Powering growth through retention

June 2025

Prepared for INMA Retention Master Class

The Guardian

First, it’s our pleasure to meet you

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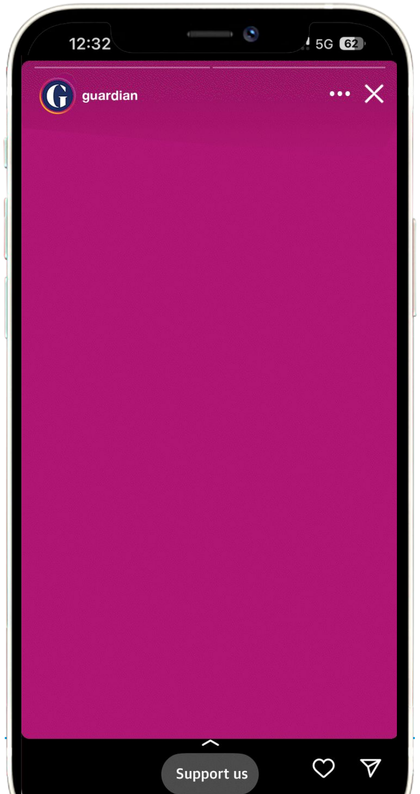
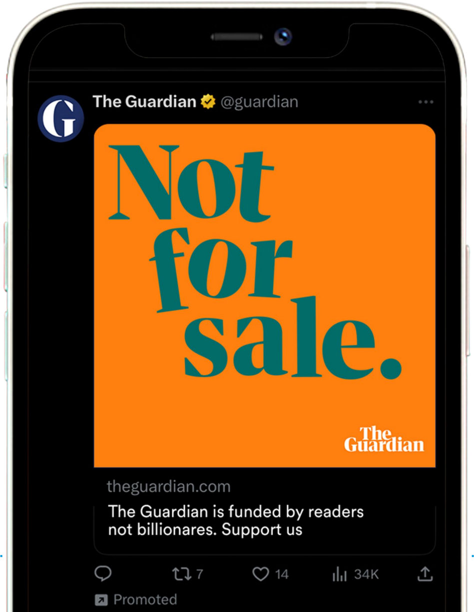
Open to all, funded by many, beholden to no one

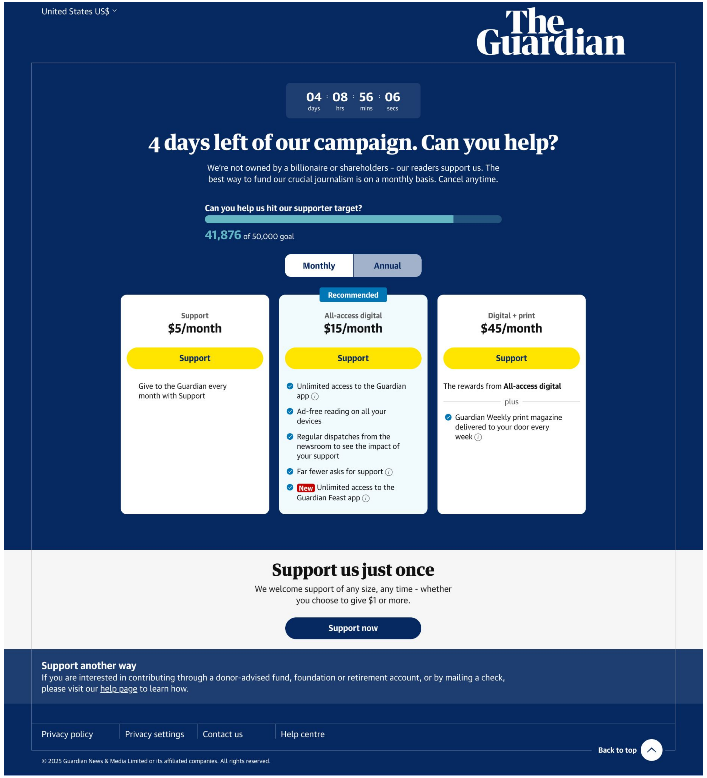




The Guardian's business structure and ownership make it unique as a media organization:

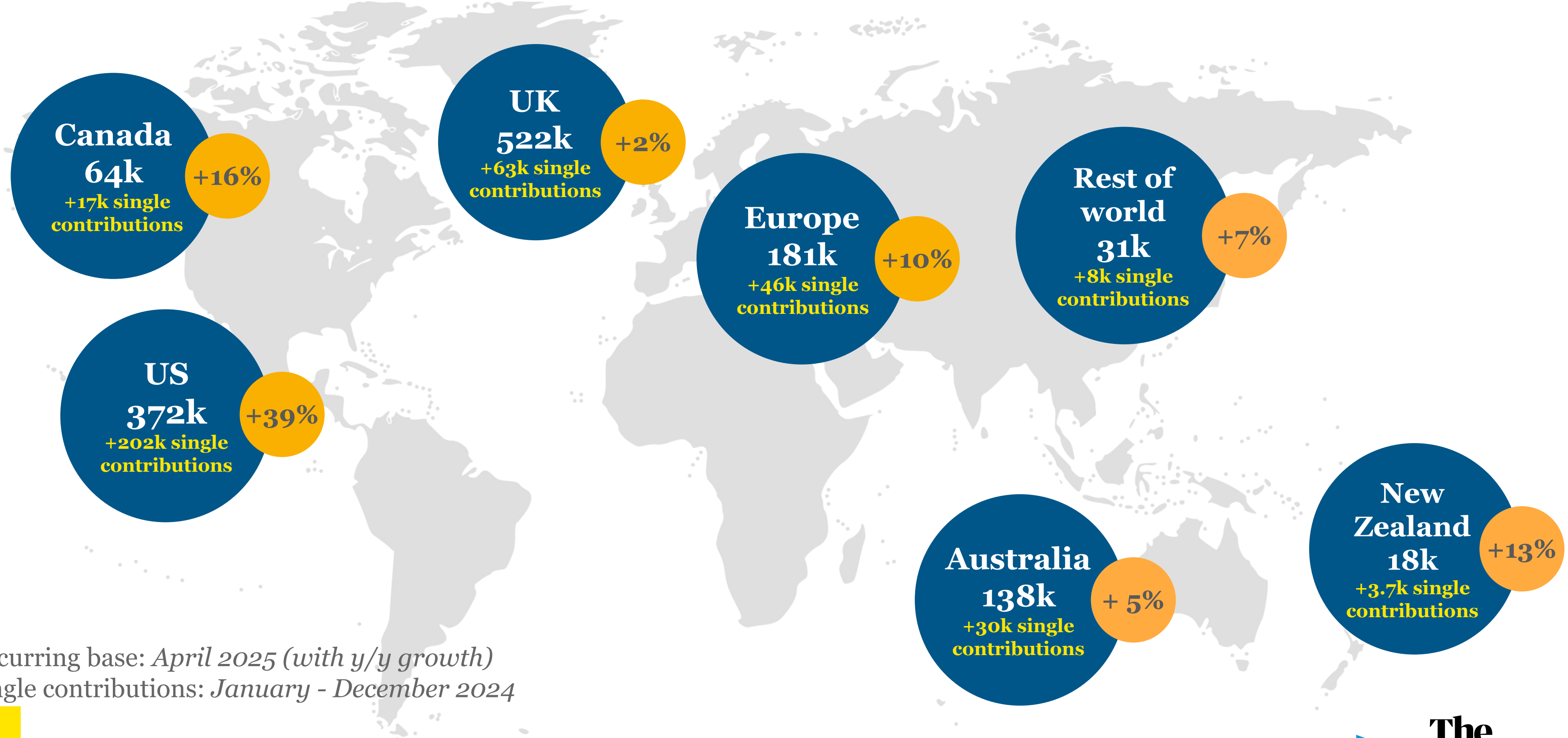
- No paywall (open to all)
- Reader supported (funded by many)
- No billionaire owner or stakeholders (beholden to no one)

There are several paths to support digitally:



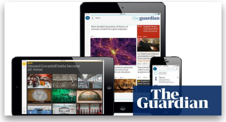
- **Recurring contribution:** No benefits
- **All access digital:** Our digital subscription, includes benefits
- **Premier tier:** Digital + print subscription, includes Guardian Weekly
- **One-time:** Single contribution, no benefits

1.36m recurring supporters & 370k single contributions



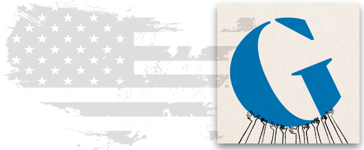
Recurring base: *April 2025 (with y/y growth)*
Single contributions: *January - December 2024*

Our model is a mix of open (site) and premium (apps)



Launch
Membership scheme

Growth | +77%
Support model



Maturity | +20%
Global expansion

Scale
Balanced growth

2008 2016 2020 2024

Retention playbook

Understand your external and internally challenges

- Rising cost of living and consumer budget sensitivity
- Subscription overload
- Audience fatigue from constant news exposure
- Evolving news consumption habits of younger audiences

- Transition from an acquisition to a retention mindset
- Ensure accessible, high-quality data for decision-making
- Articulate the value of the paid experience
- Manage a diverse and fragmented subscriber base

Listen to feedback from your customers

Call center

On site

Cancellation point
(web and IAP)

Surveys

Elevate the voice of the customer and translate it into meaningful actions for the business

Anticipate their needs: what they want, what they prefer

Create meaningful experience

Build strong and long lasting relationship

Influenced areas

✓ Develop the most efficient retention tactics
✓ Craft the next best saving actions
✓ Identify behaviour that generate loyalty
✓ Gauge motivation to subscribe
✓ Enhance the user experience
✓ Inform the product proposition
✓ Drive pricing strategy

Identify your focus areas

Drive Annual

Increase Frequency

Deepen value & experiences

Retain at cancellation point

Reduce payment failure

Preempt churn

Retain

Map out your initiatives and prioritise

Drive annual	Increase frequency	Deepen value & experience	Retain at cancellation point	Reduce payment failure
Acquisition	Early life program to be released	Recognition and appreciation	Saving offer sophistication	Explore provider capability, more data for smarter recovery
In- life	Churn mitigation program efficiency	On-boarding in web and in app	Switching capabilities	
	Propensity model / Next best actions	Base mouvement (migration & upsells)	Customer loop	
	High value actions / benefits usage	Loyalty program		

Focus on the levers that enable your retention efforts

ENABLERS / CLEANER DATA

- CDP
  (Customer data platform)
- Sign in / Registration
- Identity ID resolution
- Propensity model

Drive annual

Increase frequency

Deepen value & experiences

Retain at cancellation point

Reduce payment failure

Case study

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One of our star programs to reduce churn

Drive annual

Increase frequency

Deepend value & experiences

Retain at cancellation point

Reduce payment failure

Recurring supporter churn risk program

Step one: we designed a churn risk propensity model

Based on:

1. **Engagement segment, for example, low, medium, high**

2. **How they move between segments**

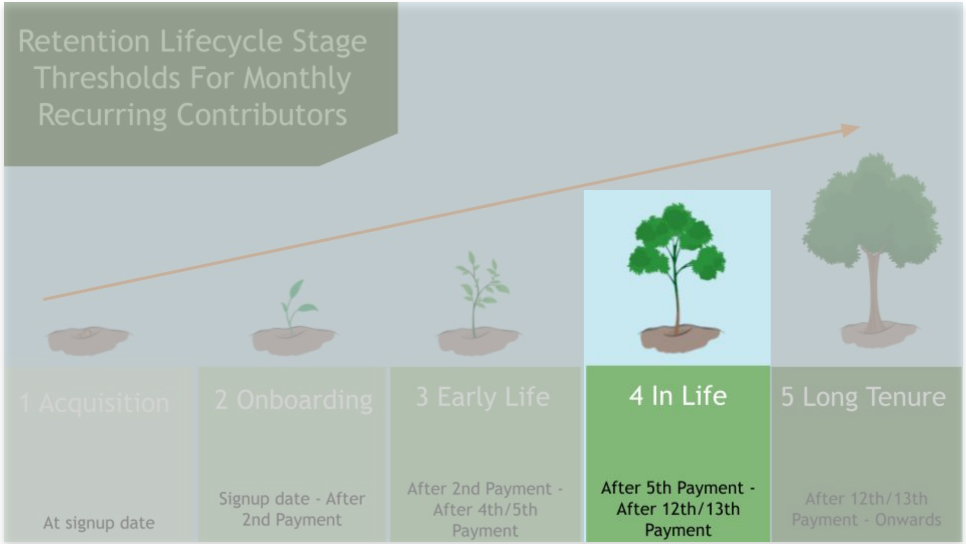
We then group users in to four segments: drop offs, burn outs, toe dippers and low flyers. We removed burn outs from the targeting for churn risk

Audience targeting | When to send | What to send | Creating the journey

Step two: we decided to send to in life supporters

Analysis showed us that supporters in their ‘in life’ stage churn at a significantly higher rate than those in the ‘long tenure’ stage.

We will focus on supporters who are in their ‘in life’ stage, specifically monthly recurring customers between 5-12 months since they started supporting us.



Audience targeting | When to send | What to send | Creating the journey

Step three: use first party data to personalise messaging & focus on encouraging high value actions…

- **Engagement movement pattern**
  Super High to Unknown, Unknown to Low, etc
- **Engagement segment**
  Super High - Unknown
- **Month**
  where they are in their lifecycle - month 5/6/7
- **Behaviour**
  visited liveblog, pillars, verticals etc
- **Region**
  AUS/US/UKROW

93 messaging variations

Audience targeting | When to send | **What to send** | Creating the journey

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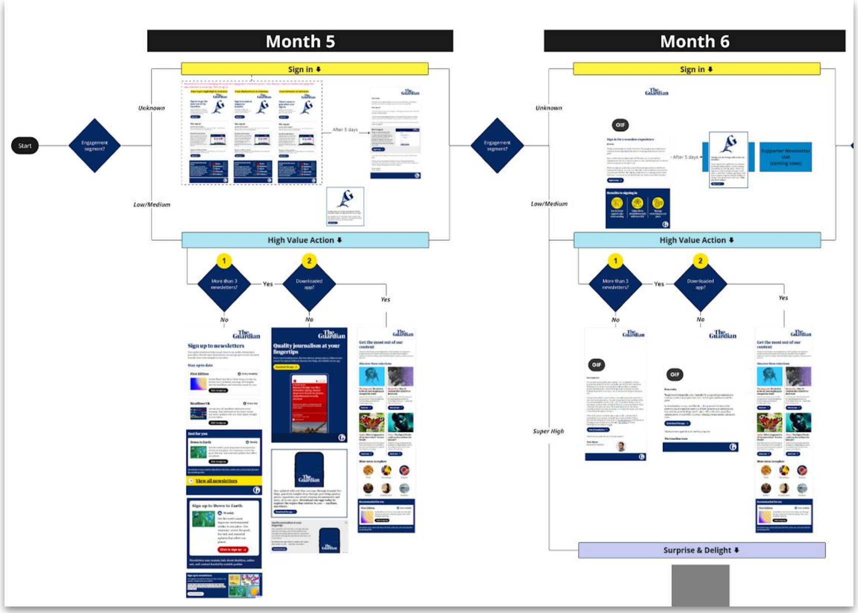
Step four: put it all together in a monthly CRM journey



Audience targeting

When to send

What to send

Creating the journey

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Measuring success

Recurring supporter churn risk program

- 20% control group
- Measure in 6 months to allow to reach statistical significance
- Primary KPI: month 13 churn rate
- Secondary KPIs: frequency, % signed in, signed up to 2+ newsletters, downloaded our App

Final takeaway

-20%
churn rate
last 4 years

Amplifying the voice of the customer across all aspects of the business.

Building long-lasting relationships and leveraging high-quality data for personalised experiences.

Shifting focus to prioritise retention, with an emphasis on high-value engagement and churn prevention.

Continuously enhancing subscriber value to ensure sustainable funding for our journalism.

Any questions?

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