**The Changing Nature of Social Media on TV and Radio**

by Bob Papper

It's not simply that television and radio stations are doing more with social media these days, it's also that -- at least in the case of TV -- they're doing something different. Those are the latest findings from the RTDNA/Hofstra University Annual Survey. More and more, at least at TV news operations, social media is about connecting with and having conversations with the audience. Radio, in contrast, looks more like television did a year ago.

**TV and Social Networking**

What is your TV station doing with social networking? 2011

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Covering the topic in newscasts | Incorporating it into storytelling | Integrating it on the website | Nothing |
| All TV | 78.9%  | 68.8%  | 86.2%  | 7.4%  |
| Market size: |  |  |  |  |
| 1-25 | 77.8  | 75.6  | 86.7  | 8.9  |
| 26-50 | 81.3  | 79.2  | 85.4  | 4.2  |
| 51-100 | 86.3  | 76.7  | 90.4  | 5.5  |
| 101-150 | 78.9  | 65.8  | 84.2  | 7.9  |
| 151+ | 67.9  | 48.2  | 83.9  | 10.7  |
| Staff size: |  |  |  |  |
| 51+ | 88.3  | 86.7  | 91.7  | 1.7  |
| 31 – 50 | 92.9 | 88.6  | 97.1  | 0  |
| 21 – 30 | 80.0  | 70.0  | 86.0  | 4.0  |
| 11 – 20 | 67.3  | 50.0  | 80.8  | 13.5  |
| 1 – 10 | 48.5  | 24.2  | 57.6  | 27.3  |

The percentage of stations doing nothing in social media fell by just 1.2%, but all the other numbers rose 10% or more in the last year. The laggards are the smallest stations, mostly in the very smallest markets. The percentage doing nothing among newsrooms with 11 - 20 staffers is more than 8 times as high as the percentage doing nothing in larger stations. And the percentage doing nothing at the smallest shops, 1 - 10 staffers, is double the 11 - 20 group. Fox affiliates are a little less likely to be involved with social media than others; stations in the Northeast are more likely to be involved with social media than stations elsewhere.

As we did last year, we asked what stations were doing with social media, and there's been a change in the last year. Although this open-ended response is really more anecdotal information than empirical data, there appears to have been a shift in the last year from using social media primarily as a promotional tool to using it heavily -- if not primarily -- to have conversations with the audience. Most news directors noted seeking comments, feedback or interaction. Some talked about livechat and crowdsourcing, but most of the comments dealt with conversations.

Does the station or newsroom have a Facebook page?

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Station only | Newsroom only | Both | No |
| All TV | 24.9%  | 32.0%  | 37.4%  | 5.7%  |
| Market |  |  |  |  |
| 1 - 25 | 21.8  | 25.5  | 43.6  | 9.1  |
| 26 - 50 | 28.3  | 34.0  | 37.7  | 0  |
| 51 - 100 | 22.6  | 34.5  | 39.3  | 3.6  |
| 101 - 150 | 23.2  | 32.9  | 39.0  | 4.9  |
| 151+ | 30.0  | 31.7 | 26.7  | 11.7  |
| Staff size |  |  |  |  |
| 51+ | 18.2  | 37.9  | 43.9  | 0  |
| 31 - 50 | 28.0  | 30.7  | 41.3  | 0  |
| 21 - 30 | 21.8  | 38.2  | 34.5  | 5.5  |
| 11 - 20 | 25.9  | 31.0  | 29.3  | 13.8  |
| 1 - 10 | 28.6  | 25.7  | 25.7  | 20.0 |

The percentage of TV stations saying they have no Facebook page fell from 13.9% last year to 5.7% this year. But the changes aren't just whether -- it's who and how many. The percentage of TV news directors reporting that only the newsroom had a Facebook page actually fell 7 points. The percentage of news directors reporting that just the station had a Facebook page rose by 56%, and the percentage reporting that both the station and newsroom had pages rose by more than 10%. I found no stations with 31 or more newsroom staffers that didn't have a Facebook page. Other commercial stations, non-commercial stations and those with 1 - 10 staffers lagged behind all the others.

Is the newsroom actively involved with Twitter?

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Constantly | Daily | Periodically | No |
| All TV | 35.8%  | 31.9%  | 20.3%  | 11.9%  |
| Market |  |  |  |  |
| 1 - 25 | 37.5  | 28.6  | 17.9  | 16.1  |
| 26 - 50 | 48.1  | 31.5  | 13.0  | 7.4  |
| 51 - 100 | 39.3  | 36.9  | 19.0  | 4.8  |
| 101 - 150 | 37.0  | 28.4  | 21.0 | 13.6  |
| 151+ | 16.7  | 33.3  | 30.0 | 20.0  |
| Staff size |  |  |  |  |
| 51+ | 60.6  | 30.3  | 7.6  | 1.5  |
| 31 - 50 | 36.5  | 41.9  | 17.6  | 4.1  |
| 21 - 30 | 23.6  | 43.6  | 21.8  | 10.9  |
| 11 - 20 | 29.3  | 27.6  | 27.6 | 15.5  |
| 1 - 10 | 2.8  | 16.7  | 41.7  | 38.9  |

Perhaps the biggest surprise in the survey is how little has changed in the Twitter numbers. The biggest stations are doing a lot, but outside of the top 25 markets, the numbers drop substantially, and the overall picture is little changed from a year ago. There are not big differences by network affiliation or geography.

**Radio and Social Networking**

Radio has made dramatic strides in the use of social media in the last year. At the same time, it remains well behind television.

What is your radio station doing with social networking? 2011

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Covering the topic in newscasts | Incorporating it into storytelling | Integrating it on the website | Nothing |
| All Radio | 32.4%  | 28.4% | 54.9% | 32.4%  |
| Market size: |  |  |  |  |
| Major | 72.2  | 44.4  | 72.2  | 5.6  |
| Large | 40.0  | 40.0  | 70.0  | 30.0  |
| Medium | 17.5  | 25.0  | 57.5  | 32.5  |
| Small | 26.5  | 20.6  | 38.2  | 47.1  |

Led by larger stations in large and major markets, radio soared in the use of social media in the last year. Overall, the percentage of stations doing nothing in social media dropped in half from last year's 61.1% to 32.4% this year. Ownership and region were far less meaningful in determining social media activity than market and staff size.

We asked news directors what they were doing with social media, and the answers look a lot like TV did a year ago. Most news directors are either posting new stories or providing links to the station website. A couple noted stories on new media or using new media. Only one news director mentioned encouraging listeners to send content to the station. A plurality of news directors simply wrote Facebook and/or Twitter.

Does the station or newsroom have a Facebook page?

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Station only | Newsroom only | Both | No |
| All Radio | 61.9%  | 0  | 11.5%  | 26.5%  |
| Market |  |  |  |  |
| Major | 72.2  | 0  | 22.2  | 5.6  |
| Large | 63.6  | 0  | 27.3  | 9.1  |
| Medium | 68.9  | 0  | 2.2  | 28.9  |
| Small | 48.7  | 0  | 12.8  | 38.5  |

Overall, the use of Facebook rose 10% in the last year in radio news. Generally, the bigger the staff, the more likely that there was a Facebook page. Group owned stations were a little more likely to have Facebook pages than independents, and stations in the South were more likely than those elsewhere to have Facebook pages.

Is the newsroom actively involved with Twitter?

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Constantly | Daily | Periodically | No |
| All Radio | 11.0%  | 17.4%  | 11.0%  | 60.6%  |
| Market |  |  |  |  |
| Major | 36.8  | 26.3  | 10.5  | 26.3  |
| Large | 18.2  | 18.2  | 9.1  | 54.5  |
| Medium | 4.8  | 14.3  | 11.9  | 69.0  |
| Small | 2.7  | 16.2  | 10.8  | 70.3  |

Overall, use of Twitter in radio rose 12% from a year ago. Interestingly, use of Twitter appears more a function of market size than staff size, although the bigger the staff, the less likely that a station was doing nothing with Twitter. Stations in the Northeast were a little less likely than stations elsewhere to be involved with Twitter.

Just over 20% of stations (20.2%) reported being involved with anything they considered to be convergence. That's up from last year's 16.7%. Non-commercial stations and stations with the biggest staffs were most likely to say they were involved. Market size and ownership were less relevant. About two-thirds of all examples cited involved the station's website. A few stations mentioned arrangements with a newspaper.

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**About the Survey**

The RTDNA/Hofstra University Survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2010 among all 1,729 operating, non-satellite television stations and a random sample of 3,000 radio stations. Valid responses came from 1,360 television stations (78.7 percent) and 203 radio news directors and general managers representing 603 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.