

## Keyword Guidance for brands

As consumers seek advice and guidance during the current COVID-19 crisis, trusted news sources are more important than ever before. Edelman's Trust Barometer: Special Report on Trust and the coronavirus reported last week that consumers are more engaged and spend longer with ads next to content that's deemed to be 'hard news'.

With coronavirus dominating the news agenda, brands are understandably taking every precaution to appear in safe and suitable environments. To this end, current keyword blocking practice may be getting in the way of brands' intention to engage the attention of target audiences from trusted news sources.

ISBA is backing the call from the Rt. Hon. Oliver Dowden MP, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to brands to support quality journalism and take a nuanced approach to their use of keyword blocking in these extraordinary times. You can view his letter [here](#).

ISBA, along with its partners at Newsworks, the AOP, IAB UK and the IPA recently provided guidance to advertisers and their suppliers to ensure uninterrupted access to responsible news media inventory. That guidance has been updated (see below) to reflect our work with industry partners and is supported by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

Keyword blocking is a critical component of a blended solution which delivers a nuanced approach to blocking. Taking into account the fact that not all COVID-19 content is damaging, we fully support this joint statement from the IAB and content verification providers [here](#) and would encourage our members to work closely with your CV providers to make the best use of their technology at these unprecedented times.

### UPDATED: Ways to manage keyword blocking during the COVID-19 crisis

- Brands should consider continuing to support their brand and business with advertising
- Speak to your brand team/agency and enable advertising against hard news topics you may have previously been avoiding, including coronavirus. To do this:
  - Talk with your verification provider to understand which categories coronavirus content may appear within and consider making trusted new publishers exempt from these
  - Review your existing keyword blocklists to ensure that you are not including any coronavirus-related terms. Consider those that are obvious; some of the most common keywords related to coronavirus you should avoid where possible are "coronavirus", "covid", "covid-19", "crisis", "lockdown", "self-isolating", "virus testing", "furlough", "social distancing", "isolating", "pandemic" but also review and consider those that are more obscure such as "natural disaster", "Boris Johnson" etc.
  - Ensure that your team and agency are re-familiarised with the capabilities of your content verification tools, for instance, being able to distinguish between a corona virus mortality news story and a 'home-schooling during the corona virus lockdown' feature in the same news brand.

You can find more information from **Double Verify** here:

- [Supporting News Amid the Coronavirus Crisis](#)
- [Demystifying DV's keyword blocklists](#)
- [How blocking works](#)
- [Get to know your toolkit](#)

From **IAS** here:

- [Keyword blocking and COVID-19](#)

From **Oracle** here:

- [The News Industry Needs Advertisers Support Right Now](#)
- [If You're Using a Blacklist, It's 'Dead' Certain You Blocked This Article](#)
- Review the data available to you from verification providers to understand where your brand is and is not appearing. If block rates are high, understand what is driving this and make changes accordingly
- Consider setting up direct relationships with news publishers to support their content at this time
- Publishers control the content they monetise, speak to your partners directly to understand the approach they are taking
- Encourage feedback and new ideas from your agency and publisher relationships. Ask them for their feedback on how other brands are managing the situation to see if any new ideas come to the surface
- Review your campaign message to ensure it is considerate and appropriate for the context and time it is being delivered in
  - Consider that there is a lot of content being posted right now so to cut through the noise, make sure your messaging from copy to creative is communicated clearly
- Adapt to the dynamic nature of this unfolding situation by re-looking at your brand safety strategy and reviewing your keyword blocklists frequently
- Importantly, ensure your internal teams are informed of your decision to support quality news and trusted content and that PR/comms team are prepared with answers to questions that may arise e.g. *“we are advertising on these sites because this is a critical health issue facing all of our customers, and we want to reach them to offer our support during this crisis.”*
- Lastly, don't underestimate your influence. Share the message on Twitter, LinkedIn and all your socials to raise awareness amongst your consumers that you support their wellbeing and to encourage peers in the industry to do the same

ISBA will keep this section updated with new guidance and new processes that ISBA understands are being brought in by news organisations to assist advertisers and their agencies in making placement decisions.

ISBA is also in consultation with the industry to provide advertisers with access to lists of trusted news brands and services. In the meantime, using the Cairncross definition:

***For the purposes of this review, the press industry is defined as both: 1) Members of press self-regulators (i.e. IPSO/IMPRESS) 2) News publishers who have their own internal standards code and means of readers making complaints.***