

Social streaming

Facebook Live is a live-streaming platform that's free and easy to use. **James Cooke** gets social to find out the pros and cons

CHANCES ARE THAT YOU'RE ON FACEBOOK AND

so is your house of worship, as well as a large proportion of its congregation. Almost two billion of us are counted as active monthly users on the site and with the launch of Facebook Live earlier in the year comes a new way to stream video content to your followers. The platform is available for anyone with a smartphone to use, but with many HOWs renowned for producing broadcast-quality content, some manufacturers are integrating their productions with the streaming service.

The Archdiocese of San Antonio is well versed in producing and broadcasting video content on its television station, Catholic Television of San Antonio (CTSA) for over 35 years. The archdiocese also posts regular video updates to its own website and as regular readers of *Worship AVL* will know, it added a TVUPack TM8100 4G/LTE backpack transmitter from TVU Networks several months prior to the launch of Facebook Live. When

the manufacturer updated its systems to allow them to integrate with the streaming service, CTSA was attracted to the potential it offered for a wider audience.

'I had already seen individuals using Facebook Live to stream their events and we felt it could take us to the next level,' explains Dagoberto Patlan, operations manager at CTSA. 'We wanted to expand our social media outreach. Until last year, we didn't even have a Facebook page for the station. When we heard that TVU Networks was adding a Facebook Live streaming component to their system, we jumped at the opportunity.'

Mr Patlan notes how the reach of Facebook is a major advantage to driving more traffic towards CTSA's content. 'Facebook Live helps us get beyond the terrestrial limitations of our broadcast channel. We can reach more Catholics, in other cities, states and countries,' he says. 'With a traditional website, people have to know you are there to find you. Facebook makes it easier to reach people.'

'There's a lot of people on Facebook and they usually have their smartphones with them all the time,' adds Matt McEwen, VP of product development at TVU Networks. 'It's a very large audience and you've got the ability to share with them at any time, reaching them wherever they are. Compare it to traditional broadcast, which requires a lot of planning and expense to setup, reaching a limited viewership. Facebook is so entrenched in everyone's life nowadays that being able to stream live video to it lets you reach your audience with extreme efficiency.'

Another advantage to streaming on Facebook Live comes in the form of immediate feedback. 'As our streams begin, we can see the viewer metrics.

They can comment and we can reply; it's two-way communication,' muses Mr Patlan. 'We know they are watching and can hear what they have to say and we can literally see the links we make on the Facebook Live real-time map.'

'We decided to integrate our products with Facebook Live due to customer demand,' recalls Mr McEwen. 'There's the massive user base and there's no cost to stream to it outside of bandwidth costs. This makes it fairly economical to reach a very targeted audience because Facebook users will already follow a particular HOW and will get a notification when it starts streaming. I think this is going to change things dramatically, especially for HOWs, as traditional tools probably didn't make a whole lot of sense for anything other than a mega-church.'

With minimal costs involved and the ability to stream from anywhere at anytime, HOWs are afforded the option to get creative and provide video content for a variety of different events. 'CTSA does a daily mass using Facebook Live. We have held press conferences on the new rector and the Dallas tragedy live from San Fernando Cathedral,' says Mr Patlan. 'We are planning to Facebook Live our first remote mass, the local World Youth Day celebration and are making plans for Christmas Eve Midnight Mass, *The Passion Of Christ* play that we broadcast every year, the Pentecost celebration, the ordination of priests and all 10 Catholic high school graduations.'

While there are plenty of benefits to reaching a congregation via Facebook Live, there are also some drawbacks. For starters there is a 90-minute time limit for each live stream, meaning that if you are broadcasting an event that will run for longer, the stream will cut out after an hour and a half and you will need to start a separate stream to continue.

'We have no control over the Facebook end,' adds Mr Patlan. 'On one occasion, our stream could not get through to Facebook. After working with Tracy Xu at TVU Networks, it was determined that the issue was on the Facebook side. So we had no live mass that day on Facebook. Reliability becomes an issue in an area we have no control over.'

'There is also a lag, which makes starting and stopping cleanly difficult' he continues. 'Additionally, there have been issues related to network requirements with regards to the internal bandwidth. You must have an in-house network capable of handling the two-way stream of the video coming into the TVU Server from the TVUPack, and the video being encoded and sent back to Facebook.'

Of course, while Facebook Live can be streamed from any smartphone, footage from a mobile device is not going to produce professional quality. That's where manufacturers, such as TVU Networks and Telestream come in.

'We were the first company invited to implement Facebook Live's API and it was a no-brainer,' exclaims Tom Prehn, senior product manager at Telestream. 'Wirecast 7 and the last version of Wirecast 6.0.8



The TVUPack streaming to Facebook at CTSA



Facebook Live streams remain on your HOW's Facebook page as VOD content



currently include integration with the service. It's a simple setup: open Wirecast, turn on a webcam, go to output setting and authenticate your Facebook account and hit the stream button, voila! You can also connect an external, higher-grade camera for which you need a capture card to capture video from the camera and make it readable to your computer.

'Wirecast has all the production elements you need for a professional broadcast,' furthers Mr Prehn. 'Live text, graphics, chroma key, audio mixing and more. A HOW may want the production elements, particularly the screen capture for scripture passages or lyrics. We also have resources on our website to walk new users through setup for many different scenarios. Again, it's cost effective and easy to use.'

Meanwhile, TVU Networks has integrated Facebook Live with almost all of its transmissions. 'Integration to send the stream to Facebook is done at the receiver end,' explains Mr McEwen. 'As long as you can transmit from one of our devices to a TVU Receiver, you can take that stream over to Facebook Live. The way we've integrated it is via a web interface for the receiver called Command Centre that allows you to control all aspects of the transmission. The nice thing with the TVUPack is that you can go live from anywhere with an IP connection, be it a cell connection, Ethernet or Wi-Fi.'

How is the technology working for those in the HOW sector? 'The Facebook Live component for TVU Networks is simple and easy to use. My employees picked it up after only a few minutes,' answers Mr Patlan. 'There's an encoding tab where you key in the Facebook stream info and you hit start. Training is necessary as it's not 100 per cent intuitive if



CTSA streams live to Facebook using TVU Networks' TVUPack

you don't have an IT background, but the training is simple and afterwards it's just about putting the right info in the right place.

'We use the Facebook Live component for remote events, but also within the station,' continues CTSA's operations manager. 'After our IT department worked with TVU Networks to get all the proper settings, it's been a very successful launch. We use the TVUPack with Facebook Live in conjunction with our Panasonic AF-100 field cameras, our NewTek Tricasters in our production control room as well as in our production van. They all seem to work very well together.'

TVU's transceivers, with six streaming outputs, also enable the simultaneous streaming of content to Facebook Live and a traditional broadcast channel or alternative web stream. 'I don't think that this is going to replace television; I think we'll still have

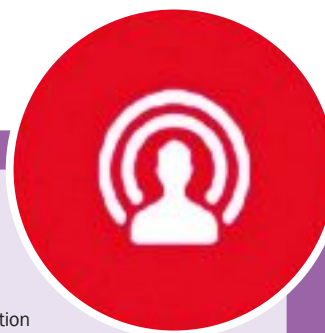
traditional broadcast and that we'll still have houses of worship streaming on their own websites,' muses Mr McEwen. 'However, social media is an excellent new way to distribute content. There's no question that based on all the benefits of Facebook Live, this is here to stay and will only get stronger, bringing in more and more viewers.'

It certainly seems that the benefits of streaming on Facebook Live far outweigh any disadvantages, and with the availability of products that bring broadcast-quality production values to the platform, it can serve as a great alternative way for HOWs to reach their worshippers. The feedback CTSA has received has so far been favourable.

'All the reactions to the Facebook Live component for the daily mass and special events have been positive,' concludes Mr Patlan. 'This instant feedback lets us know that we are going in the right direction. Our presence on the service has been embraced and we hope our reach has expanded. Some of our viewers are from the town and now living elsewhere. We provide a connection to not only the city of San Antonio, but to their home in the Catholic Church.'



Worship AVL is now on Facebook @WorshipAVL



FACEBOOK LIVE

FACEBOOK LIVE IS A FREE- to-use streaming service. In its most basic form, anyone with a smartphone and a Facebook account can use it to stream video content. Even here at *Worship AVL* HQ, we were able to give it a try.

Open up the Facebook app and head on over to your house of worship's page. Click on the 'Post' button to create a new piece of content.

When you are asked 'What's on your mind?', instead of typing in

a status, click on the 'Live Video' button. This is the icon that depicts a person surrounded by a couple of circles, located between the camera icon and the smiley face.

Your phone's camera will then be activated and you will be given the

option to type in a title or brief description for your live stream. This description will be seen by anyone who watches the stream. At this stage, you can also select which of your phone's cameras that you wish to stream from. To toggle between your cameras, press the circling arrows in the top-right corner of the screen.

When you're all set, press the 'Go Live' button to stream live on Facebook. Your followers can view and react to your content as it streams. Once you finish, your video will be saved to your Facebook page to be viewed again any time, ensuring that none of your followers miss your content.



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