

The Ultimate Digital Publishing and Media Glossary

101 Terms You Need to Know

Introduction

Untangling the web of technological jargon, acronyms, and buzzwords associated with digital publishing can be overwhelming, to say the least. Every day, new terminology seems to spring into existence, created to make communication easier. But without a genuine understanding of what these terms stand for and mean, it's easy to find yourself lost in a sea of three letter words.

We live in a new world. General communication skills just don't cut it anymore — you also need to be digitally fluent to thrive in digital publishing. So what do you do if you can't tell your CDPs from your CRMs, or your data layers from your data walls? Luckily for you, the team at Zephr is here to help. In this glossary, we've cut down and simplified the 101 terms we think all professionals in news, media and publishing ought to understand. Let this act as your guide to the essential terminology needed to feel confident navigating the digital world again.



Glossary

A

A/B TESTING

Refers to the experimentation process (also known as split testing) where two or more versions of a variable, such as an article, email, or journey, are tested by putting half of your audience through each and seeing which performs best. This allows you to double down on one optimized strategy.

ACQUISITION

Acquisition is the ultimate goal of sales and marketing, turning visitors or prospects into paying customers.

ACCESS MANAGEMENT

A system (similar to identity and access management) that manages access to content or information on an individual basis. This is essential for security and ensuring sensitive data is kept safe from prying eyes, as well as making sure customers only see content they have paid for.

ACCOUNT SHARING

When multiple people access a resource or piece of content using the same login details. Account sharing is a common pain for subscription businesses, as potential customers use a friend, colleague, or relative's account to access content they would otherwise have to pay for. This might prevent them from setting up their own account, lowering your revenue.

ADVERTISING

A way of communicating with potential and current clients, usually about a service or product. It can also be a marketing tactic where you pay for a space to promote a service, product, or cause.

AFFILIATE MARKETING

A marketing arrangement where one partner or advertiser pays commission to a publisher for external traffic or sales generated from their referrals. For example, a software company (the "advertiser") might pay an industry publication (the "publisher" or "affiliate") to promote their product through an article. The end goal is for the customer to read the article and then go on to buy from the software company.

API

An application programming interface allows one application or website to use the functions of and communicate with another without you having to enter the original site.

ARPU

Average revenue per user. A calculation worked out by dividing your total revenue by the total number of users in any given period. It plays an important role in modelling growth, indicating the worth of an existing, individual user and therefore helping you predict future revenue.

ATTRIBUTES

The defining features, qualities, or characteristics of an individual subscriber. These might be regarded as an inherent part of the person, the device type they're using, their location, as well as any other details or preferences they may share.

AUTHENTICATION

The process of verifying the identity of a user logging in to a service. Authentication can be established in several ways, like biometrics (e.g., face or finger scan), a personal question or a verification text sent to your phone.

AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT

A calculable representation of how many users not just viewed but actually interacted with your content or website in some way. This could include commenting, liking, or sharing the content. A high engagement rate is a good sign your marketing strategies are working, or that your content is high-quality and relevant.

B

B2B SUBSCRIPTION

Recurring purchases (usually monthly or yearly) that businesses make to access the content or platform of another company.

BOUNCE RATE

A bounce is a single-page session on a site. The bounce rate is the percentage of total website visitors who only view one page before leaving. A high bounce rate means readers are clicking on your content but then leaving quickly. The problem could be that there's no clear next step on your pages, such as links to a related page.

BEST-OF-BREED

A term used to describe software that is considered the best within its referenced category or niche. Best-of-breed solutions usually perform specialized functions better than end-to-end (i.e., they do everything) systems, but are constrained to a more limited capacity within that specialization.

BUNDLED PACKAGES

When several products are "bundled" into one purchase at a discounted rate, increasing its appeal. For example, many online news publications offer readers the ability to buy access to premium content packages such as sports, politics or world affairs, all at one discounted price. This gives the customer more value for less, and the publisher a larger deal than they would have otherwise. Read more about bundling and unbundling [here](https://www.zuora.com/resource/bundling-vs-unbundling-digital-subscriptions)¹.

¹ <https://www.zuora.com/resource/bundling-vs-unbundling-digital-subscriptions>

C

CCPA COMPLIANT

The California Consumer Privacy Act 2020 defines the statewide data privacy law that dictates the way companies all over the world are allowed to handle California residents' personal information.

CDP

A customer data platform is a tool that combines data from multiple sources into a succinct profile on each of your customers. Storing each customer's data in one place allows companies to build an "address book" of their audience and cater better to their preferences.

CHURN RATE

The percentage of users that unsubscribe from your service over a set period of time. High churn rates are a problem for all subscription businesses, as lost customers are a direct hit to their bottom lines. The more churn experienced, the more acquisition companies need in order to replace lost revenue.

CONTACT TAGS

A way of grouping a number of contacts under a common label, making it easier to find a specific person. These groups could be by company, relevance, or anything you want.

CONVERSION RATE

The percentage of visits to your site or ad that lead to a purchase. Your conversion rate is calculated by dividing the total number of visitors to your site by the number who actually subscribe or convert into paying customers. This shows the rate of successful transactions your page attracts — or the efficacy of your current conversion strategies.

CPC

The cost per click refers to the actual price of every click in your PPC (pay-per-click) marketing campaign, giving you an accurate understanding of how effective your marketing strategy is. CPC is determined by several factors, including your maximum bid, your Quality Score, and the ad rank of other advertisers bidding for the same keyword.

CPM

Cost per thousand impressions. Similar to CPC, CPM is the cost for each 1,000 views of your ad.

CRM

Customer relationship management. A system that allows businesses to gather, track, and share customer information, enabling effective management of the customer-business relationship. This is essential for maintaining the happiness of existing customers, as well as preparing for new, potential customers.

CROSS-SELLING

Cross-selling involves marketing additional products from other companies or product lines to existing customers. Some companies do deals to cross-sell to each other's customers in an attempt to capture a new audience. For example, *New York Times* customers used to get a discounted Spotify Premium subscription, and vice versa.

CTR

Click-through rate. A metric measuring the ratio of total impressions to clicks, showing how effective your advertising strategies are. If your content has a large number of impressions without being followed up by clicks, it is either reaching the wrong target audience or lacks a "grab" factor.

CTA

Call to action. A line that asks the reader to take another action, such as reading another article, downloading a piece of gated content, or booking a demo. You will find CTAs at the end of blog articles, social media posts and ads, such as “If you enjoyed this post, get in touch!”

CUSTOMER LIFECYCLE

The process of potential customers becoming aware of a product, making a purchase from a brand, and ideally becoming a company’s longtime customer. The lifecycle is made up of five stages: awareness, engagement, conversion, retention, and loyalty.

D

DASHBOARD

A dashboard is a visual display of your most relevant data. This allows you to quickly and easily keep an eye on your performance metrics in real time to monitor your growth.

DATA LAYER

A tool that collects all of the data generated from customer interactions with your website. Not all websites have a data layer but they are essential for reliable and flexible data collection — a necessity for a growing business.

DATA SETS

A collection of multiple pieces of information or data relating to a singular person or thing. For example, how users interacted with your email newsletter is a data set.

DATA VISUALIZATION

A way to make your data more accessible by visualizing it, such as putting it into a graph or chart. Endless numbers on a page can be daunting and hard to understand, so it’s good practice to use data visualization where possible.

DATA WALL

This is similar to a paywall, except it demands data instead of a subscription. Where a paywall asks users to fill in their card details to purchase access, a data wall may ask for relevant details like your name, email address, and occupation. This incentivizes the consumer to hand over first-party data in return for content or services, which can be just as beneficial to a growing company as a monetary donation.

DIGITAL ECOSYSTEM

An online network where a group of businesses, people, or things work together. Through this ecosystem you can interact with customers, other industries, and even competitors.

DMP

Data management platform. A tool used for collecting and managing data, allowing businesses to identify audience segments. This gives a better understanding of your audience and how they react to your content.

DOWNSELLING

Downselling is the opposite of upselling (i.e. moving a client to a cheaper plan or product). Businesses should embrace downselling in the future as an acceptable trade for keeping happy, long-term customers. Value alignment is key, and it is better to have a lower paying customer than no customer at all.

DYNAMIC EXPERIENCES

A user experience personalized to the individual user, often changing depending on their actions. A dynamic experience of a digital publisher could include personalized content, localized pricing, and user-specific messaging.

E

ESP

Email service provider. A software used by companies to manage email marketing, such as sending out promotional email campaigns or simply communicating with their customers.

EXTENSION STRATEGY

A strategy used to keep sales of a product in the growth stage, rather than falling into decline. Long-term planning and effective extension strategies aim to avoid a loss of interest in established products.

Examples of extension strategies might include rebranding, price discounting, and entering new markets.

F

FEATURES

Features are the elements of your site that you wish to place access decisions on. They target a specific part of a page and result in that content being transformed.

Features are used to create unique experiences for your users such as dropping registration and data capture walls, displaying house ads and paywalls, and promoting special offers. Content such as forms, payment forms, and custom content blocks are created as outcomes within each feature.

FEDERATED USER ACCESS

A system where users can access all networks or domains that are part of the federation using the same authentication details. This means that once logged in to one domain, users also have access to the other federated domains and don't have to go through any separate login processes.

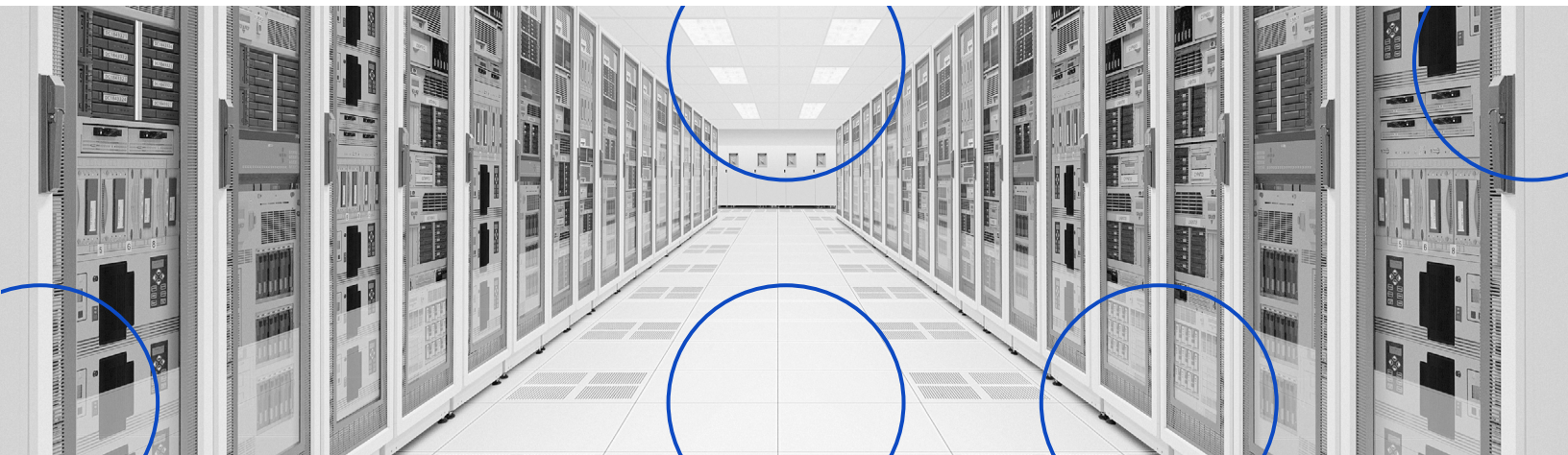
FIRST-PARTY DATA

This is information that the company owns as it is collected directly from its customers and is therefore the most reliable and sought after type of data. First-party data is a key part of the range of data available and can reduce the need for other kinds of data. Strategies such as data walls are an effective way of collecting first-party data.

G

GDPR COMPLIANT

The General Data Protection Regulation defines the legal guidelines for the collection and processing of personal information from individuals who live in the European Union. Since the regulation applies regardless of where websites are based, it must be heeded by all sites that attract European visitors, even if they don't specifically market goods or services to EU residents.



I

IDAM

Identity and access management is the managerial process which ensures that the right people have the appropriate access to technological resources. This might be through passwords or more in-depth security systems.

IMPRESSIONS

Impressions quantify the number of times usually an advertisement or content is shown. For instance, an impression occurs any time a user opens an app or website and an advertisement is visible. Should not be confused with “reach.” Reach is the total number of people who see your content. Impressions are the number of times your content is displayed, no matter if it was clicked or not.

INTUITIVE UI

A way of designing the graphics of your user interface (UI) so it is simple and enjoyable for clients to use. User interfaces are the aesthetic and graphic layers of your platforms that your users directly interact with, like the buttons they press on your website or the text they read on your app. Creating an intuitive UI means these platforms are easy to navigate, increasing time spent using the platform and hopefully increasing conversion rates. A website that is impossible to use won't inspire subscriptions.

INCREMENTAL DATA CAPTURE

A strategy where user information is asked for over a period of time in exchange for further access to content. This builds a clearer picture of your users, helping to increase ad revenue through better user profiling, or generating a more qualified leads list for your sales team. It also works to build a relationship between the reader and your brand, gaining their loyalty the more articles they read.

For example, a user registers with an email address and is given trial access to two pieces of content. Once these views have been used, they are asked to provide their full name. By providing this additional data, they are given access to two more pieces.

IN-RULE REPORTING

An easier way to track data and make informed decisions based on the result of testing. With Zephr's platform, publishers can create personalized subscription journeys in our drag-and-drop rules builder, and then use in-rule reporting to streamline the decision-making process, generating test results in real time, for the effective optimization of user journeys.

J

JSON

JavaScript object notation. A format used for storing and transporting data. It is often used when data is being sent from a server to a webpage, as well as for transmitting data in web applications — for example sending some data from the server to the client, so it can be displayed on a web page, or vice versa.

JWT

Json web tokens. A way of exchanging user data in a secure way between two pieces of software. In Zephr they are used when you are integrating Zephr with the third-party identity management tool. JWTs are used to pass information between server-side systems, via an end user's client (a web browser) without allowing the information to be tampered with.

K

KNOWN USERS

The users of your site you already have information on and established customer profiles through registration/sign-up.

KPI'S

Key performance indicators. A specific set of metrics decided on by a company to help track how the business is performing. By having a defined set of metrics recording data to determine performance, you can more easily and accurately measure progress over time through KPIs.

This makes long-term planning and problem-solving easier.

L

LTV/CAC RATIO

Lifetime value/customer acquisition cost. A calculation that compares the value of a customer over their lifetime to the cost of acquiring them. If the LTV/CAC ratio is less than 1.0, it means you are spending more money acquiring a customer than you get back in revenue. Therefore you will lose money in the long run.

M

MARKETING AUTOMATION

Using software to automate repetitive marketing tasks to more effectively market on multiple channels online. For example, by automating email marketing or social media posting, you can increase efficiency, save money, and further personalize customer experiences.

Examples of marketing automation software include HubSpot, Mailchimp, and ActiveCampaign.

METRICS

The calculations made from data or information derived from your performance that shows the progress of your business. Metrics give you a quantifiable description of how badly or well customers respond to ad campaigns, posts, or websites through engagement rates, impressions, or other factors.

Examples of metrics include customer acquisition cost, cost per click and customer lifetime value. The list goes on.

MONETIZE

The process of generating profit from users consuming your content. This revenue might come from customers paying for content directly, or a third party marketing their products through your content.

MULTI-FACTOR VERIFICATION

A method which only grants a user access to a domain after successfully proving their identity through two or more verification methods.

MULTI-LOGIN

A method which allows you to quickly and easily switch between accounts. This allows you to easily manage multiple profiles simultaneously without logging in and out, or worrying about data leaking from one to the other. You might already be familiar with this feature if you use Google Chrome, where you can switch profiles with a singular click of a button.

O

OAuth

A framework that allows third-party services to exchange your information without you having to give away your password. The simplest example of "open authorization" is when a website asks whether you'd like to log in using your details from another platform, such as Facebook or Twitter.

Overlays

A type of ad that pops up within your page for a short time and then disappears — unless it is interacted with. They can take the form of almost anything, including interactive elements or videos. They are fairly disruptive to users, but nonetheless remain some of the most effective and expensive forms of ad.

P

Page Load Time

The length of time it takes for a webpage to fully load and appear on your screen. Lengthy loading times might lead visitors to bounce and impact a website's rank in the SERPs.

Paywalls

A system in which access to all or part of a website is restricted to paid subscribers. Read Zephr's overall guide on paywalls [here](https://www.zephr.com/blog/the-case-for-paywalls)².

1. **Dynamic or intelligent paywall:** A dynamic paywall allows readers to consume content until certain conditions are met. Intelligent paywalls take this further by restricting access to one website visitor, while simultaneously giving unrestricted access to the same content to another — usually on a topic they are more likely to be interested in.
2. **Hard paywall:** Hard paywalls do not allow visitors to view any of your content without subscribing. These are the most direct paywalls to drive conversion, but also the riskiest as they may reach a reader before enough loyalty has been built up to incentivize them to subscribe.

3. **Freemium paywall:** A "freemium" or soft paywall means offering a mixture of free and premium content. Visitors must pay to access premium content behind the paywall, but have unlimited access to the free content. Which premium articles are hidden are heavily curated by editorial teams to ensure readers are sufficiently hooked by free content to consider payment for more.
4. **Metered paywall:** Metered paywalls allow visitors access to several articles for free before the paywall appears. Readers can therefore access any article, premium or not, within their specific quota of free articles before requiring paid subscription.

Personalization

The process by which ads, messages, and other forms of marketing is tailored to individual clients needs. Customer data is used to personalize every step of the subscription journey, ensuring a positive subscription experience and increased client satisfaction.

Plug-and-play integration

A series of tools that need no changes after installation to work perfectly, even when integrated with several other tools. In the past, downloading new software meant writing long, complicated code to make sure it worked as intended. Now, the reality of plug-and-play software means you should be ready to go directly after installation.

Pop-up messages

An advertisement format whereby a message "pops up" on a user's browser or desktop, intended to grab their attention. Examples include "exit pop-ups" which are shown when a user is about to leave the website, or "welcome bonus" when a discount code is offered to first-time visitors.

Product packages

Content providers often group together articles or videos within a specific topic and sell the "package" to users so that they can access all the content they are interested in. A common example of this is a sports package, which might be a premium add-on offered by a news publication.

² <https://www.zephr.com/blog/the-case-for-paywalls>

PROPENSITY MODELING

Using data to predict a visitor's actions and decisions. This can range from how likely a user is to convert or churn, to whether they will unsubscribe from email chains. Propensity modeling is important for a growing business to get a better understanding of how their users behave. Furthermore, while this is only a prediction and not fact, these models still offer some clarity on what to expect from certain users in the future.

PUBLICATIONS

Companies that prepare and distribute content for public sale. Published material in the physical sense is something everyone is familiar with, assuming you've picked up a book at some point in time. Publication in the digital world works exactly the same, except the content being produced exists only online, such as a blog, video, or news article.

R

RECURRING REVENUE

The portion of a company's revenue that is expected to keep coming in the future. Different to one-off sales that can be unpredictable and unreliable — recurring revenue can be counted on with a high degree of certainty.

For digital publishers, recurring revenue can be most easily secured through locking customers into subscriptions.

REGISTERED

The definition of a client that has signed up to a publication to access content (usually by sharing some of their data through a registration form).

REGISTRATION FORM

A form with a list of fields created by a company for customers to input their data. This makes collecting essential customer information and first-party data quicker and easier for both parties.

REGISTRATION WALL

A tool for managing relationships with your clients online by asking visitors to establish a free account with your website to have access to content. This allows you to collect first-party data easily and effectively.

RENEWAL

The act where a client extends their subscription package having reached the end of the original agreed period. Subscription renewals are essential to securing recurring revenue, as well as giving an indication of customer satisfaction.

REVENUE MIX

The split of total revenue that is generated by different products or streams. Understanding your revenue mix and therefore your most profitable products or services is essential for predicting future growth and profitability.

RULES

In Zephr's platform, a Rule refers to a series of decisions to determine what access a user gets to a piece of content. Zephr offers Feature Rules, which target a specific part of a page and result in the content being transformed, and Request Rules, which target the whole request and alter the response.

Rules are used to create unique experiences for your users such as dropping registration and data capture walls, displaying house ads and paywalls, restricting access to downloads and promoting special offers.

S

SECOND-PARTY DATA

Second-party data is first party-data that has been shared between two or more parties "privately" for mutual benefit. This means that second-party data is, in essence, just first-party data that has been bought or traded with another company. This means the information is as accurate as first-party data, but it's information you have purchased, not collected.

SEGMENTATION

The process of dividing an audience into smaller groups by attributes such as age, gender, location, or interests. Being able to segment your audience allows you to target different buyer personas using more relevant strategies and deliver personalized messages.

SESSION LENGTH

The amount of time a user spends on your website or app within one sitting before leaving. Publishers strive for a long average session length, as it implies their audience values the content and are willing to spend a significant amount of time reading it.

SINGLE SIGN ON

A way by which your end users can log in to all of your sites after logging into a single site. For example, by logging in to Site A, you automatically receive an authenticated session for Site B and Site C.

SOCIAL SIGN-IN

A way to allow your users to use your social media accounts as password-based authentication to sign in to other accounts. There are various social media platforms supporting social sign-in, including Facebook, Twitter, Google, and Instagram.

This means you can take advantage of your existing username and password making it much easier to log in. It also gives you direct access to their information saved for the chosen site. Read more [here](#)³.

STICKY FOOTER

A footer that is "stuck" to the bottom of the reader's screen as they scroll through an article. Sticky footer ads are effective as they are always in the reader's sight, but are less obtrusive than pop-ups.

SUBSCRIPTION EXPERIENCE

This describes how your customers experience the process from discovering your product to becoming a long-term customer through subscription. Similar to the subscription experience is the subscription journey. This is the sum of the experiences a customer goes through when interacting with your company and brand, from the content they see to the offers they are shown.

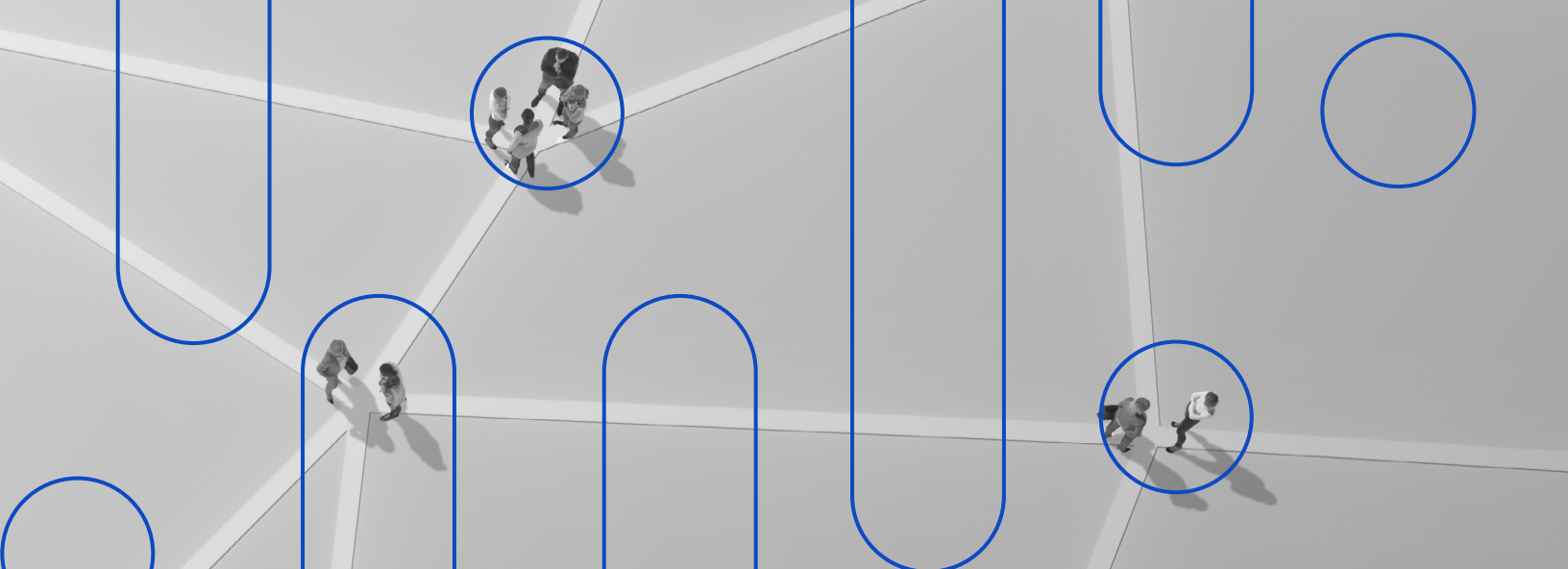
SUBSCRIPTION MANAGEMENT

The process of acquiring and maintaining subscribers with the aim of ensuring that their experience with your product or service is a happy one. The process starts when a customer signs up to subscribe to your product or service, and it ends when the customer cancels their subscription.

SUBSCRIPTION ECONOMY

A phrase coined by Zuora describing the current changing business landscape, where traditional pay-per-product services are being exchanged in favor of subscription-based business models.

³ <https://www.zephr.com/blog/why-strong-usernames-and-passwords-dont-cut-it-anymore>



T

TECHNOLOGY AGNOSTIC

A notion supporting the idea that there is no one "right" technological solution to solving a problem. It is important to remain unbiased towards any given technological tool, and avoid molding your processes to fit the tool you have chosen to buy and implement.

Ultimately, tools exist to support the systems and processes you create, rather than provide a framework for them. Be wary of falling into the trap of finding the right job for the tool instead of the right tool for the job.

TECHNOLOGY STACK

The combination of technologies used to build and run an app or project. Connecting the server (back-end) side and client (front-end) side of the application are many layers of code, programs and tools that allow the app to run and function properly. These layers together form the technology stack.

THIRD-PARTY DATA / COOKIES

Third-party data is any information or data that has been collected by an entity that has no direct link to the user. Often this data has been collected from a variety of websites and aggregated together by a third-party data provider like a DMP. This means the connection between the data and supplier is more tenuous than first- or second-party data.

TRIAL

The process of granting potential customers free access to content for a short time in the hope of "hooking" them and increasing their chances of conversion. Most publications offer a 7- or 30-day trial period before you are billed for a subscription.

U

UNKNOWN USERS

The visitors to a site that you have no data or information at all on. Unknown visitors should not be disregarded though, as they represent roughly **90% of site visitors**⁴. Once unknown visitors fill in a registration form, they become "known."

UPSELLING

Upselling involves encouraging customers to add additional products to their package, such as access to premium content.

USER SEGMENTATION

A process where you separate users into distinct groups, or segments, based on shared characteristics. A company might segment users based on language preferences, product version, geographical region, or user persona.

This allows you to target certain content or ads to specific areas of your audience with ease.

⁴ <https://wiprodigital.com/2018/06/28/b2b-who-are-unknown-customers-and-how-can-marketers-reach-them/>

USER SPECIFIC PERSONALISATION

The strategy of increasing customer satisfaction and conversion rates by tailoring each user's individual experience with your platform. This ranges from how quickly you see a paywall to the type of pop-up ads you receive. Solid CRM tools and detailed customer profiles all contribute to effective user specific personalization.

USER STATES

A description of what stage of the subscription journey your customer is in, such as anonymous, registered, subscribed, etc. This gives you a better idea of what frame of mind a certain customer may be in, as well as a better idea of how to move them from one state to the next along this journey. User states allow you to identify the health of a business by noting how customers move between states; if there is an increase in the churn risk state, it is a good indication something isn't working right.

For more information about user states, listen to our podcast [here](#)⁵.

USER STATE MAP

A specially designed feature to bring new levels of curation to your customer subscription journeys, allowing you to map out the stages of your customers' lifecycle and set criteria that triggers the transition of a customer from one stage to another. The user state map allows users to have the ability to influence a broader set of success metrics, such as churn prevention, experience personalization, deeper progressive profiling, and upsell strategies.

USP

Unique selling proposition. These are the unique factors that separate a company, brand, or product from its competitors within a certain sector. These must be a feature that highlights meaningful product benefits to customers, and can range from something you do that no one else can, or doing something for the best price on the market.

V

VRM

Visitor relationship management are strategies that enable businesses to personalize customer visits and improve customer experience. They include a solution that allows organizations to streamline their visitor management process through features such as pre-registration or ID verification.

W

WHITELIST IP ADDRESSES

Granting content access to a specific location. Whitelisting IP addresses allows you to grant access for a host of visitors all operating on the same IP address, rather than forcing them to all register or subscribe separately.

Z

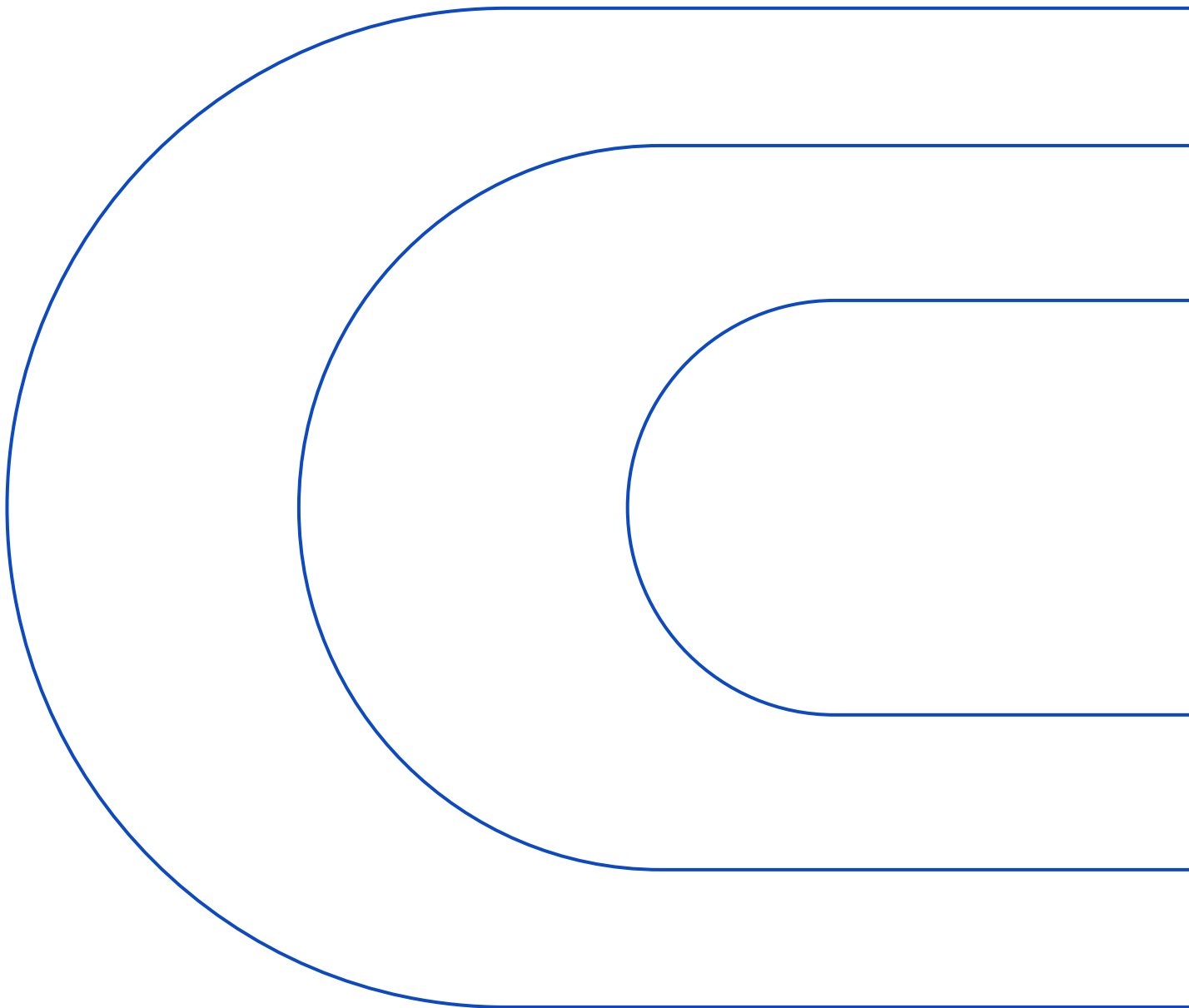
ZOMBIE SUBSCRIBERS

Zombie subscribers are subscribers that do not interact with your platform, simply existing and not actively participating.

⁵ <https://www.zephr.com/podcast/podcast-27-chris-scott-user-states>

Conclusion

With this glossary to hand, we hope you have a better understanding of the technological language that swarms all things "digital." Acronyms and abbreviations that aren't understood lose their purpose, while staying well-informed on current terms gives you the power to communicate quickly and effectively.



Want to see how we can help you navigate all things digital subscriptions?

[Speak to our team](#)



Zuora provides the leading cloud-based subscription management platform that functions as a system of record for subscription businesses across all industries. Powering the Subscription Economy®, the Zuora® platform was architected specifically for dynamic, recurring subscription business models and acts as an intelligent subscription management hub that automates and orchestrates the entire subscription order-to-cash process, including billing and revenue recognition. Zuora serves more than 1,000 companies around the world, including Box, Komatsu, Rogers, Schneider Electric, Xplornet, and Zendesk.

[More at www.zuora.com](http://www.zuora.com)