

Using Premium Newsletters To Drive Value and Retention

Initiative to Engage and Retain Subscribers

About Advance Local



About Advance Local (Cont.)

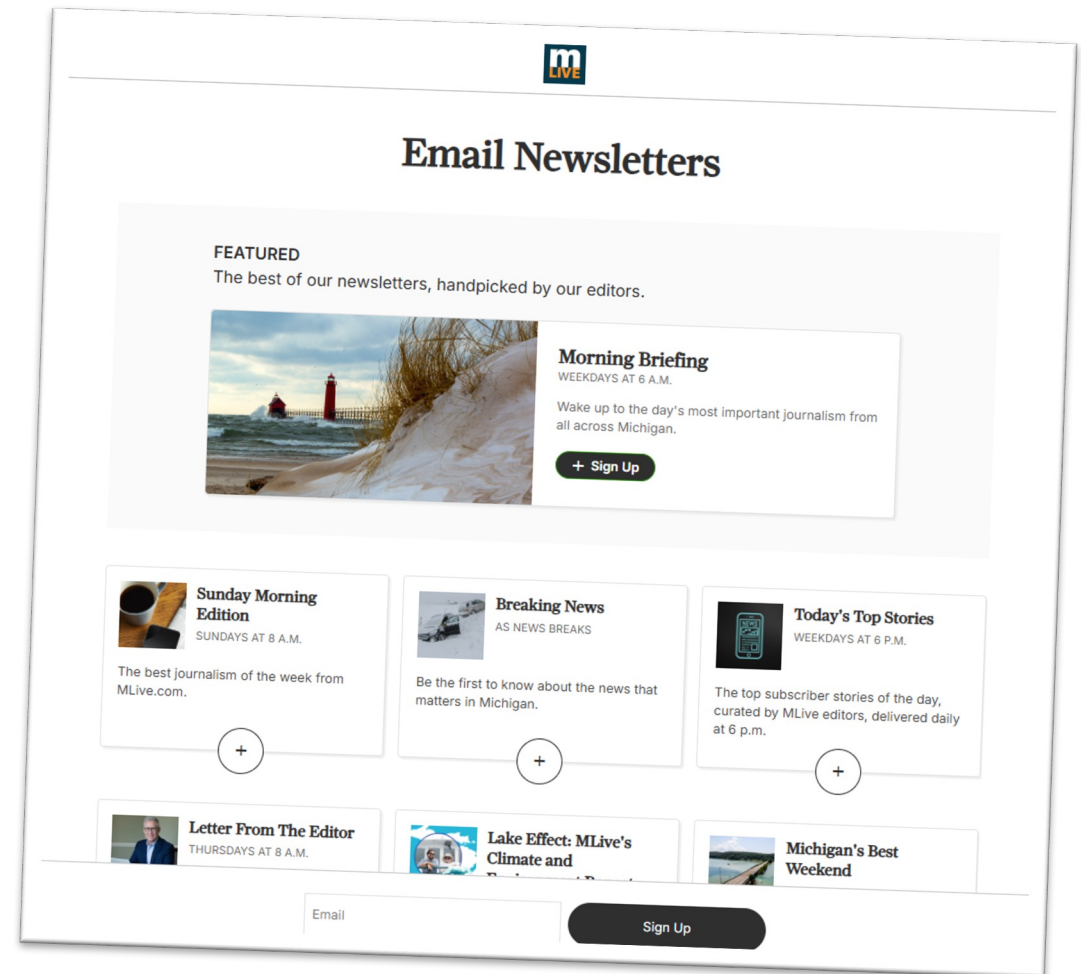


Growing & Engaging Audiences Via Newsletters

Entering 2024, Advance Local had more than 200 free newsletters across 10 US markets.

Our decade-long focus:

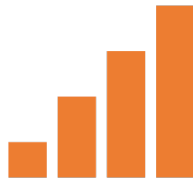
- Growing active audience
- Building frequency to build habit
- Driving meaningful engagement
- Converting readers into paid subscribers



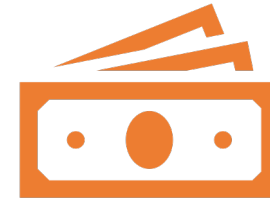
Newsletter Portfolio Attributes



2M+ unique
newsletter subscribers
across 10 markets



Strong engagement
metrics



Significant
contribution to
digital subscriptions



Highly efficient
Workflow

SUBSCRIBER 

However, we did have a gap. Only 4 of our newsletters were exclusively for paying customers as a benefit of subscription.

Building a Retention-Driven Newsletter Program

Strategic Shift: Retention is the New Acquisition

Early results from our first 4 subscriber-only newsletters showed a **35% higher correlation with retention** and up to **50% more on-site engagement** than free newsletters.

This validated the opportunity—and confirmed our need to shift strategy, which is built on **three core pillars**.

1. Value Creation

- Increase digital subscription value through exclusive, personality-driven content

2. Data-Driven Decisions

- Use analytics + newsroom expertise to identify high-impact topics and optimize performance

3. Sustainable Operations

- Build efficient workflows that scale, including AI-assisted content and curation

KPIs: Our Hypotheses

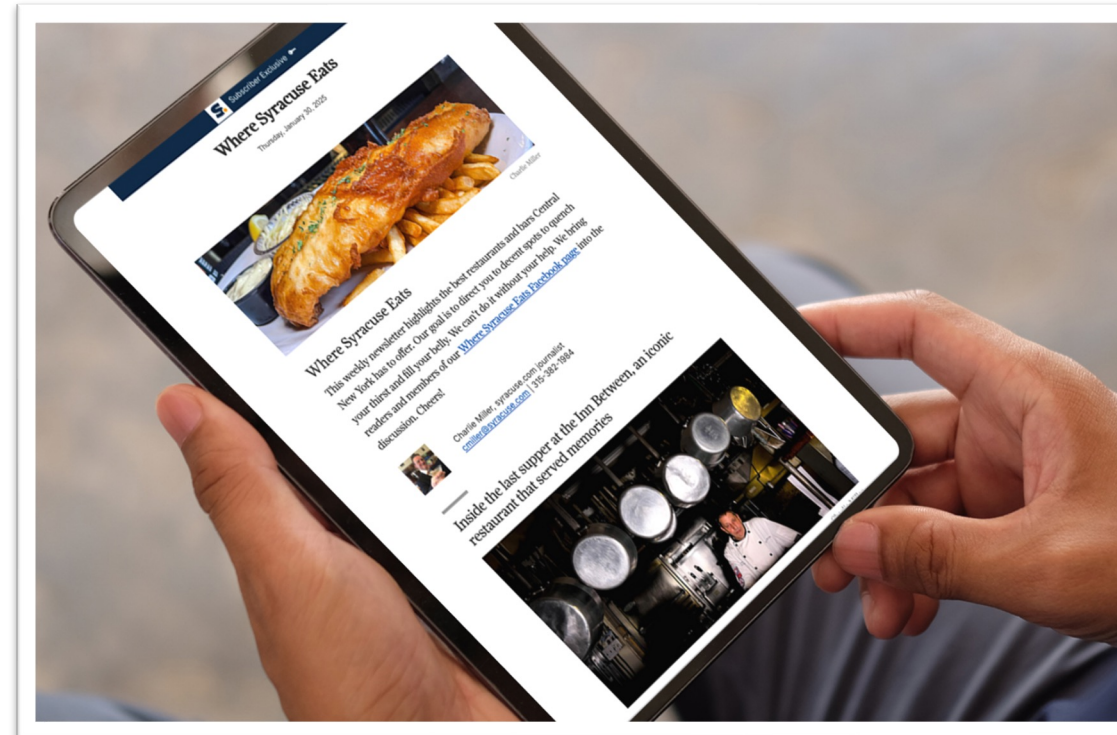
Retention: Newsletter recipients should retain at higher rates than non-recipients

Engagement: Premium newsletters should demonstrate significantly higher open and click rates than free newsletters



Defining a Premium Newsletter Experience

- **Handcrafted.** Written by a staff expert
- **Personality-driven.** Strong voices and views
- **Exclusive.** Only for subscribers, curated for newsletters
- **Premium UX.** User-tested designs, fewer ads
- **Frequency.** Minimum 1x/week
- **Strategically balanced.** Mainly an inbox-first experience but with thoughtful opportunities for clickthrough and on-site engagement



Ex: A UX-Driven Premium Newsletter Experience



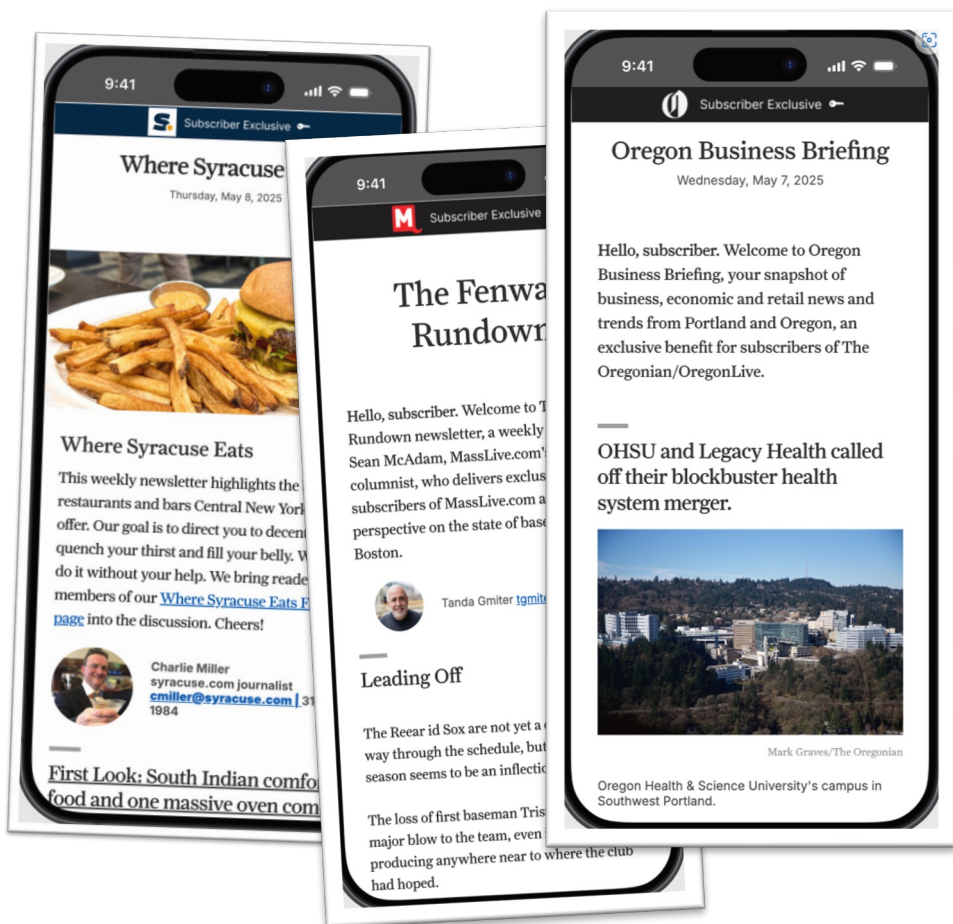
Clear subscriber-only label & opening
writer personal introduction

Nudge modules, Other "Essential" and
behind the scenes stories / content

Product cross promotion, custom
curation of related top story links

Interactive polls, feedback modules,
and closing author note + bio

Expansion: Addressing More Subscriber Interests



We've launched 24 new subscriber-only newsletters over the past year — data-driven and each developed through newsroom collaboration.

- Focused on high-readership categories like sports, politics, food, and business
- Combined audience and research insights to surface viable, valuable topics.
- Converted strong free newsletters that fit the right ingredients.
- Built around trusted local voices — beat reporters with subject expertise, loyal followings, and distinctive tone that connects with readers

Results: Exceeding All Key Performance Metrics

Our new subscriber-exclusive newsletters **delivered exceptional results** across every KPI

Our success with premium newsletters in 2024 provided a strong foundation for expanding Advance Local's subscriber-focused email strategy in 2025



RETENTION RATE

+58% PEAK

Correlation
Average: 29%



OPEN RATE

74% PEAK

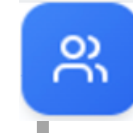
Average: 60%
Target: 55%



CLICK RATE

25% PEAK

Average: 10%
Target: 8%



PAID DIGITAL SUBS
RECEIVING NEWSLETTERS

41K+

+142% YOY

Optimizing for Engagement and Efficiency

Generative AI saves time by writing subject lines, headlines and summaries for human approval — and analyzes engagement to inform future decisions

Interactive features like polls and surveys drive additional engagement and learning

Behavioral insights and user testing help refine template layout and content strategy

Budget bill divides Pennsylvania lawmakers

Pa. Democratic U.S. Sen. John Fetterma said he would oppose the "One, Big, Beautiful Bill" passed by the GOP-controlled House while GOP Sen. Dave McCormick seems poised to support it. (AP file).

Pennsylvania's congressional delegation has split along party lines over President Donald Trump's controversial "One, Big, Beautiful Bill." Republicans are supporting the legislation, while Democrats oppose it.

Top 10 Sections Among the Most Clicked

1. **news** - 6,772 clicks
2. **life** - 1,892 clicks
3. **politics** - 1,121 clicks
4. **weather** - 1,024 clicks
5. **business** - 668 clicks
6. **wolverines** - 568 clicks
7. **public-interest** - 512 clicks
8. **puzzle-society** - 394 clicks
9. **crime** - 383 clicks
10. **obituaries** - 351 clicks

Characteristics of Top Performing Subject Lines

Length and Clarity

- **Short and Direct:** Top-performing subject lines tend to be concise and to the point, typically under 50 characters. They clearly state the topic without ambiguity.
- **Example:** "Neil Goldschmidt dies at 83" (24 characters) and "Oregon's new minimum wage" (23 characters).

Tone and Urgency

- **Urgent and Newsworthy:** Subjects that convey urgency or significant news tend to perform better. This includes announcements of deaths, major policy changes, or significant local events.
- **Example:** Death announcements like "Neil Goldschmidt dies at 83" or urgent policy news like "Oregon's new minimum wage".

Keywords and Topics

- **Local Relevance and Impact:** Subjects that directly impact or resonate with the local audience's daily lives or significant events in the community tend to have higher open rates.
- **Example:** Local political developments ("Gun owners' Measure 114 motion denied"), significant local news ("Chef Naomi Pomeroy drowns in Willamette River").

THIS WEEK'S POLL

Which issue most influenced your vote for U.S. president in the 2024 general election?

- ☐ Candidate's character
- ☐ State of the economy
- ☐ Environment
- ☐ Gun control
- ☐ Health care
- ☐ Immigration
- ☐ Other

m LIVE

* The "Lovable Michigan" newsletter is available only to paying subscribers. On a scale from 1 to 5, where 5 is Significant Value, how much value does this newsletter add to your subscription?

☐ 1 - Less value

☐ 2

☐ 3 - Neutral

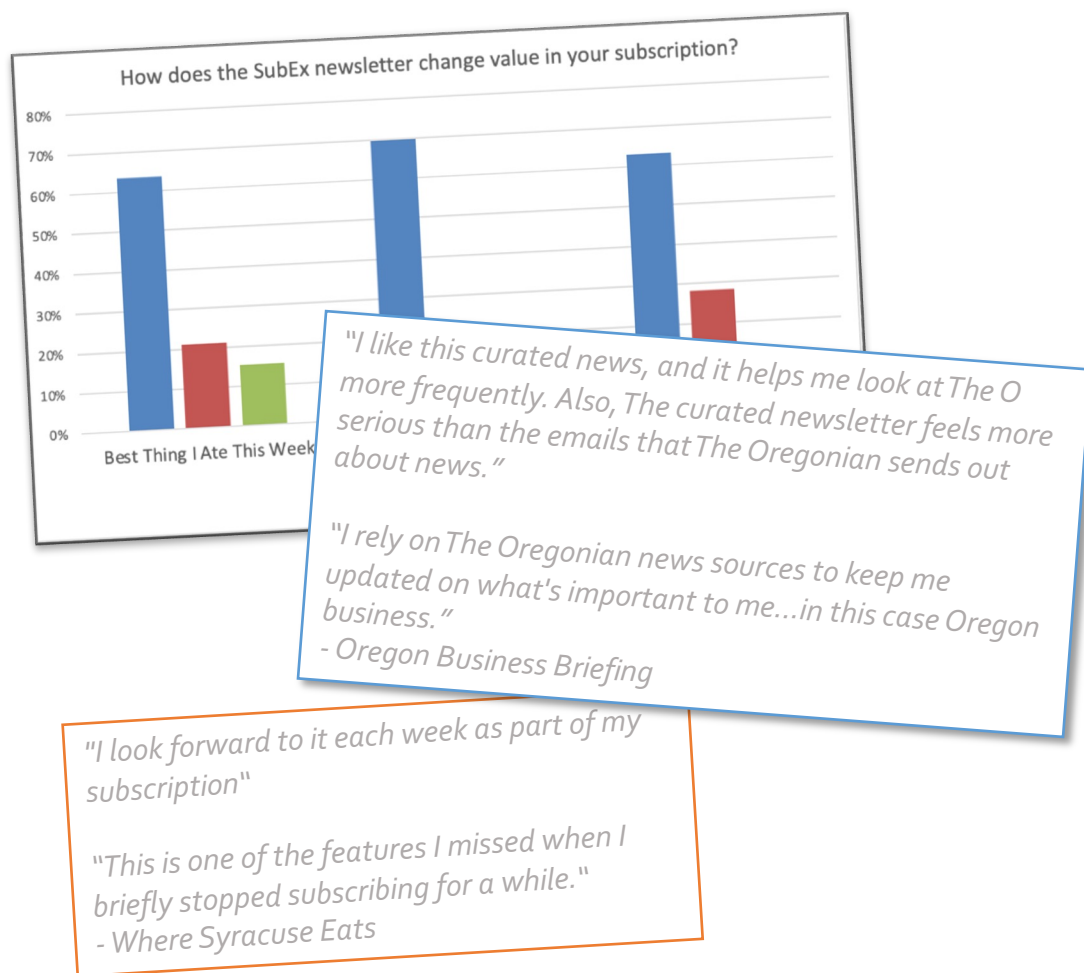
☐ 4

☒ 5 - Significant Value

Briefly share why you chose that answer.

Enter your response

Validating the New Value to Subscribers



Research. Surveys conducted 45–60 days after launch showed high satisfaction with exclusive, relevant content

Feedback loop. Subscriber comments helped identify topics and formats that resonated, guiding strategic improvements

Results. "Content felt relevant, unique, and valuable" and validated that our premium newsletters enhance subscription value and drive retention

Promotion Across Key Touchpoints

Integrating newsletter offerings into subscription **customer journeys**

Triggering emails promoting relevant newsletters based on content interests

Strategic targeting with **personalizing on-site opt-in modules**

Cross newsletter promotion

In-newsletter promotion

Thank you for being a subscriber 🍷

Enjoying this newsletter? Share it with others—they can sign up [here](#). Explore all our subscriber-exclusive [newsletters](#), including a few you might like:

🍷 [Eat. Shop. Go.](#)

🏈 [Penn State Insider](#)

🚌 [High School Sports Highlights](#)

Did someone share this newsletter with you? [Subscribe to PennLive](#) and never miss an issue. Explore all our [newsletters here](#).

Onboarding email



On-site opt-in module

Recap and Look Ahead

Key Takeaways

- Start with what you have—then make it premium
- Secure editorial buy-in early
- Let data guide you — and keep listening
- Design around key retention levers
- Build for sustainability

Our Next Steps

- Continue expanding subscriber-only portfolio
- Deepen insights-gathering through structured feedback
- Refine user experience through testing and iteration
- Scale with efficiency through AI integration