

# IDENTIFICATION: IT'S AS EASY AS ABC

EFFECTIVELY USING **IDENTIFIERS** IN THE ADVERTISING SUPPLY CHAIN

With Contributions By:



Today, we live in a world surrounded by unique identification (Social Security Numbers, license plates, bank account numbers, Employer Identification Numbers, etc.). Such identifiers cannot be truly unique unless they are created through a single source and used universally.

In recent years, the advertising industry has come together to develop standard methods of identification that have been successful in fighting fraud, improving brand safety and privacy issues, delivering a better experience to consumers, and supporting measurement and attribution. Industry education is key to all of these efforts, which reflects the Brand Safety Institute's interest in publishing this document.

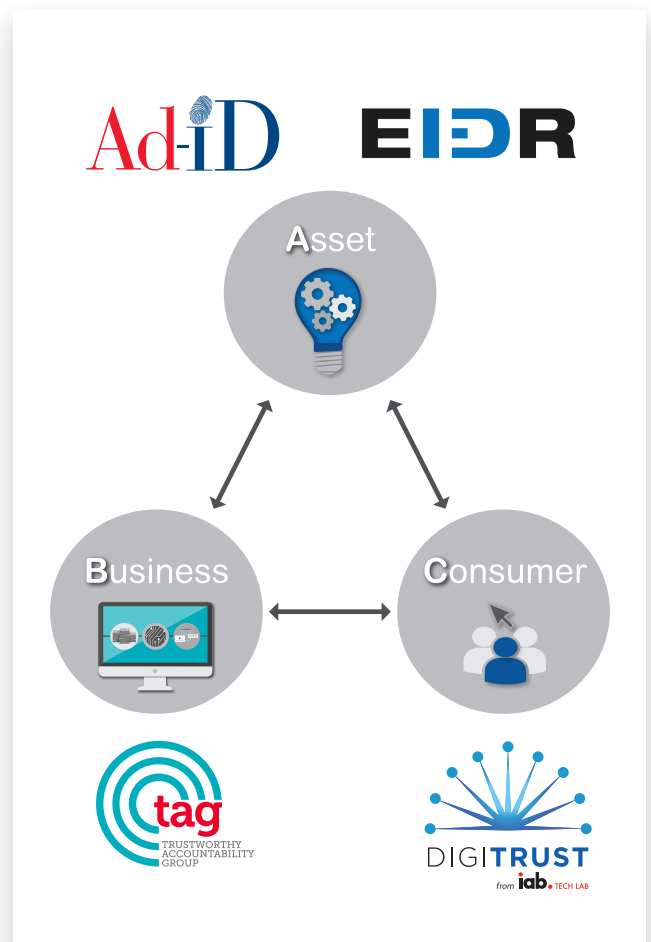
There are three categories of identifiers in the supply chain.

- **Asset IDs** identify creative assets as they go through the advertising supply chain. **Ad-ID** is used for ad creatives in the United States and **EIDR** (Entertainment Identifier Registry) is used internationally for publishers' video program content assets. There are other regional and local ad creative identifiers like the clock number in the UK.
- **Business IDs** identify the various companies involved in the advertising supply chain. **TAG-ID** (Trustworthy Accountability Group) is used to identify companies.
- **Consumer IDs** attempt to anonymously identify individual users or households, and are usually tied to associated devices or browsers. The **DigiTrust ID from IAB Tech Lab** can be used to identify browsers tied to users or households.

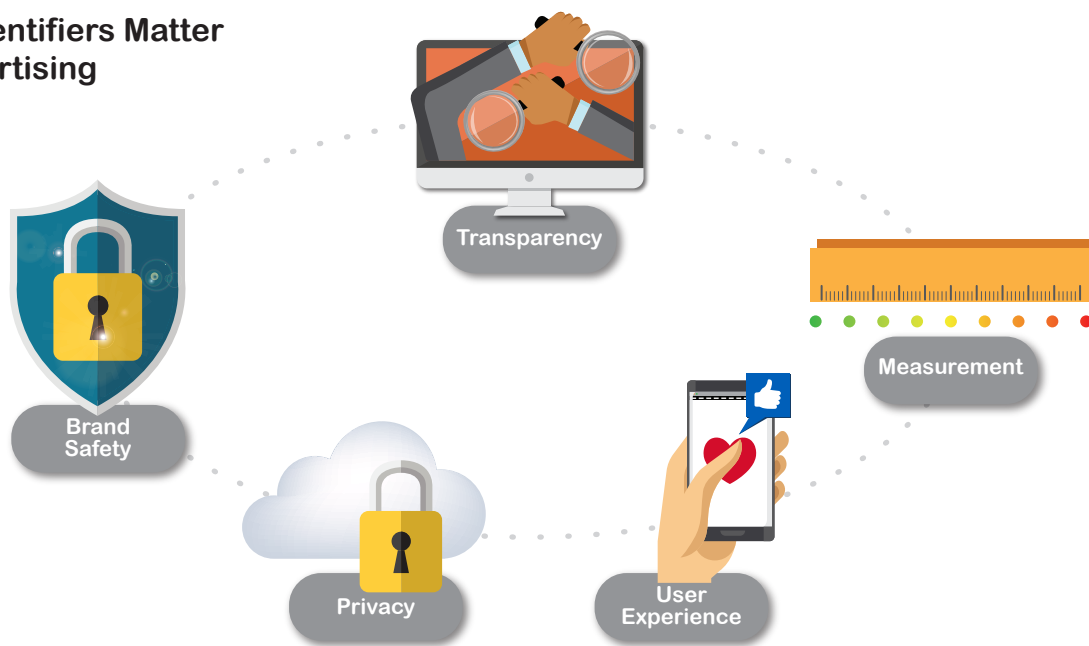
While such identifiers have been shown highly effective where implemented, the industry in

some cases still approaches inefficiencies and productivity issues in the supply chain by creating workarounds that do not provide true solutions to the underlying problems. Despite the importance of such trusted identifiers, the ad industry has yet to universally embrace standards and unique identification for all elements in the advertising supply chain. To date, the current advertising workflow is still organized around a combination of outdated, shared, ad hoc, and in-house methods of identification in many cases, leaving room for error where trusted identification is vital.

Given the progress to date – and advances still to be made – it is imperative to educate members of the supply chain on the importance of identification in advertising workflows and how they help to resolve common industry issues. Each of these identifiers provide value to specific entities within the supply chain, but when all of the identifiers are adopted by the industry as a whole, everyone will reap the benefits.



## Why Identifiers Matter in Advertising



## A BRIGHT IDEA: IDENTIFIERS FOR EFFECTIVE ADVERTISING

Common identifiers enable everyone (people and systems) to talk to each other in the same language. This is imperative to meet the increasing challenges and requirements within the advertising supply chain today.

What are some of those challenges? A lack of frequency capping, insufficient cross-platform measurement, and an inability to determine unique audience reach are just a few. And, while these challenges may seem minor now, as the use of multiple devices becomes more prevalent, solving these challenges will become more difficult. Industry agreement and adoption of standards will address these issues and enable the proper execution of programmatic buying and selling, as well as addressable advertising.

### ASSET IDs

Unique commercial (Ad-ID) and content (EIDR) identifiers are a great place to start and would do for the TV industry what the UPC code has done for retailers. These identifiers are necessary if you want to:

- Support system interoperability and workflow
- Enable cross-platform scheduling, tracking and reconciliation
- Assist in cross-platform measurement
- Facilitate addressable TV ads and programmatic buying/selling

Ad-ID and EIDR provide the unique identifiers necessary to properly distinguish assets from one another throughout the advertising workflow. Ad-ID uniquely identifies the advertising creative while EIDR identifies the content (audio visual objects such as movies, TV shows, etc.). Both also include standard metadata with key information that describes the asset being identified.

These centralized registries allow systems to share information, so the identifiers and associated metadata do not need to be re-keyed multiple times. This simplifies the workflow, reduces manual errors, and ensures the same information is being carried in all systems.

The benefits of Ad-ID and EIDR extend beyond just supply chain and workflow efficiency. Standard coding enables better measurement of the same asset across multiple media platforms and allows for frequency capping.

How can you ensure the same asset is not being used too often across the same or multiple platforms if you are not identifying the asset with a universal identifier? How can you accurately measure when and where an ad is running across multiple platforms if you are not using a consistent identifier for that ad?

In an ever-evolving industry, it is important to have transparency and continuity throughout the entire lifecycle of an asset. Now that the industry is seeing more creative assets moving between linear TV and online video, it is easier for incorrect assets to be used. Universal adoption of Ad-ID and EIDR is essential to achieving workflow efficiencies and creating a true supply chain in advertising.

## BUSINESS IDS

It is just as important that companies can identify one another. Research by the IAB and Ernst & Young in 2015 estimated that \$8.2 billion can be saved each year if the advertising industry works together to eradicate corruption across the supply chain.

To do this requires that legitimate companies have a way to identify – and choose to work only with – other responsible, trusted partners in the digital advertising ecosystem. TAG and the TAG-ID provide exactly that, giving companies powerful transparency into their partners' standards and practices, and making it possible to solve the challenges of fraud, malware, piracy and transparency.

Companies that successfully complete the TAG registration process receive a unique, persistent identifier called a TAG-ID and are listed in the TAG Registry, joining a protected community of supply chain participants that demonstrate their



commitment to higher standards of transparency and disclosure to their partners. Use of TAG-IDs enable digital ad companies to ensure that they are working with trusted parties throughout the life of their campaigns. A common ID system across vendor reports and diagnostics is also beneficial for customers of various service providers (anti-fraud, anti-malware, viewability, brand protection, et al.).

It is recommended that companies include the request for a partner's TAG-ID as part of all standard contracts, requests for proposal, insertion orders and media plan templates. In addition, TAG-ID should be used as part of OpenRTB protocols and within ads.txt for programmatic transactions. These approaches provide the most value to the entire advertising supply chain.

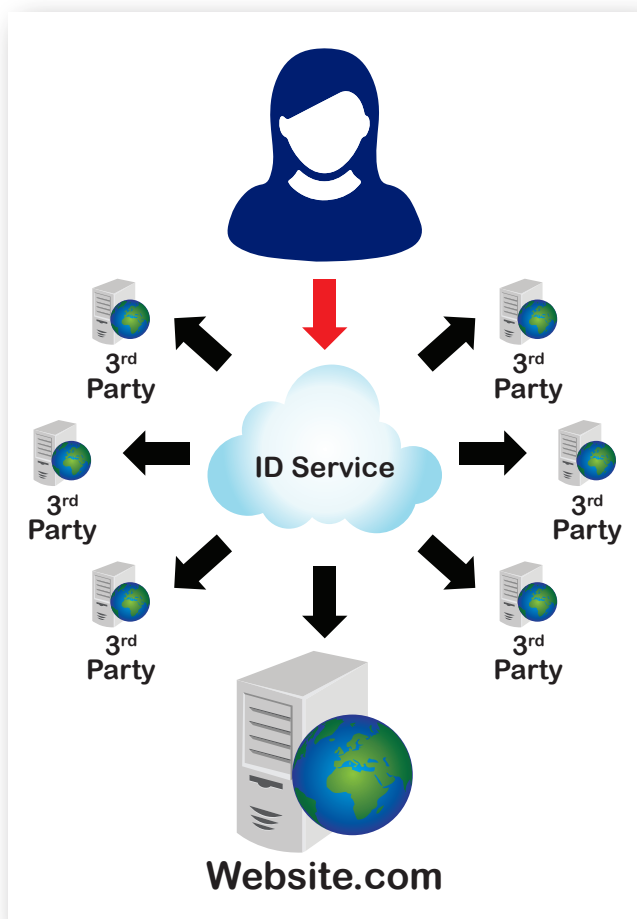
## CONSUMER IDS

Today, websites are littered with thousands of third party cookies from technology vendors attempting to identify consumers and their preferences across different publisher domains. Because internet technology only allows companies to read and understand their own proprietary cookie ID, they often need to “compare notes” with other web service providers by maintaining expensive match tables that are synced with each other before pages load, ultimately taking bandwidth from users and slowing down websites. In fact, in 2018 the average page load time was 8.66 seconds, well above the 3 seconds recommended by Google and webpagetest.org. In addition to contributing to a poor browsing experience, ID syncing is also very costly for the companies involved and still results in significant data loss / poor match rates between parties. Clearly, the status quo is not ideal for anyone involved regardless if you’re an advertiser, platform or publisher.

The solution? Replace the thousands of proprietary IDs with a single ID for everyone, and use that standardized ID as a shared utility the same way a homeowner uses city plumbing or an electrical grid. This would dramatically reduce friction in supply chain activities via improved match rates, reduced operational costs, improved audience recognition / frequency capping, and more accurate measurement and attribution... all while improving page load times and privacy controls for consumers.

Given the clear foundational benefits associated with cookie ID standardization, anyone involved in supporting digital content or services should have a vested interest in advancing the cause. However, given the sheer number of available IDs, and the fact that some IDs are tied to a for-profit company’s media and/or data business models and some are neutral and non-profit approaches, choosing the right one is a more complex and competitive evaluation than Asset or Business IDs. Currently, IAB Tech Lab’s **DigiTrust ID** is the only scaled ID that has a neutral, non-profit governance structure. When choosing which ID solution is most appropriate for your business to support, there are important considerations that should be carefully weighed. They include:

- **Ownership and Governance** – globally adopted standards inherently imply a degree of technology dependency, which results in technology risk depending on the organizational structure. If the ID is offered by a for-profit company, are there controls in place to ensure that product decisions are driven by uniform value to participants instead of shareholder benefit? As a shared industry utility, are design and implementation decisions made in a neutral and transparent way? Is the technology open-source? Does the governance structure allow for equal input and control across all organizations using the ID? Could the company be acquired, or otherwise exert undue influence or anti-competitive practices over participants?





- **Industry acceptance and independence** – is adoption of the ID in conflict with specific companies or categories, or does it offer industry independence? Is the ID compliant with consumer privacy laws in the geographies you do business, and likely to generate the broadest levels of cooperation from within the industry, including from the environments that limit 3rd party cookies? Does deployment of the ID unfairly bias any specific company or category with respect to behavioral data collection, targeting, measurement, attribution, etc.?
- **Technology or operational dependencies** – does the ID involve unnecessary dependencies on specific participants and their proprietary technology? How well does the ID solution comply with all relevant international privacy laws? How well does the ID tie into existing industry standards?
- **Operational funding** – how is operation of the ID funded, including infrastructure costs, privacy attorney fees, product development costs, etc.? Is the operational funding appropriately distributed so as to reduce funding risk? Are there costs involved for participants?
- **A Standardized Consumer ID:** Demand Side Platforms (DSPs), Server Side Platforms (SSPs), Data Management Platforms (DMPs), advertisers, cross-device and verification vendors, and other platforms - **anyone with a need to measure, target, or otherwise touch individual browser devices at scale.**

Regardless if a company is responsible for registering the identifier, the entire supply chain should be requesting and applying these identifiers to reduce errors and improve efficiency and brand safety.

## EMBRACING STANDARDS

The advertising industry is constantly evolving and those involved in the supply chain must be able to keep up with new developments while continuing to work effectively. Everyone involved in the supply chain must speak the same language in order for the industry to successfully tackle the problems it faces.

In the ad industry, these standard identifiers are already available and being implemented by some, but industry wide adoption is critical for everyone to realize the full potential. Remember, it's as easy as ABC:

## WHO SHOULD BE USING THESE IDENTIFIERS?

Everyone in the advertising supply chain!

- **Ad-ID:** Advertisers, agencies and **any company involved in the creation of advertising assets.**
- **EIDR:** Motion picture studios, TV network groups and **any organization involved in movie and television production, post-processing, distribution** or those that provide services to the entertainment industry.
- **TAG-ID:** Advertisers, agencies, publishers, AdTech companies, vendors and **any company participating in the advertising supply chain.**

Asset: Register advertising assets with Ad-ID and content assets with EIDR.

Business: Register your company with TAG-ID.

Consumer: Implement a standardized ID solution, such as DigiTrust, for user identification.

It's time to embrace standardization and unique identification to address the existing issues the industry faces and be better prepared for future challenges to come.

## APPENDIX



### ABOUT AD-ID

Ad-ID ([ad-id.org](http://ad-id.org)) is the industry standard for identifying creative assets (advertisements) in the advertising ecosystem. An Ad-ID is a unique 11 or 12-character alpha-numeric code. Authorized third party systems, as well as proprietary systems, can access Ad-ID codes and associated metadata to reduce the need for rekeying information, which helps avoid errors.



### ABOUT EIDR

EIDR ([eidr.org](http://eidr.org)) is a non-profit, global registry of universally unique identifiers for movie and television assets. A non-proprietary EIDR ID consists of a DOI (Digital Object Identifier) standard registry prefix, the unique suffix for each asset, and a check digit. EIDR is intended for not only automating the tracking of completed works - such as feature films and TV (series, seasons and episodes), but also for related objects - such as specific edits and clips.



### ABOUT TAG

The Trustworthy Accountability Group (TAG) is the leading global certification program fighting criminal activity and increasing trust in the digital advertising industry ([tagtoday.net](http://tagtoday.net)). Created by the industry's top trade organizations, TAG's mission is to eliminate fraudulent traffic, combat malware, prevent Internet piracy, and promote greater transparency in digital advertising. TAG advances those initiatives by bringing companies across the digital advertising supply chain together to set the highest standards. The TAG-ID is a global and persistent identifier that enables a wide variety of use cases for all entities within the digital advertising supply chain. The use of TAG-IDs enables digital ad companies to ensure that they are working with trusted parties throughout the life of their campaigns.



### ABOUT IAB TECHNOLOGY LABORATORY (TECH LAB)

The IAB Technology Laboratory (Tech Lab) is a non-profit consortium that engages a member community globally to develop foundational technology and standards that enable growth and trust in the digital media ecosystem. Comprised of digital publishers, ad technology firms, agencies, marketers, and other member companies, IAB Tech Lab focuses on solutions for brand safety and ad fraud; identity, data, and consumer privacy; ad experiences and measurement; and programmatic effectiveness. Its work includes the OpenRTB real-time bidding protocol, ads.txt anti-fraud specification, Open Measurement SDK for viewability and verification, VAST video specification, and DigiTrust identity service.



### ABOUT THE BRAND SAFETY INSTITUTE

The Brand Safety Institute was founded to support education on and the practice of Brand Safety in the Digital Advertising Supply Chain. Through a program of research, education, and certification BSI offers knowledge, tools, best practices, and a community of peers to the individuals charged with championing the cause of Brand Safety. For more information on BSI please visit [brandsafetyinstitute.com](http://brandsafetyinstitute.com).