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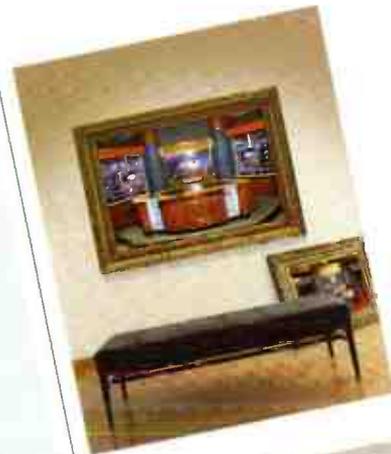
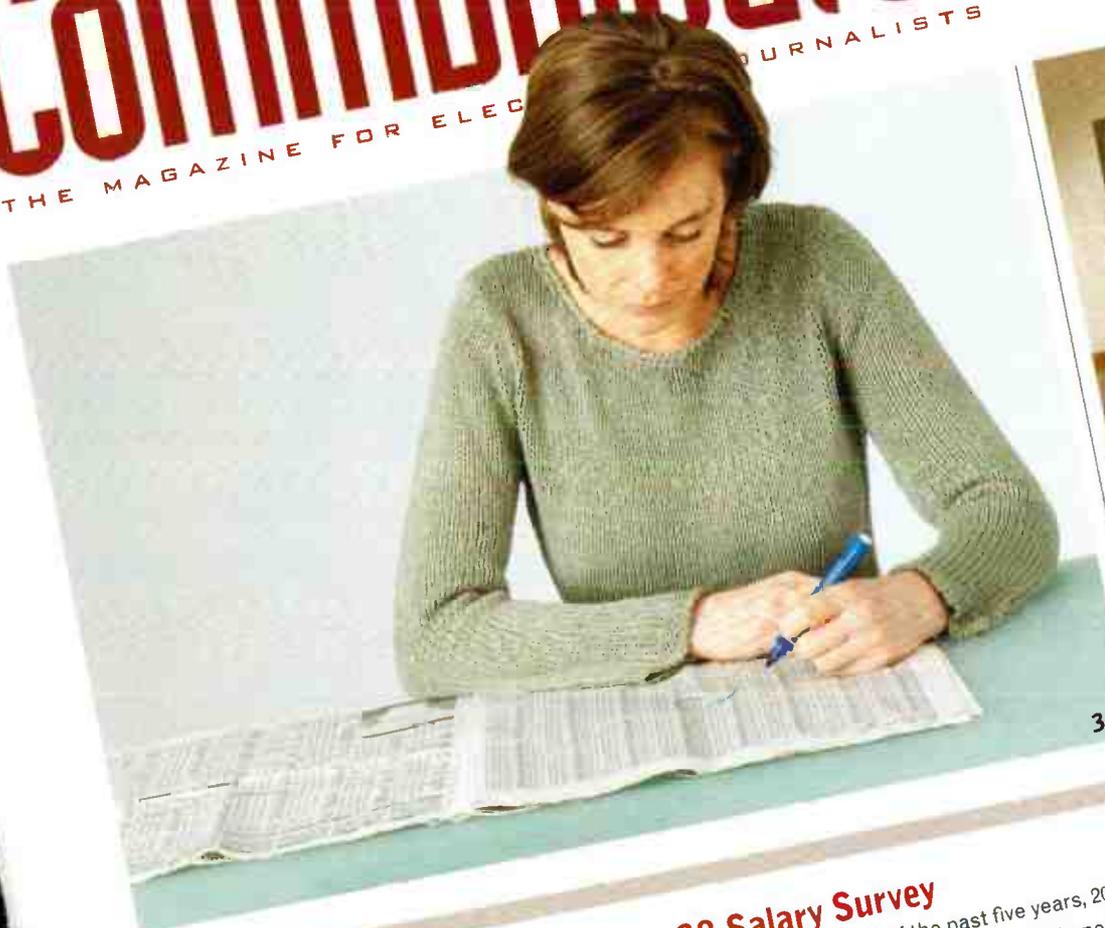
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World Radio History

RTNDA  
**Communicator**  
 THE MAGAZINE FOR ELECTRONIC JOURNALISTS

JUNE 2006 Vol. 60, No. 6



**ON THE COVER**

KTVE-TV's new look is garnering all of the attention in this gallery, while its old look is being put in storage.

Cover photo: Randy Faris/Corbis

**FEATURES**

**24 Ultimate Newscast Makeover**

BY CHIP MAHANEY

KTVE-TV refurbishes its look and refocuses its strategy, compliments of RTNDA's makeover team.

**38 Salary Survey**

Following the pattern of the past five years, 2005 was not a great year for making a living in news as the latest RTNDA/Ball State University Annual Survey reveals. TV news salaries remained largely unchanged, and radio news salaries dropped compared with inflation rates.

36

**36 Where the Jobs Are**

BY BOB PAPPER

While television stations expect to expand their staffs, hiring journalists with new and broader skills, staffs in radio are remaining the same size.



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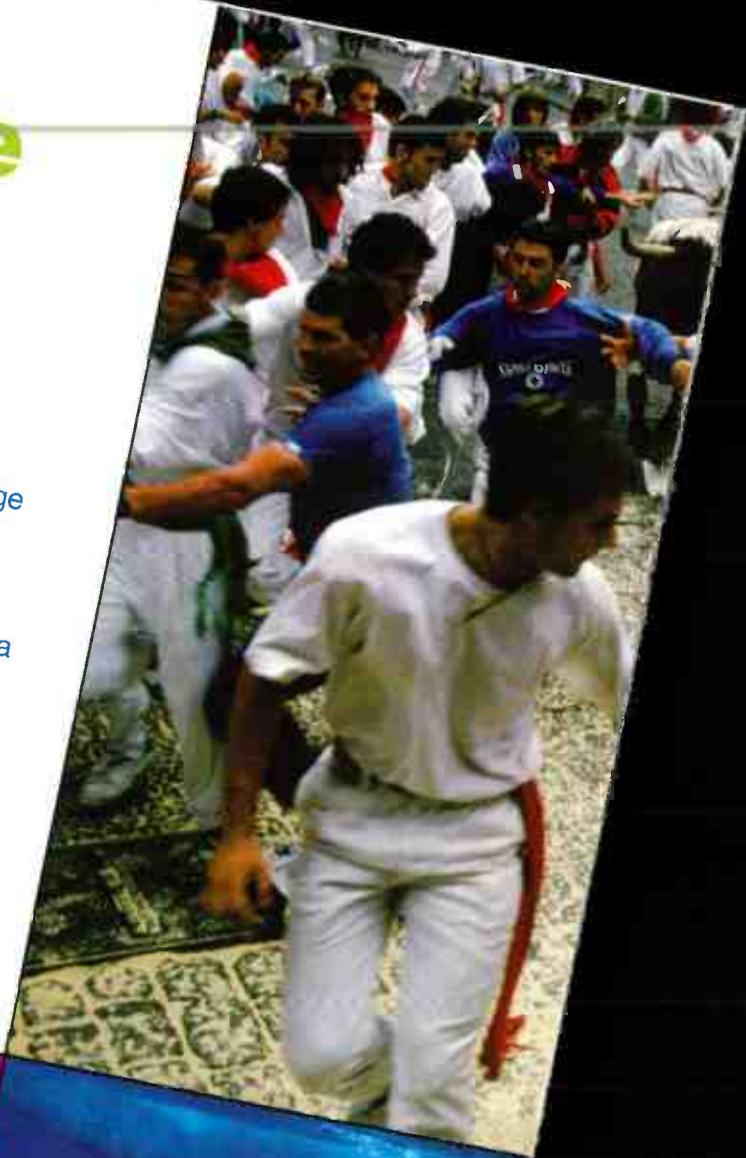
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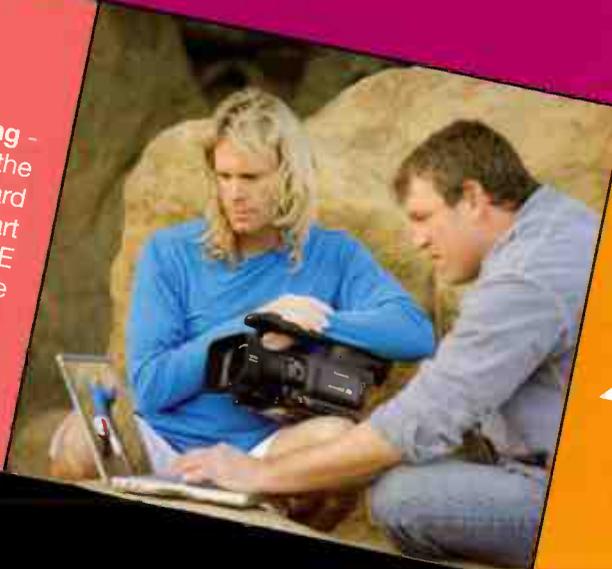
No other compact HD camera gives you the full 100 Mbps image quality and creative freedom of the AG-HVX200. The HVX200 delivers DVCPRO HD and 4:2:2 color sampling – twice the chroma resolution of MPEG-2, resulting in clean green screen work and lossless compositing. The HVX200 captures images in discrete progressive frames, so it simplifies editing and offers faster workflow. SD today, HD tomorrow, this camera has you covered.



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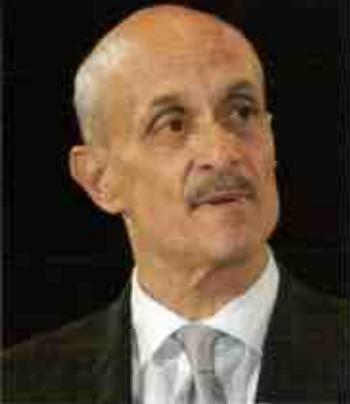
# Newsbreak

CONVENTION

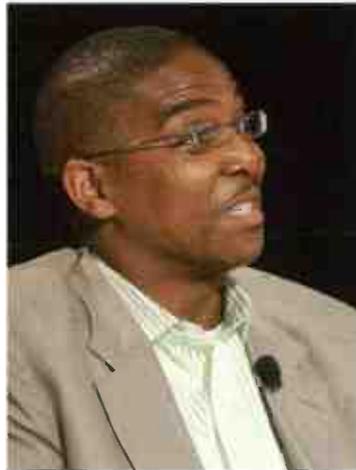
## RTNDA@NAB in Las Vegas

RTNDA celebrated its 60th birthday in late April at the annual conference and exhibition. More than 1,140 attendees packed the 40 educational sessions and the numerous special events that took place over four days.

Homeland Security chief Michael Chertoff said reporters would have greater access to DHS workers in future emergencies. Chertoff spoke at the Foundation Luncheon.



Shepard Smith of Fox News Channel moderated the opening session, Hurricane Katrina: Lessons Learned. Smith was chosen to lead the panel because of his own exemplary work covering the hurricane.



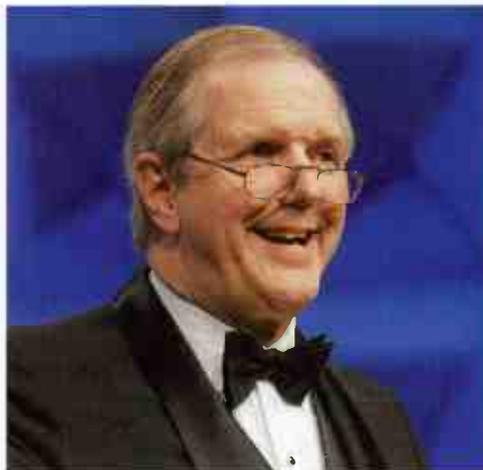
Among the news directors on the Hurricane Katrina panel was Anzio Williams, who led his station, WDSU-TV in New Orleans, during the crisis last fall and through the tough times that followed.



Convention registrants had their pick of 40 educational sessions. This one was standing room only.



Rainer Hasters of RIAS Berlin Commission received the Barney Oldfield Award from RTNDA chair Bob Priddy.



ABC News anchor Charlie Gibson received the Paul White Award, RTNDA's highest honor. In his dinner address, he bemoaned the fact that news directors stay put only about two years, and urged them to put down roots in the community in order to serve it better.



Angie Kucharski, VP/station manager of WBZ-TV/WSBK-TV in Boston, is the new chair of RTNDA. She succeeds Dan Shelley, news director and assistant program director at WTMJ-AM in Milwaukee.

Photos: Infinity Photo Group/Lief Jen Lyswe

# RTNDA@NAB NEWS SHOP & EXHIBITS

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## RTNDA@NAB

### Exhibit Hall Events:

**RTNDA@NAB**  
2006 Showcase Sessions  
Booth R222

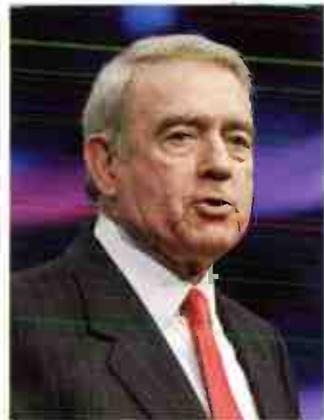
Ultimate Newscast Makeover  
Exhibit Booth R243  
Sponsored by The Coaching Company,  
FX Group, Stephen Arnold Music and VDO

Stephen Arnold Music/  
Harley Davidson Happy Hour  
Tuesday, April 25  
3:30p.m. - 5:00p.m.

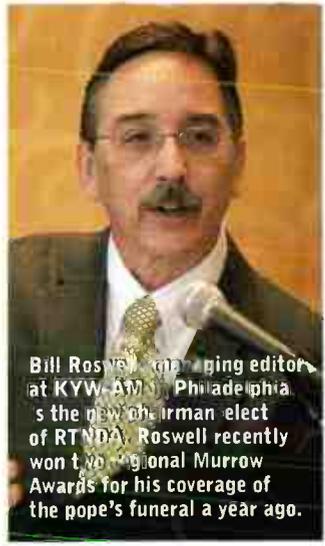
**RTNDA@NAB**  
**Event Hours:**  
Monday, April 23  
10:00 a.m. - 5:00p.m.  
Tuesday, April 24  
10:00 a.m. - 5:00p.m.  
Wednesday, April 25  
10:00 a.m. - 5:00p.m.  
**News Shop Hours:**  
Monday, April 23  
10:00 a.m. - 5:00p.m.  
Tuesday, April 24  
10:00 a.m. - 5:00p.m.  
Wednesday, April 25  
10:00 a.m. - 5:00p.m.



More than 1,140 attended RTNDA@NAB, and many of them crowded the exhibit hall on opening day.



Dan Rather and Tom Brokaw received NAB Distinguished Service Awards at the All Industry Opening Ceremony. Peter Jennings was honored posthumously.



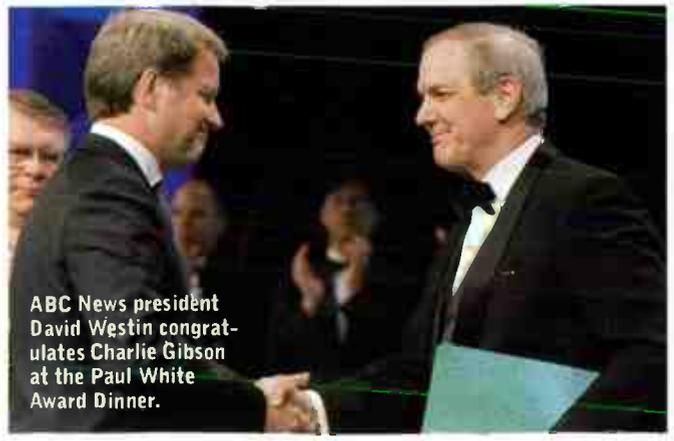
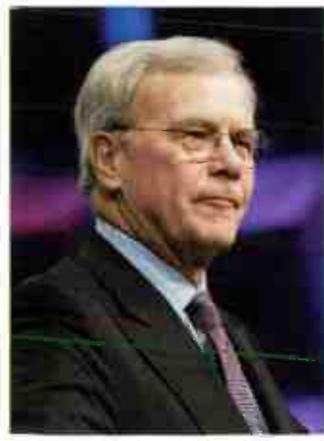
Bill Roswell, managing editor at KYW-TV in Philadelphia, is the new chairman elect of RTNDA. Roswell recently won two Regional Murrow Awards for his coverage of the pope's funeral a year ago.



RTNDA president Barbara Cochran brought attendees up to date on RTNDA activities.



NBC anchor and RTNDA board member John Seigenthaler moderated a Super Session that brought together industry leaders to contemplate The Shape of Things To Come.



ABC News president David Westin congratulates Charlie Gibson at the Paul White Award Dinner.

INDUSTRY NEWS

# Former TV Reporter Goes Online

When Dave Helling went to work for the *Kansas City Star* after 25 years in TV news, he not only wanted to show what the newspaper could achieve with video on its website, he wanted to expand the possibilities. From his first day on the job, the *Star* began putting original video stories directly online, and has continued to do so every day, a step ahead of its television news competitors.

Helling's colleagues at the *Star* have adjusted to the idea of working with a TV guy. "They're much more attuned to video now than they were," he says, "much less reluctant to run it than I thought they'd be. They understand how video can help the story."

Helling has two basic missions. The first is shooting and reporting video stories for a newspaper website, and the rules there are, to say the least, tentative. "It's the strength of the web to do things in different ways," he says, finding the mix of stories, styles and formats appealing. On a recent afternoon, he was working both short- and long-term, something he says had gotten increasingly unusual in TV news. Between conducting off-camera background interviews about Kansas City's preparations for a possible avian flu outbreak, Helling wrote and voiced a quick VO/SOT-style story on rising gas prices. Earlier in the week, he posted several minutes of an interview with a

Jackson County legislator.

Helling and *Star* editors keep an eye on click-throughs for clues to learn what has worked. "We don't know how people are going to watch. We don't know how long they're going to watch, what they're going to watch."

Helling's other mission is to be a focus for the paper's developing video presence on the Internet, building on both his TV expertise and his general strength as a reporter. *Star* editor Mark Ziemann noticed that Helling scooped the paper more than once. "I wanted to bring in somebody who had credibility in the newsroom," Ziemann says. "He was somebody [whom] reporters in the newsroom would talk about with respect."

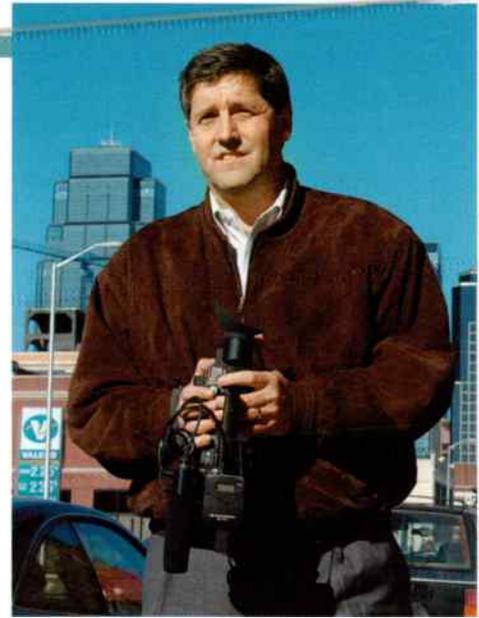
Add to that Ziemann's desire to get the *Star* "into multimedia reporting online in a big way." One by one, the photographers are looking to Helling for video training, and the paper will soon hire

a full-time videographer, after which Ziemann expects the station to post five pieces of original video online daily. And while the newspaper has an agreement to trade stories and video with KSHB-TV, the watchword may be competition more than convergence. Five years from now, Ziemann wants the *Star* to be the leading online news source in Kansas City, with its own video newsgathering identity and presence. "When it all shakes out, I think the newspapers will be the ones standing," he says.

Some TV news directors in town disagree, and the Internet rivalry between newspaper and TV news competitors is just beginning. Bryan McGruder, WDAF-TV vice

president of news, sees most of what is on the *Star's* site as "raw video out of a handcam." KSHB-TV news director Debbie Bush says her station is starting to post stories online before they air on the newscast, and live streaming video of a recent car chase drew heavy traffic. (The station also shared that live feed with the *Star's* website.) Regent Ducas at KCTV says his station will be the first in the market to have a video news service for cell phones. It has already pushed some live news straight onto web streaming video, notably a speech President Bush gave in Columbia, MO.

Helling believes that TV newsrooms are "just not where they need to be," and lack his paper's newsgathering muscle. If the *Star* can leverage the fact that its Internet audience logs on specifically for news more often than do the TV stations' web traffic, he may be right.—John Broholm is an associate professor at the University of Kansas School of Journalism in Lawrence.



Dave Helling has worked as a TV reporter, anchor and bureau chief in Grand Island, NE; Wichita, KS; Washington; and Kansas City, MO.





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RTNDF NEWS

# Can You Handle the Truth?

Candid advice on how to improve local news.

"Tonight, we want to hear 'your truth' about local television news," Al Tompkins told the group assembled in Phoenix. They would spend the next two hours talking about their likes and dislikes, frustrations and suggestions for improving TV news. The focus group of audience members was a prelude to the next day's News Decision-Making Workshop sponsored by RTNDF and the Ford Foundation.

Tompkins, broadcast and online group leader at The Poynter Institute, has conducted many focus group sessions, but this one was different. There was no one-way glass separating the panel from the observers; no "run-

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Several suggestions on how to improve local news came out of the Phoenix focus group. The following represent the strong opinions

from some of the 17 viewers who participated:

- Show more diversity in reporting the points of view represented.
- Showcase some "positive" stories in the community to offset the perception that TV news is all about crime and spot news.
- Rethink the "packaging" of news stories and use terms like "Only On" and "Breaking News" more sparingly.
- Provide the viewers with ways to address the problems you raise.
- Examine your intentions when it comes to investigative stories. Do they provide solid, usable information or are they more likely to simply leave the viewer frustrated because

there's really no a

■ Consider wh  
should tease a sto  
early-morning nev  
you're not going t  
10 p.m. Some view  
watch at 5 a.m. are  
to see a late news  
they may become  
a result.

■ Give more inf  
through the effect  
of news tickers an  
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■ Develop "nich  
programming to b  
certain segments o  
community.

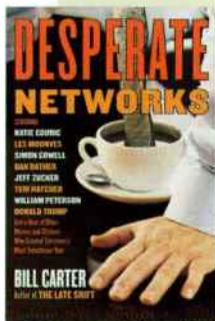
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ing programs, visit  
rtnda.org.—Mike Ca  
is a former RTNDA ch  
and media consultant  
Atlanta. He can be rea  
mike@cavendergroup

BOOKSHELF

## Summer Reading Requirements

### Desperate Networks

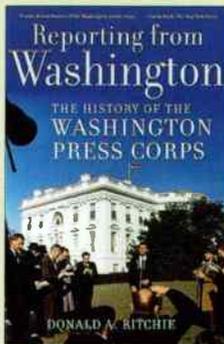
By Bill Carter, 336 pages, hardcover, ISBN 0385514409, Doubleday Publishing, \$26.95



Bill Carter takes a look at the mounting pressures the four networks face as they compete for America's attention.

### Reporting from Washington: The History of the Washington Press Corps

By Donald A. Ritchie, 412 pages, hardcover, ISBN 0195178610, Oxford University Press, \$30.00



Donald Ritchie chronicles news coverage in the nation's capital from the early days of Watergate and Meet the Press to the cable revolution led by CNN and C-Span.

### Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination

By Susan J. Douglas, 448 pages, paperback, ISBN 0816644233, University of

Minnesota Press, \$19.95  
This well-documented look at the state of radio explores a medium without images and its revival as an essential com-

munication tool that the American imagin

—Melanie Lo



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RTNDF NEWS

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there's really no answer?

■ Consider whether you should tease a story in the early-morning newscast that you're not going to show until 10 p.m. Some viewers who watch at 5 a.m. aren't available to see a late newscast, and they may become frustrated as a result.

■ Give more information through the effective use of news tickers and station websites.

■ Develop "niche" news programming to better serve certain segments of the community.

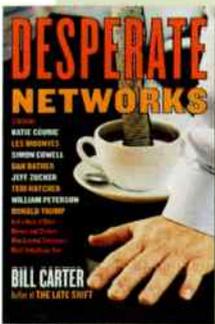
RTNDF offers cutting-edge training for broadcast and online journalists throughout the year. For information about upcoming programs, visit [www.rtnnda.org](http://www.rtnnda.org).—Mike Cavender is a former RTNDA chairman and media consultant based in Atlanta. He can be reached at [mike@cavendergroup.com](mailto:mike@cavendergroup.com).

BOOKSHELF

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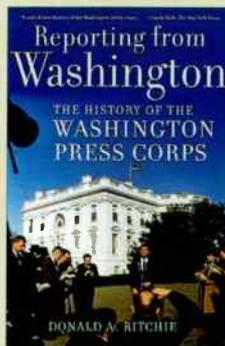
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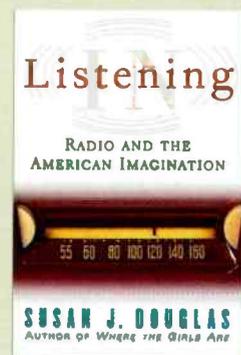
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—Melanie Lo





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INDUSTRY NEWS

# TV Innovator Dies at 56

Don Fitzpatrick Jr., 56, of Alexandria, LA, died on April 17, 2006, in his residence. His unique contributions to the broadcasting and journalism professions made him a friend to thousands of people who never met him in person. He will be missed by many and remembered as an innovator in his field.

Born in Pittsburgh, Fitzgerald graduated from Gonzaga University in Spokane, WA, with a master's in guidance and counseling and a B.A. in journalism and political science. From 1982 to 2000, he ran Don Fitzpatrick Associates in San Francisco, which was then the largest on-air talent

and news management recruitment firm in the country. With a database that gave virtual unknowns a beeline to TV stations, Fitzpatrick became the most important "talent scout" in the business. Through him, literally thousands of people found their jobs in broadcasting.

In 1983, Fitzpatrick created the now-legendary TV news industry newsletter ShopTalk, which began as one of the first emailed newsletters and developed into a daily must-read for journalists. Sometimes he reprinted stories from TV columnists across the nation, but more often than not, those columnists



Don Fitzpatrick received the Hogan Award at RTNDA@NAB in 2005.

got their information from reading ShopTalk. Fitzpatrick later developed the popular TVSpy Watercooler, an online meeting place for industry professionals.

In 2005, Fitzpatrick received the John F. Hogan Distinguished Service Award, in recognition of his contri-

butions to the journalism profession.

San Francisco was his hometown, but after a bout with ill health, Fitzpatrick returned home to Louisiana to be with his family. Memorial gifts may be sent to the American Cancer Society, 1450 Peterman Drive, Alexandria, LA 71301. Notes of condolence to Fitzpatrick's family may be sent in care of the John Kramer & Son Funeral Home at kramerfunerals@aol.com.

Fitzpatrick is survived by his siblings Erin (and John) Rhodes, Betsy Belgard, Sean (and Kim) Fitzpatrick, and 10 nieces and nephews.

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- LOCAL RADIO

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## RTNDA/F NEWS

# Award-Winning Talent

An RTNDF High School Journalism Project partnership won a Peabody Award, and an RTNDA staffer received a regional award from the Society of Professional Journalists in April.

**Radio Rookies Wins Peabody Award.** Radio Rookies, an independent teen radio project created through a partnership between the Radio and Television News Directors Foundation and WNYC-AM/FM in New York, won a Peabody Award in April. "Teenaged

reporters pick up microphones and let down their guards in this series of remarkably immediate and illuminating first-person dispatches," wrote the Peabody board in announcing Radio Rookies as one of the winners of the 65th annual awards.

The collaboration, which included a grant to WNYC, involved training by RTNDF staff as well as subsequent youth training workshops sponsored by the National Federation of

Community Broadcasters.

Radio Rookies has helped inspire other youth radio initiatives, including the Youth Voices program at Washington's WAMU-FM, another RTNDF grantee.

To learn more about Radio Rookies, go to [www.wnyc.org/radiorookies/about\\_who.html](http://www.wnyc.org/radiorookies/about_who.html).

### RTNDA's Melanie Lo Wins SPJ Award.

Lo, who joined RTNDA as marketing and communications assistant in June 2005 right out of the University of Maryland, worked for Maryland's Newsline while a student. Her work there contributed to two first-place finishes in the SPJ Region II Mark of Excellence Awards,

announced in April.

Lo's work on the Newsline story "Uncovered: Maryland's Health Insurance Crisis" won first place in the Online In-depth Reporting category. The package, which combines profiles, overviews and breaking news, along with interactive features, photos and

audio, is at [www.newsline.umd.edu/health/special-reports/uninsured](http://www.newsline.umd.edu/health/special-reports/uninsured).

Newsline also won first place in the Best Independent Online Publication category.

Both regional award-winning projects will compete in the national competition in Chicago this August.

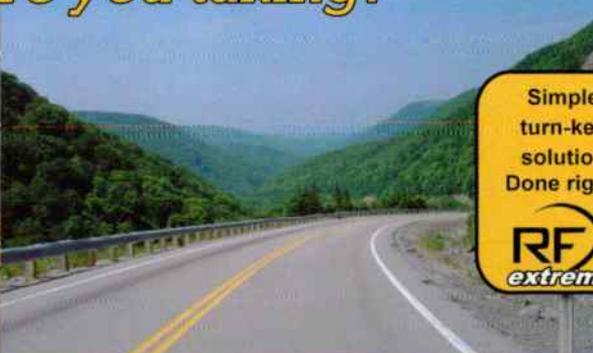


Melanie Lo



Lo photo: Infinity Photo Group/Lief Jon Lowe

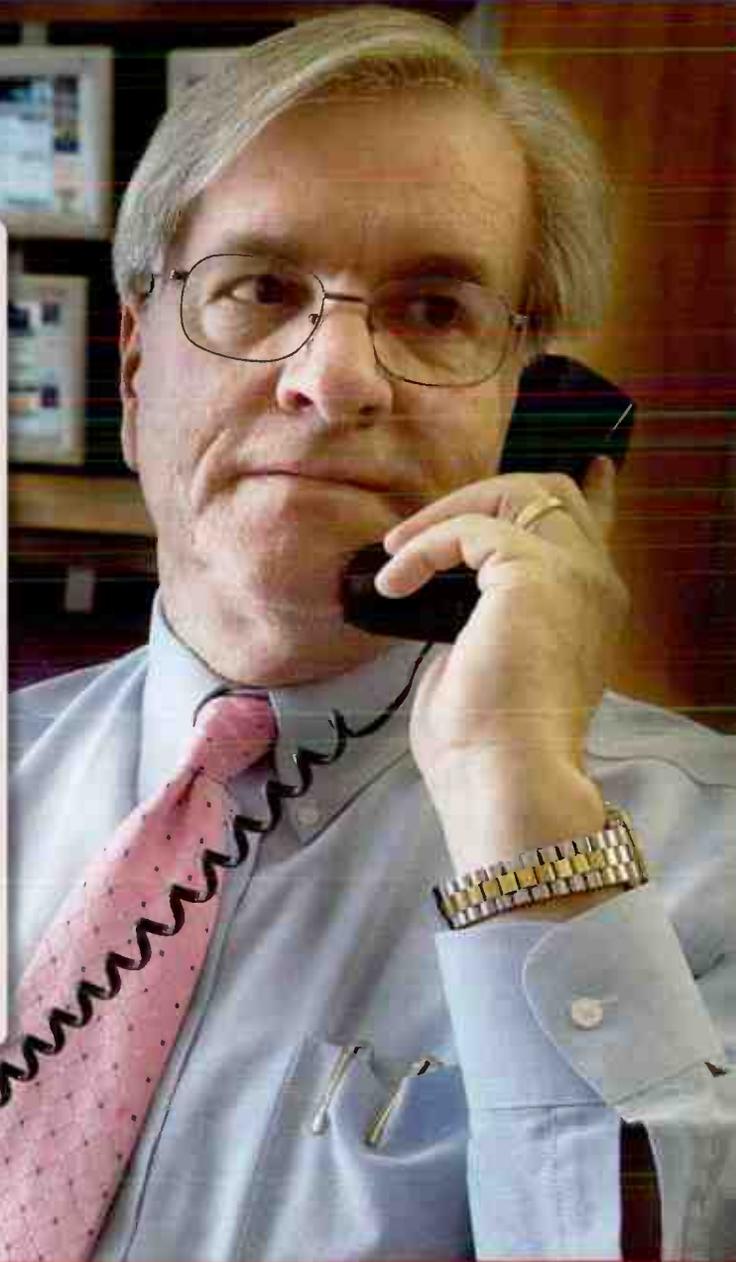
## Which road are you taking?

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Vice President, News  
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# Names in the News

## Job Changes

**Sorboni Banerjee** to reporter, WHDH-TV, Boston, from WLNE-TV, Providence, RI.

**Anastasiya Bolton** to reporter, KUSA-TV, Denver, from WABM-TV, Birmingham, AL.

▲ **Katie Brace** promoted to anchor/reporter from reporter, WPTV, West Palm Beach, FL.

**Tom Buhrow** promoted to national anchor, NRD-TV, Hamburg, Germany, from bureau chief/senior correspondent, ARD-German TV, Washington.

**Jay Cashmere** promoted to anchor/reporter from reporter, WPTV, West Palm Beach, FL.

**Cari Champion** to anchor, WGLC-TV, Atlanta, from WPTV, West Palm Beach, FL.

**Kenny Choi** to anchor/reporter, SportsNet, New York, from KOKI-TV, Tulsa, OK.

**Chris Danielle** to assistant news director, KREM-TV, Seattle, from news director, KVEW-TV, Kennewick, WA.

**Eric Glasser** to reporter, WPTV, West Palm Beach, FL, from KDFW-TV, Dallas.

▲ **David Hatcher** to assistant news director, WBZ-TV/WBSB-TV, Boston, from EP, WFOR-TV/WNYW-TV, New York.

**Jennifer Haynes** to weathercaster, WTVR-TV, Richmond, VA, from KRCG-TV, Jefferson City, MO.

**Jade Hernandez** to reporter, KTVU-TV, San Francisco, from KSHB-TV, Kansas City, MO.

**Jeff James** to meteorologist, KGUN-TV, Tucson, from KTVX-TV, Salt Lake City.

**Steve Johnson** to news director, KDBC-TV, El Paso, TX.

**Thatcher Kamin** to associate producer, AnswersMedia, Chicago, from reporter, KOMU-TV, Columbia, MO.

**Jacqueline Lapine** to reporter, KMIZ-TV, Columbia, MO, from student, Denison University.

**Carissa Lawson** to anchor, WLKY-TV, Louisville, KY, from WWAY-TV, Wilmington, NC.

**Carolina Leid** to reporter, WEWS-TV, Cleveland, from Central Florida News 13, Orlando, FL.

**Eric Lerner** to GM, KIRO-TV, Seattle, from KFSN-TV, Fresno, CA.

**Kip Lewis** to anchor/reporter, WRTV, Indianapolis, from freelance reporter, WPIX-TV, New York.

**Chris Manson** to VP/news, Nexstar Broadcasting Group, Irving, TX, from news director, WMBD-TV, Peoria, IL.

**Jennifer Mayerle** to reporter, WGLC-TV, Atlanta, from anchor/reporter, WKRG-TV, Mobile, AL.

**Shannon Ogden** to anchor, WTLV-TV, Jacksonville, FL, from New England Cable News, Boston.

**Kennetra Pulliams** to reporter, Metro Sports, Kansas City, MO, from WTVR-TV, Richmond, VA.

**Reggie Rivers** to anchor, KCNC-TV, Denver.

▲ **Geoff Roth** to news director, KMPH-TV, Fresno, CA, from EP, WPXI-TV, Pittsburgh.

**Lena Sadiwskyj** to news director, KGUN-TV, Tucson, from EP, KTVK-TV, Phoenix.

**Steve Salvatore** to medical correspondent, WPIX-TV, from WNYW-TV, both in New York.

**Greg Saunders** to creative services director, KTXL-TV, Sacramento, CA, from KSWB-TV, San Diego.

**Don Shafer** to news director, WEYI-TV, Flint, MI, from KOKH-TV, Oklahoma City.

**Ann Sterling** to anchor, KOKI-TV, Tulsa, OK, from reporter, KNXV-TV, Phoenix.

**Mike Stone** to meteorologist, WTOL-TV, Toledo, OH, from WEWS-TV, Cleveland.

**Sven Sundgaard** to meteorologist, KARE-TV, Minneapolis, from KBJR-TV, Duluth, MN.

▲ **Karen Swensen** to anchor, New England Cable News, Newton, MA, from WWL-TV, New Orleans.

**Jamison Uhler** to reporter, WCAU-TV, Philadelphia, from WFTV, Orlando, FL.

**Denise Valdez** to anchor, KLAS-TV, Las Vegas, from anchor/reporter, KNBC-TV, Los Angeles.

**Mark Welp** to anchor, WHOI-TV, Peoria, IL.

## Deaths

**Richard A. Femmel**, former anchor, WXYZ-TV, Detroit, and founding member of the Detroit Press Club, died March 31 at age 79.

**Don Fitzpatrick**, founder of ShopTalk, the electronic newsletter, died April 17 at age 56. See story on page 12.



▲ **Katie Brace**



▲ **David Hatcher**



▲ **Geoff Roth**



▲ **Karen Swensen**

Send information for Names in the News to [names@rtnda.org](mailto:names@rtnda.org).

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# Decision-Making in the Newsroom

Shaping a code of conduct takes practice, practice, practice.

Do you remember the last time you were in a news meeting when a big story came up and the discussion wasn't about what you were going to do, but, instead, about how you were going to do it? Do you remember how long that discussion lasted? How many voices did you hear during that discussion?

These are the discussions that define our newsrooms. They shape our code of conduct—a statement of who we are as journalists and what we stand for. And most would agree that this “code” is best when it evolves, and it is most powerful when it is truly representative of the many voices in our newsrooms.

As leaders of our teams, one of our greatest challenges is coaching others to use their voices. But learning something new is never easy.

In a discussion about ethical decision-making, I once heard someone say that learning to recognize that feeling or reaction in your gut—and then having the skills to speak up—can be a lot like learning to play golf. When you first start out, you feel unnatural, awkward and a little timid. After a little practice, however, your swings get a bit stronger and you start to develop your

technique. Most important, the key to enjoying the sport lies in knowing you don't have to be Tiger Woods on day one, but you have to be comfortable with the skills you do have and be dedicated to improving your own game each time out.

Much like golf, our best ethical decision-making comes from practice and from developing a true “respect for the game.” In our case, however, the game is not recreational, it's our craft. Respecting that craft is paramount, and a commitment to honing our skills is critical.

But saying we practice ethical decision-making and actually incorporating these skills into our daily newsgathering routines are two different things.

All too often, we talk about ethics when it is the big story or a controversial situation and often on deadline. And, it is frequently the news director or a few key managers who are involved in the process. The result is often predictable and often based on precedent. Yet, how often is each story the same—with the exact situation and the exact same set of players? Not that often, really.

Imagine the possibilities if we committed to including the other journalists in our room. This means not only the news managers, but the anchors, reporters, photographers, editors and the folks who drive the live trucks. They each have an interest in the integrity of our broadcasts. And the variety of perspectives would likely make our coverage stronger and more responsible.

That difference in our coverage can

come from just one more voice having the courage to listen to his or her gut and start a new conversation during the morning meeting. It is the power of one question. It can be a simple question, like: “What are we trying to accomplish?” “Is there another way to do this?” “Does anyone else feel uncomfortable with this?”

Our role as leaders is to create that environment where those questions are not only welcomed, but encouraged, and where they happen naturally. That may mean making a few changes in how we currently operate.

In recent weeks, I was fortunate to be able to join hundreds of journalists in both the upper Midwest and the Northeast in RTNDF's News Leadership and Ethics workshops. We talked about some ways to help create a culture of better ethical decision-making. Here are several of the ideas we talked about during and after the sessions:

■ **Talk about your code of ethics. Do you have one?** Is there one in particular that you use to guide your decisions? How many in your newsroom know it?

■ **Make some changes to the morning meeting.** Invite everyone to attend, and encourage participation and discussion. Develop some systems to help the staff know when you are talking about editorial approaches, and when it is time to ask questions about ethical issues.

■ **Dissect one story per day to discuss ethical approach.** Our most experienced news managers and news leaders will be quick to admit that good ethical decision-making comes from practicing it on a regular basis. As news leaders, look for opportunities each day to select a story or two to discuss the approach, the stakeholders and the possible outcome. Developing systems on daily stories can help the decision-making on the bigger, more difficult stories. Help guide discussions to include not only what's legal, but what's right.

### Upcoming Workshop

RTNDF News Decision-Making Workshop

July 14–15, Detroit

To sign up, call Erica Thode at 800.80.RTNDA

■ **Have ethical discussions away from deadlines.** It's a lot more difficult to have a thorough ethical discussion when the clock is ticking. When you can, take advantage of opportunities to discuss potential ethical conflicts early in the day.

■ **Include others in impromptu ethical decision-making.** When a n ethical situation arises, take the extra steps to include others. Tapping the usual suspects will likely give you the usual outcome. Look for others in the room who will offer a contrary opinion. It will make for a richer discussion.

■ **Talk about the decisions made.** Whether it's at the end of the day or at the next morning's meeting, take a moment to talk about some of the decisions that were made. It's important for everyone on the staff to understand the values behind the decisions. And their awareness of the process is critical to their future involvement.

■ **Prepare to justify your decisions.** If you were asked to explain why you did what you did, would you be able to answer that question? More importantly, would you be proud of that answer?

■ **Share your decisions with viewers/listeners.** All too often viewers and listeners judge or even criticize our coverage without always having a full understanding of what went into that decision. Consider sharing some of that information as part of the coverage.

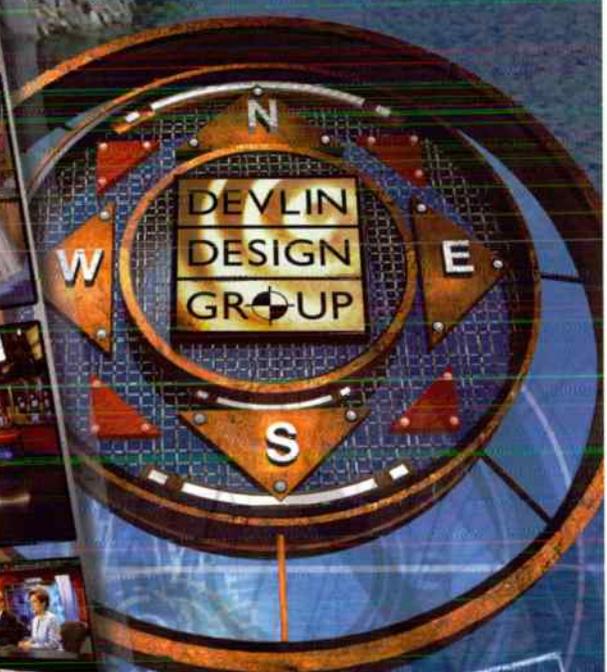
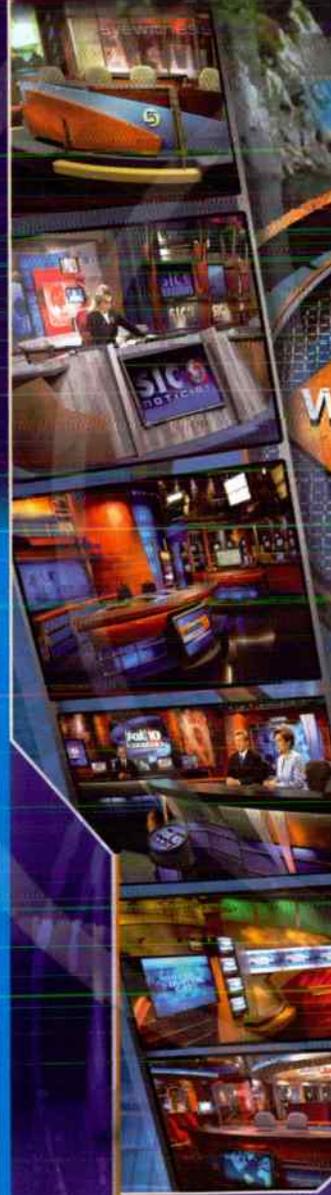
If you need some help on getting started on some of these initiatives, resources are available online at [www.rtnda.org](http://www.rtnda.org). You'll find the RTNDA Code of Ethics, Guidelines for Ethical News Coverage and upcoming Ethics Workshops.

We have the resources and we have the power. The power of just one question. Now we just need to encourage each other to use that power wisely.—Angie Kucharski is vice president/station manager at WBZ-TV/WSBK-TV in Boston. You can reach her at [akucharski@cbs.com](mailto:akucharski@cbs.com).

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# From Football Fields To Halls of Congress

RTNDA fights *for* cameras on the sidelines, and *against* government regulation of the media.

The calls and emails came pouring in—from Detroit, from Phoenix, from Kansas City, from Decatur, IL. News directors in National Football League cities started contacting RTNDA immediately after they learned that the owners association had tentatively decided to ban local television cameras from the sidelines during games.

These stations cover the teams week in, week out during the season. Stations provide countless minutes of coverage in every NFL franchise city. They spend significant amounts following the teams to their away games. Many stations have weekly shows with the coach or key players. You could make a case that without local television coverage, the relationship between the team and the public would be greatly diminished.

It didn't help matters that none of the teams contacted their local stations or made any effort to explain why they felt they needed to take this step. They didn't explain why still cameras were OK, but video cameras were not. They didn't say why this was allowable even though many teams play in stadiums funded by taxpayer dollars. And they had no answer for how a local station working on an enterprise story about a player or coach could get the video it needed without disclosing its plans to the competition.

Within minutes of receiving the first calls and emails, RTNDA swung into action. In less than a day, we fired off a letter to the NFL and to co-chairs of the rules committee asking them to continue to allow video cameras on

the sidelines. Through quick action, we were able to alert all news directors of the planned changes in access and to outline the arguments local stations could use to persuade their teams not to take action.

RTNDA members appreciated the effort. The National Association of Broadcasters issued a supporting statement a few days later, and its new president, David Rehr, said he was impressed that we moved so swiftly.

The outcome is still up in the air. The NFL is arguing that it needed to take this step to protect its ownership rights in game content and that no other pro sports league permits sideline cameras. But because we called attention to the issue early on and spoke out on behalf of local stations, individual teams have had to deal with stations to work toward mutually acceptable arrangements.

To me, the most gratifying thing about this episode was that when news directors had a problem, they knew whom to call—RTNDA. Not that many years ago, it would have taken days for the Washington office to find out about such an issue, and then only indirectly. Now, because RTNDA has worked hard to demonstrate to members that we will be responsive and we will fight for you, RTNDA is top of mind when an issue of access or coverage comes up unexpectedly.

### Video News Releases

Another issue that came up suddenly is the renewed call for regulation of video news releases.

In April, the Center for Media and Democracy announced that many local television stations were running VNRs without attribution. It coupled its findings with a call for the Federal Communications Commission to issue new regulations requiring continuous identification on all VNR material. One FCC commissioner attended the news conference.

Just as in the past, reporters began calling RTNDA to see what we had to say. This was a tricky situation. We had good reason to think that many of the video examples posted on the CMD website were simple errors, not deliberate attempts to fool the public, but the similarities between newscast stories and VNRs were embarrassing. We also had an obligation to make clear common industry policy and practice. It is plainly stated in the RTNDA Code of Ethics: "Professional electronic journalists should clearly disclose the origin of information and label all material provided by outsiders." So we sent RTNDA members and the media a statement reaffirming that policy and reiterating guidelines issued by the RTNDA Ethics Committee when a VNR flap erupted a year ago. We also emphasized that RTNDA opposes any attempt to regulate the form of identification and said those decisions are clearly part of the editorial discretion that is protected by the First Amendment.

Many of the stations that were featured on the CMD website investigated and, with the help of RTNDA's guidelines, took steps to make sure everyone in the newsroom understands and observes their policies of identification.

But the regulatory issue isn't going away. The FCC has already conducted an inquiry on this issue. Last year RTNDA successfully fought against new legislation on VNRs in Congress and filed comments with the FCC. Now, Commissioner Adelstein is calling for enforcement action based on current regulations and for new regulations to

# Big News

## AAAS Science Journalism Awards Call for Entries



The AAAS Science Journalism Awards honor distinguished reporting on science by professional journalists. The awards are an internationally recognized measure of excellence in science reporting for a general audience. They go to individuals (rather than institutions, publishers or employers) for coverage of the sciences, engineering and mathematics.

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mandate how outside material is identified. RTNDA will continue to fight on this issue on behalf of the rights of electronic journalists. We will also work with journalists, VNR providers and others to see if there is more that can be done to ensure that the origins of material are clear to the journalists so

that they can correctly identify outside material to their audiences.

### Anti-Leak Legislation

A third issue that has kept us busy is a move in Congress to pass new anti-leak laws that could penalize journalists and chill the free flow of important

information to the public. Some in Washington have reacted strongly and negatively to recent news stories that disclose information about the war on terror and are based on classified government information. The *Washington Post's* story about secret prisons in Europe for U.S. terror suspects, the *New York Times's* story about eavesdropping on some calls without a court order, and the *USA Today* story about government access to phone company call records all triggered a great deal of concern in the administration and among members of Congress. Some in Congress began working on legislation aimed at plugging leaks and there has even been talking of imposing criminal penalties not just on the leaker but also on the person or entity who receives such information. Such a law would create penalties for journalists who publish classified information even if it is in the public interest.

Obviously, such legislation is a very serious threat. Especially in time of war it is critical for the public to receive as much information as possible about how their government is executing its policy. This anti-leak legislation could make the media, which is supposed to serve as the public's watchdog, toothless.

RTNDA is working with other journalism organizations to persuade Congress not to enact new and potentially chilling laws. We have written letters, met with members of Congress and helped arrange for top journalists to testify about the importance of keeping information flowing to the public. This struggle is far from over, but RTNDA will make it a top priority to protect a fundamental cornerstone of our free press.

From the football field to the halls of congress, RTNDA is working to protect the rights of electronic journalists. Your involvement in these issues is critical to our success. So keep those calls and emails coming. We depend on you to let us know about the issues we all want to fight for.—You can reach RTNDA president Barbara Cochran at [president@rtnda.org](mailto:president@rtnda.org).

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# Makeover



KTVE-TV refurbishes its look and refocuses its strategy, compliments of RTNDA's makeover team.

**O**ne Thursday afternoon at five, on a beautiful, quiet day in northern Louisiana and southern Arkansas, something changed for the people tuning in to KTVE-TV. Gone for good was the old Region 10 News. Here to stay was the new NBC 10 News, courtesy of RTNDA's creative Ultimate Newscast Makeover team. Few viewers had known in advance that their local news would change dramatically, suddenly having the look and feel of bigger markets like Dallas and Atlanta.

That night the anchors delivered the news from a set with 21st-century technology as its centerpiece, including a 70-inch DLP flat-screen mounted behind the anchors and a series of smaller plasma screens on either side. Each screen showed motion graphics featuring the station's new logo and its new rich and forward-thinking look. With new lighting, the anchors seemed to jump off the screen, appearing closer and more accessible to the viewers than ever before. The music matched the graphics beat for beat, giving prominence to the station's long connection with its parent network, as well as a nod to local Louisiana sound and flavor.

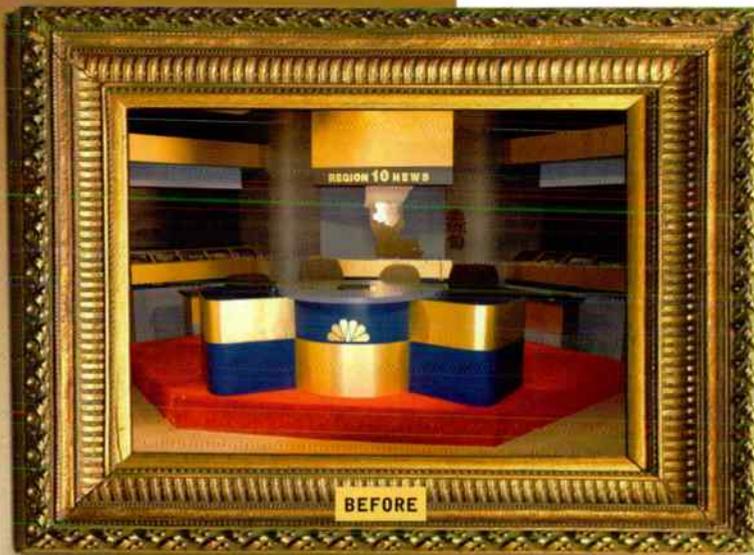
### **A Tale of Two Cities**

KTVE is the NBC affiliate in the 135th-ranked Monroe–El Dorado market that spans the Louisiana–Arkansas state line, reaching east all the way to the Mississippi River. Locals call the area the Ark-La-Miss. The region was spared the worst of last summer's hurricanes, but the area became home to thousands of people displaced

from New Orleans and other towns along the coast. For months, life in Monroe and El Dorado had been dominated by the hurricanes and what they left behind.

The market's two anchor cities are 60 miles apart, a far spread for any hyphenated market. The cities exist for different reasons. Monroe, along well-traveled Interstate 20, is a transportation and distribution hub that supports a significant farming community. El Dorado, which still calls itself "Boomtown," is deeply rooted in oil. The differences between the two cities have played a large role in the differences of fortunes for the market's two leading television stations.

KTVE, licensed out of El Dorado, for years called the southern Arkansas city its home. But the 1980s oil bust hit El Dorado hard, hurting KTVE to the point where the station picked up



**By Chip Mahaney**

Remedy Films/Corbis

stakes and moved to the larger Monroe in search of more viewers and better revenue opportunities. Alas, the hearts and habits of Monroe viewers belonged to KTVE's chief rival, KNOE-TV, a CBS affiliate owned by the family of a former governor. KTVE had difficulty winning viewers away from its competition. The call letters, which stood for "TV for El Dorado," reminded viewers of KTVE's interloper status, and even a name change to the generic "Region 10" didn't win anyone over. Rival KNOE kept ratings that often more than doubled KTVE's.

KTVE's on-air look reflected its second-place, almost downtrodden status

in the market. Its professional music package was serviceable but dated. Their blue and gold set, professionally built in the 1990s and refreshed only a few years ago, was nonetheless a throwback to the past: With a four-person anchor desk perched above them, it looked as if the weather and sports anchors were seated at the kids' table for the family's Thanksgiving meal. Behind the two main anchors, a hanging backdrop—a cutout of Arkansas and Louisiana with the counties in the market highlighted—reinforced the has-been look.

But the cupboard wasn't altogether bare for KTVE. The station had the

foresight to invest in its weather coverage, and thus had the only live Doppler radar in the entire region, the closest being in Shreveport, 90 miles west. And KTVE had the only all-meteorologist team in town, delivering daily forecasts and warning viewers of severe storms on the way. But even their strength in weather was handicapped by poor studio layout. KTVE's studio accommodated five sets—the main news desk, an interview set, a cooking set, a locker-room-style set for sports, and a small secondary anchor desk used for a 9 p.m. local Fox newscast on sister station KARD-TV. But there was no room for a weather

## Coaching Pulls It All Together

One of the biggest differences between RTNDA's first Ultimate Newscast Makeover last year (at WCYB-TV in Bristol, VA) and this year's Makeover at KTVE-TV was the added element of coaching. Last year we installed four new sets, new music and new graphics, but this year we added the glue that holds it all together. Here are some coach-driven "people" pointers for your next makeover:

■ **Use the makeover to develop new work teams.** One of the outgrowths of the makeover process at KTVE was the discovery that new relationships were growing, even among staffers who had

worked together for years. The makeover gave each staff member a chance to try something different and work in new ways with the people around them. In turn, new energy fueled the entire makeover process.

■ **Consider anchor changes to coincide with the makeover.** Before the makeover, KTVE had used a single anchor at 5 p.m. Starting on Launch Day, a co-anchor now gives the newscast even more energy than the creative elements could alone provide. By promoting an anchor/reporter from the morning newscast, the right candidate was found in-house.

■ **Make time for rehearsal, and practice until it's perfect.** The Coaching Company's Bill Brown began pre-launch rehearsals at KTVE by telling the crew they would start a show and then stop it as soon as they hit a bump. Then they would restart from the beginning until they hit another bump. By starting over each time, the staff built both mental and muscle memory, important to creating a well-executed newscast right out of the box.

■ **Teach anchors to relax.** The goal is to be the same on air as you are in your social life. Brown says this is most difficult for anchors at number-two or number-three stations, because those anchors have a tendency to read faster and speak louder in the hopes of improving their ratings, when in fact the opposite is true. Anchors at number-one stations have a higher level of confidence and tend to perform into those high ratings. "The coaching turned me into a human being at an anchor desk," says KTVE anchor/reporter Laura Monserrate.

■ **Stress to your staff that the makeover is only the beginning.** Make clear to your team members that the makeover isn't its own destination, but rather is a first step in a continuing process. The real work begins after the makeover crews leave, and ratings growth may still take months or years to achieve.



KTVE anchors Laura Monserrate and Stephen Webster get ready for their first newscast from the new set.

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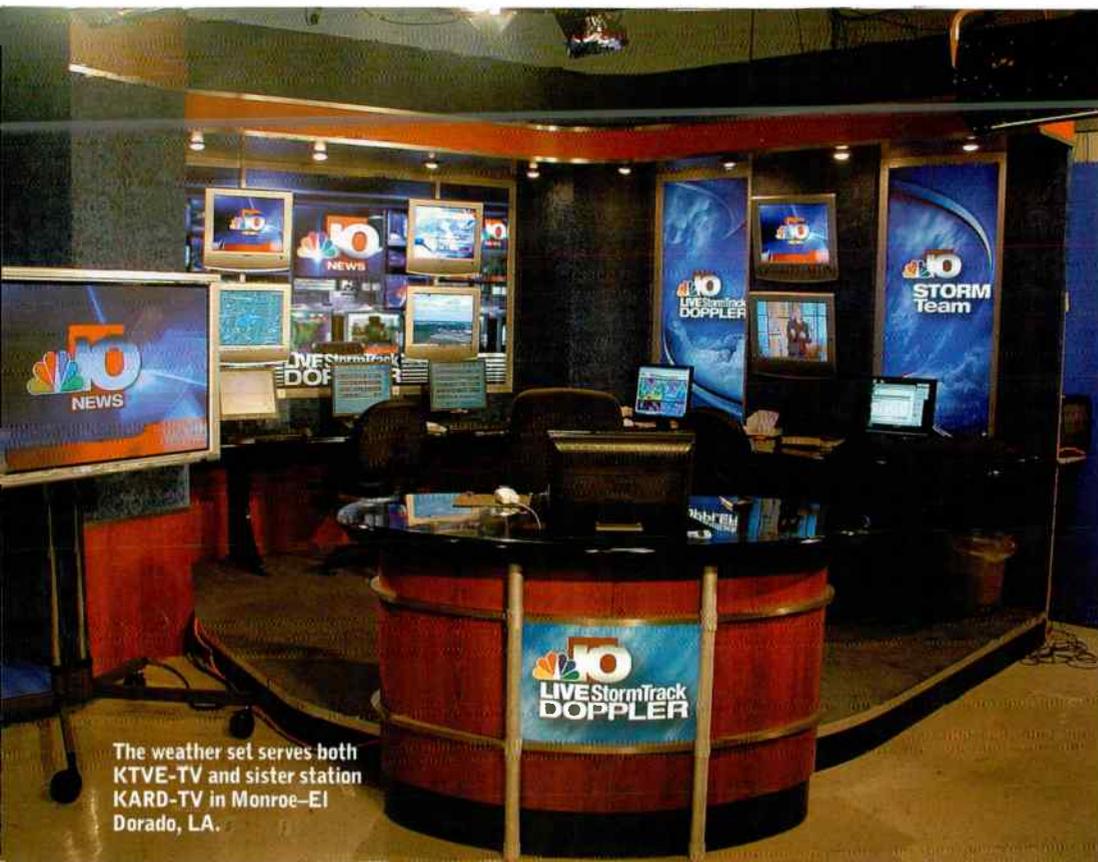
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The weather set serves both KTVE-TV and sister station KARD-TV in Monroe—El Dorado, LA.

center in the studio; instead, the area where meteorologists could analyze model data, build graphics and control the radar, was housed in a closet, off to the side of the studio, too far away to be of much use during breaking weather events.

### Finally Ready for a Change

Last summer, KTVE cried uncle and sent an application to RTNDA's Ultimate Newscast Makeover competition. Their completed questionnaire underscored the station's longtime challenges, but also gave hope that a makeover would immediately and dramatically change its fortunes. KTVE sent in a videotape to show off its current environment, with a humorous warning at the opening of the tape that "viewing the behind-the-scenes tour may be hazardous to one's health." It showed off the station's spunk and deep desire for radical change, even if they couldn't afford to make that change themselves.

It was a dream situation for the Ultimate Newscast Makeover team: A station playing from behind with a look that was stuck in the past. The



ratings had nowhere to go but up, and the on-air look had nowhere to go but toward the future.

Four companies participated in this year's Makeover: Set designer and builder FX Group, Stephen Arnold Music, graphics guru VDO, and new this year, The Coaching Company, a training and consulting firm. When company reps convened at the KTVE studios in December, they found lots of friendly people working in a studio that obviously needed a major upgrade.

"My push as news director is to get a set where I can get the actual talent back on the news set," says Jeff Hamburger, "as opposed to sitting in

leopard-print chairs reading the news." Those chairs were part of the station's home-made interview set, used for selected morning-show segments and a daily afternoon health segment.

Everyone was ready, but before cosmetic changes could affect the station's product, much thought had to go into the most important concept in any makeover: the branding of the product. For years, KTVE had used the slogan "Coverage You Can Count On," and it was agreed that that was a keeper. According to The Coaching Company's Bill Brown, the slogan "says something about the dependability of coverage. We cover the entire market—the entire Ark-La-Miss."

A bigger concern than the slogan was the name of the product altogether. Even though "Region 10" was designed to serve everyone in the market, Brown believed it was serving no one well because it was so generic. And so the switch was made to NBC 10 for the station and NBC 10 News. Rather than try to hug the entire market with a name that meant little if anything to viewers, KTVE would reconnect with its viewers using the strength of its parent network.

That decision led the way to many more. Weather would become the primary point of differentiation for the station, with the goal being to line up the station's market-leading resources in such a way that when bad weather threatened the region, KTVE would own the coverage and win the viewers. "Most coaches would agree that the station that wins weather is the station that has the momentum and is the station that eventually wins," says Brown. In a market where a legacy station owned the ratings, winning weather was the best way for an underdog station to fight back and win.

With branding decided, VDO designer Diane Fiolek unveiled the station's new look, and the most star-



## BROADCAST DESIGN & BRANDING

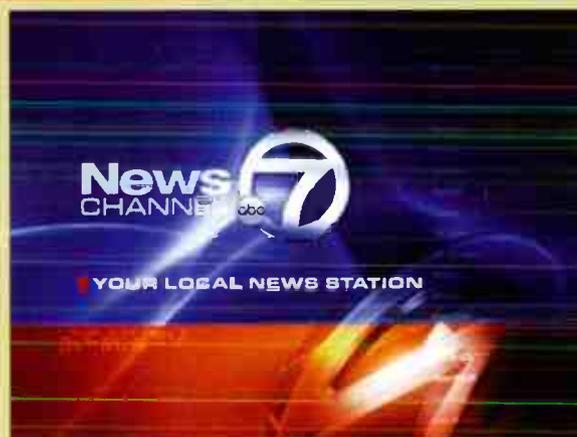
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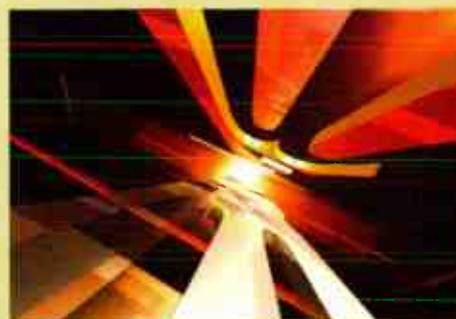
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KTVE staffers, family and friends watch the debut newscast.

foundation for KTVE's new sound logo. Chad Cook of Stephen Arnold Music told KTVE that the NBC three-tone chime was one of the most familiar "sonic brands" for any company, not just in television. A sonic brand is a musical series of notes that become the station's sound logo. Just as the peacock is NBC's visual logo, so are the chimes its sound logo. "Everyone knows NBC," Cook says, "so you're instantly grabbing that equity and putting it into the station."

One concept Stephen Arnold Music brings to its clients is taking the region's local musical flavors and blending them into the station's music package—not necessarily for the main news themes, but for bumps and beds that play under secondary elements in a newscast or in the station's promotions. For northern Louisiana, this would be a little country-western, a little Cajun, a little Zydeco—definitely music with an edge.

ting element up front was the choice of the primary color—blue. Blue was the color used by the station across the street.

"A lot of people think just because one station has blue, they own blue, and I say 'hogwash' to that," Fiolek says. "There are millions of different

shades of blue. It looks nothing like the competition's blue. We can put them side by side and there is no similarity." That settled, the new graphics were set off by a new NBC 10 logo, with a red background and a white "10" next to the familiar NBC peacock.

Another NBC logo provided the

## Lessons Learned from KTVE

■ **Determine what is driving the redesign.** Often clients will want to address a particular issue, such as changing the flow or format of the show to ramp up the energy, or possibly the station just needs to upgrade a dated graphic look. "The more your designers know what is driving the redesign," says VDO's Dianne Streyer, "the more targeted the design."

■ **Begin with the brand.** If your current brand no longer fits who you are, use the makeover as a chance to change it. Once you decide on a new brand, hit it with everything you've got. The same advice applies to slogans. Whether you're "Live, Local, Late-Breaking" or something else, let your brand speak for your product, but make sure your product is backing up the brand, every day and in every newscast.

■ **Invest in technology and weather.** For many lower-rated stations, this can be the quickest way to grow your audience. New technologies such as plasma, LCD or DLP screens will give

you new ways to tell your stories. Winning your market's next big weather event will do more in a single day to drive ratings growth than anything else, if you've invested up front in technology and people.

■ **Budget realistically.** \$50,000 budgeted for set revisions doesn't mean you'll only spend \$50,000 with your set company, says Bill Brown of The Coaching Company. Additional purchases, like wireless mics and IFBs, lighting instruments and connectors, dimmer packs, additional AC outlets, and cabling, even new chairs, can add tens of thousands of dollars to your project.

■ **Realistically evaluate your equipment.** Your set, lighting, graphics, and music designers should know at the start of the project exactly what equipment you have. There's no sense investing in the latest design technology when you lack the technological equipment to run it.

■ **Merge elements for a unified look and feel.** The music and graphics should be created simultaneously to comple-

ment and enhance one another. Chad Cook of Stephen Arnold Music says, "It is so important that the music and sound design catch the motions and hit points, and that the music reflects the dynamics and energy of each graphic element."

■ **Don't let impatience get the better of you.** Ratings won't change overnight, even in metered markets. Once you've launched your own makeover, and you've learned all the new techniques and new disciplines to build better newscasts, stick with it. You've had months to get ready for the new look, now give your audience time to get adjusted to it too.

■ **Make changes cultural, not just cosmetic.** KTVE news director Jeff Hamburger says, "Anyone can get new graphics, music or set, and that's not downplaying any of those things—they are all great components. But you're looking for a great product, and your job as a station leader is to instill that cultural change, sense of urgency and sense of pride in work."

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The biggest challenge would come in the set, or, rather, sets. Mack McLaughlin of FX Group is used to facing new challenges every time he walks into a new studio. In this instance, he felt that, owing to technology, the old set could be transformed. "This really is a refresh," McLaughlin says of the current set. "What we're trying to do is make this look like a brand-new 'top-25' set. The number-one thing is technology and motion." The primary focus of the new set would be a series of video screens in strategic places, allowing for motion behind the anchors.

KTVE's main news set, while dated, offered a good foundation, so to save money and use it elsewhere, McLaughlin and station leaders decided that the new look, showcasing state-of-the-art technology, could be built on the existing framework.

Of equal interest was a new set for weather, but the concern was where to put it in a studio already crowded by



five sets. The best place was to convert the station's Fox set, a simple, one-anchor-sized framework and desk, into a working weather center where the meteorologist could prepare and present the forecast, as well as operate all the equipment live on the air during critical weather situations. To do this would mean displacing the Fox anchor. The solution, like many others in this process, would be rooted in technology. The new KTVE anchor desk would also host the Fox newscast, but the video monitors in the background would switch from NBC 10 graphics to the Fox graphics. A hitch to the plan came within a week, in the realization that the Fox set would not be big enough to

accommodate a weather center. "So we finally just gave up on it," McLaughlin says. "The only thing we kept is the platform, but everything else (backdrops, desk, workstation space) is new."

### Looks Aren't Everything: Personality Counts

For three months, designers and station leaders held weekly conference calls, planning for the day when their work would be unveiled. Meantime, there was an equally important transformation beginning on the staff in the form of training and coaching. The Coaching Company's Dennis Kendall gathered news staff to talk strategy, in the form of identifying a target viewer. He wasn't looking for a description of a viewer, but a real individual with a real name and life in the community. That viewer turned out to be "Crystal," who lived in a small house, perhaps on a farm. Earning \$7 an hour, she has a son, living at home but working with Dad on the farm.

Personifying an individual (albeit

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So, as KTVE's designs were finalized, The Coaching Company launched its hall-mark service: Total Station Coaching.

In 3 weeks of intensive training and rehearsals, The Coaching Company coached KTVE's total staff – content managers, producers, technical and studio crews, as well as anchors and reporters. The result? Solid team-work, flawless debuts, and a great start for a great brand: NBC 10 News.

Co-founder Bill Brown



**"The Coaching Company went deep into KTVE's newsroom, control room and studio to turn their recommendations into reality. They called it total station coaching. We called it totally awesome." – Mark Cunningham, GM**

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GARDEN WAHU WAOW WBBM WBOC WCAV WDJT WFXS WGBA WGEM WHSV WHTM WINK WKOW WMAR WQOW WMSN  
WREX WRTV WSB WSET WSJV WTMJ WTVY WVAW WVVA WXOW WZMY ZDFGERMANY

For more about the Ultimate Newscast Makeover and other helpful stuff, visit [www.coachingcompany.com/tv](http://www.coachingcompany.com/tv)

fictional and composite) viewer helps focus the story. "If you change everything external about the newscast, the graphics, the set, the packaging, but you don't change the product itself," Kendall says, "you run the risk of people saying, 'That's pretty, but it still has all the issues why I didn't want to watch it before.'" And then you lose your audience all over again.

Two weeks before launch date, KTVE vacated its studio to allow FX to refurbish the main anchor desk and to install the new weather center. The new sets were rich in their blue color scheme with wood trim, but the eye was first drawn to the new video screens, which looked almost 3-D for their clarity and color. Few stations, even in large markets, can boast of a dozen flat-screen displays in their news and weather sets.

While the new sets were being constructed, with lighting from DeSiste being installed and focused, Kendall's partner Bill Brown took a leadership role in preparing the station for the launch. He began coaching station tal-

## Thanks!

RTNDA thanks the following people for their work on the Ultimate Newscast Makeover.

### FX Group

Glenn Anderson, Brian Baumgarten, Matthew Carson, Joe Haig, Eric Haugen, Mack McLaughlin, Kathy Mosher-Boulé, Jeff Ritz, Kevin Vickers

### Stephen Arnold Music

Chad Cook, Jesus Garcia, Clay Lorange, Paul West

### VDO

Darrell Chambers, Diane Fiolek, Michael Nadell, Dianne Streyer

### The Coaching Company

Bill Brown, Dennis Kendall, Barry Nash, Patty Pressley

### KTVE-TV

Mark Cummings, Jeff Hamburger, Joe Holland, Esther Phillips

### Creator/Producer

Chip Mahaney, RTNDA Board of Directors

ent and production professionals on how to make the most of the new design elements to create a totally altered newscast, with better content, performances and production. Nowhere was this more evident than in the rehearsals leading up to launch. Brown's ability to quickly learn the names and roles



Mack McLaughlin from FX Group (center) discusses ideas for the new set with other team members.

of the staff and crew and to provide structure and purpose to the limited rehearsal time gave the station its best chance to create a perfect product on the night of the launch.

One of Brown's top projects was the making of a new NBC 10 anchor. Laura Monserrate had handled weather duties on the morning news, but was now being promoted to co-anchor of the 5 p.m., the first newscast launched with the new look. For her and co-anchor Stephen Webster, everything about them was new.

And so on a Thursday afternoon in March, the new NBC 10 News was born, featuring a shining new set, stronger graphics, and music connecting viewers to their geographic location, instilling a feeling of home. The re-energized staff was dedicated to making it the first day of their journey into the future. As KTVE general manager Mark Cummings remarked moments before launch, "Even if we don't see any success in the numbers right away, based on what [the Ultimate Newscast Makeover] has done for our station, there's no doubt in my mind it's going to be a success."—Chip Mahaney is the creator and producer of RTNDA's Ultimate Newscast Makeover. He is also managing editor of KDFW Fox 4 News in Dallas-Fort Worth, and he represents Region 6 on the RTNDA Board of Directors.

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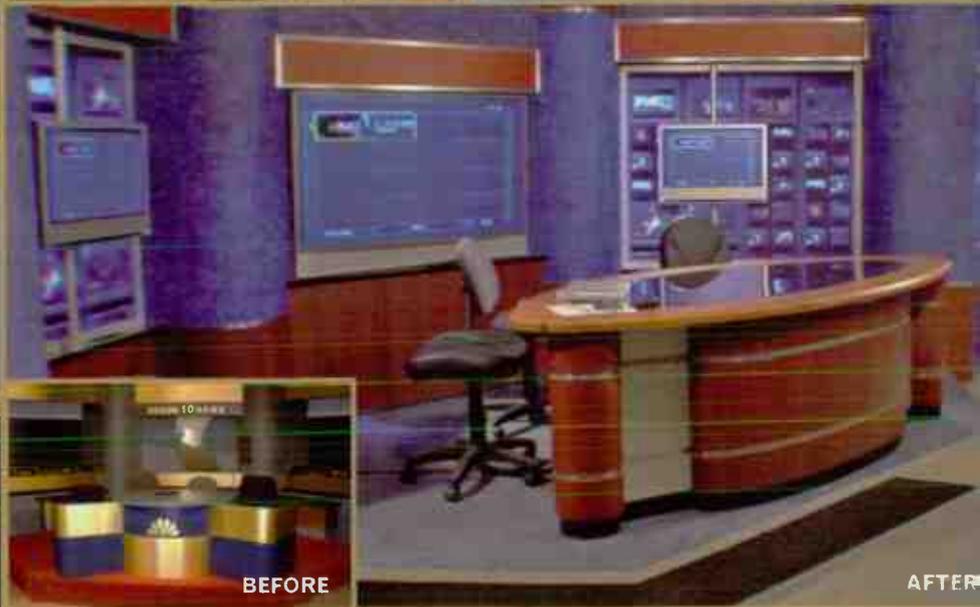
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# Where the Jobs Are

Salary survey reveals specifics in hiring practices.

By Bob Papper

**I**n light of the recent salary survey figures (see page 38), we wanted to dig deeper and see exactly what jobs are out there and where you can find them. Sure, geography matters, and some positions are in a lot more demand than others, but managers are also looking for new and broader skills.

"The jobs are where the economy is," notes Dan Bradley, vice president of news for Media General's broadcast division. Simple enough, and generally good news for a company like Media General—most of its 26 stations are comfortably situated in the Sunbelt. In the case of television news, the latest research from the RTNDA/Ball State University Annual Survey shows exactly what Bradley is talking about: The biggest job growth is in the South and the West, particularly in growing areas with strong economies.

## The CW and the News

The new CBS/Warner Bros. network could well mean more news jobs, but don't look for big growth in the first year. Initially, news on CW stations will likely come from existing news departments, especially at Tribune stations, or major affiliate news departments already running news on UPN or WB stations that will become part of the CW. But if the network does well, expect to see a number of CW affiliates build their own news departments and other stations expand to run more news on a CW affiliate, starting in a year or two.

By the numbers, television news is coming off another strong year. The handful of small news operations that have eliminated news have gotten lots of attention, but most stations have added staff, and few report budget or staff reductions. But not all parts of the country are basking equally in that situation, and not all news positions are, either.

Fox affiliate WCCB-TV in Charlotte, NC, launched the station's first half-hour newscast on New Year's Day 2000. News director Ken White says he started lean with 22 people. Today, he has 37 employees, producing an hour at night and two and a half hours in the morning. The top position added: producers.

Overall, remaining in first place among new newsroom hires were reporters, at 30.1 percent of the total, but producers, at 28.4 percent, were just behind. Photographers, at 20.1 percent, were next. Tape editors came in fourth, at less than half of photographers. Those top four positions accounted for 87.1 percent of all new, entry-level hires, and they're the most common hires for non-entry-level positions, too.

"A couple of years ago, we considered reducing staff," says Mike Cutler, news director at WTVF-TV in Nashville, TN. "We decided to take the opposite approach and expand." Cutler added four people to his staff of 75: a reporter and photographer, an investigative producer and a meteorologist. The reporter and photographer are both overnight positions working in TV news' biggest growth area, the morning news.

There also seems to have been a shift in



what television news jobs are most likely to be available. The number-one position remains photographers—the typical television news department has more shooters than any other single job, but that is a relatively stable position.

There is more turnover among reporters and producers, and the typical television station now has more producers than reporters. Both of these can be traced to two trends: More small stations have added producers rather than having anchors or others produce the news, and stations have continued to add news programs—and producers—to their lineup. WCCB's White now has five producers at his station. But some of that rebalance between reporters and producers is a bit deceptive. Often, reporters are now considered anchors because of all the news programs stations have added over the years. When combined, anchors and reporters make up the biggest category in a news department.

Almost nine out of 10 television stations (89.3 percent) reported hiring, although most of those (87.9 percent) were replacements rather than additions. Still, the average television newsroom hired almost seven replacements and one addition. Best bets for growth: the West, where 17.5 percent of all hires were for new positions, and the South, where 11.5 percent of all hires were new. Generally, larger news departments (31 or more staffers) were the most likely to grow; non-network affiliated and PBS stations were the least likely to expand.

That takes care of television, but what about hiring for radio?

“Radio is not a growth industry by any means,” says Ken Beck, vice president news/talk programming for Entercom and market

manager for Entercom New Orleans. Entercom has 105 radio stations scattered across the country. Mostly, Beck says, hiring involves replacing retired or departed news staffers. Consolidation cuts have happened, Beck says, so now it's a holding operation, and while most stations do some information programming, not all have journalists doing newscasts.

Based purely on the numbers, radio is a different story. The same survey that shows television expansion shows radio hunkered down—replacing workers who leave but with little to no expansion. And growth in radio varies little from region to region.

Only half of the radio stations surveyed reported hiring anyone. The

average radio station that did hire, hired about one person, and that was almost always a replacement. Only one radio station in 14 actually added someone. Of the new hires, 28.1 percent were reporters, 21.9 percent were announcers, and then producers and board operators, each at less than half the number of announcers.

Tom Severino, vice president and market manager for Emmis Indianapolis Radio, sees things differently. Severino says all of Emmis' 25 radio stations are drawing up plans for a future not constrained by simple terrestrial broadcasting.

"If you're going to grow and prosper, you have to get beyond the paradigm of ink on paper [as a newspaper]

and see what the company says Severino. "It's the same for broadcasters."

That translates into an emphasis on the web and developing programming like streaming active—new programming to require adding new people when HD radio development thinks that will lead to more on side channels.

"The jobs are changing," Bradley says. The Media General division added 40 people to a mixture of "techies and [journalists] but moving more and more content side as the technical comes easier and more Bradley says stations are no

## Keeping Up

By Bob Papper

It was a bad year for salaries in both television and radio news, but that's been true for most of the past half-decade. After down years during 2001 and 2002, salaries went well up in 2003. But last year, both radio and television salaries came in just ahead of inflation, and, this year, inflation won by a landslide.

TV news salaries were virtually unchanged from a year ago—up just two-tenths of a percent. With inflation at 3.4 percent for the year, almost everyone had a loss in real wages—the pay increase minus the devaluation caused by inflation. In this case, real TV news wages fell 3.2 percent. Only managing editors, news anchors and assistant news directors beat the inflation rate. Assignment editors and news directors rose just under the inflation rate, weathercasters and sports anchors were unchanged and most of the rest dropped slightly. News reporters, sports reporters, news writers and Internet specialists dropped more drastically.

Radio salaries varied more, but overall pay in radio news dropped 4.4 percent from a year ago. That's before inflation. News and sports anchors went up, but news directors, producers, and news and sports reporters all dropped.

The RTNDA/Ball State University Annual Survey reports a little change in TV news salaries and a drop in radio salaries compared to the inflation rate.

### Television News Salaries

	Average	Median	Minimum	Maximum
News Director	\$86,000	\$75,000	\$25,000	\$125,000
Assistant News Director	67,500	62,500	30,000	100,000
Managing Editor	63,300	60,000	30,000	100,000
Executive Producer	52,600	49,500	22,000	100,000
News Anchor	75,500	58,500	13,000	120,000
Weathercaster	63,600	50,000	10,000	100,000
Sports Anchor	52,900	40,000	5,000	100,000
News Reporter	35,200	28,000	4,000	100,000
Sports Reporter	32,100	25,000	8,000	100,000
Assignment Editor	35,200	33,500	14,000	100,000
News Producer	31,900	29,000	17,000	100,000
News Writer	29,200	25,000	4,000	100,000
News Assistant	26,700	24,500	10,000	100,000
Photographer	29,200	27,000	10,000	100,000
Tape Editor	27,100	24,500	6,000	100,000
Graphics Specialist	30,000	30,800	15,000	100,000
Internet Specialist	36,300	35,000	20,000	100,000
Art Director	51,200	47,500	4,000	120,000

There were few differences in salaries based on network affiliation, although Fox affiliates were a little higher than the others. News manager median salaries at the four major affiliate stations were 20–25 percent higher than at other commercial stations, but other positions were more similar and the differences were smaller. Overall, salaries in the Midwest were about 10 percent higher than the rest of the country.

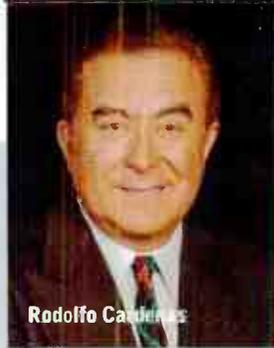
## The Biggest Growth

The RTNDA/Ball State University Annual Survey does not track the number specifically, but there is no question that the biggest growth market in local television news is in Spanish television. It's not simply the growth of news within Hispanic stations, it's the growth in the number of Hispanic stations running news.

Rodolfo Cardenas started the first Hispanic newscast at KCEC-TV, the Univision station in Denver. Cardenas, news director and senior anchor, started at KCEC in 1995 with a staff of five, doing one 30-minute newscast a day. After adding two new people this past year, Cardenas now has 17 people (and a live truck) producing two newscasts a day.

In the beginning, other stations viewed them as "a little Hispanic station, trying to do TV and news. You could see it in their eyes," he says. "Now they're monitoring us because they're competing with us."

Cardenas expects to have two Hispanic news competitors by next year, but he says his station is looking to expand too.



Rodolfo Cardenas

for people with a wider breadth of skills and experience.

"We need people who are web savvy," agrees Cutler. "It's a multitasking job today."

"Their skills need to be broader than the traditional broadcast journalist," echoes Severino. He says new hires have to know how to write for print and broadcast, and they need to be able to shoot digital photographs—his company just purchased several video cameras.

"They're going to have to figure out how to bring news on demand and not news on a schedule," Bradley says.

"We have to find the audience," says Cutler. "They no longer have to find us."—Bob Papper is professor of telecommunications at Ball State University.

## Median TV News Salary Comparisons Over Time

	2006	2001	5-Year Percentage Change	1996	10-Year Percentage Change
<b>Inflation</b>			<b>+13.1%</b>		<b>+28.2%</b>
All TV news			+7.7		+34.2
News Director	\$75,000	\$65,000	+15.4	\$48,000	+56.3
Assistant News Director	62,500	54,500	+14.7	42,000	+48.8
Managing Editor	60,000	50,000	+20.0	43,000	+39.5
Executive Producer	49,500	48,500	+2.1	39,000	+26.9
News Anchor	58,500	47,500	+23.2	43,000	+36.0
Weathercaster	50,000	44,500	+12.4	36,000	+38.9
Sports Anchor	40,000	35,000	+14.3	32,500	+23.1
News Reporter	28,000	26,000	+7.7	23,000	+21.7
Sports Reporter	25,000	24,000	+4.2	21,000	+19.0
Assignment Editor	33,500	30,000	+11.7	28,000	+19.6
News Producer	29,000	26,000	+11.5	22,000	+31.8
News Writer	25,000	29,000	-13.8	*	*
News Assistant	24,500	20,000	+22.5	*	*
Photographer	27,000	24,000	+12.5	20,000	+35.0
Tape Editor	24,500	22,000	+11.4	*	*
Graphics Specialist	30,800	25,000	+23.2	26,500	+16.2
Internet Specialist	35,000	35,000	NC	*	*

This table gives the longer-term picture, comparing salaries today with five years ago, 10 years ago and with inflation over those periods. Overall, in the past five years, TV news salaries have grown at just over half the rate of inflation (7.7 percent versus 13.1 percent). The 10-year picture is better, with overall salary growth (34.2 percent) running ahead of inflation (28.2 percent). The big winners in the past five years are managing editors, news anchors, news assistants and graphics specialists (all up between 20.0 and 23.2 percent). News writers, down 13.8 percent, were the biggest losers and the only group to actually drop over the five-year period. With the exception of executive producers, the biggest winners over the past 10 years were news managers, news anchors and weathercasters. Photographers and producers also rose ahead of inflation. No positions dropped in salary in the past 10 years, but graphics specialists, sports reporters and assignment editors rose the least. In most tables, we use median—or midpoint—salaries as the best general indicator of pay level.

\* Insufficient data

## Pay on the TV Anchor Desk

Over the past 10 years, there has been a decided change in the salary relationship among the news, sports and weather anchors. The order hasn't changed; news anchors were always first, with weather second and sports third. But the spread has changed.

The pivotal turning point appears to be 2000–2001. In the five years ending in 2000, news anchors made an average of 16.5 percent more than weathercasters and 31.9 percent more than sports anchors. Weather outpaced sports by 16.4 percent.

In the five years since, the difference between news and weather has grown to 24.7 percent, and the difference between news and sports has moved up to 40.7 percent. Weather now outpaces sports by 24.9 percent.

But this comparison probably understates the difference between weather and sports. Over the past 10 years, far more weathercasters than sports anchors have been added to news departments as stations have expanded weather teams and hired weather people—but commonly not sports people—for new shows. Even with the additional secondary weathercasters, they've widened the salary gap over sports.

## Radio News Salaries

	Average	Median	Minimum	Maximum
News Director	\$31,900	\$30,000	\$8,000	\$100,000
News Reporter	22,200	25,000	4,000	50,000
News Anchor	28,300	23,500	5,000	120,000
News Producer	21,900	20,500	6,000	75,000
Sports Anchor	34,800	32,500	4,000	100,000
Sports Reporter	18,500	19,000	1,000	40,000
Other	21,000	16,400	5,000	45,000

The trend in radio salaries varied from position to position. News and sports reporters, news producers and news directors all went down from a year ago. Overall, radio salaries fell 4.4 percent. Tack on an inflation rate of 3.4 percent and real wages in radio news dropped 7.8 percent in the past year.

## Median TV News Salaries by Market Size

	1–25	26–50	51–100	101–150	150+
News Director	\$120,000	\$130,000	\$80,000	\$65,000	\$53,000
Assistant News Director	110,000	80,000	55,000	47,000	36,500
Managing Editor	80,800	60,000	49,000	45,000	41,500
Executive Producer	71,300	62,400	45,000	36,500	30,000
News Anchor	115,000	107,500	67,500	45,000	30,500
Weathercaster	108,000	90,000	59,000	41,300	30,000
Sports Anchor	89,800	80,000	45,000	33,000	26,000
News Reporter	51,000	43,500	30,000	23,000	20,000
Sports Reporter	62,500	38,000	30,000	22,000	20,000
Assignment Editor	40,000	35,000	34,000	30,000	25,300
News Producer	45,000	37,000	29,800	23,300	21,500
News Writer	35,500	25,000	22,000	18,000	*
News Assistant	31,800	36,000	21,000	16,800	15,000
Photographer	44,000	35,000	28,000	21,000	21,000
Tape Editor	38,800	28,000	22,300	19,300	23,000
Graphics Specialist	40,000	34,500	25,000	27,000	30,800
Internet Specialist	47,000	40,000	36,300	25,000	35,000
Art Director	56,500	45,000	35,000	*	*

As usual, the larger the market, the larger the salary. There are exceptions, of course, and the most common ones are in the largest markets. That's because the biggest markets include both the biggest and highest-paying stations—along with a disproportionately high number of smaller, lower-paying independents. Compared with last year, markets 1–25 and 101–150 saw the most positions increase in salary. All the rest were about the same.

\* Insufficient data

## Median TV News Salaries by Full-Time Staff Size

	51+	31-50	21-30	11-20	1-10
News Director	\$121,000	\$85,000	\$65,000	\$53,000	\$45,000
Assistant News Director	80,000	55,000	36,500	30,000	48,000
Managing Editor	70,000	47,000	54,500	37,500	44,000
Executive Producer	65,000	45,000	34,500	32,000	44,000
News Anchor	110,000	70,000	45,000	31,000	44,000
Weathercaster	100,000	55,000	44,500	30,000	32,500
Sports Anchor	82,500	45,000	33,000	25,500	25,000
News Reporter	45,000	30,000	24,900	20,000	23,500
Sports Reporter	40,000	28,000	21,800	19,500	24,300
Assignment Editor	40,000	35,000	30,000	24,000	30,000
News Producer	39,500	30,000	24,000	21,000	28,500
News Writer	25,000	20,000	*	15,000	*
News Assistant	35,000	20,000	17,000	18,000	28,000
Photographer	37,200	28,700	22,400	20,000	25,000
Tape Editor	30,000	23,000	20,000	20,000	17,000
Graphics Specialist	35,000	26,000	25,000	18,500	11,000
Internet Specialist	45,000	30,000	22,500	22,000	35,000
Art Director	53,000	35,000	*	33,000	40,000

## Median Radio News Salary Comparisons Over Time

	2006	2001	5-Year Percentage Change	1996	10-Year Percentage Change
<b>Inflation</b>			<b>+13.1%</b>		<b>+28.2%</b>
All radio news			-4.5%		+22.2%
News Director	\$30,000	\$31,000	-3.2	\$21,000	+42.9
News Reporter	25,000	25,750	-2.9	19,000	+31.6
News Anchor	23,500	25,000	-6.0	21,000	+11.9
News Producer	20,500	26,000	-21.2	20,000	+2.5
Sports Anchor	32,500	30,000	+8.3	*	*
Sports Reporter	19,000	*	*	*	*

\* Insufficient data

Overall, salaries in radio news have not kept pace with inflation over the past five or 10 years. This year's losses wiped out all the gains over the past five years, but, even so, wages were running well behind inflation. Only sports anchors are up over the past five years, and they're up just 8.3 percent—still behind inflation. The picture is more complex over the past 10 years. News directors are still up well beyond inflation (42.9 percent versus 28.2 percent), and news reporters are up a little above inflation (at 31.6 percent), but both news anchors and news producers are running well behind the inflation rate.

In contrast to market size, there are extremely few exceptions to the pattern that the stations with the largest news staffs pay the most money. Here, the exceptions are most likely to be among the smallest newsrooms, because that's where we find a disproportionately high percentage of small size but large market independents. This year, the smallest news departments had the most positions go up in salary.

## Median Radio News Salaries by Market Size

	Major	Large	Medium	Small
News Director	\$ 35,000	\$44,000	\$30,000	\$25,000
News Reporter	42,500	25,500	11,000	24,000
News Anchor	83,500	23,000	32,000	22,800
News Producer	40,000	29,500	21,800	20,000
Sports Anchor	100,000	40,000	30,000	25,000
Sports Reporter	*	30,000	4,000	19,000

\* Insufficient data

Again, the larger the market, generally, the higher the salary. There's a fair amount of variability because some of the specialized positions appear only in certain size markets or at certain stations. More positions rose in major and small markets than in the two middle groups, but the differences were small. 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.

### Median Radio News Salaries by Full-Time Staff Size

	1	2	3 or 4	5 or more
News Director	\$26,000	\$30,500	\$26,000	\$37,000
News Reporter	*	*	17,800	25,000
News Anchor	*	*	22,500	30,000
News Producer	20,000	21,300	20,000	22,300
Sports Anchor	40,000	35,000	24,000	40,000
Sports Reporter	25,000	40,000	11,000	19,000

The salaries by staff size are highly variable until we get to five or more employees—at which point all the salaries are higher except for sports reporters. That was the same pattern as last year. We also were puzzled by stations with one news staff member who's a sports reporter, sports anchor or news producer.

### Median Radio News Salaries by Number of Stations Served/Supervised

	1	2-3	4	5-6	7 or more
News Director	\$35,000	\$26,000	\$35,000	\$32,000	\$33,000
News Reporter	*	4,000	26,000	24,000	27,800
News Anchor	*	16,600	38,000	23,500	30,000
News Producer	*	22,500	13,500	23,500	20,000
Sports Anchor	*	35,000	70,000	24,000	37,500
Sports Reporter	*	4,000	16,500	*	30,000

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

### About the Survey

The RTNDA/Ball State University Annual Survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2005 among all 1,617 operating non-satellite television stations. Valid responses came from 1,120 television stations (69.3 percent) and 155 radio news directors and general managers representing 524 radio stations.

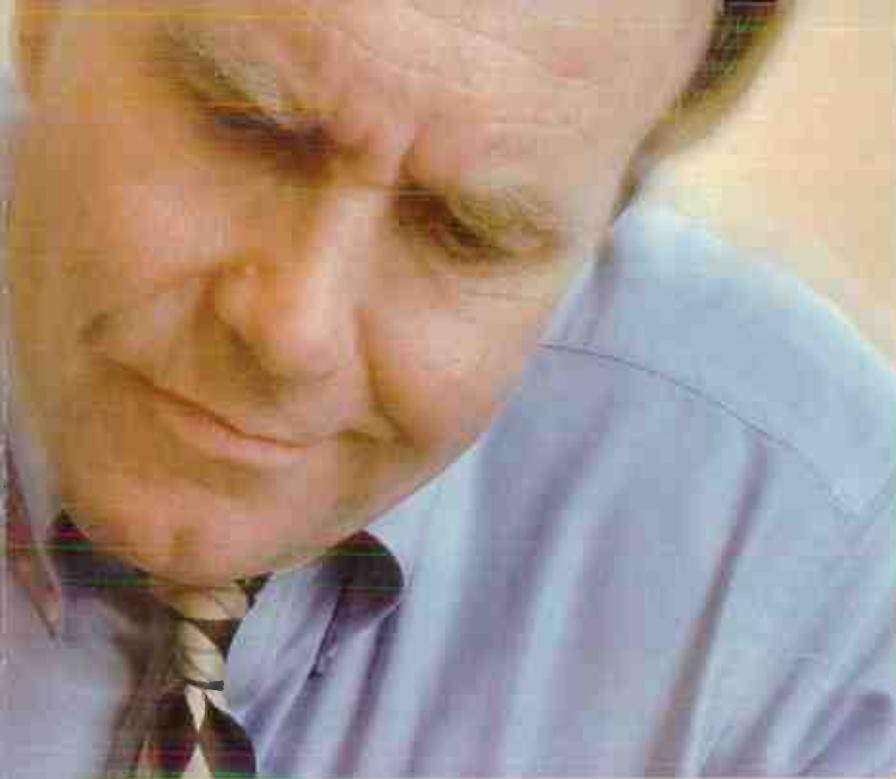
Bob Papper is professor of telecommunications at Ball State University and has worked extensively in radio and TV news. Data entry and tabulation were done by the Bureau of Business Research at Ball State. This research was supported by the Department of Telecommunications at Ball State University and the Radio-Television News Directors Association.

### Median Radio News Salaries by Ownership

	Group-Owned	Independent
News Director	\$30,000	\$30,000
News Reporter	25,000	18,500
News Anchor	23,300	27,000
News Producer	20,000	28,000
Sports Anchor	35,000	24,000
Sports Reporter	22,500	10,500

As with last year, there is no consistent pattern to salaries based on ownership.

\* Insufficient data



## Starting Out

### TV News Starting Salaries

Position	Average	Median	Minimum	Maximum
All TV news	\$21,400	\$20,000	\$ 7,000	\$77,000
Reporter	21,100	20,000	8,500	77,000
Producer	21,800	21,000	9,500	37,500
Photographer	20,600	20,000	8,000	44,500
Tape Editor	20,500	20,600	7,000	37,500
Assignment Editor	26,300	25,000	19,300	35,000
News Assistant	23,000	23,700	16,600	31,200
Writer	24,400	25,000	18,000	30,000
Anchor	20,600	19,800	13,000	29,600

The positions are listed in order of how many starting hires were made in 2005. Figures are based on salaries for new employees with no full-time experience.

### Radio News Starting Salaries

Position	Average	Median	Minimum	Maximum
All radio news	\$18,000	\$18,000	\$ 1,000	\$32,000
Reporter	19,400	19,500	10,000	30,000
Announcer	17,000	16,000	1,000	32,000
Producer	16,400	14,800	10,700	29,000
Board Operator	13,600	13,800	10,700	16,000
Anchor	20,600	22,000	10,700	30,000

The positions are listed in order of how many starting hires were made in 2005. Figures are based on salaries for new employees with no full-time experience.

## Contractual Obligations

### TV News People Under Contract and Non-Competes

	Under Contract	Under Non-Compete
News Director	39.8%	80.2%
Assistant News Director	43.1	81.8
Managing Editor	50.0	87.5
Executive Producer	55.5	93.4
News Anchor	92.1	83.7
Weathercaster	89.6	84.1
Sports Anchor	88.2	84.0
News Reporter	79.7	86.7
Sports Reporter	67.6	88.4
Assignment Editor	32.0	88.9
News Producer	56.9	83.6
News Writer	18.8	50.0
News Assistant	7.9	60.0
Photographer	14.2	88.9
Tape Editor	10.9	84.6
Graphics Specialist	6.7	66.7
Internet Specialist	27.1	89.5
Art Director	17.9	80.0

Almost all the percentages for contracts in TV news are up—with bigger jumps for managing editor, assignment editor, news writer, Internet specialist and news and sports reporters. Most employees who are under contract have non-competes—except in the growing number of states where non-competes have been eliminated.

### Radio News People Under Contract or Non-Competes

	Under Contract	Under Non-Compete
News Director	34.8%	74.4%
News Reporter	30.0	66.7
News Anchor	30.0	83.3
News Producer	25.0	90.0
Sports Anchor	33.3	100.0
Sports Reporter	50.0	83.3

The differences this year versus last year are variable, but for the third straight year, there is an overall increase in the percentage of radio news people under contract. As with TV non-competes, most contracts include that provision unless the state prohibits it.



## Decisions, Decisions

When news directors should let go.

You may wonder why your staff—even your management team—comes to you for answers on some of the smallest matters. If yours is like most newsrooms around the country, they come to the news director because they have no specific guidelines to use in making decisions or they believe they do not have the authority to make the decisions.

Neither is good. The result is that you are frequently interrupted, you feel you can't get work done and you come to believe you are the only one in the newsroom who really can do things right.

You may repeatedly override decisions your staffers make. You think you're just making something better, filling in holes or adding another idea. In fact, you're actually undermining the authority of the person who was to have made the decision in the first place.

You tell the 6 p.m. producer she has responsibility for putting together the newscast. But when she shows you the lineup, you change it. The assignment editor is supposed to decide whether and where to send the live truck. But after he announces he's keeping the truck at the newsroom on a certain story, you tell

him to send it to the scene. The assistant news director is charged with making work schedules, but you grant exceptions when staff request days off.

Not knowing how to make the decisions you want them to make, and believing you really don't trust them to make good decisions anyway, many employees simply stop deciding. They come to you instead. You make the decision and thus take it away from your employees. It's not their decision any more. It's yours.

Meanwhile, you want the interruptions to end. You want to feel less overwhelmed. You want to stop being a control freak and learn how to give authority to others. You want to pay attention to the "big picture" and stop drowning in daily details.

Here's how you can get what you want:

**Figure out what tasks you want to delegate.** Then create specific standards the staff can apply to each task. For example: "We need a minimum of three photographers and two reporters and two producers each day. If the schedule shows we have more than our minimum, someone can have the day off."

With those specific guidelines, the assistant news director is prepared to make good

scheduling decisions. She needn't come to you with every one.

But delegating the tasks may be the easy part. The hard part comes next.

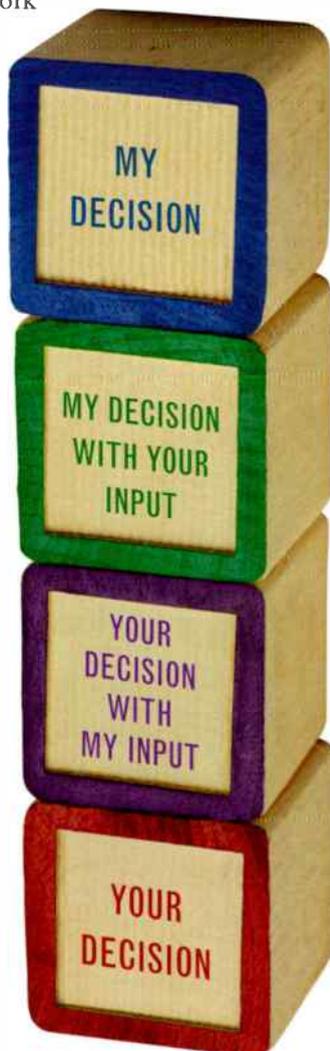
**Accept the decisions your staffers make.** And do so even when you think you could make them better. You probably can make them better sometimes. The problem is that the cost of taking back the decision is too high: It robs the employee of any pride of ownership and it robs you of time better spent looking at all the work of the newsroom as a whole rather than tiny pieces of it.

**Understand the hierarchy of decision-making.** Some time ago I learned a method I've since taught scores of news directors. They succeed with it when they stick to it. The trick is to keep decisions squarely where you assign them. If you don't, the staff will know you don't trust them to do the work you've hired them to do. In this hierarchy, "my" refers to the news director. From top to bottom, it should flow from my decision, to my decision with your input, to your decision with my input, and finally to your decision.

When I ask news directors where they think they put most of the decisions in their newsroom, they say, almost to a person, "my decision with your input" and "your decision with my input." Then I ask where they think their staff would put most of the newsroom decisions. To their credit, most news directors at this point admit, "my decision."

Having come to that recognition, they are better prepared to go forward with the liberating and satisfying process of assigning more decisions to the staff.

When you do that, you empower your employees, improve morale, and find the time to focus on the job news directors are supposed to do: make good journalism.—Valerie Hyman is president of News and Management Training. She can be reached at [ValerieHyman@BetterNews.com](mailto:ValerieHyman@BetterNews.com).





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## Freelance Success

How to make the most of your situation.

Working freelance is a fact of life in many markets these days. Tight budgets are making staff reporter positions scarce. If freelancing is the only way for you to get on the air, don't shy away. Working as a freelancer creates some great opportunities if you have the right attitude.

As a freelancer you are joining a family that has its own written and unwritten rules and its own cliques with you playing the role of the outsider. You may never feel as if you are part of the "team" and be invited to the weekend parties or baby showers, but you will develop relationships in the newsroom that may prove more genuine and rewarding.

Regardless, come in every workday with a positive attitude. There will be days when you may feel insecure or frustrated because the staff reporter is getting the best assignment or the most attention. Let it go. Prove your worth with your work. The old saying that you are only as good as your last story is especially true for freelance reporters.

There are a few other ways to succeed as a freelancer.

**Be aggressive.** Act like a reporter. When you are assigned a story, begin digging on your own. Develop your own local sources, find a fresh angle to the story, and hand off the story to the staff reporter with notes, contacts and phone numbers.

**Know the news.** Even though you are only working a couple of days a week, know the big local stories, and be ready to jump in to do a follow-up without having to spend hours having someone brief you.

**Prepare for anything.** Make sure you never have to say no. Have a bag

in your car with extra clothing, fire gear, rain clothing, etc. If the managing editor turns to you and says, "We need you. Are you ready?" there can be no hesitation. As a freelancer you don't want to miss your chance.

**Take a proactive approach.** Don't wait for a story; find one and pitch it. Remember, some may be apprehensive or surprised that a freelancer is boldly arguing for a story. But if you have done your research and it's a good story, you will find most managers or producers are excited that they have such a strong reporter available to them.

**Make your knowledge known.** If your past reporting experiences have helped you become familiar with a certain



beat, such as aviation or labor relations or politics, make sure the decision-makers know about it.

But what about your agenda? What do you want to get out of the freelance experience? Do you want a full-time job in that newsroom? Are you using this experience to freshen your audition tape?

Decide what you want and keep the following in mind along the way.

**Face reality.** Chances are this part-time job will not lead to a full-time staff position. There is nothing wrong with letting the news director know what you want, but be prepared to have others hired from outside while you keep working two days a week.

**Ask for more.** You might not get the next staff job, but you can and should keep asking for more. Let them know you want more days or are willing to work weekends to get on the schedule. If a staff position becomes available, apply but don't lobby for the job in the newsroom. Schedule a one-on-one with the news director. Let him or her know you want the job. Then drop it and go out and do a story that will lead that night's newscast. Let your work do the talking.

**Think about the future.** Keep a copy of everything you do on the air and constantly update your audition tape. Remember, that is why you are there.

**Finally, act as if you are on the staff.** Be friendly. Interact with producers and the desk. Say hi when you walk in. Congratulate others on a good program or a good story. Treat the photographers with respect. Even if you came off the bench, you are still on the team and they will appreciate your great attitude.

There is nothing "free" about freelancing. You are a slave to uncertainty. You are tied to a chaotic schedule that affects your life and family. But, freelancing may help you get where you want to go if you have the right attitude.—Ross Becker is a freelance reporter for KNBC-TV in Los Angeles.

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## Talk of the Town

What to do when you become the news.

Rachel Barnhart turned on her radio one afternoon and heard a local talk show host discussing her contract dispute. The Rochester, NY, anchor's challenge to her former station's non-compete clause wound up in court, and the details were also splashed across local newspapers. Instead of delivering the news, she wound up being the news.

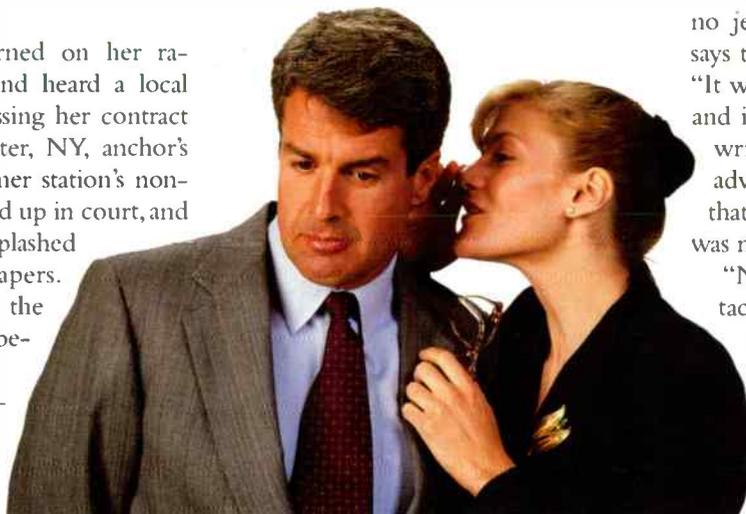
"It was so uncomfortable," Barnhart says of the media coverage. "I desperately wanted to speak for myself." But her common sense told her she should instead let her lawyer speak for her.

When an anchor becomes newspaper, online or radio fodder, for whatever reason, it can be an awkward turnabout. You've been taught in journalism school to be an objective observer. When the spotlight's on you, though, you might naturally want to set the record straight. But where? And to whom?

Many were supportive of Barnhart, but she turned down an invitation for a radio interview to explain her situation. "I didn't comment publicly," she says, because she doesn't want to be perceived as a "hot potato" who might draw controversy to her next employer.

Contract wranglings may lead to headlines, but Lindsay Gantner was forced into the local media spotlight when her then-employer dropped all newscasts.

"In March 2002, when I was working at WBUP-TV in Marquette, MI, the owners decided to stop news production," says Gantner. "There were several articles in the newspaper regarding the shutdown."



Standing in the unemployment line was humiliating, she says, and she was tempted, in anger, to talk to the local newspaper about the unfortunate situation.

"Probably the best thing I did was to not talk to the newspaper," Gantner says. She believes she might have said things she would later regret. Her happy ending to that experience is a better job in a larger market.

"Getting fired is personal," says former anchor John Nicholson, when asked if it isn't a bit hypocritical for TV anchors to deny interviews to other working journalists. Anchors, in his opinion, are not obligated to speak publicly about jobs or contracts gone wrong.

The 9/11 terrorist attacks turned WUSA-TV anchor Mike Walter into an international newsmaker. During his morning commute to his previous job as a reporter for Gannett's *USA Today* news program, Walter watched through his windshield as the third plane crashed into the Pentagon.

Walter's reporting instincts took over and he pulled off the highway to take in the devastation. CNN interviewed

him that day. A French journalist took one of Walter's comments and used it to advance a bizarre theory.

"[He] used one of my quotes out of context to help bolster his claim that no jet ever hit the Pentagon." Walter says this line came back to haunt him: "It was like a cruise missile with wings and it just went right over there." The writer used that single soundbite to advance his theory that the aircraft that plummeted into the Pentagon was not a commercial plane.

"Next thing I know, I'm being contacted by *Le Monde* and a French TV network," says Walter, "and then came the BBC and Japanese journalists and a reporter for *Der Spiegel*." Walter is relieved that his brief, serendipitous stint dealing with international media is over for now.

For those who find themselves in the spotlight, here is some advice from those who have survived it.

**Think before you speak.** Barnhart lends this bit of wisdom, based on her experience: "You need to decide how public comments could affect your future employment," she says, especially if you plan on staying in the same market.

**Remember that you are a public figure.** Howard Chen, sports anchor at WUPW-TV in Toledo, OH, has not been the subject of controversial coverage. But he watches his speed when driving and when he's out with friends, so that his name won't end up in print. Says Chen: "I do feel like I have to constantly be on guard about my image."

**Develop a thick skin.** Cincinnati anchor Sandra Ali says coverage from other media is all part of the job. "I don't think it's easy being in another's spotlight," the WLWT-TV anchor says, "but I also know that's part of the territory. It's definitely something they don't teach you in journalism school."—Christy Perry is an adjunct professor of broadcast journalism at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University.

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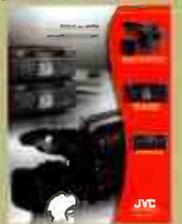
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## Drawing on Experience

What new producers bring to the table.

As news stations deal with shrinking budgets and a diminishing number of employees, producers are being called upon to fill several roles within the newsroom to bridge the gaps. And many are looking back on the prompter-running, overnight assignment desk positions we once held, only to realize just how important they were in developing the skills we needed to become successful producers.

So what exactly have we learned? And how can people who jump right into producing acquire the same essential abilities?

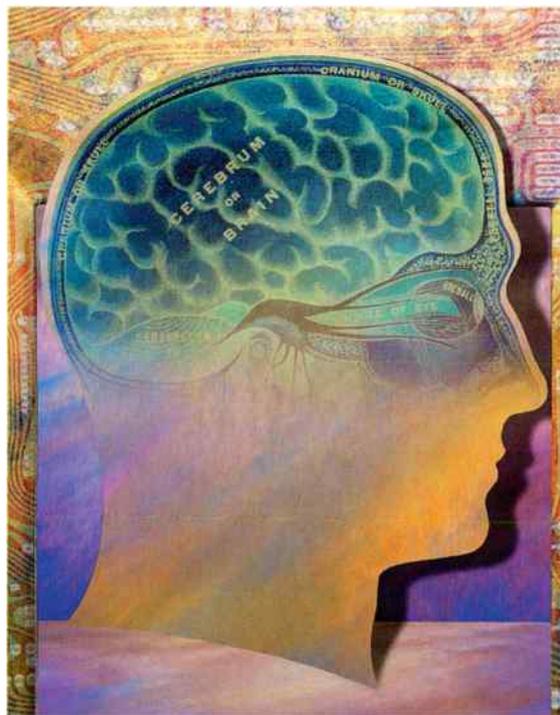
**Create a clear vision.** In order to best utilize your tools as a producer, you need to have a clear understanding of what resources are available to you. Having previous experience within the newsroom gives you a tighter grasp on what elements can be incorporated into your show. For example, as an associate producer I learned how to creatively choose new SOTs for headlines and teases.

Pam Steffey, an executive producer at WBZ-TV in Boston, agrees. She started as a production assistant in Kalamazoo, MI, and has held several positions across the country. Steffey says these jobs have helped her recognize the difference between “how I want it to look on TV, and how it will look on TV.”

Dow Smith, author of “Power Producer: A Practical Guide to TV News Producing,” says knowing the equipment gives you a better understanding of what your crew is capable of and gives you a definite advantage. Your director may tell you something is im-

possible, when really it’s just difficult to execute. By knowing exactly what your team can do, you can better ensure your vision is carried out.

For those who have always been producers, learning your crew’s capabilities may be as easy as sitting down with



a director or taking a trip back to ENG. The key here is to learn the equipment and know your options.

**Set realistic goals and understand limitations.** Once you have a general understanding of what everyone is doing, you can prioritize and work around any obstacles that may arise. When executing liveness, Smith says, “it’s invaluable to have some experience with a camera crew, because, as a producer, you are leading a team of people with various skill sets. And, as a leader, you have to understand what they’re up against.”

If you want a live report from a murder scene for the 5 o’clock show, you need to do more than just demand one—you need to calculate if it’s physically possible. If you’ve had prior reporting or shooting experience, you know it takes about 10 minutes to raise a mast and about five to feed a package, so you can more accurately assess the risks involved in banking on the shot when decision-time comes.

Producers without such experience can still acquire the necessary skills mid-career by going out with a crew and observing. You’ll learn when you’re being too demanding and possibly putting someone at risk, and when you can push the envelope to get what you want.

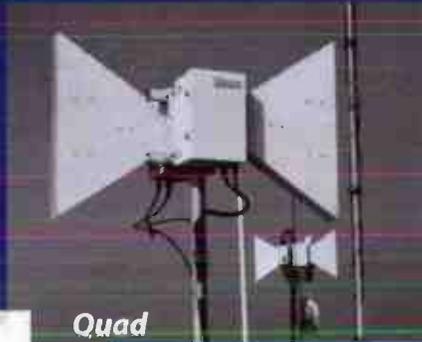
**Communicate with crew members.** By knowing the newsroom and each person’s role in it, you can also communicate more effectively with your team. You are able to use terminology that they are familiar with and state exactly what you want. This creates less of a chance for error and miscommunication.

Sharon Doud, a regional producer at Fox News in New York, says her reporting days taught her about IFB etiquette. She says she learned how to stay connected with crews out in the field without distracting them during liveness. “It’s no secret: It takes a team to get a show on the air,” Doud says, and knowing how and when to communicate with them is key.

Whether you’re just starting out or have been in the business for decades, the message remains the same—the more you know, the better off you are. So, if you have never had the chance to walk in someone else’s shoes, getting out into the newsroom may be the best step toward becoming a better producer.—Jill Nowicki, formerly a producer at WCVB-TV in Boston, can be reached at [jill\\_nowicki@hotmail.com](mailto:jill_nowicki@hotmail.com).

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## Newsgathering Equipment

HD improves the world of ENG.

High-definition is working its way into ENG. There are now wireless camcorder systems that transmit HD back to a remote vehicle. In the vehicle, HD signal conveyance via digital COFDM (coded orthogonal frequency division multiplexing) is becoming available. Although sometimes at the expense of range, COFDM has made it possible to send a signal beyond previously insurmountable obstacles or from a moving vehicle, or to bypass tall masts.

### HD COFDM

Tandberg Television has new HD MPEG-4 encoders for SNG/ENG. The EN5940 combines MPEG-4 AVC HD encoding with a DVB-S2 satellite modulator. Tandberg says the unit can transmit high-quality HD with the same transponder bandwidth used for standard-definition MPEG-2. For ENG, the EN5950 includes a COFDM modulator with a reduced bit rate that Tandberg credits for a robust signal with greater range and reliability. Tandberg also supports inexpensive HDV camcorders with a new adaptor with a Firewire interface. Option cards at a receiver can interface with HDV VTRs. Tandberg Television: 678.812.6300 or [www.tandbergtv.com](http://www.tandbergtv.com)

Broadcast Microwave Services' latest COFDM systems



**Clockwise from above: Television Engineering Eagle Eye 16:9 mast camera; BMS Truck-Coder II COFDM digital transmitter; Tandberg Voyager EN5940 HD MPEG-4 encoder/satellite modulator; Television Engineering TEC-ENG-2006 GPS/monitor; RF Central RFX-HD-CMT high-definition camera-mounted transmitter; NSI NuPod atop KTVK-TV van; Will-Burt D-TEC II mast collision alarm system.**

are high-definition. The Truck-Coder II takes 100 presets that can be downloaded via an Ethernet port. The TCII includes an interior controller and an exterior antenna configured to operate in the 2 GHz band with an option for 7 GHz. The system can support simultaneous transmission of two adjacent signals within a 12 MHz channel. The Central-DeCoder II includes a receiver/decoder that can au-



tomatically detect and adjust to COFDM/MPEG and analog signals. Broadcast Microwave Services: 800.669.9667 or [www.bms-inc.com](http://www.bms-inc.com)

If you must feed video during ongoing live coverage, Microwave Radio Communications has a system that sends a live HD signal and simultaneously transfers HD video via the Internet "over

the top" of the live video. The system uses MRC's Code-Runner 2 TX & RX transmitter and receiver and SCM4000 high-speed modem, among other components. Microwave Radio

Communications: 978.671.5700 or [www.mrcbroadcast.com](http://www.mrcbroadcast.com)

### Frugal HDNG

You can find the MRC system in Frontline's DSNG-HD Sprinter. A simpler van, DSNG-350 LT keeps extras to a minimum to start under \$180,000. Frontline Communications: 727.573.0400 or [www.frontlinecomm.com](http://www.frontlinecomm.com)



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# Buyer's Guide

## HD Wireless Camera

For covering major sports or political events, high-definition wireless transmitters are available from RF Central to relay high-definition signals from camera to an ENG/SNG or production truck. The RFX-HD-CMT high-definition camera-mounted transmitter with camera control offers up to 200 megawatts of power. Video compression is MPEG-2 with a variety of DTV frame rates and scan lines. RF Central: 717.249.4900 or [www.rfcentral.com](http://www.rfcentral.com)

For high-end production, the Grass Valley HD Wireless Camera system works with existing LDK 6000 cameras. Company says the system works well intercutting with studio

cameras because latency is only one frame at bandwidths of 55 to 75 megabits per second. Compression is JPEG 2000; transmission is via the 802.16 WiMax standard. Thomson: 503.526.8160 or [www.thomsongrassvalley.com](http://www.thomsongrassvalley.com)

## Widescreen Camera

Television Engineering Corporation offers a widescreen mast camera for wide shots from above. TEC created the Eagle Eye 16:9 camera as a more affordable alternative to a full high-definition mast camera. TEC also offers a GPS navigation device, TEC-ENG-2006, with some extra functions for ENG. Entering an address of a breaking news story can quickly call up direc-

tions, and once on the scene, the GPS screen on the truck cab dashboard can convert to a monitor of audio and video from the ENG truck system, including IFB. TEC: 866.692.0228 or [www.tvengineering.com](http://www.tvengineering.com)

## Taking a Low Profile

N Systems' NuPod, with its MC 5 controller, streamlines traditional ENG work routines and avoids the problems associated with masts. NuPod has a directional, low-profile antenna that typically extends only 40 inches. Embedded control automatically aligns and simplifies operations, so the station's control center can handle many of the jobs the field operator once did. NuPod supports analog and digital

microwave systems, including HD, that operate in the 2 and 7 GHz bands. NSI: 410.964.8400 or [www.nsystems.com](http://www.nsystems.com)

## Safety Upgrade

Will-Burt has a new version of its D-TEC safety system for telescoping ENG masts. D-TEC II detects alternating current from power lines and uses sonar to detect and avoid mast collision with objects. A new emergency bypass lets an operator override the system when there are no overhead hazards. Will-Burt: 330.682.7015 or [www.willburt.com](http://www.willburt.com)

Michael Murrie is a professor at Pepperdine University in Malibu, CA. You can reach him at [michael.murrie@pepperdine.edu](mailto:michael.murrie@pepperdine.edu).

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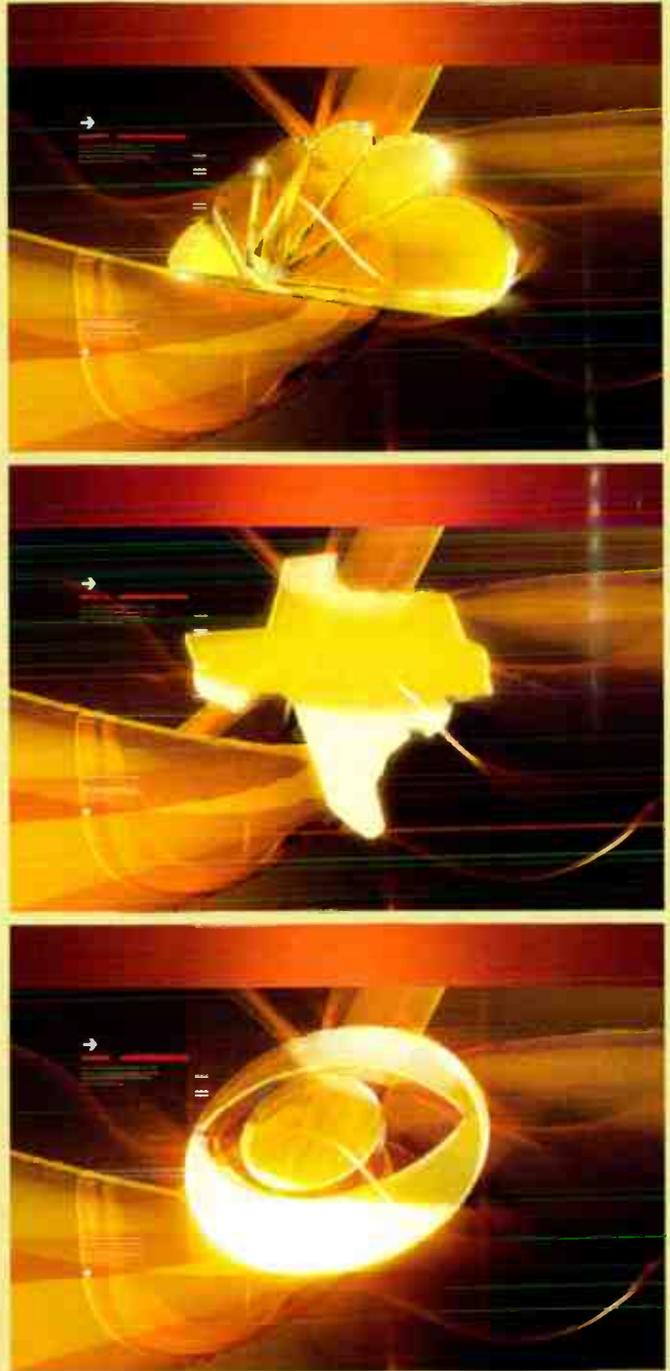
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# Tough Calls

## THE QUESTION:

**In the Pine Middle School shooting, what factors came into play when you made your decision to identify (or not identify) the 14-year-old shooter?**

**What newsroom policies do you have that aid in these decisions?**



**JASON PASCO**  
News Director  
KTVN-TV  
Reno, NV

The decision to identify juveniles accused of committing a crime is never an easy one. However, three factors help the KTVN newsroom make a tough call: The severity of the crime, the community's need and right to know, and the information disclosed by law enforcement. In the case of a shooting at a Reno middle school, all three factors worked together to help us determine that we would identify the 14-year-old boy accused of wounding two fellow students. The day of the shooting, it appeared the boy would be tried as an adult because the arrest was based on an attempted murder investigation. As a result, law enforcement released his name and booking photo to the media. All of the local news media outlets reporting the story broadcast or published the boy's identity. However, after the district attorney's office decided the evidence didn't support adult charges, the case went to juvenile court. That set off a newsroom debate: Our station felt that the "horse was out of the barn" so to speak, and that we couldn't "un-name" the boy. As a result, we continue to identify him as we report follow-up stories. In addition, here at KTVN we rely on an excellent news standards manual compiled by our corporate legal counsel. It includes guidelines for identifying juveniles and almost every other legal or ethical challenge a newsroom might face. It is a great resource that every news team member has at his or her fingertips.



**JACK BOWE**  
News Director  
KOLO-TV  
Reno, NV

At KOLO-TV Channel 8, we identified the boy at the time of his arrest because he was preliminarily charged as an adult, but we ceased to identify him once the case was kicked back to juvenile court. Even though the cat was out of the bag and his name was already public record, we decided to go back to what we would have done if he had been charged immediately as a juvenile. I felt we needed to defer to the judgment of prosecutors and the courts that the offense did not justify being kicked up to adult court. If his guilt or innocence were to be determined in a juvenile court arena, it seemed that we needed to follow the normal juvenile offender policies. The station has used juveniles' names before when the charges involve murder or other serious felonies and the case gets bumped up to adult court. In those cases the determination has been made for us by law enforcement or prosecutors that the juvenile had committed an "adult-type" crime. I wouldn't bash anyone who made the opposite decision. There's some merit to the argument that his name is already out there and you can't retrieve it. Ultimately, though, it's a matter of following the "spirit" of the law.



**JON KILLORAN**  
News Director  
KRNV-TV  
Reno, NV

We are very mindful when it comes to stories involving children. In regard to the Pine Middle School shooting, the suspect was arrested as an adult, and that status remained the same for nearly three days. During that time, we decided to use the suspect's name and mug shot as we would any other person arrested as an adult. This was not a tough call. The tough call came when the Washoe County District Attorney chose to file juvenile charges instead. The decision came down late in the afternoon of the same day we had been the "pool" photographer at the suspect's video arraignment. After significant but quick debate due to deadlines, we chose to continue running the suspect's name and the arraignment video unaltered for this latest story. Our reasoning was the amount of public attention on the case and the fact that there was no way to "un-name" the suspect. We decided to revisit the issue after receiving any viewer feedback and further story development. Viewers we heard from were split on continuing to identify the suspect. We have ultimately decided to continue using the suspect's name in future stories but only use video of him that does not show his face. In this case, we felt the public's right to know outweighs the suspect's privacy.

Send your Tough Calls ideas to [toughcalls@rtnda.org](mailto:toughcalls@rtnda.org).



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