HOW **MiQ** ACHIEVES

QUALITY IN PROGRAMMATIC

MiQ

WEAREMiQ.COM

WHAT YOU'LL LEARN

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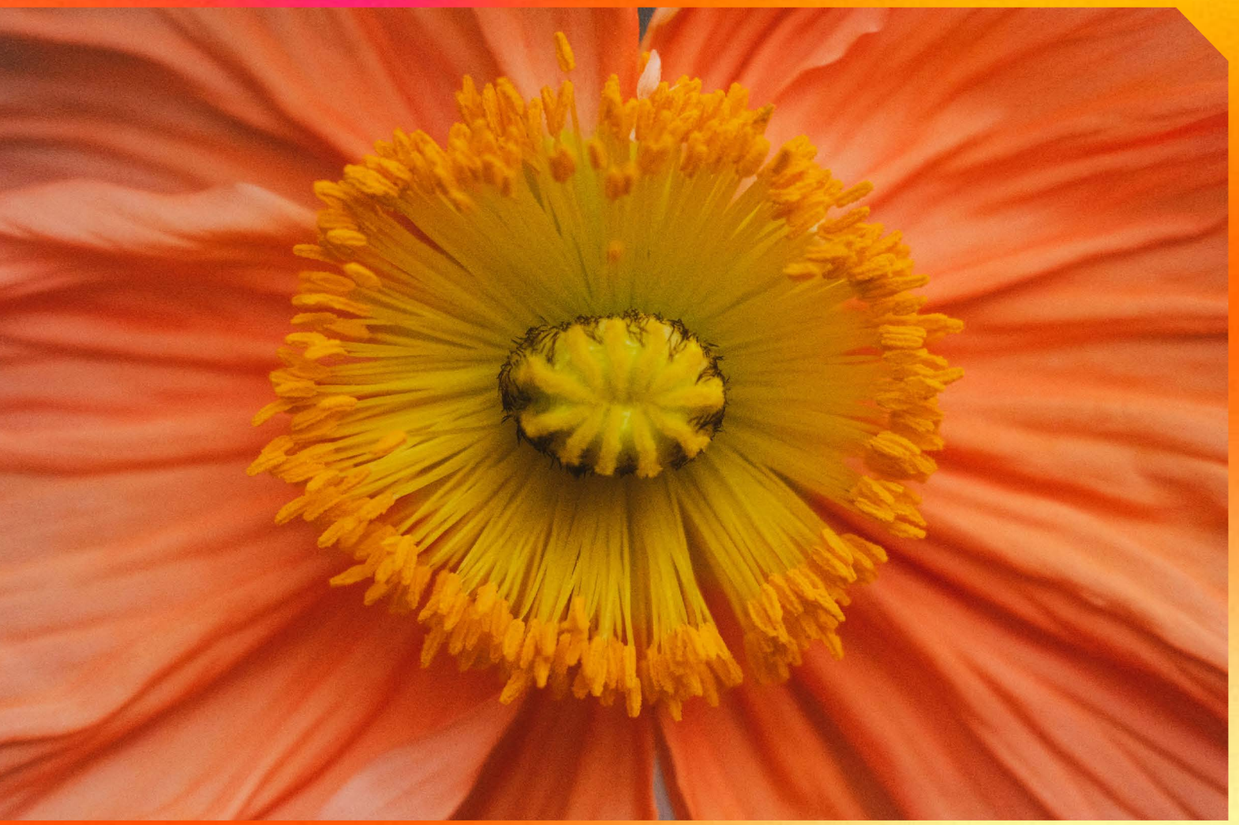
ABOUT MiQ



ABOUT MiQ

When our founders first set up MiQ, they wanted to be far from average. It was all about overdelivering for our clients, and achieving this by having a truly agnostic approach to partners, building the best technology and bringing in the best talent.
This still rings true today. This desire to lead the programmatic industry and make it better drives us every single day.

When the Association for National Advertisers (ANA) released their report in December 2023, it highlighted the most problematic issues around transparency and quality that still pervade the programmatic media landscape.

Programmatic is sometimes tarnished with a bad reputation. And these kinds of issues reinforce those views, with less-than-average players giving everyone a bad name. But MiQ's campaigns prove that - when done right - success can be achieved in branding and with performance goals.

Many of the ANA's suggested recommendations are things we've already put into action and are helping our partners to implement. The findings shine a positive light on what we do, and how we do it. It really sets apart those programmatic media partners who have already taken steps to achieve quality, and that includes MiQ.

WHAT THE ANA REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

The ANA Programmatic Media and Supply Path Transparency study published in December 2023 found that 25% of open web spending is "wasteful or unproductive"; just under half of this being due to Made for Advertising (MFA) sites and the rest linked to viewability and quality shortcomings. It's an uncomfortable stat for marketers, as it shows that assigning bigger budgets doesn't necessarily guarantee better value. It shows that the programmatic industry can - and must - do better.

In this report, we'll specifically look at made for advertising (MFA), supply path optimization (SPO), and sustainability and attention. For each area, we'll outline the main industry challenges, and show how MiQ are tackling this. You'll get an insight into why we're known for overdelivering for our clients, and how we're achieving quality. Plus, you'll get valuable insights from our leading experts.

Let's dive in.

For the last thirteen years, MiQ has helped marketers and agencies access, analyze and assess performance data from both the buy and sell side.

So the findings of the ANA report were nothing new for us. By securing log-level data at scale and applying cutting-edge analytics and data science techniques, we ensure industry leading supply path optimization, quality assurance and performance strategies.

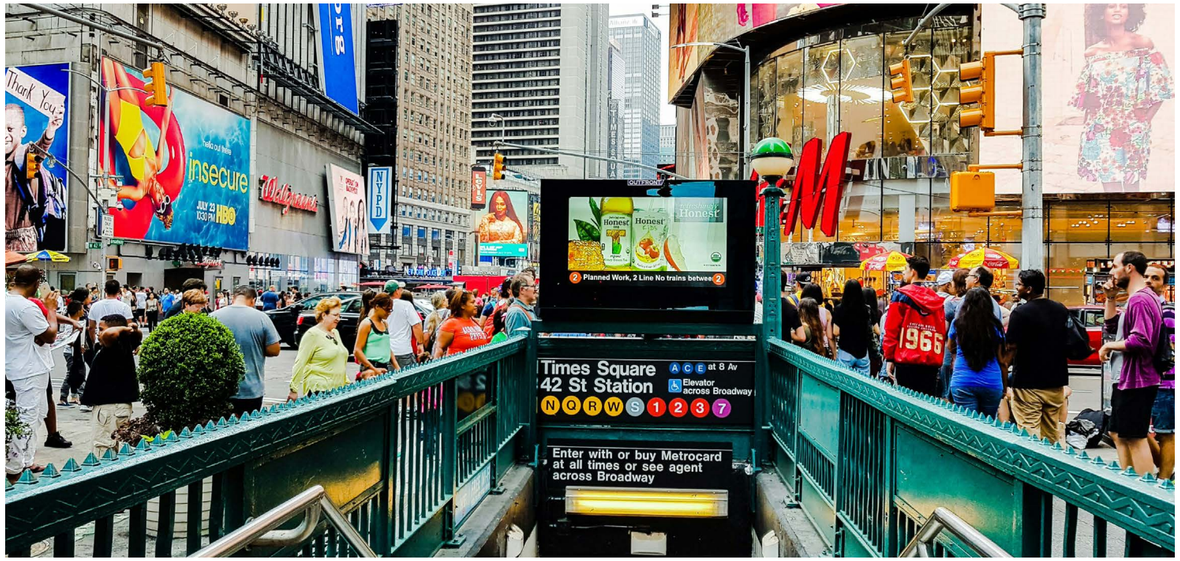
RACHEL FOSKETT - VP, GLOBAL PRODUCT MARKETING

SPOTLIGHT: MADE FOR ADVERTISING

THE INDUSTRY PROBLEM

We already knew that MFA websites pose a massive problem. The ANA report and the Adalytics study further proves this. The ANA report shows that out of $88bn in annual open web spending, $22bn is 'wasteful or unproductive'. $10bn of this comes back to MFA, and a further $12bn is linked to viewability and quality shortcomings. The report also highlights a high level of impressions running on MFA domains. Despite all this, 19% of programmatic web budgets are being spent on MFA.

After the ANA report landed in December 2023, major DSPs, SSPs and agencies publicly claimed the virtue of their anti-MFA efforts. But the follow up study from Adalytics in January 2024 highlights the difficulty of solving rapidly evolving MFA problems.

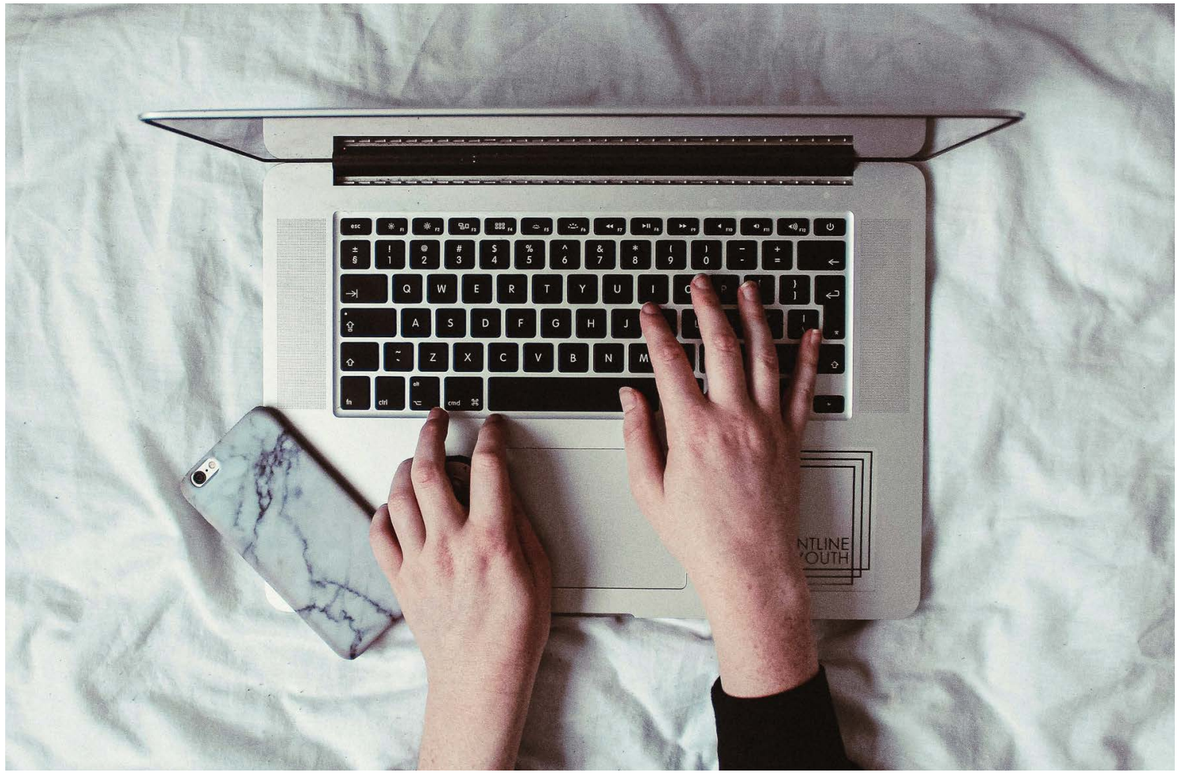


How MiQ is supporting the fight against MFA

We're constantly striving for a net-zero number of harmful MFA sites in our delivery, but thanks to new sites popping up on a weekly basis, reducing delivery on MFA programmatic supply is a constant process. If any partner tells you they've 'solved' for MFA permanently, it's probably a red flag.

At MiQ, we systematically identify and automatically exclude MFA websites from our campaigns and own supply, reviewing delivery and lists at least every month. In June 2023 (before the ANA report was published), we universally blocked over 3,500 MFA websites across our DSPs. We also share our MFA list with SSPs to remove these sites from bid requests upstream. This list is now updated monthly to ensure new entrants to the ecosystem are quickly caught and excluded, and has grown to over 5,400 sites as of March 2024.

In our latest analysis from February 2024, less than 2% of MiQ's programmatic web budgets were being spent on MFA. (This is compared to the reported industry average of 19%.) We perform better than the benchmark because this isn't a one-time check: it's something we've always actively monitored. But our work doesn't stop there. We'll continue to work on getting this number even lower.



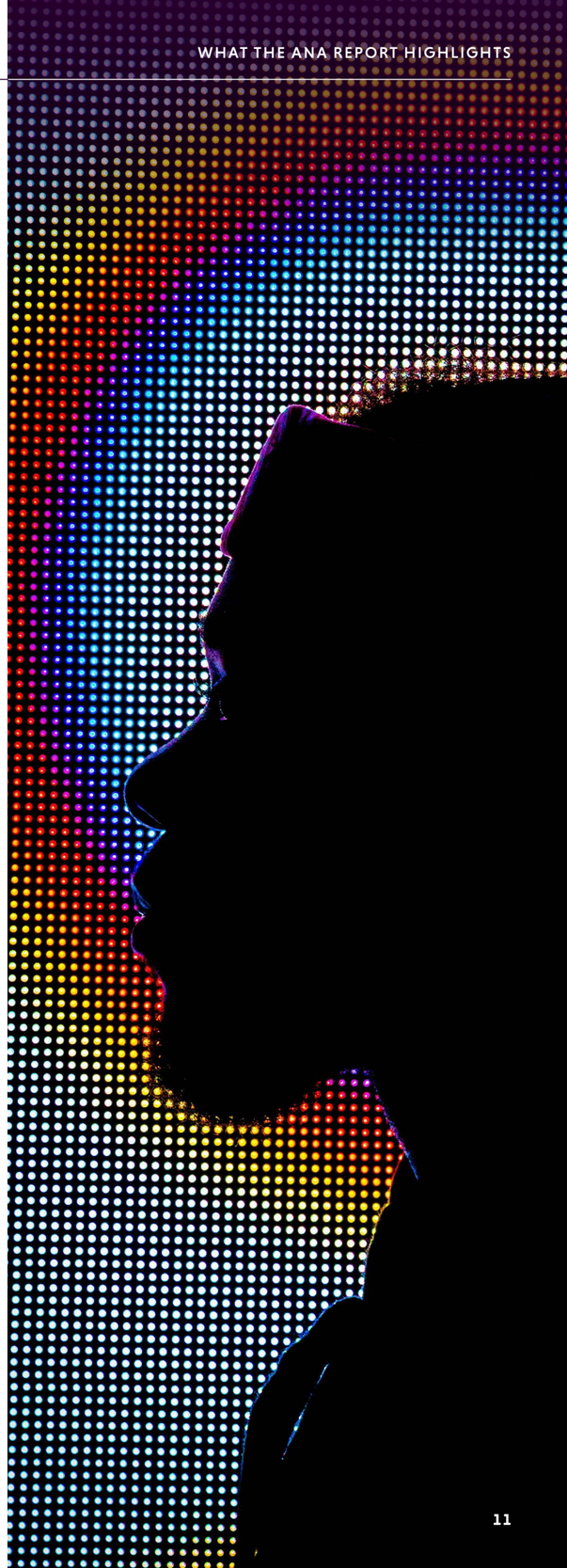
THE NUANCE OF INCLUSION LISTS

The ANA report recommends focusing on inclusion lists, rather than exclusion lists. At MiQ, we believe that more effort is required when identifying and blocking MFA sites, so we take a more nuanced approach.

Including the top 500 publishers can be a huge blocker to diversity, equity and inclusion in the advertising system as many smaller, diversely owned websites would be automatically blocked. Plus, we believe that performance can be gained on many legitimate longer tail sites that cater to niche interests and small communities. They often offer stronger campaign performance and impressive ROIs.

As an example, because the ad load experience sometimes resembles ad placements you can see on arbitraged domains, many small cooking, home, garden and other vertical sites are often misclassified as MFA. Even when publishing original editorial content, those smaller sites with heavier ad loads are often flagged incorrectly, limiting reach on legitimate mid-to-long-tail publishers.

To minimize any risk while still ensuring a quality approach, we carried out an exhaustive, manual publisher classification effort. From this, we assigned over 115,000 unique sites and apps to their parent publisher owner, and identified that these websites are owned by ~5,000 unique and legitimate sell-side partners.



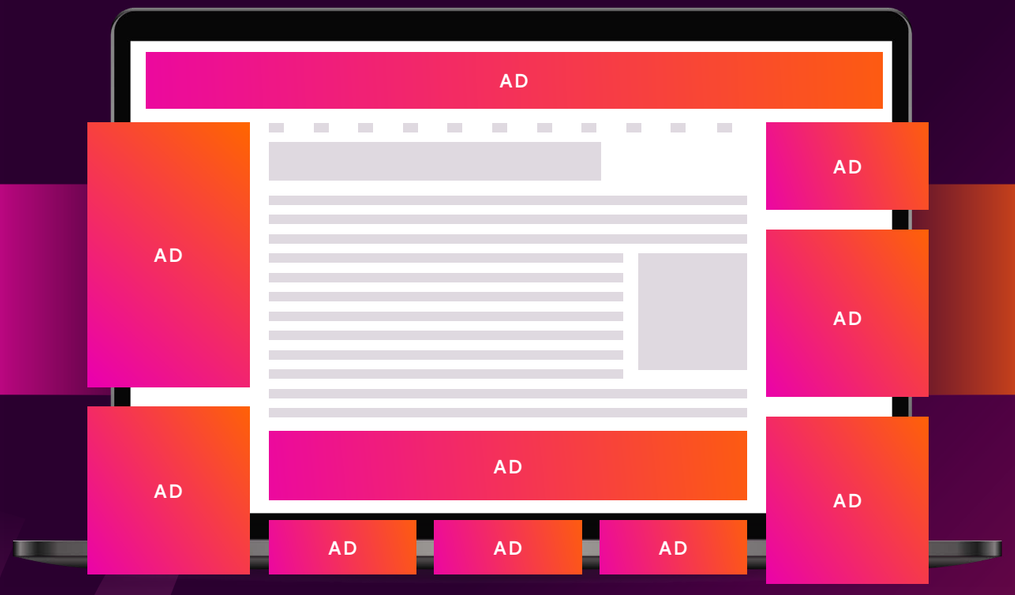
HARNESSING TECH, PARTNERSHIPS AND HUMAN EXPERTISE

Our award-winning, proprietary technology, the MiQ Performance Engine helps to automate the fight against MFA. Combining DSP and SSP log level data, partner MFA lists and website content datasets such as SimilarWeb and Pixalate, it helps allocate budget towards only high performing websites that are least likely to be MFA. This is based on several criteria such as CVR/conversions, viewability or click performance, and shares of non-organic site traffic from places like social platforms (otherwise known as click bait).

Plus, we've partnered with Pixability, the only company certified by Google for brand suitability. Our feed-level access to Pixability data helps to ensure relevance for brands.

We also lean on the expertise of our human traders. First, our inventory and partnership specialists vet publishers by looking for an extensive list of suspicious website attributes. Our experts can identify things like a website placement being sold by a parent publisher/seller known to host other MFA sites, recent website creation dates and the use of throwaway site templates. Our campaign traders then vet the set up of every campaign and monitor performance to ensure the best possible outcomes.

This automated and human approach has helped us to systematically root out MFA, and keep ahead of the industry challenge.



Advertisers shouldn't have to deliver budgets on a high number of low quality made for advertising placements in order to exceed performance goals. Reducing MFA requires constant vigilance that can only be achieved through the right combination of people, partnerships and technology. Our approach goes the extra mile to minimize MFA delivery without hindering performance.

JOHN GOULDING - GLOBAL CHIEF STRATEGY OFFICER

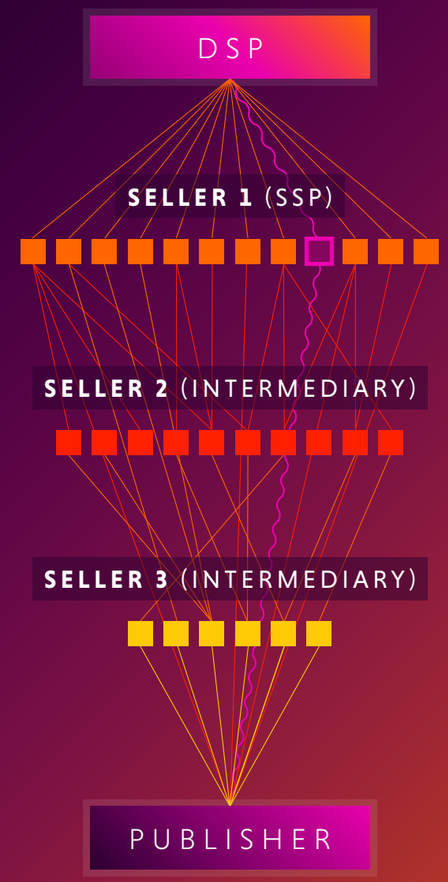
SPOTLIGHT: SUPPLY PATH OPTIMIZATION

THE INDUSTRY PROBLEM

Since the introduction of header bidding in programmatic, the number of simultaneous buying paths to the same impression has snowballed. And to make matters worse, many tech partners now have both buy and sell-side interests. This means they often prioritize spend towards their own supply rather than what will be most effective and efficient for the brand.

At MiQ, our unique view of buying opportunities across 12 DSPs puts a spotlight on this issue. We see that the number of individual paths to one impression can be as high as 260, and taking the most inefficient path can mean paying nearly 200% more to intermediaries. We've also seen that some DSPs can have over 60% bias towards delivering through their own supply.

The ANA report highlights that there's an imbalance of data available to achieve transparency and control over this issue. It also requires co-operation and data sharing across the supply chain, and expert skill sets to connect, analzye and operationalize. So there are a lot of obstacles preventing marketers from identifying supply chain inefficiencies, making effective decisions, and driving growth.



How MiQ addresses supply chain optimization

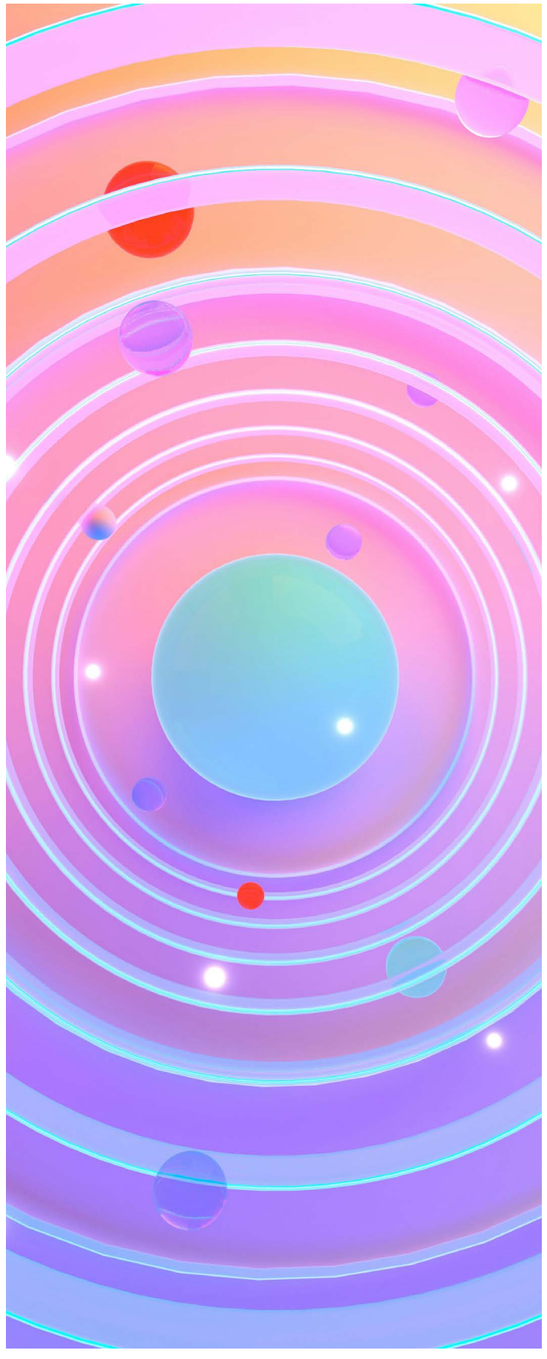
At MiQ, we want to address potential supply chain inefficiencies **before** our traders spend a single dollar on behalf of our clients. So we've invested heavily to maintain a diverse and agnostic data ecosystem from both buy-side and sell-side partners, making supply path optimization a priority. As part of this, we've refined robust SPO mechanisms which are underpinned by tech-enabled automation. It allows us to buy through direct paths* over 80% of the time, helping us to maximize performance and value for our clients.

*Direct paths are defined as any path with only one seller between DSP <> Publisher, or Supply Chain Data (schain) paths with only one 'node'.

UNLOCKING VALUE WITH DATA AND EXPERTISE

For the last three years, we've worked with our SSP and DSP partners to onboard two new data sets. The first is SSP log-level data, which helps us to understand SSP side fees, and gives us enriched information about auction mechanics. The second is Supply Chain Data (schain). This helps us to uncover the 'hidden' supply chain participants that primary SSPs are sourcing from upstream, and it means we can identify intermediary sellers who are re-broadcasting impressions.

It takes a high degree of data science and engineering expertise to discover value from supply chain logs. But we can do this as our Center of Excellence is full of award-winning data scientists. It means we successfully leverage schain feeds directly - something that other partners and buyers are still mastering.



REDUCING THE RISKS

We use this data to categorize 300+ supply intermediaries, uncovering who provides unique placements, access or addressability offerings on top of publisher supply, and who acts as a duplicative access point and/or who is arbitraging publisher supply. Working closely with SSP partners and providing regular reporting, we continually exclude harmful participants by default from our PMP and Open Auctions.

We also provide aggregated supply chain insights to many of our client partners (such as agency holding companies).

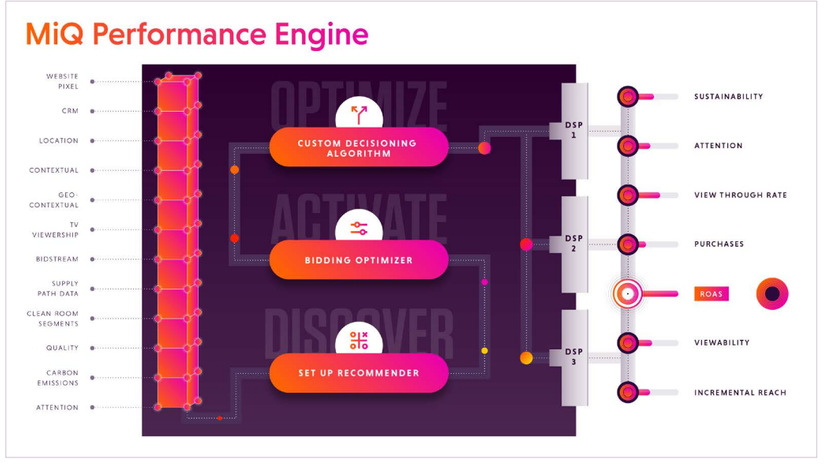
And to help further industry understanding of common buying pitfalls, our 'Unlocked' series provides educational content on supply chain trends.

This approach is working. When we first onboarded schain in 2021, the average buy saw 25% of investment go to 'multi-hop' supply paths, leading to higher costs. Since implementing our SPO practices, this has dropped to 18%, showing a 7% reduction, and we're continually aiming to reduce this on an ongoing basis.

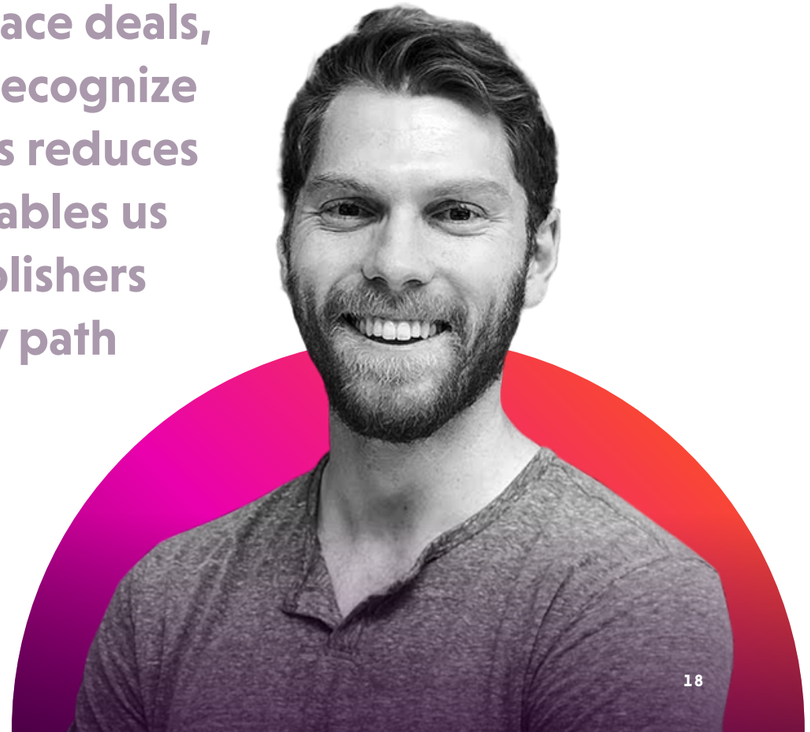
TECHNOLOGY THAT LEADS THE INDUSTRY

Our Performance Engine helps us to make sense of all this data and deliver the very best outcomes in an automated way, saving thousands of manual hours. To help navigate the risks caused by biased and inefficient supply-chain actors, we've built more than six independent SPO algorithms within our Performance Engine to find the shortest supply path, calculate the optimal bid value without impacting delivery, and prioritize performance over volume.

Our technology doesn't just help us, it helps our clients. The ANA report highlights the challenges that marketers face around data access. So, at the touch of a fingertip, our clients can access their performance data on our Intelligence Hub platform. It's just one of the ways we're trying to make the industry better.



We value our inventory across three pillars: Premium, Scalable, and Direct. By basing our assessments on performance, reputation, trust and human auditing, and being tech and inventory agnostic, we work a refined list of the best providers who don't have a history of 'foul play'. Plus, we're working to make 100% of our supply direct only. Our supply team has curated over 2,000 direct-to-publisher (or SSP) private marketplace deals, helping suppliers to recognize MiQ as the buyer. This reduces ancillary markups, enables us to continually vet publishers and run better supply path optimization.



KYLE BRENNAN - DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMMATIC PARTNERSHIPS

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SPOTLIGHT: SUSTAINABILITY AND ATTENTION

THE INDUSTRY PROBLEM

With every online action building greenhouse emissions, the average programmatic campaign produces more than five tonnes of carbon. So it's no surprise that the ANA report highlights that waste, inefficiency and productivity shortfalls lead to a bigger problem for the planet: sustainability.

The average consumer is exposed to over 4,000 ads per day, and ExchangeWire noted that campaigns that focus on driving real attention can improve sustainability by 14%. As we've seen from MFA sites, traditional metrics such as viewability are easily gamified and don't correlate to ad quality. In fact, about 20% of MRC-viewable impressions receive zero attention, which is a total fail for advertisers and likely represent the vast majority of MFA content.

According to the ANA report, MFA sites generate 26% more carbon emissions than non-MFA inventory. That's because they are cluttered with content, and increase site load times. Similarly, buying through indirect inventory supply paths multiplies the emissions output without any added benefit to the campaign.

So with so much ad clutter hurting our planet, sustainability and attention solutions are more powerful than ever.

THE AVERAGE CONSUMER IS EXPOSED TO OVER

4,000

ADS PER DAY

How MiQ ensures quality impressions are really seen

Our Attention solution is far from average. Attention by MiQ uses human-centric data from multiple partners to predict if and how a human would react in an ad environment in real time. Our machine learning technology is then used to determine the most efficient attention levels for maximum performance alongside all of our award-winning trading techniques. And it delivers better outcomes, faster.

Incorporating attention specifically into upper funnel campaigns can significantly improve both brand recall and consideration by ensuring only quality impression delivery – all impressions are seen by real people delivered on vetted sites, not MFAs. It empowers marketers to make better outcomes for their brand - and the planet.

It's been great to see the industry recognize that quality and efficiency goes way beyond traditional safety and suitability metrics. Five years ago you might have evaluated placement success only by its CPM, fraud and viewability metrics, but now the carbon output and attention of the ad slot is also critical. The new north star in measurement is working with multiple partners to determine the whole value of an impression for the marketer, the publisher, the consumer, and the planet.

LARA KOENIG - GLOBAL HEAD OF PRODUCT

MiQ UNLOCKED

Unlock a new level of learning

Programmatic is changing, and bigger budgets don't mean better outcomes. So it's time to tackle transparency and quality issues. The first step? Joining MiQ's latest Unlocked session: Programmatic 201. We'll look at current challenges, understand the benefits of an agnostic approach and delve into advanced trading techniques.

To achieve programmatic that's far from average, book onto Programmatic 201 and explore other MiQ Unlocked sessions.

find out how:
wearemiq.com

What could MiQ do for you?

Want to discover how we can add quality, carbon, or attention metrics into your campaign? Reach out to your MiQ representative to find out more.

And to learn more about achieving programmatic that's far from average, book an Unlocked session with our MiQ experts. You can find out key insights, and ask any questions.

BOOK AN MiQ UNLOCKED SESSION TO GET STARTED

ABOUT MiQ

We're MiQ, a programmatic media partner for marketers and agencies. We connect data from multiple sources to do interesting, exciting, business-problem-solving things for our clients. We're experts in data science, analytics, and programmatic trading, and we're always ready to react and solve challenges quickly, to make sure you're always spending your media investments on the right things in the right places.