

## Getting More Money

by Bob Papper and Michael Gerhard

“The best way to get a raise is to have already negotiated it in a contract prior to the economic downturn,” wryly notes Steve Caruso, president of Caruso & Company, talent and management agent in Sacramento, CA.

The year 2000 was generally a good one for broadcast news salaries. The latest RTNDA/Ball State University Annual Survey shows television salaries up 3.75 percent from the year before—0.35 percent ahead of inflation. But the business has been tightening.

“My advice is that this is not the time to be asking for a raise,” says Don Fitzpatrick, owner and publisher of ShopTalk, the television news industry’s daily bible of what’s happening. Fitzpatrick says there isn’t a day that goes by that he doesn’t hear from some station or company cutting back.

It’s not that broadcasters are losing money.

“They’re making money hand over fist,” says Fitzpatrick. “But the trouble is they want to make more money, and the loser is the viewer on one hand, and the employees on the other hand, and that’s why I say, ‘Keep your head low.’”

Okay, you know all that, and you want to make more money anyway. You’ve got two choices: Get a raise or get a new job.

## Get a Raise

You're happy where you are, but you want more money. Good luck. Most businesses build in something along the lines of a cost of living raise (for 2000, cost of living rose 3.4 percent), but getting more than that can be tough.

"In your current job, you're much more stuck with the way people view you," says Lee E. Miller, author of "Get More Money on your Next Job" (McGraw-Hill).

Miller says there are three ways to get a raise:

- Get another job offer. ("It's either going to get you a raise or get you fired," says Miller.)
- "Casually and constantly" show your boss you deserve one.
- Take on more responsibilities. ("The additional knowledge and responsibilities are going to get you more money in the short run or in the long run," says Miller, "either with your current employer or with somebody else.")

Perhaps the best way to judge what you're worth is to see what the market will pay. Because people do that, Bill Shory, news director at WHNT-TV in Huntsville, AL says he tries to monitor station salaries. "If we find somebody out of line, we try to adjust them," says Shory. He's trying to keep newsroom turnover down, and he worries that people testing the waters to negotiate a higher salary may decide that an offer is too good to pass up.

In a sense, that's what happened with Steve Edwards. "I left for more money, and I came back for more money," says Edwards, news director at WINC AM and FM and

WAPP and WBPP in Winchester, VA. When he and his wife wanted to start a family, he decided he wasn't making enough in radio, so he left the business for a big boost in pay. Three years ago, the station called with an even better offer to come back.

But you need to be careful in this approach, and avoid ultimatums. "Never put anything on the table that you're not willing to accept," says Caruso. "Don't bluff with, 'I'll walk if I don't get this.' Don't bluff with something you're not prepared to do."

Miller talks about "casually and constantly" talking to your boss about positive contributions you've made. It's about building a solid case for more money.

"Make yourself the 'can do' person," says Gary Wordlaw, president and general manager of WTVH-TV in Syracuse, NY. "If you're talking about getting a raise, over and above what's budgeted, you really have to talk about extraordinary performance," says the former news director.

"Try to drain the emotion out of it first and then present a reasoned case," says Marv Rockford, vice president and general manager, KCNC-TV in Denver. Make sure you do your homework. The former news director says don't just assume that you're not being treated fairly compared to others in the newsroom. "People never tell the truth about what they're making," says Rockford, "no matter how many drinks they have in them."

"You have to go over and above expectations," says Bob Priddy, news director at MissouriNet in Jefferson City, MO. "If some people have really stepped up and worked a lot of extra hours, done so cheerfully and willingly, then we're more likely to say, 'Okay, these people are worth a little more.'"

The third route—taking on more responsibilities--may be the most popular, especially in radio.

“With this industry and consolidation, to make yourself worth more, you have to wear more than two hats,” says Stacey Fick, news director, music director, and promotion director at WFGF-FM in Lima, OH. “Then if you want to make a move, you’re more valuable to the next employer.”

The same applies to Bruce Parrott, news director, promotion director, and AM operations manager at WNWZ AM and WLHT-FM in Grand Rapids, MI. Parrott schedules a meeting with his general manager well before the budget is set. “I plead my case, which is, ‘Look what you’ve added to my duties, and I deserve more than the 3 percent that everybody’s going to get this year,’” says Parrott. “In my particular company, with a good, strong argument you can boost that to about the limit of 6 percent.”

Part of why getting extra money is so tough is that for you to get a bigger raise, someone else is going to get less

“If you’re going to give somebody 10 percent, then somebody else is going to get nothing,” says Wordlaw.

“It’s all got to come out of the same pie somewhere,” says Rockford.

“You’ve got a pool of money,” says Lucy Himstedt, vice president and general manager of WFIE-TV in Evansville, IN, “and in order to give somebody more than the norm, then you have to take it from somebody else. They have to be doing something extraordinarily better than their counterparts.”

## Get a New Job

Jack Chapman, author of “Negotiating Your Salary: How to Make \$1000 a Minute” (Ten Speed Press), says three factors play into the salary decision in a new job:

- Your “objectively researched value.”
- Your individual value.
- What Chapman calls “risk factor dollars.”

The objectively researched value you determine by using figures from the RTNDA/Ball State University Annual Survey. That’s what a company would expect to pay for anyone in the position. Individual value is what you may bring: wide experience, ratings success, ability to build team morale—whatever case you can make. Risk factor dollars involve money that’s not guaranteed in salary—typically bonuses for achievement in things like staying within budget or boosting ratings.

Getting a lot more money in a new job is easier than getting a big raise—if for no other reason than that you get to start fresh. So don’t give away your advantage by telling a prospective employer what you’re making now.

“When people talk about salary up front they’re not worried that you cost too little, they’re worried that you’re out of their budget,” says Chapman, who suggests ducking the question until later so you don’t get screened out.

“If you let them go first,” says Chapman, “then you at least have an offer. It’s yours; it’s not going to get any less just because you negotiate or ask for more. You can be assured that they’re not starting at the top of the range.” Chapman figures there’s usually about 10 percent wiggle room up from a first offer.

## The Price We Pay

“You have to move to go up,” says Fitzpatrick. “That’s how you get a raise. You move.”

And we do. The median time in one place for a news director, for instance, is two years. But moving has its costs. For the individual, it’s the financial cost of moving, the psychological cost of uprooting a family, the mental challenge of starting all over again, the risk that whatever worked well before will not work in a new location. For the company, the cost includes wear and tear on an already-burdened staff while a replacement is found, the cost the training someone new, the loss of institutional memory, the risks inherent in someone new to the station and the market, the risk of a bad hire.

“It’s the nature of the beast we serve,” sighs Wordlaw. “Nobody ever said it was right. You work for a station, and you’re a \$25,000 a year producer. You can leave your market and leave your town and go someplace else and double your salary. The person they hire in to replace you is now paid \$35,000. Had you stayed, you’d have gotten a 3 percent raise. That has to get fixed in our business.”

## For News Directors Only

Overall, there’s not much difference in how any newsroom employee gets a raise and how a news director gets one, although there are differences in how the pay is structured.

“One is based on reality and one is based on me, me, me, me. They’re two different animals,” says Sue Kawalerski, president of TV People representation firm in Miami, FL, differentiating her experience with news managers on the one hand and talent on the other. Beyond salary, talent tends to look for perks like a clothing allowance, cosmetics, hair, and appearance-related issues. For news managers, perks tend to include things like a car, a television set, VCR, phone, and other hardware.

“For a manager,” says Caruso, “what we’ve started to focus on is showing how they have raised revenue for the station. A couple years ago, you never would have put that on a resume.”

“I don’t compensate my news director based on ratings,” says Wordlaw. “I compensate him based on his ability to run his department, stay within his budget.”

Wordlaw says that his own salary when he was news director at WJLA-TV in Washington, DC was based on his ability to meet a variety of measures. Ratings success paid off in bonuses.

“At the end of the day, what it’s all about is increasing ratings, but not at any cost,” says Rockford. “News directors who can manage their departments successfully and do that within a budget are the most valuable news directors. Even if you’re a great news director, and you’re great at winning the game, but you’re a pain in the ass and you can’t manage your budget, sooner or later, that’s going to cost you, somehow, in your career.”

“Being a news director, I think, is the toughest job in television,” says Wordlaw. “You’ve got everybody that you have to manage up to. You’ve got everybody to manage

down to. If it goes right, it's everybody else's success. If it's wrong, it's your fault. And I can't think of another management job in television that's that way."

"I once read somewhere that anybody's real job description is to make your boss look good," says Rockford. "It took me a long time to come to that realization, but I now understand that to be true."

*Bob Papper is professor of telecommunications at Ball State University and has worked extensively in radio and TV news. Michael Gerhard, Ph.D., is associate professor of telecommunications at Ball State and has extensive industry and research experience. This research was supported by the Department of Telecommunications at Ball State University and the Radio Television News Directors Association.*

## Job Sources

There are plenty of sources for radio and television news jobs. Here are some on the web. All are free—unless otherwise noted.

<http://www.rtnda.org> (must be member)

<http://www.tvspy.com> (ShopTalk)

<http://www.tvjobs.com> (free and fee)

<http://www.tvnewz.com/jobs.htm>

<http://journalismjobs.com>



<http://www.tvnewsweb.com/jobs.shtml>

<http://members.nbc.com/mikestvjobs>

<http://www.ire.org/jobs>

<http://www.medialine.com> (fee)

<http://www.lostremote.com/jobs>

<http://emonline.com> (Electronic Media)

<http://ojr.usc.edu> (online journalism review)

To compare cost of living:

<http://www.homefair.com/calc/salcalc.html>

## Agents ... Pro & Con

“Negotiations are only about two things, whether you’re trying to negotiate for a raise or trying to buy a house or a car,” says Steve Caruso, president of Caruso & Company, talent and management agent in Sacramento, CA, “and that is information and leverage.”

Agents help find jobs, negotiate contracts, provide career counseling, and do a lot of hand-holding. Mostly, services are performed for a percentage of salary (commonly 7 to 10 percent), but sometimes they’re done on a fee basis instead.

“It reached a point where I was paying a percentage for services they weren’t going to be able to do for me,” says Manny Ramos, reporter at KPIX-TV in San Francisco. Ramos has been in the business for about 25 years. He didn’t start with an

agent, and he hasn't had one in eight or nine years. Ramos decided he wasn't interested in going anywhere else, and at his salary level, he was just going to get small, incremental raises—with or without an agent.

But he says he wished he had had one when he first went from Sacramento to San Francisco years ago. “That was a big mistake,” Ramos admits. “The money they offered was great, but then I got here, and the cost of living even then was like two or three times higher than Sacramento.” After that, he got an agent—and a lot more money when he moved to KPIX years ago.

Just starting out, though, an agent can actually work against you.

“There are a lot of news directors,” says Don Fitzpatrick, owner and publisher of ShopTalk, the television news industry's daily bible of what's happening, “especially in very small markets that would be intimidated by the fact that you have an agent.” In that first job, the pay is what it is, and an agent isn't going to get more.

“If somebody's making \$20,000 a year, and they're having to pay 10 percent to somebody, that's ridiculous,” says Caruso. “That's robbery. The agent should be punished for taking that money.”

At WHNT-TV in Huntsville, AL, news director Bill Shory says station policy is that they don't talk with agents. Period. “That includes somebody's mom, somebody's dad, their agent or Bubba down the street,” says Shory.

When is the right time for an agent? For some, never. For others, after the second or third job, maybe. “It's when you're ready to move from market 80 to market 20 that you might want to consider an agent,” says Fitzpatrick.

“The right agent can help you get a job and also help you improve—if the agent is into that—and can be the insurance policy in case you lose the job,” says Caruso.

Caruso is one of a growing number of agents who now also handle news managers. News managers now account for almost one-third of their clients. For Sue Kawalerski, president of TV People representation firm in Miami, FL, it’s almost all of her business.

“Number one, a news manager who truly is working usually doesn’t have the time to network during the course of a workday,” says Kawalerski. “Number two is the negotiating factor. Emotionally, it’s very tough to negotiate your own contract. When you can take the emotion out of the dealing, you can get a whole lot more.”

Ironically, Bill Shory, who won’t negotiate with agents for his newspeople, says he’d consider one for himself. “Were I in a mode where I was actively looking, which I’m not,” says Shory, “I would probably think about that.”

## Contracts

Percentage of TV News People Under Contract or Non-Competes

	Under Contract	Under Non-Compete
News Director	32%	29%
Assistant News Director	31%	24%
Managing Editor	54%	50%
Executive Producer	55%	49%
Assignment Editor	33%	30%
News Producer	57%	50%
News Anchor	78%	67%
Weathercaster	76%	68%
Sports Anchor	71%	63%
News Reporter	60%	52%
News Writer	21%	15%
News Assistant	14%	13%

Sports Reporter	48%	39%
Photographer	17%	12%
Tape Editor	11%	10%
Graphics Specialist	8%	8%
Internet Specialist	20%	19%

Just over half (50.2 percent) of the people who work in TV news are under contract, and nearly as many (43.1 percent) have non-compete agreements. Note that non-competes are not legal in all states. People on the anchor desk are most likely to have contracts, but producers are just about as likely to be under contract as news reporters—and more likely than sports reporters. Those who work in the smallest markets (100 and smaller) are a little more likely to be under contract than those in larger markets.

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

	Under Contract	Under Non-Compete
News Director	14%	19%
News Anchor	4%	12%
News Reporter	4%	4%
News Producer	0	0
Sports Anchor	20%	20%

Unlike television, the vast majority of radio news people are not under contract. Those who are are almost all in major markets.

Tim,

In order to get to the assigned length, I removed this section from the main story.

If you have room and want to put it back, it goes between “The Price We Pay” and “For News Directors Only.”

Beyond Salary

“Some people would like to live in the South and get rid of the snow, and that would include me,” says Fick. “Money is not the most important thing. You’ve got to ask yourself, ‘Where do you want to be? What do you want to do?’”

Exactly right. It’s not just about money or market size.

“The company has made it worth my while to stay within the company,” says Himstedt. She knew she wanted to get into management, so she talked to people in the company about growth opportunities. For Himstedt, the key question was, “How can I get to where I want to go?”

“At a certain level, the salary is not the prime motivator for staying in one place and continuing to do a good job. And I think I probably reached that situation some time ago,” says Priddy, who’s been with his company for 27 years.

Wordlaw uses annual bonuses to say thank you for achievement. Ranging from a few hundred to a few thousand dollars, the bonuses are given at the end of the calendar year.

Himstedt says she might be more inclined to give someone a bonus for special work—rather than a raise.

For Edwards, the personal touch with his independent owner counts. “I talk to them every day,” says Edwards. “I know their family; they know my family. That’s hard to put a value on.”

“Cost of living increases are the baseline,” says Bob Priddy, news director at MissouriNet in Jefferson City, MO. “It depends on how the company is doing.”

That tends to sum up the year 2000 and where we are right now. Overall, television news salaries were up 3.75 percent in 2000 over 1999. That's above the previous year's 3.1 percent, but inflation rose too—up 3.4 percent in 2000, making the growth in real wages of 0.35 percent almost identical to last year's 0.4 percent. In radio, in 1999, the biggest growth came in the large and major markets. In 2000, medium markets went up the most. In both years, small markets remained flat.

But business is tough right now.

“These are difficult days in television,” says Gary Wordlaw, president and general manager of WTVH-TV in Syracuse, NY. “Nobody gets a free ride.”

“Every day I get something from either some television station or some group that not only are there layoffs, but there's a tendency to lay off the people who have been there the longest and have the biggest paycheck,” says Don Fitzpatrick, owner and publisher of ShopTalk, the television news industry's daily bible of what's happening. “On the other hand, you're seeing people coming in to take those jobs that are basically getting paid the same salary that those stations were paying 25, 30 years ago.”

#### Television News Salaries

	Average	Median	Minimum	Maximum
News Director	\$74,400	\$65,000	\$21,000	\$250,000
Assistant News Director	63,300	54,500	30,000	125,000
Managing Editor	57,500	50,000	17,000	125,000
Executive Producer	52,100	48,500	20,000	110,000
Assignment Editor	31,800	30,000	16,000	75,000
News Producer	29,300	26,000	14,000	75,000
News Anchor	66,500	47,500	14,000	1,000,000
Weathercaster	52,300	44,500	15,000	390,000
Sports Anchor	49,700	35,000	14,000	535,000
News Reporter	32,600	26,000	14,000	200,000
News Writer	31,100	29,000	11,000	60,000
News Assistant	22,700	20,000	8,000	45,000
Sports Reporter	34,500	24,000	14,000	223,000
Photographer	27,900	24,000	13,000	127,000
Tape Editor	24,900	22,000	8,000	70,000
Graphics Specialist	30,300	25,000	11,000	90,000
Internet Specialist	35,500	35,000	18,000	70,000

Overall, television news salaries were up 3.75 percent in 2000 over 1999. That's above the previous year's 3.1 percent, but inflation rose too—up 3.4 percent in 2000, making the growth in real wages of 0.35 percent almost identical to last year's 0.4 percent. The biggest winners: news directors, weathercasters, and Internet specialists all saw big jumps from last year. Producers, reporters, and photographers all rose above inflation. News writers, news assistants, and tape editors all dropped from last year. The median—or midpoint—is the best gauge of what people typically make.

### Median Television News Salaries 1995 to 2000

	2000	1995	Percentage Change
News Director	\$65,000	\$48,000	+35.4%
Assistant News Director	54,500	42,000	+29.8%
Managing Editor	50,000	43,000	+16.3%
Executive Producer	48,500	39,000	+24.4%
Assignment Editor	30,000	28,000	+7.1%
News Producer	26,000	22,000	+18.2%
News Anchor	47,500	43,000	+10.5%
Weathercaster	44,500	36,000	+23.6%
Sports Anchor	35,000	32,500	+7.7%
News Reporter	26,000	23,000	+13.0%
News Writer	29,000	23,000*	+26.1%*
News Assistant	20,000	19,000*	+5.3%*
Sports Reporter	24,000	21,000	+14.3%
Photographer	24,000	20,000	+20.0%
Tape Editor	22,000	22,000***	NC***
Graphics Specialist	25,000	26,500	-5.7%
Internet Specialist	35,000	26,000**	+34.6%**

\* 1996 Data

\*\* 1997 Data

\*\*\* 1998 Data

Since 1995, most news managers and weathercasters have shown the biggest growth—along with Internet specialists and news writers, groups we’ve tracked for less time. Photographers and producers are in the next group. For comparison, over the same period, inflation has grown by 13.0 percent.

### Median TV News Salaries by Market Size

	1 – 25	26 – 50	51 – 100	101-150	150+
News Director	\$150,000	\$99,500	\$75,000	\$55,000	\$43,500
Assistant News Director	90,000	55,500	52,000	45,000	46,000
Managing Editor	80,000	52,500	50,000	36,000	52,500
Executive Producer	80,000	57,000	45,000	37,000	22,000
Assignment Editor	47,500	30,000	30,000	26,000	23,000

News Producer	48,750	30,000	27,000	21,000	20,000
News Anchor	173,000	65,000	55,000	39,500	25,000
Weathercaster	110,000	55,000	47,500	35,000	23,500
Sports Anchor	128,000	60,000	43,000	28,000	25,500
News Reporter	78,000	32,250	28,000	21,000	18,000
News Writer	37,500	22,500	25,000	17,000	*
News Assistant	32,000	25,000	20,000	17,000	14,250
Sports Reporter	70,000	30,000	25,500	20,000	18,000
Photographer	50,500	28,000	24,500	20,000	17,000
Tape Editor	41,750	24,500	20,000	17,000	14,900
Graphics Specialist	42,000	*	24,500	14,000	*
Internet Specialist	38,000	*	30,000	28,000	25,000

As always, with rare exception, the bigger the market the bigger the salary. There were no meaningful salary differences by network affiliation (other than PBS stations paying less). Commercial stations other than ABC, CBS, Fox, and NBC affiliates generally paid more, but that's because they're concentrated in larger markets. There was little variation geographically, although stations in the Midwest tended to pay a little less than elsewhere. \* Insufficient data.

#### Median TV News Salaries by Staff Size

	51+	31-50	21-30	11-20	1-10
News Director	\$120,000	\$70,000	\$55,000	\$45,000	\$41,000
Assistant News Director	80,000	50,000	50,000	35,500	*
Managing Editor	71,000	45,000	37,000	54,000	*
Executive Producer	69,500	41,000	39,000	22,000	*
Assignment Editor	40,000	30,000	26,000	24,000	21,500
News Producer	38,000	25,000	21,000	20,000	26,000
News Anchor	120,000	49,500	39,000	27,000	23,000
Weathercaster	89,000	45,000	36,000	25,750	21,000
Sports Anchor	90,000	40,000	30,000	25,000	21,000
News Reporter	48,500	25,700	20,500	18,000	21,500
News Writer	33,000	21,000	*	*	*
News Assistant	30,000	19,000	13,000	21,250	21,000
Sports Reporter	53,000	24,000	20,000	18,000	*
Photographer	39,000	24,000	20,000	18,500	20,000
Tape Editor	31,000	20,000	18,000	15,300	*
Graphics Specialist	44,000	22,000	*	30,500	*
Internet Specialist	36,000	30,000	32,500	*	*



Generally, the larger the news staff, the higher the salary. The salary variations among the smallest news departments reflect the mix of small news departments in very small markets along with small departments in some of the large and major markets. \* Insufficient data.

#### Radio News Salaries

	Average	Median	Minimum	Maximum
News Director	\$34,300	\$31,000	\$10,000	\$125,000
News Anchor	26,200	25,000	10,000	41,500
News Reporter	26,800	25,750	15,000	42,000
News Producer	27,300	26,000	15,000	40,000
Sports Anchor	32,800	30,000	17,000	65,000

The median—or midpoint—is the best gauge of what people make.

#### Median Radio News Salaries 1995 to 2000

	2000	1995	Percentage Change
News Director	\$31,000	\$21,000	+47.6%
News Anchor	25,000	21,000	+19.0%
News Reporter	25,750	19,000	+35.5%
News Producer	26,000	20,000	+30.0%
Sports Anchor	30,000	24,000*	+25.0%*

\* 1998

Radio salaries have gone up substantially since 1995, but consolidation has meant fewer people doing the news, and those who are left frequently have multiple responsibilities.

#### Median Radio News Salaries by Market Size

	Major	Large	Medium	Small
News Director	\$46,700	\$32,000	\$29,500	\$20,000
News Anchor	34,300	23,000	21,000	18,800
News Reporter	35,000	25,000	23,000	18,800
News Producer	33,000	22,500	24,000	*

Sports Anchor	40,000	*	21,500	*
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In 1999, the biggest growth came in the large and major markets. In 2000, medium markets went up the most. In both years, small markets remained flat. 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

	One	Two	Three and More
News Director	\$20,000	\$25,000	\$35,000
News Anchor	13,000	*	25,500
News Reporter	21,000	*	26,000
News Producer	17,500	*	31,500
Sports Anchor	*	*	35,000

As in the past, when radio stations have three or more full-time news staff members, salaries take a clear leap. \* Insufficient data.

#### Median Radio News Salaries by Ownership

	Group-Owned	Independent
News Director	\$30,000	\$36,500
News Anchor	23,500	27,500
News Reporter	24,750	29,000
News Producer	23,000	35,000
Sports Anchor	30,000	*

As with last year, radio news salaries are actually lower at group-owned stations than at independents. \* Insufficient data.

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

	One	Two	Three or more
News Director	\$31,500	\$20,000	\$31,000
News Anchor	27,000	25,000	24,000
News Reporter	28,000	*	22,750
News Producer	35,000	25,000	23,000
Sports Anchor	*	18,000	35,000

For the third year in a row, the number of stations—and likely responsibility and workload—does not translate into higher pay. \* Insufficient data.

### **About the Survey**

The RTNDA/Ball State University Survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2000 among all 1,387 operating, non-satellite television stations and a random sample of 1,193 radio stations. Valid responses came from 731 television stations (52.7 percent) and 120 radio news directors and general managers representing 278 radio stations.