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[guide]

Myth vs. Reality

The truth about digital analytics

To compete in business today you need accurate digital analytics you can trust

The problem? There's so much marketing fluff and conflicting information out there it's hard to know what to believe. It's time to break down the biggest claims digital analytics vendors make, why they matter, and the truth about it all.

It's a head-to-head of what you expected from digital analytics, vs. what you've actually received.

This guide is for you if:

- You've ever been in a meeting with three different versions of the "same" data

- You're struggling with the changes to legacy web analytics platforms

- You've lost visibility into your digital data

- Your web analytics platform leaves you with more questions than answers

First-party data

First-party data is critical as third-party cookies are being heavily restricted, blocked, and expired more frequently. This causes orphaned profiles, inflated visitor and session counts, and bad analytics. To **overcome third-party cookie deprecation** panic, vendors are inflating their claims of providing first-party data – when the reality is, they can't.

The Myth	Reality
They say: "Implement a future-proof cookieless strategy with first-party data." "First-party cookies set by (third-party)…" "Cookies are limited to 24-hour or 7-day expiry." "We'll use CNAME to set client-side cookies."	True first-party cookies persist – they're never restricted or blocked, and don't expire. First-party cookies never leave the four walls of your environment, so you're in full control, with full visibility into ALL your data. The big web analytics vendors use third-party cookies in a shared environment. All digital data, including PII and PHI (if you're in healthcare), goes through the same tunnel – straight to their environment and back to yours. They may use cookie masking or JavaScript workarounds to try to hide it, but the cookie blockers know the difference.

Real-time data

By definition, **real-time data analytics** deliver query responses as it happens, within seconds, providing insight into what's happening in-the-moment. Real-time data helps companies identify who their customers and visitors are right now and how they're interacting - simply browsing, researching ideas, or ready to make a buying decision?

As Naveen Peddamail, a Walmart senior analyst, says, "**If you can't get insights until you've analyzed your sales for a week or a month, then you've lost sales.**"

Sadly, the term has been overused by vendors who aren't exactly telling the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

The Myth	Reality
They say: "Up-to-the-minute customer views and behaviors." "Process data immediately." "Deliver personalized experiences in real time."	Most data capture and analytics platforms can either capture OR deliver the data in real time. But doing both is key – the big players take anywhere from 2 to 48 hours to deliver your data for use in analytics and reporting. Not exactly real time. You need to capture AND activate your data instantly - aka live time.

Identity stitching

Identity stitching enables organizations to link journeys (think multiple visits and sessions across any device or channel) for the same visitor. In terms of digital analytics and reporting, this is key to getting accurate data you can trust. When the same individual visits your site multiple times over two weeks, sometimes on mobile, sometimes on desktop, sometimes on a subdomain, you don't want to see that as 5 different visitors in your reporting. You need to reconcile their interactions to the same visitor.

The Myth	Reality
They say: "Stitch IDs from multiple devices and channels into a single profile." "Track across channels, devices, and domains."	While the standard digital analytics solutions can stitch identity from multiple sources, they can't do it with any level of accuracy. Cookies still expire after 7 days, it's not real time (the data is stitched 24-36 hours after the fact), and it creates orphaned profiles. The only way to **stitch data in true real time** is with first-party cookies that persist over time across domains, devices, and channels to deliver instant insight and accurate analytics.

HIPAA compliance

With HIPAA taking a stand against third-party trackers, it's critical for healthcare organizations to use a **compliant data capture solution**. The problem is most digital analytics technologies are third party, which means the digital data and PHI they capture is sent outside your organization – an instant HIPAA violation. Many marketing teams have been forced to turn off their analytics completely, leaving them in the dark about who's coming to their websites or mobile apps, and halting personalized marketing efforts completely. And don't think it's only going to impact US healthcare - insurance and banking are next on the list for regulatory restrictions.

The Myth	Reality
They say: "We're a HIPAA-compliant data capture solution." "We'll sign a BAA."	Google clearly tells users not to collect PII or PHI, and they won't sign a BAA at all. Adobe says they're compliant and will sign a BAA, but it's theirs - not yours. Plus, it only works with HIPAA-ready services (which doesn't include Adobe Analytics) and adds additional cost. Only Celebrus delivers a fully compliant digital analytics solution – and we'll happily sign YOUR BAA because we know we're 100% compliant.

Data capture & tagging

Traditional data capture methods are limited to one format – **<u>tagging</u>**. And of course, the data layers that go with it. This is a frustrating and time-consuming process for data scientists, not to mention infuriating for marketers who can't predict the future (but would love to!). What's worse than having a fantastic idea, or wanting to look at your data in a different light, only to hear "we didn't tag for that"? Well, maybe finding out you missed a tag, or miscoded it and the data you were counting on is wrong – or missing entirely. Oops.

The Myth	Reality
They say: **"**Understand the full customer journey." "Discover valuable insights, understand conversions, predict future needs, identify new segments and cohorts." "Run unlimited data breakdowns for deep analysis." "Use any tag manager you want."	Tagging-based systems don't work. They're inflexible, error-prone, and struggle with session, device, and identity stitching. They take forever to set up and maintain, requiring advanced configuration. And how can you do a deep analysis on data you don't even have? To get the most accurate and reliable analytics, you need a solution that captures ALL digital data - without having to tag for it.

But wait...there's more myths too big to ignore!

Data accuracy & trust

One of the most common complaints around digital analytics is the lack of data accuracy. Marketers and data scientists need a platform they can trust, that captures all data from all digital properties in a 100% compliant manner. One that's up-to-date, and that's not missing or duplicating metrics due to tagging mistakes or cookie deprecation. Solutions that rely on tagging, JavaScript, coding, etc. are third party, can't deliver live-time data for analytics and reporting, and don't provide the trust enterprises demand.

Data ownership

Digital analytics vendors love to say "you're in control" but unfortunately you're not. They own the data that's captured and house it in their environment, not yours. This is what leads to third-party cookie blocking, latent data, and reporting issues – but overall it means you don't own or control your own data. The only fix is to use a **true first-party digital analytics** solution that's installed in an environment YOU own and control so it never leaves your four walls. This ensures compliance with HIPAA, GDPR, and other privacy regulations because it's within your own network. You can capture customer data without worrying about breaches, compliance challenges, not conforming to GDPR, etc. It also means you can pull the data you need, when you need it, without additional cost or configuration.

Let's wrap this up!

Digital data is at the heart of success and growth for any organization. But it's only valuable when it's accurate, accessible, and timely. You need a single source of truth for your digital data to feed analytics you can trust. When you have analytics you can trust, everyone is aligned on the same data and you can amplify your growth strategy. Using the insight from digital analytics empowers you to build better experiences and naturally build better relationships with your consumers.

Ready for data you can actually trust?

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