Is the iPad the long-awaited savior for publishers or just another shiny new gadget? At the beginning of the tablet publishing era initiated last year by Apple’s iPad, that was the question. Now, 15 months after the introduction of the iPad, most publishers worldwide see tablets as a promising new channel. But as with any new technology, publishers need to formulate an effective strategy to achieve their editorial and business goals. Based on Woodwing’s experience, we’ll provide some perspective and guidance for how publishers can proceed with a successful tablet publishing strategy.

**TABLET DEVICES WILL TRANSFORM THE MEDIA WORLD**
Those who agree with this opinion will probably acknowledge that publishers had similar expectations during the advent of the Internet — and were disappointed by the results. Readers were and remain highly resistant to paying for Web content, and no one needs to remind publishers that the online advertising business is significantly different from the print world.

**TABLETS ARE A DIGITAL COMPANION AT HOME**
Tablets represent an important new chapter in digital publishing. As editorial design legend Dr. Mario Garcia of Garcia Media put it in his keynote at the recent WoodWing Xperience seminar in Amsterdam, tablets are a platform that changes the game forever, and will continue to do so.

An analysis of the behavior of iPad owners conducted by Time Inc. in March would seem to validate Garcia’s thesis. The study showed that 45% of iPad owners rate their tablet as one of the most important devices they have — more important even than their TV. It is also worth noting that 52% of female users cited this preference compared to just 36% of men, which is the opposite of the PC a sign of the high acceptance of the iPad as a lifestyle item. Furthermore, the iPad is used mainly at home (74%) and particularly in the bedroom (82%), the living room (77%) and the kitchen (59%).

In addition, unlike on the Internet, iPad users are willing to pay for content. A study by ComScore last year found that 68% of 25- to 34-year-olds and 59% of 35- to 44-year-olds say they are willing to pay for news and magazines specially formatted for e-readers.

**TABLET PUBLICATIONS RAISE EXPECTATIONS**
Readers expect tablet publications to offer a true multimedia experience, integrating text, images and graphics, audio and video. But tablet publishing experts like Garcia know that tablet users expect even more. They want to save articles for later reading and they want to play and shop. They also love to share content via social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. This means that a successful tablet publication must integrate all of these elements in an attractive and easy-to-use interface, and the publishing system must allow publishers to address that challenge with minimal effort and in a cost-effective way. As Garcia suggested, publishers must design for the dynamics of the eye, the finger and the brain.

**TABLET PUBLISHING BASIC DECISIONS**
Tablet publications are distributed as reader apps. They contain the content either directly or offer built-in kiosk options that allow readers to purchase issues monthly, weekly or even daily. The first important decision concerns the creation of the app itself. One option is to
code (or have coded) an individual reader app, which is typically a costly, complex and cumbersome procedure and normally difficult to integrate into existing publishing workflows.

A much more efficient strategy is to publish tablet editions based on an existing reader app. It should offer a wide range of features and integrate multimedia content in an easy-to-navigate user interface, along with the ability to subscribe and much more. Publishers can choose which features they want to use in their app and customize the app and design it in line with the way they brand the publication.

WoodWing’s tablet publishing solution, for example, is based on its cross-media publishing system, Enterprise, which includes the content management application Content Station, as well as a number of plug-ins for Adobe InDesign and InCopy. These plug-ins allow publishers to use audio and video and to define a vast number of interactivity features directly within InDesign. In other words, these features allow publishers to create attractive and interactive tablet publications that can be based on the existing layouts of their print publications.

Such a system also allows publishers to integrate their tablet publishing activities seamlessly into existing workflows. They can create the tablet editions of their media brands in parallel with the print publication, leveraging existing team skills and software and saving resources and money.

ANALYZE AND THINK FIRST

Before a publisher migrates from an existing media brand onto tablets, it should first analyze its print publication. What are the characteristics of the publication, what types of content (such as stunning images) do readers appreciate the most and what do they expect from the publication? Do they expect things like step-by-step instructions in how-to articles?

The next step is to develop the concept of the tablet edition of the publication: how the content should be structured and enhanced with all the options available on tablets to ultimately ensure the creation of a tablet that’s attractive to readers. (See “Tips for capturing the tablet magazine reader”.)

THE DISTRIBUTION PROCESS

How the publication is distributed depends on whether the content is integrated directly into the app or if the app has a kiosk feature. If the content is integrated into the app, it’s available to all iPad users in Apple’s App Store. This solution is typically suitable for content that needs little updating. Normally, new editions replace the previous editions and an archive is not possible. It’s different for periodicals, though. Publishers offer only the empty reader app via the App Store. The content – meaning the monthly, weekly or daily editions
SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE MISSION-CRITICAL
Since mid-February, Apple has allowed publishers to offer subscriptions via the App Store. And with iOS5, the new version of its operating system for the iPad announced in early June, Apple offers specific publisher support right in the OS, including the Newsstand and a special area for digital publications in the App Store. And in response to criticism from publishers, Apple has adjusted a number of regulations to better conform to their needs. Similar services are expected to be ready for other tablet platforms when these platforms take off.

The design of the subscription model will be critical to the success of a tablet publication. It is a good idea to experiment with different options — relevant parameters are, of course, the price — but also with various combinations of print and mobile offerings, as well as offering premium content.

DEFINE AND FOLLOW STEP-BY-STEP STRATEGY
Making the tablet editions available quickly is better than trying to develop the perfect app first. Defining a step-by-step strategy allows for the continuous improvement of the tablet publication, and some publishers start with a PDF conversion of their print publication. (The online service pdftotablet offered by The Saints is an efficient way to do that.)

Using this starting point, publishers can continue to develop and improve the native reader app on an ongoing basis. Gathering information about the usage patterns of readers is vital to making good decisions. The tablet publishing solution should provide appropriate analysis tools, which are comparable to similar features familiar from Web publishing.

PREPARE FOR A MULTIPLATFORM TABLET PUBLISHING WORLD
With 14.8 million iPads sold in 2010 alone, Apple dominates the tablet market. Analysts expect as many as 25 million units for 2011 and predict that this sort of growth will continue until at least 2012. However, a number of promising tablets running on other operating systems and in different screen sizes are also available: the TouchPad from HP, RIM’s Playbook and the Motorola Xoom, as well as the Galaxy Tab models from Samsung and a variety of other Android-based devices.

This means that publishers should opt for a tablet publishing solution that is platform-independent. WoodWing’s solution, for instance, supports all of the available tablet platforms with native reader apps and also allows the publication of HTML5 versions as Web apps.

The real challenge in multiplatform tablet publishing lies in the different sizes and aspect ratios of the screens. So features that allow publishers to create tablet publications for different size screens should be another criterion for a tablet that can be published once and distributed on various devices. Only the reader app to display the content on a specific device is different.

COSTS AND ROI
Expenses will include the cost of the pub-
Already a Device of Choice…

A year after the launch, close to half (45%) say the iPad is one of the most important devices they own – more important than the TV!

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A slide of the iPad Owners Panel Survey shows how iPad owners rate their device.

Publishers will be interested to note that tablet publications seem to be very attractive for advertisers. One reason is that tablets also offer new and innovative opportunities for ads. Just think of music, videos, animations, social media integration and access to Web services. The free tablet-only digital newspaper Brasil 24/7 published twice a day, seven days a week on the iPad, started in March and has neared break-even through its ad revenue in about four weeks.

**Tips for tablet publishers**

- Analyze the nature of your print publication and tabletize it.
- Leverage the power of tablets.
- Start and proceed gradually, step-by-step.
- Think multimedia.
- Think multiplatform.
- Forget categories like magazine or newspaper; it’s all about content.
- Analyze reader behavior, watch user comments and ratings, and learn.
- Adjust and enhance your tablet publication on an ongoing basis.
- Tap innovative revenue sources such as integrated shopping options.
- Don’t forget to promote and market the app.

As with the introduction of any new print publication, publishers should safeguard the continuity of their tablet editions and give their projects the time necessary to be successful. The chances are good that it will be worth the effort because tablet publications certainly belong. In a blog post following the ABC announcement, Hans Janssen, WoodWing’s CEO, reported steadily growing traffic month by month for the Content Delivery Service offered by WoodWing — a strong indicator for the success of the digital magazines and newspapers distributed via that service.