

JOB SATISFACTION AMONG BROADCAST NEWS
PRODUCERS

COMPLETED MAY 2022

by

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Broadcast news producers are invaluable to getting television newscasts to air. Their time leading up to any given show is spent doing all the work necessary, aside from reporting, to ensure a show makes to air. From writing stories and timing out the show, to using creative brainstorming, the producer upholds the backbone to ensure each show has personality, impact and success. This means they take on a lot of stress and pressure any given day. Meanwhile, their individual personality and charisma might oftentimes be overlooked or neglected, especially during a worldwide crisis. While that is to be expected since they don't obtain star-of-the-show status, it is important to learn how they've gotten by, especially in unprecedented times.

As the coronavirus pandemic overran the world, broadcast news started to look quite different. Journalists were considered essential workers, however the decision to allow workers into the building was up to newsroom's leadership's discretion. In most instances, there was a transition from the usual newsroom backdrops and in-the-field live shots, to a homier appearance of family portraits, home-office surroundings and the occasional nose pets. Television journalists were forced to do remote work, similar to the majority of the country. This meant they had to find ways to report, edit, interview and be on live television all from their homes. Adjustments and changes happened in many areas of the newsroom within the last year. While there are a handful of reporter-check-in research reports from the lens of burnout, there is a major lack of research regarding the changes that took place within news production.

Pandemic-related research regarding burnout and emotional stressors have been decently looked into within the last year, especially focusing on the perspectives of a

reporter. The many demands that journalists uphold throughout their daily responsibilities was intensified throughout the pandemic. Having to follow stay-at-home orders, adhering to safety measures, among a long list of restrictions, caused many television journalists to admit to higher stress (Hoak, 2021). However, broadcast news producers tend to be under looked in research pre and post pandemic times, yet they arguably fill the most important role in every on-air show. They are the reason a show has the meat and bones it needs to fill the allotted time that is watched from those at home. Comparatively, they are also to blame when there are mishaps within the show, causing additional stressors to accompany their workload. The adjustments producers have had to make during the pandemic while their reporters were working remote are unaccounted for. Just from the minute knowledge I've attained working at a television station in Columbia, Missouri, producers accounted for some of the only persons allowed and expected to be in the newsroom during the stay-at-home mandate in 2020. Obtaining in depth knowledge on this topic is invaluable in measuring job satisfaction levels during the pandemic and in which ways it has impacted the job outlook within a news producer's lens.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The rise of the coronavirus pandemic generated many adjustments, isolations and stressors throughout the nation, especially within occupational settings. As a nation, we saw a hit in labor turnovers. In August of 2021, the number of voluntary separations throughout the United States totaled at 4.3 million (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021). But there were also downfall trends within newsrooms. Newsroom employment within the United States dropped from around 88,000 to 85,000 from 2019 to 2020 (Pew Research Center, 2021). In a global research project studying the impacts of working during the coronavirus pandemic on journalists worldwide, 70 percent of respondents rated the psychological and emotional impacts of dealing with the COVID-19 crisis as the most difficult aspect of their work. Respondents also reported negative emotional and psychological impacts caused by the pandemic as well.

However, the pandemic alone shouldn't be held accountable for this trend. The news industry is always evolving and is known to generate high stress levels, among all areas within a newsroom, and in many cases, causing journalists to leave the field. Thus, burnout research among journalists is not a new area of study. Journalists have been experiencing burnout long before the world was hit with the unprecedented times that accompanied the year 2020, (Cummings, 2020; Macdonald, et. al, 2016; Weaver, Willnat, & Wilhoit, 2018; Welter, 2007; Woodruff, 2020). Between 2008 and 2020, newsroom employees deflated 26 percent (Pew Research Center, 2021).

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, one study found three key reasons broadcast journalists choose to walk away from the field: increases in insubstantial demands, a lack in managerial support and follow-through, and feelings of being inadequately

compensated (Woodruff, 2020). Other previous research hones in on the burnouts of multimedia journalists within younger reporters and editors due to the fast-paced grind that is demanded of these roles in today's world (MacDonald et al., 2016). Additional literature has conducted research pertaining to the level of quality that accompanies the many demands in which is expected on a multimedia journalist (Perez, 2014). The lack in burnout research falls under that of a news producer.

Has anyone checked in on production?

News producers experience many of the same stressors that multimedia journalists in previous studies reflect upon. From high-demand, quick turn-around deadlines, to behind the scenes stressors such as creating show layouts, finding and writing content and successfully cueing reporters out in the field, and then some (Schultz, 2005). These exemplify merely a handful of the everyday headaches that producers handle. Oftentimes, they are also the problem-solvers when reporters' stories fall through, or when technology fails.

In order for one to assemble a creative, compelling and visually appealing show, a producer relies on the ongoing communication and collaborations between reporters, anchors, editors, meteorologists, directors, digital producers and production assistants throughout the time leading up to a show, and sometimes during a live newscast. Support is often needed throughout even given show as well, especially if it contains breaking news or multiple live shots, to ensure the show stays on time and is successful. These responsibilities can generate volumes of stress on a normal, non-pandemic-impacted news day. Thus making it invaluable to learn and recognize how producing was effected when most of the newsroom was working remote. In this study, I incorporated burnout

theory and AW (areas-of-work-life) model while interviewing newsroom producers to understand how a major crisis such as a pandemic has impacted their outlook on the job.

Burnout is classified as an occupational phenomena. The International Classification of Diseases defines burnout as “a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. It is characterized by three dimensions:

- feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion;
- increased mental distance from one’s job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job; and
- reduced professional efficacy,” (World Health Organization, 2019).

Any newsroom thrives off of managerial support, especially in unprecedented times. A national survey explored the extent to which television news workers perceived organizational support from their news organizations during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study, which included 173 employees, showcased larger market size, membership in professional organizations, access to counseling services and resources on best practices to covering the pandemic correlated with positive perceptions of employers (Nee & Chacon, 2021). Thus, the positive perceptions, manageable demands and high decision authority all correlated with overall job satisfaction.

The organizational context of burnout is described in six areas of work-life (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). The six areas include workload, control, reward, community, fairness and values. Each area is relevant to workplace burnout and oftentimes, they overlap. It is imperative to note that production-specific research pertaining to each of the listed areas

is hard to come by. The following literature stems from studies conducted under unrelated occupations to that of journalism.

Workload

High demands and an increase in workload are associated with causing emotional exhaustion (Leiter & Maslach, 1997). Serious mismatches or inconsistencies in workload can aggravate exhaustion, causing one to experience burnout. Excessive, unwelcome demands can drain one's energy and interfere with recovery by stimulating anxiety. Contrastingly, proper management of workload can do the opposite and maintain reasonable pacing of tasks (Leiter & Shaughnessy, 2006). Thus it is imperative that newsrooms provide the support and realistic expectations of their employees, especially during trying and unknown times.

Control

Individuals oftentimes experience a lack in control within their work when there are conflicting role demands and expectations from authority (Leiter & Shaughnessy, 2006). Being that news producers control the content, timing, layout and formats within their shows, I anticipate this aspect of their work day was interrupted as technology was more at risk due to reporters working remote. Having a lack of control is inevitable in any given live newscast.

Reward

Everyone likes to feel or be rewarded for their hard work. Whether in monetary or social aspects, many studies show that the lack thereof can lead to burnout within the workplace (Unterbrink et al., 2007), (Leiter & Maslach, 1999), (Bennet et al., 2010). Rewards in the form of gratitude, support and recognition have been found to result in a

stronger organizational climate and thus result in higher qualities of life within the work setting (Bennet et al., 2010). As the COVID-19 pandemic separated work environments via remote-work, it was of interest to reflect the ways in which organizations recognized and supported their employees while taking on these foreign and additional tasks.

Community

Similar to the previous section, a sense of community within the work place is essential in feeling supported and appreciated. When people lack a sense of support, demands and exhaustion and burnout are closely correlated (Leiter & Maslach, 1999) (Mutkins et al., 2011). On the other hand, when social support within an organization is high, demands are less closely related to feelings of exhaustion. It was inevitably expected that the usual communal environment within the newsroom was interrupted throughout the height of the pandemic, which provided context to participant's reflection of organization support.

Fairness

While similar in qualities as that pertaining to community and rewards, fairness is most closely associated with mutual trust among decision makers within an organization. Leiter and Maslach (1999) refer to this measurement of burnout as "a quality of supervisor support in that people of the higher authority in an organization have the responsibility for making judgements and decisions that affect the work environment of staff members." Negative perceptions of team cohesion and organizational fairness closely correlate to occupation burnout (Ronen & Mikulincer 2009). While team cohesion and typical workplace environments were interrupted in the newsroom in 2020, there was an interesting research piece to learn the levels of fair-treatment in which news

producers reported feeling. As a producers role is needed within the walls of a television station's newsroom, due to technological resources, they were accounted for some of the few exceptions to the stay-at-home mandate in which many employees were expected to follow.

Values

When adhering to the job seeking process, many prospective employees seek an organization that holds a handful of similar, if not identical values. When individual values are mismatched with that of the organization's, the work becomes personally irrelevant. Thus, can result in a reduction of involvement, an undermining of professional accomplishment and finding little to no meaning in one's work (Leiter & Maslach, 1999). All of which can lead to burnout. It was of considerable wonder whether one's values or an organization's values were altered or changed when navigating through a crisis such as a world wide pandemic. Additionally, whether or not the organization blatantly showcased its added or novel values and how employees perceived and reflected upon those values.

Research Questions

Thus in order to understand the effects of the pandemic on broadcast producer's job satisfaction and burnout, this research possessed the following research questions.

RQ1: Have working conditions during the coronavirus pandemic negatively impacted broadcast producer's job satisfaction?

RQ2: Are broadcast producers experiencing burnout within their roles after working through the coronavirus pandemic?

Method

The professional analysis included a series of semi-structured interviews with fulltime producers that have an established career in production. Participants upheld employment status prior to the start of the pandemic. Participants were interviewed in a variety of market sizes and geographical locations around the U.S. Doing so provided a wide range of insight into how the pandemic impacted news producers' job satisfaction.

Finding news producers within stations across the country can be a challenge to track down. To successfully recruit participants for this qualitative study, I used snowball sampling. Snowball sampling refers to the use of a chain effect that grows in size as it assembles through a line of contacts. Similar to that of a snowball generating more snow as it rolls down a hill of snow. This method of research recruitment is used when targets or participants are not easily accessible (Naderifar et al., 2017). Recruiting through snowball sampling involves requesting current or known participants to refer additional acquaintances in which they believe would be a qualified fit to participant within the study (Goodman, 1961).

As snowball sampling stems from current or previous research participants, this research first used convenient sampling to obtain the initial group or singular individual to then begin the snowball. Convenience sampling is a type of nonrandom sampling in which members of the target population meet certain qualifications such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability or willingness to participate (Etikan et al., 2015). The qualifications to participate in this study required participants to be employed as a broadcast news producer, have two plus years of experience as a news producer and for the convenience sampling, an additional qualification pertained to the geographical region, specifically the Midwest (as the study was completed within

Missouri) to obtain the first subjects. This study did not carry a need to acquire specifics in age, gender, race or the market size in which subjects were employed. Thus, gives justification as to why convenience sampling in addition to snowball sampling drove the recruitment process of the study. It is important to note that while the convenience sampling specifically recruited within the Midwest region for convenience of location in researchers, snowball sampling aided in reaching more geographically diverse locations and subjects.

The recruitment process was performed using social media platforms, mainly the use of Facebook Messenger. Being that both sampling methods fall under a more non-formal lens, the usage of social media generated the best fit. Facebook provides a wide lens within the click on the search bar. In the third quarter of 2021, Facebook users roughly totaled 2.91 billion (Statistica Research Department, 2021). Comparatively, Twitter roughly totaled 302.28 million users in 2021 in the United States. (Statistica Research Department, 2021). Facebook provided the upmost opportunity in reaching news producers throughout the nation.

As it pertains to this particular research study, qualified news producers of which were initially chosen for the study within the Midwest region, were asked to reach out to other known news producers to therefore provide additional participants for the study. The snowball sampling method had advantages and limitations when used in this research recruitment. The methodology plays a key role in locating, assessing and involving hard-to-find populations (Cohen & Arieli, 2011). Snowball sampling is also an effective and inexpensive way to reach potential interviewees. The ways in which this sampling lacks is that it does not promote a random selection. Research subjects are dependent on the

respondents first access and on the willingness of the subjects to participate (Cohen & Arieli).

It was anticipated that in using this chain-referral method it would lead researchers to participants within different regions and geographical areas within the country. It was essential in learning the ways in which newsrooms in other states and regions navigated through the pandemic and more specifically how the production team within these newsrooms reflected upon their roles and demands during this time. Thus helped to provide a more thorough and wide-range of knowledge to gather.

The driving lens of this research fell into the specific scope of coronavirus and the impacts it had on broadcast news producers' job satisfaction levels. I sought insight into the changes they underwent within their daily routines, stress levels and responsibilities throughout the pandemic. This research also provided insight into the ways in which producers perceived support received from their organization and how it fell into their job outlook. As previously stated, this research incorporated the areas of work-life model into the interview questions to measure burnout, or job satisfaction. All six areas of the model were incorporated throughout the semi-structured interview questions. This promoted further research on the understudied subject of news producers and their experience of producing throughout the coronavirus pandemic.

Interview Questions:

In order to assess how working conditions during the pandemic impacted news producer's job outlook, researchers used the following questions. There were a second set of questions for those who have left the profession, noted below.

1: How long have you been a news producer?

- 2: How has/was your everyday work flow changed from the start of the pandemic?**
- 3: How did remote-work impact the demands of your producing role during the pandemic?**
- 4: How would you reflect upon working remote? What aspects were satisfactory and what aspects were poor?**
- 5: How would you describe your job satisfaction before and after the pandemic?**
- 6: In what ways has working through the pandemic changed your perspective of the profession?**
- 7: What was the most challenging part about producing during the pandemic?**
- 8: How would you describe the support received from newsroom managers?**
- 9: How would you describe the correlation between your values and the station's values?**
- 10: How long do you plan to stay in the industry?**
- 11: Has the newsroom in which you work gone back to pre-pandemic 'normalcy'?**
- 12: Were there any tactics implemented by management that benefitted your role as a news producer? i.e., mental health checks, meetings, extra help, etc. If so, what were they?**
- 13: Do you have any friends or know of a producer at a different station that would be a good person to interview?**

Interview questions for participants no longer in the field:

- 1: How long were you a broadcast producer?**
- 2: When did you leave the field?**

3: What drove your decision to leave?

4: What field are you in now?

5: How would you describe working conditions within the newsroom?

6: How would you describe the support received from managers and directors?

7: What suggestions would you give to managers to help avoid producers leaving the field?

8: Would you ever consider going back?

Professional Component

I spent the last four months working alongside the creative services team, specifically within the promotions department at KOMU. I went from working within the constant traffic and chaos from reporters, producers and digital staff to being in a secluded office down the hall and getting a lunch break. The consistent responsibilities that were expected of me each week provided reassurance that there is in fact workplace normalcy within news, one just needs to exit the newsroom to find it... Upholding these responsibilities promoted a broader understanding of other functions within the newsroom and how they all work together to demonstrate KOMU's mission: KOMU 8 is an information communication leader, building upon our University heritage to actively touch and improve the lives of people and communities we serve.

Each week, I wrote original scripts to promote KOMU 8's involvement in community events, filled day-to-day rundown logs for KOMU and CW station promotions, updated KOMU 8's social media accounts, documented social rankings of the on-air team, joined show-rundown meetings and checked producers' daily promo scripts. Additionally, tasks were added depending upon each week's agenda, such as aiding in promotion shoots, updating social media accounts about anticipated weather impacts, writing promotion scripts for special segments and giving tours to those visiting the station.

Though the newsroom chaos wasn't where I thrived, the experience and knowledge I gained from it aided in my success of fulfilling these responsibilities of the Promotions Assistant. Without knowing the news functions and lingo, I wouldn't have

had as smooth of a transition or an appreciation for the format of the job. I now have a wealth of knowledge about the multiple roles within (and caddy corner to) the newsroom.

Chapter 3: Professional Analysis

This study analyzed broadcast producers who are active in the field and those who have parted from the field entirely. For this study, researchers talked to ten current and former broadcast news producers. Producers were interviewed via Zoom for 30 minutes to an hour each, using semi-structured interviewing. All of the participants were granted anonymity so they could feel free to speak their minds without fear of repercussions from their places of work, as some of the journalists are still in the news industry. To maintain their anonymity, they'll be referred to as Journalists A through J.

Eighty-percent of the participants were women and twenty percent were men. All ten participants are under 40 years old. The majority of participants are under 30 years old, with 60% of participants falling into the 23-28 year age range and 40% of participants being between 31-38 years-old. These journalists' experience range from two years in the industry to 12 years of experience in newsrooms across the country. Fifty percent of participants had careers in the Midwest, forty percent upheld positions in the south and ten percent of participants have experience producing on the east coast.

To answer the research questions, each interview transcription was examined in more detail. As themes began to emerge from the individual transcriptions, patterns were noted and then compared with one another to find similarities and differences among them. Topics such as communication, remote work, management relationships and reward are among the most commonly addressed topics among all ten participants.

RQ1: Have working conditions during the coronavirus pandemic negatively impacted broadcast producer's job satisfaction?

The participants in this study who remain in the field share a relentless passion for the work that journalism requires, no matter the condition of the world. Collaboration, teamwork and technological resources often make up the everyday routine of the job, creating minimal room to successfully complete a work day in their absence. The coronavirus pandemic created a multitude of disruptions in the line of broadcast production. Despite the challenges it brought, four out of five participants still working as producers stated they don't have any intention to leave the field. However, one participant said the working conditions within production during the pandemic has prompted a strong desire to leave. The journalists were asked to give their perspective of the field after working throughout a pandemic.

(Participants' experience in the field is included)

Journalist A (2 years): "After the last several weeks of covid, it was draining, I'd go home some days and didn't feel good about the work I did. It's become more of a grind than something I enjoy."

Journalist B (2 years): "Content and quality matters over quantity, and that's not how it's treated anymore. It's, what can we get to fill the show, versus how good can we make this story. The hardest part is trying to make content matter."

Journalist C (6 years): "I don't think I realized how much people actually rely on us. It was just like wow, they really kind of need us right now."

Journalist D (7 years): "It's like, we live through a historic moment in time and everything changed. We were able to get through it and it was just another day in the office for me."

Journalist E (2 years): “It definitely didn't change it for me. I've always loved what I what I did. It never made me want to leave but I totally understand why people did because it was very stressful to work in news during the pandemic.”

Remote Work

Four out of the five participants said remote work negatively impacted their work flow, trickling onto communicative routines. Remote work looked different for each producer. Some were the only ones allowed in the newsroom, others were given equipment to work from home and some had a hybrid schedule. One journalist said, “Even just having one person out of the office completely disrupts the flow like, you're working off zoom calls and zoom calls don't always connect and you get frustrated.”

After being asked to reflect upon their experience with remote work, producers commonly reflected on excessive phone calls with reporters, technological restrictions from home, and having had less time to think creatively to make their shows special. The takeaway: this everybody-hands-in job needs well, everyone's hands in. One positive aspect of working remote that every active journalist agreed on was the convenience of having rundown and story-pitch meetings on a collaborative video site (i.e., Microsoft Teams and Zoom). One journalist said, “I think it's how it should've been all along. We're out of there in 30 minutes or less.”

Communication

Without a pandemic barreling through the world, producers are often glued to their newsroom screens from the moment they start their shift until their shows are finished. A well-furnished newsroom (during normal daytime hours) is comprised of reporters, digital producers, associate producers, production assistants, managers and then

some. They work to create and fill multiple shows, update websites, and stay on top of real-time happenings in the world. Thus, if there is a question that needs answered, a fact that needs checked, a piece of advice or feedback that needs to be discussed, the person of whom a producer is seeking, is most likely in arms reach or a weak yell away. The pandemic crashed this party. Maybe it simply added to the chaos.

Who's doing what?

For a job that is centered around constant communication to navigate through the stressful grind, four out of five participants in the field said communication was the most challenging part of working throughout the pandemic. One journalist reflected on the day to day communication as "... a horrible game of telephone. We have an assignment desk that we work through but that's not always updated and texts aren't always seen."

Specifically, journalists mentioned the headache of keeping up with reporters' stories, receiving last-minute requests from those not in the building, miscommunicating instructions, and (accurately) communicating frequent covid-19 updates. What was the overarching reason for the constant lack of communication?

RQ2: Are broadcast producers experiencing burnout within their roles after working through the corona virus pandemic?

Among the five participants who have left the field entirely, three left after the pandemic hit. However, of the three, none attributed the pandemic for the reason of their resignation. It can be inferred that those who left the field after 2020 found the pandemic to be the breaking point of an already-checked-out mindset. Rather, the grounds for leaving stemmed from a build-up of the realities of the job.

Difficult realities of the job

A quick Google search will provide a variety of answers as to what a news producer does and how much they get paid on average. Responsibilities listed might include developing show schedules, managing live shots, scouting best shoot locations, coordinating with on-air personnel, writing or approving scripts, and managing technical efforts. While those duties are accurate, many descriptions don't showcase the stressful fast-pace, odd hours, and a lack-of-staffing reality that the job often presents.

Reward

When asked to reflect on the working conditions within the newsroom, one participant reflected on having great conditions within the newsroom and acknowledging their situation is rare. Three participants explained the job as one person upholding a multitude of roles, due to being short staffed, while receiving no reward, and (again) low pay. One journalist said, "One producer is wearing four or five, six, seven different hats and trying to do four, five, six, seven different types of jobs. And with a reward that was free pizza. The pay for the amount of work that you're doing just wasn't worth it."

Another journalist reflected on the specific amount a station offered with the expectation of filling multiple roles in the newsroom. She said, "One of the stations here (Madison, WI) offered me \$45,000. I was like, but I can do all three things – I can anchor, report and produce. I think I should be making a lot more than [less] than \$50,000."

Additionally, in any industry, employees want the opportunity grow. Whether it be moving up within their company, attending additional education or workshops, or simply advancing within one's role or job, it is rewarding to be a part of a company that promotes personal development and supports it. Forty percent of journalists in this study

said they've considered teaching or are interested in pursuing the education side of news, however, thirty percent said there's little to no development opportunities within a newsroom. Specifically, one journalist said, "There was only so much room to grow. I wanted to be a producer because I like having a leadership role, but to develop your leadership skills, nothing is ever anywhere to be found. There's no development sessions from directors, there's no, 'let's pay for you to go to this conference once a year.'"

Management

All ten participants were asked to describe the support they received from management and directors. The outcome of this answer presented a distaste toward the ones who rule the newsroom. One journalist answered plainly, "There was definitely an attitude at the very top. Like the news director kind of lived and breathed and slept the job and he sort of expected the same from everybody else." Another journalist said, "You know, it's just vicious."

Within any good team, there's at least one great leader. All five journalists who've left the industry stated they had better relationships with their executive producers, than with other managers in the newsroom. Executive producers typically oversee and work directly with the producers, checking scripts for factual accuracies and grammatical perfections, providing rundown guidance and feedback, etc. Additionally, executive producers often double as the manager for the entire newsroom, being pulled in multiple directions at once. Participants spoke about their executive producers as they would a therapist, guardian, or someone similar to that of a saint. Their E.P. treated producers as any advanced manager typically would or at least how many employees hope they would; provide emotional support, take on any shifts needing covered, ensure

producers have the resources they need, and mask the lack of support received from higher-ups.

Discussion:

The purpose of this study was to analyze news producers' job satisfaction, specifically following the coronavirus pandemic. Additionally, the study analyzed those who have left the field entirely to get insight as to what led to their resignation. Common demands and themes that arose from those interview regarding the issues within the industry have also been established in prior research (Nee & Chacon, 2021).

On average, participants who remain in the field have less experience than those who have left. While this study didn't intend for this fact to arise, it is important to note when analyzing the details between sets of participants. Additionally, it is important to acknowledge both groups of participants have upheld at least two years in the field. Is that the golden number to decipher whether to stay in the field? Or, is this significant to the coronavirus pandemic. Future studies should consider measuring this angle into further detail.

With the exception of the participant who's outlook on the job has been negatively impacted by the pandemic, all five participants said they felt supported while working from home and while navigating through the pandemic from directors, managers and executive producers. One journalist said, "The pandemic kind of woke up a lot of newsroom management into realizing there's not that many - there's not a surplus of journalists out there." This finding is not surprising given prior research has associated the support received from managers to increased job satisfaction (Nee & Chacon, 2021).

As previously mentioned, the working conditions that producers undertook throughout the pandemic were not preferred, however 80 percent, or four out of the five journalists still in the field, said they love the work too much to leave. One journalist said, “I could do PR. But then I look at that and think, ‘yeah it would be great to work nine to five but would I be fulfilled?’ I just like it too much to sacrifice giving it up. I could do this for another 30 years.”

Chapter 4: Conclusion

Pandemics aside, employees need more. While individual stations can't take the blame for an industry-wide staffing shortage, the stress or hours that accompany working in news, or even the pay (to an extent), stations can improve their internal structure while the industry takes its time to catch up. Participants were asked what it would take to consider re-joining the field. Their responses included: management changes, an irresistible offer, pay and better hours, internal changes, and educational and growth opportunities. A translation in laments terms: the bare minimum needs to be taken care of.

Regarding some of the six areas of work-life model mentioned earlier in this paper, producers often mentioned a lack in these areas, creating burnout within the field. The following examples incorporates questions and answers from both sides of this study. Employees need to feel a sense of community, a place where they feel they have a team of people who will cover for them when situations pop up or if their personal life coincides with the flow of the work day. Employees also need to feel rewarded and recognized for their hard work. Participants noted that the additional roles they often took on throughout the pandemic or prior to, were never rewarded, and the reality of their pay didn't make up for it. Fairness in treatment no matter one's title is also essential in creating a welcoming environment for any line of work. Some participants noted that they weren't treated in the same fashion as that of managers, or even those who were given more normal hours. Lastly, it is important to note that among those still in field, all five participants stated their station's values (i.e., morals, ethics, goals) align with their personal values, and some even noted that influenced their choice to work there.

Finally, former producers in this study were asked what suggestions they would give to managers to help avoid more resignations. Each participant's answers are listed below, as well as their time in the field.

Journalist F (3 years): "They need more money. I would say pay and development opportunities are really, really crucial in my opinion."

Journalist G (2 years): "Consistent individual attention. Even if it's not very long, you know, 15 minutes a week or, you know, an hour every quarter, just some time where they can vent or they can bring up things without anyone else hearing to just to let them feel heard and understood and supported would be huge."

Journalist H (11 years): "Listen to them. There's got to be something that can be done. If there isn't, then explain why."

Journalist I (5 years): "Knowing what your employees want. Don't rely on the E.P.'s to know them on a personal level."

Journalist J (12 years): "Foster a culture where people feel like they can say, 'I'm having (this) struggle.' Be Respectful of people's lives outside of work when you can."

APPENDIX: TRANSCRIPTS

Producers

How long have you been a news producer?

Been here since July. Been a producer since November 2020.

How has/was your everyday work flow changed from the start of the pandemic?

As a new producer, I had to call reporters, and communication was challenging. There was heavy tracking of covid.

How did remote-work impact the demands of your producing role during the pandemic?

I've never had to work remote, but I had to constantly call reporters and everyone.

How would you reflect upon working remote? What aspects were satisfactory and what aspects were poor?

It was a hassle having to constantly call reporters to ask about stories and checking in.

How would you describe your job satisfaction before and after the pandemic?

At the very beginning, it was cool. This is the biggest story of our lifetime. It's exhilarating, it's new. But after a few months, it gets old, covering the same thing. We're still covering it constantly. I don't think I've produced a show without covid in it.

In what ways has working through the pandemic changed your perspective of the profession?

I got into news to try and get a foot in the door with sports. Once I started doing it, I thought I was pretty decent at this, news director told me you could make a career out of this. Moved up to a mid-market out of a small market. After the last several weeks of covid, it was draining, I'd go home some days and didn't feel good about the work I did. I told a lot of people this will probably be the last job I have with news. It's become more of a grind rather than something I enjoy.

What was the most challenging part about producing during the pandemic?

The most challenging part is coming in and trying to think outside of the box and make six different stories about covid special.

How would you describe the support received from newsroom managers?

They do a good job to support everyone equally. They deal with the same communication issues that we do. They could be doing a lot better of a job, but it's new to all of us. They are pretty good about listening to producers about their suggestions about covid stories.

How would you describe the correlation between your values and the station's values?

As far as my personal values go, I think they align pretty well. The main idea is to help the public and to help out community see things and be a voice for them where they might not be able to do that. I consider myself a conservative and there's really not a lot of that in media. With the stations goals to better the community and bring light to things and hold people accountable, our values, definitely align there.

How long do you plan to stay in the industry?

If I have it my way, I have 20 months left on my contract. If I could get out of it tomorrow, I would. Covid is the number one reason.

Has the newsroom in which you work gone back to pre-pandemic 'normalcy'?

It's not gotten back to normal. Right now, all reporters, digital staff, work remote. Some people left. Only manager is "in-depth producer." The GM, HR is also out remote.

Were there any tactics implemented by management that benefitted your role as a news producer? i.e., mental health checks, meetings, extra help, etc. If so, what were they?

Most news rooms have meetings in the morning, they still have there's over zoom. Producers have a meeting to help take their biggest stories into something even bigger or more special.

How long have you been a news producer?

It was like starting the pandemic. So there were very limited jobs out there. And the job that I started out with a KTV was the weekend anchor. 2020. And I would say I, I basically spent equal times producing as I did being on air.

How has/was your everyday work flow changed from the start of the pandemic?

So it's very slow. It's very, you know, the same things happen every week, typically for us. Yeah, very rarely do we have spot news. So don't have to always think on like, a ton of content initially, especially in our noon shows, because we don't have reporters for those. In the evenings when we are fully staffed, we have about five reporters, three on a good day. And that was a little bit more than you have to juggle, whose stories going where, but it's not bad.

How did remote-work impact the demands of your producing role during the pandemic?

So we did have our producers remote for a decent time. So like, it would alternate one week, our mid-day producer who did our noon, and our five would be home. And our evening producer that did six and 10 would be in the station, and then they would flip. We've kind of, especially now that the COVID pay doesn't exist for us, we've had people working from home, one out of precaution like we saw a jump in cases in our area and at work a couple weeks ago. So we took people home that could for sure go home without making the day in the newsroom. So when I had COVID I produced from home on the week. So I worked from 2pm to 11pm going through picking the content for the shows writing the stories the only thing that I could not do from my house was edit video or look at video easily. I couldn't for sure edit it but I could go through and I had full access to iNews I have full access to news channel I could go through put stuff in reporter wise both from my perspective as a reporter working remote and a producer.

How would you reflect upon working remote? What aspects were satisfactory and what aspects were poor?

The biggest thing in a business based on communication is communicating. And that really lacked in the pandemic. I think it's because people didn't know how to over communicate. So I think the working from home and working remotely, really challenged everybody at my station to communicate with management with reporters with anchors, it was this is what we're going to have in the show. And we have an assignment desk that we work through, but that's not always updated and texts aren't always seen. And people forget to pass information on. It's a horrible game of telephone and workplace. So I think communication was the biggest struggle. It wasn't so much being able to do my job. Being able to do my job as well as I could if I was in the newsroom with everybody else

in the newsroom. Even just having one person out of the office that day and working completely disrupts the flow like, you're working off zoom calls and zoom calls don't always connect and you get frustrated. It's like, it's so horrible to start your day off with somebody working remotely, and they're calling into the meeting on a zoom call, and they can't hear you. And you're like repeating yourself for the first time. It also was kind of peaceful, especially when I got to work from home. I didn't have to worry about what other people were doing. And you don't always have luxury when you're working in the newsroom. So the one luxury was being able to keep up with myself, which allowed me to work faster and get more stuff done without having to wait for somebody else to get their script chapter, you know, any of those obstacles you have trying to work around or with other people.

How would you describe your job satisfaction before and after the pandemic?

I think I'm more satisfied with my job now. You can never have good hours working in news. I like the hours I have more than what I did because I have weekends off and that allows for more social time which effects who I am when I come to work. If I hate coming to work then I'm not going to do good things when I'm there. But I will say with the pandemic, the pandemic isn't over but it's not what it used to be...and when I started, every day was another pandemic story and I was like oh my God, I'm so tired of having to say 'due to covid' or 'because of covid...' it was just the same thing. It's the same thing every day every week just in a different tune. Now that we've started to live a little bit more, there's more things to talk about and that gives me more satisfaction.

In what ways has working through the pandemic changed your perspective of the profession?

I expected more passion out of people working in the field than what I have come across. Content and quality matters over quantity, and that's not how it's treated anymore. So they're coming to us because we're so short staffed as a field that will basically take anybody at this point.

It's what can we get to fill the show, versus how good can we make this story. You have the people who are really good at making a good show, burned-out because they're having to talk about the same thing every day. How many times can you make people care about new covid cases, when it's what we've been leading with for the past two years. You can't win sometimes anymore. The hardest part is trying to make content matter. I know as a producer, sometimes you get reporters who don't care, and that hurts your show.

What was the most challenging part about producing during the pandemic?

It's communication. Nine times out of , mine is always communication. It's either I didn't communicate clearly enough to this person for them to understand that I'm communicating, or they just didn't communicate to me or communication was missed in the training. And it's, and that is what really just affects the whole show. And I mean, like, today, we had our web manager working from home, and he forwarded me a story at 1145 to put in the noon. And I don't have an editor. And I don't have enough, like, it's just me, I'm the editor, the producer, the anchor, and it's on 45. And I need to balance that. And so yeah, it's people not communicating, people not offering help. It's really just the communication. I don't think until you've had to work remotely, which only a certain group of us have had to work remotely. You don't know what the challenges are.

How would you describe the support received from newsroom managers?

Support wise, especially in the last year, the first six months were rocky, because there were a lot more of us. And it was an election year. And we were working remote and I sometimes just felt kind of overlooked. And when I was looked at it wasn't for anything good. There were very few words of motivation. And I don't expect a gold star every day. But there are days that I was just like, just give me one. One thing literally I'm so close to dying and buying out and going home, just give me one thing. And now I get that a lot more. I think people have kind of lost the stress, especially management, and they're coming back to being more grateful for who they have. The pandemic kind of woke up a lot of newsroom management into realizing there's not that many - there's not a surplus of journalists out there. There's a surplus of good journalist producing and creating reporting digital you don't have just like a bad you can take them out and plop them in and fill that new position. So we've kind of gotten into more of a nurturing newsroom environment, and now we're kind of getting back into let's help mold these people into who they could be in ten years and not expect that from them right off the start.

How would you describe the correlation between your values and the station's values?

I think my values have had to somewhat shift, because I came to an area where what they care about is a little bit different than what I grew up with caring about. I had to do a lot of brushing up on ag-related stories. When it comes to the basics of journalism, I think most of my morals and ethics align with the station's. I hope in the future to see a bit more progressive ideas. I think we have a really good balance in the newsroom of fair-minded unbiased people.

How long do you plan to stay in the industry?

There's some days when I'm like, I could do this for another 30 years. I get worried about the industry as a whole, about where it's moving and what it's going to look like in ten years. Will we be on tv or will it be completely digital? I think it will take a lot for me personally to get burnt out. I'm also not that good at anything else. I could do PR. But then I look at that and I think 'yeah it would be so great to work nine to five but would I be fulfilled?' I totally respect when people leave because this job and this industry can tear you apart if you let it. I can find happiness in other things in my job, and for some people it's just awful in every aspect. I just like it too much to sacrifice giving it up.

Has the newsroom in which you work gone back to pre-pandemic 'normalcy'?

We've gone back to in person meetings and having conversations in person.

Were there any tactics implemented by management that benefitted your role as a news producer? i.e., mental health checks, meetings, extra help, etc. If so, what were they?

They always had run down meetings, and we've let go of those because we are down a producer, an assistant news director and content manager for six months. But producers always really appreciated those. We've gone back to in person meetings and that has helped how we plan our shows. We haven't really implemented anything new, we've just gone back to what we used to do, and that has helped the product.

How long have you been a news producer?

Since 2016

How has/was your everyday work flow changed from the start of the pandemic?

At first, it was extremely overwhelming. I mean, it was there was something new coming in every 10 minutes. I mean, no, it was just really, my, our workflow was also strange, because I couldn't for almost a year, I didn't see reporters, like in my newsroom, it was very weird to not go up to their desk and say, for example, 'hey, how's the story going?' Or it was weird to not have that meeting all together in the newsroom, it was weird that we all had to be like, on Zoom or on WebEx. I mean, I never thought in my journalism career, I'd be covering a pandemic. So I would definitely say it changed every aspect of what I do.

How did remote-work impact the demands of your producing role during the pandemic?

The only time I did was when I was exposed. They had to send a bunch of stuff to my house. And I actually had to quarantine like, last October 2020, when the vaccine wasn't even out. And so okay, I had to produce at my little desk in my room for a week and a half. But otherwise, I didn't really have to change my workflow. I just still went in the building.

How would you reflect upon working remote? What aspects were satisfactory and what aspects were poor?

It almost took away that human interaction in my newscasts. I mean, for good reason. But I would say it really impacted like, Okay, what is this package going to look like? Is it just going to be a Zoom meeting? Or is it going to be like this interaction? Or is it going to be a bunch of graphics? I mean, it really impacted like, how my show was presented, I guess, so to speak. And I guess also, when we were social distancing the anchors we did this for a little while, too. It impacted how I produce the show. Do they sit next to each other? Do they not sit next to each other? You know, have they been exposed? And can they even come on set? Do they have to work from home? You know, how far apart can they say what monitors can they can they not stand up? I mean, it really changes how you're putting the product together. I guess, in a way now that everybody's sitting back together. It's not really like that now, but back then it was definitely, oh, I can't have so and so and so and so sitting at this desk, because it's not six feet long. They have to stand over here over there.

Um, at first, it was really rocky, I would say I think for you know, sometimes reporters would go live from their house. And you know, you'd have the occasional, like, you'd hear their cat or something, or like their camera would die in their living room.

Depending on their internet, sometimes it was spotty. But I think once everybody got the hang of it, it was much more like smooth and manageable. I think it just took a lot of practice at first was like, okay, I have to set up this meeting in this room, because this meeting isn't good lighting. And like, this person has to feed their story by this time, because their internet is spotty, or like, yeah, your live view is doing this.

How would you describe your job satisfaction before and after the pandemic?

So in January of 2020, I was deciding what I wanted to do next, and I was like, do I stay in news? Do I stay at the station? To put things into perspective for you at five I had four news directors in four and a half years. So I wasn't very happy. And then they fired the one I liked during lockdown. But anyway, so yeah, so I was pretty unsatisfied like at that

time, and then we got furloughed, and it was like even worse, and then that's when I decided to leave. And that's when I started at Fox for about two weeks later. So I would say I'm in a much more satisfactory place. Now, I think, in this newsroom, I have a more active voice I, you know, people actually get along, like management cares about you, which is huge. So my situation is a little different, I would say, right, but at the beginning of the pandemic, like, I would say, some people almost would say the opposite. But I was somewhat satisfied. And then, at the end of that job, I was extremely unsatisfied. But now that I'm at my new job, I'm fairly satisfied, I would say things are much more like settled and normal and got as normal as they can be right now.

In what ways has working through the pandemic changed your perspective of the profession?

So I think I didn't really realize how many people like rely on the news, I think I mean, I did, you know, severe weather situations and stuff. But when everybody was at home, I mean, I don't think I realized how, like, people, my people were relying on the news to be like, well, you know, this Health Organization says this about COVID. And like the governor saying this about lockdown, like, when are we to be able to go back out and like eat at restaurants and things like that. And so I think, I don't think I realized how much people actually rely on us. And that really put things into perspective for me. I also didn't realize it was technically like, in a sense, I mean, I knew it was an essential job, but it really became, I literally had to carry around a piece of paper for my station that like if a cop pulled me over and asked where I was going, like, I had a form that was signed to my news director, and it said, like, I'm an essential worker under this act like, here's my boss's signature or whatever. It was very strict. It was very hardcore. Yeah, it was very weird. I ended up never needing it, obviously.

So it did change my outlook on the job a little bit, but I think it didn't totally flip it. It was just, oh, wow, they really kind of need us right now.

What was the most challenging part about producing during the pandemic?

I think making sure all my information was most accurate. You know, because I think the first day COVID became real. I mean, there was new stuff on the wire every 10 minutes. It was, this is canceled. This is canceled. This is on lockdown. This governor is issuing this this governor just doing that. I mean, it was just it was almost like keeping up with everything was the hardest part. And in journalism, you do have to do that. I think, obviously, because, you know, news is fluid. It's 24/7. But it really was just so it was hard. I mean, keeping up with it. And then, you know, you get you there's more stuff happening as your shows on the air, and then you leave and there's still stuff happening. Like it never ended for a while it was so like, I never got a break. And so that's kind of how that so that's kind of how it affected my producing was okay, is this correct? I checked this an hour ago. Is it still accurate? And sometimes it wasn't, I mean, so producing during that time was definitely a whirlwind.

How would you describe the support received from newsroom managers?

I would say that there's been a lot of support with management with COVID. Like, when I got COVID, a couple weeks ago, for example, there was no question like, Take as much time as you need, you know, things like that. And then they were texting me to see like how I was doing, which I was like, not used to. And then when it came to workflow, I say, there's quite a bit more help. You know, what do you need from us? How's things looking for your show? Things like that. I felt like at my old station, it was like, we're in

this crisis, just get it on the air and make it look fine. And here, it's like, no, it needs to be like a pretty quality product.

How would you describe the correlation between your values and the station's values?

My new station, they don't like give away if somebody's got COVID like unless the person's like, yeah, you can tell them I have COVID, it's fine. I would say in general, and with COVID. My new station, if I put it on a scale, one being not at all and 10 being Yes, all the way. I would probably give it like, mid to higher scale, like six to seven probably.

How long do you plan to stay in the industry?

I think the next step is management. I would like to stay in the news for a while. I know it gets harder when you get married and have children. I know a lot of people leave around that time where they decide this isn't, you know, good for me and my family. And some families make it work. And some don't, I would say probably as long as I mentally can, and can handle it and physically feel like I can handle it. And so I'm very passionate about it. It's just at some point, I think you have to give yourself a break and be like, so what can I do? Like, do I want to do this forever? Do I want to try something new? And so the answer is, yeah, I plan to stay at it for at least several more years and see how it goes.

Has the newsroom in which you work gone back to pre-pandemic 'normalcy'?

Yeah, so we're pretty much back to normal other than once Omicron started, it's peak or started getting bad. We had to re implement the mask policy, even though I work in Kansas City, Missouri. And for a long time, KCMO was under a mask mandate. That has since been lifted. But because we're all kind of close together in the newsroom, and sometimes it's hard to social distance. They asked you to wear a mask around the building, regardless of vaccination status. unvaccinated people cannot be in the studio period anymore.

Were there any tactics implemented by management that benefitted your role as a news producer? i.e., mental health checks, meetings, extra help, etc. If so, what were they?

I think the policy has kind of stayed the same. We do our morning editorial, we, you know, talk about what we want to do for the day and what we need to do for the day. And then around 130 is the editorial and it was the same at five to we have an editorial. How's everybody doing? How is your show looking? What are you leaving with? What can we do to make sure the show has enough content today?

How long have you been a news producer?

I've been doing this for seven years now. I'm at KTB, TX in Waco, Texas. And I've been here all seven years. So I graduated and came here and have never left.

How has/was your everyday work flow changed from the start of the pandemic?

Um, I guess we first I guess, we tried to, like separate everybody, you know, keep everybody, but nobody really was in the newsroom anymore. The anchors would be in an office reporters mostly would work from home. And for the longest time, I was the only one in the newsroom. You know, working out of there, just you know, trying to keep everybody away from each other. And, yeah, I was no longer able to go into our control room. So we had to set up a completely different producing station inside the newsroom.

So I would just walk from my computer over there, and produce the show from that spot. So we would come in every day, have to get our temperature checked, make sure we were good to go and on there.

How did remote-work impact the demands of your producing role during the pandemic?

I guess, a little bit just based off of like, what I was getting from our reporters who would be working from home, they would have to somehow find a way to send me their packages or VO SOTS or VOS. Whether it be through WeTransfer or another outlet that way, but yeah. It didn't really make things more difficult. It's just kind of it's an extra step that I'd have to go through.

How would you reflect upon working remote? What aspects were satisfactory and what aspects were poor?

So there weren't like, things that were particularly good or bad with it no, no, it was just, you know, yeah, I mean, nothing really crazy really ever happened that affected my workflow.

How would you describe your job satisfaction before and after the pandemic?

I mean, it it's been about the same, you know, it there was just so much uncertainty coming in coming into, you know, how long it would last. I mean, it definitely got more stressful. Yes, for sure. Um, but you know, I mean, I, I like what I do, I enjoy it. I know a lot of people have left, but maybe It's really never bothered me.

In what ways has working through the pandemic changed your perspective of the profession?

Not really. It's just I don't know, it's like we live through a historic moment in time and everything changed. And but, I mean, it's just one of those things that we had to change with it. And we're able to get through it. And I mean, I just was just another day in the office for me.

What was the most challenging part about producing during the pandemic?

Um not having people in the newsroom. You know, you'd have to call somebody or, you know, just there's a lack of communication, you know, when we're not around anybody. And you know, that can always lead to something being missed, or not having something that I was supposed to have on my show, or, or mean, not being able to, like, talk directly to a reporter and anchor it just. I mean, just because we were, we were separated at the time. And it just, it's, it's better to have a face to face talk with somebody and then, you know, write a message or, you know, waiting for them to call you back or text you back or something like that.

How would you describe the support received from newsroom managers?

No, it was great. Everyone was helpful. It was one of those things. It's like, you know, we're, we're in this now. So we've got to, you know, work through it and find ways to make stuff happen. And, you know, I, I got all the help I needed. And, once again, I tried to help out where I could.

How would you describe the correlation between your values and the station's values?

I'd say they are pretty much the same. Yeah. I mean, I never felt uncomfortable doing or running with certain things that we do here. I mean, it's been local news. It's pretty basic. So it, I've never had any issues.

How long do you plan to stay in the industry?

You know, as long as I can, I guess, you know, if another opportunity ever comes across I'd listen, but I like I said, I like what I do. I have fun here. I'm from this area, so I'm close to home. You know, I just It's just I like it. Enjoy it.

Has the newsroom in which you work gone back to pre-pandemic 'normalcy'?

These last few months, things have kind of gotten back to the way you know, they were before the pandemic.

Were there any tactics implemented by management that benefitted your role as a news producer? i.e., mental health checks, meetings, extra help, etc. If so, what were they?

I will say this. So we, we switched from having our in person editorial meetings to through Microsoft Teams. Yeah, I love that. I think I mean, I think that's how it should have been all along to be. Because, you know, we're not all sitting around a table. And it's just we get in, you know, get in everyone, you know, pitches their story for the day, we kind of discuss what's going to happen in the newscast. And then we're out of there within maybe less than 30 minutes. And before that, I don't know, it just I don't know why people would just get off on different tangents and meetings always seem to take so much longer when they were in person. So when we made that transition, it was just much quicker and a lot easier. And just it makes more sense now to me. It's just more convenient.

How long have you been a news producer?

I'm a producer in Cincinnati, Ohio, and I've been here since May 2020.

How has/was your everyday work flow changed from the start of the pandemic?

Yeah, so when I got here, so in March, when I went for my interview was the day that the governor of Ohio shut down travel to, to Ohio. And when I got to the station, everyone was like, today's crazy. It's a terrible day for your company. They're like, we've been on the air for like five hours. So then I came in, in May. And by that time, people were still trying to figure everything out. You know, COVID was just like, it was just starting to get like we didn't we weren't doing masks. I don't think by then. But I remember, it's all just a blur, like 2021? Or are like the same year and my brain? So but when I came, so what we did was alternating schedules. So we had some producers, like half of the producers in the building and half of the producers working from home. And so we would alternate week by week. So we would have, we didn't call it like a and b like I know, some stations did, but we just had, it was like your work from home week, or it was you're in the office week. But when I first started because I was training, I was in the office. So I was in the newsroom for a solid, probably like two months before they gave me all the work from home equipment and everything like that. And then eventually, once I got into the swing of things I started alternating to.

How did remote-work impact the demands of your producing role during the pandemic?

I mean, it was definitely like a learning process. I mean, it was a lot of like trial and error, and like figuring out, figuring out, you know, what worked and what didn't and why. Like, I remember one of the big things when I first was supposed to start working from home is like the internet access, or the my Wi Fi just wasn't strong enough to support like my all my work from home equipment, and then also support like my fiancé's Xbox, like

so it was just it was I ended up having to like buy a higher speed internet. And so that was one thing, and then the other and then just communication. I mean, you just have so many more resources at when you're in the newsroom in front of people sitting side by side. It's just so much easier. And we what we used was Microsoft Teams for a lot of our communication, we still do, surprisingly. But like everything, everything changed like we went from. But before I got there, they would do like in person assignment meetings in the morning where they would all sit around the table and actually saw that when I went to go visit for my interview. And when I by the time I got there, they were doing all of the morning assignment meetings on teams. So yeah, just the communication aspects, the internet thing. And then And then also, like, I don't know, what the setup, what the setups were before, but like, I had a computer like a little laptop. And then I had one separate monitor and I still have it just in case I ever need to work on. We still have all of our work from home equipment, just in case and people have worked from home like one of the 5pm producer work from home probably for like two weeks, like two months ago. So I had this little monitor and it's just so hard when because when your news and when you're doing what we do, you have so many windows open. We had NBC we had CNN we have a p we have our emails, we have everything open and it's just so difficult to navigate like when you're on your little laptop. So that was a challenge and then the Biggest thing that is still so like we never found a way to repair it for work from home was watching video watching like raw video. So what we have is like, we have the servers that everyone is connected to all of the work, work laptops, we're all connected through this first network. And that when we upload raw video, everyone has access to it if you go through the server, but actually getting the video to play, it would just buffer and load forever, it was impossible to watch raw video, and then anything that we like rolled on at the station. So if we were rolling on like the governor's COVID update on Facebook, you could not watch it at home you we had to like watch it on Facebook, and then try and like guess the time codes like well, he said it. He said it like 15 minutes in and we started the recording four minutes early. So time codes probably like 1304. Like, no, so watching video was like the worst thing and it still is it's so such a pain.

How would you reflect upon working remote? What aspects were satisfactory and what aspects were poor?

I mean, obviously, the thing I love the most is not having to get ready every day. I was like comfy every day. I got to sleep in like an extra hour. So that was that was a nice thing.

How would you describe your job satisfaction before and after the pandemic?

I mean, at first, in like the heat of the pandemic, it was challenging. I did not like, as much as I loved getting an extra hour of sleep and not having to put real pants on. It was very challenging to do my job from home. Um, so in the heat of the pandemic, um, it was definitely difficult. I mean, we had all those technological things. I didn't know everybody. And I was new, not only new to my station, but new to the area and new to the news. So the pandemic, not fun. Wouldn't want to do it again. I love my I've always loved my job. I've always, I'd never I never once questioned like, is this what I want to do? Am I happy to go to work every day? Do I like producing like, I always knew that this is what I wanted to do and that I was having fun doing it? Um, so I never questioned that. But like being in the building and seeing the people and getting to work, work so much more hands on. And you have so much more time to be creative. And really focus

on that like storytelling process and building up reporters, and you know, pulling information, you just have so much more time to do stuff that you don't because you don't have to worry about all these different complications that COVID created with work from home with me working from home or someone else working from home. Like, it's just so much easier today.

In what ways has working through the pandemic changed your perspective of the profession?

At the end of the day, when I was at home working. I was just like, I was just exhausted, like, and it's so weird because I didn't do anything except sit in a chair in front of my two monitors all day and just write, but it just took so much more, I think like brainpower to come to work from home than it does now. Because I just have so much more free time to do other things and focus on you know, what I need to do for my show. And I don't have to worry about pulling sound for the five or I don't have to worry about like, someone's video not uploading to the server or something like that, like so. It definitely didn't change it for me. I've always loved what I what I did. I always was proud of my shows. I mean, of course I had a couple that were bad or I had little things that went wrong. But um, but it never made me want to leave but I totally understand why people did because it was very stressful to work in news during the pandemic.

What was the most challenging part about producing during the pandemic?

It was just all the technology, like all dealing with the technology. And, and also, like, it's hard to, it's hard to build those like personal relationships when you're like, I think just like this year, probably maybe like, late last year, I like met people like I still had been, I had been there for over a year and still hadn't met some people. So you're not building those personal relationships. And then something I'm like, a very, like feedback kind of person I love like bouncing ideas off of people. And so just like not being able to, like, reach out to the desk and be like, hey, Donovan, will you look at this page number and tell me what you think about the tease I wrote? Or something like that? Or what do you think I should put for this lower third, like, that's not just something you're like, gonna go out of your way to write on teams about to like, ask for feedback. It's just those little things that you're looking for immediately. So yeah, just the personal relationships. And then yeah, the technology was just such a pain made everybody's job harder.

How would you describe the support received from newsroom managers?

I mean, everybody was just doing their best. I mean, we would go in, everybody knew all the challenges that we were all facing. And so it was kind of just like a collective, like, we just have to make the best of this. But I mean, anytime something came up, like they, they were responsive about it like, and there was a lot more I think teamwork probably, then even there is now like, there were there would be days where you would have to say like, I cannot get into this raw video, I really need someone at the station to pull me a bite. And so like managers were like, stepping in and like pulling raw sound bites for like both sides that they that would probably die because of the time anyway. So it was just a lot more teamwork. But they everybody knew about the challenges that we were all facing. And like we were all just trying to do our best to make to make it happen.

How would you describe the correlation between your values and the station's values?

Yeah, my station is very, very team based. Everything is, is teamwork, and we all and that's why I love my station. And that's why I chose to go there I had offers from other

places, but when I went to go visit, and I met the people and I saw the workflow, I was like, Man, I can really see myself working here, because my station is all about teamwork and, and building up the product and giving, giving good stories to the community stories that they're going to care about. And we all are working towards the same goal. And, and that's difficult you don't it's hard when you're working with people who don't want to be there.

How long do you plan to stay in the industry?

Um, so I plan to stay in, you know, as long as I can. I just turned 26. So I have, I have plans to move around a lot. I want to I have several markets that I want to work in, over the next couple of years. And eventually I'd like to work my way up to news director and then do that for I don't know, five or 10 years. After I'm done with that, I'd like to go into teaching. As long as I still love it. I can see being a producer or being an EP working my way up until I'm maybe in my 50s or something like that and then start being a part time professor at some local college teaching journalism one day but until then, I'll keep doing what I'm doing.

Has the newsroom in which you work gone back to pre-pandemic 'normalcy'?

Well, not really actually because we still do all of our morning meetings on teams. So our masks went away literally last week. Of course, they're optional or whatever. But we still do daily health checks, where you just log in on your phone and do I feel fine today or whatever. And we still do the isolation booths but not a lot has actually gone back to normal. The only thing that's really changed is that we're all back in the building. And we don't wear masks anymore.

Were there any tactics implemented by management that benefitted your role as a news producer? i.e., mental health checks, meetings, extra help, etc. If so, what were they?

I mean, they gave us the work from home equipment. So before the pandemic, when we did the in person meetings, what would happen is the reporters and the managers would have a meeting by themselves. And I feel like now with teams meeting where the producers or on the managers or on the reporters or on some of the photogs, or on some of the chief editors on, we all have a better understanding of what story each person is doing every day, which can be complicated if you're not like if you don't hear that person's pitch, or you're not there when the story gets assigned. And you don't really have that full understanding of why that story got assigned that day. It just makes everything easier, because you just have so much more knowledge off the bat. And you also have the opportunity to have productive conversations about news and about newsworthiness and say, Hey, maybe this person shouldn't be on the story. Maybe this is the bigger story today. And that's I can't count how many times someone we've had everybody assigned. And then somebody's like, hey, we forgot about this big story. And it's like, oh, yeah, let's move this person. So having our teams meetings, and I don't know if it has to do with teams, or if it has to do with just everyone being involved in a meeting. But having everyone involved in that meeting, was I personally, for me very helpful as a producer to know what my reporters were doing that day, and how best to help them tell their stories.

Former producers

How long were you a broadcast producer?

So like 12, 11, 12 years.

When did you leave the field?

Beginning of 2018.

What drove your decision to leave?

Um, you know, it was like multiple factors. Um, you know, part of it was, I was just kind of bored. I'd been line producing for over a decade. So I will say that my career's been pretty steadily kind of at the same, yeah, same place, same city. Um, so the next step might have been to get into management or to move. Um, and I think the path I wanted to take into manage management and the path that they felt like I should take were not the same. Um, it was kind of, well, this is what we can offer you. And it's kinda like, well, that's not really, like I've been producing for a decade. I think, you know, they wanted to do like morning executive producing.

Um, and then just obviously having a family and um, it's not a super flexible job and my husband also works in TV.

Um, the ultimate thing that just finally really pushed me was that there was a, an opening, um, for their web executive pretty soon. And that was something I'd been filling in on and I'd been really interested in. And um, I applied when the previous person left, I was filling in for that person when they left, you know, they were like, do it, you know, temporarily. So we figure out what we're gonna do. And then they, um, went and hired someone else from the outside.

What field are you in now?

I'm a communication director for Kentucky Medicaid's aging and disability programs.

How would you describe working conditions within the newsroom?

So the bulk of my career was spent at one television station. I've worked a couple years out of college and a different one also here in Lexington. Um, and then switched over to a different one at some point. Um, the first one was, was terrible. It was a disaster, um, low ratings, low morale. I mean a good boss, I think with a good heart who meant, well, just not very good at, um, not very good at leading.. Kind of keeping people in check that sort of thing. So, but a good person and who's gone on to other jobs and I think done really well. Um, second go around was better. Um, you know, cuz they have a, you're talking about station, like I said, better ratings, the morale's, a little higher. Um, there was definitely an attitude at the very top. Like the news director, I would say there was definitely this, like he kind of lived and breathed and slept the job and he sort of expected the name from every anybody else.

Um, and I know there's some other people who were still in that newsroom that kind of hold that view of like, well, if you're not doing more, then you're not doing enough.

How would you describe the support received from managers and directors?

So day to day, you know, our executive producer, um, dayside executive producer was awesome. I mean, he was always there to help you. He's always there to support you.

Um, you know, if he needed to, you had an appointment, you had something you had to go, you know, he's like, okay, we'll figure it out. You know, he was very, always tried his hardest as to like fulfill your vacation request and get things, you know? Immediate management was always pretty good. Um, so I don't have a lot of complaints there.

I think the longer I was there and I think we kind of seen the struggles, like you started hiring more and more people with less experience. Um, and then frequently what would happen is those people get trained on the shifts that are probably the least of least concern. So they end up getting trained by the newest people. And so suddenly you get this like army of producers who are okay, but not, maybe need a little more hand holding and babysitting.

What suggestions would you give to managers to help avoid producers leaving the field?

You know, but I don't, I also think that management shouldn't hold this expectation that, you adjusting kind of your culture and how you're doing things. Could we pull back, and it just that like trying to be respectful of people's lives outside of work when you can. So in that normal day, not trying send somebody off to something, that's gonna turn out to be nothing or insisting they stay late for something that they don't really need to stay late for, or just trying to be flexible where you can. Um, and I think too, just fostering a culture where people feel like they're like, you know, they can say I'm having this struggle. I've gotta go to the doctor, this thing's going on with my kid or whatever it is, feeling comfortable saying that and having some respect and being able to like, hold some space for that.

I think when people feel like they're supported at work and then take care of their personal life, then it kind of balances out into that they're better employees. To care about your people and their life.

Would you ever consider going back?

Um, it would have to be the absolute right thing. It would just have to be like an offer I could not refuse.

How long were you a broadcast producer?

Since 2017, five years.

When did you leave the field?

January (2021)

What drove your decision to leave?

A few things, mainly just seeing how the industry is changing, and I kind of wanted to get ahead of before I married and have kids. You know, I feel like now is the time where I could go back to school. I don't like I know I like television and I know a lot of it's moving towards digital and that's something I don't really enjoy. So I know I didn't like that aspect of it, at least from my experience to rise up, like in the producing world. Like, you either have to go manage my route or move around a lot. And then I didn't see myself going manage my route anymore. So is that I did my station and my experience I start is more like home for quality journalism. No, it's not that everywhere, but just from my personal experience, I was getting frustrated and I wasn't necessarily prouder of my work as I once was and I found myself not setting goals. And it's not like me. So during COVID, it was those where they sent us working from home for a little bit. And that was kind of a time where, you know, for a lot of people, you know, your coworkers make work fun. And with that taken away, I was kind of thinking like, I don't think I enjoy this anymore. Let's see if I can find something else to do. Just to see, you know, maybe a little something else as much. I'm good at other things when I found that. So then that kind of

drove my decision over the past year to kind of just sharpen my skills in health care and take more classes. So it's kind of a bunch of different factors kind of played into it. But definitely, I would say working from home definitely kind of forced me to really think about, OK, like if I'm going to leave now is kind of a good time to start thinking about that. And, you know, so it's bittersweet, but you know, everything happens for a reason.

What field are you in now?

And then now I'm in nursing school, so switching over into health care.

How would you describe working conditions within the newsroom?

So it's kind of like hectic on the management front. And a lot of times it's not exactly clear. I guess conditions wise in that respect of, you know, what is expected of us. And then it kind of it's hard because like, you see, I mean, I know the company, the media company, like I was working for just got like sold to a different company. So it's kind of just that constant stress of, you know, you're not getting paid for having to do more work and having to take on extra stress and having to learn extra programs and all, oh, we're switching all these things and you're expected to do all these trainings and you're expected to, you know, we're not hiring more producers because money's tight. So then you're taking on more shows. You're expected to work overtime. But it's like you're not getting compensated the way that you should. You get discouraged because as soon as you hire someone and you know, someone else will leave and then you're back to where you started. And so I think a lot of people like, we're just kind of getting discouraged and just kind of thinking, like, is this worth it? Because then you see friends in other fields or other stations event or just, you know, moving into other areas of media, making more money happier, getting what they want, whether it be weekends off or.

How would you describe the support received from managers and directors?

Like, I know my direct manager was great. And then he took a lot of the stress on, you know, to try to buffer to keep people and try to make people happy and try to take part in the scheduling in his own hands. And I think, like our eps were great. And I have that experience at my other stations too, like our eps were really great. And then it was kind of more like the higher up was where the chaos was and like, it gets to a point where it's like you start to feel that and the managers can only buffer so much. And then when you start to hear your eps being this. And frustrated, you're like, well, then how you know what I mean, that kind of this. But I mean, they would offer support like sometimes EP would be like, I'll cover like for the producers who are working weekends, like our EP, the morning shows in the morning, he was like, you know, I'll work the Saturday off if you need this or if they weren't giving that to you. Like so he would do all, he can give support. So he did a good job, but it's one of those where then the stress kind of goes on them and then you feel bad, which is also kind of the circle of why I was like, I don't think I want to go this route in this way because I'm kind of seeing that stresses me out.

What suggestions would you give to managers to help avoid producers leaving the field?

I mean, it's hard because like the reasons I left, like I would have, I think, eventually left one way or another. So for mine, like when I went in to tell, like my news director, he was like, Was there anything I can do with that money? Is it give you another show? Is it all these things? And I think if that was offered before it was too late, maybe it would have kept me for a little longer. Because if people are going to make the decision to leave, they may eventually do it. But at least he can prolong that as a manager trying to

get everything together. And I think just being more proactive about, you know, what do they like? My producers actually ones that are just assuming, you know, because for me, he was like, Oh, I can move you off morning and like, you never even asked me and I'm like, I would never want to leave morning. Like, I want to say I'm learning like, that's not even. So it's kind of just maybe just not relying more on just the eps to know them on a personal level, but more like, I don't know, just knowing what your employees actually want as like a new director, assistant news director. I know we also at our station had an issue where we didn't have an assistant director there for like a year. So that probably made it, of course, more difficult to yeah.

Would you ever consider going back?

Maybe the only way I could think of maybe if it was more of an education standpoint down the line. But at this point, I also left so recently too that in my mind, it's like it was only a couple of months ago. So for me right now, I'm like, no, you know, like a big thing is just, it is going to keep getting more and more digital, which I understand. But like, that's not what I'm passionate about. So I don't want to just stick it out and then be miserable. Ten years later, like, man, I should have switched, and I don't see that changing. So for me, I don't think I'll end up going back. But I, you know, I think in the future, if there was anything that came full circle, maybe it could be like for like education or more communications, perhaps like if that connects with, like working in health care. But I don't think I don't see myself going back to like local news. But yeah, that's probably where my mind is at least now that maybe my eyes will be different down the line, but at least right now, I don't see that in the future.

How long were you a broadcast producer?

11 years.

When did you leave the field?

August 31 of 2021.

What drove your decision to leave?

A lot of things. So, first off, one of the things we had, and I loved the station that I worked for, for, like, I obviously felt good about going there when I was interviewing, hiring. And for a while, it was great. We had management change, my executive producer left to be a news director, and we got a new executive producer who was a senior producer, supervising producer, whatever they call it. And he was not a good manager, he's a great person, he's not a good manager. And like, upper management isn't doing anything about it. So he's pushing a lot of people away in general at that station. But overall, I was mentally and emotionally exhausted. It has been a crazy two years. I think I started at the station about is August 2019. So you know, six months before committed? It was a lot. Even before that Charlotte is in Charlotte, North Carolina. They are having a lot of more, more shootings and murders, homicides. And it was exhausting to have to read about it. And when you have the conversations with people that you know, outside of a newsroom, sound so bad, like, I don't care if they die. That's all sounds really bad. But like if, if when you have to pick and choose because there's so many shootings or stabbings or things that are happening if they're in serious condition, but someone else is like, dying, you have to prioritize. And it just the way that the wording the newsroom comes out is fine. But it's also taxing when you take a step back and actually look at it.

And add that with COVID with the elections, the hatred around news. For a while during COVID It kind of felt like, especially when people aren't we're at home and just tuning into the news to figure out what was happening. It was kind of exciting, exhilarating, because people were depending on you. But then, like, Oh, it's a lie, this news, the whole Trump fake news thing. It just, it's exhausting. So emotionally, mentally, I was over it. Personally at work, I was over it. And then it the pay for the amount of work that you're doing was just it wasn't worth it to me.

What field are you in now?

I am a bartender.

How would you describe working conditions within the newsroom?

I think it's four or five, like it's every producer, one producer wearing four or five, six, seven, different hats and trying to do four, five, six, seven, eight, nine different types of jobs. You know, doing an hour and a half. When we used to when I first started, everyone would do a half hour. Sure there were days someone was on vacation. And then I did the six and 11. It was, we just couldn't either keep people or hire or something. And so everyone was just they just kept asking more and more of people. And with a reward that was free pizza. Wow managers are at Top Golf for managers retreat. Like that's not how are we supposed to have that? And at least at my station, it became, well, not amongst everybody, but the executive producer, who was bringing in like the new, newer people. And so he started putting a couple of the newer producers in like against each other. So it was like a dog eat dog world, like you can't have that for your show because I'm taking it from mine versus like a team effort, like, let's help and get different versions and different shows and different, you know, new pegs just became very competitive, and that's not healthy.

How would you describe the support received from managers and directors?

In the beginning, it was great. The executive producer that hired me, that was there for a while was fantastic. He wanted to know not just how you were doing at work, but how your personal life was going. If he if you were having a rough day, he was understanding. I've had a very good working relationship with the directors. And so I've always felt support from them. They know that when I'm coming up to ask them for a last minute change when we're coding things, that it's 99%, not me, it's like, I'm just the messenger. And it's they, I loved all of the directors that I worked with, except for one, because he just talked so much. But they were, they were always the directors I never had any problem with they were always supportive of most of the producers. As long as you scratch their back, they would scratch yours, like they were, I got tons of support from them.

What suggestions would you give to managers to help avoid producers leaving the field?

Um it's hard to say pay because I know that deep down like that's not because of them, they get a budget. They tried to fight for it. That's from a higher up aspect. Um, and I know At least I've seen, you know, in that producer group people trying to hire producers, I mean, like the standby producers group on Facebook to people trying to hire producers. And we're just sick of it. So I know that you know, when you have staff shortages in the newsroom that they at least seem to be trying. And I know they're hiring people younger and younger, who don't have the experience to work in market 20 whatever we are. And so that's frustrating for the producers there. I think it would be, to

be honest, to tell them, I'm, I'm trying to tell the producers I'm trying to fight for you, I know you're not getting paid enough. I'm trying to find more people to come help you. And then also to listen, when multiple producers are coming to you with the same problem. Listen to them. There's got to be something that can be done. And if there isn't, then explain why. Because I understand there are HR things I've been an assistant who's Director for a hot second neurotic do that again, but I understand there are HR issues there. So but like explain that to someone. super frustrating.

Would you ever consider going back?

But that's the only thing it would have to be the right person in management.

How long were you a broadcast producer?

Um, three years, I had a hybrid role. So I was a anchor producer and recorder.

When did you leave the field?

Last June.

What drove your decision to leave?

Um, it was mostly money. I guess money was the biggest one. And then the schedule. Mm hmm. I could have gotten like a Monday through Friday gig. I worked weekend mornings. Oh, gosh. So I didn't want to keep working weekend mornings, but I wouldn't have possibly minded it if I got more money, right. Which wasn't going to be I don't know, it wasn't working out the way.

What field are you in now?

Now I work in public relations. I'm a communications consultant, and I work at All State.

How would you describe working conditions within the newsroom?

Um, conditions were good. We just updated our newsroom. So it was not like it was some old gross room. I liked my coworkers. Um, you know, my boss was cool. They were like, very understanding. He was like, pretty lenient. Especially as far as like news directors go, um, people were helpful. Like, the environment really wasn't super chatty at work on the morning shift. So like, all of us were friends. Like, we all still are. We like hang out a bunch. So yeah. It was good. Like, I had a good I lucked out with a good news room.

How would you describe the support received from managers and directors?

Um, well, they were supportive. Um, I guess you could say overall, like, no, if I needed to leave early, or, you know, have an emergency, they understood that. Producing, like, they gave like, if I needed something. Um, if we needed something, they tried their best to, like, make it happen. Um, so they were like, open to listening to any, like issues you would have or like, they would listen, we had issues with like, we hired like, a new producer. Um, I guess as far as support goes, like, I was like, they were supportive. But like, we had like, some issues like, you know, just like staff or whatever, that I felt like could have been handled better. As far because then like, because one person was like, falling down on their job and made up the job harder for like, the rest of the morning team. And it felt like no matter how much like we kind of talked about it, like, that stuff, like wasn't getting addressed that put stress on like all of us. Yeah, um, so yeah, that, I guess would be an issue but as far as like, I was like, trying to say we want to do something or whatever. That was very flexible.

What suggestions would you give to managers to help avoid producers leaving the field?

They need more money. They need like a lot more money. I used to work in Madison. Okay. And then you know, I was gonna I was like looking because I liked anchoring. I did not like reporting. And I was like, Well, let me just apply for some producing jobs because I actually really enjoy that. And one of the stations here offered me only \$45,000. And I was like, but I can do all three things I can anchor report and produce, right? I'm not gonna do everything here. But I was like, that's a unique skill set. And I think I should be making a lot more than less than \$50,000. And that's like, it was like barely a pay bump from what I had before. Yeah, so I was like, um, so that that money thing is a huge issue. And development. That's another reason why I left the news business because like, I felt like, there was only so much room to grow like, really isn't enough that you could do. Nobody was like, supporting development. Like, I wanted to be a producer too, because I was like, I like having like a leadership role. Yeah. And it seems like when you go into newsroom's, like you want to produce, like people like that, but then like, develop your leadership skills, like nothing is ever anywhere to be found. There's no development sessions from directors, there's no, like, let's pay for you to go to this conference once a year, let's, um, you know, like, sessions, like, let's meet and like, let's talk about shows, like people might do that. But you know, like, it's not on a consistent enough basis to be like, I'm growing in my career, where I work now. Like, really, really, really big on development. So it's like a very complete 180. But I would say pay and development are really, really crucial to my opinion.

Would you ever consider going back?

I'd consider it. The pay would have to be right, for sure. Um, and it depends on like, I guess my situation, if I have children or not. I might consider working weekends again, if like, the pay was just like, great, but if the pay was like, good, it might not be enough. Um, it all just kind of depends. It depends too on like, the, the schedule the demanding schedule. Like I always say, like, if I did go back, I would love to be like a special projects producer, or something like that. Um, I also wouldn't be a show producer. I would want a Monday through Friday role. So that would just kind of depend on that. But I mean, pay would have to be there for sure. And then I would also need management to be open to ideas, obviously, like me stepping away. I've learned a lot of stuff that I would, I think is valuable to like a newsroom culture. So yeah, it would, you know, I don't like a newsroom where I'd be like, stuck in a rut. They're stuck in a rut. Like I want somebody you know, that's gonna be like kind of innovative and wants to try new things and wants to develop and retain their staff and like, you know, is looking for a leader in that kind of way.

How long were you a broadcast producer?

I was a morning show producer for two years and then after that I transitioned to the digital team.

When did you leave the field?

I left newscast line producing in 2014.

What drove your decision to leave?

Well, my contract was up and I had always been wanting to do more digital things.

What field are you in now?

I am the communications manager for Trinity Episcopal Cathedral.

How would you describe working conditions within the newsroom?

Working conditions in Market 90 in 2012 -2014 were about what I expected and what Mizzou prepared me for. Working overnight 11 p.m. to seven a.m. is not for most people and was not for me and led me to indulge in negative behaviors that I may have otherwise resisted. And so towards the end of my time as a morning show producer, I was diagnosed with type two diabetes. It's a brutal shift. I was very fortunate to have another producer as we were doing two and a half hours of news every morning. So it was the overall completely blow torch number one morning newscast in the market, which meant we had more resources than the other guys. But even then, you know, we didn't have an overnight photographer. If we wanted an overnight photographer, we had to call the morning photographer in early. And, you know, we had one reporter, one photographer and two anchors meteorologists. But you know, there's just there's a real disconnect when you're working a news shift with a with a larger sort of corporate structure, even a small corporate structure like the one in Cedar Rapids, where literally everyone from the CEO on down worked in the exact same building. You know, they'd have these team wide, companywide team building exercises get to know each other. And it's like, Oh, that's at 3:00 p.m. Yeah, I've been asleep for three hours. Sorry. And so you feel disconnected even from your own coworkers and the people whose paychecks are all signed by the same person. Right. And you know, it was that way for the morning, folks. It was really that way also for our PM, folks, because, you know, you don't have really time to carve out to do a lot of those things when you're in news. You know, people barely even got lunch. So, you know, they're just the. You know, the resources to do the job, were there the resources to handle all of the second order effects that come from having the job and especially having that particular job, you know of, there's the pressure and the hours and the dealing with all the crazy people on the phone when it is 1:30 in the morning. You know, there's, you know, there was not really any support for that. And you how that has been a consistent failing of the industry for decades. And so I am not optimistic that that it will it will ever change.

How would you describe the support received from managers and directors?

There was more support toward the end as I left shortly, like four to six months. I want to say before my contract was up. We, the station hired an executive producer. So kind of before then the station had been operating with the news director pulling double duty as executive producer. But he always did his best to make sure that we had a reporter and a photographer because otherwise it's just absolutely it would have been brutal to try and put a show together. Could have tried to push harder for things and maybe not have been as accepting as you know, this is just with the way the industry is and is the way the world works. Just because that has been the case does not mean that that is the way things should be. And so I just kind of every time something that would happen, it's like, oh, yeah, that's just the way it is. You know, it's just it's vicious.

What suggestions would you give to managers to help avoid producers leaving the field?

Consistent individual attention. The biggest constraint I have seen in a decade of news is the many different directions that mid-level managers, your executive producers and news directors get pulled in. And so the ability to carve out time to individually focus on

their direct reports is the most valuable thing. Even if it's not very long, you know, 15 minutes a week or, you know, an hour every quarter, just some time where they can vent or they can bring up things without anyone else hearing to just to let them feel heard and understood and supported would be huge because I know other than the contractually mandated, you know, kind of like directed from corporate time that I had with my boss at ABC 15. I didn't really, really get that, and that was mostly a like, we have to do this review for the media and we have to do this review for the end of the year. And we kind of have to say nice things because this goes in your permanent file and is used to determine raises. And you know, I try to, you know, be generous with those. And so there wasn't a whole lot of like what's really going on. And especially for managers who may manage employees who don't work the same shift they do or a slightly different shift. You know, specifically like if there's a manager who has some employees who also work weekends, you're not going to be present for all the stuff that might happen. And so there may be things that are not working that you need to know about, and it may not be entirely obvious just based on watching you on your product.

RQ8: Would you ever consider going back?

I would consider going back. It would take significant changes within the internal structure of ABC 15. Because I kind of got to the point where I didn't feel like the grass would be terribly greener. I really have nothing bad to say about the corporate ownership group of scripts. I think that they did everything that they possibly could, especially during the pandemic. For people like me who was one of the, you know, 10 employees that they still allowed to go into the building in 2020, 2021. They gave us an extra day of PTO and a thousand dollar box, which isn't a whole lot, but it's also not nothing, right? And you know, certainly when you think about all the employees across an ownership group that owns 40 plus TV stations, you know, that's a significant amount of money that adds up really quickly. And so, you know, I tried to recognize that and to honor that, and I don't think many other ownership groups do something similar, or at least I haven't heard as my dog costs no control over your video.. And so, you know, the other thing that I would just want to spend some time away just doing something else because, you know, there is nothing like the adrenaline high of chasing breaking news and working in a newsroom. It just it just I knew it. The second I walked into the Columbia Missourian on my tour of Mizzou when I was a senior in high school was that there was just an energy and an electricity to a newsroom that is like nothing else in the world and that sustained me for a really long time. And then it wasn't enough. And so if I'm able to recharge, if some certain individuals are no longer at ABC 15, then I would consider going back at some point in the future.

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