Radio Television Digital News Association
RTDNA.org

2018 RTDNA/Hofstra University Newsroom Survey
Digital & Tech

2018 Newsroom Digital Media & Technology Report

Highlights:

- More TV and radio stations are streaming more content, but newsrooms are becoming more strategic, sharing digital and social media content on fewer, proven platforms.
- Growth of Facebook Live is slowing and Twitter use among TV newsrooms is down.
- Social media drives a significant portion of traffic to TV and radio websites, which are growing in reach.
- Drone use is up significantly for local TV newsrooms

Contents:

- What’s new in digital for TV
  - TV websites
  - TV social media use
  - TV mobile & apps
  - TV station technology

- What’s new in digital for Radio
  - Radio websites
  - Radio social media use
  - Radio mobile & apps

What’s new in digital for TV

What are local TV stations doing new on the digital front? Well over 200 TV news directors answered that question in the latest RTDNA/Hofstra University Survey, with 76.9% of TV news directors saying they were doing something new digitally.

At the top of the list, 29.8% are trying new things with streaming, primarily via Facebook Live. Local stations are streaming newscasts, some scheduling Facebook Live before or during newscasts. Some are streaming events or during coverage of news stories. A couple of news directors mentioned Facebook newscasts, and while most talked about streaming more via Facebook Live, one noted doing less on streaming on Facebook rather than the station website.

In their own words:

- Concentrated focus on streaming live video on website and Facebook
- Coverage of live events via Facebook Live multiple times a day
- Facebook exclusive newscasts and special projects
- Facebook Lives, news nuggets (short story synopsis aired before newscast)
- Facebook Live during our newscasts
- Live, extended digital only news coverage (not newscasts)
- Long form coverage of live events via social media
- More assertive with breaking news reports on Facebook Live and broadcast of special event coverage - live streaming
- Moving away from using Facebook Live in favor of streaming content on our own properties
- OTT newscast, anchored live stream/Facebook Lives
- TVU to Facebook Live
21.8% of news directors mentioned trying something new in strategy and management in the past year. That included things like having everyone in the newsroom contribute to the digital side every day, with some monitoring that activity and its success (or not). Some stations are assigning digital producers to each reporter; differing content approaches for each platform; establishing a daily digital coverage plan; merging the assignment desk with the digital team; better tracking of social media postings; moving to a digital first approach; and even, in one case, to a social media first approach.

In their own words:

- 20 push notices per day
- A tease strategy using digital to drive to broadcast.
- Added a Facebook Live strategy
- Asking each person in the newsroom to contribute to our station's digital platforms in some capacity
- Assigning digital producers to individual reporters
- Created a new "digital newsroom" with 24/7 coverage
- Creating more specialty pages for specific big stories and/or news department projects
- Daily digital assignments plan
- On digital it is as much about furthering the personalities as it is furthering the brand
- Hired a multimedia content manager to integrate TV/Digital more strongly
- Focus on social media and 100 percent participation
- Involving entire newsroom in contributing
- Merged assignment desk and digital producers to one work group
- Not giving our content away on Facebook, but using Facebook to draw people to our website
- Posting completed stories before the actual newscast airing
- Putting a news manager in the role of Multiplatform Content Manager, running editorial efforts for both digital and television
- Set minimums for meaningful social media posting for each newsroom employee … measure those interactions
- Setting different digital deadlines for stories … not expecting the same digital requirement/letting story dictate the way we deliver it on our digital platform
- Started tracking analytics of both our website and our social media accounts
- Trained more team members to publish directly to the website in conjunction with our new "beat" system
- We dramatically increased digital staff and reorganized assignment desk in a digital first workflow we call the Bridge
- We instituted a web first mindset (long overdue) and have required EVERYONE to contribute digital content
- We launched a social first campaign that includes social responsibilities for everyone in the newsroom … we are still very active on our site, but our first goal is to get information to on social before going back and updating our site … it has paid gigantic engagement dividends
- We've put up a social news desk monitor in our newsroom to track our digital/social content and the competition's content
- Cross-training
- Focused training on digital elements, including seminars for news, weather and sports

16.4% of news directors have been focusing on digital content (although some of the strategy issues clearly involved content). Many news directors’ comments referenced digital-only content, special topics just on digital, digital-only newscasts, mini-newscasts, more daily specialty content, polls, contests, changes in posting, more user-generated content and more web-only local postings. One news director noted they stopped posting packages and made the content more digital-friendly.

In their own words:
Digital & Tech

- Added a specific digital effort focused on a rejuvenated downtown area (economic redevelopment)
- Adding more newscasts and special interviews to web ... more local sports content too
- Create specific content for digital only and adding live mini-newscasts
- Creating content specific to the platform we are posting on
- Greatly expanded “digital only” and “digital first” content
- In house program for feeding video and writing web stories in same program
- Stopped posting packages - more social videos
- Unique local stories that did not appear on the TV broadcast
- Unique web only content including unique web reporting
- We have started to break big stories down into several smaller bite-sized stories, pushing those out as individual elements as well as producing the long-form pieces ... we also have become more consistent in producing “snackable” videos for our social platforms
- Web extra content on stories and a focus on investigative

Just behind, at 13.8%, came using new platforms, apps and tools (not including Facebook). In order of mentions: OTT, including Roku and Amazon Alexa; Twitter; YouTube; Instagram; Snapchat; Burst; Banjo; CrowdTangle; Videolicious; 360 video. More on local TV stations’ use of new social media platforms below.

In their own words:
- Adding CrowdTangle to enhance social media monitoring and engagement efforts
- Banjo social media aggregator
- Expanded into OTT platforms including Roku and Amazon Echo/Alexa
- Instagram stories, social videos, launching social commerce strategy, native advertising, social GIF content strategy for all events and big coverage items
- Newscasts for the Amazon Echo, hourly news briefs on-line
- Started using YouTube for videos
- Videolicious reports, hanging text videos, live drone video, 360 video
- We launched a YouTube channel and developed a YouTube strategy; began producing 360 digital storytelling projects
- Added emphasis to Instagram stories and added Snapchat channel

8.4% of news directors report trying something new with push alerts and apps in the past year.

4% made adjustments to staffing on the digital side, mostly increasing staffing, but also some rearranging and more oversight. Find more on digital components of news teams in the Newsroom Staffing Report.

In their own words:
- Added a fourth full time digital producer
- Added a web content producer to focus on the website and social media
- Converted a news position into full-time digital responsibilities
- Hired a new Digital EP

A few stations also reported trying new things with teases and promotion, moving people from social media to online or on air, technical upgrades, the use of native advertising and integrating drone video and online.
Local TV Websites

It has been 7 years since the last time a TV station reported having no website. As stations’ websites have matured, fewer have reported significant website changes. This year, just over 85% said no when asked if their stations had “added or eliminated anything meaningful” from the station website in the past year.

So what did the other 15% change? The list broke down into three main areas: Content, internal organization and technical changes.

Nearly half (48.6%) noted new content: Newscasts, weathercasts, traffic, obituaries, investigative, more video, hyperlocal bloggers, geo-specific web pages, timelines and infograms. In their own words:

- Content from local bloggers to add hyper local content
- Friday Featured Photo and Featured Images for look and community involvement
- Homepage video player is gone - no one was watching it
- Unique web only content
- We added a digital reporter who turns original long form stories
- We added local obituaries ... it now generates more than 750,000 page views per month
- We’re adding much more video to our website ... original, aggregated, feed, and raw
- We’ve added special sections, more web exclusive content and station promotion banners

37.8% mentioned internal organizational issues: More or fewer people working on the site, cutting seldom-used elements or pages and reorganizing material. In their own words:

- Added additional resources to work on the web/social media accounts
- Hired two experienced digital producers which improved the digital journalism and user engagement
- Reduced number of pages. Concentrate on super-serving fewer pages
- Staffing, analytics tools
- We eliminated pages with little or no traffic or sampling

13.5% were technical changes: New websites, new CMS (which didn’t always go well), new equipment to automate posting. In their own words:

- Geo specific web pages
- New equipment to manage multiple platforms at one time
- To get more traffic, the first story that pops up on the app is the top local story ... but after that, it scrolls to the best performing stories throughout our group, which may or may not be local
- Use of timelines and infograms
- We lost 15 years of archived stories with a transition to a new CMS
- We recently revamped the overall flow and look of our website - much easier to navigate and more visually appealing - less cluttered

Web content

Fewer stations almost across the board are sharing web-only content this year, but the percentage of web content that is user-generated has not changed since last year.
Web traffic

Overall, the latest figures represent significant increases in both page views and unique visitors for TV news websites. Page views are up nearly a million and a half, and unique visitors are about 50%. Most markets saw increases in web traffic, although the biggest jumps came in top 25 markets. As usual, the bigger the market and the bigger the staff, the more page views and unique visitors. Note that almost half of TV news directors (49.2%) said they didn’t know their web traffic numbers.

![TV Station Monthly Web Traffic By Market](chart)

A new question on this year’s survey asked about the percent of station web traffic that came from social media, which stations overall report at about 50%. There’s a minor trend for an increase in the percentage of web traffic from social media as market size and staff size fall, but it’s not consistent, and the smallest staff size (1 to 10 people) is much lower in social media referrals than all the others.

![TV Station Web Traffic from Social Media](chart)
Social media does drive traffic to TV stations’ websites. How much are stations using social media, and for what other aims?

For the first time, the survey asked about the number of social media engagements for each station in the most recent month. Interestingly, there was actually a closer relationship between number of engagements and staff size than market size. Mostly, the bigger the staff, the more engagements. Overall, Fox affiliates led the category, followed by NBC, CBS and then ABC. Stations in the West came out on top, followed by the South, Midwest, and the Northeast lagging behind.
Radio Television Digital News Association

2018 RTDNA/Hofstra University Newsroom Survey

Digital & Tech

Almost 200 news directors shared more about what they’ve been doing this past year with social media, with 72.2% of news directors reporting they were doing something new this year.

That’s down 13 points from last year, but up 5 from the year before. 70% of news directors or higher in nearly every station type except the smallest newsrooms (1 to 10 people) at 47.6% and Fox affiliates at 40% reported experimenting in social media.

So what’s new? There are significant changes from a year ago. Then, it was all about Facebook Live, with more than 55% of news directors including using the platform in their answer. Facebook Live still takes top honors, but it’s down to 40.1% who talked about Facebook Live or increasing streaming. In their own words:

- We’re doing more Facebook Live which is a great recruiter for our on air
- Facebook Live only content and discussions
- More strategic Facebook Lives, including daily sports and streaming some specials
- More unique content and Facebook Lives with talent and guests
- Utilizing Facebook Live on a consistent basis has boosted social growth

Many more news directors report making strategic moves in using social media, doubling last year’s 16.3% to this year’s 33.3%. Strategic efforts took many of forms, including technical, responding/connecting back with viewers, more staff and more and better training, innovation and experimentation, getting more people in the newsroom involved and much more tracking of results.

In their own words:

- Better engagement, better training, more tools, more knowledge, more execution
- Dedicated a digital and social media EP to focus on innovating in that space
- Deep dives with talent to significantly increase their engagement
- Doing more social listening and gathering story ideas from comments, connecting with followers on social media
- Focus on engagements not follower counts
- Focused more on branding than clicks
- Increase engagement and push talent to share and engage
- Making sure we respond to questions, engage
- Setting specific engagement metrics for talent, one-on-one training with talent
- Social listening – dedicated one person each shift
- Strategic scheduling for social media posts
- We’ve been experimenting with groups … creating groups tied to specific content we’re producing
- Mapping the day for digital and on air
- Refining content to quality over quantity

Next, at 11.9% each, came more social media posting and posting more places.

Facebook

The survey didn’t ask whether the TV station had a Facebook page. It’s been four years since even one station said it didn’t have a Facebook page. Every TV station uses Facebook; the
question is how and to what end. As we’ve seen, Facebook Live use remains strong, but its growth has leveled.

What else are stations trying on Facebook? Here’s a sampling of responses:

- News updates and live reports
- Post stories to link back to homepage
- Helping drive traffic to web and TV
- Growing audience and loyalty as well as promoting
- Part of our new social media first strategy
- Posting video, articles, links, live reporting, engagement with viewers/users
- To let people know what’s happening now and what is expected to happen later
- To drive brand awareness of our station, which is #2 in market share and to promote news content our audience finds valuable
- Promote, post stories, ask for tips, gather news

Twitter

It looks like we’re seeing a real change in the use of Twitter by TV stations. Last year, the numbers stabilized and even edged down just slightly. This year, there’s an 18 point drop in the percentage of stations reporting using Twitter “constantly,” a 12 point jump in those who use it “daily,” a 4 point jump (doubling) for periodic use and an increase of 1.5 in stations who report not using Twitter at all.

That shift was across the board except for the market 26 to 50 group, which held steady. Every other group dropped, although it was most pronounced in the Midwest. More and more stations may be deciding that Twitter is a better place to learn about news than to broadcast it.
More social media platforms and programs

This is the third year that the survey has asked news directors what platforms they use – beyond Facebook and Twitter as well as how they use those platforms. More than 230 news directors answered the question – the highest response to this question ever.
At 63.4%, **Instagram** follows Facebook and Twitter in use by TV newsrooms, primarily to showcase visual stories. Again, a sampling of why … in their own words:

- Photos across DMA
- To reach the younger audiences
- Weather photos and forecasts
- Pretty pics
- We use it to give a behind-the-scenes look
- Content showcase, more visual stories
- Sharing photos from stories and viewer pics
- Promotions

Well back, in third place at 23.7% is **Snapchat**:

- For sports primarily and outdoor events
- Breaking news, story development through the day

And well behind that, **YouTube** at 6.9%:

- Posting broadcast and digital only videos

2.2% of news directors report that their stations use **Pinterest**, 1.3% use **Social News Desk**, and less than 1% each use **Banjo**, **Burst** (for UGC submissions), **Reddit**, **Nextdoor**, and **TweetDeck** (to monitor news and news staff to maximize content and content sharing).

Two years ago, stations listed 22 programs and applications used along with Facebook and Twitter. Last year, that list dropped to 12, and this year it’s down to 10, establishing a trend.

And although more news directors answered this question than in previous years, use of almost all the platforms and apps except Facebook were down. Instagram fell from 82.4% to 63.4%. Snapchat use dropped from 34.1% to 23.7%. Pinterest fell from 8% to 2.2%. Only YouTube use increased, from 4.5% to 6.9%.

**Local TV and Mobile**

Fewer TV news directors reported trying something new in mobile this year, down 10 points compared to a year ago to 58.2%. Market size made no difference. The smallest newsrooms, as usual, were least likely to have done something, but all the other newsroom sizes were similar. Fox affiliates and other commercial stations were less likely to report trying something in mobile than ABC, CBS and NBC stations, and stations in the Midwest were well behind the others.

Of those who did experiment in mobile, more than a hundred news directors noted what they have been working on.

At 49.2%, almost half of developments in mobile concerned apps. Improved, enhanced, faster, redesigned and more user-friendly apps led the charge. Stations added new weather apps and a few launched new news or breaking news apps. Three news directors noted that they consolidated apps, in all three cases, cutting a separate weather app in favor of a combined news/weather app. In their own words:

- “App extra” elements
- App-only content pushed from broadcast
- Full redesign of our weather app to make it more user-friendly
Digital & Tech

- Positioning our weather app as life-saving information ... basically replacing the old weather alert radios with our app and alerts
- Refreshed mobile app and push alert notification system
- Revamped/redesigned our apps
- Upgraded our weather system, including an update to our weather app, to allow us to post more weather videos and create more interaction
- We were official weather app of the State Fair

In a distant second place, at 15.3%, came stations trying new things with streaming and live coverage, mostly via Facebook Live, including special reports, newscasts, news events, weather events. In their own words:

- Facebook Live for breaking news and promotion of news content
- Increased live stream of live events
- Live-streaming breaking weather coverage via Facebook Live
- More live news coverage, promoting "on your phone"

13.6% of stations report working on push alerts: More, mostly, but also better, more targeted and better writing for alerts. In their own words:

- "Instant gratification" push alerts ... added direct submission for user generated content
- Our push alerts are much faster now
- Push alerts with pictures
- Push notifications instead of texts
- Restructuring our writing to appeal to mobile audience, by making it more easily digestible
- Specialized, specific alerts
- Way more push notifications, embedding links in articles

10.2% of stations are working on mobile strategy, including reworking websites to make them more mobile friendly or oriented and better strategizing push alerts and promotion. In their own words:

- Developed a specific push alert strategy for mobile
- Implementing a true, cohesive social strategy specifically directed toward the mobile experience
- We re-worked our mobile website to encourage more click-through
- We refined our push strategy in regard to what to push and what not to push

Next, at 5.1% came content changes for mobile. Mostly, that meant more or better, including “digital shorts.” One news director indicated adding more national and international news content. In their own words:

- Deeper enterprise journalism
- Digital shorts
- Mobile only content each week
- More embedded content to show up on mobile platforms
- People can now enter their own storm cancellations and share photos to be aired
- Short-form storytelling
- We began adding more content and promoting it more

3.4% tried new mobile software, including for user-generated content, 360 video and using Megaphone for mobile voting.
Another 3.2% reported miscellaneous mobile changes, including development, design and technical upgrades.

**Apps**

The percentage of TV stations with apps stands at 93.3%, down two and a half percentage points from a year ago. Almost all stations without apps were the smallest newsrooms (1 to 10 news staffers), although one station with more than 51 news people reported having no app.

Stations report an average and median of 2 apps each, representing no change from the past 2 years. The top station had 13 apps, but every market size had stations with 4 or more apps. Stations in the South generally reported higher app use, and stations in the West lagged a bit behind.

The percentage of stations that charged for apps increased from 4.4% last year to 6.8% this year, just over the peak of 6% from three years ago. All stations that charge for apps are in top 100 markets.

**TV Technology Trends**

**TV Drone Use Soars**

The number of local TV newsrooms reporting owning a drone jumped by 25 points overall and by nearly 40 points in the top 25 markets, indicating that nearly all stations which reported planning to buy or even considering a drone purchase a year ago have now done so.

**Does the TV station have a drone?**

Fox and CBS affiliates are running ahead of ABC and NBC stations in drone use and well ahead of other commercial stations. Drone ownership in the Midwest runs about 10 points higher than elsewhere.
### Local TV Station Drone Use by Market

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Market</th>
<th>Already own</th>
<th>Planning to buy</th>
<th>Considering</th>
<th>Lease/arrange for one as needed</th>
<th>Only use drone footage from others</th>
<th>No, not involved with drones</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>151+</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101 – 150</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 – 100</td>
<td>45.0%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 – 50</td>
<td>53.7%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 – 25</td>
<td>63.4%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Local TV Station Drone Use by Staff Size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff Size</th>
<th>Already own</th>
<th>Planning to buy</th>
<th>Considering</th>
<th>Lease/arrange for one as needed</th>
<th>Only use drone footage from others</th>
<th>No, not involved with drones</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 – 10</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 – 20</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 – 30</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>28.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 – 50</td>
<td>54.4%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51+</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Live Over Cellular Wins Live Technology

With more stations broadcasting live more often across various platforms, a new question this year asked what technology stations most often use to go live.

The overwhelming first choice was IP Video at 85.4% of stations, and it was second choice for nearly all others. IP Video was the first choice for every market size, every network affiliation, every staff size except the smallest newsrooms (where mobile phone won), and every region, although the percentage was lower in the West than elsewhere. Only 4.5% of news directors reported not using IP Video.

ENG is the first choice for going live at just 7.3% of stations. ENG was most common in markets 26 to 50, the largest newsrooms, at NBC affiliates and in the West. ENG was second choice at 44.5% of stations but not used at all at 19% of stations.

Streaming via mobile phone came in third place at first place for 6.9% of stations and second choice at 30.8%. It was the top choice in the smallest newsrooms (53.8%) and came in first at 17.2% of the second smallest newsrooms (11 to 20 people) and at 15.8% of non-network affiliated commercial stations.

Just 0.4% of stations selected SNG as the top choice for live broadcasting, and SNG wasn’t used at all at nearly a quarter of newsrooms. It was second choice at 4.9% and third choice at 30.4% of stations.

What’s new in digital for radio

In the latest RTDNA/Hofstra University Survey, a majority of radio stations (51.8%) said they were doing nothing significantly new digitally. The percentage saying they started something important online fell 7 points to 48.2%.

Non-commercial stations were 50% more likely than commercial stations to report doing something new. Staff size made a significant difference, with the percentages reporting digital changes increasingly steadily as the number of full time news people rose. Recall, the median
Radio newsroom staff size is just one. The biggest markets were well out in front in digital innovation, and the very smallest markets well behind.

About a hundred radio news directors and general managers shared more about what they’re working on digitally, the wide-ranging list encompassing 8 categories: Content, streaming, social media, strategy, visuals, websites, technical and other.

The largest portion, 38.4%, report focusing on digital content: More, better, special topics, different approaches. In their own words:

- Adding streaming newscasts and features
- Consistent web and social posts
- Extended and more in-depth web only newscasts
- Improved quality of news content
- In addition to the investigative stories, we have also added three separate Facebook Live shows
- Increased posting of local stories and on-demand audio/podcasts
- Keeping news updated
- More podcasts and video
- More stories, better stories
- Online audio election guide
- Organized and executed Virginia gubernatorial debate
- Posting audio of daily news summary (also podcast)
- Posting more information and pictures/video
- Significantly increased graphic visuals to share data journalism
- Slide shows
- Started high school athletics coverage on air, online and new social media

15.2% indicate doing more streaming – in general or, most often, via Facebook Live. In their own words:

- Echo/Google streaming of station
- Added more live streams
- Facebook webcasting live at varying times
- Using Facebook Live to broadcast and record live shows

13.1% indicate working more on social media. In their own words:

- Adding pictures and tying the website to Twitter and Facebook
- Increased news and resources on social media
- Melded website with Facebook and Twitter

10.1% say they’re focusing on digital strategy, including new approaches, new development and redesigns. In their own words:

- Complete overhaul of website and social media
- Hired a marketing manager to oversee social media/website development
- Organizing content internally, holding weekly news meetings

8.1% have increased visual components, either still or video.
At 7.1% came websites. These radio managers said that they redesigned the website, and one simply noted that they finally got one.

Other answers were reported by 5.1% of radio stations, including other digital developments from contests and advertising to email newsletters.

3% report technical upgrades, particularly new platform or app use or even 360 video.

**Local Radio Websites**

It’s been 7 years since the last time a local TV station didn’t have a website, but, while more radio stations have websites this year, radio web presence is not yet 100%.

All of the stations without web sites were commercial stations, all in small and medium markets, and in the Northeast or West. None were in local station groups of 3 or more stations.

**Web sites with local news**

While all TV stations that run local news post that local news on the web, that’s still not the case with radio. Radio numbers, which had increased two and a half points last year, gave up two of those points this year. The only station type for which 100% report posting local news online was radio newsrooms with full time staffs of 10 or more.

80.9% of stations said no when asked if they had, within the last year, “added or eliminated anything meaningful” from the station website.

So what did the other 19% do that was new and different?

A third of those said they were either adding local news or more and/or better local news. After that came sales, advertising, contests and swap shops. Then streaming and new or better links. A couple added blogs or podcasts, and a couple cut back on content.

**Web-only content**

11% fewer stations reported created web-only content this year than last.
All station types reported similar shifts, but the decline increased as market size decreased. Commercial stations were 4 points more likely to create unique web content than non-commercial ones, but that’s half the margin from last year.

**User-generated web content**

Radio stations used about 4 points more user-generated content on their websites this year than last, reversing the previous year’s two and a half point drop. Again this year, the smaller the market, the higher the percentage of user-generated content.

**Web traffic**

Radio station web traffic has historically been reported by too few news directors and general managers to break down beyond an overall figure. While 72.5% still say they do not know their web traffic data, enough radio managers reported data to show some trends.

Page views have increased and radio stations report a huge gain in unique visitors – up from just 53,400 a year ago. Generally, the bigger the group of local stations, the more traffic the website has.

Who in radio newsrooms contributes to digital content? Take a look at the [Newsroom Staffing Report](#).
New this year, respondents were asked about the percent of station web traffic that came from social media.

**Major markets are those with 1 million or more potential listeners. Large markets are from 250,000 to 1 million. Medium markets are 50,000 to 250,000. Small markets are fewer than 50,000.**

---

### Radio Station Web Traffic from Social Media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

### Radio Web Traffic from Social Media by Market

- **Major**: 41.3% (Average), 22% (Minimum), 80% (Maximum)
- **Large**: 29.7% (Average), 23% (Minimum), 80% (Maximum)
- **Medium**: 41.8% (Average), 40% (Minimum), 100% (Maximum)
- **Small**: 32.1% (Average), 25% (Minimum), 85% (Maximum)

---

### Social Media in Radio Newsrooms

The latest RTDNA/Hofstra University Survey found a fair amount of radio station activity with social media, although not nearly as much as in TV. New efforts in social media in radio edged up by two points to 43.4% of stations reporting new initiatives. Stations with the biggest staffs, in the largest markets, and non-commercial stations led the way in social media changes.
The new social media activities broke down into three main categories: Content, strategy/management and adding platforms.

Content made up 59.5% of the mentions by those who indicated ramping up digital efforts. Facebook Live led the way in this category with more and better posting close behind. In their own words:

- Added a news only Twitter account
- Adding captions to Facebook news posts
- Daily Facebook Live
- Engaging shows with social media
- Increased news and resources on social media
- Daily live Facebook broadcast during morning drive
- More active reporting on Facebook
- Our anchors do a Facebook Live newscast ... very popular!
- Regular Facebook Live videos
- Story-telling through use of pictures
- Streaming community forums to get questions from digital viewers
- Trying to add more news content more often

At about half that, at 27%, reported focusing on social media strategy and management: Getting involved in social media, changing strategy, establishing policies, hiring people. In their own words:

- Actually posting
- Approved revision of design
- Being consistent with something daily posted
- Driving more stories produced by our newsroom to Facebook
- Getting promotions staff involved with our social media
- Hired a social media specialist
- Linking Facebook and Twitter to our website
- Paying more attention to it
- Pushing ahead to do it every day
- Working hard to not lay content directly on social media -- but tease it back to our website or air products

At 13.5% came trying new platforms, including Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat.

A new question in this year’s survey asked about a station’s number of engagements in social media.

Commercial and non-commercial stations averaged almost exactly the same, but the median (typical) number of engagements for commercial stations was three times higher than non-
commercial stations. The highest engagement numbers went to the biggest stations with the biggest station groups.

**Major markets are those with 1 million or more potential listeners. Large markets are from 250,000 to 1 million. Medium markets are 50,000 to 250,000. Small markets are fewer than 50,000.**

**Facebook**  
Radio use of Facebook remained just about the same, with the proportion of radio stations reporting not using Facebook actually edging up by 0.2. Use of Facebook was less likely in the Northeast and the West.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Radio Stations &amp; Newsrooms on Facebook</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Twitter**  
This past year showed a small increase in the use of Twitter by radio stations. The percentage using Twitter at all rose by 4 points, although the number reporting using it “constantly” was virtually unchanged. The frequency of Twitter use rose in major and small markets but dropped in large and medium markets.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How often Radio Newsrooms use Twitter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-commercial</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Constantly - Daily - Periodically - None
What do stations use Facebook and/or Twitter for? In their own words:

- Posting stories and traffic updates
- Cross promote what is on our website and on air
- For breaking news
- We post news stories, community information, and community events
- Facebook - general content, user interaction ... Twitter – updates

Other social media

In radio, 57.7% of news directors and general managers said they used no social media platforms other than Facebook and Twitter. Generally, as market size decreased, so did the use of other social media platforms. Non-commercial stations were almost twice as likely to use other platforms as commercial stations.

Of the relatively small number who actually use social media platforms beyond Facebook and Twitter, Instagram was the easy winner at 54% of all mentions. In their own words:

- Instagram - producers generate content
- Recaps and previews
- Remotes, DJ shifts
- To promote upcoming content

A distant second, 14% of radio stations report using Snapchat.

At 7%, a tie between YouTube and Soundcloud. In their own words:

- YouTube - post videos and livestream events
- YouTube for posting music montage video shows and such
- SoundCloud for posting interviews
- SoundCloud to post our audio
- Sound Cloud - Ag podcasts

Finally, a few stations mentioned other platforms including Pinterest, Reddit, LinkedIn, Tumblr and Tweetdeck. In their own words:

- Reddit - news sourcing
- We use Tweetdeck as a sort of wire service -- columns of carefully curated accounts broken out by region and always up on a dedicated monitor at the producers' desks

Remember that those are percentages of the relatively small group who listed platforms they were using other than Facebook and Twitter.

Local Radio and Mobile

Almost three-quarters (71.3%) of radio news directors and general managers said they did nothing new in mobile in the last year. That’s up a surprising 7 points from a year ago. As with a year ago, the only station type passing the 50 percentile mark were stations in major markets of 1 million or more.

Of the 28.7% who did report new mobile initiatives, three areas cover two-thirds of the answers: Mobile apps, streaming and mobile-friendly websites. At 28.8% came adding or redesigning apps, which were also most reported, a year ago, but by a much larger margin this year. In their own words:
Digital & Tech

- Adding audio local news stories to NPR One app - enables podcast downloads
- Making sure the app maintains high quality audio
- New app provider with more interactive features
- Pushing our streaming via apps, tune in and Alexa by Amazon
- We added an app for all high school sports

At 23.1% came streaming. Some noted newscasts, some stories, some noted video. A few noted Facebook Live, and a few public stations noted NPR One. In their own words:
  - New livestream software
  - Redesign so website more responsive, enhanced streaming, added Alexa skills

At 13.5% came a new or improved mobile web interface. In their own words:
  - Better use of the descriptive function of the mobile display
  - De-cluttered, made navigating simpler
  - Made our site mobile friendly
  - New mobile first website

A few others garnered one or two mentions: contests, Alexa, better integration with social media, and a few noted sales or (for public stations) donation opportunities.

Apps

The percentage of radio stations with apps edged up about 2 points to 56.2%, still leaving a high proportion with no apps. The average station had 0.9 apps, and the median was 1. The average number actually dropped slightly. Non-commercial stations are much more likely to have an app (65.9% versus 53%), but commercial stations have more apps (average 1 versus 0.7).

The bigger the staff, the more stations in a group and the bigger the market size, the more likely that a station has an app. Stations in the South and Midwest were more likely to have an app. Stations in the smallest markets had fewer apps. The maximum number of apps was 6 at a commercial radio station. Non-commercial stations peaked at 3. No radio stations reported charging for apps.

About the Survey

The RTDNA/Hofstra University Survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2017 among all 1,683 operating, non-satellite television stations and a random sample of 3,542 radio stations. Valid responses came from 1,333 television stations (79.2%) and 415 radio news directors and general managers representing 1,110 radio stations. Some data sets (e.g. the number of TV stations originating local news, getting it from others and women TV news directors) are based on a complete census and are not projected from a smaller sample.

About Bob

Bob Papper is Emeritus Distinguished Professor of Journalism at Hofstra University and has worked extensively in radio and TV news. This research was supported by the Lawrence Herbert School of Communication at Hofstra University and the Radio Television Digital News Association.