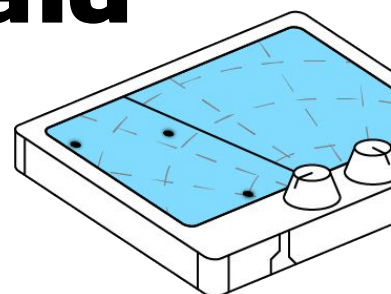


Navigating GA4 Attribution Shifts and Elevating Paid Search Performance

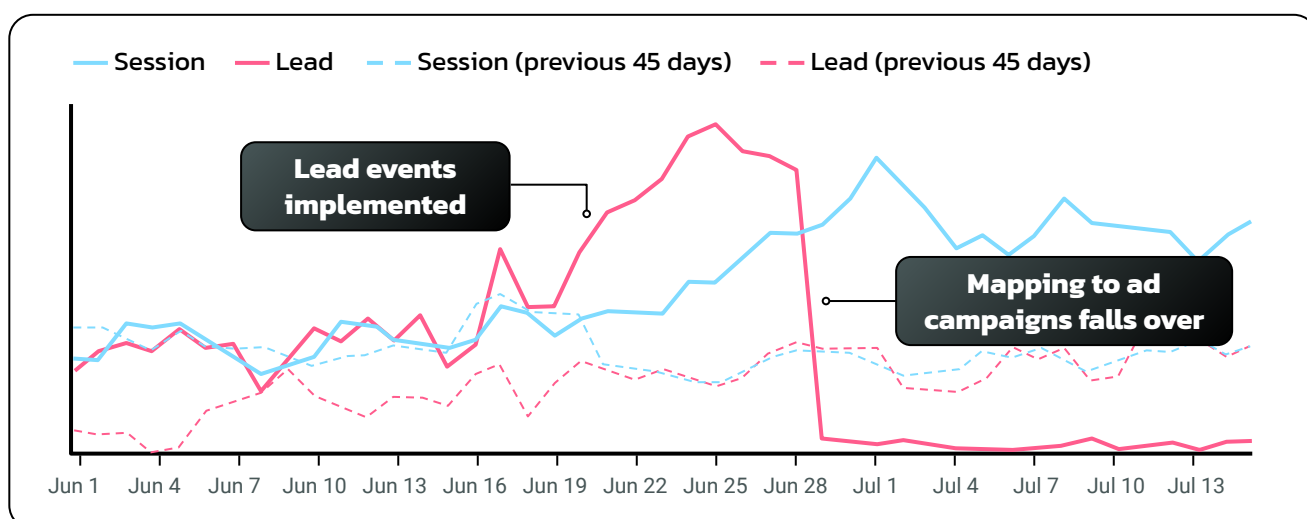


What happened?

In July, GA4 implemented changes in how event attribution is handled. Specifically, GA4 began attributing events differently compared to the previous setup. This adjustment affects how conversions and other key events are tracked and attributed to various marketing channels, including paid search. Beginning sometime in June or July, there have been notable issues with paid search data in Google Analytics 4 (GA4). The problem involved misattributing conversions from paid search campaigns to organic search traffic. This discrepancy often occurred in single-page applications where the "gclid" parameter, which identifies paid search clicks, failed to persist across multiple page views.

To address this, Google has recently updated GA4's attribution models to more accurately credit paid search campaigns for driving conversions. This update aims to ensure that campaign data is captured from the initial event on each page, even if a user navigates away and returns through a different channel. As a result, advertisers should expect an increase in the number of conversions attributed to paid search, which could impact their advertising budgets and spending strategies.

This update is part of Google's broader efforts to enhance the accuracy of their analytics tools in an increasingly complex digital landscape, where user journeys span multiple devices and channels. It's recommended that marketers review their budget allocations and campaign strategies to adjust for these changes and optimize their overall performance.



The issue



01

Attribution Model Changes

GA4 shifted the default attribution model or altered the logic for attributing events to different channels. This change led to fewer conversions being attributed to the paid search campaigns, resulting in what appears to be a sudden drop in performance.



02

Event Deduplication and Processing Delays

GA4 introduced changes in how it deduplicates events or processes them across different sessions. If certain events were previously double-counted or processed differently, the new setup could lead to a lower count of attributed conversions, giving the impression of decreased campaign performance.



03

Impact on BigQuery

Users pulling data into BigQuery saw or are seeing discrepancies because the data being fed from GA4 now reflects the new attribution logic. This will cause the metrics to look different from what was previously reported, creating confusion about the apparent drop in campaign performance.

How does this change reporting?



Correct Attribution

The updates aim to ensure that events, particularly conversions originating from paid search campaigns, are correctly attributed. This means that events previously misattributed to organic search will now be accurately reported as coming from paid search channels.



Improved Data Accuracy

This correction helps provide a more accurate picture of user interactions and conversions, leading to better insights and more informed decision-making.



Attribution Adjustments

Traffic acquisition reports, which show where the site traffic is coming from, will also reflect the corrected attribution models. This means an increase in the number of conversions and interactions attributed to paid search campaigns.



Impact on Metrics

As a result, we might see changes in key metrics such as traffic source distribution, conversion rates, and overall performance for paid versus organic search channels. This will give a clearer understanding of the effectiveness of different traffic sources.



Budget and Strategy Revisions

The adjustments in traffic acquisition reports will help in revising budgets and strategies, ensuring that investments in paid search are accurately reflected and optimized for better performance.



What can be done?



Review Attribution Settings

Check your attribution model settings in GA4 and adjust them if necessary to align with the reporting needs. This might involve switching to a model that better reflects your campaign's goals.



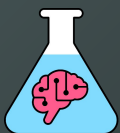
Reassess Data Interpretation

Given the changes, you might need to reassess how you interpret the data from GA4, particularly if you are comparing it with historical data from before the change.



Utilize BigQuery for Custom Analysis

- **Custom Attribution in BigQuery:**
If GA4's built-in attribution models are not meeting your needs, use BigQuery to create custom attribution logic. This allows for greater flexibility and control over how you allocate credit to different channels and interactions.
- **Enhanced Reporting:**
Brainlabs can use BigQuery to generate custom reports that take into account the new event attribution changes, ensuring the analysis reflects the true performance of the campaigns.



brainlabs

We will continue to work closely with Google and other platforms to understand the impact of these changes in real-time. Connect with our featured experts to take advantage of these changes to achieve high-performance results for your brand.



Alessandro Creso

VP Paid Search, NAMER



Atul Sharma

VP, Data, NAMER



partnerships@brainlabsdigital.com