

COUNTDOWN TO

2022

THE PUBLISHER'S GUIDE

TO **FIRST-PARTY DATA**

**BY COLLECTING, ANALYZING,
AND LEVERAGING FIRST-PARTY
DATA, PUBLISHERS CAN CREATE
CHANNELS AND AN AUDIENCE THAT
IS TRULY PROPRIETARY.**

**THE PUBLISHER BECOMES THE
SINGLE BEST WAY TO REACH THEIR
AUDIENCE.**

**AND THE PUBLISHER ALSO HAS
THE MOST POWERFUL INSIGHTS
INTO WHAT THEIR AUDIENCE WILL
FIND RELEVANT, MEANINGFUL, AND
ENGAGING.**

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INTRODUCTION

In less than 12 months, Google Chrome will follow Mozilla Firefox and Apple Safari in disabling third-party cookies in its browser and transform how ad tracking and privacy work on the internet forever.

Browsers and third-party cookies have been brokering advertising deals for over 20 years. The onus is now on publishers to develop and implement their unique systems for data tracking and trading, and the clock is ticking — 2022 is right around the corner.

What's certain is that third-party cookies' death will create a more fragmented ecosystem for ad sales and challenge publishers' profitability. Those who respond quickly and implement a proprietary first-party data system will better mitigate the threat of revenue loss — and build the foundation for future growth and profitability. Those who respond slowly will fall behind. A 2019 study by Google found that without a first-party data strategy in place, the top 500 global publishers could face a potential revenue loss of 52%.

Many of the articles published online about the death of the third-party cookie focus on the complexities of transitioning to a first-party ecosystem, and how difficult it may be for publishers to adapt. Our goal is to provide some relief; a simplified overview of how we got here, what's happening next, and what constitutes a new first-party ecosystem for competitive publishers.

Death of third party cookies will have a **significant impact** on publishers' profits from programmatic advertising.

ADS NOW TRADED VIA PROGRAMMATIC METHODS

>**75%** 
DISPLAY

>**50%** 
VIDEO

SELL-SIDE
INVENTORY
SOLD VIA
ADS.TXT FILE* **60%**

Once third-party cookies are killed by Chrome, **up to 95%** of the non-walled-garden retargeting cookies will be diminished and significantly impact how publishers earn revenue from programmatic advertising.

*Side Note for Publishers:

ads.txt files give publishers some control over who's allowed to sell ads on their sites and helps prevent counterfeit inventory from being presented to advertisers via third-party cookies.

FIRST, LET'S REVIEW HOW WE GOT HERE.

Third-party cookies have been the base for programmatic advertising intended for ad serving and cross-site tracking since 1994.

The main functions of third-party cookies have been:

- **Personalized ad targeting**
- **Cross-site retargeting**
- **Social buttons posting**
- **Third-party services placing (such as chatbot)**
- **Impressions measuring to user actions**
- **Detailed analysis**

Despite the effectiveness of their functions, Firefox, Safari and Chrome are killing third-party cookies because they're dubious. They follow users and log their activity as data without users' knowledge or consent



Consent

Media attention has helped to generate an increased awareness of third-party tracking and “surveillance capitalism,” leading to a significant influx of retaliatory ad blockers among users who resent the functions of third-party cookies. People have been shocked to learn they leave a “trail of crumbs” for advertisers to follow and unwittingly relaying information among parties they haven’t consented to engage.



Ad Blockers

Most people don’t know how to clear their cache (or want to sweep away their trail of crumbs every time they use a web browser), so ad blockers have been the de facto solution for users to resist third-party tracking. Contrary to popular belief, people don’t use ad blockers because they dislike advertising. Rather, they want some control over how their data is sold to advertisers.



Privacy Regulations

Lack of consent in third-party tracking has also inspired sweeping data privacy-centred laws and policies, such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in the UK and Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA) in Canada. Publishers that have felt increasingly challenged to operate within the boundaries of privacy regulations and ad blockers will find relief in a more open and transparent online-advertising ecosystem that runs on full transparency, albeit more fragmented.

“The shift to an advertising paradigm based on real identity, not cobbled-together proxies from a bunch of third party cookies, is the future of advertising - and a **real opportunity for publishers.”**

— Mark Zohar, Chief Operating Officer, Viafoura

WHAT'S HAPPENING NEXT

When one door closes, another one opens. Death of the third party cookie is giving publishers the freedom to shift their attention away from the third-party programmatic ad model towards a first-party ecosystem rooted in declared audiences and authenticated first-party data for the first time in over 20 years. The media business is returning to a golden era of great content and growing audiences. **Here's what publishers stand to gain with a first-party strategy:**



The Power To Collect Fully Consented Data

First-party data is fully consented data. It's authenticated by users who create “logged in” profiles so they can comment on articles or register their user preferences to receive more personalized notifications from a publisher. In a first-party system, publishers are transparent with how and why they are collecting first-party data, and users opt-in with full consent. The popularity of ad blockers will likely disappear.



The Opportunity To Build A “Known” Audience

Converting users from “unknown” to “known” will be a crucial focus for publishers seeking to bridge their first-party data with the advertising ecosystem. When users feel motivated to opt-in by an attractive value exchange and become “known” to a publisher, they willfully supply first-party data that publishers can use to identify their audience segments and serve personalized ads, and experiences.



The Ability To Drive Community Engagement

Creating a better value exchange will lead to a more engaged community. Two benefits of building an active community are subscribers and ad revenue. Publishers that implement community engagement tools will dig deep into their core audience’s behaviour and interest through user, engagement, behaviour, and preference data. Publishers can then plug that raw data into their paywall, business intelligence, CRM and data management platforms to offer more personalized and targeted subscription offers, advertising and content recommendations.



The Benefits Of Better Content Performance

First-party data offers publishers a considerable opportunity to grow their content performance with personalized recommendations (push notifications) informed by data collected from logged-in users. Personalization gives users what they want (and ask for) and leads to higher engagement while respecting opt-outs. Investing in personalization tools will pay off with serious rewards.

“The quality, accuracy and resolution of first-party data are much higher than third-party. First-party data can compensate for the drop from third-party too.”

FIRST-PARTY DATA OWNERSHIP

First-party data ownership will save many publishers' faltering ad businesses by giving them exclusive possession of their audience information.

Ownership will become increasingly important when publishers pitch advertisers their first-party data sets and soon become the pillar of programmatic advertising sales. The sooner that publishers begin developing their first-party data sets, the better (and more significant) their programmatic ad sales outcomes will be.

In fact, according to [Boston Consulting Group](#), publishers that link all of their first-party data sources can generate double the incremental revenue from a single ad placement.

THE BENEFITS OF A USER-CENTERED MODEL

We now know why a first-party ecosystem is favourable to publishers, but we've only briefly touched on how it's advantageous to users.

Let's dive a little deeper into some of the benefits that a user-centric model offers media consumers.



Member Experience

Central to a user-centric model is a rich membership experience. Someone who opts for a paid membership is motivated to be part of a media community; interacting with others, sharing ideas and opinions in the comments, and engaging in a two-way conversation with publishers. They also desire everything that a membership experience can offer; access to exclusive content, special features, personalized invitation to live or digital events, and every other flavour of goodie encased behind the paywall. These users want the crème de la crème that a publisher can offer and are willing to give their first-party data in return.

[Read: Quick and Easy Ways to Enhance Your Premium Subscription Experience](#)



Civil Discourse

Also central to a user-centric model is civil discourse. The value of civility has reached an all-time high, and increasing numbers of people seek publishers who can guarantee its presence. Online spaces are unique social environments that can make civil discourse exciting but challenging, given how commonplace trolling and hate speech have become online. Today, people want media publishers to provide reliable moderation, politeness and civility in live chats, comment sections, and discussion threads where political, social and cultural discussions are popular, but trolls typically thrive.



Reliable Comment Moderation

Reliable comment moderation will ensure civil discourse in live chats, comment sections and discussion threads and attract high-quality users seeking spaces where they can express their views and hear from others. People seeking community engagement and connectedness are on the lookout for symbols of reliable comment moderation, like “Editor’s Picks” and “Trusted User” badges, and the absolute absence of hate speech and abuse spread by trolls.

Side Note for Publishers:

Enabling reliable comment moderation **can increase page views by 248% and attention time by 364%.** This increased engagement leads to higher registrations and subscriptions since engaged users are more likely to pay for premium services.



Personalized Content

First-party ecosystems create better customer experiences by delivering personalized content to users at the right time for their evolving needs and interests. First-party data creates a wealth of knowledge about user behaviours and interests. Publishers can use that data to segment their audiences and market their content accordingly — like sending a premium collection of tennis podcasts, quizzes, and retail offers in the weeks leading up to the US Open, for example. A personalized customer experience that truly adds value will bring consumers to engage with your brand on a significant level.



Personalized Ads

We mentioned earlier that people don't use ad blockers because they dislike ads. Instead, they want to see ads targeted to their wants, needs and interests delivered at the right time. The first-party ecosystem allows users to answer “yes” or “no” to the question of tracking their behaviour with full transparency on how their data will be used, including ad targeting. Any user who opts in will receive personalized ads that are helpful and relevant in their customer journey, and ultimately create more success for advertisers.

SO WHAT CONSTITUTES A FIRST-PARTY SYSTEM?

We've explained why Chrome is killing cookies, how publishers will return to a golden era of great content and growing audiences, and why the first-party system is significantly more beneficial to users.

But what exactly constitutes a first-party system?

What tools do publishers need to implement, and just how challenging will the transition be?

IT'S SIMPLER THAN YOU MAY THINK.

AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT > EVERYTHING

Audience engagement is a critical driver of conversion and first-party user data. Audience engagement is a mostly untapped method of increasing first-party data and represents the lowest-hanging fruit for media organizations to leverage for building their collections.

Some publishers have shied away from audience engagement and the costs associated with managing and cultivating thriving communities. However, modern automated technology makes audience engagement significantly more cost-effective and viable for all publishers to collect first-party data via commonplace audience interactions on their websites.

Engagement tools can collect first-party data when users interact with their website in a variety of ways:

- **When they click an article to read it**
- **When they opt-in to a marketing offer**
- **When they share a piece of content on social media**
- **When they leave a comment on an article or in a live chat**

We know from our data at Viafoura that even the most straightforward implementation of audience engagement tools can drive between

30-50%

of all user registrations on our customer sites.

We also know that engaged users spend

3x

as much time on-site than non-engaged users,

and that registered users generated

20x

more page views and time-spent on-site per month than non-registered users.

AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT TOOL: PERSONALIZED PROFILES FOR USER AUTHENTICATION

Personalized profiles turn readers into “logged in users” who have the power to share feedback, interact with content, follow topics of interest, and comment anywhere on your site. They’re frictionless tools, offering straightforward username, email and social sign-on options because you want as many users as possible to create personalized profiles on your site.

Top benefits of personalized profiles include:

- **Audience implementation tools can drive between 30 to 50 per cent of all user registrations on consumer sites.**
- **Registered users generate 20X more page views and time on site per month than non-registered**
- **Qualifies fully-consented data.**
- **Leads to better content performance.**
- **Builds an engaged community.**

[Read More: The True Power of Your Engaged Users](#)

User authentication allows publishers to store and track their activity server-side, regardless of how browsers and regulators evolve their privacy restrictions in the future. Plus, user retention and frequency are crucial because engaged and authenticated users are significantly more likely to return for more.

AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT TOOL: COMMUNITY CHAT FOR HIGH USER ENGAGEMENT

Community chat tools drive high engagement with all types of live conversations — for significant events, like the Oscars and the Olympics, or local events unique to your brand. They can be embedded in various locations on your site, like in-line with articles, in a sidebar, or embedded within an app. The best community chat tools are activated, managed and moderated on the front-end, so they're effortless for your team members to operate.

Top benefits of a community chat tool include:

- **Engaged users have a 50% retention rate in month two versus 3% for non-engaged users.**
- **Engaged users spend 3X more time on site than non-engaged users.**
- **Flags and disables uncivilized comments.**
- **Ensures toxic messages never get seen.**
- **Identifies meaningful contributors for subscription offers.**
- **Provides you with first-party data on community engagement.**

AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT TOOL: COMMENT MODERATION FOR BUILDING COMMUNITY

Commenting tools are brilliant for growing your community, encouraging engagement, and collecting first-party data. The best commenting tools offer in-line ad spaces that work with your ad server tags and yield optimization systems. They should also be intelligent enough to maximize the number of ads seen by active and engage users without compromising overall community engagement and while generating incremental ad revenue.

Top benefits of an automated comment moderation tool:

- **Provides easy-to-use comment feature for users.**
- **Gives advertisers a new channel for reaching audience segments with personalized ads.**
- **Provides rich first-party data on community engagement trends.**
- **Rewards meaningful contributors with “Top User” badges.**
- **Prevents toxicity.**

QUICK RECAP

A few months remain before Chrome follows Firefox and Safari to **kill third-party cookies and transform how ad tracking and privacy work on the internet forever.**

Today, most of the Chrome ads rely on third-party cookies, track users and their identities. Tomorrow, third-party cookies will be gone, and publishers will need a new system for monitoring users and trading data, and compelling advertisers to invest in their audiences.

Publishers need to move quickly to develop and implement their unique systems for data tracking and trading.

The clock is ticking — 2022 is right around the corner — but publishers still have time to prepare and build their unique first-party systems.

The good news is that first-party systems are way better for publishers and users:

Benefits for Publishers:

- Provide fully consented data
- Build trust with users
- Facilitate a better value exchange
- Drive community engagement
- Improve content performance with personalization
- Give publishers full ownership of their user data

Benefits for Users:

- Creates a richer membership experience
- Provides reliable moderation and civil discourse/ protection from trolls
- Delivers a personalized content experience
- Sends relevant and customized ads

The first-party ecosystem will help resolve some of the biggest challenges that publishers have faced, like the popularity of ad blockers and privacy policies designed to protect consumers but restrict how publishers engage with their audiences.

Now, publishers can put community engagement at the forefront of their growth plans with tools that collect first-party data beautifully and serve users a superior brand experience. The features that every publisher needs in their first-party data collection toolkit include:

Personalized Profiles

Turn readers into “logged in users” who share feedback, interact with content, follow topics of interest, and comment anywhere on your site.

Community Chat

Designed for the front-end to drive engagement with all types of live conversations — for significant events, like the Oscars and the Olympics, or local events unique to your brand

Commenting

Intelligent enough to maximize the number of ads seen by active and engage users without compromising overall community engagement.

The first-party ecosystem is rooted in community engagement. The best tools for publishers to implement and collect first-party data all offer users a better, more prosperous and more rewarding experience with your brand.

TAKING FIRST-PARTY DATA INTO YOUR OWN HANDS

Publishers can reclaim their audience and their revenue opportunity by building a proprietary high resolution first-party audience that can be targeted by advertisers and marketers based on contextual and behavioural signals.

By collecting, analyzing, and leveraging first-party data, publishers can create channels and an audience that is truly proprietary. The publisher becomes the single best way to reach their audience. And the publisher also has the most powerful insights into what their audience will find relevant, meaningful, and engaging.

Gathering, storing, cleansing, and combining consumer data from multiple first-party sources is critical. Simply collecting data does not unlock its potential. Only when data sources are integrated and linked to marketing activation will companies see significant increases in ROI.

It's time to build your first-party ecosystem and customer data for community engagement, civil discourse, ads targeting, and so much more.



Start Collecting First-Party Data Today

ENGAGE YOUR AUDIENCE

Use personalized profiles, community chat, and comment moderation tools to authenticate your audience, drive engagement, and build your community for first-party data collection.

Collect fully consented data at every touchpoint.

Manage a better member experience, civil discourse, comment moderation, personalized content and ads, all within Viafoura.

GET STARTED NOW

Viafoura partners with over 600 media brands to engage, convert and monetize their digital audiences. Using best-in-class engagement and content moderation solutions, Viafoura helps companies create active, civil and loyal online communities — all while driving higher registrations and subscriptions.

**Find out how we can help you
reach your audience engagement goals today.**