

Salaries Increase Ahead of Inflation

by Bob Papper

Salaries in both television and radio rose modestly in the last year. Television salaries rose by 3.6 percent with radio salaries just behind at 3.2 percent. As usual, not everyone shared equally in the increases. In television, the biggest gains were among news managers and other off-air positions. On air positions were largely unchanged. With inflation at 2.7 percent, television news employees saw a growth in real wages of almost 1 percent with radio about half that.

Television News Salaries - 2005

| | Average | Median | Minimum | Maximum |
|-------------------------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| News Director | \$84,400 | \$73,000 | \$13,000 | \$300,000 |
| Assistant News Director | 69,000 | 60,000 | 12,000 | 180,000 |
| Managing Editor | 63,800 | 55,000 | 25,000 | 150,000 |
| Executive Producer | 52,000 | 50,000 | 20,000 | 125,000 |
| News Anchor | 71,100 | 55,500 | 9,000 | 300,000 |
| Weathercaster | 61,100 | 50,000 | 10,000 | 300,000 |
| Sports Anchor | 53,900 | 40,000 | 10,000 | 250,000 |
| News Reporter | 35,000 | 30,000 | 12,000 | 150,000 |
| Sports Reporter | 31,600 | 28,000 | 13,000 | 130,000 |
| Assignment Editor | 35,500 | 32,500 | 15,300 | 195,800 |
| News Producer | 31,600 | 30,000 | 15,600 | 90,000 |
| News Writer | 30,500 | 27,000 | 18,400 | 75,000 |
| News Assistant | 25,000 | 25,000 | 6,000 | 40,000 |
| Photographer | 29,200 | 27,000 | 12,000 | 80,000 |
| Tape Editor | 27,600 | 25,000 | 6,000 | 78,000 |
| Graphics Specialist | 33,800 | 31,000 | 18,500 | 80,000 |
| Internet Specialist | 37,800 | 37,500 | 16,000 | 80,000 |

In television, most salaries rose, although some positions did better than others. As has been the case for the last few years, newsroom managers – news director, assistant news director, managing editor and executive producer – did well with a 4.8 percent increase from a year ago. Other off air positions fared even better, with a 6.6 percent rise. On air positions, overall, actually fell by 1 percent from a year ago.

Weathercasters, sports anchors and news reporters all rose slightly but not enough to offset small drops by news anchors and sports reporters. News anchor salaries tend to fluctuate in the survey more than most other positions, depending on how many news directors provide the salaries of main anchors – especially in the largest markets.

Executive producers, news producers, writers and photographers all rose only slightly from last year. There are no consistent salary patterns by network affiliation; all stations affiliated with the four major networks pay similarly. The only pattern is that those affiliates pay noticeably more than commercial stations not affiliated with one of those networks, and all commercial stations pay considerably more than the relatively few PBS affiliates that run local news. There is no consistent pattern of salaries by region, although stations in the Northeast tend to pay a little more than stations in other parts of the country. In one of the most hopeful signs for smaller market television employees, minimum salaries rose 6.1 percent from last year.

Five and Ten Year Median Television News Salary Comparisons 2005 to 2000 to 1995

| | 2005 | 2000 | 5-Year Percentage Change | 1995 | 10-Year Percentage Change |
|-------------------------|----------|----------|--------------------------|----------|---------------------------|
| INFLATION | | | +13.4% | | +25.7% |
| News Director | \$73,000 | \$59,000 | +23.7 | \$45,600 | +60.1 |
| Assistant News Director | 60,000 | 54,000 | +11.1 | 40,600 | +47.8 |
| Managing Editor | 55,000 | 50,000 | +10.0 | 37,500 | +46.7 |
| Executive Producer | 50,000 | 49,000 | +2.0 | 34,800 | +43.7 |
| News Anchor | 55,500 | 45,000 | +23.3 | 43,600 | +27.3 |
| Weathercaster | 50,000 | 40,000 | +25.0 | 37,500 | +33.3 |
| Sports Anchor | 40,000 | 35,000 | +14.3 | 33,700 | +18.7 |
| News Reporter | 30,000 | 24,000 | +25.0 | 20,400 | +47.1 |
| Sports Reporter | 28,000 | 23,000 | +21.7 | * | * |
| Assignment Editor | 32,500 | 30,000 | +8.3 | 25,700 | +26.5 |
| News Producer | 30,000 | 25,000 | +20.0 | 21,200 | +41.5 |
| News Writer | 27,000 | 30,000 | -10.0 | * | * |
| News Assistant | 25,000 | 21,000 | +19.0 | * | * |
| Photographer | 27,000 | 23,000 | +17.4 | 19,300 | +39.9 |
| Tape Editor | 25,000 | 24,000 | +4.2 | * | * |
| Graphics Specialist | 31,000 | 30,000 | +3.3 | * | * |
| Internet Specialist | 37,500 | 30,000 | +25.0 | * | * |

Inflation has grown by 13.4 percent in the last five years and 25.7 percent in the last decade. Growth (or loss) in real wages in those periods is the difference between inflation and the change in salary percentage. For the last five years, most positions rose beyond inflation, led by Internet specialist, news reporter, weathercaster, news director, news anchor, sports reporter, news producer, news assistant and photographer (in that order). Sports anchor came in just above inflation. Close, but under the rate of inflation: assistant news director and managing editor. Well behind: assignment editor, tape editor, graphics and executive producer. News writers actually lost ground in the last five years, but that could be the result of an increase in the number of news writers now working in smaller and medium markets. Five years ago, news writers were almost all in the largest markets. In the last 10 years, most positions that we can compare rose well ahead of inflation, with news directors easily at the top of the list. News anchors and assignment editors barely exceeded inflation, and sports anchor was the one position that fell below that mark. *No data.

Median TV News Salaries by Market Size – 2005

| | 1 – 25 | 26 – 50 | 51 – 100 | 101-150 | 150+ |
|-------------------------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|
| News Director | \$115,000 | \$120,000 | \$83,500 | \$60,000 | \$51,000 |
| Assistant News Director | 100,000 | 80,000 | 52,500 | 48,000 | 30,000 |
| Managing Editor | 80,000 | 60,000 | 50,000 | 42,900 | 42,500 |
| Executive Producer | 70,000 | 60,000 | 50,000 | 35,000 | 35,000 |
| News Anchor | 110,000 | 100,000 | 60,000 | 42,000 | 32,000 |
| Weathercaster | 92,500 | 96,000 | 50,000 | 41,000 | 32,000 |
| Sports Anchor | 90,000 | 77,500 | 40,000 | 35,000 | 25,000 |
| News Reporter | 57,500 | 45,000 | 30,000 | 22,000 | 20,000 |
| Sports Reporter | 46,000 | 40,000 | 28,000 | 24,000 | 20,000 |
| Assignment Editor | 45,000 | 38,000 | 33,000 | 30,000 | 24,000 |
| News Producer | 47,300 | 40,000 | 30,000 | 23,000 | 20,000 |
| News Writer | 35,000 | 24,000 | 23,500 | 27,500 | * |
| News Assistant | 28,300 | 31,500 | 22,000 | 15,000 | 18,000 |
| Photographer | 44,000 | 32,500 | 27,000 | 20,000 | 18,000 |
| Tape Editor | 34,000 | 28,000 | 23,000 | 17,500 | 15,800 |
| Graphics Specialist | 50,000 | 35,000 | 27,000 | 26,000 | 25,000 |
| Internet Specialist | 45,000 | 49,000 | 35,000 | 24,000 | 23,500 |

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 independent stations. The biggest percentage growth took place in the smallest markets – just over 6 percent -- with markets 1 – 50 showing modest increases – just over 2 percent -- and markets 51 – 150 virtually unchanged. *Insufficient data.

Median TV News Salaries by Staff Size –2005

| | 51+ | 31-50 | 21-30 | 11-20 | 1-10 |
|-------------------------|---------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| News Director | 122,500 | \$83,500 | \$62,500 | \$55,800 | \$48,000 |
| Assistant News Director | 80,000 | 52,500 | 48,000 | 30,000 | 20,500 |
| Managing Editor | 68,000 | 50,000 | 40,000 | 40,000 | 51,500 |
| Executive Producer | 65,000 | 50,000 | 35,000 | 43,500 | 35,500 |
| News Anchor | 142,500 | 65,000 | 45,000 | 33,300 | 23,000 |
| Weathercaster | 85,000 | 55,000 | 42,000 | 31,000 | 33,000 |
| Sports Anchor | 90,000 | 43,000 | 35,000 | 25,000 | 24,000 |
| News Reporter | 50,000 | 30,000 | 24,000 | 21,500 | 22,000 |
| Sports Reporter | 40,000 | 30,000 | 23,500 | 20,000 | 23,000 |
| Assignment Editor | 41,500 | 33,000 | 30,000 | 25,000 | 24,500 |
| News Producer | 42,000 | 30,000 | 23,000 | 22,000 | 26,500 |
| News Writer | 26,000 | 23,300 | 27,000 | 45,000 | * |
| News Assistant | 31,000 | 22,000 | 15,000 | 20,000 | 23,000 |
| Photographer | 40,000 | 26,300 | 22,000 | 20,000 | 19,000 |
| Tape Editor | 28,000 | 23,000 | 18,000 | 25,000 | 24,500 |
| Graphics Specialist | 50,000 | 32,000 | 23,000 | 25,000 | * |
| Internet Specialist | 45,000 | 35,000 | 23,000 | 27,500 | 16,000 |

In contrast to market size, there are extremely few exceptions to the pattern that the largest stations pay the most money. Here, the exceptions are most likely to be

among the smallest newsrooms because that's where we find a disproportionately high percentage of small, larger market independents. *Insufficient data

Radio News Salaries – 2005

| | Average | Median | Minimum | Maximum |
|-----------------|----------|----------|---------|-----------|
| News Director | \$35,900 | \$33,000 | \$6,000 | \$110,000 |
| News Reporter | 24,900 | 24,500 | 8,000 | 48,000 |
| News Anchor | 27,800 | 26,000 | 16,000 | 45,000 |
| News Producer | 35,800 | 38,000 | 13,000 | 55,000 |
| Sports Anchor | 29,800 | 27,000 | 20,000 | 45,000 |
| Sports Reporter | 21,400 | 25,500 | 5,000 | 30,000 |

Salaries were both up and down in radio from a year ago, although there were no big, consistent winners. At a modest 3.2 percent overall increase, radio salaries rose half a percent above inflation. Unlike TV, the minimum salaries in radio did not change in any meaningful way from a year ago.

Five and Ten Year Median Radio News Salary Comparisons 2005 to 2000 to 1995

| | 2005 | 2000 | 5-Year Percentage Change | 1995 | 10-Year Percentage Change |
|-----------------|----------|----------|--------------------------|----------|---------------------------|
| INFLATION | | | +13.4% | | +25.7% |
| News Director | \$33,000 | \$24,000 | +37.5 | \$21,800 | +51.4 |
| News Reporter | 24,500 | 20,000 | +22.5 | 16,500 | +48.5 |
| News Anchor | 26,000 | 28,000 | -7.1 | 22,200 | +17.1 |
| News Producer | 38,000 | 26,000 | +46.2 | * | * |
| Sports Anchor | 27,000 | 25,000 | +8.0 | * | * |
| Sports Reporter | 25,500 | * | * | * | * |

The radio news employees still standing have done reasonably well over the last five to 10 years. But consolidation makes the comparison tricky for some positions. News directors and news reporters offer a clean comparison, and both are up about two to three times the rate of inflation for the last five years and double the rate of inflation over the last decade. Other comparisons are not as simple because there are fewer news and sports anchors and news producers, and consolidation has led to a shift in where they're located. *No data.

Median Radio News Salaries by Market Size – 2005

| | Major | Large | Medium | Small |
|-----------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| News Director | \$53,000 | \$40,000 | \$30,000 | \$25,000 |
| News Reporter | 32,500 | 27,000 | 20,000 | 19,000 |
| News Anchor | 35,000 | 35,000 | 23,000 | 23,500 |
| News Producer | 40,000 | 45,000 | * | 13,000 |
| Sports Anchor | 27,500 | 31,000 | 25,500 | 20,000 |
| Sports Reporter | 30,000 | * | 21,000 | 17,300 |

As usual, the larger the market, generally, the higher the salary. Overall, major and large markets show small gains from a year ago, while medium and small markets were flat or even down. 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 - 2005

| | One | Two | Three or 4 | 5 or more |
|-----------------|----------|----------|------------|-----------|
| News Director | \$27,500 | \$26,500 | \$30,000 | \$47,500 |
| News Reporter | * | 21,000 | 22,500 | 27,000 |
| News Anchor | * | 18,500 | 26,000 | 31,000 |
| News Producer | * | * | 25,000 | 40,000 |
| Sports Anchor | * | 25,500 | 26,000 | 30,000 |
| Sports Reporter | * | 30,000 | * | 25,500 |

In the past, when stations have three or more full time staff members, salaries rose. This year, it took 5 or more staffers before we see a meaningful salary difference.
* Insufficient data

Median Radio News Salaries by Number of Stations News Director Supervises - 2005

| | One | Two | Three or more |
|-----------------|----------|----------|---------------|
| News Director | \$28,000 | \$35,000 | \$33,000 |
| News Reporter | 25,000 | 23,500 | 20,000 |
| News Anchor | 27,500 | 25,500 | 28,000 |
| News Producer | 34,000 | * | 37,500 |
| Sports Anchor | 35,500 | 28,500 | 25,000 |
| Sports Reporter | * | 30,000 | * |

Last year, news directors who supervised three or more stations made more money than those who supervised fewer stations. This year, there's no discernible pattern.
*Insufficient data

Median Radio News Salaries by Ownership - 2005

| | Group-Owned | Independent |
|-----------------|-------------|-------------|
| News Director | \$33,000 | \$32,500 |
| News Reporter | 22,000 | 29,000 |
| News Anchor | 26,000 | 26,000 |
| News Producer | 37,500 | 34,000 |
| Sports Anchor | 27,000 | * |
| Sports Reporter | 21,000 | 30,000 |

Every year in the past, salaries were higher at independent stations than group owned. Not this year. This year, there's really no consistent pattern to salaries based on ownership. *Insufficient data.

Contracts

Percentage of TV News People Under Contract and Non-Competes - 2005

| | Under Contract | Under Non-Compete |
|-------------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| News Director | 40.6% | 73.2% |
| Assistant News Director | 41.7 | 67.4 |
| Managing Editor | 32.4 | 75.0 |
| Executive Producer | 52.1 | 74.7 |
| News Anchor | 84.0 | 81.4 |
| Weathercaster | 83.2 | 82.0 |
| Sports Anchor | 80.7 | 80.7 |
| News Reporter | 71.5 | 81.7 |
| Sports Reporter | 58.7 | 79.7 |
| Assignment Editor | 27.4 | 71.7 |
| News Producer | 59.5 | 82.8 |
| News Writer | 10.3 | 100.0 |
| News Assistant | 4.4 | 100.0 |
| Photographer | 13.1 | 71.4 |
| Tape Editor | 8.1 | 81.8 |
| Graphics Specialist | 9.8 | 80.0 |
| Internet Specialist | 5.1 | 100.0 |

Until two years ago, the percentage of television newsroom employees under contract rose steadily each year. Then it stabilized. Last year it rose again, although not by much. This year, it's stable to down – except for a big jump among news directors, which rose from last year's 33.0 percent up to 40.6 percent. Most of the non-compete percentages are down slightly, which is probably the result of changes in some state laws eliminating non-competes.

Percentage of Radio News People Under Contract or Non-Compete - 2005

| | Under Contract | Under Non-Compete |
|-----------------|----------------|-------------------|
| News Director | 33.8% | 84.6% |
| News Reporter | 21.1 | 62.5 |
| News Anchor | 38.2 | 85.7 |
| News Producer | 50.0 | 75.0 |
| Sports Anchor | 50.0 | 44.4 |
| Sports Reporter | 14.3 | 100.0 |

Unlike television, most radio news people are not under contract, but for the second straight year, the percentage under contract is clearly moving up. As with TV, news directors had the biggest jump, moving from 21.1 percent to 33.8 percent..

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

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About the Survey

The RTNDA/Ball State University Survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2004 among all 1,624 operating, non-satellite television stations and a random sample of 1,509 radio stations. Valid responses came from 1,223 television stations (75.3 percent) and 103 radio news directors and general managers representing 417 radio stations.