

An Advertiser's Guide to Brand Safety

Questions every marketer should ask their partner about brand safety throughout a campaign's life cycle

Imagine this scenario: You've worked hard on building a brand – either yours or your client's - grown it over years and years, increased brand awareness, and done so with flourishing sales too.

And now imagine after all that hard work, you stumble across one of your ads next to some questionable content, or in an environment that promoted the complete antithesis of what you'd spent years building up. That advert would stick long in your (and your customer's) memory, but for all the wrong reasons.

Brand safety is more important than ever, not least because we've seen some high-profile casualties involving global brands on global sites. The damage it can do to any brand is immeasurable and in some cases, irreversible.

In this guide, Exponential outlines what marketers should know, and the questions they should be asking all partners on their media plan, to ensure brand safety.

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Pre-Sale

- Align brand safety expectations
- Ask questions
- Understand the technology



During

- Daily updates
- Engage in two-way dialogue



Post-Sale

- Give feedback
- Ask for reporting

Pre-Sale

WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT FROM A PARTNER?

You want a partner who cares about the safety of your brand as much as you do. This means they should be asking you questions to make sure they understand how much your brand means to you and how you want to safeguard it.

Your partner should communicate on two levels about their brand safety technology used on your campaigns – at a high-level overview and down to the intricate detail. **Ask them if they use their own proprietary network or exchanges.** If so, how do they keep each in check and ensure your brand reputation won't be harmed?

It's important to know if your partner has direct publisher relationships and if they verify all the sites they run advertising across.

Other questions you might want to ask:

- Is their brand safety technology unique – if so, how and why?
- Do they validate their processes with external bodies?
- Do they work in combination with third parties?
- Are they part of trusted bodies within the digital advertising ecosystem?
- Are they certified by the Trustworthy Accountability Group (TAG) with their "Certified Against Fraud" Seal?

WHAT DOES EACH PARTNER RECOMMEND AS THE OPTIMAL SET-UP TO PROTECT YOUR BRAND?

Site verification is important in brand safety set-up; however, strict brand safety settings such as ad blocking, can affect both delivery and performance. A partner should recommend being open to monitoring, as opposed to blocking, to satisfy your goal of performance. But, before saying yes to this, it's worth your while to build trust in your partner and their technology.

Remember that brand safety content categorization is subjective, so one technology might classify an impression's environment differently than another technology. This is why it's important to work with transparent partners who know their technology stack and can communicate any intricacies.

The combination of man and machine is unparalleled. It's important that partners have human eyes looking at content, and machine automation for efficiency.

During

HOW CAN THE PARTNER FURTHER IMPROVE BRAND SAFETY PERFORMANCE?

Once your campaign begins, you should expect page-level contextualization technology to kick in to assess the safety of the site's content in real time.

A partner should be able to give you regular, if not daily, updates on campaign targeting and performance, including brand safety.

They should also be able to provide insight into optimizations being made and how they're safeguarding your brand.

WHAT INFORMATION DO PARTNERS NEED TO MAKE BETTER CAMPAIGN DECISIONS?

Understanding your brand and the concerns you have around brand safety are critical. It's important to have an open discussion about these points with your partner.

Sharing any additional context around previous issues encountered with other partners will also help to keep partners optimally set up and informed.

Be as granular and as detailed as possible, across all possible categories.

Post-Sale

HOW CAN A PARTNER SUPPORT YOU POST-CAMPAIGN?

It's important to give feedback

- Did the partner miss or meet brand safety goals?
- If they missed goals, what added value are you being offered for lost impressions?
- Why do you like working with them? Quantitative and qualitative wins?
- In what areas can they improve?
- Has your partner been transparent, or do you question if you have been sold a brand safety black box?

Also ask for reporting

- Expect or ask for a campaign wrap-up from your partner that provides you with recommendations or specifics about your campaign's brand safety performance.

Exponential is a technology-driven advertising company, that enables brands to drive consumer engagement and performance across display, video and mobile. For more than 15 years, we have delivered superior advertising products and services that consumers embrace, agencies recommend, brands select, media providers prefer, and our employees are proud of.