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The open network of specialized subscription,  
membership & event professionals

*Key takeaways from Renewd International Virtual Round-Table on September 7th, 2022*

## **Customer Value in Subscriptions: How publishers developing subscriptions products need to understand and measure customer value.**

*Carolyn Morgan of Speciall Media has written the following article under Chatham House Rules to share the key points from the discussion with the event participants and the wider Renewd community.*

In this virtual round table, [Carolyn Morgan](#) interviewed Matt Cianfarani, Executive Director, Digital at [Mark Allen Group](#) (MAG). MAG is a privately owned UK based business media company, with 500 staff, 200 events and 100 websites connected to magazines in sectors including farming, manufacturing, engineering, telecoms, aviation, and healthcare.

Community Care was acquired by MAG from RELX and serves UK social workers. [CC Inform](#) is fully digital and sold to local authorities to be referred to by their staff. It is on a legacy WordPress platform. [BJN Inform](#) is a new digital launch, on a mobile platform, linked to the British Journal of Nursing. It is currently in 10 NHS trusts and is used by nurses.

### **Purchaser vs user**

Both products are sold almost exclusively to institutional public sector purchasers, local authorities, or NHS Trusts. The needs and requirements of the purchaser are quite different to the user (social worker or nurse). All through the product development and launch process, the team have had to separately research, design and market to purchasers and users.

### **How to research customer needs**

For BJN Inform, the team invested time in interviewing the purchaser, covering different roles/ stakeholders such as Chief Nurse, Librarian, and Learning Director. This identified major strategic issues, including the risk of staff making poor decisions and opening up to legal action, and the challenge over burnt-out staff, limited time for skills development and poor retention.

The team also interviewed nurses as end users. They wanted an easily accessible, mobile solution, with bite size searchable content, covering both clinical and well-being topics. Early career nurses may lack confidence to ask questions of senior nurses or doctors. Idea of a “mentor in your pocket” was appealing. Small incentives such as vouchers were offered to reward involvement in research.

In any market, it's important to understand the use case and also the emotional needs of users. Another member of the group in a different market, noted that when they carried out new research, all their old assumptions were overturned.

### **Designing and developing product**

A project team drawn from across the organisation reviewed the research and prioritised features that addressed the key needs of purchasers and users. Since users had not made an active choice to purchase, the product needed to have good user experience (UX). It was designed for mobile first, with simple access via OpenAthens. It also works on desktop, but most nurses are on their feet all day.

Content was adapted from MAG's British Journal of Nursing but turning long articles into bite size content was more time consuming than expected. New content is added every month.

The "minimum viable product" (MVP) was tested with groups of nurses.

The group discussed the issue of "mobile-first" B2B subscription products. More employees are now happy to use their personal mobile phone to access work-related information, and convenience and portability is paramount.

### **Setting the price**

BJN Inform is priced according to the number of FTEs in an organisation, whether they use it or not. This makes the price accessible for smaller trusts. Training and skills budgets for nurses are lower than for doctors.

### **Customer success**

The customer services team on Community Care evolved into the customer success team for BJN Inform. Purchasers get regular visits to ensure the product is being used, and senior advocates are encouraging nurses to access the information available. On CCI there is a retention tool that allows purchasers to identify usage levels and skills gaps across the workforce. Zendesk tickets are used to identify issues and feed back into marketing and sales.

### **How to measure value for customers**

In short to medium term, all about usage. A third-party system, COUNTER, tracks how many staff are using the product and how often. Longer term can track skills gaps and measure impact on retention levels.

### **Future plans**

MAG will learn from the first 10 NHS trusts then scale up. Can add similar modules on the same platform for other groups e.g. healthcare support workers. CCI will eventually move to the new mobile platform for social workers.

## **About Renewd**

Renewd.net is the community for professionals in specialized, B2B information businesses. [www.renewd.net](http://www.renewd.net).

## **About Renewd International**

Renewd International has been designed to create a space for sharing and discussion - for senior executives from businesses with international operations, or those with an interest in international growth strategies. Join us for virtual roundtables to share growth strategies, best practices, and business challenges, in a closed door environment. Get in touch with Helen Coetzee ([helen@mpg.biz](mailto:helen@mpg.biz)) to find out more.

## **About the author**

Carolyn Morgan, founder of Speciall Media, has over 20 years experience at a senior level in media and consultancy, spanning print, digital, TV and live events. Carolyn has direct experience of strategic reviews, negotiating joint ventures, disposals and acquisitions of media businesses. She has successfully led media businesses to profitability and taken brands onto new media platforms. Carolyn launched the Specialist Media Show in 2010 to bring together experts and executives in specialist media. She moderated the Specialist Media Network on LinkedIn which provided a forum for debate and exchange of ideas among specialist media owners. In 2013 Carolyn sold the Specialist Media Show to SIIA and helped them launch a series of London-based events for European publishers. <https://speciall.media/>