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# Careers in Television



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



# Careers in Television

LEARNING RESOURCE CENTER  
Art Institute of Dallas  
2 Northpark, 8080 Park Ln.  
Dallas, Texas 75231



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*National Association of Broadcasters*

Revised by

**Rich Adams**

W★USA-TV, Washington, DC

Contributing writer: Dwight Ellis, NAB Human Resource Development.

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# **INTRODUCTION**

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Television touches all of our lives. It teaches, it entertains, it amuses and it informs. In fewer than 40 years, television has evolved from a curiosity and a luxury to a necessity in virtually every home in America. Through technology, television not only records events but also shapes history as people in one part of the world see and react to instantaneous images from a distant land.

The vast influence of television on modern society makes this medium an exciting professional challenge. A career in television can be a career on the cutting edge of technology, journalism and electronic communications. Thousands of people with a wide variety of skills work in the television industry. Each one of them makes an important contribution to the creation and dissemination of the programming that has so dramatically changed our society and our world.

Broadcasting is a team effort. Everything you see on the air, no matter how simple it may appear, requires the skill and cooperation of a number of people to accomplish the broadcast.

A career in television can be both financially and personally rewarding. This booklet is designed to acquaint you with the specific types of jobs found in broadcasting outlets of all sizes throughout the United States. In this time of a changing economy, it might be encouraging to note that the skills developed in one television job can often be transferred and further developed to prepare you for another job, either at the same station or elsewhere as your career progresses.

You may find that you have the skills and interest to match several broadcast positions. The information in this booklet should help you decide what role you want to play on the broadcast team. The job descriptions are broad enough so that they generally apply to jobs within commercial and public broadcasting as well as to those in other telecommunications industries. Prior preparation in key skills also is essential because the fast pace of most television stations does not allow for extensive on-the-job training.

Modern television is a highly diversified field. In addition to commercial television stations, there are opportunities in cable systems, independent video production companies, government agencies and private corporations—all of which now use some

form of television in training, staff development or program production.

It can be difficult to break into television, but there are great opportunities for those who bring imagination, flexibility, drive and a willingness to work hard.

The following job descriptions are presented along the lines of the basic organization of most television stations. All of the jobs do not exist in every station, but the basic divisions, including general administration, sales, programming, news, engineering and promotions and community relations, will be found in some form in every broadcast outlet, and to a large degree, in any television production facility. In many smaller stations and production facilities, one person may perform several roles, but the duties and responsibilities will remain essentially the same. ■

# **GENERAL ADMINISTRATION**

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As in any business, there must be a "front office" and a core of management to oversee the functions of the business. The key people in the general administration of a television station are the **GENERAL MANAGER**, the **STATION MANAGER**, the **BUSINESS MANAGER**, and the **OPERATIONS MANAGER**.

The **GENERAL MANAGER** is the chief executive officer of the station. He or she is responsible for the bottom line—the overall revenue-generating ability of the station. The general manager must constantly evaluate the effectiveness of all of the other departments in promoting the greatest profitability. In public broadcasting stations, the general manager must ensure that the station meets its fund-raising goals and must play a major role in developing community and corporate support for the station.

Because of their close association with the revenue aspects of a station, general managers traditionally have come from the ranks of sales managers or business managers. However there are also highly successful general managers who have had backgrounds in news, programming and engineering, and in some cases, extensive business experience in an industry other than television.

Regardless of background, all successful general managers are team-builders, who are skilled in setting goals, hiring effective department heads and developing budgets.

The **STATION MANAGER** is the chief operating officer of the station. In many stations, the roles of general manager and station manager are combined. However, in many large stations, there is a separate station manager whose chief responsibility is to oversee the day-to-day operations of the station's major departments. In this role, the station manager frees the general manager to concentrate on the larger issues of policy and overall budgetary management.

Station managers often come from positions as sales managers or account executives. However, they may also have news, engineering or programming experience. Effective personnel management skills and a thorough knowledge of all aspects of a broadcast operation are essential requirements for a person in the role of a station manager.

The **BUSINESS MANAGER** is responsible for all financial trans-

actions, and, in some stations, also handles personnel matters. The business manager reports directly to the general manager, and must not only keep the general manager advised of the day-to-day financial health of the station, but must also ensure that the activities of the business department are handled efficiently.

Given the complexity of modern television operations, business managers are generally expected to be Certified Public Accountants, or have extensive professional background in accounting and financial management. Significant knowledge of computer and data processing systems is also critical for the business manager.

The **OPERATIONS MANAGER** (or in some stations, traffic or continuity manager) is responsible for the accurate preparation of the station's "log"—the master document that details the exact timing of programs and the placement of commercials for the entire broadcast day.

The only product a television station has to sell is its air time. Station revenue depends on the absolute accuracy of commercial placement and the efficient verification of the commercial's broadcast and billing of clients. Sales personnel must also know how much time is available to sell and have accurate listings of available time slots so a salesperson can make effective presentations to potential clients. The operations manager is responsible for providing that information on a day-to-day, and in some cases a minute-to-minute, basis.

Operations managers may come from sales, or from within the operations department. Many stations currently use automated logging systems and complex computer networks to generate logs, and maintain necessary billing data. It is essential for the operations manager to have an exceptionally high degree of skill in computer systems and the ability to attend to the smallest of details.

Excellent personnel management skills are also necessary, since the operations manager supervises a staff which must perform tedious and detailed tasks with a high degree of motivation and accuracy.

The **OPERATIONS** (traffic or continuity) staff personnel are some of the most critical people in any television station. While these positions are often considered entry level, they are essential to the station's financial well-being. Operations personnel are responsible for actually entering the sales orders into the station logging system, thus ensuring that commercials get on the air in

exactly the time slot that was purchased by the client. In smaller stations, operations personnel may also write some of the local commercial and promotional copy. Persons assigned to this duty are often called **CONTINUITY** writers. Successful operations and continuity personnel must be detail-oriented and have skills in computer and word-processor operation. ■

# SALES



*Giving presentations to potential clients is just one part of an account executive's duties.*

A television station is above all else, a business . . . and an expensive business to maintain. Most of the money to support a station comes from advertising revenue.

This revenue comes to a local station directly or indirectly from a variety of sources. Local advertisers supply a portion and regional and national advertisers contribute another part. The networks also compensate their affiliates by distributing a portion of the advertising revenues earned by network productions carried on the affiliate stations.

In either case, the time was sold to the advertiser by a member of either the network's or the local station's sales staff. The duties of the sales force at either level are quite similar.

The **GENERAL SALES MANAGER** is the person responsible for producing all advertising revenues for a station or a network.

An effective general sales manager must have a proven record in local or network television sales. Many general sales managers also have had experience in sales or sales management in other industries or in advertising.

In addition to having outstanding sales and sales management skills, a general sales manager must also be adept at understanding the business climate in the community and must have a strong knowledge of the interests of the station audience.

The general sales manager works closely with the general manager and the program manager to choose programs they think will attract both advertisers and the maximum number of viewers. Their goal is to maximize the value of each minute of commercial air time by demonstrating to advertisers that each minute attracts the greatest possible number of viewers who may be potential customers for that particular advertiser.

The general sales manager of a large station may supervise a local and national sales managers as well as a staff of account executives. General sales managers develop their skills through years of sales experience and must have a good background in marketing, advertising or business administration.

The **NATIONAL SALES MANAGER** is the station's key contact with advertising agencies and client representative firms that place advertising on local stations for national accounts. In many instances a major national company will select certain communities to target for a sales promotion or will choose to place advertising directly on a local station so that advertising can be tailored to a specific audience. It is the job of the national sales manager to ensure that his or her station gets the largest possible share of the national advertising dollars targeted for the local station's community. National sales managers must work closely with sales executives at the networks as well as establish extensive contacts with major national companies and their advertising agencies.

Regardless of where the station is located, the national sales manager may spend a good deal of time in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago and other key advertising and business centers throughout the United States. Flexibility and willingness to travel extensively are essential requirements for this position.

Most national sales managers have come up through the ranks as account executives and/or local sales managers. However, some also may have had experience in national advertising agencies or with a broadcast network. Many national sales managers go on to become general sales managers, station managers and general managers, or perhaps station owners.

The **LOCAL SALES MANAGER** is responsible for ensuring that the station attracts the maximum amount of local advertising revenue possible in the community. In most stations, the local sales manager supervises the account executives who call upon clients to solicit advertising business. The local sales manager must have excellent community business contacts and reliable sources

of information about trends and events that may affect the business climate of the community. Local sales managers usually come from the ranks of account executives after developing strong sales skills and knowledge of the community.

The **ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE** is the "front line" representative of the station in soliciting commercial business. Account executives develop working relationships with local business leaders and with local advertising agencies and client representatives.

An account executive's highly competitive role is to convince local advertisers that the station he or she represents offers the maximum audience level (and potential customers) for each minute of broadcast time presented for sale. In addition to strong business contacts and sales skills, successful account executives must also be fully knowledgeable about the most effective methods of presenting advertising messages. In many cases, they must educate the client as to what a station can offer in the way of commercial production and presentation. The account executive must also be adept at interpreting the local ratings information in such a way that the client understands the potential value of the time being purchased.

The **SALES ASSISTANT** is a key member of the sales team. He or she works closely with the account executives in preparing presentations, compiling ratings data, assisting in processing of sales orders and updating availability information for use by the account executives.

The job of sales assistant is an excellent entry-level position for those interested in a career in television sales. Many successful account executives and sales managers began their careers as sales assistants. The skills required for this position include the ability to work well with people, good attention to detail and the ability to use computer and word processing equipment.

One aspect of television sales is rather unique and can be extremely profitable for those seeking a career in this field. In most stations, account executives and sales managers are paid a commission on sales in addition to their base salaries. Many stations also have incentive and bonus plans that provide even greater compensation for sales personnel who exceed their goals. Financial reward for sales personnel is to a large degree determined by personal initiative, drive, creativity and energy.

Although some large-market stations have separate research departments, **RESEARCH DIRECTORS** are often part of the sales

department and report directly to the general sales manager. In addition to a research director, a station may also have **RESEARCH ASSOCIATES**, **RESEARCH ANALYSTS** or **RESEARCH ASSISTANTS**.

A research director's main function is to support the sales staff by providing statistical, ratings and other marketing information that will help achieve the station's overall sales goals. This can range from preparing sales presentations for potential advertisers to compiling lists of available commercial advertising time (called "avails") to generating data on client needs versus the "avails" a station has to sell.

The research department is also responsible for analyzing the information the station buys from a ratings service. As each quarter's Arbitron and Nielsen ratings books are released, researchers compile the data and prepare it for use by the sales staff and the rest of the station management.

Research directors often deal with qualitative studies as well. Information about who is watching—their ages, their likes and dislikes, their incomes, their shopping habits and their programming preferences—is important for the success of the sales department in the community. ■

# PROGRAMMING



*Working with an assistant director, a program editor pieces together a local show to be aired at a later time.*

The planning and production of local programs broadcast by a television station takes place in the programming department. This department also determines which shows produced independently will be acquired by the station. If the station is affiliated with a network (ABC, CBS, NBC or FOX) or the public television network (PBS), the programming department is the station's liaison with the network. If the station is owned by a large broadcast group, the programming departments of the group stations often work together to develop shows for that group or for sale elsewhere.

The **PROGRAM DIRECTOR** is the manager of the Program Department. The program director works closely with the general manager and the sales manager to determine and direct the station's policies and to plan the most effective program schedule for the station. The program director must consider which shows would best compete in a particular time slot, the budget for the program, who should produce it, and how a program fits into the overall character of the station. In many stations, the program director also serves as the executive producer of major local shows, taking a direct role in the creation and production of documentaries and special feature programming.

The program director is also responsible for evaluating all of the non-local shows aired by the station. If the station is a network affiliate, the local program director often makes direct contact

with network program executives, consulting with them and providing them with information about how a particular show is being accepted by the station's viewers.

Many stations also use programs created and distributed by independent producers. This type of show is called syndicated programming. It is the job of the program director to select those syndicated shows that will attract an audience and become good vehicles for both local and national commercials. This selection is often difficult because of the volume of material available. Programming decisions require the program director to have solid knowledge of the community served by the station and of what the viewers want. Sound judgement and good taste are key requirements for a successful program director.

The program director may also be in charge of station compliance with all appropriate rules and regulations of the Federal Communications Commission regarding programming.

As is the case for most top-level managers, a college degree is practically a requirement for program directors. Useful college academic concentrations include communications, telecommunications, radio-television production, journalism, business administration or marketing.

The **PRODUCTION MANAGER** is a key part of the programming team in any station. The production manager reports directly to the program director and is responsible for all of the details required in the actual production of local programming. In that role, the production manager supervises producers, directors, floor directors and stage managers, and in many stations, schedules the technical personnel and graphics support personnel who work on local shows.

The production manager must have excellent team-building skills and should have a solid background in television production. Many successful production managers began their careers as members of the studio production crew, or in some cases, as technical personnel in television stations or production companies.

The key personnel on any production team include: **PRODUCERS**, who develop and organize local programs and are responsible for scripting, story development, booking of guests and overseeing field production and editing; and **DIRECTORS**, who are responsible for the actual on-line execution of a program, and in many stations may also serve as producers for entire programs or for the production of portions of larger programs. Direc-

tors are also used for all local, live broadcasts, including news, sports and entertainment shows. In smaller stations, directors may also be assigned to create graphics and design sets for local programs or to supervise graphics and design personnel.

The **ASSISTANT DIRECTOR** is the director's right hand in the control room. It is the job of the assistant director to keep accurate timings of program segments, assist in cueing of talent and of program inserts, and coordinate with remote producers and/or technicians and talent during live broadcasts.

The **STAGE MANAGER** is the director's representative on the studio floor and at the site of any live, remote broadcast. The stage manager relays cues to the on-the-air talent and ensures the proper positioning of talent, program guests and any props that may be used for the program. In many stations, the stage manager is also responsible for moving and putting up sets and the general maintenance of the studio.

The **PRODUCTION ASSISTANT** role may have been the gateway to a television career for more top local and national broadcasters and production executives than any other position in a station. This is the ideal entry-level position for anyone interested in a career in almost any aspect of television. This job essentially amounts to an apprenticeship in television.



*Program directors screen many shows before making up the weekly, monthly or quarterly schedule.*

A production assistant works with all production personnel helping out where needed. In the process, the production assistant will probably be exposed to a wide variety of activities, including doing research, scheduling guests, building sets, placing equipment, planning, assisting technical personnel, operating script prompters and character generators and many other production details essential to a successful broadcast.

From this position, the production assistant can "try on" various other jobs at a station or a production company to determine which production roles best fit individual skills and interests. While the job may seem lowly, production assistants are watched closely by managers for initiative, interest and skill development. In a local station, advancement to production, news and technical positions may be the direct result of conscientious work as a production assistant. The production assistant job is also one of a very few in a television station that may be available on a part-time basis, making it ideal for students.

Because the production assistant position is so valuable in developing a broadcast career, competition for these jobs is extremely heavy. Many aspiring television professionals seek out internships at television stations during their early years in college, or even in high school, so that they can be on the "inside" and well positioned for a chance to join the staff in a production assistant role.

The **GRAPHIC ARTIST** supports all production activities. He or she plays an important role in all aspects of station programming, from news and public affairs to entertainment programming. Computer skills are particularly valuable, as is a background in art and design and radio-television production. ■

# NEWS



*In some stations, producers double as editors and are responsible for the look of a piece. An editor must combine the tape and audio into a complete report.*

One of the key elements in defining a station's personality for its viewers is the news operation. The delivery of accurate, timely and well-presented news is seen by many station managers as the primary service that the station can provide for the community.

Regardless of its size, a station that does local news will find itself devoting a significant portion, if not the majority, of its local budget and resources to the news product. The nature of today's news demands skilled people and high technology. Neither come cheap. Both must be used effectively for a station to remain competitive in a local market.

The responsibility for overseeing the news effort falls to the **NEWS DIRECTOR**. Like the program director, the news director finds that the job offers a great deal of pressure and excitement along with responsibility. The news director may supervise anywhere from five to more than 100 people, depending on the size of the market.

Smaller stations may produce one or two hours of news during a 24-hour day. Some large stations now produce as much as five or more hours of local news daily, exclusive of the footage

that is often supplied to the network news programs.

A news director must understand budgeting, personnel management and the technical aspects of television. In addition to having a firm understanding of the community service role of broadcast journalism, he or she must also have solid news judgement—the ability to determine which stories are most informative and of the greatest value to the local viewer.

It is essential that news directors have experience in reporting, producing or presenting the news. Many news directors have done almost every newsroom task in the course of their careers.

A top-rated news program can generate considerable revenue for the station. Consequently, there is intense competition between stations for news ratings. That competition translates into strong pressure on the news director to make every minute of a newscast a compelling moment of television that captures the interest and imagination of the viewers. Stations are constantly searching for fresh, exciting and different ways to accomplish this goal.

The news director generally takes direct credit—or blame—for the success or failure of the news operation. Because of the high pressure and responsibility, the turnover rate can be high, particularly in highly competitive markets.

The team concept is especially important in the news department, and a successful news director must motivate the staff as a team. Newscasts depend on so many people for their success that it is essential for the entire news staff to work together for common goals.

The position of news director is generally the high point of a long career in broadcast journalism. News directors almost always



*An assistant director cues a news anchor during a live update.*

come from the ranks of producers, directors and working reporters. Some also have had network experience and return to local stations in this key management position, while others have worked their entire careers in local news.

The first requirement of a news director is that he or she be a journalist. However, the increasingly complex technology and the growing demands of the community for more news mean that a successful news director also must be experienced in the technical aspects of news-gathering, the effective use of satellite resources and the management of perhaps the largest departmental budget in the station.

Because of all of these demands, there is a growing trend toward placing major responsibility in the hands of the **ASSISTANT NEWS DIRECTOR** and **MANAGING EDITOR**. In larger stations, the assistant news director may have a specific role, for example handling all of the personnel and budget matters, or concentrating on the satellite communications system, freeing the news director for administrative duties and overall journalistic direction of the department. Also, the managing editor may assume responsibility for direct supervision of the actual newscasts, working closely with the news director. In some stations, the managing editor is called the **EXECUTIVE PRODUCER**.

All of these positions are high-level roles within a station, requiring extensive background in journalism and news production.

Individual newscasts are generally assigned to **PRODUCERS** who coordinate the content and presentation of their broadcasts under the direction of the executive producer, managing editor and news director. The show producers must have a firm understanding of the image the station wishes to project and skill at packaging information in interesting and compelling ways.

Newscast producers work under extreme time pressures, often changing their shows from minute to minute as new information is available and additional video sources emerge from live on-scene reports or satellite feeds. They must juggle the absolute time requirements of getting a program on and off the air precisely on time with the ever-changing flow of the news.

Producing a newscast is perhaps one of the most exciting and rewarding experiences in television journalism. Starting with a world of information, the producer must create his or her own concept of what the local viewer needs to know. Within the boundaries of the station format, a newscast producer has the



*Taking in feeds from various sources is part of the duties of an Electronic News Gathering (ENG) crew.*

opportunity to create a visually appealing and journalistically sound product limited only by his or her imagination and creativity.

Newscast producers must have had strong experience either as reporters or in the production aspects of television news. They must understand video technology and computers and be proficient at writing good news copy because they must edit the copy presented by reporters and staff writers. A degree in journalism or radio-TV production is highly desirable.

The responsibility for gathering the news that goes into a program rests first with the **ASSIGNMENT EDITOR**. In larger stations, this may be a team of people who set news coverage priorities, organize the logistics of camera crews and reporters, and arrange for the various satellite feeds and live on-scene coverage.

The assignment editor must be alert, have an excellent knowledge of the community and be familiar with the operations of most local emergency services because much of the breaking news information may come from monitoring the public safety radio channels. The assignment editor also must be flexible and able to change priorities from minute to minute as stories develop. Common sense and the ability to work with people under pressure are also valuable assets for all assignment desk personnel. A good assignment editor must also have sound news judgement and be able to work closely with the newscast producers. Many assign-

ment editors have worked as reporters or field technicians—cameramen or sound operators.

Interestingly, some of the most successful assignment editors have also had public safety background, either as former police or emergency services workers or as volunteers with local fire and rescue squads, where they have gained first-hand knowledge of breaking news from "the other side of the fence." The ability to evaluate situations quickly and calmly and to remain in control under the most adverse of circumstances is essential in an assignment editor.

The most visible members of the news staff are the **NEWS ANCHORS**. These are the people who get promotional attention as the "up front" personalities on local newscasts. There was a time when the news anchors were "readers", merely presenting scripts. Today's news anchor is a complete journalist, familiar with reporting, on-scene live coverage and skilled at writing, and in some cases, producing news packages.

In smaller stations the news anchors may also produce newscasts and may also serve in management roles such as news director or executive producer. News anchors in smaller and medium-sized markets may also host other locally-produced public affairs interview and feature programs. They are the personality and public identity of the station and may be assigned to or volunteer to participate in public appearances and community activities on behalf of the station and for charitable causes.

The financial rewards for anchorpersons can be staggeringly high, but the competition also is fierce and pressure to remain on top is enormous. Today's public expects an anchorperson to be many things: friendly, knowledgeable, and a strong journalist—much more than "just a pretty face."

Most anchorpersons started as reporters and, like other top broadcasting professionals, have acquired the experience necessary to get to the top. There have been cases, however, where a local anchorperson has become known through other pursuits such as politics. The ex-mayors of a couple of major cities have gone on to become successful broadcast personalities in recent years, and conversely, several local TV anchors have translated their viewer support into political power and have been elected to various local, state and even national offices.

Local **NEWS REPORTERS** are the key "front-line troops" in the news department. They are on-the-scene at every kind of

event. Successful local reporters must be excellent writers, capable of working quickly and accurately. They must also have the ability to think on their feet, particularly when assigned to do a live report from the scene of a breaking news event. A local reporter may work for several stations during the development of his or her career, often starting in college and moving on to larger markets as he or she gathers experience and a reputation for good work. Some journalists choose to remain local reporters for their entire careers, while others eventually seek jobs as network reporters or correspondents or move into news anchoring or management.

A college degree is almost essential for a local reporter. Journalism provides a good background, although many stations hire local reporters with specific professional expertise such as law, medicine, public administration or education. A person with the ability to write, possessing strong curiosity, good initiative and common sense can be a successful local reporter regardless of his or her college background.

Two of the most common specialty reporting positions in local television are **SPORTS REPORTER** and **WEATHER REPORTER**. Many sports reporters are former athletes, however much more than athletic ability and background is now expected of a successful sports journalist. The sports reporter may be called upon to cover the business, political and social aspects of athletics in the



*The list of the day's stories is displayed near the assignment desk. Editors are constantly monitoring police and fire department scanners for breaking stories.*

community, as well as to report on the outcome of games. Many local stations also have highly popular sports feature programs and the sports reporter may be called upon to host, and in some cases produce, these programs in addition to regular reporting assignments.

The **WEATHER REPORTER** also plays a key role in local news coverage. Weather is now seen as a highly competitive element of most local broadcasts, and news directors choose weather reporters who cannot only present the weather in an entertaining fashion but who also have serious knowledge and background in the science of meteorology and relevant technological equipment. The current trend is for weather reporters to be certified meteorologists with a high degree of skill in operating sophisticated weather radar systems and their associated computer graphics. There are limited opportunities to break into this field. However for someone with previous weather experience and the proper skills, it can be a rewarding career.

Another important position in the local news department is that of the **NEWS WRITER**. The modern news writer does much more than merely pound out news copy. Among a writer's responsibilities may be monitoring news feeds, preparing news packages for voicing by anchors or reporters, researching story information, booking guests for live interviews on news shows and producing segments for news programs. Exceptional writing skill is required in addition to a thorough familiarity with all aspects of the production of a newscast. Many news writers move on to become newscast producers and directors.

Pictures are essential to television news, and those pictures are obtained by **ELECTRONIC NEWS GATHERING (ENG)** crews. In some stations, the ENG personnel work for the engineering department and are assigned to the news operation. In other stations, they are part of the news department staff itself. In either case, they work alongside reporters to capture events on tape and to produce live, on-scene coverage of breaking news stories.

In addition to operating the videocamera and sound, ENG crews must also operate the sophisticated microwave and satellite transmission equipment used by most stations to relay information from the scene of an event and be skilled vehicle operators to drive the large vans required for satellite news production. They must also be able to edit videotape, both in the field and in the newsroom.

ENG personnel may be assigned to shoot and edit documentaries, sports and feature material as well as breaking news stories. This kind of work requires extreme creativity with the camera and additional knowledge of special lighting and sound techniques.

ENG crews have some of the most demanding jobs in the television station. They must have physical strength and endurance, the willingness to work long hours during news emergencies, excellent knowledge of their local area, common sense, coolness under extreme pressure, and at times under dangerous conditions, and a high degree of technical and production skills and news judgement.

The field ENG crew's counterpart at the station is the **ENG EDITOR**. In smaller stations, the person who shoots the tape in the field may also edit it back at the station. But in larger news operations, the volume of material is so large it requires ENG editors on duty to process the incoming tape.

ENG editors work with producers, reporters and writers to build news packages from the raw tape sent in from the field or gathered on feeds from networks and other sources. Their creativity and skill in building images often makes the difference between a routine news story and a truly outstanding information package.

Many ENG editors started on field crews or as newsfilm editors. They understand both news and production and have good news judgement. Other ENG editors came to news from production editing in private industry, the military or government. The editing field is wide open for creative and skilled people with a background in television and film production and journalism. The ability to edit videotape is a totally transferrable skill which can be both professionally and financially rewarding. ■

# ENGINEERING

Television is an electronic medium, relying on technology to deliver its images to the viewing public. None of the other aspects of television will succeed without excellence in every phase of the engineering department.

The divisions among types of television engineers are not as clear as those dividing the responsibilities of the news, program and sales departments. In part, this is because many broadcast outlets around the country are unionized. A number of unions are generally represented in the engineering department. Unions influence the definition of positions differently in each station, but the non-union station may be completely different.

The largest engineering unions are the National Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians AFL-CIO (NABET) and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW). Where one union contract may require a worker to master the skills of other technicians, another may prohibit engineers from working outside their specialties.

As technology increases, there is a growing trend for technical personnel to be trained and skilled in a variety of engineering functions because they are so closely interrelated in broadcasting.



*Master Control is where all broadcast signals are routed before they are sent to the transmitter and equipment is monitored for any potential problems that would cause the station to go off the air.*

Engineering departments can range in size from six to 50 or more people depending on the size and complexity of the station. The **CHIEF ENGINEER**, or **DIRECTOR OF ENGINEERING**, heads this technical staff. Traditionally, the chief engineer was the senior technical person at the station. In some cases, the chief engineer may have been the person who actually built some of the station's technical equipment and put it on the air.

However, the modern chief engineer is a business-oriented manager who supervises highly skilled personnel, working with high-technology equipment that often does not need the "hands on" attention that broadcast equipment once demanded. In smaller stations, the chief engineer may still actively be involved in day-to-day technical operations, but in medium and larger stations, the chief engineer's role is changing rapidly with much more time being spent on non-operational issues.

In some of the largest stations, the chief engineer may also be responsible for the actual maintenance of the building and all of its support systems, as well as the television technology.

Because of the increasingly complex nature of television, many stations have a senior engineering management team consisting of the chief engineer and several **ASSISTANT CHIEF ENGINEERS** and **SUPERVISORS**.

In a typical station, one assistant chief engineer may be responsible for the Studio Group of technicians, another for the Broadcast Operations or Master Control Group, and another for Maintenance. Each group has a number of people who run the studio cameras, lighting and sound equipment, operate the master control switching and computer functions, or maintain and repair the technical equipment. Under the assistant chief engineers, the supervisors are in charge of one shift or one portion of a group.

Both the supervisors and the assistant chiefs must have strong technical backgrounds and experience, as well as being capable of managing people. Most have gained that experience in the broadcast industry, although some come from the military and private industry, particularly those who work in electronic maintenance.

The **STUDIO ENGINEERS** are responsible for operating all of the equipment necessary for the production of a program. This includes the studio cameras, the audio console, studio lighting, the video switcher, and in some stations, the character generator and the electronic still-storage graphics display equipment.

**MASTER CONTROL** and **VIDEOTAPE ENGINEERS** are responsible for operating the videotape recording and playback equipment for live programs and during commercial breaks in network and taped shows. They are also in charge of the master control center through which all signals are processed before they are sent to the transmitter.

Many stations now have highly sophisticated computerized video cartridge equipment to run commercials. This is usually placed in Master Control along with the automated logging equipment that keeps an accurate record of the actual broadcast time of each program and commercial break. In some stations, the master control operator is also responsible for the camera control equipment, which ensures the quality of the color signal coming from the studio cameras.

Master control and videotape engineers must be skilled in computer operations as well as being highly trained on the specific video equipment they are assigned to operate. This knowledge is gained through experience and through continuing education provided by equipment manufacturers and a number of excellent technical schools. A community college background in physics, electronics or radio-TV production offers a good start for potential master control and videotape careers.

**MAINTENANCE ENGINEERS** are responsible for the repair, maintenance, installation and modification of all of the electronic equipment in the station. This job carries a great deal of responsibility because the entire broadcast product of the station depends on being able to get the program on the air.

Many maintenance engineers have come to television from private industry and the military where they have had extensive background in electronics either in a repair shop or laboratory setting. Television maintenance engineers must be able to quickly diagnose a problem, isolate the trouble and get equipment back into service as soon as possible. They must constantly work to keep up their knowledge of the changing state-of-the-art in broadcast electronics. Many stations provide ongoing opportunities for maintenance personnel to get this in-service training by allowing for travel to attend manufacturers' seminars and other technical schooling.

Good maintenance engineers are constantly in demand, and as television continues to become more technologically sophisticated, this field should continue to grow and offer many oppor-

tunities for financial and educational reward.

A word about **TECHNICAL CERTIFICATION**, which is mentioned frequently as an engineering prerequisite. The FCC no longer conducts examinations for broadcast engineers and a license is needed only for transmitter operations and maintenance of microwave and other technical equipment. Technical certification replaces the license examination and is conducted by several engineering membership organizations such as the Society of Broadcast Engineers. The certification tests are specifically tailored for various areas of broadcast engineering. As a technician becomes more experienced, additional certification tests are taken to demonstrate expertise in a variety of broadcast engineering jobs. Certification demonstrates to a potential employer that the applicant is willing to work hard for the job and is interested in improving performance and increasing his or her level of technical skill. ■

## **PROMOTIONS AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

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Two other members of the station staff perform services that are extremely important to the life and image of the TV station: the **PROMOTIONS DIRECTOR** and the **COMMUNITY RELATIONS DIRECTOR**. At some smaller stations, these jobs are combined into one. In larger stations, each has a full range of responsibilities and may supervise a staff.

The promotions director's job is to promote the station's image, programs and activities. Among their many duties, promotions directors conceive and execute a variety of written and taped station promotion spots, secure station advertising in other media, and, in conjunction with the sales department, develop ways to keep current viewers and advertisers and to attract new ones. In larger stations, the job of working directly with the media to place stories about station activities and personalities may be handled by a separate public relations professional or a public relations firm retained on contract.

A successful promotions director should have a good background in public relations, creative arts, writing and television production. Many have come to television stations from public relations firms. Experience in graphic arts, public relations, print design and sales is useful. Many larger stations, networks and independent production companies offer employment opportunities for promotion producers, writers and graphic artists.

The **COMMUNITY RELATIONS DIRECTOR** plans, coordinates and executes a station's services and programs developed to respond to the needs of the community. These include public service announcements (PSAs), public affairs programming (often produced in conjunction with the news department) and special, non-broadcast events that deal with community-oriented issues.

Successful community affairs directors should try to be the most knowledgeable person in the station about the needs and interests in the community. Many community affairs directors have come from the ranks of local non-profit organizations with established media departments. A background in sociology, public administration, political science or social work can be useful in a community affairs career. ■

# **PREPARING FOR SUCCESS**

Getting that first job in television can be the beginning of a rewarding career. Your survival and advancement in the competitive world of television depends on a variety of things. Ask yourself the following questions:

## ***Are you prepared for a job in television?***

College training may not be necessary, but communications skills are a must. Good writing skills and the ability to express your thoughts clearly will go a long way in making your mark in television. Of course, specific abilities will be expected to carry out the responsibilities of the job (e.g. math aptitude for accounting and financial positions; organizational skills for administration; voice qualities for on-air talent).

## ***How well do you relate to people?***

Television is a business for and about people. Television employees are expected to be team players—contributing to established goals of the company. Typical goals relate to high market ratings, revenue targets for commercial stations, and popularity in the communities they serve. Compatibility among co-workers adds to a productive environment and helps ensure desired results. In addition, a healthy attitude on the job will help you meet your personal objectives and those of your company.

## ***How much do you know about television?***

Do your homework in learning about the business of TV and the station or company that interests you. Prospective employers are always impressed by the knowledge and enthusiasm of job seekers. Would you hire someone for a sales job who knows nothing about your product? What impression would you have of someone who reports for a scheduled interview twenty minutes late? Applying for a news reporting job implies a knowledge of current affairs and a tendency to probe into the unknown. Don't be afraid to project your capabilities.

## *Who do you know in television?*

What you know is a necessary preparation for success; and who you know helps it happen. TV is a dynamic business employing a large number of people nationally, but everybody who wants a job is not hired. Sometimes well-prepared and talented persons are not selected for vacancies because of a variety of subjective reasons. Having a contact at a station or a respected reference in the broadcast industry can make a difference. Obtaining this type of support can result from exposure you received working as an intern or through the efforts of someone who serves as your mentor in the industry. A rule of thumb is that you should know at least one person at 50 percent of the TV stations in your community. Reading industry trade publications such as *Broadcasting* and *Electronic Media* magazines and talking with television professionals are useful activities for improving your knowledge about television. Also, scan your local newspaper daily for current TV news. Personnel and management actions at local stations may forecast opportunities for you.

## *What is happening in the general workforce that may affect employment trends in television?*

Technology, government policies and marketplace competition all have an impact on TV. But, people really affect the character and personality of television. The 1990s and well into the following decade will introduce new challenges for TV management. Over the next few years, greater numbers of women, minorities, the disabled, and older persons will make up the workforce and job-seekers. By the year 2000, according to the federal government, 15 states will have minority populations at or above the national average (1980) of 28 percent. In the meantime, students enrolled in journalism and mass communications programs in the U.S. increased dramatically at the beginning of the 1989-90 academic year. This means more pressure and competition for TV jobs and greater attention to the establishment and management of diversity in the workplace. More than ever before, employees must be able to function well in more diverse work environments.

*What organizations or resources are available for women and minorities seeking employment or already working in television?*

A variety of organizations and resources exist to assist women and minorities and others seeking information about diversity in TV. Anyone planning a career in TV or other areas of communications should join a professional organization related to his or her area of employment (e.g. American Women in Radio & Television). Such groups help their members stay current with industry developments and allow for productive information sharing. The following are examples of professional groups primarily concerned with, but not limited to issues of its members:

**Women**

American Women in Radio & Television  
1101 Connecticut Avenue, NW,  
Suite 700  
Washington, DC 20036  
(202) 429-5102  
FAX: (202) 223-4579

**African American  
(Black)**

National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ)  
P.O. Box 17212  
Washington, DC 20041  
11600 Sunrise Valley Drive  
Reston, VA 22091  
(703) 648-1270  
FAX: (703) 476-6245

**Hispanic**

National Association of Hispanic Journalists (NAHJ)  
National Press Building  
529 14th Street, NW, Suite 634  
Washington, DC 20045  
(202) 783-6228  
FAX: (202) 783-6218

**Native American**

Native American Journalists Association (NAJA)  
P.O. Box 287  
University of Colorado-Boulder  
Boulder, CO 80309  
(303) 492-7397  
FAX: (303) 492-0585

**Asian American**

Asian American Journalists Association (AAJA)  
1765 Sutter Street, Suite 1000  
San Francisco, CA 94115  
(415) 346-2051  
FAX: (415) 931-4671

**General Broadcast  
Employment Assistance**  
National Association of Broadcasters

Employment Clearinghouse  
1771 N Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20036  
Jobline: (202) 429-5498  
(6:00 pm—8:30 am, M-F; 24 hrs, Sat, Sun, holidays)  
(202) 429-5498  
FAX: (202) 429-5406

Employment Outreach Project  
Corporation for  
Public Broadcasting  
901 E Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20004-2006

Jobline: (800) 582-8220/  
(202) 393-1045 (202) 879-9789  
FAX: (202) 783-1019

## About the NAB Employment Clearinghouse

The Employment Clearinghouse (ECH) is a national free resume referral service. Job seekers and broadcasters in search of qualified and qualifiable personnel are brought together through the service. The experience of persons registered with ECH range from entry level to management. Minorities and women are encouraged to register.

Counseling is also available for prospective broadcast employees and current station employees seeking assistance in career planning. This service is available from 9:00 am-5:00 pm weekdays. Call (202) 429-5498. Approximately 3,000 resumes are in ECH data files, and computer listings are maintained in 26 categories of industry jobs. Broadcasters may call the Clearinghouse for personalized service in finding job candidates.

Resumes are received by mail and applicants and other interested persons may check on daily job listings through the "ECH Jobline," a non-toll telephone service. The Employment Clearinghouse is program of the NAB Human Resource Development Department.

### **The ECH "Jobline": (202) 429-5498**

The ECH "Jobline" features approximately 20 broadcast jobs a day in five categories: on-air-talent, sales, production, engineering and news. Employment opportunities in specified broadcast job areas are offered on certain days (see below).

Broadcast job-seekers may call (202) 429-5498, Monday through Friday (6:00 pm until 8:30 am the following day). The service is available 24 hours Saturday, Sunday and holidays.

<i>Job area</i>	<i>Information Day</i>
On-air talent .....	Monday
Sales .....	Tuesday
Production .....	Wednesday
Engineering .....	Thursday
News .....	Fridays, weekends & holidays

PN  
1992.55  
.N385 Careers in Television  
1991

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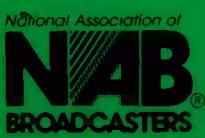
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National Association of Broadcasters  
1771 N Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20036-2891  
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