**TV and radio news salaries barely edge up**

by Bob Papper

* Salaries lose ground
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While staffing in TV news soared, salaries did not. The latest RTDNA/Hofstra University Annual Survey found that local television news salaries rose 2.0% during 2011. That thin margin of growth suggests that a lot of the hiring in 2011 took place among relatively young, less expensive staffers.

Radio news salaries this year were up a scant 1.2% from a year ago.

With inflation at 2.9% in 2011, radio and TV news people actually lost ground in real wages.

Television news salaries – 2012

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Average | Median | Minimum | Maximum |
| News Director | $99,750 | $87,000 | $30,000 | $345,000 |
| Assistant News Director | 73,900 | 69,700 | 29,000 | 195,000 |
| Managing Editor | 65,400 | 60,000 | 19,000 | 150,000 |
| Executive Producer | 59,200 | 55,000 | 25,000 | 150,000 |
| News Anchor | 84,800 | 64,000 | 18,500 | 850,000 |
| Weathercaster | 70,500 | 60,000 | 15,000 | 575,000 |
| Sports Anchor | 60,000 | 45,000 | 14,000 | 650,000 |
| News Reporter | 38,800 | 32,000 | 16,000 | 300,000 |
| Sports Reporter | 38,300 | 31,000 | 18,000 | 130,000 |
| Assignment Editor | 40,700 | 38,500 | 18,500 | 100,000 |
| News Producer | 34,800 | 31,300 | 17,100 | 120,000 |
| News Writer | 35,300 | 31,500 | 14,000 | 90,000 |
| News Assistant | 27,200 | 24,700 | 13,000 | 75,000 |
| Photographer | 34,700 | 30,000 | 12,000 | 110,000 |
| Tape Editor | 32,000 | 28,000 | 13,000 | 90,000 |
| Graphics Specialist | 35,700 | 31,500 | 20,000 | 80,000 |
| Web/Mobile Writer | 34,900 | 34,000 | 17,000 | 75,000 |
| Web/Mobile Prod/Ed | 42,400 | 37,000 | 19,000 | 100,000 |
| Art Director | 75,200 | 70,000 | 30,000 | 125,000 |

The median, or typical, salary is generally a better measure. That leaves us with a mixed picture for TV for 2012. Nine median salaries went up from last year; seven went down; two stayed the same. (Averages provide a similar mixed picture, with eight up, 10 down and one the same.) In most cases, salaries moved little one way or the other, but there were a few exceptions. News anchors dropped 8.5%, but weathercasters rose, and sports anchors stayed the same. News directors and assistant news directors went up, but managing editors and executive producers went down. Reporters, producers, assignment editors, photographers and tape editors stayed about the same. News assistants took the biggest hit -- dropping almost 18%.

Five and ten year median television news salary comparisons 2012 to 2007 to 2002

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2012 | 2007 | 5-Year Percentage Change | 2002 | 10-Year Percentage Change |
| INFLATION |  |  | +12.0% |  | +28.0% |
| All TV news |  |  | +10.5 |  | +21.6 |
| News Director | $87,000 | $74,000 | +17.6 | $64,000 | +35.9 |
| Assistant News Director | 69,700 | 63,000 | +10.6 | 57,000 | +22.3 |
| Managing Editor | 60,000 | 58,000 | +3.4 | 50,000 | +20.0 |
| Executive Producer | 55,000 | 52,000 | +5.8 | 47,000 | +17.0 |
| News Anchor | 64,000 | 60,000 | +6.7 | 50,000 | +28.0 |
| Weathercaster | 60,000 | 53,300 | +12.6 | 43,800 | +37.0 |
| Sports Anchor | 45,000 | 40,000 | +12.5 | 35,000 | +28.6 |
| News Reporter | 32,000 | 29,500 | +8.5 | 26,000 | +23.1 |
| Sports Reporter | 31,000 | 29,000 | +6.9 | 25,000 | +24.0 |
| Assignment Editor | 38,500 | 34,000 | +13.2 | 30,000 | +28.3 |
| News Producer | 31,300 | 30,000 | +4.3 | 27,000 | +15.9 |
| News Writer | 31,500 | 24,000 | +31.3 | 27,500 | +14.5 |
| News Assistant | 24,700 | 25,500 | -3.1 | 21,000 | +17.6 |
| Photographer | 30,000 | 27,000 | +11.1 | 25,000 | +20.0 |
| Tape Editor | 28,000 | 25,000 | +12.0 | 23,000 | +21.7 |
| Graphics Specialist | 31,500 | 29,500 | +6.9 | 25,000 | +26.0 |
| Web/Mobile Writer | 34,000 | 33,800\* | +0.6 | 30,000\* | +13.3 |
| Web/Mobile Prod/Ed | 37,000 | 33,800\* | +9.5 | 30,000\* | +23.3 |
| Art Director | 70,000 | 42,000 | +66.7 | na |  |

\*Comparison is with internet specialist in 2007 and 2002

Once again, almost all positions had five and 10 year salary increases that ran below the level of inflation. Only four positions beat inflation for both 5-year and 10-year comparisons: news director, weathercaster, sports anchor and assignment editor. Writer and art director beat inflation over the last five years, but art director did it by nearly disappearing from a lot of smaller stations.

Median TV news salaries by market size – 2012

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1 – 25 | 26 – 50 | 51 – 100 | 101-150 | 150+ |
| News Director | $175,000 | $135,000 | $100,000 | $75,000 | $56,500 |
| Assistant News Director | 120,000 | 92,000 | 65,000 | 42,000 | 47,000 |
| Managing Editor | 86,700 | 67,500 | 60,000 | 49,500 | 35,000 |
| Executive Producer | 80,500 | 65,000 | 50,000 | 40,000 | 37,000 |
| News Anchor | 152,500 | 122,500 | 81,000 | 52,000 | 40,000 |
| Weathercaster | 111,800 | 95,000 | 70,000 | 45,500 | 35,000 |
| Sports Anchor | 108,500 | 79,000 | 54,200 | 37,000 | 30,000 |
| News Reporter | 65,000 | 51,300 | 35,000 | 25,500 | 22,500 |
| Sports Reporter | 70,000 | 44,000 | 31,600 | 25,000 | 23,000 |
| Assignment Editor | 46,500 | 42,500 | 40,000 | 35,000 | 28,000 |
| News Producer | 57,000 | 42,000 | 32,000 | 28,000 | 23,000 |
| News Writer | 42,500 | 33,000 | 25,000 | 19,500 | \* |
| News Assistant | 30,000 | 25,000 | 20,000 | 17,200 | 21,000 |
| Photographer | 52,500 | 45,000 | 30,000 | 26,000 | 25,000 |
| Tape Editor | 57,500 | 35,000 | 27,000 | 22,000 | 24,000 |
| Graphics Specialist | 55,000 | 36,300 | 34,000 | 24,500 | 24,000 |
| Web/Mobile Writer | 39,500 | 45,000 | 34,000 | 28,000 | 26,500 |
| Web/Mobile Prod/Ed | 67,000 | 54,000 | 35,000 | 30,000 | 22,800 |
| Art Director | 114,000 | 57,500 | 55,000 | \* | \* |

\*Insufficient data

As usual, the larger the market, the larger the salary, but the big story here is actually in the smallest markets. More than three-quarters of all the positions in markets 150+ went up in salary. Only the biggest markets had more than half go up. In the fact, the bigger the market, the more likely salaries were to go up. Except for that smallest market size. What took place in those smallest markets is some measure of salary compression. The biggest salaries went up -- but just a little. The biggest percentage increases were among the lowest paid staffers.

Median TV news salaries by staff size – 2012

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 51+ | 31-50 | 21-30 | 11-20 | 1-10 |
| News Director | $150,000 | $97,000 | $70,000 | $60,000 | $44,500 |
| Assistant News Director | 92,300 | 57,000 | 43,500 | 40,000 | \* |
| Managing Editor | 75,000 | 55,000 | 42,500 | 56,000 | 19,500 |
| Executive Producer | 68,000 | 50,000 | 40,000 | 40,000 | 55,000 |
| News Anchor | 135,000 | 75,000 | 47,800 | 42,500 | 35,000 |
| Weathercaster | 109,900 | 62,800 | 42,300 | 37,000 | 24,000 |
| Sports Anchor | 86,000 | 48,500 | 35,000 | 30,000 | 21,200 |
| News Reporter | 52,500 | 34,000 | 24,800 | 23,000 | 25,000 |
| Sports Reporter | 47,500 | 31,000 | 24,800 | 22,500 | 23,000 |
| Assignment Editor | 45,000 | 39,000 | 35,000 | 30,000 | 30,000 |
| News Producer | 42,500 | 32,000 | 26,000 | 26,000 | 32,000 |
| News Writer | 33,000 | 24,000 | \* | \* | \* |
| News Assistant | 28,000 | 17,800 | 17,200 | \* | 24,000 |
| Photographer | 45,500 | 29,000 | 25,000 | 26,000 | 24,000 |
| Tape Editor | 34,000 | 24,500 | 21,000 | 24,000 | \* |
| Graphics Specialist | 35,000 | 29,000 | 31,000 | 29,000 | 24,000 |
| Web/Mobile Writer | 39,000 | 30,000 | 26,000 | 30,000 | \* |
| Web/Mobile Prod/Ed | 56,000 | 35,000 | 30,000 | 30,000 | \* |
| Art Director | 75,000 | \* | \* | \* | \* |

\*Insufficient data

This table allows you to see what's really taken place in the last year. The stations most likely to add people -- by far -- are the largest stations, followed by the second largest. Overwhelmingly, especially for the biggest stations, median salaries have fallen in the last year. That's likely the result of stations adding people who are mostly entry level -- or at least paid at a noticeably lower rate than existing staff. As we move into smaller shops, 11 - 20 and 21 - 30, we see most salaries going up. That's where fewer people have been added, and existing salaries have been raised with fewer offsetting cheaper new hires. The smallest shops, 1 - 10 staffers, are always harder to gauge because they tend to include both the smallest newsrooms in the smallest markets -- along with the smallest newsrooms in the largest markets. The mixed pattern this year -- with near equal increases and decreases -- reflects the dual nature of the group.

**Radio salaries**

Radio news salaries – 2012

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Average | Median | Minimum | Maximum |
| News Director | $39,000 | $37,000 | $12,000 | $100,000 |
| News Reporter | 33,500 | 34,500 | 12,000 | 110,000 |
| News Producer | 38,900 | 36,000 | 18,000 | 100,000 |
| News Anchor | 45,000 | 40,000 | 25,000 | 180,000 |
| Sports Anchor | 33,700 | 27,500 | 16,000 | 80,000 |
| Sports Reporter | 36,700 | 30,000 | 20,000 | 80,000 |
| Web Prod/Ed | 40,700 | 42,500 | 30,000 | 65,000 |

Overall, radio news salaries edged up 1.2% in 2011.

Median radio news salaries by market size – 2012

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Major | Large | Medium | Small |
| News Director | $47,500 | $45,000 | $37,000 | $26,800 |
| News Reporter | 35,000 | 36,500 | 35,000 | 31,000 |
| News Producer | 30,000 | 45,500 | \* | \* |
| News Anchor | 37,500 | 42,000 | 39,000 | 28,000 |
| Sports Anchor | 60,000 | 20,000 | 30,000 | 28,500 |
| Sports Reporter | 60,000 | \* | \* | 25,000 |
| Web Prod/Ed | 47,500 | 36,300 | 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 2012 to 2007 to 2002

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2012 | 2007 | 5-Year Percentage Change | 2002 | 10-Year Percentage Change |
| INFLATION |  |  | +12.0% |  | +28.0% |
| All radio news |  |  | +25.7 |  | +27.7 |
| News Director | $37,000 | $30,000 | +15.6 | $31,000 | +21.3 |
| News Reporter | 34,500 | 25,000 | +38.0 | 25,750 | +56.8 |
| News Producer | 36,000 | 20,500 | +29.5 | 26,000 | +30.9 |
| News Anchor | 40,000 | 23,500 | +37.9 | 25,000 | +45.5 |
| Sports Anchor | 27,500 | 32,500 | -8.3 | 30,000 | -6.8 |
| Sports Reporter | 30,000 | 19,000 | +55.4 | \* | \* |
| Web editor/producer | 42,500 |  |  |  |  |

\*Insufficient data

Some of these positions show up in relatively few stations, so they tend to bounce up and down quite a bit, depending on which stations send in the numbers. Overall, in the last five years, radio news salaries are running well ahead of inflation. But that's not the case for the last decade.

Median radio news salaries by full-time staff size – 2012

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | One | Two | Three | 4 - 9 | 10+ |
| News Director | $28,000 | $30,000 | $39,500 | $45,000 | $63,000 |
| News Reporter | \* | 18,000 | 34,000 | 35,000 | 37,500 |
| News Producer | \* | \* | \* | 29,000 | 36,000 |
| News Anchor | \* | 28,000 | \* | 40,000 | 50,000 |
| Sports Anchor | 32,500 | \* | 24,000 | 25,000 | 60,000 |
| Sports Reporter | \* | \* | \* | 25,000 | 60,000 |
| Web Prod/Ed | \* | \* | 30,000 | 36,300 | 47,500 |

\*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 – 2012

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | One | Two | Three | Four | Five | 6+ |
| News Director | $40,000 | $30,500 | $44,000 | $30,000 | $40,000 | $45,000 |
| News Reporter | 37,800 | 31,800 | 32,500 | 22,500 | 56,300 | 36,500 |
| News Producer | 30,000 | \* | 51,000 | \* | 72,500 | 32,500 |
| News Anchor | 39,000 | 36,300 | 45,000 | 57,500 | 115,000 | 40,000 |
| Sports Anchor | 20,000 | 32,000 | 22,000 | 24,500 | 32,500 | 52,500 |
| Sports Reporter | \* | 30,000 | 20,000 | \* | 60,000 | \* |
| Web Prod/Ed | 35,000 | \* | 42,500 | \* | 52,500 | 37,500 |

\*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 – 2012

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Standalone AM or FM | Combo AM/FM | Standalone + combo | Group of 3 or more |
| News Director | $39,000 | $30,000 | $35,000 | $40,000 |
| News Reporter | 41,500 | 32,500 | 34,000 | 35,000 |
| News Producer | \* | \* | \* | 36,000 |
| News Anchor | 41,500 | 34,000 | 37,800 | 47,600 |
| Sports Anchor | \* | 32,000 | 32,000 | 25,000 |
| Sports Reporter | \* | 30,000 | 30,000 | 40,000 |
| Web Prod/Ed | 30,000 | \* | 30,000 | 43,800 |

\*Insufficient data

I broke down the stations differently this year than in the past. I asked about standalone AM or FM, combo AM/FM and groups of 3 or more stations. This year, as in most years, group-owned stations usually paid more the independent ones. Overall, radio salaries were highest in the Northeast.

**Contracts**

TV newsroom employees under contract and non-competes - 2012

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Percent under contract | Percent with non-competes | Percent under contract with non-competes |
| News Director | 38.0% | 44.0% | 92.4% |
| Assistant News Director | 47.7 | 55.2 | 88.1 |
| Managing Editor | 33.3 | 35.7 | 78.9 |
| Executive Producer | 47.3 | 52.5 | 93.6 |
| News Anchor | 93.6 | 88.3 | 93.9 |
| Weathercaster | 92.9 | 87.8 | 93.6 |
| Sports Anchor | 87.2 | 85.6 | 92.9 |
| News Reporter | 81.2 | 81.8 | 93.5 |
| Sports Reporter | 70.0 | 71.2 | 93.2 |
| Assignment Editor | 28.7 | 38.3 | 89.7 |
| News Producer | 65.1 | 67.6 | 93.4 |
| News Writer | 17.2 | 13.8 | 50.0 |
| News Assistant | 0 | 12.5 | 0 |
| Photographer | 6.2 | 19.1 | 75.0 |
| Tape Editor | 2.7 | 10.8 | 50.0 |
| Graphics Specialist | 8.1 | 14.7 | 66.7 |
| Web/Mobile Writer | 22.5 | 21.4 | 77.8 |
| Web/Mobile Prod/Ed | 28.6 | 36.8 | 91.7 |
| Art Director | 4.5 | 9.5 | 0 |

Apparently there's nothing like an improving economy to bring out the love between station and employee. Virtually every job category rose in percentage under contract and percentage under non-competes. The only exceptions were news assistant and art director. Everything else went up, and many went up substantially.

Radio newsroom employees under contract and non-competes - 2012

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Percent under contract | Percent with non-competes | Percent under contract with non-competes |
| News Director | 22.6% | 18.8% | 44.4% |
| News Reporter | 29.4 | 14.8 | 33.3 |
| News Producer | 16.7 | 18.2 | 50.0 |
| News Anchor | 36.4 | 28.6 | 50.0 |
| Sports Anchor | 10.5 | 15.4 | 100 |
| Sports Reporter | 0 | 16.7 | 0 |
| Web Prod/Ed | 8.3 | 18.2 | 100 |

Radio numbers this year are generally in line with last year.

**Starting Pay**

TV news 2011 starting salaries for new employees with no fulltime experience - 2012

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Position | Average | Median | Minimum | Maximum |
| All TV news | $24,500 | $24,000 | $14,500 | $45,000 |
| Reporter | 23,300 | 22,500 | 17,000 | 45,000 |
| News producer | 24,700 | 24,000 | 18,700 | 35,000 |
| Photographer | 23,600 | 22,000 | 19,000 | 33,000 |
| News assistant | 25,400 | 25,000 | 20,000 | 35,000 |
| Multimedia journalist | 25,000 | 25,000 | 18,500 | 32,000 |
| Tape editor | 23,800 | 23,000 | 18,000 | 33,000 |
| Assignment editor | 27,300 | 26,000 | 20,000 | 40,000 |
| News writer | 28,800 | 27,500 | 21,000 | 43,000 |
| Studio technical | 26,000 | 25,000 | 19,000 | 35,000 |
| News anchor | 22,700 | 22,000 | 22,000 | 24,000 |
| Web | 22,300 | 22,000 | 20,000 | 25,000 |
| Sports reporter | 22,500 | 22,500 | 22,500 | 22,500 |
| Other | 20,600 | 21,500 | 15,000 | 24,000 |

The TV positions above are listed in the order of number hired, and this year's list looks a lot like last year's. Reporters remain number one on the list, although the margin over producers was small this year. Photographers and news assistants were tied at number 3 -- each with half the number of producers. One man bands/MMJs/BJs were right behind -- which means they actually slipped down a notch from a year ago. Tape editors were half the level of OMBs but 50% higher than assignment editors.

The average salary was $200 a year more than a year ago, but the median was up by a thousand to $24,000. All told, 78% of the TV newspeople hired in the last year were replacements for those who left; 22% were new hires. That's a big jump -- 9% -- in new hires.

Radio news 2012 starting salaries for new employees with no fulltime experience

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Position | Average | Median | Minimum | Maximum |
| All radio news | $24,500 | $24,000 | $15,000 | $50,000 |
| News reporter | 25,100 | 25,000 | 15,400 | 39,000 |
| General news | 25,200 | 24,500 | 15,000 | 50,000 |
| Other | 21,500 | 20,000 | 16,600 | 30,000 |

Half of all new, starting positions in radio news were reporters. About a third as many news directors were hired next, followed by news anchors and then random positions. Both average and median salaries are up around $3,000 from a year ago. That jump is mostly a reflection of which stations did what little hiring that took place.

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**About the Survey**

The RTDNA/Hofstra University Survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2011 among all 1,735 operating, non-satellite television stations and a random sample of 3,000 radio stations. Valid responses came from 1,238 television stations (71.4%) and 260 radio news directors and general managers representing 743 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.