

## Help wanted, big time

*Affiliation changes generate burgeoning market for TV news jobs*

By Julie A. Zier

**T**he broadcast television affiliation war, touched off last May by Fox's blanket affiliation agreement with the New World stations, has ignited an explosion in news hiring.

"A conservative estimate of brand-new positions is somewhere between 1,500 and 2,000," says talent agent Barbara Frye, of Frank N. Magid Associates. "In my 16 years, this is the most hectic and active I've ever seen it."

"I've never seen movement in the industry as great as it is right now," says headhunter Don Fitzpatrick. "We've made more placements in the first six months of 1994 than in the last five years."

Broadcast news employs some 25,000, including on-air reporters and anchors, producers, assignment editors, video editors and technical support, according to Vernon Stone, professor emeritus at the University of Missouri, who tracks newsroom trends.

More than two dozen stations switching affiliation from the Big Three to Fox are expanding news in the process. Several others facing the loss of affiliation are planning more news to fill the vacuum that the loss of network programming will create. And at least four are entering the news



*Stations need more news personnel as they beef up in the wake of affiliation switches.*

business for the first time as they make the leap from Fox to the Big Three.

Cases in point: As CBS affiliate KSAZ Phoenix prepares to move to Fox, it is adding four hours of local news for a daily total of seven. Another Fox-to-be, CBS-affiliate WJBK-TV Detroit, will add three hours to its current four and a half hours of daily news. WFTS Tampa, which offered no news as a Fox affiliate, will air three hours a day when it makes the switch to ABC.

Stations expanding news are causing some rival stations to follow suit. What's more, as stations directly affected by the affiliate wars recruit employees, they leave behind holes in other stations' staffs.

"Every one of our stations, if they are not looking for talent, they are looking for managers or both," says Jack Bowen, head of McHugh & Hoffman, a consulting firm.

Phoenix, one of the markets hardest

### WB countersues Gaylord

WB Network last Thursday filed a countersuit against Gaylord Broadcasting alleging breach of contract and bad faith. It seeks an undisclosed amount in punitive damages. The lawsuit had been expected since Gaylord filed suit in July to establish that three of its stations were not obligated to affiliate with the start-up fifth network.

The WB suit also seeks to prevent Gaylord from affiliating those three stations with any other network until the dispute has been resolved.

Gaylord's legal action was designed to establish that its Dallas-Fort Worth, Houston and Seattle stations were free to affiliate with one of the Big Three networks. The move by Gaylord came after the current network-affiliate churn started following the Fox-New World deal at the end of May.

Included in the WB Network suit is a copy of an affilia-

tion agreement that was sent to Gaylord in April stipulating that the three stations in question would be affiliates of the new network. The contract also states that the network will not affiliate with any station in the Nashville market, after Gaylord expressed interest in purchasing a station there and affiliating it with WB. Although that affiliation agreement is not signed by Gaylord, WB asserts that the agreement was drafted after lengthy conversations with Gaylord executives that resulted in an oral agreement stipulating those points.

Because the marketplace has changed drastically since Gaylord and WB began affiliation conversations, the station group has stepped back from the new network in an attempt to align itself with one of the Big Three, specifically CBS, which has shown an interest in Gaylord's Dallas station.

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