

Vertical Video Playbook

How publishers can use vertical video to expand their audience and capture new streams of revenue.

March, 2026

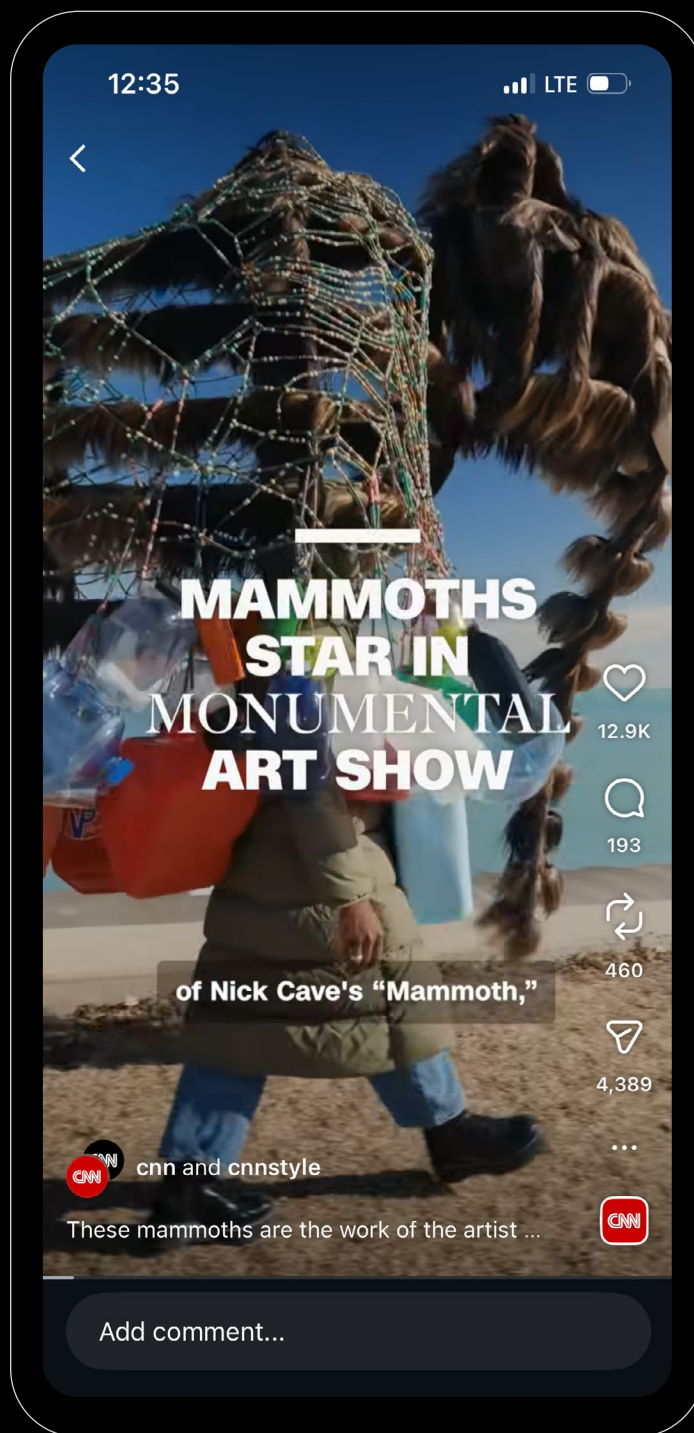
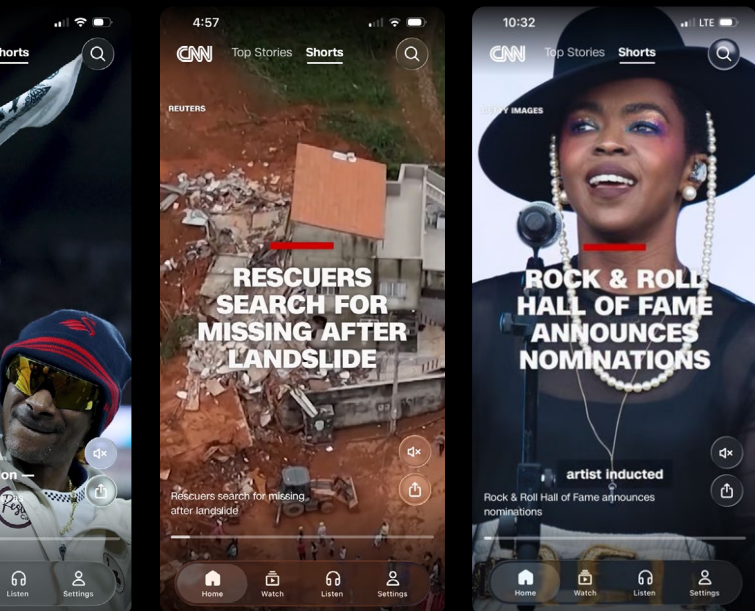
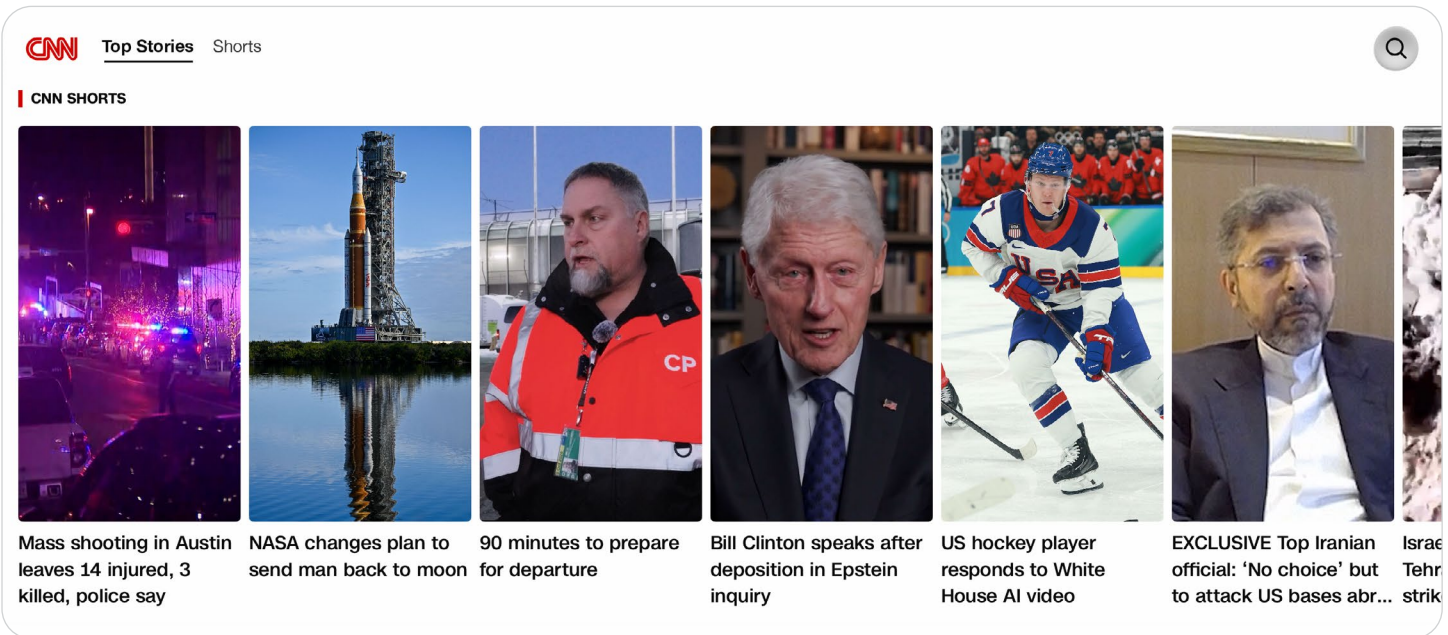


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Introduction

Mobile-friendly vertical video, a long-time staple of influencers on social media sites like TikTok and Instagram Reels, is now being fully embraced by the news media. The key to success is tailoring the video experience across an outlet's entire ecosystem – from the website to mobile apps to social media presence – and not forcing users to consume 16:9 video on every platform simply because it's easier to produce.



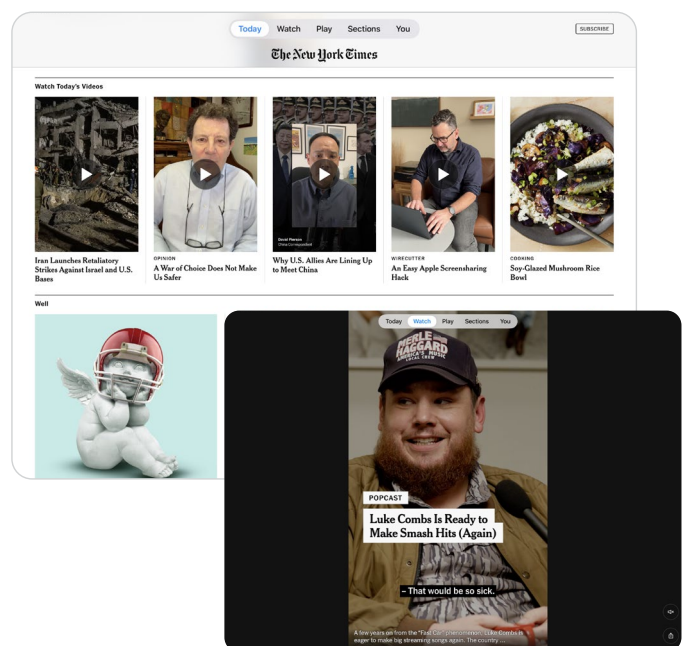
CNN has been producing vertical videos on YouTube, TikTok, and other social media sites for more than two years. In late 2025, CNN added a [Shorts](#) tab to their mobile app and on their website that enables viewers to swipe through a set of vertical videos focused on news of the day and human interest stories.

The New York Times

Similarly, The New York Times recently added a [Watch tab](#) to their app that features a gallery of vertical videos. Not just limited to news, it also features Opinion, Cooking, Wirecutter, and The Athletic content.

“Our videos live both on our own platform and on a whole range of social platforms, Instagram, TikTok, also YouTube. We don't make video that would live only or thrive only on one platform”

– Solana Pyne, Video director at The New York Times



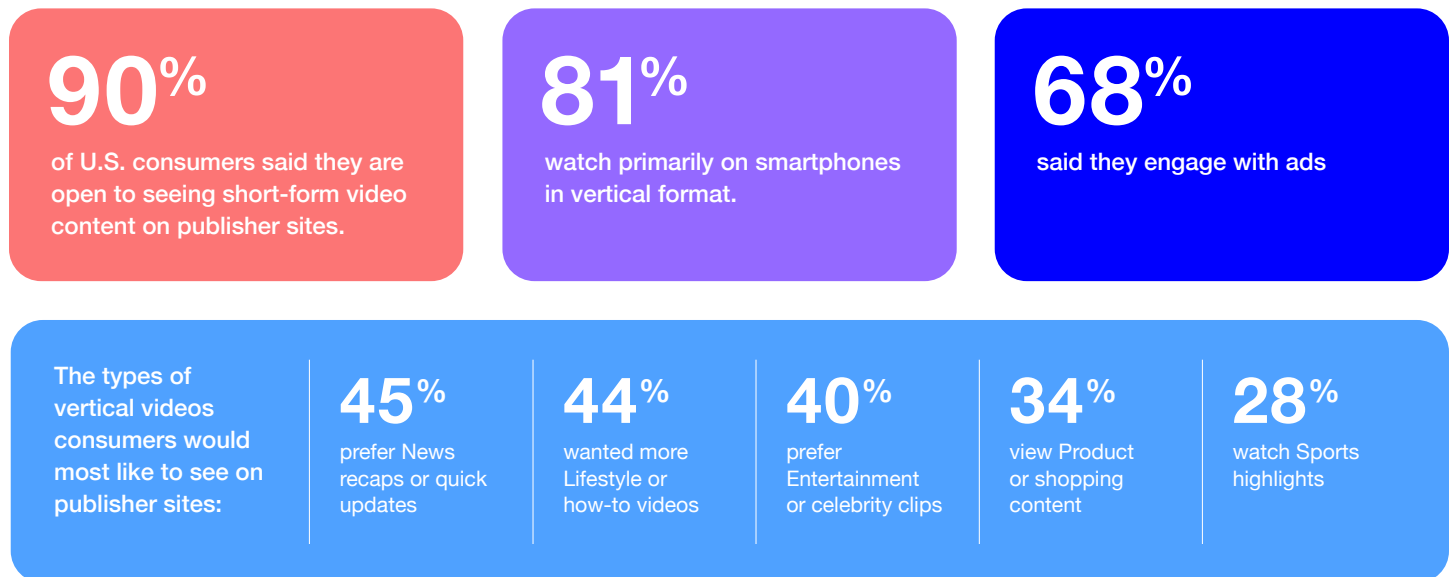
Why the push for vertical video?

Younger audiences have been conditioned to watch vertical videos on the social media sites they frequent. Producing vertical videos provides news publishers with an opportunity to expand both their audience and revenue.

The stats speak for themselves...

On publisher sites:

A November 18, 2025 poll by [Media.net](#) found:



On social media sites:

01

Publishers represent a reputable environment where advertisers can feel safe about the content they sponsor rather than the unknowns associated with influencer content. They're hoping to attract the revenue advertisers are spending on vertical video on social media platforms. According to [IAB's 2025 Creator Economy Ad Spend & Strategy Report](#), U.S. creator ad spend is projected to reach **\$37 billion** in 2025.

02

Time has started adding vertical videos after the second paragraph on most article pages. *Time* chief operating officer Mark Howard told [Digiday](#) that *Time's* video ad sales will be the "biggest growth driver" for the business in 2026.

TIME

03

Tusar Barik, New York Times Advertising's SVP of marketing also told [Digiday](#) that video ads are a key growth area, including vertical video.

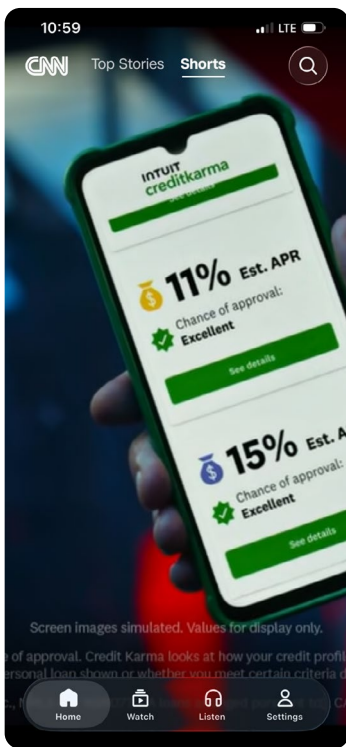
The New York Times

New types of revenue opportunities

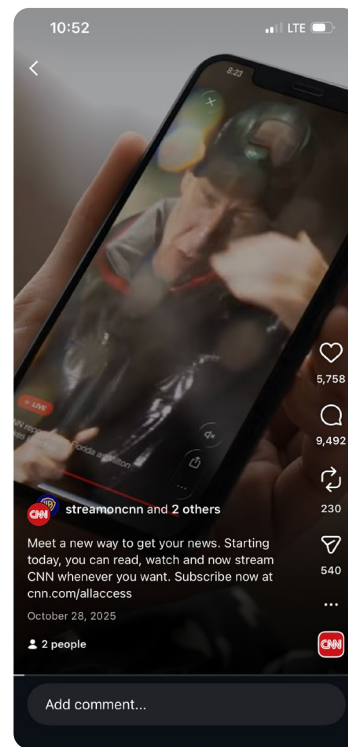
Advertisers are already producing vertical videos for social media and are looking for ways to easily repurpose them for other audiences.

Revenue tactics to consider:

01 Publishers can expect higher revenue when ads are integrated into their own platforms.
Suggestions:



02 Due to the revenue split with social media sites, publishers will see lower revenue.
Suggestions:



- + Accept vertical video ads or offer to produce and add them to vertical videos on your own site or mobile app.
- + Sell an exclusive sponsorship of all vertical video content on your site.
- + Offer advertisers persistent ad units or sponsored logo placement near or framing vertical video on your site or mobile app.
- + Include vertical video previews in newsletters to drive traffic to your site

- + Split revenue with social media platforms on video ads that run every four-to-five videos. Each network has its own partner program.
- + Include links back to a full article on your website to drive additional content consumption.
- + Partner with brands to produce sponsored segments or product placement for lifestyle or how-to content.

Tips for newsrooms



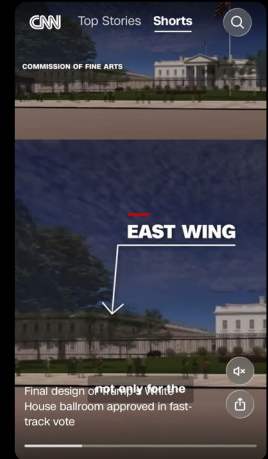
01
Turn the camera around to face the reporter to show reactions and provide commentary on the events featured in the video. Be human. Connect with the audience.



02
Grab attention in the first two seconds. Attention span is much shorter on mobile. Users scroll through video quickly and may bypass it if it doesn't catch their eye.



03
Shoot in front of a background with depth. Place yourself into the environment where you are reporting. Avoid a blank wall. It sanitizes it.



04
Think visually. Don't just rely on a talking head. Be sure to show action, graphics, and sound bites from others who can provide context.



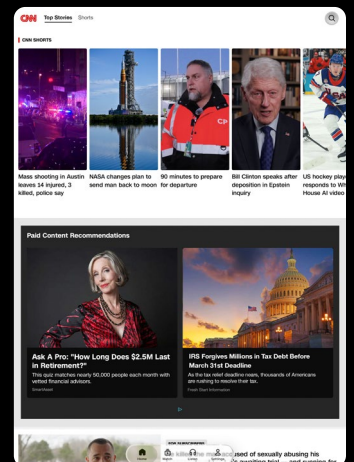
05
Don't just post to your outlet's website. Post to their social media accounts and mobile apps. There are huge audiences on these platforms, which represents an opportunity to build brand awareness and loyalty.



06
Turn the captions on or at least highlight key points with words on screen. A common mobile behavior is to watch with audio muted.



07
Choose the right talent. Not everyone is suited for the informal style of vertical videos. Don't try to make a journalist something that doesn't match their personal brand or style.



08
Create swipable carousels that can be embedded on homepages, in news stories, and in mobile apps to mimic the typical scrolling behavior of other social media sites. Avoid dead ends. Blend different genres.

Production tactics



Top third

Middle third

Bottom third



1080 px

1920 px

The rule of thirds

Follow the rule of thirds to frame your video. Imagine your screen is divided into thirds vertically. The focus (e.g., your eyes) should appear roughly on the line between the top and middle third. Fill the frame. Don't be afraid of close-ups.

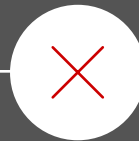
Ideal specs

- + Aspect ratio: 9:16 ratio
- + Dimensions: 1080 x 1920 pixels
- + Length: :15 - :30 seconds is optimal. Videos longer than :90 will lose interest.



DOs

- + Use quick cuts and dynamic movement. This is short-form video, not a long narrative.
- + Pan up and down. Vertical video is natural for panning up and down to show additional context or reveal more of the story.



DON'Ts

- + Don't shoot horizontally and then crop it to be vertical.
- + Don't use your phone's zoom function. It can be disorienting or look jerky. Move forward or backwards as you film.

Common editing tools

Better for individuals or influencers



Canva

- + Drag-and drop timeline editor
- + Add captions, animations, and transitions
- + Edit on mobile, desktop app, or browser
- + Customizable templates for different topics (sports, travel, etc.) and platforms (TikTok, Instagram, etc.)
- + [Plan comparison](#)



CapCut

- + Aimed at TikTok creators, but supports other social media video outputs
- + Add effects, filters, and transitions and choose from templates
- + Integration with AI generated video and writing
- + Auto transcribe for captions
- + Published directly to social media platforms
- + [Plan comparison](#)



InShot

- + Mobile app specifically aimed at creating videos for social media platforms.
- + Library of editing effects, transitions, and animations
- + Automatically creates captions
- + Remove objects from videos
- + Color adjustments, speed control
- + Professional voice overs from text using AI
- + Free with in-app purchases

Better for enterprise level



Wochit

- + Collaborate to create video in the cloud with auto-save and drafts
- + Pre-licensed library of premium visuals and music tracks from Getty, AFP, Press Association, and more
- + Customizable transitions, text overlays, infographics, and more
- + Gallery of video templates custom to social media, email, and advertising platforms
- + [Plan comparison](#)



Final Cut Pro (Apple)

- + Part of the Apple Creator Studio, only compatible with Mac
- + Library of titles, soundtracks, transitions and effects
- + Magnetic timeline that keeps everything in sync while editing
- + Separate objects in foreground from background
- + Automatically creates captions
- + Search visually or within the transcript
- + Subscription or one-time purchase required

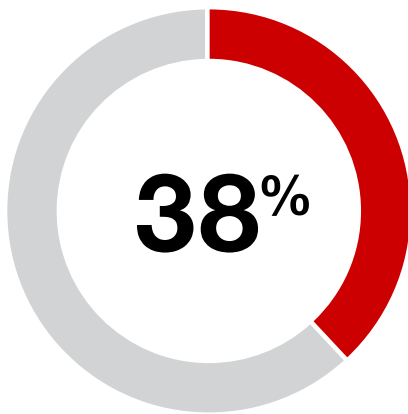


Adobe Premiere

- + If your newsroom already has access to Adobe Premiere Pro, this tool can also be used for vertical videos
- + Shares many of the same types of effects, animations, and templates noted in other tools
- + Publish directly to social media accounts
- + Integrated with AI for auto-masking, captions, and search
- + [Plan comparison](#)

Suggested use cases for local news

Generally speaking, vertical video is perfect for reflecting the local community in a less formal, down-to-earth way.



of respondents to a [November 2025 Pew survey](#) ages 18 to 29 say they regularly get their news from news influencers who have a large following on social media and often post about news, political, or social issues. Reasons they cite include helping them understand current events, quick reporting on breaking news, and a feeling of authenticity.



Breaking news
Capture unfolding stories. Document an authentic moment that people will talk about.



Behind-the-scenes access
This is a casual platform. Take users with you into the mayor's office or behind the scenes with a new baby gorilla at the zoo.



Off-the-cuff interviews
Perfect for man-on-the-street. Get viewer opinions about actions or events in your community.



How-to's
A staple on social media, quick how-to videos can gain a lot of traction (e.g., how to renew your license).



Community events
Not everyone can attend the latest art opening or try a new restaurant. Take the viewer along with you to show them what they missed or inspire them to participate more in their community.



Q&A
Start your story with a question that's top of mind for the community. It's a great way to quickly capture attention. It can also spark a conversation among viewers.



Weather
In addition to forecasts, on-scene, reports and explainers (e.g., frying an egg on pavement) can all be winners.



Opinions
Showcase journalists known for opinions on local issues. Expand their audience on social.

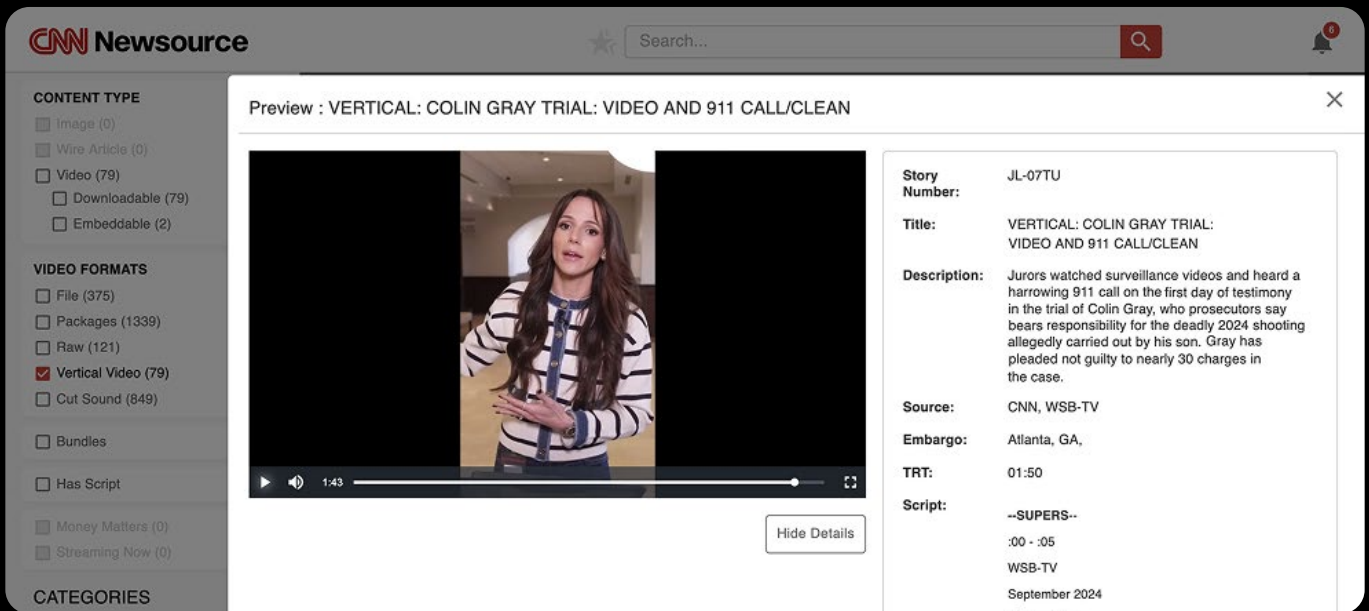
Final thoughts

The rise of vertical video has fundamentally changed how publishers think about producing, delivering, and monetizing content. At a time when website page views are dwindling as a result of AI answering questions directly in search engines, vertical video represents a unique opportunity for capturing younger audiences and potentially new streams of revenue.

Reconsider your digital ecosystem. Don't rely solely on your website to attract the traffic that can produce the necessary revenue. Create and publish content that's tailored to multiple social media platforms, mobile apps, AI search results, and newsletters. A trusted brand is one of your biggest assets to compete against social media influencers and the propagation of questionable, AI-produced content.

CNN Newsource offers a daily selection of vertical videos on the portal for our affiliates to download and use across their website, apps and branded social media platforms.

Check out the "Vertical Video" filter on the left side of the portal to help you get started.



We're at the heart of it.

CNN Newsource understands what it takes to win in the digital space. We work closely with our network of 1,000+ local news partners to offer valuable insights relevant to the news business while providing powerful, trusted news content.