



vindicia[®]
An Amdocs Company

USE, REGISTER, SUBSCRIBE:

Converting
free readers
into subscribers

Monster Revenue



Table of contents

- 03 Introduction
- 04 Converting visitors into subscribers
- 05 Know your consumer
- 06 Attracting new visitors:
Capture them on other platforms
- 07 Encouraging registration:
Focus on quality and success
- 08 Promote subscriptions:
Create value sets
- 09 Encourage subscription
- 10 Conclusion

Introduction



Americans are more voracious in their consumption of news and media than ever before.

A truly 24-hour news cycle churns out content faster than consumers can read, but that doesn't stop them from trying. The problem for legacy media companies and newspapers, however, is capturing value from these readers.

According to Pew Research, online revenue gains haven't offset print declines, while increasing use of ad-blocking technology by consumers is cutting into businesses' potential to convert readers into revenue.

PageFair reports that some 615 million devices have ad-blocking software installed, and 74 percent of those using it will leave a website that completely blocks access unless the app is disabled.

These are strong headwinds, but publishers and media companies need to formulate plans that reinforce their digital presence and earn them subscribers. This ebook can help serve as a guide to the steps that media organizations need to take.

Converting visitors into subscribers



Don't expect consumers to sign up the first time they visit your web page, or even the second or third. It takes a while for readers to arrive at decisions.

A recent study found that online consumers may do research for up to 30 days. And weighing whether or not to subscribe to a particular online publication is a process. Media companies need to target that process and remove friction, while also creating incentives, to convert visitors into subscribers.

Here's a three-tiered approach that media organizations can leverage in their conversion efforts:

- 1 Use free content to draw in new visitors.
- 2 Float registration options with the added promise of more exclusive content.
- 3 Upsell registered readers on upgrade packages that provide more access at a higher price.

The top five reasons interested parties become paying news consumers, according to the American Press Institute (API), are:

- ☒ They are looking for news on a specific topic or issue.
- ☒ Their family and friends recommend a source.
- ☒ They've taken advantage of discount promotions.
- ☒ They've exhausted their monthly supply of free access.
- ☒ They saw content that appeals to them shared on social media.

Know your customer

A prerequisite to converting readers into subscribers is knowing who your audience is.

Media companies often serve particular segments (whether that's based on age, geography, niche interests or socioeconomic status). Knowing the personas of your reader base is an essential reference point from which to launch conversion efforts. Yet, it's not enough to know who your target base is – you need to know what will turn them into subscribing readers. Understanding what motivates consumers is necessary to crafting outreach.



Attracting new Visitors: Capture them on other platforms



That last driver identified by the API is particularly noteworthy. Social media is among the most powerful tools for discovering and engaging with new consumers who fit your target profile. However, success here is not as easy as creating an account and hoping future subscribers fall in your lap. It takes active measures to capture online readers from social media.

- 1 First, interact with them by teasing content in an engaging way. Whether that's a snappy tweet, a question on Facebook, or maybe even a picture on Pinterest, know what your readers will be motivated by.
- 2 Next, examine which platforms you see the most use on (by tracking your shares and inbound visits referred from social media) and create strategic marketing plans for your top performing platforms.
- 3 Finally, be sure to actually interact with users: respond to comments, solicit feedback, hold contests.



Encouraging registration: Focus on quality and access

It goes without saying that you have to publish quality content that your audience will want to read, and which they'll look for. This doesn't mean you need to guess at what that is; your readers will signal and dictate to you through their online behaviors what topics and issues they want more content on.

The task for media companies is to produce relevant and quality content, and then promote it in ways that capture new subscriptions. Always highlight how registration can provide consumers with additional benefits and greater access.

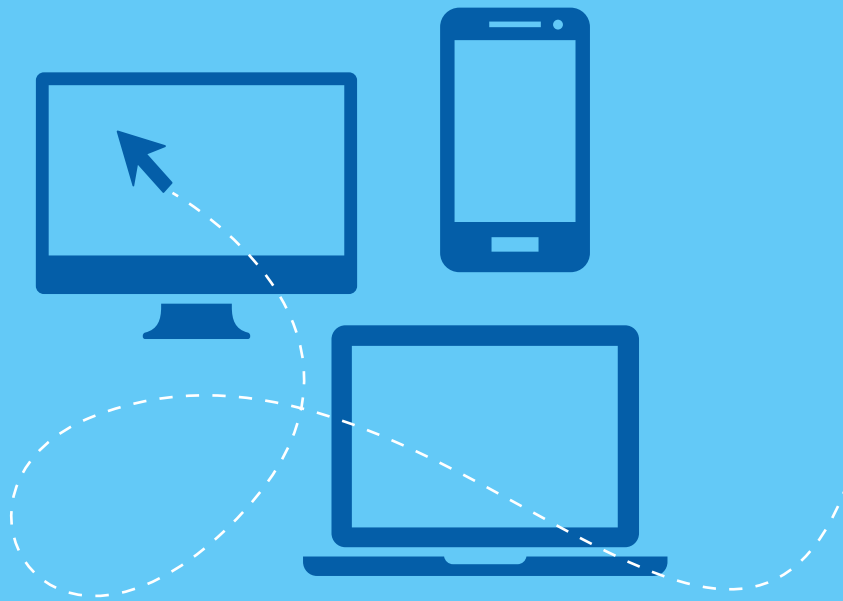
A call to action (CTA) embedded on the page is one way to accomplish this. For example, readers typically like to know what content like-minded online peers are consuming, and using CTAs to hype best-of weekly roundups (most shared, most commented, most liked) is an effective bait to lure free readers.

Promote subscriptions: Create value sets

Media companies can allow only so much free viewing of content, and paywalls have become an effective tool to curb losses and start converting free users into dependable revenue. Strategic use, however, entails more than the construction of a wall without parameters or forethought.

Before deciding on a threshold, use A/B testing to optimize not only the substance of the paywall notification, but also its graphics. Elements to consider include size, font, registration page, offer specifics and page placement.

Of course, the most important variable is the number of articles allowed. This ultimately depends on your company and nothing else: What works for one (Harvard Business Review offers four free views and has largely exclusive insight and news) won't work for another (The New York Times, while just as prestigious, reports on news that can be found elsewhere but delivers different value, offers 10).



35% of digital subscribers signed up because they got a discount.

Encourage subscriptions

Companies have prime opportunities when a free visitor reaches a content cap, is already engaged on multiple platforms, and exists within the target base. At this point it's up to publications to seal the deal by serving personalized marketing that reinforces product quality and subscription value.

The conversion will in many cases come down to the offer: API found 35 percent of digital subscribers signed up because they got a discount. But media companies should take every measure to make sure that the conditions leading to that stage are as conducive to a subscription as possible.

Use all of the data you've compiled to that point to inform how you design the approach and the offer. Consumer touchpoints will help point you to what that reader values and what may incentivize them to subscribe.



Conclusion

Courting the free usership base is a vexing matter. Fleeting consumers get what they need and get out. However, real opportunities for revenue exist, and they will make themselves known: either by engaging on social media, say, or reaching a maximum number of articles month after month.

Generating subscriptions takes careful construction of a pathway that free visitors can travel down, containing critical points along the way wherein publications engage, convey value and motivate registration. Many readers want to become subscribers – your business must have the means and intel to convert.

Everything about digital operations needs to facilitate subscription sign-ups. This means that even operations such as billing and payments, which can be automated, must encompass facilities and efficiencies that contribute to outreach efforts. Working with an experienced subscription billing partner like Vindicia can open media companies to a range of expertise, cost savings and benefits that ultimately help drive – and retain – subscriptions.



Vindicia offers comprehensive subscription management solutions that help businesses acquire and retain more customers. Providing much more than just a billing and payments system, the company's SaaS-based subscription management platform combines big data analysis, strategic consulting and proprietary retention technology. Vindicia provides its clients with more recurring revenue, more customer data, better insights, and greater value throughout the entire subscriber lifecycle. To learn more visit www.vindicia.com.

Copyright © 2019 Vindicia, Inc. All rights reserved. Vindicia, the Vindicia logo, Vindicia Subscribe, Vindicia Retain, and the designated trademarks herein are trademarks of Vindicia, Inc. in the U.S. and/or other countries. All other brands or product names are the trademarks or registered trademarks of their respective holders. 1119

Sources

1. pagefair.com/blog/2017/adblockreport/
2. informs.org/About-INFORMS/News-Room/Press-Releases/Consumers-may-search-online-for-30-days-but-buy-close-to-what-they-found-on-the-first-day
3. americanpressinstitute.org/publications/reports/survey-research/print-vs-digital

About Vindicia