Why Publishers Should Prioritize Return Visitors in 2020

A "Game-Changing" Guide To Drive
Ad Revenue and Subscriptions with
Push Notifications

Pushly

Publishers Are Leaving Money on the Table

A duopoly that has dominated traffic and ad revenue, an unprecedented global pandemic and evolving consumer preferences are among the challenges forcing publishers to re-evaluate their growth and engagement strategies.

Publishers struggle to retain audiences and grow revenue. Their business models rely on distribution across major search and social platforms, but these behemoths often take more than they give back. The high cost of traffic acquisition is trumped when traffic does make it to a publisher's site, as 70 to 90 percent of visitors bounce[1] before seeing a second page.

Publishers are leaving money on the table by not subscribing audiences who visit their sites once, never to return.

This doesn't have to be a losing battle. Publishers are missing a huge growth opportunity at their fingertips that is proven to drive greater audience engagement and keep one-time visitors coming back.

Push notifications are the way forward.

What's inside:

1. The state of publishing and why push notifications are a game-changer for growth
2. Three ways publishers can optimize audience engagement, retention and revenue
3. How publishers should evaluate the right push notification solution

Table of Contents

Pushly | Pushly.com

The "Anything But Normal" State of Publishing

For years, publishers have struggled to grow quality traffic and revenue, exploring various engagement and revenue models to keep audiences coming back and bottom lines growing.

Since the 90's, email has offered publishers an opportunity to secure engagement using visitor data to develop targeted messaging and regularly direct visitors back to their sites. Email was the highest earning ROI channel of any publisher marketing tactic. Then, inboxes started getting crowded and, just as suddenly, search and social channels began attracting greater consumer attention.

2016

The 90's

"*If the content of news publishers keeps being used on the Internet without remuneration, the future of the independent press is at great risk.*"

What's New In Publishing[5]

Begin the rise of Google and Facebook, who in 2016 controlled over 50 percent of the digital ad market[2], which today has grown to over 70 percent[3]. The search and social duopoly's growth became a prerequisite for publishers to develop paid and organic marketing strategies to gain visibility and drive more traffic back to their sites. Additionally, publishers regularly found themselves on the losing end of platform algorithm changes that negatively impacted their traffic.

Around 2018, as the duopoly continued to grow and dominate ad revenue, publishers began thinking more strategically about supplementing their bottom line by introducing paywalls or membership subscription models. While models vary, the insertion of paywalls also came with the added cost of potentially alienating audiences who didn't want to pay for content that they could find similarly on a competing site for free.

Today, publishers are faced with a dilemma - keep investing in traffic sources that are expensive and lead to a heavier reliance on third parties for audience development or reduce spending and risk losing audiences. It is not a sustainable growth strategy.

Early 2020

2018

Today

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in early 2020, publishers saw traffic surges upwards of 60 percent[4] as quarantined consumers became more digitally engaged. Yet, while traffic is skyrocketing, CPMs are declining as the economic fallout of the pandemic rattled advertisers who began pulling back on media spend.

Stop Ignoring Audiences

When did the publishing industry collectively decide to be satisfied with a single visit from the majority of an acquired audience? While the need to gain new audiences is a constant for publishers today, the fact that many first-time visitors are not being touched again is a problem.

The solution is simple: stop ignoring web audiences. Lost audiences equal lost incremental revenue opportunities. Instead, publishers should consider a new way to re-engage and increase the value of those users to drive monetization gains.

There is an undervalued channel many publishers should prioritize that is proven to double visitor retention by reaching the seemingly "unreachable" once they leave a site.

A Publisher's Secret Growth Strategy: Push Notifications

Getting audiences to pay attention and take action is a bigger challenge than ever before.

Browser-based push notifications are a relatively new channel that gives publishers greater control over their audience engagement and monetization strategies. To remain competitive, push offers a cost-efficient, personalized communication channel to increase audience retention at scale and grow brand evangelism.

What is web push?

Alert-style messages from a website delivered ad-free on desktop and mobile devices even when visitors are off the site.

- **Direct**, 1:1 audience communication channel

- **Convenient** delivery method proven to break through more effectively than social and email

- A more **timely** and precise way for publishers to engage, expand, retain and monetize their audiences
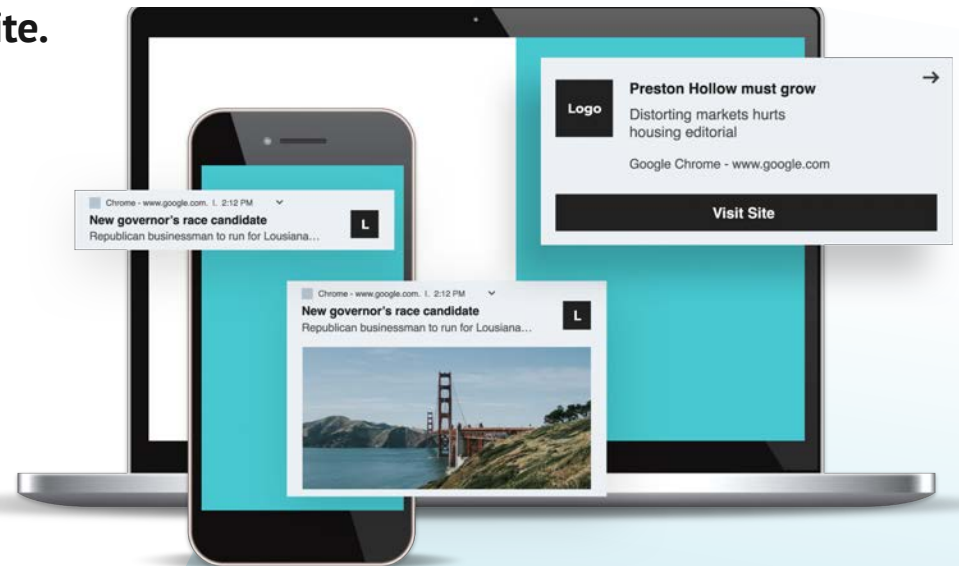
Web push is a game-changer for publisher growth. Aside from email and search, push offers the only other direct source of organic traffic to publisher sites. Compared to email, push drives over 60 percent of users to view content in their browser versus the 15 percent of users who will open an email, according to RetailDive[7].

RETAIL DIVE

Pushly | Pushly.com

Push Outperforms Alternative Channels[8]

- **Click Rate**
10%
2.5x email and 10x social

- **Opt-In Rate**
5%
vs. <2.6% for email

- **Attrition Rate**
<1.5%
vs. email at 3.22%

A publisher's greatest strength is its content. Combined with an opt-in channel like web push, with machine learning-powered personalization and convenient delivery, it is a proven solution to drive consistent audience volume.

Consumers Are Leaning Into Push

With web push, publishers can establish trust from the start with personalized content targeting after a visitor leaves the site, delivering relevant information where and when convenient for subscribers.

53%   Consumer opt-in rate for push notifications[9]

72%   Consumers who say they only engage with marketing content tailored to their interests[10]

9%+   Increase in engagement when pushes include basic personalization[11]

11x   Increase in clicks on Coronavirus-related push content from February to March 2020[12]

7%+   Average CTR with web push, 2x email and 10x social[13]

Three Ways to Optimize Push for Retention & Revenue

Push subscribers have raised their hand to say they want to receive a publisher's content, increasing the likelihood they will make repeat visits and stay longer than the average visitor. For a publisher, this means increased page views and ad revenue.

Here's how publishers can optimize push notifications to boost retention and revenue:

1 **Create An Efficient Opt-in Flow**

2 **Personalize Pushes**

3 **Test, Test, and A/B Test Some More**

1 Create An Efficient Opt-in Flow

Before content can be pushed to visitors, they must give permission to receive notifications. Creating an effective push notification opt-in flow is critical to ensure visitors agree to receive push notifications and secure subscriptions. Opt-in prompts can be tailored to meet a publisher's overall audience growth strategy. They can be turned on or off based on where visitors arrive from and/or where they land on the site. Used effectively, publishers should see **five percent or higher opt-in rates.**

2 Personalize Pushes

Web push notifications can be personalized based on what publishers know about visitors - from the content they view, to their geographic location, and push notification behavior (i.e., clicks) - to maximize engagement and return visits. Consider push like a first-party remarketing channel, where content delivered to recipients is relevant to their interests based on data publishers know about them. Using machine learning built into push platforms, enhanced by integreations with a publisher's DMP or CDP, boosts the "stickiness" of push messages allowing for smarter content targeting and **significantly higher CTRs, at times above 15 percent.**

3 Test, Test, and A/B Test Some More

To maximize KPIs for clicks and CTRs, publishers can initiate A/B or multivariate testing with push notifications to optimize for results (i.e., clicks). With this approach, publishers can input multiple articles and/or copy into a designated push distribution with audience volumes assigned for each variant in order to test which content will get more engagement. Built-in machine learning will indicate the top performing notification based on real-time engagement and optimize for the highest CTR **making daily operations easier**.
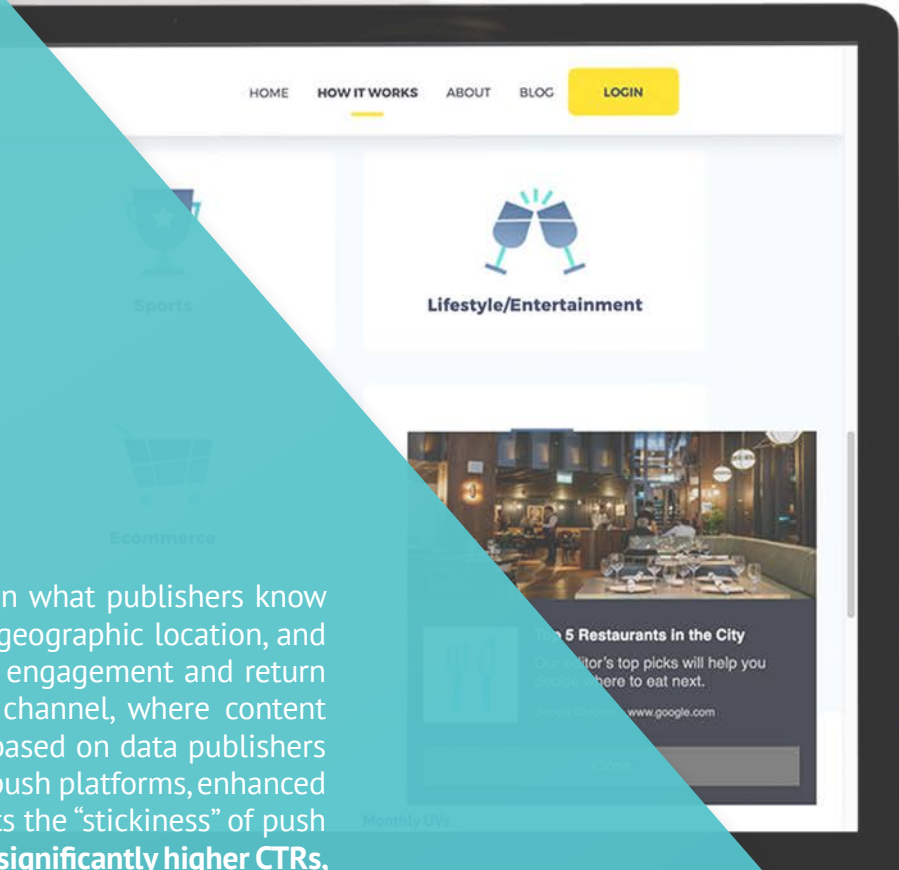
Benefits of Using Push Notifications

Increased brand loyalty

Web push subscribers have opted in to receive a publisher's content. The direct line of communication to deliver regular and relevant information to them gives publishers an opportunity to boost the overall lifetime value of their audiences.

Consistent over-indexed CTRs

Push notifications consistently benchmark higher than digital advertising CTRs. Delivering them on desktop or mobile devices when visitors are away from the site gives publishers the advantage of increased click opportunities. Even greater engagement can be achieved with segmentation, A/B testing and other enhanced capabilities.

Incremental revenue

With increased site traffic, comes additional ad revenue. Web push is a unique channel that breaks through in comparison to cluttered social and search platforms to direct subscribers to the most valuable content. Now, publishers have the opportunity to proactively manage their bottom line by increasing monthly UVs to boost RPMs.

Push Notification Partner Checklist

The right push notification partner can help publishers achieve their audience engagement goals. Here are some questions publishers should ask of their current or future push notification vendor.

Vendor checklist:

☐ If I choose a web push notification platform to scale my reach, what internal resources will I need?

☐ If we adopt this platform, how quickly can we start sending notifications and subscribing users?

☐ Can I target audiences with content down to the user-level, such as how frequently and recently they have visited certain content? [eg., pages they visited - or other competitive benchmark for targeting]

☐ To meet my KPIs, can I leverage multivariate testing to learn what content and/or action button combinations are more effective?

☐ To what degree can I customize and personalize our push notifications?

☐ Do you offer a free trial period to understand how this platform will perform for my site?

☐ What type of dedicated support and feature access will I receive for the cost?

The Risk of Doing Nothing

Web push notifications can give publishers a competitive edge in their respective marketplaces. Those who fail to implement a direct audience engagement channel like push will ultimately struggle to keep up with competitors who choose to take greater control over their audience and revenue growth.

The web push channel gives publishers a chance to truly own their audiences, including direct visitor acquisition and engagement, boosting the overall lifetime value of audiences and, as a result, decreasing publisher reliance on Google and Facebook for traffic and revenue.

About Pushly

Trusted by thousands of publishers, Pushly is the audience engagement platform that turns one-time visitors into loyal subscribers by giving audiences the ability to receive browser notifications from their favorite mobile and desktop sites. Publisher partners gain access to a suite of powerful campaign management tools including customized opt-in flows, robust audience segmentation, notification targeting, and a superior reporting suite. Pushly clients, including several of Comscore's Top 50 news and content publishers, see consistent opt-in rates of 5% or higher, and notification click-thru rates of 7-15%, resulting in month-over-month organic visitor growth and incremental ad revenue.

Pushly.com

- -

References:

[1] https://instapage.com/blog/landing-page-bounce-rate

[2] https://www.visualcapitalist.com/dominance-google-and-facebook-one-chart/

[3] https://www.marketwatch.com/story/as-demand-for-digital-advertising-plummets-google-and-facebook-could-have-shrinking-revenues-2020-04-28

[4] https://www.mediapost.com/publications/article/348611/traffic-increases-60-to-publishers-sites-amid-co.html

[5] https://whatsnewinpublishing.com/its-like-blackmail-fury-as-google-says-it-will-exclude-french-publishers-from-search-results/

[6] https://www.nbcnews.com/business/business-news/facebook-s-news-feed-changes-are-latest-blow-publishers-brands-n837196

[7] https://www.retaildive.com/ex/mobilecommercedaily/reach-the-unreachable-with-browser-push-notifications-and-emails

[8] https://mailchimp.com/resources/email-marketing-benchmarks/

https://www.wordstream.com/blog/ws/2019/11/12/facebook-ad-benchmarks

https://neilpatel.com/blog/website-push-notifications-for-ecommerce/

https://cdn.neverbounce.com/resources/the-state-of-email-attrition-2018-neverbounce.pdf

https://www.marketingcharts.com/customer-centric/lead-generation-and-management-108010

[9] https://www.businessofapps.com/marketplace/push-notifications/research/push-notifications-statistics/

[10] https://learn.g2.com/how-push-notifications-boost-engagement

[11] https://www.businessofapps.com/marketplace/push-notifications/research/push-notifications-statistics/

[12] https://blog.pushly.com/web-push-is-breaking-news-infographic

[13] https://blog.pushly.com/web-push-is-breaking-news-infographic