

Grow with the flows

A guide to effective access control strategies



ANONYMOUS METERED VIEWS

Carefully monitoring and restricting anonymous access can be the first step to developing a successful commercial model

Anonymous users often represent the lion's share of the traffic used to support advertising revenue. So access control changes need to be treated carefully. Ideally you need a flexible system where you easily control the amount of anonymous access granted. That way you can adjust the levels and monitor the impact on overall traffic.

REGISTRATION

A critical first opportunity to identify users. This might eventually lead to a payment funnel or simply to improved usage data

The quantity of information collected at this point can vary but a good rule of thumb is to implement a 'minimum viable exchange' policy. Ask for too much data in one go and you risk the user dropping out of the process. Often just a few fields including name and email address can be good enough to start a relationship. Subsequent content rationing can allow you to capture extended data once user engagement is firmly established.

CONTENT RATIONING

Rationing allows engagement levels to be understood and the chance to funnel the most active users towards commercial goals

Once you have established a registration regime you can scrutinise each segment of your audience and understand levels of engagement. While some occasional users might get all they need from your most basic free offer, by monitoring the entire audience and understanding its various needs you can set the sweet spots for further engagement or sales.



Users who register with the Times or Sunday Times can view two stories a week before they hit the subscription gate

INCREMENTAL DATA CAPTURE

Registration is just the start of the data capture process – subsequent interactions can be used to build richer user profiles

Effective use of content rationing offers the opportunity for on-going data capture. So you can introduce additional 'data gates' for access to content beyond the basic metered threshold, for example after a set number of views in a period (eg 10 stories in a calendar month) or to get access to specific freemium content such as white papers.



Users are required to reconfirm and add to their details on each anniversary of their original registration keeping Marketing Week's database up-to-date with no data more than 12 months old

DATA EXCHANGE

A specific use of content rationing gives access to valuable content in return for agreement to share data with third parties

Granting access to valuable freemium content in return for user data that can be shared with third-party commercial partners has a double benefit of providing additional user information that can also be monetised. The third party might provide the content (eg research results) or might commission the publisher to produce it. In either case they get highly qualified leads and the publisher gains yet more data against the basic user profile.

THE LAWYER

Latest reports

The Lawyer offers access to white papers and special reports in exchange for valuable additional user data. In some cases this exchange provides lead generation for commercial partners

DATA CAPTURE END GOALS

Qualified data is hugely valuable to any business. By using variable and incremental techniques to capture data throughout the access control process you will be able to create a comprehensive view of your customers, merging what they've told you with their website tracking data.

FREE TRIALS

Allowing users to trial premium content and services offers valuable lead generation and conversion opportunities

A key difference between metered access and free trials is that free trials often offer access to the entire service including premium elements. With access to such valuable content, the registration and qualification process usually needs to be more comprehensive than standard registration. This may include taking payment information and even preauthorising these details to be used at the end of the trial.

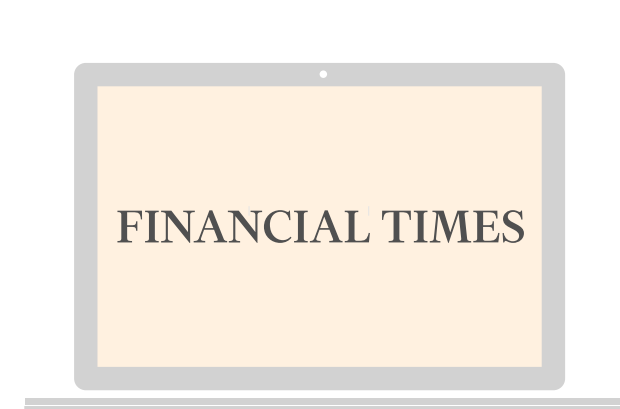


Music Week offers a one-time-only online trial along with a free sample of the digital edition to encourage sampling and generate new prospects

PREMIUM / HARD

'Hard' access control protects the most valuable content and services – if a user wants access then they must complete a transaction

If content is truly valuable to a user then a 'hard' access regime will work. But the provider must be realistic when assessing this value – is the content or service proprietary or can it be found for free elsewhere? Does the timeliness or speed to market of the data make it 'must have'? Does the 'price' match the perceived value to the user? In many cases the transaction is financial but sometimes there might be another type of 'hard' qualification, for example proof the user is a member of a profession.

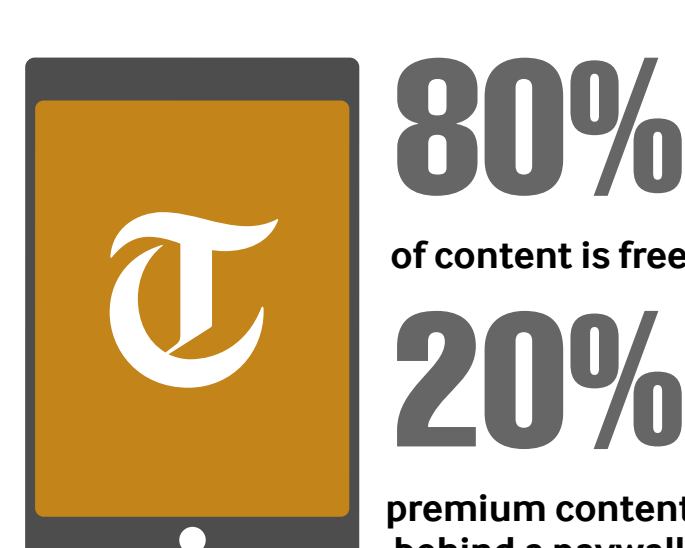


- Very limited ungated taster content
- 4 week digital trial for £1
- Standard plus premium subscriptions

FREEMIUM / LOYALTY

A freemium model works best when the content or service model supports a variety of value propositions and business models

There is always a balance to be struck between the advertising and paid content revenue streams. Freemium models can provide the best of both worlds where overall traffic can support an advertising-based model but specific pockets of paid content can increase the value of specific audience segments. There are a variety of scenarios – for example, payment might be required for access to an archive or, conversely, access to latest updates might be limited. Alternatively there might be some charges for the heaviest or most frequent users.



MEMBERSHIP

In membership models access to content and services is just one part of a wider package of member benefits

Membership might involve hard gates for some or all of the content or services but aspects of a rationed or freemium model might also apply. The key feature of this type of access control is that it forms part of a wider member benefits package that will include offline elements such as entry to events or access to special third-party deals.

theguardian



The Guardian offers a value-added membership package which is heavily promoted via free content

END GOALS

Efficiently and effectively funnelling the user through to the desired transaction is the ultimate goal for any access control regime. This conversion might happen in one step or across many and it might involve the user spending money or supplying data or both.