**TV news employment up slightly ... little change in radio**

**by Bob Papper**

* TV news employment back up
* The number of TV newsrooms slips by two
* Radio news little changed ... as usual

Total local TV news employment rose by 1.1% in 2014 -- adding 300 people, according to the latest RTDNA/Hofstra University Annual Survey. That puts total TV news staffing at 27,600. And that puts the year in third place in overall local TV news employment behind 2012 and 2000. Generally, TV newsrooms keep growing in size ... but there aren't as many of them as in past years. The 2014 growth didn't completely make up the 400 jobs lost in 2013, but it covers most of them.

Stations moved into news, and stations moved out ... and we enter 2015 down 2 from last year's 719 stations originating local news. That puts us back to where we were in 2013, which was the eighth straight year of declines. Slowing TV consolidation appears to be helping to keep the number of newsrooms relatively stable.

The average TV station hired 6 replacements during 2014 and 1.3 new, additional positions. Replacements are up half a person this year, while new hires are exactly the same as a year ago.

In contrast, the latest numbers from the American Society of News Editors (ASNE), released in July of 2014, found that newspaper newsroom staff fell 3.2% from the year before. That's half the previous year's drop of 6.4% but more than the 2.4% drop the year before that. ASNE puts total newspaper full time newsroom staff at 36,700 at 1,373 daily newspapers. The average U.S. daily newspaper now has 26.7 news staffers; the average local TV news staff is 37.9. ASNE has changed its survey schedule, and new results are not expected until sometime this summer. I'll post the updated numbers as soon as they're available.

Top replacement hires:

1. Reporters ... barely edging out #2.

2. Producers ... way ahead of #3.

Both in the same spots as last year.

3. Anchors ... just ahead #4.

4. MMJs ... a bit ahead of #5.

5. Photographers ... just about double #6.

6. Weather ... modestly ahead of #7.

7. Sports ... including, anchor, reporter and producer ... a little ahead of #8.

8. Video editor ... noticeably ahead of closely ranked #9 and #10.

9. Assignment editor/desk

10. Web/social media

The list this year is similar to last year, although MMJs moved up strongly and ahead of photographers for the first time. Web includes anything internet related, and it needed that combination of positions to come in at #10. APs (associate or assistant producers or news assistants) have never really recovered from the economic downturn and staff retrenchment of 2008.

Last year was the first time the top new hires list really didn't look like the top replacements list ... and that continued this year as well.

1. Producers ... clearly ahead of #2

2. Reporters ... Those were the top two positions (in that order) last year as well, but this is where it changes because this year, reporters were tied with MMJs

2. MMJs ... only a little ahead of #4

4. Web/internet/social media producers, editors and reporters ... a bit ahead of #5

5. Anchors ... a little ahead of #6

6. Photographers ... and then everything else was well back

TV staff size – 2015

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 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 | 37.9 | 31 | 151 | 4.4 | 2 | 85 | 42.6 | 36 | 161 |
| Big four affiliates | 39.9 | 33 | 151 | 4.2 | 2 | 85 | 44.4 | 37 | 161 |
| Other commercial | 26.5 | 17 | 95 | 3.9 | 2 | 22 | 31.4 | 18 | 95 |
| Non-commercial | 3.4 | 2 | 8 | 10.6 | 3.5 | 40 | 14 | 9 | 42 |
| Market size: |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1-25 | 65 | 72 | 151 | 6.3 | 4 | 30 | 70.2 | 76 | 161 |
| 26-50 | 59.1 | 61.5 | 95 | 5.7 | 3 | 25 | 66.3 | 65 | 101 |
| 51-100 | 38.3 | 39.5 | 100 | 4.7 | 2 | 40 | 43.4 | 44 | 101 |
| 101-150 | 28.2 | 29 | 56 | 4.5 | 3 | 85 | 32.5 | 32 | 100 |
| 151+ | 18.3 | 19.5 | 36 | 1.6 | 0.5 | 11 | 20.5 | 21 | 41 |

The average full time staff rose by almost 2 this year, although the median full time staff size remained the same. All market sizes went up except the smallest (151+). While average overall part time remained just about the same as a year ago, that doesn't mean that most stations stayed the same. Top 100 market stations went up in part timers while stations in markets 101+ went down. Overall, full time staffing dropped among non-big four network stations -- both commercial and non-commercial. But ABC, CBS, Fox and NBC affiliates were up, and staffing levels were similar among the four network affiliated stations, with fewer than three staffers (on average) separating the largest newsrooms (CBS) from the smallest (Fox). Regional staffing differences were the smallest I've seen with, again, just 3 full time (average) staff separating the biggest stations (South) from the smallest (Midwest).

Staff size changes … the past year

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Increase | Decrease | Same | Don't know |
| All TV news | 42.2% | 10.1% | 47.4% | 0.3% |
| Big four affiliates | 42.1 | 8.8 | 48.7 | 0.4 |
| Other commercial | 56 | 24 | 20 | 0 |

As usual, the bigger the station, the more likely it was to get even bigger. The percentage of stations adding staff fell by four points from a year ago, but the percentage cutting also fell, although by less than 1 point. Stations in the top 25 markets were most likely to cut staff, but that didn't include the big four affiliate stations. More than 20% of stations with 10 or fewer staffers cut the size of their already small newsrooms, and, without exception, the smaller the staff size, the more likely that the station trimmed back on news employees. Staffing grew evenly across all four of the legacy networks, but ABC and Fox affiliates were more likely to cut back than CBS and NBC stations. Staffing additions were most likely in the Northeast and then the Midwest ... while cutbacks were most common in the West.

Planned staff changes … the next year

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Increase | Decrease | Same | Not sure |
| All TV news | 39.5% | 2.6% | 51.3% | 6.6% |
| Big four affiliates | 39.5 | 3 | 51.7 | 5.9 |
| Other commercial | 48 | 0 | 40 | 12 |

After a big jump in hiring expectations last year (borne out by this year's numbers), news directors are tamping down expectations a bit for next year. There's a four point drop in news directors who expect to increase staff in 2015 and a 1 point increase in those expecting to cut. Still, overall, it's clearly an optimistic outlook and, interestingly, there are few meaningful differences by market size, staff size or affiliation. The only noticeable difference is that stations in the South and especially the West, were most likely to expect to add staff. By and large, this table on planned staff changes has a pretty good track record of predicting how things come out.

**Radio Staffing**

The typical (median) radio news operation had a full time news staff of one -- the same as it's been since I started doing these surveys more than 20 years ago. Radio news remains highly centralized, with the typical radio news director overseeing the news on an average of 2.4 stations with a median of 2. All told, 79.4% of all multi-station local groups operate with a centralized newsroom.

Number of Stations Where the Radio News Director Oversees the News – 2015

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| No. of Stations | Percentage |
| One | 47.5% |
| Two | 21 |
| Three | 8.4 |
| Four | 7.6 |
| Five | 5.9 |
| Six+ | 9.7 |
|  |  |
| Overall | Number |
| Average | 2.4 locally |
| Median | 2 |
| Maximum | 10 locally + 80 elsewhere |

These numbers have generally stayed pretty steady for the last several years. The average is, again, down 0.1, but the median remains the same.

A new question in this year's survey asked whether the radio news director was a full time station employee. At almost 30% of the stations (28.6%), the answer was no. Fully a third of news directors at non-commercial radio stations were not full time station employees. Generally, the bigger the staff, the more likely that the news director is full time, but almost 12% of news directors (11.8%) at stations with 10 or more news staffers aren't full timers. Market size didn't matter much except at the smallest markets (fewer than 50,000 people), where 36.7% of news directors were part timers. Stations in the Northeast were less likely to have full time news directors, and stations in the Midwest were more likely to have full time news directors. Note that the question asked whether the news director was a full time station employee -- NOT whether the person was a full time news director.

The average radio station hired 0.2 replacement positions and 0.2 new hires. But the median was zero for both in 2014. In other words, radio news staffing remained largely unchanged -- as usual. Hiring was so small and scattered that listing the positions hired is almost misleading because it implies more activity than actually took place. Still, the top hire was reporter, edging out a range of other, frequently combination, positions.

Radio staff size – 2015

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Avg. full-time | Median full-time | Max full-time | Avg part-time | Med part-time | Max part-time | Avg total staff | Med total staff | Max total staff |
| All radio news | 2.7 | 1 | 48 | 1.7 | 1 | 25 | 4.4 | 2 | 50 |
| Market size: |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Major | 7.5 | 2 | 48 | 3.3 | 2 | 18 | 10.8 | 7.5 | 50 |
| Large | 2.5 | 2 | 9 | 1.3 | 1 | 7 | 3.7 | 3 | 12 |
| Medium | 1.6 | 1 | 6 | 1.8 | 1 | 25 | 3.3 | 2 | 25 |
| Small | 1.1 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 2.1 | 2 | 8 |

A mixed picture again on staffing changes in radio this year. Bottom line: the typical radio station has one full time person in news. That's been true -- and unchanged -- for more than a couple decades. Total radio news employment is up this year versus last year. Full time average radio news employment rose by 0.4 this year (compared to last year's drop of 0.2), while average part time employment fell by 0.6 (after last year's increase). All of the employment increase came in the biggest markets; all others either dropped or remained the same. Looks like a fair number of part timers in the top markets moved into full time slots. Perhaps back into full time slots. Non-commercial news departments, on average, are much larger than commercial ones, but this year's ratio of non-commercial to commercial news staff size of almost 3:1 full timers is the biggest ever.

Changes in radio staff in the last 12 months and planned for the future – 2015

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Increase | Decrease | Same | Not sure |
| Total news staff the past year | 17.9% | 4.7% | 77.4% | 0 |
| Plan to change amount of staff next year | 11.4 | 0.5 | 81.3 | 6.7 |

The percentage of stations that increased staff in 2014 rose by 4 points -- which is about the same as the drop in the percentage that cut staff last year. Exactly the same percentage held steady from one year to the next. The bigger the newsroom and the bigger the market, the more likely that the station added news staff. Overall, about the same percentages expect to increase and decrease staff this year as expected it a year ago. Non-commercial stations are three times as likely to expect to add staff as commercial stations. Over 30% of the biggest newsrooms and newsrooms in the biggest markets expect to add staff this year. Stations in the Midwest are the least likely to expect to add staff.

**Web staffing**

Overall, web staffing went up in TV ... but down in radio.

**How many people work on the web? 2015**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Full-time | Part-time | Total |
| All TV | 2.6 | 0.9 | 3.5 |
| Markets 1-25 | 3.6 | 1 | 4.6 |
| Markets 26-50 | 3.3 | 0.7 | 3.9 |
| Markets 51-100 | 2.4 | 0.5 | 2.9 |
| Markets 101-150 | 2.5 | 1 | 3.5 |
| Markets 151+ | 1.8 | 1.2 | 3 |
|  |  |  |  |
| All Radio | 0.8 | 1.1 | 1.9 |
| Major Market | 1.4 | 1 | 2.4 |
| Large Market | 0.7 | 1.4 | 2 |
| Medium Market | 0.7 | 1.1 | 1.8 |
| Small Market | 0.7 | 1 | 1.7 |

Overall, TV stations are up almost a half a full time person from a year ago. That’s the biggest gain that I’ve seen in years, and it came almost across the board, although the biggest markets stayed about the same.

In contrast to TV, radio fell slightly in full timers, rose slightly in part time and dropped a hair (0.1) overall.

**Do other staffers help on the web? 2015**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| All TV | 76.8% |
| Markets 1-25 | 60.1 |
| Markets 26-50 | 66 |
| Markets 51-100 | 77.9 |
| Markets 101-150 | 82.5 |
| Markets 151+ | 88.9 |
|  |  |
| All Radio | 74.3% |
| Major Market | 48.4 |
| Large Market | 62.5 |
| Medium Market | 82.5 |
| Small Market | 93.8 |

After some bouncing up and down the last couple years, TV news staff participation in the web remained the same as a year ago.

Radio soared 14 points from last year's 60.1% -- completely on the strength of huge jumps at small and medium markets.

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**About the Survey**

The RTDNA/Hofstra University Survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2014 among all 1,688 operating, non-satellite television stations and a random sample of 3,704 radio stations. Valid responses came from 1,281 television stations (75.9%) and 316 radio news directors and general managers representing 868 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.