February 8, 2017

To: Digital Measurement Vendors Subject to MRC Audit

From: George Ivie, David Gunzerath and Ron Pinelli

Re: "Human" Labeling of Metrics Filtered for Invalid Traffic

Abstract: The MRC does not believe the labeling of filtered traffic as "human" to be appropriate or accurate and does not consider such labeling compliant with the IVT Guidelines.

Background:

On October 27, 2015 the Media Rating Council (MRC) issued the final *Invalid Traffic (IVT) Detection and Filtration Guidelines, Version 1.0*. The guidelines can be found here:

http://mediaratingcouncil.org/101515_IVT%20Addendum%20FINAL%20(Version%201.0).pdf

Within the *IVT Guidelines*, Section 7 and Appendix A provide details of the required reporting metrics associated with invalid traffic functions. Among these details are requirements to report "Gross Metrics (Completely Unfiltered)", "Net Metrics (Filtered for General Invalid Traffic Requirements)", and (if applicable to the campaign and measurement organization) "Total Net Metrics for the Campaign (Filtered for Sophisticated Invalid Traffic Requirements)". This is the default and preferred approach for IVT metric labeling.

All vendors are required to comply with the General IVT (GIVT) provisions in the guidelines, but vendors are strongly encouraged to adopt Sophisticated IVT (SIVT) provisions. Vendors adopting only GIVT provisions, by definition will be applying incomplete filtration (exclusive of SIVT) and as a result, will provide incomplete assurance that traffic is human. Even those vendors that apply SIVT provisions will be subject to materiality, error and potential incompleteness due to timing related to new or emerging IVT considerations as well as a certain level of undetermined, un-measurable or unclassified traffic. Moreover, SIVT provisions alone do not include techniques to verify presence of a user, verification of audience or assurance that a human is present when measurement takes place. Finally, IVT may include illegitimate human activity (such as incentivized manipulation of measurements) so therefore human traffic may not be completely valid.

Invalid Traffic is defined generally as traffic that does not meet certain ad serving quality or completeness criteria, or otherwise does not represent legitimate ad traffic that should be included in measurement counts. Among the reasons why ad traffic may be deemed invalid is it is a result of non-human traffic (spiders, bots, etc.), but also other activity designed to produce fraudulent traffic. The *IVT Guidelines* strengthen existing invalid traffic filtration and removal

guidance in several important ways, but compliance with them does not guarantee (or require) absolute assurance that traffic is human.

For these reasons, the MRC does not believe the labeling of filtered traffic as "human" to be appropriate or accurate and does not consider such labeling compliant with the *IVT Guidelines*. Alternative wording and labeling from what is discussed above (Gross, Net and Total Net) and required in the guidelines (other than "human", such as "valid") is subject to MRC approval on a case-by-case basis.

The MRC has produced this interim guidance based on input from an IVT Update working group and until such time as there is a formal standards update that incorporates it, this interim guidance is considered authoritative and should be applied by measurement services in the MRC accreditation process.

Please contact Ron Pinelli at MRC (rpinelli@mediaratingcouncil.org) with any questions.