Setting up digital analytics tracking to optimise measurement of campaign effectiveness

Ultimately, businesses want to know that advertising had an incremental impact on business metrics, such as conversions, sales or revenue. By analysing historical data, we can use effectiveness measurement techniques to determine how valuable each marketing channel has been. To help the brand get the most out of modeling and marketing strategy recommendations, you need to have the right infrastructure and approach in place for meaningful effectiveness measurement.

01.
High quality of tracked data

One of the biggest challenges with digital data tracking is having a trustworthy infrastructure setup to measure the right outcomes consistently. Successful marketing strategies need to be built on reliable tracking setup that's been collecting data consistently over a long period, at least 3 years.

This can be a real challenge. Sometimes data tracking breaks or isn't maintained, website code get updated, approaches change, all of which can cause inconsistencies.

Any gaps in data due to tracking breaking or not being set up in the first place can significantly limit the understanding of media's impact on KPIs. Too long of a data gap, and you might not be able to determine media effectiveness whatsoever. Just like a website is ever evolving and updated with the latest products, new offers or cool functionality, so does the digital analytics tracking infrastructure require maintenance to maintain data integrity and quality. It's worth spending extra resource to ensure website tracking is accurate and maintain its consistency to enable meaningful analysis.

02.

Have the right data

Understanding your digital performance is highly dependent on the data you track. Out of the box tracking gives you top level information, but you get maximum value from customising your analytics platform and configuration to meet your business and reporting needs.

You need to use the right data to quantify the impact of your marketing activity. The kind of data that is closest to having the impact and that's going to be different for various markets and clients. Determine what matters best for your campaign measurement, and align across the business.

The most critical tracking is to do with end of the funnel metrics, such as leads and sales. Conversions are a fundamental component of any digital analytics infrastructure and effectiveness analysis, and just like any other part of tracking, require setting up, checking and updating in line with website changes. Tracking website conversions allows you to accurately evaluate the performance of ads and campaigns.

Additional complexity is introduced when leads and sales take place offline. Having people browse the brand and product offering online, whilst converting offline, reduces the visibility on the key parts of the customer journey. It's key to join these up to understand performance holistically.

03.

Have a source of truth
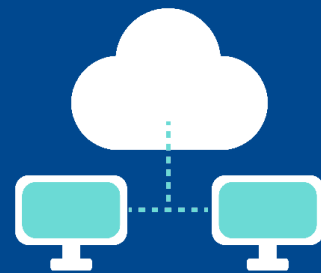
Companies will have a number of tools at their disposal collecting various types of data. On top of that, it's quite likely that various teams are using different sources for their data needs, such as marketing team using an analytics platform for analysis, whilst finance team taking internal numbers from transactional and CRM systems. Each source will tell a different story because of the differences in how each system tracks, stores and processes data.

Build a complete view of business performance by bringing your data to a centralised location, and make it accessible across various teams to prevent people getting lost in multiple versions of the truth. This will require having an aligned data strategy and data workflows in place to help navigate the setup and use aligned business metrics.

04.

Meaningful classification of traffic sources

Traffic is organised in channels throughout analytics reports, which allows you to quickly check how traffic is performing on an aggregate level. Mis-categorisation means that the correct channel is not going to get conversions and sales attributed to it, and make it difficult to understand channel performance.

Traffic coming from ad campaigns, social networks, search engines and other sources is found in analytics reports as campaigns and traffic sources. You want to be able to analyse these effectively and understand whether your product launch campaign is performing better in search or social. To be able to do that, campaign traffic has to arrive to the site with tags and parameters containing the information that signals to the analytics platform how these need to be grouped.

Brand and generic traffic are likely to have significant differences in performance, so you want to separate brand from other activity.

05.

Create and maintain data documentation

Google Analytics (GA) is a great tool for tracking website data, but the more custom tracking you add, the more difficult it can get to navigate without up to date documentation on the state of your data. Maintaining a record of custom tracking configuration enables others to understand what's been set up and how.

You can easily look up online how out of the box metrics and dimensions are collected, whilst custom tracking setup is dependent on the effort you put into it. Be clear about how data has been tracked (on the click of the button or an event on the confirmation page) and collected (is every instance of the action tracked, is data deduplicated).

Regular web updates made by development teams and changing of ownership or responsibility often mean that digital data tracking infrastructure doesn't get the same attention and can quickly become outdated as a result. When tracking breaks or gets updated, it's important to document the reason for the breakage or what was updated. This greatly reduces the time required to grasp the state of tracking infrastructure and what's happened in the past that might impact analysis.

06.

Checking tracking infrastructure regularly for quality

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07.

Prepare for the cookieless future

There's a growing lack of confidence in measurement with the demise of cookies. Both from a regulatory perspective and a technological one there have been several changes that reduce the accuracy and ability to track how well paid activity performs. In response to these industry changes there are several new data measurement technologies that can be utilised to preserve, and in some cases improve the ability to track in cookieless environments.

Future-proof your measurement with cookieless privacy-focussed solutions:
- Server side tracking
- Signed in user tracking and identity solutions
- Growing and improving the quality of first party data
- Data-driven attribution
- Add and test novel tech solutions as part of your measurement toolkit
- Predictive technology
- Machine learning
- Cohort-based audiences and strategies

08.

Google Analytics 4 migration implications

Google Analytics 4 (GA4) represents a fundamental shift from Universal Analytics (UA) we know. Data collection, processing and configuration are all different, bringing us a new set of metrics that are calculated and aggregated differently from UA metrics we're used to. Due to these crucial differences, you shouldn't compare like for like, and when implementing GA4 tracking, use best practise approach to set up tracking with platform specifics in mind.

With Google turning UA off from collecting data in 2023, it's critical to have GA4 tracking set up as soon as possible. You want to start collecting historical data to allow for meaningful effectiveness analysis later down the line, with at least 6 months of data overlap between the two platforms. You'll also want to add custom tracking to capture leads and sales as early as possible.