

Global News restructures their digital video team and experiments with new formats to grow channel

Global News is a Canadian news organization with over 15 TV affiliates and bureaus across the country, as well as a large digital platform. They focus on local, national, and international news stories.

OPPORTUNITY

Global News wanted to broaden their existing content offering, which was focused on repurposed broadcast content and agency material, and deliver more original features and series' across their video platforms to reach a wider audience.

APPROACH

Global News restructured their team (including hiring new staff), invested in video equipment, and developed new workflows so they could experiment with formats and topics to reach a broader, global audience.

Remaking the team: Over the first four weeks of the project Global News hired new staff and restructured their existing team to create two digital video units. One unit was dedicated to daily breaking news and live events, the other was focused on content testing and experimentation.

Improving capabilities and workflows: Global News invested in software for video collaboration, which helped simplify processes like video vetting and approvals. They automated some of their more time-consuming manual processes (e.g., translation), which helped save time and money. They also purchased new equipment so the video team could be self-reliant (e.g., cameras, lights, audio). All staff were trained to use new equipment and software through one-on-one sessions with the production supervisor, as well as online courses.

Experimenting with new formats: By July, they were ready to start testing new formats. Specifically, they wanted to see how long-form explainers about timely and relevant topics would perform with their audience. After digging into video best practices and format/publications trends, they outlined a framework for development and production, which included a new pitch process to streamline approvals.

Acting on insights: Meanwhile, they were also compiling insights around things like watch time, views, and click-through and retention rates. They reviewed metrics and revised production workflows based on findings. For example, they found that audiences responded well to a combination of shorter, daily formats about recent news events in addition to longer explainers, so they increased production of shorter pieces. This shift in strategy led to a spike in performance.

Applying learnings to the election cycle: With the Federal election in October, there was increased viewer demand for election news content, so they shifted the focus of their production. They were able to apply what they'd learned over the past few months to create political explainers, and capitalize on the uptick in audience interest. Following the election, they reinitiated a workflow focused more on evergreen storytelling.

RESULTS

By restructuring their video team and experimenting with format, Global News not only grew their audience and YouTube channel, but also increased organization-wide support for ongoing digital video investment.

- **104% year-over-year increase** in views for the channel.
- **34% year-over-year increase** in watch time for the channel.
- **More than 2X increase** in subscribers to the channel.
- **60% growth** in YouTube revenue.

LEARNINGS

Communication is key to sustainable digital video

success: It's easy for digital video to be dismissed as frivolous if you don't understand the role it plays in driving growth — as can be the case within large, legacy media organizations. That's why coordination and communication with all departments/teams is so important. Global News recommends looping all stakeholders into video strategy early, and making sure goals are clear and aligned with organizational outcomes, so everyone can see what you're striving for.

Planning is important... but so is agility: While planning and process are important, project milestones and timelines need to be flexible. All the planning in the world could easily fall apart due to unforeseen delays and challenges, so be prepared to pivot at a moment's notice. This is something Global News wish they'd done better. They had delays with equipment delivery that had a ripple effect on their training schedule, which in turn delayed content production and publication.

Experimentation takes time: If you're experimenting to drive change, then strap in — you're here for the long haul. Finding the best content, packaging, formats, etc. for your audience doesn't happen overnight. It takes dedication, patience, and a whole lot of nerve to experiment for long enough to get a dataset that can give you meaningful conclusions. But don't be disheartened. Don't lose focus. In the end, you'll be producing better content that will resonate more deeply with your audience — and that's the key to sustainable, long-term video growth.

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We tailor the content and formats for each platform and try to tell stories that matter in each space. We want to engage and keep our loyal audience returning to our owned and operated platforms, while trying to grow and reach new audiences across many other platforms, including YouTube.

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