

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO WEBSITE OPTIMIZATION FOR MEDIA COMPANIES



Data sourced from a survey of Optimizely experiments conducted since October 2010.

FOR MEDIA COMPANIES, TRAFFIC ACQUISITION IS ONLY HALF THE MONETIZATION EQUATION.

Website optimization is crucial for amplifying your ad revenue, subscription sign-ups, and community marketing activity. Media companies have unparalleled opportunities to grow and engage their audiences. This guide provides the most in-depth and thorough crash course that you'll find.

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01 INTRODUCTION: THE STATE OF MEDIA

It's an understatement to say that media companies are some of the web's most influential companies. Content giants like AOL, Glam Media, CBS Interactive, The New York Times, and Comcast NBC Universal consistently rank among comScore's top-50 visited websites, attracting between tens and hundreds of millions of monthly unique visits.

Through robust editorial operations, active social media communities, and interactive product features, media brands have unparalleled opportunities to engage their users. Digiday estimates¹ that The Huffington Post, for instance, publishes a new article every minute and more than 1,000 pieces of editorial content each day. Other media giants like BuzzFeed, The New York Times, and Business Insider are producing hundreds of pieces of content a day.

WEBSITE PERSONALIZATION
TECHNOLOGIES EMPOWER BRANDS
TO ALIGN USER ENGAGEMENT
WITH INCREMENTAL ADVERTISING
REVENUE.

Traditionally, media companies have monetized through advertising revenue and print subscriptions. Now with online, the opportunity is shifting -- for the first time, media companies like The Wall Street Journal and The New York Times are introducing subscription packages for online content. Not to mention, website personalization technologies empower brands to align user engagement with incremental advertising revenue.

HOW MEDIA COMPANIES EVALUATE SUCCESS

On a daily basis, media companies are evaluating the following key questions:

- 1) **READER ENGAGEMENT** - 'Are we keeping audiences interested in our content and on our website for the longest amount of time possible?'
- 2) **AUDIENCE GROWTH** - 'Are we inspiring readers to return to our website, share our content on social media, and sign up for our email lists?'
- 3) **ADVERTISING REVENUE** - 'Are we effectively aligning our reader engagement and audience growth goals with monetization opportunities through ad revenue?'
- 4) **SUBSCRIPTION REVENUE** - 'Are we looking beyond direct ad revenue to increase lifetime user value for audiences who come to our website? Are we effectively cross-selling digital and print subscriptions?'

STAYING AHEAD OF THE CURVE WITH WEBSITE OPTIMIZATION

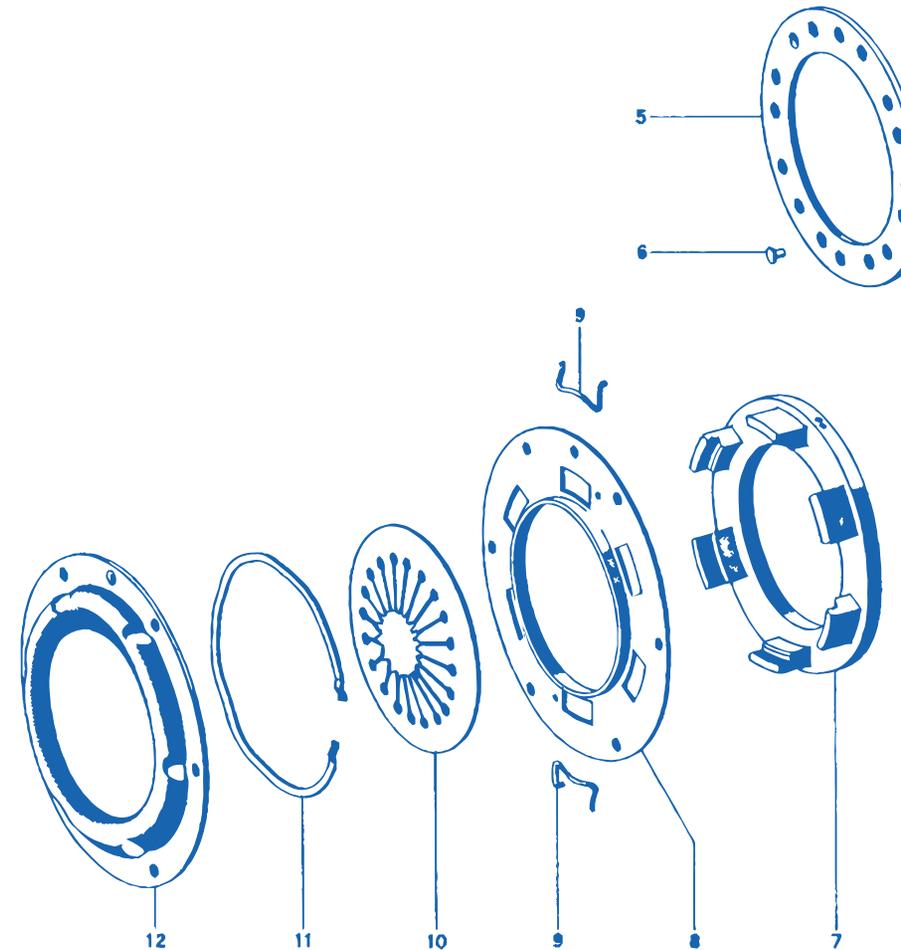
Even though business opportunities are strong, media companies face fierce competition for their audience's attention. A recent Wired article² estimates that in 2013, 500 years of YouTube videos were watched on Facebook – and more than 3 billion likes and comments were posted to Facebook – each day. On average, 700 videos were shared on Twitter each minute. That's no surprise given that the indexed web contains billions of pages³.

Meanwhile, audience attention spans are getting shorter. According to a recent study about web use⁴, the average human attention span in 2012 was 8 seconds – down from 12 seconds in 2000. Even goldfish are easier to keep engaged – the same study reported that their average attention span was 9 seconds.

It's these challenges that make website optimization so important. It's crucial to show the right content to the right person at the right time.

Media companies need a competitive advantage to (1) stand out in the crowded market for online content, (2) captivate audiences, and (3) deliver the most compelling – and most profitable – user experiences possible. Even the most subtle change to a personalization module, article headline, or website call to action can yield significant increases in incremental revenue.

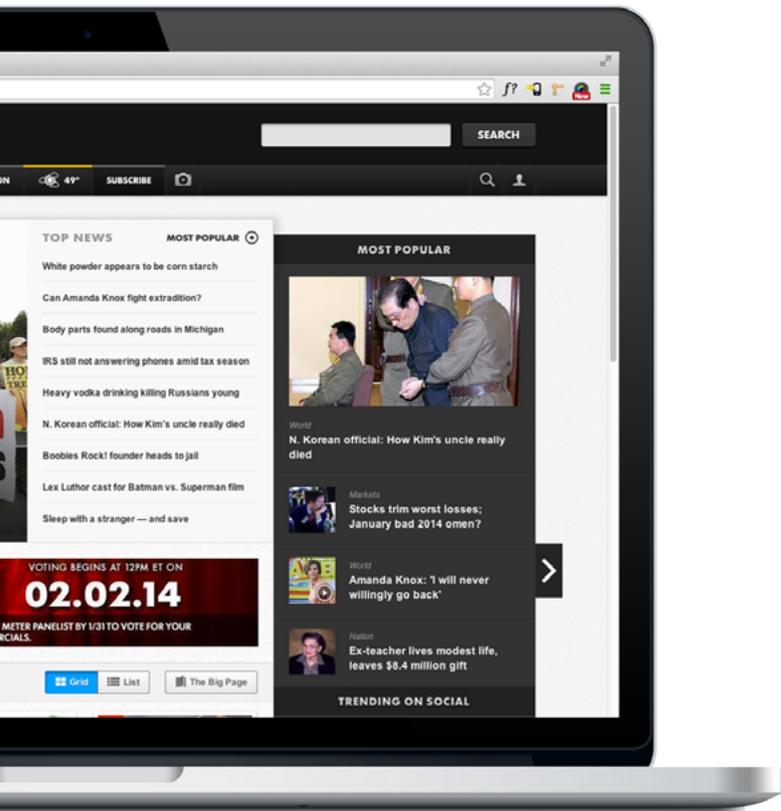
Across teams – analytics, product development, marketing, engineering, design, and UX – website optimization needs to be a core part of your organization's culture.



02

OPTIMIZATION AND THE DIGITAL MEDIA ECOSYSTEM

You're probably familiar with the term 'website optimization' – the process of ensuring that a website's user experience is always at peak performance and aligned with core revenue goals. Personalization and A/B testing are two strategies that keep websites optimized. Personalization helps your brand reach the right audience, with the right marketing message, at the right time. Example personalization techniques include content recommendation modules, customizable account login pages, and interest-based headlines. A/B testing feeds into this process by providing a simple way to test changes to a current webpage against a new design (or page element) to see which one produces a boost in desired results.



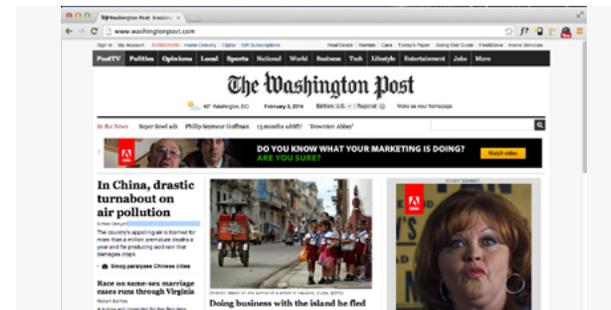
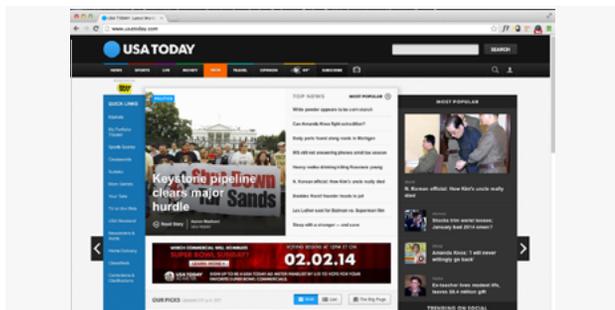
For digital media companies, website optimization will be centered around the following monetization streams:

- (1) **ADVERTISING REVENUE** through cost-per-click (CPC), cost-per-impression (CPM), cost-per-acquisition (CPA), cost-per-view (CPV), cost-per-lead (CPL) and revenue-share partnerships. (i.e. Banner, video, and performance-based ads)
- (2) **SIGN-UPS AND UPSELLING OF SUBSCRIPTION PACKAGES AND PAID PRODUCTS.** (i.e. media paywalls on sites like The Wall Street Journal and The New York Times)
- (3) **LARGE-SCALE DATA AND CONTENT SYNDICATION PARTNERSHIPS.** (i.e. the ability to license content or user profile data in exchange for a fee from sites like Bloomberg and The Wall Street Journal).

No two media brands will have identical monetization models. Revenue streams will vary based on a website's unique audience. A celebrity gossip website, for instance, may find little success in attracting subscribers. Audiences for a finance website, on the other hand, may jump to pay for exclusive stock analysis reviews.

HOW WEBSITE OPTIMIZATION BOOSTS REVENUE

Website optimization can help media companies (1) figure out which monetization models work best in different contexts and (2) boost the performance of valuable revenue drivers. Here is how website optimization fits into the three most common media business models:



1) **FREE** - These media companies share their content for free and rely entirely on advertising revenue for monetization.

HOW WEBSITE OPTIMIZATION FITS IN:

Monetization, user engagement, and ad impressions are all directly proportional to each other. A highly engaged reader is likely to see more ads.

2) **SUBSCRIPTION-BASED** - These media companies require audiences to sign-up for a subscription. Monetizing through online ad revenue has been challenging for media sites, and paywalls were introduced to create a sustainable, long-term, and high-margin revenue stream.

HOW WEBSITE OPTIMIZATION FITS IN:

Website optimization helps media companies maximize subscription sign-ups. A/B and Multivariate testing, for instance, ensure that target audiences are aligned with compelling (and personally relevant) calls to action (CTAs) at the right moment in time.

3) **HYBRID** - For some media brands, an ‘all-or-nothing’ approach is less than ideal for attracting and retaining readers. Some audiences are unwilling (or unable) to pay for a subscription. These websites rely on a monetization model that incorporates both advertising and subscription-based revenue.

HOW WEBSITE OPTIMIZATION FITS IN:

Website optimization ensures that media companies are showing the right conversion opportunities (e-mail sign ups, social media sharing buttons, and subscription sign ups) to their readers at the right time. Experiences targeted to specific audiences can help media companies personalize – and optimize – user experiences.

DEEP DIVE: THE GUARDIAN'S STORY

Here is an example of how The Guardian, an Optimizely customer, uses website optimization as part of its operations:

AT THE GUARDIAN, WE ARE VERY MUCH DRIVEN BY DATA AND NOT INDIVIDUAL OPINIONS. THIS IS ONE OF THE REASONS WEBSITE TESTING HAS BECOME AN IMPORTANT DISCIPLINE FOR US, IN AN EFFORT TO MAKE THE WEBSITE BETTER.

KERSTIN EXNER
PRODUCT MANAGER, THE GUARDIAN

Case Study: The Guardian

the guardian

OPTIMIZELY CUSTOMER SINCE:

Early 2012

OVERVIEW: The Guardian A/B tested its homepage, landing pages, and navigation menu on its dating site – Soulmates – to increase subscriptions.

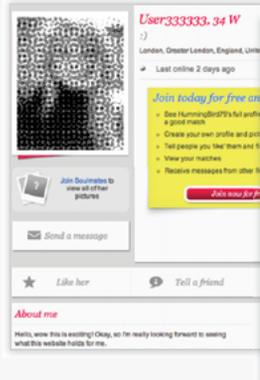
TESTING OVERVIEW

- The Guardian regularly uses A/B testing across many of its webpages and properties. Testing initiatives are run by different teams – for instance, The Guardian's UX teams are interested in tracking click patterns, engineering teams are interested in testing the performance of new features, and business teams are interested in monitoring product subscription rates.
- One property that The Guardian optimizes frequently is its dating site, Soulmates, which launched in 2004. Soulmates monetizes via paid monthly subscriptions that allow members to interact with other members.
- The majority of traffic to Soulmates comes from advertisements placed on The Guardian's news pages. The company's product team found that while ad click-through rates were high, conversion rates to new Soulmates subscriptions were trending low.

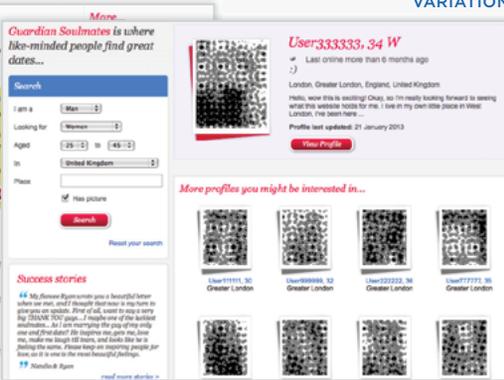
A 'PEOPLE FIRST' APPROACH

- The Guardian's product team wanted to learn why sign-ups were trending low and how it would be possible to increase conversion rates. The team hypothesized that showing more information up front – for instance, a wider variety of profiles and more facts about existing users – would increase subscriptions. The Guardian started using the term "people first strategy" as an umbrella term for this testing initiative.

ORIGINAL



VARIATION



The original landing page displayed the user’s profile with a large yellow call-to-action box in the center of the page. The variation gave site visitors more options by showing the user’s profile, similar profiles, search functionality, and user testimonials.

EXPERIMENT #1 - LANDING PAGE OPTIMIZATION

- The first experiment focused on landing page optimization. The Guardian started with Soulmates’ main entry points – landing pages where visitors entered by clicking through an ad on The Guardian’s main website. The ad features photos of various Soulmates users. When a reader clicks on a photo, (s)he is directed to a landing page displaying the Soulmates user’s profile and a ‘join today for free’ call to action (CTA).
- Using Optimizely, The Guardian decided to test its “people first” approach on these landing pages by presenting audiences with more options and a wider variety of information. The variation landing pages still showed the profile from the ad, but also displayed a few similar profiles of the same age range and gender. The variation pages also showed a sidebar with search functionality and customer testimonials.

- The Guardian allocated 50% of website traffic to the variation landing page in order to quickly get a statistically significant result (statistical significance is defined as the probability that an observation happened by chance or luck, as opposed to actual trends in reality).
- The variation landing page, which included search functionality, user testimonials, and related profiles, improved conversion rates by more than 46%.

EXPERIMENT #2 - NAVIGATION TESTING

- After the success of Soulmate’s first study, The Guardian decided run a second experiment on the website’s navigation bar. The original navigation bar displayed six default tabs: “Top matches”, “Your matches”, “Soulmates who like you”, “Soulmates you like”, “Views”, and “Recently viewed”.
- Because a new visitor’s “top matches” are unlikely to change frequently, The Guardian hypothesized that visitors thought that the website looked stale and lifeless. The team’s product manager wondered if changing the site’s “top matches” to “newly joined members” would increase engagement and click-through rates to individual profiles.
- After running the experiment for a few days, Soulmates saw a staggering 137% increase in click-throughs from the “newly joined members” pages.

WHY TRAFFIC ACQUISITION IS ONLY THE FIRST STEP

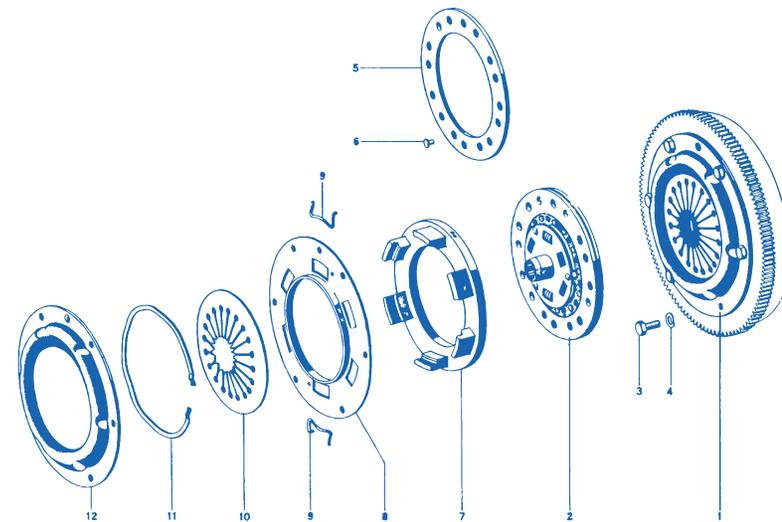
It’s common for media companies to invest heavily in traffic acquisition initiatives through paid channel advertising, SEO, social media and newsletter programs – web traffic is a media company’s core currency. A problem that media companies face, however, is that these traffic acquisition mechanisms are inefficient engines. When users come to your website, a portion will stick around to become lifetime readers, repeat website visitors, or paying customers – but many of your readers will never come back.

That’s where website optimization comes in – to make more out of media companies’ six, seven, and sometimes eight-figure marketing spends. The more that your company can build loyalty and engagement, the more that your marketing will generate an echo effect of free, organic traffic. In other words, your company will do more than increase revenue – you will also decrease your per-visitor acquisition costs.

IN OTHER WORDS, YOUR COMPANY WILL DO MORE THAN INCREASE REVENUE - YOU WILL ALSO DECREASE YOUR PER-VISITOR ACQUISITION COSTS.

Some media companies will think that they do not have the budget, resources or time to set up a website optimization system. The fact is, if you're not prioritizing website optimization, you are likely (1) missing out on opportunities to increase revenue (2) facing a significant opportunity cost to make more out of your existing marketing budget, and (3) wasting your money on generating traffic that does not convert.

The evidence is in the numbers. Pooled together, Optimizely's media customers have experienced a 29% increase in pageview consumption and a 14% increase in audience engagement.⁵



03

BUILDING A TESTING CULTURE

Website optimization involves more than just data collection and analysis. Very rarely will successful experiments happen in a silo – teams, especially at media companies, need to work together to accomplish common conversion goals.

One of Optimizely's core goals is to help media companies build a testing culture that is right for their organization. Website optimization is a living, breathing process that requires continuous attention and optimization. Ad hoc experiments are just the first step for developing a sound framework for research.

WEBSITE OPTIMIZATION IS A
LIVING, BREATHING PROCESS
THAT REQUIRES CONTINUOUS
ATTENTION AND OPTIMIZATION.

Take The Guardian example from Part II. One experiment inspired the design and launch of two more – and all three delivered actionable insights back to the business.

WEBSITE OPTIMIZATION & YOUR ORGANIZATION

Media companies who are just getting up and running will need to address the following questions:

- 1) Who should 'own' the website optimization process at a media company? Should this be a UX, marketing, technical, or product-focused initiative?
- 2) Should media companies hire a conversion rate optimization specialist, work with an external vendor, or absorb website optimization as part of an individual's (or multiple team members') roles?
- 3) How can large media organizations best embrace the research process to communicate findings cross-functionally and to management?
- 4) How often should media companies be running website optimization experiments, and what are some important day-to-day operations?

1. ASSEMBLE TEAM:

Every business is different and so is every team. Your “team” may be one person who performs a variety of functions or many people who each perform a very specific function. Nominate a Testing Program Manager who will be responsible for managing internal Design and Developer resources. Executive Sponsors are also key. Their early involvement supports the Always Be Testing directive that plants the roots of an effective testing culture.

2. ALIGN EXPECTATIONS:

Testing is not merely a tool, it’s a strategic decision with real business value at stake. A successful testing program relies on aligning the expectations of all stakeholders. These expectations should be grounded in the conviction that testing, regardless of the achieved results, is instrumental to targeting users with personalized experiences.

3. PRIORITIZE:

Determine what to test, where on your site, targeted to which user segment. Test the areas and elements on your site that are closest to your conversion goals, prioritizing experiments with the highest testing value (i.e. answer the most important questions about user behavior) AND lowest barriers to implement. When multiple teams (e.g. marketing and product) want to run tests on the same page, collaborative prioritization needs to take place in the form of: brainstorming, test setup, QAing, and interpreting past results.

4. RUN + MONITOR:

Run experiments and circulate a launch message beyond the scope of the testing team to build intrigue and excitement about testing. Periodically monitor experiments to ensure appropriate traffic allocations across variations, but don’t read too much into early results. Allow experiments to capture a minimum of 100 conversions for each variation before declaring the data actionable.

CRAFTING THE RIGHT FRAMEWORK

Optimizely works with some of the world’s biggest media brands, and what we’ve learned is that every company is in a different stage of testing evolution. Each type of organization will need its own website optimization framework -- there is no ‘one size fits all’ approach.

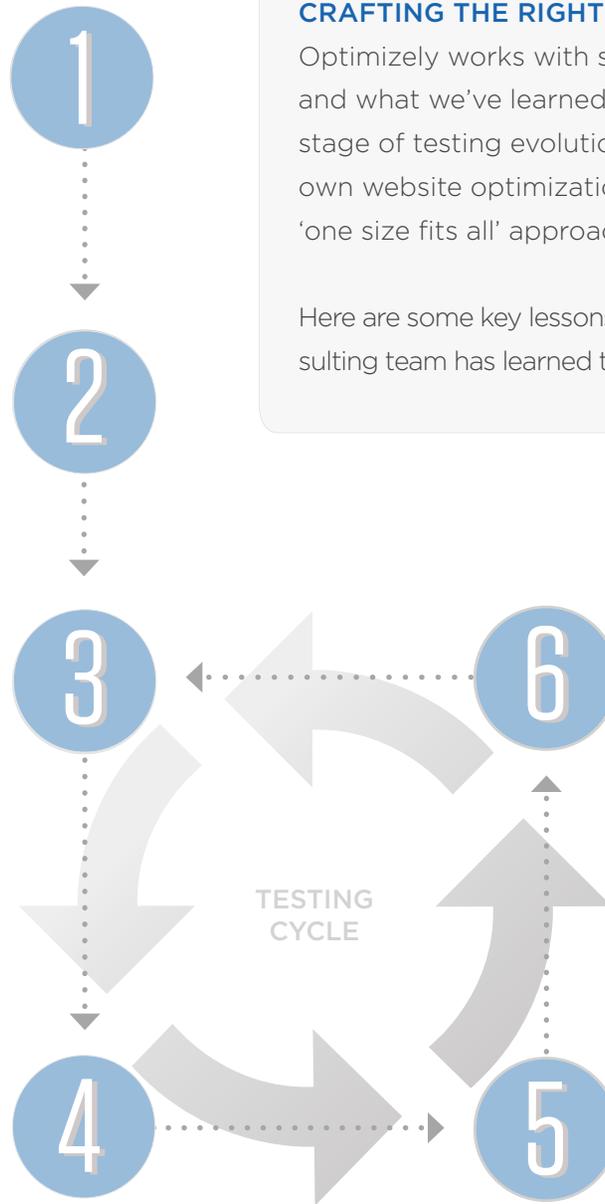
Here are some key lessons that Optimizely’s strategic optimization consulting team has learned through engagements with media customers:

6. ITERATE + REPEAT:

The desire to learn is what drives the success of website optimization. Organizations must be willing to explore high-impact research areas, challenge their assumptions, test their ideas, and iterate to shape the web experiences that delight their users.

5. ANALYZE + SHARE RESULTS:

Look for results that communicate insights about user preferences. Focus on the performance metrics you identified as most important and don’t become fixated on the success of specific campaigns, images, or copy. Test broad UX themes from which you can gather insights about user behavior. When sharing results, lead with lessons learned and quantify revenue impact wherever possible. Share via email and in person - uncover additional insights through discussion.



04

IDEAS TO TRY

How can media companies get started with website optimization? The opportunities are almost limitless. If you're not careful, you'll easily find yourself buried in a data dump.

Successful website optimization starts with experiments that prioritize revenue. Here is how media companies can connect website optimization to the four business goals that we explored in Part I of this guide:

1) **READER ENGAGEMENT** - Design experiments that keep readers on your website longer. Explore opportunities that serve audiences with more ad impressions, increase newsletter subscriptions, and encourage repeat website visits. (Think: related-article modules, newsletter subscription buttons, on-site commenting feature)

2) **AUDIENCE GROWTH** - Encourage readers to share your content with their personal and professional networks. (Think: placement of social media buttons, variations of editorial headlines, variations of article copy)

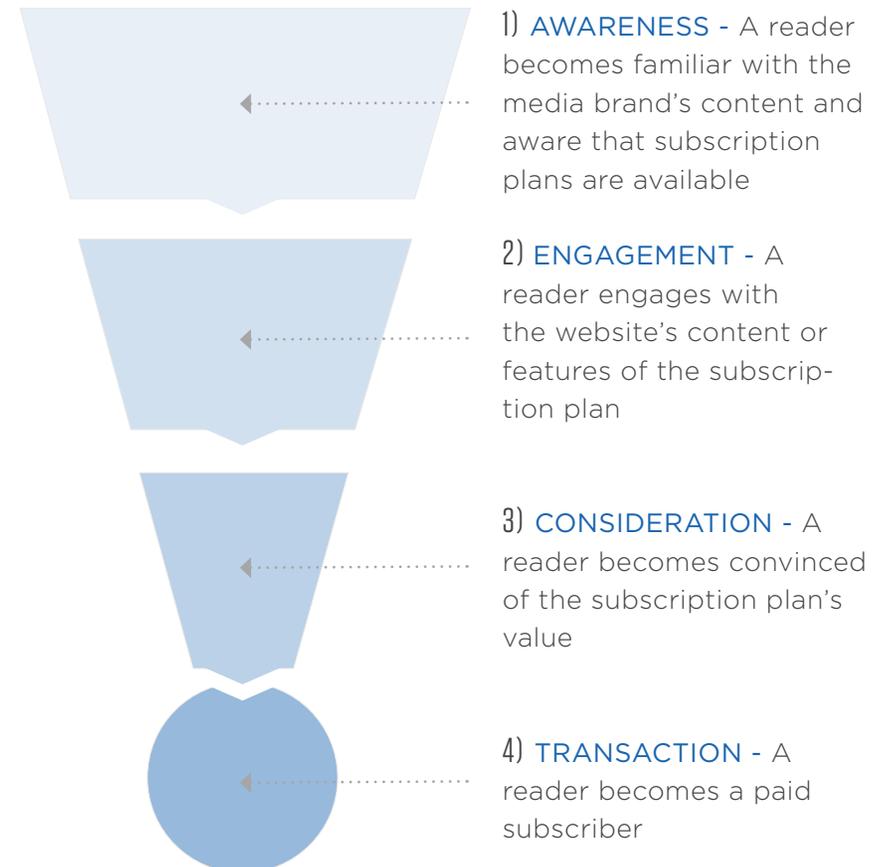
3) **ADVERTISING REVENUE** - Is your company working with pay-per-click content recommendation partners like Taboola and Outbrain? What about advertising partners like Google? You can run experiments to see which modules are generating more clicks - and consequently, monetizing more effectively. (Think: testing new revenue partners before making a 100% commitment)

4) **SUBSCRIPTION REVENUE** - Design experiments to boost subscription rates and learn new ways to inspire conversions past your website's paywall. (Think: messaging, content previews, freebies to read articles, call to action buttons text, marketing copy, color schemes)

As we mentioned in Part I, media companies will typically fall into free, subscription-based, and hybrid monetization models. The next sections explore testing ideas for a variety of media business models.

TESTING IDEAS FOR SUBSCRIPTION-BASED SITES

Subscription-based sites monetize through new account sign ups. A typical sales conversion funnel will follow these steps:



We'll use The Wall Street Journal as an example for how a media company can think about optimizing its paywall for subscriptions. The Wall Street Journal is not an Optimizely customer, and these ideas are purely hypothetical. (And we sincerely thank The WSJ for the inspiration!)

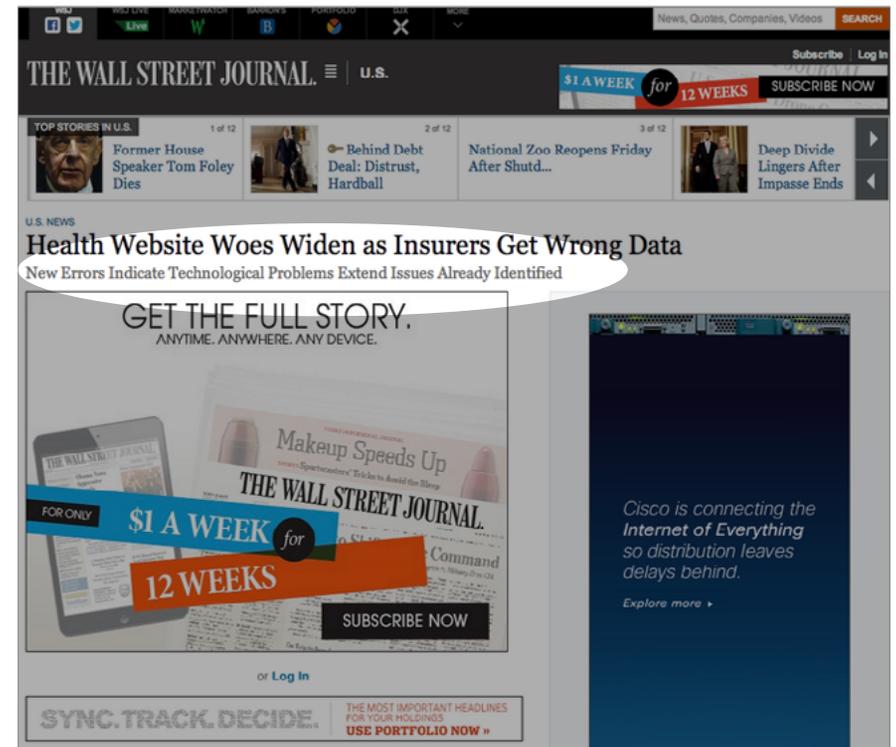
The Wall Street Journal requires a paid subscription for more than half of its content (as indicated by the key symbol):

WSJ HOME



Readers can 'unlock' these subscriptions by completing a form for a paid account. The sign-up process is multiple pages long. At the time that we wrote the guide, the user flow began with the following paywall page:

PAYWALL



Do you see a sub-headline on the article page above? Probably not. It's wedged between the larger headline text and the call to action (CTA) image. Yet this line of text could be vital to increasing conversions - it's the only preview that a reader will have for an article before deciding whether to pay to read it.

FIRST CONCEPT TO OPTIMIZE: CONTENT PREVIEWS

To increase subscriptions, the WSJ could run experiments to optimize the following:

1. THE SIZE OF THE SUB-HEADLINE TEXT

Should it be bigger?

2. THE SPACING AROUND THE SUB-HEADLINE TEXT

If there is more space around the text, will more people be enticed to sign up?

3. THE AMOUNT OF CONTENT

Does displaying a sub-headline convert as many people as displaying the first sentence of the actual article?

4. A LONGER ARTICLE PREVIEW

What happens to conversion rates if audiences can read through a paragraph or two before deciding to sign up for a subscription?

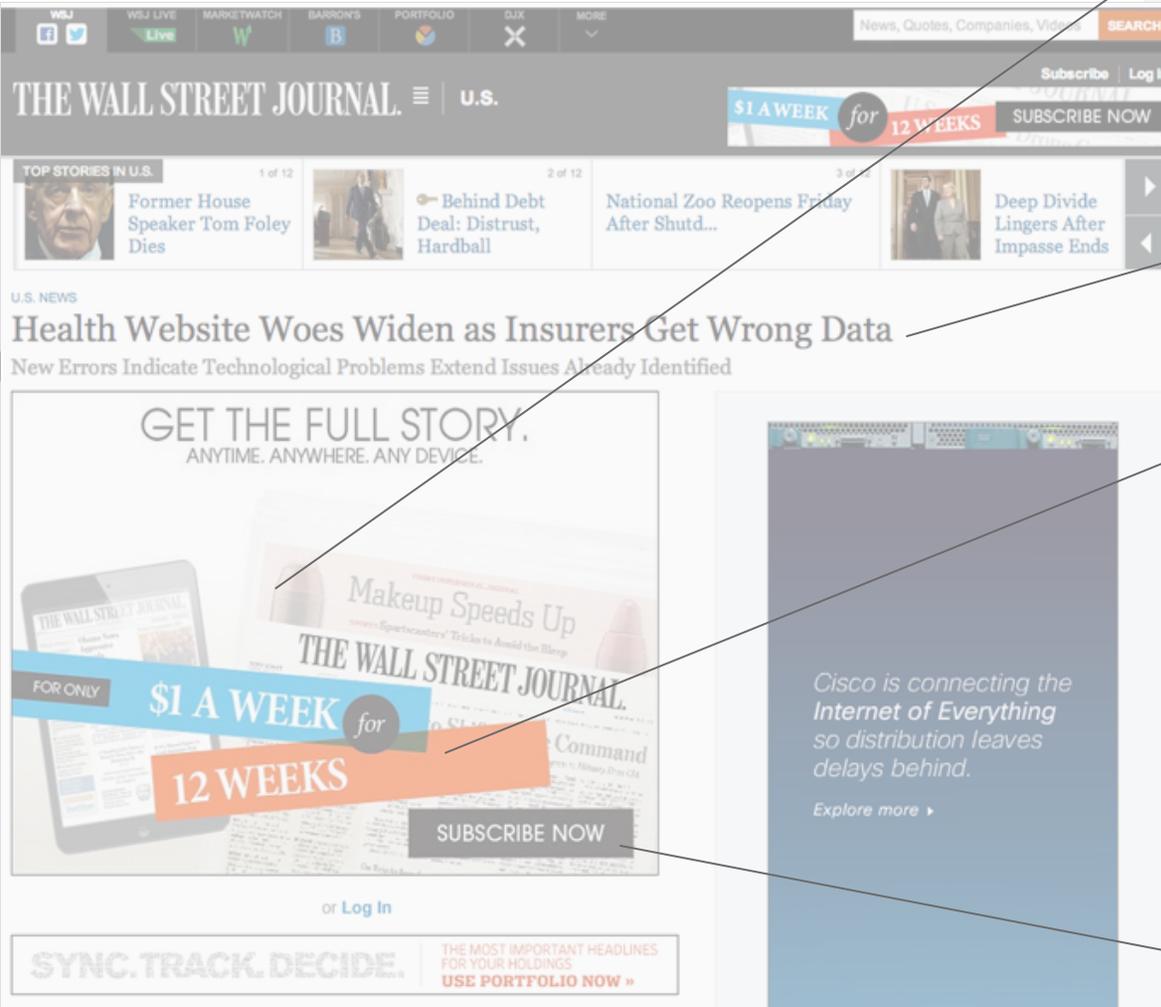


SECOND CONCEPT TO OPTIMIZE: PROMOTIONAL MESSAGING

Paid subscription sign-ups are a paywall's main conversion goal.

Media companies can optimize a variety of elements to boost sign-ups. Let's focus on one- the clickable image that initiates movement through the conversion funnel.

To increase subscriptions, The WSJ could test the following:



5. **IMAGE CONTENT.** Work directly with your design team to iterate on different graphics. In this specific image, The WSJ could try using an image of digital devices instead of a newspaper. Does an image with an iPad work better for users who see this promo on a Mac while a Microsoft Surface tablet work better for users who see the promo from PC? Optimizely also provides the ability to target experiments to specific browser types. For instance, it's possible to target iPad users with an image of an iPad.

6. **HEADLINES.** Publishers are familiar with the editorial process of scrutinizing article headlines. Your marketing messages should be developed with the same level of rigor. Experiment with a few different headlines to see which ones lead to more conversions.

7. **PRICING POSITIONING.** Does repositioning the timeframe or amount of subscription have a positive effect on subscriptions? There's a lot of room to experiment here.

- "\$1 A Week for 12 Weeks" is the same as "\$12 for 3 months." Which phrase converts more readers to subscribers? And how much information is needed?
- Is it enough to say "\$1 A Week for 12 Weeks," or does the reader want more information?
- A short blurb on how pricing will change after those 12 weeks will clear up confusion the button display.
- Does the button stand out enough? Should the button be part of the image or sit outside of it? Would adding a hover state get more users to notice it and click?

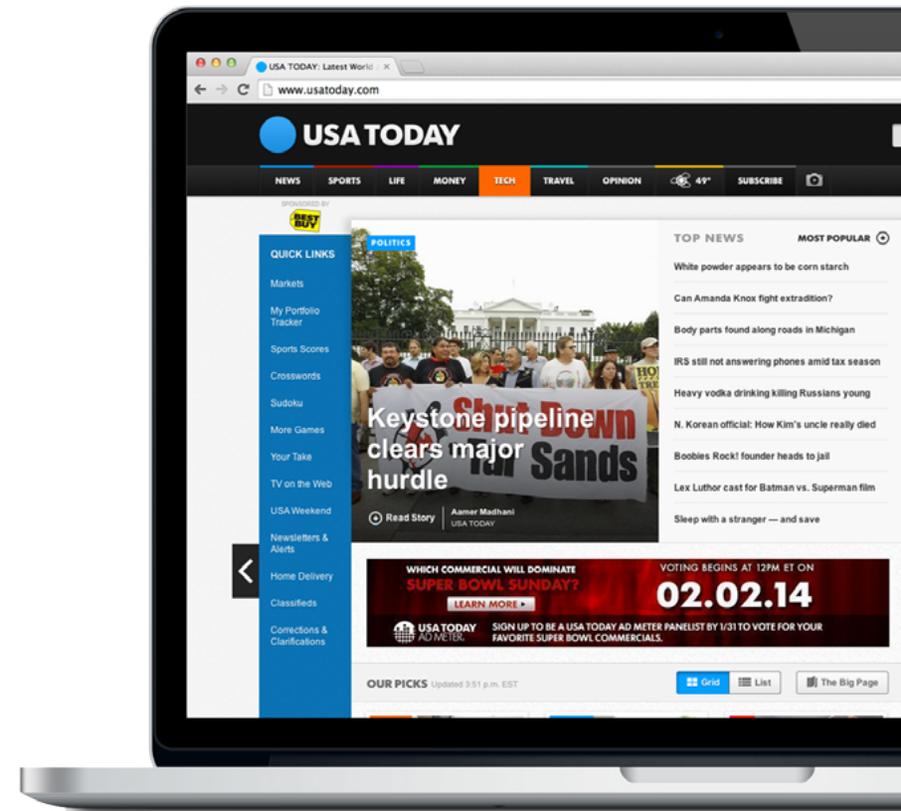
8. **THE BUTTON LANGUAGE.** Does "Subscribe Now" work as well as "Try it Now", "Go", "Continue" or even using the current title text, "Get the Full Story?"

TESTING IDEAS FOR 'FREE' MEDIA SITES

Some media companies will choose not to implement a paywall, and some subscription sites will want to share certain pieces of content for free. In both cases, user engagement will be the core business goal.

Free sites, which rely on ad revenue for monetization, can implement website optimizations to (1) keep audiences on their websites longer, (2) encourage article shares, and (3) drive return-visits. Keep in mind that these goals (and subsequent tests) are also relevant to some subscription-based sites.

We'll use USA Today as an example for how a 'free' media site can think about optimizing its user experience for audience engagement, audience growth, and return visits. USA Today is not an Optimizely customer, and these ideas are purely hypothetical (And we thank USA Today for the inspiration!)



FIRST AREA TO OPTIMIZE: ARTICLE PAGE ENGAGEMENT

Article pages are designed to help audiences (1) engage with the content in front of them, (2) share content through their social networks, and (3) find more articles to read on the site. It's important to balance page elements in a way that they are not distracting. Here are some ideas to try:

1. FONT SIZE

Do hard news articles do better with smaller fonts while lifestyle or entertainment pieces do better with larger fonts?

2. IMAGES

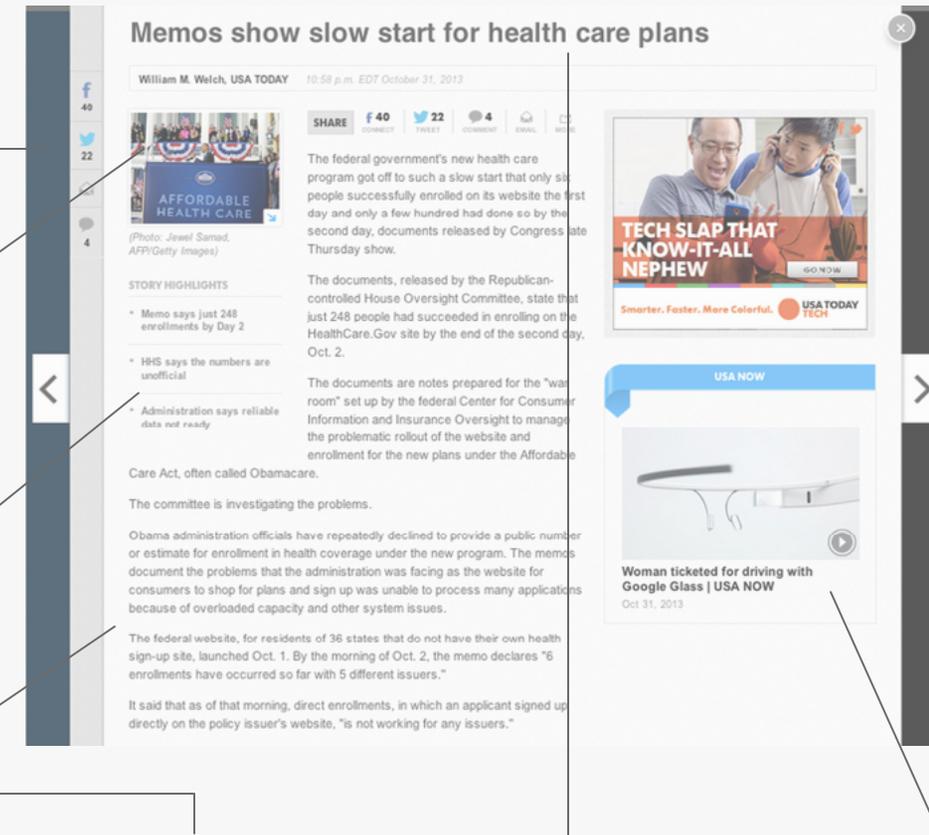
Does including more images in articles increase engagement? Even if more images is expensive, if it has a significantly positive effect on engagement it's worth testing.

3. HIGHLIGHTS

The left side of many articles includes key takeaways. Should the highlights headline or text be larger?

4. TEXT LAYOUT

What should the width of the article be? Should the width vary based on the reader's monitor size or is a standard narrow width good for all?



5. SOCIAL MEDIA BUTTONS

Does changing the placement of social media buttons (or making them bigger) increase article sharing activity?

6. HEADLINES

Do some headlines generate more social media shares than others?

7. ARTICLE RECOMMENDATIONS.

How many pieces of content should USA Today display in the right rail?

Here is an example of how Upworthy, an Optimizely customer, uses website optimization to facilitate the site's user engagement goals:

THERE ARE 100 IDEAS WE WANT TO TEST IN THE NEAR FUTURE. OPTIMIZELY ADDS TO OUR ABILITY TO MOVE QUICKLY AND BUILD ON OUR SITE - TEST EARLY, TEST OFTEN, LAUNCH EARLY, LAUNCH OFTEN.

PETER KOECHLEY
CO-FOUNDER, UPWORTHY

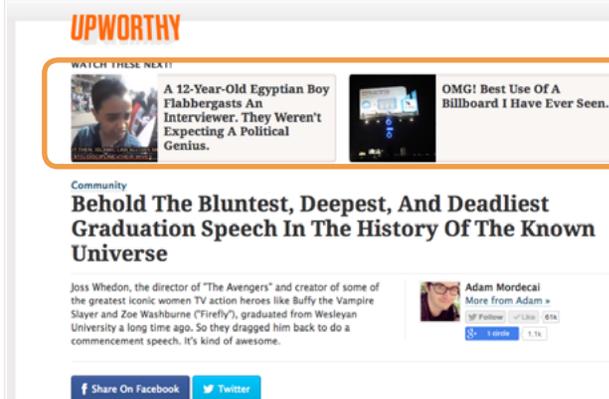
Case Study: Upworthy



OPTIMIZELY CUSTOMER SINCE:

Early 2012

OVERVIEW: Upworthy wanted to understand whether adding a recommended content module would impact social shares (Upworthy's primary business goal).



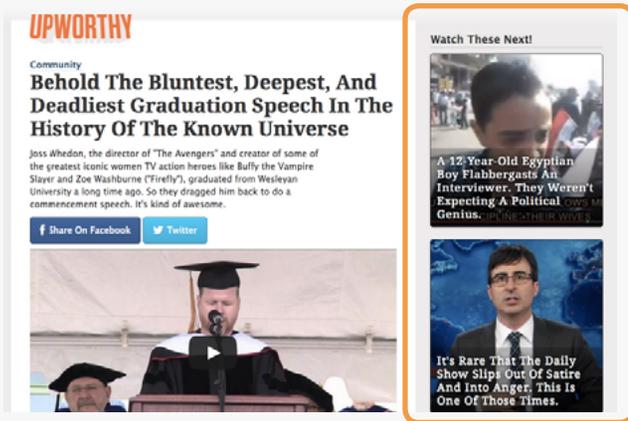
One variation displayed recommended content nuggets about the feature.

THE RATIONALE

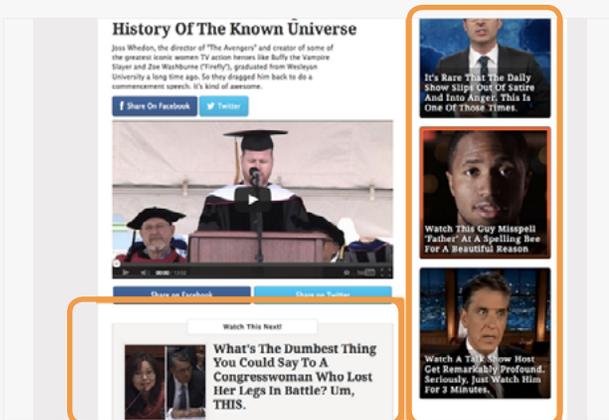
- In the earliest days of Upworthy, our goal was to find people on social media and grab their attention," explains Peter, "and then get them to share back out to social media as well. We wanted to optimize that loop. As Upworthy's audience grew, the team realized that the site's design was not keeping up with the needs of frequent visitors. Engagement was growing and people were spending more time on the site, but it was difficult to find additional content after landing on a particular video or graphic. Users wanted to dig deeper, but there was no clear way to find a second piece of content.
- Upworthy's team believed that adding a recommended content module would decrease the number of social shares for each article on average. Upworthy had already done a lot of testing around their content, and they found that when they added distractions, user sharing decreased. They were hesitant about adding a module, but decided to test out a variety of designs and layouts. They hoped to find an option that would provide users with more content without getting in the way of those who wanted to share on social media.

A 'PEOPLE FIRST' APPROACH

- The Upworthy team opted to take a two-phased approach. For phase one, they built and tested 7 different placements and layouts for the recommended content mobile module to see which would perform best. They tested content nuggets above and below the featured content, as well as left and right sidebars, and combinations that included a footer.



Another variation tested a right sidebar module.



One variation tested a sidebar and a footer module.

THE FINDINGS

- After running the test for just a few days, Upworthy uncovered some surprising results. In each variation, the recommended content module actually increased both engagement and sharing.
- With recommended content, it turns out that users would eventually land on something they wanted to share if they didn't feel like sharing that first piece of content.
- The team adopted the placement for the recommended content module that performed the best -- the right sidebar displaying three recommended content options.

THE REFINEMENT PROCESS

- After deciding on a module's page location, phase two began. The Upworthy team wire-framed several different designs and tested them out. They tested different images sizes, fonts, texts, layouts, and spacing.
- The Upworthy team finalized the right sidebar module with a minimal design. This concept increased shares by 28%

LEARNINGS

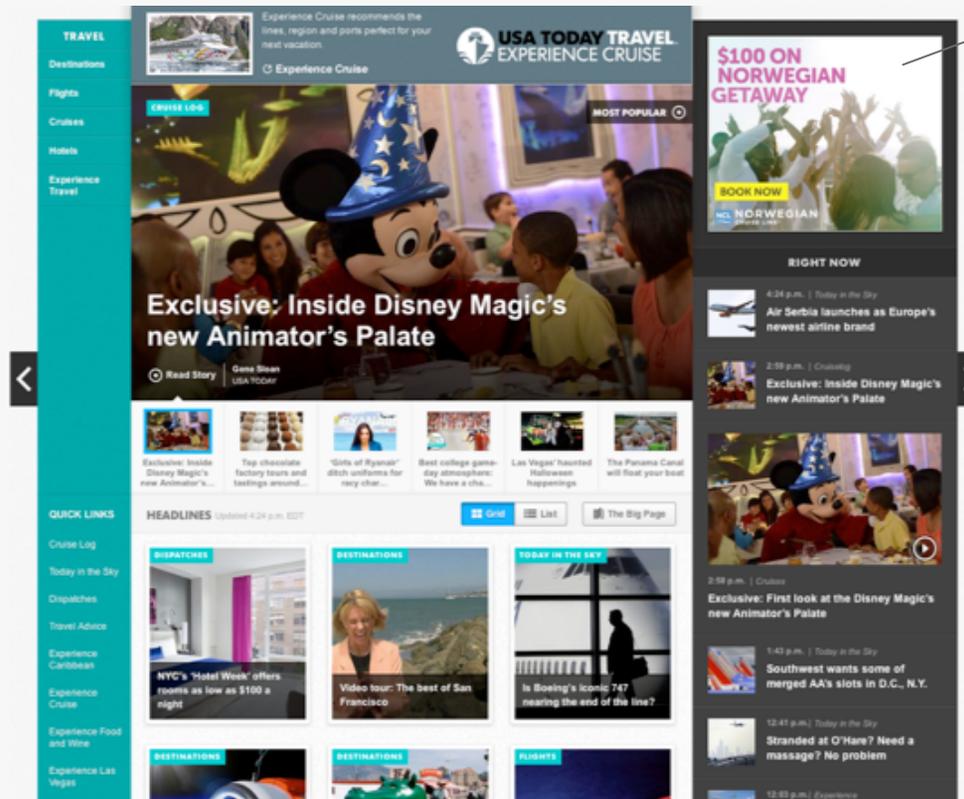
- Optimize for maximum shareability. The more people enjoy and engage with a website's content, the more likely they are to share.
- Test and iterate. Upworthy's two-phased approach solidified the strongest placement for the module so that the team could devote maximum focus to the the details. This process helped Upworthy optimize its user experience.
- Question assumptions. Upworthy's team originally believed that adding a content module would decrease social sharing. Without Optimizely, Upworthy would not have learned that the recommended content module would actually be a valuable addition to helping grow the site.

SECOND AREA TO OPTIMIZE: MONETIZATION

Ad revenue is mission-critical for many media sites. Media companies will typically work with third party revenue partners to determine which ads to serve. Advertisements typically include a mix of direct-sold sponsorships and partnerships with ad networks (like Google AdSense) and real-time bidding (RTB) auctions (like DoubleClick). Here are some ideas for media companies to test.

7. PARTNER

Do some advertising partners deliver, on average, higher monetization than others? Which media partners are exceeding expectations? Which aren't?



8. AD PLACEMENT

Which ads are more effective in driving click-throughs to direct advertisers? How should placement determine pricing of available ad inventory? Does in-article placement detract from user experience?

9. TRADEOFFS

How aggressive can media companies be with advertising before quality and user engagement start to decline? For instance, should a media brand place ads above or below the fold?

05

INTERPRETING RESULTS AND PERSONALIZATION

Now comes the fun part - audience segmentation and targeting. Website testing can help answer questions of 'what' website changes impact user experience and monetization. Segmentation can answer the question of " who". Initial results will give users a surface level understanding of their users. Brands that want to get a deeper understanding and exponentially increase the opportunity to monetize need to dive further into the data. With segmentation you can begin learning how specific sections of your visitors react towards experiments and act accordingly. This can add a layer of sophistication allowing you to increase conversions even more.

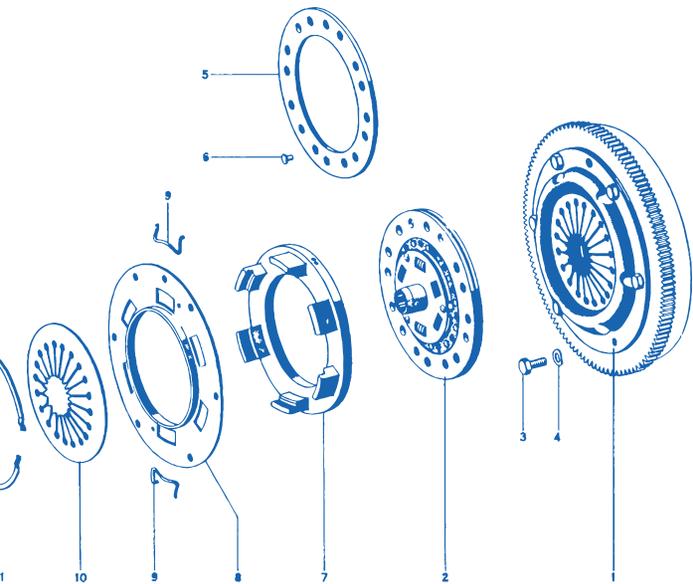
Once insights are gleaned and additional tests are hypothesized, the next iteration of tests can include a deeper level of personalization. Optimizely provides the ability to easily target custom segments that already exist as well as any additional audience segments you desire.

Segments that are important for media companies to measure and target can include the following:

- **GEOLOCATION** (i.e. Segment audiences by metropolitan area or zip code)
 - Subscription-based sites: Show different pricing for users coming from outside the U.S.
 - 'Free' media sites: Show different article titles and change content for users coming from outside the U.S.
 - Headline Testing: Show different article headlines for users coming in from different cities within the U.S.
- **MOBILE & TABLET VS. DESKTOP** (i.e. Segment audiences by iPad-only vs. desktop users)
 - Subscription-based sites: Show tablet users a promotional image that conveys reading news on the go, and desktop users a image of reading the paper at home on the computer.
 - 'Free' media website: Test different sizes of social media sharing buttons for audiences coming in through different devices.
- **REFERRAL SOURCE**
 - Social Media vs. Direct vs. Paid. Show different articles and CTA's to people coming from Facebook vs. people who typed your URL directly and vs. people who came in through a recommendation engine.

Other custom defined segments to target by are:

- **RECENT VISITORS** - Welcome recent readers back to the site, and try offering them an exclusive offer for a free newsletter or paid subscription sign-up.
- **MULTIPLE BLOCKED** - If a reader has attempted to read a number of articles behind a paywall, target them with a message that emphasizes what they're missing by not signing up.
- **CATEGORY SPECIFIC** - Readers who view science articles might be inspired by subscription promotions that highlight science related content.



NOW IT'S YOUR TURN

The secret to getting started is – well, getting started. Launch your first experiment, and learn as much as you can from the process. Test, learn, iterate, and repeat.

Website optimization has the potential to transform your media business – you have the potential to increase the efficiency of your traffic acquisition initiatives (increasing revenue while decreasing costs). Bring your teams together to form a truly cohesive testing strategy.

Optimizely was founded to simplify and streamline the website optimization process. Our founding team realized that for many organizations, technical bottlenecks were the norm rather than the exception – limiting how quickly companies could access actionable data.

Since launching, Optimizely has run more than 300,000 experiments and simplified website optimization for more than 6,000 companies ranging from major consumer brands, small businesses, SaaS companies, E-Commerce companies, and of course – media companies.

Optimizely can help you boost conversion rates. [Click here](#) to learn more.

To test out Optimizely or
request a demo, visit
[OPTIMIZELY.COM](https://www.optimizely.com)



ABOUT OPTIMIZELY

Optimizely is the world's leading web optimization platform, providing A/B testing, multivariate testing, and website personalization for individuals and organizations with and without technical expertise. The platform's ease of use empowers organizations to conceive of and run experiments that help them make better data-driven decisions. With targeting and segmentation using powerful real-time data, Optimizely meets the diverse needs of any business looking to deliver unique web experiences to their visitors.

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APPENDIX

- 1: <http://digiday.com/publishers/whos-winning-at-volume-in-publishing/>
- 2: <http://www.wired.com/insights/2013/04/the-state-of-social-sharing-in-2013-infographic/>
- 3: <http://www.worldwidewebsize.com/>
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