

Business of News

An introductory note, if you will. 2019 marks my 25th year conducting the RTDNA (before that, RTNDA) Annual Survey. First at Ball State University and now at Hofstra University. It has been my privilege to do this, and I want to thank RTDNA, Ball State and Hofstra for the support and opportunity to keep this going. Most of all, I want to thank all of you who spend what I know is way too much time poring over the way too many questions that I ask on this survey. Thank you.
- Bob Papper

New and Replacement Hiring ... TV and Radio **by Bob Papper**

The latest RTDNA/Hofstra University Survey found that the average **TV** station hired 7.1 replacements during 2018 and 1.1 new, additional positions. Replacements are up 0.2 from a year ago, but new positions are down 0.1. Stations in the Northeast hired, on average, the most replacements, but stations in the South hired the most new people.

Who got hired? These are the top **TV replacement** hires:

1. Producers ... 22.4% ... up a notch from last year ... and still in first place
2. MMJs ... 18.5% ... down a point ... but still number 2
3. Reporters ... 13.1% ... down a bit but still in third place.

Of course, if you combine MMJs and reporters they would be on top at 31.6%

4. Photographers ... 12.1% ... up 3 points and one position to move into fourth place
5. Anchors (and anchor/reporter) ... 8.9% ... down two and a half ... and down from #4 to #5
6. Weather ... 5.9% ... up nearly a point and still in sixth place
7. Digital ... 4.2% ... including web producers, digital content people ... down nearly a point and one position from a year ago
8. Sports ... 4.1% ... including anchors and reporters ... down a bit but still #8
9. Video editors ... 3.8% ... up more than a point and one position from a year ago
10. (Tie) Assignment editor/desk and managers (including news director, assistant news director, managing editor and executive producer) ... 2.7% ... the desk is up from a year ago but managers are down.

All other positions combined for 1.6% of all replacements.

New TV hires look different from replacements ... with some significant differences from last year.

1. MMJs ... 24.1% ... up 7 points from a year ago and up from #2 to first place this year
2. Digital/web/social media ... 20.5% ... up 2 points from a year ago but down from last year's #1 ranking
3. Producer ... 17.9% ... up two and a half from last year and still #3
4. Managers ... 8.9% ... including assistant news director and executive producer ... up 3 points from last year and 3 places from last year's #7

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5. Photographers ... 7.1% ... up a half a point and up one position
6. Reporter ... 6.3% ... down 3+ points and down two positions
7. Anchor ... 3.6% ... down 8 points and two positions
8. (3-way tie) Video editor, assignment desk and weather ... 2.7% ... editors and the desk are up from last year, but weather is down

All others combined for 3.5%.

Radio

The average **radio** station hired 0.4 replacement positions and 0.3 new hires. Replacements are identical to last year, but new hires rose from 0.2 to 0.3. Nevertheless, the median – or typical -- for both replacements and new hires remained at zero. That's exactly what it's been for the last five years.

The top **radio** replacement position is usually news director, but it came in third place this year - dwarfed by reporter and edged out by producer. Well back came anchor and various management positions.

The top new position in radio news was a reporter. What's different this year is that most of the new reporter positions were not simply general assignment slots. At the top of the list: education reporters and reporters covering a specific geographic area. Then came government and politics and the environment. Other area-specific reporters included legal, health care, guns and my favorite: innovation. Well behind reporters came producers, and well behind that came editors. Those editors were editorial – not technical. Then came podcast hosts or producers and news directors.

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 2018 among all 1,685 operating, non-satellite television stations and a random sample of 3,481 radio stations. Valid responses came from 1,310 television stations (77.7%) and 645 radio news directors and general managers representing 1,938 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.