



# 3 KEY STANDARDS FOR MARKETERS TO ESTABLISH CUSTOMER IDENTITY



By

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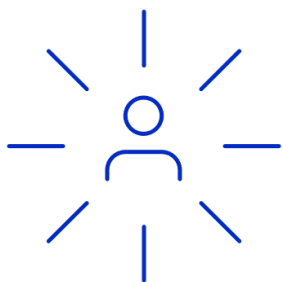
# 3 KEY STANDARDS FOR MARKETERS TO ESTABLISH CUSTOMER IDENTITY

In these uncertain times, many businesses find themselves on a sort of hiatus, with much of their activity—and certainly their marketing activity—drastically modified, or simply on hold.

As much of a brake as this is going to put on pure marketing spend for the near term, it also can provide an opportunity for brand teams to sit back and take an introspective look at their marketing plans and commitments. In normal circumstances, when everyone is more execution-oriented, busy trying to keep up with the next campaign, there often is not enough time to sit back and assess broader strategies. Now may be the time to have those conversations around what is delivering value.

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# CHALLENGES OF DATA PRIVACY REGULATIONS

Before COVID-19 changed everything, 2020 already was shaping up as a demanding year for digital marketers. The implementation of California's new Consumer Privacy Act and other emerging regulations across the U.S., European Union, Brazil, and India, have created both new expectations about data privacy and also an interesting conundrum. In this new environment, there needs to be complete clarity in terms of how data is collected—and consumers are in control of their information and how it's used and shared. But at the same time, those consumers have come to expect a more personalized experience with brands, an experience that depends on good, meaningful data. Satisfying both sides of that equation will pose new challenges for identity resolution.

On top of these data privacy concerns, Google's announcement that it plans to start blocking third-party cookies was the straw that broke the camel's back for cookie technology—the foundation of personalized digital marketing for so many years. Now marketers are asking: What does the future of identity resolution look like, in a cookie-less world?

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On the positive side, let's be honest. Cookie technology has been around since the mid-1990s, and phasing it out was inevitable, in some respects. It offered a gloriously inefficient method of cascading preferences and consent that was long past its best-by date. In some respects, the cookie is a symbol of how the industry has gone too far in terms of trying to track people. Yet everyone from email marketers to media companies and content providers—and especially small to medium-sized companies—leans on ad revenues to be viable. Our job now is to create an equilibrium where customers are comfortable with the amount of information they provide, and to whom, brands are happy with the level of targeting they can achieve, and publishers are satisfied with their revenue stream.

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From a brand perspective, the phase-out of cookies means it's time to look at customer identity more holistically. Customer identity is about more than just onboarding or linking device identifiers. It's a way to fill in the blanks around your customers. It's not the end game in and of itself, but an important tool in your arsenal as your brand seeks a better understanding of its current and potential customers.

The reliance on cookies, and the history of both DMPs and CDPs, has missed the boat in some ways, often leading to a patchwork of solutions that still provides only a sparse view of the customer. Better identity resolution checks all the boxes, providing a unified view of the customer—linking traditional channels with digital channels, combining a company's own data with information from other sources. It offers a more meaningful customer view, allowing brands to engage with customers in the personalized ways they desire.

# ASSESSING CUSTOMER IDENTITY SOLUTIONS

As the industry moves into a cookie-less future with higher levels of data privacy, good identity resolution will provide three things: quality, transparency, and flexibility. Brand owners should use those three standards to assess their customer identity solutions.

## QUALITY

In the enthusiasm to stitch data points together, companies too often have favored scale in lieu of data quality, often leading to suboptimal results. The careful linking of different signals has not always been conducted with the rigor that leads to quality identity resolution and, consequently, effective action. Today, brands want to make sure that any decisions they make are based on data points that are reliable.

## TRANSPARENCY

Identity resolution has also been mired in obfuscation around the nature of data collection as well as its application. First, the provenance of the data is important and its collection should be wholly compliant with relevant regulation. Next, any kind of downstream activity should have consent traceability as well as transparency on the nature of data manipulation and utilization. Indeed, although many marketers rely solely on deterministic signals, that approach can be limiting. There is certainly a role for probabilistic modeling and artificial intelligence in identity resolution—again, as long as everyone is honest about how decisions are being taken and which outcomes are more dependable than others. Data providers, analysts/scientists and technology platforms should all ensure complete transparency in this regard.

## FLEXIBILITY

Finally, it's important that a data firm be flexible in terms of how technology is deployed in the client's environment—making sure to meet client needs, especially those in more heavily scrutinized sectors such as financial services or telecommunications. Especially in light of a continually changing regulatory landscape, adaptability in solutioning and deployment is imperative to success.

When the world begins to return to normal—hopefully in the near future—there will be continued challenges. In a fragile economy, businesses will need to make their marketing dollars work even harder, and demand more proof of value for the technologies they invest in. Brands that use the next few months to regroup, and put the right pieces in place, have the opportunity to reap outsized rewards when these controls are lifted.

# CUSTOMER INTELLIGENCE UNLEASHED

Zeotap is a Customer Intelligence Platform that helps brands understand customers and predict behavior. Powering brands to invest in customer relationships and products that matter. Our solution already enables 60+ of the top 100 global brands to achieve their marketing goals. Let us help you to achieve yours.

## CONTACT US



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