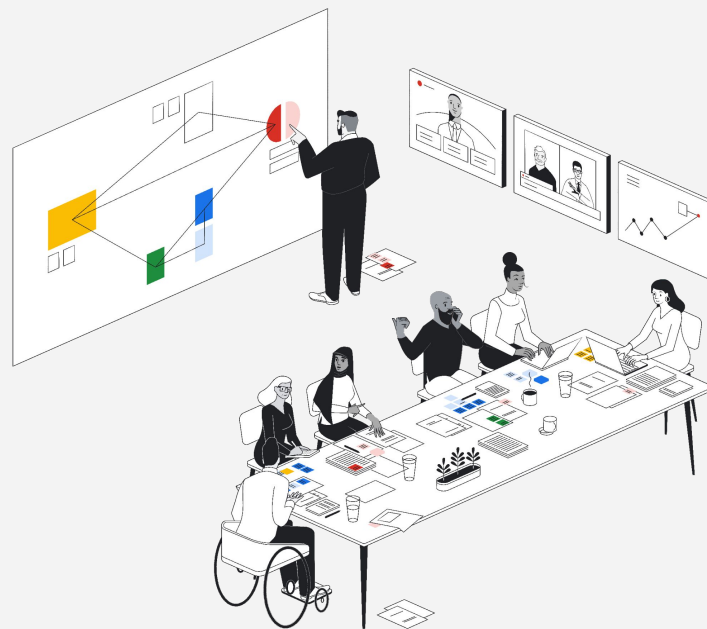# GNI Subscriptions Academy SEAS 2025

Program Explainer

Subscriptions Academy helps news publishers **accelerate their digital reader revenue growth** by assessing their current performance, **defining an ambitious vision** and **outlining the engine** that will take them to their goal.

FT STRATEGIES | Google News Initiative

Objective

The Subscriptions Academy program is designed to engage a selected group of eight SEAS publishers of varying sizes, countries, and audiences, drawn from the incredibly diverse print and digital news organizations across the region. The program will help them define an ambitious vision for their digital subscription businesses and build the engine that will take them to their goal.

Expert delivery

The Academy is an ambitious, intensive five-month experience that addresses each step of digital subscriptions, from traffic acquisition to subscriber retention, and the organizational skills publishers need to succeed. Google News Initiative and FT Strategies work in partnership during the program to help participating publishers reach their goal, providing expert advice to publishers throughout.

Participants will receive dedicated 1:1 support and learn from the shared experiences of other cohort members. Delivery will be mostly digital, with an in-person visit from FT Strategies consultants to be scheduled.

Strong historic results

We have now worked with 76 publishers across nine previous editions of the Subscriptions Academy worldwide. The program has received consistently excellent quantitative and qualitative feedback from previous participants, and publishers have seen strong improvement in key subscriptions business metrics.

GNI and FT Strategies are excited about welcoming the next cohort of eight publishers to the 2025 edition of the Subscriptions Academy program - exclusive to SEAS for the first time - and look forward to receiving your application.

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Previous participants:

"I really appreciate the **shared discipline and the rigours of the work** behind all of this. When we applied, we hoped to be introduced to a sense of structure for our experiments. This forces all of us to **change the way we approach problems**, and this will last regardless of any experiments we do.

We are very happy to be shown a new approach that helps us be **more cognizant of how we can continue to build our business**."

Program phases

DISCOVERY

Understand your organization's existing **strengths and key opportunity areas** in order to get the entire team on the same page
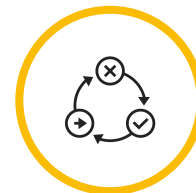
March - June

NORTH STAR

Co-create an ambitious and achievable **subscriptions-focused goal** for your organization to rally behind over the **next 3-5 years**

June

This phase includes a module on how AI can be leveraged to drive subscriptions growth

TEST & LEARN

Run **end-to-end experiments** to put your North Star **framework into practice** and set the organization up for post-program success

June - July

Discovery phase

*Understand your organization's existing **strengths and key opportunity areas** in order to get the entire team on the same page*

Core elements	Outputs

Quantitative and qualitative analysis

Analysis of your Google Analytics (or equivalent), wider business data and stakeholder interviews

Cohort masterclasses

Presentations on the fundamental principles of each stage of the reader lifecycle, including FT and industry best practice

Publisher workshops

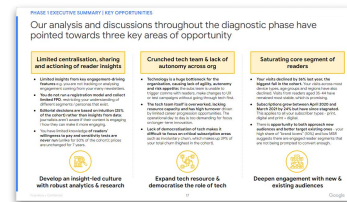Sessions with each publisher to discuss diagnostic results and identify areas for improvement

Diagnostic workshops
Covering cohort & publisher analyses, FT & industry best practices across the lifecycle

Executive Summary
Covering key strengths, opportunities and proposed solutions

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North Star phase

*Co-create an ambitious and achievable **subscriptions-focused goal** for your organization to rally behind over the next 3-5 years*

Core elements	Outputs

North Star framework

Collaborative workshops to co-develop a robust North Star framework

A North Star framework
Defining your North Star goal, outcomes, sub-outcomes and hypotheses

12 month action plan

Creating hypotheses for growth and prioritizing them in a roadmap for the first 12 months of your North Star plan
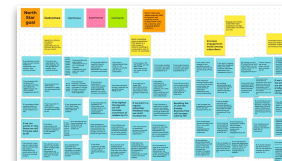
Action plan
For prioritising, planning, and mapping the roll-out of all your ideas

Initial experiments

Choosing from template experiments to validate opportunities with low-cost tests

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North Star phase

North Star is the **strategic model used by the Financial Times** that helped achieve the goal of 1M paying subscribers in 2019, a year ahead of schedule

Key benefits:

- Promotes **organizational alignment** by using a single shared goal to align resources

- An outcome-driven approach that enables **focused prioritization** on what truly matters, eliminating non-critical projects

- Sets **ambitious goals** that promote bigger and bolder ideas among the whole company

North Star goal
Set the long term vision

Outcomes
Define what success looks like

Hypotheses
Identify strategic opportunities

Experiments
Validate hypotheses
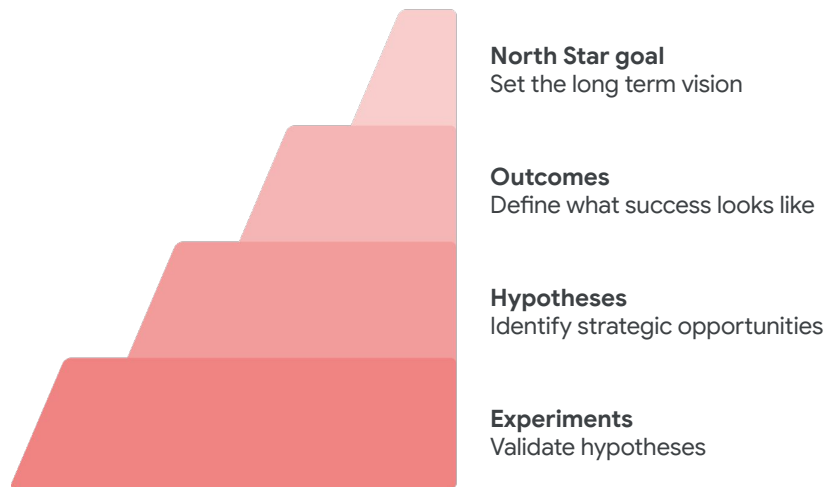
Artificial Intelligence Module

An introduction to how AI can be leveraged to accelerate your progress towards your subscription goal

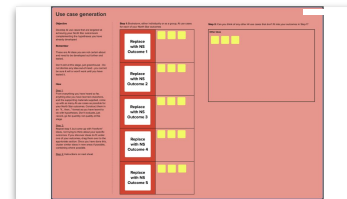| Core elements	
The AI opportunity in news media	A comprehensive overview of how AI can be responsibly deployed in news media
AI use case development	Understanding how to navigate AI use cases specific to the media industry and journalism
AI use case identification and prioritization	A workshop aimed at helping you identify and prioritise AI use cases which can help you achieve your North Star goal

Outputs

Increased AI Literacy
A thorough understanding of how to leverage AI

A prioritized list of AI use cases
For consideration in future experiments

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Test & Learn phase

*Run **end-to-end experiments** to put your North Star **framework into practice** and set the organization up for post-program success*

Core elements

|	
Bespoke end-to-end experimentation	Developing, implementing and analysing experiments that validate areas of opportunity
Subscriptions business foundations	Uncovering strengths and gaps in your technology, digital skills and organizational capabilities
Organizing for subscriptions growth	Building a strong governance structure to manage the North Star framework and realize its full impact within your business

Outputs

High–impact experiments
Identifying, selecting, designing, and running extensive organizational tests

Capabilities roadmapping
A concrete plan for development over the next 3-5 years to support the North Star

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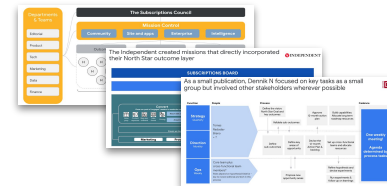
Test & Learn phase

Examples of experiments run during previous editions of Subscriptions Academy:

Paywall

Recent examples:
★ Simplify the messaging / value proposition on the paywall

★ Reduce the number of articles a reader can read for free before being asked to register / subscribe

Product / Editorial

Recent examples:
★ Removing advertising on the website and replacing with more content to encourage more engagement

★ Launch a new newsletter aimed and new audiences to increase their loyalty

Marketing

Recent examples:
★ Reduce the onboarding series of emails from 6 to 4 to be more concise and increase overall engagement

★ Marketing email to lapsed subscribers with an offer to re-subscribe

Data / Insights

Recent examples:
★ Correlate an engagement metric with churners to better understand who to target to re-engage

★ Survey trialists at different points of their trial to understand if they're satisfied and how to improve conversion

Previous programs have included coaching and experimentation across a number of additional themes including content strategy, organizational change and communication, op model design, pricing and visual journalism

Required commitments

✓ Digital subscriptions are a **strategic priority**

Digital subscriptions must be a top-three strategic priority

Must have launched a digital subscriptions business more than 12 months ago and are currently seeing growth

✓ **Senior management** is bought in

CEO or similar C-Level stakeholder agrees to participate in and attend the Executive Summary sessions (maximum of three sessions)

✓ **'Skin in the game'** operationally

Assign a project lead, and working team across key functions, including tech and editorial

Ready to commit the working team to ~3 hours of engagement on a weekly basis (varies from week to week) including a recurring update meeting

Commitment to designing and launching live experiments during 'Test & Learn' phase

Capabilities (tech, talent) to support experiments being run during the program

Fully participate in cohort activities over the program duration

✓ Willingness to **share knowledge** with ecosystem

Be a full participant in an ongoing 'community of success'

Share subscription performance data for (anonymized) cohort benchmarking purposes

Agree to contribute to industry report

About us

Google News Initiative
Digital Growth Programme

The Digital Growth program is an initiative within GNI (Google News Initiative), to help publishers grow their digital business online. The program offers multiple labs, workshops and tools, of which Subscriptions Academy is a part of.

Google teams will:

★ Manage success of overall program, providing advice and expertise as needed

★ Leverage the News Consumer Insights tool in the customer research phase

FT STRATEGIES

FT Strategies is the consulting division of the Financial Times. FT Strategies has deep expertise in reader revenue, customer engagement and advanced analytics

FT Strategies team will:

★ Lead execution of program including managing all modules and project phases / deliverables

★ Lead cohort in the development of their North Star framework, experiments and other deliverables

★ Introduce FT subject matter experts via cohort meetings

To apply for the program, please fill in the **application form**

Thank you

Google News Initiative
Digital Growth Programme

FT STRATEGIES