SUSTAINABILITY & INNOVATION IN PUBLIC RADIO

2019 WBUR BIZLAB SUMMIT

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NEXT: LIGHTNING TALKS

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WAMU - DCist

WASHINGTON, DC

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PROBLEM STATEMENT

How do we develop a distinct membership program for a digital news site within a larger legacy public radio station?

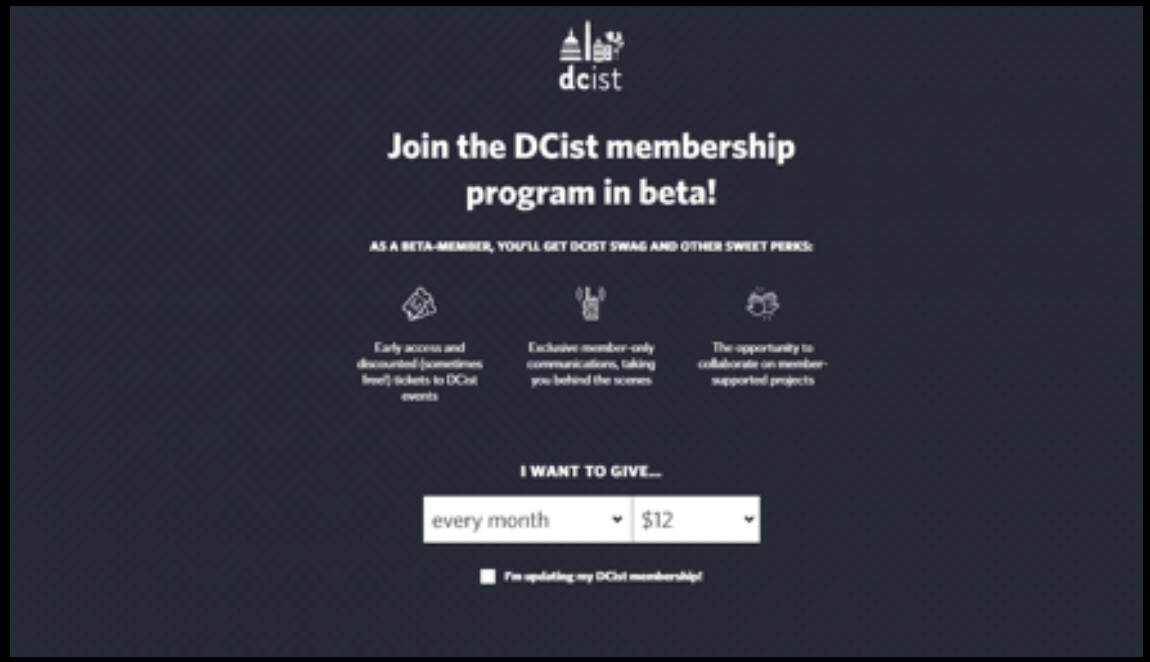
Discovery research

We surveyed readers and hosted two focus groups where we learned about readers motivations and behaviors around DCist, along with what they hoped to get from a membership program. We used analytics to capture usage behavior.

Proposed solution

We launched membership in beta and ran A/B tests around different types of membership offers.

Specifically, we looked at conversion rates for sustaining vs. one-time donations, thank you gifts, and event invites on conversion.



Conclusion and main finding

Launched a sustaining only membership program with distinct perks for DCist readers on Nov 1st.

Our goal: reach 500 founding members by the end of 2019.

Currently we have 427 members!

Raising a total of $6,538.

Louisville Public Media

LOUISVILLE, KY

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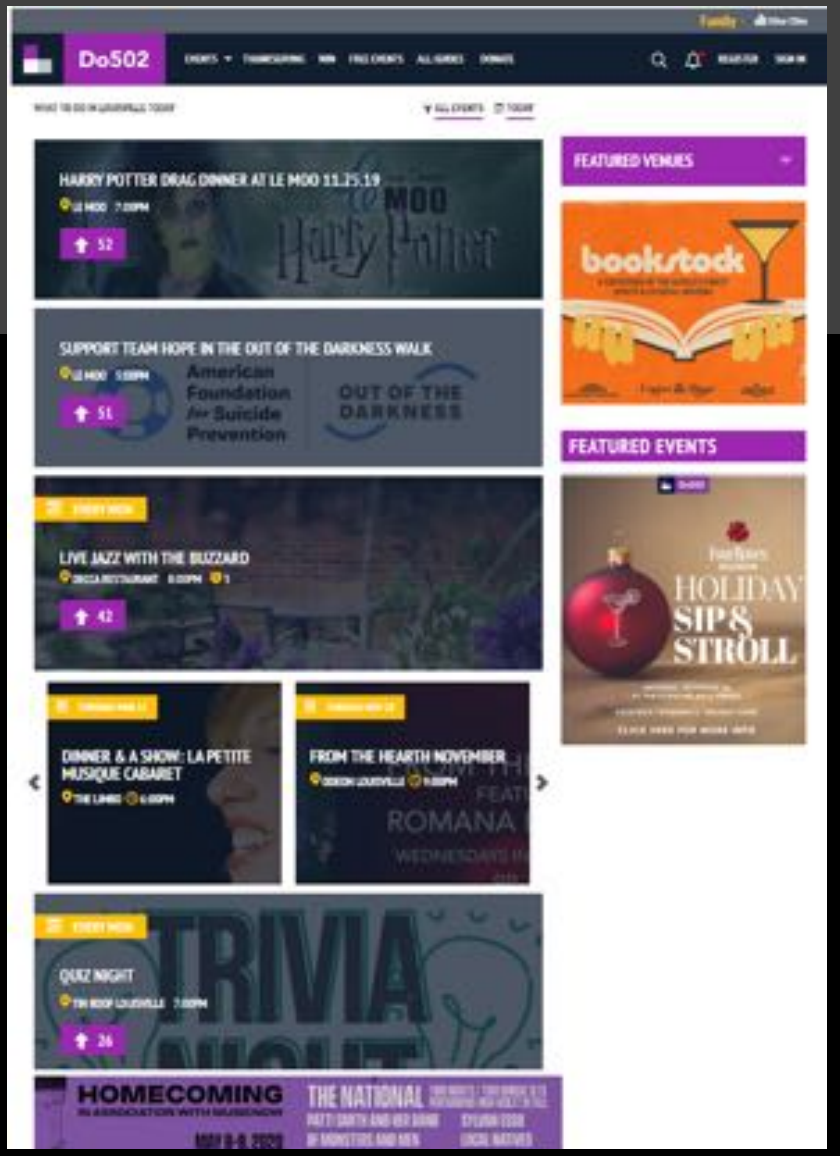
LOUISVILLE PUBLIC MEDIA

PROBLEM STATEMENT

2017: LPM purchased Do502, an event listing platform.

Plan: Integrate Do502 into LPM's programming.

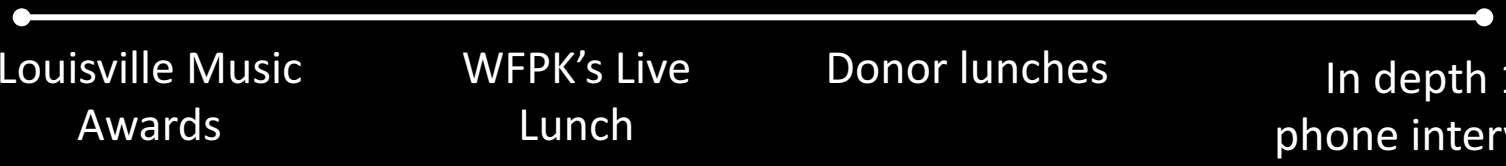
Problem: Do502 users were unaware that Do502 is connected to LPM, is a nonprofit and needs support.



Discovery research

Qualitative research

Face to face interviews



Quantitative research

Survey

Do502 analytics

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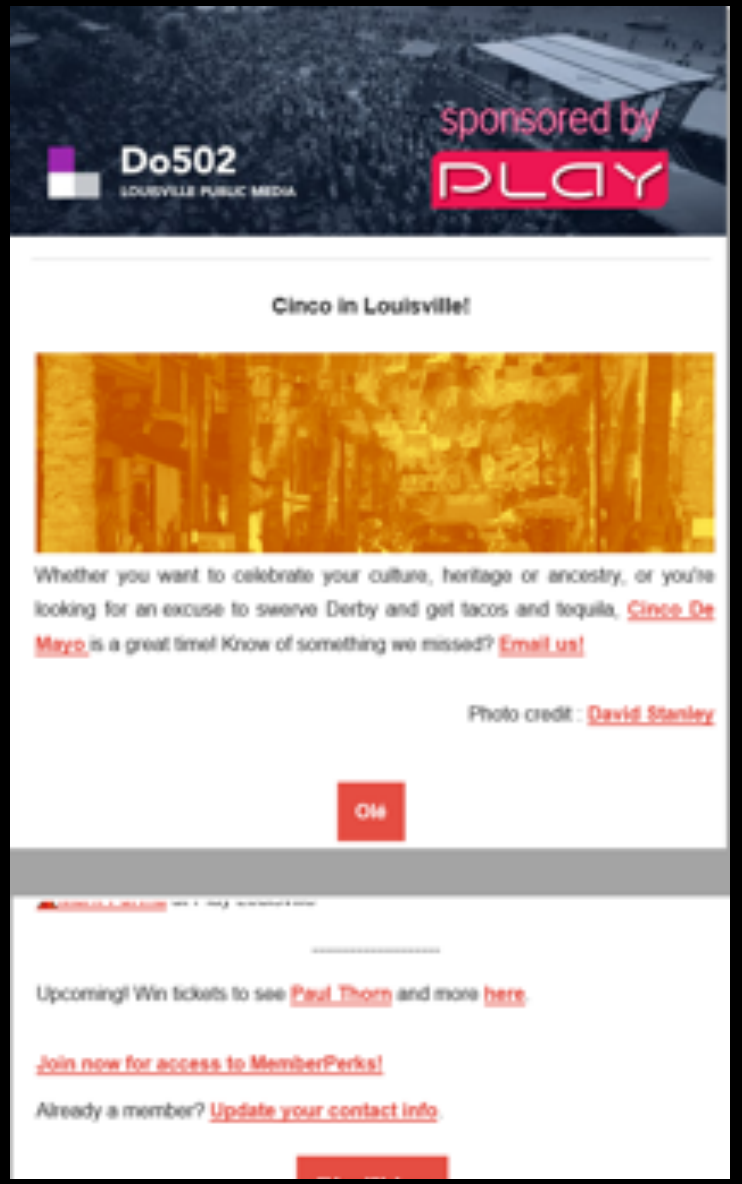
Proposed solution

Do502 events

Newsletter with member perks



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LOUISVILLE PUBLIC MEDIA

Conclusion and main finding

Findings

- Folks do come to Do502 events
- We can convert them into members
- Since April we've grown the Do502 members by 500%

Since end of project

- Continuing to build the Do502 membership program
- Creating "low lift" Do502 events program for 2020

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WDET

DETROIT, MI

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PROBLEM STATEMENT

WDET has many loyal, local small businesses who cannot afford typical radio promotions.

It's costly for an underwriting rep to go after small businesses.

Can WDET provide a simple marketing solution for small businesses and bring in additional underwriting revenues?

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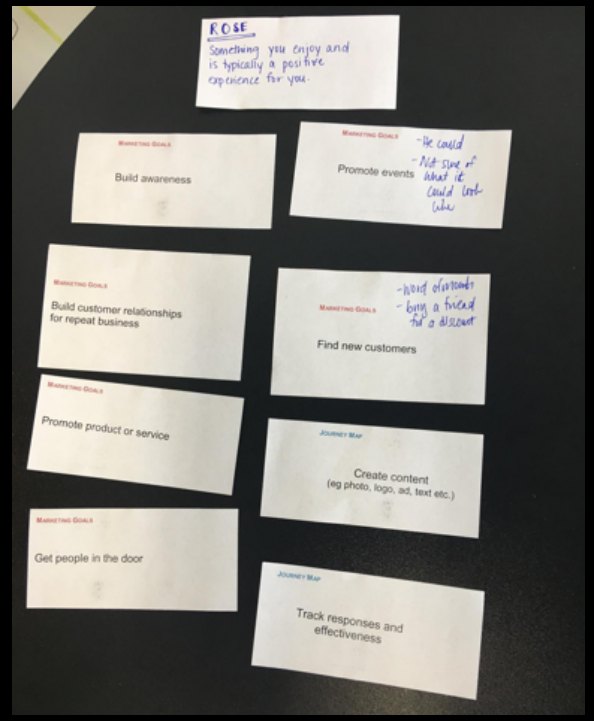
Discovery research

In-person interviews with 5 local small businesses

- Script plus cards to guide conversation
- Captured strengths, weaknesses and needs.

Business profiles included:

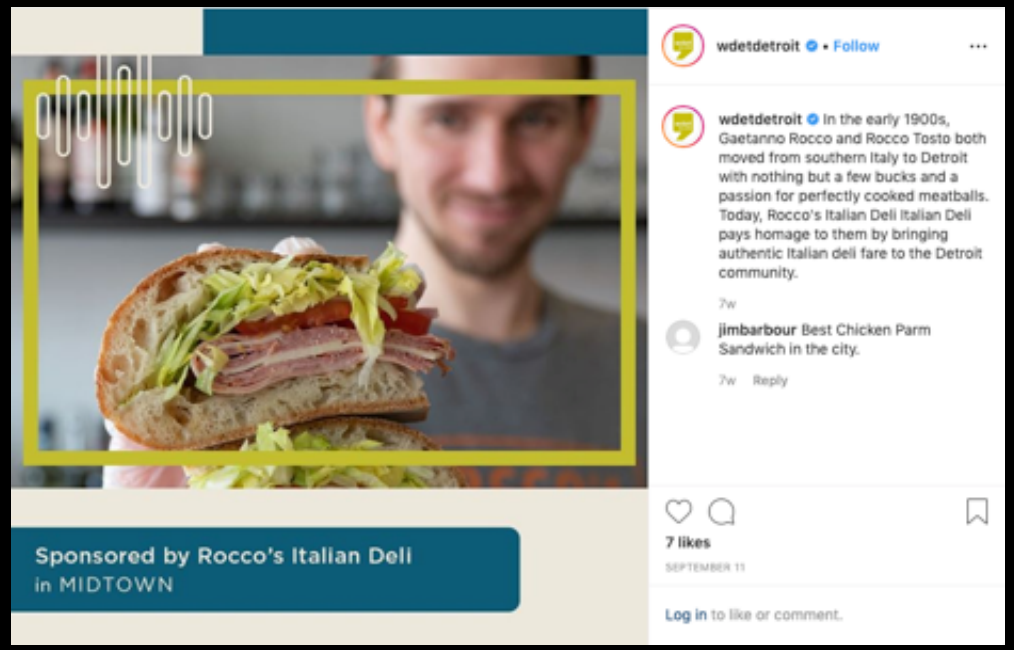
- Limited marketing budget and resources
- No traditional media
- Value the local community, being part of the culture
- Align with WDET's culture and mission
- Successfully use social media for promotion
- Target local residents, businesses and worker population
- WDET's audience a good customer match



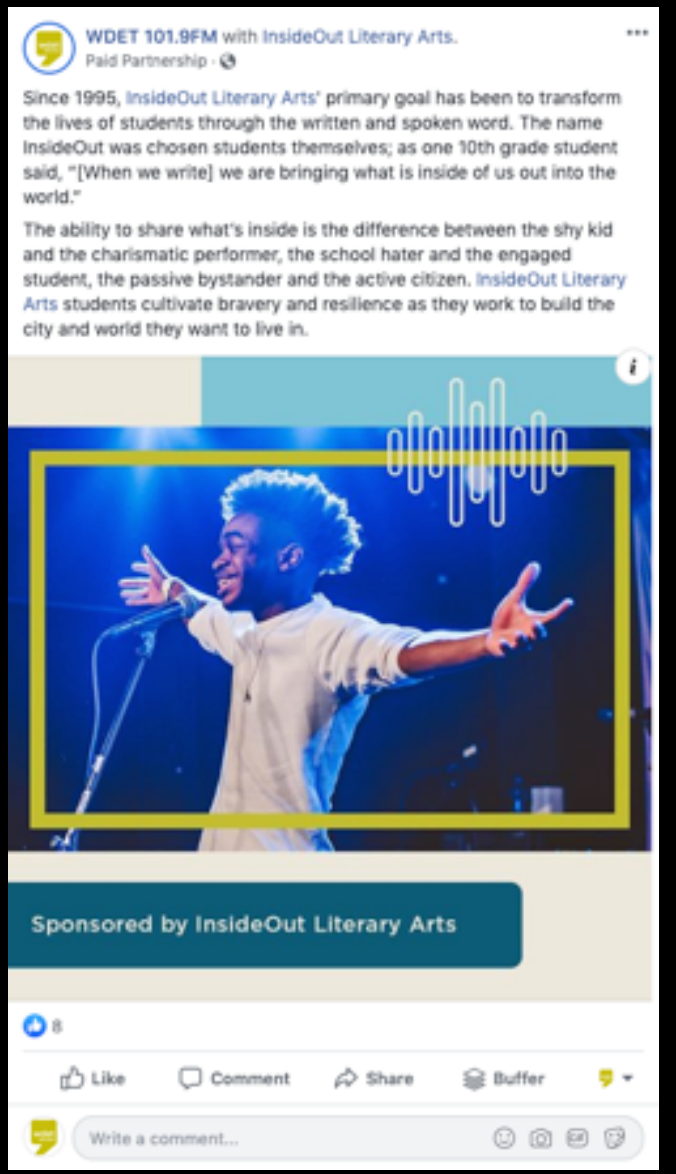
Discovery research

Objective: Create a social media product to promote Detroit's small businesses to WDET's loyal and engaged audience.

Instagram



Facebook



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Conclusion and main finding

What we learned:

- The nuances of Facebook and how their AI affects results
- How to interact with our news/editorial team to “sell” this concept internally
- Solutions to editorial objections before launching tests
- Facebook’s lookalike filter was the most effective audience for reach and cost

Recommendation:

- Continue to develop sales collateral, basic P&L revenue projections and identify business lead lists to sell this service at $200 to $300
- Next steps include an effective, scalable semi-automated process to sell and produce

Capital Public Radio

SACRAMENTO, CA

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PROBLEM STATEMENT

CPRN is a network of NPR stations throughout California who receive State Capitol reporting in exchange for underwriting units. Its successful revenue model diminished over time.

How can CapRadio restart and reinvent this potential source of revenue?

Discovery research

- Background research on the status of the partner stations
- Interviewed prospects to capture their perception of NPR and the network
- Built out the complex workflow required to manage the network

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Current experiments

- Tested a multi-region model to enable geo-targeted underwriting
  - North California
  - Central California
  - South California
- Built a new pricing model
- Met with key prospective buyers
- Experimented with ideas and support software to manage workflow, inventory, and prospects

Test sales deck

Final sales deck

Conclusion and status

Experiments resulted in an entirely new network model with newly established regions, geographically appropriate pricing, internal structures for inventory management, insertion orders, and underwriting processes.

To date we have achieved:

- 8 Meetings with key stakeholders
- 3 meetings resulting in sales
- New revenue of $65,000
- Renewal rate of 66%
- Pending revenue of $104,000 to date
- First year sales target of $250,000

WLRN

MIAMI, FL

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PROBLEM STATEMENT

WLRN needs a new content delivery system/product to attract and engage new audiences, deliver specific community issue focused content, and generate new revenue through this product.

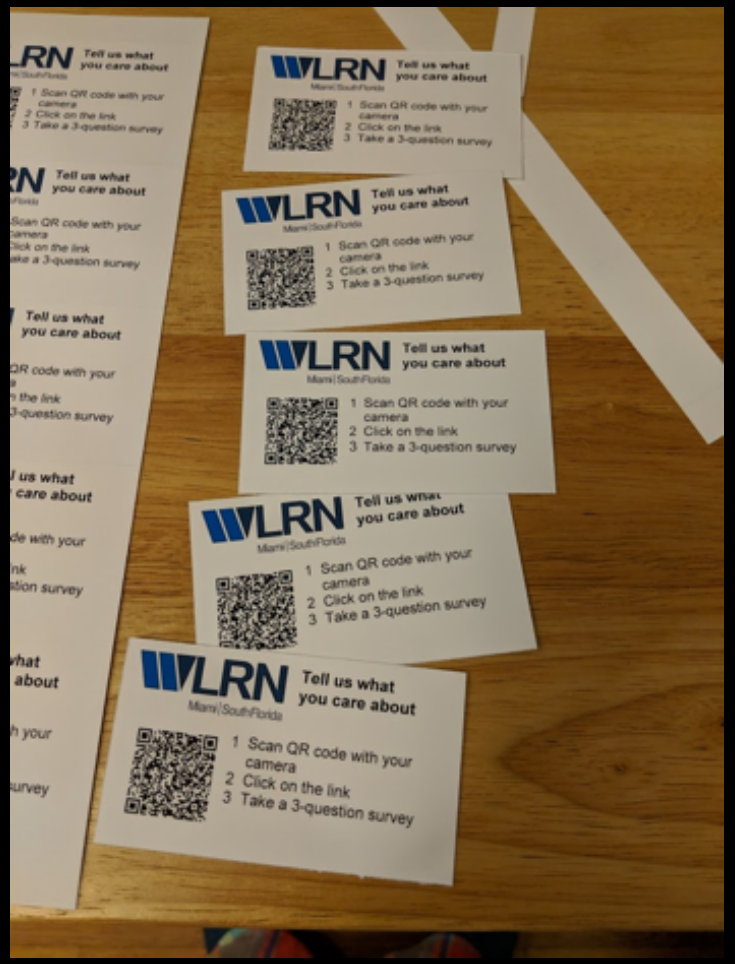
Discovery research

Qualitative

- Intercept interviews at an environment conference
- 3 mini-surveys to discover interest level in environmental coverage using QR codes for easy access

Quantitative

- Analyzed survey data
- Captured behavior of the WLRN website with environmental news



Solution

Phase 1: Develop an environmental newsletter

Six weeks: 6 newsletter tests sent to 120 individuals

Concepts tested:

- Subject lines
- Newsletter tone
- Button design, labels & graphics
- Including a Newsletter Anchor

Phase 2: Partnership with News Revenue Hub (NRH)

- Audience survey
- Set up NRH's platform: MailChimp, Salesforce & Stripe
- Scrub and import existing database to MailChimp
- Sign up forms, landing pages and newsletter best practices
- Continue experimentation with best send times
- Launch a soft donation campaign

Conclusion and main finding

Success!

- Launched a soft donor campaign with News Revenue Hub
- Newsletter performance data is positive:
- Average open rate of 30%
- Average click through rate of 2.5%.
- Audience is engaged: surveys/questions are highest clicked links
- Audience likes personalized tone and Newsletter Anchor Katie Lepri
- Feedback email – 100% positive responses

Coming up:

- WLRN's goal is to be a "hub" - combining journalism and community engagement
- Generate new donations
- Develop events
- Explore underwriting opportunities

Vermont Public Radio

COLCHESTER, VT

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PROBLEM STATEMENT

VPR's vision is 'Exploring The Whole Vermont Story, Together' - but as a statewide service, listeners constantly ask for more coverage of their local communities - especially in areas far removed from Vermont's few population centers, such as Windham County.

How can VPR connect more deeply with audiences in Windham County and feel "more local", and will that increase engagement and revenue from that area?

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Discovery Research

Research before BizLab

- 2018 Public Service Assessment:
  Survey and focus groups
- 2018 Tell Me More Tour:
  Events in all 14 Vermont counties

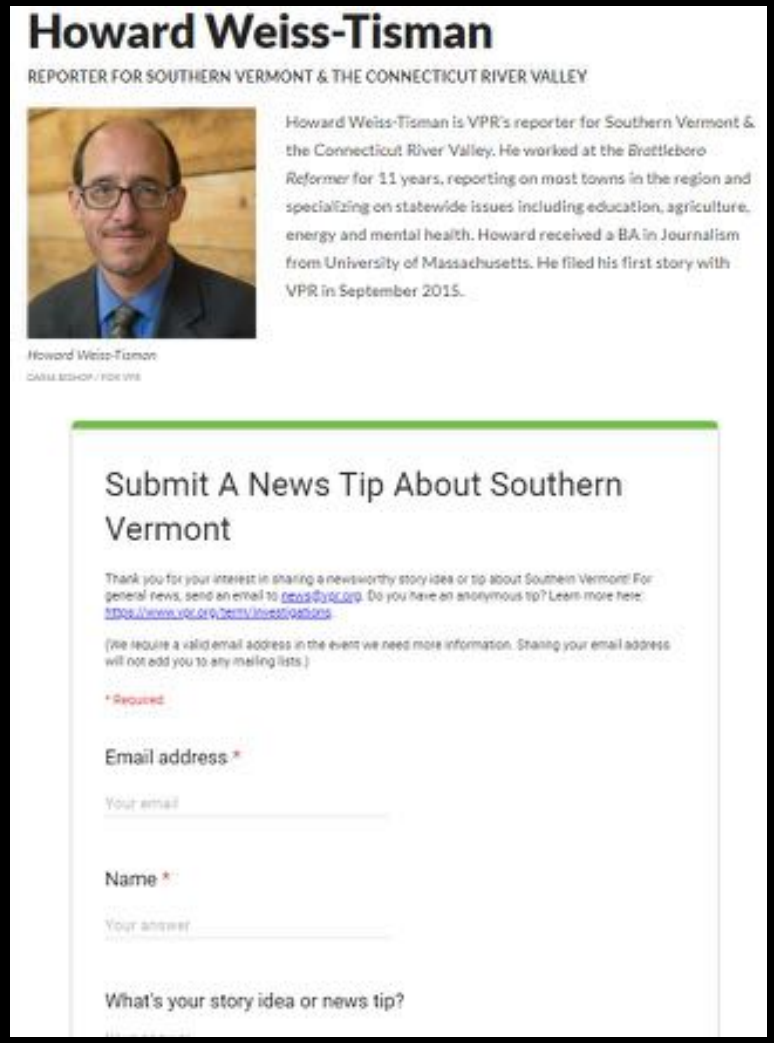
BizLab Research

- Regional interviews with individuals & businesses
- Google Analytics: VPR.org and social media usage by Southern VT
- Feedback during experiments: emails, surveys

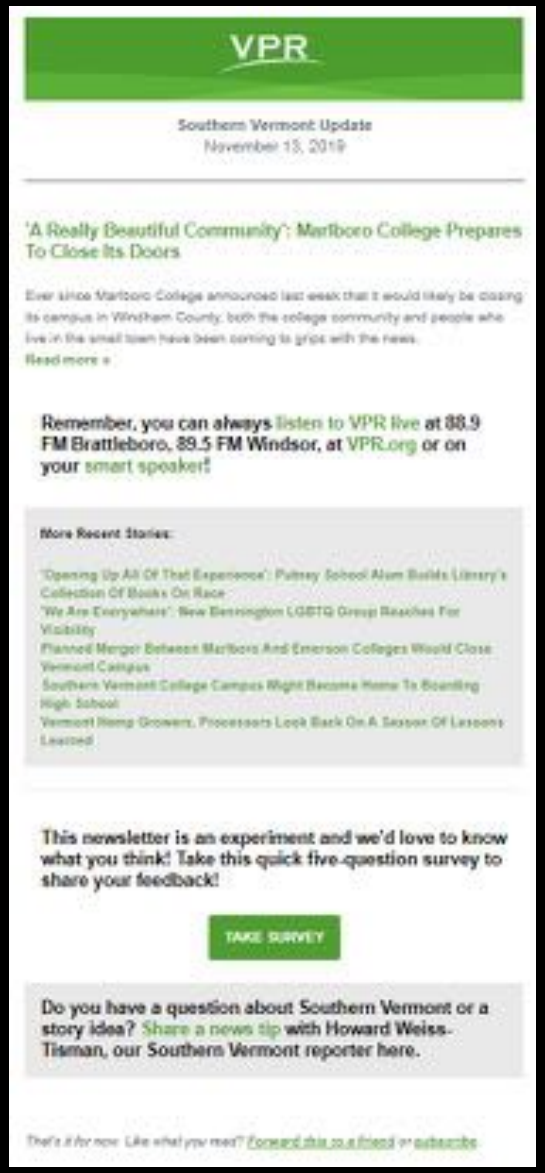
Solution

Facebook

Website



Newsletter



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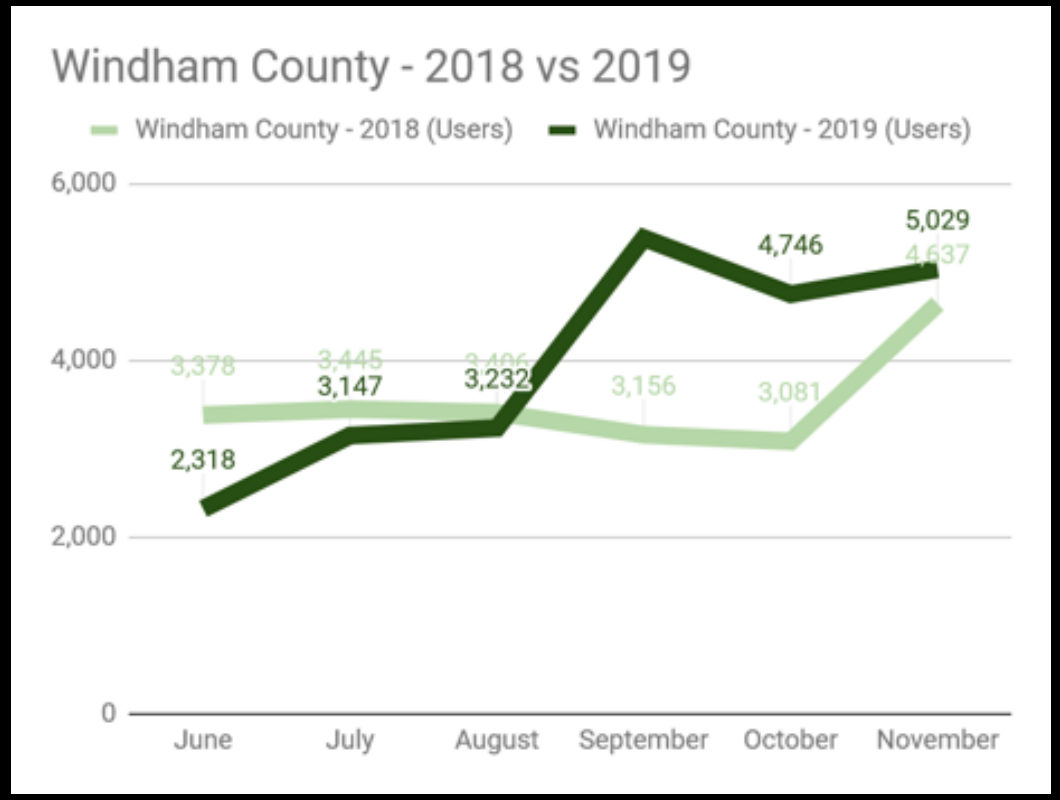
Conclusion and main finding

Success!

- “Feeling More Local” works!
- Need to publish AND promote content
- Practices can be easily replicated around the state

Waiting to learn

- Does increased engagement increase revenue?



Users visiting VPR’s website