



**Cookieless**

**Digital Marketing**

## **Don't get caught with your hand in the cookie jar:**

Strengthen your digital fundraising without cross-platform tracking



**D**igital fundraisers have gotten used to simple tools. Facebook and Google will find your target audience by email address. They'll build your lookalike models. And your ads will find your target audience across the ad-supported internet.

*It's never been more important to know your constituents' data.*

*We'll see that as one door closes, another opens.*

But the internet isn't entirely supported by advertising. On the other side of the advertising spectrum, Apple opts for a pay-for-service model and takes their money out of the back end of your purchase. This means they can turn off the inputs to these simple tools without hitting their bottom line. Because more than half of all internet traffic is now mobile and more than half of mobile usage is on Apple devices, this changes how the internet is browsed and paid for.

As a result, we are seeing a shift in how we acquire and retain donors online. We'll show you ways to meet your goals in this new world, but the TL;DR version is it's never been more important to know your constituents' data.

With this data in hand, we'll see that as one door closes, another opens. While the easy tools we have been using may be less useful today, they can give us the opportunity to create greater digital options than we've had before.

## The rise and fall of digital addressability

Once upon a time, the only customized marketing available was face-to-face. For just a few coppers more, your horse could come with a saddle. This was discussed directly with your local equine merchant, who had no way of letting the rest of their potential clients know about the free saddle deal. All other marketing was mass market, from the town crier or the newspaper with messages of the day (“LONDON STILL ON FIRE!”).

That changed when people got mail addresses, then phone numbers, then email addresses. With great addressability comes great responsibility—woe betide unto those who think the town crier’s mass-market tactics work in media where customization is possible and therefore expected.

*With great addressability comes great responsibility.*

Then came the advent of the commercial internet in the 1990s and, with it, cookies. And like many other ‘90s innovations, cookies seemed like a good idea at the time. Originally, these bits of code placed on a web-browsing device identified the user so a website could be personalized and things like login information could be stored. However, fifteen minutes later in internet time, they were being used by third parties to track you across the web.

However, these are device-specific, and we are now awash in connected devices. Our Facebook, Google, and Twitter logins follow us around the web. They connect us to our browsing, our browsing to our email addresses, our email addresses to our relationships with people and organizations, and those relationships to customized experiences as we travel the web device-agnostically.

Until recently, this had been the state of the digital world.

Then, in 2018, Apple’s Safari browser began blocking third-party cookies by default. This means individual websites will still store information to customize their site to you. However, that will only be allowed on the site you are on. Facebook can still track you on Facebook, but they won’t track you on your news site of choice. Firefox followed suit in 2019, and Google announced it would make this same move in 2023.



Apple continued its move against tracking with its April 2021 iOS 14 launch. This new operating system on mobile devices prompts users to “allow tracking” from Facebook and other apps. Only those who explicitly opt-in will be tracked across apps and platforms. Facebook anticipated that about 20% would opt-in, leaving 80% of users not trackable. So far, only six percent of Americans have, leaving 94% untracked, according to Flurry. Google will likely make a similar move in 2023, but it’s unclear what technology they will use instead (more on this later).

*These updates  
will have  
several major  
impacts.*

It doesn’t end there. With the launch of iOS 15, Apple will now open mail for roughly 90% of users who use Apple Mail on their iPhone, iPad, or Mac. An estimated 90% of users will opt-in to this new process. This will create another hurdle for fundraisers, given approximately 30-36% of our audiences use Apple Mail. Users will now be given the option to protect their mail activity, hiding their IP address and remote information.

Moreover, any email that comes to your Apple device will automatically be sent to Apple for caching and will register as an open, thus potentially creating a false positive. This will happen regardless of the address type (Gmail, Yahoo, etc.) as long as they are linked to your iOS mail application. In addition, if someone clicks an email, future opens will no longer be recorded with iOS 15.

## What does this all mean?

These updates will have several major impacts.

### ***Decreased customized reach.***

Facebook Custom Audiences will still work to target individual people on Facebook-owned properties. However, this will not work if a user is on an iOS device and has opted out of cross-app tracking. For these users, digital advertising turns from addressable—like mail, phone, direct email, or connected TV—to mostly non-addressable where you are talking to a mass audience like linear TV, radio, outdoor, or other types of advertising.



**Thankfully,  
with a rethink  
of your digital  
strategy, you'll  
be able to not  
only survive  
but thrive.**

Moreover, retargeting audience size will diminish significantly because large services like Google and Facebook won't be able to track many events from iOS 14 (and beyond) users—Facebook can't advertise to website visitors it doesn't know you have. Currently, retargeting audiences are the top performers for most of Moore's nonprofit clients.

With the rollout of iOS 15, we will also lose some segmentation capabilities. Any audience cohort, segmentation, or targeting based on the last open date will be rendered useless. To elaborate, let's say your organization sends an email campaign out on Tuesday and then decides to send an additional email to non-opens the following Thursday. With the new Mail Privacy Protection, you could be excluding some false opens from the prior Tuesday. Thus, it will become more difficult to determine which contacts are engaged vs. unengaged for your messaging.

#### ***Decreased audience insights.***

Facebook has removed its view-through attribution analysis. This means you won't be able to track if someone viewed an ad then donated; you will only be able to see if they clicked the ad then donated. As a direct marketer, you know an important difference here—often, it takes several impressions across channels to get someone to donate. This takes out this important bit of information, so even if your back-end results don't go down, they could look like they are going down in the platform because of the loss of this indirect attribution.

With the iOS 15 update, you won't be able to tell which Apple Mail recipients opened your emails (if at all), the time of open, their geolocation, and which device they use (that's right, no more mobile vs. desktop insight). In addition, automated flows and journeys that rely on someone opening an email will be rendered ineffective. For instance, if you're sending someone on a journey where opening an email more than once sends them to the sales team or member services, your data won't accurately reflect who has actually opened your emails vs. who hasn't.

#### ***Diminished in-platform results.***

With Facebook's requirement to track only one top-prioritized conversion from those that have opted out, users who convert multiple times in the same session will have incomplete data

attached to them. Removing view-through attribution means that we will see lower results in the Facebook platform. For iOS mail users, monitoring email deliverability and maintaining list hygiene will be much more challenging.

All this—less addressable reach, diminished results, less knowledge—sounds very bad. Thankfully, with a rethink of your digital strategy, you'll be able to not only survive but thrive.

# *What you can do to preserve and enhance your digital fundraising*

## **Preparing your digital campaigns**

**H**ere, you are looking to minimize the hit that your results take from this new data environment. These recommendations can help you do that:

### ***Get your conversion events focused.***

Facebook is now limiting advertisers to eight conversion events per domain, even if you use multiple pixels on that domain. If you are tracking and optimizing for one-time donations, monthly donations, newsletter signups, volunteering, visiting blog posts, taking an advocacy action, requesting planned giving materials, signing a pledge, purchasing an item, and clicking to learn more on a program page, at least two of these will have to be eliminated.

Thus, it's important that you select those carefully and for your highest value events. The top event will be the only one tracked for those who opt-out of cross-platform tracking.

### ***Focus on other metrics.***

When measuring engagement with your iOS 15 mail users, look to monitor your unique clicks rather than opens for each email. Place more emphasis on tracking website visits, form fills, and other forms of engagement.



***It's important to keep prospecting categories specific and targeted.***

### ***Prioritize your donation event.***

If a person takes multiple actions in a user session, Facebook will record only the first one if the person has not allowed tracking. If you don't rank them, the conversion events will be ranked based on campaign spend within the last 28 days. For example, if you are spending heavily on lead generation, that could jump the line if not prioritized. Thus, list your donation event first to make sure you are prioritizing revenue generation.

### ***Frequently update your uploaded Custom Audiences.***

These lists will still match back to Facebook as they did. Having these files that can target people directly or create lookalike audiences based on the data at hand will be more valuable than ever.

### ***Go prospecting wisely and narrowly.***

As you look to regain scope, you will likely start to look at interest categories. It's important to keep prospecting audiences specific and targeted. You will want to target very specific interests while also layering in different levels of interest on top of one another to create the most comprehensive and targeted audience, especially in the beginning. For searches, prioritize keyword exclusion targeting to ensure ad placement and that the brand alignment resides with what matters most to your organization.

Because of these targeted audiences, you can also run very targeted ads. For example, Make-A-Wish found that adding "As a medical professional" to ads targeting (you guessed it) medical professionals increased click-through rates on the ads by 42%. These types of non-traditional interest categories can be valuable when paired with insights about your donor data and who indexes as more likely to donate to your organization.

## Building your own data infrastructure



*Once you have this data, you can get creative about interest audience targeting and lookalikes.*

**G**etting your own data allows you to be more independent from the whims of the digital behemoths and what they decide to do today. You start from a place of strength: you have a donor file and a rich donor history. This already gives you richer data for targeting than Facebook or Google has. They may have everything else, but when you are looking to optimize for donations, it's critical to know who donates. Thus, a model that you or your data partner build from will be more predictive of who gives to you than Google, Facebook, or any third-party solution that doesn't have your data.

That said, it's also important to have myriad other variables that are predictive of giving. Census data, transactional information, leadership positions, expensive toys, membership rosters, capacity to spend, and many other variables can layer on top of your existing data. Each of these adds richness to your data stew, making for the best possible models.

Once you have this data, you can get creative about interest audience targeting and lookalikes. This first-party data plus data from companies such as Moore's SimioCloud can help you make precise selections about who can be targeted through all marketing channels. New solutions like SimioAudience, the next generation co-op, can build channel-agnostic audiences, ready for targeting in direct mail, digital, connected TV, and any other addressable media.

Since digital is becoming less addressable, you can also use this data infrastructure to inform your decisions in more broadcast media. The first-party data you have plus that which you are able to append can be converted to segments or cohorts to help you better understand who you should be targeting. You can then begin to understand how your particular audiences align with, for example, different media properties, which you can then use to optimize your spend relative to those properties.

Once you've successfully acquired that donor and have them on your file, first-party data will help you understand your donor and leverage that understanding across all channels. Some donors are more likely to move up in value with larger gifts or conversion to

*Increase revenue,  
create better  
experiences and  
generate more  
donor value.*

monthly sustainers, mid/major givers, or planned givers. For others, the goal is simply to retain at the current level. Using the same predictive power you used to acquire the donor can create optimal donor journeys to increase revenue, create better experiences and generate more donor value over time. When you have these journeys in place, you create a virtual circle where you can now spend more to acquire a donor, knowing they will have a greater lifetime value.

Of course, all this relies on a high-quality identity resolution solution such as SimioCloud, which was built to help distinguish who is who and effectively store that data. You will now be able to understand whether “Susan Chan” with this physical address is the same as that “Susan Chan” with this email address.

## Looking at new ways to advertise

One option is contextual targeting. Google had been looking for a partial replacement for cookies, which they called the Federated Learning of Cohorts (FLoC). Its purpose is to replace individual identifiers with a system that puts users into groups or cohorts based on common interests. However, it abandoned these in late January 2022 and replaced it with Topics API. This system would assign users up to five topics per week for which someone is looking and would assist with targeting. The challenge is it would focus on what people are looking for now, not what they would look for over the long term. Thus, it may be better for emergencies than for everyday fundraising.

Another option worth exploring is moving away from the digital duopoly of Google and Facebook. Our testing of Bing for advertising for one client found that it more than doubled the return on ad spend. And while our concern was that Bing doesn't scale like Google, Bing outpaced Google in gross revenue generated with a spend of almost \$30,000 less, simply because there is less competition for search listings there.

There will also likely be a move toward the '90s way of digital advertising where you could negotiate with specific publishers. This could be a boon for those who create quality content, as it



will demand both advertising of the same quality and the prices to match. At the same time, you can confidently pay significantly more for the ad, knowing you can match the identity of the incoming constituent to a high-value constituent who is more likely to convert in a positive context.

Digital expert Matt Ipcar calls a variant of this “native advocacy,” where a publication and an organization work in harmony on sponsored content. Let’s take a story on climate change, for example. Imagine if you could show advertising from environmental organizations next to the story instead of ads for sunglasses, credit card offers, and “Where Are They Now” stories about C-list 80s TV stars. We should be able to match the content to the context resulting in better results.

## Building your own audience

**B**uilding your own data infrastructure only works when it’s based on your constituents. This means there’s a greater value than before from moving your efforts up the funnel to bring in constituents even if they don’t donate. Each person brings the permission to contact them and the potential to be a valuable supporter down the funnel.

This type of investment pays off over time. The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) spent \$2.6 million to grow its list in early 2017 through a mix of Facebook lead generation ads, display, and paid petitions. Those new supporters gave \$11.5 million in the 2018 election cycle, more than quadrupling the DCCC’s investment. On the other end of the budget spectrum, Kennedy Center bought \$1,979 of ads that brought in 757 email addresses that raised \$6,105.

It’s time to reverse the flow with Facebook. For years, we’ve asked people to “like” us there, put our content there, made “friends” there, all helping them make our audience their audience. Now let’s make their audience our audience.

Some of this can be classic foot-in-the-door marketing, where you ask someone to sign a petition, a pledge, or take some other intermediate step to help your cause. We would also recommend a



*Now let’s make  
their audience our  
audience.*

give-to-get method of acquiring new donors, where people get what they want and need in exchange for signing up for your list. When the Norwegian Cancer Society looked at why people came to their website, the least common reasons were those they were advertising and displaying most prominently: donating in various forms and volunteering. People wanted cancer treatments, symptoms, and prevention information—the things that help them and their families stay safe. When they focused on offering people these things, their memberships doubled, and their donations more than tripled.



So, ask or listen to what your key audiences are looking for, whether it's an emotional need met by a pledge or a desire for safety and health. If you can use Facebook and Google to let them know you have what your audience seeks, you'll soon have more constituents, support, and data, for converting these new friends into family.

## Taking a deep breath

Like a bad relationship, it's only as we ponder the third-party cookie after we are (partly) separated that we can acknowledge that it was a bit dysfunctional all along. Cookies are device-specific, so if your significant other uses your phone, you get their ads. But if you use your desktop, then you use your phone, you don't get ads. Tracking for rich media like audio or video was also never a strong suit. Cookies have become more intelligent of late to allow for more cross-device tracking (and social logins get rid of this problem altogether), but it's largely the same '90s cookie in a different skin.

And if ads were something we wanted to follow us around the internet, we would opt-in. As of this writing, only six percent of us (or, rather, you, because I sure didn't) have. Think of this as the trial run for further challenges to third-party data. The recent iOS 15 update by Apple will not be the last hurdle we will face in the digital marketing space.

The future will be harder. All this means that over the long-term, we won't have Facebook, Google, and Apple doing our thinking and

---

*With challenge  
comes opportunity,  
and with opportunity  
comes innovation.*

modeling for us (as much). But that's likely something we should have been doing anyway since we have the most relevant data on the topic. Yes, we'll have to do more rolling-up-our-sleeves '90s-era direct ad buying, which digital old-timers will tell you is the equivalent of walking to school uphill in the driving snow. But it's possible and, if done correctly, it will give our donors and us more control over their data. With challenge comes opportunity, and with opportunity comes innovation.

Moreover, with new solutions, better machine learning available outside digital walled gardens, and more experience, we may become more effective than we have been with present-day tools. We also will be less dependent on Facebook, Google, and Apple as we forge new plans for acquiring and retaining donors, but we can still use these tools when it's to our advantage.

---

#### *Cookieless Digital Marketing*

*Don't get caught with your hand in the cookie jar: Strengthen your digital fundraising without cross-platform tracking*

#### **Contact Us:**

[info@mooredigital.com](mailto:info@mooredigital.com)