

Clean rooms are in vogue with advertisers, publishers, and vendors—but there's a catch

Article

The trend: Data clean rooms are moving into the mainstream as businesses begin phasing out third-party identifiers, with advertisers prioritizing such solutions above other martech

priorities.

Clean room 101: Everyone wants a “clean room”, so naturally, vendors glom onto the term and all define it somewhat differently. To address that, the IAB Tech Lab will be releasing an initial draft of data clean room standards by December.

- In essence, clean rooms (in theory) are a more secure way for platforms and marketers to intersect data sets without actually sharing the data.
- Multiple parties are able to cross-reference first-party data that has been stripped of personally identifiable information in these secure digital settings to generate audience and campaign insights.
- Clean rooms can assist in organizing the data that providers offer, along with who they share it with and why.

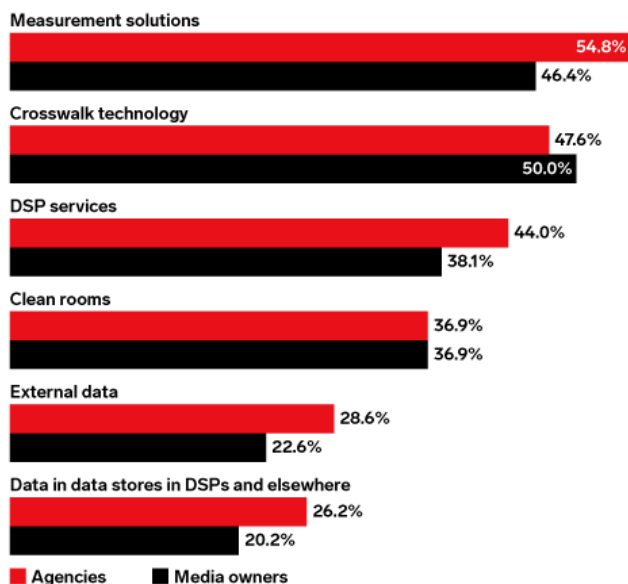
Leading clean room solutions are **AppsFlyer Privacy Cloud**, **Amazon Marketing Cloud**, **Habu CleanML**, **LiveRamp Safe Haven**, **InfoSum’s Secure Data Clean Room**, and the **Snowflake Data Cloud**.

Zoom out: Clean rooms are gaining momentum.

- In June, we reported that data cloud provider Snowflake is working on a [cross-platform and cross-publisher clean room](#) with advanced advertising firm **OpenAP**; the first publishers to take part will be **Warner Bros. Discovery**, **NBCUniversal**, **Fox**, and **Paramount**, which all jointly own OpenAP.
- In July, [Disney partnered with The Trade Desk](#), combining the former’s user data from its clean room with the latter’s Unified ID 2.0 initiative, a third-party cookie replacement that’s already been adopted by **Nielsen**, **LiveRamp**, and **Criteo**.
- Just this month, **General Motors (GM)** became the first brand to [merge its data with NBCUnified](#), the [recently launched](#) data portfolio that allows brands to combine their first-party data with information from across NBCU properties.

Areas Where US Agencies/Media Owners Expect to Increase Expenditure, May 2022

% of respondents



Note: respondents all involved in advanced TV (either supplying or buying advanced TV solutions)

Source: Winterberry Group, "Outlook for Identity in Advanced Television: Challenges and Opportunities," June 14, 2022

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How clean are clean rooms? What constitutes identifiable data and what qualifies as anonymous data is a significant issue. In July, the FTC warned advertisers against collecting "anonymous" data that could be linked to identify individuals. Clean rooms provide data owners with a secure setting in which to store and query their data—but those who hold the data are still responsible for getting customers' permission before using it.

- Data clean rooms aren't entirely secure nor fully private in some circumstances, according to **Dennis Buchheim**, vice president of **Meta's** advertising ecosystem, who expressed the sentiment at an IAB event last week.
- Buchheim's comments may be viewed as blasphemy by ad tech companies and publishers who have enthusiastically embraced the concept—but, it's important to note, Meta has a vested interest in discouraging a trend that may make advertisers less beholden to the social media giant's vast data set.

The big takeaway: Although clean rooms don't reveal any private customer information, in practice the increased number of participants and data sources raises security concerns. For that reason, businesses need to work to implement consistent security and privacy rules or risk being called out on that by an increasingly tech-savvy consumer base.

Go further: Clean rooms are but one part of the evolving programmatic landscape. ***Read our programmatic advertising explainer.***