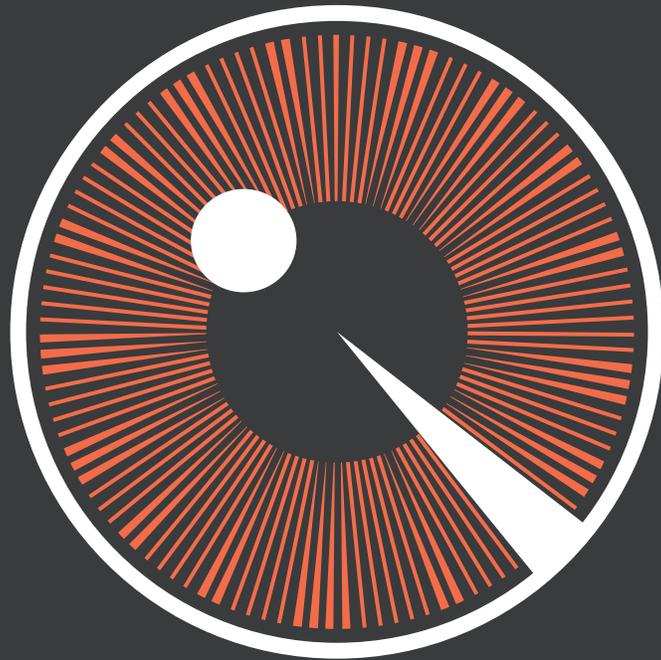


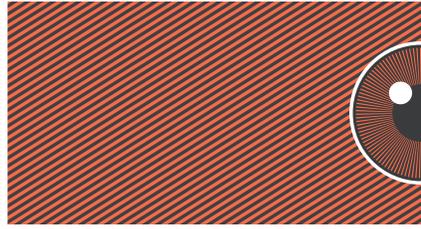
admonsters

# playbook:

Understanding Attention Metrics



sponsored by:  Chartbeat



## introduction

For years and years we've been told that if the click isn't on its deathbed, it should be shivved to death immediately. While early display ads in the mid-90s could boast CTRs above 40%, the likely number you'll see attached to a campaign these days is below 0.1%. But for some reason, even in 2015, click-through rate remains as vital to digital ad measurement although its importance is widely ridiculed.

Reliance on the click means delivering unfathomable amounts of ad impressions to users, which has hyper-inflated the value of the pageview. This has led to a broken advertising system that rewards quantity over quality. Instead of building audiences, digital publishers are chasing traffic, trying to lure users to sites via "clickbait" headlines where the user is assaulted with an array of intrusive ad units. The end effect is overwhelming, ineffective ads adjacent to increasingly shoddy content.

However, the rise of digital video and viewability have injected linear TV measurement capabilities into the digital space. By including time in its calculation, viewability has opened a conversation into the value of user attention. It has introduced metrics with the potential to assist premium publishers in building attractive audiences; better quantify exposure for advertisers; and ultimately financially reward publishers with more engaged audiences.

This is a new and fast developing area, but one where a little education can go a long way. In addition to describing current attention metrics, this playbook will dive into what you should look for in an advanced metrics partner and how to use these metrics in selling inventory and optimizing campaign performance. We'll discuss working with editorial to improve site experience in general and touch on how to transact based on attention and active time in-view.

Once the impression served as the chief proxy for exposure, to be replaced by the click as a proxy for engagement. Now time-based metrics have the potential to play proxy for arguably the most valuable commodity in digital advertising: attention.

# 02 what's a playbook?

A playbook is an extension of what the AdMonsters community has been doing at our conferences for more than 14 years. A playbook solidifies what has made our events “must attend” for many digital strategists. By bringing people together to share learnings and best practices in a focused way, people can create a plan and avoid hours—if not days—of doing research on their own.

The AdMonsters playbook concept takes existing AdMonsters content (from conferences and AdMonsters.com) and, with the help of the AdMonsters community, “crowd sources” a document that outlines best practices on a particular topic. Our belief is that this will allow for a free exchange of ideas with the benefit of curation for accuracy. This document does not get into specifics around individual solution providers intentionally.

Great effort has gone into writing the playbook in a fashion that applies to as many publishers as possible without becoming too general. In a technology-driven industry like digital advertising, information quickly becomes obsolete. The intention is that, based on the feedback of the AdMonsters community, the next version of this playbook will start to take shape and, with additional contributors, grow in both depth and breadth. Publication of future versions will be scheduled based upon the needs of the community.





time is scarce

For better or worse, digital display advertising has its roots in print publishing, with placements adjacent to editorial content. In a newspaper or magazine, there's a scarcity of ad spaces available, though extra pages can be added. How difficult it is to boost up the page count is relative—for example, a magazine may need to hit a multiple of four, so adding a one-page ad actually means adding four pages of content (including ads). As you can imagine, the price of printing can quickly add up, which means sometimes adding advertising isn't worth the cost.

The situation in digital is quite different. Adding an extra page of content is literally as easy as hitting a button, and the cost is basically nothing. In addition, there's no limit to how many ads you can place on a page. In fact, publisher bad actors insert numerous placements at bottoms of pages; transacted on programmatically, these ads drive publisher revenue while never actually being seen. This was a chief concern that drove the development of technology measuring viewability.

The Internet is not running out of space—publishers will keep adding page after page of content, many loaded to the brim with ad placements. This gives the misconception that digital ad inventory is infinite, and that lack of scarcity pushes down the cost of digital advertising.

While pageviews are seemingly endless, user attention is actually scarce. There is only so much time Internet users can spend consuming content—at the most, 24 hours a day, which is still limited when you consider all the content available. And what advertisers want most is time for their messaging to be in front of a target audience.

It's a clear path from viewability to attention because the former inserts time in its calculation. And time—

particularly active time in-view—can be used as a proxy for attention. Combine that with audience insights and a premium publisher can work some serious magic.

**54%**

of all pageviews receive less than  
15 seconds of attention.

| Source: Chartbeat, 2015

## Sidebar: The Unspoken Handshake

Don't ever let anyone tell you that Internet content is free. You may not pay cold, hard cash to access a publisher's wares, but you still offer up something. Most digital content is traded through an implied moral agreement: the user is given access in exchange for giving the publisher's advertisers the opportunity to win his/her attention and any data (e.g., browsing, interest, search) the user might impart while on the site.

User privacy concerns and increased use of ad blockers has driven this "unspoken handshake" into the light. Publishers are increasingly warning their users that data is being collected through cookies and other identifiers. To combat ad blocking, some publishers are asking users to turn off their ad-blocking extension or enabling them to pay money to access content.

# 04



## time-based tools

### Viewability

The scourge of digital advertising! The killer of revenue!  
The savior of our industry!

Most supply-siders (perhaps grudgingly) will agree with the digital media masses that consider viewability a good thing for the industry. In a perfect world, advertisers would only be charged for ads that were seen; as the most measurable medium, not only will this legitimize digital ad channels but also set them apart from (even above) their print and linear cousins.

Viewability measurement is making good on this dream, although the path there has had its share of frustrations. Beyond that, by adding time into the campaign equation, viewability is a solid first push toward attention metrics. In guaranteeing against viewability, the value of quick-hit impressions drops dramatically. According to research from Chartbeat, 54% of pageviews garner less than 15 seconds of user time; when users spend less than 15 seconds on a page, viewability slumps to a sad 28%. Suddenly many of those easy-score impressions don't actually count.

The viewability movement has encouraged many publisher actions that have arguably been as beneficial for users as advertisers. Redesigns focused on improving viewability metrics have delivered better site experiences while publishers have also repositioned placements and cut down the number of units per page. Viewability has encouraged innovation: publishers have experimented with lazy or smart loading that delivers a unit to a page when it is in view as well as sticky ads that stay in-view by following users as they scroll.

As engaged time increases from **15 seconds to one minute**, viewability goes up by over half, **from 37% to 57%**. Visitors who read for more than **75 seconds** see more than **60%** of advertisements | Source: Chartbeat

A high-percentage site benchmark (above 80%) alone is enough to confirm to your advertisers that the majority of your ads are being seen. However, we can do better—it's just the obstacles in making 100% viewability a reality are many and will be tough to overcome. Here are some of the big ones:

### Disagreement over the standards.

The Media Ratings Council has set display viewability at 50% in-view for one second and video viewability at 50% in-view for two seconds. Although the measurement accreditation organization has said time and again that these are supposed to be baselines on which campaign terms and conditions should be negotiated, many advertisers think they are too low. Many campaigns are negotiated with longer time- and or percentage in-view figures, which adds complexity to campaign management.

### Wide discrepancies between vendors.

Despite reconciliation programs headed by the MRC and regular re-certification testing, reporting discrepancies of as much as 30%-40% between viewability providers is commonly reported. Although all MRC-accredited providers use page geometry and/or browser optimization methodologies, each has their own approach to calculation. In addition, there is no standard discrepancy between advertiser and publisher viewability numbers.

# 04



## time-based tools

### “Dark viewability.”

An unhealthy amount of publisher inventory is unmeasurable due to issues such as iFrame disagreement in display and lack of VPAID adoption in video. This means viewed impressions can too often be uncounted by service providers.

### Advertiser insistence on 100% viewable now.

Although the IAB has said that 100% viewability is not currently feasible from a technological standpoint and instead suggested a 70% in-view campaign benchmark, many major advertisers are insisting on paying only for viewability impressions. Certainly some publishers can raise CPMs enough to make up for lost or wasted inventory, but such demands leave many publishers struggling.

### Post-impression metric.

Viewability metrics of course don't come in until after an impression is delivered, so forecasting and real-time optimization are major challenges. Campaign planning to maximize viewability is nearly impossible in most ad servers. However, some companies have developed page-level code that can report whether a placement is in view before the ad call.

# 76%

of publishers that have tested viewability do not find metrics consistent across their sites.

| Source: AdMonsters Viewability Litmus Test, 2015

### Sidebar: The Case for Non-Viewable Inventory

Viewability can seem like an awfully contradictory enterprise. For example, what unit would seem more viewable than a leaderboard, bright and shiny on the top of the page? Actually, although a leaderboard may register as a potentially viewable placement as the ad call is made, a user (probably used to blowing past leaderboards on every site around) is likely to scroll down before the ad hits the viewability threshold—even before it finishes loading.

Non-viewable inventory also tends to defy expectations. When we say non-viewable, we mean inventory that is not viewable when the page loads and the ad call is sent out; for example, ads at the bottom of pages hosting long and winding text articles (like the ones you read on AdMonsters.com!).

Though not always viewable or viewed, these spots tend to have higher engagement and click-through rates. The thinking is that after finishing an article or site experience, a user is more likely to be receptive to a piece of adjacent advertising.

Many publishers sell these ads at a reduced rate with the caveat that it will not be in view on load, but chances for engagement are higher than the viewable unit. In effect, the buyer is taking a chance on lower-priced inventory: although it may not be seen, if it is the impact will be stronger.

# 04



## time-based tools

### Active Time In-View

Consider the old quandary with television ads: the program breaks for commercials, so the viewer decides it's time to raid the refrigerator or hit the bathroom. The advertisements were on the screen, technically in-view, but they weren't actually seen. (Well, maybe by the family couch, but we all know it doesn't control the finances.)

Digital channels, on the other hand, can measure signals of page engagement while the ad is in view, dramatically improving potential attention measurement. Signs of user engagement include scrolling, mouse movements and any type of interaction on a page—whether it's hitting play on a video or writing in a comment box.

Typical measurement starts a clock from when the page finishes loading or the user first scrolls/interacts. After a gap in activity (e.g., five seconds), the clock would stop and the user would be considered inactive unless he/she made another interaction—at that point the clock would pick up where it stopped. If the user switches to another tab, the clock would stop immediately, and start back up when the user returns.

For advertising, active time in-view can be analyzed:

- on an overall campaign basis
- per user
- per audience segment
- per cookied user group
- per position/placement

The metric then can be cut up into:

- total active exposure
- average active exposure
- campaign lifetime exposure
- share of view (*percentage of screen taken up by ad over time*)
- and more

Active time in-view is not a guarantee that a user saw and evaluated an ad, but page engagement is a better proxy for attention than in-view time alone.

A user that reads a page for  
more than 75 seconds  
sees more than

**60%**

of the ads on the page.

| Source: Chartbeat, 2015

### Hover

Advanced metrics providers can actually report where a user's mouse or finger were placed on the page while the ad was in view. High hover time above or around a unit suggests user interest. Yes, goofy creatures we are, we have a tendency to place the cursor where our attention is.

# 04



## time-based tools

### Engaged Refresh

Site refreshes have earned a bad reputation. For a breaking news site, refreshing might make sense because you'd need to constantly update your newest story, but you've long been able to update a section by itself. Instead, some publishers will refresh their entire site or just the ads every few minutes (or even less) to get a new set of impressions in front of a viewer.

Many refreshes occur whether or not a browser is focused on that particular page—a user could have tabbed over and left a page open to come back to. So the refreshes go on and on, and a great many ads go unseen. This practice also played a part in the rise of viewability.

Engaged refresh attempts to take the stigma away by using active time in-view as its counter. Ad placements are only refreshed after they have been in-view while the user is active for a certain amount of time. Compare it to an outside digital billboard with multiple ads that rotate, only the ads change only after the user has had a good chance to take in all the information offered.

A **15 second** engaged ad refresh ad strategy can improve viewable inventory by

**69%.**

| Source: Chartbeat

The publisher may decide that length is 10 seconds, 20 or maybe 30. Publishers suggested to us that after 20 seconds of being actively in-view, an advertisement has played out its potential; a refreshed placement may even get more attention than the first ad up. Your attention metrics provider should analyze content and ad performance to help devise a refreshing scheme that fits best for your site.

The biggest advantage to engaged refreshing is that you can increase your inventory (the viewable kind at that) without increasing the number of placements on a page. That's pretty kind to users in an era where they're bombarded with advertising every site they go to. This inventory is already your valuable stuff—you're effectively multiplying it.

Of course, there's a hitch: how do you get your audience to stay on stories long enough for you to refresh the ads? Well, you gotta have something that makes them want to stick around... And unfortunately taking hostages isn't an option. So how about great content? We cannot emphasize enough here the importance of providing high-quality content—common clickbait and rehashed stories from other sites likely aren't going to be enough to engage site visitors.

Now you may be thinking, *I'm on the revenue side! Content ain't my problem.* Maybe it should be, or at least you should be more actively partnering with your editorial department.

# 05



## working with editorial

Church and state ain't what it used to be. In the "olden" days, a publication's sales and editorial teams would be resolutely separated to avoid conflicts of interest and other journalistic quagmires. Sometimes the departments would be placed on different floors so never the twain would meet.

But digital media has changed the game, for better or worse. Particularly with the rise of "native" advertising and other publisher content marketing endeavors, the line between editorial and sales has grown increasingly soft. While some people lament this and worry about the state of modern media, editorial and sales can actually do wonderful things together, particularly when bridged by the analytics team.

First off, editorial should be interested in viewability and engagement metrics to better understand user behavior—and really site experience. Editorial might already be using an advanced metrics provider to help with engagement metrics such as time engaged and referencing heatmaps to better understand usage patterns. And yes, editorial should be quite interested in user response to advertising because negative ad experiences will drive audience away.

But attention is a two-way street: The more engaging the content, the higher attention rating for advertising nearby—and higher potential for using refresh to increase the amount of viewable inventory. If you're selling advertising with attention in mind, editorial is incentivized to create engaging content that will suck the reader in for

the long haul rather than grabbing them for a quick and dirty pageview. The more time a user is on a page, the more ads that can be shown... AND SEEN!

As a respondent mentioned in AdMonsters' Publisher Viewability Litmus Test (2015): "A user needs to be engaged with the content—and the ads need to be near that content. The best thing a publisher can do is work with their metrics team to understand where users are engaged, and then plan their ad strategy around that." Another commented that viewability numbers improved substantially when adjacent to "key content."

In addition, editorial should take advantage of tools within the CMS to create a variety of content experiences (think advanced HTML5 layouts), particularly ones that enhance engagement or extend a user's view time. These can be particularly effective for sponsored content that creatively integrates the advertiser into the piece (e.g., infographics). In addition, editorial can work with ops to build intriguing units for these more impressive layouts, which sales could sell at premium.

Editorial and sales can work together without sacrificing integrity; it takes teamwork to connect the most engaging content with the advertising in need of most exposure. The most important thing is to ensure sales, editorial and analytics are optimizing toward the same goals—to borrow a phrase from print, everybody should be on the same page. Regular meetings between the departments would encourage this.

# 06



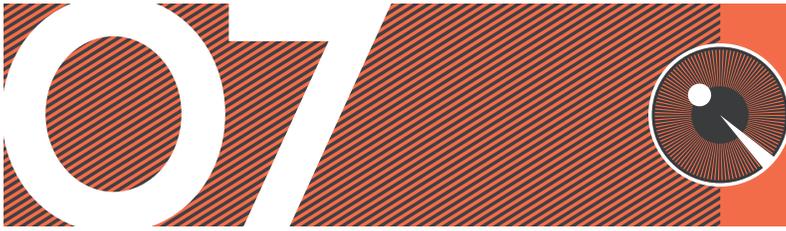
## choosing an advanced metrics partner

Getting set up with an attention metrics provider tends to be easy. Site implementation typically requires changing permissions and adding a few lines of code to page templates that ping your provider to enable near real-time reporting. You can be measuring active time in-view in no time. The hard part is finding the right provider to work with.

As we mentioned before, your editorial or analytics team might be using an attention metrics provider already; you should see if they have an ad offering. Alternatively, if your trusted viewability provider has advanced attention metrics for both sales and editorial, perhaps you should give the content team a nudge. However, a good provider should have integrations with all major data crunchers and work near seamlessly with other systems.

### Here are some other aspects to consider:

- Though it's not a requirement, it's awfully convenient for editorial, analytics and sales (including ad ops) to use the same attention metrics system. This will facilitate coordination between the departments and make it easier to optimize toward shared goals.
- Your provider should perform regular inventory analysis to find your best performing material and to assist in forecasting.
- Testing of page templates and give advice on shifting ad placements. This includes page mock-ups.
- Devising and updating a strategy for engaged ad refreshes.
- Media planning tools for optimizing campaign viewability and active time in-view.
- Knowledge of your site's content and your other revenue models can be fruitful for data analysis and campaign planning.
- DMP integrations—you're going to want to cross-reference your engagement data with your audience data. For example, how long on average do the people you label car enthusiasts spend on auto-related articles? The more interesting data combinations available, the more sales can spin to bring in hot deals.
- A dashboard showing competitor stats can be awfully helpful. This is more on the editorial side, but it will help the ad team if they can compare engaged time spent on relative content sections and story types—"Hey, our Celebrity Gossip readers spend a lot more time digging in than those on Brand X."
- The ability to build complex reports—just taking a look at all the ways you can slice and dice attention data (per user, per audience segment, etc.), you're going to need a wide variety of reports internally and for clients. A good provider will enable you to customize your reporting with little effort and hopefully a clean dashboard.
- Great client support—much of this may be unknown territory for you because it's also new ground for the entire digital advertising industry. Your provider better have people you can lean on with question after question. Sure, the data is great, *but what does it mean!?!? How do I use it?* A provider isn't worth its salt if it can't tell you, or at least help you figure it out. In addition, the provider should work with you in building the tools you need, and easing you into their newest offerings



## putting attention data to work

Now that we've got our attention metrics lined up, let's make them pay off.

### Site Optimization.

First and foremost, you should ensure that your site is laid out in a way to maximize attention for both content and advertising. Your provider should offer advice for site and placement optimization as well as the ability to create mock pages that will simulate audience reaction. Next is hooking up your most engaged content with the right advertisers in need of more exposure. This will require increased coordination between editorial and sales in data-sharing and planning.

Users with **15 or more seconds** of active exposure time to an ad had **25% higher brand recall** than those reading for **10 or less.** | Source: Chartbeat

### Sharing Attention Metrics With Advertisers.

You want to get your advertisers—as well as your sales team—comfortable thinking in terms of attention so they'll be receptive to more advanced tactics like engaged refresh. But first, use these metrics to boost buys and justify targeting schemes, both audience and content related.

You'll want to show how user attention is split across your site(s), including analysis against audience segments, whether they are made up of interest data or demographic data collected from users or layered in from third-parties. Advertisers are always partial to demographics because they're easier to tie to television reporting. Analyze against

content types: did your client's creative for a minivan garner the most active time in-view next to articles related to parenting?

If your advertisers are confident in your handle on site attention—and your sales team really gets the value of the data—they'll be more willing to bite into advanced and experimental transaction styles.

### Guaranteeing Against Attention.

This is the real brave new world: selling display inventory on a time-basis just like its video cousin. Changing CPM to CPH: cost per hour. Instead of guaranteeing against a number of impressions, you will guarantee against a certain time frame—for example, 20 hours of total active exposure. Impressions would only count against the total CPH once they hit a certain threshold (e.g., five seconds) of active time in-view.

Advertisers are going to be reluctant to jump on board for a number of reasons—in fact, it might be tougher to sell them on a tryout than to actually execute the campaign. Whether they want to admit it or not, advertisers are still addicted to clicks although they know they're next to useless. There are no industry accepted best practices or standards for measuring and transacting against attention—to some extent, your advertisers are going to go in as guinea pigs.

There's also no “time exposed” or “active time in-view” column on their planning spreadsheets, which really means that CPH performance would be difficult to compare with CPM and other digital channels. However, total active exposure within in demographics is really not that far off from the GRP metrics or digital video and linear television.



putting attention  
data to work

Offer the CPH opportunity to your best advertisers, the clients with more open minds (perhaps their distaste for the click is palatable) and the ones with which you have the tightest relationships. Also, they should be the ones most receptive to attention metrics—this is what you've been buttering them up for. All of these qualities will make them keen to embark on the CPH adventure with you, rather than passively sitting on the sidelines.

**Here are some other considerations when guaranteeing against attention:**

- Make sure you are working with branding campaigns, as direct-response will likely be better served by other approaches.
- You'll have to lean on your service provider greatly for help with forecasting, particularly considering the active time in-view threshold. Make sure your relationship is solid and that you trust the numbers they give you.
- Pricing might be steep, so it's best to give advertisers an extra incentive—how about a nice, tasty first-party audience segment or some prime content targeting?
- Don't be afraid to screw up. As we've repeated a few times, this is a relatively new area, so mistakes are going to be made. However, if you must fail, fail fast and get back on your feet.

Guaranteeing against active time in-view may make you a bit queasy just thinking about it, but with the right metrics and advertising partners, it's not as daunting as it sounds. You'll have front-row seats for what is potentially the future of desktop display advertising and other digital channels.

# 08



## summary

Before there was anything to click through to, advertisers would (and still do) buy spots in print in order to grab the attention of a publisher's very valuable audience. The publisher had this audience because their content was engaging, and it used readership surveys to demonstrate they were hitting the demographics advertisers wanted. In the early days of digital display advertising—that is, before advanced metrics and RTB-powered exchanges—print (and TV) content providers could sell their digital media based on their offline audiences.

Change is inevitable—digital media consumption quickly upended the paradigm and changed just about every rule of publishing. The rise of programmatic transactions enabled advertisers to chase first-party and third-party data across the Internet and then demand lower CPMs as impressions exploded.

Many publishers became more interested in grabbing pageviews and the impressions therein rather than building their audiences—therefore content has suffered alongside user experience as visitors are barraged with an array of intrusive units. Advertisers struggle to compare digital campaign metrics against other marketing channels; even if they are reaching their target audiences, they're not sure whether their ads are actually seen.

The potential of transacting on attention metrics is to reward publishers with highly engaged audiences—loyal users who spend a great deal of time on their sites because their content is top notch. In effect, they disincentivize clickbait and impression-chasing. Attention metrics also offer the opportunity to improve overall user experience while maintaining or improving revenue. Finally, time as a metric could prove a vital tool in helping advertisers understand their digital reach and exposure.

All in all, attention metrics just might make the Internet a better place for everyone.



about



AdMonsters is the global leader in strategic insight on the future of digital media and advertising technology. Through our conferences, website, original research and consulting services, we offer unparalleled in-person experiences and unique, high-quality content focused on media operations, monetization, technology, strategy, platforms and trends. Founded in 1999, AdMonsters began serving the advertising operations professional through live media and its online community. We provided a forum to share best practices, explore new technology platforms and build relationships. Today's expanding ecosystem now includes publishers and content creators, agencies, SSPs, DMPs, DSPs, RTB and service providers, technology and platform developers, advertising networks, brands, and investors.

This vibrant community is forward-looking and results-oriented. Their success depends on strategic insights about technology and monetization, and the exchange of actionable peer-to-peer best practices. AdMonsters has built its reputation on providing objective editorial leadership based on deep, real-world expertise. We have continued to evolve our editorial strategy to address the changing needs of the market and as a result, AdMonsters has attracted a highly focused audience who are at the forefront of the industry, and leading marketing partners have found AdMonsters to be a powerful channel to reach these decision makers. Today, our portfolio of integrated media solutions includes industry leading live events, our innovative Connect content solutions, email marketing programs, and more.

As of March 2015, AdMonsters is part of the [Access Intelligence](#) family of companies.

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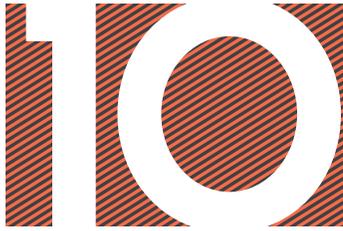
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about



Chartbeat helps content creators to pique and keep their audience's attention. It is most well known for the real-time analytics that help 80% of the top publishers in the US and ~50,000 media sites in over 60 countries around the world. Chartbeat works with writers and editors to align them around the right audience development and business goals and give them the data they need to adapt when it matters. Chartbeat proves the monetizable value of quality content over clickbait.

Go to [chartbeat.com](https://chartbeat.com) for more information

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