

Google's third-party cookie delay: What it means for online companies

Google's announcement that it was delaying phasing out third-party cookies should not lull companies into a false sense of security, and work on a first-person data strategy should continue apace, advises digital marketing company Incubeta.



Jade Arenstein, head of data strategy and analytics at Incubeta

On June 24, Google announced that it was delaying its plan to phase out third-party cookies in its Chrome browser to 2023, rather than the previously announced 2022, saying in a blog that despite the considerable progress it had made it had “become clear that more time is needed across the ecosystem to get this right.”

The delay has also factored in a six-month period where changes will be evaluated by the UK Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), the British antitrust agency, in order to allay fears that the company’s step away from the third-party cookie could be anti-competitive.



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28 Jun 2021



“News of the delay will certainly be welcomed across the board, giving publishers, advertisers and agencies alike an opportunity to better understand Google’s privacy sandbox and adopt workarounds,” says Jade Arenstein, head of data strategy and analytics at Incubeta. “I think Google realised that the industry just wasn’t ready and advertisers weren’t ready to engage with the privacy sandbox just yet.”

However, Arenstein says companies should not be resting on their laurels, pointing out that there is still a sizable amount of work to be done in order to have everything in place before third-party cookies are canned for good.

Websites are our new data powerhouses

According to Incubeta, companies will need to rely on their websites to help them in the cookieless future.

“Our advice has always been to build out websites so they are capable of tracking a similar level of data to what you are getting from third-party cookies. And this delay has not changed that. The first-party data you are tracking may not be as broad as the prospecting audiences you had before, but it is still extremely useful and can be used to generate audiences to use across your marketing channels. Companies should also be building forms to capture gender, age, interests - anything that they can, really. There is also a lot you can do with a solid content strategy on your website that will allow you to build interest-based audiences based on the content that your users engage with. In fact, brands should be using their websites as data powerhouses irrespective of when Google makes their changes. You may not have the same reach, but you still have access to valuable information,” Arenstein advises.

Incubeta is also advising clients that contextual rather than demographic audiences will be the future and strategies will need to shift to reflect this.

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