

WHITEPAPER

# Getting attribution right

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Your white paper by  **eulerian.**

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**Nicolas Levaique**  
Head of products



**Mike Bettan**  
Head of Media Technology  
and Innovation France

**Etienne Paulin**  
Expertise and Innovation  
Media Manager

**Claire Marx**  
Senior Data Analyst

**Carolyn Chomcy**  
Senior Data Analyst

**Claire Gérard**  
Senior Data Analyst

**Hugo Lorient**  
Managing Director US



**Nathalie Dufayet**  
Media Manager



**Gilles Giudicelli**  
Head of Research

**Antoine Pietravalle**  
Customer Solutions & Innovation  
Director Southern & Eastern Europe

**Paolo Terzi**  
Analytics Manager



**Damien Monier**  
Head of Data Traffic & CRM



**Emmanuel Brunet**  
CEO

**Marie-Caroline Rougé**  
Content & Project Manager



**Sonia Peiron**  
Marketing Science Partner

**Beth Antonelli**  
Measurement Business  
Marketing Manager

**Georges Augue**  
Marketing Science Lead  
Southern Europe

**Simon Camuzet**  
Marketing Science Partner

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# Attribution and its challenges

There once was a time when a customer's path to purchase was fairly simple. Now, times have changed.

Today a customer can use a variety of devices and channels to arrive at a single unique conversion.

What does that look like? Let's take Laura. She wakes up and starts her morning by scrolling through her Facebook News Feed. She comes across a sponsored post that's advertising a discount on sneakers. Laura loves sneakers. She clicks on the link and starts her visit. But now it's time to get on with her day, so she puts her curiosity on pause. A bit later she goes back to the sponsoring site by clicking directly on the browser icon on her computer desktop. But her interest has faded, so she doesn't buy. A few days later, however, she opens a newsletter that reminds her of the offer. She clicks and completes her purchase.

This is a hypothetical path to purchase that can stretch out over many days and bring many marketing channels into play.

Marketers, there are probably a number of questions you're already wondering about. Which channels played a part in the conversion? How should you assign credit based on this path? How can you evolve your marketing mix? And is there an attribution model that can help you with this process?

In marketing, attribution is about assessing and designing models, procedures and solutions that allow you to share credit for conversions, purchases, subscriptions, leads, etc. among the different marketing channels leveraged by an advertiser.

## **Attribution raises some important questions:**

- Why use attribution? What can you expect from the project?
- What technical, organizational, or other resources does it require?
- What's the timeframe for such projects?
- How can you adapt your expectations of attribution to your brand context?

# Channels and tools for attribution

An effective attribution model lets you share credit for conversions (purchase, subscription, leads, etc.) among the different marketing channels used by advertisers. But as each channel is different, the first challenge is deciding which channels to consider in your analysis.

## Traditional channels

Offline channels (mail, radio, television, print advertising, telemarketing, outdoor advertising, etc.) can all be part of attribution. However, because it is often challenging to connect them to a person online, offline channels are often excluded from the analysis.

## Digital channels

The primary digital channels are:

### PAID

- **email** (electronic mail sent to individuals)
- **search** (links appearing on a search engine)
- **display** (static or video ad content on a publisher's site)
- **affiliate**
- **price comparison sites**

### FREE (Organic)

- **referral** (link appearing on a publisher's site that connects to an advertiser)
- **direct traffic**
- **organic search** (link appearing on a search engine)

With digital there's also the type of device (mobile, tablet, desktop).

There are three kinds of digital actions that can happen:

- **impressions** (seeing a static image or video)

- **clicks** (clicking on an impression, link, or search engine result)
- **visits** (landing on the advertiser's site either directly or after a click)

## Free vs. paid channels

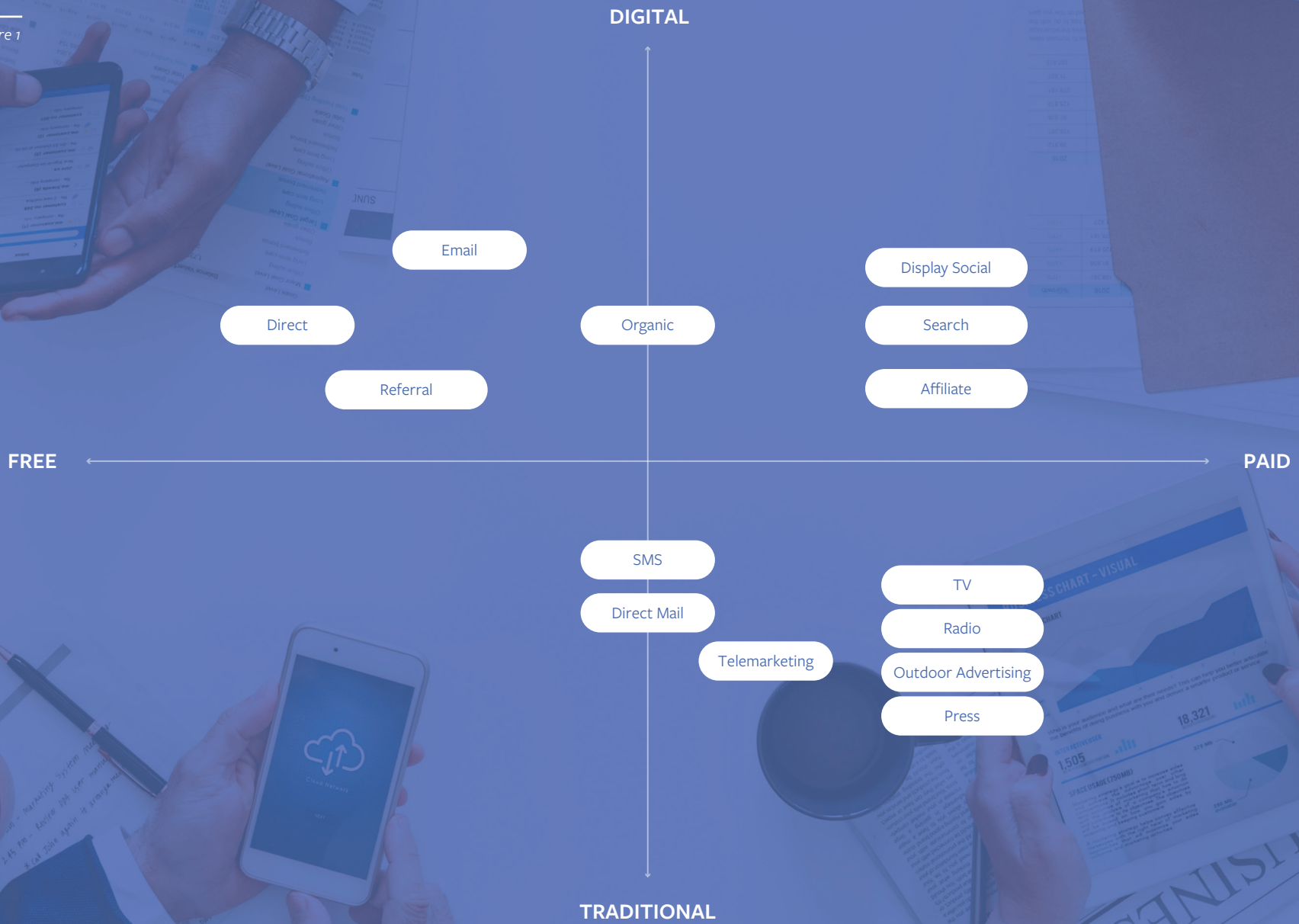
In principle, the more channels there are, the more you have to divide up the budget. For this reason, certain advertisers prefer to de-prioritize free channels in favor of paid channels. Why? Because they believe that today's organic traffic is only the result of yesterday's paid campaigns, and so it's the paid channels that should get the credit. In this way of thinking, you might as well eliminate free channels from the start.

However, some advertisers take into account free channels (direct traffic, organic search, referral) in the logic of their attribution.

Today it's mostly web-analytics tools that take traffic into account.

Part one - Channels and tools for attribution

Figure 1



## Part one - Channels and tools for attribution



### Publisher-centric, ad-centric or site-centric approaches

There are a number of measurable user interactions along the digital path to purchase. You can be exposed to an ad (impression), click on it (click) and then land on the advertiser's site (visit). And there are three basic approaches to understanding the value of these interactions.

#### Publisher-centric

Impressions and clicks lead to conversions. Each publisher-centric tool may offer a siloed analysis without considering the other channels present throughout the path.

#### Ad-centric

Impressions and clicks lead to conversions, and these two interactions get all the credit for the conversion. Ad-centric analysis is traditionally used by ad servers and dedicated attribution tools. It counts impressions and clicks but not organic channels.

[↑ Figure 2](#)



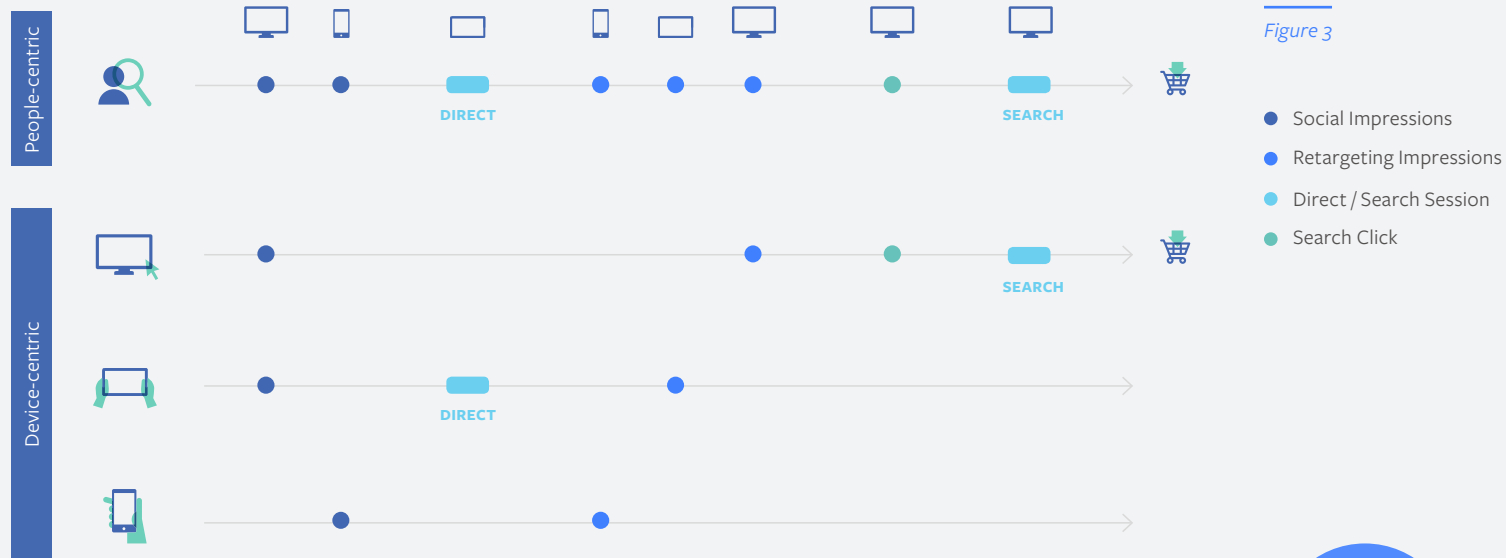


Figure 3

### Site-centric

A series of visits culminates in a conversion. Site-centric measurement is traditionally used by web analytics tools. It counts visits (from clicks) and organic search, but not impressions.

### People-centric vs. device-centric

The reality is that customers interact with your brand across a number of devices. Traditional device-centric tracking goes back to the idea of distinct device pathways, separate from each other. But people-centric tracking lets you reconcile these different paths for each user.



↑ Figure 3



# Attribution rules

Given the many different possible channels involved, how can you determine which should get credit for the conversion? And how can you decide what share of the credit each of them should get? That's where attribution rules come in.

## Lookback windows

A lookback window lets you create historical window to help you understand if a channel should be given a share of the credit: there's little chance, for example, that last summer's display campaign generated yesterday's conversion.

You can create a lookback window that takes into account the product purchase cycle (e.g. the purchase cycle for a holiday is longer than that for buying a pack

of gum). For example: for an individual's conversion that took place on September 30, with a window of 28 days post-click and 7 days post-view will take into consideration all the impressions received in the last 7 days as well as the total clicks in the last 28 days.

## Attribution models

What if your company already has an attribution model in place? If it does, then there's a good chance that it's last-click. This single-channel model has a number of advantages. It's easy to understand, and it attributes credit, as its name suggests, to the last channel. The last takes all, and all the other previous channels are ignored.

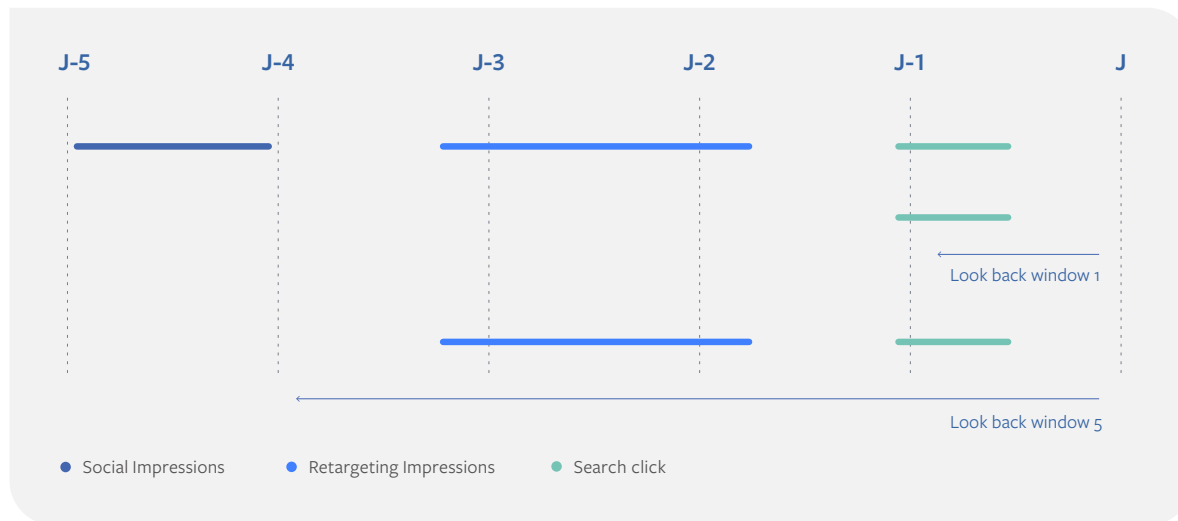


Figure 4

## Part two - Attribution rules and models

Operationally it's easier and simpler to give all the credit for a conversion to a single channel, as most publisher tools were made to receive binary information (success or failure).

The picture this model gives you is very clear and simple. But it's also very narrow. In fact, if you follow this model to the letter you could completely miss out on impact from other channels.

You might want to consider moving toward a multi-touch attribution model, which is based on static or algorithmic rules (e.g. always the last interaction, or always the first interaction or even shared attribution according to more advanced rules). However, even if this model were fairer in its ability to share attribution among partners on one side, it could also be more expensive for you.

You have to find the model that's best suited to your business challenges without losing sight of the fact that **it's not the model that produces insights, but your analysis, and your ability to understand both the answers it offers and the questions it raises.**

The choice of a model must be based on different levels of your need in terms of attribution. Whatever the complexity of your marketing plan, most analytics tools offer a number of models.

### Algorithmic models

Algorithmic models today are increasingly being adopted. They're preferred to static models based on pre-defined rules. The Shapley Value was created in 1953 and allows you to share gains (conversions) among different players (channels) in a coalition (path). The Shapley Value is popular because it uses the history of the paths (both successful and not) to determine the fair distribution of credit for a conversion. The channels are assigned credit based on their historic performance and relative to other channels. For many advertisers this is a fairer method of assigning credit.

Figure 5  
Example for illustrative purposes only.

| TYPE              | NAME             | DESCRIPTION   | IMPRESSIONS | PAID SEARCH | DISPLAY | SEARCH | USE/COMMENT   |
|-------------------|------------------|---|-------------|-------------|---------|--------|---|
| SINGLE TOUCHPOINT | Last click       | Last click credited 100%                              | 0%          | 0%          | 0%      | 100%   | Default model. Referent for comparison. Mostly used to remunerate publishers                |
|                   | Last touchpoint  | Last interaction (impression or click) credited 100%  | 0%          | 0%          | 0%      | 100%   | Credits bottom of the funnel interactions   |
|                   | First click      | First click credited 100%                             | 0%          | 100%        | 0%      | 0%     | Credits initial publishers / touchpoints / channels   |
|                   | First touchpoint | First interaction (impression or click) credited 100% | 100%        | 0%          | 0%      | 0%     | Default model. Referent for comparison. Mostly used to remunerate publishers                |
| MULTI TOUCHPOINT  | Linear           | All channels credited (event credit)                  | 25%         | 25%         | 25%     | 25%    | No prioritization. Use as a baseline to compare with other multi-attribute models           |
|                   | U-shaped         | First AND last channels get more credit (u-shape)     | 40%         | 10%         | 10%     | 40%    | Credits initial channels while keeping those bottom of the funnel.                          |
|                   | Time Decay       | Last channels get more credit (time decay)            | 10%         | 20%         | 30%     | 40%    | Mostly used with long sales cycles  |
|                   | Algorithm based  | Credit determined by custom algorithm                 | 28%         | 14%         | 42%     | 16%    | Dynamic model based on learnings vs. assumptions that adapts to advertiser's business model |

# Data collection and reconciliation

## Centralized collection

The biggest challenge of attribution is how to think about all the channels together rather than in separate silos. That's why many advertisers now combine the three different approaches outlined previously in order to get the clearest picture possible.

Using multiple approaches simultaneously allows you to get the best from each one. But it also creates a number of practical areas that need to be addressed:

- Tools with functions that occasionally overlap
- Training for teams on the use of different tools
- Different tagging plans to be implemented
- Different licensing costs to be budgeted
- Communication problems between teams

## Tracking all your channels

Today, media plans are getting more and more complex. To optimize them it's essential to have a clear understanding of the performance of each touchpoint (clicks on display campaigns for branding, programmatic, native advertising, search, social, retargeting, etc.). You have to gather the results, connect each interaction to an individual person, and conduct your analysis.

However, it's currently impossible to track the total of all media interactions that your customers are exposed to.

**Certain channels or publishers don't allow, or only partially allow**, tracking of the advertising reach that they offer. Additionally, they don't let you pick out a single identifier that you can reconcile with the rest of the interactions (mostly for in-app).

**Certain channels are intrinsically impossible to track and identify** at an individual level (outdoor advertising, print ads).

**Certain channels like television and radio can't for the moment be reconciled by a purely attributional approach** (you can't draw a direct link from a TV spot to a conversion). The measurement of TV as a channel has evolved however; thanks to the advent of digital TV, it's now becoming possible.

So you can only analyze a part of the existing media mix. You can complement this analysis with peripheral studies (credit from a non-tracked channel attributed to television).



## Limitations of web tracking

In the world of digital, most identification has been traditionally done through cookies. Cookies let you collect and store the interactions of the user with the brand. As a result you have to be very careful to place (and refresh) these little text files in the browser as many times as possible.

There are two types of cookies: first-party and third-party cookies.

**First-party cookies** are placed by the advertiser domain that appears in the address bar of the browser. For example, if the advertiser domain name is *https://www.example.com*, first-party cookies will appear with the name of this domain (or sub-domain).

**Third-party cookies** are placed by another domain. They come from different servers from those that host the page and come from diverse and varied sources. They can correspond to objects or advertising appearing on any part of the page.

To prevent the permanent tracking of a user from site to site and page to page, ad blockers prevent the placement of third-party cookies coming from certain domains. Whether or not the domain is blacklisted, certain browsers simply block this type of cookie.

As first party cookies are associated with a domain actually visited by a user, they're seen much more positively by users and third party tools. In effect, as a result of this association, it's assumed that the data will be collected by the visited site in order to improve user experience.

As a result, it's better to collect data via first-party cookies. Certain tools allow you to track part of the data under a sub-domain of the advertiser's site, which means you can increase first-party data collection and minimize the loss of data.

It's useful to measure the differences between first and third-party in order to better understand the observable differences between the solutions.



**Globally, 21% of people use ad blockers on desktop**, so it's hardly an anomaly\*. The danger is that ad blockers may affect the size and quality of your sample.

\* Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2017

| 1st party cookies   | 3rd party cookies   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Placed by the advertiser's domain<br/><i>Example: www.advertiser.com</i></li><li>Not blocked by certain browsers</li><li>Not blocked by ad blockers</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Placed by another domain<br/><i>Example: www.tracking.com</i></li><li>Blocked by some browsers</li><li>Blocked by ad blockers</li></ul> |

Figure 6

## Cross-device and online-offline

There are many channels and devices available for a customer to make a purchase, both offline (purchases made in a shop or by phone) or online (computer at home or work, on the smartphone or tablet). The goal is to reconcile sales with all media interactions.

In the world of browsers, tracking works via cookies. In the world of apps, however, you need the help of an IDFA (Identifier for Advertising) for iOS devices,

or AAID (Google Advertising ID) for Android devices. These are temporary device identifiers used to identify a mobile device (while also giving end users the ability to limit the information accessed by advertisers or apps).

It's necessary to reconcile those identifiers. In certain cases, reconciliation is done using encrypted PII (Personally Identifiable Information) or by CRM onboarders (although certain publishers don't allow it).

Finally, you need to be able to reconcile the online world with the offline world. Better known under the acronym ROPO (Research Online, Purchase Offline), taking in-store sales into consideration constitutes a major step in the evolution of attribution. But to make this connection you need a key in the form of an email on one side matched to a CRM ID on the other. In real time, by Server-to-Server, or periodically, by data transfer, it's possible to reconcile offline sales within an attribution system.

Rest assured that all of these factors can be managed by an attribution tool which reconciles the different paths via a unique ID (e.g. CRM ID, personal ID, fingerprinting).

## Data regulations

The raw material of effective attribution marketing is data – including data that the law considers personal. Make sure that all data collection and usage respects the laws and regulations for each country or region.

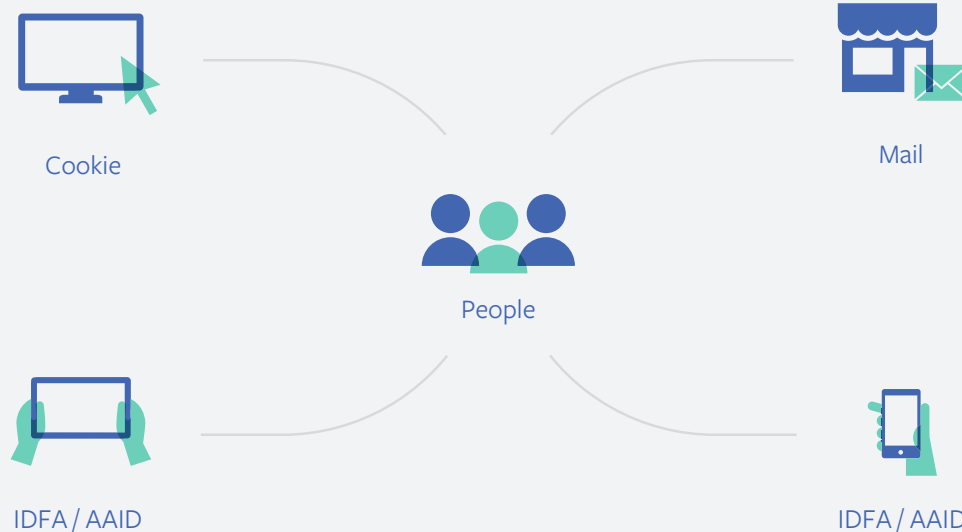


Figure 7

# Analysis and Interpretation

There's no one universal answer to how you should approach attribution. However, when choosing an approach to attribution and understanding performance from that approach there are some key points to consider.

## Correlation is not causality

By applying an attribution rule, a channel is given credit for a conversion. This means it's correlated, but it's not necessarily the cause. For example, if you click an ad before converting, that interaction is correlated to the conversion, but it's not necessarily the cause of it.

In this context, you have to analyze the historical results obtained by each channel in different past situations. This history is used to determine the probable contribution of each channel involved in the conversion. This may sound like a fair way to assign credit to different channels, but it's not necessarily the case.

In fact, in an ecosystem where media buying is targeted, each channel selects the difficulty level of the "game" it's playing. Some channels can systematically tackle a "difficult" level (e.g. trying to convert consumers who have never interacted with the brand). And others will choose an "easy" level (like re-engaging cart abandoners).

Some channels can therefore be strongly correlated to success, not because they are intrinsically performance-generating but because they are playing an easier game. This is one of the inevitable imperfections that must be taken into account.

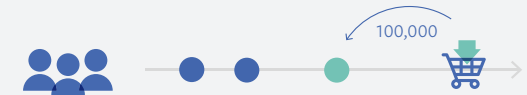
## Attribution and incrementality

To overcome the imperfection of correlation some advertisers use incremental AB Tests.

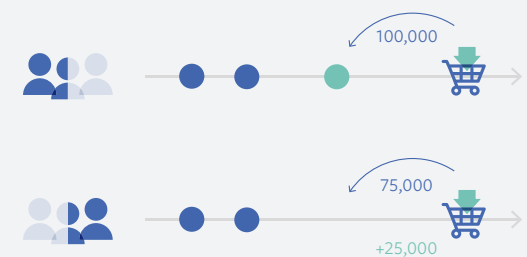
The concept is simple: you select a test group to target with a channel and a control population that's not targeted by the same channel.

Figure 8

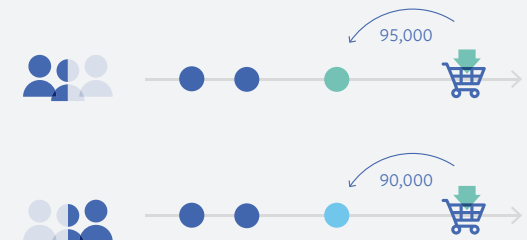
### Attribution



### Incremental AB Test



### Simple AB test



The income generated by each of the groups is then analyzed and an increment is deduced which can therefore be attributed to the channel tested. Yet here too, there are issues.

The first is that this solution can't be applied to all channels, which means you can't get a whole picture of each channel's relative contribution. It would be operationally too difficult to implement. Also, creating all the potential combinations would place too much importance on cardinality.

The second issue lies in the fact that with this method you can usually only test one touchpoint at a time, so it's difficult to analyze the synergies associated with the joint activation of several channels.

*If A results in +5  
If B results in +10  
A + B doesn't necessarily  
result in +15*

An incremental AB test is operationally demanding. It requires you to divide the audience into test and control groups and to validate that these groups are very similar, which automatically decreases the potential reach of the campaign tested. Do not confuse an incremental AB test (Lift) with a simple AB test, which allows you to compare several versions (creative, types of campaigns, messages, etc.) in terms of performance.

### Attribution and iteration

Whenever a model values a certain type of channel then the tendency will be to over-invest in this channel. If you then use contribution analysis to evaluate the results of this investment, the analysis will simply confirm that it was a good choice. Which, in reality, it may not have been.

Similarly, attribution analyzes the past to provide recommendations for the future, but it does not provide information on the ability of some channels to absorb a budget increase, for example if they are saturated. Analyzing the past doesn't necessarily tell

you anything about the impact of your next creative advertising campaign.

These points should be considered limitations in interpretation, and should encourage you to work in small iterations rather than make radical changes. Ideally, you should be able to test small variations in marketing plans to isolate the impact of each change and understand what generates performance.



# Organization and planning

Attribution is a solution for those looking to evaluate and optimize cross-channel media investments. It requires a significant amount of expertise both in terms of technical tools and human resources.

## Defining precise objectives in advance

When considering the technical complexities of attribution, always keep in mind that ultimately it's a tool for evaluating a media business plan, designed according to key objectives and specific customer targets. To do this, it's crucial to keep a business-oriented (not tech-oriented) mindset at all times throughout the project.

However, when learning about the characteristics of different attribution models or the innumerable features of some dedicated tools, even the most adept marketers could easily lose sight of their business objectives. Why do you want to use attribution? What questions are you looking to answer? What do you expect out of this project?

This phase of prior reflection is absolutely crucial.

## Right framing for right sizing and right communication

When you start your project, take care not to neglect the framing phase, and make sure to involve your various teams: media, site performance, CRM / PRM, as well as your media agency. This phase of exchange between the various parties will make it possible both to evaluate your current media context and to identify your main attribution priorities for your company.

What are the indispensable vs. optional elements of your attribution project? Then, with this list in hand, you'll be able to decide what's the best size for your project.

To draw up this list, think in particular about the channels to be included in this new unified vision of attribution, the functionalities of analysis needed during the activation phase, and the planned activations. The table in Figure 9 could serve as your jumping off point.

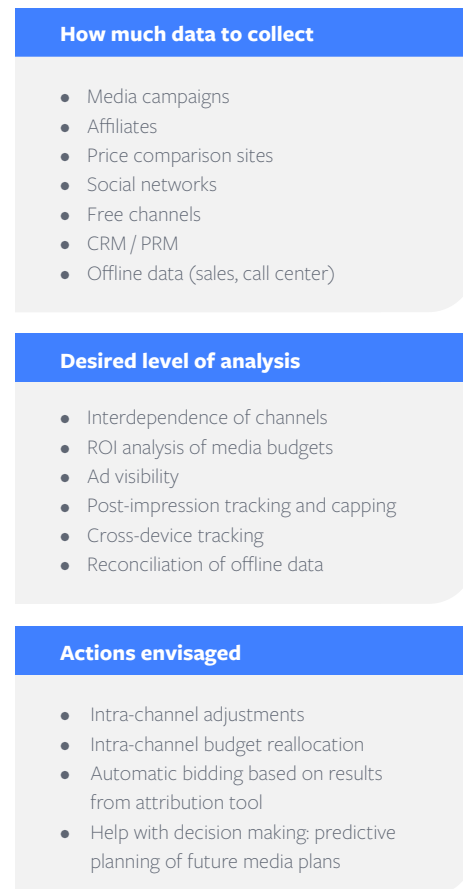


Figure 9

## Criteria for determining the right size for your project

Good initial framing will help you make sure you don't oversell the project within your organization. Attribution involves a number of different teams, so it's essential to be clear about your objectives and expectations and to commit an appropriate amount of resources. Being clear from the beginning about the expected results in the short, medium and long term is the best way to proceed with your attribution project.

In addition, as the task is primarily to change the way you evaluate your company's media plan, your project will have an impact on a significant number of internal teams.

To best guide this change, it's imperative to be straightforward about the expected gains and outcomes. Thus, from the final framing, the project team should clearly communicate the various stages of the project and the final objectives. This effort toward transparency should be well received by and encourage more cooperation from the other teams.

## Precise framing for a successful setup

Determining the right goals will also be a key factor in the successful implementation of the selected attribution tool.

In fact, whatever the complexity of your project and the chosen tool, during the implementation phase you'll have to make strategic decisions that will impact which types of analysis will be possible during the operational phase.

The challenge here is to understand your media context and its specifics. You should map your media campaigns to clearly visualize the various channels, campaigns and audience targets involved. This mapping will help you develop clear ideas about the types of deep-dive analysis that help you create value in your specific context.

First, create a list of the key conversion indicator(s) that you want to analyze. By this stage you should have a clear idea about your end goals, so it shouldn't be difficult to choose your conversion KPIs. It's essential to limit the number of KPIs you include, in order to avoid spreading yourself too thin later in the analysis phase.

During this framing, you should also be clear on the classification of your marketing channels. It may be that your classification is not granular enough. If you take the time to support this classification in advance you'll be able to conduct more granular analysis in the operational phase. For example, does your classification already differentiate brand search from generic search keywords?

Beyond this first level of personalization of the tool, you can also often add an extra level of intra-channel

differentiation and create parameters relative to the size of your business that take your context into account. These parameters could help you conduct a specific attribution analysis for each of your product lines.

This prior reflection is crucial and shouldn't be neglected. But it's also complex, and it may be worth asking for expert help prior to the project launch in order to ensure optimal framing.

## Project framing checklist

- ✓ Selection of final objective
- ✓ Choice of KPIs for conversion
- ✓ Classification of channels
- ✓ Identification of intra-channel categories (brand/generic search vs. search only)
- ✓ List of business dimensions to configure in order to enrich your analysis (e.g. by product type)
- ✓ Identification of tools to connect and external data to import if needed
- ✓ Planning of defined project, with iterative optimization cycles of media buying



## A realistic project timeline

Before modifying your attribution method, you should start with a proof of concept. You achieve this through framing, which verifies the feasibility of your project in relation to the requirements of attribution.

The first requirement is volume. To be able to analyze the contribution of each marketing channel, campaign, advertiser or even type of creative used, you must have a high enough volume of impressions, and especially conversions.

The final objectives identified during the framing will naturally come from several levels of analysis: macro-channel level, intra-channel level, campaign, site, ad-group, etc.

Once this mapping is done, you have to verify how long it will take to reach the minimum threshold of conversions before launching an attribution analysis. For example, if you want to analyze the actual contribution of your different publishers, you'll have to reach a minimum threshold of conversions per publisher reach before you start your attribution analysis.

By verifying the conversion volume expected over a period of time you'll be able to finalize your project timeline. In particular, it's very important to have access to the selected attribution solution over a significant period of time, in order to reach these minimum thresholds and to perform several iterations to your media mix.

In the operational phase, it's important to note that most tools are not retroactive: if you adjust their configuration, you'll have to wait again in order to have adjusted scores per channel. In addition, knowing how much time it will take to obtain enough data to analyze will allow you to define the duration of your iterative cycles: learn, adjust the media mix, re-analyze and so on. With each new optimization of your enacted media plan, you'll have to wait before going back into the analysis.



# Resources

Successful framing is certainly a first important milestone, but without the right resources, your attribution project will not advance. Does your project team bring together the necessary expertise?

## Mobilizing the right expertise

To launch an attribution project, the challenge is to obtain a unified vision of all marketing channels used and all types of interaction (impressions, clicks, visits). To do this, it's often necessary to flatten part of your tracking or even to set up a new layer of tracking with the chosen solution.

Once this configuration is operational, you'll need to mobilize internal or external experts to ensure the quality of the data. It might be a good idea to establish a point of reference so that you can compare the data from the attribution tool or model to that from your web analytics and media buy tools. The contribution attributed to each channel will certainly be different – that's the whole point

Figure 10



of attribution – but the total numbers should be similar. This quality auditing phase should be performed once the implementation is complete and repeated at regular intervals during the operational phase of your project,

as well as at each new activation. In the same way, if you import external data, cost files or offline sales data into these tools, you'll always have to re-check the quality of the data that goes back into your attribution tools.

In addition, some actions to track all channels for attribution could have consequences on the data quality of your other projects. The implementation of incorrectly performed click tracking, for example, could have a detrimental impact on other projects using click tracking (DMP, ROPO etc). It's therefore essential to master the technical implementation phase and go through phases of data validation.

At this point, you'll have completed the implementation phase of your project. Before you start trying to leverage this new data and upskill your teams, check the flow chart below to make sure you haven't skipped any steps.

## Upskilling to ensure acceptance of scores

Now it's time to start the operational phase. First, ensure that the various stakeholders understand and use the new contribution scores assigned to each channel. To do that you may have to upgrade internal skill levels.

If attribution is a fairly new topic for your teams, it will be important for you to support them. Training on attribution, the tool and the models used is important to ensure that this new measurement method is accepted internally. If teams don't understand how these scores were calculated, they won't be inclined to use them to inform their future media buying strategy.

It's always a good idea to communicate a summary of your new attribution model and how it works to all those involved (IT, business teams, media agencies, content team). These training and communication efforts will facilitate the implementation of recommendations from your attribution analysis.

## Understanding how to leverage your new data

Once the tool is configured, you'll have access to the new contribution scores per channel and countless analyses will be possible. But at this point it's not uncommon to feel paralyzed by this avalanche of data. Where do you start? You'll need to call on experts in analysis.

Whether internal or external, it will be up to them to be the driving force on the roadmap for the activation phase, by identifying and prioritizing the types of analyses to be carried out in order to get the maximum added value from this new tool.

In general, it's best to start by comparing the new scores with those of the old attribution model and see what conclusions you can draw.

Then, you can focus on optimizations within each channel. The goal is to ensure that each channel

performs as well as possible before you consider recalibrating your overall media budget between your different marketing channels. In the long run, a test-and-learn approach is best: your attribution model should allow you to learn more about your targets and their customer journey, then test different new approaches in your media plan and identify which is the most successful.

## An iterative approach

In order for attribution to work you have to adopt an ambitious approach that has a fixed time frame but is also pragmatic and progressive.

The first recommendation is to start with the existing technical ecosystem rather than embarking directly on a long and costly implementation.

Your teams will then be able to move from their first experience and toward more advanced technologies or solutions. Attribution shouldn't be approached on a whim, but must be driven on the long-term to achieve significant results.

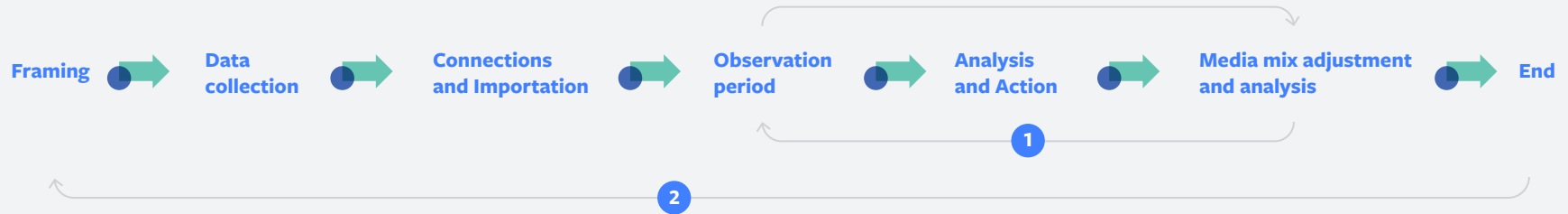


Figure 11

## An iterative attribution strategy

Here are three possible approaches for an iterative attribution strategy:

### 1. Long-term attribution strategy.

In the future, alternate between the periods of Observation, Analysis, and Media mix adjustment for the continuous optimization of your media ROI.

### 2. Progressive attribution strategy.

Your proof of concept is conclusive and you want to go further. You may have used your existing technical ecosystem for your first analysis but now you want to move towards a more advanced solution. This solution will allow you to access new levels of analysis with, for example, cross-device tracking, reconciliation with offline, etc. A new cycle will begin, starting from the framing phase.

### 3. The proof of concept is inconclusive.

You prefer to stay with your historical attribution strategy.

It's a good idea to conduct an attribution project over time and to understand the need to upgrade your internal teams.

In the short term, you may need to rely on external attribution specialists to provide your teams with the necessary expertise and ensure the successful completion of the project. In the medium and long term, it's imperative to organize a transfer of competence to your teams, so that they can be more proactive in change management around measurement issues.

Because in the long run they're the ones who will have to be a force for proposing each new iterative cycle.

What can be further optimized in the implementation of your new attribution model? What new analysis could help the media team define its next digital communication plan and distribute its budget between the different channels?

Part seven

# Learnings

La Redoute, 55, Sarenza and Eulerian shared their experiences about running the different phases of an attribution project.

La Redoute

55 the data company

SARENZA

eulerian.



## 1. Attribution is a significant issue for advertisers today. What are the benefits of attribution?

### – LA REDOUTE

Attribution is a rule fixed by advertisers that allows you to divide and manage investment between different channels.

Digital activity is at the heart of La Redoute's marketing and sales strategy. The challenge of effectively understanding user paths across all digital media is essential, especially to guide our activation and client acquisition strategies.

La Redoute wants to equip itself with an attribution and contribution tool that can give us a cross-device view of the user / customer journey. Such a tool would have to monitor, on a daily basis, all the Media and Traffic channels owned, earned or paid for, whether desktop or mobile in the broad sense (tablet, smartphone, app or web) and to return reliable, clear and analyzable indicators in order to deduce relevant investment strategies and ROI.

### – 55

Attribution is crucial because it determines the budget allocation between marketing channels. These days it's wrong to mix actionability, cross-device and offline media but only measure walled gardens. The first challenge of attribution is to assign credit correctly according to your priorities.

### – SARENZA

Attribution will help us better understand the past performance of our various channels and campaigns in order to make better decisions about how to distribute our media investments.

Nevertheless, we must be aware that the results obtained won't give us an exact answer on how much to spend and how much it will pay.

In addition, even using a highly sophisticated attribution tool, you must always have someone who can analyze the results and relate them to the business objectives of the company.

### – EULERIAN

Attribution is an important issue for advertisers.

You can expect three types of benefits:

- the ability to control the profitability of campaigns through daily optimization.
- concrete information on how your consumers interact on various media with different advertising channels throughout the customer journey.
- insights on allocating budgets to various channels and the various supports for each of these channels.

However, the chosen attribution solution shouldn't be taken as gospel. Be well aware that the numbers you get should be thought of as contributing to the answer, but not the answer itself. The solution shouldn't replace the marketer's brains when it comes to decision-making and determining the contribution of each channel.

## 2. In terms of implementation, what are the steps and which are more complicated than others?

### – LA REDOUTE

Easier steps:

- **Mapping the channels to be taken into account in the attribution model.** To set up a model, it's important to have in mind all the channels you want to include in the model. Although we have a large traffic and media team, each of the channels has been taken into account.
- **Making the teams aware of the importance and the added value of an attribution model.** The implementation of an attribution model makes it possible to better read, understand and adapt the use of our acquisition channels and the distribution of our commercial investments. This problem had been known to the teams for a few years, so this phase was completed naturally.

More complicated steps:

- **Defining a reference attribution model.** It's difficult to divorce yourself from a model you've used for several years only to build a new one and act on it. Indeed, to have a more realistic vision, some channels will be de-prioritized relative to others, and this impacts on the reading of their performance. It's a change of reference that must be applied in the teams. In addition, there's no real market trend, and the attribution model depends on our strategic issues and the sector we are in.
- **Defining a model with a product range as heterogeneous as that of La Redoute.** With the diversity of what we offer, we have a multitude of customer journeys and a multitude of durations for them. You don't buy a dress in the same way you buy a sofa. So these are decisions we have to make. Do we need multiple attribution models? Should we continue to standardize the duration of the journey?
- **Reconciling the acquisition channels** that can't be tracked as well as offline channels (TV, outdoor advertising, telemarketing, store visits, etc.).
- **Reworking our tracking:** we have a large traffic team and a large number of partners.

### 3. What are you looking for in an attribution solution?

#### – LA REDOUTE

For us, must-haves are:

- Cross-device / Cross-browser reconciliation.
- Interconnection with partner apps to reconcile the in-app journeys, models and conversions in our analyses. It's very important to understand the customer journey in order to understand the contribution of our channels.
- Different visualizations (by channels, partners, product categories, customer segmentation, post views and clicks).
- The ability to leverage data in a simple and intuitive way to generate reports, export data, and give us flexibility with models and solutions / data visualization tools. Considering the number of campaigns we are managing we need a ready to go, user-friendly tool that's accessible to teams with very different skill levels.

#### – 55

It must meet the following conditions:

- Ability to track all channels with a satisfactory cross-device solution.
- Customization of attribution models so they're relevant to your business.
- Ease of sharing the results, so communicating the results is as fluid as possible both internally and with media partners / agencies.

### 4. At what point should you internalize attribution? How is this transition going?

#### – SARENZA

It's time to ask whether you should internalize attribution when the following conditions are met:

- Market solutions can not (or no longer) give you answers to the questions that you ask internally.
- You have the resources – technical and human resources – for a project of this type.
- You can focus these resources on project deployment in a sustainable way.

## 5. How do you manage attribution studies? How do you communicate results to stakeholders (internal teams, management, agencies, etc.)?

### – 55

Attribution studies must be subjected to precise specifications from brands, in order to clearly identify the objective or objectives of conversion (e.g. ecommerce conversions, in-shop conversions), as well as the degree of granularity desired (media impact in terms of site, placement, ad, creative, keyword) and whether you need to incorporate the costs to recalculate ROI (which requires specific coordination and additional mapping procedures).

As for communicating the results, the initial study must be followed by an automation of the re-calculation of performance on a specific interface (most often that of an attribution specialist) and if possible on a synchronization between the attribution tool and the bid management tools for new daily auction rules at the level of each keyword or audience.

### – SARENZA

You have to ask yourself well in advance why you want to do an attribution study. What are you trying to demonstrate? This will make it easier to define the framework of the study and make it actionable.

Then you have to have people in-house who understand the business issues as well as the technical issues. A resource of this type is key for an advertiser because it's this person who will act as a conductor and thus facilitate communication internally and externally. The internal expert teams heading the various channels must be involved in defining the issues of this study.

An exchange with the media partners / agencies concerned is also important in order to evangelize the process and also to take into account the full measure of their expertise.

The exchanges must be regular with all stakeholders in order to hold everything together – you shouldn't end up with results that are disconnected from reality.

The work doesn't stop once you've found the answers to your initial questions. You have to continue to act, and continue to measure the impact of these actions.

### – EULERIAN

There are two ways of thinking about attribution: short-term and long-term.

In the short term, attribution projects are managed on a day-to-day basis with dashboards that allow for channel optimization. Each stakeholder could access it in different ways: data flow for BI, data volume and provenance for legal, access to the solution directly (or presentations reflecting the results) for management, channels for agencies and specific channels for partners.

The long-term logic requires a real strategy put in place upstream and lessons drawn from a critical analysis. This is possible with for example the implementation of an MTA-type attribution solution. This gives you a complete vision of the different channels and consumer behavior. The data is then sent to the data science department to optimize the performance of the channels and, as a result, the campaigns. This logic will be of paramount importance when budgeting for the coming year. You could simply communicate the results at a meeting with all stakeholders.

## 6. How do you create an actionable attribution study? How do you measure these actions over time?

### – SARENZA

Before starting an attribution study, you have to think about why you want to implement this type of study through questions that arise from your media mix.

This will help you define the different axes of analysis which will then allow you to associate actions with the initial questions.

Without this, you risk making only theoretical or uncorrelated analyses of the company's current situation.

To measure actions over time, it seems wise to proceed in small successive steps and not change your whole media mix all at once.

### – EULERIAN

In the day to day, the attribution project will let you measure conversion rates for your content, keywords, types of targeting, capping or even global campaigns and will thus go well beyond the simple view of the click rate. You'll see the benefits immediately.

Monthly (or quarterly) reports will, for their part, measure the profitability KPIs of the advertiser's marketing and advertising operations (cost per click, cost per transaction, new customers, etc.). On this basis you can observe, in relation to the progress of the projects, how the channels evolve, which in turn lets you estimate how much you can optimize your budgets.

The attribution project will therefore have significant benefits in terms of overall campaign management but also at the level of internal organization and the increase in team skills. Indeed, by changing traffic acquisition strategies, it will optimize campaign profitability. What's more, at company level it will involve the implementation of a working method that will impact objectives across the board.

This will put the managers for each channel on equal footing (with more accurate goals) and let them compare the performance of each channel.

## 7. What would you like to see from the main industry solutions?

### – 55

Today, there is a disconnect between algorithmic attribution solutions, media-mix modeling methodologies and solutions that measure uplift by creating random sample checks. Unification of these technologies would provide a unique and methodologically faultless vision for brands, regardless of their distribution strategy and media mix. Even within the digital ecosystem, there are still too many holes in simple media collection linked to the policies of major players and limits of cross-device tracking.