**What's new online in 2015 for TV and radio**

**by Bob Papper**

* The most important new thing online
* Content just for the web and user-generated content
* An interesting trend in website advertising ... radio and TV

As web numbers have largely stabilized in the RTDNA/Hofstra University Annual Survey, I've continued to shift focus more to learn what stations are doing that's new and different.

**What's the most important new thing you're doing online?**

More than 160 TV news directors took the time to respond, and, for the second year in a row, content was king.

1. All told, 36% of TV news directors noted something about more, better, or special content. Some noted original content for the web; some noted special investigative stories, series or special subject areas like Ebola; some talked about more staffers posting to the web (not necessarily by choice); some noted enhanced story coverage. News directors also noted slideshows, syndicated programming, more weather, mobile newscasts, video and more.

2. After content, streaming was next, with 21% of news directors listing streaming newscasts, both live and recorded, streaming live events, streaming video or just streaming.

At 10 to 11%, we had a three-way tie:

3. Reorganization of the website, redesign of the website, new navigation, technical issues.

3. That tied with Mobile: more apps, more and better mobile content, better mobile apps and more alerts.

3. And: More and better social media. That included better targeting, more social media content, more people in the newsroom using social media, establishing a social media desk, etc.

6. At 4% of mentions, a tie between more weather and more advertising.

8. At 2.5%: More staffing for the web; something specific with Facebook like contests or fan recruitment; then more user-generated content like photo galleries and video.

All told, just over 70% of TV news directors (70.1%) said they started something important online last year. Other than the smallest newsrooms, 1 – 10 staffers, lagging well behind, all other groupings came in pretty close to each other.

Radio was a different story. The percentage saying they started something important online in 2014 dropped from 54.8% in 2013 to a minority of 46.3% this time around. Non-commercial stations and stations in the biggest markets, 1 million people or more, were the only major groups where a majority of news directors or general managers said they started something important online. Both those groups came in right around 60%.

Still, the better part of a hundred radio news directors and general managers explained what they started online in 2014. As with TV, content won the race.

1. Nearly half (47%) mentioned something related to content in terms of what was new. The list included video, photos, in-depth stories, more original reporting just for the web, interactive community calendar, keeping content fresher, posting more and better stories, scripts, text instead of just audio, and podcasts.

2. Streaming and apps came in next at 26%. Streaming included news, video, sports, and events.

3. At 10%, new, redesigned or reorganized websites ... and one station that noted it finally started a website.

After that, answers were more scattered: more social media, using social media to drive more traffic to the web, more (undefined) use of Facebook and Twitter.

Who has web sites? 2015

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| All TV | 100% | All Radio | 98.3% |
| Market Size |  | Market Size |  |
| 1 - 25 | 100 | Major | 100 |
| 26 - 50 | 100 | Large | 100 |
| 51 - 100 | 100 | Medium | 100 |
| 101 - 150 | 100 | Small | 94.7 |
| 151+ | 100 |  |  |

I didn't find a single TV station (that runs local news) that doesn't have a website. Fourth year in a row now.

Radio still hasn't hit 100%, although it's higher than last year. All of the stations without web sites were commercial stations in the smallest markets (fewer than 50,000 people), and all were in the South.

How many web sites include local news? 2015

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| All TV | 100% | All Radio | 78.9% |
| Market Size |  | Market Size |  |
| 1 - 25 | 100 | Major | 75 |
| 26 - 50 | 100 | Large | 76.7 |
| 51 - 100 | 100 | Medium | 85.2 |
| 101 - 150 | 100 | Small | 75 |
| 151+ | 100 |  |  |

In TV, once again, every website (of stations that run local news) includes local news. That's been true for the last five years. Radio numbers are largely unchanged from the past two years. In fact, they're actually down by 0.8. The radio stations least likely to post local news have one news staffer at a single station that runs local news.

Elements of local news web sites - 2015

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| TV | Nws Vid | Still Pics | Text | Event cal | Mobile related | Live Nwscsts | User gnrtd | Audio | Live Cam | Strmng Audio | Rcrded Nwscsts | Blogs | Pdcsts | User assmbl | Other |
| All TV: | 99.3% | 95.3% | 93.2% | 78.1% | 63.8% | 62% | 61.6% | 58.8% | 56.6% | 40.1% | 35.5% | 32.6% | 9.3% | 1.4% | 3.9% |
| Mrkts 1 - 25 | 97.5 | 95 | 92.5 | 70 | 70 | 70 | 60 | 70 | 60 | 40 | 42.5 | 40 | 15 | 2.5 | 5 |
| Mrkts 26 - 50 | 100 | 95 | 92.5 | 72.5 | 55 | 82.5 | 77.5 | 57.5 | 65 | 50 | 35 | 40 | 22.5 | 0 | 2.5 |
| Mrkts 51 - 100 | 100 | 97.5 | 90.1 | 84 | 72.8 | 67.9 | 70.4 | 58 | 61.7 | 45.7 | 39.5 | 35.8 | 7.4 | 1.2 | 2.5 |
| Mrkts 101 - 150 | 98.6 | 93.1 | 97.2 | 80.6 | 59.7 | 58.3 | 61.1 | 59.7 | 54.2 | 38.9 | 31.9 | 25 | 4.2 | 2.8 | 1.4 |
| Mrkts 151+ | 100 | 95.7 | 93.5 | 76.1 | 56.5 | 32.6 | 34.8 | 50 | 41.3 | 23.9 | 28.3 | 26.1 | 4.3 | 0 | 10.9 |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Radio | Text | Still Pics | Audio | Strmng Audio | Event cal | Pdcsts | Nws Vid | Rcrded Nwscsts | Mobile related | Blogs | Live Nwscsts | Live Cam | User gnrtd | User Assmbl | Other |
| All Radio: | 82.9% | 71.4% | 63.6% | 53.6% | 41.4% | 33.6% | 30.7% | 25.7% | 20% | 15.7% | 12.9% | 3.6% | 2.9% | 0.7% | 1.4% |
| Major Market | 91.7 | 83.3 | 83.3 | 75 | 33.3 | 62.5 | 54.2 | 25 | 50 | 33.3 | 8.3 | 8.3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Large Market | 76 | 72 | 64 | 60 | 24 | 36 | 36 | 24 | 12 | 16 | 12 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| Medium Market | 78.8 | 67.3 | 63.5 | 48.1 | 50 | 28.8 | 25 | 21.2 | 15.4 | 15.4 | 13.5 | 1.9 | 3.8 | 1.9 | 1.9 |
| Small Market | 87.2 | 69.2 | 51.3 | 43.6 | 46.2 | 20.5 | 20.5 | 33.3 | 12.8 | 5.1 | 15.4 | 5.1 | 2.6 | 0 | 0 |

In TV, news video, still pictures and text are all givens. So what changed from a year ago? Streaming is the big answer. Live newscasts, streaming audio and recorded newscasts all rose by 7 or more points. Both event calendar and audio rose by more than 5. The only meaningful drop came in blogs – again. Continuing their steady fall, blogs dropped by almost 6 points (on top of last year’s 8 point decline). Note that user generated content, audio, live cameras, live newscasts, streaming audio and recorded newscasts would all be much higher if not for the smallest markets (151+). Commercial stations other than ABC, CBS, Fox and NBC bring down all the numbers except video, recorded newscasts, blogs and podcasts. Non-commercial stations bring down all the numbers except audio, streaming audio, video and recorded newscasts.

Astonishingly, in radio, two-thirds of the categories actually dropped from a year ago. Nothing dropped much, but this was definitely not the year when radio websites became more sophisticated or complex.

“Other” is typically small. In TV, most “other” included streaming breaking news and live events, then obits and a couple single-digit answers. "Other" in radio was almost non-existent.

This will be the last year I ask about users being able to assemble their own newscasts. The percentage peaked around 10% a number of years ago and has dropped to near nothing since then.

**Percentage of web content that's only on the web - 2015**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| All TV | 25.1% |
| Markets 1-25 | 26.4 |
| Markets 26-50 | 23 |
| Markets 51-100 | 26.9 |
| Markets 101-150 | 25.6 |
| Markets 151+ | 21.7 |
|  |  |
| Staff size |  |
| 51+ | 25.6 |
| 31 - 50 | 26.9 |
| 21 - 30 | 27.6 |
| 11 - 20 | 22 |
| 1 - 10 | 18 |
|  |  |
| All Radio | 18.7% |
| Major market | 18 |
| Large market | 19.9 |
| Medium market | 22.5 |
| Small market | 14.1 |

I’ve been waiting (mostly in vain) for these numbers to rise, and this year they did. Slightly. TV up 3 points from a year ago. Interestingly, the percentages don’t vary that much by market size or staff size – except that, in both cases, the smallest (market and staff) is a little lower. Stations in the Northeast report less original web content than everywhere else.

Radio, which had been even with TV last year fell back behind this time around, dropping 3 points overall.

**Percentage of web content that's user-generated - 2015**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| All TV | 8.2% |
| Markets 1-25 | 10.3 |
| Markets 26-50 | 10.8 |
| Markets 51-100 | 9.1 |
| Markets 101-150 | 5.9 |
| Markets 151+ | 6.6 |
|  |  |
| Staff size |  |
| 51+ | 10.3 |
| 31 - 50 | 8.2 |
| 21 - 30 | 7 |
| 11 - 20 | 8.8 |
| 1 - 10 | 4.4 |
|  |  |
| All Radio | 5% |
| Major market | 10.1 |
| Large market | 2.1 |
| Medium market | 3.5 |
| Small market | 5.5 |

This is another area I keep expecting to see growth ... which doesn't come. The overall number in TV is up less than a point from last year.

Radio dropped by less than a point from last year.

**TV station website traffic during the past 30 days - 2015**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Page Views (in millions) | Unique Visitors (in thousands) |
| All TV | 5.56 | 966.6 |
| Market Size |  |  |
| 1-25 | 17.23 | 2542.5 |
| 26-50 | 10.01 | 1389.1 |
| 51-100 | 3.37 | 587.3 |
| 101-150 | 2.49 | 421.7 |
| 151+ | 1.23 | 200 |

Led by top 50 markets, both page views and unique visitors in TV soared above last year. Both almost doubled overall.

Radio station web traffic is reported by too few news directors for me to break down the numbers beyond overall. And even those numbers are thinly reported. Based on the few dozen news directors and general managers who reported, average monthly radio station page views were 262,600, and average monthly unique visitors were 47,500. Page views are up from last year but unique visitors are down

**Business on the web**

**Selling stuff on the web**

The downward trend continued as far as stations selling stuff on their websites. This year, the percentage was 23.3% of TV stations selling something other than ads. That’s down slightly from last year’s 24.8%, but it continues a trend from 31% three years ago to 27.6% two years ago. Last year, I attributed the decline to station disinterest in investing money into selling stuff online when retransmission revenue kept growing with little to no investment in order to achieve that growth. Add increasing political money into the equation, and investing money in trying to boost web income becomes less and less compelling. At least for now. ABC affiliates and stations in the Northeast were a bit more likely than others to sell stuff online.

At the top of the list for stations that were selling something, almost half mentioned some sort of sponsorship or paid content. That included sections of the website, "ask the expert" or something along those lines. Not too far behind, stations noted deals and local Groupon-type offerings. Well down from that came contests and some sort of classified/product sales. Then pre-rolls and video.

The percentage of radio stations selling stuff on the web dropped to its lowest level since I first asked the question in 2011 -- down from last year's 24.5% to this year's 16.2%. Even if we just look at commercial stations, the number was 19.2%. Smaller markets were actually more likely to sell stuff online than larger ones (20.5% of stations with populations under 250,000 compared to 8.2% of stations in markets bigger than that. There were no consistent patterns otherwise -- except that stations in the Northeast were markedly more likely to sell stuff than stations anywhere else. For stations that are selling stuff, the most common items involved station swag ... followed by coupons or special deals. After that, it was just random, individual items.

**Is the station involved in any local Groupon/Social Living type offerings?**

Typically, these involve half-price offers with the proceeds commonly split between the station and the retailer, but the deals can vary quite a bit. In TV, participation in these offerings plunged from 44.5% three years ago to 31.5% two years ago to 23.3% last year … down to 19.1% this year. Markets 51 – 150 were highest in offering Groupon-type deals – primarily among ABC, CBS, Fox and NBC affiliates. When asked what they were offering, news directors listed the wide variety of interesting names they call their local half-price deals … although it’s hard to top Gannett’s DealChicken.

In radio, involvement in Groupon/Social Living type offerings also dropped to a new low: just 6.5% said yes, compared to 12% last year and 15% three years ago.

**Paywalls**

The prevalence of paywalls (a monetary charge to access a station website) in TV is up 33% from a year ago. Okay, that's statistically accurate but a tad misleading. In raw numbers, that would be up from 3 paywalls in 2013 to 4 last year. Three of the four are in markets 101+, but one is in a top 25 market. Another 3 stations say they’re considering it. That’s even lower than last year.

Radio was the same as last year, with 97.5% reporting no paywall (versus 97.1% a year ago). Of those without paywalls, 98.6% said they are not considering one. That's up a point from last year.

**News director role with the web site - 2015**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | In Charge Overall | In Charge of News Content Only | Other | No Management Role |
| All TV | 25.6% | 66.1% | 3.2% | 5.1% |
| Markets 1-25 | 37.5 | 50 | 7.5 | 5 |
| Markets 26-50 | 27.5 | 57.5 | 2.5 | 12.5 |
| Markets 51-100 | 21.2 | 70 | 3.8 | 5 |
| Markets 101-150 | 29.6 | 69 | 0 | 1.4 |
| Markets 151+ | 15.2 | 76.1 | 4.3 | 4.3 |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| All Radio | 24.5% | 51% | 3.9 | 20.6% |
| Major Market | 19.2 | 50 | 7.7 | 23.1 |
| Large Market | 22.2 | 44.4 | 3.7 | 29.6 |
| Medium Market | 21.8 | 60 | 3.6 | 14.5 |
| Small Market | 31.9 | 44.7 | 2.1 | 21.3 |

Overall, the TV numbers on website oversight are little changed from a year ago, and what changes exist resist following any consistent trends. Things appear to have settled down in website oversight. "Other," in almost all cases, involved either a situation where a news director worked with an internet director – or oversaw the management of the web site indirectly through someone who reported to the news director. Those two options were close to equal.

Radio web oversight changed quite a bit in the last year. Stations where the news directors was in charge overall rose by 7.6 points; websites where the news director was in charge of news content only rose by 6.4, and stations where the news director has no role in the website fell by 12 and a half points.

Major markets are those with 1 million or more 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.

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**About the Survey**

The RTDNA/Hofstra University Survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2014 among all 1,688 operating, non-satellite television stations and a random sample of 3,704 radio stations. Valid responses came from 1,281 television stations (75.9%) and 316 radio news directors and general managers representing 868 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.