

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

Lots going on in Mobile in TV by Bob Papper

The latest RTDNA/Hofstra University Survey found a lot of new things going on with mobile in local TV news, and about 200 news directors said what they've been doing this past year.

What's the most important new thing you started doing with mobile in 2018?

The number of TV news directors saying they did something new in mobile this year is virtually identical to a year ago. At 57.7%, it's just half a point below last year. What's different this time around is that there were no consistent differences based on market size, staff size, affiliation or geography. The only real variation is that other commercial stations were markedly higher in doing something new. That probably represents catch-up since that group was well behind others a year ago.

Interestingly, with one exception, this year's responses on what stations are doing with mobile are quite different from the answers a year.

The only area that's the same is the top item: apps. But at 35.9%, it's down more than 13 points from a year ago.

More than half of those apps noted weather. Sometimes geo-fenced or hurricane or radar specific, but mostly just a new or improved weather app.

There were also customized or customizable apps, changed apps, apps with video, weekend apps, news apps, OTT apps, sports apps (both high school and college) and otherwise unidentified new apps.

- Dayparting the menu options on our app

Push alerts came in next at 21.1% of mentions. That's up almost 8 points from a year ago.

- Altering push alerts - how often and how to word them - after a focus group

A slight majority noted sending "more" push alerts. But nearly that many talked about changing their push alert policy – frequently saying they were sending fewer or simply more targeted push alerts.

News Innovation

Up 7 points from a year ago, at 17.2%, came strategy and planning. That included new platforms designed to achieve varying goals, more targeted promotion, new contests, working toward more engagement, advertising on air for station apps, more or new staffing and just developing a (more) concrete strategy for push alerts.

- Fewer push alerts. Sending them only when necessary and when the story impacts a large percentage of the audience
- Follow the Lead allows users to get updates on stories they want to follow
- We consider web and mobile one in the same. We don't treat them separately
- We have tailored our push alert strategy to meet market research, which differs somewhat from the corporate strategy
- We push everything to the app not social media, not the desktop, not the website. The app is all that matters

Dropping nearly 5 points from a year ago is live streaming, at 10.9%. Last year, live streaming was just Facebook Live, but this year most of the comments talked about more, new, better livestreaming. Maybe those were mostly Facebook Live, but news directors didn't say that. Facebook Live was noted specifically by only a few news directors.

Content also rose nearly 4 points from a year ago, at 8.6%. Mostly, that was simply defined as more and/or better, but also more video, new podcasts, better headlines, breaking news and weather information.

At 5.5%, software edged higher than a year ago. Specific mentions include Instagram (headlines and stories), NewsON, Alexa, WhatsApp, and ChimeIn.

The percentages add to more than 100% because a number of stations are involved in more than one thing.

Apps

The percentage of TV stations with apps came in at 93.4% -- essentially identical to a year ago. Most of the stations not having apps were non-commercial, had the smallest newsrooms (1 to 10 staffers) or other commercial.

Once again, both the average and median number of apps per station are two. The top station had 8 apps, and every market size had stations with 4 or more apps. There used to be at least some noticeable differences by network affiliation and geography, but that wasn't the case this year.

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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.