

Keeping Eyes on News

By Marcello Dellepiane

To maintain their position in an increasingly competitive broadcast industry, traditional news channels and networks are embracing new and innovative technology to deliver live, dynamic content to their audiences.

There isn't much of an option, after all: As audiences' voracious appetite for new content formats increase, traditional broadcasters have to keep content appealing to remain competitive. Smaller newsrooms or studios with fewer resources are no exception. They still have to battle it out with the big players for ratings.

Delivering more dynamic content and 'community engagement' drive viewership. Nowadays, interactive visuals come into play more than ever. Live commentaries or panel discussions are no longer enough for audiences.

With the average person now able to consume tons of information within minutes, and with attention spans becoming shorter than ever, it is necessary for broadcasters to

incorporate interactive images and videos into their reportage.

Gone are the days when it's just the news anchor reading lines off a teleprompter. Now his or her tablet also takes centre stage, with the camera zooming in on his or her notes, or directly displaying them as an accompanying visual in the background.

Content directly sourced from the web has also become commonplace. Consumers now look to new media -- i.e. blogs and social networks such as Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram -- for their daily dose of compelling content from key personalities, political figures, or celebrities. Social media has also become a platform for news audiences/anchor interaction.

While these are welcome changes that creative broadcasters are adapting to, these have also made streamlining content delivery and program flow a more complicated endeavour.

To make matters worse, many existing solutions fall short in terms of ease of use, freedom and flexibility -- and costs.

Solutions that engage viewers and deliver dynamic control and interactivity in showing content are often difficult to use and master. They require not just a complicated system but an entire team of technical operators. This, in turn, stifles the creative freedom journalists desire.

Journalists, being front and centre of their news programs, do not want to risk the embarrassment of not being able to use complicated presentation solutions. They thus often let the technical crew take control of presentation systems instead, at the expense of journalistic control and flexibility.

Cost is another factor that makes looking for viable interactive presentation solutions a pain for broadcasters. Often the high cost of presentation solutions cannot easily be justified, even more so for small to medium-sized broadcast operations. Yet networks expect to maximise returns, despite failing to recognise that traditional linear broadcasting is not necessarily on an upswing -- and that missed opportunities exist in content consumption in newer formats.

With limited resources, news networks have to find a great balance between cost and the effectiveness of technological solutions that aim to help make their programs more engaging and interactive.

One such solution is MediaPower's NewsTouch, a standalone appliance dedicated to the live production of press clippings, web content, and recorded and live media files in the studio. It provides an intuitive and very easy-to-use touchscreen interface especially designed for journalists. NewsTouch allows them to display press reviews from PDFs, videos, web pages, social network posts or other content from the Internet, in just a few clicks.

With simple but powerful drawing and display tools, journalists can create drawings, markings, zoom in/out, and rotate content, just as effortlessly as they would on smartphones or tablets. What is done on the touchscreen instantly



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shows up on TV, or on a studio background display.

This ease-of-use provides a tremendous amount of flexibility and control for news anchors and journalists running their programs. It allows them to merge different types of content, and provide interactive presentations to their viewers.

Take, for example, French news channel LCI. With the decision to adopt and embrace news from the web along with the acquisition of NewsTouch, LCI has launched new programs like "The Eye of the Web". It is a news program that presents the latest tweets, and other information circulating on the web and social networks.

NewsTouch allows LCI journalists to have more direct control of their programs without having to rely on huge technical crews. It also permits more spontaneity, and better audience engagement.

Delivering news has come a long way. Moreover, whether in the form of traditional broadcast or cable news programs, or through newer media such as Internet, news remains important.

Traditional news networks stand to remain competitive by keeping their audience better engaged to their news reports, whether through adopting new media, using better visual tools, or both.

The good news: As technology matures, cost-effective and easy to use solutions are now more available, for the benefit of journalists and the viewers they must engage. ■



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