

# UPDATE ON LEE'S DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

FIRST QUARTER FY2022 EARNINGS | FEBRUARY 2022



# SAFE HARBOR

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# KEY HIGHLIGHTS/AGENDA

1

Lee Enterprises Investment Thesis and Digital Transformation Progress

2

Lee's Strategy for Digital Transformation: Three Pillar Digital Growth Strategy

3

First Quarter 2022 Results and 2022 Outlook

4

Five Year Outlook and Introduction to New Metrics To Track  
Lee's Digital Transformation



# LEE IS STRONGLY POSITIONED FOR THE FUTURE (NASDAQ: LEE)

## Leading provider of digital products and services and high quality, trusted, local news and information

- Deep relationships in 77 attractive, mid-size local markets, reaching more than 47M unique visitors each month<sup>1</sup>
- Mid-size market focus enables greater audience engagement/deeper penetration and lower volatility from macroeconomic trends
- Lee reaches 7 out of 10 adults in its markets during the week

## Fastest growing digital subscription platform in local media

- 57% YOY growth in digital subscriptions in Q1 FY2022
- Digital only audience revenue up 26% in Q1 FY2022
- Total subscribers (print + digital) up in each of the last twelve months and expected to grow over next five years

## Digital advertising growing across platforms with differentiated digital product offerings

- Developed Amplified Digital Agency; a full service digital marketing services agency
- Amplified revenue up 43% in FY2021, up 69% in Q1 FY2022, and totals \$47M over the last twelve months
- Lee's Vision platform provides a competitive advantage to grow digital advertising and marketing services revenue

## Strong business model and best-in-class management team

- Hired by Warren Buffett in 2018 to manage Berkshire Hathaway's local media operations
- Team consistently outperforms local media peers on revenue metrics
- Majority of revenue is subscription based, recurring revenue



<sup>1</sup>Digital audience represents average monthly UV's on Lee's owned and operated websites in the three months ended December 2021.

# LEE'S STRATEGY FOR DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION: THE THREE PILLARS

LEE IS RAPIDLY TRANSFORMING FROM A PRINT-CENTRIC TO A DIGITAL-CENTRIC COMPANY

## PILLAR 1

Expand digital audiences by transforming the presentation of local news and information

## PILLAR 2

Expand digital subscription base and revenue

## PILLAR 3

Diversify and expand offerings for local advertisers



Lee expects the Three Pillar Digital Growth strategy to drive more than \$435 million of recurring, sustainable digital revenue by 2026.



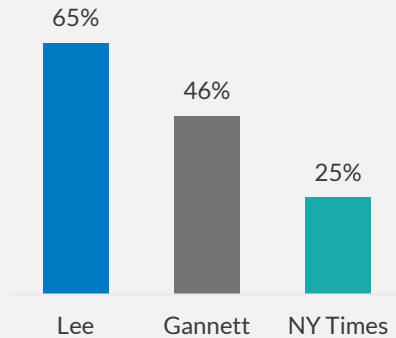
# DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION: MARKET LEADING GROWTH

## Digital Subscriber Growth Leads Industry

450K Current Digital-only Subscribers

9 quarters of leading digital subscriber growth

FY2021 YOY Growth

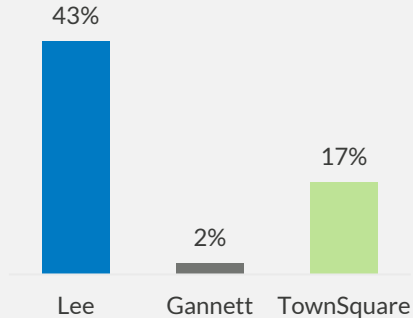


## Digital Agency Revenue Growth Leads Industry

\$47M Amplified LTM Revenue

43% YOY growth at Amplified

FY2021 YOY Growth

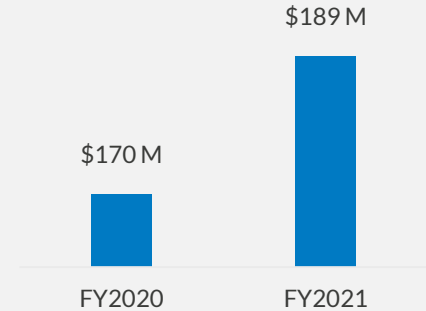


## Total Digital Revenue Growing Significantly

\$197M of LTM Total Digital Revenue

Total Digital Revenue up 11% YOY

FY2021 YOY Growth



# LEE INVESTMENT THESIS

WE BELIEVE OUR THREE PILLAR DIGITAL GROWTH STRATEGY WILL CREATE SUBSTANTIAL VALUE:



## Execute Three Pillar Digital Growth Strategy

Generate long-term sustainable digital revenue growth, margin expansion and strong free cash flow



## Continued Debt Reduction & Strengthened Balance Sheet

Expect to reach <2.5x leverage target within five years



## Increased Shareholder Value

Operating cash flow and profits are enhanced  
Debt reduction drives shareholder value

Multiple expansion fueled by increased recurring, high-margin digital revenue



**LEE'S STRATEGY FOR DIGITAL  
TRANSFORMATION:  
THREE PILLAR DIGITAL  
GROWTH STRATEGY**





# LEE'S STRATEGY FOR DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION: THE THREE PILLARS

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# DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION: EXPAND DIGITAL AUDIENCES

ENHANCING DIGITAL PRESENTATIONS TO PROVIDE BEST-IN-CLASS USER EXPERIENCE OF LOCAL NEWS, WITH MULTIFORMAT, RICH CONTENT

PILLAR 1

PILLAR 2

PILLAR 3

- Creating cohesive digital experience across all platforms by investing in user-experience design talent
- Improving multimedia presentation
  - Emphasis on video and audio to drive engagement and monetization
  - Expand regional and statewide collaboration to enhance video and audio content
- Enabling cross-platform integration to track usage
- Creating new channels (apps, podcasts) to utilize our unique content and expertise (e.g. local sports)

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Part of Constitution Trail remains closed Friday

Watch now: Bloomington artist preserved 9/11 with art, poetry

Watch now: 3 killed, including suspect, 2 injured in north Normal shooting, police say

Lane reduction planned in uptown Normal next week

Watch now: Olympic athlete brings experience back to ISU basketball

Bloomington man dies after weekend hit-and-run

Common sentenced for Bloomington double murder

**The Latest**

Central Illinois speaks up: Letters to the editor for the week of Sep. 3, 2021

Illinois man gets 96 years in 2017 killing, dismemberment

Emmett Till marker in Mississippi toppled but not vandalized

What you missed this week in notable Central Illinois crimes and court cases

**Latest Video**

You want a Super Bowl, you'll need premier quarterback

Trio of Red River piglets go crazy over new toys at San Diego Zoo

Five of the best exercises for stress relief

Kaley Cuoco and husband Karl Cook split after three years of marriage

**Sports**

Watch now: Illinois State football opens season against Butler

Watch now: Illinois' Calvin Hatt Jr. out for season; Arur Sikowodi named starter

Watch now: Illinois Wesleyan football team ready to 'line up' for season opener against Franklin

5 YEARS AGO: Max Moews, Central Catholic turn back University High

**PANTAGRAPH FROM PAGES PAST**



# DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION: EXPAND DIGITAL SUBSCRIBER BASE

GROWING DIGITAL-ONLY SUBSCRIPTIONS AND REVENUE

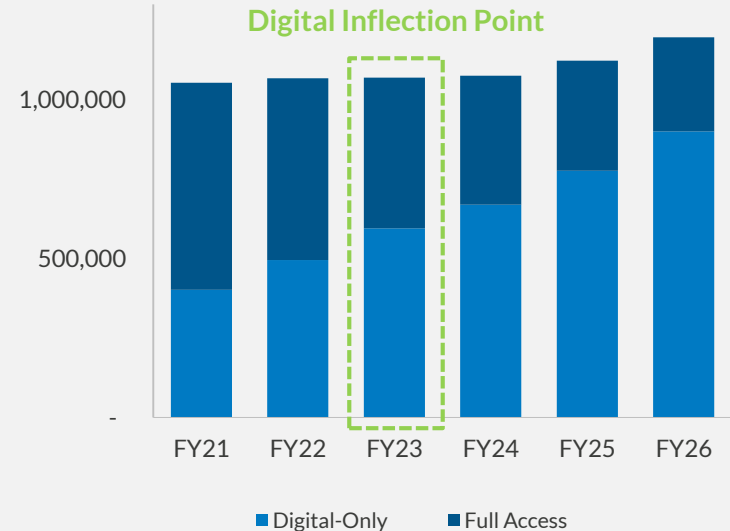
PILLAR 1

PILLAR 2

PILLAR 3

- Key initiatives...
  - Optimize subscription model for digital-only growth
  - Monetize content through new digital niche products
  - Maximize subscription rates by leveraging first-party data
  - Carefully manage the decline of legacy subscription revenue streams
- ...expected to drive:
  - **900,000 digital-only subscribers** in five years
  - **Increase** in average subscription rates over five years (7% CAGR)
  - Digital-only audience to be majority of subscriber base in two years

## Projected Print + Digital Subscription Units



# DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION: STRATEGIES TO DRIVE SUBSCRIPTION REVENUE

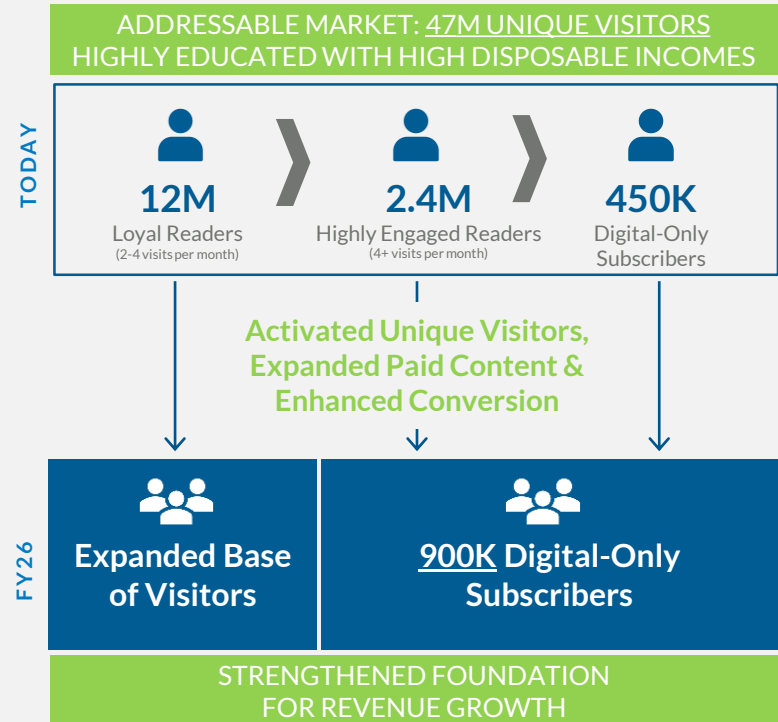
ENHANCING CONVERSION WITHIN LEE'S ADDRESSABLE MARKET

PILLAR 1

PILLAR 2

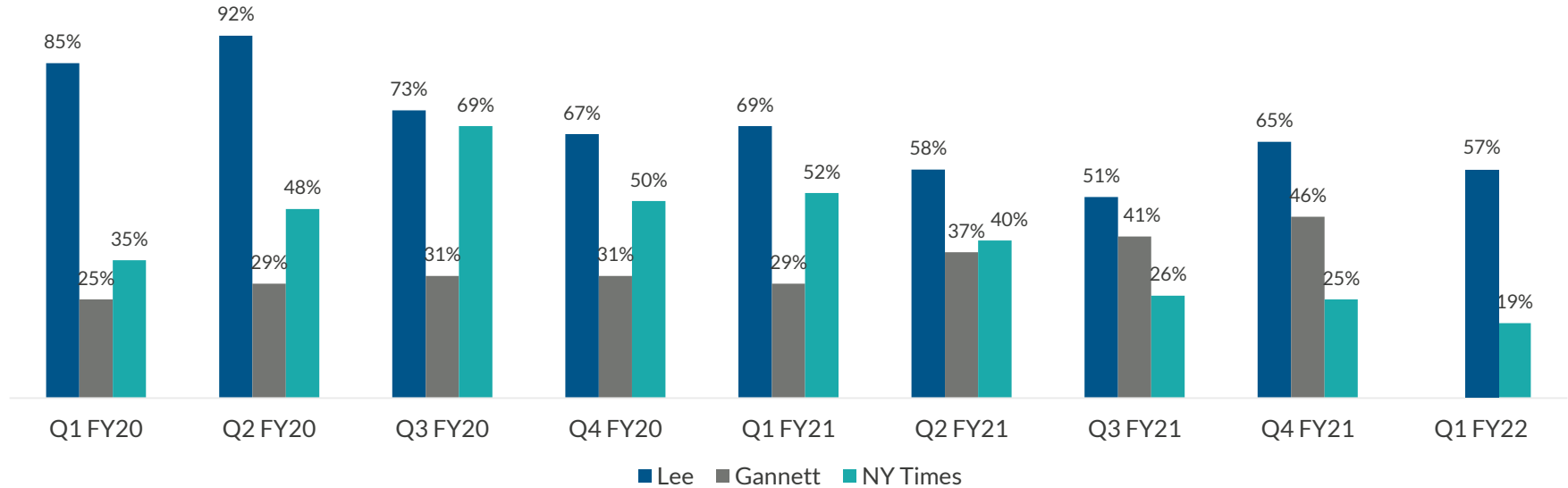
PILLAR 3

- Convert more of our addressable market to digital content subscribers
  - Leverage embedded position in 77 attractive markets to grow audiences and share of total addressable market
  - Convert more of the 2.4M highly engaged readers to digital subscribers
  - Provide attractive niche subscriptions for targeted audiences
- Implement data-driven, dynamic content metering to drive subscription conversion
  - Digital segmentation and targeted offers based on usage
  - Maximizing conversions from email, search, social media referrals
  - Leveraging TownNews dynamic meter to drive conversions



# DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION: LEE DIGITAL SUBSCRIPTION GROWTH LEADS THE INDUSTRY

## Digital Subscription Growth YOY



Digital subscriber growth has outpaced industry peers for 9 quarters



# DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION: FIVE-YEAR SUBSCRIPTION GROWTH OUTLOOK

LEE IS CONFIDENT IN ITS PLAN TO GROW DIGITAL SUBSCRIPTIONS AND ARPU

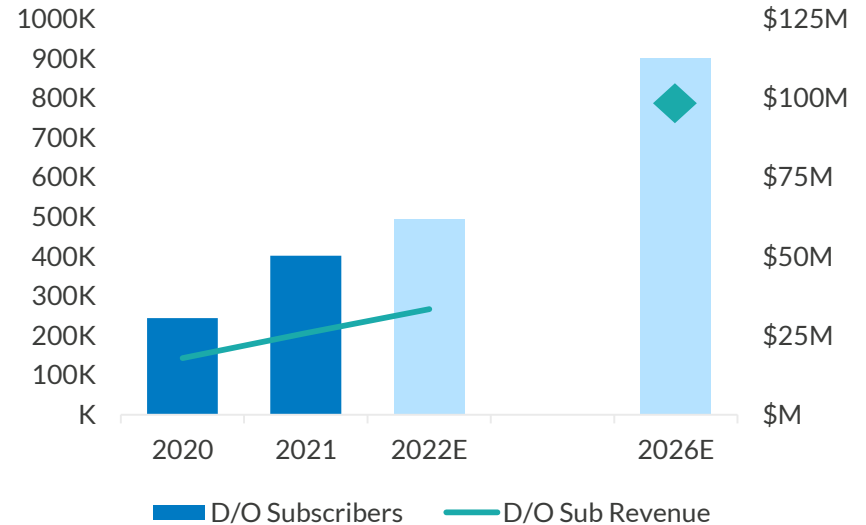
We expect significant growth in digital subscribers:

- Convert more visitors to our core digital products
- Launch new digital niche subscription products
- Continued conversion of audiences to digital subscribers
- Expect 900,000 digital subscribers by 2026, assuming modest penetration of the current addressable market

We expect to drive digital subscription revenue even faster:

- Expect ARPU expansion as introductory pricing becomes a smaller piece of the subscriber base
- Maximizing ARPU through data and sophisticated analytics
- Niche digital products expected to carry higher ARPU

## Digital Subscriptions – 5 Year Outlook



Lee expects \$100M of digital subscription revenue in 2026



# DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION: KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR SUBSCRIPTION REVENUE

1

Lee is the fastest growing digital subscription platform with a strong track record of accelerating digital subscription growth.

2

Lee is halfway to the goal of reaching 900,000 paid digital only subscribers assuming a modest penetration of the total addressable market.

3

Lee's digital transformation strategy is expected to generate recurring sustainable digital subscription revenue, expecting \$100M in 2026.



# DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION: EXPAND DIGITAL ADVERTISING SERVICES

LEVERAGE “FIRST TO MARKET” POSITION WITH ARRAY OF DIGITAL PRODUCT OFFERINGS, SERVICES AND MARKETING SOLUTIONS

PILLAR 1

PILLAR 2

PILLAR 3

## Diversify and Expand Offerings to Local Advertisers

### Amplified: Lee’s Omnichannel Marketing Solution

**Amplified** offers omnichannel digital marketing solutions for local advertisers (e.g., consulting, media buying, analytics) through its **Vision platform**

#### Competitive Advantages of Amplified:

- **Data driven ad tech** that efficiently feeds customized proposals to sales reps through Lee’s **Vision platform**
- **Specialized category expertise** – automotive and healthcare
- **Scalable custom video content** from **Brand Ave. Studios**
- **First party data** to drive **premium eCPMs** and create recurring revenue
- Creates a pipeline for providing **e-commerce solutions** from custom website development and agency services supporting major e-commerce platforms

### Maximize Revenue on Lee’s Digital Platforms

**Massive audiences** on our owned and operated websites (O&O) provide a growing opportunity to drive **high margin** digital advertising revenue

#### Competitive Advantages of O&O:

- Audience to leverage Lee’s **Vision platform** in order to:
  - Increase local market penetration increasing customer counts
  - Increase sell-thru rates and eCPM’s to drive higher value digital advertising revenue
- Promote **video** digital banner, sponsorship and **branded content**





# DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION: AMPLIFIED IS GROWING RAPIDLY

AMPLIFIED – LEE'S FULL-SERVICE DIGITAL AGENCY IS EXPECTED TO CONTINUE TO GROW SIGNIFICANTLY

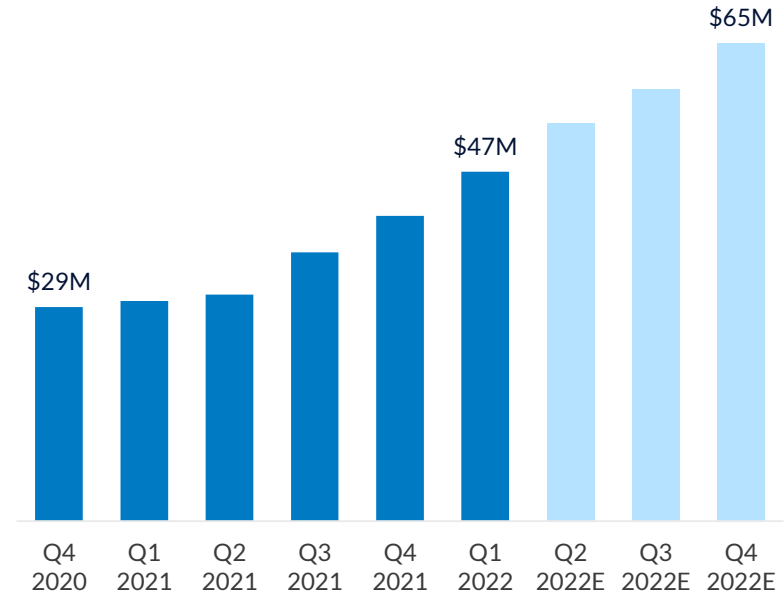
- Overview of Amplified:

- Provides **full suite of digital services** such as omnichannel marketing solutions, audience targeted display, SEM, social audience targeting, social media management, email marketing, banner, video streaming, and much more
- Creates sophisticated websites for local, regional, and national customers – **2,000 websites** developed
- Supports ecommerce solutions and leverages **first party data** to drive premium eCPMs
- Delivers **key analytics** to customers via Amplified Insights
- Develops **custom video content** through Brand Avenue Studios

- Amplified in Numbers:

- Over **5,700 customers**, up **51%** in the last twelve months.
- Amplified customers in **46 states**
- Professional staff of **127 digital experts** as of Q1 FY22, up **31%** in the last twelve months.

## Amplified Revenue (LTM)



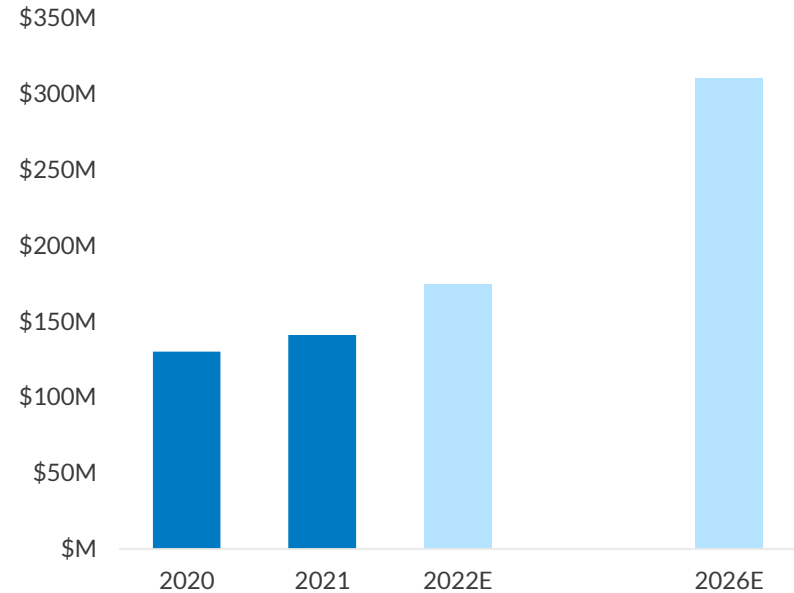
Amplified generated \$47 million in revenue (LTM) and is expected to reach \$100 million in 2024

# DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION: FIVE-YEAR DIGITAL ADVERTISING OUTLOOK

## DIGITAL ADVERTISING GROWTH IS FUELED BY AMPLIFIED

- Amplified will drive digital marketing services revenue growth.
  - Rapidly growing digital marketing services provider with \$47M of revenue over the last twelve months, up 59%
  - Leverage local market presence to expand client base from 5,700 monthly customers
  - Increase advertiser spending due to:
    - Growing demand for omnichannel digital advertising
    - Lee's Vision platform leverages data and derives value for local advertisers
  - Expect \$200M of Amplified revenue in 2026
- Our owned and operated digital products provides a unique opportunity to grow high margin digital advertising revenue.
  - Increase local market penetration increasing customer counts
  - Leverage Lee's **Vision** platform to increase sell-thru rates and eCPM's to drive higher value digital advertising revenue

## Digital Advertising Outlook



Lee expects \$310M of Digital Advertising & Marketing Services Revenue in 2026



# DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION: KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR ADVERTISING REVENUE GROWTH

1

Amplified is a major growth engine for Lee's digital advertising transformation.

2

Lee's sophisticated Vision platform uniquely positions us to capitalize on the double-digit growth in omnichannel digital advertising.

3

Lee's strategy is expected to generate recurring sustainable digital revenue, exceeding \$310M in digital advertising revenue in 2026.



# FIRST QUARTER 2022 RESULTS AND 2022 OUTLOOK



Solid revenue performance, strong in digital growth categories



Continued excellent cost control of legacy business



Investments to drive digital transformation



On track to achieve full year targets for digital revenue and adjusted EBITDA



# FIRST QUARTER 2022 FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS & 2022 OUTLOOK

## Q1 FY2022 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

- Total Operating Revenue was \$202 million in the first quarter, a 4.5% YOY decline
  - Total Digital Revenue was \$55 million, up 17% YOY
    - Digital-only subscription revenue increased 26% YOY and totaled \$8 million
    - Digital-only subscribers increased 57% YOY and now total 450,000
    - Digital advertising and marketing services revenue increased 19% YOY and totaled \$43 million
    - Excluding political revenue, digital advertising and marketing services revenue increased 30%
    - Amplified revenue increased 69% YOY totaling \$15 million
  - Total Print Revenue was \$147 million in the first quarter, a 11% YOY decline
- Operating expenses totaled \$179 million and Cash Costs<sup>(1)</sup> were up 2.5% YOY due to:
  - Increases in investments in digital talent and technology tied to our digital growth strategy and digital cost of goods sold;
  - Cycling one-time cost benefits realized in the prior year; and
  - Partially offset by a reduction in expenses that support our print revenue streams.
- Net Income totaled \$13.2M and Adjusted EBITDA<sup>(1)</sup> totaled \$26.1M

## FY2022 OUTLOOK

495,000

Total Digital Only Subscribers

\$33M

Digital Only Subscription Revenue

\$175M

Digital Advertising & Marketing Services Revenue

\$95 – 98M

Adjusted EBITDA

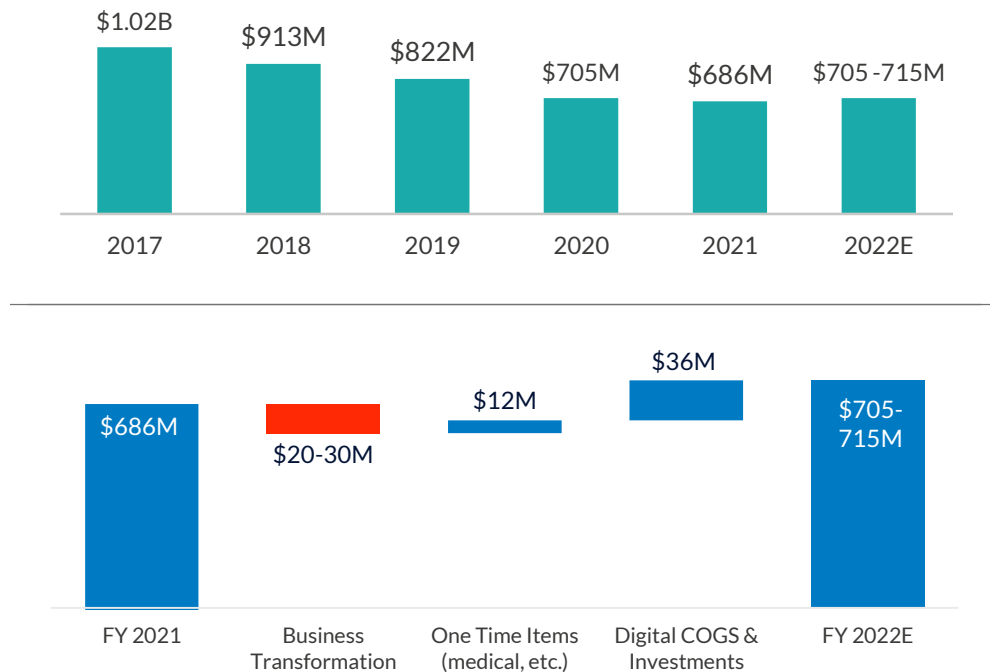


<sup>(1)</sup> Adjusted EBITDA and Cash Costs are non-GAAP financial measures. See appendix.

# STRONG TRACK RECORD OF SUSTAINABLE COST MANAGEMENT

- Proficient in driving efficiencies
  - Acquisition synergies and business transformation initiatives expected to drive \$114M in cost reductions since 2019 (proforma for the acquisition), net of investments
  - Current base of +\$300M of direct costs associated with our legacy revenue streams that will be managed with associated revenue trends
- Thoughtful investments in digital future
  - Significant investments made in talent and technology to fund successful execution of three- pillar strategy
  - Increase in digital COGS due to increases in digital revenue

Total Cash Costs<sup>(1)</sup>



Optimizing operating structure by investing in the digital future & managing the legacy business

<sup>(1)</sup> Adjusted EBITDA and Cash Costs are non-GAAP financial measures. See appendix.

# DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION: REQUIRED INVESTMENTS

LEE IS MAKING VALUE-ADDED INVESTMENTS TO DRIVE ITS DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

## TALENT AND TEAM

- Data and technology team with AI expertise
- Brand development and strategic marketing experts
- User experience experts
- Digital product development talent
- Acquisition and retention talent Top talent focused on digital subscriber acquisition and retention
- Executive producers to curate custom video content
- Digital advertising agency talent
- Digital advertising vertical category management experts

## SYSTEMS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

- Data lake technology to store customer data
- Demographic and propensity scoring software
- Consolidated ID technology for subscription access, ad targeting, frequency capping & content recommendations
- Data visualization tools for our newsrooms to drive reader engagement
- Machine learning technology to personalize experiences for our readers
- Business intelligence & visualization tools
- Marketing insight technology
- Front end ad tech that drives efficiencies and improves ARPU

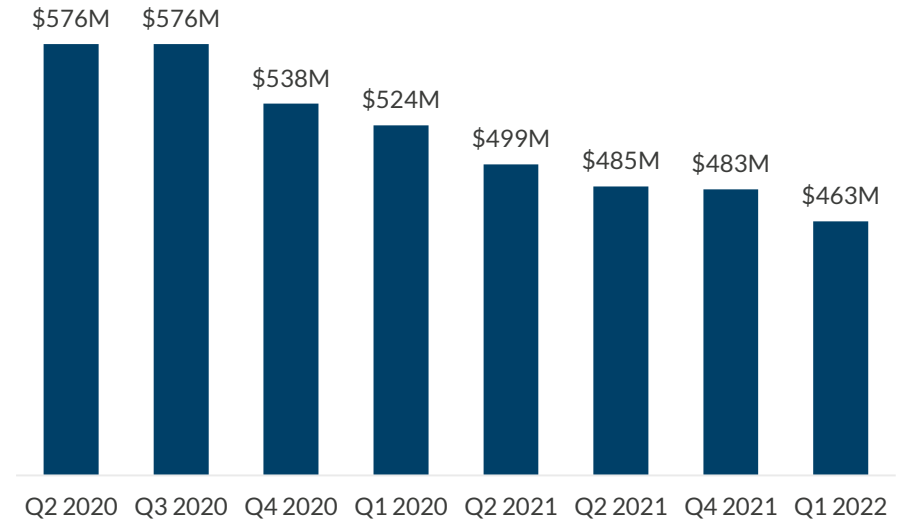
**\$15M of incremental investments expected in FY22**



# DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION FIVE YEAR OUTLOOK: STRENGTHENED BALANCE SHEET

- \$20M in debt reduction in Q1 2022 and \$113M since refinancing in March 2020
- Favorable credit agreement with Berkshire Hathaway
  - 25-year runway w/ no breakage costs or prepayment penalties
  - Fixed annual interest rate, no financial performance covenants and no fixed amortization
- Pension plans now **frozen** and **fully funded** in the aggregate and not expecting any material pension contributions in 2022
- Asset sales of \$25M over the last two years and targeting \$20-30M in 2022. \$14M already closed in Q1

## Significant Debt Reduction (Gross Debt)



Achieve long-term leverage target of under 2.5x in five years





# **FIVE YEAR OUTLOOK AND METRICS TO TRACK LEE'S DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION**



# DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION: FIVE-YEAR OUTLOOK

	2021	2022	2026
Digital Only Subscribers	402,000	495,000	900,000
YoY	65%	23%	5 YEAR CAGR 17%
Digital Only Subscription Revenue	\$28M	\$33M	\$100M
YoY	46%	18%	5 YEAR CAGR 29%
Digital Advertising and Marketing Services Revenue	\$141M	\$175M	\$310M
YoY	7%	24%	5 YEAR CAGR 17%
<b>Total Digital Revenue (including other digital services)</b>	<b>\$189M</b>	<b>\$230M</b>	<b>\$435M</b>



# LEE INVESTMENT THESIS

WE BELIEVE OUR THREE PILLAR DIGITAL GROWTH STRATEGY WILL CREATE SUBSTANTIAL VALUE:



## Execute Three Pillar Digital Growth Strategy

Generate long-term sustainable digital revenue growth, margin expansion and strong free cash flow



## Continued Debt Reduction & Strengthened Balance Sheet

Expect to reach <2.5x leverage target within five years



## Increased Shareholder Value

Operating cash flow and profits are enhanced

Debt reduction drives shareholder value

Multiple expansion fueled by increased recurring, high-margin digital revenue





# RECONCILIATION OF NON-GAAP FINANCIAL MEASURES

(Millions of Dollars)	Q1 FY2022
Net Income (loss)	13
<b>Adjusted to exclude</b>	
Income tax expense	5
Non-operating expenses, net	7
Equity in earnings of TNI and MNI	(2)
Loss (gain) on sale of assets and other, net	(12)
Depreciation and amortization	10
Restructuring costs and other	3
Stock compensation	0
<b>Add</b>	
Ownership share of TNI and MNI EBITDA (50%)	2
<b>Adjusted EBITDA</b>	<b>26</b>

**Adjusted EBITDA** is a non-GAAP financial performance measure that enhances financial statement users overall understanding of the operating performance of the Company. The measure isolates unusual, infrequent or non-cash transactions from the operating performance of the business. This allows users to easily compare operating performance among various fiscal periods and how management measures the performance of the business. This measure also provides users with a benchmark that can be used when forecasting future operating performance of the Company that excludes unusual, nonrecurring or one time transactions. Adjusted EBITDA is a component of the calculation used by stockholders and analysts to determine the value of our business when using the market approach, which applies a market multiple to financial metrics. It is also a measure used to calculate the leverage ratio of the Company, which is a key financial ratio monitored and used by the Company and its investors. Adjusted EBITDA is defined as net income (loss), plus non-operating expenses, income tax expense, depreciation and amortization, assets loss (gain) on sales, impairments and other, restructuring costs and other, stock compensation and our 50% share of EBITDA from TNI and MNI, minus equity in earnings of TNI and MNI.

**Total Digital Revenue** – Total Digital Revenue in the prior year was reclassified to conform to the current year presentation. Total Digital Revenue is defined as digital advertising and marketing services revenue (including Amplified), digital-only subscription revenue and digital services revenue. Previously other digital subscription revenue was included. The reclassification was made to conform with a similar metric of the Company's peers. All periods have been restated for the reclassification.



# RECONCILIATION OF NON-GAAP FINANCIAL MEASURES

(Millions of Dollars)	Q1 FY2022	FY2021
<b>Operating Expenses</b>	179	745
<b>Adjusted to exclude</b>		
Depreciation and amortization	10	44
Assets loss (gain) on sale of assets and other, net	(12)	8
Restructuring costs and other	3	7
<b>Cash Costs</b>	178	686

Cash Costs is a non-GAAP financial performance measure represent a non-GAAP financial performance measure of operating expenses which are measured on an accrual basis and settled in cash. This measure is useful to investors in understanding the components of the Company's cash-settled operating costs. Periodically, the Company provides forward-looking guidance of Cash Costs, which can be used by financial statement users to assess the Company's ability to manage and control its operating cost structure. Cash Costs are defined as compensation, newsprint and ink and other operating expenses. Depreciation and amortization, assets loss (gain) on sales, impairments and other, other non-cash operating expenses and other expenses are excluded. Cash Costs also exclude restructuring costs and other, which are typically paid in cash.



### **Important Additional information**

The Company has filed a definitive proxy statement and form of WHITE proxy card with the SEC with respect to the Company's 2022 Annual Meeting of Shareholders. The Company's shareholders are strongly encouraged to read the Definitive Proxy Statement, the accompanying WHITE proxy card and other documents filed with the SEC carefully in their entirety because they will contain important information. The Company's shareholders will be able to obtain the Definitive Proxy Statement, any amendments or supplements to the Definitive Proxy Statement and other documents filed by the Company with the SEC free of charge at the SEC's website at [www.sec.gov](http://www.sec.gov). Copies will also be available free of charge at the Company's website at [www.lee.net](http://www.lee.net).

### **Certain Information Regarding Participants**

The Company, its directors and certain of its executive officers are participants in the solicitation of proxies from the Company's shareholders in connection with the matters to be considered at the Company's 2022 Annual Meeting of Shareholders. Information about the Company's directors and executive officers is available in the Definitive Proxy Statement filed with the SEC on January 24, 2022, and, with respect to directors and executive officers appointed following such date, will be available in certain of the Company's other SEC filings made subsequent to the date of the Definitive Proxy Statement. To the extent holdings of the Company's securities by such directors or executive officers have changed since the amounts printed in the Definitive Proxy Statement, such changes have been or will be reflected on Statements of Changes in Beneficial Ownership on Form 4 filed with the SEC.

