

# NEW READERS EQUALS NEW REVENUE

Discovering the world of readers  
beyond your backyard

## Hotsheets

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Before this century, a magazine derived its audience—its readership—through whatever means it could to get a printed copy of its magazine into a subscriber's hands, or the hands of a newsstand buyer, or almost any other means from public place to pass along readership to newspaper distribution. Such was the makeup of a magazine's 'circulation.'

Fast-forward to the 21st century and we have magazines consumed in print, on computers, in tablets, on smartphones. The business model last century was simple. Distribute a lot of magazines and aside from any reader revenue, make money from the sale of ad space within those magazines. This century the business model isn't so simple. Sure there are derivatives of advertising revenue and more ways to distribute magazines, but the market value of the online advertising cost has tanked compared to its print predecessor. What might have been a \$150 cpm last century in print might be a \$15 cpm online this century. The saying goes that you can't sustain a business when the value of your revenue model declines by 90%. And that's true if nothing changes.

So far this century almost every magazine has endeavoured to manifest its readership as it has always done: distribute the magazine as best you can across all platforms and create a 'circulation' worthy of advertising related revenue. The mix of content and distribution might include print, or not, digital editions, website articles and a host of other iterations. But the approach in readership and revenue remains the same in that when combining it all, the magazine's intention is to represent a 'circulation' worthy of advertising attention.

What can we change in this 21st century that will impact readership and in turn move revenue upwards?

Starting with circulation, if you view the magazine's circulation as its backyard, then it's fair to say that those readers making up its backyard have gotten there mostly because they knew or learned about who lived in that backyard, as in the magazine and its brand. And yet there is a whole world of readers outside the backyard, even outside Canadian borders quite unfamiliar with who lives there or that the backyard even exists in the first place. Yet droves of people online search all sorts of things non-stop that interest them, and that magazine articles of varying types so effectively address, yet never appear as a search result or simply aren't accessible, hidden under lock and key in archived issues or are publicly inaccessible on a magazine's website.

Consider Rogers Texture, formerly Next Issue, which initially boosted magazine titles almost exclusively, and relatively recently promotes articles to draw attention to its titles. And yet searching an article within Texture is impossible. And no search results on Google for a longtail query for example will turn up Texture as a source. And maybe it shouldn't, but therein lays the conundrum in developing and fostering dynamic magazine audiences in the 21st century; which comes first, the brand or the content? Magazines generally push the brand first and the content second. Readers generally yearn for the content before they commit to the brand.

Last century, in similar fashion, music sales were dominated by album promotion, regardless of what technology delivered the content. This century iTunes (among others) unlocked the power of the single to sample and to purchase. Magazines have yet to unleash the power of the article. Yes, articles get shared across the internet, but usually starting with someone familiar with the brand, the magazine. Yet there are countless readers searching for quality content addressing their questions and their interests. And for some reason relevant, valued, quality content eludes them as it is contained in a host of magazines unfamiliar to them. Adjust the flow of your magazine content online, enabling your content to cross the paths of subject search oriented readers versus brand oriented readers, and you create a 21st century aggregate reader community existing with your backyard and well beyond.



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Some simple steps on the road to empowering your article content include:

- Posting articles as independent URLs and within the articles including links back to the magazine website or other specific location.
- Establishing sub-domains or separate sites housing article content, each of which link back to your website or other designated location.
- Re-purpose or re-release archived articles, especially those that appeared in print only, and post them as suggested here or on your website.
- Create separate independent themed article sites again linking back.

And why will any of these efforts lead to increases in revenue, you ask? Consider:

- The readership of your magazine's 'backyard' is finite for the most part and other than the ingenuity of your sales efforts, your revenue results remain finite as well.
- Releasing and posting article content outside your website enhances search capability, attracts previously inaccessible audiences and in turn delivers incremental readership, thereby increasing your overall 'numbers' (acceptable by Comscore to aggregate, btw).
- Articles and collections of articles attracting search-based readership by definition represent higher valued real estate (cpm) for advertising owing to the engaged, subject specific readership generated.
- The increased aggregate audience achieved, combined with the increased number of article sites, fosters increased advertising real estate, meaning more spots for more advertisers to more readers (whether that be traditional display ads, or sponsored content, or promotions and so on).
- The conversion rate for new readers discovering your brand through your article content and becoming repeat readers, website visitors and subscribers is potentially greater or certainly equivalent to any of the marketing practices you currently employ—and at far less cost.

More can be said on how releasing article content does not conflict with a magazine's policy over paywalls, other password accessible protocols, nor compromise fee based archived issue access or a host of other considerations, but that is a subject for another Hotsheet.

Readership attracts revenue. Unencumbered article content attracts readership. Three steps creating that path, euphemistically speaking:

Find them

Teach them

Bring them back home

