**Radio News Director Profile ... 2018**

**by Bob Papper**

The RTDNA/Hofstra University Annual Survey found that radio news directors are getting a bit younger. Congratulations.

**Radio: Age**

In the past, radio news directors were a little younger than those in TV, but that changed a year ago when radio news directors came in a little older than their TV counterparts. Not so this year. Overall, the average age in radio was 46.4, and the median was exactly 47. The average dropped by more than 2 years and the median fell by 4. How cool is that? Commercial station news directors are about 8 years older than those at public stations. That difference is only slightly more than usual. Otherwise, there were no consistent relationships between age and market size or staff size, although news directors were younger in the Northeast than elsewhere. Radio news director ages ranged from 17 years old up to 92. That’s both the youngest and oldest that I can remember.

Radio news directors have been on the job as news director for an average of 8.9 years, but with a median tenure of 4.5, it's clear that some long time news directors are bringing up the average. Both numbers are down from a year ago. The average is down 1 but the median plunged by 1.5. That’s a big change in one year for a median number. Either there’s been a fair amount of turnover in radio news directors or a fair amount in turnover in who’s filling out the survey. One news director has been at the same station for 40 years, and there are bunch close to that. Non-commercial news directors have been at the station a little less time than their commercial counterparts, but no other groupings showed any consistent variability.

And their experience wasn't just at that station. The average radio news director has been a news director somewhere for 12.1 years; the median was 8. Both of those numbers are down. The average is down two and a half points, and the median is down an amazing 4 points. News directors at commercial stations have, on average 4 years more total experience than non-commercial news directors; the median difference is 5 years. Interestingly, there is absolutely no pattern by market size, staff size, group size, etc. News directors in the Midwest tended to have more experience, and news directors in the Northeast tended to have less.

**Radio news directors … and how news fits into their job**

Overall, just over two-thirds (69.9%) of radio news directors report that they’re full time station employees … which leaves a huge 30.1% as part time. Full time radio news directors are up 2 points from a year ago. Commercial radio news directors are 3 points more likely to be full time than non-commercial news directors. That’s down from an 8-point spread a year ago and 14 points the year before that. All told, 32.5% of non-commercial news directors are part time compared to 29.3% of news directors at commercial stations. Last year, the bigger the staff, the more likely that the news director is a full time employee. This year, that didn’t make any difference, and neither did any other variable. 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.

Part time also applies to news director responsibilities as well. More than a third (34.4%) of radio news directors say that news is not their primary responsibility. Here, commercial stations were higher than non-commercial ones, with 36.9% of news directors at commercial stations saying their primary station responsibility was not news versus 27.3% of non-commercial news directors. Those numbers are not dramatically changed from a year ago. The smaller the staff size, the more likely that news was not the main responsibility. Major market news directors, at 44.2%, were more likely not to have news as their primary responsibility than other market sizes.

So if news isn’t the news director’s primary job, then what is?

37.7% Management and operations came in on top

15.6 Program director

10.4 Sales and production

6.5 Billing and traffic

6.5 There is no news director (which sounds like a way to avoid paying someone for the work)

5.2 DJ

3.9 Sports

1.3 Everything else (my favorite answer)

13% producing news, covering news events, gathering news … all of which sounds like things that I recall a news director actually doing

For news directors whose primary responsibility was news, we continued to ask what other roles they had at the station. This list is all over the place.

* Production … 13.9%
* Sports … 13.2%
* Management – GM, operations, PD … 13.2%
* Advertising, sales, billing & traffic … 11.1%
* Air personality, DV, anchor … 7.7%
* Web and social media … 6.3%
* Board op, engineering … 3.5%
* Other, including TV, teaching, corporate and “everything else” … 4.9%

And, surprisingly, a list of things like: field reporting, reporting, news, reporter, etc. … totaling 26.4%.

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**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.