

Publishing during a pandemic

Emerging from the Covid-19 crisis **JUNE UPDATE**



FIPP
Connecting
Global Media



Second wave

THE WAY industries respond to a crisis determines how they will respond to a disaster in the future. The impact of Covid-19 on publishing has brought with it an existential crisis for many. It has also brought innovation and resilience.

FIPP, as a global trade association with the purpose to improve all aspects of the media content industry through the sharing of knowledge, mutual cooperation, and strategic partnerships, has the obligation to record the impact of this crisis. More importantly, it has

the responsibility to record how this industry faces up to its challenges. By keeping track of the impact, response and, ultimately, the survival strategies, FIPP is not only recording the process of dealing with the crisis but also mapping a way to overcome future challenges.

Our first Covid-19 report, 'Publishing during a pandemic: mapping a path through the coronavirus crisis' brought together more than 20 representatives from publisher's association around the world as well as two dozen senior executives from

international businesses to share their knowledge and experiences of how Covid-19 impacted the publishing industry in the first weeks of the pandemic.

This report looks beyond the immediate doom and gloom to how the industry stood up to the challenge and is preparing itself for a radically different future. By sharing thoughts, experiences and immediate learnings - from how to manage an online event to keeping staff motivated in a changing work environment - the entire industry learns together. ●

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Content innovation



01

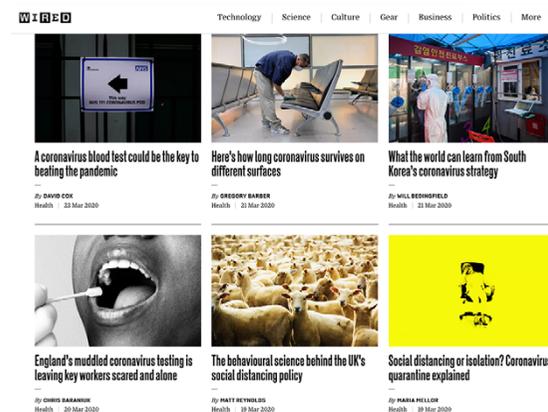
Reconnecting with readers

As the Covid-19 outbreak continues to change people's lives, it's also altering what they want to read. For publishers, assessing what your readers now need – and striking the right balance between informing and entertaining – is a crucial part of forging a way forward

DURING the very early stages of the Covid-19 outbreak, *Wired* recognised how vital it would be to cover the disease and the impact of it comprehensively. In January the magazine started to shuffle budgets away from other editorial areas to double down on science, politics and business – sections the team predicted

people want to read more about if the epidemic became worse and developed into a pandemic.

Wired UK editor-in-chief **Greg Williams** told *Press Gazette* their planning paid off. The website's digital audience has since “exploded”, he said. By March, year-on-year traffic had



*Wired UK's content on
Health and Covid-19*

tripled. One story about life after lockdown in Wuhan, China received 1.8m views on Apple News alone.

Wired was already in a good position to respond to the Covid-19 crisis. During the past three years, under Williams' editorship, the title repositioned itself from a magazine about gadgets to one competing with the likes of *Bloomberg*, *The Economist*, the *Financial Times* and *The Washington Post*.

"If you do quality journalism, if you have authority, which I think we have in this space, and there is integrity and quality to what you're doing, then fortunately there is a big audience for that," Williams said.

The spike in traffic since the coronavirus outbreak has created an

opportunity to show audiences the scope of *Wired* content - especially to those who still held the view that it was only a gadgets magazine.

Appetite for information

Similarly, Verizon Media, the owner of Yahoo, in the early days of the pandemic noticed a surge in a desire for news updates relating to the virus' global reach and impact. Not only were more people shifting online, but more people were consuming news digitally as they sought trusted sources.

When the lockdown started to keep people at home, the company realised they needed to experiment with new online experiences and value-added content that helped people cope with

the crisis, **Rico Chan**, co-head for APAC at Verizon Media, told *The Drum*.

These included online education, food and grocery deliveries, online shopping, video and music streaming, gaming and e-sports, indoor fitness, and upgrading their personal IT system. "Even as news consumption continued to surge, we also saw a shift towards content that helped people manage and cope in the crisis, such as working from home, finances, entertainment, self-care, and guides on how to cook," Chan said. "Interestingly, in Singapore, 'how to make' searches rose by 64 per cent as users sought to whip up their favourite dishes at home."

In the process, Yahoo saw a massive uptick in content viewers, with a 5,000 per cent increase in views for

articles on diseases and medical conditions in Singapore and a 5,200 per cent increase in the Philippines for articles on nutrition.

Yahoo also saw an increase in Covid-19 related searches (up 130 per cent in Singapore and 427 per cent in India). In response, its editorial network in the US, UK, and Singapore, united for 24h up-to-date coverage of the crisis.

Humanising the pandemic

With reams of grim statistics being released every day during the Covid-19 outbreak, it's easy to overlook the names and faces behind the numbers and graphs. Some publishers have taken on the responsibility of humanising the crisis with hard-



The New York Times and The Economist cover America's grim Covid-19 death toll

hitting coverage as the public started to suffer from 'Covid fatigue'.

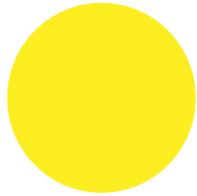
In late May, as America approached 100,000 total recorded Covid deaths, *The New York Times* published a striking Sunday front page. Under the headline, "US Deaths Near 100,000, An Incalculable Loss" the newspaper ran a list that named Covid victims in the US, each with a mini obituary.

Simone Landon, an editor on the paper's graphics desk, told the *Columbia Journalism Review* it was to demonstrate the humanity behind the numbers, amid what was "a little bit of fatigue" with Covid data, "both among ourselves and perhaps in the general reading public" .

Other outlets followed suit, with the

front page of *USA Today* showing the faces of 100 Covid victims, next to a graphic demonstrating scale. Meanwhile, *The Washington Post* portrayed victims as beams of light shooting up from a map of the US and the cover of *The Economist* turned the 100,000 figure into a literal milestone casting a shadow across an empty road. Its headline: "The American way."

There's been some coverage of the rising death count since late May, but not in the same depth and breadth as when America reached the sad 100,000 milestone. As writer **Jon Allsop** pointed out in the *Columbia Journalism Review*: "It's hard to avoid feeling like it exposed the arbitrariness of using round numbers as news pegs for human life."



“The pandemic story has been especially demanding to cover - for logistical, scientific and emotional reasons - and also to consume”

According to Allsop there is a danger that, through sheer fatigue, the pandemic is not properly covered in the coming months.

“Too often, the Covid coverage we’re now seeing feels tired, as if it’s going through the motions. That’s understandable.” he said. “After years of whiplash news and months of this particular cycle, journalists are exhausted - not to mention furloughed, underpaid, unemployed, arrested, assaulted and so on. The pandemic story has been especially demanding to cover - for logistical, scientific, and emotional reasons - and also to consume.

“Fatigue isn’t limited to the press; as Robinson Meyer and Alexis C Madrigal wrote for *The Atlantic*, America as a

whole ‘slowly seems to be giving up’ on the battle against the pandemic. But we have to fight such feelings. The stakes are too high not to.”

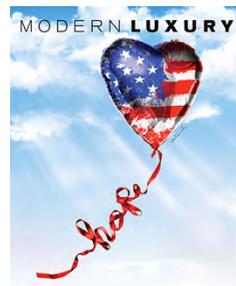
The feelgood factor

Serving your readers during tough times is not only about informing, but also inspiring. With people looking for light at the end of the Covid tunnel *Modern Luxury* stepped up and generated some positivity by turning its May/June magazine into “The Hope Issue”.

Folio reported that, as the title suggests, the issue was packed with inspirational content, including profiles and interviews with Bill Gates, Mark Cuban, Dr. Anthony Fauci, Tyler Perry, Scott Wapner and more.

The issue was also a fundraising vehicle for Feeding America - the US-based NGO that has a network of more than 200 foodbanks. According to *Modern Luxury* all profits from “The Hope Issue” will go to the organisation, along with \$1 million in media support across its print and digital channels.

Meanwhile, *Imbibe*, the “liquid culture” magazine dedicated to beverages, donated \$5 for every subscription it sells in May to Another Round Rally Tip Jar Fund, which provides emergency relief funds to hospitality workers affected by Covid-19. The publication also donated \$5 from each subscription sold to The Restaurant Workers’ Community Foundation, an advocacy and action non-profit created by and for restaurant workers, Group Nine Media’s lifestyle brand *Thrillist* has not



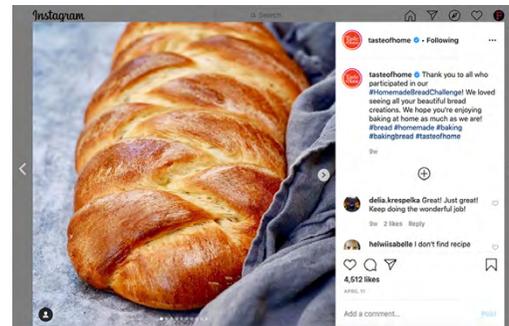
**Modern Luxury's
The Hope Issue**

sat idly by as Covid-19 devastates many of its reader's passions. To give back to this community, the brand has also partnered with The Restaurant Workers' Community Foundation, offering its platform and content as a tool to fundraise for local workers and businesses in need across local markets. To draw even more attention to the challenges restaurants now face, *Thrillist* launched a limited docu-series "Ghost Kitchen" which spotlights chefs and restaurants going above and beyond to deliver food across the country at risk to their own health.

Making dough

In early March, when it became clear more people would be staying home, *Taste of Home's* editorial team identified the content categories and topics they could organise around in a way that was true to the

Taste of Home's homemade bread challenge on Instagram



brand and its audience during the pandemic lockdown, **Beth Tomkiw**, Trusted Media Brands Chief Content Officer, told *Publishers Daily*.

Following its first meeting, *Taste of Home* content director Jeanne Sidner put together a task force of stakeholders from distribution channels, including search, social, newsletters and partners.

"The goal was to meet daily to look at real-time content performance data, share ideas and use our learnings

to boost visits and engagement across all channels," said Tomkiw.

The team currently meets once a week to "check our brand stance on new issues that arise and create relevant new content, while moving away from topics that are slowing down".

Some of the most popular collaborations across the *Taste of Home* teams include one focused on bread baking, which has seen the brand's Basic Homemade Bread recipe clock in 4.4 million visits since 1 March. The newsletter team created bread-specific sends, while the social team created a Homemade Bread Challenge.

The brand's culinary team members created "Cooking from Home" videos that repurposed the basic recipe to create mini breakfast pizzas, apple dumpling pull-apart bread and cinnamon rolls.

After reviewing data that revealed banana bread was among the most popular recipes in the U.S., the *Taste of Home* team created a My Bakeable Challenge themed around it. The challenge had the highest engagement for any Bakeable challenge ever.

Taste of Home has also seen success with gardening articles, which experienced a spike in late April that still continues.

Family Handyman has relied on its service journalism and calm voice during the pandemic. The brand's DIY University reported a 53 per cent increase in transactions during April over the previous month, with a 72 per cent increase in revenue, as it provided readers with how-to stories, such as "How to Power Your Home with Renewable Energy," "How to Build a Backyard Shed" and "How to Build a Deck".

Noted Tomkiw: "We have forward-thinking brainstorms and discussions about where we need to go next. Being a journalist is fantastic these days because you have data to help inform decisions and data to demonstrate what works and what doesn't."

Home comforts

With tourism all but drying up during the pandemic, publishers who bring out travel magazines have been chomping at the bit to start promoting destinations again - even if that is closer to home than usual. In Italy, where people are cautiously coming out of lockdown, *CN Traveler* will dedicate its next two print issues, summer and fall, solely on the country and its many amazing sites, local restaurants and scenery.

The expectation is there will be some

international travel by then, but *Condé Nast Italia* editorial director **Luca Dini** is quoted by *Digiday* in late May saying he doesn't expect Italians to leave the country. "The tourism industry is struggling enormously, we want to show support for local restaurants and hotels. There's a big emphasis on alfresco and sitting outside," he said.

With people in lockdown over the last few months, the publisher has built its social media presence, which was low in Italy. Traffic to the title has been higher than average, said Dini, and only two print advertising campaigns were rescheduled for later in the year.

Star gazing

For magazines that pride themselves on getting up close and personal to celebrities, the outbreak, and its social distancing rules, has caused

major logistical problems. Undeterred, some publishers have found ingenious ways of making sure their readers still had stars in their eyes.

For instance, *Vanity Fair's* latest cover, featuring singer-songwriter and actress Janelle Monáe, was shot via video conferencing platform Zoom. Collier Schorr photographed Monáe for the June issue of the entertainment magazine, from a distance. The celebrity bible is not the only publication to think outside the box.

The Cut's May cover was also shot via Zoom. The issue features actress-designer Chloë Sevigny, photographed by **Elizaveta Porodina**. Porodina called in from Munich, and Sevigny from Manhattan.



Vanity Fair's June 2020 cover, featuring singer-songwriter and actress Janelle Monáe, was shot via video conferencing

"It's not a big trick to go online and take a screenshot of someone," Porodina told *The Cut*. "The big trick is how can it be truly your piece that you're really proud of. In this situation, the subject has a lot more control and much more artistic license than usual. They're going to be the one adjusting the camera. They're going to be the one making decisions."

Sevigny had her own location scout, hair stylist, makeup artist, costume designer and creative director, according to *The Cut*.

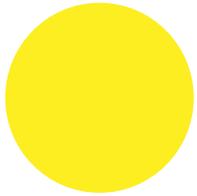
In a different take, *Fast Company* creative director Mike Schnaidt created virtual backgrounds for Zoom, with templates of different magazine covers and cover lines.

Anyone who downloads the images can upload them to Zoom and look as if they are featured on a *Fast Company* magazine cover, as "Most Creative" or "Most Productive."

The new normal

Many predict that behaviour and habits formed during lockdown will endure after the pandemic and publishers should be ready to take advantage of these changes and opportunities.

"People are going to continue to stay online, looking for new experiences that fulfil their needs and passions," says **Rico Chan**, co-head for APAC at Verizon Media. "For brands, this is a new opportunity. For example, in China and Taiwan we've seen consumers



“As governments impose new restrictions and recommendations, or lift existing restrictions, consumer behaviour will change with it”

purchasing more fashion apparel, sports gear, while previously it was home appliances and cleaning products.”

Yet, publishers should also be aware of changes in consumer needs, he points out. “In some countries in South East Asia and the Asia-Pacific region that have seen early successes in flattening the curve, we are noticing a shift towards (the need for) positive content,” added Chan.

Ian Chapman-Banks, chief executive and co-founder of Sqreem Technologies, an AI platform aiming to identify, target and engage audiences through their online behaviour, says marketers (and publishers) are operating in almost an entirely new world “and one that is continuing to change rapidly”.

That means that many old assumptions and learnings will need to be tested and revalidated. In this world, data and technology will be the key to success because it will no longer be enough to rely on human acumen to discern the right strategy for reaching audiences.

Chapman-Banks told *The Drum* that this is best reflected in a recent Comscore study, which found that instead of the usual media spikes during commuting or meal hours pre-pandemic, there is more of a flat rate of consumption throughout the course of the day.

“We need to remember that this is a continually evolving situation as governments impose new restrictions and recommendations or lift existing restrictions, consumer

behaviour will change with it,” the chief executive added.

“So, instead of second-guessing what may happen, we let data and technology work its magic, reacting to behavioural changes and optimising campaigns in real-time... Consumption of media especially when we are all working from home has changed drastically. It is difficult to pinpoint exactly when consumers would engage with media as there really is no distinction between work and play.” ●

GROWING CIRCULATION - AND VEGETABLES

India's *Manorama Weekly* magazine has given new meaning to 'seed money'

MANORAMA WEEKLY, a family entertainment magazine published in the Malayalam language, has seen a record increase in copy sales during India's Covid-19 lockdown. Although publishers worldwide have seen a spike in interest for content from respected and trusted brands during this time, editor-in-charge, **K. A. Francis**, believes the 30 per cent increase in circulation can also partly be attributed to the free vegetable seeds that now come with each copy.

Manorama Weekly, published by the Malayala Manorama Group in India since 1937, joined hands with the Government in the State of Kerala to arrange seeds for thousands of people who are locked in their homes.

Covermounts, the practice of sticking free products to magazine covers, are

nothing new to the publishing industry. In the 1960s, the satirical magazine *Private Eye* stuck 7" floppy audio vinyl recordings to the front of their magazine. The practice continued with computer magazines in the early era of home computers with storage media containing software and/or games distributed with their publications. The distribution of vegetable seeds with magazines is, however, unheard of.

Almost all of the magazine's staff spend hours post publication to glue the seed packets to the magazines. Since the practice started in March, the circulation of the weekly, printed in the city of Kottayam, increased from 190,000 to 247,000 copies.

Francis said more than 200,000 of the *Manorama Weekly* readers are engaged in farming at their homes.

"With this initiative being a huge success among our audience we are planning to collaborate with the state government to come up with more sustainable ideas."

R Rajmohan, FIPP member and President of the Association of Indian Magazines, said this initiative is an example of how magazines can connect more with audiences, even in these difficult times of Covid-19.



India's *Manorama Weekly* distributed vegetable seeds with its print edition to help people in lockdown

IL GAZZETTINO

**Distribution
and
newsstands**

02

Time to turn the page

Since publication of FIPP's first early May Covid-19 report 'Publishing during a pandemic: Mapping a path through the coronavirus crisis' (right) in which the newsstand lockdown and sales slumps in countries around the world were reported in some detail, the focus has now shifted to how - and if - the relaxation of restrictions will return some form of normality to magazines and newspaper sales.



The newsstand as distribution point has been under pressure - for various reasons - long before Covid-19 struck. Despite a huge pivot to digital (see Chapter 3), there is still a concerted effort by publishers worldwide to resurrect the kiosk and keep the distribution of printed products afloat.

While early statistics of the impact of Covid-19 on both newsstand and distribution looks grim at best, exact recovery figures are not yet available. Some positives, if only anecdotal, have been recorded, however.

In Europe, all eyes are on Italy as an early indicator. Here, as in Spain, Portugal and France, the newspaper and magazine kiosk remains a way of life. Lockdown restrictions were put in place in certain risk areas in Italy as early as 21 February. Relaxation of restrictions started early as well,



some in the last week of April already.

Distripres, a non-profit trade association established in 1955 to support and promote the global circulation and distribution of newspapers and magazines, said by 18 May, 94.2 per cent of kiosks were already open with sales trends for newspapers recorded in the week of 10 May showing figures similar to pre-Covid numbers.

The pain in Spain

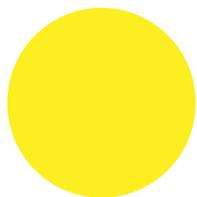
In Spain, where Parliament voted to extend the state of alert until 25 May, kiosks only started to reopen in early June. Here it is too early to analyse sales trends, but according to Distripres one positive was an initial uplift in magazine sales at supermarkets while kiosks were closed. This is despite some chains

handing over traditional newsstand space to food categories.

During a recent meeting with trade associations, Asociación de Revistas de Información (ARI) and ConeQtia, Asociación de Prensa Profesional y Contenidos Multimedia, FIPP learnt that, in Spain, there has been a drop of 41 per cent in advertising for print with a smaller decline for digital.

There has been a drop in copy sales of 20-29 per cent, with children's magazines, and not much else, doing well - although there could be some better news on the horizon for B2B titles in the near future.

It is predicted that employees will go back to work slowly in Spain and most won't return until September or even January 2021, which means the newsstand slump could continue until next year.



Portuguese publishing associations are countering rumours that paper spreads Covid-19 with an advert that reads: “Fight the virus of disinformation”

Fighting back with facts

An ongoing problem publishers are facing, in particular in Spain, Portugal and Brazil, is the circulation of rumours on social media that paper transmits the virus more effectively than other materials - something which has had a severe detrimental effect on press sales.

Portuguese publishing associations like Associação Portuguesa de Imprensa (APImprensa) have pooled their resources to start a campaign to counter this, pointing out that, in line with the World Health Organisation and the Director-General of Health, there is no evidence or cases of contamination caused by contact with newspapers and magazines. Wording for these ads have included:

“Don’t let them cover your eyes”

“Newspapers and magazines don’t transmit the virus”

“Fight the virus of disinformation”

Meanwhile, in The Netherlands, where partial lockdown and social distancing were in place and schools, bars and restaurants were closed until 28 April, all stores are reporting higher sales than usual with indexes between 110 and 150 per cent.

There are, however, massive differences between title and category performances, according to Distripres. Puzzles, youth titles (especially for young children) and the major weekly general interest titles (women, gossip) and some monthly glossies are doing

the best. Special interest titles are not enjoying the same sales uplift, however.

Crisis control

In countries where the virus has not yet spiked or a second wave of Covid-19 is being feared, positives are few an far between. This is the case for Argentina where the publishing industry is in serious crisis. Sales have fallen 40 per cent and advertising has dropped 70 per cent. Given the inability for people to circulate, many newsstands have already closed due to lack of walk-up sales.

For those newsstands that remain open, **Enrique Micheli**, Executive Director Asociación Argentina, de Editores de Revistas, told FIPP the logistics

HIDDEN HEROES

Covid-19 has had a particularly devastating effect on publishing in Australia with Bauer Media's demise resulting in seven magazines dropping out of circulation and NewsCorp Australia suspending the printing of 60 titles.

As the country tries to get back to some sort of normality, News Corp has launched a campaign to thank retail workers who have helped deliver newspapers during the pandemic.

According to a report in *AdNews*, thousands of newsagents, supermarket staff and petrol and convenience workers are being acknowledged by the publisher for ensuring newspaper customers were able to access coverage during the pandemic.



“Beyond the newsroom, there is a network of extraordinary people who work tirelessly through the night to ensure our papers are printed, transported, sold or delivered to the 2.8 million Australians who turn to us for trusted news and information,” said **Damian Eales**, chief operating officer for publishing at News Corp Australia.

“Like our journalists and print centre employees, these distribution and retail workers – such as newsagents – are among the unrecognised people who stayed on the retail front-lines, determined to help keep Australia informed and connected.”

of deliveries and collections has been very challenging.

He said because of the crisis, only one of Argentina's three largest publishing houses is still printing. While still in operation, Editorial Perfil prints and distributes all their magazines and the newspaper, in addition to having their own radio station and a TV Channel. Smaller magazine publishers are barely hanging on while trying to survive.

A similar situation exists in fellow south American nation Brazil, one of the countries worst hit by Covid-19. According to the Brazilian Association of Magazine Publishers (ANER) publications are under pressure in all revenue channels, with newsstands closed in many



Enrique Micheli, Executive Director, Asociación Argentina de Editores de Revistas

cities. With readers fearing the spread of the virus on paper, requests for subscription cancellations have shot up.

Adding to the malaise is the fact that events in Brazil have been postponed or cancelled, and publishers have not been able to find a digital way to recover lost revenue. Ads sales revenue is also decreasing every week, with digital ad revenue unable to recover the print losses.

A slightly sunnier picture

While there is slightly better news when it comes to the outbreak in Japan, it doesn't mean publishers are out of the woods yet.

Here, schools, libraries and bookstores have now reopened after the government announced the end of an emergency state for all prefectures and started a gradual end of lockdown on 25 May. However, according to Akiko Nakakoshi of the Japanese Magazine Publishers Association (JMPA) local publishers continue facing difficulty in publishing their magazines as scheduled. They have delayed the release dates of some titles, or have decided to distribute combined editions.



R Rajmohan, President, Association of Indian Magazines

In India, the success of newsstand and distribution is heavily dependent on a functioning train distribution system. With trains only stuttering back into life in early June, time will tell how quickly more print editions can be published and distributed, which will add considerable momentum to the recovery in the country.

According to **R. Rajmohan**, of the Association of Indian Magazines, there

has been no change in the advertising revenue position with only essential goods being advertised. The loss of earnings that come from cancelled and delayed events have been offset by the monetising of webinars, many of which specialised in “general topics”.

Grim reading

In America, where the outbreak has claimed more than 100,000 lives, the publishing industry has been steamrolled, with several titles closing or moving online.

The disruption of the coronavirus pandemic to content production and the supply chain was cited as the reason why Playboy Enterprises killed the print edition of its 66-year-

old flagship *Playboy* magazine, which will cease publication after its current Spring issue. The outbreak also forced *San Diego Magazine* to fold after 72 years, and weekly publication *Sacramento News & Review* to close its doors.

According to *O'Dwyer's*, Seattle-based alt weekly *The Stranger* suspended its print edition and furloughed half its staff "due to the hellscape of unforeseen economic events brought on by the coronavirus" while Time Out Group, which publishes 40 magazines in city markets around the world, temporarily suspended its print editions.

One area where there has been a growing demand is news, with some publishers taking down their paywalls - among them *The Atlantic*, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* - so readers can get free coronavirus-related health and news updates.

Just how to monetise the new online traffic, remains a serious conundrum, especially since publisher events, seen as a financial lifeline for magazines and newspapers, are not an option at the moment.

"Covid-19 has caused the public to focus very intently on local news and information - which has caused bumps in traffic and digital subscriptions," **David Chavern**, president and CEO of newspaper trade group the News Media Alliance, told *O'Dwyer's*. "But in a world dominated by Google and Facebook, traffic is not very monetisable, and the increase in digital subscriptions has in no way matched the rapid contraction in the ad markets. News publishers are suffering financially just when the world needs their information the most."

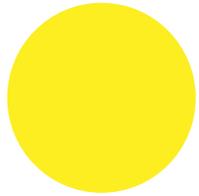
The recovery of the publishing industry

in the US is also tied to the rate stores are reopening. Barnes & Noble has taken a staggered approach when welcoming back customers, "evaluating carefully, on a store-by-store basis, when to reopen based on state guidelines and when it's safe".

And after shuttering its outlets at the start of the outbreak, Books-a-Million has welcomed back customers at a majority of its shops, offering an in-store and curbside pick-up service.

A mixed bag

In South Africa, a country still building up to its Covid-19 peak, the virus has already claimed several big scalps with Associated Media Publishing (AMP) - which brought out *Cosmopolitan*, *House & Leisure*, *Good Housekeeping* and *Women on Wheels* - being forced to close its doors after 38 years. In



“Covid-19 has caused the public to focus very intently on local news and information - which has caused a bump in digital subscriptions”

a statement released at the end of April, the media giant's CEO **Julia Raphaely** said closing up shop was the hardest decision she's ever taken.

“The unexpected and devastating impact of COVID-19, causing the closure of printing and distribution channels, the global halt on advertising spend as well as the inability to host events for the foreseeable future, have made it impossible to continue trading, despite large amounts of personal funds having gone into AMP,” she said.

In another blow to SA media houses, the board of directors of Caxton & CTP Publishers & Printers announced early in May it would stop printing some of the country's most iconic titles.

Among the magazines that have

been axed are *Bona*, which is over 60 years old, *Garden & Home*, which was first published in 1946, and *Rooi Rose* (Afrikaans for Red Roses) which dates back to 1942.

In a statement, the board of directors said the high level of cancellations of advertising in the period leading up and over the lockdown period had already had a major impact on trading.

This was aggravated by the concern that this revenue will be permanently lost and will place serious extra pressure on the magazine business and the group as a whole.

Riding out the storm so far has been Media 24, the print media division of the media company Naspers, with its news websites and regional dailies like

Die Burger and *Beeld* keeping readers up to date with the latest Covid-19 developments throughout the crisis.

In a statement released in March, Naspers stressed that its businesses had continuity plans in place and it continued to actively assess potential impacts and take appropriate, market-specific action as needed.

“The challenges vary by sector and market and this is a rapidly developing situation with no room for complacency, but we believe we have the teams, the resources and the experience to navigate this difficult time for our people and the customers and communities we serve,” the statement read. ●

Advertising revenue



03



Green shoots of recovery

As many media companies continue to see spikes in online traffic and growing subscriptions - and others even experience increases in circulation - most battle to offset advertising losses with diversified revenue streams

DESPITE doom and gloom following the early months of Covid-19's impact on advertising and revenue, there are early reports of more positive market trends with some even predicting growth. *Wired* magazine is forecasting revenue growth of up to 10% this

year, despite the coronavirus crisis, as the Condé Nast brand has seen a "huge appetite" from readers and advertisers during the pandemic.

Wired UK editor-in-chief **Greg Williams** told *Press Gazette* in an interview in early June that he believed *Wired*

would come out of the Covid-19 crisis “even stronger and even more focused as a team about what the brand means and how we deliver new innovative products to our readers”.

Wired is a majority subscriber-based magazine – in 2019 it had a total average circulation of 50,033 which included 18,714 newsstand sales per issue and 23,731 paid subscriptions, according to ABC.

According to **Nick Sargent**, *Wired*'s publishing director, although they expect some decline because many people have been unable to go out and buy the product during lockdown, their web traffic has shot up.

“Our views of our webinars have gone up and our video views are rising,” he said. “So people are interacting where they can. If there is a slight drop [in circulation], which we don't

know as yet, I'm in no doubt it'll pick up to a pre-Covid or if not higher after all this because we'll see some migration from the website... to people buying the magazine because it's the first time a lot of people have really interacted with it.”

It's a similar experience for many specialist brands, who are seeing a spike in both digital traffic and print subscriptions during the Covid-19 pandemic. Trusted Media Brands' *Taste of Home* and *Family Handyman* are perfect examples.

In April, both brands reported record numbers during their biggest month ever, with *TasteofHome.com* recording a 66 per cent increase of monthly unique visitors year-over-year at 32.2 million. *FamilyHandyman.com* recorded a 44 per cent increase year-over-year at 9.6 million.

MediaPost reports that both these brands also saw online traffic spikes between March and April: *Taste of Home* up 22 per cent and *Family Handyman* 53 per cent.

The increase in traffic is due, in part, to the brands' quick pivot early on in the pandemic (See chapter 1, earlier in this report).

The overall dilemma

Yet, across America, as in the rest of the world, media companies are grappling with the general effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the economy. Their greatest single struggle is the drop in ad revenue, which stifled ad spend almost immediately after the outbreak of the crisis.

Tribune Publishing, which owns the *Chicago Tribune* among other

How important are the following to your media planning / buying decisions?

Rank	Attributes	Advertiser %
1	Brand-safe environment: content and properties that are trusted by me/my clients	72%
2	Relevant audience reach: delivery of audiences that are valuable to me/my clients' needs	71%
3	Trusted partnerships: partners that consistently and reliably deliver on promises	65%
4	Data compliance: consistently meets industry privacy compliance standard	59%
5	Historical performance: media met or exceeded kpi objectives in previous year/campaign	55%
6	Data and analytics capabilities: advanced resources that support my media decision-making	54%
7	Cost efficiency: effective pricing and nations that meet my needs	48%
8	Responsive sales organisation: delivers the service and support required in a timely fashion	48%
9	Innovation & creativity: delivery of bold and imaginative strategies and execution	44%
10	Investments in availability of content programming that is a good fit for me/my clients' needs	41%
11	Ad operations and administration: simple and effective traffic/administration experience with near flawless execution	32%
12	Latest automated technology, programmatic and advanced addressable television solutions	29%
13	Branded content / sponsorships: option to develop content on behalf of my / my clients' needs	28%

Source: The Myers Report 2020 survey of advertiser and agency executives on perceptions of 80 media sales organisations services, support and value

newspapers, provides a perfect example of the overall dilemma. The company announced in early June that its ad revenue fell 20 per cent, or \$20 million in the first quarter of this year, compared to the same period for 2019.

Yet, during the same period it increased its digital subscriptions by 30 per cent in the first quarter. Despite Tribune Publishing now boasting 370,000 digital-only subscribers, up from 283,000 at the end of the first quarter in 2019 and digital subscription revenue climbing 42 percent compared to the same period, total revenues were \$216.5 million, down from \$244.5 million Q1 2019.

The latest Myers Report Industry Update, a set of projections for 2020 advertising spend issued by the Jack Myers media empire MediaVillage, illuminates this predicament. The

report, which compares pre-Covid-19 predictions with the current and future environment published on 15 April predicted a total 2020 marketing investments decline of 16.6 per cent.

By May it was updated to reflect a 22.6 per cent decline. Originally the same report predicted a growth of 6.2 per cent for 2020.

In her analyses of this report, **Martha Williams**, CEO of the World Newsmedia Network, said during a recent FIPP Insider Webinar the most relevant statistics for publishers are the 42 per cent decline year-on-year for advertising in legacy newspapers as well as an 8 per cent decline during the same period for digital news platforms. Just as calamitous are the slumps of 38 per cent for printed magazines advertising and 12 per cent for digital magazines.

Optimise subscription pricing

Meanwhile, she said, the surge in subscriptions (some over 200 per cent) across both print and digital newspapers and magazines all over the world is an indication that the industry must now prioritise optimising its subscription pricing structures to offset advertising losses.



**Matt Lindsay, president,
Mather Economics**

This is being echoed by **Matt Lindsay**, President of Mather Economics, a business consultancy specialising in applied economics, who said that in the middle of this Covid-19 crisis we have seen major changes in subscription activity.

He said with masses of people now visiting

websites for information, more and more people are being converted to subscriptions. From Mather Economics' own datasets they have observed a 49 per cent increase in subscription conversions from February to March this year and a staggering 87 per cent conversion from March to May.

Despite these positive numbers, he warned that pricing strategy remains vital. Targeted pricing strategies as opposed to across-the-board strategies "will yield a tremendous amount of incremental revenue from price increases and renewals," said Lindsay.

When publishers achieve this, their dependence on advertising revenue is diminished.

A new commercial playbook

As the Covid-19 outbreak cut into ad revenues, live events froze, and direct buys from brands were being strangled by market hesitancy, *The Washington Post* boxed clever - adopting a new commercial playbook that's built around brands showing their utility in the wider world.

As chief revenue officer **Joy Robins** told *The Drum*: "Our first priority can't be to sell advertising." Instead, *The Post* wants its partners to leverage its content production and brand trust.

"*The Post* isn't immune to the headwinds facing the industry," said Robins, "but I believe agility is the key to weathering this crisis... We must establish our team as a trusted resource for our clients in order to help guide them with research, insights and what the most effective way is to speak to consumers right now."



According to Robins, brands are coming to *The Post* to, "better understand what consumers are reading... We're able to use our insights and technology to help them navigate the way they communicate with readers."

Central to this new product suite is "purpose-driven storytelling," with Robins explaining it was something *The Post* and other top news titles had been jostling to deliver - a natural extension of their news products.

"Demand for that has been accelerated significantly," she said. "The combination of scale and trust creates the conditions for news organisations to be the ultimate place for brands. But they also need to navigate how they show up, and that is exactly what we are focused on guiding our partners through."

A shorter crisis

For the majority of online publishers still completely dependent on advertising income, there were signs in May that things were beginning to look up - ever so slightly.

The online trade magazine *Digiday* spoke to 13 publishing, ad tech executives and industry experts in the first week of June to reflect on positive signs in May compared to April. *Digiday* quotes IAB Europe chief economist **Daniel Knapp**, President of Mather Economics, who said digital display ad spending (which excludes video and social media) in Europe was down 38 per cent. In May, spend was down between 25 and 28 per cent. He estimates these losses will be down to around 16 percent in June.

"These early indicators suggest the crisis may not be as long as anticipated," Knapp suggested.

While the reality of a second wave of Covid-19 in many countries remains a threat to a recovery to pre-March levels, some publishers are already more confident. **Tom Jenen**, chief revenue officer of Brandmetrics, a measurement platform, told *Digiday* that in March and April, many companies were largely focused on trimming costs and preserving cash — as evidenced by the waves of layoffs, furloughs and pay cuts across a variety of sectors.

But in May, many companies began to rebuild. “Everyone seemed to have shut down because they weren’t sure where the right place was to put their advertising investment,” Jenen said. “In May they understood what they needed to do and what they needed to say... It feels like this was a correction.”

Some publishers in Europe have witnessed early signs of ad spend

unfreezing - even in the travel space, which was particularly hard hit. Advertising is starting to pick up in *The Sunday Times Travel Magazine*, editor **Ed Grenby** told *Digiday*.

According to a News UK poll, 65 per cent of respondents wanted to hear inspirational messages from travel advertisers.

Creativity with a purpose

It’s never been more important for content to have a purpose within a business and be tied into the subscription strategy. “It’s something we talk about a lot,” said *The New York Times* Executive Director of Video **Nancy Gauss** in FIPP’s latest *Innovation In Media Report*. “When we’re thinking about a premium subscription product that’s worth paying for that’s differentiated in the competitive

landscape ... it’s about creating a differentiated, unique product that’s worth paying for.”

A key part in ensuring profitable content is catering to readers. The *Sacramento Bee* recently launched an experiment to identify audiences in order to grow digital subscriptions, analysing data and finding potential communities using a series of criteria, including whether the group has a connection to the region and whether there was a team or a reporter with a track record for attracting a readership.

The editorial team then created stories focused on content relevant to each group to test what drove paid subscriptions. The strategy worked a charm - *The Bee* has seen a 4 per cent growth in digital-only subscribers and the targeted stories also grew subscriber page views by 95 per cent. ●

**Online
events**

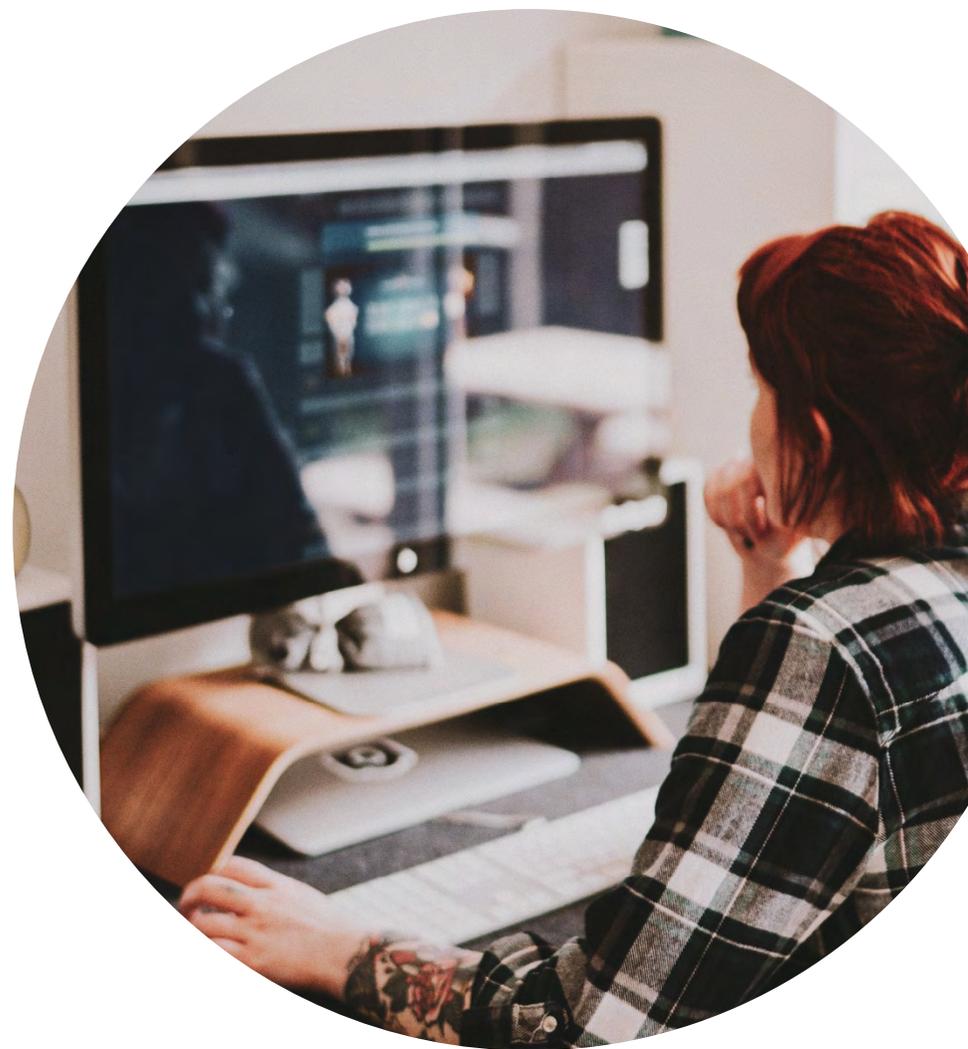
04

Brave new virtual world

Virtual is now a reality. This presents a lucrative option for publishers willing to innovate

According to the FIPP 2019 'Events in Magazine Media' report, 78 per cent of millennials choose to spend money on a desirable experience rather than a material product. This is driven by the growth of the so-called "experience economy." Where it was assumed that this economy would be built on face-to-face experiences, the Covid-19 crisis has introduced a new reality - a virtual world.

One of the first comprehensive reports to explore this sphere is Condé Nast Britain's insight report 'Looking Beyond Lockdown - Changing Consumer Behaviour in Response to Covid-19', which was released in early June. Speaking to 2,500 consumers and hosting online interviews with proprietary communities, one of the report's findings was that, while a pivot to virtual events has impacted ticket prices and revenue, consumer



uptake is high and sponsorship opportunities abound. In fact, at-home theatre and cinema screenings, as well as conferences, seminars and workshops, were the most consumed virtual experiences in the six weeks leading up to the last week of May.

As one example, the report references the Met Gala, *Vogue* magazine's annual fundraising gala for the benefit of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute in New York City. While the physical event was postponed until next year, the virtual event held in early May reportedly generated €22.79M in earned media value. The event was given new life with *Vogue*'s YouTube livestream 'A Moment With the Met'.

This is one of many large and prestigious recent events proving that consumers are happy to pay for virtual stimulation. It also showcased that people are coming to terms

with the reality that packed theatres and auditoriums will most likely not be part of the new normal any time soon. In fact, the report finds that consumers are most likely to pay for virtual entertainment and educational events. Ninety-two per cent of respondents have already engaged with a virtual seminar and/or performance in the last weeks of May and 75 per cent planned to maintain or increase their spending on in-home entertainment in the next 12 months.

Getting close to audiences

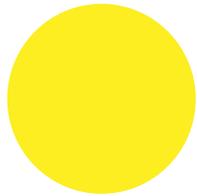
But not all events hosted by media titles have been conceived to generate direct revenue. Brand building and fostering a close relationship with audiences can be considered just as important. Condé Nast brand *Teen Vogue* recognised this during the early phases of the Covid-19 lockdown when

they decided to host virtual versions of the prom and commencement this year.

On 16 May, *Teen Vogue* hosted a virtual prom with a long list of special guests and performers, from actors to musicians to TikTok stars. As *Folio* reports, demand has been so high that it had to cap the number of high schools joining.

On 31 May, *Teen Vogue* opened its platform for a virtual high school commencement. Like the prom, this was a free event and, according to the brand, offered "inspiration and 'upliftment' from some of our favourite celebrities, noteworthy figures and inspiring young members of this year's graduating class".

The scope for online events seems to be endless. Take this example. Active Interest Media brand for outdoor enthusiasts, *Backpacker*, didn't



“Most publishers already have the right tools to move into events - and turn a profit while they’re at it”

want social distancing to prevent its community from enjoying traditional outdoor activities like camping and campfires. It launched a virtual campfire on Facebook Live with activities such as a sing-along to ‘live’ music. It was so popular that it was followed up with a free day-long Camp-In festival on 16 May. The event featured guided yoga and ‘mountain fitness’, art, gear and cooking demonstrations, author readings and, again, live music.

Online events: move fast

FIPP members from around the world attest to the reality that while face-to-face events had to be postponed or cancelled for the duration of at least 2020, everyone moved fast to find ways to create practical - and when possible,

profitable - online events. From Brazil, the Association of Magazine Publishers (ANER) reported that there has been “an explosion in the number of webinars, ‘live’ (online) events and the creation of course platforms,” such as Globo Condé Nast and *Exame*, a fortnightly magazine specialising in economics, business, politics and technology, who both created educational and mentoring platforms under subscription.

Many other publishers in Brazil followed suit and are now investing in online initiatives that encourage digital projects with a positive approach. All of these are linked to, or sponsored by, brands. The newspapers *O Globo* and *Valor* have both organised “large-scale events that were successfully held on-line”. These examples, said ANER, are not merely an overhaul of webinars

and e-events but another iteration of the acceleration seen towards digital transformation for many publishers.

The upside for media companies is that for events - live or virtual - the number one priority to keep in mind is that most media companies already possess the right tools to move into events — and turn a profit while they’re at it.

FIPP’s ‘Innovation and Media 2020-21 World Report’, produced by Innovation Media Consulting, points out that most publishers already have a well-defined target audience, existing channels for promotion, a loyal following and bags of relevant content as well as expertise.

For many media companies, events have been an important pillar of their greater income diversification

plans. As experienced by FIPP in its own recent operations, other media companies such as *The Information* or *Digiday* held more than 40 profitable media events last year.

Many of these events have since been moved online, such as FIPP's 43rd World Media Congress, which is going online for the first time in its 95-year-old history, running over four weeks from 2 to 30 September this year. FIPP's annual Digital Innovators' Summit (DIS) will be incorporated with the Congress and will also see the return of the Worldwide Media Marketplace (WMM) and the Rising Stars and Insight Awards sponsored by UPM Communication Papers.

CREATING A DIGITAL HANDSHAKE

The world of diplomacy, by its very nature, depends heavily on networking. This creates a Covid-related problem for *Embassy*, the London-based magazine and events company that specialises in keeping diplomats connected.

"We have 10 events a year that put diplomats in the same room as politicians, civil servants and businesses, but because of the pandemic we've had to move everything online for now," says **Elizabeth Stewart**, editorial and programme director.

"The challenge becomes how do you recreate 'meeting on the margins' – ad hoc one-to-one discussions on the fringes of a conference where great networking takes place. We've been exploring video platforms that offer break-out rooms that mimic this essential part of diplomatic life. And the digital format means our guest list is not limited by geography."

Another challenge facing *Embassy* is how to

cover diplomatic receptions – usually lavish affairs with banquets, live performance and speeches – which embassies have started to stream live on Facebook and Instagram.

"Our website and social media platforms have become even more important as a way to alert diplomats when to log on and do a Zoom toast. We want to make sure London's diplomatic corps keeps networking until they can meet face to face again."



Elizabeth Stewart, director at *Embassy Magazine*

Online opportunities

Planning virtual events does differ from face-to-face events in some important ways, warns FIPP's Chief Content Officer, **Cobus Heyl**.

"There are a different - and exciting - set of opportunities presented by online events and we should explore this to its full potential. To equate a virtual event to physical event is daft, much like equating a printed magazine to its social media channel."

As one example, Heyl pointed out the planned two-day physical congress with 90 speakers can now be broken up into standalone slots over four full weeks.

"I don't know anyone who would want to sit through speaker after speaker for hours on end," he added. "In the



Cobus Heyl
Chief Content Officer
and Marketing
Manager at FIPP

way consumption of most news happens at the atomic level (unit of content), we believe similar principles will apply here.

"Breaking the content into consumable 'chunks' means users are not required to spend every moment of the working day staring into a screen watching someone else at work."

Another plus is speaker times can now be scheduled in such a way as to consider FIPP's global audience's time zones. This will optimise opportunities across the board for attending the live, interactive sessions. For example:

» Sessions in the morning (British Standard Time) will be slanted towards a live audience made up of much of Asia and EMEA.

» Sessions in the afternoon (British Standard Time) will be slanted towards a live audience made of EMEA, and much of North and South America.

On top of this, all speaker sessions can be recorded and made available to attendees immediately, meaning they need not log on to every session live to have access to the unique content. "An excellent way to think of this", said Heyl, "is having the choice of watching a TV programme live or on demand. For example, if an attendee in Japan misses a session at, say, 15:45 UK time, they will still get access to the recording."

Virtual formats, explained Heyl, also solves the problem of some top international speakers not being available on specific dates. "Live sessions are obviously better because it brings the audience in on the conversation through Q&As and

other engagement tools. However, where speakers are not available for September dates, they can be pre-recorded, and the content still made available to attendees.”

Last but not least, it offers the opportunity for attendees to network with one another in break-out rooms, or book one-to-one meetings using our Deal Room software. “When it comes to interactivity,” Heyl said, “it has been interesting to see on FIPP’s webinars how much more forthcoming attendees are with comments and questions to the speaker than at physical events, where shyness always appear to be a bit of a factor when you ask for questions.”

Value proposition

Heyl said while the value proposition for both participants and sponsors of a virtual event is different from a



Booking one-on-one meetings via FIPP’s online Deal Room

physical event, it is not of lower value. “Physical events have its obvious merits, but virtual events have their own,” he pointed out. For example:

- » The multiple touch points you can create online
- » Breaking down the programme into more consumable chunks, spread

- out over a longer period of time
- » The chance to easily offer breakout rooms for topical networking
- » The choice of whether to watch something live or on-demand
- » The greater inclination to interact online with ‘strangers’ than in real life.
- » The opportunity to keep a commercial proposition open for longer
- » The data that is instantly available to refine quality and offer feedback on-the-go
- » The ability to offer sponsors product demos and lead generation
- » The opportunity to do more post event
- » In-depth reports and videos
- » Keeping our Deal Room platform open for longer to network and meet.

“Take into account participants will have no travel and accommodation cost, the participation footprint could actually be very large,” added Heyl. ●

A woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing a black turtleneck, is sitting at a white desk. She is looking down at a silver laptop with the Apple logo on the lid. Her hands are behind her head. To her right is a large bouquet of yellow and pink flowers. In the background, there are white curtains and a pink jacket hanging on a rack. A smartphone is on the desk next to the laptop. A pen holder with pens is visible in the bottom left corner.

**The way
forward**

05

Welcome to the new normal

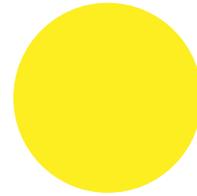
Publishing has been weathering the storm of digital disruption for two decades. It will overcome the earthquake that is Covid-19 as well - if it acts with lightening speed

For evidence that the Covid-19 outbreak has accelerated systemic media trends, you need look no further than the UK magazine market," wrote **Colin Morrison**, founder of renowned industry blog *Flashes & Flames*, on 12 June. "In the first three months of the year newsstand sales (which account for the large majority of UK magazine circulations) were 8 per cent down on 2019. Lockdown pushed the year-on-year decreases to 20-25 per cent."

Morrison then whisked through the history of magazine media's unchallenged existence during the second half of the 20th century, which was "fuelled by the advertising boom which helped to keep cover prices down and reduced dependence on readers" (read: 'reader revenue'). This strategy worked swimmingly until the internet gate-crashed the party in a big way.



Flo Dahm



“The lockdown pushed magazine newsstand sales in the UK down by 25 per cent”

Covid-19 has not only disrupted consumer magazine sales and woken publishers to the urgent need for transformation, but has also exposed the weaknesses of digital-only media, some of which were battling long before the outbreak of the pandemic.

The list of titles who've had to make cutbacks include *The Economist*, *Vice*, *The Atlantic* and *BuzzFeed*. Regional offices are closing for some, staff are on furlough or made redundant by others, print magazines go digital and others go nowhere at all.

What media pundits are asking is not only what they need to do to survive Covid-19 but, more crucially, how successful publishers will manage operations in the post-Covid environment.

Retaining subscriptions

Traffic spikes during lockdowns have been reported across the globe. With it came subscription spikes. In some regions subscriptions for print even outperformed digital offerings. Now the challenge will be to capitalise on and retain those subscribers.

Morrison warned the most durable brands will be those with unique content, and the long-term expansion of specialist or lifestyle media must therefore increasingly be based on:

- » A direct relationship with readers-users-viewers, as members or subscribers
- » Providing services “for enthusiasts, by enthusiasts” and being authentic.

- » A truly “platform-agnostic” approach to the provision of products, services and platforms
- » Interactive services which encourage the “glue” of intra-membership community relationships
- » Ownership of exclusive information for and about the market
- » Collaborations, alliances and partnerships to enhance versatility and expertise

Adding value

Lauren Gustus, the West Region Editor for McClatchy (owner of *The Sacramento Bee*) is often quoted by John Wilpers, Senior Director at Innovation Media Consulting (IMC) and co-author of the ‘Innovation in Media 2020-2021 World Report’ compiled in collaboration with FIPP, as saying

magazine media’s future success “will be built around the value people see in our work”. And of course people’s continued willingness to pay for it.

It’s also vital that publishers - in a post-Covid environment where the subscriptions space will be even more populated - pay close attention to the user journey.

This journey to convert users from visiting a website to becoming an active and continued subscriber is most critical, warned **York Walterscheid**, Managing Director of CeleraOne, a paid content solutions consultancy in Germany.

Speaking to FIPP President and CEO **James Hewes**, Walterscheid said to achieve success in converting and retaining subscribers, the publisher needs to build segments and target readers with these (content)

segments as individually as possible.

All of this needs to happen in real time. “It’s not about building a paywall and asking for payment,” he said. “It’s about interacting and engagement. A clear understanding of the reader’s need. Often it is preferable to start with a soft version of a paywall, like using a registration wall and not a direct paywall.”

A registration wall, said Walterscheid, is ideal for this period where people spend more time online because of Covid-19.

“Asking for payment to read about Covid-19 might not be the right step, but asking readers to register could be a first step into a content payment strategy.”

Embrace remote working

Most publishers have found during the past few months that remote work and flexible working arrangements can work, with some even attesting to the fact that staff have become more productive.

Brian Chen, co-founder and CEO of workplace design company ROOM told FIPP office buildings and working spaces will see huge changes after Covid-19, all of which will - and should - be catalysts for a new and more inspiring workplace.

“The office needs to be even more attractive than it was before the pandemic,” he pointed out. “It needs to be even more inviting and more inspiring as a workplace, because people will want to work from home if the office doesn’t provide a great sanctuary. Hopefully, it becomes



an aspirational call to action for how we design offices as opposed to dystopian-like cubicles, which is what the headlines suggest.”

According to **Richard Charkin**, former Executive Director of Bloomsbury Publishing, working from home will continue. “Any scepticism I harboured about whether people would really work as hard and as well in a domestic environment has been shattered,” he told *PublishingPerspectives.com*. “Surely this will continue with benefits to family life, avoidance of commuting stress, the economics of publishing, and trust and

empowerment of publishing employees.”

A balance between working from home and working from an office could be the best for both productivity and creativity. *The Economist* says several studies suggest the benefits of working from home only materialise if employees can frequently check in at an office in order to solve problems.

Hang onto top talent

The biggest challenge in the post-pandemic office will be management’s treatment of their staff, warns Wilpers. “Yes, there will be physical spacing issues, and remote working issues, and office design and workflow issues. But the bottom line is that the success of all of those and other initiatives will depend on our teams of people.”

He said prior to the pandemic, many companies didn’t have

employee-focused cultures that would have resulted in things like mentorship programmes, training programmes, career paths (with accompanying changes in salary).

Those programmes would enable employees to say, ‘I believe in our mission’, ‘I love working here’ and ‘I can see a future for me here’.

“We can’t go back to the office after this and just pretend that things are going to be the same physically or psychologically...companies will have to go through the physical changes that need to be made,” Wilpers pointed out.

“But, that’s solving relatively simple physical space problems. It does nothing to directly advance the future of the company.

“If the company was dysfunctional before in terms of how it treated its people, the post-Covid world is only going to compound those problems because you’re taking away a layer of interaction and



[You can get FIPP's Innovation in Media 2020-21 World Report here](#)

not replacing it with anything.”

What the pandemic did was to, suddenly and without planning, force the media industry to lurch five years down the road in terms of remote working, virtual events and reconsideration of print, Wilpers said.

“We’ve had to do it in an instant. Now,

we have to take what we’ve done and figure out the best way to go about it. Do we continue remote working? If so, what are the best practices? Do we come to the office once a week? Do we really need that office? What’s the best way to hold meetings? How do we maintain a personal connection with our people and our clients?”

It will be vital for employers to manage mental health during and post Covid-19, warned Hewes. “During and after lockdown it is important to maintain a work-life balance to keep work from taking over. Team managers must be aware that a lot of people are working remotely for the first time and can’t yet absorb home life while also processing work,” he said.

Finding a way to manage stress and anxiety that comes with the new working environment is a team effort. “It’s a two-way process – the individual has the responsibility to say, ‘I’m not comfortable, or don’t understand how the new process is working’, and the team has the responsibility to support

everyone and make sure they get the knowledge they need,” Hewes added.

Embrace new processes

Kilian Schalk founder of PurpleGray Consulting, who has helped magazines work remotely for the past 15 years, warns that working away from the office comes with its own benefits and challenges.

It can affect morale and spontaneity, as bouncing an idea off a co-worker or brainstorming isn’t as easy when there’s no one to bounce it off of. For this, publishers need to build future proof remote workflows. Schalk told FIPP, publishers need to think of their team members first, then the process.

“Individual tech skills are paramount,” he stressed. “Everyone on the team needs to be using (and able to use)

the same tools. For example, email is useful for communicating with the outside world; Slack, Google Docs, and Trello-like tools are good for internal correspondence. Make sure that everyone has everyone else’s contact information in a shared document.

“Everyone on the team needs to have the basics, which for me are Google Docs for editing, Trello for organising, and Slack for communicating. It’s important to build a shared work community.”

Schalk warned that there could be an initial learning curve with collaborative work on Google Doc if team members haven’t used it before.

“Individuals may try to hide that they don’t know how to do something,” he pointed out. “That may have been fine at the office, where discreet help is available; in a remote

situation it is critical not to hide.

“You can’t fix a problem if you can’t see it. Make sure people understand that there is no shame in learning something new”.

Once everyone has some experience, move your focus to workflow. Recreate a small, simple production process that happens quickly using the new tools. Then review with everyone giving their suggestions.

Once the team has built a new workflow and learned how to support each other in doing so, they can move forward to build other workflows as well.

The eventual goal is to get everyone participating in creating a remote process, managing a remote process, and using a remote process. “It will work best if it comes from the team,” Schalk explained. ●



FIPP
Connecting
Global Media

● What we do

FIPP – Connecting Global Media represents content-rich companies or individuals involved in the creation, publishing or sharing of quality content to audiences of interest. FIPP exists to help its members develop better strategies and build better businesses by identifying and communicating emerging trends, sharing knowledge, and improving skills, worldwide.

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