

Gedi makes live video the cornerstone of its digital offering and drives growth across brands

Gedi Digital is a fully-owned company of GEDI Gruppo Editoriale S.p.A., and is responsible for the management and digital development of the group's published brands. It is a multiplatform, multimedia company, and produces content relating to news, politics, culture, entertainment, and more. It has a network of about 30 active YouTube channels, covering national and local news, radio, and vertical channels.

OPPORTUNITY

Gedi wanted to make live video a cornerstone of its digital video offering across all brands. It saw an opportunity to develop infrastructure and workflows that would allow journalists to go live in a fast and efficient way, and test out new live content formats.

APPROACH

Gedi trained new staff, purchased equipment, and established a live studio space. This enabled the GEDI Live teams to live stream anywhere, anytime, as well as create live-interaction content (interviews, news commentary, entertainment). Every show was hosted by a journalist (or team) capable of creating, managing and presenting engaging live content, and the teams tested out a number of new formats to attract audiences.

Hiring and training the team: Over the course of the year-long project, Gedi trained 60 new staff in all aspects of live reporting and production, with the intent of changing the organizational mindset so it was more focused on live streaming and interactive live content. As a result, Gedi's trained journalists are now able to activate a live stream and manage it directly from their workstation, smartphone, or the newsroom. In most cases, journalists also act as directors and producers, with total control over the live event. More complex live broadcasts are supported by a multimedia producer, who creates and produces additional content (graphics, photo galleries, videos, etc.).

Setting up a space for live content: Simultaneously, Gedi set up a state-of-the-art live content production space in one of its existing meeting rooms. It purchased equipment as needed over the course of the year (e.g., webcams, microphones, earphones, smartphones, etc.). Gedi tried out different configurations of workstations to find what would be best for the space and the team, and tested various equipment for indoor and outdoor live streaming. Toward the end of the project, Gedi established a second new studio in Rome.

Experimenting with formats: In order to boost existing channels, Gedi tried out a number of different formats in its live studio, which were selected based on YouTube best practices and the individual talents of journalists. Some of these formats were:

- **In-studio interviews:** For example, "[Giornaliste di guerra](#)" ("Female war correspondents"), where female war journalists and reporters were interviewed, and "[Genitori di cervelli in fuga](#)" ("Parents of the brain drain"), which focused on the parents of young Italians who went abroad.
- **Breaking live news:** The teams covered all major news events from a live stream angle. When COVID-19 hit, all teams focused on covering the latest news and updates, which really helped the whole Gedi broadcasting family understand the benefits of live streaming.
- **News commentary:** Shows such as "[NewsBox](#)" where a journalist drilled down into important current issues.
- **Entertainment:** For example, a [new live music series](#), which was streamed via the La Repubblica channel from the Gedi offices (not a recording studio), showcased new and established artists. "[A un metro di distanza: scene da lockdown](#)" was a theatre piece recorded in different places to comply with social distancing measures. And "[Diventare \(forse\) famosi](#)" showcased an interview with a record producer, aimed at guiding aspiring musicians.

Creating new channels: Gedi also created several new YouTube channels, most notably "Senza Filtri", which specialized in live broadcasts about unusual stories and characters, experimented with new formats and languages, and anticipated trends. Gedi organized a "Senza Filtri" event to launch the new channel, which integrated the real and digital worlds. It also launched the "L'Espresso" and "Mashable Italia" channels.

RESULTS

Gedi integrated live capabilities into its newsroom and built up its team to drive significant growth across its many existing and new YouTube channels. It will continue to focus on live streaming and live-interaction content into the future as a way of engaging audiences and driving brands forward. When comparing January to March 2019 and 2020, Gedi saw:

- **10X growth** in live views.
- **3X growth** in subscriber numbers.
- **Over 125% growth** in watch time.

LEARNINGS

Passion and creativity are paramount to creating great content: Instead of dictating topics to journalists, Gedi asked reporters to pitch ideas about topics they loved and wanted to research. This helped the teams come up with many unique live formats and ideas for video content.

Audio is tricky, but getting it right is critical: Live stream audio is more challenging than the sound on pre-recorded video, but it's so important to get it right. Gedi found that audiences were more forgiving when it came to image quality than audio, and wouldn't tolerate second-rate sound.

When it comes to digital video teams, younger doesn't mean better: A lot of organizations think digital video is best created by younger generations. But many of Gedi's journalists are seasoned professionals who don't come from a digital video background. That turned out to be a benefit when it came to creativity and idea generation — many of the best ideas and most successful formats were devised by more skilled and senior staff.

“Our project stems from awareness that ‘live’ and ‘social’ (along with ‘reliability’ and ‘rigour’) are the key factors of success for a multimedia information network. Nothing better than the live human presence of the newsroom can guarantee that users perceive you as a reliable live news network able to supply the information and the answers they are seeking.”