OpenRTB Technical Governance
Ratified: April 9, 2013

OpenRTB originated as a grass roots movement to standardize communications between supply and demand participants (i.e., exchanges and DSPs) in RTB interactions. We have successfully evolved the specification through multiple versions and achieved broad industry support. The project is now under the auspices of the IAB although governance of its technical content remains with the contributing community.

While the informal community approach has been successful, we also recognize that the broad adoption of OpenRTB means that the commercial interests of many companies now depend upon its evolving content, quality, and stability.

The purpose of the governance described herein is to raise the level of formality and clarity as to the processes of OpenRTB specification evolution, while maintaining our tradition of community contribution and a "low barrier to results". Much of it is based on the relevant aspects of the Apache Software Foundation technical governance model, adjusting for the fact that our primary product is a specification rather than a code base.

# 1. Overview

## 1.1 Scope

The primary product of the OpenRTB initiative is the OpenRTB Specification itself, the latest ratified version of which is hosted for download on the IAB website. In addition, many members of the OpenRTB community collaborate on various related code-based projects (e.g., reference implementations). This Governance Process pertains only to the development and evolution of the OpenRTB specification itself.

## 1.2 Summary

The objective of this Governance Process is to establish a lightweight, easily comprehensible, and community centric method by which the OpenRTB Specification is maintained and evolved. This method is intended to provide enough structure and oversight to enable commercial participants in the space to work with OpenRTB with confidence in its content, quality, and stability, while maintaining the OpenRTB tradition of community contribution and pragmatism.

The basic principles of this Governance Process are derived from the Apache Software Foundation; one of the most successful set of community based technology projects. Some considerations have been made to the fact that the primary work product of OpenRTB is a specification rather than a code base.

At the highest level, the organization consists of a Project Management Committee (PMC), committers, and the broader community. Anyone in the community can raise issues, propose solutions, debate the merits of other solutions, and contribute to the OpenRTB discussion in general. Proposed changes to be incorporated into OpenRTB Specification are voted on by committers; a subset of the community at large. Finally, a relatively small number of committers serve as the PMC which grants committer status, coordinates ratified changes into the next Specification version, interfaces with IAB, and ensures general compliance with the Governance Process.

# 2. Roles in the OpenRTB Community

## 2.1 Contributor

Contributors provide feedback and suggest new features or solutions to issues under discussion via the public mailing list. However, contributors cannot vote on proposed changes. Contributors can send requests to the PMC to be considered for committership.

## 2.2 Committer

Committers are contributors who have demonstrated significant participation in OpenRTB and their committership has been approved by the PMC. They are typically but not necessarily active practitioners in the digital advertising domain and specifically RTB.

In addition to their activities as contributors, committers have the right to call for and participate in votes for proposed changes to OpenRTB specifications.

## 2.3 Project Management Committee

Committers and contributors form the heart of the OpenRTB community and thus central oversight should be kept to only a necessary minimum. In this spirit, the PMC has a minimal but important set of responsibilities as follows:

PMC members may also be committers, subject to the same process for contributors to gain committership.

The PMC is a voting body and thus should have an odd number of members, no two of which can be affiliated with the same company. To keep bureaucracy to a minimum, the size of the PMC should be kept reasonably small (e.g., 5 or 7).

From time to time, the PMC votes a) to grant or revoke committer status to members of the community, b) to alter the composition of the PMC or its chair, and c) to update the governance guidelines contained herein.

The PMC reviews the votes conducted by the committers to ensure propriety, to evaluate their results, and typically to accept ratified decisions. The PMC can put a hold on a ratified decision and call for further review if a majority of its members believe it to be substantially inconsistent with the mission or philosophy of OpenRTB.

Upon acceptance of a ratified specification change, the PMC coordinates and/or delegates to a volunteer committer the applicable update to the working version (e.g., draft or RC) of the next release of the specification document.

The PMC decides the set of ratified changes, features, and edits that will comprise the next version of the specification (i.e., when to “draw the line” and release an update) and the nomenclature of that version.

## 2.4 PMC Chair

The PMC includes a Chairperson or potentially a number of Co-Chairs who coordinates PMC activities and serves as the primary liaison to the IAB. The PMC Chairperson or Co-Chair has all other rights and responsibilities of PMC members.

# 3. Specification Change Process

## 3.1 Proposing a Change

A proposal is made by posting its description to the public mailing list along with supporting arguments. All discussion and debate related to the proposal should be conducted on the public mailing list in keeping with the open nature of the community. In some cases, it may make practical sense for a subgroup to work through details offline, but then the output of that effort should be posted publicly as soon as possible.

Any member of the community can propose a change. However, only committers can call a vote. Therefore, contributors who propose changes must get a committer onboard to champion the cause.

## 3.2 Voting & Ratifying

When a proposal has been made and there appears to have been sufficient and reasonable time for the proposal or its discussion-evolved version to have stabilized, a committer calls for a vote. The call for vote is made to the public mailing list, includes or references the change in a clear and unambiguous way, and should include "VOTE" in the subject to stand out in crowded inboxes.

The vote is open for 72 hours from the posting of the call for vote. Committers cast their votes to the public mailing list as follows:

+1 means "I approve of the change as written."

-1 means "I oppose making this change."

0 or no vote within the open period means "I abstain."

When the vote closes, the PMC ensures that no improprieties have occurred with respect to governance and determine the official result. Approval requires a "lazy consensus" as defined by at least 3 votes to approve (i.e., +1) and no votes to oppose (i.e., -1).

Since committers almost invariably represent the commercial interests of a company, only one vote to approve (i.e., +1) per company is counted. As a result, at least 3 different companies must be represented in support of a proposed change to OpenRTB specifications.

Votes to oppose (i.e., -1) must be accompanied by rationale in order to help keep evolution moving forward. The PMC may ignore votes without at least some minimal rationale.

## 3.3 Committing a Change

A specification change is "committed" by virtue of a vote that ratifies its approval. This means that the change will be included in the next version of the specification as scheduled by the PMC.

When a change will result in an aspect of the specification that is not backward compatible, a transition period will be used whenever possible to give implementers time to adapt while remaining in compliance. For example, a feature being removed should first be deprecated. Similarly, a new feature that is intended as required should be introduced first as recommended along with guidance that it will soon become required. The recommended length of these transition periods is on the order of 6 months, which is also the approximate time between specification versions.