

# Changes in Third-Party Cookie Management and Their Effects on Pharmaceutical Brands



---

The elimination of third-party cookies is not a new concept. Safari and FireFox eliminated them a few years back. However, now the largest used browser (Chrome) is joining FireFox and Safari, announcing the imminent removal of third-party cookies in 2022. Organizations are attempting to navigate the impact and identify alternatives. Driven by increased user privacy, Google's decision will require fundamental changes across media and advertising platforms. Google stated on March 3 of this year:

***“Users are demanding greater privacy—including transparency, choice, and control over how their data is used — and it’s clear the web ecosystem needs to evolve to meet these increasing demands.”<sup>1</sup>***

The departure of third-party cookies will change the way pharmaceutical companies, in fact all companies, approach targeted media and measurement. The uncomfortable questions are:

- **How aware are companies of the pending changes?**
- **What are organizations doing to mitigate the impact?**

## TGaS Research and Findings

TGaS Advisors has conducted a study with industry experts to gauge the response to the change in targeting. The study yielded two main findings:

1

Awareness regarding changes in third-party cookie elimination is limited outside of the Digital Media department

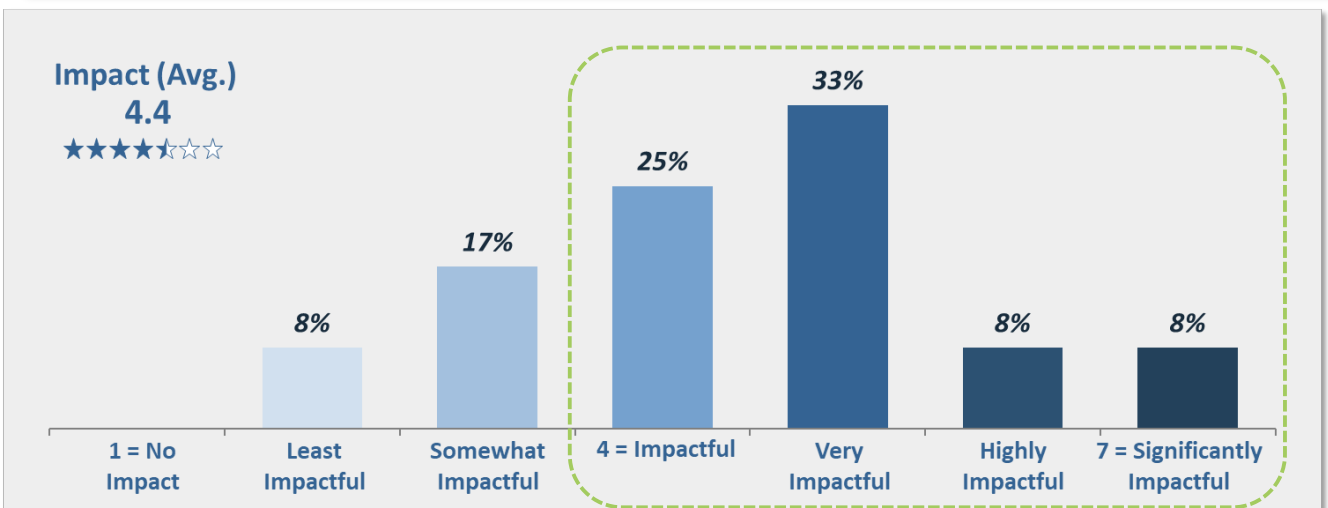
2

A majority of the respondents do not have a clear understanding of the impending changes or the impact it will have on campaigns

### Responses from our Network

Even though most respondents did not have a clear understanding of the changes in marketing programs, the majority (74%) stated the changes will be impactful or very impactful on their media plans. The response stems from the lack of clear alternatives to third-party cookies and how companies will continue to engage users.

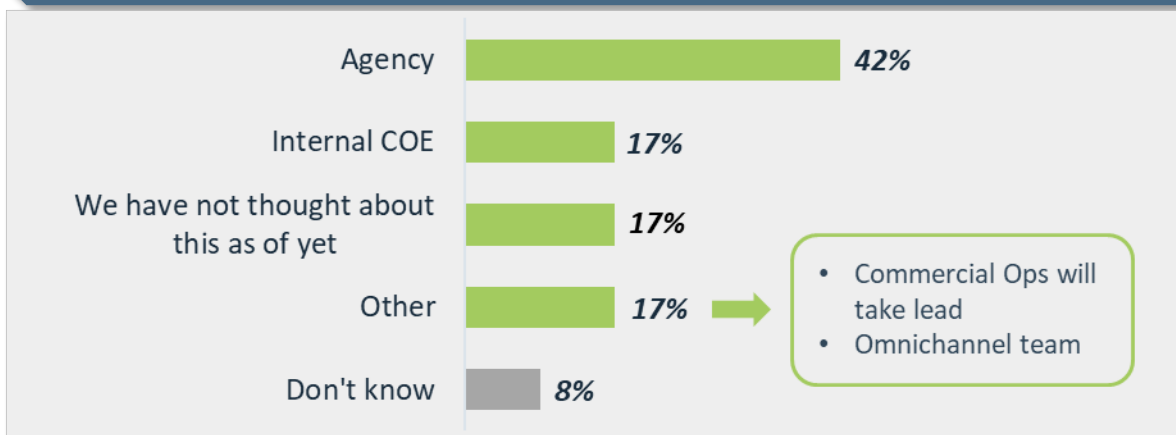
Rate the level of impact you feel the removal of third-party cookies will have on your media strategy, where 1 is No Impact and 7 is Significant Impact. (*n* = 12)



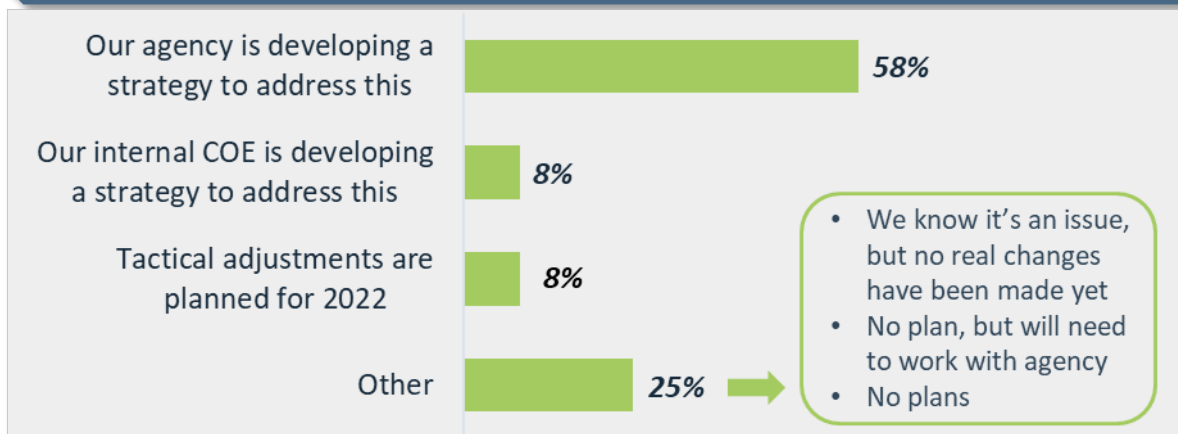
Given the lack of clarity, companies are relying on their media agencies to understand the intricacies of the changes and recommend a strategy to minimize the impact. Given media agencies possess a greater understanding of not only the manner in which the cookies are leveraged today, but also what it means for individuals brands, the approach is understandable.

However, given the scale of the change, internal centers of excellence need to play a driving role in setting the future forward approach. Changes to data collection, tagging, and integration into new vendors/partners need to be managed internally. Blind alliance on external partners could result in unrealistic or ineffective options.

### Who is primarily responsible for understanding the impact of eliminating third-party cookies and mitigating any impact? (n = 12)

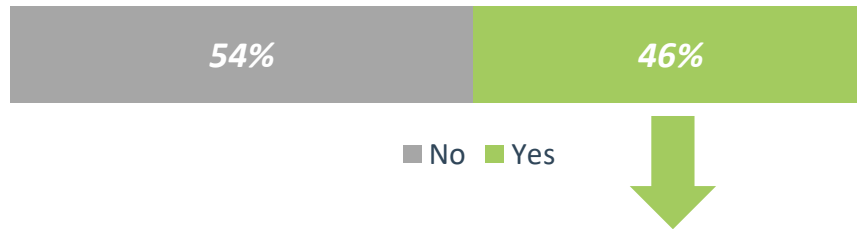


### Please further describe your current position with regards to the elimination of third-party cookies. (n = 12)



Of the companies that have started addressing the elimination of third-party cookies, 50% are actively discussing a plan of action while the other 50% are in the implementation phase.

### Has your organization initiated any work to address the elimination of third-party cookies? (n = 13)



### What, specifically, has been initiated so far? (n = 6)



#### A sample of verbatims from study respondents

Testing login state approaches, programmatic email and contextual targeting

Adopting Account Based Marketing (ABM) technology to ensure customer ID & creation of new digital platforms for improved digital CX

Discovery and plan of attack

We have had high-level meetings with our external agency to identify which current programs would be impacted and broadly discuss timeline to identify how we will pivot (as needed)

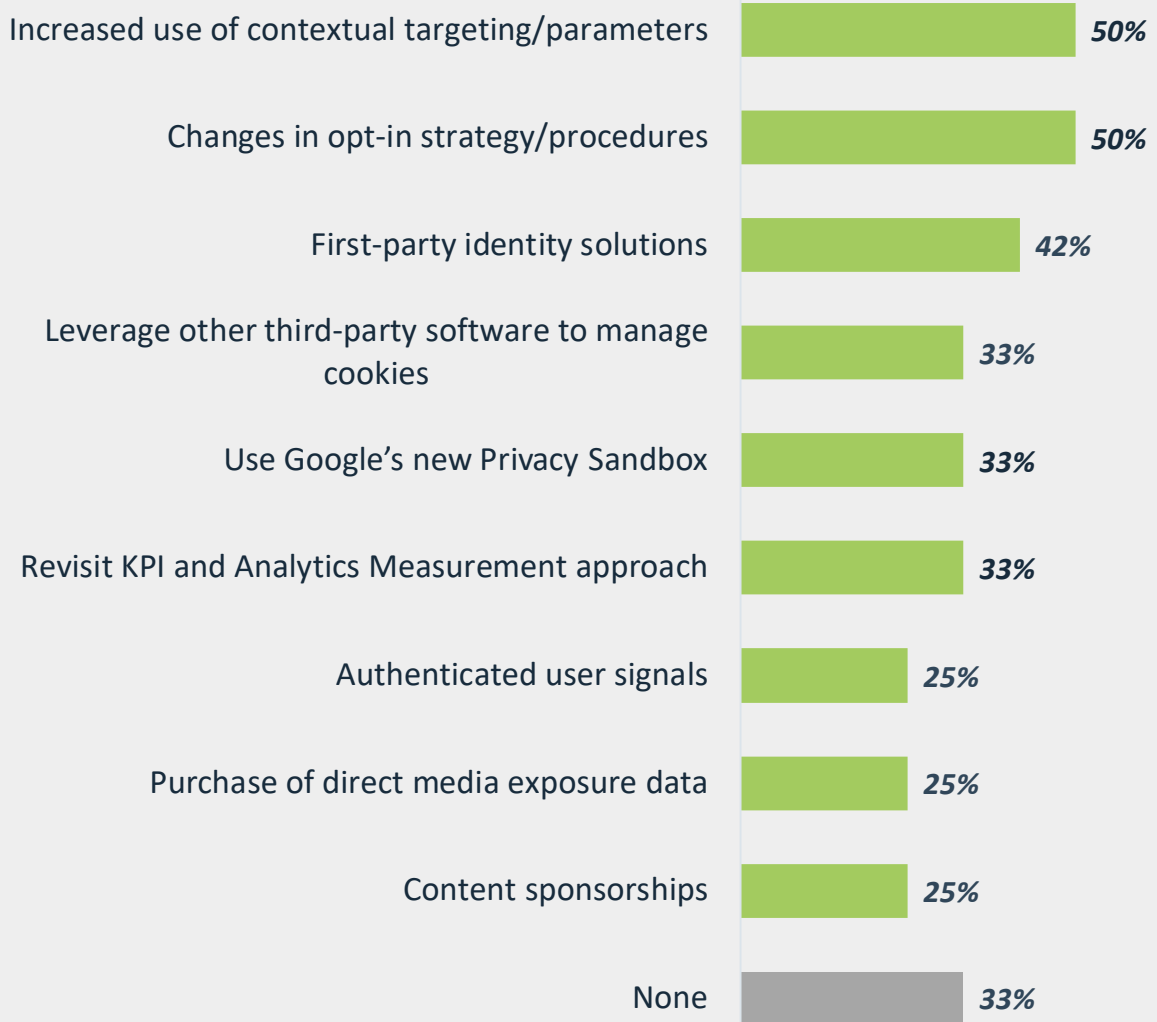
Initial discussion to develop plan

We are working through the implementation of GA4 on all sites and ensuring we have the correct GTM tags setup. We're not as concerned about 3rd party cookies since our targeting does not depend on those

## Mitigation Strategies in Pharma

Respondents to our study indicated they are exploring the following mitigation strategies:

**What mitigation strategies are being explored by your organization to address third-party cookie changes? (Select all that apply) (n = 12)**



---

## What are the alternatives?

Organizations and agencies are searching for alternatives that would ideally mirror the insight and targeting capabilities third-party cookies provided. Although no one solution immediately replaces the void that will be left in January 2022, there are a few alternatives actively being explored:

### Federated Learning of Cohorts (FLoC)

Google announced in March of this year that they will NOT be instituting any alternate tracking once third-party cookies are gone. Instead, they will be implementing an algorithm (from the Google Privacy Sandbox) program called, Federated Learning of Cohorts (FLoC). Rather than ascribing interests to unique users, Google will now have the ability to hide individuals in large crowds of people with common interests, while still showing them relevant and useful ads. <sup>2</sup>

### First-Party Data

While first-party sources will work well when they can hash personal information, you may quickly lose information on channels like paid search, organic search and direct from vendors, which are traditionally some of the most qualified traffic drivers to your site. Audience quality may have to rely on deep site navigation as a proxy for this engagement. Correlating the two now should help you understand what onsite threshold correlates to higher engagement.

### Notes on Other/Vendor Solutions

A range of vendors state they are developing their own solution, which means data silos for HCPs will require an analyst to tie this data together from these vendors or sources.

On the patient side, since all targeting is anonymous, it will be difficult to understand how many unique targets you are reaching with your campaign as the loss of cookies across properties could lead to duplication.

In other words, brands will still be able to view aggregated web traffic data, but individual engagement profiles will become much more difficult to discern, i.e. Individual doctor behavior on a brand website.

Specific personalization technologies, like those using pixels to store data, will be phased out. Instead, this type of tracking would have to occur within an authenticated environment.

---

## Strategies for Consideration in Pharma

### Increase use of Contextual/Targeting Parameters<sup>3</sup>

Companies can increase exposure by optimizing keywords and/or topics (to match a website's content/themes).

- Contextual ads are affordable and easy to implement
- They do not rely on personal details to serve ads, so privacy is intact
- Contextual ads are safer for brands

### Changes in Opt-In Strategy

- Develop a better understanding of your subscribed/registered customer base and cultivate those relationships
- Overall volume may decrease, pharma brands should focus on the quality of the engagements over volume

### First-Party Identity Solutions

- Utilize publishers' first-party generated IDs to better understand use behavior
- Learn how to activate and better manage first-party data options

### Explore Google's New Privacy Sandbox

While a third of respondents are considering this, it may not be an immediate, viable option within pharma. For one, this is a global consent, meaning opt-in is universal and control is limited. Also, there are concerns regarding Google's ability to include content relative to healthcare/pharma, as well as more complex keywords that we normally see in the pharma space.<sup>2</sup>

Before implementing any of the above, collaborate with your agency and partners to develop a roadmap to define the strategy and direction for 2022. Include in your strategy decreased reliance on traditional methods for data capture and measurement. Be prepared to discuss the further modifications of your media plans.



---

## Authors

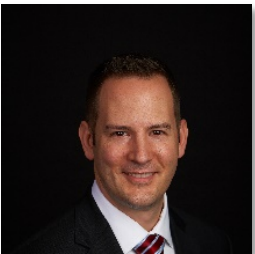


### **Jerry Luciano**

Vice President, Omnichannel Marketing | TGaS Advisors

Jerry Luciano leads TGaS Advisors' Omnichannel Marketing solution, providing analysis and recommendations to clients on all aspects of interactive marketing, brand strategy and organizational alignment. Before coming to TGaS, Jerry was a director at Fair Isaac, a supplier of predictive analytics solutions that drive effective marketing solutions. He was responsible for overseeing services engagements for several major pharmaceutical clients, including managing resources and profitability margins and forward planning for future projects, brand launches, new country integration and growing current engagements. His services targeted both physicians and consumers, and he was responsible for SaaS services targeted to increasing customer capabilities portfolios.

Jerry also worked with Digitas Health as Director of Marketing for the company's Digital Marketing Solutions and served as Solutions Delivery Manager for Global Solutions Delivery at Merck & Co., Inc. in West Point, Penn.



### **Scott Szewczak**

Senior Service Director, Omnichannel Marketing | TGaS Advisors

Scott Szewczak supports life science companies in the capacity of Senior Service Director for TGaS Advisors' Omnichannel Marketing Solution. Scott utilizes TGaS' proprietary data to create, analyze and deliver performance assessments and investment benchmarks.

Scott has over 15 years of digital marketing experience within the pharmaceutical and ecommerce industries. Scott joined the Digital & Multichannel Marketing solution at TGaS in 2013. Prior to TGaS, Scott led the digital analytics team at Cadiant Group, a digital healthcare advertising agency. His expertise spans data measurement, analysis, and strategy for digital tactics spanning paid search, search engine optimization, display advertising, email, websites, mobile sites.

---

# Appendix

## Sources

1) Think with Google, “Preserving privacy and performance will protect the future of advertising”, March 2021

2) Building a privacy-first future for web; Google Ads and Commerce Blog;  
<https://blog.google/products/ads-commerce/2021-01-privacy-sandbox/>

3) <https://instapage.com/blog/contextual-advertising>

## Notes on Cookies:

- A cookie is a small text file saved by your web browser when you visit a website. Two types include:
  - First-party cookies: These are placed by sites you visit to remember preferences, log-in information, or shopping cart. They allow for customization and enhance the user experience.
  - Third-party cookies: These cookies do not originate from the site you’re visiting, but from a third-party advertiser. They collect data about your web browsing to later target you with.

## Notes on Google Sandbox:

Google’s Privacy Sandbox is a group of proposals that span areas such as User Privacy, Ad Targeting, Ad Performance and Delivery. Solutions are named after birds (including FLoC) and can be found here: <https://blog.google/products/ads-commerce/2021-01-privacy-sandbox/>

---

## About TGaS Advisors

TGaS Advisors, a division of Trinity Life Sciences is the leading benchmarking and advisory services firm for commercial organizations in the life sciences industry. With a roster of large, emerging and precommercial life sciences companies, TGaS provides robust comparative intelligence and collaborative network membership services. The team includes more than 50 experienced professionals, most with senior-level experience in the life sciences and related industries.

**For more information, please contact Jerry Luciano | [jerry.luciano@trinitylifesciences.com](mailto:jerry.luciano@trinitylifesciences.com)  
or Scott Szewczak | [scott.szewczak@trinitylifesciences.com](mailto:scott.szewczak@trinitylifesciences.com).**