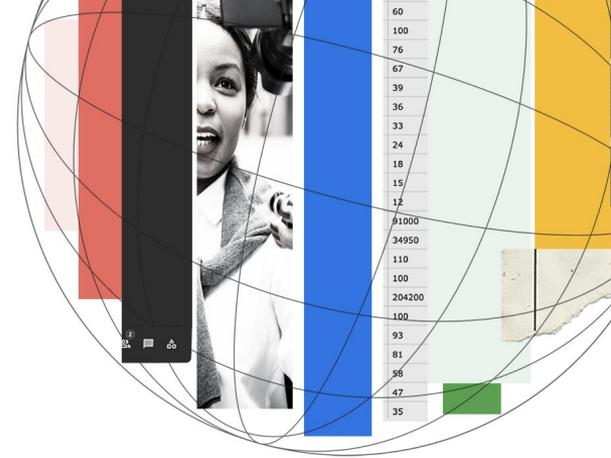
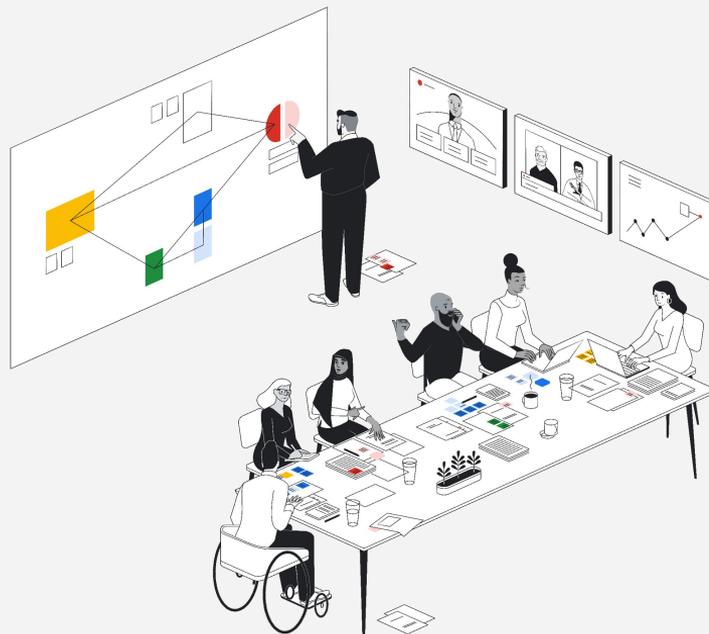


GNI Subscriptions Academy SEA 2025

Program Explainer



Subscriptions Academy
helps news publishers
**accelerate their digital
reader revenue growth** by
assessing their current
performance, **defining an
ambitious vision** and
outlining the engine that will
take them to their goal.



Objective

The Subscriptions Academy program is designed to engage a selected group of eight Southeast Asian publishers of varying sizes, countries, and audiences, drawn from the incredibly diverse print and digital news organizations across the region. The program will help them define an ambitious vision for their digital subscription businesses and build the engine that will take them to their goal.

Expert delivery

The Academy is an ambitious, intensive five-month experience that addresses each step of digital subscriptions, from traffic acquisition to subscriber retention, and the organizational skills publishers need to succeed. The Google News Initiative and FT Strategies work in partnership during the program to help participating publishers reach their goal, providing expert advice to publishers throughout.

Participants will receive dedicated 1:1 support and learn from the shared experiences of other cohort members. Delivery will be mostly digital, with an in-person visit from FT Strategies consultants to be scheduled.

Strong historic results

We have now worked with 76 publishers across nine previous editions of the Subscriptions Academy worldwide. The program has received consistently excellent quantitative and qualitative feedback from previous participants, and publishers have seen strong improvement in key subscriptions business metrics.

GNI and FT Strategies are excited about welcoming the next cohort of eight publishers to the 2025 edition of the Subscriptions Academy program - exclusive to Southeast Asia for the first time - and look forward to receiving your application.

Previous participants:



"I really appreciate the **shared discipline and the rigours of the work** behind all of this. When we applied, we hoped to be introduced to a sense of structure for our experiments. This forces all of us to **change the way we approach problems**, and this will last regardless of any experiments we do.

We are very happy to be shown a new approach that helps us be **more cognizant of how we can continue to build our business.**"

Program phases



DISCOVERY

Identify existing **strengths and opportunities** while aligning on **best practices** to improve performance across the subscriptions funnel

March - June

Best practices will introduce advanced concepts, tactics and methodologies based on the successes of other subscription-first organizations such as the Financial Times

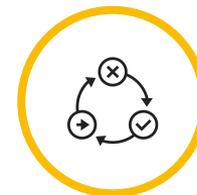


NORTH STAR

Co-create an ambitious and achievable **subscriptions-focused goal** for your organization to rally behind over the **next 3-5 years**

June

If a North Star has been developed on a previous FTS-GNI program, this will be reviewed and refined, incorporating learnings from Discovery ([see pg 7](#))



TEST & LEARN

Run **end-to-end experiments** to put your North Star **framework into practice** and set the organization up for post-program success

June - July



Discovery phase

Identify existing **strengths and opportunities** while aligning on best practices and tactics to improve performance across the subscriptions funnel

Core elements

Quantitative and qualitative analysis

Analysis of your Google Analytics (or equivalent), wider business data and stakeholder interviews

Cohort masterclasses

Presentations on best practices, tactics and case studies from the FT and other leading organisations

Publisher workshops

Sessions with each publisher to discuss diagnostic results and identify areas for improvement



Outputs

Diagnostic workshops

Covering cohort & publisher analyses, FT & industry best practices across the lifecycle



Executive Summary

Covering key strengths, opportunities and proposed solutions





North Star phase

Co-create an ambitious and achievable **subscriptions-focused goal** for your organization to rally behind over the next 3-5 years

Core elements

North Star framework

Collaborative workshops to co-develop a robust North Star framework

12-month action plan

Creating hypotheses for growth and prioritizing them in a roadmap for the first 12 months of your North Star plan

Initial experiments

Choosing from template experiments to validate opportunities with low-cost tests



Outputs

A North Star framework

Defining your North Star goal, outcomes, sub-outcomes and hypotheses



Action plan

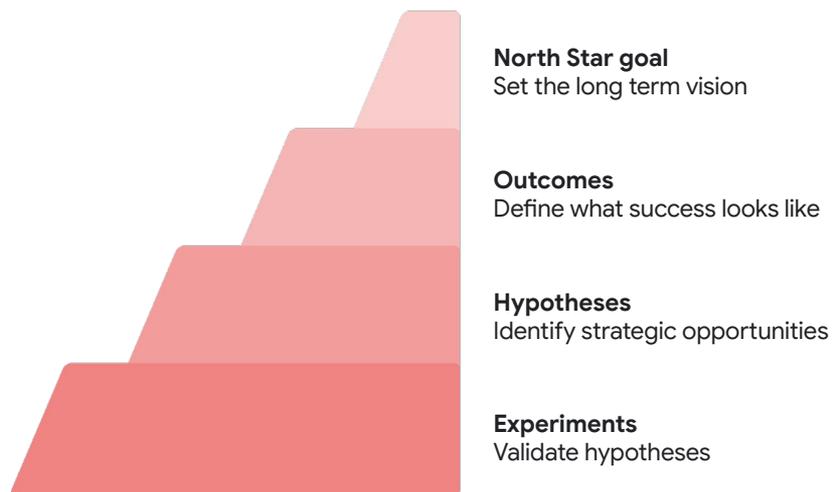
For prioritising, planning, and mapping the roll-out of all your ideas





North Star phase

North Star is the **strategic model used by the FT** that helped achieve the goal of 1M paying subscribers in 2019, a year ahead of schedule.



For publishers who have **previously developed a subscription-focused North Star goal in past FTS-GNI programs**, rather than creating a new framework from scratch, FT Strategies will:

- Review progress against the existing goal and outcomes
- Refine the goal and outcomes based on insights from the Discovery phase
- Develop new tactics and initiatives to achieve the goal
- Identify AI use cases to accelerate progress toward the goal
- Create a 12 month roadmap outlining priority experiments



Artificial Intelligence Module

An introduction to how AI can be leveraged to accelerate your progress towards your subscription goal

Core elements

The AI opportunity in news media

A comprehensive overview of how AI can be responsibly deployed in news media

AI use case development

Understanding how to navigate AI use cases specific to the media industry and journalism

AI use case identification and prioritization

A workshop aimed at helping you identify and prioritise AI use cases which can help you achieve your North Star goal



Outputs

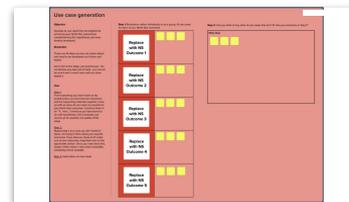
Increased AI Literacy

A thorough understanding of how to leverage AI



A prioritized list of AI use cases

For consideration in future experiments





Test & Learn phase

Run **end-to-end experiments** to put your North Star framework into practice and set the organization up for post-program success

Core elements

Bespoke end-to-end experimentation

Developing, implementing and analysing experiments that validate areas of opportunity

Subscriptions business foundations

Uncovering strengths and gaps in your technology, digital skills and organizational capabilities

Organizing for subscriptions growth

Building a strong governance structure to manage the North Star framework and realize its full impact within your business



Outputs

High-impact experiments

Identifying, selecting, designing, and running extensive organizational tests



Capabilities roadmapping

A concrete plan for development over the next 3-5 years to support the North Star



Test & Learn phase

Examples of experiments run during previous editions of Subscriptions Academy:

Paywall

Recent examples:

- ★ Simplify the messaging / value proposition on the paywall.
- ★ Reduce the number of articles a reader can read for free before being asked to register / subscribe.

Product / Editorial

Recent examples:

- ★ Removing advertising on the website and replacing with more content to encourage more engagement.
- ★ Launch a new newsletter aimed and new audiences to increase their loyalty.

Marketing

Recent examples:

- ★ Reduce the onboarding series of emails from 6 to 4 to be more concise and increase overall engagement.
- ★ Marketing email to lapsed subscribers with an offer to re-subscribe.

Data / Insights

Recent examples:

- ★ Correlate an engagement metric with churners to better understand who to target to re-engage.
- ★ Survey trialists at different points of their trial to understand if they're satisfied and how to improve conversion.

Previous programs have included coaching and experimentation across a number of additional themes including content strategy, organizational change and communication, op model design, pricing and visual journalism.

Required commitments

-  Digital subscriptions are a **strategic priority**
 - Digital subscriptions must be a top-three strategic priority
 - Must have launched a digital subscriptions business more than 12 months ago and are currently seeing growth
-  **Senior management** is bought in
 - CEO or similar C-Level stakeholder agrees to participate in and attend the Executive Summary sessions (maximum of three sessions)
-  **'Skin in the game'** operationally
 - Assign a project lead, and working team across key functions, including tech and editorial
 - Ready to commit the working team to ~3 hours of engagement on a weekly basis (varies from week to week) including a recurring update meeting
 - Commitment to designing and launching live experiments during 'Test & Learn' phase
 - Capabilities (tech, talent) to support experiments being run during the program
 - Fully participate in cohort activities over the program duration
-  Willingness to **share knowledge** with ecosystem
 - Be a full participant in an ongoing 'community of success'
 - Share subscription performance data for (anonymized) cohort benchmarking purposes
 - Agree to contribute to industry report

FAQs (1/3)

Q: Which countries are eligible?

A: This program is open to publishers in South East Asia countries. This includes: Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, Pakistan, the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Q: What is the entry fee to participate?

A: It's free of charge! This program is fully funded by the Google News Initiative, meaning no fees are required from publishers in order to participate.

Q: When does the program start?

A: The program will begin with a virtual ceremony in the week commencing 17th March 2025.

Q: When is the deadline to apply?

A: The application deadline is 21st February 2025 at 17.00 GMT.

Q: What data do I need to provide during the program?

A: *To fully benefit from the program, publishers should be willing to provide FT Strategies with access to their Google Analytics account for analysis purposes. Raw data will only be viewed by FT Strategies, not Google under any circumstances. All data will be fully anonymized during sessions. For more information on how we use your data, please visit <https://help.ft.com/legal-privacy>*

Q: What is the time commitment required by the publisher?

A: *Dedicated project teams should be able to commit approximately 3 hours of contact time per week to this program. This time commitment includes attendance of 1:1 consulting sessions and cohort-wide virtual masterclasses.*

FAQs (2/3)

Q: Will there be an in-person visit by FT Strategies?

A: Yes! FT Strategies consultants will arrange an in-person visit with participating publishers during the program. Costs and expenses will be paid for by the Google News Initiative and FT Strategies.

Q: How established should my digital subscriptions model be?

A: Eligible participating publishers must have had a digital subscriptions model in place for at least 12 months prior to the start of the program.

Q: How many digital subscribers do I need to have?

A: While this program is designed for publishers with more than 5k paying subscribers. Previous editions have included participants with 5k to 250k subscribers.

Q: What is a 'North Star for subscriptions'?

A: The North Star methodology is a strategic framework that organizes a business around a single ambitious goal. This can be applied to news organizations looking to grow their digital subscriptions businesses.

FAQs (3/3)

Q: How will this program differ from other FTS-GNI programs that have covered reader-revenue models, such as Digital Revenue Launchpad (DRL)?

A: Subscriptions Academy builds on DRL, which was designed to introduce publishers to digital reader-revenue models. This program explores more advanced concepts, methodologies and tactics successfully adopted by leading subscription-first news organizations to drive performance across the subscription funnel. It also provides a more in-depth analysis of your organization's subscription data compared to DRL, along with running more advanced experiments to validate key opportunities.

Q: What happens if I have created a North Star goal on a previous FTS-GNI program?

A: If you've previously created a subscriptions-focused goal, the FT Strategies team will review progress against it, and use learnings from the Discovery phase of this program to refine it. This process will include refining the underlying layers of the North Star framework - such as outcomes and hypotheses - to better position your organization to realize the goal.

About us

Google News Initiative

The Google News Initiative represents Google's **largest-ever effort** to help **journalism thrive in the digital age**. In collaboration with editors and journalists worldwide, the Google News Initiative (GNI) strives to foster a more **sustainable, diverse, and innovative** news landscape. Through a comprehensive suite of **programs, digital tools, training, and resources**, the GNI empowers journalistic endeavors, enabling journalists to effectively discover, verify, and narrate compelling stories while upholding the highest standards of quality journalism.

Google teams will:

- ★ Manage success of overall program, providing advice and expertise as needed.
- ★ Leverage the News Consumer Insights tool in the customer research phase.

FT STRATEGIES

FT Strategies is the **growth consultancy from the Financial Times**. **Staffed by the experts who successfully transformed the FT's business model** in the face of disruption, we work with organisations worldwide, helping them increase recurring revenue, create a customer-centric culture and transform organisations. Our deep expertise enables our clients to **future-proof their business, empower their teams, and fulfil their goals** with our proven data, digital and change consulting expertise

FT Strategies team will:

- ★ Lead execution of program including managing all modules and project phases / deliverables.
- ★ Lead the cohort in the development of their subscriptions North Star framework, experiments and other deliverables.
- ★ Introduce FT subject matter experts via cohort meetings.

To apply for the program, please
fill in the [application form](#)

Thank you

