

How Lenovo Is Moving Beyond Last-Click Attribution

Marketers aim for more thoroughness in how they credit sales

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Ross Benes



An interview with:

Priest Willis

Senior Global Marketing Manager
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For years, marketing industry observers have stressed that last-click attribution—which credits a purchase to the last ad clicked by a customer—**doesn't provide a complete picture** of who to credit with a sale. But many marketers still rely on last-click because it's what they're accustomed to, and they're unsure what the payoff will be if they switch to a more thorough attribution model. Priest Willis, senior global marketing manager at **Lenovo**, spoke with eMarketer's Ross Benes about how Lenovo is moving beyond last-click attribution.

eMarketer:

What was the impetus for testing different attribution models?

Priest Willis:

The argument, particularly within the affiliate space, is always that the affiliate guy swoops in at the last minute and steals the order from paid search or some other program.

But within that multitouch process, that affiliate probably has played a role in assisting the order. So what I want internally is to still see the value within the affiliate program, rather than just writing them off as a last-click stealer of the order.

eMarketer:

How do you plan on altering your attribution approach?

Priest Willis:

There are real companies that focus purely on attribution. We plan on looking at one of those, and kind of doing a side-by-side analysis [against our current last-touch vendors] and really seeing where the attribution lands for us.

We'll have all these data touchpoints. We're not collecting the data just to have data. We're really doing it to drive toward, "What is the value that the affiliate partnership is really driving?"

eMarketer:

For Lenovo, what all goes into your affiliate program?

Priest Willis:

Affiliate coupon shoppers, emails, we do some business-to-business [B2B] stuff with other large organizations that don't conflict with our brand, there's influencers on YouTube—it really runs the gamut.

eMarketer:

When you tell your marketing partners that you're going to change your attribution setup, what do you try to make clear to them?

Priest Willis:

I don't want to throw them out just because, all of a sudden, we're going to change the attribution. We need to be smart about how we run our business.

eMarketer:

Do your marketing partners get anxiety over this change?

Priest Willis:

Absolutely—that's something we're going through right now. That's why we're [testing a multitouch vendor]. Some people would say it's overkill. But this way we can make the business case to our partners that we have no doubt about [the attribution], based on all the different data we are pulling in.

eMarketer:

What are people's biggest concerns when they find out you are testing other attribution systems?

Priest Willis:

In some ways it could be revealing that maybe the affiliate program isn't as big because it's been eating off of the fact that we've been a last-click business. But I'm very confident that our program has multiple layers to it, and there's more to it than just this last-click, bottom-feeder approach that some tend to think about when they think of the affiliate space.

eMarketer:

Who goes through all the data you're pulling in regarding attribution?

Priest Willis:

We have an internal business intelligence team that goes through the data.

eMarketer:

How long are you conducting these attribution tests?

Priest Willis:

We're giving it a year. We're just in the first couple of months now.

eMarketer:

Why do you think it's important to put this much emphasis on attribution models?

Priest Willis:

Some people are afraid to get this deep into the data because they're afraid of what they might find. They're afraid that they might not be as big as they thought they were.

It's much easier to just throw everything in one pot. I think it's important to find out who you are because it sort of helps you to know who you're not. Then you can run your business accordingly.

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