
Quick + Scrappy Audience Research

Leveraging Newsletters to Learn About
Your Audience

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newsletter guide.org

A 201 guide for taking your newsletters to the next level — growing the lists, making money, and more.

Agenda for today's session

- Presentation
 - Why audience research matters
 - Methods and tools for newsletter-specific research
 - Questions and Answers
 - What else do you want to know?
-

Audience Research

Why does it matter?

- Audience research is important to influence key product decisions.
 - It helps you make informed choices about how a newsletter serves your audience and advances your business goals.
 - It then serves as a baseline to continue to assess the product over time.
-

—
Make way
for the
Quick &
Scrappy
approach...



The Audience Research Cycle

Study + Set Goals

- Identify potential audiences
- Discover what they want
- Set benchmarks

Launch + Learn

- Put a product in the world
- Analyze results
- Learn from your audience

Pivot + Iterate

- Refine your goal:
- Diversify audience
 - Deepen relationships
 - Drive demand

Design Your Own Survey + Interview Protocol

1. Identify audiences to survey
 - a. Example: Segment by engagement level
 - b. Remove duplicates
 2. Send each group a link to a survey
 - a. Write individual emails to users
 - i. Draft an email to copy and paste to expedite and standardize
 3. Identify participants for more in-depth conversation by telephone
 - a. Develop list of questions to ask during interview
 - b. Build a database to compare and sort responses
-

Info Needs Assessment

Here are 4 strategies from a guide produced by Listening Post Collective and Lenfest Institute:

1. Connect with community influencers who can help build trust
2. Identify places where communities congregate online — or offline
3. Safely visit places where communities are still gathering
4. Ask questions — and then
_____ listen.



CLEF COVID-19 Community Information Needs Assessment Toolkit

During the COVID-19 pandemic, news organizations have a tremendous opportunity and responsibility to provide their communities with indispensable news and information using engagement strategies to connect with audiences in a meaningful way.

To try and help newsrooms meet information needs for targeted communities, The Lenfest Institute and The Listening Post Collective partnered to highlight a four-step strategy for how newsrooms can identify and create coverage for their audiences. We've also created a printable worksheet, which you can use to begin to craft your own approach to socially distant audience and community engagement. We've also included links to other resources and case studies that can help illustrate successful approaches to engagement at lenfestinstitute.org/coronavirus.

These strategies are just a jumping off point, and we hope that they lead to meaningful journalism that provides valuable insights and information to your communities:

For more: lenfestinstitute.org/coronavirus

Act One: Study + Set Goals

The Audience Research Cycle

Study + Set Goals

- Identify potential audiences
- Discover what they want
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Launch + Learn

- Put a product in the world
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Pivot + Iterate

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Example: Launching Solution Set

A weekly-ish newsletter on
innovation in journalism

1. *Simple survey*
 2. Comparative analysis
 3. Publish and get feedback
-

Lenfest Institute -Solutions Journalism Network Collaborative Research Initiative

We're starting a new collaborative research effort to highlight best practices in news. We've identified some areas that we're interested in covering, but we'd like your help to determine which topics to report on initially.

* Required

Here are a few topics we identified as potential focus areas. Over the next few questions, please rank which topics would be most useful for you. Which of these topics would be most relevant to your work? *

Choose

 This is a

Which of the

Choose

Which of the

Choose

Are there ot

Your answer

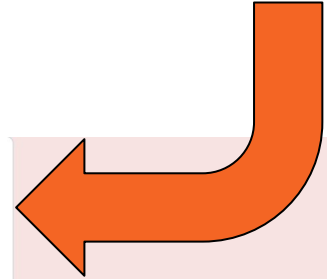
We're planning on publishing these text-based case studies online, but are there other ways that you might like to engage with our work? *

- Facebook group
- Slack group
- Email newsletter
- Email listserv
- Podcast
- In-person training or events
- Video
- Other: _____

Can we potentially follow up with you to learn more about your work and what type of resources would be most useful for you?

- Yes
- No

Next



An incomplete list of newsletters about journalism ☆ 📄 🔄

File Edit View Insert Format Data Tools Add-ons Help Last edit was made on June 4 by Jessica Sooknanan

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	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1		Compiled for the Lenfest Institute for Journalism. Questions? Email joseph@lenfestinstitute.org						
2	Newsletter	Description	Sign Up	Frequency				
3	Solution Set	A new weekly report from The Lenfest Institute for Journalism. Each week we'll go in-depth into one innovative idea in news.	solutionset.org	Weekly				
4	API Need to Know	Daily media headlines from the American Press Institute	http://americanpressinstitute.us7.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=601053a159a233594056e47&id=1d564f03d8	Daily				
5	Axios Media Trends	Newsletter from Axios' Sara Fischer	https://www.axios.com/axios-media-trends	Weekly				
6	Box of Amazing	A weekly digest covering emerging technology, trends and extraordinary articles, hand-picked to broaden your mind and challenge your thinking.	https://boxofamazing.com/	Weekly				
7	Change Your Life	A listing of grants, fellowships, and awards compiled by former Daily Tar Heel executive Director Betsy O'Donovan	http://bit.ly/CYLnewsletter	On Hiatus				
8	CJR The Media Today	A collection of media news from around the web	https://www.cjr.org/email	Daily				
9	CJR Top Stories	Links to CJR's own reporting	https://www.cjr.org/email	Weekly				
10	CNN Reliable Sources	Comprehensive roundup of media news from CNN's Brian Stelter and the network's media reporters	http://form.cnn.com/reliable_sources	Daily				
11	Colorado Local News & Media	Updates on the local news ecosystem in Colorado from Corey Hutchins	https://tinyletter.com/CoreyHutchins/	Weekly				
12	Coral Project Rethinking the Conversation	The latest news and links from Coral by Vox Media	https://coralproject.net/	Monthly				
13	Current.org	Updates from the public media trade publication	http://current.us10.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=601053a159a233594056e47&id=1d564f03d8	Weekly				
14	Data is Plural	Jeremy Singer-Vine highlights "useful/curious datasets"	https://tinyletter.com/data-is-plural	Weekly				
15	Data Journalism Newsletter	A weekly roundup of data journalism news by Dutch journalist Winny de Jong.	http://datajournalistiek.nl/en/newsletter/	Weekly				
16	Digiday Daily newsletter	Digiday stories	https://digiday.com/subscribe/	Daily				
17	Discourse Media	Monthly updates from the Canadian news org	https://thediscourse.ca/	Monthly				
18	European Journalism Centre	Regular updates from the EJC on trainings, events, and more	https://ejc.net/newsletters					
19	Fair Warning	A round up of data-driven journalism, data visualisation and data stories from Sophie Warnes	http://www.tinyletter.com/fairwarning	On Hiatus				
20	First for a Reason	A newsletter covering 1st Amendment Law from North Carolina-based law firm Stevens, Martin, Vaughn & Tadych, PLLC	Email First@smvt.com with "subscribe"	📧 (🔗) 📧				
21	Flyover Podcasts	Kelly Moffitt highlights non-coastal podcasts and podcasters	http://tinyletter.com/flyoverpodcasts/	On Hiatus				
...		Updates from the publisher covering	http://www.foliomag.com/subscribe-foi	📧 (🔗) 📧				

<https://bit.ly/journalismnewsletters>

Solution Set



News Technology & Innovation Solution Set

The nonprofit inewssource mobilized its board members to match reader donations

News Technology & Innovation Solution Set

How “members getting members” brought Zetland to financial sustainability

Local Journalism Solution Set

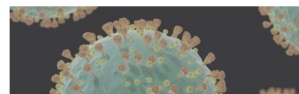
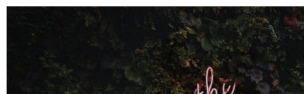
How one Iowa newspaper is providing fun and educational COVID-19 coverage for kids

Sign up for Solution Set

Get Solution Set delivered to your inbox.



SUBSCRIBE



Subscribe!!!: www.solutionset.org

Example: Lenfest Local Lab

The Lenfest Local Lab is a multidisciplinary product and user experience innovation team supported by The Lenfest Institute for Journalism.

- The Lab has conducted user experience research to launch its hyperlocal neighborhood newsletter project.
 - Much more:
lenfestinstitute.org/lenfest-local-lab
-



Fishtown Neighborhood Survey

Thank you for your feedback! This is an updated version of a survey we sent back in December.

We want to understand how you've been discovering news and information about Fishtown over the past few months, if it's been easy or difficult to access and if you're satisfied with your experience.

We appreciate your time,
The Lenfest Local Lab

* Required

1/10. What is your age? *

- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65+

2/10. How many years have you lived in or near Fishtown? *

- Less than a year
- 1-5 years
- 5-10 years
- 10-20 years
- 20+ years

4/10. How have you been spending time in the neighborhood during the past few months? (Choose all that apply) *

- Picking up take-out
- Picking up groceries
- Spending time at a park/walking
- Exercising
- Volunteering
- Attending socially distanced events
- Attending virtual community events or workshops
- Attending virtual community organization meetings
- Attending demonstrations or protests
- None of the above
- Other: _____

5/10. Have you supported local businesses during the past few months? (Choose all that apply) *

- Yes, I've ordered food from local restaurants
- Yes, I've purchased gift cards from local businesses
- Yes, I've donated to local businesses
- Yes, I've used a local vendor for an essential service
- Yes, I've shopped online from a local business
- No, I haven't been able to support a local business
- Other: _____

6/10. How do you see yourself spending time in the neighborhood in the fall while following public health guidelines? (Choose all that apply) *

- Going out to eat or drink
- Spending time at a park/walking
- Exercising
- Attending community meetings

More: lenfestinstitute.org/lenfest-local-lab

**It's okay if a
newsletter isn't
for you!**



Act Two: Launch + Learn

The Audience Research Cycle

Study + Set Goals

- Identify potential audiences
- Discover what they want
- Set benchmarks

Launch + Learn

- Put a product in the world
- Analyze results
- Learn from your audience

Pivot + Iterate

- Refine your goal:
- Diversify audience
 - Deepen relationships
 - Drive demand
-

Launch!

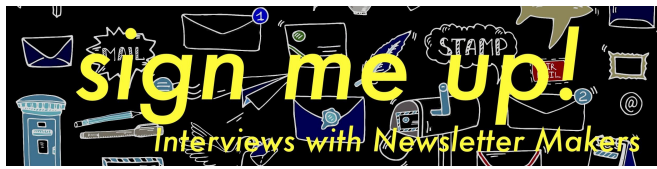
1. Just do it.
2. Seriously.
3. Put something out there — it doesn't need to be perfect.

Example: Deez Links

More details: <https://deezlinks.substack.com/>

“I started Deez Links as a way to highlight one link a day ... about interesting industry news or just cool stuff from the internet to my friends who also worked in media. The litmus test is essentially just “do I want to text this link to everyone I know right now.”

“The audience has expanded way beyond just personal friends and colleagues at this point, but I still try to write it as if I’m just composing a slightly more formal text for the group chat.”



The Personal is Professional: How Delia Cai Adapted Deez Links to Serve Her Audience in a Pandemic

Delia Cai shares why and how she changed her newsletter tone and added in a new "Signal Boost" section for journalists looking for work.



Newsletter Wizards [Follow](#)
May 6 · 7 min read



*This is the fourth post in the **Sign Me Up!** series, a project that talks directly with newsletter-makers about their newsletters, and these days, specifically COVID-19 newsletters. This interview has been lightly edited for brevity. You can read the most recent post about covering local education via newsletters, featuring [EducationNC's Nation Hahn and Mary Willson, here.](#)*

If you're reading this, odds are you're in the same future-of-news or newsletter-obsessed field as we are. And if that's true, you're likely subscribed to, or have heard of, [Deez Links](#), a daily media newsletter by Delia Cai.

~DEEZ LINKS~

Introducing: The Media Classifieds

Delia Cai Jun 16

Some cool news for today: [Deez Links](#) is partnering with our pals at [Study Hall](#) to form a classified ads network! So if you've got something you want to get in front of the most plugged-in audience on the internet (AKA all the readers of this newsletter + Study Hall's phalanx of subscribers) this is your chance!!!!

FYI, this is ****separate**** from my [Signal Boost section](#), which is for media workers who've been laid off/furloughed and are looking for work. *That* will always be free. But I've been wanting to extend this newsletter as a broader platform for brands, job listings, etc. for a while, and of course, to make [Deez Links](#) a more sustainable endeavor in general.

Here are the details; use the google form if you have any questions!

Want to promote your job opening / pitch call / new project / ecommerce brand? Consider a classified ad. [Deez Links](#) and [Study Hall](#) are working together to distribute weekly listings to 10,000

More: <https://medium.com/the-newsletter-wizards-project>

Example: The Philadelphia Inquirer COVID-19 Newsletter

1. Launched as a simple RSS feed of COVID-19 stories.
 2. Began testing right away: Morning or evening? What types of stories to include?
 3. Product has evolved as the coronavirus story has changed.
-

More details: <https://bit.ly/inquirersolutionset>

March 2020

[Web Version](#) [Update preferences](#) [Unsubscribe](#)

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The Philadelphia Inquirer

CORONAVIRUS

[Click here for the latest updates >>](#)

As a public benefit, The Inquirer's digital coverage of coronavirus is free.

Coronavirus makes nearly all public events and even private gatherings risky, experts say

Posted by on 11 March, 2020

As the coronavirus crisis grows, health officials are struggling to strike the right tone between false reassurance and *OMG we're doomed*.

On Tuesday, Philadelphia's leaders announced the city's first coronavirus case and advised residents to "consider not attending public gatherings with more than 5,000" people.

On Wednesday, a city health official acknowledged the randomness of that number, which would affect only massive events such as parades, and games or concerts in stadiums. (The Philadelphia Flyers and 76ers both have games scheduled this week; each normally attracts 18,000 to 20,000 fans.)

[Read more →](#)

Philly St. Patrick's parade organizer is '100% at peace' with cancellation (even though he thinks people are overreacting)

Posted by on 11 March, 2020

The decision to cancel Philadelphia's St. Patrick's Day Parade was made Tuesday night by organizers who were swayed after public health officials announced they had confirmed the city's first case of the new coronavirus.

Michael J. Bradley Jr., the grand marshal of the parade who has also served as its director for nearly two decades, said Wednesday that he's "100% at peace" with the decision, which to his

June 2020

The Philadelphia Inquirer

CORONAVIRUS

[Click for the latest updates >>](#)

Tuesday, June 23, 2020

Stay Healthy
This Summer



Independence

Did someone forward this to you? Sign up [here](#).

TL;DR: Philadelphia's Wawa Welcome America festival — held virtually this year — will not include a traditional live fireworks display over the Art Museum. Fireworks displays were also canceled in Camden and Ocean City. After months of COVID-19, medical PPE is still so scarce that [volunteers keep hunting for lifesaving supplies](#).

— Kelly O'Shea ([@kellooshea](#), [health@inquirer.com](#))

What you need to know:

Outdoor amusement and water parks in New Jersey can open July 2, including rides on boardwalks, Gov. Phil Murphy announced Tuesday.

Philadelphia officials expect to have a fully operational contact tracing system for COVID-19 cases in place by July 1.

In New Jersey, the percent of confirmed cases that involve younger patients has increased, State Health Commissioner Judy Persichilli warned.

MLB plans to implement a season that will be between 50 and 60 games, with opening day slated for the weekend of July 24.

Two New Jersey bars are under fire from Gov. Murphy for allowing big crowds of mask-less people.

Act Three: Pivot + Iterate

Pivot + Iterate

Refine your goal:

- Diversify audience
- Deepen relationships
- Drive demand



Study + Set Goals

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Launch + Learn

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-

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Super
Readers =
Open rate of
80 percent or
more

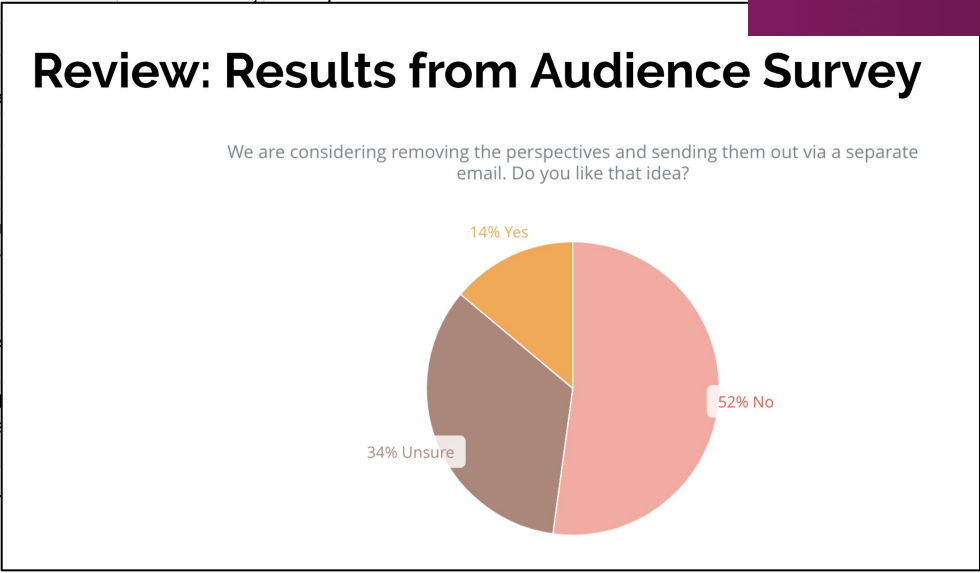


Example: EdNC's Daily Newsletter

Revisiting a core newsletter's purpose and reach with “super readers”

1. Identify newsletter's “super readers” → open rate of 80% or more, or five-stars on MailChimp.
 2. Send targeted survey → develop specific user personas for “super readers.”
 3. Better understand how to reach, support and monetize audience.
-

What else could the Daily Digest provide?	
RESPONSE	FREQUENCY
Information on school leaders perspectives throughout the state	1
Always present the truth in your articles, with different perspectives.	1
More advocacy.	1
Research	
A first-person short piece on any subject by someone enrolled in K-16.	
I don't think it should be any longer. It's almost too long now to have time to look at it e	
Continue sharing information regarding legislation.	
Listings of key conferences, seminars.	
more information in the editor's notes on what we must know	
I think some of this may already be included, but I would enjoy articles about the histo	
education in our state as well as more articles about innovative projects and initiatives	
across the state that can be emulated in other schools.	
Unbiased stories	
I enjoy quick tidbits at the beginning from the author of the newsletter. Gives me a per	
to. Nothing long, maybe three sentences max.	
It is helpful with the Daily Digest has a brief perspective of the headlines, especially w	
Education NC is running a series. Adding a daily perspective is just a great little nugg	
expertise to why these issues are showing up in today's Digest.	



Example: The Single Subject News Study

The Marshall Project logo features a stylized bar chart icon to the left of the text "The Marshall Project" in white on a black background.

The Marshall Project

The PRO PUBLICA logo consists of a magnifying glass icon with the word "PRO" inside the handle and "PUBLICA" to its right, all in white on a blue background.

PRO PUBLICA

The Reveal logo features the word "Reveal" in a white, serif font on a black, torn-edge paper background.

Reveal

The THE TEXAS TRIBUNE logo features a white star on a yellow speech bubble background to the left of the text "THE TEXAS TRIBUNE" in black on a white background.

THE
TEXAS
TRIBUNE

The the WAR HORSE logo features the text "the WAR HORSE" in black, with a horse head silhouette inside the letter "O". Below it is the tagline "Yesterday's Wars. Today's Values." in a smaller font.

the
WAR HORSE
Yesterday's Wars. Today's Values.

The THE TRACE logo features the text "THE TRACE" in white, with "THE" above "TRACE", all enclosed within a white square frame on a dark blue background.

THE
TRACE

The Chalkbeat logo features a blue circular icon with a white building silhouette to the left of the text "Chalkbeat" in a grey, sans-serif font.

Chalkbeat



THE HECHINGER REPORT



The Center for
Public Integrity

Example: The Trace & The Marshall Project



The CDC's Gun Injury Data Is Becoming Even More Unreliable
"You just can't use those number: public health researchers, after vi figures."
BY SEAN CAMPBELL AND DANIEL MASS
[VIEW ALL](#)

The Marshall Project Nonprofit journalism about criminal justice
SEARCH ABOUT DONATE f t

NEWS
First Step Act Comes Up Short in Trump's 2020 Budget
THE BUSINESS OF GUNS
U.S. Gun Makers Send Weapons South As Migrants Flee North
Experts say the Trump administration's push to weaken oversight of gun exports could worsen the Central American refugee crisis
BY ALEX YABLON

LIFE INSIDE
The Agony and Isolation of Tearing Your ACL in Prison

NEWS
Would Expanded Criminal Background Checks Hurt Federal Job Applicants?

Opening Statement The best criminal justice news, delivered to your inbox daily. [MOST RECENT EMAIL](#)
email@example.com [Subscribe](#)

Problem: How can topically focused newsrooms grow a group of “insider” readers, while also expanding readership to the general public?

Thanks for subscribing to our daily newsletter, Opening Statement.

Hello, I'm Carroll Bogert, President of The Marshall Project.

I know you care deeply about criminal justice reform; you wouldn't be a reader of The Marshall Project if you weren't passionate about change. I joined The Marshall Project because I believe hard-hitting reporting can contribute to reform. Here are a few ways our journalism has made the system more fair, humane, and

Hello,

I'm Neil Barsky, founder of The Marshall Project. The seeds of our organization were planted a few years back when I read Michelle Alexander's "The New Jim Crow," and Gilbert King's Pulitzer-winning "Devil in the Grove."

Hello,

This is Bill Keller, Editor-in-Chief at The Marshall Project. **Thank you for taking the time to read our work.**

When Neil Barsky invited me, back in early 2014, to help him launch The Marshall Project several things made the offer irresistible. There was, of course, the excitement of building something from scratch after 30 years writing for *The New York Times*.

The grotesque state of our nation's justice system was going underreported by a financially beleaguered news media. And Neil approached me with a shared conviction that journalism – fair and fact-based, not preachy or polemical – could be a critical key to reform.

Our newsroom was founded on a single mission – to sustain a sense of urgency about the U.S. criminal justice system, from policing to courts to prisons and parole.

I hope over the next few weeks, you'll see how our journalism has impact on the real world. We believe people like you can be a powerful force for change when you're armed with reliable facts.

Many thanks again for your interest and support,

Bill

Subscribe to receive The Trace's roundup of the most important news and analysis on gun violence.



Your email address

SUBMIT

THE CANON

Sent every Saturday. Our guide to the week's most revealing, must-read reporting on gun issues.

THE DAILY BULLETIN

Sent weekday mornings. Get up to speed with The Trace's latest articles and other important news of the day.

Quick + Scrappy Audience Research *Resources*

- Survey providers (Google Forms, Typeform, SurveyMonkey, etc.)
 - Your preferred method for tracking and comparing data (Google Sheets, Excel)
 - Telephone
 - Data you likely already have (Web traffic, newsletter stats, etc.)
-

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Questions?

Thank you!

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AUDIENCE QUESTION TIME!

What's your experience with audience research?

- When have you used audience research in your newsroom?
 - What were you hoping to learn about your audiences?
 - What strategies or tactics did you use?
-

AUDIENCE QUESTION TIME!

Have you launched an MVP newsletter?

- What was the newsletter?
 - What was the response from your audience?
 - Was it a challenge to get buy-in from your newsroom?
-

AUDIENCE QUESTION TIME!

Have you pivoted a newsletter?

- How did you change, and why did you make that choice?
 - What success did you have with making the change(s)?
 - What plans do you have for your COVID-19 newsletters?
-