**Social Media Expands on TV and Radio**

by Bob Papper

* What stations are doing with social media
* Facebook and Twitter and a lot more
* The most innovative uses of social media

The use of social media continues to expand and evolve in both television and radio, according to the latest findings from the RTDNA/Hofstra University Annual Survey. And stations are getting more and more creative in how they use social media.

**TV and Social Networking**

What is your TV station doing with social networking? 2012

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Covering the topic in newscasts | Incorporating it into storytelling | Integrating it on the website | Nothing |
| All TV | 87.5%  | 87.1% | 93.0%  | 2.1%  |
| Market size: |  |  |  |  |
| 1-25 | 88.5  | 84.6  | 94.2  | 0  |
| 26-50 | 84.2  | 86.8  | 94.7  | 2.6  |
| 51-100 | 89.0  | 96.3  | 97.6  | 1.2  |
| 101-150 | 88.7  | 84.5  | 90.1 | 2.8  |
| 151+ | 84.1  | 77.3  | 86.4  | 4.5  |
| Staff size: |  |  |  |  |
| 51+ | 92.1  | 98.4  | 98.4  | 0  |
| 31 – 50 | 92.0  | 97.3  | 94.7  | 2.7  |
| 21 – 30 | 89.1  | 83.6  | 87.3  | 1.8  |
| 11 – 20 | 83.3  | 83.3  | 100  | 0  |
| 1 – 10 | 63.2  | 47.4  | 84.2  | 0  |

The use of social media is now almost universal in TV, with all categories going near or into the 90-percentile range. “Nothing” dropped more than 5 points to 2.1%. Most of those involve small, independent stations -- half in the West.

Almost 150 news directors answered a question about what the station was doing with social media. Many just responded by noting Facebook and Twitter, but most went well beyond that. A lot of stations are using Facebook in particular for story leads and follow-up, and several mentioned crowdsourcing. Quite a few stations are running at least some of the Facebook comments on various newscasts. Even more stations mentioned asking for viewer feedback via Facebook, and nearly as many news directors wrote about having a "conversation" or "interacting" with viewers. Lots of stations noted using social media for promotion, but much of the promotion was geared toward the station website rather than just on air. Quite a few stations run contests via Facebook and a lot of polling takes place via Facebook as well. Several news directors noted that they had hired social media producers or reporters. Stations had polls of the day, questions of the day, friends of the day and fans of the day. And although Facebook and Twitter were near universal mentions, they weren't alone. Other social media in use (in order of mention): Google+, LinkedIn, YouTube, Storify, Tumblr, Yelp, HootSuite, Googlet and Instagram.

Does the station or newsroom have a Facebook page? 2012

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Station only | Newsroom only | Both | No |
| All TV | 25.5%  | 31.7%  | 42.8%  | 0  |
| Market |  |  |  |  |
| 1 - 25 | 15.7  | 31.4  | 52.9  | 0  |
| 26 - 50 | 34.2  | 23.7  | 42.1  | 0  |
| 51 - 100 | 30.1  | 32.5  | 37.3  | 0  |
| 101 - 150 | 19.4  | 30.6  | 50.0  | 0  |
| 151+ | 30.4  | 39.1  | 30.4  | 0  |
| Staff size |  |  |  |  |
| 51+ | 21.9  | 25.0  | 53.1  | 0  |
| 31 - 50 | 24.0  | 32.0  | 44.0  | 0  |
| 21 - 30 | 25.5  | 40.0  | 34.5  | 0  |
| 11 - 20 | 28.9  | 31.6  | 39.5  | 0  |
| 1 - 10 | 30.0  | 25.0  | 45.0  | 0  |

In a few, short years, we've moved from whether a station had a Facebook page to how many and whose are they. Not a single TV station in our survey didn't have a Facebook page. In configuration, the winner appears to be both -- station and newsroom Facebook pages. That's where the biggest growth (and numbers) have been. The only exception to that has been among ABC affiliates, where a slight plurality say newsroom only.

Is the newsroom actively involved with Twitter? 2012

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Constantly | Daily | Periodically | No |
| All TV | 50.0%  | 30.2%  | 14.2%  | 5.6%  |
| Market |  |  |  |  |
| 1 - 25 | 72.5  | 13.7  | 11.8  | 2.0  |
| 26 - 50 | 55.3  | 31.6  | 2.6  | 10.5  |
| 51 - 100 | 50.0  | 33.3  | 11.9  | 4.8  |
| 101 - 150 | 41.4  | 28.6  | 22.9  | 7.1  |
| 151+ | 33.3  | 44.4  | 17.8  | 4.4  |
| Staff size |  |  |  |  |
| 51+ | 71.9  | 23.4  | 3.1  | 1.6  |
| 31 - 50 | 54.7  | 28.0  | 12.0  | 5.3  |
| 21 - 30 | 35.8  | 39.6  | 20.8  | 3.8  |
| 11 - 20 | 28.9  | 36.8  | 23.7  | 10.5  |
| 1 - 10 | 15.0  | 35.0  | 35.0  | 15.0  |

Twitter numbers didn't change much a year ago, but they certainly have since. The percentage not using Twitter has been cut in half, and, led by the biggest stations in the biggest markets, there's been a 15 point increase in "constantly." Fox affiliates tend to do more of it, and stations in the Midwest appear to send a lot fewer tweets than the rest of the country.

**Social media innovation**

This year, I asked news directors about the most innovative social media project they were working on. All told, 115 news directors answered the question, although a few said it was a secret. The answers don't group into a few clear areas. A bunch of news directors noted using Facebook to explore special topics of concern like bullying, diabetes, immigration, transportation and solving a cold case. In an era of lots of TV news fluff, some serious stories appeared to getting new life online. (My only editorial comment, really.) A number of news directors talked about much more extensive planning on how to integrate and coordinate 3-screen news coverage. A bunch talked about contests, app development and pushing Facebook fans or friends. At least one station had used Facebook friends as a means to raise money for charity. Another pushed a user-generated photo contest to raise money for charity and revenue for the station (sorry, those are all the details I have). Some stations have been developing community websites; some have established or are looking to establish a social newsdesk. There are livechats on air and live streaming of events, and generally more web-only content. There were Facebook polls and weather pages. A number of news directors talked about converations with the audience; one mentioned having the audience develop questions for newsmakers; another brought the audience in to participate in daily news meetings. One station posted daily Facebook "behind the scenes" updates. One involved college students, but didn't say what. Anything that involves young people and news sounds positive to me. Then there's the effort at anchor-less news at KIAH-TV in Houston -- called "NewsFix."

**Radio and Social Networking**

Radio continues to make strides in the use of social media, but it remains well behind television.

What is your radio station doing with social networking? 2012

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Covering the topic in newscasts | Incorporating it into storytelling | Integrating it on the website | Nothing |
| All Radio | 42.0%  | 31.1%  | 62.2%  | 29.7%  |
| Market size: |  |  |  |  |
| Major | 72.7  | 63.6  | 72.7  | 13.6  |
| Large | 35.0  | 30.0  | 75.0  | 20.0  |
| Medium | 38.5  | 23.2  | 64.3  | 28.6  |
| Small | 34.7  | 26.0  | 50.0  | 42.0  |

A year ago, radio soared in the use of social media; this time around growth was more like a slow walk. All the categories rose, but, overall, the gains were mostly from stations already engaged in some social media doing more. The percentage of stations doing nothing dropped by less than 3 points.

Overall, non-commercial stations were a lot more involved with social media than commercial stations. That wasn't the case a year ago. Generally, staff size and market size were most closely correlated with social media activity. Stations in the Northeast lagged the rest of the country.

I asked radio news directors what they were doing with social media, and the answers look a lot like a year ago. Most news directors just responded Facebook and Twitter. Although many went deeper than that, most of the answers involved promoting the station or website or some other form of promotion. A few talked about social media as either an extension of the station or an integrated part of the station, but most of the comments were purely promotion-based.

Does the station or newsroom have a Facebook page? 2012

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Station only | Newsroom only | Both | No |
| All Radio | 70.2%  | 0.6% | 13.1%  | 16.1%  |
| Market |  |  |  |  |
| Major | 56.5  | 0  | 39.1  | 4.3  |
| Large | 87.0  | 0  | 8.7  | 4.3  |
| Medium | 75.8  | 0  | 8.1  | 16.1  |
| Small | 63.3  | 1.7  | 10.0  | 25.0  |

Overall, the use of Facebook in radio news rose another 10% in the last year (following last year's 10% increase). Large and major market stations were much more likely to have Facebook pages than stations in small and medium markets. Non-commercial stations led commercial ones.

Is the newsroom actively involved with Twitter? 2012

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Constantly | Daily | Periodically | No |
| All Radio | 11.9%  | 16.7%  | 19.6%  | 51.8%  |
| Market |  |  |  |  |
| Major | 25.0  | 37.5  | 16.7  | 20.8  |
| Large | 8.7  | 8.7  | 17.4  | 65.2  |
| Medium | 12.9  | 16.1  | 21.0  | 50.0  |
| Small | 6.8  | 11.9  | 20.3  | 61.0  |

Overall, use of Twitter rose 9% from a year ago (which was up 12% from the year before). But all of that increase came among "periodic" users of Twitter. Both "constant" and "daily" use remained essentially unchanged. The increase in periodic use came across all market sizes, but Twitter use remains most associated with staff size. The larger the staff, the more likely the station is involved with Twitter and the more involved with Twitter it is.

In a new question this year, I asked radio news directors about their most innovative social media project. Only about half the news directors answered the question, and half of those said "nothing." Top answers included new apps, community forums online or political/candidate debates/forums/information. Then came blogs/podcasts, streaming, crowdsourcing or special news projects on the web. Other projects included cooperative ventures with newspaper or TV, statewide or regional networks for information, recruiting a live audience and online listener surveys.

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**About the Survey**

The RTDNA/Hofstra University Survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2011 among all 1,735 operating, non-satellite television stations and a random sample of 3,000 radio stations. Valid responses came from 1,238 television stations (71.4%) and 260 radio news directors and general managers representing 743 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.