**New Efforts in Radio Websites**

**by Bob Papper**

In radio, the percentage saying they started something important online fell 7 points to 48.2%. In the latest RTDNA/Hofstra University Survey, a majority of stations (51.8%) said they were doing nothing new. Non-commercial stations were 50% higher than commercial stations in saying they were doing something new. Staff size made a huge difference, with the percentages going up steadily as the number of full time news people rose. The biggest markets were well out in front, and the very smallest markets well behind.

About a hundred radio news directors and general managers explained what they did. I’ve divided the wide-ranging list into 8 categories:

At 38.4% came content. More, better, special topics, different approaches. In their own words:

* Adding streaming newscasts and features
* Consistent web and social posts
* Extended and more in-depth web only newscasts
* Improved quality of news content
* In addition to the investigative stories, we have also added three separate Facebook Live shows
* Increased posting of local stories and on-demand audio/podcasts
* Keeping news updated
* More podcasts and video
* More stories, better stories
* Online audio election guide
* Organized and executed Virginia gubernatorial debate
* Posting audio of daily news summary (also podcast)
* Posting more information and pictures/video
* Significantly increased graphic visuals to share data journalism
* Slide shows
* Started high school athletics coverage on air, online and new social media

At 15.2% came streaming – in general or, most often, Facebook Live. In their own words:

* Echo/Google streaming of station
* Added more live streams
* Facebook webcasting live at varying times
* Using Facebook Live to broadcast and record live shows

Just behind, at 13.1%, came social media comments, and those tended to be all over the map. In their own words:

* Adding pictures and tying the website to Twitter and Facebook
* Increased news and resources on social media
* Melded website with Facebook and Twitter

At 10.1% it was strategy, including new approaches, new development and redesigns. In their own words:

* Complete overhaul of website and social media
* Hired a marketing manager to oversee social media/website development
* Organizing content internally, holding weekly news meetings

Pictures and video came next, at 8.1%. Most just said adding video or pictures.

At 7.1% came the web. Most said that they redesigned the website, and one simply noted that they finally got one. In their own words:

* New WordPress-based website with more focus on photos and audio playlists

Other came in at 5.1%. I include contests and advertising here. In their own words:

* E-mail news

Then technical, at 3%. Mostly just software notes. In their own words:

* Placing audio on outside sources such as SoundCloud, Meridex, etc.
* Experimenting more with 360-degree videos

**Who has web sites? 2018**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **All Radio** | 97.8%  |
| Market Size |  |
| Major | 100  |
| Large | 100  |
| Medium | 98.9  |
| Small | 94  |

It’s been 7 years since the last time a TV didn’t have a website, but radio still hasn't hit 100%. This year’s percentage is up a bit from a year ago. All of the stations without web sites were commercial stations, all in small and medium markets, and none were in local station groups of 3 or more stations. All were in the Northeast or West.

**How many web sites include local news? 2018**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **All Radio** | 80.3%  |
| Market Size |  |
| Major | 81.2  |
| Large | 85  |
| Medium | 76.1  |
| Small | 82.5  |

While all TV stations that run local news post that local news on the web, that’s still not the case with radio. Radio numbers, which had moved up two and a half points last year, gave up two of those points this time around. The only grouping at 100% involved radio newsrooms with full time staffs of 10 or more. That’s right, even a staff size of eight or nine couldn’t all manage to get local news posted on the website.

**Radio websites**

In the past, I’ve asked about all the elements stations included in their website, like video, stills, calendars, etc. But as websites matured, changes had become few and mostly inconsequential. So this year, I just asked if stations had “added or eliminated anything meaningful” from the station website. Almost 81% (80.9) said no. And all groups said no at just about the same rate.

So what did the 19% do that was new and different?

Well, it wasn’t so much different as different for their particular website. A third of the answers said they were either adding local news or more and/or better local news. After that came sales, advertising, contests and swap shop. Then streaming and new or better links. A couple added blogs or podcasts, and a couple cut back on content.

**Percentage of web content that's only on the web - 2018**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **All Radio** | 16.2%  |
| Major market | 25.8  |
| Large market | 18  |
| Medium market | 14  |
| Small market | 13.4  |

Unique web content on radio websites dropped 11 points from a year ago. All groups dropped, but the decline got worse as market size fell. Commercial stations were 4 points higher than non-commercial ones, but that’s half the margin from last year. Staff size made no difference until a station reached 10 or more news people. The Northeast was higher than all other regions.

**Percentage of web content that's user-generated - 2018**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **All Radio** | 12%  |
| Major market | 5.6  |
| Large market | 9.5  |
| Medium market | 11.5  |
| Small market | 17  |

Radio rose by about 4 points, reversing the previous year’s two and a half point drop. Note that the smaller the market, the higher the percentage of user generated content. That was true last year as well. No other variable made a consistent difference.

**Web traffic**

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 … until this year. The response on this is still thin, but it’s high enough to publish.

**Radio station website traffic during the past 30 days - 2018**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Page Views (in thousands) | Unique Visitors (in thousands) |
| All Radio | 359.2  | 249.8  |
| Market Size |  |  |
| Major market | 1,197.2 | 1,394.9 |
| Large Market | 149.5 | 55.7 |
| Medium market | 234.5 | 38.5 |
| Small market | 152.7 | 33.8 |

Over 70% (72.5) of radio news directors and general managers say they don’t know their website traffic, so take these numbers in that spirit. Still, it shows a nice gain in page views and a huge gain in unique visitors – up from just 53,400 a year ago. Generally, the bigger the group of local stations, the more traffic the website has.

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

Major markets are those with 1 million or more potential 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 2017 among all 1,683 operating, non-satellite television stations and a random sample of 3,542 radio stations. Valid responses came from 1,333 television stations (79.2%) and 415 radio news directors and general managers representing 1,110 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.