**Lots going on in Mobile in TV**

**by Bob Papper**

The latest RTDNA/Hofstra University Survey found a lot of new things going on with mobile in local TV news, and almost 200 news directors told us what they’ve been doing this past year.

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

The number of TV news directors saying they did something new in mobile this year fell 10 points compared to a year ago. Down to 58.2%. Market size made no difference. The smallest newsrooms, as usual, were least likely to have done something, but all the other newsroom sizes were similar. Fox affiliates and other commercial were lower than ABC, CBS and NBC stations, and stations in the Midwest were well behind the others.

More than a hundred news directors noted what they were doing new in mobile.

At 49.2%, almost half of all the answers concerned apps. Improved, enhanced, faster, redesigned, more user-friendly all led the charge. New weather apps and then new news or breaking news apps. Three news directors noted that they consolidated apps … in all three cases, cutting a weather app in favor of a combined news/weather app. In their own words:

* "App extra" elements
* App-only content pushed from broadcast
* Changed the look of the app
* Changed to a new weather app ... more data
* Full redesign of our weather app to make it more user-friendly
* Positioning our weather app as life-saving information … basically replacing the old weather alert radios with our app and alerts
* Refreshed mobile app and push alert notification system
* Revamped/redesigned our apps
* Upgraded apps
* Upgraded our weather system, including an update to our weather app, to allow us to post more weather videos and create more interaction
* We were official weather app of the State Fair

In a distant second place, at 15.3%, came Facebook Live (mostly), along with live streaming and OTT. Special reports, newscasts, news events, weather events. In their own words:

* Facebook Live for breaking news and promotion of news content
* Increased live stream of live events
* Live-streaming breaking weather coverage via Facebook Live
* More live news coverage, promoting "on your phone"

Just behind, at 13.6% came push alerts. More, mostly, but also better, more targeted and better writing for them. In their own words:

* "Instant gratification" push alerts ... added direct submission for user generated content
* Our push alerts are much faster now
* Push alerts with pictures
* Push notifications instead of texts
* Specialized, specific alerts
* Way more push notifications, embedding links in articles

At 10.2% came strategy. Some mobile-related in concepts, some reworking websites to make them more mobile friendly or oriented. Also push alert strategy and promotion. In their own words:

* Developed a specific push alert strategy for mobile
* Implementing a true, cohesive social strategy specifically directed toward the mobile experience
* Restructuring our writing to appeal to mobile audience, by making it more easily digestible
* We re-worked our mobile website to encourage more click-through
* We refined our push strategy in regard to what to push and what not to push

Next, at 5.1% came content. Mostly, that meant more or better, including “digital shorts.” One news director said they changed their content to have more national and international. In their own words:

* Deeper enterprise journalism
* Digital shorts
* Mobile only content each week
* More embedded content to show up on mobile platforms
* People can now enter their own storm cancellations and share photos to be aired
* Short-form storytelling
* We began adding more content and promoting it more

At 3.4% came software. Some related to user-generated content, 360 video and using Megaphone for mobile voting. In their own words:

* "Burst" UGC submissions
* Mobile Voting with Megaphone

The rest, at 3.2% were miscellaneous answers, including development and technical. In their own words:

* Mobile website redesign and app sections specifically promoted as exclusive content
* New look and navigation

**Apps**

The percentage of TV stations with apps came in at 93.3% -- down two and a half from a year ago. Almost all of those were in the smallest newsrooms (1 to 10 people), although one station with more than 51 news people said they didn’t have an app. The average number of apps and median number were both 2. That’s the same as a year ago (and the year before that). The top station had 13 apps, but every market size had stations with 4 or more apps. For whatever reason, stations in the South came in the highest, and stations in the West lagged a bit behind.

The percentage of stations that charged for apps shot up from 4.4% last year to 6.8% this time around. That’s just over the peak of 6% from three years ago. All are in top 100 markets.

***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 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.