

## Google News Initiative In Japan

### Partnership

Japan is home to over [126 million people](#) spread across 430 of its [6,852 islands](#). The islands are divided into [47 prefectures](#), and each prefecture has its own culture and newspaper.

For example [THE SHIKOKU SHIMBUN](#) was established in 1889 on Shikoku Island in Kagawa Prefecture, Japan's smallest prefecture. News updates are especially important during times of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and the newspaper supports the local community by making all COVID-19-related news free to readers.

### Overview

To stay relevant in the digital era, print news publishers need to undergo a digital transformation. This is especially true in Japan where most readers prefer to consume news on their smartphones<sup>1</sup>. Education and outreach are crucial for teaching publishers what digital transformation involves and why they should embrace the shift to digital.

To help local news publishers with their digital transformation efforts, the Google News Initiative (GNI) partnered with the Local Media Consortium Secretariat to help publishers optimize their websites, improve their mobile experience (UX), and develop monetization strategies<sup>2</sup>. They executed educational outreach activities throughout Japan and also worked directly with four local news publishers.

<sup>1</sup> Kantar TNS + Google research 2019

<sup>2</sup> In 2017, [Dentsu Inc.](#) and [Cyber Communications Inc.](#) (CCI) launched the Local Media Consortium (LMC), an initiative to support local news publishers in Japan.

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## How local news publishers engage with digital transformation and build sustainable business models in Japan

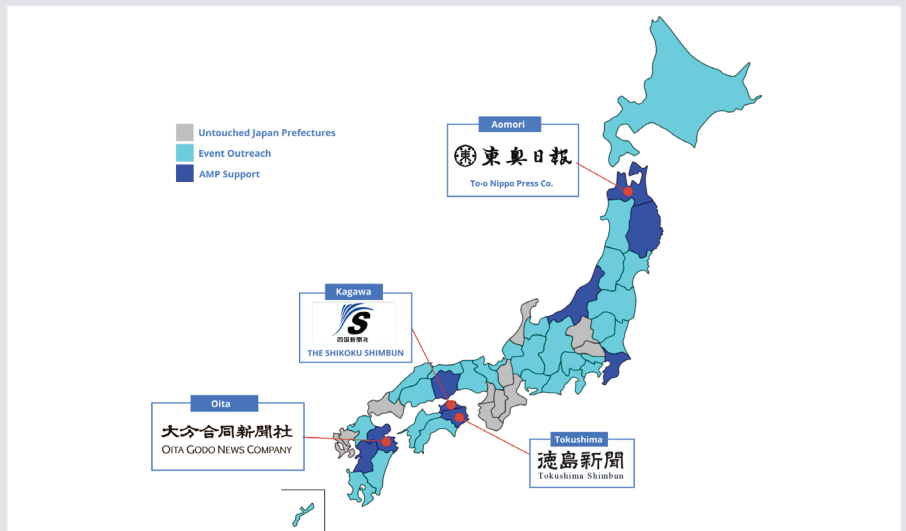
### Creating sustainable business models for Japanese publishers

### The Project

Japan is experiencing a decline in print readership, and more and more people prefer to consume news content on their smartphones. Publishers need a fast, user-friendly mobile website to remain relevant, but most local newspapers lack the resources and technical expertise to create one.



Event attendees, Sendai, January 2020.

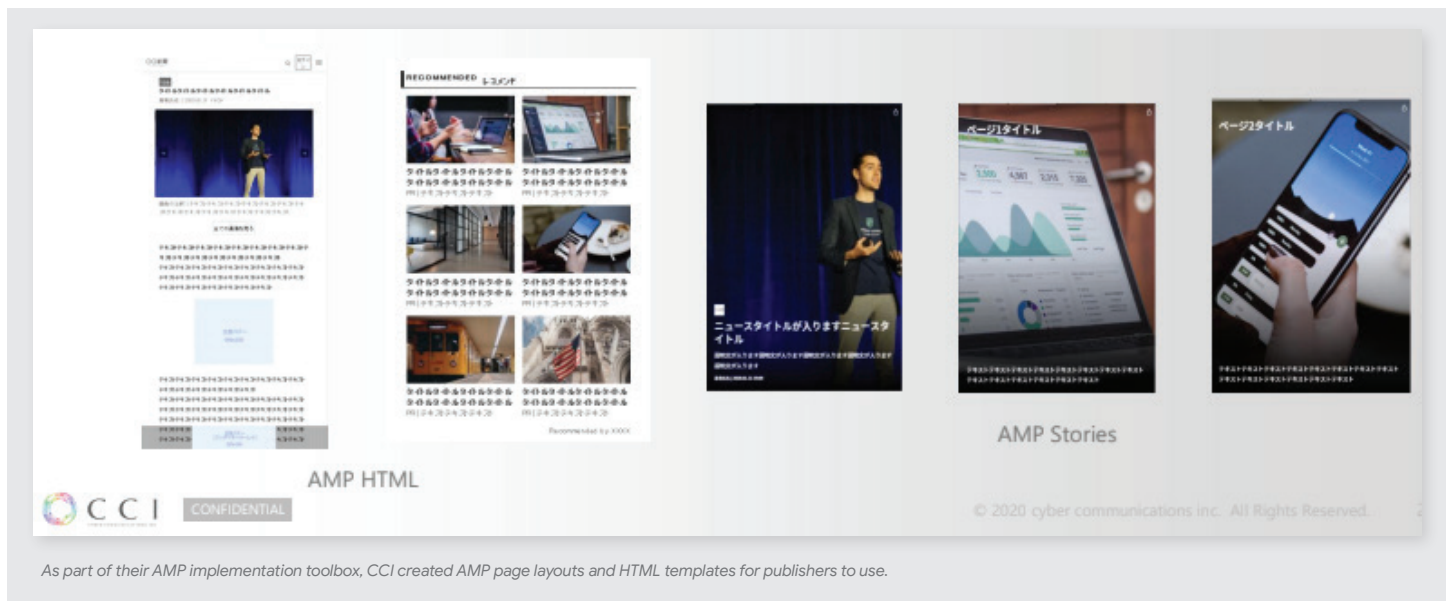


Map of engagement with publishers across Japan.

In an effort to support local news publishers, GNI partnered with The LMC Secretariat on a series of outreach efforts, including workshops and knowledge-sharing sessions, to improve publishers' site performance and enable digital monetization. They focused on using Accelerated Mobile Pages (AMP) to increase traffic and load times and to improve the user experience. Publishers could either implement AMP themselves with CCI's AMP implementation toolbox or with one-on-one support from The LMC Secretariat.

“ Technical support from Google has accelerated our understanding of AMP. It works well with Google Analytics and the Google Search Console, and could be used as a total solution including AMP. ”

英 誠一朗 (SEIICHIRO HANAFUSA), THE SHIKOKU SHIMBUN CO., LTD



As part of their AMP implementation toolbox, CCI created AMP page layouts and HTML templates for publishers to use.

“ I was surprised at how fast our site loaded with AMP. It's really nice to have a frustration-free experience with all of our articles loading. AMP greatly contributed to the increase in our site speed and UX improvement. It's also easy to use: With a little studying, I was able to learn how to code AMP myself. ”

英 誠一朗 (SEIICHIRO HANAFUSA), THE SHIKOKU SHIMBUN CO., LTD

### The Results

The GNI and The LMC Secretariat selected four publishers to help directly with their AMP implementation: [OITA GODO NEWS COMPANY](#), [THE SHIKOKU SHIMBUN](#), [The Tokushima Shimbun](#), and [To-o Nippo Press Co.](#) Within a month, the cohort saw, on average, a 38-percent reduction in page load speeds, a 203-percent increase in traffic, and a 135-percent increase in annual digital revenue compared to the prior year's performance. These improvements resulted in an additional 96K US dollars annualized digital revenue for participating publishers.

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**38%**

Reduction in page load speeds

**203%**

Increase in traffic

**135%**

Increase in annual digital revenue

**\$96K**

Annualized digital revenue for participating publishers