Taking engagement to the next level

How to continue succeeding with digital subscriptions after taking the first steps?

Jostein Larsen Østring
Vice President, Development
Amedia: Norway’s largest local media company – 73 traditional newspapers and one online national
2014: The «plus» model

A given share of editorial stories – and a number of defined categories – are subscriber-only

Today +60% of all articles subscriber-only
April 7th, 2016: Editors in the 30 largest newsrooms were presented with our **new editorial strategy**
My colleagues in Editorial Development are working with the newsrooms to help them reach their audience

- The department’s main task is to **support the newsrooms** to improve their editorial content and attract new audience

- The department has expertise in **editorial management, data journalism, video, data analysis** and **qualitative analysis**

- **9 of 10 employees** in the department have a journalist background and have worked in local media themselves
It has paid off
Growth comes from digital, compensating for decline in print

Official subscriber numbers, original local newspapers by end of year
How?
The more you read, the less chance of churn

- Reads plus-stories less than every other day: **7-12% churn**
- Reads plus-stories more often than every day: **5-6% churn**
- Reads every day: **3-4% churn**
First step: Know your subscribers

Bergensavisen on March 12, 2019:

- **2,498 subscribers** under 35 years of age
- **2,735 subscribers** over 65 years of age
- **1,302 subscribers** from Bergenhus (city center)
- **1,621 subscribers** from Åsane (suburbs)
- **65% (!) of logged-in subscribers** were men
Engage them by writing stories relevant to people with different interests and points of view.
Observe: Different stories are read by different people. Relevance goes beyond topic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Titel (med lenke)</th>
<th>Plusslesere V</th>
<th>Smittesetid</th>
<th>Alder (snitt)</th>
<th>Andel som feller av</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreldre vil ikke stille på dugnad: Sier tvert nei til omstridt vaktordning [dashboard]</td>
<td>5.361</td>
<td>1:49</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syoenbarnsmor funnet død - sann pågirepet [dashboard]</td>
<td>5.358</td>
<td>2:31</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 år gammel småbarnsfar mistet livet på E16 [dashboard]</td>
<td>3.694</td>
<td>1:06</td>
<td>51.5</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Da portalen ble demontert dukket 1700-talls dekor opp [dashboard]</td>
<td>3.313</td>
<td>1:14</td>
<td>51.2</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meteorologen: - Det har blåst fra seg [dashboard]</td>
<td>3.229</td>
<td>1:06</td>
<td>50.7</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etablirer nytt russenter i sentrum: - Håper naboene synes det blir kult [dashboard]</td>
<td>2.639</td>
<td>1:31</td>
<td>51.7</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lokale talenter smilende av falsk agent: - Foreldre må være våkne [dashboard]</td>
<td>2.587</td>
<td>1:59</td>
<td>48.6</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frielse-produksjonen sier opp assattse: - Krevende [dashboard]</td>
<td>2.381</td>
<td>1:26</td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Forberedelig tragisk og familien er hardt rammet [dashboard]</td>
<td>2.192</td>
<td>1:20</td>
<td>50.9</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mattilsynet er betydelig over bruk av tremel [dashboard]</td>
<td>2.162</td>
<td>1:37</td>
<td>51.6</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gjorde mistenkelig funn [dashboard]</td>
<td>2.151</td>
<td>2:04</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naboer raser mot Entra - igjen [dashboard]</td>
<td>2.611</td>
<td>1:25</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin selger høytalere som koster mer enn tre Teslaer [dashboard]</td>
<td>1.980</td>
<td>1:57</td>
<td>46.4</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustrert busspassasjer: - Flere slet med å få på seg bilet [dashboard]</td>
<td>1.887</td>
<td>1:26</td>
<td>51.5</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elfreds plan for å fjerne russene [dashboard]</td>
<td>1.840</td>
<td>1:49</td>
<td>50.1</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hver krok blir utnyttet i det gamle bergenhuset [dashboard]</td>
<td>1.624</td>
<td>1:51</td>
<td>48.8</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brann-trekket som kjenner underholdning [dashboard]</td>
<td>1.210</td>
<td>1:38</td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>«En fremmed mann sto og så på meg i stuen i 04-tiden. Nå er jeg både sikt og redde» [dashboard]</td>
<td>1.197</td>
<td>1:38</td>
<td>51.3</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denne uken er det storkontroll i Bergen [dashboard]</td>
<td>1.137</td>
<td>1:22</td>
<td>48.1</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politimannen goetbot bot, men angret. Det kan koste ham jobben. [dashboard]</td>
<td>1.074</td>
<td>1:16</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Well read in the age group 35-44

Well read by subscribers under 35

Well read in Bergenhus (downtown)

Well read by subscribers over 65

Etablirer nytt russenter i sentrum: - Håper naboene synes det blir kult!
Let’s dig a little deeper. Geography counts!

The readers from Fjellhamar had an average reading time on 142 seconds, while others read between 50-90 seconds.
Sometimes geography means everything

The readers from Kløfta had an **average reading time on 57 seconds**, readers from Jessheim read for **50 seconds**, while average reading time for the rest was around **15 seconds**.
On Sunday March 10th, **93 percent** of Østlendingen’s readers in Trysil/Engerdal found interesting journalism, while only **84 percent** in Nord-Østerdal. List of articles shows few stories with a strong appeal to readers in Nord-Østerdal.
Next step: Understand your potential

Age groups: Share of population with a subscription

Geography: Share of households with a subscription
Age: A substantial part of our growth is coming from younger people

Antall abonnenter pr. aldersgruppe, endring YoY, uke 9 2019

In total: +8,305 subscribers YoY
What do young people read? Again: It’s a question about relevance, not topic

Tree stories about housing/real estate:

Andreas (21) sparte 350.000 kroner på tre år. Nå eier han 83 kvadratmeter med terrasse og gressplen

På denne tomta skal de bygge luksusboliger

John og Torunn de første inn i Torgkvartalet

1,572 readers, 463 under the age of 45
1,256 readers, 257 under the age of 45
1,266 readers, 167 under the age of 45
Age of reader tends to reflect the age of interviewee

Nichlas (25) slått til blods på byen i Tromsø. Mann dømt til fengsel i 120 dager

Especially well read by subscribers in age group 25-34

Slik gir Amund (37) barna en god start på dagen: - Jeg tar det som en treningsøkt

Well read by subscribers in age group 35-44

Når Tine (27) ankommer en ulykke må hun ta på seg det alvorlige ansiktet

Byruten til Nichlas Ferdinam Nielsen endte i en blodpøl på gulvet på gatejakkenet.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lenke</th>
<th>Tittel</th>
<th>Abonnenter med kjent alder totalt</th>
<th>Abonnenter &lt;45</th>
<th>Abonnenter &lt;45 som leste plussartikkel</th>
<th>Avvik 35-44</th>
<th>Avvik 45-54</th>
<th>Avvik 55-64</th>
<th>Avvik 65+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Spillet har tatt helt av blant skoleelever i Tromsø: - Mange her på skolen tar det alt for langt</td>
<td>2315</td>
<td>902</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>-5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Stor bildeserie: Toppstening på karaokefestivalen til Driv på lærderag</td>
<td>2448</td>
<td>865</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>-1%</td>
<td>-1%</td>
<td>-1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bursdag blir invadert av brunsregler: - Det verste er at de er søkk høvlig</td>
<td>3950</td>
<td>837</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>-7%</td>
<td>-1%</td>
<td>-1%</td>
<td>-2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Er dette Thomas bestes burger? Svarer er ja</td>
<td>1746</td>
<td>636</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>-2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Siv Hege skal styre Nord-Norges største badeanlegg: - Vi har ikke en kultur for å bade i Tromsø</td>
<td>1600</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>-1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Innroppemeren står forskyldt på treningsavviket i norsk toppklubb: - Er det i snitt 1-2 timer mer på anløpet her hver dag enn jeg var i TIL</td>
<td>1513</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>-1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Anbjoern (85) var norsk soldat i Tyskland etter 2. verdenskrig: - Vi var de eneste ungkærene i landet</td>
<td>1584</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>-7%</td>
<td>-5%</td>
<td>-3%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Silke blir Tromsøbunadet</td>
<td>594</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>-4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>-2%</td>
<td>-4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Denne hytte sikrert tromsørerktanken gjør pris i internasjonal konkurranser</td>
<td>936</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>-4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Dette er de ti dyreste billedelgelløsninger i Tromsø akkurat nå</td>
<td>895</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>-4%</td>
<td>-5%</td>
<td>-2%</td>
<td>-4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>To av de tre hurtigbøkene er ute av drift etter at propellbatteri knakk. Fører til forsinket og reduksjon kapasitet: - Situasjonen er uhyrebar</td>
<td>983</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>-5%</td>
<td>-5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>-4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Side 20
We also have a gender problem: 60% of our readers are men.
Why don’t we appeal to female readers?

- Share of articles w. female names: 34%
- Share of articles w. male names: 66%
Newspapers with more female sources seem to get more female subscribers

Relationship between share of female names in articles and share of female subscriptions across 19 newspapers
Women tend to do bulk of reading in topics we do not cover well

Articles from two newspapers in the weeks 33-35 by category

Numbers show over- and underrepresentation of female readers on articles pr. category due to click rate from the frontpage

Quick-exit before ten seconds is not counted as reading
The same categories also have a better representation of female sources.
...and we have a dashboard for this as well
The difficult part isn’t knowledge, but acting on it

- **Accept that it matters who you talk to**
  - 34% female sources tends to gives 34% female readers

- **Involve the whole newsroom**
  - Evaluate every morning and during the day: Do we have the right stories for our target groups?
  - Someone with overview and mandate (often the news editor) must take the responsibility to ensure that you have the right stories
  - Make all existing departments (sports, politics, etc.) responsible
  - Ask yourself: Can we give this story another perspective? Can we interview a younger person?

- **Find out what to do less of**
  - Find out what to de-prioritize in order to do more of something else. A bit less sports might give you the opportunity to write more about education

- **You’ll have to be a stayer**
  - If you stop focusing on this after three successful months, the success is probably going to end
What to do first? The hierarchy of editorial needs

1. **Organization, leadership and culture**
   - is crucial to succeed with everything else

2. **Write enough well read stories every day**
   - means more than anything else to keep and recruit subscribers

3. **Be first on the breaking news**
   - is crucial to make subscribers and non-subscribers to revisit

4. **Hit the right target groups**
   - to recruit young subscribers and subscribers in the most important geographies

5. **Video**
   - great willingness to pay on certain video content, and a natural part of journalism

6. **New formats and channels**
   - such as podcasts, Instagram, etc.
Thank you!
Since 2016, we have been working closely with the newsrooms

- On organizational issues, including leadership and culture
- On how to make the content more relevant to readers
- On explaining the strategy of Amedia and making the editors owning the strategy

We work to empower the editor-in-chief. The editor is the key to engage the entire newsroom
When more subscribers find something to read, the number of digital subscribers tend to rise.

- A rise in plus readership means that new subscribers establish a reading routine and becomes loyal.
- Sales are practically worth nothing without an increase in readership.
Week 43, 2019

612,572 subscribers

It has paid off
Editorial analysis: What we produced most of, turned out to be the least read
2016-2018: Doubled readership in politics, higher readership in all categories

Average readership pr. story, 2016 vs. 2018
Age groups: In week 9, Amedia had 53,863 subscribers under 40 years and 61,564 subscribers over 80 years