**What’s Going On with Radio and Social Media**

**by Bob Papper**

The latest RTDNA/Hofstra University Survey found a fair amount of radio station activity with social media, although it’s way behind TV. New efforts in social media in radio edged up by two points to 43.4%. Stations with the biggest staffs, in the largest markets, and non-commercial stations led the way.

**What's the most important new thing you started doing with social media this past year?**

The new social media activities broke down into three main categories. The easy winner was content, at 59.5% of the mentions. Facebook Live led the way in this category with more and better posting close behind. In their own words:

* Added a news only Twitter account
* Adding captions to Facebook news posts
* Daily Facebook Live
* Engaging shows with social media
* Increased news and resources on social media
* Daily live Facebook broadcast during morning drive
* More active reporting on Facebook
* Our anchors do a Facebook Live newscast … very popular!
* Regular Facebook Live videos
* Story-telling through use of pictures
* Streaming community forums to get questions from digital viewers
* Trying to add more news content more often

At about half that, at 27%, came strategy and management. Getting involved in social media, changing strategy, establishing policies, hiring people. In their own words:

* Actually posting
* Approved revision of design
* Being consistent with something daily posted
* Driving more stories produced by our newsroom to Facebook
* Getting promotions staff involved with our social media
* Hired a social media specialist
* Linking Facebook and Twitter to our website
* Paying more attention to it
* Pushing ahead to do it every day
* Working hard to not lay content directly on social media -- but tease it back to our website or air products

At 13.5% came mentions of various software … mostly without explanation. That included Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat. In their own words:

* Echo/Google streaming of station

**Does the radio station or newsroom have a Facebook page? 2018**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Station only | Newsroom only | Both | No |
| All Radio | 73.8%  | 1.6%  | 19.9%  | 4.7%  |
| Market |  |  |  |  |
| Major | 77.8  | 3.7  | 14.8  | 3.7  |
| Large | 75  | 3.1  | 18.8  | 3.1  |
| Medium | 72.4  | 1.3  | 21.1  | 5.3  |
| Small | 73.2  | 0  | 21.4  | 5.4  |

Radio use of Facebook remained just about the same … with the “no” category actually edging up by 0.2. Use of Facebook was less likely in the Northeast and the West. To be honest, while Facebook use is about 95%, it’s hard to understand why, in 2018, it’s not 100%.

**Is the radio newsroom actively involved with Twitter? 2018**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Constantly | Daily | Periodically | No |
| All Radio | 18.8%  | 22%  | 23.7%  | 35.5%  |
| Market |  |  |  |  |
| Major | 40  | 16  | 16  | 28  |
| Large | 22.6  | 29  | 25.8  | 22.6  |
| Medium | 17.3  | 20  | 22.7  | 40  |
| Small | 9.1  | 23.6  | 27.3  | 40  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Commercial | 19.6  | 18.1  | 21.7  | 40.6  |
| Non-commercial | 16.7  | 33.3  | 29.2  | 20.8  |

This past year showed a small increase in the use of *Twitter* by radio stations. The percentage using *Twitter* at all rose by 4 points, although constantly was virtually unchanged as daily and periodically edged up slightly. The frequency of Twitter use rose in major and small markets but dropped in large and medium markets.

In radio, nearly 60% (57.7) of news directors and general managers said they used no social media programs other than Facebook and Twitter. Generally, as market size got smaller, so did the use of other social media platforms, and non-commercial stations were almost twice as likely to use other platforms as commercial stations.

Of the 42.3% who said they used other social media programs, 37% of them just listed Facebook or Twitter. Or, occasionally, both. What do stations use Facebook and/or Twitter for? In their own words:

* Posting stories and traffic updates
* Cross promote what is on our website and on air
* For breaking news
* We post news stories, community information, and community events
* Facebook - general content, user interaction ... Twitter – updates

Of the relatively small number who actually use social media platforms beyond Facebook and Twitter, Instagram was the easy winner at 54% of all mentions. In their own words:

* Instagram - producers generate content
* Recaps and previews
* Remotes, DJ shifts
* To promote upcoming content
* Pics

A distant second, 14% of mention involved Snapchat. In their own words:

* To promote upcoming content

At 7%, a tie between YouTube and Soundcloud. In their own words:

* YouTube - post videos and livestream events
* YouTube for posting music montage video shows and such
* SoundCloud for posting interviews
* SoundCloud to post our audio
* Sound Cloud - Ag podcasts

Then came a few mentions for Pinterest, reddit, LinkedIn, Tumblr and Tweetdeck. In their own words:

* Reddit - news sourcing
* We use Tweetdeck as a sort of wire service -- columns of carefully curated accounts broken out by region and always up on a dedicated monitor at the producers' desks

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

A new question in this year’s survey asked about a station’s number of engagements in social media. This is the gold standard of success in social media.

**Number of social media engagements in the most recent month**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Avg. No. (in thousands) | Median No. (in thousands) | Minimum | Maximum |
| Overall Radio | 70.6 | 4 | 0 | 1,250 |
| Market size |  |  |  |  |
| Major market | 191.8 | 61.7 | 2 | 871.3 |
| Large market | 58.3 | 3.3 | <1 | 500 |
| Medium market | 90.6 | 8 | 0 | 1,250 |
| Small Market | 14 | 1.9 | 0 | 95 |

Since this is the first year for the question, I can’t compare it to anything. Commercial and non-commercial stations averaged almost exactly the same, but the median (typical) for commercial stations was three times higher than non-commercial stations. The highest numbers went to the biggest stations with the biggest groups.

Another new question asked about **the percent of station web traffic that came from social media.**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Average | Median | Minimum | Maximum |
| Overall Radio | 36.1% | 27% | 0 | 100% |
| Market size |  |  |  |  |
| Major market | 41.3 | 40 | 22 | 80 |
| Large market | 29.7 | 23 | 0 | 80 |
| Medium market | 41.8 | 40 | 0 | 100 |
| Small market | 32.1 | 25 | 0 | 85 |

There were no discernible and consistent patterns linking anything with the percentage of web traffic that came from social media.

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.

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

***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.