

The Ultimate Guide to Increasing Reader Engagement

DISQUS

Introduction

Your comments section provides a space for readers to participate in the conversation, learn from different viewpoints, and engage directly with you, the publisher. Whether you're an aspiring movie critic or a growing local news destination, your publication's success is driven directly by [the relationship you have with your readers](#).

Engagement is the key to that equation. It forms the building blocks for cultivating the trust you need to grow your relationship with readers. Engaged readers [spend more time on your site and are more likely to subscribe](#). Creating great content is absolutely critical however, for publishers today, it's not enough. You need a strategy to keep readers engaged and coming back to your site. We're here to help you do that.

Defining engagement

Engagement are the actions that both readers and the publisher take to interact with each other. If it's not reciprocal, it's not engagement. But, why do readers want to engage with a publisher?

The reasons will likely vary for any publisher so it's important that you identify what they are for your audience. As a starting point, we wanted to share some insights on why readers choose to engage based on our [reader survey of 973 Disqus commenters](#) and research from the [Center for Media Engagement](#). What we learned is that the top five reasons that readers engage with publishers are to:

- Discuss and ask questions
- Make corrections or add information
- Give feedback
- Express opinion
- Say thanks

What to expect ahead

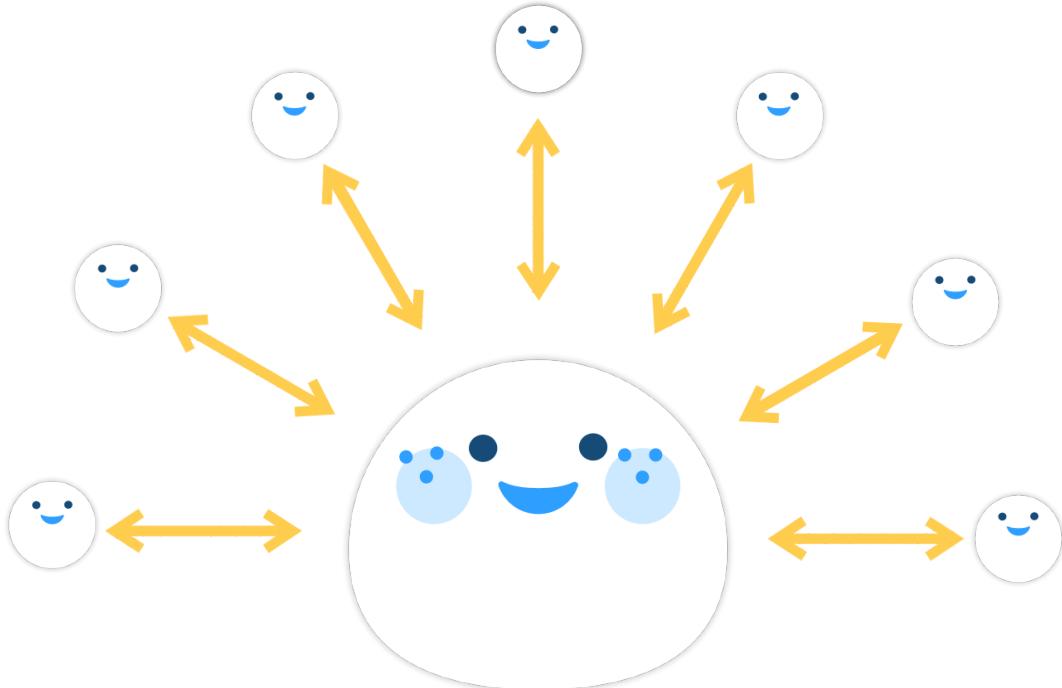
Over the next few chapters, we share proven tactics to increase reader engagement. You'll find examples of publishers who've employed these techniques to build valuable relationships with their readers. Our goal is to help all publishers learn from these strategies and become more successful.

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Chapter 1:

Engagement Starts With Listening to Your Community



Listening is the essential first step and establishes a framework for building strong relationships with your audience. Reciprocity is critical. A strong community includes both you and your readers. By listening to your audience from day one, you align the goals and expectations of both parties and ensure that you remain an embedded part of your community.

Reply, Reply, Reply

Approach comments as an opportunity to learn from your readers. The majority of readers want to [interact more with publishers](#). Responding individually to readers lets them know that their thoughts matter and that they shouldn't hesitate to reply back. Over at **Nom Nom Paleo**, a food blog on eating paleo, you'll often see the author responding to every comment in the discussion:



Christina Jordan · 4 months ago

If potato, carrots or any other high-carb or starchy veg is off the table, what would you suggest? Cauliflower? Spaghetti squash?

[^](#) [v](#) [Reply](#) [Share](#)



nomnompaleo Mod → Christina Jordan

· 4 months ago

I'm not sure they would get crispy in the same way, but I bet it would still taste good!

[^](#) [v](#) [Reply](#) [Share](#)

To start, read every comment and reply to as many as possible (better yet, reply to them all). [Top-level comments](#) are a great place to start since they are typically a response to the story/author. Make sure you've turned on [email notifications](#) for your site so that new comments receive a quick reply. Faster response times tend to correlate to higher rates of engagement. You can also upvote comments you reply to so that others are more likely to see your responses.

When replying to comments, ask questions that encourage readers to share more. A

great technique is to acknowledge the user's comment, paraphrase what they said, then ask a direct and open question.

Writers at MIT Technology Review

frequently respond to readers' comments and questions. Here's a recent exchange with one of their writers on a recent story on the potential impact of AI on cities across the United States:



ckwritess2 · 2 months ago

Would be interesting to overlay the red and blue states electoral map over this...

[1](#) [^](#) [v](#) [Share](#)



elizabeth.woyke Mod → ckwritess2 · 2 months ago

I did ask the researchers about potential overlap with/implications for politics. They acknowledged that comparing large urban areas with smaller urban areas and/or rural areas is an important dimension in politics, as well as economics. It's one of the reasons they wanted to examine the role of automation in this way.

They also noted that if you look at voting on a district level, cities above a certain size leaned blue in the past election while areas below a certain population leaned red, independent of the state in which they were located.

[2](#) [^](#) [v](#) [Share](#)

Replies are one of the best ways to measure how engaged a community is, so lead by example by getting the conversation started.

Connect your content to your community

A brief glance at social media indicates that the crowd's divided on this one, but - speaking as someone who identifies as both a Tarantino and Cruise super-fan - I gotta say, I'm hoping these roles end up going to DiCaprio and Cruise (sorry, Brad Pitt, we'll bring you back for the next one). But what do you folks think? Who would *you* like to see snag these roles? Sound off in the comments below.

There are many factors that go into creating content that generates great discussion. One overlooked step as a story is developed is to explicitly ask your readers to weigh in. Make a point to include a question in every article that addresses your audience directly and to seed the discussion.

Feature questions at the top of the discussion

Featured Comment

Boulder County Public Health Mod 20 days ago
What have you seen work well to improve mental health or access to healthy housing?
^ v · Share ·

If the discussion is just getting started, post a question as a comment and feature it. As readers complete the story, they'll see a clear invitation to add their thoughts and have the framework for a productive contribution versus a free-for-all. Reminding readers that you want to hear from them is a great way to promote engagement.

Proactively solicit feedback

Don't limit opportunities to obtain feedback from readers to just the content

you regularly produce. Instead, proactively engage in conversations that will inform you about the things that can better serve them. It could be as simple as suggestions about improving their experience on your website, to the topics you cover, or understanding the demographic makeup of your audience. Use tools like [PollDaddy](#) and [SurveyMonkey](#) that complement commenting on your site to encourage more readers to respond with feedback.



Your Reactions to the Atlantic Redesign

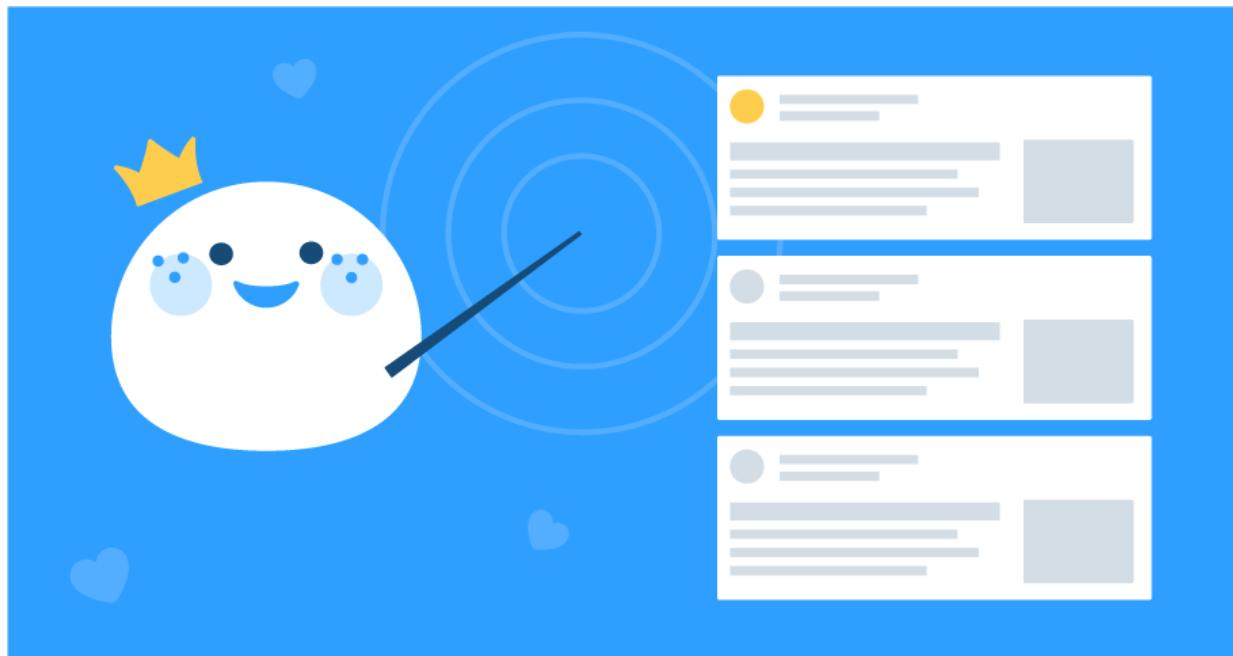
Readers tell us what they like, dislike, and really dislike about the site's new look and feel.



When **The Atlantic** launched a website redesign in 2015, they not only encouraged readers to share their thoughts about the changes, they [published](#) the feedback they received. When both readers and publications are responsive to each other, meaningful dialogue can develop and over time, become the norm.

Chapter 2:

Turn Comments Into Content



In 2015, **New York Times** Community Editor Bassey Etim was speaking on a panel about community building and moderation when he said: ["We have to treat comments as content."](#)

Comments don't have to be the passing whims of random people on the Internet with an opinion. If you nurture them - ideally by a dialogue [driven by reader feedback](#) - comments can become part of story itself. When readers see that their comments have a direct influence on the content they are consuming, they become committed to your success and more willing to take actions that grow engagement on your site.

Comments as Content

Publishers like **Lifehacker** are excelling at this strategy by turning their readers into content contributors. One recent example is their [Hack Your City](#) series where the staff ask readers to submit their best “hacks” when visiting different cities across the United States. Not only did Lifehacker readers post hundreds of suggestions, it set up a pipeline for future content.



The Best Washington D.C. Tips From Our Readers
Nick Douglas - Yesterday 12:00pm
When we asked Lifehacker readers for [their advice on visiting or living in D.C.](#), we got nearly 300 comments, a new...



Tell Us Your Best Washington, D.C. Hacks
Nick Douglas - Monday 9:00am
We've hacked a few industry towns in this column, like [Los Angeles](#) and [Las Vegas](#). Now it's time for a...

Another recent example comes from **The Financial Times** and [The Future of Britain Project](#).

FINANCIAL TIMES

A plan for Britain:

A new infrastructure bank, backed by the taxpayer, to fund real wealth creation.

Tell me more +

I like this idea

Show me another

They invited readers to brainstorm ideas for guiding Britain after Brexit. From over 800 responses that they received, their editors curated and published six responses that represented a broad spectrum of viewpoints. All told, stories for this project garnered [18 times more comments](#) than the average story on The FT.

Here’s how you can apply this strategy for your own publication:

Step 1: Invite your readers

When issuing an invitation to your readers, follow these three tips:

- **Set the tone.** State the goals upfront. What do you hope to accomplish? What role are readers expected to play in achieving this?
- **Ask a specific question.** An invitation needs a clear and direct question to the reader. Also be sure to clarify what you are not asking for.
- **Provide a simple set of guidelines.** If there is any specific criteria that needs to be established, communicate it so that readers are set up for success. If there is a format that readers should follow, include an example.

For **Lifehacker’s** Hack Your City series, they set the tone for each edition by

sharing their own insider knowledge about a city. This gets readers thinking about their own ideas. Next, they ask specific questions about navigating the city, local spots for good food, and inside information only locals would know. Finally, they provide a simple set of guidelines including the incentive for participating: the chance to be featured on the site.

"As with every city we cover, we want to hear from experienced Vegas visitors about secret deals, underused freebies, and places to avoid. We want to know how to do Vegas on the cheap, or with kids, or with your buddies. We want your favorite casinos, bars, and clubs."

Tell us your best Vegas tips below, and we'll publish the best ones in a new post on Thursday. Along with some cutesy intro about what happens in Vegas not staying in Vegas."

Step 2: Curate the comments

Disqus makes curating comments easy. For example, readers vote on comments so that the best contributions surface to the top of the thread. Toggle between different discussion sorts like the newest comments so you don't miss out on hidden gems. If you're on the [Pro Plan](#), check the [Top Comments](#) dashboard to find the best comments posted in the last 7 days. When

you've finished curating a list of top comments, [embed them in your](#) articles using our handy tool.

Step 3: Turn comments into content

Now that you've picked out the best comments, it's time to elevate them. The best comments can be the basis of a new story, highlight opposing viewpoints, and connect your content to your community.

Summarize reader feedback

Aim to highlight a broad diversity of perspectives. No matter the topic, there will always be people that sit on different sides of the table. Embracing this as a strength can help foster a more inclusive environment where reader input is actively encouraged and welcome.

Even the highest rated movies will have its critics. Has there ever been a movie that was universally liked? At [Letterboxd](#), a community for movie lovers, they publish a monthly newsletter that includes a section that compares both 1-star and 5-star reviews of recent movies. What makes these so fun is that it helps you become a more critical consumer of movies.



It

*

"Clowns aren't scary. There's nothing inherently sinister, supernatural, threatening, or violent about clowns. Their purpose is comedy. So to me, it's annoying to see/hear conversations about *It* with the assumption that clowns are scary, without addressing at all the obvious contradiction in that concept: clowns are scary despite not being scary. There's an irony here that no one wants to mention. Saying you're afraid of clowns was the middle school version of a 'hot take'—it's performatively edgy and disingenuous." —[Danny Szauderbach](#)

★★★★★

"Bill Skarsgård's performance as Pennywise is what makes it unforgettable. Skarsgård is as entertaining as he is deeply psychotic and sick. His voice gets under your skin, his eyes gaze straight into your soul, and I'm telling you I'm gonna find it hard to look at a clown's face without thinking about his deranged smile now. Skarsgård makes Pennywise the first cinematic horror icon of our century worthy of being compared to Robert Englund's Freddy Krueger. He's extremely funny, and he's terrifying, and sometimes he's both at the same time." —[Gabe Danvers](#)

In [The Washington Post's "Read These Comments"](#) email newsletter, they feature snippets from the most thought-provoking comments from readers. The comments are organized to show where different readers stand on particular policy issues.

COMMENTS THAT CAUGHT OUR EYE

As concern about North Korea deepens, the U.S. and China are at odds

"It's easy for us civilians to write all sorts of stuff, with all sorts of bluster, we aren't the ones putting our lives on the line when 'we' go to war."

I just can't see that there are any 'good' options with North Korea. Whatever action or inaction is taken, I'm sure we 'Monday morning quarterbacks' will find fault."
— [ejr1953](#)

Lastly, show interactions between readers. Some of the best comments are the result of serendipitous encounters between different users. Sometimes a clarifying question or a piece of additional input can turn a rough thought into a great idea. An

engaged community helps to bring these ideas to light.

It could be a response to an open question or a clarifying question directed at a comment (e.g. "what did you mean by that?").

On the [Change My View](#) subreddit, users with different viewpoints engage in discussions in an effort to better understand all sides to a story. Expressing one's views is not enough here. Rather, members take the extra step to explain the reasoning behind their stance in order to help others see the world from their perspective. As a result, these community dynamics create opportunities for interesting back-and-forth dialogue from people who may not normally interact with each other.

Follow up on a story

A story never really ends. Sometimes it unfolds in new and unexpected ways as soon as you share with your audience.

In the summer of 2016, [The Atlantic published a documentary](#) that profiled the struggles of living alone as an elderly person in NYC. The short video concluded when the main protagonist, King-Sim Ng, suddenly disappears after being hit by a

car, leaving readers in angst and concerned for her well-being.



Mantai Chow · a year ago

I am the producer and director of this short doc. I am touched by the overwhelming kindness from all of you asking Ng's whereabouts and how you can help. I would like to give you an update here.

Fortunately, I got in touch with her finally. She is back in her apartment safe and sound. She seems to be fine but her legs are still a bit weak. Tay visits Ng in her apartment almost every day now to give her food and stuff. I also heard that her daughter has stepped in to help.

I think what we all can do is to keep our eyes open. When we see a need, we give a helping hand. It can be as simple as chatting with the elderly people in the street, buying them lunch and eating with them. This kind of support is especially important for those like Ng who is reluctant to reach out to the community centers and social services.

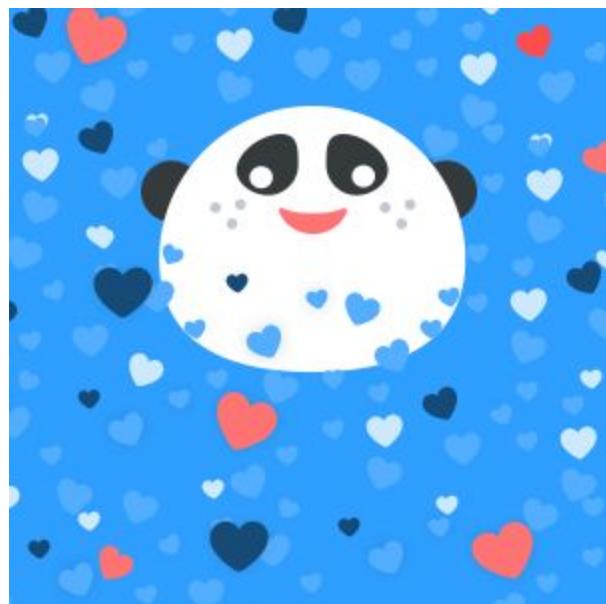
18 ^ | v · Reply · Share ↗

One month later, **The Atlantic** published a [follow up story](#) confirming that Ng was back safely at home. The update

chronicled the different chapters of this captivating story through readers' comments. One particular comment added additional information that wasn't originally covered in the documentary that brought meaningful context to the situation depicted in the video.

Chapter 3:

Host Events to Foster a Sense of Community



Events bring people together around a shared experience, creating a powerful sense of community. An event could be anything from a Q&A forum, a live video stream, or simply a place to hang out. As long as it involves a group of people gathered together by a common purpose, you have an event.

Getting started

You will need just two things to host an event:

- Agenda:** What is the purpose for people convening together and the plan for the event? What is the mode of interaction?
- Shared time and space:** When and where will this event happen?

With Disqus, comments posted in a discussion appear in real-time, creating a space that feels lively and active.

Participants can customize their [user profile](#) with fun avatars to establish unique identities that others can readily recognize. Commenting is also flexible for different modes of expression including support for [embedding rich media](#) from services like YouTube, Twitter, and Giphy.

Participate in Q&As/AMA with readers

Reddit AMA's (Ask Me Anything) are a great example of successful online events. In an AMA, celebrities and subject-matter experts answer questions about any topic from the community. Over the years, notable people have stopped by the **IAmA** subreddit to participate in an AMA including Bill Gates, President Obama, and even an astronaut living in space!

A screenshot of a Reddit AMA conversation. At the top, a user named mav194 asks, "Hi Chef, Are there any really strange food combinations that you enjoy?" Below it, Gordon Ramsay responds with a detailed answer about a dish he made in Spain. A small note at the bottom right says "More comments".

While you may not attract a famous celebrity, you can host a Q&A featuring members of your team including contributors and editors. According to a [survey of news commenters and readers](#), nearly 60% said that they would like to see experts weighing in the comments section. In other words, be part of the conversation!

Preferences on Journalist and Expert Involvement in News Comment Sections³¹

I would like it if ...	Agree (strongly or somewhat)	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree (strongly or somewhat)
Journalists clarified factual questions in news comment sections.	60.9%	33.0%	5.4%
Experts on the topic of the article would respond to comments in news comment sections.	58.7	34.5	6.1
Journalists would actively contribute in news comment sections.	40.5	46.4	12.5
Journalists directed the conversation in news comment sections.	26.0	48.5	24.9

Data from the Engaging News Project

Notes: Unweighted sample size among those who either comment online or who read online comments on news or any other type of site = 1,267.

If you interview someone for a story, invite them to participate in the comments. It helps to have someone curating the comments for relevant questions to respond to. Whenever **Wirecutter** receives a question about a product recommendation on Twitter, their social media manager directs it to the

appropriate expert on their team to respond.

d.Mon @djmongol
Replies to @djmongol @wirecutter
However, for music with any degree of dynamic range, they seem like they just can't keep up

Wirecutter @wirecutter
Gotchya! @LaurenDragan is there any wireless earbuds that could offer a higher music quality, regardless of price?
8:21 AM - Nov 14, 2017

Your publications' voice extends to the comments. Your readers expect you to be listening and responding. If you're not, then [don't expect a community to emerge from simply hosting comments](#). This should be a team effort so don't be afraid to encourage your team to chime in with readers.

Stop Lurking Day

One of our favorite examples of an event that brings people together online is [Stop Lurking Day](#), hosted by **Spoiler TV**, a site for TV news and reviews. Every community has its lurkers, those members who follow the discussions but never participate.

LokiCharmz · 3 months ago
I guess I'll stop lurking long enough to say hi. Hello!

All right, that's enough social interaction for me.



DARK UFO @DarkUFO · 3 months ago
Hey @LokiCharmz nice gif ;)

3 ↗ | ↘ · Reply · Share ·

1 ↗ | ↘ · Reply · Share ·

[Check out the AMA we hosted with their readers in 2016!](#)

To encourage readers who visit regularly but have never left a comment, **Spoiler TV** created Stop Lurking Day so that lurkers can finally step into the spotlight and introduce themselves to the community. These brave souls are then quickly met with the friendly, welcoming arms of the community who are always eager to make newcomers feel special.

Chapter 4:

How to Promote Reader Comments Outside of Your Website



Today's readers engage with your content across several channels. More than ever, readers find, read, and interact with content on social media, email, and in mobile apps. The most successful publishers employ a multi-channel strategy to foster engagement and connect to their audiences. Here are some best practices to increase reader engagement when leveraging channels outside your website.

Include a preview

If you want people to take an action, include a preview of what to expect. Incorporate images when appropriate including screenshots and visual graphics. You can use tools like [Pablo](#) to create engaging images on social media.

The image shows two separate Twitter posts. The top post is from 'The New York Times' (@nytimes) with a blue checkmark, posted 6 hours ago. The headline reads: 'So this happened in our comments section today' followed by a link 'nyti.ms/2zIgNOD'. It has 2:47 PM - Oct 26, 2017, 80 replies, 244 retweets, and 931 likes. The bottom post is from 'Financial Times' (@FT) with a blue checkmark, posted 6 hours ago. The headline reads: 'Thoughts from the FT comments on the UK election' followed by a link 'on.ft.com/2sah9NT'. It has 3:09 PM - Jun 9, 2017, 2 replies, 20 retweets, and 20 likes.

When sharing a story about the general election in the UK on Twitter, **The Financial Times** included a screenshot of a comment that captured a common sentiment from readers in a concise fashion.

Utilize a strong call-to-action

A strong call-to-action is clear, direct, and concise. Provide some intrigue without resorting to clickbait (otherwise you may lose your readers' trust). Here's a recent

tweet from **The New York Times** about their comments section that went viral:

A single tweet from 'The New York Times' (@nytimes) with a blue checkmark, posted 6 hours ago. The headline reads: 'So this happened in our comments section today' followed by a link 'nyti.ms/2zIgNOD'. It has 2:47 PM - Oct 26, 2017, 80 replies, 244 retweets, and 931 likes.

The headline utilized a strong call-to-action that was easy to understand and provided enough mystery to encourage readers to learn more.

Publishers like **NPR** utilize mobile push notifications to deliver breaking news stories to readers. Timeliness is critical but also requires striking the right tone to convey the importance of the event.

A single mobile push notification from 'NPR NEWS' (@nprnews) with a blue checkmark, posted 10m ago. The headline reads: 'Rock 'N' roll legend Chuck Berry dies at 90. With hits like "Johnny B. Goode," he was central to the development of the genre.'

Tailor your message for each channel

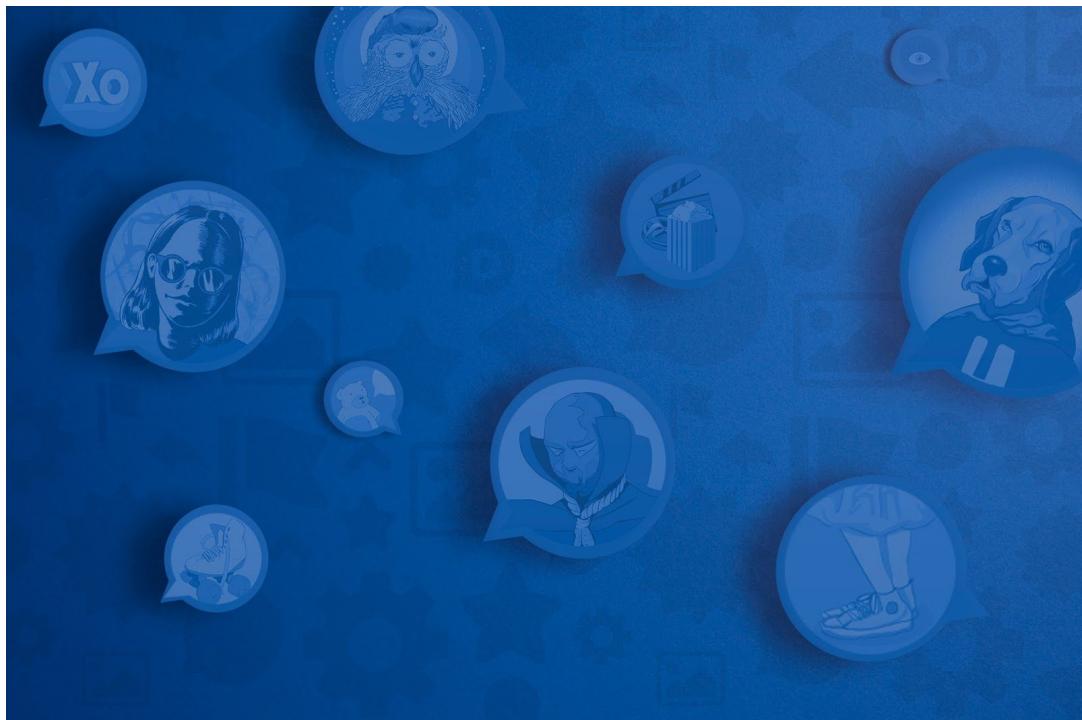
For any given message, tailor what you say depending on the specific audience and mode of interaction of the channel. On social media, audiences are more attuned to reacting, sharing, and participating in conversations as it happens. Instagram is more visual than LinkedIn. Snapchat is more raw than YouTube. On email, audiences are less interactive and more focused on completing tasks.



Knowing these differences will help you optimize your calls-to-action and improve performance. Check out this [great guide](#) from Buffer that's full of great examples and insights on tailoring your message on social media.

Chapter 5:

Recognize Top Commenters to Retain Them



A highly engaged audience can be your most valuable asset. In this chapter, we'll explore strategies for fostering loyalty from new readers and retaining your most valuable audience members through incentives and recognition.

Feature the best comments

When [featuring a comment](#), the comment is pinned to the top of the discussion. Commenters are notified when a comment they posted is featured by the site, closing the feedback loop for their interaction.

 Destructoid featured your comment on You may not see many No Man's Sky reviews before release · 2 minutes ago

 Rhombus Columbus · 2 months ago
Games are too expensive to buy these days without seeing a good review first.
[View in discussion](#)

Not only does featuring top comments recognize readers' contributions, it leads to a boost in engagement. In a [study](#) conducted by the **Center for Media Engagement** examining comments posted on **The New York Times**, they found that users whose comments were selected as "NYT Picks" resulted in an increase in commenting behavior.

Average Number of Comments Posted Before and After A Commenter was First Selected as a NYT Pick



Comments were selected by the moderation staff that contributed to the discussion, such as by steering the

discussion in a productive direction or adding new information to the story.

Recognize top contributors

If a commenter inspired a story idea with a thought-provoking question, take the opportunity to mention them directly in the story. [Embedding their comment](#) is simple and places higher visibility into the ongoing discussions happening across the community.

If you have an idea of who your top contributors are but would like to discover more, visit the Top Commenters tab on your site's comments section. Just select your site's name next to the comment count and switch to the Top Commenters list to see the readers that have contributed the most to discussions. This is also a good opportunity to visit their [user profile](#) to learn more about the communities they frequent as well as their areas of interest.

Once you've identified your top contributors, one of the easiest methods for recognizing them is to interview them. On **Man Repeller**, a fashion site for women, they interviewed five of their most prolific commenters and [featured them on the site](#). These incredible stories brought color to the voices that make their

comments section feel vibrant and friendly every day.

Get to Know 5 of Man Repeller's Top Commenters

by Amy Campbell | 08.02.17



To see more examples like this, check out [this profile](#) from **The New York Times** and our own [Commenter Spotlight](#) series that featured commenters from communities all across the Disqus network.

Empower engaged members as Trusted Users

As readers ascend the ranks into becoming highly engaged and loyal readers, empower them to take on leadership roles. By doing so, you begin to shift some of the work of managing a growing community to the community itself. This could include things like onboarding new readers, moderating comments, and referring new readers. By tapping into this group, you've

designed a path towards scaling your community to new heights.

One tactic to empower readers is to add those with a track record of posting high-quality comments to your [Trusted Users](#) list. Trusted Users have the benefit of being able to post on discussions more freely without requiring moderation review. Not only does this reduce your moderation time by prioritizing your effort, this recognizes these readers for their contributions to your site and creates a model for other readers to aspire towards.

At **Stack Overflow**, developers share their knowledge and help each other learn programming. New members start with limited access to capabilities like voting, editing, and moderation. By answering questions effectively, supporting other members, and otherwise being a great citizen, [members earn additional privileges](#) over time that empower them to support the community in more impactful ways.

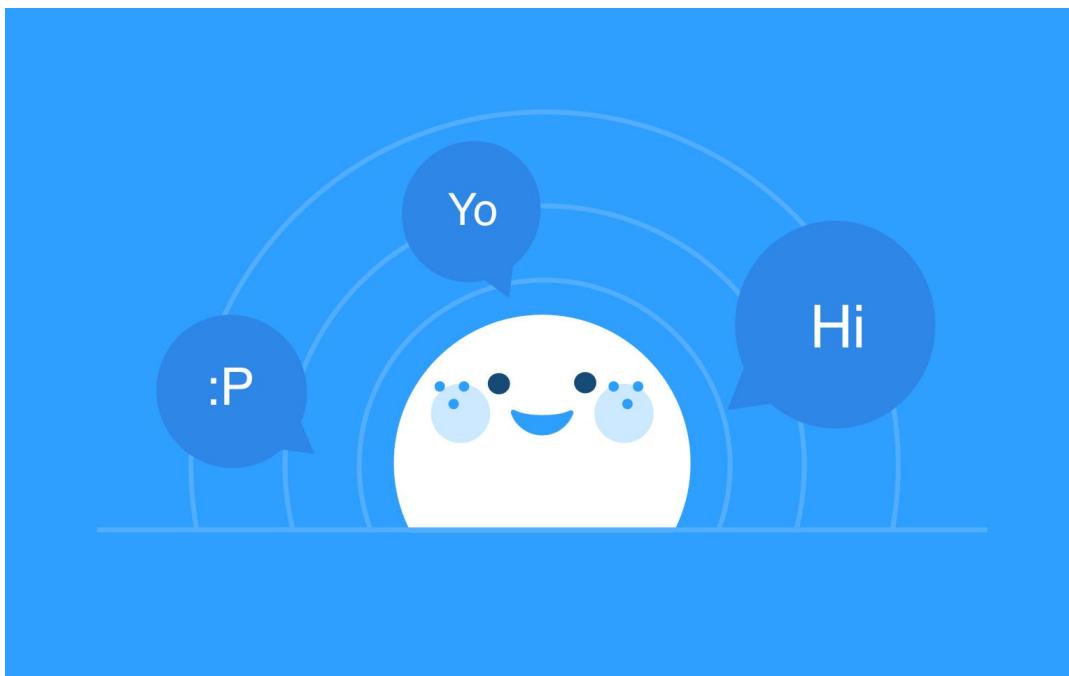
25,000	access to site analytics	Access to internal and Google site analytics
20,000	trusted user	Expanded editing, deletion and undeletion privileges
1,000	established user	You've been around for a while; see vote counts
200	reduce ads	Some ads are now automatically disabled
✓ 10	remove new user restrictions	Post more links, answer protected questions

Today, this model has propelled Stack Overflow into becoming one of the largest Q&A sites on the web spanning topics that go far beyond just programming. By aligning incentives early on to support

behavior that benefits the entire community, this helped scale their growth as more users joined the community, without diminishing the quality of the content.

Chapter 6:

How to Lower the Barrier to Commenting

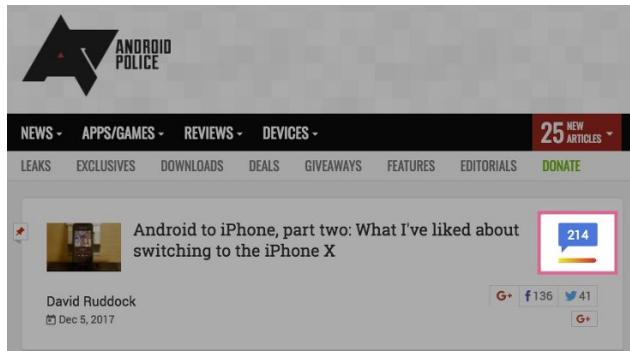


If you want readers to start commenting on your site, it's not enough to just add comments and expect them to figure it out on their own. In this final chapter, we'll share five solutions to improve your readers' commenting experience by addressing common barriers to increased engagement. Let's get started.

Utilize effective calls-to-action

When readers visit your site, direct them to discussions by utilizing calls-to-action. Context is key when implementing effective CTAs. For example, someone who just arrived on your homepage will have different goals than someone who clicked a link to an article from Facebook. Depending on the following scenarios, different solutions will apply most effectively.

Homepage: Discovery is your reader's primary goal on your homepage. *What are the latest stories? What should I read first?* Start by [adding comment counts](#) to articles so readers know where discussions are happening. On **Android Police**, they display the comment count adjacent to every headline. This is accompanied by a dynamic "hotness" bar based on pageviews and social media activity so that readers can see at-a-glance which stories are trending.



MOST COMMENTED

In Portland, You Can Steal Cars Over and Over—and Get Away With It. Here's How. 218

These 6 Cities Are Smarter Than Portland About Housing

128

Fur Coats Are Coming Back. Don't Hate Until You Try One. 96

Another option is to add a leaderboard widget of top stories sorted by total comments. Show a list of recent comments to [reward readers who comment](#) and invite passive readers respond. You can implement either of these options using a variety of plugins if you're on WordPress. For more control and configuration options, use the [Disqus API](#) to create custom widgets that match your site's look-and-feel.

Article page: Readers are spending the majority of their time on your site reading your content. After all, it's the reason they follow and subscribe. If you want readers

to comment though, it's not enough to just invite them at the end of the story to "share your thoughts in the discussion."



ARLnow.com · a month ago

For us, it's all about the way articles are written. There needs to be something to talk about, so train your staff to identify that and make sure it's included. For us, reader prompts or trying to tell users to "tell us what you think" doesn't do anything.

2 ^ | v · Share ›

Asking a direct question is a good start since it prompts readers to respond to a specific topic. But don't just wait until the end to ask the question. Seed the discussion as early as possible by incorporating potential topics for discussion as a reader navigates the story. You'll find that these early reminders set the stage for more thoughtful responses.

🏆 Pro-tip:

*Link to the comments by appending **#disqus_thread** to the article's URL. When readers click the link, it will jump directly to the comments section.*

Comments: After reading an article, readers have the opportunity to respond in the comments or see what others had to say. Start by posting a direct question as a Featured Comment. This provides a framework for readers to quickly jump in with something they can talk about. Next, turn on Discovery to display a list of recommended discussions happening elsewhere on your site so readers know where to head to next.

Remove friction when commenting

Disqus makes commenting easy. Readers can comment across millions of sites using just a single profile, skipping the headache of creating new accounts for different sites. Using a real-time notifications system, they can also jump back into conversations to keep it going.

Here are some additional ways you can remove friction for your readers when commenting on your site:

- 1. Enable guest commenting.** Provide the option for readers to comment without signing up for a Disqus account. This can be an effective solution for converting first-time visitors into engaged users. As these readers post more, they may decide to switch to a Disqus account to take advantage of the extra benefits.

2. Add Trusted Users. If a user has a strong track record for posting high-quality comments, add them as a [Trusted User](#). This allows them to post comments immediately without requiring moderation review and saves you further moderation time.

3. Curate Restricted Words list. If it has been a while since you last reviewed your site's [Restricted Words list](#), here's a good opportunity to update it. Remove any words that are poor signals for moderation action in your community. Filter comments flagged in your Mod Panel by Restricted Words to see example comments that were recently held for moderation review.

4. Incorporate page navigation shortcuts. Make it easy to navigate a discussion on your site, especially if you publish a lot of longform content. Add a button for users to jump to the top of the page or directly to the comments in one-click. This is particularly important for mobile visitors where scrolling is a slower process.

On **Batman News**, clicking the Batman icon on the top-right corner of the site brings you back to the top of the page when reading a story (Yes, it is exactly like using Batman's grappling hook).



When visiting **Wirecutter's** in-depth product guides on a mobile device, the topic sections are collapsed by default so you can easily jump to the topic you're interested in reading first. This makes it easy for readers to join the discussion at the end of each guide with minimal scrolling.

The Research

[Expand all](#)

Why you should trust us

I've reviewed TVs, Blu-ray players, and home theater equipment since 2008. In my past I spent time at Secrets of Home Theater and High Fidelity, running the Blu-ray and DVD Benchmark they created and updating it as features changed. With the help of Stacey Spears, we devised a testing system to determine which Blu-ray players were actually accurate and which were not, working to show that even in digital, bits are not always bits. I'm also ISF-trained for evaluating image quality and am up-to-date on all the current and future HDR standards and what to look for while evaluating those on players.

Who this is for

How we picked and tested

Teach readers how to comment

If you're introducing commenting to your site for the first time, it's a good opportunity to provide a short tutorial to help readers get started. Show them the steps to creating an account, the basics of posting comments, and a brief overview of your site's [Comment Policy](#). It's new for everyone so encourage folks to get acclimated and learning together.

When **Buffalo Rising** switched to Disqus, they [announced the change](#) on their site. They instructed readers on how to sign up for an account and outlined the various benefits of participating.

Disqus: A New Day for BRO Comment Section



by Buffalo Rising

October 26, 2016, 9:11 am

30 Comments

Similarly, when **Education Week** started using Disqus, they [published](#) an in-depth guide for commenting on the site, which they link to directly above the comments of every article. In it, they shared answers to frequently asked questions, information about the site's community guidelines, and how to contact the site.



The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of the Education Week website. It includes links for EDUCATION WEEK, TEACHER, DIGITAL DIRECTIONS, MARKET BRIEF, TOPSCHOOLJOBS, SHOP, ADVERTISE, LOGIN, FOR BETTER EDUCATION, and a search bar. Below the navigation is a blue header bar with the text "EDUCATION WEEK" and links for LOGIN, REGISTER, and SUBSCRIBE. The main content area has a sub-header "How to Comment on edweek.org: A Notice to Readers".

How to Comment on edweek.org: A Notice to Readers

To better facilitate robust discussions on edweek.org, we are upgrading our commenting platform. Comments on the site will now be powered by Disqus, a system used by a number of major publishers. It makes it easier for you to find and participate in popular discussions and offers improved spam filtering.

Information for Current Users

If you are a current subscriber or registered user, and have already established a Display Name on edweek.org, you don't need to do anything in order to comment.



Even if you've had comments on your site for some time, new readers may benefit from a quick primer that reinforces good habits for the future. Use opportunities like the release of new Disqus commenting features to start a conversation with readers about commenting.

Provide a dedicated space for off-topic discussions

Instead of spending time moderating off-topic comments, create a dedicated discussion thread for readers to talk about anything they like. This reduces your moderation time, keeps article discussions on topic, and provides a space for readers to interact with each other on your site instead of someplace else.

On **Gematsu**, a site for Japanese gaming news, they start new "[Open Forum](#)" [threads](#) every week and link to in the sidebar. These discussions routinely garner thousands of comments from readers who

use the discussion to share and talk about their favorite games.

Open Forum #282
posted on 12.17.17 at 09:59 PM EST by Zero (@KazumaLynx)



Open, off-topic discussion.

OPEN, OFF-TOPIC DISCUSSION

The Open Forum is your domain for anything and everything. Whatever you feel is inappropriate to discuss in other threads, you can discuss here. Want to talk about Santa? You're in the right place. Have a random question? Ask it here. Want to poll the community? Do it here. The Open Forum is what you make it.

Welcome new users to the community

For new readers, it can be intimidating to post their first comment. Think back to your first day at school or a new job when every face looked unfamiliar. The best way to make first-time commenters feel at home is to welcome them when they first comment on your site.

Welcome to Disqus! How did you find this corner of the web?

8133 Comments [Edit](#)

 Pam
@disqus_pam · 2 years ago

Create a welcome thread that encourages new readers to introduce themselves to the community. This could either be a dedicated page on your site or a weekly series you publish to keep things fresh. When commenters create a new Disqus account, we send them a welcome email that links to [a welcome discussion](#) where they can introduce themselves to the community and how they discovered Disqus.

Wrapping Up

Thank you for reading this guide to increasing reader engagement. We've come a long way since we first started talking about the importance of listening to your community. Those early conversations paved the way to leveraging comments to create more engaging content, opportunities to host events that fostered a shared sense of community, and equipped your most loyal readers to support the continued growth of your community.

Wherever your journey takes you next, we hope that this guide has helped you discover important insights to be successful at growing an engaged audience. If you know someone who could benefit from this information, feel free to share this with them. Thanks for reading!