

## By leaning into digital-first video, GMA reinvigorates their traditional media brand, engages a new audience, and reduces production costs

GMA is an award-winning Philippine broadcaster that produces many types of content, including news, documentaries and entertainment.

### OPPORTUNITY

GMA wanted to better reach and engage a younger audience segment (18-34) with a digital-first, mobile-first newscast — while still maintaining the credibility and values of the traditional GMA newsroom.

### APPROACH

To understand the nuances of running a digital newsroom (including costs, content, hiring, processes, etc.), GMA developed a new digital-first content format, “Stand for Truth.” By building up teams, honing workflows, and testing different ways of engaging viewers, GMA was able to gain a clear understanding of what it takes to be a successful digital-first brand and reach new, younger audiences.

**Building out the team:** To start experimenting with digital-first content, GMA first needed to get the right team in place. They used an innovative, social-media based recruitment process, and received hundreds of applications, which they whittled down to ten new hires. The new team attended training sessions with experienced GMA staff to learn basic reporting, interviewing skills, investigative techniques, mobile journalism, hostile environment coverage skills, and writing and editing.

**Getting the right equipment:** To set the new team up for success, GMA purchased necessary equipment, including mobile phones, microphones, rigs for small lights, and editing equipment.

**Creating new workflows for digital-first video:** Prior to launching “Stand for Truth” the GMA team spent time developing ideal workflows to ensure content could be delivered regularly, on time, and to a high standard. This was the most challenging part of the process, and they continued to tweak the workflow up to three months after launch — this was due to both external (e.g., slow internet in parts of the country) and internal (e.g., reporting/editing took longer than expected) factors.

**Experimenting with different topics and formats for a digital-first newscast:** They tested different formats to explore what would resonate best with the younger audience, such as live music segments featuring famous singers/songwriters, graphics-focused digital videos featuring an in-house analyst, breaking news stories, and discussion pieces focusing on major issues and featuring known GMA reporters. They found that the most successful formats incorporated breaking news stories, and the least successful focused on entertainment only (e.g., music segments).

“**YouTube’s audience is young. It simply makes sense to tap into the digital video audience while still telling stories that reflect the journalism, credibility, and basic values of the GMA newsroom.**”

### RESULTS

GMA not only succeeded in reaching a younger audience, they also revamped the image of their brand, plus lowered production costs.

- **They staffed up teams** with skilled professionals who have gone on to be popular faces for the channel — certain personalities (such as Manal Sugadol) are getting up to 5M views per segment.
- **GMA has transformed its perception amongst younger generations** from a traditional news service to a cutting-edge, digital-first brand. Many graduates from top journalism schools have contacted the network and asked about working with them.
- **The changes in equipment, studio space, and production style have resulted in lower costs** than standard newscasts — much of the content is now shot on mobile, and viewers respond well to the more organic, intimate style this affords.
- **“Stand for Truth” is averaging 20K new views** per day on YouTube alone.

### LEARNINGS

**YouTube is an entity unto itself:** Content produced for other platforms doesn’t necessarily translate well to YouTube, so don’t just replicate or clip what you’ve published on other channels. Find formats and topics that work for YouTube — for example, GMA found that personality-driven formats shot on mobile were very popular, as were human interest or quirky topics related to breaking news.

**Made-for-YouTube content can work on TV:** These days, GMA broadcasts their content via YouTube and their broadcast TV news channel, which means they can reach an even broader audience. They found there’s little overlap between audiences, and both segments have high watch numbers. However, don’t rush into putting YouTube content on TV! Test and hone formats online first to uncover what resonates best with your audience, then scale.

**Thumbnails are windows to the content:** When GMA started releasing content, they used generic thumbnails that didn’t explicitly reference the videos. The click-through rates weren’t great, so they updated thumbnails to contain a still photo from the video as well as clear, catchy titles in a consistent font. This led to many more views.