

WORKING IN SPORT AND RECREATION



Name

Ian Payne

Job Title

Presenter

Company

North East Tonight

Can you briefly describe what your job involves?

I'm the main news presenter for North East Tonight. I do a half hour programme five times per week and I occasionally present other bulletins for example once a week I do the late news slot for ITN. Before this job I was the senior sports presenter. I still cover sport and it's important to me to keep that link – that keeps me going.

I also have a consultancy role in the English Federation of Disability Sport and I'm often involved in things to do with that in the morning before I go in to work. That might include going to a school to help them with access arrangements for pupils with disabilities. I meet people through that work and that can generate other stories. I'm also patron of two other charities and I was involved in a Variety Club of Great Britain Charity Challenge in the Sahara. I made a programme about it which wasn't commissioned by Tyne Tees, but when they saw it they liked it and it was shown. That's the seed of an idea I'm trying to continue – to get organisations to self-fund programmes that can then go on air.

Can you describe a typical working day?

There is an informal shift pattern. On a typical day I'm in the office by 11am. By then the day's stories have been assigned to the reporters and I familiarise myself with what's going in the programme. From 3.30 onwards I'm working solely on the 6 o'clock programme – recording titles, promotion spots, taking in live links – at that stage the only thing is that day's programme. After the programme there is a debrief until about 6.50pm.

Between 11am and 3pm I'm doing follow ups on previous stories and forward planning. I do less reporting now that I'm a presenter but we try to show ourselves going out and about - the station's motto is 'closer to home'. The pressure is off when I'm not in that day's programme. I might record interviews for later in the week and occasionally we cover special events. The job has freed up time to reinforce my face as a regional presenter and there is value in being out and about.

What aspect of your work do you enjoy the most?

When I was working in sport I enjoyed being part of the enthusiasm and passion of the North East – it's unbeaten anywhere in the country. And being respected for having the knowledge and the

authority. I was very proud of that. Now I'm bringing that to news. It's a very responsible position to be in and you have to get it right.

I also enjoy the position of responsibility within the company. The team work. Some people are going home as I arrive but I know that they will watch the programme later and I'm the person sent out to deliver what they've been working on, maybe standing out in the cold and rain - so I should do my best to call the viewers attention to it, not detract and, hopefully, enhance it.

Are there any aspects of the job that you don't like?

I think the programme should be a regional magazine rather than a news programme. We live in a multichannel, 24 hour media culture and news is less about scoops now, so it's not good to take yourself too seriously, which news does sometimes. Also I don't like to put out a pessimistic programme. If I haven't smiled very much then for me it's not a good programme, but unfortunately sometimes you have to bring bad news.

How did you get into the industry?

I'm from Ipswich originally but I studied sport at Newcastle Poly and I did a placement with TV Sport and Leisure (TSL). They were working on a programme for Channel 4 about the Seoul Olympics and I got the bug. If the work placement hadn't happened I might be a PE teacher now. When I got back to Newcastle I knocked on the door of Tyne Tees and asked if there was anything I could do to get more experience. I was still doing my degree, but I did an afternoon a week checking captions, goal times, that sort of thing. When I finished my degree I got a job with Film Nova, an independent company in Newcastle, part of Nova International, run by Brendan Foster. The plan at that stage was that Nova International would stage the Great North Run and Film Nova would televise it. They organised and sponsored it but in the end the BBC televised it. So I spent three years with the company making corporates for companies like Swan Hunter and Nissan.

If I wanted your job how would I go about it?

My mantra is that you should be interested in what you do rather than how you do it. I don't think TV is difficult. I have a degree in sport and sport is my passion and it's a means to communicate that. It's best to be qualified in a subject and be genuinely interested in it – for example if you want to be a political journalist, rather than doing a media degree, do politics and then do a postgraduate journalism course.

When I go to media colleges to talk to students I think it's important to be clear, honest and pragmatic. Working for the BBC and working for the ITV regions are two very different jobs. In ITV, programmes are a necessary cost to generate the advertising space. There's a lot of cost cutting in budgets and it's important that people understand that.

People often ask me how they can get their ideas or stories on TV. I cut the Sahara Challenge on Avid Xpress Pro. It's easy to do on a laptop. If they can do it they should. New media is the way it is going and the benchmark is Meridian. The Tyne Tees website is about to be re-launched in house and it's being brought in to the ITV local experiment. My audience is currently people sitting at home watching TV, but soon it will be people on buses. News will go on to the web and podcasts. You can put something on the internet now that can be seen all over the world. Work with it.

How do you promote yourself and market your skills? - do you have an agent?

No. I hope work will come to me. There have been times when it might have been useful to have one for example when negotiating fees outside the region. But I'm happy with the level of publicity I've got. I'm not looking for another job. I'm at the stage in my career when my next job will probably be something that's offered to me, but I would never reject an opportunity without giving it proper consideration.

What's the pay like?

In the ITV regions there will be 17 regional news programmes and they are all a double header (one male and one female presenter) – that's 34 jobs with presenters earning between 50 and 80k, I'm led to believe. So it's a sought after job. But someone well-known who has been doing it for years will not be on the same banding structure.

How did you reach the current point in your career?

I got production experience at Nova and I was still getting my sport fix because the company was involved in sport but after three years I decided I wanted to try broadcasting. I had maintained my links with Tyne Tees and by then I had my sports degree and production experience so they took me seriously. That's often the case – if people try to get in but don't succeed at first but they go away and come back in six months with more experience under their belt and prove they're genuinely keen, they can get in. Tyne Tees allowed me to apply for an internal vacancy and I joined as a Sports Assistant. In six months I was voicing pieces and doing football reports and in a year and a half I was presenting sports bulletins.

The good thing about being in the regions is that you can make mistakes and learn – you're given a second chance. With live broadcasting there's nowhere to practise – it's a bit like sport – until you run out in front of a crowd you don't know how it will be, how you will perform. Everyone needs a second chance.

I've worked on the Champions League and been all over the world through working with ITV sport and it enhanced my reputation at Tyne Tees but it also made me appreciate working there as well. It has been a stepping stone to better things in the region rather than the network. And although it looks from my CV as if I've been 14 years with one company, in fact I've worked for Yorkshire, Granada and now the Independent News Group – so I've been a bit more ambitious than it looks. There's not a rung above me on the ladder at the moment though in another couple of years the industry will have changed again with the digital switchover.

What advice would you give someone looking for work experience?

I wouldn't want to put anybody off, but be wary – many media courses are taught by people who used to work in the industry and they have a slightly rose-tinted view of things, but the industry has really changed. It's a good job but it's not glitz and glamour. Someone once said 'TV is a medium that is rarely well done'. It's a vehicle to communicate a message, but it's just one medium, like the internet, radio, talking to someone. It's no big deal. But, that said, it's also a great job.