



# Transitioning Video Ads from Flash to HTML5/JS

## Agency Checklist

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### Table of Contents

<b>Overview</b> .....	2
<b>Challenges with moving away from Flash:</b> .....	2
<b>Benefits:</b> .....	2
<b>Recommendations for Media Agencies</b> .....	3
<b>Recommendations for Creative Agencies</b> .....	4

## Overview

Both media and creative agencies alike have a unique opportunity to encourage and embrace industry adoption of HTML5 for all ads including VPAID (Video Player Ad Interface Definition), and video formats such as MP4 or WEBM for VAST (Video Ad Serving Template). An industry-wide transition away from Flash is critical for browser capability, user experience, and to re-stabilize the inventory interoperability on current technology. As stated in the IAB Tech Lab recommendations (available at <https://iabtechlab.com/html5videotransition>), the goal is to complete this transition for video ads by **July 2017**.

That said, we recognize fully the challenges of making this transition from Flash successfully. To that end, we have put together this brief checklist and recommendations for media and creative agencies as a tool to empower and help your team move to HTML5 and cross device compatible video file formats.

### Challenges with moving away from Flash:

1. Current lack of JS VPAID inventory
2. Difficulty identifying HTML5 vs Flash inventory
3. Lack of expertise to build JS VPAID ads
4. Cost of building more than one type of creative
5. Some publishers may still require Flash for VPAID and FLV for VAST
6. Old validators or outdated publisher specifications out in the market may still ask for FLV file format (even if it is not required for that site)
7. Compatibility with supporting tech - Non-Flash verification, surveys, pub as server, etc.

### Benefits:

1. Protecting branding: Making sure that the best possible user experience is offered when a user is interacting with your client's ad.
2. Cross-screen delivery: Being able to serve in mobile will increase reach.
3. Pushing for availability of inventory means there will be greater scale for audience buying.
4. Future-proofing campaigns: Account for shrinking availability of Flash by either using VAST, which can run in all players, or using JS VPAID.
5. Reduction in cost and complexity of campaigns: Using multiple technologies (Flash and HTML5) means more builds, more tags, more testing, etc.
6. Keeping creative offerings up to advertiser market demand.
7. Moving away from supporting a legacy technology.
8. Utilizing the same technology (HTML5, CSS and JS) as rich media and banner ads making it easier for creative teams to support and build interactive video units.

## Recommendations for Media Agencies

Options to solve for lack of inventory and identifying inventory type:

1. Encourage publishers, networks and DSPs (Demand Side Platforms) to fully adopt HTML5-compatible solutions and discontinue Flash support:
    - Ask publishers for timelines on availability of JS VPAID and discontinuation of Flash support. Point to the six-month runway recommended by the IAB.
    - Ask publishers if they can move away from requiring FLV video files for VAST, and if FLV is no longer needed, asking them to update their specs.
    - For programmatic partners, see if and how they identify inventory sources that are HTML5-player compatible, and where viewability, verification and other desired functionalities are supported.
    - During the RFP Process, agencies and advertisers should actively be inquiring about the above, and asking operations teams about their support and specs for these HTML5 video compatible ad units.
  2. Test on various players to ensure consistent coverage across publishers.
  3. Run different types of ads on currently available inventory and technologies
    - Focus on decreasing the dependency on Flash ads as players will be phased out and inventory availability will shrink.
    - Options for running ads (in order of preference):
      - **Strongly recommended:** Run VAST and a separate JS VPAID ad until more VPAID inventory opens up
      - **Strongly recommended:** Run only HTML5/JS VPAID ads where available
      - Where supported, run both Flash VPAID and JS VPAID in the same tag (where supported\*\*)
      - Run two different tags for Flash VPAID and JS VPAID (However, note that this will result in a more complex campaign)
      - Run a hybrid VAST and HTML5 tag (where supported\*\*)
- \*\* Please check how well hybrid VAST tags (tags with multiple media nodes) are supported at various publishers since it is a complex implementation. Check whether the order of the tags matters (JS before Flash before media for example).
4. Ask your vendors to provide analytics on which VPAID was used so that you understand the inventory you are seeing and the adoption trends. This might be especially important to understand how much the backup video-only version is being used.
  5. Include the following (or similar) on a Request for Proposal (RFP) to the publisher:
    - For all VPAID video placements, please:
      - Propose inventory sources that have updated their video players from Flash to HTML5/JS
      - Confirm the inventory is certified to accept JS VPAID tags from XYZ Industry Partner
      - Confirm that the functionality available for JS VPAID is equivalent to the functionality supported by Flash VPAID. Viewability/verification in particular should not be assumed to be synonymous with VPAID,

especially if running on mobile in-app, OTT (Over-The-Top Content) and other non-desktop inventories

6. Be sure to ask publishers for accurate details/specs to creative agencies to ensure there is clear confirmation on how the creative needs to be built.
7. Verification and viewability considerations - Most vendors already support JS versions of their libraries. All agencies will need to do is check (if possible) whether any Flash wrappers are being inserted anywhere along the chain.

Options to solve expertise and budget for creative:

1. Work with creative agencies and other vendors to ensure that they can create HTML5-compatible video ads (typically JS VPAID). Ask for training on vendors' HTML5 creation and/or conversion tools if needed.
2. If both Flash and JS VPAID are needed, check to see if additional creative costs are involved for the sake of budgeting.
3. In all cases (including plain/non-interactive video ads) confirm that they are aware that Flash assets should not be delivered.

## **Recommendations for Creative Agencies**

Options to solve for knowledge gap:

1. Retool and educate staff to be able to support the creation of JS VPAID and other HTML5-compatible solutions
2. Work with vendors who can support HTML5-compatible solutions, including JS VPAID
3. Use tools that will support the creation of this format
4. Be sure to consider the capabilities and differences from Flash VPAID

Considerations for building HTML5/JS creatives:

1. Time estimates, changes to workflow to factor in change in technology and tools
2. Internal QA of all the different environments
3. External (Ad Server) QA of all the different environments
4. Different device capabilities
5. Building creatives responsively
6. Outline any changes to cost for supporting HTML5 solutions to media side or client for budget considerations, possibly alongside Flash solutions for some period of time while Flash is phased out