

An introductory note, if you will. 2019 marks my 25th year conducting the RTDNA (before that, RTNDA) Annual Survey. First at Ball State University and now at Hofstra University. It has been my privilege to do this, and I want to thank RTDNA, Ball State and Hofstra for the support and opportunity to keep this going. Most of all, I want to thank all of you who spend what I know is way too much time poring over the way too many questions that I ask on this survey. Thank you.
- Bob Papper

What's Going On with Radio and Social Media by Bob Papper

The latest RTDNA/Hofstra University Survey found a small slide in the amount of new radio station activity with social media. New efforts in social media in radio fell from 43.4% a year ago to 40.8% this time around. Once again, stations with the biggest staffs, in the largest markets, and non-commercial stations were all most likely to be doing something new.

What's the most important new thing you started doing with social media this past year?

New social media activities divided into 4 groups. Coming out on top, with just over 50% of the mentions, something to do with social media strategy.

That could be “actually using it,” or using it a lot more. Adding Facebook pages to reach more people. A plan to add more pictures and/or video to posts. Working at engagement and building conversations with the audience. Developing social media guidelines. Developing or increasing goals for social media posting or developing content areas to appeal to various groups. Better, more engaging posts. Developing a strategy for each platform. Hiring a social media coordinator or another digital hire.

At 22.5% came social media platforms – mostly without an explanation of how it's being used. Instagram came out on top here, with one person mentioning “insta-stories.” Twitter got four mentions, and one person noted using it particularly for breaking news, and a couple mentioned Flipboard. Then single mentions for Snapchat, LinkedIn, RadioFX, YouTube, EchoBox, and GroundSource.

Content came just behind that at 19.8% (and you can certainly argue that many of the items in strategy involved content). Here we have Facebook Live for reporting, election coverage, sports and interviews. Podcasts development, too.

Then money-related at 7.2%. Here I include monetizing content and sales and promotion and marketing.

Does the radio station or newsroom have a Facebook page? 2019

	Station only	Newsroom only	Both	No
All Radio	68.3%	0.9%	24.3%	6.5%
Market				
Major	66.7	0	28.3	5
Large	80.3	0	15.2	4.5
Medium	64	0.9	28.1	7
Small	66.3	2	23.5	8.2
Commercial	66.7	1.4	22.8	9.1
Non-commercial	71.4	0	26.9	1.7

Minor shifting in radio's use of Facebook. Station only Facebook pages dropped while both newsroom and station pages went up. The non-use of Facebook actually rose by 1.8. Other than non-commercial stations being more likely to use Facebook than commercial ones, there are no consistent patterns based on staff or market or geography. But it's still hard to understand why, in 2019, it's not 100%.

Is the radio newsroom actively involved with Twitter? 2019

	Constantly	Daily	Periodically	No
All Radio	20.1%	27.2%	22.2%	30.5%
Market				
Major	37.3	27.1	16.9	18.6
Large	20	29.2	18.5	32.3
Medium	19.5	25.7	25.7	29.2
Small	10.3	27.8	23.7	38.1
Commercial	17.1	23.6	19.4	39.8
Non-commercial	25.4	33.9	27.1	13.6

This year showed a 5-point increase, overall, in the use of Twitter by radio stations. But the increase wasn't at all across the board. Essentially all of that increase came from non-commercial stations. They went up more than 7 points ... while commercial stations largely held steady overall and went down 2 and a half points in the constantly column.

In radio, nearly 60% (58.3%) of news directors and general managers said they used no social media programs other than Facebook and Twitter. As market size got smaller, so did the use of other social media platforms, and non-commercial stations were more than twice as likely to use other platforms as commercial stations.

Of the 41.7% who said they used other social media platforms, over 60% (60.2) said Instagram. Why and how?

Mostly to repeat Facebook and Twitter posts ... photo essays ... behind the scenes on stories ... repost pictures from local users ... stories, announcements ... newsletter ... photos and events ... sports and promotion ... behind the scenes glimpses of the newsroom.

News Innovation

The only other social media to make it into double digits was YouTube at 10.2%. That was for posting interviews and video.

Snapchat came in at 5.7%; SoundCloud, Flipboard and LinkedIn each hit 4.5%. WhatsApp was 2.3% ... then it was all single mentions.

A few years ago, stations tried a wide range of social media platforms. Today, that use is concentrated in Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Number of social media engagements in the most recent month

	Avg. No. (in thousands)	Median No. (in thousands)	Minimum	Maximum
Overall Radio	30.9	8	0	250
Market size				
Major market	45.2	13.5	1.8	250
Large market	20.6	5	<1	135
Medium market	42.5	5.2	0	221.3
Small Market	20.6	6.5	<1	152
Commercial	32.6	8	0	221.3
Non-commercial	26	7.9	<1	250

This is only the second year that I've asked this question, and most of the numbers are down from last year. That would be puzzling except that relatively few news directors and general managers seem to know these numbers, so I would urge viewing them cautiously. Unsurprisingly, the biggest stations in the biggest markets got the biggest numbers.

Percent of station web traffic that came from social media - 2019

	Average	Median	Minimum	Maximum
Overall Radio	37.7%	30%	0	100%
Market size				
Major market	36.3	23	7	90
Large market	37.1	29	0	100
Medium market	29.6	20.5	0	100
Small market	44.5	45	0	100
Commercial	45.5	50	0	100
Non-commercial	23.5	20	0	80

This is also just the second year that I've asked this question. Generally, the numbers are up just a bit. But, again, relatively few news directors and general managers were able to supply these numbers.

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.

Note that there's a fuzzy dividing line between information in this Social Media article and the articles on the web and mobile ... so please be sure and check out all.

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About the Survey

The RTDNA/Hofstra University Survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2018 among all 1,685 operating, non-satellite television stations and a random sample of 3,481 radio stations. Valid responses came from 1,310 television stations (77.7%) and 645 radio news directors and general managers representing 1,938 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.