

GA(4) IYKYK

GA is Both Brilliant and Broken

Hi! I'm Doug.

Doug@DugaDigital.com

DugaDigital.com



DUGA?

Duga means "to help or to produce" in Old Norse English.

- Build
- Create
- Partnership
- Share Knowledge
- GROW

WHY ARE WE HERE?

WHY ARE WE HERE?



GA TIMELINE

2005

URCHIN

Google buys
Urchin

GA TIMELINE

2005

OG GA

URCHIN

Google buys
Urchin

GA

Google
Analytics

GA TIMELINE

2005

OG GA

2012

URCHIN

Google buys
Urchin

GA

Google
Analytics

UA

Most popular
analytics
platform on the
planet.

Welcome GTM

360 announced
in 2016

GA TIMELINE



URCHIN

Google buys
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Welcome GTM

360 announced
in 2016

GA4

WTAF?

GA TIMELINE



URCHIN

GA

UA

Goog
U

Where were you?
What were you doing?
Do you remember this day?

in 2016

GA4

WTAF?

ANALYTICS

Prepare for the future with Google Analytics 4

Mar 16, 2022 · 4 min read



Russell Ketchum

Director, Product Management, Google Analytics

Mixed reactions



WHY ARE WE HERE?

WHY ARE WE HERE?

Complacency

Complacency

- UA was
 - Comfortable
 - Easy

Complacency

- UA was
 - Comfortable
 - Easy
- UA was ALSO
 - Flawed
 - Used poorly
 - Promoted lazy thinking
 - Abused

SCOOP!

I never told you this, right?

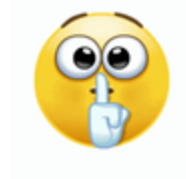


SCOOP!

I never told you this, right?



UA was about to crumble.



SCOOP!

I never told you this, right?

Didn't like the timing of the
move to GA4?

They actually saved you...

So here we are...

GA(4) SUCKS!

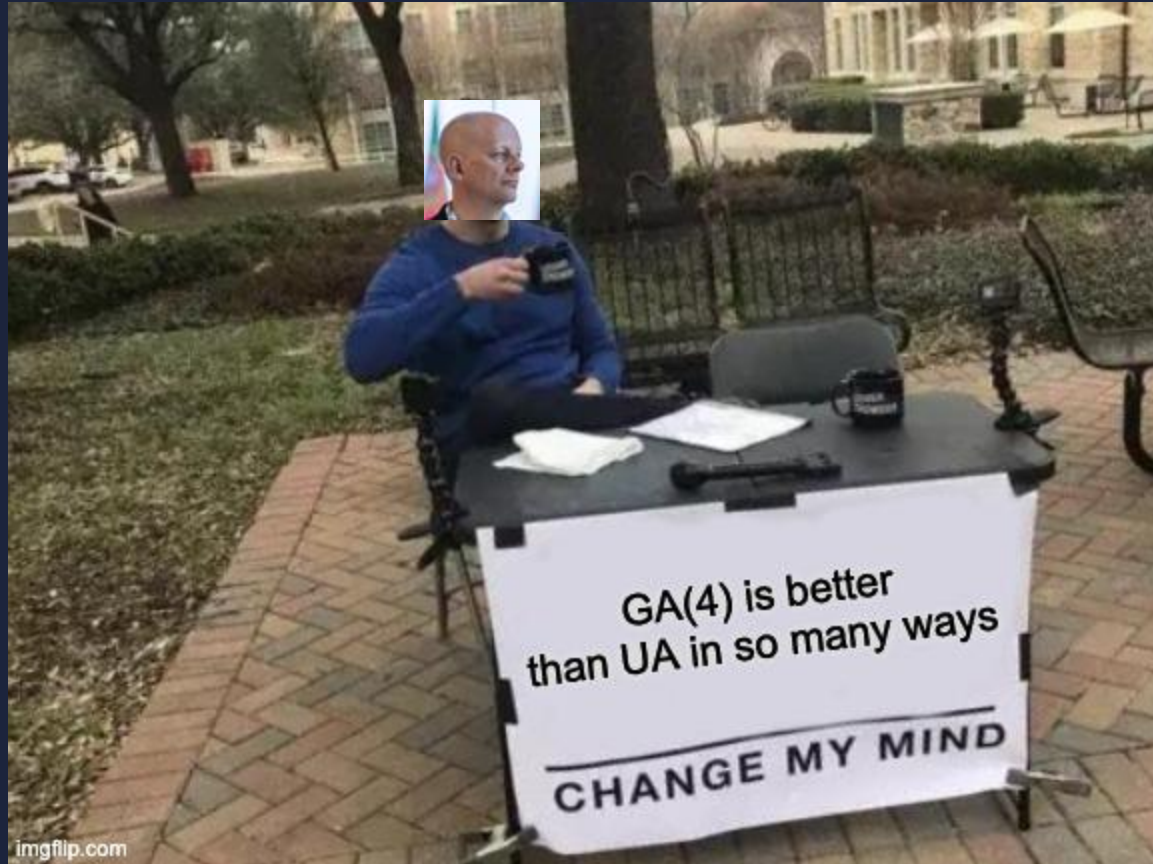
GA(4) SUCKS!

The lazy thinker
opinion

It's not all roses

- Migration Assistant
- gTag injection
- (not set)
- Reporting UI
- HyperLogLog++
- ~~Evangelists?~~

Hold your horses!

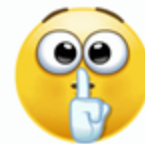


Bashing GA4 became a popular *sport*

- Think like an engineer
- Replace criticism
- Apply critical thought
- Less populism
- More pragmatism

SCOOP!

I never told you this, right?



Love the configurable menu?

Love Looker Studio flexibility?

How far can GA configuration go?

GA is better than ever

a.

Features

Features have returned **better** than UA - moving towards the **non-PII CDP** vision

b.

Future proof infrastructure

Legacy infrastructure replaced with scalable, **streamed** data processing

c.

Community

The partner ecosystem is **stronger** than ever before

GA is better than ever

a.

Features

Features have returned **better** than UA - moving towards the **non-PII CDP** vision

b.

Future proof infrastructure

Legacy infrastructure replaced with scalable, **streamed** data processing

c.

Community

The partner ecosystem is **stronger** than ever before

d.

The secret?

There is no secret - here's how to **flourish** with GA

Why am I so
+ve

BUT

Why I'm still
not 100%
satisfied

Integrations

- Free BQ Integration - **raw**
- Data transfer to BQ - **processed**
- Multiple, and increasing cost data imports
- Highly durable analytics
 - Server side (secure) cookies
 - Google tag gateway [First Party Mode]
 - Unified tagging
- Configurable Menu
- Annotations
- Partner ecosystem reboot
 - Evangelism
 - Education
 - Support
 - Growth

Integ

September 17, 2025

Import cost data from Snap ads

You can now import cost data from Snap through a seamless integration with Google Analytics. This enables advertisers to automatically track Snap cost data within Google Analytics. [Learn more about importing cost data from Snap Ads.](#)

○ Unified tagging

July 21, 2025

Import cost data from Reddit Ads

You can now import cost data from Reddit through a seamless integration with Google Analytics. This enables advertisers to automatically track Reddit cost data within Google Analytics. [Learn more about importing cost data from Reddit Ads.](#)

○ Growth

**Reliable data
collection**

Infrastructure

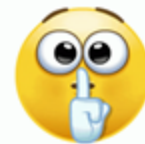
Privacy first

**Regulatory
compliance**

- Free BQ Integration - raw
- Data transfer to BQ - **processed**
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SCOOP!

I never told you this, right?



FACT: GA4 Infrastructure has more power

THOUGHT: What does that mean for data processing?

SCOOP!

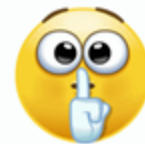
I never told you this, right?



Wouldn't it be **awesome** if processing was real time?

SCOOP!

I never told you this, right?



Wouldn't it be **awesome** if processing was real time?

And data was processed and ready for 08:00 AM?

UI Wins

If you're not
using these,
you're missing
out

- Free BQ Integration - raw
- Data transfer to BQ - **processed**
- Multiple, and increasing cost data imports
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- **Annotations**
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 - Growth

Community

Yes, we DO
miss G+!

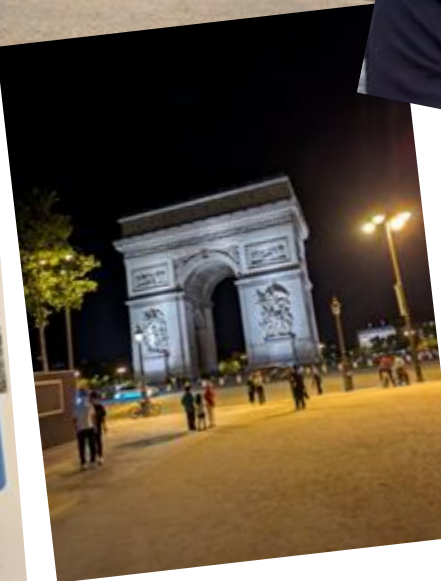
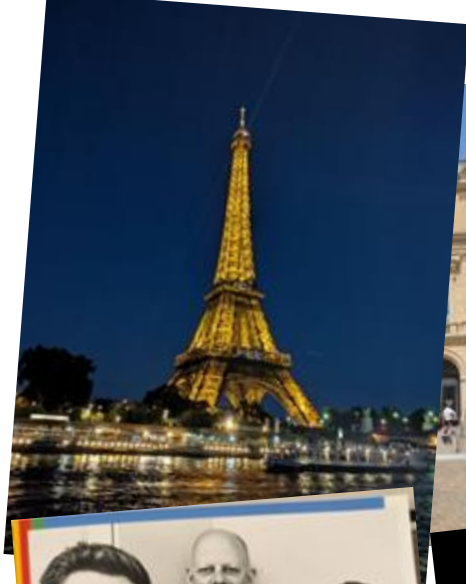
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Duga team on
tour...

The sights

The summit

The team



Why am I so
+ve

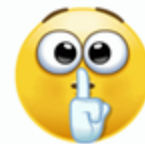
BUT

Why I'm still
not 100%
satisfied

- Listening:
 - Qualitative feedback
 - Google Tags are confusing
 - Quantitative feedback
 - GA uses GA on GA
 - Feature adoption
 - Even comparing new GA with old UA features

SCOOP!

I never told you this, right?



FACT: Consent data is in BQ

VISION: Consent as a dimension

TIME FOR OUTRAGE!

May 2025

They made a
change

OUTRAGE!

ANALYTICS

Google Analytics 4 Cookie Format Change: From GS1 to GS2 Explained

LinkedIn · David Vallejo
170+ reactions · 2 months ago

David Vallejo - Google Analytics 4 Cookie Format Change

Google has recently updated the format of the Google Analytics stream cookie. In this post, we'll explore what exactly has changed (if anything), the possible ...

LinkedIn · TRKKN
60+ reactions · 2 months ago

Google Analytics cookie format has changed | TRKKN

Heads up: Google Analytics cookie format has changed if you're extracting the session_id from the _ga_MEASUREMENT_ID cookie, things might ...

LinkedIn · Doug Hall
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Doug Hall - Google Changed a Cookie Format!

BREAKING: Google Changed a Cookie Format! If your feed looks anything like mine, you'd think Google just announced the end of digital ...

LinkedIn · Alberte T.
2 reactions · 2 months ago

Google changed GA4 cookie format. Check your setup now.

Google changed the GA4 cookies format without warning. Check your setup! Google has quietly changed the format of the GA4 cookie ...

LinkedIn · Mohsen Dehghan Dehnavi
60+ reactions · 2 months ago

Google Analytics 4 Cookie Format Changes

Google Analytics 4 Cookie Format Changes – What You Need to Know GA4 continues to evolve, and its cookie format updates could impact how you ...

May 2025

They made a
change

OUTRAGE!

Guilty as charged...

ANALYTICS

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They listened

They listened

August 2025

readAnalyticsStorage

Release notes

Release notes for Google Tag Manager

August 1, 2025

New custom template JavaScript API to read Google Analytics client and session cookies

The `readAnalyticsStorage` sandbox API is now available. This client-side JavaScript API allows developers to read client and session IDs in a custom template. Previously, developers relied on reverse-engineering or custom parsers to understand Google-set cookie formats, which wasn't a reliable approach. It was prone to breaking whenever Google Analytics updated its cookie formats.

Now, the `readAnalyticsStorage` API allows Tag Manager users to safely read the necessary cookie parts, future-proofing their approach and preventing interruptions from format updates. Learn more about [Custom template APIs](#).

```
const readAnalyticsStorage = require('readAnalyticsStorage');

const cookieOptions = {
  cookie_prefix: "xyz",
  cookie_domain: "google.com",
  cookie_path: "/",
};

readAnalyticsStorage(cookieOptions);
```

Why am I so
+ve

BUT

Why I'm still
not 100%
satisfied

- FPM
- Quickly rebranded to Google Tag Gateway
 - Data volume up 11%
 - Google observation
 - SME using GTG

Why am I so
+ve

BUT

Why I'm still
not 100%
satisfied

- Serve analytics from yoursite.com rather than google-analytics.com
- First party is always better
 - CDN
 - OR
 - sGTM

Why am I so
+ve

BUT

Why I'm still
not 100%
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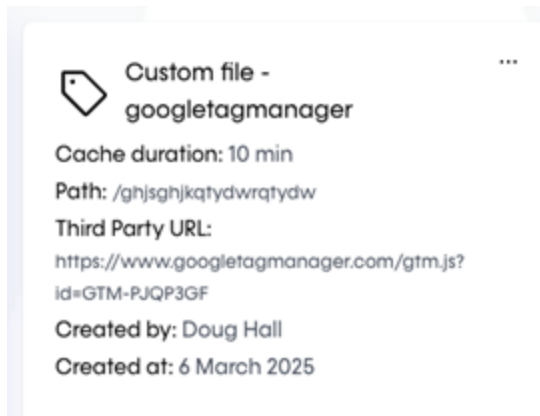
- BUT
- This is **not** without risk
- It's technical! ([Team Simmer](#))



Set-up quickly without code

Once we've checked that your site uses a compatible content delivery network (CDN), setup only takes a few moments and requires no changes to your tag code. You'll need admin access to your CDN and the Google tag.

- There are alternatives



BUZZWORD BINGO!

Why I'm still Excited for the future

- AI is having massive impact on SEO
- It's coming to analytics
 - Analysis overviews
 - Anomaly detection
- MCP server for analysis and administration

SCOOP!

I never told you this, right?



Wouldn't it be **awesome** if the AI learnt what is important to you, and your business?



SCOOP!

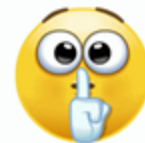
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Wouldn't it be **awesome** if the AI learnt what is important to you, and your business?

Wouldn't it be awesome if the AI can diagnose configuration problems?

SCOOP!

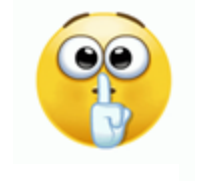
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Wouldn't it be **awesome** if the AI learnt what is important to you, and your business?

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What do you think to an **agent** data stream?
Measure MCP server usage...?



SCOOP!

How will this be measured?

Shopify merchants will soon be able to sell products through ChatGPT

Chatbot can access inventory sold using Canadian e-commerce giant's software

The Canadian Press · Posted: Sep 29, 2025 3:58 PM EDT | Last Updated: September 29

How to win with GA

But first, a
quick
question...

How do you
know there's a
pilot in the
room?

How do you
know there's a
pilot in the
room?

They'll tell you...



Easy to fly.

DH 82 Tiger Moth



Easy to fly.

Hard to fly well.

DH 82 Tiger Moth



GA IS EASY TO DO

But hard to do well

Is there a secret?

What's the way forward?

Don't Improvise

- Follow the docs
- Stay in lane
- Don't be weird

Don't Improvise

- Follow the docs
- Stay in lane
- Don't be weird



Analytics mania



Don't Regress/Reengineer

- GA(4) != UA
- No more “Category, Action, Label”
 - They're gone
 - Let them go

GA(4) != UA

Event Name 

{{GG - Event Category}}

Event Parameters

Event Parameter

Value

EventAction

{{GG - Event Action}}

EventLabel

{{GG - Event Label}}

Recommended events.

Recommended events. Why?

Recommended events. Why?

Recommended events are events that are **recommended** for a good reason

Recommended events are events that are recommended for a good reason

- They power reports
- Expected metrics and dimensions
- Convention matters
 - Consistency
 - Onboarding
 - Debugging

Convention over configuration

Convention over configuration (also known as coding by convention) is a software design paradigm used by software frameworks that attempts to **decrease the number of decisions** that a developer using the framework is required to make **without necessarily losing flexibility** and don't repeat yourself (DRY) principles.[1]

What's wrong here?

- attempt_purchase
- secure_checkout
- transaction
- add_to_basket
- discount
- return
- pdp_pageview
- plp_pageview
- complete_checkout
- click_item
- remove_from_basket

What are these so important?

- add_payment_info
- add_shipping_info
- add_to_cart
- add_to_wishlist
- begin_checkout
- purchase
- refund
- remove_from_cart
- select_item
- select_promotion
- view_cart
- view_item
- view_item_list
- view_promotion

Non-standard events make these useless

- add_payment_info
- add_shipping_info
- add_to_cart

More Settings

Ecommerce

☒ Send Ecommerce data

Data source

Data Layer

Monetisation

Overview

E-commerce purchases

Purchase journey

Checkout journey

Promotions

Transactions: Transaction ID

- select_item
- select_promotion
- view_cart
- view_item
- view_item_list
- view_promotion

Less whining, more fixing

- Innovate
- Turn situations into problems
- This was the way with UA
- Change isn't just possible, it's obvious

Simplify client side.

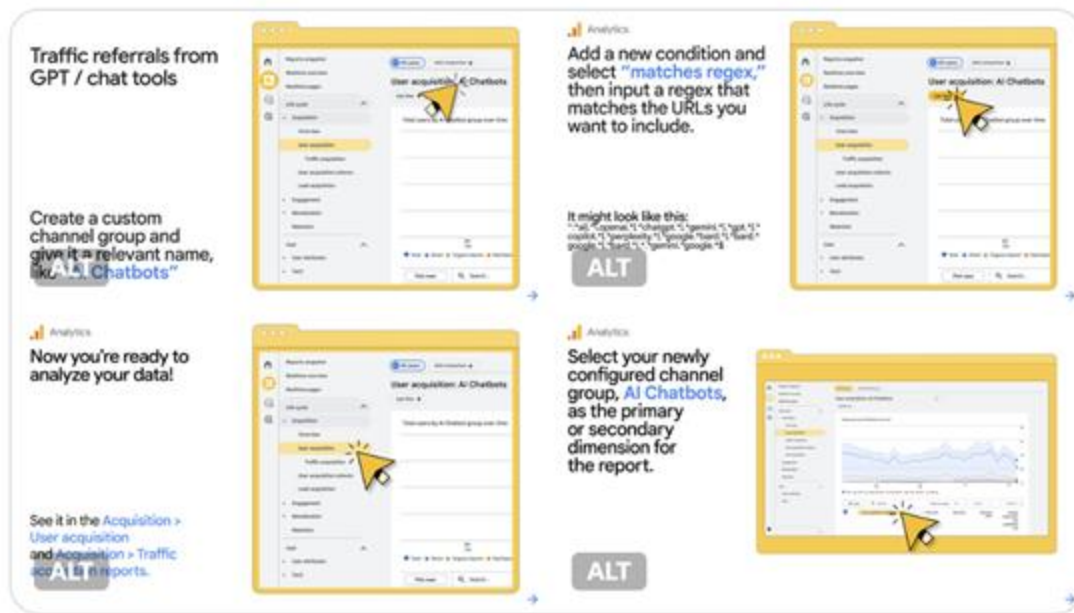
Leverage server side power.

Innovate using server side.

- **Adaptability**
- Data enrichment
- Data redaction
- Innovation



We've laid out the steps for you here: goo.gle/3HhcCBv



Simplify client side.

Leverage server side power.

Innovate using server side.

- Adaptability
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- Innovation

Fixing ecom data collection in GA4

Transformation Configuration

Transformation Type



Augment event

Add or modify event data values

Parameters to Augment ⓘ

Name

Value

items

{{Ecom Attributor - Items array}}

Matching Conditions

This transformation applies when all conditions are met:

Event Name matches RegEx `^(select_item|view_item|add_to_cart|remove_from_cart|add_t...`

Affected Tags

Allow transformation to affect

Some Tags

Included Tag Types



Google Analytics: GA4

Google Analytics

Notes

This Transformation is part of Ecom Attributor custom solution. Reference: <https://github.com/google/ga4-ecom-attributor>

Not official Google TREASURE

<https://github.com/google-marketing-solutions/>



Google Marketing Solutions

Open source projects related to Google Ads, Google Marketing Platform and Google Ad Manager

460 followers

<https://youtu.be/HcjR6ZngQcw>

sGTM Pantheon

- Accessing cloud-based customer, product, and business data in real time
- Bidding using advanced or secret values in marketing platforms
- Accessing data from external APIs (e.g. reCAPTCHA)
- Realtime website personalisation & conversion rate optimisation
- Streamlining of data pipelines
- Improved data collection
- Advanced analytics & reporting using cloud databases

Simplify client side.

Leverage server side power.

Innovate using server side.

- Adaptability
- Data enrichment
- **Data redaction**
- Innovation

PII Protection

Data redaction

Redact data

Redact specific data collected by website events before it's sent from your website to Google Analytics. Redacted values will show up as '(redacted)'. [Learn more about data redaction](#)

Choose what to redact

Email

Redact most email addresses from event data



URL query parameters ⓘ

Redact URL query parameters from specific event parameters



To redact a query parameter's value from URLs, specify one or more query parameter keys to redact.

Important: URL query parameter redaction only applies to the following event parameters: page_location, page_referrer, page_path, link_url, video_url, form_destination.

Enter up to 30 query parameters (not case sensitive)

search_keywordⓧ

Simplify client side.

Leverage server side power.

Innovate using server side.

- Adaptability
- Data enrichment
- Data redaction
- **Innovation**

Friends don't
let friends
write code
when they
don't have to

<https://github.com/stape-io>

 [facebook-tag](#) Public

Facebook tag for Google Tag Manager Server Side

● Smarty ☆ 42 🍷 23

 [tiktok-tag](#) Public

TikTok Events API Tag for Google Tag Manager Server Side

● Smarty ☆ 15 🍷 5

 [data-client](#) Public

Data Client for Google Tag Manager Server Side

● Smarty ☆ 58 🍷 19

 [data-tag](#) Public

Data Tag for Google Tag Manager WEB Container

● Smarty ☆ 22 🍷 15

 [json-http-request-tag](#) Public

JSON HTTP Request Tag for Google Tag Manager Server Side

● Smarty ☆ 8 🍷 5

 [ga4-advanced-tag](#) Public

GA4 Advanced tag for Google Tag Manager Server Side

● Smarty ☆ 19

Improved GA4 tag template:

<https://github.com/webmechanix/gtm-improved-ga4>



WebMechanix

A full-service digital marketing agency specializing in paid search/social advertising and custom WordPress theme design and development.

7 followers
 United States of America
 <https://www.webmechanix.com>
[@WebMechanix](#)

Tag Type



Improved GA4

WebMechanix

Tag permissions

Tag Type

Event

Event Name



Send to Specific Tags or Groups

You may specify one or more destinations for this event data to be sent. These can be tag IDs or groups as defined inside your Improved GA4 config tag types. **By default events will be sent to all ImprovedGA4 tags configured on the page.**





Less whining, more fixing

How **NOT** to request change



How to request change

a. **Context**

Explain the situation - what are you trying to do and why GA doesn't enable this

b. **Describe the required change**

I need feature X for many many many clients to do this thing.

c. **Value**

If I can't do this, I can't spend vast \$\$\$\$\$\$\$ on Google Ads

WHY ARE WE HERE?



GA is better than ever

a.

Features

The **non-PII CDP** vision. Innovate where you find gaps.

b.

Future proof infrastructure

Streaming data processing that is legal, durable, and robust

c.

Community

GET IN THERE. Contribute. Share. GROW

d.

The secret?

There is no secret. Be creative. Be accurate. Use standards.

THANKS!

Doug@DugaDigital.com

DugaDigital.com

