

HTV integrates digital video into its TV newsroom and launches a YouTube news channel

Ho Chi Minh City Television (HTV) is a nationwide broadcaster located in Southern Vietnam. It has been in operation since 1975 and broadcasts 17 television channels, covering entertainment, drama, sports, news, and more.

OPPORTUNITY

HTV wanted to reach news audiences in the digital space, rather than just via television. It saw an opportunity to build and launch a YouTube news channel and train reporters in digital video best practices so they could create content for both traditional and digital environments.

APPROACH

HTV trained its News Center staff in storytelling for YouTube, and upgraded software and equipment to enable digital video reporting. It launched a YouTube channel and the team experimented with new formats to drive audience growth.

Building up digital video skills: HTV created an internal survey to get a better understanding of the digital video abilities and goals of its reporters and editors. Based on findings, HTV updated its workflows and processes to incorporate digital video and invited 10 staff from the HTV broadcast News Center to participate in the digital project.

Investing in technology: HTV invested in a newsroom management system and learned how to use it for digital video. It installed an additional server into the system to enable automatic conversion of broadcast footage to a YouTube-friendly format, which can then be uploaded directly to the channel by an editor.

Training the team: Staff had training in software operation, workflows, and YouTube content best practices, including thumbnails, titles, descriptions, keywords, etc. They also received training in analytics and measurement so they could better understand if content resonated with audiences. Later in the year HTV organized a week-long training class for 20 News Center editors in digital media storytelling so they could improve YouTube content creation skills.

Building and promoting the brand: The team designed branding for the HTV YouTube News Channel and set up the site across various platforms (e.g., social, owned and operated). HTV promoted the new channel via its existing channels and platforms – for example, the team added cards and endscreens to popular HTV YouTube entertainment videos that linked to HTV news clips, they created news playlists on other HTV-owned YouTube channels (e.g., HTV Entertainment, HTV Films, HTV Sports, etc.), and they promoted the new YouTube channel via HTV's broadcast TV programs.

Expanding to international stories: HTV then expanded to international coverage by leveraging agency footage. This gave the HTV YouTube News Channel a point of difference to other channels that report mainly on domestic news.

Integrating live stream capabilities: HTV purchased live stream servers so that reporters could cover breaking news. The system can receive video signals from 17 of HTV's TV channels and stream to its YouTube channels. It also invested in software (app licenses) and hardware (audio) to enable reporters in the field to capture content directly from their smartphones and publish to YouTube, social media, or HTV's owned and operated platforms – reporters no longer have to carry around cumbersome cameras and satellite technology.

Experimenting with content to drive growth: Over the first three months of operation, the digital team regularly uploaded content that was taken from HTV broadcast shows and optimized it for YouTube. But views and channel subscriptions only increased slowly, so in mid-August the team decided to test new formats for the channel:

- "60 Seconds" is a short-form news program based on HTV's highest rated broadcast news show. The team considered things like publication time and day to help the online version increase the ratings of the TV show, and vice versa.
- "20H News" is a live news show, which started streaming in February 2020. It covers breaking news and trending stories.
- "Ladies Chat" is an interactive talk show hosted by five key opinion leaders who discuss current social events. The format was based on a popular weekday TV broadcast show.

RESULTS

HTV integrated digital video into its newsroom, launched a YouTube channel, and started to experiment with new content formats.

- **Created a digital ecosystem** so the HTV News Center can distribute and broadcast digital video news on websites, apps, YouTube channels, and social media.
- **Trained 20 team members** in digital media production.
- **Established live stream capabilities** so 20 reporters can go live via YouTube, TV, and social media using just their smartphones.

LEARNINGS

Optimize content for YouTube: Know your YouTube audience and create content with formats they like and topics they're interested in. HTV found that trending and breaking news topics resonated well with its YouTube audience. It also found that, for regular live streams, putting the show time in the thumbnail helped drive repeat audiences.

Use all your channels for promotion: When launching a YouTube channel it can be hard to build an audience from scratch. But if you have existing platforms or channels, then use them for cross-promotion. For example, HTV mentioned its YouTube news channel on its popular TV shows, linked to it via other successful YouTube channels, and added cards or endscreens to some of its most viewed entertainment clips. All of this helped drive audience growth.