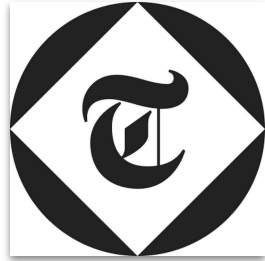


**The Telegraph**

# Beyond the comments:

How the Telegraph harnesses community to drive  
subscriber retention

June 2025



**The Telegraph is an award-winning, multimedia news brand that has been synonymous with quality, authority and credibility for almost 170 years.**



**William Whittington**  
Head of Community  
Moderation



**Arielle Goldstein**  
Community Editor

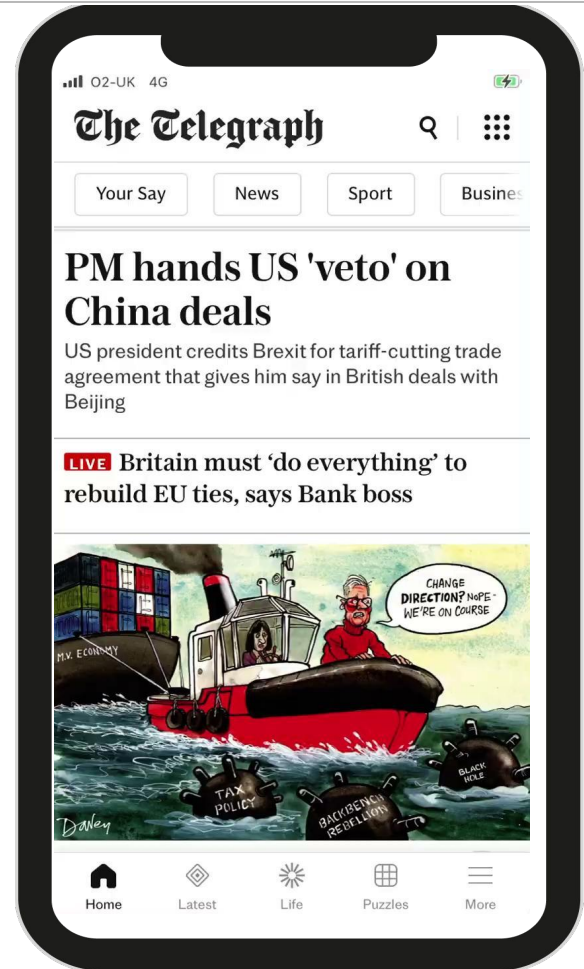
The Telegraph has **three million** daily readers and is a subscription-first business, with quality journalism at the heart, and a goal to build deeper connections with subscribers at scale.

# Below the Line & Your Say

The practice of an author interacting and directly engaging with readers in the comments section of an article.

Your Say is a place where subscribers can go at any time to:

- ❑ read, listen to, or take part in a conversation with others;
- ❑ debate issues;
- ❑ access expertise;
- ❑ get their views validated by others;
- ❑ or simply for entertainment





Journalism has changed



AI can't replicate human connections



Divisive political landscape

# Benefits and examples

Help build a loyal,  
engaged audience

Improve the quality of  
comments

Encourages readers to  
post instead of lurking

Gather ideas for a new  
story or angle

Increases overall article  
performance

Improves article SEO

## CHAT Allister Heath Britain's moral cancer exposed by wars



Allister says our country is showing two faces to the world. One makes him terrified for our future. Join the conversation:

### James Hardman says:

“Yes, the bias is obvious. I fear it is largely centred on envy of sheer Jewish talent.”

### Allister replies:

“Generally speaking, envy is the foundational problem, the driving force for socialism, communism etc.”

### N.O. says:

“You Netal esser

### Alli

“Tru Wes Wes

Catch up here →



**Jason Foord** · 10 DAYS AGO

I also wake around 3am most nights, I understood this might be my natural state, what is called bi-phasic sleeping. Does that sound correct?

REPLY 3 REPLIES LIKE 4

REPORT



**Alanna Hare** Contributor · 10 DAYS AGO

Reply to **Jason Foord**

Some studies have suggested about 7% of adults have a biphasic sleep pattern (usually a longer daytime nap, plus nighttime sleep) and about 1% have a polyphasic pattern. However, if you wake at around this time each night and are then able to return to sleep fairly easily, this is more likely to represent a normal waking period (part of your normal sleep cycle) than truly biphasic sleep

REPLY 1 REPLY LIKE 0

REPORT



**Jason Foord** · 10 DAYS AGO

Reply to **Alanna Hare**

No, I stay wide awake! Usually for about 1 hour and then often get sleepy after lunch. Have for years. Same pattern.

REPLY 1 REPLY LIKE 0

REPORT




**Alanna Hare** Contributor · 10 DAYS AGO

Reply to **Jason Foord**

OK: try to avoid any naps in the daytime (take a short walk after lunch and ensure you have some outside light exposure in the morning) and don't stay in the bed when you are wide awake. Stick to a consistent time out of bed each morning and consider moving your bedtime back a little: this will increase your "appetite" for sleep at nighttime and should help....

REPLY LIKE 0

REPORT

 **Join the conversation** now  
Michael Deacon: A guide to the BBC's anti-Trump bias — live Q&A

# I'm 27 and dying of cancer, but my friends are 'ghosting' me in my final days

## 56 new commenters

- ALL COMMENTS 467 NEWEST
- IO Isabel Oakeshott** · 1 HR AGO  
Just to let everyone know that we are going to be collecting all your messages and comments and passing them on to Magdi and Josh later today ....I am hoping that he will be just well enough to listen to her reading out the messages. Either way, I know she will take huge strength from the response.  
4 REPLIES LIKE 122
  - DC David Chipping** · 54 MIN AGO  
Reply to Isabel Oakeshott  
Hats off to you and the DT for publishing this.  
2 REPLIES LIKE 2
  - NC Neil Cumins** · 50 MIN AGO  
Reply to Isabel Oakeshott  
It's 3pm and the comments are still flooding in. Hope the outpouring of positive sentiments below give Josh and Magdi some solace at this unimaginably difficult time.  
1 REPLY LIKE 1
  - SL Steven Lawrence** · 36 MIN AGO  
Reply to Isabel Oakeshott  
Thank you Isabel for letting us know. It's a hard story to read, what a lovely young man  
1 REPLY LIKE 1
  - EH Erika Hazelgrove** · 4 MIN AGO  
Reply to Isabel Oakeshott  
Josh and Magdi, please know you are not alone. You are enfolded in love from so many people.  
1 REPLY LIKE 0

**IO Isabel Oakeshott** · 1 HR AGO  
Hi everyone, thank you for all your lovely comments about this article. We had been hoping that it might be possible for Josh to write some replies, but unfortunately he's taken a turn for the worse. I knew it was a race against time to do this interview with him as he has been deteriorating a little each day. Yesterday it all got too much for his mother, who has been caring for him almost single handed, and Macmillan encouraged her to allow him to go into a hospice. What this meant is that Magdi could get some desperately needed sleep and he is now in safe hands. Of course Magdi would rather have him at home but there's only so much one person can cope with and it feels as if this was the right decision for them both. I know Magdi will take huge strength from all your supportive comments and kind thoughts, and will be reading some of the messages out to Josh, as and when he's awake enough.  
I'll be online for another half hour or so looking at the feedback and responding where appropriate.....  
12 REPLIES LIKE 162


**VH VL Harrison** · 1 HR AGO  
It's very difficult for friends. There's some element of survivor guilt. And I suspect also they wish to retain memories of the person as they were before the body was destroyed. That's selfish, but you can understand it.  
2 REPLIES LIKE 10

**IO Isabel Oakeshott** · 1 HR AGO  
Reply to VL Harrison - view message  
I think that's right - and while unkind and selfish, it's not entirely illogical on the part of the so-called friends. More than a year of am still quite haunted by the image of my mother in her final days and moments. I was not too afraid to face up to that, but would I rather not have those mental images? Yes.  
10 REPLIES LIKE 10

**PP Paisly Print** · 1 HR AGO  
Reply to VL Harrison  
it is hard for people for sure. There is always that human thing about not wanting to know. Not knowing what to do.  
1 REPLY LIKE 1

**The Telegraph** @Telegraph  
@IsabelOakeshott has provided an update on Josh's condition in the comment section.  
Tap to read below:  
[telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/10/0...](https://telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/10/0...)

**The Telegraph** @Telegraph · 2h  
'Cancer ghosting' is a recognised phenomenon. Josh Cullen has experienced it first-hand.  
"They used to send messages, but I hardly ever get that any more."  
...  
[Show more](#)



**'I'm 27 and dying of cancer, but my friends are 'ghosting' me in my final days'**

1:54 PM · Oct 2, 2024 · 9,015 Views  
3 comments 1 share 7 likes 1 bookmark

44%

uplift in article dwell  
time when authors are  
live below the line

2x

the number of comments  
when a columnist goes  
below the line



significant increase in the  
proportion of readers who  
feel a sense of belonging

# How long does it really take to sober up? I drank as much as I could in two hours to find out

47% above average dwell time



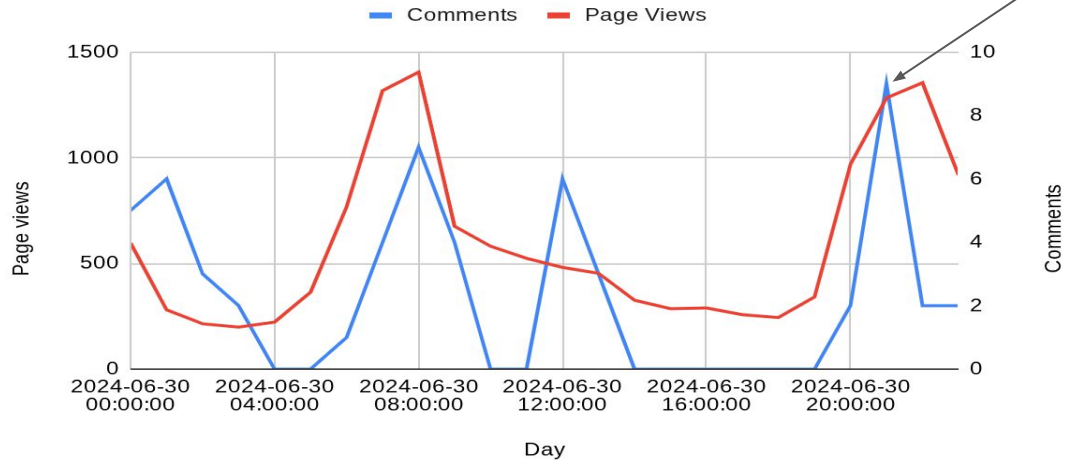
**GD** **Gareth Davies** Telegraph · JUNE 30, 2024  
 Good evening, all. I'm currently in the comments section responding to your comments. If you have any questions - please post away and I'll get to as many as I can. Thanks a lot.  
 REPLY 3 REPLIES LIKE 4

**JF** **Judith Frances Taylor** · JUNE 30, 2024  
 Reply to **Gareth Davies**  
 Hi Gareth, what do you think about the proposal to reduce the drink driving limit after your experiment? I have to say that your experience has convinced me that I won't have anything to drink before driving. I have been moving this way for a while. Thanks  
 REPLY LIKE 0

**JF** **Judith Frances Taylor** · JUNE 30, 2024  
 Reply to **Gareth Davies**  
 PS I am a drinker but think it's best kept for evenings at home.  
 REPLY LIKE 1

**GD** **Gareth Davies** Telegraph · JUNE 30, 2024  
 Reply to **Gareth Davies** - view message  
 Hi Judith. Thanks a lot for your question - it's a great one. A lot of people I know do what you propose. If they're driving - they won't drink at all. Others will have a 2-pint rule. Others one drink. And, sadly, I've seen plenty of people ignore the rules altogether. I don't think the ambiguity is helpful for anybody. But the reason there is ambiguity is because everybody is different, and they metabolise alcohol differently.  
 I'm not sure it's worth lowering it unless it's absolutely zero. But then the ambiguity kicks in again about when you can drive the morning after a few drinks. I think we've got it right - it's just about educating people to make the right decisions. But you certainly wouldn't get me protesting against a zero policy.  
 Thanks for reading. And enjoy your next drink! lechydal! (Cheers!)  
 REPLY LIKE 1

How long does it take to really sober up?



Comment articles  
with author  
engagement:  
**109%** uplift in  
comments

Lurker



Commenter



# Integrating Community

# Community efforts are central to our business practice

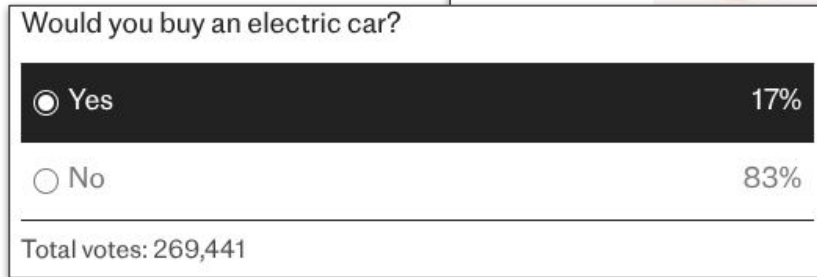
- Polls
- Comment carousels
- Reader-led pieces

## Do you make your tea like the classic Telegraph reader?

Milk first or last? Tea bag or loose leaf? We asked Telegraph readers to weigh in on how to make the perfect cuppa

**Arielle Goldstein**  
 Related Topics  
 Drinks recipes, Afternoon tea recipes, Tea  
 23 May 2025 9:00am BST  
 19

I gave my secretary a Dulux paint card to show her the desired shade of brown I like for my tea



The Telegraph

Your Say | News | Sport | Business

## £14 billion for nuclear to keep the lights on

Energy Secretary commits to two new reactors amid concerns over reliability of wind and solar

### Rolls-Royce to build Britain's first mini nuclear reactors

What you're saying:

**Odin Asgard**  
 "The price of electricity will continue to increase and make it even more unaffordable. There is no explanation as to why UK costs are so much higher to build nuclear power stations."

**Johr**  
 "I tru Torie sellir Fren we p

Join the conversation →

How did we secure  
buy-in for Community?



Bang the drum



Define  
Community



Tell a story



Stakeholder  
gets  
stakeholder

# Moderation

- The author/interviewee going BTL is **pictured** and could be open to personal abuse.
- They've presented an argument which goes **against** the views of **core Telegraph commenters** and could result in backlash.

## How I raise my kids in an open relationship

We've been together for 15 years and although most couples would find it horrifying, both of us sleep with other people



Susanna Galton

Related Topics  
Children, Sex, Relationships,  
Marriage, Parenthood

13 November 2024 12:25pm GMT

427

Gift this article free



## James Baxter-Derrington Cash savers don't deserve tax breaks

The cash Isa is an unaffordable relic – Rachel Reeves should go further and scrap it



James Baxter-Derrington  
Investment Editor

Related Topics  
Rachel Reeves, ISAs

03 February 2025 4:41pm GMT

3135

Gift this article free



## I went from a size 22 to an 8. The hardest part was getting rid of my loose skin

- Informed of publication of this article **ahead of time** allowing us to moderate content, before, during and after the BTL session.
- Comments were **moderated on the web page** during the session as a way of conducting 'live' moderation.
- **120 human moderation** events of manually and automatically flagged content. 57% of these comments **were rejected**.

## How I raise my kids in an open relationship

We've been together for 15 years and although most couples would find it horrifying, both of us sleep with other people



Susanna Galton

Related Topics  
Children, Sex, Relationships,  
Marriage, Parenthood

13 November 2024 12:25pm GMT

427

Gift this article free



- 188 human moderation events
- 86.2% of these were rejected

## I went from a size 22 to an 8. The hardest part was getting rid of my loose skin

After a decade of dieting, gastric surgery saw me lose 10st. The biggest challenge was dealing with my body afterwards

Elle Ekins

Related Topics  
Weight loss, Skin, Nutrition and dieting

30 April 2025 7:00am BST

888

Gift this article free



After undergoing gastric sleeve surgery, Elle decided to get her excess skin removed, as well as pay for a breast lift

And again, bravo, and thank you to the moderators. Please tell them I said that responding was delightful and in huge part because of them.

17:42

- In May of last year, we introduced **reporting reasons**.
- In the two weeks prior to this, we received an thousands of manual reports a day - with an accuracy rate of just **12.3%**.
- In the two weeks following its introduction, average reports dropped by over **85%**. However, accuracy rate more than doubled to **31%**.
- For the month of May this year, **49%** of tens of thousands manually reported comments were deleted.
- Reporting reasons has **restricted spam reporting**, allowing moderators to address the most problematic comments first and free up more time to train our **automatic filter**.

## What's your reporting reason? ×

I Disagree With This User

Disagree or dislike the user's content



Targeted Harassment

Degrading someone, repeated unwanted contact, attacking someone based on their identity such as race, gender, sexual orientation, or religious affiliation



Spam

Soliciting currency, encouraging interaction with content under false pretences, leading users off the site by misleading links



Inappropriate Username or Avatar

User's name or avatar goes against Community Guidelines



Threatening Content

Threats of violence directed at one or more individuals



Impersonation

Representing themselves as another individual under false pretences



Private Information

Sharing personally-identifying information



Misinformation

Sharing false information that could be harmful to others



Damaging a reputation

Making allegations about a person or organisation or speculating on the character or guilt of someone involved in a legal case



Submit

Cancel

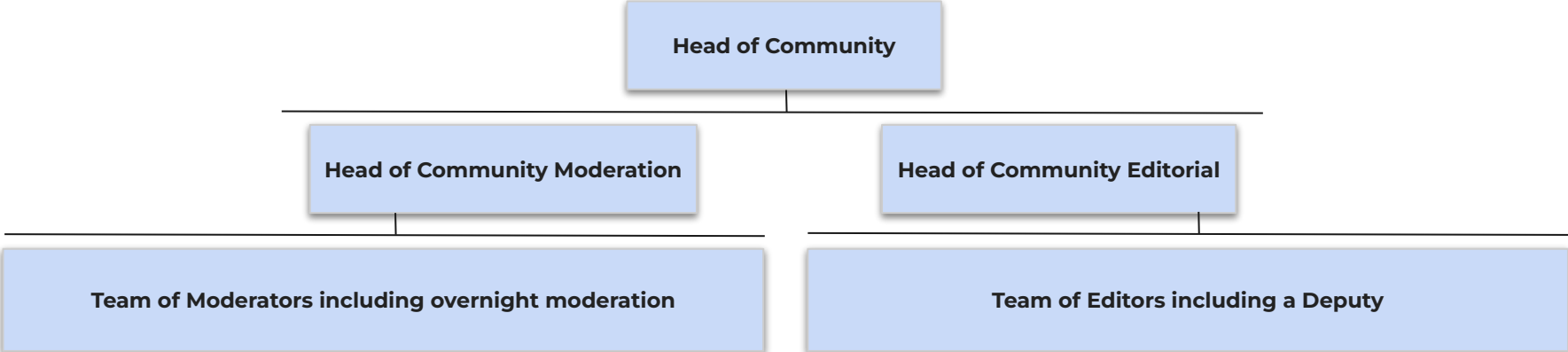
## Things that work well

- Thank or acknowledge readers
- Answer questions
- Add more detail or context
- 'Laugh' at funny comments
- Empathise with personal experiences
- Address or defuse angry and critical comments
- Ignore and/or report any particularly triggering comments

## Things that don't work well

- Angry retorts
- Anything that breaches our guidelines
- Same response under multiple comments
- Asking for moderation action directly in the comments
- Insulting readers in any way

# Structuring for Success



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# Questions?

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Please feel free to contact [Arielle.Goldstein@Telegraph.co.uk](mailto:Arielle.Goldstein@Telegraph.co.uk) or [William.Whittington@Telegraph.co.uk](mailto:William.Whittington@Telegraph.co.uk) for more information

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