

Global Universal Creative Identification Framework

An Open Standard for Omnichannel
Execution and Measurement

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Executive Summary

Extreme Reach (ER) is proposing the formation of a global Universal Creative Identifier (UCID) specification for uniquely identifying all types of ad creative to significantly improve omnichannel campaign execution, measurement and attribution across an increasingly complex media landscape. An open standard UCID is an essential next step to align the global creative-to-media supply chain and improve the quality of data that brands and media companies receive from measurement solutions and other data sources. It will enable the development of new and enhanced services for the industry in critical areas such as real-time optimisation of campaigns, global tracking of usage rights and digital tracking of creative across media channels.

While the establishment of a single, universally adopted standard has long been the goal, it has been impossible to achieve due to the sheer number of different industry players, varying agendas and business models and myriad code systems around the world.

The solution is simple, yet transformational. ER will introduce a new and open standard specification for a global UCID system that focuses purely on ID creation and validation. The standard will operate using principles that are much like the internet domain structure, via a set of Registration Authorities that are designated from within the existing industry. Most importantly, the proposed open standard easily accommodates any regional/local standards already in place. As such, the Registration Authorities for UCID can and should include the existing local bodies who already provide code standards.

ER does not play a role as an audience measurement provider or as a source of media trading currency. That agnostic position, coupled with the company's central place at the intersection of creative asset prep, delivery, activation, and tracking makes ER uniquely positioned to drive the creation and adoption of an open standard. Furthermore, ER's extensive global footprint, its connectivity to all major media destinations and its industry credibility, underscores the ease with which this initiative is poised to accelerate and transform the ecosystem for the betterment of all parties.

It should be emphasized that the company proposes this system as a function of its responsibility as a major player in a central agnostic position and with the sole interest of industry innovation that best serves all parties. This document describes the rationale, design and implementation of the global UCID solution, as well as the value proposition to the ecosystem upon adoption.

Lack of Standards in Creative Identification is a Barrier to Progress

A critical element of accurate campaign measurement is the ability to forensically differentiate which ad creative was seen by which audience in which market via which media channel.

Basic KPIs, such as unique reach, frequency, creative performance, etc., rely on uniquely and definitively identifying each unique ad creative and then correctly associating that identifier with individual ad exposure metrics. As simple and obvious as this may seem, it remains elusive to the vast majority of the measurement and attribution ecosystem. **The lack of global standardization in ad identification across linear, CTV, web, mobile and out-of-home video channels results in highly fragmented, disparate measurement data sets that, at best, require significant manual effort to reconcile and, at worst, lead to wildly inaccurate conclusions.**

As the market leader in global creative logistics across linear and digital video delivery paths, ER ingests and processes the vast majority of TV and video ad assets (in addition to all other media types) that travel from advertisers and their agencies to the secured media inventory across all their media partners. The company effectively operates today as a creative clearinghouse for the world's top advertisers, providing ER with a view across the global creative-to-media supply chain. This provides a long-standing and unique perspective into the serious problem of fragmented ad identification, its impact on brands, the measurement and attribution companies that support them and the media companies that run those ads across different channels, platforms and devices. Put simply, ER connects the buy and sell side of the media ecosystem, and is uniquely positioned to champion this global, open standard for ad identification.

Together, We Can Solve the Universal Creative Identifier Puzzle Right Now

As background, ER has always enforced unique identifiers for all creative that is processed through its platform. In some cases, clients rely on Ad-ID to provide a guaranteed unique identifier, combined with reference ad metadata, which is directly integrated with the asset content in the ER platform. In other cases, clients rely on other global identification standards, such as Clearcast Clock# (UK), PubID (FR), or ad hoc, made-up codes, and these too are supported on the ER side (as long as they conform to uniqueness rules). Where neither of these approaches is used, the ER platform generates and assigns unique ad codes directly, incorporating client-specific ID schemas, if needed.

But no one company can solve this problem alone. It is our collective responsibility to work together to best serve brands around the world and all their partners. This proposal for a global Unique Creative Identifier (UCID) standard is truly the only path forward and is elegant in its simplicity. All that is required is adoption. The UCID is the modern answer to disparate ad coding schemes because it accommodates existing systems for easy implementation, with profound benefits that unlock significant opportunities to measure and understand advertising effectiveness better than ever before. It also prepares the global ad industry for an increasingly complex future.

Universal Creative Identification Principles

The Universal Creative Identification (UCID) Framework *open specification* is designed to be very simple and focus solely on the creation and validation of Universal Creative Identifiers that are globally unique, patterned loosely after the Internet Domain Name System (DNS). **This provides an ecosystem whereby multiple providers can participate instead of relying solely on a single, proprietary ID scheme.**

The following points define the guiding principles underlying the UCID Framework Specification, some of its basic rules, and its evolution.

For a complete description of the framework, see the Universal Creative Identification Framework Specification v1.0 published on Github at:

<https://github.com/ExtremeReach/ucid>.

Registration Authorities

The UCID framework involves designation of Registration Authorities that are recognized suppliers of trusted, unique creative identifiers within the ad creative ecosystem. Given the relatively limited scope of the ecosystem surrounding the marketing creative supply chain, the list of recognized Registration Authorities can be maintained as a community resource, rather than managed by a formal standards body. As such, the list will be maintained on the Universal Creative Identification Wikipedia page. Registration Authorities implement a set of public and private API operations defined in the specification that permit them to issue and validate UCIDs.

Each Registration Authority (RA) is responsible for the following primary functions:

- Issuing unique Domains for individual advertisers, agencies, etc. (clients), similar to how a company can register one or more Internet domains. The combination of RA and Domain must be globally unique.
- Issuing UCIDs on behalf of authorized clients and ensuring that all issued identifiers are unique within each RA/Domain. Within a given RA/Domain a client may generate as many creative identifiers as they choose.
- Validating UCIDs to confirm that they were previously issued by the RA or one of its peers.

Registration Authority API

All Registration Authorities must implement a standard, publicly accessible API that allows all RAs to interoperate with each other and validate codes via peer-to-peer communication. The API will be based upon simple HTTP requests, similar to other standard frameworks, such as OAuth. Public API operations allow each registry to publicly identify themselves, as well as providing a mechanism for registries to “discover” each other for the purpose of code validation. Additionally, private API operations allow authenticated clients to obtain domains, generate UCIDs and manage relationships between identifiers.

Interoperability, Discovery and Validation

A public API definition permits an RA to communicate with its peers by calling well-defined operations against each known RA, providing a discovery mechanism for each RA to learn of new RAs added to the ecosystem. This also supports another important aspect of the UCID framework - the open validation mechanism. Any creative identifier can be validated by simply calling a public API operation against any recognized RA. This allows parties throughout the marketing supply chain to confirm the uniqueness and source for creative identifiers.

Relationships between two or more UCIDs may be expressed to indicate parent-child associations, aliases, derivatives or format translations. This allows for UCID "graphs" to be established that promote discovery and interoperability. It also allows "legacy" creative identifiers that do not conform to the UCID structure (do not include a valid Registration Authority Identifier, RAID, prefix code) to be validated by querying peer RAs to verify that the code is valid and was generated by one of the peer RAs.

UCID Creation

A distinct feature of the UCID framework is the inclusion of a RAID prefix on every generated identifier. This ensures that all creative identifiers are universally unique, even if two or more registries issue the same domain or even full code. This is similar to the "top level domain" (TLD) used with Internet domains (e.g. .com, .org, .edu, etc.) The RAID is represented by a single alpha-numeric character and can quickly distinguish which registry issued the code, similar to the first digit of a credit card designating Visa, Mastercard, etc.

Each Registration Authority (RA) would issue unique 4-character ID Domains for individual advertisers, agencies, etc. (clients), similar to how a company can register one or more Internet domains. The combination of

RA+Domain must be *globally unique*. Within a given RA+Domain a client may generate as many identifiers as they choose, as long as each is unique within the RA/Domain. The default UCID structure (see below) provides for six alpha-numeric characters in the Unique Value section of the ID, allowing up to 2,176,782,336 possible unique IDs per RA/Domain.

A Registration Authority and/or client may also elect to apply a custom schema to their identifiers, such that individual positions in the generated ad code can represent specific attributes. This same custom schema support can be used to support familiar coding schemes already in use across different global markets, while still conforming to the UCID specification to ensure uniqueness and interoperability.

Global Universal Creative ID Structure - Default

RAID	ID DOMAIN				UNIQUE ID VALUE					
E	A	C	M	W	0	0	1	2	3	4

Default Universal Creative ID Elements:

ID Element	Values	Purpose
RAID	1 alpha-numeric character, from 0 to Z	Designates the Registration Authority that generated the code. Some initial RAID values could be: E = ER, A = Ad-ID, C = Clearcast, P = Publd, etc. 37 total possible registries.
ID Domain	4 alpha-numeric characters, from 0 to Z	The unique ID domain issued to the client by the RA.
Unique ID Value	6 alpha-numeric characters, from 0 to Z	A character sequence that is unique within the domain

Example Custom UCID Schemas

Ad-ID Format

RAID		ID DOMAIN (AD-ID PREFIX)				UNIQUE CODE						FORMAT CODE
A	A	C	M	E	0	0	9	2	1	6	8	H

Clearcast Clock-ID Format

RAID	ID DOMAIN (AGENCY CODE)				UNIQUE CODE						DURATION			
C	A	B	C	/	D	E	F	0	0	1	/	0	3	0

Client-Specific Custom Schema

RAID	ID DOMAIN				CAMPAIGN CODE		CAMPAIGN YEAR		UNIQUE ID VALUE			FORMAT CODE
E	A	C	M	E	R	X	2	1	0	9	4	S

Clients should always ensure that a UCID is assigned to *each unique creative asset* they produce and that the same UCID is used for all renditions and uses for that creative. For example, a video ad creative used across linear TV, CTV, web and social channels should use the same UCID for all usages to ensure that measurement data from various sources can be aligned to the same creative message.

Value Proposition

ER believes that the adoption of a UCID will enable the development of new industry services which will be valuable to multiple stakeholders across the global ecosystem:

- **Standards Setting Bodies:** These bodies currently provide unique identifiers for specific use cases within the local market. Such bodies can choose to become an RA under this framework, and contribute to the broader global repository of UCIDs. By joining, their IDs become recognised globally by all other local RA bodies, making their work more relevant to global brands
- **The Creative Community:** By ensuring their creative is registered with a UCID, it can enable ways to track contribution to the advertising supply chain. It opens up some unique options to tag digital assets with UCIDs so that there is still value in being the original owner of the creative, like in the case of NFTs for digital artwork
- **Creative and Production Agencies:** Using UCIDs will allow final creative masters and versions of such masters to be tracked fully from origination to final delivery. This gives them the ability to optimise the value of the creative with the effectiveness of the asset to the consumer. Additionally they may also wish to be an RA in order to implement their own in-house ID system to manage and track their creative work across multiple regional offices.
- **Monitoring and Measurement Companies:** Being able to link monitored advertising directly to UCIDs will allow omnichannel monitoring globally. Such information can be analysed in real time to understand effectiveness of creative across various channels and to affect campaigns while they are in flight.
- **Brands:** Ensuring their agencies and media partners use UCIDs, will mean faster and more relevant information flowing back to marketing teams for accurate tracking of reach and frequency and myriad other metrics that enable optimisation. This vital information gives them better visibility and control and adds value to their “big data” repositories designed to return business-building insight.
- **Media Companies:** By leveraging UCIDs and promoting their use by advertisers and agencies, media companies can reduce the duplication of creative across their various channels and physical plants by ensuring that each ad creative is uniquely represented, regardless of how the media is managed and sold.

Governance

As a published open standard specification, the UCID Framework will be maintained and developed by the community. The specification will be published on Github under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 License. It is envisaged that the governance of the UCID Framework will be provided by a steering committee composed of the appointed Registration Authorities. While Extreme Reach will initially act as the primary contributor, over time, the Framework will evolve based on contributions from the RAs and other community members.

Summary

Time is of the essence. This simple solution, previously held back by conflicting priorities, differing agendas and process isolation between global markets, is vital to ensuring a flourishing future for the global advertising economy.

This truly open, universal and all encompassing framework will significantly enable the promise of omnichannel marketing by providing the essential foundation from which to understand advertising effectiveness more accurately than ever before across an ever-changing consumer media consumption landscape. As the proposer of this transformational initiative, Extreme Reach welcomes robust discussion and debate as we work together to finalize the standard and get on with the business of serving the world's greatest brands.

About Extreme Reach

Extreme Reach (ER) is the global leader in creative logistics. Its end-to-end technology platform moves creative at the speed of media, simplifying the activation and optimization of omnichannel campaigns for brands and agencies with unparalleled control, visibility and insights.

One global creative-to-media supply chain answers the challenges of a complex marketing landscape and an equally complicated infrastructure under the global advertising ecosystem. The company's groundbreaking solution integrates all forms of linear TV and non-linear video workflow seamlessly with talent payments and rights management. Now, brands and agencies can optimize campaigns as fast as consumer consumption shifts across linear TV, CTV, OTT, addressable TV, mobile, desktop, and video-on-demand.

Extreme Reach connects brand content with consumers across media types and markets, fully illuminating the marketing supply chain for a clear view of creative usage, waste, performance and ROI.

With the acquisition of Adstream, Extreme Reach operates in 140 countries and 45 languages, with 1,100 team members serving 90 of the top 100 global advertisers and enabling \$150 billion in video ad spend around the world. More than half a billion creative brand assets are managed in ER's creative logistics platform.

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