



MEDIA Business

THE MAGAZINE FOR BUSINESS PUBLISHING EXECUTIVES

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Paid content key issue for many publishers

By Marie Griffin

As in previous years, *Media Business*' third annual compilation of "10 Great Media Sites" reflects current trends, technologies and strategies in digital media. In 2007, the best media sites were differentiated by the quality of the user experience and breadth of functionality. Last year, the leading sites notably introduced or expanded social media and community tools.

The emphasis in online business media this year is monetization—no surprise in light of the economic downturn. As print advertising has plummeted,

publishers have become more determined to make money online.

Two of the sites recognized by *Media Business* this year—FT.com and

WSJ.com—are at the center of the debate over paid content, a controversy that has grown more heated as the economy has cooled. The *Financial Times*'

Like many publishers with paid subscription models in print, managers at *The American Lawyer* wrestled for years with the question of how much content to put on the Web for free. The question was resolved when the brand adopted a daily news strategy in spring 2008, which is reflected in a redesigned Web site and a new daily e-newsletter, *The Am Law Daily*.

The difference between the previous Web site and the current one is night and day, said Aric Press, editor in chief of *The American Lawyer*. "The old site wasn't a news site. It was a repository of data and marketing material," he said. The new site "is a daily source of information" with five to 10 original stories posted each day.

While the daily news content is open access,

some—but not all—of the magazine content is reserved for subscribers. "We are refining our strategy. In the fall, we'll go to a more fine-tuned, tiered system of free, free with registration and paid," Press said.

Traffic for the site increased 178% between June 2008 and June 2009. The *Am Law Daily* has about 60,000 readers and "is the principal traffic driver for the site," Press said.

In addition to the daily news stories and select stories from *The American Lawyer*, the Web site incorporates content from sibling publications in the Incisive Media legal family and relevant news from across the Web, as well as comments, video and regular Twitter feeds. A mobile version is also available. □



TRADE

The American Lawyer
URL: www.americanlawyer.com
Company: Incisive Media
Average monthly unique visitors: 136,000
Source: Omniture

A year ago this month, *The Wall Street Journal* relaunched its Web site, WSJ.com. "It was a top-to-bottom rebuild," said Gordon McLeod, president of The Wall Street Journal Digital Network. Since last summer, the number of unique visitors to WSJ.com has soared by 46%.

In addition to the new look and feel, additional interactive features and improved navigation, the relaunch made the distinction



GENERAL BUSINESS

The Wall Street Journal
URL: www.wsj.com
Company: Dow Jones & Co., a division of News Corp.
Average monthly unique visitors: 22 million
Source: Omniture

between subscriber-only and free-to-all content more transparent.

A graphic of a key now distinguishes paid content. Visitors who click on one of those headlines are brought to a landing page that previews the article and provides a subscription offer. These pages have become a major driver of paid subscriptions.

Late last year, WSJ.com added a tier of free registered users in addition to free visitors and paid subscribers. In return for providing some personal information, registered users can access the Journal Community, the newsletter management center and other

personalization features.

"Registered users are the fastest-growing source of new online subscriptions for us," McLeod said. While declining to reveal the number of registrants, he said they visit three times as often and generate six times as many page views as nonregistered free visitors.

Now that the free registration tier has been built out, WSJ.com is working to add an additional layer of premium paid content. "We're looking at [paid content] from a lot of different angles," McLeod said, adding that WSJ.com will be revealing "a lot of exciting things" in this area this fall. □

Last month, several *Financial Times* executives made themselves available to other media organizations to extol the benefits—even necessity—of charging for content online. FT.com had 117,000 paying subscribers as of June 30, an increase of 18% from a year earlier, while revenue from those subscribers increased 30% as the standard annual online subscription in the U.S. went from \$129 to \$181.

FT's historic reliance on print advertising must change, said Ben Hughes, deputy CEO. In the early part of this decade, "print advertising represented about 85% of our total revenue; that percentage is now down to 40%," he said. Meanwhile, revenue from content now makes up 40% of overall revenue and has grown 18% over the past year.

"When print advertising is not firing as it used to, you have to look for other ways of bringing in revenue, and this is a very good way of doing it," Hughes said.

Online subscription growth has been fueled by FT.com's new access model, which allows visitors who provide some personal information through registration to view up to 10 stories per month for free. "When we give people a taste of the Web site, it's proven to be fantastically successful" in converting registrants to paid subscribers, Hughes said.

Those registrations have grown more than 200%, to 1.4 million, over the past year.

Sometime in 2010, FT.com will experiment with a pay-per-article model, but the technology "must be absolutely right so that it's simple," Hughes said. □



PAID SUBSCRIPTION

The Financial Times
URL: www.ft.com
Company: Financial Times Ltd.
Average monthly unique visitors: 11.4 million
Source: ABCe (ABC electronic)

On May 1, *Communications of the ACM*, the flagship magazine of the Association for Computing Machinery, introduced its first Web site. The magazine's digital content was previously distributed primarily through the association's digital library, said Scott Delman, group publisher of the ACM Media Group.

The site offers daily news from ACM technical writers and an in-house news staff, as well as feeds from the Associated Press and other news services. It also hosts content from the current issue of the magazine, as well as the complete archive of 50 years of issues.

"In the past, we would publish static content in print, PDF or

HTML form; so, having the ability for people to interact online on a real-time basis was very important," Delman said. Users can comment on stories and blogs, e-mail them or share them via Digg, Facebook, LinkedIn, Slashdot or 60 other services.

The new site also has an expert blog and a blog roll linking to computing and IT bloggers elsewhere on the Web.

Multimedia capabilities will be built out, Delman said. "There is video very deep within some of the sections, but it's in our plans to put video on the front page," he said. "Multimedia components tend to drive traffic better than static content."

Print and online subscriptions are included in the membership fee for the not-for-profit association, which has more than 90,000 members worldwide. "We take advertising, but we are not dependent on it," Delman noted. □



Communications of the ACM

URL: <http://cacm.acm.org>
Company: Association for Computing Machinery
Average monthly unique visitors: 24,100
Source: Google Analytics

After 10 years of focusing on education technology, e.Republic's *Converge* broadened its mission this year, starting with the January issue, to address a longer list of critical issues facing education, including effective literacy programs, green and vibrant schools, and 21st century skills and careers.

The companion Web site, relaunched April 1, was the first to use e.Republic's new Clickability content management system, which puts more control in the hands of editors than IT. The system powers Web 2.0 tools such as blogging, commenting and automatically generated lists of most popular and e-mailed stories.

The site now features significantly more staff-written original content, said Marina Leight, editor in chief. Prior to the relaunch, 20 new articles were posted monthly; since then, it's been 60. Seven new bloggers collectively generate 30 posts per month, where there were no blogs previously. As a result, monthly page views for the three months after the relaunch were 32% higher than the three months before. Monthly unique visitors soared from 7,000 to 13,000 between June 2008 and June 2009.

One of the goals of the Web site redesign was providing a visual upgrade. "On the old site, we would have one image for every 10 or 20 articles. Now it's about nine out of 10," said Zach Presnall, e.Republic's Web marketing manager. "We wanted the site to match the look of the magazine in terms of images, fonts and color." □



Converge
URL: www.convergemag.com
Company: e.Republic
Average monthly unique visitors: 13,000
Source: Google Analytics



Growing Produce

URL: www.growingproduce.com
Company: Meister Media
Average monthly unique visitors: 11,700
Source: Google Analytics

In January, Meister Media Worldwide launched GrowingProduce.com, a new site that acts as the online hub for three print magazines—*American Fruit Grower*, *American Vegetable Grower* and *Florida Grower*. The URLs for the formerly freestanding sites now redirect visitors automatically to www.growingproduce.com.

By aggregating the audiences and content of the three titles, GrowingProduce.com has greater appeal to both advertisers and users.

"Individually, these audiences aren't huge," said Jim Sulecki, director of e-media at Meister Media. "By aggregating a larger audience across three markets, it's a much more compelling story. We've definitely seen an increase in business from the large national accounts since we've launched

this."

Sulecki added: "There's a lot more content on the site when you aggregate it, and that drives traffic and page views." Another key traffic driver is daily news, made practical with the addition of a dedicated online editor.

"When you're dealing with tighter, smaller markets, aggregating audiences with common interests gives you a much more robust presence online," said Gary Fitzgerald, chairman-CEO of Meister Media.

One of the highlights of the site is Growing Produce TV, which is broken down by category into six channels to make it easy for users to sort through more than 50 videos. Two channels, on insect control for fruit and vegetables, respectively, are sponsored. □

PoliceOne.com, a 10-year-old, online media brand aimed at law enforcement professionals, is the flagship site of San Francisco-based Praetorian Group. In the past two years, PoliceOne has launched two dedicated video Web sites: BluTube.com, in October 2007, and PoliceOneTV.com, in March 2008.

Like YouTube, BluTube enables users to upload and view videos, but it also offers a secure environment with some content reserved for law enforcement professionals. BluTube enables users to create video play lists, subscribe to other members' content and



PoliceOne

URL: www.policeone.com
Company: Praetorian Group
Average monthly unique visitors: 700,000
Source: Self-reported

rate or comment on videos. In the second quarter of this year, BluTube delivered 1.9 million video views from an inventory of more than 3,500 videos.

PoliceOneTV features original programming in three categories—hard-hitting stories and interviews hosted by PoliceOne's law enforcement experts; law enforcement training, including health and fitness; and product reviews and demonstrations. Each Monday, three new videos, one in each category, are posted online and distributed in e-mail newsletters. In the second quarter, 225,000

videos were streamed within PoliceOneTV.

While video is engaging for the audience and a very effective training tool, "monetization has been one of our challenges," said Alexander Ford, Praetorian Group CEO. One revenue source "which has offset a good portion of the costs of our video initiatives" has come from filming five-to-10-minute custom videos for exhibitors at trade shows. □

One of *BusinessWeek's* primary goals since 2008 has been to build interactivity. "The traditional model of journalism is that you own the audience," said *BusinessWeek* President Keith Fox. "In the new model, you're part of the dialogue. Editors have typically been content creators. Today, they have become content curators."

Audience members, meanwhile, have become content creators. Through the Web site, users have contributed story ideas, questions for interviewees and comments that have been used in major features for the print magazine, where readers are given credit with their name and a photo.

To facilitate regular interaction between journalists and users on the Web, *BusinessWeek* hired Shirley Brady as its first dedicated community editor last year.

Last September, *BusinessWeek.com* launched a subbrand called Business Exchange (BX) that puts the audience in the curator role. BX members aggregate content around topics that they themselves define; that content can come from anywhere on the Web. Once topics have been created, *BusinessWeek.com* search engines trawl the Web for relevant stories and blog posts, then serve them up for users.

Since 2007, *BusinessWeek.com's* traffic has increased by 44% to 10.2 million unique monthly visitors worldwide, according to Omniture. □

WEB 2.0/NON-IT



BusinessWeek

URL: www.businessweek.com
Company: McGraw-Hill Cos.
Average monthly unique visitors: 10.2 million
Source: Omniture

TechTarget added NotebookReview.com to its portfolio in April 2007 when it acquired the site's parent, TechnologyGuide.com Inc., for about \$15 million. While most of TechTarget's 60-plus sites focus on specific technology niches (such as cloud computing or SQL servers), NotebookReview.com attracts a broad audience of consumers as well as business decision-makers.

The 6-year-old site is devoted exclusively to laptop computers and mobile computing. Its content revolves around in-depth product reviews produced by staff writers and supplemented with voluminous user-generated content, some of which is provided by extremely knowledgeable product enthusiasts, said Ben Stafford, Technolo-

gyGuide general manager.

A high level of audience interaction is achieved through the efforts of NotebookReview.com's editorial staff and volunteer moderators. "We don't let any questions go unanswered," Stafford said. The forums collectively receive more than 4,000 postings and 200 new user registrations a day, according to TechTarget, and the site logs more than 15 million page views per month.

Between June 2008 and June 2009, unique visitors increased 44%. The laptop computer category is hot, Stafford said, due to an explosion of new netbook products and the relatively low price of notebooks in general. "There are a lot of products and more people than ever sorting through the field," he said. □

WEB 2.0/IT



Notebook Review.com

URL: www.notebookreview.com
Company: TechTarget
Average monthly unique visitors: 6 million
Source: Omniture