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February 21, 2024

EEO Division Enforcement Bureau Federal Communications Commission 45 L Street, N.E. Washington, DC 20554

ATTN: Lynn Kalagian-Jones Supervisory EEO Specialist

Re: Amendment to EEO Audit Response WHBQ-TV, Memphis, Tennessee (FID 12521)

Dear Ms. Kalagian-Jones:

Imagicomm Memphis, LLC ("Imagicomm" or "Licensee"), the licensee of WHBQ-TV, Memphis, Tennessee (FID 12521) ("WHBQ" or the "Station"), hereby amends its EEO audit response of December 14, 2023, to provide the following information responsive to your email to me of January 16, 2024.

In particular, your email asked for additional information regarding the recruitment of several individuals as to whom it appeared there was "limited to no recruitment" for the vacancies filled by those individuals. In a follow-up telephone call, you informed us that the four specific vacancies in question are the following:

Production Assistant (Date of Hire January 16, 2023) Executive Producer (Date of Hire September 7, 2022) Photographer (Date of Hire January 25, 2023) Production Assistant (Date of Hire January 25, 2023)

Below, we provide you with pertinent general information regarding the broad recruitment activities that were undertaken by WHBQ during the period covered by your inquiry, and specific facts concerning recruitment conducted to fill the four vacancies about which you inquired.

DWT.COM

Background Information Concerning WHBQ-TV

The current licensee, Imagicomm, purchased the assets of WHBQ on August 1, 2022. Imagicomm had no previous broadcast ownership or operations experience.

In the first six months following Imagicomm's acquisition of WHBQ, the Station experienced tremendous turnover in its employee ranks. Specifically, when Imagicomm assumed control of the Station, there were 20 openings that needed to be filled immediately. The Station lost an additional 15 employees between December 2022 and February 2023, a number of which, due to the nature of their responsibilities, had to be filled as quickly as possible.

The prior licensee handled much of the Station's recruiting activity, including the responsibility for compliance with FCC recruiting requirements, centrally through a talent acquisition office at its headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia. Many of the Station's historical records and files, including those relating to recruiting, were located at the prior licensee's headquarters offices, not at the Station, and were not provided to Imagicomm at the time of the sale. Consequently, because WHBQ's local station staff had only limited roles in the recruitment process, they had little awareness of or responsibility for compliance with FCC recruitment rules. When the sale of the Station to Imagicomm was completed, the prior licensee did not leave behind any recruitment staff or materials, necessitating that Imagicomm start from scratch in establishing its hiring process.

Following the transition of the Station to Imagicomm ownership, all openings were listed on the Station's website and its LinkedIn page, which together average 400,000 page views per day. Openings also were advertised through online postings on sites such as Indeed.com and JournalismJobs.com.

Additionally, the Station's Production Manager, Ron Crawford, has an ongoing relationship with Roxana Gee, Associate Professor and Internship Coordinator for Film and Video Production at the University of Memphis. He regularly visits Professor Gee's production class, and she gives his contact information to students who are interested in pursuing television production as a career. Mr. Crawford regularly receives emails and resumes from these students.

With these background facts in mind, we provide the following information in response to your particular inquiries.

Production Assistant (Date of Hire January 16, 2023)

The Station has a near perpetual need for Production Assistants, which, like at many stations, is a transitory position. The candidates interviewed for this position came primarily

from a posting on Indeed.com that was initially made on August 26, 2022, for the Production Assistant hired December 1, 2022. The Station received 116 resumes for this position from both the Indeed.com posting and from students at the University of Memphis.

Attached as Exhibit 1 is the Applicant Interview Record for this position showing that six candidates were interviewed for the position. Although the ultimate hire was an employee referral (his father worked at the Station), there clearly was wide dissemination¹ for this position.

Executive Producer (Date of Hire September 7, 2022)

This position was specifically for Executive Producer of Investigations, who oversees all investigative journalism at the Station, as well as overseeing the team that produces the Station's early evening newscasts. This person also is in charge of the Station's FOIA and public records requests. It is critical that the person filling this position have a thorough institutional knowledge of the Memphis market, including investigative journalism, as well as a thorough knowledge of the laws relating to journalism. The previous holder of this position had been at the Station for more than 19 years and her departure left a hole that needed to be filled as quickly as possible. The need to fill this position on an expedited basis truly constituted an exigent circumstance.

The position was posted on JournalismJobs.com on August 26, 2022. See Exhibit 2. Three candidates were interviewed for the position. See Exhibit 3. However, two of them were under contract with other stations in the market and could not leave their current positions soon enough to meet WHBQ-TV's needs.

¹ *See* In the Matter of Review of the Commission's Broadcast and Cable Equal Employment Opportunity Rules and Policies, 17 FCC Rcd 24018 *; 2002 FCC LEXIS 6169 **; 27 Comm. Reg. (P & F) 1394, MM Docket No. 98-204, at paras. (Rel. Nov. 20, 2002) (" ... use for each vacancy of a recruitment source or list of recruitment sources ... sufficient to ensure wide dissemination of information about the opening. We will not dictate the number or type of sources that a broadcaster must use. **** A broadcaster may widely disseminate job postings through any combination of methods sufficient to ensure that its recruitment efforts are inclusive.") (footnotes omitted); In the Matter of Petition for Rulemaking Seeking to Allow the Sole Use of Internet Sources for FCC EEO Recruitment Requirements, 32 FCC Rcd 3685 *; 2017 FCC LEXIS 1221 **; 66 Comm. Reg. (P & F) 793 ("Internet usage has become sufficient to justify allowing online job postings to be used as a sole recruitment source, in circumstances where doing so meets the 'widely disseminate' requirement of the rules, and we update our EEO policy to reflect this conclusion.")(footnotes omitted).

The ultimate hire, Richard Holden, was exceptionally well qualified for the position, as he had 22 years of broadcast journalism experience, 19 of which were in the Memphis market, where he had been a long time Executive Producer. He also had five years' experience as an Assistant News Director, including overseeing investigative journalism. Mr. Holden's unique qualifications included (a) comprehensive knowledge of the local court systems and an ability to handle court records; (b) comprehensive knowledge of local government and politics; (c) local neighborhood and community knowledge, including historical context needed for investigations into environmental justice; (d) knowledge of libel, slander and broadcast law; (e) knowledge of Adobe editing and Photoshop; (f) experience gained by being an Avid iNews "Super User"; (g) knowledge of Chyron, Luci and Axis graphics; and (h) experience with logistics planning. It was difficult to imagine finding a more qualified person for this position. Indeed, since his hiring, Mr. Holden has produced extremely timely and valuable stories on ghost guns, affordable housing, and a link between decreased traffic tickets and increased traffic fatalities, among others. The Station considers itself fortunate that he was available when this position became open.

Imagicomm believes that its recruitment efforts for this position satisfied the Commission's wide dissemination standard, and also that it qualified as an exigent circumstance.²

Photographer (Date of Hire January 25, 2023)

The Station's opening for the photojournalist/photographer position was posted on LinkedIn on December 16, 2022, and also on JournalismJobs.com. See Exhibit 4. Eight candidates were interviewed as a result of these job postings; one of those was offered the position but turned it down. Although the person ultimately hired to fill this position came through an internal referral, we believe there was wide dissemination for this position in compliance with the Commission's requirements.

² See MM Docket No. 98-204 at para. 80 (recognizing "the need to replace immediately an employee who departs without notice and whose duties cannot be fulfilled, even briefly, by other station employees [as exigent circumstances]"); para. 85 (exigent circumstances where "a talent [is] so unique and exceptional that a broadcaster could reasonably conclude that a comparable talent is unlikely to be found by recruitment."); para. 50 ("-we would rely on the good faith discretion of broadcasters"); para. 83 ("look[ing] to the entirety of the licensee's recruitment efforts in assessing its compliance with our Rule. *** In the absence of evidence of such abuse, we would not necessarily find a violation even if we disagreed with a licensee's decision as to a particular hire, as long as it is made in good faith.") (footnotes omitted).

Production Assistant (Date of Hire January 25, 2023)

As noted above, the Production Assistant position is essentially a perpetual job opening. As also noted above, the Station received 116 resumes for this position as a result of both the August Indeed.com posting and resumes received from students at the University of Memphis.

The person hired for this position, Simmone Smith, was one of the candidates interviewed for the Photographer position described above, although she also had submitted a resume for the Production Assistant position. This particular position was for someone to edit the weekend evening newscasts using the Station's Adobe editing system. Ms. Smith, who is Black, seemed particularly well suited for this position as she had experience using the Adobe editing system, which no other Production Assistant at the Station knew how to operate. Accordingly, she was offered the Production Assistant position, which she accepted. In addition to Ms. Smith possessing unique Adobe editing system expertise, the Station also was confronted with an urgent need to add someone with those skills, as the Station had only five other production assistants capable of editing the 53.5 hours per week of newscasts produced by the Station on a 24/7 basis, all of whom were working overtime and were overtaxed.

Consequently, Licensee believes that its Production Assistant recruitment efforts for this position satisfied the Commission's wide dissemination requirement, and that this position also constituted an exigent circumstance in view of the fact that it had to be filled immediately by someone who had the necessary news editing skills.

Conclusion

As noted above, the Licensee assumed control of this Station in August 2022 and has had to fill an inordinate number of positions since that time without the benefit of the prior licensee's recruitment staff or materials and without the benefit of previous FCC broadcast hiring experience. Since then, the Licensee has informed itself of the FCC's requirements for both recordkeeping and wide dissemination of job openings, and has had numerous meetings with staff to ensure that all involved are knowledgeable about these requirements.

We think it is noteworthy that, even without the benefit of past broadcast ownership experience or the prior licensee's experienced staff and station records, WHBQ's staff is quite diverse. Attached as Exhibit 5 is a chart showing the makeup of the Station's staff. As can be seen, every department of the Station includes both women and persons of color. Among newsroom managers, half (4 of 8) are persons of color. Similarly, the majority of directors are persons of color as well (3 of 5). Overall, the newsroom staff is 55% Black, nearly 3% Hispanic, nearly 3% Asian, and 40.5% female. Looking at all station employees (not just the newsroom), they are 48.7% Black, 2.65% Hispanic, 1.77% Asian and 45% female, truly reflecting the

Memphis community at large, which is 47% Black, 6% Hispanic and 2% Asian.³ Of the 15 Station employees who have supervisory/managerial responsibilities, six (40%) are minorities, comprised of five Black and one American Indian/Asian employee. Also, eight of the 15, i.e., a majority, are female. See Exhibit 5. Thus, even without the benefit of prior FCC experience, the Licensee has been very successful in hiring a diverse staff, which is the ultimate goal of the Commission's EEO program.

Please let us know if there are any other questions or if we can provide any further information with regard to this audit.

Respectfully submitted,

DAVIS WRIGHT TREMAINE LLP

/burt a braverman/

Burt A. Braverman

³ Source: <u>https://censusreporter.org/profiles/31000US32820-memphis-tn-ms-ar-metro-area/</u>

DECLARATION OF RANDY WARDELL

I, Randy Wardell, hereby declare as follows:

1. I am the News Director at Imagicomm Memphis, LLC, the licensee of WHBQ-TV in Memphis, Tennessee (the "Station").

2. I have read the foregoing "Amendment to EEO Audit Response" and hereby declare under penalty of perjury that all of the facts stated therein are true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information and belief.

Dated this $\frac{21}{2}$ day of February 2024.

Randy Wardell



Position:	Production Assistants	Department:	Production/News
Date Posted:	11/23	Date Closed:	TBD
Person Hired:	Cooper Guidry	Hire Date:	1/16
Replacing:	Bryant Pryor	Hiring Manager	Ron Crawford

	Interview Date	Interviewee Name	Referral Source (How did interviewee hear about the job? BE SPECIFIC)	Additional Information
1	12/23	John Jentesh	INDEED	
2	12/29	Jazmine Burrientos	Email Resume'	
3	12/29	Yael King	Email Resume'	
4	12/29	Shatana Curtis	Email Resume'	
5	01/04	Cooper Guidry	Email Resume'/Refferal	HIRED
6	01/04	Derrick Brown	Email Resume'	
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				

Executive Producer of Investigative Journalism

FOX13 Memphis, Tennessee



Date Posted	August 26, 2022
Industry	Television
Specialty	Investigative
Required Education	Bachelor's Degree
Job Status	Full-time

Description:

Imagicomm and FOX13 Memphis have an immediate opening for an Executive Producer of Investigations

Journalism, real community-serving journalism, has value. You can make a difference in our community. You can make life more affordable, fairer, and safer for the people we serve.

We are searching for an Executive Producer to oversee our Investigative Content. FOX13 Investigates and Your Money set the editorial agenda in Memphis. It is our journalism that shapes our community.

The Executive Producer will be responsible for the oversight of relevant, well-paced memorable newscasts that have high production value.? The successful candidate will excel at owning breaking news and showcasing investigative/ enterprise content.?

The Executive Producer will also schedule and oversee all investigative content.? The candidate must be creative and able to work with a research-based framework.

WHAT YOU WILL DO:

- Supervise Investigative Reporters and Photographers
- Oversee scheduling of all investigative content
- Oversee newscasts, making sure they meet research goals and the mission of FOX13 Memphis to be the go-to source for weather, breaking news and daily investigative journalism
- Supervise producers, making sure newscasts are filled with valuable content that is clear and easy to understand
- Ensure producers execute meter and quarter hour tease strategies
- Ensure newscasts regularly showcase and execute process language
- Copy edit newscasts and approve reporter scripts with fundamental journalistic and legal understanding
- Maximize graphics and pre-production elements for newscasts
- Attend editorial meetings and contribute story ideas
- Develop and critique producers and set coverage expectations
- Understand brand and manage newscasts so product is consistent with brand
- Communicate daily with News Director and news management
- Work with news managers to craft special coverage plans
- Be the leader in wall-to-wall breaking news coverage

- Understand and execute research plans
- Consistently integrate references/ pushes to our digital and social media products

WHAT YOU WILL BRING:

- A minimum of 5 years professional experience in local TV news is preferred??
- Prior news management experience is a plus?
- Bachelor's degree (B. A.) from four-year College or University in Journalism or Communications preferred?
- Ability to define problems, collect data, establish facts, and draw valid conclusions?
- Must be thoroughly professional in all aspects of journalism

Email your reel and resume to randy.wardell@fox13memphis.com

When applying, mention you saw this opening listed at JournalismJobs.com.

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BEST WESTERN PLUS FLOWOOD I From \$93	SLEEP INN & SUITES AIRF From \$80	
Info	Info	

Applicant Interview Record

Position:

Date Posted:

Person Hired:

Replacing:

Executive Producer 09.01.22

red: Richard Holden

lacing: Claire Jones

Department:NewsDate Closed:09.19.22Hire Date:09.07.22Hiring ManagerRandy Wardell

	Interview Date	Interviewee Name	Referral Source (How did interviewee hear about the job? BE SPECIFIC)	Additional Information
1	09.02.2022	Richard Holden	Referral from Valerie Calhoun and Claire Jones	Top candidate – long time EP and Assistant News Director in the market
2	09.01.2022	Ben Hogan	Internal Candidate	
3	09.03.2022	Istvan Bardos	Internal Candidate	
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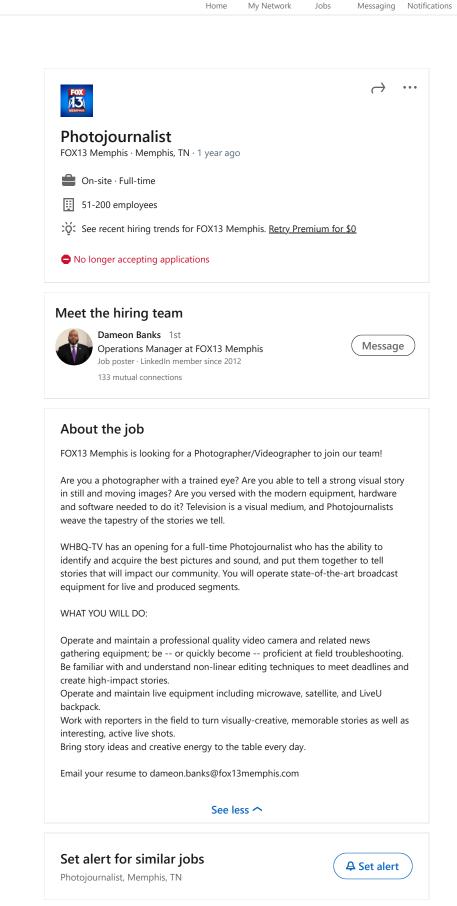
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4 Home My Network

Messaging Notifications



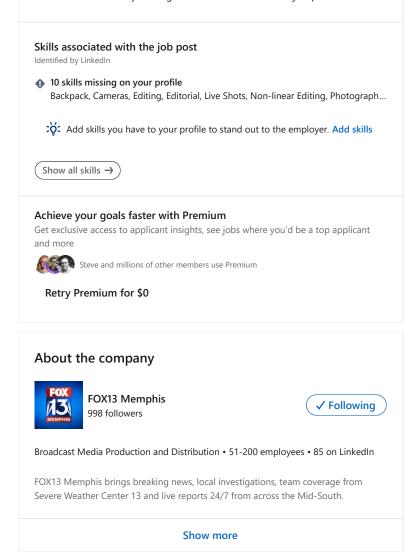




How you match

(1) Photojournalist | FOX13 Memphis | LinkedIn

Stand out by adding skills associated with the job post

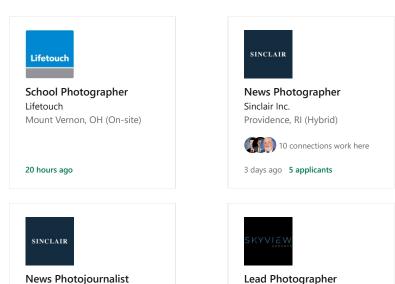


More jobs

Sinclair Inc.

Baltimore, MD (Hybrid)

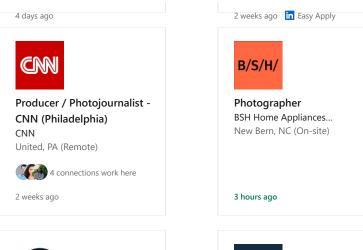
10 connections work here



Lead Photographer Skyview Experts Grand Rapids Metropolitan Area (Remote)

Response time is typically 6 days

(1) Photojournalist | FOX13 Memphis | LinkedIn





Photographer Obama Foundation Chicago, IL (On-site)

Pour profile matches this job

3 days ago



Content Creator / Studio Photographer TRG Dallas, TX (Hybrid)

4 days ago



News Photographer -Washington DC (15935) Getty Images Washington, DC (Hybrid)

2 days ago







Photographer Tesla Fremont, CA (On-site)

2 weeks ago

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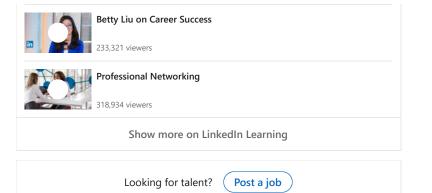
Learn skills to get a new job with these courses



Developing Your Professional Image in a New Job

273,043 viewers

(1) Photojournalist | FOX13 Memphis | LinkedIn



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Sales Solutions	Mobile	Small Business		Go to your Settings.	
Safety Center			0	Recommendation transparency Learn more about Recommended Content.	

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Nome	Title	Base	Condox	
Name Newsroom Managers	Title	Race	Gender	White Black Male Female
News100111 Managers	News Director	White	Male	4 4 7 1
	Operations Manager	Black	Male	50% 50% 87.50% 12.50%
	Managing Editor	White	Male	
	Senior Executive Producer	Black	Female	
	Investigative Executive Producer	White	Male	
	Morning Executive Producer	White	Male	
	Production Manager	Black	Male	
	Chief Photographer	Black	Male	
Anchors				White Black Male Female
	Morning News Anchor	Black	Male	2 5 4 3
	Morning News Anchor	White	Female	28.57% 71.43% 57.14% 42.26%
	Midday News Anchor	Black	Female	
	Evening News Anchor	White	Male	
	Evening News Anchor	Black	Female	
	Weekend Evening Anchor	Black	Male Male	
	Weekend Morning Anchor	Black	IVIAIE	
Meteorologists				White Black Male Female
Weteorologists	Chief Meteorologist	Black	Male	3 2 2 3
	Morning Lead Meteorologist	Black	Female	60% 40% 40% 60%
	Weekend Evening Meteorologist	White	Male	
	Weekend Morning Meteorologist	White	Female	
	Morning Second Meteorologist	White	Female	
Content Center				White Black Asian Male Female
	Evening Assignment Lead	Black	Female	3 2 1 3 3
	Morning Assignment Lead	White	Female	50% 33% 17% 50% 50%
	Morning Digital Producer	White	Male	
	Lead Digital Producer	White	Male	
	Digital Content Producer	Asian American	Male	
	Digital Content Producer	Black	Female	
D				
Producers	6pm Producer	White	Female	White Black Male Female 5 5 6 4
	Midday Producer	Black	Male	5 5 6 4 50% 50% 60% 40%
	Weekend Morning Producer	Black	Female	30% 30% 00% 40%
	5pm Producer	White	Male	
	Morning Producer	Black	Female	
	Weekend Evening Producer	Black	Male	
	10pm Producer	White	Female	
	Morning Producer	White	Female	
	9pm Producer	White	Male	
	Morning Producer	Black	Female	
Reporters				White Black Asian Hispanic Male Female
	Dayside Reporter	White	Female	3 4 1 1 1 8
	Morning Reporter/Anchor	Hispanic	Female	33.33% 44.44% 11.11% 11.11% 11.11% 88.89%
	Dayside Reporter	Black	Female	
	Nightside Reporter Consumer Investigative Reporter	White White	Male Female	
	Investigative Reporter	Black	Female	
	Nightside Reporter	Black	Female	
	Nightside Reporter	Black	Female	
	Morning Reporter	Asian American	Female	
	U U			
Photojournalists				White Black Male Female
	Morning Photographer	Black	Male	3 7 8 2
	Investigative Producer/Photographer	Black	Female	30% 70% 80% 20%
	Evening Photographer	Black	Male	
	Morning Photographer	White	Male	
	Evening Photographer	White	Male	
	Lead Morning Photographer	Black	Male	
	Dayside Photographer	White	Male	
	Dayside Photographer	Black	Female	
	Dayside Photographer	Black	Male	
	Overnight Photographer	Black	Male	
Editors				White Black Hispanic Male Female
	Morning Editor	Black	Male	1 2 1 3 1
	Morning Editor	Hispanic	Female	25% 50% 25% 75% 25%
	-	-		

		14/1-11			
	Evening Editor	White	Male		
	Evening Editor	Black	Male		
Directors				White Black	Male Female
Directors	Evening Director	Black	Female	2 3	3 2
	Morning Director	White	Male	40% 60%	60% 40%
	Weekend Morning Director	Black	Female	40% 00%	00% 40%
		Black	Male		
	Weekend Evening Director Evening Director	White	Male		
		winte	Ividie		
Production Assistants				White Black	Male Female
FIGURE ION ASSISTANTS	Editor/Production Assistant	Black	Male	3 7	7 3
	Morning Production Assistant	White	Male	30% 70%	70% 30%
	•	Black		30% 70%	70% 30%
	Morning Production Assistant	Black	Male Male		
	Evening Production Assistant				
	Editor/Production Assistant	White	Female		
	Evening Production Assistant	White	Female		
	Evening Production Assistant	Black	Male		
	Evening Production Assistant	Black	Male		
	Morning Production Assistant	Black	Male		
	Morning Production Assistant	Black	Female	Overall Newsroom	
					panic Asian Male Female
				29 41	2 2 44 30
				39.19% 55.41%	2.71% 2.71% 59.46% 40.54%
				Memphis Metro Area	
					oanic Asian
				41% 47%	6% 2%
				Primary Gatekeepers - Ma	nagers and Anchors
				White Black	
				6 9	
				40% 60%	
					rs, Meteorologists, Reporters
					banic Asian
				8 11	1 1
				38.09% 52.38%	4.76% 4.76%
Other Departments				-	oanic Asian Male Female
Finance				1	1
Engineering				6 5	8 3
Administrative				1 1	1 1
Creative Services				6 1	1 4 4
Sales				8 6	3 11
Traffic				2 1	1 2
Non-News Total				24 14	1 18 21
				62% 36%	3% 46% 54%
Total Station				53 55	3 2 62 51
				46.90% 48.67%	2.65% 1.77% 54.87% 45.13%