

THE IAB RELEASES NEW AD UNIT PORTFOLIO

In September, the Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) released for public comment [an updated version of its Standard Ad Unit Portfolio](#).

New (and More) Digital Ad Standards

Standard ad units were introduced more than a decade ago to help publishers and marketers work with a set of common standards for digital advertising. With constant evolution in this space, the industry has been pushing for updates to address the many more choices advertisers now have across digital platforms and formats, including “experiences” like virtual reality, vertical video, emoji, stickers and 360-degree video ads. These new standards include recommendations on new characteristics such as file size, weights and aspect ratios.

Ad Blocking Onward

Reliable numbers on the percent of users who have ad blockers are hard to come by. This is partly because, some sites and verification software can detect the use of blockers but there’s no central source to correlate this data. Those who have tried to look at the entire market (like eMarketer) use many sources, including companies like e.g. PageFair, an ‘anti-ad-blocking’ solutions company. For the U.S., the estimates of ad-blocker use range from 15% to 25%, but again, each estimate has its own agenda. Nonetheless, it is clear that there is a steady increase in the usage of blockers and a double-digit percent usage by the population. So regardless of the exact figures, the base and trend are alarming.

When they’re asked about why they use ad blockers, consumers most often cite the perception that ads slow down their “user experience” because the ads (and the posse of tags appended to them). This has become a real problem. Indeed, large complex ads suck up CPU power on desktops and especially, phones. Some ads have over 100 unique JavaScript calls that slow page downloads.

LEANer Ads

The IAB purposely designed these proposed standard ad units to comply with the IAB's "[LEAN](#)" principles, introduced in 2015 as the scope and cause of ad blocking became more clear. LEAN is an acronym for *lightweight, encrypted, AdChoices-supported and non-invasive*. (Catchy.) The parameters for each ad unit are based on HTML5, itself designed to replace the “heavier” JavaScript that has allowed for animation and fluidity in online ads since 1996.

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WHAT THIS MEANS FOR MARKETERS

MEC and GroupM are fully on board with the idea of LEAN as a strategy to help limit the growth of ad blockers. (We don't recommend trying to "trick" consumers' ad blockers and serve them ads they don't want.) We're currently participating in the IAB comment period which lasts until 11/28/16. However, we recommend the following for our clients:

- Sign on to the IAB's LEAN initiative and be public about your endorsement with the ANA and others
- Ensure that all digital assets meet the LEAN criteria
- Don't indirectly support ad blocking companies by participating in schemes to get around ad blockers. (Companies that offer to do this are invariably the same companies that sell ad blocking technology.)
- As always, marketers should be pushing messaging that goes beyond advertising. We advocate using the "ad format" for something more engaging; information, entertainment, anything that will support your brand without numbing your audience.

The IAB initiative is broad and important. We're giving input to make sure that the unit specs they propose are realistic and effective, but overall this is an initiative we all need to back.

RECOMMENDED READS

[Read more on the IAB's New Ad Portfolio](#)

[Ad Age: "IAB Overhauls Ad Guidelines to Encompass Proliferating Screen Shapes, VR, Vertical Video](#)

[MediaPost: IAB Releases New Ad Unit Portfolio For Public Comment](#)

CONTACT:

Greg Smith

Greg.Smith@mecglobal.com

MEC Office

825 7th Ave

New York, NY

10019



www.mecglobal.com

