Stan Smith: I know, I know.

Laura Click: We're letting our listeners around that too which is awesome.

Stan Smith: I know they are.

Andy Crestodina: Well, this is great. You guys are asking the best questions.

[Laughter]

Stan Smith: If you are listening and you're freaking out, you're going, "Oh my gosh, he's saying so many great things and I don't have it." We will have transcripts for you. Watch in the show notes. We'll transcripts of this entire interview, so we got you covered.

Laura Click: Yeah. We'll link to some of the things that Andy is talking about too especially the blog post that I'm recalling and Andy you have to point this and the others. If there's something that our listeners need to hear, we'll make sure to link those up in the show notes so people can … I know you did a great in your blog that you've always been providing screen shots and images and arrows and all sorts of cool things to help people see exactly where to find all these wonderful reports.
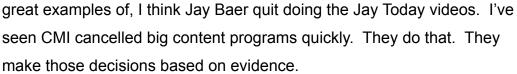
Stan Smith: Totally. My next question is about how do you instill a data-driven process culture in a company? Because I know that over the last two years, Andy, I'm sure you've seen this is that finally analytics and metrics and experimentations and optimization has really become a higher priority and a lot of marketers, yeah, to do list. I think growth hacking has really helped that to a degree. Exposing at least the benefit of doing in it and I know it still freaks people out because it's a lot of a technical pieces that need to be done there.

Stan Smith: How would you go about kind of instilling this, "Let's make sure we look at our data before we make decisions here in the marketing net?"
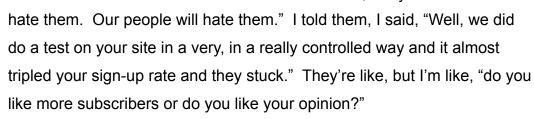
Andy Crestodina: Yeah. It's the perfect consideration because without that then nothing else will work. I mean it has to be built in to the culture and to the thinking day to day. If it doesn't come up in meetings then you're not likely to ever get a better results from these things. It will be a side note or look at delegated or they have report you look at once in a while. I start by reminding people that reports themselves don't ever affect our marketing. Only actions do. The analytics is not just a bunch - pretty charts are great but it's only the decision we make from them that affect our outcomes. Google Analytics is really for analysis, but as the name suggests, it's not just a reporting tool. It's for analysis. There's two times when we should be doing that and too, triggers that we should be sensitive too like in meetings or a conversation that drive us toward the reports that will affect our decisions. The first is there's a new marketing idea. Someone gets an idea, "Hey, there's a new social network, it should we at, maybe we should be active there" or "Hey, why don't we try this little topic or this another format for content, when should we make more video?" Any idea that you have, you can probably go in to analytics and find some data that would support or reject that idea and … so be skeptical even of your own ideas and turn those ideas into hypothesis and look for answers that would help you decide if it's worth the effort or not because it's kind of marketing, right? We could spent a million hours on something and not necessarily get any result. The second trigger to go look at the analytics is, "did that work?" "We tried it, what are the results?" "Let's measure it." "Should we continue doing that?" Those great examples of, I think Jay Baer quit doing the Jay Today videos. I've seen CMI cancelled big content programs quickly. They do that. They make those decisions based on evidence.

Andy Crestodina: The cultural moments are when those new ideas or when we want to validate that something is making sense, the skepticism … what we want to do is to flip that, so the skepticism isn't on analytics and we're worried. We're kind of wary about the numbers. It should be on the other direction. We should be wary of opinions. It's an automatic trigger for me. Anytime someone adds an opinion, right, I probably haven't stated any opinions, hopefully none in this interview. We should be careful of anyone who states an opinions who isn't skeptical of their opinion. We are all just focus groups of one. Opinions really don't … they're just terrible basis for making choices. I have to gently remind people using very soft language when talking to clients or prospects and just saying, "Yeah you don't like X, well, you are one person. Let's look for other evidence that maybe that's part of a bigger trend or that these other people like you or that you are like your audience." I joked in a presentation once. I said, "Never bring an opinion to a data fight." It's the same thing, right? When people … we should be instantly skeptical of anybody who states any personal preference because that's just not enough. I mean, the highest paid opinion in the room often makes big decisions but we should not just let that happen by default. We need to always bring evidence.

Stan Smith: Yeah. I think that I really love that point of view and I know that a lot of times marketers are really valued because of their opinions. However, I know that 99% of my opinions are wrong. I need data to kind of back that up and I think that that's super important. I think one example where I've seen this is that a couple of years ago, I walked into a room and I said you should do pop-ups to grow your list and the client and a couple of the other marketers in the room was kind of like, "they don't work. I hate them. Our people will hate them." I told them, I said, "Well, we did do a test on your site in a very, in a really controlled way and it almost tripled your sign-up rate and they stuck." They're like, but I'm like, "do you like more subscribers or do you like your opinion?"

WITH STAN SMITH   **THEMARKETINGHUDDLE.COM**   AND LAURA CLICK

Stan Smith: It was a tense conversation but we did pop-ups. Having that data a lot of times keeps on the right track. That really resonates with me.

Laura Click: We spent a lot of time and I think this is kind of to pay you back up that a little bit. Well, we spent a lot time talking about analytics and I love how you talked about, does it affect marketing unless you do something with that, right? You've got to use that to inform your actions. We've talk so much on the analytics side but I know that you're into content marketing just like we are. I'd love to know how have you seen content marketing change? I feel like it's evolved a lot over the past few years. This is going to see if you're going to state an opinion or have facts to back it up but I mean, how would you say that content marketing has changed in the last couple of years? What have you seen based on the data and analytic side of this? How this practice has changed?

Andy Crestodina: Yeah. Some of this will be kind of trendspotting and might be opinion … some of this might have data behind it but …
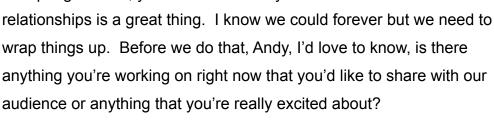
Laura Click: I'm going to catch you!

Andy Crestodina: Yeah. That's fine. I think that we've all seen the growth of social and the convergence of social search and email as the main channels for content marketing. We've all seen the evolution of content strategy and the importance of document of content strategies and having a plan and measuring results. It's gotten I think more focused and more kind of more deliberate, more strategic over time. I think that there has been, right now, some of the bigger things are native advertising is really big for certain brands, influencer marketing is a really big topic. The decline of organic and social is going to spread to other networks beyond Facebook, I'm sure.

Andy Crestodina: I think that one of the things that I love about it is just the continual focus. It's never gone down at all, the emphasis on people and real relationships and offline conversations and live events and calls like this one. The one thing that's always stayed true is people who have - marketers who've emphasized relationships. The way PR people always did, right? Building relationships, editors and journalist, the way that a lot of people now are doing blogger relations, the way that events have just gotten so good at curating certain speakers and delivering on a promise to their live attendees. I think that some of the most important themes have only become more important over time. I am emphasizing every bit as much as I ever did on relationships because that's the one thing that you can really own and that matters the most and that makes it fun. I love to watch the trends I predicted. Probably, Twitter will create an algorithm at some point and there'll be tweet rank and tweets will be throttled or all kinds other interesting trends. Native will become bigger but also gets a worse name and email will open rates, will probably decline next year. I mean there's lots trendspotting but I think that the fun part is what we're doing now and what I hope everyone does. Take it offline, get on the phone, go to live events, send to him a thank you note, be a person. That's really for me what is always been the part that was the most rewarding, the most interesting, the most fun and honestly the most effective.

Laura Click: I totally agree. I think the three of us is kind of a testament to that. I mean we've known each other online for while and I know I met Stan at a conference a few years back and that's how out relationship has grown and we've got to meet you out in San Diego in the spring. I think, yeah and the more you can establish those relationships is a great thing. I know we could forever but we need to wrap things up. Before we do that, Andy, I'd love to know, is there anything you're working on right now that you'd like to share with our audience or anything that you're really excited about?

Andy Crestodina: Yeah. I'm going to soon be launching some kind of podcast. You guys are ahead of the curve. I'm behind.

Stan Smith: Barely.

Andy Crestodina: Barry Feldman and I are going to do a 20-minute podcast, it will be bi-weekly. It's called Content Matters. I'm out at events talking to people and teaching whatever I can. I'm excited. I'm sure I'll seeing you guys out there. Conversion Conference, Social Media Marketing World, Content Marketing World, these are all places I'll be in next year but mostly I'm here helping clients through web design. I'm focused on Chicago. I tried to connect with anyone who happens through a town. I would never miss a chance to get together with guys in person even if you're flying through, let me know, I'll meet you at O'Hare and we'll get … sit down for a coffee.

Stan Smith: That's awesome!

Laura Click: I'd love it. That's a deal. That's a deal. We told folks about your company but where can folks go see your fabulous content. Where can they find you online?

Andy Crestodina: Orbitmedia.com is our website and Orbitmedia.com/blog is where I do most of my writing now. I don't do as much guest posting as I used to. But it's a bi-weekly newsletter and they tend to be long. A lot of people don't read them right away. I'm writing longer posts than I used to but it's all tactical how to step-by-step stuff and you can find it at Orbitmedia.com/blog.

Laura Click: Awesome. Awesome. Well, Andy just thank you so much for joining us today. We just really appreciate having you and hopefully our audiences has enjoyed this conversation as much as Stan and I have. I know I've got pages of notes as I'm sitting here.

Stan Smith: Yeah. Me too. This is awesome stuff.

Laura Click: This has been great. Before we let our listeners go, I just want let everyone know about wonderful little bonus that we have for folks right in time for the holiday as we've got a free eBook about our favorite marketing tools, so we've rounded up all of the tools that we use on a daily basis so you don't have to go and find the best ones. We've done all the work for you. You can get those tools by going to themarketinghuddle.com/subscribe and we'll send you that eBook. You'll also get updated as we add to that eBook and update it on a regular basis. You'll also get notified at every time we publish a new podcast which is every week. This also wraps our show for the day. We want to thank our sponsor S2N Design. You can check them out at S2NDesign.com and also if you want to leave us a review tell us what you think about having Andy on the show, we'd love to know what you think of having him and what you'd think about having folks on a somewhat regular basis. Let us know that in the comments today or got to iTunes and leave us a review. We'd really appreciate it. To do that, go to themarketinghuddle.com/review. We give you a link to go to iTunes and once you've done that we'll send you this awesome leather-bound journal. You'll want to get one. Go to themarketinghuddle.com/review. We'll send that to you for leaving a review. As always, thank you so much for listening. We'll be back next week with another episode of the Marketing Huddle. See you next time.

[Outro Music]

WITH STAN SMITH THEMARKETINGHUDDLE.COM AND LAURA CLICK

Links & Resources:

- ✦ [Orbit Media Studios](#)

- ✦ [How to Setup Google Analytics: 5 Quick Videos That Make it Easy](#) – Orbit Media Studios

- ✦ [How To Improve Your Google Rankings: 9 Steps to Rank Higher Fast Using Analytics](#) – Orbit Media Studios

- ✦ [Google Analytics: 21 Inaccurate Traffic Sources, Setup Mistakes …and Fixes](#) – Orbit Media Studios

- ✦ [Analytics for Teams: How to Collaborate using Google Analytics (plus, a sample agenda for marketing meetings)](#) – Orbit Media Studios

- ✦ [User Flow: Find the Top Path Through Your Website](#)– Orbit Media Studios

- ✦ [Google Analytics Reporting vs. Analysis: Insights From 4 Reports](#)– Orbit Media Studios

- ✦ [Analytics Help: Exclude internal traffic](#) - Google

- ✦ [Analytics Help: Set Up Site Search](#) - Google

- ✦ [Analytics Help: Set Up Cross Domain Tracking](#) - Google

- ✦ [Analytics Help: Install Google Analytics via Google Tag Manager](#) - Google

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- ✦ [Google Analytics Annotations](#) – Google Analytics