AUDIENCES+

ACTIVATION GUIDE

THE MARKETER'S GUIDE TO

First-Party Data Activation

Five Ways To Turn Customer Data Into Commercial Value

A practical guide for marketing, growth and data leaders in any sector who want to put the customer data they already hold to work in their media, without moving it out of their cloud. From AUDIENCES, the independent activation platform.

INSIDE THIS GUIDE

01 The business case for activation 2

02 Five ways to put first-party data to work 4

03 A measurement framework 7

04 Proof across sectors 7

05 Activation readiness checklist 8

33%
AVG. CPA REDUCTION

22%
AVG. ROAS INCREASE

FEATURING
Results from Saga, Pets at Home and brands in insurance, travel and services

01 — THE BUSINESS CASE FOR ACTIVATION

You Don't Have A Data Problem. You Have An Activation Problem.

Businesses in every sector have invested heavily in customer data, cloud and AI. Activation is what turns that investment into commercial value, yet most of that intelligence never reaches the media decisions that drive growth.

Spending More, Getting Less Back

Media budgets keep growing, but more spend isn't buying better results. Meanwhile, retention's share of media spend has fallen 29% since 2024 (Gartner).

MEDIA SPEND IS UP

+13%

UK digital ad spend year on year, to £21.2bn in H1 2026

IAB UK & MediaSense

ACQUISITION COSTS ARE UP

+5%

cost per lead on Google Ads, rising in 13 of 23 industries

WordStream Benchmarks 2025

LOYALTY IS DOWN

52%

of UK shoppers are less loyal than three years ago; 55% blame irrelevant offers

HyperFinity, 2026

<3%

of media spend is informed by first-party data.

Your best signal is already yours: who to reach, who to exclude and who to keep.

01 — THE BUSINESS CASE FOR ACTIVATION

Why The Gap Exists

Marketers rarely lack data or tools. The difficulty is turning scattered, privacy-restricted customer data into signals that change what happens in media.

A

Data Sits Apart From Media

Customer data lives in the cloud, while media is planned and bought in separate platforms, by separate teams.

B

Moving Data Adds Cost And Risk

Legacy activation copies customer data across platforms and intermediaries, eroding control and adding a data tax every time it is used.

C

Insight Loses Value Over Time

Propensity, churn and suppression signals only pay off once they reach the right team or media platform. Slow, project-based activation lets their value decay.

THE ANSWER: IN-CLOUD ACTIVATION

Fewer copies. Better signals. Greater control.

Build audiences from first-party data and send them to media directly from your own cloud, so customer data is never moved or duplicated. Move the technology, not the data. Privacy and performance are not a trade-off.

Where AUDIENCES Fits

Runs in your cloud

Deployed where your data lives, including as a Snowflake Native App.

Works with your stack

Sits alongside your CDP and connects to the channels you already buy.

Fully independent

No media, ID or cloud lock-in, and no data tax each time your data is used.

02 — FIVE WAYS TO PUT FIRST-PARTY DATA TO WORK

From Customer Data To Commercial Value

Each of the five ways below starts with data most businesses already hold, whatever the sector. For each one, we set out the opportunity, how to put it into practice, the KPIs to track and, where available, real-world proof.

01 Stop Paying To Reach Existing Customers

Suppression: make every acquisition pound reach someone new.

The opportunity. Acquisition campaigns often reach people who are already customers, policyholders, members or subscribers. Every impression served to them is budget that could have found someone new.

How to put it into practice

1. Build a suppression audience from the customer records already in your cloud.
2. Exclude it from acquisition activity across search, social, programmatic, CTV and DOOH.
3. Keep it refreshed automatically, so recent converters are excluded too.

KPIS TO TRACK

New customer CPA | Reinvested spend | Share of new customers

PROOF

A leading retailer excluded existing customers from acquisition activity, reducing reinvested spend as part of its award-winning in-cloud activation.

02 Prospect Smarter With Your Best Customers

Lookalikes and prospecting: use high-value customers as the blueprint for growth.

The opportunity. Your most valuable customers tell you who to look for next. Using them as a seed helps acquisition reach new prospects who look and behave like the customers you value most, lowering the cost of every lead or sale.

How to put it into practice

1. Identify high-value customers using transaction, tenure and behavioural data.
2. Build a seed audience and activate lookalike targeting in the channels that support it.
3. Combine with suppression, so budget goes to genuinely new prospects.

KPIS TO TRACK

Cost per lead | CPA | ROAS

PROOF

European travel brand used first-party customer intelligence in paid social, achieving a **65% lower cost per lead**.

Ways 1 and 2 work best together. Suppression stops budget leaking to existing customers, while lookalikes point it at the prospects most likely to become valuable ones.

03 Retain Rather Than Reacquire

Retention and re-engagement: act on churn signals before customers are lost.

The opportunity. Lapsed and at-risk customers already know your brand. Re-engaging them, ahead of a renewal, a booking season or a key trading moment, is usually more efficient than winning someone new.

How to put it into practice

1. Define "at risk" and "lapsed" for your business, using churn or propensity models.
2. Build re-engagement audiences from those signals in your cloud.
3. Reach them at the right moment, and exclude them once they return.

KPIS TO TRACK

Churn rate | Reactivation rate | Renewal or repeat rate

PROOF

A retailer engaged existing customers with personalised offers on a new loyalty club, strengthening retention performance.

04 Grow Value With Cross-Sell And Upsell

Customer value: help existing customers discover more of what you offer.

The opportunity. Most customers buy only part of what you offer, whether that's product categories, policies, services or tiers. Reaching them with the most relevant next product grows lifetime value.

How to put it into practice

1. Map what each customer segment holds, and what it doesn't.
2. Build audiences for the most natural next product or upgrade.
3. Activate across channels, suppressing customers who already have it.

KPIS TO TRACK

Products per customer | Order value | Lifetime value

SIGNALS TO USE

Product holdings, purchase history, tenure and propensity scores.

PROOF

A telecoms brand targeted existing customers with an upgrade offer, exclusive to their teir.

05 Extend Reach Into Premium Channels

Audience extension: take first-party intelligence into CTV and beyond.

The opportunity. First-party intelligence shouldn't stop at search and social. Taking it into connected TV, DOOH and programmatic, and enriching it with trusted partner data, brings precision to the channels that build scale.

How to put it into practice

1. Start with your highest-value or highest-propensity audiences.
2. Extend reach with trusted data partners such as Experian or Outra, without copying your data.
3. Activate in CTV and programmatic, and measure incremental impact.

KPIS TO TRACK

Incremental ROAS · Incremental revenue · Quality reach

PROOF

A tour operator's connected TV campaign delivered **10.9× incremental ROAS** and £1.1m incremental value.

BETTER TOGETHER

The Five Ways Reinforce Each Other

Acquire efficiently

01 + 02. Suppression stops budget leaking to existing customers; lookalikes point it at the best new prospects.

Grow existing customers

03 + 04. Retention and cross-sell protect and grow the value of customers you already have.

Scale what works

05. Extension takes your proven audiences into the channels that build reach.

What The Five Ways Deliver

Avg. 33% lower CPA · 22% higher ROAS across AUDIENCES customers

45%
lower cost per quote against target
INSURANCE PROVIDER

£3.4m
incremental revenue, live in three weeks
TRAVEL & LEISURE BRAND

42%
lower CPA and over £1m incremental revenue
RETAIL & SERVICES BRAND

03 — A MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK

Prove The Value Of Every Audience

Activation should deliver measurable business outcomes, not just more impressions. Use this framework with your existing reporting to evaluate each of the five ways.

OBJECTIVE	WHAT TO MEASURE	WAYS
Acquisition efficiency	CPA, cost per lead or quote, and reduced wasted spend	01 · 02
Campaign performance	ROAS, conversions and media efficiency	All
Customer retention	Churn, reactivation and renewal or repeat rates	03
Customer value	Products per customer, order value and lifetime value	04
Incrementality	Incremental revenue and incremental ROAS	05

Four Habits Of Good Measurement

1
Agree success metrics and a baseline before launch.

2
Use control or holdout groups to see incremental impact.

3
Evaluate against your own sales and customer data, not just platform reporting.

4
Review by audience and channel, and reinvest in what works.

04 — PROOF ACROSS SECTORS · FEATURED: SAGA

First-Party Intelligence, From Social To The Living Room

Saga activated first-party customer intelligence with AUDIENCES across paid social and connected TV, using the data it already held to improve efficiency at the top and bottom of the funnel.

65%
lower cost per lead, paid social

£4.4m
booking value, connected TV

£1.1m
incremental value

10.9×
incremental ROAS

PERFORMANCE MARKETING AWARDS
Best Use of Data & Audiences

Pets at Home: Gold, Best Use of Data & Audiences 2026

In-cloud activation of 8m+ Pets Club members, combining suppression, lookalikes and re-engagement, delivered **+18% ROAS**.

Read more →

05 — ACTIVATION READINESS CHECKLIST

Are You Ready To Activate Your First-Party Data?

Activation shouldn't be a project. It should be a reflex. Tick each statement that is true for your business today. Not sure about some? That's normal, and we can help.

Your Data

- [ ] Customer data sits in a cloud platform such as Snowflake, Databricks, Google Cloud, AWS or Azure.
- [ ] You hold transaction, product or behavioural data you can segment.
- [ ] The data is approved for use in marketing activity.

- [ ] **I don't know yet.** That's OK: we can help you find out.

Your Team And Governance

- [ ] Your data team can grant approved access to the data needed.
- [ ] Privacy, security and legal stakeholders are involved early.
- [ ] There is a named owner across marketing and data.

Privacy by design: because AUDIENCES runs inside your cloud, DPIAs and security and legal approval can be simpler.

Your Media

- [ ] You run acquisition campaigns where suppression could reduce waste.
- [ ] You advertise across search, social, programmatic, CTV or DOOH.
- [ ] Your in-house team or agency can apply audiences in those channels.

Your Measurement

- [ ] You have agreed the KPIs that matter most.
- [ ] You have a baseline to compare results against.
- [ ] You can evaluate results in your existing reporting.

Mostly ticks?
You're in a strong position to start with one or two of the five ways, such as suppression and lookalikes, even with a few unknowns.

A few gaps or unknowns?
That's common, especially on data questions. We can help you find the answers and map the quickest route forward.

Ready To Put Your First-Party Data To Work?

Book a 20-minute demo to see how AUDIENCES, the independent activation platform built by marketers for marketers, could turn your customer data into commercial value, and which of the five ways to start with.

Book a 20-Minute Demo weareaudiences.com

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Scan to book a demo