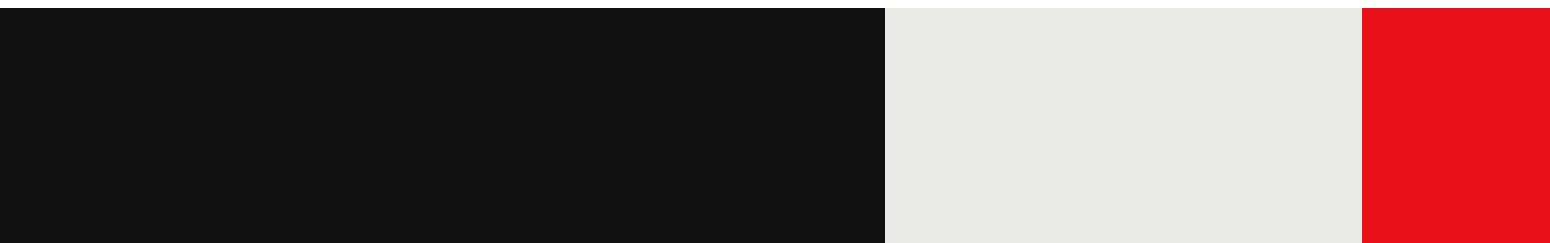



How brands are adapting to a post-cookie world with first-party data

Article



The news: As third-party cookies disappear, **The New York Times**, **Disney**, **NBCUniversal**, and **McDonald's** are prioritizing first-party data. At **The Trade Desk's FWD25** event, executives detailed how they're using direct consumer relationships to enhance targeting, measurement, and personalization in a privacy-first era.

Early adoption pays off: The New York Times is reaping the benefits of having abandoned third-party cookies well before industry-wide deprecation and pursuing a first-party data strategy.

- The Times is using its 11.5 million subscribers and 150 million registered users to build ad products that perform **up to 3-to-4 times better than traditional campaigns**.
- **BrandMatch**, the publisher's AI-driven audience-targeting tool, translates brand briefs into precise audience segments, **delivering up to 4 times better campaign performance**.
- Global chief advertising officer **Joy Robins** highlighted how this approach provides advertisers with premium, privacy-compliant targeting solutions while maintaining user trust.

Identity interoperability matters: Rather than locking its data within a walled garden, **Disney's Bridge ID integrates with broader industry identity solutions** to ensure seamless audience targeting for advertisers.

- **Bridge ID connects with Unified ID2**, enabling advertisers to match their own first-party data with Disney's audience insights.
- **Jamie Power**, Disney's SVP of addressable sales, emphasized how identity resolution remains a challenge: "You might have the most thoughtful test design, and then you have no idea that you only matched on 9%."
- **To maximize advertiser confidence, Disney is making its data more accessible.** "I don't want you to guess the duplication between Hulu and Disney+ when I can just give you the data," Power said.

Scaling loyalty: McDonald's is aggressively expanding its first-party data footprint by growing its loyalty program, which already has **170 million active members and aims to reach 250 million**.

- Global head of media **Anne Enright** noted that McDonald's sees the biggest impact when it can **leverage customer insights to make interactions "more meaningful, big or small."**
- **By owning its first-party data**, McDonald's is reducing reliance on external platforms and ensuring its ad spend translates into tangible business results.

Our take: First-party data is defining winners and losers. As the advertising industry shifts away from third-party cookies, companies with **direct consumer relationships and strong**

identity frameworks are best positioned for success.

Ultimately, the companies that invest in first-party data now will dictate the future of digital advertising. Those without direct consumer relationships—or a clear data strategy—risk being left behind as privacy restrictions reshape the industry.

Go further: Read more of our FWD25 coverage.

