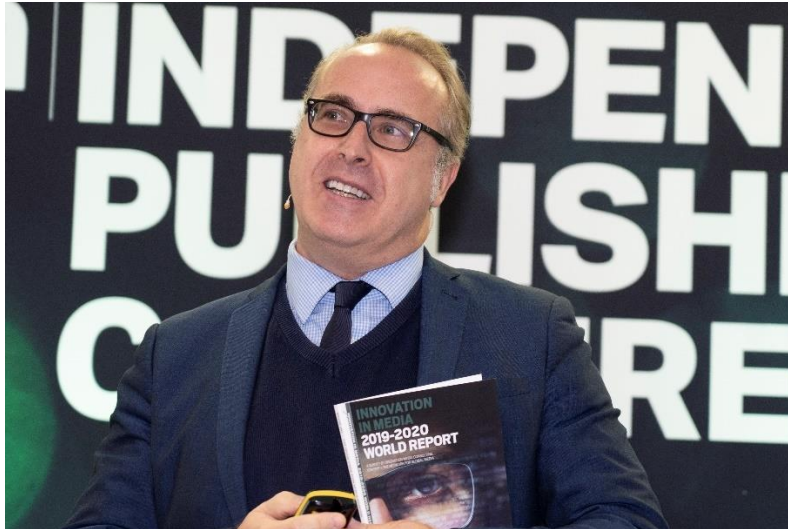


Take your pick: 14 business models delivering publishing success in 2019

An article inspired by a presentation from Juan Senor, President of INNOVATION Media Consulting, at the Independent Publisher Conference, Friday November 8, 2019.



In a typically whistle-stop tour of global publishing trends, Juan Senor, President of Innovation Media, set out 14 examples of innovative business models that publishers around the world are pursuing in today's disrupted market.

The models are all taken from the *FIPP Innovation in Magazine Media 2019/2020 World Report*, authored by Juan and colleague John Wilpers, and are judged on the criteria of their success in delivering reach, relevance and/or revenue.

Juan urged delegates to consider the potential of these models for their own businesses but warned against seeking quick wins or following a 'piñata strategy' that lacks strategic focus and is not aligned with business objectives.

The single most important thing for publishers to recognise in relation to digital, he argued, was the need to manage the transition from advertising revenues to reader revenues, whether directly, in the shape of a paywall, or indirectly, through a data wall.

Juan said publishers should not succumb to the "charm offensive" still presented by social media giants such as Facebook, remembering that "money is made where articles are viewed", and that giving content away for free in return for the "click cocaine" of traffic risked the loss of both income and trust. "The last thing you need is more visitors to your sites," Juan pointed out. "You just need people to pay."

He complemented this statement by pointing out the fact that people are increasingly willing to pay for content via subscriptions, particularly using frictionless methods, and he recommended a benchmark of around 40% of income to be sourced from reader revenues.

Publishers should also be confident in their proposition, said Juan. Particularly in the context of fake

news and ad fraud, publishers are prized as providers of “potable water” amid the flood of poor-quality content or, to put it another way: “Only journalism can save journalism.”

14 business models for 21st century publishers

With legacy models under threat and “no instant digital salvation” on the cards, below are 14 strategies to “organise the chaos”, offered with the recommendation to adopt three or four (and certainly no more than five) for success:

1. **Paid content:** A persistent theme. The lesson of the last five years has been not to undervalue ourselves, so interrogate – and obsess over – the content that triggers subscriptions rather than just traffic. Dynamic paywalls can provide the mechanism – you don’t need to take a one-size-fits-all approach.
2. **Emotional advertising:** Targeting ads against emotion has been found to generate an uplift in impressions of as much as 80% compared with behaviourally targeted ads, and 40% higher on average. There are 18 emotions to aim for (14 of which are positive) and titles such as *USA Today*, *The New York Times* and *ESPN* are all aligned with this move to selling psychographic rather than demographic targeting – but it is reliant on a data wall.
3. **Data broker:** Use your privileged position of trust (carefully) to exploit the potential of selling audience insight, in the same way that a market research company would.
4. **Membership:** A model that has gained traction in recent years, membership means developing an expanded proposition beyond paid content, offering a package of benefits to your community under a publishing brand umbrella. *La Nación* in Argentina do this to great effect, offering direct discounts and cost savings to around 400,000 members of Club La Nación.
5. **Retail recommendation:** *Net-a-Porter* and *FT Weekend* are examples of titles who make it easy for audiences to transition from content consumption to product purchase, earning affiliate revenue in the process – but always ensuring it’s rooted in “real journalism and telling stories”.
6. **Festival organiser:** There remains a strong appetite for face-to-face audience engagement, with the caveat that it can be low margin, complex to co-ordinate, commercially risky and time-consuming. That said, many publishers are driving higher margins through content-based festivals that take place over a series of days, with *Le Monde* an example of a brand finding success in this area.
7. **Philanthropist:** *The Salt Lake Tribune* became the first daily legacy newspaper in the US to adopt a not-for-profit model, truly fulfilling the function of public service journalism.
8. **Agency:** “Content marketing is the only marketing left,” industry sage Seth Godin famously claimed, and although this is a well-established and very competitive field, publishers have many advantages.

9. Purveyor of time: The real measure of the value of audience engagement is time so publishers need to recognise this with a move from selling CPM to CPH (Cost Per Hour) or, perhaps more neatly, from “clicks to clocks”.
10. Brand licensor: “There is no one better than a publisher to convene an audience,” stated Juan, and many brands are capitalising on this through licensing agreements. Publishers retain input, working closely with independent partners to ensure brand integrity, and the various rankings, listings and awards programmes run under the Forbes banner are an example of this in action.
11. IT provider: In recent years, many larger publishers have found it cost effective to author their own purpose-built programmes to manage content creation and workflow. Many are also now seeing opportunities to white label these products and generate revenues through licensing.
12. Investor: Agile start-ups continue to fuel disruption in many sectors, including advertising, marketing, insight and design, and publishers should see this as an opportunity to seek out and support new ideas – with the caveat that investments should be based on clear business criteria.
13. Educator: The authority of publishing brands often mean they are in a strong position to profit from teaching or learning services, whether as a direct offering or by certifying or sponsoring offerings from third-party providers.
14. Librarian: Nostalgia can be powerful and, armed with a wealth of archive content, publishers have the potential to profit through content or associated product sales.

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[Click here](#) for more information and to purchase the **Innovation in Media 2019-20 World Report**.