

Case Study

THE IRISH TIMES

**The Irish Times
implements subscription
technology alongside
successful churn
management capabilities**

With the implementation of innovative retention and recovery technology from Aptitude Software, The Irish Times has increased its account win-backs and decreased subscription cancellations.

Aptitude 



Overview

With larger numbers of consumers turning to digital access, publishers are shaping their paid content strategies to take advantage of these opportunities in the market.

The Irish Times, one of Ireland's most widely read newspapers, has a daily reach of 534,000 readers across print and online. With 51 million monthly page views and 8.5 million monthly users, the news publisher saw an opportunity to monetize its digital audience to further drive revenues.

Project requirements

To effectively connect with loyal and highly engaged readers, The Irish Times required a platform which was able to identify and engage its readers, as well as successfully manage them throughout the subscription lifecycle. This led the news publisher to Aptitude who deliver eSuite, the world's smartest subscription and billing platform providing publishers with the freedom to monetize digital content and print publications in real time, for the launch of its digital subscription service.

The standard digital subscription starts at €12 per month with a complete print and digital subscription option at €50 per month, including full digital access and six-day home delivery of the print paper. With 'The Irish Times ePaper', subscribers can access an exact replica of the print newspaper on iOS and Android devices.

To ensure that it could maintain and continue driving revenues, it was vital to The Irish Times that it could also retain its customers. A project requirement was for the news publisher to have access to the eSuite Retention and Recovery module to effectively identify, manage and reduce subscriber churn.



The solution

Powered by eSuite, The Irish Times' metered paywall model enables non-subscribers access to a number of free articles per month and subscribers to receive access to print, mobile and digital content.

eSuite provides key core functionality in The Irish Times systems architecture. This architecture gives The Irish Times a centralized platform that enables the news publisher to manage all its customers and their data, thereby providing an understanding of how to best serve individuals and groups of readers in the future.

Flexible and tailored pricing

eSuite also provides The Irish Times with flexible and tailored pricing and packaging, enabling the news publisher to easily change products and services via the product and subscription management functionality. Provided with greater insight into the habits of its readers, the news publisher can adapt its prices and services to drive audience engagement even higher.

Reduction in cancellations

A key area of focus for the organization was to reduce the number of cancellations due to subscribers whose card payments were failing. Leveraging the Retention & Recovery module in eSuite, The Irish Times has access to a range of functionality to ensure revenues do not decrease due to involuntary churn.

Implementing a number of configurable multi-layered, time-based retry rules, the news publisher can ensure it is taking payment at the optimum time to ensure success. By identifying the ideal time to take payment, The Irish Times has implemented retry schemes so that if taking payment is not successful, it will be tried at various times over a twelve-day period.

The Irish Times has also leveraged the card updater functionality available in the Retention & Recovery module. This technology identifies cards in a subscriber's eWallet due to expire and calls out to the initiating bank prior to the expiration date, requesting the updated details for the card. This reduces the number of card payments failing at the time of the monthly renewal, ensuring the news publisher can maintain as much recurring revenue as possible.

Consistent user experience

As a highly trusted source of news, views and information, it was vital for The Irish Times' customers to continue to use the service the way they wanted. Customers benefit from a wide range of options and a consistent user experience, with the newspaper's brand, look and feel unified and integrated into the payment pages to reflect The Irish Times' website.

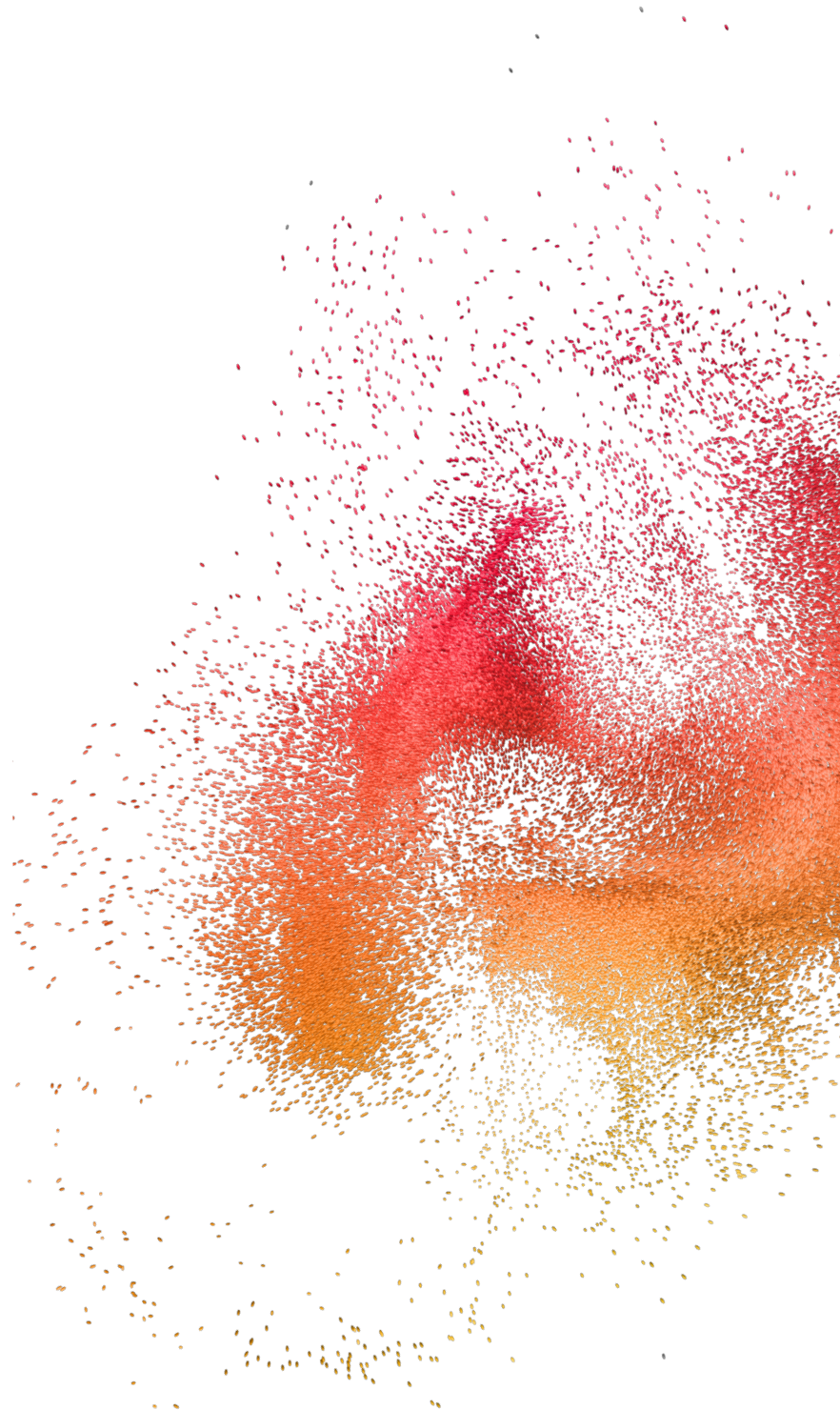
eSuite enables The Irish Times to manage many aspects of the customer journey, from content metering, subscription and entitlement management, to product management and customer service. This functionality provides The Irish Times with business efficiency gains in a number of areas, while accelerating the launch of new products, either internally or through carefully selected third parties.



With the increasing acceptance that digital content needs to be paid for, we believe it is the right time to ask readers for what we think is a modest subscription cost. Working closely with Aptitude we can ensure we understand our audience better and develop our services to keep them returning to The Irish Times.

Liam Kavanagh,
Managing Director

THE IRISH TIMES



Project goals

Centralized customer information

The Irish Times needed a centralized system to store all customer details across its services, from print to digital, while creating a customer-centric service. With this approach at the heart of the business, the news publisher required the ability to report and manage their success across a range of business areas.

Adding new subscribers

With the focus of the new strategy being to improve consumer engagement, The Irish Times required the functionality to attract new audiences and types of readers to its digital services. One of the key ways to do this is by leveraging voucher code technology to create offers and promotions that entice consumers to become subscribers.

Improve subscriber retention

With churn proving a major challenge for subscription services across the media industry, it was one area The Irish Times wanted to manage effectively. The news publisher understood the necessity of focusing on involuntary churn, as well as voluntary, which is why it implemented retention and recovery technology alongside voucher code functionality.

Monetization across platforms

In light of consumers turning more to digital sources to access news, it became apparent that The Irish Times needed to monetize digital audiences alongside its print subscribers in order to continue driving revenues. The launch of its digital subscription and implementing eSuite into the business has enabled The Irish Times to achieve this and successfully manage the different services across a single, integrated platform.



The results

Since going live in 2015, The Irish Times digital subscription has exceeded the news publisher's target, reaching over 136,000 digital and home delivery subscribers. This was attributed to launching digital subscription packages and combined digital and print bundles (where home delivery is available), with the news publisher doubling the number of its subscribers in the first year.

The Irish Times now has a combined total weekly audience of 975,000 and 58 million monthly pageviews. This shows that, in keeping with evolving digital consumption habits, The Irish Times is maintaining its position as a highly trusted source for news, opinion and analysis which continues to attract readers.

The implementation of the retention and recovery technology has enabled the news publisher to increase its account win-backs and decrease subscription cancellations. Since the retry functionality was implemented, the involuntary churn rate has fallen from its highest point of 3.5% to achieve a low of 1.1%.

With The Irish Times acquiring revenue from both print and digital, the news publisher is securely positioned to meet the ongoing demands of its audience and their reading habits.



We are delighted with the success of the digital strategy and are excited to see how our relationship with Aptitude will support us as we continue to innovate along with the changing demands of audiences and their reading habits.

Derek Wilson,
Technology Director

THE IRISH TIMES

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