



You Guys Should Talk

By David L. Smith  
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By David L. Smith, Friday, November 23, 2007

RANDALL ROTHENBERG OF THE INTERACTIVE Advertising Bureau, meet Jim Spence of the Web Analytics Association. There are a hundred reasons why you two should be at the same table.

Jim, as you may know, Randall is the new President and CEO of the IAB. Randall, Jim is the head of Target Marketing but also runs an association called the Web Analytics Association. In a previous Metrics Insider, Josh Chasin pointed out that your two organizations are both out there setting standards, a laudable effort.

Yet, the standards your organizations are setting, while they use many of the same terms, are different. Each organization has its own definition for things like clicks and click-throughs. (IAB actually has a technical definition while the WAA basically describes the action).

There is a serious underlying issue here, and it is called attribution. Not only do we have to get the two standards bodies on the same page for definitions, you both need to agree what to do with items like pixels and attribution.

Now, I am not a researcher. Nor am I a Web analytics person. But I see the results of counting by a third party ad server (3PAS) where we know how many people viewed an ad and went to the site through a click-through or a view-through (post impression). The site-side analytics don't understand view-through, and the IAB has not even got it on its agenda for definition, near as I can tell.

Yet, over half the visitors who saw a client's ad do not come through a click-through but visit the site later through the URL line. We can tell this as we cookie them when they are exposed to the ad. Now, I am not going to get into a discussion here as to the veracity of view-throughs, as that is a separate article. We know they are valid at least to some degree and can prove it and will.

But one thing is clear. It does us no good when, as a result of these different standards, the Webmaster says we got 50 sales and the 3PAS system says we got 100. Even if view-throughs are not counted, the differences are significant. Yes Jim, I know that if we deploy two of your members' systems, they end up with different numbers, too. That's another story and one that all need to work on. But it does no good at all when there are standards bodies, trying to define the same thing, that are not at the same table.

So, I am going to make this easy. You are both on LinkedIn. You are both linked to me. Either one of you can send an invite to the other to link, or I will gladly forward it.

I, and probably many others in the industry, am willing and able to join the two of you around the table. But we need to start the discussion.



#### About the Author

David L. Smith, CEO of Mediasmith, is an internationally known expert in the areas of new media application, media strategy, media planning and metrics, and has a number of awards to his name including an Effie and an ad:tech Individual Achievement award. Trained in the major agency media department environment, he has been in the independent media service field since 1978 when he founded Mediasmith. Smith is a pioneer in the application of computers in media, deployment of interactive advertising and media metrics. His experience ranges from participating in the creation and early usage of the first generation of advertising technology (housekeeping systems, data sources) to the current issues facing the use of metrics in the digital marketplace. He has been at the forefront of new metrics applications, with major involvement on the AAAAs, ARF, OPA and IAB national committees working to establish and refine standards in metrics, business practices and financial issues for interactive advertising. Smith has also contributed his knowledge through articles and interviews in an extensive range of media over the past two decades. He is a regular speaker at Industry events including iMedia, @d:tech, OMMA and others and writes regularly for a number of industry publications and Web sites including iMediaConnection and MediaPost. His advisory board involvement includes OPA, IAB, comScore/Media Metrix, AdEx and a number of start-up private companies. A University of Washington graduate, Smith is married with a seventeen-year-old son; plays guitar; and is a gourmet Chinese cook. You'll find him at the office early most mornings unless he is traveling with his family.

#### About Mediasmith

Mediasmith is a recognized leader in digital media planning and buying. We specialize in the integration of traditional and digital media, search, and emerging technologies. We architect plans across all media, in all markets, in virtually all product categories utilizing the right combination of media options to help our clients grow in the increasingly fractured media environment; from planning and buying, to tracking, optimization, and reporting of ROI on all media efforts. Mediasmith remains dedicated to the evolution and standardization of digital media practices. As committed innovators, we test the latest in metrics and analytics, providing solutions that enable us to act as a catalyst for our clients' media innovations.