

STANDARDIZING THE SYNDICATION OF MEDIA WITH ADVERTISING ON THE WEB

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INTRODUCTION

It is the goal of every content provider to grow their audience as large as possible. On the Web, the strategy for accomplishing this is evolving to include syndicating video to third-party destination sites and portals. The rationale: put your video in front of your audience and potential viewers, wherever they choose to spend their time. Content owners win through more reach and new consumers. The sites and portals win with more engaged users. Both owners and the sites can benefit from increased advertising revenue.

The friction in this model is getting both of these parties to agree on how the content is handed off to the video player on the destination site. Content companies want to ensure their content is well-presented and that they have control over the advertisements surrounding their video. Websites have invested in easy-to-use, compelling video players with some going as far as to differentiate their site based on the playback experience. Accepting another company's player on their site is unacceptable. Reporting is a requirement for both sides as an underpinning of the relationship.

ACCELERATING SYNDICATION

Accelerating broadband video syndication requires standards in three areas.

First, a metadata schema is needed to cover the basics of video and its associated media like thumbnail images. This ensures that a content provider can set title, author, copyright, descriptions, and other tags just once, with the knowledge that the information will be presented correctly in each targeted player.

Second, a standard needs to be created that respects a content provider's advertising policies around the media. Beyond today's fixed playlists, the video player needs to dynamically determine when ads are placed in the video, the types of ads (video, overlays, companion banners, etc.), and which advertising campaign management system from which to request the ad. This is complicated when business agreements split the video ad avails between the respective advertising systems.

Finally, an accepted method for reporting on the video views, advertising impressions, and other statistics is a requirement. Content companies should be able to provide the location of a reporting repository where they receive data for their content. Destination sites will need the same information sent to their servers to ensure business terms are met and accounted for. In the case where the website has content from several sources, report delivery should also be a dynamic process. Each content provider should receive relevant statistics for their video without the player having to adopt myriad reporting formats.

THE BENEFITS

The benefits of standards for the syndication of broadband media are numerous. Overall, reducing the technical friction that exists between content providers and their distribution partners should speed the

time between the business deal and consumers viewing the video. Allowing for both parties to share advertising aligns their interests as content companies provide great content and distributors promote it. With everyone on the same page for reporting, business policies are easy to audit and the data is available to justify increased investment and expanded relationships. Even consumers benefit as they find their favorite and new content on their preferred sites.

A POSSIBLE STARTING POINT

SMIL offers a potential starting point for defining these standards. As an existing metadata container supported by many of the web's video players, it offers a good foundation for defining tags for common content descriptors like title and author. To allow for more dynamic advertising, the ability for a SMIL file to call for another SMIL file from a campaign management system may meet the requirements. "SMIL types" might be added to enable the player to distinguish content from ads and behave appropriately. A parallel process for reporting that includes the information to collect and URLs to post to can address the obligation to collect reporting data. Finally, this enhanced SMIL file needs to be delivered along with the video and associated media as an object in a content catalog via standard feeds, like media RSS or JSON.