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How County-Level TV Stations Can Smoothly Transition to County-Level Integrated Media Centers: Postprint

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Date: 2023-10-08T00:00:00+00:00

Abstract

With the continuous development of the social economy and the deepening of reforms, people increasingly pursue enrichment in their spiritual realm. The principal contradiction in society has transformed into the one between the people's ever-growing needs for a better life and unbalanced, inadequate development, which imposes higher demands on the construction of spiritual civilization. As the most grassroots media outlets, county-level television stations face both opportunities and challenges in the new era. To better meet these opportunities and challenges, county-level television stations should break away from traditional habitual thinking, strengthen connections with audiences, advance media convergence initiatives, and transform themselves into county-level integrated media centers, thereby better serving the broad masses of the people.

Full Text

How County Television Stations Can Smoothly Transition to County-Level Media Convergence Centers

Abstract: With continuous socioeconomic development and deepening reforms, people increasingly pursue fulfillment in their spiritual lives, and society's principal contradiction has transformed into the tension between the people's growing needs for a better life and unbalanced, inadequate development. This imposes higher demands on the construction of spiritual civilization. As the most grassroots media outlets, county television stations face both opportunities and challenges in the new era. To better embrace these opportunities and challenges, county TV stations should break away from traditional habitual thinking, strengthen connections with audiences, and advance media convergence efforts to transform themselves into county-level media convergence centers, thereby better serving the broad masses of people.

Keywords: media convergence center; county television station; resource integration

1.1 Challenges from Online Self-Media and Higher-Level Television Stations

In recent years, with the rapid development of the internet, an increasing number of people use Weibo and WeChat, and scrolling through social media feeds to obtain information has become a daily habit that is gradually replacing television as an information source. Television program production requires substantial human, material, and financial resources, resulting in high costs. In contrast, online self-media offers unique advantages: lower costs, faster dissemination, broader reach, and more rapid information updates. Audiences can access information more conveniently and quickly through online platforms, which provide rich, diverse content with strong interactivity. Furthermore, CCTV and provincial/municipal television stations possess more abundant resources and greater resource mobility, enabling them to produce higher-quality programs that attract public attention and achieve higher ratings.

1.2 Lack of Market Competitiveness

Currently, most county television stations in China still employ traditional management models, lack strong program innovation capabilities, and suffer from weak competitiveness. This operational approach is no longer suitable for today's advanced information society. Specifically, this deficiency manifests in three primary aspects.

1.2.1 Outdated Program Content and Formats County television stations produce monotonous programs that follow outdated production processes and methods, focusing primarily on meeting coverage news as their main news programs. Their narrow scope of material collection fails to adequately reflect livelihood issues or highlight people's real lives, making it difficult to attract audience attention. Additionally, due to inadequate facilities, there remains a significant quality gap compared to CCTV and provincial/municipal television stations.

1.2.2 Backward Management Methods and Low Technical Capacity

Influenced by traditional management models, county television stations have failed to keep pace with the times and lack the motivation and determination for program reform. Moreover, their funding channels are relatively singular and financial resources are limited. This insufficient financial support makes it difficult for stations to optimize and upgrade, hindering the smooth implementation of many planned reforms. The state has repeatedly promoted media convergence development, emphasizing that the key to convergence lies in integration

and unity to create a batch of new mainstream media. The National Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television Work Conference proposed deepening integrated development to achieve new breakthroughs in media convergence, pointing the way for advancing deep media convergence in the new year.

1.2.3 Small Scale and Low Compensation Due to their small scale and low compensation, county television stations struggle to attract professionally skilled talent, resulting in poor professionalism among internal staff who cannot adapt to current social development trends. Consequently, programs produced by county television stations lack sufficient appeal.

1.3 Low-Quality Advertising and Insufficient Revenue

County-level economic development is relatively backward, and commercial development within counties is small in scale. County television stations find it difficult to attract high-level advertisers, and their inserted commercials are relatively cheap, frequently repeated, and low in quality, easily causing audience fatigue. Moreover, after the unified regulation and governance of television advertising, county television stations' advertising business has significantly shrunk, resulting in low income. Additionally, online self-media has captured a substantial portion of advertising clients, further preventing county television stations from improving their economic performance.

2. The Role of Media Convergence in County Television Development and Strategic Considerations

County television stations currently face numerous problems. Only by recognizing and attaching importance to these issues can they formulate relevant optimization strategies. As the most grassroots media outlets, county television stations serve as an important bridge between government and the people and play a pivotal role in socialist construction. Therefore, to better fulfill their functions, they must emerge from their predicament, proceed from reality, and explore a development path suited to their own circumstances. This involves gradually transitioning to county-level media convergence centers, integrating information resources that appeal to audiences, and creating high-quality programs.

2.1 Increased Financial Support

The impact and challenges brought by online self-media are unavoidable. County television stations must proceed from their actual circumstances, fully leverage their unique characteristics and advantages, recognize their own lag, and identify a development path aligned with current information technology to smoothly transition to county-level media convergence centers. Compared to online self-media, television stations exercise stricter control over published information, ensuring authenticity, reliability, and objective reflection of facts, which provides

greater authority. However, television review procedures consume substantial human and material resources. Therefore, to achieve a smooth transition, government support must increase financial investment to provide sufficient financial guarantees for the upgrade and development of county television stations.

2.2 Strict Implementation of Editorial-Business Separation

In traditional county television stations, news editorial staff are often required to participate in business operations beyond editorial work. This personnel arrangement significantly reduces the professionalism and enthusiasm of editorial staff and is detrimental to the long-term development of the station. To facilitate a smooth transition to county-level media convergence centers, television stations should completely abandon this arrangement, establish and strictly implement a system that separates editorial and business operations, and entrust business activities entirely to professional companies.

2.3 Reform of Performance-Based Distribution Systems

Although current salary distribution at county television stations is nominally performance-based, in practice it still follows a largely uniform distribution with only minor adjustments. This approach reduces staff motivation and makes it difficult for employees to efficiently engage in daily work, resulting in suboptimal outcomes. To enhance staff enthusiasm, county television stations should reform their performance distribution systems, eliminate egalitarian salary distribution, and allocate wages according to employees' contribution ratios. Outstanding employees should receive higher salary grades and be rewarded and encouraged, using competitive compensation to stimulate their passion. Slack employees should be effectively penalized.

2.4 Breaking with Tradition and Rational Resource Integration

In the process of resource integration at county television stations, the most critical aspect is human resource integration, which first requires the station to have adequate talent reserves. Improving compensation for outstanding employees is an effective way to ensure talent reserves. Since television news primarily relies on in-house staff for collection and editing, relevant personnel must possess solid foundational knowledge and professional ethics to ensure information objectivity. To effectively enhance staff professionalism and ethics, a performance management system that rewards productivity can be implemented to encourage employees to improve their professional skills and competency, thereby attracting more outstanding talents to join the county media convergence center. In terms of departmental resource integration, the traditional siloed working pattern of television station departments should be changed to strengthen inter-departmental communication and interaction, achieve information resource sharing, and improve information utility.

2.5 Establishing County-Level Media Convergence Centers Based on County Radio and Television Stations

County radio and television stations have a relatively broad mass base, making the establishment of county-level media convergence centers more easily accepted by the public. Therefore, to ensure a smooth transition from county radio and television stations to county-level media convergence centers, the process should be based on county radio and television stations. This involves thoroughly studying and implementing General Secretary Xi Jinping' s important speech spirit, solidly advancing the construction of county-level media convergence centers, better guiding and serving the masses, and integrating county websites, newspapers, forums, Weibo, and other public media resources to achieve multimedia convergence development.

2.6 Adapting to Era Development by Establishing Independent Network Platforms

The application of network media has significantly impacted county television stations, which must actively adopt the strengths of online self-media. By integrating information from websites operated by county party committees and governments, internally distributed newspapers, and related client platforms, they can build their own network platforms or WeChat public accounts. For example, Zhuxi County Radio and Television Station in Shiyan City, Hubei Province, uploads its programs to network platforms and WeChat public accounts to release real-time county information, pays close attention to audience feedback, promptly addresses its own shortcomings, and strives to improve program quality. This ensures the openness and real-time nature of news information, enables faster dissemination among the masses, and to some extent narrows the distance between the television station and the public. This approach not only facilitates program material collection but also enhances interaction between the station and its audience.

To better address the opportunities and challenges brought by information technology development, county television stations must confront their own problems, absorb fresh resources, establish corresponding network platforms, strive to improve their comprehensive competitiveness, boldly innovate, adapt to new era development, base themselves on reality, follow their own development path, and accelerate their transition to county-level media convergence centers.

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

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