

mather: insights



Listener data tracks article-level performance. Draft articles are imported via API from ARC.

Machine learning model predicts path to conversion and other performance metrics for each unpublished article.

Slack alerts are with recommended premium articles. A self-serve dashboard is also available.

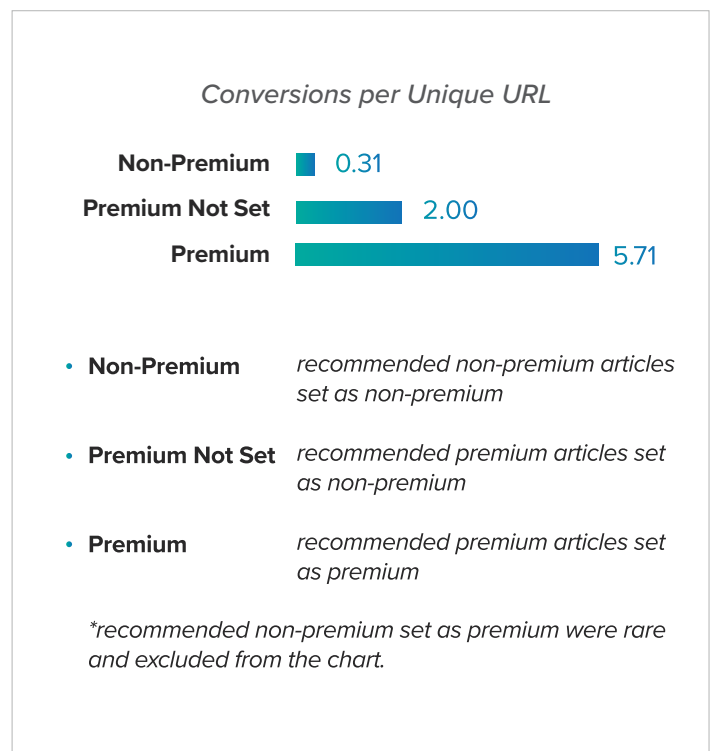
However, balancing quality journalism and data-driven decisions comes down to which decisions are informed vs. automated. Some are better for humans while others can be unburdened onto algorithms.

Apply Data Science to Repeated Automated Decisions to Get the Greatest ROI

Once the journalism is written, the decision of how to monetize does not need to remain solely within the newsroom. The “separation of church and state” has existed for decades for good reason. Marketing tactics, pricing, paywall rules, and setting premium content are tactical decisions ripe for predictive modeling and automation.

The diagram above shows the workflow of the premium content engine. **Listener™** was integrated with the ARC content management system to capture articles before publication. The predictive model uses taxonomy, metadata, and natural language processing to predict how likely an article would succeed when set as subscriber-only. The model is initially trained on several months of history but continues to improve with new data and performance tracked every day. A recommendation is sent via Slack alert within minutes of the article being “ready to publish”.

The chart below shows last-click conversion performance of the articles tested over a three-month period:



The key insight here is the middle bar, which indicates part of the lost opportunity. When implemented fully, setting the recommended articles behind the paywall in this market generated nearly **six conversions per article**. Though the recommended articles not set as premium still performed strongly (two conversions per article), similar articles set to premium **generated nearly 3X the conversion volume**.

The net result to the bottom line was a measured 20% boost in subscription start volume and an 8% boost in net digital revenue (accounting for marginally fewer page views from anonymous users).

One limitation in the implementation of this workflow is the reliance on a Slack alert and follow-through by the receiver to implement the recommendation. Even with an automated alert, many recommended articles were still not set to premium, leaving revenue unrealized.

Looking Ahead = Back to the Future

Mather is continuing to work with the publisher referenced in this blog (and others) to evolve and tighten the newsroom workflow. A next step is to directly set the flag within the CMS or paywall system to ensure full follow-through from the recommendations. Since the launch of the program, Mather has also developed a post-publication model to augment the pre-publication decision engine, ensuring real-time article performance is accounted.

Inevitably, the model of the future will combine advanced audience and content analytics in tandem to optimize subscription value. Technology is catching up to the thought-leadership and analytics.

Mather has been fortunate to support news media brands through significant digital transformation over the last decade. Years ago, Mather introduced the Intelligent Paywall™ but paywall technology at the time lagged capabilities to personalize by user certain parameters, such as meter settings, offers, and creative. Over time, multiple paywall companies emerged to enable such functionality.

Like the rapid evolution of paywall technology, Mather anticipates a similar modernization of content management systems, not just in the production of content (see headless CMS) but also in supporting analytics and enabling subscription optimization. A “best of breed” solution will likely define the tech stack of the future.

The summary here is a high-level review of cutting-edge analytics being adopted by leading publishers.

Ready to talk?

Don't hesitate to connect with the authors to learn more about how to automate your premium content decisions!

