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CASE STUDY

Xandr + Axel Springer

Transparency, Independence, and Higher Yields: How Xandr Monetize Helped Axel Springer Take Its Business to New Heights

The Challenge

Axel Springer needed an open, transparent partner to help it build the advertising ecosystem of the future

Axel Springer SE is a German media company and one of the largest digital publishing houses in Europe. As the owner of major news brands like Bild, Die Welt and Business Insider, the firm reaches hundreds of millions of readers and viewers each month.

With so many different businesses under its umbrella, Axel Springer's various brands have a wide range of advertising technology needs. In order for each of these businesses to maximize its potential, Axel Springer set out in search of an advertising technology solution that could help its brands flourish on both the buy-side and the sell-side, across desktop, mobile, and in-app environments.

Like many large publishers, the company had become worried about Google's dominance in the digital advertising marketplace, as well as the lack of transparency found in its ad server and SSP products. Axel Springer's sales house, Media Impact, sought to challenge Google's walled garden with an open, full-stack solution that could integrate multiple demand sources holistically and provide a transparent view of its monetization.

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"Our partnership with Xandr should serve as an example to all publishers that there are options for action in holistic marketing, even without Google as your leading ad-tech stack. We encourage all publishers in our situation to begin exploring the open market."
Carsten Schwecke
Managing Director
of Media Impact,
Axel Springer's Sales House

In addition, the firm sought to upgrade its ad server to one that would allow its various programmatic and direct demand sources to compete with one another on even footing. In Axel Springer's existing waterfall setup, direct deals were guaranteed access to every impression, even if a programmatic buyer was offering a higher price. Until the publisher could implement a system for accepting these high-end programmatic bids, it would have no choice but to continue leaving money on the table.

Last, but not least, Axel Springer needed its new technology partner to come with a top-tier customer service team, one that could help it migrate its complex ad server operations to a new platform. With over 30,000 ad placements sitting inside its existing ad server, the publisher and its new partner would certainly have their work cut out for them.

The Solution

Axel Springer implements header bidding with Xandr Monetize

Axel Springer chose Xandr Monetize to power Media Impact's ad stack holistically.

Whereas its earlier setup prioritized Google's AdX demand over other programmatic demand sources, Axel Springer used Xandr Monetize with prebid.js to create a stack that allowed holistic optimization. All demand partners, including Google AdX, were able to submit their bids simultaneously. With Xandr's log-level data, the publisher was able to validate that its inventory was being sold fairly, inside a truly open marketplace.

Meanwhile, Xandr's ad server and its industry-leading forecasting analytics allowed Axel Springer to optimize its yields with open dynamic allocation. In its prior setup, each impression was offered to different demand sources along a strict hierarchy, with direct deals getting the first crack, followed by the firm's exchange partners. But under open dynamic allocation, these rival demand sources were able to compete inside the ad server, allowing Media Impact to accept higher programmatic bids and generate superior CPMs whilst ensuring guaranteed campaigns would still achieve their delivery goals.

Even better, the Xandr implementation team managed to port Axel Springer's complex ad server decisioning logic to its platform in record time. In just three months, the publisher's entire display advertising stack was up and running on Xandr for desktop, mobile, and in-app inventory. Due to Xandr's speedy migration, Axel Springer was able to make the final switch in time for the crucial Q4 season.

Last, but not least Xandr's SSP and ad server attracted key programmatic video buyers to the publisher's video supply, and the ad server delivered direct sold campaigns for a variety of major video advertisers. As a result, Xandr has empowered Media Impact to successfully monetize its video content across desktop, mobile, and in-app inventory.

"While digital publishers are frequently intimidated by the idea of changing their entire technology stack, our speedy implementation with Xandr is proof that migrating ad servers isn't something to be afraid of - so long as you have the right technology partners at your side."

Carsten Schwecke
Managing Director
of Media Impact,
Axel Springer's Sales House

The Results

Xandr Monetize drives +13% in open market eCPMs

Axel Springer's migration to Xandr Monetize was an overwhelming success.

In addition to emancipating itself from its reliance on Google, the publisher was able to use header bidding and open dynamic allocation to generate the highest possible yields from every impression. Since moving to Xandr, Axel Springer's open-market eCPMs have grown by over 13%.

Of equal importance, the publisher's newly open and transparent ad stack has allowed it to rest easily with the knowledge that its inventory is being sold exactly as it intends. The data-driven yield optimization enabled by Xandr Monetize provides full insight into internal decisioning logic and bid landscape data, which enables Media Impact to be firmly in control of its ad sales operation.

"Xandr gave us all the tools we needed to craft a holistic, transparent, and independent approach to how we sell digital advertising."

Carsten Schwecke
Managing Director
of Media Impact,
Axel Springer's Sales House