



IAB Ad Campaign Measurement Process Guidelines

July 2008, Version 1.0

To be applied to all current Ad Impression Measurement Guidelines

For Publishers and Agencies Using An Audited/Certified

Third Party Ad Server ASP Solution



Introduction

This expansion of the IAB Ad Campaign Measurement and Audit Guidelines and all other Impression Measurement Guidelines is intended to address an important component of the Measurement Certification Initiative of the IAB – the process supporting a publisher’s or ad agency’s use of a 3rd Party Ad Server (3PAS) and its Application Service Provider (ASP) solution. The guidance offered herein is derived from a consensus of areas for examination as shared with the IAB by the auditing organizations that are part of the IAB membership. ***This guidance applies only to the customers of audited/accredited/certified 3PAS companies and does not include enterprise customers of 3PAS or publishers or agencies with their own proprietary ad serving solutions.***

In November 2004, the IAB's [Measurement Task Force](#), with the support of major global organizations involved in the advertising and research disciplines, joined together to issue a global standard for counting online ad impressions.

Since that time, many major media companies and ad serving organizations with proprietary or enterprise ad serving technology have been audited as prominent brand marketers continue to demand the highest level of transparency and accountability from this world-class medium.

While the Ad Impression Guidelines focus primarily on the technical methodology for serving and counting an ad impression, additional processes and procedures may be implemented by those using a non-proprietary ad serving solution (i.e., an ASP offering from a 3rd Party Ad Server – 3PAS) in the course of campaign implementation. For a publisher or agency using a non-proprietary ad serving solution (ASP offering) to be certified, it would be necessary for the ASP offering to be certified as well as all processes relevant to the internal controls and advertising counting system, but which are outside the scope of the ASP and in control of the publisher or agency. These processes can affect the numbers produced by the ad serving systems. As such, any audit of the ad serving system by itself would not adequately examine these additional components and therefore the reported ad impression numbers may not be considered as qualifying for Measurement Certification. (see VI - Glossary).

The nature of 3PAS offerings in the marketplace vary as does the way in which companies use them. As such, the 3PAS may have facilities, processes and controls that are required to be performed by the company using the service in order to ensure the service is used in an appropriately controlled manner to ensure the complete and accurate processing of advertising transactions. Customers of 3PAS offerings should be aware that, as a customer, you will have responsibilities for certain controls that will be subject to audit and you should seek direct clarification of the boundaries of the 3PAS control versus areas under your direct control. The



3PAS should make available to publisher/agency auditors (upon request), appropriate certification audit information such that publisher/agency auditors can understand the extent and coverage of such audit. The 3PAS Description of Methodology (DOM) may be sufficient to satisfy this requirement, but may include management assertions and auditor opinions.

Scope and Applicability

These guidelines are intended to provide supplementary information, definitions and guidance on the auditing of processes used in the placement, trafficking and reporting of interactive advertising as pertains to current measurement guidelines. They will be modified as additional advertising measurement guidelines are finalized.

Project Participants

The following companies have participated in the authoring of these Guidelines and the IAB thanks them for their involvement and support:

- ABCi
- AMC Group
- BPA Worldwide
- Deloitte & Touche
- Ernst & Young
- ImServices Group
- Media Rating Council
- PricewaterhouseCoopers

The IAB would also like to express our gratitude to the following third party ad servers, whose technologies are IAB-compliant, for their review of this work in advance of the wider release:

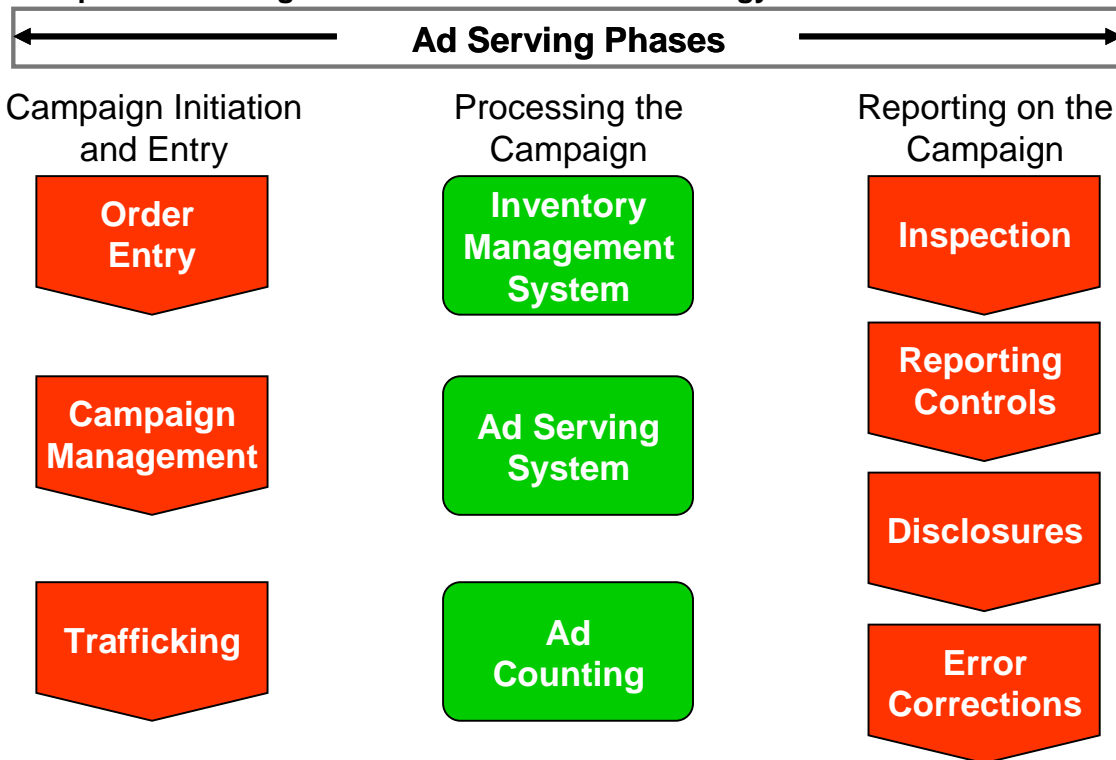
- Atlas Solutions (Microsoft)
- DoubleClick DFA / DFP

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I. Map of Ad Serving Phases: Process and Technology



II. Areas of Auditor Inquiry

Each of the ad serving phases needs to be evaluated according to:

Technology – The technology that actually serves the ad impression is the most critical component. The software that actually drives the mechanism for ad serving must be determined to be working as it should and to be counting ads per the IAB Guidelines.

Process – There are processes that support each phase of the ad serving system that must be examined. Some process will be intricately linked to the technology (as with Enterprise and Proprietary implementations), while others will be independent and under the control of the agency or publisher using a 3rd Party Ad Server.

Data – The numbers, or data sets, that are a result of the technology and supporting process, are subject to review and validation by auditors. Management assertions and auditor opinions on the veracity of the data are critical components.

III. Achieving Measurement Certification

Measurement Certification is accorded when all aspects of each stage have been audited and are compliant with the most up-to-date IAB Ad Impression Measurement Guidelines, supplements and appendices.



Technology
Mechanisms of the software are audited to be working in terms of what it should and does do, i.e., compliant
Process
The end-to-end process is examined, including that surrounding the technology, to determine if it is compliant with Guidelines
Data
The numbers, as a result of the technology and process, are validated. Management assertions and auditor opinions are critical here.

Some auditing bodies conduct audits against separate and distinct standards and guidelines that have recognized value in the marketplace in addition to IAB Ad Impression Measurement Guidelines. Meeting the terms described above, against all published IAB Ad Impression Measurement Guidelines, is all that is required to achieve “certification”.

IV. Glossary

Measurement Certification – is achieved when all phases of ad serving have had the technology, process and data audited by a qualified 3rd party auditing firm.

Audit – qualified auditing firms conduct an independent assessment of the fairness by which a company's adserving statistics are presented by its management. This includes an *evaluation* and testing of an organization's technology, process, and data as it relates to the underlying ad serving system (including the customers of ASP systems).



V. Summary of Control Objectives – Control objectives refer to the internal business processes and procedures that companies use to maintain high quality performance of their people and systems. In the area of ad serving, the process that supports the actual technology can have significant impact on system integrity and accuracy.

1 Insertion Orders – Establishing Approved Campaign Parameters

- a. Standardized, documented processes and procedures are in place for the processing and approval of insertion orders.
- b. Insertion orders are approved by appropriate level of management and are reviewed to ensure that all aspects of the final, signed insertion order are exactly represented within the insertion order management system.
- c. Proper segregation of duties exists between those with the ability to approve an insertion order and create an insertion order in the system of record.
- d. Changes to in-process (or processed) insertion orders are approved by the appropriate level of management.

2 Ad Trafficking

- a. Standardized, documented processes and procedures are in place for ad trafficking of the approved campaign.
- b. Content and content delivery systems are sufficiently standardized and documented such that appropriate tagging mechanisms are easily recognized and applied. This may include appropriate standardized communications between the publisher and agency/advertiser.
- c. Campaigns are only activated for clients with existing and approved insertion orders.
- d. Prior to activation of a campaign:
 - i Ad creative (including where applicable, alternative creative structures) is determined to exist, is reviewed and available for use by the intended publisher and third party systems as soon in the process as possible, and
 - ii The proper construction and validity of ad tags is verified before activation. This should include making a browser request for the ad tag to verify the correct creative(s) are served and rendered (later for click accreditation procedures, this should also include verification that a click through on the impression leads to the correct landing page; and where possible, that a click through is routed through appropriate servers to ensure consistent counting). This also includes verification or appropriate quality review that page content will support the ad creative intended to be displayed. Both the agency and publisher should have a standardized procedure to verify that a campaign is working correctly before activation. If a party is generating an ad tag with a system that has not been audited to IAB guidelines, the validity of each ad tag must be verified by the generating party and all parties that use the tag.
- e. After trafficking ads in the advertising agency/publisher and third party systems:
 - i A timely validation is performed by the agency and publisher that ad parameters are operating as intended, based on knowledge of projected campaign volumes. Timely corrective action is taken as necessary and approved by appropriate management personnel.

3. Technology Infrastructure

- a. If the advertising agency or publisher uses its own computer systems, software or technology infrastructure for entering, tagging or trafficking ad campaigns, processing advertising data or reporting count data, the following general control procedures are necessary (otherwise skip to Other Matters):
 - i. The operations performed by the computer system are documented in sufficient detail to specify for each computer application at least: (1) the objective of the program; (2) the input data to be used; (3) the editing and processing steps to be performed; (4) the output data, and (5) data retention procedures.
 - ii. The computer programs and data are diligently protected from unauthorized manipulation, and
 - iii. Changes in any computer program are documented in enough detail to identify what is being changed, the reasons for the changes, tests performed to confirm the effect(s) of the changes, and the effective date of the changes.

4. Reporting Controls

(Applicable to advertising agencies or publishers that report measurement data directly to end users via their own system or customized ASP solutions)

- a. Disclosure guidance of the IAB Guidelines should be followed for aspects of the reporting system developed or customized by the agency or publisher.
- b. If measurements are extracted from the 3PAS reporting system prior to delivery to end users, effective controls must be in place to ensure only authorized changes to original counts. Disclosure of the nature of edits or changes to original counts is required, if material.

5. Other Matters – Points of Emphasis

- a. Geo-targeting, behavioral targeting, frequency capping and other special targeting/execution parameters that are executed in-house should be subject to review and approval to minimize the occurrence of measurement discrepancies. This review should be performed by individuals other than those responsible for transaction entry (i.e., proper segregation of duties exists). For those targeting or frequency capping functions executed by third parties, the agency or publisher should review the associated campaign parameters with the third-party to ensure consistent communication, and a timely interim check should be performed with the third-party to ensure accurate execution.
- b. Auto-refresh parameters selected by the agency or implemented by the publisher should follow IAB Guidelines and therefore be appropriate based on content.

VI. Self-Assessment Questionnaire. The following questions are intended to provide a mechanism for publishers, 3PAS and advertising agencies to perform a self-assessment of compliance with the above control objectives. In going through this self assessment, an organization should consider not whether it can answer “yes” to *all* questions, but how close or far it is from answering each question positively. This will give the organization a better understanding of concerns that may arise or need further explanation upon pre-audit and audit.

1 Insertion Orders:

- a. Does written, complete and up-to-date procedural documentation exist for the following ad-campaign initiation functions:
 - i Approval of the original contract (signed insertion order) to initiate entry and creation of an electronic insertion order,
 - ii The insertion order entry process itself,
 - iii Follow-up on seemingly illogical or unusual campaign parameters
 - Manual review, and
 - System edits
 - iv Quality control review of the completed insertion order and campaign parameters, including timing, and
 - v Training processes and procedures for any personnel associated with the above functions?
- b. Are content delivery systems standardized such that tagging mechanisms are easily identified and checked for accuracy?
- c. Are general terms and conditions (default terms) reviewed periodically and approved by management?
- d. Are insertion orders approved for entry by management personnel?
- e. Are management personnel who approve/execute insertion orders knowledgeable of advertiser requirements and the contract specifications?
- f. Are the responsibilities of each party clearly articulated in the terms and conditions?
- g. Are original contract terms (the signed insertion order) compared with the created electronic version?
- h. Are insertion orders entered and reviewed/approved by different personnel?
- i. Do defined procedures exist for adjusting in-process or processed insertion orders, as follows:
 - i Defined approval and review of changes by management personnel other than entry personnel,
 - ii Error follow-up and logging procedures,
 - iii Communicating adjustments to the insertion order to agency management and client personnel, depending on the significance of the change?

2 Ad Trafficking:

- a. Does written, complete and up-to-date procedural documentation exist for the following ad-trafficking functions:
 - i Use of hard-coded ads or sponsorships where advertising is not placed through the normal ad system.
 - ii Assignment of third-party server, partner or affiliate responsibilities,

- iii Assignment of appropriate tagging or other identification functionality within ads or page-content,
- iv Testing the validity of ad tagging
- v Ensuring proper insertion order execution through timely monitoring of activity, and
- vi Completion and post-execution review of the campaign?
- b. Do appropriate management personnel review to ensure the presence of expected ad creative prior to activation of the campaign? Does this review include whether alternative (non-flash) ad creative is available in case complex creative such as Flash-based ads cannot be served?
- c. Do management personnel test (through systems checks and direct observation) that ads are trafficked to expected publishers or affiliates, in accordance with the parameters of the approved insertion order?
 - i Before trafficking?
 - ii After initiation of the campaign?
- d. Are errors noted in trafficking corrected in a timely manner and communicated to original insertion-order creation personnel?
- e. Does appropriate management review completed campaigns to ensure execution as documented in campaign contracts and insertion orders?

3 **Technology Infrastructure:**

(Completion of this section of the self-assessment questionnaire is only necessary if the publisher, 3PAS or advertising agency maintains campaign-entry software, adjusts entry parameters or maintains the technology infrastructure for campaign entry. In some cases only a portion of this section will be applicable, if for example, third-party tools are used but infrastructure is maintained by the agency or publisher)

- a. Does written, complete and up-to-date documentation exist for the following technology areas/procedures:
 - i Purchasing and evaluating new software applications,
 - ii The campaign entry, insertion order and trafficking application software itself,
 - iii Computer operations and data back-up procedures,
 - iv Granting and denying access to application and systems software,
 - v Maintenance procedures for application and systems software,
 - Development
 - Testing
 - Approval
 - vi Restart and error correction procedures, and
 - vii Output distribution and reporting procedures?
- b. If the agency or publisher relies on third-party documentation and manuals, are these manuals up-to-date and applicable to the software versions currently in use?
- c. Are operations, application/systems development and programming, and data access and control functions administered by different personnel?
- d. Is access to campaign initiation, insertion order, trafficking and systems software diligently controlled through passwords?
 - i Are passwords changed periodically?



- ii Are employees with access periodically reviewed to ensure continued authorization of all users?
- e. When application software is changed is documentation of the change retained? If so, for how long?
- f. When application software is changed, are changes tested to ensure accurate execution prior to adoption of the change?
- g. Are data and software related to Internet ad campaigns backed up and stored offsite on a regular basis?

4 **Reporting:**

- a. Has the organization reviewed the disclosure guidance contained in the IAB Ad Impression Measurement Guidelines? For in-house developed applications, are the appropriate disclosure made as required in the Guidelines? For customized ASP solutions, is full disclosure made of all customized aspects of the application?
- b. Are all types of data editing or data manipulation fully described to users of the data? For significant types of data adjustments, are these adjustment rates disclosed?
- c. Does current documentation exist for all report creation processes?

5 **Other Matters:**

- a. Does the advertising agency or publisher use automated methods to extract campaign parameter or execution data directly from a third-party or other system? If so, are data extractions reviewed for completeness and accuracy by personnel other than those executing the extraction?
- b. Does the advertising agency or publisher use geo-targeting, frequency capping or other special targeting/execution parameters in its insertion orders? If so, are these parameters reviewed for completeness and accuracy by personnel other than those entering the parameters?
- c. Are geo-targeting or other vendors used in targeting processes reviewed and approved by agency or publisher management?
- d. Are the names of geo-targeting or other vendors used in targeting processes communicated to advertiser clients?
- e. If a third-party is used for targeting or capping applications, is there a post entry review to ensure accurate entry of campaign parameters?
- f. If a third-party is used for targeting or capping applications, is a timely review performed to ensure accurate execution of campaign parameters?
- g. Are the IAB Ad Impression Measurement Guidelines followed for auto-refresh pages that are set by the agency or publisher?