## Business challenge

Valley News Live–KVLY-TV (KVLY) meteorologists wanted flexibility to send more customized content to their mobile app users to inform them, boost engagement and increase monetization opportunities.

## Transformation

In rural areas with frequent life-threatening weather conditions, access to up-to-date, local information is critical. KVLY in North Dakota added Max Engage with Watson® software from The Weather Company®, an IBM Business, to its existing platform. Now the station can send automated emergency videos that give its viewers the customized mobile content they need.

## Results

**350% more video views per month than the competition**
by creating customized content users want and need

**Nearly 300,000 video views per month**
help sales team sell ad space to monetize content

**Relevant weather content pushed out faster**
with automated processes and a solution designed for ease of use

# Valley News Live–KVLY-TV

## Increases viewer engagement 350% over the competition with customized content

KVLY (external link) is an NBC affiliate, full-service television station based in the US in Fargo, North Dakota. It serves roughly 45 counties in eastern North Dakota and northwestern Minnesota. In addition to airing local newscasts and sports, the station broadcasts NBC's national news, soap operas and late-night programs. It is also the only station in the Fargo market with a bureau in Washington, D.C. KVLY was founded in 1959 as KXGO.

*"We were excited about Max Engage and jumped on board right away. Our viewers demand good content and good forecasts whenever and wherever they are."*

—Hutch Johnson, Chief Meteorologist, Valley News Live–KVLY-TV

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## Wide-ranging weather needs customized content

Winter temperatures drop to -40°F. Blizzard wind chills plunge to -80°F. In the summer—which is only a few weeks long—highs reach triple digits. And then there are the floods and tornadoes. This is the weather that television station KVLY covers.

KVLY's 50,000 sq mi market area covers 45 counties extending from the eastern third of North Dakota to western and northwestern Minnesota. And it experiences such different weather across it that the station works with three offices of the National Weather Service for forecasts.

KVLY was an early adopter of weather application technology. Over more than a decade, it has deployed several apps.

"We're meteorologists and scientists," explains Hutch Johnson, Chief Meteorologist at the station. "We try to improve our forecast and delivery of information so we can help our viewers make informed decisions."

One frustration with earlier apps was lack of customization and flexibility. "I was always concerned about a third-party app putting out a different forecast than we were broadcasting," he says. "And, as much as I love data,

the flexibility to show only the data I think is most important to my viewers is paramount to that."

When The Weather Company developed a mobile app integrated with Forecast Editor, the station's on-air Max software data input tool, Johnson was thrilled. KVLY began using The Weather Company Max Mobile app in 2010. Then, when it introduced Max Engage with Watson, KVLY was quick to integrate it with its existing Weather Company Max software system.

Johnson acknowledges that people can get temperatures and forecasts from any weather app. "But with our app, we can say, 'Hey, this is Hutch. You're at Valley News Live. There's rain coming in 13 minutes … you'd better have the windows rolled up.' And that kind of personalized, custom content is what our audience wants."

## Customized content creates engaged audiences

Since August 2017, KVLY has been using the Max Engage with Watson solution to create and send customized mobile alerts and videos to its viewers. "We were excited about Max Engage," recalls Johnson. "We're in a weather-heavy, rural market. Our viewers demand good content and good forecasts whenever and wherever they are."

*"For emergency alerts, we programmed Engage to choose particular content to send our viewers. These go out automatically, with an urgent status. That's a very powerful tool for our audience. Our automated pushes of severe weather alerts are what people watch the most, by far. That's how the system works to keep people safe."*

—Hutch Johnson, Chief Meteorologist, Valley News Live–KVLY-TV

It took planning, but IBM and the KVLY team developed a process that is now seamless within their daily workflow.

Morning meteorologists create two videos, first thing in the morning and midday. Then the afternoon staff post early in the afternoon and later in the day. "That's our baseline," Johnson explains.

But the baseline is just that: a threshold. To keep viewers engaged, the KLVY team posts additional videos for local weather events, emergency alerts or notable weather news from outside the region.

The meteorologists decide the relevant weather story. "If they want to show forecast data, they show forecast data. If they want to show 'right now' data, they show 'right now' data," Johnson says.

Meteorologists can quickly create and distribute videos for any of the 45 counties in the viewing area. To make a video, they open Max Engage, add a headline and type in a few words. Then they pick the product. It might be modeled forecast data or live data of temperatures, winds, radar or hail. Or where there's rotation in a storm. This automation and speed let them focus on the forecast science and storytelling while keeping mobile app users safe and informed.

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"For severe, life-threatening weather, the team can do more than send a snapshot of the radar and say there's a tornado warning for this county and it's moving this way," explains Johnson. "It's fast for me and I can keep it short, sweet and simple for our viewers."

# Engaged audiences create avid advertisers

Short, sweet and simple are working for KVLY. So is the customized content.

View numbers vary, but since August 2018, only four months have had fewer than 100,000 video views. In fact, June and July 2020 had nearly 600,000 video views each. With 78,000 viewers, that's over seven views per user per month. "That doesn't sound like a lot, but most stations average fewer than one or two views per user per month," Johnson explains.

KVLY's 350% increase over its competition isn't simply a result of customization. The team works consistently to keep its content engaging.

"We have analytics on our dashboard," says Johnson. "I can see what the most popular videos are. And you can be sure I'm looking to see who made the most popular video last week!" There's an unspoken competition to win the week, but not simply for bragging

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rights. The team considers what makes a video popular so they can learn from it.

This mindset helps KVLY grow its user base, increase engagement and earn its viewers' loyalty—which creates opportunities for monetization and advertising revenue.

It takes time to show the value that a mobile weather app provides to an advertiser. Sales teams must

demonstrate how many people use the app and how often. "An app that averages 100,000 to 200,000 video views or more per month is easier for your sales team to sell," explains Johnson. The KVLY sales team can do just that.

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The KVLY team will continue tracking measurable results, tweaking what it's doing and testing those tweaks.

This knowledge and flexibility are possible using the Max Engage with Watson solution. "The full suite and palette of available content that The Weather Company and IBM bring to the table let us offer our viewers something far and above what we've ever had before," Johnson concludes.

## Solution components
- The Weather Company® Max Engage with Watson®
- The Weather Company Max Mobile

## Take the next step
To learn more about the IBM solutions featured in this story, please contact your IBM representative or IBM Business Partner.

## About The Weather Company
The Weather Company, an IBM Business, delivers more than 25 billion personalized and actionable forecasts globally each day to millions of consumers and thousands of marketers and businesses. It accomplishes this through Weather's API, its business solutions division, and digital products from The Weather Channel (external link) and Weather Underground (external link). Its products include the world's most downloaded weather app, a network of 250,000 personal weather stations, a top-20 US website, one of the world's largest Internet of Things (IoT) data platforms, and industry-leading business solutions.

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