

11 Marketing Attribution Models

Map marketing attribution to your customer journey

What happens on a customer's journey from brand discovery to conversion? It's an important question to ask as you plan and optimize your marketing campaigns.

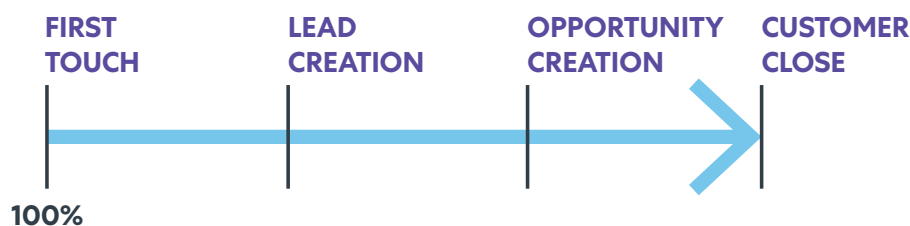
Unfortunately, it's impossible to read your customers' minds and get the full picture of their purchasing decisions. But marketing attribution can give you insight into those decisions by helping you measure the impact of your touchpoints throughout their journeys.

Attribution isn't one-size-fits-all, so you have many options to choose from to find the best fit for your company. Let's look at how 11 different models give credit for conversions and weigh the benefits and drawbacks of each.

SINGLE TOUCH MODELS

1. First touch attribution

Gives 100% of the credit to a single touchpoint: The marketing effort that drove a customer to your website for the first time.



Pros

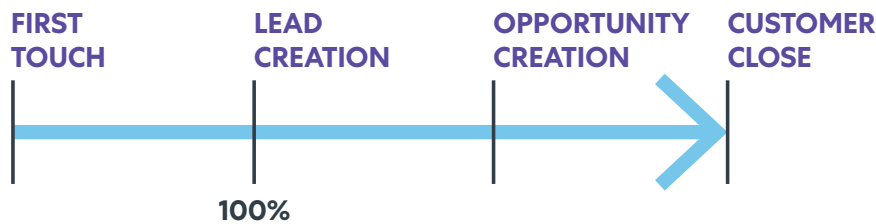
- Easy to implement
- Easy to understand

Cons

- Attributes too much credit to top-of-funnel marketing channels
- Susceptible to errors because the time from first touch to close can be longer than cookie expiration windows, resulting in misattribution

2. Lead creation touch attribution

Assigns 100% of the credit to the touchpoint where the lead was created (when a lead form was filled out).



Pros

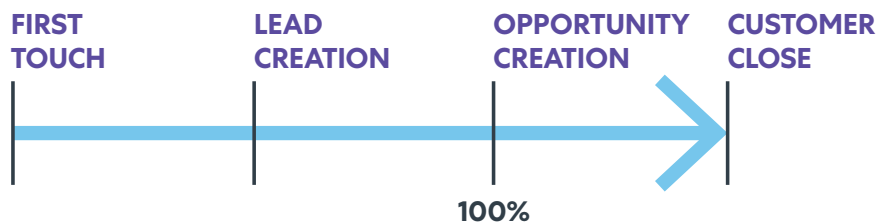
- Gives you a better understanding of which channels drive lead conversions
- Offers an accurate way to track conversions with a marketing automation platform

Cons

- Oversimplifies marketing's role in the customer journey—there's much more to marketing than lead creation
- Doesn't track a first touch if it was anonymous (i.e., the visitor didn't fill out a form)

3. Last touch (opportunity creation) attribution

Attributes 100% of the credit to the touchpoint where the opportunity was created.



Pros

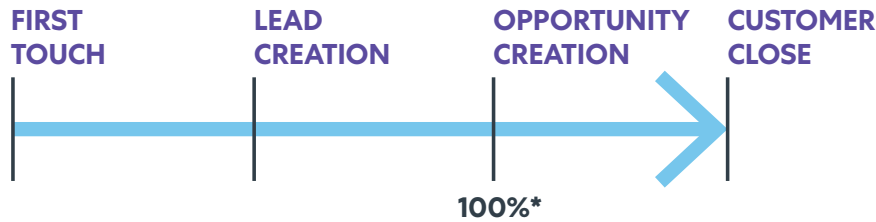
- Simple model for attribution systems to measure
- Accurate because it has the shortest timeframe for an error to occur

Cons

- Minimizes the significance of top-of-funnel lead generation and nurturing efforts
- Over-emphasizes the influence of bottom-of-funnel activities

4. Last non-direct touch attribution

100% credit goes to the non-direct touchpoint that occurred when an opportunity was created.



*or the touch before if the opportunity creation touch is direct

Pro

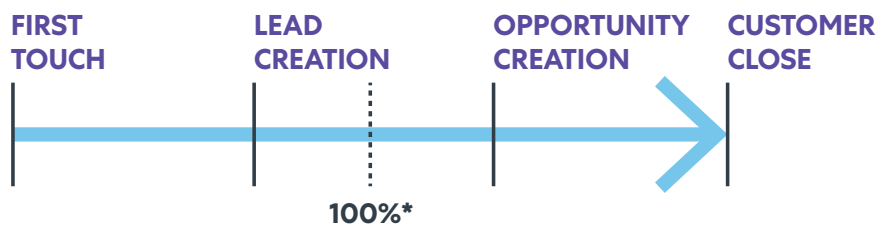
- More accurate because it avoids giving credit to misleading direct data, like data from untagged or improperly tagged social posts, social ads, or emails

Con

- Doesn't give a complete picture of how a buyer moves from the first click to the last click

5. Last [insert marketing channel] touch attribution

Assigns 100% of the credit to the last touch from a specified channel and is considered the catch-all bucket for channel-specific attribution models.



*last touch from specified channel

Pro

- Most channels, like Facebook and Google Ads, offer standard last touch analytics

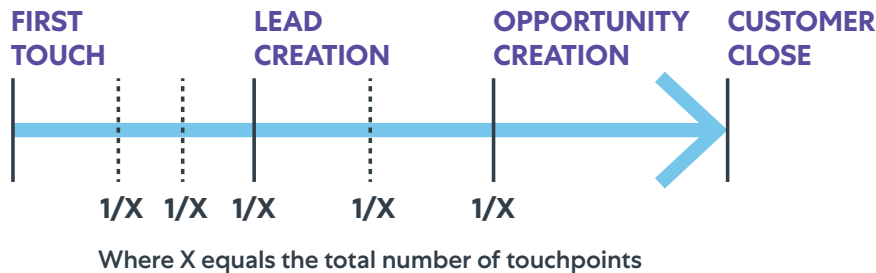
Cons

- Every channel is biased and will overvalue its own impact
- Could potentially double- or triple-count conversions if you combine separate reports from each channel

MULTI-TOUCH MODELS

6. Linear attribution

Shares credit evenly between every touchpoint in the buyer journey.



Pros

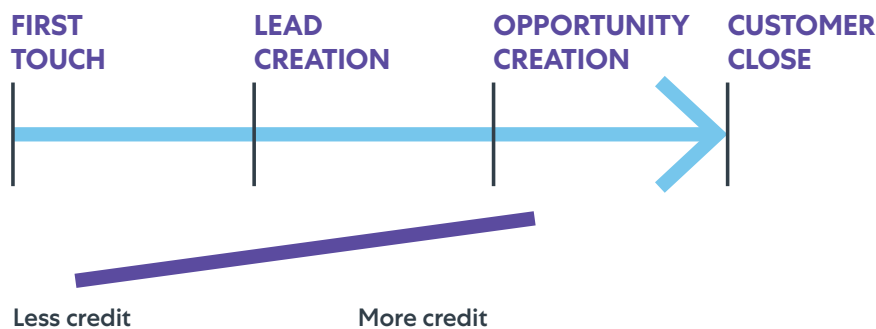
- Simplest of the multi-touch attribution models
- Gives credit to marketing channels throughout the multiple funnel stages

Con

- Doesn't account for the varying impact of marketing touches; might improperly distribute credit

7. Time decay attribution

Gives more credit to the touchpoints closest to the conversion.



Pro

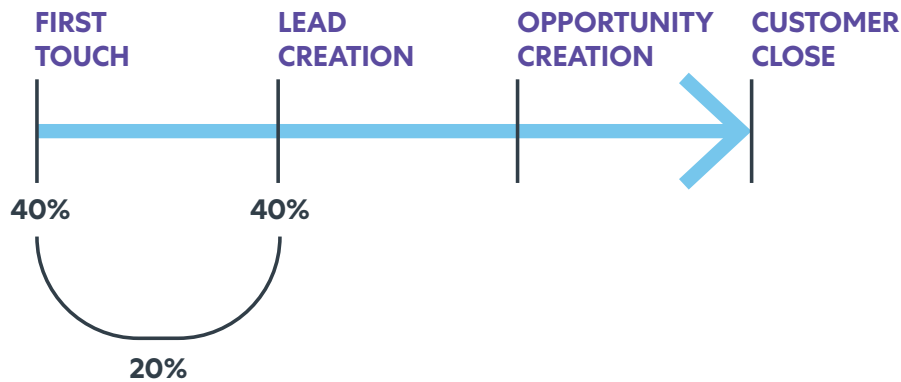
- Spreads credit across multiple touchpoints

Con

- Undervalues top-of-funnel activities because they're further away from the point of conversion

8. U-shaped (position-based) attribution

Attributes 40% of the credit each to the first touch and the lead conversion touch, and equally splits the remaining 20% between all other touchpoints.



Pros

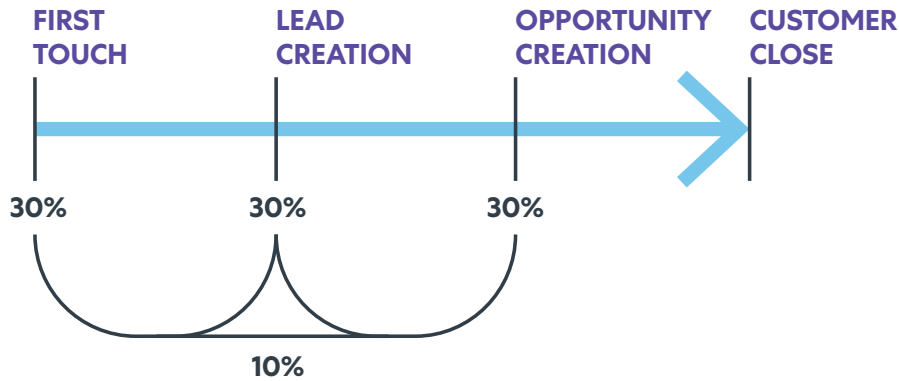
- Great for marketing teams that focus on lead generation
- Gives top- and middle-of-funnel touches credit that is proportionate to their contribution

Con

- Gives no credit to post-lead conversion marketing and sales touches

9. W-shaped attribution

Distributes 30% of the credit each to the first touch, lead creation touch, and opportunity creation touch, then distributes the remaining 10% to the touchpoints between first touch and opportunity creation.



Pros

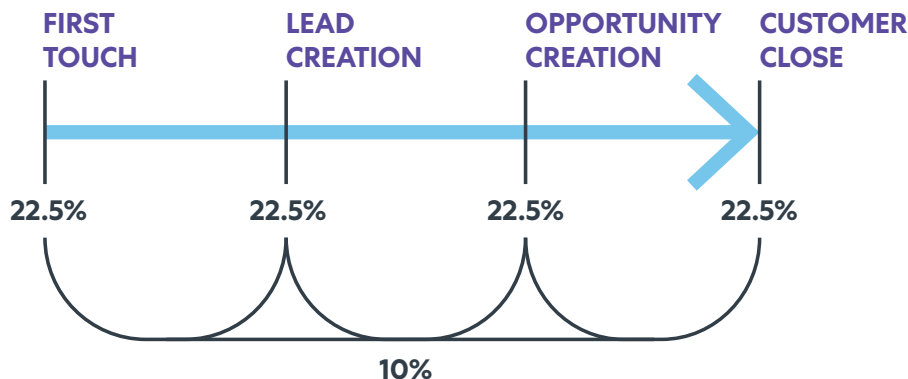
- Highlights three important stages in the funnel
- Adds the opportunity creation stage to the U-shaped attribution model

Con

- Gives no credit to touches after the opportunity is created

10. Full-path (Z-shaped) attribution

Accounts for marketing beyond the opportunity stage by giving 22.5% of credit each to the first touch, lead creation, opportunity creation, and customer close, then splits the remaining 10% between all other touchpoints.



Pro

- Gives weighted credit to multiple touchpoints from the top to the bottom of the funnel

Cons

- Requires you to sync with sales and only works if sales agrees to let marketing touch prospects near the bottom of the funnel
- Only appropriate for organizations that market to existing sales opportunities

11. Custom or algorithmic attribution

Custom-built model tailored to your customers' specific journey and buying process.

Pros

- Offers the most accurate representation of marketing's impact on the customer journey
- Allows each touchpoint to be weighted differently
- Provides rich data and insights about your marketing channels

Cons

- Expensive, difficult, and time-consuming to build
- Hard to maintain, especially if the developer leaves the company
- Difficult to use and may require data scientists to manipulate data rather than marketers creating drag-and-drop reports

Interested in learning more about marketing attribution?

Check out marketo.com/marketing-analytics

