**TV and Radio News salaries up sharply**

by Bob Papper

Not only did TV news staffing go up noticeably this past year, so did salaries. The latest RTDNA/Hofstra University Annual Survey found that local television news salaries rose 7.3% during 2010. The numbers are a sharp contrast to the last two years, when salaries actually fell 4.4% two years ago before rising a modest 2.5% last year.

Radio news salaries this year were up 9.8% from a year ago, but that figure is inflated by more high-paying, all-news stations reporting this year than we usually see. Even taking that into account, it was a good year for radio salaries, too.

With inflation a low 1.6% in 2010, news people really did have a good year.

Television News Salaries – 2011

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Average | Median | Minimum | Maximum |
| News Director | $95,600  | $82,000 | $18,000  | $300,000  |
| Assistant News Director | 74,400  | 65,000  | 27,000  | 190,000  |
| Managing Editor | 65,200  | 65,000  | 26,000  | 145,000  |
| Executive Producer | 60,700  | 60,000  | 25,000  | 140,000 |
| News Anchor | 90,500  | 70,000  | 18,000  | 737,500 |
| Weathercaster | 70,900  | 58,000  | 18,000  | 300,000  |
| Sports Anchor | 60,800  | 45,000  | 17,000  | 300,000  |
| News Reporter | 40,100  | 32,000  | 16,000  | 201,500  |
| Sports Reporter | 35,900  | 30,000  | 19,000  | 120,000  |
| Assignment Editor | 40,600  | 38,000  | 18,000 | 80,000  |
| News Producer | 35,100  | 32,000  | 18,000  | 86,000  |
| News Writer | 34,800  | 30,000  | 15,000  | 79,000  |
| News Assistant | 30,000  | 30,000  | 14,000  | 50,000  |
| Photographer | 34,900  | 30,000  | 12,000  | 175,000  |
| Tape Editor | 31,800  | 27,500  | 16,000  | 76,000  |
| Graphics Specialist | 33,200  | 29,000  | 11,000  | 76,000  |
| Web/Mobile Writer | 37,900  | 37,500 | 20,000  | 73,000  |
| Web/Mobile Prod/Ed | 42,400  | 37,500 | 18,000  | 83,000  |
| Art Director | 47,800  | 45,000  | 27,000  | 68,000  |

The median, or typical, salary is generally a better measure to look at. Of those medians, every salary went up this year except two (graphics specialist and art director). And most of the increases were significant. I cannot directly compare web-related salaries because we switched from one category (internet specialist) to two categories (web/mobile writer and web/mobile producer/editor). I can tell that had we left the title the same, that would have gone up as well.

Five and Ten Year Median Television News Salary Comparisons 2011 to 2006 to 2001

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2011  | 2006 | 5-Year Percentage Change | 2001 | 10-Year Percentage Change |
| INFLATION |  |  | +8.2% |  | +23.1% |
| All TV news |  |  | +11.1 |  | +25.6 |
| News Director | $82,000 | $75,000 | +9.3 | $65,000 | +26.2 |
| Assistant News Director | 65,000 | 62,500 | +4.0 | 54,500 | +19.3 |
| Managing Editor | 65,000 | 60,000 | +8.3 | 50,000 | +30.0 |
| Executive Producer | 60,000 | 49,500 | +21.2 | 48,500 | +23.7 |
| News Anchor | 70,000 | 58,500 | +19.7 | 47,500 | +47.4 |
| Weathercaster | 58,000 | 50,000 | +16.0 | 44,500 | +30.3 |
| Sports Anchor | 45,000 | 40,000 | +12.5 | 35,000 | +28.6 |
| News Reporter | 32,000 | 28,000 | +14.3 | 26,000 | +23.1 |
| Sports Reporter | 30,000 | 25,000 | +20.0 | 24,000 | +25.0 |
| Assignment Editor | 38,000 | 33,500 | +13.4 | 30,000 | +26.7 |
| News Producer | 32,000 | 29,000 | +10.3 | 26,000 | +23.1 |
| News Writer | 30,000 | 25,000 | +20.0 | 29,000 | +3.4 |
| News Assistant | 30,000 | 24,500 | +22.4 | 20,000 | +50.0 |
| Photographer | 30,000 | 27,000 | +11.1 | 24,000 | +25.0 |
| Tape Editor | 27,500 | 24,500 | +12.2 | 22,000 | +25.0 |
| Graphics Specialist | 29,000 | 30,800 | -5.8 | 25,000 | +16.0 |
| Web/Mobile Writer | 37,500 |  | +7.1\* |  | +7.1\* |
| Web/Mobile Prod/Ed | 37,500 |  | +7.1\* |  | +7.1\* |
| Art Director | 45,000 | 47,500 | -5.3 |  |  |

\*Comparison is with Internet Specialist in 2006 and 2001

A year ago, almost all positions had five and 10 year salary increases below the level of inflation. Not this time. Compared to five years ago, only assistant news director, graphics specialist, web/mobile specialist and art director are below the rate of inflation. Graphics specialist and art director are actually down in salary from five years ago. In a 10 year comparison those positions (minus art director, which I didn't ask about 10 years ago) plus news writer are the only ones below the rate of inflation. News reporter and news producer increased at exactly the same rate as inflation.

Median TV News Salaries by Market Size – 2011

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1 – 25 | 26 – 50 | 51 – 100 | 101-150 | 150+ |
| News Director | $168,000  | $135,000  | $100,000  | $70,000 | $56,000 |
| Assistant News Director | 115,000  | 90,000  | 65,000  | 42,500  | 44,000 |
| Managing Editor | 85,000  | 75,000  | 55,000  | 55,000  | 33,000  |
| Executive Producer | 80,000  | 65,000  | 53,500  | 41,500  | 33,500  |
| News Anchor | 165,500  | 137,500  | 84,500  | 55,000  | 35,000  |
| Weathercaster | 123,800  | 97,800  | 68,000  | 46,000  | 34,500  |
| Sports Anchor | 115,000  | 96,500  | 50,000  | 35,000  | 29,000  |
| News Reporter | 65,000  | 53,300  | 35,000  | 25,000  | 21,000  |
| Sports Reporter | 70,000  | 48,800  | 32,300  | 25,000  | 21,000  |
| Assignment Editor | 50,000  | 40,000  | 40,000  | 31,000  | 28,000  |
| News Producer | 55,000  | 40,000  | 33,000  | 27,800  | 24,000 |
| News Writer | 40,000  | 25,000  | 16,800  | 25,000  | \*  |
| News Assistant | 35,000  | 35,000  | 29,000  | 20,000  | 20,800  |
| Photographer | 55,000  | 40,000  | 32,000  | 25,500  | 22,000  |
| Tape Editor | 47,500  | 31,500  | 24,500  | 22,000  | 17,500  |
| Graphics Specialist | 42,700  | 36,300  | 29,000  | 26,400  | 17,500 |
| Web/Mobile Writer | 40,000  | 40,000  | 32,800 | 35,000  | 30,000 |
| Web/Mobile Prod/Ed | 55,000  | 47,300  | 37,500 | 34,500  | 23,000 |
| Art Director | \*  | 53,800  | 50,000  | 27,000  | \*  |

\*Insufficient data

As usual, the larger the market, the larger the salary. The top 25 market salaries would be even higher, but the group also includes a number of smaller, independent newsrooms which generally pay lower salaries than their network-affiliated counterparts. Only weathercasters went up from last year in every market size. Other big winners, based on market size, are news directors, news anchors, news assistants and photographers. At the lower end: sports anchor, assignment editor and tape editor.

Overall patterns by market size are hard to discern, but money was clearly tightest in the smallest markets.

Median TV News Salaries by Staff Size – 2011

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 51+ | 31-50 | 21-30 | 11-20 | 1-10 |
| News Director | $168,000  | $100,000 | $70,000  | $58,000 | $50,000  |
| Assistant News Director | 95,000  | 55,500  | 43,000  | 36,000  | 65,000  |
| Managing Editor | 77,800  | 57,500  | 55,000  | 33,000  | 40,500  |
| Executive Producer | 67,500  | 55,000  | 40,000  | 45,000  | \*  |
| News Anchor | 152,500  | 80,000  | 46,500  | 45,000  | 30,000  |
| Weathercaster | 121,300  | 64,000  | 40,000  | 35,000  | 24,000 |
| Sports Anchor | 107,500  | 50,000  | 33,300  | 29,800  | 18,000  |
| News Reporter | 61,000  | 35,000  | 24,600  | 22,000  | 25,000  |
| Sports Reporter | 51,000  | 30,000  | 24,400  | 22,000  | \*  |
| Assignment Editor | 48,000  | 40,000  | 35,000  | 25,500  | 18,000 |
| News Producer | 46,500  | 32,000  | 25,300  | 25,000  | 35,500  |
| News Writer | 31,000  | 21,800  | 25,000  | \*  | \*  |
| News Assistant | 35,000  | 22,500  | 22,900  | 20,000  | 17,000  |
| Photographer | 47,300  | 32,000  | 25,000  | 25,000  | 27,000  |
| Tape Editor | 38,000  | 24,000  | 24,000  | 21,000  | 33,000  |
| Graphics Specialist | 40,000  | 28,000  | 26,500  | 25,000 | 11,000  |
| Web/Mobile Writer | 40,000 | 33,800  | 30,000  | 30,000  | \*  |
| Web/Mobile Prod/Ed | 46,500 | 36,300  | 26,000  | 27,500  | \*  |
| Art Director | 50,000  | \*  | \*  | 27,000  | \*  |

\*Insufficient data

It's all in the perspective. By staff size weathercasters were down or even in four of the five groupings. It's the biggest stations that drove up the median. By staff size, the biggest raises went to news directors, executive producers, sports reporter, tape editor and web/mobile staffers. At the lower end: sports anchor, graphics specialist and art director.

As with market size, there's no overall pattern, but stations with staffs of 11 - 20 generally fared worse than others.

**Don't write off TV anchors**

Note that despite all the talk about the shrinking importance of anchors, there's no evidence to support that where it really counts: money. News anchors and weathercasters, in particular, have seen among the biggest jumps in salaries over the last five and 10 years. Ten years ago, news anchors had the fifth-highest median salary in the newsroom; five years ago, news anchors came in fourth. This year, they're second only to news directors.

**Radio salaries**

Radio News Salaries – 2011

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Average | Median | Minimum | Maximum |
| News Director | $43,400 | $35,000  | $12,000  | $250,000 |
| News Reporter | 35,000  | 30,000  | 18,000  | 75,000  |
| News Anchor | 49,100  | 42,500  | 25,000 | 100,000 |
| News Producer | 32,000  | 31,300  | 17,000  | 47,000  |
| Sports Anchor | 36,400  | 35,000  | 25,000  | 50,000  |
| Sports Reporter | 33,500  | 35,000  | 29,000  | 35,000  |
| Web Prod/Ed | 34,800  | 31,500  | 20,000 | 75,000  |

Overall, radio news salaries were up 9.8% in 2010. That increase was driven by having more high-paying all-news stations in the survey this year than I usually see. News reporters were actually unchanged from a year ago.

Median Radio News Salaries by Market Size – 2011

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Major | Large | Medium | Small |
| News Director | $60,000  | $42,000  | $33,000  | $28,000  |
| News Reporter | 40,000  | 30,000  | 30,000  | 18,500  |
| News Anchor | 52,500  | 28,000  | 30,000  | \*  |
| News Producer | 34,500  | 30,000  | 32,500  | 20,500  |
| Sports Anchor | 50,000 | 27,000  | 35,000  | 28,000  |
| Sports Reporter | 35,000  | \*  | 35,000  | 29,000  |
| Web Prod/Ed | 35,000 | 26,000 | 27,500 | 30,000 |

\*Insufficient data

As usual, the larger the market, generally, the higher the salary. 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.

Five and Ten Year Median Radio News Salary Comparisons 2011 to 2006 to 2001

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2011  | 2006 | 5-Year Percentage Change | 2001 | 10-Year Percentage Change |
| INFLATION |  |  | +8.2% |  | +23.1% |
| All radio news |  |  | +25.3 |  | +23.1 |
| News Director | $35,000 | $30,000 | +16.7 | $31,000 | +12.9 |
| News Reporter | 30,000  | 25,000 | +20.0 | 25,750 | +16.5 |
| News Anchor | 42,500 | 23,500 | +80.9 | 25,000 | +21.4 |
| News Producer | 31,300  | 20,500 | +52.7 | 26,000 | +20.4 |
| Sports Anchor | 35,000  | 32,500 | +7.7 | 30,000 | +16.7 |
| Sports Reporter | 35,000  | 19,000 | +84.2 | \* | \* |

\*Insufficient data

The big, high-paying stations in this year's survey have really driven up the salaries for news anchor, news producer and sports reporter, and that inflates the overall numbers. Even so, almost all positions are running ahead of inflation over the last five years. Over a 10-year period, the overall increase for radio news is exactly the same as inflation.

Median Radio News Salaries by Full-Time Staff Size – 2011

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | One | Two | Three | 4 - 9 | 10+ |
| News Director | $32,000 | $35,000  | $39,000  | $41,500  | $70,000  |
| News Reporter | \*  | 28,000  | 30,000  | 30,000  | 37,000  |
| News Anchor | \*  | 30,000  | 25,000  | 35,000  | 59,000  |
| News Producer | \*  | \* | 31,300  | 24,000  | 35,000  |
| Sports Anchor | 45,000  | 26,000  | \*  | 30,000  | 45,000  |
| Sports Reporter | \*  | \*  | 29,000  | 35,000  | 35,000  |
| Web Prod/Ed | 22,000 | 50,000  | 33,000 | 30,000 | 31,500  |

\*Insufficient data

The salaries by staff size are almost always highly variable, although there is a general tendency for the largest news operations to pay more.

Median Radio News Salaries by Number of Stations News Director Supervises – 2011

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | One | Two | Three | Four | Five | 6+ |
| News Director | $39,500 | $32,500  | $36,000 | $37,500 | $27,500  | $32,000  |
| News Reporter | 36,000  | 30,000  | 35,000  | 30,000  | 18,000  | 46,000  |
| News Anchor | 37,500  | 95,000  | 40,000  | 30,000  | 28,000  | 49,000  |
| News Producer | 21,000  | 32,500  | \*  | 30,000  | \*  | 46,000  |
| Sports Anchor | \*  | 35,000  | 26,000  | 45,000  | \*  | 42,500  |
| Sports Reporter | 29,000 | 35,000  | \*  | \*  | \*  | 35,000  |
| Web Prod/Ed | 21,000 | 30,000  | 33,000 | 50,000 | \* | 35,000  |

\*Insufficient data

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

Median Radio News Salaries by Ownership – 2011

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Group-Owned | Independent |
| News Director | $35,000 | $38,000  |
| News Reporter | 30,000 | 32,500  |
| News Anchor | 51,400  | 43,000  |
| News Producer | 32,000  | 28,300  |
| Sports Anchor | 45,000 | 26,500  |
| Sports Reporter | 35,000  | 32,000  |
| Web Prod/Ed | 35,000 | 26,000  |

\*Insufficient data

In the past, group-owned stations usually paid more the independent ones. Last year, it was the other way around. This year, there's no consistent pattern at all.

**Contracts**

TV Newsroom Employees Under Contract and Non-Competes

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Percent under contract | Percent with non-competes | Percent under contract with non-competes |
| News Director | 27.7% | 29.2% | 79.3% |
| Assistant News Director | 39.1 | 33.3 | 73.5 |
| Managing Editor | 16.9 | 22.0 | 80.0 |
| Executive Producer | 39.8 | 36.9 | 78.0 |
| News Anchor | 76.0 | 58.2 | 74.5 |
| Weathercaster | 74.1 | 58.5 | 77.6 |
| Sports Anchor | 69.0 | 53.3 | 76.4 |
| News Reporter | 61.9 | 48.5 | 74.2 |
| Sports Reporter | 48.4 | 38.7 | 71.1 |
| Assignment Editor | 19.2 | 20.0 | 80.0 |
| News Producer | 42.3 | 37.7 | 77.0 |
| News Writer | 4.2 | 8.3 | 100 |
| News Assistant | 5.3 | 5.4 | 100 |
| Photographer | 5.2 | 9.8 | 66.7 |
| Tape Editor | 0 | 5.7 | na |
| Graphics Specialist | 0 | 4.4 | na |
| Web/Mobile Writer | 10.0 | 13.7 | 80.0 |
| Web/Mobile Prod/Ed | 19.6 | 19.6 | 80.0 |
| Art Director | 5.6 | 11.1 | 100 |

It's been a few years since I last looked at contracts in depth. This year's contract numbers are all down -- and down significantly. For news producers on up the chart, the percentages are down around 20% across the board. The others are down, too, but they were never high enough to go down that much. It's too soon to say whether this marks a trend or it's a reaction to tougher economic times or something else. Maybe we'll learn the answers with next year's survey.

Radio Newsroom Employees Under Contract and Non-Competes

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Percent under contract | Percent with non-competes | Percent under contract with non-competes |
| News Director | 22.3% | 21.3% | 57.1% |
| News Reporter | 19.4 | 25.8 | 83.3 |
| News Anchor | 25.0 | 29.2 | 50.0 |
| News Producer | 13.3 | 20.0 | 50.0 |
| Sports Anchor | 6.3 | 12.5 | 100 |
| Sports Reporter | 16.7 | 33.3 | 100 |
| Web Prod/Ed | 5.6 | 11.1 | 100 |

In contrast to TV, the percentages of contracts in radio are up noticeably from a few years ago. But it's possible that those large, all-news stations are inflating the numbers. I should know that next year.

**Starting Pay**

TV news 2011 starting salaries for new employees with no fulltime experience

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Position | Average | Median | Minimum | Maximum |
| All TV news | $24,300 | $23,000  | $15,000 | $60,000  |
| Reporter | 23,100  | 22,000  | 15,000  | 60,000  |
| News producer | 24,600  | 23,500  | 17,000  | 50,000  |
| Photographer | 24,200  | 23,000  | 16,000  | 45,000  |
| Multimedia journalist | 24,000  | 24,000  | 18,000  | 32,000  |
| News assistant  | 25,000  | 23,000  | 18,000  | 40,000  |
| Tape editor | 23,700  | 24,500  | 17,000  | 28,000  |
| Assignment editor | 30,000  | 30,000  | 25,000  | 38,000  |
| News anchor | 20,000  | 20,000  | 15,000  | 24,000  |
| Weathercaster | 18,500  | 19,000  | 15,000  | 21,000  |
| Web | 25,700  | 25,000  | 22,000  | 30,000  |
| News writer | 27,500  | 27,500  | 25,000  | 30,000  |
| Sports reporter | 22,800 | 22,800  | 22,000  | 24,000  |
| Other | 24,600  | 23,700  | 19,000  | 35,000  |

The TV positions above are listed in the order of number hired, and there's been a big change in which positions were most often hired in the last year. A year ago, news assistants were at the top of the list; this year, they're down to number five. Multimedia journalists (one-man-bands) were eighth last year; this year, up to fourth. Reporters were second a year ago; this year, they're a dominant number one -- almost double second place news producers. And producers are almost double number three photographers.

The average salary was exactly the same as a year ago, but the median dropped a thousand to $23,000. All told, 87% of the TV newspeople hired in the last year were replacements for those who left; 13% were new hires. There were fewer new hires in the West than any other region.

Radio news 2011 starting salaries for new employees with no fulltime experience

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Position | Average | Median | Minimum | Maximum |
| All radio news | $21,900  | $20,800  | $15,000  | $35,000  |
| News reporter | 24,000  | 22,500  | 15,000  | 35,000  |
| Announcing | 19,200 | 18,000 | 15,000 | 25,000  |
| General news | 23,600 | 24,000 | 17,000  | 33,000 |
| News anchor | 25,000 | 25,000  | 25,000  | 25,000  |
| Other | 21,000 | 20,800 | 15,000 | 26,000 |

The radio positions above are listed in the order of number hired, and news reporter came in more than double the number two position. Overall, both average and mean starting salary in radio rose from last year, but last year was the lowest it had been in years.

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**About the Survey**

The RTDNA/Hofstra University Survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2010 among all 1,729 operating, non-satellite television stations and a random sample of 3,000 radio stations. Valid responses came from 1,360 television stations (78.7 percent) and 203 radio news directors and general managers representing 603 radio stations.

Some data sets (e.g. the number of TV stations originating local news, getting it from others and women TV news directors) are based on a complete census and are not projected from a smaller sample.