

The Evolution and Transformation of Subscription-Based Data Products

This white paper discusses the evolution of legacy data publishing and its move online, along with the rise of new online data players. By tracing the industry's evolution from 1995 to the present, this paper seeks to explore the forces that are transforming the industry and their implications for the future. In addition, this paper also considers the impact of social media and mobile computing, and recommends an overall business posture for subscription-based data publishers.

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In this White Paper:

- ▶ Background on the evolution of the subscription data publishing industry since its print heyday in 1995
- ▶ Identification of the factors most significant in the industry's transformation
- ▶ Discussion of the forward trend line for subscription data products

Introduction

While data publishing has been as profoundly impacted by the Internet as other types of content, data publishing doesn't share the same business models as magazine, journal and other types of mostly textual publishing. Consequently, data publishers stand a greater chance of success through deep specialization and providing complete, accurate and current information as opposed to covering broad areas poorly. The future is to provide data products that become highly valuable inputs to customers' business processes.

Legacy Subscription Data Publishing

Subscription-based data publishers founded prior to the Internet boom of the mid-1990s are typically referred to as legacy publishers. Most of these publishers began life with print directory products. High software development costs and limited audience kept most of these publishers out of the early versions of online information delivery, but the CD-ROM platform provided an entrée into digital publishing that was well-suited to directory search and display needs.

The CD-ROM experience was very positive. This early introduction to electronic products taught

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publishers that it was possible to charge stiff premiums compared to print because subscribers were now able to sort and filter data, and output it in multiple formats. While ultimately these premiums became less substantial as the technology matured and CD-ROM data products proliferated, CD-ROM gave publishers early experience with electronic products, and forced them to improve the consistency and accuracy of their databases and organize themselves to publish to multiple platforms, all developments that would later stand them in good stead online.

Despite these many benefits, the embrace of CD-ROM by publishers was slow. Some saw a passing fad to be avoided. Some wanted an adequate installed base of CD-ROM readers in computers (it was felt at the time that nobody would install a CD-ROM drive just to use an electronic database).¹ Some were put off by the investment requirements. But the rapid, widespread adoption of CD-ROM technology ultimately washed away these objections and most publishers had CD-ROM products by the time the Internet burst on the scene.

It was this timing that may ultimately have saved subscription data providers. Having taken the plunge and spent the money to develop CD-ROM offerings, many legacy subscription publishers had little interest in quickly jumping on the Internet bandwagon. Some again saw a fad; some saw an unwelcome round of new investment, and some were simply unsettled by the growing sentiment that information needed to be made available online for free. Consequently, most subscription data publishers sat out the dot com boom and as a result sailed through the dot com bust largely intact. Ironically, full participation in the dot com boom may not even have been possible, as structured data often was not even indexed by the early, text-focused search engines. Further, because many of these publishers were moving online in such a limited way, they were also comfortable licensing their databases to Web start-ups who wanted to give their content away for free online. This created a substantial and highly profitable new revenue stream that had almost no impact on the businesses of these publishers, for reasons we detail in the following sections.²

Dot Com Mania

During the dot com mania, a period lasting roughly from 1995 to 2000, there was one given in all the frenzied online development that was taking place:

¹ *Electronic Publishing on CD-ROM : Authoring, Development, and Distribution*, Steve Cunningham; O'Reilly, 1995

² infoGroup and D&B are just two example of prolific licensors, though many vertical market data providers licensed their content as well while continuing to sell it directly at full price.

information should be freely available, and advertising-based revenue models were the preferred way to make money. The underlying dynamic was simple and powerful: website operators saw that free content attracted site visitors, and visitor traffic could be readily monetized through advertising. This led website operators to add more and more free content in order to attract even more visitors. As a consequence, Web users became accustomed to accessing large amounts of content online for free, firmly validating the “information wants to be free” meme.³ The easy and largely unchallenged acceptance of this traffic-based worldview probably did more to damage the publishing industry than any other factor and sadly, it was self-inflicted.

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You can see the self-reinforcing spiral that was built: users got a taste of free content, liked it, and rewarded those sites with more traffic. In an environment that perceived the Web as a land-grab, where those who built the biggest audiences fastest would reap the greatest rewards, publishers tossed content online for free as fast as they could. In addition, thousands of online start-ups, many unburdened by the need for short-term revenue, pushed even more free content online. Paid content publishers are still living with the consequences of this great body of information that was placed online for free, because

- ▶ so much free information contributed to a general devaluation of content in the eyes of users
- ▶ the sheer mass of information pushed online created an attitude that all information can be found for free online... somewhere, which created huge marketing challenges for paid content providers

Somewhat more subtle, but just as insidious, was the growth of data-driven e-commerce. In short, merchants, by virtue of newly comprehensive product catalogs, became de facto publishers. Perhaps the best-known example of this was Amazon.com, which as part of its mission to make available for sale every known book, necessarily built a detailed catalog of every known book. In another example of these blurry lines, Amazon acquired the popular Internet Movie Database (IMDb), and now operates it simultaneously as a free site for traffic purposes, as a paid data site for industry professionals, and as an e-commerce platform.

It is therefore not surprising that many in the media field at this time viewed subscription-based data publishers as the “walking dead,” clinging to a business model not seen as viable in the new online business environment, while selling content that was rapidly becoming commoditized. That so few subscription-based publishers meaningfully engaged with the Web during the dot com boom worked to further reinforce this perception.

From Boom to Bust

Those who lived it recall that the dot com boom flipped to dot com bust with extraordinary speed. This fundamental shift in sentiment reduced the valuation of dot com companies, dried up funding for dot com start-ups and caused advertisers to re-consider the value of online advertising. This cloud of suspicion about the Web lasted a number of years, and in that period, advertising-based publishers went back to pushing their print products while subscription-based publishers began to slowly engage with the Web, in part because the conventional wisdom had shifted to, “maybe a paid subscription model makes sense online after all.”⁴

While it took a few years, what finally re-ignited the online space was the arrival of Google. We are always careful to note that Google was not the first or only search engine. It came to fame because it was a dramatically better search engine.⁵ Google was better because of its innovative approach to

assessing Web page relevance, but also simply because it indexed more sites and re-indexed them more frequently and offered a clean and simple user interface. This second point seems mundane, but it actually quite significant. Prior to Google, the extraordinary growth of the Web meant none of the search engines of the time could keep up, making search very much a hit-or-miss experience. Google brought new dependability and comprehensiveness to Web searching, which helped legitimize the Web generally as an information destination, and search engines as the primary point of access.

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Largely unremarked upon, but also of critical importance, is the fact that during this whole period of explosive online growth, personal computers were getting simultaneously more powerful and easy to use. Now that even relatively unsophisticated computer users could import, export and manipulate data locally, they started buying a lot more data. And what's the fastest and easiest form of data access and delivery? Online.

Describing the dot com bust requires we also address the issue of commoditization. The dot com boom led many start-ups to put a lot of broad-appeal content online for free, in particular business contact information. Some, but far from all, of this content disappeared during the dot com bust as these start-ups ran out of capital and folded, but enough remains to this day that some permanent commoditization has occurred. Company name, address and other contact details really aren't saleable anymore because they are so widely available. And as we have noted, more powerful search

³ There is incredible irony in the fact that the quote that served as the rallying cry of this movement was actually taken out of context. The full quote is: “On the one hand information wants to be expensive, because it’s so valuable. The right information in the right place just changes your life. On the other hand, information wants to be free, because the cost of getting it out is getting lower and lower all the time. So you have these two fighting against each other.” Stewart Brand, 1984

⁴ The well-known industry website, PaidContent.org, was founded in 2002 specifically to address the renewed interest in the subscription-based business model

⁵ “How Quickly We Forget: Google’s Competitors Falsey Claim Google Dominates Because It Was ‘First’”, TechDirt.com, September 21, 2011

engines only exacerbated the situation. This was a bad development for the mailing list industry, but it also impacted a large swath of data publishers with low information-value products, some of whom ultimately exited the business, while others made the commitment to build better and more valuable datasets.

And Back Again

Ultimately, the power and ubiquity of the low cost information access and delivery platform that is the Internet could not be ignored. After the requisite few years of collectively asking “what were we thinking?” all the pieces fell into place: a stable, low-cost and ubiquitous platform, the killer app of email, new dependability in search and a new level of business restraint. The combined package helped online regain its legitimacy. And further innovation by Google in the advertising arena brought back advertisers —in droves. Online was now firmly a central part of our lives.

Subscription-based publishers about this time rushed to get their products online, upgrading their sites, which had typically been used mostly to provide marketing information. In truth, some of this evolution was driven as much by vocal customers demanding online access as publishers suddenly getting online religion. Regardless, the timing was good.

Early publisher efforts to get their data online were unexceptional. In fact, strong parallels to the move from print to CD-ROM can be found. Most publishers initially saw the convenience of online access itself as adequate value-add and did not otherwise significantly alter or enhance their products. Only a relative handful of publishers saw from the outset that moving online not only could be but indeed had to be, a transformational experience.

Today, this quote from Paul Rossi, Publisher and Managing Director of The Economist, is notable not only for its clarity, but for the fact that virtually

nobody now argues with his stance, which would have been heresy just ten years earlier:⁶

“We extract the value where we create the value. We believe the content is the value proposition. We don’t believe access to the audience is the value proposition.”

Can we now safely proclaim “game over,” with the primacy of the subscription model assured? If only it was that simple. The corrosive impact of both content commoditization and the culture of free remains today. Indeed, many in the industry note the growth of a “good enough” segment of the market that is willing to rely on whatever it can find online for free, with little regard for the value of their time or simple data quality. Whether this is an anomaly or a significant market trend remains to be seen.

Similarly, as we detail below, user expectations have grown mightily with respect to data quality, user interfaces and associated tools. This is creating a bifurcated market of those willing to live with whatever they can obtain for free and those willing to pay a premium for the best. What is rapidly disappearing is the opportunity for paid products that aren’t best in class.

Web 2.0

The next phase of Web development was what might be deemed the Web 2.0 years. Few topics are as frustrating to embrace as Web 2.0, because nobody defines Web 2.0 the same way. For our purposes, Web 2.0 defines a period of intense creativity and innovation in the areas of user interfaces, data aggregation, social media and e-commerce—all elements of enhanced interactivity. With a more stable and mature online environment, the focus shifted from land-grab⁷ to testing the limits of what could be done on the Web as a networked communications platform, not just a publishing platform.

A great example of this is in the real estate area. During the dot com boom, a website called Realtor.com was launched, combining all the hitherto

regional multiple listing database into a single website available to consumers. A very competent implementation with strong search capabilities, real-time updating and access to proprietary content, Realtor.com was a big step forward for the real estate industry, and created an online 800 pound gorilla in the real estate space.

The dot com bust saw the creation of Zillow, a website that aggregated real estate assessment and sale data nationally, and united it all under an interface that provided both detailed maps and photos of virtually every home in the country. Coupled with algorithms that created a valuation for every home, Zillow was an overnight sensation, generating massive traffic. Zillow then leveraged that traffic to get individual real estate agents to start listing homes for sale on Zillow, creating over time a site that gave Realtor.com a competitive run for the money.

Shortly after Zillow, we saw the launch of Trulia.com, that upped the ante by adding in previously unavailable information on apartment rentals nationally. Like Zillow, Trulia represented a virtuoso performance of integrating massive amounts of data under a powerful yet intuitive user interface.

And these sites only represent the tip of the iceberg. Regional sites such as PropertyShark.com and BlockShopper.com also aggregated previously disparate data sources to create data-rich sites with powerful yet simple user interfaces. PropertyShark is also of interest because much like Internet Movie Database, it offers basic information for free, with premium access on a subscription basis.

To us, Web 2.0 for the world of data was largely about impressive mash-ups of disparate data sources, many of them unlocking pools of public domain data for the first time. At the same time, Web 2.0 was about stunningly powerful and innovative user interfaces, enabling access to information in ways that just hadn’t been possible before.

The key implications of Web 2.0 for subscription publishers as we see it were two-fold:

⁶ <http://www.themediabriefing.com/article/2011-05-05/ppa-conference-2011-why-digital-b2b-publishers-dont-need-to-chase-t-numbers>

⁷ Again, the land-grab mentality was based on the idea of aggregating the largest possible audiences in order to generate advertising revenue. One relevant example of this in the data world can be found in the many attempts to build national yellow pages sites. The attraction of these sites was that they were large, not because they had proprietary content or particularly sophisticated interfaces or user tools.

- ▶ With so much public domain data being brought online, generally with an advertising-supported model, more data commoditization occurred, though the impact was uneven across markets⁸
- ▶ These huge steps forward in data aggregation and presentation created a popular perception that almost anything was possible in terms of online information and tools, raising the bar for all publishers, and making it very difficult for a subscription site to impress potential customers with its content, tools or interface.

Social Media

Another recent trend in the evolution of online has been social media. Social media is an umbrella term that encompasses structured, public interactions by and among online users. Platforms such as Twitter and Facebook are well-known examples of social media, but social media also includes more mature types of interaction such as blogging, which typically encourage comments from readers. Social media also includes what is known as user-generated content, where users freely contribute content to a site that then generally seeks to monetize that content. Yelp is one well-known example of social media, but there have also been remarkably successful B2B businesses built on user-generated content. In short, there is a lot going on in social media.

A small number of publishers are looking at social media from exactly the opposite perspective—as a new source of content ... There is a lot of creativity and value still to be unlocked in this nascent area.

For the subscription-based information publisher, social media is a mixed bag of opportunities and distractions. Some publishers are finding marketing benefit in social media, pushing out content using blogs, Twitter and even video. The simple objective is to increase online visibility and improve search engine result rankings.

In a variant approach, some publishers are using social media to build community among their subscribers, creating LinkedIn and Facebook groups, for example, that let subscribers converse among themselves, while also allowing the publisher to push out useful subscriber and new product information to its community of users.

A small number of publishers are looking at social media from exactly the opposite perspective—as a new source of content. Social media platforms are being aggregated and examined to analyze market sentiment and trends, brand perceptions, expert commentary and more. There is a lot of creativity and value still to be unlocked in this nascent area.⁹

Of course, user-generated content still remains an interest if not a fixation of many publishers intent on developing an extremely low-cost source of potentially valuable content. Online users have shown themselves willing to populate databases (Jigsaw), power review sites (Angie's List) and provide raw input for professionally edited content (Zagat). We believe the limits of user-generated content have yet to be found.¹⁰

Overall, social media gets used in different ways by different publishers. At one level, it provides a new and privileged communication channel to reach customers and prospects, one that is becoming increasingly important as email marketing suffers from over-use. At another level, it helps build both visibility and community by bringing together various combinations of customers and prospects in one place. Most intriguingly, it can be mined as still another source of content.

Mobile

A recent area of explosive growth has been in the area of mobile devices. Initially limited to email, the phenomenal growth of smartphones and now tablets is radically altering how—and where—users access information. Some recent studies suggest that nearly 56%¹¹ of online users now look to mobile devices

as their preferred method of online access. Closely allied to this growth in mobile access has been growth in services tied to location. Since most mobile devices can report the current geographic location of the user with great accuracy, this opens up a host of opportunities for marketing, analytics and even entertainment. In addition, many information providers are now incorporating geo-location capabilities into their products to add an extra degree of utility and value.

While smartphones and tablets are certainly revolutionizing how online users access the Internet, it is important to recognize that they are still accessing existing Internet content. Email on these devices is identical to that on a personal computer; similarly, Web browsing is an identical experience, the innovation of touch screen interfaces notwithstanding (though screens are smaller and response times often slower). Even the much-vaunted "apps" that have been so critical to the success of the latest generation of mobile devices are largely just Web browsers customized to access a specific site (at least where information publishers are concerned). Some apps usefully download some portion of their content to permit offline browsing, but few to date radically advance the ball in terms of functionality. Rather, they attempt to optimize the mobile computing environment. The consumer mobile experience may deserve the media hype it is currently receiving, but in B2B publishing, the killer apps like mobile commerce have yet to emerge.

What may well be game-changing for data publishers is the remarkable growth in tablets. With relatively large screens, impressive portability, powerful processors, copious storage and mobile connectivity, it is easy to see these quickly entering business workflow. Tablets may well become elegant substitutes for presentation materials, bulky product catalogs and other similar types of collateral material. That they can be centrally maintained and updated brings many advantages and savings. All this said, however, tablets are simply limited function laptops with a different form factor and

⁸ Consider that most of the real estate sites cited earlier depend to varying degrees on public domain property tax records that these companies aggregated and normalized for use in their own products, obviously to the detriment of legacy information providers in this market.

⁹ For example, there are over 200 companies that build commercial products from feeds of social media content. Consolidation of this space is well underway already with companies like SalesForce.com buying Radian6 and Nielsen buying BuzzMetrics.

¹⁰ A detailed discussion of rating and review systems can be found in the InfoCommerce Group white paper entitled "The Strategic Uses of Consumer Ratings and Reviews" available at www.infocommercegroup.com/industry_research

¹¹"Smartphones Preferred Over Computers for Web Access", MarketingProfs.com, June 1, 2011

touch screens. Their impact is a consequence of their popularity, their improved portability and quick social acceptance of using them in lieu of paper documents. Whatever the causes, the impact is real and, we believe, lasting.

What are the implications of mobile for subscription-based information publishers? Certainly, if your information is often shared by your subscribers with their clients, optimizing your data for use in a one-on-one, off-site environment is critical, and may well justify development of a customized app.

Similarly, tablets may have real implications for print products. Many subscription-based publishers find a meaningful percentage of their customer base clinging tenaciously to print. The reason they most often cite is portability. Tablets may well alter that view, especially when some or all of the content resides locally on the tablet to accommodate situations where a wireless connection is not available. Certainly, there is a generational component to the continued appetite for print, but tablets may well work to accelerate migration to online access.

The geo-location capabilities of most tablets and smartphones offer a relatively easy way for many subscription-based publishers to add an extra layer of functionality and value to their products. A prospecting database, for example, that can not only identify a top lead for a subscriber, but guide her there, has great value, and even more value if it can identify other good prospects in the immediate vicinity.

The key to engaging with the mobile revolution is to thoroughly understand both your subscribers and how they use your product. Not every information product demands advanced mobile functionality. Indeed, many publishers may be well advised simply to create mobile-optimized versions of their existing websites, typically not a demanding undertaking. While we must acknowledge that users are rapidly migrating to mobile devices for information access, we must also remember that these users can already access your website. To optimize for small-screen access makes sense for every publisher; building elaborate apps only makes sense for some publishers. However, belong to those reviews publishers who fully appreciate the underlying

dynamics of reviews and the pitfalls the industry has uncovered to date, both of which we explore below.

Learning From History

So what can we take away from this brief history of subscription-based data publishers and the online revolution? We see several key insights:

- ▶ First and foremost, the subscription model has never been in danger of obsolescence. Online users, particularly businesses, never stopped paying for quality, valuable content, continue to do so today, and will do so in the future.
- ▶ The proliferation of free content has however created downward price pressures. Web 2.0 has significantly raised user expectations, and the ongoing sense among online users that “I can find any information I want out on the Web for free ... somewhere” all conspire to complicate selling and the business environment generally, but content with demonstrable utility and value can still be readily sold.
- ▶ Whether through insight or inertia, subscription-based publishers have weathered the Internet storm for over a decade by avoiding the bleeding edge of innovation and technology. Subscription-based businesses feel change more slowly than advertising-based businesses, and subscription publishers should continue to leverage this privileged position to effect measured and strategic changes to their products and business models.
- ▶ The various manifestations of social media are all about users finding different ways to interact online. As each one rises to prominence, marketers madly rush in to stay visible in whatever communications format online users currently favor. Subscription publishers can indeed find ways to profitably leverage social media, but in our view unless a publisher faces strong, direct competition, there is more risk and cost in being first than following thoughtfully at a measured pace. The key for paid subscription products is to establish the habit of engagement. The move to mobile Web access, particularly tablets, is significant for subscription-based publishers. In our view, it demands that publishers provide optimized access to their content through mobile devices, though some publishers will need to respond faster than others depending on their

specific markets, functionality and content. We also believe rapid adoption of mobile access may accelerate migration from print.

Thinking Forward

The review above might suggest smooth sailing for subscription-based information publishers. We would condition that statement. While we feel strongly that the subscription-based model remains strong and healthy, future success for subscription-based publishers involves much more effort and investment than in the past. We've noted above that subscription-based publishers tend to have businesses that change slowly. This affords them the luxury of making slower, more considered changes to their businesses. This is not, however, the same as the luxury to do nothing. The most successful subscription-based publishers today have reached this position carefully strengthening their businesses and by staying slightly in front of user needs and expectations. This is hard work that requires investment and risk, but it's essential for ongoing success and viability.

While we feel strongly that the subscription-based model remains strong and healthy, future success for subscription-based publishers involves much more effort and investment than in the past.

Perhaps the most significant trend we are seeing is that the most successful subscription data publishers almost always have mastered a specific body of content. This is inherently a business of niches and specialization. Publishers that know more about a specific topical area than anyone else are invariably the ones that are thriving. Once a publisher masters a body of content, any number of products may be generated by that content, but in this environment, it is far better to do a few things very well. Providing deep, comprehensive, accurate data on screw manufacturers for example, is a far better business proposition than providing shallow, spotty information on the larger market of fastener manufacturers.

Competing effectively in a world of ever-more-powerful and comprehensive search engines means having some amount of proprietary content. And let's not forget the often under-appreciated value of proprietary organization—scrubbing and normal-

izing information to make it more comparable and thus valuable.

We also believe that the strongest subscription-based information products will be those that provide some degree of summarization and ideally provide a direct answer. Driving this trend is extreme business time compression, and a generational shift that heavily favors fast information gratification. Legacy information products were often effectively data dumps—users were expected to find their own answers and indeed their own value. This is no longer a viable approach. What information users value today is trustworthy content where specific information can be readily accessed. Even greater value is ascribed to content that assesses, analyzes, rates and ranks ... anything that moves the user closer to a fast answer, decision or action. This is not at odds with our recommendation to build deep content; rather it is acknowledgement that users increasingly want to review only immediately relevant information. That puts a premium on developing information products with an eye towards strong, consistent organization and lots of access points to minimize the time it takes to identify and access the desired chunk of content.

We must also discuss workflow integration. We define workflow integration as data products that become fundamental to a subscriber's daily business activity because of their content and/or associated software. To date, relatively few subscription data products have been able to achieve this highly desirable state. This is true even though workflow integration can occur far more easily for data-driven information products, because they can become information feeds that drive a subscriber's own internal systems.

There are many reasons why more publishers haven't been able to achieve workflow integration. First and foremost, we need to acknowledge that when subscribers integrate data, they almost always depend on that data for currency and accuracy. While virtually all subscription publishers have had to radically improve their information quality over the last decade or so (some more willingly than others), the fact remains that not too many datasets meet the requirements for businesses to rely on them for what are often mission-critical tasks.

Similarly, legacy subscription data publishers have a long history of providing stand-alone content. While many have built strong software tools around that content, these products still tend to operate as information islands, a huge hindrance to integration. Indeed, some publishers actively work to make sure their content can't be easily integrated, seeing integration as a weakening of their digital rights. Even those publishers actively seeking workflow integration opportunities find themselves challenged in the sales and marketing area. Often they find themselves suddenly having to sell to technical groups, and a variety of internal business stakeholders, a process that is slow and complex and often politicized as well. All this said, workflow integration is truly a worthy aspirational goal for all subscription publishers with appropriate content.

The Bottom Line

- ▶ The subscription content model remains viable and increasingly attractive, but demands that publishers with this model deliver real value through deep, good and smart content, increasingly in combination with tools
- ▶ The subscription content model is both buffered and resilient, meaning that subscription publishers have (within limits) the luxury of time to make informed choices about how to react to marketplace developments
- ▶ Proprietary content not only creates differentiation and value, it will increasingly become a competitive barrier as fewer and fewer organizations seem willing or able to build content sets from scratch
- ▶ The marketplace favors those subscription publishers with narrow, deep content as opposed to broad and shallow content sets
- ▶ The new breed of information user demands fast access to relevant content, placing an increasing premium on smart, intuitive user interfaces, content organization, powerful search and strong categorization. Similarly, publishers add significant value by pre-processing content: summarizing it, ranking and rating it, analyzing it, all with the goal of making it more quickly actionable

- ▶ Tools and content are becoming inseparable as a way to make information directly actionable, whether generating a presentation-ready chart, performing a specialized calculation or enabling a purchase
- ▶ Social media can be important to subscription publishers, but different publishers will find value in different ways, and thus social media strategies must be developed thoughtfully with a specific need in mind
- ▶ Mobile computing, particularly tablet computing, is fundamentally altering how online information is accessed and at a minimum publishers should optimize for these devices, while carefully evaluating whether even larger mobile opportunities exist

About Us

Since 1995, InfoCommerce Group has been the thought leader in exploring, charting, analyzing—and, defining—the most important issues reshaping the business information industry.

The reason InfoCommerce Group is recognized as the leading expert organization in business information publishing: our nuanced understanding of the industry's dynamics coupled with unique access to the people who drive it. In addition to our long standing experience and commitment to the industry, our reputation is also based on our publications, Models of Excellence awards and conferences which we use to connect our customers to new and important players and identify industry-changing trends.

In turn, our customers provide a reality-based source of intelligence about what is and isn't working in the marketplace. This makes InfoCommerce Group a clearinghouse for industry information, and we draw on this privileged base of insight in all of our consulting assignments.

While we consult broadly across the entire spectrum of business information publishing, InfoCommerce Group is particularly recognized for its expertise in the areas of data publishing and health information content.

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