

## **Announcer Career Path Exploration**

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### **Introduction**

This article provides factual information for those interested in a career as an announcer. The given information about the job specifications, such as duties and benefits, may prove beneficial in helping those who are interested decide if this career is right for them. The following information about the announcer career will be presented in this order: responsibilities, how to become one, pay and benefits, job outlook, and an interview with someone currently working in this field.

### **Responsibilities of Announcers**

According to the U.S. Department of Labor (2019), announcers' main responsibility is to verbally present material, including news, music, the time, the weather, commercials, and sports, as well as give commentary and conduct interviews. Those in the profession are expected to read scripts, choose some of the program's content, make announcements throughout the entertainment as a way to guide the audience, and appear at events for promotional purposes (U.S. Department of Labor, 2019). The two types of announcers are television and radio announcers and public address system announcers (U.S. Department of Labor, 2019).

Television and radio announcers present the news or music, must have knowledge of current events, and may need to conduct some research to properly comment on specific topics, as stated by the U.S. Department of Labor (2019). They are additionally expected to read scripts, make appointments for guests to appear on their show, work to create content alongside producers, and use studio equipment (U.S. Department of Labor, 2019). Many announcers work with advertising, which includes persuading advertisers to purchase advertising time, recording advertisements, and broadcasting commercials, public service announcements, and schedules for the program (U.S. Department of Labor, 2019). Those in the occupation tend to do promotional activities, such as appear at events and use social media to maintain a connection with the audience and promote the program (U.S. Department of Labor, 2019). According to the U.S. Department of Labor (2019), the types of television and radio announcers include disco jockeys (DJs), podcasters, and talk show hosts.

The U.S. Department of Labor (2019) states that public address system announcers entertain or provide information to audiences to enhance their experience. They may be required to write their own scripts or improvise, but the other responsibilities of public address system announcers vary depending on the specific position (U.S. Department of Labor, 2019). For instance, sports team announcers read the starting lineups and advertisements and announce as players enter or exit while train announcers read details about train schedules, serving a more informative purpose (U.S. Department of Labor, 2019). According to the U.S. Department of Labor (2019), public address system announcers also include emcees, who host events by informing the

audience of upcoming speakers or performers, and party DJs, who present music and give commentary at an event.

Television and radio announcers tend to record in soundproof studios (U.S. Department of Labor, 2019). Many of those in the announcing profession work full-time, while some work part-time, as found by the U.S. Department of Labor (2019). Some announcers work for the early morning or late-night programs, but many of these programs are recorded during the day (U.S. Department of Labor, 2019).

### **How to Become an Announcer**

As stated by the U.S. Department of Labor (2019), some job positions for announcers may only require a high school diploma or equivalent, but many positions tend to require a bachelor's degree, often in the areas of broadcasting, journalism, or communications. Broadcasting classes can help students work on their vocal ability and quality and give them experience working with equipment and software used in studios (U.S. Department of Labor, 2019). Sports attorney and *Forbes* contributor Jason Belzer (2016) says that those interested in becoming a sports announcer may consider a degree that offers a concentration in sports media, which helps provide students with more specific training and networking opportunities. According to the U.S. Department of Labor (2019), announcers will often need on-the-job training for a brief period. For instance, public address system announcers will need to understand the equipment and event for which they work while those with only a high school diploma or equivalent who work as television and radio announcers will need training to use the equipment properly (U.S. Department of Labor, 2019). Those interested can gain additional experience through taking college classes, working for a television or radio station on their college campus, or obtaining an internship, and employers often expect potential employees to have some previous experience (U.S. Department of Labor, 2019). According to Chicago announcer James Van Osdol (2005, p. 11-12), internships provide students with the opportunity to connect with professionals and make themselves visible in the field, and many students are able to transition from an internship to a paid position at the same broadcasting company.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor (2019), announcers tend to begin their career at a small-market station where they can learn to develop their on-air personality. To advance their career, many move to a large-market station. The U.S. Department of Labor (2019) explains that large-market stations will look at announcers' past work because they want to hire someone with an attractive and engaging on-air personality. Large-market stations additionally look for someone who has experience with social media, selling commercial time, and making appearances for promotional purposes (U.S. Department of Labor, 2019).

Communication skills – interpersonal, speaking, and writing – are important because of announcers' need to work with interview guests or clients, speak effectively, and often write their own scripts (U.S. Department of Labor, 2019). Announcers' voices are an important aspect of their career, and Glenn Halbrooks (2018), who worked in news broadcasting for 30 years, advises those beginning in the field to record and listen to their own voice, try impromptu speaking, and make adjustments to their scripts to practice speaking in a natural way. According to Van Osdol (2005, p. 13), reading material, from the newspaper to novels to brochures, can help announcers gain different perspectives and communicate more effectively. They

additionally need to develop computer skills to use editing software and other equipment, research skills to properly report about events, and persistence to work at small-market stations with the hopes of advancement (U.S. Department of Labor, 2019).

### **Pay and Benefits**

According to the U.S. Department of Labor (2019), the median annual wage for public address announcers in May 2018 was \$27,720. An annual salary of less than \$18,250 was received by the lowest 10 percent, as opposed to more than \$63,760 which was earned by the highest 10 percent (U.S. Department of Labor, 2019). For public address system announcers, the top industries in May 2018 were performing arts, spectator sports, and related industries with a median annual wage of \$33,700 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2019).

As stated by the U.S. Department of Labor (2019), the median annual wage in May 2018 for television and radio announcers was \$33,220. An annual salary of less than \$19,120 was earned by the lowest 10 percent while more than \$94,450 was earned by the highest 10 percent (U.S. Department of Labor, 2019). The top industry for television and radio announcers in May 2018 was television broadcasting with a median annual wage of \$47,020 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2019).

According to professional writer Frank Howard (2018), those who are television or radio announcers have many benefits including interviewing interesting guests, performing a variety of tasks on the job, and traveling to cover certain events which may all provide additional satisfaction. Additionally, Van Osdol (2005, p. 13) says announcers are able to find positions at companies related to their own passions, such as music or sports, and they are able to immerse themselves in their passion.

### **Job Outlook**

For announcers in general, employment is expected to decrease by 9 percent from 2016 to 2026 according to the U.S. Department of Labor (2019). For public address system announcers, employment is expected to increase by 2 percent, which is below average compared to other occupations, while employment for television and radio announcers is expected to decline 12 percent from 2016 to 2026 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2019). The U.S. Department of Labor (2019) states the projected decline may be a result from the consolidation of many broadcasting companies which means broadcasting companies have less job positions to offer. Syndicated programming is used when a broadcasting company prerecords a segment and has the rights to sell the segment to other local broadcasting companies, which means they do not have to hire as many announcers (Halbrooks, 2019; U.S. Department of Labor, 2019). The popularity of satellite and online radio stations has provided competition for over-the-air radio stations (U.S. Department of Labor, 2019).

Some announcer job positions are expected to remain in demand. For instance, announcers for podcasts or Internet radio may be in demand (U.S. Department of Labor, 2019). Additionally, there is a large number of national news stations, so the audience may want an increase in local news stations (U.S. Department of Labor, 2019). Public address system announcers will remain in demand because of the information or entertainment they provide according to the U.S. Department of Labor (2019).

**Interview with Joel Godett, director of Broadcasting and Athletics Communication at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana**

1. What type of activities do you do on a typical working day?

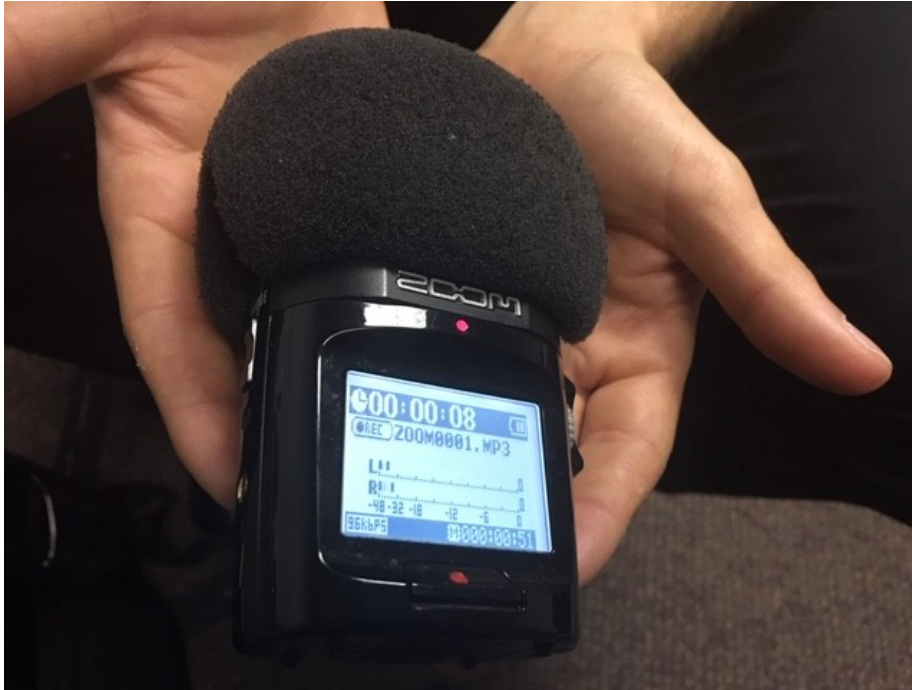
If I'm working at a Ball State University football game or basketball game,

As we approach football seasons and I'm getting ready for a football broadcast, I listen to the previous week's game while multi-tasking and doing other things. I listen to myself in an announcer capacity and determine if there are details that I want to focus on during the next game. This is a constant self-reflection to improve as an announcer. I will also start research prior to the next game. I familiarize myself with players, trends on the team, and I start laying out spot charts (These are what I have in front of me for each broadcast with all information that I might need). Spot charts are prepared in advance with a great deal of research via multiple sources including Internet sites, coaches, and coach teleconferences with other teams.

When it comes to preparation for a television broadcast there's a whole different set of preparations. I'll trade emails with my producer and analyst and talk about what we think is important and how we want to tell the story of our upcoming game. We'll set up a conference call with opposing players and coaches and then, of course, I get to travel to the various locations of games. So it's a whirlwind.

2. What kinds of fun technology do announcers get to use?

Announcers get to use a Zoom voice recorder. This is used when interviewing coaches and players. This helps with gathering notes that could then be referenced on the air when broadcasting. This information could also be used during a pregame or half-time show. Announcers also use broadcast headsets during broadcasts. These are very expensive headsets because they produce quality sound to provide the best experience for viewers and listeners.



*Announcers may use a Zoom voice recorder (pictured) to gather direct quotes from coaches and players that can be referenced later.*



*Joel Godett sits in his office, showing the Zoom voice recorder mentioned above.*



*Godett is shown wearing a broadcast headset, which is designed to provide the highest quality listening experience to those listening to announcements and programs.*

3. What is your favorite part about being an announcer?

My favorite part of being an announcer is getting to attend athletic games and experience the energy of the environment. Being part of the performance aspect of the production is rewarding. I am able to be part of the performance to entertain viewers and listeners, and while it's not scripted at all it is definitely still a performance in some respects. There is a depth to how you use your voice and the vocabulary selected and how you paint a picture for viewers and listeners. Every word choice matters! That challenge, much like walking out on stage, is part of the fun.

4. What are the main challenges you have in your typical work?

One challenge that I have is multitasking because I serve as an announcer and a sound engineer for all radio broadcasts. Prior to games when working as a sound engineer, I must connect to the radio station and make sure all equipment is functioning properly. I also have to monitor the connection to the radio station during the game. I troubleshoot broadcasting issues before and during games and, believe me, they come up all the time. This is typical of smaller radio stations and at certain levels of college athletics and particularly at the minor league baseball level.

5. What is your advice for someone interested in pursuing this career?

My advice is to want to really pursue this career because it is hard. Climbing the ladder in this industry is not easy, and you have to have a lot of work ethic and perseverance. You will need to be ready to move out of state and often miss family events due to athletic commitments. You have to have a genuine sense of curiosity. This is important because you can't be fake. You

have to want to know the answers to questions that you ask to players, coaches, fans, etc. You have to be genuinely interested in those answers and be genuinely curious and want to get to know people. That curiosity shows in the way you'll be able to better tell athlete's stories.

### Conclusions

Announcers verbally deliver material to either inform or entertain the public, depending on the specific position. Therefore, this career is best for those who have strong skills in verbal communication because much of their success relies on their ability to effectively communicate and engage with the audience. Despite the overall decline in announcer employment, announcers can receive fulfillment from working with their passions. Those who are interested in this career may want to consider finding an internship and practicing their vocal skills.

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