

COLUMNS

## Closing the case on ODIN

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By AN AMERICAN MARKETER COLUMNIST

By **Konny Zsigo**

Back in April of this year, I blogged that we were not going to support the formation of ODIN and advised others against joining as well ("**ODIN not for WDA**").

As ODIN continues to fade as a possible solution to the industry's tracking and security challenges, it is well worth a reexamination of the rationale, if only for future guidance in such matters of significance to the mobile advertising industry. There are important lessons to be learned here if the industry is to navigate the challenges ahead.

We thought then, and still do now, that forming an industry alliance to replace UDID was an unnecessary affront to the professionalism of Apple.

### UDID undone

Apple has a good grasp on the issues and hardly needs an industry group to lay out its options. Individual members of the industry could, and did, suggest various enhancements for Apple to consider. But an all-out, industry-wide initiative was not a prudent use of anyone's time.

Looking deeper into the situation, the industry was taking Apple to task for problems that originated within the industry itself.

The industry gave Apple no choice but to signal the eventual deprecation of UDID.

Corruption and bad practice evolved quickly in the application marketing space: download "farms" that exist only to drive rank; "consulting" companies that manipulate app ratings; slightly over-incentivized download networks; and a generally-unhealthy hysteria to drive cheap downloads at the expense of anything, including user privacy.

Apple is making a sustained effort to protect user experience and not make the Apple ecosystem a dangerous place for users, and it is getting that message out.

The formation of an industry effort to force a solution on Apple immediately establishes a combative framework, and does not send a positive message to the business community, which already views the mobile advertising industry as fractured and self-interested.

Finally, the dire projections that the deprecation of UDID and lack of formidable industry-wide replacement for it would bring disastrous results have proven unfounded, as we said they would.

The prediction that "60 percent of the mobile ad revenue will be in jeopardy" is far from the reality of what has happened. Mobile ad revenue continues to grow steadily, with the most current projections stating that the industry will grow by 400 percent over the next four years.

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The heart of the problem still lies within the premise that we need a persistent value in the device that allows mobile app marketers to connect the ad click to the app download. We call this "strict attribution" because we can attribute a download to a marketing event i.e., a banner on a site that was clicked.

#### Identifying the issue

We said back in April and reiterate now that we do not need a permanently persistent ID to do this. A temporary one will do just fine.

We dropped the UDID matching requirement many months ago from our API, and our campaigns continue to function effectively and efficiently. It is easy and convenient to send it along, but it is not necessary if you have good software and processes.

We continue to believe that the standardization of IDs, an initiative that ODIN promotes, is actually the problem.

The real risk of standardized algorithms to generate persistent or even semi-persistent IDs is that they then facilitate companies sharing or selling secret data to one another which is when the real privacy invasion starts.

We believe that standardizing IDs further across the advertisers and networks will lead to more abuses, the very abuses we think Apple is trying to curtail on behalf of its users.

We remain comfortable having our own system that obfuscates, hashes or otherwise creates a private ID system that we can use to benefit our customers' marketing campaigns.

The last thing we want to do is share our algorithm with everybody else, nor do we have an interest in clawing back to the very thing Apple eliminated. We think the rest of the industry probably feels this way as well, given the lack of traction that ODIN is experiencing.

MOBILE CONTINUES TO have a transformative effect on our culture and will be the most important thing to happen in advertising since television.

Everyone continues to struggle to respond. Daunting challenges abound, yet all serious advertisers find themselves compelled to address those challenges now with decisive action.

We need to leverage our deep understanding of the industry with sensitivity to the public's concerns. United industry efforts to standardize metrics, for our exclusive benefit, raises deep concerns with the public. Such efforts also do not really fix the problem.

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