

# How Postmedia is **building direct audience relationships** through newsrooms

## THE CLIENT

**As one of Canada's largest media companies, Postmedia operates 130+ news brands and destination websites. With national, local and community news brands and vertical websites, Postmedia reaches more than 18 million readers per month across print and digital platforms.**



## THE CHALLENGE

Over the past few years, Postmedia's approach to commenting has been centrally focused on minimizing toxicity with help from Viafoura's AI moderation solution and moderation services team. This has effectively promoted civility in conversations between readers, creating the foundation for a strong, trustworthy community. Despite this, many newsrooms that Erin Valois, VP of Digital Strategy, consulted were still hesitant to engage directly given the harassment they had experienced online — especially on social media — in the past.

As part of a larger strategy to move online conversations to Postmedia's owned and operated properties, Erin sought to simultaneously harness the potential of the comments section as a community-building tool while also protecting editorial teams.

## THE SOLUTION

In partnership with Viafoura, Erin and her team worked with the newsrooms to create the **first comment initiative, a project designed to prove whether journalist involvement in the comments section would generate more audience engagement.**

During three months across 15 newsrooms, journalists used Viafoura's **Conversations solution to write a declarative statement with an open-ended question in the first hour after an article was published.** Pinning it to the top of the comments thread for visibility, the first comment was easily discoverable for readers to engage with in a variety of ways: like, dislike, or reply. This also set the tone for the discussion in the commenting experience.

Erin and editorial leadership were confident that Viafoura's moderation engine would effectively filter hateful comments, encourage more productive conversations, and ultimately gain the newsrooms' trust.

**Drawing upon Viafoura's rich data set, the team analyzed the results among the test group and found that the first comment initiative generated increased registrations and comments.** This helped prove that with editorial buy-in and when used proactively, comments are an effective way to boost engagement and build community.

With the insights gathered from the first comment initiative, Erin can now demonstrate the impact that an editorial commenting strategy can have. Emma McKay, the Director of Newsletters and Jacob Dubé, National Operations Producer, used the insights from the experiment to develop a fulsome guide to engaging tactics tied to comments and rolled it out across all of Postmedia's newsrooms.



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This initiative was a huge success from a strategic perspective and as a change management exercise — it's clear that every touchpoint within the Viafoura platform is an opportunity for conversion.

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— **Erin Valois**  
VP of Digital Strategy

## RESULTS\*



**increase** in  
registrations  
per article



**380%  
increase** in  
total average  
comments



**increase** in  
time spent in  
comments



**347%  
increase** in  
average likes  
created

\*Results have been calculated across the test group of articles that participated in the first comment initiative and compared to a baseline of articles outside the test.