

Server-side tracking beginner checklist

Get started with your server-side implementation



Why leading organizations are moving from client-side to server-side tagging

For years, client-side tracking has been the default online, sending tracking data directly from the browser to platforms like GA4, Meta, and Google Ads. Today, this model is finding its limits due to a number of factors:



Privacy regulations

Privacy laws such as the GDPR in Europe, Law 25 in Quebec, and the CCPA in California now require user consent before tracking.

This is a positive step for user privacy, but it also means that the pool of data you can collect has shrunk significantly, and that every signal you do keep matters even more.



AdBlockers

Roughly a quarter of internet users now browse with an ad blocker app or browser extension.

Contrary to their name, these tools do more than hide ads; they can prevent tracking scripts from firing, even when users have consented to tracking.



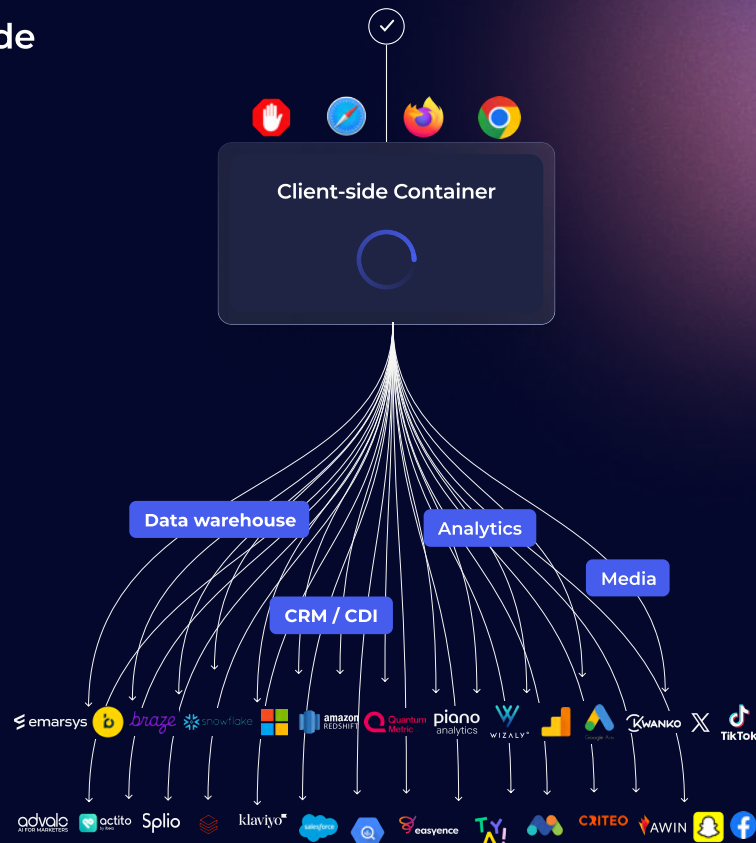
Browser limitations

Several popular browsers block third-party cookies by default, and Safari caps cookie lifespans at 7 days, meaning a customer who clicks your ad on Monday and buys ten days later is considered a brand-new visitor. On mobile, [where Safari holds significant market share](#), the attribution damage is substantial.

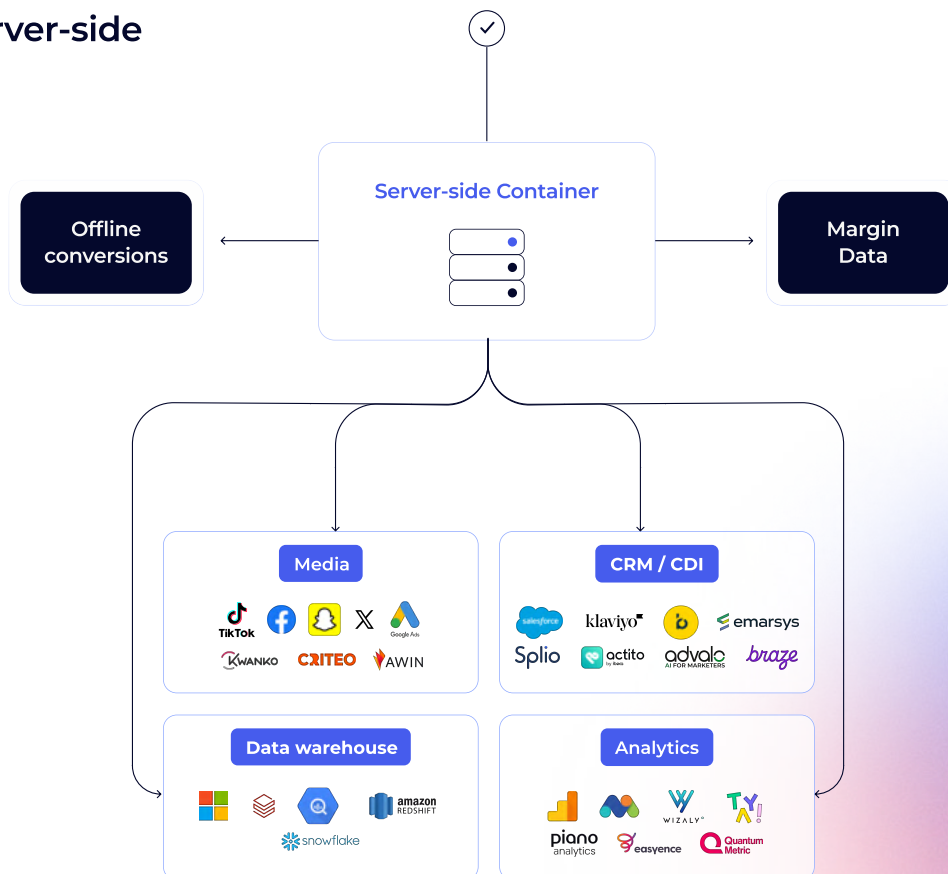
Server-side tracking offers a solution by placing a server between the browser and tagging partners to act as a sorting room for your data. The server lives within your domain, receives a single stream of events from the browser, then checks, filters, and redistributes them to each platform.



Client-side



Server-side



The benefits of server-side tracking

Data collection

Recover the revenue signal you're losing

Browser-based tracking drops a large share of conversions before they reach your ad platforms. Server-side sends events from your own first-party environment, recovering that lost data so your ROAS reflects what actually happened, instead of a partial picture.

Data quality

Feed better data to your ad platforms

Higher-quality conversion signals, including stronger event match quality on Meta, let platform algorithms learn faster and bid smarter. As a result, campaigns scale efficiently instead of plateauing on thin data.

Data governance

Take back control of what you share

Instead of firing data straight from the browser to a dozen third parties, server-side tracking lets you filter and shape it on your own server first. You decide what leaves, where it goes, and on what basis.

Web performance

Make your site faster

Every client-side tag is another script slowing the browser down. Moving execution server-side lightens the page, improving load times, user experience, and the Core Web Vitals that feed search rankings.

And this is only the beginning. While the migration to server-side tracking already unlocks great benefits, mature server-side organizations are able to leverage more specific use cases, from [handling ad blockers](#) and browser restrictions, all the way to incorporating offline conversions and user data in ad campaigns.

[Learn more about the benefits of server-side](#)

Server-side tracking

Your journey to full measurement maturity.

MATURITY LEVEL

0

YOUR STARTING POINT

Client-side Tracking

1

FOUNDATIONS

Server-side Migration

- Deploying subdomain DNS
- Setting up a GTM server
- Migrating tags (GA4, Google Ads, Meta, Pinterest, etc)

2

TWO MAJOR OPTIMIZATIONS

Optimize to Recapture Lost Data

- Bypassing adblockers
- Building cookie resilience by maintaining first-party cookies beyond browser limits

3

UNLOCK FULL POTENTIAL

First-party Data Unification

- Implementing margin-based optimization
- Incorporating offline conversions
- Leveraging user data in CAPI
- Covering mobile app
- Including product and customer data



The Addingwell by Didomi approach: Server-side tracking without the black box

Most server-side setups recover your data but hide it from you. Whether consent is respected on every tag is invisible unless you dig through server logs.

Addingwell by Didomi does it differently. We handle hosting and setup, and everything stays auditable and compliant by design thanks to our [Event Consent Monitoring feature](#), which shows you exactly what fired per tag, including consent status.

WITHOUT EVENT CONSENT MONITORING

Server-side tagging blackbox



- ✗ Requires access to raw server logs.
- ✗ Misconfigurations go undetected.
- ✗ Regulators still asking for proof.

WITH EVENT CONSENT MONITORING

Continuous, automated view of consent compliance



- ✓ End-to-end, per-tag, per-vendor consent visibility.
- ✓ Misconfigurations surfaced automatically.
- ✓ Auditable record you can share with your DPO.

Addingwell was acquired by Didomi in 2025 and helps over 2,000 businesses do server-side tracking the right way. To learn more about our work and how we help leading organizations maximize their data operations, check out our case studies.

Getting started with server-side tracking

1 Create your container

Set up your Addingwell container, the control center that hosts your server-side configuration and connects your site to your tagging server.

→ [Follow the guide](#)

✓ COMPLETION CHECK

Container is created and visible in your Addingwell workspace.

2 Configure the GTM server

Provision your server-side Google Tag Manager container. This server environment receives your data, processes it, and forwards it to your tools. Addingwell handles the hosting and provisioning for you.

→ [Follow the guide](#)

✓ COMPLETION CHECK

Server container is live and receiving requests.

3 Tagging subdomain setup

Point a subdomain on your own domain to your tagging server, so data is collected first-party rather than through a third-party URL. This is what lets requests load from your domain and sidestep blockers.

→ [Follow the guide](#)

✓ COMPLETION CHECK

Subdomain is configured, DNS propagated, and requests are loading from your domain.



4 Monitoring setup

Turn on Events Monitoring from the start, so you can see exactly what is firing once you go live rather than discovering breakage later. Monitoring tracks all your events automatically.

→ [Follow the guide](#)

✓ COMPLETION CHECK

Tags and events are visible in the monitoring interface.

5 Consent

Handle consent server-side so recovered data stays compliant, tied to the Didomi consent layer. Consent choices collected by your CMP travel with each request and gate whether tags fire.

→ [Follow the guide](#)

✓ COMPLETION CHECK

Consent status is read and respected server-side, per tag.

Ready to move server-side? Let's talk

Do it with us.

Our platform handles provisioning, uptime, monitoring, and support, so you skip the infrastructure burden and get to recovered signal faster. The team will walk through your setup.

We'll connect you to a partner.

If you'd rather hand implementation to an expert, Addingwell works with [an extensive network of partners](#) who do this daily. We can introduce you to the right one for your stack and region.

[Book a call with the team](#)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Does server-side tracking allow you to bypass consent?

No. Server-side tracking changes your data-collection architecture, not your legal obligations. The GDPR and the ePrivacy Directive apply in the same way, whether your data passes through the browser or your server.

In practical terms, you must transmit your visitors' consent choices (collected via your [CMP](#)) through your data stream to your tagging server, and use them as a trigger condition for your tags. A visitor who has opted out of tracking must not be tracked. Use server-side tracking to more reliably measure visitors who have consented, not to track those who have opted out.

What will my return on investment (ROI) be if I switch to server-side tracking?

It depends on your traffic and how much you rely on advertising platforms. In practice, we generally see a 5 to 15% increase in requests sent to platforms (Meta, Google Ads) thanks to bypassing ad blockers.

More measured conversions send a stronger signal to bidding algorithms, leading to better-optimized campaigns and lower customer acquisition costs. On the other hand, factor in hosting costs (depending on your event volume) and implementation costs.

What does sGTM stand for?

sGTM stands for server-side Google Tag Manager. It is Google's server-side tag management solution, which sends website data to an intermediary server before forwarding it to analytics and advertising platforms such as GA4, Google Ads, and Meta.

Is server-side GTM free?

Google Tag Manager is free, but running server-side GTM isn't. sGTM requires a server or cloud hosting environment, which creates ongoing hosting costs that vary depending on traffic and event volume.



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Does sGTM bypass ad blockers?

sGTM can help recover tracking data that browser-based ad blockers would otherwise block. Because data can be sent through a first-party server endpoint rather than directly to advertising platforms, fewer requests may be blocked, but sGTM must never be used to bypass a user's consent choice.

How long does sGTM setup take?

There is no fixed time for an sGTM setup. A basic implementation may take a few hours, while a production migration involving multiple platforms, consent management, testing, and debugging can take several days or longer depending on the complexity of the tracking setup.

Can I use sGTM without Google Tag Manager on the browser side?

Not usually for a standard website implementation. sGTM still needs a browser-side source, such as a GTM Web container or Google tag, to collect events and send them to the server container; however, you can then move many third-party tags off the browser.

Is server-side tracking legal?

Yes, server-side tracking is legal when implemented in accordance with applicable privacy laws and user consent requirements. It does not bypass GDPR, ePrivacy, or consent obligations, and you must not track users who refuse tracking simply because you process data server-side.

Does Google Tag Manager slow down your site?

Google Tag Manager can slow down a website if it loads many or poorly optimized client-side tags. Moving appropriate tags to server-side GTM can reduce third-party code and browser requests, improving page speed and overall web performance.





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