



ENGAGING READERS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

AN INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE
CENTRE WHITE PAPER IN
PARTNERSHIP WITH TOUCH TREE



TouchTree

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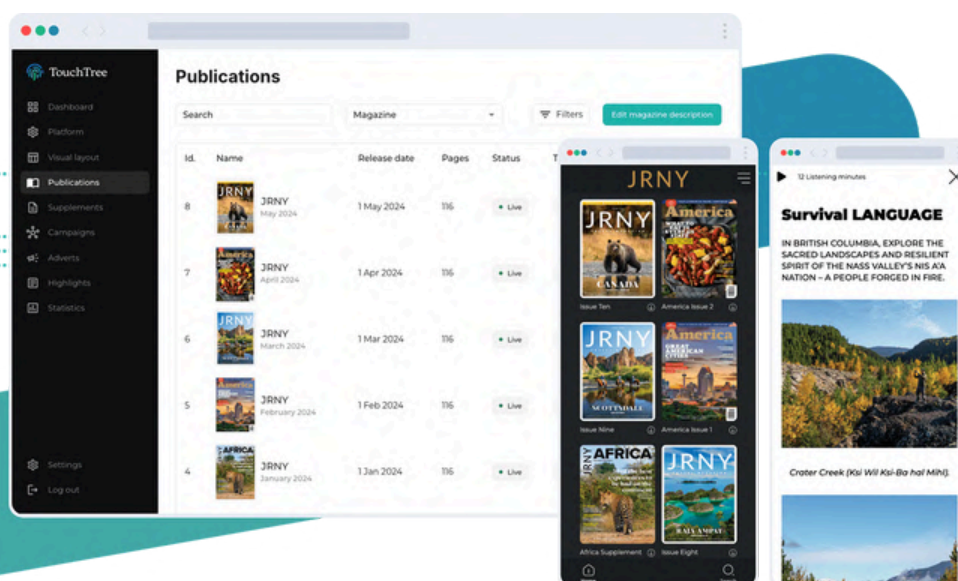
ENGAGING READERS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

How Touch Tree is helping magazine publishers thrive in a multi-platform world

At a time of ongoing disruption in our industry, digital platforms can provide you with new ways to extend your reach and enhance the value of your print publications.

As we move beyond the outdated 'print versus digital' debate, many successful publishers integrate both formats strategically; rather than replacing more traditional formats, digital magazines offer additional access to content, attracting new audiences and strengthening engagement with existing readers. Plus, a web- or mobile-first approach is becoming ever more effective for delivering content in a way modern consumers expect – on the go, with seamless accessibility and across multiple devices.

This white paper explores the key challenges publishers are currently facing and shows how mobile-first digital platform Touch Tree can help. It also includes real-world insights from Glory magazine and Wargames Illustrated, giving you inspiration on how to enhance your own reader engagement and retention.



CHALLENGES IN DIGITAL BRAND ENGAGEMENT

For many publishers, traditional revenue streams are shrinking, and audience expectations and behaviours are shifting.

While print remains valuable, catering for digital readers is going to prove essential for growth and long-term success.

In addition, engaging readers in an oversaturated digital market can be difficult, especially for those of us with small teams and limited budgets – and without the right tools, it may prove harder for us to nurture that longer-term connection with our audiences.

“We had a really healthy global readership, but when Brexit hit, postage went through the roof... we needed to figure out a way of getting the Glory content to our readers [outside the UK].”

LEE NASH, GLORY MAGAZINE

COSTS AND DISCOVERABILITY

As more readers turn to digital platforms, publishers face increasing pressure to adapt their revenue models. While some digital distribution platforms offer large reach, this can come with high costs and competition for visibility. Add to that the complexities of managing paywalls and the varying willingness of consumers to pay for content, and it becomes clear that maintaining control over your audience is critical. The challenge now is finding new ways to balance revenue generation with maintaining full control over our content and relationships.

AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT

Simply having a digital presence is no longer enough. Amidst the ‘content tsunami’, today’s readers expect instant access, engaging formats, and personalised experiences. This means that to be successful, we need to actively build communities, encourage interaction, and create compelling digital experiences that keep our readers coming back.

SUBSCRIPTION FATIGUE

Digital subscriptions may offer a potential revenue stream, but many consumers feel overwhelmed by the sheer number of services available.

Convincing our readers to commit to yet another subscription means offering something of genuine value. Offering a smooth experience, flexible payment options, and exclusive content can all help, but execution is key.

NEW REVENUE STREAMS

As many readers increasingly turn to digital platforms, traditional advertising and subscription models are proving less sustainable. In response, publishers are exploring innovative ways to generate revenue -- such as promoting or reprinting back issues, creating new digital experiences, and reconnecting with audiences through previously untapped content.

TECHNICAL LIMITATIONS

As smaller and independent publishers, we are less likely to have the technical expertise or financial resources to develop and maintain sophisticated digital platforms. Without access to user-friendly tools, it can be a struggle to keep up with the bigger players that have more resources, to make the most effective use of data, and to optimise our digital content for multiple devices.

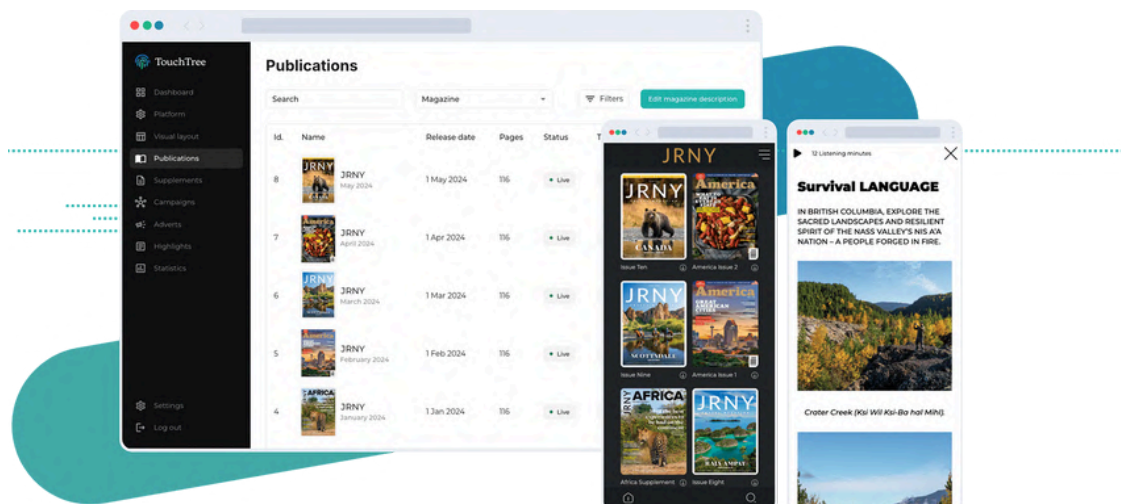
HOW TOUCH TREE CAN HELP

For SME magazine publishers, the shift from print to digital can feel like a complex and sometimes overwhelming challenge.

The Touch Tree platform ensures a smooth, efficient process for adapting content to digital formats, with full control over design and functionality – without losing the essence of what makes our publications unique. In particular, we liked that Touch Tree offers:

SEAMLESS DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

The first hurdle for many traditional publishers is converting print content into digital formats while preserving the design and feel of the original publication. We found – as did our case studies, below – that Touch Tree makes this transition simple and effective. Publishers can upload print-ready PDFs, and the platform automatically adapts content to ensure an engaging experience across all devices. It doesn't just convert either; it enhances, with features like indexed text-to-speech, embedded video, and the ability to integrate ads.



Plus, Touch Tree guarantees secure offline reading, meaning readers get a high-quality experience wherever they are. And its integration with WooCommerce and any other subscription management platform means publishers can deliver content effortlessly to subscribers while maintaining complete control over access and monetisation.

KEEPING READERS ENGAGED

As we know, today's readers expect more than just static content – they want multimedia elements and interactivity. We liked that the Touch Tree platform helps publishers integrate videos, audio, and interactive features into digital magazines, encouraging readers to spend more time with each publication.

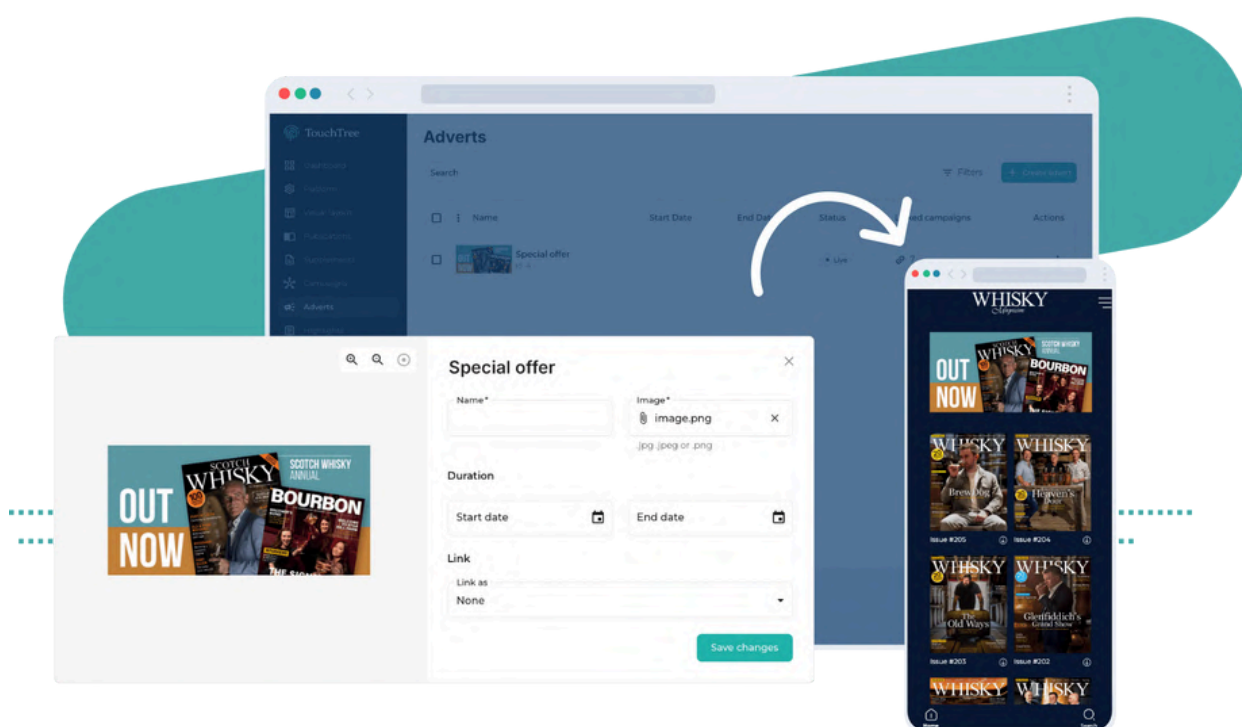


NURTURING AUDIENCES THROUGH DATA

Every time content is shared, we aren't just reaching new audiences – we're building a valuable database, learning more about our readers, and nurturing future subscribers or customers. The real-time analytics from Touch Tree's platform give genuinely valuable insights into reader behaviour, and Touch Tree's Campaign Toolkit allows publishers to distribute content securely to find new readers using geo-location or time based access, to make data-driven decisions. Plus, all of this happens without relying on third-party platforms that control and own your data, putting you in full control of your revenue and audience relationships.

EXPLORING NEW REVENUE OPPORTUNITIES

Monetising digital content is a key concern for those of us in the magazine industry. Touch Tree gives publishers full control over how they generate revenue – the publisher sets up their own paywall to create print and digital bundles, or digital-only access, ensuring publishers retain 100% of that revenue. Dynamic, timed ad placements can also be integrated to align with wider digital campaigns, giving publishers new ways to connect with readers and boost revenue without relying on third-party platforms.



FUTURE-PROOFING YOUR CONTENT

As reader habits change, we need to make sure that our content remains relevant, engaging and accessible. We found it reassuring that Touch Tree helps future-proof publications, by making digital content flexible across platforms and audience types – and by putting control firmly back in publishers' hands, rather than relying on algorithms or platforms we don't own.

CASE STUDY 1

GLORY MAGAZINE: KICKING OFF A NEW ERA

The digital evolution of a coffee-table print publication

Founded by Lee Nash and Ben Hopkins Lefevre, Glory magazine explores football beyond the English Premier League, combining in-depth football storytelling with travel journalism. This unique approach quickly attracted a global audience – but when Brexit disrupted its global distribution, its founders faced a critical challenge: how to retain their international readership while staying true to their print-first philosophy. Their solution lay in a digital transformation that preserved the essence of Glory while expanding its accessibility.

THE CHALLENGE: THE BARRIERS OF BREXIT

In 2020, 70% of Glory readers were based outside the UK. “We were sold in over 70 countries,... it shows you that football really is a global language,” says Lee Nash.

However, when Brexit hit, it introduced logistical barriers that drastically altered their distribution model.

“Everything changed. All of a sudden, we were having to fill out customs forms just to get stuff shipped over. Postage was going through the roof. Magazines were getting lost,” Lee recalls. “Very quickly, one by one, we were losing our global readership.”

The shift was stark; Glory went from a chiefly international readership to an 80% UK-based audience. With print at the heart of their identity, they needed a solution that would allow them to reach their scattered global fanbase without compromising the magazine’s premium experience.

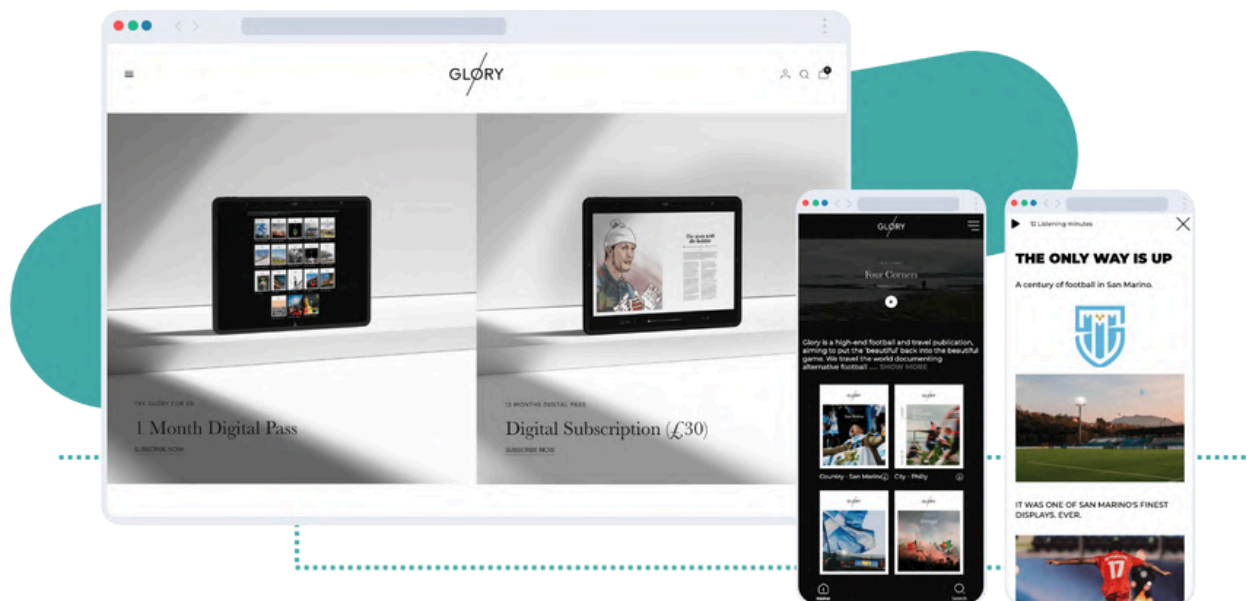
“We’ve always firmly believed in print. We love print, and Glory is an aesthetic product. But our issues are over a kilo each, and with postage fees becoming extortionate, we knew we needed to find a way to bypass these constraints.”

LEE NASH, GLORY MAGAZINE

THE SOLUTION: DIGITAL FORMAT, PREMIUM EXPERIENCE

Faced with these distribution challenges, Lee and Ben decided to digitise, and their search led them to Touch Tree.

Naturally, finding a digital solution that complemented their premium print product was important. “Our magazine is really tactile and beautiful, but my experience of e-readers and so on had been really disappointing in the past,” says Ben. “Touch Tree just had what we needed; we saw immediately that the Touch Tree platform worked really well – rather than just flipping through a PDF, readers could read stories in a more user-friendly but still aesthetically pleasing way.”



Initially, Glory introduced digital subscriptions as a complimentary feature alongside print subscriptions, which allowed them to gauge audience interest. Over time, they transitioned to offering paid digital subscriptions, including both monthly and annual plans, which are growing steadily.

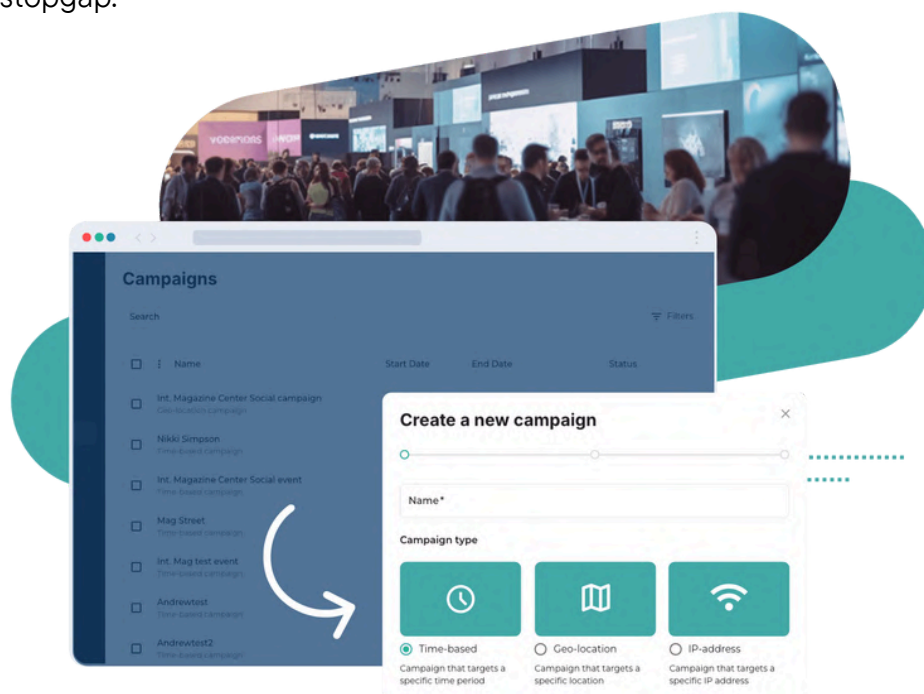
For international subscribers, digital access has solved a major logistical challenge, and has provided an opportunity for growth. “We’re considering adding extra digital content to further entice subscribers,” says Lee. “Some readers have been willing to pay a £50 supplement on a four issue print subscription for shipping to their country, but with current international shipping rates, we can’t expect them to pay £120. If we make the digital content even better, they won’t feel like they’re missing anything.”

Lee says they found the digitisation process surprisingly simple. “We sent them high-res pdfs of all our back issues, and within a week or two, our back catalogue was online. Now, whenever we finish an issue, it’s usually uploaded within a day.”

UNLOCKED: POWERFUL POTENTIAL

Beyond accessibility, Glory has started leveraging digital subscriptions as a marketing tool. By partnering with football clubs, for example, they can use geolocation to offer limited-time free digital access to attract new subscribers in specific venues.

And rather than undermining their print offering, making the back catalogue available online has prompted the Glory team to consider reprinting. “We weren’t sure if it was feasible for us to reprint previous issues. But the interest the back catalogue is generating has made us look again at finding a more affordable way. In the meantime, the digital back catalogue has been an amazing stopgap.”



Since embracing digital, the team has been able to add new features, such as the ability to read offline, thanks both to reader input and Touch Tree’s flexibility.

“The team at Touch Tree are incredibly receptive to feedback – for example, when one of our readers mentioned they wanted offline access, Touch Tree quickly developed a secure, mobile-friendly HTML version within just a few weeks,” says Lee. “We know that once we fully harness the potential of the Touch Tree platform, it’s going to be an incredibly powerful tool for us.”

CASE STUDY 2

WARGAMES ILLUSTRATED: BRINGING HISTORY TO LIFE

Future-proofing a legacy brand

For almost four decades, WarGames Illustrated has been at the heart of the miniature wargaming community. First published in 1987, this contributor-led print magazine has become an essential resource for hobbyists, packed with battle reports, painting guides, and historical insights.

As reader habits changed, the team knew that the magazine needed to evolve to meet the growing demand for digital content. And with nearly 500 back issues, the team faced a growing challenge: how to make this rich archive accessible to readers beyond the print format.

THE CHALLENGE: A BACK CATALOGUE OUT OF REACH

Over the years, the WarGames Illustrated archive had grown to just under 500 issues. However, while physical copies of old issues existed, they were difficult to obtain.

The demand wasn't just from nostalgic longtime subscribers – it also came from new readers looking to explore the magazine's deep history.

“People were asking for back issues all the time, and there was no easy way for readers to access them.”

**DAN FAULCONBRIDGE,
WARGAMES ILLUSTRATED**

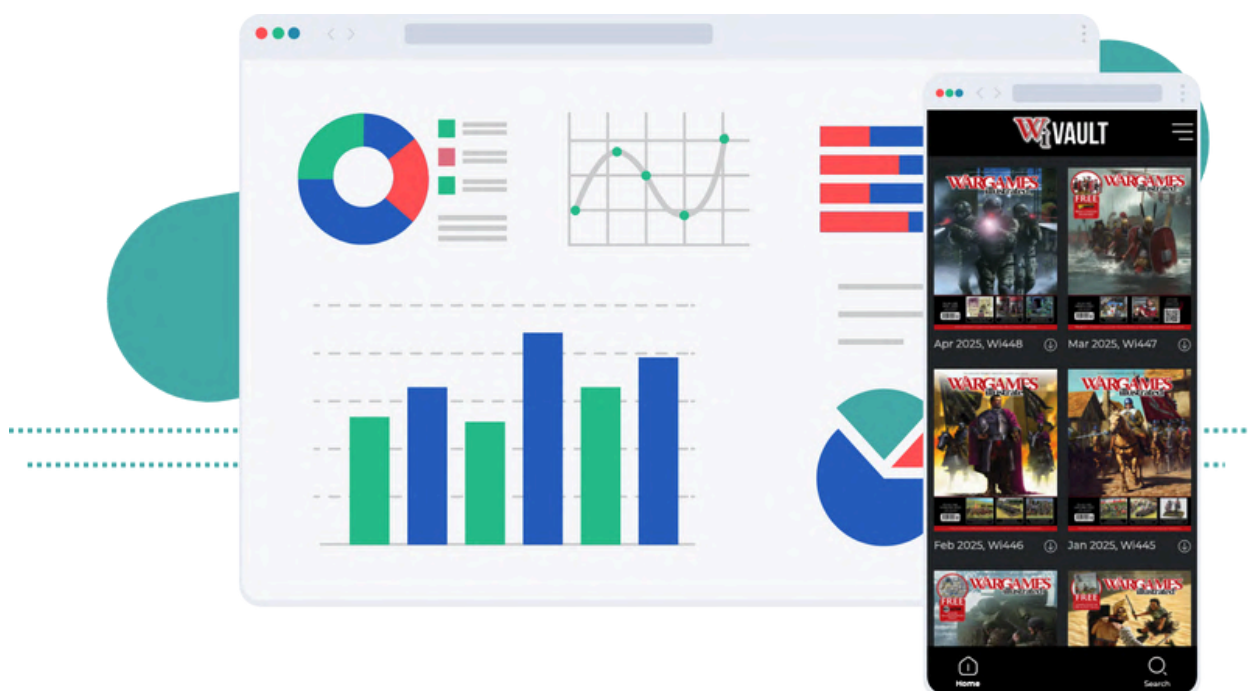
“WarGames Illustrated contains evergreen content – articles about Napoleonic uniforms or World War II strategies remain relevant years later,” says Dan.

Another key driver was the shift in reader habits, especially from upcoming generations. “You only have to look around when you're on a bus or plane to see that most people are looking at screens rather than paper,” says Dan. And while there had been PDF versions of issues in the past, the team knew that they needed to provide something more sophisticated.

It was clear that a digital solution was needed – but with hundreds of issues spanning decades, the prospect of digitisation was daunting.

THE SOLUTION: A FULLY SEARCHABLE DIGITAL ARCHIVE BACKED BY DATA AND ANALYTICS

Working with Touch Tree, the Wargames Illustrated team brought their entire catalogue – from 1987 to the current issue – online using a phased approach, digitising newer issues first while gradually working through the archive. It wasn't without its logistical challenges – early issues existed only as hard copies or scanned PDFs – but Dan says the process was very collaborative.



“It was a learning exercise for everyone – especially me, whose techie knowledge is limited,” he says. **“Touch Tree have been so good at talking us through it, and understanding what we wanted to get from the process.”**

The new platform didn't just solve the accessibility problem – it also enhanced the reading experience. With full search functionality, readers can now instantly find articles on specific battles, games, or painting techniques, rather than flipping through physical pages.

“We now have a proper, searchable archive,” says Dan. “If you want to find every article we've ever published on the Napoleonic wars, you can do that in seconds.”

MORE THAN JUST AN ARCHIVE: A GROWING COMMUNITY RESOURCE

Since launching the digital archive (called The Vault), Wargames Illustrated has seen a steady increase in digital subscriptions. Part of their success has been the seamless integration of WooCommerce, which Touch Tree helped them implement within their digital magazine platform. "It's not like we flipped a switch and suddenly had thousands more subscribers. But we've grown – we now have as many digital as print subscribers," says Dan.



Just a few months in, they've already received positive feedback from their readers – even more important for a contributor-led publication. "When so much of your content is from contributors, you really want them to be on board with changes – it means they're more likely to contribute and to buy the magazine," he says.

Dan says that while the print edition remains the flagship product, offering a digital alternative is helping to retain readers who prefer online access. "It was important to us to offer that as a service," he says. "Most importantly, we feel like we're future-proofing the magazine."

FIND OUT MORE

Glory magazine and Wargames Illustrated have embraced digital transformation to enhance engagement and improve reader loyalty, and you can too.

The Touch Tree platform has the tools to make digital publishing easier and more effective for print publishers, whether it's to generate recurring revenue or improve accessibility to find new readers, adding multimedia to drive engagement, or using archives for lasting value, Touch Tree gives publishers easy-to-use digital tools to help make their digital strategy a success.

THE BENEFITS OF TOUCH TREE TECHNOLOGY

1. Converts print magazines into high-quality digital editions using HTML
2. Adapts to all devices, from desktop to mobile
3. Offers intuitive navigation and search functionality
4. Integrates video, text-to-speech, and interactive elements
5. Supports social sharing for organic audience growth
6. Provides analytics and real-time data to track reader behaviour
7. Enables targeted ads and personalised experiences
8. Puts paywalls, revenue, and audience relationships in your hands
9. Supports multiple formats to meet evolving reader preferences
10. Gives you, as publishers, full control over content and distribution

To learn more about how Touch Tree can help transform your publication, book a free consultation with MD Jason Mengers, today: jason@touchtree.tech

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