

## Radio Technology Purchases Plummet ... Drone Use Low and Level by Bob Papper

The latest RTDNA/Lawrence Herbert School of Communication - Hofstra University Survey found that 14.8% of radio news directors and general managers plan technology purchases this year. That's down more than nine points to the lowest level since I started asking this question a decade ago. Non-commercial stations were twice as likely as commercial stations to be making a purchase. The bigger the market size and the bigger the staff size, the more likely the purchase. Stations in the West were much less likely to be making technology purchases than stations elsewhere.

### Technology purchases in radio

There may not be a lot of purchasing, but the answers are all over the map. Categorizing technology purchases isn't always simple, and there's clearly some overlap among some of the groupings.

Last year, the top item was studio equipment at 22.6%. This year, the top item didn't make it to 14%:

13.8%	Software (newsroom and/or editing)
10.3	(tie) Studio equipment and Cameras
8.6	(tie) Remote equipment and Field recorders
6.9	(tie) Computers and Streaming equipment
5.2	Transmission equipment

We're already down pretty low – and that's of the 14.8% who said they were buying something.

When I first started asking the question, the percentages planning some sort of technology purchase were around 40. Then it dropped into the low to mid 20s. Now it's back in the teens. Not an encouraging sign.

### Drone use stable/down in radio

#### Does the radio station have a drone?

	Already own	Planning to buy	Considering	Lease/arrange for one as needed	We just use drone footage from others	No, not involved with drones
All radio	6.5%	0.5%	7%	2.8%	1.8%	81.4%
Market						

Major	10.8	0	7.7	1.5	3.1	76.9
Large	9.1	0	6.5	1.3	1.3	81.8
Medium	6.3	0.8	7.9	3.9	1.6	79.5
Small	2.5	0.8	5.9	3.4	1.7	85.6
Commercial	5.3	0.8	6.8	3.8	1.9	81.4
Non-comm	8.9	0	7.3	0.8	1.6	81.5

Overall, last year's small numbers stayed that way or managed to shrink a bit more. "Already own" dropped from 7.1% to 6.5% while not involved with drones stayed exactly the same. The bigger the market, the more likely for the station (or station group) to own a drone. Stations in the West and South were a bit higher than stations elsewhere.

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.

### **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.