

Innovation Award



KEY
EXECUTIVES

Mega- Conference

Solutions, Success Stories
and New Ideas

Newspaper or company name: The Virginian-Pilot

Address: 150 W. Brambleton Ave.

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Entry submitted by: Erica Smith

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AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

Please describe any innovative audience approaches your company has taken that has allowed your company to reach more readers, new audience segments (for example: Millennials, sports fanatics, etc.) or improve subscriber engagement. How has this impacted subscriptions, open rates, social shares or total audience? (300 words or less, suggested)

Partnering with Hindsight Technology Solutions, The Virginian-Pilot launched Smart Tagging in August, a feature that provides quick background on key words and phrases in a story and recommends related Pilot stories. Readers can click on a highlighted word or phrase to learn more about it without leaving the story or opening a new application or browser window. The project launched Aug. 27, limited to desktop users and stories in the military section of The Pilot's website.

In the first week, there were 660 clicks on smart tags, about a 40 percent click-through rate on smart tags on pages where Smart Tags were rendered. When a Smart Tag was opened, there was a 7.6 percent click-through rate on related content. That was substantial when compared to the average daily clicks on traditional related content: 7.

Sept. 10, was our first day with more than 1,000 clicks on Smart Tags, which was still limited to desktop users viewing military stories. (Popular military-related stories about Hurricane Florence didn't hurt, and got Smart Tags in front of even more users.)

On Nov. 12, Smart Tagging expanded to the government sections of pilotonline.com — national, state and local government and politics. A week later, we launched a mobile view for Smart Tags.

By Dec. 11, more than 500,000 articles with Smart Tags had been viewed, and the click-through rate on those tags was 19.85 percent. The click-through rate on traditional "related content" links within our content management system was 6.39 percent. The click-through rate on links added in stories by reporters and editors was 1.04 percent.