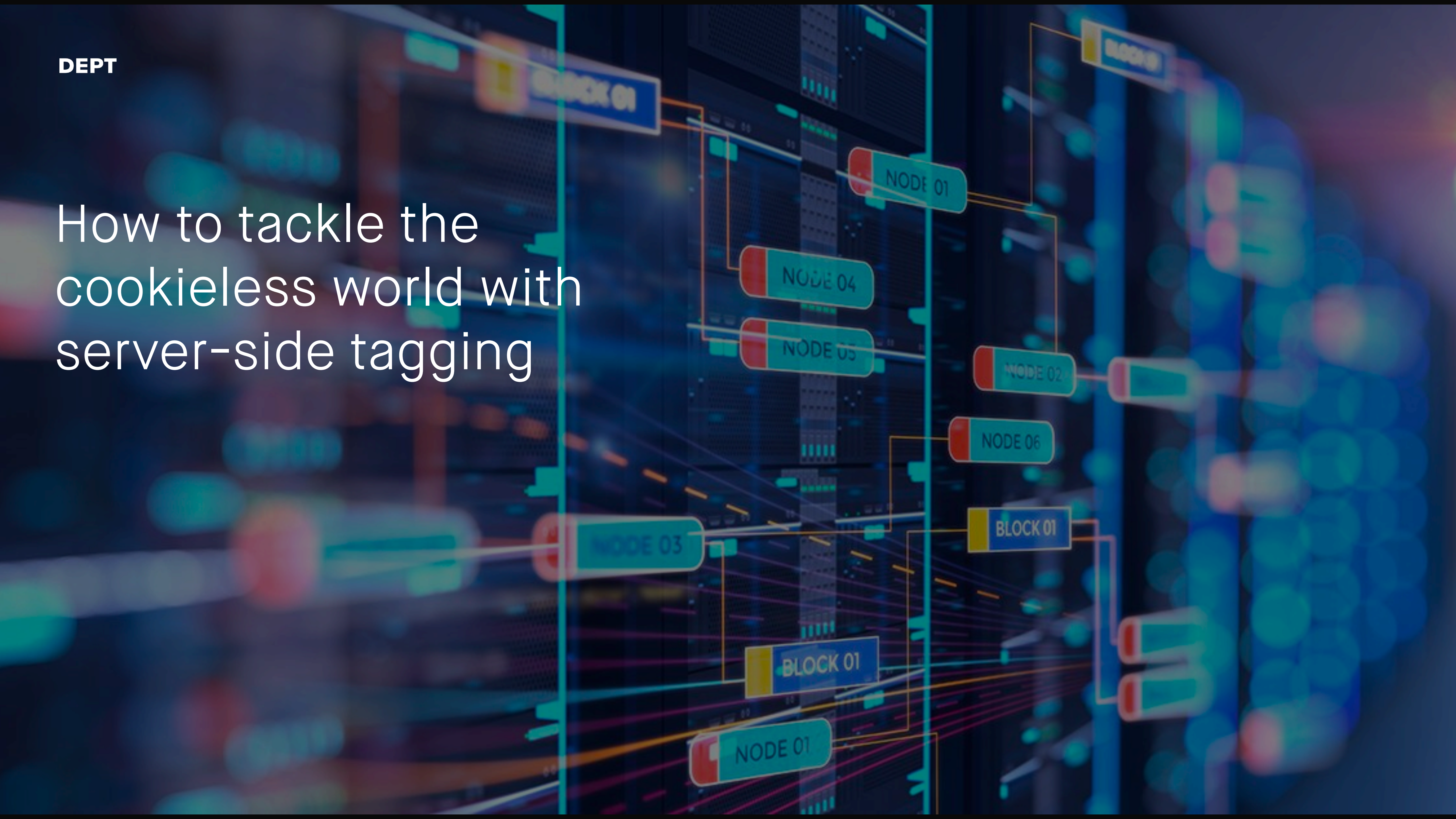


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How to tackle the cookieless world with server-side tagging



Today's agenda

01 A short recap of the situation

02 Server-side tagging

03 Next steps

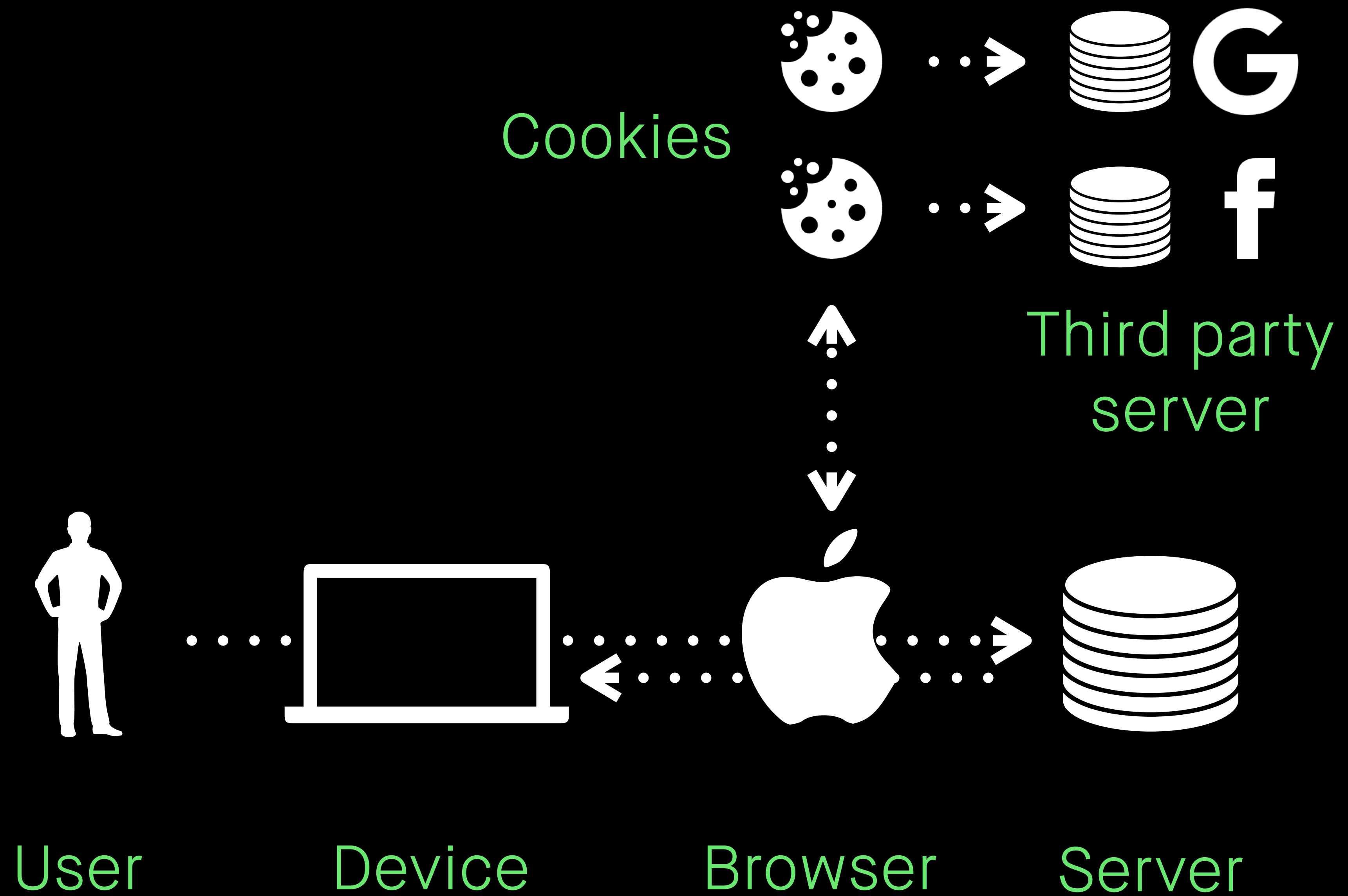
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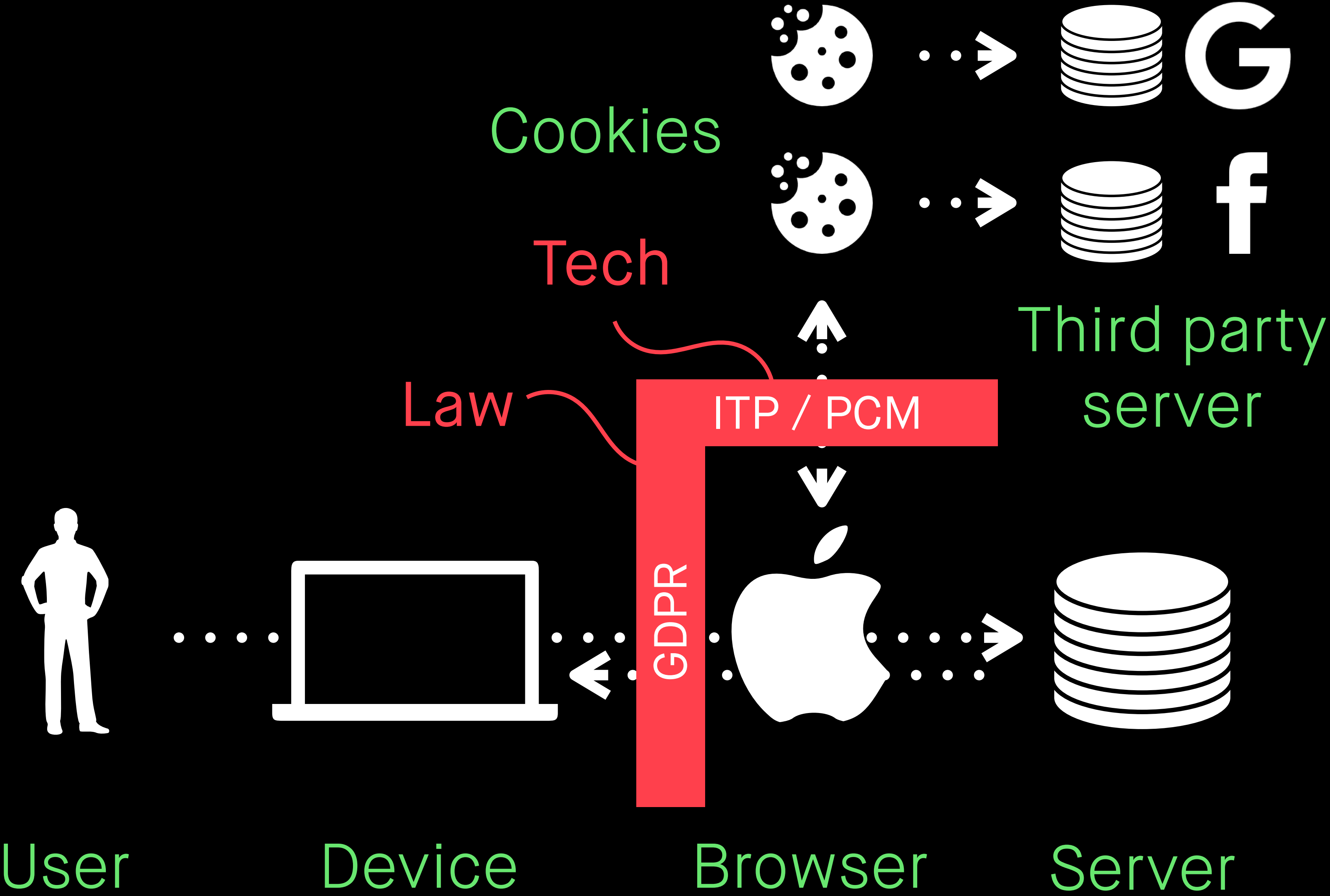
01

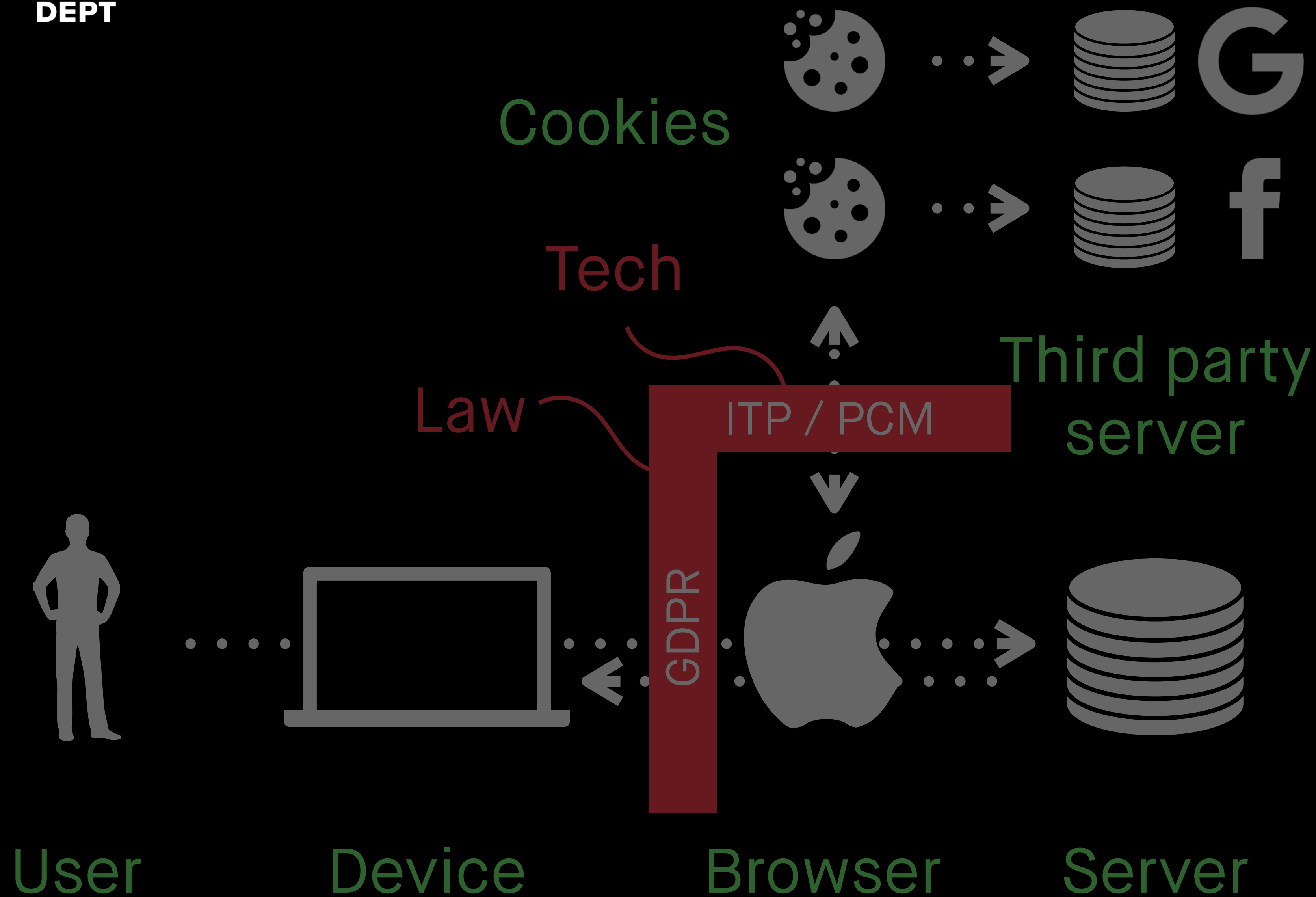
A short recap
of the situation



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breaking

measurement

(re-)targeting

optimisation/
automation

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3rd party
like Google Ads & Facebook

1st party
like Google Analytics

APPLE



SAFARI



1 DAY (ADS)
7 DAYS (OTHER)

MOZILLA



FIREFOX



35 DAYS

MICROSOFT



EDGE



GOOGLE



CHROME



*UNTIL END OF 2023



APPLE



IOS



*IF CONSENT
IS NOT GIVEN

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02

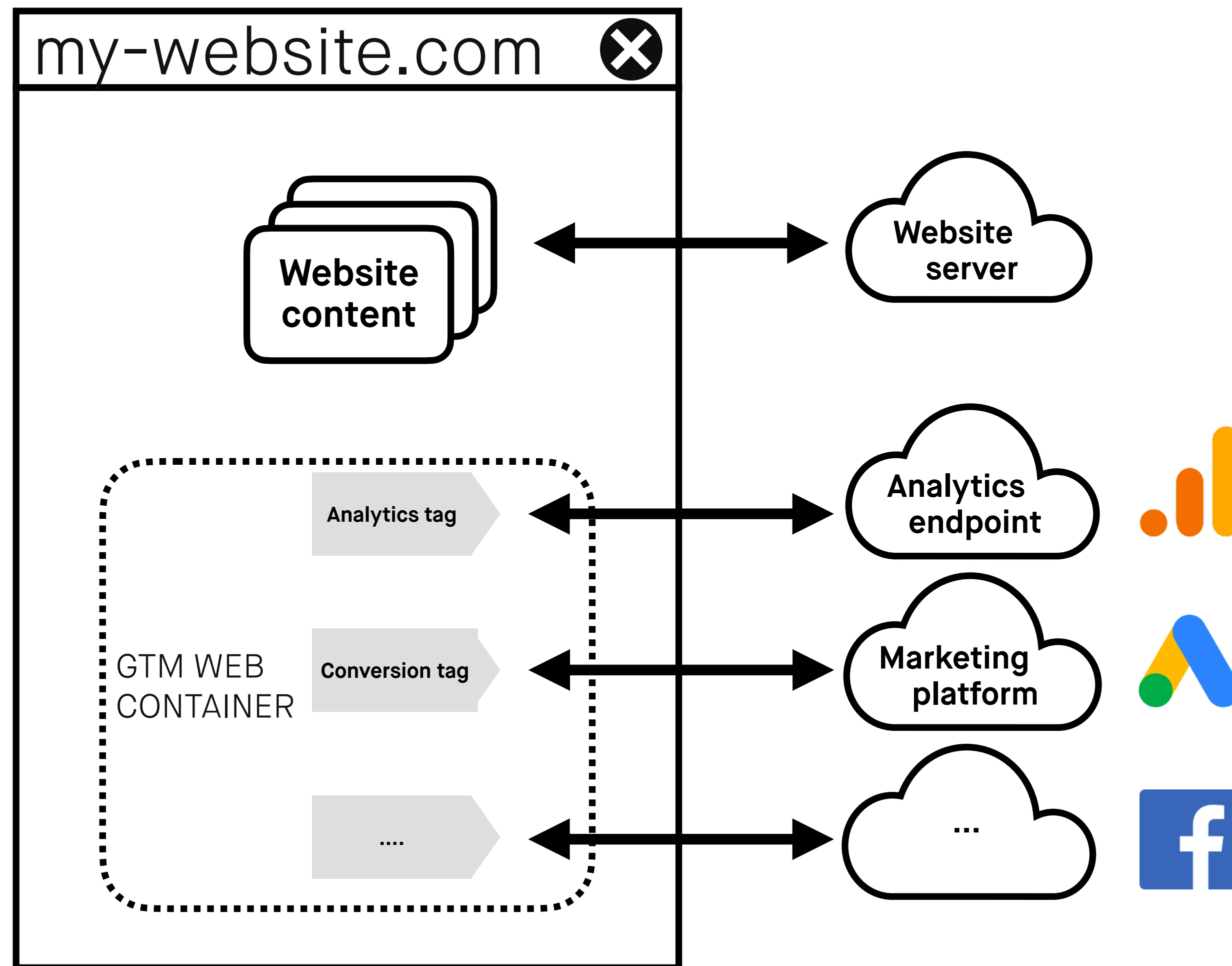
Server-side tagging



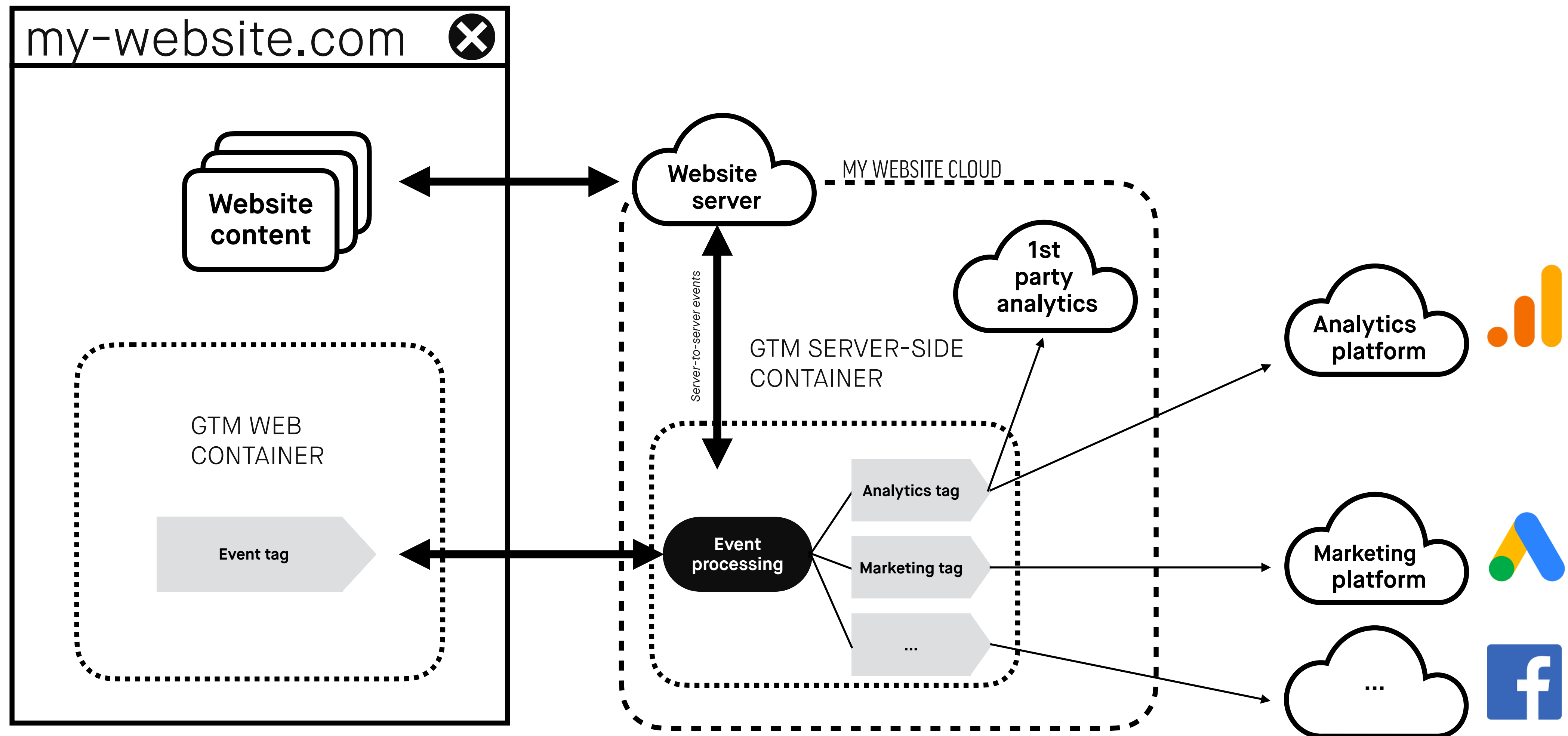
Server-side tagging in short:

With server-side tagging instead of sending lots of data to multiple vendors on specific events, you send only one hit to your own server and let the server handle all the logic.

Client-side tagging in Google Tag Manager



Server-side tagging in Google Tag Manager



Security benefits

- No need to execute lots of JavaScript snippets from various vendors anymore
- Hits can be processed and modified on your server as you prefer before it's sent to the relevant platform. Eg. you can remove PII or other sensitive data so it's not shared with the vendor
- You can now safely integrate the collected data with business-sensitive data like margin per product, lead quality etc. in the server environment without exposing it to tech savvy users

Server-side tagging circumvents ITP and ad blockers to improve data quality

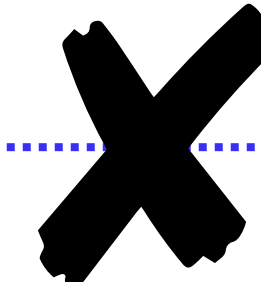
Client-side: Cookie set by JavaScript on Safari browser



Cookie lifetime:
1-7 days



Client-side: Request to known marketing platform URL is blocked by the ad blocker



google-analytics.com

Server-side: Request to unknown URL of server.mywebsite.com is allowed by the ad blocker



server.mywebsite.com

google-analytics.com

Server-side: Cookie set by HTTP request on Safari browser



Cookie lifetime:
2 years

Improved data quality

- Browser measures like ITP can be circumvented increasing the cookie lifetime which results in a much better ability to recognise returning users
- Ad blockers can be circumvented since the data is no longer shared with a third party by the client
- Crucial data like transactions can be shared directly from your backend to the relevant platform through the server removing the typical discrepancy
- Improving data quality will to a large extent have a positive impact on bid optimisation on marketing platforms, attribution analysis and A/B-testing efforts since these all rely on cookies and being able to identify users
- Facebook advertising will in particular see performance benefits by using their Facebook Conversions API to restore data quality. This is easily integrated into your server-side tagging solution of choice.

Page speed impact

- Client-side tracking often relies on executing lots of different tags which requires computing power by the browser. This has a negative impact on page load speed which increases the more tags you ask the client to execute
- Server-side tagging delegates the heavy computations to the server instead as you only need to execute one client-side tag which is then picked up on the server
- Improving the page load speed has a proven positive impact on conversion rates, SEO, Google Ads quality score (landing page experience) and the general user experience

Base tech for your future customer data platform (CDP)

- By migrating tag management from the client browser to the cloud, you've already taken a big step towards a cloud-based customer data platform
- If you go for a GTM server-side implementation the server can be easily connected with other GCP products like BigQuery

The drawbacks of server-side tagging

Added complexity

Server-side tagging adds another layer to your measurement setup which requires expertise to set up and modify. Fortunately, a platform like GTM SS already offers lots of templates and community support.

Extra costs

The server needs to run and somebody needs to pay for it. If your tagging server runs on Google Cloud the monthly cost is typically €100-250 depending on the amount of data you need to process.

Less transparency

Since the actual network requests to the different vendors are no longer visible to the end user in the browser, it will be difficult to audit and debug your setup for an external party.

Three examples of server-side tracking platforms



Segment

Established server-side tracking platform. Solution with specific integrations, segmentation options, fine-grained control and interface for eg. keeping track of a measurement plan. A little pricey and mostly still a third-party tool.



Tealium

Customer Data Platform with a built-in server-side tracking option. One of the best options for a CDP if you prefer to purchase an out-of-the-box solution. Quite expensive though.



GTM Server-side

Relatively new server-side solution from Google. Highly flexible and easy to set up. Fully first-party solution on Google Cloud or potentially other platforms. No fees except for cloud costs.

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Next steps



You should consider server-side tagging if...

You want to improve your overall data quality

You have lots of users on Apple devices

You have a longer sales cycle or have a need to better understand the customer journey and attribution

Facebook advertising is a significant part of your marketing approach

You are interested in (eventually) working with a CDP

You would like to integrate additional data (eg. profit, lead scoring) in your digital measurement

You would like to improve your page load speed

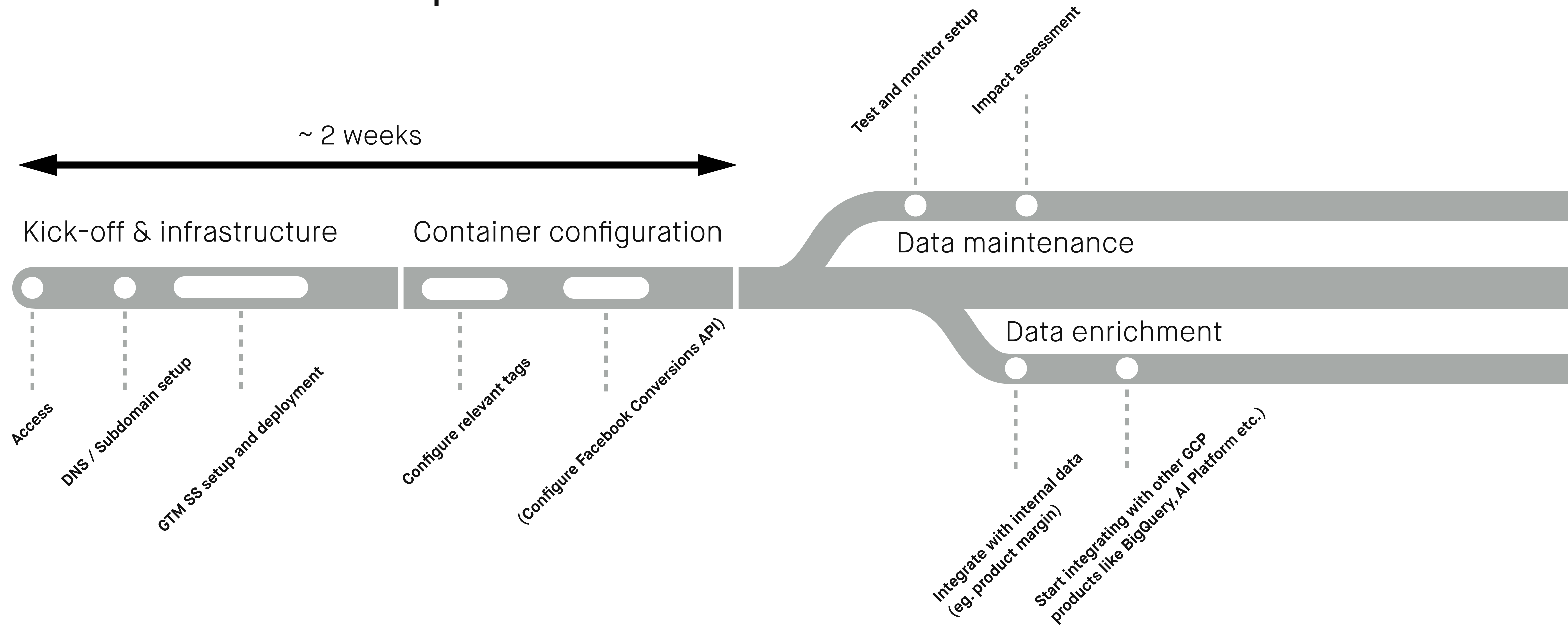
You would like to be in charge of which customer data is shared with third parties

You're already using a tag management solution or are considering one

You're willing to invest in the implementation and necessary cloud costs (typically 100-250 EUR monthly)

You can accept the added complexity in your measurement setup

Timeline example for GTM server-side implementation



Main takeaways



1. Server-side tagging essentially moves your tracking setup from the user's browser to your server.
2. Benefits are numerous including **better data quality**, **improved page load speed**, easy integration and **enrichment of other internal data** and **better control of the user data** which is actually shared with third parties.
3. Your main tags can usually be moved server-side within a **couple of weeks** and the ongoing costs for the server is usually in the range of **€100-250/month**.
4. There are **several platforms available** for server-side tagging, but **Google Tag Manager SS is an obvious candidate** for many companies since the product is free, integrates really well with other Google products and the setup is relatively easy.
5. Server-side tagging is **not for everyone**, but the various benefits provides a **strong business case for most companies**.

Any questions?

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