

CASE STUDY

# Data-Driven Attribution Cuts Ford Canada's CPAs by 25%



[Ford Canada](#) and its agency partners (Mindshare, Catalyst and GTB) were looking to better understand customers' online journeys, from first seeing an ad to considering a purchase. They needed a solution that could support thousands of online conversions and reveal which advertising tactics worked, for whom and at what point in the journey. In other words, they needed a new way to measure impact, and they found it in [Data-Driven Attribution](#) (DDA) from DoubleClick.

## Trading up

Ford, one of the largest digital advertisers in Canada, runs numerous programs throughout the year, from search and display to social and video. To measure them, it leaned heavily on last-click attribution, but knew this two-step journey left out many crucial touch points. The majority of incoming conversions were assigned to the most common last-touch channel: search.

When the team started seeking an enhanced attribution solution, they realized that they lacked a comprehensive view of all digital media. So Ford's first big step was to consolidate all search buying into DoubleClick Search, to manage campaigns across multiple engines in one system. This gave the team unified tracking and reporting on all digital channels.

**"As we moved away from a last-click attribution model, the numbers for non-search channels went up, often by double digits."**

"Suddenly we could see the true impact search has together with other media," said Philip Kwok, digital media investment manager at Mindshare. "That was when we really started to challenge the validity of last-click attribution and look for more accurate options."

Kwok's team realized many media channels were contributing to purchase

## Ford of Canada

- Founded in 1907, Ford Canada is Canada's longest-established automaker, bringing 320,000 cars to market each year.
- Oakville, Ontario
- [www.ford.ca](http://www.ford.ca)

## Mindshare Toronto

- Mindshare is a global media agency network based on the values of speed, teamwork and provocation. Toronto is one of 116 Mindshare offices in 86 countries around the world.
- Toronto, Ontario
- [www.mindshareworld.com](http://www.mindshareworld.com)

## GTB

- GTB is an innovative agency model designed to deliver true 'integration' within the speed, diversity and potential of modern communications - bringing together best of breed from within the WPP network, data, media, technology and creative under one roof. GTB's founding client is The Ford Motor Company, forming the world's biggest integrated communications partnership.
- Toronto, Ontario
- [www.gtb.com](http://www.gtb.com)

## Catalyst Canada

- Catalyst specializes in digital discovery. It has embraced PPC & SEO as its core services for more than 15 years, and have continued to develop an advanced set of digital services including Content Marketing, Paid Social Buying, Local Search Optimization and Programmatic Media Buying.
- Toronto, Ontario
- [www.catalyst.ca](http://www.catalyst.ca)

consideration actions, but few of them were getting proper recognition with a last-click approach. “We asked ourselves how we could properly attribute conversion on high-impact tactics such as pre-roll video where we optimize to completions and not clicks.”

The arrival of Data-Driven Attribution opened up those new options for Ford. DDA uses advanced digital metrics and economic statistics to offer recommendations on how to assign credit to all digital media ads served through DoubleClick, accurately and automatically. Each touch point gets the credit it deserves in real time, and it adapts to the ever changing customer journey.

## Kicking the tires

Ford and agency partners Mindshare, Catalyst, and GTB began implementing DDA in June of 2015. It didn't take long for them to notice the results.

“We've always known the role search plays in driving conversions as the last touch point, but we didn't know how to measure the true value other media tactics along the consumer journey,” said Kwok. “As we moved away from a last-click attribution model, the numbers for non-search channels went up, often by double digits.”

“The biggest surprise was how much influence video and display truly had on conversion in the path to purchase.”

Chris Morden, digital marketing strategy and analytics manager for Ford Canada, found the data striking. “The biggest surprise was how much influence video and display truly had on conversions in the path to purchase,” he said. “Media tactics that had been primarily intended for awareness objectives were contributing as conversion-drivers. It surprised us as to how many conversions were attributable to them.”

## Taking a test drive

A few months later, the team was ready for a formal test on selected campaigns chosen for their weight in all media tactics: display, video, and social. The question was simple: Could DDA lower the cost per action (CPA) on Ford of Canada's website?

## Goals

- Attribute true value to all marketing methods
- Understand the customer journey better
- Optimize campaigns for better results

## Approach

- Adopted DDA from DoubleClick
- Established baseline measurements for all campaigns
- Optimized campaigns based on new attribution data

## Results

- 25% reduction in CPAs
- 480% rise in CTRs
- Strong improvements in attribution for all non-search channels

The Mindshare team measured numbers throughout September as a baseline. In October, they began optimizing campaign targeting and budgets based on the credit given to each channel and media partner according to the enhanced attribution model on the DDA platform.

“Data-Driven Attribution gave us a holistic way to think about multi-channel impact. Now we really see which channels are influencing others across the digital ecosystem.”

The results were impressive: a 25% lower CPA for digital display media in just one month, which included adjustments the team made to make sure seasonal changes weren't affecting their results.

“We've always looked at data to influence how we go to market. Media and creative efficiency and effectiveness are part of our DNA,” said Morden. “Data-Driven Attribution gave us a holistic way to think about multi-channel impact. Now we really see which channels are influencing others across the digital ecosystem.”

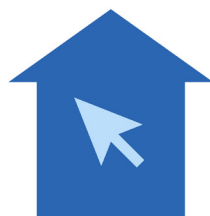
### Hitting the gas

In addition to that 25% savings in cost per action, Ford Canada also saw its click-through rates (CTR) skyrocket. Overall CTR for display test campaigns went up 480% in the first month alone.

To sum up: in its first few months on the job, DDA saved an average of 25% on CPAs while increasing CTRs nearly five times over. Not a bad result for a team that set out to better understand each tactical execution's impact in the customers' journeys.



**25%**  
decrease in CPAs



**480%**  
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“Search is still a great driver in delivering results for Ford and will continue to play a key role in capturing the end interest of a consumer’s journey,” said Morden. “The question for this program was whether the true contribution of our other tactics affected the end result and if we could better leverage tactics like display and video to help deliver more in search. The answer was easy: ‘Yes!’ Other channels absolutely play a vital part in assisting the end conversion, and optimizing these in real-time through the DDA platform, can deliver some powerful results.”