Introduction

Welcome to News Consumer Insights! We’re glad you’re here.

We developed this framework in response to conversations with news publishers that started back in 2016. We heard repeatedly that, although these companies were awash in data, they found it difficult to extract the insights and direction for their businesses from the raw numbers.

The News Consumer Insights framework has two parts: the dashboard and this playbook. Our intent is that you gain initial insights from seeing your reader funnel more clearly in the dashboard. It reveals which audience segments are actually driving value and why it’s important to drive casual readers down the funnel toward loyalty. By being able to benchmark your performance against your peers you can set goals for driving revenue growth.

Once you understand your dashboard and user funnel, this playbook shows you what to do with your new knowledge. It contains both tactical suggestions on technical areas (for example, structured data) and more nuanced ideas for areas like user engagement and social media.

While there is no one-size-fits-all solution, the News Consumer Insights methodology is easy to understand and requires only your regular Google Analytics account with no code changes. To learn what drives results in each segment of your user funnel, you’ll have to test, experiment and adapt. We hope the report helps you direct your resources and adapt your strategies to drive loyalty and sustainability for your news publication.

Sincerely,

Amy Adams Harding
Global Head of News Consumer Insights, Google

Richard Gingras
VP of News, Google
Playbook Structure

Introduction

01 Understanding your audience
- Our report and what it means for you
- Optimize your Google Analytics implementation

02 Maximizing User Value on the journey to subscription
- Mobile and desktop: speed matters
- Improving recirculation
- Newsletter: acquisition / content optimization
- Search: structured data for news and magazine publishers
- Social: strategies to boost user loyalty

03 Driving more consumer revenue
- Identifying the profile of your potential buyers
- Refining your value proposition thanks to user feedback
- Act and drive consumer revenue
Understanding your audience

CHAPTER SECTIONS

- Our report and what it means for you
- Optimize your Google Analytics implementation
Our report and what it means for you

SUBSECTIONS
What is News Consumer Insights?
Overview of the User Value Score (UVS)
User Value Score (UVS) calculation and example
How to use the News Consumer Insights report
What is News Consumer Insights?

We developed News Consumer Insights to give publishers a view into their Google Analytics data and to help them build sustainable businesses. The report will uncover:

- Which readers drive value across my site?
- How do I build a loyal user base?
- How can I improve engagement with my users?
- How can I convert users into paying consumers through subscription or patronage?

News Consumer Insights uses the funnel concept to segment your Google Analytics data into key audiences for you to clearly identify value across your site. In other words, the goal is to maximize value as users go through your engagement funnel.
What is News Consumer Insights?

Using metrics that look at user engagement across multiple areas, we assign each user segment a User Value Score between 0 and 100. To do so, we leverage our news industry data to create benchmarks so you can measure your performance against comparable organizations and best-in-class peers.

Together, these metrics give you a better understanding of what drives qualified traffic and where you should focus your resources in order to maximize the value of each user segment.

The end goal is to provide insights that help you move users from the “Casual Readers” segment down the funnel to becoming “Loyal Readers,” or even “Subscribers.” In other words, the report will help you adapt your business strategies for each user segment.
Overview of User Value Score (UVS)

We created a custom metric for News Consumer Insights to help you understand the value of each audience segment for your publication. Called "User Value Score" (UVS), this single metric shows how much readers engage with your content compared to the industry. Alongside our reader funnel, we hope our score will highlight how they can potentially drive additional ad or consumer revenue (like subscriptions).

Our UVS consists of 4 user metrics per audience segment, measured over the last 30 days:

- Pageviews per User: how many articles does a user read on average across all visits?
- Avg. Session Duration: how long does a user stay on your site?
- Sessions per User: how many times does a user visit your site?
- Pageviews per Session: how many articles does a user read per visit?

For each audience segment, these four metrics will be measured against industry benchmarks to create a dynamic score between 0 and 100. The higher the score, the more value that segment is driving.

In this example, we compare the four key metrics against the ones for an average Casual Reader online to create the UVS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Casual Readers</th>
<th>User Value Score</th>
<th>57</th>
<th>/ 100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your Data</td>
<td>Benchmarks</td>
<td>Best in Class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pages / Session</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.27, 7.45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. Session Duration</td>
<td>00:01:28</td>
<td>00:01:07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Casual Readers</th>
<th>User Value Score</th>
<th>61</th>
<th>/ 100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your Data</td>
<td>Benchmarks</td>
<td>Best in Class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pages / Session</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>1.92, 7.25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. Session Duration</td>
<td>00:01:07</td>
<td>00:00:52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
User Value Score (UVS) calculation and example

We explored many methods to create the most useful User Value Score (UVS). Since our goal was to create a simple framework to use with the most basic Google Analytics implementation, we couldn't use advanced (or "non-standard") Google Analytics signals like social engagements or custom dimensions and events, as they don't scale particularly well in our use case. Keep in mind that, while this approach has proven its validity for many publishers, it does have limits (see our FAQ section for details).

Ultimately, we revisited the MOZ proposed methodology for content scoring1 and applied it to Reader Segments to identify the ones driving the most value.

We dynamically capture four key metrics: Pageviews per User, Avg. Session Duration, Sessions per User and Pageviews per Session per audience segment over the last 30 days. Thanks to our benchmark data, we can compare each of those metrics with averages from the industry for any given reader segment, which allows us to estimate how they’re performing.

For example, let’s define the User Value Score for the Loyal Readers of Site X:

\[
\left( \left( \frac{\text{Page views per user}}{\text{Page view per user}} \right) \times 2 \right) + \left( \frac{\text{Avg Session Duration}}{\text{Avg Session Duration}} \right) + \left( \frac{\text{Sessions per User}}{\text{Sessions per User}} \right) + \left( \frac{\text{Pageviews per Session}}{\text{Pageviews per Session}} \right) / 3 \right) / 3
\]

You’ll notice we apply more weight (a multiple of two) to Pageviews per User. This tells us how Site X’s loyal readers are behaving compared to the benchmarks. We call it “Performance %” and it does not appear in your report.

In order to get the User Value Score: 30 x Ln ("Performance %") + 50

If Site’s X Loyal Readers metrics are equal to the benchmark, the Performance % would be equal to “1” and the User Value Score to 50 (as \( \ln(1) = 0 \)).

Source:
One Content Metric to Rule Them All: https://moz.com/blog/one-metric
User Value Score (UVS) calculation and example

UVS FAQ

1. Why did you choose these specific user metrics?
We are trying to create a consolidated, single score with all the relevant data from Google Analytics about how users behave on your site. The metrics we use tell us how much time is spent on your site, how many visits occur across 30 days, as well as how many articles are read (per visit and across the time frame studied) – all per audience segment.

2. Why is Pageviews per User given more weight?
One of our key assumptions is that we can infer both loyalty and potential advertising revenue from the pageview metric. To simplify, we assume that a user segment with more pageviews per visit than the average is potentially more loyal and represents a more important advertising revenue source. That's why we multiply Pageviews per User by two.

Keep in mind that specific content sections (like photo galleries inflating pageviews) and site features (content auto-refresh) might render the UVS less effective for measuring your site performance.

3. Why are you using benchmark data and is it updated?
The benchmark data helps define industry averages for the metrics used in our UVS and for every audience segment studied. They are reference points for you to analyze your reader performance against your peers and identify potential gaps.

The data is updated on the first day of each month.
User Value Score (UVS) calculation and example

4. Is the data sampled?
Yes, part of the data may be sampled (read more about Google Analytics sampling).

5. Why don’t you include social engagement events like “shares,” “tweets,” or “comments?”
We wanted our framework to apply to the simplest Google Analytics implementation in order to be useful to the majority of news publishers. All social engagement signals require additional code to be properly tracked.

6. Why don’t you take into account advertising revenue or consumer revenue to measure value?
We do not have access to news publishers’ revenue sources, which also introduce certain variables (advertising strategies, exchange rates...) that are hard to address at scale.

7. Why does my data look “weird”?
Take a look at our optimizing your Google Analytics implementation to make sure everything is set up correctly. Keep in mind that this framework was built for news publishers exclusively and might not apply to your content specifically.
How to use the News Consumer Insights report

1. **Load your Google Analytics data**

Choose your Google Analytics account (it will appear if the email used to access this report is linked to your Google Analytics account). The data in this report is for the past 30 days, the growth rates are for the previous 30 days.

Please note that your data will not be shared with Google.

As you go through your personalized News Consumer Insights report, click through to the playbook chapters highlighted for valuable optimization tips.
How to use the News Consumer Insights report

2. Your Audience Funnel

The first part of the report shows the News Consumer Insights reader funnel applied to your site. You’ll get a quick glance of who is driving value and where the gaps lie.

Pay attention to the gaps in the metrics between each segment:

- How do they compare in size? Where is the biggest opportunity to move a segment down the funnel?
- How many articles do Casual Readers view compared to Brand Lovers? If we define “loyalty” as articles read per user, who’s more likely to subscribe or create consumer revenue?
- If each pageview is an opportunity to generate advertising revenue, where should you spend your resources? What type of users have the best ROI?
How to use the News Consumer Insights report

3. User Value Scores and our Benchmarks
We've assigned a User Value Score (UVS) between 0 and 100 to each key segment which takes into account their respective engagement metrics in order to measure them against the benchmarks. This score will inform you if each segment is performing as well as it could (take a look at the score range below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0/100</th>
<th>50/100</th>
<th>100/100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You can also use the "Site Size" filter to select sites comparable to yours for benchmarking.

582 News websites included in benchmarks

Benchmark Site Size - User Base (past 30 days)
How to use the News Consumer Insights report

4. Benchmark deep dive on engagement

This chart helps you compare a chosen segment vs. its Benchmark (industry average) and Best in Class (top performer).

- The Audience segment UVS will tell you how you’re performing and if there is room for improvement.
  - **If your UVS is below 50, your segment is performing below average.** Take a closer look at the biggest gaps compared to the benchmarks. Are your users staying long enough? Are they reading as many articles as they could? Do they come back often enough?
  - **If your UVS is above 50, your segment is overperforming the industry average.** Measure yourself against the best in class to see if that segment has room to be optimized.

- Repeat this exercise for Casual Readers, both desktop and mobile, and prioritize accordingly.
How to use the News Consumer Insights report

5. Benchmark deep dive on traffic sources

The chart on the left ranks your traffic sources by UVS for a given segment, so your most valuable traffic source will be the tallest red bar on the left. The blue line indicates the number of incoming users for each channel.

The chart on the right ranks the most valuable traffic sources for the same audience segment across the benchmark.

We suggest you to analyze your results in this order:

1. Is your most valuable traffic source also your most important one in terms of incoming users? You should prioritize user acquisition of small but valuable traffic sources.
2. A traffic source with a score of 50 means that it’s performing at average. You can compare your respective scores with the ones from the benchmark. A source might have a good score across your site and still underperform compared to the benchmark. On the other hand, if a traffic source has a lower score than the benchmark, you should revisit your engagement strategy for that segment.
3. Do your traffic source rankings match the benchmarks?
4. You can also compare traffic source scores between desktop and mobile to look for performance gaps.
Section 02

Optimize your Google Analytics implementation

SUBSECTIONS
- Import our reader funnel
- Optimize your Google Analytics tracking strategy
- What you need to know about bounce rate
- Set up an A/B testing strategy
Import your reader funnel / dashboard

You can import our reader funnel by clicking on the Google Analytics segments below. You can also download a simple dashboard to track key metrics from each segment. This will help you do your own research using our pre-defined methodology. To analyze your readers based on their level of engagement download these Google Analytics segments:

- **Casual Readers**: New readers / users to your site
- **Loyal Readers**: Returning readers / users
- **Brand Lovers**: Readers / users who visited your site more than 15 times across the last 30 days
- **Subscribers**: A reader / user who purchased a subscription to your site *(currently not being tracked in News Consumer Insights)*

Discover where users are coming from, their top referral sources and which articles they’re reading.

Download News Consumer Insights Readers Report
Optimize your Google Analytics tracking strategy

While Google Analytics can yield deep knowledge on visitor data, its front-end might not immediately reflect the KPIs most relevant to your industry. Your personalized News Consumer Insights report should address that and it is a best practice to optimize your tracking strategy to make sure you are building a solid data framework to draw from.

Focus on these key areas:

- Newsletter tracking
- Social interactions
- Marketing campaigns
- Mobile: AMP tracking
- Content strategy
- Consumer revenue tracking
Optimize your Google Analytics tracking strategy

Newsletter tracking

If you use an external service provider for newsletter outreach, your email traffic might be displayed under “Other” or “Referral.”

Here’s how to capture these users under the “Email” traffic source instead:

- Log in to your Google Analytics account
- Go to Acquisition > All Traffic > Source/Medium
- Click on “Source” below graph
- Enter the Source name of your email traffic provider as classified by Google Analytics

To create a rule to capture future traffic:

- Go to: AdMin tab > Channel Settings > Email channel > add a rule: “AND”
- Source: “contains” the name of your email traffic previously identified
Optimize your Google Analytics tracking strategy

Social interactions
Many social networks provide embeddable buttons and widgets that enable users to share content.

With a few lines of JavaScript, you can add a “social interaction” plugin to your Google Analytics to track:

- Which social buttons users click on your site
- Which pages they share and like
Optimize your Google Analytics tracking strategy

Marketing campaigns
It’s important to differentiate your experiments and outreach programs in Google Analytics so you can measure their corresponding impacts. For example, you’ll want to differentiate users coming from content newsletters versus marketing newsletters. The same applies for your social activities.

By adding campaign parameters to the destination URLs you use in your campaigns, you’ll be able to analyze their effectiveness.

Set up marketing campaigns via UTM tagging
There are five parameters you can add to your URLs:

- `utm_source`: Identify the site, publication, etc. that is sending traffic to your property, for example: google, newsletter 4, billboard
- `utm_medium`: The marketing medium, for example: banner, email newsletter, social, etc.
- `utm_campaign`: The individual campaign name, slogan, promo code, etc. for a thing you want to track
- `utm_term`: If you are using paid media, use ‘term’ to identify paid search keywords. If you’re manually tagging paid keyword campaigns, you should also use `utm_term` to specify the keyword
- `utm_content`: This can be used to differentiate similar content, or links within the same page. For example, if you have two call-to-action links within the same email message, you can use `utm_content` and set different values for each so you can tell which version is more effective

Each parameter must be paired with a value that you assign. Each parameter-value pair then contains campaign-related information.
Optimize your Google Analytics tracking strategy

How to set up custom campaigns
You can add parameters and values to your URLs manually. You can also use platform-specific URL-builder tools to create your URLs and append the parameters.

When linking to websites, we suggest you use the Campaign URL Builder on the Google Analytics Demos & Tools site.

View custom-campaign data in Google Analytics

To see the Campaigns reports:
- Sign in to Google Analytics
- Navigate to your view
- Open Reports
- Select Acquisition and then Campaigns

Quick Tip:
You can add parameters to a URL in any order and note that Analytics is case sensitive, so utm_source=google is different from utm_source=Google. Case sensitivity applies for each value you define.
Optimize your Google Analytics tracking strategy

**Mobile: AMP tracking**

The Accelerated Mobile Pages ("AMP") Project is an open source initiative between publishers and technology companies to improve the entire mobile content ecosystem for everyone – publishers, consumer platforms, advertisers, creators, and users.

- If you’ve deployed AMP format or are thinking about it, consider tracking user experience across AMP and non-AMP content so you can see the impact on both user behavior and revenue.
- To do so, set up [Google AMP Client ID API](https://www.google.com/intl/en/policies/amp-api/). It’s available to all users and is supported by optional tagging changes in your GA configuration.

[Learn how to deploy AMP across your site](https://www.google.com/intl/en/policies/amp-api/)

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**CH 01**

Understanding your audience

**SECTION 02**

Optimize your Google Analytics implementation

**SUBSECTION**

Import our reader funnel

Optimize your Google Analytics tracking strategy

What you need to know about bounce rate
Set up an A/B testing strategy
Optimize your Google Analytics tracking strategy

Content Strategy

GA has advanced features that can help you shape your content strategy. Identify which content works best for reader acquisition and recirculation or what type of users read sponsored content. Or, maybe you want to see how your video content impacts reader behavior.

Get these insights and other by creating custom dimensions:

- Page type: (Homepage, Category Section, Articles, etc.)
- Sponsored Content: (Article ID 1, Article ID 2, etc.)
- Content Type (Text, Image Gallery, Video etc.)
- Article Category (World, Breaking News, Politics, Finance, Local)
- Article Sub-Category
- Article Author

Create Your Custom Dimensions
Optimize your Google Analytics tracking strategy

**Transactional data to increase consumer revenue**

Have you ever wondered where your subscribers are coming from? Which devices they are using? What their typical level of engagement is?

When it comes to generating revenue, news publishers can learn a lot from the strategies and KPI tracking of pure ecommerce sites.

Consider these complementary approaches:

- Defining goals
- Ecommerce tracking

To better identify transactional data, you need to define your Google Analytics goals. With properly configured goals, Google Analytics can provide critical information such as the number of conversions and the conversion rate.

We recommend that publishers:

- Track readers interacting with your products / subscription paywall by enabling "Event Goals"
- Track reader conversion by enabling "Destination Goals" on "thank you" pages

This will help you:

- Capture the profile and behavior of readers who have shown interest in your online offers or who have converted
- Visualize your conversion funnel and identify drop-off points

Learn how to use goals for funnel visualization in Google Analytics
Optimize your Google Analytics tracking strategy

As a complement to Google Analytics Goals, ecommerce tracking counts the transactions and revenue your website generates. It reveals how readers convert across your site and feeds into your consumer revenue/subscription strategy. This will help you:

- Analyze and optimize your ROI per traffic source, region, browser, landing page, etc.
- Access a substantial list of consumer revenue metrics
- Access additional attribution models

Learn how to deploy Ecommerce tracking
What you need to know about bounce rate

What is bounce rate?

A bounce is a single-page session on your site. In Analytics, a bounce is calculated specifically as a session that triggers only a single request to the Analytics server, such as when a user opens a single page on your site and then exits.

Bounce rate is the number of single-page sessions divided by all sessions.

These single-page sessions have a duration of 0 seconds since there are no subsequent hits that would let Analytics calculate the length of the session. Learn more about how session duration is calculated.

Understanding your bounce rate

![Bounce Rate Overview Report](image)

Download Bounce Rate Overview Dashboard
What you need to know about bounce rate

So is a high bounce rate a bad thing?

It depends...

If the success of your site depends on users viewing more than one page, then, yes, a high bounce rate is bad. For example, if your home page is the gateway to the rest of your site (e.g., news articles, product pages, your checkout process) and a high percentage of users are viewing only your homepage, then you don’t want a high bounce rate.

Identify opportunities to lower your bounce rate.

Examine your bounce rate from different perspectives. We suggest using our Bounce Rate Overview dashboard for Google Analytics:

If your overall bounce rate is high, see whether it’s uniformly high or whether it’s the result of something like one or two channels, source/medium pairs, or just a few pages.

For example, if just a few pages are the problem, think about whether their content correlates well with the marketing you use to drive traffic and whether those pages offer easy paths for users.

If a particular channel has a high bounce rate, take a look at your marketing efforts for that channel. For example, if users coming via display are bouncing, make sure your ads are relevant to your site content.

If the problem is more widespread, take a look at your tracking-code implementation to be sure all the necessary pages are tagged and that they’re tagged correctly. You may want to reevaluate your overall site design and examine the language, graphics, color, calls to action, and visibility of important page elements.
What you need to know about bounce rate

What is the difference between “bounce rate” and “pogo sticking?”

While bounce rate is the percentage of single-page sessions divided by all sessions, “pogo sticking” occurs when a user performs an action on a search engine such as Google, clicks on a result from the listings, then quickly clicks back to the search result page, and clicks on a different result. This immediate (1 to 5 seconds) dissatisfaction with the search result, known as pogo sticking – is always a bad thing.

So what causes pogo sticking?

It can stem from problems with content, metadata, slow page speed, UX or overwhelming ads like full-screen pop ups.

Among news publishers, the main causes of pogo sticking are:

- Content that doesn’t match the title or meta description. (For example if the title promises “The truth about bounce rates” but the article is actually about the ups and downs of interest rates)
- Pages loading so slowly that users abandon content in frustration
- Videos or video ads that autoplay with sound
- Too many pop-up windows

For more ways to fix pogo stick problems, watch [this great video](https://moz.com) from Moz.com.
Set up an A/B testing strategy

Why is A/B testing so important?
The best data-driven news publishers not only store and analyze data, they also build frameworks to act on insights and test scenarios. A/B testing tools like Google Optimize (which works with Google Analytics) will help you identify your best strategies and move forward with confidence.

There are many A/B testing tools available. Our tool, Google Optimize, offers some unique benefits:

- Free, user friendly
- Split testing without a developer
- Automatic integration with Google Analytics
- Works with Google Tag Manager
- Advanced targeting capabilities
- Built-in visual editor

Sign up for Google Optimize

Quick Tip: Read a case study from The Next Web to see the benefits of A/B testing:
TNW case study
Set up an A/B testing strategy

The right call to action to the right user at the right time
Your A/B testing tool will help you identify which calls to action perform best with each user segment so you can customize your strategy and messaging accordingly.

Example of custom call-to-action per audience segment:

![Diagram showing A/B testing strategy for different audience segments]
Set up an A/B testing strategy

Define your A/B strategy

Try these simple techniques to build an effective A/B testing strategy.

- **Reader Funnel**
  - 01 Casual Readers
  - 02 Loyal Readers
  - 03 Brand Lovers
  - 04 Subscribers

- **Define Business Objectives per Segment**
  - Improving your reader’s loyalty and getting a stronger base of Brand Lovers
  - Transforming Brand Lovers into Subscribers
  - Set goals in Google Analytics, relative to each segment, to track impact.

- **Identify “Hot Areas” for each segment**
  - Where are your readers most likely to focus? Where are they more likely to click?
    - Above the fold?
    - End of Articles?
    - Within Articles?
    - Navigation bars?
  - On Desktop? Mobile? After the Xth pageview or session?

- **Test call-to-action**
  - Define a call-to-action (Follow on social, subscribe to newsletter) and A/B test.
  - Once you have identified the best performing one, do not forget to A/B test multiple variants to find the best:
    - Colors
    - Message (“subscribe”, “Get the latest news”…)
    - Size

An example of A/B testing in action

Here’s what your A/B testing process could be like for calls to action for Casual Readers and Brand Lovers.
CH.02 Maximizing User Value on the journey to subscription

CHAPTER SECTIONS
- Mobile and desktop: speed matters
- Improving recirculation
- Newsletter Optimization
- Search: structured data for news and magazine publishers
- Social: strategies to boost user loyalty
Section 01  Mobile and desktop: speed matters

SUBSECTIONS
How speed affects readers
Ways to improve your speed
How speed affects readers

Speed matters! With these steps to increase your mobile speed, you can keep users engaged for longer and increase your UVS opportunity.

“As users migrate to mobile, page load time is perhaps the most important metric we have. If you can’t load pages fast enough, you can’t compete. Consumer expectations in a mobile-led world are extreme” – Howard Mittman - VP & publisher of the Condé Nast men’s monthly from an interview on Digiday.

Mobile users expect content to load super fast and to be easy to explore. The reality is that 75% of mobile sites take 10+ seconds to load and 53% of users leave mobile sites after 3 seconds of load time.

Speed is the most underrated element of user experience. You could invest in the best content and design in the world, but if it doesn’t load before the user loses patience then it would have all been for nothing!

Research shows conversions fall by 12% for every extra second a webpage takes to load. So imagine if you are trying to sell subscriptions to your publication and your site/page takes 6 seconds to load. That means you are losing 36% of your potential sales/conversions every day!

53% of mobile site visits are abandoned if a page takes longer than 3 seconds to load.

Source: DoubleClick, “The Need for Mobile Speed”, September 2016

The good news is that you can take steps to ensure you’re not losing these conversions. But, it will require work, and that work is not a one-off. It’s work that you will need to monitor and continually tweak to ensure you getting the best results you can.

Improving your mobile and desktop site speed requires clear assessment of the problem, executing solutions and monitoring impact. The good news is that the tools to improve mobile speed are easily accessible. This guide will walk through the steps you can take to get your site up to speed.
Ways to improve your speed

**Step 1: Get your tools and evaluate**

Would you bake a cake without knowing the recipe or ensuring you know the right measurements? The same can be said for improving your website. Before you try to fix anything, you need to evaluate your site and identify performance bottlenecks that most affect the user experience. We recommend the following tools, which provide the best measurement and metrics for mobile and desktop speed.
Ways to improve your speed

Top tools for finding the culprits:

- **PageSpeed Insights**: This should be your first port of call in your investigation. PageSpeed Insights analyzes your site and measures the performance of a page for mobile and desktop devices, scoring its speed and user experience and then identifying the issues that need fixing. The best practice is a score marked in green as “Good.”

  ![PageSpeed Insights](image)

- **Lighthouse**: This tool will allow you to dive deeper into the data and identify potential savings per optimization. Lighthouse is an open-source, automated tool for improving the quality of web pages. It’s a versatile real-time tool for evaluating your website’s performance right in the browser. You can run Lighthouse in Chrome DevTools, from the command line, or as a Node module. Additionally, can run it against any web page, public or requiring authentication. It has audits for performance, accessibility, progressive web apps, and more.

  ![Lighthouse](image)

Extra tool:
The **Mobile-Friendly Test** is designed specifically for mobile sites. This tool allows you to test how easily a visitor can use your page on a mobile device. Just enter a page URL to see how your page scores.

  ![Mobile-Friendly Test](image)
Ways to improve your speed

Step 2: Find culprits

Once you have that information, you’ll need to assess the individual components impacting speed. This means, from a technical and organizational level, you need to examine your ads, content and tech architecture. Here are some of the top culprits that may be slowing down your pages:

- Optimize images - [Learn how to do it]
  - Images often account for most of the downloaded bytes on a page. As a result, optimizing images can often yield some of the largest byte savings and performance improvements.

- Avoid landing page redirects - [Learn how to do it]
  - Redirects trigger additional page loads and delay the final page rendering. As a result, you should always minimize the use of redirects to improve site performance. If your site does requires one or more redirects, please see Google’s [Redirects and User-Agent Detection guidelines].

- Enable compression - [Learn how to do it]
  - All web pages take data to load. But, by enabling compression, you can reduce the size of the transferred data by up to 90%, which can significantly reduce the amount of time to download the page, reduce data usage for the user, and improve the time to first render of your pages.

- Improve server response time - [Learn how to do it]
  - Server response time measures how long it takes to load the necessary HTML to begin rendering the page from your server. You should aim to reduce your server response time to under 200ms as much as possible.
Ways to improve your speed

Extra tips:
Optimize the ads running on your page.

- Utilize responsive layouts or create mobile optimized sites to ensure ads are displayed correctly across multiple device types and screen sizes.
- Implement infinite scroll with lazy ad loading will allow you effectively to monetize long pages and engaged users with additional ads, without slowing down initial page load.
- Minimize passbacks. Ads load slower when ad calls are passed from one ad server to another via passbacks. The fewer passbacks that take place, the faster ads load and the higher the viewability rates.
- Enable asynchronous ad loading to allow ads from loading independently from page content to ensure ads do not block rendering of page content.
- Leverage browser caching - Learn how to do it
  - Fetching resources for your webpage over the network is both slow and expensive: the download may require multiple round trips between the client and server, which delays processing and may block rendering of page content, and also incurs data costs for the user. Setting an expiry date or a maximum age in the HTTP headers for static resources instructs the browser to load previously downloaded resources from local disk rather than over the network.
- Minify resources (HTML, CSS, and JavaScript) - Learn how to do it
  - Minifying resources, including HTML, any inline JavaScript and CSS contained in it, can save many bytes of data and speed up download times. Minification refers to the process of removing unnecessary or redundant data without affecting how the resource is processed by the browser.
Ways to improve your speed

Extra tips for images:
If images are a problem for you, we strongly recommend you look at serving your images as WebP to compatible browsers. WebP is a new image format that provides better lossy and lossless compression for images on the web, compared to PNG and JPEG. Encoding your images in WebP rather than JPEG or PNG means that they will load faster and consume less cellular data. See A New Image Format For The Web for more on WebP.

- Optimize CSS Delivery - Learn how to do it
  - Before the browser can render content it must process all the style and layout information for the current page. As a result, the browser will block rendering until all the style and layout info are downloaded and processed, which may delay the time to first render.

- Prioritize visible content - Learn how to do it
  - To make pages load faster, limit the size of the data (HTML markup, images, CSS, JavaScript) that is needed to render the above the fold visible content of your page.

- Remove render-blocking JavaScript - Learn how to do it
  - Render means loading, so if JavaScript is render-blocking, it means that the javascript is keeping the page from loading. When the browser encounters scripts, it stops and executes it before it parses the HTML. Therefore it is important to eliminate any unnecessary JavaScript from website that interferes with content loading.

- Use asynchronous scripts - Learn how to do it
  - Using asynchronous scripts means that your page can render more quickly. Instead of forcing users to wait for a script to finish downloading before the page renders, a script can be downloaded in the background.
Ways to improve your speed

**AMP**

Have you tried Accelerated Mobile Pages yet?
Did you know you can improve user engagement with fast, compelling mobile experiences just by implementing AMP? Accelerated Mobile Pages (AMP) load near instantly, enabling you to offer a consistently fast experience across all devices and platforms that link to AMP Pages including Google, Bing, LinkedIn and more. These performance gains often translate in improvements in the numbers that matter, such as time spent on page, return visits and CTRs.

Learn more about AMP for Publishers

Did you know?

**20%**

of users abandon your mobile app for every step before value

Blog Gabor Cselie

**54%**

of users will quit before doing yet another sign-up

Blue Research & Instant Checkmate

**40%**

of users abandon sites that take longer than 3 seconds to load

Gomez.com, Akamai.com
Ways to improve your speed

Step 3: User experience is important: prioritize how your site loads
Simply put, first impressions matter. If you can show a users/visitor a good first experience it will make sure they come away with a very good impression of you publication.

- **Prioritize loading elements that are visible above the fold first** - Learn more here
  - Minimize the amount of pieces that show above the fold of visible content. Load styling, javascript logic and images that are only accessed after direct interaction later. Make sure no large interactive elements such as videos are preventing initial content from loading.

- **Maximize idle time while the page is being read** - Learn more here
  - Use idle time to complete deferred work. For example, keep pre-load data to a minimum so that your app loads fast, and use idle time to load remaining data. Deferred work should be grouped into blocks of about 50ms. Should a user begin interacting, then the highest priority is to respond to that.

- **Animate to win and produce a frame in 10ms** - Learn more here
  - Animations aren’t just fancy UI effects. For example, scrolling and touch drags are types of animations. Users notice when the animation frame rate varies. Your goal is to produce 60 frames per second, and every frame has to go through all of these steps: Whenever possible, produce a frame in 10ms. For more information, see Rendering Performance.
Ways to improve your speed

Step 4: Implement, test, learn and reiterate to improve your speed

Once you’ve found the culprits, run A/B tests. Then make the changes needed so that your site can be among one of the fastest out there. You will need to monitor performance on an ongoing basis and, of course, after making any new development changes to the site, flag and remove anything that adds latency.

There are a few extra steps you can take to make sure you keep your site at top speed:

- Consolidate data and analytics tags.
- Investigate open-source tools such as Accelerated Mobile Pages (AMP) and Progressive Web Apps (PWA).

Maintaining your site for speed isn’t simple, but the day-to-day work is worth the effort. Creating a fast and smooth web experience keeps users engaged and strengthens your potential revenue opportunities.

Be the outlier: make mobile and desktop web speed a priority for your site!

“We firmly believe high performance is not an optional engineering goal – it’s a requirement for creating great user-experiences.”
- Kristofer Baxter, User Interface Engineering @ Netflix via The Netflix Tech Blog: "Making Netflix.com Faster"

Sources:
Webpagetest.org, Sampled 11.8K global mWeb homepage domains loaded using a fast 3G connection timing first view only (no cached resources), February 2016
Find Out How You Stack Up to New Industry Benchmarks for Mobile Page Speed
Page Load Time: How to optimize your site and increase revenue
Section 02  Improving recirculation

SUBSECTIONS

- How recirculation helps overall engagement
- User recirculation via content recommendations
- User visit frequency via push notifications
- Conclusion
How recirculation helps overall engagement

Introduction
Take a look at your reader funnel, paying close attention to the Pageviews/User metric (also look at how it impacts your UVS under each segment’s deep dive). You’ll notice that your most loyal readers are the ones who read the most articles.

As we aim to move users down the funnel, one of our priorities is ensuring they consume more content. Giving them easy access to your most valuable content can help generate advertising revenue, but it’s also about connecting them with your brand. That connection builds loyalty, which is a key driver of overall consumer revenue.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Casual Readers</th>
<th>Loyal Readers</th>
<th>Brand Lovers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Users</td>
<td>334.5K</td>
<td>186.7K</td>
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<td>Pageviews</td>
<td>830.7K</td>
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<td>12.6</td>
<td>111.2</td>
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</table>
### How recirculation helps overall engagement

#### Where should you start?
Check the performance of each audience segment and pay close attention to the Pageviews/Session metric. Are your users staying long enough? Are they reading as many articles as they could? Do they come back often? If you are below the benchmark, there’s room to improve your internal recirculation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Loyal Readers</th>
<th>User Value Score</th>
<th>/ 100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+ Brand Lovers</td>
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<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Data</th>
<th>Session / User</th>
<th>Pages / Session</th>
<th>Avg. Session Duration</th>
<th>Pages / User</th>
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<td>10.87</td>
<td>00:25:22</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Loyal Readers</th>
<th>User Value Score</th>
<th>/ 100</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+ Brand Lovers</td>
<td>56</td>
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</table>

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<tr>
<th>Your Data</th>
<th>Session / User</th>
<th>Pages / Session</th>
<th>Avg. Session Duration</th>
<th>Pages / User</th>
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</tbody>
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User recirculation via content recommendations

Look at your current setup

If you already have “Related/Recommended” links on your article pages, but your site performs below the benchmark, look at the following:

- Are the links visible right after the articles? How about when the user is still reading the article?
- Do you have images illustrating the links? If so, are they impactful enough?
- Do you prioritize your best and most popular articles via a recommendation engine?

If any of those answers is a “no,” there’s room for optimization. Go to your site and imagine that you are a loyal reader: you liked the article you just read and you’re interested in reading more articles from the site.

Are the Related/Recommended articles easy to find? Are they visually attractive? Are they relevant to you or what you have just read?

As we aim to make your readers stay longer on the site, you should make it as easy as possible for them to discover your best content throughout their sessions.

Your user recirculation articles should be:

1. In the right place
2. Attractive
User recirculation via content recommendations

Put recommendations “in the right place”
If you have a recommended articles/links section, that’s great! Now, let’s make sure they’re given high-performing placements.

Take a look at the calls to action on your articles page. Have you inadvertently prompted them to leave via an ad or an external recommendation?

Where should they go?
As your reader funnel reveals, most of your value comes from your engaged readers. That’s why we recommend these strategic related article placements for all readers:

1. Within an article
2. Just after an article
3. On the right-end side (desktop and tablet)

In the right place: Advanced implementation
If you’ve already strategically placed your related links and you’re still underperforming, try A/B testing these advanced formats:

- Anchor format on mobile
- Infinite screen roll format after the article
User recirculation via content recommendations

Make related articles attractive
Image size and quality can really help drive recirculation. Make sure you’re following these simple best practices:

- People are always preferable, best if they’re at a medium zoom (shoulders up) or closer.
- Utilize eye-catching colors.
- Avoid image clutter.
- Images should be clearly visible to have impact (less articles might be better than too many if images are displayed too small).
- Make sure images are responsive and compressed (file size is important and could have latency impact).

RECOMMENDED

How to write great titles
Your titles need to be accurate, enticing, short and optimized for social sharing.

Be accurate
One way to ensure accuracy? Add bracketed clarification to your headline: [Interview], [Podcast], [Infographic].”

Headlines with this type of clarification perform up to 38% better than headlines without clarification.

Sources:
Hubspot: How to Write Catchy Headlines and Blog Titles Your Readers Can’t Resist
User recirculation via content recommendations

Make it enticing
- Use your title to attract your ideal target audience (especially for local news).
- If there are any visuals or videos within your post, make it clear in the title.

Keep it short
Headlines should be 8–12 words.

Optimize for social
Focus on keywords that you know your audience is already searching for, then look into the search volume for those keywords.

Quick Tip: For non-news items, remember:
- Lists are always clickable, so be sure to highlight them.
- Intrigue and mystery can help draw users in.
User recirculation via content recommendations

Improving recommendations with Google’s Matched Content

You can use Matched Content units to replace your existing solution or complement it. You can also A/B test to see which system works best for you for advertising and user engagement.

Benefits of Matched Content:

- Can be used to exclusively push your site’s articles or a mix of your articles and monetization pieces
- Free service for AdSense publishers (see the eligibility criteria [here](#))
- Simple, familiar set up
- Takes the hassle out of deciding which content to promote
- Works on all web platforms (desktop, tablet, mobile)
- Supports custom sizes

[Sign-up for Matched Content]
User recirculation via content recommendations

User recirculation via video content
Video is one of the best mediums to improve session duration. It drives stronger emotional connections than text, which can lead to deeper engagement.

If you have video inventory that’s hard to access, you might be missing out on an opportunity.

Here are some key best practices:

- Videos should live on all articles with differentiation between:
  - Videos directly linked to the article (appearing within the content)
  - Videos on similar topics (appearing at the end of the article) like a carousel
- Embed your YouTube videos and include a “subscribe” call-to-action to drive more YouTube viewership
- Pay attention to your video player’s latency and responsiveness
- Autoplay is a great “eye-catcher” but beware of the UX impact (turn off sound if you activate autoplay)

Visit YouTube Academy for News Publishers
User visit frequency via push notifications

**Increase user visits via push notifications**

Push notifications are new tools you should invest in. They can drive qualified traffic to your site by enticing users to read your latest articles, even when they’re not on your site.

**What is a push notification?**

It’s a way to send instant notifications from your website to your user’s browser.

Push notifications let users subscribe to timely updates from sites they love while helping you re-engage them with customized, relevant content. Readers will get these updates in their browser or mobile notification area, but they will not appear on iOS.

Key benefits:

- Increase visit frequency from qualified traffic
- Communicate directly with your readers
- Soft opt-in process with one click to subscribe
- Works even better for “urgent” type of content, such as breaking news, weather alerts, etc.

See examples of push notifications
User visit frequency via push notifications

Set up your own push notifications

Our Web Fundamentals guide will show you how to add push notification functionality to your site. A few things to note:

- You have full ownership and control
- There are no usage cost once implemented
- If you’re not on HTTPS, you’ll need it
- Development resources are required

Set up push notifications via a 3rd party

Many software companies can provide you the technology to quickly and easily set up push notifications. They usually offer custom styling, advanced targeting settings (frequency, type of traffic, etc.) and require payment based on usage. Key aspects of 3rd party solutions include:

- Quick set up and launch
- Many customizable settings
- Usage cost
- Reliance on outside software vendor

[Web Fundamentals Guide]
Section 03 Newsletter Acquisition & Content Optimization

SUBSECTIONS
- Why we're focusing on newsletters
- Newsletter user acquisition
- Newsletter calls to action
- Newsletter content best practices
Why we’re focusing on newsletters

Publishers are rediscovering that email newsletters are a reliable way to reach readers and deepen their connection to audiences.

The Washington Post has more than 75 newsletters written by reporters and editors in their respective verticals with oversight from a newsletter and alerts editor. The Post wouldn’t give raw numbers but has said it increased traffic from newsletters by 129 percent in 2016 and added more than 1 million newsletter subscribers in the past year by making a concerted push in this area.

It has been reported that a typical email user spends an average of 51 seconds reading each email newsletter. Publishers of all sizes should invest in improving their newsletter acquisition and content.
Why we’re focusing on newsletters

How is your newsletter performing compared to industry peers?

If you haven’t yet, you can compare the relative value of each one of your traffic sources to our Benchmarks.

In general, newsletter users over perform in terms of engagement; they have higher “visit frequency” and “articles read per visit” ratios. For publishers who have a subscription business, it’s also the traffic source with the highest conversion rate.

You probably have a newsletter in place for your readers, but are you focused on it? How can you optimize it?

Quick Tip: Depending on your GA setup, your email traffic might appear under “Referral” or others.

Read our Optimize your Google Analytics implementation section.
Newsletter user acquisition

Look at your current setup

If you have a newsletter subscription field on your site, ask yourself:

- Is your newsletter subscription field easy to access? Is it easy to find for a new reader?
- Do you have a clear call to action? Have you A/B tested different calls to action?
- Can your readers subscribe to your newsletter by filling less than two fields?
- Can a reader subscribe to your newsletter(s) without having to login to your site?

If any of those answers is a “no,” there’s room for optimization.

Quick Tip: Go to your site, imagine the behavior and path of a new visitor... try to subscribe to your newsletter.

Was it easy? How many steps did you have to take? What were the friction points?

Your newsletter subscription process should be:

- Simple and quick
- In the right place
- Relevant and attractive
Newsletter user acquisition

You should always avoid including long, unnecessary fields in your signup form.

Email Address
jane.jacobs@thetheway.edu

First Name
jane

Last Name
Jacobs

Birthday
11/3

Most users don't like to give up personal information -- especially Casual Readers who are new to your site. Keeping signup quick is more pleasant for users and increases rate.

Using CAPTCHA
There are many resources online showing how CAPTCHAs impact conversion rates. Should you absolutely need one, we'd advise using Google Invisible reCAPTCHA to reduce friction, like The New York Times does.

One-click signup
Pre-populate the signup field with your readers' email address. You can learn how in our "Email Newsletter Form Autocomplete on Web/mWeb/IA" document.
Newsletter user acquisition

If you have a newsletter sign-up section/url on your site, that’s great!
But do you have a newsletter signup box within the flow of your articles?

A clear call to action is the best way to make sure your readers act on whatever goal you’ve defined for them.

Take a look at the widgets on your articles page: what are you expecting your readers to do?

- Are you pushing them to an external article via a content recommendation solution?
- Are you presenting ads for them to click on?
- Are you offering them easy access to one of your trending articles?

As we’ve seen before, users coming from newsletters over perform all other traffic sources, which is why we strongly recommend placing your newsletter sign-up box on the articles page.

How do I do it?
You can create a simple html form to collect email addresses or use a 3rd party solution (paid but includes more targeting options).

Where do I put them?
Above the fold or below the fold? Ideally, both. But we recommend A/B testing to find the optimal placement. Slide-in widgets are also a good idea while pop-ups are usually bad for UX (even though their conversion rate is high).
has seen such clear evidence of so many county police officers doing everything they can to avoid the work they’re paid to do.

“In 47 years of policing,” Devore said, “I’ve never seen anything like it.”

The Weekly Messenger

Don’t miss a single column: Sign up for Tony’s weekly e-newsletter.

Email

I understand that registration constitutes agreement to the Terms of Use and Privacy Policy.

Look at the structure of your article pages. How many call to actions / buttons do you have? Are your content recommendations widget social buttons and ads cannibalizing user focus?

Quick Tip:

Define what you want your readers to do and make it clear for them.
Newsletter user acquisition

Ideally, your newsletters should follow your site’s content segmentation.

Make sure the sign-up box is relevant to the article being read. If a reader is on a sports article, he or she should see a sports newsletter subscription widget.

Be creative with the widget title and description: try to avoid “Sign-up for our newsletter.” Remember, personalization goes a long way. When you’re trying to convince your casual readers to subscribe, they should have a clear idea of the value they will receive.

In this example, Politico has clearly personalized their newsletter subscription widget: they’ve named it “Politico Huddle,” and clearly stated the value proposition.

The CTA button should not be underestimated either – colors matter. It should stand out from the rest of your template. Once again, we recommend A/B testing different value propositions and button colors.
Newsletter calls to action

For most users, forms are hard to fill out on mobile and cumbersome on desktop.

The best forms have:

- The fewest inputs
- Semantic input types
- Keys that change to match the user’s input type (i.e.; choosing a date on a calendar) and clear instructions at every step

In this chapter, we’ll show you how to create fast, simple newsletter subscription sign-ups with clear calls to action, asking only for email, and using auto-complete functions. In essence, subscriptions with just one or two clicks.

(Note: since some formats don’t allow forced autocomplete, you can use placeholders to mimic a user’s email address such as xxxxxxxxxx@xxxx.com.)
Newsletter calls to action

Use metadata to enable auto-complete

Users appreciate when websites save time by automatically filling common fields like names and email addresses. Plus, it helps to reduce potential input errors — especially on virtual keyboards and small devices.

Browsers use many heuristics to determine which fields they can auto-populate based on previously specified data by the user. You can give hints to the browser by providing both the name attribute and the autocomplete attribute on each input element.

Note: Chrome requires input elements to be wrapped in a <form> tag to enable auto-complete. Otherwise Chrome will offer suggestions, but will not complete the form.

For example, to hint to the browser that it should auto-complete the form with the user’s name, email address and phone number, you should use:

```html
<label for="frmEmailA">Email</label>
<input type="email" name="email" id="frmEmailA" placeholder="name@example.com" required autocomplete="email">

<label for="frmEmailC">Confirm Email</label>
<input type="email" name="emailC" id="frmEmailC" placeholder="name@example.com" required autocomplete="email">
```
Best practices for forms

- Use a label on every form input, and ensure it’s visible when the field is in focus. The label element gives direction, telling the user what information is needed. Applying labels also improves the touch target size: the user can touch either the label or the input.
- Use placeholders to help guide users on the required format and content. They usually appear as light text and disappear as soon as the user starts typing in an element -- so they are not a replacement for labels.
- `<input type="text" placeholder="MM-YYYY" ...>`

The autofocus attribute

On a form where you want the user to fill out a particular field, you can add the autofocus attribute. When it’s set, desktop browsers immediately move the focus to the input field, making it easy for users to quickly begin using the form. Mobile browsers ignore the autofocus attribute to prevent the keyboard from randomly appearing. Be careful using the autofocus attribute because it can steal keyboard focus and prevent the backspace character from being used for navigation.

- `<input type="text" autofocus ...>`
Newsletter calls to action

Call-to-action in Instant Articles

You can add call to action (CTA) units to your Instant Articles to strengthen relationships with your most loyal readers on Facebook. These units appear inline with the same native speed and responsiveness as your Instant Articles.

Each unit features a blue call-to-action button that prompts readers to take a specific action. Currently, there are two types for publishers, accessible through your Facebook Page.

- Email newsletter sign ups
- Page likes
How to create call-to-action units

From your Facebook page, access Publishing Tools > Instant Articles > Call to Action Units. Follow the self-service flow to create and customize these units and see their performance on a dedicated insights page. You can turn any unit on or off by selecting it in the management window and using the actions drop-down menu. The status column indicates whether a unit is active or paused. To get started, you will need:

- Unit name — This name is for your internal tracking and is not visible to the public. Use it to identify the unit on the insights page.
- Headline — A header for the unit.
- Body text — Description of your newsletter.
- Privacy policy URL — Link to your publication's privacy policy.
- Confirmation message — A message displayed to readers after they sign up. It appears on a second screen after they click the call-to-action button.
- Style — Settings to customize the unit's font and background colors.
- Logo — Any logos previously uploaded to Instant Articles.

To see a preview of the confirmation message, click to view the second screen of your live preview.

Currently, you cannot create multiple versions of a unit type. You can promote one email at a time in the sign-up unit. If you want to change the email you are promoting, select “edit” under the actions drop-down menu and revise your headline and body text accordingly.
Best practices for retrieving leads

- **Manual lead retrieval:** Download a CSV file from the call-to-action units management page.
- **Automated lead retrieval:** Minimize the time between reader sign up and their first email. Send new subscribers their first daily newsletter within 24 hours (or, even better, a welcome message on the same day). To automate the flow, integrate your system with our webhook or API. This helps solidify your relationship with valuable new audiences.
- **Headlines:** Engage readers with a tangible value proposition. Invite them to take an action: "get," "subscribe to," "sign up for," etc. Indicate what kind of information they will be receiving, whether it’s as simple as "updates" or as specific as a "daily newsletter." Experiment by trying out different headlines and comparing results.
- **Body text:** Share some details about the editorial content in the newsletter. Help readers understand where to find your product. Specify the frequency of delivery (e.g., daily, weekdays, weekly) and the time of day (e.g., morning, afternoon, evening). It can also be helpful to point to email in-boxes as the place of delivery.
Newsletter content best practices

Look at your current KPIs and use these benchmarks to measure your performance:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry Email Marketing Benchmarks</th>
<th>Open</th>
<th>Click Through Rate (CTR)</th>
<th>Soft Bounce</th>
<th>Hard Bounce</th>
<th>Abuse</th>
<th>Unsub</th>
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<tr>
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<td>0.18%</td>
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<td>21.71%</td>
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<td>0.37%</td>
<td>0.29%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Entertainment and Events</td>
<td>21.21%</td>
<td>2.33%</td>
<td>0.49%</td>
<td>0.41%</td>
<td>0.02%</td>
<td>0.28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business and Finance</td>
<td>20.97%</td>
<td>2.73%</td>
<td>0.66%</td>
<td>0.55%</td>
<td>0.02%</td>
<td>0.23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [Industry email marketing benchmarks](https://mailchimp.com) via MailChimp

**Poor delivery? (Soft bounce, hard bounce, unsubscribe)**
Decrease your use of large images, remove spam words from subject lines and put in whitelist requests. Clean your lists every six months and remove anyone who hasn’t opened or clicked within that time frame. Your delivery rates and open rates may skyrocket if you haven’t done this in awhile.

**Low open rate?**
Make your sender address recognizable, your subject lines more enticing and provide better content. If people don’t anticipate good content from you, eventually they won’t open your emails at all.

**Opening but not visiting? (Click-through rate)**
You may want to create more incentives to click through or possibly add more links to your landing pages in the message.
## Newsletter content best practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newsletter Diagnostic Questionnaire</th>
<th>Yes!</th>
<th>If not, go to:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does your newsletter template look simple?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Page 73: Always keep it simple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you using tables?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Page 73: Make friends with tables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you avoiding body attributes?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Page 73: Avoid body attributes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you you hosting the images on your site?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Page 74: Use absolute image paths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is your headline less than 31 characters?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Page 74: Keep subject lines short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is your brand clearly identified in the “from” field?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Page 75: Optimize your “from” line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you using Web Fonts or Google Fonts?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Page 75: Use web safe fonts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there any way for the reader to engage with your newsletter?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Page 79: Include links to your social media profiles, Page 76: An engaged reader is a loyal reader, Page 77: Encourage sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you leaving enough room for your content to breathe?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Page 75: Give all of your content enough room to breathe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Newsletter content best practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes!</th>
<th>If not, go to:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did you get rid of HTML bullet points?</td>
<td>Page 77: Don’t use HTML bullet points</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your footer have enough relevant</td>
<td>Page 76: Follow CAN-SPAM rules, Perfect your footer, and Don’t hide</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>information?</td>
<td>the “unsubscribe” button</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you offer an HTML version option?</td>
<td>Page 78: Link to an HTML version, Page 80: Use a standard format,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plain-text?</td>
<td>and Why Inline CSS is your friend</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your content seen aligned on the left?</td>
<td>Page 78: Watch the left side of your screen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you remove background images?</td>
<td>Page 79: Always avoid using background images</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you remove most of the rich media content?</td>
<td>Page 72: Be very careful when it comes to using video</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is your newsletter optimized for mobile?</td>
<td>Page 75: Create eye-catching tappable calls to action, Page 77:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tailor design elements to a small screen, Page 80: If you can’t say it</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fast. Don’t say it at all, Use bigger fonts, and Input an image width</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and height</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Quick Tip:

Look at a copy of your most recent newsletter as you answer each question. The following pages provide an exhaustive best practices list, but we recommend completing this questionnaire first, so you know where you need to focus. Focus on what needs to be addressed.
Newsletter content best practices

Always keep it simple!

The first thing to remember, is that your email templates should be simple. Design should always enhance your message, not distract from it! Emails with a lot of over-the-top design pull the reader’s attention away from your actual message, and as a result may harm conversions. Plus, the fewer elements you have bouncing around in your email, the less likely it is to render improperly or trigger a SPAM filter.

Make friends with tables

If you’ve been coding for a while, you may think that sounds crazy, but it’s actually important to use tables in template design to ensure your email renders the same way across every email client.

Avoid body attributes

As you begin sending more newsletters, you’ll find certain email clients don’t pay attention to your email’s body attributes, which means all your attribute work will be for nothing. In these cases, create a light gray email background by using a 100% width light gray table, and then nest the content of your email within that table.
Maximizing User Value on the journey to subscription

**Newsletter content best practices**

---

**Use absolute image paths**

Make sure any images in your email templates are hosted on your website. Then, make the image path point to the URL of the page on which the image is hosted. You can always find the image URL by right-clicking on an image and selecting "View Image Info." It should end with a file extension like .jpg or .gif – not .com.

---

**Include links to your social media profiles**

You should always encourage signups on alternate lists and channels, in case a reader decides to unsubscribe from your email lists. In a mobile-first or responsive email template, putting your social icons in the footer works very well and is considered by many to be standard now.

---

**Keep subject lines short**

They’re still critical and now it’s even more imperative, since they’re often truncated on smartphones.

Place keywords in the first few words and make sure your message is understandable even when abbreviated. Subject lines get cut off at all different lengths, with the shortest on mobile. Android truncates at 24 characters and Apple at 31.
Maximizing User Value on the journey to subscription

Newsletter content best practices

Create eye-catching, tappable calls to action

They should be a minimum size of 44 x 44 points/pixels including text links.

Optimize your “from” line

It should clearly identify the sender and be quickly recognizable to the recipient. Studies have shown that when viewing their inbox, readers start at the “from” line; engaging readers here has been shown to increase open rates.

Use web safe fonts

Choosing the right font for your email newsletter is a pretty important decision. Technically, you can use any font you like in an email, but if your subscribers don’t have that font available on their device, they are not going to see it. It’s best to stick with basic web safe fonts such as Arial, Helvetica, Tahoma, Times New Roman, Georgia, etc. You can also use Google Fonts.

Give all of your content enough room to breathe

Use images to support the content and business goals, but don’t overuse them. Your newsletter should be easy to skim, with short paragraphs, bullet points and ample white space.
An engaged reader is a loyal reader

Any and all email newsletters should provide benefit-oriented content that engages the reader. It should promote two-way communication with things like comments, surveys, polls, and links to social media accounts as ways to provide feedback or communicate with the editor(s).

Always follow CAN-SPAM rules

Readers have come to expect to find certain information in the footer of an email newsletter. Some of it, like a way to unsubscribe, is required by CAN-SPAM regulations (assuming the email's purpose is promotional, not transactional). Other information is just best practice, like including social media links.

Consistency breeds routine and loyalty

Tell subscribers your schedule. Make sure that your email frequency and content are consistent with what subscribers were told when they signed up.
Don’t use HTML bullet points

Those fantastic HTML bullets you always use don’t work too well when mis-rendered in email. As an alternative, try using plain text options, like dashes (•) or asterisks (*) to ensure readers don’t see broken or missing bullets in their email message.

Tailor design elements to a small screen

Similar to any other website, CTA buttons should be large enough to be easy to click. While most web designers are aware of this issue on mobile-friendly websites, it often gets overlooked by e-newsletter designers.

Don’t hide the “unsubscribe” button

This is major “don’t.” Not only is it against CAN-SPAM regulations to hide/forget your unsubscribe button, but making the button prominent actually makes subscribers feel more secure. It also keeps people from hitting the “spam” button.

Encourage sharing

Ask readers to share your email newsletter with their friends and colleagues. This can help the distribution and acquisition phases of your newsletter campaigns. Provide those who receive a forwarded issue an easy way to sign-up themselves.
Maximizing User Value on the journey to subscription

Newsletter content best practices

SECTION
Newsletter: acquisition / content optimization

SUBSECTION
Why we’re focusing on newsletters
Newsletter user acquisition
Newsletter calls to action
Newsletter content best practices

Watch the left side of your screen

Data from eye-tracking marketers and multiple product research papers have shown that the left side of the screen is the main focus of email readers. Therefore, the left side should be where your email images are placed. In responsively designed emails, this does not mean a left-column design, it simply means images are left-aligned.

Link to an HTML version

A web version of your email newsletter is good for two reasons. The first is that some people may not be able to see your email newsletter in their email client. The second reason is that sometimes people want to link to it.

Use plain text as backup

We know that not everyone renders their emails in HTML. That’s where plain text comes in handy. Make sure the copy in your plain-text email stays the same as the copy in your HTML email. In fact, not having a plain-text option sometimes signals SPAM filters.
Always avoid using background images

With readers using so many different email clients, it's hard to test for all of them. Since background images can stretch and warp, it's much safer to use a solid background color that will perform across email programs.

Be careful when using video

The use of video in email is still a new thing; as such, it doesn't render well in some email clients. Instead, we recommend that you use a screen capture of your video with a "Play" button, and link it to YouTube or the page where it's embedded.

Use a standard format

Most professional email marketers use Multipart MIME for mobile design and that approach should not change. This format sends the email content in both HTML and plain text. Also, try to build your email template in as much basic HTML as possible, because CSS is sometimes blocked or rendered improperly.

Gmail, Yahoo!, Hotmail and any other browser-based email clients (including some mobile-based app clients) will strip out things like BODY, DOCTYPE, and HEAD tags. You won't encounter this problem if you use inline CSS.
Don’t forget about image alt text

No, alt text isn’t just to help search engines read images on your website. Alt text in emails helps readers determine what images were supposed to be, had they rendered in the inbox. Including clear, descriptive alt text helps fill in the blanks for recipients if images are blocked, turned off, or rendering improperly.

If you can’t say it fast, don’t say it at all

Always limit the length of email content. People are often on their phones and expect to get through it quickly. Studies of eye-tracking show that the most attention is paid to the top left corner and then interest drops quickly after that. In some cases, like breaking news alerts, rather than sending one e-newsletter with many articles, consider sending each individual article as an e-newsletter.

Keep the width of emails under 650 pixels

This ensures that they always display in Gmail’s and Outlook’s vertical preview panes!
Maximizing User Value on the journey to subscription

SECTION
Newsletter: acquisition / content optimization

SUBSECTION
Why we’re focusing on newsletters
Newsletter user acquisition
Newsletter calls to action
Newsletter content best practices

Useful articles
- Autofill: What web devs should know
- Help users checkout faster with Autofill
- Instant Articles - How-to Newsletter

External sources used:
https://www.mailonthemark.com/6-e-newsletter-best-practices-for-2016/
https://fulcrumtech.net/resources/10-winning-email-newsletter-best-practices/
http://www.mequoda.com/articles/audience-development/5-email-newsletter-best-practices-for-mobile-desktop-youll-want-to-know/
https://digiday.com/careers/newsletter-editors-new-important-person-newsrooms/
https://blog.marketo.com/2013/10/k-i-s-s-the-most-effective-way-to-grow-email-opt-ins.html
Section 04
Search: structured data for news and magazine publishers

SECTION CONTENTS
Foreword
Introduction to Structured data format
Subscription and Paywalled content
Summary
Foreword to structured data for news and magazine publishers

No matter how great your content is, if no one is visiting or reading it, can you still call it great content? You need to ensure that you are putting your best foot forward when building your website to ensure that you are maximizing your chances of your content being chosen by users.

A good practice when optimizing your site is to ensure that the foundational data is marked up in the correct way. Marking up your articles, reviews, videos, and more with structured data in the form of Schema.org makes your site understandable and coherent for search engines.

Please note that by accurately implementing structured data on your site, your content is more likely to appear in enriched search results listings. These enriched search results listings give search engine users an easier way to pick a result from the list of links. If your listing is rich, and your page does what your listing promises, you most likely are a valid result for the user and that will lead to a better overall experience for both Casual and Loyal Readers.

Below you will find all the details on what structured data is and what you need in order to implement it across your News or Magazine website.

Quick Tip:

Go check your site’s Google Search Console page: We recommend that you check how your structured data is performing as of now in Google. To do this, go to your Google Search Console and locate the Structured Data tab under Search Appearance and you’ll see all the pages that have structured data, plus an overview of pages that give errors, if any.
Introduction to structured data format

Search engines work hard to understand the content of a page. You can help them by providing explicit clues about the meaning of a page by including structured data on it. Structured data is a standardized format for providing information about a page and classifying the page content; for example, on a recipe page, what are the ingredients, the cooking time and temperature, the calories, and so on. Google Search also uses structured data to enable special search result features and enhancements.

Structured data is coded using in-page markup on the page that the information applies to. The structured data on the page should describe the content of that page. You should not create blank or empty pages just to hold structured data; nor should you add structured data about information that is not visible to the user, even if the information is accurate. A detailed description can be found in the introduction to structured data guide.

Technical and quality guidelines are described in the structured data guidelines.
Introduction to structured data format

Structured data format

This documentation describes which fields are required, recommended, or optional for structured data with special meaning to Google Search. Most Search structured data uses schema.org vocabulary, but you should rely on the documentation on developers.google.com as definitive for Google Search behavior, rather than the schema.org documentation. Attributes or objects not described here are not required by Google Search, even if marked as required by schema.org.

What is Schema.org? - Schema.org provides a collection of schemas that you can use to markup HTML pages in ways recognized by major search providers, and that can also be used for structured data interoperability e.g. in JSON (JavaScript Object Notation is an open-standard file format that uses human-readable text to transmit data objects consisting of attribute–value pairs and array data types). Search engines including Bing, Google, Yahoo! and Yandex rely on this markup to improve the display of search results, making it easier for people to find the right Web pages.

- Be sure to test your structured data using the Structured Data Testing tool during development, and the Search Console Structured Data report after deployment, to monitor the health of your pages, which might break after deployment due to templating or serving issues.
Introduction to structured data format

Structured data format cont.

You must include all the required properties for an object to be eligible for appearance in Google Search with enhanced display. Recommended properties may or may not be factored into ranking. The guidance is that the recommended properties tell Google more about your page, but Google may or may not use those properties.

However, it is more important to supply fewer but complete and accurate recommended properties rather than trying to provide every possible recommended property with less complete, badly-formed, or inaccurate data.

In addition to the properties and objects documented here, Google can make general use of the sameAs property and other schema.org structured data.

Google recommends using JSON-LD for structured data whenever possible.

Structured Data General Guidelines

These general guidelines apply to all structured data and all guidelines must be followed to enable structured data to be eligible for inclusion in Google Search results.

Pages or sites that violate these content guidelines may receive less favorable ranking or be marked as ineligible for rich results in Google Search in order to maintain a high-quality search experience for our users. If your page includes structured data or content that is considered spam, you will see a message on your Manual Actions page in Search Console.
Introduction to structured data format

**Article**

Proper structured data in your news, blog, and sports article page can enhance your appearance in Google Search results. Enhanced features include entry in a top stories carousel and rich result features such as headline text and larger-than-thumbnail images.

Ensuring you have correctly implemented structured data on your article page type is the most important and as such the one you should start with first. Implementation guides can be found in the [Article developer guide](#).

- Google recommends creating an AMP version of your page to provide a better user experience on mobile devices. [Read more about the benefits of AMP on mobile devices](#). For general implementation guides and more information on AMP with structured data, see the Article developer guide.

**Other page types**

A non-exhaustive list of other content types that can be marked up through structured data can be found in the [search feature gallery](#). Here are the most typical news features:

- [Article](#)
- [Fact Check](#)
- [Paywalled content](#)
- [Recipe](#)
- [Review](#)
- [Video](#)
- [Trust Indicators](#)
Subscription and paywalled content

Sites with paywalls are strongly encouraged to apply the new structured data to their pages, because without it, the paywall may be interpreted as a form of cloaking, and the pages would then be removed from search results.

Google have created detailed best practices for implementing flexible sampling, which we strongly suggest you follow.

There are two types of sampling we advise: (1) metering, which provides users with a quota of free articles to consume, after which paywalls will start appearing; and (2) lead-in, which offers a portion of an article’s content without it being shown in full.

1. For metering, we think that monthly (rather than daily) metering provides more flexibility and a safer environment for testing. The user impact of changing from one integer value to the next is less significant at, say, 10 monthly samples than at 3 daily samples. All publishers and their audiences are different, so there is no single value for optimal free sampling across publishers. However, we recommend that publishers start by providing 10 free clicks per month to Google search users in order to preserve a good user experience for new potential subscribers. Publishers should then experiment to optimize the tradeoff between discovery and conversion that works best for their businesses.

2. Lead-in is generally implemented as truncated content, such as the first few sentences or 50-100 words of the article. Lead-in allows users a taste of how valuable the content may be. Compared to a page with completely blocked content, lead-in clearly provides more utility and added value to users.

We encourage publishers to experiment cautiously with different amounts of free sampling so as not to unintentionally degrade user experience and reduce traffic coming from Google.

Read Google's General Guidance for Flexible Sampling before getting started.
Subscription and paywalled content

How to indicate paywalled content

Publishers should enclose paywalled content with structured data in order to help Google differentiate paywalled content from the practice of cloaking, where the content served to Googlebot is different from the content served to users.

The information found in the implementation guide describes how to use schema.org JSON-LD to indicate paywalled content on your site.

This structured data helps Google differentiate paywalled content from the practice of cloaking, which violates our guidelines. Learn more about subscription and paywalled content.
Summary

Now you understand the importance of structured data and how using something like on-page markup enables search engines, such as Google, to understand the information on your web pages and provide richer search results for users in order to make it easier for them to find relevant information they are looking for.

Essentially, publishers should use structured data to help search engines understand the content of their site and enable special Search result features for the pages.

For more information and detailed specifications on implementing the structured data, visit Google's Developer documentation.

If you have additional technical questions on Structured Data, you'll find the Webmaster Central team in the dedicated Structured Data section of their forum.

Source:
https://support.google.com/webmasters/answer/7532484
https://support.google.com/news/publisher/answer/40543
https://developers.google.com/search/docs/data-types/paywalled-content
https://developers.google.com/search/docs/queries/mark-up-content
https://developers.google.com/search/docs/data-types/articles
https://developers.google.com/search/docs/queries/search-gallery
https://developers.google.com/search/docs/queries/sd-policies
https://developers.google.com/search/docs/queries/intro-structured-data
https://developers.google.com/search/docs/queries/search-features
https://developers.google.com/search/docs/data-types/reviews
Section 05

Social: strategies to boost user loyalty

SECTION CONTENTS

Types of social content that we share
Technology is changing the game (again)
Build a holistic social media and content strategy
Distribution strategy
Don’t be afraid to experiment
Introduction

If you build great content and no one sees it, is it still great content? Effective content distribution is a pillar of long-term success for publishers of every size.

Let’s take the news vertical for example; when you look at the way your readers find news online, interesting trends emerge. They go directly to your site only about half the time. All other times they find news via search, social media, email or even mobile notifications and alerts. The fragmentation is huge, but as a CONTENT publisher you need to make sure that your content is available in all the ways your users want it.

As you think about your social media strategy, define specific goals for distributing your content on social media. The goal may be to drive more page views or to get users to sign up for your newsletters.

You should also start with a good idea of who your target audience is. Do you want to cultivate millennials as your brand champions of the future? Or, are you looking to engage with a mature professional demographic who has more immediate purchasing power and would likely convert to subscribers sooner?

Finally, know how and where your target users consume content. For example, if you are targeting senior business executives, you might consider putting more emphasis on LinkedIn versus Facebook.

Armed with an understanding of your goals, who you are targeting and where those users consume content will help you determine what type of content to create, where you distribute it and how you measure results.
Types of social content that we share

Make sure the content you create touches on one or more of these principles:

- Emotion - when we care, we share!
- Social Proof - we'll share what makes us look cool, smart, savvy!
- Practical Value - If your content is useful, people will spread the word!
- Stories - the undercurrent of contagious content. People don't share information, we share stories.
Technology is changing the game (again)

Brand, social and content storytelling are constantly evolving with new technologies.

At a panel discussion at a SXSW conference, Google Global Creative Director Ben Jones spoke with agency and content creation leaders about how technology is changing storytelling. Here are their responses:

**The Branded Content Partner:**

“You can’t just use technology for technology’s sake. For us on the news side, there has to be a consumer need. For instance, we launched a partnership with Samsung to do [The Daily 360](https://www.thedaily360.org) where we’ll feature 360-degree video journalism every day. And that was the most natural partnership we’ve ever done—it was tech by Samsung and journalism by The New York Times.”


**The Agency Creative Director:**

"It’s never been easier to make cool stuff. But it’s never been harder to get the word out about it. And we saw that with [Lockheed Martin’s Field Trip to Mars](https://www.lockheedmartin.com/mc/field-trip-to-mars.html). That was a cool use of VR, and it garnered billions of impressions. So it’s not about just creating content people have to seek out and find, but about making content that creates headlines."

— Myra Nussbaum, SVP & Group Creative Director, DDB Worldwide
Technology is changing the game (again)

The Creative Collaborator:

"Technology is creating more immersive experiences. And that's important because attention is the one metric that can't be bought. You can buy 20M eyeballs or 30 seconds of time, but there's now a bifurcation around choice. 'If I can choose it, I want a lot of it. But if I can't choose it, I want less of it.'"

- Ben Jones, Global Creative Director, Google

The Agency Strategy Director:

"There's a difference in passive attention versus active attention. Passive is scrolling by something in a feed. And you can high-five with every impression you get, but that's not the whole story. The most successful campaigns create active attention, which is way harder to get, because we're competing with news media, entertainment, and everything else that's on the internet that day."

-Jess Greenwood, VP, Content & Partnerships, R/GA
Technology is changing the game (again)

As readers’ attention grows ever scarcer, creatives and brands will be tempted to latch onto shiny new storytelling tools. But technology alone can’t be asked to deliver a memorable piece of content. Great creative and copy transcends everything but they need to be delivered via a holistic strategy.

Create relationships with your users

1. **Be human:** be curious
2. **Communicate** like you’re on a first date
3. **Flatter** your users’ egos
4. **Motive** users to share
5. **A picture says a 1000 words**
Build a holistic social media and content strategy

Don’t get hung up on the terminology -- publishers need content strategies and social media, but not merely posts that are segmented into new article updates, sponsored branded content and “everything else.” Publishers who get the most out of the social ecosystem embrace holistic strategies rooted in consumer/reader behavior.

We believe the strongest content strategies don’t simply reuse and repurpose content that worked on other platforms. Instead, they adapt to unique consumer behaviors and mind-sets on each platform, medium and touchpoint. In the process, they take small risks, test and learn, then adjust before they scale.
Build a holistic social media and content strategy

**Content Creation Strategy:** Hygiene, Hub and Hero Content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hygiene</th>
<th>Hub</th>
<th>Hero</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always-on &quot;pull&quot; content designed for your <strong>core target</strong>.</td>
<td>Regularly scheduled &quot;push&quot; content designed for your <strong>prime prospect</strong>.</td>
<td>Large-scale, tent-pole events or &quot;go-big&quot; moments designed to raise broad awareness.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Size of circle corresponds to potential audience size.  

Source: Google BrandLab

The Google and YouTube teams have developed a framework of three content types: **Hygiene**, **Hub**, and **Hero**.

- **Hygiene** content shows audiences how to engage with your business, publications, or a specific news category. Daily and hourly news articles, reviews, weather updates and videos are great examples of the hygiene content that every publishers needs.
- **Hub** content speaks to users’ passions to broaden a publisher’s appeal. The content can draw from a variety of other programs such as sponsorships and partnerships — and bring in interests such as music, science, cooking, and beauty.
- **Hero** content builds around the major events in a publisher’s calendar, such as big technology launches, the SuperBowl and World Cup, political elections.
Build a holistic social media and content strategy

The publishers who use Hygiene content successfully serve consumers searching for news and articles in useful and meaningful ways. Meanwhile, they’re also pushing out episodic or recurring Hub content related to their target users’ passions. Finally, with Hero content, publishers execute those “go-big” moments throughout the year to raise awareness and drive new readership from new users.

**Post daily updates through Hygiene content**

Hygiene content refers to your strategy’s always-on content. Straightforward daily article updates are a natural fit for this kind of content, but that doesn’t mean you always have to be providing actionable advice. Your goal should be to make content that meet users’ needs, e.g. are you giving them the information they require.

Here’s how to get started:

- Use [Google Trends](https://trends.google.com), YouTube Trends and Google Search Console to understand what readers are searching for when they come to your site. Find the most frequent searches (aka “queries”).
- Create a Hygiene content plan that clearly and simply addresses a specific high-volume search query.
- Establish why your site should be the one to answer the query.
- Create “evergreen” content like “Top 5” lists, how-to and instructional videos or articles that will always be searched for over time.
Build a holistic social media and content strategy

Keep it going with Hub content

Consistent formats are the key to social channel sustainability. Think about successful content based franchises — traditional physical newspapers, the nightly news on TV, TV shows like Friends and The Big Bang Theory. They all have one thing in common, and that is that they are consistent in what they do. The consistent timing of the physical newspapers and the nightly news on TV to the consistent comedy styles of The Big Bang Theory. Think of Hub content as ongoing scheduled engagement programs that stimulate your audience and that are coordinated across all your owned properties including your social platforms.

This is the first step in creating your Hub content—regularly scheduled content, be it news or entertainment posts that give readers a reason to subscribe/follow to your channels.

Here are some suggestions to get you started on Hub content:

- Create a social voice with a strong, distinctive style. This can be different from your editorial voice and can vary across social platforms based on user demographics.
- Maintain a consistent visual and written language.
- Develop an active promotion strategy that includes social media, cross-promotions and incentives for subscribers to share your content.
Build a holistic social media and content strategy

Go big with Hero content

Hero content campaigns are characterised by intense bursts of activity and investment — when publishers make important choices to focus on a major events in a calendar, such as the SuperBowl and World Cup, and other tentpole moments, political elections. This allows them to be seen by vast audiences, usually across a short period of time. Social media can be of unique help here thanks to the reach of its platforms and of course the sheer number of conversation that will be happening during these times.

Here are some things to keep in mind while creating hero content:

- Identify important events that are relevant to your audience.
- Use Google Trends. Explore the tool to gauge how much early and sustained interest there is around an event.
- Develop a production calendar covering all the videos, images, photos and graphics you are going to create or curate for the event.
- Get ahead of the buzz. Release ancillary posts around your hero content several days before the event. The pre-buzz (or audience interest) leading up to an event is just as important as the actual event.
- Consider collaborating with YouTube creators to amplify your message.
- Ask yourself: Would people bother to share this on social media? Would this make a good newspaper headline? Can you imagine your audience paying for this content?
- Ask for your audience’s participation in the event. Can they design it? Star in it? Vote for it? Turn your audience into advocates who will promote ahead of the launch.
Build a holistic social media and content strategy

A quick word on consistency
Consistency is crucial to success on the site. But consistency can refer to different aspects of production. Take a look at how these content use consistency of format, schedule, and elements to tie their content together in satisfying ways. Note that Hub content doesn’t always have to be fully polished, and can be created with production values that range from scant to robust.

- **Consistent Schedule:** Upload a piece of content to your channels on a specific day.
- **Consistent Format:** Create a recurring series with content that can be repeated again and again.
- **Consistent Elements:** Repeat small aspects of a content the same way every time, such as intros and outros, or revisit certain segments.

Why it’s important to post consistently
- Research shows that people prefer things that are familiar (e.g. “Mere Exposure effect”).
- It’ll compel your audience to return again and again to what they like and are familiar with.
- Increases reader loyalty.
- Makes your audience comfortable.
- It helps your audience develop a sense of expectation.

A good starting point in thinking about social media frequency comes from marketing expert, Dr. Jefferey Lant. Called “The Rule of 7,” it suggests that prospects need to be exposed to your message at least 7 times in an 18-month period before you can expect to penetrate their consciousness.

Best practices for maintaining a consistent presence on social platforms
- Create a structured format that will prevent you from having to reinvent every post.
- Make sure your social posts have a clear point of view that accurately reflects your messaging.
- Remember, consistency requires a sustainable approach — considering operating costs, copy costs, means of production, and creative resources.
Build a holistic social media and content strategy

Sustainability

Your best efforts at consistency will only pay off if you can sustain the format. Consider all the elements of the production, from the location and actors to the overall budget, and make sure you’ll be able to maintain it over time.

Here are some tips for creating sustainability:

- Plan your creative concept carefully. Does it have longevity?
- Implement recurring formats and predictable programming — organize your social post (be it copy only, images, photos, videos or a mix) and channel activity into a daily, weekly or season-long schedule.
- Make sure you have the in-house or agency resources to support your creative vision for the long term.
Distribution strategy

Effective content distribution is another pillar of long-term success for publishers. Your users are discovering your content in multiple places, so we’ll give you tips for reaching them wherever they are.

Selectively repost

When you look at the way your readers find news online, interesting trends emerge. They go directly to your site only about half the time. All other times they find news via search, social media, email or even mobile notifications and alerts. Make sure that your content is available in whatever way your users want to consume it. And if you have evergreen content, think about occasionally re-posting it, since readers may have missed it the first time.

As of August 2017, two-thirds (67%) of Americans report that they get at least some of their news on social media (including YouTube) – with two out of ten people doing so often, according to a survey from Pew Research Center. This makes it a great place to reach new readers.

Look at how many social media channels you’re using and which ones drive the most traffic. You can use News Consumer Insights and Google Analytics to analyze your sources and the relative value of the traffic they drive.
Distribution strategy

Be social
When you’re busy posting content, it’s easy to forget that these networks aren’t just promotional tools – they’re meant to connect people. Speak to your users in an authentic voice and have an ongoing conversation with them: Ask questions, respond to queries, address comments. This will strengthen your relationship with your readers.

Consider each platform individually
Be mindful of nuances in each social platform and how they might guide content creation decisions such as tone or which snippets to highlight. Users behave differently on Facebook vs. Twitter vs. Snapchat and your content should, too.

They also visit platforms for different reasons; for example, Facebook is primarily a tool to stay connected with family and friends, while Twitter is for “in the moment” information sharing.

The underlying idea here harkens back to media theorist Marshall McLuhan and his belief that “the medium is the message,” which was further illustrated by Tabitha David in a 2016 blog post.

There are some key differences in the demographic makeup of each social platform’s news readers: Instagram and Snapchat users are considerably more likely to be younger. Twitter and LinkedIn have the largest share of college graduates among their news users – 59% on LinkedIn and 45% on Twitter. The news user bases of the two largest sites – Facebook and YouTube – include more older Americans than those of smaller sites such as Instagram and Snapchat.
Distribution strategy

Be human
Get into the minds and hearts, of your target audience. Put yourself in their shoes: what do they want and need in terms of relevant information, ideas, inspiration and entertainment? Notice what they respond to and tailor your content accordingly.

Don't forget about social sharing
You probably already have social sharing buttons on your article pages and you should think about analyze the following from a user perspective:

- Is it easy for your users to share your articles with their social circles?
- Have you implemented all social buttons?

You need to make Social Sharing easy for your Readers. Ideally, your social sharing buttons should be:

- **Diverse**: News readers spend their time on different social platforms. Make sure you’re leveraging all of them.
- **Visible**: Readers should be able to spot straight away these buttons.
- **In the right place**: The closer to the content the better.
Don’t be afraid to experiment

While it helps to be aware of strategies that work traditionally, we encourage you to think outside the box.

Some ideas to consider:

- Rich content: use images, catchy phrase, short videos, etc.
- Bite-sized content: Easy to consume, mobile friendly, “on to the next one.”
- Trending topics: What’s hot? What are people talking about?
- Use humor: According to eMarketer, people are 31% more likely to share content that makes them laugh.
- Do NOT use shock value: "I can’t believe this!" "That’s crazy!"
- Guest editors / influencers (For example, Bill Gates guest edited TheVerge.com).
- Behind the scenes: Who are you, why should the user’s care?

Source:
https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/marketing-resources/content-marketing/youtube-insights-stats-data-trends-vol8/
https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/features/youtube-playbook/topic/programming-channel-strategy/
https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/marketing-resources/content-marketing/brand-storytelling-video-technology-advertising/
https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/features/youtube-playbook/topic/programming-channel-strategy/
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http://www.verypartners.ca/the-medium-is-the-message/
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https://blog.hootsuite.com/10-social-media-questions-to-help-define-your-strategy/
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https://nabrams.newsroom.com/how-to-build-a-perfect-content-distribution-strategy/
CH.03 Driving more consumer revenue

CHAPTER SECTIONS

Identifying the profile of your potential customers
Refining your value proposition thanks to user feedback
Optimize to drive consumer revenue
Section 01  Identifying the profile of potential customers

SUBSECTIONS

Introduction
Custom segments and tracking
Qualitative feedback
Introduction

As a publisher, it's important to understand what motivates your readers and to listen to them. For example, you may think a $5/month subscription seems fair for your site, but is that what your readers are willing to pay? What are the triggers that make them want to pay this amount? What type of benefits are they expecting when subscribing? Are there alternative payment solutions that are more suitable? Would your readers be interested in different methods of supporting your content?

Listening to your readers at scale can help you understand the opinions of the people who really matter and formulate plans to engage and retain them.
Custom segments and tracking

Your loyal readers and brand lovers present an opportunity to drive consumer revenue through a subscription model, ecommerce strategy, or a combination of both. Be sure to consider all of the ways you can drive revenue.

Your most loyal readers might respond positively to paying for your content, as long as the value proposition and the price are right (The Guardian launched a membership program with positive impact and Wired is making the most of affiliation revenue).

The main assumption in our framework is that loyalty is the key to identifying potential customers. But, this is just the first step. And like any ecommerce player, you should refine your segmentation with historical information from your current customers.

Setting up Google Analytics Goals and/or Ecommerce tracking will let you create custom segments to answer the following questions:

- Content: what type of content drives the most sales?
- Traffic source: which traffic source has the best conversion rate?
- Device type: how do your customers behave per type of device (mobile, desktop, tablet)?
- Demographics: what are the characteristics of your average customers?

This will help you identify the most accurate “likelihood to buy” signals on your site.
Qualitative feedback

Now that you’ve identified user signals that might drive consumer revenue, focus on collecting qualitative feedback to understand your buyer’s motivations and expectations. This will inform how you should adapt your product offering. Once you have the right package, you’ll be ready to optimize the conversion path by removing friction points and enhancing your promotion strategy.
Section 02  Refining your value proposition thanks to user feedback

SUBSECTIONS

Google Surveys
Refining your value proposition
Google Surveys

Google Surveys lets you gather near real-time feedback from your different audience segments. Ask your readers what they think about your subscriptions and the corresponding benefits; measure brand or publication awareness; and learn more about pricing perceptions. The insights gathered will help you adapt your offers to improve subscription rate.

01: Ask Your Questions

02: Your Audience Answers

03: Get Results in Days
Google Surveys

You can use Google Surveys for free, exclusively across your site and properties. More importantly, it will allow you to gather data - user feedback - that is highly complementary to your Google Analytics insights. You could say that Google Analytics answers the "What is happening?" and Google Surveys the "Why is it happening?"

Google Surveys was created to be accessible for all. You don’t need to be a data scientist to use the tool.

Unfortunately, you won’t be able to target specific Google Analytics segments with Google Surveys. You can use one of our features, called “Screener question” to filter respondents based on specific answers, such as asking about reading frequency and screening-in only users who answer “daily” or “frequently” or asking about subscription intent and screening-in only users who answer “I do not plan to subscribe.”

To allow Google surveys on your site, you’ll first need to add a few lines of javascript in your code. You can sign-up to the publisher product called Opinion Rewards via this link and make sure the “Google Surveys for Publisher” option is set to “yes”.

Our operations team should reach out shortly to help you with the implementation.

Now that you’re set up, we will show you the step by step process on how to target your own readers. This can be used by anyone who has been added to the publisher reporting dashboard as an ‘owner’. You can update this yourself or just email opinion-rewards-publishers@google.com.
Refining your value proposition

Pricing

You could replicate the Van Westendorp Price Sensitivity Analysis by asking 4 simple questions:

- At what price would you consider the product to be so expensive that you would not consider buying it? (Too expensive)
- At what price would you consider the product to be priced so low that you would feel the quality couldn’t be very good? (Too cheap)
- At what price would you consider the product starting to get expensive, so that it is not out of the question, but you would have to give some thought to buying it? (Expensive/High Side)
- At what price would you consider the product to be a bargain—a great buy for the money? (Cheap/Good Value)

You can learn how to plot the answers on a graph via this external tutorial and it should look like the chart below.

While this methodology has its flaws, it is easy to run and will give you an initial idea of your reader’s price perception.
Refining your value proposition

Packaging (expected benefits)

You can use surveys to gather insights on the type of benefits that your readers would expect in exchange for payment. This can help you improve your current consumer revenue strategy or inform plans to build one.

We advise you to:

1. Use screening questions to identify either readers not willing to subscribe or potential subscribers
2. Identify awareness of your subscription packages
3. Measure interest for specific existing benefits: Ad light experience? Discounts? Exclusive content?
4. Test interest in benefits not included in your packages and their associated impact on subscription intent

Based on the results, you can adapt your products and promotion methods.

3. What would convince you to subscribe to your favorite News site?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The offer price matches my budget</td>
<td>40.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If the content is original/exclusive</td>
<td>31.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Ad light experience</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My peers subscribe</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philanthropy - I want to support Journalism</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to discounts and prize competitions</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey Example Here
Refining your value proposition

The pricing and expected benefits surveys are merely two examples of the insights you’ll can gather using Google Surveys. Many publishers have successfully gathered user feedback to adapt their subscription benefits to better match their reader’s expectations. As a result, they have experienced positive impacts on consumer revenue growth.

Consider other areas to investigate like potential cross-sell opportunities (events? electronics?) or reasons for subscription churn.

Outside of subscriptions, you might consider using Google Surveys for:

- **Content creation**: collect insights from your readers to get their unique perspective on multiple topics like sports events, elections, etc.
- **Ad sales**: enrich your media kits for advertisers with additional insights directly from your readers (like % of users willing to buy a car in the next 6 months) or analyze advertising impact from your direct campaigns by measuring brand impact on exposed users.
- **UX research**: measure the impact on user satisfaction post-feature launch or interest pre-feature launch.
Section 03  Optimize to drive consumer revenue

SUBSECTIONS

- Optimizing your conversion funnel
- Promoting the right packages, to the right users
Optimizing your conversion funnel

Reduce friction points on your landing pages to improve conversions

The feedback you collect via Google Surveys should help you adapt different aspects of your subscription offers (pricing, expected benefits, etc.) to match your reader’s expectations. Your landing pages should be fully optimized to make it as simple as possible for your readers to pay for your content.

We suggest you evaluate the following elements on your landing pages:

- **Login?**
  Don’t forget to add social logins to simplify registration

- **Payment and Registration forms**
  Less is always better. Limit the number of fields required and think about implementing the Google Chrome Autofill feature

- **A/B test continuously**
  As mentioned across our playbook, Google Optimize will allow you to identify the best performing layout and messaging of your call-to-actions

- **Faster is always better**
  Count the number of steps and clicks required to finalize the subscription process and optimize for less

UX Matters: Pay particular attention to the layout of your call-to-actions. The shape and colors of your buttons should stand out, in contrast with the rest of the page. You should A/B test different placements, messaging and layouts.

Pricing: Clearly display the price of each package and highlight discounts.

Package Benefits: Benefits must be easily identifiable and readers should be able to differentiate them in terms of value, across your subscription packages. Don’t hesitate to clearly highlight best offers, promotional trials or free cancellation policies.
Promoting the right packages, to the right users

Promoting the right packages, to the right users, to improve conversions

Publishers with and without a paywall are usually surprised of the general lack of awareness of their subscription packages across their readership. Promoting the right package to the right user segment is key to convert your potential subscribers. You should invest in doing this on your site, as well as across the web.

On your site:

- **Calls to action:** Make sure you have at least a “Subscribe now” button clearly visible on each page. *Test different layouts, colors (focus on contrast) and messages.*
- **Subscription ads:** Your house ads (unsold inventory) present a great opportunity to display your subscription packages and promotions to your readers. *Focus on “action-driven” messages like “Subscribe now.”*

Across the web

- **Make it crawlable:** To ensure organic promotion, your subscription landing pages should be indexed for discovery by search engines.
- **Invest in SEM:** The audiences that you’ll create can be exported to Google Adwords for retargeting across the web. You can also use [the Customer Match feature](#) in Google Adwords to show your ads to potential customers based on your own data (like a list of email addresses). *Test a subscriber acquisition campaign and pay close attention to your Cost per Acquisition (CPA) and corresponding ROI. Adjust your budget accordingly.*

A publisher using Google Analytics 360 should focus on creating [audiences](#) to export to Doubleclick for Publishers and/or optimize them to display personalized promotion messages.

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Conclusion

“News membership isn’t about premiums, tote bags, mugs, or local business discounts. Readers become members or donors when they want to be part of the larger cause that the news organization represents or when they think it represents something unique in the world. To put it another way, no one ever became a member of a journalism site offering news that feels like a commodity.”

– “Guide to Audience Revenue and Engagement” - TOW Center for Digital Journalism

Growing your consumer revenue is as dependent on what you’re trying to sell as how you’re trying to sell it.

We believe that by gathering user insights through Google Surveys, you can build a successful sales strategy that continuously drives funnel optimization, and ultimately, conversion.