



Atlas

Can you use AI to unlock subscription growth?

Abi Spooner,
Strategy Partner

Prague, November 2024



FIPP
Connecting
Global Media

Atlas

**a strategic growth
consultancy**

Think with Clarity
Act with Confidence

- Founded in September 2022 by market-leading experts
- Building in-house and bespoke systems for making sense of customers
- Data informed, customer centric and real-world solutions
- Strong focus on core subscription KPIs and how to affect them
- Working closely with clients to deliver strategies for sustainable profit growth

What drives subs growth?

Subscriptions profit and growth requires patience.
The below strategies are essential – and AI can accelerate them all.

Customer insight and understanding of customers' **needs** are essential for building out offers, products and messaging

Acquire to Retain – target high quality acquisitions to drive Lifetime Value

Tailor your messaging – the right offer to the right person at the right time will convert best

Your **content** will play a different role throughout your funnel – understand and work with it

Customer service will support retention – listen to your subscribers

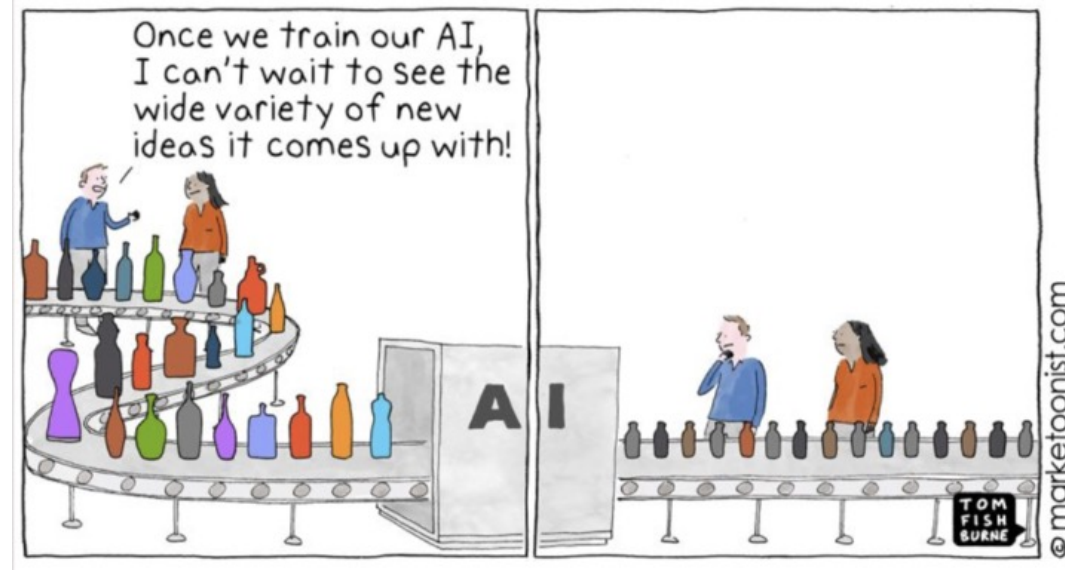
Team efficiency and effectiveness – subscriptions is a team sport

New business model

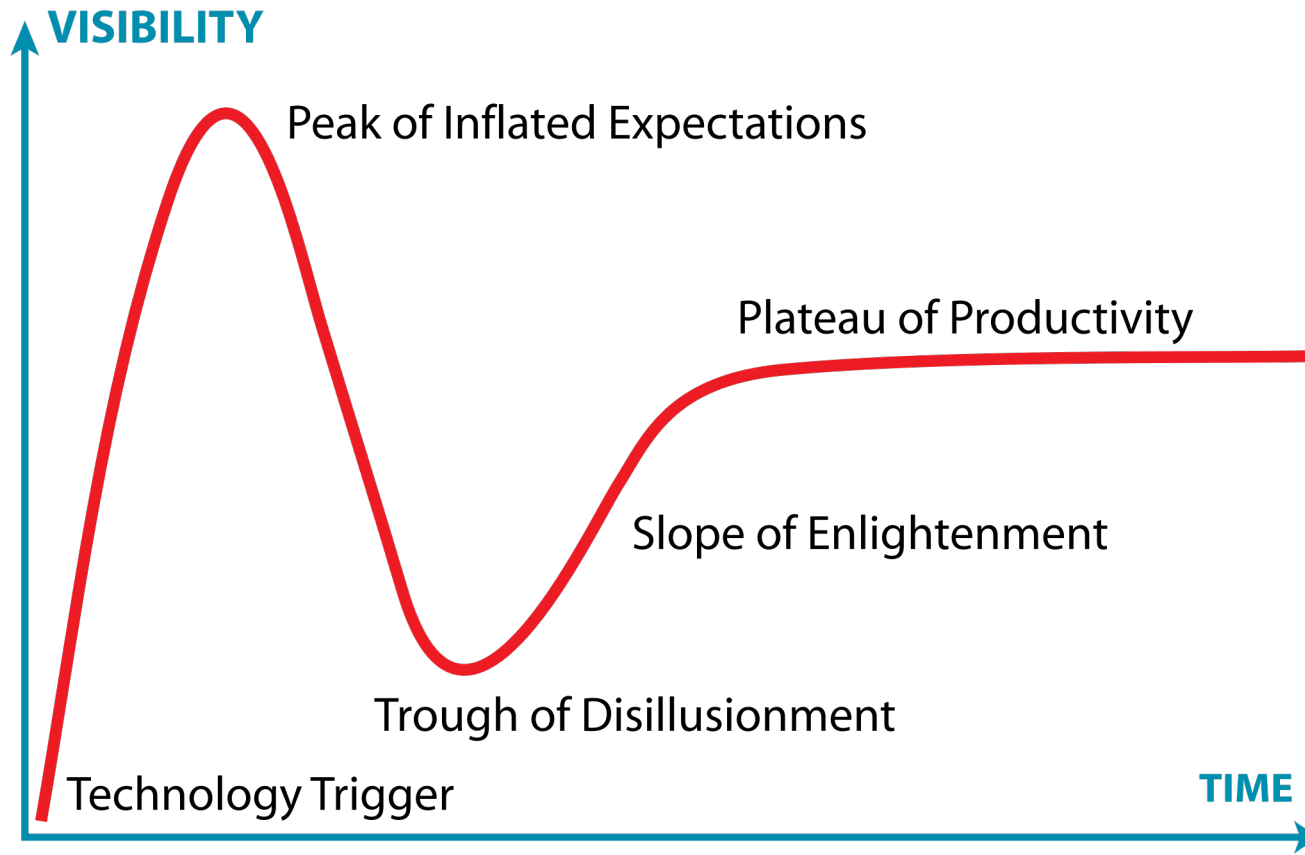


AI is a tool, choose the right one for the job

Supervised learning	Unsupervised learning	Reinforcement learning
Makes predictions based on historical data	Detects patterns in data	Recommends decisions or actions to achieve a goal
Propensity Modelling	Customer Segmentation	Performance Optimisation



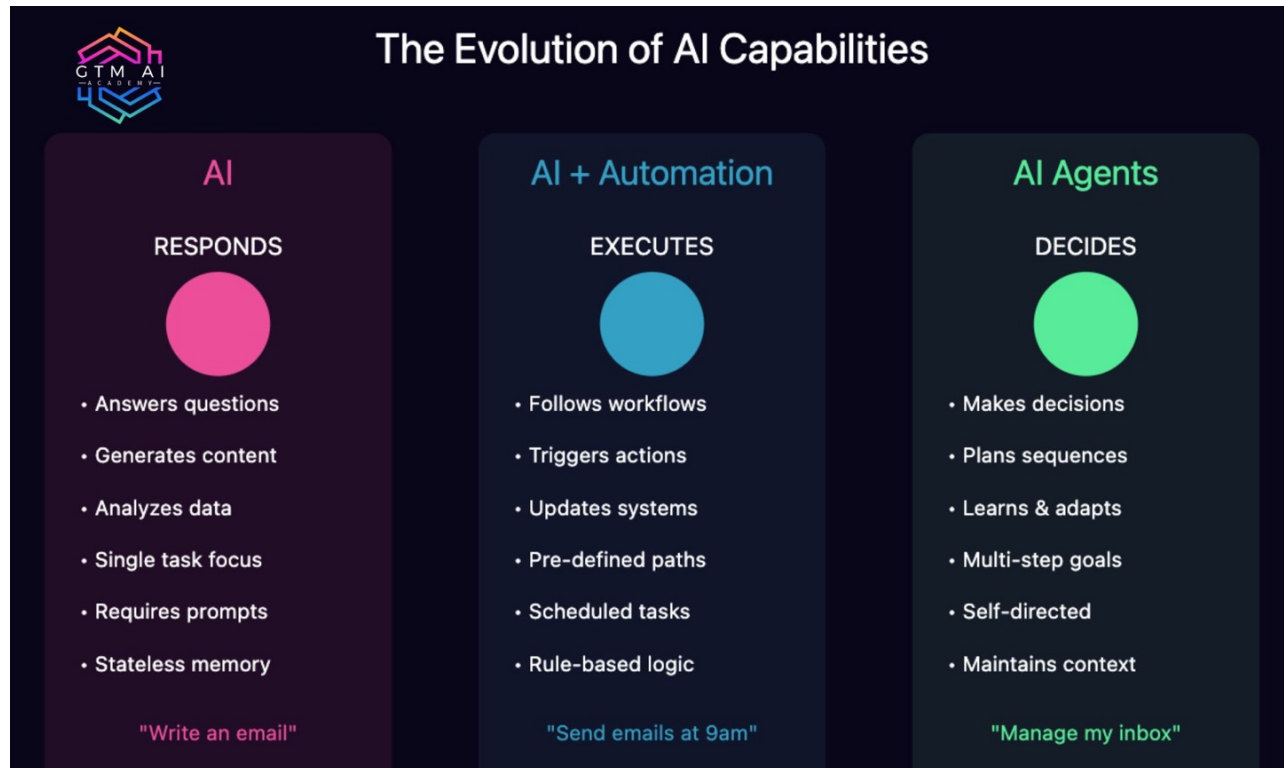
Where are you on the hype graph?



Understand the task you're entrusting to AI

Different tools have different capabilities

An AI project is not “magic” – you should be able to understand the task you're briefing, how it could be done manually and why AI will be a better solution



AI making teams more efficient day to day

Desk research
and insights

Data analysis

Meeting
transcripts and
actions

A centralised
source of
information for the
team to interrogate
with questions

Generating creative
and iterating for
different
placements

A 'style' bot to
ensure all marketing
copy adheres to
house style

Marketing
automation and
testing

Get closer to your customer before building out strategy and tactics

Understand your customer needs and wants through research.



Establish your audience and decide who you will target.



Decide how you will position your offering to them.



Set realistic, timely and challenging objectives.



Choose the channels, products and opportunities to achieve growth.



Marketing
research



Marketing
strategy



Marketing
tactics

Who is my customer? What are their needs?

Use generative AI and key prompts to get closer to your customers

You are an experienced professional marketing research manager for our magazine Boating Today which has a website and a print magazine.

Your task is to generate a detailed subscriber persona for a 50 year old boating enthusiast who loves to go sailing at weekends and has a sailing yacht.

His goal is to have the latest sailing technology, and allow him to go out sailing every weekend.

Structure your response under the following headings:

Subscriber Persona Demographics

Subscriber Persona Psychographics

Subscriber Persona Other Interests and Competitors

Expand on this subscriber's persona's pains and gains

Tell the AI what role you need it to play

Be specific as to the output formats that you require – and tell it when it's wrong.

Give it context and build on your questions.

Ask it to write in a specific style

Break down complex tasks into sections and use questions to get into the detail

Ask the AI to ask you questions to clarify your objectives if necessary

Get closer to
your customers 

Meet your customer

**Be critical about the outputs:
Challenge everything**



Here is the image of the 50-year-old boating enthusiast on his yacht, embodying his passion for sailing and sophisticated lifestyle. Let me know if you'd like to adjust any details!

Pains

- **Lack of Information:** Frustrated by limited access to detailed, unbiased reviews of new sailing technology and equipment.
- **Cost Concerns:** Wants to ensure his investment in yacht equipment is worthwhile and durable.
- **Time Constraints:** Balances a busy professional life, leaving limited time for researching new products or planning sailing trips.
- **Safety and Reliability:** Concerns about equipment failure or weather risks while sailing.

Gains

- **Informed Decisions:** A trusted source that provides comprehensive insights into sailing gear, yachts, and technology.
- **Convenience:** Tips and tools for planning weekend trips efficiently.
- **Enhanced Experience:** Access to technology and techniques that make sailing more enjoyable and less stressful.
- **Community:** Feeling part of a community of like-minded sailors through engaging content, interviews, and success stories.

**Get closer to
your customers** 

Right offer, right person, right time

The holy grail of 121 targeting is within reach.
Enrich customer data through insight and performance and use it to inform comms

- Customers respond to offers better when they are perfectly targeted
- Make the offer make sense considering their engagement level
- Identify their Next Best Action through your market funnel
- Present existing subscribers with messages that make sense and help to nurture and increase loyalty



Case study: Subsets

Identify and target audiences

Case Results: “Intro: 2m without proper activation”



Audience

“Intro: 2m without proper activation”

Subscribers with an intro 2m bundle having low usage and low engagement with newsletters received.

Combination of

Subscription type: 2 month trials

Tenure: Less than 2 months

Behavior: Low engagement

+

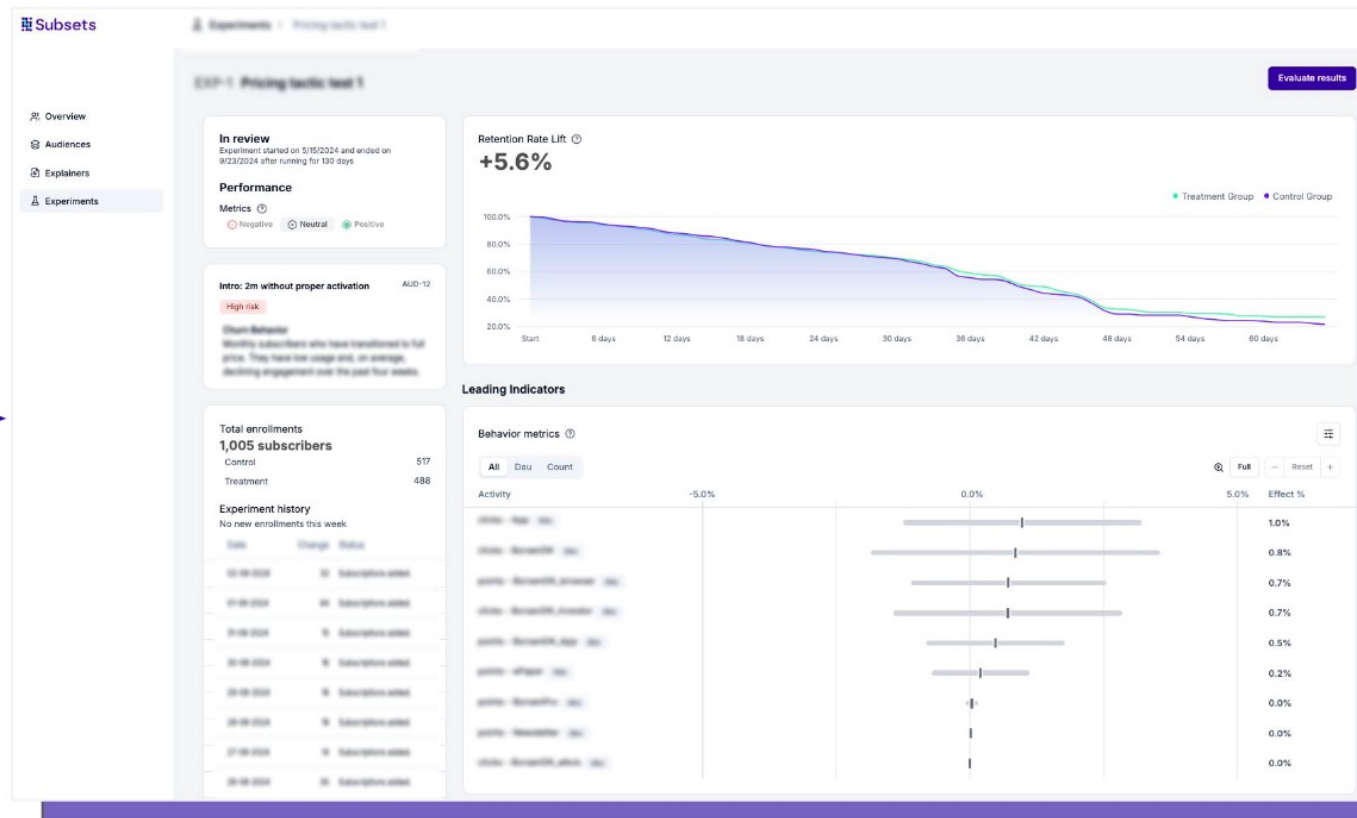
Flow: Explore new content

Flow to reconnect with and re-activate subscribers

Flow: Ask to (re)submit preferred content while mentioning some of the content they’ve engaged with historically

Leading indicator(s):

Submitted preferences and engagement



Case study: Subsets

Identify and target audiences

Case Results: “In-life subs losing interest”



Audience

“In-life subs losing interest”

Monthly subscribers who initially engaged across a diverse range of genres but have recently shown declined usage and are losing interest.

Combination of

Subscription type: Monthly

Tenure: +3 months

Behavior: Declining engagement

Time-frame: Past 30 days

+

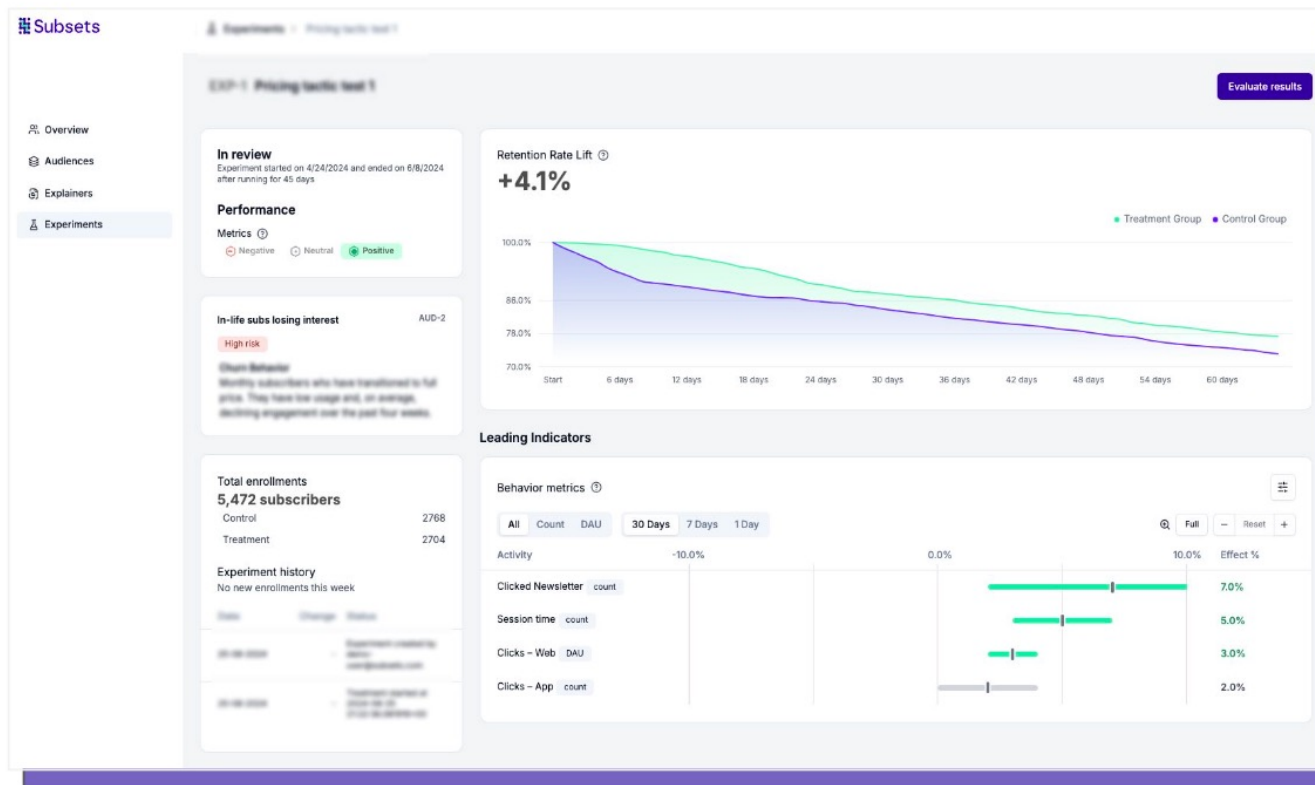
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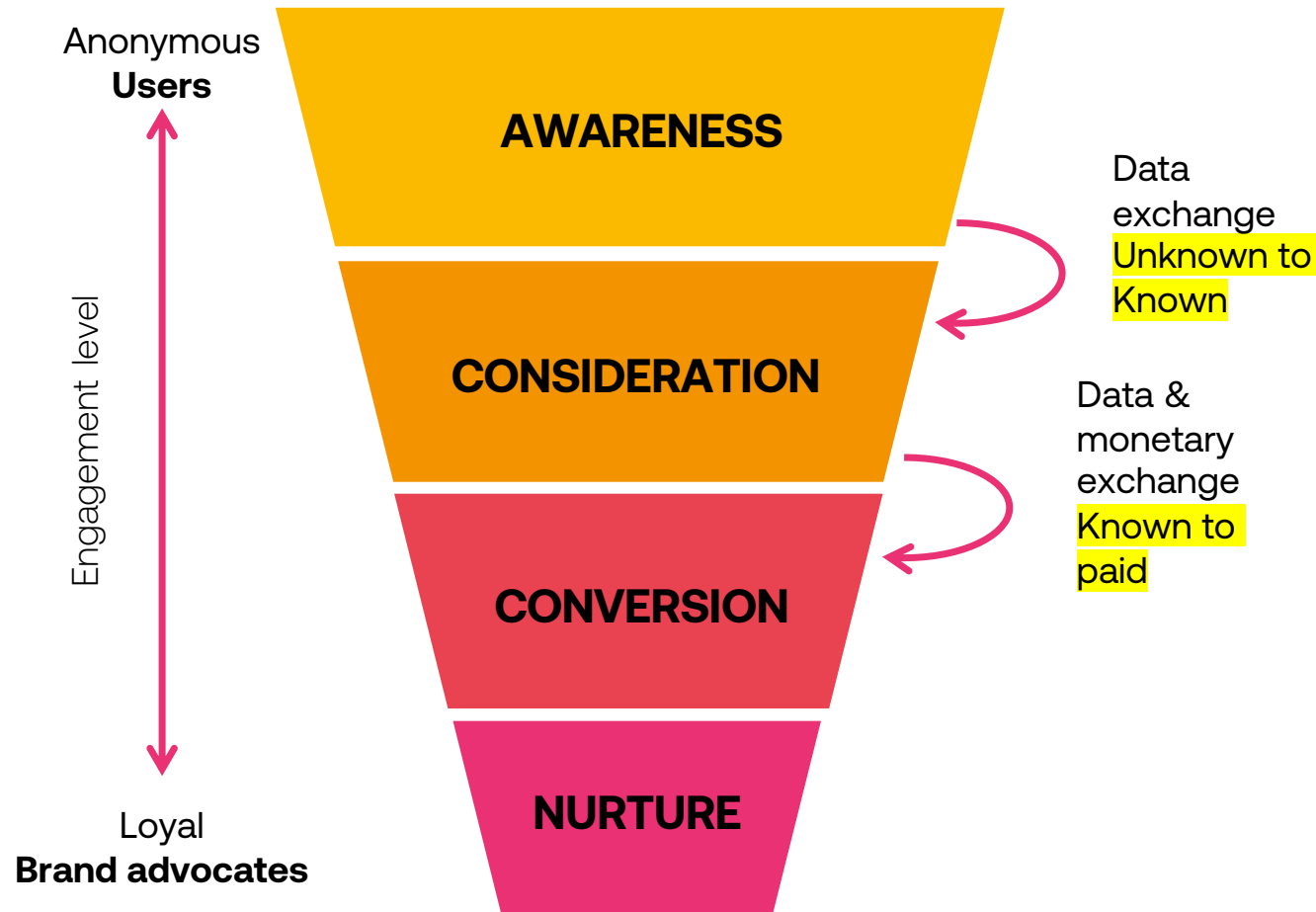
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Use your content to hero your brand and engage your readers



Understand what role different content plays throughout the funnel in moving readers from unknown to known, through conversion to subscription.

Case Study: HBM and Which?

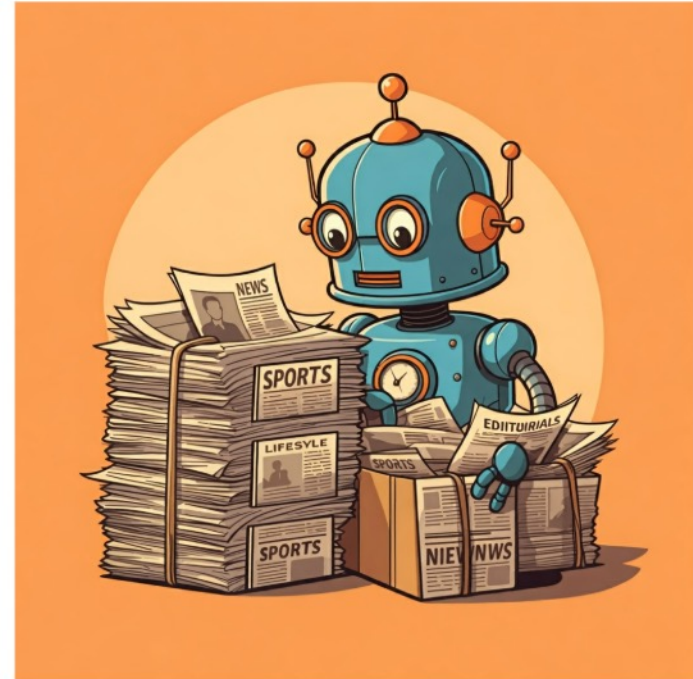
HBM / ADVISORY AI-enabled content reviews

What we do We categorise content and analyse its performance using AI to uncover the drivers of success (or otherwise)

How we do it We take the publisher's content and categorise it according to more than 12 taxonomies (topic, length, article type, headline style, article structure tone etc) using our proprietary models

Then we compare this with the performance of each article

What the publisher gets We tell them not only how each type of article performs but also why. We then give them a content strategy that will meet their goals



Case Study: HBM and Which?

HBM / ADVISORY How we helped Which?

What they asked us How does news content in our Money and Home & Garden perform in relation to subscriptions and other KPIs?

Their hypothesis 'We can easily see the content that performs best for reach but we aren't sure if that is best for keeping our subscribers happy. And that's just a hunch at the moment'

What we found The content that promoted subscription acquisition and retention in both verticals was very different from reach content. It was more Which?-like – featuring market intel and product guides

What we left them with Actionable guidance for how to meet both subs and reach goals

Which?

Test, test, test!

Marketing experiments - learning faster than A/B tests

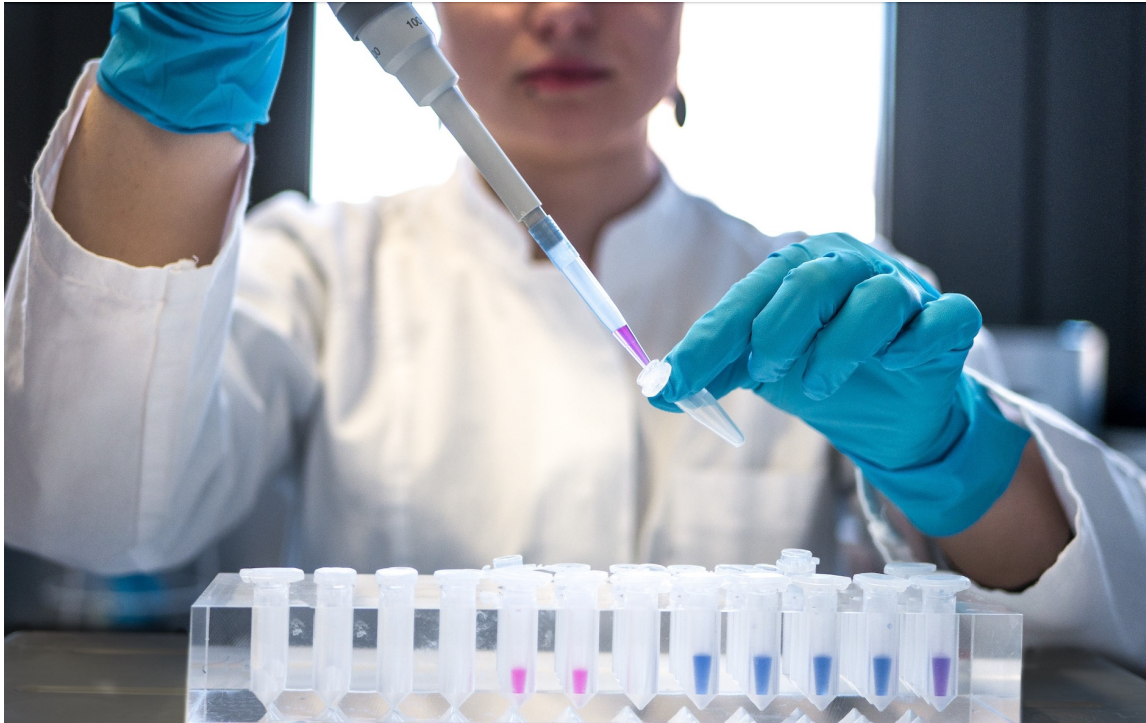


Photo by Julia Koblitz on Unsplash

Structure tests with hypotheses

Make sure every test has a control

Tests can help you win arguments

Tests are essential to keep improving performance

Make sure you analyse results and act on what you've learned

A/B testing versus AI optimisation

Experiment,
don't just test

Example: Which offer should be used on the website?

6 issues for £10



SUBSCRIBE NOW

VS

One year for £18



SUBSCRIBE NOW

The problem with A/B testing

Experiment,
don't just test

Test 1 – to half the audience	
Split	50%
Audience offered	500
Description	1 year for £18
Offer value	£18 (£32 3 year LTV)
Response	2%
Total Orders	10
Total Order value	£180 (£320 3 year CLTV)

Test 2 – to half the audience	
Split	50%
Audience offered	500
Description	6 months for £10
Offer value	£10 (£20 3 year LTV)
Response	1%
Total Orders	5
Total Order value	£50 (£100 3 year CLTV)

Test 1 rollout to entire audience	
Split	100%
Audience offered	1000
Description	1 year for £18
Response	2%
Total Orders	20
Total Order value	£360 (£640 3 year CLTV)

WINNER

Test 2 rollout to entire audience	
Split	100%
Audience offered	1000
Description	6 months for £10
Response	1%
Total Orders	10
Total Order value	£100 (£200 3 year CLTV)

The solution with AI audience optimisation

Test 1	
Split	70%
Audience offered	700
Description	1 year for £18
Offer value	£18 (£32 3 year LTV)
Response	3%
Total Orders	20
Total Order value	£360 (£640 3 year CLTV)

Test 2	
Split	30%
Audience offered	300
Description	6 months for £10
Offer value	£10 (£20 3 year LTV)
Response	3%
Total Orders	10
Total Order value	£100 (£200 3 year CLTV)

The audiences are now optimised to the offer that they are most likely to respond to. Users are shown the targeted offer for them and response rates increase on both offers.

Total Response	
Response	3%
Total Orders	30
Total Order value	£460 (£840 3 year CLTV)

Case study: Business Insider

Which articles should be behind a paywall or registration wall? Business Insider tested AI driven decision-making against decisions made by an editor

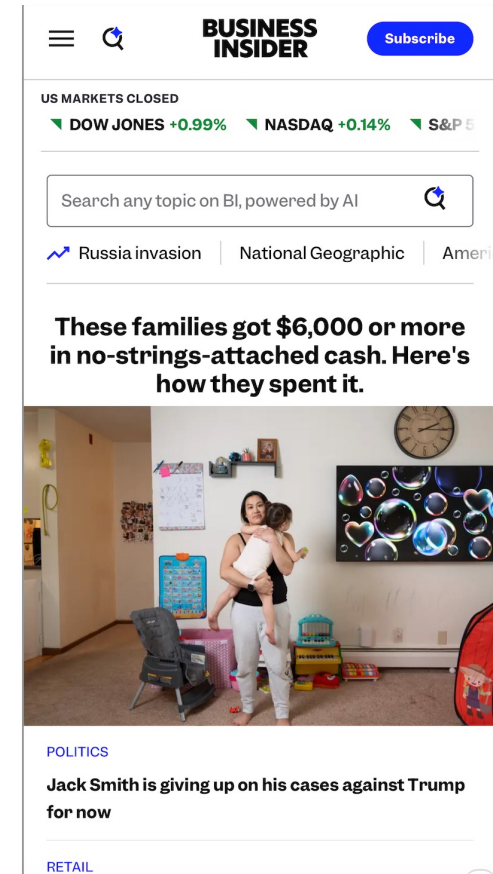
The previous paywall was “freemium” – only articles written by a specific team of journalists were paywalled.

The smart paywall AI determined content users are most likely to pay for

- Based on the user's previous reading habits
- Based on what platform the user came from
- The propensity the genre of content had for conversion

This decided whether the user sees a paywall a registration wall or nothing.

At the end of the test period 60% of new conversions were from ‘non-premium’ stories which wouldn't have been paywalled before.



Case Study: the Philadelphia Enquirer

Experiment,
don't just test

Case study of the Philadelphia Inquirer

The smarter paywall gets, **the more it sells**

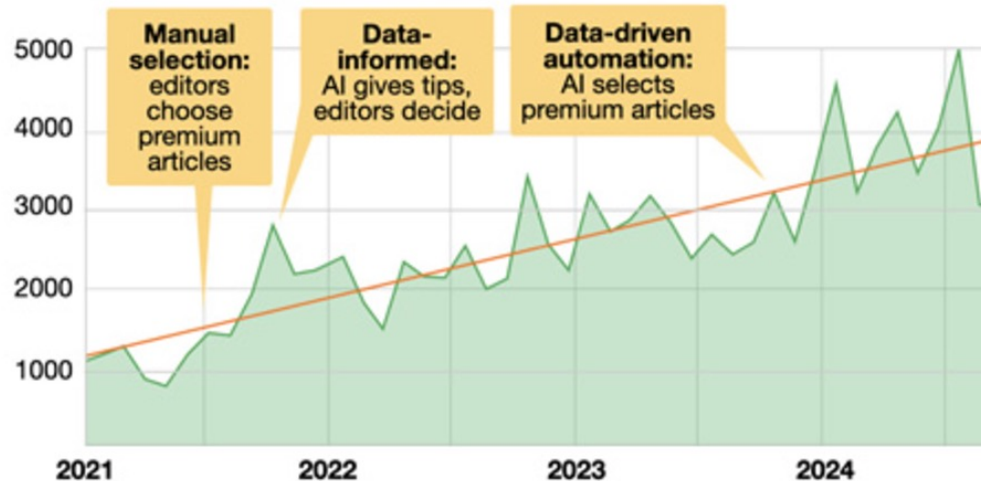
Dynamic paywall found more effective than one-size-fits all walls

Not all readers are created the same, and neither is all content. Publishers need to realize this and monetize each individual visitor and each piece of content differently to maximize revenue.



Darya Ushakova
SVP, Consumer Marketing,
The Philadelphia Inquirer

New digital subscription starts originated on the paywall, per month



Source: D. Ushakova, Digital Subscriber Acquisition, The Philadelphia Inquirer, INMA Subscriber Acquisition Master Class 2024



A series of iterative steps building up to progression



Put your customers first

AI and ML's role in monitoring, assessing, supporting and empowering customer services is becoming essential

Customers expect great service

Facilitating customer self service is essential

Chatbots are becoming normal

What else can you learn?

Analysis of comms to understand sentiment, discover trends and identify key issues early

Assess the performance of your customer service team



Case Study: Customer Service

Listen to your
customers

VOICE

- All calls are transcribed and AI technology reviews the transcriptions looking to **provide the customers sentiment** (positive or negative)
- The use of keywords enable us to identify 'Moments' within a call. We're utilising this to **recognise complaint calls so they can be escalated** to the appropriate team
- Transcription coupled with Moments **enables the evaluators** to see if an agent has followed various processes e.g. call opening/closing, data protection and cross sell

EMAIL

- AI technology reviews all inbound emails, and looks for key words or phrases to **establish the nature of the enquiry** e.g. cancellation, renewal, missed issue
- The enquiry is then classified and put into a contact category
- This **streamlines the workflow** such that only agents skilled in that category will be offered this enquiry to action
- Agents will also only be offered templates that are relevant to the category which **simplifies the process** for them

Case Study: Customer Service

Listen to your customers

Within the Chat environment ABS subscriptions now have a 'virtual agent', Maggie.

Maggie handles the initial customer interaction collecting data protection information and providing recommended FAQs based on an understanding of the customer's enquiry.

Chat

Hello, my name's Maggie! I'm your virtual assistant, here to help you find the right information or connect you with someone who can assist with your query.

Please choose the title you're enquiring about.

Auto Express
Select

What may I help you with today?

Missing issues/Delivery

Frequently Asked Questions

Here are some FAQs related to Missing issues/Delivery. You can also find more 'FAQs' at the bottom of this chat.

Are you cutting down on plastics? ▾

My magazine arrived damaged, what can I do? ▴

We're sorry to hear that your issue arrived damaged. Start a chat with us now so we can go through the options with you.

My copy has arrived late, what should I do? ▾

Overseas delivery updates? ▾

May I have your name?

Have you been able to find the information you need?

Yes, thanks!

Can you use AI to unlock subscription growth?

Subscriptions growth requires patience – and AI can accelerate your strategies.

- Get closer to your customers
- Identify and target audiences
- Understand the role your content plays and work it harder
- Experiment, don't just test
- Listen to your customers effectively

AI can't define your strategy – don't let it. It still makes mistakes.
It can't do anything unlimited resource couldn't – but it can accelerate your opportunities

Thank you

Questions?

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