

# Is the Programmatic Ecosystem About to Untangle?



With DSP consolidation, first price auctions and the maturation of prebid threatening the role of the SSP, will the next generation of programmatic be direct DSP-to-publisher relations? Will the market move towards multiple private marketplaces relying on prebid as the auctioneer?

Historically the role of the SSP was to help drive revenue upwards by providing demand from multiple DSPs. The second price auction ensured that advertising budgets were optimised, but as long as there are SSPs in place to invite enough DSPs to the auction, then the final price was pushed upwards, providing more revenue to publishers.

But as the industry moved to first price auctions, DSPs have consolidated to a couple of handfuls providing the majority of revenue, and prebid has become an increasingly powerful connector, does the future require you as a publisher to pay an SSP to handle the relationships with the DSPs?

With the cry for more transparency within the programmatic chain, not least since ISBA launched this report, agencies have started to connect directly with supply, by doing so they create a more cost-effective ecosystem for clients. But if this continues, what will the programmatic ecosystem look like in 2-3 years?

It looks like agencies are first out to build alternative trading platforms to improve the value chain, but also publishers have a real opportunity to take control of how trading happens. As mentioned in a separate post, publishers are showing healthy scepticism towards unified ID solutions as these technologies may not support publishers' opportunity to finally regain control of their data.

If publishers are really serious about controlling the identity of their users and protecting this all-important commodity, they need to consider expanding their ambition to control the trading channel as well. There is great value in user knowledge, but the money is in the campaigns, so in order to monetise data effectively the method and channel of selling inventory should be an integral part of the new strategy as is keeping control of the data. If you don't control the trading channel, protecting your data is difficult.

The question is really, if publisher data will constitute sufficient value for buyers to change their purchase processes to access that data.