PROGRAMMATIC BUYING SOLUTIONS FOR PREMIUM VIDEO

A GUIDE TO BEST PRACTICES FOR MAXIMISING PROGRAMMATIC DELIVERY ON PREMIUM INVENTORY

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This document, focused on programmatic solutions for premium video, follows on from the FW Council for Premium Video, Europe (FWCE) initiative: Cracking the Programmatic Conundrum. The paper outlined three strategic approaches being taken by premium video providers to incorporate programmatic trading to grow local markets, manage inventory more effectively and boost the overall value proposition. For this second output, the FWCE put together a guide to help buy-side technology partners adopt specific best practices for maximising programmatic delivery on premium inventory.

What is premium video?

Premium Video is professionally-produced content delivered via curated user experiences in a brand-safe context to highly engaged audiences. TV broadcasters and operators have premium video offerings within linear and digital environments:

- The content that they monetise includes long form content and also includes live events and simulcast channels
- Broadcasters and pay TV operators focus on user experience - this is both due to their long-standing direct relationship with audiences as well as existing regulations
- Historically they have managed supply/demand relationship and planned their operations very early in advance
- They have an extensive and complex footprint of endpoints. These include devices such as OTT devices, Set-Top-Boxes (STBs); IPTV. These devices, as well as the high-quality user experience requirements have led them to create complex creative management processes.
- They have invest significantly to better understand their audience whilst continuing to provide a positive user experience. This rich first-party data is one of their most valuable assets and they therefore are reluctant to expose this to other parties unless this is done in a secure way.
The Opportunity

Premium Video publishers have a proven reputation of providing engagement environments for their advertisers. This is not just due to the singular focus the viewer has with the content but also because the ad breaks are curated to be highly effective. The TV viewer typically watches an appropriate number of adverts, aligned to content, separated by industry to avoid dilution or conflict, frequency capped to avoid frustrating repetition, and where addressable, with increased relevance.

The opportunity for buy-side partners like Demand Side Platforms (DSPs) is to achieve better performance against their client’s advertising goals. When executed well, premium video delivers impactful campaigns through access to desirable, engaged audiences. DSPs should respond to their advertisers’ needs by investing to include premium video audiences as part of their portfolio to reach viewers in the most impactful environments.

Ad Server and Supply Side Platform

To deliver optimal ad selection across all demand channels, premium video publishers should consider using an ad server that provides a unified decision across guaranteed and non-guaranteed campaigns whether they are executed via direct-sold insertion orders, reseller client-to-server VAST tags or programmatic OpenRTB bids. These ad servers offer an integrated supply side platform (SSP) to provide server-side access to programmatic demand which can be fed directly into the ad selection process.

Integrated SSP benefits for programmatic buyers:

▶ Root access to the ultimate ad selection decision in the publisher ad server
▶ Access to more opportunities, rather than only one per ad break
▶ Optimized path to supply with no intermediary auctions or ad decisions
▶ Better budget management, as invalid bids (due to publisher user experience business rules) are filtered pre-auction rather than post-auction

Server-to-server integrations:

▶ Enhanced troubleshooting
▶ Informed ad decision that takes true DSP bid price and creative attributes into consideration

There are a number of aspects with premium video that DSPs and other partners need to account for in their processes and capability in order to take full advantage of the opportunity provided by this inventory. Most topics below are global in nature, but where appropriate, nuances are called out to allow for variances in market dynamics.
PROGRAMMATIC BUYING SOLUTIONS

USER DATA  CREATIVE COMPLIANCE AND FORMAT  MEASUREMENT
IDENTIFYING ADVANCED INVENTORY  PACING AND REPORTING
LIVE STREAMING  PROGRAMMATIC GUARANTEED  UNIFIED DECISION
REGULATION  TRANSPARENCY
USER DATA

User Data - Summary

Premium video requirements and capabilities may limit the information populated in the bid request due to several reasons:

- Unlike environments such as Desktop, some premium video environments are not always able to generate or pass all information, particularly for SSAI, STB VOD and CTV.
- Publishers have to comply with strict viewer privacy or industry regulations, or policies that restrict user data sharing.
- Potential bid request fields that may be omitted, obfuscated or non-standard: IP Address, User Agent, Device ID, Buyer User ID, Geo.

DSPs should consider how existing processes may be affected by restricted or obfuscated user data for invalid traffic (IVT) detection, frequency capping, audience targeting and geo targeting. Let’s consider each one.

User Data - IVT (Invalid Traffic)

The ad server should implement several pre- and post-delivery tools to identify and prevent invalid traffic from being transacted on its platform.

Publishers with strict policies around user data sharing may pass user data to the ad-server to incorporate it into the ad-server’s own IVT detection processes but that user data may not be included in external bid requests to DSPs.

Challenge: The absence of user data in the bid requests may result in inaccurate detection of invalid traffic within DSP detection processes.

Best practices:

- Work closely with the ad server team to develop a clear understanding of what constitutes IVT in the premium video environment and whether DSP IVT processes might lead to false positives.
- Highlight any particular IVT concerns to enable investigation and resolution across ad server, DSP and 3rd party detection partners.
- Consider bid request identifiers and white-listing processes and prevent requests being filtered for IVT:
  - device.ext.truncated_ip
  - device.ext.ip_less
  - publisher.id
  - device.ua
  - device.type

User Data - Frequency Capping & Viewer Experience

Programmatic buyers often implement frequency caps to control the viewer experience for their brand or campaign. Similarly, publishers may have sophisticated control for overall viewer experience across all ads, or granular control between brands or industries (this is covered in greater detail within the ‘Creatives and Compliance’ section of this document).

Challenge: The absence of user data in the bid requests may result in the non-delivery of DSP campaigns that use frequency capping (or limit capping).

Best practices:

- Collaboration is needed to educate buyers on the limitations (signals) of buyer frequency capping on premium video inventory.
- Encourage buyers to set frequency capping expectations with publishers for them to implement.
- Perform frequency capping on bid request field user.id or device.ifa which may be populated with a unique representation of the user.

User Data - Audience Targeting

Programmatic buyers often implement audience targeting within the DSP campaign settings, to optimise delivery to the most relevant users.

Challenge: The absence of user data in the bid requests may result in the non-delivery of campaigns that use DSP audience targeting.

Best practices:

- Work with the ad server/SSP teams to determine the most efficient way to handle audience targeting in the absence of user data in the bid request.
- Encourage buyers to work with publishers to use 1st party data to target deals towards the most relevant users in accordance with applicable laws.

SOLUTIONS
**User Data - Geo Targeting**

Programmatic buyers often implement geography targeting within the DSP campaign settings, to optimise delivery to the most relevant users.

**Challenge:** The absence or obfuscation of IP Address in the bid requests may result in the non-delivery of campaigns that use DSP geo targeting.

**Best practices:**
- Work with the ad-server team to determine the best way to handle geo-targeting in the absence of user data in the bid request.
- Encourage buyers to work with publishers to target deals towards particular geos.
- Consider implementing support for the OpenRTB Geo object, in particular `geo.country` and `geo.zip`.

**CREATIVE COMPLIANCE AND FORMAT**

Publishers can have sophisticated control for overall viewer experience across all ads, or granular control between brands or industries.

**Challenge:**
- Premium video can be delivered into a wide range of player environments which require creatives of a particular specification.
- Premium video can be subject to broadcast regulatory standards in some markets, which require a central creative repository.
- Campaigns that are executed through multiple supply paths (direct sold or via several DSPs and SSPs) may not respect frequency capping served alongside one another within the stream.

**Best practices:**
- Be aware of audio requirements on the publisher’s platform.
- Work with ad server partners to best handle creative uniqueness and satisfy local broadcast regulations.
- Potential solutions could include:
  - Integrating repositories such as Clearcast or Ad-ID.
  - Declaration within VAST 4.x response.

**MEASUREMENT**

Many premium video environments do not allow 3rd party scripts to run because of the risks of interrupting a user’s viewing experience if the script fails to run properly. For the environments that do allow measurement scripts to run, it is necessary for publishers to utilise code libraries (or SDKs) in the video player so that the scripts can be initiated at the time of ad rendering.

**Challenge:** Viewability measurements that digital buyers rely on for less regulated display or web may not work the same way for premium video.

**Best practices:**
- Open Measurement SDK - look for partners who have built support for the IAB Open Measurement SDK, removing the need for publishers to install each measurement partner’s SDK individually. DSPs are encouraged to include the relevant OM SDK resources in the creative VAST sent in the bid response in order to trigger measurement in compatible environments.
- There is a need to further educate buyers that premium video environments are sometimes un-measurable and should be treated differently from other media types.
- Consider other metrics such as completion rate, as an excellent proxy for measuring viewability when no other measurement is available.
- Transacting Deal IDs with trusted sellers on inventory that is inherently viewable (such as Connected TV) will achieve greater scale than exclusively targeting measurable inventory in the open market.

**IDENTIFYING ADVANCED INVENTORY**

Premium video inventory may require specialised DSP workflows but DSPs may not be able to differentiate premium video inventory types in a consistent way.

**Best practices:**
- Consider supporting new identifiers for premium video inventory to trigger specialised workflows:
  - Server-side (`imp.ext.serverside`)
  - Live stream (`content.livestream`)
  - Programmatic guaranteed (`deal.ext.guaranteed`)
  - OTT IFA Guidelines (`device.ext.ifa_type`)
  - Support for IPv6 formatted IP addresses.
**PACING AND REPORTING**

**Challenge:** Metrics and ratios traditionally used in DSP reporting for display may look significantly different due to the nature of premium video.

**Best practices:**
- DSPs should take the following considerations into account for bidder optimisation, pacing and buyer reporting best practices:
  - Bid Ratio = Responses/Requests: This is still a good indicator of whether DSP is participating
  - Win Ratio = Wins/Bids: This may be lower than on other inventory, due to strict business rules for long-form content such as industry separation, brand exclusivity, back-to-back ads etc.
  - Delivery Ratio = Impressions/Wins: This may be lower than on other inventory, due to longer times between auction and delivery

**LIVE STREAMING**

**Challenge:** Live streaming may result in spikes of concurrent users and impact existing configurations for performance (query-per-second capacity), budgeting, pacing and frequency capping.

**Best practices:**
- Work with ad server partners to align on best practices for handling live streams and live events
  - Suggestions include:
    - Support for high-concurrency events. For example: 5-6M viewers resulting in 3-5M bid requests within 5 seconds.
    - Support for server-side calls to tracking URLs and ability to differentiate livestream-related QPS spikes from fraudulent activity.
    - Support for mezzanine-level creative.
    - Support for response times under 250ms.
    - Cloud infrastructure that scales to handle increased traffic.
    - Custom processing for live inventory, such as triggered on the ORTB livestream.
    - Further buyer education for budget planning that takes traffic spikes into account.

**PROGRAMMATIC GUARANTEED**

**Challenge:** Guaranteed transactions executed within a programmatic infrastructure requires creative pre-ingestion and a >90% bid rate

**Best practices:**
- Look to integrate a Programmatic Guaranteed Creative API
- Respond to >90% of Programmatic Guaranteed bid requests by disabling some functionality such as budgeting, pacing or targeting
- Create DSP-specific buyer best practices and set expectations for delivering successful Programmatic Guaranteed transactions. For instance, creative associated prior to deal start date and aligning with the seller to configure their targeting or pacing requirements

**UNIFIED DECISION**

**Challenge:**
- Often creatives are retrieved prior to the ad selection process. Therefore, the ${AUCTION_PRICE} macro will not expand if included in the ad mark-up (adm field in bid response).
- Some publishers may implement some business rules such as brand exclusivity and industry separation, which would filter out some bids
- Advanced ad servers will simultaneously send a bid request for every potential opportunity in the stream
- Conduct ad selection for the whole stream, at the start of the stream. For long-form content, 98% of impression events occur within 2-hours of auction time

**Best practices:**
- Include ${AUCTION_TYPE} in the NURL call-back only
- Include multiple bids within the bid response, to increase the probability that a bid will be selected and multiple bids can deliver into each break
- Implement a window of at least 2-hours to receive impression call-backs for billing and budgeting
**REGULATION**

**Challenge:** Respect user privacy and local regulations

**Best practices:**
- It is important to respect dnt, lmt, coppa and gdpr bid request flags - otherwise, publishers will not send bid requests

**TRANSPARENCY**

**Challenge:** Advertising budgets intended to deliver into premium video environments are redirected by bad actors to invalid traffic

**Best practices:**
- Implement ads.txt and app-ads.txt
- Work with ad server partners to determine the best solutions for transparency for buyers

**Challenge:** Premium video publishers need granular control on demand quality

**Best practices:**
- Send Seat ID in the bid response and provide the ad server with mappings of Seat ID to buyer entity
PROGRAMMATIC BUYING SOLUTIONS BENEFITS

In order to take full advantage of what premium video can deliver for marketers, consider adjusting execution processes and developing infrastructure to transact at scale:

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**APPENDIX**

**Addressable TV**
Addressable TV is the use of technologies to enable individual advertisers to serve different ads to different audience segments watching the same TV content. This can be applied to live or VOD environments & has the opportunity to open up television to an expanded set of marketers seeking specific audiences. Through the application of data from advertisers, third party and/or TV providers, addressable TV enables advertisers to access more specific audiences beyond traditional age & gender. Segmentation can occur at geographic, demographic, behavioral & (in some cases) first & third party data-matched household levels, through cable, satellite, & Internet Protocol television (IPTV) delivery systems.

**Ad server**
Ad Server technology makes rapid decisions about what ads should display, and then serves them. The Ad Server also collects and reports data (such as impressions) that advertisers can analyze in order to enhance future ad performance.

**CTV**
Connected TV is a television set that’s connected to the internet and facilitates the delivery of streaming video content. Ad placements run on Connected TVs are typically bought and sold more like digital video.

**Deal IDs**
A universal identifier that can be tied to specific attributes for a campaign.

**Frequency capping**
Is the maximum number of times any one user is supposed to see a specific ad.

**IVT**
Invalid Traffic - activity that did come from a real user with genuine interest, such as accidental clicks caused by intrusive ad implementations, fraudulent clicking by competing advertisers, and advertising botnets.

**OTT**
Refers to content providers that distribute streaming media as standalone product directly to viewers over the internet, bypassing telcos, multichannel televisions and broadcast tv platforms that traditionally act as a controller or distributor of such content.

**Programmatic**
Covers automated advertising transactions sold by the unit. It is the Buyer who chooses the impression and the profile on which they want to publish. Programmatic Buying can be made through an Auction Process (Real Time Bidding) or with fixed CPM.

**Programmatic Guaranteed (PG)**
PG is the programmatic execution of a traditional guaranteed transaction. Unlike traditional direct-sold, PG transactions may have multiple advertisers, the publisher may not know in advance which specific advertisers will be included in the transaction from the agency, and execution happens over OpenRTB connections.

**RTB**
Real Time Bidding refers to a way of transacting media that allows an individual ad impression to be put up for bid in real-time. This is accomplished through a programmatic on-the-spot auction, which is similar to how financial markets operate.

**Seat ID**
Allows the SSP, when receiving a response from a DSP, to determine who the Trading Desk is, using that DSP.

**SSAI**
Also referred to as dynamic ad insertion, or ad stitching - Dynamic Ad Insertion - expands advanced advertising opportunities by allowing advertisers to target ads that can be swapped in and out of VOD content.

**SDKs**
Software Development Kit. Typically, a set of software development tools that allows the creation of applications for a certain software package, software framework, hardware platform, computer system, video game console, operating system, or similar development platform.

**SSP**
An SSP is a Technology Platform with the single mission of enabling Publishers to manage their inventory and maximize revenue from digital media, specifically through the Automated Channel.

**Unified Decisioning**
Is a process that enables a unified auction across direct sold and programmatic ads. Unified Decisioning moves the ad decision process fully into the ad server to optimize holistically across both direct and programmatic sales channels.

**VAST tags**
Video Ad Serving Template = Communication Protocol between a Media Player and an AdServer / XML document format that describes an ad to be displayed in, over, or around a Video Player or a Wrapper pointing to a downstream VAST document to be requested.

**Viewability**
Refers to the capacity of measuring the amount of a video Ad that has actually been viewed by the user.

**VPAID**
The IAB’s Video Player Ad-Serving Interface Definition (VPAID) establishes a common interface...
Special thanks to the FreeWheel Council for Premium Video Europe members, FreeWheel DSP Partnership team and partners who contributed to this paper.

About The FreeWheel Council for Premium Video, Europe (FWCE)

The FreeWheel Council for Premium Video Europe (FWCE) was formed in June 2017 to serve the interest of those in the premium video industry through leadership positions, research, and advocacy. Aligned to the FWC formed in North America in 2015 (with members such as Discovery, Fox and NBCUniversal), the FWCE consists of 20 members: Canal+ Régie, Channel 4, Discovery Networks International, DPG Media, European Broadcaster Exchange (EBX), France Télévision Publicité, Publitalia, NENT Group, Next Régie, Proximus, Sanoma Finland, STV, SevenOne Media, SFR Régie, Sky Media UK, Germany, Italy; Taipa, TF1 Publicité and United Group. Across both Europe and North America, the FWC operates as an educational and organising resource to assist marketers to reach desired audiences in premium video environments, conduct research documenting the benefits of premium video and represent the interests of member publishers and the market.

For more information on the FreeWheel Council for Premium Video please visit: www.FreeWheel.com/councils and follow us on Twitter @FWCouncil.

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