



June 16, 2020

An Open Letter to the Digital Advertising Industry:

We, the undersigned business publishers, collectively represent the foundation of the digital advertising industry. We put a significant level of energy and investment into creating compelling content that is the basis of our relationship with our audience. And our audience relationship is the key asset that creates value for our customers and for our businesses.

We want to raise awareness of an issue that is putting our key asset at risk. We believe the current system allows for a significant data breach by companies gaining access to the real-time bidding (RTB) infrastructure (i.e. the “bid stream”) for the sole purpose of harvesting both publisher-specific and audience-specific data. Further, we believe the bid stream is being used to obtain information about specific content pages viewed on publisher websites and the end-user companies that consumed the content to create offerings that compete against those same publishers whose data may be leveraged without their consent.

To be perfectly clear, without publisher permission, third parties have no contractual right to use this data to create derivative works from the very assets that publishers have spent decades and billions of dollars to create. They are being enabled by loose restrictions within some RTB platforms, which may ignore their responsibility and obligation to the media marketplace.

The publishing industry speaks with a unified voice in saying this practice must stop immediately.

We are asking our customers and the RTB eco-system to respect and protect our most valuable assets. BPA Worldwide, an assurance organization for advertisers, agencies and publishers, is working with us to bring your attention to what, we believe, is a significant breach. Our hope is that you share our position, and will join us in this most critical time for the business publishing industry.

To create a path forward, BPA is leading this effort with a three-pronged approach.

The first prong is education and awareness. This Open Letter is the first step in that process. BPA has also organized a virtual town hall meeting, [“Data Leakage, Bidstream & the Demise of the 3rd-Party Cookie,” for Wednesday, June 17 at 11am EDT. Register here.](#)

Second is contractual clarity and follow through. BPA is collaborating with other industry organizations to create model contract language designed to protect publisher data across digital technology vendor agreements.

Third, BPA is developing industry bid stream data integrity standards and will launch a certification program for vendors that desire independent verification of compliance to these new standards.



We applaud the undersigned agencies and platforms that have joined us and immediately embraced this effort with an endorsement. We all have a vested interest, now more than ever, to build on the collective partnerships of trust and integrity. Credible media brands have played a vital role in the advancement of connecting marketers with their customers. Maintaining that integrity requires protection of the assets that drive the economic engine supporting a quality media environment.

We are asking our customers and advertising partners and technology vendors to join us in the effort by simply adhering to our mutual responsibility.

