

COLUMNS

5 tips to battle mobile advertising fraud

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By **Dean Harris**

Since the turn of the century we have heard each and every subsequent year declared as "The Year of Mobile." I pronounce 2015 as "The Year Of Mobile Ad Fraud." Here is why.

I believe in the old axiom, "Just follow the money." EMarketer in a Dec. 10 study stated emphatically: "Mobile advertising is the key driver of growth around the world, and advertisers will spend \$64.25 billion on mobile in 2015, an increase of nearly 60 percent over 2014."

When asked why he robbed banks, the famous bank robber Willie Sutton said, "Because that's where the money is."

To draw an obvious parallel, fraudsters are attracted to the mobile advertising market because that is where the money is now.

Rob ROI

Sutton went to jail numerous times for his crimes. Interestingly, no one has ever gone to jail for mobile ad fraud, making this kind of fraud even more attractive to criminals throughout the world.

This suggests quite clearly that if you are operating in the mobile advertising marketplace you will have to address the issue of mobile ad fraud. Seriously.

What does mobile ad fraud look like? We are seeing it everywhere.

For example, we detect a high level of fraud within the mobile pre-bid environment.

Clearly, eliminating mobile ad fraud before you bid on it is a good thing. Not bidding on it means you never will buy that fraudulent, non-human impression.

Much of the mobile ad fraud we are detecting comes from non-mobile traffic. This means fraudsters are using virtual machines or desktop devices to spoof mobile behavior.

We are also detecting a good deal of fraud in the mobile applications market.

Incentivized app installs are fertile ground for fraudsters. Fortunately, there is technology today that can eliminate payments for fraudulent installs before they occur.

What is more, in-app behavior can be monitored as well to help eliminate fraud there, too.

Tip top

Now you are probably wondering what you can do to help win the battle against mobile ad fraud. Here are a few suggestions:

1. Pick a reputable ad fraud detection company. There are number of them and the good news is that they have the tools to help immediately.

You might want to think of ad fraud detection as inexpensive insurance. It does make sense to spend a few cents CPM to make certain that what you are buying or selling is fraud free.

2. Do not assume that this is someone else's problem.

Mobile ad fraud is something that can affect your bottom line and your company's reputation. It is not going away

unless you take proactive steps to address it.

3. Make sure you monitor in real time.

Fraudsters are not static, so only real-time monitoring will give you a realistic view of what is going on.

4. Demand transparency. This means full transparency from your ad fraud detection partner.

You want to know when they are seeing mobile ad fraud and why.

Reporting should be data-driven and granular. It should not be just a "yes" fraud or "no" fraud opinion.

There is also great value in understanding in real time why your ad fraud partner is determining a source to be fraudulent or not. This will help you optimize your campaigns, and will arm you with the data you need to be able to get appropriate charge backs.

5. Learn more every day.

Part of the appeal of mobile media is the rich set of data you can derive that can lead to continuous improvements. This suggests the need to constantly monitor your campaigns to analyze all placements and programs.

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