

## How to drive traffic to your digital magazine



Written by Matt Berringer

June 24, 2020

Digital magazines are more important than ever because of changes related to COVID-19. So how can you drive your readers to engage with your [digital magazine](#)? Below are some ideas and best practices for doing just that.

If you're looking to get started in digital publishing [start here](#).

### Setting goals for your digital magazine

As with every project, it's a good idea to start with the end in mind. What goals do you have for your digital magazine? Now is a good time to [review any analytics](#) to which you already have access.

This activity can help you establish a baseline for your publication's performance and serve as a measuring stick for the effectiveness of your efforts. Do this for your most recent issues but also calculate your average and year-over-year statistics so that you have a well-rounded idea of your traffic and engagement. Don't forget to account for any anomalies like holidays or, in the case of 2020, COVID-19.

### What are the key metrics?

**Visitors** – The number of overall visitors to your publication. This could include people who return to your publication several times. Each time they return a visit is recorded.

**Unique Visitors** – The number of distinct visitors to your publication. Unlike the visitors metric, the unique visitors metric counts only the first time someone views your publication.

**Bounce Rate** – The percentage of visitors who only view one page of your content before exiting. This can be a general sign of user engagement (or lack thereof).

**Downloads** – If you have a downloadable edition, review how many downloads you receive for each edition.

**Time Engaged (Average Session Duration)** – How much time do visitors actually spend engaging with your content? If this number is very low, it can be a sign your content is not resonating or drawing the interest of your audience.

**Shares** – How many visitors shared your content (if this feature is enabled on your publication)?

**Rich Media Interactions** – How many times have videos or interactive content been clicked on.

Don't have access to these metrics yet? You can typically use something like Google Analytics to begin tracking them. It's important to use a credible third-party vendor for your analytics so that advertisers can trust the data you show them and so that you can have confidence in the data you're seeing. At NxtBook Media, we use [AT Internet](#).

When you have an idea of your past performance, you can now set goals for improvement. But first, you need to decide which areas are most important to your business goals. Do you just want more visitors who spend little time engaging? These superficial reader numbers can be good for selling advertising in the short term but probably not over the long term. Most publishers (and advertisers) would prefer a moderately lower visitor count with strong engagement compared to a high visitor count with little-to-no engagement.

### What's a good engagement rate for a digital magazine?

We hear this question quite a bit. The answer varies based on your industry, your publication, the types of promotion you're already engaging in, and the specific metric you're looking at. That's why it's important to gather key metrics for your publication and set goals according to your publication's performance.

To get you started though, here are a few benchmarks:

### What is a good average click-through rate for a digital magazine?

Most publishers have an email list to which they can send their new issues. If you have an in-house list, take a look at your average click-through rate and compare it with [Mailchimp's benchmarks](#). You'll notice that they have it broken out by industry which can be a strong factor impacting your click-through rate.

### What is a good average session duration for a digital magazine?

The average session duration for a website visit lasts around [2-3 minutes](#).

Visitors to content on Nxtbook Media platforms average around 7 minutes per visit. So, for a digital publication, we'd recommend shooting for the higher end of that spectrum. We wrote an eBook diving into the importance of the time-engaged metric. You can find it [here](#).

### What is a good bounce rate for a digital magazine?

If you have a low average session duration, you may have a high bounce rate. Here again, bounce rates can vary greatly depending on your industry and a number of other factors.

In general though, you want to see your bounce rate below 50 percent. If it's higher than that, you may want to review your promotional strategy to make sure you're hitting the right audience.

If you're hitting the right audience and still seeing a high bounce rate, consider reviewing your landing page and making adjustments to get visitors to explore your content.

### Improving engagement metrics

Now that we have an idea of our goals and the benchmarks we should be aiming for, let's take a look at some best practices for driving engagement with your content.

### Driving traffic to your digital magazine

**Publish valuable, persona-centered content** – If you're an experienced publisher, you probably already have this one down. But if you're new to publishing, one of the most important parts of building a successful digital publication is to create valuable content for your readers. This should be content that they find insightful, interesting, and useful. Start with great content and the rest of your job will be a lot easier. Click [here](#) for a deep-dive on personas from HubSpot.

**Consider the reader experience** – You can have the best content in the world but if it doesn't display properly or is a pain to read, your readers aren't going to stick around (and your bounce rate will go through the roof).

Make sure you design your content using a platform that makes engaging with your content a delightful experience for readers. Think about things like responsive design (content that reflows based on the device on which it is viewed), accessibility features for hearing or visually impaired visitors, and interactivity (do you want your users to be able to interact with your content with elements like videos, animations, or audio files?). All of these options can help improve reader engagement and average session duration.

**Build your list** – If you are an established print publication you may already have a list of readers you can build from. That's a great place to start. If you don't have a list, start building one as soon as you can using [lead magnets](#) on your website or paid lead generation campaigns on social media.

You can also give your list a boost by sponsoring a promoted email campaign through an industry partner. For example, an outdoor-focused magazine may wish to sponsor an email campaign to a specific brand's in-house list to drive awareness of its latest issue. You could also consider partnering with another brand to perform a giveaway. In this way, you're renting access to a target audience in the hopes of attracting them to become a part of your in-house audience.

**Publish your content consistently** – If you're publishing content on a consistent basis, your readers will be more likely to engage with it. Consistency drives regular engagement and repeat behavior. If done right, readers expect your content to be published on a regular basis. If you're not publishing consistently, your audience may stop expecting it.

**Promote your content consistently** – Just as important as publishing consistently is promoting your content consistently. Don't just publish your content and wait for the masses to arrive (they won't). You need to proactively share your content across a variety of channels to include email, social media, and display advertising. Share individual articles as well as the entire edition and do it multiple times across different channels.

**Don't forget to experiment** – A/B test email layouts to drive up your click-through rates on your emails. For social media, try out a variety of hashtags, post times, and visuals. Hootsuite has some great [tips](#) for best practices on social media.

**Pay to play** – Don't forget about paid promotion on social media as well. In the past few years, organic (unpaid) reach for companies on Facebook has [dwindled to around 5.5 percent](#), one way to increase this is by boosting your posts with paid campaigns. At a minimum, analyze your organic posts and boost the high performing ones to drive targeted traffic to your content.

This strategy can help boost traffic and generate more engagement with your publication.

If you are running a variety of campaigns, you may want to set up UTM (that stands for tracking module if you want to impress people) codes to keep track of them and determine which ones are working the best. Buffer has a great guide to all things UTM [here](#).

**Always be helping** – Also, don't forget the social part of social media. Social media is a two-way street! In addition to sharing your content, you can also monitor conversations that you can join. If it's appropriate and helpful to share a link to your content, go for it! Just be mindful to avoid blatant self-promotion and make sure you're genuinely able to help inform on an issue.

There you have it, key metrics to analyze as you look to build an audience for your digital publication, key benchmarks for your performance, and eight ways to improve performance against those benchmarks. These tips can go a long way towards helping you drive traffic to your digital magazine but building an audience also takes patience. Don't get discouraged if traffic isn't where you want it right now, as the saying goes, the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.

We hope you find this information helpful. If you'd like more information or want to chat about your goals, please [let us know](#) – we're happy to help!

