



**TV and Radio Staffing and News Profitability Survey 2009  
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The RTNDA/Hofstra University Annual Survey found that 2008 was the poster child for doing more with less in TV news. All told, 1,200 people in TV news lost their jobs – 4.3 percent of the local TV workforce. Coupled with a decrease in staff, the amount of local news on TV grew to a record amount: 4.6 hours per weekday – up half an hour from the year before.

The pain wasn't limited to staffing. Average salaries in both TV news and radio news also dropped in 2008.

**Hours of Local TV News per Day – 2009 - checked**

	Average weekday	Weekday maximum	Average Saturday	Saturday maximum	Average Sunday	Sunday maximum
All TV news	4.6	23.0	1.7	7.0	1.7	7.0
Big four affiliates	4.7	23.0	1.7	6.0	1.7	7.0
Other commercial	2.6	7.0	1.3	7.0	1.2	7.0
Market size:						
1-25	4.9	9.0	2.7	7.0	2.8	7.0
26-50	5.2	20.0	2.3	5.0	2.2	4.0
51-100	5.3	23.0	1.8	4.0	1.8	5.0
101-150	4.1	9.0	1.2	3.0	1.2	3.0
151+	3.5	6.0	1.0	2.0	0.9	2.0
Staff size:						
Staff 51+	6.2	23.0	2.8	7.0	2.9	7.0
Staff 31-50	4.4	9.0	1.4	4.0	1.4	4.0
Staff 21-30	4.0	7.0	1.1	2.0	1.0	2.0
Staff 11-20	2.6	5.0	0.9	3.0	0.9	3.0
Staff 1-10	1.5	3.0	0.3	1.0	0.3	1.0
Affiliation:						

ABC	4.4	9.0	1.8	5.0	1.8	5.0
CBS	4.8	20.0	1.7	5.0	1.5	5.0
Fox	4.6	9.0	1.4	5.0	1.5	5.0
NBC	5.0	23.0	1.8	6.0	1.9	7.0
PBS	1.5	3.0	0.5	1.0	0.3	1.0

This was the epitome of the year when stations did more with less. Despite shrinking news staffs, the amount of news on the average station soared to a new record – up an average half an hour each weekday to 4.6 hours. Other than independent commercial stations, the growth was largely across the board. Top 100 markets rose the most with only markets 101 – 150 remaining the same. The real dividing line was staff size.

Stations with the largest staffs (51+) expanded local news; most others stayed the same or shrank slightly. All network affiliate groups rose, although Fox stations rose a little more than the others. Saturday and Sunday both remained exactly the same at 1.7 hours each.

### Changes in newscasts in the past year

	Added a newscast	Cut a newscast	No changes
All TV news	29.9%	8.5%	65.9%
Big four affiliates	30.3	8.2	65.5
Other commercial	0	0	100.0
Market			
1 – 25	31.4	14.4	62.9
26 – 50	39.4	11.8	55.9
51 – 100	37.0	4.3	58.7
101 – 150	26.9	7.7	69.2
151+	14.6	7.3	80.5
Staff size			
51+	41.0	13.1	55.7
31 – 50	28.3	0	71.7
21 – 30	27.5	9.8	64.0
11 – 20	18.5	7.4	81.5
1 – 10	0	25.0	75.0

Two-thirds of TV stations neither added nor cut a newscast in 2008, but more than three times as many added as cut. Newsrooms most likely to have cut a newscast were the very smallest (1 – 10 staffers). Fox affiliates were the most likely to have added a newscast;

NBC affiliates were a little less likely to have added. There were no meaningful differences in cutting back on newscasts.

Two-thirds of the newscasts added were on weekdays, with a slight edge to morning over the rest of the day. The other third was split evenly between weekend and both weekday and weekend. Just over 80 percent of the newscasts cut were on weekdays, with a majority of the cuts in the afternoon.

The most common newscasts added:

10 pm, followed by a tie between 5 am and 7 am, then noon, and then a tie between 7 pm and 5 pm. Few newscasts were cut, and they were scattered across time period, although noon and 11 pm newscasts were slightly more likely to be cut than others.

**Amount of News Changes ... the past year**

	Increase	Decrease	Same	Not sure
All TV News	35.1%	6.5%	58.1%	0.3%
Big four affiliates	34.6	5.8	59.3	0.3
Other commercial	45.5	18.2	36.4	0
Market size:				
1-25	26.4	3.8	69.8	0
26-50	48.9	8.5	42.6	0
51-100	42.7	5.3	52.0	0
101-150	33.7	9.3	57.0	0
151+	24.6	4.9	68.9	1.6

Most stations stayed the same, but more than a third increased the amount of news.

Although 6.5% is a low number for decreasing news, it's the highest I've seen in the 15 years I've been doing the survey. Increases in the amount of news were most likely in markets 26 – 100. Decreases were most likely in markets 26-50 and 101-150. Stations with the smallest staffs were the most likely to cut back on news. Fox affiliates were the

most likely to add news and independent commercial stations the most likely to cut.

There were no meaningful differences by region.

### **Amount of News Planned ... the next year**

	Increase	Decrease	Same	Not sure
All TV news	23.9%	4.0%	60.2%	11.8%
Big four affiliates	22.8	3.7	61.2	12.2
Other commercial	39.1	4.3	52.2	4.3
Market size:				
1-25	24.1	3.7	66.7	5.6
26-50	19.1	8.5	51.1	21.3
51-100	25.7	4.1	55.4	14.9
101-150	25.6	0	64.0	10.5
151+	23.0	6.6	62.3	8.2

The percentage of stations expecting to increase news the next year is well below last year's number. But it's still six times the number that expect to decrease news. Most stations expect the amount of news to remain the same. Interestingly, the smaller the staff, the more likely to expect an increase next year; that's the opposite of what took place this year. CBS and Fox affiliates are the most likely to expect an increase, and stations in the Northeast are much more likely to expect an increase than affiliates elsewhere.

### **Staffing and Profitability**

#### TV Staff Size – 2009

	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	35.9	30.5	117	7.1	4.0	140	39.4	33.0	162
Big four affiliates	38.1	32.0	117	6.2	3.0	140	37.1	32.0	162
Other commercial	18.8	12.0	70	7.0	5.0	23	20.2	13.0	84
Market size:									
1-25	60.9	69.0	117	9.9	5.5	45	50.4	45.0	162
26-50	53.4	58.0	90	8.0	4.0	50	47.7	56.5	90
51-100	36.8	38.0	71	3.8	3.0	14	35.4	39.0	71
101-150	26.0	26.0	50	7.4	3.0	140	28.7	28.0	157
151+	20.4	19.0	60	3.3	2.0	25	21.5	20.5	60

Average full time TV newsroom employment fell 1.4 people from a year ago. Industry-wide, that's the loss of about 1,200 jobs or 4.3 percent. Another 1.6 average part-timers were displaced as well, shrinking the average total staff to 39.4, down from 41.3. The biggest drop came in markets 51 – 100.

**Staff Size Changes ... the past year**

	Increase	Decrease	Same	Don't know
All TV news	15.8%	56.0%	27.9%	0.3%
Big four affiliates	15.9	55.9	27.8	0.3
Other commercial	17.4	56.5	26.1	0

Staff growth wasn't common in any group, but was most often seen in markets 1-50, then 51 -100. Growth was least likely in the smallest markets, 151+. Decreases in staff size were also most likely in top 100 markets. Stations in markets 101+ were more likely to stay the same. Stations with the biggest staffs were the most likely to grow bigger (22.5%), with all others in the low to mid teens. But cutting staff was far more common. Generally, the smaller the staff, the more likely the news department remained the same size. Fox affiliates were more than three times as likely to expand staff size compared to other network affiliates and less likely to cut or stay the same. News departments in the Midwest were least likely to grow, followed by the South. News departments in the West were most likely to cut staff.

**Planned Staff Changes ... the next year**

	Increase	Decrease	Same	Not sure
All TV news	9.3%	31.6%	43.3%	15.8%
Big four affiliates	7.5	32.5	44.1	15.9
Other commercial	34.8	21.7	30.4	13.0

The smaller the staff, the less likely to expect that staff to grow; but the bigger the staff, the more likely to expect cuts. In other words, 2009 will be another down year. Most smaller news departments expect no staff size changes. The 15.8 percent of news

directors who say they're not sure about staff changes this year is the largest number I've seen in this category in the 15 years I've done the survey. That's clearly a testimony to the economic uncertainty in the marketplace. There were no consistent differences by network affiliation or region.

### TV News Budget ... the past year

	Increase	Decrease	Same	Don't know
All TV news	25.1%	41.9%	28.1%	4.9%
Big four affiliates	24.7	42.1	28.4	4.7
Other commercial	18.2	54.5	9.1	18.2
Market size:				
1-25	23.5	50.0	20.6	5.9
26-50	26.7	40.0	33.3	0
51-100	31.1	46.7	17.8	4.4
101-150	25.9	25.9	38.9	9.3
151+	17.5	52.5	27.5	2.5

This is the worst budget report I've seen in 15 years. Generally, the smaller the staff, the less likely that a

station saw a budget increase and the more likely that the budget stayed the same. NBC and Fox affiliates were a little more likely than others to have a budget increase; CBS affiliates were a little more likely to have seen a decrease in budget. There were no meaningful variations by region.

### TV News Profitability ... 1999 to 2009

	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999
Showing profit	52.7%	55.4%	56.2%	57.4%	44.5%	58.4%	55.3%	54.9%	56%	58%	57%
Breaking even	11.6	11.5	11.5	8.1	24.2	10.4	13.6	11.6	13	11	9
Showing loss	14.5	10.5	6.4	10.0	12.1	9.2	9.2	11.2	10	11	11
Don't know	21.3	22.6	26.0	24.4	19.2	22.0	21.9	22.3	21	20	23

The percentage of stations making a profit on news is down by less than 3 percent, and the percentage losing money is up by 4 percent.

### TV News Profitability ... by Size and Affiliation – 2009

	Showing profit	Breaking even	Showing loss	Don't know
Market size:				
1-25	57.6%	15.2%	24.2%	3.0%
26-50	57.6	6.1	18.2	18.2
51-100	64.4	13.3	11.1	11.1

101-150	49.1	14.5	5.5	30.9
151+	36.6	7.3	19.5	36.6
Staff size:				
51+	71.7	6.7	13.3	8.3
31-50	62.3	13.2	13.2	11.3
21-30	48.1	15.4	13.5	23.1
11-20	10.7	7.1	21.4	60.7
1-10	0	25.0	25.0	50.0
Affiliation:				
ABC	47.4	17.5	14.0	21.1
CBS	62.1	10.3	12.1	15.5
Fox	62.1	3.4	10.3	24.1
NBC	49.2	11.5	13.1	26.2
Big four affiliates	55.2	10.8	12.4	21.6
Other commercial	18.2	18.2	45.5	18.2

The profitability level of the biggest markets is pulled down by the smallest stations in those markets -- none of which reported a profit on news. Generally, the bigger the news department, the more likely it is to be profitable. NBC affiliates dropped 10 percent in profitability from last year, but all the rest stayed about the same. Interestingly, news directors in the biggest markets were much more likely to know whether they made money than in the past, and news directors in the smallest markets were less likely to know about profitability. Stations in the Northeast were much more likely to report making a profit on news, while stations in the South and West were much less likely to. Stations in the Northeast were also much less likely to report a loss, but all other regions were about the same.

### **Percentage of TV Station Revenue Produced by News – 2009**

	Average	Median	Minimum	Maximum	Not sure
All TV news	43.5%	40.0%	15.0%	70.0%	45.3%
Market size:					
1-25	44.3	40.0	15.0	70.0	66.7
26-50	31.2	35.0	27.0	55.0	75.0
51-100	41.7	42.5	25.0	68.0	85.0
101-150	39.3	40.0	26.0	65.0	82.0
151+	40.7	40.0	25.0	60.0	82.1
Staff size:					

51+	43.0	40.0	25.0	70.0	68.5
31-50	39.8	42.5	26.0	60.0	82.2
21-30	43.1	40.0	25.0	65.0	81.6
11-20	26.5	25.5	27.0	35.0	85.3
1-10	14.0	15.0	15.0	27.0	71.4
Affiliation:					
ABC	44.2	40.0	20.0	70.0	74.0
CBS	45.2	44.0	35.0	60.0	85.2
Fox	39.6	40.0	33.0	50.0	80.0
NBC	35.9	40.0	35.0	68.0	80.4
Big four affiliates	41.2	40.0	20.0	70.0	79.0
Other commercial	*	*	*	*	100.0

The median station revenue produced by news dropped 2.5 percent to 40 percent, but the average only slid by 1.1 percent. The largest markets, 1 – 25, rose in percentage, but all others fell. NBC affiliates dropped noticeably -- by an average of about 17 percent and a median of 10 percent. All others were about the same.

## **Radio**

### **Radio Staff Size – 2009**

	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	2.8	1.0	60	1.6	1.0	40	4.1	2.5	100
Market size:									
Major	18.8	6.5	60	13.0	5.5	40	31.8	12.0	100
Large	2.3	1.0	32	1.0	1.0	4	3.1	1.0	35
Medium	2.3	2.0	14	1.4	1.0	7	3.6	2.0	32
Small	1.7	1.0	6	0.8	0	3	2.4	1.0	8

The average staff size rose slightly this year, mostly due to a few extraordinarily large radio news operations reporting. That's why it's useful to keep your eye on the median – or typical – staff number – which remained the same at 1. That's where it's been for quite a few years. Group owned stations continued to have more people, on average, than independent stations.

**Changes in Radio News, Staff and Budget in the last 12 months and planned for the future – 2009**

	Increase	Decrease	Same	Not sure
Amount of news the past year	30.4%	2.9%	65.7%	0
Plan to change amount of news next year	23.5	0	72.5	3.9
Total news staff the past year	7.8	9.8	79.4	2.9
Plan to change amount of staff next year	4.9	1.0	82.4	11.8
Change in news budget from the year before	3.9	6.9	66.7	22.5

Generally, radio news staff was less likely to have increased and more likely to stay the same than in past years. That was also true for the news budget. Non-commercial, group owned stations and stations in the West were most likely to increase the amount of news, but, overall, most of these numbers look a lot like last year and the year before that.

**Radio News Profitability ... 1999 to 2009**

	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999
Showing profit	11.8%	21.0%	29.1%	18.1%	19.6%	22.5%	25.2%	15.2%	17%	25%	19%
Breaking even	16.7	13.7	13.1	17.6	14.4	17.1	13.8	13.9	17	15	18
Showing loss	9.8	10.5	8.6	6.4	3.1	7.2	2.4	7.3	0	7	6
Don't know	61.8	54.8	49.1	58.0	62.9	53.2	58.6	63.6	66	53	57

This year's plunge in profitability was not accompanied by an increase in loss or a big difference in breaking even. Mostly, the percentage of news directors who said they didn't know rose to more than 60 percent.

**Radio News Profitability by Market Size – 2009**

	Showing profit	Breaking even	Showing loss	Don't know
Major market	25.0%	0%	25.0%	50.0%
Large market	0	18.8	18.8	62.5
Medium market	17.9	15.4	7.7	59.0
Small market	9.1	18.2	6.8	65.9

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.

**Number of Stations Where the Radio News Director Oversees the News – 2009**

No. of Stations	Percentage
One	26.0%
Two-three	43.3
Four	18.3
Five-Six	10.6
Seven-Eight	1.9
Overall	Number
Average	3.1 (locally) +0.7 elsewhere
Median	3.0
Maximum	29

This year, we heard from more news directors who oversee one to four stations and less from news directors who oversee seven or eight stations. Perhaps the latter group was too busy to fill out the survey.

**What Else Radio News Directors Do – 2009**

This year, 77.9 percent of radio news directors said they had other responsibilities at the station beyond news. That’s not far off last year’s record 83.1 percent. The smaller the staff and the larger of stations in the local group, the greater the likelihood of other responsibilities.

Other job	Percentage
Talk show host	15.4%
Announcing (including sports and weather)	15.4
Program Director	15.4
Production	10.8
Operations	9.2
Sales	7.7
General Manager	4.6
Public Affairs	3.1
Other	18.5

Most of these numbers are generally in line with the last few years.

