Summary:

- **The webinar provided an introduction to Looker Studio, a free data visualization and reporting tool from Google.**
- **The presenters walked through how to connect Looker Studio to a Google Analytics 4 (GA4) data source and build a report showing total users from the city of Chicago over the last 30 days and the pages they visited.**
- **Key features highlighted were Looker Studio's flexibility to use any GA4 dimensions and metrics, setting default date ranges, and adding filters.**
- **The presenters mentioned a Part 2 webinar in December that will cover more advanced Looker Studio reporting capabilities.**

Key Takeaways:

1. **Looker Studio provides a free, powerful, and flexible reporting tool to visualize GA4 data.**
2. **It allows you to easily build custom reports using any GA4 dimensions and metrics.**
3. **Setting default date ranges and adding filters helps provide important context for reports.**
4. **The Part 2 webinar will cover more advanced Looker Studio features like line charts, pie charts, and multi-page reports.**

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Joanna Jackson: Hello, everyone! My name is Joanna Jackson. My pronouns are she/her and I am a Caucasian female presented person with a blonde hair and wearing a funky collared shirt today. So thank you so much for coming to Looker Studio for Beginners Part One. I said this at the beginning, but just as a few more people are joining - If you have any questions for the speakers, please submit them in the Q&A channel. We'll address as many as we can. For general comments, share those in the Chat channel. If there's anything that we don't cover today that you would like to learn more about. Let us know, and we will cover it in Part 2. Coming a little bit later this year at the beginning of December.

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Joanna Jackson: Today's presentation will have audio captions, and the session is being recorded. Next week we'll provide a human corrected transcript and a link to the recording for you to view as well. Immediately after the presentation we are going to share today's deck. Thank you all so much again for attending. We're so excited. You're here over to you, Cam, and Nick!

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00:03:57.400 --> 00:04:21.300
Cameron Panice: All right. Hello, everyone. My name is Cameron Panice. My pronouns are he/him. I'm a male presenting person. And here at Sandstorm Design I'm a Digital Strategist. So I typically fill your traditional Product Owner/Project Manager role, but a lot of what I do, what I'm

passionate about and what we're going to be talking about today is going to be web analytics, reporting, capturing and specifically Looker Studio today. So excited to walk through what we've got. And I also have Nick with me here as well. Nick, if you want to go next.

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Nick Meshes (he/him): Hi, thank you. Thank you, Cam. My name is Nick Meshes. My pronouns are he/him. I'm a male presenting Caucasian. I'm bald with a handlebar mustache. I'm wearing a headset and a green shirt. As the Senior Director of Technology, my role is some part development and software architecture and website architecture, and some part analytics. And a lot of that is the technical aspects of making sure your websites work well with the analytics platforms like GA4.

Cameron Panice: Excellent. And, Nick, why don't you tell the folks a little bit about Sandstorm who we are.

Nick Meshes (he/him): Yeah. So Sandstorm has been around for over 25 years. We are officially based in Chicago, but we have folks all over the United States of America. We've been working with associations, nonprofits, healthcare associations for 15+ years. We do have clients that have been going back that long.We are very much into usability. And we have over 4,600 hours of user research. So we actually do sit down to user research.Even to this moment, I know team members are currently doing a usability study at this very moment for another project. We have accessibility certified folks in house. So building a website or web application that's fully accessible. We are experts in that area as well as expertise in DEIB: diversity, equity, inclusion belonging, and we were founded by Sandy Marcico. This is a women owned certified business.

Cameron Panice: Excellent. Thank you very much, Nick. Okay. So the crux of the issue, the reason that we're here today, if you have struggled with GA4, you're not alone. In a recent survey, 76% of respondents said that they have significantly struggled with GA4. The sort of change in philosophy from the old version of analytics to new, has thrown a lot of people for a loop, and common things that we hear are the loss of "views" being a struggle. There's a lot of new events that come out of the box in GA4 that folks don't understand how they work. They muddy up the reporting that they're seeing. So here at Sandstorm, we had some difficulties as well when we migrated, and we were looking for a solution that would solve all of our problems. And we found one in what was previously called Google Data Studio, but is now called Looker Studio.

We now use Looker Studio, basically for all of our reporting, not just for Google analytics, but for a myriad of other things as well. Looker Studio, in a nutshell, is a flexible reporting data visualization platform that integrates not only with Google products, which is what we'll be talking about today, but also search console ads and other 3rd party platforms. You can even upload CSVs to them, which makes it a very powerful tool. Nick, I know I think you have some.

Nick Meshes (he/him): Yeah, I did wanna call out an example today. We may even have that client in this meeting right now. But we've used it in the past when it was called Google Data

Studio, we're actually exploring, rebuilding and adding additional reports today in Looker Studio. This is a healthcare organization. And so we're using that information to analyze their healthcare provider data and their patient data.

Another example. Also, there's a higher education organization that is looking at replacing their scantron system. They actually have replaced their scantron system with their own home built system, if you remember scantrons or use them. Recently, if you voted recently, you just used a scantron like system. They want to be able to take that data, put it into something like an Excel spreadsheet, Google sheets or CSV and then use Looker Studio to then analyze their scantron student data.

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Cameron Panice: Yeah, so a very powerful tool. And we're going to focus specifically on GA4 today getting a data source connected and building a basic but powerful report, so that you can kind of get your feet wet. Understand the lay of the land. Then from there start to explore on your own. As mentioned, we have a part 2 webinar coming up that will talk about some of the more fancier bells and whistles. But we want to make sure you leave here with a basic lay of the land and are able to start to get some of that data that's hard to pull out of GA4 into a report in Looker Studio.

So we're going to be running a live demo today. And we're going to be using a data set that Google provides called the Google Web Store. This is example data that if you've messed around in GA4 for any significant time, you probably have this example data available to you in GA4. If you don't, you can add it to your GA4 account using the help desk here, so I will share this in the chat right now.

If you scroll down and you click on this Google Analytics for "Property Group", Google Merchandise Store Web Data link. This will add the test data to your GA4 account. It's not going to interfere with any existing properties that you have. This is just a data source that Google provides to allow for things exactly like this. So if you want to follow along exactly with what we're doing today. Make sure you visit that link and add this test data.

I believe in a email prior to this webinar as well, we expressed that Looker Studio is free to use, but it does require you to have a Gmail account. But you're going to need to log in and sign up with an account that's associated with Gmail. And if you are planning on using your own GA4 data watching along at home while we walk through our example, you want to make sure that you have at least editor permissions to that GA4 dataset. Otherwise, you won't be able to pull it in. So if you're following along at home, not able to see your data set, you're going to want to get in contact with people on your end who manage your GA4 and make sure they update your permissions.

As mentioned, we're going to walk through a live demo, and we've got a short amount of time, so we're going to try to run through it pretty quick. If you have any questions, Joanna and Nick,

of course, are standing by in the chat. They will route your questions, and we hope to have some time at the end to resolve any questions, and yeah, go from there.

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Cameron Panice: Alright, so I will go ahead and get started with the live demo. The 1st thing we're going to need to do, of course, is to get to Looker Studio itself. That can be done with a simple Google search. And you'll be brought to this link here: Lookerstudio.google.com. Now, if you haven't signed up before this webinar, you'll probably be brought to a landing page with a blue button that says get started, or something equivalent to that. Once you've signed up and provided some information, you'll be brought to a screen that looks like this, and your screen will likely look a little bit different than mine. I've got some reports for some of our clients appearing here. You'll probably see a more blank version of this screen. But the the basics will be the same. And the way that we start creating a report, we can either start with a template or we can create a brand new one for today's example.

We want to show you how to create a report from scratch. So I'm gonna click on this "create" button here. And then I'm gonna click on "report". This will open up a dialog box that then allows us to create a connection to a data source and what you can start to see on my screen. Here are all the different 1st party connectors that Google provides for free for you to use in Looker studio. So of course, there's the Google Analytics Connector. You can see down here, there's the CSV file connector. So again, there's a lot of things you can do with this platform. But just for now we're going to focus on the Google Analytics Connector. This is a dynamic list based on which connectors you use most frequently. So if you're not seeing "Google Analytics" here at the top, like I am, you can use this search bar here and just search for "Google Analytics".

And then, you see, our list will filter down. There are 2 sections here: the Google Connectors and the Partner Connectors. You want to make sure you're using the Google Connector for this example, any of these Google Connectors are free to use free to experiment with and as of right now don't incur any sort of cost. There are also this large library of 3rd party partner connectors which do things a little bit differently, perhaps connect to a data source that Google has not built a proprietary connector for. Yet. You want to make sure. For this example, you're using the Google Connector because those 3rd party connectors often incur a cost. They're free to try, then at a certain point, your trial experience tends to end, and then you have to pay. But, if you use the Google Connector or any of the 1st party connectors, there's no cost. So I'm going to click on Google Analytics. And this will pull in all of the accounts in which I have editor permissions for including that demo account that we were talking about. So I'm going to click on the demo account that's going to bring up the list of properties within that account in GA4.For our example, I'm going to add the Google Merch shop. So I'm just going to click it this blue button highlights and then I'm going to click "Add". It's going to think about it for a minute, and then this dialog box will appear. This is just a data privacy notice that is saying much like an Excel spreadsheet or a Google Doc. Anyone you share this report with will be able to download a version, an offline version of the report so similar to your Excel spreadsheets or your Google slides. Make sure the people that you're sharing this information with should have access to it because they'll be able to pull it down and save. Even if you revoke their access, you know it's

possible they'll create a version of it that they can always access. So I'm okay with that, I'm going to click, "add to reports". It's gonna think about it for a second. And now we have this this chart for us to play around with. I'm going to resize my screen very quick.

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Alright, and we'll go ahead and get started on building our report. So as an example, I am going to try to build a report that shows the total number of users that have come to our site over the last 30 days, and what page they landed on specifically. I want to look at users from the city of Chicago, so we'll get started building that in just a second. But I want to take a second to show kind of why we like Looker studio so much, and why we recommend it for your reporting. If I go into this resource tab here at the top. And then I click, "manage added data sources" you can see our GA4 Google merch shop has appeared here. We see that its status is working. So everything is connected properly from Google Analytics. And then if I click on this "edit" button, we can see the full breadth of dimensions and metrics that we are able to combine. So nearly 400 dimensions. It's pulling in from our GA4 property. And then, if I keep scrolling down, nearly 100 metrics for us to combine in any way that we want to do our reporting. Just as a quick disclaimer: Dimensions are the things you're actually measuring. So "year", "week', as some examples.

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Cameron Panice: Those are going to always appear in Looker as green, and then your metrics are the measures by which you are measuring your dimensions so "active users" "cost per click", etc, etc.

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Cameron Panice: This is what we love so much about, Looker. Because if you have experience with GA4, you've probably encountered some sort of arbitrary restrictions around what sort of dimensions and metrics you can use, especially in the out of box reporting. Google goes "Okay, we think you'll need these 5 dimensions and these 3 metrics" and doing anything else out of the box can be a real struggle. There is a more free form report creation tool within GA4, which is called "Explorations", which allows a little bit more flexibility. But, there's a really arbitrary data retention limit within the "Exploration" tool itself that limits your reporting to the last 90 days. So you can't do any sort of long term reporting within GA4.

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Cameron Panice: In Looker Studio, you can pull in whatever dimensions and metrics you want, and for as long as your GA4 has been open and active and collecting data. You can do reporting across that entire time period.

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Nick Meshes: Yeah, I actually find building reports in Looker Studios easier and more intuitive and more flexible than trying to use GA4's "Explorations".

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Cameron Panice: Absolutely

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Cameron Panice: so excellent! We see everything has come over the way that we were expecting it to. I'm going to leave this screen right now by clicking on this blue "done" button in the corner. And we're gonna start building a really simple report. So again, I want to see the total number of users from the city of Chicago over the last 30 days. And I want to see what page that those users came to.

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Cameron Panice: So I'm going to start here by clicking on this table. You'll notice when we added that data source that this table appeared. I'm going to click on it, and that opens up 2 menus here on this sidebar. Right? So if I don't have anything selected, it says, "Let's get started". Once I click on it, it opens up into this configuration menu. Specific to this talk, ee were going to go through sort of the setup options and what you need to build a basic report.

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Cameron Panice: So number one, we just want to confirm that the data source we're using in this chart is the correct data source. So we know we want to use the Google Merch shop for this. It's the only data source that we have added. But if you go off and explore after this talk and add additional data sources, you'll want to make sure the charts that you're creating are using the data source that you suspect. If I wanted to swap this, I can simply click on it. And you can see Google is providing some other sample data sources as well. Google Search Console which is another Google analytics property and some Google sheets. So we've confirmed that our data source is correct. And now we will jump into setting up the dimensions and metrics we want for our example report. So I mentioned I wanted to take a look at what page users were coming to, and there are a couple of different ways. We can pull in those dimensions. If you're familiar with GA4, you can probably just use the "add dimension". If you're familiar with what dimension you're trying to pull into the report. But if you're brand new to this stuff, I would recommend looking within this data tab underneath the the search bar. And just looking for "page".

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Cameron Panice: This will limit that giant list we had of over 400 metrics and dimensions down to just the ones that I'm looking for. And I see "page path" here which is perfect. That's what I'm looking for. As a reference when we say "page path" that's anything coming after the domain. So, for example, in Looker Studio here, the page path for the report I'm on right now would be /report or /Yada! Yada! Yada! Right? So that sounds great. For my example report, and all I have to do is just drag and drop this into my report.

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Cameron Panice: It's gonna refresh. And then now I can see Page path and how many views were earned, which is great. We're getting on the right track. But I mentioned I wanted to look at the total number of users that are coming, individual folks who are coming to the site, and where they're going on our site. And so, Nick, just as a refresher, do you mind explaining the difference in between a view, a session, and a user?

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Nick Meshes (he/him): Oh, for sure. Yeah.

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Nick Meshes (he/him): So I actually going to start with the user. So as an individual visitor to the site, you'd be a "user". The same visitor should hopefully be consistently the same "use"r, even if they're going across devices. Because Google is getting really smart about knowing that sort of thing.

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Nick Meshes (he/him): Every time a user visits from the very first page they visit very first thing they do to the end. That's a session. And so an individual user may have many sessions as they come visit the site many different times. And then, during a given session, they're gonna visit any number of pages. They may visit the same page more than once, so they may start on the homepage, go around on the site, come back to the homepage. They would actually have two page views for that same homepage in that one session.

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Cameron Panice: Yeah, it always helps for refresher. Right?

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Cameron Panice: So, similar to what I did to pull in "page path". I want to pull in my users right? So I do the exact same thing I did for dimensions. I'll just close out of my previous search, and then I will search for users, and I get a couple of different things here. Interestingly, some of the dimensions it's pulling in don't actually mention users. But I know I'm looking for a metric. Right? I have what I'm measuring, I just need a measure by which to measure it. And I want to use "users". So I'm gonna look through this list: "7 day users" No. "Active users" No. In this example, I'm just interested in total traffic. And if I scroll down, I can see "total users". That's what I'm looking for. In the exact same way that I added my dimension, I'm just gonna drag and drop this and replace "views" with "total users".

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Cameron Panice: And just like that, right? We now have a report that shows what page folks are going to and how many individual users actually went to those pages. I mentioned as part of our example, we want to see what city folks are coming in from specifically the city of Chicago.

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Cameron Panice: So previously we had been using this search here. I could do it again. I could just search for the city dimension and drag and drop it here."If you're familiar with the dimension name, typically a quicker flow, if you know specifically what you're looking for, is to click—actually, either add dimension or add metric. In this example. We know that "city" is a dimension. That's what we're measuring. I would just search for "city", and then I can add it directly to the report there.

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Cameron Panice: After thinking about it for a second, Looker will pull everything in which is great. We now have a report that's almost there, right? One of the things you'll notice is that some of this data is getting cut off. So Los Angeles isn't showing in the full column. You can adjust or resize any of these tables here much like you do an image in a Google Doc, or, in a Word Doc. So I can just grab this chart and move it around to wherever I want. Let's say I want to center it

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Cameron Panice: and then again, just like an image, you can grab the corners here and resize everything.

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Cameron Panice: And then, what you can also do to ensure that all of your data fits these columns: you can either resize them manually. These are represented by these dotted lines here.

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Cameron Panice: Or, what you can do when you've clicked into a chart: there's this sort of transparent header. This is referred to as the 'table header.' If you click on these 3 dots here, this is going to open up a big menu. But what we're concerned about right now is this 'resize columns' feature, and I can choose to either resize all of the columns in my chart to fit the data or to distribute evenly amongst the total number of columns. So just for this example

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Cameron Panice: I'm going to choose to distribute everything evenly. And now we've got a report where we can see everything.

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Cameron Panice: And I mentioned wanting to look at the city of Chicago only, and what you could do is export this out into a spreadsheet and then do a vlookup and all that, or you could

just sit there manually and tabulate. Okay, number 6 is Chicago. Scroll down. Okay, I see number 15, Chicago. But what is going to be infinitely easier for you is to actually add a filter to this chart

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Cameron Panice: and that's pretty simple as well. So again, I'm going to click into the chart to bring up this configuration menu, and then I'm going to scroll all the way down to the bottom.

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Cameron Panice: And then underneath this filter header is where I can add a filter.

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Cameron Panice: Once I click that, it's going to bring up a dialog box for me to actually start to build my filter. What we need to do to build a filter is choose our 'include' or 'exclude' condition. We'll select the field that we actually want to filter down to. We'll choose how we should be filtering the value that we provide, and then actually provide the value. So let's walk through what I mean by that. So first, I want to give my filter a name. So I'm going to call it filter to Chicago traffic only.

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Cameron Panice: and I know I want to include Chicago traffic only in this report, right? I don't want to exclude it. So by default, it's going to say, "Include". If I click, I can see if I want to exclude Chicago I could. But, we're going to include it for now. And then I need to select the field by which I'm filtering. That, of course, is the city field, the city dimension. So just like we were doing when we were building the report, I'm going to search for it and

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Cameron Panice: and click on "city". I need to select a condition. I'm going to do "equal to", since I want it to be Chicago only, and then I'm just going to provide the value I'm filtering for which is Chicago. And then once I click "save"

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Cameron Panice: you'll see our report has now updated, and we're now looking at total user count for the city of Chicago and what page they went to.

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Cameron Panice: The last thing I mentioned: I wanted to look at data for the last 30 days. We're almost there by default. Any new chart that you add in Looker Studio is going to default to the last 28 days. The eagle eyed amongst you may have noticed above our filter options is a option for us to change the date range, but

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Cameron Panice: we prefer to not set the date ranges on a per chart basis. Because if I were to share this with you all with 0 context, right? You'd be like, "I don't even know what I'm looking at!

Is this 2 weeks? 2 months? I don't know!" So even though you and I will know that this is for the last 28 days,

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Cameron Panice: it helps to have some sort of visual indicator. We all know with analytics and reporting the data is only as important or only as useful as the context surrounding it. So what I'm going to do is I'm going to add, a date range picker control through this menu here. So up at your top bar. Here is the control menu.

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Cameron Panice: Once I click on that, I get this list. There's a lot of fun things you can do with some of the options in here, but

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Cameron Panice: for now, underneath this divider is this date range control. Once I click on that, it's going to attach this box to my pointer here, and then I can place it anywhere on the page. I'm going to choose to select it right over the top left corner of my report, and then once I click, I can set a date range. Now, you'll probably be tempted to click in here and set the date range within the report itself.

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Cameron Panice: But this is the temporary date range. We want to have this default every time someone loads this report to the last 30 days. So what you actually do when you click on the date range.

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Cameron Panice: This date range 'control properties' menu will show up. And this is where you'll set your default date range. So I'm going to click here. I'm going to get that same calendar view, and I can either do a fixed date range or I can use this dropdown at the top here to select a pre-provided option from Google. If I hover over the last 7 days, I can see my last ___

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Cameron Panice: date ranges, and in there is 30 days. So I'm going to click on that. Click 'Apply'. It's going to think about it for a second. And now we have the report that we were asking for, which was users from the city of Chicago, what page, in the last 30 days. Once you start to get into that flow, it's going to be really easy for you to generate these reports very quickly. And just real quick before we move on: I mentioned setting the

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Cameron Panice: default date range. Let's say you share this with somebody in your organization. You say "Great. This is what I was looking for. But what if I want to filter this down to the last 14 days?" They'll be able to jump in here and actually use this date range picker that you've created and select an option. For example, the last 14 days.
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Cameron Panice: Click, apply, and then it'll filter down. But this, as I was saying, is a temporary date range when you set it within the report itself. If I refresh here, you'll see that it goes back to our default, which is the last 30 days.

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Cameron Panice: So that's how to build a simple report. Of course, there's so much more available in this tool. But we wanted to make sure that you had enough

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Cameron Panice: lay of the land to be able to build a report, be able to export it out, and start to do more empowered reporting out of GA4 and into Looker Studio. As we've mentioned a couple of times, we have a Part 2 webinar coming up in December, where we'll talk through additional visualizations. So line charts, pie charts, you-name-it, multi-page reports. So building 30, 40, 50 page reports encompassing all of

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Cameron Panice: the data for your website, or what-have-you. You can sign up for that, using the registration link on your screen, or by scanning the QR code.

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Cameron Panice: And in Part 2, we're gonna ideally show you how to build something that looks like this. So what we built today is powerful, but something like this is exciting right? So hope to see you there. And if you have any questions at any point feel free to reach out. I don't know if you've noticed,

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Cameron Panice: I'm really into this stuff! So if you have any questions, I love talking about it. Feel free to email me, directly at the email on your screen or connect with me on LinkedIn. The same goes for Nick as well. He has plenty of experience in this area, so feel free to send him an email or connect on LinkedIn. And if you're curious more about what Sandstorm is capable of in the realm of web analytics, you can visit the link on your screen as well as scan the QR code.

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Cameron Panice: So we got like 1 minute rapid fire. Do we have any questions?

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Nick Meshes (he/him): Looks like we have one issue of getting into the link. We'll get that, resolved.

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Joanna Jackson: Yeah, we will for sure get that resolved, and make sure to send it over to you

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Joanna Jackson: after. So sorry about that! A little bit of technical difficulties, but I know we are right out of just about time. So thank you again, Nick and Cameron, for presenting today. Our first question is:

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Joanna Jackson: How do I connect my Looker Studio to my Google Analytics Four property?

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Cameron Panice: Yeah. So we we walk through that during the report. Right? So I can walk through the flow again. When I'm creating a new report, I just click on this dropdown here. And then I use the provided Google Analytics Connector. I pick my account, and then I connect to GA4

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Cameron Panice: I am seeing a question here: "Is there a way to isolate subdomains in the reports?" Yes, there is, I'll walk through that really quick. I know we're at time. Hang with me. Here, let's get our example report pulled back up.

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Cameron Panice: The the the dimension you're going to want to use for a report like this is called "Host Name", that's going to be your domain.

00:31:12.770 --> 00:31:35.309
Cameron Panice: And you can see if I put this into our existing report, we can see in this example only one domain is pulling in. So the shop.merch.google. But the same way with your own data that we built that report for the city of Chicago. You would build a filter. I'll walk through it here to include or exclude by "host name"

00:31:35.600 --> 00:31:42.100
Cameron Panice: "equal to", and then, whatever host name or domain you want to include or exclude. I hope that's helpful!

00:31:42.100 --> 00:31:46.660
Nick Meshes (he/him): Yeah. And in the same way you could also put a drop down on the page itself to select hostname.

00:31:46.850 --> 00:31:53.790
Nick Meshes (he/him): So it's something that would be interactive also either works either way. Right? The way Cam's doing it or making it an interactive widget at the top.

00:32:00.650 --> 00:32:21.100
Joanna Jackson: All right. Well, we are at time! So thank you all again so much for joining today. And we, you know, we got more questions, and we'll be sure to answer those in our Part 2 as well. And I know there have been some a little bit of a technical difficulty with registering for Part

2, so we'll make sure to get that cleared up. It looks like you will be able to register, but it's gonna

00:32:21.290 --> 00:32:33.099
Joanna Jackson: tell you that it's forbidden, even though it seems to not be. So, we'll get that resolved. And then we look forward to seeing you all again on December 5th for the next part of this webinar. Thank you so much!

00:32:34.350 --> 00:32:35.000
Nick Meshes (he/him): Thanks so much.

00:32:35.960 --> 00:32:36.750
Cameron Panice: Bye.