

# Communicating the Value and Benefits of SAIs: A Case Study in Analytics



**PRESENTATION TO THE TENTH MEETING  
OF THE INTOSAI WORKING GROUP ON THE VALUE  
AND BENEFITS OF SAIS**

**SEPTEMBER 2017  
MEXICO CITY, MEXICO**

# Agenda



- The importance of the current communications environment in conveying the value and benefits of SAIs
- Case study: the use of analytics in guiding approaches to communication
- Next steps

# Communicating the Value and Benefits of SAIs



- Bringing transparency and accountability to governments across the globe is the critical agenda of SAIs
- The success of this agenda is maximized when SAIs are able to communicate the value and benefits of 1) the results of their work and 2) the importance of their role in government to citizens and other stakeholders.
- Given the breadth and urgency of the issues that SAIs are addressing, it has never been more important that this communication be as effective as possible.

# The Changing Communications Environment



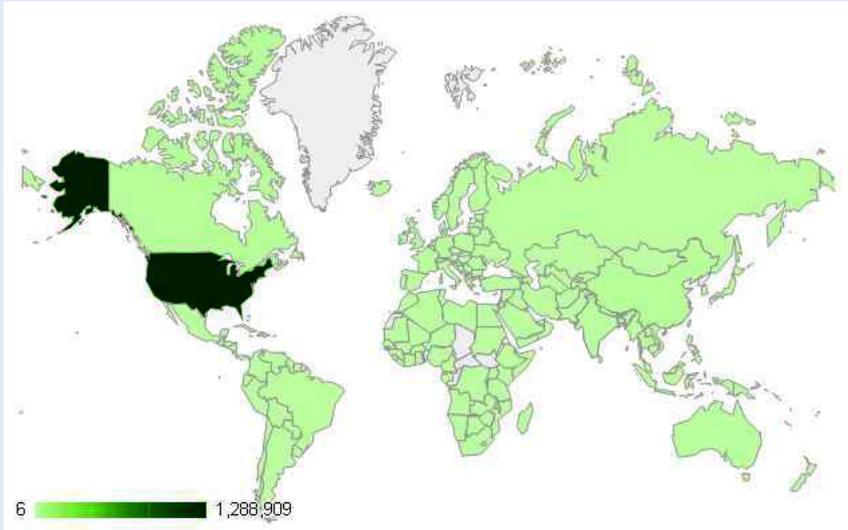
- One of the key challenges in achieving effective communication is the ever accelerating pace of change in the communications landscape.
- The number and variety of communications vehicles increases every year; electronic reports, podcasts, Facebook pages, twitter accounts, Flickr channels, blogs, and other vehicles have all been added to traditional paper documents.

# Keeping Pace with Change



- Recognizing that change in communications is inevitable, SAIs should develop the ability to identify and respond to changing stakeholder needs.
- For example, it is clear that online readers have come to expect very short, easily understandable, bottom-line messages up front.
- Using analytics is one way to determine whether this expectation is being met.

# Google Analytics



- Started using Google Analytics in 2012.
- Used to understand the public's interaction with GAO.gov and make website improvements.

# Using Analytics to Measure Bounce Rate



- Many analytics tools exist; GAO started using Google Analytics five years ago to measure several types of marketing data, including bounce rate.
- Bounce rate is an Internet marketing term used in web traffic analysis. It represents the percentage of visitors who enter the site and then leave quickly ("bounce") rather than continuing on to view other pages within the same site.
- GAO seeks to have readers move from the opening highlights page of a report to other pages/content.

# Using Analytics to Measure Bounce Rate



- Google Analytics showed that our approach to communicating with our audience in the digital environment was not working well.
- Specifically, the bounce rate for the highest level of communication on our website (the highlights page) was far too high.

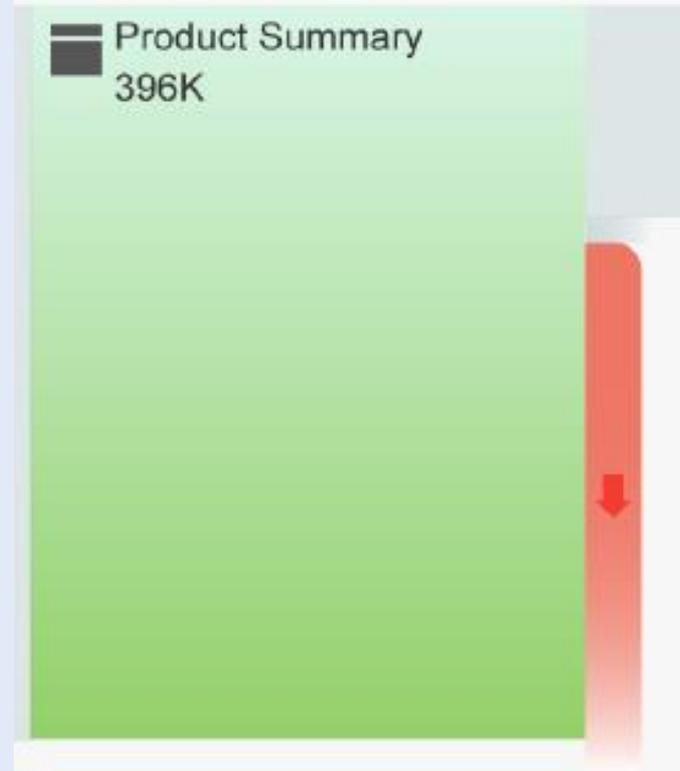
# What the Analytics Showed



## We Face Challenges Communicating

- Highlights pages' bounce rate was 60%.
- Most users quickly decided not to engage further with the report, or with other GAO.gov content.

## Google Analytics Data: High Bounce Rate

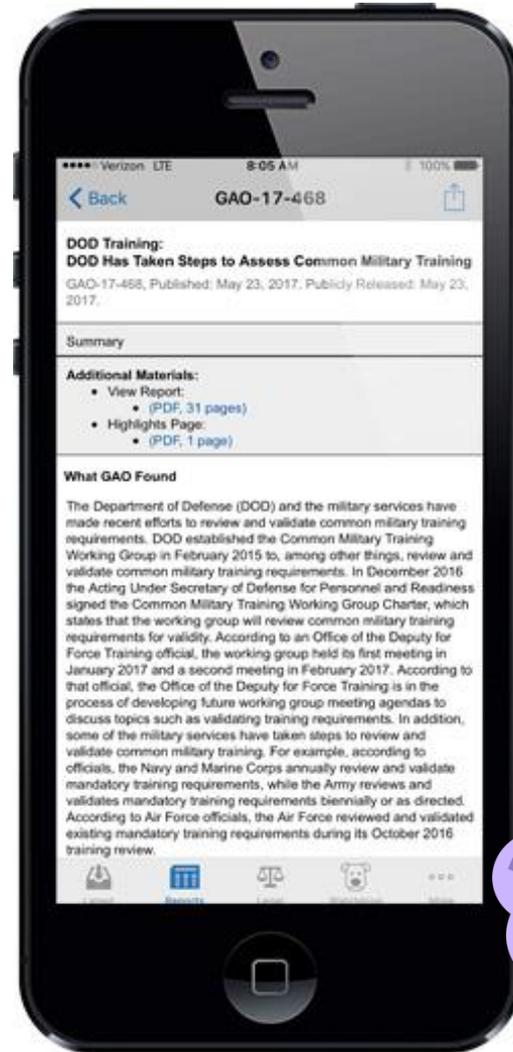


# What Did We Learn?



Our concerns were supported by the data

- Our top layer of communication—the highlights page-- was too long and not written to effectively draw the reader in to the topic.



# What Did We Do?



## Create Fast Facts, a brief online introduction to the report or testimony

- Two to three short paragraphs
- Written at a high level of generality
- Fewer words, more visual appeal (photos, graphs, or video links)

FAST FACTS

HIGHLIGHTS

VIEW REPORT (PDF, 39 PAGES)

The Department of the Interior and the Department of Health and Human Services offer education, energy resource management, health care, and other programs for Indian tribes and their members.

We testified on both Departments' weaknesses in managing these programs. These weaknesses have contributed to unsafe conditions at Bureau of Indian Education schools, limited or missed opportunities for tribes to use energy resources for their economic benefit, and inadequate oversight of federal health care facilities that serve tribes.

Our 2017 High Risk report highlighted 39 recommendations that could help address these issues.

**Failed Boiler Inspection Tag in a Bureau of Indian Education School Classroom Building**



Source: GAO. | GAO-17-587T

# Was it Successful?



- Following the creation of Fast Facts, we pilot tested this communications tool with actual reports.
- After six months of the pilot, we once again used analytics to determine whether the bounce rate had changed. The results and lessons learned confirmed our decision.

# Users Were More Engaged with Website



## Full Site Engagement Metrics for Fast Facts Visits Compared to GAO.gov Visits

	Visits to gao.gov	Visits including Fast Facts	Percent change
<b>Bounce rate (percent of single-page visits)</b>	<p>48.51%</p> <p>0 100%</p>	<p>33.21%</p> <p>0 100%</p>	31.54% decrease
<b>Average session duration</b>	<p>2:55 minutes</p>	<p>4:54 minutes</p>	68% increase
<b>Average pages per session</b>	<p>3.75 pages</p>	<p>5.3 pages</p>	42.47% increase

Note: The analysis compares how users interacted with GAO.gov when they viewed Fast Facts with how users interacted with GAO.gov from the same time period a year prior (without Fast Facts).

# Results Were Magnified for GAO's Mobile Website



## Mobile Site Engagement Metrics for Fast Facts Visits Compared to Site Visits

	Visits to GAO's mobile website	Mobile visits including Fast Facts	Percent change
<b>Bounce rate</b>	<p>71.65%</p> <p>0 100%</p>	<p>13.02%</p> <p>0 100%</p>	81.83% decrease
<b>Average session duration</b>	<p>1:24 minutes</p>	<p>10:28 minutes</p>	647.62% increase
<b>Average screens per session</b>	<p>2.19 pages</p>	<p>8.56 pages</p>	290.87% increase

Note: The analysis compares how users interacted with GAO's mobile website when they viewed Fast Facts with how users interacted with GAO's mobile website from the same time period a year prior (without Fast Facts).

# User Testing: Overall Value



“Fast Facts are **worth pursuing**. It gave enough information to decide a way to go [with my research.]” – Washington Post Reporter

Fast Facts is “**tremendously helpful**” and “**increases the usefulness** of products.” – Legislative Assistant

Fast Facts has “useful information and **the type of information that [elected officials] should know.**” – Legislative Assistant

# Next Steps



- Expand Fast Facts pilot GAO-wide
- Continue to monitor marketing results of Fast Facts using analytics
- Mine marketing data for future opportunities to improve our product line

# Questions?

