

PERSONAL INTERVIEWS WITH GENERAL
MANAGERS OF COMMERCIAL
TELEVISION STATIONS
AND
TWELVE CASE STUDIES

Thesis for the Degree of M. A.
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
Peter M. DiMeo
1976

67 94-304

ABSTRACT

PERSONAL INTERVIEWS WITH GENERAL MANAGERS OF COMMERCIAL TELEVISION STATIONS AND TWELVE CASE STUDIES

By

Peter M. DiMeo

There is a general consensus among those people in broadcasting that a broadcast education does not adequately prepare the broadcasting student for a career in broadcasting. In order to test this statement, the author interviewed the general managers of seven commercial television stations, all of which are network affiliates and are in the top one-hundred markets. When exposed to the statement above, most of the general managers interviewed by the author felt that "a broadcast education is not enough."² They suggested that broadcast curricula be revised and that more internships be made available to the broadcasting student so that he or she can get a more realistic understanding of how complex the broadcasting business is.³

The question of whether or not a gap exists between what is taught at the colleges and universities and what is done in the broadcasting industry is of interest both to broadcasting students and educators alike. Because the

author could not find any tests dealing specifically with this issue, he has attempted to investigate it on his own. By interviewing the general managers of commercial television stations and reporting actual case studies and responses to certain questions asked by the author, he hopes to investigate this issue as well as give the broadcasting student a taste of what he or she can expect "on-the job." It is hoped that the actual case studies and the responses to questions dealing specifically with the position of general manager that are included in this thesis may prove useful as an educational aid.

Although it was the author's intention to concentrate exclusively upon the general manager of a commercial television station, the case studies can be useful not only to the student interested in becoming a general manager but also to those interested in other areas of broadcasting. The twelve case studies presented in this thesis all involve the general manager, either directly or indirectly. At the same time, however, the case studies contain overlapping information primarily about the area of sales but also to some extent about personnel and programming matters. For this reason, the case studies may appeal to broadcasting students and educators with more than one area of interest.

The author chose eight questions specifically about the general manager of a commercial television station on which to base his comparison of primary and secondary sources. By comparing primary and secondary sources in these areas, the author hopes to further investigate the issue of whether a gap does indeed exist. The author asked each of the seven general managers of commercial television stations the following eight questions:

- 1) What is the definition of a general manager of a commercial television station?
- 2) What are some of the major problems he encounters?
- 3) What type of personality should he have?
- 4) How many hours per day does he work on an average?
- 5) What college courses, if any, should future general managers of commercial television stations take?
- 6) Is a college degree necessary to manage a commercial television station?
- 7) How valuable is a degree in broadcasting?
- 8) What seems to be the path to take in order to become a general manager of a commercial television station?

By no means will this thesis provide the broadcasting student with all the necessary information about broadcasting and the general manager of a commercial television station. It is merely an attempt on the author's part to supplement information contained in secondary sources about

the general manager of a commercial television station and to investigate the question of whether or not there is a gap between what is taught in the universities and what is done in the broadcasting industry.

REFERENCES

1. Arthur L. Savage, Jr., The Teaching of Broadcast Management In American Colleges and Universities (East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University, 1971), pp. 69, 73.
2. Based on personal interviews conducted with general managers of commercial television stations in October 1975.
3. Ibid.

PERSONAL INTERVIEWS WITH GENERAL MANAGERS
OF COMMERCIAL TELEVISION STATIONS
AND
TWELVE CASE STUDIES

By
Peter M. DiMeo

A THESIS


Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Telecommunication

1976

Accepted by the faculty of the Department of
Telecommunication, College of Communication Arts
and Sciences, Michigan State University, in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of
Arts degree.



Director of Thesis

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to thank Dr. John D. Abel, thesis advisor, for his time, consideration, guidance, constructive criticism, and recommendations.

The author also wishes to thank all those general managers who were considerate enough to speak to him. Without their help, he would not have been able to present the twelve case studies contained in this thesis.

Finally, the author wishes to thank his wife Barbara whose consideration, understanding, and support made this possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	Page
I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND.....	1
II. METHODOLOGY.....	5
III. THE TWELVE CASE STUDIES.....	9
The Cocky Salesman.....	9
The Morton Problem.....	12
The Collection Problem.....	14
The Organization Change.....	16
A Salesman's Weakness.....	19
Take It or Leave It.....	21
An Easier Sell?.....	23
The New Buyer.....	25
The Marks Carpet Account.....	27
All or Nothing.....	30
The Sensuous and Sensational Problem.....	34
A Tough Decision.....	37
IV. FINDINGS.....	40
Definition of a General Manager.....	42
Major Problems.....	43
Type of Personality.....	46
Number of Hours Per Day a General Manager Works.....	48
Recommended College Courses.....	48
Necessity of College Degree.....	50
Value of a Broadcasting Degree.....	51
Path to Becoming a General Manager.....	52
V. CONCLUSION.....	54
Recommendations.....	57
Recommended Texts.....	58
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	60

TABLE OF CONTENTS--continued	Page
APPENDIX--Sample Cover Letter.....	61
Purpose of Interview.....	62
Additional Questions.....	63
Sample Release Form.....	64

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The author's rationale for undertaking this thesis is the hope that it will serve three basic purposes of interest both to the author and to the broadcasting student in general.

The first purpose of this thesis is to give the author and broadcasting student a taste of what to expect "on-the-job." It is for this reason that the author has included twelve actual case studies of real problems that have occurred at commercial television stations. The author has purposefully omitted the "solutions" in all of the case studies. In so doing, he hopes to involve the reader more fully and to allow the reader to arrive at his own decisions without being biased by the decisions that were made by the station "experts." Again, as stated in the Abstract, the case studies deal primarily with the general manager of a commercial television station but have applications in other areas of commercial broadcasting as well.

The second purpose the author hopes to accomplish is to obtain information about the position of general manager of

a commercial television station from actual station managers. It is the author's ultimate goal to manage a commercial television station. Because of this, he is interested in certain questions specifically about the general manager's position. This thesis contains the responses by the general managers of seven commercial television stations to the eight questions specifically about the general manager's position that are listed in the Abstract. Although this part of the thesis may not be of interest to the broadcasting student in general, it will be of interest to those, like the author, who are interested in one day managing a commercial television station.

The final purpose of this thesis is to investigate the issue of whether or not there is a gap between what is taught in the universities and what is done in the broadcasting industry. Because the author could not possibly deal with all areas of broadcasting and because his interest lies particularly in the position of general manager of a commercial television station, he has chosen to investigate this issue by comparing his primary and secondary sources in the eight areas mentioned in the Abstract which pertain exclusively to the general manager of a commercial television station. Although the author does not wish to reveal his findings here, he does wish to point out that he found the results very surprising and feels that they will

be of interest to anyone wondering how valuable the broadcasting degree is.

This thesis is different from those done in the past because it attempts to compare and contrast primary and secondary sources in a specific area. In addition, it is slanted primarily toward the general manager of a commercial television station. Finally, it provides more recent case studies, as the last thesis containing case studies was written in 1971.

In order to accomplish his purposes, the author has organized this thesis into four chapters in addition to this introduction: the methodology, a presentation of twelve actual case studies, the author's findings revealed in his comparison of primary and secondary sources, and a conclusion.

The methodology, Chapter II, gives the reader a step-by-step account of the procedures used by the author in completing the research for this thesis. It is divided into two parts. The first part deals with acquiring the actual case studies; that is, the primary sources. The second part contains the methodology used by the author in acquiring the secondary sources, or published works by experts. The methodology may help the reader understand more clearly what the author has tried to do and may be of value to him should he wish to conduct similar research.



o
t
h
o
s
s
c
a
t
te
ar

Twelve actual case studies comprise Chapter III of this thesis. The author hopes that the twelve case studies presented will give the broadcasting student and educator some insight into some of the decisions and problems which the general manager of a commercial television station faces daily.

Chapter IV of this thesis consists of the findings that the author discovered when comparing and contrasting his primary and secondary sources regarding the eight specific questions pertaining to the general manager. This section will be of interest primarily to those broadcasting students who are interested in the general management of a commercial television station.

The conclusion, Chapter V, contains the outcome of the author's research. It also contains recommendations for those interested in becoming general managers of commercial television station, along with a brief discussion of secondary sources found to be most worthwhile by the author.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

This thesis contains both primary and secondary sources, primary sources consisting of actual case studies using the case study method developed by the Harvard Business School¹ and secondary sources consisting of published works written by experts in the field.

Before conducting the personal interviews with general managers of commercial television stations necessary to acquire the actual case studies, the author selected a state in which to conduct his interviews. He then acquired Standard Rate and Data Service for Television Markets from the Michigan State University Library. Turning to the alphabetical listing of states, he was able to locate the state he had chosen and review all the commercial television stations in that state. The author then determined which stations he could reach without "undue time, travel, and

¹Malcom McNair and Anita Hersum, The Case Method at the Harvard Business School (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1954), pp. 256-276.

t
t
c

n
i

co

an

an

to

so

pu

—

Stu

men

expense."¹ Next, he photocopied a list of those commercial television stations from this section which fulfilled the above requirement. This list included such other information as "Station Call Letters," "Address," "Personnel," "Facilities," "Agency Commission," "General Advertising Codes," etc. From this list, he was able to obtain the names and addresses of the general managers which were included under the "Personnel" category.

Next, he wrote a letter to each general manager requesting a personal interview and stating the purpose of the request (see Appendix). Approximately one week later, the author telephoned each general manager as a follow-up to his letter. At that time, a firm date was agreed upon on which to conduct the personal interview.

For the next several weeks, the author was busy keeping his appointments to interview the general managers. Before interviewing them, however, he prepared a brief presentation containing a Purpose of Interview Statement, an example of an actual case study, a sample release form (see Appendix), and a bound, published thesis. This information was given to each of the general managers before beginning the personal interview so that there would be no question about the purpose of the interview, what was expected of the general

¹Department of Telecommunication, TV-Radio Graduate Student's Handbook (East Lansing: Department of Telecommunication, 1974), p. 11.

manager, and for what purpose the information would be used.

After the general managers had presented their case studies and the author had recorded them, he proceeded to ask them certain brief questions (see Appendix), giving them the liberty to elaborate upon them or not, as they saw fit. At the end of the last question, the author thanked them for their time and consideration. He explained that he would send a final draft of the cases with release forms for them to sign upon acceptance of the cases. He again stressed that all names would be changed and that the material would be used for educational purposes only.

The methodology used to acquire the secondary sources basically involved research conducted at the Michigan State University Library. The author consulted standard reference sources such as the card catalog in order to locate secondary sources by experts in the field. He then examined approximately twenty-one works in the area of broadcasting in order to find the information he needed to complete this thesis. All the secondary research was conducted the summer before the personal interviews were scheduled so that the author would be aware of general problems and tendencies and would have some knowledge of the field before talking to the general managers. In this way, he could avoid wasting their time, he would be able to converse intelligently

with them, and he would be able to ask meaningful questions.

In conclusion, the author wishes to say that preparing this thesis has been an educational experience for him and he hopes that it will prove of value not only to the broadcasting student interested in becoming a general manager of a commercial television station but also to the broadcasting student in general.

a

is

to

ro

Al

two

bec

lis

tia

much

as w

he's

happy

CHAPTER III

THE TWELVE CASE STUDIES

THE COCKY SALESMAN

"It's always unpleasant to admit being wrong, but I'm afraid I missed the boat completely as far as Wayne Young is concerned. He's not working out."

As Jason Miller, general manager of WXXX-TV, listened to his sales manager, he was reminded of the situation surrounding the hiring of Wayne Young for a sales position. Although Wayne was obviously intelligent and had completed two years of college, he had been against hiring Wayne because of his youth and inexperience. He had, however, listened to his sales manager who had seen in Wayne a potentially promising salesman.

"It's a little early to expect him to be bringing in much revenue," Mr. Miller said softly.

"Oh, it's not that," said Walter Prince. "He's doing as well as salesmen with double his experience. In fact, he's cleared \$1600 in the last few months."

"Then I don't understand the problem. You should be happy he's doing so well."

"It's not his performance that's lacking--it's his attitude."

Mr. Miller listened without interrupting as his sales manager explained the situation. Saleswise, Wayne was performing well, perhaps too well. Although at first he had done everything by the book, his early success seemed to have spoiled him. He began to take extremely long lunches, his relations with station personnel became poor, and he started to neglect his appearance and job responsibilities. Worst of all, he had begun underselling the station to acquire accounts, a practice which was against strict station policy.

"Have you spoken to Wayne about all this?" asked the general manager.

"Yes, but without much success. He's got the cocky attitude that we won't fire him as long as he's bringing in the bucks."

"What's his effect on the other salesmen?"

"They don't like him much," answered Walter, "at least, not since he's become a big 'success.'"

Jason Miller sat silently as he thought over the alternatives. He could try to straighten Wayne out, thus keeping a potentially good salesman or he could fire Wayne and replace him before the station invested any more time and effort in him. Wayne was young enough to change, but his

very youth was against him as it revealed his lack of maturity. Jason Miller hated making this type of choice--there were no clear-cut considerations on which to base a logical decision. The decision could only be based on one man's judgment of another man's personality. He addressed his sales manager:

"Walter, I'd like to talk to Wayne. Can you arrange a meeting before the end of the week? Of course, I'd like you to be there, too."

"Don't worry. Cocky kid or not, he'll be there. How's ten o'clock Thursday sound?"

"Fine," said Jason Miller. "I'll see the two of you then."

THE MORTON PROBLEM

Arthur Morton had been a salesman for WYYY-TV for the past three years. Not yet forty, he was the highest-selling salesman and had maintained this position for the past two-and-a-half years. Unfortunately, the knowledge of his success had a detrimental effect on his attitude toward station personnel. He was overbearing, demanding, temperamental, and, in general, hard to get along with.

Mr. Walter Ryan sighed. If it were the least successful salesman involved, he would not have this problem. What, though, should he do in the present situation? Mr. Morton was a valuable asset to the station, and he knew it.

The present situation had been aggravated lately by certain actions Mr. Morton had taken. When a client had cancelled an appointment with Mr. Morton, he had decided not to come in that day but to attend a lecture on a subject totally unrelated to his work. Although this in itself could be excused, Mr. Morton had committed the offense of completely bypassing the office procedure of "signing out" with the sales manager's secretary.

Both Mr. Ryan, the general manager, and his sales manager believed in giving the salesmen freedom to accomplish their work, but there was one hard-and-fast rule that

both insisted upon; namely, that the salesmen call the sales manager's secretary to let her know where they could be reached. In this way, should any problem arise requiring a salesman's attention, the sales manager would know how to contact him.

Although this procedure had been stressed frequently, Mr. Morton had ignored it and had instead told the maintenance man where he was. It had been hours before the maintenance man had relayed the message to the secretary. Although no problem had arose, Mr. Ryan shuddered as he thought of the possibilities. No doubt Arthur Morton had been annoyed by the secretary's reminders to sign out or had had angry words with her during one of his "temperamental outbursts" and had decided to teach her a lesson. Regardless of his reasons, Arthur had broken one of the "ten commandments" of WYYY-TV.

Walter Ryan could not afford to let the situation happen again or have it spread to the other salesmen. He was torn between his desire to punish Arthur and his knowledge that Arthur was the Number One Salesman. If he punished Arthur, Arthur could easily become angry and quit. If he did not punish him, on the other hand, Arthur might repeat his action or set an example for the other salesmen to imitate. As general manager, Mr. Ryan knew that the decision was his alone to make.

THE COLLECTION PROBLEM

As Mr. Arnold Johnson sat reviewing some papers in his office, he knew that WZZZ-TV was in trouble. It was a problem that had not come up before in his career as general manager of WZZZ-TV. Usually, one of the biggest problems he and his sales manager faced was how to motivate the salesmen in order to keep sales high. This time, the problem was almost the opposite--all the salesmen were highly successful and well-motivated. Unfortunately, they seemed to be selling to too many clients who were poor credit risks and who became "collection problems."

He looked over the accounts receivable information on his desk. It was the station's official policy not to air accounts which went over ninety days past-due. If he were to honor the official policy now, a significant amount of his billing would have to be cancelled. Although one salesman in particular seemed to attract the poorest credit risks, Mr. Johnson knew that the tendency was spreading to other salesmen as well. Had he and his sales manager "over-motivated" the salesmen so that they tried to sell everything in sight, regardless of credit and collection considerations?

The problem he and his sales manager now faced was how to make the salesmen take more interest in the collection

aspect of selling without putting a damper on their motivation and enthusiasm for making the sale. As a former salesman, Mr. Johnson knew that salesmen have a tendency to see the collection aspect of a sale as an "administrative responsibility." However, without caution and cooperation on the salesman's part, collecting from the client became unnecessarily difficult.

As general manager, Mr. Johnson knew that the present situation could not be allowed to continue. The station would be out of business, no matter how many sales were made, if they could not collect from their clients.

THE ORGANIZATION CHANGE

"Clark, as your sales manager, I feel that there's a situation you should be made aware of. I think we should change our national rep--we're not getting the consideration we should be from them," said Martin Blake.

Clark Williams, general manager of WUUU-TV, was surprised at this information his sales manager gave him. The station had always done business with Comet Advertising. In fact, he liked Carter Green, the national sales representative from Comet and felt that they had an exceptionally good working relationship.

"What reason do you have for feeling this way, Martin?" asked the general manager. "We've done business with them for years without any problems. Why the sudden change in attitude? Are our national sales decreasing?"

"No, they're not, but our share of the market isn't increasing any. Every time I make recommendations, they ignore them. I don't feel they're following through in terms of gathering market information which can be used to attract advertisers. As a result, although dollar-wise our national sales are increasing, our market share of those advertising dollars is remaining stable. Without growth in this area, we could have serious problems in the future. Ever since Comet Advertising underwent that organizational

change, it seems they have less and less time to spend with us."

"Have you discussed your feelings with Carter Green?" asked Mr. Williams.

"Yes, I have. He just laughs and says Comet knows best--that's their business, and they know what they're doing."

"And you disagree with that?"

"Yes, I do. Don't you? Don't you feel we should have a say in the matter? After all, it's our revenue that's involved!" said Martin hotly.

"I see your point, Martin, but I feel I need more facts and figures before I can make a decision of that importance. After all, we've had good results dealing with Comet. Why change when you've got a proven thing" If, however, the trend you've pointed out isn't merely a temporary fluctuation, then we should get together with Carter and discuss this situation. I feel Carter deserves to be involved in any decision we make--I wouldn't want to cancel him without any explanation. How long will it take you to get your facts and figures together?"

"I could have them for you by Thursday," said the sales manager.

"Good, I'll expect you Thursday around nine-thirty."

As Martin left, Mr. Williams pondered the situation. He would hate to see Carter Green go, but if his sales manager were right, then he had little choice. Although it was still early enough to check any unpromising trends, he felt that Martin wanted total cancellation rather than "second chances." As he settled down to that day's work, he hoped Martin's statistics were as conclusive as possible.

A SALESMAN'S WEAKNESS

Mr. Wyatt Fuller, general manager of WBBB-TV, dreaded his upcoming meeting with his sales manager. It was not that he disliked Jerry Waters; it was the subject of the meeting which distressed him. The problem was Harry Roberts, one of the station's salesmen.

According to Jerry Waters, Harry's billing was 50 percent of what it should have been based on both his previous years' performances and on the billing of the other salesmen. As Jerry had explained it, Harry's problem was his inability to seek new accounts. This weakness on his part was affecting the station detrimentally. The station could not afford to keep a full-time salesman who "couldn't pull his weight."

Logically, it was a "shape up or ship out" situation. However, Mr. Fuller admitted to being swayed as much by logic as by his feelings. Harry had been with WBBB-TV for five years. As a graduate in the communications field, he was well qualified for the position. In addition, there was a Mrs. Roberts and three little Roberts in the picture. All of which made a strictly logical decision almost impossible for Mr. Fuller.

The sales manager felt that Harry's inability to seek new accounts was a weakness that Harry could not overcome.

He pointed to problems in Harry's past performance that were at first contributed to his inexperience. When these problems did not disappear after five years but became worse, they had to be attributed to personality rather than inexperience. To keep Harry Roberts on, Jerry Waters pointed out, would be expensive for the station and could conceivably cause morale problems among the other salesmen. When Mr. Fuller suggested additional training for Harry, the sales manager had laughed. He saw it as a personality problem, pure and simple. "You can't teach an old dog new tricks," he had said.

As general manager, it was his decision in the end whether to keep Harry or let him go. It was clear what decision Jerry Waters felt was right, and as sales manager, he knew more about the situation than Mr. Fuller did. Still, Mr. Fuller did not see the situation in the same light as Jerry did. However, no matter what decision he made, he would have to be able to justify it not only to his sales manager and himself, but also to his superiors.

TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT

Jim Jones, station manager of WCCC-TV, found himself in an unpleasant position. For the past several years, his station had been losing money. This year, the station would be operating in the red for the first time. Out of the blue, came an offer that would save the station. In return for carrying the Sunshine Organization's programs, WCCC-TV would receive a life-saving \$150,000 in revenue.

The problem, as Jim Jones saw it, was that the programs produced by the Sunshine Organization were of a highly specialized and religious nature. It was the type of programming which traditionally did not attract audiences. Although he would save his station by carrying it, at the same time he would be hurting WCCC-TV by lowering the station's audience appeal and ratings. This would make it less desirable to other advertisers. As Mr. Jones saw it, it was a vicious circle.

Mr. Jones had decided to carry the programming out of necessity, although his program manager had been vehemently against it because he felt it would have a detrimental effect on the station's image. Six months after the fact, there was no conclusive evidence to support the program manager's claim. All of which made the present situation all that much harder for the general manager.

Yesterday, the Sunshine Organization had made a request that the station air the same program twice in the same day in order to reach more people. To do so would mean an additional \$125,000 in revenue for WCCC-TV, making a grand total of \$275,000 for the year. There was no doubt in the station manager's mind that the station needed that money. If the program manager were right, however, to comply with the Sunshine Organization's request would make WCCC-TV totally dependent on them for revenue and even more unappealing to other advertisers.

Mr. Jones wished he had more time to make the decision, but he did not. In a few short hours, he was scheduled to meet with the Sunshine Organization's representative to give his final decision. Should he comply with their request or should he finish out the contract hoping that the station could come up with a plan which would raise its ratings and attract more advertisers?

AN EASIER SELL?

"How's the Max Restaurant account coming along?" asked Mr. George, sales manager of WAAA-TV.

Mr. Charles Cash, one of the station's top salesmen, hesitated before answering.

"Well, Max Junior is in favor of advertising on our station, but I haven't been able to convince his father yet. I need more time to close this one."

"Don't waste too much time on this account, Chuck. If I remember correctly, Max's Restaurant is a small family business. I don't imagine they have a hell of a lot of money to invest in advertising. Is it really worth all the time and effort you've put into it?"

"I don't know. Max's Restaurant has been a steady advertiser for as long as they've been in business. If I could just get them to switch their advertising dollars from print to television.... It may not amount to big money but it would be steady and there's a possibility that they might expand."

The sales manager interrupted:

"Everything you've said is pure speculation. Remember, while you're wasting time on this one account, there are plenty of other easier sells out there."

Chuck knew that his sales manager had a point. There was no guarantee that Max Junior would go against the wishes of his father. Max Senior had reacted hostilely to every suggestion he had made--he was well satisfied with advertising in the print medium and saw no reason to change after forty years. The son, on the other hand, definitely wanted to advertise on WAAA-TV. Although their present advertising budget was small--only \$135 per week--it was steady money regardless of whether the business grew or not. One day, Max Junior would own the business, but until then Max Senior was in charge.

Should he continue in the hope that Max Junior could convince his father or should he go in search of "the easier sell?"

THE NEW BUYER

"I regret to tell you this," said Mr. Art Jones, "but as your sales manager I must. It seems that our clients aren't buying as much as they did in the past. With the advent of the thirty-second spot, our clients are spreading their advertising budgets over more stations and are buying less. To get a thirteen-week buy now is practically unheard of. In addition, the buyers we do have are not as quick to buy as they have been in the past. They want more open prices, prices based on rating points, CPM prices, DMA info, etc. In other words, buyers are getting more demanding and sophisticated than they have been in the past. The effect is that our sales have been going down."

Mr. Grant Ames, station manager of WDDD-TV, sat pondering the information his sales manager had just given him. It was a Monday morning, the same as most Monday mornings except that he had just returned from a two-week vacation. Mr. Ames was surprised at the information. He viewed himself as a successful general manager. He was proud to be the general manager of WDDD-TV; it was a relatively new station in the top one hundred markets, and his overall sales revenue was above average. In fact, of all the total avails 65 percent or more were sold, and based on the station's past performance, its sales were steadily

increasing from year to year. There was no doubt in his mind that WDDD-TV was a competitive station.

"What you have just told me is very disturbing," said the general manager, "especially in light of the fact that our operating costs have been increasing steadily. If the trend you've highlighted continues, we're going to be in serious trouble."

Mr. Ames knew that it was up to him to come up with a plan of action. Should he hire more salesmen in the hope of selling more avails? To do so would mean an increase in operating costs as he would have to pay for the additional salaries. Should he reduce the number of personnel, thus reducing his operating costs, or would that impair the efficiency of the station? These and many more questions had to be answered--not only answered quickly, but answered correctly. Mr. Ames sighed; it was going to be a long day.

THE MARKS CARPET ACCOUNT

Mr. Bill Beard, sales manager of WFFF-TV, was sitting in his office reviewing the performance of his salesmen. Overall, he felt satisfied--he liked to think of them as a winning team with himself as captain of that team. The year was not yet half over, but most of his salesmen were over the halfway mark to meeting their quotas. All in all, there was only one blot on the record: the Marks Carpet Account.

Mr. Beard frowned: WFFF-TV had not yet been paid for the time bought by Marks Carpets. Although the station was still running the commercials, Mr. Beard felt that payment was long overdue.

He picked up his telephone and dialed Greg Powers' extension, hoping to find him still in the building. As the salesman handling the Marks Carpet account, Greg should be able to fill him in on the situation.

"Greg Powers here, can I help you?" came the pleasant voice on the other end.

"I hope so, Greg," said Mr. Beard. "It's about Marks Carpets."

Greg Powers laughed:

"What a coincidence!" he said. "I talked to Jim Shines of Star Advertising Agency today. As you know, they produce the commercials for Marks Carpets. They're sending

us payment in full--they're mailing the check in tomorrow's mail, as a matter of fact."

"Super," said Mr. Beard. He smiled as he imagined a large blot disappearing in mid-air, leaving a clean, tidy page behind.

Two weeks later, Mr. Beard was called in to the general manager's office. He could not help wondering what Mr. Jackson wanted--he hoped it were good news.

"Sit down, Bill," said Mr. Jackson. "Are you familiar with the Marks Carpet account?"

"Oh, that's been straightened out. They're paying in full. Did we receive the check yet?"

"Yes, we did; it bounced."

"Bounced?" asked Mr. Beard incredulously. "How could it have bounced?"

"Star Advertising is going bankrupt," said the general manager, "that's how! The only possibility of getting our money now is to go to court, and I've decided against that. Instead, we'll cancel all the remaining commercials. That way, it won't be a total loss. I'd appreciate it if you'd tell your salesmen that their responsibility doesn't end when the sale is made--they're also responsible for collecting on their accounts."

As Mr. Beard left the office, his surprise was mingled with relief--he'd heard the last of Marks Carpets.

Two days later, an excited Greg Powers burst into his office.

"Why did you cancel Marks Carpets? Mr. Marks is threatening to sue us!"

"Because the check Mr. Shines sent us bounced."

"But Mr. Marks already paid Star Advertising in full-- they were supposed to pay us. He said he's not going to suffer because Star Advertising went bankrupt. He's serious about suing us!"

Mr. Beard groaned. Would he never hear the end of Marks Carpets?

"Have you told Mr. Jackson yet?" he asked Greg.

"No, I just got off the phone," answered Greg.

"Let's go, then. I think this is something he should know about. We've got to come up with a strategy to avoid this type of situation in the future," said Mr. Beard as he slowly climbed the stairs to the general manager's office.

ALL OR NOTHING

Mr. Bud Stone, Sales Manager of WHHH-TV, was sitting in his office. It was a beautiful Monday morning as he gazed out his office window and noticed the brilliant colors of the leaves. For the first time in quite a while, he had a free moment in which to enjoy his cup of coffee and reminisce about his first job in broadcasting. He smiled to himself as he realized how long ago it had been. In the more than twenty years that he had been in broadcasting, he had come up through the ranks and enjoyed every challenging moment of it. How ironical that his first job had been selling radios and television sets!

Before he could finish his coffee, his secretary buzzed him. Mr. Stone sighed; he'd known that his moment of peace could not last long. He picked up the telephone.

"Yes, Nancy?" asked Mr. Stone.

"Mr. Ron Harder is here to see you."

"Please show him in, Nancy."

Nancy ushered Mr. Harder in and then left the room.

"Please sit down, Mr. Harder. Would you care for a cup of coffee?"

"No, thank you," responded Mr. Harder.

"In that case," said Mr. Stone, "what can I do for you?"

"I represent a theatrical chain, Mr. Stone. We're interested in doing business with your station. As you know, the commercials for our films are part of a package deal. Our only stipulation is that the commercials be aired during prime time."

"I see," said Mr. Stone. "Do you have more detailed information about the films?"

Mr. Harder handed him some literature about upcoming film features in the Theatres. As Mr. Stone looked through it, he was surprised to see that one of the films dealt with what he termed "adult matters."

"Well, I'm afraid I can't give you a straight yes-or-no answer right now," Mr. Stone said. "Personally, I find the subject matter of one of the films to be unsuitable for prime-time viewing. Apparently, you aren't aware that WHHH-TV is a subscriber to the N.A.B. Code and the family viewing concept."

"I'm really shocked to hear that you feel that way," said Mr. Harder. Several other stations in your market have carried other commercials of the same type as ours, and no one's ever offered the slightest objection to the content. I suggest you talk it over with your general manager. There's a lot of revenue and a contract involved--why lose all because you dislike one film commercial out of the entire package?"

Mr. Stone knew that Ron Harder was right. Although he himself preferred not to air that particular film, he knew that it was an "all or nothing" situation. To reject one film was to reject the entire package. Too much money for the station was involved; he did not want to be the one to make the decision.

"Thank you very much for your time, Mr. Harder. I'll confer with the general manager and we'll contact you shortly."

As soon as Mr. Harder left, Mr. Stone phoned the general manager's office.

"Mr. Waters, I've got a problem. Is it possible to see you right now for about half-an-hour?"

"For you, Bud, anything," joked the general manager of WHHH-TV, "Come on up."

Mr. Waters sat silently while the sales manager explained the situation to him. He said:

"I'm glad you consulted me, Bud. It's not going to be an easy choice to make. Nevertheless, one has to be made. Let's arrange a meeting with Mr. Harder tomorrow if possible."

Mr. Stone felt relieved that the burden for the decision had been taken off his shoulders and, at the same time, curious to learn what the general manager's decision would be.

"Thanks for seeing me, Mr. Waters," he said as he left to arrange the meeting.

THE SENSUOUS AND SENSATIONAL PROBLEM

Mr. Paul Rogers, sales manager of WIII-TV, was looking over some papers in his office. It had not been a typical business day; it had been quiet and without any major problems. For this reason, Mr. Rogers was happy when the telephone rang and his secretary interrupted him to tell him that Mr. Tom Sommers of A & B Advertising was on his line waiting to talk to him.

"Hello, Tom," said Mr. Rogers. "What can I do for you?"

"Well," said the voice on the other line, "I have a client who's interested in buying some spots on your station."

"That's terrific," said Mr. Rogers, "who's your client?"

The voice on the other line hesitated before replying:

"The Sensuous and Sensational Personal Care Company."

Now it was Mr. Rogers' turn to hesitate. "You mean the company that manufactures Sensuous and Sensational Douches?" he asked uneasily.

"You got it," said Tom Sommers.

"Well, that puts an entirely different light on the situation. As you know, it's not exactly our policy to carry ads for that kind of product. I'll have to clear this one with Mr. Rose, our general manager."

"Well, don't spend too long talking it over," said Tom. "There is another station in the market which isn't as concerned about it as yours. Why don't you talk it over with Mr. Rose and call me back before Friday?"

"OK, Tom. We'll get in touch with you before then. So long."

Two hours later, Mr. Rogers and Mr. Rose were still in the general manager's office, trying to arrive at a decision regarding the Sensuous and Sensational Personal Care Company.

"I don't go for it," said the general manager. "As you know, we're a relatively young station, and we're still growing. It's been against our policy to advertise many personal products. Don't you remember how we turned down a lucrative hemorrhoid account last year for that very reason, Paul?"

"Yes, I do, Mr. Rose. I was against turning it down then and I'm against turning this down now," said Paul Rogers.

"Keeping in the good graces of our audience and the N.A.B. is more important to me as general manager of this station than the money involved in those cases." Mr. Rose said hotly.

"Mr. Rose," said Paul Rogers, "the N.A.B. Code has changed--they have relaxed on advertising personal care products, if the commercials are presented in good taste.

Our competition is doing it--we can't afford to get behind the times. As a station in the top one hundred markets, we've got to be competitive. I recommend strongly that you accept the account."

"I know you've got a point," Mr. Rose said sadly. "It's just that I still have basic principles. As you know, I started out in less complicated times, and I guess it's hard to forget my origins. Let's call it a day. I'll go home and sleep on it. Tomorrow's only Thursday, and I need more time to think it over. Thanks for your recommendations, Paul. Don't worry about Tom Sommers--I'll call him back. Goodnight."

Mr. Rose went home and spent a restless night. The Sensuous and Sensational Personal Care Company was on his mind, and he slept poorly. He went to work tired the next morning without having come to a decision. Thursday came and went and still he was uncertain of his position.

Friday morning Mr. Rose was still thinking it over when Paul Rogers came into the general manager's office.

"Mr. Rose, Tom Sommers is on my line. He said he wouldn't ordinarily bother calling us back except that his client is really anxious to advertise on our station. Shall I have the secretary transfer the call to your line?"

"Yes," said the general manager. "I've made my decision."

A TOUGH DECISION

Late one afternoon, Mr. Dee, news director for WKKK-TV, was looking over his script for the upcoming newscast. As he took a sip of his coffee, his attention was disturbed by footsteps in the hallway outside his door. He looked up to see Ross Carter come charging into his office.

Mr. Dee smiled; he liked Ross and took a paternal interest in him. In the ten years he had been news director, Mr. Dee had never met a more promising salesman than Ross. Although Ross had only been with WKKK-TV for six months, he was doing very well for a salesman still in training. Mr. Dee attributed this partly to Ross' long history of selling retail products and partly to Ross' personality itself: he seemed to have a natural inclination for the sales end of the business. In addition, Mr. Dee felt close to Ross because both had attended the same university. Although Mr. Dee had graduated fifteen years ago and Ross had left six months ago with only two years of college under his belt, Mr. Dee felt he had more in common with Ross than with any of the other salesmen.

Before Mr. Dee could say a word, Ross said excitedly:

"Mr. Dee, you can't run that story about Mr. Sim's store being robbed. I just received a phone call from him. He's very upset. He saw the first newscast, and he doesn't

want us to run the robbery story on any more newscasts because he's afraid it will scare away his customers. If we do run the story, he threatened to cancel all his advertising with us."

"Calm down, Ross," said Mr. Dee, "I think . . .

"But he's one of our biggest local advertisers," interrupted Ross. "We can't afford to lose his account!"

"I'm aware of that, Ross. Please sit down."

While Ross sat down, Mr. Dee considered the alternatives facing him. In his ten years of experience, the situation had occurred before and was not new to him. Because of his inexperience, Ross was overreacting, but then the stakes were different for Ross than for Mr. Dee.

As Mr. Dee saw it, he could comply with Mr. Sim's wishes and not show the robbery story. In so doing, however, he would be "selling out" his news department, the station, and the public WKKK-TV served. To go ahead with the story, on the other hand, meant risking Mr. Sim's account and possibly losing a substantial amount of revenue for the station.

Mr. Dee knew that whichever decision he made would make someone unhappy. He found himself caught in a situation in which he was "dammed if he did and damned if he didn't." Ideally, it was a decision that should be made by the general manager, but with the next newscast only a

matter of minutes away, he knew that there was no time to consult with the general manager. The decision had to be made quickly, and he was the one who had to make it.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This chapter contains the findings uncovered in a comparison of primary and secondary sources. This study concentrates on eight general areas pertaining to the general manager of a commercial television station. These eight areas are:

- 1) the definition of the general manager of a commercial television station
- 2) some major problems encountered by the general manager
- 3) the type of personality a general manager should have
- 4) the average number of hours per day a general manager works
- 5) recommended college courses for future general managers
- 6) whether or not a college degree is necessary to manage a commercial television station
- 7) the value of a degree in the field of broadcasting, and

- 8) the career path to becoming a general manager of a commercial television station.

The above eight areas were chosen in the hope that they would be helpful to the student interested in becoming the general manager of a commercial television station and that information might be discovered which would supplement information available in secondary sources.

The secondary sources referred to in this section of the thesis are:

- 1) Chester Giraud, Garnet R. Garrison, and Edgar E. Willis, Television and Radio.
- 2) Sydney W. Head, Broadcasting in America.
- 3) Sherman P. Lawton, The Modern Broadcaster.
- 4) Sol Robinson, Broadcast Station Operating Guide.
- 5) Ward L. Quaak and Leo A. Martin, Broadcast Management: Radio and Television.
- 6) Herbert Zettl, Television Production Handbook.

Although other broadcasting texts were consulted, the six books specifically mentioned above were found to be the most helpful. Because the books essentially agree in the eight areas pertaining to the general manager of a commercial television station, only one or two of the best quotations were selected to sum up the point of all the secondary sources. This does not mean that only one work was in agreement with the primary sources. To avoid repeating similar information

from each secondary source, only the information which best summed up the consensus of the other secondary sources was quoted.

Definition of a General Manager

There was essential agreement between the primary and secondary source definitions of the general manager of a commercial television station. Both defined the general manager in terms of his duties and responsibilities.

According to one general manager, the general manager is "the person who assumes full responsibility for the operation of the station."¹ As general manager, he is ultimately responsible in the areas of sales, engineering, programming, finances, station policy, personnel, and compliance with the rules and regulations of the Federal Communications Commission and other governing bodies.² To quote another general manager:

This person makes plans for the station, regulates station policy as well as determines it, maintains the image of the station in the community it serves, communicates to the staff what the responsibility and the policy of the station is, hires competent people to be on the staff, overviews the Equal Opportunity Program, and assures that the station operates on a day-to-day basis 365 days a year.³

¹Based on personal interview conducted with a general manager of a commercial television station in October 1975.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

As one general manager colorfully summed up the definition of the general manager, his office is "the place where the buck stops."¹

The secondary sources revealed similar definitions of the general manager of a commercial television station. As Quaal and Martin define him, the general manager is "the person having the duty to establish station policy, make plans, and see that they are implemented."² Zettl's definition of the general manager of a commercial television station as "the person who determines the major station policy and who is responsible for the entire operation of a station"³ sums up the consensus of the secondary sources in this area.

Major Problems

A comparison of primary and secondary sources in the area of major problems encountered by the general manager revealed two basic problems in common; namely, the handling of F.C.C. rules and regulations and the handling of criticism of the station.

¹Ibid.

²Ward L. Quaal and Leo A. Martin, Broadcast Management: Radio & Television, 6th ed. (New York: Hastings House Publishers, 1972), pp. 31-38.

³Herbert Zettl, Television Production Handbook (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc., 1968), p. 488.

Interviews with the general managers of commercial television stations revealed that they had difficulty interpreting F.C.C. rules and regulations and in ascertaining and satisfying the needs of their communities.¹ This basic problem was also stressed in the secondary sources. As Sydney W. Head states in Broadcasting in America:

The requirement by the F.C.C. for ascertaining community needs had to be stated in elementary terms because broadcasters could not understand what was desired by the F.C.C. Some stations revealed that they were not sure what they should do.²

The second area of major concern was that of dealing with criticism of the station. The general managers interviewed considered the misunderstanding of the public and complaints about the broadcasting business by the print medium as major problems.³ Quaal and Martin agree with this, stating that the general manager is forced to "spend too much time with assaults from critics and Government pressure."⁴

¹Based on personal interviews conducted with general managers of commercial television stations in October 1975.

²Sydney Head, Broadcasting in America (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1972), p. 458.

³Based on personal interviews conducted with general managers of commercial television stations in October 1975.

⁴Quaal and Martin, op. cit., p. 21.

Although the primary and secondary sources delineated common areas of concern for the general manager, the general managers themselves revealed many more problems that existed than did the secondary sources. In addition to the two major problems discussed above, the general managers listed five other problem areas.

The first difficulty was that involved in ascertaining and satisfying the needs of the community while simultaneously concentrating "on the day-to-day operation and business"¹ of the station. Another typical problem common to the general managers was that of handling the paperwork required in order to conform with Federal regulations.² A third area of concern to the general managers was that of finding enough time to meet the constantly changing needs of the organization.³ In addition, the general managers pointed out that there was a "tendency of Federal regulators to infringe upon the first amendment areas as they relate to radio and television."⁴ Finally, primary sources revealed that a major difficulty encountered by the general

¹Based on personal interviews conducted with general managers of commercial television stations in October 1975.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

manager of a commercial television station today was how to "maintain integrity and still be successful."¹

Type of Personality

The third area researched was that of what type of personality the general manager of a commercial television station should have. A comparison of primary and secondary sources revealed basic similarities, although the information gathered from primary sources was more detailed on this topic.

By pooling the information from primary sources, it was determined that a general manager should have an awareness of the precarious nature of the broadcasting business and should be sensitive to the public interest. At the same time, he must be able to objectively evaluate and take action. He also must possess an extraordinary ability to communicate with various levels of people and be able to control his emotions and deal with crisis situations routinely. In addition, he must be extroverted, want to know his community and its problems, and want to help solve them. A general manager must be able to accept the turnover in his market and station personnel, must be good in business and administration, and must have imagination and a sense

¹Ibid.

of inspiration. Finally, he must be able to get along with and communicate to his staff, must have human understanding and an acceptance that people are fallible, must be patient, and must not be impulsive. In general, he must be the type of person who can "take the good with the bad."¹

Although not nearly as exhaustive, the secondary sources also contained recommendations regarding the type of personality a general manager should have. To quote Quaal and Martin, he should be the type of person who

can work with the human side of the business. This person must be willing to solve problems without precedent, stake his future on his ability to face issues, and thrive under pressure.²

Furthermore, this person "should be interested in the welfare of the people who work at the station and reside in the community it serves."³ He must be able to "communicate both in writing and in speech,"⁴ control his temper and emotions, and must possess leadership capability, intelligence, the knowledge necessary to make good judgments, personal integrity, and a sense of responsibility and showmanship.⁵

¹Ibid.

²Quaal and Martin, op. cit., p. 14.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

Number of Hours Per Day a General Manager Works

There was basic agreement between primary and secondary sources regarding the average number of hours a day worked by the general manager of a commercial television station. Although responses to this question by different general managers varied, all agreed that he worked more than eight hours a day. They also agreed that the actual number of hours worked varied depending on the season, that the day included both time worked at the station and time spent at business and public activities, and that a general manager is never "off-duty."¹

The secondary sources were consistent on this point, as is shown in the following quotation by Robinson:

A general manager does not work a fixed eight-hour day. He begins from the moment he opens his eyes until the time he goes to sleep.²

Recommended College Courses

The next area of investigation was that of college courses recommended for future general managers of commercial television stations. Again, the primary and secondary

¹Based on personal interviews conducted with general managers of commercial television stations in October 1975.

²Sol Robinson, Broadcast Station Operating Guide (Blue Ridge Summit: Tab Books, 1968), p. 111.

sources did not disagree on this point, but the primary sources yielded more specific information than did the secondary sources.

When questioned as to college courses which would be of help to future general managers, the general managers interviewed came up with the following list:

- Psychology
- Human Relations
- Sales Transactions
- Business Law
- Business Management
- Liberal Arts
- Accounting
- Journalism
- History
- English
- Marketing
- Advertising
- Program Theory
- Interpersonal Relations
- Communication (Speech, Listening)
- General Business
- Broadcast Sales and Ratings
- Speed Reading for F.C.C. Law
- Personnel Relations
- F.C.C. Law
- Economics
- Radio and Television Technology
- Labor Management
- Demographics Used in the Media¹

The secondary sources researched did not contain recommended courses specifically aimed at future general managers. In fact, only one contained recommendations for those interested in broadcast careers in general; namely, Lawton's The Modern Broadcaster. The courses are necessarily less

¹Based on personal interviews conducted with general managers of commercial television stations in October 1975.

specific than those recommended by the general managers, but there are basic similarities as the following list demonstrates:

- Psychology
- Physical and Biological Sciences
- Literature
- History
- Government
- Modern Language
- Advertising
- Marketing
- Journalism
- Speech
- Drama
- Cinema
- Broadcast Equipment Training
- Economics
- Broadcast History and Foundations
- Broadcast Philosophy¹

Necessity of College Degree

The next area of interest was whether or not a college degree was necessary to manage a commercial television station. The primary and secondary sources were in agreement on this point. Both indicated that although a college degree may not be absolutely essential today, it is fast becoming a requirement.

The following quotation by one of the general managers interviewed neatly sums up the attitude of the general

¹Sherman P. Lawton, The Modern Broadcaster (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1961), p. 17.

managers interviewed:

A college degree is practically necessary whereas it wasn't in the past. The person who has it has an advantage in that it enables this person to read and comprehend as well as interpret the tremendous amount of material that a general manager must keep up with and know.¹

This finding was supported by the secondary sources.

Giraud, Garrison, and Willis best sum up the basic attitude found in the secondary sources regarding this question.

To quote:

Most broadcasting executives today prefer hiring candidates with a college degree. As one executive said, 'College degrees don't guarantee that people are genuises, but it does indicate that the individual has the ability to think, judge wisely, know a lot about things, and come to a decision.'²

Value of a Broadcasting Degree

The next area under investigation was the value of a degree specifically in broadcasting over the value of a college degree in another field. Although the general managers themselves saw the broadcasting degree as an asset, there was no evidence in the secondary sources indicating a preference for a broadcasting degree.

¹Based on personal interview conducted with a general manager of a commercial television station in October 1975.

²Chester Giraud, Garnet R. Garrison and Edgar E. Willis, Television and Radio (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1971), p. 572.

Discussion with the general managers indicated that they viewed the broadcasting degree as an asset for those interested in a career as a general manager of a commercial television station. The consensus was that a broadcasting degree is

. . . valuable, especially today. In fact, it is more essential. Those who have it are better prepared to handle the many responsibilities that they, as general managers of television stations, will be confronted with.¹

The secondary sources, on the other hand, did not reveal a preference for a broadcasting degree over a college degree in general. As Giraud, Garrison and Willis see it, a college degree in any field, including broadcasting, is "an asset since most executives feel that it enables the person to converse intelligently, to think and make better judgments, and to come to a better decision."²

Path to Becoming a General Manager

The final topic investigated was the recommended path to follow for the individual interested in becoming the general manager of a commercial television station. It was in this area that there was the most discrepancy between primary and secondary sources.

¹Based on personal interviews conducted with general managers of commercial television stations in October 1975.

²Giraud, Garrison and Willis, op. cit., p. 572.

Interviews with the general managers yielded the following information about paths leading to the position of general manager:

There is no particular path which leads to becoming a general manager of a television station. In the past, general managers have come through the sales department; however, this is no longer true. Today, general managers are coming not only from the sales department, but also from the programming and production departments as well.¹

Secondary sources, such as Lawton and Quaal and Martin, indicate that there is indeed a recommended path to follow for those interested in becoming a general manager. Although not completely ruling out other paths, the secondary sources were in agreement that "Sales is considered the road which leads to management,"² and that "The most usual route to station management is through sales, especially in broadcasting."³

¹Based on personal interviews conducted with general managers of commercial television stations in October 1975.

²Lawton, op. cit., p. 13.

³Quaal and Martin, op. cit., p. 149.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This study has three objectives. The first is to give the reader a taste of on-the-job training through the presentation of case studies. The second is to answer eight questions specifically about the general manager, and the third is to investigate the question of whether or not a gap exists between what is taught in the colleges and universities and what is done in the broadcasting industry. The first two objectives were covered in Chapters III and IV, respectively, of this study. The final objective will be addressed in this conclusion.

Research revealed that there is indeed a gap between what is taught in the colleges and universities and what is done in the broadcasting industry. Interviews with the general managers of commercial television stations pinpointed the gap in the area of the teaching of broadcast production rather than in the teaching of broadcast management.

The general managers interviewed felt that "college students believe that they can handle a production job

because they have taken one or two courses in production."¹ On the basis of their past experiences in hiring broadcasting graduates for production positions, most of the general managers felt that this was not the case. As one general manager pointed out, he had interviewed a college graduate in broadcasting for a position as a film man at his station. During the course of his interview, the student indicated that because he had taken a 16mm film course in college and had a college degree in broadcasting, he felt he could handle the position. The general manager, on the other hand, felt that the student's education was not adequate preparation for the "reality of the job."² Despite the general manager's comments, the student persisted in saying that he could handle the position. Against his personal experience, the general manager decided to give the student a chance to prove himself. Within a short period of time, however, the student was let go. As the general manager explained it, "taking college course/courses in broadcasting will never give the student the reality of the job because in college the student has one or two assignments to complete over a term or quarter but in reality the student has

¹Based on personal interviews conducted with general managers of commercial television stations in October 1975.

²Based on personal interview conducted with a general manager of a commercial television station in October 1975.

many assignments to complete in hours."¹ The experience related by the general manager was not unique to himself but was supported by the other general managers as well.

The general managers also pointed out that there is a gap between the type of job the broadcasting graduate feels he is qualified for and the type of job that is actually available. Although this may be partly due to the student's own unrealistic expectations, the general managers indicated that perhaps the colleges and universities did not adequately prepare the broadcasting graduate for the reality of an "entry-level position."² Primary research revealed that it was common for broadcasting graduates to turn down positions as cameramen and floor managers because they felt they were over-qualified for production jobs and wanted to start out as television producers. As one general manager pointed out, however, a television station can have only so many producers and "in this business you have to start somewhere."³

Regarding preparation for positions in broadcast management, there appeared to be no gap between what is taught

¹Ibid.

²Based on personal interviews conducted with general managers of commercial television stations in October 1975.

³Based on a personal interview conducted with a general manager of a commercial television station in October 1975.

in the colleges and universities and what is done in the broadcasting industry. As the questions discussed in Chapter IV indicate, the broadcasting degree is an asset for anyone interested in employment in the field of broadcast management.

Recommendations

On the basis of the research conducted to complete this study, there are several recommended courses of action depending upon the individual's ultimate career goals.

For those who are interested strictly in a production position, research indicates that they might be better off getting an education specifically in the area of broadcast production at a reputable broadcasting school rather than at a college or university. However, should they decide at a later date to change career paths from production to management, it might be necessary for them to earn a college degree. For this reason, a wise choice might be to get a college degree while supplementing their education with actual production experience or with training at a reputable broadcasting school.

For those who wish an ultimate career in broadcast management, a college degree in any field is the recommended course. However, the individual interested in broadcast management as a career should be aware that he may

have to accept a position in production in order to "get his foot in the door." For this reason, he may wish to familiarize himself with this aspect of broadcasting also.

In sum, which course an individual should take depends on a number of factors: his ultimate career goal, whether he may want to change career goals at a later date, future trends in the broadcasting industry, etc. If a career in production is the object, however, the research indicates that colleges and universities may not provide as much preparation as a reputable broadcasting school. If, on the other hand, a career in broadcast management is the desired end, research shows that getting a college degree is practically a requirement.

Recommended Texts

The following are fifteen texts of value to the student interested in radio and television station management:

- 1) Association for Professional Broadcasting Education, publishers. Broadcast Management, May 1972.
- 2) Brown, Les. Television: The Business Behind the Box. Harcourt, Brace, Javanovich, New York, 1971.
- 3) Emery, Walter. Broadcasting and Government: Responsibility and Regulations. Michigan State University Press, 1971.
- 4) Giraud, Chester, Garnet R. Garrison, and Edgar E. Willis. Television and Radio, New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1971.

- 5) Head, Sydney W. Broadcasting in America. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2nd edition, 1972.
- 6) Institute for Broadcasting Financial Management, editors. Accounting Manual for Broadcasters, Chicago, 1972.
- 7) Lawton, Sherman P. The Modern Broadcaster. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 1961.
- 8) Mayer, Martin. About Television, New York: Harper & Row, 1972.
- 9) Noll, Roger G., Merton J. Beck, and John J. McGowan. Economic Aspects of Television Regulation, Washington, D. C.: 1973.
- 10) Owen, Bruce M., Jack H. Beebe, and Willard G. Manning, Jr. Television Economics, Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1974.
- 11) Phelps, Robert H. and E. Douglas Hamilton. Libel: Rights, Risks, Responsibilities. Macmillan, New York, 1966.
- 12) Quaal, Ward L. and Leo A. Martin. Broadcast Management. New York: Hastings House Publishers, 6th edition, 1972.
- 13) Robinson, Sol. Broadcast Station Operating Guide. Blue Ridge Summit: Tab Books, 1968.
- 14) Roe, Yale, ed. Television Station Management, New York: Hastings House Publishers, Inc., 1964.
- 15) Zettl, Herbert. Television Production Handbook, 2nd edition, Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1971.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Department of Telecommunication. TV-Radio Graduate Student's Handbook. East Lansing: Department of Telecommunication, 1974.

Giraud, Chester; Garrison, Garnet R.; and Willis, Edgar E. Television and Radio. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1971.

Head, Sydney W. Broadcasting In America. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1972.

Lawton, Sherman P. The Modern Broadcaster. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1961.

McNair, Malcom, and Hersum, Anita. The Case Method at the Harvard Business School. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1954.

Quaal, Ward L., and Martin, Leo A. Broadcast Management: Radio and Television. New York: Hastings House Publishers, 1972.

Robinson, Sol. Broadcast Operating Guide. Blue Ridge Summit: Tab Books, 1968.

Zettl, Herbert. Television Production Handbook. Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc., 1968.

APPENDIX

SAMPLE COVER LETTER

Dear Sir:

I am currently a graduate student majoring in Broadcast Management at Michigan State University. As part of my masters degree requirements, I am writing a thesis based on personal interviews with the general managers of television stations within your coverage area. The purpose of the interviews is to gather case studies in the areas of sales and programming. Your help and cooperation will be greatly appreciated.

I plan to call you the week of September 29 in order to set up an appointment to interview you at your convenience.

Thank you for reading my letter. I am looking forward to making your acquaintance.

Sincerely,

Peter M. DiMeo

PURPOSE OF INTERVIEW

"The traditional means of acquiring a practical understanding of . . . broadcasting appears to be through on-the-job training." According to one writer, the consensus among broadcasters is that the individual learns about it once he is hired by a station.

I feel that neither traditional classroom training nor ignoring training until the individual is on the job is a satisfactory approach for those who seek careers in broadcasting. My experience is that there is a gap between what is taught at the universities and what is done in industry. I am concerned about this gap, and it is through personal interviews that I hope to bridge this gap or at least bring it closer together.

In sum, the purpose of this interview is to acquire case studies in the areas of sales and programming involving decisions made by general managers. These case studies will be published so that they will be easily accessible to the broadcasting student. It is hoped that the cases will give him a more realistic and practical view of the general manager than is found in textbooks.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

- 1) What is your definition of a general manager?
- 2) What do you feel are some of the major problems a general manager is confronted with?
- 3) What type of personality would you say a general manager should have?
- 4) How many hours a day on the average would you say a general manager works?
- 5) What courses, if any, would you recommend future general managers to take?
- 6) Do you feel a college degree is necessary to manage a television station?
- 7) How much value do you place on a degree in broadcasting?
- 8) What was your previous position before you became a general manager?

SAMPLE RELEASE FORM

Mr. Peter M. DiMeo
 Apartment 1634G
 Spartan Village
 Michigan State University
 East Lansing, Michigan 48823

Dear Pete:

The case entitled _____
 has been read by me and checked for verification.

I hereby authorize the use of this material.

Please check: () without change

() with the corrections indicated

It is hereby understood that this material will be used for
 educational purposes only.

Signature of Executive _____

Firm _____

Date _____

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES



3 1293 03071 1554