

Recommendations for Advertising Viewability (Resulting from the AMM Viewability Congress Held February 4, 2016)

1. Viewable impressions can be one measure of campaign performance.

Digital is more measurable in almost every regard than other media types, and there is an almost unlimited variety of factors that can be measured to determine a campaign's success. The technological ability to accurately measure the various performance metrics, as well as the depth of understanding needed to correctly interpret the findings, can challenge even the most seasoned digital marketer. Although viewability may play a part in measuring campaign performance, objectives for each campaign must be clearly understood in order to determine the key performance indicators as optimizing a campaign against one metric can negatively impact the campaign's ability to deliver on other important metrics. Publishers, agencies and clients should work together to determine exactly how the viewable impression will be analyzed vis a vis other performance indicators.

2. Medical media publishers should be prepared to tie payment to a viewability standard for agencies and clients desiring to do so.

Inarguably, an ad must be viewed by a human being to have any impact whatsoever, and fraud—such as that seen in the consumer web publishing industry (but which is rare to non-existent in professional medical media)—should not be tolerated. The IAB, whose primary constituents are consumer publishers and advertisers, has attempted to address this challenge, as well as the many challenges inherent in measuring viewability and fairly accounting for it in billing, in its State of Viewability Transactions 2015¹ and accompanying Frequently Asked Questions.² Advertisers are increasingly demanding adherence to the IAB recommendations, but in medical media where inventory is scarce, providing make-good impressions (as recommended by IAB) is impractical for many publishers, so tying payment to viewability may be the only option. Medical media publishers are already implementing changes to their sites to address this new currency; however, association and STM (Science, Technical and Medical) publishers may take longer to adjust their sites due to society and association considerations. Publishers and advertisers should be willing to collaborate to achieve desired performance within the bounds of current realities.

3. Campaigns billed against viewability metrics should be priced differently than those that are not.

As with any performance-based ad campaign, it is possible for publishers, working closely with their clients, to test, change and optimize each digital ad for viewability, but providing this service requires investments in both technology and staffing as the challenges are different from campaign to campaign. When ads are tied to viewability, the cost of doing business on the publisher side significantly increases while the available supply decreases. Not all agencies and not all clients require viewability, and may not wish to pay the price for those that do.

¹ IAB State of Viewability Transactions 2015. <http://www.iab.com/guidelines/state-of-viewability-transaction-2015>. Accessed 2/23/16.

² IAB State of Viewability Transaction 2015 – Frequently Asked Questions. <http://www.iab.com/guidelines/state-of-viewability-frequently-asked-questions>. Accessed 2/23/16

4. Viewability should not be factored into the billing for sponsorships or SOV opportunities.

Road blocks, SOV, and other sponsorship opportunities are in a different class than run-of-site (ROS) ads because, in this model, the advertiser is buying ownership of the page or site—not a set number of impressions. The objectives are not only to maximize visibility but to limit the visibility of competitive ads. In SOV/Sponsorship campaigns, there is no opportunity for publishers to optimize campaigns or over-deliver to meet viewability thresholds. Nevertheless, some advertisers and agencies will ask that viewability be factored into billing, so publishers who wish to honor these requests will undoubtedly factor any potential viewability requirements into their pricing models.

5. The calculations used for billing based on viewability should be standardized across the industry.

Different agencies have different formulas for calculating billing if contracts are designed around viewability; some are designed around the IAB 2015 Transaction Principles³ while others are not. This causes publishers to have to develop different processes for calculating billable amounts & delivering contracted impressions, and most of this work is manual. This adds greatly to the cost of doing business and, ultimately, pushes prices upward for all advertisers. This is why IAB developed its 2015 Transaction Principles with the expectation that the vast majority of advertisers and publishers would adhere to this common standard.

AMM endorses the current IAB standards in their entirety, but recognizes that there are nuances in medical media that will require exceptions.

The most notable exception is the IAB standard that under delivery be reconciled in the form of make-good impressions rather than billing adjustments, which is often not practical for medical media publishers or advertisers. AMM further endorses the IAB standard that says, “Non-measurable impressions should be billed based on the served impression number. Non-measurable are assumed to be viewable since we cannot determine otherwise. We [the IAB] are explicitly not comfortable with applying viewability levels [to non-measured impressions] that are extrapolated from the measured impressions.”⁴

6. When the agency and publisher are using different viewability measurement tools, billing should be based on the highest counts measurable from an accredited MRC vendor.

This is about accuracy and administrative efficiency only. While no vendor can capture every viewable ad and report it as viewable, it is much less likely that a vendor will report an ad as viewable if it isn’t—thus, the highest count is likely to also be the most accurate. Furthermore, if publishers can invest in one viewability measurement tool, and use it for optimization and billing calculation, this will contain the cost of doing business and help hold prices down for all advertisers.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE: Media Ratings Council (MRC) Viewable Ad Impression Measurement

http://measurementnow.net/press-release-media-rating-council-updates-viewable-ad-impression-measurement-guidelines/#.VuMVU_krJD8 (Accessed 3/10/16)

³ IAB 2015 Transaction Principles. <http://www.iab.com/guidelines/state-of-viewability-transaction-2015>. Accessed 2/23/16.

⁴ IAB State of Viewability Transaction 2015 – Frequently Asked Questions. <http://www.iab.com/guidelines/state-of-viewability-frequently-asked-questions>. Accessed 2/23/16