



2012 TV and Radio News Staffing and Profitability Survey

Part VI: TV and Radio News Salaries Barely Edge Up

By Bob Papper

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- *Winners and losers and starting pay*
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While staffing in TV news soared, salaries did not. The latest RTDNA/Hofstra University Annual Survey found that local television news salaries rose 2.0% during 2011. That thin margin of growth suggests that a lot of the hiring in 2011 took place among relatively young, less expensive staffers.

Radio news salaries this year were up a scant 1.2% from a year ago.

With inflation at 2.9% in 2011, radio and TV news people actually lost ground in real wages.

Television news salaries – 2012

	Average	Median	Minimum	Maximum
News Director	\$99,750	\$87,000	\$30,000	\$345,000
Assistant News Director	73,900	69,700	29,000	195,000
Managing Editor	65,400	60,000	19,000	150,000
Executive Producer	59,200	55,000	25,000	150,000
News Anchor	84,800	64,000	18,500	850,000
Weathercaster	70,500	60,000	15,000	575,000

Sports Anchor	60,000	45,000	14,000	650,000
News Reporter	38,800	32,000	16,000	300,000
Sports Reporter	38,300	31,000	18,000	130,000
Assignment Editor	40,700	38,500	18,500	100,000
News Producer	34,800	31,300	17,100	120,000
News Writer	35,300	31,500	14,000	90,000
News Assistant	27,200	24,700	13,000	75,000
Photographer	34,700	30,000	12,000	110,000
Tape Editor	32,000	28,000	13,000	90,000
Graphics Specialist	35,700	31,500	20,000	80,000
Web/Mobile Writer	34,900	34,000	17,000	75,000
Web/Mobile Prod/Ed	42,400	37,000	19,000	100,000
Art Director	75,200	70,000	30,000	125,000

The median, or typical, salary is generally a better measure. That leaves us with a mixed picture for TV for 2012. Nine median salaries went up from last year; seven went down; two stayed the same. (Averages provide a similar mixed picture, with eight up, 10 down and one the same.) In most cases, salaries moved little one way or the other, but there were a few exceptions. News anchors dropped 8.5%, but weathercasters rose, and sports anchors stayed the same. News directors and assistant news directors went up, but managing editors and executive producers went down. Reporters, producers, assignment editors, photographers and tape editors stayed about the same. News assistants took the biggest hit -- dropping almost 18%.

Five and ten year median television news salary comparisons 2012 to 2007 to 2002

	2012	2007	5-Year Percentage Change	2002	10-Year Percentage Change
INFLATION			+12.0%		+28.0%
All TV news			+10.5		+21.6
News Director	\$87,000	\$74,000	+17.6	\$64,000	+35.9
Assistant News Director	69,700	63,000	+10.6	57,000	+22.3
Managing Editor	60,000	58,000	+3.4	50,000	+20.0
Executive Producer	55,000	52,000	+5.8	47,000	+17.0
News Anchor	64,000	60,000	+6.7	50,000	+28.0
Weathercaster	60,000	53,300	+12.6	43,800	+37.0
Sports Anchor	45,000	40,000	+12.5	35,000	+28.6
News Reporter	32,000	29,500	+8.5	26,000	+23.1
Sports Reporter	31,000	29,000	+6.9	25,000	+24.0
Assignment Editor	38,500	34,000	+13.2	30,000	+28.3
News Producer	31,300	30,000	+4.3	27,000	+15.9
News Writer	31,500	24,000	+31.3	27,500	+14.5
News Assistant	24,700	25,500	-3.1	21,000	+17.6
Photographer	30,000	27,000	+11.1	25,000	+20.0
Tape Editor	28,000	25,000	+12.0	23,000	+21.7
Graphics Specialist	31,500	29,500	+6.9	25,000	+26.0
Web/Mobile Writer	34,000	33,800*	+0.6	30,000*	+13.3

Web/Mobile Prod/Ed	37,000	33,800*	+9.5	30,000*	+23.3
Art Director	70,000	42,000	+66.7	na	

*Comparison is with internet specialist in 2007 and 2002

Once again, almost all positions had five and 10 year salary increases that ran below the level of inflation. Only four positions beat inflation for both 5-year and 10-year comparisons: news director, weathercaster, sports anchor and assignment editor. Writer and art director beat inflation over the last five years, but art director did it by nearly disappearing from a lot of smaller stations.

Median TV news salaries by market size – 2012

	1 – 25	26 – 50	51 – 100	101-150	150+
News Director	\$175,000	\$135,000	\$100,000	\$75,000	\$56,500
Assistant News Director	120,000	92,000	65,000	42,000	47,000
Managing Editor	86,700	67,500	60,000	49,500	35,000
Executive Producer	80,500	65,000	50,000	40,000	37,000
News Anchor	152,500	122,500	81,000	52,000	40,000
Weathercaster	111,800	95,000	70,000	45,500	35,000
Sports Anchor	108,500	79,000	54,200	37,000	30,000
News Reporter	65,000	51,300	35,000	25,500	22,500
Sports Reporter	70,000	44,000	31,600	25,000	23,000
Assignment Editor	46,500	42,500	40,000	35,000	28,000
News Producer	57,000	42,000	32,000	28,000	23,000
News Writer	42,500	33,000	25,000	19,500	*
News Assistant	30,000	25,000	20,000	17,200	21,000
Photographer	52,500	45,000	30,000	26,000	25,000
Tape Editor	57,500	35,000	27,000	22,000	24,000
Graphics Specialist	55,000	36,300	34,000	24,500	24,000
Web/Mobile Writer	39,500	45,000	34,000	28,000	26,500
Web/Mobile Prod/Ed	67,000	54,000	35,000	30,000	22,800
Art Director	114,000	57,500	55,000	*	*

*Insufficient data

As usual, the larger the market, the larger the salary, but the big story here is actually in the smallest markets. More than three-quarters of all the positions in markets 150+ went up in salary. Only the biggest markets had more than half go up. In the fact, the bigger the market, the more likely salaries were to go up. Except for that smallest market size. What took place in those smallest markets is some measure of salary compression. The biggest salaries went up -- but just a little. The biggest percentage increases were among the lowest paid staffers.

Median TV news salaries by staff size – 2012

	51+	31-50	21-30	11-20	1-10
News Director	\$150,000	\$97,000	\$70,000	\$60,000	\$44,500
Assistant News Director	92,300	57,000	43,500	40,000	*
Managing Editor	75,000	55,000	42,500	56,000	19,500
Executive Producer	68,000	50,000	40,000	40,000	55,000
News Anchor	135,000	75,000	47,800	42,500	35,000
Weathercaster	109,900	62,800	42,300	37,000	24,000
Sports Anchor	86,000	48,500	35,000	30,000	21,200
News Reporter	52,500	34,000	24,800	23,000	25,000
Sports Reporter	47,500	31,000	24,800	22,500	23,000
Assignment Editor	45,000	39,000	35,000	30,000	30,000
News Producer	42,500	32,000	26,000	26,000	32,000
News Writer	33,000	24,000	*	*	*
News Assistant	28,000	17,800	17,200	*	24,000
Photographer	45,500	29,000	25,000	26,000	24,000
Tape Editor	34,000	24,500	21,000	24,000	*
Graphics Specialist	35,000	29,000	31,000	29,000	24,000
Web/Mobile Writer	39,000	30,000	26,000	30,000	*
Web/Mobile Prod/Ed	56,000	35,000	30,000	30,000	*
Art Director	75,000	*	*	*	*

*Insufficient data

This table allows you to see what's really taken place in the last year. The stations most likely to add people -- by far -- are the largest stations, followed by the second largest. Overwhelmingly, especially for the biggest stations, median salaries have fallen in the last year. That's likely the result of stations adding people who are mostly entry level -- or at least paid at a noticeably lower rate than existing staff. As we move into smaller shops, 11 - 20 and 21 - 30, we see most salaries going up. That's where fewer people have been added, and existing salaries have been raised with fewer offsetting cheaper new hires. The smallest shops, 1 - 10 staffers, are always harder to gauge because they tend to include both the smallest newsrooms in the smallest markets -- along with the smallest newsrooms in the largest markets. The mixed pattern this year -- with near equal increases and decreases -- reflects the dual nature of the group.

Radio salaries

Radio news salaries – 2012

	Average	Median	Minimum	Maximum
News Director	\$39,000	\$37,000	\$12,000	\$100,000
News Reporter	33,500	34,500	12,000	110,000

News Producer	38,900	36,000	18,000	100,000
News Anchor	45,000	40,000	25,000	180,000
Sports Anchor	33,700	27,500	16,000	80,000
Sports Reporter	36,700	30,000	20,000	80,000
Web Prod/Ed	40,700	42,500	30,000	65,000

Overall, radio news salaries edged up 1.2% in 2011.

Median radio news salaries by market size – 2012

	Major	Large	Medium	Small
News Director	\$47,500	\$45,000	\$37,000	\$26,800
News Reporter	35,000	36,500	35,000	31,000
News Producer	30,000	45,500	*	*
News Anchor	37,500	42,000	39,000	28,000
Sports Anchor	60,000	20,000	30,000	28,500
Sports Reporter	60,000	*	*	25,000
Web Prod/Ed	47,500	36,300	30,000	*

*Insufficient data

As usual, the larger the market, generally, the higher the salary. Major markets are those with 1 million or more listeners. Large markets are those from 250,000 to 1 million; medium markets are from 50,000 to 250,000; and small markets have fewer than 50,000 listeners.

Five and ten year median radio news salary comparisons 2012 to 2007 to 2002

	2012	2007	5-Year Percentage Change	2002	10-Year Percentage Change
INFLATION			+12.0%		+28.0%
All radio news			+25.7		+27.7
News Director	\$37,000	\$30,000	+15.6	\$31,000	+21.3
News Reporter	34,500	25,000	+38.0	25,750	+56.8
News Producer	36,000	20,500	+29.5	26,000	+30.9
News Anchor	40,000	23,500	+37.9	25,000	+45.5
Sports Anchor	27,500	32,500	-8.3	30,000	-6.8
Sports Reporter	30,000	19,000	+55.4	*	*
Web editor/producer	42,500				

*Insufficient data

Some of these positions show up in relatively few stations, so they tend to bounce up and down quite a bit, depending on which stations send in the numbers. Overall, in the last five years, radio news salaries are running well ahead of inflation. But that's not the case for the last decade.

Median radio news salaries by full-time staff size – 2012

	One	Two	Three	4 - 9	10+
News Director	\$28,000	\$30,000	\$39,500	\$45,000	\$63,000
News Reporter	*	18,000	34,000	35,000	37,500
News Producer	*	*	*	29,000	36,000
News Anchor	*	28,000	*	40,000	50,000
Sports Anchor	32,500	*	24,000	25,000	60,000
Sports Reporter	*	*	*	25,000	60,000
Web Prod/Ed	*	*	30,000	36,300	47,500

*Insufficient data

The salaries by staff size are almost always highly variable, although there is a general tendency for the largest news operations to pay more.

Median radio news salaries by number of stations news director supervises – 2012

	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	6+
News Director	\$40,000	\$30,500	\$44,000	\$30,000	\$40,000	\$45,000
News Reporter	37,800	31,800	32,500	22,500	56,300	36,500
News Producer	30,000	*	51,000	*	72,500	32,500
News Anchor	39,000	36,300	45,000	57,500	115,000	40,000
Sports Anchor	20,000	32,000	22,000	24,500	32,500	52,500
Sports Reporter	*	30,000	20,000	*	60,000	*
Web Prod/Ed	35,000	*	42,500	*	52,500	37,500

*Insufficient data

As with previous years, there is no consistent pattern to salaries based on the number of stations a news director supervises.

Median radio news salaries by ownership – 2012

	Standalone AM or FM	Combo AM/FM	Standalone + combo	Group of 3 or more
News Director	\$39,000	\$30,000	\$35,000	\$40,000
News Reporter	41,500	32,500	34,000	35,000
News Producer	*	*	*	36,000
News Anchor	41,500	34,000	37,800	47,600
Sports Anchor	*	32,000	32,000	25,000
Sports Reporter	*	30,000	30,000	40,000
Web Prod/Ed	30,000	*	30,000	43,800

*Insufficient data

I broke down the stations differently this year than in the past. I asked about standalone AM or FM, combo AM/FM and groups of 3 or more stations. This year, as in most years,

group-owned stations usually paid more the independent ones. Overall, radio salaries were highest in the Northeast.

Contracts

TV newsroom employees under contract and non-competes – 2012

	Percent under contract	Percent with non-competes	Percent under contract with non-competes
News Director	38.0%	44.0%	92.4%
Assistant News Director	47.7	55.2	88.1
Managing Editor	33.3	35.7	78.9
Executive Producer	47.3	52.5	93.6
News Anchor	93.6	88.3	93.9
Weathercaster	92.9	87.8	93.6
Sports Anchor	87.2	85.6	92.9
News Reporter	81.2	81.8	93.5
Sports Reporter	70.0	71.2	93.2
Assignment Editor	28.7	38.3	89.7
News Producer	65.1	67.6	93.4
News Writer	17.2	13.8	50.0
News Assistant	0	12.5	0
Photographer	6.2	19.1	75.0
Tape Editor	2.7	10.8	50.0
Graphics Specialist	8.1	14.7	66.7
Web/Mobile Writer	22.5	21.4	77.8
Web/Mobile Prod/Ed	28.6	36.8	91.7
Art Director	4.5	9.5	0

Apparently there's nothing like an improving economy to bring out the love between station and employee. Virtually every job category rose in percentage under contract and percentage under non-competes. The only exceptions were news assistant and art director. Everything else went up, and many went up substantially.

Radio newsroom employees under contract and non-competes – 2012

	Percent under contract	Percent with non-competes	Percent under contract with non-competes
News Director	22.6%	18.8%	44.4%
News Reporter	29.4	14.8	33.3
News Producer	16.7	18.2	50.0
News Anchor	36.4	28.6	50.0
Sports Anchor	10.5	15.4	100
Sports Reporter	0	16.7	0
Web Prod/Ed	8.3	18.2	100

Starting Pay

TV news 2011 starting salaries for new employees with no fulltime experience – 2012

Position	Average	Median	Minimum	Maximum
All TV news	\$24,500	\$24,000	\$14,500	\$45,000
Reporter	23,300	22,500	17,000	45,000
News producer	24,700	24,000	18,700	35,000
Photographer	23,600	22,000	19,000	33,000
News assistant	25,400	25,000	20,000	35,000
Multimedia journalist	25,000	25,000	18,500	32,000
Tape editor	23,800	23,000	18,000	33,000
Assignment editor	27,300	26,000	20,000	40,000
News writer	28,800	27,500	21,000	43,000
Studio technical	26,000	25,000	19,000	35,000
News anchor	22,700	22,000	22,000	24,000
Web	22,300	22,000	20,000	25,000
Sports reporter	22,500	22,500	22,500	22,500
Other	20,600	21,500	15,000	24,000

The TV positions above are listed in the order of number hired, and this year's list looks a lot like last year's. Reporters remain number one on the list, although the margin over producers was small this year. Photographers and news assistants were tied at number 3 -- each with half the number of producers. One man bands/MMJs/BJs were right behind -- which means they actually slipped down a notch from a year ago. Tape editors were half the level of OMBs but 50% higher than assignment editors.

The average salary was \$200 a year more than a year ago, but the median was up by a thousand to \$24,000. All told, 78% of the TV newspeople hired in the last year were replacements for those who left; 22% were new hires. That's a big jump -- 9% -- in new hires.

Radio news 2012 starting salaries for new employees with no fulltime experience

Position	Average	Median	Minimum	Maximum
All radio news	\$24,500	\$24,000	\$15,000	\$50,000
News reporter	25,100	25,000	15,400	39,000
General news	25,200	24,500	15,000	50,000
Other	21,500	20,000	16,600	30,000

Half of all new, starting positions in radio news were reporters. About a third as many news directors were hired next, followed by news anchors and then random positions. Both average and median salaries are up around \$3,000 from a year ago. That jump is mostly a reflection of which stations did what little hiring that took place.

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About the Survey

The RTDNA/Hofstra University Survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2011 among all 1,735 operating, non-satellite television stations and a random sample of 3,000 radio stations. Valid responses came from 1,238 television stations (71.4%) and 260 radio news directors and general managers representing 743 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.