



# SLATE

## How Slate Used Data to Effectively Launch a Paywall Model

500%

increase in  
subscriptions

With insights from  
Amplitude, the online  
publication drove  
explosive growth  
in subscriptions

Amplitude



Within months of launching its new paywall, Slate saw “phenomenal growth” in its memberships.

**Mark Morgioni**  
Senior Director of Research and Data

While paywalls have become a favored business model for news outlets seeking to stay competitive in an increasingly challenging publishing climate, asking loyal readers to become paying members can still be a risky move.

But when Slate opted to launch its own paywall as a way to continue to diversify its revenue stream, it took comfort in knowing it had a powerful ally: Amplitude.

The online magazine had already come to rely on Amplitude’s time-saving product intelligence offerings for a range of editorial and business decisions. So it was confident the platform would provide the data needed to support its business strategy, including user eligibility, traffic, and conversion rates.

And Slate has already begun using Amplitude to tackle other new initiatives, such as boosting retention and developing a plan for custom pricing.

### A Data-Driven Organization

By the time Slate launched its metered paywall, the publication was already using the platform across a wide swath of its operations, having **shifted to Amplitude from Omniture (acquired by Adobe)**.

Now, the editorial team uses it to understand content consumption, the product team for insights into user behavior, and the business team for client reporting.

Best of all, Mark said, because Amplitude is so user-friendly, these teams can access this information without the help of his team. It’s the difference he said, between helping to “validate and confirm that assumptions are correct versus doing all the work of building out the dashboards.” That’s translated to a tremendous saving of time, allowing Mark and his team to focus their efforts on solving thornier questions.

Now that other stakeholders can get the answers they need from Amplitude without his team’s help, Mark said, “we’re able to build models to answer a lot more complicated user-level questions like predictive models for user churn.”

### A Paywall Done Right

To ensure the paywall would be more profitable, Mark and his team turned to Amplitude to prepare, using it to understand questions such as how many users would be eligible for a variety of different paywall scenarios, how much traffic might be lost—and how that varied platform to platform—and what kind of conversion rates Slate could expect based on the strength of its legacy premium product.

Slate’s editorial team also used Amplitude to consider the implications of a paywall on its content strategy. For example, the team used Amplitude’s [Cohorts](#) and [Engagement Matrix](#) to understand how various types of users might run into the wall. One significant finding: they discovered Slate’s loyal, advice-column readers were the readers most likely to encounter the paywall.

The work paid off. In a few months of launching their paywall, Slate saw subscriptions shoot up **by 500 percent**, outstripping the magazine’s expectations. After the initial launch, Slate was able to continue to lower the wall using Amplitude’s data to project future conversion rates and user behavior.

Drawing on user data, a new way to drive retention Now that Slate has signed up more subscribers, it’s looking for ways to keep them coming back.

To do this, Mark and his team are using insights afforded by Amplitude to enrich Slate’s data ecosystem, helping the publication make pricing and packaging changes to prevent churn and improve retention.

Amplitude’s out-of-the-box identify resolution and data enrichment, Mark said, have enhanced Slate’s data ecosystem, making them more effective, and valuable. “We’ll be able to make a stronger set of decisions than we would be able to use with just any one analytics partner.”

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