Please note the new partnership on this research as it becomes the RTDNA/Newhouse School at Syracuse University Survey. I am privileged to have joined the outstanding faculty at Syracuse. That’s the name you’ll see on the research from here on … and that’s what you’ll see on the painfully long survey questionnaire later this fall.

Bob Papper

**Starting Pay Moves Mostly Up … Modestly … in Both TV and Radio News**

**by Bob Papper**

After last year’s mixed picture, typical stating pay in local TV news went up by $2,000 this year – from $28,000 to $30,000. Average remained the same at $30,500. Note that, once again, average and median starting pay in radio is higher than average and median starting pay in TV.

And to introduce a touch of reality, the National Association of Colleges and Employers reports that in 2019, the average starting salary for recent college grads was $50,944.

When I started full time work at WCCO-TV in 1970, the station was embarrassed that it could only pay me $175 per week. Based on inflation, 1970’s $9,100 a year salary is worth $60,760 today.

In 1999, I wrote an article for the RTNDA Communicator magazine, noting that broadcasting is just about the lowest-paying profession a college graduate could enter. Nothing positive has changed over the years.

**TV news 2020 starting salaries for new employees with no fulltime experience**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Position | Average | Median | Minimum | Maximum |
| **All TV news** | $30,500 | $30,000 | $19,000 | $80,000 |
| MMJ/OMB | 28,300 | 28,000 | 19,000 | 43,000 |
| News Producer | 31,100 | 30,000 | 21,000 | 47,500 |
| Reporter | 29,100 | 30,000 | 20,000 | 36,000 |
| Photographer | 30,700 | 30,000 | 21,000 | 40,000 |
| Web/digital | 30,600 | 30,000 | 21,000 | 43,000 |
| Video Editor | 30,100 | 30,000 | 25,000 | 36,000 |
| News Assistant | 36,500 | 30,000 | 24,000 | 80,000 |
| Weather | 27,300 | 27,500 | 24,000 | 30,000 |
| Assignment Editor | 40,200 | 45,000 | 25,000 | 55,000 |
| Studio -Technical | 33,800 | 32,500 | 30,000 | 40,000 |
| Anchor | 29,700 | 30,000 | 28,000 | 31,000 |
| Other | 31,300 | 30,000 | 19,000 | 80,000 |

The order of the list reflects the relative volume of hiring by position. This year, MMJ came out way in front of producer, and the two positions together make up almost 60% of all the new hires. The order is exactly the same as last year (as usual) with three exceptions: web jumped in at number 5, weather jumped in at number seven; and studio technical and anchor swapped positions this time around.

**Radio news 2020 starting salaries for new employees with no fulltime experience**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Position | Average | Median | Minimum | Maximum |
| **All Radio news** | $32,400 | $31,000 | $18,000 | $60,000 |
| News Reporter | 34,600 | 35,000 | 18,000 | 60,000 |
| News Producer | 36,900 | 35,000 | 20,000 | 50,000 |
| News Anchor | 34,400 | 35,000 | 25,000 | 60,000 |
| News Director | 27,500 | 26,000 | 18,000 | 36,000 |
| General news | 30,900 | 29,000 | 18,000 | 60,000 |

In radio, average starting pay rose $500 … after going up $3,300 last year, $500 the year before, $600 the year before that and $700 the year before. Median pay rose $900, following last year’s $100 increase after a $3,000 jump the year before.

As with TV, the radio list is in decreasing number of people hired. News reporter remains the top hire with a more than 3 to 1 margin over news producer, which jumped over news anchor this year. That was really the only change in the list.

Note that the average starting pay in non-commercial radio is nearly $10,000 a year higher than commercial radio; the median starting salary is almost $8,000 per year higher. In fairness, more of those non-commercial stations are in large and metro markets.

***Bob Papper is Adjunct Professor of Broadcast and Digital Journalism at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University and has worked extensively in radio and TV news. This research was supported by the Newhouse School at Syracuse University and the Radio Television Digital News Association.***

**About the Survey**

The RTDNA/Newhouse School at Syracuse University Survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2019 among all 1,702 operating, non-satellite television stations and a random sample of 3,427 radio stations. Valid responses came from 1,313 television stations (77.1%) and 673 radio news directors and general managers representing 1,996 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.