

Please note the new partnership on this research as it becomes the RTDNA/Newhouse School at Syracuse University Survey. I am privileged to have joined the outstanding faculty at Syracuse. That's the name you'll see on the research from here on ... and that's what you'll see on the painfully long survey questionnaire later this fall.

Bob Papper

Radio Eases Up on New Social Media Initiatives by Bob Papper

The latest RTDNA/Newhouse School at Syracuse University Survey found a significant drop in the amount of new radio station activity with social media. New efforts in social media in radio fell from 43.4% two years ago to 40.8% last year, down to 35.7% 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?

Overwhelmingly, the most important new thing radio stations were doing with social media involved strategy. 72.2% answered with something akin to strategic moves. The biggest percentage simply involved more posting or more scheduled (or enforced) posting. Right after that came streaming or more streaming or more video. Then we had things like developing a social media strategy, working at social media engagement (or working on a plan to do that), refining content, steering people from social media back to the web, hiring staff to handle social media.

In their own words:

- All news posted to FB
- Almost daily posts with radio schedule for the day, Friday night football games
- Began using it to promote news
- Collaborating with university professors and their students to develop a social media strategy
- Cross-posting to schools and community FB
- Having an intern focused entirely on social media
- Hired a digital news editor to oversee news-related social media
- Informing the public on how reporting works.
- More consistent Instagram posts and intentional timing on Facebook

- Online summaries of news without posting actual stories - we are steering people back to our website instead of reading a headline and commenting on FB
- We have significantly increased our post output per day (averaging roughly 20).
- Started making sure that we post SOMETHING every day

Almost all the other “important new things” involved social media platforms – without much detail on what. Facebook and Instagram got most of the mentions ... frequently, especially in the case of Instagram, creating a page or account and getting started. Twitter got a bunch of mentions; Hearken got one.

In their own words:

- Facebook Live in-studio conversations
- Instagram stories; we signed onto a service called "Echobox" to automate social media posts/manage live streaming of video podcast
- More audiograms, audio snippets connecting to images
- Short news stories on Instagram

I wasn't sure where or how to classify creating “scavenger hunts,” but it sounded like fun.

Does the radio station or newsroom have a Facebook page? 2020

	Station only	Newsroom only	Both	No
All Radio	74.3%	1.5%	19.7%	4.5%
Market				
Major	75.5	1.9	18.9	3.8
Large	72.7	1.5	22.7	3
Medium	72.2	0.9	22.2	4.6
Small	76.9	1.9	15.7	5.6
Commercial	72.1	1.8	19.5	6.6
Non-commercial	78.9	0.9	20.2	0

The non-use of Facebook dropped by two points – after going up 1.8 a year ago. The only two groups with 100% Facebook use are non-commercial stations and stations with 10 or more news employees. Hard to understand why, in 2020, it's not 100%. But I say that every year.

Is the radio newsroom actively involved with Twitter? 2020

	Constantly	Daily	Periodically	No
All Radio	16.2%	21.3%	22.9%	39.6%
Market				
Major	41.2	27.5	15.7	15.7
Large	17.5	28.6	22.2	31.7
Medium	11.2	22.4	23.4	43
Small	8.4	13.1	26.2	52.3

Commercial	14.1	15.9	20	50
Non-commercial	20.4	32.4	28.7	18.5

While TV news use of Twitter has been falling for the past few years, radio news use has been going up. Until this year. Constant use slid by four points; daily use fell by six. Non-use jumped by nine points. Every grouping except major market stations went down. We'll have to see if this becomes a trend like TV.

In radio, more than 60% (60.7%) of news directors and general managers said they used no social media programs other than Facebook and Twitter. That's up 2+ points from last year. The bigger the market, the bigger the staff, and non-commercial stations were most likely to use social media beyond Facebook and Twitter. In fact, non-commercial stations were the mirror image of commercial ones, with 61.2% of non-commercial stations using additional social media while 71.6% of commercial stations were not.

Other social media in radio means Instagram – coming in at 85.6% of all “other social media.”

In their own words:

- Instagram - photos of newsworthy events - infrequently
- Instagram - station and event promotion
- Instagram - to share stories, poll listeners, solicit feedback.
- Instagram - to share what we're working on in the newsroom
- Instagram... we don't use it well

After that, 5.6% said YouTube ... 3.2% Soundcloud ... 2.4% Snapchat ... and individual mentions of email, Harken, LinkedIn and Twitch.

In their own words:

- YouTube (local TV production, digital-first video)
- SoundCloud as another means to get our product out
- Email to notify of Deals of the Day

Number of social media engagements in the most recent month

	Avg. No. (in thousands)	Median No. (in thousands)	Minimum	Maximum (in thousands)
Overall Radio	58	6	0	2,100
Market size				
Major market	271	36	<1	2,100
Large market	72	10	0	465
Medium market	39	4	0	625
Small Market	12	5	0	68

Commercial	67	8	0	2,100
Non-commercial	32	4	<1	250

This is just the third year that I've asked this question, and the numbers are mixed. Average number of engagements are way up from a year ago, but median numbers are down. Interestingly, average and median numbers are up for major and large markets, but both numbers are down for medium and small markets. A note of caution: while enough news directors and general managers were able to supply numbers this year to make the results reportable, the total number of respondents is still small compared to how many filled out the Survey. View the numbers, especially within subgroups, cautiously.

Percent of station web traffic that came from social media - 2020

	Average	Median	Minimum	Maximum
Overall Radio	41%	30%	0	100%
Market size				
Major market	28.5	26.5	3	60
Large market	30.7	22.5	0	95
Medium market	53.6	50	2	100
Small market	41.1	30	0	100
Commercial	44.6	40	0	100
Non-commercial	34	25	3	100

This is also just the third year that I've asked this question. Generally, the numbers are largely unchanged from a year ago. Again, relatively few news directors and general managers were able to supply these numbers so view them cautiously.

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.

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.

About the Survey

The RTDNA/Newhouse School at Syracuse University Survey, funded in part by the Lawrence Herbert School of Communication at Hofstra University, was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2019 among all 1,702 operating, non-satellite television stations and a random sample of 3,427 radio stations. Valid responses came from 1,313 television stations (77.1%) and 673 radio news directors and general managers representing 1,996 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 Papper

Bob Papper is Adjunct Professor of Broadcast and Digital Journalism at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University and has worked extensively in radio and TV news.