Are you running an experiment, or ...

Are you just winging it?

Join the conversation with #ONA18Experiment
Hello!

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Welcome

Here’s a guide to our session

- 10 mins - Experimentation vs Winging it
- 40 mins - Walk through steps to experiment
- 10 mins - Discussion and questions

Hashtag: #ONA18Experiment
Going with a good idea for a new product, feature or format to see how it flies

Justifying doing something new and different as ‘experimentation’

Often a one-time project

Success is subjective

Insights are limited
Experimenteration

- Includes a hypothesis
  - *What do you want to learn?*

- Careful, thoughtful measurement
  - *Qualitative + quantitative*

- An iterative process

- Holistic learnings to build upon
  - *What worked? What didn’t? What’s next?*
What Might You Experiment With?

- **New formats**
  - Live notifications, new newsletter to niche audience

- **New features on existing formats**
  - Something new on a page

- **A process within the newsroom**
  - Communicating by Slack, adding fields to a CMS
Why Experiment?

- Assess the value of an idea
- Test a new idea to see if you really want to build it
- Understand how an audience really uses something
- To find out what your audience values
What about ‘just winging it’?

- **Advantage:** Faster! Easier!
- **Disadvantage:**
  - Limited insights
  - Success is highly subjective
Step 1:
Turn an idea into a hypothesis
Idea

A new thing you’d like to make.

Hypothesis

What value it provides and how you’ll measure that
Idea

Put live election data in a notification

Hypothesis

Make following election results easier for mobile users
How to develop your hypothesis

- What will it do?
- How will it serve people?

*If these questions are hard to answer, you might want to do some audience research first.
Idea

Give us one!

Hypothesis

...
Step 2: Define what success looks like
You can learn a lot from a small group.

- Requires a shift in thinking
  - Letting go of “more is better”
  - Letting go of a fear of learning
Use a variety of measurement tools

Quantitative Data
“WHAT”

Engagement Behavior

User Opinion

Qualitative Data
“WHY”
Measuring the “WHAT”

The “WHAT” = Quantitative analysis

- How did they engage (or not)?
- How much time did they spend?
- What did they do afterwards?
Measuring the “WHY”

The “WHY” = Qualitative analysis

- Why did they engage (or not)?
- Was the time they spent, well spent?
- How did the experience go for them?
Measurement overview

Success Framework

Quantitative
  - Google Analytics
  - Parse.ly

Qualitative
  - Survey
  - Interviews
The Guardian offered live data notifications for the US Presidential election in their apps.

We saw high subscription rates, high engagement and utility, and the alert acted as a hook to more coverage all night.

- 230K subscribers (170K Android, 60K iOS)
- 800K pageviews sent to live blog & full results
- 74% of users tapped through on the alert
- 98% would definitely or maybe sign up again
What did we learn?

Live updating notifications provided the audience with an easy and convenient way to get useful information, with simple access to more in-depth coverage on mobile devices.

Also...

- The onboarding screen was successful for sign-ups
- People understood the alert functionality (updating, expanding, opt out)
- People appreciated the alert’s accuracy, timeliness and usefulness
What we learned about the experiment’s value

“Between the app and the blog, The Guardian was by far the best source of live and updating results and I was glued to it all day. None of the other news sources even came close.”

“Love your work G dog, will become a member as soon as I get a ‘good job that pays well’”

Survey responses
Step 3: You make and launch your experiment
Hey Look! It’s YOU, launching an experiment.
Step 4:
Send your survey
Survey best practices

- Keep them **short** (max. 15 q’s)
- Ask **demographic** info to support segmented analysis
- Ask a **mix of broad and granular** questions
- Include **screenshots** for clarity
- Leave room for **freeform responses**
- **Google Forms** are great!
What you can learn from a survey

Is dismissing an alert a negative? **New survey question:** “If you dismissed the alert, what was the most common reason?”

![Pie chart showing reasons for dismissing alerts]

- I was informed and didn't need it anymore
- I was annoyed and didn't want it
- I wanted to unsubscribe but didn't know how
- Other
Step 5:
Have a “burndown” meeting
Recipe for a burndown meeting

1. Gather everyone who participated (internally)
2. Answer three questions:
   ○ What went well?
   ○ What didn’t go well?
   ○ What could we do better next time?

   Designate a note taker. Answer one q at a time. No wrong answers!
Questions?

We know you’ve got them...
Thank you!

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Want to talk more about the session? Head to the Midway lounge!
Also, be sure to visit the many ONA18 exhibitors in the second floor Exhibit Hall.