Tackling Criminal Activity and Promoting Brand Safety in Digital Advertising FAQs

Why are the ABG, IAB and TAG working together in the GCC region?
The Advertising Business Group and Interactive Advertising Bureau GCC (IAB GCC) have partnered [LINK TO NEWS RELEASE] with the Trustworthy Accountability Group (TAG) to promote international standards aimed at tackling ad fraud, facilitate threat sharing, as well as promoting brand safety (such as minimizing the risk of ad misplacement), in digital advertising. The aim is to boost trust and transparency and protect brand investment in digital ad spending.

The Trustworthy Accountability Group (TAG) is not-for-profit cross-industry standards body aiming to tackle criminal activity and promote brand safety in digital advertising on a global scale. Since its founding in 2015, TAG has over 700 companies from 40 countries across the world (at the time of writing), including the largest and most influential brands, agencies, publishers, and ad tech providers, all working collaboratively to work for a cleaner and safer digital advertising ecosystem.

What are TAG's standards?
TAG's standards are an intrinsic part of ensuring that the digital advertising industry continues to be self-regulated in every region. Working with industry experts from across the international media landscape, TAG's certifications reflect the areas within the supply chain that collectively work together to maintain a cleaner and safer digital advertising ecosystem.

These areas include:

- Tackling ad fraud;
- Minimizing the risk of ad misplacement; and
- Facilitating Threat Sharing (including combating malvertising).

Requirements for gaining TAG certification differ between each standard. However once companies have gone through the rigorous process (including independent validation where relevant – see below) and all standard conditions are met, they will be awarded certification seals to show to clients and partners that they are adhering to the best industry standards.

The standards will not be mandated by the IAB or ABG, but advertisers and agencies may well include this as part of their decision process when selecting advertising placements, as many do in other parts of the world.

Does TAG Certification cover all my business operations?
Yes. TAG Certification covers the entire legal entity and applies to all the company's digital advertising processes. TAG does not certification at the business product level.

How effective are TAG's Certifications (standards)? Why should I get involved?
The standards have had and are having a significant impact in fostering greater trust and transparency in digital advertising. The 2020 TAG Fraud US Benchmark study showed a 90% reduction in IVT in TAG certified channels (i.e. buying through companies adhering to the TAG anti-fraud standard) compared to the industry average. The Asia-Pacific and European studies have showed the same trend of 91%+ less fraud in TAG certified channels.

From a consumer point of view, the cautious approach brands and advertisers have taken towards ad placement has been well received so far. Almost 86% of UK consumers said they would feel more positively about a brand/advertiser knowing they require all of their ad partners to be independently certified to meet high safety standards for ads. 85% of US consumers also felt the same as UK shoppers. Advertisers - such as Procter & Gamble - are requiring these standards to achieve a better return on their investment.

Who supports TAG's standards?
Advertisers and brands are constantly looking towards organisations like TAG to provide guidance and set industry standards around how best to safeguard their advertising budget. Trade bodies like the World Federation of Advertisers (WFA), IAB Europe, IAB UK, IAB Ireland, IAB US, ANA, 4As and more have either publicly backed one or more of TAG's standards or incorporated TAGs standards into their safety and security programmes such as the Global Media Charter and IAB UK Gold Standard. ABG and IAB GCC add to this list.

How much does it cost to be certified by TAG?
Good self-regulation does not always come cheaply: however ABG and IAB have negotiated a specific financial deal for the GCC region.

Business Category	Annual Fee (US$)*
Publisher and / or Sales House (with one site only)	$6,000 (> 120m+ impressions per annum) $4,500 (60m-120m impressions per annum) $2,500 (< 60m impressions per annum)

Publisher and / or Sales House (with multiple sites)	$8,500 (20+ sites) $8,000 (10-20 sites) $7,500 (6-9 sites) $6,500 (2-5 sites)
Intermediary (Exchange Platform, DSP, SSPs etc.)	$10,000
Agency / advertiser in GCC region	$5,000 (Annual Billing > $30m) $4,000 (Annual Billing $10-30m) $3,000 (Annual Billing <$10m)

* All fees are annual (January-December) and are pro-rated by each quarter.

The above fees apply if a company is certifying for the GCC region only and its annual global digital ad revenue / spend is below $10m per annum. All international companies or companies in the GCC region wishing to apply the standards at a global level will pay existing TAG prices.

The above fees will include the cost of independent validation IF a company chooses to use MEDPUSH's auditing services (companies may choose other auditing services but they will have to cover the related cost as extra – see below). Companies already certified by TAG will not incur additional costs for these certifications. However, they will need to ensure their compliance is independently validated for the GCC region.

In addition to the above, TAG is offering a further 10% discount on these fees for 'early adopters' (i.e. signing up for these certifications before the end of 2021).

How does TAG work with the IAB Tech Lab?

The IAB Tech Lab is an arm of the IAB US that develops technical standards that make ad delivery more effective and increase transparency throughout the supply chain. Working with companies, IAB Tech Lab introduces technical standards into the market which TAG often includes into broader industry-wide standards to tackle criminal activity such as ad fraud and promote brand safety. For example, IAB Tech Lab developed several technical tools such as ads.txt / app-ads.txt, sellers.json and supply chain object to help companies be more transparent and ensure legitimate transactions in the supply chain. All these tools are key enablers within TAG's Certified Against Fraud Certification program. TAG is in the unique position of being able to drive broad industry adoption of such standards, including by agencies and marketers.

What is the Media Rating Council (MRC)?

Established in the early 1960s by the US Congress, the Media Rating Council (MRC) is the body that has set standards for measurement services in the media industry, specifically around validity, reliability and effectiveness. As part of the requirements for qualifying for TAG's Certified

Against Fraud program, companies have to prove they have met MRC's guidelines around detecting and removing Invalid Traffic (IVT).

Whilst the current Certified Against Fraud program encompasses MRC's IVT detection standards, TAG is open to working with equivalent IVT detection and removal standards at an international level. As well as the MRC, TAG also works closely with China Advertising Association (CAA) and has localized the Certified Against Fraud program to enable compliance with China's national IVT standard. Companies can still use the Media Rating Council's (MRC) IIVT guidelines if they choose to.

How does TAG work with vendor companies (e.g. anti-fraud and measurement, content verification companies)?
TAG is not a technology organization, Vendor companies are experts in their field and TAG will continue to support their important work. They do not transact inventory by themselves but help companies comply with TAG's standards. For example, many companies seeking to comply with TAG's Certified Against Fraud program use an MRC-accredited vendor (e.g. Human, Integral Ad Science) to meet the detection and removal requirements of the standard. Or a company may use a Content Verification provider (e.g. Integral Ad Science, Protected Media, Oracle Advertising) to prevent, detect or evaluate ad misplacement across the digital advertising supply chain.

How does TAG ensure that companies comply with the standards?
Complying with TAG's Certification Against Fraud and Brand Safety Certification standards requires independent validation by a third-party company in the GCC region [N.B Independent validation is mandatory worldwide for TAG's Brand Safety Certification; and in Europe, China (as well as GCC) for the TAG Certified Against Fraud standard. Self-attestation is an option for the TAG Certified Against Malware standard]. Independent validation is required annually but will cover all of a company's business operations (i.e. just in UAE; GCC; Middle East; or globally).

Though the list is not exhaustive, companies can choose from a wide-range of companies offering independent validation services including: ABC, BPA Worldwide, AAM, EY, Deloitte, MedPush and CAICT.