

# Google Analytics

# Breakthrough

From Zero to  
Business  
Impact

FERAS ALHLOU · SHIRAZ ASIF  
ERIC FETTMAN

WILEY

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From Zero to Business Impact

Feras Alhlou,  
Shiraz Asif, and Eric Fettman

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## In Memory of Shiraz Asif

When we embarked on *Google Analytics Breakthrough*, we could never have imagined that Shiraz would no longer be with us for the book's publication. He became ill with the flu and later pneumonia in February 2016, and after battling for several weeks in the ICU, he passed away on the morning of Friday, March 18th. Shiraz is survived by his parents, siblings, in-laws, loving wife and four young children.

Those who knew Shiraz personally and professionally understand that he was among the hardest-working colleagues, most generous mentors, and most thoughtful friends. He was always a catalyst for development and change, and his thirst for knowledge benefitted everyone around him.

Shiraz, we miss you and will always remember you. May your honorable character, kindheartedness, and open spirit inspire us all to embrace each day in gratitude for the gift of life.

*Feras Alhlou, Eric Fettman, and the entire E-Nor family*



# Foreword

It seems a little crazy that I'm about to recommend that you pay serious attention to data and the power of analytics by buying this book. Simply because what has been hyped more over the last decade than data? Nothing.

We had the promise of being able to collect all the data about everyone. Web servers were practically switched on with data spewing out. Then we went into the hype cycle of data warehouses and then analytics tools and then the Earth was hypnotized by the mesmerizing power of Big Data. Nothing was safe; everything was going to be cured!

And yet precious little has changed.

It is ironic that we live in the most data-rich environment in mankind's evolution, yet we are barely any smarter than we were when none of this existed 20 years ago.

So what's the problem? And why hype this book?

A part of it is a generational divide in how executives made decisions (experience first, data second—ideally optional). This is changing with time (sadly, the Earth moves, we all get old, we retire, move to a golden retirement home in Florida!).

A part of it was our initial approach of taking all the data we could get our hands on and then puking it like crazy (as if the shower of reports and metrics by themselves could make people smarter). Having failed at changing anything beyond local maxima, I feel that people are ready to stop all the data puking.

A part of it was a lack of a holistic understanding of what's possible, and the ability to create a winning strategy where the objective was not to nuclear bomb the world into changing overnight, but rather have a step-by-step approach customized to your amazing and unique business.

These last two reasons are why I'm so excited about Feras, Shiraz, and Eric's book. They take a soup-to-nuts approach to helping you understand the entire landscape of possibilities (from implementation to data collection to data processing to data analysis to deliver insights). They hold your hand and lead you step-by-baby-step in helping you understand each amazing element of a successful analytics strategy (covering tag management, audience segmentation, dashboards, and experimentation). In each chapter

there is a simple way to figure out exactly where you are today, and then create the next few steps required to go from good to great.

There is almost nothing that's missing from the book that you'll need to create an effective analytics and optimization strategy that drives online and offline business profit. The only ingredient that you'll have to bring, is a deeper understanding of your business strategy (be BFFs with your boss's boss's boss) and a hunger to get better every day.

Data awaits. Carpe diem!

Avinash Kaushik

Author: *Web Analytics 2.0*, *Web Analytics: An Hour a Day*

Digital Marketing Evangelist: Google

# Acknowledgments

The journey of writing *Google Analytics Breakthrough* started long before we signed the agreement with the publisher. The idea had been brewing in our minds for years.

For more than 12 years in our analytics consulting work at E-Nor, we've had the good fortune of working with some incredibly smart people—marketers, analysts, and executives from some of the most recognized brands in the world. It's very fulfilling when, during our discussions, we see that spark in their eyes when they “get” analytics and have the “aha!” moment. To “get” analytics involves asking great, sometimes difficult questions and then challenging yourself to find the answers. We are sincerely grateful to our clients and training participants for encouraging, nudging, and requiring us (sometimes in that order!) to push the envelope—both for the Google Analytics product and for ourselves—to positively impact their organizations.

We also owe a debt of gratitude to industry veterans and “founders” who helped foster a family atmosphere and shape a cooperative and collaborative analytics community. We especially want to recognize Avinash Kaushik for evangelizing analytics to the non-converted, Jim Sterne for being the one and only analytics godfather, Eric Peterson for writing one of the very first books on demystifying analytics, and Brian Clifton, whose books provided much of the technical foundation that we still leverage many years later. We'd also like to recognize the high-cardinality list (data-geek joke) of acquaintances and friends within the industry for being giants whose shoulders we're able to stand on. You have and will continue to inspire us.

A special thank you to the Digital Analytics Association (DAA) community, volunteers, and dedicated staff for all of your countless hours dedicated toward advancing our industry. Of course, we also want to thank our competitors and “frenemies.” You all know who you are, and we still read your blogs and learn from you!

We wanted this book to include tips and advice from the trenches, so we sought out thought leaders and top practitioners to add more color and a diversity of perspective and experience to the book. Thank you to all the guest contributors for their invaluable input.

We also thank the team at our partner Google, namely the Google Analytics and Google Tag Manager teams. From the technical and marketing leadership to product managers,

to Analytics 360 partner managers, sales, and support, to every Googler who has contributed to making GA the amazing product it is today. Few products benefit companies on such a large scale and in such an irreplaceable way. Keep on innovating!

Special thanks go to the Wiley team: Sheck Cho, who helped us refine our vision for the book, Pete Gaughan and Connor O'Brien for their expert guidance and editorial insight, Michael Henton for easing so much detail into the cover design, and Vincent Nordhaus for getting us to the finish line.

We also want to humbly thank our families, loved ones, and friends who have supported us at every step. Ghaidaa and Amina, your sacrifices and support have been invaluable to us as a company, and especially as individuals. We love you and thank you all.

Last, but definitely not least, we literally couldn't have completed this project without the amazing "E-Norians." The culture of teamwork, collaboration, learning, respect, and support that we are fortunate to work in easily makes E-Nor the best company on the planet to work for.

A high-five and thank you to our E-Nor family:

- **John H.** - You were right all along: we are lucky that you deal with us.
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- **Joel** - We don't know what is in the Portland water supply (in those uncovered water reservoirs), but keep drinking, baby. Oh, and bring back the 'stache.
- **Tracy** - You keep us informed and always bring us back to the big picture.
- **Tara** - The mile-high city produced some mile-high talent.
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- **Pat** - Everything is super-sized in Texas, and so is your support and help.
- **Tina** - Too many things to include in one line. You are a rock.
- **Sri** - Content is king, but you'll rule it in 2016 and beyond.
- **John A.** - Our very own Ferrari. How's the beach, buddy? :)
- **Farid** - You can sing and dance, and you have nice hair. You are awesome—no joke.

Of course a very, very special thank-you to **Asmaa** for her dedication and creativity in supporting us with the graphic design and illustrations for the book, and for putting up with our crazy schedule and last-minute requests.

With gratitude,  
Feras, Shiraz, and Eric



# About the Author(s)

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He led his organization to achieve multiple certifications, including Analytics 360 Reseller, Google Cloud Platform, Tableau, Optimizely, Crimson Hexagon, and others.

A Certified Web Analyst and co-chair of the Digital Analytics Association's San Francisco chapter, Feras is also a blogger and a speaker who is quoted in national and international media outlets.

Feras received a Master of Science in Engineering Management from the University of South Florida and a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering from the University of Tulsa. He's married with three children, enjoys skiing, listening to audiobooks, volunteering, and practicing aikido, in which he has earned a second-degree black belt.

**Shiraz Asif** Shiraz Asif is co-founder and VP of Analytics of E-Nor. Shiraz has an unwavering passion for project success and customer satisfaction. He lives by the motto "Knowledge Talks. Wisdom Listens."

Shiraz has extensive background in the areas of solutions architecture and Web/mobile analytics, specializing in advanced analytics implementations, report creation and automation, and integrated data analysis.

As the VP of Analytics, Shiraz has managed complex analytics implementations for governmental agencies and Fortune 500 companies, overseeing the end-to-end process ranging from defining key performance metrics to identifying actionable insights, through to reporting delivery and automation.

**Eric Fettman** Drawing upon a wide range of development and marketing experience, Eric positions analytics within a real-world business and technical framework as Director of Training at E-Nor.

At [googleanalyticstest.com](http://googleanalyticstest.com), which Eric developed, participants have completed more than 100,000 tests. The site has been widely recognized as a leading resource for Google Analytics Individual Qualification (GAIQ) preparation and practical Google Analytics skills training.

Eric has earned certification as a Java Programmer, as well ISO 9000 quality management internal auditor qualification, which strengthened his commitment to customer focus and continuous business performance improvement. He holds a BA with High Honors from Harvard University.

As an educator and a lifelong learner, Eric empowers his students to strive, grow, and excel in all endeavors.

# About the Contributors

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**Vanessa Sabino** transforms data into marketing insights. She started her career as a system analyst in 2000, and in 2010 she jumped at the opportunity to start working with Digital Analytics, which brought together her educational background in business, applied mathematics, and computer science. She gained experience from top Internet companies in Brazil before moving to Canada, where she is now a data analysis lead for Shopify, helping make commerce better for everyone.

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