



MEDIA HOUSES AND PUBLISHERS

*How Do You Improve
Audience Management?*



In the age of 24/7 news machines and social media, the one thing the world is not short of is content. Fake news, content marketing, the proliferation of online media outlets – the competition facing publishers and media businesses has changed beyond all recognition in the last ten years.

The main conundrum for publishers is how their content cuts through, how it stands out when audiences are staggering under the weight of content overload. Audience engagement is key and to do that effectively, publishers need to have a deep understanding of their audience. As a result, audience management has become a critical tool in the armoury for successful publishers.

Enhancing audience engagement is vital because engaged users are more likely to trust a publisher's brand. And when they are properly engaged, they return more often to the website and are more likely to connect with the brand on other levels, such as buying a subscription, coming to an event, or opening a newsletter or e-shot.

Once audiences are engaged, revenue per advertisement rises, because advertisers are willing to pay more for positions in highly valued publications, or on a website that has engaged users.



WHERE MANY PUBLISHERS *are at the moment*



A publishing company might have several titles across a number of channels – print, digital, social and live (events, exhibitions etc) – and have a really loyal audience, who buy their magazines, attend their events and are engaged with the website.

But although they have a captive audience, many publishers are not able to define their audience very well or have a deep understanding of how engaged the audience is. And they probably want to increase engagement, but until they have a clear understanding of their current position, they won't be able to measure any change.

Many publishing and media companies have basic audience management in place – usually a database that captures demographic information – but they rarely have the behavioural picture too. This might include the type of content the reader engages with, the pages they click on, events they attend etc. And because these publishers do not have integrated systems – their email communication tools act independently of the audience database – they are unable to link that behavioural information to the information on the audience.

Having an integrated picture of the audience means publishers can offer a more valuable proposition to advertisers. And CRM is critical in being able to help media companies achieve this.



BUILDING AN AUDIENCE *management process*

Taking a piecemeal approach to audience management can be successful to a degree. Having a database here and an email tool there will be quite effective, but it won't help publishers get a 360 view of their audience. A defined audience management process and integrated systems will help publishers achieve this. There are four key steps to consider:



Step one: AUDIENCE PROFILING

All publishers and media companies have a central database of their audience – or you would like to think so! It is vital that this is regularly cleaned and kept up to date. Ageing data is one of the scourges of effective marketing campaigns, so it is in the interest of all publishers to have accurate, timely information on their readership. This central system of audience information should encapsulate:

- **Demographic information:** data such as who they are, what their job is, where they are based, their salary bracket etc. This standard information is vital for publishers to build a picture of their audience. But in this day and age, on its own, it isn't enough.
- **Behavioural information:** understanding how engaged the audience is, is key to a successful publishing business. So when looking at audience profiling, building a layer around behavioural understanding is important. Behavioural information could include what audiences might do on the website, what pages they look at, what topics and themes interest them, what emails they click on, what events they might attend etc.

If demographic information is integrated with behavioural information, suddenly publishers and media businesses are able to build a much more accurate profile of their audience than they could previously. And the more accurate the profile is, the more valuable the proposition is to advertisers.



Step two: SEGMENTATION

Segmentation is the ability to group an audience according to certain characteristics, requirements and other variables. Advertisers often want more of a sharp shooter approach than a scatter gun strategy. For example, a software company might want to target sales directors based in Scotland who have recently subscribed, or a wellness company might want to run a campaign targeted at 25-34 year olds who earn over £30k and are regular readers of the health pages.

But due to having multiple systems in place and an overall lack of integration, some publishers are unable to segment the database particularly effectively. Segmentation enables better, more targeted communication and enables the publisher to provide highly accurate data to advertisers. The ability to slice and dice readership data to drive outbound communication is vital and the results can have a significant impact on audience engagement and the audience's perception of the brand.

Consider this scenario. If a publisher is hosting a B2B accountancy event in Bristol on behalf of an accountancy software firm, effective segmentation ensures the publisher only invites accountants from large practices in Bristol, the West Country and South Wales as per the client's requirements. If the publisher invited accountants from all over the country and from any size practice, it might not look particularly professional. More targeted communication with an audience reflects well on the brand and increases customer loyalty. Importantly, it also boosts revenue per advertisement.



Step three:

INCREASING ENGAGEMENT AND RE-ENGAGING

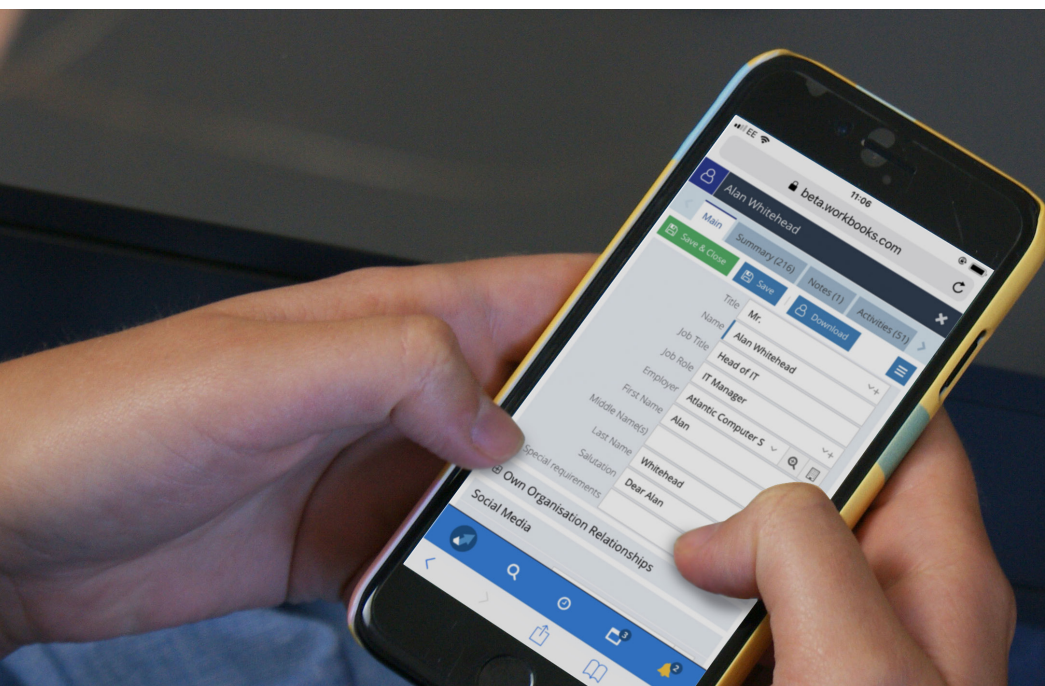
Customer engagement is the holy grail in content marketing. But the volume of content available to consumers today means it can be difficult to establish engagement and engender customer loyalty. So how can publishers begin to understand engagement?

A good place to start is to analyse data collected from the website, from email campaigns and from social media – statistics such as open rates, bounce rates, click throughs, likes, shares, retweets, conversions etc. This information helps to build the behavioural picture and if it's integrated with audience management information, publishers and media houses can start to build three dimensional pictures of the audience and use this insight to improve engagement.

Targeted content is vital for improving engagement. Understanding what elements of the magazine or newspaper interest a reader – fashion, holidays or business – means the publisher can aggregate relevant content to send them or target them with a deal specifically related to their interests.

Offers are another consideration. Giving a reader an incentive that appeals to them has been proven to impact engagement levels. For example, a 20% off voucher for a high street clothes chain for readers interested in fashion, or a wine discount voucher for bon viveurs. Readers respond well to incentives and offers that are specific to them and the content they like to engage with.

Audience management can also be used in risk management. For example, if publishers have an effective audience management process, they are able to detect readers and subscribers who might not have engaged with the content for a while. In this scenario, a red flag might be raised in the system alerting the subscription team, as these audience members might not renew their subscription. The team can contact these readers to find out why they have dis-engaged and work with the marketing team to find ways to re-engage the readers who have lost touch.





CRM FACILITATING AUDIENCE MANAGEMENT

Publishers realise the best results if their audience management process is underpinned by CRM. A single platform that integrates all elements of audience management gives publishers crystal clear insight into their audience, their profile and how they behave.

One system to track, capture and analyse data, enabling publishers to act on the management information the system generates, can put them in a much better position and help them develop a true data driven strategy for subscribers and advertisers. And having an accurate, real time picture of the audience and the ability to measure and demonstrate engagement will drive revenue per advertisement. And it's not only about boosting revenue. One system means publishing and media companies can realise operational improvements and mitigate risk as it reduces the margin for error.

A good audience management system and process will link to other areas of the business, such as advertising, subscriptions and events. And it's cyclical, so information from those teams can feed back into audience management. All this data gives a clearer, more granular view of the audience.

CRM will help put publishing and media companies back on the front foot with audience management. And it will give them the insight they need to ensure their proposition is more valuable for both their readership and their advertisers.