

The marketer's guide to contextual video

Harnessing data in the realm
of sight, sound and motion

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For marketers, contextual targeting is a critical post-cookies solution.

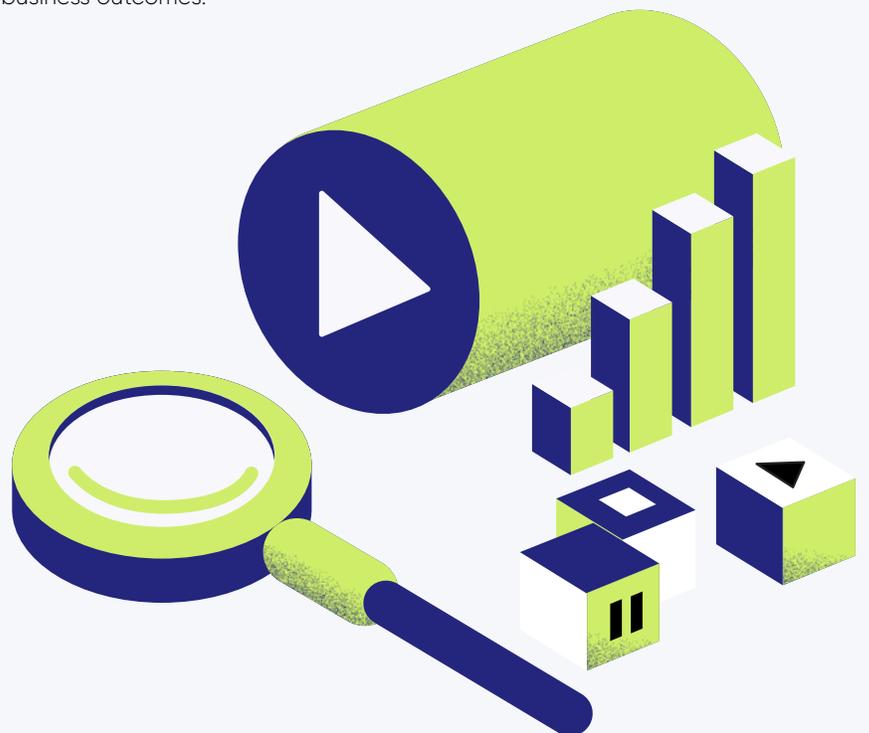
However, when it comes to delivering relevant ads in a changing advertising landscape – now and when Google's slated deadline for deprecation arrives in 2023 – discussions of this method and its use cases are still typically limited to text-based contextual signals such as keywords and phrases. Because of that, marketing teams are often overlooking the opportunity that online video and CTV content present in the contextual targeting space.

The tools to contextually target key audiences with in-video campaigns have only emerged in the last year or so, but the strategy is showing promising outcomes. Not only does video offer insight-rich data that can be extracted and put to work in contextual targeting, but consumers [tend to be in a more receptive mindset](#) when watching video compared to other formats.

New approaches depend on adoption, and advanced contextual targeting has only just begun picking up steam among marketers, with [many still](#)

[familiarizing themselves](#) with the basics, much less with newer video-level capabilities.

To help teams just getting started with contextual video targeting, and to further the work of marketers already making early moves, in this tactical guide, Digiday, IRIS.TV and 4D, a division of Silverbullet, present a tactical guide to unlocking the medium, bringing into focus how data extracted from within videos can be activated and utilized to clearly convey brand messages within a contextually relevant environment to drive business outcomes.



Understanding the contextual-targeting opportunity that video presents



Traditional contextual targeting is based on text-based signals and video content is typically chained to this information. However, when video-level data is unlocked, the resulting influx of new signals enables deeper levels of data that can be used to target audiences contextually via the increasing supply of video and CTV inventory.

Video content offers many more signals than just those of overall topic. It includes factors such as the actors or celebrities featured, company logos, what's happening and being said in the video, as well as tone and sentiment.

Data about how viewers are interacting with the video in which an ad is placed also enables a better understanding of the audience and a campaign's effectiveness in order to optimize strategies.

As Billy Port, vice president of revenue at 4D, explained, "Users are more engaged with video content online.

Therefore, contextually relevant ads that are placed to complement that content are going to perform better and provide an increased value exchange for the marketer."

Without this data, advertisers looking to leverage the growing footprint of video content and its viewership, especially when it comes to CTV, lack transparency into the specific contexts they would be advertising in. They are limited to targeting by genre, keywords or rating, which means the audiences of the content may not be ideal for their brands, or, even more importantly, aspects of the content may not meet their brand safety standards.

Kevin Weigand, director of U.S. national video innovation at Amplifi, a division of Dentsu International, explained that his team's clients were looking to get more from their CTV investments: "Channel, app, self-declared genre and run-of-network inventory has become insufficient for our clients investing in CTV and streaming video." To move beyond these limitations, unlocking video-level data is required.

Tactics and insights

- **Video content provides extra levels of data beyond text-based signals that can be used to target contextually. Signals include visual and audio data and information about how viewers are engaging with the medium.**
- **Contextual campaigns delivered in video enable a deeper understanding of what in particular resonates with viewers or drives further action. This could be something like the programming type, or even the specific celebrities that are featured.**

Unlocking video-level data for contextual targeting

In order to use video-level data to target contextually, the publisher that hosts the video inventory must make that data accessible. There are several avenues to unlocking this access.

Marketers can approach publishers directly to access video-level data. This method requires the manual effort of compiling the data and analyzing it for contextual insights, a process that not all marketers have the technology, resources or expertise to handle. And, considering that most marketers work with up to several hundred sellers, doing this is seldom efficient at scale.

To ease the process, publishers often partner with a video data platform, which integrates into content management systems where videos live. These platforms then normalize the data, centralize it and make it accessible to buyers through compatible ad platforms, like ad servers, SSPs and DSPs.

Once the data is available in these environments, marketers either engage with a contextual targeting platform to leverage within the DSP, or work with the contextual targeting platform that is already integrated with the video data platform, making the analysis and targeting capabilities available with the video inventory when it's purchased.

Because this technology is different for video than for display ads, making video-level data more widely accessible is dependent upon collaboration among all stakeholders. Again, adoption is the key to the approach.

"It can be available everywhere, but we need the ecosystem to adopt the fabric," said Richie Hyden, co-founder and COO of IRIS.TV. "That includes publishers, platforms and buyers alike,"

As it turns out, marketers hold significant power when it comes to influencing that adoption.

"If you're a buyer, you're the ultimate budget holder," Hyden explained. "Everything starts with what you're looking for. You need to talk about wanting to have access to this data and how it can benefit sellers too, in terms of better performance and margins on their inventory."

Tactics and insights

- **Marketers can work directly with publishers to access video-level data, then manually compile it and analyze it for contextual insights.**
- **Since technology, expertise and scale can be barriers to manually compiling video-level data and putting it to use, publishers turn to video data platforms to ease the process and increase accessibility for marketers.**
- **Marketers need contextual targeting solutions to be able to put the video-level data to use to reach audiences once the data is unlocked.**

Identifying the right contextual targeting platform for video

In order to take full advantage of the array of data available from video, it's important for contextual targeting platforms to have three key capabilities.

Facial and brand recognition:

Recognition of visual signals such as faces allows brands to target content featuring celebrity spokespeople and brand ambassadors. Brand recognition enables targeting based on recognition of logos, products and other meaningful signals that encompass a brand's identity.

Computer vision and visual signal

recognition: These capabilities extract the overall topic of a video to identify what the video content is about.

Campaign performance and

optimization: Contextual targeting platforms should have machine learning algorithms that make statistically significant recommendations to optimize campaigns.



Putting video-level data to work: Campaign creation, targeting and brand safety

Once the decision is made to put video-based contextual targeting into action, marketers need to test it.

According to Hyden of IRIS.TV, “Most marketers start with PMPs because there’s not a guaranteed investment amount and they’re not done on IOs, so it’s usually a pretty low-lift way to put a deal together. Then the buyer and seller can have a discussion about what the best type of content will be to target.” This is where conversations about contextual signals come into play. A sports brand might want to target March Madness related content, for example. The buyer and seller will have a conversation about that plan, create the deal, activate the targeting and analyze performance.

When it comes to figuring out a contextual targeting strategy, marketers don’t need to start from scratch. Many marketers employ some kind of topical targeting in display, social or search.

“There are usually tactics that are working elsewhere that you can get started with and say, ‘OK, let’s bridge that segment that we’re targeting for display into video.’ You can start there and learn and tweak from that,” said Hyden.

This optimization is based on basic metrics such as video completion rate, view-through rate, click-through rate and dwell time. Once that video-level data is unlocked, marketers can

gather insight about how the targeting strategy is performing.

The data will indicate what kind of video an ad ran against and what exactly was happening in the frame. If metrics like search traffic or conversion rates went up at that particular moment, that indicates to marketers that they should consider looking for similar video inventory that can produce comparable outcomes.

“You might find that your ads actually resonate when they’re shown with horror films, or something else that you otherwise wouldn’t know,” said Hyden.

Aside from targeting specific contextual signals, video-level data also enables marketers to use those signals to ensure brand-safe ad placements.

For the CTV streaming platform company Crackle Plus, an IRIS.TV partner, brand safety is the most common use case its video-level data is applied toward by advertisers. “It’s less so the targeting capabilities as much as the anti-targeting capabilities that our advertisers are taking advantage of,” explained Darren Olive, executive vice president of ad sales and sales strategy for Crackle Plus.

By providing advertisers transparency into their content beyond the genre or rating, they are able to ensure that their ad placements are in-line with brand guidelines. Some advertisers want to avoid content with any kind of violence

or intense action, while others want to avoid political content, for example.

“They need to get what they pay for. We need to be as close to 100% accuracy on that,” said Olive. “Our stake in the game is to deliver what we’ve told them, and we’re able to, using all the measurement tools and capabilities that are at our disposal.”

At Dentsu International, Weigand echoed this sentiment from the agency perspective. “For contextual and brand-safe targeting and reporting, we believe that it’s important to have video-level data analyzed and verified by trusted third-party data partners.”

Tactics and insights

- **Marketers that are just starting with buying video inventory for contextual targeting are finding PMPs to be a low-lift method to test strategies.**
- **Topical targeting strategies that are used in other channels are good places to start with contextual video targeting. Tactics can be optimized from there.**
- **Performance metrics uncover the specific video contexts that are driving campaign objectives, allowing real-time optimization toward targeting more content in which ads are most likely to resonate with viewers.**

How video-based contextual targeting and real-time optimization drives campaign objectives

As part of its cookieless testing initiative, insurance company AXA UK, a 4D partner, turned to contextual targeting for video content in order to drive brand awareness.

Four different contextual targeting strategies were employed for each of the brand's main insurance offerings, including the addition of a targeting layer for content featuring competitor logos to drive conquering objectives.

"When you use Google DV 360, where this campaign was managed, table stakes video completion rate is 70%. That's the average in the industry now and that was AXA's goal," said Port.

By leveraging performance metrics, AXA narrowed in on the particular video content and formats that were working

best and identified more viewable inventory that fit the bill. Identifying that six-second video formats were driving the highest VCR, for example, prompted AXA to shift spending toward similar inventory. Optimizations like this boosted the video completion rate to 95% across skippable inventory.

Staying nimble and open to real-time optimization suggestions, even when they don't seem intuitive, is key to driving these kinds of outcomes.

"Media teams often think if they're advertising pet food, for example, they should just target pet-related inventory," Port explained, "and they might think spending budget on content about healthy living would be a waste. But that might not be true when you look at the performance."



Video-level contextual targeting for marketers and publishers in a cookieless world

Unlocking access to video-level contextual targeting capabilities depends upon marketers expressing their interest and publishers adopting the systems needed to capture the outcomes. It's essential that publishers understand why making these moves will be worth the effort and investment.

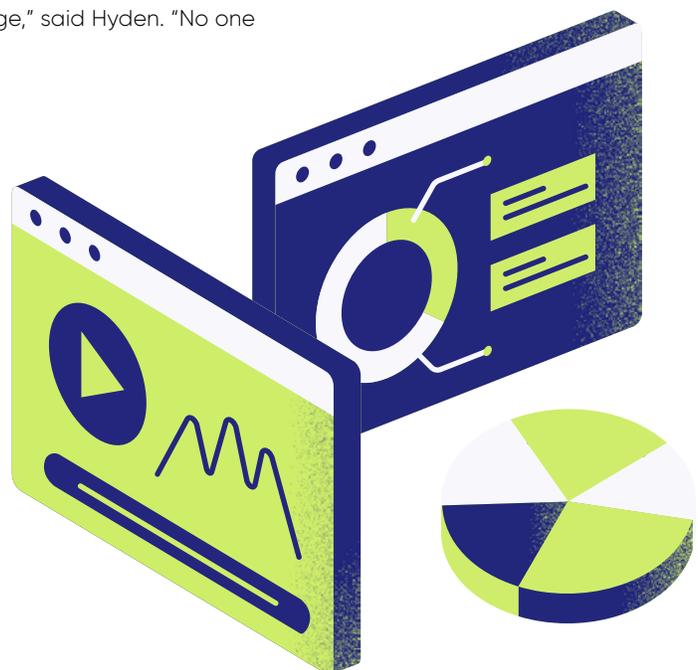
This understanding was critical to the Crackle Plus team's decision to boost its contextual targeting capabilities. "Transparency at the asset level is paramount to the success of our business moving forward," said Olive. "We need to be able to make sure that the contextual environment is the proper environment for advertisers, and having access to data at the asset level lets us make sure that they're getting what they pay for."

The granularity of video-level data also helps publishers avoid falling victim to blunt instrument blocklisting. Take news content, for example. Especially given the heightened news cycles in recent years, most marketers want to avoid advertising with news content. "There's a lot of news content out

there that's not incendiary, and not advertising with it harms the journalistic side of the media companies," Hyden said. "To blocklist a whole network just because you don't want to run on news is the only way to do it if this data is not accessible."

The nuance of video-level data enables marketers to target content on a news network that's brand safe, suitable and drives outcomes.

"We're seeing people adopt once this conversation starts because it's a fair value exchange," said Hyden. "No one loses."



About IRIS.TV

IRIS.TV is the only data platform built for video. We provide video data connectivity to enable better viewing experiences and advertising outcomes. For CTV and online video, we structure, connect, and activate the world's video-level data. Since 2013, we've enabled our partners to build scalable solutions on top of our platform for video-level contextual and brand-safe ad targeting, verification, planning, measurement, and video recommendations. For more information, visit www.iris.tv

About 4D

4D, a division of Silverbullet, is the leading context outcomes engine that enables clients to step into the post-cookie, first-party data future with confidence. We bring together the most advanced machine learning and AI technologies to help you reach your customers at the right place, right time, and in the right moment. For more information, visit <https://wearesilverbullet.com/4d/>

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