

Chapter 11: Discuss Coverage Goals, Next Steps and Recommendations

We return to the goals table that we showed earlier in this report, and this time, we zoom in on where, in our coverage areas, the unique nonsubscribers come in to read.

This table shows how traffic arrived over the course of several months just before the pandemic (when we think reader behavior was more “normal.”) It’s a month’s worth of data.

The WSJ goal is that we have to reach 100 million unique visitors per month by 2024 is planned to be achieved over four years, with progress each year. For the next year, our goal is to get to a sustained 55 million unique visitors per month.

That will take real focus, and our content has a big role to play in it.

	Non-subscriber Traffic						
	Search	Social	Newsletter	Direct	External	Internal	Total
Unique Visitors <i>(minus subscribers)</i>	10.0	6.9	0.5	6.9	5.2	3.5	33.0
Monthly Visits <i>(minus subscribers)</i>	13.0	8.6	0.6	11.6	7.4	7.0	47.9
Average Visits per Visitor <i>(minus subscribers)</i>	1.3	1.2	1.3	1.7	1.4	2.0	1.5
Unique Non-subs (28 Day Avg., Jul-Dec 2019)							
	Search	Social	Newsletter	Direct	External	Internal	Total
Articles: Fleeting News	5.970	4.768	0.387	3.105	3.752	2.017	20.0
Fleeting Corporate Articles	1.640	1.289	0.115	0.955	1.126	0.568	5.7
Fleeting DC Articles	1.218	1.029	0.097	0.523	1.025	0.454	4.3
Fleeting Life & Arts Articles	1.241	1.564	0.071	0.722	0.823	0.556	5.0
Fleeting Finance Articles	1.024	0.561	0.086	0.582	0.720	0.381	3.4
Fleeting US Articles	0.966	0.617	0.052	0.351	0.587	0.305	2.9
Fleeting News Visuals	0.033	0.323	0.006	0.076	0.046	0.030	0.5
Fleeting World Articles	1.008	0.456	0.053	0.420	0.747	0.341	3.0
Articles: Evergreen & Archive	3.740	1.673	0.279	1.710	2.043	1.303	10.7
Ongoing Corporate Articles	1.083	0.456	0.076	0.427	0.401	0.309	2.8
Ongoing DC Articles	0.820	0.476	0.087	0.387	0.595	0.320	2.7
Ongoing Life & Arts Articles	0.458	0.228	0.019	0.172	0.304	0.228	1.4
Ongoing Finance Articles	0.568	0.193	0.066	0.349	0.277	0.246	1.7
Ongoing US Articles	0.497	0.205	0.031	0.196	0.330	0.164	1.4
Ongoing News Visuals	0.003	0.003	0.000	0.004	0.010	0.004	0.0
Ongoing World Articles	0.661	0.334	0.044	0.356	0.374	0.232	2.0

Chapter 11: Discuss Coverage Goals, Next Steps and Recommendations

To give you an idea of what the goal for the next year means: If we distribute the added reach across the six coverage areas listed above (Corporate, D.C., Life & Arts/Weekend, Finance, U.S., World), that means each coverage area needs to bring in about 1.9 million more nonsubscribers above where we were last Fall.

The good news is that, due to the news cycle we have been in, we are halfway there. If we maintain the level of visitors we have now, then we are left with a roughly 37% increase needed, which comes out to around 1 million more unique visitors per coverage area.

We'd like to talk through with Matt Murray whether these goals for reach should fall broadly and evenly across our coverage areas or should be planned out to be taken on more by some coverage areas more than others.

As the news cycle changes, keeping our level of visitors up will get harder. We will need to employ more strategic thinking about where we focus our content and how we do our journalism, including a far bigger focus on evergreen content, SEO, social and community. We will need to listen to our audiences. We will need to focus on digital, not print.

We have the right tools and framework laid out above to work hand in hand with coverage chiefs, bureau chiefs, reporters and newsroom leaders to make the right tradeoffs. We are ready to sit with coverage editors to map out coverage strategy and areas to focus on digital improvement. We are ready to help change things like tagging that will allow us to keep moving ahead strategically. We are ready to build a microsite to share learnings, guides and data broadly with the newsroom.

Let's do this.

Chapter 11: Discuss Coverage Goals, Next Steps and Recommendations

Our Recommendations

These appeared throughout the report and are better digested with context. But here is a list of our recommendations with the page numbers where you can go back and find more detail on them.

How We Listen to Audiences:

Mindset Shift: We need to go all in on practicing two-way journalism, listening to our audiences and growing those communities, with an eye on different types of audience groups including professional ones. We need to take action when receiving audience feedback, from assigning a story based on what we've heard or learned to asking a reporter to include specific audience questions in their reporting and incorporating the responses into the story. (page 45)

Tactical:

- We need to actively monitor Google Trends and Google Suggestions to understand what our audiences are searching for and assign, encourage and pitch stories in response. (page 62)
- When the audience doesn't come to us with insights, we need to go to them and consider having reporters go into communities we want to reach on social media. Once there, we should listen, learn who the top influencers are and learn the language and culture of the community. (page 59)

What We Cover:

Mindset Shift: We should move away from favoring existing coverage read to a large degree by heavy readers (those who come to our platforms 11 or more days per month) and instead prioritize engaging with lighter-reading and new audiences.

Tactical:

- We need to adopt and enforce our Coverage Strategy Mapper and Framework, see page 79.
- Our Coverage area-specific discussion points start on page 86. We need to dive into identifying more opportunities for change using the Mapper in partnership with coverage chiefs.
- We should keep our finger on the pulse of what's trending and maintain a few different ribbons of contextual stories that add to a reader's understanding of major news stories or specific topics. (page 167)
- We should assess story pitches and commission stories by whether they will feature diverse people or be of interest to diverse audiences. We should consider how different audiences, whether by gender, race, sexual orientation or age, see themselves in our coverage. (page 138)
- We should create or expand beats around topics that matter to diverse audiences. These topics include the environment, career, consumer products, drug addiction, racism, affordability of health care, income inequality and violent crime. (page 144)

Chapter 11: Discuss Coverage Goals, Next Steps and Recommendations

How We Cover Things:

Mindset Shift: Preferences and tastes of digital readers—in particular our light-reading members and future members—need to drive how we cover things. This includes: format, publishing timing, medium, content organization, type of story and matters of style (such as focus on featuring real people in our stories).

Tactical:

- Many of our stories are missing a macro-level overview. We need to inform our audience of a story's consequences and the impact it has on the world and in our lives. (page 159)
- We need more Help Me Understand stories to help our audience establish a strong baseline of knowledge and expand their interest in more topics. Our hypothesis is that this will allow our audience to engage longer with our content. (page 167)
- Across all sections, we make recommendations about covering topics from the lens of an underrepresented voice or how someone views the impact of a current event from a younger audience's perspective. We need to diversify our approach to covering current events. (page 50)
- We recommend an increase in the volume of service journalism—content that will improve people's lives. The topics range from how to manage your personal finances to how to plan a great vacation. (page 168)
- Quoting real people should not just be about checking a box or a nice-to-have element of a story. Find out why this is important. (page 157)
- We need to create more evergreen stories versus creating fleeting news stories and why stories with a longer tail will help us connect with our audiences and maximize the life of our content. (page 162)
- We need to improve engagement for video by optimizing our SEO strategy and picking effective preview images. (page 172)
- We need to sharpen our graphics and visuals work and the process for coming up with those ideas. How do we produce more evergreen graphics and ensure they are successful? How do we spend our resources on charts that are more memorable instead of creating a large volume of them? (page 181)
- We need to focus more on growing unique visitors to our platforms through newsletters. (page 53)
- When it comes to social media, we need to maximize the potential of each platform individually and customize our content to take advantage of those platforms. (page 56)
- If we want to continue focusing on audio, we need to add staff to the podcast team producing seven of our eight shows to guard against burnout and turnover and to allow for innovation and experimentation. We have also identified some areas of opportunity for cross-functional teams to collaborate on content. This also includes training our reporters on collaborations with the visual, video and audio teams. (page 177)

Chapter 11: Discuss Coverage Goals, Next Steps and Recommendations

The Ways We Work:

Mindset Shift: We must shift to audience-driven decision making that is firmly guided by our company reach and engagement goals. All parts of the newsroom must follow the same strategy and drive to the same top-line goals. The masthead editors must join DXS leadership in communicating those goals and our strategy—more clearly and more often—and also require consistent use of technology to streamline work and communications.

Tactical:

- Recommendations for establishing best practice for packaging stories as a digital-first, mobile-friendly experience. There has been a lack of clarity around who in our organization is responsible and empowered to make the calls on news presentation for given stories, publishing schedules and on what mediums given stories should be. Given the strategy editors' strong grasp of the data, position as neutral brokers who advocate only for the audience rather than a particular medium and also their ties to each other for cross-newsroom comparative knowledge, they should be empowered to guide these decisions and make these calls where there is disagreement. They will bring in Louise, Leslie and Sheila as necessary and work with them on guidelines.
- Through exploring our data, we have identified where our taxonomy and metadata—including tagging, fall short in enabling the strategy editors to dig even deeper into our user behaviors when interacting with our text, videos, graphics and interactives. The strategy editors will lay out particular guidance on tagging in each of their areas and

strict adherence to their guidance must be required. We also need a newsroom-wide point person who dedicates substantial time to be our tagging librarian. (page 199)

- One of the important ways of reaching new audiences is through SEO. We make recommendations on how to help our sections understand the importance and impact that SEO can have on their stories. We need strong support for SEO at the top and a backing for its approach as audience-interest-driven programming. We also need devoted SEO specialists in the newsroom beyond our existing team of two editors, particularly in Hong Kong and London. (page 60)
- Provide the newsroom with actionable data that empowers them to make impactful editorial decisions but also reinforce the role of the strategy editors, Leslie Yazel and Sheila Courter in holding coverage areas accountable to following our central strategies and frameworks. Consolidating this into a single source of truth across all our content types. (page 63)
- We should centralize data collection, management and insights across all mediums, including video, audio, social media, and newsletters, with the News Insights team. This is important to maintain standards and quality, having one source of truth on how the newsroom is performing. They will need a minimum of two additional data scientists to handle this. (page 63)
- Video strategy needs to be joined to the central strategy of the WSJ. Structurally, there should not be a separate strategy editor and data analyst who do not report to the programming strategy editor. In addition, we need to hire a YouTube analyst. This is in line with the additional two people who were supposed to be newsroom distribution strategists in this team but were not hired. (page 174)

Chapter 11: Discuss Coverage Goals, Next Steps and Recommendations

- We need to be more intentional about what gets promoted across our social channels and when. We need to consider not only our main social feeds but also how we can leverage the different sub-brand accounts we have. To make this strategy even stronger, we need to consider breaking our social team into two: one for creating experiences specific to each social platform and another for digital newsgathering. (page 56).
- We need to have a discussion about how we empower the strategy editors to meaningfully drive change.
- We need full participation with Newsgrid, Slack and an overhaul of meeting structure (that Sheila Courter and Leslie Yazel will lead). (page 191)