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Strengthening and Expanding the Mainstream Public Opinion Position to Promote In-Depth Development of County-Level Media Convergence: Construction Practice and Experience of ChangLe County Media Convergence Center (Postprint)

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Abstract

In the new media environment, how county-level traditional media can overcome their inherent limitations and predicaments to realize the in-depth development of media convergence has become imperative. Focusing on strengthening and expanding mainstream media to achieve depth and ensuring the Party's voice reaches every corner, Changle County has made renewed efforts and breakthroughs in deepening platform system construction, continuous content innovation, system and mechanism reform, and other aspects, continuously advancing the in-depth development of media convergence.

Full Text

Preamble

Strengthening the Mainstream Public Opinion Position and Promoting In-Depth Development of County-Level Media Convergence: Practices and Experiences from the Construction of Changle County Media Convergence Center

(Changle County Media Convergence Center, Weifang City, Shandong Province, Weifang, Shandong 262400)

Abstract: In the new media environment, it is imperative for county-level traditional media to break through their limitations and dilemmas to achieve in-depth media convergence development. Focusing on strengthening the mainstream media position and ensuring the Party's voice reaches every corner, Changle County

has made renewed efforts and breakthroughs in deepening platform system construction, continuous content innovation, and institutional mechanism reform, continuously advancing media convergence toward deeper development.

Keywords: county-level media convergence; media convergence; institutional mechanisms; open media operations; in-depth development

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As one of the national pilot counties for county-level media convergence center construction, Changle County has vigorously promoted reform and innovation since 2018 through institutional integration, personnel integration, and platform integration. These efforts have significantly enhanced all staff—particularly frontline journalists—to transform their communication concepts and prioritize mobile platforms.

1. Focusing on Platform System Construction to Achieve In-Depth Development and Build a New Convergence Media Pattern

From the initial pilot phase, Changle County established a clear positioning for its media convergence center: to truly build it into the county's mainstream public opinion position, comprehensive service platform, community information hub, and regional media brand. Centered on this goal, the county invested substantial efforts in organizational restructuring and platform development.

Traditional media represents the advantage of county-level media, and it should not replace new media but rather develop through integration with it. Changle County Media Convergence Center has implemented comprehensive and gradual reforms from internal to external aspects, covering staff concepts, media architecture, and institutional mechanisms, progressively building, improving, and operating the platform, talent, and operational systems for media convergence.

1.1 Establishing Transformation Concepts and Unifying Ideological Understanding

Media convergence development is the necessary path for county-level media to respond to new media challenges and enhance overall comprehensive strength and core competitiveness in grassroots communication. Changle County Media

Convergence Center began by addressing staff mindset and concepts, conducting multiple rounds of all-staff discussions on convergence media development to promote the transformation from traditional media concepts and upgrade existing operational models. This fostered proactive integration into new media and established the concept of integrated development between traditional and emerging media, further broadening channels and platforms for reform practice.

The center organized a three-month online training program titled “Broadcasting Defense War—China Broadcasting Practical Expert Group Public Welfare Livestream” for all employees. Staff also visited Jiangsu Pizhou, Qingdao West Coast Media Convergence Center, and Weifang People’s Broadcasting Station to learn advanced experiences and practices in media convergence development. This not only enhanced professional knowledge but also exposed all employees to advanced experiences and specific practices from media convergence initiatives across different regions, fundamentally transforming original and entrenched concepts. During the pandemic prevention and control period, the center actively practiced new concepts of convergence media publicity. Through television, newspapers, radio, and mobile platforms, it published over 1,100 pandemic-related articles and information pieces. Seven original articles on the “Ai Changle” App exceeded 100,000 views, with the *Emergency Initiative to All Changle County Residents* reaching 247,000 views. These proactive practices and tangible publicity outcomes further and more effectively motivated all staff, especially frontline journalists, to transform their communication concepts and prioritize mobile platforms.

On April 7, 2020, the official Changle Release Weibo account was officially transferred to Changle County Media Convergence Center, completing the official media architecture of “two micros, one app.” Currently, the “Ai Changle” App has 116,000 registered users; the “Today’s Changle” official WeChat account has exceeded 4.32 million total clicks, with 68 articles surpassing 10,000 clicks and total users exceeding 88,000. Since its transfer to the center, Changle Release has published 1,174 Weibo posts, with followers increasing from 3,430 to 30,258.

2. Focusing on Strengthening Mainstream Media to Achieve In-Depth Development and Amplify the Party’s Voice

“Connecting the ‘last mile’ of public opinion communication is the positioning of county-level media convergence center construction. In the convergence media era, everyone can be a news publisher.” [1] Changle County Media Convergence Center always firmly grasps the mission of “holding high the banner, gathering public support, nurturing new talent, promoting culture, and showcasing positive images.” Adhering to the principles of centering on core tasks and serving overall interests, upholding integrity and innovation while striving for excellence, and following the guidelines of “orientation as soul, mobile as priority, content

as king, innovation as essence, and talent as foundation,” the center accelerates the construction of a convergence media publicity pattern of “integrated online and offline, coordinated internal and external communication,” creating a new mainstream media with influence and competitiveness, and promoting in-depth media convergence development to provide strong public opinion support for Changle’ s high-quality development and catch-up growth.

2.1 Emphasizing Content as King to Enhance the “Four Forces” of Mainstream Media

First, innovating news production methods and improving content quality from the source. “In any case, content production is the core competency. We should insist on being witnesses at news scenes, adhere to content as our main business, and produce high-quality original content.” [2] The center focuses on in-depth reporting, producing and publishing substantial news articles, establishing a deep commentary column on the “Ai Changle” App to enhance influence. Centering on thematic and mainline publicity, it builds a multi-level, multi-angle, and multi-method platform for publicizing Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era that resonates with the masses, enabling the Party’ s voice to spread more widely, deeply, and thoroughly at the grassroots level and among the people. The center expands and upgrades realistic theme creation methods, using new media production techniques to tell Changle stories well, improving the “four forces” of news publicity, producing more works that “connect with the ground” and praise Changle people, and enhancing the customized, personalized, and precise supply capacity of thematic reporting to further improve content dissemination effectiveness.

Since 2021, television, radio, and *Changle Daily* have launched over 30 thematic reporting columns such as “Focusing on High Quality and Striving for New Catch-up Growth” around the central work of the county party committee and government. *Changle News* has produced more than 2,000 thematic news reports; community radio has broadcast 912 programs; the “Today’ s Changle” official WeChat account has published 576 articles; and the “Ai Changle” App has cumulatively released 5,921 news items with 6.98 million total clicks.

Second, building brand columns. Changle Television launched the *Today’ s Focus* column, which exposes problems in rural living environment improvement to promote rectification and has broadcast 15 episodes, advancing work implementation. The center produced the large-scale government affairs interview program *Face-to-Face Implementation*, interviewing main leaders of county-level relevant units on topics such as road access for every household, mineral resource management, illegal fundraising disposal, ecological environmental protection, and village/community “two committees” elections. This government-public interaction, connecting online and offline, smoothed communication channels, created a “transparent government,” and won unanimous praise from both the government and audiences, achieving the best viewership in years. Since its launch, seven 60-minute episodes have been produced.

Third, prioritizing “video-ization.” Based on interests and industry characteristics, the center established convergence media studios. To date, its Douyin, Kuaishou, and Toutiao accounts have published 1,179 short video works, with single article maximum readership exceeding 4.7 million.

2.2 Emphasizing Mobile as Priority to Extend Emerging Matrix Outreach to the Grassroots

Advocating a “mobile-first” strategy, the center has established a modern communication system with multi-screen interaction and integrated development, creating a local characteristic new media publicity matrix. **First, focusing on building the “Ai Changle” mobile client.** The “Ai Changle” mobile client features seven functional modules including news and information, government services, online government inquiries, life services, party building classroom, and new era civilized practice, striving to build a diversified life information service platform. This year, the center will launch series activities such as “Civilized City Snapshots” and “Online Government Inquiries” to channel public demands to the “Ai Changle” App. Collaborating with the county education system, the center has set up a health reporting function on the App to guide parents to download and use it, aiming to exceed 170,000 users within the year.

Second, expanding quantity in new media to achieve comprehensiveness. The center allocates human, material, and financial resources toward new media, strengthening the new media work team; increases assessment weight for new media; continuously launches distinctive original works; strives for major breakthroughs in quality and quantity of new media products such as short videos, H5, and posters; and intensifies publishing efforts on Lightning, Douyin, Kuaishou, Toutiao, Xinhua, Xuexi Qiangguo, and WeChat video accounts to enhance influence.

Third, delivering exciting mobile livestreams. The center established a new media livestream team, launching new columns such as *Anchor Takes You to Explore Stores* and *Anchor Takes You to Taste Food*. Through anchor product promotion, the center creates influencer effects and achieves real-time livestreaming via mobile platforms like the “Ai Changle” App and “Today’s Changle” WeChat official account, with online participation exceeding 60,000 people per event. The “Today’s Changle” WeChat official account launched the “Changle Convergence Media Mall” to continuously broaden revenue channels and build a bridge between merchants and consumers.

Fourth, generating enthusiastic responses for H5 and short video works. The center intensifies creative R&D of convergence media products, actively explores new convergence media products such as short videos and H5, and focuses on improving dissemination effectiveness. Particularly, applying H5 and short video works in traditional media like Changle Television’s *Changle News* has enriched publicity forms and increased viewership effects. Since 2021, *Changle News* has broadcast over 240 H5 and micro-video works.

2.3 Emphasizing “Media +”to Expand Influence of Convergence Media Derivative Projects

Based on county-level media advantages, the center coordinates planning in convergence transformation to release the “1+1>2” effect of media convergence development. **First, focusing on convenience and practicality to expand “Media +” service functions.** The center has established sections such as “Media + Government Affairs,” “Media + People’ s Livelihood,” “Media + Culture,” and “Media + Party Building,” connecting with the “government affairs circle” of 103 government departments in Changle County.

Second, conducting cross-industry cooperation and implementing mixed business operations, successively launching projects such as media + exhibitions, + finance, + auto insurance, and + education. Since 2020, the center has conducted nearly 100 live broadcasts for large conferences and events including the Cloud 2020 Changle Melon New Variety Display Week, the city-wide “One-Time Handling” Reform and Industrial Project “Construction Starts Upon Land Acquisition” On-Site Promotion Conference, the city-wide poverty alleviation problem clearance “Look Back” and Quality Improvement On-Site Promotion Conference, the first Changle County Professional Farmers Skills Competition, and Civilized Summer Square Performances, with cumulative live viewership exceeding 100,000 people.

2.4 Broadening Cooperation Channels and Upholding “Open Media Operations”

On February 2, 2021, the Changle County Fire and Rescue Brigade Sub-Center of the Media Convergence Center was inaugurated, marking the first sub-center established by Changle County Media Convergence Center. The sub-center’ s establishment will effectively integrate publicity forces between the county media convergence center and the fire and rescue brigade, playing a positive role in expanding fire and rescue publicity and achieving complementary advantages and win-win development. The next step will strengthen liaison with county departments and townships, striving to establish more media convergence sub-centers following the fire and rescue brigade model, expanding the correspondent team, leveraging strengths to improve grassroots news publicity, and increasing fresh, “down-to-earth”news. While expanding cooperation channels at the center level, *Changle Daily* and the “Ai Changle” App have also signed cooperation agreements with influential local writers, photographers, and calligraphy and painting artists to open cultural columns, further improving work and article quality.

3. Focusing on Institutional Mechanism Guarantees to Achieve In-Depth Development and Stimulate Convergence Media Team Vitality

As the most basic official information and authoritative voice platform in China, county-level media convergence centers have long been affected by institutional mechanisms and staffing issues, with phenomena such as oversimplification and seniority-based ranking still existing to some extent in internal performance evaluation and professional promotion. [4] Therefore, further exploration of institutional mechanism reform is necessary to achieve innovative media convergence development.

3.1 Establishing and Improving Policy Guarantee Mechanisms to Consolidate the Foundation

Currently, media convergence center construction has been basically completed across regions. Starting from this point, how to achieve deep media integration development has become an urgent issue facing media convergence centers at all levels. Changle County Media Convergence Center conscientiously studies and implements General Secretary Xi Jinping' s important discourse on promoting media convergence development, and will continue to broaden platform carrier channels, increase content and form innovation, and break through institutional mechanism constraints to strive for in-depth media convergence development under the new normal and new situation.

Since its establishment, the Changle County Party Committee and Government have provided maximum policy support for the media convergence center. **First, setting the correct development direction.** The county established a media convergence leadership group at the county level to regularly organize relevant departments to study media convergence work. **Second, strengthening project guarantees.** The center is supported to actively undertake county-wide festival activities and plan special projects such as “Cloud Agricultural Exhibition Hall” and “Cloud Gem Expo.” **Third, continuously increasing investment to update technology.** Since last year, the center has invested over 20 million yuan to build a “central kitchen,” purchase television broadcasting vehicles and high-definition camera editing equipment, and upgrade office facilities.

3.2 Deepening Operational System Reform to Build an Efficient Operational Framework

Based on preliminary exploration and practice of the “convergence media center + state-owned company” operation model, with county financial support in the form of a “lump-sum” budget and full-process performance evaluation for all staff, the center has further adjusted and optimized its internal organizational structure, salary system, and performance evaluation methods. It formulated and issued the *Internal Organizational Structure and Position Setting Scheme*

and *Salary Distribution and Performance Evaluation Measures* for the county media convergence center, establishing an employment mechanism that allows entry and exit, promotion and demotion, and survival of the fittest, enabling the capable to rise, the average to yield, and the incompetent to step down, thereby gradually making talent management more scientific, systematic, and standardized.

3.3 Innovating Talent Introduction and Cultivation Mechanisms to Provide Intellectual Support for Convergence Media Development

First, innovating talent introduction mechanisms. In terms of talent introduction, the Changle County Party Committee and Government have provided strong support to the media convergence center, increasing its staff quota from 69 to 79 positions (10 additional positions), plus vacancies from retired employees. This enables the center to more confidently recruit urgently needed talents in planning and command, content production, and data analysis through formal establishment channels.

Second, focusing on the critical aspect of personnel utilization. Changle County Media Convergence Center broke the original personnel structure, implementing comprehensive staffing reforms across all platform departments through two-way selection, establishing a “basic salary + seniority + professional title + performance” evaluation mechanism that encourages “more pay for more work,” promotes young talents, and achieves “flexible entry and exit, flexible promotion and demotion” in both employment and salary aspects.

Third, creating an environment that retains talent. The center timely innovates and upgrades personnel management systems, implementing a professional title evaluation and appointment system for contract employees to open promotion channels for non-permanent staff. The professional title evaluation has been conducted twice, with two contract employees appointed to intermediate professional titles and seven to junior professional titles.

Fourth, emphasizing talent cultivation and improving employee care mechanisms. The center upholds a mentorship system to leverage the “old guiding the new” role; strengthens “external introduction” and “internal cultivation,” selecting over 20 frontline staff members annually for advanced studies at higher-level media such as Guangming Daily and Shandong Television; conducts more than three collective team-building activities annually; and implements a birthday cake program for every employee within the center, deepening the “convergence media family” concept. These initiatives continuously enhance staff dedication, responsibility, sense of achievement, and happiness, striving to enable all talents to achieve self-worth enhancement at the county-level media convergence center.

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Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

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