

# CLAVES 2021

## El Mundo Premium

What we did and what we learned in our first year of paywall business

**Germán Frassa - Digital Product & Audience Development offer, Unidad Editorial**  
**December 9th, 2020**



**ELMUNDO**

# Who we are

# El Mundo in a nutshell

## ELMUNDO

- Founded in 1989
- Second largest printed daily newspaper in Spain (80k copies, 650k daily readers).
- One of digital top news properties in Spain (+20m monthly uniques)
- E-replica launched in Oct 2010
- Launched its freemium paywall in Oct 2019
- +50k digital paying subscribers (as of Sept 2020)

As per Wikipedia:

- The country's 'newspaper of record', along with El País
- Centre-right, with independent and liberal overtones (vs. centre-left El País).
- Played a key role in uncovering a number of corruption and political scandals through the years.






# Unidad Editorial in a nutshell

- Created in 2007 from the merger of Grupo Recoletos and Unedisa
- Fully owned by Italian media conglomerate RCS MediaGroup, publisher of **Corriere della Sera** and **Gazzetta dello Sport**, and organizer of classic **Giro di Italia** cycling event
- Besides El Mundo, UE is the publisher of the leading Spanish newspapers in sports (**Marca**) and business (**Expansión**)
- 2019 Financials:  
Revenue: 295m €  
2019 EBITDA: 48,3m €  
2019 EBIT: 37,2m €



# What we did

# Our Premium offer since September 2019

Orbyt	Premium <small>RECOMENDADO</small>	Papel + Orbyt + Premium
		
La versión digital de tu periódico en papel	Acceso ilimitado a todo el contenido web	Todos los formatos para toda la familia
<b>1€/mes durante 2 meses</b> después 7,99€/mes	<b>1€/mes durante 2 meses</b> después 7,99€/mes	62,83€ Ahorra un 44% <b>34,99€ / mes</b>
<a href="#">Lo quiero</a>	<a href="#">Lo quiero</a>	<a href="#">Lo quiero</a>
Descubre sus ventajas	Descubre sus ventajas	Descubre sus ventajas
Descargable y con acceso desde cualquier dispositivo, incluso sin conexión.	 Nunca el periodismo de calidad ha estado tan a tu alcance	 Incluye un año GRATIS de Legáfitas ESTÁNDAR, valorado en 240€

- Freemium model: approx 15% of articles behind paywall (now 20%, plans to gradually grow)
- Paywalled content: all opinion pieces + top content (exclusive pieces, reports, analysis, etc.)
- Price: 1€ trial, then €7.99/month or €69/year (replica access not included)
- Payment methods: debit/credit cards, Paypal

# How we did it

## 1. **Before the launch:**

Reorg: cross-platform "content factory" + transversal product/tech support

## 2. **Launch, learn, and adapt:**

Finding the right balance between service and business

Focus on long-term revenue

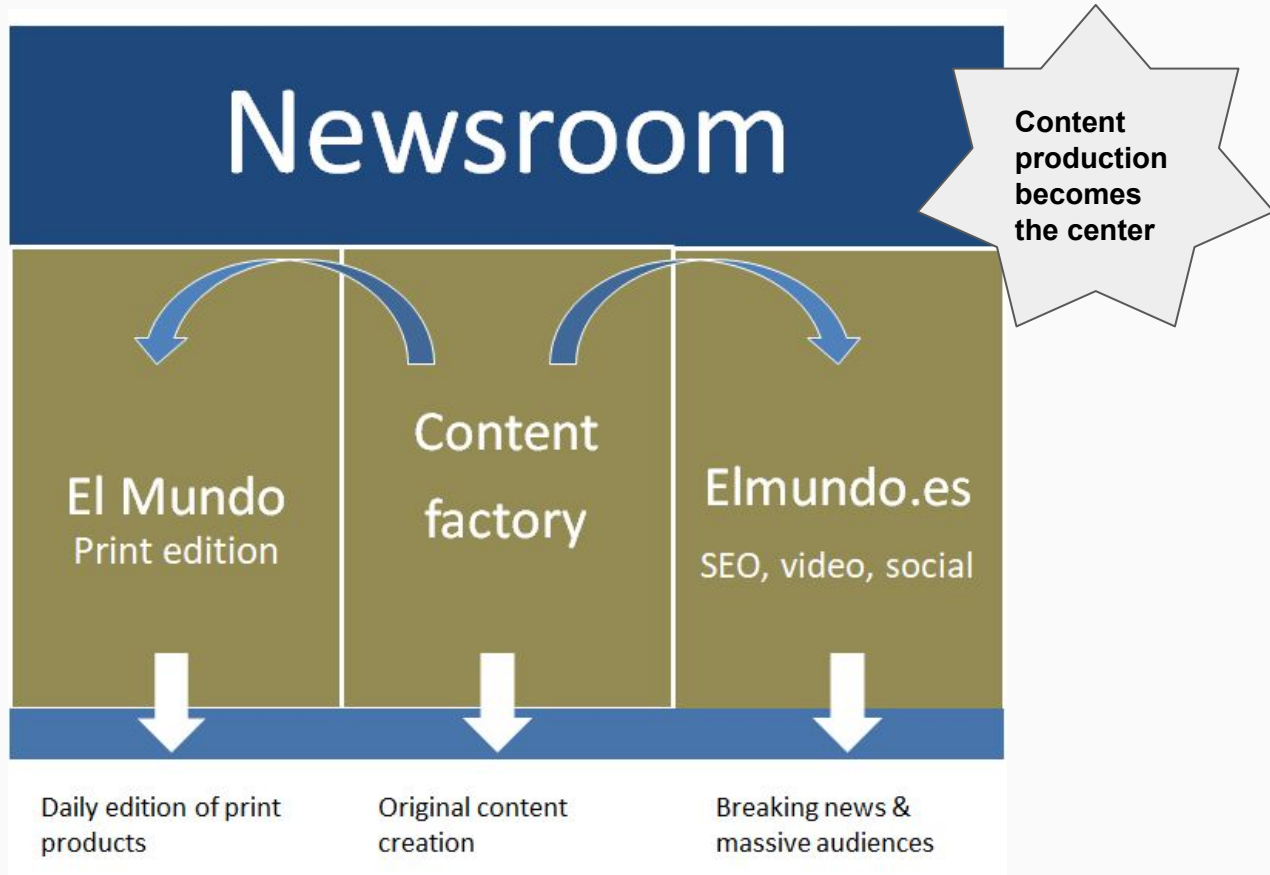
## 3. **Next steps**

Getting the right metrics in the newsroom

Going from static to dynamic

Going from trial-and-error to structured experimentation

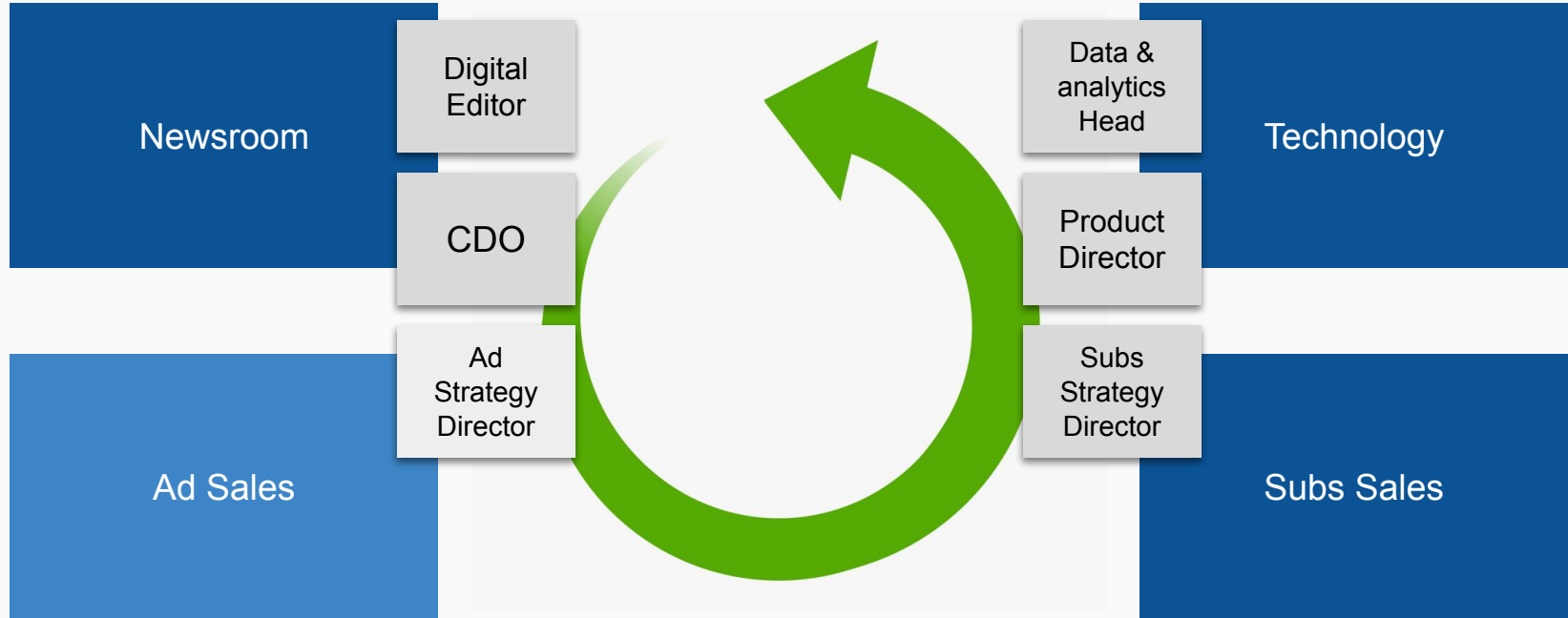
# Before: newsroom reorg







# Before: Core Team to follow-up



# Before: Keeping it simple

We launched upon a 100% static paywall, based on the same tech stack used by RCS since 2016, so:

- No dynamic pricing
- No dynamic paywall
- No AI or Big Data (mostly)
- No paper/digital bundles out of the box

# What we learned

# After Launch: to close or not to close?

March 2019: Global media debate over coronavirus coverage: paywalls were lifted, softened or even postponed to free covid-19 coverage

We decided to open **only** coronavirus content that could be strictly categorized as “public service”

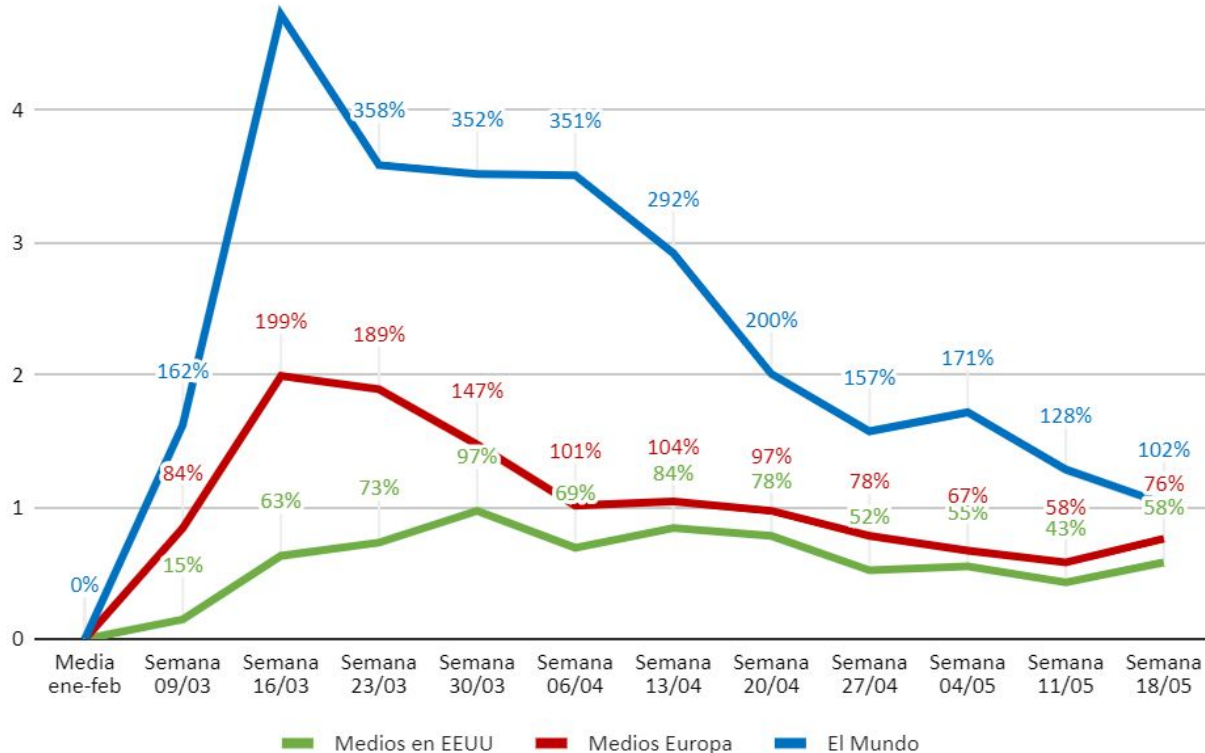
This was critical to success: we **tripled** our subscriber portfolio in the first two months of the pandemic.

The few complaints were managed through call center, plus a letter from the editor explaining the decision.



# After launch: The “Covid-19 effect”

Change in Elmundo.es paywall subscriber additions by week vs Jan-Feb



Source: UE Data (El Mundo) and Piano (US and Europe)

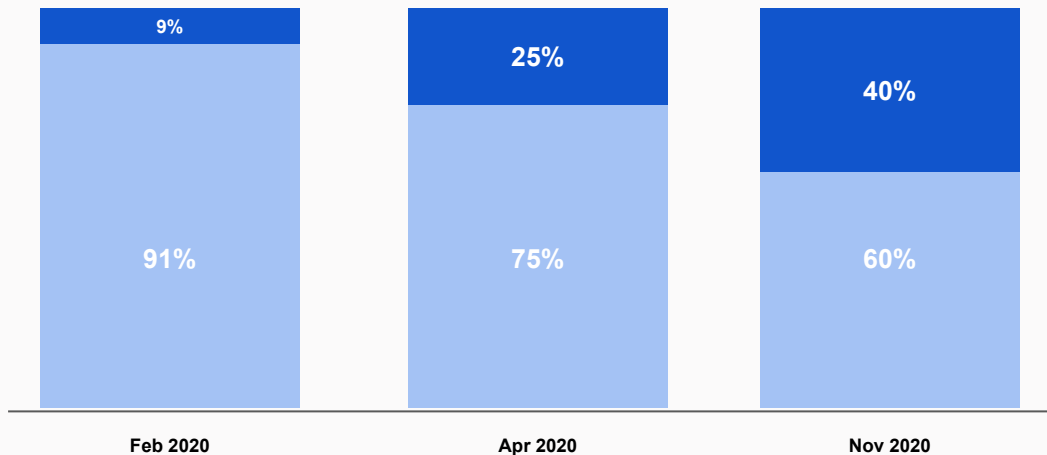
Being early allowed us to catch the pandemic-related wave of subscriptions.

You can only benefit from business opportunities as long as you are “out in the wild”, actually doing business

# After launch: Adapt as you go

- 'On the spot' focus switch from monthly to annual customers

**Type of billing of premium subscribers  
(Feb vs. April 2020, % of portfolio)**



## Aggressive annual pricing

From €80 to €47, then €59, then €69

## Tie-in promotions

1 year of free legal support

## A/B testing

Modify preview article page to show annual offer as well; show annual pricing by default in landing page



# Next Steps

## **Getting the right metrics in the newsroom**

- Starting to use a variation on the 'Quality Reads' FT concept (based on Chartbeat's Quality Pageviews) to have engagement as a proxy for conversion

## **Going from a static to a dynamic paywall**

- Implementing Piano platform to manage dynamic content recommendations and pricing

## **Going from trial-and-error to structured experimentation**

- After 9-month GNI Subscription Lab consultancy workshop, now adopting 'North Star' methodology, including a revamped governance model, a 12-month action plan, and a systematic generation of outcomes/hypothesis/tests for continuous improvement



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