




VAST 4.x Benefits Overview for Consumers

Why you should include the latest version of VAST 4.x (Video Ad Serving Template) in your product roadmap

March 2020

Benefits Overview

VAST (i.e. Video Ad Serving Template) is a communication standard that allows ad servers and video players to talk to each other. As the video ecosystem has evolved (with the emergence of mobile and OTT – among other things), VAST has evolved with it. The latest version of VAST includes improvements that will help ensure smooth ad delivery and measurement and solve for the transparency issues that were prevalent with previous versions. The current version is [VAST 4.2](#) (released June 2019). Read more on the evolution of the video ad serving standards in this post: [Simplifying Video Ad Delivery](#).

BENEFIT	 <p>Improves video creative quality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No blurry video ads. 	 <p>Better ad delivery and more efficient transactions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced errors (i.e. broken ads that don't play) & enhanced reporting across delivery systems. 	 <p>Streamlines and improves measurement, verification, and reporting efforts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simplifies tags which enables better measurement. Better management and tracking of creative assets (with Ad-ID integration).
CORRESPONDING VAST 4.X FEATURES/SOLUTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved user experience with mezzanine file and SSAI support (i.e. allows for more device coverage, higher quality video ads, etc.). Allows the video player to deliver the right ad based on available bandwidth with “ready-to-serve” file support. Opportunity for creative innovation with increased support of interactivity and audio. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better understanding of client (device) capabilities via macros translates to fewer errors. More context maintained across the entire delivery chain. Simplified ad delivery architecture (i.e. separation of media file from interactive/verification code) which leads to fewer blank or delayed ads. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better support across all verification vendors (VAST4.x + OMID allows a single tag to work across all platforms). Brand visibility at creative level; ability to view where their ads appear enables better reporting.

VAST 4.x Features and Benefits for Consumers

IMPROVES VIDEO CREATIVE	UPDATES AND FEATURES	WHY IT MATTERS FOR CONSUMERS
	<p>Mezzanine file support A high-quality media file that can be used to transcode (i.e. convert) the video to any desired quality - by SSAI servers as well as 3rd party ad servers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High quality video advertising experiences.
	<p>SSAI features In addition to the mezzanine file support, there is a separation of code from the media file, directions for handling headers, tracking beacons, ad requests, etc.</p>	
	<p>“Ready to serve file” support (low/med/high resolution media files) 3 pre-defined quality media files that can be used for adaptive streaming. The video player will choose the most appropriate file depending on the viewer’s streaming environment and will seamlessly transition between video files if the environment or streaming capabilities change during video playback.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminates any lag in the video. • Increased opportunity to stream in bad service areas.
	<p>Video ad interactivity handled via SIMID (Secure Interactive Media Interface Definition), replacing VPAID (which is being deprecated) Better support for interactivity with a separate node that will help ensure safe execution.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More opportunities to engage with interactive ads.
	<p>VAST interactive templates Standardized interactive experiences that can be driven by data in a VAST template instead of executable code. The first example of an interactive template in VAST 4.x is the “end card.”</p>	
	<p>Support for audio ads DAAST now merged into VAST. VAST 4.1 also introduced hybrid audio/video ad support.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More creative audio advertising experiences.
	<p>Closed captioning (for ads) Enables closed captioning for ads by standardizing the delivery of closed captioning files.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better accessibility support.

UPDATES AND FEATURES	WHY IT MATTERS FOR CONSUMERS
<p>Support for ad cloud hosted video creative Brands can host their creative centrally, in an ad cloud, and share VAST 4.x tags that can then be wrapped by upstream ad servers and/or DSPs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better quality ads that match the quality of the content being viewed.
<p><u>New error codes</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer video ad errors and improved ad experiences over time.
<p>Ad request (macro-based) spec Ability to send client context via <u>macros</u> including player capabilities (means that the VAST response can be built to match the player's capabilities). Standardized server to server communication.</p>	
<p>Separation of media file from interactive code/verification code VAST 4.x has separate nodes for the media file (i.e. MP4), the verification code, and the interactive code.</p>	
<p>Limit on wrappers Limit the number of <u>wrappers</u> allowed to 5.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quicker ad load times.
<p>Ad Categories Separate node for ad categories. Well defined registries for advertising assets.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The viewer will experience a variety of advertisements. • Age will be considered to protect children from exposure to inappropriate ads.

UPDATES AND FEATURES

Verification & viewability support via Open Measurement
 Better support for verification (separate node, viewability & verification beacons). Previously, running measurement code was possible only through Video Player-Ad Interface Definition (VPAID) media files, which would unnecessarily obscure and delay the actual creative content. This also meant that verification vendors became responsible for video playback, rather than simply acting as an observer. The only alternative to this setup was for each vendor to maintain a number of bespoke solutions with individual players.

Universal AdId
 Mechanism to clearly identify video assets, using standard ad registries (like [Ad-ID](#)).

WHY IT MATTERS FOR CONSUMERS

- Faster page loads due to simplified architecture.

- Delivery of more relevant ads.

Definitions

- **Adaptive Bitrate Streaming:** A technical process that adjusts the quality of a video delivered to the client/video player of a connected device based on changing network conditions, video buffer status, and CPU utilization to ensure the best possible viewer experience
- **Beacon:** A tiny image, referenced by a line of HTML or a block of JavaScript code, embedded into a website or third-party ad server, used as a tracking pixel to monitor user activity
- **Header:** An HTTP mechanism that allows the client (i.e. devices) and the server to pass information
- **iFrame:** An HTML capability that allows publishers and advertisers to avoid disruptive behavior and potential security risks when serving ads and other third-party content in line with the page
- **Macro:** A “variable” string that gets replaced with actual values by the publisher/video played
- **Mezzanine file:** In video production, the mezzanine file is the high-quality source file from which other versions at different quality levels can be transcoded
- **Node:** A processing location
- **Server-Side Ad Insertion (SSAI):** This is the process of stitching video content and ads together on the server-side level rather than on the browser level (client-side ad insertion)
- **Wrapper:** a bit of code that wraps around an object providing additional functionality

About Us



The Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) empowers the media and marketing industries to thrive in the digital economy. Its membership is comprised of more than 650 leading media companies, brands, and the technology firms responsible for selling, delivering, and optimizing digital ad marketing campaigns. The trade group fields critical research on interactive advertising, while also educating brands, agencies, and the wider business community on the importance of digital marketing. In affiliation with the IAB Tech Lab, IAB develops technical standards and solutions. IAB is committed to professional development and elevating the knowledge, skills, expertise, and diversity of the workforce across the industry. Through the work of its public policy office in Washington, D.C., the trade association advocates for its members and promotes the value of the interactive advertising industry to legislators and policymakers. Founded in 1996, IAB is headquartered in New York City.



Serving as the go-to for all things video, the IAB Digital Video Center of Excellence simplifies the video supply chain and provides best practices and education for brands, agencies, and media companies to drive continued growth through the evolving convergence of television and digital video. A dedicated unit within IAB, the center is devoted to the advancement of the digital video medium in the global marketplace. Its board and members reflect a dynamic mix of top television brands, original digital video content producers, prominent cross-media publishers, digital video technology leaders, and innovative start-ups spanning across the digital video programming, marketing, and distribution spectrum. Together with its member companies and in cooperation with the IAB Tech Lab, the center helps produce technical standards, common measurement, metrics, research, and thought leadership critical to the field, while identifying emergent best practices in the fast-growing arena of digital video. Working with the IAB Public Policy office, the Digital Video Center also advocates to legislators on behalf of the burgeoning medium. Established in November 2014, the Digital Video Center is based at the IAB New York City headquarters, and membership is open to all IAB member companies.

For more information on how to get involved, please contact digitalvideocenter@iab.com.

The logo for iab.TECH LAB features the word 'iab.' in black lowercase letters with a red dot above the 'i', followed by 'TECH LAB' in red uppercase letters with a red dot between 'iab.' and 'TECH'.

The IAB Technology Laboratory (Tech Lab) is a non-profit consortium that engages a member community globally to develop foundational technology and standards that enable growth and trust in the digital media ecosystem. Comprised of digital publishers, ad technology firms, agencies, marketers, and other member companies, IAB Tech Lab focuses on solutions for brand safety and ad fraud; identity, data, and consumer privacy; ad experiences and measurement; and programmatic effectiveness. Its work includes the OpenRTB real-time bidding protocol, ads.txt anti-fraud specification, Open Measurement SDK for viewability and verification, VAST video specification, and DigiTrust identity service. Board members include CBS Interactive, ConsenSys, ExtremeReach, Facebook, Google, GroupM, GumGum, Hearst Digital Media, Index Exchange, Integral Ad Science, LinkedIn, LiveRamp, MediaMath, Microsoft, Neustar, OpenX, Oracle Data Cloud, Pandora, PubMatic, Quantcast, Rakuten Marketing, SpotX, Tapad, The Trade Desk, TikTok Ads, Twitter, Verizon Media, Xandr, and Yahoo! Japan. Established in 2014, the IAB Tech Lab is headquartered in New York City.