DART White Paper

Counting
Methodologies

July 12, 2001

DoubleClick

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PREFACE TO DART COUNTING METHODOLOGIES

About this white paper

Because of a lack of standards within the Internet advertising industry, there is little uniformity in the way websites and ad-serving technologies count impressions and clicks. As a result, advertisers have difficulty making accurate comparisons among the many websites with which they do business.

While third-party ad serving through DoubleClick presents advertisers with an accurate, uniform methodology for counting and reporting impressions and clicks across multiple websites, there are often discrepancies between the numbers reported by DoubleClick and those reported by the internal or third-party counting systems used by the individual websites. Furthermore, because there are many factors that can cause these discrepancies, and because these factors vary by website, the discrepancies are typically not consistent from website to website.

The purpose of this white paper is to explain the discrepancies between the way DART and other organizations count impressions and clicks, and to provide ways to minimize the impact of these discrepancies.

How this white paper is organized

This white paper is divided into the following sections:

COUNTING IMPRESSIONS

In online advertising, it is imperative to know how many impressions a given ad has served. This chapter explains how DART counts impressions as part of the ad serving process, and why DART's impression counts are sometimes different from the numbers that are produced by other, non-DoubleClick counting methodologies.

This chapter discusses the following topics:

The Ad Serving Process

The following figure shows the process by which DART serves ads.
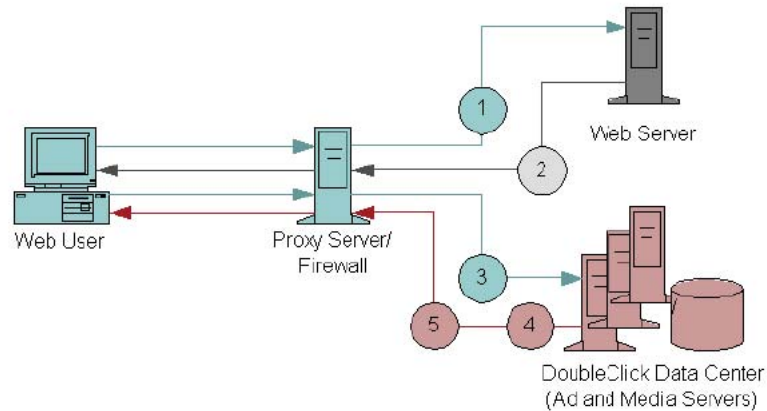
FIGURE: How DART serves ads

Stage	Description
1	The user requests an HTML page.
2	The Web server sends the user an HTML document.
3	The user's browser reads the HTML code and sends a request to `http://ad.doubleclick.net` for an ad.
4	The DoubleClick ad server chooses an ad and counts an impression.
5	The ad server, a media server, or a third-party redirect server serves the ad.

DART counts an impression when the ad server determines which ad to send (Stage 4) after receiving a request for an ad from the user's browser (Stage 3).

Many websites and ad-serving systems count an impression when the HTML page that contains the tags for the ad is sent to the user (Stage 2). This counting method incorrectly equates a page view with an ad impression. For a variety of reasons, browsers often send requests for HTML pages, but do not send requests for the ads in those pages. When counting impressions, DART counts only requests for ads themselves, not requests for the HTML pages that contain the ads.

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