



Airbnb improves vendor data collection to 90%, reduces tag deployment time using Google Tag Manager

About Airbnb

- www.airbnb.com
- Headquartered in San Francisco, CA
- Accommodation listings in 192 countries, 33,000 cities

Goals

- Prevent bottlenecks between operations and marketing teams
- Implement tags fluidly
- Avoid unnecessary replication in tagging
- Minimize size of snippets to enhance performance

Approach

- Implemented Google Tag Manager
- Built a data layer

Results

- Cut tag deployment from days to hours
- Increased site speed by 8%
- Faster launches of new programs, tools, and vendors
- More accurate data, better optimizations, better ROI

Founded in 2008, Airbnb is a community marketplace for people to list, discover, and book accommodations around the world, online or from a mobile phone. Airbnb's aim is to connect people to unique travel experiences in more than 33,000 cities and 192 countries around the world.

The challenge of managing tagging complexity

Airbnb is structured with a centralized product team that collaborates on marketing projects. The company uses a large number of website tags, including a unique tag for each of their multiple AdWords accounts and additional tags for an array of vendors measuring different types of conversions. To accommodate the needs of various vendors, many tags had to be replicated several times. At one point, Airbnb was running 88 different audience lists and 100 different tags.

In order to prevent a bottleneck between the operations and marketing teams, Airbnb needed a tag management system. The first solution the company tried was not successful — it required significant technical knowledge to implement tags, needed add-on tools for QA and reporting, and was too expensive.

Streamlined marketing through Google Tag Manager

After researching alternatives, the Airbnb team opted to shift its tagging to Google Tag Manager. A number of factors contributed to the decision. Airbnb already used several Google tools, so the team felt Google Tag Manager's tag templates would enable a smooth integration. Also, Google Tag Manager's extensive QA and reporting features would make it easier to locally test and deploy tags. Finally, because Google Tag Manager is a free solution, it offered a tangible benefit to the company's bottom line.

According to Maria Hwang, a lead on Airbnb's online marketing team, standard setup was straightforward and did not take long to implement. Airbnb also built a data layer to enable the company to pass custom parameters for remarketing purposes.

Cutting tag deployment from days to hours

In terms of alleviating demands on technical resources, it immediately became clear that Google Tag Manager's templates made it much easier

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-- Mona Gandhi, Software Engineer, Airbnb

and quicker for engineers to meet the needs of the marketing and operations team. Maria and her team can create tags from vendors on the fly and send these to the engineering team to be rapidly implemented, usually within two hours. “From a marketer’s standpoint, it’s way easier than ever before,” she says.

In the past, tagging was a back-and-forth process that would average two to three days to complete. “Previously, there were a lot of touch points, lots of room for error along the way,” Maria says. The laborious procedure included checking that JavaScript tags were correct and establishing QA before eventual deployment. “With Google Tag Manager, it’s a matter of an hour or so from receiving a tag to testing to QA to deployment,” reports Mona Gandhi, Airbnb software engineer. “It’s exponentially better.”

The solution has also improved the ability to implement entirely new marketing strategies. “We were able to expand to a few more AdWords accounts, and Google Tag Manager makes it easier to consolidate all the tagging,” Maria says. And thanks to Google’s pre-formatted tag templates from other vendors, the marketing team can quickly and efficiently adopt new tags. So it’s simpler for Airbnb to try new tools, use more third party vendors, and launch new advertising programs on any platform requiring website tagging.

Improved QA, reporting, data, and speed

Prior to implementing Google Tag Manager, detecting issues with data due to tags not firing correctly was an everyday occurrence. Today, Mona reveals that conversion counts are much more accurate and in line with Airbnb’s internal data: the team is now collects vendor data for 90% of conversions. Thanks to this more accurate conversion data, Airbnb is better equipped to optimize to a CPA metric than was possible in the past. The result is an improved ability to manage ROI of marketing activities.

Airbnb has also made extensive use of Google Tag Manager’s preview and debug options, improving their QA and ability to see which tags are firing on pages. A final benefit has been that Google Tag Manager’s JavaScript snippet is smaller than that of Airbnb’s previous solution. Enhanced website performance has been noticeable, with a reported 8% improvement in page load time.

About Google Tag Manager

Google Tag Manager is a free tool that makes it easy for marketers to add and update website tags—including conversion tracking, site analytics, remarketing, and more—with just a few clicks, and without bugging the IT folks. It gives marketers greater flexibility, and it lets webmasters relax and focus on other important tasks. To learn more, visit google.com/tagmanager

