**What’s New in Social Media and Mobile on Radio and TV**

**by Bob Papper**

* What’s new in social media this year (with lots of details)
* There’s plenty new in mobile this year, too
* What stations are doing to reach millennials

The latest RTDNA/Hofstra University Survey found a lot going on with social media and mobile in both radio and TV.

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

More than 200 **TV** news directors gave specific answers to this question. That’s 33% more than a year ago.

Given that 55.5% of TV news directors included Facebook Live in their answer, I could probably just divide the answer between Facebook Live and other. Except, in fact, many of the other things probably included Facebook Live – even if it wasn’t specifically mentioned.

What did stations do with FBL? Breaking news was mentioned more than any other one thing. Bad weather, polls, sports specials, major events, behind-the-scenes. One station said they made a point of using Facebook Live weekly. Another said they use it every day before every newscast.

Inside the Facebook umbrella: More content, including weather, sports and special shows, exclusive interviews, unique content, special web stories, polls, user generated content, more video and video specifically for Facebook, digital only video.

More posting to Facebook (news directors didn’t note what content).

More posting … likely heavily to Facebook (although the name wasn’t there), including from the field and more personal stuff on reporters and anchors rather than just stories.

More live streaming … again, probably to Facebook (and others) without noting which. One news director noted that they always try to live stream the big story.

Picking up the social media crumbs after Facebook:

* Strategic moves came in next … at a relatively paltry 16.3%. This included things like developing a specific social media strategy, lots of staff training, trying to drive traffic to newscasts, “purposeful and scheduled posting,” requiring staff to post to Facebook and Twitter eight times a day, a social media checklist for reporters. Also in this group, hiring people specifically to work on social media or oversee social media. Or just changing responsibilities so that half of someone’s job became social media. Also here, tracking social media and the station anchors and reporters who post it. A couple mentioned using Share Rocket to track. I also included in this category efforts to engage the audience in more of a conversation rather than trying to drive them somewhere or simply promote something. Efforts at greater interactivity and live chats with viewers.
* At 12.4% came various other software used to interact with viewers. Instagram first, then Snapchat, Videolicious, Twitter, YouTube and Periscope.

Then it’s just random answers.

In TV, 85.7% of news directors said they did something new in social media in 2016. That’s way up from last year’s 67.1%. In fact, it’s the highest level ever. The bigger the market, the higher the percentage, but even markets 151+ came in above last year at 76.3%. Only the smallest newsrooms were under the 80 percentile mark.

A new question this year asked, **Who oversees the station’s social media?**

In a majority of cases, the person in charge is the person in charge of social and/or digital media … 53.6%. I’ll come back to that in a minute. Next came the news director at 28%. Then a digital producer or editor at 9.2%. Then the executive producer at 2.4%, followed by the assistant news director at 2% and the assignment manager or managing editor at 1.6%. Then we’re down to one and two station answers: marketing director, creative services, assignment editor, corporate, promotions manager, a news producer, and editorial team.

Back to the person in charge. I think we need to work on this. I’ve been surveying TV and radio stations for 23 years, and most TV positions have a single name. Sure, there’s the news assistant, assistant or associate producer variance, and some news directors are also vice presidents, but otherwise, it’s pretty straightforward. Not so for the person in charge of social media or digital. Here, alphabetically, are the 37 titles I collected:

Digital Content Coordinator …. Digital Content Director … Digital Content Executive Producer … Digital Content Manager … Digital Content Supervisor … Digital Coordinator … Digital Director … Digital Executive Producer … Digital/Interactive Director … Digital Manager … Digital Managing Editor … Digital Media Manager … Digital Media News Director … Digital Media Supervisor … Digital Supervisor … Director of Audience Engagement … Director of Digital … Director of Digital Content … Director of Digital Media … Director of Integrated Media … Director of New Media … Director of Online Content … Director of Web/Social Media … Emerging Media Director … Evolving Media Manager … Executive Producer of Digital … Executive Producer of Digital Content … Executive Producer of Digital Content and Strategy … Internet Director … Manager, Digital Content … Managing Content Editor … Social Media Manager … New Media Manager … Social Media Director … Social Media Executive Producer … Vice President of Digital … Web Content Manager. Perhaps we could winnow the list down to a half dozen or so?

New efforts in social media in **radio** went up by seven and a half points to 41.2%. Stations with the biggest staffs, in the larger markets, larger local station groups and non-commercial stations led the way. Still, enlightening specifics were hard to come by.

For those doing something new:

* Facebook Live (and live streaming) led the way at 32.5%. That included posting video clips, video from events and promotions, posting video of in-studio artists, and streaming newscasts.
* Close behind, at 28.8%, came a mixture of strategy and “doing more.” I put them together because determining to do more or more regularly is, indeed, a strategy. News directors and general managers noted establishing regular daily or weekly posting goals, tracking posts, getting more employees involved, interacting more with the audience, being more aggressive, posting more links, doing more contests, even putting someone in charge of social media.
* Next came content at 13.8%. That included pictures, breaking news, videos, more visually appealing material and posting long-form material.
* Instagram was noted by 6.3% … Twitter by 5% … then it was bits and pieces. Software mentions, podcasts, blogging and “trying it out.”

**What's the most important new thing you started doing with mobile in 2017?**

For the second year in a row, more than two-thirds of **TV** news directors (68.7%) said they were doing something new in mobile this past year. That’s almost identical to a year ago. In the past, the bigger the market and the bigger the newsroom, the more likely that the station was doing something new in mobile. Not this year. Every grouping was pretty much the same except the very smallest markets and the very smallest newsrooms. In fact, without newsrooms with 1 to 10 staffers, three-quarters of all stations would have been involved in something new with mobile. For whatever reason, Fox, NBC, non-commercial stations and stations in the Northeast lagged behind the others. Fox, non-commercial stations and stations in the Northeast were less likely last year, too.

Almost 200 **television** news directors answered the question this year about what they were doing new in mobile. And there were some big changes in mobile from last year to this. Latest watchwords: enhanced … redesigned … updated … upgraded.

1. App development remained in first place … as it has, but, at 28.5%, it’s down about 10 points from a year ago. Leading the list: weather apps, including radar and special severe weather apps. Right behind were redesigned apps, including just about everything. Then adding apps. Some were simply more, but several stations developed apps for the very first time. Then traffic apps … and even a sports app (but just one).
2. Push alerts. Up 10 points (and two places) to 25.3% from a year ago, push alerts and notifications were a major area of development and refinement in the past year. Here, enhanced and refined were the key words used. Special news categories of push alerts. More specific. More aggressive. For school closing and weather. Especially to drive people to TV. Not always louder … sometimes softer: silent to be less annoying … and fewer but more targeted.
3. Streaming … up a place at 18.3%. Live streaming – new and improved … and a whole lot more. Streaming newscasts got quite a few mentions along with streaming more events. Also contributing to the total: Facebook Live.
4. A broad category I’ll call strategy and technical redesign. Leading in this category came new, cleaner, easier-to-use mobile. Again, redesign was a common term here. Just behind that were mentions of a new mobile-first strategy, including a newsroom reorganization to put the emphasis on mobile. A bunch of stations introduced a new CMS (content management system) -- mostly to make mobile easier to use – both for customers as well as for photographer and reporter postings. Throw in some digital only hires in the category.
5. Content. Down three places and less than half what it was a year ago … now at 7%. More video came in at the top of this, including special short form video just for mobile. New content just behind: school closings, election-related, special topics, just for mobile and just plain more. Even user generated content got a mention here.
6. Barely showing up at 2.7% each: software and miscellaneous. Software included Instagram, Videolicious and Snapchat … and a mention for NewsOn, which, as a growing mobile app news service, is clearly a bit different.

Almost two-thirds (64.2%) of **radio** news directors and general managers said they did nothing new in mobile in 2016. That’s down less than 2 points from a year ago. The only group passing the 50 percentile mark were stations in markets of 1 million or more.

Of the third (35.8%) who said they did start something new …

* Apps dominated the list at 54.7%. That’s 80% higher than a year ago. New apps, better apps, more apps, specialized apps, updated apps. Apps for contests, discounts, giveaways, and a county fair. Apps for TuneIn and non-commercial apps for NPR One.
* Next, at 21.9%, came streaming. Better, for breaking news, for special events, Facebook Live. That’s more than double last year’s streaming total.
* At 7.8%, better mobile design and making the website more mobile friendly. That category was a strong number 2 last year.
* Various efforts at texting came next at 4.7%.
* Then a tie between developing a podcast and just plain (finally) doing something. Both at 3.1%

A new question this year asked, **Who oversees the radio station’s social media?**

Twenty-two different positions were listed as being in charge of social media at radio stations. And the total would be way more if I included multiple names for the same position. I spent quite a few years working in radio (as well as TV), but I don’t remember having that many positions in the whole station. News director came out on top at 32% … followed by general or station manager at 20.4%. Next came a tie between operations/operations manager and digital manager/director … each at 8.8%. That’s where we find the winner of the longest radio job title: “Director of Digital Strategy and Community Engagement.” At 3.4% we have owner or corporate officer. At 2% we have a tie between reporter/anchor and IT/webmaster. Then we have one or two votes for another 15 positions – everything from sales manager to traffic manager to associate producer to “all.” I don’t even know what that means.

**Is the station doing anything specific to reach younger (18 to 34 year old) viewers?**

Almost two-thirds of **TV** news directors (62.8%) answered the question in the affirmative. And that number held pretty steady regardless of group. The only exceptions were the smallest markets (43.8%) and the smallest newsrooms (38.5%).

There were over 300 answers on what stations were doing to reach millennials, but I’m afraid that you’re not going to learn a lot of new secrets here.

* Over half (54.8%) said what they were doing was “**social media**.” Some were as bold as to say that they were “emphasizing social media” or “aggressively pushing social media,” but I put those in the same category as the ones who just said “social media.”
* Coming in second, at 14.8%, were news directors who said they were pushing specific **software**. This is the year of Facebook Live, and a third of the mentions were for that along with a scattering of just Facebook. Snapchat came in next, closely followed by Instagram, then, farther back, Twitter, Burst and YouTube. I included podcasting in this category, although the trend has actually been away from podcasting for TV stations.
* Just behind software, at 14.1%, came **younger-oriented content on digital platforms**. One news director said they were doing live chats aimed at millennials. Otherwise, there were no specifics on what that millennial content was.
* At 9.8% came a **millennial-oriented digital strategy**. In most cases, that’s all the information I got. One news director said their station had created a website specifically for millennials. A bunch of Sinclair news directors noted Sinclair’s efforts with Circa. Circa describes itself as a “mobile-friendly, video-driven news and entertainment portal” aimed at millennials and emphasizing shareable content and easy customization.
* No other area hit the 2% mark. Five stations noted new on-air programs aimed at millennials (or at least younger people). Another five noted alterations to one or more newscasts to aim it at millennials or running a newscast at a non-traditional time; another noted a faster-paced show; and another mentioned including comments on the air. Four stations noted digital hires or paid internships, although it wasn’t clear how those internships figured in. Three mentioned technology: measuring social media impact (social media performance screens are becoming more and more common in newsrooms), Roku and OTT (over-the-top content).

Half of **radio** news directors and general managers said they were doing something specific to reach younger (18 to 34 year old) listeners. More non-commercial than commercial … more in bigger newsrooms than smaller ones … less in the Northeast.

More than a hundred answered the question on what they were doing to reach younger listeners?

* At the top of the list, at 36.4%, came social media. That included new social media pages, a new approach to social media, the use of Facebook.
* At 23.6%, came music format. That might be a switch to a younger format or simply that the station’s format appealed to younger listeners.
* Next, at 13.6%, came appearances at high school or college events and/or instruction at high schools or colleges.
* At 10.9%, broadcast of college and/or high school news or, more commonly, sports. Just behind that, at 10% came contests and promotions aimed at younger listeners. At 9.1% came special programs on air or online (or both) geared toward younger listeners. In at least a couple cases, those programs were done by enlisting young people to help or even produce them.
* At 5.5% came podcasts geared toward younger listeners and a different news approach aimed specifically younger.
* Then, at 2.7%, a digital first approach to information … followed by a variety of mostly individual answers.

**Facebook**

**Does the TV station or newsroom have a Facebook page? 2017**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Station only | Newsroom only | Both | No |
| All TV | 35.5% | 38.1% | 26.4% | 0 |
| Market |  |  |  |  |
| 1 - 25 | 45.2 | 29 | 25.8 | 0 |
| 26 - 50 | 20 | 47.5 | 32.5 | 0 |
| 51 - 100 | 42.9 | 32.1 | 25 | 0 |
| 101 - 150 | 38.2 | 41.2 | 20.6 | 0 |
| 151+ | 23.8 | 42.9 | 33.3 | 0 |
| Staff size |  |  |  |  |
| 51+ | 35.6 | 40.7 | 23.7 | 0 |
| 31 - 50 | 41.3 | 38.7 | 20 | 0 |
| 21 - 30 | 28.8 | 39 | 32.2 | 0 |
| 11 - 20 | 25 | 45 | 30 | 0 |
| 1 - 10 | 38.9 | 5.6 | 55.6 | 0 |

Newsroom only Facebook pages went up and station only went down, but it’s really hard to find any consistent patterns. The smallest newsrooms are a lot less likely to have newsroom only Facebook pages. Stations in the Northeast were less likely to have station only Facebook pages, and stations in the Midwest were less likely to have both station and newsroom FB pages. There were, again, 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? 2017**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Station only | Newsroom only | Both | No |
| All Radio | 76.8% | 0.9% | 17.7% | 4.5% |
| Market |  |  |  |  |
| Major | 80.6 | 0 | 9.7 | 9.7 |
| Large | 78.4 | 0 | 18.9 | 2.7 |
| Medium | 74.7 | 2.3 | 19.5 | 3.4 |
| Small | 76.9 | 0 | 18.5 | 4.6 |

**Radio** use of Facebook moved up 3 points from last year. Use of Facebook was least likely in the largest markets, which is opposite of the way it usually comes out. Also lowest in the Northeast.

**Twitter**

**Is the TV newsroom actively involved with Twitter? 2017**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Constantly | Daily | Periodically | No |
| All TV | 68.7% | 26.8% | 4.2% | 0.4% |
| Market |  |  |  |  |
| 1 - 25 | 80.6 | 19.4 | 0 | 0 |
| 26 - 50 | 82.5 | 15 | 2.5 | 0 |
| 51 - 100 | 70.2 | 27.4 | 2.4 | 0 |
| 101 - 150 | 55.9 | 36.8 | 5.9 | 1.5 |
| 151+ | 64.3 | 26.2 | 9.5 | 0 |
| Staff size |  |  |  |  |
| 51+ | 84.7 | 11.9 | 1.7 | 1.7 |
| 31 - 50 | 64 | 33.3 | 2.7 | 0 |
| 21 - 30 | 57.6 | 37.3 | 5.1 | 0 |
| 11 - 20 | 80 | 10 | 10 | 0 |
| 1 - 10 | 27.8 | 61.1 | 11.1 | 0 |

These numbers are remarkably similar, overall, to a year ago, suggesting that stations have largely settled into their Twitter routine. In fact, the “constantly” numbers in the top 100 markets all slipped slightly into the “daily” column. Balancing that, markets 100+ moved more from the “daily” to the “constantly” category. Fox affiliates are a bit more likely than other affiliates to be in the “daily” column, and stations in the Northeast are more likely than all the others to be in the “periodically” column (although the number is still low).

**Is the radio newsroom actively involved with Twitter? 2017**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Constantly | Daily | Periodically | No |
| All Radio | 18.7% | 20.5% | 21% | 39.7% |
| Market |  |  |  |  |
| Major | 17.2 | 34.5 | 10.3 | 37.9 |
| Large | 35.1 | 16.2 | 13.5 | 35.1 |
| Medium | 22.5 | 27 | 16.9 | 33.7 |
| Small | 4.7 | 7.8 | 35.9 | 51.6 |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Commercial | 18.2 | 16.9 | 20.8 | 44.2 |
| Non-commercial | 20 | 29.2 | 21.5 | 29.2 |

This past year actually showed a small decline in the use of *Twitter* by radio stations. The percentage using *Twitter* at all stayed exactly the same, but “periodically” rose as both “constantly” and “daily” fell. Twitter use dropped in large and major markets, went up in medium markets, and largely held steady in the smallest markets. Non-commercial stations were much more likely to use Twitter than commercial stations.

**Other software programs in use**

For the second year in a row, I asked news directors what software they were using – beyond Facebook and Twitter (whose use is highly detailed above). And I asked what stations were doing with that software. Again, lots of answers from nearly 200 news directors. Thank you.

Last year, I published a complete list of the names of the software in use at stations and exactly what they are. If you’re not familiar with them, you can find that list on my website at bobpapper.com.

In **television**, 75.9% of news directors said they’re using social media beyond just *Facebook* and *Twitter*.

* And 82.4% of those made *Instagram* the easy winner. For *Instagram*, the list of what stations are doing included posting pictures – especially “behind the scenes, glimpse into our lives,” beauty shots, mostly non-news, visually driven content, sharing pictures, story photos, show talent personalities, raise engagement with viewers, share video and ask for tips, share breaking information, photos of weather events, station events, post pictures and link to stories on our website, “share behind the scenes or powerful imagery captured by our crews.” Nicely put.
* Well behind, at 34.1%, came Snapchat. News directors noted they used it for sharing pictures and short videos, behind the scenes photos, a number of stations said they were “trying” it or “experimenting” with it … although a number said it wasn’t really working for them.
* After that came *Pinterest* at 8%. News directors said they used it for “mostly posting photos.”
* Then came YouTube and Google+ at 4.5% and 3.4% respectively. News directors noted using it for content, publishing videos, and in at least one case, “all video.”
* Then came everything else with one or two mentions only: LinkedIn (for recruiting), Videolicious, Social News Desk, reddit, tumblr and SocialFlow.

Beyond that, last year’s list of other social media software (beyond Facebook and Twitter) included 22 different programs. This year, the list is just 12 programs long. All part of the sorting out process.

**Big changes?** Instagram went up from its dominating position, and Snapchat rose substantially to become another major player. Everything else dropped. Pinterest came in at half what it scored a year ago. Periscope went from more than 20% to 1.7%. Even YouTube and Google+ both dropped from last year’s 8.8% each.

Generally, the bigger the market and the bigger the news staff, the more likely that a station is using social media software beyond Facebook and Twitter.

In **radio**, nearly a hundred news directors and general managers answered about what software they were using other than Facebook or Twitter (whose use is more detailed above). Unfortunately, 44% listed Facebook and/or Twitter … but nothing else. Of the much smaller group that remained …

* Instagram was the overwhelming winner at 83.7%. Posting station photos, posting photos of station activities, cross promotion, share articles, behind the scenes photos, for different campaigns.
* Snapchat came in next at 18.4%. Also for behind the scenes photos.
* SoundCloud came next at 12.2%.
* Tumblr, YouTube and Periscope all tied at 6.1%. YouTube for sharing videos; Periscope for traffic reports and maps.
* Then Google+ at 4.1%
* Individual mentions for Pinterest and LinkedIn.

Remember that those are percentages of the relatively small group who listed software they were using other than Facebook and Twitter.

**Apps**

The percentage of **TV** stations with apps rose to 95.8% this year – up almost 3 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. Both numbers are the same as a year ago. Only the biggest newsrooms (51+) were higher (average 2.6 … but median still at 2). The top station had 9 apps. Only 4.4% of stations charged for apps. That's up one from last year but still down from 6% three years ago.

The percentage of **radio** stations with apps went back up past the 50 percent mark to 53.9%. That’s still a pretty high proportion with no apps. The average station had 1.1 apps, and the median just crossed into 1 (it had been zero until this year). Commercial stations and non-commercial stations are about equally likely to have an app, but commercial stations have almost twice as many. The bigger the staff and the bigger the market, the more likely that the station has one or more apps ... and the more apps they’re likely to have. I found one commercial radio station in the South that said it charged for an app. The other 99.2% said no.

*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 2016 among all 1,684 operating, non-satellite television stations and a random sample of 3,987 radio stations. Valid responses came from 1,409 television stations (83.7%) and 430 radio news directors and general managers representing 1,151 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.