

Newsletter growth and monetization tactics for 2025



Remember when everyone was saying email marketing was dead? Safe to say that's changed.

In the last decade, newsletters have transformed from a tired marketing tool to one of media's most important distribution channels.

Early on, they were mainly used for company updates or sales promos, but as self-service email tools like Mailchimp evolved, so did the creative potential.

Right around this time, daily digest newsletters like The Skimm and Morning Brew exploded onto the scene. They quickly rocketed to multi-million dollar valuations each, largely because they could draw six-figure sponsorships from high-profile advertisers bullish on newsletters as a new place to reach young professional audiences.

Then came the COVID-19 pandemic. Suddenly, everyone from The New York Times to your neighborhood gym needed newsletters to stay connected with their audience. Competition rose, content and design improved, and the evolution of segmentation capabilities made communications more personalized.

At the same time, new starter platforms like Substack made it easier for independent creators to start, grow and monetize their newsletters from scratch. Creators began using newsletters to go out on their own or, in the case of Payload and The Hustle, launch their own media businesses from scratch. Eager to capitalize on this new energy, publishers of all kinds began expanding and advertising against their own speciality newsletter products.

Fast forward to 2024. Newsletters have become a core revenue driver for media organizations, creators, and brands alike. But with that money has come new competition and new revenue pressures. As the industry gets more saturated, publishers can't rely on the same playbook to keep driving engagement and income from their newsletter. (i.e., You can't pull a Morning Brew and charge \$100,000 for a banner ad anymore.)

So as we approach 2025, how can you keep up with the competition and drive revenue from your newsletter? How can you drive sustainable income from your newsletter without diluting your product or stretching yourself too thin?

In this guide, we're giving you strategies and tactics you need to drive revenue from your newsletter, from using your first-party data more effectively to generating income through tiered subscriptions, sponsorships, and premium content offerings.

Whether you're just starting out or scaling up, read on to learn how to grow, monetize and activate your newsletter audience in 2025.

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The biggest challenges facing newsletter operators in 2025

Newsletter operators are facing more pressure to drive revenue and results from an increasingly savvy and saturated audience, all in a more challenging advertising environment. So before diving into strategy and tactics, let's address some of the biggest challenges facing newsletter operators going into 2025.

That includes:

1 | Increased competition:

In the late '00s, the widespread adoption of social media gave everyone, from legacy new organizations to average citizens, the same audience. We're seeing the same effect in the newsletter space now. Anyone can create a newsletter, and anyone can unsubscribe, so operators will need to constantly provide concrete value to their audience in order to keep them subscribed.

2 | Reader Behavior is shifting (as always):

Audiences have limited time, and competition for their attention is fierce. So newsletter creators need to create more relevant experiences to keep their readers engaged and avoid unsubscribes.

3 | It's getting harder to track performance and measure results:

Privacy regulations like GDPR and the tightening of email marketing policies could limit data collection, tracking, and personalization capabilities. This makes it harder to target the right audience and measure campaign effectiveness, especially for newsletters monetized through advertising.

4 | It's getting more difficult to drive ad revenue:

Ad-blocking software, diminishing open rates, and email filters (e.g., Gmail's Promotions tab) reduce the visibility of sponsored content and advertisements. This makes it harder to generate reliable revenue from ads, pushing publishers toward alternative models.

5 | Increasing amounts of audience data make it harder to deliver the personalization that your audience expects:

Personalization is the key to creating relevant experiences for everyone in your audience and avoiding unsubscribes/complaints. But it's hard enough to get all of your audience data in one place, let alone get it standardized, unified and cleaned quickly enough to actually use it to personalize content.



In this guide, we'll help you address these challenges and grow your newsletter, all while staying connected with your audience.

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Use your first-party data to grow and improve your core product

Unify your first-party data so you can create more curated, personalized experiences

Your organic growth strategy should be grounded in observable audience data that you're gathering from every channel, not just email.

But many creators don't have the tools they need to unify their audience data. That keeps them from seeing how their subscribers engage with them across every channel — and makes it a lot more difficult to personalize content to each person's needs.

So step one: develop a process for collecting and unifying your first-party audience data. There are a lot of different tools on the market that'll help you do this to some degree — you could use a standalone customer data platform, data lake, CRM and some combination of tools.

But if you're building a business around your content, you want [a data management tool that integrates easily with the other audience tools in your stack](#), like your marketing automation and subscription management tools. This way, everyone on your team has the information they need to create campaigns and personalize content all in one place.

Use your email reporting to start creating your paid content strategy

Opens, clicks and click-throughs are a decent gauge of whether something's working or not. But if you want to start charging for content, and advertising against it, you need a more granular view of how specific audiences engage with — and convert from — your content.

Before building your paid content strategy, dig into your email reports. Some questions to ask as you develop your paid strategy:

- What referral sources are most successful?
- What kinds of content within your newsletter drive the most traffic and clicks, both overall and among specific audience segments?

- **How engaged is your email audience?** Do they tend to interact with you on other channels, like your website or social media? Or can they be considered a standalone audience?
- **Also look at your most engaged email audience.** Your most engaged audience is the most likely to pay for a subscription. So the more tuned in you are to this group's needs, the easier it'll be to create paid products that work.

Using your database or a lead scoring solution, study your most highly engaged readers to see:

- What characteristics does this group tend to have in common?
- What value do you give them?
- What topics do they read about most often?
- What knowledge do they expect from you?
- And more importantly, what additional value/resources will they need to convert to paid subscribers?
- **What kinds of interest- and behavior-based segments can you create from your existing newsletter?** This gives you more opportunities to upsell and cross-promote your content.

For example, if your main newsletter has both finance and leadership articles, you might consider creating two smaller newsletters for each topic, then marketing it to people who regularly click those articles in the main edition.

Or if 20% of your audience always downloads your industry research, you might add them to a "research" segment for research emails, then send the next report straight to their inbox, rather than making them skim through the whole newsletter in order to find what they want.

- **How effectively are you welcoming and retaining your subscribers?** Your current audience is your most important source of revenue and security, especially if you're working within a niche market.

So as you assess your email performance, pay close attention to your retention and engagement metrics: **What kind of content are you linking to in your welcome emails? How many emails are you using within the series? Are you providing whitelisting instructions in these emails and if so, is your audience taking action?**

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- **Is your email engagement real?** Does your email provider remove bot clicks from your email reports? If not, up to 63% of your clicks could be fake. So switch to using an email service provider that removes bots from your reports, like Omeda, or manually remove likely bot clicks from your reports before promising specific engagement rates or conversion targets to potential sponsors.

Qualify new subscribers and tighten your content strategy by adding a survey to your sign-up flow

Most newsletters will ask a few qualifying questions during the sign-up process. But since this takes place before the sign-up's complete, you can only ask so many questions before you risk losing that subscriber forever.

But if you provide a survey after sign-up, you're free to ask more questions. And the right ones will lend clarity to both your content and advertising strategy.

Take, for instance, [The Flyover](#), which covers state-wide news in various "flyover" states, including Texas, North Carolina and Florida. That's a really broad mandate covering many different topics and many different states. So in order to stay relevant to each individual in their audience, they need a reliable way to qualify new members upon sign-up.

That's where their welcome survey comes in handy. Upon subscribing, the user's led to a confirmation page which includes an extensive survey covering not just demographics, but preferred content topics, household income, common news sources and more.

Not everyone will complete the survey, but you can imagine that those who do will get a highly individualized, improved experience — and the Flyover team gets more information they can use to advertise against them.

THE FLYOVER

[Trouble Receiving Our Email?](#)
[Latest Edition](#)
[State Editions](#)
[Store](#)
[Advertise](#)

How old are you?

- ☐ 18-24
- ☐ 25-34
- ☐ 35-44
- ☐ 45-54
- ☐ 55-64
- ☐ 65+

Gender

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Rather not say

What is your current relationship status?

- ☐ Married
- ☐ Single
- ☐ Other

What is the highest level of education you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

- ☐ Grad school
- ☐ Undergrad
- ☐ Some college
- ☐ High school
- ☐ Trade school
- ☐ Other

Do you rent or own the place where you live?

- ☐ Rent
- ☐ Own
- ☐ Neither

What is your household income?



Diversify your income sources through sponsorships and partnerships

If you're covering your industry well, chances are that someone's already interested in sponsoring your newsletter. Or they would be, if they knew you were in the market. So as you get started, include sponsorship prompts in your newsletters to encourage inbound requests.

In those prompts, link to a media kit that includes:

- Your audience and demographics
- Your distribution
- Who you've worked with in the past
- Your sponsorship products and how you work with sponsors

From there, focus on external outreach. Pitch and perfect your sponsorship packages with these best practices:

- **Create detailed advertising packages specifically targeting your most highly engaged audience.** Remember when you pulled a bunch of reports about your most engaged readers? This is where it'll pay off. Give your advertisers detailed demographic and behavioral data about your most active audience members and you'll be able to create more successful, expensive packages.
- **Diversify your sponsored content and offers.** When you think of newsletter sponsorships, you probably think of the callout box that appears in the top-third of the email. But expanding your sponsorship formats gives you more sponsorship options and revenue potential. It takes more work upfront, but when it succeeds, it pays off in a major way.

One notable example: [Not Boring](#), which provides in-depth analysis of the tech and startup landscape written by Packy McCormick. Instead of your standard sponsorship ads, McCormick writes a 15,000 word deep dive about each sponsor company.

According to a recent interview with [Growth Croissant](#), the deep dive model has been enormously successful. From the interview: "Packy has had incredible success with the sponsored deep dive model. Today, for every 1 sponsored post, 20 more companies are asking Packy to do one of them."

That allows him to select only sponsors whose stories deliver value for his audience, helping him balance advertiser and audience needs more easily. And it seems to have paid off: Not Boring has since expanded to 200,000 readers, a podcast and even an investment business.

(Important caveat: McCormick developed deep dives based on reader demand. Something that long likely won't make sense for your brand, but take this as a reminder to check your data, talk to your audience and see what other sponsored content makes sense for your business.)

- **Provide granular reporting on how the sponsorship performed**, including engagement metrics (views, likes, clicks), referral sources, and post-conversion actions (where on your website does your audience go after clicking through?). Also include comments and feedback, as this will tell you how to frame the next sponsorship.



Drive reader revenue through subscriptions and paid newsletters

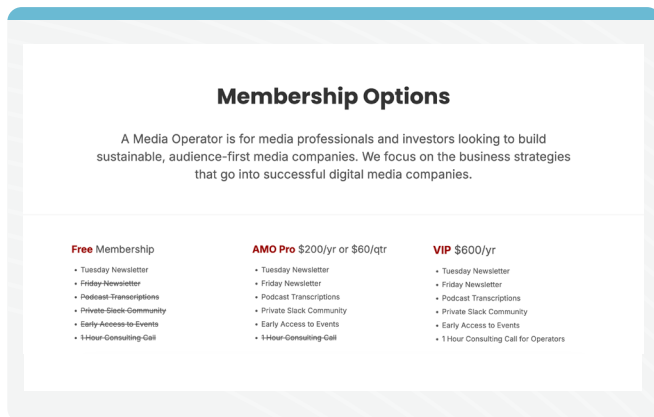
A strong reader revenue model gives you a reliable income source and reduces your reliance on outside funding sources. But charging for content is difficult, especially when your audience has gotten used to getting it for free.

Read on to learn how to introduce paid content to your newsletter without losing your core audience.

Create a tiered subscription system

This essentially creates a marketing funnel within your newsletter audience, where free subscribers get more generalized, “top-funnel” content while paid subscribers get progressively more tactical, valuable content.

For instance, you could send a free newsletter once per week, but send additional newsletters — with more exclusive resources like case studies or proprietary data — specifically for your paid audience, like A Media Operator does.



Use subscriber data to paywall the right content

More and more publishers are using paywalls in their emails to monetize their newsletters.

However, this strategy only works if you paywall the content your audience is most likely to pay for. And while you probably already have an idea of what works, you might not know what topics, formats and tone drives conversions for each segment of your audience. And you need that level of specificity in order to drive revenue from your content.

Query your current paid subscribers to figure out:

- what industries they come from
- their job title / seniority level
- what topics they're most interested in, particularly what educational resources they tend to seek out
- what kinds of questions or feedback they've given you

Experiment with the number of “free” articles someone can read within the email before getting paywalled.

Use your email reports to determine what kind of content drives the most engagement and paid conversions. Also experiment with:

- the copy and placement of paid content within your newsletter (for instance, placing your paid content at the bottom of the email vs. linking to it in your header or welcome message.)
- the type of articles that get paywalled (for instance, industry research v. podcast episodes, tactical v. strategic topics)
- the color, placement and copy of your CTA message itself

Develop subscriber communication workflows

Shifting to a paid newsletter model means you need to create customer journeys for your audience. And you need to develop automated campaigns to communicate key information at each point of those journeys. So before launching paid newsletters, use your marketing automation solution to create the following workflows:

- **Re-engagement series for lapsed free newsletter readers.** Shoot to reactivate 2-5% of your lapsed subscribers, or 5-15% if you're more established, according to Dan Oshinsky of Inbox Collective.
- **Welcome series for new subscribers:** In this 2- to 4-email series, introduce your new subscribers to your backlog of content and give them key account and payment information.

The more you can customize these messages, the better impression you'll make with new subscribers. Ask your new subscribers to indicate their key interests, ideal sending frequency and preferred channels on your sign-up form, then customize your outreach to those needs. (Also consider using dynamic content in your emails to tailor content to each individual's engagement history.)

- **Subscription renewal reminders:** Create a monthly automated campaign for audience members whose subscriptions are set to expire in 30 days or less.
- **Win-back campaign for lost subscribers:** For best results, combine email outreach with other channels, including SMS and on-site personalizations.

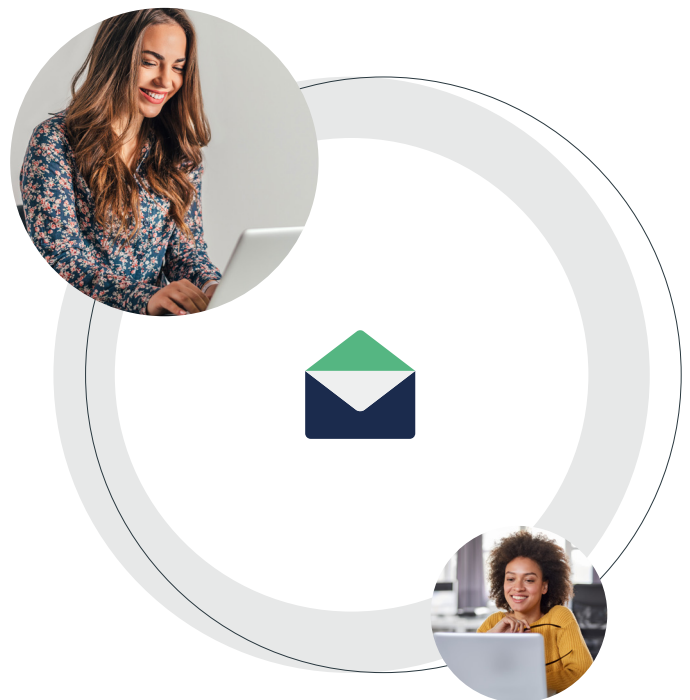
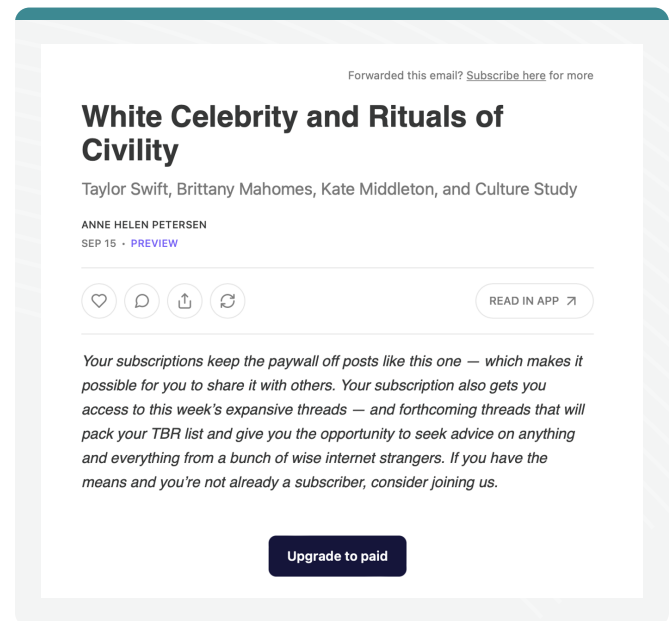
Use benefits-based marketing to increase conversions

People are warming up to the idea of paying for digital content. But many of your subscribers will still be reluctant to pay for a product they've been getting for free, no matter how good that product is.

So when you tell your subscribers you're raising prices, it's usually best not to cite outside factors — like increased costs or macroeconomic factors — as the reason for increasing the price. Instead, tell them how the additional revenue will help you improve the product. Tell them what they stand to gain, not what they stand to lose.

"Instead, it can be valuable to remind subscribers how much the product has improved and announce any notable upcoming changes. You can also reference what the additional funding will enable you to do, including just more of what you're already doing, but better," [as Reid DeRamus said in Growth Croissant](#).

So how does this look in practice? One good example comes from Ann Helen Peterson's [Culture Study](#) newsletter:





Build paid products around your best content

Sure, you could add a weekly paid edition to your free newsletter program. But creating additional paid products adds more value to your subscription package while also helping you reach new audiences (i.e., the person that won't read your newsletter, but would listen to an audio version while doing the dishes).

Here's where to start:

- **Personalized templates, downloadables and resources:** Curating personalized resources for your readers gives them the most value for the least time spent — and that convenience is definitely worth a premium. For instance, [The New York Times](#) provides personalized recipes for paid subscribers of its Cooking vertical. (This is where having reliable, accurate audience data really comes in clutch.)
- **Q&As:** Host a monthly Q&A to share your expertise and address more specific topics/questions than you might be able to in your main newsletter. Make your Q&As as tactical and specific as possible to deliver the most bang for your audience's buck.
- **Case studies:** Release case studies just for your paid subscribers, if it makes sense for your brand. For example, [Simon Owens, a journalist who covers the media industry, does extensive case studies about high-performing media businesses for his paid newsletter audience.](#)
- **Events:** Hosting events creates a community around your newsletter. And if you play your cards right, they can even net you some new subscribers and advertisers.

They don't have to break the bank, either. We've seen newsletter operators host Zoom meetups and casual happy hours. But at the top end, they're singularly useful networking opportunities. Some examples: Payload's application-only investor conferences and Jacob Donnelly's AMO Summit for B2B media operators, which can charge more than \$1,000 per ticket.

But event planning takes an entirely different skill set than writing or producing a newsletter. So for more advice, check out Inbox Collective's tips on [how to throw an event for your newsletter readers.](#)

- **Community discussion boards:** You can only provide so much value on your own. But paid discussion boards let your audience give each other advice, resources and recommendations even when you're not there. Let your audience tap into the network effect and your own value goes up exponentially.

As an example: [Superpath](#), which began as a newsletter and community for content professionals, now charges \$500/year for full access to its Slack board (among other features in its paid subscription), which features lengthy advice threads among top content marketers in the tech space.

- **Online courses:** A time-bound, super specific course can help you attract new audiences and progressively introduce them to the rest of your work.

For best results, create courses targeting a variety of knowledge levels. While that takes more groundwork, the breadth benefits your audience members while helping you qualify your audience. Even better, you can create more detailed interest-based, seniority-based and behavioral segments based on engagement data from those courses, then use it to further individualize your outreach to each reader.

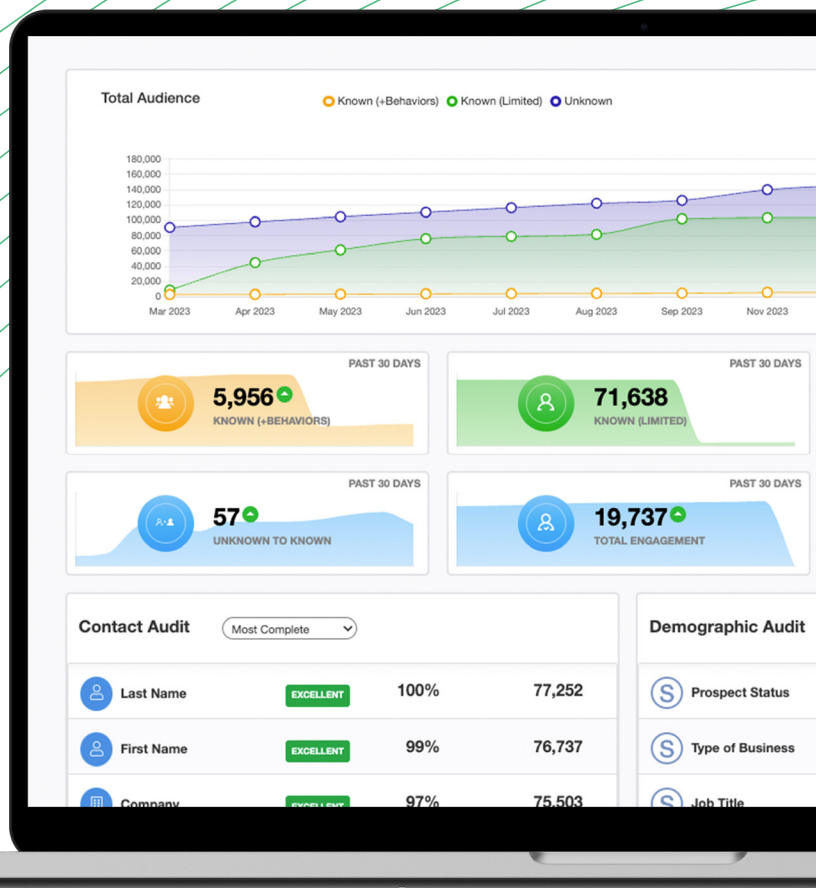
Bonus: Once you've created your courses, you can repurpose the related content for additional newsletters and other channels, freeing you up to create even more paid products, content and interviews going forward.

Struggling with siloed subscriber data, complicated workflows, and declining audience engagement?

What if you could unify your subscriber data and use it to engage and convert your audience with less effort?

Discover how Omeda's integrated Audience Data Platform helps teams like yours use their subscriber data to strengthen their media businesses.

Get a Demo





About Omeda

Omeda is a SaaS provider delivering the platform and expertise required to maximize the value of media and publishing businesses' most critical asset — their audience. The platform of choice for B2B and B2C professionals, Omeda's integrated solution, which includes a customer data platform, workflow automation, email automation, and subscription management, provides the professional tools and controls required to maximize a media business' diverse revenue streams, power 24/7 audience development, and orchestrate precise targeting for measurable results. Our platform is built by passionate audience pros, workflow masters, and data nerds who partner with our customers to grow and thrive in a disruptive media world.

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