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GETTING IT TOGETHER:
A PRIMER ON HOW TO UNITE MOBILE AND PC CUSTOMER DATA

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Customers are WAY ahead of most brands when it comes to using mobile to achieve goals. Here's a simple introduction to the challenge of uniting PC and mobile data, and tips to help make it happen in your organization.

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INTRODUCTION

More and more brands are convinced that they must take ownership of their customer data. The burgeoning DMP business is testament that marketers want to create and control customer profiles, leverage insights across their marketing programs and keep their data safe. There's also growing awareness of the need to collect and measure activity across mobile screens in addition to PCs, and to combine mobile behavior data with PC-based data to develop comprehensive customer profiles. This little primer outlines the challenges of collecting, measuring and combining mobile data along with tips on how to make it happen at your organization.

WHY YOU SHOULD CARE

A few years ago US marketers might safely postpone addressing the mobile data "gap" because relatively little consumer time was spent in apps. But things have changed in a very big way – and a lot more quickly than most people expected.

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In 2014, comScore reported that time spent on mobile devices accounted for fully 60% of US connected time. Even more interesting is that 52% of total connected time takes place in apps rather than on the web. This is significant because you can't collect data in apps the same way you do on the PC web. Net, without collecting mobile data, you're missing out on a large proportion of the signals consumers are sending as to what they care about. That's why mobile data matters. This is particularly true if you have an app and use it to drive mcommerce.
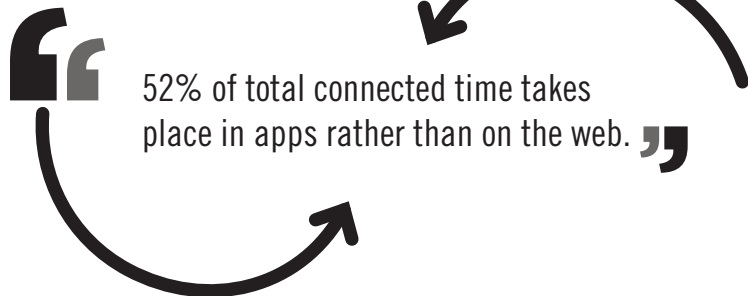
FIRST THINGS FIRST: GETTING MOBILE DATA

When most of us hear "customer data," we think first of 3rd party cookies, the little workhorses that have done so much to help us begin to understand consumer digital behavior on the PC web. While there are a growing set of challenges to the veracity of third party cookie data (cookie blocking, deletion, etc.) cookies remain fairly effective on the PC web.

But mobile – and especially mobile apps – are an entirely different animal, and require very different data collection methodologies. There are a few mobile measurement and attribution options here – many of which use SDKs that brands incorporate in their apps. Data from in-app measurement tools traditionally has been used to measure the effectiveness of marketing efforts.

> "Mobile and especially mobile apps require very different data collection methodologies."

The SDKs associate customer events with a "device ID" that is a (semi)permanent unique identifier for each smartphone. The common device identifier helps address the problem that apps generally can't or don't share information between one another. Without the ID, it would be extremely difficult to get a macro view of in-app behavior.

The good thing about device IDs is that they tend to be much longer lived than third party cookies, so it is often easier to associate mobile activity with a single user. The challenging thing about them is that in order to be able to collect data on lots of devices, you need LOTS of SDK installs. Only a small number of companies have that kind of device penetration.

SECOND: MEASURING MOBILE ACTIVITY

To measure customer behavior in apps, you must define the sorts activity that are relevant to your business. We call consumer actions in apps "events". An event might be a product search, browsing activities, adding an item to a cart, beginning the purchase process, finishing a purchase, referring a friend, etc. Once you define events, the SDK tracks consumer actions by device ID, under the assumption that a phone is almost always used by a single person.

Mobile web activity works differently. Third party cookies can capture some mobile web activity. But Apple's Safari browser blocks third party cookies by default. SDKs are far better data collectors in mobile.

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THIRD: COMBINING PC AND MOBILE DATA

Once you have your cookie data from the PC web, and your mobile data from an app measurement company, you need to bring them together into anonymized profiles that represent a single individual across devices. To understand an individual fully, all behavior data needs to be combined into a single profile.

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To combine PC and mobile data, we use a "device graph." A device graph infers that two or more devices belong to the same person based upon signals that household wifi IPs, login information, etc. These are called probabilistic matches. The limiting factor for most graphs is the number of mobile devices they track. Companies that can "see" more devices can naturally make more matches. The matching is generally performed by "data on boarders".

Most brands have many other sources of first party behavioral data that can be anonymized and aggregated into these customer profiles. Examples include CRM email interactions, purchase records and web site visitation. Including these data sources naturally further improves your customer view.

FOURTH: PUTTING YOUR DATA TO WORK

Having profiles isn't an end. It's a means to an end. What you really want is to leverage these profiles to empower audience development and analysis that you can export and utilize across your marketing mix.

Insights from these united profiles can be leveraged across many of your marketing platforms, powering tactical programs like PC and mobile retargeting, push notifications, triggered emails, site personalization, and larger analytics projects. Most marketing tactics can be made better with audiences and data built on these omni-channel profiles.

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WHAT YOU CAN DO AT YOUR COMPANY

Taking action at your company is a process of discovery and education. Whether or not your company has begun the process of uniting its PC web data, these five broad steps should help get you started:

1 **Find out how/if your company is collecting mobile customer data – both on the mobile web and in apps.** If you are, then you have a head start. If not, you will need to identify means of collecting the data.

2 **Understand the data ("events") that are being measured.** Much app measurement focuses primarily on app installs. This information is useful for evaluating the relative effectiveness of media vendors, but not at revealing what customers are DOING in-app. Make sure that your measurement tool can and is collecting data on ALL of the event types relevant to your business.

3 **Once your company has a way to collect the data, you must ensure it is being processed and retained in a DMP and a set of anonymized customer profiles.** Be careful here, as many companies have DMPs that aren't equipped to collect or combine mobile web, mobile app and PC data. Remember that a PC-only DMP is only seeing on average 40% of customer activity. A PC web and mobile web DMP is only seeing 48%. You need to make sure in-app activity data is in the mix. It is also immensely valuable to have other types of first party data being combined in these profiles as well, for an even more complete customer view.

4 **Once all of these data types are being collected and retained, you need to ensure your company is combining them into omni-channel profiles.** While it is useful to leverage mobile data for mobile targeting and optimization, and PC data for PC web efforts, it's far more effective to leverage a combined omni-channel profile and insights across the entire marketing mix. If you aren't, you'll need to task your tech team with identifying an on boarder.

5 **Once you have all the data together, get creative with how you leverage the profiles across your marketing mix.** Retargeting and "look-alike" marketing are the gimmes here, but imagine how a complete view of a customer can, for example, drive a precision push notification effort, or an individualized email program that responds to customer actions, or a marketing automation program that orchestrates a series of touch points to drive customer action.

CONCLUSION

The "360 profile" is more than a marketing holy grail. It is (or soon will be) essential to drive optimal marketing effectiveness. While uniting PC and mobile data isn't a doddle, it is now possible, and with more than half of connected time taking place on phones and in apps, it's a need to have, not a nice to have.

I welcome comments to this perspective. If you would like to get in touch, please write me at jim@apsalar.com. For more information on Apsalar, please visit our website at

WWW.APSALAR.COM.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jim Nichols is VP of Marketing for Apsalar. Jim has 20+ years experience in over 80 different categories, including developing successful positioning and go-to-market plans for more than 40 adtech and martech companies. He joins Apsalar after several years as VP of Marketing for Conversant, where he led various efforts in the successful rebrand of the company from ValueClick, Inc. The rebrand and associated industry attention for the company contributed to the $2.3B sale of Conversant to Alliance Data in December, 2014. He is a prolific writer for digital trades on brand marketing, mobile, video, data, and customer profiling. Publications include iMedia Connection, Inside Radio, VentureBeat, ad:tech, ShellyPalmer.com, Jack Myers, and many consumer publications. He holds a B.A. in U.S. History from the University of Pennsylvania and an MBA in Marketing from the University of Chicago.

ABOUT Apsalar

Apsalar, the leader in mobile data management, helps direct marketing brands get better marketing effectiveness by providing a mobile data management platform that delivers a true understanding of customer behavior in apps and across other marketing channels. The Apsalar Mobile DMP enables brands to measure marketing effectiveness, enhance, manage, enrich and segment profiles to build audiences, and easily and safely connect to other marketing partners so brands can confidently share their data and audiences. San Francisco-based Apsalar is privately held, with more than $17Million backing from leading venture capital firms including Thomvest Ventures, DCM, Battery Ventures and DN Capital. For more information, visit www.apsalar.com.

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