



TRANSPARENCY

In a world of Walled Gardens

By Damien Venuto for Acquire Online





TRANSPARENCY

It's only fitting in an election year, that a word usually reserved for political debate has become the key talking point in advertising. So how far exactly are we from ensuring 'transparency' in digital media?

Until recently the word 'transparency' was used primarily in reference to cellophane and politics. But over the last few years, we've increasingly seen it slip into the conversations pervading digital media to become one of the biggest talking points in the industry. Dodgy metrics, questionable standards, rampant fraud and inflated margins have all contributed to marketers asking tougher questions of their digital partners and demanding that they know where their money is being spent.

Earlier this year, Procter & Gamble chief brand officer Marc Pritchard didn't mince words in calling for greater transparency across the industry.

When Pritchard talks, the rest of the industry listens—and this was something he was acutely aware of when he made what amounted to a rallying call for action.

"The days of giving digital a pass are over," he said in January. "It's time to grow up. It's time for action."

"Your participation is essential. Every one of us. Don't be fooled by the myths. Don't accept the excuses. Don't wait for someone else to move. Don't be daunted by the task. Take one step at a time. There is tremendous power in the collective force of our industry."

While his words were uttered in Hollywood, Pritchard's call to arms will no doubt have also been heard by local marketers eager to ensure that they're getting the best possible deal for their money.



AcquireOnline's Zane Furtado says that programmatic advertising is no longer the technically esoteric discipline it was once considered. Marketers have become more educated on how programmatic works, and they've started taking a more hands-on role.

"They don't just rely on their agencies or vendors," Furtado says. "Modern marketers get more involved and ask more questions. And as ad buying matures and more programmatic specialists move to the client side, the demand for greater transparency and control increases."

This resonates with remarks made by ANZ head marketers Astrud Burgess and Matt Pickering, who recently told NZ Marketing that they're taking active steps to ensure that they understand programmatic sufficiently to make informed decisions.

"Advertisers can't just leave it to others to understand the effectiveness of their digital investment," they said. "Up-skilling marketing teams to have this expertise in-house to drive these conversations directly is critical, which can be challenging as it is such a specialised area.

The point here is that the transparency can't just be dropped at the doorstep of the adtech companies.

It's an issue that demands collaboration between marketers, researchers and measurement providers, publishers, programmatic companies and digital juggernauts such as Google.

But what exactly are we working toward? What constitutes a suitably transparent relationship between the client and the advertising partner?

"A transparent relationship allows a marketer access to actual media spends, strategy, platforms, site transparency across various media channels and devices," explains Furtado when asked this question.

"This not only builds trust but also helps trading desks have the flexibility to move away from media plans and adjust strategy to match the ever-changing MARTECH landscape, consumer trends and media consumption habits."

THE BIG

ISSUES

The problem, however, is that the industry is still some way from achieving this objective.

In delivering his speech, Pritchard gave marketers four directives with a view toward moving toward a more transparent advertising landscape.

These were:

1. Adoption of a single viewability standard
2. Implementation of third-party measurement verification
3. Signing transparent agency contracts
4. Taking steps to tackle ad fraud

These directives are each tailored to correcting what Pritchard—and many other marketers—see as the core issues impacting digital ad buying.

The local industry has taken some recommendations seriously. In February, the Interactive Advertising Bureau of New Zealand (IABNZ) hosted a debate on viewability, featuring a panel with representatives from MOAT, MI9, IKON, Comscore and BNZ.

The general consensus was that industry accepted the IAB's standard definition that an ad can be considered viewed if 50 percent of the pixels are viewable for a duration of one second in display or two seconds for video.





WALLED GARDENS

Applying this minimum standard uniformly across the board has, however, become a challenge in the evolving online landscape.

“At this stage, we are living in a world of walled gardens,” says Furtado.

“Each garden has its own set of rules and audience. We can’t get rid of them, but what we need is for them to cooperate and be transparent.”

Alongside the high walls of Facebook and Google, we now also have Snapchat and Amazon—both of which also command massive audiences.

Furtado says that without cooperation from all these players, it’s virtually impossible to ensure unduplicated reach and frequency. Essentially what this means is that unless we’re able to peek through these walls, one person might be counted three times as they jump from Facebook to Google and on to Amazon.

Fortunately, the juggernauts of digital media are starting to come around (to some degree).

As Lachlan Brae, Comscore vice president for Australia and New Zealand, explained during the panel discussion: “Those walled gardens

are coming down. Google and Facebook are much more open to collaboration and they’re opening up to more third parties every day across a whole range of metrics.”

An example of this shift was evident earlier this year when Facebook committed to an audit with the Media Ratings Council.

Steps of this nature are certainly a move in the right direction, but marketers and agencies need to remain vigilant to ensure transparency from the major international publishers.

Mi9 managing director Rhys Heron said it best when explaining that despite the size of the big global media companies, the power still lies with those who hold the purse strings.

“It’s really up to the advertisers and the agencies that control the booking revenue to demand the same level of transparency from international publishers as they do from any other publishers,” Heron said.

Money talks. And if marketers really want transparency, then they still have it within their power to demand it. And rest assured if a few more powerful marketers heed the call of Pritchard then the muddiness we currently have could clear up quite quickly.

WHAT QUESTIONS ?

should you be asking ?

1

Question your vendors on what platforms they use to ensure brand safety and transparency.

3

Keep up-to-date on new technology and fraud prevention techniques.

2

Get access to site level data, media spends and viewability metrics.

4

If you get 1,000 clicks and no conversions on a performance campaign, question your agency/ vendor, change the user experience on your website, or make changes to your brand product offering.

HOW ACQUIRE ONLINE

ensures brand safety and transparency

- 🛡 We use industry brand safety and ad fraud detection tools including MOAT, Double Verify, Integral Ad Science, ComScore and Peer39.
- 🛡 We maintain and update a strict blacklist and whitelists. We have a negative keyword list that covers violence and hate speech, tragic events, natural calamities and sensitive topics amongst others.
- 🛡 Acquire Online are constantly first to market with new technology.
- 🛡 Our custom dashboards give a holistic view of our client's campaigns including audience insights, engagement, site level data and sales conversions.
- 🛡 We take viewability seriously, exceeding the Australia and NZ standard of 44% with an average campaign viewability of 51% for 2016 and growing year on year.

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