‘Generation Alpha’: Publishers Leaned Into Youth-Focused Media in 2020

Back in March, when Covid-19 was on the horizon but the lasting effects still unknown, current affairs publisher The Week went ahead with the U.S. launch of its title, The Week Junior, aimed at kids aged eight to 14-years-old.

“The key decision was ‘do we continue or do we stop?’” CEO of The Week Kerin O’Connor said. “We decided to proceed but it was tough for edit, they’ve never produced an issue in the office. It’s all by online co-working through a complex shift in working styles.”

Since then, the title has gained 75,000 paid subscribers, is now charging $49.95 for six months after hiking the price in August from $37.99. Its first six-month renewal rate is 85%, the publisher said. In the U.K., The Week Junior is five-years-old and has 100,000 paid subscribers. But the growth is in the U.S., said O’Connor, where acquisition and retention stats are outpacing the U.K.

Generation Alpha Rises—Along with Subscriptions

“This is ‘Generation Alpha,’ that was the global trend we were seeing,” O’Connor said. “There are issues that are important to them, like climate change, science, the world of nature. They are aware of their impact on the world. We want to be their companion. Every child is curious, we want to spark that creativity.”

Kids have had a strange year. Media brands in 2020 recognized

that and, so, began catering more to to younger people. As parents doubled as educators, a flurry of youth-verticals from news publishers launched this year, including Time for Kids and NowThis Kids. For publishers, expanding to younger audiences works as a brand extension, a pipeline for growing subscriptions among older readers. Building the brand focused on the youngest readers has clear value. That's particularly true in driving immediate business outcomes as existing older subscribers often gift the titles to the younger people in their life, O'Connor said.

As a separate vertical, Time for Kids is nearly profitable thanks to its rising subscription numbers, president Keith Grossman said. The title brought its classroom-based magazine online for free when kids took their learning home. Once the new semester began in September, it started charging for access after people had built up the habit. In four months it grew to 63,000 subscribers for its annual subscription starting at $19.99 a year.

Launching new verticals has been a way for publishers to cater to advertisers who are still spending, outside of core sectors that were stressed like travel.

New Verticals Capture New Revenue

NowThis News, one of the five core brands published by GroupNine, launched NowThis Kids in April aimed at kids aged six to 11. It started off with a dedicated YouTube channel and programming, along with a related podcast and newsletter. This was one of 78 franchises and verticals the publisher launched since the pandemic began. The vertical features family-first programming like how to tackle homelessness and trying to identify emotional health. The content is aimed at parents too.

For NowThis, the abundance of verticals was to help drive ad revenue, offering new inventory for ad clients—those outside

of more distressed categories like travel—to partner with the publisher.

“We have leveraged existing relationships into open apertures for when we launched new brands,” said chief revenue officer Geoff Schiller. Cheerios, NowThis Kids’ launch partner, had worked with Group Nine on one of its other five core brands, PopSugar.

The Week Junior is mostly funded by subscriptions but also partners with a select number of brands, like non-profit Reading is Fundamental, (there’s a well-documented “decline at nine,” where children stop reading for pleasure after nine years old.) It viewed the first year as a year of “foundation and learning,” in terms of working with ad clients, having subscription revenue took the pressure off having to hit advertising numbers.

Continue Reading

Pages: 1 2

Recommended articles
https://www.adweek.com/media/generation-alpha-publishers-leaned-into-youth-focused-media-in-2020/