



DV Video Upfronts and Newfronts Verification Guide

Introduction

The TV Upfronts and Newfronts provide an opportunity to further buy-side goals around video ad measurement and transparency within digital video and CTV inventory. It's a key point in time when publishers are listening to advertiser requests and can be more open to developing solutions.

This guide is designed to assist buyers in 2022 TV Upfront and Newfront negotiations and discussions around topics related to third-party verification and measurement. These topics can require buyers to have an understanding of technical details and working knowledge of the latest industry trends to convey needs and point publishers in the right direction.

This guide also includes background and suggested language around key solutions that advertisers may wish to request out of their Upfront deals, especially in regards to their CTV and video campaigns. Topics include:

1. Getting full CTV app transparency
2. New video content-level transparency and solutions
3. The need for advertiser-side protections
4. Resolving the TV Off issues in CTV
5. Retaining independent third-party measurement

In DoubleVerify's (DV's) discussions with publishers on these topics, they have indicated that solutions are all within reach, but publishers need to understand their importance and the impact on Upfront and Newfront budgets should they support them.

Getting Full CTV App Transparency

56% of CTV impressions withhold app transparency in the advertising ecosystem

Transparency is key for the advertising ecosystem to function. Without an understanding of where an ad is delivering, a campaign can serve in unsafe or unsuitable environments. This issue is magnified in digital environments, where it's easy to send an ad anywhere on the internet with no limits on the types of content available.

The most common type of transparency data that's offered in digital advertising is at the site and app level. Verification providers can help buyers understand and control which sites and apps campaigns are running in. However, this is not always the case in CTV, as the availability of app transparency can vary by publisher.

In 2021, only 44% of CTV impressions that DV clients ran offered app transparency. This transparency was low in both direct and programmatic inventory.

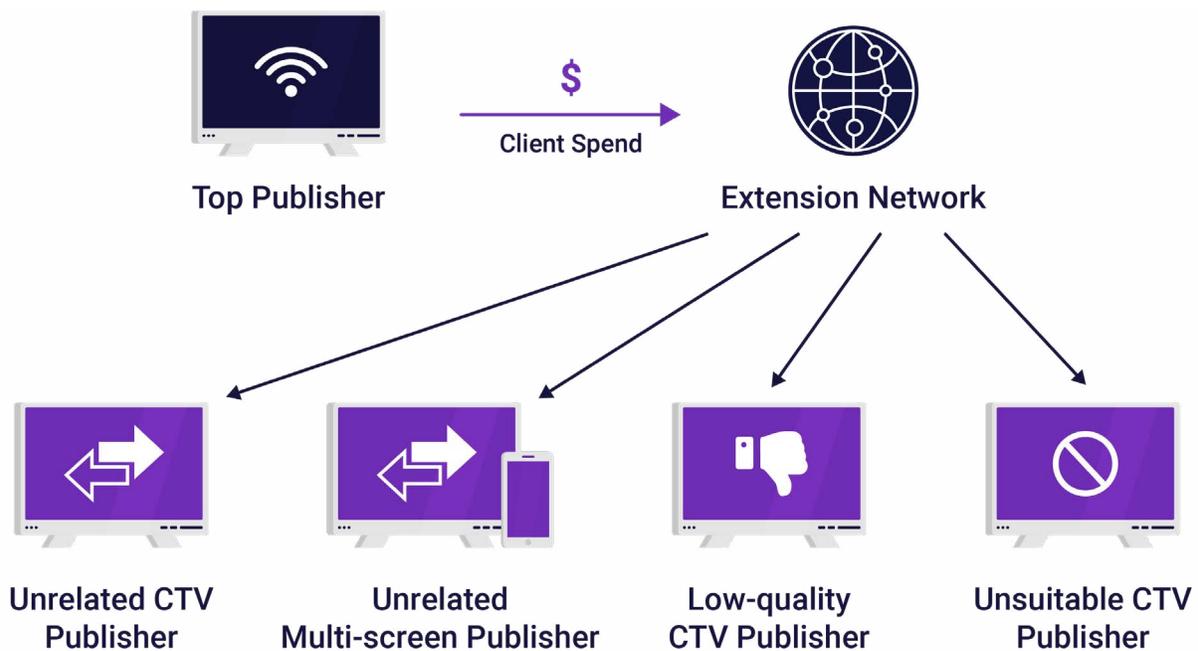
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While it's common for transparency to be offered in programmatic auction data, app transparency was only available post-bid for 31% of programmatic CTV impressions. Post-bid data is key, as it can provide the most accurate picture into details such as where the ad actually ran. Sometimes, **auction data** can be incorrect due to publisher errors, fraudster manipulation, or purposeful omission. This gap in transparency is **fueling fraud** and brand suitability issues.

The lack of transparency is one reason why buyers frequently stick to Direct IO, Private Marketplace (PMP) and Programmatic Guaranteed (PG) campaigns as part of Upfront and Newfront deals. But are these campaigns always safer?



Many buyers believe their CTV campaigns will only run on inventory from the publishers from whom they're buying due to a focus on Upfront deals. However, DV is finding that's not always the case. To add scale and lower CPMs, **many suppliers, including Over The Top (OTT) publishers and device manufacturers, use 'audience extensions' and 'extension networks', which allow campaigns to run outside of the publishers' owned and operated apps and sites.** Typically, these are industry accepted tactics that the advertiser agrees to ahead of time as a part of their contracts with publishers, however, **DV clients are finding these tactics are being used in unauthorized situations** as well. Additionally, these extensions tend to be unvetted against fraud, safety or suitability, with DV detecting examples where campaigns are unintentionally extended to environments like pornographic websites and apps and sites that allow users to download pirated content.



In an analysis of identified Upfront placements monitored by DV in March 2022, **half of the advertisers had low volumes of impressions generating from unrelated, low quality sites and apps, such as screensavers and email tools. Additionally, about a fourth generated impressions on adult or extremist environments.** The impression volumes on these environments were generally minor, but for many brands even a single impression in an unsuitable location can cause issues.

As just one recent example of this, a top telecom advertiser utilized DV's data to uncover that their Upfront campaign with a top TV broadcaster – which was expected to only run in that broadcaster's inventory – ran across 250+ unrelated mobile apps in February 2022. Some of these apps were fraudulent, others were unsuitable for the advertiser, and some were even designed to help users pirate video content from TV publishers.

In parallel to the extension tactic issue, digital content is also naturally shareable – for example, think of a viral video being shared across the internet. Publishers frequently encourage and explicitly support this behavior within their video players. However, what happens when a premium longform video is shared to a pornographic or extremist message board? Ads can easily travel with the video, and DV frequently detects this occurring – even with Upfront campaigns. However, advertisers can employ solutions such as pre-bid avoidance and DV Video Filtering to avoid these incidents so that they can proactively protect their campaigns.

These are just some of the examples of why advertisers are frequently finding campaigns delivering into unexpected locations – even in the safest transactions available (Upfront and Newfront campaigns with top TV providers).

Thankfully, IAB-approved standards for app transparency support already exist, and buyers can request that suppliers support them. These methods are HTTP Headers and IAB standard VAST Macros. Publisher ad servers, such as FreeWheel, already support passing this information – all that's left is for buyers to demand it.

Advertisers wishing to understand and control which apps their campaigns serve on are highly encouraged to request support for full programmatic post-bid and direct campaign app transparency, enabled through verification providers, from their upfront deals.



Step 1

End user finds a video from a premium OTT provider



Step 2

User shares the video (via link or extraction) on a pornography message board



Step 3

Video player plays OTT content + ads on pornography message board

Suggested Discussion Points with Publishers

- App-level transparency is required for my brand's campaigns (or for agencies: for my client's campaigns). Understanding where campaigns serve, including in which apps, is table stakes for campaigns, and must be extended to CTV.
- We request that all campaigns be provided with app transparency through the industry standard User Agent HTTP header X-Requested-With and/or the IAB standard VAST macro [APPBUNDLE]. This transparency must be provided in VAST requests as well as impression trackers.
- Publishers that provide app-level transparency are likely to see increased budgets.

Upcoming Video-Level Transparency and Solutions

Video content-level transparency and solutions are now within reach

A common concern traditional tv buyers have had with CTV is the lack of transparency in regards to where their ads are played compared to linear. DV knows that understanding which app and video content advertisers' campaigns are serving on is the first step in protecting their CTV campaigns. Although video content-level transparency remains a gap in digital video advertising – solutions with meaningful scale are now within reach.

Soon, no longer will advertisers worry about whether their ads are unintentionally playing on, for example: a 24/7 news network that offers extremist views, an adult-focused show with mature content or even more extreme content that is not as common on linear. DV has already tested and confirmed with a top OTT provider that an industry-standard, IAB supported, and privacy-friendly approach for video transparency works at scale across all screens. In discussions across top US publishers, DV has also confirmed that this solution is able to be leveraged across their environments should they see enough advertiser demand.

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How does it work? Sellers can simply pass a content identifier through IAB standard macros and offer DV and other verification providers with a standard method to look up the video metadata.

To receive video content-level transparency and solutions, advertisers are encouraged to push for its support in Upfront and Newfront deals. DV is all in on video content-level solutions and has found that there are no technical or legal barriers. It all comes down to convincing sellers to prioritize it. With this data, DV can verify the programming content that campaigns run with and enact protections to ensure content is safe and suitable for advertisers.

Suggested Discussion Points with Publishers

- Advertisers need to know what content their ads play in. Clients are holding off OTT/CTV spend due to this lack of transparency. It has long been provided in Linear environments, and we now need it in digital, including CTV, as well.
- We request that all campaigns be provided with video content-level transparency through our verification providers in an industry-standard and scalable method.
- Publishers that provide this transparency are likely to see increased budgets.

The Need for Advertiser-Side Protections

Upfront and Newfront campaigns do need to be protected

As illustrated previously, TV Upfront and Newfront campaigns may run in fraudulent, unsafe, or unsuitable environments. Yet many upfront campaigns today do not utilize active protections that would prevent an ad from playing in these locations. Historically, this had been due to key publishers not accepting VPAID technologies that had drawbacks, including a lack of support in CTV. Thanks to a recent DV innovation, this is no longer an issue.

DV heavily invested in an innovative new layer of protection that can be accepted across publishers, called DV Video Filtering. Released in 2020, it's the industry's first and only solution that protects campaigns from fraud, brand safety, and geo incidents across every screen and buying channel. It's also MRC accredited. DV Video Filtering empowers advertisers by providing a protective layer around their ad creatives across online video and CTV, preventing the ad from playing in – and preventing advertisers from paying for impressions in – fraudulent or unsuitable environments, while still allowing sellers to monetize the placement. The challenge is that a few of the TV Upfront publishers don't support advertiser-based protections. While DV Video Filtering has been proven to work across all devices and environments in a publisher-friendly way that preserves their revenue, some publishers do not allow this essential capability.

DV believes advertisers should have a fundamental right to protect their campaigns with advertiser-side technologies. **Advertisers are encouraged to request that advertiser-side protections, and in particular DV Video Filtering, be supported as table stakes across campaigns.** Without these protections, advertisers may find their Upfront campaigns running in fraudulent or inappropriate environments.

Advertisers wishing to better understand which publishers do/don't support these protections can reach out to their DV representative.

“
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..... ”

Suggested Discussion Points with Publishers

- Advertisers need baseline protections against fraud and suitability issues. We are seeing continued issues on these fronts, even in Upfront campaigns.
- We request that DV Video Filtering, a VAST-based protection, be supported across all our campaigns.
- Publishers that support DV Video Filtering will see increased budgets.

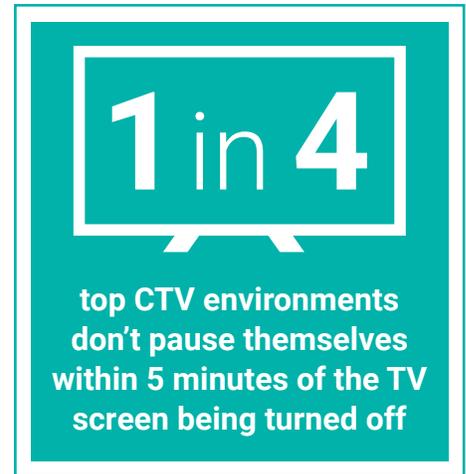
Resolving the ‘TV Off’ Issues In CTV

Ads should not play while the TV is Turned Off

DV’s analysis has shown that 1 in 4 top CTV environments don’t pause themselves within 5 minutes of the TV screen being turned off. These environments will run content, play ads, and generate impressions long after the TV screen is turned off – sometimes for hours or days.

‘TV Off’ issues are industry-wide and occur in top apps from Upfront TV publishers. DV’s study was the first to alert the industry to the issue, and DV has been open with publishers about how the TV Off issue is evaluated and what they can do to ensure their environments don’t pose this challenge. DV has even created the industry’s first solution to help publishers address viewability challenges in CTV, including the TV Off issue, through our MRC-accredited Fully On-Screen Certification.

To further DV’s fight against TV Off issues, advertisers are encouraged to push Upfront partners on proactively ensuring their apps pause themselves within 5 minutes of the TV screen being turned off. It is up to every app developer/publisher to configure this in their apps.



Suggested Discussion Points with Publishers

- The TV Off issues across the CTV ecosystem are concerning to to us and/or our advertisers who have an expectation that CTV apps don’t run content or generate impressions while the TV screen is off
- We request that all of your CTV environments be configured to pause themselves shortly after the TV screen is turned off, no more than 5 minutes thereafter.

Ensure You're Choosing the Right Measurement Partner

Third-party measurement providers should be truly independent

DV believes independent third-party measurement is critical to ensuring the fair value exchange between buyers and sellers. Increasingly, though, **DV has observed some verification providers move away from independence by directly participating in and influencing transactions on behalf of publishers. DV believes this is a critical mistake that erodes trust in the ecosystem and negatively impacts buy-side clients.**

As an example of this, one of the key verification providers now operates publisher ad server and header bidding solutions. Publishers are now paying the 'independent' verification provider to control which ads are selected and at what CPMs, and to optimize the revenue of the publisher. These are basic functions of publisher ad server and header bidding solutions.

Soon after acquiring these solutions, the verification provider released a reporting solution to advertisers. The reporting solution, marketed to buyers as measurement designed to inform their budgets, likely gets its data directly from the publisher without independent verification. That would mean that no one is grading their homework.

To ensure a fair value exchange in Upfront campaigns, DV recommends only partnering with truly independent third-party measurement providers.

Suggested Discussion Points with Publishers

- Independent verification is table stakes for us and/or our clients. Please continue to support DV and other verification partners.

Allow DV to be your partner in continuing to protect your CTV campaigns this Upfront and Newfront season.

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If you have any questions about any of the points above, please reach out to your account manager.

