



About Village Media:

Village Media operates a number of local news and community websites throughout Ontario, Canada. The company focuses on providing local stories written by local journalists to the communities that it serves.

In addition to local news, Village Media sites offer weather, events, obituaries, and a wide range of community information. Their sites pride themselves in being members of the communities they serve, supporting local events, charitable causes, and recognizing citizen achievements.

About News Consumer Insights:

The News Consumer Insights framework and dashboard emerged out of a series of findings from Project Fuse. Project Fuse was an initiative in 2017 to help publishers better understand their audience segments, as well as the value of individual users, and to inform data-driven tactical decisions around audience development efforts.

RESULTS

Using the News Consumer Insights toolkit and framework, Village Media identified pagespeed as an optimization opportunity for [SooToday.com](#). After implementing improvements aimed at reducing page load times, [SooToday.com](#) saw:

- Page load decrease from 6s to 3s
- Pages per Session increase 4%
- Sessions increase 19%
- Bounce Rate decrease 6%

News Consumer Insights and Village Media: Bringing and keeping visitors through page speed improvements.

The time it takes for a website to load is one of the most important factors when looking to improve digital reader engagement, satisfaction and brand loyalty. If content takes too long to load, it won't matter if a publisher has amazing content and incredible design.

With many articles to choose from across the web, many readers will often turn elsewhere to view content if a page loads too slowly. As more and more readers shift to mobile, the desire for a frictionless and fast experience is becoming even more important. Failing to address page speed can hamper user acquisition and decrease the likelihood that a casual reader will shift towards becoming an engaged brand lover.

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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

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Improving the user experience

Using News Consumer Insights (NCI) to benchmark performance on [SooToday.com](#), a Canadian local news site in Sault Ste. Marie, the Village Media team noticed that readers who visited the site visited a low number of pages per visit. After investigating the issue, they found that the page had a load time of over 6 seconds. They decided to focus their attention on pagespeed with the hypothesis that pagespeed be at the root of their low engagement numbers possibly even be driving readers away from their site after visiting only one page.

Reducing page load time

Village Media addressed their pagespeed challenge on two fronts:

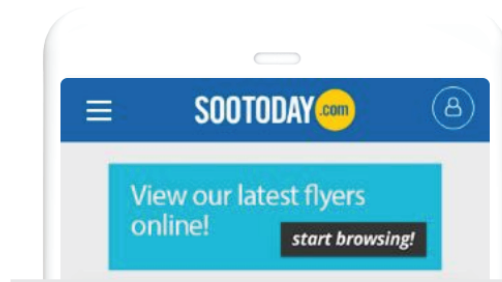
- 1) Latency due to elements and applications loaded on their servers
- 2) Latency due to elements and applications loaded on the user side (everything that's executed by the browser: loading fonts, rendering images...)

On the server side, Village Media focused on two elements. First, they optimized the TTFB (Time To First Byte) through heavy use of in-memory caching of key pages. Second, they moved all images to a Content Delivery Network (CDN) in order to reduce latency.

On the browser side, they focused on loading images when they come into a user's view as they scroll a page, otherwise known as lazy-loading images. They also addressed creative assets like their font and used a tool called [fontfaceobserver](#) to load custom web fonts to allow content to load faster.

Village Media found that applying lazy-loading images had the greatest impact on page load times.

These are just some examples of all the work done by Village Media to improve reader experience across the site.



PAGE SPEED

1 second

Your current page speed on 4G networks is **fast**.

Pagespeed improvements drive clear results

A year after their page speed adjustments, SooToday.com saw times drop to 1 second, which led to a 19% increase in overall visits to their site or sessions, a 4% increase in pages visited per session, and a 6% decrease in visitors quickly leaving the site. Through their pagespeed efforts, Village Media improved reader visit frequency, depth of engagement per visit and also reduced the likelihood of users navigating away from their site after only one page - major steps towards improving loyalty across the site.

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NCI is a great resource that any publisher can use. We're looking forward to future collaborations with the NCI team which help us continue making informed, data-driven decisions for our network of sites. This continues to help us deliver value to the communities in which we serve.

JEFF ELGIE
CEO, VILLAGE MEDIA

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