

iab

Internet Advertising
Bureau www.iabuk.net

Discrepancy Buster

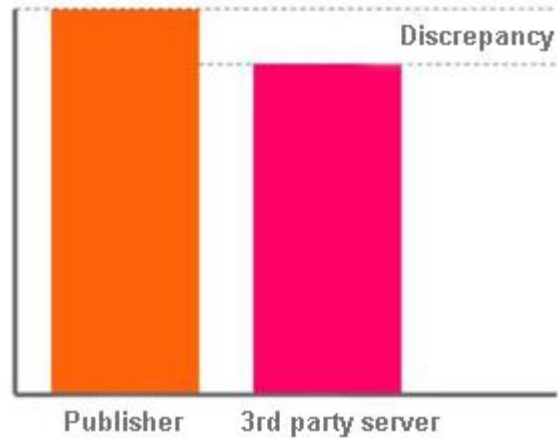
Preventing discrepancy checklist

Discrepancies, the difference between numbers reported by a publisher and a third party ad server, are a big source of frustration for both agencies and publishers.

There will always be some degree of discrepancy between the publisher and the 3rd party ad server because of the differences in technology and the different points at which they count.

However, there are a number of simple checks both publisher and agency teams can do before running a campaign to help reduce and even prevent the majority of discrepancies. These include:

- i. Trafficking errors
- ii. Heavy creative
- iii. Page download
- iv. Redirecting ad calls
- v. Browser issues
- vi. iFrames



Discrepancy tolerance

The IAB recommends a tolerance of **10% for discrepancy based on the publisher's figures.**

While discrepancy can be the cause of under or over delivery, it is actually a different issue. The Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (IPA) currently recommends a tolerance of 5% for under and over delivery, this **shouldn't be confused** with discrepancy.



i) Trafficking errors

With the trafficking of tags being a manual process there is always the possibility of human error. When implementing tags watch out for some common errors including:

- Failing to copy and paste the entire 3rd party tag.
- Not implementing the correct cachebuster or timestamp.
- Using incorrect 3rd party tag (JavaScript vs. i-frame in accordance with ad calls on the page).
- Difference between campaign run dates from 3rd party to publisher.

All of these errors can increase the chance of having higher discrepancy for impressions or clicks.

Make sure your traffic teams have regular training regarding cachebuster implementation for the tracking of new and existing tags will mean that this can be minimised.

ii) Heavy creative

With the increase in use of rich media creative, file sizes are extremely important as heavy creative can increase discrepancies due to increased load times for the ads and the website.

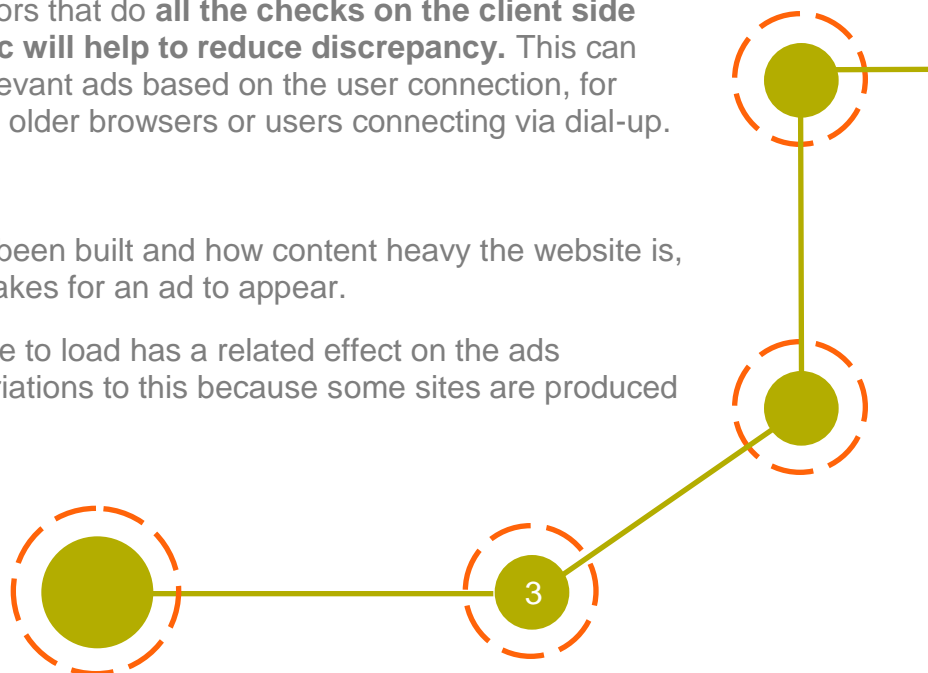
This in turn has an effect on the user's experience. It is important to have standard file sizes for each ad format which is served. **Complying with the IAB best practises can ensure that the ads are served correctly.** E.g. Having the initial load at 40kb and then polite downloading the rest of the elements of the ad up to a maximum of 2mb.

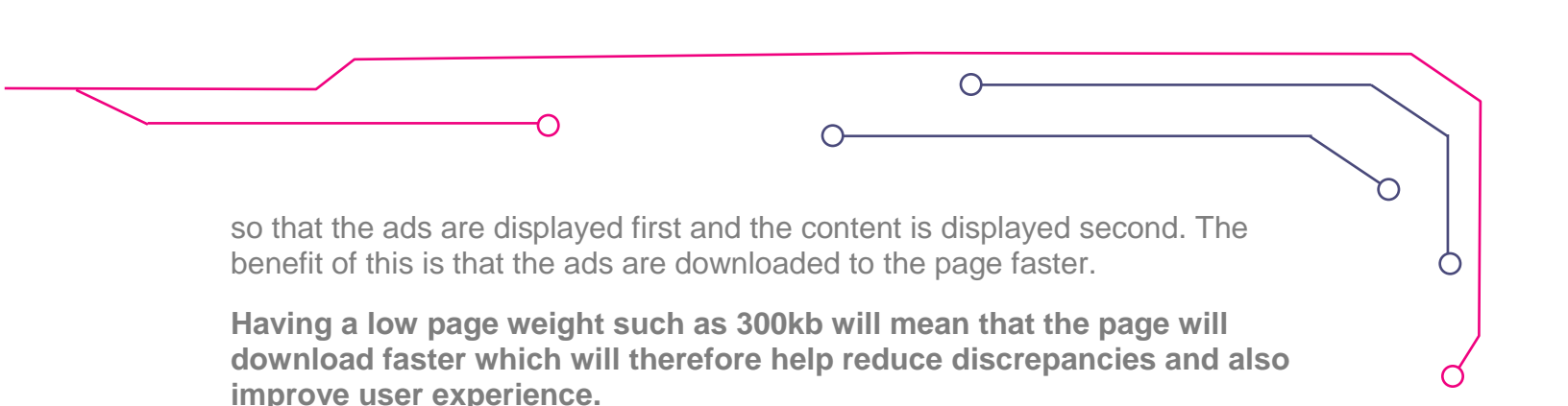
Using reputable rich media vendors that do **all the checks on the client side e.g. bandwidth, sniffer code etc will help to reduce discrepancy.** This can enable the publisher to target relevant ads based on the user connection, for instance a smaller file creative to older browsers or users connecting via dial-up.

iii) Page download

The way in which a website has been built and how content heavy the website is, can affect the amount of time it takes for an ad to appear.

The longer it takes for the website to load has a related effect on the ads download time. There can be variations to this because some sites are produced





so that the ads are displayed first and the content is displayed second. The benefit of this is that the ads are downloaded to the page faster.

Having a low page weight such as 300kb will mean that the page will download faster which will therefore help reduce discrepancies and also improve user experience.

Heavy pages and high ad file sizes will directly affect discrepancy as this is just further increasing the time lag also known as latency.

With all of these issues the main aim is to spot the problems early on in the campaign. Depending on the campaign length the trafficker should request regular reports from the 3rd party server. By **comparing the stats daily** you will be able to spot a high discrepancy and then investigate what could be causing the problem.

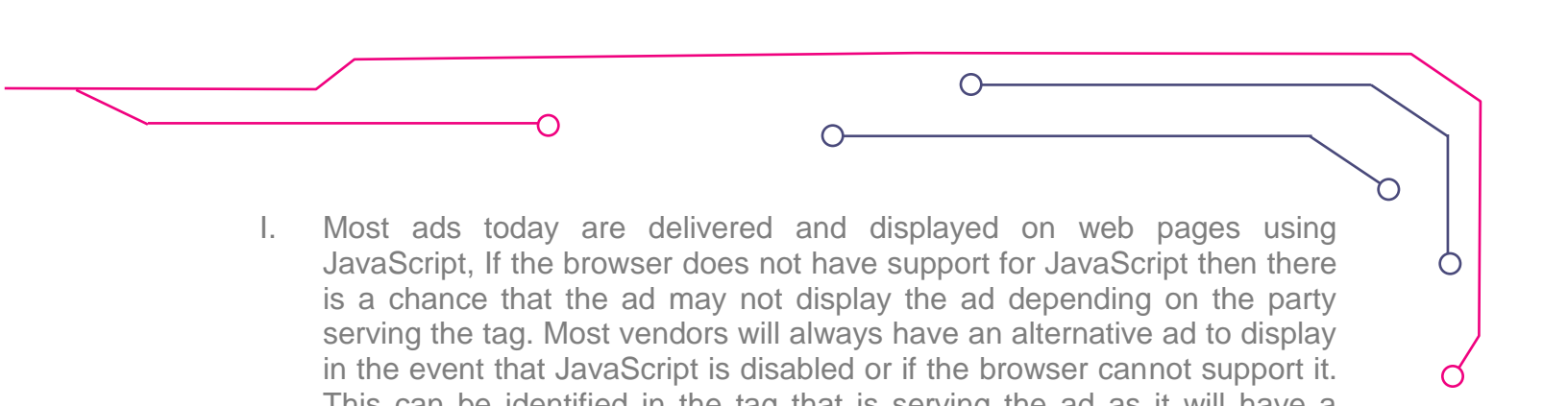
iv) Redirecting ad calls

Redirecting Ad calls can be a cause for discrepancy because if these ad calls are being called using a 302 redirect (daisy chain)

- I. If there are characters inside the URL chain that the browser does not understand the URL might not be able to resolve to the correct location. Also the parsing code that is being used extract the data can break the chain so that no redirect can follow-through – to be able to correct this it is always a good to escape the URL so that the browser can understand characters that are not browser friendly and also the parsing code used by the 3rd or 4th party is able to process the strings correctly
- II. There is a limitation in Internet Explorer that limits any URL to 2083 characters, by adding more and more URLS to a redirect chain may cause the URL to exceed this character limitation and there for break and redirecting will not be able to follow through.
- III. Timing: Because each URL in the chain gets fired one after the other in a chain, each URL gets parsed and then will continue on to the next URL and so on.
If the user closes the browser window while this process is running, the redirecting will stop and not all parties will count.

v) Browser issues

Different browsers can be reason for discrepancies It is always important to make sure that ads are always tested on the browsers they are meant to run on and make sure they ads are displaying correctly.

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- I. Most ads today are delivered and displayed on web pages using JavaScript, If the browser does not have support for JavaScript then there is a chance that the ad may not display the ad depending on the party serving the tag. Most vendors will always have an alternative ad to display in the event that JavaScript is disabled or if the browser cannot support it. This can be identified in the tag that is serving the ad as it will have a `<noscript> </noscript>` portion that will contain an simple image tag. If this is not included in the tag , this can account for discrepancy as 3rd party ad server will not deliver any ad in this case.
 - II. Code behaves differently in different browsers and in some cases can break the ad or even the publishers page from loading. For example, if there is an ad that has a code error in a certain browser, this can be caused by the ad code is conflicting with the publishers own code or the publisher maybe using some JavaScript libraries that are not compatible with the 3rd party's code. This can cause 3rd party Tags to break and not load.
 - III. There is a limitation in Internet Explorer that limits any URL to 2083 characters, by adding more and more URLs to a redirect chain may cause the URL to exceed this character limitation and there for break and redirecting will not be able to follow through.

iv) iFrames

In some cases serving ads into I-frames require the publisher to use a stub file (code that will allow the ad to run outside the iframe) mainly rich ads and expanding formats.

If this stub file is not correctly implemented it may cause the ad to break and not load at all, so it is important to make sure if an ad requires it to use a stub file that it is implemented correctly, every 3rd party ad server will have instructions on how to correctly implement their stub file.

