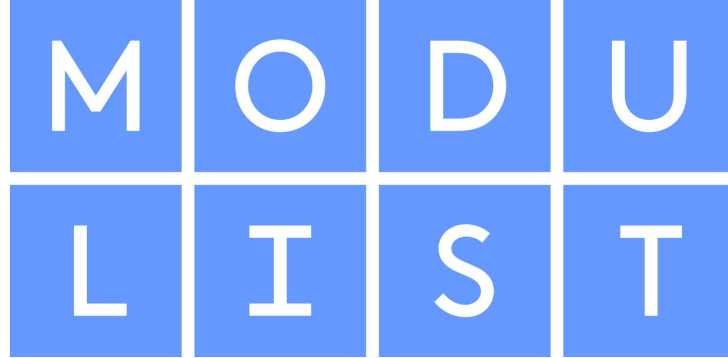


Optimizing obituaries to drive traffic and revenue



Slides Used in this E&P Sponsored Webinar

Why are obituaries vital to community publications?

“Two and a half years ago, Kirsten Hare, editor at Poyner, started an experiment with the Tampa Bay Times to test a couple theories: People will read feature obituaries in a digital format. Those stories can drive loyalty through digital subscriptions or membership. And they can help us remember what we have in common.”

- “Obituaries are important, worth rethinking and reviving”, June 15, 2021

Obits' maintain consistent digital traffic

For InForum.com, North Dakota largest news site, the obituary section:

- Ranks in the top 10 daily
- Average engaged time ranks higher than the average of the site
- Maintains consistent pageviews
 - For Inforum.com which has approximately 42,000 digital subscribers, the obituaries section averages 8,000 to 12,000 pageviews a month
- Acts a discovery pathway for new readers

For smaller news sites, like The Detroit Lakes Tribune located in the Northeast of Minnesota, the obituary section:

- Ranks in the top 10 daily
- Average engaged time is 40 seconds while the overall site's average time is 18 seconds
- Maintain consistent pageviews despite the fluctuating digital subscriber base - currently around 3,000 combo subscribers
- Acts a discovery pathway for new readers

1:03

During April 2021, InForum's Obit Section gained more than minute of an average engaged time despite the overall site's average being just 18 seconds

Obituary Customers Include Accurate Information

- The deceased's name, age and city of residence
- Name of funeral home hosting memorial services
- Address to specific location
- Website URL to specific location about upcoming service

Robert “Bob” A. Scheel

Robert Scheel, age 87 of Fargo, North Dakota passed away peacefully in his home at Touchmark, Monday, May 3, 2021.

Bob was born in Moorhead, Minnesota to Mabel (Benedict) and Frederick Scheel on June 6, 1933. He graduated from Central High in Fargo, and Hamline University in St. Paul, Minnesota. During college, he met and married his wife of 60 years, Joan Cornell. After graduation Bob joined the Marines and became a Naval aviator. Joan and Bob moved to Pensacola Florida, Kingsville Texas, and then to Kaneohe, Hawaii while Bob was in the Marines.

After his discharge, Bob started his career working for Scheels in Montana and returned to spend most of his career at the South University Scheels in Fargo.

Bob and Joan were fortunate to retire to Sonoma Valley, California. During their time in California, Bob and Joan enjoyed wine tasting, traveling, spending time with friends, and returning to Pelican Lake during the summer months.

Bob was an unsparing philanthropist, and enjoyed making a difference in people's lives, both locally and globally. His hobbies included playing bridge, jigsaw puzzles, tennis, sailing and working around the yard. Bob and Joan were lifelong members of First Congregational Church of Fargo.

Bob is survived by his two daughters: Janet Gunderson Stellpflug (Tom) Minneapolis, and Kristen Scheel (Scott Askerooth) Detroit Lakes; six grandchildren: Ben Stellpflug, Bob Geske (Ashley), Eric Stellpflug, Libby Rott (Michael), Olivia Gunderson, and Davis Geske; three great grandchildren; sister, Patricia Crary; brother, Chuck Scheel, and special friend, Patti Pratt.

Bob was preceded in death by his parents; his wife, Joan; brothers, Fred and James, and sister, Kay Norem.

Thank you to everyone at Touchmark for making Dad feel at home.

Thank you to everyone at Roger Maris Cancer Center for taking such great care of Dad, especially Dr. Preston Steen for whom Dad had the utmost respect and gratitude.

Memorials are preferred to the YWCA, First Congregational Church or a charity of choice.

A private family service will be held.

Memories and condolences may be shared by visiting www.hansonrunsvold.com

Arrangements by Hanson-Runsvold Funeral Home-Fargo, ND.

Obits Meet SEO Requirements

1. **Relevance:** Whether the story is relevant to the user's query. This factor mainly influences what you see in top results.
2. **Interests:** The interests readers define based on their previous searches or clicks.
3. **Location:** This factor accounts for surfacing local news related to where the reader lives. But it also takes into account regional nuances in search queries.
4. **Prominence:** Articles that cover a key topic that is currently trending will have more chances to be surfaced.
5. **Authoritativeness:** Search raters heavily influence the signals Google manages when assigning trustworthiness and authoritativeness to a news source. Click-through rates in Search Engine Result Pages (SERPs) and backlinks also influence this factor.
6. **Freshness:** Recent articles can have a higher chance of being surfaced over older articles if they provide additional information.
7. **Usability:** As in search results, Google takes into account how usable and accessible a website is to surface their pages in search results. Loading speed, responsive design and cross-browser compatibility are key requirements in this area.

Obituaries create discovery funnels

- Often a way non-community members find a particular publication is through a Business Announcement or an Obituary
 - 43% of the visitors were New, and 34% are Loyal to InForum's Business Brief section during the last 30 days
 - 11% of the visitors were **New** and 33% were **Returning visitors** to InForum.com's **Obituary section** during the last 30 days

**Stats taken from Forum Communications Co.'s ChartBeat.com dashboard*

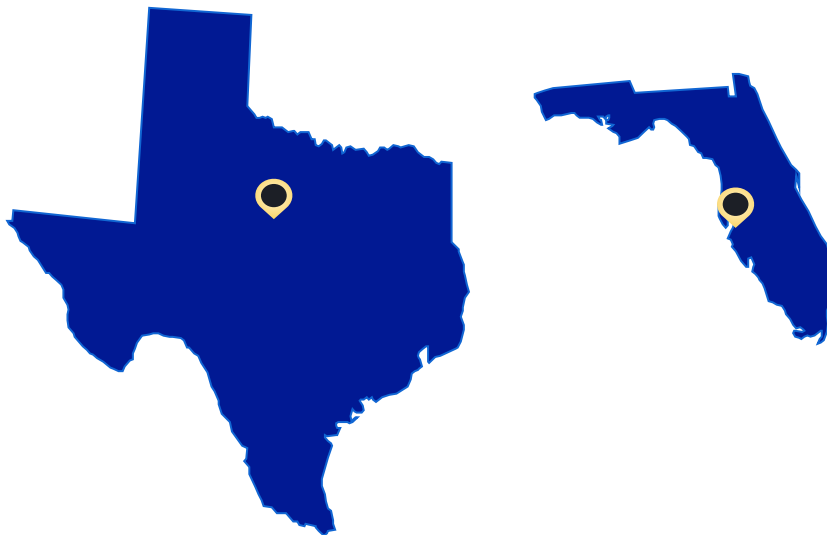
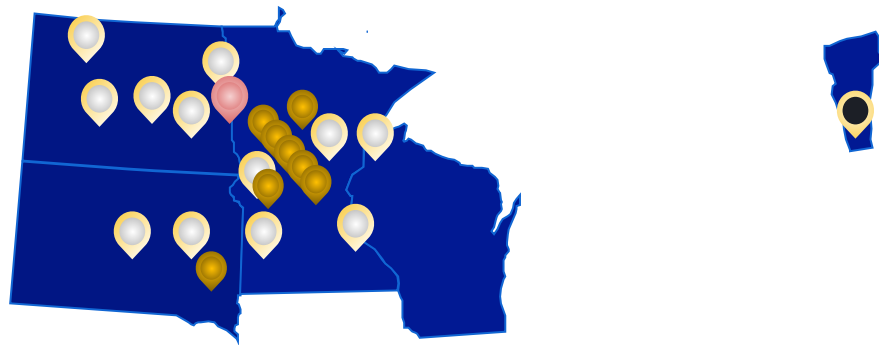


Modulist by the Numbers

We average approximately **3,500 total paid content orders** per month, including months where we've exceeded 5,000 orders.

We serve **32 local media outlets**, spanning Florida, North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Texas, Vermont, and Wisconsin.

It takes as little as 15 minutes to process an order, and when you work with our team, processing time can be reduced to just **4-5 minutes**.





“Before Modulist, our process placing content like obits required multiple steps. Grabbing the design files for an obit page and laying it out could take a designer at least an hour to complete.”

— Forum Communication Co.’s Integrated Media

Operations Production Manager Alicia Strnad

Hoalcraft

Hi, We're Here to Help



Devlyn Brooks
President

- President, Founder
- Spent 17 years in newsrooms as reporter, columnist, editor.
- Founded Modulist to establish a better solution to ordering and processing obituaries in 2011.
- Bachelor's degree in communications, master's of divinity degree.
- Currently an intern pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America.



April Knutson
**Marketing
Strategist**

- Marketing Strategist and Content Producer
- More than 10 years experience in digital marketing, journalism and project management
- Former breaking news editor, journalist and website manager
- Enjoys teaching classes about media literacy

Optimizing Community Content

1. Define **Content Categories** for readers
2. Make certain **pieces of information required for paid placement** of “story”, i.e. first and last name, city of residence, and website if applicable.
3. Set a **consistent pricing strategy** for each content category
4. Ensure digital community content **updates are automatic**
5. Create, offer educational and **evergreen content resources**
6. Automate tasks, or **offer an online ordering platform**

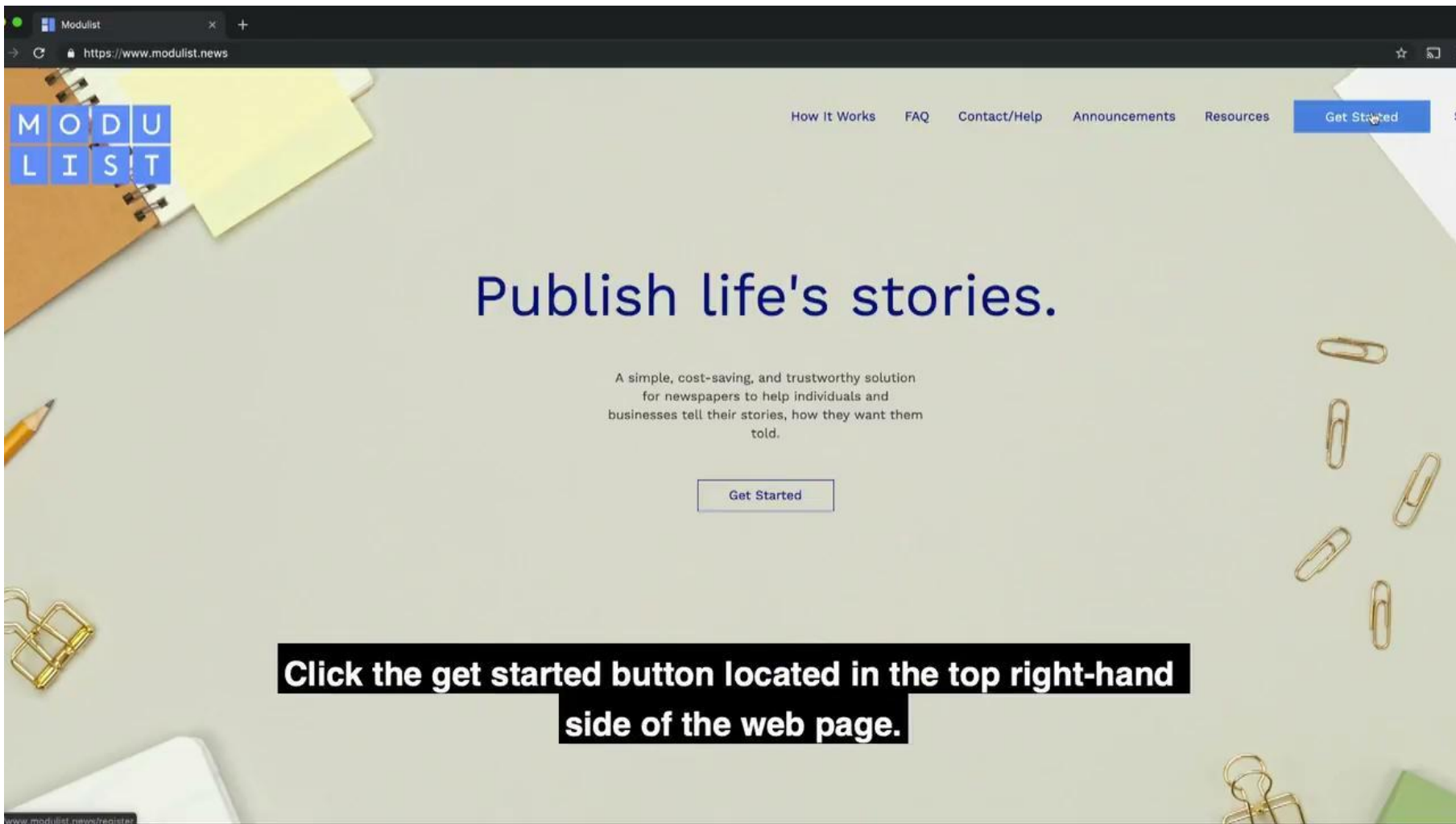


When readers place an obituary, customer service is king

“I was delighted in Modulist’s simplicity. It took me less than 3 minutes to place my loved one’s obituary. I would tell others that Modulist is easy to use and understand with outstanding employees if you need help.”

— Lindsay, online obituary purchaser on April 16, 2021





Publishers Experience the 'Amazon Effect'

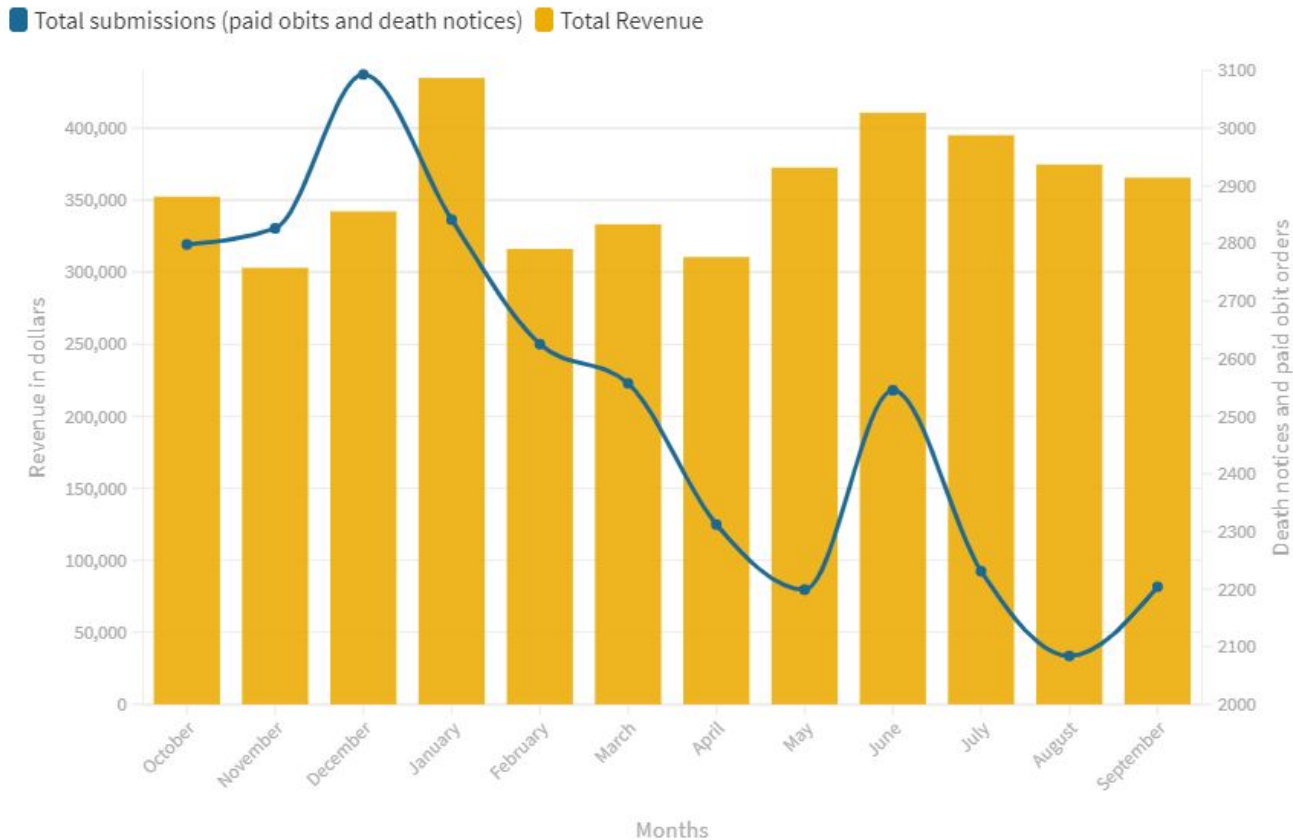
- In 2018, Forum Communications signed an agreement with Modulist to onboard each of its 26 newspapers located throughout North Dakota, Minnesota and Wisconsin to process all of its classifieds, obituaries and milestones paid content.
- In fact, during the last fiscal year, Forum Communication has increased its community content submissions by 11% and obituary revenue by almost **\$1 million dollars with its total revenue reaching more than \$5 million dollars.**

FORUM COMMUNICATIONS COMPANY



Obituaries' Revenue is Consistent

**2019 to 2020
Fiscal Year**



We help newspapers thrive.



Modulist specializes in the processing of user-generated paid content, helping media “Publish Life’s Stories” about people in their community.

"Modulist provides excellent service to funeral homes and direct to consumers. The service is efficient, and we've taken this work from of our front line folks in Editorial."

— Jim O'Rourke, O'Rourke Media CEO



Learn more at Modulist.News



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“ It helps us enter obituaries for several publications at once. It makes our job a lot easier ”

Brett Jacobsen
David DonehowerFuneral Home

Question and Answer

- Additional tips for Digital Obituaries Optimization?
 - Add tags for large or regional funeral homes in your community
 - REMEMBER: Tags are case sensitive
 - Provide readers with an “Obits Tips Cheat Sheet”
 - Make order system have required input fields that will boost your site’s SEO, i.e. funeral time, date and address, and social shareability

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