



Digital Video In-Stream Ad Format Guidelines and Best Practices

Released May 2008

Version 2 of 2005 IAB Broadband Ad Creative Guidelines

These Guidelines and Best Practices have been developed by the IAB Digital Video Committee, with additional participation from:

Avenue A | Razorfish
BBH
blip.tv
Broadcast Interactive Media
Deep Focus
Goodby, Silverstein & Partners
OMD
Revver
Singing Fool

About the IAB Digital Video Committee:

The Digital Video Committee of the IAB is comprised of 145 member companies actively engaged in the creation and execution of digital video advertising. One of the goals of the committee is to implement a comprehensive set of guidelines, measurement, and creative options for interactive video advertising. The committee works to educate marketers and agencies on the strength of digital video as a marketing vehicle. A full list of Committee member companies can be found at:

http://www.iab.net/member_center/35088?iabid=a033000000s0p4AAA

This document can be found on the IAB website at: http://www.iab.net/DV_guidelines

IAB Contact Information:

Jeremy Fain
Senior Director of Industry Services, IAB
212-380-4724
jeremy@iab.net

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Executive Summary

In order to simplify the digital video advertising buying and selling process, the Digital Video Committee of the Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) has developed these guidelines and best practices for the most common current in-stream ad formats, including:

- Linear video ads
- Non-linear video ads
- Companion ads

These recommendations have been constructed for these ad formats in order to meet the following marketplace needs:

- More efficient operations through a common set of creative submission guidelines
- More efficient development of ads and players through minimum common creative guidelines, including click functionality and duration definitions
- Easier digital video ad buying across multiple sites through minimum common ad sizes for overlay and companion ads
- Better consumer understanding of ad interactions and environments through best practice recommendations for creative development and player environments

There are three types of recommendations contained in this document for each ad format:

- Ad Format guidelines
- Common creative submission recommendations
- Additional best practices

Publishers will be able to self-attest to the IAB for a compliance seal by adhering to these Ad Format Guidelines. All other recommendations in this document should be considered best practices and should strongly be considered for adoption, but are not necessary for compliance.

It is also important to note that this document has certain scope boundaries:

- This document supersedes the 2005 Broadband Ad Creative Guidelines (www.iab.net/media/file/Broadband_Ad_Creative_Guidelines.pdf); the original 2005 document is now obsolete
- Measurement of impressions or other metrics is not addressed in this document
- Although many of these formats can apply to full-screen and live experiences, this document does not specifically address those environments because of the high level of customization between publishers. We encourage, where possible, that these guidelines be used in those situations.

While this document's purpose is to develop more standardization in the most common areas of the digital video landscape, the IAB continues to encourage creativity and innovation in video ad formats. As with all IAB guidelines, this document will be updated as the dynamic digital video advertising landscape progresses and new ad formats become more widely adopted.

Introduction

In November 2005, the IAB Broadband Committee (now the Digital Video Committee) released creative guidelines for online video commercials¹ to further enhance the user experience and improve the efficiency of planning, buying, and creating online media without constraining creative opportunities for marketers.

Since 2005, both the experiences and consumption of video content have evolved significantly and newer video ad formats have been introduced to compliment these emerging types of video experiences and environments. This document is meant to build upon those guidelines by offering more detail on both the creative and technical aspects of video player and ad development.

Currently the most common digital video ad experiences are either viewed within or around “**In-Stream**”, “**In-Banner**” or “**In-Text**” video formats.

- **In-Stream Video** is generally played or viewed from a video player.
- **In-Banner Video** is generally displayed in IAB standard ad units².
- **In-Text Video** is generally user-initiated and triggered by relevant highlighted words within content.

This document delivers standards and best practices around **In-Stream ad products only**, as outlined in the red, bold boxes in the below illustration:

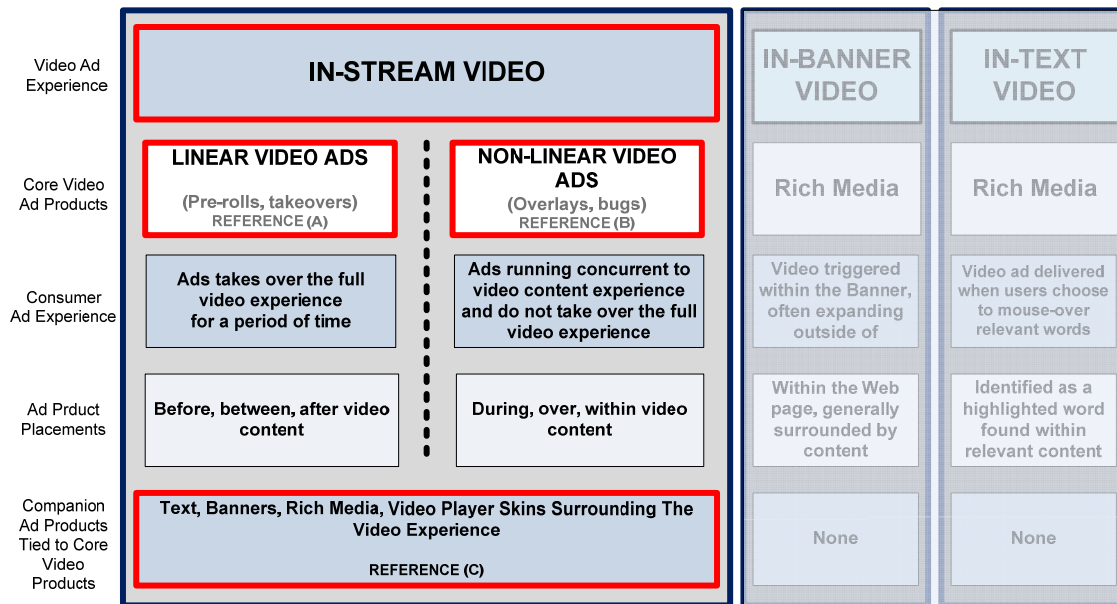


Figure 1: Distinguishing In-Stream Video, In-Banner Video, In-Text Video Formats

¹ To read about the guidelines: http://www.iab.net/about_the_iab/recent_press_releases/press_release_archive/press_release/4829

² IAB Ad Unit Guidelines can be found at: http://www.iab.net/iab_products_and_industry_services/1421/1443/1452

In-Stream Video Advertising

There are two core video ad format categories in today's In-Stream ad experiences. These are, "**Linear Video**" ads (Figure 1, REFERENCE A) and "**Non-linear Video**" ads (Figure 1, REFERENCE B):

- **Linear Video ad:** The ad is presented before, in the middle of, or after the video content is consumed by the user, in very much the same way a TV commercial can play before, during or after the chosen program. One of the key characteristics of a linear video ad is that the user watches the ad in addition to the content as the ad takes over the full view of the video. Common linear video ad formats include pre-rolls, interactive takeovers, and short bumper vignettes that appear prior to the video content stream.
- **Non-linear Video ad:** The ad runs concurrently with the video content so the users see the ad *while* viewing the content. Non-linear video ads can be delivered as text, graphical ads, or as video overlays. Common non-linear video ad formats include:
 - Overlays which are shown directly over the content video itself. Note that an overlay ad can also be delivered over a linear ad experience as well, generally prompting the user to interact with the ad when the user mouses over the ad.
 - Product placements which are ads placed within the video content itself.

Both linear and non-linear video ad formats have the option of being paired with what is commonly referred to as a "**Companion Ad**" (Figure 1, REFERENCE C).

- **Companion Ads:** Commonly text, display ads, rich media, or skins that wrap around the video experience. These ads come in a number of sizes and shapes and typically run alongside or surrounding the video player. The primary purpose of the companion ad is to offer sustained visibility of the sponsor throughout the video experience. Companion ads may offer click-through interactivity and rich media experiences, such as expansion of the ad, for further engagement opportunities.

The following sections detail the ad format guidelines, recommended submission guidelines, and best practices for the following In-Stream video ad formats:

- Linear Video Ad with or without Companion Ads
- Linear Video Interactive Ad
- Non-Linear Overlay Ad
- Non-Linear Non-Overlay Invitation Ad

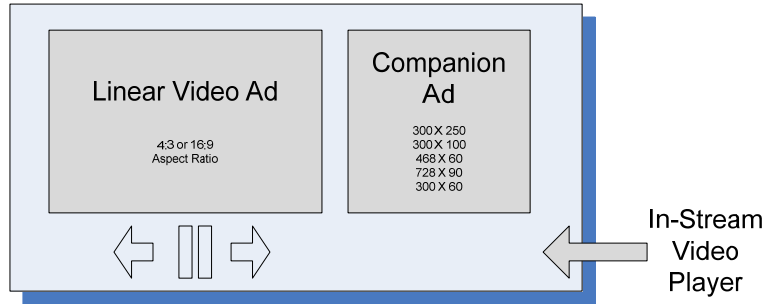
This document was written to address the informational needs of advertising agencies, advertisers, vendors and publishers. Please keep in mind that some of the terms and language used are technical in nature and therefore a glossary of terms is included at the end of the document to assist readers in understanding the core concepts covered.

Linear Video Ad Formats

Linear Video Ad with or without Companion Ad

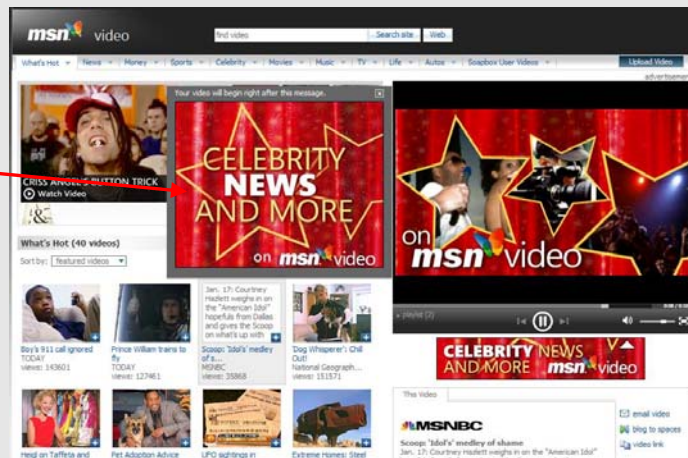
User Experience Description

A time-limited video advertisement that can be shown before, in the middle of, or after the user sees the content in the video player. A clickable companion ad is typically run adjacent to the player content window.



Example

Companion Ad



Video Ad

Source: MSN Video

Linear Video Ad Format Guidelines

Insertion Point	Can be placed pre-roll, mid-roll or post-roll
Maximum ad display duration	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 30 seconds max 2. 15 seconds max <p>Ads may be less than but not exceed these maximum durations.</p>
Click Event	Both the video window and companion ad may be clickable with links to advertiser site
Controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since ads are displayed when a user opts-in to view content, it is recommended that all linear video ads be host-initiated • Minimum player controls present should be Start/Stop and Volume On/Off/Softer/Louder. Other recommended and acceptable buttons include Fast Forward/Rewind, Pause, Zoom and other Interactive buttons as needed. All buttons should be enabled throughout the video ad play, <i>with the exception of Fast Forward.</i>
Companion Ad Sizes	<p>If a publisher offers companion ads as part of a linear video ad product, as per the “Companion Ad” section of this document at least one of the following companion ad sizes should be accepted: 300x250, 300x100, 468x60, 728x90, 300x60.</p> <p>It is important to note that this is a <i>minimum</i> consideration set and that other ad sizes may also be offered by a publisher in addition to at least one of the listed sizes.</p>

Linear Video Ad Submission Recommendations

It is recommended, but not required for guideline compliance, that publishers adopt the following list of specifications in order to encourage standardized and more operationally efficient submission practices.

Video file technical specifications	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bit rates: Greater than 2Mbps 2. Resolution (in pixels): 640x480 preferred; 400x300 minimum; these dimensions may be adapted to accommodate wide screen videos 3. Color depth: 32-bit 4. Key frames: every 1 second 5. Frame rate: At least 15 frames per second 6. Recommended <u>codecs</u> for video asset submission: MPEG2, WMV, H.264/AAC
Aspect ratio	Aspect ratio: 4:3 (standard screen) or 16:9 (wide screen). Publishers may scale the submission to fit their player (e.g. colored bands may be added around the ad.)
Leaders (slate)	Video creative may be submitted without leaders (slate) before ad content.
Scalability	If scaling of ad is possible, publishers should disclose to buyers in creative specs how scaling may occur.

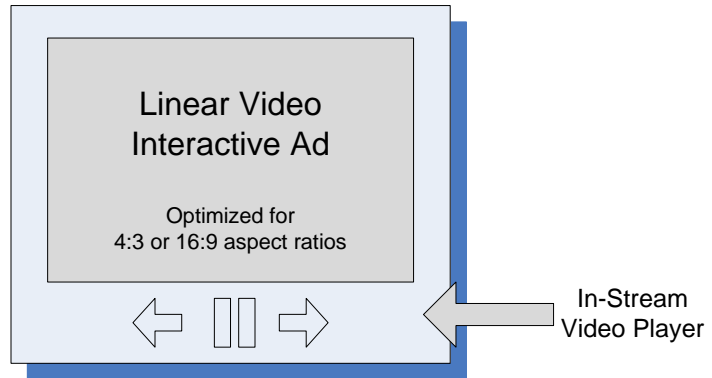
Linear Video Ad Best Practices for Publishers

1. Video players should gracefully accommodate both aspect ratios (4:3 or 16:9) by adding color bands or adjusting the player size to fit.
2. Publishers should disclose to advertisers when running multiple ads in a pod during commercial breaks.
3. Other durations commonly accepted:
 - a. Short-form video creative (aka "bumper", 3-10 seconds in length)
 - b. 60 second spots (should be run sparingly and only as post-roll or during extended mid-roll ad slots)
4. Publishers should accept at least one of the following formats for companion ads: jpeg, gif, png, swf (Adobe Flash), and xap (Microsoft Silverlight).
5. In order to deliver optimal user experiences, publishers should continuously manage and analyze the ratio of ads to content.
6. It is recommended that frequency capping practices be employed. When frequency capping is practiced, publishers should disclose frequency capping practices to the buyers.

Linear Video Interactive Ad

User Experience Description

Ad experience allows a user to interact with an ad message within a video window. The ad plays for a prescribed minimum length of time (usually length of video creative) inviting the user to interact. Ad duration can continue if the user continues to interact with the ad based on publisher criteria. The ad may include video, animation, or images. A key aspect of this unit is that everything is displayed within the video frame.



Example



Interactive elements

Source: Yahoo! (esurance)

Linear Video Interactive Ad Format Guidelines

Insertion Point	Can be placed pre-roll, mid-roll or post-roll
Maximum ad display duration	For compulsory portion of experience, if any: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 30 seconds maximum 2. 15 seconds maximum <p>Ads may be less than but not exceed these maximum durations</p>
Click Event	Interactive elements within video ad are clickable and can take user to telescoping interactive experiences or to advertiser web site.

<p>Linear Video Interactive Ad Unit format</p>	<p>Publishers should accept one of two types of interactive ad unit with the following format requirements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Full-video-window rich media interactive unit file format: Publishers should accept at least one of the following file formats: swf, flv (Adobe Flash), and/or xap (Microsoft Silverlight) <p>It is important to note that some integration with publishers may still be required.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Linear video ad with interactive overlays See format guidelines for linear video ads.
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Linear Video Interactive Ad Submission Recommendations

It is recommended, but not required for guideline compliance, that publishers adopt the following list of specifications in order to encourage standardized and more operationally efficient submission practices.

<p>Video file technical specifications</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bit rates: Greater than 2Mbps 2. Resolution (in pixels): 640x480 preferred; 400x300 minimum; these dimensions may be adapted to accommodate wide screen videos 3. Color depth: 32-bit 4. Key frames: every 1 second 5. Frame rate: At least 15 frames per second 6. Recommended <u>codecs</u> for video asset submission: MPEG2, WMV, H.264/AAC
<p>Leaders (slate)</p>	<p>Video creative may be submitted without leaders (slate) before ad content.</p>

Linear Video Interactive Ad Best Practices for Publishers

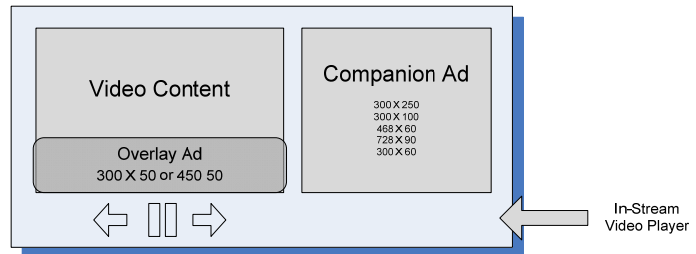
1. Video players should gracefully accommodate both aspect ratios (4:3 or 16:9) by adding color bands or adjusting the player size to fit.
2. Publisher should disclose to advertisers when running multiple ads in a pod.
3. Publishers should clearly outline integration requirements for developing creative.
4. In order to deliver optimal user experiences, publishers should continuously manage and analyze the ratio of ads to content.
5. When possible, simple interaction cues, such as a small graphic or animation, should be included to ensure users understand when and how to interact with the ads.

Non-Linear Video Ad Formats

Overlay Ad

User Experience Description

Overlay ads run *concurrently* with content. Invitation unit ads are displayed on top of content while video is playing. If user interacts with invitation, content is paused and full video ad is displayed in the video window. If user does not engage with overlay it may disappear, collapse to a “leave-behind” companion ad or be persistent for entire content play. Note that some overlay ads can be served over linear video ads as well.



Example



Non-Linear Video Overlay Ad Format Guidelines

Insertion Point	During video play
Maximum ad display duration	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5-15 seconds Persistent
Click Event	Click or rollover on overlay expands to auto-initiated video, interactive ad, or takes user to advertiser's site.
Overlay Ad Sizes	<p>Publishers should accept at least one of the following overlay ad sizes: 300x50, 450x50.</p> <p>It is important to note that this is a <i>minimum</i> consideration set and that other ad sizes may also be offered by a publisher in addition to at least one of the listed sizes.</p> <p>The overlay ad should not be more than 1/5 of the height of the player.</p>

Non-Linear Video Overlay Ad Submission Recommendations

It is recommended, but not required for guideline compliance, that publishers adopt the following list of specifications in order to encourage standardized and more operationally efficient submission practices.

Video file technical specifications (if video is used for overlay ad)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bit rates: Greater than 2Mbps 2. Resolution (in pixels): 640x480 preferred; 400x300 minimum; these dimensions may be adapted to accommodate wide screen videos 3. Color depth: 32-bit 4. Key frames: every 1 second 5. Frame rate: At least 15 frames per second 6. Recommended <u>codecs</u> for video asset submission: MPEG2, WMV, H.264/AAC
Non-video file formats	Publishers should accept at least one of the following: jpeg, png, swf (Adobe Flash), xap (Microsoft Silverlight)
Maximum file size	100k
Audio	No audio allowed in overlay invitation unit; once full ad expands or begins audio should be host-initiated
Opacity	Text and image – 100% opaque; background – 70% maximum
Animation	For animated overlay ad units, publishers may allow an extra 20 additional vertical pixels (beyond the 1/5 limit) that can be used sparingly by the advertisers to enhance the ad message, such as for drop shadows, flying sparks, etc.

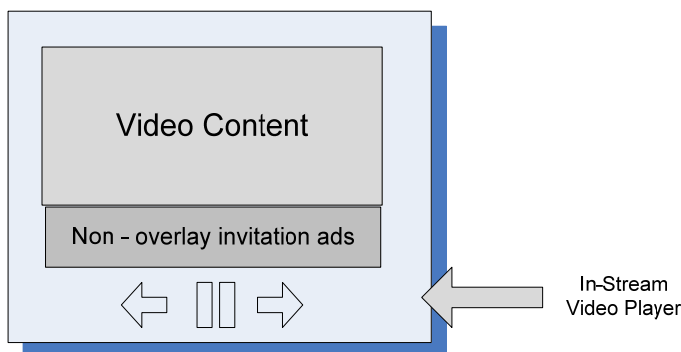
Non-Linear Video Overlay Ad Best Practices for Publishers

1. Publishers should include a persistent close button in the upper right corner of the overlay ad unit.
2. Publisher should clearly use overlay labels to identify unit as “Advertisement” within frame or next to overlay unit.
3. The ad is most commonly presented anchored to bottom of player, but may be anchored along the top or side of player at the publisher’s discretion.

Non-Linear Non-Overlay Invitation Ad

User Experience Description

Like the overlay, this unit presents an invitation to engage with the ad concurrently with the content experience. However, rather than overlaying the content, the non-overlay ad's invitation resides outside the live video frame but within the video window. This format is used when publishers do not wish to overlay the content.



Example

Non-Overlay Invitation Ad



Source: Yahoo (Adobe)

Non-Linear Non-Overlay Invitation Ad Format Guidelines

Insertion Point	During video play; within player but not within video content frame
Maximum ad display duration	At least one of the following two durations should be offered: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 5-15 seconds 2. Persistent
Click Event	Click or rollover on overlay expands to auto-initiated video, interactive ad, or takes user to advertiser's site.
Non-Overlay Ad Sizes	<p>Publishers should accept at least one of the following overlay ad sizes: 300x50, 300x60, 234x60, 400x20.</p> <p>It is important to note that this is a <i>minimum</i> consideration set and that other ad sizes may also be offered by a publisher in addition to one of the listed sizes.</p>

Non-Linear Non-Overlay Invitation Ad Submission Recommendations

It is recommended, but not required for guideline compliance, that publishers adopt the following list of specifications in order to encourage standardized and more operationally efficient submission practices.

File formats	Publishers should accept at least one of the following: jpeg, png, swf (Adobe Flash), xap (Microsoft Silverlight)
Maximum file size	100k
Audio	No audio allowed in overlay invitation unit; once full ad expands or begins audio should be host-initiated

Linear Video Interactive Ad Best Practices for Publishers

1. The invitation should be presented as anchored to either the bottom or top of player.
2. Expandable rich media banners enabling users to rollover or click to view an expanded ad experience may be offered.

Companion Ads

The primary purpose of companion ads is to offer sustained visibility of the sponsor throughout the video experience. Companion ads may offer click-through interactivity and rich media experiences, such as expansion of the ad for further engagement opportunities, and may include text, graphics or rich media and may be combined with any of the format standards listed above to create unique experiences for users and opportunities for advertisers. Creative specifications for companion ads are not detailed in this document and should continue to be governed by each individual publisher.

If a publisher offers companion ads as part of a linear video ad product, at least one of the following companion ad sizes should be accepted:

1. 300x250
2. 300x100
3. 468x60
4. 728x90
5. 300x60.

This is a *minimum* consideration set. Publishers have significant inertia around the companion sizes they use on their sites today. Publishers may continue to accept companion ads in other sizes, however, the minimum requirement is to accept one or more of the listed sizes for companions. The purpose of this minimum is to provide a core group of sizes so media buyers can rely on the portability of their creative.

Appendix A: Glossary of Digital Video Terms

Average View Time – refers to the average amount of time the video ad was played/viewed by users.

Brand Awareness – research studies can associate ad effectiveness to measure the impact of online advertising on key branding metrics.

Bug – a persistent, graphical element that appears in the video environment. Clicking on it will generally take the user to a website.

Bumper Ad – usually refers to a linear video ad with clickable call-to-action; format is usually shorter than full linear ads (i.e. 3-10 seconds) and call-to-action usually can load another video or can bring up a new site while pausing the content.

Click-through – the action of following a hyperlink within an advertisement or editorial content to another Web site or another page or frame within the Web site.

Companion Ad – both linear and non-linear video ad products have the option of pairing their core video ad product with what is commonly referred to as companion ads. Commonly text, display ads, rich media, or skins that wrap around the video experience, can run alongside either or both the video or ad content. The primary purpose of the companion ad product is to offer sustained visibility of the sponsor throughout the video content experience. Companion ads may offer click-through interactivity and rich media experiences such as expansion of the ad for further engagement opportunities.

Completes – completes refer to whether the video played to completion.

Contextual Ads – existing contextual ad engines can deliver text and image ads to non-video content pages. Ads are matched to keywords extracted from content. Advertisers can leverage existing keyword-based paid search campaigns and gain access to a larger audience. Third-parties generally receive a share of the revenue collected from the advertisers.

Core Ad Video – the essential video asset, often repurposed from offline; can be displayed directly in the player or in a more customized presentation.

Event Trackers – primarily used for click-through tracking today, but also for companion ad interactions and video session tracking where available.

Full Screen Views – refers to the number of impressions where the video was played in full screen mode.

Hot Spot – an ad unit that is sold within the video content experience. Mouse action over the video highlights objects that can be clicked. The click action generally initiates a linear video ad or takes the user to a website.

In-Banner Video Ads – leverage the banner space to deliver a video experience as opposed to another static or rich media format. The format relies on the existence of display ad inventory on the page for its delivery.

In-Page Video Ads – delivered most often as standalone video ads and do not generally have other streaming content associated with them. This format is typically home page or channel based and depends on real estate within the page dedicated for the video player.

In-Stream Video Ads – played before, during or after the streaming video content that the consumer has requested. These ads cannot typically be stopped from being played (particularly with pre-roll). This format is frequently used to monetize the video content that the publisher is delivering. In-Stream ads can be played inside short or long form video and rely on video content for their delivery. There are generally four different types of video content where in-stream plays: UGC (User Generated Content/Video), Syndicated, Sourced and Journalistic.

In-Text Video Ads – delivered from highlighted words and phrases within the text of web content. The ads are user activated and delivered only when a user chooses to move their mouse over a relevant word or phrase.

Invitation Unit – a smallish still or animated graphic often overlaid directly onto video content. Typically used as a less-intrusive initial call-to-action. Normally when a viewer clicks or interacts with the invitation graphic, they expand into the ad's full expression, which might be a simple auto-play video or an interactive experience; also commonly referred to as an Overlay Ad.

IPTV – refers to television content delivered via Internet Protocol (IP) over proprietary lines operated by telecommunications companies.

Journalistic Video – primarily news and documentary content that was shot, edited and used by the actual publisher.

Linear Video Ads – the ad is experienced as in-sequence as part of the linear timeline as the content; the ad can be presented before, in the middle of, or after the video content is consumed by the user. One of the key characteristics of a Linear Video ad is that the user watches the ad instead of the content as the ad takes over the full view of the video.

Metadata – data that is associated with the asset; used to facilitate the understanding, use and management of the asset. Metadata may include standards for business-critical data such as advertiser name, eCPM goal, format, and version information.

Mid-roll – a Linear Video ad spot that appears somewhere in the middle of the video content.

Non-linear Video Ads – a Non-Linear Video ad product that runs concurrently with the video content so the user still has the option of viewing the content. Common Non-linear ad products include overlays which are shown directly over the content video itself, and product placements which are ads placed within the video content itself. Non-linear video ads can be delivered as text, graphical banners or buttons, or as video overlays.

Overlay Ad – an ad that appears in the bottom 20% of the video window. Click action generally initiates a linear video ad spot or takes the user to a website; also commonly referred to as an Invitation Unit.

Playlist – a list of discrete videos (sometimes referred to as “segments” or “clips”) presented alongside a video player; it affords easy navigation from clip to clip (clicking on a thumbnail in the playlist will start the playback of the respective clip); it can be programmed as a “loop-list” where clips play in sequential order, often with Linear ads between the clips.

Post-roll – a Linear Video ad spot that appears after the video content completes.

Pre-roll – a Linear Video ad spot that appears before the video content plays.

Quartile Reporting – refers to whether the video ad played to its 25% and 75% points.

Replays – refers to the number of times a user requested to see the video ad again (where available)

Rich Media – advertisements with which users can interact (as opposed to solely animation) in a web-page format. They may appear in ad formats such as banners and buttons, as well as transitionals (interstitials) and various over-the-page units such as floating ads, page take-overs, and tear-backs.

Sourced Video – content generated by a third party (typically professional). An example may be a new car review.

Syndicated Video – content sourced from a professional third party, examples may include syndicated television shows, news footage, etc, and distributed through a multitude of outlets observing strict ownership rights.

Sponsorship Graphics – components that are displayed as very persistent graphics such as with a player-surrounding skin. Sponsorship graphics are generally displayed throughout the entirety of the content play. Sometimes the sponsorship graphic remains interactive and will behave like an overlay ad allowing viewers to explore deeper ad units such as the embedded interactive.

User-Generated Video – video content created by the public at large, generally not professionally edited, and directly uploaded to a site.

VOD – “Video on Demand” allows users to select and “watch video content over a network; usually refers to services offered by cable companies through set-top boxes.