**What’s new in mobile and social media on radio and TV**

**by Bob Papper**

* Lots new in mobile this year
* What’s new in social media this year
* A (pretty) complete list of software being used … and what it’s being used for

**What's the most important new thing you started doing with mobile in 2016?**

After a dip last year to 59% a year ago, the percentage of TV news directors saying they started something important in mobile jumped to 69.5% this year. That’s higher than the percentage of news directors who said they started something new in social media last year. And that’s why I’m starting with mobile. Generally, the bigger the market and the bigger the newsroom, the more likely that something new took place. Only the very smallest newsrooms fell below the 50% mark. For whatever reason, ABC, Fox, non-commercial stations and stations in the Northeast lagged behind the others.

Almost 200 **television** news directors answered the question this year about what they were doing new in mobile.

1. Once again, app development came in on top at 38%. App development broke down into three nearly equal parts. Slightly ahead of the others came adding an app. Sometimes it was noted as a news app, but more commonly it was just “added an app (or apps).” Right behind that came weather or severe weather apps. And not too far behind that came redesigning apps. We have now reached the point where some of those original apps need to be updated and improved; this was the year that we started to see a significant number of those.

2. Content areas came in next at 16%. Some of the distinctions between categories involve splitting hairs, but I categorized by emphasis in the comments, and I think it helps in understanding the direction that the industry is heading. The biggest single area within content was an increased emphasis on video. More and better and better embedded. A fair number of news directors simply noted more content. One news director used the term, “snackable.” I liked that. Some noted specific areas of new content for mobile: political, user generated content, live, produced content for mobile, long form storytelling, a mobile sports show, a mobile series, short newscasts specifically for mobile.

3. Right behind content, at 15.5%, came alerts. Some news directors noted a switch from text alerts to push alerts.

4. After alerts came streaming at 13.4%. That broke down into two main areas. First came just live streaming. Sometimes noting news or events, but mostly just saying live streaming. Well behind that came live streaming newscasts. One news director added, “finally!” Only a couple noted streaming recorded newscasts.

5. Not far behind came web and mobile redesign at 12.3%. This showed up as things like redesigning the website to make it more mobile friendly or have a common design approach regardless of login device. Also included are mobile redesigns to improve the look and/or functionality. Some noted improved linkages between web and mobile, and I also included a number of comments about altering the approach to posting to make it mobile first.

6. At 2.7%, promotion came in next. Some of that was on air promotion of mobile and some was mobile promotion of the web or on air. Then came 2.1% of scattered, single answers.

Almost exactly two-thirds (66.1%) of **radio** news directors and general managers said they did nothing new in mobile in 2015. Disappointingly, that’s up 3 points from a year ago. Only non-commercial stations and markets of a million people or more passed the 50 percent mark.

Of the third (33.9%) who said they did start something new, apps came in at the top at 30.4%. New apps, better apps, more apps, specialized apps. Next, at 27.5%, came better mobile design and making the website more mobile friendly. At 10.1% came streaming (which is also app development). Live events, sports, news, sometimes just improved. Then news alerts and a bunch of one and two mention items, including things like giveaways, geo targeting, more and better content, texting, and just paying more attention to mobile.

**What's the most important new thing you started doing with social media in 2015?**

More than 150 **TV** news directors gave specific answers to this question. I’ve divided the answers into eight general areas plus other.

On top, at 36.8%, is strategy. Here I include not simply the news director saying that they developed or implemented a strategy, but also general strategic decision-making. Many of the answers related to placing increased emphasis on – or actually forcing – talent and reporters to post more or a minimum number or specific types of posts. Also in the category – and also with a substantial number – the hiring of producers, editors or managers to oversee or handle social media. I also included things like strategic targeting of posts, hiring a company or buying software to track the effectiveness or reach of social media posts, training staff in the use of social media and *stopping* the use of marketing posts in Facebook. One news director noted they had opened up Facebook so that anyone in the newsroom could post to it. Another news director said they were “producing more content specifically for our social spaces – not teases, true social-only content.”

In second place, at 16.7%, came more. More active posting, more content, more focus on *Instagram*, more streaming, more use of *Snapchat*, more blogging, more *YouTube*. Just more.

Next is *Twitter* at 10.3%. Most of these involved “more emphasis” on *Twitter*. Some noted live tweeting at news or sports events.

Right behind that, at 9.2%, comes what I call Interaction and Engagement. That may be the goal of much of social media, but these comments noted that specifically. Like “more interaction with comments on *Facebook*,” more reading social media posts on air, or even just better posting to engage the audience more, live viewer chats and polling. One news director wrote that they were “focused on posting and promoting highly sharable content. [We’ve] moved away from being a ‘news wire’ to more of a ‘Look at/Share This’ content.”

Next came *Facebook* at 8.6%. As with *Twitter*, most of the comments just said *Facebook* or more emphasis on *Facebook*. A couple said *Facebook* Mentions.

Not far behind that is video at 7.5%. Sometimes that was video on *YouTube* or using *Videolicious*; more often it was just posting, using or sending more video.

At 5.2% came promotion. Some involved promoting social media on air and some using social media to promote the web or TV newscasts. “We are now ‘promoting’ certain content to specific areas and groups in an attempt to drive them to our web site or on air product,” wrote one news director.

Experimentation came in at 3.4%. One news director said the station had created an internal team to experiment with social media. Some noted experimenting with various software or trying new things.

Then came a handful of individual items.

In TV, two-thirds (67.1%) of news directors said they did something new in social media in 2015. That’s down about 5 points from a year ago. Only top 25 markets, the biggest newsrooms, CBS affiliates and stations in the West came in noticeably above that figure.

**Radio** was almost the opposite, with only a third, at 33.7% , saying they did something new in social media in 2015. Only the largest newsrooms (10 or more staffers) and the largest markets managed to pass the 50% mark.

The two top answers for what’s new in social media on radio were *Twitter* and *Facebook*. Sometimes news directors and general managers left it at that; sometimes they elaborated about more or better or more targeted postings. Or required postings. Right behind were answers that basically came down to content – better, more of it, posted more often. A bunch of radio news directors and general managers simply answered more or better social media. Some mentioned more video or more audio. One said they hired someone to oversee and do it; one said they’ve started to use analytics to better craft posts; one said they got rid of it. Really?

**Facebook**

Does the TV station or newsroom have a Facebook page? 2016

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Station only | Newsroom only | Both | No |
| All TV | 40.2%  | 31.5%  | 28.3%  | 0  |
| Market |  |  |  |  |
| 1 - 25 | 23.1  | 30.8  | 46.2  | 0  |
| 26 - 50 | 54.8  | 28.6  | 16.7  | 0  |
| 51 - 100 | 45.1  | 25.6  | 29.3  | 0  |
| 101 - 150 | 39  | 37.7  | 23.4  | 0  |
| 151+ | 34.8  | 34.8 | 30.4  | 0  |
| Staff size |  |  |  |  |
| 51+ | 43.7  | 38  | 18.3  | 0  |
| 31 - 50 | 37.7  | 26.1  | 36.2  | 0  |
| 21 - 30 | 33.9  | 35.7  | 30.4  | 0  |
| 11 - 20 | 43.3  | 26.7  | 30 | 0  |
| 1 - 10 | 55  | 20  | 25  | 0  |

Most of these **TV** numbers are similar to last year, but the percentage of “station only” *Facebook* pages rose just over 5 points while “newsroom only” and “both” had small decreases. Most of the growth in “station only” appears to come from the smallest newsrooms. There were no TV stations in this year’s survey that didn’t have a *Facebook* page.

Does the radio station or newsroom have a Facebook page? 2016

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Station only | Newsroom only | Both | No |
| All Radio | 73%  | 2.8% | 15.6%  | 8.5%  |
| Market |  |  |  |  |
| Major | 83.3  | 0  | 8.3  | 8.3  |
| Large | 68.4  | 2.6 | 26.3  | 2.6  |
| Medium | 78  | 2.4  | 13.4  | 6.1  |
| Small | 65.7  | 4.5  | 14.9  | 14.9  |

**Radio** use of *Facebook* crept up by 0.7 from last year … which almost puts the number in line with two years ago. Use of *Facebook* is least likely in the smallest markets, in the smallest newsrooms, and in the South. Overall, more radio newsrooms have *Facebook* pages (apart from or in addition to station accounts). Both “newsroom only” and “both” rose 2-3 points in the last year.

**Twitter**

Is the TV newsroom actively involved with Twitter? 2016

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Constantly | Daily | Periodically | No |
| All TV | 66.8%  | 27.3%  | 5.6%  | 0.3%  |
| Market |  |  |  |  |
| 1 - 25 | 87.2 | 10.3  | 2.6  | 0  |
| 26 - 50 | 83.3  | 14.3  | 2.4  | 0  |
| 51 - 100 | 78  | 18.3  | 3.7  | 0  |
| 101 - 150 | 51.9 | 39  | 7.8  | 1.3  |
| 151+ | 39.1  | 50  | 10.9  | 0  |
| Staff size |  |  |  |  |
| 51+ | 88.7  | 11.3  | 0  | 0  |
| 31 - 50 | 75.4  | 21.7  | 2.9  | 0  |
| 21 - 30 | 48.2  | 48.2  | 3.6  | 0  |
| 11 - 20 | 50  | 36.7  | 13.3  | 0  |
| 1 - 10 | 15  | 50  | 30  | 5  |

On the surface, it appears that *Twitter* use is unchanged from a year ago – with almost all the overall numbers almost exactly the same. But there was a change. The biggest markets went up in the “constantly” column (from “daily”), but markets 101+ dropped from “constantly” (and into the “daily” column). The bigger newsrooms, 31+ staffers, either went up in “constantly” or held steady, but smaller newsrooms all dropped in “constantly.” NBC and especially CBS and other commercial and non-commercial were below ABC and Fox in the “constantly” column. Geography made no difference.

Is the radio newsroom actively involved with Twitter? 2016

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Constantly | Daily | Periodically | No |
| All Radio | 21.5%  | 22%  | 16.7%  | 39.7%  |
| Market |  |  |  |  |
| Major | 47.8  | 30.4  | 0  | 21.7  |
| Large | 31.6  | 23.7  | 21.1  | 23.7  |
| Medium | 20.7  | 19.5  | 15.9  | 43.9  |
| Small | 7.6  | 21.2  | 21.2  | 50  |

This past year showed only small growth in the use of *Twitter* by radio stations. The percentage using *Twitter* at all rose less than a point and a half. Both “constantly” and “daily” increased – but only by about 3 points each. *Twitter* use is at its highest – by far – in the very biggest newsrooms; it’s less common in the South.

**Other software programs in use**

News directors have regularly volunteered names of software that they’re using, but this year RTDNA asked me to seek out a complete list.

I’ve been collecting and publishing data on *Facebook* and *Twitter* for a number of years now, so the question is *other* than those two, what are you using? Let’s start with the list itself:

* *Banjo* is a website and app that allows users to see what’s going on in the world in real time.
* *Flickr* is an image and video hosting website, used for sharing those photos and videos. It’s owned by Yahoo.
* *Google+* (or Google Plus) is a social network, akin to *Facebook* (and well behind *Facebook* in subscribers).
* *Hootsuite* is a social media management system that works to coordinate many of those other software programs.
* *IFTTT* is a web based system allowing the user to create conditional automated distribution of messages or postings. The name stands for *If This Then That*.
* *Instagram* is used for online mobile photo and video sharing and social networking. Instagram is owned by *Facebook*.
* *LinkedIn* is a business-oriented social networking service.
* *NPR One* is an audio app that allows the user to stream NPR stories and podcasts.
* *Numerous* tracks and updates all the numbers you tell it you care about (e.g. birthdays, anniversaries, etc.).
* *Periscope* is an online live video streaming service (app). It’s owned by *Twitter*.
* *Pinterest* is a “visual discovery tool” to help people find and save creative ideas.
* *Rdio* was an online music streaming service. *Rdio* went into bankruptcy, and many of its assets were purchased by *Pandora*.
* *Slack* is a cloud-based messaging app for teams.
* *Snapchat* is a video messaging app.
* *SoundCloud* is a global online audio sharing platform, which can be used for uploading and recording audio.
* *Storify* allows people to use social media (like *Facebook*, *Twitter*, etc.) to create stories and timelines.
* *Tagboards* are included within websites to allow people to see and leave messages without registering.
* *TuneIn* is an online service allowing access to thousands of radio stations, programs and podcasts.
* *Tumblr* is a social networking and microblogging platform. It’s owned by *Yahoo*.
* *Videolicious* is a software program that enables users to create, edit and publish videos just using an iPhone. Android software is in the works but not available as this is written.
* *Vine* is an app used to create and share very short videos. It’s now owned by *Twitter*.
* *YouTube* … you know what *YouTube* is – a video-sharing website. It’s owned by *Google*.

In **television**, 73% of news directors said they’re using social media beyond just *Facebook* and *Twitter*. And 76.8% of those made *Instagram* the easy winner. Although I didn’t ask how stations were using the software, many news directors volunteered answers. For *Instagram*, the list included branding, mostly behind the scenes pictures, reporter pictures, sharing content, weather updates, re-sharing user generated content, Friday night high school football, visual promotion of stories, pictures of events, share content and promotions, short videos, interact with the audience.

Well behind, at 20.4%, came *Periscope*. News directors noted they used it for behind the scenes pictures, streaming, teases, and live events.

After that came *Pinterest* at 16%. News directors said they used it for pictures.

Right behind that, at 15.5%, is *Snapchat*. News directors noted using it for a personal side of the newsroom, weather pictures and sports.

Then a tie between two Google properties: *Google+* and *YouTube* … each at 8.8%. *YouTube* was used for videos, interviews and uploading stories. News directors didn’t mention how they were using *Google+*.

*Videolicious* came in at 2.2% and was being used for teases, according to one news director.

Other software just got single mentions: *Storify*, *Vine*, *Slack*, *Numerous*, *Banjo* and *Tagboard*.

Generally, the bigger the market and the bigger the staff, the more likely a TV station was using social media beyond just *Facebook* and *Twitter*.

In **radio**, almost 32% of news directors and general managers listed various software other (than *Facebook* and *Twitter*) that they’re using. That *other* list turned out to be *Instagram* and other. *Instagram* was mentioned 50% more often than all the other software combined. Everything else was in single digits, starting with *Periscope*, then *YouTube*, then *Snapchat*, then everything else. A number of the NPR affiliates mentioned *NPR One*.

**Apps**

The percentage of **TV** stations with apps rose to 93.1% this year – up more than 5 points from a year ago. The bigger the staff, the more likely that the station had one or more apps. The average station had 2 apps and the median was 2. That's up 0.2 on average, although the median remained the same. The top station had 6 apps, and quite a few had that number. Only 3.1% of stations charged for apps. That's up one from last year but down from 6% two years ago.

Surprisingly, maybe astonishingly, the percentage of **radio** stations with apps actually fell slightly from last year, from 49.7% to 48.8%. It’s not much of a drop, but it took place when I’d have expected another year of big growth. The average station is at 0.9 apps (again), but the median (typical) number remained at zero. Smaller groups, smaller newsrooms and, especially, smaller markets kept the number down. Non-commercial stations were more likely to have apps than commercial stations, but non-commercial stations tended to have fewer apps per station than commercial stations. The maximum number of apps in this year’s radio survey was 7. One station reported charging for its app … but it’s probably more likely that they misread the question or answer.

Note that there’s a fuzzy dividing line between information in this Mobile/Social Media article and the article on the web … so please be sure and check out both.

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**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.