

Ebook

# The publisher's ultimate guide to scaling a branded content program

Maximizing performance to  
grow your revenue potential



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CHAPTER 1

# Branded content for today's savvy advertiser

Mike Rucker, Vice President of NBC News Brand Studio, joined NBC News Group in 2017 to establish a branded content team for news. Instead of focusing on brand awareness like NBCU's other branded content studios, Rucker made performance his team's north star.

Rucker recognized changes in the branded content industry since the early days of the advertorial. Branded or sponsored content — media that publishers create on a brand's behalf — is now a go-to for advertisers to increase brand awareness or engagement.

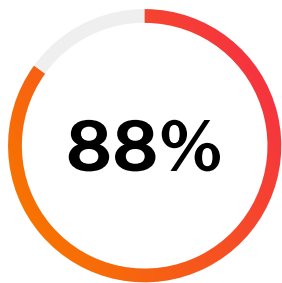


Advertiser spending on branded content has a compound annual growth rate of [40 percent](#).



## Branded content for today's savvy advertiser (cont.)

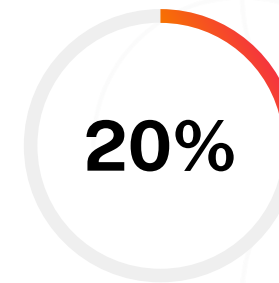
Publishers established in-house branded content teams in response to increased demand. They benefited from increased ad revenue and found that the medium added value for readers – unlike traditional ads.



Today, branded content drives revenue for [88 percent](#) of publishers.

Yet the more ubiquitous branded content became, the more Rucker saw advertisers' priorities and expectations shift. They wanted more tangible results from campaigns. Rucker's laser focus on new industry norms and maximizing performance has paid off.

As NBC News Brand Studio's team refined their campaign strategies and client experience, their business expanded. Thanks to new tools to improve performance and efficiency, the team now runs [20 campaigns](#) at a time on average.



NBC News Brand Studio saw repeat business grow [20 percent](#) year over year.

Shining the spotlight on ROI grew NBC News Brand Studio's new and repeat business. But how can other publishers accomplish this with limited budgets and resources?

## Learn how to succeed in a competitive market

The branded content market has never been more competitive. Despite increased investment in the medium, publishers face challenges scaling programs. However, with the right tools and strategies, any publisher can maximize branded content as a revenue stream and create a stand-out client experience.

In this guide, you'll learn how to:

- Overcome common challenges more effectively
- Use data to build a stronger program
- Optimize your campaign promotion channels

***“Companies are savvy — especially on the B2B side. They know the campaign metrics they can get for their dollar, so expectations are increasing. Branded content studios need to step up to meet that need.”***



**Mike Rucker**  
Vice President  
NBC News Brand Studio

CHAPTER 2

# Rise above common challenges

To meet the expectations of today's savvy advertisers and maximize revenue, branded content programs have to overcome five primary challenges.

1

## Delivering results

Publishers must set realistic campaign benchmarks for advertisers, then meet — or exceed — the promised ROI.

2

## Increasing profitability

When campaigns aren't optimized, publishers spend more on ads than they need to — bumping up operating costs.

At scale, branded content brings in less revenue overall.



### 3 **Communicating with advertisers**

Advertisers want to monitor campaign progress. Publishers spend valuable time each week fielding requests, manually sourcing data from multiple platforms, and building progress reports.

### 4 **Pursuing suitable campaigns**

Not all advertisers or campaigns fit every publisher. Choosing the best opportunities sets the partnership up for success.

### 5 **Navigating a fragmented media landscape**

The sheer number of placements can overwhelm advertisers and publishers alike. Advertisers may struggle to identify what they need, and publisher sales teams might not know what to recommend.

If you overcome these obstacles, your program will become an even stronger revenue stream for your publication. However, you can't see what's working and what's not without precise data.



## CHAPTER 3

# The role of aggregated data in program scaling

With the correct information, your team can make better-informed decisions that:

- Improve campaign performance
- Strengthen relationships with clients
- Fuel program growth

In-depth reporting helps solve every major challenge branded content programs face.

However, campaign data is usually spread across multiple platforms. Aggregating it into a centralized, usable format often needs to be done by hand, which means teams spend more time collecting data than putting it to good use.

Reporting automation tools unify your data in one place, so your team has more time to focus on high-impact tasks to improve your program.

Some of the world's top publishers use automated data aggregation to streamline workflows and scale their programs. BDG Studios' branded content team implemented this technology and saved 30 hours per week. However, saving time is only one of many arguments for aggregated reporting.





## Guiding optimization strategies

Only [10 percent](#) of the content published online daily gets seen — creating millions of missed opportunities. You hit dozens of roadblocks, such as fake ad impressions to low organic traffic, before the intended audience sees your content. Analytics help you navigate these challenges, so your content reaches the right readers while you spend less money getting it in front of them.

When it comes to branded content measurement, distribution and content metrics must be considered separately:

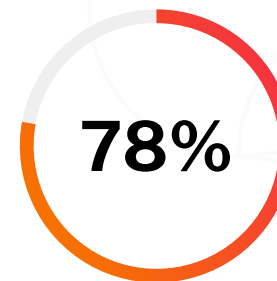
- **Distribution metrics** are social and ad measurement KPIs that follow the user's journey. This can include clicks, views, and engagements.
- **Content metrics** indicate how users interact with your content (the number of reads, average scrolling percentage, and time spent on the page).

## Focus on the proper channels with distribution metrics

Distribution metrics are crucial for finding the right channels for your audience, specific types of campaigns, and more.

Later chapters will teach you best practices for optimizing your campaign distribution channels. While these tips can serve as starting points, ultimately, you must experiment and look at the data to see what works best.

Accessing these metrics in a single place allows you to refine your strategy without manually logging into each platform and pouring campaign metrics into a spreadsheet.



[78 percent](#) of all branded content traffic comes from referrals or social media.

## Tailoring campaigns for engagement with content metrics

Observing how users behave on the page uncovers valuable information about what resonates with your audience. When you study metrics across multiple campaigns, you'll notice patterns that help you to design more compelling content.

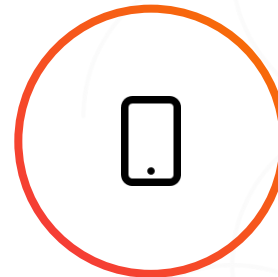
Many publishers look to Google Analytics for on-page data. However, some tools have deeper content metrics that unveil even more valuable insights. With reporting automation tools, like Pressboard by [impact.com](https://www.impact.com), you find metrics such as:

- Active time on page
- Scrolling depth
- Click-through rate
- Engaged read rate (10+ seconds on page)

These metrics also open a new avenue for showing campaign effectiveness to advertisers.



You analyze reader device usage across all your campaigns for the year



You notice that most readers access your content on mobile



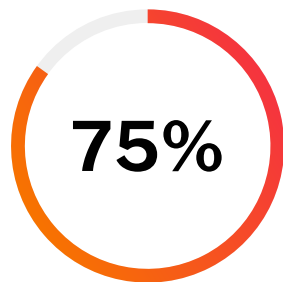
Your team prioritizes mobile optimization by crafting content with short paragraphs, responsive imagery, and lower loading times

## Providing more value to advertisers

Siloed campaign data presents problems for communicating with advertisers. Creating campaign progress and wrap reports takes a lot of time. You must log in to many different platforms and manually pull data into spreadsheets.

When all your campaign metrics are in one place, you can quickly respond to advertiser report requests and improve the client experience. Specific tools can even send responsive campaign dashboards directly to advertisers.

Many top-tier publishers use automated data aggregation to strengthen advertiser relationships.



When Outside's branded content team implemented this technology, it resulted in [75 percent faster](#) reporting for advertisers.

*“When the team presents a campaign wrap report, the client often wants to dig into the data. We’d then have to get back to them and manually re-pull all the data.*

*With aggregated reporting, we can address their questions live on the call in just a few clicks. We’ve received a lot of positive feedback from clients about this.”*



**Alexis Mannello**  
Campaign Performance Manager  
Outside Inc.

## Making the most of your opportunities

With aggregated campaign data, you may see macro trends across campaigns. Your audience may respond better to advertisers in specific verticals.

Cost-per-read campaigns may perform better than their package rate counterparts.

You can use these patterns to magnify the performance and profitability of each campaign by:

- **Setting benchmarks.** If you understand what to expect from campaign performance, you can set realistic expectations with advertisers.
- **Making better recommendations.** Tailoring campaigns and RFPs to specific advertisers gets easier when you know what campaign techniques work.
- **Identifying high-value clients.** With visibility into what resonates with your audience, you can pursue the opportunities that give your publication the best returns.

Gaining these insights with manual data collection is nearly impossible for resource-strapped publishers. You need the ability to compare and contrast metrics across campaigns easily.

*“With the time we saved on reporting, the team can build internal and external case studies to help people better understand our branded content offerings.”*

*We also started developing best practices to share with editors and with other teams within the business.”*



**Veronica Stuart**  
Director of Campaign Performance  
The Trust

## CHAPTER 4

# Tap into your audience for better performance

When advertisers pay for a campaign, they're not just paying for content creation — they're accessing your audience. A thoughtful content distribution plan gets content in front of more people, delivering results for advertisers.

But branded content teams can't just deliver results — they must meet campaign goals while minimizing spending. To do this, you need to strengthen the effectiveness of each channel overall using data.

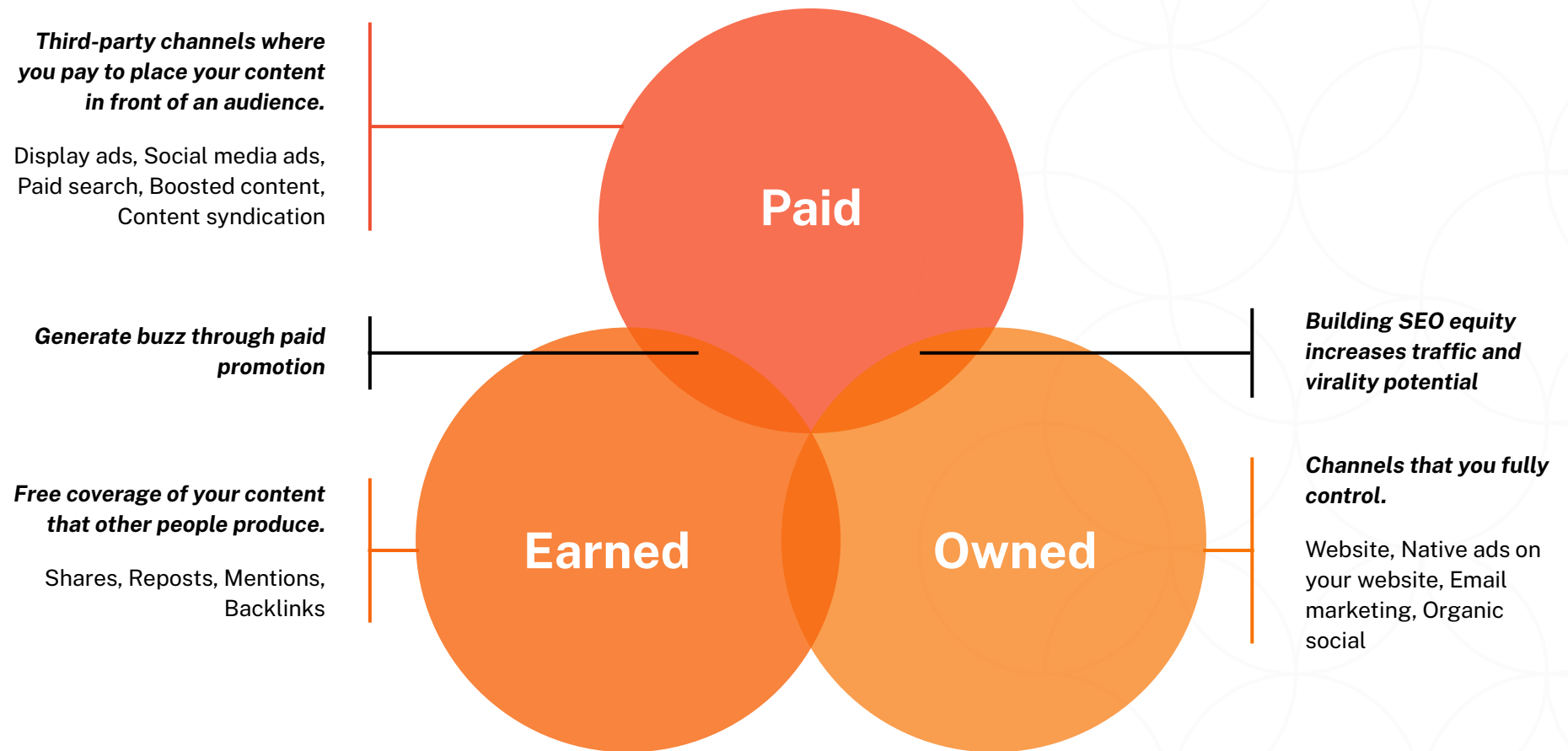
Building a solid foundation of channels makes it easier to:

- Consistently meet campaign goals
- Minimize program operating costs at scale
- Fuel audience-building efforts for your publication



## Tap into your audience for better performance (cont.)

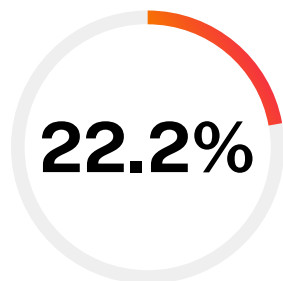
Here are all the channels you must optimize to position your program successfully.



## CHAPTER 5

# How to optimize owned campaign channels

Owned channels expand the reach of branded content and achieve campaign goals without additional spending on ads.



These properties can yield powerful results, with direct traffic accounting for [22.2 percent](#) of users driven to branded content campaigns in 2022.

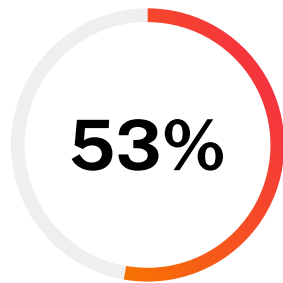
Enhancing owned channel performance may require extensive collaboration with other departments, such as editorial and social. This can generate goodwill with other departments and encourage teamwork in other areas.

Discover how to use your owned channels to their fullest potential.



## Your website holds a captive audience

Branded content shines because your website is already a magnet for readers. However, with native ads, your website can also serve as a distribution channel.

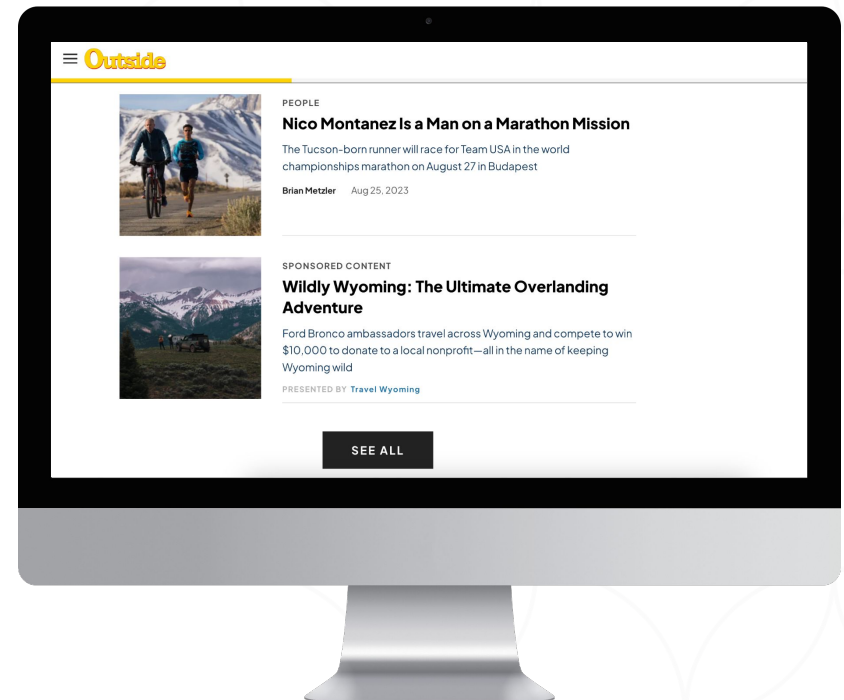


Consumers look at native ads [53 percent more frequently](#) than traditional display ads, making them useful for furthering your reach.

Native ads match the form of your usual content while being clearly marked as advertising. For example, you place a link to your piece on your home page in line with other content.

These ads drive direct traffic at a low-cost, but many publishers still have room to optimize.

These ads drive direct traffic at a low-cost, but many publishers still have room to optimize. Ads distributed through Nativio, a native advertising technology, averaged a [0.14 percent click-through rate](#) for branded content campaigns in 2022.



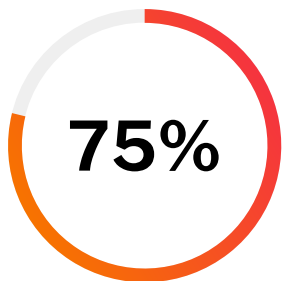


## Creating better native ads

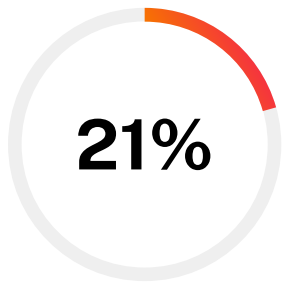
Some ways to optimize your native ads include:

### Clarity

Native ads capitalize on user trust, so you must do everything you can to maintain it.



[Seventy-five percent](#) of consumers trust content and recommendations seen on an editorial environment.



[21 percent more](#) than those that trust user-generated content on social.

Fine-tune your copy so the ad doesn't masquerade as editorial content. No one likes feeling misled.

### Relevance

Native ads typically perform best when they appear in a relevant context. When you place them carefully, you put your content in front of a qualified audience. For example, a native ad for a natural foods store would likely perform well embedded into an organic recipe roundup. Placing the same ad in a cosmetics article may yield different results.

### Testing

Follow ad performance closely and see what works. Over time, compile your findings into a library of best practices. Testing data in your back pocket can also give you an edge when competing with other departments for valuable real estate on your website.

## Creating better native ads (cont.)

### Technology

Specific tools can automate the position and optimization of native ads, maximizing the effectiveness of every placement. Integrating these tools into your stack ensures that your ads are relevant and allows you to glean the best data insights possible from your audience.

*“Make sure your ad delivers on its promise once a user clicks through. Consumers often become disappointed when they click on a native ad that appears to be editorial and are then redirected to a company landing page.”*



**Vitaly Pechersky**  
Co-Founder and COO  
Stackadapt



## How The Washington Post makes branded content front page news

[The Washington Post](#) is one of a select few publishers that continues to see incredible levels of direct traffic. Nearly 50 percent of all desktop traffic they receive is direct. Elana Luppino, Operations Director at The Washington Post's WP BrandStudio, shared her insights on maximizing native ad effectiveness for branded content.

### **Q: How does The Washington Post use direct traffic to support its branded content programs?**

**A:** At least 75-80 percent of our traffic to branded content pages arrives from our onsite promotions targeted to our readers across The Washington Post platforms. Most of the remaining traffic comes from highly targeted social efforts, leveraging our @wpbrandstudio handles to reach Washington Post followers across social platforms.

Since we do not have to buy traffic like many of our competitors, we know our branded content initiatives are reaching our valued readers on behalf of our clients.

### **Q: How do readers feel about native ads and branded content on The Washington Post?**

**A:** We see high performance with our branded content and branded content advertising promotions among readers.

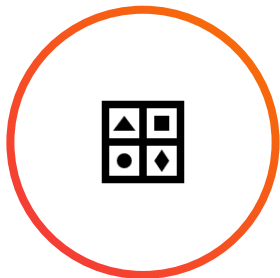
Due to the diversity of topics we cover and our native and high-quality approach to content experiences, our engagement metrics for branded content are comparable with those our analytics team sees for newsroom content.

Our subscribers are often some of our most engaged readers.

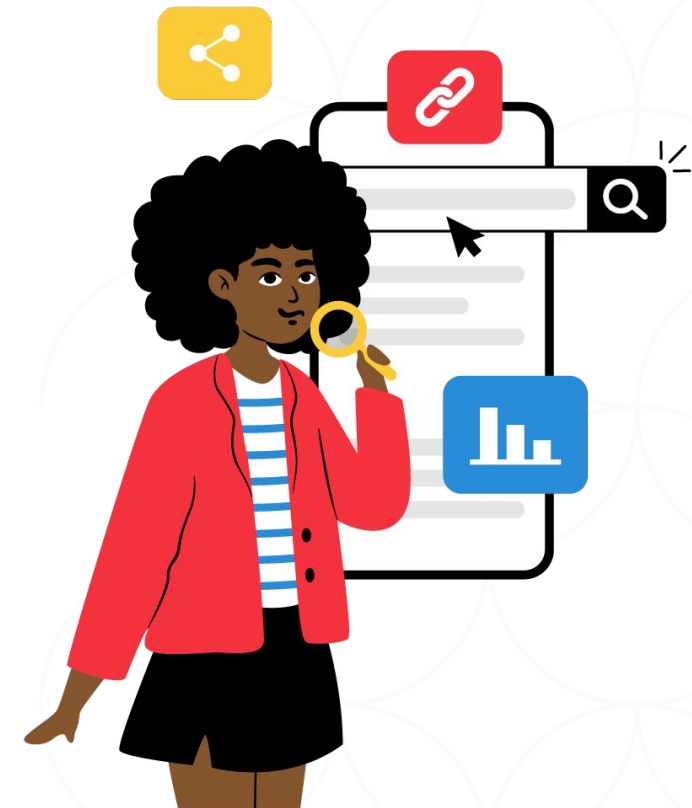
## How The Washington Post makes branded content front page news (cont.)

**Q: Do you see any significant differences in audiences' engagement quality based on how they found the branded content? Which distribution channels receive the highest levels of engagement?**

**A:** This really depends on the content medium, topic, promotional strategy, and target audience. We generally expect to see our highest engagement metrics coming from readers arriving to content from native promotions on desktop devices – but video engagement can be higher when we leverage select social tactics.



Highly interactive pieces find their most active audience among our readers on mobile devices.



## How The Washington Post makes branded content front page news *(cont.)*

**Q:** In what ways are you able to optimize the native ads on your website? Do you have any interesting tips you can share?

**A:** We use our proprietary targeting technology, Zeus Insights, to target our readers based on first-party data on their consumption habits across The Washington Post platform.

We also leverage A/B creative testing strategies across distribution tactics and platforms, optimizing for the highest-performing creative, devices, and ad units throughout the campaign.



## Organic social fuels your online presence

The organic reach of social media content continues to decline thanks to constant algorithm changes. On Facebook, the average post reaches just [5.2 percent](#) of its potential audience.

However, that doesn't mean organic social is useless to your campaign. Your owned social media presence:

- **Increases brand awareness.** Branded content helps build a publication's brand on social media, keeping you top-of-mind for existing readers and providing an early touchpoint for new ones.
- **Connects with your audience.** Nothing feels more direct or personal for a reader than asking a question in the comments and getting an immediate answer from your social media team.
- **Creates authenticity.** Your social media accounts open the conversation with readers, helping them form a deeper connection to your publication (and the advertisers you promote).



## How Narcity's social presence takes campaigns to the next level

[Narcity](#) is one of Canada's top digital publishers, covering a wide range of local topics like food and drinks, city events, travel, and lifestyle. As part of their multichannel approach to campaigns, Narcity's branded content team uses the publication's active social media presence to drive engagement and brand awareness for advertisers.

Minnie Nguyen, Head of Branded Content Studio, described how the team maximizes the publication's active social channels to deliver results.

### Q: How did Narcity build such a large social media presence?

**A:** Narcity has deep roots on social. The publication began as a Facebook group, with the MTL Blog edition, to share nightlife photos of Montreal. It then grew into a website, which housed listicles and similar content about activities in the city. Narcity has since expanded into other cities across North America.

**Because we started on Facebook, that's where our audience learned to find us.**



## How Narcity's social presence takes campaigns to the next level (cont.)

**Q: How did Narcity build such a large social media presence? (cont.)**

**A:** We've dabbled in many platforms over the years, and this experimentation helped us create a huge ecosystem of distribution channels to reach our audience.

**Q: What are the social platforms that you use most for campaigns?**

**A:** In keeping with Narcity's roots, Meta is still the principal social driver of on-site traffic for our campaigns. We lean on platforms like Twitter, Pinterest, and LinkedIn on a case-by-case basis — depending on what makes sense for a specific campaign. We also incorporate emerging platforms like SnapChat and TikTok into our distribution strategies where appropriate.

**Q: How do you use organic vs paid reach on social media for campaigns?**

**A:** Organic remains crucial in our distribution strategy. We use organic as much as possible, then supplement with paid to hit our guaranteed KPIs.

Most of our content naturally fits social. It's the type of information and stories people go to these platforms for. Social platforms also help us reach our core audience, which tends to be millennials and gen z.

However, some campaigns aren't a perfect fit for us. For various reasons, the narrative or messaging advertisers want to convey might be more challenging. In those cases, we rely more on ad spend to reach the campaign KPIs.



## How Narcity's social presence takes campaigns to the next level (cont.)

**Q: Many publishers struggle with organic reach in today's "pay to play" environment. How does Narcity make it work?**

**A:** The team puts a lot of attention into how we package our content — the tone, title, imagery, messaging, etc. When we stay close to our editorial directives, it makes branded content as attractive to readers as our organic pieces. Our goal is always to marry the client's objectives with our existing DNA.



**Q: What techniques do you use to ensure your content resonates?**

**A:** I coach my team to think “organic first.” Even though we’re in the advertising space, we need to consider the reader before anyone else. We only have a split second to get someone’s attention, especially on social. Everything needs to appeal to our readers in the exact same way that editorial content does.

You haven’t achieved effective content if you don’t find a way to get your audience inside your story. You can get a certain number of eyeballs on a piece of content, but the advertiser is looking for true engagement. We need to build some kind of attribution between the user and the brand.

Accomplishing that hinges on remaining faithful to your publication’s DNA.

## E-newsletters offer a direct line to engaged readers

Publishers increasingly recognize e-newsletters as a powerful tool for increasing engagement – and the stats show the benefits.

For branded content teams, e-newsletters offer an unrivaled opportunity to tap into a captive audience and bolster campaign performance.

However, the content you include must be carefully curated so you can maintain the newsletter's tone and trust with your audience.



175%

Traffic from Vox's newsletter averaged [175 percent more](#) time on the website than Facebook traffic



2X

Vanity Fair's newsletter readers consume [2x more](#) content than other audiences



2X

New York Times' newsletter subscribers are [twice as likely](#) to become paid subscribers

## What premium publishers can learn from The Rebooting's approach to e-newsletters

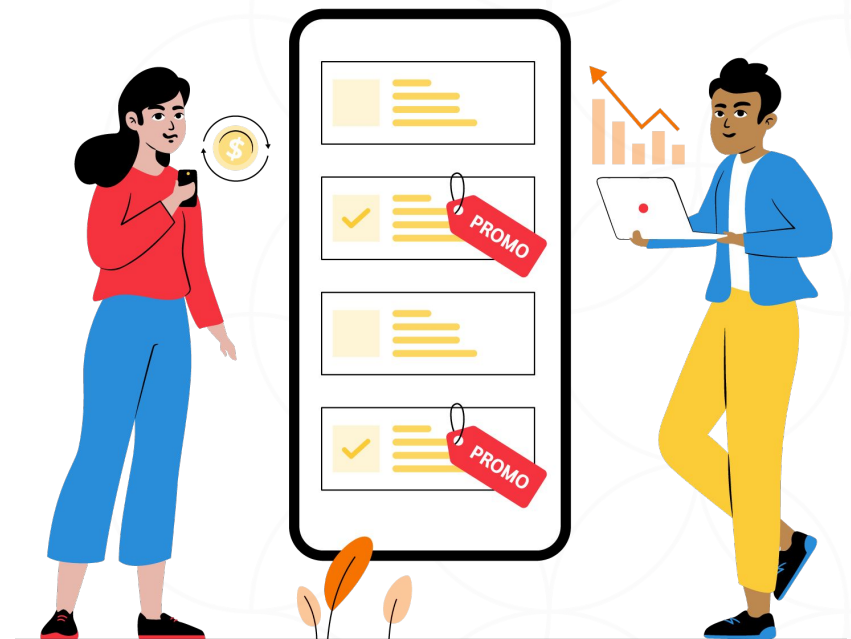
[The Rebooting](#) is a B2B e-newsletter that explores ways to build a sustainable media business. Brian Morrissey, former Editor-in-Chief at Digiday, founded the newsletter in 2020 and has grown his audience to over 16,000 subscribers. With over 20 years of experience writing about the media industry, Morrissey offers his insights into the importance of creating authentic newsletters that connect with audiences.

### Q: What role does the newsletter play in a publisher's channel mix?

**A:** Newsletters have always been critically important in media — especially business media. Everywhere that I've worked, we didn't focus on our unique visitors or pageview metrics. We focused on how many email subscribers we had and the subscribers' depth of engagement.



Many people, especially in B2B, are coming around to this way of thinking.



## What premium publishers can learn from The Rebooting's approach to e-newsletters (cont.)

**Q: Why do you believe so many publishers are using newsletters more?**

**A:** Email newsletters provide a direct connection to your audience. It provides a lot of stability and resilience for your traffic because it's a push medium vs a pull medium. You push content to people instead of waiting for them to find it. For example, SEO is a pull medium.

Many pull mediums require you to produce content that's optimized for algorithms. The companies that create those algorithms change them based on their priorities and they don't explain how they work. Publishers often get caught in the crossfire. You have more ownership and control over your push mediums, which makes them more valuable.

I noticed there's a more personal connection between the publisher and the audience with email — particularly after I started The Rebooting.



## What premium publishers can learn from The Rebooting's approach to e-newsletters (cont.)

**Q: How do you suggest publishers develop a personal connection with their audience?**

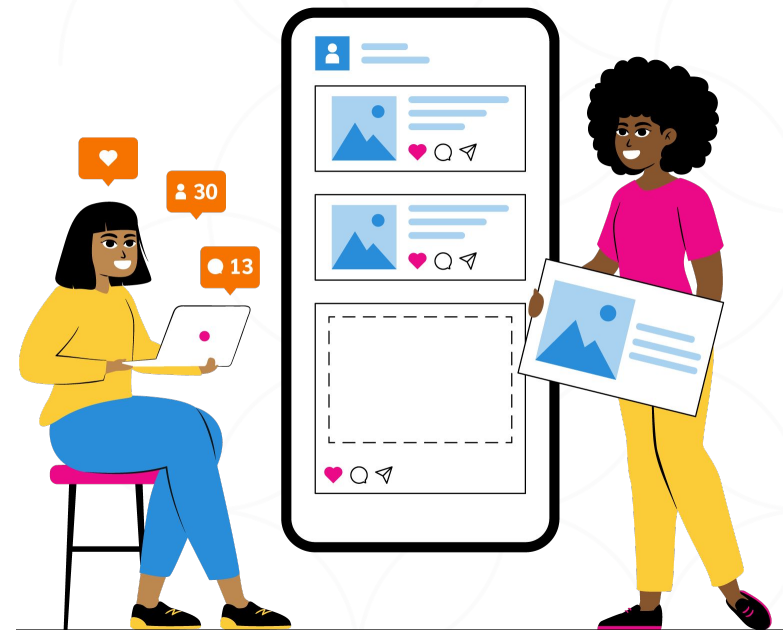
**A:** When an email comes from a person, it will perform better. If it's done well, it should read more like a personal message. The best email newsletters are written like emails from friends or family — not an email with a bunch of ads like you'd receive from a retailer.

Though there are different types of email newsletters, the most powerful ones feel personal. There's a depth of engagement and connectivity that doesn't really exist in a lot of other publishing formats. People write long emails back to me sometimes, which is great.

Many publishers still have a traditional approach to newsletters. They have heavy institutional brands and don't emphasize individual writers or personalities.

However, many newer publishers are trying to find a place on that institutional-to-individual continuum.

They want the benefits of an overarching brand but also take advantage of that human connection.



## What premium publishers can learn from The Rebooting's approach to e-newsletters (cont.)

**Q: How do you balance that sense of authenticity and personalization with newsletter advertising?**

**A:** Curate your advertising partners thoughtfully. Not everyone who offers to advertise is a good fit for your newsletter — and that tension is part of what makes publishing a difficult business.

If an advertising partner doesn't align with the publication's mission, it's glaring. It erodes trust between publishers and their audiences.

The ad format also needs to align with the newsletter content. Clients often ask me what the biggest performance driver is. The biggest factors are:

- How the messaging aligns with newsletter content stylistically
- If you're providing something valuable to the audience

**An effective newsletter ad needs to feel like an introduction at like a cocktail party to someone who you might have something in common with. In many ways, that approach is antithetical to today's highly automated approach to digital advertising. Everything is about efficiency, but humans involve a lot of friction.**



The more a message sounds like it was written to a human being — vs a cookie-cutter, automated message — the better it will perform.

CHAPTER 6

## How to optimize earned channels

News and public relations are traditionally considered earned channels, but these don't play a prominent role in branded content campaigns. Instead, publishers boost earned attention by optimizing for shareability.



Creating shareable content adds extra oomph to your campaign without spending a dime.

Jonah Berger, a marketing professor at the University of Pennsylvania, identified six factors for viral success.



1

## Social currency

People want to be seen positively by others. Everyone gains or loses status based on the quality of the information they share — whether in person, through text, or on social media.

Create content that makes the sharer appear smart, cool, and interesting.

2

## Triggers

People associate words, phrases, or images with a brand — like the Aflac duck or Geico gecko. Establish a trigger through repetition and carefully selecting the context of your content.

Once established, seeing the trigger will inspire your audience to talk and think about the content.

3

## Emotion

To excite your audience's emotions, you need to know them. Content that inspires high-arousal emotions such as awe, laughter, and even anger are the most effective for increasing virality.

Be careful when dealing with negative emotions — you don't want negative associations to stick to the brand.

4

## Public

Humans are social creatures, so they share content others share. Consider whether the content contains anything that may stop a reader from sharing, such as polarizing topics and unrelated information. Once published, a social amplification strategy that puts your content in front of as many eyeballs as possible will prime the pump for virality.



5

## Practical value

Your readers want to share high-value content that meets their needs and interests. Consider your audience's interests or pain points to craft content that helps them solve problems.

6

## Stories

Narratives connect fact with emotion, drawing readers in so they connect with the material. Building a narrative arc into your content gives the audience a story to share.

As you experiment with each principle, review your campaign data. See what works and incorporate these best practices into campaigns. Share your findings with editorial and other departments within your organization to increase goodwill.

[See examples](#) of the STEPPS used in branded content.



CHAPTER 7

## How to optimize paid channels

Paid channels, such as social media ads, are the surest way to amplify your content's reach — but even these channels must be optimized.

You should closely monitor your campaign data to optimize each paid channel.



Find key insights that improve ad efficiency for your audience and advertiser vertical.

**However, there are some universal best practices to keep in mind. Here are a few of the most impactful methods for each platform.**



## Facebook and Instagram reign supreme among paid social

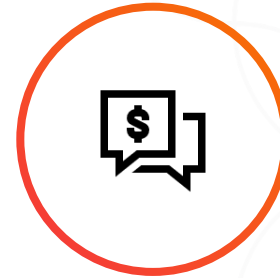
Facebook, owned by Meta, drew nearly [two billion daily active users](#) in 2022. That means a quarter of humanity logs on to the platform daily.

Getting Facebook ad costs down can have a huge impact on the profitability of your campaigns.

According to [Pressboard's Branded Content Benchmark Report](#), the platform accounted for 11.9 percent of branded content traffic in 2022, with some room to decrease costs:

- Average cost per click (CPC): 40 cents
- Average cost per mille (CPM): \$3.90
- Average cost per landing page view: \$1.35

Instagram, also owned by Meta, receives low traffic compared to its counterpart. [1.21 billion people](#) use the platform monthly. In 2022, Instagram drove only [0.2 percent](#) of branded content traffic.



With a few tweaks, your campaigns can go further with less ad spend.



## Facebook and Instagram reign supreme among paid social (cont.)

### Optimize your campaign structure

Many create a new campaign for each audience segment rather than structuring campaigns around objectives. Instead, streamline ad management and optimization by creating one campaign with multiple ad sets that target different audiences.

### Set automated rules to scale optimization

Tell Facebook what actions to take when your ads reach certain thresholds. For example, you could set a rule that pauses ads if the CTR doesn't exceed a specific amount in one week.

If you have data about your program's campaign performance in the aggregate, set these rules based on what has led to success in the past. While ads always need some form of monitoring, automated rules can lighten the lift.

### Step on the gas with the fast takeoff method

Facebook ads have an algorithmic learning period to collect the data it needs to optimize your campaign. Speed this process by setting a high budget early in the campaign and scaling it back after reaching 10,000 impressions.



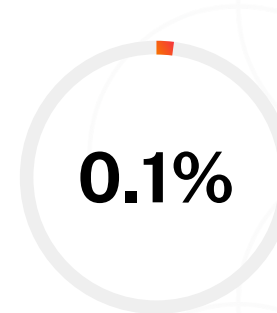
## Twitter can be costly, depending on the campaign

While it's one of the smaller networks, Twitter punches above its weight. [Twenty-three percent](#) of adults in the United States use Twitter. However, accessing this audience comes at a high price. The average Twitter ad can cost between [\\$0.50 to \\$2 per action](#).

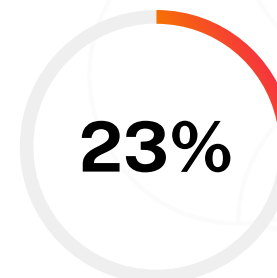
You'll have a better chance at catching their interest by following this advice:

- **Brief is best.** Top-performing ads only use [50 to 100 characters](#).
- **Spotlight your CTA.** Don't include hashtags or mentions. These can distract your audience from what you want them to click on.
- **Variety is the spice of a campaign.** Combine three to five ad formats for maximum effect, including short videos of 15 seconds or less to grab attention.

Some publishers find Twitter useful, but it's not the most cost-effective paid channel for many.



The platform drove only [0.1 percent](#) of all traffic to branded content campaigns in 2022.



[Twenty-three percent](#) of adults in the United States use Twitter.

## LinkedIn provides traffic for professional campaigns

Only [0.1 percent](#) of all traffic to branded content campaigns came from LinkedIn in 2022. However, publishers focused on businesses, professionals, and industry-specific news may find these ads particularly beneficial.

Put your prose in front of the pros with these tips:

- **Make it for mobile.** Most LinkedIn users sign in from their mobile devices, so ensure ads are well-designed for that venue.
- **Tighten your targeting.** Find the customers you really want with targeting options ranging from job title to company growth rate.
- **Track and analyze.** With some setup, you can gain insights into how your ads perform, who converts, and why they click.



## YouTube draws in viewers from around the world

People watch [one billion hours of video](#) on YouTube every day, making it the perfect place to reach your target audience when they're hungry for content. Branded content campaign videos uploaded to YouTube received [203,655 views on average](#) in 2022.

Remember these methods to optimize your campaign.

### Measure what matters

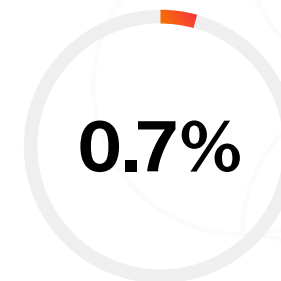
The vast array of metrics YouTube offers makes getting lost in the weeds easy. Focus on what matters most: View rate and click-through rate. These metrics tell you how often your ad gets seen and how often users click, making them vital for improving campaign efficiency.

### Encourage action

People often need clear direction from an ad. Ensure your ad includes a strong, clear call to action that drives people to your content.

### Revise your bid strategy as you go

If your campaign isn't performing as expected, open the hood and adjust your ad groups and max cost-per-view (CPV). Raising your bid will get more eyeballs on your ads, but keep it within your budget.



YouTube is best used as an awareness tool, with the average CTR at [0.7 percent](#).

## Pinterest captivates users with striking imagery

Pinterest can be an expensive platform for promotion, with the average CPC coming in at [\\$0.10-\\$1.50](#). The platform benefits publications that create lifestyle content, focusing on topics such as cooking, home decor, gardening, and more.

Keep this advice in mind to grab their attention.

### Think visually

Pinterest bills itself as a “visual discovery engine” rather than a social network, so make your images pop. Pair high-quality imagery and juicy headlines that catch the eye and encourage people to click.

### Track the trends

See what types of content are currently going viral using the Pinterest trends page. Discover if your content aligns or jump on the bandwagon early enough to ride a trend to success.

### Paid search ads with a twist

Remember that Pinterest doesn't consider itself social media. Its ads combine the keyword focus of Google or Bing with the audience targeting of Facebook or Twitter.

*“At Refinery29, we never used commercial or stock images in our branded content — we created visuals ourselves to cater to our visually-driven audience. Having a strong visual identity and retaining this aesthetic throughout content helps maintain an authenticity that is important to your audience.”*



Anna Plaks  
VP Branded Content  
Refinery29



## TikTok taps into younger audiences

What started as an app for singing, dancing, and sharing music has exploded into a dominant social media network in just a few years. Best practices for advertising on TikTok haven't been fully realized yet. [Average costs for advertising](#) are relatively high, with CPC sitting at \$1 and CPM at \$10.

However, savvy marketers still have a few tips on optimizing your content for this idiosyncratic platform.

### Keep it cool

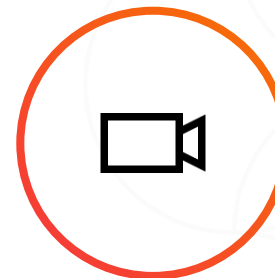
The bulk of TikTok users are [under the age of 30](#). Tailor your content to that demographic to find success. Emphasize your shared values, but remember that they can spot inauthenticity a mile away.

### Back up feelings with facts

Living with the rising costs of housing, transportation, food, and healthcare, TikTok's young audience [wants proof](#) that a product is worth buying. Your content can help them find that proof.

### Aim for the heart

The most popular videos on the platform [elicit happiness](#) and surprise rather than anger, fear, or sadness. Carefully consider the music, lighting, and color schemes to convey the mood you want to evoke.



Keep in mind that you may need to overexpress in videos to capture people's attention quickly.

CHAPTER 8

## Send your program flying high

Branded content has a bright future, but publishers need easily accessible data to meet the needs of today's advertisers. Bringing in tools to optimize your campaigns and tackle some of the industry's top challenges will expand your branded content business.

Pressboard by impact.com, part of the [impact.com for Publishers suite](#), puts all of the data you need in your hands. The platform provides multiple solutions for boosting your program, including:

- Centralizing your data
- Streamlining operations
- Automated campaign reporting

Make your program more profitable than ever with the power of automation and robust data. [Schedule a demo](#) today.





## About impact.com

[impact.com](https://www.impact.com), the leading global partnership management platform, has been transforming the way enterprises discover and manage all types of partnerships — including affiliates, influencers, commerce content publishers, B2B, and more — since its founding in 2008. Its powerful, purpose-built platform helps businesses, including brands, publishers and agencies, to build authentic, enduring and rewarding relationships with both publishers and consumers. By providing visibility across the entire consumer journey they are able to aggregate, orchestrate and optimize the total value of the entire mix of partnerships with ease and transparency, driving growth and creating new value for consumers.

To learn more about how [impact.com](https://www.impact.com)'s technology platform and partnerships marketplace is driving revenue growth for global enterprise brands such as



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