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NEW ENGLAND
NEWSPAPERS, INC.

Zephr

CASE STUDY



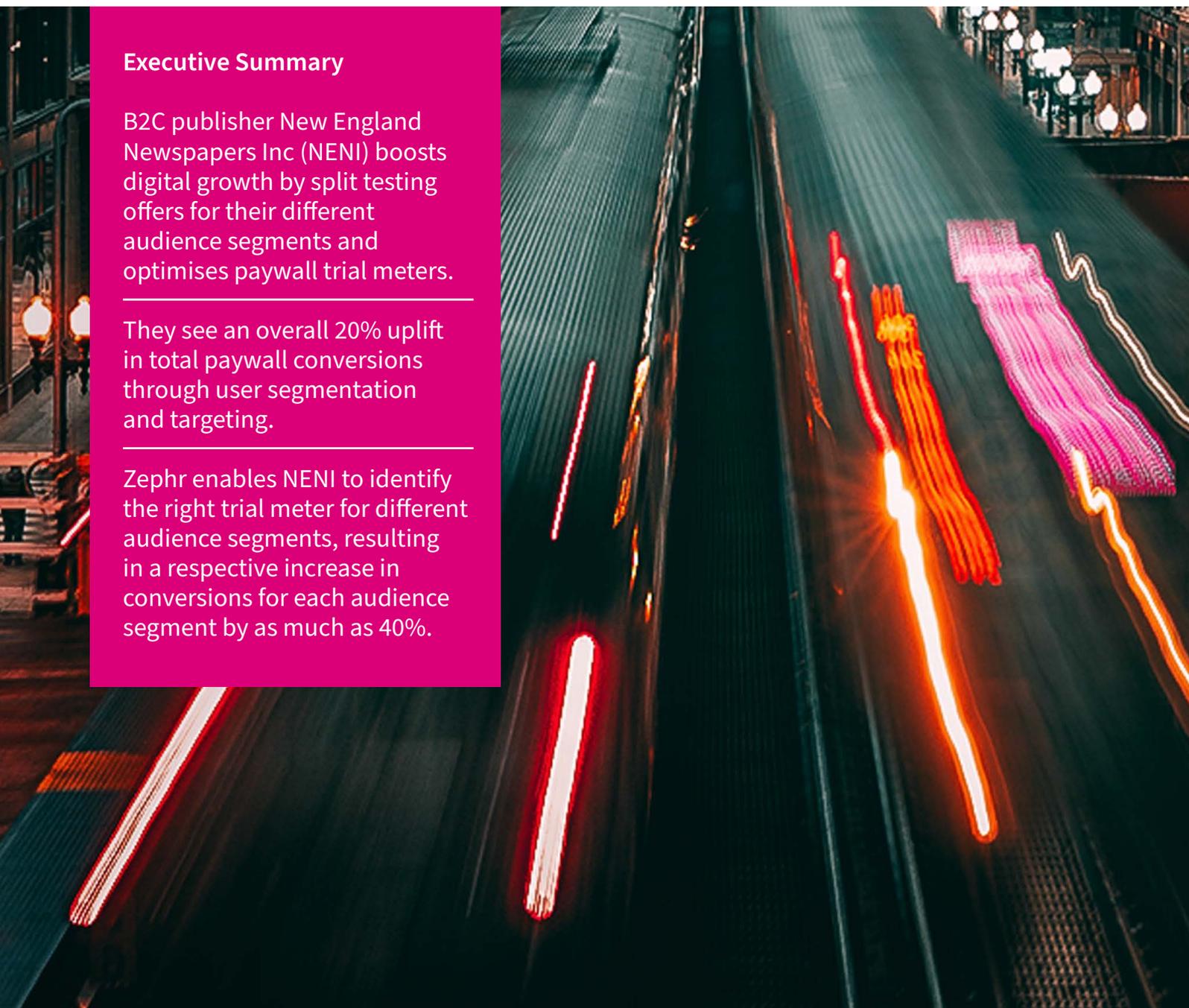
New England Newspapers Inc gains a 20% uplift in subscriber conversions by optimising paywall meters

Executive Summary

B2C publisher New England Newspapers Inc (NENI) boosts digital growth by split testing offers for their different audience segments and optimises paywall trial meters.

They see an overall 20% uplift in total paywall conversions through user segmentation and targeting.

Zephr enables NENI to identify the right trial meter for different audience segments, resulting in a respective increase in conversions for each audience segment by as much as 40%.





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Introduction

Founded in 1789, locally-owned New England Newspapers Inc publishes the daily newspaper-of-record for 3 New England communities. They have a goal to sustain the highest level of excellence in local journalism for their leading community newspapers.

They regularly see print subscriptions grow 5-8% every summer because of tourism and holiday stays in the

Berkshire area, but in recent years, their strategy has focused on reinventing their digital tech stack to increase year-round digital subscription revenue.

To do this, New England Newspapers Inc made the decision to swap out their existing website CMS, paywalls, and other systems, and curate new registration and paywalls from scratch with Zephr.

Challenge

Having previously worked with two ‘developer heavy’ paywall systems, the biggest challenge NENI faced was not having the ability to easily personalise different customer offers. Instead, they had to rely on extensive tech expertise to manually update any changes that were required, resulting in a long and arduous process when it came to switching between offers, and testing different outcomes. That meant weekend sales such as Black Friday deals became complex and took months of planning and preparation due to a lack of automation.

In order to grow online, it was absolutely essential to have the ability to test and optimise new offers quickly to grasp a firm understanding of which were converting best, and for which user segments.

Without this level of understanding, NENI were missing out on potential revenue from users whose needs didn’t match their fixed offer. In today’s digital world, publishers who stick with a one-size-fits-all approach to their offers rapidly fall behind, as online readers become more accustomed to personalisation and seek products tailored to their needs.

Since there was potential to gain subscription revenue quickly by implementing fast, they needed a solution that could easily integrate with other tech providers they were already working with:

“When considering Zephr for our tech stack, [we had to think about] how all these pieces are going to play together.”

— Gary Lavariere, Chief Revenue Officer

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Solution

With a small team, NENI required flexible paywalls, without having to invest in extensive tech support or requiring the complexity of writing substantial code.

“Since we aren’t a large enterprise, it was very important for [the solution we were looking for] to be cost effective.”

— Gary Lavariere, Chief Revenue Officer

That solution was to use Zephr’s intuitive user interface and plug-and-play integrations to enable commercial and technical teams to develop powerful subscription relationships and deliver customisable, paywall forms that could easily be swapped out.

Rapid split testing of paywalls in this way enabled New England Newspapers Inc to test new offers, track engagement, and change paywall meters as they saw fit. With this flexibility, New England Newspapers Inc could see which offers were bringing in the most conversions (and which had the best retention).

“Zephr was key to building our new technology stack here at NENI and allowed us to make changes to our decision engine on the fly.”

— Gary Lavariere, Chief Revenue Officer



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Outcome

Since implementing Zephr, New England Newspapers Inc are now able to understand their users in a meaningful way and split test different offers with ease.

By using Mather Economics' audience analytics tool, NENI were able to analyse audience content preferences, engagement levels, and user demographics to build audience segments. Thanks to Zephr's integration with Mather, NENI were able to build rules within Zephr that easily changed their paywall meters based on these different user attributes. This new level of personalisation increased conversion rates by as much as 40% for the different user segments.

“Since implementing Zephr, we've seen an overall 20% lift in direct paywall conversions through user segmentation and targeting.”

— Gary Lavariere, Chief Revenue Officer

Moreover, Zephr's technology allowed New England Newspapers Inc to focus on interest-based messaging, meaning they could serve personalised messages to encourage individuals to subscribe based on the types of articles they frequently engaged with.

This, as well as the optimisation of their offers, puts NENI in a great position for future growth, making way for meaningful connections with their audience even more than previously possible.

In summary, the implementation of flexible paywall solutions has enabled New England Newspapers Inc to expand their digital subscription business without having to extensively rely on technology teams. Choosing Zephr allows New England Newspapers Inc to integrate easily with future tech as their business needs grow to create better experiences for their subscribers.

CONTACT

www.zephr.com
info@zephr.com

