

Start broad, then narrow your focus: Expert strategies on first-party data use

Article

The race is on for marketers to bolster their first-party data strategies. But navigating the collection, organization, and activation of that data can be tricky.

Here are four tips to help you get started.

1. Start broad, then narrow your focus

“I think there was a temptation in the beginning of our journey to go after very granular, different segments,” Brigitte Barron, director of global customer relationship management and customer growth at e.l.f. Beauty, said during a session at [our virtual summit last week](#). “But we had to take a step back and align on key macro audiences or segments that we wanted to go after first.”

Barron recommended identifying three to five key audiences and what your main messaging to them would be.

Chris O’Brien, senior vice president at M&T Bank, agreed. “It’s really important for people to focus on their audiences, whether you’re building audiences [based on cookies] and doing that sort of profiling in a data management platform or you’re using first-party data,” he said.

2. Create one source of truth

The next step to getting first-party data ready for activation is getting it all in one place, according to Barron.

“We started the journey by finding a customer data platform [CDP] and housing everything from our anonymized data that we collect on our website to other first-party sources from our loyalty program, customer service orders, and so on,” she said.

Then, you need to find a way to merge all of those records to get a single view of the customer.

“We have a lot of data around different subcategories of products, and consumers can be inconsistent [with self-reporting], so we wanted to understand how to put that all together and create a primary source of truth,” she said.

3. Prioritize quality over quantity

To make up for the loss of third-party cookies, marketers are racing to capture more first-party data, said Christine Grammier, head of solutions at LiveRamp. But not all data is equal.

“Make sure you’re monitoring that these [first-party data] sources are actually high quality and that you can connect other data to it,” she said. Loyalty programs, transaction data, and website and app behaviors are some examples.

If you aren’t sure what data to use, you can work backward to determine which business outcomes you want to drive, said O’Brien.

“Once you do that, it makes it a lot easier to determine which data sets you need and how to put them together to activate them on the channels that matter for your business.”

4. Ensure your tech stack stacks up

In addition to finding a CDP as a central location to house data, e.l.f. updated its data collection tools, the tech stack for its loyalty program (“Our richest source of data,” said Barron), and its marketing automation tools to help the company activate more successfully against its first-party data.

Barron also said legislation like the General Data Protection Regulation in the EU and the California Consumer Privacy Act has had an impact on the brand’s process and tech stack.

“We’re a small company managing [these] changes and making sure we’re being compliant. We’ve had to stay on top of and think about how we’re evolving and handling [requests for data deletion].”

[Watch the full session now.](#)

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