



WEATHER MINUS: NBC SHUTTERS DIGITAL VENTURE

Source: B&C, 10/8/08

—NBC Universal is pulling the plug on Weather Plus, the 4-year old digital venture between NBC and local affiliates that provided 24-hour local weather service on digital tiers.

NBC and the NBC Television Affiliates Association Board unanimously approved the decision to dissolve the service, according to an announcement. NBC News chief Steve Capus informed the staff Tuesday that operations would be shut down. Ten NBC O&Os and 80 affiliates currently use Weather Plus.

“NBC Universal’s purchase of The Weather Channel, coupled with the ongoing financial and distribution challenges facing Weather Plus, made the venture no longer feasible,” the company said in a statement. “On the air and behind the scenes, the staff has shown tremendous dedication and professionalism, and we would like to thank them for all their efforts.” Weather Plus fell under the news division’s responsibility last year when Jay Ireland, former head of the NBC stations group, returned to parent company General Electric.

Weather Plus was intended to exploit new revenue streams for NBC and its affiliates, but the service was facing increasingly challenging economic realities. When NBC Universal acquired a minority stake in The Weather Channel in July, Weather Plus was rendered all but redundant.

Few at the station level were surprised to hear of NBC’s decision to pull the plug on Weather Plus.

“Weather Channel is such a strong brand—it’s the weather brand,” says WTHR Indianapolis VP/General Manager Jim Tellus, whose station offers its own Skytrak franchise instead of Weather Plus. “I would’ve guessed they’d put their energies into Weather Channel.”