

## **PROJECT BACKGROUND**

1. You work at the New York Times as a user researcher.
2. The product manager for digital (web, mobile app, tablet app) has a quarterly goal to increase paid digital subscriptions.
3. The digital subscriptions almost provide enough revenue to shutdown print production and still support the newsroom.
  - ([http://www.cjr.org/the\\_audit/the\\_nyt\\_paywall\\_shores\\_up\\_the.php](http://www.cjr.org/the_audit/the_nyt_paywall_shores_up_the.php))
4. NY Times digital content allows 10 articles per month and then a user is asked to subscribe and pay. They call this the paywall.
  - (<http://www.nytimes.com/content/help/account/purchases/subscriptions-and-purchases.html>)
5. In case you aren't a NY Times reader or user, then take a look at what people do to read the NY Times and avoid the paywall.
  - (<http://betabeat.com/2013/02/5-ways-you-can-still-get-around-the-new-york-times-paywall/>)
6. The product manager has defined engagement as any of these, in increasing order of value:
  - a. load content
  - b. signup
  - c. login
  - d. save content
  - e. access saved content
  - f. recommend a comment
  - g. write a comment
  - h. comment is published
  - i. subscribe to an email newsletter
  - j. subscribe to notifications or alerts in an app
  - k. subscribe for paid subscription (digital and/or print)
7. Currently the subscription plan pricing is 50% off weekly for 26 weeks then standard weekly subscription charge.
  - (<http://www.nytimes.com/subscriptions/Multiproduct/lp3LWL6.html>)

## **WHAT YOU KNOW FROM RECENT RESEARCH AND MEETINGS**

8. From surveys and data analysis for digital paid subscribers, you and the product manager know that there are 3 segments that are most likely to pay for a digital subscription:
  - a. Users who migrate from print-only to digital (or to digital + print)
  - b. New paid subscribers (digital only)
  - c. Users who are actively engaging with 3 or more of 6(d)–6(j) because they are most likely to eventually pay

9. The product manager has proposed 2 new paid subscription plans to attempt to **transform actively engaged unpaid users into paid users**. The quant researcher conducted survey and analysis for 4 paid plan ideas, and determined the 2 most desirable plans. These 2 plans are as follows:
  - a. Pay up front for 6 months, get 12 months (nonrefundable)
  - b. Free trial for 3 months, then pay regular monthly fee
10. The product manager has some hypotheses about the NY Times value prop for migrating from unpaid user to paid subscription:
  - a. User is tired of hitting paywall or using workaround to avoid paywall on web
  - b. User recently installed NY Times app on phone or tablet and is actively using it (free unlimited access for a week) and then hit paywall
  - c. User has been using NY Times on 2 or more of (web, phone, tablet) and notices it is easier to use cross-platform with a paid subscription

## WHAT'S IN YOUR POCKET?

11. Develop ideas for research that would gather:
  - a. Qualitative feedback about/for the 2 new paid subscription plans – why are they desirable?
  - b. Validate/invalidate the hypotheses about the value prop for paying for the NY Times digital.
  - c. Main Goal: better understand why users pay, and what type of plan encourages them to pay?
12. You have 2 weeks to complete this research. The product manager needs you to give a presentation to the Head of Digital at the end of 2 weeks.
13. The product manager would like to be involved along the way and is available to help.
14. The quant researcher is also available to explain the results of the survey analysis (that determined desirability for pricing plans, among 4 plans).
15. It's easy to get access to any type of user – you work at the NY Times and are allowed to directly contact any user.
16. You have unlimited access to research tools, vendors, and incentives for users – anything you need!

## YOUR DELIVERABLES → to discuss with a product manager for 30-45 minutes.

1. Describe suggested research methods, timeline and plan, and steps to execute/conduct the research within the 2-week constraint, including who you will talk with and how you will find them (or need help finding them).
2. What will you talk about with the users?
3. Discuss what you can and cannot learn within the time constraint of 2 weeks and the research methods you chose.