**Radio Technology Purchases Drop Again … but Drone Use Up**

**by Bob Papper**

The latest RTDNA/Hofstra University Survey found that just 18.9% of radio news directors and general managers plan any technology purchases this year. That’s as low a number as I can remember in all the years I’ve been asking. A year ago, it was 25% and 22% the year before that. Non-commercial stations were three times as likely as commercial stations to be making a purchase. Larger markets, 250,000 people and up, were markedly higher than smaller markets. Staff size and station configuration made no difference. Stations in the South were lower than all other areas.

**Technology purchases in radio**

27.3% Video … that’s right, video came out on top, including 360 cameras, go-pro cameras, iPhones for video, etc.

* 1. Digital remote equipment
	2. Studio equipment

 9.1 New computers or new newsroom management systems

4.5 Ties: new facilities … new phone system … new website or software for the website … social media sharing equipment (which could have been video cameras, but they didn’t say so, so I kept in separate

* 1. Ties: drones … mics … translator for the AM

 6.8 Percent said they weren’t sure yet

A numbers of years ago, the percentage planning some sort of technology purchase used to be around 40. Then it dropped into the low to mid 20s, and now it’s below that. Watch for this number next year.

**Drone use moving up in radio**

This is the second year I’ve asked this question:

**Does the radio station have a drone?**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Already own | Planning to buy | Considering | Lease/arrange for one as needed | We just use drone footage from others | No, not involved with drones |
| All radio | 6.2%  | 2.2%  | 5.3%  | 3.5%  | 2.6%  | 80.2%  |
| Market |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Major | 12.9  | 6.5  | 9.7  | 3.2  | 3.2  | 64.5  |
| Large | 10  | 2.5  | 0  | 5  | 2.5  | 80  |
| Medium | 5.5  | 2.2  | 5.5  | 4.4 | 3.3  | 79.1  |
| Small | 1.5  | 0  | 6.2  | 1.5  | 1.5  | 89.2 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Commercial | 6  | 1.2  | 4.8  | 3  | 2.4  | 82.6  |
| Non-comm | 6.7  | 5  | 6.7  | 5  | 3.3  | 73.3  |

Led by large and major markets, the use of drones in radio moved up a fair amount over the last year. Overall drone us is up 8 points, but it really depends on the details of exactly what you’re looking at. A year ago, under 10 percent of major market stations were involved in any way with drones. Now it’s more than a third. Commercial stations went up 7 points in some sort of drone usage, but non-commercial stations rose by more than 11 points.

Major markets are those with 1 million or more potential listeners. Large markets are from 250,000 to 1 million. Medium markets are 50,000 to 250,000. Small markets are fewer than 50,000.

***Bob Papper is Emeritus Distinguished Professor of Journalism at Hofstra University and has worked extensively in radio and TV news. This research was supported by the Lawrence Herbert School of Communication at Hofstra University and the Radio Television Digital News Association.***

**About the Survey**

The RTDNA/Hofstra University Survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2017 among all 1,683 operating, non-satellite television stations and a random sample of 3,542 radio stations. Valid responses came from 1,333 television stations (79.2%) and 415 radio news directors and general managers representing 1,110 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.