

Radio Eases Up on New Social Media Initiatives **by Bob Papper**

The latest RTDNA/Newhouse School at Syracuse University Survey found new radio station efforts in social media holding steady 37.6%. The new efforts in social media in radio fell from 43.4% three years ago to 40.8% two years ago, down to 35.7% last year. 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?

Last year, strategy was the overwhelming first choice for what stations were doing with social media. This year, at 46%, it's content. More content, better content, virtual town halls, COVID content, more video and pictures, more breaking news, polls, sports, weather.

In their own words:

- Getting every local story posted to our website on Facebook and Twitter. In the past we weren't consistent
- COVID-19 information
- Local!

Then came strategy at 30%. Coordinating strategy, making everyone participate, becoming active, becoming more active, developing a digital department, adding digital people.

In their own words:

- A coordinated strategy across content team
- Becoming active
- Being more active
- Remain involved, local, respond and communicate with all messages
- Sharing more local info and posting more to drive to website
- Using our station's social media for greater listener engagement since the pandemic meant we couldn't meet them face to face anymore.

At 24%, the rest went to software. Without further explanation, adding or adding more Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, Facebook Live, Parler, GroundSource, Hearken, Zoom, FaceTime, Twitch. You can argue they should go with content or, more likely, strategy, but without an explanation for why do something, it's hard to know.

In their own words:

- Streaming
- Facebook Live
- GroundSource

Does the radio station or newsroom have a Facebook page? 2021

	Station only	Newsroom only	Both	No
All Radio	71.1%	1.8%	20.9%	6.2%
Market				
Major	68.7	4.5	20.9	6
Large	73.8	1.2	21.2	3.8
Medium	70.8	1.5	23.1	4.6
Small	71.2	0.9	18	9.9
Commercial	71.2	0.7	20.4	7.7
Non-commercial	71.1	4.4	21.9	2.6

The non-use of Facebook went up this year. The nearly 2-point increase canceled out the nearly 2-point drop from a year ago. The absence of Facebook use was highest in both the largest and smallest markets. Even in newsrooms with 10 or more news people, there were some stations without Facebook pages.

Is the radio newsroom actively involved with Twitter? 2021

	Constantly	Daily	Periodically	No
All Radio	15.6%	22.9%	22.9%	38.5%
Market				
Major	34.3	31.3	17.9	16.4
Large	20	26.2	25	28.7
Medium	10.9	20.3	25.8	43
Small	6.4	18.3	21.1	54.1
Commercial	13	18.9	21.1	47
Non-commercial	21.9	32.5	27.2	18.4

Radio's use of Twitter is virtually identical to a year ago. Some numbers edged up and some down, but most moved less than a single point one way or the other.

In radio, more than 60% (61.5%) of news directors and general managers said they used no social media programs other than Facebook and Twitter. That's up less than a point 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 nearly the mirror image of commercial ones, with 61.5% of non-commercial stations using additional social media while 71% of commercial stations were not.

Beyond Facebook and Twitter, 86% of those who said they used other social media listed Instagram – dwarfing all other software. Even so, only a third of all radio stations that run local news are using Instagram.

In their own words:

- Instagram and YouTube for interviews and photos of stories and events
- Instagram -- music and podcast promotion
- Instagram - photos and captions
- Instagram - to post station-wide things and some news
- Instagram for story and content promotion; LinkedIn for story, program promotion
- Instagram is tied into our FB posts
- Instagram -- highlight station activities and promotions

YouTube was mentioned by 10%

- YouTube for original digital video and reposting broadcast video

SnapChat hit 5%, and LinkedIn came in at 4%. Everything else came in at just one or two mentions:

TikTok

Reddit

Parler

RMTP (real time messaging protocol)

Switcher Studio (for multi-camera operation)

SoundCloud (for audio distribution)

Vimeo (video hosting and sharing platform)

Twitch (live streaming, especially by gamers)

Radio.com (broadcast and internet platform owned by Entercom)

NFHS Network (for live high school sports)

Mixlr (live audio to the web)

Number of social media engagements in the most recent month

	Avg. No. (in thousands)	Median No. (in thousands)	Minimum	Maximum (in thousands)
Overall Radio	44	4	0	1,500
Market size				
Major market	180.1	48.3	0	1,500

Large market	66.1	10	<1	500
Medium market	22.1	1.7	0	300
Small Market	7.6	2.1	0	46.6
Commercial	47	4	0	1,500
Non-commercial	30.9	7.5	<1	200

Four years into this question, and most news directors and general managers still don't know the answers, so you need to view the numbers through that caution. Still, well over a hundred news directors and GMs filled in numbers, so the results are reportable.

Percent of station web traffic that came from social media - 2021

	Average	Median	Minimum	Maximum
Overall Radio	33.9%	25%	0	100%
Market size				
Major market	28.9	21	3	80
Large market	43.1	45	0	90
Medium market	36.9	30	0	100
Small market	26.2	10	0	80
Commercial	35.5	30	0	100
Non-commercial	28.6	20	3	80

Virtually all these numbers are down from a year ago. Both averages and medians, all market sizes and commercial and non-commercial. Seems surprising. Again, relatively few news directors and general managers were able to supply these numbers so view them cautiously.

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.

Web staffing numbers and newsroom participation in working on the web are included in the staffing article. Web profitability is discussed in the business of news articles. Paywalls are in the online article.

Note that there's a fine line between online and social media ... so be sure to check the online article.

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About the Survey

The RTDNA/Newhouse School at Syracuse University Survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2020 among all 1,762 operating, non-satellite television stations and a random

sample of 3,379 radio stations. Valid responses came from as many as 1,358 television stations (77.1%) and 765 radio news directors and general managers representing 2,310 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.