

Postmedia creates a new video-first brand to connect with younger audiences

Postmedia is a Canadian newsmedia company representing more than 140 brands across print, online, and mobile platforms.

OPPORTUNITY

Postmedia wanted to test new offerings with a younger audience (18-24). The team saw an opportunity to experiment with expanding its brand offerings through a new, video-first channel (Postable) that would integrate Postmedia's journalistic values and experiences with the tools and distribution capabilities of YouTube.

APPROACH

In order to build a channel from the ground up, Postmedia first went through a hiring and training process to cultivate the next class of video-savvy rising stars in journalism. With a dedicated team in place, they were able to start exploring how to make the most of YouTube as a platform for reaching a younger audience.

Building out the team: The first thing they did was establish a dedicated in-house team of digital video experts. Then, they went about recruiting new talent who would appeal to a younger audience. They advertised on school forums, community job boards, as well as more traditional employment sites. After an extensive interview process, they selected five creators who reflected the diversity of the target audience (including young women, POC, and LGBTQI+), and who were well equipped to explore diverse issues that are important in and around their local communities.

Training the team: To set the creators up for success, they implemented a rigorous training program based on Postmedia's best practices and quality expectations. This included introducing creators to the newsrooms in their community, and a hands-on training session in Toronto with producers and other creatives.

Empowering the team with the right equipment: Equipment purchase was concurrent with training. Postmedia put together 'creator kits', which included DSLR cameras, lav mics, shotgun on-camera mics, tripods, portable lighting, audio recorders, and a DJI Osmo camera.

Launching the channel: With all the pieces in place, creators were encouraged to work with existing Postmedia teams to brainstorm formats and approaches which would work on YouTube. They launched the channel in August, and promoted it with a comprehensive cross-channel social media strategy. The aim was to drive audience reach and subscriptions. This was particularly challenging given they were building a brand from scratch, with no existing awareness or subscriber base.

Experimenting with content formats: Since launch, they've been experimenting with different made-for-YouTube formats and production styles to see what best drives engagement — including an intimate vlog style that encourages dialogue between audience and host, long-form videos, and more informal editing and production techniques (e.g., jump cuts).

They've also been experimenting with engagement strategies to create a two-way conversation with their audience (e.g., replying to comments, requesting feedback on current videos or future topics, calls to action highlighting 'like' and 'subscribe' in videos).

RESULTS

Postmedia successfully established a dedicated news video channel for a younger audience, and is growing its viewership.

- **Assembled a skilled and diverse team** of five creators and two dedicated YouTube producers.
- **Exceeded their audience retention goal of 40%** (actual retention rate is 49%) within three months.
- **Generated 18K video views in three months** (with one video getting nearly 10K views) — not quite the number they're hoping to eventually reach over time, but they're still working hard to grow their audience.

LEARNINGS

Building an audience from scratch is a challenge: If you're building a YouTube channel, make sure you're in it for the long haul. You can't expect to get 100K views right out of the gate. Work on nurturing your audience and building your community in an authentic way. This includes always being willing to experiment, learn, and change course if needed. It won't happen overnight, but if you're tenacious and dedicated, it will eventually.

Integrating a digital video department into a larger company takes time: Postable was designed to be one of the offerings of a larger brand, Postmedia. To do this successfully, it's important to help other teams understand digital workflows (which are often very different from traditional media) and communicate digital video goals at an organization-wide level, so that everyone is heading in the same direction. At the end of the day, you're all on the same team, so digital video success means brand success.

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The GNI YouTube Innovation Funding gave us the opportunity to change the narrative that journalism is dying in Canada, and to start cultivating the next class of rising stars in journalism who are more video savvy and can connect with a younger YouTube audience.

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