

CRACKING TRACKING



Network & Platform Q&As

July 2024

Our Cracking Tracking initiative champions technical excellence in the affiliate and partner marketing channels.

At the APMA we are on a mission to guarantee every click, sale and interaction driven by the channel is tracked and recorded, and this guide explores the technical mechanics that make that possible.

Affiliate and performance marketing networks and platforms power the industry and we asked them to explain how their tracking works, and what sets it apart from the competition.

We also ask them about the latest tracking trends and challenges marketers face when attributing sales and value to their budgets. And if you ever wanted to know how you'd explain affiliate tracking to a five-year-old, you're in the right place.

We hope you find this a handy guide for you and your teams. And don't forget to bookmark [The APMA website](#) for future Cracking Tracking updates.



ADTRACTION



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In one sentence, what makes your tracking so good?

Good partner tracking is about accuracy, reliability and ease of integration – we believe that our solution ticks all of these important boxes.

Now explain to me how it works as if I'm a five-year-old...

Your friend at school tells you all about this cool adventure playground they visited. You want to visit it too so you get on a bus that takes you there. When you arrive you have to pay to go in to the adventure playground. The owner of the adventure playground wants to thank your friend for telling you all about the cool adventure playground, so he asks the bus driver to take a chocolate coin back to your friend to say thank you!

How are we going to get rid of third-party cookies from the affiliate channel once and for all?

At Adtraction as standard we do not use any cookies that are set or read in a third-party context for tracking. We assume most providers in our industry now use a tracking solution supported in whole or in part by first-party cookies, which means the third-party issue is probably overstated. Third-party cookies can still be an issue when network / provider tracking is called conditionally – with that condition being the presence of a cookie set in a third-party context.

What should best-in-class tracking do?

From an advertiser perspective best-in-class tracking needs to be flexible enough to suit the advertiser's e-commerce platform, be able to capture all the data needed for the advertiser to run successful pay-for-performance marketing partnerships and be capable of scaling based on different levels of technical input. For partners, tracking is about visibility, reliability and accuracy. That means the tracking technology needs to be as first-party and integrated with the advertiser's own website as possible. It should be applied unconditionally (visible for all traffic and sales) on an advertiser's website wherever possible. The advertiser should not be in control of when or how a conversion signal is passed to the provider, as this is normally a limiting factor on tracking accuracy. Partners also crucially need to be given as much visibility as possible as to how an advertiser's tracking is set-up, and any rules that might degrade tracking accuracy. Consent is another vital part of best-in-class tracking. Under the current European guidance, consent for any cookies required for affiliate tracking should be gained on the advertiser's website and where possible

consent for tracking should be treated as a cookie used to underpin the measurement of partner marketing.

Tell us some of the work you're doing to push its adoption.

Adoption of Adtraction's go-to, first-party tracking method is actually very strong across Europe. This is a factor of being new to market in many territories as well as acquiring, migrating and reintegrating a large number of clients.

App tracking tends to get overlooked. What are you doing to make sure it doesn't?

App tracking does get overlooked, but there are a few important reasons for that. Firstly, on a mobile device, most partners send traffic to advertisers using a standard mobile browser. The big social media Apps use embedded web-browsing experiences and do not send traffic out of their eco-systems. Very few partners have dedicated Apps (with the big cashback sites being notable exceptions), and even in those cases the vast majority of journeys seem to be sent out of the App to a website. All this means App-to-App journeys in partner marketing account for less than 5% of all overall traffic, and are of course only relevant for advertisers that have dedicated e-commerce Apps.

The launch of iOS14 and the 'permission-to-track' rules has degraded the ability of App-tracking to report accurately enough at a transaction level for our channel. Apple's SKAd Network initiative relies on a probabilistic methodology which makes it unsuitable for the partner channel. All that said, Adtraction does work closely with the major in-App measurement platforms to help our advertisers track in-App conversions sent by Partners. We find working with expert in-App measurement companies the best way to implement successful App-to-App and mobile web-to-App tracking.

There's so much confusion about tracking because every network uses different terms. Is it essentially all the same?

In general...yes. All providers are ultimately trying to achieve the same thing – a tracking solution that is accurate for partners, while being flexible and capable of being integrated by a wide variety of advertisers. Providers are also all facing the same challenges to reliable and accurate tracking, such as consent rules, Google Analytics changes, cross-channel de-duplication and browser privacy. It's no surprise that different companies working independently have come up with similar solutions. This is where the APMA can play an important role to standardise tracking terminology across the industry.

What does the future of affiliate tracking look like?

The technology behind the industry's tracking is very robust. The challenges it faces are largely presented by circumstances beyond our control, like the drive for cookie consent or privacy becoming a very important USP for browser manufacturers in recent years. These issues are also driven by concerns about marketing tactics like aggressive retargeting, which are not directly relevant to the partner channel. The future will hopefully bring a better way of identifying marketing methods that are genuinely privacy invasive, which will allow partner channel tracking to be treated as a necessary measurement function. Initiatives like Open Banking may also play a more fundamental part in partner tracking of the future than they do right now.



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More information:

[Affiliate Future Tracking Guides for Advertisers](#)

John Vickers
Client Services Director

In one sentence, what makes your tracking so good?

Our tracking is exceptional because we offer first-party, server-to-server, and third-party plugins for major eCommerce platforms, making it highly adaptable to any advertiser's needs.

Now explain to me how it works as if I'm a five-year-old...

Imagine you're planning a holiday, and you visit a website with cool holiday reviews. You find a hotel you like and click on it to book. When you click the link, it's like your computer gets a message saying, "This person came from the review website." Your computer then sends you and the message to the hotel's website. The hotel's website saves the message in a special file called a cookie. You book the hotel, and the hotel's website tells our computer, "Someone booked a hotel, and here's the message." Our computer reads the message and tells the hotel to give some money to the review website as a thank you for helping them get a booking. That's how it works! The review site gets some money when you book a hotel through their link.

How are we going to get rid of third-party cookies from the affiliate channel once and for all?

To eliminate third-party cookies from the affiliate channel, we are focusing on robust server-to-server (S2S) tracking, which bypasses the need for any cookie storage. While this setup can be more complex, we are actively assisting clients in transitioning to S2S tracking. In the meantime, all clients must implement our first-party cookie tracking as a fallback. Given the potential challenges with correctly saving first-party cookies, we continuously monitor and optimise the performance to ensure accurate tracking.

What should best-in-class tracking do?

Best-in-class tracking should be flexible, adaptable, and reliable, with backup solutions in place to ensure continuity if one method fails. It should include active monitoring to ensure all sales are accurately tracked. Additionally, it must be data-light, capturing only the essential information to respect user privacy.

Tell us some of the work you're doing to push its adoption.

To push the adoption of best-in-class tracking, we are actively collaborating with clients to transition them to our advanced tracking solutions. This involves providing detailed setup guides, personalised technical support, and continuous monitoring to ensure a smooth implementation process. We are also hosting

educational webinars and creating informative content that underscores the benefits of our tracking solutions. Also, we are continually enhancing our tracking technology to make it more user-friendly and efficient, minimising setup complexity and maximising reliability. Through these efforts, we aim to set a new standard in affiliate tracking.

App tracking tends to get overlooked. What are you doing to make sure it doesn't?

Our server-to-server tracking solution ensures app tracking isn't overlooked by offering flexibility for use with any apps, websites, or even Point of Sale tills. Additionally, our voucher tracking allows influencers to generate sales without needing tracking links, further ensuring comprehensive coverage across all platforms.

There's so much confusion about tracking because every network uses different terms. Is it essentially all the same?

While it might seem confusing because different networks use various terms, the core principles of tracking are essentially the same across the industry. All tracking systems aim to accurately attribute sales or actions to the correct source, ensuring that commissions are properly credited. The differences typically lie in the specific technologies and methodologies used, but the fundamental goal remains consistent. At Affiliate Future, we prioritise flexibility and reliability in our tracking solutions to meet diverse advertiser needs.

What does the future of affiliate tracking look like?

The future of affiliate tracking lies in moving away from the user's browser and adopting server-to-server solutions. Browser-based tracking can be disrupted by misconfigured consent management platforms, third-party extensions, and missing tags on deep-linked pages. By transitioning to server-to-server tracking, we eliminate issues related to first-party cookies and ensure high-quality conversion tracking that operates seamlessly behind the scenes, using the minimum amount of data necessary. This shift promises more reliable and robust tracking, enhancing both accuracy and user privacy.



Alex Parmar-Yee
UK Strategy Lead

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More information: [Working together to protect affiliate revenue](#)

In one sentence, what makes your tracking so good?

Our tracking stands out for its versatility, offering advertisers three distinct methods—MasterTag, Server Side, and our innovative Conversion API—to seamlessly integrate first-party cookie tracking, ensuring maximum flexibility and effectiveness tailored to their needs.

Now explain to me how it works as if I'm a five-year-old...

Imagine you really like telling friends about a cool toy or yummy snacks at a shop. When your friend buys those things the shop keeper may choose to give you a present from the money they made. They will need to ask your friends if you told them about the store and then do some sums to work out how much they can give you as a present. Now, if you tell your friends about toys and snacks on a computer or iPad the person selling them can't tell who your friends are. So a helper friend called a "network" helps out. When you share a special link to go to the shop on your computer the network puts a special digital sticker onto your friend. When your friend buys something on their computer or iPad using your special link, the helper friend can see they are wearing the sticker and keeps a track of what they bought. They can then help the shop keeper do the sums for your thank you present for bringing them a customer.

How are we going to get rid of third-party cookies from the affiliate channel once and for all?

By embracing Google's shift away from third-party cookies, we're seizing the opportunity to align the industry towards more robust and reliable tracking methods, ensuring the longevity and integrity of affiliate marketing channels.

What should best-in-class tracking do?

The best tracking needs to firstly be something that is reliable and has multiple sources to account for any redundancy. For example, it's essential to have tracking via first-party cookies and Awin's MasterTag, but we also recommend the use of Server Side Tracking and our Conversion API to supplement and enhance the quality and reliability. It's also important to ensure that tracking works for a variety of customer journeys whether that is purchasing via an app with app tracking, via a phone through call tracking or in-store using something like card linking or open banking. We also believe that tracking should empower excellent decision making through capturing an appropriate level of detail about journey and transactions. Data tracked should be able to feed into programme insights as well as being used for dynamic commissioning. That being said this should all be done respecting data privacy and regulations.

Tell us some of the work you're doing to push its adoption.

We're leveraging strategic partnerships with a number of technology experts to enhance tracking capabilities and provide even more seamless integrations solutions to ensure the best tracking is also easy to implement. We're also dedicated to educating advertisers to ensure they're set up correctly from the get-go, providing comprehensive guidance to maximise their tracking effectiveness and campaign success. With our focus on education and support, advertisers can confidently navigate the affiliate marketing landscape with ease and precision. For existing advertisers we're proactively monitoring for gaps in their tracking setups and working with them at multiple levels to prioritise upgrade, whether it is getting sign off with the head of marketing, moving us to the top of the dev queue with someone technical or educating day to day clients on the impacts to publishers.

App tracking tends to get overlooked. What are you doing to make sure it doesn't?

We're ensuring that app tracking receives the attention it deserves through our dedicated strategic partnerships team, actively pushing app partners to ensure the highest quality setup and widespread adoption. Moreover, we're committed to transparency in our directories, clearly indicating which advertisers offer app tracking capabilities. This empowers publishers to make informed decisions about which advertisers to promote, fostering trust and driving successful partnerships. With our focus on quality, transparency, and strategic partnerships, we're elevating the standards of app tracking within the affiliate marketing ecosystem.

There's so much confusion about tracking because every network uses different terms. Is it essentially all the same?

While terminology may vary across networks, a lot of the core capabilities and approaches are consistent. However, the additional layers in terms of enhanced data and additional tracking redundancies can vary. Despite the depth to our tracking solution, we strive to clarify and simplify these concepts for our clients, ensuring everyone speaks the same language when it comes to maximising their affiliate marketing efforts.

What does the future of affiliate tracking look like?

The future of tracking is all about deeper connections with advertisers whilst maintaining flexible integration options. So I expect closer integrations with advertiser systems. In addition, future tracking needs to remain flexible, able to adapt to the pace of change of technology, innovation and the ways consumers interact with the internet.



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More information:

Advertisers: [An overview of our recommended site-tracking setup](#)

Publishers: [Read more about our Publisher Tag](#)

Blog: [Tracking strategy information](#)

In one sentence, what makes your tracking so good?

CJ has a future-forward approach to tracking, and we've worked to strike a balance between solutions that are easy to integrate, and solutions that are resilient, as the restrictions placed on web technology continue to multiply.

Now explain to me how it works as if I'm a five-year-old...

Let's say you're playing with a really cool toy at school, and you tell your Mum or Dad about the toy. Your Mom or Dad decide they want to buy you that toy as a birthday gift, so they ask your teacher at school what toy it is. Your Mom or Dad then buy the toy, and because your teacher at school recommended it, the school earns a little bit of money from the toy store as a reward for recommending that toy. That's essentially what affiliate marketing is all about, helping people find the things they love. Our tracking code makes sure that the toy store knows your school recommended the toy, so they can earn some money and hopefully use it to buy even more fun toys!

How are we going to get rid of third-party cookies from the affiliate channel once and for all?

We need to implement tracking solutions at all points in the customer journey, that leverage first-party data and first-party cookies, to improve the accuracy of customer journeys and the persistence of customer identity. We also need to use data to understand what's not being tracked accurately and create compensation options around it to ensure publishers get paid and advertisers can better understand the return on their investment.

What should best-in-class tracking do?

Best in class tracking needs to enable accurate measurement and transparency between partners. This means using the most resilient technologies, like first-party data for customer identity and HTTP cookies and using solutions that provide full visibility into the customer journey. This also includes using concurrent tracking methods to capture what could be missed through another method.

Tell us some of the work you're doing to push its adoption.

We've dedicated resources across almost all our teams at CJ to getting adoption of our solutions, and we tie that adoption success to the goals we set for our business and for our clients. This requires that our teams can show and articulate the value of our solutions, through data, case-studies, and thought-leadership. Our goal with all of this is to help our advertisers and publishers understand their options and make the best decisions around what tracking technologies to use. We're also continuously focused on making our solutions easier for our clients to implement and faster to enable, through e-commerce plugins, templates, and creating varied integration options to meet our clients' technical needs. Taking this approach has allowed us to support our clients at scale, and we've seen tremendous success.

App tracking tends to get overlooked. What are you doing to make sure it doesn't?

CJ provides various technical options to enable in-app tracking, which gives our clients flexibility to do what works for them. We also partner with mobile measurement partners (MMPs) to make sure our tracking is easy to enable for our shared clients. During client onboarding, we guide and support our clients through setting up tracking for all their shopping properties, which requires education and technical resources from our operations teams at CJ.

There's so much confusion about tracking because every network uses different terms. Is it essentially all the same?

Yes and no. The fundamentals are the same, but details matter. The technology choices in the tracking solutions created by each network are often what sets solutions apart, because those choices influence how resilient tracking is to changes over time, and the ability for the networks to improve those solutions. Networks also have varying approaches on how much transparency they push for, especially from advertisers. At CJ, we push advertisers to tag every page of their site, and track all their traffic, so we can better understand complete customer journeys. This also allows us to see better when tracking is not working as expected. This gives us opportunities to more fairly compensate publishers and creates more equity in the partnerships on our network.

What does the future of affiliate tracking look like?

Tracking customer journeys the way we used to just isn't possible, and accurate tracking requires comprehensive solutions that need to be adopted by both publishers and advertisers. Measuring performance requires looking at traditional metrics, like conversion rate, and combining this with aggregate metrics that provide visibility into total tracking but may not provide event-level data. This likely results in more hybrid payment models that include options beyond CPA, things like CPC and pay-out adjustments to compensate for missed tracking. First-party data is increasingly important to understanding consumer behaviour because it's now the only option for identifying customers in a persistent way. Just an example of this, cross-device tracking is now only possible using first-party identifiers as Chrome begins their third-party cookie deprecation. As networks, we're responsible for advocating for the value our channel provides. With tracking being at the core of measuring that value, we need to advocate for better tracking and transparency, and show our clients why adopting new solutions and measurement models is key.



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More information:

<https://www.financeads.com/start-your-financial-affiliate-program/>



Cristian Bobocel
Technical Acct Manager

In one sentence, what makes your tracking so good?

At financeAds, our tracking technology excels due to its seamless integration, real-time data accuracy, and robust compliance with GDPR and forthcoming privacy regulations.

Now explain to me how it works as if I'm a five-year-old...

Imagine you have a magic notebook where you jot down every time your friend comes over and the games you play. Every time they visit because you invited them, your parents give you a star sticker. Our tracking is like that magic notebook, making sure you get your star every time someone visits because of your invite.

How are we going to get rid of third-party cookies from the affiliate channel once and for all?

We're proactively transitioning to server-side and first-party tracking technologies, which are more reliable and privacy-friendly than third-party cookies. This move not only aligns with global privacy trends but ensures our tracking keeps working even when browsers block third-party cookies.

What should best-in-class tracking do?

Best-in-class tracking should be invisible yet powerful—accurate, reliable, and consistent, no matter the platform or device. Plus, it should keep up with new rules and tech changes, protect user privacy, and give clear, useful data to advertisers and publishers.

Tell us some of the work you're doing to push its adoption.

We are continuously improving our tech, chatting with experts, and connecting with our community through workshops and seminars to stay up to date on trends and advanced tracking solutions.

App tracking tends to get overlooked. What are you doing to make sure it doesn't?

We place a strong emphasis on mobile and app tracking, ensuring our attribution will work also on mobile devices including a fallback to the desktop funnel. We give the highest priority to the testing phase together with the advertiser before we go live and monitor the performance of the campaign regularly (cross-device) to guarantee accuracy.

There's so much confusion about tracking because every network uses different terms. Is it essentially all the same?

While the basic goal of tracking—attributing actions to the right source—is shared across networks, the methodologies can vary significantly. At financeAds, we focus on transparency and clarity in how our tracking works, which helps demystify the process for our partners.

What does the future of affiliate tracking look like?

The future of affiliate tracking at financeAds is geared towards greater automation, enhanced accuracy, and deeper integration into advertisers' marketing stacks. As the digital world changes, so will our tracking tech, making sure it stays strong and up-to-date.



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More information:

<https://impact.com/partnership-track/>

In one sentence, what makes your tracking so good?

Our tracking works consistently across web and mobile app platforms without any need for third-party cookies — via simple ecommerce integrations, a reliable JavaScript tag, or flexible API connections.

Now explain to me how it works as if I'm a five-year-old...

Susie reads a story about some new clothes and decides she wants to buy them. When she clicks a link in that story, our system writes a little note that says “User 123 clicked on that partner’s link.” It’s important to respect Susie’s privacy, so we come up with a secret code instead of actually putting her name in the note. Later, when Susie buys some clothes, our system looks at that note and remembers that “User 123” is the same person who just bought something. That way, we can tell the clothing company that the partner helped Susie find them, and that they should give the partner some money to say “thank you.”

How are we going to get rid of third-party cookies from the affiliate channel once and for all?

This change has already happened — anyone relying on third-party cookies in 2024 is already missing out on a huge percentage of conversions that occur in Safari. If a brand is not sure whether their affiliate or partnerships platform relies on third-party cookies, they should have that conversation immediately. The real question now is “How can we stop worrying about browser policies affecting our tracking?” The answer to that question is server-to-server tracking, or APIs. As long as crucial data is stored in the user’s browser, there will always be some danger that a new browser policy will make it harder to connect a click to a conversion. Server-to-server tracking cuts out the browser middleman and sends all the necessary data directly to the tracking platform’s server on click. Later, the conversion data is sent to the tracking platform as well, and the platform can attribute the conversion to the earlier click, without relying on any data stored in the user’s browser.

What should best-in-class tracking do?

Best-in-class tracking should capture each interaction between the user and the partner, so that the brand can get a complete view of the conversion path — including not only clicks and conversions, but also app installs, form submissions, subscription upgrades, and every other meaningful event. Besides accomplishing all that, best-in-class tracking should be reliable, simple to set up, and adaptable to any use case — and it should not be vulnerable to new browser policies like cookie deprecation.

Tell us some of the work you’re doing to push its adoption.

As a partnerships platform, our role is to offer tracking methods that provide the best attribution rates for all brands and partners, regardless of their technical resources. We are continually improving our Universal Tracking Tag (UTT), as well as streamlining our plug-and-play integrations with integration partners like Shopify, Magento, BigCommerce, and HubSpot. Right now, we're working on some new tools to that will allow brands to proactively identify any gaps in their tracking setup and provide them concrete steps to increase tracking consistency when needed. This will also provide an extra level of transparency, so that publishers can see which of their brand partners are set up for maximum tracking efficacy. We're also rolling out a feature that will ensure tracking for loyalty and cashback publishers in regions where GDPR applies, even when users have not specifically opted in to be tracked. Since loyalty rewards can only function when tracking works, users who attempt to redeem these offers are considered to provide implicit consent. Our new feature will provide more consistent attribution in these scenarios.

App tracking tends to get overlooked. What are you doing to make sure it doesn't?

If a brand allows users to convert in their app, but is not tracking in-app conversions in their partnership program, they are massively undervaluing their program. Way back in 2019, we released TrueLink™ to provide in-app deep linking and mobile measurement. Since then, we've built that mobile focus into our DNA and we've worked with all the major mobile measurement providers (MMPs) and Customer Data Platforms (CDPs) to integrate their solutions as well. Each time we onboard a new brand, we work with them to learn how their users interact with their app and we ensure that they are set up to track every meaningful in-app event or app install, either through our own native solution or their MMP or CDP of choice.

There's so much confusion about tracking because every network uses different terms. Is it essentially all the same?

At the core, all tracking is essentially doing the same thing. But there are many ways to accomplish that tracking — some better than others — and that's led to much of the confusion. At impact.com, we're committed to supporting our clients every step of the way, helping them navigate through the complexities and ensuring they fully understand and benefit from our tracking solutions.

What does the future of affiliate tracking look like?

In the future, affiliate tracking will:

1. All take place in a server-to-server context, which means that no one will need to wonder whether Apple or Google's latest update will affect their tracking
2. Follow Privacy by Design principles, which means that it will collect the data needed to attribute conversions and inform marketing decisions without compromising the user's privacy; and
3. Be simple to integrate, thanks to one-click plugins and streamlined onboarding flows.

At impact.com, we're committed to pushing the industry forward in these areas.



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<https://www.kwanko.com/tech-for-advertisers/>

In one sentence, what makes your tracking so good?

We've been in the affiliate market for over 20 years now. Our tracking is always evolving, adapting to market changes. Our technology is fully GDPR compliant and perfectly suited for the cookieless future.

Now explain to me how it works as if I'm a five-year-old...

Picture yourself walking into a sweet shop to buy just one sweet. The owner tells you that sweet costs £1, but if you bring along a friend who also buys sweets here, you'll get an extra sweet or even some extra cash. The more friends you bring, the more sweets or money you'll get. However, to ensure you get the right amount, the shop owner will keep a record of your visits in a book, noting down everything: how many times you've been in, which of your friends made purchases, and for how much, and so on.

How are we going to get rid of third-party cookies from the affiliate channel once and for all?

For tracking conversions, we've got solutions in place, and most of our campaigns are compliant. We suggest either using a 1st party tracking method or a server-side method. However, the real challenge lies in handling the publisher's side, particularly with partners like retargeting. There are different methods we can explore, such as 1st party data matching, alternative ID solutions, privacy sandbox, and so on.

What should best-in-class tracking do?

Its crucial function is to track accurately and reliably without any interruptions. The top-notch tracking system should consider all market developments and seamlessly adapt to these changes. We also need to ensure compliance to safeguard user privacy and data security.

Tell us some of the work you're doing to push its adoption.

We're constantly keeping an eye on market trends to make sure our tracking system stays up to par with all the requirements. We work closely with advertisers and publishers, advocating for top-tier solutions and optimisations. Our goal is to provide the most accurate tracking possible, tailored to today's varied market demands, particularly when it comes to cookie challenges. On top of that, we prioritise offering tracking solutions that are simple to implement, which is why we've invested in incorporating e-commerce plugins.

App tracking tends to get overlooked. What are you doing to make sure it doesn't?

Our publishing team is actively reaching out to publishers with apps and mobile tracking capabilities. We're constantly updating our directories with this information. At the same time, our sales and account managers are ensuring that clients possess apps, enabling us to efficiently drive traffic and generate conversions for them. We've implemented dedicated solutions to track app conversions effectively.

There's so much confusion about tracking because every network uses different terms. Is it essentially all the same?

Indeed, the terms used may vary by different networks but we all have essentially the same goal: provide our clients with the consistent tracking that adheres to the market regulations.

What does the future of affiliate tracking look like?

The affiliate tracking system needs to align with the evolving requirements of privacy and security, especially in a cookieless environment. The upcoming months bring forth substantial challenges for the affiliate industry. Moreover, with technology advancing swiftly, it's imperative for us to adapt and provide easily integrable solutions for our clients. Affiliate tracking is by nature privacy friendly as what matters is the affiliate, not the individual, and we must remember that other actors are not working for us, even if they claim working for privacy sandboxing.



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More information:

[Tracking Setup Guide | Optimise Knowledge - Help & Support \(optimisemedia.com\)](#)

In one sentence, what makes your tracking so good?

We deliver versatility, reliability and ease of integration through our Universal Tracking, Server to Server (S2S) Tracking and multiple integrations backed by first party data with a flexible data layer.

Now explain to me how it works as if I'm a five-year-old...

We work with our friends to put special tags on their websites. These special tags help us see when people visit or do things like ask for prices or buy stuff. Then, we can discover which friend sent the person to the store and give them a prize for bringing in a customer.

How are we going to get rid of third-party cookies from the affiliate channel once and for all?

Optimise uses first party cookies for tracking and has done for several years. We have worked very closely with our Advertisers to ensure that third-party cookies are not in use in any part of the tracked Affiliate journey, or conversion validation process. We also ensure that any new advertisers do not implement tracking that uses third-party cookies.

What should best-in-class tracking do?

What Tracking configurations need to deliver has become increasingly complex, as we demand more from each configuration to keep pace with evolutions in the digital landscape and Advertiser's expectations from the channel. At its core though, it's about accurately and consistently tracking events, conversions, and their attributes, across devices and in-app. In doing this it ensures Partners are correctly rewarded for all customer actions they refer, that Advertisers have precise transparency on the volume and value of these customer actions and that customers have a high level of satisfaction in the brand experience, ensuring that conversions from cashback Affiliates are consistently tracked. Finally, and importantly, it needs to be versatile enough to mitigate risks presented by 3rd parties, whether that's browsers or legislators and regulators. At Optimise we've worked hard to ensure that our tracking solutions deliver these things and continue to innovate, as the channel evolves.

Tell us some of the work you're doing to push its adoption.

We work very closely with new advertisers to ensure they implement our most reliable tracking solution. Our tracking is very easy to implement, and we provide support and documentation to assist Advertisers during the implementation process. We constantly monitor our tracking data to identify any possible issues and we have worked extensively with our existing Advertisers to upgrade their tracking to our newest technology, providing additional resources, guidance and hands on support where required.

App tracking tends to get overlooked. What are you doing to make sure it doesn't?

We actively promote and work with Advertisers to implement App Tracking and integrating into their existing stack. We ensure transparency for Partners by showing where App Tracking is enabled.

There's so much confusion about tracking because every network uses different terms. Is it essentially all the same?

Yes, fundamentally all tracking is there to achieve the same goal. There are important nuances though which, depending on the strategic or commercial goals an Advertiser has, can make a big difference to the effectiveness of an integration. At Optimise we work closely with our Advertisers and provide them with the tools to maximise the data that they track, ensuring they get the answers they're looking for.

What does the future of affiliate tracking look like?

Server to Server tracking will continue to become the go-to solution for conversion tracking. Simpler integrations with one-click setups where possible will make this easier and drive quicker adoption. Flexible integrations and easily accessible data for measuring and delivering ROI are key. Optimise is committed to continual innovation in Tracking and are already developing new capabilities in these areas.

Rakuten Advertising



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More information:

[Surviving iOS: Your Guide to Cookieless Tracking and Affiliate Marketing](#)

In one sentence, what makes your tracking so good?

At Rakuten Advertising, we put the groundwork in during the early days to ensure our core tracking and attribution processes don't rely on 3rd party cookies, regardless of the integration method, and that's why they withstand the test of time. This is backed by ongoing testing that we've done with a multitude of clients, which shows little to no impact to their performance.

Now explain to me how it works as if I'm a five-year-old...

Imagine a football team with a player called "Affiliate" who brings in new fans to watch the game. When Affiliate brings in a new fan, they give them a special stamp on their hand to show that they came to the game because of Affiliate. Then, when the game is over, the team looks at all the fans with stamps and gives Affiliate a point for each one. This helps the team know how many fans Affiliate brought to the game and gives them a prize for doing so. Affiliate marketing tracking works in a similar way. We keep track of how many fans each player brings to the game and then gives them accurate credit for it, which feeds into optimisation tactics within our technology like Forecasting and Conversion Journey in our Insights and Analytics Portal.

How are we going to get rid of third-party cookies from the affiliate channel once and for all?

At Rakuten Advertising, we fully embrace the shift towards first-party data. We know that server-side tracking mitigates the challenges presented by Apple's ITP or changes to Google Analytics and Chrome. Leveraging server-side advertiser tracking and first-party publisher data for affiliate partnerships generates new monetisation opportunities for publishers and allows brands to target the right audience effectively. This creates a win-win scenario for all by allowing publishers to personalise their on-site experience without requiring 3rd party cookies to track users across the internet. Advertisers and Publishers will still need to adapt to the change in user-level fidelity that they may have leaned on in the past for their marketing strategies, but we feel that the timely emergence of generative AI will aid in this transition. Additionally, to help advertisers find and action on hyper targeted audiences, we created Audience Engine – an industry-first solution we specifically built to empower publishers to utilise first-party data for unique commission rates that leverage audiences with the highest potential value for advertisers.

What should best-in-class tracking do?

First and foremost, it should be resilient, reliable and constantly tested! The rapid pace at which our industry is changing means best-in-class tracking must be adaptable to change without requiring heavy tech investments from advertisers. Solutions that track the entire purchase journey, regardless of channel, provide a deeper level of measurement and insights that allow brands and publishers to make smarter optimisations and performance decisions. Importantly it needs to do all of this while respecting the spirit of consumer privacy.

Tell us some of the work you're doing to push its adoption.

All Rakuten Advertising integrations support tracking without 3rd party cookies. The majority of our advertisers have always had server-side integrations, and those that didn't, have had their tracking upgraded to support 1st party and server-side cookies.

Since Apple first announced ITP in 2017, we've been evolving our processes and technologies to be independent of 3rd party cookies to maintain tracking integrity for publishers. We also recognise the current tracking challenges are industry-wide, so we need to band together to overcome them. That's why we partner with industry bodies like The APMA to help drive awareness and education. We are constantly testing our tracking and sharing results with our clients, publisher partners and the industry, and we're also creating an ongoing feedback loop. We're meeting with our clients and partners to hear their concerns and challenges first-hand and then feeding this into our product roadmap.

Our teams on the frontline are also given in-depth training to ensure they have the knowledge needed to support our advertiser and publisher partners. As Affiliate becomes more prominent as a monetisation strategy for content publishers, we are also providing education opportunities on affiliate tracking, and more specifically, how it has no dependency on cross-site tracking of users (3rd party cookies) for revenue.

App tracking tends to get overlooked. What are you doing to make sure it doesn't?

We're strong advocates for app tracking. We encourage our clients to implement app tracking during the onboarding and program set-up stage. Our app tracking utilises a simple code integration for advertisers, measuring app installs and conversions using any affiliate link promoted within a publisher's app or mobile webpage. This data then feeds into our industry-leading Insights and Analytics Portal (IAP). Because of this, we have invested in partnerships with Tune, Button, AppsFlyer, Adjust, Kochava, Singular and Branch, and bring the data and insights from these platforms into our Insights and Analytics Portal, consolidating reporting into a central location for advertisers.

There's so much confusion about tracking because every network uses different terms. Is it essentially all the same?

The underlying tracking concepts are mostly the same regardless of affiliate network or platform. Where it differs depends on how transactions are attributed and commissioned. And that's where different systems can be a challenge. They use different methods and views of data.

What does the future of affiliate tracking look like?

Affiliate tracking will continue to evolve, and it's important to have a solution that has the agility to change with the industry – and that requires minimal effort on tech teams when the changes happen. The industry will shift, it will be out with the old and in with the new. As the use of 3rd party cookies depreciates, new innovations will come to light, and AI will continue to change the landscape and provide new perspectives that can help fill in the gaps as cookies depreciate.

We're constantly looking at ways to incorporate new and emerging technology to help our clients and publisher partners. We call this Affiliate Intelligence, with innovative insights and technology at the forefront to lead the industry in affiliate marketing.



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In one sentence, what makes your tracking so good?

Tradedoubler's 25 years of experience, using a conversion focus approach, with a robust Application Programming Interface (API) suite – tailored around our tracking and ability to automatically adapt to new challenges means we're confident we can fulfil our client's needs.

Now explain to me how it works as if I'm a five-year-old...

You're viewing your favourite website, see a pair of trainers you want to buy online, you click on a unique Tradedoubler link and arrive at the product. Tradedoubler then tracks the journey of this purchase from start to finish so the client can see at a glance how the purchase was made and the publisher can be paid as a thank you for introducing the sale. If anyone tries to block the flow of information about the sale, Tradedoubler's tracking system has the flexibility to change and provide back up to ensure the sale is tracked and the publisher is paid.

How are we going to get rid of third-party cookies from the affiliate channel once and for all?

Tradedoubler has moved on from third-party cookies: we introduced support for first-party cookies over 15 years and migrated all our clients to first party cookie tracking in 2019. This is extended by external first party identifiers (hashed email addresses) and cookie-less tracking; used to maximise tracking coverage – especially in situations where cookies cannot be used (such as QR codes, web-to-app or offline conversions).

What should best-in-class tracking do?

Best-in-class tracking should constantly evolve and be prepared for changes before they happen. The best tracking doesn't focus too much on one area. Tracking with first-party cookies is the strongest tracking available and server-to-server integrations can get around privacy/blocking issues but it's important not to neglect other forms of tracking (such as Cross Device tracking, finger-printing, AI/machine learning etc). It's also key for tracking to plug in effectively with Data Privacy – configuring Consent Management Platforms (CMP) to maximise tracking coverage while also being GDPR compliant is vital to keeping tracking in a healthy state.

Tell us some of the work you're doing to push its adoption.

Tradedoubler has constantly innovated to remain ahead of the curve. Over the last few years, we have added more and more functionality to our tracking, including anti-ad blocking, fallback tracking, consent toggles as well as many others. On the subject of consent, we are looking at a business level at getting the most out of consent management. This includes native tracking support, educating advertisers and publishers on the best setups and regular monitoring of sites to minimise risk of tracking loss.

App tracking tends to get overlooked. What are you doing to make sure it doesn't?

Contractually, we consider app tracking to be a part of the client's tracking service. For all clients with app capabilities, we have developed integrations with their chosen Mobile Measurement Platform (MMP) so we can track in-app. For clients without an MMP, we have proprietary SDKs and support S2S app integrations to make sure conversions are counted.

There's so much confusion about tracking because every network uses different terms. Is it essentially all the same?

In essence all affiliate networks are trying to solve the same problem, Tradedoubler believes the way forward is providing a solution offering control and visibility to brands, enabling understanding of the driving force behind what makes the tracking work effectively.

What does the future of affiliate tracking look like?

While the future will likely include more restrictions on how we can track, it is difficult to say for sure exactly what will change. To that end, affiliate networks need to keep a flexible approach and try to keep one step ahead. Investing in other technologies, such as AI and machine learning, is also vital to remaining relevant. We don't want to spoil the surprise, but Tradedoubler also has a major tracking solution launching this summer. Stay tuned for more.



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More information: <https://www.webgains.com/public/en/tracking-breaking-the-barrier/>

[‘We Need to Talk About Tracking’ with Webgains CTO Samuel Rodman](#)

In one sentence, what makes your tracking so good?

Our tracking is fully GDPR compliant, 1st party with S2S backup technology.

Now explain to me how it works as if I’m a five-year-old...

Imagine sending a letter to a friend, the letter has a postage stamp on it, and when the letter arrives at the post office it’s stamped with a really big number, your friend likes their letter so sends a thank you card back. An affiliate network is like the post office and you and your friend are advertisers and publishers.

How are we going to get rid of third-party cookies from the affiliate channel once and for all?

Overcoming the reliance on third-party cookies in the affiliate industry is a big challenge, the industry is always exploring alternatives like first-party cookies, which ensures privacy compliance. However, certain types of affiliates, especially those reliant on cross-site tracking for revenue, are understandably hesitant to migrate away from third-party cookies. As an industry, we will need to look at how best to navigate the alternatives such as Universal IDs, Google privacy sandbox, Apple’s Private Click Measurement and Publishers looking closer at new methods such as Contextual targeting methods.

What should best-in-class tracking do?

Best-in-class tracking should ensure uninterrupted tracking accuracy and reliability for affiliate marketers operating within the network’s ecosystem. Additionally, the tracking system should prioritise user privacy and data protection.

Tell us some of the work you’re doing to push its adoption.

Webgains tracking has been first-party only, since 2019, ensuring compliance with privacy regulations while maintaining consistent tracking. We also continuously make improvements to enhance tracking accuracy, even in cases where cookies may not be available. Furthermore, we have the option of server-to-server tracking technology, allowing for seamless attribution across devices and platforms.

App tracking tends to get overlooked. What are you doing to make sure it doesn’t?

To ensure app tracking isn't overlooked, we actively look to support in-app tracking capabilities through our server-to-server tracking solution. Additionally, we're currently in the process of developing integrated partner solutions with leading SDK providers like Adjust, AppsFlyer and other prominent players in the market. This initiative aims to provide comprehensive tracking coverage across both web and app channels, ensuring seamless attribution and performance optimisation for our affiliate partners.

There's so much confusion about tracking because every network uses different terms. Is it essentially all the same?

While terminologies vary from network to network, the underlying principles of click, impression and conversion tracking are fundamentally the same. However, simplification in the terms used across networks could help to build consumer confidence.

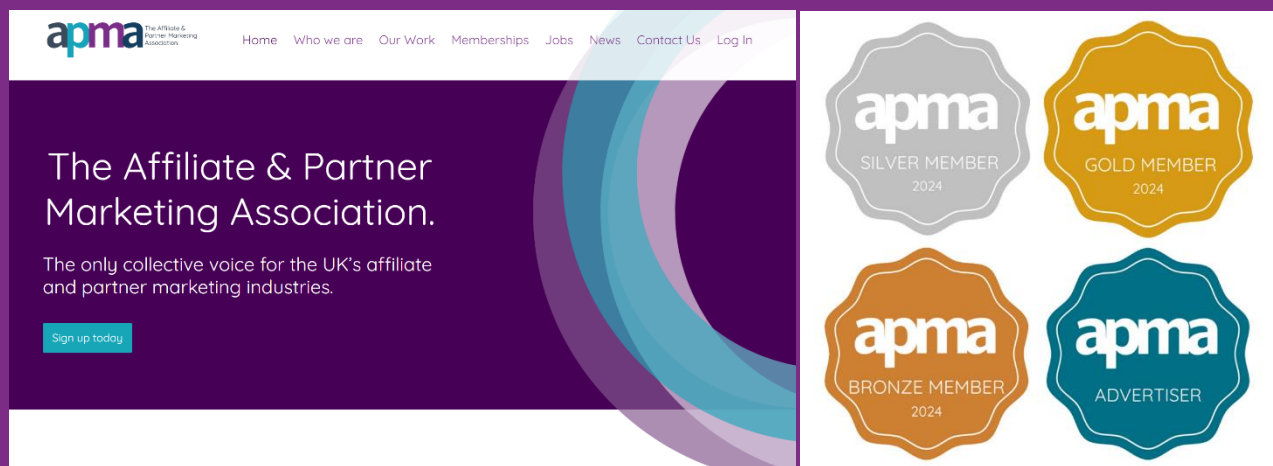
What does the future of affiliate tracking look like?

The future of affiliate tracking will continue to evolve an increased emphasis on privacy-compliant tracking methods, such as first-party data utilisation and consent-based tracking, alongside advancements in AI and machine learning we are likely to see more accurate attribution modelling as well as better methods of targeting. Ultimately the connections/relationship between publishers and advertisers will need to get closer. Additionally, with technology such as blockchain, we may see improvements to transparency and security in tracking transactions.

Thank you for reading!

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