

AT THE CENTER OF STIMULUS ACTIVITY

D.C. SEES DRAMATIC INCREASE IN DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT

Online news readership, digital advertising performance, and advocacy all rose in lead up to \$2 trillion bill's passage.

Since the coronavirus pandemic has gripped the nation's attention, U.S. online readership has increased by more than 60% over typical levels, according to a Kivvit analysis of publisher data from Parse.ly.

But as eyes turned to Washington, D.C., where federal officials worked on the \$2 trillion stimulus package in March, we found that media outlets in the nation's capital saw even higher rates of engagement compared to before the pandemic. We learned this by speaking with a cadre of leading digital, print, and radio outlets that cover Inside the Beltway policy and politics. They shared their engagement data with us on the condition that we protect their anonymity.

All outlets reported over 100% gains in readership in March, with some seeing up to 3x their typical number of visitors. Some of the most dramatic increases were in news sections related to healthcare, with outlets reporting exponential traffic growth — one outlet reported a 40x increase — on that coverage.

READERSHIP STATS**OUTLET ONE**

The home page typically averages 3-4 million impressions and is now *seeing 6-7 million per day*.

Healthcare news section increased from serving 500-800k impressions to 20M impressions over the last several weeks (*~40x the average*).

OUTLET TWO

In recent weeks, both the main outlet and its local affiliates *doubled traffic to their websites* compared to the same time last year.

OUTLET THREE

Comparing March 2019 to March 2020, there was *3x the amount of unique visitors*.

OUTLET FOUR

Overall *pageviews for the site grew by 114%* since the pandemic was declared.

Also, *traffic to the healthcare page grew by 630% and the tech page by 771%*.

Even in this crowded information environment, there is also data that shows advocacy messages are breaking through.

The increase in readership also translated into higher engagement with digital advertising, we're told. One outlet saw a 3x increase in click-through rate of digital ads compared to its benchmark, while another saw a 40% increase. A radio station we spoke with saw a 16% increase in Amazon Alexa and Google Home streaming, which triggers ads to play — proving that the rise in engagement has been a multi-channel trend.

The wave of engagement has motivated outlets to create new ad-supported content vehicles. One outlet launched a new podcast that is receiving 140,000 downloads per week. A new COVID-19-focused email newsletter has registered 55,000 recipients since it was launched.

ADVERTISING STATS

OUTLET ONE

Homepage Takeover campaigns typically average 3.5M impressions daily. These are *currently averaging 6M+ impressions, reflecting a surge in this premium inventory due to increased traffic.*

OUTLET TWO

Streaming on smart speakers via Alexa and Google Home *increased by 16%* compared to previous weeks. Ads play once the stream is activated.

OUTLET THREE

Advertisers are experiencing a *click-through rates 3x benchmark* on run-of-site ads.

OUTLET FOUR

The *click-through rate increased by .11%* in March, a 40% increase vs. February.

The pharmaceutical industry, Facebook, and telehealth company Ro all took out sponsorships with major D.C.-based outlets in March. Additionally, Facebook ad data shows several organizations, including Airlines for America and Save Our Medical Resources, targeted ads to Washington, D.C., while stimulus legislation was being developed.

POLITICO NIGHTLY
Coronavirus Special Edition

BY **RENUKA RAYASAM**

Presented by

TRAVEL THE WORLD FROM HOME — Join POLITICO's Ryan Heath virtually [at 10 a.m. EDT](#) for a video briefing on the global response to coronavirus. [Register here.](#)

VIRAL CLARITY — It's been barely seven days now since America effectively shut down life as we knew it to limit the spread of Covid-19. So, to channel a [certain Cabinet official](#) from another crisis-rich era, here's what we know, know we don't know and don't know we don't know, a week in:

Known knowns: Nearly 200,000 people across 161 countries have become ill with the virus, and

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Bryan Fratkin, CEO of SparkInfluence, an online advocacy platform, told us “the last two weeks have been our busiest ever.” Platforms like SparkInfluence facilitated a combined 4.5 million emails to decision makers, up 700% from their average weekly count. Engagement and action rates have been higher across the board, Fratkin added, with data showing that topical issues like healthcare and student loans are receiving heightened engagement from advocates and decision makers alike.

ADVOCACY STATS

4.5M

EMAILS DELIVERED
TO DECISION MAKERS*



700%

INCREASE IN EMAILS
VS. WEEKLY AVERAGE*



300K

NEW ADVOCATES
TOOK ACTION



**Includes SparkInfluence and other advocacy platforms.*

Organizations are also using this moment to try and re-engage audiences who typically have been harder to activate but are more likely to be paying attention now. In addition, many entities are using this moment to adapt educational and advocacy content for people who are working from home, such as creating Zoom briefings, Fratkin noted.

THIS ISN'T BUSINESS AS USUAL, AND WE ALL MUST ADAPT TO ENSURE WE CAN WEATHER THIS UNEXPECTED STORM.

The data points we laid out show how organizations can navigate these tumultuous times, and how organizations can largely control their outcome as long as they are willing to be creative and engage with their audience in new and strategic ways. Kivvit hopes these insights provide relief and excite organizations as they determine how to use this moment to create digital plans that promote visibility and build a base of supporters among policymakers, advocates, consumers, and the public.