

Digital strategies and best practices

Always be planning.

Key strategies for planners

- **Bait the right traps:** Just like fishermen don't linger where the fish aren't, we shouldn't be putting our best content where/when our readers aren't. Data, filtered with consistent review and analysis, points us to when and where our various audiences expect to find content. And that's where we should be focusing the bulk of our content efforts across platforms. This is what planning helps us achieve.
- **Emphasize 36-Hour Rule:** The more we can change the default mindset for content from “now, now, now” to “hold up, let's find the best audience,” the better all the other pieces fall into place. The data has made it crystal clear: The more content we can shift to morning publish, the better we will see it perform – both in standard metrics and in generating new subscriptions, and that is what 36-Hour Rule planning gives us the space to do.
- **Are my plans paying off (are stories you expect to get there hitting content benchmarks)?** Planners are expected to follow up on plans – stories aren't dead after their first day. They work with newsrooms, strategists and the DOT to identify stories that could benefit from some attention.

How you can help: Consistent and early creation of planning cards is essential. Planners will be asked to follow-up with local coaches if they aren't seeing planning cards early enough to allow for good planning.

Daily interactions with a planner should look like ...

In a perfect world, every story should start with a chat between reporter, editor and planner.

Why is this story valuable, and what audience(s) thinks so?

How can we tell this story in the best way(s) to reach the audience(s)?

What can we deliver, and when can we deliver it?

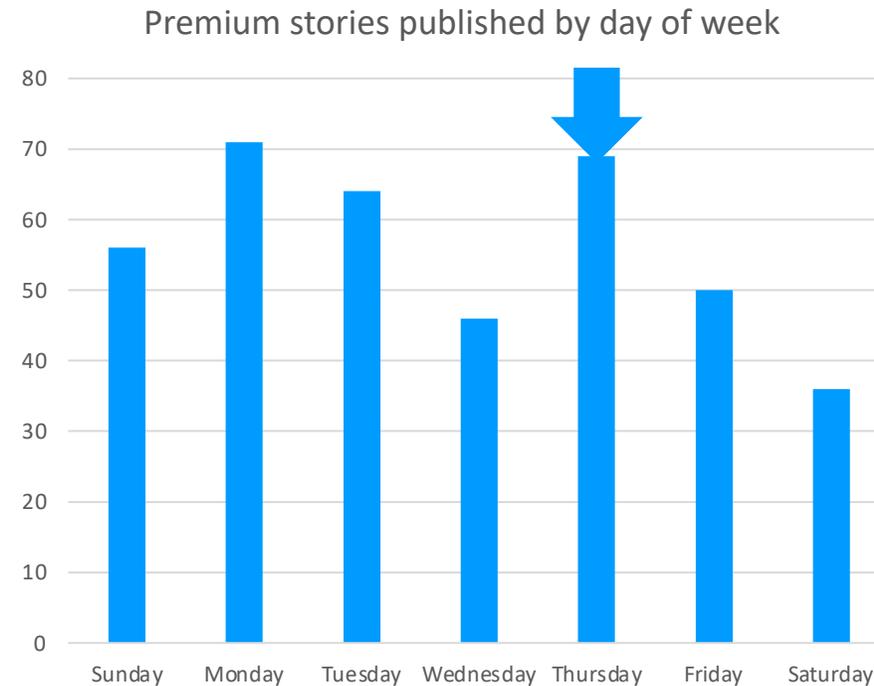
TAKEAWAY: Finding ways to bring in planners early in the process is the key. It allows time for discussion, analysis and intentional planning for the best chances of success for that piece of content.

Targeted bring backs, particularly on ‘Sunday’ content

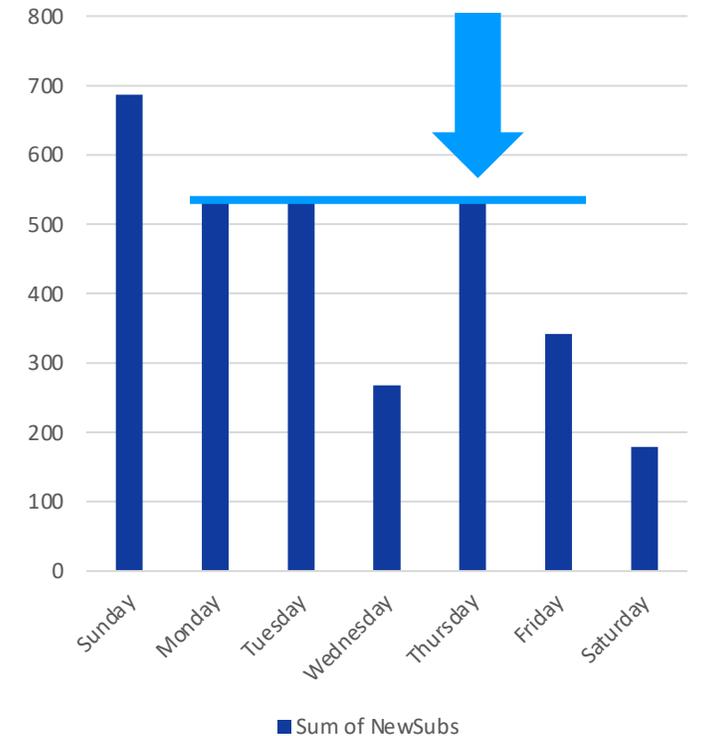
Yes, publish “weekend” content early – or sometimes even hold it for digital until Monday.

But even if you publish the content Wednesday or Thursday, make sure you have “extended” promotion on different platforms.

Des Moines case study: Thursday continues to be prime for weekend story content, even as we’ve moved more to Sun-Tues when we have stronger subscriber audience.



But because of good planning, stories published Thursday drive as many orders as our subscriber-rich days early in the week.



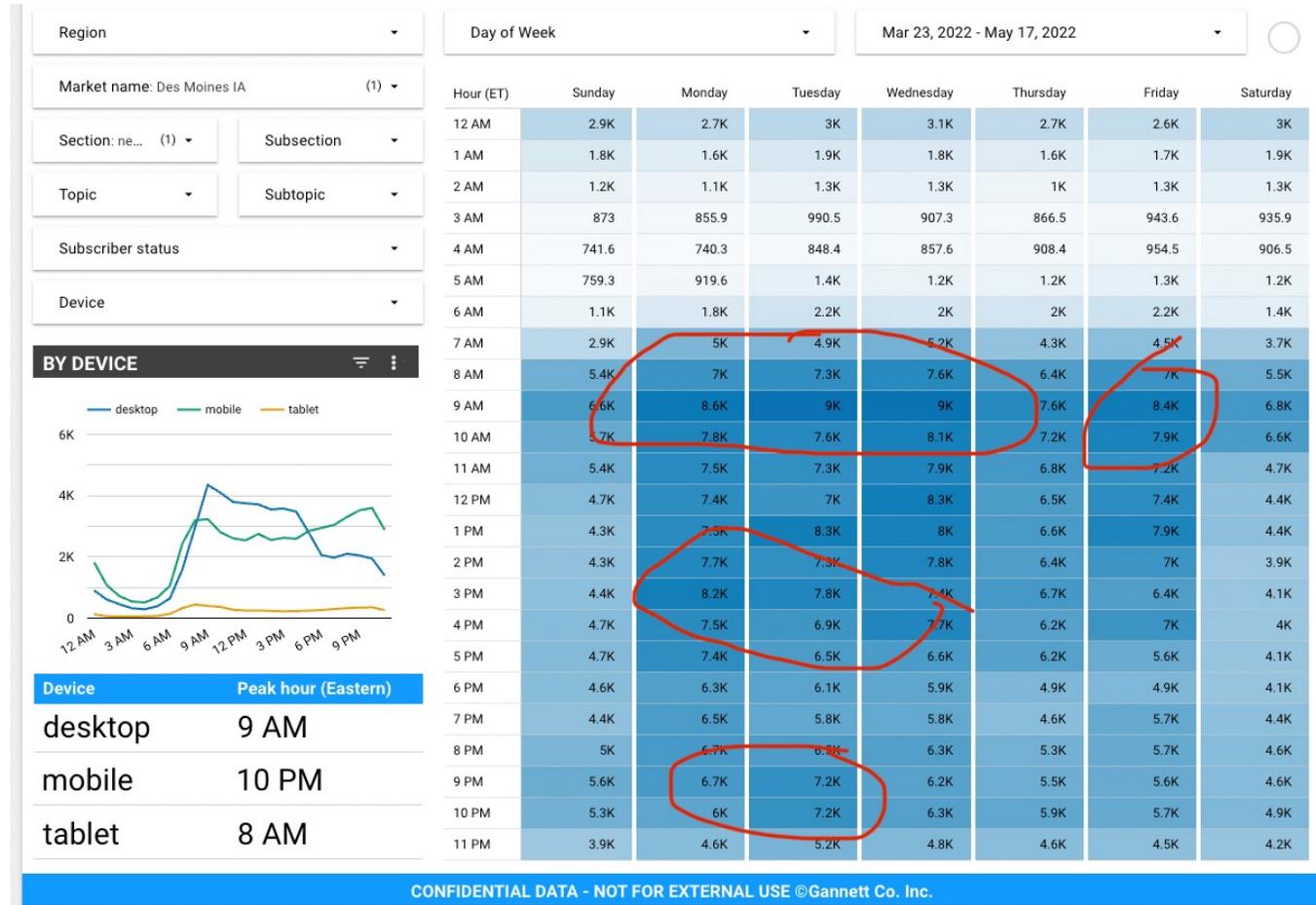
Using heat maps to target stories for top readership

How planners use them

It lets anyone easily see exactly where our readers are, so it makes it easier to process “focus on the big dark blobs” than mentally sift numbers looking for that insight.

Regularly check again: The best time of day for an education story in July may be different than in October. We can't look things up just once.

When we can do this consistently, we have seen the results – more subscribers reading and engaged, higher page views, more subscriptions sold.



Find your heat maps at dashboards.usatodaynetwork.com

Creating digital plans for publish, pins, social and more

PLANNING

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- Digital publish - Premium. Monday morning
- Social - Premium. Facebook - Monday morning link post, Thursday evening social card for announcement; Twitter – Monday morning; Thursday evening (tied to event announcement); Insta – Monday evening
- Home page pin - Monday morning; Thursday evening bringback (tied to event announcement); weekend afternoon or evening, as needed to help fill
- Other digital - Monday morning top stories push; Thursday morning Daily Briefing newsletter

What is their news browsing routine?

Readers in our growth audience segments tell us these are key parts of the day when they're **seeking to engage in news**:

This is as much about when to social as when to publish.

Ease into the day

When: Waking up, maybe still in bed; just beginning to engage with the world.

Seeks: "Lighter," short-form content that is easily digestible and digital platforms that facilitate social connection



Facing the day

When: Morning, after they're up engaging with the day; maybe eating breakfast, getting themselves and family ready for day ahead, commuting.

Seeks: Informative content, harder-hitting local and national news and politics



Capitalizing on the day

When: Later parts of the day, often beginning on the commute home and into eating supper.

Seeks: Intellectual stimulation from informative and harder-hitting, "deeper" local, national news, politics or personal interest content



Unwinding from day

When: Later parts of the day, watching TV or maybe back in bed; yearning for disconnection and relaxation.

Seeks: "Lighter," longer-form content



What about during the work day?

Segment 3 readers show infrequent consumption during the day, usually only when taking a break from work, running errands or as background noise.