Going all-in on digital subscriptions

ONA Dublin 2017

The Christian Science Monitor

Who are we?

- **108-year** old news publication
- **70** full-time employees
  - 45 editorial, 25 business
- **$6M** in revenue
- **35K** print readers; **2.5MM** monthly uniques online

What's our challenge?

"If the Christian Science Monitor
***were to vanish**,*
what would the world lose, really?"

-- *Mark Sappenfield, Editor, May 2017*

What's our Job to Be Done?

"The Monitor helps me embrace difficult perspectives on important issues."

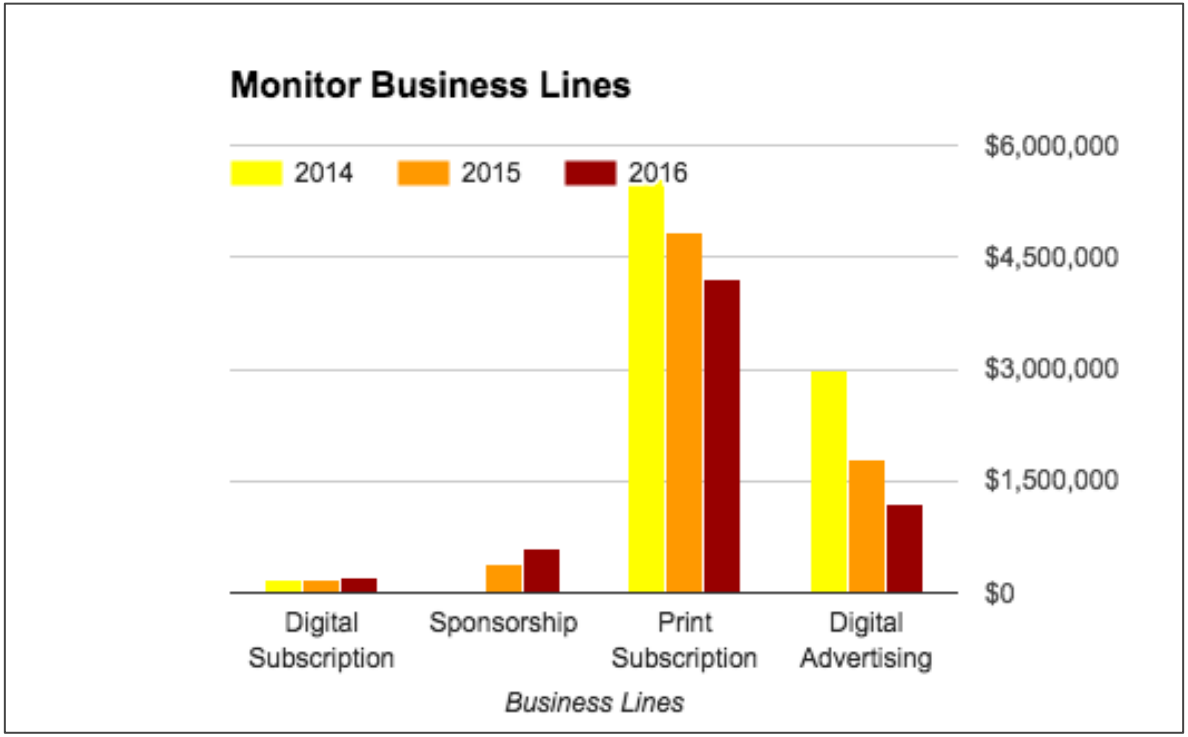
"When we just focus on events and don't delve into the views and values that are actually shaping the world – we lose what matters. We lose the ability to see how all these events point to the winding path forward that humanity is taking."

-- *Mark Sappenfield, Editor, May 2017*

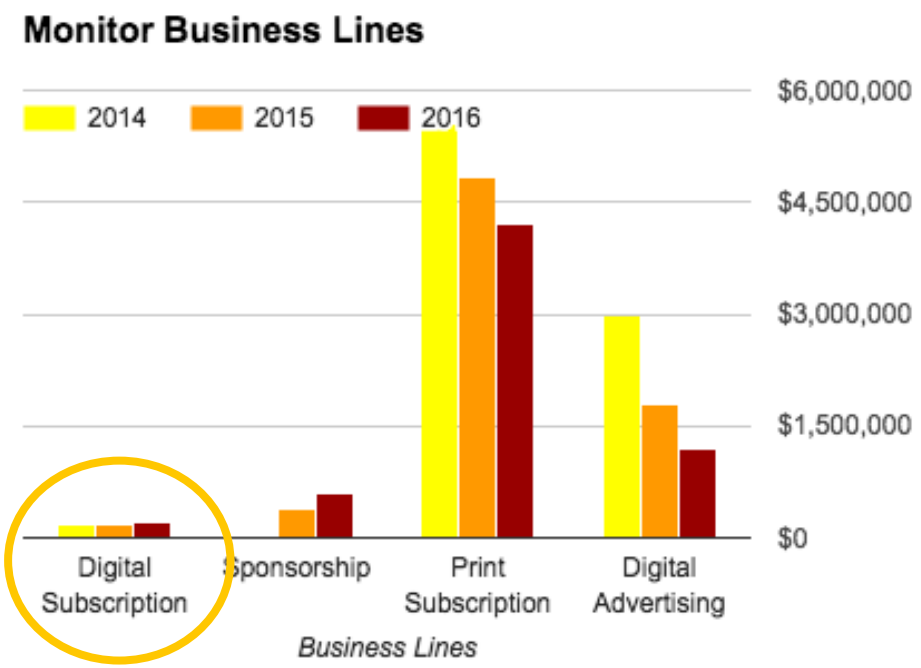
Q: Super. So what?

A: Business focus.

Q: What was our business?



Q: What will be our business?



Q: Why go all-in on subscription?

- **Aligns** business, editorial and organizational goals
- Builds an organization adept at **solving reader problems**
- **Capitalizes on the moment** in digital media

Q: Is this a good business? (Part I)

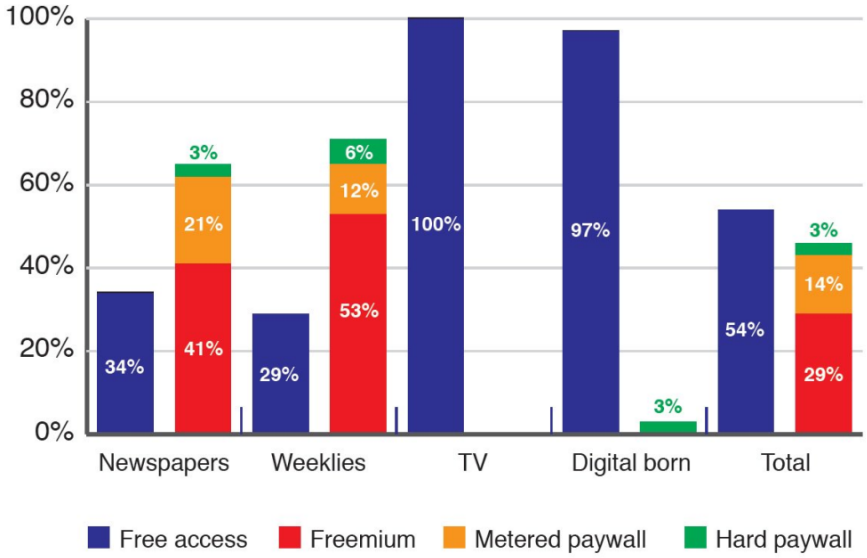


Figure 1. Free and pay models by media type

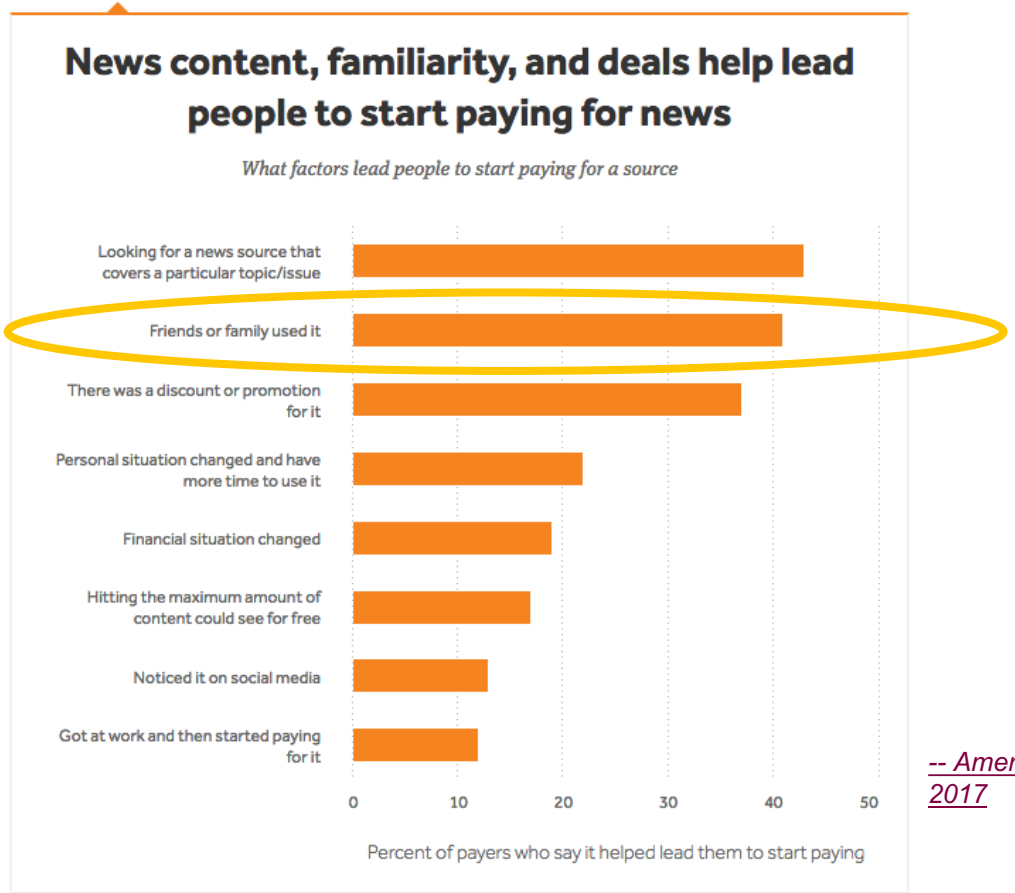
-- Rasmus Kleis, Twitter, May 2017

Q: Is this a good business? (Part II)

- **54% of American adults pay for news**
- **Half** of those who don't pay **act like those who do** ("News-seeking" behavior)
- **Readers think digital news is a bargain**
  - *48% say very good value versus 10% who find it expensive*

-- American Press Institute, May 2017

Q: Is this a good business? (Part III)



-- American Press Institute, May 2017

Q: What is the Monitor Daily?

- 5 stories + editorial + CS article + audio
  - Editor intros: focus on the values at work in each story.
  - “Mini” story that can be expanded for full text
- Emailed + posted each weekday ~6 p.m. EST
- Pricing: $9 or $11 / month // $90 or $110 annually

Q: How is the Monitor Daily doing?

- **74% of readers scroll** past the 4th article
- **26% expand** an item
  - *Compare with CTR on email of ~4-5%*
- **~15% listen to the audio** per week
- **3,400 subscribers** in ~8 days

Q: How do we measure success?

- Do we let readers *(data!)* guide our decisions? (Analytics)
- How regularly are we talking to our readers? (Product)
- How quickly do we solve their problems? (Service)
- Are we finding new ways to delight them? (Features)
- Are we reaching our subscriber goals? (Business)

Q: Where do we go next?

The Christian Science Monitor's new paid, daily product is aiming for 10,000 subscribers in a year

-- Nieman Lab, May 2017