NCI Mid-Funnel Strategy Menu

GNI Audience Lab

The GNI Audience Lab created this document from the resources available in the Google News Consumer Insights Playbook. The following strategies are proven methods to help keep readers on your site or to bring them back to read more—to help newsrooms bolster the middle of their funnel. Feel free to make a copy and share.

Comments? Suggestions? Send them to Evan Mackinder: evan@fundjournalism.org

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Key Mid-Funnel Strategies:

- ➔ Optimize newsletter acquisition
- ➔ Web push notifications
- ➔ Optimize recirculation links and strategy
- ➔ Social amplification
- ➔ Launch a newsletter course
- ➔ Add an editorial note to your newsletter

Explore more strategies in the News Consumer Insights Playbook (.pdf).

Optimize Newsletter Acquisition

Why it matters: Newsletters are the key bridge product for creating loyal readers. Optimizing the newsletter signups on your website can go a long way to increasing your subscriber list.

What to do: Optimize your newsletter signups.

Loyalty metrics that matter:

- Acquisition rate
- sessions-per-user

Example: Denverite

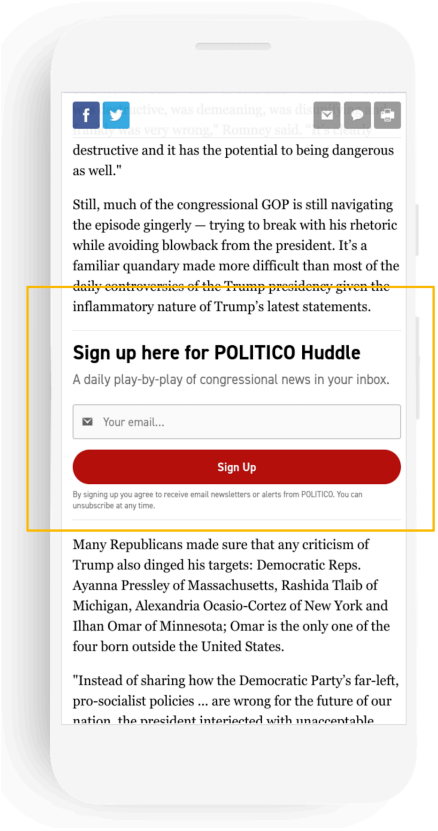
Make it easy
Do not make users click to another page in order to sign up. Enable autocomplete for the form.

Make it prominent
Position the module so that it is discoverable on both desktop and mobile and give it a design that brings visual attention to the CTA.

Put it high on the page and use ‘energy colors’ such as red or orange.

Make it clear
The language and design are very clear. The only extra bit of information I would like to know is how often the newsletter will come, but that is in the secondary page.

Best in class example



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Web Push Notifications

Why it matters: Web push notifications are an increasingly common way for publishers to drive traffic directly to their site. They are a great way to capitalize on traffic spikes.

What to do: Test a service such as Push.ly or OneSignal

Other Key Benefits

- Increase visit frequency from qualified traffic
- Communicate directly with your readers
- Soft opt-in process with one click to subscribe
- Works even better for “urgent” type of content, such as breaking news, weather alerts.

Loyalty metrics that matter: Sessions-per-user

Example: Dallas Morning News

Look & Feel
Focus on personalizing the prompt messaging.

Display Frequency
Prompt shouldn’t appear too soon in the session. Prioritize acquisition on article view or 2nd user impression.

Build your own vs 3rd party
Implementation might require many tech resources (https, PWA...). 3rd parties can be a good solution but do have a cost.

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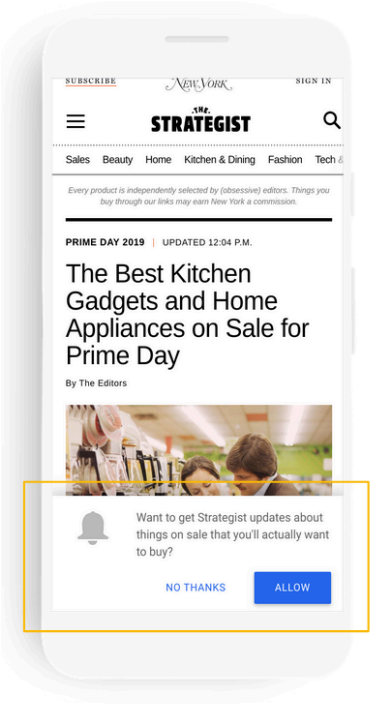

Best in Class

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Optimize Recirculation Links or Strategy

Why it matters: Simple, strategic recirculation can be the difference between readers staying on your site or leaving. It's a core part of any strategy to enhance loyalty.

What to do:

- Test in-line recirculation links a la *Washington Post*
- Install or new recirculation modules
- Optimize current recirculation modules by moving them up the page, testing different colors or language

Example: Washington Post

Loyalty metrics that matter: Pages-per-session

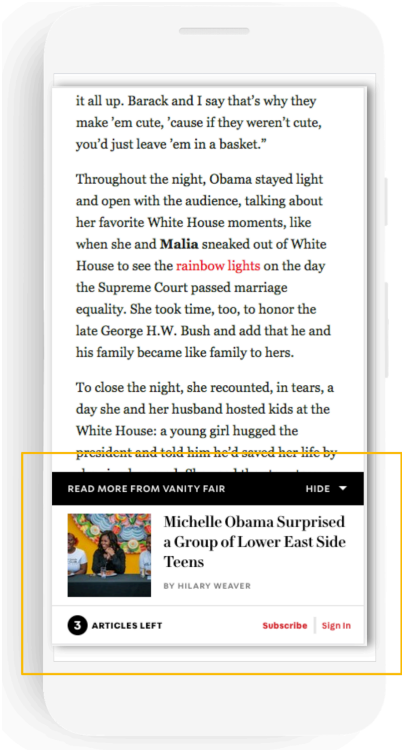
Make it prominent
Place recirculation modules further up in articles. Many users do not look past the end of an article. Sticky modules are more intrusive to the reading experience but perform well.

Make it compelling
Images drive more engagement. Google's research shows that images to the left of links is the most effective layout for attracting clicks.

Feature your newsrooms most compelling stories.

Give options
Aim for three recirculation links per article.

Best in class example



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Social Amplification

Why it matters: Social and sharing buttons can turn your readers into ambassadors for your publication. But in order to share your site, they need easy access to those options.

What to do: Research available options to implement a scrolling share option on your desktop and mobile site.

Loyalty metrics that matter: Sessions-per-user

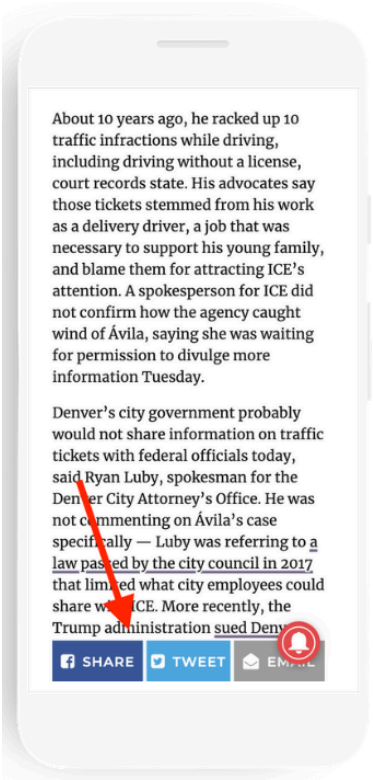
Example: Mississippi Today

Position
Your social buttons should be visible throughout the article. On mobile, you should look at the anchor format.

Be Relevant
Make sure you're displaying all the relevant social buttons to your audience, including text and email.

Look and Feel
Try to preserve the original icon color of each social network to drive more clicks

Best in class example



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Launch a Newsletter Course

Why it matters: Automated newsletter courses can deepen engagement with loyal subscribers and serve as a gateway for new ones. Maybe a four- to six-email course that serves up your most compelling, evergreen(ish) content around 2020 elections or your environmental coverage?

What to do: Consider designing a set-it-and-forget-it newsletter course that leverages your most popular evergreen content.

Example:

- Texas Tribune's Teach Me How to Texas
- New York Times 7-Day Sugar Challenge

Loyalty metrics that matter:

- 4-5 star subscribers (Mailchimp)
- Sessions-per-user

Advance Prep
The best part about a newsletter course is that it's set-it-and-forget-it. If you have the capacity to design the course and the landing page, you can deploy this and promote it on social and in newsletters.

Leverage evergreen content
For content, consider what already works. Scour your archives for patterns on the topics readers are returning to, and give new readers an opportunity to revisit them via the course.

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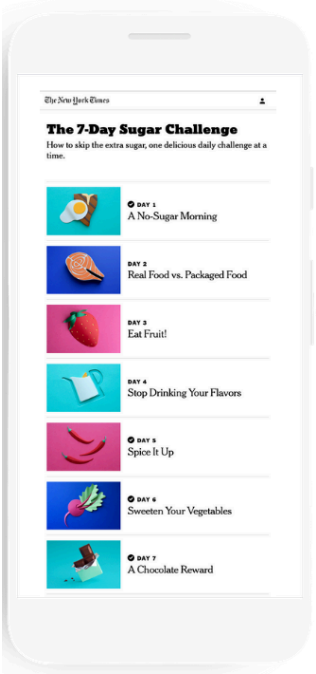

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Enhance Your RSS-ish Newsletter

Why it matters: Headline/blurb-style newsletters are designed to get readers out of the inbox and back to the publisher's news site. That's good for traffic, but they tend to have a low ceiling for engagement. It's also a great way to begin testing more personality in your newsletter products.

What to do: Consider adding an editorial note from a reporter or editor above your stories.

Example:

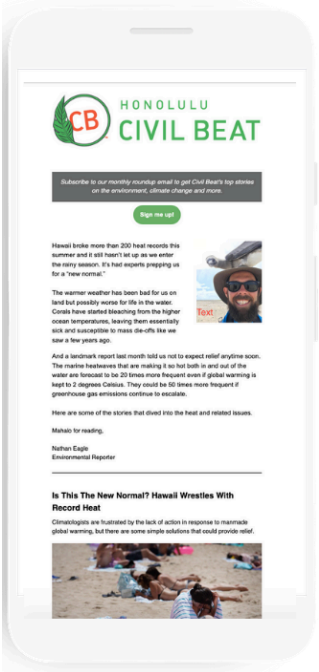
- Civil Beat
- Bridge Michigan

Loyalty metrics that matter: 4-5 star subscribers (Mailchimp)

Focus on personality
The purpose behind the note is to bring personality to your product. Choose a reporter or editor who wants to bring some verve to a daily note.

Keep in mind the workflow
The most important aspect of the editorial note may not be the writer, but the workflow. Even adding a 100-word blurb can be a challenge and may require additional editorial efforts.

Best in class example



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