

## DAA ADOPTS STRONG STANCE AGAINST MICROSOFT'S DECISION TO GO AHEAD WITH ITS "DO NOT TRACK" BROWSER: ASKS ADVERTISERS TO IGNORE IT



# Microsoft®

Microsoft's decision not to discontinue its 'Do Not Track' browser has drawn all round flak and not gone down too well with the advertising community. Marketers roundly panned the decision during the prestigious Advertising week in New York and said that there were many issues that still needed to be looked into and that Microsoft's decision to go ahead with its default DNT browser was unfortunate. The Digital Advertising Alliance, the online advertising industry's self-regulatory body for behavioral targeting, has reacted strongly to Microsoft's decision and said that they will not honor it, but neither will they penalize companies that ignore it. In a statement DAA said, "Machine driven Do Not Track does not represent user choice; it represents browser manufacturer choice. Allowing browser manufacturer to determine the kinds of information users receive could negatively impact the vast consumer benefits and Internet experience delivered by DAA participants and millions of other websites that consumers value." The strong stance taken by the digital advertising industry comes in the wake of Microsoft summarily undermining the commitment made by the industry in February that it would, in principle, honor an opt-in browser before the year was out. Ever since the browser company announced its default DNT browser four month ago, it has caused a lot of furor amongst advertisers. Moreover, Microsoft has turned a deaf ear to the repeated requests by the Association of National Advertisers to overturn its decision. Mike Zaneis, senior vice-president and general counsel of the Interactive Advertising Bureau said, this issue is becoming a matter of grave concern for all concerned and advertisers and advertising agencies, publishers and ad networks are desperately seeking answers. He said that even though the DAA's decision is clear, guidance still needs to be provided for the self-regulatory program. However, the DAA's position can lead to advertisers indirectly ignoring an individual's desire not to be targeted with advertisements. Those who use IE10, specifically because the "do not track" function is set by default, may inadvertently do exactly what the users don't want them to do, that is monitor them. This could lead to legal complications with privacy advocates. DAA and the World Wide Web Consortium are making conflicting statements amidst allegations the industry is retracting from its Do Not Track commitments. DAA stalled the Consortium's attempts to define a permanent DNT policy telling that the W3C had no business or authorization to do so. Jeff Chester, executive director of the Center for Digital Democracy has made serious allegations against the DAA calling them "privacy enemy number one." He further alleged that their icon-based policing was a sham that they have perpetrated on the American people and that it was a camouflage for their data collection scheme. "[DAA's] announcement today to punish Microsoft for putting consumers first is an extreme measure designed to strong-arm companies that care about privacy," he said. "In spite of what others are saying the DAA says that it believes that it is behaving responsibly and that its self-regulatory program is working. The DAA program provides users the alternative to opt-out of targeted online ads. The dispute and debate is expected to continue when the Association of National Advertisers meets this week for their annual meeting. Last week the Association of National Advertisers had sent a strongly worded letter to Microsoft, signed by 40 of the world's largest advertisers that their decision would weaken "the robust content and services available over the Internet."