

Tribune leans into digital video and gives underrepresented people and issues a voice

Tribune Media Company is an American TV and digital broadcaster. In 2019, the company was acquired by Nexstar Media Group, which became the nation's largest local broadcast television and digital media company, with national coverage and reach to approximately 39% of US television households.

OPPORTUNITY

Tribune wanted to give a voice to underrepresented people and issues within local communities. It saw an opportunity to change the way all its newsrooms created digital video so teams could better report on important social issues and engage new audiences.

APPROACH

Tribune created a new storytelling arm of the organization, then trained journalists and producers in different ways of video storytelling. The new team went on to create innovative formats that gave underrepresented issues and people a voice.

Developing the project: A new storytelling team was created, and an Executive Producer with experience in social impact filmmaking was hired. Up to this point, the digital video content Tribune had published was based on traditional TV news reporting. But the storytelling team wanted to move away from this established format because they wanted people within local communities to tell their own stories using their own voices. The team planned to create several docu-series looking at underreported, timely topics that were important to their audiences and they relied on social media to help choose topics. They empowered a diverse group of staff from seven different stations across the country to tell stories they were passionate about.

Getting organization-wide buy in: Concurrently, the storytelling team involved the News Directors and Creative Executives in the early stages of program development. The goal was to change the storytelling culture across all Tribune newsrooms, so getting executive buy-in early was essential.

Training on the go: Shoots were conducted with a minimal crew of around four people. They were trained on location by the Executive Producer in things like using filming equipment (e.g., DSLR 4K or 24P, drone cameras, and go pros), framing, angles, and B-roll. Footage was then edited by trained producers who focused on digital video best-practice techniques around transitions, filters, graphics, text, animation, music, dialogue, etc.

Launching the content on YouTube: The storytelling team worked closely with the Corporate Creative Services Department to create a unique look and feel for the new content. The team also produced on-air and social media promos to promote the shows, and drive audience views and engagement.

Integrating learnings throughout the organization: The team developed a style guide based on their learnings and shared it with all the Tribune newsrooms.

RESULTS

Tribune successfully integrated a new style of digital video storytelling throughout the organization. This helped them create videos that gave voices to underrepresented social issues and groups.

- **Tribune newsrooms all across the country** are now creating longer format documentary stories.
- **The team launched three new series** about underrepresented issues in the local community (transgender representation, mental health, and what it means to be an ally to marginalized groups).
- **The sales team is working to find sponsors** for the series' so Tribune can continue to tell community-based stories.

LEARNINGS

Create a style guide so everyone is on the same page:

Tribune created a style guide of best practices, which helped them train multiple newsrooms in a scalable way. They also produced an initial video for the News Director to give a tangible example of the look, feel, and tone of the stories they were hoping to tell. This not only helped get buy-in early on, but also ensured everyone in the organization understood the aim of the project right from the start.

Your videos can have an impact beyond the screen:

Tribune found that working on stories which addressed marginalized groups gave them insights into how these communities grapple with discrimination. They hope the videos can be utilized in different ways to help foster understanding around underrepresented groups within the wider community – for example, videos could be used for empathy training, and diversity and inclusion programs.

“ **What excited us the most about this project is that it allowed us to develop an avenue to create great digital-specific national franchises that can attract a new audience while re-energizing our existing audiences.** ”