Maximizing Efficiency at The Washington Post with BlueVenn

The Washington Post is one of the most distinguished and influential newspapers in the US, with a daily circulation over 474,000. The newspaper has been a BlueVenn client since 2008, using BlueVenn's marketing automation tools to grow its audience and target prospects with acquisition strategies. The BlueVenn platform also gathers data from The Washington Post's readership, to create more relevant retention campaigns, managed both internally and with the help of other third-party vendors.

Nearly a decade later, the newspaper continues to use BlueVenn marketing solutions (better known to the US news media industry as MaaX), to bring in multiple sources of data from its print subscribers to automate campaigns that improve retention and loyalty.

In particular, BlueVenn has helped The Washington Post to measurably reduce the marketing team's labour and cost associated with time-consuming data preparation. Doing so has freed up more than 100 hours over the course of a year, providing the marketing team more time to improve campaign efficiency and results, as well as collect more consistent, reliable data for actionable strategies.

THE RESULTS

- Efficient data preparation saves 100 hours with subscription management
- Two-hour processes reduced to a single minute using BlueVenn
- Marketing team freed up with more time for improved retention strategies and creative campaigns

BlueVenn

Every week, campaigns run by The Washington Post generate files for use by third-party vendors. This data identifies subscribers with overdue payments; is used to order gift cards for subscriber incentives; highlights customers who are scheduled to terminate soon; and those whose credit card payments have failed. Each of these time-consuming tasks required data to be manually filtered, updated and formatted. This meant processing time that took upwards of two hours to complete.

"For someone unfamiliar with the process, they can now scan the documentation and be done within five to ten minutes.

"This is a huge time saver. Extrapolated over 12 months, this means over 100 hours saved; like gaining two and a half weeks each year."
Adam Cromack, Associate Marketing Manager, The Washington Post.

BlueVenn's campaign management software has had a considerable impact on productivity. Now, The Washington Post can automate many of these tasks as exclusions, virtual fields, or calculated in the template specified for that file output.

With the addition of a simple batch script to draft the emails with correct attachments, subjects, and recipients, Adam has since managed to reduce the previously two-hour task down to a single minute, complete with verification checkpoints along the way.

IMPROVED DATA ACCURACY

This automation brings additional advantages: the creation of consistent data and, by removing much of the manual work involved and the opportunities for human error, improved accuracy. "With processing done by hand after the files were initially generated, there was always a risk of mistake – especially if someone else was stepping in for that week and wasn't familiar with the process," says Adam.

Most rewarding of all, the BlueVenn marketing software has presented The Washington Post marketing team the opportunity to focus on more creative aspects of their role.
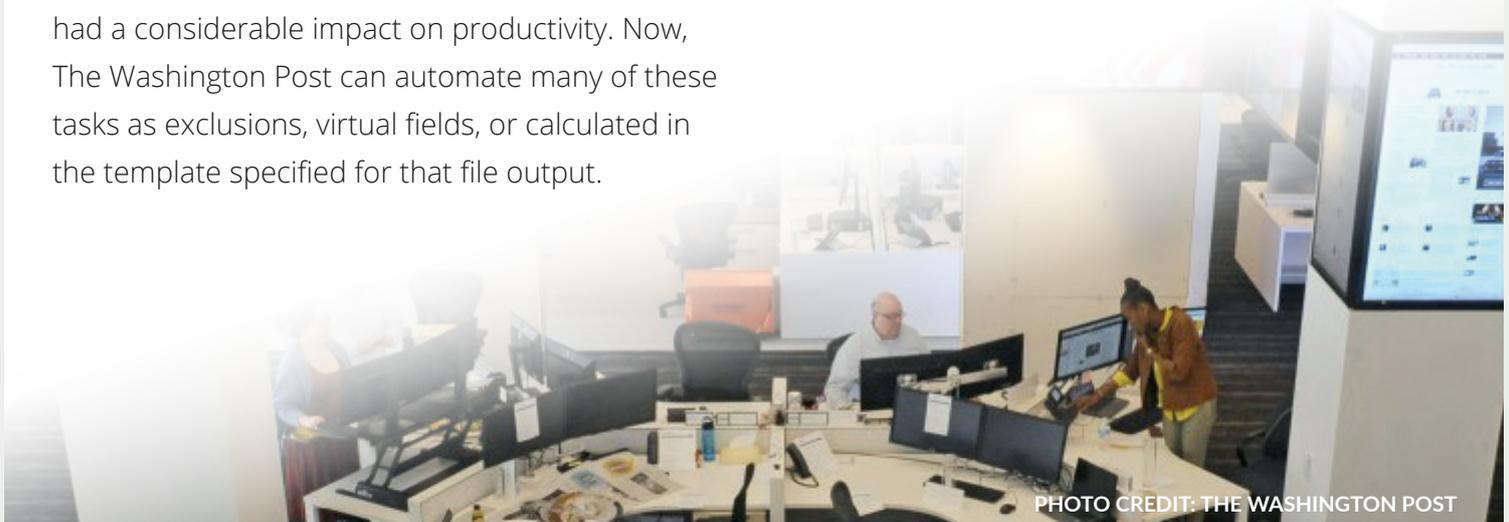
100
Hours gained

PHOTO CREDIT: THE WASHINGTON POST

NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR CREATIVITY

The improved processes have allowed The Washington Post to create new reports with vendor feedback to evaluate the effectiveness of their campaigns. For example, for its collection efforts, The Washington Post is now considering different incentives to customize the script based on the type of subscriber.

The Post is also looking to add in other behavioral data points and ranking scores, to tailor the messages to individual subscribers – using some data from multiple sources within the BlueVenn software.

IMPROVED THIRD-PARTY RELATIONSHIPS

Timelier reports, backed by reliable data, have proved beneficial for The Washington Post's vendors, too. For example, for subscribers whose credit card has been declined, the generation of phone number and email lists gives third-party vendors more time and opportunities to recover payments.

This data analysis has also helped with the ordering of gift cards, an incentive to encourage readers to enroll in various programs and adopt certain behaviors that are demonstrated to improve retention.

CONCLUSION

With a partnership that has lasted nearly a decade, The Washington Post has continued to find new ways to optimize its marketing performance, improve the customer experience and construct engaging new campaigns.

"The biggest improvement for us has been time savings across many projects, leaving more time to create reports and analyze the effectiveness of those campaigns, and even create new ones altogether,"

Adam Cromack, Associate Marketing Manager, The Washington Post

Previously, this used to require a campaign to be executed manually once a month, with a list heavily modified to fit the tight requirements of the vendor.

Now, a tailored campaign template means a list can be uploaded and the purchase of the gift cards can be made in a matter of minutes.

Additional automated communications to internal staff about the order date of this gift card has freed up even more time:

"I used to be forwarded inquiries about 'missing gift cards' a handful of times every week; I now receive zero. The automated note lets anyone in customer service know that if the subscriber calls to ask, they can be informed when the order was placed and when to expect it in the mail," says Adam.