PRINT MATTERS

8 great ideas for increasing your subscriptions

Editor's note: We don't have to tell you that the pandemic has affected, well, everything. Ironically enough, though, it provides an excellent opportunity to increase your subscriber base. This month, we asked media consultant Carolyn Morgan to share her ideas on how you can accomplish this worthy goal.

London Review of Books launched a dedicated online shop for merchandise and has built up a 6-figure revenue in a year.

Subscriptions can be a lifeline for small publishers in tough times — many readers pay upfront and their renewal rates are predictable, ensuring steady revenues. Here are some ideas for generating even more revenue from your subscriber community.

1. Connect with your subscribers and enlist their help.

Your best first step is to start a dialogue with your subscribers. *British Journal of Photography* publisher 1854 Media has set up a Facebook group for its members so they can share experiences and support each other. *Singletrack Magazine's* publisher made an appeal to readers at the start of the pandemic and received a boost in renewals and new subscribers. Niche magazines are well loved, and if you ask for support, readers will share the word, recommend friends and are more likely to renew.

Try offering an early renewal or an extension to a 2-year subscription to established subscribers. *Singletrack* asked its current subscribers to pay now for an extra year on the end of their subscription and were pleasantly surprised with the response. This works best when your subscribers pay upfront rather than on a monthly basis.

2. Test new introductory offers.

Several publishers offer short-term discounted offers — 2 issues for $2 for a bimonthly and 3 issues for $3 for a monthly, for example. A good benchmark for your promotional price is working out your breakeven point. If your product is good, then you should see a fair number converting to a full-priced subscription after the initial offering.

3. Touch base with your partners.

Do any of your advertisers or other business affiliates have a strong mailing list? Can you create a special subscription offer for their audiences?

4. Build up your online prospect list.

Consider putting some high value content behind a registration wall on your website; in order to access the content, they have to provide an email address. It could be a newsletter or access to certain archived articles and/or issues. Then you can actively try to convert these website visitors (and your social media followers too) to paid subscribers. Over time, *London Review of Books* estimates that 7% of people on its email list become paying subscribers. So building your email list and providing valuable content is likely to pay back in subscription revenue.

5. Consider a premium subscription offer.

Some of your most loyal subscribers might be prepared to pay you more. Work out how to create a premium package with extra benefits (archived content, access to editors or contributors) that are valued but don't add unnecessary cost, and market the upgrade to your current subscribers.

6. Sell other products to subscribers.

Loyal subscribers love your brand, so consider selling related branded merchandise — bags, mugs, compilation print products, T-shirts, caps. This has become a strong revenue stream for *Singletrack*. *London Review of Books* launched a dedicated online shop for merchandise and has built up a 6-figure revenue in a year.

7. Convert international subscribers to digital.

The logistics of mailing abroad are likely to be challenging for a while. Consider offering your international subscribers a swap to a digital-only subscription (maybe with a term extension as a goodwill gesture). For those wedded to print, consider a print on demand option. Or offer a "bumper" issue once the crisis has subsided, which also saves on postage costs. (A bumper issue is extra large and typically combines several issues.)

8. Try a crowdfunder.

One niche publisher I know sent out an appeal to its community, and an enterprising reader set up a crowdfunder to help support the publishing team through the crisis. Outside the publishing realm, London Drawing, which runs small group events for amateur artists, raised $3,000 from their email and social media audience to pay their tutors to run a series of free online art classes during the lockdown. So you might be surprised just how much your audience cares about your publication!

These are certainly challenging times for publishers, and I wish you the best of luck. If you'd like to talk through how you could apply some of these ideas to your magazine, I would be happy to help.

Bio: Carolyn Morgan has acquired, launched, grown and sold specialist media businesses across print, digital and live events. She was a co-founder of the Specialist Media Show, which brought together niche publishers to explore digital opportunities, which was sold in 2013. Morgan now advises a range of media owners on all aspects of their digital strategy. She can be reached at carolyn@speciall.media.

Please check out our updated Johnson Press of America LinkedIn page.

JPA has more than 70 years of experience working with niche magazine publishers just like you. We offer top notch quality, competitive pricing, and we will restore your faith in customer service.

For quotes, please call 815.844.5161:

Duane Carrell, ext. 235 or duanecarrell@jpapontiac.com • Wayne Fenior, ext. 237 or w.fenior@jpapontiac.com • Jill Rambo, ext. 234 or jrambo@jpapontiac.com

Randy Schwartz, ext. 239 or r.schwartz@jpapontiac.com

Publisher's Corner
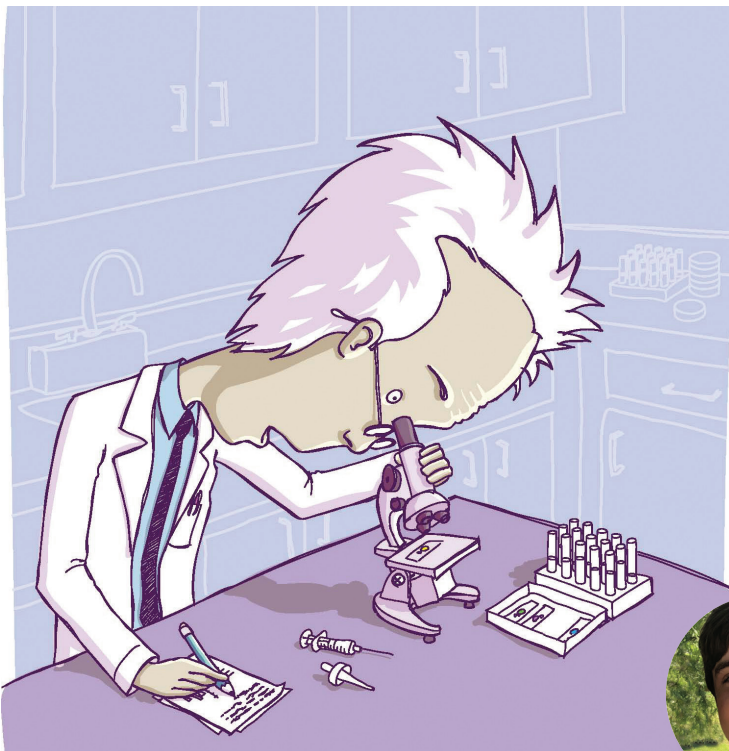
In creating this newsletter, we look for inspiration from everywhere. After 13-year-old Jack McGowan earned 14,000 "upvotes" for a meme he created for reddit, we tasked him with creating a cartoon for us. He came up with the concept and caption, and we found the image on Shutterstock. We hope you enjoy a good laugh!

Hey look! I finally found something smaller than the time frame we have to complete this magazine.