

Q3 2026 • FREE REPORT

State of Tracking Report

Conversion tracking benchmarks for e-commerce advertisers.

4.2M

EVENTS

340+

STORES

4

PLATFORMS

SIGNALBRIDGE

April – July 2026

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OVERVIEW

Methodology

This report presents aggregated, anonymized data from the SignalBridge tracking platform. No individual store data is exposed.

Data Source	SignalBridge platform aggregate data
Sample Size	4.2 million conversion events
Store Count	340+ e-commerce stores
Platforms	Shopify, WooCommerce, custom platforms
Ad Platforms	Google Ads, Meta Ads, TikTok Ads, Realize by Taboola
Time Period	April 1 – July 31, 2026
Privacy	All data anonymized & aggregated

How We Measure Accuracy

Accuracy is measured by comparing the number of conversion events captured by pixel-only tracking against the total conversions confirmed through order-level reconciliation — backend order data matched to tracked events. Server-side accuracy is measured using the same reconciliation method for events sent via Conversion APIs.

EMQ Score Sourcing

Event Match Quality (EMQ) scores are sourced directly from Meta's Events Manager for accounts connected through SignalBridge. Scores are sampled weekly and averaged across the reporting period.

CPA Comparison Controls

CPA data is compared across stores in the same vertical with similar monthly ad spend ranges to control for spend-level effects. Stores are bucketed by vertical and monthly spend tier (\$1K–\$5K, \$5K–\$25K, \$25K–\$100K, \$100K+) before comparison.

Bot Classification

Bot classification uses SignalBridge's multi-signal detection system, which analyzes behavioral patterns, device fingerprints, IP reputation, session characteristics, and JavaScript challenge

responses. Events classified as bot-generated are excluded from accuracy measurements but counted separately for bot rate analysis.

OVERVIEW

Executive Summary

The gap between advertisers with complete data and those without is accelerating. Pixel-only tracking accuracy dropped to 63% in Q3 2026 — from 69% just two quarters ago. Advertisers relying solely on client-side pixels are now making optimization decisions based on roughly 60% of their actual conversion data.

63%

PIXEL-ONLY ACCURACY (Q3)

94%

WITH SERVER-SIDE TRACKING

31 pts

AVERAGE IMPROVEMENT

Seven Key Findings

1	The Gap Is Widening	Pixel accuracy declined from 69% → 63% in 2 quarters
2	Platform Benchmarks	All 4 platforms show 19–34 pt gains with S2S
3	EMQ Distribution	Average EMQ rose to 7.8; EMQ 8+ → 18% lower CPMs
4	Bot Traffic Trends	Bot events now 14.9% of total; growing ~1% per quarter
5	CPA Correlation	S2S users: CPA -14%. Non-S2S users: CPA +8%
6	Top 10% Playbook	8 characteristics shared by the best-performing accounts
7	Native Ad Gap	Realize by Taboola: 39% gap — largest of any platform

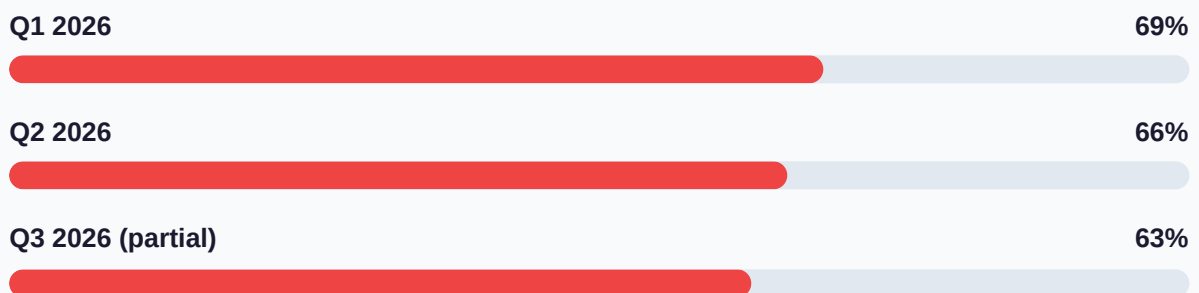
The bottom line: Server-side tracking is no longer a nice-to-have. It is the single highest-impact infrastructure investment an e-commerce advertiser can make for their paid acquisition stack in 2026.

FINDING 1

The Gap Is Widening

Pixel-only tracking accuracy continues to decline quarter over quarter. The gap between what pixels report and what actually happened has widened from 31 percentage points six months ago to 37 points today.

Pixel-Only Tracking Accuracy by Quarter



The decline accelerated in Q3 due to four converging factors:

- **Safari 18.1 ITP tightening** — further reduced first-party cookie lifetimes and added new heuristic-based blocking
- **Chrome Privacy Sandbox Phase 3** — began limiting third-party cookie access for an additional 20% of Chrome users
- **Ad blocker adoption up 4% YoY** — now blocking tracking scripts for an estimated 42.7% of desktop users
- **EU DMA consent enforcement** — stricter consent requirements under the Digital Markets Act reduced opt-in rates

FINDING 1 — CONTINUED

What This Means for Advertisers

When pixel-only accuracy is at 63%, it means **37% of conversions are invisible** to the ad platform's optimization algorithm. The downstream effects compound:

Algorithm Impact

- Learning phase takes 2–3× longer to exit
- Campaign Budget Optimization (CBO) misallocates spend
- Advantage+ audiences train on incomplete signals
- Value-based optimization underestimates ROAS

Business Impact

- CPA appears 20–40% higher than reality
- Winning campaigns get killed prematurely
- Budget shifts to wrong channels
- Scaling hits artificial ceilings

The Divergence Is Accelerating

The gap between pixel-only and server-side accuracy has grown each quarter:

QUARTER	PIXEL-ONLY	WITH S2S	GAP
Q1 2026	69%	94%	25 pts
Q2 2026	66%	94%	28 pts
Q3 2026 (partial)	63%	95%	32 pts
Projected Q4 2026	~60%	~95%	~35 pts

Key insight: Server-side accuracy has remained stable at 94–95% across all three quarters, even as pixel accuracy declined. This is because S2S tracking is architecturally immune to the browser-side changes driving the decline.

FINDING 2

Platform Accuracy Benchmarks

Every major ad platform shows measurable accuracy gains when server-side tracking is added alongside the pixel. TikTok shows the largest relative improvement; Google shows the highest absolute accuracy.

Google Ads

Pixel-only: **78%** (▼ 2 from Q2)



With S2S: **97%** (+19 pts)



Meta Ads

Pixel-only: **63%** (▼ 2 from Q2)



With S2S: **94%** (+31 pts)



Realize by Taboola

Pixel-only: **61%** (first full quarter)



With S2S: **93%** (+32 pts)



TikTok Ads

Pixel-only: **57%** (▼ 2 from Q2)



With S2S: **91%** (+34 pts)



FINDING 2 — CONTINUED

Platform-by-Platform Analysis

Google Ads — Highest Baseline, Steady Improvement

Google Ads maintains the highest pixel-only accuracy (78%) due to first-party cookie infrastructure and Google's own browser. Enhanced Conversions pushed accuracy to 97%, the highest of any platform.

Meta Ads — Biggest Absolute User Base Impact

Meta's Conversions API delivered a 31-point improvement. Given that Meta is the largest ad spend platform for most e-commerce advertisers, this represents the single highest-impact integration for total conversion recovery volume.

Realize by Taboola — First Full Quarter

Q3 2026 was the first complete quarter for Realize by Taboola on the SignalBridge platform. The 61% pixel-only accuracy reflects the unique challenges of native advertising: cross-domain redirects through publisher sites and publisher-level consent layers that block third-party scripts.

TikTok Ads — Largest Relative Gain

TikTok showed the lowest pixel-only accuracy (57%) and the largest point improvement (+34 pts) with the Events API. TikTok's younger user base has higher ad blocker adoption, and TikTok's pixel is more frequently blocked by browser extensions.

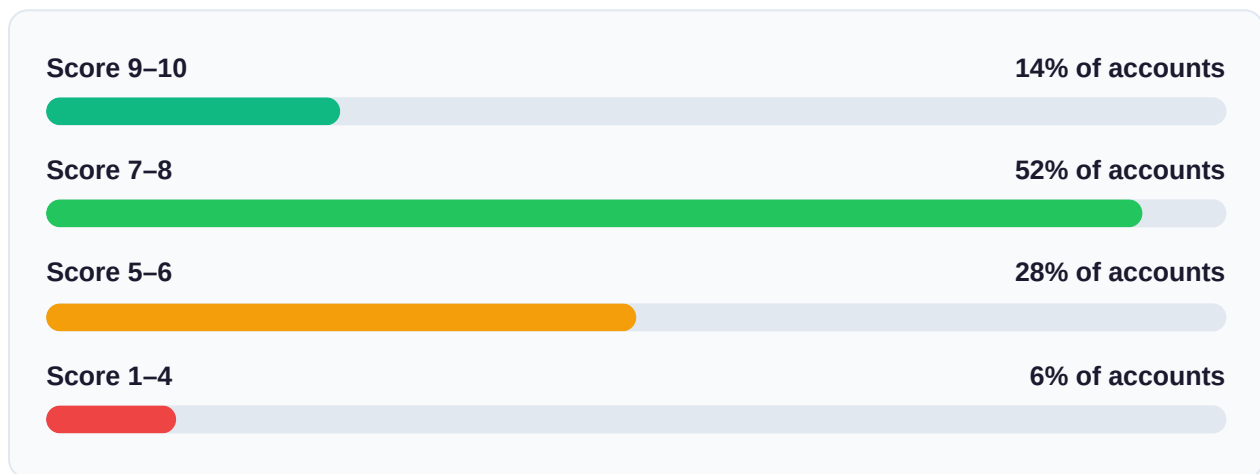
PLATFORM	PIXEL-ONLY	WITH S2S	GAIN	Q2 CHANGE
Google Ads	78%	97%	+19 pts	▼ 2
Meta Ads	63%	94%	+31 pts	▼ 2
Realize by Taboola	61%	93%	+32 pts	—
TikTok Ads	57%	91%	+34 pts	▼ 2

FINDING 3

EMQ Score Distribution

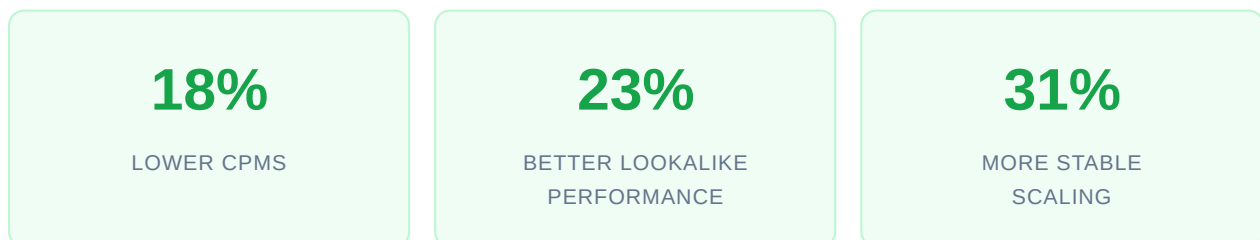
Meta's Event Match Quality (EMQ) score measures how well server-side events match to Facebook user profiles. Higher EMQ means better ad optimization, lower CPMs, and stronger Lookalike audiences.

Distribution Across SignalBridge Users (Q3 2026)



Average EMQ: **7.8** (up from 7.2 in Q2)

Performance Impact of EMQ 8+



FINDING 3 — CONTINUED

How to Improve Your EMQ Score

EMQ is determined by the quantity and quality of customer identifiers you send with each server-side event.

Data Fields & Their Impact on EMQ

DATA FIELD	EMQ IMPACT	NOTES
Email (hashed)	High	Primary identifier. SHA-256 hashed before sending.
Phone (hashed)	High	Second most impactful. Include country code.
First Name (hashed)	Medium	Helps disambiguate when emails match multiple profiles.
Last Name (hashed)	Medium	Same as first name — improves match confidence.
City	Medium	Geographic matching. Case-insensitive, lowercase.
State/Region	Low–Medium	2-letter ISO code preferred.
Zip/Postal Code	Low–Medium	First 5 digits for US.
Country	Low	2-letter ISO country code.
fbp (Meta browser ID)	High	Bridging parameter — links S2S events to browser sessions.
fbclid (Meta click ID)	High	Click identifier from fbclid. Highest precision match.

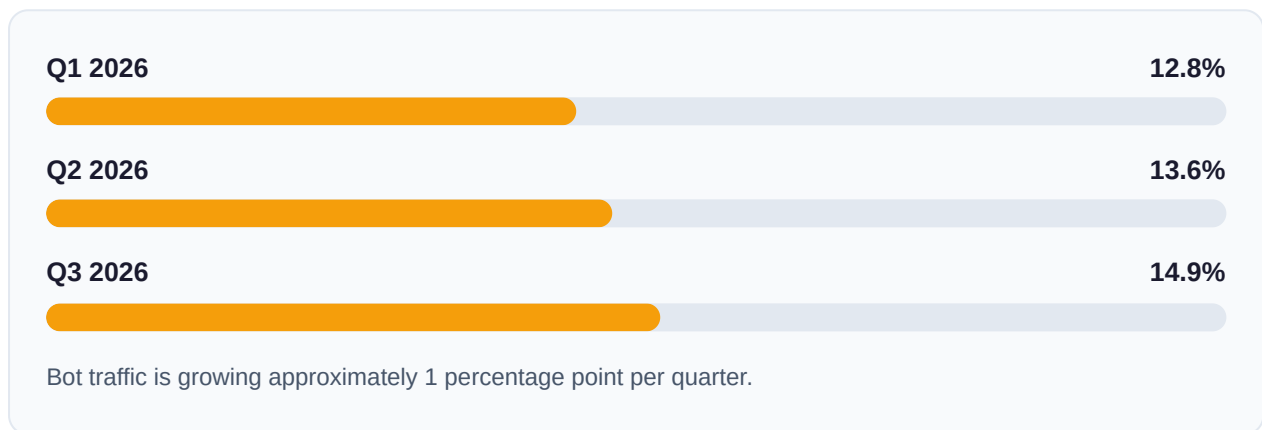
SignalBridge automatically: Captures fbp and fbclid browser parameters, hashes all PII before transmission, formats phone numbers with country codes, normalizes city/state/country fields, and deduplicates events using event_id matching.

FINDING 4

Bot Traffic Trends

Bot events as a percentage of total conversion events continue to grow. Without filtering, bots inflate conversion counts, corrupt Lookalike audiences, waste retargeting budget, and distort ROAS.

Bot Events as % of Total Conversions



Bot Rates by Vertical

VERTICAL	BOT RATE	RISK LEVEL
Supplements & Health	19.2%	HIGH RISK
Beauty & Skincare	16.8%	ELEVATED
Fashion & Apparel	15.1%	ELEVATED
Electronics & Gadgets	14.3%	ELEVATED
Sports & Outdoors	13.5%	MODERATE
Food & Beverage	12.1%	MODERATE
Home & Garden	11.8%	MODERATE
Pet Products	9.4%	MODERATE

FINDING 4 — CONTINUED

The Real Cost of Unfiltered Bot Traffic

Bot traffic doesn't just inflate conversion counts — it has cascading effects across your entire ad stack:

ROAS Inflation

If 15% of your "conversions" are bots, your reported ROAS is 15% higher than reality. Decisions made on inflated ROAS — scaling budgets, maintaining unprofitable campaigns — waste real money.

Lookalike Audience Corruption

Bot conversions pollute your purchase audience. Meta's Lookalike algorithm then finds users who look like bots, not real buyers. This silently degrades ad performance over weeks.

Retargeting Waste

Bots that trigger AddToCart or ViewContent events enter your retargeting audiences. You then pay to serve ads to non-existent shoppers, draining budget from real prospects.

CPA Miscalculation

Counting bot conversions as real makes your CPA look lower than it actually is. When you scale and CPA "suddenly" increases, it's often because the bot ratio shifted.

Supplements & Health vertical alert: At 19.2% bot rate, nearly 1 in 5 conversion events is fake. For a store spending \$50K/month with a \$30 CPA, that's ~330 phantom conversions and an estimated \$10,000/month in misallocated ad spend.

FINDING 5

The CPA Correlation

We compared CPA trends for advertisers with server-side tracking versus those without, controlling for vertical and monthly ad spend tier.

✓ With S2S Tracking

Average CPA change (90 days)	-14%
CPA volatility change	-22%
Scaling ceiling change	+40%

✗ Without S2S Tracking

Average CPA change (90 days)	+8%
CPA volatility change	+15%
Scaling ceiling change	Walls hit earlier

Why This Happens

Better data → better AI optimization → lower CPA. The relationship is not linear — it compounds:

1. **More conversion signals** enter the platform's optimization system
2. **Machine learning models** identify more accurate patterns in who converts
3. **Ad delivery improves** — showing ads to higher-intent users
4. **Lower CPA unlocks more budget** — which generates more data
5. **The cycle repeats** — each iteration is faster with more data

FINDING 5 — CONTINUED

The Compounding Effect Over Time

The CPA divergence between S2S and non-S2S advertisers widens over time. This is not a one-time improvement — it's a structural advantage that compounds.

CPA Trajectory: S2S vs Non-S2S (Indexed to Day 0 = 100)

TIMEFRAME	WITH S2S	WITHOUT S2S	GAP
Day 0 (baseline)	100	100	0 pts
Day 30	95	103	8 pts
Day 60	90	106	16 pts
Day 90	86	108	22 pts

What "Scaling Ceiling" Means

Every advertiser eventually hits a point where increasing budget no longer proportionally increases conversions — the CPA spikes. This is the "scaling ceiling."

Advertisers with S2S tracking hit this ceiling approximately 40% later (measured by daily ad spend) because:

- The algorithm has more data to find incremental audiences
- CPA remains stable longer, justifying continued spend increases
- Bot filtering prevents phantom conversions from triggering false "scaling is working" signals

Practical example: A fashion brand spending \$25K/month with pixel-only tracking typically hits CPA pressure at \$35K/month. With S2S tracking, the same brand typically doesn't see CPA pressure until \$50K/month — a 40% higher ceiling.

FINDING 6

What the Top 10% Do Differently

We analyzed the top 10% of accounts by combined metrics (accuracy, EMQ, CPA efficiency, scaling success) and identified eight characteristics they all share.

**Server-side tracking on ALL platforms**

Not just Meta. Google, TikTok, and Taboola S2S are all active simultaneously.

**EMQ score 8+ on Meta**

Sending all available customer identifiers — email, phone, name, location, fbp, fbc.

**Enhanced Conversions active on Google**

First-party customer data hashed and sent with every conversion event.

**Events API active on TikTok**

Server-to-server events supplementing the TikTok pixel.

**Bot filtering enabled (not optional)**

Treating bot filtering as mandatory infrastructure, not an add-on.

**Deduplication configured properly**

event_id matching between pixel and S2S events to prevent double-counting.

**Tracking health monitored weekly**

Automated alerts for event drops, API errors, or configuration drift.

**Ad spend auto-synced for real ROAS**

Actual spend data matched against server-side conversions for true ROAS.

FINDING 6 — CONTINUED

The Performance Gap by Checklist Score

We scored each account on how many of the 8 characteristics they implement:

ITEMS IMPLEMENTED	% OF ACCOUNTS	AVG CPA CHANGE (90D)	AVG EMQ
7–8 items (Top 10%)	10%	-22%	9.1
5–6 items	24%	-14%	8.0
3–4 items	38%	-6%	7.2
1–2 items	22%	+4%	5.8
0 items	6%	+11%	N/A

Key takeaway: Average brands do 2–3 of these. Top performers do all 8. The performance gap between 2 items and 8 items is a 33-point swing in CPA trajectory.

Where to Start

If you're currently implementing 2–3 items, the highest-impact additions are:

1. **Enable bot filtering** — immediate ROAS and audience quality improvement
2. **Configure deduplication** — prevents conversion inflation from day one
3. **Set up tracking health monitoring** — catches silent breakages before they corrupt weeks of data

FINDING 7

Native Ad Tracking Gap

Realize by Taboola completed its first full quarter on the SignalBridge platform in Q3 2026. The results revealed the largest conversion gap — and the largest improvement from server-side tracking — of any supported platform.

39%CONVERSION GAP
(PIXEL-ONLY)**+32 pts**IMPROVEMENT
WITH S2S**#1**LARGEST ABSOLUTE
IMPROVEMENT

Why Native Ads Have the Largest Gap

1. Cross-Domain Journeys (Primary cause)

Native ads redirect users through publisher sites before landing on the advertiser's domain. Each domain hop is an opportunity for cookie loss, consent prompts, and tracking script failures. A typical native ad journey: Publisher site → Taboola redirect → Landing page — that's 2 domain transitions where tracking can break.

2. Publisher Consent Layers (Secondary cause)

Premium publishers implement strict consent management platforms (CMPs) that often block third-party tracking scripts including the Taboola pixel. When the pixel is blocked on the publisher side, the initial click data is lost.

3. Ad Blocker Interaction

Ad blockers are particularly aggressive with native ad network pixels compared to Meta or Google pixels. Taboola's tracking domain appears on more blocklists, resulting in higher block rates.

FINDING 7 — CONTINUED

The Native Ad Opportunity

The flip side of the largest gap is the largest opportunity. Advertisers who added S2S tracking for Realize by Taboola saw the biggest absolute improvement of any platform: +32 percentage points.

Comparison: S2S Improvement by Platform

PLATFORM	PIXEL GAP	S2S IMPROVEMENT	WHY
Realize by Taboola	39%	+32 pts	Cross-domain + publisher CMPs
TikTok Ads	43%	+34 pts	High ad blocker rate among users
Meta Ads	37%	+31 pts	iOS ATT + browser restrictions
Google Ads	22%	+19 pts	First-party cookies partially compensate

Implications for Native Ad Budgets

Many e-commerce advertisers have reduced or abandoned native ad spend because "the ROAS doesn't work." Our data suggests that a significant portion of this perceived poor performance is actually a measurement problem, not a media quality problem.

When advertisers add S2S tracking and see their actual conversion data, native ad ROAS often improves by 30–50% — sometimes making previously "unprofitable" campaigns clearly profitable.

Recommendation: If you've paused or reduced native ad spend due to poor ROAS, re-evaluate after implementing S2S tracking. The actual performance may be significantly better than what pixel-only data showed.

DEEP DIVE

Vertical-Specific Benchmarks

Performance metrics vary significantly by vertical. Compare your numbers against your industry rather than overall averages.

VERTICAL	PIXEL ACCURACY	S2S ACCURACY	BOT RATE	AVG EMQ	CPA Δ (90D)
Supplements & Health	58%	92%	19.2%	7.4	-18%
Beauty & Skincare	60%	93%	16.8%	7.6	-16%
Fashion & Apparel	62%	93%	15.1%	7.9	-15%
Sports & Outdoors	63%	94%	13.5%	7.7	-14%
Electronics & Gadgets	64%	95%	14.3%	8.1	-12%
Food & Beverage	65%	94%	12.1%	7.8	-14%
Home & Garden	66%	94%	11.8%	8.0	-13%
Pet Products	68%	96%	9.4%	8.3	-11%

CPA Δ measures the average change in cost-per-acquisition over 90 days after implementing server-side tracking, compared to the 90-day period before. Controlled for monthly spend range.

Key Vertical Insights

- **Supplements:** Highest bot rate (19.2%) and lowest pixel accuracy (58%). The most to gain from S2S + bot filtering.
- **Pet Products:** Lowest bot rate (9.4%), highest pixel accuracy (68%), highest EMQ (8.3). Best baseline performance.
- **Fashion:** Middle of the pack, but highest transaction volume. Absolute conversion recovery is largest here.
- **Electronics:** Highest S2S accuracy (95%). Higher AOV means each recovered conversion has outsized revenue impact.

DEEP DIVE

Month-over-Month Trend Tables

Tracking the key metrics month by month reveals the trajectory. Pixel accuracy is declining while server-side accuracy remains stable.

Core Metrics — April to July 2026

MONTH	PIXEL ACCURACY	S2S ACCURACY	BOT RATE	AVG EMQ
April 2026	66%	94%	14.1%	7.5
May 2026	65% (▼1)	94%	14.5% (▲0.4)	7.6
June 2026	63% (▼2)	95%	15.0% (▲0.5)	7.9
July 2026	61% (▼2)	95%	15.8% (▲0.8)	8.0

4-Month Summary

-5 pts

PIXEL ACCURACY

APR → JUL

+1 pt

S2S ACCURACY

STABLE

+1.7 pts

BOT RATE

RISING

+0.5

AVG EMQ

IMPROVING

Platform Accuracy Trends (Pixel-Only)

PLATFORM	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	Δ
Google Ads	80%	79%	78%	77%	-3
Meta Ads	65%	64%	63%	61%	-4
Realize by Taboola	63%	62%	61%	59%	-4
TikTok Ads	59%	58%	57%	55%	-4

ACTION PLAN

Actionable Recommendations

Based on the findings in this report, here are eight concrete actions ranked by impact and priority.

#	ACTION	PRIORITY
1	Implement server-side tracking on all active platforms Start with the platform where you spend the most. Meta CAPI and Google Enhanced Conversions deliver the most immediate impact.	CRITICAL
2	Achieve EMQ 8+ on Meta Send email, phone, name, city, state, zip, country, fbp, and fbc with every event. EMQ 8+ → 18% lower CPMs.	CRITICAL
3	Enable bot filtering before scaling Bot traffic is growing ~1% per quarter. Filter before you scale to protect audiences and ROAS.	HIGH
4	Configure deduplication correctly Use event_id matching. Misconfigured deduplication overstates conversions by 15–30%.	HIGH
5	Monitor tracking health weekly Tracking breaks silently. Automated monitoring catches issues before they corrupt your data.	HIGH
6	Sync ad spend for accurate ROAS Platform-reported ROAS is calculated on incomplete data. The real difference is typically 15–25%.	MEDIUM
7	Add Realize by Taboola S2S if running native ads 39% conversion gap = the highest-impact change for native ad advertisers.	MEDIUM
8	Review vertical benchmarks quarterly Compare your metrics against your vertical, not overall averages. Verticals differ significantly.	MEDIUM



Ready to Close the Gap?

SignalBridge recovers 20–40% of conversions that client-side pixels miss. 5-minute setup, no GTM required.

Start Your 14-Day Free Trial

signalbridgedata.com

SIGNALBRIDGE — THE DATA BEHIND THE DATA.