

Another bad year for salaries

by Bob Papper

For the second year in a row, TV news salaries rose by less than one percent from the year before. That means that for the second year in a row, people working in local TV news actually saw a loss in real wages--the pay increase minus the devaluation caused by inflation. TV news salaries rose just 0.6 percent while inflation rose by 3.2 percent. That's actually a slight improvement over a year ago, when salaries edged up by 0.2 percent while inflation rose by 3.4 percent. Unlike past years, there were really no big winners or losers; just about everyone stayed nearly the same.

Radio news fared much better, with salaries rising by 8.4 percent--well ahead of inflation. But a year ago, radio salaries actually fell 4.4 percent from the year before, so most of this year's gain was just catch-up.

In real wages for the last two years, both radio and TV news salaries are down.

#### Television News Salaries - 2007

	Average	Median	Minimum	Maximum
News Director	\$84,900	\$74,000	\$11,000	\$300,000
Assistant News Director	67,500	63,000	27,000	200,000
Managing Editor	59,700	58,000	19,000	200,000
Executive Producer	53,900	52,000	16,500	175,000
News Anchor	72,400	60,000	8,500	1,200,000
Weathercaster	62,700	53,300	15,000	500,000
Sports Anchor	52,300	40,000	10,000	400,000
News Reporter	35,600	29,500	10,000	275,000
Sports Reporter	32,000	29,000	16,000	100,000
Assignment Editor	34,900	34,000	11,000	80,000
News Producer	31,900	30,000	9,500	120,000
News Writer	27,000	24,000	16,000	74,000
News Assistant	28,800	25,500	7,000	85,000
Photographer	29,600	27,000	7,000	82,000
Tape Editor	27,000	25,000	6,700	90,000
Graphics Specialist	30,200	29,500	10,000	75,000
Internet Specialist	34,300	33,800	10,500	120,000
Art Director	46,100	42,000	23,000	120,000

Overall, salaries were highest in the Northeast and lowest in the West. There were few meaningful differences in salaries based on network affiliation. Other commercial

stations—most of which were in larger markets—tended to have higher salaries. PBS affiliated stations tended to pay higher salaries than commercial stations for most positions but paid much lower salaries for anchors and news managers. Because the largest, highest-paying stations can raise the average salaries out of proportion, the median—or midpoint—is usually considered a better gauge of typical salaries.

#### Five and Ten Year Median Television News Salary Comparisons 2007 to 2002 to 1997

	2007	2002	5-Year Percentage Change	1997	10-Year Percentage Change
INFLATION			+13.8%		+28.5%
All TV news			+13.4		+35.5
News Director	\$74,000	\$64,000	+15.6	\$50,500	+46.5
Assistant News Director	63,000	57,000	+10.5	44,500	+41.6
Managing Editor	58,000	50,000	+16.0	44,500	+30.3
Executive Producer	52,000	47,000	+10.6	40,000	+30.0
News Anchor	60,000	50,000	+20.0	40,000	+50.0
Weathercaster	53,300	43,800	+21.7	35,000	+52.3
Sports Anchor	40,000	35,000	+14.3	30,500	+31.1
News Reporter	29,500	26,000	+13.5	22,000	+34.1
Sports Reporter	29,000	25,000	+16.0	20,000	+45.0
Assignment Editor	34,000	30,000	+13.3	26,000	+30.8
News Producer	30,000	27,000	+11.1	24,000	+25.0
News Writer	24,000	27,500	-12.7	23,000	+4.3
News Assistant	25,500	21,000	+21.4	19,000	+34.2
Photographer	27,000	25,000	+8.0	20,000	+35.0
Tape Editor	25,000	23,000	+8.7	*	*
Graphics Specialist	29,500	25,000	+18.0	25,000	+18.0
Internet Specialist	33,800	30,000	+12.7	*	*

This table gives the longer term picture, comparing salaries with five years ago, ten years ago and with inflation over those periods. Overall, in the last five years, TV news salaries have grown at just under the rate of inflation (13.4 percent versus 13.8 percent). The ten year picture is better, with overall salary growth (35.5 percent) running ahead of inflation (28.5 percent). The translation, of course, is that TV news salaries used to grow at a much faster clip than they have more recently. The big winners in the last five years are news anchor, weathercaster and news assistant—all up between 20.0 and 21.7 percent). Graphics, managing editor, sports reporter, news director and sports anchor were the only other positions to come in ahead of inflation. News writer, down 12.7 percent, was the biggest loser and the only group to actually drop over the five year

period. Over the last 10 years, only news writer and graphics failed to beat inflation.

\*Insufficient or no data.

#### Median TV News Salaries by Market Size – 2007

	1 – 25	26 – 50	51 – 100	101-150	150+
News Director	\$115,000	\$130,000	\$90,000	\$65,000	\$53,000
Assistant News Director	95,000	85,000	61,000	50,000	41,000
Managing Editor	86,000	62,500	58,000	45,000	42,000
Executive Producer	70,000	68,000	50,000	37,000	30,000
News Anchor	98,000	100,000	80,600	45,900	35,000
Weathercaster	75,000	82,500	65,000	45,400	35,000
Sports Anchor	80,500	75,000	50,000	36,800	28,000
News Reporter	56,000	44,000	32,800	24,000	20,000
Sports Reporter	51,000	39,000	30,000	23,500	19,800
Assignment Editor	40,000	40,000	34,000	28,500	25,000
News Producer	45,000	38,500	30,000	24,000	22,000
News Writer	30,000	25,000	22,000	22,800	*
News Assistant	39,000	30,000	25,000	14,000	12,000
Photographer	43,000	35,000	29,500	22,000	19,000
Tape Editor	39,000	29,800	23,300	18,300	12,000
Graphics Specialist	36,500	31,000	28,000	22,800	18,000
Internet Specialist	46,800	40,000	35,000	27,000	28,300
Art Director	85,000	45,000	42,000	29,000	*

As usual, the larger the market, the larger the salary. There are exceptions, of course, and the most common ones are in the largest markets. That's because the biggest markets include both the biggest and highest-paying stations—along with a disproportionately high number of smaller, lower-paying independents (lower paying based on market size). Unlike some past years, there were no market sizes that stood out as having much better or much worse pay rate changes from last year to this year.

\*Insufficient data.

#### Median TV News Salaries by Staff Size –2007

	51+	31-50	21-30	11-20	1-10
News Director	\$136,500	\$85,000	\$65,000	\$52,300	\$40,500
Assistant News Director	87,000	57,000	48,000	36,500	*
Managing Editor	69,000	50,300	46,000	40,000	19,000
Executive Producer	70,000	50,000	35,000	33,800	27,000
News Anchor	112,500	75,000	45,500	33,000	24,000

Weathercaster	102,000	58,000	45,000	33,500	24,500
Sports Anchor	80,500	45,000	35,000	27,500	24,000
News Reporter	50,500	32,500	24,000	20,000	23,700
Sports Reporter	40,000	29,000	24,000	20,300	18,000
Assignment Editor	40,000	35,000	30,000	25,000	33,500
News Producer	40,500	30,000	24,000	22,000	28,000
News Writer	25,000	22,500	25,500	*	20,000
News Assistant	33,000	24,000	23,000	12,000	20,000
Photographer	38,000	28,000	23,000	20,000	28,000
Tape Editor	29,500	22,000	20,000	26,000	30,000
Graphics Specialist	35,000	28,000	27,500	25,000	35,000
Internet Specialist	40,000	32,000	29,000	23,000	*
Art Director	41,000	42,000	50,000	*	23,000

With rare exception, the bigger the newsroom, the bigger the salaries. \*Insufficient data.

#### Radio News Salaries – 2007

	Average	Median	Minimum	Maximum
News Director	\$36,400	\$32,000	\$9,000	\$100,000
News Reporter	25,800	25,000	3,000	78,000
News Anchor	35,000	29,000	10,000	150,000
News Producer	29,600	27,800	12,000	55,000
Sports Anchor	31,300	30,000	14,000	70,000
Sports Reporter	21,200	19,300	10,000	37,000

Other than sports anchors, all other positions moved up in the last year. While the overall 8.4 percent increase appears to mark a very strong year for radio salaries, it follows a year in which salaries fell by 4.4 percent. Factor in inflation, and the last two years still result in a cumulative decline in real wages. There were no meaningful salary differences based on geographic region. Because the largest, highest-paying stations can raise the average salaries out of proportion, the median--or midpoint--is usually considered a better gauge of typical salaries.

#### Five and Ten Year Median Radio News Salary Comparisons 2007 to 2002 to 1997

	2007	2002	5-Year Percentage Change	1997	10-Year Percentage Change
INFLATION			+13.8%		+28.5%
All radio news			+5.0		+32.3
News Director	\$32,000	\$30,500	+4.9	\$23,000	+39.1
News Reporter	25,000	22,000	+13.6	20,000	+25.0

News Anchor	29,000	27,500	+5.5	21,000	+38.1
News Producer	27,800	27,500	+1.1	22,000	+26.4
Sports Anchor	30,000	29,500	+1.7	*	*
Sports Reporter	19,300	*	*	*	*

Overall, salaries in radio news have not kept pace with inflation over the last five years, although this year's gains helped cover some of last year's losses. Even so, radio salary increases over the last five years are only 40 percent of inflation. None of the five jobs for which we have comparisons rose at the level of inflation, although news reporters were just barely below it. The 10-year picture is far better, with overall salaries up almost five percent ahead of inflation. News directors and news anchors were above inflation while news producers and news reporters were below. As with TV, what that means is that salaries used to grow at a much higher rate than they have in the last several years. \*Insufficient data.

#### Median Radio News Salaries by Market Size – 2007

	Major	Large	Medium	Small
News Director	\$70,000	\$44,000	\$30,000	\$26,000
News Reporter	49,300	27,000	24,000	15,000
News Anchor	50,300	31,000	25,500	19,000
News Producer	34,500	22,500	28,000	26,000
Sports Anchor	65,000	35,000	25,000	22,500
Sports Reporter	*	23,000	23,600	12,000

As usual, the larger the market, generally, the higher the salary. There's some variability because some of the specialized positions only appear in certain size markets or at certain stations. Major markets are those with 1 million or more listeners. Large markets are those from 250,000 to 1 million; medium markets are from 50,000 to 250,000; and small markets have fewer than 50,000 listeners.

\*Insufficient data

#### Median Radio News Salaries by Full-Time Staff Size – 2007

	One	Two	Three or 4	5 or more
News Director	\$30,000	\$29,200	\$39,000	\$45,000
News Reporter	*	10,000	20,000	28,000
News Anchor	84,000	19,000	25,000	30,000

News Producer	*	27,000	28,800	27,800
Sports Anchor	30,000	25,000	22,500	35,000
Sports Reporter	15,000	11,000	23,000	28,000

The salaries by staff size are almost always highly variable, although there is a general tendency for the largest news operations to pay higher salaries. We, too, were puzzled by stations with one news staff member who's a sports reporter or sports anchor. \*Insufficient data.

#### Median Radio News Salaries by Number of Stations News Director Supervises - 2007

	One	2-3	Four	5-6	7 or more
News Director	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$42,500	\$37,100	\$30,000
News Reporter	24,000	23,000	28,000	24,000	25,000
News Anchor	32,500	27,500	33,000	27,000	32,500
News Producer	26,300	30,500	27,500	28,000	24,000
Sports Anchor	18,800	28,500	32,500	30,000	35,000
Sports Reporter	10,000	35,000	13,000	20,000	*

As with previous years, there is no consistent pattern to salaries based on the number of stations a news director supervises. \*Insufficient data.

#### Median Radio News Salaries by Ownership - 2007

	Group-Owned	Independent
News Director	\$32,500	\$30,000
News Reporter	26,500	12,000
News Anchor	30,000	25,000
News Producer	26,800	30,000
Sports Anchor	35,000	22,500
Sports Reporter	23,600	12,000

Unlike the last two years, when there was no consistent pattern, this year group-owned stations paid more for five of the six radio news positions. \*Insufficient data.

**Bob Papper is professor of telecommunications at Ball State University and has worked extensively in radio and TV news. Data entry and tabulation were done by the Bureau of Business Research at Ball State. This research was supported by the Department of Telecommunications at Ball State University and the Radio Television News Directors Association.**

#### About the Survey

The RTNDA/Ball State University Survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2006 among all 1,596 operating, non-satellite television stations and all 11,942 radio stations for which we could gather complete data. Valid responses came from 974 television stations (50.9 percent) and 225 radio news directors and general managers representing 740 radio stations.

## Contracts

### Percentage of TV News People Under Contract and Non-Competes - 2007

	Under Contract	Under Non-Compete
News Director	33.8%	79.7%
Assistant News Director	43.2	82.9
Managing Editor	30.5	94.4
Executive Producer	50.8	88.9
News Anchor	69.5	89.6
Weathercaster	69.4	89.3
Sports Anchor	66.4	89.7
News Reporter	60.7	91.5
Sports Reporter	52.0	92.1
Assignment Editor	29.3	82.4
News Producer	50.0	88.0
News Writer	16.7	83.3
News Assistant	10.0	100.0
Photographer	17.5	85.7
Tape Editor	4.8	83.3
Graphics Specialist	5.4	50.0
Internet Specialist	15.8	66.7
Art Director	6.7	0.0

Over the years, the percentage of newsroom employees under contract has generally edged up, although some years it has stayed the same. This is the first time that we've seen a drop. In some cases, it's a substantial drop—like all the anchor desk from the upper 80s and low 90s down to just below 70. We'll have to wait another year to see if this holds or whether this year's figures are simply an anomaly.

### Percentage of Radio News People Under Contract or Non-Compete – 2007

	Under Contract	Under Non-Compete
News Director	33.9%	80.0%
News Reporter	29.7	90.0
News Anchor	54.8	70.6
News Producer	37.5	66.7
Sports Anchor	22.2	75.0
Sports Reporter	12.5	100.0

The differences this year versus last year are variable, and after three straight years of growth, these numbers represent little overall change from a year ago.

TV news 2007 starting salaries for new employees with no fulltime experience

Position	Average	Median	Minimum	Maximum
All TV news	\$22,000	\$21,000	\$7,000	\$48,300
Reporter	22,000	20,800	13,500	48,300
Sports reporter	22,500	21,000	13,800	48,300
Producer	23,600	23,500	9,700	48,300
Photographer	23,000	22,000	9,700	48,300
Assignment editor	23,600	24,000	9,500	37,700
Tape editor	23,300	24,000	9,700	37,700
Writer	20,800	20,800	9,000	31,300
News assistant	18,900	19,300	7,000	30,000

The positions are listed in order of how many starting hires were made in 2006. There were not big differences in new hiring, but the Midwest clearly lagged behind the rest of the country in new hires and even slightly behind other areas in replacement hires.

Radio news 2007 starting salaries for new employees with no fulltime experience

Position	Average	Median	Minimum	Maximum
All radio news	\$19,800	\$18,500	\$7,000	\$60,000
News anchor	18,400	16,600	10,000	32,000
News reporter	20,200	20,000	10,000	45,000
Sports anchor	18,300	16,100	10,000	32,000
Sports reporter	19,000	18,700	10,000	31,000
Producer	19,600	20,000	10,000	60,000
News director	18,600	19,900	10,000	35,000

The positions are listed in order of how many starting hires were made in 2006. There was little difference geographically, although radio stations in the Midwest and West had slightly higher starting salaries than stations in the Northeast or South.