

# A Guide for Publishers



## ***Audience engagement is a popular discussion topic – but what does “engagement” actually mean?***

For publishers, engagement comprises a number of factors:

- Time on site
- Pages/articles viewed per session
- Return visits
- Likes, shares, or tweets of an article
- Comments on articles
- Ads clicked

Why does measuring engagement matter? Because engagement is intimately tied to revenue. Visitors who stay longer and read more pages see more ads; return visitors present opportunities to promote premium access; and social engagement on a site is tied to whether a visitor will pay for the services or not, according to findings in a study by MIT Sloan.

As the pressures on publishers increase due to ad-blockers and third-party distribution platforms like Facebook, focusing on engagement - and what you can do to improve it - becomes critical. But not all engagement is created equal. How a reader finds your content, the device they use to locate and read news, and if they are a new or returning reader, all influence the degree to which a reader engages with your website.

# Challenges Facing Reader Engagement Today

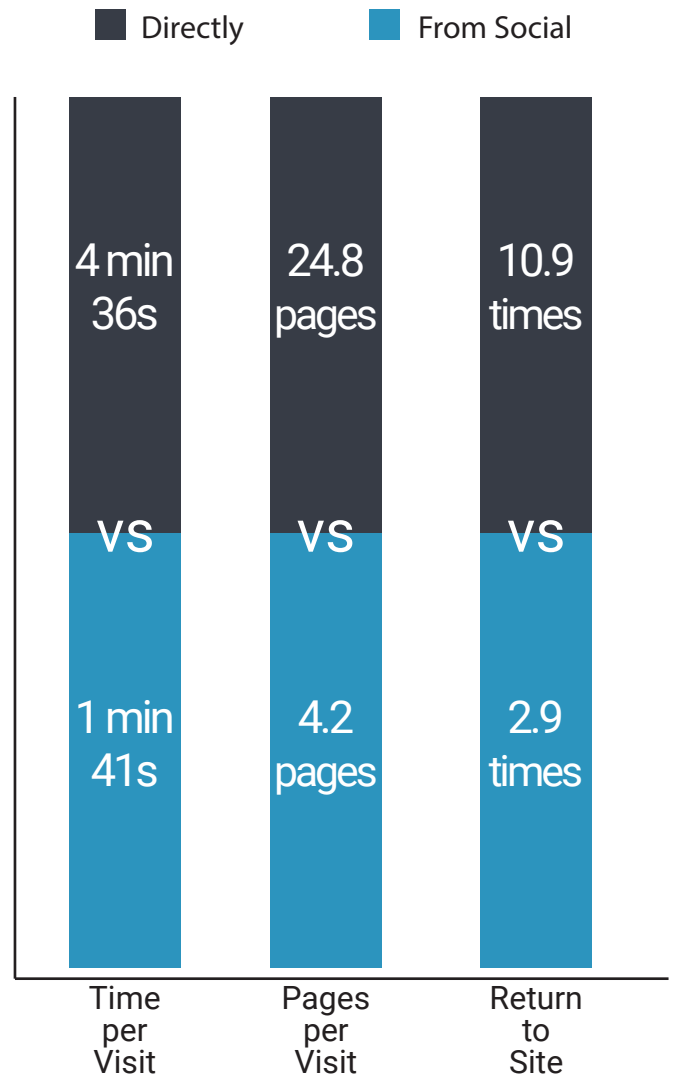
## Challenge: Traffic Source

According to recent Pew Research reports, social networks drive approximately 31%-46% of traffic to websites - more than any other channel. However, visitors from this channel are among the web's most fickle.

Compared with visitors who arrive directly, visitors from social sources:

- ⦿ Spend less time per visit (1 min 41s vs. 4 min 36s)
- ⦿ Consume fewer pages per visit (4.2 pages vs. 24.8 pages)
- ⦿ Return fewer times (2.9 times vs. 10.9)

Visitors from search fare only slightly better than visitors arriving from social media. Headlines that are optimized for search engines (i.e., are short and fact-based) drive reader trust, but search-sourced visitors behave more like social-sourced visitors than direct visitors.



**Conclusion:** The majority of visitors arrive at a publisher's site from social and are the most difficult to engage.

## Challenge: Mobile

Recent reports also note that news consumption via mobile device now exceeds that on desktop (58.7% versus 41.3% respectively). This shift has impacted engagement on each platform, as well - desktop engagement (measured by minutes spent) dropped 5% from 2014-2015 versus mobile's increase of 21%.

# Challenges Continued...

Readers who consume content via a news app spend more time reading the content, but as a percentage of overall readership, are just a small percentage. The time readers spend with content varies by device, as well: readers on mobile devices spend over twice as much time with long-form content compared to short form content (123 seconds versus 57 seconds).

**Conclusion:** Understanding how visitors engage with content on mobile can help you craft the right type of experience to best maximize - and even grow - engagement for users.

## Challenge: Return Visitors

It's more difficult and costly to attract new website visitors than to retain existing ones. Once acquired, however, returning visitors are more likely to:

- 🕒 Share & link on social media, or via their website/blog
- 🕒 Interact via live chat, social media, or email
- 🕒 Write reviews & post comments
- 🕒 Make a purchase than new visitors (8x more likely, in fact)

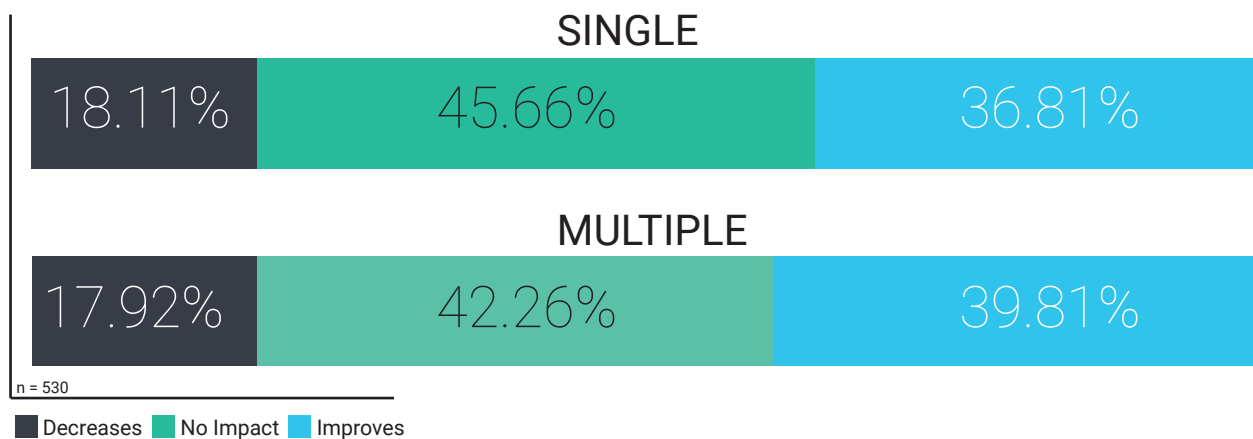
**Conclusion:** Returning visitors have a lot going for them. The MIT Sloan study found that if you can hold a visitor's attention for just 3 minutes they are twice as likely to return than if you only hold their attention for 1 minute. As noted above, a visitor's return rate depends a lot on the channel through which they arrive.

# Social Media Content Drives Engagement

There are many strategies and tactics that can be tested and employed to help improve engagement. Part of the 'art' is discovering what works best for your audience and your site. As an industry expert in social media curation, Crowdynews researched how publishers can improve reader engagement by incorporating safe, relevant, real-time social media content on a website. These recommendations are not meant to be exhaustive; rather, they are best suited as part of an overarching, multi-pronged strategy to improve visitor engagement.

## Why curated social media content can be an important element of a visitor engagement strategy.

Recent Crowdynews research shows that 36% of respondents believe that adding social media from one single social stream improves the reader-friendliness of an article. When asked the same question but for multiple social sources (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram in one integrated stream), the number jumps to 40% of respondents.



The research shows that readers see quantifiable value in incorporating social media with a publisher's content.

# Social Media Content Continued...

Adding curated social media content to your website will help combat the fickleness of visitors arriving from social networks. As noted previously, visitors from social sources are challenging to engage.

## Action: Create a Social-Rich Destination

Incorporating curated social media into your content provides readers who arrive from social media with an environment in which they are comfortable and know how to navigate.

A social stream alongside your articles allows readers to:

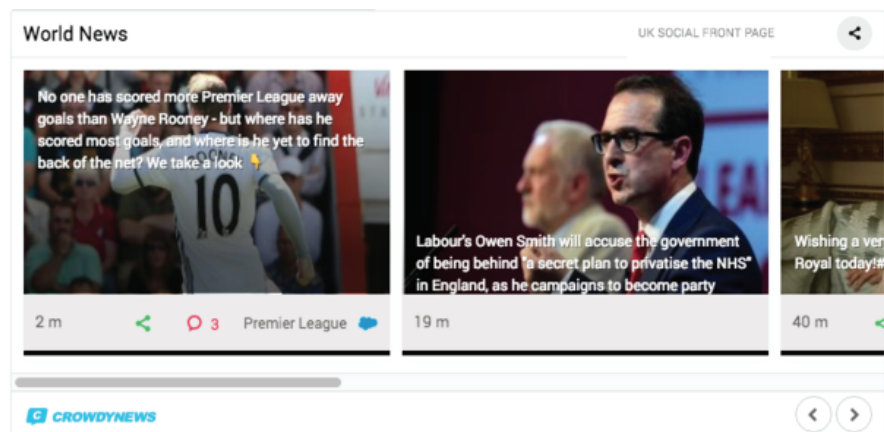
- Remain on site longer as they scroll through the social feed
- Like, retweet, or share the posts from the social stream without leaving your property (no click-outs)
- Consume more of your content when they click on one of your articles that show up in the stream

And, knowing your site offers a socially-rich experience, they may choose to return to your site directly or click through a link on search or social again in the future.

## Action: Deliver a Broader Perspective

Provide a broader perspective of the news by incorporating additional voices from social media into a story. Voices can include:

- An authoritative perspective when reporting on world events, such as a YouTube video from the President of the United States when addressing the nation regarding political tension in another part of the world.





# Socia Media Content Continued...

- 🕒 A humorous perspective, such as reporting on celebrity feuds by including the latest tweet from a member of the Kardashian clan about the ongoing quarrel between Kanye West and Taylor Swift.
- 🖼️ An impactful image when reporting on devastation caused by a recent natural disaster and the people who rush to contain the damage.

Thanks to social media, publishers have many options to capture the different perspectives of a story.

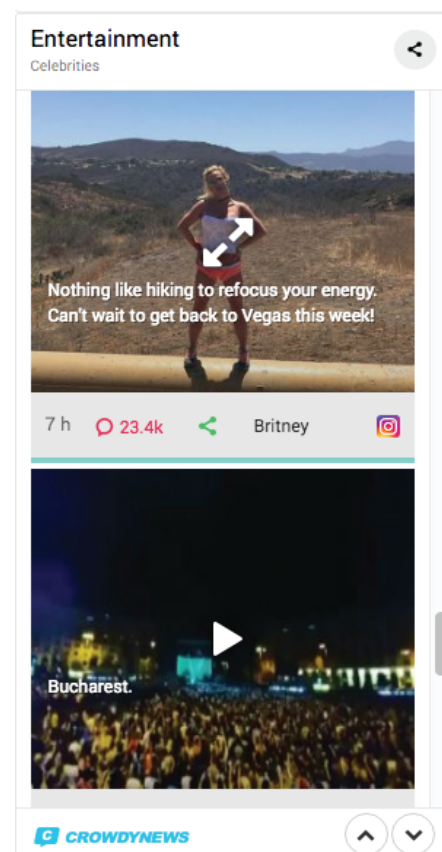
## Action: Incorporate Multiple Sources

Like a good reporter, a social media editor will never rely on a single source when writing a story. It is important to corroborate the story with others. The same goes for using a single social media channel. An editor should include commen-tary from Twitter, images from Instagram, videos from YouTube, and other sources into a single social media stream. More social channels gives your visitors more opportunity to engage with your content and your editors the opportunity to tell the whole story.

## Action: Deliver First-hand Accounts

Social media excels at sharing new as it happens. If you remember, it was Twitter users who broke the news of a plane landing on the Hudson river in 2010, the Boston marathon bombings in 2013, and more recently, the attack on the Charlie Hebdo newsroom in January of 2015 and the Paris shootings in November that same year.

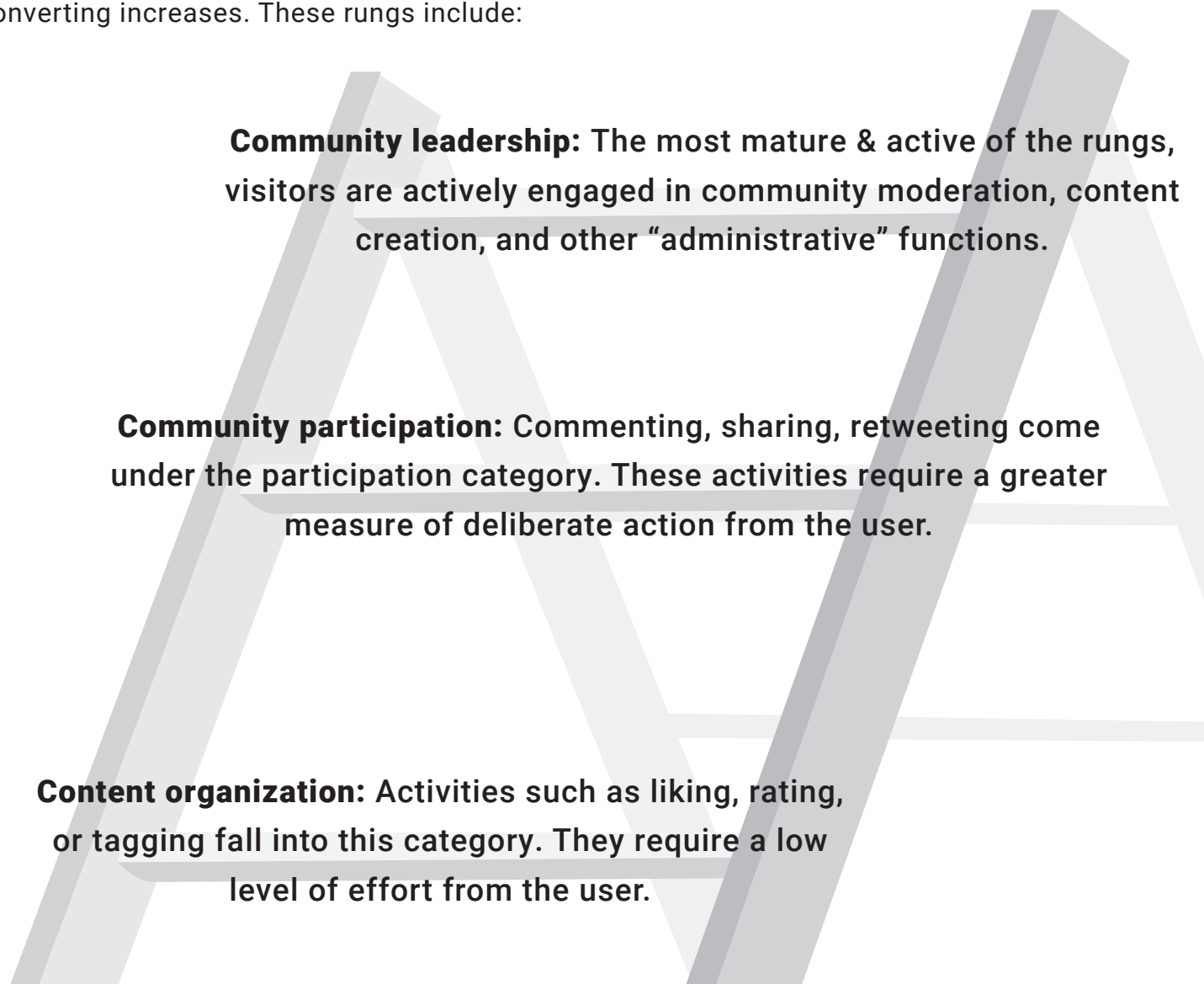
In addition to breaking news, social is particularly adept at capturing the conversation around special events such as, sports contests, awards shows or other entertainment gatherings, as well as political elections. Incorporating the conversation as it is posted on social media into your editorial content gives readers an up-to-the-minute account of the events as they unfold encouraging your readers to stay longer and read more pages.



# Social-based Engagement heads to Conversion

Ultimately, as businesses, publishers need to tie engagement to financial outcomes. A recent study by Lior Zalmanson and Gal Oestreicher-Singer at MIT Sloan concluded that social engagement on a website is in fact connected to a willingness to pay for features and services on that site.

Zalmanson & Oestreicher-Singer outline a three-rung “ladder of participation,” which describes the steps through which visitors’ social engagement matures. At each rung, the probability of converting increases. These rungs include:



**Community leadership:** The most mature & active of the rungs, visitors are actively engaged in community moderation, content creation, and other “administrative” functions.

**Community participation:** Commenting, sharing, retweeting come under the participation category. These activities require a greater measure of deliberate action from the user.

**Content organization:** Activities such as liking, rating, or tagging fall into this category. They require a low level of effort from the user.

Multi-network, curated social media streams, like those offered by Crowdynews, help publishers address at least two-thirds of the social engagement participation ladder, and create opportunities to drive engagement and increase conversion possibilities.



# Summary

By adding a multi-source, integrated social stream alongside your content, you provide opportunities for readers to engage across a spectrum of participation:

- 🕒 Scroll through the content and skim headlines from social posts related to the article they're reading
- 🕒 Click on an item in the stream enabling readers to drill deeper (e.g., view a video without leaving your site) and see related social posts
- 🕒 Like, favorite, reply, retweet, etc., from a social stream creates a unique reader participation experience within your site

In short, adding social media to a publisher's site offers engagement opportunities, and engagement leads to conversion & monetization results.

**Ready to engage your readers with the power of social content?**

Contact Crowdynews to learn more

## About Crowdynews

Crowdynews is the world's largest social media curation platform, delivering social content to the news media market worldwide. We are the definitive one-stop shop for automating the inclusion of relevant, real-time, and safe social content from Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Vimeo, and more alongside editorial content. Using artificial intelligence & natural language processing, we enable our customers to tell "the whole story" by augmenting their own content with photos, videos, eyewitness reports, and opinions shared through social media. For more information, please visit [www.crowdynews.com](http://www.crowdynews.com) or follow us on Twitter @Crowdynews.