

## CASE STUDY

# Cowan's Auctions Leverages Google Analytics for Scalability and Custom Insights

Cowan's Auctions is an innovative auction house specializing in art, historical Americana, and antique firearms. Cowan's has attracted more buyers to these specialty auctions by conducting bidding at its auction house, by phone, and online simultaneously. The firm's strategy frequently attracts more than 1,000 participants per auction and has driven annual sales to nearly \$20 million.

### More success requires more insight

Cowan's increasingly popular online presence and growing number of online bidders posed a new measurement challenge. While campaigns were clearly bringing users to the site, standard site analytics did not allow marketing to track how users interacted with Cowan's bidding functionality. In order to continually optimize, the marketing team wanted to understand both which marketing efforts were attracting users and which items those users bid on as a result.

Standard analytics tools left the firm struggling to connect marketing investments to resulting successes. Cowan's needed more visibility both to determine which auctions to promote across its mix of marketing channels and to inform personalized email campaigns.

"Placing ads is now a science with measurable results. We understand where to advertise and which display ads work. We don't feel like we're throwing spaghetti on the wall anymore. People click, and we measure."

—Reid Sikes, VP of Marketing,  
Cowan's Auction House



### About Cowan's Auctions

- Cowan's Auctions specializes in art, historical Americana, and antique firearms.
- [www.cowanauctions.com](http://www.cowanauctions.com)

### About InfoTrust

- InfoTrust helps businesses and organizations analyze and improve their digital marketing efforts. InfoTrust is a Google Analytics Certified Partner and a Google Analytics Premium Reseller.
- [www.infotrusted.com](http://www.infotrusted.com)

### Goals

- Determine which campaigns are driving bids
- Understand the customer journey through the bidding process
- Bring reporting under one platform

### Approach

- Migrated all web tracking to Google Tag Manager
- Deployed custom dimensions and metrics to track all aspects of online bidding
- Optimized marketing strategy based on real-time bidding data

### Results

- 42% increase in online bidding in the first 30 days following implementation
- 163% increase in bids and 185% increase in bid value via strategic decisions informed by Google Analytics

### Driving success requires even more customer insight

In partnership with Google Analytics Certified Partner, InfoTrust, Cowan’s implemented a robust and highly customized configuration of Google Analytics. Migrating all web tracking to Google Tag Manager and upgrading to Universal Analytics paved the way for new data insights and enterprise scalability as Cowan’s grows.

Google Analytics enabled InfoTrust to set custom dimensions and metrics to track every detail of Cowan’s online bidding functionality. The team also deployed new user demographic and interest reports within Universal Analytics to assess display advertising effectiveness.

### Easy-to-read data offers actionability

With Google Analytics, InfoTrust was able to leverage custom reports and dashboards, making it easy for Cowan’s marketing and leadership teams to get actionable insights from the new analytics. Cowan’s marketing team can now keep tabs on how marketing investments impact online bidding with quick, accurate, and customized reports. From comparing bidding activity across channels to confirming the best site placement for display ads, the team is able to assess a wide range of marketing activities, all in one place.

“Our new Google Analytics data lets us know how effective our digital advertising is. Who clicked on an ad, who came to our site, did they place a bid for an auction item, and how much was the bid?”

—Reid Sikes, VP of Marketing, Cowan’s Auction House

Default Channel Grouping	Sessions	Users	New Users	Absentee Bid Placed (Goal 1 Conversion Rate)	Timed Bid Places (Goal 11 Conversion Rate)	Number of Bids	Bid Amount
	<b>58,497</b> % of Total: 100.00% (58,497)	<b>43,577</b> % of Total: 100.00% (43,577)	<b>37,385</b> % of Total: 100.00% (37,385)	<b>0.44%</b> Avg for View: 0.44% (0.00%)	<b>0.00%</b> Avg for View: 0.00% (0.00%)	<b>1,160</b> % of Total: 100.00% (1,160)	<b>3,038,325</b> % of Total: 100.00% (3,038,325)
1. Organic Search	<b>34,532 (59.03%)</b>	<b>26,958 (60.93%)</b>	<b>23,312 (62.36%)</b>	<b>0.23%</b>	<b>0.00%</b>	<b>403 (34.74%)</b>	<b>2,450,065 (80.64%)</b>
2. Direct	<b>10,511 (17.97%)</b>	<b>7,385 (16.69%)</b>	<b>6,461 (17.28%)</b>	<b>0.55%</b>	<b>0.00%</b>	<b>224 (19.31%)</b>	<b>197,055 (6.49%)</b>
3. Email	<b>5,970 (10.21%)</b>	<b>3,628 (8.20%)</b>	<b>2,109 (5.64%)</b>	<b>1.61%</b>	<b>0.00%</b>	<b>404 (34.83%)</b>	<b>274,620 (9.04%)</b>
4. Referral	<b>4,392 (7.51%)</b>	<b>3,634 (8.21%)</b>	<b>3,144 (8.41%)</b>	<b>0.32%</b>	<b>0.00%</b>	<b>71 (6.12%)</b>	<b>78,610 (2.59%)</b>
5. Social	<b>2,260 (3.86%)</b>	<b>1,953 (4.41%)</b>	<b>1,725 (4.61%)</b>	<b>0.40%</b>	<b>0.00%</b>	<b>58 (5.00%)</b>	<b>37,975 (1.25%)</b>
6. Display	<b>625 (1.07%)</b>	<b>522 (1.18%)</b>	<b>500 (1.34%)</b>	<b>0.00%</b>	<b>0.00%</b>	<b>0 (0.00%)</b>	<b>0 (0.00%)</b>
7. (Other)	<b>207 (0.35%)</b>	<b>163 (0.37%)</b>	<b>134 (0.36%)</b>	<b>0.00%</b>	<b>0.00%</b>	<b>0 (0.00%)</b>	<b>0 (0.00%)</b>

This report offers a quick view of bidding generated by marketing investments across channels.

## More insight drives more strategic decision-making

Cowan's results have galvanized the company around the power of analytics. With customized and granular visibility into customer behavior provided by Google Analytics, Cowan's marketing team was able to drive a 42% increase in online bidding in the first 30 days following implementation.

Top Items - Absentee Bids		
Item ID	Number of Bids	Bid Amount
163681	13	21,640
160360	12	25,100
165645	12	77,000
166744	12	3,900
164618	11	12,900
164843	11	11,000
165231	10	2,000
166561	10	7,400
166895	10	17,400
158208	9	18,150

In the second month of use, Cowan's team achieved a 163% increase in bids and a 185% increase in bid value via strategic decisions informed by Google Analytics. In partnership with InfoTrust, the in-house marketing team hopes to continue this trajectory by taking strategic action based on the newly visible data.

With clearer marketing impact data under their belts, Cowan and InfoTrust can continue to look for new and better ways to engage with their users.

## About Google Analytics

Google Analytics is the enterprise-class analytics solution that gives companies rich insights into their digital audiences and marketing effectiveness. With features that are powerful, flexible, and easy-to-use, companies large and small can measure engagement to create more effective marketing initiatives, improve user experience, and optimize digital strategies. Sophisticated conversion attribution and experimentation tools help savvy marketers determine the best allocation of media and resources to drive results. For more information, visit [google.com/analytics](http://google.com/analytics).