

Join Julie Livingston, founder and president of WantLeverage Communications and host of PR Patter, a series of talks focusing on relevant topics in marketing and public relations today, in conversation with Amelia Tran, an award-winning marketing leader, who has evolved teams and processes at global media agencies and industry-leading tech companies such as Google, Shell, Bayer, and L'Oreal. Tran currently serves as Senior Marketing Director at her own consulting agency.

Livingston and Tran talk about what digital cookies do and how it serves audiences and advertising, why Google is getting rid of third party cookies, and the possibilities and potentials of other marketing and data-driven tools to advertise to consumers.

“By definition, digital cookies are small blocks of data created by a web server while a user is browsing a website. That cookie is placed on the user's device by the web browser. There are actually multiple types of cookies, just like there are in our favorite dessert. Similar to how the interwebs work there are first party cookies, which are really used to improve our personal experience, as a consumer and how we engage with a website. From a digital standpoint, we're talking about third party cookies. As an advertiser who has worked on the agency side and on the ad tech side, this has been a really meaningful audience targeting tactic because advertisers use cookies to collect data on browsing habits, allowing us to then retarget them with the most relevant and targeted content.”

“Google announced it would no longer support third party cookies on its browser. Historically, Apple Safari and Mozilla's Firefox really never supported third party cookies. With this deprecation, the third party cookie is pretty much rendered extinct.”

“Industry friends and anyone out there that I've talked to have predicted a rise in ‘contextual targeting,’ which allows brands to target their ads based on the content it would appear adjacent to. It involves segmenting ads based on parameters like keyword or website topics. Contextual advertising in the 21st century is a much more sophisticated activity within the world of programmatic advertising. It allows for more precision than, say, a traditional ad in the sports section of your local newspaper.”

“[A cookie-less future is] really for the people-free content in exchange for relevant advertising, while putting the consumer in the driver's seat when it comes to privacy and control. But overall, it's also still not going to be the only solution. There are definitely going to be other industry solutions that can fill in the gap where there may not be solutions.”

–Amelia Tran

Edited Transcript:

Julie Livingston:

Hey, it's great to be back with another installment of Julie's PR Patter. I'm really delighted to have a special guest today. My friend Amelia Tran, boy, I can't get the words out this morning, Amelia. Amelia's an award-winning marketing leader and change maker. I love that because I

love talking about change and embracing change. She's got a track record of evolving teams and processes at global media agencies and industry leading tech companies such as Google, Shell, Bayer, and L'Oreal. Throughout her career, Amelia has become a trusted partner of her clients while managing multi million dollar budgets. Her passion for change is evident in everything she does. I know Amelia through a community group called Mosaic, which has brought so much value into my life. Mosaic is for digital marketers and small businesses, and she's also active in other marketing communities, sharing her millions of phenomenal resources and offering and inspiring others to understand what work-life balance really is, and what it means through her own experiences of finding it. She's currently serving as senior director marketing at work, where she is working on reducing a staffing solution, providing the industry with qualified media buying and analytics talent with flexibility. Flexibility is the main name of the game these days. So welcome Amelia. I know that you have just come from a lot of excitement this week with Advertising Week. I know that it's such a big deal for people to get back together in person and be face to face. And I know you said you were a little hoarse this morning from all that great networking that you're doing. Why don't you start by telling us a little bit about what's happening at Advertising Week, and then we'll talk about the future of advertising without cookies.

Amelia Tran:

Yeah, sounds like a plan. Normally my voice isn't like this, but after two days of events, day and nights you know, it's getting there. Thanks Julie for the lovely introduction, and it's always a pleasure to see a familiar face. I just came fresh from programmatic IO where I got to hear from leaders on the buy and sell side about different topics. But all in all, it all led to what does the road really look like when it comes to advertising without cookies. In addition to that, of course, like Ad Week and events were going on. From a networking perspective, there were just so many networking opportunities. Conveniently, I didn't have to travel too far. I live in New York City, but let's just say as someone that has always managed events or run events in New York in general, I've never seen such a packed house or city.

Julie Livingston:

So exciting. Like to bring the industry back together in one venue, one or multiple venues around the city. For this particular purpose to talk business marketing and advertising. That's awesome.

Amelia Tran:

We've all connected with one another on LinkedIn and other virtual forums you know, like I said, in community groups and whatnot, so we're all used to being behind the computer, right? Just to see so many people in person and to actually get those valuable stories from them about who they are, where they've been, and what they're going to do. Love that. To me, that's always been like a recipe for how I approach networking, because the whole thing is about seeing and reconnecting with industry friends. You can't forget familiar faces, but from a marketing and sales side, it's all about us going out there and trying to meet as many people as possible. It's worked out so well. This week is still going. I have more things to go to later tonight and even tomorrow, even though I'm no longer going to the conferences. So that's the extent of what's

really happening. Even if you're not attending any of the conferences, for example, you are in ad tech or you know, agency side or brand side, any sort, if you're in town like this, it's definitely good to go.

Julie Livingston:

It's the place to be, right? This is the place to be. That's phenomenal. I hope your voice lasts. I think it will. I know your enthusiasm for fashion will definitely carry you through. So, let's start.

Amelia Tran:

We'll, we'll use that.

Julie Livingston:

What are digital cookies? Amelia, can you explain that sort of thing in layman's language, because I think people get confused about it.

Amelia Tran:

I love that you asked, you know, especially when we were talking about this. I still feel like there's a lot of confusion in the industry about what cookies really are and what's really all happening. We'll dive into a bit of that. By definition digital cookies are small blocks of data created by a web server while a user is browsing a website, and that cookie is placed on the user's device by the web browser. There are actually multiple types of cookies, just like there are in our favorite dessert. Chocolate chip macadamia nuts and whatnot. Similar to how the interwebs work, there are first party cookies, which are really used to improve our personal experience as a consumer and how we engage with a website. For instance, first party cookies allow you to stay signed in so you don't have to log back into your Walmart account. Or, you know, when you add stuff to your Target shopping cart, the items remain in your cart, right? That's at least that's a good thing until you do. Yeah, exactly. So at least until you clear your cookies. From a digital standpoint, we're really talking about third party cookies. As an advertiser that's worked on the agency side and on the ad tech side, this has been a really meaningful audience targeting tactic because advertisers like myself, and I'm sure all of you have used cookies to collect data on their browsing habits, allowing us to then like retarget them with the most relevant and targeted content, or at least we should be. For instance, you know, you shouldn't see a car ad if you're not in the market for a new vehicle. I don't have any children, so I don't know why I'd be served like diaper ads. So all in all, like the lesson is that digital ads shouldn't be intrusive. They should be relevant. They should really lean into exactly what the user wants and what they need at that moment. It should really enhance our browsing experience and be valuable to the end user. This is why historically cookies have really been important.

Julie Livingston:

I read that cookies are going to be phased out and they're going to be phased out specifically by Google Chrome, which is the world's biggest web browser in 2023. What does that mean and how will it affect us? How will it affect advertisers and target audiences?

Amelia Tran:

That's a great question. Right now, to stream this, I'm using Google Chrome, and probably haven't used any other browser. For as long as I can remember, it is the biggest web browser to date. Originally, and just to backtrack, it was supposed to be deprecated next year, which is 2023. The latest news of the summer says you know, Google's actually delaying this deprecation until the following year, which is 2024. Just like anyone tuning in, I am also on the receiving end. Anytime there is an update, I make sure our industry really knows about it in case you missed this type of thing. That's great. Yeah. In 2020, to go back in history, Google said it would support cookies and Chrome by actually early this year, quote unquote, like once it actually figured out how to address the needs of users, publishers, and advertisers, come up with different tools to mitigate like actual workarounds. But the latest plan has really delayed it because I still think they're trying to figure out more about how to address the needs of the user because it's a complex topic as for why this is happening. I always like to say it's a hot mess.

Julie Livingston:

Any change is disruptive, right? I mean, it's going to change a lot of things for companies. I can imagine, you know, figuring out the best way to roll it out and introduce it is it's a big deal.

Amelia Tran:

It's more about Google giving you a heads up and knowing there is an end date allows the industry to push forward to find solutions, which you know, we'll dive into as a way to wrap up this. As for what it's happening, like I said, it's very, very complicated digital marketing itself. It's very complicated, which is why Work Reduce has been in existence for eight years to really help the industry solve what is the talent crisis with our qualified talent, right? Just because there's really not enough like analytics and programmatic practitioners out there that really understand like hands on keyboard, like what this all means, how to really activate against it from like a strategy and tactical side. I was at that programmatic IO, listening to Google themselves on stage about this as well. Google announced it would no longer support third party cookies on its browser. Historically Apple Safari and Mozilla's Firefox really never supported third party cookies. With this deprecation, the third party cookie is pretty much, I like to say, rendered extinct.

Julie Livingston:

Okay, you said that the deprecation is going to be delayed probably until 2024, but I'm sure you are at your company and a lot of other companies are starting to think about how they can prepare for this big transition.

Amelia Tran:

There's a couple of things that I've learned just from, you know, speaking with industry friends and hot off like programmatic IO like a lot of my notes really come from, leaders from the buy and sell side in general. Industry friends and anyone out there that I've talked to have predicted a rise in contextual targeting. What contextual targeting is, it allows brands to target their ads based on the content it would appear adjacent to. For example, it could be ads on running shoes on a news article about running, or it could be ads for laptops on a tech e-commerce site,

right? Wherever there's contextual relevance. This is done on contextual targeting through ad networks like Publi, AppLovin and Undertone, just to name a few. For instance, it makes sense that Undertone, I saw that they were one of the sponsors of, of programmatic IO. What that means is it involves segmenting ads based on parameters like keyword or website topics within those tools. That said, contextual advertising in the 21st century is a much more sophisticated activity within the world of programmatic advertising, which allows for more precision than say a traditional ad in the sports section of your long lost local newspaper, right? Contextual targeting is just one way to target and it's become extremely increasingly data driven and less reliant on cookie based targeting. In a way, with the growth of contextual targeting, it's already made its way through so that advertisers aren't just pulling this on and off switch of like, oh God, third party cookies are being dedicated. What could I do? Contextual targeting has been around because all of these ad networks have made it a targeting option.

Julie Livingston:

That's great. Anything else you'd like to add about the future without cookies?

Amelia Tran:

I think I'd like to just kind of go off of what I last said, really honestly, most marketers like myself will use a combination of targeting solutions and companies are actually trying to build alternatives to cookies that replace the general concept of cross-site relevance while keeping privacy on top of mine, right? Privacy is a whole other thing and we are not gonna fit it in this morning.

Julie Livingston:

We'll talk about that another time. Maybe you'll come back.

Amelia Tran:

Yeah. Maybe like way after Christmas. I love that there was this really senior leader from Triple Lift that gave a great presentation on first party data. I remember the session title was Prioritize, Prioritize, Prioritize, literally those three words repeatedly. That really means using your own CRM data and layer on relevant segments. This is like data that you control as a brand, meaning like you're collecting, you know, someone's email user information and things like that. When I say collecting information to then reengage them with retargeting ads and whatnot, they're also collected with terms and conditions that the end user sees. This is why, for instance, we all see privacy policy on sites and more importantly, overall digital media executives are also pushing for the industry to converge on a single solution. The no cookie problem, and one of it is called unified ID 2.0, which I still need more time to dive into, but in short– it's emerged as an early front runner. It started with high profile brands, agencies, and publishers embracing unified ID 2.0 as the, as a new industry standard. It plays nicely with other solutions and DMPs, like live ramp, block graph and Open AP in the TV realm, if you guys are familiar with that. What unified ID 2.0 does is it preserves the value exchange of the open internet. What that means is it's really for the people free content and exchange for relevant advertising while putting the consumer in the driver's seat when it comes to privacy and control. Overall, my last point is, it's also still not gonna be the only solution as with marketing, like especially digital marketing, and

how everything changes by the day by the second. There are definitely going to be other industry solutions that can fill in the gap where there may not be IDs. That's why there's a really tremendous emphasis on so-called interoperability, which means that different solutions can interact across the open internet. Lastly, when it comes to new solutions against cookie deprecation, let's also remember that the open internet such as streaming TV and mobile never use cookies. Overall, as marketers, my takeaway is we just have to get even more creative. And I know it's not easy, but we'll get through it together.

Julie Livingston:

Amelia, this is so hot off the press. I'm so thrilled that you actually, that Advertising Week was happening this week. So thank you so much for your time. It was great to talk to you about a cookie-less future, and I hope you'll come back sometime and maybe I'll see you next week.

Amelia Tran:

Yeah, definitely I will.

Julie Livingston:

Take care. Bye-Bye.

Amelia Tran:

Thanks for having me.