

piano

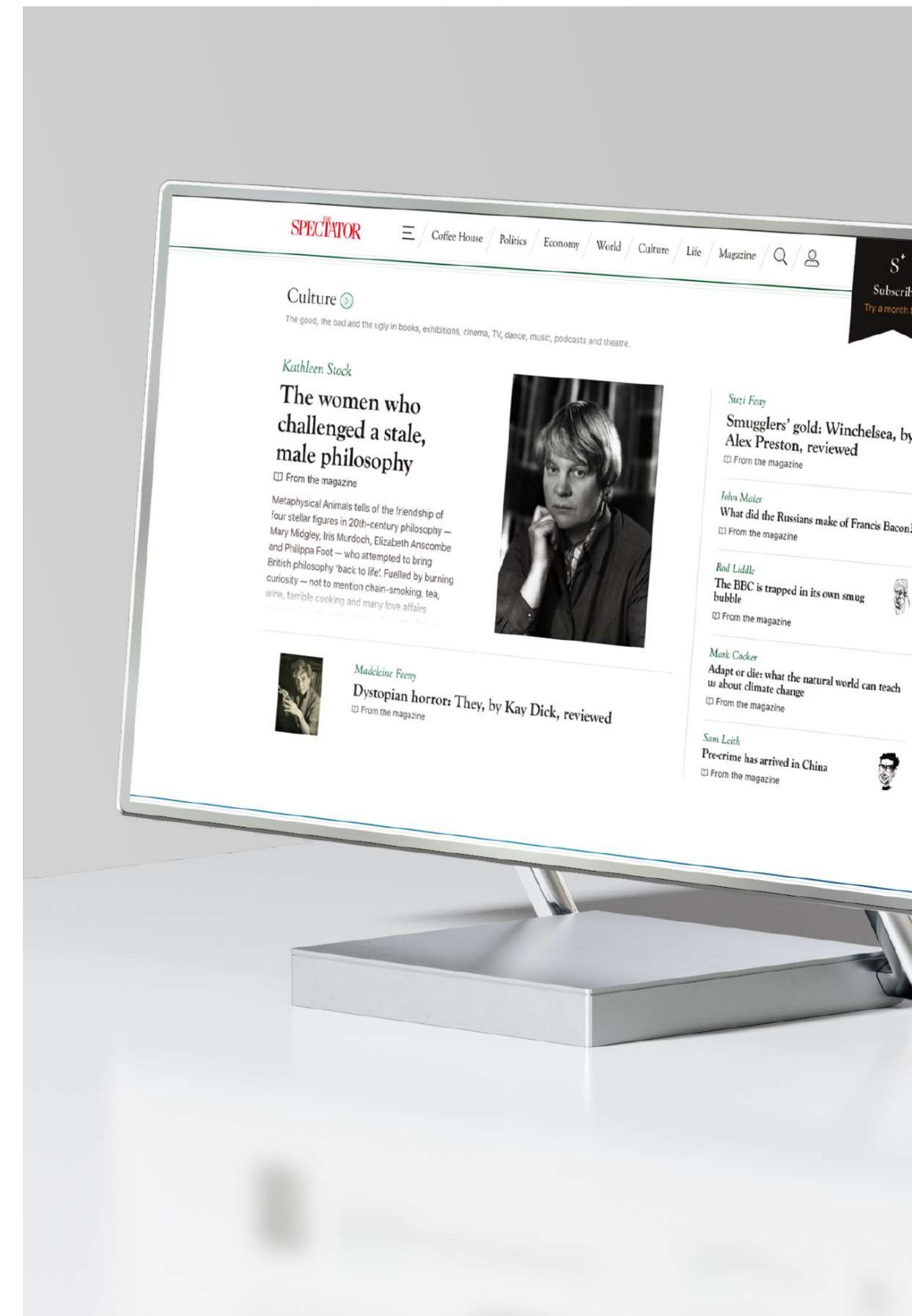
THE
SPECTATOR

How The Spectator's user-first digital
strategy extended their centuries-old brand
and increased subscription revenue

The Spectator is a weekly British magazine covering politics, culture, and geopolitical affairs, who first began producing content in 1828, and is now considered the world's most long-standing weekly magazine. The publication has a historic tradition of producing really substantial illuminating and engaging content, which remains a core philosophy to this day.

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The magazine has long been distributed in print format across the United Kingdom and later introduced online distribution for the UK, Australia, and the United States. But in 2016, they tightened up their metered paywall, reducing the amount of content that was available for free. Today, they offer a few free articles per month before inviting people to become subscribers and access even more high-quality content.



In 2019, Tom Morgan joined The Spectator as Director of Digital. Under Tom’s direction, The Spectator created a unique intersection that optimized the creative process, the marketing side of the business, and the technology used to bring it all together so the end user enjoyed a fulfilling experience on the front end of the website.

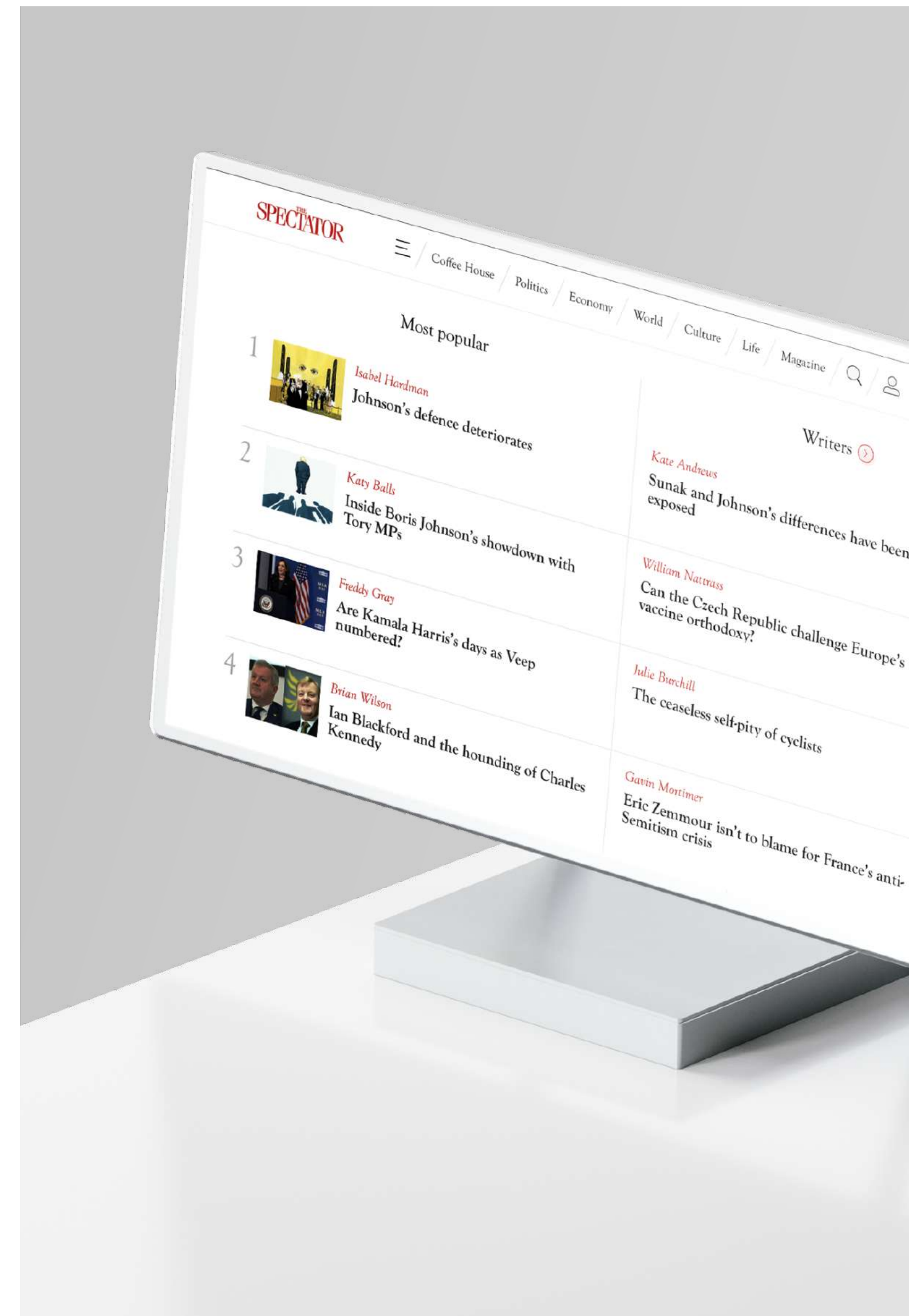
“Any kind of new technology with us would always be set against the backdrop of the ways we work and the approaches and processes that go back a long time,” says Tom Morgan, Director of Digital at The Spectator. “Something I don't think has changed between 1828 and now is the concept of family. We, as a magazine, right through to the digital users we have today, understand that idea.”

Understand customer journeys through the prism of subscription funnels

To optimize their digital experiences, The Spectator began by focusing on the basics of delivering quality content to the world. The digital team created a blueprint that laid out all of the potential steps along the customer journey on their website. From there, they narrowed in on three key areas to focus their optimization efforts:

1. The path to the paywall
2. Registration experiences
3. Engagement with the content

To help optimize the path to the paywall, The Spectator reduced the number of programmatic ads that appeared on the web pages to improve the reading experience for users. They adopted a “less is more” approach to onsite ads, reserving space for only the most high-quality ads that would benefit the users, while improving the readability of the content.



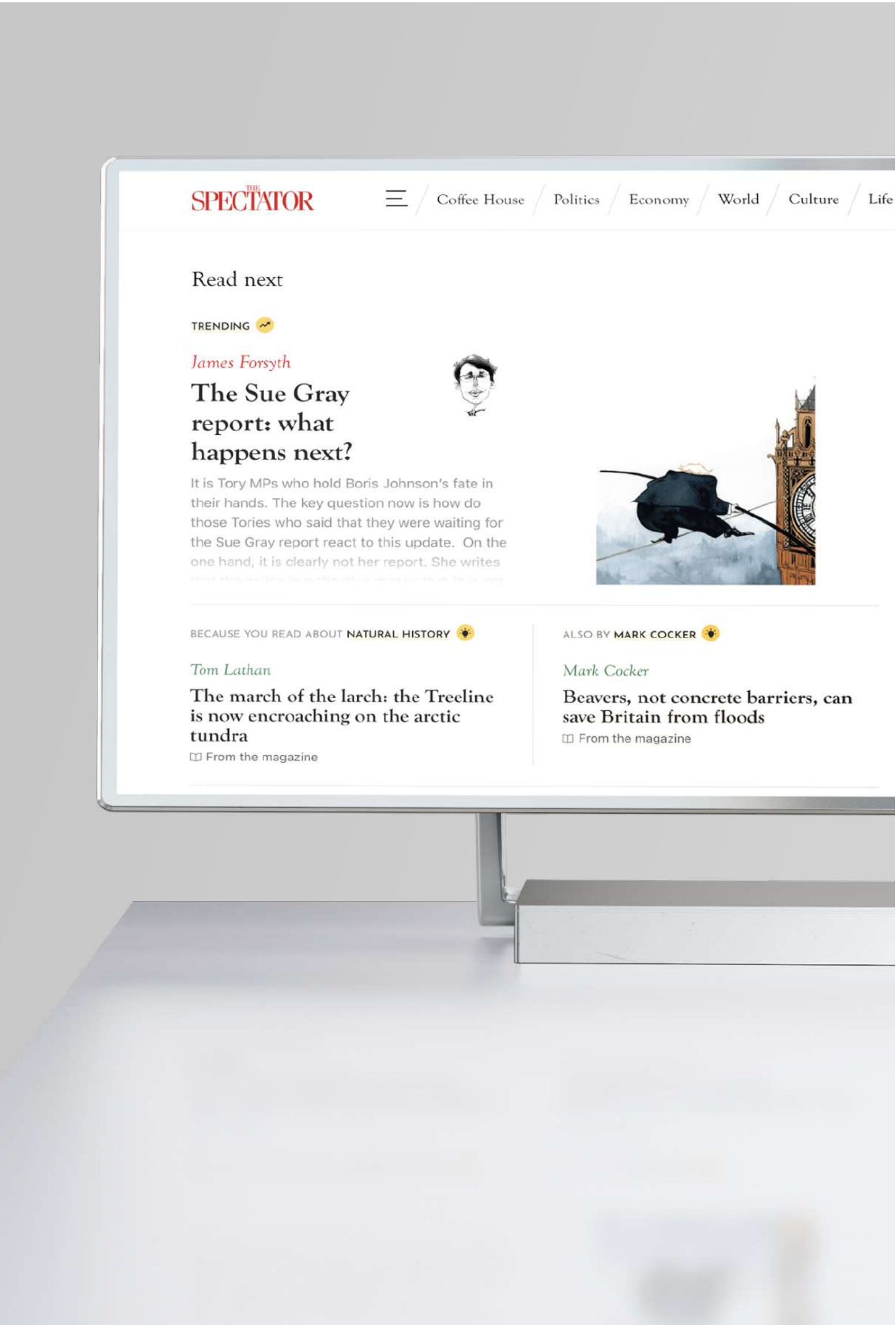
Create a really good product that people love

The Spectator has been busy improving their overall digital experience. They overhauled their checkout flow, reduced the number of checkout fields, integrated every common payment option, and built login, logout, and registration options into one seamless flow.

The technology used to redevelop the experience was powered by Piano. With Piano deployed, they were able to overhaul the entire checkout process in only six weeks, dramatically better than the six months it took to create their previous checkout flow. Checkout completion time dropped from 90 seconds down to 30 seconds. Users loved the faster turnaround time and, as a result, conversion rates soared to new highs. It was an early win that validated their focus on the basics, and resulted in a dramatic increase in conversion wins and customer satisfaction.

“Now that we've got Piano deployed, we can offer far more personalized and quicker checkout experiences,” says Morgan. “We're able to convert faster, we're able to personalize better, and ultimately we're able to create a better experience for our customers along the way.”

Additionally, the digital team at The Spectator strived to “become their users,” in which they attempted to picture their customers and build experiences that appealed to them. They conducted multiple on-site user workshops, and found that users were most appreciative of the magazine’s editorial philosophy. These insights shaped how the website was overhauled to maximize the value of the subscription experience.



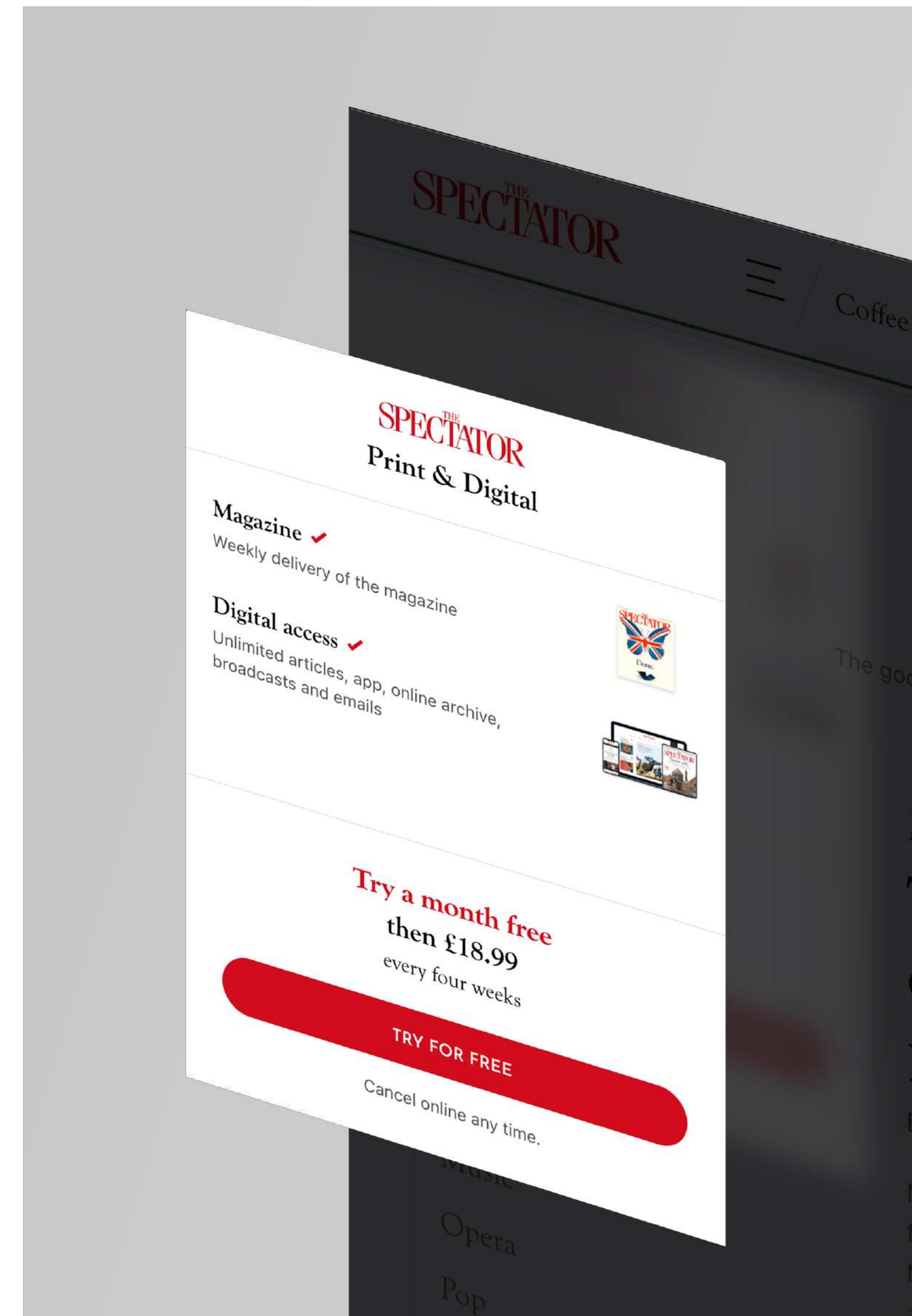
Grow the sense of loyalty and membership

With the brand identity cemented, and an improved website experience ready to deploy, it was time for The Spectator to apply those customer insights to real-time site activity.

“Once you have all of these insights, you need to use them and translate them into the product,” says Tom Morgan. “We learn from what we know about our users and about our print products, and we bring them together to create digital experiences that are visually appealing but also provide a consistent sense of humor, light touch, and enjoyment that you get from the magazine.”

Piano provided out-of-the-box templates and segments that enabled The Spectator’s digital team to create customer journeys at speed that successfully grew the digital part of the business. The most important factor in selecting Piano was the flexibility of the tool and its ability to grow with the business.

“We rely on the Piano platform because it is both powerful and flexible so we can react and immediately improve and test the experience for our customers,” says Tom Morgan.



Achieve new subscription highs

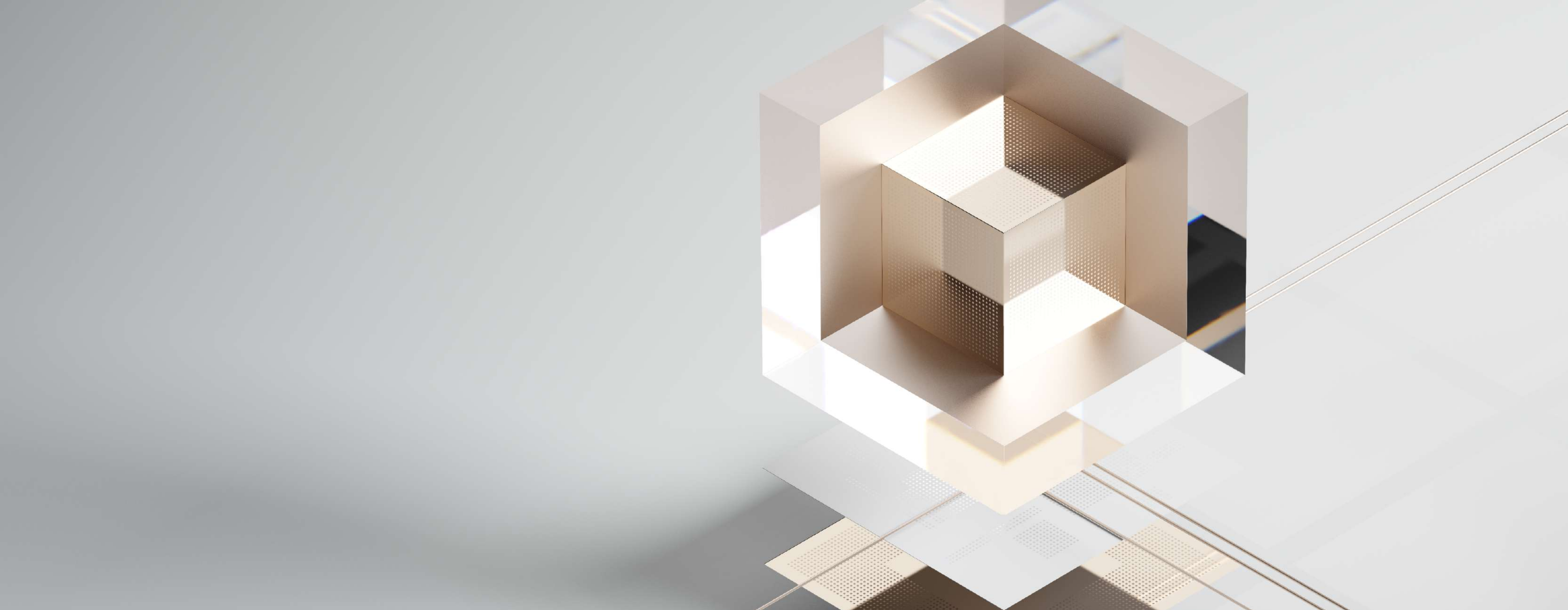
During a three-month period, conversions at The Spectator more than doubled and the number of users exposed to their site continued to increase. Additionally, by using Piano's end-to-end subscription solution, the publishing team saved significant time and resources in managing the website.

"I'm adamant to try to get more of the business onto Piano," says Morgan. "It's comparatively stress-free and has the added benefit of saving money, since we won't be spending time maintaining integrations with other systems."

The Spectator is now in a better place to further personalize their experience for users, that would have been significantly more complex with a solution built in-house. By segmenting their audience, they're able to showcase offers tailored to subscription status.

"Our digital subscription offering is so much more than web. It's emails, it's podcasts, it's events, it's even continued appreciation of print. The Spectator is a highly omnichannel experience," says Tom Morgan. "We plan to use Piano as not just a tech platform, but to continue optimizing the entire experience for our readers, improving customer journeys, and to help drive that cross-channel engagement."





ABOUT PIANO

Piano helps organizations understand and influence customer behavior by putting the power of insights and logic into the hands of their employees. The Piano Analytics and Activation Platform measures thousands of customer data points and acquires first-party data to more deeply engage users and then serve relevant content and experiences based on their unique behaviors and profiles. Using this powerful end-to-end platform, Piano's clients have achieved more scale, engagement and revenue by expanding the lifecycle and value of every digital interaction.

Learn more by reaching out
to hello@piano.io