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## Executive Profile

**Michael Marcotte News Director KPBS-FM**

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Michael Marcotte, the news director at KPBS-FM, has broadcasting in his blood. The son of a network level radio and television journalist, Marcotte became intrigued with news reporting at an early age.

His interest in public radio was piqued while writing his master's thesis for the University of Georgia's Journalism program. Looking at trends in radio broadcasting from its inception in the 1940's through the 1980's, he discovered some interesting changes. "I did research and analysis on where we'd come from when radio really began to where it was, at that time, which was the mid-80's and I found very clear trend lines. One particular trend line showed public broadcasting on the upswing in terms of taking on news and news analysis. Public radio was investing anew in not only national service on NPR but also at the local level, in local news departments. So I made up my mind that [public broadcasting] was where I wanted to be."

Marcotte also explained that, at that time, commercial broadcasting was on a downward trend. Commercial radio had been deregulated, stations were not required to provide local programming any more, many were going to all-music formats and "throwing out their AP machines." Public radio news was the wave of the future.

As the news director, Marcotte takes final responsibility for what stories are aired on KPBS-FM. The individual reporters are empowered to be responsible for their different beats (subject areas), and are the first to pick up on story possibilities. Once distilled, the local news provided by KPBS-FM is a combination of what's happening on each particular beat as well as important issues affecting the community at large. When choosing stories to air, Marcotte and his team look at what is affecting the largest number of people. "We take a step back and look at the big picture. We look at San Diego as a community. What are the big influences, what are the big stories; not necessarily what are the immediate emotional stories. We try to put a thinking person's overlay on it and that's where I think you get some of the big differences in terms of stories we'll do on public radio versus stories that would be news on commercial radio," Marcotte said.

The KPBS-FM news team does not target its stories to any particular demographic, like some commercial stations. Marcotte knows that the news content his team provides tends to attract a highly educated listener, but that, as he put it "is more self-selecting, we don't necessarily go after that." He recognizes, however, that there are subcultures throughout the community and each has a place in his coverage.

As a result of the terrorist attacks on September 11th, KPBS Radio's audience rose 26% compared to fall 2001. Marcotte recalls that during the days right after the attacks he and his team were constantly

on high alert anticipating the next important story. He was intuitively aware that people would turn to KPBS-FM and took a very proactive approach by making as much information available as possible. As a result, during the period directly following the attacks, San Diegans turned to KPBS-FM as one of the better local resources for accurate and up-to-the-minute coverage.

Marcotte enjoys working with KPBS-FM because he feels he is in sync with the station's mission and values. In his own words, "KPBS is a force for good in the community. It's really more than news you can use. We're helping the community figure itself out; we're helping the community make its decisions. KPBS is central to that dialogue, that process of understanding, knowing and decision making that steers where we're headed, defines where we are and defines where we've been."