

# The Complete Publisher's Tech Breakdown

Essential Components for Publisher Success

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**In digital publishing today, success goes beyond having great content. It requires a robust and efficient technology infrastructure that supports every facet of the subscription business. As such, publishers have come to recognize the value of technology and innovation in driving subscriber growth and generating sustainable revenue.**

From managing customer relationships to delivering personalized experiences, the right technology stack can be the differentiating factor between thriving in any market, or struggling to keep up. So to help publishers truly grasp all they need from their tech stacks, this comprehensive guide aims to break down the essential technological components that digital publishers need.



Throughout this guide, we'll delve into the critical role of key technologies, such as Customer Relationship Management systems (CRMs) in effectively managing subscriber data, and Customer Data Platforms (CDP) in enhancing data management and personalization efforts. Furthermore, we'll discuss the best practices shaping the publisher's tech landscape to enable publishers to better choose technology that's right for their business and maintain their competitive edge in an ever-evolving industry.

Without further ado,  
let's dive in...

# Key Components of a Publisher's Tech Stack

In this section, we'll explore the key components that make up a comprehensive tech stack. By understanding and implementing these key components, digital publishers can establish a robust and efficient infrastructure that empowers them to thrive.

## Customer Relationship Management System (CRM)

In the realm of digital publishing, a Customer Relationship Management system (CRM) plays a pivotal role in managing and nurturing customer relationships. The first step to cultivating any relationship is understanding the other party. Enter the CRM, which serves as a centralized hub for collecting, organizing, and analyzing subscriber data. This enables publishers to gain valuable insights into their audiences and tailor their strategies accordingly. Typically, customer success and sales teams run this tool internally, and by leveraging a CRM, they can help to solve support issues and deliver experiences that drive subscriber satisfaction and retention.





## Why use a CRM?

Implementing a CRM offers numerous benefits. Firstly, it allows publishers to have a comprehensive view of their subscribers, enabling them to break down and store an audience into segments. These segments can be based on various attributes such as demographics, user state, and engagement levels. Segmentation like this facilitates targeted support, marketing campaigns, and optimized customer communication.

Moreover, a CRM system facilitates effective subscriber lifecycle and user state management. Publishers can track the entire customer journey, from acquisition to retention and win-back strategies. This further helps to identify opportunities for upselling, cross-selling, and providing tailored offers to maximize revenue generation.

Additionally, and perhaps most crucially, a CRM allows customer success and support teams to resolve account issues promptly, and provide proactive customer care, thereby improving overall subscriber satisfaction and loyalty.

With the above points in mind, it's clear that CRMs are useful, if not critical to the success of building any relationship with an audience online. With that established, what key features and considerations should publishers be aware of when choosing a CRM platform?

### 1. Integration capabilities

A common theme for all the technology discussed in this guide will be integration. As with all successful technology in a stack, publishers ought to ensure that their CRM integrates seamlessly with other components, such as the CMS and CDP (more on these later). This enables a unified view of customer data and facilitates streamlined workflows.

### 2. Customization and scalability

Since CRMs play a crucial role in many functions, it makes sense to choose a solution that can be customized to align with specific publishing needs and can scale as the subscriber base grows. This ensures flexibility and future-proofing for the CRM investment.

### 3. Data security and compliance

Given the sensitive nature of subscriber data of almost any kind, robust data security measures and compliance with data privacy regulations, such as GDPR or CCPA, are crucial considerations when choosing a CRM.

### 4. Analytics and reporting capabilities

In order to be effective, publishers need to be able to extract useful insights from their data. Look for a CRM that offers robust analytics and reporting features, providing actionable insights on subscriber behavior. These insights empower publishers to make data-driven decisions and optimize their strategies.

### 5. User-friendly interface

Consider the user-friendliness and intuitiveness of the CRM platform. An intuitive interface makes it easier for publishers and their teams to leverage the system effectively and maximize its potential.

By carefully selecting and implementing a CRM platform that aligns with the specific needs and goals of the digital publishing business, publishers can harness the power of subscriber data, improve engagement, and ultimately drive revenue growth.



## Customer Data Platform (CDP)

In the digital publishing landscape, a Customer Data Platform (CDP) acts as a unified and centralized repository that combines data from various sources, such as website interactions, mobile app usage, email engagement, and more. CDPs are often confused with CRMs, but effectively, CDPs provide a bigger picture of how customers interact with your brand across all platforms. While a CRM organizes and manages customer interactions, CDPs collect specific data on users and make it easier to connect that data to additional third-party systems. By consolidating and harmonizing data, a CDP enables digital publishers to make effective use of it with actionable insights.

By integrating data from multiple touchpoints and channels, a CDP enables publishers to gain a holistic and deeper understanding of individual subscriber preferences, behaviors, and engagement patterns. This wealth of information enables publishers to answer key questions about users and better offer highly personalized and tailored experiences across various touchpoints, such as content recommendations, targeted promotions, and customized on-site messaging. For example, does a user access content on a laptop or mobile? What times of day are they most active? What content formats do they prefer? What topics do they engage with most frequently?

With these questions answered, a high level of personalization can be achieved, enhancing subscriber engagement and satisfaction, and ultimately driving higher conversions and retention rates.

~ 90%

of executive-level professionals — including marketers, and publishers — say audience data (for example, what you would typically find in a CDP) has driven at least “some” value in supporting unique competitive advantage for their organization, with 32 percent adding that it has driven a substantial competitive advantage.

Winterberry Group whitepaper  
**'Data as Competitive Advantage'**

**When evaluating CDP solutions, publishers may want to consider the following factors:**

### **1. Data integration capabilities**

Much like a CRM, it's beneficial to ensure that a CDP can seamlessly integrate with diverse data sources, including website analytics tools, mobile apps, email marketing platforms, and more.

The more integration available, the more comprehensive your consolidation of subscriber data can be for effective personalization and segmentation.

### **2. Data unification and cleanliness**

Data is only useful if it's accurate. Publishers might look for a CDP that can harmonize and cleanse data, resolving duplicates and inconsistencies to create a single, accurate view of subscribers.

### **3. Compliance and data privacy**

Similarly to CRMs, when handling any sort of data, it's important to ensure you adhere to data privacy regulations and can provide robust security measures to protect subscriber information..

By leveraging a unified view of subscribers and applying sophisticated analytics and personalization techniques, publishers can deliver highly relevant and engaging experiences to foster stronger customer relationships.





# Subscription Experience Platforms

In the realm of digital publishing, delivering a seamless and exceptional user experience is paramount to acquiring and retaining subscribers. This is where Subscription experience platforms come into play. Subscription experience platforms enable digital publishers to design, manage, and optimize the end-to-end subscriber journey. By focusing on every touchpoint, from initial engagement to ongoing interactions, a subscription experience platform can ensure a cohesive and engaging experience for subscribers.

Typically this involves the use of:

- Flexible paywalls to drive dynamic revenue conversions with effective messaging and unique user experiences.
- Identity & access management to streamline the onboarding process, making it easy for users to register, set up their accounts, and access premium content quickly and effortlessly, at the right time for every user.
- First-party data strategies to capture and enrich valuable, compliant user data and maximize revenue growth.
- User-specific personalization to develop deeply personalized user experiences, allowing publishers to customize the user interface, content recommendations, registration walls, and even design elements.

Ultimately the goal of a subscription experience platform is to enhance engagement, increase content relevance, and drive subscriber satisfaction by making use of user data (often collected in a CDP).

The ability to personalize and enhance engagement in this way should not be underestimated. **SmarterHQ** says that 72% of consumers now only engage with marketing messages that are personalized and tailored to their interests. With that in mind, it's easy to see why subscription experience platforms make up part of the tech stack backbone.



## Considerations when evaluating a subscription experience platform:

### 1. Effective utilization of data:

Integrating a subscription experience platform with other components of the tech stack, such as the CRM, CDP, and CMS, is crucial for a unified and effective personalization strategy. By ensuring each component is compatible, publishers can connect these systems and create a seamless data flow, synchronizing subscriber information for accurate and relevant personalization across touchpoints.

### 2. Intuitive platform:

To enable effective testing and optimization, a low-touch coding platform is preferred, enabling non-technical teams to run tests and make changes with ease, and empowering commercial and product teams to take control of their digital revenue strategies.

### 3. Future-proofing and continuous improvement:

In order for personalization strategies to be effective, publishers might consider forward-thinking and future-proofing. This means understanding the opportunities available for innovation and having the tech in place to be able to integrate with those innovations e.g. AI data analytics. Having a subscription experience platform that connects with tools like AI data handling and propensity modeling software will enable publishers to continue to create personalized campaigns, perhaps even better than before.

In summary, a subscription experience platform plays a pivotal role in digital publishing. While the other tools in this guide provide the logistics for a good subscriber experience, subscription experience platforms provide the actual means to deliver seamless, engaging, and personalized interactions.



Having a system in place to test new ideas quickly enables [commercial] teams to make rapid advancements towards company goals. The ability to alter individual website components and quickly see an impact enables teams to highlight key areas of focus.

**James Counter**  
Senior Digital Marketing Manager,  
Zuora



## Content Management System (CMS)

As we've seen throughout this guide, many of these tech stack essentials overlap and build on each other. Having a unified tech stack that works seamlessly together in this way is something that is echoed with a CMS too. A CMS plays a pivotal role in the efficient creation, organization, and distribution of digital content for publishers. In the dynamic landscape of digital publishing, a CMS serves as the central hub for publishers to manage their content and ensure a smooth publishing process. A robust CMS empowers publishers to streamline workflows, enhance content discoverability, and deliver regular, relevant content to audiences.

A CMS offers several key functionalities and benefits that contribute to the success of digital publishers, providing intuitive tools for content creation, editing, and formatting. Content creators can easily draft, review, and revise content within the CMS, facilitating efficient collaboration and content iteration. Perhaps most importantly in the modern world, an effective CMS allows publishers to distribute content seamlessly across multiple channels and platforms, such as websites, mobile apps, social media, and email newsletters. This enables consistent branding and messaging, and ensures that content reaches different audience segments through their preferred channels.

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For media publishers, the concept of personalization centers around their ability to demonstrate relevant value to each of their readers. The sooner relevant value (content) is realized, the happier customers are and the greater their lifetime value. An effective CMS will integrate well with other parts of a tech stack and allow publishers to activate their data, make informed decisions around content, and enable content teams to quickly and efficiently craft connected journeys that resonate with audiences.

**Chris Petitt**  
Content Marketing Manager,  
Zuora





## The following are points publishers may want to consider when choosing a CMS:

### 1. Content management capabilities:

Evaluate the CMS's ability to handle various content types, such as articles, videos, images, and interactive elements. A CMS that works for your business should provide features for easy content editing, version control, and content reuse to optimize content management workflows. It's also beneficial to think about how content may grow and change in the future, e.g. audio articles, community discussions, and even the addition of VR experiences. Taking a future-first approach when choosing a CMS will put publishers in a good position to capitalize on new content trends as they emerge.



Publishers can seize [new] opportunities and fill a gap by transforming their amazing repositories of content into true community destinations. That will be a major step toward what users want, and what we need as a society: better, healthier community experiences that bring people together.

**Nadav Shoval**  
OpenWeb's co- founder  
and CEO

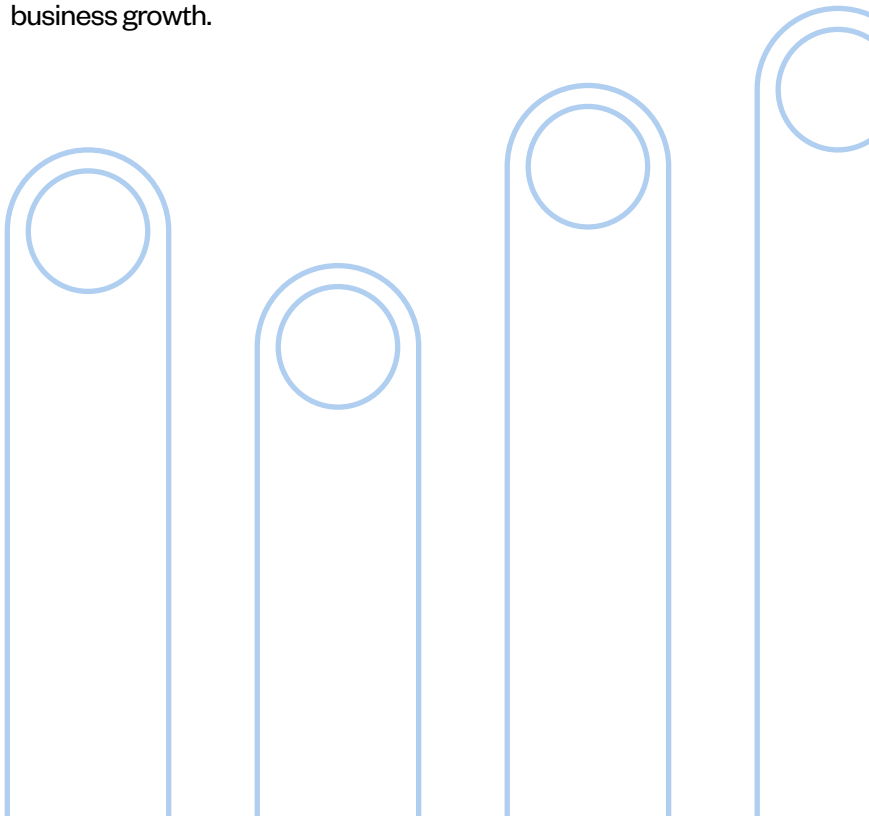
### 2. User-friendly interface and intuitive editing tools:

Much like subscription experience platforms, a CMS sits more with non-technical commercial teams, meaning a user-friendly CMS interface and intuitive editing tools are essential for efficient content creation and management. Content creators and editors should be able to navigate the CMS easily and have access to tools that simplify the content creation process.

### 3. SEO and metadata management:

A CMS ought to offer features for managing metadata, URLs, and SEO settings to optimize content discoverability and search engine rankings. It's also beneficial if a CMS can facilitate integration with SEO tools and provide guidance on SEO best practices.

A reliable and feature-rich CMS empowers digital publishers to streamline content creation, organization, and distribution processes. By selecting the right CMS and leveraging its functionalities, publishers can enhance content discoverability, improve user experiences, and efficiently manage their publishing operations, ultimately building communities, and supporting business growth.



## Payment Gateway and Billing Systems

Payment gateway and billing systems are critical components of a publisher's tech stack, facilitating seamless and secure transactions, subscription management, and revenue optimization. In the digital publishing landscape, where ensuring payment processes are smooth and regular, a reliable and efficient payment system is essential for recurring billing cycles and accurate revenue tracking.

On average across industries and geographies, approximately **10% of transactions fail** for reasons ranging from insufficient funds to lost cards or technical failure. It's no wonder then, why many big enterprises have so much focus on their payment gateways.

Payment Gateway and Billing Systems offer several key functionalities and benefits for digital publishers. For example, a robust payment gateway ensures the

secure processing of payments, protecting sensitive customer information and minimizing the risk of fraud. It encrypts payment data during transmission, follows industry-standard security protocols, and supports various payment methods, including credit/debit cards, and other online payment options.

One of the most important benefits of payment gateways for publishers is that they allow publishers to implement flexible pricing models and monetization strategies to cater to different subscriber segments. Trying to do this in-house without a system in place could be an arduous task. Instead, with the right billing system, publishers could have one-time purchases, tiered subscriptions, metered usage plans, bundled offerings, and more, all ready to go at once. On top of these, billing systems also enable a range of options from the use of different discounts, code redemptions, billing triggers and time limits with effective dates.



## When choosing Payment Gateway and Billing Systems for digital publishing, the following considerations can be taken into account:

### 1. Currency and transaction flexibility:

Credit cards are the **primary mode of transactions** in North America, the UK, and Australia, but these regions make up only a small portion of global consumers. Millions of people worldwide do not rely on credit cards for their payments.

In contrast, countries like Germany and Russia have lower credit card usage. Instead, local services such as SEPA and QIWI are commonly used for recurring and subscription payments. Additionally, SEPA payments have a significant market presence in Austria and the Netherlands.

Image from **Zuora Subscribed** showing the various payment methods in different markets.

Letting your customers pay the way they want, no matter where in the world they are is beneficial to a smooth checkout process. Therefore, it makes sense to carefully assess that card types are compatible with your payment gateway.

### 2. Security and compliance:

Ensure that the systems adhere to industry-standard security protocols and compliance regulations, such as **PCI DSS** (Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard). Data encryption, tokenization, and secure data storage are essential features for protecting customer payment information.

### 3. Payment method support:

As well as the various card payments mentioned above, it's also beneficial to verify that the chosen system supports a wide range of payment methods to cater to diverse subscriber preferences. Not only does this include credit/debit cards, but also digital wallets like Apple Pay, PayPal, and even new alternative payment options like crypto wallets.

Payment method	Market opportunity	Functionality
QIWI	21 million users in Russia	The customer authorizes the wallet to make transactions on a repeat basis.
SOFORT/Giropay SEPA Direct Debit	50% share of online payment in Germany	Accounts validated by SOFORT or Giropay Subscription is paid with SEPA Direct Debit
SOFORT/EPS/ SEPA DD	60% share in Austria	Accounts validated by SOFORT or Giropay Subscription is paid with SEPA Direct Debit
iDEAL/SEPA DD	80% share in the Netherlands	Accounts validated by iDEAL Subscription is paid with SEPA Direct Debit

#### 4. Subscription management capabilities:

Assess the systems' ability to handle recurring billing cycles, subscription upgrades or downgrades, trial periods, and promotional offers. Flexible subscription management features empower publishers to effectively manage subscriber relationships and optimize revenue streams. The more flexibility a subscriber has with their subscription payments, the more likely they are to continue subscribing.

#### 5. Reporting and analytics:

Look for robust reporting and analytics capabilities that provide real-time insights into revenue performance, payment trends, churn rates, and subscriber behavior. These insights enable publishers to identify opportunities, minimize involuntary churn, optimize pricing strategies, and even improve financial forecasting.

Implementing reliable Payment Gateway and Billing Systems within a digital publisher's tech stack is essential for providing a secure and seamless payment experience, managing subscriptions effectively, and optimizing conversions. Major subscription businesses are beginning to consider payment systems as an integral part of the subscriber experience, rather than just a means to do business.

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At Spotify, we have moved away from a standard view of payments as a cost-base only. In fact, payments sit within the growth and conversion team, as we see it as a key driver of Customer Lifetime Value.

**Federico Pezzotti**

Former Payments Fraud  
Manager, Spotify





# Best Practices for Implementing and Managing the Tech Stack

Before choosing and implementing the full tech stack for any digital publishing business, it's crucial to define clear objectives and align them with overall business goals. By identifying the specific desired outcomes and goals of the business, it becomes easier to not only justify investment to other teams, but also ensure that a tech stack supports strategic initiatives and drives the desired business results.

In this section, we'll discuss some of the best practices to ensure a smooth onboarding:

**1. As outlined above, conducting a thorough assessment of needs enables a business to effectively choose the right solutions.**

With Mar-tech forever growing and expanding, finding the right solution can be an exhaustive process. Instead of painstakingly getting to grips with what each solution does, a better approach might be to draft out what the business actually wants to achieve, and then asking providers to demonstrate how they can help.

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Choosing technology to solve a business problem is typically the wrong way to do it. Firstly, identify what you want to achieve as a business. Do you want more customers, subscribers or visitors? Using this as your desired outcome, work out what you need technology to do. Then using this as a set of requirements, select the best technology to fit your requirements, and in that process, you should be able to identify what the right technology solution is [for your business].

**Shorful Islam**  
CEO, [Be Data Solutions](#)

## 2. Plan for integration and future-proofing.

As seen throughout this guide, integration between the various components of a tech stack is crucial for seamless data flow, synchronization of information, and delivering a unified user experience. Developing a comprehensive integration plan that outlines how data will be shared and synchronized between systems, such as the CRM, CDP, and CMS might be beneficial in ensuring effective use of each component. Additionally, considering that the digital publishing landscape is continuously evolving, with new technologies and innovations emerging regularly, it becomes important to think about integration capability in order to future-proof. Staying informed on industry trends, advancements, and best practices will put publishers in the best position to choose tech that can adapt and change with the times. This knowledge will enable publishers to leverage new opportunities, stay ahead of the competition, and make informed decisions regarding updates or enhancements.

## 3. Ensure data privacy and security.

A lot of the tech covered in this guide involves the use and handling of customer data. With data policies open to change and potentially become stricter in future, it makes sense to think about robust data privacy and security. Publisher's would benefit from ensuring that any chosen solutions adhere to industry-standard security protocols and compliance regulations. Implementing measures such as data encryption, access controls, and regular security audits will also help protect sensitive subscriber information and maintain trust with an audience. Since data policies and compliance are subject to updates, regularly reviewing and updating security practices as new vulnerabilities emerge will ensure there are no violations or breaches of regulatory requirements.

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Marketers have a plethora of new technologies that are available to them and tend to focus on what is available now versus what makes sense for their objectives. Ending up implementing expensive technologies that don't work for their long-term needs and ultimately abandoning them. The key is to clearly define the customer journey and then map key objectives within in order to identify the technologies that are required to achieve these objectives.

**Sibel Ugur,**  
Sr Director, Marketing  
Zuora



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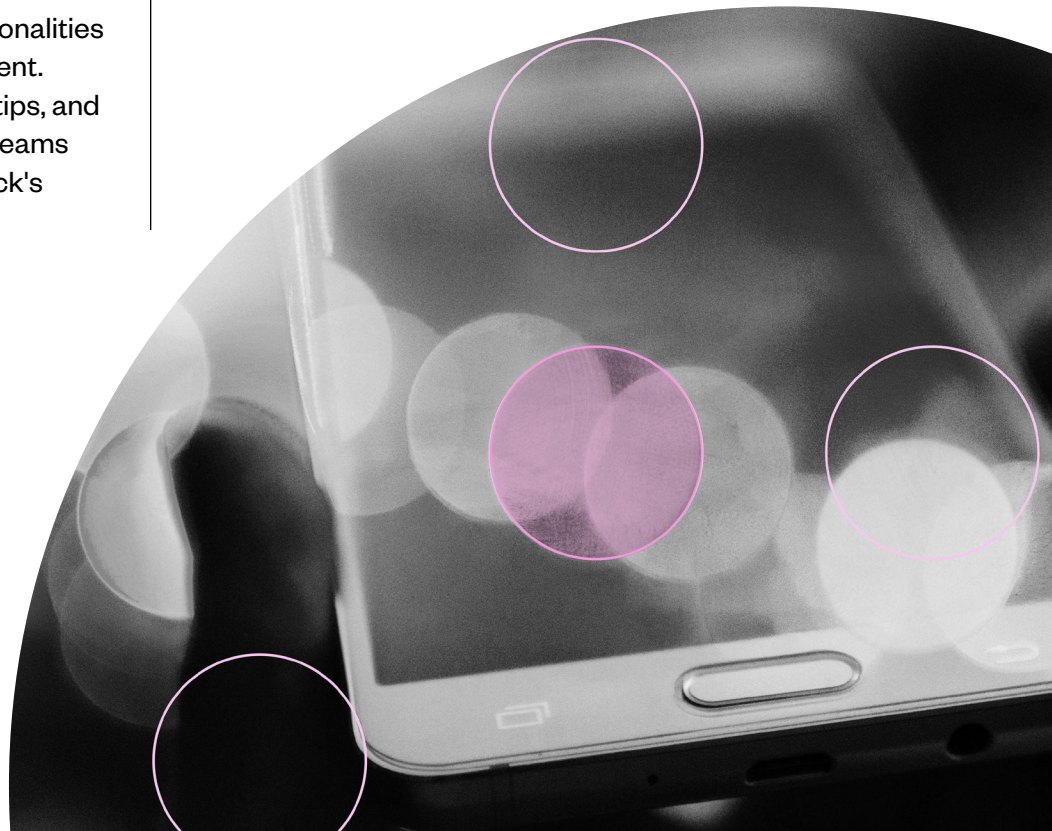
### 4. Provide training and support for users.

While this might sound simple, seeking tech that has good support and training for teams can make all the difference between getting by with a tool, or effectively using it to its full potential. Providing comprehensive training sessions and documentation will help familiarize users with the functionalities and best practices of each component. Regularly communicating updates, tips, and best practices will also ensure that teams are making the most of the tech stack's capabilities.

### 5. Continuously monitor and optimize performance.

Continuous improvement is just that... continuous. In order to ensure user experiences are optimized and running at their best, publishers may choose to regularly monitor the performance of each component of the tech stack and analyze the data generated. Continuously identifying areas for improvement, tracking key metrics, and leveraging insights to optimize content strategies, marketing efforts, and subscriber experiences will ensure a consistent advantage in a competitive market. Implementing a culture of continuous improvement, where feedback and data-driven decision-making drive iterative enhancements to the tech stack, will further strengthen a publisher's ability to adapt, leading to long-term success.

By incorporating these best practices, publishers can enhance their ability to implement and manage their tech stacks in a manner that aligns with business goals, improves operational efficiency, and strives to deliver a seamless and personalized experience for subscribers.



# Forward Thinking

The digital publishing landscape is evolving at a rapid pace, and publishers are striving to leverage the right technology in order to succeed in today's competitive market. From Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and Customer Data Platforms (CDP) to Subscription Experience Platforms and Content Management Systems (CMS), each component plays a crucial role in enhancing subscriber experiences, optimizing content strategies, and driving revenue growth.

Implementing a robust tech stack requires careful planning, alignment with business goals, and integration across systems. As the digital publishing industry continues to evolve, the success of publishers will rely on their ability to leverage technology effectively, adapt to changing consumer preferences, and deliver personalized and engaging experiences to their subscribers. By implementing a comprehensive tech stack and staying at the forefront of industry advancements, publishers can thrive in the digital era and build a sustainable and successful subscription business.

Interested in understanding more about your technology needs, and navigating the complexities of the digital publishing landscape? [Click here to speak to our team and learn more!](#)



# Ready to unsilo your revenue streams?

Speak to someone on 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)**