

COLUMNS

2 tips for marketers in the new era of data privacy

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War. Doomsday. Apple vs. Facebook. The bout between the two tech giants has been going on for years with no end in sight. If you are reading this, you already know what iOS 14.5 is the people's champion, the "little guy's" liberator the advertising killer.

We live in a time where privacy is a luxury and Apple was promising to give it back. No more indiscriminate tracking. No more stalker-ish ads. Your data was yours. The only way companies like Facebook or Google could use your data? You had to willingly grant it.

Beginning back this past May, any app that collects end-user data must obtain explicit consent from users. [Analytics data](#) suggests that more than 96 percent of users chose to opt-out of tracking. If you are a marketer, you are understandably worried.

This is having a tremendous effect on our industry but do not worry, there are solutions.

How data privacy affects marketers

Performance

In the age of automation, Facebook takes care of bidding for us based on a multitude of signals. More signals and data directly equate to better results. Ninety-six percent of opt-outs mean way less data. As a solution, Facebook now attempts to bridge the gap with modeling.

However, it does not take a rocket scientist to figure out that marketing results will take a nosedive due to the loss of direct data.

Reporting

Facebook is notoriously difficult to report on. The numbers in Facebook rarely align with the numbers in a customer's content management system (CMS), in Google Analytics (GA), or elsewhere.

With the update, it is nearly impossible to match up the numbers and justify investing in Facebook. This, in turn, causes more performance decreases, despite every marketer knowing that Facebook performs due to the platform's ability to highly target a wide array of demographics. We just cannot prove it.

Decision-making

Decision-making is hurt on both the marketer's end and the client's end.

For a marketer, we now need to make decisions on partial data. Ever drive on a busy highway with a blindfold? Yeah, me neither, but this is what it feels like. Instead of basing everything we do on the numbers, we are now making indirect assumptions and hoping for the best.

For our clients, it is like taking a Trust Fall on steroids. Facebook is now showing even lower numbers and the logical choice would be to move budgets elsewhere. Why are they not moving their budgets to "better performing" channels? Because marketers are saying, "trust me."

Solutions

Server-side tracking through Google Tag Manager (GTM)

Clientside tracking (via browser/app) is the standard way most marketers track users. The way a user gets "tracked" is by a cookie placed in the browser and app. On the other hand, server-side is hosted on your own servers and has nothing to do with the outside world.

The downside is that it requires a dedicated web developer with extensive knowledge in both development and marketing. Simply reading [Google's article](#) is not enough.

The possibilities and upsides are endless. This means more, complete data for all marketing channels such as Facebook, paid search or email. More complete data means better machine learning, better decision-making by the marketing team, and greater ROAS.

Instead of the browser, the GTM is hosted on your own servers and you have full control over the data. You can validate the traffic and, if done correctly, can truly understand where/how/what is converting. Marketing performance will improve, you can report better and on top of that, both you and your clients can make better decisions.

API to offline conversions tracking

Offline conversions allow you to upload your own sales data into the majority of engines. If Facebook cannot attribute a transaction to a purchase, your offline conversions might bridge the gap.

For example, if Mike did not want to be tracked, clicked a Facebook ad in the Facebook app and made a purchase, Facebook would not be able to attribute that back. However, if you were able to upload Mike's data after the purchase into Facebook, Facebook can match that back to the Facebook ad.

API's allow us to do this automatically in Google Analytics, Facebook and Google Ads. If we can match CMS sales data within our engines, we can be better marketers.

CONSUMER DATA PRIVACY is a huge focal point and this is not changing anytime soon.

IOS 14.5 is just the beginning with Google Chrome already announcing plans to do the same. In an industry where data and privacy are kings, the marketers who can adapt will thrive, while the rest will fall by the wayside.

The good news is that marketers do have options. Smart marketers will keep up with the times and figure out the latest ways to get accurate data such as conversions API and server-side tracking.

If we adjust our lens when viewing performance, reporting and decision-making challenges, we can continue to get in front of the right customers and grow our brands.

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