



IAB On-Time Delivery Toolkit for Interactive Media

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Includes:

IAB Creative Delivery Best Practices
IAB Creative Specifications Database

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IAB Creative Delivery Best Practices

And

IAB Creative Specs Database

Summaries and Explanations

Developed by the IAB Ad Operations Council in conjunction with key Agencies:

IAB Ad Ops Council Members

AOL
CNET Networks
CNN.com
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Fox Interactive Media
Google
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NBC Universal
Univision
USATODAY.com
Wall Street Journal Digital
Walt Disney Internet Group
Washington Post-Newsweek Interactive
Weather Channel Interactive
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Agencies

Carat
Digitas
Horizon Interactive
Mediavest
OMD
Starcom
Universal McCann

The Toolkit can be found on the IAB website at:
http://www.iab.net/resources/on_time_delivery.aspx

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Executive Summary

The Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB), its publisher members, and major agencies set out in early 2007 to solve two principal causes of late creative:

1. **Lack of objective, industry best practices** left marketers, agencies, and publishers unable to develop informed policies and procedures for delivering on-time creative; and
2. **The inability of Publishers to effectively and efficiently update the various creative specs databases** that are maintained by third party ad servers and rich media vendors; agencies were using tools that held out-of-date specs, creatives were developed that failed publishers' new criteria, and extra time was necessary to be fix the problems.

The solutions to these problems have been packaged together as the “**On-Time Delivery Toolkit for Interactive Media**”. The Toolkit consists of two items developed by major agencies and IAB publishers:

1. **The Creative Delivery Best Practices** – A project plan template for rich and non-rich creative development, from marketer briefing to publisher launch of campaign, the Best Practices Process is meant to be used by marketers, agencies, and publishers as the basis for internal process and efficiency improvement.
2. **The IAB Creative Specs Database** – An online database maintained by the IAB to ensure that agencies have access to current specs for their campaigns and to consolidate publisher specs into a single source for accurate specs data throughout the industry; the Database is populated by publishers, and specs for a campaign are downloaded by agencies.

This document summarizes and explains the major features of each of these tools, which can both be accessed at http://www.iab.net/resources/on_time_delivery.aspx.



IAB Creative Delivery Best Practices

Summary of Best Practices

Users of these Best Practices should be especially conscious of the following key points:

❖ **Interactive media takes time to deliver correctly**

This document is meant to be a model for the delivery processes of marketers, creative agencies, media agencies, and publishers and the accompanying templates were based on the most common processes and timeline. The end-to-end delivery process for interactive media is complicated and requires sufficient padding to account for its intricacies. Many campaigns may be required to truncate these recommended planning and development timelines but it is strongly recommended that all parties follow these templates for all normal operations in order to standardize and improve the efficiency of campaign delivery throughout the industry.

❖ **Rich media takes longer to deliver than non-rich media**

The rich media process in these templates is laid out over 52 business days while the non-rich media process requires 43 business days. The two week difference is significant and should be taken into consideration by marketers and agencies when developing the strategic and creative plans.

❖ **The process is complex; an empowered project manager is imperative**

It is extremely important for media and creative agencies to have clear communication and synchronization throughout the project because key tasks and phases significantly overlap throughout the entire process. For example, once insertion orders have been signed, deployment tasks can begin at the media agency, even while creative is still being developed. It is therefore strongly recommended that a project lead is identified and empowered at the beginning of each campaign to manage all parties involved.

❖ **Quality Assurance (QA) time should not be compromised**

Interactive advertising can be technically complex, and publishers and marketers want to ensure that campaigns run smoothly and successfully. Media agencies and publishers should avoid shortcuts when testing creatives. Creative agencies and marketers should take all QA line items seriously and understand the time required to thoroughly check a campaign's assets. Mid-campaign creative changes must also go through QA processes and therefore should not be swapped out without all parties' knowledge.

❖ **Developing outside these processes is not recommended**

With the development of these templates and the implementation of the IAB Creative Specs Database, media agencies and publishers are expecting an improvement in on-time deliveries. As the majority of the industry adopts more efficient and effective processes, it is understood by all parties that there will be exceptions; however, as the industry continues to grow, it will become increasingly difficult to accommodate regularly late creative.

Explanation of Process Templates

The Templates

The **Creative Delivery Best Practices** consist of two project templates: one for **rich media** and the other for **non-rich media**. Both templates are included in the same spreadsheet file on different tabs. Both template processes are similar but each involves slightly different parties and QA time requirements.

The Phases

Each template follows similar project layouts and each includes five main phases:

1. **Initiation** – includes marketer-agency briefings and initial project timing
2. **Define** – includes agency interviews, analysis, preliminary strategic and measurement recommendations
3. **Design** – includes creative concepting and RFP stage
4. **Development** – includes media plan development and sign off, finalization of IOs, creative and landing page development
5. **Deployment** – includes creation and delivery of ad tags, QA by media agency and publisher, launch of creative, and any mid-campaign revisions

The Tasks

Within each phase (Exhibit A, area A), there are two types of task breakouts: stages and steps (Exhibit A, area B). A *stage* is considered a major task with discrete *steps* associated with it. The stages and steps listed were those deemed most applicable to a wide variety of agencies and publishers. Each company is expected to have additional discrete steps unique to its own internal process.

Interactive Advertising Bureau				
Component	Level	Description	Exit Criteria	Notes
Phase	1	INITIATION - Initiate the Program		
Stage	1.1	Client to Agencies Briefing	Assignment Understood by All Parties	
Stage	1.2	Preliminary Project Planning	Agreement: Stage/Step Timing	
Step	1.2.1	Develop/Overall & Prelim Stage/Step Timing	Visible Project Plan (MSP)	
Step	1.2.2	Agree to Overall & Prelim Stage/Step Timing and M	Published Schedule	
Phase	2	DEFINE - Define the Recommendation		
Stage	2.1	Conduct Interviews & Assessments	Findings Document / Con Call w/Client	

Exhibit A: Phase and task break outs

Each task has a number of descriptive elements, including:

- ◇ A discrete stage and step identifier (Exhibit A, area A – “Level”)
- ◇ Task deliverable (Exhibit A, area B, “Exit Criteria”)
- ◇ Party responsible for the deliverable (Exhibit B, area C, “R – Responsible”)
- ◇ Other parties involved in the task (Exhibit B, area C, “P – Participates”)
- ◇ Number of days for each task (Exhibit B, area E, “Days”)

Additionally, each task has a set number of days associated with it but some tasks overlap and others must wait for prior tasks to be complete before they can begin. These task dependencies are displayed visually as a Gantt chart (Exhibit B, area E, color coded boxes)

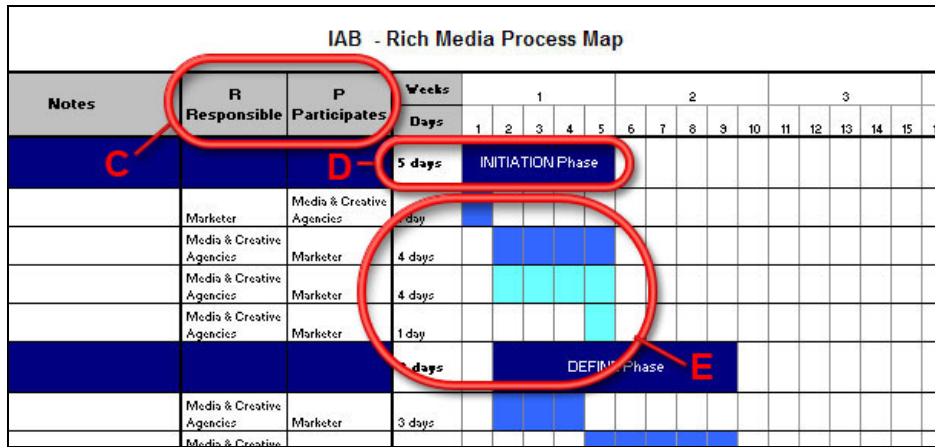


Exhibit B: Task details

Mid-Campaign Changes

At the end of the Deployment phase, each template has additional tasks that discuss the process for changing creative mid-campaign (Exhibit C). It is extremely important to build this extra time into any planned optimization, etc, that may occur during a campaign. Each template has a different number of tasks and days associated with mid-campaign changes.

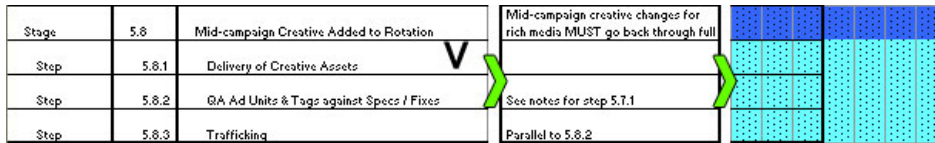


Exhibit C: Mid-Campaign Tasks and Timeline



IAB Creative Specs Database

Summary of Recommended Database Uses

The **IAB Creative Specs Database** is a simple, effective tool developed with input from agencies and publishers to meet two main objectives:

- ◇ **Provide a centralized repository for publishers** to upload their most current specs, therefore eliminating the need for keeping multiple third-party databases updated; and
- ◇ **Enable agencies to download the current specs for their entire campaigns** in a standardized format, including an automated calculation of Lowest Common Denominator specs, as well as contact and other important information for each site involved in the campaign.

The time and effort lost because of out-of-date specs has become a burden to all parties, making the Database an essential part of the **On-Time Delivery Toolkit**. These two functions are vital to improving on-time delivery of creative *built to the correct specifications* and are described in detail in the Explanation sections on the proceeding pages.

In order to ensure that the Database is the most credible source of current specs, IAB members who house their specs in the system are expected and regularly reminded to keep them updated. All participating publishers must agree to the system's Terms of Service, which include provisions for uploading new specs within 72 hours of a change. If it is reported by agencies that a publisher's Database specs are not current, the IAB reserves the right to take steps to remedy the situation, including the possible removal of the member's sites from the system.

The database can be accessed directly at <http://www.iab.net/creativespecs/>

Explanation of Publisher Functionality

General Process for Uploading Specs

There are several steps that must be completed by the publisher before the specs can be viewed and downloaded by an agency:

1. Register for the Database
2. Add sites to the account
3. Download and fill out the specs template (spreadsheet)
4. Upload the completed template without errors

Registering for the Site

All IAB Members can register quickly and easily for the Database at <http://www.iab.net/creativespecs/NewAccount.aspx>. It is important to note that the Terms of Service clearly state:

"By subscribing to this service, IAB publisher-members agree to upload the most current production or creative specifications within seventy-two (72) hours of any change to such specifications. Publishers acknowledge that users of CSD may rely on the Upload Data provided by publishers."

The IAB is responsible for ensuring the credibility of the Database. If the specs are found to be consistently out-of-date, the Database loses all utility to agencies and creative will continue to be delivered based on incorrect specs. The IAB is committed to taking steps in order to preserve the tool's integrity, including removal of the members' sites from the database.

All requests for accounts are verified and manually approved by the IAB in order to ensure the integrity of the system. All accounts are approved within 2 business days, if not sooner. Corporate email accounts are required for all accounts. ***The form clearly states that accounts registered using a personal email address will not be approved, and users will not be notified of their rejection.***

Adding a Site

In order to upload specs into the Database, a publisher must first add a site to its account by clicking on the [+ Add a new site](#) link in the Publisher's interface (Exhibit A)

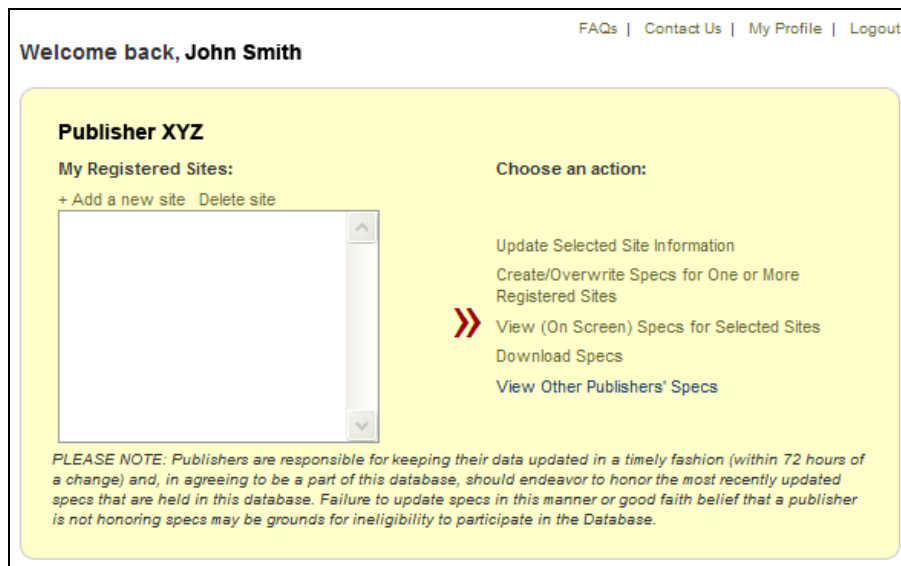


Exhibit A: Publisher Interface

There are several required fields on the “Add New Site” form (Exhibit B) that then appears, including contact information and minimum lead times for rich and non-rich media. There are also optional fields for general site-wide information such as the publisher’s late creative policy and approved rich media vendors.

Add New Site Last updated: 10/1/2007

* denotes required field

Site Belongs To: Publisher XYZ

Site Name (if different from above):

Primary Contact Name*:

Primary Contact Phone*:

Primary Contact Email*:

Link to Site-Hosted Specs:

Page where creative specs reside on company's website
(e.g. http://www.mycompany.com/specs/)

Minimum Lead Time (Rich Media)*:
Number of business days before campaign launch that creative needs to be delivered

Minimum Lead Time (Non-Rich Media)*:
Number of business days before campaign launch that creative needs to be delivered

Late Creative Policy:

Description of policy, if any, for what happens when creative is late

Preferred Tag Style:

Rich Media Allowed
Please list all companies that you have approved or allow

Exhibit B: Add a Site

Once a site has been added, the publisher can upload specs for that site. However, a spec template must be filled out as discussed below.

Downloading and Filling Out the Specs Template

The Specs Template is a spreadsheet that includes a number of spec data fields. It is downloaded by clicking on the [Create/Overwrite Specs for One or More Registered Sites](#) link in the publisher interface (Exhibit A). In the resulting upload area, there is a link to download the template file.

In the template, there are many available data fields but only a few fields are required:

- ◇ Site Name
- ◇ Ad Unit Name (e.g. Banner, Skyscraper)
- ◇ Width
- ◇ Height
- ◇ Ad Type (Standard, Rich Media, Broadband/Video, Other)

The template was developed by analyzing the specs requirements from a large number of IAB members. These required fields were determined by both the publishers and the agencies to be

the minimum number of fields necessary to implement certain additional Database functionality including the agencies' Lowest Common Denominator calculations. Since each publisher fills in its own template, all additional data is deemed required by the agencies when downloaded and should be used in the creative development process.

Once the template has been downloaded, it must be filled in. There are several **important Template rules** to be conscious of while completing the template:

- ◇ **All registered sites' specs can be included on a *single* template.** There is no need to fill in separate files for multiple sites. When a spec is for a different site, simply fill in the name of the different registered site in the first column of a new row and complete the rest of the row with the necessary information.
- ◇ **Many fields have strict data input requirements and only allow certain values.** These data requirements are explained in the "Explanations" tab of the template. If the data requirements are not followed, the specs template will not successfully upload.

Uploading the Template

As stated in the previous section, the template must be filled in according to each column's data requirements. Once this has been attempted, a publisher clicks on the [Create/Overwrite Specs for One or More Registered Sites](#) link in the publisher interface (Exhibit A). There is a simple upload form where the user selects the template file to be uploaded and clicks the "Upload Spec" button.

If there are errors in the template, they will be listed in red and explained along with their corresponding template row numbers. This makes it easy to fix anything a publisher may have missed when originally filling out the template.

Once the template has been successfully uploaded, the specs are viewable and downloadable by agencies. Each month the Database will automatically send reminder emails to every account reminding them to update their specs if they have changed.

It is recommended that each publisher keep the current template on hand and update it with spec modifications. If the publisher misplaces the filled-in template, it can also be re-downloaded directly from the site by selecting the appropriate sites in the box and clicking on the [Download Specs](#) link in the publisher interface (Exhibit A).

Viewing Other Publisher Specs

Any publisher user can view other publishers' specs by clicking on the "View Other Publishers' Specs" link in the publisher interface (Exhibit A). An explanation of the additional interface can be found in the **Agency Functionality** section below.

Explanation of Agency Functionality

The Agency functionality is simple and straightforward. There are two main steps that a user must take in order to download specs:

1. Request and receive an account
2. Select sites and download specs

Requesting an Account

All agency users can request an account quickly and easily at <http://www.iab.net/creativespecs/NewAccount.aspx>. The form is short and requires only contact information and an appropriate corporate email account as the user ID.

All requests for accounts are verified and manually approved by the IAB in order to ensure the security of the system. All accounts are approved within 2 business days, if not earlier. Valid corporate email accounts are required for all accounts. **The form clearly states that accounts registered using a personal email address will not be approved, and users will not be notified of their rejection.**

Selecting Sites and Downloading Specs

Once an agency user is logged in, it takes only a few steps to download the specs along with the Lowest Common Denominator calculations and all site specific contact and policy information:

1. The user selects sites from the left-hand box on the interface (Exhibit C) and clicks on the top directional red arrow in order to move them to the right-hand box
2. Once all the necessary sites have been selected, the user clicks on the “Download Specs” button and all information from the sites in the right-hand box is exported into a CSV file
3. The user is then asked to save the CSV file and the process is complete

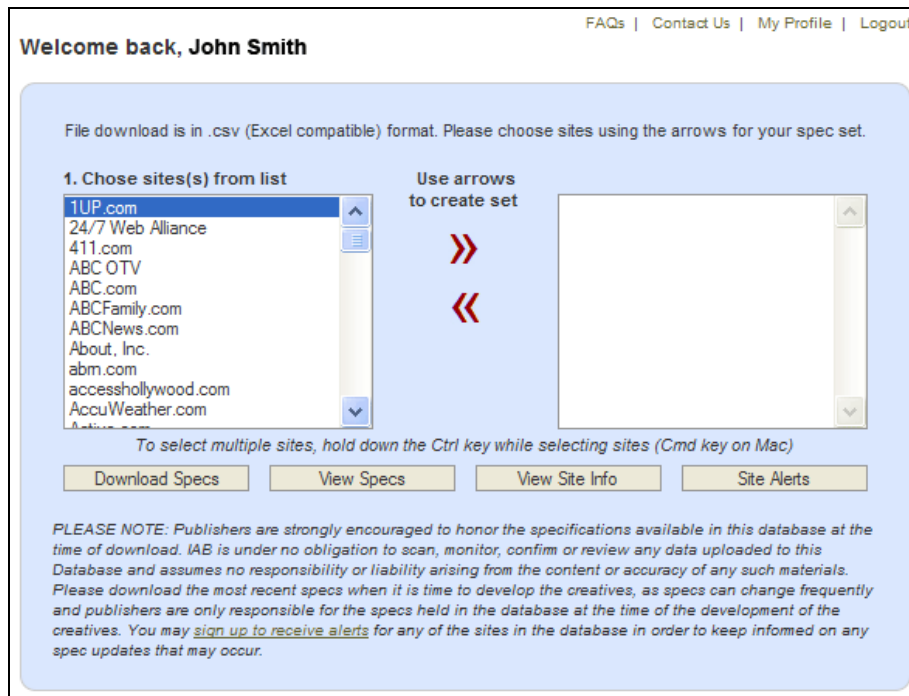


Exhibit C: Agency Interface

The resulting file has three sections, all viewable as a single worksheet:

- ❖ The first section includes all the raw specs from all the selected sites.
- ❖ The second section includes all the Lowest Common Denominator information for each ad type and unit size.
- ❖ The third section includes all the policy and contact information for each selected site.

Site Alerts and Other Functionality

While the download functionality answers the main usage requirement of most agencies, there are several more available function buttons in the agency interface (Exhibit C):

- ◇ **Site Alerts** – Agency users can sign up to receive email alerts when a site updates its specs. The user selects sites in the same way download sites were selected, by using the red arrows to move sites from the left-hand box to the right-hand box. Then the user clicks “Site Alerts” and a list of the selected sites appears below the interface. The user can then select or deselect which sites to receive alerts from.
- ◇ **View Specs** – This is the same functionality as for downloading, but the specs appear in a pop-up window instead of being exported to a CSV file.
- ◇ **View Site Info** – If a user just needs to find contact or policy information for one or more sites, clicking on the “View Site Info” button will display this information. This is the same information exported in the third section of the downloaded specs.