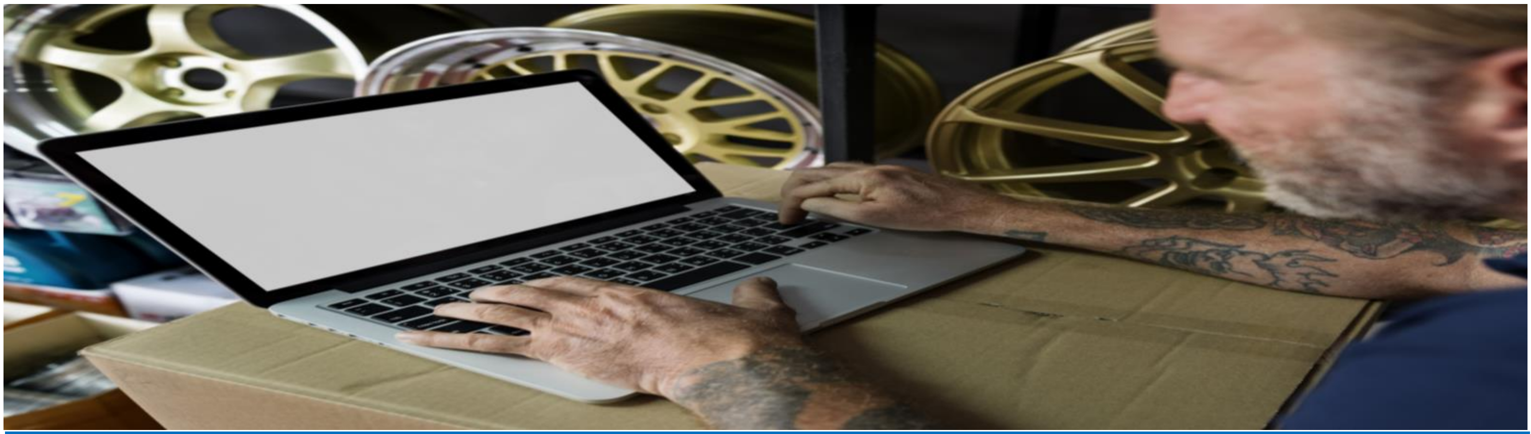

Attribution Case Study

Automotive Retailer Used Data To Empower Employees

Introduction

An on-line retailer specializing in selling automotive parts wanted to better understand which media channel was responsible for generating sales without double counting. In business for 10 years, the company wanted to use this information to make better informed business decisions and, ultimately, maximize their marketing budget allocation.

The Challenge

The retailer developed an attribution model using information from third parties, such as the revenue estimates from Google AdWords, its email service provider, and remarketing provider. However, when it combined the data from all of these sources, the revenue attributed to each medium far exceeded 100% of its total revenue. This signaled to the company that relying on the data from each of these sources individually was not providing a true reflection of the impact of each marketing channel it used. These inconsistencies made employees question the effectiveness of each channel and the company was unsure how incremental changes on the marketing budget would impact revenue. The retailer needed to understand these numbers to aid in decision-making.

The Strategy

The company realized the proper way to understand the effectiveness of each marketing media was to stop using multiple data sources and have one source of truth. The first step was to use a web analytics tool. The company chose Google Analytics to track each users' visit to the website through URL tagging and give credit to the last touch that was not a direct visit (last touch attribution). This was a quick and easy approach, but the company soon recognized there were two issues:

1) 'Branded' revenue: A significant portion of revenue was generated from touches related to the company's brand (mainly in organic search and paid search).

2) Still incomplete revenue: Google Analytics provided a general picture with 'no double counting' of revenue but the revenue still was not 100% aligned to the company's order systems. Website revenue was still incomplete because Google Analytics did not incorporate returns, cancellations, and adjustments. Additionally, a significant portion of revenue came through phone calls, which was not reflected in Google Analytics.

To understand the portion of revenue that came from searches where the customer already knew the brand, the company added rules to identify the branded searches from organic and paid channels. The company then adjusted the last touch attribution to also look past branded organic and branded paid searches so the company could now see the true impact of marketing channels. This created a structurally sound website attribution model and improvement from the initial problem. To then get a complete view of revenue, the company decided to capture the data outside of Google Analytics and run attribution internally. This fully encompassed all accurate order data including returns, cancellations, adjustments, and phone revenue. Both website and phone data used the same rules created around last touch and branded.

The Results

Developing an attribution model by tracking customers' visits to the website and the touch prior to going to the website helped the company create a single source of truth from which the employees could make decisions. Although the company recognized that the attribution model was not perfect, it gave marketing channel managers mutually agreed upon numbers from which to make decisions, confidence to make independent decisions, and insight into results without relying on the marketing director for endless approvals. The team continues to make improvements to their attribution model to attribute value to marketing other than the last click, and also uses incremental hold testing. The foundation created by moving to this system has been invaluable and further changes tend to be incremental in nature.