

Personalized B2B Demand Generation After Third-Party Cookies Is Already Here



B2B marketers have no reason to panic about the long-awaited demise of third-party cookies. Just lean into smarter, more efficient ways to drive engagement with your best customers.

The news that Google is finally making good on its promise to block third-party cookies in its Chrome browser has sparked another round of speculation about how B2B marketing teams can personalize their message and drive engagement without what was once a primary source of buyer intelligence.

Fortunately, we've had several years to work on the problem.

Smart marketers have already adapted their demand generation strategy and tactics to [lean into first-party and trusted partner data](#) – which we've always known to be the gold standard. Omni-channel campaigns and new user identification technologies have largely replaced third-party “spy” cookies as the way to find and connect with the in-market buyers who drive higher ROI on your demand generation marketing programs.

Google's decision to effectively take third-party cookies out of the data mix is just speeding up the last mile of this evolution. And that's a good thing.

Why Nobody Likes the Taste of Third-Party Cookies

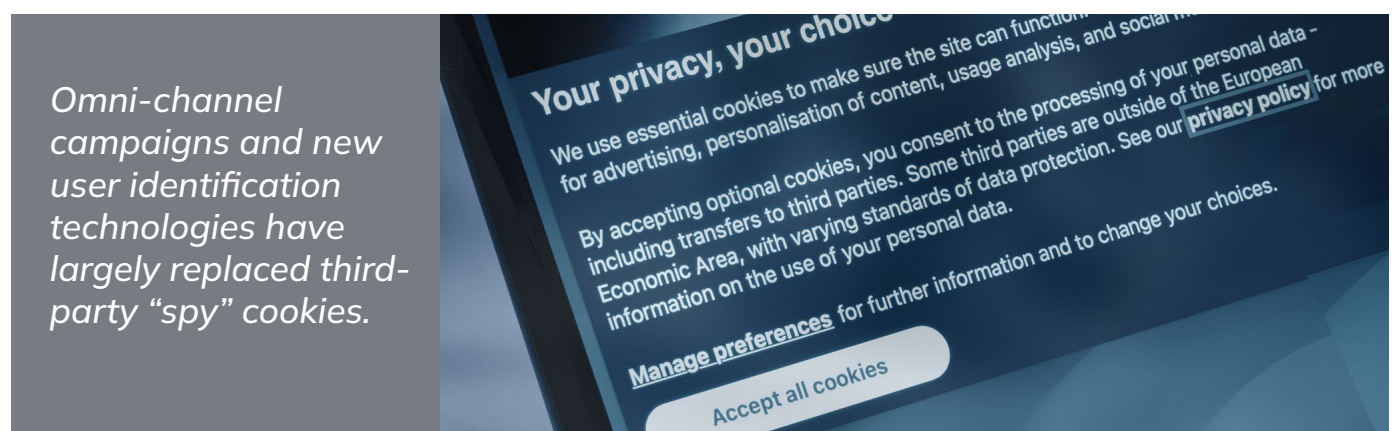
First off, let's be clear about why we're calling third-party cookies “spy,” and why so many users and privacy advocates are happy to hear of their demise.

Third-party cookies are installed on a user's system by someone other than the owner of the website that is currently being visited (hence, “third-party.”) This third party is typically a marketing or display advertising network that uses the installed cookie (typically a snippet of JavaScript) to track the user's behavior wherever they go on the internet – “spying” on them, essentially. They are often called “persistent” cookies and can be used to target display ads to a specific user, which has been their primary use in both B2C and B2B marketing.

Calling them, “spy” may be a little harsh. [Third-party cookies aren't necessarily nefarious](#), and many sites that install them on behalf of other companies include them in their terms of use, even if it's pretty deep in the fine print.

But, they do follow you around, wherever you go. Third-party cookies are considered “non-essential” by most privacy regulations, like [GDPR](#) and [CCPA](#), and they've been on the way out since Safari started blocking them by default back in 2020.

So, third-party cookies are definitely on the way out. But for many B2B demand generation specialists, including our team here at Bython, it's a road we've been traveling for a while.



The Shrinking Role of Third-Party Cookies in B2B Demand Generation

A stat you've probably heard is that about three-fourths of marketers say they still rely on third-party cookie data for personalizing their marketing programs. This number tracks back to a [2022 Statista](#) survey, and while it's a valid talking point, let's add:

1. That was two years ago, and things move fast.
2. This survey was of both B2C and B2B marketing teams, and things just work a little differently on the two sides of the fence.
3. A lot of marketers may not be aware of exactly how their targeting and retargeting data is being collected (see point 1).
4. There are several ways to personalize a user's experience, and the best ones don't rely on third-party cookie data.

In practical terms, third-party cookies have been (and, to some degree, still are) used primarily in display advertising. Browsing history and other behavior is gathered and used to build audience segments around topical interests. They also can be used to re-target a specific user based on past history – third-party cookies are why you keep seeing vacation ads after you visit a travel site, even if you are currently reading local news headlines.

Third-party cookie data also was, at one time, a significant component of many intent data platforms. But as Big Data user ID technology has improved, it's been replaced by IP address, content consumption patterns, and preferred second-party data sources as a way to detect and assign buying intent.

So, that's about it. Third-party cookies are used to drive some forms of personalization, but those applications are limited, and B2B demand generation is finding better ways to drive personal engagement with customers.

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First-party Relationships Drive Meaningful Personalization

Make no mistake: Personalization is a huge competitive edge in B2B. In fact, it's really become more of a baseline than a differentiator. A widely publicized study by Salesforce reported that [52 percent of B2B buyers are likely to switch brands](#) if they aren't offered a personalized experience. Countless other surveys report that buyers are more likely to go with a vendor that personalizes their experience.

But this level of personalization goes well beyond just flooding a browser with vacation ads.

Personalization in B2B marketing means supporting your customers' research throughout their often complex purchase journey. Demand generation marketing, in particular, requires you to provide useful content and insights that drive engagement to the next level – you want to be with the customer as they make that next step toward the buying decision.

To build this level of trust, you need to convince customers to enter a first-party relationship with your brand. And that requires you to offer real value in exchange for sharing their personal information and permission to continue talking with them.

It's a fair deal. Most consumers (both B2B and B2C) are more than willing to share personal information if they get value in return. In B2C, it's a discount vacation package. In B2B demand generation marketing, it's a useful case study or an insightful webinar – followed by another useful content offer that anticipates and supports the next step in the buying process.

Display advertising plays a part, sure. But B2B demand generation has already moved beyond the point where the loss of third-party cookie data should be a major blow.

Continuing to Grow Without Third-Party Cookies

So, how do you review and optimize your demand generation strategy to get ready for the death of the third-party cookie? You're probably already most of the way there, and if you're not, the B2B marketing ecosystem has been getting ready for this shift for a long time.

So, if you do need to make some changes, it's really just a matter of investing in the right assets and reviewing the ROI on some channels and tactics.

Which you're doing already.

Understand and Support Your Customer Journey with High-value Content

This is really the essence of B2B demand generation. If you don't understand what your best customers need, you can't give it to them. And you can be sure it's not just continuous brand awareness via display retargeting.

Review and refine your purchase journey models (at least once every six months) and shift resources into creating content and experiences that encourage buyers to enter and grow a first-party relationship with you.

Personalize the Customer Experience with First-party Cookies

When you hear stats about the importance of personalization in B2B, they often are talking about onsite experiences enabled by first-party cookies (which, obviously, your own site installs on the user system). First-party cookies are universally accepted as good business practice, as they simply track a user's behavior while on your own site, regardless if they are logged in or not. This lets you offer personalized content to site visitors even before they agree to share personal info, such as an email address.

Other on-site "personalization" tactics include [chat bots on conversion pages](#) (which have been found to increase conversions by 10 to 20 percent) and branching site navigation, based on previous behavior tracked by a first-party cookie. And, depending on the sophistication of your data program, otherwise anonymous first-party cookie data can be correlated with a partner's contact database for powerful email audience segmentation.

Take Privacy and Security VERY Seriously

The concerns that have led to the phasing out of third-party cookies all boil down to the fact that people find them intrusive and even a little creepy. That's no way to build the trust that's essential to driving engagement in B2B.

If you do use first-party cookies on your site (and you should), be sure to offer visitors a chance to opt-out and offer them clear information about how their first-party data will be collected and used. Here's how the form looks on our own site.

The screenshot shows the bython website header with navigation links: Marketing Channels, Operational Tactics, Byonic Platform, Insights, About Us, and a Contact Us button. The main content area features the heading "B2B Demand Generation Solutions" and a list of three bullet points: "Foster meaningful connections", "Drive tangible results", and "Create positive ROI". A "View Testimonial" button is located below the list. A privacy notice overlay is positioned in the bottom left corner, titled "We value your privacy" and containing text about cookie usage and three buttons: "Customize", "Reject All", and "Accept All". A large blue circular button in the bottom right corner says "Read the Latest News". The background of the page is a dark blue image of a hand interacting with a digital interface.

It's fairly straightforward and will put you in good standing with privacy regulations. Beyond this basic first step, be sure to continuously review and update security policies, both for your own database and with any demand generation partner you choose. Security is an essential part of your overall [data quality program](#), which is "page one" for any successful demand generation strategy.

Understand the New Programmatic Landscape

Targeting new audiences with display ads isn't going anywhere, with or without third-party cookies. As stated earlier, the B2B demand generation ecosystem has been anticipating this change for years, and new technologies now offer segmentation and targeting that's about as good, or maybe even a little better, than "spy" cookies.

The two new approaches that get the most attention are IP-based and contextual targeting.

IP-BASED SEGMENTATION AND TARGETING fit pretty seamlessly into Account-based Marketing (ABM) programs, which are becoming SOP in demand gen. Based on IP address, you can target the business campuses of your named accounts. This approach is elevated when paired with other user ID technologies that can credibly infer the addresses of buying group members, based on content consumption and other behaviors. This process is essentially the same as the AI and machine learning tech that powers intent data and is often referred to as triangulation.

CONTEXTUAL TARGETING can be highly useful for broad awareness and branding components of your campaigns. It essentially uses the same semantic technology as search engines to determine what a web page is about, then places ads that want to target that topical interest. It's a way to extend the same value offered by publisher networks, except across a broader reach of sites without losing topical focus.

Most credible ad networks already offer targeting based on these two approaches, and when used smartly at the right stages of the customer journey, they can replicate almost all the functionality of third-party cookies.

It is also important to note that Google ([at about 28 percent market share](#)) and the other big digital ad platforms have been working on their own technologies to replicate third-party cookies, as well. These basically amount to taking the very explicit individual data that they can still legally gather (they own the browser) and then anonymizing that data into very targeted "cohorts" around topical interest and demographics. Again, they can gather this data directly as the "first-party" owner of the browser or platform. Other programmatic networks have to infer that level of detail from multiple sources.

In fact, most observers have concluded that Google's years-long delay in making good on its promise to block third-party cookies was really just them working out their own counter-solution.

Business is business, after all.

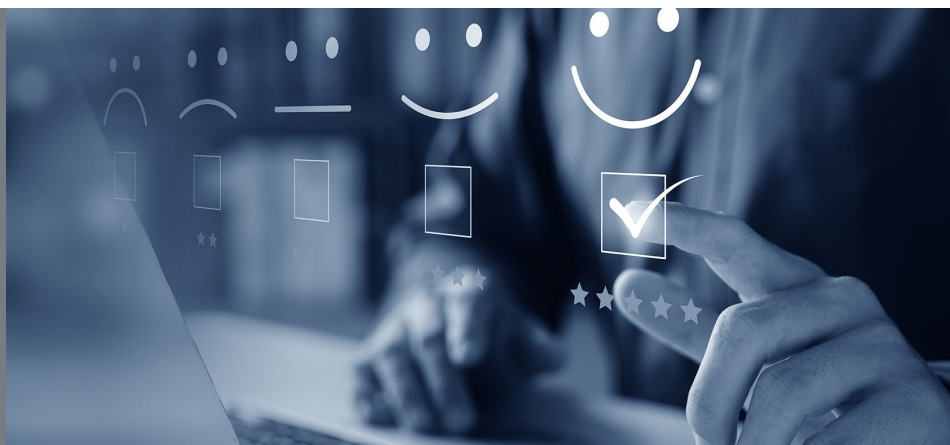
But, in the end, the market has developed technologies that let you target audiences based on interest and purchase decision involvement. Which is all you really need.

Re-evaluate ROI for All Your Channels

Even though you still have solid options for display targeting, you probably want to look at how much you want to invest in programmatic as a component of your demand generation strategy.

Recent research puts the average ROI on PPC/SEM advertising at 36 percent, [dramatically behind other channels such as email](#) (312 percent) and even direct mail (77 percent). We need to stress that this research, conducted by an SEO firm, notes that display can be very cost-effective when done with precision as part of an overall customer acquisition strategy. But, too, often, it's just spray and pray, and that can turn into a money pit, even if the reach you are buying seems relatively inexpensive.

Working with a trusted demand generation partner gives you access to verified, engaged buyers who are ready to start talking.



In our own programs here at Bython, we rely on programmatic only at the very high funnel/awareness stage of our programs. You have to get the word out, and display is still a great way to test new segments that intent and other business intelligence tell you are likely in-market. But if a buyer is actively shopping, they will engage and want higher value content soon enough. Constantly re-targeting an individual across sites and platforms as “ground cover” for an offer just has not proven cost-effective for us – it creeps into the realm of over-personalization that marketers have been discussing for a few years now.

So, that’s an aspect of third-party cookie targeting that we just don’t miss all that much. Much better to shift resources toward moving customers into a first-party relationship and driving engagement with higher-value tactics.

Grow Your Reach with Strategic Partnerships

Obviously, you can only collect so many email addresses and job titles, no matter how meticulously you optimize your conversion paths. Working with a trusted demand generation partner gives you access to verified, engaged buyers who are ready to start talking. When the time is right, they can drop seamlessly into your first-party programs and continue the conversation.

It’s the sort of scale at precision that can’t be replicated by third-party tactics. You get solid, predictable ROI on your B2B demand generation budget that you tune to your current pipeline needs.

It’s just a really smart investment.

B2B Demand Generation Is Finding a Sweet Spot Without Third-Party Cookies

We’ve illustrated why B2B marketers shouldn’t be panicked about the long-awaited demise of third-party cookies. We knew it was coming, and we’ve been preparing for it. And the results are smarter, more efficient, and more meaningfully personalized experiences to drive engagement with your best customers.

It’s all about building first-party relationships based on trust and real value, and that’s always been the real goal of demand generation strategies. The tools are just changing and making us work a little smarter.

