

AUTO-TAGGING + ENHANCED ATTRIBUTION

OBJECTIVE

1. To improve GA4's ability to accurately attribute sessions and key events to paid media clicks, from single-touch to multi-touch* to cross-device** user journeys.
2. To help the advertiser achieve more consistent paid media reporting data in GA4 free of gaps or errors that can occur as the result of system mis-categorization or human error with manual UTM tagging.

CONFIGURE AUTO-TAGGING

NOTE: These steps can only be configured by a user with appropriate access to the GA4 property and the GMP platform (usually Admin but each platform differs)

- o GA4 property > Admin > Platform links
- o Select the platform that you wish to link (CM360, Google Ads, or DV360)
- o Follow the directions GA4 provides to send the link request
- o Log into the platform (yourself or a colleague with the necessary access) and approve the link request from the platform side

CONFIGURE ENHANCED ATTRIBUTION

CM360: Advertiser > Floodlight configuration > Enhanced Attribution dropdown > Check box

DV360: Advertiser > Resources > Floodlight > Basic Details > Enhanced Attribution > Check box

NOTE: This is only applicable for DV360 advertisers that are not linked to the CM360 floodlight configuration, otherwise DV360 will inherit the EA setting in CM360

Google Ads: No “Enhanced Attribution” feature; Google Ads will automatically append a GCLID to every ad it serves when Auto-tagging is enabled.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ENABLING BOTH (AT + EA)

GA4 leverages the platform integration (which enables AT by default) to detect the DCLID (CM360/DV360) or GCLID (Google Ads) from the landing page URL associated with a paid media session. By reading this DCLID/GCLID, GA4 will be able to discern the source/medium/campaign/ad content/term(only search) that drove the session – by means of auto-tagging – and will populate those values in GA4 reporting.

However, the DCLID/GCLID will only get appended to redirect URLs if the specific tagging feature is active in the source platform: Enhanced Attribution for CM360/DV360, Auto-tagging for Google Ads.

Caution for CM360/DV360 setups: If AT is enabled by linking GA4 to the CM/DV, but EA is not enabled in CM/DV (and therefore no DCLIDs appended to the landing page URLs), it is critical to manually tag paid media URLs with UTM strings. If EA is not enabled and URLs are not manually tagged with UTM strings, auto-tagging will not be able to infer the source/medium/campaign/ad content/term that drove the session and will likely misattribute the traffic to source/medium groupings like “direct/none” or “source domain/referral”, stripping it of its paid media context entirely.

ADDITIONAL TIPS

If the advertiser is using Google Tag Manager, make sure the Conversion Linker is setup in their GTM container. This special piece of technology will automatically recognize the DCLID/GCLID and store it in a first-party cookie on the advertiser's website. There are multiple value propositions for doing so:

1. The IDs can be stored on the site for up to 90 days, safe from 24-hour 3rd-party cookie-deletion settings in browsers like Safari and Firefox. This enables GA4 to recognize returning users over a much longer period of time.
2. The IDs will persist across pages while the user navigates the site, instead of falling out of view as soon as the URL changes. This makes it easier for GA4 to attribute a purchase to a paid media click.

* The supplementary campaign data that AT+EA provides to GA4 improves its ability to measure **multi-touch** user journeys by enabling GA4 to provide fractional credit across multiple campaigns. For example, if a user's path to conversion looks like: Display Ad → Search Ad → Organic Link → Conversion, GA4 will now be able to award a fraction of the conversion credit to the specific campaign and creative associated to the display ad, and another fraction of the credit to the campaign associated to the search ad. This won't result in a conversion report that says “0.5 conversions attributed to SA360 Campaign A”, but it will help SA360 make more effective bidding optimizations.

** Through a nuanced system of data engineering bolstered by Google's massive network of logged-in users, GA4 is capable of stitching together cross-device touchpoints across a user's path to conversion. However, even if GA4 determines that a user started their conversion path on their phone and ended on their laptop, it won't be able to attribute fractional conversion credit to the specific campaign and creative behind those touchpoints without auto-tagging providing that information.