

Improve Digital

10 ways to control **ad quality** when working with **ad networks and exchanges**

Are you a publisher looking to benefit from the revenues that networks and exchanges could bring, but worried about creative quality control and protection of your brand image? You are certainly not alone. In a world where buying media space in 'real-time' is becoming increasingly standard, controlling quality can become more challenging. Networks and exchanges do a large part of the job, but as a publisher you can also benefit from technologies and practices that will help you get it 'right'.

Joëlle Frijters
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BACKGROUND TO RECOMMENDATIONS

In the early years of online advertising, monetising online display media space used to be a step-by-step process where all creative was pre-approved, or at least always came from a well known third party such as the media agency. Control of quality of ads, and therefore brand image, was relatively easy. But monetisation today is all about capitalising on multiple revenue opportunities from multiple resources which go way beyond the classical direct advertisers and media agencies. Two of these new channels are ad networks and exchanges.

The number of networks and exchanges is growing and with over 70 networks operating in the UK only, working with multiple networks has become the reality for most premium publishers. However, optimising and managing multiple networks can be a challenge in terms of workload, data management and quality control. Improve Digital is a company that provides technology to help publishers to solve this challenge resulting in increased eCPMs and revenues, cost efficiencies and better central control (see www.improvedigital.com for further details). Working with over 25 premium publishers in Europe and the UK has enabled Improve Digital to gather key information on how to control the quality of the various campaigns and ads served by multiple networks and exchanges.

Besides looking for additional revenue, higher eCPM's and cost savings, the majority of the publishers also want to protect their brand image and see this as a key criteria for success. "We see that protection of brand image is often even higher on the agenda than the actual increase in eCPM," says Joëlle Frijters, CEO and co-founder of Improve Digital. "Together with the networks, we have good experience of controlling the quality of campaigns and creatives, however you have to get everything 100 percent right. We're happy to share our thoughts with the industry and show how collaboration with multiple ad networks and exchanges can be an extreme positive experience."

Nic Peters, UK managing director of Improve Digital, adds: "Brand management needs to have time and effort devoted to it. If for example you neglect to update and refresh your block lists - which are fundamental to brand safety – it will be extremely difficult for networks to perform according to your brand protection goals."

10 DO'S AND DON'TS

The advice is valuable for any publisher working with ad networks and/or exchanges. Some networks/exchanges are more controlled and others are more open, but in general if you keep the following do's and don'ts in mind, you will have a 'brand-safe' experience:

1. Manage your blacklist dynamically and be as precise as possible: A blacklist is dynamic and a process for updating it needs to be in place. For example, don't forget to delete temporarily blocked advertisers in order to avoid downwards pressure on your eCPM from networks due to overly tight restrictions. Be as specific as possible and don't make assumptions such as 'please exclude our competitors' - you need to be precise and name them per market.
2. Think international IP's: Most networks service their campaigns and GEO target on IP. So when considering your website, also bear in mind blacklisting for the other markets, which might be more or less strict. Try to provide a precise blacklist for the major markets. The other way around, don't trust blindly on IP targeting especially in countries with multiple languages such as Belgium. You will risk ending up serving French ads to Flemish speaking users.
3. Pre-approve ads and campaigns where needed: Some networks/exchanges offer you the ability to pre-approve each campaign and advertiser. This should be limited to those networks where you feel it is a 'must-do'. Every human step reduces the real time capabilities of a system and therefore the eCPM and potential revenues.

4. Manually check what is being served: Even when all networks and exchanges have signed off on your blacklists, there might still be ads coming through and you have to check this, especially at the beginning of the collaboration.
5. Use a plug-in for your browser to view the network source of each ad: For this you can use a specific browser or a Firefox plug in such as AdInspector from PubMatic.
6. Have your emergency process in place, making sure it also covers out of office hours and all markets: If anything goes wrong make sure you, and your network contacts, are prepared. Have emergency email addresses in place both internally and externally for the facility to take down 'bad creative' 24/7. Also make sure the SLAs with the networks are clearly defined.
7. Consider Javascripts versus Iframes: Iframes are somewhat safer as it makes it impossible for an ad to 'damage' your website or serve unwanted expendables etc. However Iframes also restrict some capabilities for the networks such as forms of contextual advertising.
8. Aim for long term relationships with networks: Search for longer term relationships with a maximum of 10 ad networks that fit your audience and brand. This will give the networks the opportunity to learn about your requirements and understand your rules around brand image protection. You might test many more networks in the beginning, but eventually you will find your preferred partners.
9. Categorise your inventory and tailor the ad network mix by section: If you are a larger publisher, do you need to work with the same network mix and restrictions across all of your inventory? Remember that you can be stricter on some placements and 'easier' on others.
10. Document your findings and share: Ask around about which networks might fit your brand image and seek advice from colleagues and peers in the industry, but also make sure you document your findings and at least share them internally within the company - and ideally with the market.

In summary, monetising with ad networks and exchanges can go hand in hand with full brand image protection, and for most premium publishers with their own direct sales team or significant premium business, this is a key requirement. Most networks are already taking creative control very seriously and are able to deliver 100 percent according to the restrictions. However, it is always good to know the rules of the game and be able to work according to them on a day-to-day basis. Learning from others and building on their experience is part of the process that must be undertaken to achieve the best overall monetisation possible both in the short and the long term.

About Improve Digital



IMPROVE DIGITAL

Powered by: **PubMatic**

Leading premium publishers from all over the world use Improve Digital's/ PubMatic's real time and predictive optimisation technology to increase revenues from ad networks and exchanges, protect their brand image and gain central insight and control. Our clients benefit from local presence, local market knowledge, and best in class service. Improve Digital exclusively represents the PubMatic technology in Europe adding additional technologies, services and expertise. Improve Digital has offices in London, Amsterdam, Hamburg and Paris and is member of the IAB.

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