**The evolving TV news business and new technology … 2014**

**by Bob Papper**

* The big picture of TV news
* Cooperative ventures appear to be headed down
* Where new technologies are heading this year in TV and radio

The latest RTDNA/Hofstra University Survey continues to show that the TV news business isn't limited to TV anymore, but the numbers also show a stabilization in the outside reach of a TV newsroom. The percentage of stations involved with other media slid about two and a half points from last year to 75.9%. Still a very high number. The group least likely to be involved with others: the smallest stations in the biggest markets -- which came in around the 66 percentage mark -- and Fox affiliates, which came in around 57%.

In the past, I noted that more stations said they were running news on another local or nearby station than I was able to locate. Well, the news directors (and the survey) were correct, and this year I was able to find those stations. Almost a third of TV news directors (31.2%) said they ran news on another local or nearby TV station, and they said they ran that news on an average of 1.4 stations. There are 719 stations originating local news ... times 31.2% equals 224 ... times 1.4 equals 314. I have identified 307 stations running news from one of those 719 newsrooms. I love it when these things work out.

**TV news departments are providing content to a variety of other outlets**

Percentage of TV news departments providing content to other media – 2014

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Another local TV station | TV in another market | Cable TV channel | Local radio | Website not your own | Mobile device | Other |
| All TV | 21.0% | 16.8% | 6.7% | 41.9% | 9.8% | 42.2% | 6.7% |
| Big four affiliates | 21.5 | 15.5 | 7.4 | 43.7 | 8.8 | 44.4 | 6.7 |
| Other commercial  | 13 | 34.8 | 0 | 21.7 | 8.7 | 26.1 | 4.3 |
| Market size: |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1-25 | 20.8 | 15.1 | 7.5 | 24.5 | 11.3 | 26.4 | 9.4 |
| 26-50 | 15.9 | 9.1 | 15.9 | 40.9 | 11.4 | 45.5 | 9.1 |
| 51-100 | 25.6 | 14.4 | 5.6 | 44.4 | 10 | 42.2 | 5.6 |
| 101-150 | 24.4 | 17.1 | 3.7 | 51.2 | 7.3 | 47.6 | 4.9 |
| 151+ | 10.9 | 30.4 | 4.3 | 41.3 | 10.9 | 47.8 | 6.5 |

There was no consistent pattern in the numbers this year. Stations providing news to another station within their market dropped slightly (two and a half points) from a year ago. Cable TV and mobile devices dropped slightly. TV in another market, radio and a website not your own all went up.

Generally, the bigger the newsroom, the more likely to have the station supplying news to other places. Fox affiliates were more likely to be involved with cable channels but less likely to be involved with another TV station in the local market or a radio station. Stations in the Northeast were noticeably more likely to be involved with another local TV station, a cable channel and TV in another market than stations elsewhere.

The small number of "other" included a local newspaper, company-owned affiliates elsewhere, subchannels, and one that supplies video to gas pump monitors at local service stations.

**Stations remain heavily involved in cooperative ventures with others.**

The table above deals with stations supplying news to other media. The next table deals with cooperative ventures among media outlets. Overall, the numbers are just about the same as last year. A majority of stations have a cooperative arrangement with another medium.

Aside from the local or nearby TV station for which you produce news, do you have a cooperative news gathering or coverage agreement with the following?

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Another TV station | Local newspaper | Local radio station | Other | No |
| All TV | 21.5% | 22.4% | 21.5% | 3.8% | 48.7% |
| Market |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1 - 25 | 44.6 | 25 | 17.9 | 1.8 | 33.9 |
| 26 - 50 | 27.3 | 27.3 | 15.9 | 6.8 | 43.2 |
| 51 - 100 | 14.8 | 28.4 | 26.1 | 3.4 | 47.7 |
| 101 - 150 | 13 | 16.9 | 22.1 | 5.2 | 58.4 |
| 151+ | 14.9 | 12.8 | 21.3 | 2.1 | 57.4 |

Interestingly, all of these numbers are down from a year ago except "other" -- which stayed the same. Nothing dropped a lot, but all went down: another TV and radio by just over a point and local newspaper down by three and a half.

"Other" included corporate, newspapers and other websites.

Three years ago, I noted that cooperative ventures had been growing during a down or uncertain economy ... and that it would be interesting to see how they hold up as the economy improves. Last year's evidence suggested that they're shrinking. That trend has continued this year as well.

For those stations that are involved with cooperative agreements, I asked what they were sharing.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Information | Helicopter | Pool video | Other |
| All TV | 82.1% | 15% | 37.9% | 10.7% |
| Market |  |  |  |  |
| 1 - 25 | 72.7 | 48.5 | 39.4 | 9.1 |
| 26 - 50 | 81 | 19 | 28.6 | 9.5 |
| 51 - 100 | 80 | 2.5 | 35 | 17.5 |
| 101 - 150 | 92.9 | 0 | 42.9 | 7.1 |
| 151+ | 88.9 | 0 | 44.4 | 5.6 |

Other than pool video, the numbers are down slightly from a year ago, but there are really no big, meaningful changes here in the last year.

Most of the "other" could easily have been listed as "information" or "pool video." It included content ideas, video, packages and web content.

For the fourth year in a row, the percentage of stations not involved in a cooperative venture were less likely to be planning or discussing one. Three years ago, 28.6% of stations not involved in a cooperative venture said they were planning or discussing one. That dropped to 24.8% two years ago, then plunged to 16% last year and down again this year to 15.3%. Pretty clear cut trend.

**Stations are running less information on their digital channels.**

This has persisted as an area of greater expectation than reality.

Stations running material on another digital channel that news director oversees - 2014

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | All news channel | Weather channel | Other | No |
| All TV | 4.3% | 15.8% | 24.5% | 59% |
| Market: |  |  |  |  |
| 1 – 25 | 6.2 | 8.3 | 22.9 | 62.5 |
| 26 - 50 | 0 | 20 | 34.3 | 48.6 |
| 51 - 100 | 5.1 | 22.8 | 26.6 | 51.9 |
| 101 - 150 | 2.7 | 12.2 | 23 | 66.2 |
| 151+ | 7.1 | 14.3 | 16.7 | 64.3 |

Once again, most of the numbers here look a lot like the year before. Big plans in the past have yielded small steps so far. "All news" and "weather" both dropped by about half a point. "Other" stayed largely the same. Most of that "other" involved a wide range of mostly secondary subchannel-type affiliation stations like Bounce TV, MeTV and Antenna TV ... along with secondary affiliations that stations have with Fox, CW, Azteca America, MyNet and Telemundo

**High Definition**

Percentage of stations broadcasting local news in high definition - 2014

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Yes | No |
| All TV | 78.5% | 21.5% |
| Market: |  |  |
| 1 - 25 | 92 | 8 |
| 26 - 50 | 82.9 | 17.1 |
| 51 - 100 | 83.8 | 16.2 |
| 101 - 150 | 72 | 28 |
| 151+ | 61.4 | 38.6 |

The rate of growth continues to slow --- up 10 points a year ago and just under 8 this year. Almost all the growth in the last year took place in markets 101+.

**New Technology - TV - 2014**

Almost two-thirds (64.76%) of TV news directors say they're shopping for new technology this year. And that's pretty much across the board -- even the smallest markets.

And we're talking big money ... from a couple dozen conversions to HD and almost as many major master control/control room/production investments to complete new facilities. A hundred news directors say they're buying -- or buying more -- live over cellular gear. That was the overwhelming pick (again this year). Well back -- but we're still talking dozens and dozens of stations -- is new field gear -- cameras, editing, MMJ kits. Quite a few stations are planning new newsroom computers, and quite a few of those will include new newsroom software. A whole bunch of cars and trucks -- especially satellite trucks -- will get added. New weather graphics, new traffic graphics and new map graphics. On a smaller scale: GoPro cameras, still cameras, tablets, Apple TV, Skype, Google Glass and a drone or two.

**One-Man-Bands - 2014 Update**

Call them one-man-bands, multimedia (MMJ) or backpack journalists -- their use has been growing over most of the last six or seven years -- until last year.

Percentage of TV Newsrooms Reporting Using One-Man-Bands - 2014

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Yes, Mostly Use OMB | Yes, Use Some OMB | Yes, But Not Much Use | No, Do Not Use |
| All TV | 46% | 31% | 11.8% | 11.1% |
| Market size: |  |  |  |  |
| 1-25 | 14 | 30 | 28 | 28 |
| 26-50 | 14.3 | 40 | 20 | 25.7 |
| 51-100 | 44.4 | 40.7 | 7.4 | 7.4 |
| 101-150 | 57.1 | 31.2 | 7.8 | 3.9 |
| 151+ | 90.9 | 6.8 | 2.3 | 0 |
| Staff size: |  |  |  |  |
| 51+ | 9.3 | 44.4 | 22.2 | 24.1 |
| 31-50 | 37.7 | 47.8 | 8.7 | 5.8 |
| 21-30 | 66.7 | 21.1 | 7 | 5.3 |
| 11-20 | 89.2 | 8.1 | 2.7 | 0 |
| 1-10 | 69.2 | 15.4 | 3.8 | 11.5 |

Last year, the numbers really didn't change; this year the relentless, slow march continues. The use of one-man-bands had been going up about 3 points a year. Last year, it was unchanged, but this year the use increased by around 5. So we're back to an average increase of close to 3 points per year overall.

**Radio Technology**

Periodically, we ask radio news directors about the use of digital technology in the newsroom.

Use of digital audio equipment 2014

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Average | Median |
| News material gathered digitally | 72.3% | 85% |
| News material mixed and edited digitally | 75.6 | 100 |
| News material played back/aired digitally | 72.3 | 100 |

Bigger markets and non-commercial stations are most likely to gather, mix and playback news digitally.

**New Technology - Radio - 2014**

Technology shopping in radio appears to be getting thinner and thinner. Two years ago, 38% of radio news directors and general managers said they'd be making no technology purchases in the next year. Last year, 44% said nothing. This year, it's up to more than two-thirds (69.3%). For those who are planning purchases, the answers are a bit more varied than last year. A year ago, digital audio recorders came in the runaway winner. This year, it's tied for first place along with newsroom computers. Close behind, video cameras. Just behind that, another tie between automation equipment and production/control room equipment.

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**About the Survey**

The RTDNA/Hofstra University Survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2013 among all 1,659 operating, non-satellite television stations and a random sample of 3,263 radio stations. Valid responses came from 1,300 television stations (78.4%) and 249 radio news directors and general managers representing 649 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.