

# THE 10 PROGRAMMATIC COMMANDMENTS



## INTRODUCTION

Programmatic is opening a whole new world of possibilities for publishers and advertisers, but there are still gaps to be filled to truly reap the immense benefits. Much of the current challenges can be attributed to a lack of understanding on both the marketer side and among publishers.

Curated by the IAB Singapore Programmatic Committee, these 10 Programmatic Commandments aim to bridge the gap between what industry players already know and what they need to know to fully realise the potential of programmatic. The first part of this guide addresses sell-side challenges, while the second half covers buy-side concerns.

The Ten Commandments:

SELL-SIDE	BUY-SIDE
1. Think globally, play locally	6. Get the basics right
2. Data is your currency, use wisely	7. Leverage data from your digital assets & use for success
3. 3. Going beyond the waterfall	8. Be selective about data
4. Programmatic is premium?	9. Be creative with your creative
5. Build a team of programmatic experts	10. Embrace brand safety and transparency

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## SELL-SIDE

### THE FIRST COMMANDMENT: THINK GLOBALLY, PLAY LOCALLY

Historically, publishers have focused their sales efforts in domestic markets, while leaving international markets to sales houses or worse, unserved. Meanwhile, advertisers have worked with global media agencies with local experts in each market to build locally relevant media plans.

As advertisers seek to improve data security, efficiency and consistency across global buys, they will increasingly look to centralise their buying efforts. Consequently, publishers must begin to think globally and act locally. Below are recommendations for doing so:

- **Understand your global inventory mix** and develop your pricing and sales strategy accordingly. Market maturity varies greatly across the world; be sure to take into consideration local ad formats, consumers' online behaviours, access to relevant data segments and local pricing expectations.
- **Centrally planned and bought media is both an opportunity and a threat for publishers.** The threat lies in losing direct contact with the buyer, thus jeopardising the opportunity to communicate your USP. To overcome this, we recommend working closely with your global technology partners to build a worldwide network of buyers. Equally, ensure your sales team is well-versed in your global strategy and in regular contact with this network.

While the threat may seem daunting, the opportunities are plenty. Programmatic technology can bring inventory to a new set of brands across the world in a way that was previously impossible with direct sales. As a publisher, be sure to take advantage of these opportunities – increase total fill rate and capture greenfield markets – and minimise the impact of the threats.

#### GLOBAL ECOSYSTEM ALSO BRINGS GLOBAL COMPETITORS



It is vital that local publishers are aware of this and able to respond. Local publishers have a deep and esteemed history of serving consumers domestically, which brings with it a competitive edge in defining local audiences and leveraging data assets. Publishers must be able to articulate and transact a local data story with both global and domestic buyers.

Your competitors are no longer limited to local broadcasters or print houses. Global brands such as Google, Facebook, Amazon, Alibaba and Tencent are now vying for a share of ad budgets.

#### PROVIDE A FEEDBACK LOOP FOR BUYERS

While a publisher may have small volumes in a certain country, it may still be high performing. Ensure your sales team is able to identify these trends and feed this back to all buyers in order to encourage reinvestment.

Programmatic is opening a whole new world of opportunity for publishers and buyers. As a publisher, be sure to take advantage of the opportunities and have the foresight to minimise the impact of threats.

 **Work closely with your global technology partners to build a worldwide network of buyers. Equally, ensure your sales team is well-versed in your global strategy** 

## **SELL-SIDE**

### **THE SECOND COMMANDMENT:**

#### **DATA IS YOUR CURRENCY, USE WISELY**

It is trite at this point in our industry to say that “data is the new currency”. If you treat data as a dollar value, you would be constantly finding ways to invest and reap higher returns (i.e. capturing new customers and business), rather than locking them up in Data Management Platforms like banks with low interest rates. That being said, you also have to spend wisely with your data, and put in place safeguards to ensure they are managed wisely.

#### **AVOID DATA LEAKAGES**

For publishers and data owners, protecting data as a first step is key. Often, publishers encounter accidental “data leakages” because they rely on social widgets, analytics services, old vendor conversion or retargeting pixels for website data collection. Perform a regular site audit and ask your partners and agencies explicitly what they are doing with the data being collected.

#### **PROTECT CUSTOMER DATA**

Equally for data owners, entrusting customers' sensitive personal identifiable information (PII) with ad tech vendors could cause long term issues. Pick your partners carefully, ask questions on security and storage, scrub all sensitive information before sharing anything with your DMP/ DSP/ CRM partners. Even basic information, such as gender data, can be used by bidding platforms to create unintended profiles and lookalikes.

Invest in a security and compliance team, and begin exploring new ways to safeguard your data by adding it to the bid stream, allowing agencies to purchase it without too many intermediaries and match partners. A healthy amount of paranoia will do you good, especially with looming legislation that might impose high commercial fines for poor data collection processes and security.

#### **BE SELECTIVE ABOUT YOUR DATA**

For data buyers and sellers, focus not just on the type of data, but also the source, relevancy and freshness. For example, a car buyer segment could be a year old and no longer relevant for your campaign. Time-sensitive transactions such as travel booking or e-commerce need the most up-to-date data to trigger the best performance and creative relevancy. The more relevant and timely the data touchpoint, the more the cost will be justified.

#### **PAY ATTENTION TO SCALE**

When purchasing or selling data segments, pay attention to scale. While it is attractive to zero in on the perfect user, often it's better to combine a narrow data point with other targeting information (gender, location, website browsing, contextual keywords, etc.) to scale the campaign. Using an “Or” approach when creating your segments is key to ensuring ad delivery and relevant messaging.

Gone are the days of creating and buying ads and hoping for the best months later. Today, we are operating in a new, highly personalised, cross-channel and device world, and data is the fuel that powers this tracking and accountability. Control your data just as you would your life savings, and reap the dividends of your sound and wise investments in the long term.

 **For data buyers and sellers, focus not just on the type of data, but also the source, relevancy and freshness** 

## SELL-SIDE

# THE THIRD COMMANDMENT: GOING BEYOND THE WATERFALL

Historically, publishers followed the waterfall model whereby prices were determined based on the demand partners' historic performance and preference. Ad servers were not designed to manage bidding in real-time from multiple external partners. This set-up proved too inefficient because potential bids were not evaluated in real-time, and all bids from demand partners were not assessed in the same auction.

For example, Partner B, who was lower on the waterfall, was called in only if Partner A, who was ranked higher, did not have a buyer for that impression.

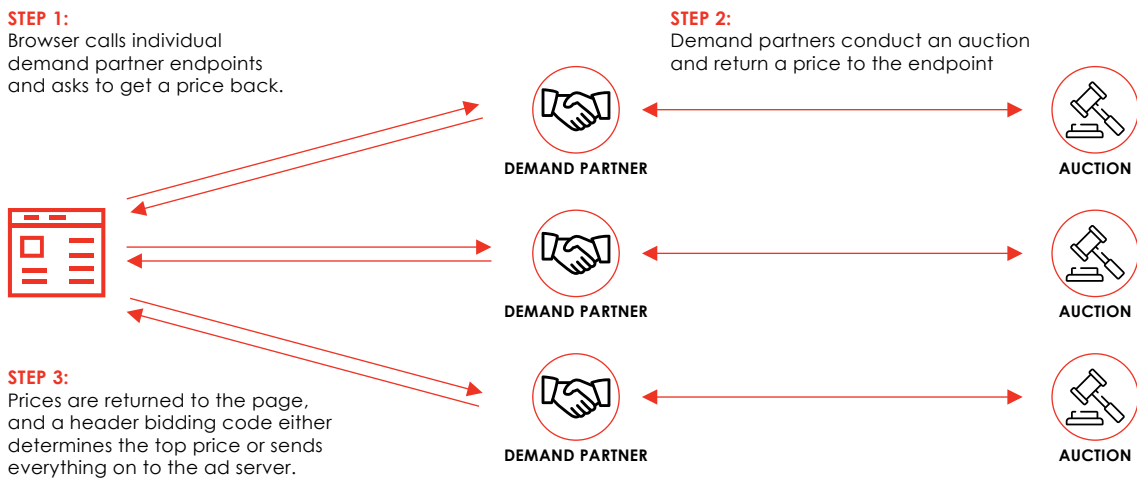
Enter header bidding, a solution that triggers a unified auction from different demand partners in real-time, directly from the page, or from a server, before the ad server is called. For now, it promises to be a win-win situation for all parties involved. For publishers, it generates higher yields and frees them up from time-consuming operational tasks, while advertisers gain access to a larger and better performing pool of inventory, consequently increasing their audience reach.

### DIFFERENT TYPES OF HEADER BIDDING SOLUTIONS: CLIENT-SIDE AND SERVER-SIDE

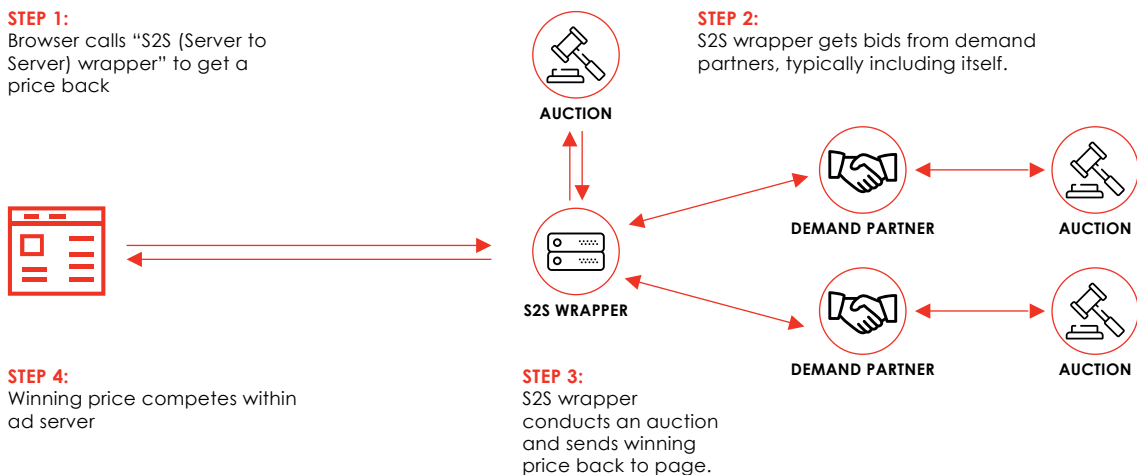
There are currently two types of solutions, with different nuances, but a common advantage: gathering real-time bids from different exchanges in a single auction within the ad server.

Client-side prebid solutions integrate many different demand sources to increase bid density and compete against the exchange, whereas Server-side prebid solutions does the same thing as client-side but makes the browser do less work.

#### CLIENT-SIDE HEADER BIDDING SOLUTION



#### SERVER-SIDE HEADER BIDDING SOLUTION



The table below highlights the key differences between the two solutions:

	CLIENT-SIDE	SERVER-SIDE
Main Differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Auction dynamics embedded in the web page</li> <li>• Auction code fully transparent (directly visible in the code of the page)</li> <li>• Partner platforms natively support JavaScript call</li> <li>• Potential risk of latency on the page based on time out setting, or if too many demand partners are integrated</li> <li>• High cookie match rate as partners can retrieve user information directly from the browser</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Auction dynamics hosted in a server, calls made directly between servers</li> <li>• Auction code non-transparent (hosted in a remote server)</li> <li>• Partner platforms must have a server-side function</li> <li>• No risk of latency on the page since the auction is held in another environment</li> <li>• Risk of low cookie match rate (dependent on the user match rate between partners and the partner hosting the code)</li> <li>• For mobile, no need to update the SDK, since the code is hosted on a server</li> </ul>
Maturity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Product maturity covering large array of ad formats (display, video, native)</li> <li>• Large number of partners are client-side ready <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Growing adoption from publishers in APAC*</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Product still in its infancy regarding formats</li> <li>• Limited number of partners are server-side ready <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Limited adoption from publishers in APAC*</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Some Examples of Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open Source <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Prebid.org, AppNexus, Rubicon, Facebook</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Proprietary solutions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Index</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open Source <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Prebid.org, AppNexus, Rubicon</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Proprietary server-side solutions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Google Exchange Bidding Dynamic Allocation, Amazon Trusted Marketplace (ATM), PubMatic, OpenX</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

\* Note, as of October 2017, there is no official study in APAC measuring adoption. According to the IAB, over 50% of publishers are employing header bidding solution.

### DOES IT AFFECT PUBLISHERS' DIRECT SALES AND RULES SET UP IN THE AD SERVER?

Publishers retain full control of line item priorities and floor price rules within their ad server. They can still define how they sell via their partners such as which buyer can bid, which type of formats are allowed, and which brand categories are blocked.

Publishers should also review their current line item setup to enhance monetisation. As header bidding partners can now compete on impressions that were not previously available, it is important to re-think the priority of line items and their granularity.

### WILL THIS ALSO BENEFIT ADVERTISERS?

Yes. Thanks to header bidding, there's much more transparency compared to the opaque waterfall system. Advertisers also gain access to a larger audience and more premium inventory, which allows them to compete for better performing impressions.

## **SELL-SIDE**

### **THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT: PROGRAMMATIC IS PREMIUM?**

Simply put, premium programmatic offers value to buyers and audience through the automation of buying and selling premium inventory. How premium is defined is still up for debate, because whether a site is premium depends on many factors.

In general, buyers and sellers should consider sites premium if:

- The site has a premium or truly unique audience
- It is free from ad fraud, as much as possible
- The content is trustworthy

Apart from that, we need to look at issues such as viewability, page clutter, site load, amongst others to determine a site's value. For publishers eyeing premium programmatic, here are some factors to consider:

#### **PROGRAMMATIC NEEDS TO BE PART OF A HOLISTIC DIGITAL SALES STRATEGY AND NOT AN AFTERTHOUGHT**

Programmatic is no longer trading remnant inventory; it can offer value to both publishers and advertisers. Publisher products need to be developed with programmatic as part of the strategy, not as a retrofit. Whilst that is not always possible, especially when looking at content, programmatic is a way of delivering advertising, and therefore should be worked on at the product development stage. It then becomes a commercial decision for the publisher as to whether a product will be opened via programmatic or not, rather than a question of more technical work.

#### **PREMIUM PROGRAMMATIC NEEDS TO OFFER ADDITIONAL VALUE TO BUYERS OUTSIDE OF AD SIZES**

- Programmatic Guaranteed is a great way for both buyers and sellers to have control
- Publishers can overlay first-party data onto premium inventory, or offer specific site sections to buyers as a value add
- Premium publishers can select similar quality publishers to partner with and offer inventory bundles. For buyers, this means advertising at scale with brand-safe sites
- Publishers can exert control over brands that appear within their own sites, choosing to work with brands that are a good fit for their target audience
- Publishers need to implement [ads.txt](#) to ensure that only authorised companies sell their inventory. This is an initiative by the IAB to eliminate the ability to profit from counterfeit inventory in the open digital advertising ecosystem. Ads.txt provides a mechanism to enable content owners to declare who is authorised to sell their inventory.

#### **INTERPERSONAL CONNECTIONS NEED TO REMAIN**

For service-level deals, both buyers and sellers need to determine performance KPIs, deliverables etc. The human element is not lost with programmatic trading; it's simply a different conversation.

#### **INNOVATION AND EVOLUTION IS KEY**

Work with trusted partners to ensure that you have a compelling, attractive programmatic offering that is evolving at pace, if not ahead, of other publishers in market.

## SELL-SIDE

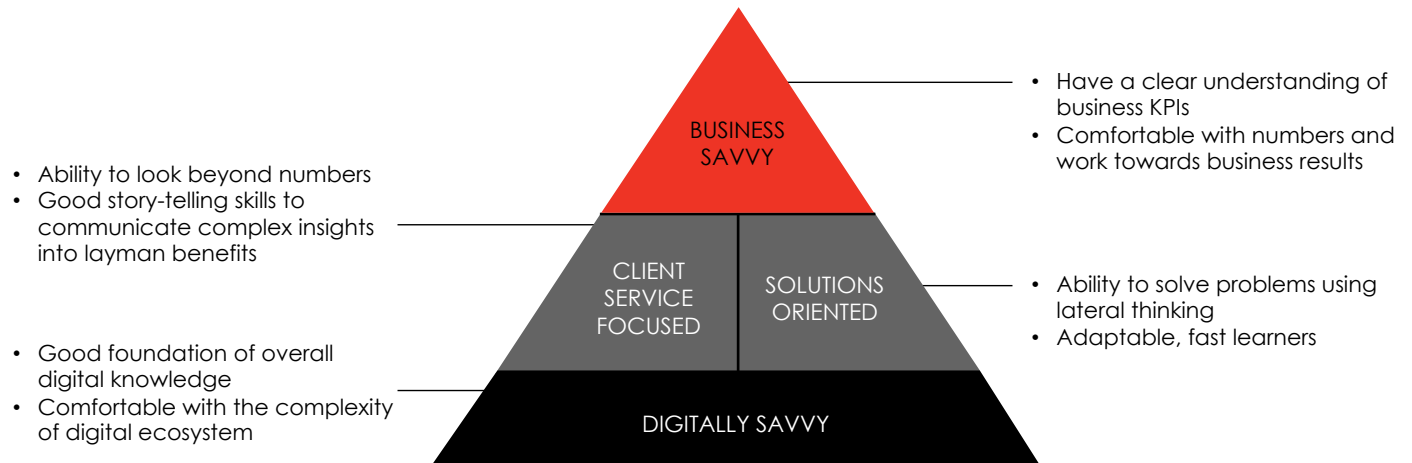
### THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT:

#### BUILD A TEAM OF PROGRAMMATIC EXPERTS

Finding an all-star programmatic team is easier said than done. Organisations often spend too much time searching for and hiring programmatic talent – this breed of digital experts is scarce, expensive, and likely to be snapped up by your competitors faster than the rate at which real time bidding occurs.

In addition, the programmatic world is fast-paced and dynamic and so one rule does not fit all. Although programmatic is merely a process of digital that enables automated media selling, given its progressive nature and rapid technology advancements in this space, people continue to be a key factor in determining the success of your programmatic strategy within your organisation.

Like every organisation, we often search for smart, hungry and fast-learners. However, what types of skill-sets are critical and uniquely important for building a strong and successful programmatic team? The figure below summarises four key essential traits to cultivate in our programmatic talent-searching and grooming.



#### DIGITALLY SAVVY

With the growth of digital ad spends propelling at an unprecedented rate in Southeast Asia projecting a US\$2.70B digital spend in 2019<sup>1</sup>, programmatic spend is forecasted to take up about 17 percent of total digital spends at around US\$452 million in the same year<sup>2</sup>. In 2017, we observed a huge pickup in programmatic by global and Southeast Asian advertisers beginning to charge toward enabling digital within their organisations. However, many often get confused that activating and enabling programmatic sell equates to digital enablement. It's not the case. Tapping into the full potential of programmatic requires a wider understanding of both traditional and new media.

A solid digital foundation provides programmatic teams with a broader perspective of the ecosystem and the ability to identify buyer challenges across multi-stakeholders, be it driving cost efficiency of media, better yield for ROI or higher quality insights. Only with a good understanding of digital may teams then turn these challenges into opportunities, taking full advantage of the technologies at hand to drive the best business results for its buyers.

**// Being digital is not programmatic, //  
being programmatic is digital //**

<sup>1</sup> Ad spending in Southeast Asia

<sup>2</sup> Magna Global

## **SOLUTION-ORIENTED**

Gone are the days when inventory is bought and sold on an excel sheet insertion order as an email attachment. While there are more automated processes and ways to sell your inventory, there are also more steps involved and more decisions to be made. The human element behind programmatic can never be replaced. So, you need a team that understands how to take advantage of automation and the options available in order to set up efficient processes with great results in mind.

The programmatic world is fast-paced and dynamic, involving multi-layered data sources and solution platforms; no two are the same. The one-size-fits-all process-driven approach certainly would not cut it in this ever-changing environment. Moreover, programmatic is not a separate entity. It sits alongside traditional media and does not replace what you are currently doing. Talents need to be versatile and creative, both in approaching problems and generating holistic solutions that integrate the multitudes of available data sources, technologies and media. Your team needs to be able to look not only at your digital business, but also look across your traditional businesses which are rapidly moving towards automation solutions such as programmatic TV.

## **CLIENT SERVICE FOCUSED**

Going beyond that, you will need people on the team who can mine valuable insights from the data, identify issues and solutions and illustrate to buyers the value of their inventory for their client. They should communicate campaign insights in the light of layman business or commercial benefits; in short, be good at storytelling.

Those at the frontline have the ability to move the needle. Educating buyers on programmatic knowledge and correcting assumptions are fundamental in managing expectations. Buyers may want a mix of traditional buys with automation solutions; your team needs to be able to respond to these ever evolving buyer requirements.

## **BUSINESS SAVVY**

Last but not least, you will need a team that's comfortable in understanding short term and long term business KPIs and crunching the numbers -- be it revenue, performance or quality-related statistics. The evolution of programmatic means greater volumes of data each day which are useful, but can also be confusing without the right pair of eyes and tools. Cut through the clutter by understanding not only your own, but also your client's KPIs and make programmatic relevant to their needs.

Being programmatic is digital, but the converse is not true. The fact is that programmatic is here to stay and traditional publishers need to work towards integrating it with what they currently have. Keep your eyes on the long term objectives by understanding where programmatic sits within your organisation's digital strategy.

All in all, set your team up for success by providing clear direction in terms of the goals they need to achieve, and leave it to them to develop a winning strategy for the organisation. Keep your team on their feet by emphasising agility in the workplace, providing consistent feedback, and most importantly, encouraging them to collaborate and innovate with the endless possibilities of programmatic.



## BUY-SIDE

### THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT: GET THE BASICS RIGHT

Programmatic advertising is a complex network of parties and the jargon can be confusing. How does an inundated marketer sort through the layers? Here are five steps to get started:

#### UNDERSTAND YOUR BUSINESS GOALS

Clear and smart business goals are key. Once you understand these, you can think about how marketing and advertising can support wider business objectives. Identify what your business goals are, for example: are they to grow online sales by a certain percentage; to increase customer size; or to successfully launch new products with specific sales targets?

#### SET A PROGRAMMATIC CAMPAIGN OBJECTIVE

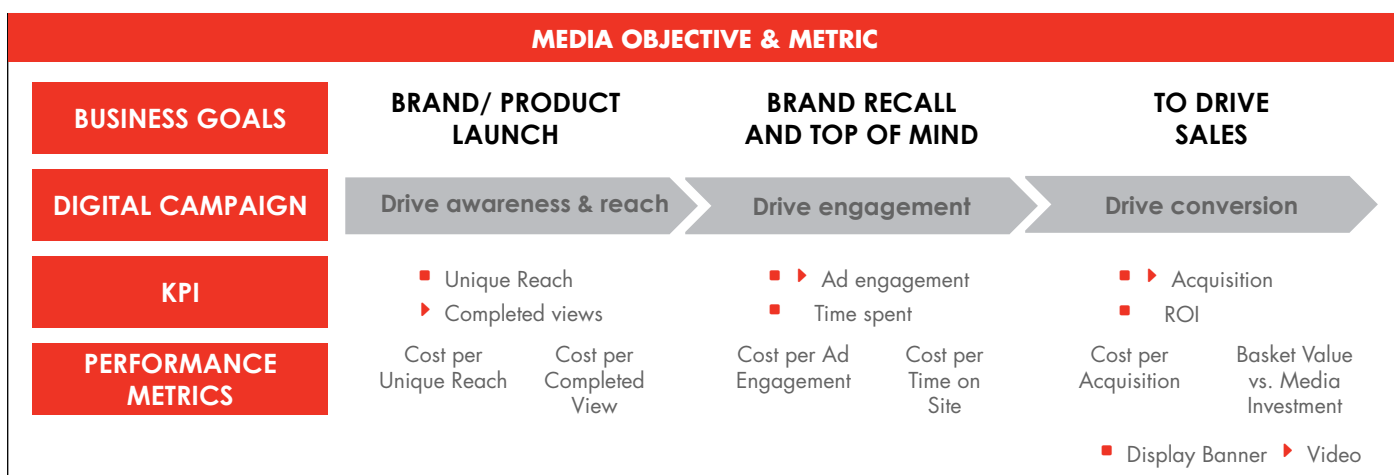
While programmatic is a very effective and efficient way of delivering digital campaigns, it doesn't do everything. To which part of your overall marketing plan can it contribute to? What is your programmatic campaign objective? With this aim in mind, define the campaign strategy (for example, a data-driven awareness campaign). Then set well-defined KPIs accordingly, such as to deliver an in-target reach of x% or more, or drive a defined number of leads to the website.

#### IDENTIFY THE PARAMETERS THAT DETERMINE PROGRAMMATIC SUCCESS

Look into the areas that may impact your programmatic campaign. Using the earlier example of a data-driven awareness raising campaign, consider factors such as: type of available data segments to reach the target audience; scale and cost of data; third-party tracking for in-target reach; a programmatic partner's inventory type; brand safety; viewability tracking; or suitability of a brand uplift study.

#### USE THE RIGHT KPIS

Marry the right measurement metrics with your campaign objectives. Obsessing over CTR may not be the best indicator. If you are looking to drive brand awareness or a new product, your KPIs should consider unique reach against your target audience. In this case, optimise towards cost per unique in-target reach. Awareness of your brand could also come from banner exposure, so you can look at setting a viewability threshold or measuring reach, frequency and domain quality.



#### USE THIRD PARTY AD TRACKING

Lastly, get a neutral and accurate understanding of how each of your digital channels is performing and how it works alongside other channels. Third party tracking gives advertisers a view of their campaign performance by channel/vendor in one single platform, which removes problems such as double counting.

Third party tracking also helps validate delivery and track results, therefore negating the need for screenshots as proof of delivery. Traditionally, screenshots were essential for mediums such as print, however, with the advent and advancement of verification tools, we have the opportunity to go beyond screenshots and deliver actual tracking results of the ads.

## BUY-SIDE

### THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT:

#### LEVERAGE DATA FROM YOUR DIGITAL ASSETS & USE FOR SUCCESS

In the world of digital marketing, brand marketers often overlook how consumers interact with their owned digital properties, be it desktop, mobile website or application. Yet, tracking this behaviour is critical in unlocking the potential of paid media.

## OWNED ASSET

### UNDERSTAND CONSUMER SITE BEHAVIOUR WHEN THEY GET TO YOUR DIGITAL PROPERTY

Analyse how long they dwell on your page, which content pages interest them and apply those learnings to make improvements across the site or application. This is where you collect first party data from your consumers.

Programmatic media teams can use site activity (full-funnel purchases) to guide their efforts in campaign optimisations and retargeting. With enough scale, there is more you can do with the data you collect, such as identifying relevant lookalike audiences for retargeting.

**// It is important here to understand what scale actually means.**  
**For example, 500 visits a month is not sufficient. You**  
**ideally need monthly unique visitor sessions of around 250,000** **//**

Benjamin Yeow,  
Publicis

### WITHOUT PIXELS ON YOUR BRAND'S PLATFORM & AUDIENCE TARGETING ON THE PLAN ...

No retargeting clickers, video viewers,  
site visitors, and no sequential messaging

Oversaturation to brand issues with  
frequency caps



No cross-device targeting to other  
phones, laptops, tablets associated with  
your audience's profile

No insight into user's full path to  
conversion, or optimise to conversion  
or site visit events

Wasted budgets in learning phase  
of campaign from not leveraging  
lookalike modeling

### BEST PRACTICE: ALWAYS TAG UP YOUR DIGITAL ASSETS

## **PAID MEDIA**

### **UNDERSTAND THE CONTRIBUTION OF EACH MEDIA CHANNEL**

To build a robust view across your paid media channels, always measure paid campaigns with data from an ad server. With ad servers, you can understand attribution, allowing more data to be collected for further optimisation.

With advanced tracking methods, you can track sales data with custom variables e.g. number of tickets sold, price of tickets, time to purchase etc. Ad server site tags are the only ones that provide post view attribution and can help you link delivery and site response metrics together. You can then move past last click attribution.

### **UNDERSTAND YOUR DATA TO PROVIDE A GOOD USER EXPERIENCE**

When customers get to your digital property, do you find a lack of user engagement? Paid media gets consumers to your door; but the website or application is the last step to closing the loop. If your user experience (i.e. navigation, content) is not engaging, no amount of paid media is going to increase consumer interaction and subsequently get the business result you want.

## BUY-SIDE

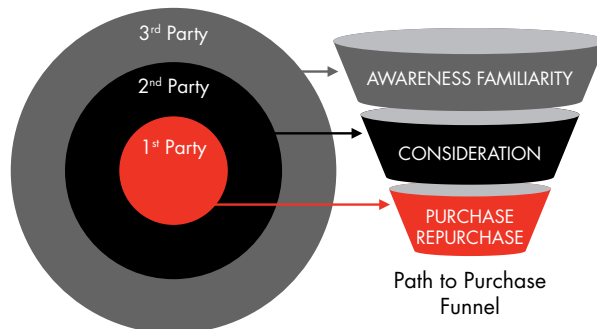
### THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT:

#### BE SELECTIVE ABOUT DATA

First, second and third-party data are key components of a successful programmatic strategy. Being smart with data delivers efficiencies to advertisers by reaching their desired target audience on the right screen, at the right time and with the right frequency.

These different data sources are:

- First-party data: An advertiser's own customer data, e.g. from website, loyalty members or customer relationship management (CRM) data
- Second-party data: When an advertiser and another party agree to share data, e.g. MasterCard allowing advertisers to target customers who spend a certain amount of money on their credit card each month
- Third-party data: Acquired from data providers who aggregate data from various sources, e.g. travel intent aggregated anonymously across multiple travel sites.



In selecting data sources, it is important to understand what roles these different data types play in a programmatic campaign:

#### CHOOSE THE DATA SOURCE THAT BEST SERVES YOUR BUSINESS OBJECTIVES

First-party data helps target lower funnel metrics, for example, while second and third-party data plays a significant role in achieving higher funnel metrics. The most important starting place for brands is to collect, analyse and activate their own first-party data as that delivers the most cost-efficient performance. When it comes to second and third-party data, it is important to ask your data providers:

1. What data do they collect? Behaviour? Location? Mobile? How do they collect the data and how is it verified or audited to ensure high quality data? You know your target audience best.
2. Does the data match the audience you have in mind? How do they define an audience? Do they use models or exact information, such as people that are looking at Burberry or those that have luxury shopping habits?
3. How fresh is the data? Do they refresh the data every 30, 60 or 90 days? What data is available for the DSP to target? How does that affect the audience definition?

Examples of data available to purchase across the region:

- Browsing data
- Mobile in-app data
- Location based data
- Hyperlocal data
- Search
- Credit card transactions
- B2B data
- Household data

#### SPECIFICITY AND SCALE CAN IMPACT COSTS

There is abundant data out there, but how much can you stretch your dollar? In Southeast Asia, using second and third-party data can be prohibitively expensive relative to the lower average cost of media in this market (as much as 80% cheaper) compared to the US, EMEA and ANZ. Moreover, different data sources vary in price according to specificity or scale. For example, finance and automotive categories usually prefer specificity; while FMCG businesses tend to value scale.

It is thus crucial to note that while you can be picky with your data, you have to be prepared to pay for the price tag attached to its specificity.

## BUY-SIDE

### THE NINTH COMMANDMENT: BE CREATIVE WITH YOUR CREATIVE

At its heart, programmatic is simply a means of delivering creative. No amount of optimisation can save your campaign if the creative is not fundamentally compelling enough to stand out in the cluttered marketplace. There is still no substitute for high quality creative in driving consumer engagement.

Good creatives start with understanding how and why your consumers engage with content, and building a connection with them.

#### MAXIMISING YOUR PROGRAMMATIC CAPABILITIES

Programmatic technology goes beyond placements and distribution. Get the most bang for your buck and let the data you have inform your creative message. Programmatic creative can pave the way for powerful campaigns, utilising user-specific data points and capturing micro-moments to deliver hyper-relevant ads tailored to the user real-time. [Uber](#) and [Spotify](#) are examples of brands leveraging data insights to shape their creative. Understand the available data points and jointly build the creative brief with your creative agency.

#### MAXIMISE YOUR CREATIVE VALUE

Programmatic allows you to be creative with your assets. Given that your target audience consumes content in various ways, ensure that you work closely with your creative agency to make your assets versatile so that they can work for various mediums and experiences.

There are plenty of smart ways to create content or even repurpose assets you already have, as [Clinique](#) had done with their print ads and [Netflix](#) in response to user feedback received. Do your research before committing investment. Bear in mind that repurposing assets goes beyond simply reusing global content and changing the language. It should always be adapted to fit the local context of your target market.

#### TEST YOUR CONTENT

Test the creative beforehand to ensure the message resonates with the target audience. Remember audiences may respond to your creative in different ways depending on where you distribute - one size does not fit all. What programmatic allows you to do is to tailor your creative to your audiences based on the data points you have collected in real-time. Testing will help you avoid wasting money at scale. Also, consider the medium and format.

#### COMBATING AD FATIGUE

Always keep in mind that too much exposure can be detrimental for your brand, especially as the user becomes immune to your brand messaging and subsequently ignores it. Your performance will suffer if frequency caps are not managed well, as the user stops clicking/watching after prolonged and repeated exposure. Ensure that your creative messaging is constantly refreshed and take advantage of Dynamic Creative Optimisation (DCO) and creative rotation to continuously reach the user in new and personalised ways.

#### STAY AGILE

Programmatic enables advertisers and publishers to optimise their video, social and display campaigns. Therefore, you must be agile when creating, editing, testing and running creative for digital advertising. This is even more important for display ads. Collect and analyse both ongoing and past campaign data to understand which content or formats worked on which channels, devices and audience segments.

## MANAGE EXPECTATIONS

Remember not all assets or creative are optimised for digital delivery. From a user perspective, asking a consumer to watch a TV commercial online is not optimal within the digital environment.

Do you have a clear call-to-action on the display creative if your key KPI is interaction or acquisition? Be very clear about what your key KPI is and whether programmatic delivery can reasonably be expected to hit it.

## CHECKLIST FOR CREATING POWERFUL CREATIVES

- Define the campaign objective and set realistic goals.
- Identify and understand your audience using data insights around demographics, online and offline behaviours.
- Collaborate with your creative agency to agree on the strategy to produce data-driven creative. Share as much data, insights and results from previous campaigns with them.
- Make sure the creative aligns with the overall campaign strategy, objective and goals. Don't be afraid to challenge your agency if it's not.
- When relevant, leverage DCO technology to build and serve the right creative to the right audience, at the right time and at scale.
- Test and learn to understand whether the creative resonates well with your target audience and amend accordingly. This should happen as early on in the process as possible.

## BUY-SIDE

### THE TENTH COMMANDMENT:

#### EMBRACE BRAND SAFETY AND TRANSPARENCY

Brand safety as a concept is not new, but digital has made it easier for brands to ensure their messages do not appear in questionable environments.

 According to the IAS H1 2017 SEA benchmarks, ad fraud accounts for 12% of programmatic buys in Southeast Asia. 

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Marketers should apply brand safety across all clients, regardless of whether they request it. In tandem, transparency and viewability have become hotly debated, sparked by CMOs calling on the advertising industry to clean up the digital ecosystem.

Programmatic allows you complete oversight of your ads and is actually, the epitome of transparency. Log-level website data allows you to extract information about where your ads appeared. Recently, digital agencies and vendors have been creating digital standards to improve transparency around the supply chain. One example is ads.txt, an industry project aimed at preventing specific types of counterfeit inventory.

What should brand marketers and advertisers focus on to manage these concerns? Tick off the boxes on the following checklists to ensure your brand is well protected:

#### BRAND SAFETY CHECKLIST

- Have you defined what is considered contextually unsafe for your brand based on your brand values on a global, local market and campaign level? Apart from content containing illegal activities, violence and pornography, grey areas such as unmoderated user-generated content, fake news, political and religious content need to be considered as well.
- Have you communicated your brand safety standards to your entire marketing organisation, partners and stakeholders?
- Do you have a clear understanding of your tech partners' capabilities? Knowing what you can and cannot control (e.g. inventory, tools) allows you to best select your partners and leverage the preventive and mitigating solutions they provide.
- Have you curated a blacklist of URLs and keywords? Be sure to do regular updates of the blacklists and create new keyword lists based on current events relating to disasters, scandals and political unrest. In the SEA region, it is especially crucial to bear in mind that English keywords are not automatically translated, so you will need to develop negative keywords in local language.

- Does your DSP partner have media quality data<sup>3</sup> integrated into their platform for you to activate and ensure you are brand safe?
- Have you used a third-party verification tool from a trusted brand safety partner? Make sure they are neutral to ensure publishers are not judge and jury.
- Have you implemented brand safety filters applicable to the brand? Keep in mind it is not necessary to apply every known brand safety filter available as it may affect inventory availability, campaign performance and cost.
- Have you considered factors in the buying process such as ad fraud, viewability and invalid traffic? Although correlated, each factor has specific measures and should be treated with separate strategies.
- Do you conduct regular post-measurement reviews on where your ads appear? There is no substitute for active policing.
- Do you have a takedown policy (crisis management) in place? Service level agreements between media partners can help align expectations of timeframe for action.
- Have you established a realistic threshold of acceptance?

Remember that there are no 100% guarantees and that no technology is foolproof. The best way to deal with brand safety and transparency is to understand the definition of brand safety in your client's eyes. Ensure you have done your due diligence and embraced them as part of your programmatic plan. These changes to the industry are helping advance the programmatic landscape in ways that will only benefit brands in the future.

For a detailed guide on Brand Safety, take a look at our [Brand Safety Handbook: An Overview and Guide for Mitigating Risk](#).

<sup>3</sup> Media quality data is a term for Brand Safety, Viewability and Fraud detection filters



## CONCLUSION

Programmatic is no substitute for sound strategy or inspired marketing, but it does enable a more efficient and effective way of buying and selling media.

The 10 Commandments outlined in this guide offer a starting point and issues checklist for marketers and publishers. These commandments are critical in ensuring they embrace programmatic technology that fits and provides value for their brand, while avoiding the pitfalls of an adolescent industry.

The digitisation of inventory and automation of buying is just the first stage of digital's programmatic evolution. Programmatic's promise goes deeper, too. Advances in real-time bidding technology opens up doors to unlock deeper insights into audiences and increase control over the delivery of brand messaging across a fragmented and sometimes obscure landscape.

Technologies are developing rapidly in this space – what you learnt here might very well be obsolete in the next six to 12 months. Therefore, getting your basics right and being agile enough to adopt and execute new developments is essential for both the buy and sell-side to take full advantage of programmatic's benefits. Seizing these opportunities will become make or break factors in what is already a highly competitive arena.

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