

The Guardian Nigeria builds a digital newsroom and establishes their voice in the digital video news space

The Guardian Nigeria newspaper was founded in 1983 to provide high-quality journalism and thoughtful editorial content. It covers local and international news, sports, technology, lifestyle, fashion, politics, and business.

OPPORTUNITY

The Guardian wanted to establish their voice in Nigeria's digital journalism space. They saw an opportunity to invest in digital video capabilities (including hiring a dedicated team and creating a studio space) to support their transition from traditional news organization to multimedia publisher.

APPROACH

Reaching audiences with the best stories via the right platforms has always been a key priority for The Guardian Nigeria. But to keep up with the changing, and increasingly competitive, news landscape, they needed to increase their digital presence and reach a younger audience. They hired a new digital video team, created a dedicated studio, and experimented with digital-first formats.

Identifying gaps: As a first step, The Guardian Nigeria benchmarked themselves against global news organizations to understand how the landscape of journalism had shifted, and found specific opportunities for improvement and growth. They identified multimedia storytelling as their key area for investment, and set about uncovering the organizational changes they would need to make to become a player in the digital space.

Building up capabilities: Next up, they built a studio for digital video, making sure it was designed in such a way that all the available space could be used for recording if needed. They also have a space that can be used as a green room or for photography. Then, they identified and sourced digital video production equipment to fit out the studio. Concurrently, they began the hiring process for staff to run the department. This included camera operators, graphics/video editors, gaffers, and presenters. They developed an introduction and training program so that all staff would be aligned to The Guardian Nigeria's goals and values. In addition to training new staff, they implemented sessions for the existing newsroom staff so they could learn how to tell stories through non-traditional formats (including digital video).

Format brainstorming: The new team was then tasked with brainstorming content and format ideas. These ideas were based on the news consumption habits of the audience and designed to drive engagement. Formats included explainers to break down the news, short text overlay videos, and documentaries about empowerment, innovation, climate change, human rights, activism, and health.

Enabling format experimentation: Once the ideas were distilled, the team developed branding for each format and created a project implementation plan to determine workflow and production schedules. Then, each team member was assigned to a specific content piece so they could further creatively develop it. Once ideas were finalized and approved, each format went into production. The videos were then rolled out across The Guardian Nigeria's digital platforms (including YouTube).

Reviewing and revising: Three months after production kick off, they carried out a format review so the team could better understand what had worked, and where they could improve.

The implementation and workflow processes were so successful that teams and reporters were creating more content than The Guardian Nigeria could publish. They streamlined the publication schedule and prioritized pieces that were newsworthy and timely. The production and review process is ongoing.

RESULTS

By building up their video capabilities, The Guardian Nigeria successfully integrated digital into their traditional newsroom, and are now a fully-fledged multimedia news organization.

- **Three team members received production processes training** from DelYork Film Academy and then shared their learnings with the wider team.
- **Viewership increased by 500%** for new videos created in the new studio and some videos have really taken off: One episode of a football show, "The Nutmeg," had 87K views.
- **4X increase of subscriber numbers** for their YouTube channel.

LEARNINGS

Think substance over space: You don't need the fanciest studio set up to get started on your digital video journey, so begin with whatever space you have — it's more about the content than the colorful set. If you don't have the space to film content on site, consider partnering with existing locations/spaces.

Adopt a start-up mentality to hiring: Start with a lean team of experienced personnel who can provide proper editorial direction. Expand that team as and when you need to — and if you don't have the capacity to have permanent in-house hires, bring in support staff on an as-needed basis.

Forget the fancy equipment: Unlike traditional video production, you don't need to invest in expensive production equipment — you're not filming for television. Hire additional equipment if and when you need it, rather than spending money on gear that may become obsolete quickly.

Have a strategy to get more eyeballs on your content: Invest the time and resources developing and implementing a deployment and promotional strategy — there's no point in creating content if no one is going to see it. Start promoting content before you launch, and continue with cross-promotion afterward. Also, consider partnering with popular creators who already have a following on digital because you can piggyback on their success.