

# Taking digital strategy to next level

By [Gail Hoffmann & Richard Stephenson](#) 10 Oct 2012

Amongst the biggest trends in digital publishing is the adoption of the tablet - from which everything else flows. This leads to the non-standardization of any platform, as an operating system. Many publishers have a presence on iOS, many of those also added something on Android but they are approaching it in a case-by-case basis - in a way that does not necessarily scale, as the number of options proliferates. This dovetails with the growth of pure digital titles.



Gail Hoffmann

In our view, publishers should be on every channel. It is a reading channel, it is a delivery channel to a user so the user should be able to pick up any tablet or smartphone and find his or her magazines. The only barrier to that is the ease of doing it - but that is the desired state. In addition, it is for people like us to provide an economical and good workflow for publishers, so they can publish in those different formats.

If each new platform that you want your magazine on means that you have to pay those digitization costs all over again, then obviously you'd want to focus on the top one or two platforms. If the incremental cost of adding your presence on a platform is much smaller than that, then there is no reason not to want to be everywhere.

## Opportunities for digital publishers

Publishers should try to set aside the concept of just publishing a magazine and consider building communities or forming an ecosystem around the brand. Particularly while the brand has a lot of currency and the print title and its history are very strong. It needs to go just beyond a 'Letters to the Editor' page these days; there is no reason for publications to limit themselves. They can now have a much deeper and richer connection with their readers.

Smaller, independent publishers are actually in a good position to benefit from the move to digital, because they are suddenly on a more even footing, as they are no longer competing for the same limited space on the physical newsstand shelf. We see titles from smaller publishers that are competing very strongly with larger titles from the big publishing houses. Therefore, there is an opportunity to punch well above one's weight in the digital space.

## Social media broadens reach

Social media needs to feature as a much deeper part of a digital magazine. It is a very strong way of monetizing and making a brand successful. One of the features we advise publishers to adopt is the ability for image sharing from magazines to social networks. We see advertisements in magazines, with very

strong images, and we encourage publishers to make it very simple for readers to share those images on their social networks. Therefore, you are not only publishing a magazine in the digital space, but the advertisers are now getting the reach through those readers that select images to push onto their social networks.

Advertisers and certain magazines should look at how to push the images they publish to go viral across the network. This means the magazine can go to an advertiser and say, "Look, it's not only our audience that you're potentially targeting here, but if you can make your content dynamic and compelling enough that people wish to share it, then it goes through our readers to the much wider audience of everyone they're socially connected to - their entire social graph."

## **2013 offers HTML content options**

One of the most interesting and exciting things ahead is what we are looking at doing with HTML content. While users definitely want that full, rich, designed experience across devices, in some reading cases they would rather have the simple text and just get the content out of the article. We are aiming to set it up, so they can have both experiences and choose which view they want. They can go and see the full spread of the magazine online but if they prefer to switch to an HTML-based scrollable view, they can comfortably read that on a small phone screen.

The people who have tablets frequently have smartphones as well and they see no reason why they cannot read it on both - but they want the experience to be rendered suitably for each type of screen. We think that all of the current phone platforms will become a very important element of monetization for magazine companies and we will have a solution for that.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Gail Hoffmann has been in the magazine publishing industry for the last 18 years, starting her career with Times Media (now AVUSA). She then started Eish Media, a small project based media organisation that takes on unique commercial publishing projects and has since with Alan de Sousa Caires and launched a digital arm, Eish Digital. Richard Stephenson is the chief executive of YUDU (a large digital publishing platform, which has digitally published over 500 000 titles), Eish Digital's preferred partner.

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