Building Compelling Value Propositions for Digital Media Subscriptions and Memberships

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Introduction

The competition for reader dollars in digital media is greater than ever. With Facebook, Google, and increasingly Amazon dominating the battle for digital ad spend, many publishers are being forced to find new methods and justifications for monetizing their audience directly in order to survive. Therefore, having a compelling answer to the question of "Why?" someone should become a subscriber or member of your organization is vital.

This is a relatively new focus for a lot of publishers so it is unlikely many (especially small and medium sized organizations) will be aware of the range of approaches to building strong subscription/membership value propositions that are available. In light of this, this article seeks to:

- First, layout a clear framework for considering all possible elements of your subscription's/membership's value proposition; and
- Second, provide a method for identifying what elements are appropriate for your organization to focus on and practical actions that can create value from them.

Value Proposition Framework

What Do I Mean by a Value Proposition?

I define a value proposition as "The combination of content, features, and services that form the argument an organization makes for why someone should support them financially as a subscriber or member (henceforth referred to as a "supporter") for an extended period of time". For clarity:

- This excludes both one-off price promotions and the larger set of competencies needed to execute a successful reader revenue strategy, such as the effective use of audience data, achieving

organizational buy-in and culture change, efficient payment processing, etc. Though important, these generally support a value proposition rather than form it;

- Despite there being a difference between a subscription and a membership (see Hansen and Goligoski: "Guide to Audience Revenue and Engagement"[1]) the line between them is increasingly being blurred. So, to keep things simple I generally disregard this distinction as the insights in this article are largely applicable to both. The only exception to this is in the first part of the value proposition framework (below) which features two elements that are essentially proxies for choosing a subscription or a membership model, respectively. I talk more about why it is structured like this later;

- Finally, a clear understanding of your value proposition may help efforts to grow revenue streams outside of subscription or membership fees/donations, but this is not this article's goal, simply a possible side benefit.

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Value Proposition Framework

Below is a framework which contains the various elements that could comprise a value proposition for your organization's digital media subscription/membership:

Possible Value Proposition Elements of a Subscription or Membership

1	Exclusive Content	*then select*	3	Superior User Experience	6	Community Identification
	or	*from...*	4	Two-way Engagement	7	Value for Money
2	De Facto Donation		5	Complementary Product / Service	8	Recommendations

How to Read the Framework

One of the main decisions you, as a publisher, will need to make as you begin building a subscription/membership business will be whether, generally speaking, you want to:

1) Restrict content only to your paying audience; or
2) Make content freely available

The first option is indicative of a typical subscription model and is represented by the element "Exclusive Content" in the framework. Conversely, the second option is more commonly associated with a membership model and is represented by the "De Facto Donation" element. Deciding what the fundamental relationship will be between your content and your audience will affect other decisions about how exactly to implement the value proposition elements $3-8$ that you select. This is why I suggest it be the first decision you make, before considering other elements.

However, as mentioned, the line between subscriptions and memberships is increasingly being blurred. For instance, *The New York Times* is regarded as operating one of the most successful subscription businesses, yet makes overt appeals to financially support its journalism (as seen in its "The Truth is Worth It" campaign[2]) that have the look and feel of a membership marketing campaign. On the other hand, *The Guardian*'s membership model makes all content freely available to everyone – yet, by offering

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[1] https://www.cjr.org/tow_center_reports/guide-to-audience-revenue-and-engagement.php
[2] https://www.nytimes.com/subscription/truth/the-truth-is-worth-it

access to products like The Guardian Daily App only to people who pay additional for it, they have incorporated tactics reminiscent of a subscription business.

The point is yes, the choice between restricting content or making it free is meaningful and will affect much of your content and product strategy. At the very least it provides an important perspective with which to approach decisions about other value proposition elements. But, the distinction between them is *not absolute* and *does not preclude* you from incorporating ideas from the element not chosen, as *The New York Times* and *The Guardian* examples demonstrate.

Either way, after "selecting" one of the "Exclusive Content" or "De Facto Donation" elements, there are six more elements that could be included in your organization's value proposition. Selecting which of these six (if any) to focus on depends on your organizational/editorial mission, available resources, core competencies, etc.

Additional Comments

Within each of the eight total elements are a variety of strategies and tactics that your organization can pursue; attempting to list these all of these in this article would be futile. Instead, in the next section I explain common characteristics of strategies and tactics within each element, which can help you think creatively about how your organization can execute these. Importantly, this article allocates more time to those elements where I feel I have meaningful insight to contribute. For the others, I only briefly reference the main insights from existing research and real-world examples.

Finally, this article analyzes what constitutes a value proposition by taking the "publisher's perspective". Therefore, it should be seen as a complement to, rather than substitute for, the "Paths to Subscription"[3] research done by the American Press Institute, which adopts the "audience's perspective".

Value Proposition Elements

1) Exclusive Content

Allowing access to an ongoing stream of new content only to paying supporters is the most obvious way of building value in your subscription/membership – assuming your content is worth paying for. Examples of paywalls being erected are everywhere today, from *de Correspondent* in the Netherlands to *The Sydney Morning Herald* in Australia.

Deciding to build value by restricting access to content is often successfully done when an organization has an expertise or unique insights about a specific topic/field that is desired by an audience with the means to pay for it. Examples of this include the technology and media business strategy website, Stratechery, and The Athletic which focuses on in-depth sports journalism. Other rationales include leveraging regional dominance (e.g. the *Boston Globe*) or making the most of your reputation as being a "must have" and/or your ubiquitous brand (e.g. the *Washington Post*), though the latter is a realistic

option for only a limited number of publishers. Whatever the justification, your organization should be willing to adopt a "subscriber-first" operational structure and mentality and to have concluded that restricting content is consistent with your mission and principles.

Choosing the appropriate type of paywall, testing different content areas to restrict or not, seeing which articles best convert an audience to become paying supporters, and assessing which verticals have an audience willing to pay for access are just some of the challenges you must face if deciding to focus on this element. These are well known considerations so I will not belabor these points. But there is another less known method to use content to drive perceived value.

When a person decides to become an ongoing financial supporter of your organization, the intent is a combination of two things:

- "Access": Paying for access to existing content
- "Investment": Investing in the future creation of content the supporter will be able to access

In essence, one is backward looking and the other forward looking. When a person becomes a supporter for primarily "Investment" reasons, organizations should be deliberate with whether they represent/market *new content* as being "Incrementally Accessible" or "Incrementally Produced".

What's the difference? "Incrementally Accessible" refers to content that *would have been produced anyway and freely available if not for the paywall*, whereas "Incrementally Produced" refers to content that *would not have been produced at all in a counterfactual world where there was no paywall.*

If the perception amongst supporters is that their "investment" in future content is basically just subsidizing work that would likely have been produced anyway (i.e. "Incrementally Accessible"), it is reasonable to assume that the perceived value of this content will be less than if they believe their "investment" has led to new, *additional* reporting that wouldn't have otherwise been done (i.e. "Incrementally Produced").

Representing content as being "Incrementally Produced" suggests their support made a larger difference than under the other scenario. Therefore, communicating to (potential) supporters that paywalled content falls into one or the other of these categories (which could be executed through user interface design, on-site messaging, promotions, etc.) is another way to strengthen, or not, the "Exclusive Content" element of your value proposition. Supporters will develop an impression one way or another anyway – the question is simply whether you want to guide this or leave it to chance.

As valuable as walling off content can be, there is a risk that organizations, particularly newcomers to the reader revenue space, become myopic about what can be done to make a subscription/membership worth paying for. Expanding the view of what is possible is a big part of the purpose of this article and is what we work towards for the remainder of it.

2) De Facto Donation

Centering your argument to an audience on the idea that they should financially contribute in order to help keep your content universally accessible and to support your type of journalism is another common approach to building value in your subscription/membership. As shown in the above framework, the

"De Facto Donation" element is the alternate initial option to "Exclusive Content" that a publisher will choose between (not forgetting the qualification that this distinction is not absolute).

Obviously, this approach risks allowing some in the audience to engage in "free riding" behavior, consuming content subsidized by others. But, whether or not your decision to make content available to all is based on a moral decision or a driven by your audience's characteristics not being appropriate for charging subscriptions, improving the quality of your "asks" can help overcome the free rider problem and reduce the risk of your contents' value being insufficiently monetized.

An effective ask for a donation makes sense when three criteria are met:

1) Does the audience believe in your overall mission/objective and is this consistent with your brand and the content you produce?
2) Does the audience believe there is a real need for their support?
3) Is it possible for the audience to visualize or foresee a tangible or compelling result of their support?

Let's look at each closer. 1) is fairly obvious – it is very difficult to motivate someone to part with their money if the cause they're donating to is something they disagree with or they see misalignment between what the "ask" is and what your brand is known for. Also, asking for donations should not be considered purely the domain of non-profit organizations, either; for-profit companies that also show authentic commitment to a cause can generate donations.

Next, even if people agree with your cause, they are less likely to donate if they believe that their contribution isn't actually needed – point 2). For example, I believe in the mission of Microsoft – "Our mission is to empower every person and organization on the planet to achieve more"[4]. But I feel no pressure to donate to them as their ability to execute this would not be materially affected by my meager contribution.

Point 3) relies of the persuasive powers of reciprocity and specificity. Being able to point to an investigation, article, or an otherwise unrealized piece of content that comes about (in part) as a result of a person's donation gives them something specific to associate with their giving, making them more likely to do so.

More generally, using principles of persuasion (such as those advocated by Dr. Robert Cialdini[5]) and our understanding of human biases while asking for donations can improve your chances of success. For example, at the bottom of each article on *The Intercept*'s website is a message urging readers to become a member and make a monthly donation – this is not groundbreaking but adheres to the principle that repetition in asking is more likely to be persuasive than only asking once.

The Guardian takes it one step further. They often personalize (another persuasion technique) their equivalent message with the number of their articles a reader has read in the month so far, presumably using information gained from cookies or a device's IP address. These relatively simple examples are just a sample of how persuasion principles are and can be used to make more effective donation asks.

Consider this scenario: at the top of an extensive investigative article, information about the journalists who worked on it, the amount of days and hours it took them to produce it, and the financial cost of all

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[4] https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/about
[5] https://www.influenceatwork.com/

of this (essentially all the resources committed to the piece) is displayed. Alongside that is a goal indicating the quantity or dollar value of donations needed to be received in order for these costs to be recouped, with profiles of members/readers that have already donated.

Wouldn't an ask for a donation like this, one which employs the principles of specificity, reciprocity, and conformity/social proof, be more likely to generate donations that a generic banner at the end of the article? Probably, and the changes needed to make something like this happen are not substantial. The opportunities are near endless when you take what we know about what the human brain responds to and integrate it into your website's or app's design and communications.

3) Superior User Experience

Providing a superior way for supporters to use or interact with your content and products vis-a-vis non-supporters is the first of the remaining six elements discussed in the value proposition framework. One implication of charging for user experience improvements is that it allows you to monetize an audience without necessarily needing to restrict their access to content, though this remains an option. Therefore, it is appropriate for both standard subscription and membership models.

The Guardian has chosen the former strategy.

An example is their Premium Subscription which allows subscribers to "Enjoy an ad-free experience across all of [their] devices when [they're] signed in on [their] apps and theguardian.com". Similar moves to grow revenue by removing ads are evident in how YouTube Premium removes them from subscribers' videos and how the startup Scroll allows subscribers to read selected articles from prominent news organizations without being interrupted by banner ads.

However, superior user experience is not just about getting rid of ads. *The New York Times'* "For You" mobile app functionality which allows subscribers to follow and access content by their "interests" rather than by traditional "sections" (e.g. Politics, U.S., World, etc.) is a different example of building value through superior user experiences. *The New York Times* understands that some people are more likely to use the app and pay for a subscription when content discovery is facilitated in a way they would naturally approach it – by topics they care about (e.g. Climate Change, 2020 Election, etc.) – rather than by the formal categorization of sections.

Fundamentally, this element is based on having an intimate understanding of why and how people consume your content and building products that align with this. However, failure to fully comprehend this relationship does risk investing time and money on "improvements" that are not actually relevant to your audience. Therefore, pursuing this approach means committing to a genuine period of research along with allocating sufficient development team resource and user testing times. If your organization has experience continually adapting user experiences and user interfaces, then this is clearly an advantage. If done correctly, opportunities for value creation through this element are substantial.

4) Two-way Engagement

The value that can be created by initiatives that facilitate "Two-way Engagement" between publishers and supporters (and among supporters themselves) has received a lot of attention. In short, the publishers benefit from the "time, money, connections, professional expertise, distribution to …

networks, and/or ideas to support a cause"[6] provided by supporters. In return, supporters benefit from the opportunity to contribute in a meaningful way to the production, promotion, and/or more general support of content from organizations they care about. These things are inherent to the "social contract" more and more publishers are looking to enter into with their audience.

Restating the various ways to execute this is not a good use of time. Instead, I refer you to reports from organizations such as The Membership Puzzle Project, Columbia Journalism School, the American Press Institute, as well as by observing the real-world actions taken by organizations themselves. Many of these resources speak to the following reality: you should not underestimate the additional workload required to connect your audience and journalists/reporters if you decide to pursue this strategy. It may be tempting to cut corners or save on investment costs, but attempts that come across as tokenistic risk causing supporters to become apathetic and skeptical of future engagement initiatives.

5) Complementary Product / Service

Supporters of your organization will have other needs and desires that you may be able to satisfy through providing additional products or services, all increasing the value of your subscription/membership. Though what these are exactly will vary significantly, below is a useful set of characteristics (drawing on insight from *The New York Times'* Chief Technology Officer Nick Rockwell[7]) that can be used to identify appropriate opportunities:

1) Discrete and definable need or desire of a particular supporter segment
2) Existing (or readily acquirable) internal technical expertise and resources to develop a solution
3) Efficient delivery platform of solution to supporters
4) The size of the financial opportunity justifies the investment risk
5) Encourages frequent, extended, and/or habit-inducing use
6) Leverages and reinforces existing compelling brand qualities

Let's look at an example. *The New York Times* crossword puzzle clearly ticks the box off items 2, 3, and 4. For item 1, the need/desire it satisfies is not necessarily just one thing, but if forced to choose I would say it is "the desire to not be bored". This leads us to item 5 – boredom often strikes while commuting and people commute every day. Together, these lead to frequent playing of the crossword being encouraged. Also, the crossword's "streak" functionality reinforces this effort to embed this type of behavior. As for item 6, the crossword does not align as much with this, but checking the box of every item is not required.

Quickly, here's another example: *The Information* provides subscribers with organizational hierarchy charts for some of the biggest tech companies in Silicon Valley, demystifying something that can otherwise be opaque for interested outsiders, a service that satisfies items 1, 2, 3, and 6.

With regards to digital products, new product development can be expensive. While analyzing products that *The New York Times* sells alongside its core subscription (i.e. crossword, cooking, parenting), I noticed that they have common characteristics which help reduce upfront investment costs.

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[6] https://www.cjr.org/tow_center_reports/guide-to-audience-revenue-and-engagement.php

[7] https://www.niemanlab.org/2019/07/what-does-the-new-york-times-look-for-in-coming-up-with-a-new-product-these-five-things/

Just like above, awareness of these commonalities can help guide an organization when assessing new product opportunities:

7) Time insensitivity of the main value delivered by the product's content
8) Relatively low marginal cost to the organization when updating, replacing, and adding additional content
9) Low cost to the user to engage in activity facilitated/prompted by the product
10) Personalization of user's experience with the product done by the individual, not by the product

Consider The New York Times Cooking app. Its recipes are non-perishable, and it is relatively inexpensive to increase the range of recipes available to users (for instance, recipes from the Times' archive are sometimes used). Additionally, the low weekly cost of $1.25 complements the fact that to make use of information in the app the only additional cost is likely the price of ingredients – money that would likely be spent anyway. Finally, it is up to the user to choose which recipes to try out and when, which to add to their favorites, what ingredients to save to their personal shopping cart, etc., removing the need for additional personalization work to be done by the product which would require additional data crunching.

In addition to determining what complementary products/services are viable opportunities, consideration should be given as to how they will be made available vis-a-vis existing subscription/membership offers. Three approaches come to mind:

- "Merged": Folded into existing subscription/membership offers
- "Separated": Sold independently from existing subscription/membership offers
- "Bundled": Package offers of various combinations of products and services with different price points

6) Community Identification

People will financially support your organization when being part of the community convened by you is an important part of their self-identity. Similar to non-profit, political, and social organizations, communities built around digital media organizations that enjoy this level of commitment and investment from supporters foster strong and expressive ties (i.e. relationships with high levels of trust, friendship, and social support, and commonality of interests and purpose).

Building this relationship between your organization and supporters (and between supporters themselves) is difficult to achieve. It is not simply an exercise in increasing support through providing someone the ability to signal in-group association (e.g. through a branded tote bag, which could still serve another purpose); it is more substantial than this as it requires people to tie part of how they view themselves to a collective identity you foster. Accordingly, it is not a value proposition element that is appropriate for all publishers to focus on.

But, for organizations for which it is appropriate, if sufficient progress is made in establishing a community identity that is important to people (albeit hard to define what exactly this would be) the cost to a person of a monthly subscription or membership fee/donation will pale in comparison to the sense of belonging they receive. This is what makes this element so potentially valuable. (To be clear, "Community Identification" is different from "De Facto Donation". The latter essentially persuades an

individual to contribute due to the cause pursued by an organization, whereas the former persuades via the significance of belonging to the community convened by an organization).

One of the most effective examples of "Community Identification" in digital media is that of The Young Turks (TYT). TYT is a progressive online news network that also engages directly in political activity to further causes in alignment with the organization's values and political priorities. It is this unique combination of journalism, activism, and a transparent progressive ideology that has helped build a loyal audience and member base, colloquially known as the "TYT Army".

This community engages in in-person and online activism, fundraising for (including personal contributions to) major capital projects (e.g. building a new broadcasting studio), pro-bono work, and other activities that leverage their collective sense of belonging. This is all done while adopting a principled anti-establishment stance that aims to bring about a progressive political revolution in the United States – an important goal for many of their members.

7) Value for Money

If a subscription to the *Washington Post* cost $1 for the entire year the result of a potential supporter's internal cost-benefit analysis would likely be that there is huge value to them for subscribing, even if they are infrequent readers of the Post's content. Accordingly, "Value for Money" can add to your overall value proposition by expanding the gap between your subscription's/membership's price versus the perceived utility a supporter gets out of it.

Clearly, creating value for your supporters by lowering prices so much that it becomes financially unsustainable and/or reduces the perceived value of your brand is not what I am advocating; testing your various audience segments' willingness to pay, price elasticities, and the financial (and other) effects of price changes is still important. But a framework about all the ways in which a subscription's/membership's value could be strengthened would be incomplete without this element, hence its inclusion. It is ultimately up to you to decide how much you want to pull on this lever to create value vis-a-vis other elements in this framework.

8) Recommendations

Whereas "Complementary Products / Services" states that there is value in satisfying supporter needs/desires *in-house*, "Recommendations" recognizes that value can be created by reducing search and transaction costs between supporters and *third-party* products/services. Loosely inspired by the thesis of the value of connections described by Harvard Business School Professor Bharat Anand in his book "The Content Trap", "Recommendations" relies on the following premises:

- Your organization has successfully captured supporters' attention
- Supporters have additional needs and desires
- It is inefficient to satisfy these in-house, but third parties can do so
- You have the ability to connect your supporters to the third parties

To successfully integrate this element into your value proposition, your organization should exhibit the following traits:

- Have credibility with supporters in the area where a recommendation is being made

- Have a simple and intuitive user interface that allows supporters to exploit the recommendations as easily as possible

The value of this "Recommendation" function can be incorporated into the price of your subscription/membership. However, its ability to be monetized this way relies on there being a particular audience segment that consistently needs to be re-directed in one way or another (such as how it is popular for people to follow a long series of relevant links down an endless Wikipedia rabbit hole). To this point, the main risk of "Recommendations" would be of creating a functionality that systematically diverts supporter traffic away from your site, rather than having them recirculate back after "getting what they needed" from the link they clicked on.

Finally, affiliate fees could also be charged such as what is done with CNN Underscored and Wirecutter, assuming the right commercial partner is found.

Creating Value by Understanding the "Nature of Your Content"

Understanding the fundamental "Nature of Your Content" can help you:

1) Identify which value proposition elements from the framework make the most sense for your organization to focus on
2) What practical steps you can take within the appropriate elements to exploit value creation opportunities
3) What other types of content you don't currently produce that could be beneficial

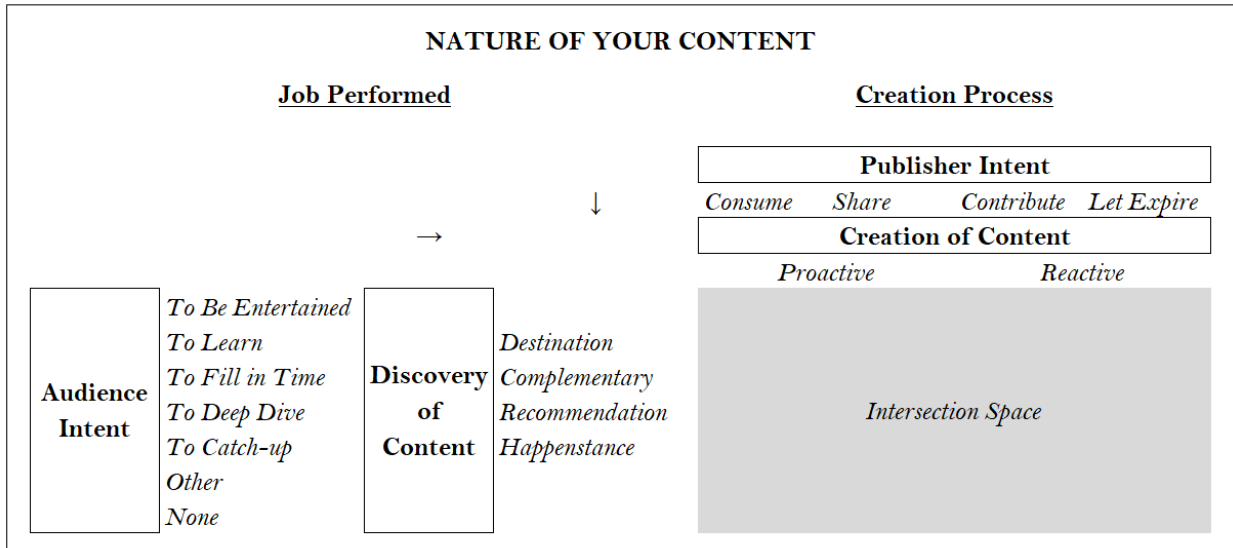This can be achieved by analyzing existing content while adopting two perspectives:

1) "Audience Perspective": The "job" being performed for your audience by your content (inspired by work done by Professor Clayton Christensen of Harvard Business School[8])
2) "Publisher Perspective": The logic underpinning contents' creation

Let us now explore the "Nature of Your Content" framework before looking at how it and the "Value Proposition" framework can be used together.

The "Nature of Your Content" Framework, Explained

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[8] https://hbswk.hbs.edu/item/clay-christensen-the-theory-of-jobs-to-be-done

NATURE OF YOUR CONTENT				
Job Performed			**Creation Process**	

NATURE OF YOUR CONTENT

Job Performed   →   ↓   **Creation Process**

			Publisher Intent	
			Consume Share Contribute Let Expire	
			Creation of Content	
			Proactive Reactive	
Audience Intent	*To Be Entertained* *To Learn* *To Fill in Time* *To Deep Dive* *To Catch-up* *Other* *None*	**Discovery of Content**	*Destination* *Complementary* *Recommendation* *Happenstance*	*Intersection Space*

Each perspective involves decisions at two levels, described below.

Audience Perspective: Job Performed

First, you must determine what the audience's intent behind consuming your content is, which can be one or more of the above seven reasons. Next, you need to determine how the audience is likely to discover your content. The possibilities are one or more of:

- "Destination": The audience pro-actively navigates to the content
- "Complementary": The audience is prompted to read/watch/listen to etc. the content while consuming another piece of related media
- "Recommendation": The audience discovers the content via a recommendation from a friend, trusted source, etc.
- "Happenstance": The audience discovers the content by chance, such as by scrolling through their Facebook or Twitter feed

Publisher Perspective: Creation Process

First, you (the publisher) must decide how you want the audience to interact with your content. Your intent can be for the audience to do one or more of the following with your content:

- "Consume": Simply read/watch/listen to etc. it
- "Share": Share it on social media, via email etc.
- "Contribute": Add comments, edits, suggestions, insight, and/or another thing of value to it
- "Let Expire": Consume it before letting it disappear (e.g. Snapchat)

Next, you must decide whether you will *Proactively* produce the content (i.e. plan ahead to write/record it based upon your knowledge of upcoming events, etc.) or whether you will *Reactively* produce it (i.e. write/record it in response to events that transpire, etc.).
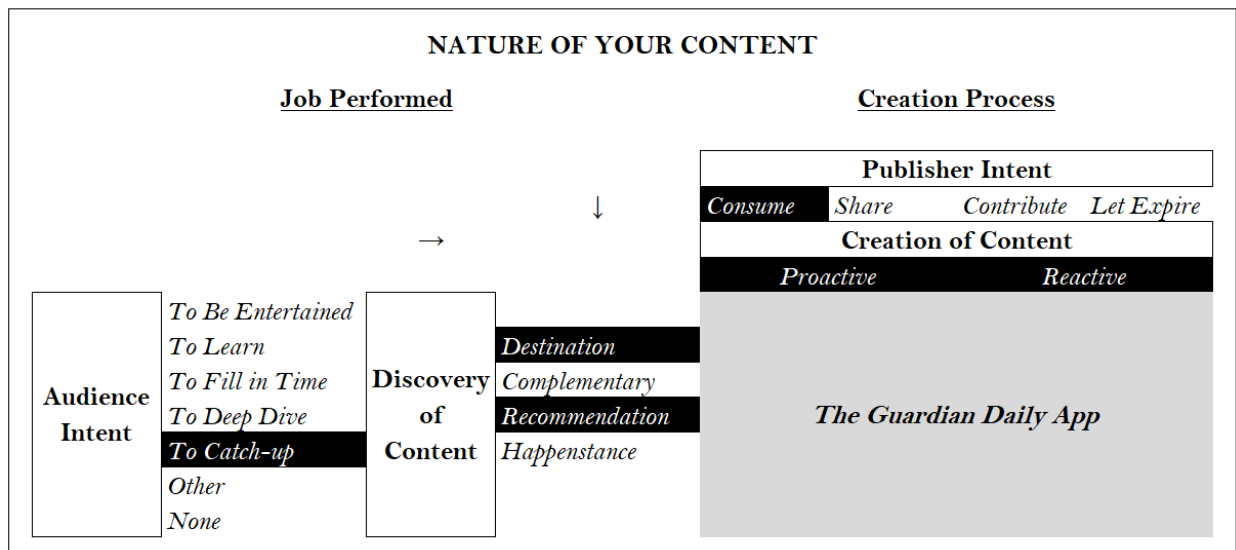
Inevitably the above framework will be missing some approaches your audience and/or organization may take with regards to a given piece of content. That is okay. The purpose of this framework is simply to motivate deeper thinking about why and how you produce the content you do and how this intersects with why and how your audience engages with it; the coming together of these two perspectives is graphically represented by the "Intersection Space".

Example: The Guardian Daily App

The Guardian set out in early 2019 to create a new "finite, edition-based experience in a mobile app"[9] that allowed their audience to quickly catch-up on the most important stories before getting on with the rest of their day. The selected stories largely follow what goes into their print edition as determined by their editors, directly accessible via a dedicated mobile app. Additionally, these stories are a combination of proactively and reactively written articles (e.g. latest business news and political op-eds). This app is now available at a standard price of £11.99 per month, which includes a Premium Subscription to the standard *The Guardian* app.

These characteristics of the new "The Guardian Daily App", specifically the "job" it performs for readers, the type of content the publisher chooses to put on it, how it is sold alongside existing products, and its focus on a new user interface all can be explained by using the "Value Proposition" and "Nature of Your Content" frameworks I have described.

First, based on the above description, let us see how "The Guardian Daily App" lines up on the "Nature of Your Content" framework:

NATURE OF YOUR CONTENT

Next, let's evaluate "The Guardian Daily App" with the "Value Proposition" framework (below).

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9 https://www.niemanlab.org/2019/10/finishable-news-worked-for-the-guardian-on-ipad-for-8-years-will-it-draw-new-subscribers-on-phones/

As the app is only available to members who pay additionally for it, it is more in line with the "Exclusive Content" element's approach. As for it being contained in a stand-alone app, this clearly meets the first six characteristics of the "Complementary Product / Service" element from the "Value Proposition"

framework. Also, the "thoughtful design, easy navigation, and improved user experience"[10], which includes a "slider" designed to inform readers of how many articles of the day's selection are left to read are consistent with the "Superior User Experience" element.

Possible Value Proposition Elements of a Subscription or Membership

1	Exclusive Content	*then select from...*	3	Superior User Experience	6	Community Identification
	or		4	Two-way Engagement	7	Value for Money
2	De Facto Donation		5	Complementary Product / Service	8	Recommendations

The takeaway point is this: used together the two frameworks explained in this article could have both:

1) Shown *The Guardian* the existence of a gap in their previous content and product offering; and
2) Helped them determine the best way to build a compelling value proposition for a solution to this

The competitive digital media industry will force *The Guardian* and other publishers to continually review what content and products/services they're offering audiences, and their arguments for why people should pay for these. And now the "Value Proposition" and "Nature of Your Content" frameworks can help with this work.

Conclusion

The word "framework" can suggest rigidity and a lack of creativity in thinking. However, the "Value Proposition" and "Nature of Your Content" frameworks outlined in this article facilitate exactly the opposite behavior. They are tools your organization can use to expand thinking about what a subscription or membership could be at a time when the need to present compelling arguments to audiences to convert them into financial supporters is as strong as ever.

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[10] https://www.niemanlab.org/2019/10/finishable-news-worked-for-the-guardian-on-ipad-for-8-years-will-it-draw-new-subscribers-on-phones/