

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE · ANALYTICS

WHAT'S A KEY EVENT IN GA4, AND WHICH ONES SHOULD YOU TRACK?

A key event is an action on your website that matters to your business: an enquiry, a call, a booking, a sale. Marking them in Google Analytics 4 turns a pile of visitor numbers into an answer to the question that counts: which marketing brings in customers?

By **Jack Easterbrook** 8 steps 7 min read Updated September 2026



BEFORE YOU START

- ☐ Google Analytics 4 installed and collecting data (our GA4 guide covers this)
- ☐ Editor access to your GA4 property
- ☐ A list of the website actions that make you money
- ☐ Optional: Google Tag Manager, for tracking phone and email clicks

Good to know: Key events used to be called conversions in GA4. Google renamed them in 2024. Google Ads still calls them conversions, and you can import your GA4 key events straight into Ads.

THE STEPS TICK EACH ONE OFF AS YOU GO

1

List what counts as a win

Start with the actions that lead to money: enquiry form sent, phone number tapped, booking made, purchase completed, quote requested. Aim for a handful. If everything's a key event, nothing is.



2

See what GA4 already tracks

Go to Admin → Data display → Events. With enhanced measurement on, GA4 already records page views, scrolls, outbound clicks, file downloads and form interactions. Shops set up through Shopify's or WooCommerce's Google integrations usually send a purchase event too.



3

Track form enquiries

The most reliable way is a thank-you page. Send people to one (like /thank-you) after they submit your form, then create an event for views of it: Admin → Data display → Events → Create event, where page_location contains /thank-you. GA4's automatic form_submit event doesn't suit every form plugin, so test it before relying on it.



4

Track phone and email clicks

GA4 doesn't track taps on phone numbers and email addresses out of the box. The simplest route is Google Tag Manager: a click trigger for links starting tel: or mailto:, sending an event like phone_click or email_click. Your web developer can set it up quickly.



5

Mark them as key events

Once an event has data, go to Admin → Data display → Events and click the star next to it. For an event you're creating, switch on Mark as key event as you create it. GA4 marks purchase as a key event for you.



DONE

6

Test before you trust it

Send your own test enquiry and tap your own phone number, then check Reports → Realtime to watch the events come in. Once you're happy, make sure your own visits are filtered out as internal traffic.



DONE

7

See which channels bring them

In Reports → Acquisition → Traffic acquisition, look at the key events column (you can pick a single key event) to see which channels bring enquiries, not just visits.



DONE

8

Share them with Google Ads

If you run Google Ads, link your GA4 property and create Ads conversions from your key events, so Google optimises towards real enquiries rather than clicks.



DONE

EVENTS VS KEY EVENTS

Every interaction GA4 records is an event: a page view, a scroll, a click. Key events are the few you tell GA4 matter most. Marking one doesn't change what's collected, it changes what GA4 highlights, so you can see which channels, pages and campaigns lead to results.

BEST-PRACTICE TIPS

A

Fewer is better

Three to five solid key events beat twenty vague ones. GA4 allows up to 30, but you won't need that many.

K

Name them clearly

Pick names you'll understand in a year, like generate_lead or phone_click. Use Google's recommended event names where they fit.

Q

Scrolls aren't sales

Page views and scroll depth are useful, but they aren't key events. Save the star for actions that lead to money.

J

Give leads a value

If you know roughly what an enquiry is worth, add a default value. It makes comparing channels much easier.

10

Once per session for leads

Set enquiry key events to count once per session, so one keen customer sending the form twice doesn't count double.

9

Retest after site changes

New form plugin, thank-you page or theme? Test your key events again. Website changes quietly break tracking all the time.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERED

Are key events the same as conversions?

In GA4, yes: same idea, new name. Google Ads still calls them conversions, and you can create Ads conversions from your GA4 key events.

Do I need Google Tag Manager?

Not for the basics. Thank-you page tracking can be set up inside GA4. Tag Manager makes phone and email click tracking much easier, though.

Why don't the numbers match my inbox?

Cookie consent choices and ad blockers mean GA4 won't see every enquiry. Use it to compare trends and channels, not as an exact count.

How many key events can I have?

Standard GA4 properties allow up to 30. Most small businesses only need a handful.



Written by Jack Easterbrook

Founder of JAE Digital in Weston-super-Mare. 10+ years in digital marketing, Google Ads Partner and Shopify Partner.

Sources

- Mark events as key events (Analytics Help): <https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/13128484>
- Enhanced measurement events (Analytics Help): <https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/9216061>

The online version of this guide, with any updates, is at jaedigital.co.uk/advice/ga4-key-events/.

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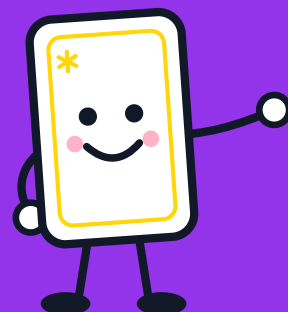
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