

Publishers Weigh-In on How to Better Monetize Online Content

Background: Publisher Roundtable

[Publisher Roundtable](#) is a community sharing platform powered by [Netpop](#) designed to let online publishers collaborate and learn how to grow their websites more effectively. Together, publishers can generate benchmarks around audience growth, content and monetization. Designed to benefit content publishers of all types and sizes, the goal of Publisher Roundtable is to arm publishers with the objective data and insights they need to make more informed business and marketing decisions.

Topic for Fall 2014: Monetization

What can publishers do to improve how they monetize the content on their sites?

A total of 427 online publishers participated between July 3rd and September 2nd, 2014. Members of Publisher Roundtable were invited to participate. Marketing partners, Viglink and sovrn, also reached out to their contacts in the publishing community to participate.

The Publisher Roundtable community now numbers more than 700 publishers, representing over 150 million monthly uniques. To find out about the characteristics of the Publisher Roundtable community, please refer to the “Community Profile” information at the end of this report.

Key Topics

1. Where to Begin

What should publishers do first to monetize? Next? And after that? This report provides a roadmap.

What should publishers who are just starting out do first? next? and after that? This report provides a roadmap for newbies so they face fewer hurdles and see results more quickly. A closer look will be paid to publishers who are newer to monetization, as their experiences are likely more new and relevant to those just starting out.

2. Getting to the Next Level

What should publishers do to improve their monetization performance? This report offers suggestions.

What should publishers do to improve their monetization performance? What are the most important tactics to focus on? Should different types of sites be focusing on different things? This report examines the top tactics, offering tips to publishers of different sizes, tenure and vertical.

3. Picking a Partner

Not sure which ad network or what to look for to help you monetize? This report reveals some of the more commonly used ad networks and why publishers like them.

Looking for an ad network to help you monetize? The “Key Findings” and “Next Steps” sections will offer advice on what to look for when choosing an ad network and how long it makes sense to “test” a network before committing long term.

4. Monetization Options

What should you use to monetize? This report helps you decide which options to try and approximately how many to use in total.

So many options! What should publishers be using to help monetize their site? Which approaches are publishers most satisfied with? Which ones are generating the greatest share of revenues? This report offers a comprehensive look at the major monetization options to help publishers decide how to allocate their time and budget effectively.

5. Expectations vs. Reality

Do the expectations publishers have when they start monetizing match what they achieve? Find out.

Are publishers' expectations being matched? Has monetization been harder or easier than they expected? Can publishers accurately predict what they will be making next year? This report examines the mindset of publishers when they start the process compared to what they face in reality. The "Key Findings" and "Next Steps" sections will help publishers who are new to monetization set the appropriate expectations and plan accordingly.

6. Monetization Report Card

How do publishers grade themselves and the industry on monetization? Do larger sites perform better than smaller ones? This "report card" provides an honest assessment.

How well do publishers think they're doing? How well do they think the industry is doing to support them? Do certain types of publishers have a more positive outlook? This report provides an honest assessment of the online publishing ecosystem with the aim of giving the industry a benchmark for mutual growth and improvement.

7. Non-Monetizers

Hesitant to start monetizing? This report shares the attitudes and ideas of other publishers like you.

What are the barriers for publishers getting started? When are they thinking they'll start and which ad networks and options are on their radar screens to try?

8. Community Profile

Who makes up the Publisher Roundtable community? See that stats on audience size, annual revenues, geography and more.

9. The Independent Web

How do topics group together across the Independent Web? This map shows you. It may also spark ideas on how to expand the topics you cover.

Monetization: Where to Begin

as of 09/02/2014

What should publishers do *first* to monetize? *Next*? And *after* that? This report provides a roadmap.

Key Findings

- Publishers consider **content targeted ads** the quickest and easiest monetization option
- **Mobile ads, link tools (affiliates) and behavioral targeted ads** are next in ease/speed
- Other monetization options take more time and effort to implement

Next Steps

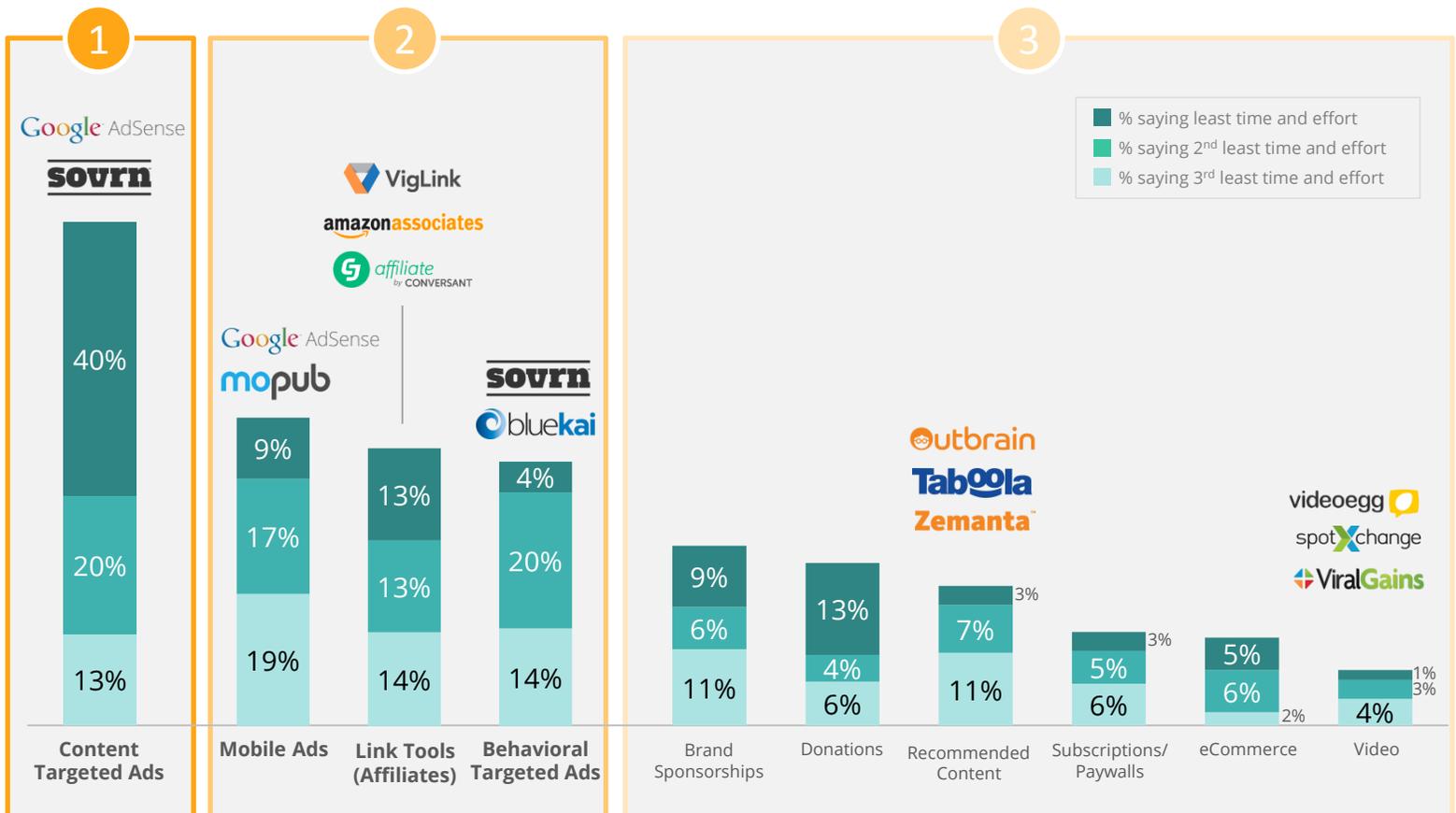
- Start with **content targeted ads**
- Then move to **mobile ads, link tools (affiliates) and/or behavioral targeted ads**
- Looking for help? Consider the companies below for support in **meeting your goals**

➔ Go to the Discussion board  on Publisher Roundtable to dig into this topic more.

Most Efficient & Effortless Tools

Easier

Harder



Monetization: Getting to The Next Level

as of 09/02/2014

What should you do to improve your monetization performance? This report offers suggestions.

Key Findings

- **Ad network selection, custom sponsorships** and **ad placement** are the most important factors

- **Larger pubs** emphasize direct sales and ad placement
- **Smaller pubs** emphasize creating affiliate-oriented content and syndicating/sharing content

Next Steps

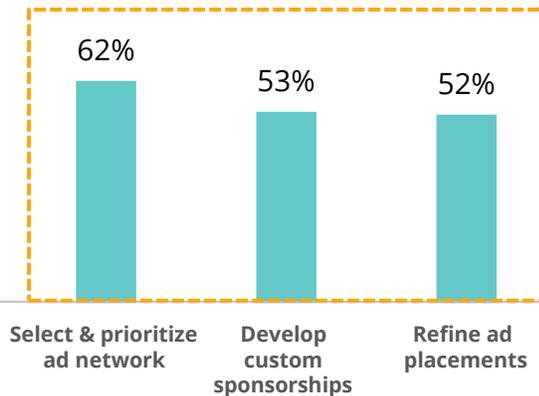
- Evaluate your **ad networks carefully** and **develop custom sponsorship opportunities**

- **Larger pubs:** focus on building direct sales channels and refining ad placements
- **Smaller pubs:** focus on promoting quality content over social media

➔ Go to the discussion board  on Publisher Roundtable to dig into this topic more.

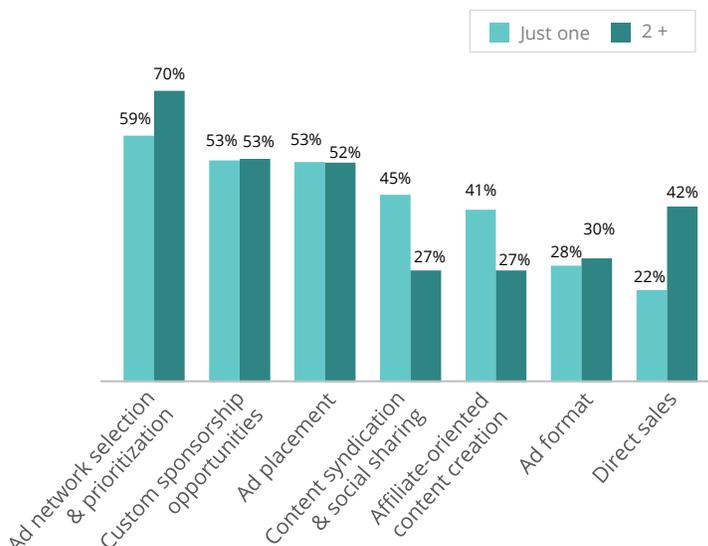
Importance of Monetization Strategies

(% ranking 1st, 2nd or 3rd in importance)

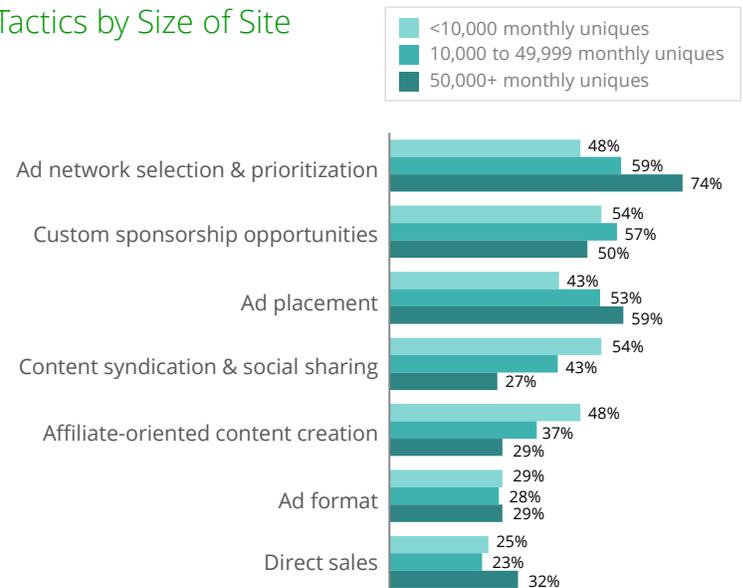


Q: Which strategies do publishers rank first, second or third in importance?

Tactics by Size of Staff



Tactics by Size of Site



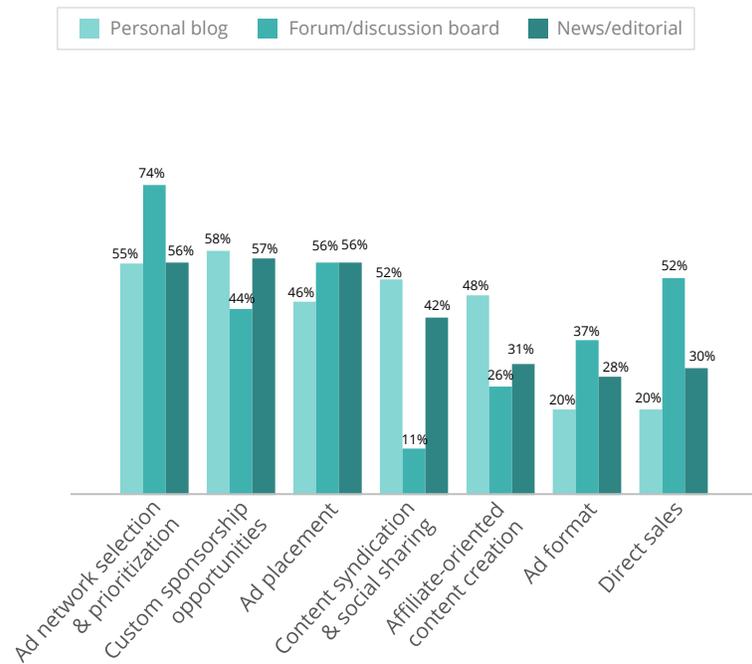
Monetization: Getting to The Next Level

as of 09/02/2014

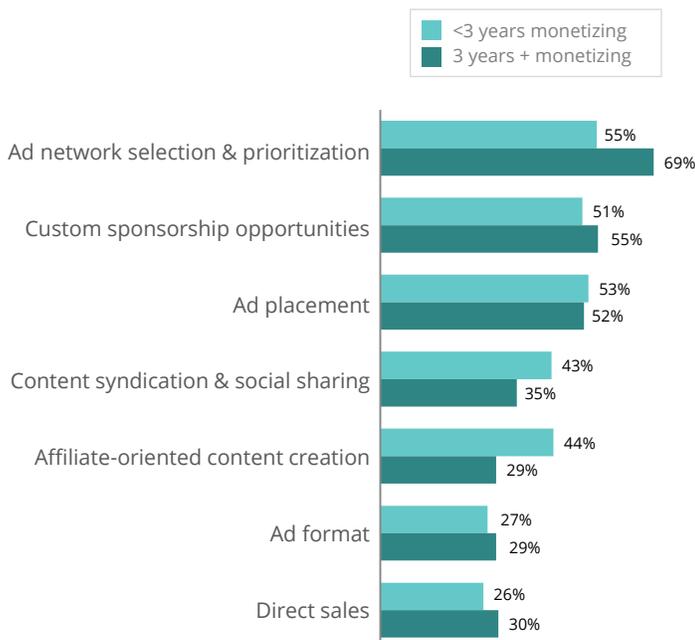
Tactic Preferred by Content Categories



Tactics by Type of Site

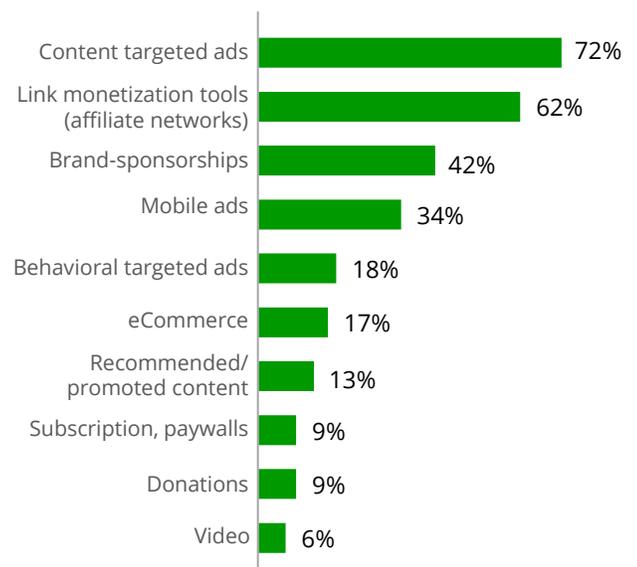


Tactics by Experience Monetizing



 See Options report for more ideas

Percent Using Monetization Options



Monetization: Picking a Partner

as of 09/02/2014

Not sure which ad network or what to look for to help you monetize? This report reveals some of the more commonly used ad networks and why publishers like them.

Key Findings

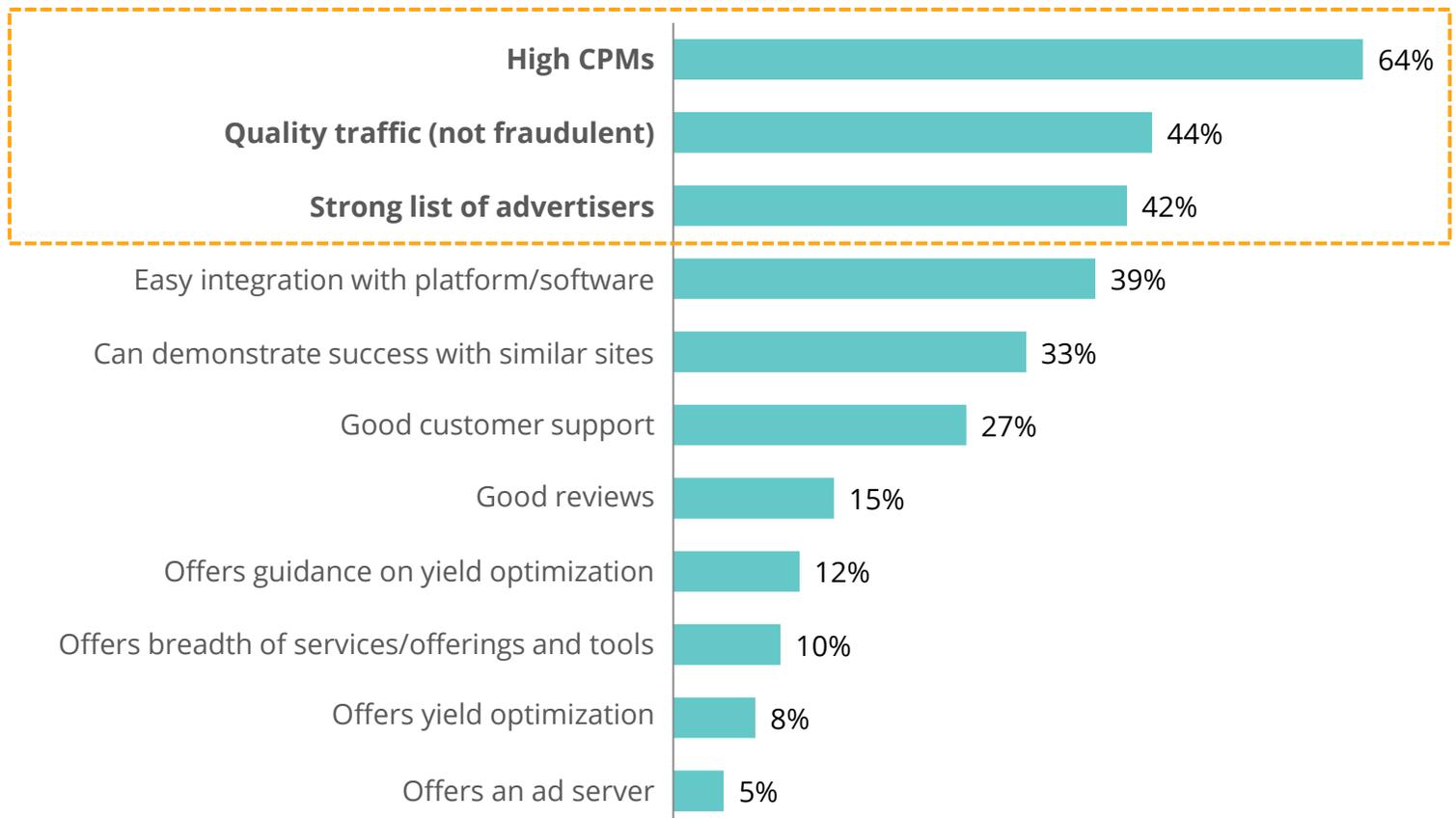
- Publishers use **3.3 ad networks** on average; larger sites use more (4.0)
- Publishers look for networks that deliver **high CPMs**, **quality traffic** and a **strong list of advertisers**
- Publishers recommend testing a network for **1.8 months** (on average) before engaging long-term

Next Steps

- Consider selecting **3 to 4 networks** and plan to spend **2 months** testing each one
- Check out **tools** and **catalogues** such as [VigLink Merchant Explorer](#) to compare advertisers' commission rates.
- Consider **sovrn** and **VigLink**, recommended (respectively) for their **performance** and **ease**

➔ Go to the Discussion board  on Publisher Roundtable to dig into this topic more.

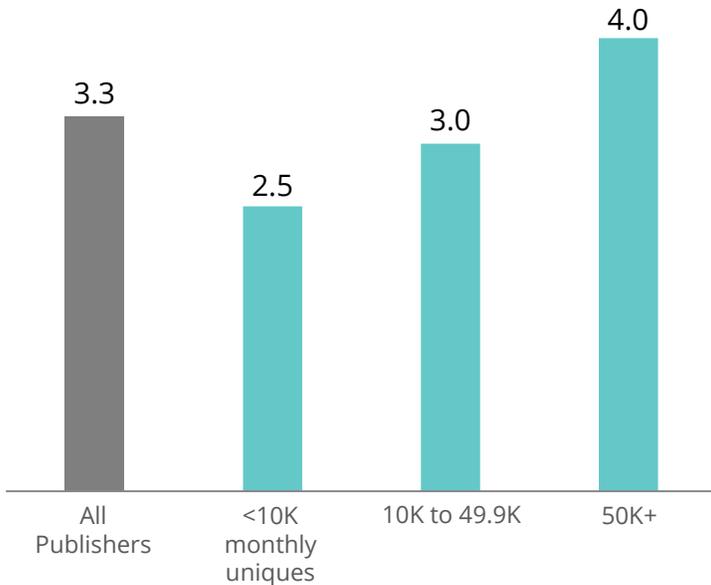
What to Look for When Selecting an Ad Network



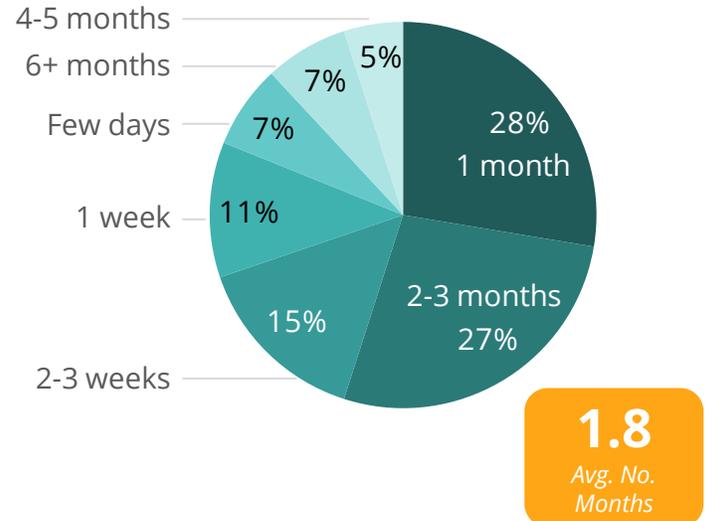
Monetization: Picking a Partner

as of 09/02/2014

Avg. # of Networks Used by Size of Site



How Long to Test Network?



Recommended Networks



"**Google AdSense** gives reliable and healthy payouts, customization options, ties in with AdWords and Analytics, and mobile monetization."



"**sovrn** helped me get started when others wouldn't. I have better results with them than anyone else."



"**DoubleClick** is integral to proper ad serving and monetization. The tools work very well and are easy to use."



"**Amazon Associates** is easy and most people shop with Amazon. They are also prompt, have good support, and make me the most revenue."



"**VigLink** makes it easy to manage affiliate marketing campaigns. It is easy to implement, with both a commercial and customer department at your disposal."



"**BlogHer** offers more opportunity and personalized treatment."



"**CJ** has good reporting with a wide network and good tools."

Monetization Options

as of 09/02/2014

What should you use to monetize? This report helps you decide which options to try and approximately how many to use in total.

Key Findings

- Publishers typically use between **2 and 4 monetization options**
- **Content targeted ads** and **brand sponsorships** have the highest use and satisfaction
- **Link monetization tools (affiliates)** are widely used by large and small sites alike.

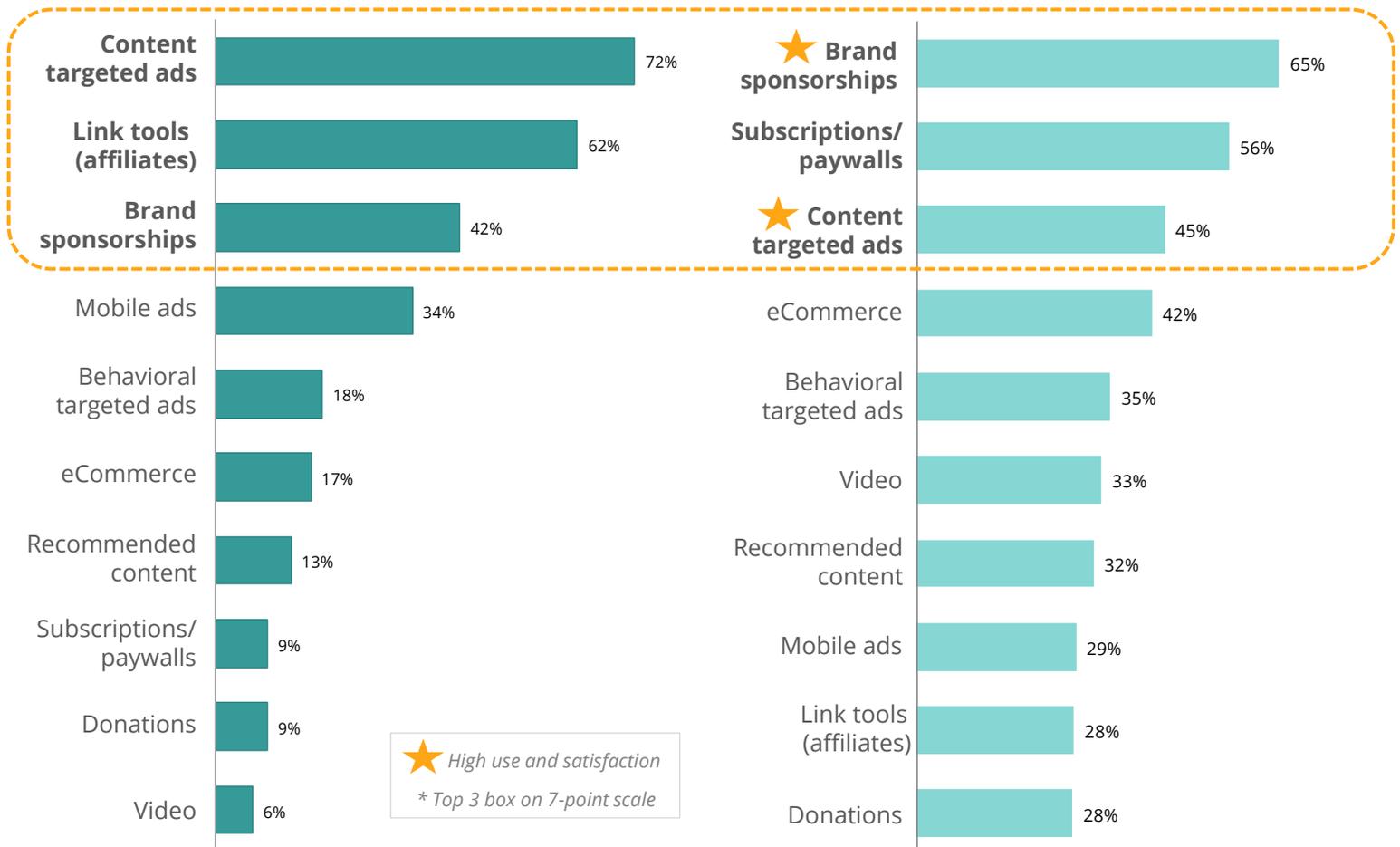
Next Steps

- Focus on **content targeted ads** and **brand sponsorships**, both widely used and effective
- **Link monetization tools (affiliates)** generate the majority of revenues for smaller sites
- Don't overlook **subscriptions/paywalls** and **eCommerce**; fewer pubs use them but those that do are very satisfied

➔ Go to the discussion board  on Publisher Roundtable to dig into this topic more.

Current Use of Monetization Options

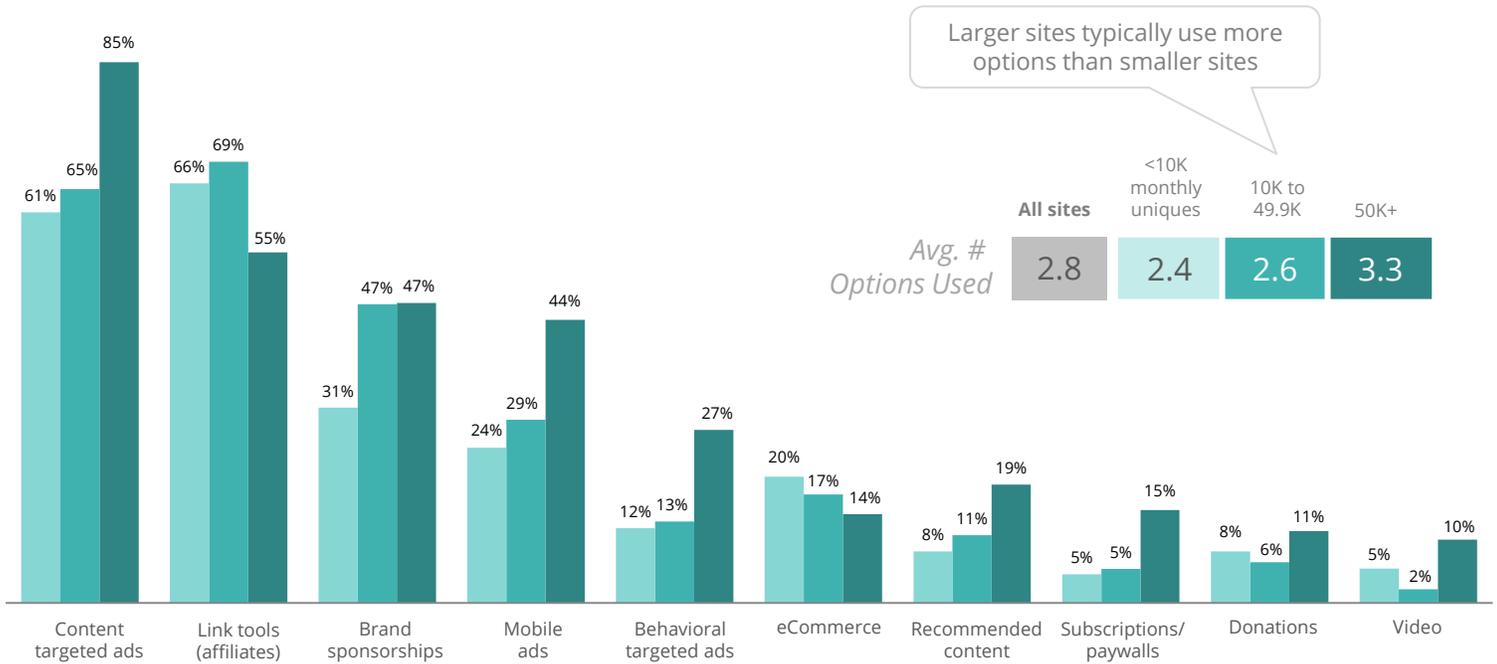
Satisfaction with Monetization Options



Monetization: Options

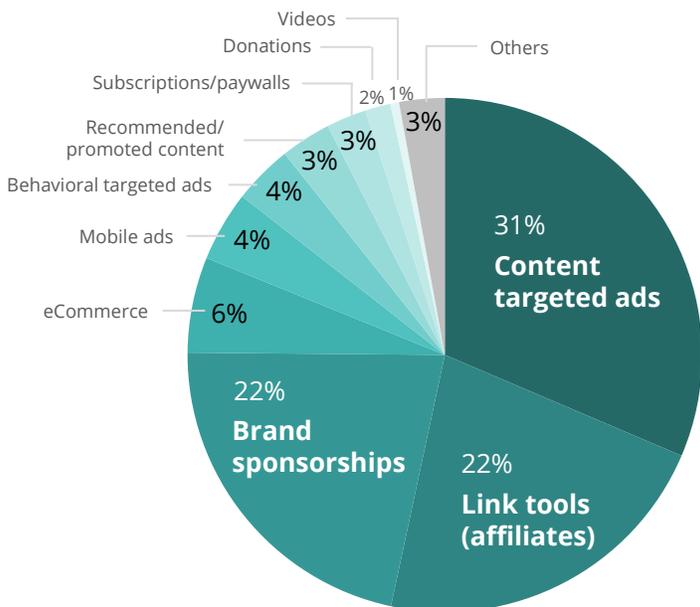
as of 09/02/2014

Use by Audience Size

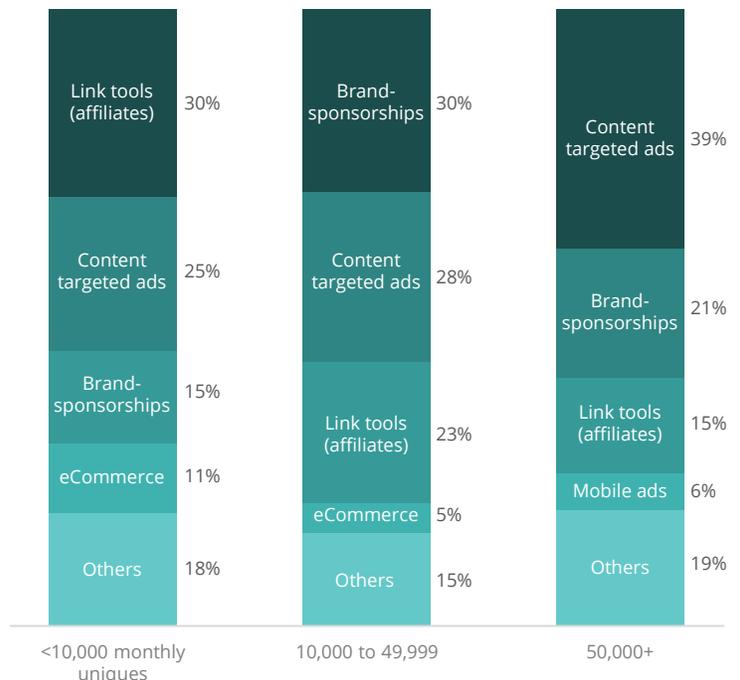


Share of Revenue

2/3 of all revenue is generated through content targeted ads, affiliate networks, and brand sponsorships



Share of Revenue by Size



Monetization: Expectations vs. Reality

as of 09/02/2014

Do the expectations publishers have when they start monetizing match what they achieve? Find out.

Key Findings

- Publishers have **very different experiences**
- **Larger pubs** have a much easier time predicting their income more accurately
- Nearly 1 in 4 **don't know what to expect** when they start monetizing the content on their site

Next Steps

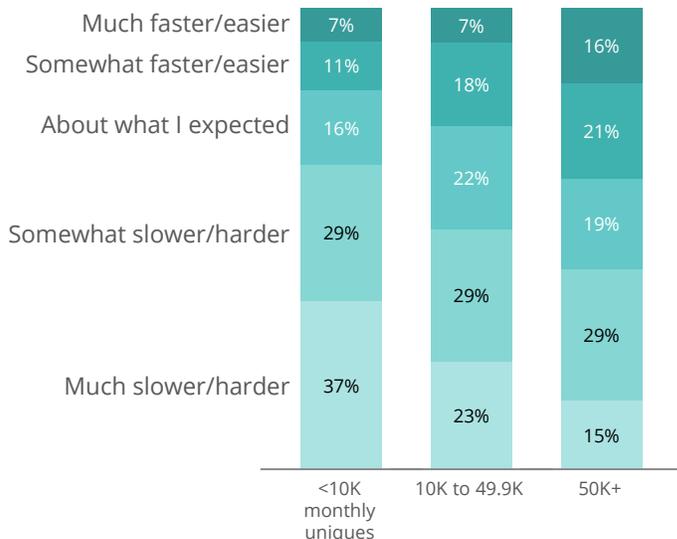
- Expect a long learning curve; **patience and persistence** is required to succeed
- There is no "silver bullet": Use **multiple methods**, **be diligent** and **stick with it**
- **Want to learn more? Check out these reports:**
 - "Where to Begin"
 - "Getting to the Next Level"
 - "Picking a Partner"

➔ Go to the discussion board  on Publisher Roundtable to dig into this topic more.

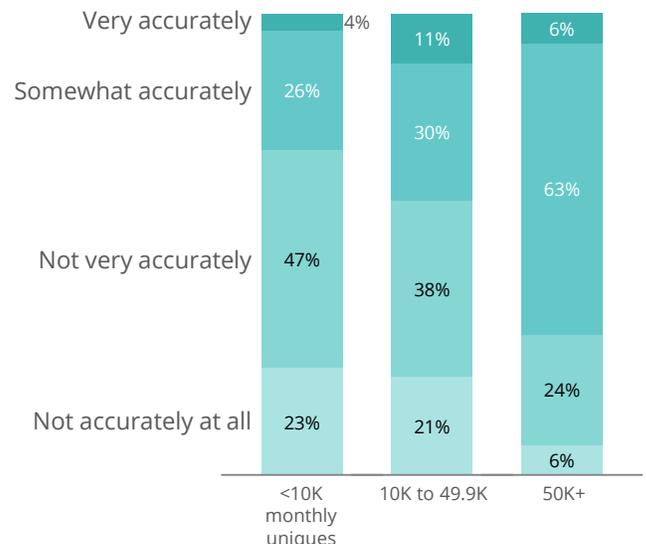
Does Your Monetization "Reality" Match Your Initial Expectations?



Has it Been Faster/Easier or Slower/Harder?



How Accurately Can You Predict Income?



Monetization Report Card

as of 09/02/2014

How do publishers grade themselves and the industry on monetization? Do larger sites perform better than smaller ones? This "report card" provides an honest assessment.

Key Findings

- **Publishers** grade themselves a "C" in monetization
- Publishers grade **the industry** a "C" in how much it does to help them
- **Larger pubs** are only slightly more positive – grading themselves and the industry a "C+"

Next Steps

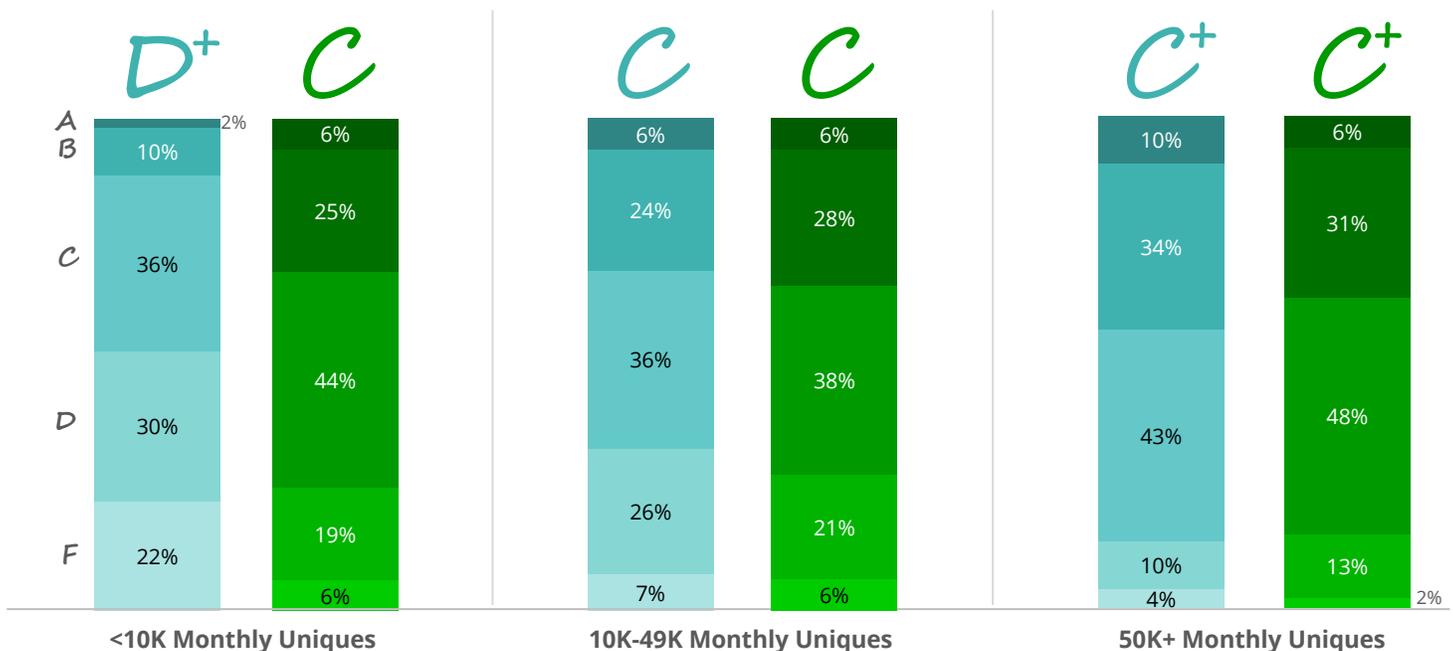
- If you're feeling disgruntled about the state of monetization, [you are not alone!](#)
- **For strategic ideas and guidance, go to:**
 - "Where to Begin"
 - "Getting to the Next Level"
 - "Picking a Partner"

➔ Go to the Discussion board  on Publisher Roundtable to dig into this topic more.

Publisher vs. Industry Report Card



Publisher vs. Industry by Size of Site



Monetization: Non-Monetizers

as of 09/02/2014

Hesitant to start monetizing? This report shares the attitudes and ideas of other publishers like you.

Key Findings

- **Biggest barriers to monetizing:**
 - Not knowing what to do
 - [Not having enough traffic](#)

- Many are discouraged: Nearly 1 in 3 say they **tried and failed in the past**
- **Time** and **money** are also factors preventing publishers from starting to monetize

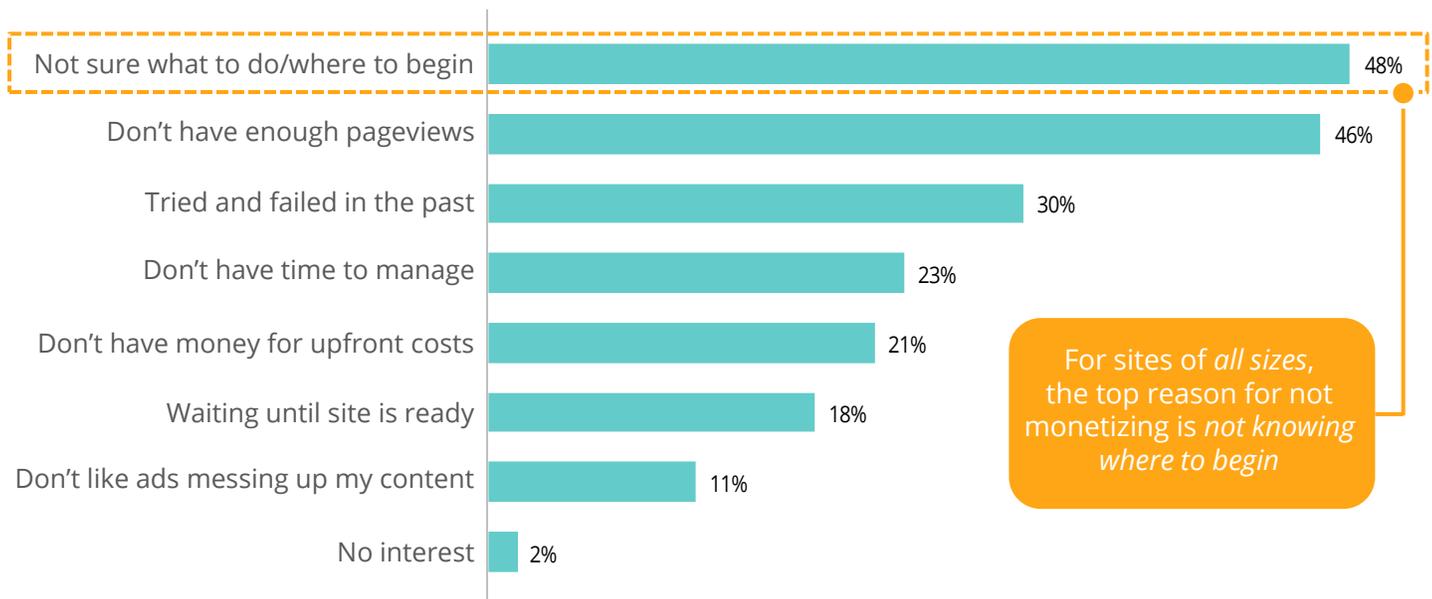
Next Steps

- [Don't delay!](#) Start small and learn as you go

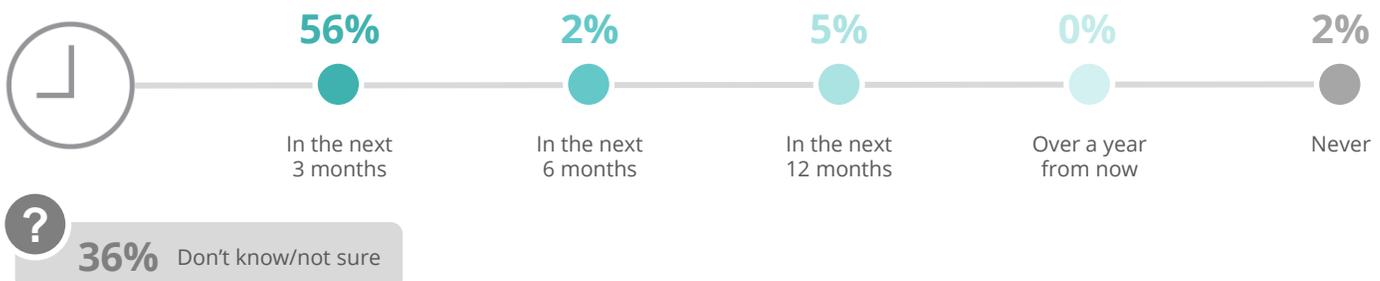
- Consider the **ad networks** shown on Page 2 of this report
- **Refer to these other reports for guidance:**
 - "Where to Begin"
 - "Getting to the Next Level"
 - "Picking a Partner"

➔ Go to the Discussion board  on Publisher Roundtable to dig into this topic more.

Barriers to Monetizing Site



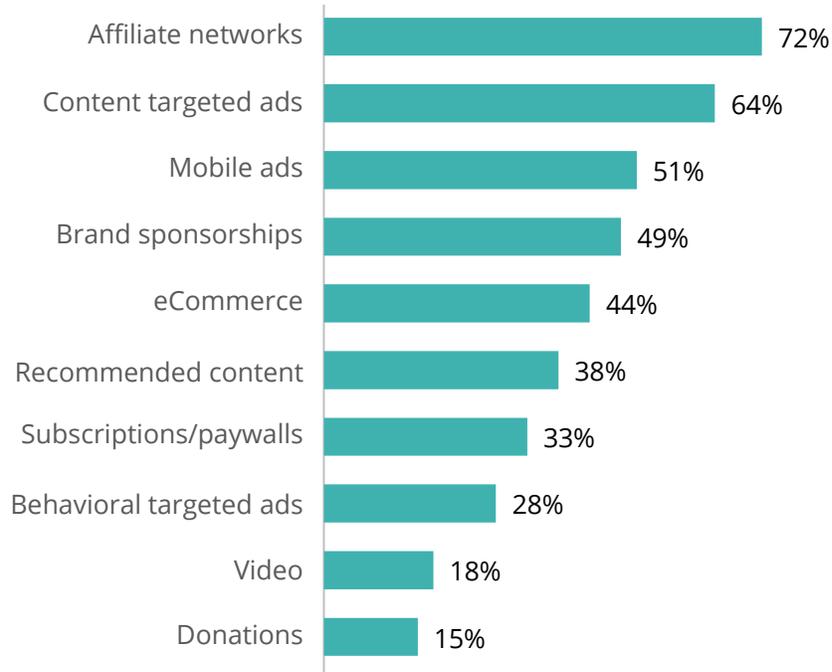
When Plan to Start Monetizing



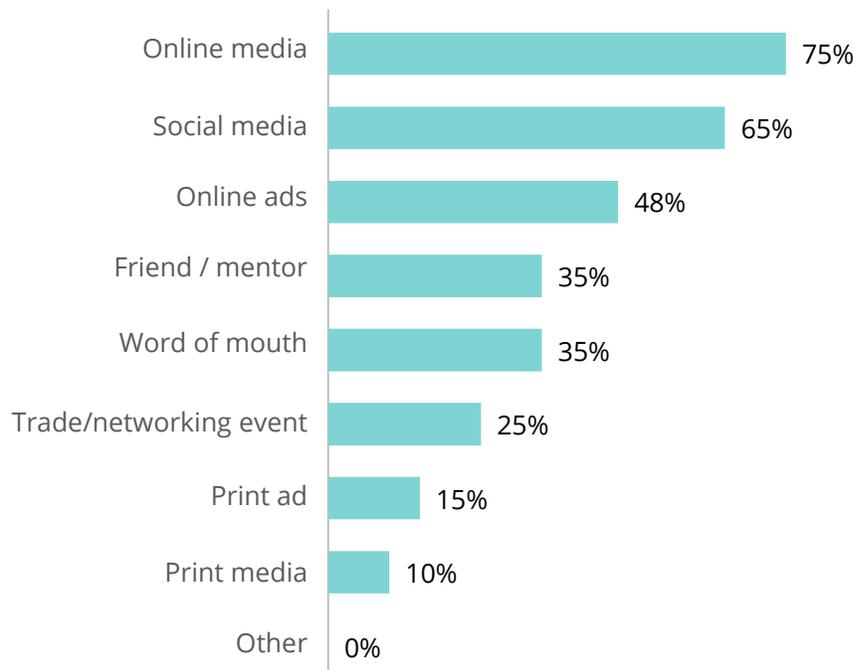
Monetization: Non-Monetizers

as of 09/02/2014

Monetization Options Under Consideration



Resources for Potential Improvement

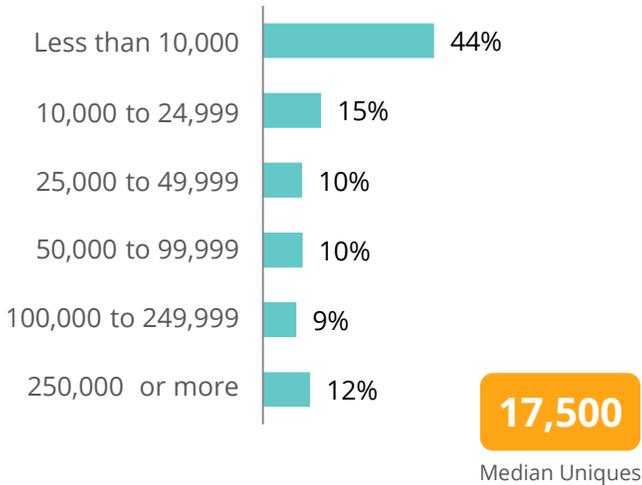


Community Profile

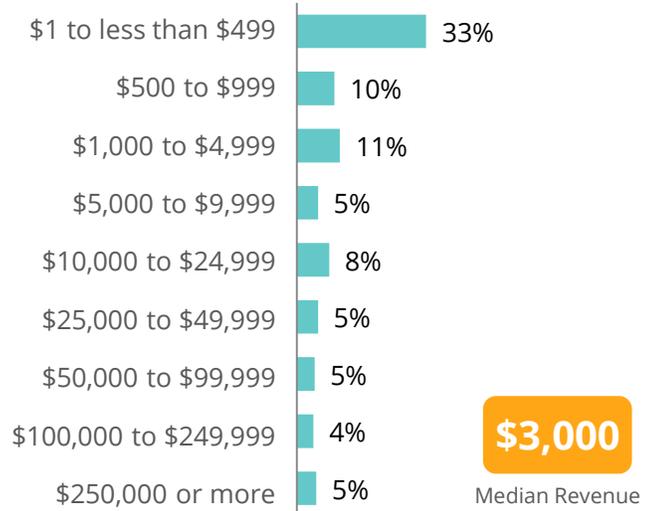
as of 09/19/2014



Monthly Uniques



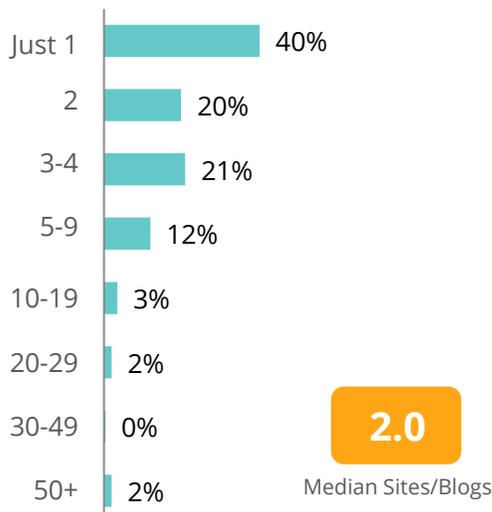
Annual Revenue*



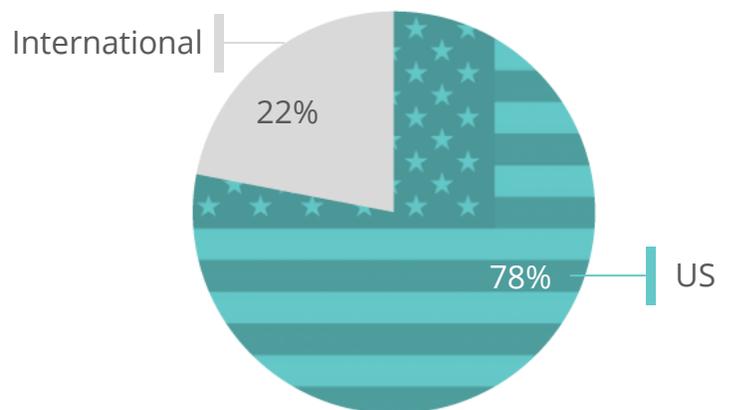
*14% have no revenue



No. of Sites Managed



Geography

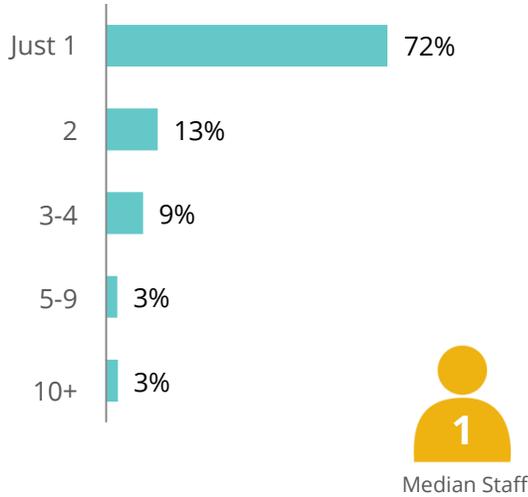


Community Profile

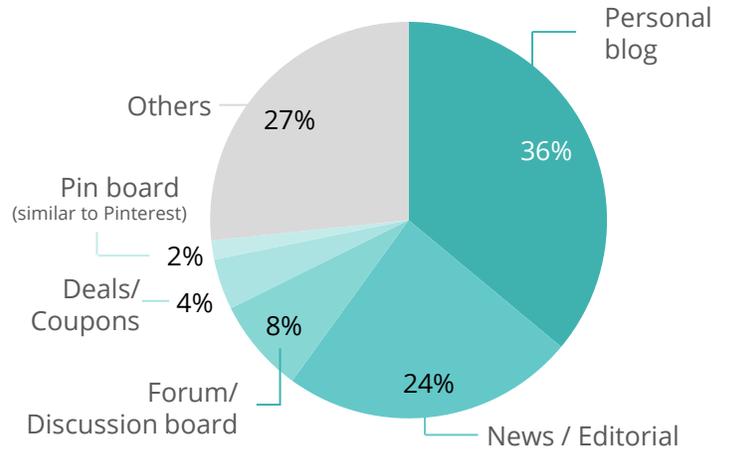
as of 09/19/2014



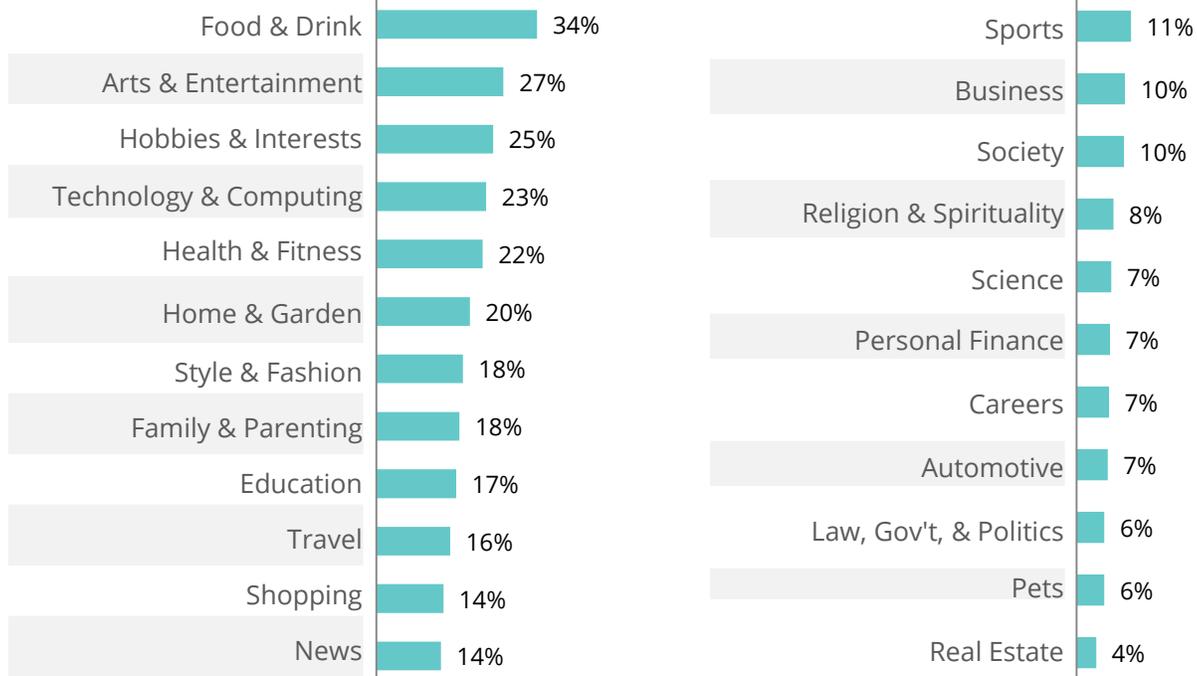
Size of Staff



Types of Sites



Topics



3.3
Mean Topics

How do topics group across the Independent Web? This map shows you. It may also spark ideas on how to expand the topics you cover.

-  Sites covering topic
-  Most strongly correlated

Map of the Publisher Roundtable "Independent Web"

