

MOBILE

Publishers hone in on strategies for tackling ad blocking

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Image courtesy of Michael Kors

By CHANTAL TODE

With ad blocking on desktop and mobile a big concern of marketers, the Interactive Advertising Bureau's Technology Laboratory is showcasing some of the tactics that are working to change consumer behavior in a new primer.

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The Publisher Ad Blocking Primer outlines the tactics publishers are using to persuade consumers to stop deploying ad blockers. The IAB Tech Lab also released an open-source ad blocking detection script to assist in a step-by-step process for connecting with ad blocking consumers.

"The primer isn't intended to discriminate one platform versus another," said Scott Cunningham, senior vice president of ad operations and technology at IAB and general manager of **IAB Tech Lab**. "Experimentation should occur on both.

"Ad Blocking rates on desktop have been measured higher than mobile, but testing has occurred on both platforms," he said. "Many publishers will start messaging end users if they haven't already and are also implementing LEAN strategies as part of the value proposition."

DEAL with it

The primer outlines a recommended approach for publishers to connect with ad blocking consumers. The first step involves detecting when ad blocking is taking place in order to initiate a conversation with these consumers.

The second step is explaining the value exchange that advertising enables. This is followed by asking consumers to change their behavior in order to maintain an equitable exchange.

The final step is lifting restrictions or limiting access in response to consumers' choices.

The approach is called DEAL, for detect, explain, ask and lift.

A tactical approach

The primer reviews a number of different tactics being employed by publishers but does not recommend any specific ones.

These include sending a message to the site visitor once ad blocking has been detected. The risk involved with this

strategy includes raising awareness of ad blockers. On the plus side, it is a light touch entry point for further discussion.

Another tactic is to deny access to content once ad blocking has been detected. This could result in shrinking a site's total audience. However, it has been shown to have much more significant impact on user behavior than simple notice.

Another tactic is offering a tiered experience. This could result in the user feeling the publisher is not as valuable a resource. On the other hand, this strategy can help retain audience and provide for more engagement opportunities.

IAB's goal in releasing the primer and ad blocking detection script is to open the door to greater transparency and a meaningful dialogue with visitors using ad blockers. Ultimately, the expectation is that by communicating with consumers who are engaged in ad blocking, publishers can cut through the blockade and support an open, ad-supported Internet.

To ensure the effectiveness of the method, IAB recommends that publishers offer user-friendly Web sites that are light, encrypted, ad choice supported and have non-invasive ads.

"It's early, but some publishers are finding certain messages work for certain pools of users," Mr. Cunningham said. "Not one size fits all."

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