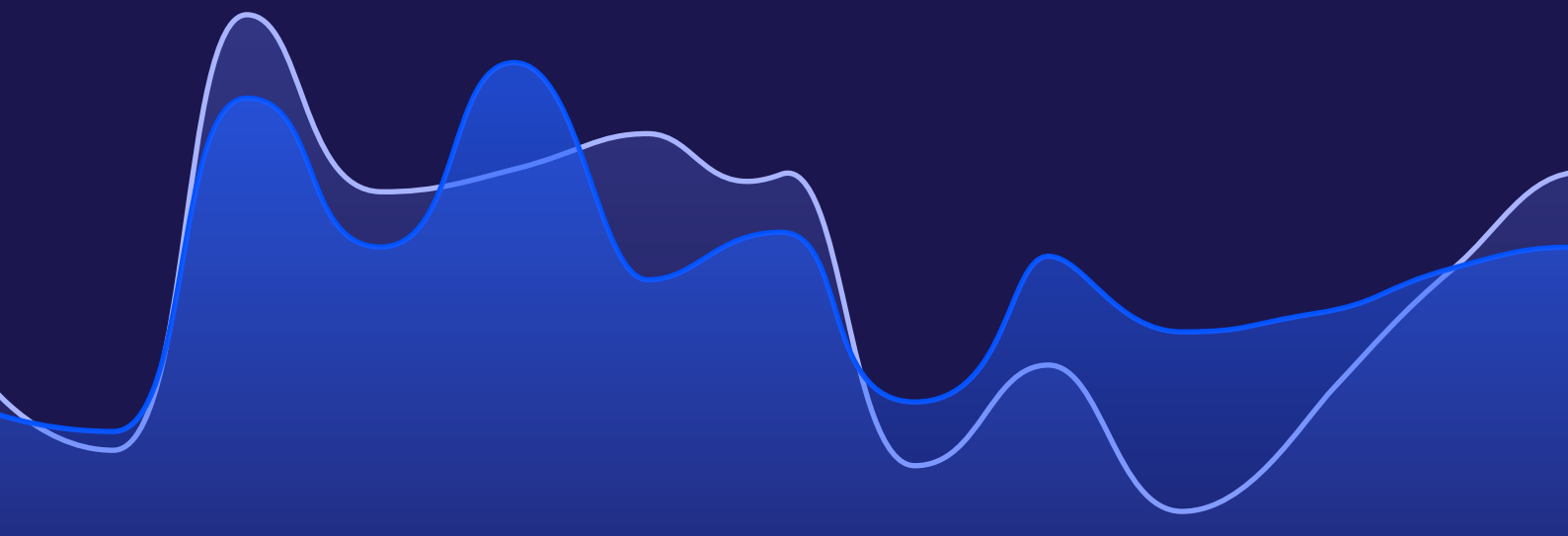
CORVIDAE

A Buyer's Guide

To selecting the right attribution solution.



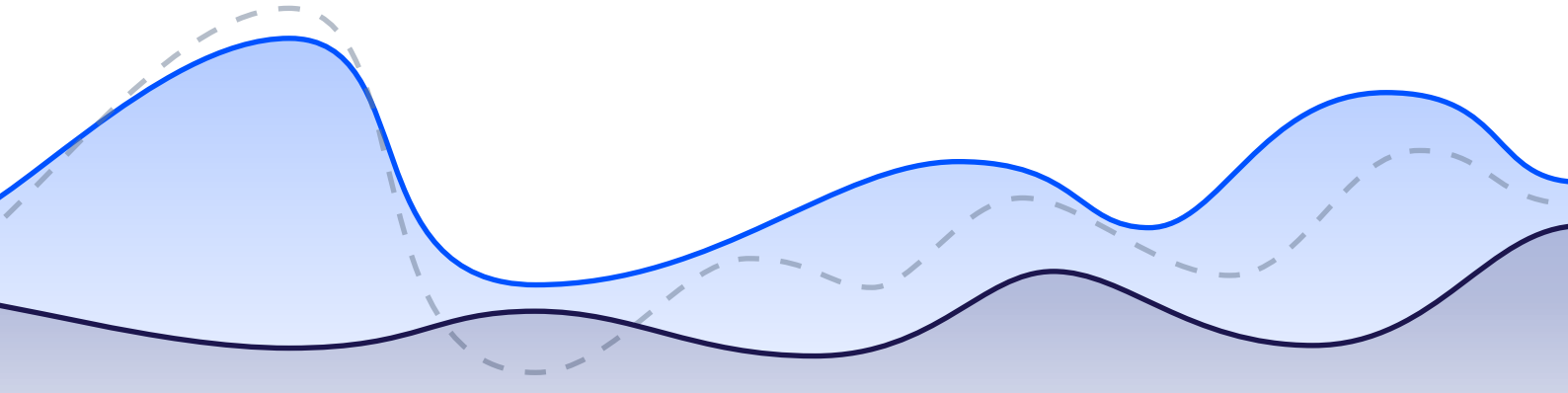
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Introduction

The task of ensuring effective marketing attribution can often be a complex and daunting one for marketers to address. And the sheer increase in the complexity and depth of the customer journey in recent times – both on and offline – has only served to increase this.

That's why we set out to produce this guide, as a largely non-technical overview of some of the key considerations you need to keep top of mind as you evaluate competing attribution solutions, including:

- What is attribution and **why is it so important**?
- Some **common misconceptions** about attribution technology
- 4 **clear signs** you might need a better attribution solution
- **Helpful tips** for choosing the right solution for your needs
- **Some guiding thoughts** to factor into your selection process



What is attribution and why is it so important?

At its most fundamental the definition of attribution is relatively simple. It is the practice of identifying and evaluating all of the marketing touchpoints that a customer comes in to contact with on their buying journey. And then placing a relative value on these touchpoints to determine which of them has had the greatest impact on their decision to purchase (or potentially also convert in some other shape or form).

It is important because – done properly - it enables marketers to create a single, unified data view that allows them to assess and adjust their marketing mix in a way that devotes more resources and spend to more effective media and campaigns. And that drives true marketing ROI for their business.

Attribution is a gap for many marketers, with eMarketer reporting that 54% of marketers see it as a gap in in their toolset.

Some common misconceptions about attribution technology.

Before we delve into why you might need attribution technology and what it can do for you, we thought a good starting point was to actually consider some of the more common misunderstandings that you are likely to encounter around the topic of attribution - and attribution solutions, in particular.

Here are just a few we came across ourselves.

Misconception #1

My existing analytics technology already includes highly effective attribution - so I don't need anything else



If you need more information on different models download our Complete Guide to Marketing Attribution.

Depending on the type of analytics technology and attribution approach you are using this might not be strictly true. In fact, our experience of working with a significant number of brands in this area is that there is a very real chance that your models are skewing the way you see impact of your marketing efforts.

There are two key reasons for this.

Historical and oversimplified views: At the most fundamental level almost all current attribution models and associated technology are historical in nature and all the evidence is that they are woefully inadequate in terms of doing what they should. For example,

Last-Click is the default attribution model for Google Analytics, and is a complete oversimplification where 100% of the value of the conversion is given to the last marketing engagement. In essence, this ignores all the previous points in the customer journey: almost the same as applying no attribution at all!

Lookback windows are too short: Even tools like Google 360 have limitations due to their short lookback window and only partial attribution in relation to what is very often a long and complex customer journey, where the customer is influenced by a broad spectrum of media, over an extended period of time.

Misconception #2

Simply buying a piece of attribution technology will solve all of my problems

Unfortunately, this isn't the case and it's an oversimplification for a whole host of reasons. But perhaps the main one is that it focuses exclusively on the technology itself – and ignores the importance of ensuring the **quality of the underlying data** you are feeding into your attribution technology.

In practice, the limitations we highlighted in Misconception #1 are only part of the story. It is also highly likely that **up to 80% of your marketing data is wrong too**. As we explain on the following pages.

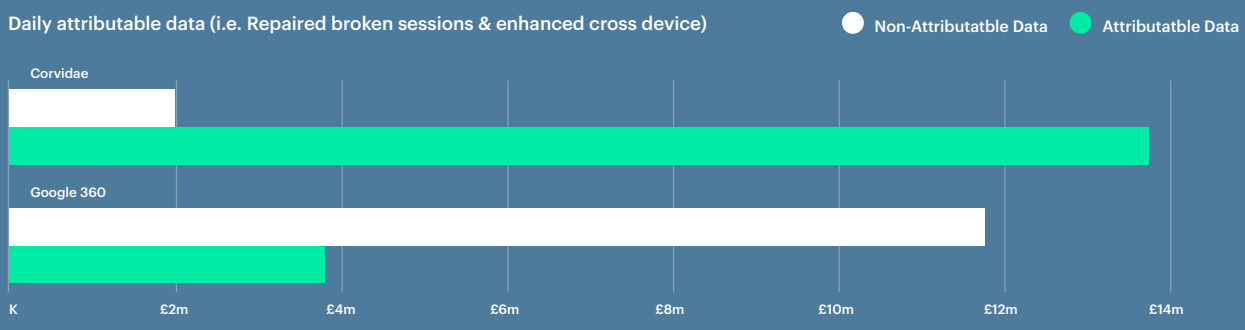
It is highly likely that up to 80% of your marketing data is wrong.

Using Google Analytics or Adobe? How accurate is your data really?

Without wanting to get overly technical here, the vast majority of digital marketing data is “deterministic” and collected using a pixel working in tandem with a cookie. A variety of data including dwell time, previous site visited, repeat visits etc. is all captured in this way.

And this is the point at which the world’s most commonly used analytics packages – like the ones provided by Google and Adobe - start to break down and generate incorrect or incomplete data. The cause? What is being measured is a device accessing a web property. Not the actual person – a person who will typically use multiple devices in the course of even simple transactions.

Cookies are supposed to enable ‘joining’ of multiple sessions generated by devices interacting with a web property. Unfortunately, in reality they do a pretty poor job, as is shown in the chart below.



The chart shows that using deterministic analytics data only (i.e. pixel and cookie data) to create a picture of an individual’s behaviour behind their multiple devices generates data that is around 80% incorrect. Even where advanced session joining algorithms are employed - as with Google 360.

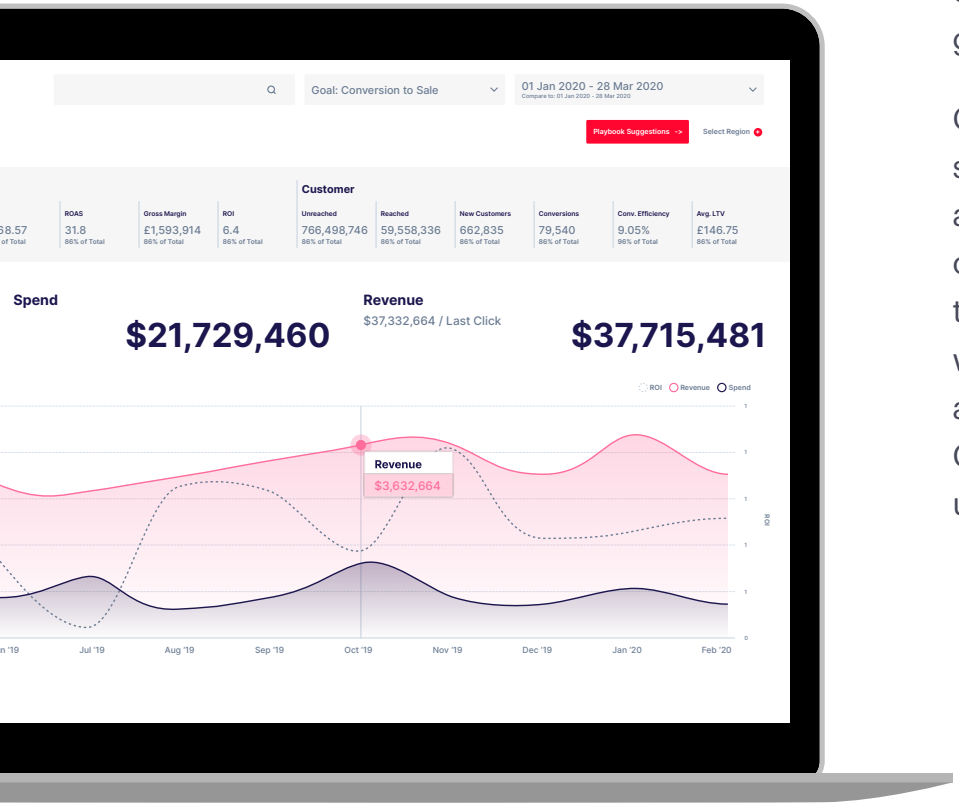
In this instance, Corvidae – which is QueryClick’s attribution software – used a combination of advanced econometrics techniques and Machine Learning to effectively “rebuild” the core clickstream data from Google Analytics which was then shown to be 80% incorrectly attributed.

Misconception #3

Attribution technology is for data scientists only - and not practical for commercially focused marketers

In this case, the reality couldn't be further from the truth.

Although the use of sophisticated models like Shapley, Markov and techniques like deterministic matching and the advanced use of Machine Learning and AI are all important elements of how your attribution technology functions. What really matters is the effective insight that the technology and analysis delivers to help you improve your marketing efforts.



And crucially the ability to connect marketing spend with growth.

Good attribution technology solutions are going to deliver against that, providing not only "big picture" analysis but the ability to drill down into what is – and isn't – working at a Channel, Campaign, Creative and even an individual user level.

Misconception #4

My current attribution solution tells me that PPC is my best performing channel - I am not sure what deeper insight I need?

There is little doubt that Paid Search is a highly effective channel for many marketers. And it is hugely popular due in part to the simple nature of the media. You turn it on and revenue flows.

However, it is also probably the case that it has already created an imbalance in your digital strategy. Attribution approaches like Last-Click can provide an over simplified and exaggerated view of the impact of Paid Search activity – and more importantly ignore the wider impact of other media that can contribute to conversion. Particularly on longer, more complex customer journeys.

And its' relative popularity has created an even bigger problem. Everyone is using it – which is driving CPAs up and ROI down over time. So, the pressure is on to find other ways to drive conversions and revenue to boost marketing ROI.

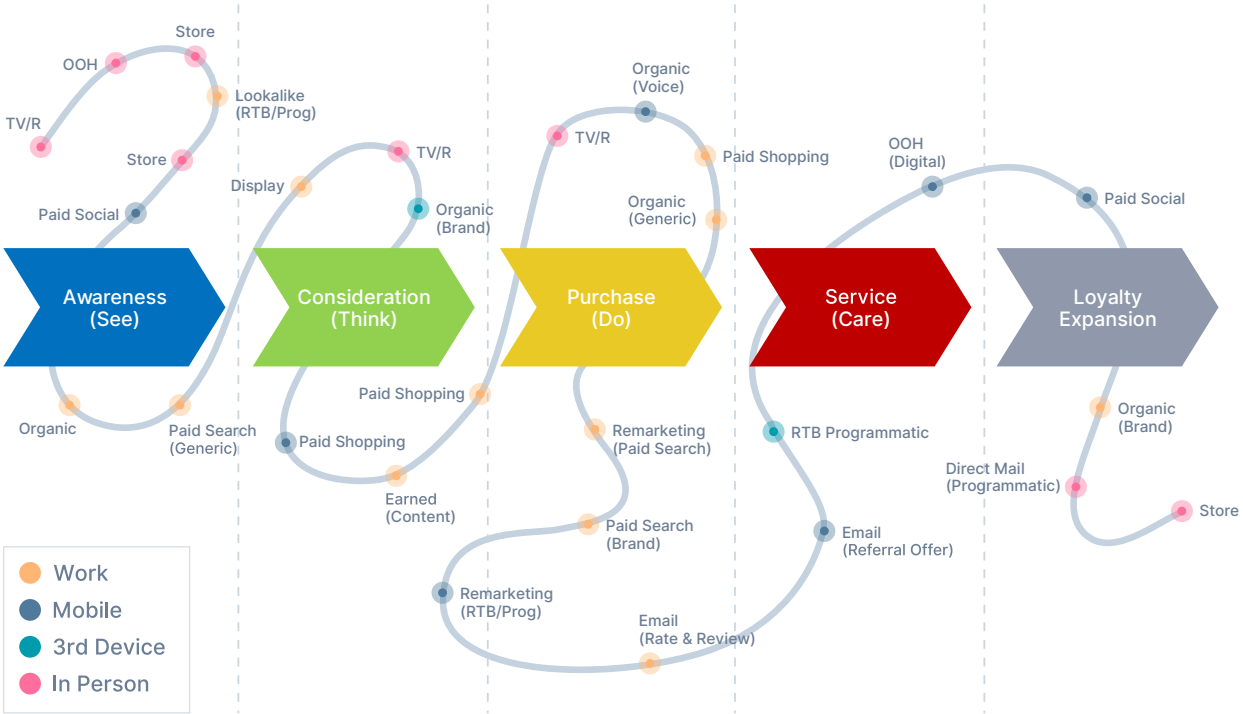
Misconception #5

The customer journey is way too complex to bother trying to effectively attribute

The first part of this statement holds some element of weight. For many brands customer journeys have become increasingly complex. Being undertaken on a wide range of devices from laptops and tablets to

mobile phones. Being impacted by a wide range of both offline and digital media that potentially all have a part to play in the conversion process. Over an extended period of time, often stretching into several months.

That can be complex to unravel, and static attribution models have struggled to cope. However, advances in technology mean that attribution solutions - that leverage econometric and probabilistic modelling techniques and incorporate bleeding edge data science in the form of machine learning and AI – are able to join journeys together that were previously unidentifiable. To create a fully attributed map of the customer journey that you can use to analyse and drive marketing performance.



4 clear signs you might need a better attribution solution.

There are a number of reasons you might be looking to improve the quality of your attribution.

ONE.

You continually struggle to justify your marketing budget & spending decisions

Marketing spend decisions and budgets are under greater levels of scrutiny than ever before.

And the pressure to connect the investment in marketing activity with growth and revenue is on, and is non-negotiable. The problem is that for many marketers poor and ineffective attribution models mean they typically lack accurate data to prove the effectiveness of marketing activity and enable them to push back on unwarranted intrusion on the budgeting and planning process. Including protecting and ringfencing their budgets.

67.5% of Marketing Directors are actively restricted from employing activity with longer term payback

Not only is there evidence that this pressure is very real – but research by QueryClick uncovered that the nature of spend is being impacted too. With evidence that 67.5% of Marketing Directors are actively restricted from employing activity with longer term payback due to internal stakeholder influence.

TWO.

You lack confidence in your marketing data

At the most fundamental level you simply might not trust the marketing data that is being put in front of you.

For many marketers this is a very real challenge. At the heart of the issue are flaw attribution models and solutions that simply aren't fit for purpose. In fact, it is no exaggeration to say that attribution is digital marketing's broken promise with 90% of marketers responsible for improving marketing ROI in the UK unable to get access to the right type of data to meet their needs.

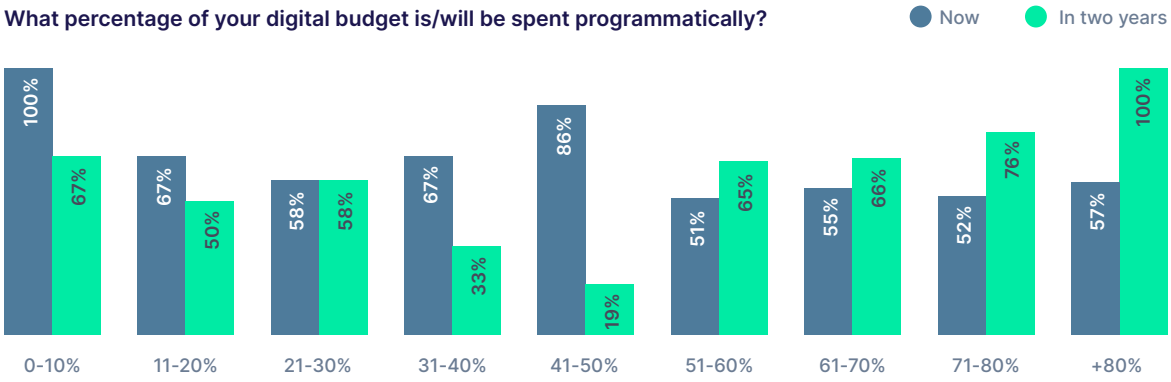
90% of marketers responsible for improving the marketing ROI in the UK can't access the data they need.

This has left many struggling to create a single, data-driven joined up view of the customer journey which is only compounded by the data silo issues that many brands face – with channels like Paid Search, Programmatic, Social and other media types all having siloed data collection and measurement.

THREE.

You have difficulty identifying fraud and wasted marketing spend

The meteoric rise in popularity of digital advertising has created a ground-shift in the way that brands can deliver targeted messages to the right type of audiences with unparalleled opportunities to deliver ad placements on thousands of sites, at the right time and to the right audiences.



The World Federation of Advertisers forecast fraud will cost brands more than $50 billion by 2025.

Programmatic advertising is at the heart of many digital schedules with [62% of respondents to a Programmatic Pioneers survey] current spending over half of their budget in this way with plans to increase this to 82% in the next 2 years. The problem is that programmatic is wide open to abuse. For example, high profile studies have shown that bots are responsible a quarter of all "views" of video-based ads. Which contributes to a fraud problem that the [World Federation of Advertisers forecasts will cost brands more than $50 billion by 2025].

And advertising fraud is only part of the story with broader waste related issues around poor placement, oversaturation etc.

FOUR.

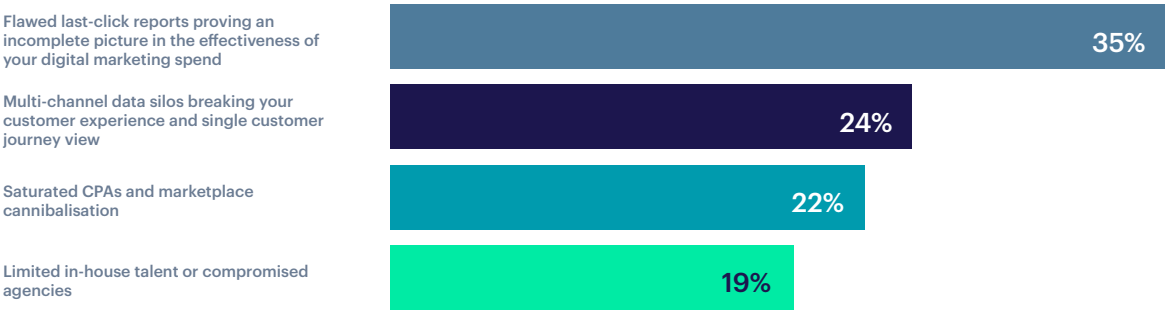
There are some very real limitations in your existing attribution approach

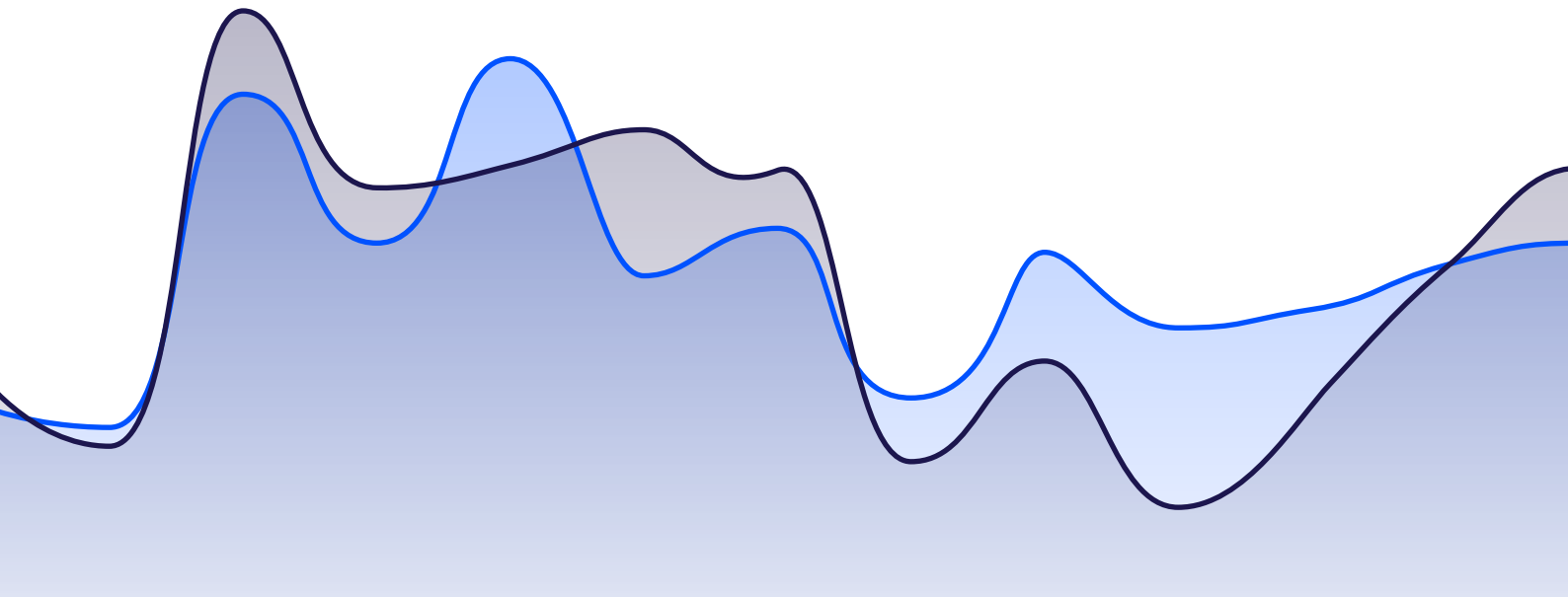
Underlying many of the issues above there could also be some limitations in your current attribution solution that is holding you back.

If you don't have effective attribution in place, then it's a fairly safe bet that you also don't know what is – and just as importantly isn't – working across your marketing mix. So, assessing and improving "true" marketing performance isn't really possible for you.

And you are not alone. According to the Programmatic Pioneers Report 2020 **35% of marketers highlight flawed, last click reports that provide incomplete pictures of overall marketing effectiveness for digital spend as their primary marketing challenge.**

Which of the following is your primary marketing challenge?





Helpful tips for choosing the right solution for your needs.

There is a bewildering array of attribution solutions to choose from, ranging from off-the-shelf analytics packages to dedicated data services and SaaS based attribution software.

However, not all attribution solutions are built the same. So, here is a checklist of some of the key things to consider to ensure you get the right solution to fit you and your needs:

1 Aggregated versus sampled data

Give some consideration to whether a solution is applying attribution to your entire data set and not just a proportion of it.

There are very real dangers of only applying attribution rules to a sample or subset of your data. This is typically when attribution gets misunderstood, with fairly significant consequences that can easily and quickly skew attribution outcomes – and ultimately your marketing strategy with it. Sampling data, effectively giving your marketing attribution model or solution a partial view of your marketing activity and data, can't lead anywhere other than outcomes that don't fairly reflect the contribution of all of your marketing efforts.

The situation is made worse when separate media silos in the same business are cannibalizing each other's contributions and individually attributing their data

set level on individual media channels. Claiming credit they shouldn't and attributing more than their fair share of contribution to revenue. On the face of it, MarTech solutions like Salesforce, Hubspot and Dynamics CRM seem to offer a solution to the issue. However, in reality, much of their value is found in understanding the needs and preferences of individuals after initial conversion - and they struggle to interpret the myriad of interactions that occur before conversion.

So, solutions that take an aggregated approach to unifying data silos are an essential building block in your attribution strategy and solution choice.

2 Deterministic versus probabilistic matching

As customers increasingly undertake complex buying journeys both offline and across a range of digital devices including mobile, laptop and tablets it becomes increasingly difficult to identify individual journeys.

There are two ways to identify the same user across a range of devices:

- **Deterministic matching**
  Creates device relationships by using specific personally identifiable information – for example, email, name and phone number, and is highly accurate in making this match.

- **Probabilistic matching**
  Creates device relationships by linking data through device fingerprinting, IP matching, operating system, Wi-Fi network, behavioural browsing data etc.

The reality is that although both have their merits and these approaches can be used to complement each other with probabilistic matching adding reach and

scale to an underlying deterministic approach, adopting a deterministic approach is key to individual-centric marketing and identifying individual customer journeys.

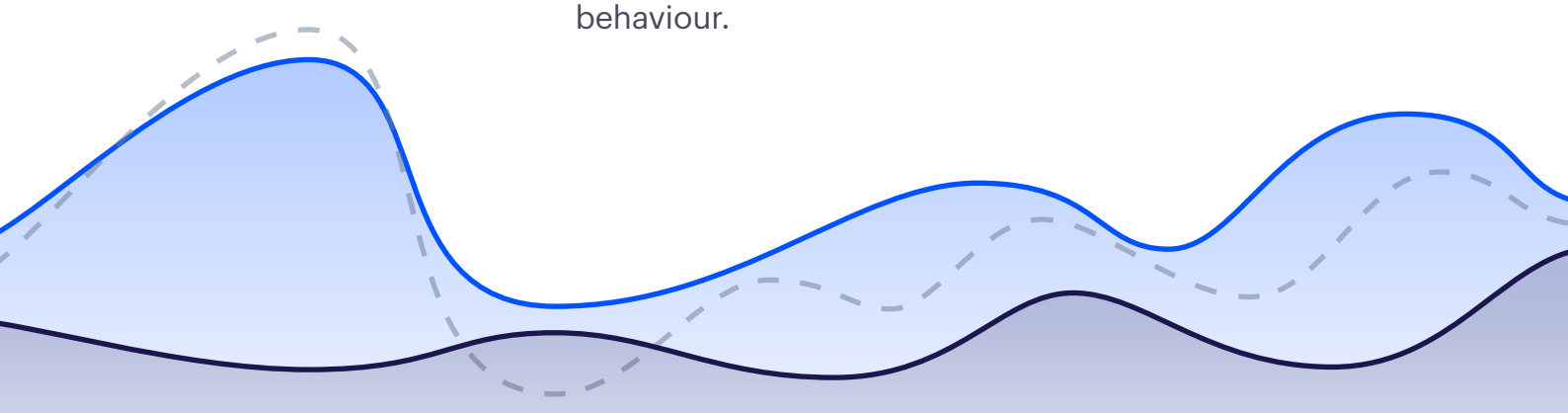
So, if this is important to you. Factor it into your evaluation criteria as you look at different attribution solutions.

3 Check the quality of “data in” and rebuild it

Look for solutions that place as much emphasis - if not more – on the quality of the data being fed into it, as the attribution solution itself.

If you take one thing away from this guide, then take this – it really doesn’t matter how good your attribution solution is if the underlying data you are feeding in is poor. As we pointed out earlier in our pull out on page 6 it is highly likely, even if you are using recognized attribution solutions from Google and Adobe that, that 80% of your input data is actually wrong, due to limitations in the way it has been collected.

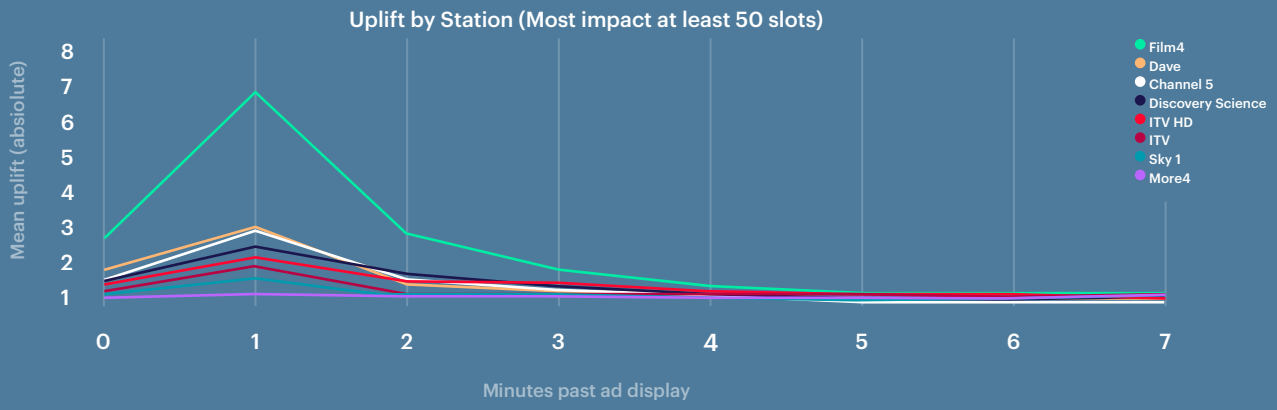
Consider attribution solutions that look to overcome these limitations and look to rebuild and enhance your raw clickstream data by using a combination of the best of econometric modelling techniques - and Machine Learning and AI - to “stitch” in the impact of marketing content across the entire complexity of the customer journey. Which completely rebuilds core marketing data from the ground up around a true picture of customer behaviour.



The crucial impact of including offline in your analysis

So, what impact does including offline data really look like in practice?

Take the example below which was a project we undertook for a major life insurance customer, where data was accurately mapped very precisely to offline events. Here geo and time data – from a range of offline media sources across a two-year lookback window – was connected to changes in customer conversion behaviour. With the customer having likely been exposed to an offline marketing event - a TV ad, or instore activity.



This activity is 'stitched' into their conversion journey. When attribution modelling is subsequently applied that offline event is allocated value just as a digital channel would. This opens up the possibility to quantify offline activity effectiveness and allows digital and offline to be held to the same, unified, account for performance optimisation.

The results?

39% of TV spend was identified as ineffective and available for allocation to other channels for no negative revenue impact.

More starkly, uncovering data proving no correlation between radio activity and conversion impact **enabled £2.42m of radio media spend to be reallocated with no negative revenue impact.**

TV Spend Effectiveness: Reallocation Opportunitie	
Total Yearly TV Spend	£2,264,000
	Ineffective Spend
Savings from Time adjustment	£430,160
Savings from Station adjustment	£311,753
Savings from Day adjustment	£152,209
Total	**£894,122**

4 Be sure to include the impact of offline activity

If your customer journey is on and offline then your attribution solution needs to reflect this. And by missing out the impact of many offline touches on the customer journey you miss the opportunity to create a genuinely accurate single point of truth.

Don't compromise here. Integration offline has its challenges but increasingly offers rich data as measurement moves beyond traditional, panel-based approaches to incorporate digital data from Beacon technology, opt-in Wi-Fi tracking and RFID data. The largest marketing reach touchpoints outside of store are linear TV and radio activity which can provide either panel-led econometrics data or purchased, direct from the manufacturer data. For example, on Smart TVs.

Whilst there are some potential challenges with integrating this type of data - including an inability to look beyond channel level impact and a lack of immediacy at times – if they are applied to enrich an already unified marketing strategy and attribution approach they can be a powerful tool to unlock individual customer behaviour, environmental influence, competitive intelligence and meaningful signals for targeting. To help optimize campaigns and ad spend, and drive personalisation at scale.

5 The importance of customizable, digital multi-touch attribution

The most common application of attribution today is the rule-based Last-Click model that is the default attribution approach in Google Analytics. This type of approach provides no sophisticated view of the impact of all touchpoints along the customer journey and effectively applies 100% of the conversion value to the last interaction.

Other rule-based models like first-click or time decay models attempt to overcome the limitations above but in practice custom, multi-touch data attribution models are the only way to understand the impact of marketing initiatives and media across the customer journey, to provide the long-term insights you need for actionable results to drive your marketing ROI.

Look for solutions that include data driven, custom attribution models that leverage powerful econometrics modelling techniques and Machine Learning approaches to provide a highly customised and individual view of the customer journey.

Feature comparison

	Corvidae	Conversant	Liveramp	Cubed	Nielsen	Adobe	Google 360
Digital Multitouch Attribution	✓	✓	–	✓	✓	✓	✓
Digital Clickstream Cleansing*	✓	×	–	×	×	×	×
Enterprise Onboarding	✓	✓	✓	✓	–	✓	–
Unified Attribution Modelling (inc individual customer journeys)	✓	×	×	×	×	×	×
Replacement for Enterprise Analytics platforms	✓	×	×	×	×	×	✓
Enterprise Data Integration / APIs	✓	✓	✓	✓	–	✓	✓

A high-level feature comparison of some of the more advanced attribution solutions on the market.

6 Look for deep dive analysis capability with views across the customer journey

Ensure you select a solution that provides a depth of analysis that enables you to unravel the complexity of the wide variety of touchpoints on individual customer journeys and accurately attribute the correct level of impact to each, enabling you to make the direct link between marketing spend and revenue. And providing

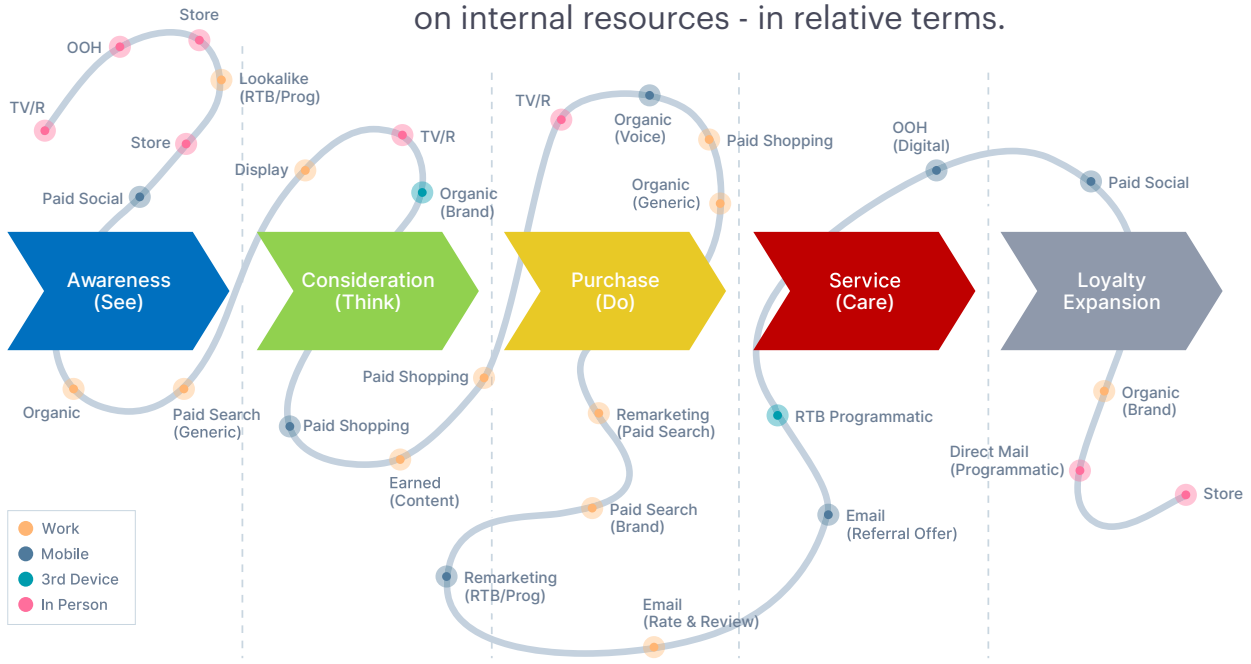
the capability to significantly improve your marketing ROI by making informed judgements based on sound data analytics – at different levels including Channel, Campaign and Impression level.

If your customer journey is long and complex, choose a solution that lets you "see" the journey end to end - across devices, media types and journey stages.

7 Leverage the cost-effective power of Machine Learning and AI

Finally, ensure your solution leverages the full potential of Machine Learning and AI technology. The sheer complexity and breadth of the customer journey demands that you take advantage of bleeding edge data science, to rebuild your clickstream data and "stitch in" and join highly valuable data – from either on of offline sources – to provide a single unified view of the individual customer journey. This results in near-live, highly actionable data that provides the capability to accurately assess and re-target your marketing spend, for optimum payback.

The best solutions will put all of this at your fingertips, and can be cost-effective – and place less or a burden on internal resources - in relative terms.

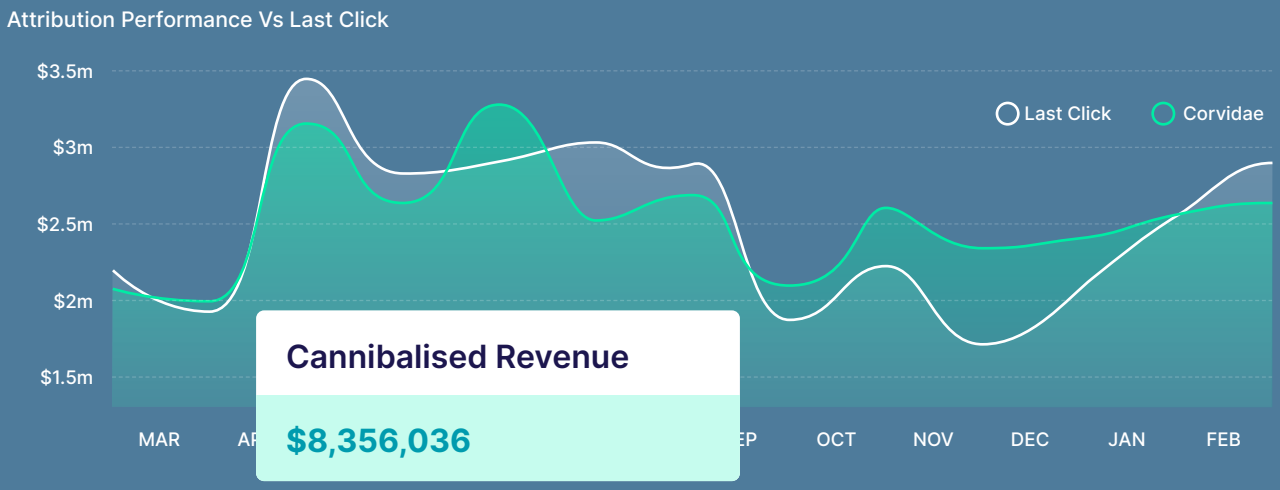


Do your attribution dashboards really give you what you need?

Beware of fancy bells and whistles. And fancy dashboards vs what's really important to drive effective insight and marketing ROI.

Most marketing departments are drowning in enough un-connected data to sink them completely. And there really isn't any business case for adding more "so what" type data - without actionable insight - into the mix.

So, as you consider attribution solutions – think carefully about how you can potentially use the data you are seeing to action improvements.



So, for example, on a practical level does the solution:

- → maximize marketing ROI by eliminating wasted, cannibalized spend you can cut out right now
- → correctly value content and help you adjust your marketing mix to build top of funnel activity
- → enable you to automate customer acquisition and convert customers based on probability to purchase

If it doesn't – ask what it does do. And look for actionable recommendations rather than simply historic views of where you – and your customers – have been. Rather than where you should be going.

Some guiding thoughts to factor into your selection process.

Having an effective attribution model is a crucial piece of the market jigsaw puzzle. And pivotal to your ability to plan, assess and continually improve your marketing effectiveness.

Here are some closing thoughts as you explore your options:

- **Flaws in existing attribution solutions are very real.** A combination of factors ranging from issues with the way that cookie/pixel data is collected, to historical and oversimplified views mean they are highly likely to be providing you with incorrect or incomplete data

- **As a result, selecting the right attribution solution is only one part of the equation.** In some ways the quality of your attribution becomes a moot point if the quality of the data you are feeding into it is poor. So, finding a solution that has the capability to rebuild your data – as a sound foundation for attribution - is crucial.

- **The customer journey is typically long and complex.** It takes place over both offline and online – across a wide range of digital devices including laptops, mobile and tablets, involving a plethora of media channels and types. Your attribution solution needs the capability to deal with the complexity and be able to provide a single, unified and individual view of this journey at a personal level.

- **Not all attribution solutions are built the same.** Differences in the way that solutions approach matching – deterministic or probabilistic – and data sampling (vs aggregated data) can have a big bearing on the accuracy of your attribution efforts. As can the ability to include the impact of offline activity in your overall analysis. Also be sure to look for solutions that provide customizable, digital multi-touch attribution and leverage the power of advanced econometrics techniques, and Machine Learning and AI.

- **Beware of shiny dashboards along the way** – and look for solutions that provide practical, actionable recommendations that can provide improvements across your marketing mix at a channel, campaign, creative and individual user level.

And if you are interested. Talk to us about Corvidae.

Talk to us about Corvidae

Corvidae is QueryClick's SaaS marketing attribution platform and the only attribution solution which completely rebuilds your marketing data, reaching beyond Google 360 and Adobe Analytics.

BOOK A DEMO

