



Independent News & Media Group Ltd Case Study

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Last Updated : August 31, 2020
Version : 2.1

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INDEPENDENT NEWS & MEDIA GROUP LTD (INM)

Independent News & Media Group Ltd (INM) is the leading newspaper and online publisher in Ireland.

INM is vertically integrated with print and distribution assets and is the largest wholesale distributor of newspapers and magazines on the island. The Company is a 100% subsidiary of Mediahuis N.V., a private European media group, headquartered in Antwerp, Belgium.

Last year INM embarked on the digital transformation of independent.ie, which encompassed a paid-for-content strategy across web, app and e-paper. INM selected Flip-Pay to be its system solution provider, as it offered the company a rapid route to market, agile scalability and the complete suite of tools to manage their digital estate.

INM brands are household names in Ireland, with the Irish Independent, Sunday Independent, The Herald, Sunday World, Belfast Telegraph, Sunday Life and The Star, all of which are market leaders in their segments. Also, they have fifteen weekly regional newspapers and these titles achieve a combined average reach of 1.9 million readers each week across print and online.

In the Republic of Ireland, INM is the clear leader in newspaper publishing with the Irish Independent holding a readership of 512,100, +47% more audience than its nearest daily competitor while the Sunday Independent with a readership of 687,400, has +51% more audience than its nearest Sunday competitor.

FLIP-PAY BACKGROUND

International Micro Payment Ventures Ltd (Flip-Pay) was established in 2015 as an R&D project to examine the potential for a digital-wallet based micropayment eco system in digital publishing.

Founded by Paul McCarthy-Brain and Irish financier Dermot Desmond, Flip-Pay spent the first couple of years in R&D mode, looking at the limitations of traditional paywalls and working with a number of high-profile global publishers to understand the challenges faced.

“The problem with legacy paywall solutions is that they are difficult and expensive to deploy, offering a poor user experience for the consumer, and they require the publisher to purchase lots of other tools to get the job done, making it an expensive proposition,” according to the company.

Flip-Pay’s core development team came from backgrounds in online gaming, banking, information security, cloud scale and high frequency trading – underlying the experienced skill set required to build a high volume transaction platform that scales on demand, is secure and has extreme availability at a global level.

In less than three years Flip-Pay has developed the world’s most powerful and granular digital content monetization platform that can be deployed at any publishing company for any type of print and digital media, including news, video and audio.

The system is not just a paywall - although it has these capabilities. The product was designed from the outset to give a publisher the flexibility to create any form of content bundle packages and sell the same content down multiple differing channels targeting specific markets. The platform can up-sell content to users who would not normally take out a subscription, whilst offering full subscription services to those who do.

The platform allows the publisher to move beyond simply deploying a paywall by creating *“casual products that target different audiences and increasing revenue opportunities.”*

Since the arrival of the coronavirus pandemic, the company has seen a dramatic level of interest and its client base is expanding, says the company.

The cloud-based platform can provide subscription services across multiple channels and scales on demand, requiring no installation of hardware or software by the publisher. Also, it enables the publisher to rapidly deploy the solution across multiple titles and globally if required.

Flip-Pay's platform offers a complete suite of services covering analytics, customer service helpdesk modules, finance reporting, content and bundle management, pricing controls, AB testing, direct to consumer emails, identity management -- single sign on services and integration with third parties -- all accessible in an easy to use web based portal.

The types of configurations that Flip-Pay has been asked to deploy include --

- Membership: Access to premium content alongside existing free articles.
- Podcasts: Host, stream and deploy podcasts with monetization built in -- either per podcast or by series or unrestricted access. Also allowing the user to play their premium podcasts in their favorite podcast player.
- Video: The platform can be used to make a clone of an entire Netflix style platform or to monetize individual videos, create box sets, allow subscription to series and more.
- Premium News content: Include day passes, monthly subscriptions, annual subscriptions, subscribe to categories, metering, point of origin tracking, geolocation pricing.

Flip-Pay has set up working systems within one week, ready for test and approval by the publisher. Flip-Pay continues to refine the deployment process and in 2021 aims to have a self-service process ready for smaller publishers.

DEPLOYMENT AT INM

After comparing Flip-Pay's offering with market-leading paywall vendors including MPP Global and Piano/Tinypass, INM chose Flip-Pay for its group-wide solution, citing flexibility, speed and ease to deploy, cost effectiveness and suite of accompanying tools.

INM has 23 titles in the UK and Ireland, split between national and regional titles.

The initial deployment for Flip-Pay was to bring a digital first paid-for-content strategy to life -- a business model that had previously been based on print, with a digital operation based on digital advertising.

Since the success of the digital transformation, INM has moved Flip-Pay into every corner of their organization and every publication. Flip-Pay has also developed a brand new print home delivery system for INM. This involves typical bundle management across digital and print titles and integrates with route optimization systems for an efficient delivery network.

INM also uses the Flip-Pay customer support helpdesk system for all titles and customer service agents. The product has powerful capabilities and includes a ticketing system along with advanced customer retention tools, tele-sales modules and much more.

Flip-Pay is, by design, very quick to deploy. At the bare minimum, a publisher can drop a line of JavaScript code into their publication and Flip-Pay will do all the heavy lifting. The deployment at INM involved integration with app store products, e-papers, existing business intelligence tools and replacing legacy systems. The platform is agile and extensible giving INM a level of flexibility they would not have seen with other providers.

Flip-Pay's setup time to configure pricing, edit email templates, branding, reporting and configuration can be as little as a few days depending on the Publisher's requirements and their system infrastructure. In the last few months we have partnered with INM to launch a number of national titles and more than a dozen regional titles.

INM'S CONSUMER OFFERING

The *independent.ie* publication has the following content access points for consumers --

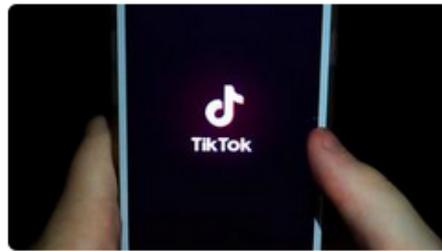
- *Online website:* The website now offers integrated content from the daily newspaper for sale as premium content.



Technology **Premium**

Apple to build world's largest onshore wind turbines in Europe

Apple has announced that it is to build two of the world's largest onshore wind turbines in Denmark.



Technology

TikTok buyers face harsh decisions in deal

TikTok's prospective buyers are discussing four ways to structure an acquisition from its Chinese owner ByteDance, which include buying its US operations without key software, after Beijing stalled a deal which could be worth \$30bn (€25bn), sources said.

The site has a mix of freely available content and premium articles.

- *App accessible:* The site is also available via apps listed in the Apple and Google app stores. Flip-Pay integrates deeply with Apple and Google allowing customers to roam between web and app seamlessly -- also allowing Flip-Pay to generate real-time sales data from within the various app stores giving a whole world view to the publisher.
- *E-paper:* The site is also accessible by a third-party provider via e-paper (a digital PDF style version of the newspaper). Visiolink, the company who provides the digital newspapers, integrates directly with Flip-Pay who also control access to the e-paper.

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- *Home delivery:* INM can now offer consumers a mix of print and digital bundles to be purchased and shipped to the home. This highly advanced solution also includes driver tracking, route optimization, automatic manifests and integration with the publisher's finance, warehouses, transport, and marketing teams. The solution can create new routes for the publisher and is now operating island wide.
 - *Whitelisting:* The whitelisting functionality provides free unrestricted access to staff and designated third-party suppliers.
 - *Corporate sales:* The Flip-Pay solution provides executives and specified staff with 'free' access to a specific bundle on a recurring basis. The payment is then made directly with INM's in-house finance team.

INM and its parent company (Mediahuis) are extremely impressed with the conversion statistics and acquired subscriber base, which is continuing to grow at an accelerated rate due to the Covid-19 outbreak. Consumers are flocking to take out a digital subscription to stay on top with the news.

One of the major benefits for consumers is the ability, with a minimum of two clicks, can become a subscriber/make a purchase using the Flip-Pay system. They are:

1. Register with an existing ID (Google, Facebook, Outlook, LinkedIn -- any OpenID system).
2. Pay with ApplePay / Google Pay, debit, credit and integrates directly with many third party payment providers..

There are no forms to fill in, no personal details to capture, just email and existing payment. If no existing payment exists, then the consumer enters card details but only card number, expiry, CVV.

The lack of forms makes it possible to capture the consumer, rapidly, during the discovery phase and this mechanism works extraordinarily well.

SOFTWARE PLATFORMS DEPLOYED

INM has deployed the following Flip-Pay software platforms:

Content Monetisation which gives INM the flexibility to monetize their content in different ways.

Unlike legacy paywall solutions where the paywall is up or down with a fixed monthly cost, the Flip-Pay solution allows the publisher to create new dynamic market segments and sell some or all of your content to customers who wouldn't otherwise have subscribed.

The platform can sell any combination of products from a single individual item, right through to complex packages at a targeted demographic. The platform is an advanced content monetisation engine for digital media. The service can be deployed on video, streaming services, news, classifieds, magazines, podcasts, music and more.

Flip-Pay offers the content owner an efficient and endlessly scalable platform in which to base their international sales upon. Everything is supplied as a service, from conditional access, payment processing, customer service modules, finance reporting, third party API integration, recommendations, content tagging, natural language processing and much more, in a rapidly deployable and intuitive to use tool set.

Identity Management which integrates with third-party vendor ID solutions. The primary function of Flip-Pay's identity product is to act as unification bridge between multiple properties, giving the content owner the ability to significantly reduce friction and to cross-sell content between properties within the group.

This is one of the most powerful elements of the Flip-Pay platform and key to its ease of use from a consumer perspective, aiding in revenue generation. Flip-Pay integrates automatically with the following:



As well as other OAuth2 third party solutions. Flip-Pay can also create custom connectors for proprietary systems on request.

Subscription Management which naturally processes and manages subscriptions. This is all controlled through Flip-Pay's layered content rules, which gives the content owner the ability to create and manage multiple sales channels with ease.

Help Desk Module enables publishers to deliver custom bundles or offers directly to specific channels and sell individual components of the subscription to market segments which have yet to subscribe.

The Flip-Pay helpdesk module also has a complete ticketing service and audit history, so interactions with customers can be tracked and escalated if required. There is a full supervisor agent feature that allows the monitoring of tickets raised. Customer Service agents also have access to powerful retention tools, to migrate users from one package to another, put on a lower rate or even given a free grace period.

Payments and Micropayments platform has powerful CS tools to service and track queries and maintain subscriptions. The platform supports global currencies & mobile carrier billing, making it easy for the publisher to increase their revenue with payment options built to reach a global audience and optimize checkout conversion.

Flip-Pay accepts 138 major debit and credit cards

Flip-Pay partners with Stripe for seamless payments and advanced AML and fraud detection, lowering the publisher's administration costs and system complexity.

Apple Pay and *Pay With Google* are included as default, for rapid mobile payments enabling a completely frictionless experience for the consumer and a higher acquisition rate for the publisher.

The platform can also integrate with any other 3rd party payment providers as required.

Print Home Delivery module is deeply integrated within Flip-Pay. The Publisher can cross sell and simply manage digital and print products across a number of verticals, combined with route optimization services.

Mobile Carrier Billing is available for penetrating markets where debit and credit card adoption is low. This can be run in parallel with a traditional debit/credit card-based solution.

Micropayments are processed via an industry leading integrated digital mobile wallet solution.

Micropayments can be deployed by publishers looking to enable content snacking and pay-per-view content, or pay-as-you-go streaming and even for use within gaming.

Micropayments can be deployed along side traditional subscription models and used to target demographics where a subscription is not desirable. One of the many unique elements Flip-Pay has over legacy paywall providers, is the granular sales options available to the publisher.

Security is paramount. Flip-Pay does not store payment information on their systems. They operate a token exchange with the payment provider that allows publishers to process recurring subscriptions without risk.

Third Party Integration

Flip-Pay is extensible, allowing INM to manage their entire digital estate from Flip-Pay's comprehensive publisher portal.

The platform was designed to easily integrate with multiple third-party providers, permitting alternative identity management, payment, analytics, video content providers, e-paper, print delivery and primary app stores to work in conjunction with Flip-Pay.

Analytics

Flip-Pay provides a unified vision of the publisher's business across all channels and verticals.

The Flip-Pay platform supports point of origin tracking. They measure the success of a campaign on the site and quickly understand where there is adoption and where there is drop off, making it ideal for tuning the platform to reduce bounce.

The publisher portal is a real-time dashboard to give the client a global view of their estate. Flip-Pay also provide a comprehensive API service that integrates directly with the publisher's existing business intelligence systems.

There are many pre-built reports available for finance, marketing, testing, customer service and general activity tracking. Customer reports can be created on demand or by making calls to Flip-Pay's well documented APIs.

PERFORMANCE

Flip-Pay is at the heart of INM's digital transformation strategy. The platform provides subscription services across multiple channels, as well as Identity management, reporting, billing, payments, advanced analytics and, where required, a complete helpdesk solution to manage customer retention.

When INM was choosing a technology partner for this project, one of the main reasons they selected Flip-Pay was its ability to deliver all of this functionality as a one-stop shop solution.

Flip-Pay is software-as-a-service (SAAS). It's a cloud-based platform that scales on demand, requiring no installation of hardware or software by the publisher. It also enables the publisher to rapidly deploy the solution across multiple titles and globally if required.

"We were delighted to be selected as INM's technology provider for their digital transformation project and to deliver the most advanced solution of its kind to Ireland's largest publisher. INM had a first year target for digital subscriptions, and we smashed that figure within the first three weeks and doubled it again within six weeks," said Paul McCarthy-Brain, CEO , Flip-Pay.

"Last year INM embarked on the digital transformation of independent.ie which encompassed a paid-for-content strategy across web, app and e-paper. We selected Flip-Pay as it offered us a rapid route to market, agile scalability and the complete suite of tools to manage our digital estate. The performance and reliability of the platform has been outstanding and INM are now deploying Flip-Pay across all our titles" - Henry Minogue, CIO, INM

"The simplified customer on-boarding process means higher conversion and lower churn. We're now working closely with INM on expanding these tools to more publications."

Contact Us

More about Flip-Pay can be found at <https://flip-pay.com>

Should you wish to get further information about Flip-Pay please contact us below.

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