

## Ad workflows to benefit from BXF, XMP updates

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BXF 3.0 will automate the time-stealing data-entry process that has been in place for more than 50 years, while XMP provides a consistent format for embedding Ad-ID information directly into the file of all video, display, print and radio advertising assets.

The customs and practices of the TV advertising business have stayed rooted in the 20th century, yet the demands on those in the value chain have increased with the explosion of multi-device delivery. TV stations have spawned sub-channels and catch-up channels, while web and mobile delivery adds to the complexity.

The workflow from creating a campaign through to airing a spot has two paths. The media — the video and audio files — follow one path through production and post. The transaction from agency through sales house ultimately to traffic follows another. If all goes well, the master control operator will have the correct commercial in the playlist. However, marrying up the traffic instruction with the media files can have its problems.

Problems can arise from mistakes in keying the identifier for the spot. Mistakes are easy when a spot exists in several versions. It is very usual for the transactions to be conveyed by e-mail or fax, and the traffic instruction is frequently rekeyed, and that is when errors creep in.

### **Ad-ID and AMWA AS-12**

To get around these issues, various parties have been developing standards to support more rigorous workflows. In the U.S, [Ad-ID](#) has been pivotal in driving standards. Ad-ID is a joint venture between the American Association of Advertising Agencies (4A's) and the Association of National Advertisers (ANA). It serves more than 600 clients, including the largest advertisers and advertising agencies in the world.

Under the sponsorship of Ad-ID, the [Advanced Media Workflow Association](#) (AMWA) developed AS-12 describing an application specification for the media files for the commercial in a constrained [MXF](#) format. AS-12 files include a digital slate, which can carry the Ad-ID unique identifier to aid unambiguous identification of a spot.

### **Ad-ID and XMP**

Although this has been well accepted by the broadcast sector, for other users of video ads, MXF and SMPTE standards could be considered overkill. To this end, Ad-ID has been working with Adobe on an Ad-ID Digital Ad Slate for XMP. Originally developed by Adobe, XMP is an open international standard (ISO 16684-1). This new schema provides a consistent format for embedding Ad-ID information directly into the file of all video, display, print and radio advertising assets.

“The emergence of cross-platform media, while innovative and exciting, does produce a number of complications for accurately creating, assigning and tracking advertising information,” said Harold S. Geller,

Chief Growth Officer of Ad-ID. “The new Ad-ID Digital Ad Slate provides critical, standardized information for advertising assets that will not change as they pass through the digital marketing supply chain.” The identification information includes agency, advertiser, product, brand, title, size and more.

The Ad-ID digital slate can be used to reconcile the video and audio components of the spot with the traffic instruction to prevent expensive mistakes. By using the Ad-ID unique identifier, a broadcaster ensures that what the advertiser ordered goes to air.

Geller added, “AS-12 is at the center of the toolkit for advertising interoperability, which demonstrates that universal adoption of Ad-ID will make the marketing supply chain more efficient and productive, thereby enabling the marketing ecosystem — including agencies, media and suppliers — to become increasingly capable.”

Now with the addition of the XMP version, it becomes easier to build unified workflows to manage assets across the digital advertising industry.

Although AS-12 and Ad-ID provide support for the media workflow, AS-12 does not reach into the transactional workflow. This is where BXF comes in.

A key part of the new workflows is the SMPTE-2021 BXF format. During its annual October conference Oct 21-24, the SMPTE will announce SMPTE’s Broadcast eXchange Format (BXF) 3.0, a significant breakthrough in commercial scheduling for broadcasters, advertising agencies and advertisers. BXF 3.0 will automate the time-stealing data-entry process (re-keying of traffic instructions) that has been in place for more than 50 years.

This format has been used for messages between program management, traffic and playout automation, carrying schedule and as-run information. The latest version 3.0 of BXF adds support for Traffic Instructions, as well an enhanced support for loudness and AFD control. A new job structure allows grouping of related messages into “jobs.” Content can be uniquely identified by the Ad-ID or the [Entertainment Identifier Registry](#) (EIDR).

For years, ad agencies and broadcasters have focused on the media buy (known as the order) and invoice. Yet scheduling the commercial, the most critical step to ensure a spot airs correctly, is still an entirely manual process. Currently, once a commercial has been produced, ad agencies assign it a commercial code (Ad-ID) and create traffic instructions advising broadcasters when, where and how to air it. Typically, traffic instructions are distributed to stations and networks via fax or e-mail, and the commercial information is re-typed by hand into the traffic system. It takes valuable time to re-key the data and underscores the inevitability of errors. That’s where SMPTE’s Broadcast eXchange Format (BXF) 3.0 comes in.

Experts Christopher Lennon of MediAnswers and Angela Tietze of Entertainment Communications Network (ECN) spent the past 18 months working with a group of industry professionals to create a standard within BXF that will enable traffic instructions to be ingested electronically into traffic systems at stations and networks, automating commercial scheduling using XML. The result will be no more manual data entry and faster time-to-air for advertisers, while significantly reducing discrepancies and make goods.

## **SMPTE Conference Paper**

During the SMPTE conference, Lennon and Tietzewill present "Faxes, Emails, Pagers, and the Macarena: Adiós to Relics of the '90s." Both will delve into one of the advertising and media industries’ least talked

about workflows, which today relies on dated technology: traffic.

The combination of AMWA AS-12 and SMPTE BXF provide the messaging structure for the efficient delivery and identification of commercials, as well as supporting the transactional processes behind advertising. The way is open for software applications to exchange information in an automated fashion, relieving staff from unnecessary rekeying of information. For hard-pressed broadcasters and agencies, this offers a way to cope with the increased workloads created by multiplatform delivery of programming and associated commercials.

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