

Nebraska Rural Radio Association Scales Third-Party Digital Selling Across Markets, Fulfilling Clients' Ad Needs and Driving Revenue

Background



[Nebraska Rural Radio Association](#) (NRRA) operates 15 radio stations in Nebraska. They offer a variety of advertising channels for local businesses, including OTA (over the air), O&O (owned and operated) on their websites, and third-party digital with Marketron NXT. NRRA was a beta client for NXT and then proceeded to scale it across all their stations. In the following case study, four of the organization's sales managers, Anthony Jacobsen, Doug Southard, Gail Wightman and Judy Mauch, share their experiences using NXT and partnering with Marketron.

The Challenge:

Expanding to Third-Party Digital Offerings Was Necessary to Meet Advertiser Needs, but Sellers Needed Digital Training

With any new product to sell, how sellers respond to the task can vary. Third-party digital isn't something sellers can offer overnight. It requires training and education on the tactics, how to pitch them and how to execute them using a technology platform. NRRA had not sold digital prior to implementing the NXT platform.

Of those challenges, Southard said, "We all had to learn third-party, how to sell it, determining the right marketing mix, order entry and creating the ads. The more we learned, the more we got comfortable."

The urgency to get up to speed on digital channels was to meet the needs of their advertisers, and they wanted both OTA and digital ad options. Their advertisers were eager to use cross-channel tactics to attract customers. Jacobsen explained, "We pride ourselves on having sales reps that connect with our clients and meet their advertising needs. We wanted to provide all the opportunities to help them."



Year-over-year revenue increase:

1,107%

(as of October 2022)

Number of campaigns executed:

56

MarketronNXT

The drive to capture more revenue outside of OTA was also a primary factor. Wightman added, “We needed ways to expand revenue without selling out inventory.”

The Solution:

Marketron Resources and CDM Improve Sellers’ Digital Knowledge and Platform Proficiency

The first challenge NRRA needed to tackle in implementing a third-party digital platform was ensuring it was more than software. All the sales managers concurred that training on the tactics and the system was essential. Marketron delivers many ways to drive digital success. Those resources include the NXT Training Academy, the Marketron Learning Center (MLC), Aspire sales enablement content, webinars and a dedicated CDM (client development manager).

“The Learning Center has excellent training videos and answers for everything. Our CDM has helped us grow our digital business much faster than if we were doing it on our own. They are part of our team,” Southard said.

Digital literacy for sellers has grown tremendously per the sales managers. As a result, salespeople have more confidence when recommending digital tactics to customers. Understanding tactics and how they can help advertisers reach their goals has been critical to their increase in year-over-year revenue. The enhanced digital acumen in their sales teams has also turned high-performers into coaches to others.

Along with the robust training library that NXT provides, NRRA attributes much of its digital success to its CDM. “The biggest difference maker was our access to our CDM. If we have any questions, we contact her. We’ve made huge strides in a short time,” Mauch explained.

Gaining these new skills, receiving support from their CDM, and having an easy, turn-key platform to do everything for digital has delivered impressive results across all their markets. With NXT, users have access to features that streamline sales — instant proposals, comprehensive tactics, transparent reporting and consolidated invoicing. In one solution, they can power all their third-party digital sales.



“NXT is more robust than other offerings. Once a sale is made, it’s much easier to get in the system and the campaign running. The analytics and stats are impressive, and anyone can run them for their customers. They are very detailed and provide the seller and customer what they need to see how things are going.”

Doug Southard
Sales manager
Nebraska Rural Radio Association

The Results:

Third-Party Digital Leads to Profitable Upsells and Banking Deal Worth \$40K

NRRA has experienced significant positive revenue results since deploying NXT. They've been able to upsell existing clients and acquire new ones. The sales numbers started slow, but they are now selling digital campaigns frequently. "We've sold digital to existing customers with incremental ad investments. They are adding digital to their radio buys," Southard commented.

Wightman shared that many of the radio clients she upsold came back to purchase more digital. "One of my clients specializing in agricultural land listings liked the reporting and transparency we provide. He has since purchased additional packages. **We went from zero to more than \$30,000 in the following months.**"

Another big success was a local bank with locations in three states that made an initial digital investment of \$40,000. Offering a wider portfolio of ad tactics met the advertiser's needs around targeting, and NRRA expects the company to expand its digital purchases.

A big win for Jacobsen's market was a \$2,500 campaign for a local fair that wanted to leverage digital to expand its reach and attract new crowds. In both cases, the advertisers view advertising as an investment, not an expense.

It's not just the selling, training or technology that matters. The successful execution by the advertiser is equally as important. Mauch noted, "We learned how to prep the client to ensure their websites were ready before starting a campaign."

The NRRA sales teams are aggressively expanding their digital budgets, and Jacobsen is confident that Marketron and NXT will get them there. "We've got all the tools to do the job," he said. In addition, NRRA plans to expand its digital portfolio, including NXT's options for SEM (search engine marketing) and a focus on OTT/CTV.

In parting advice for other stations diversifying into digital, Southard said, "You should consider NXT because the training modules are comprehensive, the proposal creator is easy and professional, campaign tracking is impressive, and the Marketron team does the backend work."

