UNIT 5: ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

UNIT STRUCTURE

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5.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- give an overview of the organisational set-up of a TV station
- explain the newsroom set-up in a TV Station

5.2 INTRODUCTION

In the previous units you have got a brief introduction to the television media and its functioning. Now, it is time to learn about its functioning in further detail, from the inside.

It is very important for you to understand that behind the glitz and glamour of what we see and enjoy on the television screen everyday goes a lot of hard work of a lot of people. Television production is not an easy task. Even putting together a 10 minute programme actually takes several hours of preparation and the combined efforts of several people.

In this unit, let us understand how it all takes place inside the TV station, what are the different kinds of people involved and how they work together to produce and bring to our homes, our daily dose of entertainment and news.

5.3 ORGANIZATIONAL SET-UP OF A TV STATION

A TV station requires the services of and co-ordination among a large number of people. Although the scale, nature and complexity of a particular production will determine the specific number of people, they are nevertheless bound to be sizeable. The organizational structure of a television channel can broadly be divided into the following three main departments:

- Editorial
- Production
- Technical

Apart from these three departments there are other departments which are concerned with carrying out various activities in a television station. The other departments that exist are accounts, administration, marketing, sales, HR etc. The position nomenclatures in news channels are not standardized as the job role played by a Producer in one organization may be undertaken by a Director in another and vice-versa.

i) EDITORIAL

The editorial departments are run by a host of Reporters, Researchers, People on the desk, Coordinators, News Editors, News Producers and Anchors.

News Coordinator: Another crucial job performed in a newsroom is that of the News Coordinator. He not only keeps himself abreast of what is happening all over the country but he is also in touch with all his correspondents and stringers on the field. He coordinates with the reporters on the field and gets news across locations.

Researchers: Researchers play an important role in a television station. It is true that most of the reporting jobs start with the initiative of the reporter who provides preliminary information. However, it is the researcher who provides additional background information, which makes the story meaty and meaningful. Nowadays, however, not many organizations have News Researchers as they expect the Reporter to do his own research.

Reporters: This is the most popular and tough job in the editorial department. The Reporter covers stories on location and is concerned with

the real job of gathering news from the field. He conducts the interviews and even performs the job of a director on the location of news coverage where the camera person works under the instruction of the reporter. The reporter is also expected to write the basic script of his story.

Copy Editors: They work at the desk. Their primary job is to prepare the copy to go with the visuals. They check scripts of reporters for grammatical and factual errors and rewrite them. They are also to check if any important element of the story is left out and fill that in with the help of researchers.

Editors: In a television station there are mainly two kinds of Editors; Input and Output editors. The input editors are concerned with taking the decisions about what news items or stories are to be followed whereas the output editors decide which stories are to be carried in the bulletin from amongst all the other stories being covered. In some organizations the desk consists of only the input editors, the output editors and the producers.

News Producers: News Producer is the television alternative of News Editor in print media set up. It is his responsibility to see the news through to telecasting. He decides the news bulletin's run-order. The run-order is the order in which stories are to be carried in the bulletin. It also gives information about the news story format and its readiness. At present there are several newsroom automation software which make the process of run-order easy.



LET US KNOW

The terms **'reporter'** and **'correspondent'** are often used interchangeably. However, there is a difference between the two terms. Reporters or staff reporters are regular employees who locally cover news and write the news for a publication or a broadcast outlet. Correspondents on the other hand are regular employees of a publication or an agency who are stationed in different locations of the state or the country or even the world for gathering news and they deliver the copy to the editor by wire, fax or e-mail.

A **stringer** is someone who reports or writes for a newspaper on an assignment basis, i.e., paid for what is published rather than as a full time salaried member. The term 'stringer' comes from the old time custom of measuring a correspondent's total inches of stories with a string of a certain length to determine the pay.

Another related term is **liner**. The liner lives in a small town and is not a full time journalist. While his main profession is something else, he also sends reports to a newspaper which pays him on the basis of the number of lines of the news item published in the newspaper.

Then there are the **freelancers** who, like stringers and liners, are paid on assignment basis. They have the freedom to supply the news report to more than one newspaper. Stringers and liners, on the other hand, usually have to maintain their loyalty to a single client alone.

Anchors: Anchors are also called presenters or hosts. These are the people who perform the job of presenting the news items in front of the camera. Earlier they used to be called News Readers, But with the change in the roles they are supposed to play, the nomenclature has also changed. Nowadays anchors are expected not to read news, but to present news. They are expected to act as proactive journalists; interviewing people live, coordinating correspondents located across different locations.

ii.) PRODUCTION

Director / Producer: The production unit is headed by the Director and it is he/ she who decides the look and feel of the programme and eventually executes what has been finalized on paper by the News Producer. In some channel this person is called the producer of the show. He also has the task of controlling the Production Control Room (or PCR) when the news is being compiled.

Graphics Dept: The graphics department designs and creates all the graphics and fires them at the right time under the guidance of the director.

Lighting Directors: They put in lights in the studio floor based the Director's instructions. Any mistake on their part during the recording at the studio will lead to a bad quality of picture in the production.

Assistant Producers: The assistant producers are the people who assist the director in his/her work. The work may range from compiling the story sent by a stringer, news agency or to keep stories ready for telecast or run the Autocue machine. Autocue machines are computers with a see through screen at one side. The camera can see through and focus on the anchor whereas the anchor can see a computer screen and read the news. This machine helps in creating an illusion that the anchor is speaking without reading from the script and this adds to an awe factor of news telecast.

Production Assistants: They assist in production of a programme in different ways.

iii.) TECHNICAL

Camerapersons: They operate the camera both on location and in studios. It is the cameraperson's responsibility to record good visuals. Besides knowing how to operate a video camera and to take good visuals, one should have a flair for journalism and news sense to be a good cameraperson in a news channel.

Sound Recordists: They record the sound on location and in the studio. A sound recordist is concerned with the recording of better quality of sound both at the location and at the studio.

Video Editors: They edit the available visuals (called footage) as per the requirement of the script. They may edit the footage by using either linear editing techniques or non-linear editing techniques. These people should have a very good skill in editing the footages flawlessly and within a very short period of time since television broadcast is a fast medium and everything covered should be aired as fast as possible.

Light men: They put in lights in required intensity and angle, under the supervision of the Lighting Director and/or Cameraperson in the studio, and also at times on outdoor shooting.

Vision Mixers: They are online editors who cut from one camera to another or from a camera to a Video Recorder based on the Director's instructions. They work with a series of monitors which are available with him on location. The Vision Mixing Console is a machine which makes this possible for the Vision Mixer.

CCU Operators: Camera Control Unit Operators match the various cameras in a studio. Unmatched cameras will make a programme look unprofessional with different cameras showing different colour and light balance.

Maintenance Engineers: They maintain all the equipment.

MCR / VSAT operators: Master Control Room or MCR sends the completed programme signals to the earth station from which they are sent to the satellite. They also control the signals coming from other studios and OB Vans (Outside Broadcast Vans).

Computer Engineers: Nowadays the entire operations in a newsroom are automated hence computer engineers are a part and parcel of any news team.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1. Briefly discuss the organisational structure of a television station.

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Q.2. What is the role of a news producer in a television channel?

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ACTIVITY - 5.1

1. Visit a private television station in your city. Describe the organisational structure of the channel.

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5.4 NEWS ROOM SET-UP IN A TV STATION

Inside the newsroom

The TV news industry calls for speed and accuracy. It takes a lot of hard work and co-ordination to run a show everyday with standardized precision.

Every night the bulletin is aired on its right time and everything goes on so well. It seems to most of us that there is no big deal in the production of such programme. But the inside story is totally different. A whole lot of people work hours at a stretch to bring out one such daily bulletin which should not only be accurate in terms of the news it contains but also in terms of the co-ordination of the visuals and other sound and graphic effects. All these are not as easy as it looks like from this side of the screen.

Those who go into broadcast news have to enjoy the challenge of working in tight deadlines in an environment of what is at times called ‘controlled chaos’. Step into a TV newsroom right before a newscast, especially in a small-to-medium station where everyone seems to have the workload of more than one person. You might see something like this: Reporters are putting finishing touches on late-breaking copy, the producer is yelling at someone because several scripts are not in hand, a video editor is cursing one of the bulky machines and the sports editor is rehearsing copy in a corner and telephones continue to ring.

Inside the studio just before the newscast all the persons concerned with the production of the news cast remain busy to check the faultless telecast

of the news. For this purpose the engineers remain busy checking cameras, the floor crew rearranges lights while the news producer and the editors remain busy doing their final tasks of compiling the copy and editing the related visuals and in the studio the anchor gets ready for the news cast.

Right at the time of the news cast the jingle of the news bulletin plays and the anchor starts casting the news. At the Production Control Room the Producer gives signals to the concerned technicians to run the related visuals. If all goes as planned, cameras and microphones work, videotapes run without any hitch, then the show runs smoothly. As soon as it gets over, the crews start their job one more time for the next news cast. The same routine is followed by the TV channels day in and day out.

How it all happens

Newsgathering is a specialized area and it requires special skills to provide news up to the minute. It has become highly competitive because news channels apart, most entertainment channels, with the exception of music channels, have at least one news bulletin a day.

News departments have very little time to prepare. They are mostly required to 'rush' to the scene of action. Therefore, they are equipped with the separate sets of equipment and other paraphernalia. They also have their own personnel who are always on the move covering events all over.

Let us look at the roles and responsibilities of various news personnel.

News Editor

News Editor (NE) heads the news room. He/she is the *de-facto* captain of the concerned news channel and is responsible for all news telecast by the channel. NE looks after the operation of this department in terms of personnel, budget and policy. It is the NE, who actually hires and fires personnel; he/she also battles with other department heads for fiscal resources. He/she determines what the station will cover and how on a day to day basis. Of course he/she consults and takes advice from the channel head to determine the policy. He/she plans, instructs and ensures that stories are available for bulletins while providing direction to the channel.

Looking at the vast array of responsibilities of the news editor we cannot overlook the importance of the news director. The news director does not

operate in a vacuum though he/she reports to a program director or station manager. The program director or the station manager in turn reports to a higher level manager. Management sets policy for sales, programming and news and the department heads in those areas are responsible to carry out those policies.

In case of smaller stations it is more likely that each person will have several jobs. For instance, the news editor often performs the job of the lead anchor or the station's primary on-air news talent. On other situations he may perform the job of even the program director or station manager. On some occasions, the news director will double as the assignment editor and be responsible for sending reporters and videographers to cover stories. He may also coordinate the work of stringers, stationed in distant locations.

News producer

The news producer (NP) is the person who collates and packages stories from various sources for a bulletin. The stories selected by the NE are put together by the NP, who ensures that all video/audio/graphics required for a story are in place. Many a time, the NP is required to co-ordinate live inputs for a news bulletin from various reporters/correspondents and incorporate them into the bulletin. He or she also ensures proper mix and balance of stories within a bulletin. A news channel could have as many as six to eight news producers.

Chief reporter/assignment editor

The chief reporter or assignment editor instructs reporters and camerapersons to cover specific events and also assigns the reporters specific beats. The usual duty of an assignment editor is to start the day by scanning local and regional newspapers in order to ensure that the station has not been scooped by the competition. News tips come via wire-services or are even faxed to the newsroom by those seeking coverage. The assignment editor tracks scheduled and unscheduled stories and keeps in close contact with field reporters/correspondents on a daily basis, providing them feedback on the quality of stories, the inputs required, and alerts on follow-ups.

Reporter/correspondent

The correspondent develops sources and gathers news from the field, mostly on tape. The reporter also does interviews, vox populi (the voice of the people), piece to camera (stand-ups), and writes the story for the newscast. He or she ensures that the visuals required for a story reach the station well in advance for necessary editing. Some news channels prefer their reporters to edit the story complete with commentary, visuals, interviews and piece to camera. When required, reporters also provide live inputs from the scene of action. Live inputs include telephonic reports from the reporting site or, as is common these days, the reporter's presence on the camera.

Of late, multi-tasking is becoming the norm in many news networks. The reporters are also expected to shoot and report the story for television with some help from other technicians. Further, they are also expected to edit their stories and transmit them to the channel's newsroom. This increases pressure on reporters. However, organizations that have already begun hiring multi-skilled personnel opine that such an arrangement minimizes the number of personnel in news operations.

Cameraperson

The cameraperson operates the camera to cover an event. The cameraperson either works on his or her own or with instructions from the reporter to cover different parts of an event. For smaller stations, the cameraperson doubles up as reporter too. It is his or her responsibility to provide good visuals and cutaways as also good audio for a story. A cameraperson working for a news channel is required to have good reflexes and takes risks to get the best visuals and sound bites.

Each story is discussed in a meeting with the reporter, the assignment editor and the producer. After the story is deemed worthy of coverage, it is the reporter, who will prepare the ground work, for example set up interviews, etc. It is the responsibility of the camera person to record the appropriate visuals. For instance, if the story is about a candlelight vigil, of course the candles and people will have to be captured on video by the cameraperson. All of this together can take several hours, or at times can be done in as little time as 30 minutes.

Stringers

Stringers are basically hired reporters who even supply the visuals of an event which has occurred at a place where the station's correspondent or reporter could not reach. Stringers are not permanent employees of a TV station but they are paid on the basis of the number of events being aired by the station reported by them. When an event to be covered is outside the limit of the city in which the television station is situated and it cannot be economically covered by deputing the staff cameraman of the station, services of stringers are utilized. Stringers are basically reporters or camerapersons who are selected and empanelled according to the prescribed procedure and may be utilized for coverage of news events of importance. Stringers should also have adequate facilities and equipment to undertake the coverage and should be good camerapersons with good news sense.

Video editor

Mere reporting of an event and capturing in video cameras do not result in a news production but many other factors are employed in making it presentable. A news report consists of interviews, visuals and the reporter's voice and this assembled product is known as a package. A package is the way most reporters tell their story. It is generally anywhere from a minute to three minutes depending on the time the producer gives the reporter. The time can vary depending on what the story is about, the amount of good video and interviews that the reporter has. The reporter has to write the story, pick what parts of interviews will be used, decide on the video and then have the whole script approved by the producer. This process takes a lot longer than it appears on the newscast. The person who actually gives shape to a news story in coordination with a fast hand at the editing machine is known as the video editor. The video editor edits the video inputs from the reporter in accordance with the latter's story/script.

The duration of the story may be of just two minutes which includes seeing the reporter out in the field or in the newsroom but the editing process (assembling the bites and the visuals together) may take much longer time, often stretching to hours.

Voice-over artiste

In most cases, the reporter provides the commentary. Some TV channels prefer to use professional voice-over artistes for quality. The voice-over artiste provides background commentary for the news story, that is, records the voice-over for the editor to shape the story.

Anchor/newscaster

The person who reads out the news stories in the newscast is known as the news anchor or newscaster.

Weathercasters/sportscasters

These are talent who present weather and sports reports with inputs from the meteorological department or the field with adequate graphic support.

Technical editors

The technical editor is responsible for putting together different shots and audio to create a news story and then combining various news stories to create a news bulletin. He/ she should have the knowledge of appropriate editing techniques as well as good news and aesthetic sense. News nowadays are often shot live. It calls for online editing in real time. The Technical Editor should be able to handle that.

Multi-media producer

The multi-media producer (MMP) in a TV news channel ensures that all stories are written for the channel's website and updates it on a regular basis. The MMP is also responsible for images, graphics, and illustrations and all other content on the website.

You must have realized by now that though the final product, that is the news bulletin, may look like something that is very easy to make, it is actually not so. If it does look easy to make, it means that everyone on the news team from the on-air to off-air or to people working in the studio has done their parts correctly. When something goes wrong, there could be one or many problems. It's hard to tell. But all in all, you can see and listen to a newscast sitting comfortably and imagine that news-casting is a simple affair. But it is not something that comes easy.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.3. Who heads the news department in a Television Channel?

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Q.4. Define the terms

a. Voiceover

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b. SOT

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Q.5. Who is a weathercaster?

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Q.6. What is the job of a multimedia producer?

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5.5 LET US SUM UP

- The organizational structure of television channel can broadly be divided into the following three main areas: editorial, production and technical.
- The editorial department is manned by people like Reporters, Researchers, News Coordinators, Copy editors, News Editors, News Producers and Anchors.
- The production unit is headed by the Director who may also be known as the Producer of the show in some channels.
- The boss of the news department is generally known as the News Editor who is responsible for managing the operation of the news department in terms of personnel, budget and policy.

- The news producer (NP) is the person who collates and packages stories from various sources for a bulletin.
- The chief reporter or assignment editor instructs reporters and camerapersons to cover specific events and also assigns reporters specific beats.

5.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans. to Q No.1 : The organizational structure of television channel can broadly be divided into three main areas: Editorial, Production and Technical.

Editorial department comprises Reporters, Researchers, Copy editors, Coordinators, News Editors, News Producers and Anchors.

Production department comprises Director/Producer, Graphics designers, Lighting Directors, Assistant Producers and Production Assistants

Technical department comprises Cameramen, Sound Recordists, Video Editors, Lightmen, Vision Mixers, CCU Operators, Maintenance Engineers, MCR / VSAT operators and Computer Engineers

Ans. to Q No.2 : The news producer (NP) is the person who collates and packages stories from various sources for a bulletin. The stories selected by the News Editor (NE) are put together by the NP, who ensures that all video/audio/graphics required for a story are in place. Many a time, the NP is required to co-ordinate live inputs for a news bulletin from various reporters/correspondents and incorporate them into the bulletin. He or she also ensures proper mix and balance of stories within a bulletin. A news channel could have as many as six to eight news producers.

Ans. to Q No.3 : News Editor

Ans. to Q No.4 : (a) Voice over: The audio narration on a video news story is called a voice over (VO).

(b) SOT: The 'sound bites' of people interviewed in a news story is known as sound on tape (SOT).

Ans. to Q No.5 : Weathercasters are talents who present weather and sports reports with inputs from the meteorological department.

Ans. to Q No.6 : The multi-media producer (MMP) in a TV news channel ensures that all stories are written for the channel's website and updates it on a regular basis. The MMP is also responsible for images, graphics, and illustrations and all other content on the website.



5.7 FURTHER READING

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5.8 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q.1. Briefly describe the organizational structure of a television station.

Q.2. The situation inside a newsroom just before a telecast is one of chaos. Describe who are the different personnel involved in creating a news bulletin and what their roles and responsibilities are.

Q.3. Describe the structure of the editorial department of a news channel.

Q.4. Write short notes on:

a. Anchor

b. Lighting Directors

c. Vision Mixers

Q.5. How are the reporter, correspondent and stringer different?