

# SHIFTER

# CASE

SHIFTER

# STUDY

**Sounding out the Audience:**  
Surveying Interest in Audio,  
Subscriber Changes

## IN SHORT

Shifter decided to launch a new audio project and redesign its current subscription strategy to attract new audiences.

## ABOUT THE NEWS OUTLET

Shifter is a Portuguese online magazine that also publishes a quarterly physical edition. It brings critical perspectives to everyday issues, focusing on technology, culture, politics and social justice. Along with Lisboa Para Pessoas, a platform that informs and engages citizens about Lisbon and its metropolitan area, it is part of the company Shifter Gen, Unipessoal Lda.



## PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Shifter aimed to validate demand for audio content and reduce reliance on long-form articles alone. In parallel, it sought to redesign subscription tiers to attract new members and make the publication more accessible. Other objective was to diversify the outlet's voice by using an open call and bringing new contributors into production.



## IMPLEMENTED SOLUTIONS

Shifter surveyed 100+ respondents and ran a small reader focus group to map preferences and willingness to pay. Insights split the work into two streams: an audio project and a subscription redesign. The team prototyped new tiers, launched an open call, reviewed 150+ submissions, and selected four collaborators for production.

## WHY THIS PROJECT?

Shifter wanted to optimize its content. While the magazine primarily focuses on long-form journalism, the team recognized that this format can be daunting for some audiences and that there is growing demand for audio content. Another motivation was to make their work accessible to a wider audience. Finally, since Shifter is run by just two people, they began to feel that the publication was too closely associated with their individual identities. By launching an open call for their audio project, they aimed to make the platform more pluralistic.

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## HOW DID APPLYING DESIGN THINKING PRINCIPLES HELP?

Shifter applied design-thinking principles in multiple aspects of the project. To gather audience insights, the team first conducted a survey of more than 100 respondents and led a focus group with five readers to explore their interests and preferences. Based on these findings, the initial project was divided into two streams: one focusing on audio, and the other on redesigning the subscription model. As prototyping is a regular part of Shifter's work in testing new ideas, the team also developed prototypes for this project.

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## DID SHIFTER'S APPROACH CHANGE ENGAGEMENT WITH ITS AUDIENCE IN ANY WAY?

Yes, Shifter's redesign of the current subscription strategy attracted new members. As for the audio project, it managed to mobilize a great number of contributors and build a sense of anticipation among the potential audience for its upcoming launch.

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## WHAT CHALLENGES DID SHIFTER ENCOUNTER AND HOW DID IT ADDRESS THEM?

Shifter's biggest challenges proved to be time and financial constraints. Although the initial two-month timeline seemed achievable, the team quickly realized that the process would take significantly longer than anticipated. The open call for the new audio project resulted in a high volume of submissions (over 150), resulting in a lengthy review process that ultimately led to choosing four collaborators. Another major challenge was staying within the project budget while balancing the creative ambition and resources available.

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## HOW WAS SHIFTER'S PROJECT RECEIVED BY ITS AUDIENCE?

After Shifter updated its subscription tiers, it witnessed a 13% increase in subscriptions within two weeks, indicating that the change successfully attracted new audiences. As the audio project is yet to be released, the audience reception will be evaluated in the near future.

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## WHAT DOES SHIFTER PLAN ON DOING NEXT?

Moving forward, Shifter plans to release the audio pieces through the end of 2025, while refining its communication and distribution strategy for the new format. Afterwards, the team will carefully assess how to proceed with the project. Initial feedback has been promising and if upcoming results confirm the format potential, the team plans to maintain consistency and continue developing it.

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## WHAT ADVICE WOULD SHIFTER GIVE TO OTHER JOURNALISTS OR ORGANISATIONS CONSIDERING A SIMILAR PATH?

Even if a project seems easy at first, creating a high-quality product is always difficult. To stay on top of your work, break the project down into as many concrete steps as possible.

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Shifter's print editions reflect the magazine's strong visual identity and its commitment to long-form, thoughtful journalism.

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## VISUALS FROM THE PROJECT



Public talks and presentations supported Shifter's efforts to engage audiences beyond the magazine and test new content ideas. Audience events and discussions played a key role in understanding reader expectations and shaping future formats.