

Tips To Out Promote, Out Market

A PromaxBDA Station Summit panel outlines tactics to boost both on-air and online through creative cross-promotion that never lets up.

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TV stations don't have to lose out to newspapers when it comes to reaching online audiences. They just have to play to their strengths, according to industry experts on Thursday's PromaxBDA Station Summit panel, "Out-Promote, Out-Market and Outsmart, Online," moderated by TVNewsCheck publisher Kathy Haley. One strength that TV stations have is their on-air personalities.

"You spent years making people popular in the market," says Marsa Jarrett, creative services director at Hearst's NBC affiliate WYFF in Greenville, S.C. "Newspapers don't have that face. Self promote with web ads. Use your personalities to promote the station."

Jarrett showed promotional spots the station uses to build its brand, including spots with the message, "We're live local breaking news."

Anchors can engage with viewers online, including by filing online stories with related TV content that will take viewers from one screen to another. And anchors can virtually speak with viewers.

"Have a conversation with your users," says Jarrett. "Interactivity counts. Our meteorologists are answering questions. We bring doctors online. Users love that. Put familiar faces on your Facebook page. When your reporter is out on a story have him post on Facebook. Viewers get really excited about that. Then they look on TV for the story."

Sherry Carpenter, creative services director at Post-Newsweek independent WJXT in Jacksonville, Fla., says the News4Jax audience goes to the station's site if they have a compelling reason to do so.

"Make very specific content promises on multiple platforms," says Carpenter. "We promise exclusive content for each platform. Some promos led to News4Jax doubling our comScore audience and outpacing the local newspaper."

She showed promotional spots where a TV news reporter says he's out in the field getting the story. Then, an online producer says: "I'm posting that news as it happens."

In another promo, a consumer affairs reporter says: "I put pictures of recalled products on news4jax.com so you can see how it affects you."

Carpenter says mobile apps are increasingly important for stations to stay connected with their audiences.

"Consumers control your content," she says. "It has to be accessible on every platform." She described the station's wake-up app that has an alarm, interactive traffic maps, breaking news reports and weather alerts.

Dan Weig, creative services director at Belo's CBS affiliate KREM in Spokane, Wash. says online contests bring viewers in and can keep them coming back.

"Compelling news and photo slideshows will get you only so far," says Weig. "What people really want is a free car. We have a sweepstakes that brings thousands of viewers to our website. We make a ton of money off of it and it brings people to our site and to our TV station."

Brett Atkinson, general manager of ksl.com, an offshoot of Bonneville's NBC affiliate KSL Salt Lake City, found success by learning from newspapers' missteps, notably having employees handle print duties and online duties.

"Creating a digital-only division forces you to think about opportunities in the digital space," says Atkinson. "You can thrive in the broadcast arena while you have a team that focuses on digital, whether that's mobile devices or the wearable devices you'll see in a few years."