

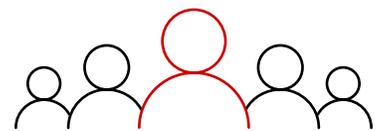
Ongoing series: Affordable ways to increase inbound traffic and revenue | part 1 of 3

A new age for newsletters

Often taken for granted, publishers are finding new reasons to take another look at email newsletters

Despite the emergence of more sophisticated tools, the simple age-old email newsletter is one of the most affordable ways to build brand awareness, communicate regularly with your audience, increase engagement, and establish long-term loyalty.

Think of them as another weapon in your plan for diversifying revenue streams. Newsletters can bring in direct revenue and drive traffic to other platforms that generate dollars, both advertising and subscription.



21% in the U.S. get their news via email each week (Reuters)

What we'll cover:

- Why pay attention
- What audiences like
- Where to start
- How many?
- Developing desirable content
- Eye-opening stats from publishers
- Designing your newsletter
- Improving your strategy
- Increasing subscribers
- Monetizing your newsletters

5 reasons why newsletters are worth the attention

1

Forms Relationship

The constant communication they offer builds a strong direct relationship with the audience in an increasingly competitive market.

2

Provides Data

They provide valuable user data that you own and can leverage for advertising, content targeting, and marketing.

3

Adds Revenue

There are multiple ways to monetize them, contributing additional revenue to your bottom line.

4

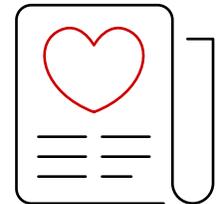
Builds Habit

Free to all, newsletters encourage sampling of your content which builds habit and loyalty, both of which are particularly important for subscription or membership services.

5

Decreases Churn

If you offer subscription services, they are an important tool for battling churn. New subscribers who receive newsletters are more likely to return to and regularly use the service.



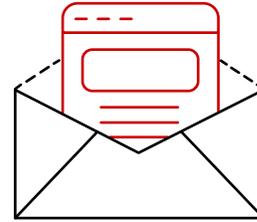
51% of news lovers and daily briefers enjoy email newsletters
(Reuters)

“ We don’t necessarily send newsletters to drive traffic. The truth is, it’s an investment in relationship building.”

— Alan Segal, VP of Audience Development and Analytics, CNN.com

What audiences like in a newsletter

- Morning and evening summaries of what's going on in the world to feel better informed.
- A way to stay in touch with the topics of personal interest.
- A simple layout that's easy to scan.
- Concise text so it's quick to finish.
- Images that capture the intent of each story.
- Opinions, points of views, or humor offered by a personality who provides context.



Most popular e-newsletters can get 80% open rates, though the news industry average is around 22% ([Reuters](#), [MailChimp](#))

View this email in your browser

THE POINT

WITH CHRIS CILLIZZA

March 19, 2021 | by Lauren Dezenski, Allison Gordon and Sonnet Swire

These are stark reminders of America's divisions



President Joe Biden's [visit to Atlanta](#) was supposed to be a victory lap. He and Vice President Kamala Harris would tout the \$1.9 trillion stimulus package -- and all the local sweeteners inside -- in the state responsible for flipping the Senate majority to the Democrats, which helped make the whole thing possible.

But instead, a gunman's senseless acts of violence at spas near Atlanta wrenched the spotlight back to a seething issue in America: racism and its dangerous and deadly impacts.

Now Biden will meet with members of the Asian American community in Georgia as he and others decry the violence and discrimination the community has faced since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic.



47% of email users in the U.S. receive politically-focused emails ([Reuters](#))

Where to start: assess what's working today

Examine these six e-newsletter metrics to understand what's working and what's not:

	Metric	Description	Why it matters
1	Subscribers	Total number of unique email addresses in your list	Identify which newsletters are most popular and where there may be additional opportunity for monetization.
2	New subscriber rate	Weekly rate at which you are adding new subscribers	Know if you are growing your lists or if you need to better market/promote your newsletters.
3	Open rate	Number of opens divided by the number of subscribers	Understand how interested users are in your newsletters to adjust topics covered.
4	Click-to-open rate	Number of unique clicks on the email divided by the number of unique opens	Determine if users are clicking on links in your newsletters and converting to readers of your website. Content adjustments may be required.
5	Unsubscribe rates	Weekly rate at which subscribers are unsubscribing	Learn which newsletters are not trending well with your audience so you can replace them with emails that better resonate.
6	Revenue per newsletter	Weekly or monthly revenue generated by each type of newsletter	Identify the types of content advertisers are most interested in and where there may be underperforming newsletters that can be replaced.

How many is too many?

From broad subjects, like politics, to hyper-focused topics, like news about a local candidate, it depends on the number of meaningful segments you can create for your audience.



6 tips for developing desirable content

- 1 Curate a roundup of up to five of your best stories daily to tempt subscribers to visit your site on a regular basis.
- 2 Stick to topics of interest to your local community. Identify the content that you can “own” unique to your organization.
- 3 Create “pop-up” newsletters for hot news topics that may have a limited lifespan, such as an election. Market other newsletters to that base as it winds down.
- 4 Review your site analytics to identify trending topics and create newsletters for those topics.
- 5 Offer some newsletters from a personality who can bring a personal touch. Consciously write like you’re talking to a human. Tone is important for building a relationship with your audience.
- 6 Add images and video to your newsletters to provide visual interest and incentivize a click through to the full story.

60% of email subscribers prefer daily updates
(Reuters)

5 things

CNN

Wednesday 03.10.21

Sea levels are rising, and of course that's affecting coastal cities. **But the very infrastructure that makes those cities run** compounds the problem. Here's what else you need to know to **Get Up to Speed and On With Your Day**.

By **AJ Willingham**

A masked worker passes murals at a boarded-up business in Austin, Texas.

1

Coronavirus

About 1 in 10 Americans -- more than 32 million people -- **are now fully vaccinated against Covid-19**, but experts say that number is nowhere near high enough to suppress the spread through herd immunity. CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky says March and April will be “pivotal times” for whether people can work toward ending the pandemic nightmare or will erase progress by ignoring safety measures. Around the world, **richer nations are**

“It’s important to identify the value you can provide to your audience that is not being met elsewhere. You must have the pairing of a good product and an audience who wants that product.”

— Alan Segal, VP of Audience Development and Analytics, CNN.com

4 eye-opening stats from publishers

The Washington Post

30%

average open rate for The Washington Post's newsletters. (Digiday)

The New York Times

2X

the content consumed on the The New York Times website by newsletter readers compared to those who don't get newsletters, and they're twice as likely to become paid subscribers. (Parse.ly)

WIRED

50%+

of the time spent by logged-in subscribers on Wired.com was driven by newsletters. (Wired)

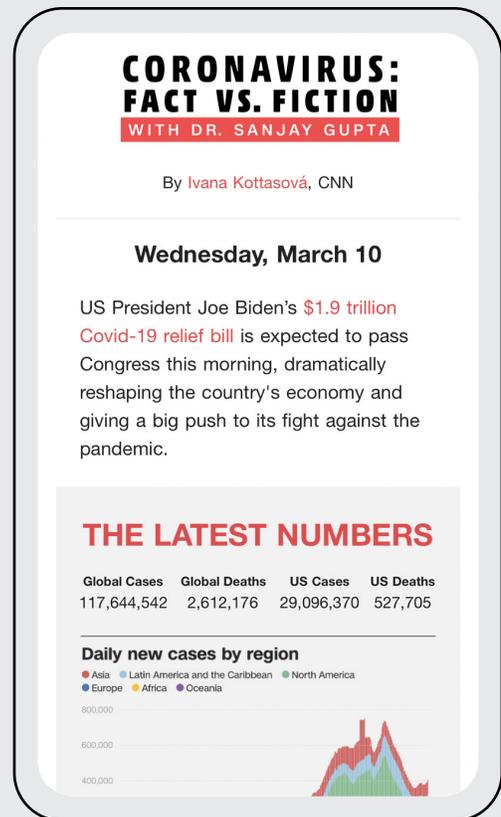
Vox

110

seconds spent on the Vox site by email subscribers compared to just 40 seconds for visitors from Facebook. (Really Good Emails)

How to design your newsletter

- Keep it as simple as possible with a single column of content.
- Don't make it too long. Studies show that click through rates drop further and further after each featured story.
- Optimize for mobile display:
 - Short subject line
 - Short digestible headlines and descriptions
 - Images with small file size that load quickly and alt tags in case they don't load
 - Limited number of stories
 - Links and buttons that are large and tappable for fingers
- Use large font sizes (16pt+) with limited copy to increase scannability.
- Write descriptive links to the full story to entice a click through to your site, not just "read more."
- Use proper semantic code to enable email clients and screen readers to display and read the content properly.



40% of emails opens during Q3 2020 were on mobile devices, followed by webmail opens at 39.3% and desktop opens at 19.3% (Litmus)

7 ways to improve your email strategy

1 **Segment your subscribers** into demographics and / or topical interests. By allowing customers to select which content they want to receive based on their interests, response rates will likely increase.

2 Use **A/B Testing** to optimize subject lines, layouts, length of email, topical groupings, and time of deployment with a small subset of subscribers before sending to the entire segment.

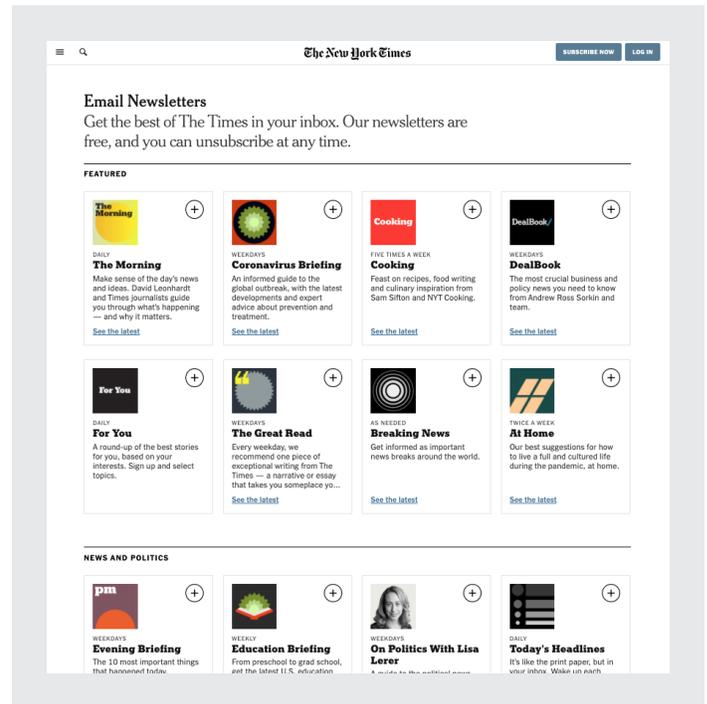
3 Configure **triggered emails** to automatically be sent when a user signs up. As part of the welcome, opportunities to sign up for other emails or subscription services should also be included.

4 Learn **what works and what doesn't**. Monitor your subscriber numbers and click through rates to uncover which emails are gaining traction and which are not.

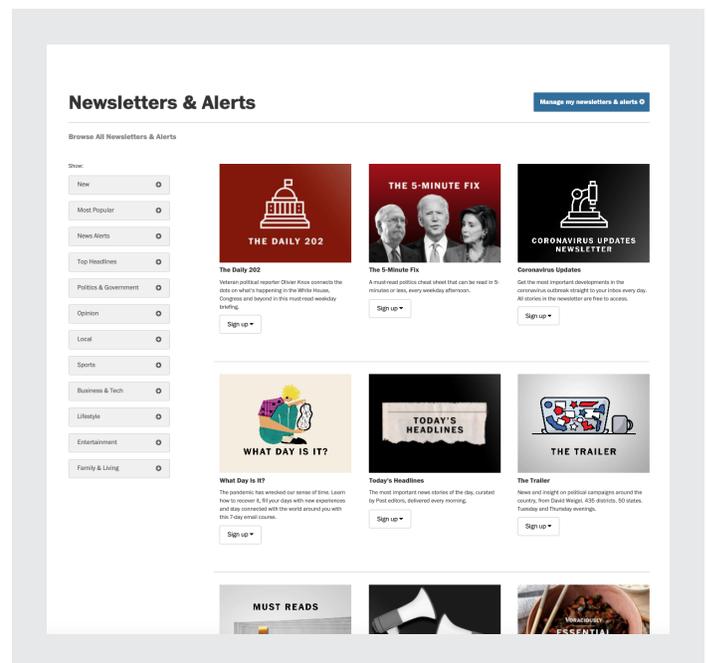
5 Add **UTM (Urchin Tracking Module) parameters** to links in the email in order to track user engagement as they move from the email to your site.

6 **Set goals, then measure them**. Figure out what you want out of newsletters and make sure you are able to measure your progress.

7 Get **direct feedback** from your users about what they like or don't like. This can be solicited through an email address or form on your site that you link to from the newsletter.

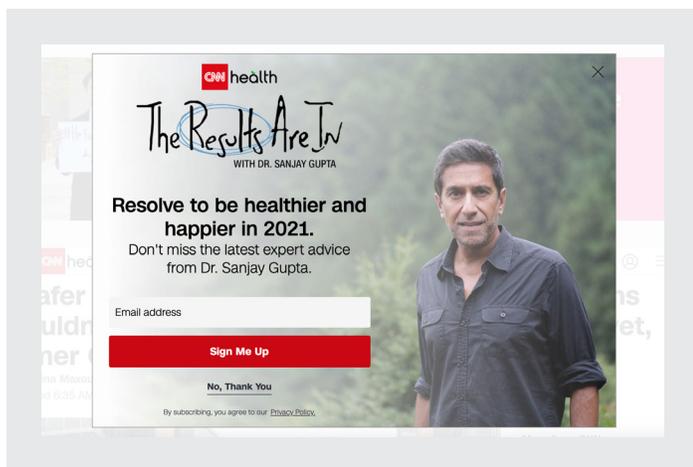


The New York Times



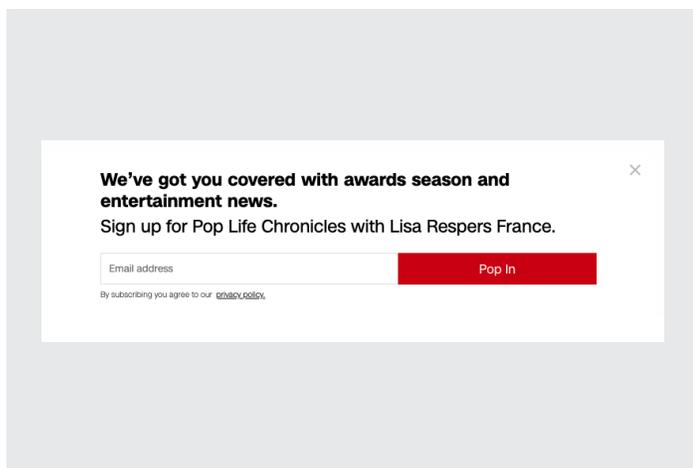
The Washington Post

How to increase subscribers



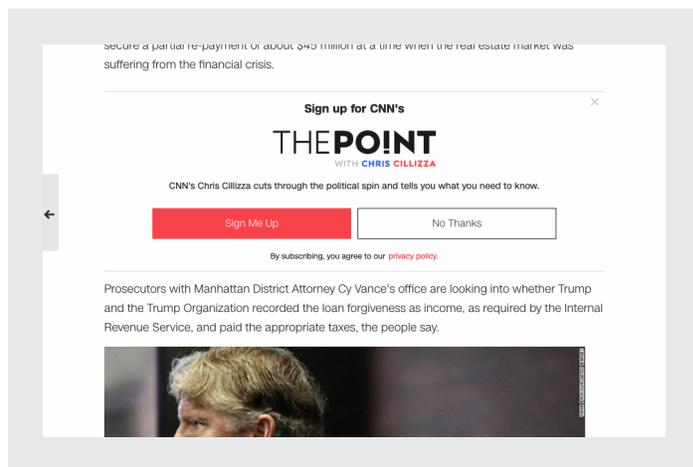
On-site promotion

The people coming to your site are most likely your most loyal users. Take advantage of breaking news traffic to promote your newsletters thereby habituating them to return on those slower news days.



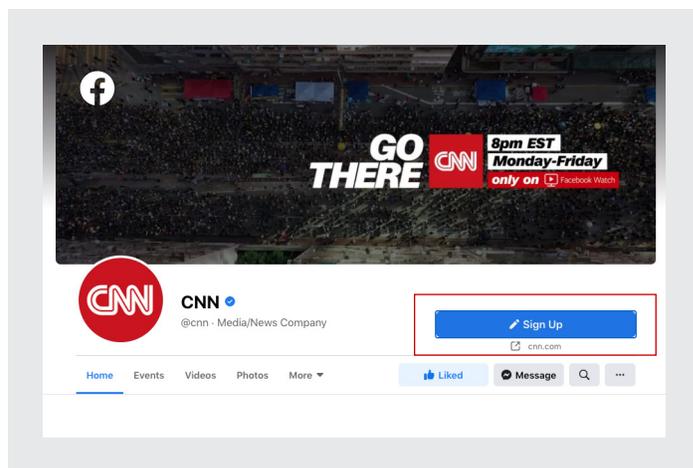
Simple Sign Up

Keep the sign up form as short as possible, ideally just an email address. The longer the form, the greater the chance a potential subscriber will abandon sign-up midway. Be aware of any opt-in requirements from legislation like the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA).



Context

Embed email sign up forms alongside stories that would be found inside the newsletter. For example, promote your political newsletter within political stories.



Cross-channel promotion

Promote your newsletter across all of your channels - website, social media, television, push notifications, and other email newsletters.

How to monetize your newsletters



Advertising

Insert native ads into your newsletters or use programmatic advertising. Advertisers like the simplicity of newsletters because there's less content to compete with their ad.

But don't overdo it. Place them sparingly within logical breaks in the narrative.

Make sure any ads are highly targeted to the content of the newsletter. This will increase the likelihood of a click through.



Sponsorships

A single advertiser could sponsor the entire newsletter with marquis brand exposure baked into the email framework.

This can be highly appealing to an advertiser because they are able to more closely associate their brand with a topic of interest to their audience.

For example, advertisers pay about **\$75,000** per week to sponsor the daily *Axios AM* political roundup newsletter with 200,000 subscribers. (BuzzFeed)



Paid Subscribers

Publishers who have placed their content behind a paywall have found email newsletters to be a valuable tool for reaching non-paying customers and converting them to paid subscribers.

They can also help reduce churn rates. When Canada's *The Globe and Mail* emailed subscribers at risk of churning, they increased retention rates by **140%**. (NiemanLab)

The takeaway

It's time to re-examine your email newsletter strategy. This inexpensive technology can pay dividends in relationship building and brand loyalty.

Treat email newsletters as an additional publishing platform rather than an afterthought. Dedicate resources to it and build a strategy for it. Don't let them run on autopilot. Continually nurture them, measure them, and adapt them to your needs.

“ It isn't enough just to write it. You need someone who is responsible for growing the audience. It has to be a deliberate action. If you're not willing to do that work then don't do newsletters. ”

— Alan Segal, VP of Audience Development and Analytics, CNN.com

CNN Newsource understands what it takes to win in the digital space. We work closely with our network of 1,000+ local news partners to offer valuable insights relevant to the news business while providing powerful, trusted news content.

