

Local Service Initiatives

Name of Initiative: Detroit Public Television's Strategic Plan

Station: Detroit Public Television

Contact Person: Steve Antoniotti

Contact Information: e-mail: antoniotti@dptv.org phone: 313-876-9500 or 248-305-3700

Briefly describe the initiative and be as specific as you can be about the products or services that the initiative includes.

As the name above indicates, this is more than an "initiative" and has become Detroit Public Television's strategic direction. It is based upon our assessment that, given public television's current business model (or lack of one), Detroit Public Television will find it increasingly difficult to differentiate its national programming in a content rich media environment and will lose, what has been, its perceived value. Since our traditional revenue sources rely almost entirely upon this exclusive value proposition, we see the national programming services of public broadcasting as critical to branding but less and less viable for station revenue generation. This decline in local station sustainability will be accelerated as national programs become available on new media platforms outside broadcast. Detroit Public Television has, therefore, set its course toward increasing its "local" value by enhancing its franchise as the only locally-owned television station in Detroit. Our vision is to be "...in partnership with our community" on a mission to "share the power of media...to help other local institutions achieve their goals." This local value proposition has the potential to generate new sources of revenue by endearing the station to a wider local community, even those who "don't watch much television."

The number of "partners" and the types of "local institutions" is unlimited, but include cultural, educational and public service organizations. As an example, Detroit Public Television has revenue generating contracts in place with the Detroit Public Schools to provide services in communications arts at the Detroit School For Arts and to operate the FM radio station licensed to the Detroit Public Schools. Detroit Public Television produces local programs in partnership with the Detroit Institute of Arts, Wayne State University, The Economic Club of Detroit, *The Detroit Free Press* and *The Detroit News*, the Community Foundation of Southeastern Michigan, the Detroit Symphony Orchestra and The Henry Ford.

How does this initiative fit into your "portfolio" of other Local Service Initiatives? Is it one of many initiatives and projects, or does it take the bulk of your "Local" resources?

All of Detroit Public Television's local resources are dedicated to this strategic goal. Detroit Public Television has adopted the concept that local public broadcasting should be operate more like a public "utility." We ask potential partners a simple question: "If you had a television channel could you use it, and what would you use it to accomplish?" If "their" goals are consistent with Detroit Public Television as a public broadcaster, we're in business, literally. All of the station resources are then used to accomplish our partner's goal, such as: greater visibility, increased attendance, or assisting with the education of students. If we're successful, Detroit Public Television becomes of increased value to them (and their supporters) and will be more than a channel they watch.

What station assets, competencies and/or relationships does the initiative build upon?

Detroit Public Television has two primary assets, a single primary competency and the ability to expand the number of relationships. Our assets are: an FCC license to use broadcast spectrum that gives us the ability to distribute information to large, local audiences; and, the PBS brand which identifies us with a level of quality that our customers trust. Our competency is the ability to shape and form information for effective television communication. Our relationships can be strengthened and expanded by focusing upon the needs of other institutions in the community, all of whom have boards and supporters who may not already be contributors to "the public television station."

How would you describe the community benefit of this work? What needs are being addressed?
The institutions with which Detroit Public Television partners will provide direct benefits to the community that are evident in their mission, purpose and the constituencies they serve. They provide an evident community value with which Detroit Public Television becomes identified and recognized by helping them achieve their goals. The needs being addressed are those identified by our partners and validated by their supporters. Detroit Public Television doesn't need to spend time and resources to argue about the value of our programs, just our effectiveness.
Who is the "customer?"
The primary customer is the institution with whom we partner. However, as a public broadcaster we need to make certain our mission "...to educate, enlighten and entertain," and the requirements we have under our license are aligned with the goals of these primary customers. Obviously, our viewers and the constituencies of our partner institutions will be the ultimate customers.
How do you know or measure if the customer's needs are being met?
We measure the success of the partnerships by direct feedback from our institutional partners. If it doesn't work for them, it won't work for us because it won't be funded. Revenue is the ultimate measure of our success because it program sustainability and institutional viability from a business standpoint. Detroit Public Television looks for revenue from those individuals, foundations and businesses that support our partner's mission. In many cases this expands Detroit Public Television's financial support our traditional donors.
Who benefits from the initiative?
Detroit Public Television, our partner institutions, and the community.
How do you measure the benefits?
By achieving our partners' goals (i.e. greater attendance, visibility and effectiveness) and the financial support Detroit Public Television receives in order to sustain the program and station operations.
Describe the financial model for the initiative, being as specific as possible. How much does it cost? What are the sources and amount of revenue? How does it fit into your station's overall economic model?
In general, see the above. More specifically, at the beginning of the relationship, Detroit Public Television produces a limited number of programs at our expense. These programs are used to market the project and attract support. Our experience has been that sustaining financial support comes from board members, foundations and businesses who already provide revenue to the partner institution. For instance, our weekly program with the Detroit Institute of Arts is funded primarily by the MASCO Corporation (\$125,000) whose Board Chairman sits on the board of the DIA. Our projects with the Detroit Public Schools are contractual and will provide revenue to Detroit Public Television in excess of \$2 million a year.
Could other stations use this idea or model? Would it work for any size station or licensee type?
Yes.

***Please send this information to Brian Edstrom: bedstrom@tpt.org**