TV Staff Size – 2010

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Avg full-time | Median full-time | Maximum full-time | Avg part-time | Median part-time | Maximum part-time | Avg total staff | Median total | Maximum total staff |
| All TV | 34.5  | 29.0  | 130  | 5.3  | 2.0  | 156  | 38.3  | 32.0  | 172  |
| Big four affiliates | 37.0  | 31.0  | 130  | 5.5  | 2.0  | 156  | 40.9 | 34.0  | 172  |
| Other commercial  | 21.2  | 18.0  | 64  | 4.3  | 3.0  | 16  | 24.1 | 18.5  | 68  |
| Market size: |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1-25 | 54.8  | 63.5  | 130  | 9.2  | 3.5  | 72  | 61.3  | 67.0  | 161  |
| 26-50 | 50.6  | 57.0  | 92  | 4.7  | 3.0  | 16  | 52.6 | 57.0  | 103  |
| 51-100 | 36.8  | 36.0  | 80  | 3.9  | 2.0  | 18  | 39.1 | 40.0  | 80  |
| 101-150 | 26.5 | 26.0  | 46  | 6.3  | 1.0  | 156  | 31.4  | 28.0  | 172  |
| 151+ | 18.1  | 19.0  | 47  | 3.7  | 2.0  | 45  | 20.8  | 20.0  | 66  |

This past year represents another down year for staffing -- although not as bad as 2008. In 2008, 1,200 TV news jobs were lost. In 2009, another 400 jobs disappeared. That's a drop of 1.5 percent.

Overall, the smaller markets, 100+ held steady, while the biggest markets, 1 - 25, got hit the hardest. Of course, stations there had larger staffs to begin with.

People should not confuse the decrease in total staffing with the idea that no one is being hired in local TV news. The typical TV station hired three people last year -- all of which replaced people who had left. In other words, there are still a fair number of people moving from job to job or moving into the field. The average station hired 3.7 replacements and 0.6 new positions. Stations in the Northeast were less likely to be hiring than stations throughout the rest of the country.

Staff Size Changes … the past year

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Increase | Decrease | Same | Don’t know |
| All TV news | 11.5%  | 64.1%  | 24.1%  | 0.3%  |
| Big four affiliates | 11.4  | 64.0  | 24.2  | 0.3  |
| Other commercial | 15.2  | 60.6  | 24.2  | 0  |

Nearly two-thirds of TV news directors reported staff cuts last year. That's an even higher percentage than the year before -- although fewer positions were cut than a year ago. The percentage of news directors reporting staff increases went down 4 percent from the year before. The numbers were fairly constant across all subsets, although CBS and NBC affiliates were less likely to increase staff size than others, and stations in the Northeast were, generally, more likely to be hit with layoffs.

Planned Staff Changes … the next year

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Increase | Decrease | Same | Not sure |
| All TV news | 22.7%  | 7.1%  | 60.8%  | 9.4%  |
| Big four affiliates | 23.0  | 7.8  | 60.8  | 8.4  |
| Other commercial | 27.3  | 3.0  | 54.5  | 15.2  |

These may be the most hopeful numbers in this year's survey because the figures represent a dramatic turnaround from the year before. Over 60 percent of news directors say they expect staff size to remain the same this year, but that's up nearly 20 points from last year. A year ago, almost a third of all news directors were expecting staff cuts; this year, the number is less than a quarter as large. Two and half times as many news directors expect to increase staff this year as compared to the year earlier.

That hiring is expected almost all across the board -- except for the very smallest stations (1 - 10 staffers) and PBS affiliates.

TV News Budget … the past year

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Increase | Decrease | Same | Don’t know |
| All TV news | 9.6%  | 65.1%  | 21.8%  | 3.4%  |
| Big four affiliates | 8.6  | 67.7  | 21.1  | 2.6  |
| Other commercial | 23.3  | 42.9  | 28.6  | 4.8  |
| Market size: |  |  |  |  |
| 1-25 | 10.6  | 61.7  | 19.1  | 8.5  |
| 26-50 | 10.3  | 65.5  | 24.1  | 0  |
| 51-100 | 8.0  | 74.7  | 16.0  | 1.3  |
| 101-150 | 13.1  | 60.7  | 23.0  | 3.3  |
| 151+ | 6.3  | 58.3  | 31.3  | 4.2  |

Last year, I noted that the budget numbers were the worse I had seen in 15 years of doing this survey. But these numbers make last year look like the good old days. A year ago, a quarter of the news directors said their budgets had increased. This year, it's under 10 percent. Last year, just over 40 percent said their budgets had decreased; this year, it's almost two-thirds.

There were no meaningful differences no matter how I broke down the numbers.

TV News Profitability … 2000 - 2010

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 | 2005 | 2004 | 2003 | 2002 | 2001 | 2000 |
| Showing profit | 47.8% | 52.7% | 55.4% | 56.2% | 57.4% | 44.5% | 58.4% | 55.3% | 54.9% | 56% | 58% |
| Breaking even | 14.6 | 11.6 | 11.5 | 11.5 | 8.1 | 24.2 | 10.4 | 13.6 | 11.6 | 13 | 11 |
| Showing loss | 8.3 | 14.5 | 10.5 | 6.4 | 10.0 | 12.1 | 9.2 | 9.2 | 11.2 | 10 | 11 |
| Don’t know | 29.2 | 21.3 | 22.6 | 26.0 | 24.4 | 19.2 | 22.0 | 21.9 | 22.3 | 21 | 20 |

Outside of the anomaly of 2005, this is the lowest profit percentage that I've seen in my 16 years on the survey. At nearly 5 percent, it's also the biggest one-year drop in profits (outside of 2005). Break even rose to its highest level, but loss dropped to one of its lowest levels ever. Note also that "don't know" rose to the highest level ever, too.

TV News Profitability … by Size and Affiliation – 2010

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Showing profit | Breaking even | Showing loss | Don’t know |
| Market size: |  |  |  |  |
| 1-25 | 42.9%  | 14.3%  | 11.9%  | 31.0%  |
| 26-50 | 51.7  | 24.1  | 0  | 24.1  |
| 51-100 | 48.6  | 9.5  | 13.5  | 28.4  |
| 101-150 | 50.8  | 16.9  | 3.4  | 28.8  |
| 151+ | 45.8 -  | 12.5  | 8.3  | 33.3  |
| Staff size: |  |  |  |  |
| 51+ | 48.5 | 14.7  | 5.9  | 30.9  |
| 31-50 | 55.7  | 11.5  | 4.9  | 27.9  |
| 21-30 | 42.6  | 21.3  | 4.3  | 31.9  |
| 11-20 | 46.2  | 15.4  | 12.8  | 25.6  |
| 1-10 | 15.4  | 23.1  | 23.1  | 38.5  |
| Affiliation: |  |  |  |  |
| ABC | 47.1  | 8.6  | 10.0  | 34.3  |
| CBS | 54.5  | 15.6  | 6.5  | 23.4  |
| Fox | 52.9  | 8.8  | 8.8  | 29.4  |
| NBC | 46.5  | 18.3  | 4.2  | 31.0  |
| Big four affiliates | 51.1  | 12.1  | 6.7  | 30.0  |
| Other commercial | 31.8  | 31.8  | 18.2  | 18.2  |

Geographically, stations in the Northeast were less likely than others to make a profit on news and more likely to lose money. Interestingly, it used to be that the smaller the market and the smaller the station, the less likely that the news director knew whether the station made a profit on news. This past year, an increasing number of news directors -- across the board -- don't know the answer.

Percentage of TV Station Revenue Produced by News – 2010

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Average | Median | Minimum | Maximum | Not sure |
| All TV news | 44.7%  | 45.0%  | 5.0%  | 80.0%  | 71.4%  |
| Market size: |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1-25 | 46.9  | 42.2 | 20.0  | 80.0  | 67.3  |
| 26-50 | 39.7  | 40.0  | 30.0 -  | 50.0  | 64.5  |
| 51-100 | 45.3  | 50.0  | 7.0  | 73.0  | 73.7  |
| 101-150 | 43.1  | 46.0  | 6.0  | 55.0  | 75.4  |
| 151+ | 42.6  | 40.0  | 5.0  | 65.0 | 70.8  |
| Staff size: |  |  |  |  |  |
| 51+ | 44.5  | 43.0  | 20.0  | 73.0  | 70.4  |
| 31-50 | 42.3  | 50.0  | 6.0  | 60.0  | 72.6  |
| 21-30 | 47.8  | 50.0  | 7.0  | 80.0  | 76.6  |
| 11-20 | 42.8  | 42.5  | 30.0  | 55.0  | 75.6  |
| 1-10 | 22.5  | 22.5  | 5.0  | 40.0  | 76.9  |
| Affiliation: |  |  |  |  |  |
| ABC | 42.1  | 45.0  | 22.0  | 67.0  | 75.0  |
| CBS | 43.0  | 42.6  | 6.0  | 73.0  | 69.6  |
| Fox | 37.9  | 35.0  | 7.0  | 66.0  | 70.3  |
| NBC | 49.5  | 50.0  | 6.0  | 80.0  | 71.1  |
| Big four affiliates | 45.4  | 45.0  | 6.0  | 80.0  | 70.2  |
| Other commercial | 38.4  | 40.0  | 5.0  | 60.0  | 73.9  |

The average revenue actually rose slightly from last year's 43.5 percent, and the median rose to 45 percent from 40 percent last year. A note of caution, though. The percentage of TV news directors who said that they didn't know how much revenue came from news soared from a year ago. In fact, it's the first time more than half the news directors reported that they didn't know how much station revenue news brought in. The overall numbers should still be good, but I'd urge caution in judging the various subsets which necessarily involve fewer respondents.