

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

## **TV vs. Newspaper? by Bob Papper**

Another new question in this year's RTDNA/Newhouse School at Syracuse University Survey asked news directors whether they view the local newspaper as competition for audience. Why or why not?

The vote was close, with 53.4% saying yes, newspaper is competition and 46.6% saying no, it's not. With the exception of markets 101 to 150, the smaller the market the more likely for the news director to say that the newspaper is competition. Staff size and network affiliation made little difference. News directors in the Northeast and Midwest were more likely to see the newspaper as competition than news directors in the South or West.

Of those who said they did see the newspaper as competition, most, 56.3%, said they compete digitally. Another 22.2% said that every outlet that produces news is competition. 14.8% noted that the local paper is strong; 9% said they compete for the same sources, interviews and content.

In their own words:

- All competing for a small audience. Especially in the digital world.
- Anyone online putting local news out there is another competitor for our viewers' attention.
- Because the digital platforms are equally as important as the on-air, and they compete heavily there.
- Despite significantly reduced circulation, the local newspaper produces some strong reporting
- I view anyone and anything producing content as competition
- I work in a small market. I consider not only the other TV station as competition, but the newspaper as well.
- I'm old school. The paper is better embracing multi-platform storytelling and still breaks an enterprise story ... or offers a more in-depth follow-up that I wish we had a better pulse on. I use those stories as teachable moments for our newsroom.
- Information consumption is information consumption. It's our product vs everyone else's for time and attention.

- Our goal is to broadcast or publish digitally the night before the newspaper comes out
- People spend less time than ever accessing news. Time spent reading the paper (or its website) limits what they'll seek elsewhere.
- The newspaper is our primary digital competitor, which is significant in an ever-fractured news marketplace.
- The newspaper recently started a low power TV station. they plan to add news to their station
- There are really only two viable news operations in our town. Our TV station and the newspaper
- They are breaking important stories that matter to our viewers and are a powerhouse online.
- They have previously been strong on breaking news, government reporting, and digital & social media. We are taking that away from them.
- Viewing a competing newscast as your only competition is an old mindset. We're competing to be the outlet bringing you content on a number of digital platforms, and the newspaper is one of the outlets we're competing against.
- We are the only TV station in our region and our goal daily is to beat the morning newspaper.
- We view the newspaper as our primary competition as the other two stations in the market, we believe, do not produce quality content for viewers.
- We're both content providers, no longer distinctions between TV & newspaper

Of those who said they didn't view the paper as a competitor, the most common reasons, at 47.9%, were the paper's decline in circulation, readership and/or quality. Another 7.3% said the local paper was either dead or dying – including, literally, gone. 16.7% said the paper and TV reached different audiences, and 3.1% said people commonly consume both. 10.4% said they partner with the local paper or were jointly owned. 7.3% said that they do compete with the paper digitally but 5.2% said the paper was so weak digitally that they didn't view them as competition. 2.1% just said they were stronger than the paper – although it's clear that many, maybe most, feel that way.

In their own words:

- As in other markets, the newspaper industry has seen a massive drop in readership. Since the paper is still seen as a more "in-depth" resource for news, locals don't turn to it first to get their news of the day.
- Circulation is less than 12,000
- Different platform and audience
- Dwindling readership, skeleton reporting staff
- Corporate ownership pretty much destroyed our local paper; They are not relevant anymore.
- It's not the powerhouse it once was; most journalists are as green as the on-air journalists.
- Newspaper has surrendered
- Newspapers here have very small circulation and pay walls for all digital content
- Our website gets significantly more visits and page views. We also have more people in our newsroom. They are no longer a source for breaking news.

- The local newspaper has substantially cut back on local content and staff writers. They also discontinued the Sunday newspaper.
- The local paper only puts an issue out three times a week
- The local paper's staff and reach is much smaller than ours
- The newspaper covers daily news, we do analysis and context of the biggest stories. We interview newspaper reporters occasionally and aren't trying to do the same job as they do.
- The newspaper is irrelevant in the market. Their website is not competitive, and their delivered paper is 18 hours behind.
- We don't have a daily paper.
- We have very healthy partnerships with several local newspapers. I believe teaming up on projects to report on what's important to our communities is critical to ensuring the user/viewer gets the most information.

## **About the Survey**

The RTDNA/Newhouse School at Syracuse University Survey, funded in part by the Lawrence Herbert School of Communication at Hofstra University, 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.

## **About Bob Papper**

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.