

PUBLISHING

Quiz: Pick your digital match By Josephine Rossi

Every association strives to add value to its magazine. Right now, publishers are looking to electronic content delivery to satisfy readers who are comfortable with digital formats and the access to information they provide. But deciding on a format, either a digital replica of a print publication or a more interactive digital edition, can be a challenge. Both options have their place, but they are different in terms of investment and reader experience.

A digital replica of a print version of a publication allows readers to flip through pages, link to URLs in editorial and advertisements, and page jump from the table of contents. Most options offer access to archived issues, searchable content, downloading, and social network and email sharing. Some also offer basic analytics for tracking reader usage.

A true digital version, on the other hand, offers the same bells and whistles plus other enhancements, including mobile capability. Digital versions give readers a more robust experience by incorporating expanded or repurposed content, audio, video, slideshows, and animation. Advertisers can take advantage of the same rich-media options and special positions as well as virtual belly bands, cover wraps, and more.

So which format should you choose? Rather than risking time and resources, conduct a digital-readiness assessment to help predict adoption levels for a yet-to-be-implemented format. In the meantime, this quiz will point you toward an electronic format that fits your publication's reality.

Find the Right Digital Format

- 1** What is your main goal for an electronic edition?

A. To increase circulation without additional print costs.	B. To offset foreign postage charges.	C. To make money.
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- 2** Where do readers typically access your organization's content?

A. Print only.	B. Print and some electronic sources (web, e-newsletter, and so forth).	C. Mostly electronic sources.
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- 3** Which word best describes your publication's budget?

A. Shoestring	B. Judicious	C. Large
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- 4** Which best describes your online/web sales?

A. We have trouble generating interest.	B. We've had some buy-in from advertisers through bundled print/digital deals and discounted rates.	C. Our advertisers regularly take advantage of our electronic assets.
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- 5** Which best describes your designers' and editors' availability for additional tasks?

A. You're kidding, right?	B. Tight, but we could carve out some time.	C. We can swing extra work.
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- 6** When I walk around our annual conference, I see ...

A. members taking notes on steno pads.	B. several people Tweeting from most sessions.	C. rooms full of iPad users.
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SCORING

Mostly As. Start out slowly with page-turning PDF versions of your print edition and alert readers via email when each issue becomes available. The goal here is to raise visibility of the digital option without significant initial investment. In the meantime, gather reader feedback and consider launching a more formal survey to gauge if there is a need to upgrade to a more sophisticated platform.

Mostly Bs. Tread carefully. To capitalize on the digital edition's enhancements, you'll not only need the budget and reader interest but also staff time and skills. In addition to having some enhanced knowledge of new media applications, designers should consider optimizing fonts and orientation for electronic viewing. This will likely create more work for editors, who will need to repackage content for easy digestion.

Mostly Cs. Your readers and advertisers could be prime candidates for the full digital edition. They already are accessing content electronically and using mobile devices, so transitioning to digital makes sense. With resources in place, look for a provider that offers ways to grow advertising revenues, such as blow-in cards, mouse-over videos, and strong tracking capabilities.

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