

Publishers not platforms must take lead in ad blocking thinking

The World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA), and Digital Content Next (DCN) (formerly the Online Publishers Association), along with major publishers and key industry representatives, have launched an ambitious new initiative to help publishers understand and address ad blocking.

According to a [report](#) by Adobe and PageFair, the use of ad blockers in the US alone has risen 48% in the past year and cost publishers billions of dollars in lost revenue globally. More than 200 million users worldwide now use ad blocker products.

While most ad blocking software is aimed at the desktop browser experience, Apple has just opened mobile Safari to ad-blocking plug-ins, leading to fears of a collapse of online display revenue as well.



Image via [123RF](#)

"We need to articulate a proactive response to ad blocking, one that respects users and sustains media businesses," said Vincent Peyrègne, CEO of WAN-IFRA, which represents 18,000 newspapers, 15,000 online sites and more than 3000 companies in 120 countries. "Everybody suddenly has a lot more freedom and this freedom includes the freedom of consumers to reject forms of digital advertising."

Jason Kint, CEO of DCN, said, "Consumer privacy and user experience haven't been given proper consideration. Now consumers are speaking up with software. The industry needs to clean up the user experience and provide more transparency and controls for consumers. This is the first step in that journey."

'Call to Think' campaign

WAN-IFRA and DCN are calling on publishers worldwide to participate in a ['Call to Think'](#) to formulate guiding principles to shape the experience that users enjoy on publishers' sites in the future.

The Call to Think emerged from a recent meeting organised by WAN-IFRA and hosted in London by the Financial Times and the Economist. It included representatives from many of Europe's top media companies. These included Axel Springer (Germany), the BBC (UK), Daily Mail Group (UK), The Daily Telegraph (UK), The Guardian (UK), The Irish Times (Ireland), JP/Politiken (Denmark), Mediahuis Connect (Belgium), RCS Media Group (Italy), Ringier Group (Switzerland), Stampen

Group (Sweden), and Vocento (Spain), delegates from DCN (US), IAB UK, Mozilla and PageFair (Ireland). Dr Johnny Ryan, Head of Ecosystem at PageFair, initiated the meeting.

Three priorities

The new initiative has set three priorities:

1. To improve the overall ad experience for users without ad blockers, to help ensure they will not install them. "We need to actively engage our audiences about the link between advertising and quality journalism and we must find better ways to giving readers better control over their ad experiences," said Shaw.
2. To find ways to encourage users with ad blockers to agree to be served ads again. This might involve setting and adhering to standards for online advertising.
3. To focus on other mobile-ready advertising opportunities that provide alternatives to display, such as branded content, in-stream ad formats, video and audio, and e-commerce.

The new initiative follows an earlier, related WAN-IFRA project to help prevent data leakage through the unwanted transfer of data from publishers to third parties, often using cookies associated with online advertising. These cookies contribute to the problems that lead to ad blocking: sites that are slow to load, resource intense and packed with tracking software.

WAN-IFRA has also been encouraging better online advertising through the advertising categories in its World Digital Media Awards and its regional digital media awards in Europe, Asia and Latin America.

Tools, next meeting

WAN-IFRA Advisory Services recommends that publishers can begin to address the issue by determining how much of their traffic is currently blocking advertising. A simple way to do so is available with a custom event in Google Analytics, which can be found [here](#). More on the ad blocker initiative, and the challenges ad blockers pose, can be found [here](#).

A second meeting will be held on 5 October 2015 in Hamburg, Germany, during WAN-IFRA's World Publishing Expo 2015. Publishers interested in joining the initiative should contact Ben Shaw, Director of Global Advisory at WAN-IFRA, at ben.shaw@wan-ifra.org or on Twitter at [@bdshaw](https://twitter.com/bdshaw).

Publishers can also voice their opinions through a short [ad-blocking survey](#).

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>