

Brand Safety in Online Advertising : Technical Guidelines, Industry Response and Training



IAB Canada Industry Discussion Update
May, 2017

“The Supply Chain continues to make significant strides towards providing sophisticated tools and policies designed to provide a safe environment for advertisers to invest in”.

Sonia Carreno - President, IAB Canada



With increasing concern over control in an open digital marketplace with great scale, IAB Canada is working to update technical principles on delivering brand safety to advertisers.

The principles represent minimum requirements that advertisers or agencies placing advertising must have in place to ensure appropriate content alignment. Separately, IAB Canada will be releasing best practices for advertisers and agencies with regards to setting parameters for ad exposure online.

Current technical principles include the following requirements to offer brand safety:

- Block the serving of advertising to pages, which contain content deemed to be inappropriate by the advertiser, in HTML source code.
 - Detect inappropriate words on a web page or the code of that web page before or after the ad appears.
- Block the serving of advertising to pages that contain words in content delivered via a linked file deemed to be inappropriate by the advertiser.
 - When the page appears in the browser it displays content pulled from another source which may be unrelated to the expected content on the page.
- Register changes in page content and then block the serving of advertising to pages which contain content, deemed to be inappropriate by the advertiser, in real time.
 - A page which has rapidly changing content such as a Forum.

- Block the serving of advertising on to domains and sub-domains, deemed inappropriate by the advertiser. An inappropriate text string in the domain or sub-domain name such as <http://inappropriate.com> OR <http://inappropriate.safesite.com>
- Block the serving of advertising to pages containing words in the URL, deemed to be inappropriate by the advertiser.
 - An inappropriate text string contained within the URL such as <http://normal.com/okay/inappropriate.aspx>)
- Block the serving of advertising to aliases of a URL or domain, deemed to be inappropriate to the advertiser.
 - A URL may look like <http://normal.com/safe.aspx> but the page that is displayed is <http://inappropriate.com/unsafe.aspx>
- See through iframes and block the serving of advertising if keywords or URLs, deemed to be inappropriate, to the advertiser, are detected.
 - Inappropriate words may be contained within the iframe which is embedded on a web page and the ad is served on the page, or vice versa.
- An approved content verification product will also be able to serve ads correctly in equivalent scenarios that contain only appropriate content. In addition, the CV Product will:
 - Operate consistently in allowing or blocking advertising when JavaScript is disabled. If the product requires JavaScript to be enabled by a browser for it to make a decision as to whether the content is appropriate or not, does it block the serving of ads if JavaScript is disabled?
 - Be capable of incorporating any list of keywords or URLs, deemed to be inappropriate by the advertiser, into the CV product within 2 working days of that new list being produced.
 - Be configurable to block the serving of advertising to any URL not previously checked as safe, until the status is known, if identification of content is not in real time.

Industry Response to Brand Safety Concerns

In response to increasing concerns over brand safety from the advertiser community, major platforms like Google, YouTube and Facebook have moved quickly to develop increased security measures for marketers using their channels.

Some significant changes we have noted include:

- Sophisticated machine learning to help navigate millions of pieces of content with some increased efficiency and accuracy. While AI is in its early stages, there have been some promising results in early testing indicating that automated moderation is a viable investment towards a safer advertising environment.
- Changes to policy allowing the platforms to respond rapidly (in a matter of hours) to flagged content - this includes a commitment towards increased resources as well as procedures. There is acknowledgement that this area requires oversight and manpower to provide meaningful security service.
- Tighter default settings for brand safety, decreasing the margin of human error - in the pursuit of scale, many advertisers once operated on open market settings. Newer defaults are making it easier for planners to make conscious decisions about increasing exposure.
- New account-level controls allowing advertisers to exclude specific sites, channels and content (as described in our technical principles), as well as, the addition of sensitive subject classifiers making it easier for brands to exclude high risk content.
- Transparency reporting - working with MRC-accredited vendors, verification reporting will be made available in the coming weeks/months.
- Refinements to Brand Safety Policies - existing policies will be expanded to look at broader issues surrounding emerging trends i.e. hate speech and varying groups that are targeted by it.

The investments in brand safety are ongoing and we anticipate some quantifiable research to be released in the coming months to help signal change to advertisers who are in need of reassurance and concrete proof of safety in the supply chain.

** Please note that not all changes were implemented on all platforms*

IAB Canada and Brand Safety – *Empowerment Through Training*

Brand safety is a top priority for the supply chain and IAB Canada firmly believes that it is critical to the brand and media owner relationship to ensure that advertisements do not land on inappropriate content.

IAB Canada has a long history of leading the mission to create a safe environment for brands in collaboration with its global network. From providing best practices to supplying definitions and organic inappropriate content lists, the focus has mainly been on providing the industry with tools.

Specifically in the case where brands place ads on user-generated content, it is critical that they leverage the tools that they have available to give themselves full control of where their ads are placed. While user-generated content provides the incredible scale and niche content alignments many advertisers benefit from, it is a form of advertising that reminds us that digital media executions require hands-on, strategic attention.

It is for this reason that IAB Canada is committing to provide more sophisticated levels of training in the areas of brand safety over the coming weeks.

Our mandate is unwavering in that it is focused on securing the supply chain and re-establishing trust with advertisers.

New IAB Canada Brand Safety Workshop

IAB Canada is showing its commitment to empowering the industry with the right tools and processes to ensure brand safety by launching its first Brand Safety Workshop on **May 17th, 2017** at the IAB Canada Training Centre.

The workshop will outline the key issues affecting the supply chain and cover best practices for brand safe media execution. We will cover some of the technical requirements that agencies and marketers should be looking for from their ad tech vendors as standard best practice to create a safe buying environment. We will also share tactical process practices that can be implemented right away to ensure brand safety is being addressed across the entire organization.

Finally, the workshop will provide hands-on training on the technical implementation of brand safety features in the field. We will cover popular in-field platforms like Comscore, Google, Eyetrack and Facebook to provide participants with confidence in execution immediately following the session.

IAB Canada will be holding several workshops throughout the year but spots are limited, register today to secure a seat.