WHAT'S A PLAYBOOK?

A playbook is an extension of what the AdMonsters community has been doing at our conferences for 20 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 playbook will start to take shape and, with additional contributors, grow in both depth and breadth.

INTRODUCTION

Long before Apple introduced Intelligent Tracking Protection in its Safari browsers—making traffic "anonymous" and untargetable in advertisers' minds—publishers were struggling to monetize their mobile web traffic. Despite more than 10 years of surging mobile web traffic, few publishers have found good solutions for driving revenue from this channel, especially as challenges like ITP have stacked up.

But don't despair, brave mobile publisher! The imminent demise of the third-party tracking cookie and new technology designed specifically to enhance mobile site speed and ad delivery are set to revitalize the space and enable publishers to maximize mobile web revenue opportunities.

Of course, it won't be simple. A mobile web monetization strategy is definitely not plug and play—it's not even as simple as prioritizing demand partners in the header or setting up a clever flooring scheme.

Mobile monetization strategies are about the bigger picture—a coordinated effort around several distinct digital publishing areas that ensure both better user experience and optimal monetization. Better site performance means increased pageviews, equaling more impressions and ultimately higher revenue.

This playbook will dive into the nuances of each of the areas mentioned above, illustrate how they are interconnected, and assist you in making your mobile web performance the best it can be. In particular, we will focus on:

ACCORDING TO STATISTA,

traffic to websites from mobile devices began to exceed desktop devices in

2018.

SITE PERFORMANCE

We can't even begin to talk about mobile web monetization without highlighting the importance of providing a quality user experience that enables optimum user engagement. The mobile web has long been viewed as providing a far more inferior user experience with slow-loading pages and poorly positioned and obtrusive ads. At least that's how it was in the days before Progressive Web Apps (PWAs) and Google Accelerated Mobile Pages (AMP), two technologies developed to deliver faster, richer mobile experiences to users while saving publishers time and money in developing for different devices or browsers.

Flying With PWAs

Introduced in 2015, PWAs function like native apps—users can easily add them to their mobile homescreens—while also featuring aspects of responsive websites. PWAs allow for:

- *push messaging;*
- *swiping features;*
- *discoverability;*
- *shareability; and*
- *offline access.*

More importantly, PWAs are lightweight and load instantly while also displaying seamlessly across devices, with reduced ad latency. Even users with

older phones or slower connections will be rewarded with great experiences. And since pages are served through SSL, there are SEO advantages, as well as built-in brand safety and security features.

A 2017 case study of Pinterest's move to PWA, revealed astounding increases across the board over their old mobile site—40% in time spent, 50% in ad clickthroughs, and 60% in core engagements. Pinterest reduced the time to interaction from 23 seconds to 5.6 seconds.

Many experts believe PWAs are the definitive future of the mobile web. Back in 2017, Gartner predicted that by 2020 PWAs will account for 50% of all general-purpose consumer-facing mobile apps as PWAs are supported across the four major browsers—Google Chrome, Apple Safari, Mozilla Firefox, and Microsoft Edge.

AS DEFINED BY GOOGLE,

PWAs are web apps with additional capabilities that make them:
Fast, Interactive, Reliable and Engaging

(FIRE).
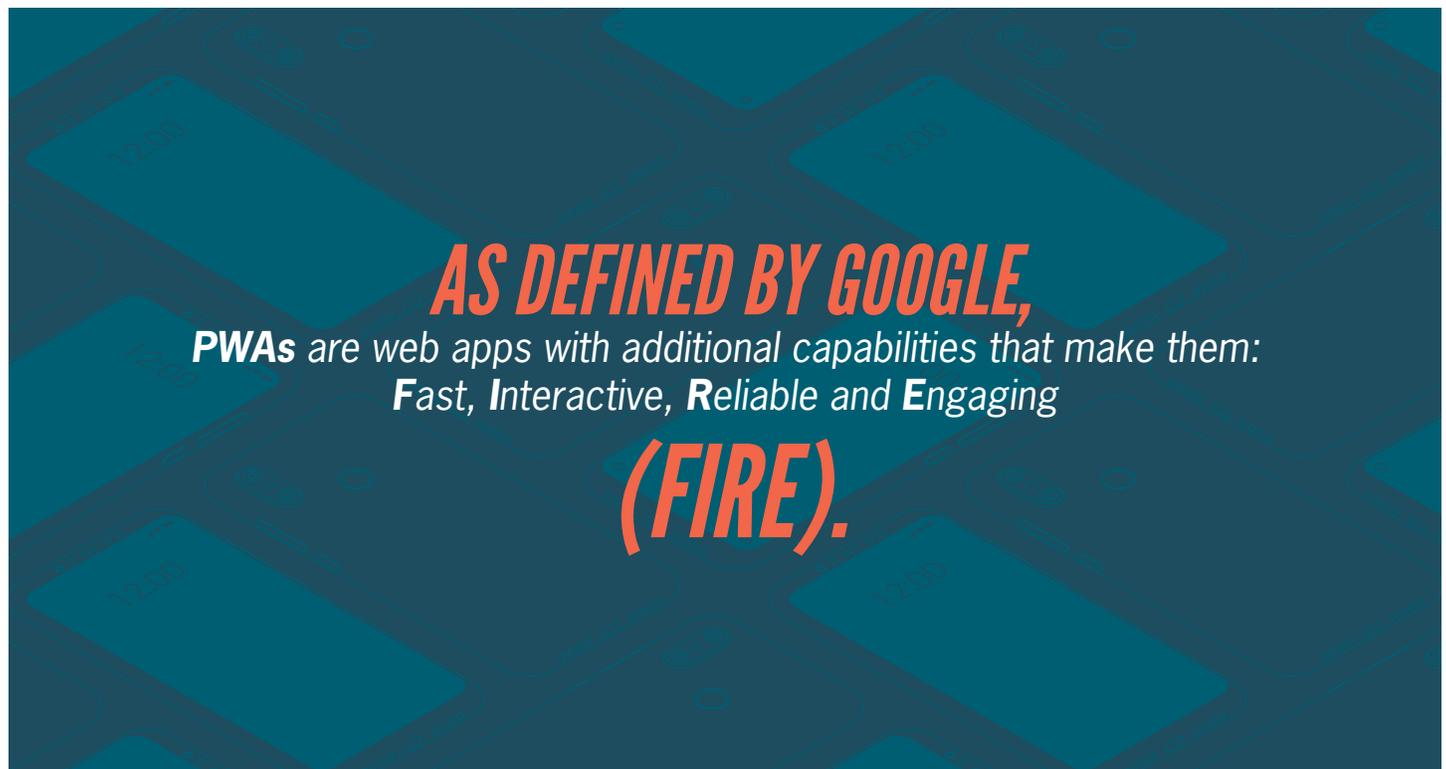
AMP GROWTH SINCE 2015:

In 2017—two years after launching—AMP reported that more than 4 billion AMP pages had been published across 25 million global domains.

A STUDY BY PERFICIENT DIGITAL

showed that publishers who implemented AMP saw an increase in organic traffic by

14%

and more than a

23%

increase in SERP CTR.

AMP Yourself Up!

AMP is an open-source HTML framework that optimizes web pages, enabling them to be cached so they load much faster. The framework helps make websites more mobile- and user-friendly by stripping down a great deal of code bloat, delivering a no-frills experience that emphasizes site content. Google prioritizes AMP pages in mobile search results—however, this can drive traffic away from publishers' completely owned and operated mobile websites.

Early on AMP presented challenges for publishers as a limited number of demand sources were integrated and ad formats were restricted to standardized units. The key to AMP is mastering its monetization, something that is possible with unlimited bidders in a server-side integration (more on that later).

- *In 2018, AMP made it easy to implement a header bidding wrapper for monetizing AMP traffic and the platform is currently supported by all major SSPs and exchanges.*

- *AMP also supports a growing range of ad formats, including video ads, native, sticky ads, carousels, and lightboxes.*

- *For publishers who rely more on subscription revenue than advertising revenue, the ability to integrate paywalls is also an option.*

- *To receive the full benefit of AMP, which includes optimized ads and increased engagement, publishers need to adopt the AMP for Ads framework and take advantage of all the available ad tools.*

Best of Both Worlds

Though it requires more dev work, combining PWA and AMP into a single mobile web delivery solution offers publishers the best capabilities in creating first-class, super speedy and engaging mobile websites. And you know what that means: more page views and more revenue. Many publishers report significantly increasing pageviews (some doubling overnight) and raising programmatic revenue by 10% and average revenue per user by 10% – 20%.

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PWA ESSENTIALS

A PWA bridges the gap between the traditional browser experience and the mobile app experience. Out of the box, Marfeel PWAs deliver the best of both worlds through these features:

App-like navigation. PWAs give readers a rich, app-like experience with swipe-to-navigate, infinite scrolling, and a silk-smooth reading experience.

Instant loading. Loads the first meaningful paint in less than 1 second, even in uncertain network conditions.

Push notifications. Add lifetime value to your traffic with push notifications to re-engage your audience.

Lightweight framework. Built to be lean, with the average app weighing 0.35 MB - 1% of average iOS app size.

Home screen icons. Create returning readers with quick, easy access to your website home page.

Innovative. Built with progressive enhancements, PWAs work on every browser, every phone, and for every user.

Connectivity independent. Service workers give readers access to content whether they're offline or working with low-quality connections.

Holistic approach. One of many seamlessly connected platforms that Marfeel configures to distribute a publishers' content.

PROGRAMMATIC OPTIMIZATION

The mobile space, with its potential wealth of targeting data, seems made for programmatic advertising—particularly real-time bidding. However, programmatic can lead to user experience challenges. It can take a while to get responses from your partners in an auction (hence the need for timeouts), and cookie syncs only add to latency issues. Latency, typically driven by high timeouts used to draw maximum bids, and data drain can quickly pile up to make for poor mobile user experience.

So integrating a quality programmatic tech stack means having user experience top of mind. This means thinking server-side. Mobile ad servers like MoPub and GAM (AdMob) offer server-side programmatic channels, but not the publisher control associated with header bidding.

Unlike in mobile apps, traditional or client-side (aka, browser-side) header bidding does exist for mobile web. But the latency and data-drain issues are enough to turn a programmatic ops specialist's stomach. The chief reason to rely on client-side header bidding versus server-side options has been trouble with ID syncs or cookie matching. However, the sunsetting of third-party cookies and the general embrace of alternative targeting solutions (e.g.,

identity or people-based marketing) remove most challenges with ID syncs.

Server-Side Header Benefits

Countless bidders. Key to auction optimization is bid density, and that requires a lot of bids coming in from a ton of sources. Too many partners in a client-side wrapper can quickly lead to latency issues, requiring publishers to constantly monitor performance to determine which should stay or go. But the speed of server-side solutions can support ever-higher amounts of bidders without adding latency. This can both drive more revenue for publishers while also unveiling new, unique demand sources.

Pricing optimization. Your server-side wrapper partner can potentially apply performance data or learnings to ensure your calls get higher bids.

Creative quality control. Protection against malvertising or low-quality advertising can be handled at the server level, meaning ad-quality or creative-blocking code need not execute on the page. In addition, this potentially allows for another speedy auction to take the place of the unsuitable creative.

CAN YOU SPOT THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO IMAGES?

Yup, a server makes all the difference for a quality ad experience on the mobile web.
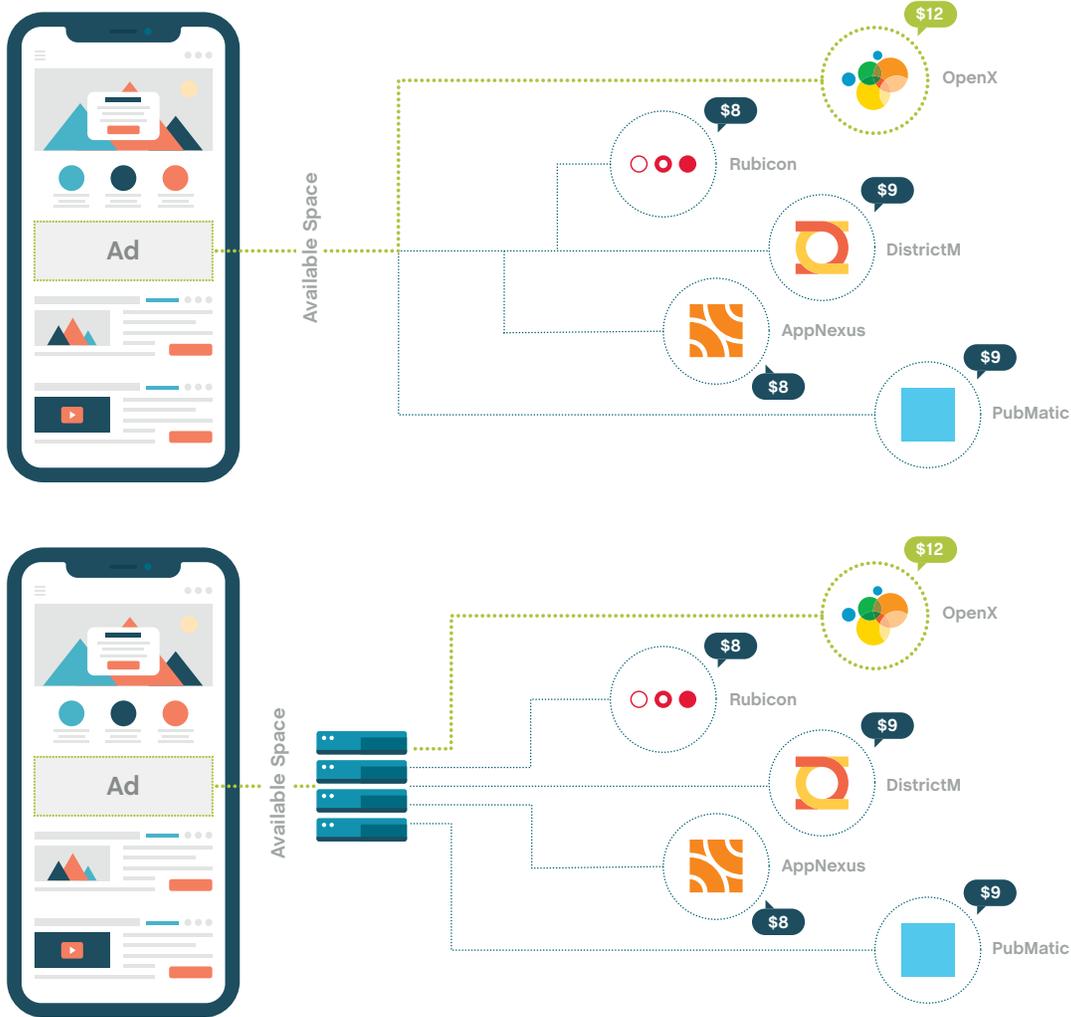
ACCORDING TO MARFEEL DATA,

decreasing latency and time to first impression can increase viewability by 10% and boost eCPMs by 15% on average.

LOADING AND PLACEMENT

Mobile websites load slowly due to three major factors—file size, the number of server requests and the order in which the page elements load. Far too often, there are way too many ads on mobile pages with overly large creatives, which can be further delayed by slow network speeds.

Smart Loading Strategies

Smart loading is the key to unlocking the power of mobile site speed and viewability. Your users scroll really fast on their phones, so you'll need a few strategies in your toolkit to foster engagement in your content and your advertiser's ads.

Lazy Loading: When mobile sites load content all at once, there's a high chance that users won't see all of the content and all of your ads won't be viewable. Lazy loading improves site performance by prioritizing content so that images, social embeds, iFrames, video players or third-party widgets only render as the reader scrolls.

Fast Ads: If your mobile pages are loading faster thanks to platforms like AMP and PWA, you need the ad speed to match them. You can create a faster advertising experience by better synchronizing your

content with your monetization. Here are a few tactics to avoid the white space of an unfilled impression:

- Separate your monetization code from your page content.

- Lazy-load the essential page elements.

- Lazy-render your ads to enable greater speed alongside viewability.

These measures lead to a decrease in overall ad load time, leading to increased ad viewability and higher revenues.

Better Ads

Any ad that interrupts the user leads to obstructed user experiences, and in turn lead to users blocking ads. Pop-ups, dense ads, auto-play video ads, full-screen scroll overs—these are the kinds of ads users hate most. The Better Ads Standards were initiated to inform publishers about avoiding these types of ads to reduce ad blockers. Complying with the Better Ads Standards and following their recommended ad formats ensures not having to worry about ads being blocked by browsers.

Optimal Ad Placement

The Better Ads Standards also recommends that ad density, or the ratio of ads to content, on a mobile page not exceed 30%. Publishers need to monitor their density closely and adjust the ads displayed on a page so that they stay as close to the 30% ad density barrier without surpassing it. The right technology partner should be able to automate ad density at 30%, so that publishers won't have to forfeit potential ad revenue in the name of compliance.

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AD LOADING BEST PRACTICES

High-speed mobile pages require a lean and efficient monetization strategy to deliver content and ads in one seamless experience. Here are Marfeel's technical considerations for maximum ad viewability.

Prefetch, preload. Prepare all the connections that will be needed in advance.

Load asynchronously. Minimize the number of ad requests with a smart loading strategy.

Chunking. Break the page into different chunks and request loading in order of prioritization.

Ad order. Make sure the ads are requested in order of appearance in the scroll.

AUDIENCE TARGETING

Nowhere has the crumbling of third-party tracking cookies (3PCs) been felt as hard as on mobile web. In the US, the majority of mobile web traffic arrives via Safari, and the lack of 3PCs available to target make it akin to a ghost town. Increasingly, the majority of publishers' mobile web traffic is "unidentifiable," which will only grow now that Chrome is cutting support for the 3PC. Over the next two years, advertisers and publishers will embrace audience targeting and tracking solutions both new and old.

Authenticated Traffic and Identity Solutions

Publishers with logged-in users or authenticated traffic can use identity solutions to provide advertisers better targeting of individuals and verified campaign measurement. Identity solution providers match a publisher's durable ID—typically a hashed email—to their own identity graphs, which are connected to IDs from other publishers as well as other data sources (including offline). Identity solutions are integrated with other players within the programmatic ecosystem so that when an ad call comes from a publisher, the tool can match it to buyer data.

To best function, most identity solutions require publishers to collect a highly durable ID like an email address—a publisher first-party cookie simply isn't permanent enough. While many publishers find clever and valuable ways to garner email addresses (e.g., newsletter signups) not all publishers will be able to garner high volumes of emails, especially if a great deal of their traffic is "hit and run" (i.e., high bounce rate) coming in from search or social.

Also, there are real questions about transparency and the transmission of user consent. Ironically, reliance on durable IDs seemingly gives users less control over targeted advertising than 3PCs that can be flushed at any time. While identity solutions do have their own consent mechanisms, they're not always easily visible to consumers.

So for publishers with audience login data or user emails, partnering with an identity solution will make your traffic "identifiable" for advertisers, though be wary of a potential privacy conflagration. For publishers without durable IDs at scale, there are fortunately other options.

Unified IDs

Similar to identity solutions, many technology players in the programmatic space are pooling identifiers to create unified IDs that connect buyers and sellers while still maintaining user privacy. This is a particularly interesting 3PC replacement for publishers without logged-in or authenticated traffic.

Advanced DMPs

Many DMPs now leverage short-term storage within the browser and use edge computing (also known as browser-based computing) to crunch data in near real-time. For publishers without logged-in traffic, this greatly enhances the ability to layer data onto inventory. In addition, these DMPs can hook into identity solutions to offer greater connections with the buy side.

Location Data

Mobile operating systems are very guarded about sharing location data and require user consent. Revenue teams can work with product and editorial teams to build location-based tools that can earn user consent. In addition, location-based demand partners can sit in a header or tech stack and leverage their own location sources to add that data layer to a publisher's impression.

Contextual Targeting

What's old is new again! Before the 3PC audience-targeting craze, many advertisers relied heavily on contextual targeting as an audience proxy. And on a more privacy-centric Internet, contextual is much less likely to be restricted than the audience-data-based options mentioned above.
Contextual targeting can mean many things:

- Intent or interest data, usually driven by publisher segmentation efforts;

- Semantic targeting based on keywords; and

- Machine-learning-based contextual services that scan and analyze pages (sometimes in real time).

What's particularly cool about this space is that many service providers can serve as technology or demand sources. But beyond their contextual intelligence, these partners must have integrations with key DSPs and exchanges, where they can transmit contextual signals to buyers.

Other Technologies

- Blockchain-based ad marketplaces that use cryptography to ensure the preservation of user privacy.

- AI-driven marketplaces that match buyers and sellers based on a variety of signals.

- Technology leveraging "differential privacy," a statistical tool for discovering trends in large sets of data without exposing identifying qualities.

Use Them All

AdMonsters often comments that there is no one tool that is going to replace the third-party cookie—there's a whole suite of them. And publishers can fill up their belts with as many of these tools as they need. A publisher can leverage an advanced DMP that hooks into an identity solution, while also incorporating location-focused and context-based demand partners or integrating with blockchain- or AI-based marketplaces.

A HIDDEN BENEFIT

of the 3PC's crumble is a speed boost in programmatic. Third-party cookie syncs— sometimes multiple ones on a single ad call—can easily slow down auctions and increase overall ad latency. Identity solutions and similar solutions dramatically reduce syncs and the time required to perform them.

CONCLUSION: THE 5G EFFECT

You can't deny the allure of 5G. Everywhere you turn, you'll hear how it's the Formula 1 of mobile broadband—bringing lightning-fast speeds, lower latency, and increased connectivity. To be honest, the amount of devices capable of taking advantage of 5G's superpowers is currently quite limited and we're unlikely to see widespread usage until maybe 2021, 2022.

5G is going to be awesome for the future of the mobile web, but initially it might make things much worse. With 5G user's expectations of mobile site performance will be much higher and the truth is most publishers aren't built for the speed enrichments it will bring.

You think viewability is a problem now? 5G is only going to expose your bloated tags, dense creative and any other technical limitations that might be holding you back from delivering content at optimal speeds.

5G will introduce a whole new realm of complexity and it will be difficult to adapt if you're still clearing out clutter from the last decade. Right now publishers need to optimize their mobile web performance by:

- Delivering better site experiences through a combined PWA and AMP structure;

- Invest in server-side header setups to maximize revenue while maintaining good user experience;

- Rev up faster-loading creative and optimal placement strategy; and

- Embrace some or all audience and targeting technologies that are taking the place of the third-party cookie.

We hope this Playbook has given you a gameplan for maximizing your mobile web performance now before 5G shakes up the arena, but you'll need your house in order for the chance that's coming. While publishers have struggled with mobile web monetization almost as long as smartphones have existed, adopting forward-thinking technologies will help turn the tide.

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The global leader in strategic insight on the future of digital media and advertising technology. Through our conferences, website, and original research, we offer unparalleled in-person experiences and unique, high-quality content focused on media operations, monetization, technology, strategy, platforms and trends. We provide a forum to share best practices, explore new technology platforms and build relationships.

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.

For more info: Media contact:
See admonsters.com   marketing@admonsters.com
Follow us on Twitter: @AdMonsters   Sponsorship contact:
Facebook: facebook.com/admonsters   sales@admonsters.com

Marfeel is a publisher platform that optimizes the traffic, engagement, and monetization of publishers' mobile websites.

Through improved mobile speed and performance, a data-tested UI/UX, and advanced programmatic technology, Marfeel delivers seamless reader experiences that lead to higher advertising revenue and increased readership.

With headquarters in Barcelona and offices in New York and Bogota, Marfeel serves over a billion sessions per month, across 850 publishers.

Marfeel has a commitment to developing new tools for digital publishers to reach their mobile audience. Innovative technology such as PWAs, AMP, Google Innovation Award-winning push notifications, and a powerful monetization suite delivers greater performance and worldwide distribution for publisher partners.

Working with the publishing and adtech industries since 2011, Marfeel is a Google Certified Publishing Partner, an official member of IAB Spain, Prebid.org, and a major code contributor to the AMP open-source project.

For more info:
See marfeel.com
Follow on Twitter: @Marfeel

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