NEW SKOOL MEDIA WORKS WITH CTAC TO LAY THE FOUNDATIONS FOR PREDICTIVE ANALYTICS IN POWERAPPS

The magazines published by New Skool Media are some of the best known in the country. Brands like EW, delicious., Formula 1 magazine and Seasons are available both online and offline for fans of a wide range of subjects. Ctac helps New Skool Media to make their brands even more successful with the help of data and predictive analytics.

New Skool Media (NSM) is one of the biggest publishers of special interest publications in the Netherlands. NSM publishes magazines and media platforms for a very wide range of interests and hobbies, from fashion and cycling to science and entertainment. The vast majority of NSM's turnover comes from subscriptions. So it is important for the company to know exactly how many subscribers will join or leave in the future and how much the advertising campaigns will cost and deliver. Clean data is essential for this.

Predictable, manageable and achievable

"Data has always played an important role in our operations," says Marc Bongers, Director of Marketing & Data Intelligence at New Skool Media. "Previously, we were using a lot of different marketing tools and our data

was fragmented. In addition, the data team was too remote from the operational employees who actually had to use the data. That had to change. We set ourselves the goal of making all our future marketing activities predictable, manageable and achievable."

To be able to better predict the effectiveness of marketing activities and subscriber numbers, NSM first had to lay good foundations. Bongers: "We expanded the data team and merged it with the marketing team to bring our processes and systems closer together. We then looked at how we could make our internal processes more efficient and automate them. To get started, we needed to do two things: improve data input and decide which tools we wanted to use moving forward. Our starting point was that our database had to form the core of our data strategy. Together with our data analyst, Julian Vandenbussche, we went looking for a platform
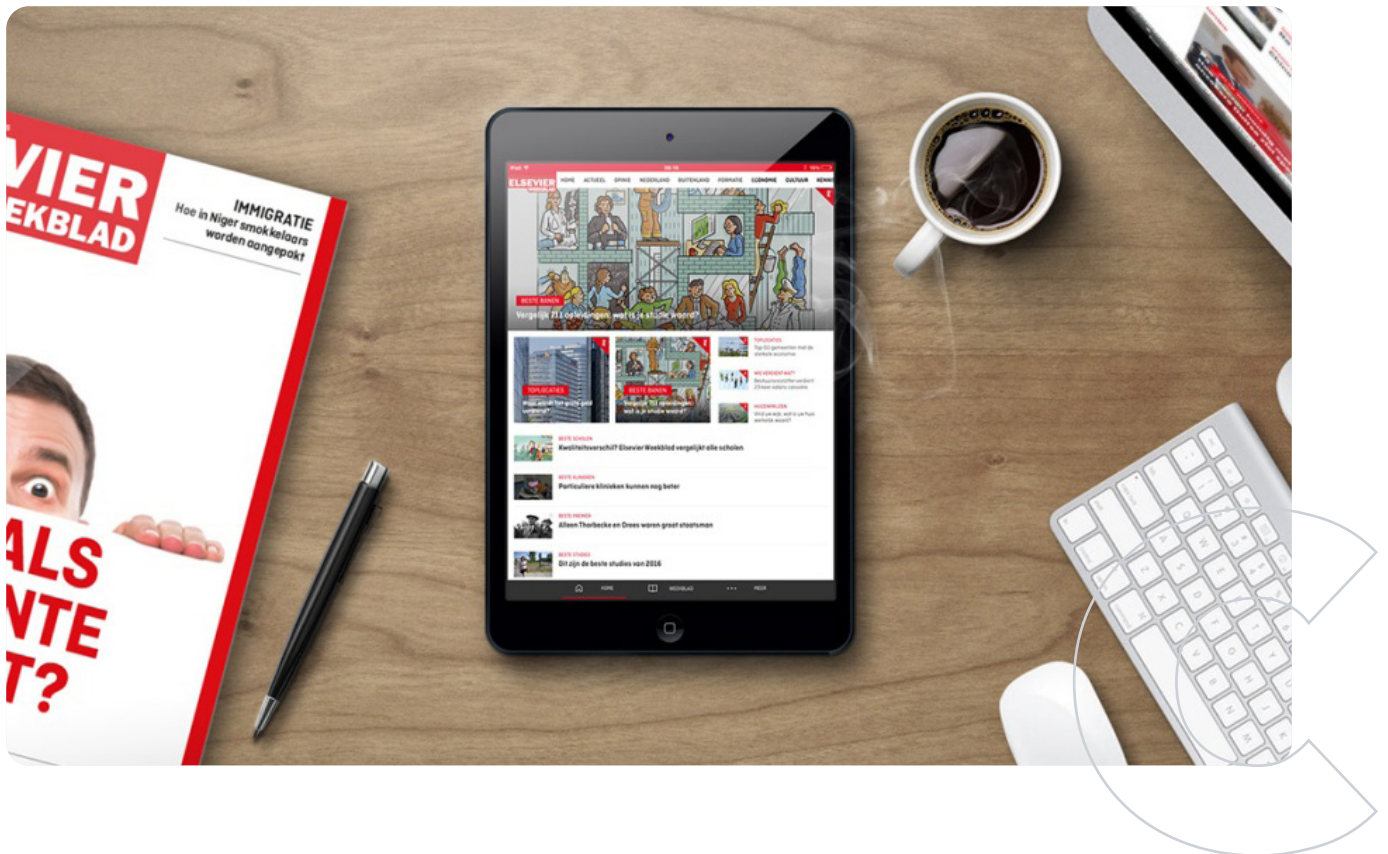
that applies that same principle. Our choice was Microsoft PowerApps. That is why we then shopped around for a partner who could help us to implement PowerApps correctly in our organisation, who could scale up quickly, and who could assist us over the medium term with setting up predictive analytics."

Step-by-step automation

In the spring of 2021, New Skool Media got in touch with Ctac. "Ctac has the PowerApps expertise we were looking for, and the capacity to get things moving quickly. In addition, during our first brainstorming sessions, they proved that they fully understood our long-term goals in the area of predictive analytics. They set out clearly which intermediate steps were needed to work predictively. We then drilled down into these steps in workshops, which mainly involved asking the sales side of the business what they needed."

The campaign management app

The first major development that came out of the joint workshops was the campaign management app. "In the application, we carry out preliminary, interim and follow-up calculations for our campaigns," explains

Bongers. "We check whether campaigns stay within the budget we set, and how much they contribute to our goals. The app also has to automate repetitive tasks, such as tagging to trace the origin of Internet traffic and creating landing pages. We also use the app to ensure the data we input is uniform, structured, complete and correct, so that we keep on improving our analyses."

The analyses in the campaign management application help NSM to assess which campaign elements are working well and which could be optimised. Bongers: "We want to find out where the weak points are and monitor various KPIs. For example, we now receive reports that are automatically generated. Marketers no longer have to set these up themselves, which saves them a lot of time. In addition, all the reports have now been compiled in a clear way, which makes the results easier to compare."

A framework for the future

Bongers is pleased with how the collaboration with Ctac worked during the development of the app and the overarching predictive analytics project. "We always end up reaching a consensus on what Ctac will do for us, what we can do together and what we will take care of

ourselves," says Bongers. "We do this deliberately, because we also need to learn how to use PowerApps for ourselves and build up our expertise. I also attach great importance to deadlines and budgets. I want us to keep up the momentum and to use our time efficiently. I discuss this with Ctac regularly – something else which is working very well. I really do view it as a partnership. We are building this framework for our future together.

Of course, there are always things that are tougher to achieve than I would like," admits Bongers. "For example, a lot of data sources have to be pooled, including from third parties. This is not always easy and it impacts the timeline. But Ctac talks to us openly about this. They warn us about the risk of delays and chase up whoever is slowing things down, so that the data can be shared faster."

Predictive models for resource investment and subscriber numbers

Now that the campaign management app is almost finished, NSM is ready for the next step. "Firstly, we will make our campaigns smarter," explains Bongers. "To do this, we need to use machine learning as well as gathering data. With the resulting model, we hope to be able to identify the best deployment of resources before starting a campaign."

Meanwhile, Ctac and NSM are also developing a predictive model for subscribers and subscription numbers. Bongers: "We want to use this model to predict, for example, how many subscriptions we will have in a year's time, depending on our marketing campaigns. We combine various types of data in this model. Things such as our customer lifetime value, the acquisition channel, subscriber turnover and the remaining lifetime of subscriptions. Using the information we receive, we will in future be able to budget better, reduce revenue risks, reach our target groups more effectively and offer subscribers a more personalised service. We will be working hard on this with Ctac in the near future."

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