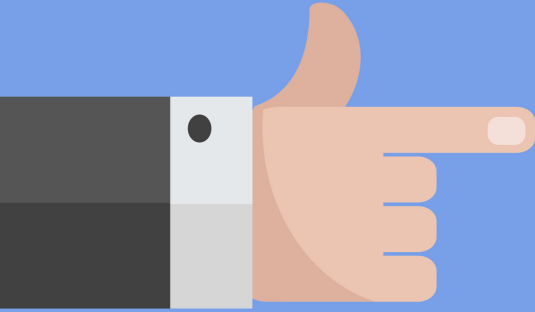# A SOFTWARE SOLUTION TO PAID CONTENT

HOW A NEW PLATFORM PARTNERS WITH NEWSPAPERS TO INCREASE REVENUE, RESOURCES

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MODULIST CONTENT PRODUCER

Newspaper professionals from journalists to publishers are learning how to do more with less resources after cutbacks due to economic crises of the last two decades, and most recently the coronavirus pandemic. In fact, according to the Pew Research Center, since 2018, weekday print circulation decreased 12% while Sunday print circulation decreased 13%.

Because of the reduced opportunity for print revenue, publishers are looking for ways to maximize other streams of income.

"Prior to 2012, all paid content placement was transacted manually and touched by several employees and departments," said Forum Communication Co.'s Vice President of Newspaper Operations Aaron Becher.

Forum Communications leaders highlight the community content process can become inefficient, sometimes needing multiple departments to touch business announcements, classifieds, death notices, milestones, and obits before it's ready for publication.

"Before Modulist, our process placing community content like obits required multiple steps," said Integrated Media Operations Production Manager Alicia Strnad Hoalcraft. **"Grabbing the design files for an obit page and laying it out could take a designer at least an hour to complete."**

This is when Forum Communications, the parent company of Modulist, decided to turn to their in-house experts. Formerly known as the "obit team", Modulist team members have been providing solutions to its newspapers throughout North Dakota, Minnesota, South Dakota and Wisconsin for more than 10 years.

Through this team's expertise and recent innovations in software development, Modulist team leaders were able to create a platform that offers a multi-prong approach to streamline the community content process including:

- **empowering customers to create and proof their own paid placement**
- **an automated design and layout process for page designers**
- **and several administrator features for publishers to monitor and manage their unique needs.**

Modulist team members have more than a quarter of century experience in processing community content. They are based out of Fargo and work every day to publish life's stories.

Innovation through partnership

Modulist allows all the following steps to easily occur for community content:

- Collects the payment upfront from the consumer
- Consumers build their ad in our intuitive and user-friendly portal
- Ensures quality on each order
- Provides a pdf for printed publications and a digital file into publisher's content management systems

According to Forum Communications leaders, this system freed resources for departments to focus on vital business functions.

"Modulist specializes in the processing of user-generated content of various categories through its online site at Modulist.news," Becher said. "The process change allowed for a more streamlined approach from the point of entry until the content was placed or fulfilled."

Empowering customers
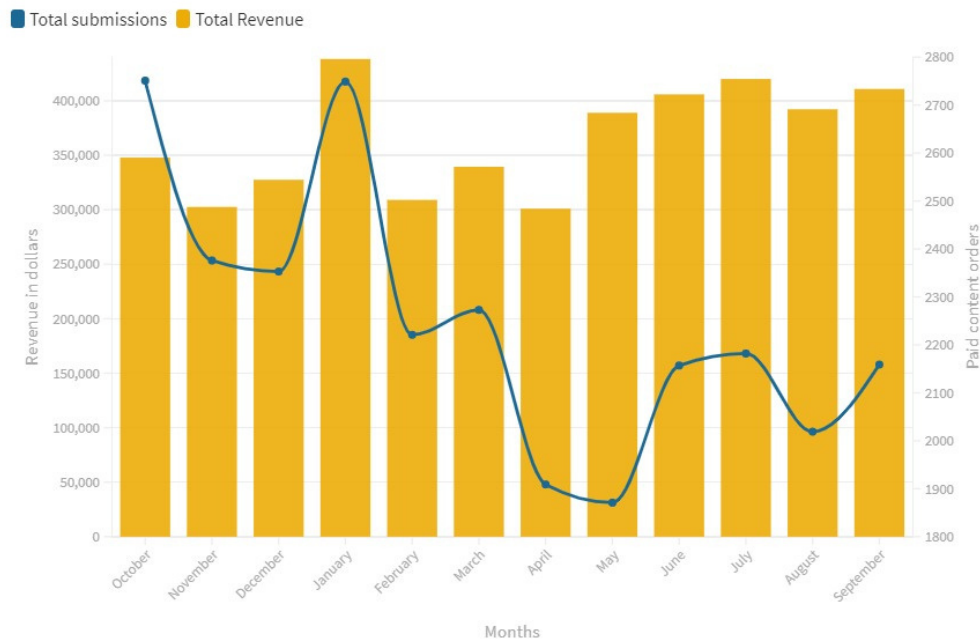
This graph shows the amount generated by Modulist each month compared to the number of submissions during the last fiscal year. Graph created by Modulist

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 business announcements, classifieds, legal notices, milestones and obituaries.

"Modulist modernized the user-generated paid content experience and decreased the number of full-time-equivalents needed," Becher said.
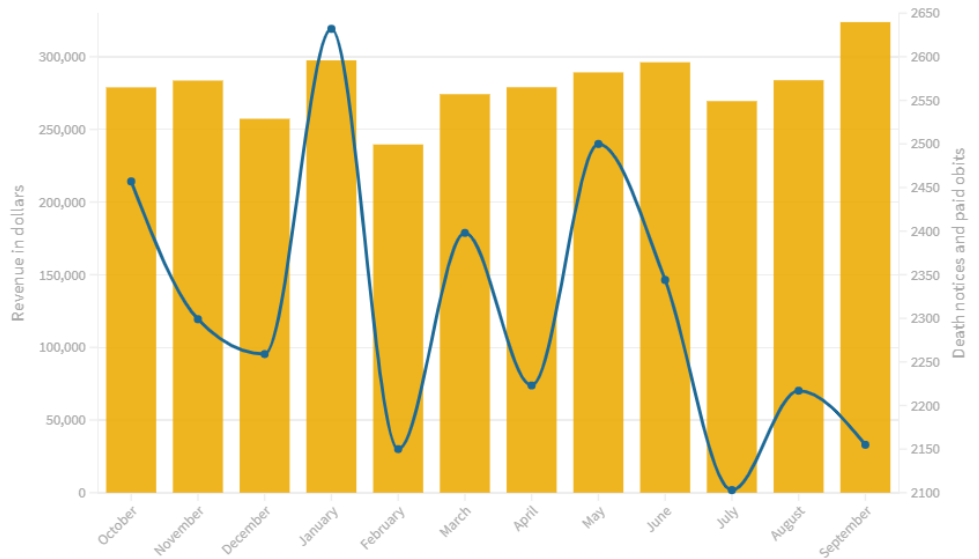
In simple terms, the Modulist platform and team processes on the newspaper's behalf; provides white-glove client service seven days per week; produces a quality looking order for all of your platforms, allowing for newspapers to generate and keep much of its paid content revenue.

In fact, during the last fiscal year, Forum Communication has increased its paid content submissions by 11% and obituary revenue by almost $1 million dollars with its total revenue reaching more than $5 million dollars.

In the graph above, despite the changes in submission rate throughout the year, the Modulist platform created opportunities to keep revenue relatively consistent only dropping to $300,000 once during April 2020. Through further comparison, we can see this trend continue when we consider the paid obits and death notices submissions vs. total revenue generated.

2018 - 2018 fiscal year
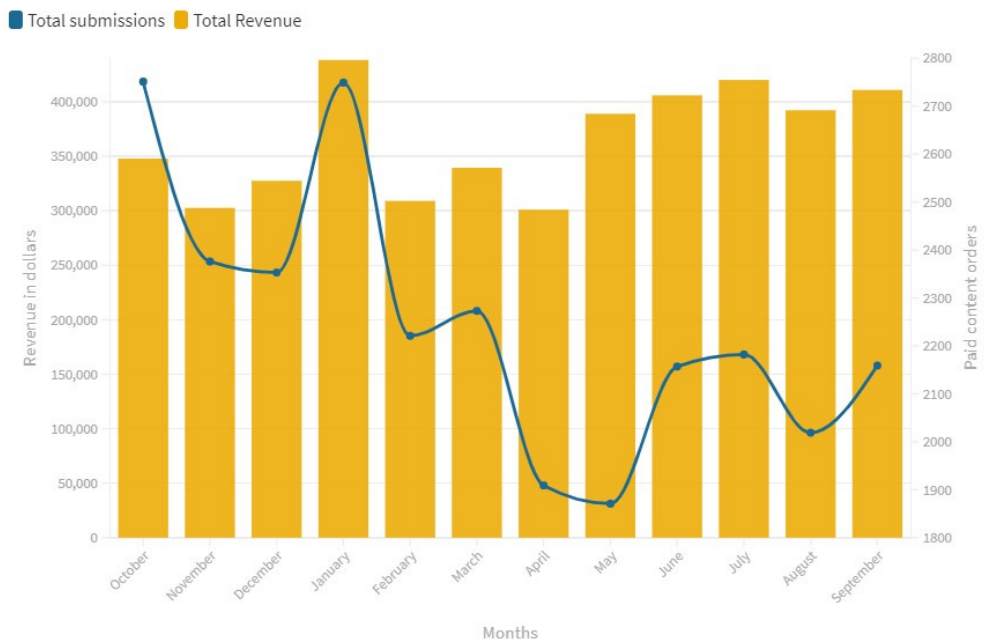

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This graphs shows the trend in revenue vs. death notices and paid obit submissions during the 2018 - 2019 fiscal year.

2019 - 2020 fiscal year

This graphs shows the trend in revenue vs. death notices and paid obit submissions during the 2019 - 2020 fiscal year.

During the 2018 fiscal year, all FCC newspapers were onboarded to the Modulist system by March 2019, and then we can see a steady increase in revenue.

Focusing on eficiency

Since Forum Communications Co. onboarded the Modulist platform for its newspapers, leaders have said the new process has improved the community content process for customers while reducing the time and effort it takes for people and departments to create these valuable but sensitive pieces of content.

"Modulist seeks to build lasting partnerships with newspaper companies to help them decrease their production costs and increase their revenue in these integral content categories," Becher said. "Modulist will add depth to your professionalism and add overall efficiency to your operation."

Hoalcraft emphasizes the difference Modulist has made. In her several years of experience, this system allowed her and her team to reduce the time and effort required to layout a page. She underlined paid content pages now only take minutes to create instead of hours.

"Moudlist really is a game-changer," Hoalcraft said. "Creating an obit page is always like a game of Tetris. All I have to worry about it is producing a well-balanced page. Before I had to work with multiple departments and ensure photos were sized and toned correctly, not to mention text formating and correct spacing between the obit's photo and its life story."

And it's not just the publishers who highlight how the intuitive platform helps to place poignant pieces of content.

In fact, one Modulist customer Kelsey Roseth, founder of Kero Creative said this about her experience: "When we suffer a loss the little things mean a lot, and Modulist's simple process and cost-effective options helped to submit my grandfather's obituary with ease."

While the newspaper industry will undoubtedly face new challenges and changes during the next year, creating opportunities to empower customers and increase efficiency will create opportunities for revenue and reader delight.

If you'd like to learn more about how to improve community content process and increase revenue, contact us to schedule a demo today.
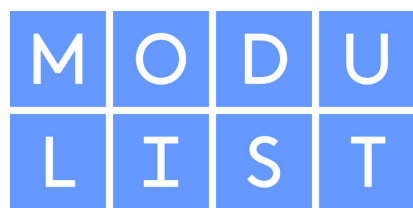
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MODU LIST

Modulist brings newspapers, businesses, and individuals together, helping all parties publish human stories in human ways.Newspapers are tasked with finding, sourcing, and listing articles, classifieds, and ads on a daily basis. Businesses need to reach job candidates and advertise in specific markets in an efficient, effective manner. .Modulist solves all these problems, helping newspapers cut costs and time, helping businesses reach their target market when they need to reach it, and helping individuals broadcast stories surrounding life's meaningful moments.