



What's new digitally at radio stations?

By Bob Papper and Keren Henderson

Aug. 20, 2024 – In radio, the percentage of news directors and general managers saying they started something important digitally edged down from a year ago. Just 38% say they started something important online in 2023 – that's a decrease of nearly three-and-a-half points compared to last year.

RADIO STATIONS' DIGITAL EFFORTS DECLINE

- In 2023, only 38% of radio news directors and general managers reported starting something important online, down from last year.
- Major markets (61.3%), non-commercial stations (56.9%), and those with large staffs (72%) were most active digitally.
- Content is a key focus, with 56.5% emphasizing sports, video, podcasts, and streaming, but it's slightly decreased from last year.
- Website traffic for radio stations generally increased, especially in major and medium markets, while podcasting also saw modest growth.

RADIO ONLINE



Major markets (61.3%), non-commercial stations (56.9%) and those with the biggest staff (72%) are most likely to say they started something important.

More than a hundred radio news directors and general managers listed what they're doing in the latest RTDNA/Newhouse School at Syracuse University Survey.

At the top of the list comes content. At 56.5% of the responses, it's down a bit from last year. The content can be divided into three almost equal parts. There's the "more" content, including sports, video and just more stuff. Then there's the podcast segment – way up from past years.

And there's the streaming segment, including Instagram, YouTube, live streaming and one lonely mention of Facebook.

What they're doing – in their own words:

- Added a few cool news weekly features
- Added a new daily news podcast
- Added more local news stories on social media for more audience engagement
- Added morning show video
- Hired student journalist to create unique local news TikTok and Instagram videos
- Incorporating pictures, alt text, and related content with all of our posts
- Live video stream of morning show
- Daily podcast of top news

At 32.4% comes organization, design and management. That includes a new or improved website, more attention to SEO (search engine optimization), a focus on contests, sales or promotion:

What they're doing:

- Adopting a digital first mindset
- Better utilizing social media platforms for breaking news
- Consistent posting to webpage, publishing regularly on social media.
- Developed morning show and afternoon drive show social pages
- GMB [Google My Business], SEO [Search Engine Optimization], website building, review management.
- Improved monetization of the audience
- New websites for each station
- Prepping for a January 2024 launch of a hyper local news site

At 11.1%, we'll call it reaching out: apps and newsletters.

What they're doing:

- Started voice and email messaging ahead of our one-hour weekly topical call-in show
- Breaking newsletters
- Launched news newsletters
- New app

Online basics

Who has a website?

All Radio	97.7%
Market size:	
Major	100
Large	98.4
Medium	99.2
Small	94.6
Commercial	96.9
Non-commercial	100

It's been well more than a decade since the last time a TV station didn't have a website, but the radio still hasn't hit 100%. In fact, the percentage is down half a point this year. Non-commercial stations hit the 100% mark this year. Note that the question does NOT relate to all radio stations – only those with local news.

How many websites include local news?

All Radio	79.1
Market size:	
Major	80.6
Large	85.7
Medium	77.1
Small	77.2
Commercial	75.6
Non-commercial	88.2

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 have bounced up and down within a narrow range over the years. Last year was up a bit; this year it's down – although just barely. The only subgroup that hit 100% were those stations with 10 or more radio news people.

Web traffic

The response on this is a bit thin, as usual, so view these numbers cautiously.

Radio station website traffic during the past 30 days

	Page Views (in thousands)	Unique Visitors (in thousands)
All Radio	844.7	899.8
Market size:		
Major market	557.9	2,699.2
Large Market	535.2	111.9
Medium market	1,486.2	621.8
Small market	274.1	63.6
Commercial	990.3	1,109.8
Non-commercial	444.3	223.1

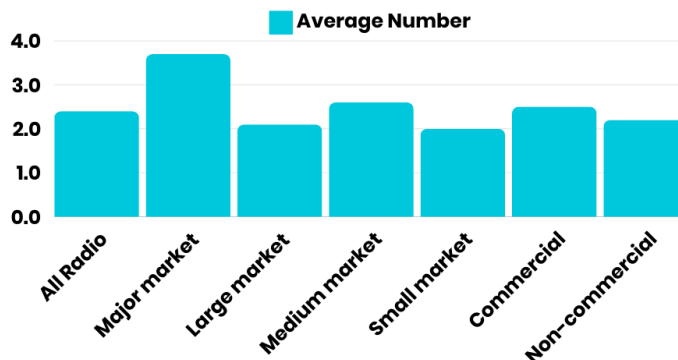
All of these numbers, except small market unique visitors, are up noticeably from last year.

Podcasts

Podcasts continue to get a lot more attention on the radio than at TV stations. The average number of podcasts at radio stations is 2.4 this year. That's up 0.2 from last year, but it's still down a bit from a couple of years ago. Still, the median (typical) number of podcasts is back up to one. It hit that mark for the first time two years ago but dropped back to zero last year. The median at commercial radio remains at zero, but non-commercial has a median of two – bringing the overall median to one.

RADIO PODCASTS **GAIN** POPULARITY

How many different podcasts do radio stations run per week?



INSIGHTS

- Podcasts get more attention on radio than TV stations
- The average number of radio podcasts is 2.4 this year
- Median number of podcasts is one, up from zero

RADIO ONLINE

RTDNA

Syracuse University
Newhouse School of
Public Communications

How many different podcasts do you run per week?

	Average Number	Median Number
All Radio	2.4	1
Market size:		
Major market	3.7	2
Large market	2.1	0
Medium market	2.6	1
Small market	2	0
Commercial	2.5	0
Non-commercial	2.2	2

Overwhelmingly, at 79.4%, stations report that they're running the same number of podcasts this year compared to last year. That's down nearly five points from last year (which had been up five points from the year before)

Non-commercial stations and stations in metro markets are most likely to be running more podcasts. The bigger the staff, the more likely the answer is.

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.

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.

Note that there's a fine line between online and social media ... so be sure to check the social media article.

About the Author

Bob Papper is Research Professor of Broadcast and Digital Journalism at Syracuse University and has worked extensively in radio and TV news.

Keren Henderson is Associate Professor of Broadcast and Digital Journalism at Syracuse University.

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About the Survey

The RTDNA/Newhouse School at Syracuse University Survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2023 among all 1,876 operating, non-satellite television stations and a random sample of 4,764 radio stations. The television response rate is different for every question, but Valid responses came from as many as 1,387 television stations (73.9%) and 631 radio news directors and general managers representing 1,902 radio stations. Some data sets (e.g. the number of TV stations originating local news, getting news from others and women TV news directors) are based on a complete census and are not projected from a smaller sample.

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