

The Boston Globe

BlueConic Case Study: Boston Globe Media

Boston Globe Media grows its active subscriber base by delivering a personalized content and marketing experience across its distinct media properties.

Abstract:

In an era when consumers can access information on any device whenever and wherever they want, digital media and publishing companies must find ways to continually stay ahead of the curve to address changing consumer preferences and engage with consumers on their terms. Today, Boston Globe Media (BGM) is on the cutting edge thanks to its use of BlueConic, the world's simplest and most accessible customer data platform that allows marketers to recognize readers and translate their intent into a marketing action.

BGM enlisted BlueConic to get a deeper understanding of both its identified and anonymous readers in order to increase online engagement, drive more subscriptions to premium content, and generate higher advertising revenues. Using the BlueConic platform, BGM can unify visitor behavioral data across its digital properties and leverage the resulting insights to deliver individualized experiences to readers across its entire digital audience.

As a result, the digital media and publishing giant is able to increase digital engagement and grow subscriptions through customized signup offers to readers based on their expressed and implied content

interests. In fact, BGM has found that readers respond 70% more favorably to relevant messaging and BGM has more than doubled the number of identified readers across its digital properties.

Introduction:

The Boston Globe is an American daily newspaper based in Boston, Massachusetts. Founded in 1872 by Charles H. Taylor, it has now grown to operate a number of highly trafficked platforms such as BostonGlobe.com, Boston.com, BetaBoston.com, BDCWire.com, and Cruxnow.com.

Objectives:

BGM delivers content to millions of readers every day through the multiple digital properties it owns and operates. The majority of these readers are anonymous and, as a result, it's a challenge for BGM to improve its understanding of readers' online behaviors and intent. In addition, they aspire to deliver a more personalized experience to those readers that have identified themselves. It is also essential for the publisher to synchronize customer data among its various marketing systems, and make that data available and actionable for each brand interaction.

Enter BlueConic. By capturing a more robust, first party dataset and seamlessly synchronizing that data across the

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marketing technology stack, BGM leverages the resulting consumer insights to convert readers from anonymous to identified. The increase in the number of identified readers helps BGM drive the number of premium content subscribers – a crucial factor of the business' health.

Goal #1: Increase the Number of Identified Readers

"We get millions of readers every month, some of whom we knew a lot about, but others we were still trying to understand and learn more about. In particular, we had challenges understanding behavior across browsers and across platforms. When we discovered BlueConic, it seemed like a good opportunity to use the technology to drive identified profiles, merge user profiles, and ultimately move from a one-size-fits-all approach to a much more targeted and one-to-one solution," said Peter Doucette, Chief Customer Officer of Boston Globe Media.

In order to achieve this consolidated view of the reader, BGM implemented BlueConic's profile merging functionality. This capability enables BGM to recognize an individual across multiple channels and combine an individual's cross-channel activities and behaviors into one distinct profile, providing more insight into the individual reader. In this case, email is a critical component of BGM's marketing ecosystem. Consequently, BGM used BlueConic to track real-time browsing behaviors, craft relevant email messages, and ultimately utilize the profile merging capabilities to recognize an individual as they re-engaged across properties.

Based on email click-through tracking data, BGM discovered that a significant number of readers use the email as a jump to the website without subsequently logging into the site, and therefore were not getting a personalized experience. BGM implemented a program with BlueConic to embed a unique identifier in tracking URLs so that they are recognized as soon as they click through the email to the website. As a result, instead of treating the reader as new or anonymous and delivering a generic experience, BGM is able to deliver content recommendations, customize acquisition messaging appropriately for prospective subscribers, and ensure that existing subscribers continue to have fast and easy access to their preferred content.

Result:

BlueConic helped BGM double the number of identified readers over the prior baseline in part by recognizing readers arriving to the site via email. Using BlueConic, BGM is able to identify these email-based readers, merge profile properties from the reader's previous activities, and leverage insights about content interests and preferences to deliver a more personalized experience. This process not only allows BGM to understand granular reader behaviors, but also to improve relevance in email and on-site interactions. They are able to integrate the user experience across web, mobile, and email to deliver the best experience for the reader at every brand touchpoint.



Goal #2: Increase the Number of Premium Content Subscribers

BlueConic's platform also enables BGM to define comprehensive segments of high-value readers, and then take action on the data associated with those segments. To increase awareness of and drive interest in premium content subscriptions, BGM leveraged the profile data captured by BlueConic to create segments of readers based on their unique content interests, affinity for different BGM brands, and types of stories read.

By building these distinctive reader segments, BGM can run more impactful tests of various messages against different reader cohorts to see what will resonate. As an example: "If you've read some of our coverage about the Red Sox, we've tailored a specific newsletter signup for you," explained Doucette. Consequently, the increased relevancy helps BGM increase newsletter signups and improves the likelihood of converting a reader into a premium subscriber.

“One of our paywall boxes focuses on the frequency of visits, which we have been able to tailor and customize using BlueConic. The first time a user comes across the paywall, they will see one version. However, when it is their second or third time, we’re going to give them a different experience because we understand the user’s preferences and can leverage those insights to deliver a more personalized experience,” added Doucette.

Result:

After implementing BlueConic, BGM saw a 70% increase in engagement on subscription sign-up offers tailored to the individual’s content interests compared to generic messaging, as well as 4x growth in the number of prospects going to their subscription registration pages. BGM also gained a deeper understanding of reader segmentation and response to subscription messaging based on that segmentation.

“We have seen improved conversion rates and improved adoption rates with this approach by leveraging BlueConic,” said Doucette.

Conclusion /recap:

Using BlueConic, BGM successfully achieved its dual goals of:

- 1) bolstering the number of identified readers to double the previous benchmark and
- 2) increasing subscriptions for premium content based on 4x growth in the top of the funnel.

As Doucette concludes, “Ultimately, the deep insights that BlueConic provides about our readers is going to inform how our products are developed. With BlueConic, we’re on the path to creating hyper-relevant solutions for our users. With everything that we’ve learned along the way, including across our different products and our portfolio, we bring together and serve it back to our readers in real-time to create that compelling experience. BlueConic allows us to better acquire new subscribers, keep and engage our existing base of customers and drive our digital business forward.”



To see Peter Doucette’s full testimony visit BlueConic.com

BlueConic Inc. | www.BlueConic.com | +1 (888) 440-2583 | info@blueconic.com
207 South Street, Suite 671, Boston MA 02111, United States