COLUMNS

How conversion tracking for app marketing works

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By AN AMERICAN MARKETER COLUMNIST

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All marketers need insights and actionable data that they can use to optimize and improve their marketing efforts.

Understanding what channel is responsible for driving an application download is critical to managing resources and improving marketing effectiveness.

Conversion tracking technology provides this data and helps marketers understand if an app download came from email, social, paid, search or a direct download from the app store.

With conversion tracking in place, there is no more guesswork when planning, budgeting and optimizing mobile app marketing.

What is conversion tracking?
A conversion is another term for a mobile app download.

Conversion tracking is a system or technology that measures app downloads by channel.

Because app marketers use a wide variety of channels, having a system that does source attribution across email, paid, search, social and even the PC Web is critical to managing and optimizing campaigns.

It is also important to have flexibility in this system and be able to test new channels as they emerge.

Conversion tracking starts with the user clicking on a link from a channel such as an email.

The user is then taken to the app store where she downloads the app to her device.

Once the app is downloaded, mobile app conversion tracking technology matches that user to the marketing source.

Because the app store is a black box, marketers cannot use cookies or other PC Web technologies to understand from which channel the users come.

App marketers need a technology partner that has the capability to tackle the complexity inherent in app conversion tracking and correctly match the app download to the source.

How does it work?
A small piece of code needs to be added to the app that is being promoted.

This code is usually referred to as the SDK (Software Development Kit), which is simply a small package of code that a developer drops into the app.

This code communicates with a server and sends data from the app. The data is used to match downloads to the links users clicked from a marketing channel.

In the PC Web, this type of tracking is done with a Javascript tag. However, since Javascript does not exist in the app world, the same function is performed with the SDK.

The actual matching of links clicked to downloads is where it gets really complex.

The mobile ecosystem is fragmented and because there are so many different systems and platforms, accurate matching takes very sophisticated systems to process.

Finding a technology that can do this matching easily and at scale is important.

Beyond the download: marketing ROI with actionable data
Once conversion tracking is in place, you can go beyond the download and see deep into your conversion funnel.

This allows you to optimize campaigns to get the greatest return on your marketing investment.

For retailers this means measuring registrations, purchase data, repeat purchases, and even total revenue per purchase.

For travel marketers it means measuring hotel bookings, airline reservations and car rentals.

For other verticals, marketers should measure data that is most relevant to their business.

With conversion tracking in place, it is easy to move beyond cost-per-download measurement and optimize your marketing to the goals that matter most to your business.

Analysis and visualizations from real-time conversion tracking data
With a steady stream of real-time data coming from your app, it is possible to do even more sophisticated analysis and conduct impressive data visualizations.

Cohort analysis is a great way to understand lifetime value, improve your marketing funnel, and optimize marketing campaigns directly to revenue generated.

Cohort analysis measures a group of users acquired in one week over time. This allows marketers to plan for seasonality, identify the best day of the week and optimize creative.

By looking at user behavior over time, marketers get a more accurate picture of how their initiatives are performing.

BECAUSE OF THE complexity and fragmentation in mobile, accuracy in conversion tracking is challenging.

An effective conversion tracking platform allows marketers to focus on marketing, instead of pulling together a piecemeal solution with various providers.

Marketers should seek out a platform that solves all their technical challenges without requiring them to become technologists themselves. Find a platform vendor who speaks your language.

To grow your app business and acquire the highest quality users, invest in the most effective marketing channels, measure success, and optimize campaigns based on performance.

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