

JOHNSTON PRESS PLC

About Johnston Press:

Johnston Press is one of the biggest publishers in the UK regional press with 300 weekly newspapers, 18 daily titles and 323 local websites. Each month their news brands touch the lives of more than 29m people across our publishing regions, delivering extensive coverage of local news, events and information

Johnston Press provide news and information services to local and regional communities through our extensive portfolio of hundreds of publications and websites. Their titles span Scotland, the North East, West Yorkshire, the North West & Isle of Man, South Yorkshire, the South, Midlands and Northern Ireland - delivering extensive coverage of local news, events and information.

RESULTS

In partnership with News Consumer Insights, Johnston Press was able to:

- Gather insights from their readers to understand what they want from a newsletters across the Johnston Press network.
- Launched a revised newsletter strategy where they've seen continued growth of sessions
- Grow Email traffic to be over 2% of total traffic to the site.
- Drive a significantly more engaged user segment, including users sessions being approximately a minute longer than the average session duration.

News Consumer Insights and Johnston Press: Increasing traffic and building a more engaged audience across the Johnston Press network

Publishers are rediscovering that email newsletters are a reliable way to reach loyal readers and deepen their relationships with audiences. For example, The Washington Post has more than 75 newsletters written by reporters and editors in their respective verticals – all overseen by a newsletter and alerts editor. Since 2016, The Post has increased traffic from newsletters by 129 percent and added more than 1 million newsletter subscribers in the past year.

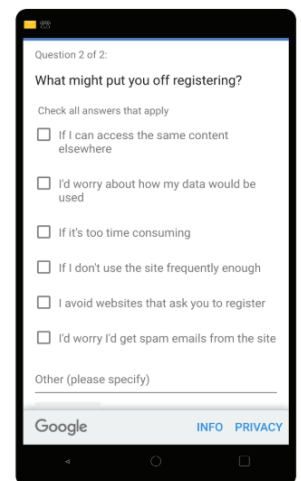
It has been reported that a typical email user spends an average of 51 seconds reading each email newsletter which is why publishers of all sizes should invest in improving their newsletter content and acquisition strategies.

Applying News Consumer Insights' framework to identify underperforming traffic sources

Earlier this year, we launched the News Consumer Insights tool and partnered with the Johnston Press to better understand how to drive reader engagement across their portfolio of local sites and drive engagement and loyalty.

Using the industry benchmarks from the News Consumer Insights report, we were able to identify "email traffic" as an area where the Johnston Press was underperforming against industry standards. This is a channel that is often neglected in acquisition strategies but is crucial to driving loyalty.

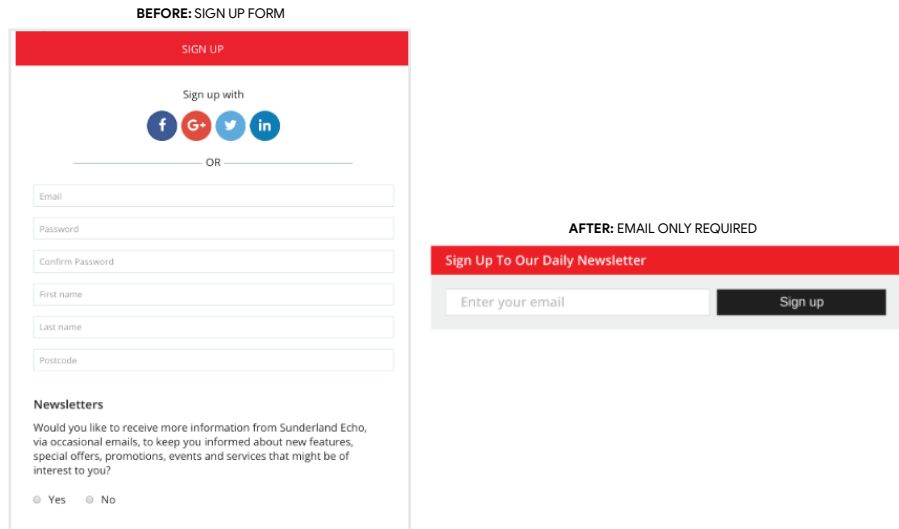
Using the recommendations from the playbook chapter - "[Refining your value proposition thanks to user feedback in the playbook](#)", we worked with Johnston Press to gather insights from their readers to understand what they want from a newsletter. We implemented a Google Surveys research strategy to better understand what would boost newsletter signups. We sent the survey below to 1K readers of sites in the Johnston Press network.



About News Consumer Insights:

The News Consumer Insights framework and dashboard emerged out of a series of findings from Project Fuse. Project Fuse was an initiative in 2017 to help publishers better understand their audience segments, as well as the value of individual users, and to inform data-driven tactical decisions around audience development efforts.

Quick Tip: Always put yourself in your readers shoes. How much data/information will they want to exchange to sign up for a newsletter. What’s the value exchange you are offering them?

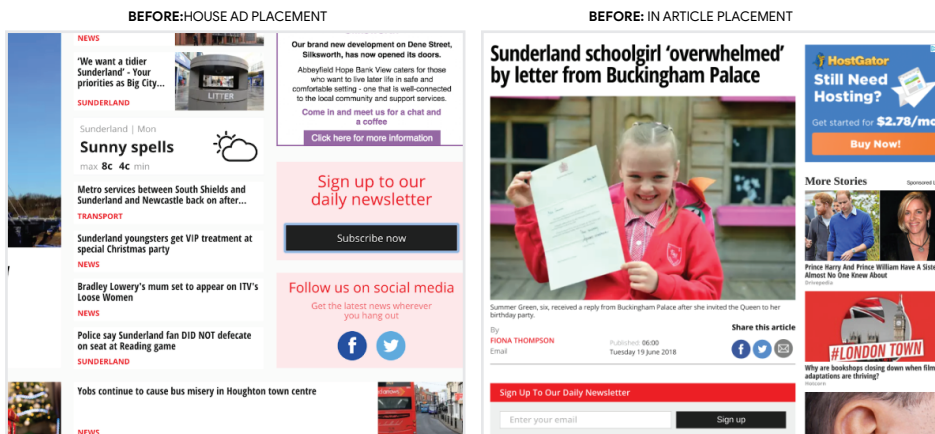


Following that we partnered on increasing the visibility and UX of their call to action sign up process. Using the best practices from the playbook chapter - “[Newsletter Acquisition & Content Optimization](#)”, we reviewed the current signup process, used the insights from the survey results and looked at ways to increase newsletter sign up process.

The first thing we did was amend and simplify the email newsletter sign up process.

Quick Tip: Your newsletter subscription process should be: simple and quick, in the right place and relevant and attractive. If you have a newsletter subscription field on your site, ask yourself:

- Is your newsletter subscription field easy to access? Is it easy to find for a new reader?
- Do you have a clear call to action? Have you A/B tested different calls to action?
- Can your readers subscribe to your newsletter by filling less than two fields?
- Can a reader subscribe to your newsletter(s) without having to login to your site?



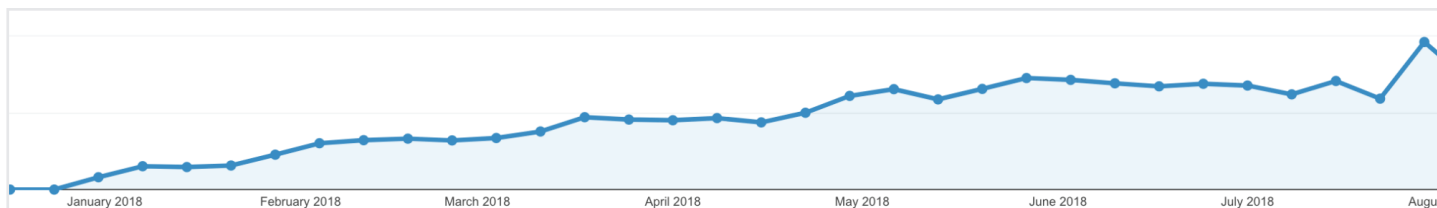
Following that we worked on increasing the visibility of the sign up call-to-action units, moving them from using a house ad placement to be included in all article pages.

Some asked if these in article placements should be above the fold or below the fold? Ideally, both. But we recommend A/B testing to find the optimal placement. Slide-in widgets are also a good idea while pop-ups are usually bad for UX (even though their conversion rate is high).

Growing engaged users and email sessions across the Johnston Press network

Since launching the revised newsletter strategy we have seen continued growth of sessions month on month and has driven continued engaged traffic since launch. Email traffic has now grown to be 2% of total traffic to the site.

We also see that the users coming from this traffic source are significantly more engaged with a 5% lower bounce rate then the site average, over 2.5 pages per session and approximately an extra 60 seconds average session duration.



“With Google Surveys we unearthed insights about our readers and what they expect from us. The tool allows us to validate a hunch from our most valuable audience - our readers.

ANDY FLETCHER,
HEAD OF PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT, JOHNSTON PRESS

Just the beginning of Johnston Press using the News Consumer Insights framework

“We see newsletters as a key engagement tool with our readers. From the initial results we have seen good incremental traffic and high engagement vs other sources of traffic. Having taken on these learning’s, there is a goal to launch more specific newsletters to different audiences to meet our readers needs.” Nigel Leigh CDO Johnston Press

Seeing the results of such simple changes, Johnston Press plans to apply the News Consumer Insights framework to several new initiatives. Using the report, they can better identify the profiles of potential subscribers based on engagement, referral source and device usage, and then apply that data to broaden the scope of marketing tactics such as increasing the loyalty of their readers by optimizing their email newsletter pipeline and by focusing on the speed of their websites.