Publisher John D enjoyed working late when the office was quiet. Only two editors remained, debating whether to up the page count to accommodate a spread. He smiled as he walked past his back-issue room where skids of inventory waited for tomorrow’s trade show. Happily, his returns were down, and he was toying with international distribution.

Several circulators were still there, chasing collections. They had just printed 1.3 million blow-ins for a subscriber acquisition campaign, and telemarketing would start next week.

John was meeting his ad director to celebrate a 6x back cover contract. As he left the building, he grabbed a current issue and ran through the rain to his car.

Publisher Jane D also liked working late to compare her print, web, digital, and mobile channels. Her editors had left early after easily adding a spread to their digital edition. She smiled at their new conference room, converted from storage space. They now used digital archives and controlled sampling with ‘Look Inside’ blow-ins that integrated with fulfillment.

Circulation was quiet now because 15% of subscribers paid for digital delivery. No missed issues, no address changes, no international surcharges. Jane and her sales director were also celebrating a 6x back cover contract but also six digital edition sponsorships linked to advertiser websites, 18 app issue banners and a slew of videos. In her car she received a “push notification” on her smartphone and knew their current issue was live. Hundreds of readers would enjoy it on their train ride home.

That night, John went to bed thinking about customs. Jane checked her tracking reports to grab numbers for tomorrow’s trade show. She fell asleep quickly, knowing her mobile magazine was being deployed to the entire attendee list. John tossed a while longer.

Despite the dramatic changes in publishing, print remains an anchor for the industry and is still the “go-to” medium for the relaxed read and a tried-and-true channel of distribution. The Web, meanwhile, is an extension of print, where text is distilled from the original layout and reflowed into columns. Websites offer the ability to update content, but the dramatic linear flow of information is lost.

Nonetheless, there’s no denying that many readers, particularly those in the highly sought after 25-45 year-old age group, are increasingly reading on screens – many of them mobile – rather than in print.

But while some industry pundits have complained of diminished demand for published content, we are seeing just the opposite. Publishers are publishing more often and in new and exciting ways. They’re repurposing content and creating fresh material to accommodate the emerging distribution channels. Some are even using “digital-only” solutions to test new markets before investing in print. Many are archiving their back issues to reduce paper inventory and to add value for paid subscribers. Some are organizing their assets on digital newsstands, branded to their corporate identity and enabled with e-commerce. Others are incorporating served ads, welcome pages and sponsored e-mails to increase advertising opportunities.

On the app front, mobile publishers are using RSS feeds to update content between issues with news that’s relevant to their audience, extending a publication’s shelf life and encouraging return readership. They’re pushing content out to social media sites and enabling their readers to become brand ambassadors. Their icon sits boldly in the iTunes Store or in the Android Marketplace, opening doors that didn’t exist two years ago. If anything, the publishing industry is enjoying a digital resurgence.

We’ll explore some relatively basic and affordable digital publishing strategies, starting with digital editions.
**Digital Editions** are vivid replicas of print publications that preserve design and brand integrity. They are accessible on computers, laptops and any Web-enabled mobile device. Editorial and advertising content can be linked, searched, shared, saved and zoomed. Digital editions are usually deployed by e-mail and are reported in compliance with ABC and BPA audit requirements. Because digital editions can be “seen” by search engines, they can also improve a publisher’s Web presence.

**Magazine Apps** are produced as replicas or text extractions that are optimized for mobile devices. They can be read on smartphones and tablets. Many are enhanced with rich media, such as slideshows, video and animations, to deepen the user’s experience. They can include RSS feeds and social media connectivity that update content and foster engagement. Mobile apps can accommodate display advertising on the launch screen, the user interface and in interactive features. These digital and mobile alternatives fill the gaps during a reader’s busy day, reinforcing the brand, expanding reach and driving return business.

**The Myth of Cannibalization**
In recent years, Texterity has teamed up with BPA Worldwide to survey the digital edition reader. While some publishers have worried that digital solutions might cannibalize print or website readership, results consistently show otherwise. Digital edition readers are increasingly loyal, act on editorial and advertising content and actually use a publication’s website more often.

Research from 2010 showed that 86% of the 31,000 respondents were satisfied or extremely satisfied with their digital edition, 57% read it the same day it arrived, 50% spent half an hour reading it, 58% went to advertiser’s website and 40% e-mailed content to a friend. (This digital magazine research is available free.)

**Advertising Analytics**
While current measurements of the effectiveness of print tend to be anecdotal and retrospective, digital metrics are analytical and are produced in real time, tracking such details as page views, unique visits, amount of time spent and geographic locations. Data can be viewed as daily, weekly or monthly trends or drilled down to assess specific user patterns. A strict privacy policy protects the reader and informs the publisher, which retains ownership of the e-mail list.

The digital format, therefore, better serves advertisers clamoring for improved accountability. Through comprehensive user behavior tracking systems, available at no additional cost to publishers, digital and mobile app ads are linked, tracked and monitored 24/7. For publishers, this provides concrete proof of reader activity and for advertisers it’s an opportunity to refine messaging and creative.

We expect mobile advertising to become increasingly interactive in the months ahead, incorporating technology that allows...
readers to test products and compare styles so that they can make educated buying decisions.

MOBILE BRANDING

Mobile publishing re-integrates brands that have been fragmented and widely dispersed. With live feeds and in-app web connectivity, a mobile magazine app consolidates media assets and serves them up in a way that consumers crave, making the mobile magazine a one-stop destination that fosters between-issue use. This highly branded, personal form of delivery sets a publication apart and removes it from the clutter of competition. Here a publisher is empowered to amend content, add to its library and "touch" readers through a push notification when a new issue is ready. Because readers have such an intimate rapport with the titles they enjoy, mobile delivery becomes a way of life that solidifies the reader-publisher relationship.

Today’s digital and mobile publishers can utilize the familiar tools and tactics they already know, simply reinvented for emerging digital channels. Most of the same strategies that work for print are also effective on computers, smart phones and tablets. The same business sensibilities that drive the bottom line are platform-agnostic. Good customer service, prompt delivery, quality, relevance and ease of use can all be addressed digitally.

For example, Texterity’s digital edition interface includes a panel of ‘drawers’ that open to help readers find pages, links or back issues. Most publishers include a “Subscribe Now” button on this panel with a direct link to fulfillment service. Many also include icons that link to their social media sites.

Sampling, for instance, can be controlled digitally and implemented at a fraction of the cost. A ‘Look Inside’ blow-in can tease content by revealing only a few pages while graying out the others. The prospect is then intercepted with a subscription offer. If they accept, all the pages become immediately readable. Publishers of consumer titles on Coverleaf often use this mechanism to protect their content while self-promoting.

ADVANCE AT YOUR OWN PACE. ALLAY YOUR FEARS.

One of the greatest misconceptions is that a commitment to digital dramatically affects workflow. Not true. Digital publishers don’t have to reinvent the wheel. Texterity’s digital editions and mobile apps, for example, are built on non-Flash, scalable technology that utilizes existing high-resolution PDFs.

Digital publishers also don’t have to go it alone. Providers such as Texterity assign an account manager and project manager at the outset and offer best practices throughout. A publisher dashboard lets the production team manage uploads and monitor status. Cross-platform migration can be seamless. Texterity, for example, offers a “Total Mobility” package that includes a digital edition, Web-based mobile edition, iPhone, iPad, and Android app. Publishers can start conservatively and transition on their own timetable.

App enhancements can also be quite affordable. Texterity partners with The Wonderfactory, a New York design and brand experience firm, to create interactive “modules” that can be added to a standard app. By eliminating the need for a custom build, even a small publisher can offer sophisticated features.

Now is the time for publishers to celebrate change. Innovation is abundant and the reading public is ready to embrace it.