**What's new online in 2016 for TV and radio**

**by Bob Papper**

* The most important new thing online
* Must-haves for a station website
* Content just for the web and user-generated content

**What's the most important new thing the station is doing online?**

Nearly 200 **TV** news directors took the time to respond, and, for the third year in a row, content was king. But the margin was a lot closer this year.

1. All told, 27.1% of TV news directors noted something about more, better, or special content. That’s down 9 points from a year ago. The top vote within content was simply having more of it on the web. Right behind that came new content that was just for the web and hadn’t been on air. Then came more video on the website, *Periscope* (which is live video-sharing software), and more investigative reporting. Then we had scattered answers: polls, weather, short web newscasts (labeled short-casts or mini-casts), more user-generated content, and more political content. News directors also noted commentary, blogs and podcasts, a new website for a special station project, more updating of stories on an ongoing basis, web cameras, a live web show, more long form story content, and slideshows.

2. Right behind content came streaming at 24.6%. It was second last year, but the percentage was up, and it was a much closer race this time around. Most TV news directors specifically noted live streaming of breaking news and events. That was followed by live streaming newscasts. A few news directors noted streaming recorded newscasts, and one simply said *Syncbak*, which is streaming software.

3. Number 3, at 16.3%, was social media. The biggest chunk of this involved “improving” social media and more efforts to engage the audience via *Facebook*. Some news directors noted *Twitter* and *Snapchat*, which is a video and text sharing application. Some talked about doing more to promote reporters via social media or simply making more of an effort to interact with the people who comment on stories online. There’s a lot more on social media in the separate social media article.

4. At 11.3%, I’d call number 3 technical. Mostly, that involved a new or better CMS (content management system) platform or a new (and also presumably better) website. A couple news directors mentioned better tracking of audience usage, and one news director noted the use of *Share Rocket*, which is a social media measuring service.

5. Right behind technical, at 10.3%, is what I’d label strategy or maybe planning and organization. Most often, this included stations mandating or opting for a digital first approach to news dissemination. Sometimes this showed up as more or better planning and emphasis on the website. A bunch of stations hired dedicated digital reporters, producers or managers to oversee the station’s digital efforts.

6. At 8.9%, apps and push alerts occupied sixth place. Most of that related to alerts, but some news directors also noted an app alert for teases, geo-targeting apps, and just general “apps” and “mobile.”

*Note that I have an extensive list of what are really social media applications and software in the separate social media article … along with brief descriptions of each.*

In all, 76.2% of TV news directors said they started something important online last year. That’s up 6 points from a year ago. Markets 151+, newsrooms with 1 to 20 staffers and Fox affiliates lagged all the others.

In **radio**, the percentage saying they started something important online in 2015 held steady with a year ago at 47%. Almost two-thirds of non-commercial stations said they started something new, while just 42% of commercial stations said the same. The bigger the market and the bigger the news department, the more likely that the station said it started something new online.

This year, more than a hundred radio news directors and general managers explained what they did. The challenge, of course, is to convert those answers into a cogent summary.

1. Nearly half (48.6%) mentioned something related to content in terms of what was new. The list included video; in-depth stories; keeping content fresher; posting more, more often and with better stories; more specialized reporting, including government, science, weather and sports; special weekly web-only programs and content; more on-demand newscasts and news; data visualization; more live streaming; more specialty content areas.

2. Technical issues came in at 21.5%. That included things like making the website more user friendly; integrating the website with mobile; enhancing the mobile experience; and redesigning the website.

3. Social media-related things came in at 18.7%. That included more and better postings on *Facebook*; posting more pictures on *Facebook* and *Twitter*; better use of *Twitter* and *Instagram*; more texting; hiring a social media person; and just increasing the use of social media.

Who has web sites? 2016

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| All TV | 100% | All Radio | 98.9%  |
| Market Size |  | Market Size |  |
| 1 - 25 | 100 | Major | 100  |
| 26 - 50 | 100 | Large | 100  |
| 51 - 100 | 100 | Medium | 99  |
| 101 - 150 | 100 | Small | 97.8  |
| 151+ | 100 |  |  |

For the fifth year in a row, I didn't find a single TV station (that runs local news) that doesn't have a website.

Radio still hasn't hit 100%, although it continues to edge toward that. All of the stations without web sites were commercial stations with a staff of one, and all but one were in the smallest markets (fewer than 50,000 people).

How many web sites include local news? 2016

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| All TV | 100% | All Radio | 79.8%  |
| Market Size |  | Market Size |  |
| 1 - 25 | 100 | Major | 80  |
| 26 - 50 | 100 | Large | 79.2  |
| 51 - 100 | 100 | Medium | 84.4 |
| 101 - 150 | 100 | Small | 74.7  |
| 151+ | 100 |  |  |

In TV, once again, every website (of stations that run local news) includes local news. That's been true for the last six years. Radio numbers moved up just under a point from last year. In this category, non-commercial stations lagged commercial ones, although the difference was just 5 points.

Elements of local news web sites - 2016

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| TV | News Video | Still Pics | Text | Live strmng | Event cal | Live Nwscsts | Mobile related | User gnrtd | Live Cam | Audio | Rcrded Nwscsts | Strmng Audio | Blogs | Pdcsts | Other |
| All TV: | 99.3% | 97.5%  | 91.9%  | 79.6% | 78.6% | 72.6%  | 69.5%  | 68.4%  | 63.9% | 56.1%  | 42.8%  | 38.6%  | 36.5%  | 8.4%  | 1.8%  |
| Mrkts 1 - 25 | 100 | 97.4  | 89.7  | 94.9 | 74.4  | 84.6  | 64.1  | 74.4  | 79.5  | 64.1  | 51.3  | 51.3  | 61.5  | 23.1  | 0  |
| Mrkts 26 - 50 | 100 | 97.6  | 100  | 97.6 | 81  | 95.2  | 88.1  | 83.3  | 78.6  | 61.9  | 47.6  | 52.4  | 52.4  | 11.9  | 2.4  |
| Mrkts 51 - 100 | 98.8 | 98.8  | 87.8  | 81.7 | 72  | 76.8  | 76.8  | 70.7  | 68.3  | 57.3  | 51.2  | 36.6  | 34.1  | 7.3  | 2.4  |
| Mrkts 101 - 150 | 98.7 | 96.1  | 92.2  | 68.8 | 80.5  | 58.4  | 57.1  | 62.3  | 53.2  | 50.6  | 36.4  | 29.9  | 23.4  | 1.3  | 1.3  |
| Mrkts 151+ | 100 | 97.8  | 93.3  | 64.4  | 88.9  | 57.8  | 64.4  | 55.6  | 46.7  | 51.1  | 26.7  | 33.3  | 26.7  | 6.7  | 2.2  |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Radio | Text | Still Pics | Strmng Audio | Audio | Event cal | Pdcsts | News Vid | Rcrded Nwscsts | Mobile related | Blogs | Live Nwscsts | User gnrtd | Live Cam | Other |
| All Radio: | 82.3%  | 71.2%  | 61.1%  | 60.6%  | 49%  | 34.3%  | 34.3%  | 33.3%  | 26.8% | 26.8%  | 14.6%  | 12.6%  | 5.1%  | 4.5%  |
| Major Market | 90  | 80  | 75 | 80  | 30  | 70  | 50  | 50  | 50  | 45  | 25  | 15  | 20  | 5  |
| Large Market | 84.2  | 76.3  | 65.8  | 65.8  | 47.4  | 47.4  | 55.3  | 23.7  | 44.7  | 39.5  | 18.4  | 15.8  | 7.9  | 5.3 |
| Medium Market | 81.5  | 64.2  | 66.7  | 56.8  | 53.1  | 38.8  | 32.1  | 33.3  | 23.5  | 25.9  | 12.3 | 11.1  | 2.5 | 1.2  |
| Small Market | 79.7  | 74.6  | 45.8  | 55.9  | 50.8  | 8.5  | 18.6  | 33.9  | 11.9  | 13.6  | 11.9  | 11.9  | 1.7 | 8.5 |

**Television websites**

Let’s divide TV websites into six groups. First, the “virtually everybody does” category: news video, still pictures and text. All in the high 90 percentile range. Next is the, “you really should be doing this” with three-quarters of TV websites are doing this: live streaming of news and events, live newscasts and calendar of events. Live streaming and live newscasts were two of the biggest gainers in this year’s survey. Then, there’s the, “you should also be doing this” with about two-thirds of TV websites on board: mobile-related, user-generated content, and live cameras. All three went up this year. At a little over half, there’s audio in the next group. Then we’re into the optional extras at around a third of TV websites: streaming audio, recorded newscasts and blogs. Recorded newscasts were up in the last year; blogs edged up slightly; streaming audio fell slightly. Under 10% in the, “it doesn’t seem to matter much”: podcasts, which actually went down from a year ago.

Generally, the bigger the market, the more complex the station website. Staff size was less clearly correlated, although websites at the smallest newsrooms, 10 or fewer staffers, tended to bring down the numbers pretty much across the board. “Other” commercial stations tend to bring down the numbers for text, live cameras, live newscasts, blogs, mobile and user-generated content. Non-commercial stations tend to bring down the numbers for almost everything.

Not too many differences among network affiliates except for Fox stations, which were noticeably lower in live cameras, mobile, user-generated content and calendar of events … and a lot higher in podcasts. ABC affiliates were a bit lower in recorded newscasts.

There were relatively few regional differences, but there were some. Fewer live cameras, mobile-related and user-generated content in the West; less live streaming in the Northeast; more live newscasts in the Midwest; and more recorded newscasts in the Northeast.

**Radio websites**

After a slight overall drop in the complexity of radio websites last year, radio was mostly unchanged this time around. Only a couple things went down, but almost nothing fell by more than a point. The biggest changes came in blogs (up 11.1) and user generated content (up 9.7). Recorded newscasts, event calendar and streaming audio all rose by about seven and a half points. Mobile-related went up by almost 7.

Last year was the last time I asked about users being able to assemble their own newscasts in either radio or TV. The percentage peaked around 10% a number of years ago and had dropped to near nothing since then.

**Percentage of web content that's only on the web - 2016**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| All TV | 27%  |
| Markets 1-25 | 35.3  |
| Markets 26-50 | 29.7  |
| Markets 51-100 | 26.8  |
| Markets 101-150 | 25  |
| Markets 151+ | 22.9  |
|  |  |
| Staff size |  |
| 51+ | 30.3  |
| 31 - 50 | 23.3  |
| 21 - 30 | 31.2  |
| 11 - 20 | 18.8  |
| 1 - 10 | 27.5 |
|  |  |
| All Radio | 23.5%  |
| Major market | 24.6  |
| Large market | 24.8  |
| Medium market | 25.5  |
| Small market | 19.9  |

I keep waiting for these numbers to shoot up – at least in TV. And I’ll continue to wait. Overall, TV is up about 2 points from last year after a 3 point increase the year before. Top 50 markets are up almost 16 points from a year ago, but there was virtually no movement in all the markets below that.

Radio rebounded this year after dropping 3 points a year ago. Radio went up almost five points, and that growth was fairly uniform across all market sizes. Commercial stations lead non-commercial ones by about 5 points in this category.

**Percentage of web content that's user-generated - 2016**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| All TV | 8.8%  |
| Markets 1-25 | 9.6  |
| Markets 26-50 | 10.1  |
| Markets 51-100 | 11  |
| Markets 101-150 | 7.3  |
| Markets 151+ | 5.7  |
|  |  |
| Staff size |  |
| 51+ | 8.6  |
| 31 - 50 | 10.1  |
| 21 - 30 | 10  |
| 11 - 20 | 3.7  |
| 1 - 10 | 5  |
|  |  |
| All Radio | 10.2%  |
| Major market | 5.8  |
| Large market | 11.5  |
| Medium market | 10.5  |
| Small market | 10.5  |

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. Again. All the growth (such as it was) came in markets 51 to 150.

Radio rose by more than 5 points this year – despite a 5-point drop in major markets.

**Web traffic**

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

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Page Views (in millions) | Unique Visitors (in thousands) |
| All TV | 6.62  | 839.7 |
| Market Size |  |  |
| 1-25 | 9.69  | 1336.3  |
| 26-50 | 13.54  | 1453.9  |
| 51-100 | 6.61 | 774.4  |
| 101-150 | 3.39  | 537.4  |
| 151+ | 1.17  | 306.5  |

Overall, in TV, page views were up over 1 million compared to last year, but unique visitors dropped by about 130,000. Top 25 market numbers dropped substantially from a year ago, but almost all other numbers were up.

Radio station web traffic has been reported by too few news directors and general managers for me to break down the numbers beyond an overall figure. But we’re getting closer (about one-quarter reporting), and I hope to provide more data next year. Overall, average monthly page views came in at 266,600, and average monthly unique visitors were 65,100. Page view numbers are virtually identical to a year ago, but unique visitors are up substantially from last year’s 47,500.

Note that web staffing numbers and newsroom participation in working on the web are included in the staffing article. Web profitability, selling stuff on the web and paywalls are discussed in the business of news articles.

***Bob Papper is Emeritus Distinguished Professor of Journalism at Hofstra University and has worked extensively in radio and TV news. This research was supported by the Lawrence Herbert School of Communication at Hofstra University and the Radio Television Digital News Association.***

**About the Survey**

The RTDNA/Hofstra University Survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2015 among all 1,681 operating, non-satellite television stations and a random sample of 4,037 radio stations. Valid responses came from 1,286 television stations (76.5%) and 484 radio news directors and general managers representing 1,316 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.