

WVIK CAB - CEO Report...August 17, 2017

"Securing the future for public radio requires rapid response to new opportunities for engaging audiences. Extending our reach, relevance and accessibility supports our goal of building a best-in-class network of reporters, storytellers and artists, and it drives our vision of a digital network that connects with audiences across every platform. We come from everywhere; we want to be everywhere." Tom Hjelm - Chief Digital Officer NPR

WVIK is already available on-air and online. Additionally, individual elements (newscasts, podcasts and individual news stories) are available via the NPR One app and on Facebook. After noting that some stories are reaching as many people on Facebook as they do on-air...we began posting newscasts on our Facebook page.

Now we must gear up to take full advantage of a new frontier. Voice-Activated Devices...more commonly known as "Alexa" and "Google Home." Soon, Apple's "HomePod" will be commonplace. More than 35 million Americans will use a voice-activated device at least once per month this year, according to eMarketer (a market research company that claims two-thirds of Fortune 500 companies as clients). That's twice as many as in 2016.

NPR is aggressively pursuing this new territory...which is seen as the equivalent of bringing radios back into the home. And we need to, too.

Three years ago, we installed a new transmitter capable of broadcasting in HD (Hybrid Digital) mode. This allows us to initiate additional channels, much like TV does. The big difference between radio and TV is that we were forced to replace our old analog TV sets. That's not the case with radio...where analog signals continue. Thus, response to HD radio has been lackluster and we have found little incentive to create new channels that few people can receive.

Now, however, with the growing popularity of voice-activated devices...and smartphone apps...it is making more sense every day. We don't have to actually put new channels on-air (on HD channels)...as these devices receive an online stream. But...the advantage lies in the cost. For one, music rights fees for online streams are expensive. By putting them on an HD "over the air" channel and then streaming that channel (as we do 90.3 FM), the Corporation for Public Broadcasting pays our fees. And, we can purchase HD packages from NPR and American Public Media for just a few thousand dollars that let us pick and choose anything they offer. That would allow us to create a "news" channel that would blend our local content with some of the best network programs you may or may not be able to access presently in the Quad Cities.

These new channels would be receivable on HD radios (many newer cars have them)...on smartphones...on computers...on voice-activated devices and smart-dashboard devices that new cars are equipped with.

So...what do you think the community needs to hear on them?