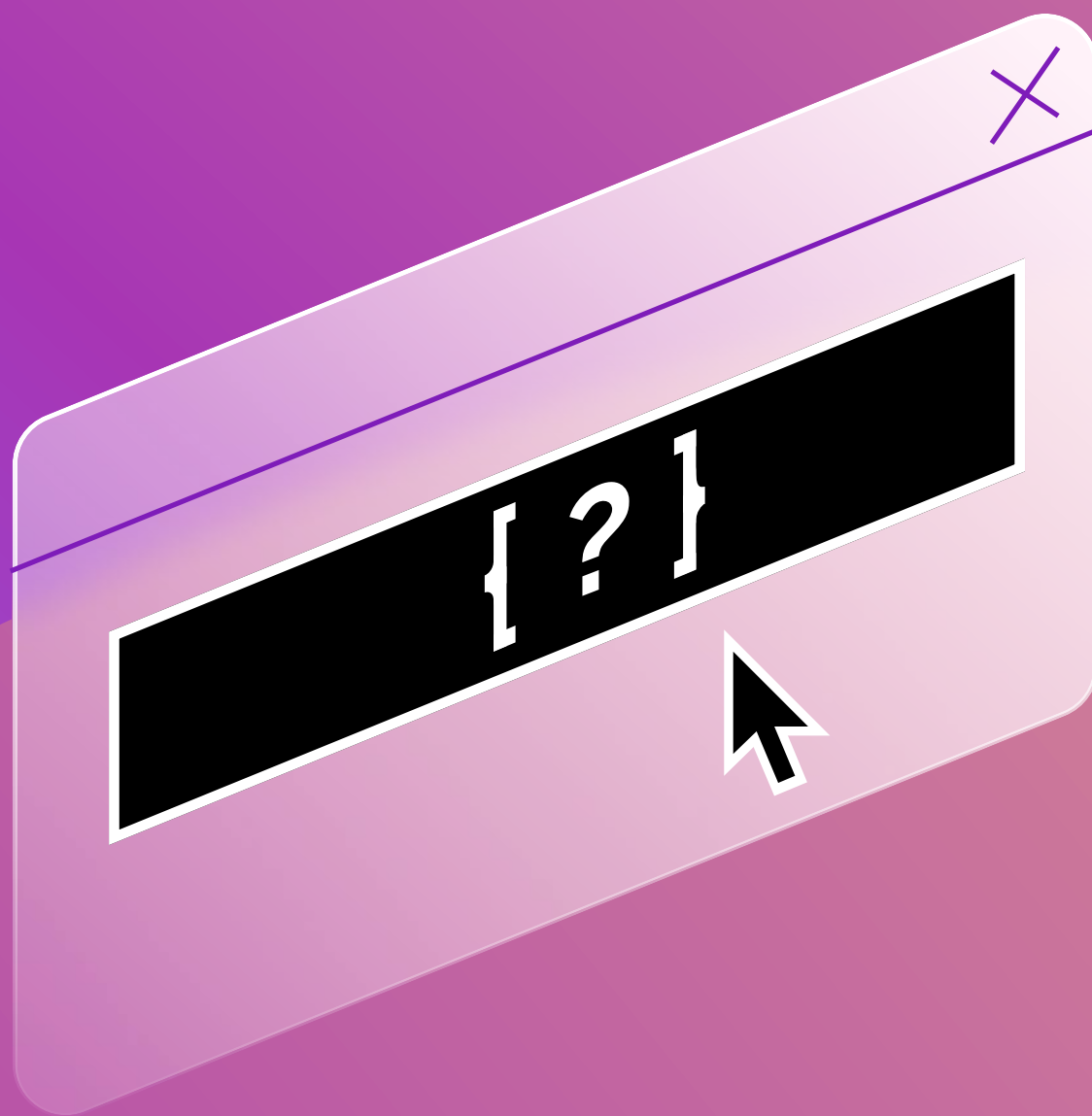


The Billion-Dollar Guide to UTM tags



A set-and-forget foundation for precise attribution, trusted reports, and better performance.

Contents

A quick intro to UTMs

01

01

Advanced
UTM Practices

Use UTM macros
to automate campaign tracking

04

02

Advanced
UTM Practices

Create a separate UTM tag
for every campaign

09

03

Advanced
UTM Practices

Check your campaigns
for proper UTM tag usage

11

04

Advanced
UTM Practices

Develop a naming convention
specific to your business

13

05

Advanced
UTM Practices

Create specific codes to protect
sensitive information

15

06

Advanced
UTM Practices

Use as many IDs in your UTM tags
as you possible can

17

07

Advanced
UTM Practices

Stick to Google Analytics'
channel grouping

18

08

Advanced
UTM Practices

Document
your UTM tags

20

UTM tags for precise revenue attribution

21

A quick intro to UTM^s

1

UTM tags hold a ton of valuable information for marketers, salespeople, and analysts. Knowing how to use them properly may tell you so much more about your marketing performance and give you a better angle to approach leads. However, many companies get entangled in a pile of poorly structured UTM tags.

The job of UTMs is to help you do analytics better, not prevent you from doing it.

So, we've drawn up this guide to help you build a healthy UTM tracking routine and, eventually, understand what's going on with your campaigns.

UTM stands for Urchin Tracking Module. The tag consists of different parameters that contain information about the origin of your lead, campaigns, channels, and more. You can add these parameters as snippets of text after the question mark in your URL. As a result, when users land on your page, you'll be able to see more information about them.

Here's an example of a UTM tag:

```
https://www.fakewebsite.com?utm_source=google  
&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=campaign+name
```

Now, let's walk through a brief overview of all UTM parameters:

- utm_source:** Identifies the source of your traffic (e.g., LinkedIn, Google, Facebook, etc.). For example, if a user lands on your website by clicking on your ads on LinkedIn, you'll see this:
`utm_source=linkedin`
- utm_medium:** Shows the type of medium where your link was featured. For example, it might be CPC, newsletter, or something else. If a user comes from an organic social channel, you'll see this:
`utm_medium=social`
- utm_campaign:** Shows the campaign that your URL is part of. This might be a specific campaign name such as "launch0419" or "hiring-campaign-linkedin". Here's what your parameter will look like:
`utm_campaign=hiring-campaign-linkedin`
- utm_content:** Shows the exact content piece that has generated a conversion. It might be a call-to-action button, banner, image, etc. You can use this tag to understand which content is most effective. The tag looks like this: `utm_content=green-button-cta-book-a-call`.
- utm_term:** Shows the paid search campaign keywords that resulted in a conversion. For example, if users search for the best ecommerce platform, your will be as follows:
`utm_term=best%ecommerce%platform`.

UTM tagging is an essential practice that helps marketers track the effectiveness of their campaigns. However, it's often neglected by both small businesses and large enterprises. Marketers name UTM tags based on their gut feelings, not common sense. Sometimes, they don't use UTM tags at all.

Companies are wasting millions of marketing dollars due to improper UTM usage because they can't attribute generated revenue to any particular campaign.

30%

Our internal data shows that companies don't use UTM markup in over 30% of campaigns.

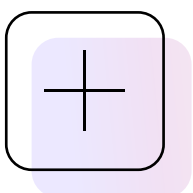
20%

Another 20% of campaigns can't be tracked precisely due to poor usage of UTM parameters.

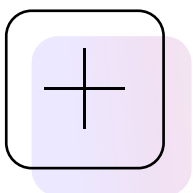
Use UTM macros to automate campaign tracking

UTM macros are an efficient automation tool for your campaigns. Instead of manually building a new UTM tag each time you create a new campaign, you can use a pre-built macro.

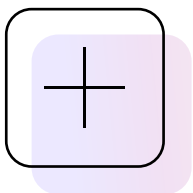
Here are the benefits of using UTM macros:



You get fewer errors compared to manual UTM tagging



No need to manually crunch numerous campaign parameters



You reduce the time spent on creating UTM tags for new ad campaigns

Here's a macro example for Google Ads campaigns:

```
{lpurl}? utm_source=google&utm_medium=
cpc&utm_campaign=n-discovery- usa&utm_content=
cid_{campaignid}|gid_{adgroupid}|adid_{creative}|
phid_{targetid}&utm_term={keyword}&placem
ent={ifsearch:search}{ifcontent:display}content={creative}
```

Let's decompose it into separate parts:

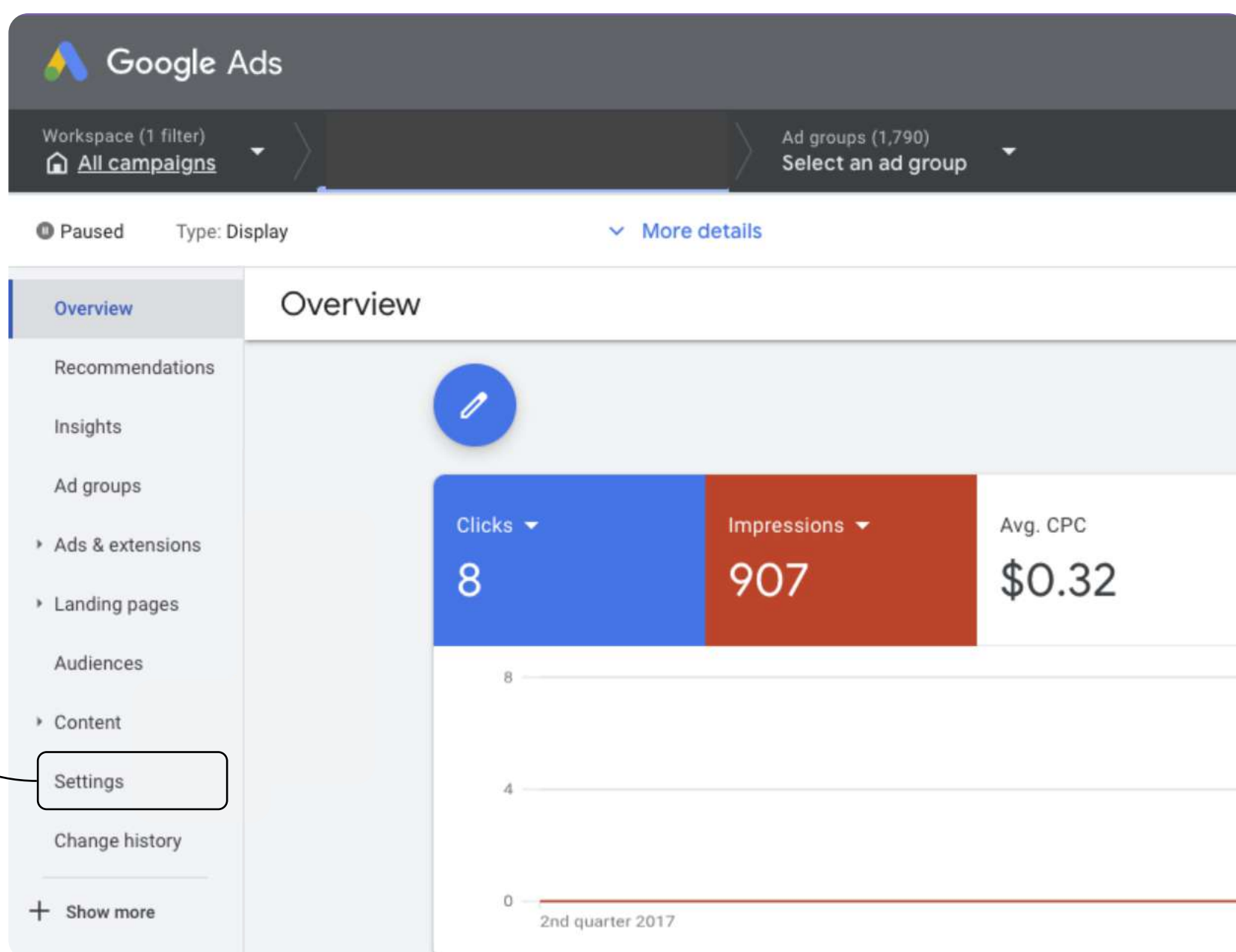
{lpurl}	stands for the URL of the landing page visited by a user.
utm_source utm_medium utm_campaign	are custom set parameters that you can define before launching your campaign.
cid_{campaignid}	a custom set parameter that you can define before launching your campaign.
gid_{adgroupid}	this attribute automatically retrieves the ad group ID.
adid_{creative}	this attribute automatically retrieves content used in the ad.
phid_{targetid}	returns the ID of the keyword.
utm_term={keyword}	returns the exact keyword that matches the search query.
placement ={ifsearch:search}	lets you know that your ad was clicked from a site in the Google Search Network.
{ifcontent:display}	lets you know that your ad was clicked from a site in the Google Display Network.
content={creative}	returns a unique ID for your ad.

Macros help you gather all of this information automatically by entering them into the required field in your ad platform.

Here are the instructions for using macros in Google Ads:

- 01 **Select an active campaign and choose settings from the menu on the left**
- 02 **Click on the additional setting button to expand the menu on the screen**

Settings



Here are the instructions on using macros in Google Ads:

03 Click on the "Campaign URL options" drop-down menu

Using URL tracking options

Goals	Use campaign specific goal: Demo Request - Email validated (Improvado All Sites)	
Marketing Objective	Leads	
Locations	Alabama, United States (state) + 54 more	
Languages	English	
Bidding	CPC (enhanced)	
Budget	\$10.00/day	
Ad rotation	Optimize: Prefer best performing ads	
Start and end dates	Start date: March 4, 2021	End date: Not set
Devices	Show on all devices	
Frequency management	Let Google Ads optimize how often your ads show (recommended)	
Campaign URL options	Using URL tracking options	
Dynamic ads	No data feed	
Conversions	Don't include view-through conversions in your "Conversions" and "All conversions" colum	
Value rules	No rule set	
Content exclusions	Sexually suggestive + 6 more	

Here are the instructions on using macros in Google Ads:

- 04 **Insert your UTM macro in the "Tracking template" textbox**
- 05 **Click on the "Save" button**

Tracking template

{lpur}?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=...

Campaign URL options

Tracking template

{lpur}?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=...

Example: https://www.trackingtemplate.foo/?url={lpur}&id=5

Final URL suffix

?

Example: param1=value1¶m2=value2

Custom parameters ?

{_ Name }

=

Value

+

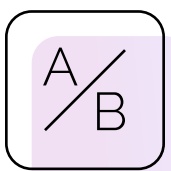
Test

Create a separate UTM tag for every campaign

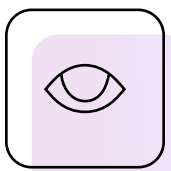
From our experience, companies often use similar UTM tags for two or more campaigns. This approach limits your insight into the performance of each separate campaign.

Imagine that you use the same UTM tag for two campaigns, and one of them has generated some revenue. Since you don't know which exact campaign (or ad group) resulted in a conversion, you can't say for sure which part of your ad spend drives more revenue.

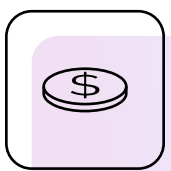
When using the same tag for different campaigns, you can face the following bottlenecks:



Limited ability to A/B test your campaigns



Barely any insight into the performance of separate campaigns



Inability to understand which part of your ad spend generates revenue

With separate UTM tags for your campaigns, you can clearly see what elements resonate with your audience down to the content level (creatives and buttons).



Detailed insights allow you to reuse successful elements in other campaigns and increase the overall productivity of your advertising efforts.

Check your campaigns for proper UTM tags usage

Another obvious step to improve your campaigns' quality is screening UTM tags. You'd be surprised to know how much money large companies spend on campaigns without assigning them UTM tags.

No matter the size, enterprises spend up to one-third of their budgets on campaigns without incorporating UTM tags.



In more than 30% of the cases, companies spend tens of millions of dollars with no chance to track the effectiveness of marketing investments.

Implementing an automated system to check your campaigns for proper UTM tags usage is a smart way to improve your analytics and secure your ad spend.

Dashboard

For example, Improvado's UTM quality dashboard automatically connects to ad platforms to parse UTM tags used in campaigns. Then, it shows your ad spend share that can't be tracked due to unassigned UTMs. It also shows whether you have used parameters correctly and how deep you can dig (campaign or ad group level) into performance with your current UTM structure.

Develop a naming convention specific to your business

UTM tags' structure should always take into account your business specificities. Your tags might differ depending on the industry you're in, the products or services you're offering, the advertising channels you're using, and more.

To avoid reinventing a wheel with each new UTM tag, you have to develop a unified naming convention for all of your future tags.

A naming convention is a unique method of combining and structuring UTM parameters to create a readable and comprehensible code for marketing analysts.

Let's imagine an international computer hardware company launching a new campaign to promote a new product line.

Here are some variables their UTM tags will most likely contain:

- **Country where the ads are shown**

This will help marketers understand how the same campaign drives sales in different countries and analyze why prospects across different regions interact with it differently.

- **Product name/product line name**

Knowing which product your campaign promotes is crucial in order to understand the demand for it and assess the campaign's level of success.

- **Audience**

Knowing how different audiences interact with your ads shows the level of interest among different customer groups and allows you to target more promising leads.

Considering these variables, your campaign parameter might look like this:

utm_campaign=us-mb-under25m

Here,

us stands for the location, which is the United States.

mb The "mb" variable stands for the product line, which is motherboards.

under25m Finally, the "under25m" variable describes your audience, which might be males that are 25 or younger.

With these insights, analysts can extract the required parameters from the tag and build a pivot table to see which product lines the target audience is most likely to engage with.

Create specific codes for sensitive information

One of the drawbacks of UTM tags is that everyone can see what parameters you're tracking because UTM tags are incorporated in publicly visible URLs.

Business competitors might use UTM information to enrich their ad strategy or use your UTMs as competitive intelligence.

You have to make sure you're not exposing any sensitive ad information in your UTMs and create a code to conceal the real names of business entities.

Special marks

For example, when promoting computer hardware, you can change graphics cards for "alpha", motherboards for "omega", and so on.

Glossary

The key here is to create a glossary that transcribe your code into a common language for you and your team members.

Use as many IDs in your UTM tags as you possibly can

Using similar names for your campaigns and UTM tags might seem like a good idea in terms of readability. However, there's a high chance that this UTM tag won't be trackable after a while.

Performance marketers often rename campaigns due to some changes in keywords, targeting, etc.

If the only logical connection between your campaign and the UTM tag was based on the campaign name, you won't be able to track it after renaming.

It's always better to use specific names for your UTMs such as campaign IDs or ad group IDs.

The reason is that campaign names can change, but IDs are always constant, so you'll never lose track of your UTMs.

Stick to Google Analytics' channel definitions

Google Analytics' channel groupings are rule-based groupings of your traffic sources.

Google Analytics provides a list that shows how different channels can be identified to simplify analytics and work with regular expressions.

Instead of naming your paid search medium as "ps", "paid", "paid", etc., stick to default options provided by GA: **cpc, ppc, paidsearch**.

Following GA's default channel grouping allows analysts to avoid data discrepancies and additional data transformations.

Channel	Definition
Direct	Source exactly matches direct AND Medium exactly matches (not set) OR Medium exactly matches (none)
Organic Search	Medium exactly matches organic
Social	Social Source Refferal exactly matches Yes OR Medium matches regex ^ (social social-network media sm social network social media)\$
Email	Medium exactly matches email
Affiliates	Medium exactly matches affiliate
Referral	Medium exactly matches referral
Paid Search	Medium matches regex ^(cpc ppc paidsearch)\$ AND Ad Distribution Network does not exactly match Content
Other Advertising	Medium matches regex ^ (cpv cpa cpp content-text)\$
Display	Medium matches regex ^(display cpm banner)\$ OR Ad Distribution Network exactly matches Content
(unavailable) or (other)	Sessions don't match any channel description.

With the ever-growing number of campaigns and channels, it becomes hard to keep in mind all peculiarities of your UTM tags. Documentation will help you understand what a certain tag means at any moment in time.

Moreover, if, for some reason, you don't have a unified naming convention, documentation will help you understand disparate parameters scattered across UTM tags. Basic documentation for UTM tags should include the two key points:



A person accountable for the UTM tag



Additional notes explaining naming inside the tag
(if they're not intuitively understandable)

Naming conventions that are clear to one person might be unclear to other team members. UTMs are often stored in CRMs. That's why knowing how to read them company-wide helps improve the performance of discovery calls and sales activities.

UTM tags for precise revenue attribution

UTM tags are irreplaceable if you need to understand what touchpoints generate more revenue, how users discover and engage with your brand, and how your marketing dollars impact your growth.

However, UTM tags scattered across different channels, campaigns, and ad groups take too much effort to track and analyze. That's why marketers often neglect them to avoid even more work they already have.


Automated macros and a structured approach to documenting your UTM tags significantly reduce the time marketers spend to launch a trackable campaign. When it comes to analytics, marketing data platforms can help you centralize and monitor all your UTM tags.

→ For example, Improvado loads UTM tags to a centralized dashboard to let you know the degree of information granularity they can show you.

Select date range

Datasource

Advertiser Name



Datasource	UTM Quality	Quantity of adsets	Spend
Facebook	bad	153	17,353.3
Google Ads	medium	7	9,121.9
Facebook	good	76	9,106.6
Google Ads	good	31	4,924.03
Facebook	medium	48	3,529.96
Google Ads	bad	52	584.14

good

medium

bad

Join of such Paid ads campaigns to GA is possible at source, medium, campaign, content level. That means precise ROAS calculation on adset level.

Join of these Paid ads campaigns to GA is possible at source, medium, campaign level. That means precise ROAS calculation on campaign level only.

Join of these Paid ads campaigns to GA is complex or isn't possible because of UTM strategy.

What's more, Improvado can check the correctness of UTM tags' structure after the user provides a template for the naming convention they use in campaigns.

MCDM

Finally, Improvado's MCDM (Marketing Common Data Model) unifies disparate naming conventions across ad platforms. Different platforms use different namings for country names, metrics, gender, and other data.

Improvado aligns heterogeneous data to prevent a mess inside a database and provide marketing analysts with analysis-ready data.

Leverage your marketing data with full-scale automation

Data is power, but only if it's easily accessible, clean, and actionable. With its impeccable data quality, Improvado enables global businesses to gain reliable reports of any granularity in minutes by automating marketing analytics.

At the click of a button, you have all the data from multiple sources consolidated, mapped and ready for analysis in clear-cut dashboards. Transform scattered data into actionable intelligence, uncover insights, and push revenue goals forward.

LET'S AUTOMATE