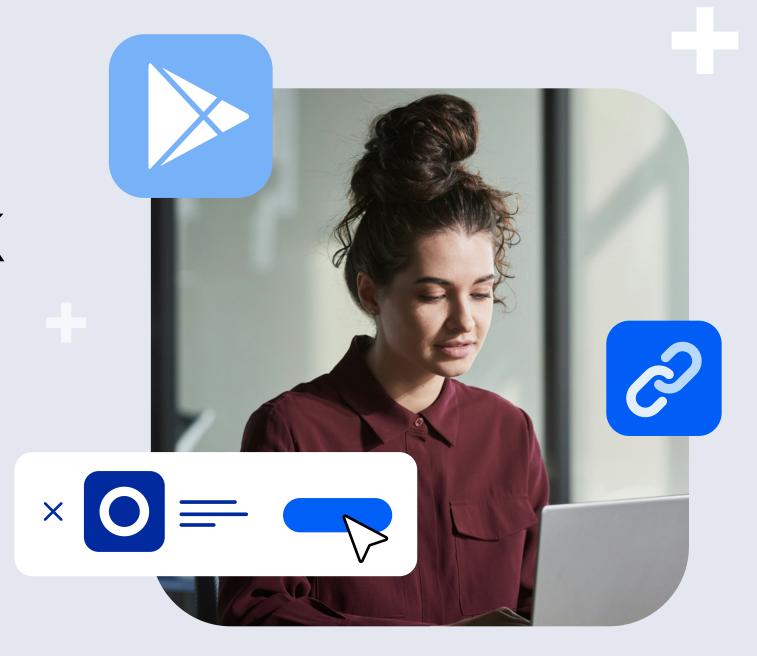


# The web-to-app journey handbook

An essential guide for mobile advertisers





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#### INTRODUCTION

### What is web-to-app?

Web-to-app refers to the process of moving users from a mobile website or web environment into a brand's mobile app. This journey is typically initiated through links, banners, or prompts that encourage users to continue their experience within the app, rather than the browser/mobile web (mWeb).

For businesses, web-to-app journeys offer a strategic opportunity to drive higher engagement, retention, and conversion rates. Mobile apps typically provide richer features, more personalized experiences, and better performance than mobile websites. According to a report by Criteo, users view 4.2x more products in apps than on mobile sites and conversion rates are 3x higher, with retail apps converting up to 94% higher. Findings from Google and Kantar's Consumer Shopper Journey study also found that among retail shoppers who shop omnichannel and purchase in-store, more than half of those went online while in-store, half of which were to the retailer's app. By guiding users from web to app at the right moment, companies can capture more value from their audience and build stronger customer relationships.

Implementing effective web-to-app strategies requires an understanding of user behavior, the right technology, and clear business goals. This guide explores the fundamentals, opportunities, and best practices for creating seamless web-to-app journeys that benefit both users and organizations.

#### THE WEB-TO-APP ADVANTAGE

Historically, the primary method used to acquire app users has been via app install campaigns. This largely holds true today, particularly with the advanced optimization and strong performance of solutions like Google's <a href="App Campaigns for Installs (ACi)">App Campaigns for Installs (ACi)</a>. However, developments in user behavior and the increasingly multi-channel nature of the digital landscape have given rise to web-to-app flows and necessitated incorporating them into app acquisition and engagement models.

This works by using mWeb landing pages to direct high-intent traffic into apps, leveraging the broader reach and cost-effectiveness of web campaigns and solutions like Google's Web to App Connect. Audiences that arrive on a brand's web properties are often engaged and aware—making them well-suited for smooth transitions into the app through "Download the app" buttons, links, or banners on mobile web pages.

#### **BENEFITS**

- Reach and ROI: Web campaigns provide broader access to potential users and often deliver more cost-effective results, especially as acquisition costs for app installs continue to rise.
- ✓ Measurement: Web-to-app journeys help maintain reliable measurement and attribution, even as privacy restrictions and the loss of identifiers make traditional app marketing tracking more challenging.
- **High intent audiences:** Users on a brand's web properties typically demonstrate stronger intent and awareness, resulting in higher-quality audiences and improved conversion rates when guided into the app.

#### **OPPORTUNITIES**

- ✓ Deliver seamless web-to-app experiences that increase in-app engagement.
- Use mobile web as a gateway to maximize the reach and cost-effectiveness of paid campaigns.
- Convert high-intent web visitors into loyal app users, boosting adoption, long-term growth, and LTV.
- Enable accurate app attribution to optimize campaigns, improve retargeting, and enhance lookalike modeling.

Adjust data shows that in Q2 2025, the highest share of web-to-app attributions took place in the shopping vertical (52%) followed by travel (16.7%) and social (14%). When split by platforms, iOS accounted for 58% of web-toapp attributions, with Android representing the remaining 42%.









#### How customers connect across platforms

Customer journeys are becoming increasingly multi-platform: they are no longer limited to single channels or devices.

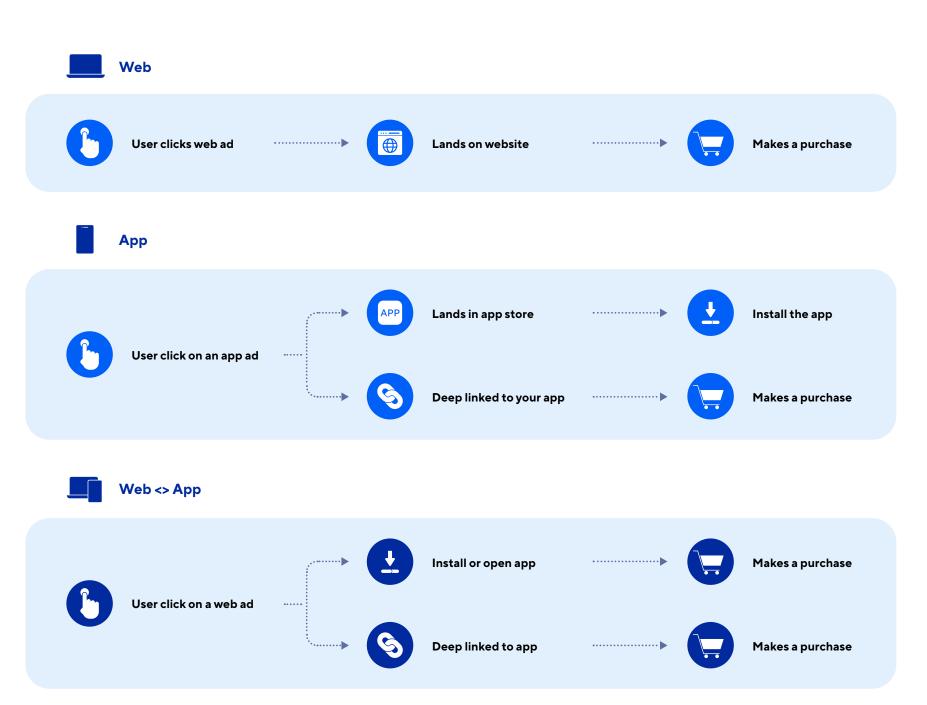
Users move fluidly between web and app, often interacting with multiple touchpoints throughout their journey with a brand. Rather than separating "web customers" from "app customers," it's more accurate to recognize that there are only customers, each taking their own unique path to engagement and purchase.



#### The many ways a user interacts with a business

Interactions might start on the web, in an app, or flow between both. What matters most is meeting customers where they are, and ensuring a seamless, conversion-driven experience at every step.

Marketers need a way to orchestrate cohesive experiences and get insights from them despite the complexity.



#### Tackling the challenges of web-to-app

To facilitate customers moving fluidly between web and app, businesses encounter a siginificant—but by no means insurmountable—set of challenges. These hurdles can make it difficult to deliver the integrated, seamless experiences that today's users expect, while also meeting business objectives and adapting to a rapidly changing digital environment.

**Limited measurement:** With fewer identifiers and strict privacy standards, tracking user journeys and attributing results across platforms is complex.

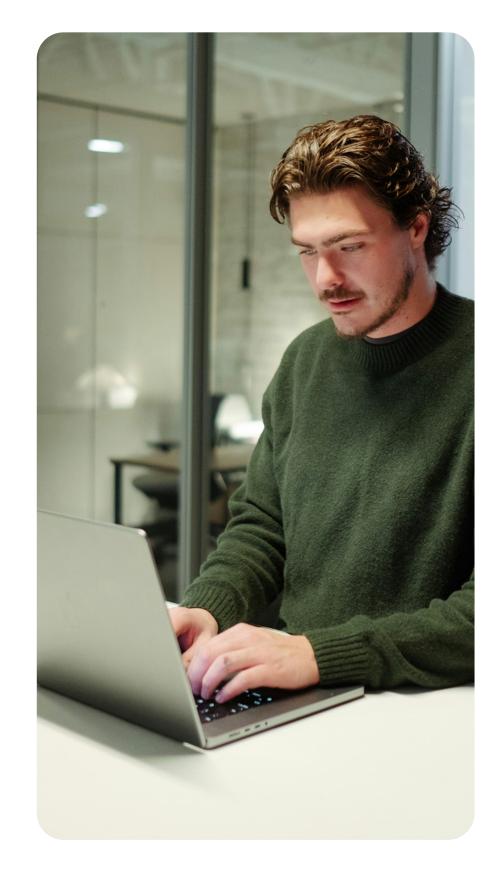
**Disconnected tools:** Analytics and measurement solutions often don't exist in the same systems or lack integration, making it tough to see the complete customer journey.

**Team silos:** When web and app teams operate independently, customer experiences can become fragmented and opportunities are easily missed.

**Journey friction:** Breaks between web and app touchpoints can disrupt user flow, leading to higher drop-off rates and lost conversions.

**Resource pressures:** Rising expectations and tighter budgets mean teams must achieve more with less, increasing the pressure to demonstrate clear business value.

Creating connected web and app experiences comes with real challenges, but these also point to the biggest opportunities. The key is having the right tools and strategies to break down silos, simplify measurement, and remove friction from the user journey.

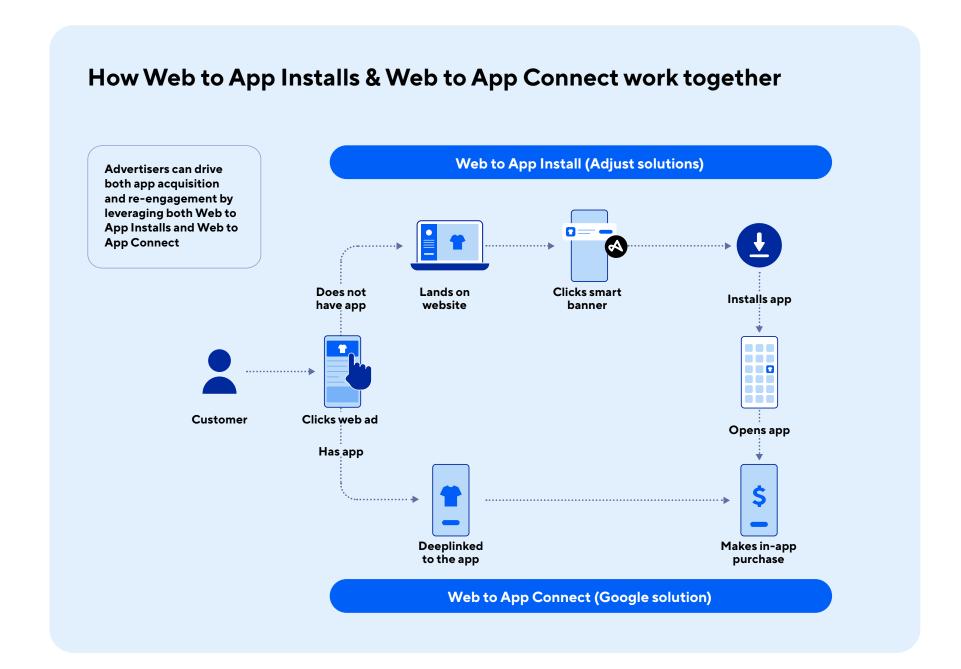


## Strategies and tactics for web-to-app success

Moving users smoothly from web to app—and keeping them engaged—requires the right tools and technology. Google offers two main solutions for web-to-app: Web to App Install and Web to App Connect. Here, we'll explore how each method works and how Adjust's solutions complement and interplay with Google's to enhance your web-to-app strategy.

**Web to App Install:** Drives app acquisitions directly from web campaigns.

**Web to App Connect:** For re-engaging existing app users from the web.

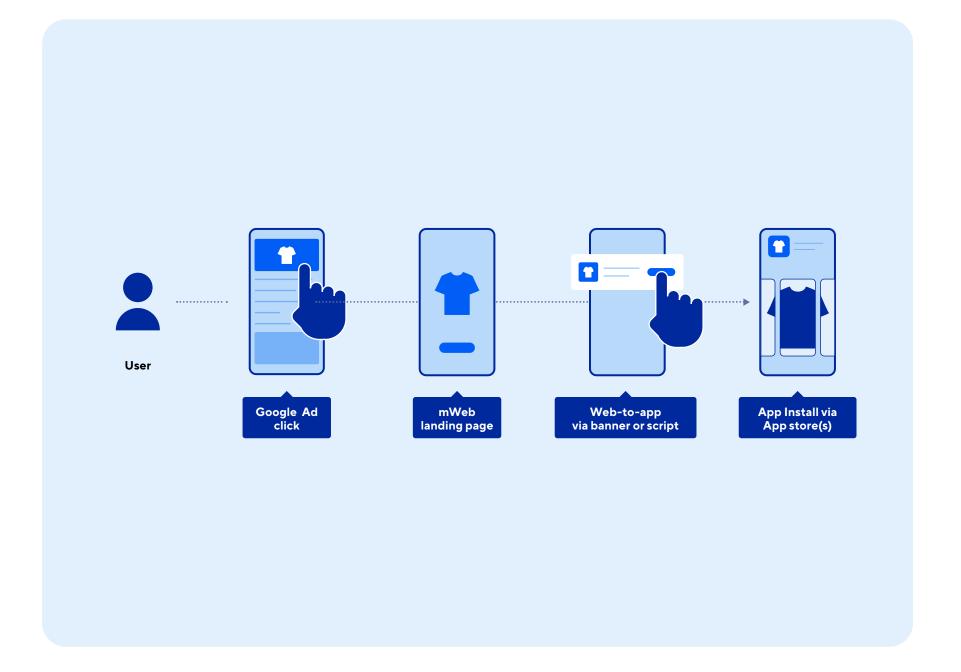


## Method 1. Web to App Install (powered by Adjust solutions)

Google recommends beginning with App Campaigns for installs as the primary app user acquisition strategy for business aiming to drive mobile app installs. As web-to-app becomes increasingly important, however, complementing this approach with web-to-app campaigns is key to driving app user acquisition and expanding reach.

#### IMPORTANT

App Acquisition, which will enable Google Ads to claim installs for user acquisitions from the Web to App flow via SAN integration. Once launched, this new product will automatically integrate with Adjust's Smart Banners for advertisers. Stay tuned for more information.



#### Step 1: Setting up Google Ads

Using Google's <u>Tracking templates</u>, marketers can create a setup that enables inserting additional information in the URL for identification of the source of an individual ad click. For example, you can add URL parameters that will tell you which campaign and ad group contained the ad that the user clicked on, what type of device the user was on, and which keyword triggered the ad.

Marketer setup: Configure Google Ads to ensure that the campaign parameters pass UTM parameters through to the web landing page.

**End-user experience:** User engages with a Google Web campaign and arrives on a web landing page and add Adjust links to the tracking template field to facilitate parallel tracking.

Let's say that you sell T-shirts. When the user clicks on your ad for a Blue T-shirt, you would like them to be directed to your landing page. You set the final URL to: <a href="https://www.teecommerce.com/blue-t-shirt">https://www.teecommerce.com/blue-t-shirt</a>.

If you want to track which campaign, ad group, and creative triggered the ad that the user clicks on, you can set the tracking template as follows:

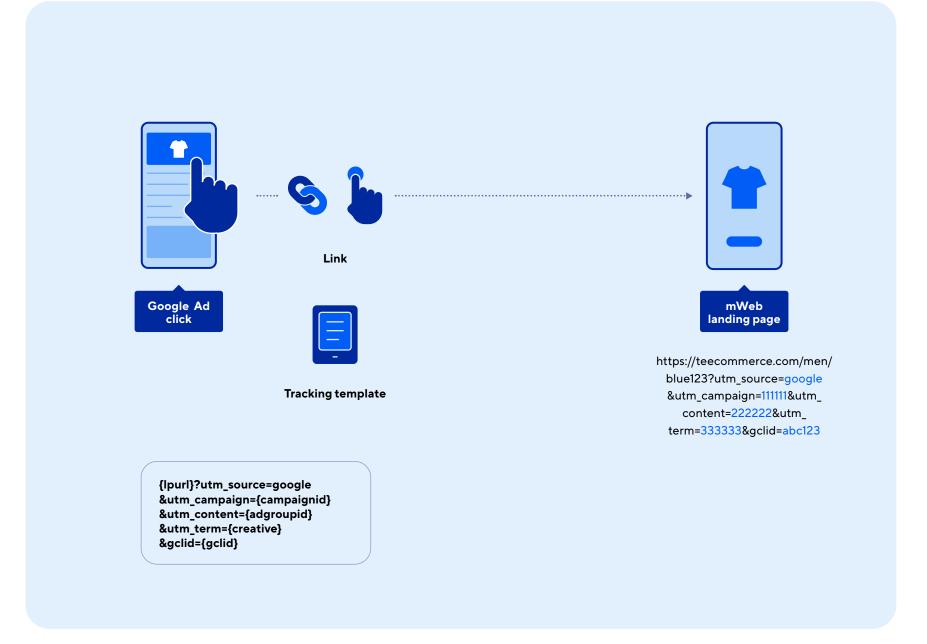
Google Ads field	Description + Entry
<u>Final URL</u>	The destination URL reached by clicking on an ad. https://www.teecommerce.com/blue-t-shirt
Final URL Suffix	Required additional parameters (appended to the URL):  utm_source=google&utm_campaign={campaignid}&utm_content={adgroupid}&utm_ term={creative}&gclid={gclid} &adjust_referrer=adjust_external_click_id%3D{gclid}  Allows you to enter parameters that will be attached to the end of your landing page URL in order to measure information.
Tracking Template	Your Adjust link + the required additional parameters:  https://app.adjust.com/abc123?campaign={campaignid}  &adgroup={adgroupid}&creative={creative}&redirect={lpurl}  &external_click_id={gclid}

In the final URL {|purl}?utm\_source=google&utm\_campaign={campaignid}&utm\_content={adgroupid}&utm\_term={creative}&gclid={gclid}, Google will replace each {parameter} with the actual value when the ad is served. For example, {|purl} is replaced with the landing page's final URL, {campaign} is replaced with the system-assigned ID for the campaign, etc.



Customize the tracking to include UTM parameters and <u>custom parameters</u> based on your analytics tagging structure.

So the final URL in the browser when the user arrives on the landing page would look something like https://www.teecommerce.com/blue-tee?utm\_campaign=111111&utm\_term=22222&utm\_content=333333&gclid=123xyz



## Step 2: Configure and implement CTAs and links

Marketer setup: Orchestrate the user experience with relevant CTAs (buttons/banners/incentives) to guide users to download the app.

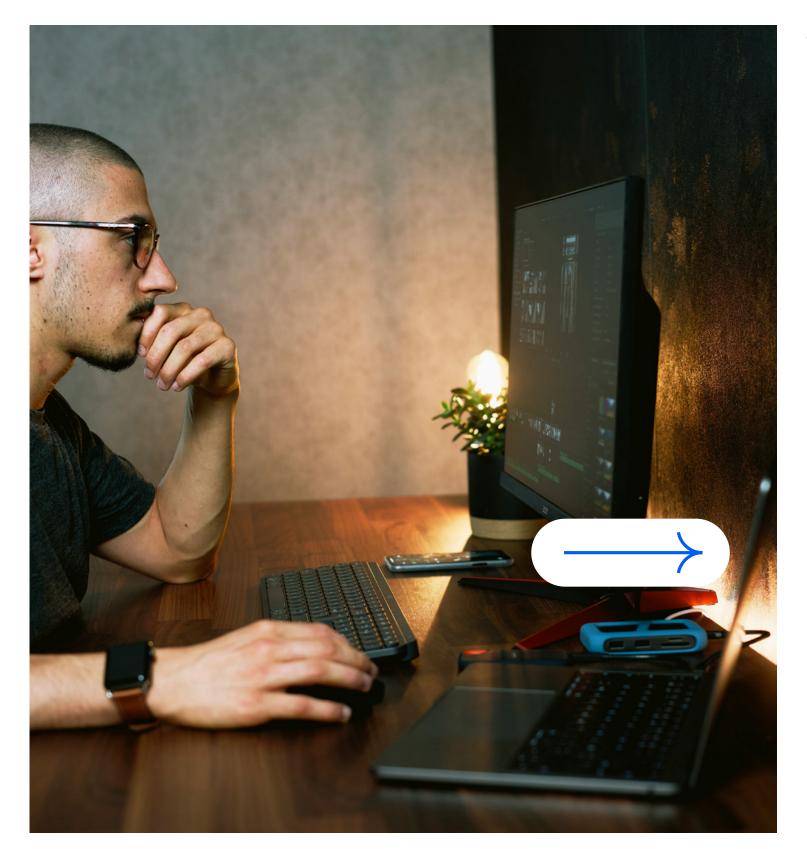
**End-user experience:** User is presented with a CTA to download the app on web landing page.

There's no single approach for moving users from web to app—what works best will depend on your business, your audience, and your goals. Marketers have a variety of options for guiding users to the app and creating cross-platform journeys that feel natural and engaging. For example:

 An e-commerce brand might let customers complete purchases on the web, then display a post-purchase banner inviting them to track their order or access an exclusive coupon in the app.

- A game developer could use the web as a landing page to showcase gameplay highlights, encouraging users to jump straight into the app with a single tap.
- A travel company might allow bookings on the web, but drive app downloads by offering app-only promotions or discounts.

Ultimately, users don't distinguish between platforms—they just want a seamless experience. It's up to you to create smooth transitions that move users to the right place at the right moment.



#### Adjust solutions

Adjust provides a comprehensive suite of web-to-app solutions designed to make the transition from web to app as smooth as possible. Our goal is to help brands simplify the user journey, reduce friction, and ultimately drive higher rates of both app acquisition and engagement. These offerings form a key part of our Engage pillar, which focuses on creating meaningful connections between brands and their users. At the center of this is TrueLink—our advanced deep linking solution that enables seamless, personalized experiences from web to app, ensuring users reach the right content every time.



#### **Smart Banners**

Targeted and customized banners deployed on mobile websites to convert mWeb users to app users by driving them to download or open mobile apps.



#### **Smart Scripts**

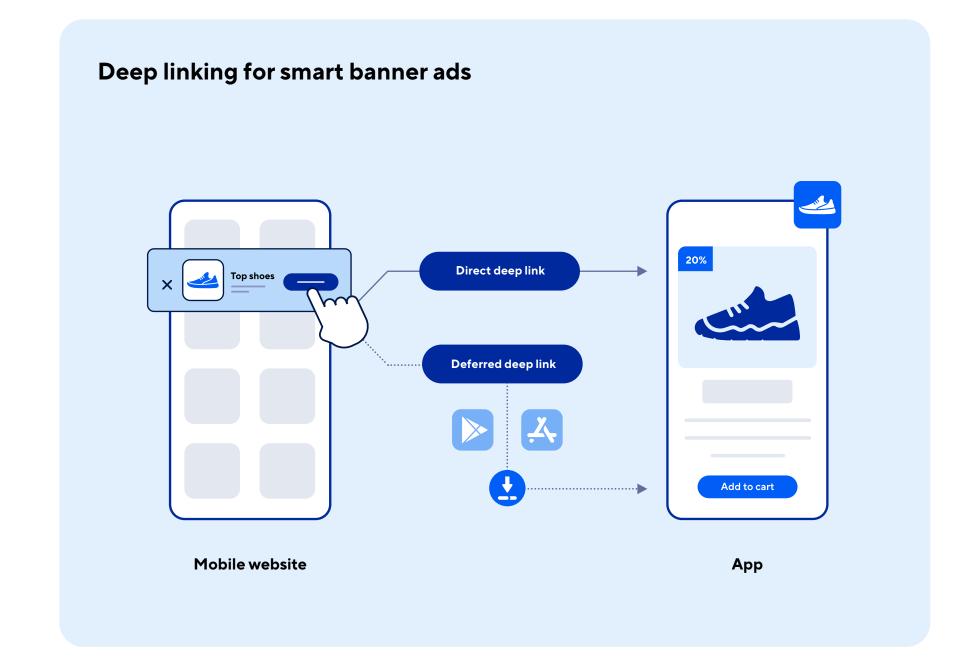
Script executed on mWeb that dynamically generates outgoing URLs (Adjust Links) based on the parameters from the incoming URL, facilitating correct attribution of web-to-app flows.

#### **Smart Banners**

Smart banners are a clever way to bridge that gap between mobile website and mobile app. They are a direct yet subtle call to action (CTA), usually appearing at the top or bottom of the mobile web browser screen, on both iOS and Android. They will either prompt a user to move from the browser to the installed app, or prompt a user to install the app via the app store.

In both cases, when the user gets to the app, they'll land on a specified page (via a deep link). With deep linking (app already installed) and deferred deep linking (app installed as part of the journey), you can ensure users start their in-app experience from where they left off on mobile web, ensuring a seamless transition. For example, you could specifically promote a sales event or product, bringing users directly to the relevant page.

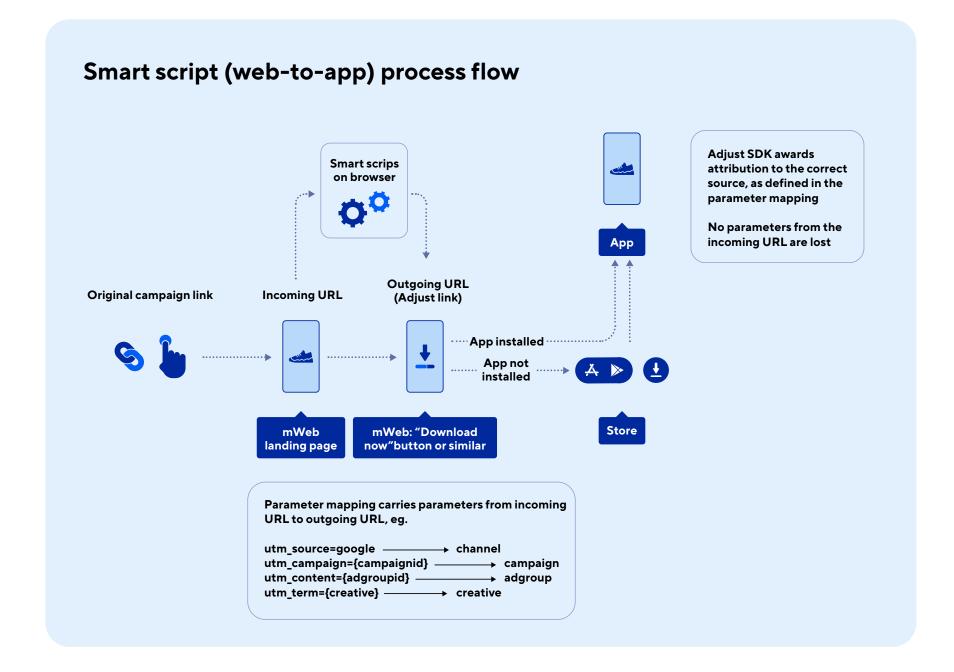
Adjust Smart Banners can be configured to match your brand, customized different banners for different audiences, and localized into relevant languages.



#### **Smart Scripts**

Smart scripts are an essential part of an effective web-to-app setup. When added to your Smart Banners or download buttons, these scripts capture key user data at the moment someone clicks to download your app from your site. This means every app install or event can be accurately linked back to the original web source, eliminating guesswork and lost attribution.

With Adjust's Smart Scripts, it's easy to track and optimize your campaigns, making sure you know exactly what's driving app growth. They're simple to implement and work seamlessly with your existing web-to-app tools. You can build these scripts into Adjust Smart Banners, or into your in-house download buttons/banners if you would prefer to build and manage the UI elements yourself.



#### Step 3: Map UTM campaign parameters

Marketer setup: Generate a link on the mobile web landing page while ensuring UTM parameters and click IDs are picked up and mapped to Adjust parameters.

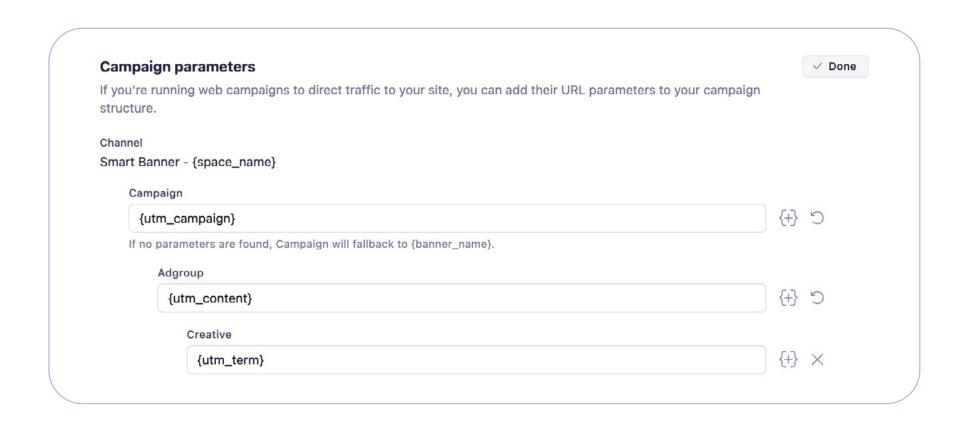
**End-user experience:** User clicks on the install app button/banner and is seamlessly deep linked to the relevant in-app location.

This is done by mapping the incoming URL parameters (on the mWeb landing page) onto the outgoing URL parameters (Adjust link).

When leveraging Adjust Smart Banners, you can add UTM parameters from your Google web campaigns to the campaign structure to get better reporting insights.



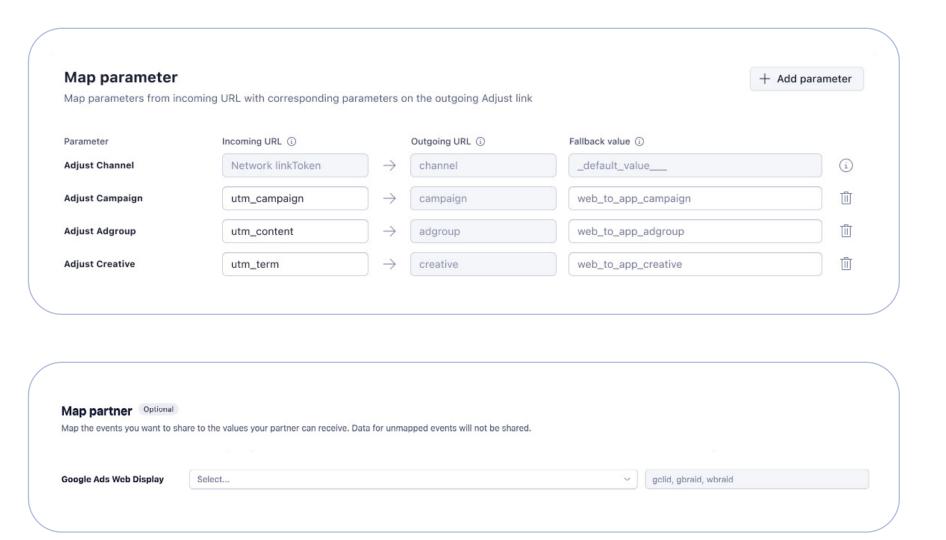
Set Smart banner attribution as a fallback click so credit goes to the original source of web traffic (e.g., Google web campaigns) instead of being cannibalized by the banner.



# Paid campaign users Choose how to attribute users who engage with a banner after arriving on your website from an ad click. Where do you want to attribute these users? To the previous ad To the smart banner

Adjust Smart Scripts allows you to go one step further. You can map the parameters that are picked up from the incoming URL (e.g. Google) and mapped onto the outgoing URL (the Adjust Link). For example, if **utm\_campaign** is present, its value will be mapped onto the Adjust **campaign** parameter. If it doesn't exist, the default fallback value defined by you will be used. This means that the context from the first click is automatically carried over to the second click behind the download button, helping preserve attribution to the original referring source.

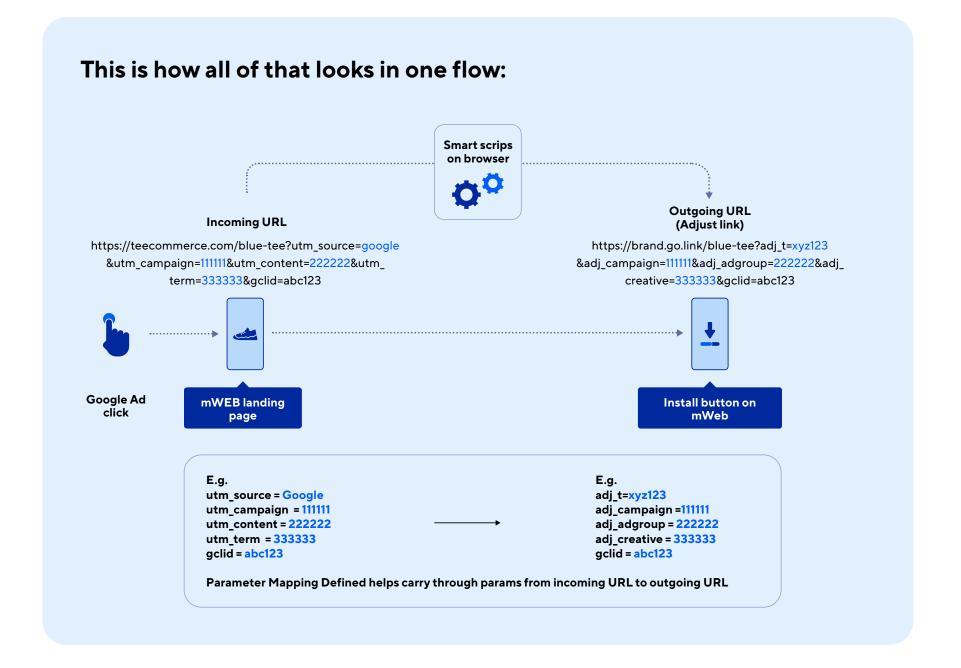
You can also map the Google Ads partner and choose the corresponding link token to which attributions should be awarded. For example, if the traffic source is Google Ads web campaigns (determined based on whether GCLID is available on the incoming URL), then the corresponding Google Ads link token gets the attribution.



Illustrating this with our Teecommerce example, the final URL in the browser when the user arrives on the landing page is <a href="https://www.teecommerce.com/blue-tee?utm\_campaign=111111&utm\_term=222222&utm\_content=333333&gclid=123xyz">https://www.teecommerce.com/blue-tee?utm\_campaign=111111&utm\_term=222222&utm\_content=333333&gclid=123xyz</a>

So, by ensuring that you map the incoming UTM parameters to the outgoing Adjust link parameters, the Adjust link generated looks like

https://brand.go.link/blue-tee?adj\_t=xyz123&adj\_campaign=111111&adj\_adgroup=222222&adj\_creative=333333&gclid=abc123



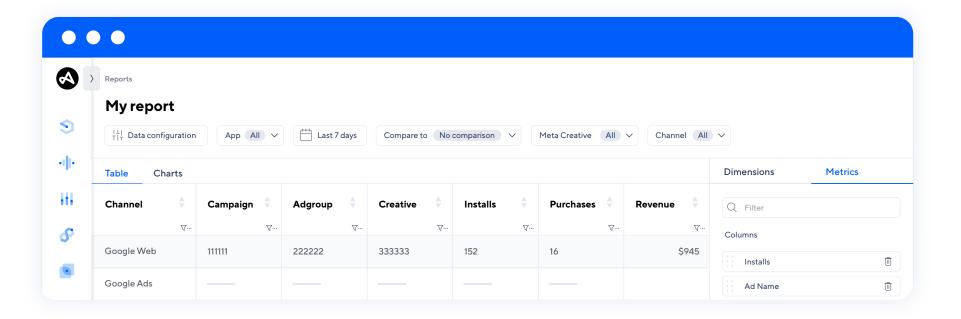
## Step 4: Attribution, measurement, and reporting

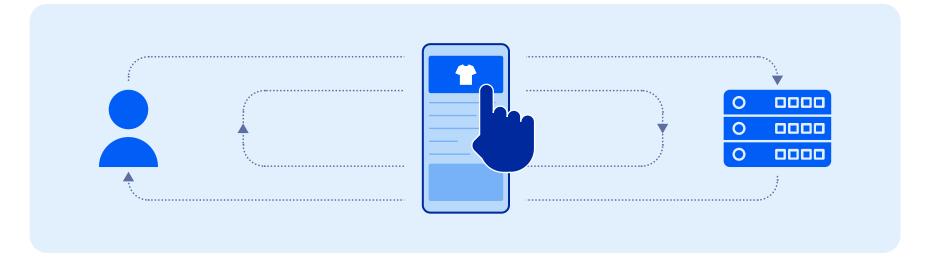
Marketer setup: Set up Attribution settings and reporting to gain insights on campaign conversions + Adjust callbacks to Google.

**End-user experience:** User installs app, opens app, and completes in-app event/conversion (e.g. purchase), with the entire experience being frictionless.

Once you set up the Google web campaign and Adjust Smart Banners and Scripts, you will be able to view the reporting for the web-to-app campaign within Adjust Datascape.

Ensure that you have <u>enabled Data sharing</u> in Adjust, so that install and event callbacks can be sent to Google along with the Google Click Identifier (GCLID). This enables reporting and campaign optimization on the Google side.





## Method 2. Google Web to App Connect (for re-engagement)

Once you've acquired app users, via either direct app campaigns for installs or via web-to-app installs, you can continue engaging them with Google Ads' Web to App Connect. This solution is designed to simplify the process of directing existing users (those who already have the app installed) from the web *back* into your app after they click on your ads.

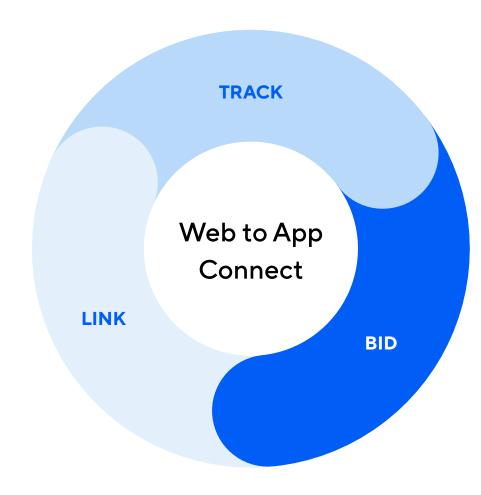
Web to App Connect works across all major Google channels, including Search, Display, Shopping, Performance Max, Demand Gen, Hotel, YouTube, and Discovery. With in-app conversion tracking, bidding, and deep linking in place, you gain clearer insight into how users interact with your ads and app. This setup helps you measure what matters, identify which channels are most effective, and ensure users land in the right place within your app.

On average, Web to App Connect delivers a 2.8x higher conversion rate for clicks that land on your app versus your mobile website. Source: Google Internal Data 2025.

Teams using Web to App Connect typically see:

- Stronger conversion rates when ad clicks lead directly to app content
- Improved overall performance from their web campaigns
- Better ability to focus spend on the channels that deliver the most value

Google outlines three clear steps for setting up Web to App Connect in Google Ads: Track, Bid, Link.

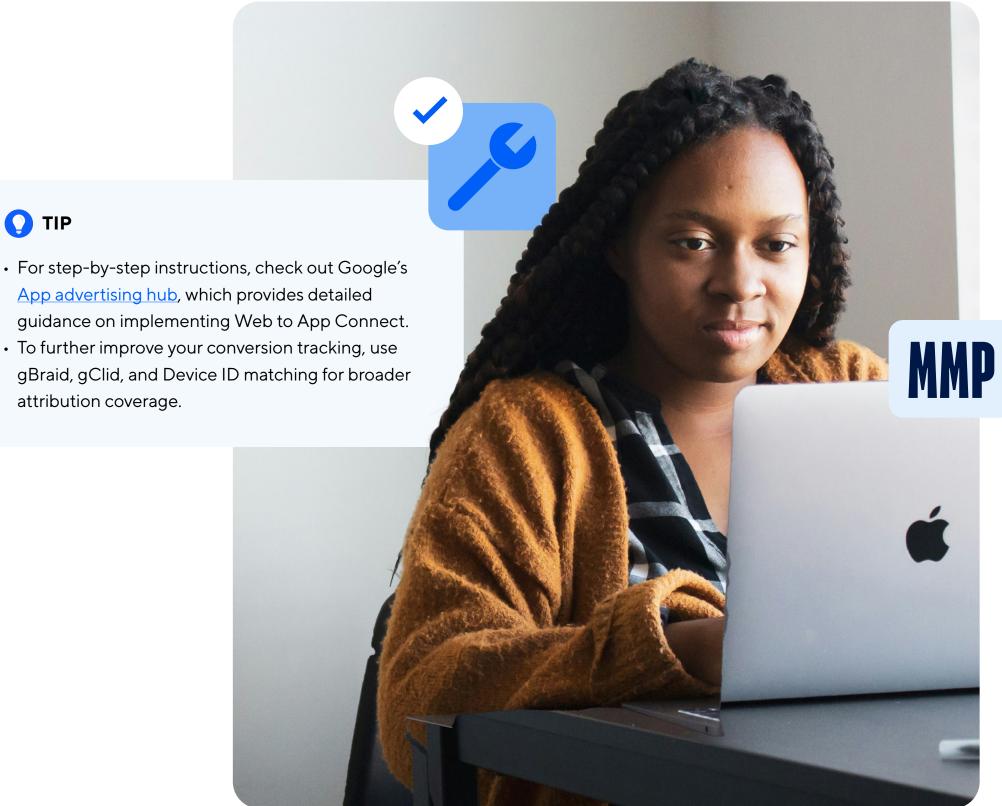


## 1. Set up AppConversion Tracking:

Begin your web-to-app measurement by setting up app conversion tracking with Adjust as your MMP. According to Google, almost half of mobile web ad spend with Google Ads is missing app conversions, and app conversion tracking is essential for any advertiser looking to connect web and app performance. By working with Adjust, you can accurately measure conversions happening in your app and create a foundation for a unified cross-platform strategy.

#### How to do it:

- Prepare your App Conversion Tracking set-up by integrating your app with the <u>Adjust SDK</u>.
- <u>Link</u> Google Ads to the Adjust SDK.
- Ensure unified reporting by <u>importing Adjust</u> <u>conversion data</u> into Google Ads.



#### 2. Enable bidding on Adjust App Conversions in Google Ads

After importing app conversion events from Adjust, you can use these insights to shape your Google Ads bidding strategy. By incorporating Adjust conversion data, Google Ads can better identify which users are most likely to take valuable actions in your app or on your site, helping you reach customers with the profiles that perform best.

#### How to set it up:

- Add the relevant Adjust conversion events to your Google Ads campaign's conversion goals. More on this here.
- If you're using account-default goals, mark these Adjust conversions as "primary actions." Primary actions are used for bidding and are reflected in the "Conversions" column in Google Ads reports.

Bringing Adjust conversion data into your Google Ads campaigns gives you greater control over who you reach and allows for more efficient optimization—helping maximize the impact of your web-to-app efforts.

#### Bid on app conversions to fuel bidding models to deliver ads more effectively, leading to higher campaign performance



Jane sees and clicks on an ad



She lands in the app



Jane makes a purchase



The conversion and conversion value is captured and passed to bidding models



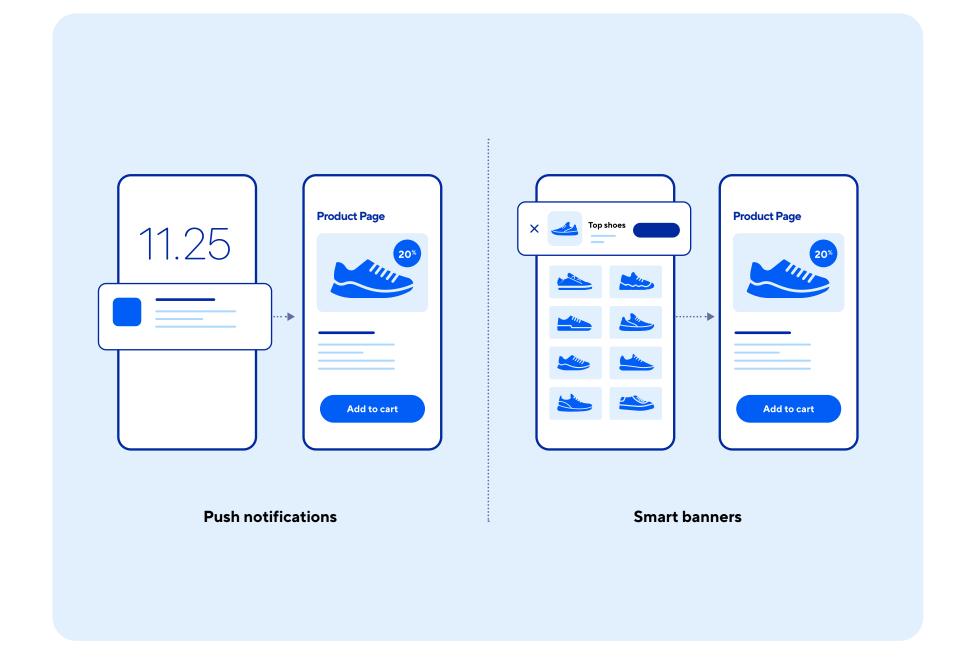
The model learns from the conversion to deliver ads more efficiently (e.g. maximize conversions or conversion value)



Bidding on app conversions is no different than bidding on web conversions. In fact, sending both web and app conversions powers the bidding system to work even more efficiently.

## 3. Deep Link your users to the right in-app content

Deep links direct users straight to the exact spot in your app relevant to the ad or creative they click. This way they can read, shop, make purchases, play, or complete any action without extra steps or confusion.



#### **Deep linking Benefits**



#### 

- Seamless experience: Directs users to specific locations within your app for a smooth journey.
- **Increase traffic:** Expands reach through marketing, emails, SMS, referrals, QR codes, onboarding, and more.
- **Drive engagement:** Deep linked experiences typically see 2x higher conversion rates.
- Boost mobile ROI: Improves return on investment by guiding users to valuable inapp actions.
- Improved measurement: Provides better measurement and attribution across campaigns.

#### **ADJUST**

- **Direct access:** Users move instantly from link to app, with no extra steps.
- **Higher retention:** Less friction means more users stay in the funnel and complete key actions.
- Boosted acquisition: Deferred deep links drive more app installs and guide new users to the right in-app content.
- Better optimization: Deep link attribution reveals which campaigns work, improving ROAS and insights.
- Stronger results: Deep links deliver higher conversion rates, retention, and user lifetime value (LTV).



#### IMPORTANT

#### Notes on differences between Google Ads Deep Linking and links created with Adjust's TrueLink:

Google's recommendation for deep linking is to utilize **Universal Links** and App Links. As Google Ads policy requires that Final URLs not include any redirect parameters, this is their most straightforward way to drive seamless Web to App Connect experiences.

That said, in order to maximize web-toapp measurement and to ensure that valuable in-app customer activity driven by Web to App Connect is captured, you can use Adjust's links in Google Ads tracking templates.

#### Deep linking encourages app users to make a purchase and creates more opportunities for conversions

Jane sees and clicks on an ad

She manually navigates to the app

She is deep linked to the app

Jane makes a purchase

The **conversion** and conversion **value** is captured and passed to bidding models

The model learns from the conversion to **deliver ads** more efficiently (e.g. maximize conversions or conversion value)



This segment of users are **2x more likely** to make a purchase when deep linked to the app.

When tracking, bidding, and deep linking are all in place, your web and app campaigns work together as a unified system. This integrated setup delivers better measurement, optimization, and a smoother journey for your users, making it easier for them to move between platforms and complete key actions in your app.

Each step gives you greater insight into what drives the best experiences and most conversions, allowing you to invest more confidently in your top-performing channels while keeping users engaged with relevant in-app content. The result: higher conversion rates, improved ROI, and a stronger overall customer experience.

## Your final checklist to optimize your web campaigns with your app



#### Set up tracking

- To get started with Google Analytics 4, link your Google Ads account and start tracking conversion events.
- To get started with an App Attribution Partner, link it with Google Ads and refer to these guidelines.



#### Import app conversions

- Ensure your conversion settings are accurate. Note: iOS conversions need to count every conversion to track gBraid.
- Import session\_start events to enable deep-link reporting within Ad Destination.



#### **Activate Smart Bidding**

- Mark core events as "Primary" to include in Smart Bidding (for SA360 guidance, reach out to your Account team).
- Ensure auto-tagging is enabled for your Google Ads account.



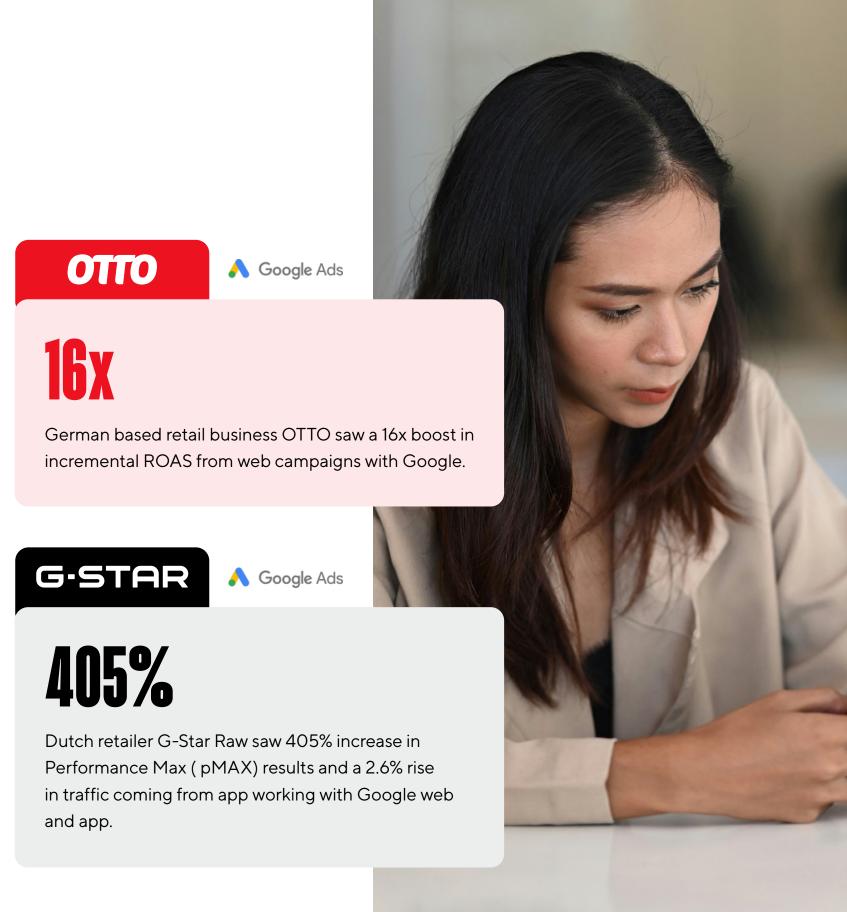
#### Deep link existing app users

- Campaign URLs should be set up as iOS Universal Links and Android App Links by your App Developer team.
- Use the Web to App Connect tool in the Google Ads UI to isolate top deep-linking opportunities.

## Web-to-app in action

Bringing web and app journeys together isn't just theory, it's delivering real results for top brands. Leading companies are putting web-to-app strategies into practice to drive better engagement, higher returns, and a more seamless customer experience across every touchpoint.

Winning results with Google: OTTO & G-Star Raw



The web-to-app journey handbook

## Here's how Japanese health app Ubie used Adjust's TrueLink for web-to-app deep linking



#### THE CHALLENGE:

Japanese health company Ubie set out to grow installs of their symptom-checking app, which started as a webbased service during the COVID-19 pandemic. When the app launched in 2021, most users still discovered Ubie through web searches, and converting these web visitors into app users was a challenge.

#### THE APPROACH:

To bridge this gap, Ubie partnered with Adjust and implemented TrueLink for web-to-app deep linking. This allowed Ubie to create a seamless experience: users could transition from the web to the app with their activity and content carried over, ensuring a personalized and relevant first-time app experience. For a service with so many web users, making the first app launch feel smooth and familiar was key.

#### THE RESULTS:

A TV commercial campaign positioned Ubie as an app-first service and sparked a surge in app installs. But not every user downloaded the app right away. TrueLink helped Ubie guide web users to the app at their own pace, making the transition frictionless and ensuring no context was lost.

"In the TV commercial we ran, we clearly communicated that 'Ubie' is an app service, which successfully led to a significant increase in app users as intended. However, not all users install the app right away. By utilizing Adjust's TrueLink, we were able to seamlessly guide new users from the web to the app, ensuring a smooth transition—this was a major achievement."



Yasuo Takahara **Marketing Lead** 



#### **CONCLUSION**

## Success starts with Google Ads and Adjust

Most users don't care whether they're on web or in an app, they just want things to work. Web-to-app is about meeting users where they are, letting them move from web to app in a way that feels natural, with as little friction as possible. When teams put measurement and user experience first, they see the impact: higher-value users, better conversion rates, and more reliable data for making decisions.

The strategies and solutions from Google Ads and Adjust outlined here are working right now for brands who want to connect every part of their funnel. As user behavior keeps evolving, bridging web and app isn't just best practice or a tactical move—it's proven to deliver stronger results.



## **ADJUST**

#### **ABOUT ADJUST**

Adjust, an AppLovin (NASDAQ: APP) company, is trusted by marketers around the world to measure and grow their apps across platforms. Adjust works with companies at every stage of the app marketing journey, from fast-growing digital brands to brick-and-mortar companies launching their first apps. Adjust's powerful measurement and Al-powered analytics solutions provide visibility and insights, while deep linking and engagement solutions help to drive ROI.

Learn more about Adjust at: www.adjust.com

