

JTBC integrates digital video into its newsroom and tests new formats to engage younger audiences

JTBC is a large, nationwide South Korean generalist cable TV network. The JTBC Digital News Agency is the division that produces and distributes digital content for JTBC News.

OPPORTUNITY

JTBC wanted to become more digitally focused so it could reach a younger audience. It saw an opportunity to reorganize teams and optimize resources and workflows for digital video, then test new formats on YouTube.

APPROACH

JTBC invested in digital video resources and capabilities so the team could experiment with different video formats that would help increase viewership.

Establishing a digital presence: JTBC set up a digital video team by restructuring its newsroom and hiring new staff across three key areas — live broadcast, VOD digital video, and organization/management. JTBC built a dedicated digital video studio, which included a live control room that could connect in-studio staff to reporters in the field. JTBC also purchased equipment to facilitate digital video production, for example an automatic transmission system, cameras, wireless microphones, lighting and audio gear, etc.

Implementing new digital workflows: JTBC faced challenges moving to digital video because traditional broadcasters are generally not familiar with the style of formats that work well on YouTube, or interacting with audiences. To overcome this, JTBC created and integrated new digital video processes and workflows that broke down internal silos, were much more simple and more efficient than TV production, and enabled staff to perform various roles simultaneously (e.g., production and operation).

Finding a strategic direction: Concurrently, JTBC set up a task force whose job it was to analyze JTBC's current digital offering and look at audience feedback, then propose a new strategic direction for digital video. The task force helped communicate the company-wide digital video goals throughout the organization and set realistic expectations for improvement.

Training and education: JTBC wanted to instill a digital mindset across the whole organization, so it instigated training for both the digital and traditional TV broadcast teams. The teams analyzed news videos that incorporated different ways of storytelling, and brainstormed the unique formats and topics they could use for their own channel. In addition, they sought advice from external creators and marketing experts about digital video production and distribution best practices. Finally, they explored potential models for digital video revenue with the JTBC digital studio.

Testing new formats: The digital team then set about turning their learnings into action. They created a variety of different pilot programs designed to drive audience engagement:

- "Newspace" was a 24/7 live content format that covered lighter topics, such as entertainment.
- "Social Live" was a discussion that occurred after the main live news broadcast. The anchors and editors set topics and engaged in live chats with the audience.

- "Malbus" was a show where people were interviewed on a village bus about issues important to them. Viewers could apply to be on the show, which helped drive engagement and loyalty.
- "Comment Newsroom" was a commentary program where the host incorporated YouTube comments from viewers into their news reports, which were often humorous or satirical in tone.

Measuring success: JTBC used the audience insights generated from the pilot programs as a guide for future production decisions. It looked at qualitative (e.g., comments, anecdotes) and quantitative (e.g., clicks, watch time, shares, etc.) data and made decisions about which formats to continue, and which to cease — for example, "Newspace" only ran for one season.

RESULTS

JTBC helped staff **embrace a digital video mindset** by putting digital at the center of its strategy. It **invested in resources** that would set the video team up for success and ensured that even staff on the TV broadcast team had a good understanding of digital video. The brand worked hard to **develop a business model that drives advertising and growth via YouTube** so that digital video can become a sustainable part of its long-term plans.

LEARNINGS

Digital promotes audience interactivity: One of the great things about digital is how easy it is to interact with and learn from your audience — something that is less tenable with traditional print or TV news. Comments, Community posts, and live chat are useful tools for a brand to understand which topics and formats viewers connect with and what they'd like to see more of. JTBC took this notion of interactivity even further and created the popular new "Comment Newsroom" show, which is based on audience feedback.

Train your whole newsroom in digital video: The future of news is digital, so even if you have a traditional print or broadcast team, ensure they understand digital video best practices. Unfortunately what often happens in traditional broadcast companies is that production decisions still sit with the legacy teams, rather than the digital native teams, meaning content is not conceived with a digital platform or audience in mind. To prevent this, it is very important that all production personnel are properly trained with an experimental mindset, so that legacy news media can produce effective digital content.

“ Through YouTube we were able to use live news channels and the YouTube Community tools for real-time communication with our audience, then create programs based on viewer feedback. ”