



NAB's Guide to
Careers in

Television

Second Edition

by Liz Chuday



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National Association of Broadcasters
National Association of Broadcasters Education Foundation

Revised by Liz Chuday
Chuday Communications
Baltimore, MD

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Note: The educational background and work experience required for the various careers discussed in this booklet are generalizations. Specific educational backgrounds and work skills will vary from station to station, market to market.

INTRODUCTION

Why Consider A Career in Television?

Television bookmarks our lives, preserves moments in time that trigger memories of where we were and what we were doing when historic events occurred. Its images and sounds touch our emotions, connect us with world events, and help us prepare for natural disasters with weather reports using equipment so sensitive, it tracks storm movement block by block. We are entertained, informed, influenced and motivated to action by TV.

As an industry, television is an exciting business that continues to thrill. Look around when a camera crew arrives on a scene and the lights come on. Even the most conservative people may be swayed by the allure of TV and clamor to be in that spotlight.

This book, published by the **National Association of Broadcasters (NAB)**, a full-service trade association representing the interests of free, over-the-air radio and television broadcasters, and **the NAB Education Foundation (NABEF)**, an organization dedicated to the training and enhancement of the nation's broadcasting community, is intended to provide a general overview to persons considering a career in this dynamic and exciting field. It has been written specifically for entry-level job seekers with little or no experience in the industry, and includes general descriptions of job opportunities in the field and how these jobs interface with each other.

Whether your goal is to be on air or behind-the-scenes, this book will help you familiarize yourself with the workings of a TV station and understand how the various parts fit together to make the whole. The better educated you are about the business, the greater your chances of gaining entry to and succeeding in an industry that has produced the likes of Walter Cronkite, Oprah Winfrey, Jane Pauley, Diane Sawyer and Tom Brokaw.



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A Word About STATION OWNERSHIP

In terms of employment, station ownership may not affect entry-level position job seekers. However, as with any company, a station's resources (financial, technological, etc.) and structure will have an impact on the various positions at the television station – from what positions are available to the job responsibilities of each position. Thus, it is important to know and understand the differences in station ownership.

Most **commercial television stations** are owned by large media conglomerates. Smaller, family-held stations are the exception rather than the rule today as mergers and acquisitions have brought many stations under one large corporate umbrella.

There are several types of commercial stations. These include **stations that are owned and operated by the networks (O&Os)**, stations that are **network affiliates of a network** (ABC, CBS, Fox, NBC, Univision, PAX TV, WB, etc.) and **independent stations** that are not affiliated with any network. Large media groups often own affiliates of several different networks.

Network-owned and operated stations carry network programs, have a good deal of local autonomy and ultimately report to their network's station group management. Network affiliates also enjoy local autonomy and have a contractual relationship with a network for the network to supply them with programming.

Both affiliates and O&Os carry syndicated programming supplied by vendors such as King World and Twentieth Television, among others, which are either independently owned or exist as companies within the same corporate family. Independent stations carry syndicated programming and/or locally originated fare.

Public television stations are often owned or managed by local governments, universities and/or school districts. The majority of these stations are members of PBS receiving a large portion of their programming from this service. The remainder of their programming day is filled with syndicated and locally originated programming. Public stations cannot air advertising and depend on the funding they receive through viewer support, corporate underwriting and government funding.

Whether the entry-level position you find is with a small station or a large conglomerate, your job performance, in large part, will ultimately determine your upward mobility. It is also important when considering a career in television to know that the industry is mobile and relocation is often a reality.

The GENERAL ADMINISTRATION Department

General Manager

A station's **general manager** (GM), who often holds the additional title of **president** or **vice president** in larger station groups (and may also be the owner in a small cluster), is the chief operating officer at the station. All departments typically report directly to the general manager. The general manager sets the work ethic, tone and pace of the station. TV general managers predict market trends; set budgets and performance expectations; ensure the station is in compliance with all equal employment opportunity (EEO) and Federal Communications Commission (FCC) requirements; and have overall responsibility for maintaining a station's reputation and market image. TV general managers have final say on station hires and keep both on-air and behind-the-scenes talent in step with overall station directives. They create a clear vision for the station and the blueprints for success that every staffer is expected to follow.

The bottom line stops with the GM, who is charged with growing the station's profitability.. Advertising revenue is crucial to a television station's financial security and, as a result, relationship-building with advertisers and potential advertisers is a significant area of the GM's responsibilities. The GM is heavily involved in the station's sales efforts and is generally expected to participate in sales presentations along with executive members of the sales staff. GMs find creative ways to profit and succeed despite obstacles.

Every television station cultivates its own public image, based on its local market and community needs. As a result, general managers are committed to involving the station in community events and public affairs. Television stations are visible leaders in their markets, and a many choose to deliver on-air editorials to voice opinions about community issues at large.

General managers are typically recruited from within the advertising sales department, although news directors – especially those with experience in other aspects of the business – are also potential candidates for this position. The average length of stay in a market for a GM is five years. A traditional advancement path for a general manager is to leave a smaller market station for a larger market, either within his/her own company or by competitor recruitment (outside the company). General managers are often recruited from their stations by corporate offices for positions at company headquarters.

Station Manager

The position of **station manager** was originally designed to alleviate some of the pressures placed on the GM. Many stations are eliminating, or intend to eliminate, this position, thus the number of job opportunities for this title are diminishing. Station duopolies (stations that operate in markets where two television stations are owned by a single owner) may be an exception, where given the increased demands on the GM, the position of station manager remains necessary. In these instances, the GM focuses on long-term strategies, budgets, community networking, business building, advertiser relations and policy making, while the station manager concentrates on the day-to-day operations, interfacing with department heads and handling personnel issues.

Human Resources

In those stations where there is a station manager, the station manager often oversees the day-to-day **human resource (HR)** functions. Otherwise, the HR functions will fall to the general manager, who at larger stations will have a human resource staffer. Years ago, stations often had a senior human resources professional in this role, but this senior position is now often found at the corporate level, leaving more junior people at the individual stations within a group.

Executive Assistant

Executive assistants handle executive/senior-level correspondence and phones; field viewer questions and complaints; manage the executive appointments calendar; process billing; handle the paperwork related to EEO and FCC reporting and, in general, try to make the day go more smoothly for the GM.

Don't confuse the abundance of clerical duties with a lack of importance in this position. The executive assistant is often the person who determines who gains access to the GM, and thus this administrative position can be a powerful role at the station.

Business Manager and Controller

Some stations have separate positions for **business manager** and **controller** while other stations may combine these two positions since the duties for each position are similar: maintaining the station's financial well-being. These financial experts report directly to the general manager and at larger stations manage a business staff that oversees a station's accounting. They also make decisions in concert with the station's department heads and the general manager about large equipment purchases and expenditures.

Most business managers are Certified Public Accountants and many hold MBA degrees. All have high degrees of financial acumen in accounting and financial management as well as the necessary computer and data processing skills.

The SALES and MARKETING Department

Director of Sales

The term **general sales manager (GSM)** is sometimes substituted for **director of sales (DOS)**. In large markets, the DOS may supervise a team of GSMs and/or hold a dual title for one of the stations within the group. Along with the news director and business manager, the director of sales is part of the general manager's "inner circle." This is an extremely demanding position and requires exemplary management skills.

A DOS has daily contact with the general manager, and works with other sales managers to ensure the station is maximizing all available traditional revenue opportunities in the market – from both local and national ad agencies – while developing new business opportunities from both. Directors of sales price and manage the perishable inventory; do budget forecasts; issue sales projections; coordinate projects with other department heads; motivate the team; and inspire everyone to give 150 percent.

General Sales Manager

At some stations, the **general sales manager (GSM)** is a distinctly different position than director of sales. GSMs have complete knowledge of sales forecasting and planning and are strong motivators. Along with the DOS, they are long-range thinkers, have excellent presentation and interpersonal skills and excel at client networking. GSMs develop monthly and quarterly revenue-generating proposals, establish individual sales goals and hire and manage the sales teams.

National Sales Manager

National sales managers (NSM) manage a television station's sales accounts. A national sales manager "works the phones," deals with the sales representatives at national advertising firms and travels to the advertising epicenters including New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Atlanta and Dallas. National business is very fast-paced. Sales representatives at advertising firms working with NSMs handle a host of stations and must make decisions quickly, thus it is imperative that national sales managers have all the station's updated information, are on top of all pending business and are accessible at all times to negotiate buys. Stations lacking a national sales manager give the responsibilities of this position to the GSM.

Marketing Director or Director of Non-Traditional Revenue

The position of **marketing director or director of non-traditional revenue** is a more recently created position within television stations, added as more stations seek non-traditional revenue sources. The performance bars for these positions continue to rise. Marketing directors continually develop and implement creative, out-of-the-box ways to generate revenue.

One successful example of a non-traditional revenue source is staging an "Ask the Pharmacist" day during which pharmacists associated with a professional network come into the station and dispense advice to callers. This group discussion is not broadcasted, but promotional spots encouraging viewers to call the station are, and the pharmaceutical client pays for the promotional costs. The marketing director may also work with a local charity, sponsoring an event with commercial TV tie-ins and/or printed collateral materials.

Depending on the station, marketing directors may have a support staff and/or one or two account executives assigned to help in their area, and also may work with the production people in creative services to produce commercials for new advertisers.

Local Sales Manager

Local sales managers (LSM) closely supervise the frontline sales staff consisting of account executives or account managers – whatever term that station prefers. If a station does not have a general sales manager, the local sales managers acquire the duties of this position.

Account Executive

Account executives (AE), who also may be **called account managers**, comprise the local sales team that generate advertising revenue by calling on established agencies, cold-calling new prospects and convincing potential clients of the merits of television advertisements. Account executives often have irregular hours and work evenings and weekends meeting with clients.

An innate sales ability and a positive attitude are essential in this position. Most account executives receive a commission based on their sales volumes, and thus earnings will fluctuate depending on sales performance. This isn't necessarily a job for those persons who want a consistent monthly paycheck. But for successful account executives, the potentially outstanding financial rewards make this an attractive position.

Sales Assistant

Sales assistants keep the communications flowing within the sales department, working with managers and account executives to create sales presentations and other sales support materials. They are adept at a number of computer programs (e.g., PowerPoint), input sales orders, troubleshoot client and agency phone calls, help track and gather articles that support the sales cause and may even plan the details of sales entertainment events.

The TRAFFIC Department

Operations Manager

Operations managers head the traffic department, whose responsibility is to set the advertising schedule that is crucial to maximizing a station's revenue and keeping commercials on the air. Logical thinking and good task juggling abilities are critical in this position. An operations manager's job is highly stressful; his or her performance could mean the difference between the sales department achieving its budget or not. Operations managers ensure the traffic department keeps an accurate station log – the master listing of all scheduled programs and commercials expected to air throughout each broadcast day.

One of the television station's major goals is to ensure every spot (i.e. television commercial) is sold for the highest amount while the perishable inventory – or available time to run commercials – is maximized. An operations manager knows how to manipulate the schedule to meet both the client's and station's needs.

For example, consider a situation where a movie company wants to buy spots promoting a film opening in just a few days and is willing to spend top-dollar, but the television station has sold out its inventory for that weekend. The operations manager would identify clients that may be willing to alter their advertising schedule, sometimes offering additional incentives such as extra spots added elsewhere at no charge, or offering up other programs with air time left to sell in hopes of clearing out that inventory while at the same time benefiting the client.

Other Traffic Department Positions

Larger stations may structure the traffic department as follows: at the head of the department is the operations manager who reports to the DOS and directly supervises the traffic manager. The traffic manager oversees the traffic supervisor who is in charge of the other members of the traffic team: the traffic assistants (also known as order entry coordinators or log editors or copy coordinators). Traffic assistants create and manage the next day's commercial logs, make sure copy is properly entered; type quickly and accurately, and perform other clerical duties to keep sales running.

The RESEARCH Department

Market Research Director

A **market research director** interprets a station's ratings and supporting research to cast the station most favorably against its competitors, and assists in the creation of sales materials. Sometimes he or she participates in sales presentations to existing and potential clients.

A station's market research director may supervise a staff or the position may not exist at all, with the corporate office providing the local stations the necessary ratings and research data. The credentials and number of years in the field vary as well for this position. Often, larger station groups that maintain corporate research departments distribute information as necessary to stations within the group. Thus, the more heavily credentialed people are at the corporate level, eliminating the need for duplication on the local levels. Not only does this type of job streamlining occur in the area of market research, but it also happens in human resources and programming areas.

The NEWS Department

News Director

A **news director** sets newsroom journalistic standards that govern who, what, where, when and why a particular news event is covered – or not covered. News directors make certain the journalistic integrity of the station remains uncompromised, map out coverage strategies and plan assignments that showcase the talent in ways compatible with the station's image goals. This is a coveted position to which many ambitious journalists aspire (unless they want to go even higher and become the GM).

Typically long-range thinkers, news directors identify future scheduled events and plan coverage around them that allows the station to take ownership of the event and shine brighter than the competition. The event could be an elite sporting event, political debate, huge charity spectacular or other special function. News directors must also plan for the unexpected and are expected to react well in a crisis, keeping the news staff focused and committed to performing under extreme tension and stress.

Management duties for this position include financial aspects such as developing budgets that allow leeway for overtime when the unexpected occurs. News directors understand that while their foremost focus is on journalistic excellence, television is also a business of revenue and ratings. Staff within the sales department will often ask news directors to cover client-generated topics or events, and it is up to the news director, sometimes in consultation with the general manager, to determine potential conflicts of interest in these situations.

Assistant News Director

The **assistant news director** is often next in line to become the station's news director and has a solid news background and management skills. The assistant news director is responsible for implementing the news director's vision and questioning the content, accuracy and fairness of stories to maintain balance and station credibility.

Managing Editor

The **managing editor** – if a station has this position – manages the more day-to-day operations of the newsroom.

Business Manager for News/News Operations Manager

The **business manager for news** or the **news operations manager** takes care of the financial details for the News department, tracking budget information, overtime pay, departmental supplies and more, keeping in close contact with the news directors and assistant news directors.

Executive Producer

Executive producers (EP) have overall responsibility for their individual news program or show. Executive producers direct shots, approve show content and make sure their program or show is on track. Those in this post think in 30-second intervals and are prepared to immediately switch gears in a crisis, such as a lost feed, no-show guest or any other unforeseeable event. Executive producers must be creative thinkers and able to create a newscast with a defined personality that stands out and connects with viewers.

Senior Producer

Each news program or show in the larger markets has a **senior producer** who creatively shares with the executive producer the responsibility for determining the composition and flow of the newscast. Senior producers work closely with the news management, anchors, reporters, editors and the technical crews; they research news story lines, write, select video and set interviews for news stories.

Producer and Assistant Producer

Producers help write for the shows and perform the detail-oriented tasks that, when properly done, can mean the difference between a great show and a mediocre one, or convince a source to talk on air. **Assistant or associate producers** work to make the lives of producers easier by handling any and every task assigned – whether it is confirming a guest, driving across town for an essential prop or doing background research.

News Writer

News writers do just this: write the news. Not many stations have more than one dedicated full-time to this task; often producers do double duty as show writers.

Futures or Planning Editor

Futures or planning editors forecast the station's upcoming coverage by making decisions about what the station might cover in the next days or weeks. Advance planning allows the station to develop a story rather than just reacting to a news event.

Assignment Desk Chief

A seasoned veteran, the **assignment desk chief** works with others in news management to plan well-rounded news coverage that fits with the “personality” of the station. Assignment desk chiefs maintain extensive working files of possible story ideas, including crucial background information, and have superb contacts. They also oversee the scheduling and assignment of news coverage, order satellite time as needed, and take active roles in planning in-depth series and special coverage. Assignment desk chiefs may also function as writers and producers as needed.

News Assignment Desk

The **news assignment desk** is one of the most important posts in the newsroom. In smaller stations, the staff in this area may be entry-level (typically the smaller the station, the younger the faces in this department). Staffers here could work days, nights or weekends. They man the news tip phone lines; listen to police dispatches; read newswires, emails and press releases; stay in contact with key sources; and assist with assigning stories, scheduling reporters and photographers. They often are the “first in the know,” and must exercise considerable news judgment to separate fact from fiction.

Special Projects Editor

Special projects editors work on long-term assignments that are more in-depth and may evolve into a series of reports. They work closely with the news talent, and their work is often highlighted during the crucial sweeps, during the key ratings months.

News Assistant

News assistants serve as the right-hands of the news director, fielding phone calls, interfacing with other departments to get essential intradepartmental information and more.

News Anchor/On-Air Talent

News anchors are the foundation upon which the news team is built – they are the most recognizable station ambassadors to the public. Generally news anchors have worked their way up through the reporting ranks, although some may have started on the production side. Competent journalists, news anchors write and package their own special reports as well as read copy prepared by other team members. With today’s technology, more anchors are stepping out from behind the anchor desks to do “live remotes” and report on the higher profile stories. At smaller stations, weekday news anchors have formal reporting duties incorporated into their roles. At larger stations, it’s generally only the weekend anchors that have this double duty.

Sports Director

Sports directors report on local and national sporting events. Due to increased competition from the cable sports’ outlets, sports directors often now have less air-time than when only the “big three networks” dominated the airways. Better, more concise reporting, and an ability to bond with the sports teams is crucial to how viewers now relate to a station’s sports director.

Weathercaster/Meteorologist

Weathercasters/meteorologists report and forecast the local area's weather conditions. Newer entrants into this area of news generally hold degrees in meteorology. Their on-paper credentials become a marketable asset used in station promotions. Yet degrees don't matter if you can't deliver the weather in a way that's credible, informative and resonates well with viewers. With Doppler radar installed on-site at many stations and computers improving the content, accuracy and scope of weather-related information, success in this position is a function of how well the weathercaster /meteorologist can master the weather equipment and integrate that information into his/her reports.



Reporter

Reporters write, produce and package their own stories, with editing in the larger shops done in tandem with someone who actually holds the title of editor and is versed in both analog and digital formats. Reporters may be general assignment reporters – assigned to report on a variety of topics – or alternatively may have a special beat – an assigned specialty area.



Health reporters fall under this later jurisdiction, as do education reporters, business reporters, investigative or “I-Teams,” entertainment reporters and more. A number these specialty reporters were previously professionals in the fields they are now covering.

Not every station has someone specially assigned to these coverage areas. Those that do promote these reporters as “franchises,” claim ownership of these areas and use this to get legs up in the ratings battle. Special beats often have assigned producers to back them. In the case of investigative, or “I Teams,” it might be an entire department. Duties differ by market size, union and non-union regulations. An investigative producer in the Birmingham, Ala., market, for example would research, plan, write, shoot and edit investigative and consumer pieces for newscasts. In a market such as Chicago or New York, the shooting and technical editing would be domain of others.

Traffic Reporter

Traffic reporters offer continuing traffic news during commuting hours, helping viewers avoid gridlock. Most stations have partnerships with a media company specializing in traffic news, equipped with airborne traffic crews to provide the latest coverage. The dash to harness this service proved hot competition for stations in the early to mid 1990s, many battling to become the first in their markets with their “own” helicopter-based news gathering team.

Helicopter Pilot/Reporter

Given the expense involved, few stations can afford to have a **helicopter pilot/reporter**, and those that do usually have arrangements with companies that supply the chopper and the pilot via a leased arrangement. Stations that have this coverage find that it adds more immediacy to news visuals and allows faster access to breaking stories, especially in situations difficult to access by foot or news van or geographically distant from the station. How the helicopter pilot or reporter is presented to the audience varies by station. Some stations promote the pilot as part of their on-air team; others send their own reporters up and the focus is on them, not the chopper operator.



NAB'S GUIDE TO CAREERS IN TELEVISION



The CREATIVE SERVICES Department

Creative Services or Promotions Director

Creative services or promotions directors develop and oversee the station's image marketing, direct all advertising, promotional and contest initiatives of the station, as well as daily promotion of the news product. They work to properly brand the station in concert with the general manager, who sets the overall station image goals and objectives.

Imaginative and visionary, creative services directors have strong artistic backgrounds and are well-versed in copywriting and editing as well as audio, visual and print production. Supervision of the art department is part of their role, along with directing the activities of an outside ad agency for those larger stations with that relationship.

Many Creative Service Directors do the media planning and buying and all are responsible for staff hiring, budget projections and management in their supervisory area. In smaller markets, especially, they may do hands-on editing and should have a degree of knowledge of how the editing process works.

Promotions Manager or Audience Promotions Manager

Promotions managers or audience promotions managers write, create and coordinate with other Creative Services staffers, the on-air promotions for station-sponsored special events. They work with sales to create client, revenue-driven promotions and also work with news to create daily topicals. Their department (which could consist of just one person) also maintains the station's banners and other promotional items and giveaways used at station events.

Stations with bigger staffs have writers/producers assigned to work under the promotions manager, often dividing writing and promotions into two separate focus areas to maintain the separation of news and sales.

Writer/Producer

Writers/producers (one of which may double as **Web master**) – assigned to news promotion write and produce topicals and spots that highlight the news and programming products. They are also involved in creating a station's branding campaign. While familiar with shooting techniques, writers/producers generally do not operate this equipment themselves. Writer/producers serving the sales departments write commercials for those clients who don't have an outside ad agency, and produce and shoot these spots themselves. Writers/producers have excellent creative writing and presentation skills as well as great talent for the visual elements. They have experience in such graphics programs as Avid, Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Premier and Final Cut, and editing with non-linear and linear platforms.

Post-Production Editor

Post-production editors take rough cuts (raw footage) and polish them into final, on-air promotional materials. This entails adding music, graphics and other sound and sight elements as necessary to make the finished product even more compelling. Post-production editors may work on a station commercial, a news package or a public affairs program.

Station Announcer

Station announcers generally are hired on a contractual basis to do voiceovers for news promotions.

Art Department Positions

An **art director (AD)** oversees the graphics area and has specific knowledge of what works for TV and what doesn't. Art directors work with news to give more visual impact to the news product by using graphics or other special effects such as animation and deal with outside vendors on such projects as set design, signage and station image branding materials including print ads and collateral. Art directors also supervise **electronic graphic artists** working for the station.

A Word About the Creative Services Department

Permanent jobs often missing from this department are the make-up person and the props person. These tasks, when needed, are usually filled by independent contractors (i.e. freelancers).

People hired in the Creative Services department usually have Bachelor of Arts degrees with majors in these most common areas: English, Communications, Liberal Arts, Political Science, History, or, as in one known case, anthropology. All possess excellent English and grammar skills.

Most schools did not offer communications majors until the mid-1970s. Those who graduated after this period have the added advantages of specific training in focused areas of the communications field, from concentrations in broadcast journalism to electronic graphic arts and television editing and production. Many colleges require specific knowledge of such editing programs as Final Cut. Familiarity with this program is a real plus in this business, for certain employees in the creative services area who lack these skills are required to get up to speed and learn how to edit. Art department staffers have specific training in electronic graphic arts; just a freehand background doesn't make the grade. The typical path to advancement in the Creative Service department is through the ranks; most have experience at more than one television station if they are employed at a station in the larger markets.



The
PUBLIC RELATIONS
and
COMMUNITY AFFAIRS
Department

Public Relations Director

A **public relations (PR) director** for a television station functions the same as any other PR person, the difference being that the product he or she promotes is the television station. Skilled in written and oral communications, the public relations director manages public perception of the station, interacts with the media and serves as an official spokesperson. Special station events are often arranged by this department to further connect with the community or advertisers and could be the domain of the public relations director or the **community relations manager** (who may hold the title of **public service director**).

The job of public relations director could be a permanent staff position or handled on a contractual basis by an outside firm. At stations lacking a public relations director, the duties are often added to the job of community relations manager or public service director. In certain cases, the general manager handles media queries and interfaces with the press.

Public Service Director or Community Relations Manager

In addition to the public relations director, the station's community liaison is the **public service director** or **community relations manager**, who works to involve the station in the community through sponsorships of charity events or other visible causes, including those that could provide advertiser tie-ins. Public service directors/community relations managers receive countless public service announcements (PSA) submitted by groups hoping to get their non-commercial messages on the air and their causes promoted "for free." A number of public service directors/community relations managers write, produce and even edit local public affairs programs and may even serve as an on-air hosts.

Most people employed in these positions have college degrees and majors in communications, English, Liberal Arts or Political Science. Public relations directors have specific experience in the public relations field and may have worked before at an advertising and public relations agency, held a PR post within a corporation or come from print or broadcast journalism.

Public service directors/community relations managers are experienced in broadcast production and may or may not have on-air skills. They might have transferred from radio, worked at a post-production house or served as an on-air talent in TV or radio and somewhere along the way acquired experience in writing and producing for television.

Speakers Bureau Manager

A part-time position, if it exists at all, the **speakers bureau manager** deals with public requests for talent appearances at various events. What does and does not get scheduled is a function of individual talent preferences and what causes the station has adopted as its own. This person may or may not have a college degree and could have been promoted up from a job as department assistant or intern.

The PROGRAMMING Department

Programming Director

The **programming director** or **programming manager** makes certain programming information is fed to traffic, sales and other pertinent departments. Any changes are communicated both in house and externally to the TV listings services and local newspapers. Maintaining programming equilibrium versus negotiating for new product is part of the daily responsibilities. Stations in larger markets, especially those that are part of a large media conglomerate, have downgraded or eliminated this position because many programming decisions are now made at the corporate level, on behalf of multiple stations.

The ENGINEERING Department

Director of Broadcast Operations and Engineering (BO&E)

The staff of the Engineering department keeps the television station on the air and the station's physical property in good shape. Rapidly evolving technology has compressed the workforce in this area, making multi-tasking more essential and some jobs obsolete.

Head of this department is the **director of broadcast operations and engineering (BO&E)**, who could also be called **chief engineer**. This is a hybrid position that's half technical, half personnel management, overseeing -- in the words of one BO&E director -- "everything from the toilet paper to the tower."

BO&E heads figure out what new equipment the station needs to keep competitive and work the angles to get the best deals. While a number of news departments are still video-tape based, most are converting to non-linear, server-based technologies. Digital technology is replacing analog, but stations still need to deal with video's legacy: all the information still physically stored in this format versus compressed computer files.

General Broadcast Operations and Engineering Positions

Although titles may shift station to station, the following positions also comprise the BO&E team.

The **engineering manager** supervises such areas as equipment maintenance, installation, repair of anything from the tower to news vans, and the technicians who accomplish these tasks.

Physical maintenance of the property – its landscaping and grounds, janitorial needs, mailroom, security and front desk reception is the domain of the **building supervisor** who manages the staff working in these areas.

A **broadcast operations manager** oversees the scheduling of studio time and some of studio personnel associated with the physical side of on-air performance such as show **directors**; **camera operators** (most studio cameras are now robotic); **tape room operators** who manipulate video tape; **master control supervisors or chiefs** who oversee the **master control operators**; the **audio board operators and switchers**; **teleprompter operators** and more.

Those working in **master control** are very familiar with FCC standards and practices related to video levels and take action to ensure the integrity of the station's on-air technical performance. It is here that the station's daily log is programmed into the spot playback system, tapes are loaded in the proper sequence, air variances are corrected prior to airing of any commercials or other inputted programming. Master control operators log transmitter readings, align satellite receiver equipment and record programming feeds as logged on the satellite as well.

It's the **news technical operations manager** who schedules shifts for the **photographers or videographers** and other people involved in the tangible editing of the news product, whether they're working with video tape, film, high-definition or other digitally formatted mediums. **Crew chiefs** in the photography and editing areas report to the news tech ops manager, or **technical resources manager**, and in turn manage down the line.

Engineering technicians of all kinds are needed to keep equipment humming, from the phone system and satellite network, to reporter laptops and the plumbing.

Entry Level Engineering Positions

Entry-level jobs in the Broadcast Operations and Engineering department include trainees for such positions as teleprompter operator, master control operator or video editor. A high school education is required with some college preferred although trade school and/or prior field experience count. It depends on who's hiring and market size.





STARTING YOUR CAREER

“Think big, start small.”

That's the advice given to industry newcomers by vice presidents and general managers of TV stations interviewed, especially to those seeking work in news.

Bigger markets, for example, won't hire people in a number of positions who lack specific television or related industry experience. Says one president/GM with a large Hearst-Argyle station, about hiring novices in the newsroom: “[They] can be costly if they do not know the rules of journalism and basic laws of libel and slander. We prefer our talent to have prior experience before they come here.”

There are exceptions. One station head personally recruited a broadcast student at a local university known for its outstanding journalism program who was a prior station intern, graduated with a 3.9 average, came highly recommended by her professors and was named an outstanding student in her field by the college. During her internship, she impressed the GM and news director, and the station hired her when the news assistant went out on maternity leave. Their satellite bureau then needed a production coordinator and she's now a full-time staffer there.

How much experience you will need and the education level required depends on the station you are interested in and the job sought.

Says one president/GM: “I actually prefer our talent to have more of a liberal arts background than to have focused exclusively on broadcast journalism, because what you learn in school is quite different from the realities of the TV station. Those with broader knowledge bases are apt to be more versatile in their reporting.”

A Word About INTERNSHIPS

Whatever the field of study, get an internship. As one station CEO notes: “Internships are the best way to gain practical, real-world experience and they are the perfect test model for station management to assess the intern's level of intelligence, enthusiasm and growth progress during their internship stint...If interns impress us, but are just not ready to work here, we'll guide them to work at stations in smaller markets, ask them to keep in touch and remind them to be patient.”

Theory is fine. Familiarity with industry terminology is great. But there is no substitute for the real experience and sometimes the most practical aspects of getting hired are never covered in class. Says one technical news operations manager who can't stand wrinkled or incomplete resumes: “You go four or five years to school and they don't even teach you how to write a resume, put it in a nice folder so it will stand out....a person doesn't deserve a job if he sends in his resume with no phone number.”

David Zurawik, the National Media Writer for *The Baltimore Sun*, has extensive experience covering the industry, is a radio pundit on media issues and also teaches a journalism course at Goucher College. He's taught elsewhere, interviewed journalism department heads and shares a sentiment with many who actually work in the media: students often are woefully unprepared for the real media world. The best schools will have teachers who worked or still work in the industry, have contacts and can help students get jobs. More importantly, they offer broadcast internships that hands down, are the best ways to gain industry entry. These more often than not are credit-only, unpaid programs, so if you seek one during the summer, be prepared to take on another, part-time or full-time paying job.

Advice on JOB HUNTING and YOUR CAREER

Do Your Homework

There's no excuse for ignorance about the television industry when information can easily be found online or is just a phone call away. Let your fingers do the clicking, saddle up to the Internet and research what you want to know about a particular station, market or job. Key words such as "careers in television" entered into a search engine would be one basic route. (See the list of good Web sites and resource groups provided starting on page 28). Go to station Web sites and tap into the staff bios. Then go to the "Jobs Available" section. You'll see how others progressed and how you might tailor your own career path.

This research will also help you create a cover letter that presents you as informed and savvy about the station's history and "personality," which allow you to drop "buzz words" that might open that front door.

Cover Letters

Don't just address a cover letter to a generic "Dear Sir or Madam." Call and find out who at the station is hiring and personally address the letter. Make sure you have the correct spelling – you don't want to be an applicant too lazy to have made an effort to ask the right questions. After all, this is a journalistic business and it pays – as it does anywhere – to get it right the first time.

A well-written cover letter won't necessarily get you in the door, but a poorly crafted one will keep you out, especially if you're after jobs in areas such as news, programming, creative services, public relations, accounting and sales.

Cover letters must accompany a resume and they should reflect your knowledge of the station, the job you seek, and present you in a way that stands out from the next hungry competitor.

Resumes

Many station managers keep certain resumes and cover letters on hand as examples of what not to do. Some favorite faux pas? Cover letters and resumes that lack such basic contact information as a phone number; ones addressed "To Whom It May Concern;" and those loaded with spelling and grammatical mistakes.

Then there are the content-weak letters that breathlessly note, "I just want a job in television, any job – what do you have to offer?;" the ones where every paragraph starts with an "I...;" and those ego-centric ones that read "P.S. – you can reach me at (111) 234-5678," and actually believe they'll get a call back.

If you're not great at constructing a cover letter or resume, get help from a parent, teacher, friend, colleague or professional. Know the importance of follow up.

The Interview

Once you secure an interview, there are a few more rules you will want to follow, including following up to confirm the interview the day before. Arriving not only on-time, but early-, is a good idea.

Dress for success, and be sure that your attire is appropriate for a professional office. Double-check in the mirror for spots on the tie, lost buttons, dangling threads and don't forget to cut the tags off that new suit!

Remember, this is television. Appearances count.

Advancing in the Industry

Examine the resumes of reporters and anchors and you'll discover they aren't nicknamed "glitter gypsies" for nothing. Non-accidental tourists, they go where the bigger and better jobs are, especially younger talent, who often move every year or so to achieve their goals.

Some career moves may puzzle those unfamiliar in the industry. Why, for example, would someone take a job as part-time weekend reporter when he or she is already an anchor? While this may seem like a demotion, if you compare the stations' markets you realize that the "anchor" position was in the nation's 47th market, while the weekend anchor position is at a top-20 station. Thus, because there are more opportunities for advancement at the second station it is actually a smart career choice.

When reporters do reach a market where they're comfortable with the size, lifestyle and pay, they may well put down roots even if anchor jobs appear out of reach. Why? This is still a business where appearances count and stability eventually wins out over ego.

Those seeking management positions also need to move in order to move up. That may mean seeking a post with a different station group or actively campaigning for promotion within the same corporate structure – which still might mean transferring to a new part of the country.

Be versatile. Be open. Be willing to take on new tasks without ignoring the tasks in front of you. Be curious. Best of all, be the best you can be to move up.

**A WORD ABOUT
SALARIES**

Poultry king Frank Perdue gave a great piece of advice to graduating students seeking to enter the work world and it applies to every job category: "Don't go for the job that offers the most pay. Go for the job that offers the most advancement."

That's difficult advice when buddies are out making \$40,000 and up a year. Will they tap out at \$40,000, too? Are they in a career that they love?

Pursue what you love and the money will follow.

INDUSTRY RESOURCES

Individuals seeking jobs in the television industry have a variety of resources to help them learn more about the business and determine how they might fit in. Some are trade associations. Others fall under the auspices of educational groups. There are also those specifically dedicated to promoting the advancement of women and minorities. Listed below are some, but not all, of the many groups dedicated in whole or part to the television industry.

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

National Association of Broadcasters (NAB)

1771 N Street NW
Washington DC 20036
Phone: 202 429 5300
Fax: 202 429 4199
www.nab.org

Employment resources within the NAB include:

WWW.BroadcastCareerLink.com

NAB Bookstore

Phone: 800 368 5644
www.nabstore.com

American Women in Radio and Television (AWRT)

8405 Greensboro Drive
Suite 800
McLean VA
Phone: 703 506 3290
Fax: 703 506 3266
www.awrt.org
info@awrt.org

Asian American Journalists Association (AAJA)

1182 Market Street
Suite 320
San Francisco CA 94102
Phone: 415 346 2051
Fax: 415 346 6343
www.aaja.org
National@aaja.org

Corporation for Public Broadcasting

401 Ninth Street NW
Washington DC 20004 2129
Phone: 202 879 9600 or toll-free 1 800 272 2190
Fax: 202 879 9700
www.cpb.org
<http://www.cpb.org/jobline/>

National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ)

8701A Adelphi Road
Adelphi MD 20783 1716
Phone: 301 445 7100
Fax: 301 445 7101
www.nabj.org
nabj@nabj.org

National Association of Hispanic Journalists (NAHJ)

1000 National Press Building
529 14th Street NW
Suite 634
Washington DC 20045 2001
Phone: 202 662 7145 or 1 888 346 NAHJ
Fax: 202 662 7144
www.nahj.org
jobbank@nahj.org
nahj@nahj.org

National Association of Program Executives (NATPE)

2425 Olympic Boulevard
Suite 600E
Santa Monica CA 90404
Phone: 310 453 4440
Fax: 310 453 5258
www.natpe.org
<http://www.natpe.org/contact/form/>

Native American Journalists Association (NAJA)

University of South Dakota
414 E Clark Street
PO Box 287
Vermillion SD 57069
Phone: 605 677 5282
Fax: 866 694 4264
www.naja.com
info@naja.com

PROMAX

9000 W Sunset Boulevard
Suite 900
Los Angeles CA 90069
Phone: 310 788 7600
Fax: 310.788.7616
www.promax.org
http://www.promax.tv/conf_contacts.asp

Radio-Television News Directors Association and Foundation (RTNDA/RTNDF)

1600 K Street NW
Suite 700
Washington DC 20006 2838
Phone: 202 659 6510
Fax: 202 223 4007
www.rtnda.org
rtnda@rtnda.org rtndf@rtndf.org

Society of Professional Journalists

Eugene S. Pulliam National Journalism Center
3909 N. Meridian Street
Indianapolis IN 46208
Phone: 317 927 8000
Fax: 317 920 4789
www.spj.org

Industry Trade Magazines

Every industry has trade magazines that serve the business. Television is no exception. Listed below are some of the publications that may serve as valuable reference tools. Those interested in the television profession may well consider subscribing to some of these publications or at least perusing their Web sites.

Advertising Age

Chicago IL
Phone: 312 649 5200
Fax: 312 649 5331
www.adage.com

Adweek

New York NY
Phone: 212 536 5336
Fax: 212 536 1416
www.adweek.com

Billboard Magazine

New York NY
Phone: 212 764 7300
Fax: 212 536 5358
www.billboard.com

Broadcasting & Cable Magazine

New York NY
Phone: 212 645 0067
Fax: 212 337 7028
www.broadcastingcable.com

C E D – Communications Engineering and Design

Highlands Ranch CO
Phone: 303 470 4800
Fax: 303 470 4890
www.cedmagazine.com

Communicator (Monthly Magazine of RTNDA)

Washington DC
Phone: 202 659 6510
Fax: 202 223 4007
www.rtna.org/communicator/current.shtml

Communications Arts

Menlo Park CA
Phone: 650 326 6040

Fax: 650 326 1648
www.commarts.com/CA

Electronic Media

Chicago IL
Phone: 312 649 5293
Fax: 312 649 5465
www.emonline.com

Media Industry Newsletter

New York NY
Phone: 212 983 5170
Fax: 212 983 5144

PR Watch

Madison WI
Phone: 608 233 3346
Fax: 608 238 2236
www.prwatch.org

PR News

Potomac MD
Phone: 301 340 7788
Fax: 301 340 1451
www.prandmarketing.com

S M P T E Journal

White Plains NY
Phone: 914 761 1100
Fax: 914 761 3115
www.smpete.org

Television Week

Los Angeles CA
Phone: 323 370 2412
Fax: 323 658 6174
www.tvweek.com

The Entertainment PR Newsletter

Encino CA 90066
Phone: 818 776 1914
Fax: 818 776 1930
www.westcoastpr.com

The Hollywood Reporter

Los Angeles CA
Phone: 323 525 2000
Fax: 323 525 2377
www.hollywoodreporter.com

Variety

Los Angeles CA
Phone: 323 965 4476
Fax: 323 857 0494
www.variety.com

RELATED INDUSTRY WEBSITES

Below are some other Web sites you may want to check out to learn more about the business. Some have job postings and allow you to job-search online via their Web site for free; others require registration and a fee.

American Press Institute The Journalist's Toolbox

www.journaliststoolbox.com

Broadcast Image Group

www.broadcastimage.com

B Roll Online

WEBSITE: www.b-roll.net

Buzz-Pei Arts and Entertainment

www.isn.net

Citysearch.com (use this to locate media in your area)

www.citysearch.com

Digitaltelevision.com

www.uemedia.com/divisions/dtv.shtml

DirectorsWorld.com

www.uemedia.com/CPC/directorsworld

Dolan Media Management

www.smartrecruit.com

EntertainmentJobs.com

www.eej.com

Entertainment Weekly

www.ew.com

4EntertainmentJobs.com

www.4entertainmentjobs.com

Filcro Media Staffing

www.jobs-in-tv.com

IRE – The Job Center

www.ire.org/jobs

LatPro

www.latpro.com

Magid Talent Placement

www.magid.com

Medialinenews.com

www.uemedia.com/divisions/medialine.shtml

MediaPost

www.mediapost.com

MediaRecruiter.com
www.MediaRecruiter.com

Media Star
www.medialandjobs.com

NewEnglandFilm.com
www.newenglandfilm.com

News Blues
www.newsblues.com

ProSoundNews Online
www.prosoundnews.com

Remix
www.industryclick.com

Rick Gevers' News Director List
<http://www.talentedynamics.com/ndlist.html>

Shoptalk
www.tvspy.com/jobbank.cfm

Spin Magazine
www.spin.com

Sportstvproduction.com
www.uemedia.com/../../divisions/sportstv.shtml

The Big TV Joblist
www.bigtvjoblist.com/

The Maslow Media Group
www.maslowmedia.com
www.tvgigsonline.com

The Rundown
www.tvrundown.com

TV and Radio Jobs.com
www.tvandradiojobs.com

Videography.com
www.uemedia.com/divisions/vidy.shtml

Career Resources offered by the NAB Education Foundation

Established in 1994, the NAB Education Foundation (NABEF) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to serving the public interest through education and training programs, strategies to increase diversity in the broadcast business, initiatives stressing the importance of the First Amendment, community service, philanthropy and other timely broadcasting issues. It is the mission of NAB and its education foundation to offer a pipeline of resources with the goal that broadcasting reflects the rich diversity of America.

NABEF Online Career Center

The NAB Education Foundation has launched an upgraded online career center for broadcast employers as well as job seekers interested in opportunities within the broadcast business. The service, Broadcast Career Link, allows interested applicants to search broadcast-related job listings and post their resume free of charge. Employers can also use the resource to post job openings and identify qualified applicants. Employers and job seekers can access the Web site, www.Broadcastcareerlink.com to create an online account and manage their job postings or resume.

Career Fairs

Professionals, students and entry-level job seekers are provided with the opportunity to network with key executives and professionals who work in the television and radio industry at the foundation's career fairs, which are held each year during The NAB Show in April and the Radio Show in September.

Media Sales Institutes

The foundation sponsors the successful Media Sales Institute program at three universities: Howard, Florida A&M and the University of North Texas (UNT). The program trains recent graduates of color and women during a 10-day intensive media sales training program on each campus.

Students learn about winning sales strategies, networking, presenting effective pitches and closing sales. After training, students make sales presentations to recruiting companies then meet with recruiters looking to hire high-quality students for entry-level positions.

Broadcast Leadership Training Program

This 10-weekend MBA style management training program assists senior level broadcast managers of proven ability who aspire to advance as group executives or station owners. To encourage diversity in broadcasting, fellowship opportunities are offered to women and people of color.

Making News: Broadcast Journalism for Non-News Executives

This innovative executive development program gives new general managers and future general managers a fundamental understanding of what is involved in running a reliable, responsible and ethical news operation that is also profitable. Areas include branding, marketing, ethics, First Amendment, the impact of new technology platforms and staffing. Sessions range from legal and ethical risks in the newsroom to how to use the new media to get your information out and increase your audience.

For more information about these or other NABEF programs visit www.nabef.org or email nabef@nab.org.