



Making Measurement Make Sense: An Update on Viewability... and Beyond

Dear Members of the ANA, 4As, and IAB,

The past several weeks have seen an overflow of public debate about the industry-wide shift of the “currency” for digital advertising transactions from the served impression to the viewable impression. This debate is welcome, and it is healthy. But it should not overshadow one basic fact: We have won. Implementation challenges notwithstanding, the viewable impression is the new reference currency for digital media transactions. Our three associations are proud of our investments and collaboration, and we are locked arm-in-arm-in-arm as we strive to improve the state of digital media measurement, and indeed, of all media measurement.

But in order to speed up the transformation and maturation of digital measurement, we need your renewed commitment to and leadership in this critical joint industry endeavor. Specifically, we need marketers, agencies, and publishers to provide the MRC specially structured data on viewability measurement results for their advertising campaigns, so the MRC can identify and resolve any remaining material causes for systematic viewable impression counting differences by companies and their vendors.

As most of you will recall, exactly four years ago, we launched the “Making Measurement Make Sense” (3MS) initiative because the absence of a consistent approach to measuring and assessing the effects of digital media had resulted in a cacophony of competing and contradictory measurement systems, contributing to a complex and costly supply chain for the industry. The transition to a viewable-impression currency was the first recommendation of the groundbreaking . June 2011 3MS study done for our three associations by Bain & Co. and Medialink LLC. Viewable exposures were increasingly the norm across other media, because they better address the needs of brand marketers. The research showed that of all major media, only digital failed to require viewability in measuring advertising - a critical deficiency as consumers increased their media consumption on digital channels, and a major impediment to cross-platform advertising planning, buying, and optimization. The end goal of this process has always been a robust digital measurement currency that can help act as a “digital GRP” that leads us to understand cross media behavior. But to get there, we first had to understand what makes an impression viewable.

We handed oversight of viewability implementation and 3MS's other vital objectives to the Media Rating Council, and the MRC has done a superb job in shepherding this critical program. It's been only six months since the MRC lifted its "gating period" and trading on viewable impressions formally began. During that time, many snags have been encountered in the application of viewability – and unraveled by the MRC.

As the MRC oversees the "last mile" of viewability implementation, it needs more and better data from marketplace participants to understand and resolve the remaining causes of discrepancies among its accredited viewability measurement providers. While MRC has previously issued guidance to the industry on reasons why such discrepancies existed, and has prescribed certain procedures that accredited vendors must follow to address these variances, it is undertaking this additional step to ensure that any remaining material causes for systematic viewable impression counting differences are identified. The data supplied confidentially for this project will help to ensure that significant issues will be addressed and resolved.

The most valuable data submissions would be those that illustrate significant vendor counting differences in systematic manners – variances greater than +/-10% - especially if they are tied to specific advertising circumstances. The MRC will review each submission and determine what (if any) further actions required are required, and also determine how the individual cases might lead to changes in the general principles governing viewability metrics.

The memo from MRC CEO George Ivie, which you can download [here](#), describes the kinds of data the MRC is seeking, and the best ways for you to provide that data. If you have any questions about how you can contribute, we urge you to contact George (givie@mediaratingcouncil.org) or David Gunzerath (dgunzerath@mediaratingcouncil.org) at the MRC; Duke Fanelli at the ANA (dfanelli@ana.net); Bill Tucker of the 4As (btucker@aaaa.org); or IAB's Sherrill Mane (Sherrill@iab.net). At our forthcoming Board of Directors meetings (ANA, Jan. 28; 4As, Jan. 29; IAB, Feb. 8), our associations will discuss how we intend to work with our members to assure the MRC gets the information it needs – and that you get a better, more friction-free, more transparent marketplace.

We also intend to reconvene the "Blue Ribbon Task Force" of major marketing, advertising, and publishing business leaders to own and oversee together the progress of 3MS. The next phase of 3MS, which has already begun, will focus on the creation of a common, audience-based GRP, followed by the development of common platforms for cross-media analytics. We need business leaders, sales leaders, research leaders, and technology leaders focused on these tasks, and we do plan to call on you for ongoing support and thought leadership.

We always expected hurdles along the way to better measurement. We also knew that, collectively, our industry would overcome them, and with the MRC's guidance, we are. It is healthy for our ecosystem that companies are challenging each other, and negotiating their way over and around these obstacles. The debates and negotiations are merely stops along the way toward greater understanding and more consistent application of important industry standards.

Yours,

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