

Exploring the Converged Media Construction Path for Urban Radio and Television Stations (Post-print)

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Abstract

Currently, traditional media organizations are actively advancing the construction of convergence media centers, with both successful exemplars and struggling cases. In today's era of rapid internet development and the prevalence of 15-second short videos, what bottlenecks have city-level media stations encountered in their media convergence development? What principles should the construction of convergence media centers adhere to? And in the concrete process of transformation and development, how should various city-level media stations gain self-awareness, select appropriate positioning, and carve out a distinctive path for convergence media development?

Full Text

Preamble

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Exploring the Path of Converged Media Construction for City Broadcasting Stations

Abstract: Currently, traditional media are actively developing converged media centers, with some successful models but also struggling cases. Today, with the rapid development of the internet and the prevalence of 15-second short videos, what bottlenecks have city broadcasting stations encountered in converged media construction? What principles should converged media center construction follow? And in the specific transformation and development process, how should each city station recognize itself, select the right positioning, and forge a distinctive path of converged media development?

Keywords: converged media center; central kitchen; production mechanism

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In the era of fragmented reading, emerging media have begun to capture users' mindshare. While traditional media have achieved phased progress on their arduous transformation journey, development remains uneven. Audience aging, severe viewer attrition, and the sudden rise of the Internet have weakened the self-sustaining capacity and competitiveness of radio and television media. Specific manifestations include: intensified competition in the media market that traditional platforms struggle to address; lagging institutional reforms with insufficient internal vitality; and the continuous implementation of convergence projects where new media "burn money without seeing returns," urgently requiring enhanced self-sustaining capabilities for integrated development. Consequently, deepening institutional innovation, exploring successful pathways, and accelerating the promotion of converged media platforms appears to have become an inevitable course of action.

What path, then, should city broadcasting stations choose for converged media construction? How can they avoid pitfalls in practice? Where should converged media center construction begin? We offer some preliminary explorations here.

1.1 Cognitive Deviations: Media Convergence Is Not Simply Adding New Media Platforms

Over the years, most city broadcasting stations across the country have successively built new media platforms—including websites, Weibo, WeChat official accounts, and apps—on top of their traditional media foundations, simultaneously migrating existing content onto these new platforms. On the surface, having both traditional and emerging media leads many station leaders and editorial staff to believe they are practicing "media convergence." In reality, however, numerous stations have yet to truly enter the realm of media convergence, with content production still operating in silos and new media content failing to follow internet operational principles. Decision-makers' inadequate understanding has caused many city stations' media convergence efforts to stagnate or remain superficial. As convergence enters deeper waters, the optimization and reorganization of media resources becomes imperative.

Additionally, city stations themselves face constraints from limited coverage and audience size, resulting in scarce original content and uneven program quality. Establishing a converged media "central kitchen" presupposes sufficient raw material and source content. Furthermore, building a converged media center

requires not only coordinating internal resources but also considerable capital investment for equipment procurement and “central processing system” construction—no easy feat for financially constrained city stations.

1.2 Institutional Constraints: Difficulty in Integrated Converged Media Operations

In fact, most city stations currently still operate under a channel-centered system, with each acting independently and transforming passively, making integrated converged media operation extremely difficult.

1.3 Objective Condition Constraints: Uneven Converged Media Talent Pool

Professional work requires professional personnel. While traditional media editorial and management talent certainly possesses technical advantages, new media planning and operations are not something just anyone can readily undertake. Editorial staff must also master internet technologies, understand operational patterns and communication characteristics, and be familiar with market operations. It must be said that truly qualified new media talent remains universally scarce in city stations. Cultivating mature, innovative new media professionals also requires...

2.1 Editorial Process Reconstruction as a Prerequisite

The institutional reconstruction of editorial processes constitutes a prerequisite for media convergence. Through reconstruction and optimization, converged media centers can operate automatically driven by systems rather than relying solely on individual will. Traditional program editorial processes have already formed relatively mature and fixed patterns, with some early-adopting regions even achieving industrialized production workflows through separation of production and broadcasting. Therefore, establishing a converged media center must first break down outdated concepts, prepare all staff for transformation, and boldly challenge past institutional structures and interest patterns.

2.2 Unified Underlying Architecture as the Standard

The underlying architecture for traditional media’s internet exploration must be unified. If development proceeds in a fragmented manner with each platform being built in isolation and unhealthy competition, it becomes difficult not only to build a genuine user accumulation platform but also to fully maximize internet effectiveness, likely ending in mutual recrimination.

2.3 Internet Technology as the Bridge

With society developing rapidly, internet technology has placed the media industry at a difficult transformation crossroads. Without transformation, rapid

decline is inevitable; with poor transformation, progress remains difficult. The new era has its own communication patterns and methods, just as new media have their own operational patterns and techniques. Therefore, when building converged media centers, we should use internet technology as a bridge and make technical adjustments according to internet communication patterns.

2.4 User Accumulation as the Development Goal

Media convergence occurs against the backdrop of internet development, where traditional media fully integrate original resources to establish mechanisms and platforms suitable for new media content production, thereby forming an integrated organizational structure and communication system. Television media has always emphasized audience thinking, whereas new media operations prioritize users. What distinguishes users from audiences? Users focus on usage, are clearly visible through data, and represent a two-way choice; audiences focus on “receiving,” representing typical one-way communication. Therefore, users enable close interaction and possess high commercial value, while audiences remain beyond the screen, intangible, incapable of high-level interaction, and possess lower commercial value.

3.3 Using the News Center as the Leader to Build a Central Kitchen Distribution Platform

The essence of internet thinking is user supremacy. For traditional media, the primary task of converged media centers is to transform audiences into users, using new media platforms to first accumulate users.

2.5 New Media Products as the Outcome

User accumulation is merely the beginning, akin to internet traffic thinking where commercial conversion follows traffic acquisition. The ultimate outcome of converged media construction is delivering new media products that speak for themselves. Many traditional media professionals struggle to understand how to create internet products. The internet business model where “everyone is a product manager” has not truly permeated traditional media platforms. More often, they still produce media content from a self-centered perspective, only occasionally considering audience feelings, rather than genuinely starting from user experience to accurately grasp user pain points and needs.

3. Strategic Considerations for City Station Converged Media Construction

Based on the current actual situation of city stations’ converged media construction, the author proposes strategic considerations as follows.

3.1 Leveraging Inherent Advantages, Transforming Communication Concepts, and Deepening Media Convergence

City stations must confront the enormous impact of internet platforms on one hand, while on the other hand facing intensifying Matthew effects where stronger satellite TVs become even stronger, making it clear that maintaining the status quo is no longer viable. To this end, city stations must fully tap into their inherent advantages, strengthen their own platform attributes, place media convergence development in an important strategic position, and leverage commercial platform advantages in technology, channels, and users to guide traffic and transform their DNA. They should explore an “Internet +” model that conforms to their own development requirements and patterns to open new vistas for media convergence. For example, Beijing’s converged media center construction dared to break through conceptually by concentrating the advantages of Beijing People’s Radio, Beijing Television, and Beijing New Media Group. Through integrating news program resources, it achieved centralized command, unified scheduling, resource sharing, collaborative production, and multi-dimensional communication. It effectively integrated channel resources such as Beijing Radio and Television’s WeChat public accounts and mobile clients to build a new media matrix with unified management and “one-click publishing.” It integrated communication channels, unified new media export resources, and enabled coordinated content release with unified user management and operation. It integrated existing technical system resources, providing specific production and publishing tools according to different media characteristics to meet journalists’ needs to break news anytime, anywhere. Simultaneously, Beijing Radio and Television’s converged media center connected news resources from sixteen districts, Yizhuang Development Zone, and various committees and bureaus, expanded Beijing’s government affairs resources and urban service resources, achieved support for information services in government affairs, party building, and livelihood fields, and built Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei collaborative development converged media resource sharing...

3.2 Avoiding Blind Expansion and Steadily Promoting Converged Media Construction According to Capacity

Building an all-weather, all-media news and information collection, editing, and distribution system requires substantial financial support. The industry has reached consensus that media convergence burns money—and not just ordinary amounts. Therefore, converged media construction does not require everyone to start with high-profile, large-scale efforts from the beginning. City stations in various regions should conduct in-depth assessments of local social environments, population conditions, and other factors. They should combine these with their own realities and decide on the scale and quality level of hardware investment in converged media construction according to the resource allocation standards required by new media products. They must avoid rushing in blindly, following trends, or pursuing fads, as well as taking on debt for large-scale construction,

being unrealistic, starting rashly, or creating image projects. In promotion, efforts should also be tailored to capacity, with continuous iterative upgrades, spending as little money as possible while accomplishing as much as possible to achieve the highest possible goals.

3.3 Using the News Center as the Breakthrough to Build a Central Kitchen Distribution Platform

City stations previously advocated “news establishes the station” because grounded news served as their original flagship product with proximity and core competitiveness. At the current stage, city stations undertaking converged media construction should take building a converged media news center as the breakthrough point. They should aggregate personnel originally scattered across various departments and positions, unify manpower and material resources, unify planning and scheduling, and unify content production. This transforms dispersed strength into powerful concentrated effect, facilitates organic integration of various media resources to complement each other’s strengths, and makes news products audible, viewable, visual, and interactive to form powerful communication capacity and public opinion guidance capability. For instance, Changsha TV in central China, building upon its existing new media matrix, constructed a media “central kitchen” by building platforms. This effectively integrated resources in human power, information, and channels, achieving “one-time collection, multiple generation, diversified distribution” while also saving costs and improving efficiency. Simultaneously, through all-media live broadcasting to strengthen integration, enhance central kitchen usage and scheduling capabilities, and increase the influence of the entire media matrix, it achieved very obvious...

3.4 Using Three Major Platform Constructions as the Lever to Rebuild Converged Media Program Production Mechanisms

Many city stations have encountered difficult-to-solve financing problems and talent shortages in integrated development. The root cause lies in institutional obstacles. Therefore, we should rationalize program production mechanisms by improving big data resources and technology platforms, intelligent production and distribution platforms, and user accumulation platforms. On this foundation, we produce content products for the converged media center. City stations’ converged media construction ultimately achieves a virtuous R&D and production track for new media products through “platform building, resource reorganization, and operation keeping up,” thereby better guiding users and serving the masses. Only in this way can converged media construction achieve actual results and establish an invincible position.

Media convergence development is the need of the times and the requirement for media to maintain eternal vitality. Despite viewership diversion, declining advertising revenue, talent shortages, and difficulty improving program quality, and although the media industry faces fierce competition and tremendous

pressure, as long as city stations follow new era development trends, change from passive exploration to active surprise-winning strategies, utilize resources rationally, consolidate local strategies, remain committed to urban communities, and quickly seize the minds of new media end users, they can to some extent enhance their own influence, attractiveness, competitiveness, and cohesion, thereby achieving truly meaningful successful transformation.

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