

# Process and Practice of Radio Programming

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JOANNA R. LYNCH  
GREG GILLISPIE

UNIVERSITY PRESS OF AMERICA®

# **PROCESS AND PRACTICE OF RADIO PROGRAMMING**

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**Joanna R. Lynch  
Greg Gillispie**

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# Preface

Creativity, strategic thinking, research, analysis, business acumen, psychology, motivation, accounting, marketing, promotion, public relations, production, instinct, and more are all part of the radio programmer's job. It takes a lot of hard work by the Program Director and his or her team to master these disciplines and become successful. As programming pioneer Gordon McLendon once said, "If that work is not a labor of love, rather than a labor of continuing effort, the chances are that the station will [be successful] only briefly."

Radio programming can be very rewarding. It can also be extremely challenging. What other job description is as nebulous as that of a radio programmer? There is no right or wrong way to do what it takes to win; although we have learned over the years that certain maxims hold true virtually regardless of format, competitive situation or market size. Problems can be approached a variety of ways; yet the various solutions may yield similar results. And to be successful, you have to be a sort of jack-of-all-trades.

One of the most thrilling aspects of programming for me is that it's not the same thing day-in and day-out. Sure, there are strategies to play out, tactics to execute, and goals to reach; but the speed at which radio can move, act, or react eliminates the day-to-day drudgery of many other management positions. The challenge is to not only respond to what the audience wants today, but to anticipate what they will want tomorrow.

So how do you learn how to do this? You could go to school--either high school, college, or broadcasting school. Chances are, if you are reading this book, you have chosen a more formal educational path. Or, you could be fortunate enough to get the rare opportunity to learn it first-hand in a radio station. However, unless you avail yourself to a number of such opportunities, chances are you will be indoctrinated by only one person's methods.

I am one of the lucky ones who received both a formal and first-hand education. I majored in broadcast management at a college with an experienced staff and plenty of hands-on opportunities. I also got to try my skills at the student-run campus station, and as a part-timer at a local rock 'n roll powerhouse. But the ability to learn in the formal setting was facilitated more by conversation and observation than it was a formal source of anything other than theory.

Fourteen years after I left college, I returned as part of the alumni

program. I spoke to three classes, a graduate class, and the staff of the student-run radio station. Before I started my presentation, I told all the students they were getting a great education, although it was based on theory and not necessarily actual problems, challenges, or experiences. My presentation was about how radio works in the real world. I told them about ten things our research had isolated that would happen in the next ten years. Interestingly, all ten things became reality within eight years.

By the time I was done, I noticed some students had long faces. I told them I did not want to dash their dreams; but give them real expectations based on contemporary experiences. I was hoping to prepare them for the competitive challenge of actually getting a job and being successful.

I first met Joanna Lynch in the mid-80's while programming WDVE/Pittsburgh. This young and enthusiastic young lady applied for an opening at the station. She told me about her radio experiences and love of exploring ghost towns. I was fascinated by her ability to communicate and her passion for the business. Unfortunately at the time, my competitive situation required someone with a bit more experience.

I encouraged Joanna to pursue her goals and told her I would help in whatever ways I could. She took the initiative to send me tapes for my critique from her next station and stayed in touch. A few years later, as a consultant putting a new station on the air, I approached Joanna for the midday on-air and promotions coordinator position. I knew she would be perfect for the situation. After much badgering, begging, pleading, and groveling, I persuaded her to join our bold experiment. Unfortunately, Joanna and I, as well as many other people, suffered from a manager's flights of fancy. She lost her job. I lost my client.

I continued to consult, then went back to the day-to-day excitement of programming a station, and then recently returned to consulting, this time as President of the company. Joanna got her Masters degree, began a PhD program, and started teaching radio at a New Jersey high school. That's when our paths crossed again.

When Joanna described her frustrations of trying to teach practical programming principles without a text book that went beyond theory, I told her that had always been a problem. The next thing I know, she decided to write a book that not only taught theory, but also had specific examples of real-life programming success and failure. And I was going to help her!

So here you have it. *Process and Practice of Radio Programming* is the result of a few years of hard work (the labor of love kind of hard work) and many more years of actual experiences. At the time of writing, the foremost experts in the fields directly related to the day-to-day experiences of the radio

programmer relay their insights into what it takes to be successful. There are case histories, detailed examples, and interesting stories from the trenches included in this book. And, there are also workshops to help you, the student, learn first-hand what it takes to be a successful radio programmer.

I encourage you to read this book, participate in the exercises, and understand the principles of great radio programming. As you devour this book, listen to the radio stations in your city. Try to understand why the stations do what they do. Ask questions; hard questions, not only of the instructor, but the people working at the local radio stations. If you truly want to enter one of the most exciting fields imaginable, do everything you can to prepare yourself.

Unfortunately, radio has not done a very good job of nurturing its young. We have been too busy ourselves learning how to make the medium more competitive and successful. Our challenge is to learn from our experiences and pass the information along to you. After all, you are the future of what we and those who came before us created. And for you and all those who will listen to what you create, the future deserves to be bright. Make it shine!

*Greg Gillispie*

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The staff at WHLM/Bloomsburg in 1981/82 for welcoming me with open arms every time I cut classes in order to get that all important practical experience at a real radio station.

Dan Steele, who gave me my first radio job.

Jan Jeffries for giving me my first crack at a major market.

Ernesto Gladden, who gave me my first lessons in programming.

Bob Lee for allowing me to try my hand at news.

My co-workers at WQXA/York, WBSB/Baltimore, WRXL/Richmond, KFMG/Albuquerque, KUPD/Phoenix, WTPA/Harrisburg, WAZU/Dayton, and WARM & WSBA/York for sharing the trenches with me.

Greg Gillispie for being my mentor throughout most of my radio career, and for agreeing to come on board for this book, taking a small project and turning it into a big project.

My family--especially my parents--who always supported and encouraged me to follow my dreams.

## **Greg Gillispie would like to thank:**

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WOWO/Ft. Wayne, CKLW/Detroit, WABX/Detroit, WRIF/Detroit, WWW/Detroit, CJOM/Windsor, and WIOT/Toledo between the years of 1963 and 1973 for inspiring me with great radio.

The woman, whose name I can't remember, from the University of Toledo's student radio station who convinced me I should apply for a show on the station.

Clint Doolittle and The Mighty Mo for giving me pointers in the early days of college radio and introducing me to the right people at WIOT/Toledo.

Frank Baker, GM of Bowling Green State University's WBGU, who forced me to get my FCC license and then gave me a job.

The late Dorian Paster for challenging me to be better.

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My wife, Cathie, and daughter, Sara, for continuing love and support even in times when radio takes me away from home.

# **What is Programming?**

## **Chapter Objectives**

**At the end of this chapter students will be able to:**

1. Understand the role programming plays in radio.
2. Define a demographic target audience.
3. Define a psychographic target audience.
4. Explain how programmers use demographic and psychographic target information to make programming decisions.
5. List methods programmers use to keep up with trends in the market and in the radio industry.
6. Demonstrate understanding of the chapters main concepts by completing the practical programming assignments at the end of the chapter.

# Chapter 1

## Glossary of Radio Terms

<b>Program Director:</b>	Programming department head. Responsible for the development and execution of everything that goes out over the air.
<b>Production:</b>	Pre-recorded creative elements that highlight and image the radio station. Pre-recorded commercial announcements.
<b>Formatics:</b>	Structure of elements that ensure a logical and smooth flow of the station's sound.
<b>Music Director:</b>	Responsible for acquiring and maintaining service from record companies. May assist PD in music programming decisions.
<b>Syndicated:</b>	Programming that is purchased or bartered from an outside source. May be delivered via satellite or compact disc.
<b>Promotions:</b>	Events that define and highlight the radio station in order to attract an audience or increase top-of-mind awareness among listeners.
<b>Promos:</b>	Pre-recorded or live announcements that highlight a station feature or promotion.
<b>Imagers:</b>	Pre-recorded or live one line statements that define a station's image.
<b>Fragmentation:</b>	Sub-formats that developed from existing formats. May contain elements of 2 or more individual formats.
<b>Formats:</b>	Specific programming that is designed to attract a specific listening audience.
<b>Ratings:</b>	Arbitron research findings on the type of listening that occurs in a radio market.
<b>Trend:</b>	Monthly Arbitron ratings report that averages 3 consecutive months between ratings periods.
<b>Demographic Target:</b>	Definition of a station's audience in terms of age and sex.
<b>Psychographic Target:</b>	Definition of a station's audience in terms of beliefs, opinions, values, etc.

# 1

## What Is Programming?

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### Radio Programming

*All the world's a stage* according to William Shakespeare. The Bard never spoke a truer word when it comes to describing the radio broadcasting industry today. For decades, radio has been a tremendous force in people's lives. Radio influences many of the decisions we make, helps us keep in step with current trends, lifts our spirits when we need a reason to smile, and creates the mood when we're looking for a little fun or romance. These factors combined add up to that magical "theater of the mind" quality that keeps listeners coming back for more. Think about it. Most of us have a favorite station we tune in to on a daily basis. Perhaps it's a station you grew up with that has become a vital part of your life. Perhaps it's a new station that has captured your attention by playing your favorite songs intertwined with exciting contests and humorous radio personalities. The reasons why people listen are as numerous as the choices now available on the radio dial. And since radios can be found in 99% of the homes across America, it's no wonder radio has become a necessity in so many lives.

The reasons for this are numerous. Radio is immediate. Listeners can tune in to get up-to-the-minute information anytime, anywhere. Radios are portable. They can be found at home, in the car, at work, on the beach--you name it--radio is flexible. Radio is also entertainment, and the selection is massive. No matter what your musical taste--whether it be rock, country, classical, oldies, contemporary Christian, ethnic, big band, urban, or dance, just to name a few--chances are you'll find a station that offers the kind of music you're looking for. Radio also wakes up our social conscience through a variety of news, public affairs, and talk programs. Radio is powerful. This media source can relax us, stimulate us, motivate us, and serve as a companion to us--all at the touch of a button. More than any other media source, radio has become a part of our lifestyle.

So how do radio stations decide what programming to air that will satisfy our needs? What exactly is radio programming anyway? According to Lee Abrams, radio pioneer and programming consultant, radio programming is

everything you hear on the air. Period. "Radio programming is a combination of elements that create a radio station's sound. The music, the production,\* the formatics\* and the announcer presentation. It's a melting pot of a bunch of different concepts that create programming."

John Sebastian, Program Director\* of country music station KZLA in Los Angeles, adds that everything you hear on the air affects programming. "I deal with the processing (of the station's radio signal) with the engineering department. I deal with every single commercial you hear; the quality of that commercial; the theme of that commercial. Those things aren't normally thought about. Obviously, I also deal with the music; the rotation of that music; the balance and the mood of that music; and the actual research value of the music. Also, the disc jockey presentation--meaning precisely what and how the disc jockey speaks; philosophical things around what the disc jockeys say; and the topics they should be dealing with. Plus, the marketing and advertising of the station, and how we present the station from an image standpoint. Those are all things that the Program Director should be dealing with, in my opinion."

Sebastian also believes radio is better today than it was 20 years ago. "What radio has to offer, in a lot of ways, has to be better because of the new technology, and new research methods. We're closer in touch with what listeners really want."

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## **Call Me Up in Dreamland**

**by Greg Gillispie**

The other night I had a radio dream. Fortunately, it was not the nightmare that most radio people have had; where the song on the air is about to end and you can't for your life find another song. No, it was a dream about a very unique radio station, and I'd like to share it with you.

At this station, music is of the utmost importance. The jocks are virtual encyclopedias of music, both old and new. They stay on top of the music by subscribing to every pertinent periodical and reading the music news sections of the industry trades, which are left by the music director\* in a binder in the studio. They use that information to create anticipation and help the listeners get more comfortable with the music. And, unless it is an exclusive advance, a record rep\* dares not come to the station without a copy of every release or promotional item for every jock. The jocks are even

encouraged to listen to all the new releases and make suggestions at the weekly music meetings because the PD knows the jocks relate to the audience and know their expectations of the station.

The news commitment at this station is very strong, but certainly atypical. The news director actually investigates stories that have an impact on the station's listeners and regularly develops special reports to help listeners fully understand all aspects of the story. The news director is not afraid to express a station stance on a burning issue via a commentary. Additionally, the station makes it a point to champion local issues in its news and public affairs programming, particularly those that impact the less fortunate or needy, or improve the quality of life in the community.

This station never runs a syndicated\* program as is, unless it is a major live event. Instead, they take apart the program and reassemble it, making the show sound original and local. This station never overlooks the opportunity to reflect or recall something of great importance or the unexpected. Even a simple recorded drop-in with excerpts of a major event or speech are part of this station's regular feature schedule. Any time this station airs a special program, the build up is spectacular, like a TV network's promotion of a first-run movie or mini-series.

The coverage of the events this station is involved in is extremely thorough and explores all angles. Not only does the station create anticipation for the event with pre-event coverage, they tape all of their coverage and create a post event special so those in attendance never miss a thing. The listeners feel like they've experienced it live. This coverage is very aggressive. The station goes to the celebrities when they won't come to the station. And, to top it off, the station uses the event as a research point, using interns to survey people as they leave the event.

The promotions this station does are more lifestyle than contesty. Fun and easy to get involved in events that tie into topical things or raise money and awareness for charity are preferred. Anything that is given away either has great value, enhances the listener's life or is so exotic the average listener believes it's out of their reach. If the station can't avoid a value added sales promotion,\* they put their creative team to work to put a unique spin on it so it sounds like a crazy station idea that a client just happens to support. This station is very selective about the number of promotions it does. Maximum impact with no confusing clutter is paramount

When it comes to production,\* every piece is an entertainment element. The station promos\* and imagers\* create visual imagery and get the listener mentally involved. Even the commercials are fun and don't create tune-out. The production director and all the jocks work hard with the clients to bring

life to the copy and make the production fit the station sound. When you walk in the station, the entrance way is lined with Addys (American Advertising Award) for creative production. And the sales manager\* has a portfolio of client letters about the effectiveness of the station. There is never a dull moment on this station.

Listening to and participating in this station is a real joy. Many people talk about "stationality," but this one has it. From its community image, to its unconventional marketing, to its bond with the listeners, people know what this station stands for. It's almost as if the station is holding up a giant mirror, reflecting the values and excitement of its city.

Was this a dream about the ideal station or a flashback to a time when the product ruled supreme--a time when the listeners truly did bond with a station. Loyalty was the rule and radio wasn't just a utility.

That station did exist. And others like it still exist today, but only as a remnant of their idealistic forefathers. Sure, there are still some stations with a similar zeal, but rarely do they cover all these bases thoroughly.

Some might say, "People don't make that level of commitment to radio today." One can either dream about it or make it a reality. By the way, your song is almost over.

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## **The Role of Programming in Radio**

In the early days of radio, stations on the AM radio band reigned supreme. These stations served as superstations, providing everything from news, music, and drama to talk show programs and program sponsorships. Today, few stations offer all these elements combined in one station. Due to the fragmentation\* of radio formats,\* stations tend to offer one type of programming to a very specific target audience. This is because radio stations are trying to attract a sizable audience of listeners so that they, in turn, can sell radio advertising time to clients in order to generate revenue for the station. Bottom-line radio is a business. Unless the station is a public broadcasting station, the main goal of radio station management is to turn a profit while serving the needs of the station's listeners.

While it would seem logical that a radio station would air a wide range of

programming that would appeal to all types of people, this, says Mike Henry, Managing Partner of Paragon Research, would be disastrous. "One might think that the broader variety of music you play, the more mass appeal your station would be. In fact, the reverse is true. The broader range of music challenges the mainstream to the point where the only people who would listen to you are the people who like the exact music components you put together, and they can't believe somebody made a radio station for them. Whereas, if you focus on a particular style of music you always exceed the listening levels of a station that may have been previously broader in its approach. The broader your approach, the smaller your appeal, but the more loyal your appeal is within that smaller circle."

There are numerous staff members who are involved in the programming that is presented on a radio station. *Program Directors* develop the programming formula, and guide staff members through its execution. *Music Directors*, along with the Program Director, help select the music that is heard on the air. *Radio Personalities* deliver the music and information in an entertaining manner. *News Anchors and Reporters* gather and present important news and information that affects our lives. *Promotion Directors* and *Marketing Directors* help create the image of the station through exciting contests, station-sponsored events, and through marketing campaigns that use other media sources such as television, billboards and direct mail. The roles these individuals play in the programming process will be discussed individually in future chapters.

Like many businesses, radio has undergone an evolution in recent years. New technologies, changing social attitudes, relaxed government standards, grander marketing strategies, more competition (from more radio stations as well as other media sources like TV, cable, the Internet, and Digital Cable Audio Services), greater niched programming, or narrowcasting as it is sometimes called, and a growing corporate environment have changed the way radio stations are programmed.

Greg Gillispie, President of B/D & A, an international media consulting firm, says radio programmers now have to be a lot more sensitive to a bigger picture overview, and how all the various components of the competitive matrix of the marketplace fit together. "In days gone by, you were generally concerned about your radio station, and any other station of your genre. They were your competitors, and you did everything you could to destroy them. These days, where one company can own 6 or 8 stations in a market, you may be involved with programming more than one of them. You may need to be less aggressive against a station your company owns. You may have to find different ways to be competitive because one of your primary

competitors may also be your sister station. So you have to have a much bigger picture overview of what's going on, and how the relationship of all the radio stations in the marketplace fit together, what the overall goals of your company are, and the more individual goals of each radio station. You have to be much more savvy about marketing than in the old days. It's so much more competitive for that top-of-mind-awareness among listeners. You also have to be more astute in business because there's a lot of stuff that, as a department head (Program Director), you have to take care of like EOE and other business considerations. But, bottom-line, you can never forget that radio is an entertainment business."

KZLA's John Sebastian feels this more corporate environment has also caused radio to lose some of its excitement and spontaneity, creating a more conservative atmosphere. "Some of its devotion towards creative aspects has been lost because radio's become such a business controlled by banks and investors. I think we could go back to some of those days as far as making creativity and programming a high priority. Not just making money. Now, I think there's more cost-cutting and corner-cutting. Maybe that's partly because there are so many stations being owned by one group in a market, and, therefore, they're having one person program several stations simultaneously. So a lot of the things that need to be done aren't getting done that would really make a station successful."

One result of multiple stations being owned by a single company in a market is that radio stations are far more niched than they used to be. Formats have been cut down and very clearly defined so that they appeal to a very specific audience. Curtiss Johnson, Station Manager/PD of KRXQ in Sacramento, describes how this format fragmentation has affected the rock format. "Nowadays there's every possible definition you can think of that defines rock. It used to be AOR (Album Oriented Rock) and CHR (Contemporary Hit Radio—or Top 40). Then, Classic Rock came along and fractionalized those formats a little bit. Now we have Alternative. There's even varying forms of Alternative like straight-ahead Alternative, and Adult Alternative. There's Active Rock, which tends to lean harder. The rock listenership is being cut up into smaller and smaller pieces. Now there are 5, 6, 7, or 8 stations in a market all programming some form of rock."

John O'Dea, Program Director of WNNK in Harrisburg, says the CHR format has also undergone many changes in recent years. "Some stations are going in a dance direction. Some play more rock or alternative. We pretty much play everything here. I just think, overall, radio is fragmenting its audience and trying to find more niches—which is kind of sad in a way."

Not everyone in the entertainment industry finds format fragmentation to

be a negative. Pat Rascona, Local Promotion Manager of the East Coast Mid-Atlantic Region for Island Records, says he likes the industry better now because there's more variety. "I can turn on the radio in New York, and listen to dance music on one station. You know that if you listen to WKTU you're going to get all dance music. If you listen to WNEW you're going to get Classic Rock. If you listen to K-Rock you're going to get Howard Stern in the morning and Alternative the rest of the day. If you listen to WFAN, you'll hear All-Sports. It's not a mixed bag anymore. Everything is positioned to target one specific demographic.\* WPLJ--its demo is females ages 25-54. K-ROCK is males 18-34. WNEW is catering to males 18-34 also, but maybe more of an upscale trend. WFAN is strictly males 25-54. Everything is based around advertising. But I find it enjoyable because I know I can listen to FAN all day and get every sports score that I want. Or, I can dance around in my car by listening to 'KTU. Or I can listen to some old stuff and some new stuff on 'PLJ. As far as a record company guy goes, it makes my job a little easier. First of all, I wouldn't walk into 'NEW with Susannah Hoff. I know, for each particular station, what records I have to walk in with. If you're dealing with stations that play a variety, it makes it harder to get records on the radio because you're dealing with a lot more records."

Despite the "big business" atmosphere that has prevailed in the radio industry in recent years, some programmers, like Leslie Fram of WNNX in Atlanta, feel there are changes for the better on the horizon. "Obviously, it all goes back to the fact that most stations want to make sure they have a great morning show, great marketing and great music. It's always the 3 Ms. But I think more and more programmers are learning that they really need to let their gut lead them a little bit, and take a few chances. Which is hard to do--especially if you're programming a station in a top market, and you've got to have good ratings.\* And if you're in a consolidation situation where you're owned by a big company, and you're judged by every single trend\* once a month, that's very hard to do. You tend to want to be more safe and conservative. But I think more and more people are shooting a little more from the hip to have an exciting radio station."

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## Focusing Your Programming Snapshot

by Jan Jeffries

How many times have you heard a colleague says "Radio is not brain surgery"? That may be true; however, it does require paying attention to detail. The small details can make the difference that makes all the difference!

An initial station visit earlier this year proved to be a classic example of how a station seemed to be doing most everything right, but with very little improvement in market share among the target demos.

The GM and PD provided details of how they conducted two auditorium music tests in the last year, were following to the tee the recommendations of their strategic study, upgraded their air staff, and supported it all with a sizable TV campaign.

While the major components were being taken care of, the importance of attention to detail of a little thing called **balance** was being overlooked. The truth is that listeners generally form an opinion of a radio station in a short period of time spent listening. This underscores the importance of paying attention to detail of every 15-20 minute "snapshot" of programming regardless of when in the hour listening begins.

Take this programming "snapshot" challenge for your station:

A. Start anywhere in the hour on a typical day's music log, examining any four-song sequence. What does it say about your station? The truth is that a listener can get in their automobile and be going to their destination in about 4 or 5 songs of listening to your station. In their minds, that short "snapshot" of listening *is* your radio station. All the other songs in your music library do not matter. What matters is what they hear when they listen. Was the music familiar? Did it have variety? Did the station deliver on its promise? Meanwhile, the at-work listener may *hear* the station throughout the day; however, in between meetings, telephone calls, and countless interruptions, he or she has short windows of time when they may truly *listen*. It is in this short period of time that they, too, form an opinion of the station, to either like or not like it, to keep listening or to change the station.

B. Within any 20-minute "snapshot" of listening, does the "stationality" come through? Programming elements between the music are very important. Are the *listener benefits*, station differentiation, and superlatives

sold consistently throughout every hour? Are compelling and interesting teasers and "sell-throughs" in front of stop-sets being utilized to promote "what's coming up" to increase TSL?\* Are other dayparts being promoted with *specific* and *compelling* reasons to listen?

A side-by-side analysis of your music and program logs (containing placement of promos and talk breaks) can help you achieve the balance needed to impact each "snapshot" of listening, regardless of where *listening* begins and ends.

While it may not be brain surgery, you still must pay attention to the small details as well as the big picture. Make sure every listening "snapshot" of your station is balanced and contains all the colors of your programming spectrum.

By the way, the case history station corrected their "small" errors by allocating one and a half to two hours each day in the *manual scheduler* of their music system to maximize *balance* of sound codes, tempos, and eras within every 20-minute "snapshot" of listening. They achieved their programming goals, including #1 ratings in their target demo. Get the picture?

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## Targeting the Community

When applying for a radio station license, the Federal Communications Commission charges radio stations to serve in the public's best interest. Radio stations are responsible for demonstrating to the FCC how they accomplish this during license renewal procedures.

In order for stations to serve their listening audience by providing the entertainment and information they need, radio stations must first clearly define what audience they are trying to attract to their radio station. This audience is called a target audience. Jo Robinson, Assistant Program Director at WRCX in Chicago, describes a target audience as "the people you want to reach in order for your sales department to create revenue to support the staff of the radio station." This target audience is defined in 2 ways--*demographic* and *psychographic*.

A *demographic target\** relates to the age and gender of the audience. Radio stations will specify who they're programming to--say men between the ages of 18 and 34--and will select music, imaging, and information elements that relate to this demographic.

A *psychographic target\** considers the attitudes, behaviors, opinions, and values of a specific demographic target. Mike Henry of Paragon Research says psychographic targets can be even more clearly defined. "A psychographic target is within that demographic target of 18 to 34 year-old men that focuses on those listeners who fall into an Alternative psychographic category, or an Urban category, or a Country psychographic category. It's a delineation within a demographic based on the target's lifestyle, and, particularly as it relates to radio, their music tastes."

Once this target audience has been established, the radio station then, through on-going research studies, discovers the likes and dislikes of the target audience on numerous levels, including music tastes, lifestyle issues, social attitudes, etc. Program Directors then adjust the programming the radio station offers so that it meets the needs of the target audience. Since trends in the marketplace are constantly affecting what a target audience is thinking, it is up to the Program Director and other staff members to stay on top of these changing attitudes.

## Keeping Up With Trends

Human nature is often times very fickle. What was popular yesterday is no longer fashionable today; And more than likely a new trend will become all the rage tomorrow. Fashion, music styles, attitudes, and entertainment sources are just a few examples of how lifestyle issues are affected by trends. Although many of these are cyclical in nature, staying in touch with changing tastes is not easy. It's even more challenging for radio programmers since not only do they have to keep up with what's popular today, they must also anticipate what will be in vogue in the future. Radio is a reflection of society as a whole. Individual stations mirror their target audience. If not, listeners will consider the station to be *passe*, and will probably not listen.

So how do radio programmers stay in touch with what listeners want from their radio station? Obviously, various research methods are used to keep a finger on the pulse of the target audience, but Program Directors need to do more to keep on top of current and future trends. Chuck Knight, Program Director of WSNY in Columbus, recommends that PDs keep their eyes and ears open at all times. "Watch plenty of TV, including the local news

programs. Read the newspaper. I think what's important is that you keep track of the trends within your target demographic, and not get caught up in the trends of another target. But again, you can't close your eyes and be blind to what's going on around you because sometimes that's content for the radio station--specifically a morning show. Take body piercing. I mean--body piercing means nothing to people in our demographic (women 25-44), but it certainly made for an interesting topic a week and a half ago on our morning show. Parents started calling in and saying *Yes, my daughter did it. What are you going to do?* It made for real interesting interaction on the air."

KZLA/Los Angeles PD John Sebastian suggests going to current movies as a way to tap into the views of society. "I find, just from seeing all the movies, that you do stay on top of what's going on. It's not always positive, either. Musical as well as societal issues come up in most movies. Staying open-minded helps to keep you young, and helps keep you aware for radio purposes."

Consultant Greg Gillispie believes keeping an eye on fashion helps to gauge what's coming down the pike. "These days, what's old is new in a number of areas. Whether it's reflections of music or fashions. Often times, being sensitive to where a lot of that is going can then dictate a lot of the other stuff that goes with it in terms of the packaging of the radio station. Fashion can be a very important thing. It's visible. It changes. It can be somewhat leading edge, and a part of people's lifestyles."

Keep your staff out on the street all the time is the advice of Leslie Fram, PD of Alternative rocker 99X in Atlanta. "Have them go into record stores and check out what people are buying. Go to see bands. Usually, almost every night of the week, there's a show here. Someone's always at that show, and will report back in a music meeting. I try to go to a lot of shows on the weekends. I went to several shows in a row last week, including Counting Crows and Verve Pipe. You have to be out. You have to be where the audience is. Even if it's in a restaurant or an art opening."

It's important to keep in mind that what's fashionable in one city or in one state may not necessarily be popular in another. Program Directors and radio personalities need to be in touch with what's happening in their region and in their market. Constant interaction with listeners, whether it's on the request line, at station events, or through the pursuit of day-to-day activities is the most effective way to gather the information a radio station needs to be a winner.

## Practical Programming Assignments

1.

Pick a specific music style. Describe the demographic and the psychographic target of the audience who listens to that music style. Then:

- a. Visit a local music store. Describe the buying patterns of this audience.
- b. List TV shows that would be popular with this target audience
- c. List magazines this target audience would read.
- d. Describe the forms of entertainment this target audience would pursue.
- e. Visit several clothing shops. What type of clothes are they buying?
- f. What movies and videos are most popular with this target audience?

2.

Punch into radio stations around the dial. What formats are offered in your radio market? List examples of the artists played by each station. Describe the radio station's image in terms of the attitude displayed by the on-air announcers, station events and contests and the imaging statements used by the station to describe their programming. (Examples of image statements would be "The home of rock and roll," "If your boss won't let you listen at work....quit!," "Your local news authority," "Hot County Mix," "The MOST music.") What are these stations trying to say through their image liners?

3.

Monitor 3 radio stations of different formats for one hour. List the commercials played by these stations within the hour. Why would these commercials appeal to the station's target audience? If commercials are similar between one or more stations, describe why these commercials work on these stations despite the differences in their target audiences.

# **The Evolution of Programming**

## **Chapter Objectives**

**At the end of this chapter students will be able to:**

1. Explain how music trends, lifestyle trends and the audience affect programming.
2. Describe the cyclical nature of music.
3. Explain how and why formats have fragmented in recent years.
4. List the most common radio formats, their target audiences, and examples of artists that are core to these formats.
5. Demonstrate understanding of the chapter's main concepts by completing the Programming Practical Assignments at the end of the chapter.

## Chapter 2

# Glossary of Radio Terms

- Book:** Slang term for the formal research report compiled by The Arbitron Company that demonstrates the type of listening that occurs in a radio market.
- P1:** Listeners who listen to a particular radio station more than any other radio station in a given week.
- Share:** Average Quarter Hour Persons estimate of a station expressed as a percentage of the Metro Total Average Quarter Hour Persons estimate within a given daypart.
- Multiopoly:** Up to 8 radio stations owned and operated by a single broadcasting company in a radio market.

# 2 The Evolution of Programming

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## The Evolution of Music and Its Relationship to Programming

From the day music was first broadcast over AM radio's airwaves, popular music has been a mainstay in radio programming. In the early days, a single station served an entire population with a variety of music and talk programming. Today, popular music has evolved to such an extent that radio stations can no longer afford to target such a wide-spread audience. This has resulted in what is now known as the fragmentation of radio formats. In other words, "broadcasting" has now become "narrowcasting."

Until a few decades ago, AM radio ruled supreme. A problem with broadcasting over Amplitude Modulation (AM) radio waves is AM's tendency to produce static. Many broadcasters like Edwin Howard Armstrong found this static annoying, and were convinced that programming could be broadcast without being affected by atmospheric conditions. Armstrong set about developing a new way to broadcast using a different part of the radio spectrum, Frequency Modulation, which later became known as FM.

Despite this revolutionary new form of broadcasting that produced a clean, clear sound, FM wasn't accepted by most broadcasters as a direct competitor to AM radio until the late sixties or early seventies. Consultant Lee Abrams explains that the reason why FM wasn't universally accepted in the beginning was because station owners viewed FM radio as a fad. "Most competitors did not take FM seriously at all. To make matters worse, they certainly looked at the music as a fad. Back when FM was really starting to come out was at the same time when Jimi Hendrix and Jethro Tull and all these bands that they thought were weirdos were starting to emerge. This old generation of broadcasters thought they would go away. There was a lot of denial--*Oh, this will never work*. And there was the whole political Vietnam era. People were thinking, *Well, that's (FM) the hippy station*."

In spite of FM's less than auspicious beginning, Abrams says he always knew FM would eventually become the mainstream force that it is today. "I

kind of figured it would be big because in 1967, when I first started hearing FM, records sounded better in stereo. FM was in stereo, and it sounded so great. I always assumed it was just a matter of time before this great sounding (radio) band destroyed horrible AM. I've always liked AM--mostly for nostalgic reasons. The problem in the old days was that there was no programming on FM. All of it was canned Beautiful Music tapes. I figured that as soon as there was some real competitive programming on FM, AM wouldn't be able to fight that."

Abrams says two things happened in the seventies that brought FM radio into focus. "One was the AOR (Album Oriented Rock) format. Also, on the upper (demo) end there was a guy named Jim Shulke who did an extremely well thought-out and well-marketed Beautiful Music format. Both of those formats simultaneously started taking off about the same time. They started to get good ratings, and people thought, *Well, that's a fluke*. By the 4th or 5th consistently good or up rating book\* people said, *Wait a minute*. Every ratings period it grew another percentage point until by the late seventies it was clearly dominant. He (Shulke) had a concept--I believe it was called Matched Flow--where, instead of just throwing a bunch of Montovani records on he really had it figured out to a science. He would only sign stations (to play his format) who would support it with huge marketing campaigns. They saturated a market and got tremendous listenership overnight. So I think those two formats were the first real harmful thing to AM."

Just as the vehicle to present radio programming has evolved over the decades, music has also evolved. Years ago, rock and roll was considered to be a radical movement that would soon die a quick death. Yet, not only has rock and roll survived, the various splinter formats that have sprung from the original rock and roll format now dominate the programming that is heard on radio's airwaves. An examination of the fragmentation of radio formats will be discussed later in this chapter.

Programmer and consultant Guy Zapoleon says the segmentation of formats is, in part, a response to the cyclical nature of music. "Music goes through a cycle that repeats about every 10 years. The cycle is this: It's called the birth, which is in the middle of the decade, then it goes to extremes, then it goes to doldrums. Basically, since 1955 or 1956, when rock and roll started, the music went very pop. R&B (Rhythm and Blues), Rock, and AC music is all very pop. Then, what happens is, towards the end of the decade, one music style--whether it's rock or R&B--usually becomes very extreme, depending on what was the most popular at that time or depending on what the trend is. For example, in 1960, believe it or not,

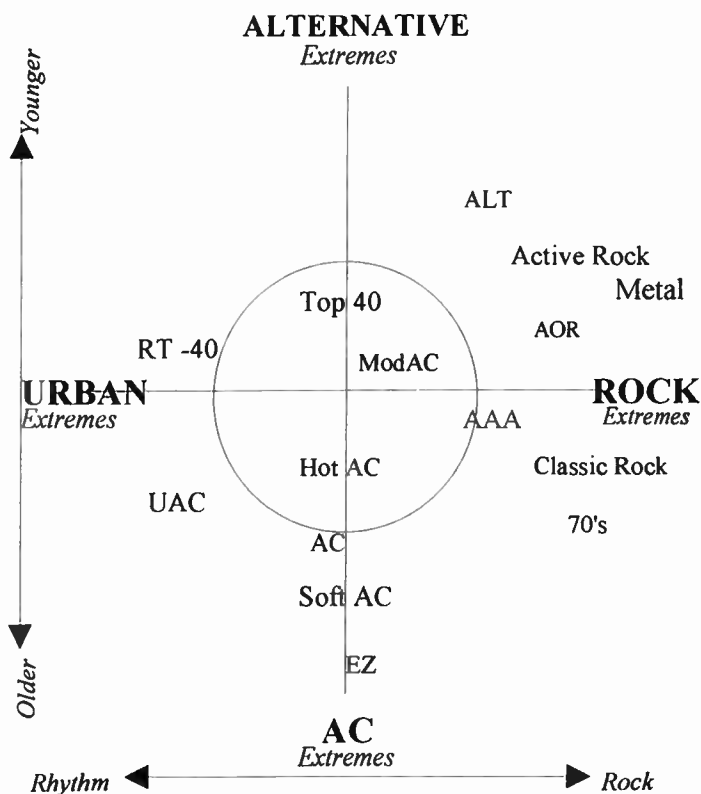
there was actually a dance explosion. Everything was dance in 1960. There was stuff like "The Twist." Music became very dance, although it was very mild compared to other dance extremes. All the great rock/pop stuff kind of went away. If you remember, that was the time when Elvis went into the army. Back in 1964 and '65 there was the British Invasion, and so the musical cycle came back around. And before that, to talk with the doldrums, there was the Bobby Vinton real soft period during 1962/63. '69 was another extremes period with acid rock like Hendrix and other real harder-edged rock bringing the birth of Album Oriented Rock. And then it went back into a soft stage in the '70's. There's a cycle. Disco was a cycle. Rap was a cycle. Those are both extremes."

Zapoleon explains that radio is very much affected by the cyclical nature of music. "Usually, in the middle of the decade, music gets very pop-sounding. This is Top 40's big, successful time. Right now (1997), Top 40 is successful, but not as successful as it used to be because of the segmentation of radio formats. Instead of just Top 40, there's Top 40, Modern AC (Adult Contemporary), Hot AC, and Rhythm Top 40 (Dance)."

Lee Abrams concurs with Zapoleon's view that radio, like music, evolves in cycles. "You look at the early sixties and radio was very personality-driven. And then, when Bill Drake came along, radio became very tight again. Then, in the early seventies, it got a little looser. In the late seventies radio got tight again. Then it got a little looser in the early eighties. Now we're back in one of those tight periods again. By tight I don't mean (music) playlist. I'm really talking about attitude."

Abrams believes that radio only transforms into a new cycle when stations begin branching out into something new. "It's really a matter of a handful of stations in noticeable markets doing some really new and different things, and getting tremendous ratings. Then, because radio is a sheep kind of industry, people will say, *Wow! We've got to be more like those 3 stations. They went from a 5 to a 9 share,\* and boy do they sound great! What's their secret?* And, slowly but surely, other stations will start saying, *Oh, they're doing that creative thing. We ought to start doing that.* Next thing you know, a couple of years down the road, everybody will sound like that. Then, a couple of years later, someone will come in and say, *Wait a minute! Everybody's creative, and radio's just a creative mess. We need some good MBA-types in here running this station.* That's when somebody will come in with a real clean, tight, uncreative approach, and will probably do real well. Then everybody will follow that station. So radio really does go in cycles."

## ZAPOLEON MUSIC MATRIX ©

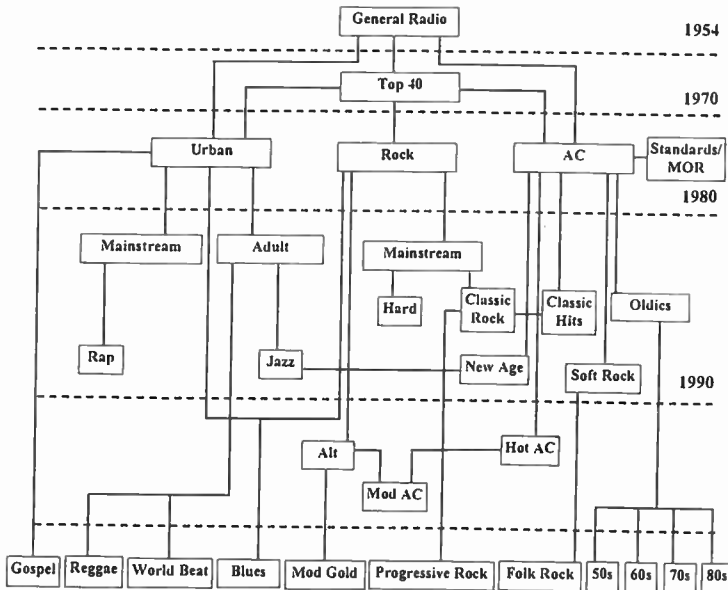


The above graph demonstrates the relationship between music genres, audience appeal and radio formats. *Reprinted with permission from Guy Zapoleon.*

## Radio Formats

### B/D & A

### THE FRAGMENTATION OF RADIO



FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

The preceding graph demonstrates the evolution of radio formats, in particular the rock radio format, over the decades. The following is a description of the most common formats in the United States today. It is important to remember that there are dozens of hybrid formats, and that the fragmentation of radio formats is constantly evolving.

## Adult Contemporary (AC)

The Adult Contemporary format, commonly referred to as AC by many in the industry, is often considered to be the most popular format with advertisers. This is due to AC's strong appeal to consumers in the 25 - 54 year old age group, which is generally considered to be the demographic with the most disposable income. Although AC stations generally target both men and women, in most cases, women constitute the largest percentage of an Adult Contemporary station's core audience.

Over the years, the Adult Contemporary format has fragmented into several hybrid formats. These include Mainstream AC, Hot AC, Full Service AC, Urban AC, Soft AC, Modern AC, and Soft Rock. Although their target and core audiences vary somewhat depending upon the lean of the format, they share some threads of commonality with both the original AC format as well as other similar formats. However, these commonalities and differences may change according to current trends in both the broadcasting and music industry.

*Mainstream (Traditional) Adult Contemporary* plays both current hits as well as older library music. This music, generally, does not follow extremes--meaning neither extreme rock-leaning or urban (dance)-leaning records would be included on a Mainstream AC's playlist. Michael Bolton, Boyz II Men, Toni Braxton, Phil Collins, Peter Cetera, Celine Dion, and Whitney Houston are examples of artists who would be played on a Mainstream Adult Contemporary radio station.

*Hot Adult Contemporary* radio station's are, in many ways, a hybrid of a Mainstream AC and a Contemporary Hit Radio (CHR) station. Hot ACs tend to focus more on current records rather than library music. This format may also embrace records that are more rock or dance oriented, and therefore, Hot AC stations tend to appeal to a slightly younger audience than a Mainstream AC station. Examples of artists played on a Hot AC radio station may include: En Vogue, Hootie & the Blowfish, Sarah McLachlan, Counting Crows, Madonna, Phil Collins, Sheryl Crow, Alanis Morissette, and No Doubt.

*Full Service Adult Contemporary* radio stations are often found on the AM radio dial. Unlike it's FM format cousins, Full Service AC combines both music and news and information segments of interest to listeners. Since Full Service AC stations tend to play softer library-oriented music, the audience of this format tends to skew older. Music found on a Full Service AC station would include Barry Manilow, Barbara Streisand, Lionel Richie, The Carpenters, Simon and Garfunkle, and Whitney Houston.

*Urban Adult Contemporary (UAC)* is a hybrid between Traditional AC and Urban Contemporary. This format plays the softer end of what is popular on the Urban Contemporary music charts. Toni Braxton, Luther Vandross, Whitney Houston, En Vogue, Mint Condition, Isley Brothers, Tina Turner, and Babyface are often featured on UAC stations.

*Modern AC* stations are a relative new-comer to the AC arena. The music blend is a mix of Pop and Alternative, and is more current based than some of the other AC formats. It could be considered an alternative approach to CHR. Core artists include Sarah McLachlan, Jewel, Gin Blossoms, Fiona Apple, Dave Matthews Band and Blues Traveler.

*Soft Adult Contemporary* stations are similar to Mainstream or Traditional AC stations except that Soft AC tends to focus on mellow older hits of years gone by. Because the music focus is more library rather than current, the listening audience of a Soft AC station is usually on the older end of the 25-54 year old spectrum. Neil Diamond, Three Dog Night, The Temptations, Barbara Streisand, The Beatles, Chicago, Diana Ross and the Supremes, The Carpenters, and The Turtles might be examples of artists commonly found on a Soft AC station.

*Soft Rock*, which is also sometimes called *Rock AC*, tends to play older, softer rock songs from artists like Billy Joel, The Eagles, Van Morrison, Steely Dan, Rod Stewart, Eric Clapton, Elton John, John Mellencamp, and Kenny Loggins. Of all the AC hybrid formats, Soft Rock attracts larger numbers of male listeners than any of the others due to the format's tendency to play more rock-leaning records.

According to Chuck Knight, Program Director of WSNY in Columbus, the current trend in the industry seems to be leaning more towards the rock-leaning AC format at the moment. "I think Top 40 radio is running into this problem too, but it seems like product flow is following that trend. The problem we have within the industry is that every time a new cycle of new music comes out everybody rushes over to that new trend. It happened to radio stations in the late '70s and early '80s with disco. It happened before that with country music in the mid to late 70s. I think one of the problems the industry is struggling with right now (1997) is the fact that the current product flow from record companies is very rock oriented. Certainly some of this rock music has been very mass accepted by record buyers and radio audiences so, therefore, maybe we have swung the pendulum too far in the rock direction with adult radio."

Consultant Guy Zapoleon believes programmers of AC radio will, in the future, need to pay close attention to figuring out ways to make the format own the workplace. In other words, motivate people to tune in while at

work. "That's what drives AC--Time Spent Listening.\* You need to get more (Arbitron) credit for the listening that takes place at the workplace."

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## **The Adult Contemporary Puzzle**

**by Mike McVay**

Adult Contemporary has never been a format that was completely understood. The name itself is a misnomer. It dates back to the original roots of the format when AC meant playing Contemporary songs for adults. The fragmentation of the format and its many colorations over the years have included everything from Traditional AC to Soft Rock to Format 41 to Special Blend and the now long defunct Shulke II, which was a combination of AC and Easy Listening. Today, AC is clearly a mainstream format in America, but its future is not so clear.

It seems that no one likes AC, except the listeners. Radio broadcasters will run lemming-like off a cliff in favor of hybrid AC formats or format derivations that are more exciting to the radio person. Meanwhile, the most traditional and straight-ahead AC formats are generally the most successful on a national basis.

We asked a number of major programmers and researchers for their opinions on Adult Contemporary today, and where they see it going tomorrow. The only thing that is for sure is that the format is not going away.

Everyone interviewed agreed that Adult Contemporary is going in many different directions. The musical tastes of listeners on the low end of the 25-54 demographics will become more Contemporary. Pop-Rock artists such as Hootie & the Blowfish, Natalie Merchant, Blues Traveler, and Alanis Morissette, are becoming more acceptable than traditional Hot AC artists like Phil Collins, Whitney Houston, and Gloria Estefan. Star/LA-type radio stations are on the most contemporary edge of Hot AC featuring lots of Pop/Alternative on one end of the spectrum.

On the other end, many soft ACs are now favoring Phil Collins over Streisand and (Neil) Diamond. There are an ample number of current artists who transcend all AC formats. Smart AC programmers are researching their heavy users to directly determine which artists, and particularly, which songs

are expected on their stations. Just because a song tests well doesn't mean it belongs on your radio station. Artistry of music scheduling and placement has never been more important than it is today in the AC arena.

While programmers seem enthusiastic about this new direction, several researchers are taking issue as to what the potential for an Alternative AC format will be. Coleman Research President Jon Coleman believes, "As the AC format continues to evolve, the influence of Pop/Rock or Pop/Alternative sound will continue to grow." Coleman's belief is that Pop/Rock will continue to be a major sound for Hot AC stations for the foreseeable future and that the "Safer side of the format (Goo Goo Dolls and Hootie & the Blowfish) will increasingly be heard on Soft AC stations." Obviously, the songs by these artists would have to fit the essence of a Soft AC. I'm not so sure I agree with Coleman on this point. I'm of the opinion that Soft AC must be safe.

Coleman sees Modern AC as nothing more than a Rock-based Adult CHR or Hot AC format. In other words, Modern AC is just a more Pop/Alternative-based version of Hot AC. Whereas most Hot AC stations today play between 30% and 45% titles from a Pop Alternative genre, Modern AC stations are roughly three-quarters Pop Alternative based.

It is apparent to me that we, as programmers, cannot force a musical type on an audience. Research will become even more important for Adult Contemporary in years to come as we allow the listeners, through music research, to decide what songs belong on what radio station. Markets with less fragmentation will allow ACs to be broader in the music spectrum, but highly fragmented markets will require AC stations to be very narrow in order that listeners may actually program their own radio station just by pushing the buttons.

Those I talked to generally agree that the competition for AC will come from other AC stations as well as Oldies and Adult Rock. Those markets that have no Urban Adult Contemporary or no jazz will undoubtedly have further fragmentation with the arrival of such formats. I am seeing where Soft Adult Contemporary radio stations lose a portion of their African-American or Hispanic audience to Jazz or Urban AC. It stands to reason that Adult formats targeted to the ethnic audience will damage mass appeal Adult stations that have ethnic listeners.

Non-musical elements will play an even greater role on AC as stations continue to sound even more alike. The cross pollination of artists and types of music means that it will be more difficult for listeners to identify the station they are tuned into. Non-music elements are becoming less of an interruption to listeners and, more importantly, a marketing element for

today's AC radio. Soft ACs have to build morning shows that are bigger and more entertaining than ever before. This tactic takes a station beyond traditional at-work listening. Survival information and Discretionary Time Information are vital. Anyone can be a jukebox. It is what the airstaff says between songs that will separate the winners from the losers.

Both researchers Larry Rosin and Jon Coleman believe that the audience composition for AC will see changes. According to Coleman, "The splitting of the format into Hot and Soft will continue as will the evolution of the demographic composition of each position's audience. The Hot AC focus is clearly on the 30-year-old segment of the audience with the musical taste of the 25-34-year old driving the format. For Soft AC the audience is drawn from primarily 40-year-olds with the core of the format not really kicking in until age 45."

Both strains of AC, Hot/Pop and Soft/Traditional continue to be dominated by female listeners. With Soft AC having a higher female composition, mainstream AC is vulnerable to both Soft AC and Hot AC attacks, while Hot AC can be attacked by CHR, Rock or Oldies. The at-work usage of Soft AC is something else that puts the format in a position of strength.

Coleman agrees that Soft AC is less vulnerable to attack. "A case can be made for potential competition from other 'mood' driven formats, such as Jazz or perhaps Classical, but we do not see these as a major threat. In fact, we believe the biggest threat to Soft AC may come from within, as Soft AC programmers may be tempted to delve into more Contemporary up-tempo sounds and stray too far from the taste of format partisans."

The pieces of the AC puzzle seem to be coming together in that the format in most markets will shake out with a Soft AC, a Hot AC, and a Modern AC that leans more Pop/Alternative. The Hot AC may find itself in the position of the more traditional AC, while those in highly fragmented markets will be able to support a Pop/Alternative.

The unanswerable question remains as to what the record labels have in store for the format. Less product from main-stream image artists may mean that traditional Adult Contemporary stations will actually play fewer currents. It will probably also mean that inexperienced or non-resource-oriented program directors will follow the lead of the record labels and be sold on the benefit of playing new music by non-image artists. Those are the stations that I want to compete against as they will be turning listeners off at a rapid rate.

At some point those ACs that are Hot/Pop/Alternative leaning will vacate the traditional 80s AC arena and leave the Michael Boltons of the world for

Soft.

The format evolution continues.

*Reprinted with permission from McVayMedia. This article appeared in the McVay Media Monthly Memo, November 1996-Vol. XIII, Issue 11*

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## **Contemporary Hit Radio (CHR)**

Like most formats, the Contemporary Hit Radio format, also called CHR and Top 40, has undergone increased fragmentation in recent years. The most common variations of the Contemporary Hit Radio format include CHR/Pop, CHR/Rhythmic, and Adult CHR/Hot AC. As Adult CHR/Hot AC has already been discussed under the Adult Contemporary heading, this section will focus on the remaining CHR hybrid formats. Although CHR stations target both male and females—usually Adults 18-34, the composition of that audience tends to skew much younger than stations of other formats. These stations also tend to be very contest and promotion-oriented.

*CHR/Pop* or *Top 40* radio most closely resembles the original Top 40 format of several decades before format fragmentation took place. CHR/Pop is very current-based, playing the hottest selling, trendiest records of the moment. Therefore, the station's format may lean more rock, pop, dance or alternative, depending on the current trend in music. The pace on a CHR/Pop station is fast with a great deal of audience interaction with the station's on-air personalities. Examples of artists played on a CHR/Pop station include Jewel, The Spice Girls, Janet Jackson, Madonna, Hootie & the Blowfish, Alanis Morissette, No Doubt, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Counting Crows, and Sheryl Crow.

*CHR/Rhythmic* plays more dance-oriented music than is played on a CHR/Pop station. This format mixes Contemporary Hit records with Dance and Urban hits. Like the CHR/Pop format, CHR/Rhythmic is characterized by a fast pace with a great deal of personality involvement. Artists such as Puff Daddy, Keith Sweat, Crystal Waters, En Vogue, Spice Girls, Toni Braxton, Baby Face, No Doubt, Dru Hill, and Tony Toni Tone are often featured on a CHR/Rhythmic station.

According to CHR programmer and consultant Guy Zapoleon, programmers of CHR stations are going to need to focus on 2 key issues in order to keep the format competitive. "Obviously, marketing is going to

become more important. Also improving the talent to where it used to be. Everything's getting so cut-up format-wise that everybody's going to have a 2 share otherwise."

Zapoleon also feels there is more room for variety on a CHR station than people think. "I think there's room in every market for one true CHR radio station. I call them mass appeal radio stations. I really do think there's an audience out there that loves to hear current music, and likes to hear about what's happening along with some older music that makes sense. But again, we're in this narrowcasting world right now. People haven't figured that out yet. That's why Z100 (New York) just had a good ratings book. They actually hurt WKTU, which is the station I work with. I was kind of dreading that they had figured out that another station besides 'KTU could play Top 40 music and exist in New York. Z100's doing that right now."

## **Rock**

Once called Album Oriented Rock (AOR), the rock format is the most lifestyle oriented of all the formats. It features strong personality involvement and listener-based promotions that focus in on the interests of the listeners and their relationship with the community. Rock radio originally grew from listener dissatisfaction with Top 40 radio in the late 1960s. Originally called Progressive Rock, like other formats, rock radio hasn't escaped fragmentation. This is partly due to trends in music that have forced rock stations to re-examine their music focus, and target a more specific audience with a very specific genre of music. Just as the music focus varies among hybrid formats, the target audience of these formats also varies. Alternative (also called Modern Rock), Mainstream Rock, Classic Rock, Adult Alternative Albums (AAA), also sometimes called Adult Oriented Rock or Progressive Rock, and Active Rock are all fragments of the rock format. In this section, Mainstream Rock, Active Rock, and Classic Rock will be discussed. Alternative and AAA will be the focus in following segments.

*Mainstream Rock* most closely resembles what was once called Album Oriented Rock (AOR), which, according to Consultant Greg Gillispie, did extremely well in the '70s and early '80s until the Classic Rock format was developed. "Then, by the late 1980s, the younger generation grew to such a large volume, and music styles changed so much that AOR couldn't support the late '80s fragmentation of musical styles. This allowed programmers to program smaller niche formats."

Today Mainstream Rock stations tend to target 25-44 with a high

concentration of male listeners. The music on a Mainstream Rock station blends current rock records with standard classics. In-depth album cuts are often used as spice to help image the radio station to its listeners. Core library artists on a Mainstream Rock station may include ZZ Top, Van Halen, Aerosmith, AC/DC, Metallica, U2, Pearl Jam, Rush, Led Zeppelin, Live, Pink Floyd and The Doors.

The *Active Rock* format grew from the younger generation's call for a radio station that reflected their interests and musical tastes. Active Rock stations usually take a more irreverent, in-your-face attitude, and are heavily involved with the lifestyle and interests of their target audience. Focusing more on current music rather than library music, Active Rock stations are usually harder-edged than Mainstream Rock stations with a focus on guitar-based alternative music such as Pearl Jam, Stone Temple Pilots, Soundgarden, Smashing Pumpkins, Green Day, Metallica, White Zombie and Alice in Chains. Library music from Led Zeppelin, Van Halen, Aerosmith, AC/DC and Pink Floyd may also be heard on an Active Rock station.

*Classic Rock* stations tend to attract the older segment of the rock listening audience, concentrating on the music that baby boomers grew up with. Although no less lifestyle oriented than other rock formats, the promotional and marketing focus will reflect the lifestyle of this older audience, and may feature more family-oriented promotions than the other rock formats. Library favorites from The Doors, The Eagles, Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd, Bad Company, Foreigner, ZZ Top, Doobie Brothers, The Steve Miller Band, Aerosmith, and The Rolling Stones are often featured on Classic Rock stations.

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## Long Live Rock

by Greg Gillispie

Back in its formative years, the cry of the rock generation was not to trust anyone or anything over 30. Now the rock format celebrates its thirtieth year, making it one of radio's longest running music formats.

So what is the state of the format's fragmentations, its developing trends, and future success potential? Before we can know where we are or where we're going, let's recall how we got here.

### **Forward Into the Past...**

Rock radio is as diverse today as it was in the beginning. Its diversity is now just spread over five fragmentation formats instead of represented on one radio station.

The Rock format itself was a fragmentation of the mainstream Top 40 format. In 1967, in response to all the great music that was defining a generation and selling, but not being truly represented on Top 40 stations, "underground" rock stations began emerging around the country. Spearheaded by stations such as WNEW, New York and KSAN, San Francisco, the rock format was born.

Over the next several years, rock stations modeled on the progressive approach of the original stations began popping up all over the country. Then, in 1973, Lee Abrams added structure and formatics to the progressive approach of the underground rock stations, creating the Superstars format. This was the first fragmentation of the form.

Through the remainder of the '70's and into the early '80's, AOR (album oriented rock, as it was dubbed by Radio & Records Mike Harrison) exploded across the country. With superstar artists and stadium-sized concert tours developing alongside the format, AOR became the most effective means of reaching the rapidly growing baby boomers.

As AOR reached critical mass, it too began to spawn fragmentations just as Top 40 had a dozen years before. Spurred by the introduction of MTV and its exposure of new artists and music, a fledgling Alternative movement began in the early '80s. But this format's true impact would not be realized until nearly a decade later.

As AOR reacted to MTV by incorporating more new music, it created a void for the aging baby boomers who grew up with rock's superstars but were uncomfortable with the new sounds and looks. In 1983, Classic Rock, an AOR fragmentation similar to the oldies split from Top 40, became a viable threat to AOR's continued dominance.

Through the remainder of the '80s, AOR became more conservative and classic-based as it fought, in some markets for its life, against Classic Rock. By the late '80s and early '90s, an entirely new and fairly sizable generation of rock fans, disenfranchised by AOR's classic stance, sought their own identity. A handful of stations eschewed many of AOR's stalwarts and began developing their own stars for this increasingly influential new generation. Originally dubbed Rock 40, these stations sowed the seeds of what would become known as Active Rock.

What came next in 1991 was unforeseen by many, yet would have the greatest impact on the music scene and radio since the progressive days of

the late '60s. The growing post-baby boom generation flexed its collective muscle and the power of Alternative music, only hinted at ten years before, exploded onto the airwaves.

Also about this time, a growing group of stations that had quietly been carrying the ideals of the original progressive movement began to offer to baby boomers a viable alternative to the tired sounds of Classic Rock and the confused approach taken by AOR. The progressive movement had come full cycle under the banner AAA.

So here we are, 30 years on in the life of rock radio and all its children. Some are more mature than others; some are healthier than others; and some have brighter futures than others. Let's take a closer look to see if in fact we can still say "Long live rock."

### **Best of the Old...Best of the New**

Within two years of the advent of MTV, Album Oriented Rock ceased to exist. Rather than combining the hit singles and great album cuts from its stars, AOR became song oriented.

Once Classic Rock emerged, AOR stations moved to attract the mainstream radio listener by playing the best classic songs and the best new songs. In many markets, this position is still viable today. In many others, it has been killed by the more focused fragmentations spawned by AOR.

There are still many successful Mainstream Rock stations that combine the best of classic and new rock. They are represented by stations such as WDVE/Pittsburgh, WFBQ/Indianapolis, KQRS/Minneapolis, and KEZO/Omaha.

All these and other similarly structured stations have a couple of common elements. Most prominent is their heritage. These stations were generally the first rock station in the market and have continued to be successful in their target demo over many years, even in the face of many direct or flank attacks. Their heritage, while often inviting attacks, helped fend them off. In many cases, these stations are household names among the target audience and their roots run deep within their community via involvement in annual and charitable events.

The second common thread among Mainstream Rock stations is the pervasiveness of their morning show. Paulsen & Krenn, Bob & Tom, Tom Bernard, and John Boy and Billy have been waking people up and becoming part of their community's fabric for years. Clearly, high cume, top-of-mind, community-involved morning shows are critical to the format's success! Without the power of the morning show, Mainstream Rock stations generally perform at a lower level or are more vulnerable to competitive attack from

various rock forms.

Mainstream Rock's biggest challenge into the new century is the pressure the population split presents. The format's target audience is comprised of baby boomers and their younger siblings or children. The gaps in music tastes between both ends of the target spectrum are widening. As Bill Elliot, WMMQ/Lansing PD said, "How many people do both The Doobie Brothers and Metallica appeal to?" It is becoming increasingly difficult to play the best of the old and the best of the new and satisfy everyone.

Certainly multiopoly effects all rock formats. Rarely do you see a company owning two or more rock stations, with one of them in the Mainstream field. The format's best shot at maintaining or growing (its down 2.2% over the last two years; 1.7% in the last year) is in markets with only one or two rock stations or with a more focused 30-40 male approach.

### **The Four Year Itch**

After Classic Rock's initial two year rush to success, this format has spiked twice in four year intervals. The first spike was 1989 due to AOR's harder stance brought on by the Rock 40 attack. The second spike was 1993 when the oldies-influenced version of Classic Rock, The Arrow, upset the balance in many markets.

Now, four years since Classic Rock's last hurrah, it is itching to have another successful run. The high levels of burn associated with mass exposure of the music at Classic Rock and Arrow stations and on television have declined. (source--25 auditorium music tests conducted Spring 1997.) And after experimenting with the new rock movement of the early '90s, many 25-44 year-olds are rediscovering their fondness for the music they grew up on.

The recent Arbitron Winter 97 survey shows glimpses of what is yet to come. In the last year, Classic Rock is up 2.1% in its target demo of 35-44 adults. Classic Rock beat Oldies for the first time ever in this demo in the Winter 97 sweep, and again in the Spring 97 sweep. In order to reap the rewards, it is critical that Classic Rock stations focus on this, the younger end of the baby boom. These are the people that grew up on rock based music between 1969 and 1982. It is also important that Classic Rock or Hits stations win 35-44 men. The Winter '97 Arbitron shows Classic Rock with a 67% vs. 33% male/female composition.

Clearly, Classic Rock and Classic Hits stations cannot coexist in the same market. Los Angeles, where The Arrow drove KLSX out of the format, and Dallas, where KZPS forced The Arrow to change, are two major examples of the need for only one classic-formatted station per market.

The competitive matrix of the marketplace dictates whether Classic Rock or Classic Hits wins. Classic Rock is artists and album based. Classic Hits, as the name implies, is hit based. Classic Rock must focus on the hits of the era and use the appropriate depth material from all the great albums as spice and imagining. Classic Hits must avoid being too pop or concentrating on the music of one decade, opting instead for the rock hits from the late '60s to the mid '80s. This approach is more successful than trying to play Bob Seger and Donna Summer on one station.

More than anything, Classic Rock and Hits stations must realize they cannot survive on music alone. "The biggest challenge the Classic Rock format faces is the tendency to become stale, complacent, and predictable," said Darrin Arriens, Operations Manager of WBYS/WFWI/Ft. Wayne. This is radio, not a jukebox. High profile morning shows, appropriate lifestyle promotions, community involvement, creative marketing, sparkling production, and features that support the music's foundations and pop culture attributes are all important in creating the total package.

For perhaps the first time in history, an entire generation appears to be satisfied growing old with the music of their youth. Can Led Zeppelin and The Rolling Stones still capture the attention of the 60 year-old baby boomers? From all indications, yes. Creating a total entertainment package that addresses the target audience's lifestyle while recalling pop culture can overcome the burn cycle.

### **Cars, Bars & Guitars**

By the late '80s, an emerging vocal minority was bored with AOR's conservative, classic approach designed to attract their older brothers or parents. While this group of 45 million Generation Xers was a minority compared to the 78 million baby boomers, collectively they offered an attractive market segment to stations wallowing in the sixth, seventh, or lower 25-54 position. A few bold radio stations saw the advantage of being number one 18-34 and moved to attract these listeners with their own music, attitude, and lifestyle elements, all of which were being ignored by traditional AOR stations.

What started as a harder rock, pop-metal based format was quickly replaced by a new sound that surged out of the Bay area and northwest. With the release of Metallica's *Metallica* album and the guitar-based alternative sounds of grunge masters such as Nirvana, Pearl Jam, Soundgarden, and Stone Temple Pilots, the disenfranchised once again had their own music and their own radio station. Really no different than the concepts that drove AOR in the very late '70s, Active Rock was launched and the message was

clear--contemporary, guitar-based rock n roll mixed with compatible classics and presented with a verve long missing from rock radio.

The timing could not have been better. Many owners fearful of not being able to convert huge 18-34 numbers into revenue, suddenly had the opportunity, due to duopoly, to cash in on a long-ignored demo. Paired with Classic Rock or other adult-appeal formats, Active Rock's fast-moving target presents, according to *Time* magazine, "an extreme sporting experience for cars, brewers, sneaker makers," and tons of other products targeting a generation with \$125 billion in annual purchasing power. Active Rock listeners have a voice that demands to be heard.

As with any current-based format, Active Rock is dependent on new music that fits the listener's expectations. From 1990 through the middle of 1995, Active Rock stations mined a rich vein of music that helped it revitalize the entire rock genre. However, as the music industry's marketing efforts have intensely focused on catching the wave of the next big thing and some of the format's early stars have failed to deliver subsequent success, partly due to death or demise, Active Rock has reached a crossroads.

Clearly, the caliber of the music today is not what it was a few short years ago. WXTB/Tampa PD Brad Hardin says, "The biggest problem is the music pool has dried up." While Active Rock was never designed to be just a harder-edged version of rock, it is having a difficult time assimilating softer or more pop-oriented songs into its core sound. Additionally, as a result of reduced dependence on its library, many active rock stations are finding their audience has a renewed appreciation of classic hard rock from artists such as AC/DC, Aerosmith, Van Halen, and Led Zeppelin. They would rather have more of these artists than something not universally perceived as rock.

Active Rock and its cousin format Alternative, long combatants for the hottest new music, have reached their first stage of maturation. As with other forms of rock radio already discussed, Active Rock must create a complete entertainment package to weather times of lackluster music. Once again, a compelling morning show that fits the listener lifestyle, such as WRCX/Chicago's Mancow, KEGD/Dallas' Howard Stern, or WZTA/Miami's Paul Castronovo can propel the station to consistent success.

Active Rock is a great multipoly partner for a format that either attracts older men or similarly aged women. On its own, unless its in a top 20 market, Active Rock will have to evolve much the way the "modal rock" stations of the late '70s did.

### **Why Do Thy Call It Alternative Anyway?**

This question, asked by an actual listener, represents all that is positive

and negative about the Alternative format.

Exploding onto the radio dial at the same time a new brand of music erupted from the streets, Alternative radio has been one of the fastest growing, most influential formats of the early '90s. Because of Alternative music's rapid rise, many other formats quickly co-opted this music, extending its reach across a variety of radio formats.

Now, the Alternative format's growth rate has leveled and it no longer has an exclusive lock on an exciting and successful music genre. "This is a pessimistic time for Alternative radio," says Andy Bloom, VP/Coleman Research.

Joel Schaaf, General Manager of WGRD/Grand Rapids, the most successful top 100 market Alternative station (12+ Fall '96 and Winter '97 Arbitron) believes, "The future of Alternative radio lies in taking the format away from the purest form and making it mainstream." However, due to the mainstreaming of the format, the original Alternative audience feels as though "a lot of geeks have been let into the club," according to Andy Bloom.

The Alternative format started out as a small come--big TSL format. As the music increased in popularity and impacted not only a number of other formats, but much of society as well, it has become a big come--small TSL format. This has caused Alternative PDs to grapple with the concept of the Alternative format.

When the Alternative format began emerging in the early 90s, Val Garriss, B/D & A VP/Programming & Research predicted "The format will grow to occupy the (contemporary) hit radio position in many markets." Based on the current format profile, his prediction proved correct.

Much like the original rock format of the late '60s and early '70s, Alternative music is represented by diverse styles created by developing artists. As the music, artists, and format grew in popularity, Active and Mainstream rock siphoned the guitar-based element, while AC and CHR incorporated the pop element into their mix. Recently, a hybrid fragmentation of Alternative and AC, known as Modern AC, began popping up in markets across the country. While this new format has yet to prove its staying power, it is offering another focused choice for a portion of what was once Alternative's exclusive domain.

Joel Schaaf says, "If Alternative stations are going to continue to be successful, you are going to need a great morning show to start the day and then recycle those listeners." Clearly, Alternative stations with big morning shows, such as WNNX/Atlanta, KOME/San Jose, and WGRD/Grand Rapids, are in a better position than those without the day-starting, come-generating morning show.

Alternative radio's biggest challenge is, according to Andy Bloom, "to figure out how to keep it alternative, yet mass appeal." Most any Alternative PD will tell you the music cycle has peaked and is currently in a lull. The hallmark of the format has been playing challenging music that keeps the format on the cutting edge for its core. However, with the fan base for Alternative music expanding, the format must recall what brought the rock format to critical mass in the late '70s and early '80s. By finding music compatible with the core's expectations, the format can break new sounds; but to prevent core erosion, it now must hold on to its hits and work harder to own them in face of increasing competition.

### **What the Heck Is It?**

Perhaps one of the most misunderstood, yet quality formats to rise out of rock radio's fragmentation is AAA/AA/PAR. Depending on who you talk to, this format is known as Adult Alternative Albums, Adult Alternative, or Progressive Adult Rock.

Regardless of what it is called, those creating and listening to AAA are extremely passionate about the format! Based on the Winter '97 Arbitron survey, AAA's 25-54 adult audience is extremely loyal, with P-1 performance upwards of 45%.

AAA is an adult rock format that is a direct, yet distant descendant of the original progressive rock format. Designed to attract adult listeners disenfranchised by AOR's failure to completely grow with its original target demo and Classic Rock's reliance on the same old songs, AAA has the potential to deliver a quality adult audience unrivaled by any other rock fragmentation.

The success and future of AAA, according to G. Michael Donovan, KMTT/Seattle President, "depends on two things: the availability of great Program Directors who understand how this product must behave and group heads who recognize the viability of album rock for adults." The problem many AAA stations face is the temptation to be eclectic, rather than familiar and appealing enough to attract a sizable audience.

"The greatest challenge for AAA remains the biggest challenge it faced five years ago: how to be commercially viable and artistically unique at the same time," says Donovan. The stations that have met that challenge, such as KFOG/San Francisco and KMTT/Seattle, have experienced tremendous success. KFOG has reached number one and KMTT number two in the critical 25-54 demo.

While the diverse and fairly exclusive music mix is the initial draw to the format, AAA, like all the other rock formats, must create a total

entertainment package to reach these levels of success. A morning show, marketing, features, and promotions that fit the target audience's lifestyle and expectations clearly make AAA an enjoyable listening experience and ratings success.

Because many AAA stations rely on adult-oriented modern rock, the recent development of Modern AC is causing AAA problems on the younger, female end of their audience. In Seattle, where KMTT's owner Entercom also owns Oldies, Alternative, and Active Rock stations, Donovan indicates, "When you know what the stations on either side of you are planning to do, it makes it much easier to super-serve your core. And super-serving your core makes as much sense today as it did before deregulation."

AAA is a great example of a format that can make a solid return on investment in the age of deregulation. With the exception of a couple of markets, the most successful AAA stations will be part of a multiopoly.\*

### **Back to the Future...**

As long as rock stations of any type understand and remain focused on their core audience, super-serving them with music, marketing, promotion, and personality that fits their lifestyle, the various forms of the format will continue to succeed. The new era of deregulation makes it possible for narrower-cast forms to exist and prosper where they would not have a few short years ago.

Depending on the market, competitive matrix, and ownership umbrella, many variations of the broader form could develop. During research for this article, blues rock, reggae, classic alternative, and whatever other dreams that may exist in a programmer's mind were mentioned as possible opportunities.

Technology could also drive new ideas and forms. Local programming with nationally syndicated personalities in real time and localized for the market is already possible. As groups grow regionally, they could employ the hub and spoke concept, utilizing the complete programming package from the larger, centrally located market to impact all the satellite markets. And then there is the web...

The rock format. It's 30 years old. It can still be trusted. As The Who said years ago, "Long live rock, I need it every day."

### **Active Rock: Station monitor (WRIF/Detroit)**

Queensryche

Sign of the Times

Nirvana

In Bloom

Verve Pipe

The Freshman

Ozzy Osbourne  
 Collective Soul  
 Van Halen  
 Red Hot Chili Peppers  
 Metallica  
 Pearl Jam  
 Tool

Crazy Train  
 Precious Deceleration  
 You Really Got Me  
 Under the Bridge  
 King Nothing  
 Black  
 Stinkfist

### **Classic Rock: Station monitor (WZGC/Atlanta)**

The Beatles  
 Bob Dylan  
 Pete Townshend

The Doors  
 Buffalo Springfield  
 Stevie Nicks

Norman Greenbaum  
 Genesis  
 Little Feat  
 Steve Winwood  
 The Cars  
 Golden Earring

Come Together  
 Tangled Up in Blue  
 Let My Love Open the  
 Door  
 Love Her Madly  
 Mr. Soul  
 Stop Draggin' My Heart  
 Around  
 Spirit in the Sky  
 A Trick of the Tail  
 Dixie Chicken  
 While You See a Chance  
 Just What I Needed  
 Radar Love

### **AAA: Station monitor (KFOG/San Francisco)**

Peter Gabriel  
 John Fogerty  
 Tom Petty  
 John Mellencamp

Talking Heads  
 Chris Isaak  
 The Rolling Stones  
 Mark Eitzel  
 Bob Marley  
 Odds  
 John Lennon  
 Paul Simon

Lovetown  
 Walking in a Hurricane  
 I Won't Back Down  
 Ain't Even Done With the  
 Night  
 Life During Wartime  
 Dancin'  
 Jumpin' Jack Flash  
 In Your Life  
 Jamming  
 Heterosexual Man  
 Stand By Me  
 Diamonds on the Soles of  
 Her Shoes

### **Alternative: Station monitor (WGRD/Grand Rapids)**

Live	Freaks
Bush	Everything Zen
Mighty Mighty Bosstones	The Impression that I Get
Red Hot Chili Peppers	Under the Bridge
Soundgarden	Burden in My Hand
The Verve Pipe	The Freshman
Nirvana	All Apologies
Third Eye Blind	Semi-Charmed Life
Collective Soul	Precious Declaration
Green Day	Brain Stew/Jaded
Sublime	Santeria
Stone Temple Pilots	Interstate Love Song
No Doubt	Spiderwebs

### **Mainstream: Station monitor (WFBQ/Indianapolis)**

Boston	Smokin'
Hootie & the Blowfish	I Go Blind
Rush	The Spirit of Radio
Wallflowers	One Headlight
Bob Seger	Night Moves
Santana	Black Magic
	Woman/Gypsy Queen
Bad Company	Ready for Love
ZZ Top	Tush
REO Speedwagon	Golden Country
John Mellencamp	The Full Catastrophe

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## **Alternative**

The seeds of the Alternative format were actually sown in the late '70s with the advent of what was then called New Wave or Modern Rock. Then,

bands such as Elvis Costello, Modern English, The Pretenders, and the Psychedelic Furs were sometimes heard on AOR stations before disappearing from their airwaves in the early 80s. But this movement didn't die out completely, and was soon adopted by stations who called themselves Alternative--meaning they were an alternative to standard AOR stations. There were some moderately successful stations on both coasts in the late '70s and early '80s. Because of the size of the coastal markets and associated cutting edge lifestyles, the east and west coasts were able to support adventurous radio stations. WLIR/Long Island and KROQ/Los Angeles were 2 pioneering stations that started this tradition.

In the late '80s and early '90s, a movement which was to be called the "Seattle Sound" exploded onto the rock world, changing it--and rock radio--forever.

Today, like in the early '80s, alternative music is crossing over into rock and pop radio's airwaves, and has shaped many of the music trends of today. Leslie Fram, Program Director of WNNX/Atlanta says programmers really can't use the word alternative anymore because alternative is now mainstream. "If you want to use the word alternative it means that we try to play a lot of music and bands that don't have another radio format to go to. 99X and other Alternative stations tend to play different textures and different types of music. Bands that wouldn't normally be heard on a Mainstream radio station. For instance, 311."

Like the more traditional rock radio formats, the Alternative format targets 18-34 year old adults. Alternative stations play a wider variety of music from artists such as Mighty Mighty Bosstones, Pearl Jam, Nirvana, 311, Veruca Salt, Live, Sponge, Filter, Elvis Costello, The Cranberries, Seven Mary Three; Although these stations are really more song than artist oriented.

Fram says that Alternative stations also have a different feel to them image-wise and presentation-wise from other rock stations. "Anywhere from self-deprecating to quirky. Not your normal 10-in-a-row mainstay type presentation. Going back to Alternative today as opposed to 4 or 5 years ago, the format has really escalated. You saw stations playing more of the Nirvanas and Pearl Jams because those records were out-selling everything else. Now, the format, to me, is in kind of a weird place because we're seeing through research and attitudes with the listeners that they're really tired of that "Seattle Sound," and they want something new. They don't know quite what they want, but they expect you to find it. People are now gravitating toward different niche sounds like Squirrel Nut Zippers, which is the swing sound, to ska and the more rhythmic pop sounds--which is

unusual because the format has always been based on guitars. But what's really working now is this new alternative sound. Anything from Beck to Sublime and the Mighty Mighty Bosstones. Whoever thought that ska music would be getting as much airplay as it is now!? You're even seeing bands like Mighty Mighty Bosstones being played on Top 40 and Modern AC stations."

Fram adds that she feels programmers of Alternative radio are going to have to be more open to contesting to stay competitive in the future. "In the beginning, I think we were all a little wary of doing regular radio station contesting. Maybe we thought that the listeners would think it was too much hype. We were a little sensitive to what the core (audience) was thinking. Alternative's got to be a little different. We didn't want to sound like a huppy Top 40 radio station. Now we're saying *Well, okay. Maybe if we do it in a fun way then it'll be okay* as long as we don't over-think it too much. People who listen to this format--Hey! They don't mind winning cash and cars! Those things will work well as long as they're presented in the same fashion that you would present anything else on your station."

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## **What's So Alternative About Alternative Anyway? by Greg Gillispie**

For the last two years, Alternative music has been touted as the savior of AOR and CHR, and the driving force behind the growth of the format that has been called everything from Alternative to Modern Rock to New Rock. But what's so alternative about Alternative music anyway?

Looking back at the playlists of the successful stations in this format, you see a tremendous diversity. There are contemporary singer/song writers such as Sarah McLachlan and Tori Amos; contemporary folk artists such as the Indigo Girls and Sheryl Crow; contemporary rhythmic/dance artists such as Erasure and Stereo MCs; contemporary rock artists such as Pearl Jam and Alice in Chains; and extreme hard core artists such as Nine Inch Nails and The Rollins Band.

Is this diversity really any different than that of the early days of progressive AOR when you could hear artists such as Elton John and James Taylor, Joni Mitchell and Judy Collins, War and Stevie Wonder, The Rolling

Stones and The Who, and Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin? In those days, Alternative was not even in a broadcaster's vocabulary.

Webster defines alternative as *a proposition or situation offering a choice between two or more things only one of which may be chosen*. When you think about the audience loyalty that these so-called Alternative stations have cultivated, they really do not fit the definition of alternative at all. In fact, for many 18-34 adults these stations have become their sole radio station. The reason is, these stations have focused on this life group's musical tastes and lifestyle needs, becoming the fresh new music and entertainment outlet. Doesn't this sound like the definition of mainstream?

Webster defines mainstream as *a prevailing current or direction of activity or influence*. Considering the number of artists and songs that have started at the so-called Alternative format and crossed over to AOR and CHR, and the volume of sales these artists have generated, it certainly appears that this format is truly the new mainstream.

While many stations position themselves as mainstream and remain successful against their target audience, they are hardly riding the crest of the prevailing current. They have been forced to live up to the expectations of their past.

Perhaps it's time to realize that a major shift is happening before our eyes and ears. Rather than focusing on the definition of music styles and continuing the debate on what fits where, maybe we all should wake up to the **new mainstream**. Those that don't, may find themselves swept away by the current.

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## AAA

A throwback to the more progressive rock fragmentation that developed in the late '60s, AAA (*Adult Alternative Albums*) is also sometimes called *Progressive Rock* or *Adult Rock*. This format goes deeper than just the hits from core artists, and attracts an older, more up-scale segment of the rock audience. AAA features music from artists such as Melissa Etheridge, Blues Traveler, Dave Matthews Band, 10,000 Maniacs, Verve Pipe, Bodeans,

Sting, Bruce Cockburn, Phish, Better Than Ezra, U2 and REM.

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## **AAA Format Focus**

### **by Greg Gillispie**

In the last year there has been a lot of talk about a new format that, in reality, isn't all that new. The format, known as AAA (Adult Alternative Albums), PAR (Progressive Adult Radio), TAR (True Album Radio), or Adult Rock, has its foundation in the pre-AOR days of progressive or underground rock. Progressive rock radio, which evolved into AOR in the mid-'70s, embraced a new generation of rock music and was born out of Top 40 radio's musical fragmentation in the late '60s. Now AAA is developing much like its forefather, as a result of the fragmentation of the broad-based rock format, AOR.

Many AAA proponents are touting this format as a higher quality, adult appeal rock format than mainstream AOR or Classic Rock. Others see AAA as an eclectic, self-indulgent format that has yet to be proven in the mass market.

Let's explore the audience, music, marketing, promotion, presentation and success potential of the AAA format.

### **The Audience**

Most AAA stations specifically focus on 35-44 adults with a broader target of 30-50 adults. The majority of AAA partisans grew up on rock n' roll in the late '60s and '70s, but have become disenfranchised by the same old classics and today's hard rock or new, unproven/unfamiliar artists. They want quality music that relates to their lifestyle and is not generally available from other radio formats.

The listeners of AAA are indeed a higher qualitative group. Most are college educated, have dual incomes, own or use a computer, own a house and drive moderate to upscale cars. They eat out, rent or see movies, buy prerecorded music, and enjoy family or outdoor recreational activities several times a month. AAA's target listener considers himself intelligent, independent, young, proactive, socially aware, forward thinking, an opinion

leader, and into music. They spend a substantial, yet unmeasurable amount of time listening to Public radio.

### **The Music**

The AAA station plays a wide variety of quality music. The Core Artist List substantiates the programmer's quest for quality. The AAA music mix encompasses a wide spectrum of sounds, including acoustically-based singer-song writers, progressively influenced rock, modern blues, lesser exposed classic rock, and today's next generation modern AAA artists.

Unlike most AOR or Classic Rock stations, AAA stations play more than just the hits or biggest songs by the core artists. In fact, core artist depth is a prime component of AAA.

Depending on the station, the AAA format plays from 30% to 50% current music in each hour, but only from artists that fit the audience lifestyle and artistic expectations. AAA makes a strong commitment to new music.

The overall texture of the AAA station is extremely important in creating a pleasant listening environment. Along with a lack of repetition, the AAA format can generate an extremely long TSL.

### **Marketing**

AAA's target audience has been bombarded by a number of messages over their lifetime. They have become very wary of hype. As a result, AAA stations generally take a low key approach to on-air imaging and a more direct approach in reaching their listeners.

Rarely do you hear a strongly worded positioning statement on a AAA station. While some stations use phrases like "Quality Rock, True Variety" or "Where the Music Comes First," most let the music and variety naturally position the station.

While traditional marketing concepts such as television and billboards are used by some AAA stations, most attempt a more personal approach. Database marketing, interactive phone or computer systems, station newsletters, loyal listener "clubs," and appropriately designed handouts can reduce hype and create a stronger bond between station and listener. In AAA, the relationship with the audience is paramount.

### **Promotions**

AAA's primary promotional plan must address the listener's lifestyle. Recreational activities such as cycling, skiing, concerts, running, cooking, dining, traveling, and socially important issues such as recycling or environmental concerns comprise the bulk of a AAA station's promotions.

Family oriented events are also part of the AAA game plan.

### **Presentation**

The AAA on-air presentation must be very natural. Communicators who can relate as real people to the listener's lifestyle with a bit of irreverence are the best. Remember, the target audience grew up on "Saturday Nigh Live," "M\*A\*S\*H" and "Animal House." A vast knowledge of the music is critically important.

### **Success Potential**

Of the surveyed AAA stations, 39% are top five 25-49 men. Stations that have been in the format for a number of years, such as KBCO/Denver, WXRT/Chicago, KINK/Portland, and KTCZ/Minneapolis, have shown even greater success.

The AAA format is not a quick fix overnight sensation. It takes time, perhaps as long as two years, to develop a sizable, loyal audience. With the advent of duopolies and increasing fragmentation, AAA offers a viable, successful option.

*Reprinted with permission from B/D & A and McVay Media. This article appeared in The Approach, Volume VII, Issue 17/September 6, 1994.*

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## **Country**

In its early days, *Country* radio was most popular in the south, midwest and southwest. Today, country music has exploded in the radio industry with more radio stations adopting the format in recent years than ever before. KZLA Program Director John Sebastian calls Country radio "the most successful format in America today--by far." According to Sebastian, Country music's popularity stems from it's ability to connect with listeners. "If you want an emotional definition of why it's successful I'd say it's because it touches people. It deals with people's feelings. It's back to what used to be successful in Top 40 and AOR, and I think they've lost some of this--that is--dealing with heart music. Actually dealing with lyrics, melodies, understandable stories, and real life. I think people are so starved for that.

That's why Country is the biggest format in America."

The Country format can be divided into 2 types of approaches to the format. One highlights *Traditional Country*, the other takes a *Young Country* or *Modern Country* approach. The Country format attracts a wide demographic audience, with core listeners ranging in age of 25-54. Traditional Country plays artists whose sound leans more traditional, while Young or Modern Country features many of the more recent artists, giving stations of this format a fresh, new sound that is attractive to listeners. Brooks & Dunn, Garth Brooks, Vince Gill, Leann Rimes, Trisha Yearwood, Alabama, Reba McEntire, Alan Jackson, George Strait, Diamond Rio, and Clint Black are all examples of artists found on Country music stations.

## News/Talk

The news/talk format may take one of several approaches to the format, depending upon who the station is targeting. These forms include All News, All Talk, All Sports or a combination of any or all the approaches. Programming may be live or syndicated, depending on the station, programming and market size. No matter which approach is taken, News/Talk/Sports radio tends to appeal to an older core audience ranging in age from 25-54 and above. The audience of these formats tends to be more up-scale and college educated. Talk radio, especially, has enjoyed a rise in popularity in recent years due to the success of syndicated shows like Rush Limbaugh and Dr. Laura Schlessinger, and more stations are also electing to feature an All -Sports format, featuring games and discussions on sports topics.

The All News station features news broken down into presentation segments, much like is found on CNN. According to CBS-AM/New York anchor Wayne Cabot, the news stories and discussion topics that are presented are based on what the station thinks the public wants to hear. Cabot says deregulation and new technology has also impacted News and Talk radio. "Technology has advanced so rapidly that everyone is everywhere at the same time. So the rush to get to the telephone to get on the air first is gone. We all have cell phones now. We're on the air instantaneously. With satellites we're around the world instantaneously. It has become less competitive because technology has enabled us to be on a level playing field."

Over the years, the news media has been accused of "overkilling" stories in their quest to remain the "news leader" in the eyes and ears of the public. This became especially apparent in the recent coverage of Princess Diana's

death in an automobile crash in Paris. Cabot agrees that sometimes the media doesn't know when to let go. "Sometimes we're afraid to be the first to back off a story. There's comfort in numbers. As long as everybody else is using these same stories, that "pack mentality" or "pack journalism" does tend to protect us from potential criticism from our bosses. It's the safe route, but it's not always the wise route. The problem with doing All News is that it's the nature of the beast to be repetitive. You want to repeat something often enough so that people who are tuning in for a span of--say 20 or 25 minutes--will hear the story."

A more in-depth discussion on News/Talk radio is featured in Chapter 4.

## **Urban Contemporary (UC)**

Urban Contemporary formatted radio stations play a mixture of dance, Rap, R&B, and Contemporary Hits. Hybrids of this format include Urban AC and CHR/Rhythmic. Urban stations are most commonly found in large markets where there is a high concentration of African-American and other ethnic groups. The target audience of UC stations varies depending upon which musical approach is adopted by the station. Artists found on an Urban Contemporary station include Whitney Houston, MC Lyte, Lil' Kim, R. Kelly, Az Yet, Babyface, Monica, Aaliyah, Foxy Brown, Toni Braxton, and En Vogue.

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## **Urban Radio by Tony Gray**

When President Clinton signed the telecommunications bill into law in February of 1996, the face of the radio industry changed. From what was originally an industry of small entrepreneurial companies, to what is now an industry controlled by large publicly held corporations.

How has Urban radio been impacted? Well the format remains healthy, audience shares are as strong as ever. Revenues show continued growth but there are some who are concerned that minority ownership of commercial broadcast stations has seen little or no growth. Of the 5,285 commercial FM stations now operating, only 77 or 1.5% are owned by African-American controlled companies. If we look at the 4,906 commercial AM stations, the numbers improve, 99 or 2.0% of industry totals.

So with such a small share of control of the broadcast facilities in the hands of African-Americans, we are faced with two important questions: Why are the numbers so low? And what impact if any does ownership have on the consumers? The answer to our first question was uncovered in a recent U.S. Department of Commerce report. The report cites limited access to capital as the principle reason for low ownership among African-Americans.

Other contributing factors include the elimination of the minority tax certificate program and the lack of governmental policy in the current administration to encourage African-American ownership of broadcast facilities. While many of the black broadcasters would agree that you will not find any major differences in the programming of the radio stations operated by minorities, they do feel that African-American broadcasters are more in tune with consumer expectations beyond music, contesting and promotional activity.

"We know from perceptual research that we have conducted in all our markets, the fact that we are black owned has some impact on our listeners, but it is not the primary reason a listener chooses to listen to us over one of our competitors," says Steve Hegwood, Vice President of programming for Washington DC based Radio One, the nations largest African-American owned radio group.

Why is the issue of ownership important? In a word: Competition. The battle for black listeners has escalated over the past several months. When operators like Evergreen Media and Clear Channel Communications recognized that radio stations programming music targeting African-Americans often had the highest ratings in their respective markets--with the potential of generating millions of dollars in annual advertising revenue--the industry at large now sees the real business potential of urban radio.

Barry Mayo, former president of Broadcasting Partners, Inc. agrees with Steve Hegwood on the issue of African-American ownership, but adds that the fact that a radio station is owned by blacks in no way assures listeners' loyalty. "A broadcaster regardless of race must deliver a high quality product to the marketplace," insists Mayo. He also urges broadcasters to do their homework as it relates to the African-American consumer. "As a former equity participant I must say that the decreased percentage of African-American ownership as a direct result of the telecommunications bill is very disappointing to me. My only hope is that these large public companies who have made the decision to become major players in black radio understand the difference in operating these properties as opposed to their other general market properties. Radio to black listeners is more than

the music a station may play. Black radio stations are an important voice to the African-American community; these new players need to be committed to hiring and/or developing strong African-American management."

Don Moore, Senior Vice President and General Manager of Evergreen Media's WVAZ-FM Chicago says he is focused on dispelling buyer misconceptions as they relate to black consumers and their collective buying power.

A buying power that spends well over \$446 billion dollars annually in the consumer market place, the black population is growing at twice the rate of the non-ethnic population. Research conducted by Interep Radio projects that the total U.S. black population will exceed 35 million by the end of this decade. The study also projects black consumer disposable income should grow at a comparable rate.

By utilizing black-formatted radio, advertisers can reach 96% of all black people 12 and older. Even more impressive 97.1% of all black women 25-54 listen to radio on a weekly basis.

With such a high level of business interest in the African-American market, it is important to note that the Urban format continues to evolve. In effect to hold on to as well as grow audience shares, many Urban stations have focused on niche programming which "superserves" specific demographics within the urban life group.

While the final decision about what music receives airplay still falls on the shoulders of programmers, black consumers are having more influence on these decisions than at anytime in Urban radio's history. Audience research is the driving influence behind this rising trend that has moved our segment of the industry to narrower targets. Most of today's leading Urban stations zero in on an 8 to 10 year demographic target. Once said target is identified the programming and management team move to develop strategic marketing plans to convert as much of the station's weekly cume to P1\* partisanship.

Programming in this new environment of consolidation and huge media conglomerates offers special challenges for many black-owned stations who don't have the dollars to invest in their properties that their corporate owned competitors have.

If we look at the Washington DC market we can find at least one example of a black-owned station that has more than met the challenge. WHUR's revenues have moved from an estimated 7.1 million in 1995 to a projected 9 million for 1997. Black broadcasters can compete but they must target their stations and find innovative ways to market and promote the station once the product is focused at a specific demographic.

Verna Green, Senior Vice President and General Manager of Evergreen Media's WJLB and WMXD-FM Detroit, urges large corporations to look at Urban stations as more than just profit-making entities. "Our listeners look at their radio stations as extended parts of their families, therefore, it is in our best interest to pay particular attention to the human component of the business to insure long-term economic success."

People before profits. That's an interesting thought. The FCC issues licenses to broadcasters in part to serve the public's interest. Yet the fact that broadcasting is a business that is now more profit driven than in any time in the industry's history, the question now becomes how does the industry serve the public's best interest? Did Congress take into consideration the potential of reduced diversity when it moved to replace the Communications Act of 1934 with the Telecommunications Act of 1996? Did our representatives consider the potential of creating what some believe to be format monopolies? That, in many cases, severely limits--if not excludes--the opportunity of participation by individuals who have invested their entire careers in broadcasting.

The range of debate runs from that of Newt Gingrich, who argues profits are synonymous with public service, to that of Vice President Al Gore, who believes some public interest concerns can only be addressed once profitability of the industry has been assured. Politicians of both parties promised the public that the Telecommunications Act would provide increased competition as well as create new jobs. At this point some industry observers argue that the opposite has occurred as it relates to Urban radio.

The head-to-head battles that made the Urban format a fun and exciting place to be in the 70's and 80's have all but disappeared. Competition has become more or less a planned exercise in this new world of deregulation. The Telecommunications Act has been a boom for big business, but the jury's still out on the remaining single station operators and small group Urban owners.

Ronita Hawes-Sanders, President of Hawes-Sanders Broadcasting, believes that at this point the only way for African-Americans to participate in media ownership is to:

1. Have had a sound business and acquisition plan in place prior to the enactment of the Telecommunications Act of 1996.
2. Be fully committed to stay the course and weather the storm under heightened levels of competition.

3. Have the ability to secure senior level debt.

Equally important, Hawes-Sanders urges those African-American operators who are in the broadcasting field to strategize and share knowledge and information openly as a means of insuring current survival and long-term potential.

The 90's have certainly proven to be a pivotal decade for Urban radio. So, as we move to the close of this decade and the 20th Century, it is my hope that we who have chosen this area of the electronic media for our professions continue to take the necessary steps to stay ahead of the curve.

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## **Adult Standards**

The Adult Standards format evolved from a format called Middle-of-the-Road (MOR) or Nostalgia. Typically found on the AM radio dial, Adult Standards targets a much older up-scale demographic audience of 35-64 year old adults. Although some stations do offer live programming, many stations that present the Adult Standards format obtain it through syndicated programming.

Bob Lee, former Program director of KCEE/Tucson, says the Adult Standards format is currently undergoing an evolution process. "Back in the late '50s and early '60s when everything was on AM and you had the stations that played what was traditionally known as pop music--Doris Day, Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin and those kind of folk, that's kind of what we're doing now. The Adult Standards format of today bears in mind that many of today's adults are in their 40's, 50's and 60's, and grew up with Elvis Presley, The Everley Brothers, and people like that so some of the more middle-of-the-road softer sounds from those people are included as well. Also some big band music from the '30s since some of our listeners are also in their 70's and 80's. So it really runs the gambit. Many traditional, younger FM rock music programmers would say *How can you possibly play Frank Sinatra, Glenn Miller Orchestra, and Elvis Presley on the same radio station back-to-back?* It's very easy because in the late '50s and early '60s when this whole thing was evolving--that's what you got. The disc jockies in those

days played a little Frank Sinatra. They played the rock n' roll that the kids wanted to hear, and they played some big band. It worked then and there's no reason why the people listening now don't find that it works as well. It absolutely is a format that's the roots of radio. Adult Standards stations are now playing a lot of the really giant hits of the '50s like "Que Sera Sera" by Doris Day, and a lot of the one-hit-wonders that we've considered to be the rock n' roll in the '50s. The stuff that our parents were saying *Oh, man! That's awful!* Now they're the very same people saying *This music is great!* Especially when compared to some of the head-banger stuff today! But what's happening today is that people in their late 40's and early 50's--the so-called baby boomers from post World War II--these are the people who are coming to this music format. This is their music and they're re-discovering it. They're playing it in their offices at work as kind of background music, and the response has just been tremendous across the country. And it's not going to go away. I would imagine that so-called Adult Standards stations 20 years from now are not going to sound like the Adult Standards that we're listening to today. What's interesting about this format is that, when it was created a few years ago, it was designed primarily for AM stations. Over the past few years we've found that it's moving to the FM band very quickly and very successfully. Just because the people who grew up listening to Big Band music are dying right and left doesn't mean there will be a total disregard for the music. There will always be an audience for it. It may not be huge, but guys like Harry Connick Jr. recognize it. That's why they're recording new stuff, and people are buying it."

Lee adds that another reason why the Adult Standards format is currently experiencing a certain amount of rejuvenation is because the demographics with the purchasing power are changing. "The new demographics bandwagon, and I'm on it, is that the 25-54 demographic is going to be replaced by 45-60. You can see the national advertising agencies that are recognizing this. Look at the people on the television commercials. You don't see quite so many vim and virile beach bunnies and beach guys as you used to see. Now you're seeing more 40-somethings. The people who deny that are stupid because that's going to be the largest segment of society. They're going to have the money, and they're going to want to spend it."

## Easy Listening

Also known as Beautiful Music, the Easy Listening format features instrumental music with very few vocal offerings. Typically found on the FM dial, Easy Listening stations target an older adult audience of 35-64.

The audience, while not huge, does tend to listen for long periods of time as Easy Listening stations are often used as background music in medical and business offices. Programming is generally obtained from music syndicators, which is why talk on an Easy Listening station tends to be brief with little or no personality.

## **Gold/Oldies**

Unlike listeners of the Adults Standards format, listeners of Gold/Oldies stations tend to be in their late 30's to mid 50's. A typical Oldies station, which can be found on both the AM and FM dials, plays the hits from the '50's through the '70's. A hybrid form of the Oldies format is a format known as Classic Hits, which is similar to Classic Rock except that Classic hits plays only the hits while Classic Rock will go a little deeper on albums. Examples of artists who are played on Gold/Oldies stations include Buddy Holly, Herman's Hermits, The Beatles, CCR, The Hollies, and the Motown sound.

## **Religious**

Programming on Religious formatted stations varies depending upon the target audience. While some stations feature Gospel and religious talk programming, a format known as Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) has been gaining popularity in recent years. This may be due, in part, to greater exposure being given to Contemporary Christian artists. In recent years, many major record labels have begun or acquired subsidiary labels that produce CCM, and artists have benefited from this with increased marketing exposure. Also, because cross-over artists such as Amy Grant, Michael W. Smith, Jars of Clay, Stryper, Kathy Troccoli, and DC Talk have received airplay on mainstream formats such as Rock, AC, CHR and Alternative, this exposure has brought attention to other performers of the CCM genre. Other artist featured on CCM radio stations include Newsboys, Petra, Steven Curtis Chapman, PFR, and Susan Ashton.

## **Spanish**

This format has experienced tremendous growth in recent years, and is expected to continue to grow into the next century. This is due to a rise in the Spanish-speaking population in several sections of the United States, including California, Florida, New York and the Southwest. Stations

featuring the Spanish format offer talk and music elements which are, of course, in Spanish. Musically, depending upon the station, there are four types of Spanish music that are played: Ranchero (Mexican Country), Nortena (Northern Mexican Country), Contemporary Spanish, and Tropical (Salsa). Some stations also offer News/Talk and Sports programming.

## **Classical**

Typically found on the FM dial, Classical music stations are usually a part of the programming offered on Public Radio. There are few commercial stations who offer Classical programming since the audience, while extremely loyal, is relatively small. Regular listeners of Classical music stations are generally older, upscale and well-educated. Promotions, on-air chatter or any other kind of hype typical of other formats is rarely found on Classical stations.

## **Smooth Jazz/NAC**

Smooth Jazz, also known as NAC (New Adult Contemporary), is a format that began in the late 1980s. This format, which appeals to an upscale, well-educated target audience of 35-54 year old adults, is one of the few formats that has a multi-ethnic audience.

Bob O'Connor, Senior Vice President of Optimum Broadcast Consulting and Research, a company that specializes in the Smooth Jazz/NAC format, describes the format's approach as "sexy, romantic and classy." According to O'Connor, the music base of a Smooth Jazz/NAC station contains several elements. "In the beginning it was 50% contemporary jazz--David Sanborn, Kenny G, Bob James, Grover Washington Jr., and George Benson. All the music by those artists is instrumental. Another 20% is new age music. People like Yanni, John Tesh, solo piano and solo guitar stuff. 15% features urban vocals from artists like Luther Vandross, Anita Baker, and Sade. The last 15% is a mix of soft AC vocals like Simply Red and Mariah Carey. Not the hit songs. We play songs by hit artists, but we play album tracks so that we're not necessarily playing the same songs as the AC station. The idea behind the format was to program something that was unattackable. It couldn't really be flanked. That means that when a competitor comes up on you, and while they might not do the exact same thing that you're doing, they might pick one aspect of what you're doing and really go after that to get the core audience. But this format has so many different elements in it that it really is an unattackable format. If you're playing a little bit of AC music, the

AC in the market wouldn't start playing jazz because that's not what they do. They really didn't do anything because they didn't know how to attack this format. It's a unique format and the timing was perfect because it came at a time when a lot of the stations were sounding the same. The segmentation of radio formats hadn't really started yet. What we went after was a lot of disenfranchised listeners that had left radio because they were very bored with it. What we tried to do was program anti-radio. We decided to take this small segment of highly educated, extremely successful people who had left radio, and try to bring them back. We knew we would never get enough listeners to be number one, but we also knew we could make a very nice living being number four or number five 25-54 year old adults with this tremendous demographic of upscale listenership. We could get sponsors like Mercedes Benz, Macintosh Computers and Porsche--companies who really don't do a lot of radio--because we told them *While we don't have the most people, we do have a group that is very loyal to our station. You can't reach these people with other media. They only listen to this type of music because they hate other types of radio. And, they're very, very well-to-do. They can afford your products. So instead of buying time on the local Top 40 station that may have a half a million listeners, but only 10% of them could afford to buy your product, if you buy us we may only have a hundred thousand listeners, but ALL of them make over \$80,000 a year and can afford your product.*"

O'Connor describes the Smooth Jazz/NAC format as a TSL\* based format that may vary slightly depending upon the radio market it serves. According to O'Connor, East Coast stations may lean more urban sounding while West Coast and Sunbelt stations may play more pop/acoustic jazz. O'Connor also says that while the format is often found in large urban centers, this is changing. "Now, markets like Austin, Columbus, Syracuse and Albany are being exposed to the format. That's because upscale pockets are developing everywhere. More and more upscale adults are leaving urban centers and going to Oregon, Spokane, and Wichita. This format, as does any good product, seems to have more of a word-of-mouth appeal. Any marketing person will agree that's the way a great product becomes successful. We found that although it does take marketing dollars, it doesn't take the hundreds of thousands of dollars every book that it takes in other formats. So some of these stations in smaller markets realized that with a marketing budget of \$50,000 a year they could actually market this station because it's a unique and well-done product."

The Smooth Jazz/NAC format is music intensive. Therefore news and information is kept to a minimum. Although this format does do some

contesting, O'Connor says it must be disguised because the audience is very educated and very hip to forced listening. Some of the best contests, according to O'Connor, are ones that evolve around the music such as trips to see concerts, backstage passes, and money to purchase music at a local music store. "Since this audience is upscale, try to come up with prizes that money can't buy," advises O'Connor.

## **Practical Programming Assignments**

1. Do further research on how music trends have affected radio, past and present. Predict future music trends. How will these trends affect radio? Discuss your findings in class.
2. Possible Class Discussion Topics:
  - a. What formats are present in your radio market?
  - b. How long have these formats been presented on their present stations?
  - c. What new formats have been introduced in your market?
  - d. What subtle changes (music and station presentation of other programming elements) have you noticed on the stations in your market?



# **The Program Director as Manager**

## **Chapter Objectives**

**At the end of this chapter students will be able to:**

1. List the responsibilities of the program director.
2. List the responsibilities of the music director.
3. Describe the criteria program directors and music directors use to make music add decisions.
4. Explain how the programming and sales departments work together to increase station revenue.
5. Describe upper management's involvement in the programming process.
6. List the programming tools of a program director and explain how they are used to make programming decisions.
7. Explain how a program director can create a positive work environment for his or her employees.
8. Describe the background and skills needed to be a successful program director.
9. Demonstrate understanding of the chapter's main concepts by completing the Programming Practical Case Studies assignment at the end of the chapter.

# Chapter 3

## Glossary of Radio Terms

**Image Liners:** Short statement that defines a radio station's image and programming.

**Narrowcasting:** Specific programming that is targeted toward a specific target audience.

**Auditorium**

**Music Tests:** Large group information-gathering session conducted to elicit listener perceptions of music.

**Focus Groups:** Small group information-gathering session conducted to elicit top-line points for further research.

**Call-Out Research:** Information-gathering session conducted by phone to elicit listener perceptions of music, radio stations, and listener lifestyles.

**Aircheck Sessions:** Meeting between a Program Director and an announcer to critique the announcer's taped radio show.

**Promos:** Written or recorded "commercial" that describes a radio station feature or promotional event.

**Music Adds:** Songs that are added to a specific category on a radio station's music playlist.

**Time Buys:** Commercial time purchased on a radio station to advertise an event, product or service.

**Direct Mail:** Survey or advertisement conducted by mail to advertise an event, contest or to elicit listener perceptions of music, radio stations and listener lifestyles.

**Books:** Slang reference to the Arbitron book that displays radio station ratings in a radio market.

**Duopoly:** Group of radio stations of varying formats operated by one company in a radio market. (Now called multipoly)

**Perceptuals:** Market-wide study that elicits individual reactions of the performance aspects of the radio station.

# 3

## The Program Director as Manager

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### Responsibilities of the Program Director

The programming department of a radio station is one of the most important divisions of the radio team. Headed by the Program Director, otherwise known as the PD in the radio industry, the Program Director is responsible for everything that is broadcast over the station's airwaves. While upper management and the station's owners may select the station's music or talk format and then hire a PD who specializes in programming that particular format, it is the PD who is in charge of the day-to-day execution of the station's sound and image. The various elements that are broadcast, including music, image liners,\* DJ talk, and promotions are crucial ingredients that make up the station's program mix. This is developed by the PD in conjunction with upper management's vision for the radio station. The program mix defines the "product" that is offered to the listening audience. Listeners sample the products presented by radio stations, and then make listening decisions based on which radio station best serves their needs. Therefore, PDs need to thoroughly understand the needs and lifestyle of the station's intended target audience, and stay one step ahead of any new trends that may affect their listeners.

With the advent of format "narrowcasting"\* in recent years, Program Directors now have to clearly define their radio station's format and target audience since there are usually competitors in the market who offer a similar program mix. As in any industry, offering a superior product is the key to obtaining high ratings in this extremely competitive media realm. These ratings eventually translate into revenue dollars for the radio station. Naturally, a goal of the radio station and its ownership is to make the most money possible without compromising the product offered by the station.

Greg Gillispie, a 24 year veteran programmer of radio stations such as WDVE/Pittsburgh, KAZY/Denver, and WRXK/Ft. Myers, says Program Directors are the equivalent of product managers in the corporate world. "You're really no different from the guy on the assembly line in terms of the

person who oversees the product of whatever is being made. I happen to oversee the development of a creative entity that you can't hold in your hand. The best part about being in radio--while there are certain things you have to do every day--is that there's a different set of challenges, a different set of problems, a different set of opportunities that constantly present themselves. You're always looking for new ways to make things better, different, more creative--whatever the case may be."

For the Program Director, creating the program mix is much more than selecting the "right" music, the "right" news stories, and the "right" talk elements that will appeal to a target audience. The station's imaging statements, contests and promotions as well as its marketing and promotional positioning in the radio market are crucial components that directly impact the success or failure of the radio station. These elements all fall under the administration of the Program Director, although the PD may also consult with other station departments such as upper management, marketing, research and sales before enacting any final decisions.

It should be noted that while the terms *promotion* and *marketing* may be used interchangeably by some in the radio industry, their functions are, in fact, different. Promotions provide short-term incentives for radio listeners. They are used to generate excitement and awareness of the radio station in the market. A promotion could be as simple as giving away a pair of concert tickets on the air during a contest or it could be a major event that includes a remote broadcast at another location in the market. The basic idea of a promotion is to increase audience involvement with the station and, in the case of a sales promotion, its advertisers. Promotions are generally used on an on-going basis (especially during ratings periods) to enhance the station's image.

Marketing, on the other-hand, involves long-term planning. Marketing is used to determine the needs and wants of the station's target audience, and then the station is positioned to meet those needs. Marketing uses advertising strategies to reach its target audience through the use of other forms of media such as television advertisements, outdoor advertising including billboards and busboards, newspaper advertisements, Web sites, and direct mail to name just a few. Many radio stations develop a listener data base which can be used to develop a current profile of their listeners. Since the needs of radio listeners are constantly changing, the radio station must remain in step with these changes.

Chuck Knight, former programmer of (Hot AC) Star 104.5 in Philadelphia, believes outside marketing plays a huge role in controlling the station's image, and, ultimately, it's level of success. "Certainly our business

is no different than any other business. You have your loyal customers and you have your people who occasionally come through the doors of the store. And you have people who have never been your customers before. We're all trying to get new customers to come through the door. We're also trying to get those occasional customers to become loyal customers while still taking care of our loyal customers. One of the best ways for us to do that and still attract new customers is through outside marketing whether it be television, billboards, busboards, direct mail, or telemarketing. Any number of stations in the Philadelphia area--including us--have used those marketing tools to attract new customers to the store."

However, not every radio station has a huge marketing budget that would allow Program Directors to get the word out through outside media sources. According to Bob Lee, Program Director of KCEE in Tucson, that's when a PD has to develop "street smarts" in order to reach potential listeners. "Many of us find ourselves in these situations with no money to advertise. As a result, you have to go out into the community and do a lot of promotions and give away a lot of free stuff. You try to show up in places where there might be a lot of potential listeners, play the station, and get some of those people to discover it. The people who aren't listening, aren't listening. So they don't know what you're doing unless you can find a way to get to them. Think of creative ways to get your message out where people can see it and say *What the heck is that all about?* You want them to check you out. Some stations may accomplish this by doing some outrageous stunt which will get them a lot of free publicity on television and in the newspapers. The stations who can afford heavy media campaigns do tend to see some benefit from that. But it's up to them to deliver what they promise in those campaigns in order to keep their audience. Radio listeners are kind of fickle by and large. When they see or hear something that's new and hot they'll check it out. If what you're offering is any good they'll stick around for a while."

Jo Robinson, Assistant Program Director at WRCX/Chicago, insists that passion must be a part of any radio station if a PD hopes to keep his or her station competitive. "Even though radio is a passive medium, the people in it had better be passionate. Or radio won't last. Or that particular station won't last. You've got to have passion in any job that you do. Or why do it unless you have to. There's fierce competition in radio. There's a tremendous amount of pride, satisfaction, and learning that goes into this job. I don't know who said this, but if you don't learn something new everyday you're not living. Boy does that hold true! You learn from each other. You learn from your listeners and your peers. When I stop learning put a lily on

my chest."

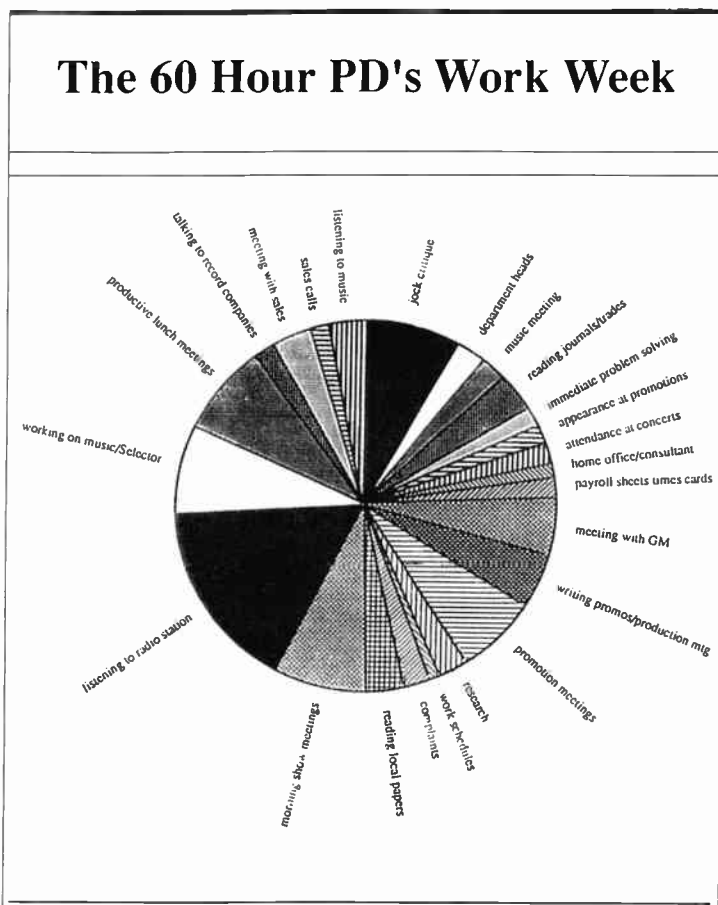
Consultant Lee Abrams, the man who created the Superstars format (which was later coined AOR (Album Oriented Rock) by *Radio and Record's* Mike Harrison), the most successful concept in FM radio history, warns that PDs must keep several key factors in mind when planning competitive strategies. "The stations who I think will succeed in the future will have a balance between the experimental nature of the sixties and the programming technologies of the nineties. A lot of stations today are way too serious and so tightly wound that they're afraid of their own shadows."

Abrams contends that it's the little mistakes some PDs make, such as burying themselves in front of their computers, that can prevent a station from reaching its fullest potential. "It used to be that when Program Directors talked to each other they would say *Heard any good records lately?* Now, when they talk to each other they'll frequently say *Seen any good records lately?* Meaning--anything on the printout look good? Little things like that. And things you don't see anymore like the guerrilla staff training and development where you'd turn the jock staff into an army fighting for the station mission. You also don't see much in terms of real exciting graphics. If you look at most radio station logos it looks like one artist did all of them. There's not a lot of inventiveness and creativity. I think if you can balance the science with real hard core creativity that's where the great stations will once again emerge. If you look back at the sixties--particularly in Top 40--there were some great stations with huge ratings. Even today, when you listen back to the tapes, they were pretty magical. Nowadays there aren't very many magical stations. Just a lot of good, efficient stations."

While marketing the radio station is an on-going concern for the radio Program Director, it is just one of the many duties that fall under the PD's jurisdiction. No day is typical. That's why time management skills are essential. The PD interacts constantly with the station's listening audience, advertisers, outside personnel ranging from record companies to publicity outlets, other station departments as well as the on-air staff members who fall directly under the Program Director's supervision. Therefore, the duties of the PD may vary according to the day's agenda. That's what makes the job so interesting acknowledges Curtiss Johnson, *Billboard Magazine's* "1990 Major Market Program Director of the Year" and current Station Manager/PD of 93 Rock/ KRXQ in Sacramento. "My day can vary from laying out a simple weekend talent schedule to negotiating contracts with disc jockeys to looking at research, talking with record company personnel and meeting with the sales staff on promotions that can be sold to a client or

sponsor. Part of it's spent on the computer scheduling music or checking out the latest research data. I also organize Auditorium Music Tests\* and Call-Out Research.\* Then, of course, there's the traditional things like aircheck sessions\* with disc jockeys and that sort of thing."

Greg Gillispie says his day begins as soon as he gets up in the morning. "I get up early to listen to the morning show while I go through my routine of getting ready for work. I try to come in early before anyone else. That's when I get stuff done. I schedule music. Return letters. When the morning show gets off the air I hold a creative meeting with them to talk about the show. Then there are usually department head meetings and promotions meetings I have to attend. Beyond that, promos\* need to be written and scheduled. I work with the Production Director on creative aspects in terms of the creative imaging of the radio station such as recorded promos. I often go out with sales people to meet clients, and hold meetings with the Promotions Director to make sure all the elements of promotions that are in the planning stages are being taken care of. I hold aircheck sessions with jocks, listen to new music, listen to competing radio stations, and think outside of the "box" to see if there's anything I'm missing to make my radio station more entertaining. I also need to make sure that the music log and all promos are in the studio and ready to go for the next day. Late in the day, when I finally get done, I may go out to a promotion or go out with a client or record rep. Then I go home and listen to the radio station, my competitors, and make notes of any creative brainstorming that might come along. I may touch base with jocks that I didn't have time to talk to that day to pump them up and give them a little boost. So it's a whirlwind of activity that's extremely difficult to define on a day-to-day basis. There's never a dull moment. I would say that if you're serious about being in radio, you'd better not look at it as a job. It's a way of life and a lifestyle."



This graph demonstrates the complexity of the Program Director's job as well as the multiple skills needed to be a successful PD.

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## **The Ultimate P.D.**

**by Greg Gillispie**

Product manager, psychologist, creative director, marketer, salesperson, researcher, producer, business person, music expert, predictor of trends. Today's program director has a lot of roles and responsibilities. The program director is arguably the most important person in a radio station, yet there is no formal training for becoming a great PD.

This special edition of *The Approach* is designed to give you the basics of being a great PD. Consistent execution of these points over time, combined with your smarts and ability to learn, will give you a solid foundation for success.

### **Time Management**

**ORGANIZATION:** Getting control of your time is the most difficult and important aspect of your job. Make a daily "To Do" list, placing the tasks that will most quickly improve the product at the top. Focus your thoughts and efforts on accomplishing these tasks in a reasonable amount of time. At the end of each day, review your list and prepare a new one for the next day.

Take control of your time by using a daily planner. Whether you use a book, calendar, or digital diary, schedule your time and keep your appointments.

If you are an on-air PD (I do not recommend today's PD be on-air), give yourself a break between doing business and your airshift. Maximize your to and from work time. Use it to monitor the competition or listen to new releases, airchecks of potential jocks or influential stations.

**MEETINGS:** Meetings are probably the biggest abuse of time in business. While certain meetings are essential, you can save time and accomplish more by following an efficient schedule.

The meetings a PD must attend each week are: department head, sales, airchecks, promotion, music, and creative (or production). All other meetings should have a specific purpose and can be effectively controlled by:

1. Meeting in a neutral room. You can determine how long the

meeting will last simply by walking out. If it must go further, you will be stopped.

2. Don't sit down. If someone gets comfortable in a chair, it's hard to get them to move. Stand, discuss your business, and move on.

**PHONE CALLS:** The phone is a terrible distraction. Take control of the phone with these steps:

1. Don't take phone calls unless it is a pre-arranged call or an absolute emergency.
2. Have your calls screened. Easily 20% can be handled by someone else or ignored.
3. Set aside a time to return calls. If you miss the person, let them call you back. You will be amazed how many "problems" take care of themselves.

**LUNCH:** A "pit stop" is essential, but how much time you spend and how effectively you use it is important. An hour is all you really need, and here are some ideas on how to spend it:

1. Bring your lunch or have it delivered. Catch up on the trades while you eat in your office.
2. Have a client meeting, but follow an agenda.
3. Work out several times a week.
4. Avoid lunches with record promoters--see them for dinner.
5. Don't consume alcohol at lunch.

**PAPER PILE-UPS:** Process your paperwork by using the T.R.A.F. (toss, refer, act, or file) system. Every piece of paper must move!

## **People Management**

**BUTTONS & CARROTS:** Take the time to find the personality type buttons (motivators) and carrots (rewards) of each staff member. Get a psychologist involved. Most of all, create an atmosphere of having fun!

**INFLUENCE & INVOLVEMENT:** When managing your staff, you must do so on two levels: influence and involvement. Both are customized on an intensity scale ranging from soft to strong, depending on the individual's abilities.

Soft	Influence		Strong
	Involve/ Cooperate	Sell/ Persuade	
Delegate			Tell them To Do It
Observer	Involvement		Doer
	Counselor	Coach	

**REWARD & REPRIMAND:** Celebrate even the smallest victories with an appropriately measured reward. Be firm and objective when reprimanding unsatisfactory work or behavior. Remember to tell people not only what to improve, but how to improve it.

**AIRCHECKS:** Meet with the morning show daily; other staff weekly or biweekly.

**LEADERSHIP TYPES:** Each of these types has its place and purpose. Know how and when to use them:

1. Autocrat: tight control.
  2. Democrat: asks for input.
  3. Free rein: maximum participation and brainstorming.
- And remember, leadership by consensus is really followship.

**HIRING SKILLS:** Wisdom is knowing what to do with what you know. Know your strengths--hire to your weaknesses. Surround yourself with people who complement you.

## Promotions

Too much time can be wasted on promotional planning. Follow these rules and you will have more successful promotions conceived more efficiently:

1. Develop a promotions manual that outlines the station's goals and policies. Make sure everyone, particularly the sales staff, understands them.
2. During the sales meeting, inform the sales staff of all that is going on and apprise them of promotional opportunities. An informed sales staff is a strong ally. Let the sales manager

- compile a list of client promotion opportunities. Don't let sales people come to your office with promotional ideas.
3. The promotion meeting should be attended by the GM, sales manager, promotions manager, production director, and the PD. Use this meeting to discuss all promotional opportunities, match programming and sales needs, finalize the calendar, and develop copy and production concepts.
  4. Learn to say no. If the calendar is too full or the idea doesn't make sense, it's better not to do it. Focus on one major and no more than two minor events at a time.

## **Marketing**

Marketing often gets confused with promotion. Marketing is moving the product from the producer to the consumer. Promotion is creating awareness for the product.

Today, the PD must understand how to market the station to the diary keeper (listener), revenue supplier (client), and controlling interest (banker/investor). The concepts are varied and complicated--direct marketing, telemarketing, merchandising, and financial reports. The key is to continually create demand for the product so that it becomes a part of these people's lives.

If a PD could be supplemented in any one area, it is marketing. While expenses are growing, the ability to cover them is seemingly shrinking. Owners and managers must seriously consider the value of adding a marketing director.

## **Research**

The amount of information available to a PD is greater than ever before. Knowing what and how to use it is critical to saving time and money.

As a PD, know how to analyze an Arbitron report. Strategic Research has an excellent guide for breaking down an Arbitron. The insights you derive can tell you whether you are gaining or losing audience, but not necessarily why.

If you want to find out why, you need additional research--perceptuals, AMTs, focus groups, one-on-ones, and call-outs can all be helpful and confusing. If you're going to venture into one of these projects, get the researcher's insights into the results.

Consultants are also a form of research. The information, insights, ideas,

and strategies we provide are only valuable when properly executed. Make your consultant part of your team and discuss how the service can best be used.

## **Business Acumen**

In the "old days," being a PD was easy--all you had to do was pick the right music, write a few liners, do some airchecks, and develop some promotions. Now, business acumen plays an important role, and the PD must understand how the business of radio works or potentially cost the owner millions.

You must differentiate and balance the creative and business aspects of your job. If you focus too much on creativity, you will miss some important business opportunities; if you focus too much on business, your station will sound boring.

Here are some business truths and points to consider:

1. Be aware of your product and your competitors. They want to wipe you off the map!
2. If you don't anticipate change, you won't be in business long. Leaders must inspire change.
3. Take calculated risks. Fix what isn't broken.
4. Be decisive. Winners decide what needs to be done and take action. Losers adjust to their situations.
5. Be flexible, creative, and concentrate on the listener and the bottom line.
6. Set aside time, preferably away from the station, for creativity.
7. Learn to look at the big picture.
8. Ask your GM how you're doing.
9. Dress appropriately. A suit isn't always necessary, but know when it is.
10. Have self-confidence.

## **Goals and Objectives**

A goal is the end you want to attain. An objective is the step(s) you take to reach your goal.

Successful people set goals:

1. Long range goals: Where do you want to be in five or ten years? Do you have a lifetime goal?
2. Intermediate goals: What do you want to accomplish in the

next 6 to 12 months?

3. Short range goals: What do you want to do tomorrow or next week?

Set appropriate time frames and then work hard to attain your goals. Winners make their goals; losers make excuses.

Being a Program Director isn't easy, but it can be very fun and rewarding. In the scheme of a radio station, you are responsible for everything that comes out of the speakers. You are the product manager. Create it. Nurture it. Protect it. Make it profitable. And you will be on your way to becoming a great PD.

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## Responsibilities of the Music Director

The Music Director works directly under and in tandem with the program director in selecting the music that is played on the radio station as well as performing numerous other duties. According to Susan Stone, Music Director at WRXK/Ft. Myers, there is no such thing as a typical day for a music director. "Things change from day to day. I come into the station in the morning around 9 or 9:30. I have additional duties besides being Music Director. I'm in charge of our concertline. I'm also in charge of a feature that we have called *Where to Go/What to Do*--which lists where local bands are playing and what events are happening--things like that. And I'm the mid-day personality."

Stone says her first duty of the day as Music Director is to "reconcile" the previous day's music log. "I go back into our SELECTOR system and I pull up that day. I go through the music log hour-by-hour, and any changes that were made to it--such as somebody dropping a song because there was too much music scheduled for that hour or somebody adding a song for whatever reason--I have to make those changes in the SELECTOR system to reconcile the log. The reason why you do that is so when you schedule the next few days--let's say you scheduled Derek and the Dominos "Layla" in your ten o'clock hour, but it didn't get played that day. When you reconcile the music log you're telling the computer *Wait! That song didn't get played*. This allows for that song to be scheduled again in that daypart."

The Music Director also tracks new music and reports music adds\* to trade magazines such as *Radio and Records*, *Album Network* and *Billboard* to be compiled into weekly national music charts. Stone says she has specific days when these tasks are accomplished. "On Mondays I'm generally preparing our playlists and our Top 5 requests of the week so that I can call them into the trade magazines that we make our reports to. I generally print the reports out of the computer. It will tell me all the various categories that we have--we're talking currents only--and show me what my playlist was for the week. How many spins each song got. I also tabulate all the request sheets. All the jocks are taking requests from listeners during their shows, and I'm looking for the requests that are currents. On Tuesday I'll call in my report to the trades. We report to *R & R (Radio and Records)*, *Album Network* and *FMQB*. For record company purposes, they (the trades) want to know what are the hottest played records in the country. What's getting the most requests. All this information, of course, goes back to the record companies. The record company then tries to "sell" their record to radio stations and get them to play it."

The Music Director may also generate daily computer music log print-outs that tell the disc jockeys what to play on a song-by-song basis. These logs are usually examined by the Program Director for music flow and consistency before they are placed in the studio. The Music Director is also responsible for maintaining the music library by cataloging music manually or on the computer as it is added to the station's playlist.

According to Curtiss Johnson, depending on the radio station, the size of the market, and the amount of experience the Music Director has, the duties of the MD can vary. Johnson believes one determiner is how much control over the music the PD is willing to give to the Music Director. "The Music Director can have quite a bit of power and decision-making on what gets added to a radio station's playlist. Or it could be pretty much a secretarial position. Sometimes it can mean the Music Director maintains the music computer and keeps the record library up-to-date. Or the music director can be somebody who deals primarily with the record reps from the labels, and who can pretty much decide on his or her own what music gets added to the radio station as well as negotiate promotions with record companies and that sort of thing."

Chuck Knight says his Music Directors are responsible for listening to all the new music that comes in from record companies. Then they make suggestions on what music should be added to the station's current rotation playlist. "They are the conduit for new music to be played on Star 104.5. I have a Music Director and an Assistant Music Director. We meet every

week. I go into the meeting, listen to the new music, and ask them what they want to go with. I'm there as the final filter. My Music Directors are the musically active people who understand the radio station; Who are involved with it every day just as I am. That's why they carry a lot of weight in the decision-making process."

John O'Dea, Program Director of Wink 104/WNNK in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, a recent recipient of the prestigious "Marconi Award" as best CHR station in the country, also follows a collaborative approach in selecting new music. "From a programming standpoint my Music Director is not involved in programming decisions. But from a musical standpoint he's very involved. We have weekly music meetings where we'll sit down together and decide what songs look viable this week. We look at what kind of songs we need, and then we pretty much decide together what we're going to add to our current music rotation from week to week."

Susan Stone admits that when she and her Program Director have music meetings to decide music adds, the discussion can sometimes become quite heated. "There are times when I feel very strongly about a record, and the PD feels the opposite. We duke it out for a little bit. He listens to what I have to say, and we may argue over stuff, but through discussion and through looking at the numbers on the research and looking at who else is playing it in the country and what it's doing sales-wise, we generally come to a conclusion that we both can agree upon. I'm not crazy about everything we play, and neither is he. But radio is a business. We listen to the music and try to make decisions based on what we think our audience wants to hear. But, bottom-line, the PD has the final say on what gets added to our playlist."

Not all Program Directors give their Music Directors a large role in the decision-making process. Curtiss Johnson likes to maintain final control over the music policies of 93 Rock. "My music director doesn't add a track, but he has a pretty good idea of what kind of song I'm looking for that will fit our station. I respect his opinion, but he doesn't necessarily add music. He does deal with record labels and can negotiate for promotions and various things like that, but he has to check off with me."

Johnson also likes to have an "open door" policy for music meetings. "I like to look at as many opinions and aspects as I can before making a decision. I don't want twenty people in a music meeting because then it would be chaos, but a handful of people can give a different perspective. Since I am a male, and although I am trying to target a predominantly male audience, a part of my audience is also female. I want a female perspective from my jocks as well. They can give me an opinion I might not have necessarily thought of without their input."

O'Dea shares Johnson's view on the importance of soliciting multiple opinions on new music. "Periodically, I'll play a song for the women here in the office to see what they think of it. We also do a daily music thing where we play a song and let the audience tell us what they like and don't like."

Polling listener reaction to new music has long been used by program directors and music directors to determine listener interest in songs gauged to be wild cards according to John Shirk who programs Contemporary Christian rocker WJTL in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. "We do a segment called 'Listener's Choice' where we put three new songs side by side. We play samples of each song and then get listener votes. If the song is voted in, we'll put it in rotation the next night."

Ultimately, both the Program Director and the Music Director need to keep their listeners in mind when choosing which songs to play on their radio station. Most PDs and Music Directors rely on gut instinct when deciding whether or not a song will be a potential hit with their audience. O'Dea believes it's difficult to teach anyone how to know what song is a hit and what isn't. "It's just a feeling. Basically, it's just Scott (Wink 104's Music Director) and I saying *The hook of that song is really hot! I think that will work well for us.* Certainly there are songs that we play that don't become big hits, and we find out we made a mistake on them. But, basically, we listen to music on a song-to-song basis and then decide whether or not that song will work for us."

It's the challenge of figuring out what the audience wants to hear that drew Susan Stone to the job of Music Director in the first place. "My airshift was very fulfilling, but I wanted to become more involved with the station. There's a sense of purpose and accomplishment when you hear a record, you think it's gonna be good, and you have something to do with getting it on your radio station. It's a neat feeling to be able to introduce people to something brand new. It's a neat feeling to be a part of shaping and molding a product that you're putting on the air. It's cool to be a part of that instead of just sitting there and playing it."

## The Relationship Between Programming and Sales

On the surface, it would appear that the programming and sales departments have little to do with each other. The programming department is concerned with fine-tuning the sound going out over the air while the sales department is busy selling commercial advertising time to station clients.

However, just like with any team, these two departments often work together to help the station reach its goal of increased listenership, which translates into increased revenue. This is accomplished in several ways. The programming department may develop special features such as a concert line where listeners can get updated local concert information, or programs that highlight the station's music such as a show that spotlights local musicians. The sales department may put together a sponsorship package for these features and sell them to clients on a weekly or monthly basis. Morning and afternoon traffic reports, newscasts and business reports are also often sold as sponsorship packages.

Sales promotions also involve direct interaction between the programming and sales departments. A sales promotion idea may come from either the client or the radio station. The Program Director usually decides whether or not the sales promotion idea is developed or discarded based on several factors; *Will listeners be interested in the promotion and prize? Does the promotion enhance the image of the radio station? Are there similar promotions recently or currently being run in the market? Can the station effectively promote the promotion without incurring station clutter? What are the responsibilities of the station and the client during the planning and execution of the promotion?* Once the PD gives the go-ahead on a promotion, the programming, promotion, and sales departments work in tandem to ensure the success of the promotion.

Although it would be natural to assume that all departments of a radio station work harmoniously together as one team, this is not always the case. Programming and sales departments are notorious for their often stormy relationship with one another. Programming often accuses Account Executives of being greedy in their pursuits to make money for the station at the expense of the listeners, while sales personnel often charge programmers with interfering with the station's profit margin, claiming PDs have an inability to face business realities. Although some stations have managed to achieve harmony between sales and programming, it is an uneasy existence for some Program Directors.

KRXQ's Curtiss Johnson laughingly admits he likes to keep his interaction with the sales department to a minimum. "You work with them if you're going to be a good program director and a manager. You also have to realize--especially nowadays--that you are just as responsible for the bottom-line in the revenue generation for the radio station as the Sales Managers. And, hopefully, you are aware of what it takes to generate money and get it into the radio station. That requires a certain amount of interfacing with a sales staff to accommodate them to get sales--i.e. remotes,

promotions, giveaways, and sponsorships that they can use to bring more money into the radio station. I work quite a bit with the sales staff. A lot of times it's a very antagonistic sort of relationship, but I feel the more professional I am as a programmer, the less it should be antagonistic."

Kevin Vargas, Program Director of KISS/San Antonio, notes that fueling the battle between sales and programming is not conducive to maximizing a station's earning potential. "You have to empathize with each other and understand that without sales you don't have the revenue. As long as they (the sales department) don't try and force anything that could jeopardize the position of the radio station, I will bend. By that same token, for having the courtesy to listen to what they have to say and cooperate when necessary, I also, in return, can expect that they will respect my judgement on anything inappropriate. It's a real good two-way street here at KISS. We have a real good understanding. It can't be programming versus sales. It has to be "us" making things work in KISS's best interest. I've always believed that it's much better to work together rather than on opposing sides."

Some PDs, like John Sebastian who currently programs Country outlet KZLA in Los Angeles, enjoy working closely with the sales department. "My door is always open for Account Executives to come in and ask questions about programming. Together we can work on promotional ideas along with the Promotion Manager."

Sebastian also makes it a point to frequently accompany account executives on their sales calls with clients. "I can talk passionately about the philosophy I have (for the station) and what we're doing. Some of the things I say and believe in can equate very effectively into incremental dollars from sales."

Kevin Vargas says one of his greatest thrills in life is going on sales calls for annual sales contracts. "I love being the pitch man. I love sitting there with the Sales Manager and the Account Executive. When it comes time to really explain our promotional capability or what the station can do (for the client), I love being the person who shares that understanding and passion for the product. Who better to present the product than the product manager?"

But harmonious relationship or not, interaction between the two departments is unavoidable. Most of the promotions, contests, and sponsorships that occur on a radio station are generated by the sales department. Often, a promotional idea is developed by the radio station in an effort to close a sale on an advertising campaign for a client. The promotion may even occur at the client's place of business if the promotion happens to be a remote broadcast or listener party. Or the client may be

responsible for furnishing the prize that is given away by the radio station. The station will then work out a deal with the client that balances the costs of the promotion with the costs of a commercial advertising schedule on the station to promote the event or contest. Each deal varies according to the number of station personnel who will be involved in the event, the number of additional station clients who will participate in the promotion if it is a major event as well as other contributions that all sides will bring to the table to make the promotion a success.

The success of the promotion also depends on the type of promotion that is agreed upon by the station and its client. Program Directors need to understand what kind of promotions will appeal to their station's target audience before committing the station to participate in any promotion. A promotion or contest that doesn't fit the image the station is trying to project--such as an Adult Contemporary station that programs to a 25-49 year-old female target audience participating in a contest that has a pair of tickets to a tractor-pull as the prize--can be a big turn-off for listeners. Ultimately, it can have a negative impact on the station's ratings, which eventually will mean less money for the station when the station tries to sell advertising time to its clients. If the client perceives a big drop in the station's listenership, the client is likely to take his business elsewhere.

Greg Gillispie stresses that Program Directors need to stay focused on what they are trying to achieve for their station when making decisions on whether or not to go with a promotion being proposed by the sales department. "A lot of the promotions are precipitated by the fact that the sales people are trying to take care of their clients in terms of promotional ideas. I kind of have to be the keeper of the guard in terms of the product of the radio station to make sure that the things we do fit in with the radio station. I probably go to one sales meeting every two or three weeks and I talk to the sales people every day. I'm constantly battling clutter on the air and the perception (of our listeners) that we talk too much and things like that. And the sales department is a big part of that problem because they're out there constantly trying to get more promotions on the air for their clients."

Learn how to say "no" is the advice John O'Dea has for any Program Director. "You need to know what are good promotions; what is going to work and what isn't going to work from an advertising standpoint. You also need to be able to work with the sales people because they can become very demanding. They need this promotion or that promotion. You can get dragged down with all sorts of sales things, and then all of a sudden your station is so cluttered with garbage that the message of the station doesn't get

through. You can't really effectively promote everything. When we do promotions at Wink 104, I want to make sure they work. That's why I don't want to have too many things going on at the same time. Otherwise we won't be effective with each thing."

"Keep your sales staff educated as to what you're trying to achieve," advises Curtiss Johnson. "And also, when you have to say 'no,' give them alternatives. In other words, tell them *I don't want to do this, but maybe we can do this so you can keep your client happy*. It's a friction-filled cohesiveness that you're trying to achieve between the sales staff and the programming staff."

## **The Relationship Between Programming and Upper Management**

As stated earlier in the chapter, upper management has a vested interest in the programming offered on the radio station. Since the programming strategy is aimed to reach a specific target audience, upper management needs to ensure that the goals of the station and its ownership are reached in terms of acquiring the largest listening audience possible to generate the most revenue for the station. Much of this is accomplished through the hiring of a Program Director who is experienced in developing a programming formula that will deliver the expected results. Although the day-to-day programming decisions are usually left in the hands of the Program Director, the PD still needs to consult with upper management--most notably the General Manager--before making any drastic programming decisions. Ultimately, upper management expects the Program Director to be in compliance with all FCC regulations, company policy, and any other elements that can affect the station's licensing requirements. The FCC's role in programming will be discussed in a later chapter.

Some Program Directors do complain that General Managers have a tendency to micromanage from above by interfering with daily programming decisions. The bottom-line is being examined much more closely now that radio has become more corporate in recent years. Because General Managers are ultimately held accountable for the success or failure of their radio station, some GMs--rightly or wrongly--might not feel confident in their Program Director's ability to make sound programming decisions without their guidance. This can cause friction between the programming department and upper management, turning the station into an "us and them" environment. This lack of trust can negatively impact the moral of the radio

station, and can ultimately have an adverse effect on the sound of the station being transmitted over the airwaves.

Some Program Directors, like Greg Gillispie and John Sebastian, prefer to keep their interactions with upper management to a minimum when it comes to daily programming decisions. According to Sebastian, upper management sees him as the expert, allowing him to make most programming decisions on his own. "That's the way I've always preferred it and that's the way it is here. I certainly work best under that scenario."

Others, like Curtiss Johnson, view programming as a team effort. "Once they (upper management) have set an agenda of who we're targeting, I'll go to them with my synopsis on how to gather that audience, and then it's up to me to run it on a day-to-day basis. But I wouldn't all of a sudden go into the radio station tomorrow morning and say *You know what? We're going to turn CHR*. I wouldn't be able to do that. I make the big picture decisions with my General Manager and station ownership, and then it's up to me to implement it. I'm the implementer of policy. They may have hired me because of my experience in a certain format or a certain style that I have that they feel is going to get what they're trying to achieve, but it's teamwork. They set the agenda of what they're trying to achieve and then I achieve it."

John O'Dea says his station's greatest strengths are the owners and upper management. "We're a company that's committed to winning--which means spending the money to promote the radio station from advertising to promotions. It's also their commitment to hiring the best people. Hiring good personalities. Not just card-reading disc jockeys, but personalities who communicate to the audience. I think another thing that makes Wink 104 successful is the *You don't know what's going to happen next* attitude--especially on Bruce's show (Wink 104's afternoon drive-time personality). Also our news and information. We're really a full-service Top 40 radio station. There are very few of those left. People can come here for good quality news and information and not have to go anywhere else. The music is certainly one of the things we hang our hat on, but all of those things combined--from the advertising, the promotion, the contesting, the giveaways that we do, the news and information, the personalities--all of that make up this radio station. I think that's why we're still so successful. We basically have 3 or 4 radio stations in one."

## Programming and Record Companies

Radio stations and record companies work together to promote bands and

their music to the public. This relationship, although sometimes adversarial, is necessary because these factions of the music industry would find it difficult to survive without the other. Record companies are responsible for signing new bands and recording their albums that are later promoted to radio Program Directors for airplay. How does radio benefit from this arrangement? Pat Rascona, Local Promotion Manager for the East Coast Mid-Atlantic Region for Island Records, says radio stations profit in numerous ways, such as receiving free promotional copies of the new music that is released to play on the station. "Basically, what we offer is good music. We think so anyway. We wouldn't put it out if we didn't think it was good. We also like to back up our records with times buys so that brings revenue into the station. We try to do nice promotions with radio stations. For instance, I have U2, and we're doing a promotion with Z100 in New York to fly somebody to Mexico City to go see our band. We'll even give away front row seat tickets to shows. It really depends on the artist that we're working with."

However, Rascona also believes the relationship between record companies and radio station programmers is not as special as it once was. "Record guys are now more concerned with spins on records. (Of course, radio guys are *also* concerned with spins on records.) I think it stresses the relationship even more when, instead of trying to get a record on a radio station, you constantly try to bump it up in rotation. The whole chart situation has changed in the past 5 or 6 years where spins make a major difference. That's because of BDS (Broadcast Data Systems). I think it's strained the relationship between the record company and programming department. Also, I don't think Program Directors are as accessible as they used to be. They don't go out as much to shows as they used to. I don't think radio has the...I don't quite know what word to use...to break new bands. I think radio stations are living book to book, and that hurts the relationship between record people and radio guys."

Kelso Jacks, National Director of College Radio, Video, and Commercial Modern Rock Radio Promotions for Roadrunner Records, finds the relationship between the record rep and the radio programmer to be very congenial and friendly until you get to talking about the actual music. "Then it's kind of a give and take. Programmers say *What can you do for me?* I say *How is the song doing?* Everyone is nice to each other, but the relationship is very professional."

Working college radio, according to Jacks, is much more relaxed than working with programmers in commercial radio. "On the college level everyone is your best friend. I'm everyone's counselor. I hear about every

keg party, every broken heart, and every final exam. It's more about the people and getting to know who the Music Directors are as people rather than programmers. College kids are really kind of innocent when it comes to programming music. They'll give anything a try. They don't have to worry about what their sponsors are going to think, and how much money they're going to bring into the station--which is where the big difference comes into play between college radio and commercial radio."

Tara Simon of Bar None Records adds that college stations also differ from their commercial counterparts because they play a lot more variety. "That doesn't always mean that they're going to have a country show and a disco show and a rock show. They're going to play it all one after another. And so a lot of stations that I've been talking to will say *Oh, your record charted*. And I'll say *Really? How many spins did it get?* *Three*, they'll say. So they have 200 records in their current rotation because there's a lot of stuff coming out. Things will chart one week and then be nowhere in sight the next week. Commercial radio? If you're not selling 60,000 records in a certain area you're not going to be heard on the radio there. They'll have 25 or 30 songs that they'll play the heck out of, and you'll hear them over and over again hour after hour. So there's a big difference."

When deciding whether or not to add a song, PDs of both commercial and college radio must ensure that the new music selected to be added to the station's current playlist fits the station's image and format. That is why decisions made by Program Directors on how much to play a record--if they decide to play that record in the first place--can often make or break a band's career.

But how do these various components of the music industry fit together in determining the course of a band's career from the initial signing by a record label to the promotion of the band's music to radio stations and retail outlets? According to John Conway, a marketing manager at BMG Distribution, the components of the music business serve as a partnership platform for artists. "Ultimately, it all comes down to their song and their record. We sign an arrangement with an artist that we agree to promote and be the distribution vehicle for their--we hate this word, but it's called "product." It's music and it's an artist's craft, but it becomes a unit. A CD, a cassette, and a cassette single. Our job is to make sure that music gets into the marketplace; that we get these records played on radio stations; that we get the videos played on video outlets like MTV; and that we drive you as viewers and listeners of radio and concert-goers into record stores to, hopefully, buy the records that you like."

Pat Rascona says the process of signing a band to a label and getting the

music out into the marketplace spans many months. "Each record company has its own A&R (Artist and Repertoire) department. New bands send their tapes to A&R people. Or the record company might have a major band on its label and their management company might have a couple of bands that they'll use like, for example, when I worked with Kiss a long time ago, Kiss's management company had a small band, and, in order for us to re-sign Kiss we had to sign this smaller band. If you send a tape to an A&R department you hope that they will listen to it. These guys get flooded with tapes every day. You hope that they pick yours out of the pile. If they like what they hear they'll give you a call. Then they'll set up time where they'll put you in the studio to do some roughs. Then they'll pick out a producer for you to redo some of the songs. After that's done they'll go into the studio and do the album. Then they'll send it to another engineer who will mix it down. And then, when we get the finished product, we'll set up a whole marketing plan on what we're going to do with the band. We may put them out on the road to do some club dates. We'll try to hook them up with other bands that are familiar to people. And we try to take radio (Program Directors and Music Directors) out to these shows to see our bands. Then the CD will come out and we'll work it track by track. If you're a major band you'll pick your own track. If you're a small band, the record company picks the track to work to radio. And then, with God's will, we'll get some airplay on it. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. I've estimated that 1 out of every 10,000 bands break. That's not a lot."

Tara Simon says college radio is really a testing ground for new bands. "If you can make it there it's a foothold to maybe make your way onto a bigger label and possibly into a bigger market. A majority of bands are broken that way. What's nice about college radio is that it's new kids coming in every year. It's fresh ears. A fresh set of backgrounds running a station. Usually they have a committee who decides what gets played. They don't have a huge experience of music that they're bringing along with them, and, I think, they're more receptive to new stuff."

Getting radio stations across the country to add the band to their station's playlist at the same time is crucial to achieving maximum impact explains David Levin, a marketing representative for BMG Distribution. "They stage it so that the band gets the most visibility on a certain song at a certain time. And that's when we (the marketing distribution team) take over--when that record comes into the marketplace. Once we've sold the record into stores, it's time to market it because we need to let people know that there's a record out by this band--say--*Take That*. That the song they're hearing on the radio is, in fact, *Take That*.

Adds John Conway, "We do this in synchronization with radio. As radio airplay is, hopefully, building, as the video is getting played on MTV and VH1 and people are suddenly saying *"I hear that song a lot, but who is that band?"* there are people who work for us who go into record stores and make sure there are posters up and displays of this artist or this group prominently displayed. With radio programming, our promotion staff is in radio stations making sure we're keeping rotation up on that record. This cycle lasts maybe 8 or 12 weeks. Then we have to figure out what we're going to do next with a record."

One choice could be trying to get radio stations to add a second cut from the record. However, Pat Rascona says that's not as easy as it used to be. "It's harder these days to get a second single played than it is the first single. Radio is not going very deep into albums. Second tracks are hard to break. Especially if the first track wasn't strong for them (radio and the artist). If your first track on the album is not that strong you are going to sweat to get a second one. Sweat! Because people are not intimidated by the band or whatever else they have to offer. Sometimes radio believes that record companies put out the best cut first, and sometimes that's not the case. So radio really needs to listen to a whole album to see what they might like."

Does this mean record companies feel more pressure today to select good first cuts? "Without a doubt!" Rascona agrees. "We try to get a feel from radio before we come out with a second single to find out what they think. If a radio guy says to me *You know—the U2 record, "Discotheque," is not for us, but I love "Staring at the Sun."* If you get enough people to say that then that could influence a second track. Then you can go back to radio and say *Here's the record you've been waiting for.*"

Curtiss Johnson says handling record company calls may fall under the jurisdiction of the Program Director, the Music Director, or both depending on the station. "Some Program Directors don't take record company calls. Period. They have Music Directors to do that. I have a fairly good relationship with the record labels, but I won't let them dictate what gets added. They'll say *Well, I'll tell you what. If you add this record, I'll send your listeners on a trip to see the band in New York City.* Different things get thrown out on the table as inducements. I don't use those as a factor when I'm making my decisions on what to add for the week. If it's something I'm going to play anyway, I'll come back after I've started playing it and say *Hey! I'd like to be able to send some winners to go see so and so. It'll help promote your band.* Also, sometimes the record company will make time buys\* on the radio station to help make the familiarity of the band grow quicker. That then generates some sales for themselves in the market and

that sort of thing."

WRXX's Susan Stone says programmers have to keep in mind that record reps are really sales people. "When it comes right down to it record reps are like the Fuller Brush people. You want some of what they have, but you don't want a lot of it because a lot of it's garbage. But their job is to push the record. We then have to be picky and choosy when deciding what fits our format and our audience best. We're not going to add a record for the sake of adding a record. Does it fit what we do? We're very much of a meat and potatoes rock and roll radio station. If it's guitar-based; if it's Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd, AC/DC or Aerosmith--that's wonderful! So how is a new record going to fit in with that? We cherry pick our currents very, very carefully."

Stone admits that there are times when record reps have influenced how she felt about a record. "If they start throwing facts and figures at me saying *Look at these chart numbers! Look at these sales figures! Look at what it's doing! You're missing the boat by not playing this record.* Okay. So maybe I'll think twice about the song. Maybe I ought to go listen to it again." But, Stone stresses, "I'll often say to the record rep *Respect me and I'll respect you. But more importantly understand my station. Understand my market. Understand my format before you even try to work me on a record. And if I tell you no--accept it and move on. If you're pushing a record on me that we've already looked at research and feel it's not going to work for us--move on. You'll have another record that's going to be good for us.*"

Consultant Greg Gillispie calls the relationship between record companies and radio stations both cooperative and adversarial. "The record companies want to break new bands and they want to sell records. And the radio stations want to play hit records and play stuff that's a balance between the comfort zone and unfamiliar. Radio stations also want stuff from the record companies in terms of promotion and concert tickets and things like that."

Gillispie explains that conflicts can occur when the record company wants more from the radio station in terms of more adds and more airplay on certain records than the Program Director is willing to deliver. "Prime example. April was international guitar month. It was my desire to give away one autographed guitar by a star every day of the month--so I needed 30. I started discussing the issue with record companies. A couple of them tried to play "Let's Make a Deal." *I'll get you a guitar from so and so, but you have to add this and that.* And I said, *I don't want to play that game. Let's talk about the value you're going to get for your artists and the image you're going to get for providing me with the guitar instead of*

PRIME MOVE:

AUG 13, 1997

# Counting Crows

"Have You Seen Me Lately?"

R&R Active: 36-**34\*** 484x (+47)

R&R Rock : 34-**30\*** 427x (+44)

BDS Heritage: Debut **30\***

## MORE CLOSE OUT ADDS THIS WEEK:

**KDKB:** Phoenix **WMMS:** Cleveland  
**WKLC** **KJKJ** **KEZO** **KZOZ** **WGLF**  
**KNJY** **KSQY** **WYKT** **KCAL**

Up-tempo, *rocking* track from the  
**DOUBLE PLATINUM & 1/2 SELLING CD**  
*"Recovering the Satellites"*

Now on **104 GREAT ROCK STATIONS!**

## **BIG EARLY AIRPLAY:**

<b>WMMR:</b> Philly 21x	<b>WYSP:</b> Philly 12x
<b>WWDC:</b> Wash. DC 10x	<b>WTPA:</b> Harrisburg 20x
<b>WIQB:</b> Ann Arbor 22x	<b>WCCC:</b> Hartford 15x
<b>WTPA:</b> Harrisburg 14x	<b>WARQ:</b> Columbia 25x

Record advertisement for the band Counting Crows that demonstrates radio station adds. *Reprinted courtesy of DGC Records. Copyright 1997 Geffen Records, Inc.*

*forcing me to add a record that I don't want to play or one that's not right for my radio station just so you can get higher chart numbers."*

Gillispie adds that the relationship PDs develop with record reps often determines the quality of service radio stations receive from record companies. "The more record companies can understand you and what your radio station is about, the more beneficial the relationship will be for both parties. They (the record companies) are always going to press the envelope, but it's better if they are more in tune with your needs."

Kelso Jacks of Roadrunner Records states that record companies often press the envelope because they know some PDs look to see what other stations are playing before adding a record. "There are the taste-maker stations that everyone else in the country is looking at to see their playlist. K-Rock in Los Angeles--if they add something to their regular rotation modern rock programmers across the country are saying *Ooohh! Maybe I should add that record, too, because those guys are hot.* So those taste-maker stations are the kinds of places where you have to actually show up and meet people face-to-face because phone calls don't work."

Island Record's Pat Rascona agrees that phone calls won't necessarily get PDs to sift through the pile of CDs they receive in the mail every week to look for the record he's working. "You have to go see them. In major markets radio stations have appointment times where you can sit for 10 minutes and really play your priority records. I mean, you have to figure it this way. There are 30 of me in New York. On an average we work 3 records per radio station. So, you've got 90 records coming in a week. No way is a PD going to sit down and listen to 90 records in a small meeting time. What you have to do is pick and choose the records you think might fit their radio station. Then, sit them down or take them to dinner, play it in the car on the way there. Give the record a few minutes. That's the priority records. The smaller ones you're just going to have to work on the following week. That's why it takes so long to break records."

Rascona explains that a good record rep will also take time to visit PDs and Music Directors in smaller markets. "You have to go out and see these guys and make them feel loved. You can't neglect the little guys because you never know where they're going to be one day. If you mess with them now they're going to mess with you later."

So how do record companies decide what music has potential before they decide to promote the band to radio stations? To Conway, the answer is simple. "It's really a matter of taste-maker, by taste-maker, by taste-maker. Here's an example. Jeff Healy Band. He's a blues guitar player from Canada. This happened about seven or eight years ago. We believed this

guy could sell records in the United States so we signed him. We recorded him, and we put the record out in the market. For 6 months there was dust piling up on his records. Nobody would play it. Then there was this single called *Angel Eyes*. Down in Alabama, one radio station played it, and one record store called us to say they had sold his record. We immediately said *That's a taste-maker—that's an example*. So we rushed right down there and said *Let's play it some more. Let's buy some advertising*. Suddenly, it was like watching the blob hit the map. There was this spread of sales patterns that began to develop on Jeff Healy. It eventually became a gold record. That's how it happens. The thing we'll hear over and over in this business is that there's no recipe for making a record a success. Our distribution company will release 12 hundred records this year. Maybe 70 of them will get to a point of being worthwhile sellers of 500,000 to a few million. But it sometimes takes years to develop bands to get to that level. It's not brain surgery, but there's a lot of money at stake, and sometimes there's a lot of ego involved."

Conway stresses that PDs, ultimately, make the final decision on whether or not to add a record. "Program Directors pretty much drive the trends. They have to decide *Does my audience want to hear this?* If I'm a responsible programmer then I'm in step with my audience. If the record is the right fit (for the station), then that's good for the record. But it might not fit sometimes. It's the record promotion guy's job to knock on the door and say *Hey! This is our new CD. This is the one we really believe in*. We know it might not fit every format, but we're going to knock anyway because the more stations we get to play the record, the better opportunity that music has to be heard."

## Programming Tools

As in any business, Program Directors need their tools of the trade to help them do their job in the most effective and timely manner. In addition to interaction with other staff members on the programming agenda, PDs use computers, trade magazines, record companies, consultants, and research to help them make programming decisions.

## Programming With Computers

Years ago, many radio stations controlled their music rotation through a card catalog system. Music was categorized based on common elements

such as music genre, release date, or popularity, depending upon the Program Director's objectives for the music mix. The PD then developed a program clock for each daypart that plotted the layout of the music categories on an hourly basis. These categories were strategically placed within the hour according to the programming formula based on listener needs. The air personalities would then select their music from each category according to the pre-determined criteria set up by the PD.

In the card catalog system, each song was typed on a individual index card. Information about each song was noted on the card such as song title, artist, album title, tempo, and restrictions such as the time of day the song was allowed to be played (called dayparting). Song length was also noted, including the duration of the song's introduction before the artist began singing as well as whether the song had a cold ending or a fade ending. The air personality was also given specific rules to follow when selecting music. The following list might be an example of the type of song rotation rules developed by the program director:

1. Follow the program clock exactly, playing a song from each category as it appears on the program clock.
2. Never go more than five cards back in a category when selecting a song.
3. Never play 2 females artists back-to-back.
4. Always follow a slow tempo song with a medium tempo song.
5. Observe all daypart restrictions.
6. Log the date and your initials under the hour in which the song is played.
7. Allow at least a 90 minute separation between songs by the same artist.
8. Never play the same song in the same hour within a 2 week period.

Although this system gave air personalities greater freedom in the selection of the music being played on their shows, it made it difficult for the Program Director to maintain tight control over the music flow and song rotation.

Today, computer programs such as SELECTOR by RCS and Music Scan have replaced the old card catalog system, enabling Program Directors to fine-tune their radio station according to the sound they feel their listening

audience will find most appealing. These computer programs operate in a similar fashion to the card catalog system by allowing the Program Director to set up all the rotation rules internally so that the music rotation is consistent. The computer programs the music, following a specific pattern in terms of music flow, artist separation, and any other conditions set by the PD. The music is then printed out according to the program clock for each hour. After the Program Director checks the music flow for any mistakes such as tempo, music style and segue flow as well as artist conflicts, the daily music log is then placed in the studio. The disc jockey simply follows the print out and checks off each song as it is played.

Today's fiercely competitive environment means that maintaining consistency in the station's sound is crucial. Curtiss Johnson insists that programming rules on record rotation are essential to making the station's sound a success with his listening audience. "You're trying to portray a consistency throughout the day. Of course, each disc jockey has their own personal style, but you need a consistent presentation across a 24 hour period--or at least a Program Director's interpretation of that because, generally, disc jockeys don't see the overall big picture. They may love a particular song, but that song may not appeal to enough of your audience to warrant airplay."

That's why radio personalities need to divorce themselves from their personal music preferences. Music is a tool used by the radio station to attract listeners. The overall presentation of the music, image factors, and the personalities' interaction on the air is what provides the entertainment value to the station. Johnson adds that the Program Director has the experience, knowledge, and savvy of what will work for his or her market, and the potential audience he or she is trying to gain. "If a disc jockey is not executing the format by playing songs that they like--but that the Program Director hasn't approved--ultimately it comes down to where the Program Director's job is on the line if the station is not successful. It's very critical that the disc jockeys follow the rules. If everybody's doing their own thing, then a listener won't quite know what to expect from your station because you'll have chaos. Using computers to program the music helps eliminate that chaos because the Program Director maintains control over what is played and when it is played on the station."

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99-X WNNX-FM 99-X 99-X 99-X 99-X 99-X 99-X 09-19-97 3 PM
99-X 99-X 99-X 99-X 99-X 99-X 99-X 99-X Friday
CD # T I T L E / (cd title) A R T I S T (MO/YR) IN/RTIME/E
=====
4168- 7 ALL I WANT IS YOU U-2 / /10/ 6:26/CF
      RATTLE AND HUM /94
3566- LONG LONG TIME (!) LOVE SPIT LOVE 04/11/19/ 3:55/CF
      TRY SOME EATONE /97
      FADES UP
3387- FLY SUGAR RAY / /05/ 3:55/F
      FLOORED /97
3534- TRIPPING BILLIES DAVE MATTHEWS BAND /07/24/ 4:08/CF
      CRASH /97
      OPTIONS: CUT 2 HAS COOL FADE AT 4:49. CUT 3 IS LIVE - 09/17/16 - 5:20 - APP
3545- TUBTHUMPING CHUMBAWAMBA /06/15/ 3:43/F
      TUBTHUMPER /97
      FADES UP
      'BREAKTHROUGH BAND' ITEM ON THEN IN THE SEPTEMBER ISSUE OF '99-X-PRESS.'
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>>> STOPSET #1 <<<< :00
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4182- 5 GRADUATE (!) THIRD EYE BLIND / /09/ 3:06/F
      THIRD EYE BLIND /97
4029- 4 RELAX FRANKIE GOES TO HOLL / /04/ 3:53/CD
      WELCOME TO THE PLEASUREDOME 1/85
4281- 3 SWEET SURRENDER (!) SARAH McLACHLAN /06/07/ 3:46/CF
      SURFACING /97
      99-X PRESENTS AT THE FOX THEATRE ON SATURDAY, OCTOBER 11th.
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>>> STOPSET #2 <<<< :00
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3513- SUMMERTIME (!) THE SUNDAYS /10/18/ 3:16/F
      STATIC & SILENCE /97
      C.D IS DUE OUT ON TUESDAY, OCTOBER 21st.
3244- CLOSE TO ME CURE /05/36/ 3:21/CD
      THE HEAD ON THE DOOR 10/85
3555- WRONG WAY SUBLIME / /00/ 2:13/CD
      SUBLIME /97
3237- DREAM (!) FOREST FOR THE TREES / /09/ 3:14/F
      FOREST FOR THE TREES /97
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>>> STOPSET #3 <<<< :00
-----
4149- 2 LOSING MY RELIGION R-E-M / /14/ 4:22/CF
      OUT OF TIME 3/91
Total Time for Hour is 49:18 WNNX-FM

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Many radio stations use computer programs like SELECTOR to schedule music. The above is an example of a one hour music print-out for 99X/Atlanta. *Reprinted with permission from Leslie Fram/WNNX.*

WRXX's Susan Stone agrees that consistency is crucial since listening audiences expect the music and information to be delivered in a certain way throughout all of the dayparts. "The format has to be executed properly. There's got to be something that links it all together. If it's back-selling music and having the jocks present the same promotional information and play the same music--that's a good thing. You can't have five people coming on the air and running spots whenever they feel like it or playing music that's not on their log. There has to be something there that holds it all together, and I guess the programming rules are that. I'm not saying that everyone is going to agree with every PD rule, but your boss is your boss. If your boss is running the show in a certain way you need to respect that. If you can get an understanding of what's happening and your PD will sit down with you and explain because he has an "open door" policy, then they (the programming rules) should make sense to you and be easier to follow."

## Using the Trades

Program Directors usually subscribe to one or more weekly trade journals that provide information on everything from management techniques to the latest FCC rulings, industry gossip, and music charts. Although some trade journals are format specific, the most commonly used trades include *Radio and Records (R&R)*, *Billboard Magazine*, *Billboard Airplay Monitor*, *The Gavin Report*, *Friday Morning Quarterback (FMQB)*, *College Music Journal*, and *Album Network*. Trade journals usually break down music charts by individual formats to allow PDs to see how records are performing nationwide. Individual station breakdowns across the country are also provided which list new music adds for the week as well as how many spins per week the hottest songs are getting on each station. Program Directors can analyze this information to determine whether or not a song can be a potential hit on their station.

Although most PDs admit to checking out these charts on a weekly basis, some Program Directors say the information they provide has little influence on their programming decisions. Curtiss Johnson says the charts are about 20% of what he looks at when determining what new music he's going to play. "It depends on what chart you look at, too. There are so many of those just like there are so many formats. I'll look at the charts of airplay around the country for my format (Active Rock) and the Alternative format, but I'll also look at the BDS (Broadcast Data Systems) charts, which track national airplay. They'll actually give you spins now since everything is electronically computer-monitored. So I have a pretty good idea of what's going on in the

top 50 to 100 markets. And then I'll also look at Soundscan, which is record sales nationally in the Rock and Pop formats."

Johnson says he also uses his gut instinct based on what has worked for his station in the past in Sacramento. "I'll think about what I'm looking for sound-wise to work for this strategic instance in this market of where I want to put the radio station. Something that I'm not sure about that's being played on the Alternative or Pop station I may put on my Call-Out Research with my audience. So there's a lot of factors that I look at when deciding which records get added. I'll also look at other radio stations. I have computer programs that have 24 hour monitors of music that are usually 5 to 10 days old from about 500 radio stations in the top 30 markets--from country-formatted stations to CHRs to Rock stations to Alternative stations. I can look at other stations that may be in a similar make-up of stations in their market. I can actually pull up charts to see how many times these stations are spinning records. I also call other programmers that I've developed relationships with over the years and say *Hey! I'm thinking about playing this particular song, but I have some hesitations. You've been playing it for a while. How many spins do you have on it? How is it reacting (with your audience)?* And they may say *Well, I've been getting some phone calls, but it's still too early to test it in Call-Out Research* or something like that. Or, on something they've been playing for a while they may say *Well, it's really not reacting.* Or they may tell me *It's working real, real well for me, and here's the demo that it seems to be working best in."*

WRCX/Chicago's Jo Robinson says she only checks the trades if she's got a question about a particular song. "Now that BDS is around and legitimate spins show up we can see the number of spins on a particular record. If people are playing a record a lot and we don't "hear" it, then we've got to sit back and say *All right. Maybe we don't like this, and maybe we don't "hear" it, but other stations are playing this song 30 and 40 times a week so somebody's getting either research or sales or they're seeing something else on this record.* But as far as looking at what other radio stations are playing and then making our ads for the week (based on what we see) we don't care. Never have. What works nationally doesn't necessarily work here in Chicago."

Greg Gillispie agrees that while charts may give PDs an indication of how records are doing nationally, like Johnson, he prefers to call upon the services of companies like Broadcast Data Systems and Billboard Monitor to provide him with information on national real airplay. "Instead of looking to a chart in a trade that's reported to, I have certain stations that I look at to see what they're doing that are more in line with what I'm doing. Research

gives me an idea of what kinds of music should and should not work, but a lot of it just boils down to ears and gut."

Chuck Knight and John O'Dea say the charts reported in the trades make no impact on their programming decisions. According to O'Dea, the charts really don't mean anything. "It's nice to see how many stations are on a certain song, but, basically, we listen on a song-by-song basis. There are quite a few songs that we've played this past year that never did well nationally, but did real well here. We rely more on ourselves than on the trades to decide what we think we're going to play."

## Programming and Consultants

Due to an increasingly competitive marketplace, more and more radio stations are hiring outside consultants as additional ammunition in the ratings war. Lee Abrams, who formed one of the most successful radio consultancy firms with Kent Burkhart in the early seventies, says the original purpose of consultants was to develop the format of the station. "A consultant would have a format or an idea and if a radio station wanted to do that idea they would call the consultant to set it up. I'll give you my own situation. It was really the beginning of FM as far as being recognized as a force, and I had 1 or 2 successful stations in New Orleans and Raleigh doing Rock on FM. All these other stations--big AM stations who had FM in their closets playing dentist office music tapes--heard about this and said *Hmmm. Here's a way to make extra profits on that little FM we have. Let's hire this consultant to show us how to do it.* So, literally, we'd go in with a format and say *Here's the music list. Here's the clock and the rotation. Plug it in.* We were really the programming concept provider. It's not like that anymore. But in the early days they (radio stations) were really buying a format, and it was the consultants who designed it, set it up, and made sure it ran right."

Today, consultants provide a wide variety of services to radio stations according to Guy Zapoleon who consults AC and CHR stations in the United States and Australia. "One of the services is that we really have a lot of experience in a lot of different formats. Often times we can analyze the marketplace, and say *Well, this format might work. However, you've got two stations that already lean in your direction.* Let's say that you were going to do Modern AC, for example, which is kind of like "The Buzz" in New York right now. You can say *Well, that's fine, but there are two Alternative stations and there's a Rock station that plays a lot of alternative. So your opportunity's not as big.* Other things we do to help

out stations--I'll actually do music with our clients every Monday. We set up their music systems so that they're playing the biggest hits. We make sure they're targeted toward the station's audience. We help maintain that through music calls. We also help PDs find talent if they have an opening. We help critique the talent. We help develop marketing plans and positioning--promos and liners. We also talk to them about managing their people and managing their time. Everything from programming to business. I've had people call us and say *Hey! How do I handle this situation? My morning guy is really tough to deal with. Have you got any experience on how to crack him so that he understands I'm on his side? Or A new competitor's coming in and they're using these statements on the air and they're attacking us on the air. What should we do?* So a consultant handles all sorts of strategies and tactics as well."

In addition, many consultants provide their clients with newsletters, such as B/D & A's *The Approach* that discuss promotional ideas and upcoming trends in programming and listeners' lifestyles. These newsletters are another form of research a Program Director can use when designing a programming strategy for the radio station.

How involved a consultant is in the programming process depends on the radio station and the Program Director. Some PDs discuss what songs they are thinking of adding to the station's playlist with their consultant before actually making the adds. Others simply use their consultants as an additional research tool.

John O'Dea says that although Wink 104's consultants are involved in the Monday music meetings via phone, he and his Music Director don't always follow their advice. "Bottom-line is if we don't want to add a record, we won't. And if we do, we will. They're just there to give us their feeling and input on how they feel about the record."

O'Dea says he also uses his consultant as a sounding board for any promotions he's considering. "If we decide to do a contest on the station we'll tell them what we have in mind. They'll tell us their feedback on the idea or come up with another angle that we might want to use. We use Vallie Consulting. They're very good consultants because they do exactly that--they consult. They give feedback and ideas, but they're not dictators. They don't force-feed anything--which is the worst type of consultant to deal with."

Curtiss Johnson says the involvement of 93 Rock's consultant in programming decisions is minimal--if at all. "Occasionally they may come into the market, listen to the market and give me a perception of something I may not have thought of before since I'm here day in and day out.

Sometimes my nose is so deep into what's going on from day-to-day that I might not see the forest from the trees. They may give me a national perspective on some things that I may not necessarily have access to because they (the consultant) may have 30 or 40 radio stations scattered across the country. They're also learning stuff from me that they're going to disseminate somewhere along the line to some of their other radio stations and vice versa."

Super-program directors is how Johnson describes the job of a consultant. "They're not dealing with day-to-day type of things, but they do see things more on a regional or national picture."

Lee Abrams agrees that consultants today aren't as powerful as they once were. "The function of most consultants is different today. A lot of them are really researchers providing a research service. *Here's the numbers. I'll help you interpret them. Thank you very much. See you.* Earlier on, consultants were used to bring the recipe of the station. A lot of stations wouldn't breath without calling the consultant to see if it would work."

Greg Gillispie, who programmed WRXK in Ft Myers before his recent return as President of B/D & A, an Atlanta-based consulting firm, says he now sees a new role for radio consultants. "After being back in programming on a day-to-day basis for almost 2 years and seeing how much things are changing, I think the biggest thing a consultant can do for a station is give an objective outside set of ears. Because programmers are too close to it, they (consultants) can tell you what's right and wrong with your station. Consultants need to be a clearing house of ideas and information. If something's happening somewhere else they need to pass it on to you so you can assimilate it into how it can affect your radio station and your market. They need to be creative people who help you enhance any element of your radio station. Because they deal on a more national level and see things happening, they should be able to see trends coming and inform clients of what's coming and give ideas on how these opportunities can be taken advantage of."

Guy Zapoleon says he never really appreciated what consultants did until he became one. "Consulting is really one of the most under-appreciated jobs. And it's one of the hardest jobs because, if you really understand the power and the influence you have, then you'd really better take it with an understanding of your responsibility--which is to not stifle the creative process. That's something I take very seriously. I really take consulting very seriously. It's very emotional, and very physically and mentally taxing."

When it comes to building relationships with Program Directors, Zapoleon hopes the relationship is one of being a teacher. "One of the things

that's great is young programmers who are constantly questioning what came before them. They really teach you things because the truth does change sometimes. Sometimes your perspective changes. So, it's a great relationship--teacher/student. That's what you hope the relationship is because that's where it works best."

## Research

Research has become a focal tool for Program Directors in recent years. Much of this is due to radio's increasingly competitive environment in the marketplace. Research provides the backbone of what's happening within the station and the marketplace. Most radio stations use one or more forms of research to determine listener needs, trends in the marketplace, music trends, and to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of their competitors. Larger stations may have an in-house research department that conducts routine surveys to provide the Program Director with up-to-the-minute information to guide his or her programming decisions. Smaller stations may solicit the services of a research company to gather and analyze listener feedback.

Pat Rascona, Local Promotion Manager of the East Coast Mid-Atlantic region for Island Records, believes that record companies are another valuable research tool for radio stations. "I feel like the Federal Express lady with the phone to the ear. I'm constantly on the phone and I travel a lot so I'm able to give Program Directors and Music Directors research stories that are happening around the country. We network with each other--the people on my staff--through a voice mail system. We network and we find out comparative stations. Like if Z100 in New York watches what Kiss (WXKS) in Boston does and John Ivey's (PD of WXKS) getting great research on the U2 record, but Z100's not seeing it--yet they feel Kiss's audience is basically the same parallel as Z100's--they'll watch what other radio stations do. So we can go into the station and give them research stories on key programmers around the country, which will also help our records on that particular station."

Consultant Guy Zapoleon stresses that while Program Directors should definitely keep an eye on research results they also need to keep it in perspective. "Research should paint the outside lines of the road, but it shouldn't pave the road. I think you have to use your intuition. One of the things a good programmer should have is intuition. To be able to draw from his or her experience and extrapolate with his intuition."

The methods used to gather research vary depending upon the station's

research budget, the marketplace, and the personal preferences of the Program Director. The most common formal research methods employed include Call-Out Research, Focus Groups, Auditorium Testing, Perceptuals,\* and a radio station's Web site. Informal research can be gathered by talking to listeners on the request line or at promotional events. These research tools will be discussed at length in a later chapter.

## **Interpersonal Skills of an Effective Program Director**

As in any business, Program Directors are managers. They are department heads who hire, supervise and fire employees. Managing talent is one of the more demanding aspects of the Program Director's job. Radio is a creative entity, and the people who work under the PD's supervision are creative individuals. This means egos can sometimes run rampant.

WRCX/Chicago's Jo Robinson says dealing with huge egos is a major challenge at her radio station. "Here we deal with guys who walk around and make millions of dollars a year. It's amazing to know that some of the people who are working for you make eight times as much as you do. And how do you face that? How do you gain respect? How do you think you deserve respect from people who make eight times as much as you do? It's always good to let your people know that your door is always open. I try to keep a ton of communication going between myself and all the jocks. That's usually where the problems start. I let them know what promotions are going on. I let them know that I respect what they think. That I'm not the only one with ideas around here. A lot of times the ideas they come up with are better than mine. I just try to surround myself with great people. When it happens that there is a conflict, the plan is that I have gained their respect by asking their opinions, accepting their opinions, and accepting that we'll also disagree on some things. But hey--the boss makes the final decision."

At times, radio Program Directors have to use creative management techniques to maximize the performances of their employees. They have to build and maintain team spirit in the radio station, and boost morale if problems develop either among individuals or in cases where the station isn't performing up to expected standards during ratings periods. Sometimes this means being the station "cheerleader." Other times this means stepping in and being the "boss" when problem employees refuse to follow station policies.

Not all Program Directors are comfortable in this role. John Sebastian

admits that while he doesn't always handle employee management well, he does treat his employees as individuals. "Everybody's so different. Having a locked way to handle everyone doesn't work. You need to figure out what makes people tick. I think you have to be kind of a combination of a coach and a psychologist. Some people really need you to shut the door and let them come in and almost let them cry on your shoulder. Sometimes they literally cry on your shoulder. And other people need you to be a "rah rah" guy that says *Man! Get in there and kill them today! You can do it!* You need to believe in them. With other people you have to be kind of clinical. You have to get quiet and you have to say *This is exactly what we want. This is how you have to do it.* It just depends on the personality of the individual. I think you're much more successful if you can be flexible and keep everybody on the same page by treating everyone individually."

Building relationships with your employees, says Greg Gillispie, is the key to maintaining morale. Gillispie believes that offering occasional rewards can also be a positive motivator that makes employees feel special. "Find out little things about people and find ways to touch them in a positive manner. Whether it's their birthday and you say "Happy Birthday," or give them a card that you know they'll like. One of my jocks has a collection of those nipper dogs. Every few months I'll get one for him--one that I know he doesn't already have--and give it to him to add to his collection."

Gillispie adds that giving employees additional responsibilities also helps employees feel they're making worthwhile contributions to the success of the station. "If you can find ways to give people responsibilities that they can execute and feel good about that gives them positive reinforcement. It's gotta be give and take. Sometimes it's gotta be serious. Other times it's complete lunacy. And other times it's a balance of the two. That's the nature of the business."

Chuck Knight, PD of WSNY/Columbus, feels that when it comes to managing employees, honesty really is the best policy. "I owe that to each one of my people and they owe it to me. Honesty is what I base all of my relationships on. If we've got honesty we can work our way through any problem. If we don't have honesty then we have absolutely nothing to base a relationship on."

Being a good Program Director means being a leader. PDs need to address problems early--before they become big problems. Giving clear directions, providing feedback, and maintaining open lines of communication can help prevent problems from occurring. Program Directors must also be specific about what they expect from their employees and what are the consequences if those expectations are not met. PDs not only need to tell

their employees what they want them to do, they must also tell them how they would like it to be done in order to avoid any misunderstandings.

When conflicts do occur, Jo Robinson feels Program Directors should sit down and think the matter through before confronting the employee. "Before you approach the individual, think of every way they can come back at you. Decide what your approach is going to be to their reaction so that you've thought it all through ahead of time. Nine times out of ten they'll back off. If they don't--they're gone."

Robinson says that, bottom-line, the PD must consider what's best for the station when dealing with problem employees. "In radio it's a team thing. It's not "my show." It's not "me." It's "us." It's "ours," and it's "ours" to lose."

Getting them involved in the programming process is the best way to help employees feel they are a part of the team. However, John Sebastian also feels that PDs must have sound reasons for any policies they enact and be prepared to explain the reasons for these policies to their employees. "If a programmer can't tell you why, then you really have to lose some respect for them. It's kind of like if your Dad or Mom tells you to do something and the reason why is *Because I said so*. I don't think that's valid. So I really do have a why for everything I do. I'm obsessive about everything I do on the station. If they (the employees) can trust that the programmer knows his or her stuff and can give valid answers to the "whys," then they ought to buy into the whole program. Otherwise they ought to keep asking questions. Maybe the programmer really doesn't know what he or she is talking about."

Perhaps the words "mutual respect" best sum up a positive relationship between a Program Director and his or her staff. Individual roles and the relationship between these roles must be clearly defined. Outlining the goals of the station on a regular basis and listening to feedback and suggestions on how to reach these goals will maximize the creative pool within the station. That's what makes radio employees a team and the radio station a winner in the marketplace.

## **How to Become a Program Director**

There's no one way to become a program director. Most get their start as disc jockeys and then work their way up the programming ladder first as Music Directors before taking over the programming reins at a small or medium market station. Chuck Knight says that's where PDs get a real feel for the kinds of challenges that face Program Directors. "I started in a market of about 70,000 people--LaCrosse, Wisconsin--and you know what?

I did my airshift. I did music. I did the promotions. I did the promos. I did the commercials. I wanted to do it all myself. I wanted the credit. And you quickly learn that if you do it all you're not going to get any of the credit. You're going to get all of the blame. There are so many demands on PDs in smaller markets. As far as research--forget it! Here's your subscription to R&R (*Radio and Records*). That's your research budget for the year. Choose your music out of here. I remember the first time I did music on my first radio station that I programmed. I'd been in the business for about 7 years before that point, and I remember pounding through R&R trying to figure out what songs looked like they were on their way up; what songs looked like they were stiff; and what songs looked like they were on their way down. It's tough. It's real tough to do. There are too many demands. You're pulling your own airshift. You're pulled into the General Manager's office for this, that, and everything else. There are a lot of first-time General Managers in markets like that--people who have no interpersonal skills. There are also a lot of PDs who have no interpersonal skills."

That's a skill no PD can afford to neglect insists Greg Gillispie. "You definitely have to have people skills and people management skills. That's important because your people are your number one resource. Without them and without them being properly managed you'll have problems because you're dealing with a lot of egos. A lot of psychology goes into it."

Gillispie adds that creativity and an understanding of current technology are also "musts" for any PD. "You have to be smart on a number of levels. If you can't "hear" music and you can't be creative and you can't bring your ideas to life then you've got to be smart enough to hire against your weaknesses. You have to hire someone who's strong in those areas to counter-balance you. You also need the ability to understand what your potential listeners want when they turn on the radio. Also, have a sense to keep your finger on the pulse of the street because things change and you have to keep a half a step ahead of those changes. Read about it. Know about it. Talk to people about it. Be hip," advises Gillispie.

Being the boss also has its stresses--particularly when the business is driven by trends and the whims of radio listeners. What's hot one week may not be hot the next. That's why Bob Lee, PD of KCEE in Tucson, says PDs need to develop a thick skin. "You've got to be able to take the knocks. It's very stressful. You get a couple of bad books\*, and then you're going to wonder whether or not you'll have a job. There's always somebody in the company who knows more than you do. How do you balance between what you think you know and what they think they know? They may have the power so you've got to be a diplomat, somewhat of a politician."

According to Lee, flexibility and a positive attitude toward change are also highly desirable qualities in program directors. "There's so much rapid change in this industry now, and there's going to be even more change over the next few years. You also need to have a fairly outgoing personality. You should be a competitor, somewhat aggressive. You need to recognize the realities of what makes broadcasting work. What makes it work is the business side. You can't fight that because if you do then you're not going to survive. You have to do the best that you can do and be willing to take a lot of hints and suggestions from your consultants."

Many stations now prefer their Program Directors to hold college degrees, although experience is still the most desired quality in the hiring process. Years ago, most Program Directors gained their experience through doing a little bit of everything at a radio station. Today, many colleges and universities offer broadcasting programs that teach students the fundamentals of the business. Students can take classes in programming, news writing and reporting, performance, production, station management, and sales while they gain experience working at the school's student-run radio station. Curtiss Johnson also advises students to take courses in other departments as well for a more well-rounded education. "You need to be aware of what's going on in the world to be in radio. As far as classes--of course you need your broadcasting, journalism and media classes, but you also need to take business courses because radio is a business bottom-line. Sociology, psychology, and marketing classes help as well. Program Directors aren't "head" disc jockeys like they used to be 15 or 20 years ago. Now they are far more managerial. Not only are they in charge of their air staff, they also oversee a promotions staff, a research staff, and they interface a lot more with the sales staff and general managers."

"Take plenty of speech and drama classes," advises Chuck Knight. "Radio is all about performing. I'd honestly minor in Mass Communications and major in something else. If you've really got the bug, the bug is going to take you wherever you want to go in your career. The diploma isn't going to get the job. It's your talent and motivation. In "duopoly\* land," being versatile is extremely beneficial. Versatility is the key."

Kelso Jacks, National Director of College Radio, Video, and Commercial Modern Rock Radio Promotions for Roadrunner Records advises broadcasting students to check the walls of communications departments for internship opportunities. Internships not only provide students with much needed experience, they also offer a glimpse of what it would really be like to work in the industry. "Interning is the way to go. You don't need a college degree. I don't have a college degree, although I did intern my junior

year in college at a commercial radio station. There I learned that although I love the idea of being a DJ, and think it would be one of the coolest jobs in the world, I was kind of discouraged by the fact that you don't get to talk on the radio as much as I would like. You're really limited by the station as far as what you can say unless you're the wacky morning guy. I also interned here at Roadrunner, and then I stayed on for 6 months as an unpaid intern after college. Then they finally hired me. Getting into the music (and radio) industry is a lot about who you know in the industry who can get you jobs. It's really hard for someone to come in cold without having any connections. You can't just send in your resume and expect someone to call you immediately unless you have a friend who can take your resume to whoever is doing the hiring so that they can talk you up. That's why interning is so important. They know you're working for nothing, and they can judge you. If you do your all without getting paid, imagine how much harder you'll work if you are getting paid."

Susan Stone, Music Director at WRXK/Ft. Myers credits her internship at WLVQ in Columbus for helping her get her foot in the door. But, she stresses, an internship is only as valuable as the amount of work the intern is willing to put into the experience. "As an intern *learn* everything you can. *Do* everything you can. Don't sit around looking stupid, wondering what you can do. Get in there and ask *What can I do? What can I help you with? Give me something to do.* Show up at every promotion the radio station does. Get to know everyone. Treat them with respect. Show them that you are a hard worker, that you are intelligent, and that this is really what you want to do. What you're trying to do is make an impression on someone so that when you're ready to start looking for a job they're going to consider you. Nine times out of ten an intern is hired by a radio station. We just hired our intern who's going to start doing one overnight shift a week. The kid knows nothing about radio, but he's had a chance to sit in, learn how to run the board, learn how things work, and now he's got one shift a week. That's how you get started."

Kelso Jacks also advises students to get as involved as possible with their college radio station. "That's the first step to meeting people in the industry who can get you jobs. I can't tell you how many college seniors have called me this past month asking me if I knew who was hiring."

For those who want to move up the ranks into programming, Susan Stone suggests that students and current radio employees should let the Program Director know about their interest in programming. "Ask to sit in on any function that you can and any meeting that you can. If you're not allowed in--fine. You're not allowed in. Otherwise, hang out with the PD. Hang out

with the Music Director. Watch what they do. Is it really something you want to do? If so, ask the PD point blank *Teach me what you do*. That's the only way you're going to learn."

## **Practical Programming Assignments**

**Directions:** The following case studies are situations faced by Program Directors on a regular basis. Decide the course of action you would take as a Program Director to solve each situational dilemma.

### **Case Study #1**

You program an AC radio station. In your music meeting with your Music Director to discuss music adds for the week, you decide that you have only one slot open for a new song for your currents rotation. You can't decide between adding the new Madonna song or a record from a brand new band called Smooth Grooves. Whenever you play Madonna, it always does well for you because she tests well with your audience--lots of requests, good responses on the phones, etc. You are also aware that it usually takes a while for your audience to warm up to and accept new bands. This particular Madonna song is not as strong as her previous hits. You suspect that the song from Smooth Grooves will eventually be a huge hit. Which song do you decide to add to your currents rotation? Why?

### **Case Study #2**

You are the PD of an Alternative radio station in San Diego--a progressive radio market. Your station has a fairly wild image that is successful with your target audience of 18-24 year old males. You begin playing a new song by the band White Zombie that has lyrics that are blatantly suggestive. You believe it will be a minor hit that will do well with your audience. You're getting some positive responses on the phones, but you're also receiving a few complaints as well. Your station's brand new General Manager tells you to stop playing the White Zombie song. You don't want to make him mad by being insubordinate, but you also know the song is perfect for your station's image and for what you're trying to achieve with your audience and in the market. What do you decide to do?

### **Case Study #3**

The General Manager of your Country-formatted station is aggressively trying to promote a positive work environment between the sales and programming departments. In the past, relations between these two

departments has been rather tense due to a lack of communication. An Account Executive has just approached you with a possible sales promotion idea that you feel is inappropriate for your station's audience. Not only that, your promotions calendar is quite full, and you don't feel you could effectively promote the event. The client involved in the promotion is one of your station's best clients. How do you handle the situation?

### **Case Study #4**

You are the Program Director of a CHR station in a top 10 market. Your station is involved in an extremely competitive situation with one other CHR station in the market. Your morning man, who happens to be quite popular with your listening audience, has just shown up for work in an inebriated state for the 3rd time in two weeks. You request a meeting with your morning man to discuss the situation. What do you say to him in the meeting?

### **Case Study #5**

You program an Active Rock station in Richmond, Virginia. The company that owns your station is small so you don't have a great deal of money to spend on promotions for your station. A record rep from a large record label has just offered you an all-expenses paid trip to Hawaii to give away to a pair of listeners. The catch? The record rep wants you to add the new song from Raging Hormones to your current rotation. You were not planning on adding that song because you feel it is a little too wild for your conservative market. However, you also feel giving away a trip for 2 to Hawaii could also garner publicity that your station desperately needs. What do you decide to do?

# **The Program Mix**

## **Chapter Objectives**

**At the end of this chapter students will be able to:**

1. Describe music categories.
2. Explain how music is categorized.
3. List the various types of information that is gathered about each song.
4. Explain the most common song rotation rules of programming.
5. Define how music is day-parted.
6. Describe how PDs decide when to stop playing new songs and/or move those songs to new categories.
7. Explain the qualities programmers listen for when listening to new music.
8. Describe the changes in news and talk radio.
9. Complete the practical programming assignments at the end of the chapter.

## Chapter 4

# Glossary of Radio Terms

<b>Stop Set:</b>	Group of commercials played at a specific time within an hour during a broadcast.
<b>Music Sweep:</b>	3 or more songs played in a row without interruption.
<b>Demographic:</b>	Research term used to describe an audience in terms of age and sex.
<b>Psychographic:</b>	Research terms used to describe an audience in terms of attitudes, behaviors, opinions, values, etc.
<b>Front-sell:</b>	Announcing the name of the song and artist before the song is played on the air.
<b>Back-sell:</b>	Announcing the name of the song and artist after the song is played on the air.
<b>Day-parting:</b>	Allowing a song to be played only during a specific time of day.
<b>OES:</b>	(Optimum Effective Scheduling) Ensures that at least 50% of the audience hears something at least 3 times.
<b>News Feeds:</b>	News sent via satellite or through phone lines to subscribing stations.
<b>Deregulation:</b>	Government ruling that, for the most part, reduced the power of the FCC by allowing the marketplace to dictate what show content will be tolerated from broadcasters. Also changed other FCC policies concerning station ownership, program logs, news/public affairs programming, etc.
<b>Syndicated:</b>	Programs produced elsewhere that are purchased by radio stations for airplay.
<b>Cume:</b>	The estimated number of different persons who listened to a station for a minimum of 5 minutes in a quarter hour within a given daypart..
<b>TSL:</b>	(Time Spent Listening) An estimate of the amount of time the average person spent listening to the radio in a given daypart.

# 4

## The Program Mix

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### Designing a Program Clock

Everything listeners hear on the air has been carefully researched and strategically plotted out on an hourly program clock before it ever hits the airwaves. As stated in the last chapter, Program Directors conduct periodic research studies to determine listener needs, wants and desires. This research applies to when commercials are played, how many commercials are played within a given stop set,\* the topics radio personalities discuss on the air, the imaging of the station, the promotions, and, of course, the music a radio station plays.

For example, a PD may decide to play 3 commercial stop sets an hour. The first may occur at 20 minutes after the hour; the second at 35 minutes after the hour; and the third at 50 minutes after the hour. The disc jockey may be instructed on the program log to play or read a station image liner following the last commercial in each stop set into the first song of the next music sweep.\* Any news, weather reports, Public Service Announcements and promotional announcements will also be placed in a specific location within the hour.

Program clocks may change each hour or each daypart, depending upon the strategic formula the PD has developed for the radio station. Basically, the program clock serves as a road map that plots out the course of each hour. DJs know in advance exactly what they're going to play and when they're going to play it. This process allows Program Directors to maintain tight control over the station's sound.

### What are Music Categories?

The type of music a station plays depends upon the format selected for the radio station. A format could be broad-based--meaning it plays a little bit of everything within a specific music genre, or it could be very specific. This is called niche formatting.

Radio stations carve out a very specific target audience within a radio market--such as males between the ages of 18 and 34--and then develop the station's programming around what the research tells a PD is essential to meet the needs of the target audience.

Let's say music research of the market shows that the 18-34 year old male target audience is most interested in heavy metal that is less than five years old. A smart Program Director will develop a playlist that is based around this type of music. The bulk of the songs should be more current-based, although older songs that test well with the target audience would also be incorporated into the music formula. In addition, there may be songs that lean more alternative or industrial-based that could be included as well.

Every song on a station's playlist is carefully selected according to research findings based on listeners' responses. These songs are then grouped into various categories according to shared characteristics between songs. The PD will then determine where these categories should be placed within the hour to maximize the station's music flow, sound, and image.

## **How is Music Categorized?**

There are, generally, two very broad categories of music--"current" and "library". "Current" music is usually new--less than a year old--that is being promoted to radio stations by record companies. This is the music that is ranked on music charts in various trade journals. Record store sales may also reflect these songs' popularity. "Library" music consists of older music that is popular with a station's listening audience.

Both "current" and "library" categories are then sub-divided into additional categories according to the programming formula determined by the Program Director. These sub-categories vary from radio station to radio station. How this music is further divided is based on the demographic\* and psychographic\* goals of the radio station.

Individual categories are then plotted on an hourly program clock. A song from each category is then played in the position where it appears within the hour.

To picture what this process looks like in very broad terms, let's imagine that each music category is represented by a deck of cards. There are four decks of cards--red, blue, yellow and green. Each card within the deck represents an individual song. The number of cards within each deck varies according to what category it represents. Let's call the yellow and green categories "current" categories, and the red and blue categories "library" categories. There are five cards in the yellow category, ten cards in the green

category, 200 cards in the blue category and 400 cards in the red category. The PD has determined that the following categories will be played, in order, from the top of the hour to the bottom of the hour within a given hour:

:00	Red
	Blue
	Red
:15	Yellow
:18	Commercial stop set
:22	Red
:26	Blue
:30	Green

As a card from each category is played, it is then placed at the bottom of the stack of that category. This demonstrates how music is rotated within a category on a program clock. The music within "current" categories may change quite often since records are rotated in and out of these categories during the weekly music meeting between the Program Director and the Music Director.

Susan Stone, Music Director of WRXK/Ft. Myers, says she and her PD make these changes every Friday during their weekly music meeting. "What the PD and I will do is sit there and listen to all the new releases the record reps have worked us on during the week. We try to make decisions on which ones we're going to add--if we decide to add any at all. We think about what rotations we're going to put these songs in. We have 3 "currents" rotations. We have "A"s, "B"s, and "N"s. "A"s are our really hot "currents." They get the most spins. Generally, they are so hot and so familiar that everybody knows them so they don't necessarily have to be front-sold.\* Then we have our "B"s, which are relatively new records. They do need a front-sell. They may only get 8 to 14 spins a week so it's a medium rotation. Our "N" records are our lightest rotation. They're pretty much night records only. We play a little heavier stuff at night, and those probably only get anywhere from 4 to 8 spins in a week. It's a way to gradually break them in to the audience. During our music meeting we decide if any of our "A"s are burned out and ready to go to our "re-current" category. Are any of our "B"s becoming familiar enough and popular enough that people are screaming for them enough that we can move them to "A" rotation? Are any of our night records ready to go to "B" yet? Are they accepted enough that they could be played more in a daypart other than nights?"

Curtiss Johnson describes the formula he uses to categorize his music and achieve results with KRXQ's listening audience (males 18-34) in

Sacramento. "The highest spins of a record is what I call my "A" category--or "power currents." At my station, they're played once every five hours. Then I have a "medium current" rotation. They rotate anywhere from 7 to 11 hours, depending on how many great tracks are out there, the strategic battle I'm in at any given time, and what I'm trying to do image-wise for the radio station. At some points in time, I've had night currents where the songs tend to be a little harder or a little more obscure or a little more esoteric for that younger end of my audience that tends to listen to radio more at night. That, of course, is with the rock format. Some more highly niched formats will probably have 4 or 5 current categories, but they tend to rotate on a 24-hour basis. But with a station that's a little more broad-based, you'll tend to see day-parting\* come into effect. There may be categories that only rotate during certain times of the day. Then, after the "night current," I have a "power re-current." These are records that were once in my "power currents" and did very well. They are the hits that everyone is familiar with. I'll put them in a category that comes up once an hour. They'll come up (on the station's playlist) within 15 to 19 hours. In other-words, they'll get played one to one-and-a-half times a day, depending upon where they're at within the category. I also have a "re-current" category. Those songs are about a year to a year-and-a-half old. After that, I have my "gold" categories. You can break them out into so many different ways. You can have categories that are day-part specific. They only come up during a certain time of day. Classic Rock stations, of course, will have quite a few layers of "gold" categories because that's all they play. I have something that I call a "power gold" category that is the big monster-testing records. With my core, they're the best testing records out there. Or they may have a very high "favorite" percentage when I have an auditorium test or do call-out research. People will say, when they hear those songs *Yeah! That's one of my favorites!* They're the most well-liked. I'll rotate those higher than my other gold categories. I also have a "spice" category that may only come up every 2 to 3 hours. Those are the songs that when people hear them they say *Oh, wow! I haven't heard that song in a long time!* It may be an album track from a big artist five or ten years ago."

The term used to label each category may vary slightly between radio stations. Johnson's "spice" category is called an "Oh Wow" category at Wink 104 in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Program Director John O'Dea says songs in this category only come up once every 2 to 3 weeks. In addition, O'Dea says he categorizes brand new songs that have just been added to the radio station's playlist as "C" category records.

O'Dea also has 2 different categories of "re-current" records. "There are

"power re-currents," which are songs that just came out of a "power" category that I don't want to play as often. Then I have "secondary re-currents," which are songs that came out of the "B" category--or "secondary powers." These songs did well, but they didn't do tremendously well. They come up less often than the "power re-currents."

Although the number of categories and the determiners used to place songs within categories varies between stations, the basic formula remains the same. And, according to John Sebastian, PD of Country-formatted KZLA in Los Angeles, this formula can easily be transferred from format to format. "I use the same system with every format I've programmed. Then I use my call-out research and music auditorium tests almost exclusively for the bottom-line of whether we play a song, what category it's placed in, and what rotation it's played in. One of the reasons why I've been so successful in a diverse number of formats is that the basics are so pervasive. The basics work--if you do them well--for anything from Classical to Country. In an overview, I think they aren't different. But they are different in that the audiences are more loyal. I think the audience is more passionate about the music. I think they put the music on a pedestal with Country more so, maybe, than almost any other format except for, perhaps, Classical. These people are just absolutely crazy about their radio stations and their music. Because of the lyric content, there are very personal stories being sold in the music. Maybe that's why it is so personal with the audience."

\*\*\*\*\*  
 \* KRXQ-FM \*  
 \* PAT MARTIN \*  
 \* 1 PM Tuesday 10-07-97 \*  
 \*\*\*\*\*

CAT	TITLE	ARTIST	TIME/ENDS
A	MY OWN PRISON	CREED	4:55/F
H	MY OWN PRISON ROAD TO NOWHERE 30 MORE YEARS	ALBUM VERSION OZZY OSBOURNE	4:59/F
09:54 93ROCK IMAGER DROP			:10
E	WRONG WAY	SUBLIME	2:16/C
G	SUBLIME LITHIUM	ALBUM VERSION ONLY NIRVANA	4:10/C
16:30 *NEW ROCK FROM _____ OF 93ROCK.			:05
B	AMAZED	OFFSPRING	4:25/C
21:00 93ROCK RECORDED IMAGE PHOTO			:50
P	ONE	METALLICA	7:03/C
F	...AND JUSTICE FOR ALL GRIND	TRACK 1 ALICE IN CHAINS	4:45/C
33:38 SECONDARY STOPSET			5:00
B	FLY	SUGAR RAY	4:13/F
H	FLOORED	PLAY "Pais" OR CART ONLY 93 Rock Presents 8 Memorial (11-1-97 w/311)	5:54/F
48:15 PRIMARY STOPSET *40 MINUTES OF 93ROCK SON-STOP NEXT...*			6:00
P	UNDER THE BRIDGE	RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS	4:20/C
59:05 THE FOLLOWING SONG IS OPTIONAL FOR TIMING			:00
G	PLOWED	SPONGE	3:10/C
62:15 LIVE LEGAL 1.0. KRXQ ROSEVILLE/SACRAMENTO...			:15
TOTAL TIME FOR THIS HOUR IS 62:30			KRXQ-FM

One hour SELECTOR music schedule for KRXQ. *Reprinted with permission from Curtiss Johnson and KRXQ.*

## **What Kind of Information Needs to be Known About Each Song?**

As discussed earlier in the chapter, individual songs are placed into categories based on a set of pre-determined criteria. Information about each song is needed in order for an effective rotation pattern to be established within the category. Since most music is now programmed by computer, this information is placed in the computer's memory, and is called up during the music scheduling process.

Curtiss Johnson maintains that SELECTOR music scheduling system helps him generate his daily music logs most effectively, allowing him to set rotation rules for each song so that KRXQ's sound is exactly how he wants it. "In SELECTOR, you'll pull up a card for each song. You go into the "add song" category of the program. You give the song a catalog number. You'll give it a category notation--an "A," "P," "G," "F," or whatever. You give the title of the song and the artist. If it's a duet, you mention the secondary artist so that the computer knows to separate that artist from one of their other songs. You'll also give the CD title. Then the program goes into areas where you can put in a designation so that Sammy Hagar gets separated from later Van Halen or Ozzy Osbourne gets separated from Black Sabbath. Lately here, Mad Season is a spin-off of Alice in Chains so you want to separate that. Soundgarden gets separated from Temple of the Dog because it's the same lead singer."

Johnson adds that SELECTOR also allows PDs to keep a tight rein on the music flow by allowing songs to surface more often within a category than others. This occurs by telling the computer to place the song only so far back in the stack of songs in the category it's placed in.

Mood and tempo for each song can be designated on a 1-5 or a 1-10 scale within SELECTOR to control the speedometer of the radio, according to Johnson. "Let's say you have a 1-5 scale with 5 being the fastest, heaviest, most aggressive music. 1 being a slow ballad. When you go into mood and tempo, what you do is basically go into your clock settings and determine within any given hour the point setting you want to give that hour. That's so you keep an even tempo of your radio station. You don't want to have 15 minutes of really hard, fast music, and then schedule 3 or 4 ballads back-to-back. You can tell the computer to only schedule 2 ballads back-to-back, and that you want the second ballad to speed up at the end of the song so that it will transition better into a faster song. There are also other factors you can set in the computer such as the image of the song or artist."

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*-- S E L E C T O R ----- Song Information --*
Song ID Media Cat Lev Pack Song Title . 202
132 P 1 0 MAN IN THE BOX
Artist 1 34 Artist 2
ALICE_IN_CHAINS
Album Title 203 Role Group %Back*
FACELIFT 75% F3 Song Notes
----- F4 Artist Notes
Mood ..... 4 Daypart F5 Current Options
Energy ..... 4 Restriction F6 Additional Info.
Tempo ..... MM Grid F7 Song History
BPM ..... 1 111 11 F8 Themes
Texture ..... 212345678901212345678901 F9 Print/File
Sound Code .... G MAAAAAAAAAAAAANPPPPPPPPPP
Opener ..... Mon Alt F2 Auto-Save OFF
Era ..... Tue Alt F7 Delete History
Type ..... Wed Alt F9 MUSICbase Info
Pattern ..... 1 Thu Alt A Alternate Cat.
Key/Chord .... Fri Alt C Chart Info.
Runtime ..... 4:44.0 Sat Alt F Future Moves
Intro . / . / Sun Alt I Digital Audio
Opening/Ending /C KRXQ-FM Song 34 of 71 Alt R Research
-- F1-Help F2-Save PgUp/PgDn-Previous/Next Song Alt O-Custom Field Ordering --*

Additional Song Information
Artist 3 Artist 4
Additional Artists
Composers
Publishers
Arrangers License Label
MM 1
Record # Promoter Country Content 21 Address
1469
Radio Text
Complete Work Name Complete Work?

*----- F1-Help F2-Save -----*
Present Cat/Lev/Pack 1 1 1 1
Entered . 2/24/96 Date Day 2 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 1 2 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 1
Plays ..... 346 10/ 9/97 Thu | | | | | | | | | | * | | | | | | | | | |
Change History 10/ 8/97 Wed* | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
Entered CLPack Play10/ 7/97 Tue | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
10/23/95 G1 0 5110/ 6/97 Mon | | | | | | | | | | * | | | | | | | | | |
/ / F1 0 13910/ 5/97 Sun | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
10/ 4/97 Sat | * | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
10/ 3/97 Fri | | | | | | | | | | * | | | | | | | | | |
Total Plays 10/ 2/97 Thu | | | | | | | | | | * | | | | | | | | | |
636 10/ 1/97 Wed | | | | | * | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
Date Added 9/30/97 Tue | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
11/17/94 9/29/97 Mon | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
Last Edited 9/28/97 Sun | | | | | | | | | | * | | | | | | | | | |
8/21/97 9/27/97 Sat* | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
Maintenance Flag 9/26/97 Fri | | | | | * | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
9/25/97 Thu | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
F3/F4-Prev/Next Song F5-Change History F7-Play History Alt M-Maintenance Flag
*-----*

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Example of a song card found in the SELECTOR music scheduling system.  
 Reprinted with permission from Curtiss Johnson and KRXQ.

"For my particular use, I have a "mainstream" category that I'll let my computer schedule as many of those songs back-to-back as it wants. Or I may have a punk category, and I'll only allow one punk song to schedule every 45 minutes. And that may shift. As a song becomes more familiar, it may shift in and out of categories. After it's been played for 6 months, it may get more of a mainstream feel to it. That decision is up to you, your gut instinct, what you're hearing from people, and what your research is telling you about whether a song's designation should change somewhere down the road. I may also have a "hard" designation where 2 hard songs won't be scheduled back-to-back. I may have an industrial category where I have to have a minimum of 5 songs between Nine Inch Nails and Filter. And then, of course, there are day-parts, the length of songs, intros and outros of songs. That sort of thing. This is the core of SELECTOR. Your scheduling rules how often songs get rotated, minimum and maximum separation of songs, artists, and categories. What's the minimum time that you'll allow to elapse before that artist can be scheduled again. You can set a maximum time. If you have a really hot artist like Pearl Jam, which is one of my core artists, you may not want 2 hours to roll by without scheduling another Pearl Jam song. Basically, you set all those parameters based on what you're doing competitively, and what you want for the station. You can come up with as many settings as you want depending on how closely you want to control your music flow," Johnson says.

Johnson admits that maintaining tight control over the music flow can also cause problems when scheduling music. "The more closely you control the computer in scheduling music, the harder it is for it to schedule as well--especially if you have tight rotations on your music."

That's a problem Chuck Knight, WSNY/Columbus PD is more than willing to tackle. "I think the only way to do it is to pre-program music. It's the only way to manage a library. Otherwise, you wouldn't have a clue as to when it was played yesterday. It's the only way to ensure that you don't play the same song at the same time five days straight. That's one thing that really ticks listeners off."

## **Rules and Conditions of Record Rotation**

Once a Program Director creates a program clock for each hour and inputs individual song information into the music scheduling program on the computer, the PD must then set up the conditions he or she wants the computer to follow when scheduling music. Although the computer is able to follow the rules of scheduling individual songs based on what the PD tells

it to do, the Program Director must first consider the broader perspective of what's going on in the market at that time.

Greg Gillispie insists that before a PD can even begin to set guidelines within the computer, the Program Director must first decide what type of radio station is being programmed. "Are you a more come-driven or more TSL-driven radio station? Once you decide that then you have to develop your radio station accordingly. Realize that for the average person listening to Rock radio, the average Time Spent Listening across the country is about 10 hours a week. It used to be 14 hours. There are a lot of diversions for people's Time Spent Listening, and it's difficult to say how those 10 hours break up. Is it an hour straight? 20 minutes here and there? An hour and 20 minutes here and there? A couple of things I use are "reach" and "frequency" to see how many impressions it's going to take for my target audience to be impacted by a song or a promo. Along the same lines, OES (Optimum Effective Scheduling), \* which is a sales tool, is something else I look at. If you understand how that relationship works with the average person's listening, and then decide whether you're a come-driven or TSL-drive radio station, then you either increase the record rotation if you're come-driven or relax them a little bit if you're more Time Spent Listening-driven to prevent people from getting burned out on the music. I think a good rule of thumb for a Rock radio station is that you should play your heavy rotating songs at least once per day part."

In order to see how effective record rotations are when it comes to scoring "hits" with the listening audience, Arbitron and RCS, the company that developed SELECTOR, have jointly developed a new software strategy for programmers that compares music rotations with Arbitron ratings. The program, which is called SELECTORREACH helps programmers determine power rotations for core listeners to determine how often a record must be played in order to achieve "come penetration."

Another decision a PD will make is which categories get front-sold or back-sold by disc jockeys on the air. Although some songs are popular enough that the listening audience probably already knows the song title and artist, other songs don't enjoy that same familiarity. Island Record's Pat Rascona feels radio stations could do more to make new music more familiar to the general public. "All we ask of radio stations is to play our records if they fit their radio station. Also, I would really appreciate it if they would start back-announcing the stuff they play a little bit more to get their audience a little more familiar with the music. When a station plays a record and the listener thinks *Oh, I really like that record...* they want to know who sings it. Back-announcing would really help us a lot."

Susan Stone agrees that some stations could do a better job "selling" new music to the public. "I think, from a radio standpoint, it is extremely important to talk up your music. That's something we do believe in very strongly at this radio station. We back-sell by song name and artist. Although it creates a fair amount of talk, research has shown us that it's very important to back-sell your music. For some reason, even though the listening audience thinks you talk too much already, if you take an extra 30 to 60 seconds to name the last 6 songs you played that's information the audience wants. Otherwise they're sitting there scratching their heads wondering *What the heck was that song 3 tunes ago?*"

Stone also believes that radio stations have a responsibility to create excitement about the music that is coming up. "There are very few people who listen to the radio intently. I think I read somewhere that the average radio listener spends an hour a day with radio. Now, you do have your diehards out there who may work on a construction site or something like that who listen to the radio 8 hours a day. Those people think you play everything way too much. But radio is not designed for those people. It's designed for the person who listens 1 hour a day. So you have to let your audience know what you're about to play. Get them excited. Make them not want to tune out. *You've gotta hear this new Sammy Hagar! He's got some great people playing on the record. You're not going to believe who half of them are!* Get them intrigued. And then, when you're ready to play the song, build it up. *My gosh! He has Slash on this record! He even has Huey Lewis! It's amazing! Listen to this! See what you think.* It's important to create excitement. That's something we're constantly on the jocks about. It doesn't matter whether it's an old classic tune or a brand new song. Be a cheerleader for the music. Even if it's the Eagles "Hotel California" that you've heard 5 billion times, but you happen to remember a funny story about that song in a tid-bit about the album, share that with your audience. Give them reasons to say *Yeah! "Hotel California!" Okay, I've heard it 5 million times, but you just put it in a whole new light for me with that story.* So the record companies who complain about radio stations not back-selling music—I understand that. They're justified because I also think that's important."

## Developing the Currents/Library Formula

Program Directors develop their currents/library formula based on who they're trying to get to listen to their radio station. Research will certainly tell a PD what listeners are expecting from their radio station. Earlier in this

chapter, we discussed that current music is described as music that is, generally, less than a year old. This category encompasses the new releases that are being marketed by record companies to the public. Library music, on the other-hand, is music that has been around for a while. Almost any format can break down their music into current and library categories.

The percentage of current music versus library music played on a radio station will vary from format to format. And, according to Wink 104's John O'Dea, it can also vary from day-part to day-part. "We play 70% current, 30% oldies from 5:00 a.m. to 3:00.p.m. After that, it's probably 95% current/re-current and 5% oldies. I do this to keep the station sounding more upbeat, bright and fresh--especially at night. At night people are going out. If they want oldies, they can get them in other places. We want to have more of a fresh hot sound at night."

O'Dea adds that his station's target audience is women 18-49 years of age, but that other age groups are also attracted to his radio station as well. "This sound also appeals to teens, but I don't try to get teens. They just kind of come to the party."

Chuck Knight, who's also trying to appeal to the same demographic with Hot AC-formatted Star 104.5/Philadelphia, takes a slightly different approach with his music formula. On this station, we look for pop and rhythmic-leaning records. We don't look at rock records. That isn't part of the music mixture. Basically, our formula is 30% current, 20% re-current, and 50% gold."

Other formats, such as Rock and Country, may use a similar currents/library formula. It all boils down to who you're targeting with your programming. If a station is trying to appeal to an older demographic, the percentage of library cuts played on the station may be greater. Stations who target younger demographics may play a higher percentage of current music than library tracks.

# The Program Mix

121

=====				
KRXQ-FM 93 ROCK SACRAMENTO PLAYLIST				
TRADES 10-06-97				
* DENOTES ADD				
STATION MANAGER: CURTISS JOHNSON				
ASSISTANT PROGRAM DIRECTOR: PAT MARTIN				
MUSIC DIRECTOR: KYLEE BROOKS				
Rank	Plays	Title	Artist	Label
=====				
1	32	TOUCH, PEEL AND STAND	DAYS OF THE NEW	OUTPOST/GEFFEN
1	32	H	TOOL	100
3	31	MY OWN PRISON	CREED	VISX-UP/RSG
3	31	TRUST	MEGADETH	CAPITOL
5	30	RHINOSAUR	SOUNDGARDEN	A&N
6	21	SHUTTER GUT (CAROLINE)	SOAK	INTENSCOPE
6	21	GRADUATE	THIRD EYE BLIND	ELEXTRA
6	21	AMAZED	OFFSPRING	COLUMBIA
6	21	BLEEDING ME	METALLICA	ELEXTRA
10	20	LIVE THROUGH THIS(15 STORIE	MIGHTY JOE PLUM	ATLANTIC
10	20	3 AM	HATCHBOX 20	ATLANTIC/LAVA
10	20	FLY	SUGAR RAY	ATLANTIC
10	20	HELLO HELLO	TALK SHOW	ATLANTIC
10	20	WHY I'M HERE	OLEANDER	
15	19	HIGH	JIMMIE'S CHICKEN SHACK	POLYGRAM/ROCKET
15	19	EVERLONG	FOO FIGHTERS	CAPITOL
15	19	WALKIN' ON THE SUN	SMASH MOUTH	INTENSCOPE
15	19	ALMOST HONEST	MEGADETH	CAPITOL
15	19	HITCHIN A RIDE	GREENDAY	REPRISE
15	19	WASH IT AWAY	BLACK LAB	DGC
15	19	SLOW RIDE	KENNY WAYNE SHEPARD	REVOLUTION
15	19	SAINT OF ME	THE ROLLING STONES	VIRGIN
15	19	PINK	AEROSMITH	COLUMBIA
24	18	AENIMA	TOOL	VOLCANO
25	15	WRONG WAY	SUBLIME	MCA
26	12	EVERYTHING TO EVERYONE	EVERCLEAR	
26	12	MY OWN SUMMER(SHOVE IT)	DEFTONES	HAVENICE
28	11	DOWN	CELLOPHANE	VIRGIN
28	11	BLACK	SEVENDUST	TUT
28	11	WHAT WAS I THINKING	311	CAPRICORN
28	11	TEMPTATION	THE TEA PARTY	ATLANTIC
32	10	TUMBLE IN THE ROUGH	STONE TEMPLE PILOTS	ATLANTIC
32	10	DOWN	311	CAPRICORN
32	10	RATTLESNAKE #	LIVE	RADIOACTIVE
35	9	RPM	SUGAR RAY	ATLANTIC
35	9	ASHES TO ASHES	FAITH NO MORE	REPRISE
35	9	WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO	STABBING WESTWARD	COLUMBIA
35	9	TRIPPIN' ON A HOLE IN PAPER	STONE TEMPLE PILOTS	ATLANTIC
35	9	GUILTY	GRAVITY KILLS	TUT
35	9	DOWN WHEN I'M LOADED	OLEANDER	FINE RECORDS
35	9	VOLCANO GIRLS	VERUCA SALT	GEFFEN
42	8	PRETTY NOOSE	SOUNDGARDEN	A&N
42	8	WASTING MY HATE	METALLICA	ELEXTRA
42	8	LAKINI'S JUICE	LIVE	RADIO ACTIVE/MCA
42	8	GONE AWAY	OFFSPRING	COLUMBIA
42	8	I CHOOSE	OFFSPRING	COLUMBIA
42	8	SANTERIA	SUBLIME	MCA
48	7	HYPE	HEADSWIM	550 MUSIC

Current (new) music playlist for KRXQ. Playlist shows song rank and times played for the week of October 6, 1997. *Reprinted with permission from Curtiss Johnson and KRXQ.*

## Music Tracking--How Long to Play/Rest Songs

Once a song is put into rotation, the program director must then monitor how the song is doing. One of the biggest complaints radio stations receive from listeners is that they are burned out on particular songs. If a PD leaves a song in a fast rotation for too long, the radio station may be at risk of sounding stale. This creates the impression in listeners' minds that the radio station is not keeping up with current trends. In response, they may tune into another station that seems more in-step with their needs.

In order to keep the station sounding "fresh," a PD may decide to "rest" a song for a while by taking it out of rotation for a period of time. The tricky part for any Program Director is making sure they don't take a song out of rotation too soon. The songs perceived as "favorites" by many listeners are the songs that are currently topping the charts. These are also the songs that have the highest burn-out rate for listeners.

How do PDs determine when to play and when to rest a song? Most PDs, like John O'Dea, use research--in particular--call-out research--to gauge listeners' reactions to individual songs. "We have call-out research that we do every other week. That gives us a good gauge on how our music is doing. Whether it's getting burned out to the audience or whether we should increase the rotation of a song. That's 60-70% of how I tell whether or not a song is working for my station. We'll certainly get research back on songs that we say *I can't believe this is not testing better!* On a gut standpoint, we might keep it in rotation another couple of weeks and then look at it again in research."

KZLA's John Sebastian also uses his gut to determine whether or not to play a song, although he also admits to using a more conservative approach to selecting music. "If I hear something that blows me away I'll play it. But most of the time I wait for other stations that I trust and let them break things. Then I get on it later just to make sure I'm not making as many mistakes as other radio stations do. It's a safer way to go. But I still have that instinct that if I hear something that's fantastic, if it gives me goosebumps, then I'll give it a shot."

Listener reaction on the phones is also a good earlier indicator, according to Curtiss Johnson. "You can usually tell. Some records you already know are going to be reaction records. Those records will get immediate reaction because they happen to be young-based for teens or people in their early 20's. Those people seem to be more active musically, and will get on the phones and tell you that they like or don't like that particular song. But phone reaction doesn't necessarily kill a record or make a record a hit in my

mind. It takes a while for things to establish. Some things that hardly ever get requests work out to be great records for you because they appeal to an older audience or an audience that will never pick up a phone and call a radio station. You basically hear from about 1-2% of your listening audience. I do give the phones some credibility early on in a project. I can see whether or not a record has some potential. A lot of times those active members of your audience will tell you what members of your passive audience will say a month or two down the road when that passive part of your audience gets familiar with the record."

Greg Gillispie suggests that PDs should monitor the competition to see what they're playing. He also cautions that Program Directors need to keep things in perspective when dealing with record companies. "Generally, the record companies are way ahead of your agenda. After they've gotten a record out and it's in heavy rotation on your radio station, they're ready to start breaking the next track when your audience is just getting familiar with the previous one. It's kind of an old rule of thumb that we in radio are so far ahead of the audience because we live, eat, and breathe this stuff on a daily basis. A lot of times my jocks will come in and say *I'm so sick of this song!* And I'll say *Well, that's about the time your listeners are starting to get into it.* And a couple of weeks later they (the jocks) come in and say *I am just going to puke if I have to play this song one more time!* You can just about bet that that's when the song is your listeners' favorite. And about the time your jocks are puking, then it's probably about the time when your listeners are starting to get tired of it. That's when you cut its (the song's) rotation back. It's pretty clear to me that you have to have at least 100 spins on a record before your audience is going to have heard it enough times to really decide whether they like it or not. After that, you've probably got another 250-450 spins out of a record in a current rotation before you get to a point of burn. Depending on what kind of song it is, it may come earlier or it may come later."

## Developing an Ear for Music

Probably one of the more difficult and hard-to-define duties of a radio Program Director is developing an ear to select the music that a station's listening audience will find most appealing. PDs receive dozens of songs from new bands in the mail every day from record companies. Together, the PD and the Music Director must sift through the pile in search of bands that will eventually be chart-toppers in their particular format. Predicting tomorrow's hits is not as easy as it seems, and, unfortunately, there's no clear-

cut solution that makes this task any easier.

Jo Robinson, Assistant Program Director of WRCX/Chicago, believes that nobody knows which records will be hits until they start to sell in retail stores. "There are certain formulas that you can listen for. There are certain trends that you can listen for in music to try and predict whether or not a record will become a hit. But there are a lot of other factors involved. How much is the record label willing to get behind that song? There are some labels who say *You've got to add this! It's a hit! It's a hit! It's a hit!* So, we'll add it and then 2 weeks later they'll say *Drop that record and add this one because it's going to be a hit.* That's when we'll think *Wait a minute. You don't have a commitment for Artist B or for what Artist A was doing.* It gets really frustrating sometimes because Dave (PD of WRCX) and I will hear songs, and we won't even follow what the rest of the country is doing. We'll decide *The heck with everyone else! We really like this band. We think we can make it a hit in Chicago so we're going to be committed to it.*

That's happened with a lot of different bands. There's a band right now called Local H that's a hit for us. It's selling in Chicago. All the songs we play from Local H are testing well for us. They sound great on the radio so why not play them? But to sift through the hundreds of pieces of music that we get every week is tedious. You're pretending to play God with these bands--which is not fair to them--but that's the way this business is. I don't want something to sound like "The next record." I don't want everything to be formula or sound like the next Nirvana--or whatever the next trend happens to be. If it's The Wallflowers or Hootie and the Blowfish, I'd like them to try and sound like individuals so that we can develop that artist and that band. Our listeners know that we're here to develop bands and not just play hit songs. That's what Top 40 radio is for. That's *not* what Rock radio is here for."

WRXK's Susan Stone says she sometimes questions what she's hearing when she listens to new music. "There are times when I think *Oh--this is a no-brainer. This is a hit. This is a smash.* And then nothing ever happens with the record. And then there are times where I think the same thing and--sure enough--it's huge. Here's a great example--the Widespread Panic song that came out called "Hope in a Hopeless World." When that record was released I thought *Oh, this is so perfect for our station.* We added the record out of the box and it was huge. It stayed with us until 2 weeks ago when we finally put it in re-currents. That song got over 500 spins, which is pretty high for a current record."

Stone mentions that there are also times when she disliked songs that eventually became hits. "The band is called Verve Pipe. Their song

"Freshman" is a huge hit record. I hate it! I don't know why it's a hit. I think it is one of the most boring records I've ever heard. The lyrics are pretty deep and pretty intense, but outside of that I find it an extremely boring record."

Leslie Fram, Program Director of Alternative rocker WNNX in Atlanta, believes it takes a lot of gut (feeling) in programming to choose hit records. "We can't just sit back and play what the labels are offering us. We have to dig deep into records that are laying on the desk. We've got to take the time to go through each CD. If you just play what's being sent to you every week then...I don't know. A lot of times you really have to go out and find that next sound. We sort of did that recently. About 2 or 3 months ago we felt really bored with everything that was on the air. So a friend of mine turned me on to this English import that he had of this band called Chumbawamba. They were a punk band in Britain. They've got about 6 or 7 records out. This one particular song called "Tubthumping" sounded like a real reaction record. It sounded like an across the board hit. It had a great hook, and had a lot of different styles of music in one song. Everything from dance to pop to whatever. We heard it and thought *Gosh! What a great summer-time sounding record! This would cause a lot of reaction from our audience.* And, sure enough, it was one of those songs that the minute you put it on the air the phones lit up. It's now the biggest song on the request line."

According to Island Record's Pat Rascona, a lot of comparison goes on when determining whether or not a song will be a hit. "Does it sound like Madonna? Does it sound like No Doubt? Does it sound like Jewel? Does it sound like Hootie and the Blowfish? You just have a feeling of what's going to be a hit. When I get new music I'll play it for people who are not in the industry to see if they like it because those are the people who are going to go out and buy it. I try to judge my records by asking my fiancée or my parents *What do you think of this particular record?* Then I run with it from there. If I feel it fits the station or the format then I'll work it. There are records that we put out that I think aren't that great or there are records that I think are tremendous that radio doesn't like. It's a tough call. I have a record now that I am in love with, yet I can't get the time of day on it from radio because they feel it doesn't fit them. That kind of bothers me a little. But you have to realize that radio doesn't break a lot of new bands a year. Maybe 5. Maybe 10. And that's a lot. 10 is a lot for a year. You don't see that many records going gold or platinum anymore like you used to. Some bands are one-hit-wonders. Some bands will get four tracks played off an album. Radio is very fickle on what they're playing because they're into their (Arbitron) numbers. And I don't blame them for that because their numbers

sell advertising. So they have to play what they think is best for their audience. Sometimes I might not agree with that, but I have to live with it."

Radio consultant Greg Gillispie, who spends his days, in part, advising Program Directors on which songs to play suggests that beginning programmers need to first get a sense of what kind of records are "hit" records for individual formats. "Then you need to go one step beyond that and get an understanding of what elements made it a hit. I don't know anything about music in terms of reading music or structure or theory. I just know what seems to be a strong hook; what elements should go around the hook; what seems to be appealing to a certain type of listener. It's changed so much in the last 5 or 6 years because there's so many changes in music. Keep that in mind as you listen to music. Have an ear towards the future. Be aware of any new and different sounds that are changing trends. Those who had a sixth sense of Nirvana and Pearl Jam in the very early days probably scored big dividends down the road with their audience because they may have been one of the first to play them."

Gillispie admits that even PDs with years of experience can miss trends or, even if they have a gut instinct about a particular sound, may not quite understand why they feel that particular sound will eventually be a big hit. "I didn't get Nirvana at all, but I had a strong sense that there was something really brewing there. I knew I should just stand out of the way and let it happen instead of trying to understand why."

Curtiss Johnson, who's programmed Rock stations for more than 10 years, says advising someone on how to develop an ear for music is tough. "It really comes down to experience; being in touch with your audience, and being aware of what music has worked in the past for your audience. My philosophy is that you don't want to just follow trends. Hopefully, you can lead your audience into some things as well. The things that you want to look for when you're looking for songs to add are: *Is there a hook? Is there something that really grabs your attention whether it's musically or lyrically? Is there a melody?* Melody is equally as important as a hook. If it doesn't have a great melody, maybe it's a riff like you'll find in industrial-type music--that is, something that really catches peoples' attention. Lyrics are another factor. Lyrics tend to be far more important to female-dominated formats than male-dominated formats. Males tend to listen more to the music. The lyrics are secondary. Females tend to put lyrics first and music second."

Kelso Jacks, National Director of Modern Rock Radio Promotions at Roadrunner Records, says developing a feel for what music will be hot is a life-long process. "I've been listening to music since I was a kid. I like to

think that I'm pretty well versed in a lot of different kinds of music. I probably spend about a hundred dollars a week on new music. If you listen to lots of new music, go to live shows, and totally submerge yourself in music--that's how it grows. When you're listening for things that might work on commercial radio you're listening for something that's catchy. It has to have a hook that listeners will be able to associate with really easily when they hear it on the radio. That's what you're looking for. I think there really are 2 kinds of ears. The A&R guy--the guy who signs the bands--his ear is totally different. Hopefully, the A&R person is thinking *This guy's an artist. This band really knows how to play their instruments and write songs well.* And then, when you bring the band's song to a record promotions person or a radio person, they're thinking *This song has the right hook.* So it's 2 different kinds of ears. One is an artistic ear. The other knows what consumers want to hear."

After spending 24 years programming a variety of formats such as CHR, AOR, NAC and Country, John Sebastian believes picking out hits involves a great deal more than just using your ears. "You need to open up your heart. Really listen with your heart as well as your mind and your ears. Very rarely will that send you down the wrong path. But you also need to be educated. Nobody can come right in and be right on (in picking out potential hits). Nobody has a perfect gut by any means, so your gut needs to be educated over time. By experimenting with your gut, and then by having the research show you where your audience wants to lead you--that's how you gain experience. Your audience has to be the final decision-makers. So if your gut's saying one thing and the people in the research are saying something else, then you've got to go with the research. Let the research teach you what reality is with that particular format, in that particular city, and in that particular situation. If you don't then you'll get yourself into trouble. You have to be able to divorce yourself at some point from your personal feelings about a song and go with what the listeners want. They are the ultimate programmers. They're the ones who make you live and die in the ratings battle."

## The News/Talk Station

Of all the radio formats, the News/Talk format requires more money to execute than any other. Music-formatted stations can get by with one DJ running the whole show during an individual time slot. News and Talk stations, on the other-hand, demand the work of numerous individuals behind

the scenes to make it successful. The All-News station has reporters, news writers, editors and anchors all working together as a team to put together individual news casts. Talk show hosts have producers, researchers, and people who answer the phones to make their jobs easier. Some stations do All-News, All-Sports, or All-Talk programming. Others combine these three elements, depending upon the individual market situation. For stations who run these types of programs 24 hours a day, this can add up to quite a large number of employees on the payroll.

Most stations do not develop talk shows or run news programming on their own. Although there might be pockets of local programming--meaning the shows are produced in-house--many radio stations rely on nationally-syndicated\* programs or network news broadcasts to cut costs by reducing the number of employees a station has to hire to run this type of programming. These programs are often picked up by stations via satellite.

Wayne Cabot, a news anchor at WCBS-AM, an all-news radio station in New York City, believes that network news has become a dinosaur. "In my opinion, the only function it serves on most stations is to give the appearance of a radio station presenting news. It's ridiculous to think that people are going to want to hear national and global news first, local news second. To set it up in such a manner is contrary to what news is--that the most important thing, the most interesting thing should go first. Network news did serve a purpose a long time ago when information was hard to come by. But now it's not as necessary as it once was. It does help news rooms focus on national and international news so it does provide perspective. But that also can be done with news feeds\* that you can incorporate into your own newscast with, for example, the expertise of somebody who covers the capitol beat."

Bob Lee, on the other-hand, says his station, KCEE/Tucson, has benefitted from using syndicated programming instead of trying to produce the same type of programming themselves. "In our case, we're increasing our listeners daily, and advertisers are coming on board and discovering the benefits of syndication. News is certainly an important item on some radio stations. But news has **also taken** a back seat on most music stations because people's needs differ. And with deregulation\* stations don't have to do as much (news) now. They don't have to make that commitment. But news on a Talk station or non-music station--obviously that's a very important staple. It's nice when the station has a few resources to put a few reporters on the street to cover the local scene, but not all stations can afford to do that. Syndicated programming, as it's usually presented, is very inexpensive

because you get it for free. You carry some advertising that comes with the program, and you get to run some local ads of your own. Everybody goes away happy. Now there are exceptions. Rush (Limbaugh), of course, is one. You carry national commercials and you (the station) also pay for Rush. From an economic standpoint, using syndicated programming makes sense.

It takes all the worry and fuss out of hiring and managing employees because you don't have any. If somebody quits, it's not your problem. And the talent you get (with syndication) is usually pretty good. It's a lot better than what you might be able to find or even afford if you try to do the same thing on your own."

In recent years, nationally-syndicated talk shows have become enormously popular with American listening audiences. Rush Limbaugh, Dr. Laura Schlessinger, G. Gordon Liddy, Howard Stern--to mention just a few--have provided listeners with a platform to air opinions on subjects ranging from politics to relationships. Although sometimes controversial, these personalities have called attention to issues that weren't even acknowledged a few years ago.

Still, Bob Lee sees change on the horizon for Talk radio. According to Lee, he's convinced that Talk radio is entering a transitional stage. "I don't know if I want to say that the conservative talk of the likes of G. Gordon Liddy, Rush Limbaugh, Ollie North and the rest of those people has peaked, but I think that Talk radio--syndicated Talk radio, in particular--is approaching a turning point. Specifically, I'm talking about political Talk radio. Currently, the most successful shows happen to be conservative. There have been several developments just recently. Oliver North's flagship station in Washington DC has just moved his show from the afternoons to the evenings to make way for Dr. Laura Schlessinger--who's not a political talk-meister by any stretch of the imagination. Also, more stations are trying an All-Sports format. Although Rush Limbaugh shows no signs of peaking, there are a lot of things happening right now that might change things in the future. I think nationally-syndicated talk shows are still going to dominate for a while. They're cheaper. They, generally, have better talent than what's most often found in medium and smaller markets who do a talk show on their own. The bottom-line is still the bottom-line in radio. If it can be done more cheaply by using syndication, and if the local audiences don't seem to mind, then I think it's going to be around for a while. Rush Limbaugh proved that it doesn't have to be local to be successful."

Despite the success of Rush Limbaugh in many markets, some stations still hold the view that local programming works best for their listening audience. In many cases, this is certainly true. Local talk shows discuss

issues that are relevant to that particular community--something that doesn't occur with nationally-syndicated shows. But Bob Lee cautions that station managers need to thoroughly research their market before putting any type of local programming into place. "It's very hard to put a label on what might or might not work in any individual market because markets differ so much. For instance, here in Tucson, local talk has not fared very well. Part of it has to do with the composition of the audience here in Tucson. It's largely a group of people who come here from somewhere else. People move to Tucson from the midwest, the Chicago area, and other colder climates. Because of that people don't get as caught up as quickly in some of the local issues. As a result, they're not particularly concerned about what's going on in City Hall, the county government, and even the state government. That's what drives many of the local talk shows. In other cities where there might be a large industrial base, there are lots of things happening. Maybe the crime problem is humongous, and there's a lot of turmoil, stress and strife going on. That's often the fodder for local talk shows. Same thing is true if the city has a really, really good guy or gal as a talk show host who catches the people's fancy for whatever reason. It may be controversy. It may not. Then, obviously, there has to be enough interest in the market to support a local talk show. You'll find that in most markets there's usually only room for one really successful local talk show. There may be several stations trying to do it, but usually there's only one that dominates it."

Whether it's a nationally-syndicated talk show or a local talk show, controversy, quite often, is at the center of the issues. Many programmers feel that Talk radio can't survive without controversy. Looking back over his days as a News Director, Bob Lee agrees that there's nothing like controversy to get people's interest. "By and large we're a voyeuristic society. I don't mean that in a sexual sense, but people love to look over the neighbor's fence and gossip about what they see. They love to hear gossip. The supermarket tabloids are proof of that. Some of the TV talk shows prove that, too, although there may be a shift there. Just like anything else, people get tired of stuff. With TV, it seems, even more quickly than with radio. It (Talk radio) has to have an edge. The shows with the edge are what seem to get the attention, and that carries over into folks like Howard Stern and Don Imus. Those are the guys where you're never quite sure what they're going to say next; what they're going to do; what's going to happen. If it's working nationally, then you're probably going to see the same approach being taken locally. If it's bland; if it's nice; if it's warm and fuzzy, chances are people aren't going to pay too much attention to that. Warm and fuzzy only gets attention on Mothers' Day and Valentine's Day."

Wayne Cabot, who feels news also takes a more tabloid approach today, says it's the major events that get people talking. However, Cabot also believes that society is not as interested in news as it once was. "The problem is there's not a lot of news these days. Ten years ago we had the Iron Curtain, we had an epic battle between communism and capitalism, between the US and Russia. That threat is gone. People feel a lot more secure. They don't feel the need to go to the news as much to find out if the world's going to blow up tomorrow. The economy's gotten much better so people aren't concerned about gas lines, inflation, where their next pay check is coming from. Socially, we've calmed down an awful lot. We don't have the Vietnam War to divide the country so we don't have those kinds of protests going on anymore. There's no compelling global drama. Even though there are major things happening around the world, even though there are major crimes against humanity happening around the world, it is no longer that epic struggle between the good guys and the bad guys. Our country and the Soviets. It used to be that when we had that struggle everything else sort of fit into that major story. We had countries that were aligned with them and countries that were aligned with us. And that's why those countries were important to us. Now? Things are good. Everybody's happy. The women's rights battle, while it continues, is not the new ground it was 20 years ago. Racial issues are still strong. The challenge to the news media now is to handle those issues without sensationalizing or trivializing them, and actually tell people something about them they don't already know."

According to Cabot, the end of the cold war is a milestone in the evolution of news as it is presented today. "That's when international news got screwed. As far as domestic news even politically there's nothing going on anymore. The Republicans had their revolution. Bill Clinton won re-election anyway. The two of them are now holding hands and passing budget deals. It's all a big yawner. Politics have become so trivialized, and we're all becoming so aware now of how human these formerly revered people are that some of the mystique is gone. Some of the power that was once afforded to those offices is gone because we now see them as regular schlubs. They don't seem as important to us anymore. All those newsy things that used to make print and broadcast now are trivialized. And it would change tomorrow if, God forbid, a nuclear bomb would drop somewhere. Or if some terrorist group were to blow up the Lincoln Tunnel. Suddenly everything would change. Everything political surrounding that would become important. It takes a calamity, catastrophe or tragedy to get people to listen, watch or read the news. Every time there's a plane crash,

any time there's a personal drama of someone that we're all familiar with like OJ Simpson, many of us would turn our noses up at it and say *Oh, that's tabloid*. Yet we say that after we've gotten all the juicy details. I think the best service news provides now at this time of peace and tranquility in our country is in helping people better deal with their everyday lifestyle issues. Raising their kids. Making consumer choices, schools, pocketbook issues. We've turned very inward. We're all looking at issues that affect "me" directly now."

When controversial stories do occur, the big question for many Station Managers is just how far should they go when it comes to controversial issues in both news and on Talk radio. Wayne Cabot says people who believe news looks for controversy in what is reported are very astute and absolutely correct. But, he cautions, if news reporters didn't go after controversy, in his opinion, no one would be listening. "That's the nature of news. Controversy. Discussion. Things that are interesting to people. If you go for the boring details then you'll be off the air pretty fast."

Cabot also believes that no matter how careful a reporter may be when reporting a story, he or she always runs the risk of offending someone. "If you do a story on a controversial topic you're going to offend someone no matter how hard you try to walk the middle ground. We all carry our own biases into every story--even if we try not to. The way we decide which facts to present first, which facts to present second. Someone's going to always think that we're doing them a disservice. Or that we're not being fair about it. And if you start thinking about whether someone's going to be offended then you're going to wind up saying nothing at all."

Lee feels that in Talk radio, while larger markets may be willing to take the risk of offending some listeners, smaller markets may be in a different situation. "People have a tendency to be a little more conservative, a little more caring and concerned about what goes over the airwaves in a smaller market. In a market the size of York, Pennsylvania, Howard Stern might not play too well--although I understand a station has picked him up there. In a small town, all it takes is five people to call a radio station and complain to the General Manager. Those five people might as well be five thousand. In a city of 2 million, 3 or 4 hundred calls amount to a hill of beans if the rest of the people are listening, and if the sponsors are supporting it. In a small town, you really have to be in the middle of the road. There may be a controversial issue that the Talk radio guy or gal could cover, but to generate the controversy themselves is a little more dicey in smaller markets and even in some medium markets. In the big cities, it's pretty much anything goes. Whatever you can get away with. That's the whole spirit of deregulation.\*

The FCC says the market--the citizens, the listeners--should be able to decide what they will and won't accept; whether or not a radio station is meeting their needs and interests. And it pretty much has worked."

WCBS's Wayne Cabot says one concern expressed by the general public is that news often seems to focus on "bad" news stories rather than "good" news stories, which is why many stations are now attempting to address this issue. "I try to keep that in mind when I'm on the air. There are often good stories that are very compelling. Sometimes there are good versus evil stories where the good guy wins. We had one yesterday. A typical day in the life of a New Yorker story where a taxi driver zoomed across three lanes of traffic, plowed into a bicyclist, sent the biker over his handle bars onto 6th Avenue, and then the cabby sped away. It just so happened that a fire fighter was driving home and saw it happen. He went to the biker's aid and said *Hey! Are you okay?* And the biker said *Don't worry about me. Go after that cabby and catch him.* The fire fighter caught up with the cabby, and the cabby denied it. The fire fighter said *I saw you do it*, and he held him for the cops. Here's a case where the good guy won. Is it a big news story? No. Is it important? Is it going to be around tomorrow and change people's lives? No. But it does show that there is good in people and good in society. And sometimes good nature prevails. But it is a valid point. We need to do more of these kinds of stories. If nothing else, they're often interesting. No one wants to hear doom and gloom for an hour at a time. It makes you want to jump off a roof. That's why every so often we need to throw in some things that give people reason to hope."

Another challenge facing News/Talk radio today, according to Cabot, is that listeners are not as naive as they once were. "When I go on the air I try to do it with the thought that the listener is smarter than I am. Especially in such a well-educated market as New York. A lot of professionals listen to this station, and in most cases people are smarter than I am. I think if we stop trying to fool people they'll recognize it and appreciate it. And if we admit our mistakes and short-comings and correct our mistakes immediately and stop trying to be the omniscient ones then I think it gives us more credibility, not less. In news, if you're not coming at people from a position of credibility then you've just hung yourself. People will forgive mistakes like *Dateline NBC's* pickup truck mistake. I think there's some self-discipline that's required to be lucrative. I think people in radio do realize that if they do get a little heady about their power then they could certainly jeopardize their whole operation if they get caught because people are keeping a keen eye on the media these days. Believe me--people in the media are held at or just below the level of people who are in Congress by

the general public. We are not the champions of truth and justice that we would like to think we are in the minds of many people. They consider us suspect. They are aware, very often, of the buzz words we use that don't mean anything. More and more people are looking for us to come at them with a slant. *Why are they telling me this? What are they trying to get across? Is this fair?* I think people are much more media-savvy now, and as a result, we have to be on our guard a whole lot more or the whole thing is gonna cave in on us. It always impresses me to be in a room full of people when the news comes on TV, and to see this news person come on with this dead-serious look his face, saying some absurd thing, and hearing people laugh out loud at this oh-so-serious, self-important news person. If only the news room could see how people are reacting in their homes. I think it would make them treat the viewer (and listener) with a little more respect."

Cabot believes the stories that really "sell" with the general public are the stories that have a story to tell. "They're the kind of stories that you'd stop somebody and say *Hey! Did you hear this?* That could be almost any kind of story. It can be an important story of national or world significance or it can be a curious story about a personality. The best kinds of stories are the ones where you want to go on the air and preface the story with *Listen to this! Or Wait until you hear this!* The bottom line is that it has to address human needs. If you aren't telling people about information that affects them, and the info they need to know or that you think they need to know, then, no matter what kind of whiz brand of technology you're using, people aren't going to listen or watch or read. You'll find yourself becoming obsolete."

KCEE's Bob Lee agrees. "The news has been diminished considerably on many stations for a variety of reasons--most of them economic. Economic in the sense that it has a tendency to cause tune-out. News is expensive to do. If you're running something controversial and no one is listening, chances are it's going to go away."

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## Air Limbaugh

by Dwight Douglas

On a drive from Miami to Atlanta recently, I had the opportunity to listen to a lot of radio. As we passed through towns and toll booths, radio signals drifted in and out. My scan button took me from station to station on the 13

hour journey.

I was amazed how many AM stations carried Rush Limbaugh. As soon as he'd fade away, the next local would fill in what I had missed of the ongoing political harangue. His roots are clearly in radio, but this self-proclaimed conservative crusader has made the jump to TV. Unlike Howard Stern's TV experiment, Rush's show does attract a substantial client base.

My first encounter with Rush goes back some twenty years ago when he was a weekend talk host on the AM sister station to an FM I programmed. At the time, he was going by a typically unmemorable radio DJ name and sporting a larger-than-life body. His style was similar to his present act, although less aggressive. He brought in a stack of newspaper articles, magazine background materials and lots of lunch. Because he was on a small town thousand-watter, he had to fill vast spans of time with his own voice.

During my recent Rush hours of listening, I found it interesting that he can go for an entire quarter hour without taking a phone call. His gift of gab is an art he perfected between bites and news breaks back in Pennsylvania. I wonder what would have happened if Rush's first few PDs had said, "Shut up and play the music!"

One of the aspects that draws you into Rush, no matter what your viewpoint, is his energy level. The spunk and obvious enjoyment of rapping out the gospel according to Limbaugh makes him stand out. Yes, he's in love with himself, but all superstars beam confidence. Watch Barry Bonds, Michael Jordan or Deion Sanders. They all transmit: *I'm the man*.

When Bill Clinton won the election, one of our clients said he thought this historical event would end Rush because the voters (the majority?) don't agree with him. Well, Rush's America held hostage day (number) and the quick downward spiral of Clinton's popularity has pumped up the volume. Rush is winning more and more 18-49 year-old men daily. Many probably are out of work and now regret voting for Clinton.

Another smart technique Rush uses is the reintroduction: He takes the time to explain a bit, word, or show concept so that new listeners feel comfortable. This is something Howard Stern, Greaseman, Ron and Ron and all networkers should learn.

But clearly the silver bullet Rush Limbaugh carries is preparation. The guy must gobble up as much reading material as rigatoni. His facts aren't the rhetoric of a creative conspiracy-oriented-ego-maniac. For the most part, the reality of waste, personal agenda, and lack of comprehension of how to get the job done fuels the conservative right and Rush.

His entertainment and sense of humor is the output of a jolly man who's

laughing all the way to the bank. Does he really believe his own sarcastic call to action? Yes, he's a genuinely pompous person who enjoys the pontification. Whether it's gays in the military or bombing Saddam, it's not Rush who writes the script, it's a government that's jogging every morning but is still miserably out of shape.

If you haven't listened to Rush Limbaugh lately, you should. It's talk radio at its best. If I had a Talk station, News station, Sports station or maybe even a Country FM, I'd try to get Rush. Air Limbaugh puts points on the board. Even if fat men can't jump, there's one who at least has something to say.

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## Practical Programming Assignments

1. Select at least 20 songs of varying release dates from a specific music format genre such as country, rock, pop, etc.

Then:

1. Develop 5 music categories based on whatever criteria you choose such as music types, release dates, etc.
2. Identify shared characteristics of the songs you selected and place them in the most appropriate categories.
3. For each song, list song title, artist (include any secondary artists and other bands the lead singer has performed in), album title, tempo, mood, length of song introduction, and whether the song has a cold of fade ending.

Tempo Scale: 1 - 5 (1 is very slow; 5 is very fast)

Mood Scale: 1 - 5 (1 is very sad; 5 is very happy)

2.
  - a. Listen to songs that are hit records. Try to identify the characteristics that made them successful. Do they have great hooks? Are the lyrics strong? Bring this list to class for discussion.
  - b. Listen to new music or other tracks on an album. Do any of these songs share any characteristics with the hit records?
  - c. Identify and list any new trends you hear occurring in new music.
  - d. Play your predicted hit records to the class. Discuss why you feel these songs will be hits.

# **Creating a Talent Line-Up**

## **Chapter Objectives**

**At the end of this chapter students will be able to:**

1. Describe the qualities PDs look for when hiring radio personalities.
2. Explain why radio personalities must fit the image of the radio station.
3. List the techniques PDs use when developing talent.
4. Explain why morning shows are important to radio stations.
5. Explain the role of humor in a morning show.
6. List current trends for morning shows.
7. Justify the importance of programming rules and explain how they are enforced.
8. Demonstrate understanding of the chapter's main concepts by completing the Practical Programming Assignments at the end of the chapter.

# Chapter 5

## Glossary of Radio Terms

- Puke:** Voice affectation assumed by DJs during the early years of radio.
- Comedy Bits:** Entertainment segments that are either live, pre-recorded or a combination of both.
- Tease:** Brief mention of an upcoming station element used to generate listener interest.

# 5

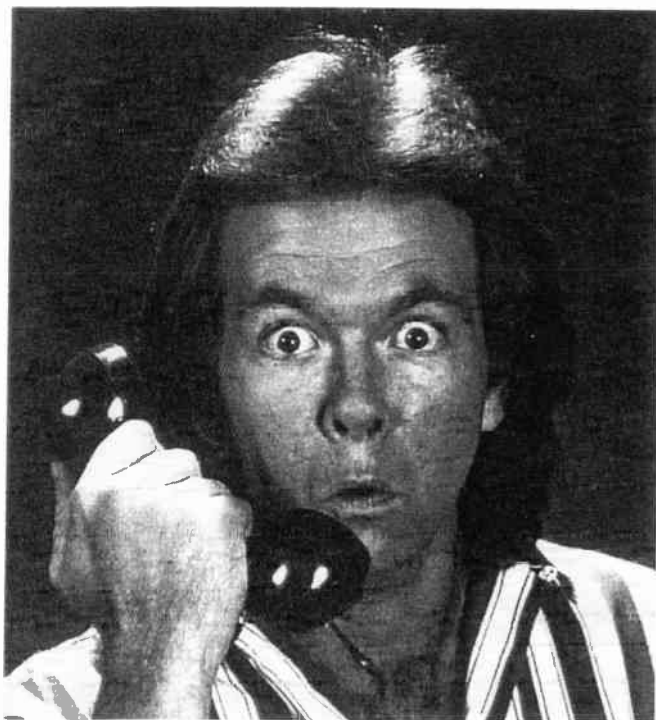
## Creating a Talent Line-Up

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### Selecting Announcers With the Right Delivery

The most visible members of the Program Director's team are the on-air personalities. These individuals interact directly with the public on a daily basis through on-air chatter, handling listener phone calls on the request line, and "pressing the flesh" at personal appearances. Since radio personalities are usually the first contact listeners have with the radio station, PDs need to ensure that they can communicate effectively, and that they treat listeners with respect. Also, just as the music, promotions, marketing, and imaging statements must fit the image of the radio station, radio personalities must also reflect the same attitude so that all elements of the radio station represent the product as a whole.

Most PDs have a mental checklist in mind when they're listening to the many tapes they receive every day from aspiring announcers. Bottom-line, what most PDs say they're looking for is someone who is a good communicator. Raw talent is another important consideration according to Leslie Fram, Program Director of 99X (WNNX) in Atlanta. "I get a lot of tapes from people who, even though they've been in the business a long time, they've never been coached properly. Some of them have never been coached or critiqued once! We've hired a lot of people straight from college radio. Not just because they have the right attitude (of the station), but because they were very natural on the air. They were themselves. That's really hard to teach someone. It's really hard to teach someone to not sound like an announcer when they have a microphone in front of their face. It doesn't matter what kind of a voice they have. We also want to have someone who can convey the attitude of the station. Also, someone who knows the music. Everyone here--when Steve or Sean or Axl are on the air--they always have something they can contribute. A little story or fact about the band. I think that's really important."



**98KUPD**  
ARIZONA'S REAL ROCK

**DAVE PRATT**  
in the morning

Radio personalities often have publicity photos taken that can be handed out to listeners. These photos may also be sent to prospective PDs when applying for jobs. *Reprinted with permission from Dave Pratt and KUPD.*

Conveying an image that fits 93 Rock's attitude is high on Curtiss Johnson's list. "Do they (the on-air personality) convey the style you're trying to convey on the air? Are they knowledgeable about music and current events? Are they familiar with the lifestyle of the listening audience? Do they look the part? Are they somebody who can go out on the street and market the station and present the station in the light that you want it to be presented in?"

The right attitude is also important to Jo Robinson, Assistant Program Director of Chicago's Active Rock station WRCX. However, Robinson looks at attitude on another level besides whether or not the on-air personality can convey the attitude of the station. "Anybody we hire has to be a team player. We want someone who has their own ideas. Someone who has a lot of talent, but who is also willing and ready to be molded into what we think sounds best for what we do here. The direction of the station is always changing, and it's always changing because of the people who work here."

Radio pioneer Lee Abrams insists that the one thing PDs should avoid are convenience hires. "A lot of stations will hire somebody already in the market at another station just because it's convenient. That's a great recipe for maintaining average sound. I think you've got to look for confident jocks. People who are cocky about their ability, and who feel good about their creativity. Hire fun people. A lot of radio guys are boring. Also, the eccentricity factor. That's another thing that's missing from radio. I call it the "Letterman Factor." You see, Letterman will drop water balloons off of a 40-story building, and watch them explode in slow motion. The crowd'll love it. Or he'll put a camera on a cow's head and call it "cow cam" as it walks through the audience. Looking for that eccentric factor is real important. Eccentric helps balance out the mechanics of the radio station. It seems like most stations have a great defense, but no offense. Defense being the mechanics--the tight playlists and that stuff. Offense being everything else. And occasionally there are stations who have a great offense, but their music's all screwed up so they have no defense. If they could get offense and defense together--whoa! So I think eccentricity in people, and the ideas they have, is a real good offensive tool that helps balance out the necessary defense that the station needs to have. Set it straight to the staff that there really is an offense, and that it is important. That's where free-thinking comes in. Jocks shouldn't be afraid to express ideas or try things. It should be part of the station's mission. Then, hire people who are good offensive players. In football, you hire a defense and you hire an offense. The Research Director should be a good defensive type.

Jocks should be pretty offense. Create the mission in the building, hire the right people, and then develop them. That's how it works. Little things like the staff meeting are really important. In my opinion, it shouldn't be at 1 o'clock under florescent lights. It should be, maybe, at the PDs house where the PD spends an hour preaching the concept, critiquing tapes, and brainstorming. There should be 10 yellow pads full of ideas after the meeting is done."

Program Directors who are looking to hire announcers generally place ads in industry trade magazines such as *Radio and Records*, although PDs also receive unsolicited tapes and resumes in the mail every day whether or not the station has any openings. Greg Gillispie, a veteran programmer and consultant, says there are lots of basics he looks for when sifting through the pile of applicants. "Get a good resume," advises Gillispie. "Make it short and concise. But also make it entertaining, visual and compelling. Get a tape together. And don't forget to put your name and phone number on it! Looking through these tapes that I have on my desk right now, some of them have a phone number but no name on it. Or a name and no phone number. And some of them have nothing on the tape at all! Capture my attention within the first minute of the tape. Make it entertaining. I would prefer hearing a tape that's just a straight scoped tape of a show so I can hear how you get from break to break to break. I want to see how you cover yourself on mistakes and stuff like that. I'm looking for people who are intelligent, get "it," and who show personality and versatility. Your tape and resume is kind of like your calling card. After that, I look at how you handle yourself in an interview situation. But realize that this is an entertainment business. I get millions of tapes and resumes, and most of them are dull and boring. Give me something that's exciting. Something that captures my mind and senses. Also, something that provides me with the information I need, but not something that is so way-out creatively that it's cluttered and I can't deal with it. Market yourself as if you were a product."

Chuck Knight, former Program Director of Star 104.5 in Philadelphia and current Program Director of WSNY in Columbus, believes putting "personality" back into radio should be a priority that PDs need to consider when selecting new talent for the radio station. "Getting personality radio back has been a need for the last 10 or 15 years. Unfortunately, I can't say that we've taken any steps ahead on that. People like Howard Stern are few and far between. I don't see anyone else like him on the horizon. We, as an industry, haven't given people a platform and allowed them to make mistakes and let them shine. And, unfortunately, that doesn't happen in major market situations where you've got a 40 million dollar radio property. I think

another thing that has really led to the fact that there are no personalities is that nobody is able to learn from anybody else. When I was a kid back in the late sixties and early seventies, AM radio was still a giant. You could listen to high-profile personalities in Chicago, New York, Oklahoma City, Los Angeles, and Cincinnati. All of these radio stations would boom into the Midwest, and you could hear how people did it. You could learn from other people. That's not the case anymore--especially within music formats. People don't have the ability to learn from example. Now you've got a lot of kids coming out of college and immediately thinking that they're ready for the major leagues. I think there are a lot of similarities between how the radio business works and how baseball works. I get resumes from college kids every spring. Resumes only saying *Hey! Here I am! I'm ready to join your radio station on a full-time basis!* Or, any time we advertise for a morning show talent, I get a bucket-load of resumes from college kids. Well, first off--where's the tape?! Secondly, didn't anybody tell you about how this business works? You're trying to be--to use a baseball analogy--Dwight Gooden. He's somebody who came out of high school, I think, and went straight into the major leagues. Colby Bryant is an NBA player who's coming out of high school and trying to get into the NBA. These people are few and far between. Most of the time, what happens is that people go through college. Then they're drafted by a major-league team. They start in Class A baseball, which is in small towns. Then they move up to Double A, and they work with the coach and the manager there. They polish up on things. Then they move up to Triple A, and they polish up the things they've got to work on there. And then--if they're good enough--they get called up to the major leagues. There they probably sit on the bench for a year or two before they break into the starting line-up. I don't see anybody at the college level telling radio students who want to get into the industry how it really is. And, therefore, out of frustration, we might lose some real talent who go out and start knocking on doors in Philadelphia and say *Whoa! I grew up in Philadelphia. How come I can't get a job there?* After 6 months or a year of that--Boom!--they're frustrated, and, therefore, we may not get those people into the business because nobody told them how it really works. It was my goal to be in a major market by the time I was 23. Finally, I reached that goal when I turned 37. You want to be ambitious, but you don't want to be ridiculous within that ambition. Realize that this is a career. It isn't just fun and merriment. And it isn't going to happen overnight for you. Building a career takes time."

## Working With Talent

Once a Program Director hires the on-air personality the real work then begins. PDs generally work with the air talent through weekly, bi-monthly or monthly aircheck sessions\* where the PD and the announcer sit down and go over a tape of the disc jockey's show. No matter how seasoned the announcer is, everyone benefits from a different set of ears listening to the show and offering suggestions on how to make improvements. That is, of course, if the Program Director knows what he or she is doing when it comes to doing critiques.

Lee Abrams says developing talent starts with the PD. "Program Directors, in many cases, are the problem. It's like sometimes you walk into a station, and the PD's head is buried in his computer. When he does interact with the jocks it's to yell at them if they do a break at 19 minutes after the hour that we supposed to have been done at 18 minutes after the hour. So it really does start with the PD. Otherwise, I think developing talent is just trying to find people who have "it." The "it" factor. They're rare, but they're out there. Some of the things we used to do is play tapes of a *3 Stooges* episode or something really bizarre to potential jocks and see if they got it or not. If they laughed and said *Oh, this is great!* then they had it. The ones who didn't laugh and said *Why are we doing this?* We scratched them off the list."

Abrams explains that "it" is one of those intangibles that you know "it" when you hear it or see it or meet it. "Stern has "it." Dahl has "it," radio-wise. In comedy, John Belushi had "it." It's a very unique and endearing quality. "It" is something different in everybody. If a Program Director can't see "it" then that's a problem. In the Stern movie there are all these Program Directors who told him to shut up and just read the cards and play the hits. They didn't see that the guy had "it." So it took him several stations for somebody to realize the "it" factor in him and let him roll with it."

Because aircheck sessions are such a vital part of the development process, radio personalities need to develop a "thick skin" and not become defensive when offered advice on how to make improvements. Leslie Fram, PD and morning show co-host at 99X, an Alternative formatted radio station in Atlanta, says an announcer may spend time doing weekend overnight shifts early on in his or her career so that any mistakes made in the learning process are heard by a minimal number of the radio audience. "We hired 2 or 3 people from college radio who had some raw talent so we put them on overnight shifts--usually on the weekends. We let them do 4 hour shifts here and there. Then we sat them down and went over tapes of their show with

them, and pointed out all the great things they were doing. We taught them the basics of radio--being brief, sticking to 1 or 2 thoughts per break, knowing, generally, what they were going to say before opening the microphone. I think you need to teach somebody the basics first, and then let them go as far as developing their own personality. You want them to have their own personality. Not say *Hey! I want you to sound exactly like the afternoon guy*. If you do that then they'll do all right. That's what's unbelievable. The people who have come here who have never been on the radio before, and who have then been able to work full-time in a market the size of Atlanta--that's very unusual. The PD is the guide to making that happen."

Fram says critique sessions are not limited to novice disc jockeys. "We meet with the full-timers twice a month. With the part-timers it's sometimes once a week. We don't just critique. We listen to their shows, offer suggestions and let them know what things they're doing that are working well. With our morning show it's the same thing. We love getting that feedback. Brian Philips, our Operations Manager, works with us. He meets with us every other week. We may talk about something that the morning show is working on. Or we may talk about interviews that we did. Or we may listen to an interview. The last time we did an interview it was with Jim Bakker. We listened to it, and talked about what went really well with it. I think it would be crazy for us to think we didn't need someone to go over tapes with us. If you ever get to that point I think you're in trouble."

KZLA/Los Angeles PD John Sebastian says one of the basics he's always stressing to his jocks is the intimacy factor. "I always tell the announcers to speak in terms of "you" and "I." They need to speak to one person at a time. It's never *Ladies and Gentlemen* or *Hi Gang!* or *Hello Phoenix!* or anything like that. It's talking to one person. That's a simple, but important distinction."

Dave Pratt, morning drive-time personality at KUPD in Phoenix, says his first PD at KUPD, Ernesto Gladden, was of vital importance to his development as a morning man. "He took his time and worked with me. He taught me the formatics of doing mornings. He taught me the methodology of Arbitron. How to make listeners count and score for me. He taught me the importance of relating to listeners. Being one of them and talking with them. Not to them. And then Curtiss (Johnson) came along. Curtiss was a PD from a different viewpoint. He's my best friend. So it's a really weird relationship. You hear about Program Directors and morning men not getting along, but we always got along. We had a lot of respect for each other. But because he was such a good friend he was always honest with me.

That's so valuable to have."

Most aircheck sessions are conducted on a one-on-one basis, but individual approaches may vary according to Kevin Vargas, PD of KISS in San Antonio. "When you approach somebody you've got to know what makes them tick. What they care about. And then you adjust your approach to what best works when working with this person. Just like being a school teacher. You can blanket-teach to the class, but the individual instruction is where you're really going to make a difference. When you first get together you start with the fundamentals. There's a reason a baseball team goes into spring training. All they do is fundamentals. It's getting that muscle memory and those mechanics flowing. Those simple little things you've done a million times, but if you don't do the basics first, you can't make the great play. You'll be making 15 errors in one week. And then you'll be out of there! Radio is much the same way. Eliminate the negatives. Find the bad habits. Then get rid of them. Strip away the bad and then enhance. It's got to be step-by-step."

Consultant and radio programmer Guy Zapoleon suggests that PDs in the United States should also look at what other countries are doing to develop their talent. "There are some people--consultants who I really admire--that I work with in Australia. They have a mentoring program where they actually critique the airchecks. They talk to the people at their client stations about how to punch up their delivery. They may even suggest, sometimes, that the talent go to a voice teacher to work with their voice to improve it. Ideally, that is what a consultant should do, but, being honest, I probably don't do that as much as I should."

Susan Stone, Music Director and mid-day personality at WRXX in Ft. Myers says working on the basics with her first PD is what helped her develop her talent. "In the beginning you don't have a clue of what you're doing. I got my first job at WLWQ in Columbus. The people who hired me there taught me, molded me and shaped me. They helped me get the basic formatics down. Stupid little things like *Gee, don't forget the call letters first and last thing out of your mouth. Be yourself. There's no need to use a million cliches and puke\* on the air. Don't say "Hey! It's 69 degrees outside."* Well, duh! Where else is it going to be 69 degrees? In your living room?! Just be yourself. That was the one thing that was drilled into my head over and over again. Don't be somebody that you're not. Be yourself, and have fun. Let your personality shine through. That's scary to someone who's never done this before, and you've got a liner (image liner) in front of your face, and you're reading it and sounding like a geek. But I think, in time, you become comfortable behind the mic, and you remember everything

you've been taught. You listen to other jocks, either in your own city or somewhere else, and you decide who you think is good and who you think sounds terrible. The biggest thing was PDs who constantly airchecked me. Who constantly took me aside and said *Okay, let's sit down, and let's do this.* Sometimes they would pick apart my entire show. It would drive me crazy! It makes you defensive, and it's hurting your ego, but in the long run I think that everything I was taught in those sessions was for the best. I think now there are a lot of prima donnas in the business. There are a lot of people who have egos. But if they don't have the basics down then you have to hurt their feelings a little bit. That's why I think the PD needs to aircheck with them on a regular basis. They need to drill it into their heads--*This is what we expect from you as a jock. We need some consistency among the airstaff. This is how everybody does their show. Get your own personality in there, but let's keep with the basic formatics. Backsell your music. Get your call letters in there. Get your liner information in there, but don't read it word-for-word. Look at the liner. Understand what it's about, and then put it into your own words. Same thing when you talk about the music. Find some tidbits on the artist. Digest it, and deliver it with your own personality. But do all of this in as few words as possible.* One of my favorite sayings came from Greg Gillispie--*A fair jock says it in 3 words. A good jock says it in 2 words. A great jock says it in 1 word.* That's very true. There is not a person out there who is hanging on your every word. They don't give a hoot what you're saying. They want you to get back into the music. You're just background noise to them. So--do what you have to do, make it short and sweet, and then shut up."

## The Ten Commandments of Managing Talent

1. Thou shalt not critique a jock right before he or she goes on the air.
2. Thou shalt not reprimand a talent in front of anyone.
3. Thou shalt not hotline an announcer unless what they did could be repeated within the shift or could cost the station money.

4. Thou shalt not be mean to a talent, meanness begets meanness.
5. Thou shalt not say "I guess I'll have to do it myself around here," when you must reassign a task.
6. Thou shalt not tell a DJ that the reason for doing something is because "they" told us we have to. Be **management** by cutting the umbilical cord to jock mentality. It's not **us** (the DJs and the PD) against **them** (the owners and GM). You have the title, live it.
7. Thou shalt not show favoritism and destroy the team spirit at the radio station.
8. Thou shalt not be late for a meeting with the jock or the jock staff.
9. Thou shalt not send a memo when it could have been handled face-to-face.
10. Thou shalt not waiver from the words the management has decided on when terminating an employee. You must maintain a legal position. No one knows how to be fired, so expect the worst and stick to the script.

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## Take Your Talent to the Top

by Greg Gillispie

One of the most beneficial things a PD can do to improve the station is an aircheck session. An improperly conducted aircheck session can demoralize a jock or create unnecessary negative criticism. As a result, many PDs avoid doing airchecks. I've done enough aircheck sessions to know they help the talent and station get better.

Constant contact with your talent increases their confidence and escalates

their performance. Get them involved in their development and you can work on their responsiveness during the "dreaded" aircheck session. Here is a simple four-step talent development program we have successfully used:

### **Step One**

The PD sits in his/her chair, the jock sits in the guest chair. The PD critiques each break of the show, encouraging the elements that make a break great and offering suggestions to improve weak breaks. The PD should keep notes and at the end of the session give the jock a non-combative memo that highlights the jock's strengths and suggests improvements in no more than three areas. Asking the jock to make improvements on more than three things can be perceived as too much negative criticism.

### **Step Two**

Next time, the jock sits in the PD chair, the PD sits in the guest "hot" chair. Before the session begins, the PD and the jock discuss what has been done to improve the last three areas. Then the jock runs the tape machine and critiques each break of the show. Careful attention should be paid to how the jock has improved the work areas. Strengths and new weaknesses should be discussed. Both the jock and the PD should take notes during the session and compare them at the end. The follow-up memo may focus on one or more of the original work areas or any new problems that may have arisen. It is important to completely correct the original problems before moving on to new ones.

### **Step Three**

This is what I call the "gloves off" session. The jock is instructed to bring in what he/she feels is his/her best twelve breaks since the last session. In this no-holds-barred session, the PD and jock openly discuss what makes the truly great breaks great and the less-than-great breaks weak. Remember, this is supposed to be the jock's "greatest hits" of the last week or two, and anything less than a hit is unacceptable. The end result of this session should be to isolate the concepts behind the truly great breaks and develop a plan to put those concepts to work every time the jock cracks the mic. This is also a great opportunity to assess the jock's overall performance and set long-term goals.

### **Step Four**

This is what I call the fun session. The PD brings a tape of a direct

market competitor or similarly styled out-of-market jock. The tape is listened to and discussed, isolating what makes the talent a formidable competitor or good role model. This is also a great chance to brainstorm ideas.

### **Step Ahead**

The series starts all over again with the next session. There is no magic formula for an aircheck timetable. Some jocks need it daily; other weekly; and others bi-monthly or monthly. You can also be effective by casually mentioning a great break or slight problem once the jock has gotten off the air. Unless the jock has done something to threaten the license, the PD should never hotline the jock while he/she is on the air!

As a PD, you need to know how to influence and instruct each talent individually. And once you get your talent involved in their own development, you will see how much quicker they can take themselves to the top and work harder to win as part of the team.

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## **Programming and the Morning Show**

Of all the air shifts put together, morning drive (usually Monday through Friday from 6 a.m. to 10 a.m.) is the most critical. No other day part has the potential to have as many listeners, which is why PDs pay close attention to hiring the right talent for this time slot as well as closely monitoring their progress. That's because listeners who tune into a morning show, hopefully, are more likely to stay put at that same radio station throughout the rest of the day. However, high-profile personalities such as Howard Stern tend to draw a wide variety of listeners from a number of music formats. Often times these people go back to their regular music format after the morning show. So the purpose of the morning show is to rope in listeners, and get them excited about what's happening at the radio station.

There's no one formula to follow to make a morning show a success. How much talk or music a radio station plays depends upon the station, its

format, the audience, the radio market, and the competitive situation the radio station is programming against. Consequently, the brand of humor used by the morning personalities is also contingent upon the above criteria.

Most morning shows generally involve one or more hosts, a news person who may also double as a co-host, and a producer. It is the producer's job to line up any guests who will appear on the show, produce comedy bits\* or any other production pieces that will be used on the show, and plan a basic outline of topics to be covered on the show in conjunction with the other members of the morning team.

Chuck Knight, Program Director at WSNY in Columbus, says his friend, Dave Robbins, General Manager at WNCI in Columbus, has a good theory on how to develop good morning shows. "He attributes them to sitcoms. He says that any good sitcom will involve a dear, a dick and a dork. When you stop and think about it, it's really true. It's fun to watch sitcoms and figure out who's the dear, who's the dick, and who's the dork. You can do that with *Seinfeld*--no problem. Dave's theory is that any good morning show will also involve these three players."

KUPD's Dave Pratt insists developing a relationship with the listeners is one of the key ingredients of a successful morning show. "I've felt like I'm not the most talented on-air jock, but I'll out-work anybody. I return all of my own mail, phone calls and e-mail. Mail, on a typical day, is somewhere around a hundred letters. E-mail, throughout a week, is over a thousand. When I do appearances I'm not always on stage. I get out, shake hands, kiss babies, have a good time, and hoist a few beers. I'm with the people, and I think that's the most important thing. I'm accessible, and I think the listeners feel like I'm one of them. They know I'm committed to staying in Arizona. I've turned down a lot of offers over the years and most of them have hit the papers so they know I love Arizona. I want to be here. It's not a stepping stone to a bigger market. One of the things I like about doing mornings is that it's a high-profile shift. I enjoy the pressure. I like knowing the station will go in the direction of the morning show on a typical basis. If the morning show does well, usually the station will do well. I also like waking up early. When I drive into the station I come over a little crest of the city and I can see all the lights of the city. It's a neat feeling at 4:30 a.m. to know that I'm going to be talking to these people and waking them up. I know that sounds corny, but I love that."

Once a morning show is in place, the development of that morning show is a constant, on-going process says Curtiss Johnson, KRXQ's Station Manager/PD. "I would equate the development of a morning show with being a coach or a manager of a baseball team. There are so many different

elements of a morning show. You have to decide, strategically, what you need to do in the mornings to gather the most audience. For a personality-based morning show you have to decide if the humor is targeted enough. Is it targeted to the audience that you're trying to reach? Are you hitting home runs often enough--to use a baseball analogy--with the jokes that they're using? Is their delivery right? Is their timing and pacing within the hour on target? How are they perceived by your audience? Are they perceived as a bunch of idiots? Are they well-liked? Maybe one of them is well-liked and the other one is hated, but they balance each other out to where there are fans on both sides."

Some morning shows highlight more music and less talk elements--as is the case with KZLA in Los Angeles. Program Director John Sebastian says he works quite closely with his morning talent to make sure the morning show is on target with his philosophy. "We're doing a unique morning show here in that we're not doing a lot of bits. We're playing a lot of music. I think that makes us very unique in Los Angeles. Because it's the most important show of the day I meet with the morning people every day when they get off the air. We talk about the show. Go over the tape. I talk about the points I heard. Answer any questions. I treat it with kid gloves, but I am very integrally involved. Not that I'm not involved with all the shows, but I make it the highest priority to meet with my morning show every day. It's so important."

Greg Gillispie, during his time as Program Director at WRXX in Ft. Myers, says he also had to use the kid gloves approach with his morning team, which sometimes made dealing with them quite a challenge. "I've got 3 very negative, judgmental, very strong-willed, hard-headed guys who do a show that is predominately talk. They are open and honest and call things as they see them. Some people peg them as being mean and vulgar and crass. Other people think they're very funny. They don't take constructive criticism very well. The biggest trick with them--and I think this is the case with a lot of morning shows, and this is difficult for me to do because of the kind of person I am--is trying to get them to do things by making them think it was their idea in the first place. We don't do airchecks. We talk conceptually. And often times I'll ask them to do things, and they'll rebel and go on the air, telling people I said they have to do this, how much it sucks, and how bad it is. Or, they'll do the exact opposite, and act like spoiled little kids. They get it out of their system. Then they'll move on and do what I need them to do."

Not all morning shows take a rebellious approach on the air. Some concern themselves with dealing with real issues that affect the station's

listeners every day. Kevin Vargas believes that's what makes KISS's morning show so successful. "Our guys are different. They're a free-form flow of colloquial conversation. They don't do birthdays, parody songs, or stupid bits or gimmicks. Our audience eavesdrops and participates in conversations. Yesterday, they did an entire show on date rape. They thought--prom time? What a perfect time to do a show on this subject--especially since John (one of the morning guys) has a 16 year-old daughter. Two weeks ago they had a sex therapist in here. They do everything from deep-rooted discussion on the water crisis we had when there was a drought to a female sexuality expert teaching women how to get in touch with themselves. They cover it all. These guys are good. They're just being themselves. So how do you tell John and Steve how to be John and Steve? You can't. They need somebody who watches their mechanics. When I see a hitch, when they don't realize that they're doing something, I tell them about it. That's how you work with a morning show like John and Steve. I'm simply the batting or pitching coach. I facilitate ideas, and keep them focused on little things that can bog them down. Creative people are off in their own little world, and sometimes they can't blend that left and right brain. If they're being the right brain, I need to help them by being the left brain. If they're the left brain, I'm the right side."

Finding individuals who have the right chemistry to mix well together on the air can sometimes be a challenge for Program Directors. If morning hosts don't get along, it eventually comes out over the air--which can be disastrous! Leslie Fram is convinced her station, WNNX, got lucky when they put their morning show together. "Our show is called *The Morning X with Barnes, Leslie and Jimmy*. Barnes runs the board. He's usually the first guy you hear on the air. Jimmy's the producer and agitator of the show. He's the one who stirs up all the controversy. I'm a co-host. We didn't know quite how the chemistry would be, but I think we lucked out when the station put the 3 of us together. There's got to be chemistry there between the people on the show. It clicked with us. And that may have happened because I was already friends with one of the guys. When the new person came in--it clicked. We all have 3 distinct personalities. I think it would have been a problem if we had all been exactly alike. I hate to use the old cliché, but we do compare our show with the sitcom *Friends* because our show is a grouping of people who get together every day and talk about what's going on currently. There are a lot of things that hit our 18-34 year-old target. Whether it's talking about male/female relationships or interviewing celebrities. We do a lot of celebrity sleaze."

Fram says a lot of preparation goes into the show every day. "To be on

a morning show you really have to commit yourself to being on top of your game. It requires a lot of reading. What I try to do, because I'm also the Program Director, is at least watch the news every night. In the morning, I get up 30 minutes earlier to watch CNN to get all the latest news. I also try to read the newspaper every day. I read a lot of entertainment magazines. As far as the prep that Jimmy puts into the show because he's the producer, he's here all day. He books guests, comes up with bits that we're going to do, and then, obviously, he goes over all that with me and Barnes before we go on the air. It's a lot of planning. We knew when we were going to have Johnny Cash on the show that we would have to get a lot of information on him. It's now much easier to do that. You can download it from the Internet. We got something like 10 pages of stuff about Johnny Cash so that we were aware of everything about him before he came on the air with us. If someone has a book out you try and get it in advance so you can read it. You can't just walk in 5 minutes before you go on the air and expect to do a good show. And that would go for any shift. A lot of it comes from being spontaneous, but all the jocks are very well prepped. They know about every artist that they're playing. Some of them put markings on their music sheets. Little things that they want to say here and there--whether it's a little story about the band or a tease.\* Listeners think jocks work 4 hours a day on the air and that's it, but that's not true. Part of the other things that all jocks are required to do as part of their job is production--making commercials, which could take 1 or 2 hours. And then there's outside promotions for the radio station, which again everybody is required to do. That could be going to a movie screening or introducing a band at a concert or doing a charity event. In order to promote yourself and the station, you want to do those things."

Fram attributes her morning show's success to the fact that it's a mainstream morning show. "People tune into the morning show for entertainment, and they get it every morning. You draw in a large number of people that you hope will stay with the station after 10 o'clock. That's real important for any station. Since mornings are the most listened-to time slot you want to do the best possible job you can. The feedback we get from listeners when we're out on a promotion or in e-mails or letters is that people love the stunts we do. Practical jokes. People love our artist interviews. They'll comment on what they like. So we try to do a mixture of those things they like to hear--games, interviews and a good degree of music. It's hard to balance the two, but we're able to try and get in as much music as we can. It might be 7 songs an hour, which is a lot of music for a morning show. There are also the Howard Stern-type morning shows which play virtually no music, but our audience seems to want a little bit of everything in the mix.

So our job is to provide that every day, and have a good balance of everything."

Dave Pratt says the right balance of talk and music elements is the key to good morning radio. "I don't have the answer of how to do that, but here's what I do. If I have something good to do on the air I do it. But I never push anything. If it's a slow news day, and there's not much to do that's funny, I play the tunes. I still stay up. I still try to be entertaining, but I'm more short and sweet. If I have a hot guest in the studio like the day Ozzy Osbourne hosted the show I don't play one song in an hour because it's Ozzy. Ozzy was telling stories. A rock station doesn't always have to be music. It's an attitude. I can play Ozzy CDs anytime, but if Ozzy's in the studio why waste his time? Let the listeners hear Ozzy and have fun. Seems like on Mondays I play more music because people are more irritable. Fridays we might loosen up more and goof around."

Stunts, of course, often play a role in the humor a morning show delivers to its audience. Fram chuckles when she recalls the stunt her show played earlier that morning. "Today Jimmy is out of town so we told everyone on the air that he went to DJ school. He's really at a convention. But, whenever he's out of town or Barnes is out of town, they play practical jokes on each other in their hotel rooms. When Barnes was on vacation last year, Jimmy had called the maid and said that he wanted all the sheets and towels removed from his room because he was allergic to them. So when Barnes got to his room at midnight that night there were no towels or sheets. To pay him back, this time Barnes pretended he was Jimmy and called an escort service in New Orleans, saying that he wanted a male escort to come to his room at 8:30 this morning. The guy asked him what he wanted so Barnes went through this long list and ended up ordering a large man who was into all kinds of kinky things. It ended up that Jimmy was greeted this morning at 8:30 by this escort service. So we played that part on the air, and then we played the part where Jimmy called up, livid, saying *How do you tip a large...*I can't remember what he called him, but it was probably something offensive! Jimmy happened to be waiting for a couple of buddies this morning when it happened. He had a towel wrapped around him, and was in the bathroom. Use your imagination on the rest! Those are the kinds of things that our listeners love. People started calling. They loved the fact that we played a practical joke on Jimmy!"

Dave Pratt relates that often times humorous moments occur as a direct result of interacting with listeners. "One morning I had a lady call up. She was talking about the Tyson/Holyfield fight. She thought that Tyson was going to win. Spontaneously, I said *Okay. I'll take Holyfield. What do you*

want to bet? She said *You pick the bet, Dave*. And I said *Okay. Loser, tomorrow morning, rides down Central Avenue in red underwear on top of our van*. She agreed. She lost. The next morning she's on top of the van. People are hooting and hollering. Every office window on Central Avenue is looking down on her. We're live on the air. She's got a microphone with her on the van. The press is there. She gets arrested. We get more press. That all came off a live phone call. It was wild! People were honking their horns, and following the van. I was playing strip-tease music on the radio. Of course, after she got arrested, I went down to the police station and took care of her. The whole thing was on the air. It all started spontaneously off of one phone call. That's fun. That's real. You can't make that stuff up. It's listener involvement. That's the type of radio that you can't turn off--where you're sitting in the parking lot, knowing you're late for work because you want to hear the final result. *Is she going to be okay? What's going to happen? Is Pratt in trouble, too?* That's good radio to me."

Pratt admits that stunts have also played a part in his morning show. "I've wrestled a bear. Broadcast live from a nudist resort. The only thing we had on was the radio that morning!" he jokes. However, Pratt also cautions that stunt radio only works if there's a morning show to back them up. "I'm not big on stunt radio. I did them early in my career to get attention. But I think it's more important to have a consistent, good radio show every day. Consistency is so important. People get accustomed to what they want to listen to. You have to have a good batting average day-in and day-out. Stunt radio--it happens once and then a jock could suck the rest of the week. What good does that do you? If you do a stunt and get people to tune into your show, and your show sucks, what did you accomplish?"

An important consideration for any morning show is where to draw the line when it comes to humor. Leslie Fram believes that only happens when the morning show and Program Director understand the audience. "You kind of get a feel for that after you know the audience about how far you can go. Jimmy's the one who, if anybody is going to get a laugh, he'll get it. People think that the 3 of us are funny. I don't know if that's in the context of how we present ourselves when the 3 of us are talking. There are times when Jimmy and I will get into a fight on the air or it might be a male/female type of thing where I have to step in and be the voice of reason. There are some shows that are more male humor or blue humor or locker-room humor. Our show's not really like that. More rock stations have shows like that. Since our station is 50/50 male/female, it's more the kind of humor that you would see on *Friends*. It's edgy, but not offensive."

Pratt feels humor is incredibly important to any morning show. And, he

admits, sometimes critics have accused him of being too blue on the air. "I would rather go over the edge quite a bit than never get close to the edge at all. That's the secret of good morning radio. Especially in a format like rock and roll. You have to go over the line once in a while or you're not fun. But, pretty soon we're going to have to regulate ourselves. If a station is too blue advertisers aren't going to want to be on it. Then the chain begins. There's a difference between a high-rated show and a high-income show. I think society will regulate itself."

Another dimension to morning radio that some stations have developed is having a band be a part of the show. WAZU/Dayton had *The Wham Bam Thank You Band*. WTPA/Harrisburg had the *Dead Air Blues Band*. KUPD's Dave Pratt has the *Dave Pratt and the Sex Machine Band*. "It's a fun band. We have 5 albums out. It's a vehicle to promote the station in a fun party way. We've done some big shows. We performed in front of more than 10,000 people for my tenth anniversary at KUPD in 1991. We play original music. We have an old circus cannon that shoots red underwear out into the crowd during our song *Underwear*. We have a fire extinguisher that shoots 20 pounds of whipped cream all over the crowd for the song that we do called *Whipped Cream*. We all have a good time. The *Sex Machine Band* has given me some of the wildest times ever at the station. We've done everything from riding donkeys out on stage to having chain saws and celebrities. In fact, one of the guys was getting a little frisky with a sheep at one of the shows and he busted his leg on stage and had to go to the hospital! It's funny now, but at the time--the poor guy! We've also had shows where the crowd has broken through the barrier and the stage buckled. But the listeners in Arizona know that when we say there's a *Sex Machine Band* show it's going to be a party! The crowd is as much a part of the show as the band."



Insert cover from the Anniversary CD of Dave Pratt and the Sex Machine Band.  
Reprinted with permission from Dave Pratt and KUPD.

A current trend in the radio industry is to syndicate morning shows. Howard Stern, of course, is the most prominent, but other shows such as Scott and Todd on WPLJ in New York also have their show aired in other markets. Many PDs, like Fram, believe this is a trend that will stick around for a while. "I think it will last because people are finding it harder and harder to develop morning talent. Where's the talent pool? You keep hearing that from PDs who get tapes in the mail that they don't find to be very interesting. People haven't been coached for so many years that there's this dry well. So, when a show is working and they think that it could work in another market, they try it. If it does work--all of a sudden it's syndicated. There are several syndicated shows right now. It's easier for some stations to flip a button, and have a syndicated morning show. On the downside, you lose that localness of it. For us, our show is so local I doubt that it would ever be syndicated. I don't think you could turn on our show in Dallas. But with the Howard Sterns of the world, because it's not really a local show--it's more national because he talks about national things--it's been very successful."

Dave Pratt feels that in order for a show to be syndicated it has to be completely different. "It has to offer something that nobody else is offering. Howard is different. That's why he's so successful. Love him or hate him--he's different from anybody you'll hear on the radio dial. Some of these other guys, while I give them credit for doing great shows, they're no different from the best jock in pick your city."

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## Building Blocks, Stumbling Blocks

by Jan Jeffries

Successful morning shows enhance the mood and attitude of the radio station. Listener loyalty is born here. Through effective cross-daypart promotion, it lives in all dayparts on winning radio stations. Winning mornings requires discipline and talent on the part of the host(s). It's no easy task; however, using a well-designed daily **morning show model**, you will provide consistency and balance. Let's look at the basics:

**HUMOR:** Understanding **who** your core target is and their likes and dislikes is essential in sensing and communicating humor to them. Listen

and watch people at movies, comedy clubs and the like to learn what is funny. If the morning show's humor isn't great, use outside sources. The bottom line is to have a **fun** morning show, but not necessarily always funny. Think **topical**, think **planned spontaneity**, think **listener**.

**EMOTION:** Appeal to your listeners' emotions. This is an excellent vehicle of **endearment**. Taking the "warm and fuzzy" side of a topic (i.e.: charities, local needy family or group, etc.) is a great opportunity to project the human side and "likability" of the morning show. Look for opportunities to key on the emotions of the attentive morning audience.

**LOCALIZATION:** In this age of "satellite" morning programming, it is more important than ever to relate to **your** city and the events that are unique in your metro. This can be a major strength for your station. Reflect the attitudes and viewpoints of the local citizens. A **daily activity book** with a calendar and articles about **local** happenings that are of interest to your target audience should be utilized in show prep. A second copy should be kept in the control room. The morning show producer, promotion director or an intern should update this book daily.

**ENRICHMENT:** Informing your target audience of information that is interesting to their lifestyle is an important element of the morning show. It can be the latest health/fitness discovery, local concert announcement, etc. Interesting information to the target helps keep them interested and coming back.

**CURIOSITY:** Pique the listeners' interest and pull them through the hour with **compelling** reasons to keep listening. Tease details of a hot topic, lifestyle information, contest details, etc. Make the listener want more...make them curious about the details with compelling teases.

**LISTENER INTERACTION:** Every listener with a telephone has a microphone on your morning show. Some of the best humor and surprises can come unexpectedly from your audience. Listener interaction also causes the perception that "everyone is listening" when listeners hear others on your station. It's the bandwagon effect.

**CROSS-DAYPART PROMOTION:** Among successful stations, morning drive is, in most cases, the cume leading daypart. Heavy cuming stations will generally recycle more than 60% to PM drive. It is essential to be **compelling** with **listener benefit** promos being played in morning drive to recycle to midday and PM drive. It also ties the morning show to other dayparts, enhancing "stationality." Midday and PM drive air talent should produce quick and compelling promos for their shows with a specific listener benefit reason to listen today!

**SERVICE ELEMENTS:** Time and temperature are essential **every**

**break.** Complete forecasts should be regularly done every quarter hour. Quick weather relatables are effective: "You'll need those Ray Bans all day today with a temperature of 88 degrees," or "Don't forget your umbrella on your way out the door this morning, you'll need it on your way home, too!"

News on 18-34 or 18-49 targeted music intensive stations should be written and presented with the **core** target in mind. Local, economy, health/fitness, heart (warm and fuzzy, good Samaritan type story) and lifestyle (entertainment news) news should make up the news information. National or world news items should be included only if they relate locally. Sports scores only. Avoid in-depth sports unless the star is a personality.

**MUSIC:** The quantity of songs per hour in morning drive must be determined on an individual basis, depending on the competitive and market composition. Morning shows of stations that are music-intensive outside of morning drive should be cautious not to sound like an entity to itself. It is important that music/talk balance in morning drive be representative of the station's music promise.

Here are some things that should be avoided in morning drive:

1. In-house humor. Too much talk about in-office parties, inside jokes, etc. It leaves the audience out.
2. Negativism and sarcasm.
3. Repetition of bits--"It seems like the same morning show every day." (Reverse spontaneity)
4. Too much talk.
5. Too much sports.
6. Under-produced. Bits and features go unnoticed by the casual listener.

Work on the *building blocks* and clear away the *stumbling blocks*. Wake up with a better morning show tomorrow.

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## Enforcing Programming Rules

In order for the station to run smoothly, and for the sound to remain consistent throughout the day, Program Directors develop programming rules which they expect the air talent to follow. These rules are developed

with the target audience, competitive situation and station mission in mind. Keeping the station on track is crucial, particularly since the station's success hinges upon getting ratings.

John O'Dea, PD at Wink 104 in Harrisburg, insists that following program rules are even more important on his station than they may be for most others. "We have 2 shows that are pretty much free-form so-to-speak so for the other dayparts I have very stringent rules from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and from 7 p.m. to 5:30 a.m. and also on the weekends. I have very strict rules on when to talk, and when to do everything, basically. The station has to have some sort of structure. Otherwise, when people tune in, they wouldn't know what to expect or what they're going to get. I think that's very important. I don't become so strict that jocks can't do a break on what they feel like doing. They pretty much have free-rein 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to say what they want to say during their breaks. We certainly have sales liners or promotions that we have going on that need to be talked about. We have a certain structure on how to do that as well in terms of how often that needs to be done in an hour. But I think if a station doesn't have any structure at all then you're not going to be successful. There's a certain element on WNNK that is unpredictable, but there's a big section that's very predictable. It puts the station in a comfort zone, yet a zone where people also say *I don't want to miss what's going on because I don't know what's going to happen next*. That's especially true on Bruce's show. But if I let the other jocks do what Bruce does then the station would have no continuity. That would be a bad thing."

Leslie Fram says a big problem some PDs face, especially those in smaller markets, is jocks who hang on the request line talking to listeners their entire shift. "I think in a lot of smaller markets radio becomes this avenue for some guys to get chicks. They'll sit on the request line and talk to girls all night. I used to have that problem all the time when I was in a smaller market--people who spent their entire airshift on the request line. It's a matter of how serious are you about radio? Once they reach a market the size of Atlanta then a lot of those people are weeded out. But it's still a problem everywhere. Here we have a lot of people who love what they do and they're passionate about their job. They're all professionals and they have a professional attitude about their job."

Susan Stone, who does the mid-day shift at WRXK in addition to handling Music Director duties, says she'll often talk over any programming rules she doesn't understand with her Program Director. "If I think something is stupid and pointless, I'm not shy. I'll go to the PD and say *I don't understand. Please explain to me why it's being done this way. It*

*doesn't make sense to me, and I can't execute this rule properly because I don't know what you're talking about. And maybe, if it's explained to me, I'll understand it. Doesn't mean I'll agree with it necessarily, but your boss is your boss. You need to respect that."*

## **Practical Programming Assignments**

1. Get an aircheck from a fellow student and critique it. What are they doing well? Suggest 3 areas that need improvement.
2. Listen to five morning shows in your market. Compare their styles. Determine their music/talk balance. Describe the type of humor used in each show. Suggest the target audience each morning show is appealing to, and analyze how the shows are geared toward their target audiences. Report your findings to the class.
3. Pick a local radio station. Critique all facets of it, analyze it, and report (and demonstrate) your findings to the class.

# **Creating an Image**

## **Chapter Objectives**

**At the end of this chapter students will be able to:**

1. List the elements that, combined, depict the image of a radio station.
2. Describe the steps taken by radio stations to determine appropriate imaging measures in a market.
3. Explain measures radio stations take to maintain an image.
4. List and describe the types of marketing used to market a radio station in the community.
5. Explain how radio stations use Web sites to market the station.
6. Demonstrate understanding of the chapter's main concepts by completing the Practical Programming Assignments at the end of the chapter.

# Chapter 6

## Glossary of Radio Terms

<b>Traffic Reports:</b>	Reports that inform the listeners on the condition of area roadways.
<b>Sound Bites:</b>	Short pre-recorded bits of information that may be used in a newscast or during other programming elements.
<b>Database Marketing:</b>	A developed list of the station's loyal listeners to which specific marketing programs are designed.
<b>Spot:</b>	Slang term for a pre-recorded commercial announcement.
<b>Gross Ratings Points:</b>	Gross impressions that represent a percentage of the population.
<b>Gross Impressions:</b>	Total number of times a listener hears a commercial announcement.

# 6 Creating an Image

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## Creating an Image

Have you ever glanced at a total stranger and made a snap judgement about what type of person that stranger was based on the clothes he or she was wearing, the facial expression, language and tone used, posture, and attitude that person projected? Whether we realize it or not we commonly do this on a daily basis. These quick decisions influence how we respond to the people we encounter. Everything we say, wear, and do projects an image, and research has shown that we make (right or wrong) decisions about people in terms of their educational level, social position, moral values, economic level of success, trustworthiness, and other character attributes based on the images we see portrayed by others. We may find ourselves drawn to certain types of images and repulsed by others.

In a similar manner, radio stations also portray an image that has been carefully crafted by the Program Director and other members of the radio team. This image is developed with a target audience in mind with the hope that this target audience will be attracted to the image being projected by the radio station. How successful the radio team is in garnering a sizable audience is revealed in the ratings distribution at the end of a ratings period. As stated in chapter three, the goal of the radio station is to grab as large a portion of the intended target audience as possible, and keep them listening for an extended period of time. This ensures that the radio station receives the revenue it needs from advertisers to maintain its survival in the marketplace.

There are many elements that go into the creation of an image, according to Curtiss Johnson, Station Manager/PD of KRXQ in Sacramento, and all of them need to be carefully considered by the PD before activating them on the station. "Everything you see and hear about the radio station plays a role in the image being portrayed. From the music you play to the disc jockeys that you have on the air to the marketing you put in place--whether that be billboards, TV campaigns, or newspaper ads. Also, what kind of promotions you do and how you present these promotions. And a lot of that has to do

with the personality of the Program Director. The market situation comes into play, too. If you've got a real off-the-wall, irreverent radio station in town do you want to go up against them or do you want to appeal to that side of the audience that gets turned off by that controversy and comedy by playing more music and not allowing the jocks to talk all that much? Or, vice versa. If you want to attack a radio station that's really conservative you may want to come across with more personality."

Lee Abrams, who's been advising client stations how to develop an appealing image since his partnership in Burkhart/Abrams began in 1970, says a radio station's image involves the portrayal of three key components. "The first is musical attitude. The station should be one of those stations where if you walked into a shopping mall and you can barely hear the station you know which station it is just by the feel of the music mix. Also, it must have a non-computerized music feel. Sort of where anything can happen musically on the station. Again, you need to play the hits, but you should have a clear musical position and musical attitude. The second thing is character. I think the station needs to have a certain eccentricity to where it's fun to listen to. If the station has swagger, it's like nobody messes with these guys because they know what they're doing. Almost like how *Saturday Night Live* used to be--definite character. The third thing is muscle--especially now in the days of MTV. I call it the "er" factor where everything is bigger and better than anything in town. Then you really make a point of that in your whole spirit. Say an artist comes to town--one of your core artists. Instead of just giving away tickets to the 9th caller or letting the other stations do it all because they "promote" the show, *steal it!* Go in there and do it! All you have to do is ask. A couple of weeks before the concert call the manager. Or if it's that important, fly out to LA or wherever the manager is and "do" lunch with this guy. Outline what you want to do and how you can cooperate, and the next thing you know you might get an unplugged show with somebody like Eric Clapton. It could happen."

However, before any image should be put into place, B/D & A President Greg Gillispie says the first thing any radio team should do is research. "You need to determine the market hole and what type of format is desired in the marketplace. What kind of format has a strong chance of success? From there, after you have chosen a format, then you have to build the appropriate image that goes with that format. That doesn't mean an AC station always has to be mellow, adult, sappy and somber, and a rock station always has to be wild and crazy and in-your-face. You have to look at it like you're developing a marketing image for any sort of product. You've got to figure out what your product's greatest strength is as well as the greatest weakness

of your direct competitor. You've got to approach it from that point of view--really sell your strengths. I've also read some things in the past where marketing people talk of attacking the strengths of your competitor. Look for the weaknesses and the strengths. I don't know that there's any set game plan. A lot of it depends on the market conditions, and what you hope to accomplish in terms of audience appeal. See if you can steal any of your competitor's imagery. If not, look for the weaknesses that they have and attack that. At the same time, sell your strengths. When you're marketing a radio station there's really no more than 3 points that you want to get across to your audience. You've got to continually find new, fresh, and different creative ways to sell those same points. In the case of one of my clients, our research clearly indicates the greatest strength that we have is the variety aspect. So we spend a lot of time (on the air) talking about the variety that we play on this radio station. After that, the morning show is definitely out on the edge. And what goes with everything is the unpredictability. So we try and find a wealth of ways to sell variety, and then we try and find ways to be as unpredictable as possible by being entertaining and catching people by surprise. It's different for every radio station and every market. There's no set pattern. Just concentrate on 2 or 3 elements and then drive those points home. Think about other products. Radio--yes, it's an entertainment medium, but it's also very disposable to a lot of people out there. To me, radio is an emotional thing, and you can play on peoples' emotions and create a strong bond to your radio station. But it's really difficult to do that because people have so many things going on in their lives. They're just looking for background noise or a little entertainment. I think that if you can find ways to create a stronger emotional bond with your radio station, and realize that radio is a product like any other product, you can learn a lot from the way that Coke, McDonalds and Budweiser market themselves. Stop and look. What is Coke selling? I think that some of the best books you can read are any of the *Ries and Trout* books on marketing if you really want to get a grip on reality in terms of putting together the right kind of approach for your radio station."

Many stations are also using direct marketing to create station images. According to Courtney Thompson, President of Broadcast Direct Marketing, Inc., creating a data base is the key to this method. "Basically, it's designed to help a radio station create a listener relational management program or loyalty program. From the standpoint of imaging a station there are lots of things they can do. They can use audio cassettes. They can use video cassettes with tours of the station, and parts of the funny morning show on it."



Direct mail piece that clearly defines the image of the radio station.  
*Reprinted with permission from Broadcast Direct Marketing.*



Direct mail piece that combines imaging elements of the station with a contest. *Reprinted with permission from Broadcast Direct Marketing.*

According to Thompson, "They can use flat mailers that show pictures or have a contest in them such as "Party in Paradise for with KSJO," which is a rocker in San Jose. The listeners get a wild picture of wild people on the beach, and the perception that is created is that the radio station is fun and exciting. So a lot of the imagery that goes into the mailer needs to be based on what imagery the radio station wishes to portray. Whether it's an NAC/Smooth Jazz station like KKSF in San Francisco or KAJZ in Austin, Texas, and they want to portray that they're smooth, cool, and relaxing, or whether it's "Party in Paradise" and it's a lot of crazy people with semi-nude bodies on the beach with KSJO, it's based on the image the station wants to portray. Everything they do after that falls in line with that image. It's no different than any other form of media."

Thompson says the concepts developed for the marketing campaigns are a collaboration between his company and the radio stations. "A lot of times people will call us and say I know I need to do something directly. I know I need to mail a video or get people more involved with my radio station. I think mailing a video will accomplish that. We'll go back over our research and determine what is the best way for the station to spend their money. We've done a lot of research from Focus Groups and Perceptual studies on an on-going basis where we've asked listeners of different formats what they like most and what they want to see most from a radio station. We're able to reference that research and build creative concepts around what the audience tells us they expect from radio stations."

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## **Mission Possible**

**by Bob Lepine**

**Director of Radio for Family Ministry**

A well-crafted mission statement will provide direction for your station, inspire and unite the staff, and enable management to set measurable performance goals (beyond the budget) for evaluating success.

A mission statement is simply step one in a process that can revolutionize the way you do business. If that sounds like hyperbole, consider that a mission statement has served as the foundation for many successful and innovative new ventures, like Saturn and Southwest Airlines.

There would be value in coming up with a mission statement, even if

that's all you ever did. It will provide a perspective that can help you make day-to-day decisions.

Let me illustrate. Imagine you were to decide to take the family on a vacation. But before deciding where to go, how to get there, how much to spend, or how long to be away, you asked the question, "Why are we taking this vacation?" You might decide the mission for your vacation is relaxation. You might decide you want to see new sights. Your mission might be fun and adventure, or it might be lots of rest and long afternoon naps.

Knowing your mission can help you decide whether to head for the beach, hike in the mountains, or spend a week with Mickey. It can help guide your decision-making process.

For your station, the next step after defining your mission is to answer another series of questions: "What business are we in?" "What are we good at?" "What do we do better than anyone else?"

Answering these questions can help you develop a business statement. In the same way a mission statement can explain why you do what you do, a business statement can help you define how you will go about accomplishing your mission.

In the vacation illustration, let's assume your mission for two weeks is R&R--rest and relaxation. The next question to answer is, "What do we find relaxing?" That would lead you to a business statement for a vacation, and would help you narrow your options.

In your city, you are one of a handful of people with access to a radio station. That will obviously influence your business statement. It helps define what you can do better than anyone else in your city to help accomplish your mission.

But your license and your transmitter are not your only assets. As a team, you have a unique set of gifts and competencies. Those gifts and abilities will help define the kind of business you're in.

Your business statement can help determine whether music, news programs, talk programs or some mix of programming will enable you to accomplish your mission. Again, it should be easily understood, concise, memorable and measurable.

Chick-Fil-A has as its business statement, "To be America's Best Quick-Service Restaurant at Satisfying Every Customer." Even though Chick-Fil-A serves chicken, their business statement allows them to be measured against everyone from Wendy's to Taco Bell.

As you work toward a business statement, consider the following questions: Are you in business as broadcasters or communicators? What is the difference? Are you communicators or influencers? What business

would your customers say you are in? Of all the things you seek to do, what are the things you do best? Would your customers agree?

Once you've answered the questions "Why do we exist?" (mission statement) and "What do we do best?" (business statement), there is one final issue with which to wrestle. As a team, you need to determine your core values. These are the non-negotiables for your business--the values that, as a staff, you will not compromise.

Core values will help set up the standards for how you will operate both on and off the air.

As a manager, what do you value from employees? Honesty? Loyalty? Flexibility? Maturity?

As a leader, what do your employees value from you? Integrity? Compassion? Fairness? A chance to advance?

How about your listeners? Or your advertisers? What are the values you hope will characterize your station in the community?

The place to begin in determining your core values is by asking each employee to list what he or she thinks are the top three to five priorities at the station. Those values that show up on almost everyone's list will say something about what you are communicating as your priorities.

As you think about your core values, think about your reputation as a station. How would you like to be known? When listeners, advertisers, or employees think about your station, how would they finish this sentence: "I can count on KXXX as a station that..."?

Once you know your mission (why you exist), your business (what you're all about), and your core values (how you'd like to be known), you're ready to outline your strategies and plans for the future. Your mission statement, your business statement, and your core values will help you make decisions about your format and your future.

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## Maintaining an Image

Putting together an image for a radio station is only half the battle. Keeping the image in place, and finding new ways to keep the image fresh

in the listeners' minds requires careful planning based on gut instinct and a constant influx of new research data of listeners' perceptions of the radio station. Is the station satisfying ever-changing listener needs? Are certain elements of the station's image beginning to sound stale and need to be adjusted to keep the station sounding exciting and innovative? No Program Director can afford to rest on his or her laurels just because the initial image found success with the station's listening audience. The competition is always looking for new ways to steal away the audiences of other radio stations so any smart Program Director will be on guard against these tactics while looking for ways to do a little audience-stealing of his own!

Maintaining an active street presence is one way to keep a radio station's image alive in the minds of its listeners. Jo Robinson, Assistant Program Director of WRCX/Chicago, says her station is tremendously active promotionally. "We've got a 16 person promotions staff. We're in 4 places at once 7 nights a week. We've also got a police car, 2 vans, a Blazer--4 station vehicles--so we can do that. Obviously, there's a lot going on in Chicago all the time so our street presence is huge."

John O'Dea, Program Director of Wink 104 in Harrisburg, reveals that the basis for his station's success is that the image of Wink 104 is constantly creating itself. "When people turn on the radio they know what they're going to get when they listen to Tim and Sue (Wink 104's morning team). They know what they're going to get during mid-days, during Bruce's show in the afternoons, and when they listen to Heidi from 7 to midnight. People come to us for information, traffic reports,\* music and comedy. They also come to us to win money, concert tickets and trips. When it comes to promotions, I do have a Promotions Director, and he takes care of all the details. But if it's a sales promotion the Sales Manager and I both sign off on it so that everyone is in the loop. Just to make sure we don't have too much going on at the same time, and to make sure that the promotion\* is viable and makes sense for us to do it. It's real important for my Promotions Director to tell me if Rod Stewart's coming in concert and they want to do a promotion with us. But if he (the Promotions Director) doesn't know that I already have another Sting promotion set up then that wouldn't work. So it's real important that I'm in the loop on what we're going to be doing on the air."

O'Dea adds that part of his promotions strategy includes maintaining a constant presence in the community. "I always want to be out there in the audience's face, so to speak, as much as possible with billboards and events. Top-of-mind awareness is so important."

As stated earlier in the chapter, in order to achieve top-of-mind

awareness, a PD must first ensure that he is satisfying the needs of the audience he is trying to attract. Depending on the format, the market, and the audience, how to achieve this goal varies depending upon what the research reveals to the Program Director. Kevin Vargas, PD of KISS in San Antonio, says his station meets the needs of his audience simply by remaining a lifestyle function of his listeners. "We are San Antonio's rock station. We selected a target, we defined what they want, and then we fulfill it. We make sure their expectations are met. The station, basically, has several elements musically. It's a hybrid of hard rock, modern rock, old stuff, new stuff. That's the essence of KISS. For the most part, we're just real people who happen to have these jobs. We don't have any BS radio attitudes. No radioisms. We're very relaxed. Very south Texas but with a little more enthusiasm. Our audience defines what they want, and then we give it to them. If they wanted 24 hours of the greatest hits of Quiet Riot, and it made 20 shares, we'd do it."

Vargas also believes that radio is unique in some respects from other corporations. "In radio, we operate on an immediacy that very few corporations could. We can change in a moment's notice. We have to be thinking about today, but we're also thinking about tomorrow, next week, next month, next quarter, next annual event. At the same time, we have to account for everything we've done in the past. It's an insane amount of directions you have to be thinking in."

The special features radio stations air also define the station's personality and image says Chuck Knight, former Program Director of Star 104.5 in Philadelphia. "There are different personality traits that radio stations come up with. Some stations have a "No Repeat Workday," and things like that. As far as the "No Repeat" thing, we think repeating records is a positive. People don't usually complain about hearing a song they like too often. They usually complain about hearing a song too often that they *don't* like. So repeating the best of the best is not a problem to us. We think it's a negative when you don't play that favorite song of theirs often enough. But that is a personality trait that a lot of radio stations have been able to develop and take credit for. A good interactive morning show is part of a good personality trait for a radio station. We have a lunch hour feature, which is all up-beat music. We have "Between the Sheets," which is a love songs show that we run from 9 p.m. until 1 a.m. "Saturday Night Dance Party" happens from 9 p.m. until 1 a.m. These all give radio stations their personality. They really are the bench marks that listeners can gravitate to and grab on to on the radio station."

Of course, controversy can also come into play when developing and/or

maintaining an image. Curtiss Johnson believes controversy--whether it's musically (such as playing the song "Sportin' a Woody" by Dangerous Toys) or through DJ chatter--could be used, depending upon what the PD is trying to achieve. "What is the image of your station? Is it one of those stations where you have your audience conditioned to where they expect or want to be musically-challenged by hearing off-the-wall or controversial songs? Or is your station more conservative or main-streamed? Does the song fit what your audience wants or expects from your station when they tune in? You see fast food places try things like spare ribs or pizza and fail miserably because that's not what people expected from that fast food place. In a way, radio formats can be much the same way. If you've got a radio station where people expect to be challenged occasionally, or that's the image of the station you're trying to achieve in the long run, then you occasionally need to pick out those records that are going to be off-the-wall. And maybe you'll garner some negative reactions as well as some positive reactions. I play records that I know are going to be hits, but early on may garner some negative reaction because it's different-sounding or something. If you're an off-the-wall, irreverent radio station then you need to do that. If you're an AC station that is appealing to an older, more conservative and passive crowd, then no, that's not something you want to do."

Lee Abrams is convinced that most radio stations don't take advantage of the resources they already have by not putting a creative twist to the usual imaging elements. "Take a station t-shirt. So often I'll ask a station *What are you doing t-shirt-wise?* And they'll say *I don't know. Hold on a minute. Hey, Joe! What are we doing t-shirt-wise this year? Same as last year!* Joe says. There's so much you can do with t-shirts. You can do them in foreign languages. You can number them. You can turn them into collectibles. You can hire a major album cover designer to do the design instead of some local agency. These guys do an album every three years, and starve in between. You could have the guy who did the Aerosmith logo. Every station seems to have a van, yet for the same price you could have a black Cadillac limousine, which would be much cooler. AOR stations are just hilarious because they still have this attitude of *I'm gonna kill you 'cause we rock harder!* In 1981, when AOR was threatened by new wave and disco, and wanted to prove how manly they were with big in-your-face promos, that was okay. But that was 18 years ago, and stations are *still* doing it. *Beavis and Butthead* are making fun of it. Stations think they are impressing people by being mean. Most of the rock stations sound pissed off if you really listen to them. And what about giving shows the right name? I remember at K-FOG in San Francisco we played a late sixties music show. Sure enough,

management wanted to call it *Oldies at 6*. Me and the PD wanted to call it *Psychedelic Supper*. We won. Another thing stations can do to help develop their character is develop stars. I think every station should have a staff Musicologist. Just like a TV station has a Meteorologist. And a travel expert. Do things like a 60 second report on how to get to LA for 49 dollars. Tell your listeners where to party. Where to stay. What to check out. Have a restaurant reviewer. You could have all these staff experts who are probably already on the staff. But stations need to develop some personality depth. One thing that worries me is if you ask Joe Average Listener what he likes about station X, and if he says *The music*, that's kind of a red flag. Anybody can come in and play more music and better music. But if you ask that listener and he says *I don't know, man, but they're great!* That's when you know you're in there. When they can't really define it. If they say *Those guys are nuts!—perfect!*"

An important thing, according to Abrams, is a creative batting average. "This is where a station or a member of the staff comes up with a hundred ideas, and 30 of them work. Nobody will remember the 70 that didn't work because those 30 that did work will stand out. That would be batting 300. Most staffs are batting 000. Not creative at bat in the first place. They're not even trying to come up with anything new. That's why you hear so many station cliches. You'll hear *10th caller wins!* when you do a contest. That was very effective in 1972 at the birth of the touch-tone era. This is almost 30 years later and people are still doing 9th and 10th caller wins. Or, "Two for Tuesday." Again, kind of cool in 1978. "Block Party Weekends." 21 years ago when that emerged it was cool. Some of those are trademarks are very important, but there has got to be some new ideas. Anybody who says there are no new ideas is someone who's bitter. Or somebody who ran out of them. I think there are plenty of new ideas. And there's also a lot of new ideas that can be recycled and renamed. One of the things I do in staff meetings is play old airchecks from the sixties to young jocks. They usually hear them and say *Wow! This is cool!* And then they'll sort of reinterpret that idea for the nineties. All you have to do is listen to Howard Stern. That whole thing's a new idea. But there's also a lot of the old ones that can be brought back. Some ideas that are 30 years old that worked then and haven't been used in years just need a little dusting off and reinterpreting for today."

Another image-builder, Abrams says, is sound. "Stations need to use more sound. MTV does a great job of using visuals, but very few radio stations use sound effectively. Between records, pay a lot of attention to and create new-sounding, full-stereo promos and IDs. Stations use them now, but they usually have only one or two of those and change them every year-

and-a-half. It can be noises and voices, sound bites\* and TV themes, old TV commercials, and guitar stabs. Sound is "ear candy." Hit that production room and come out with great stuff. Add a cinematic quality to the station's sound. Radio can be sonically out there, but we're not. We need to be. And that can be on all formats."

Abrams also suggests that stations should handle new music differently. "Nowadays, when a record comes out by a major artist, the record is simply added to the station's play list. I think the station could really do the whole fanfare thing. Have somebody from the record company on the phone the day before the record comes out. *Joe Schmo from Reprise Records is on the line to tell us about the new Clapton record. Joe?* And Joe says *Well, you'll have it tomorrow.* And then the jock does an interview on the air. When the record comes in play the whole thing. Play another track every hour. Then, at 7 p.m., roll the whole album again if you're an album station. And even if you're a country station, you could play a Garth Brooks album. I'm convinced that a station could probably add only 6 records a year, but if they handle them right they could become the new music station in the eyes of their listeners by doing it right when the important ones do come out."

## Re-Imaging a Station

If research or Arbitron numbers reveal that the station is not doing as well as expected, it may be time for the Program Director to consider modifying or completely revamping the image of the radio station. The Program Director may develop these strategies on his own, with other station staff members, or he could hire a consultant (if the station doesn't already have one) to help him give the station the overhaul it needs. If a consultant is hired to help the station revise its image, consultant Guy Zapoleon, who provides his expertise to AC and CHR stations across the country and in Australia, says a good consultant would spend a tremendous amount of time understanding history before the revamping process takes place. "First, I would understand the marketplace and the history of the marketplace. What drives it? What are the things that make it different than any other place? Also, station history, competition history, and talent history. I think that's a really important perspective to get at the beginning. Then, throw it all away. Build from that. Do research. Then try to understand through talking with the Program Director what the existing images are, and how you can re-craft the image--if you can. Or, you may just have to blow it all up and start over."

John Sebastian, Program Director at country outlet KZLA in Los Angeles,

says he's been involved in quite a few station turn-around situations, and has enjoyed considerable success with his efforts to get people to sit up and pay attention. "If you make dramatic moves like I've done in those instances, you're definitely going to get attention. First of all, I stream-line the radio station. It's kind of like rebuilding a house that's been screwed up. I just tear it all down and start with the foundation. I take off all the specialty programming. I lower the commercial load. I cut the disc jockey chatter down to a very, very minimum. Speed up the rotations on the best songs, and take out all the iffy songs. Put some individual sweepers (image liners) on the air that really accentuate those changes. Usually, those type of stream-lining methods get a lot of talk going--both positive and negative. People are talking about your radio station so people are sampling you. And, of course, the fastest thing on top of that is to do some advertising. Either television, billboards, newspapers or something that will inflame that word-of-mouth reaction."

However, Lee Abrams cautions that stations who do put a re-imaging campaign into motion need to make sure that campaign is honest and trick-free. "One problem I have with stations--particularly in the last 10 years--is that they love to trick listeners. Marketing change rather than actually doing anything. A typical thing might be where a station does Focus Groups, and finds out everybody says *Boy! You play the same records over and over again. I want a station that has more variety.* So instead of actually changing the playlist, all the station does is put up billboards all over town that say *Now! On K108, more variety!* They're expecting the listener to say *Hey! That station used to really suck! I guess they're good now.* I see this happen all the time. The station will find a flaw, but instead of fixing that flaw, they'll market to the audience that they fixed it without actually doing anything about it or even addressing the problem."

Hopefully, if re-imaging is in order, and the PD has done his research, put together a clear, well-defined station mission, and has enacted a campaign of change, the station will be able to build upon the momentum this strategy has achieved, and will soon enjoy competitive numbers once again.

## Marketing the Station in the Community

No matter how good a station sounds, no matter how well-defined an image a station has developed, if few people are aware of the station's existence, the radio station will enjoy few pay-offs for its efforts. That's where outside marketing becomes critical in building an audience and in maintaining top-of-mind awareness with existing listeners.

There are numerous choices when it comes to selecting outside media sources to use in a station's marketing campaign. Selecting the right media sources requires an understanding of the lifestyle of the station's target audience, current trends in the marketplace, the goals of the marketing campaign, and the station's marketing budget. Some media outlets, like television, are more expensive, and a PD may find that other media choices or a combination of choices would be more effective for his particular station and competitive situation.

Regardless, careful planning, including long-term and short-term goals, must be considered before making any final selections. As in other station decisions, research may be used to determine the best media sources to pursue. The development of any marketing campaign usually involves the station's Program Director, General Manager, and Marketing and/or Promotion Director--if the station has one.

Bob Lee, Program Director of KCEE in Tucson, says his station sometimes uses a combination of billboards, newspaper ads and television. "One of the things we're looking at is some of the cable networks. We go where our listeners have a tendency to go on cable, which is A&E, The Learning Channel, The Discovery Channel, and The History Channel."

Consultant Guy Zapoleon is a firm believer in television campaigns. "Television is still the most effective way to market a station. Billboards reinforce and image, but they, generally, don't really create a new image for a radio station. You need audio combined with visual to be able to really capture what the radio station is all about. Television does that best. Television captures the imagination, plus, it reaches people in a way that cuts through to and reaches people that you might not normally get through a billboard."

John Sebastian also feels television is the method to use if a station intends to be a major player in the market. "In this market, Los Angeles, you've got to do television advertising so that's what we're really concentrating on. There's nothing like mass marketing to hit several million people in one fell swoop. That's what we're trying to do. But there are also all kinds of new techniques for database marketing.\* I've experimented with some of that. Billboards are important, too."

Wink 104/Harrisburg's PD, John O'Dea, concedes that his station probably spends most of their marketing budget on TV, although he says they're also trying other media sources such as busboards\* and newspaper. "The most prominent source we use is billboards, but we're also going on-line and will probably have a Web site within the next couple of weeks. It'll feature basic information on the station like if we have events going on or

remotes. It'll also feature information on each personality, the Top 10 of the week. It'll be pretty simple to start with."

Not all Program Directors view television as radio's top marketing choice. WRCX's Jo Robinson feels TV is out of the question for her radio station at this point in time for a variety of reasons. "It's expensive. It's *really* expensive. It's not reaching who we feel we need to reach. There's not much bang for the buck. Instead, we do other things like buying large signs at the arena where the Bulls play. Outdoor (billboards) is, primarily, where we do our biggest push."

Curtiss Johnson says, in addition to billboards, KRXQ concentrates on lifestyle marketing. "This station is Active Rock. In other words, we're a young-based 18-34 year-old radio station. Our audience tends to be very active so we try to get involved in as many of the things that they like to do for fun. We've presented snow boarding events. We may do river rafting trips in the summer. Also water skiing events and concert sponsorships. We may do automobile racing. Those are ways that you market your station. I consider our Web site to be a marketing tool because it's really kind of presenting yourself to another market that's out there. Marketing can also be a van sitting on a street corner, giving away bumper stickers. We also have a radio card that sort of looks like a credit card. Also t-shirts that are available for our audience to wear. All those things are marketing."

Some Program Directors are looking for innovative ways to get the word out beyond or instead of traditional marketing tools. Direct mail is often being used to help build an image for a radio station through flyers announcing station events or contests or other items that mirror the image of the station. During his tenure as PD of WRXX in Ft. Myers, Greg Gillispie says he focused on data base marketing. "Basically, it's isolating the people who are heavy and moderate users of our station and format, and finding ways to increase that bond with them on a more personal level. We're trying to create a data base of loyal listeners, and then we'll send them birthday cards. We'll also send them special notices about things like private contests that only they will know about. Anything we can do to find out more about them so we can develop a stronger qualitative profile of our station for when we're out trying to sell it to advertisers."

To keep outside visibility, Gillispie says he uses a merchandising campaign with station license plates, t-shirts, bumper stickers, hats, refrigerator magnets, buttons, etc. "We also do a lot of things on the streets in town whether it's crazy remotes or tying in with city-wide events or with a big charity thing. I also try to get coverage from TV news and newspapers."

Gillispie remarks that he rarely uses billboards or TV anymore. "I'll give you a fine example of why we decided to get away from using billboards and stuff like that. Last fall, nine radio stations in this market did TV. One night I came home from work and turned on the news. When the news ended, *Hard Copy* came on. I saw 8 TV commercials for 7 different radio stations in one half hour. So, whose message stood out? When I drive down the road that my radio station is on I can go five miles and probably see 15 billboards for 3 or 4 different radio stations amongst all the other billboards that are out there, too. So a lot of that mass marketing is more like standing back and trying to shoot the side of a barn with a shotgun, hoping you hit something as opposed to taking that laser-guided scope and aiming it right at the center of the barn. But if your favorite radio station sent you a postcard that said *Hey, Joanna! We know you love Led Zeppelin, and this weekend we're doing a Led Zeppelin Weekend and giving away 5 Led Zeppelin catalogs-- Just thought you'd like to know, you'd probably think that was pretty cool.*"

Bob O'Connor, Senior Vice President of Optimum Broadcast Consulting and Research, says programmers of Smooth Jazz/NAC formats often use data base marketing as their primary marketing tool. "The NAC audience is a very difficult audience to reach. They're professionals and they're extremely busy. In our research some of them have told us *Hey! I haven't even had time to do my taxes let alone fill out an Arbitron diary with a week's worth of radio listening.* That, of course, hurts us when the book comes out. So we had to find a way to constantly touch these people with station information like faxes that go out every week with information on artists. We'll send birthday cards out through the data base. Also monthly newsletters. They're full 32 page newsletters that talk about the radio station and the artists that we play. We found out that if we don't touch these people every month through the mail or on the Web site they don't fill out the Arbitron diary."

Guy Zapoleon is enthusiastic about a new marketing technique many of his stations are trying out. "A great tool that we're beginning to get into is called V-Light Video. It's video cassettes that you can send out. You put the station's TV commercial on the video. You can have a 10 minute little case study for your radio station. You could have an introduction, then you could walk through the radio station and introduce the staff to the listener on video cassette. And then say *Here's the TV commercial. If you watch it to the end and you see your name on it at the end, call the radio station and win a thousand dollars.* We send the video out through a direct mailing list. That's a new little twist that's coming out. Our station in Los Angeles, Star, used it very effectively. It seems to have worked for them. When we went

back through Arbitron and isolated the campaign, their *Time Spent Listening* tripled during that 5 or 6 week period."

How does direct marketing compare with other forms of marketing? Courtney Thompson, who heads up Broadcast Direct Marketing, says that most other forms of media are very unfocused and very untargeted in comparison. But, Thompson concedes, these other marketing forms do have other benefits. "Outdoor can give you frequency. You can somewhat target your outdoor by the nature of the neighborhoods that the outdoor is in. But what we suggest in the new millennium, what the new paradigm of marketing is going to be, is strategic integrated target marketing. By that I mean the old paradigm of buying television to try and affect radio listening is that you would buy 3, 4 or 5 hundred gross ratings points\* of television per week. That suggests the same way that Tide (detergent) goes out and says You know, about 80% of American households have the potential to use my product Tide. Well, about 80% of the households don't have the potential to use my radio station so why would I want to go out and buy television that way? So, it's transcending and moving on from the paradigm of buying large amounts of media to affect large amounts of gross impressions\* to affect large amounts of people to affect a sale. Our belief is that by tightly defining the consumer you're trying to reach, you are then able to tightly define what forms of media reaches that consumer. The ways that you reach them become much more effective and efficient because what we're doing is very finely targeting them. For example, in a Smart Target Study (Broadcast Direct Marketing's targeting system) we're able to see whether or not TV wrestling or TV golf--which are really opposite ends of the viewers of the people who sit in front of the TV--is more popular with an audience. In the old way of gross ratings points, you'd treat TV wrestling and TV golf basically the same. In fact, you might not buy TV golf because it doesn't have a very large audience, but it may be the right place for you to have your spot.\* What we do in our target integrated strategies is evaluate all forms of media and then begin to look at the appropriate cross-applications of those forms of media on the basis of who the target is, and then look at our ability to do that."

...listen to  
WAVE music...

...win \$1,000!

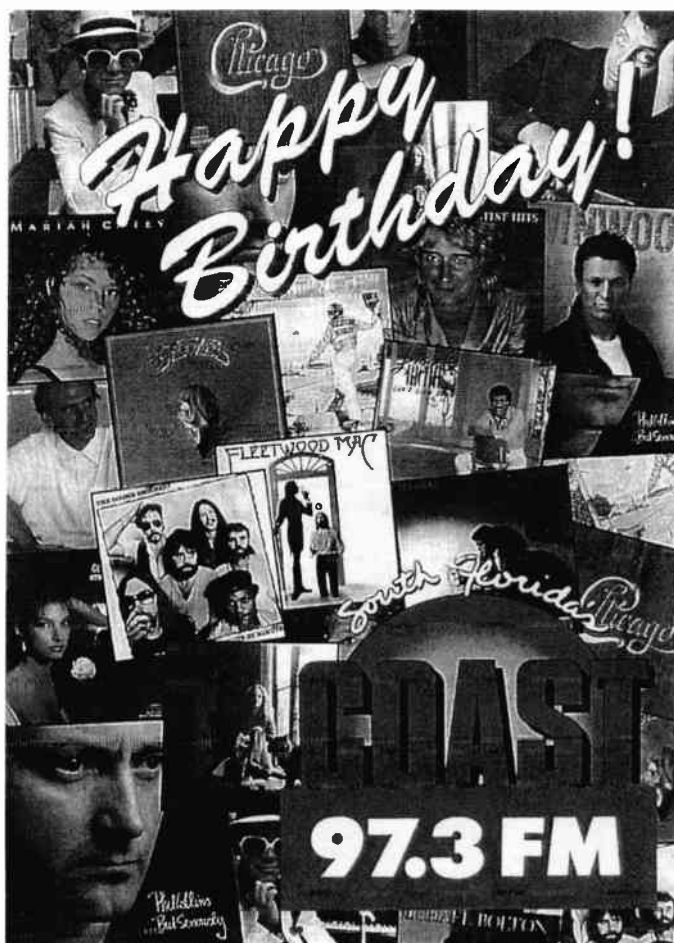
THE WAVE

107.3

SMOOTH JAZZ • WNWV

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Direct mail is suitable for stations of all formats. *Reprinted with permission from Broadcast Direct Marketing.*



Thompson cites the New York market as an example of how this process works. "In a market that has 15 million people you'd be pretty hard-pressed to market a radio station today just by doing television. What you might do is say *Okay, I'm going to mail 600 or 700 thousand pieces of direct mail*. In New York, you've got 7 million households. I'm going to find the best 10 percent of that population by households that can possibly look at using my product. Interestingly enough, my radio station will probably come 10% of the market. So we're matching those goals with the come goals of the radio station. Then, what we're also doing is saying *Instead of buying all of the television options that are available in New York, what I may do is buy some local access on cable that has appropriate types of programming that I've learned my audience really watches and enjoys*. Then I'll take the rest of the dollars I have left over and put my outdoor into the areas I know my audience uses to get to work. I've taken what would have cost me millions of dollars and I've put it into about a million dollar budget."

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## Relationship Marketing: The Gathering by Dwight Douglas

Radio people are sometimes afraid of their most important customers. We call them groupies, contest pigs and weirdos. They become so involved with the radio station, they want to have a relationship. It's time we understand how to have a relationship with the audience.

When I go to a Scottish festival, I, of course, dress in full regalia. Yes, I wear a kilt. One time on the way to one such gathering, I had to stop at a convenience store to get some film. The place stopped. The man behind the counter said, "Going to a Halloween party?" I said, "Yes," and clicked my heels.

I get the same reaction when I dress up for a baseball or football game. Fans are trying to say I like this when they outwardly show their loyalty. In radio, thousands of fans come in contact with a successful station every month and the station usually does nothing to bond or solidify the relationship.

Database marketing is only a beginning. Something must occur to complete the circle. Since the first of the year I've received seven different

pieces of mail from the Atlanta Braves. Not bad, 60 days and they already have all my money. It's the relationship beyond the sale that's most important.

Skip Finley of WKYS sent me a great article written by Stan Rapp and Thomas L. Collins that suggests we sell and socialize with our members. Their new book *Beyond Maxi Marketing: The New Power of Caring and Daring* (McGraw-Hill) is on my short list. From roadside rest stops in France where Nestle gives away 600,000 baby meals, to Toyota sending all their German Lexus LS 400 owners a bottle of Beaujolais, to Harley Davidson's Harley Owners Group, companies around the world have begun to have relationships with their customers.

The one area of my business that I personally regret is that the travel is so time consuming. It is difficult to have the kind of relationship I truly want to have with most of the people I consult. But caring about your customers isn't enough, you've got to bring them together in a gathering.

A Rock memorabilia show, a world's largest garage sale, a bake-off, chili cook-off, a car show, etc., are all possibilities of bringing your listeners together. KSEG/The Eagle in Sacramento has always done listener advisory sessions. Make them big parties. Get the fannage to assemble and watch the enthusiasm flow.

Churches have done this for years. Even my subdivision has parties and outings outside of the business meetings. Do you have a listener's club? Annual appreciation party? Do you send your listeners a birthday card? Do you have a database? You can't have a relationship with another person without asking for his or her phone number and knowing their name. Get going!

Why not have a computer in the studio so when a listener calls and says, "Hi, this is Linda Johnson," your DJ could say, "Oh Linda, the Led Zeppelin freak from Dunwoody." She'll be amazed that you remembered and you'll have a listener for life.

Technology is great and artificial intelligence may not be biodegradable, but real relationships with real people still mean something. When a PD tells me he knows his audience, I'm going to ask, "How well?" I'm going to probe, "Have you had a gathering? Do you have a relationship with each listener? Do you have colors and stickers and costumes for your fans to wear?" The aim here is not to create new sociological forces, but to make more money. Relationships are valuable.

*Reprinted with permission from B/D & A. This article appeared in The Approach, Volume VII, Issue 5/March 7, 1994.*

## The Internet

In recent years the Internet has probably become one of the hottest marketing tools for many radio stations. Radio Program Directors are all fired up about the Internet and what it potentially can do for radio says Leslie Fram, PD of WNNX (99X) in Atlanta. "I think people are still trying to figure out how they can make money using their Web sites. We really want to look at getting our Web site right. It looks good, but it could be better. We're exploring doing more live cybercast concerts on the Web site, which you're going to have to do because there are so many people who have computers at home. You can't ignore that anymore. We have so many people who tell us they listen to our morning show at work on their computers--which is exciting! We do a contest on the show where we ask for people to call us in other cities. Immediately we'll get phone calls from all over the United States, and from London and Canada so we want to do more with the Web site. We'd like to do some cybercasting, contesting, and sell our merchandise through our site. Anything we can do on the air we want to be able to do on the Internet. That's a big focus for us right now."

Kevin Vargas says KISS's Web site has become an extension of the radio station. "It's the encyclopedia of KISS. There's not a thing you can't find out about the radio station on our Web site. Yet it also has entertainment value and interactive stuff so that our listeners will return to it. We use it to enhance our product. It's another arm of the brand of KISS."

Curtiss Johnson is emphatic that any station Web site should be a visual interface with the radio station. "Hopefully, the Web site on a visual basis reflects the image that you're trying to portray of your radio station. It's a way to expound on different features. It's a way to highlight your disc jockeys and make them more visible. You can put their pictures on there. People always want to see what the faces look like behind the voices. You can also put your DJs' bios up there. Web sites can also be another source for information. Your listeners can check in for concert information. You can also do other contesting that compliments what you are doing on the air or that drives listenership to your radio station from the Web site. Say you have a certain allotment of tickets to a big concert coming up. Within one of the disc jockey's pages or in the promotion section of your site you can say *For you Internet users only, we're going to play X song by this artist during these particular hours. When you hear that song, call up the radio station, and we'll give away those tickets.* It's only for Internet users, which means you make no mention of the contest on the air. Then they feel special about

using the Web site. They know things that only they're privy to. They tend to come back to see what else you have to offer. It generates new listeners, and hopefully generates listeners back into the radio station. Other contesting you can do--which we do quite a bit--is sign listeners up for our Loyal Listener Club. Every tenth person that signs up we may send them a t-shirt or something like that. We also have files that you can download. Some of them might be screen savers from different artists. Others might be a bit map of the radio station's logo that can be a screen saver."

Web sites are also excellent sources to use to market station merchandise according to Jo Robinson, Assistant Program Director of WRCX in Chicago. "We market t-shirts, hats, music CDs. We sell tons of this stuff through our Web site."

Robinson adds that stations don't need to limit themselves to just one Web site for their radio station. "Our morning show's got a Web site and our afternoon drive guy's got a Web site in addition to our station Web site."

KCEE's Bob Lee, who programs an Adult Standards formatted radio station, says his station hasn't put together a Web site yet for a variety of reasons. "Our philosophy is that if you're going to do them then you have to do them right. You need to staff a Web page to make it effective. You can't just plug it in and forget about it because what happens if it gets an awful lot of hits, but there's no returns because there's nothing there to make it worth returning to. Also, probably our audience, more than any other audience, doesn't have computers. I have seen some stuff that indicates that people 45-55 are the people who will probably be buying computers over the next 5 or 10 years as they become more financially independent when the kids get out of the house and are on their own. Both adults will still be working so they'll have money to spend on toys."

John Sebastian explains that stations who target younger audiences are more likely to use the Internet than stations who target older demographics. "It makes sense right now that younger demo formats use the Internet more because, based on the statistics I've seen for the Internet so far, is that it's still dominated by 15-24 year-olds. We're going for 25-54 year olds so we're not on the Internet yet. But we probably will be eventually."

There's no question but that technology in radio--such as the Internet--is here to stay. However, Kevin Vargas does offer one caution. "Technology for technology's sake does not necessarily mean a better product because radio's all about human emotion. It's about touching people. It's about reaching out and pushing a button and connecting with your audience. Machines don't connect with people. They're just the vehicle in which you can communicate. Bottom-line, radio is still about communication. So,

technology is good, but I think it starts with the people who are using it. Our job is still flipping on that microphone and communicating."

## Practical Programming Assignments

1. You are a brand new rock station, WZTR, in Atlanta. Your target audience is males between the ages of 18 and 34. Your chief competitor is FM 104, a heritage station that has been rocking Atlanta for the last 20 years. FM 104 also has a target audience of men 18-34. Their approach is mainstream, neither too wild nor too conservative. Musically, FM 104 leans more Classic Rock. For the last 6 years, FM 104 has been #1 in the ratings every book. Based on what you already know about Atlanta, what kind of image are you going to create for your radio station in terms of the music, image liners, air talent, and promotions that will:
  1. Make an impact on the Atlanta market.
  2. Make a significant erosion into FM 104's ratings in 2 books.
2. Pick a radio station in your market (you can also address this assignment to the campus radio station) and write 3 image liners for the station. Explain why you feel these image liners are appropriate for the station.
3. Design a promotion and a marketing campaign for a station in your market or the campus radio station. Explain why this promotion and the marketing campaign are appropriate for the station and its target audience. What is the listener benefit to the promotion? What listener benefit is stressed in the marketing campaign?

# **Programming and the Competition**

## **Chapter Objectives**

**At the end of this chapter students will be able to:**

1. Describe a competitive market situation.
2. List and describe the breakdowns used by Arbitron to rate radio stations.
3. Explain how Arbitron ratings affect radio stations.
4. Describe what PDs look for when examining ratings reports.
5. Explain the role of counter-programming in the programming process.
6. Describe the function of promotions and marketing in a competitive situation.
7. Demonstrate understanding of the chapter's main concepts by completing the Practical Programming Case Studies assignments at the end of the chapter.

# Chapter 7

## Glossary of Radio Terms

**Rep Companies:**

Organization whose primary purpose is to solicit national advertising agencies to make commercial time buys on the radio stations they represent.

**The Book:**

Ratings research report for a radio market.

**Metro Survey**

**Area (MSA):**

Corresponds with the federal government's Office of Management and Budget's Metropolitan Statistical Area.

**Total Survey**

**Area (TSA):**

Geographic area that includes the Metro Survey Area and possible additional surrounding counties.

**Average**

**Quarter**

**Hour (AQH):**

The estimated average number of people who are listening to a radio station for a minimum of 5 minutes during any given quarter hour.

**Cume Persons:**

The estimated number of different people who are tuning into a radio station for at least 5 minutes during a quarter hour within a day part..

**Cume Rating:**

The estimated number of Cume Persons expressed as a percentage of the population.

**Time Spent**

**Listening (TSL):**

The number of quarter hours a listener spends with a radio station.

**Share:**

Average Quarter Hour Persons estimate of a station expressed as a percentage of the Metro Total Average Quarter Hour Persons estimate within a given day part.

**Public Service**

**Announcement**

**(PSA):**

Short announcement of an event for a non-profit organization that is either read live or recorded for later air play.

# 7

## Programming and the Competition

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### Radio War Games

The fierce competition that exists between radio stations has long been likened to a battle for domination in a radio market. It's not uncommon for radio stations to regard their competitors as the "enemy" who must be conquered at all costs. Programming consultant Lee Abrams, who's been named *Radio and Records* "Most Influential Programmer" and is listed as one of *Newsweek* magazine's "Top 100 Cultural Elite," believes, if anything, radio is even more competitive today. "It's a different kind of competition. Before, it was guys going to the competition's radio station and rummaging through their dumpster at 3 o'clock in the morning to find a memo to see what they were going to do the next week. There was more of a cut-throat *Let's Kill!* sort of attitude. Now I think it's more of a marketing thing. *We're going to spend more money on television and more money on billboards than other people.*"

Although the skirmishes between stations are usually of a friendly nature, there have been times when individual battles have turned downright hostile. In these cases, the animosity can sometimes turn into unprofessional behavior that can have serious repercussions on one or both stations. In one such instance, a morning personality in the midwest called in law enforcement after receiving numerous life-threatening faxes from the morning team of the competing radio station. In addition to the threats, the faxes also detailed embarrassing circumstances from the personality's past, and held them up for ridicule. Some of this information was also broadcast on the competitor's morning show. The resulting publicity stemming from the incident had a negative impact on both radio stations.

Of course, shock jocks such as Infinity Broadcasting's Howard Stern, Rush Limbaugh, Mancow Muller of WRCX in Chicago, and KROQ/Los Angeles's Kevin and the Bean have been known to carry out personal battles on the air, slinging insults at their competitors as well as critics of their shows. In these cases, although the publicity may have seemed negative on

the surface, it can also be positive for the radio stations involved. The old adage *any publicity is good publicity* is the key here because *any* publicity heightens awareness of the personalities and their radio stations.

Jo Robinson, Assistant Program Director of WRCX in Chicago, the biggest Active Rock station in the country, calls the Howard Stern/Mancow Muller battle a "really weird situation" that seems to pay off for both of them. "They are completely at each other's throat, and always will be. As far as Stern and Mancow go, it's egos. Stern saying that 'Cow totally rips him off and 'Cow saying that Stern is an old, passe, not hip, thinks he's too-cool-for-school kind of guy. It's words and it's theater of the mind. They both promote the heck out of each other when they do this so I don't know if it's good, bad or indifferent. But it also enables each of their constituencies to be able to have a passion for their leaders. So, in other words, 'Cow has got his "Mancow Militia," and they hate Howard Stern. Howard has got his minions, and they hate Mancow. So they've each got enemies that they can absolutely hate and they can claw and scratch at them. And in the end they (Stern and Mancow) both make a ton of money so neither one is losing."

Not all stations engage in open warfare with their competitors, especially those who target older demographics. Adult-formatted stations may view on-air antics as a turn-off for their listening audiences. These stations rely on solid programming, creative promotions and wide-spread marketing campaigns to get the word out to potential listeners. This doesn't mean they are less competitive than other radio stations. It simply means that their *approach* to winning the ratings war follows a different strategic battle-plan. The end goal is the same for all stations--to grab as large a portion of the targeted listening audience as possible.

Stations spend a great deal of time and money planning on how they're going to dominate their slice of the market. All factors must be considered--from the on-air programming, the personalities who present that programming, and the promotional events and contests the station conducts during the ratings periods to the outside marketing the station uses to cement their image and awareness in the community. Some stations do a better job of presenting the overall picture than others, which is why some stations consistently stay on top through multiple ratings periods.

Bob Lee, who's been a programmer in both radio and TV, cites his current competitive situation in Tucson, Arizona, as an interesting case study of stations striving for market domination. "Tucson has nearly 30 radio stations competing for 800,000 people. A market with over half a million listeners and 30 radio stations is over-signalled. There are three new stations in the top 10 in this market that weren't even on the air 3 years ago. That

means 3 other top 10 stations had to move some place. Fortunately, our audience is a loyal audience. They support us. They come to events. They tell their friends. When somebody new comes into the market we look at what they're doing, and then decide whether or not we need to worry about them."

Jo Robinson says getting WRCX to the top of the ratings heap was an uphill battle that required a great deal of strategic planning when the station first hit the airwaves with its present format several years ago. "We sat around and said *Okay, where do we want to go with this? What do we want to do?* There was a Classic Rock station and a very strong, powerful Alternative station in the market. And there was an amazing 25-year heritage AAA station in the market--WXRT. And we said *What battle do we want to fight first? How are we going to do that?* So we got the most powerful morning show that we could possibly think of--Mancow Muller and his Morning Madhouse. They hit the ground running, and were in the top 4 in ages 18 to dead in Chicago within the first 6 months--which is just frightening for that to happen to someone who just flipped formats. Then we started a very long uphill battle with record companies for co-promotions on concerts saying *Hi! We're here!* Dave (WRCX PD) had been a Classic Rock programmer his entire career so he wasn't used to dealing with record labels. He didn't know any managers of any bands. He had no contacts or credibility with the local promoter here in Chicago. We were starting at ground zero, and the only place we could go was up. It was really, really tough. So Dave said to me *You deal with all the record labels because they know you.* And he concentrated on hiring the rest of the staff, and getting a sales staff together. Four or five months later the dust settled a little bit because all the pieces were pretty much in place. We were starting to sound good. We were playing new music, but we still weren't getting any recognition from the record labels. Every time a band came into town that we shared with the Alternative station they got the "Presents." They got all the tickets to give away, and the time buys from the promoter. They got all the record company attention, and we said *Okay. So what do we do now?* We've got a brilliant Promotion/Marketing Director who would not take "no" for an answer. We got this little guerrilla promotions staff together, and we sabotaged every show with bumper stickers, showing up with our van, and shining this thing called a "bat light." The Promotion Director at WLWQ in Columbus told me about the "bat light." It shines our logo and the band's logo onto the sides of buildings. We did whatever we could to get in the face of our competitor on the street and on the air. We said *Fine! If you're not going to give us any support promotion company and record company then*

*we'll "own" it (the concert) anyway. We don't need you.* We bought tickets. We did everything we could to make it our show, and ignored the fact that on the print ads and on the concert tickets it said "Jam Productions and Q101 present Band Z." Eventually, the ratings started coming in, and it was proven a couple of times that the Alternative station did not want to play a band that a record label really wanted them to play. Examples would be The Toadies, Space Hog, 7 Mary 3--those are 3 bands that we broke in Chicago because the Alternative station said *They* (meaning us) *can't break bands. We're going to prove this by not playing this band.* And we broke all 3 of them so the record companies started sitting up and taking notice. All we ever asked for was a level playing field. We were always really, really level-headed about the battles we fought and choosing the right battles to fight and not dropping records when we didn't get a "Presents" on a show. Not throwing hissy fits, but being very firm and showing our support. Also starting to contact band management. Faxing managers, heads of labels, local record reps every single time we added a record so they would know. When the ratings came out we faxed them that information as well. And now, at the end of the day, to be kicking the Alternative station's butt, to have already taken out one Classic Rock station in the market is a tremendous boost for us. It's also a confirmation that we're on the right track, and that good guys don't always finish last."

## Programming and the Ratings

The final outcome of the radio battle within a market is revealed when the ratings figures are released following a ratings measurement period. All radio markets are surveyed for listening habits either twice a year (spring, fall), or four times a year (spring, summer, fall, winter), depending on the size of the radio market. Currently there are more than 250 radio markets across the country ranging in size from small, medium, and large (major) markets. These markets are categorized based on the population of the urban center and surrounding communities.

Although there have been other independent companies who have surveyed radio markets in the past (such as Birch who has recently re-entered the ratings research arena), a company called Arbitron is the undisputed "king" of the ratings research companies. Arbitron, based out of the suburban Washington DC area, is used by radio stations, advertising agencies and Rep Companies\* in all radio markets.

Although the company is currently exploring alternative methods of surveying listening habits, Arbitron primarily collects data through the

distribution of diaries to randomly-selected sample households within a radio market. All individuals within the household who are 12 years of age and older (as long as no member of the household is employed by the media) records his or her listening habits in the diary over a period of seven days. The information that is collected in the diary, including the person's age, sex, residence, radio station(s) listened to during the seven day period, where listening occurred, and the times listening began and ended is then sent back to Arbitron to be compiled and analyzed along with the other diaries that are collected from the same radio market during the measurement period. Radio stations can also monitor their progress during the ratings period through a monthly research report called an Arbitrend. This rolling three-month average allows Program Directors to monitor their progress. However, Arbitrends are not always the most accurate reflection of the bigger picture that the Book represents. Monthly sample sizes and diary placement can affect the statistical reliability of an Arbitrend.

At the end of the measurement period, the final figures are released to the radio stations who subscribe to Arbitron in a report form that is commonly known in the industry as "The Book."\* Radio stations are then able to use these numbers to sell the radio station to commercial advertisers by demonstrating how their station can reach the consumers the advertiser is trying to target through a commercial advertising campaign. Only radio stations who subscribe to Arbitron are allowed to present these numbers to advertisers.

It is important to note that radio stations are not permitted to discuss Arbitron surveys with listeners nor are they allowed to encourage listeners to write down their station in an Arbitron diary over the air. To do this would encourage bias in the research findings and could result in the station being excluded from the final survey results. Some stations try to get around this through vague references in a broadcast image liner such as "WXYZ...Write it down!...The home of rock and roll!"

The process for compiling research findings is somewhat complicated, but the data that is collected by Arbitron is crucial to a radio station's survival in the marketplace. Program Directors as well as other station managers such as Sales Managers can examine the results and determine which statistical findings best demonstrate their station's achievement in a positive light for advertisers. Program Directors can also inspect the figures in a detailed hour-by-hour basis to conclude when the station is performing above, to, or below expectations as well as compare the station's ranking against other stations within the market. The PD may then decide to make programming adjustments if he or she feels such adjustments are necessary.

THURSDAY									
Time		Station	Place						
Start	Stop	Call letters or station name <i>Don't know? Use program name or dial setting.</i>	Check (✓) one		Check (✓) one				
			AM	FM	At Home	In a Car	At Work	Other Place	
1 Early Morning 5 AM to 10 AM									
2 Midday 10 AM to 3 PM									
3 Late Afternoon 3 PM to 7 PM									
4 Night 7 PM to 5 AM (Early Fri.)									

If you didn't hear a radio today, please check here. ☐

Sample page from an Arbitron diary that is filled out by listeners during ratings periods. *Reprinted with permission from The Arbitron Company.*

Arbitron surveys a radio market by breaking it down into three broad parameters. The first is called *Metro Survey Area (MSA)*,\* which corresponds to the federal government's Office of Management and Budget's Metropolitan Statistical Areas, Primary Metropolitan Statistical Areas or Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Areas, subject to exceptions dictated by historical industry usage or other marketing considerations.. *Total Survey Area (TSA)*\*, the second breakdown, is made up of the Metro Survey Area and may include additional counties. The final parameter, called the *Designated Market Area (DMA)*,\* lists Nielsen Media Research's (the company that surveys TV viewing and issues a ratings report) geographic market design which defines each television market exclusive of others based on measurable viewing patterns. The data collected within a Metro Survey Area, Total Survey Area, and Designated Market Area is then further broken down into several categories--*Average Quarter Hour Persons (AQH)*,\* *Cume Persons*,\* *Cume Rating*,\* *Time Spent Listening (TSL)*,\* and *Share*.\* These statistics reveal what kind of listening is taking place within the market.

*Average Quarter Hour Persons* discloses the average number of people who are listening to an individual radio station for at least five minutes during a particular daypart. This estimate is the average of the reported listening in the total number of quarter-hours the station was on the air during the reported daypart. Quarter hours are defined through the division of one hour into 4 equal 15-minute increments, meaning the top of the hour to 15 minutes after the hour, 15 minutes after the hour to the bottom of the hour, and so on. The listener must listen for a minimum of five minutes in a given quarter hour for the station to get credit for that quarter hour.

*Cume Persons* describes the number of *different* persons who are tuning into a radio station for at least five minutes in any given time period. The estimate is expressed in hundreds (00). This figure gives the PD an idea of what kind of exposure the radio station is getting within the market. The PD can then determine whether additional marketing needs to be done in the community to increase awareness.

*Time Spent Listening* tells a PD how long listeners are tuned in by counting up the number of quarter hours the listeners are spending with the radio station. This estimate is only reported in Metro Survey Area results. If listeners are staying for a long period of time this means they are probably satisfied with the programming they are hearing, or the station offers a fairly exclusive format choice. If the listeners are punching out of the station relatively quickly this could indicate that programming changes are needed if the PD wants to increase the length of time listeners are spending with the

radio station.

*Share* takes a look at the percentage of all radio listeners who are listening to the radio during a given time period, and compares this amount with the percentage of listeners of individual radio stations. In other-words, let's say that 100,000 people are listening to the radio (all radio stations) from 2:00 p.m. to 2:15 p.m. *Share* tells a station what percentage of that 100,000 figure is listening to their radio station. Again, this estimate is only reported for Metro Survey Area results.

*Cume Rating* compares the total population of the listening area with the percentage of that population that is actually listening to the radio during a given time period. Radio stations can then see what percentage of the total population of a particular demographic is listening to their station. For example, if City X has 20 thousand females between the ages of 18 and 34, it would be helpful to radio station WXYZ and its advertisers to know what percentage of that age demographic is listening to WXYZ during a particular time period.

The above data figures are displayed by age and sex breakdowns of the listeners as well as by various day-parts so that station personnel and advertisers can see who is actually listening to the radio station, when they are listening, and how long they are listening. Since radio stations and advertisers are targeting different audience demographics, interested parties can examine only those figures that are particularly relevant to their goals.

When examining the data from an Arbitron book, KZLA's John Sebastian likes to use a sports analogy when deciding whether or not his station is reaching its goals. "I think running a radio station is like running a basketball team. You need to not believe you're quite as good as the great ratings, and not quite as bad as the bad ratings indicate. You need to know that everything is kind of grey and in the middle. And don't let that throw you off too much in either direction. If you know your course, if you know your vision, you know what your potential is so you just stay with that. It's very nice when a nice trend comes in, and sometimes a bad trend is going to come in no matter what you do because of the idiosyncrasies of Arbitron. So you just try to stay the course unless it's radically different from what you had anticipated. Then you may need to go back to the drawing board."

## Up/Down Books

In the battle for a slice of the listenership in the radio market each station is trying to grab as large a portion as possible within a particular demographic cell. Each time a book comes out, the market "pie" is sliced a

little differently. Sometimes a station sees their listenership increase. Other times they may see a significant dip in their ratings, causing what KCEE/Tucson's Bob Lee calls "great fear and trepidation." Since most radio stations use their ratings to sell their station to commercial advertisers, the results of a book can affect how Program Directors program their station in the future. These figures can even lead to staff changes in on-air personnel or even for the Program Director himself.

Chuck Knight admits he used to lose a lot of sleep before a book came out, although, after 14 years as a programmer, he's managed to conquer his night-time fears. "By the time a book comes out the survey period had ended 30 days earlier so you have absolutely no control over it. You just do the best you can and hope for the best. There are swings (in ratings results). The industry now realizes that there are statistical inaccuracies in Arbitron. These days you're always in a ratings period. But in the past probably a lot of good people were let go during those times due to statistical inaccuracies. We have more knowledge today about how the measurement methodologies work. We have also learned within the industry that it really comes down to staking out your territory and claiming that territory. It used to be that you had to score big in 25-54 adults for the station to make money. That was the number one dollar demo--and it still is--but what has happened is that everybody through the fractionized world of radio programming pretty much has the same 25-54 number so it forces us to go beyond that 25-54 adult number and tell advertisers about our radio station when we're trying to sell commercial time to them. It forces the advertiser to ask about radio stations, too. *Are you a male or female 25-54 year-old radio station?* Star 104.5 is a female radio station. *Okay. Well, are you an upper or lower-end 25-54 year-old female radio station?* We happen to be the lower end 25-44 year-old female radio station. So, from that perspective, I think some good has come out of the ratings fiasco because everyone is niched out and doing their own thing. Philadelphia is a good example of that. There's very little format overlap. We're all doing something a little bit different from everyone else."

Greg Gillispie says the industry's recognition of Arbitron statistical fluctuations has changed the way radio stations and Arbitron look at ratings. "Everything is based on four-book averages now. Arbitron still puts in your actual scores for the current book, but then, right below those scores, they're now putting in a four-book average. I think it's important that when you deal with ratings and statistical reliability that you've got to look at a four-book average. That's your snap-shot of the year in most markets. That's how you can see where you are headed. I've seen radio stations go from a 6 share to a 3 share to a 9 share in 3 books. That's not real."

## Target Listener Trends

		Persons 12+																		
		Monday-Sunday 8AM-10AM				Monday-Friday 10AM-3PM				Monday-Friday 3PM-7PM				Monday-Friday 7PM-10PM						
		ADN (10)	Cume (10)	ADN %	ADN Spw	ADN (10)	Cume (10)	ADN %	ADN Spw	ADN (10)	Cume (10)	ADN %	ADN Spw	ADN (10)	Cume (10)	ADN %	ADN Spw			
VJR - AM																				
FA '96	184	7271	1.3	7.4	818	3878	2.2	9.4	584	3434	1.6	6.9	471	2577	1.3	6.2	201	7071	-5	6.0
SU '96	180	6036	1.1	6.2	757	3400	2.1	9.1	450	2978	1.2	5.0	380	1807	1.0	5.0	178	6520	-5	5.3
SP '96	428	7247	1.2	6.9	818	3879	2.2	9.4	515	3141	1.4	6.0	427	1366	1.2	5.6	202	7565	-6	6.2
VI '96	485	6934	1.2	7.5	1147	4143	2.5	10.6	626	3276	1.4	6.7	522	1603	1.4	5.7	205	7037	-6	6.2
4-Week	447	6841	1.2	7.0	827	3771	2.3	9.6	544	3207	1.3	6.0	491	1237	1.2	5.2	197	7081	-4	5.9
FA '95	183	6213	1.3	7.4	900	3559	2.5	10.4	635	3477	1.7	7.3	416	3034	1.1	5.5	144	1486	-4	4.6
VCOI-FM																				
FA '96	274	6159	7	4.4	411	3268	1.1	6.7	361	2809	1.0	4.2	257	1502	1.0	4.6	130	2122	-4	3.9
SU '96	386	6297	1.0	5.8	433	3153	1.2	5.2	259	2478	1.5	6.3	312	1027	1.4	6.6	170	2271	-5	5.1
SP '96	245	6279	7	3.9	380	3176	1.0	4.2	138	2996	9	3.0	307	3127	8	4.0	103	1849	-3	3.2
VI '96	258	5292	7	4.1	478	3091	1.2	5.5	352	2186	1.0	3.9	276	1856	8	3.5	108	1631	-3	3.3
4-Week	286	6019	8	4.4	420	3172	1.2	4.9	402	2843	1.1	4.9	347	1379	1.0	4.7	129	1971	-4	3.5
FA '95	263	5430	7	3.9	409	3138	1.2	5.4	308	2405	8	3.5	301	2616	8	4.0	111	1591	-3	2.9
WJZZ-FM																				
FA '96	55	1310	1	9	95	561	2	1.1	90	521	2	7	65	584	2	9	40	358	-1	1.2
SU '96	58	1265	2	9	77	501	2	9	85	581	2	1.0	84	572	2	9	45	404	-1	1.3
SP '96	56	1180	2	9	96	503	2	1.1	66	483	2	7	56	440	2	7	46	339	-1	1.4
VI '96	73	1586	2	1.1	98	736	2	1.1	86	569	2	7	109	627	2	1.4	68	492	-2	2.1
4-Week	60	1330	2	9	89	573	2	1.1	89	554	2	8	74	486	-1	1.0	60	712	-1	1.6
FA '95	53	1177	1	8	74	538	2	9	63	555	2	7	52	531	1	7	52	377	-1	1.4
WQDR-FM																				
FA '96	234	3648	-6	3.8	249	1652	7	2.8	326	1948	9	3.8	279	2100	8	3.7	182	1652	-5	5.5
SU '96	270	3120	8	4.1	296	1662	8	3.8	299	1882	11	4.4	319	2150	9	4.3	202	1541	-4	6.0
SP '96	233	3568	8	3.7	244	1846	7	2.8	313	1924	9	3.8	275	1982	8	3.6	180	1380	-5	5.8
VI '96	277	3735	8	4.4	271	1806	-7	3.1	326	1756	9	3.8	358	2124	1.0	4.6	239	1606	-7	7.3
4-Week	256	3874	-7	4.1	266	1740	-7	3.1	269	1902	-10	3.9	310	2091	-8	4.1	195	1616	-6	6.7
FA '95	349	1082	-1.0	5.6	404	2106	1.1	6.8	484	2168	1.3	5.5	398	2512	1.1	5.2	211	1756	-6	7.7
WYIC-FM																				
FA '96	402	5701	1.1	6.4	604	3015	1.6	6.9	666	3038	1.8	7.9	487	3149	1.3	6.2	192	2184	-5	5.8
SU '96	340	5436	1.1	6.2	591	3371	1.6	7.1	639	3473	1.7	7.1	449	3657	1.2	5.9	135	1795	-4	5.9
SP '96	342	5382	9	5.4	514	2802	1.4	5.9	506	2568	1.4	5.9	401	2875	1.1	5.2	192	1851	-5	5.8
VI '96	339	5072	9	5.3	542	2796	1.3	6.3	532	2375	1.3	5.9	419	2631	1.1	5.4	157	1765	-4	6.8
4-Week	337	5260	1.0	5.7	547	2801	1.6	6.4	560	2871	1.4	6.4	419	2864	1.2	5.5	184	1933	-5	6.4
FA '95	353	5118	1.0	5.6	568	2927	1.6	6.5	523	2505	1.4	6.0	430	2878	1.2	5.7	170	1956	-5	5.6
WQDR-FM																				
FA '96	379	6281	1.0	6.1	642	3508	1.7	7.3	527	2829	1.4	6.2	455	3462	1.2	6.0	123	1678	-3	3.7
SU '96	390	6681	1.1	6.2	591	3371	1.6	7.1	639	3473	1.7	7.1	449	3657	1.2	5.9	135	1795	-4	4.0
SP '96	375	6275	1.0	6.0	653	3294	1.8	7.5	581	2970	1.5	6.5	427	3296	1.2	5.6	118	1438	-3	3.6
VI '96	309	5895	8	4.9	366	2778	1.0	4.2	502	2500	1.4	5.6	400	3068	1.1	5.1	138	1622	-4	3.9
4-Week	342	6107	-1.0	6.4	518	3168	1.9	6.8	557	3011	1.5	6.4	437	3178	1.2	5.7	134	1933	-4	3.4
FA '95	252	4986	-7	4.0	273	2029	-7	3.1	428	2214	1.2	4.9	306	2604	-8	4.0	117	1425	-3	3.7
WDRH-AM																				
FA '96	97	1243	-3	1.6	83	408	-2	9	157	710	-4	1.8	100	546	-3	1.3	50	291	-1	1.5
SU '96	74	1192	-2	1.2	88	387	-2	8	115	587	-3	1.3	81	368	-2	1.1	27	245	-1	1.8
SP '96	71	886	-2	1.1	53	203	-1	8	119	479	-3	1.4	72	343	-2	9	47	286	-1	1.4
VI '96	86	1148	-2	1.4	70	423	-2	8	163	684	-4	1.8	66	475	-2	8	30	281	-1	9
4-Week	87	1099	-2	1.2	46	384	-2	8	138	610	-4	1.6	85	490	-2	1.0	39	272	-1	1.2
FA '95	82	1107	-2	1.3	87	355	-2	1.0	135	617	-4	1.5	85	555	-2	9	39	235	-1	1.0
WDRH-FM																				
FA '96	180	2599	-4	2.6	176	1147	-5	2.0	249	1306	-7	2.9	197	1435	-5	2.6	81	899	-2	2.4
SU '96	117	2076	-3	1.9	121	797	-3	1.5	195	1171	-5	2.1	156	1206	-4	2.1	53	561	-1	1.8
SP '96	130	2294	-4	2.1	132	1079	-4	1.5	193	1171	-5	2.2	168	1204	-5	2.2	89	786	-2	2.7
VI '96	154	2458	-4	2.4	188	1053	-5	2.0	234	1296	-6	2.6	194	1395	-5	2.5	79	875	-2	2.4
4-Week	147	2146	-4	2.2	180	1009	-4	1.4	217	1257	-6	2.5	179	1210	-5	2.4	74	781	-2	2.3
FA '95	140	2230	-4	2.2	153	929	-4	1.8	229	1239	-6	2.6	200	1333	-5	2.8	59	782	-2	1.9

\*\* Stations not reported the survey.

\* Listener estimates adjusted for reported broadcast schedule.

\* Station(s) changed call letters - see Page 12.

4-Week: Avg. of current and previous 3 surveys.  
1-Week: Avg. of most recent 3 surveys.

DETROIT

ARBITRON

15

FALL 1996

Sample page from an Arbitron survey report. Reprinted with permission from The Arbitron Company.

Does this mean Program Directors basically ignore what the ratings say since the figures may reflect a number of statistical inaccuracies? Not if you're a smart programmer says Curtiss Johnson, who feels that PDs need to take an in-depth look at what the numbers are saying--especially when the ratings aren't favorable. "You need to look at them (the numbers) closely and decide whether this is a trend that you need to address or if it's an anomaly that's going on with Arbitron. The more and more fractionalized radio markets tend to get, the more wobbles or up and down rises you'll see because listenership is getting pared down to such small fractions within formats and within radio stations. You can still see massive fluctuations sometimes. If it's been a trend for the last 3 or 4 months where you've seen a slow erosion of your audience then you need to look at that. You have to decide where the listenership is disappearing to. Which competitor is it going to? Is it Time Spent Listening that I'm losing? Or is it Cume that I'm losing? If it's Cume that you're losing maybe your radio station is very sick and the listeners have given up on it. They don't even want to tune in to your station anymore over a period of time to where you may have seen your Time Spent Listening start to erode. If that's the case then your radio station is very sick and you need to do something. If your Time Spent Listening is fairly stable but your Cume is starting to go down--meaning people are spending less time punching into your station--then you need to put some outside marketing into place and drive some of that Cume. Or start doing some contesting to get people to punch into your radio station. If it's Time Spent Listening then you need to look at what you're doing. Are you playing the right songs? Are you playing the right songs often enough? Or are you playing too many image songs that people are unfamiliar with? There are so many factors that you need to look at when it comes to reacting to up and down books. I just went through a situation where my fall book of 1995 was very bad. I knew it was coming because of my Arbitrend. You can track those as you go along, and you average 3 months in a row. So when you put on a new month, the third old month gets thrown out of the factor. You can look at the hard numbers of each individual month as they come in. So I knew I was going to have a very bad fall book because, during the first month of that fall book, I basically had the floor fall out of the radio station. October was the first month. The month before--September--I had 11,000 Average Persons per quarter hour listening to the radio station. In October, I looked at that same measurement and it went to 700. So, literally, I had lost 10,300 persons in one month. That just doesn't happen. You know that's a statistical error, but it's a statistical error that you end up having to live with because it's Arbitron. You live and die by the way Arbitron works. So you

hope for another month that's an equal wobble to the other side. One that's so incredible that you know it's not real, too. But you can look at those factors and say *Well, we had a bad ratings period, but it's because of the statistical problem that we had.* The more media that is used by people and the more radio stations that are in a given market, the more you're going to start to see fluctuations like that happen. It's a fact of life now until they can revamp the way radio stations are rated."

Bob Lee stresses that PDs need to look closely at the numbers even when their ratings are good. "You have to try and figure out what you did right. *Why* did the book go up? What happened? Anybody who's smart doesn't just look at their radio station. You need to look at the entire market and analyze what happened in the market. It's really critical. You can't just assume that you did something right. It may be that others were doing something wrong and you benefited. You also need to look at how the sampling was distributed. What was the return on the sampling? Do some zip code analysis and look at all those factors. Without being unkind, every market has certain kinds of people living in certain zip codes. Some are up-scale. Some are mid-scale. Some are down-scale. And some are off the map! You look at whether there's a tendency to shift heavy in one of the zip codes. That can make a difference. But if you have a down book then you can see what you did wrong. And if you can see that other stations like yours took a hit then you can say *Well, it was our turn to take a hit.* Arbitron has yet to get it right, but it's the only game in town as far as advertisers are concerned. It's the only thing they'll recognize. As a programming tool, you have to take Arbitron for what it is, and hope that managers and owners will do the same."

Greg Gillispie says he and his staff members have the same reaction to a book--good or bad. It is a reaction that is common within many radio stations around the country. "Basically we go out and drink--either to drown our sorrows or to celebrate our victory. I tend to think that in the overall scheme of things one book does not make or break a radio station."

John O'Dea agrees. "What's great about this company is that no one gets upset or goes through the roof if we have a down book or a down trend. It's just something we look at and see what happened. We'll look back at what we did and see what we could have done. Then we carry on. Steady as she goes, and she'll come back around."

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## Keeping Score or Having Fun

by Dwight Douglas

The human mind works best when it isolates the task at hand. I couldn't help but notice that when the Little League team I coach focuses on the score of the game, they don't play as well. The reaction of eight and nine year-olds to each inning's report card is similar to the way adults affect their performance when they are distracted by a score.

If a trend is one batter in an inning, a book is only one inning in a whole game. Winning the game is being successful during the entire contest. In radio, we sometimes focus on the result rather than permit ourselves the joy of being locked into a zone. That zone can lead to a better performance, and thus, greater achievement.

We've put such an emphasis on winning that sometimes we spend more time on the trophy than the training. Learning the basics and perfecting techniques aren't as much fun as pouring the Gatorade over the coach's head, but hard work has always been hard. For many, having fun is attached more to a score than to the sensation of **doing it right**.

In radio, we've become so wired to monthly statistics that we forget that our real purpose is producing **entertainment for the people**. As we all know, the weather, especially in the north, has been horrible this winter. This is all the more reason for radio to *put a smile on* and help the listeners *escape their boredom*. But really this is a good idea 365 days per year. This is how to get better ratings.

When we do score big ratings, there's nothing wrong with celebrating our victories, but we must also remember the overall goal takes more than a book to achieve. Just like my boys jumping up and down in the dugout in the third inning after going up six to three. We eventually lost the game 14 to 13. In our business, I'm concerned that some people can't balance the long and short-term enthusiasm levels. The imbalance can be a let down for the team.

Overreaction is an ailment. When the results of a 100 person sample call-out survey create an overly critical evaluation of performance, we get tight and defensive. We are guilty of chastising the batter for striking out. Pressure added to pressure begets choke. We must not lose our passion due to one trend, one survey or one fan yelling from the bleachers.

The Little Leaguers have a lot of pressure on them. They want to do well

for their parents. They want to win. They want to look good in their clean white uniforms. But all this doesn't matter unless they can execute the basics and **feel good about themselves**. Taking pressure off them will make them perform better. In practice, they're usually much better players. No pressure there.

As we watched the Buffalo Bills in the last four Super Bowls, it was clear that one or two opposing scores destroyed their hope. Many excellent teams of top players are eliminated in the playoffs because they lose mental concentration. Concentration without confidence is just as dangerous as over-focusing. It's more fun to just plunge in and enjoy the act.

I'm amazed when a sales person walks up to me at a station and points a finger in my face with, "What happened to our ratings?" If this is the approach they use with the consultant, I can't imagine what they give the PD every day. I admire the aggressiveness, but you can't do anything to change what **has happened**. You can only affect what is **about to happen**. And that's the fun part.

Adding pressure to someone's job is not motivational. Imagine if I walked up to the batter and screamed, "You've got to hit a home run!" In most cases, the batter won't. Not even a professional could handle that much pressure. Sometimes a sales person's daily water torture can add up to the same kind of pressure.

Ask yourself, "Am I keeping score or having fun?" You should be having fun. Remember, it's only baseball--I mean, **radio**.

*Reprinted with permission from B/D & A and McVay Media. This article appeared in The Approach, Volume VII, Issue 6/March 21, 1994.*

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## Counter-Programming

Counter-programming, as is the case in any battle, requires strategic planning. Program Directors must first determine whether any type of counter-programming against a competitor's promotion or programming feature is necessary, and then decide how to counter-attack. This requires careful analysis of the competitive situation as well as a great deal of creative brainstorming to decide the best course of action for the radio station to take. The last thing a PD wants to do is make his station appear to be a copycat of his competitor in the eyes of the listening audience by enacting a similar

programming strategy.

KRXQ's Curtiss Johnson says there are a number of factors programmers need to consider to determine whether any form of counter-programming would be effective. "When you think about counter-programming you need to decide whether what the competition is doing is going to have enough of an impact on their audience and your audience that you need to counter-act it. If they give away a bunch of cars does that mean you have to give away a bunch of cars? Or do you need to make fun of them for giving away a bunch of cars by doing a parody or something like that? There are various ways you can address and attack problems when you're reacting to somebody. You can take the direct route by saying on the air that we're better than the other station. Hopefully, if you're doing a good enough job of doing that *they* may react to what you're saying and address you on the air. This is especially effective if you're the underdog in the market. Suddenly the underdog is getting credibility because the big dog just paid attention to them."

This was a strategy chosen by WAZU in Dayton, Ohio, when they went on their air as a brand new Active Rock station. It's a well-known fact that radio listeners are usually turned off by commercials--especially those listeners of the Rock formats. WAZU had decided to position themselves in the market as a radio station that played more music than their direct competitor, WTUE, a station with a 20 year heritage in the market. WAZU's Program Director at that time asked his radio personalities to closely monitor WTUE while they were on their air. Whenever WTUE began playing a commercial stop set, WAZU would play a short recorded promo that advised radio listeners that no one played more rock and roll in Dayton than WAZU. The promo ended with an invitation from the PD. *If you don't believe me, go ahead and check out WTUE right now. We'll wait.* After a few seconds, the PD's voice returned saying *See? I told you. Nobody plays more rock and roll than the Big Wazoo!* The DJ then played a song popular with WAZU's listening audience. The ploy was designed so that when listeners tuned into WTUE they heard commercials. Upon their (hopeful) return to WAZU, they heard one of their favorite songs. The premiss behind the attack was to plant in listeners' minds the idea that WTUE played a whole lot of commercials while WAZU concentrated on playing music. It is likely this strategy had some payoff for WAZU since the station did enjoy competitive numbers with WTUE in the next Arbitron book. In fact, sources say during the first year of WAZU's existence, WTUE lost one million dollars in gross revenue.

WRXK/Ft. Myers' Susan Stone groans when the words "counter-

programming" are brought up, calling herself a big chicken when it comes to engaging in open warfare with another station. "I *hate* those situations! I can't *stand* them! We do verbally attack one of our competitors in the market. We do not do it via the jocks. We have produced elements that will attack the other station by name, but the jocks are never, ever, ever to open their mouths about it. We let the produced elements do the talking. I'm not even comfortable running those, but that's a programming rule. I understand why the PD feels we need to do it, so, of course, I execute it because that's what I need to do. I think what frustrated us the most is that this particular station was beating us and we couldn't understand why. They are an Arrow format--super wimpy Classic Rock. We're talking disc jockeys with the personality of a tree stump! We don't understand why this station is beating us. They're not promotionally active. Their music is boring. Their disc jockeys are boring. I think by attacking them verbally on the air what we're hoping to do is point out to the listeners *Look--this station says this song is Classic Rock*. And then we'll play a snippet of Kenny Loggins *Danger Zone*. Then we'll say *But we say this is Classic Rock*. And then we'll play Jimi Hendrix. Their format is so weird. You can hear *Danger Zone* into Billy Joel's *Allentown*, into Led Zeppelin's *Whole Lotta Love*. Cut me a break! So what we're trying to do is point out to the listeners that they (the competition) are geeks! We're saying *Do you really approve of what they're doing? They're saying this is Classic Rock, you guys. This is pop at best.*"

KRXQ's Curtiss Johnson stresses that how much attention a radio station should pay to its competitors depends upon the station's competitive situation in the market. "Are you an attacking radio station? (As was the case with WAZU) Are you the leading radio station? You always pay attention to what the competition is doing, but do you always *react* to what they're doing? That depends on whether you're leading the race or whether you're trying to overcome somebody."

Some PDs favor the philosophy that radio stations should behave as if they're the only radio station in the market. To them, competition simply doesn't exist. These programmers feel that to acknowledge another radio station in the market is to remind listeners that they have other choices. According to Greg Gillispie, "There's an old saying that says radio stations with 2 shares should act like they have a 20 share. Radio stations with 20 shares should act like they have a 2 share. In other words, stations at the bottom should act classy to get to the top. Stations at the top need to make sure they don't lose sight of their hunger and street sense."

Susan Stone says that's the philosophy she was taught in her early years of radio. "I was always taught to take the high road. Don't lower yourself to

attacking the competition. Don't lower yourself to respond to any attacks they may make on you. That was always drilled into my head. So, when I came here to WRXX and realized that this station does things differently, it was kind of a shock to me. I had to get used to it."

Other PDs, like John O'Dea, the programming brains behind Marconi Award recipient WINK 104 in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, feel that paying too much attention to the competition takes the PD's focus away from his or her own radio station. Former Star 104.5 PD Chuck Knight agrees. "We have control over our own destiny, but we have no control over what anyone else does. We think we're our own worst enemy and our own best enemy at the same time so we try to attack ourselves. We certainly can't be blind to what is going on in the market, but we have to concentrate on what is right for the listener of this radio station and not get caught up in reacting to what a competitor is doing. At Star 104.5 we counter-program by figuring out who the audience of this radio station is and what their wants, needs and desires are, and then we program to that. We don't program to other radio stations. We program to listeners."

John Sebastian, whose station, KZLA, is presenting quite a challenge to other radio stations in the Los Angeles market, agrees that while PDs should put most of the focus on their own stations, they still need to be aware of what other radio stations are doing--including stations of other formats. "If you've got a significant competitor that's got a similar size station, a similar size audience, and a similar size signal then you have to be knowledgeable about what they're doing. You have to be realistic that they're out there. That doesn't mean you have to copy them or care about everything they do. You still have to have your focus, your vision, and stick to that. We have 550,000 cume. The closest Country station has 85,000 cume. They really are a non-factor, comparatively speaking. The other Country stations have far less than that. Even though they won't like to hear me say this, I really think we are the only major Country station in the market, and that's the way I'm playing it. My competition is the Oldies station. It's The WAVE. It's KOST. It's KLOS. It's K-BIG. It's the top 5 stations in the market. That's who I'm going after."

Sebastian's battle in Los Angeles is particularly interesting in light of the fact that he once programmed Smooth Jazz/NAC formatted The WAVE, one of the stations he now considers to be a direct competitor to his current station, KZLA. Sebastian made LA broadcasting history during his tenure at The WAVE by taking the station from 13th place to 1st place in 25-54 year-old adults in less than a year. Sebastian now plans to do the same with KZLA. When asked how he felt about challenging a station he had helped

to create, Sebastian admitted that he didn't think about the situation often since he considers the two stations to be quite different. "We're not going to share a lot, but I am going to take some (of their audience) from them. They're off into their own thing, and we're very different. I would feel differently if I was coming in with another NAC station, but I can pretty much divorce myself from The WAVE because of the diversity."

Sebastian adds that *attitude* is the key to winning in any ratings war. "That's pretty much my philosophy in any situation. I come into a market--even if it's a competitive situation--I come in with the attitude, at least in my own head, that they're all going to chase *me*. I'm going to do my own thing, and they're all going to react. So I don't react to what other stations do. I really don't--and haven't for some time. I let *them* do the counter-programming. It's amazing how, with that attitude, that's how it always works. They start reacting to me. They start talking about *me* on the air while we pretend like they don't even exist. If you have that attitude then you infect your staff with that attitude, and it comes out over the air. There's something magical about the chemistry of behaving that way. It seems to work every time."

Kevin Vargas, PD of heritage rocker KISS in San Antonio, agrees. "As far as I'm concerned we are our best competition. Everyday, when we step into the control room, we're competing to be better than we were yesterday. You can't really control the competition. If you sit around worrying about the competition all the time you've got a problem. My motto has always been *Losers sit around afraid of being beaten. Winners sit around thinking of ways to do the beating.*"

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## Three Possible Conditions of a Radio Station

### by Greg Gillispie

As we begin the Spring book, it's good to reexamine your game plan. Does it fit your condition?

### B/D & A Virgin Game Plan

1. **Determine the market hole:** How good is the leader? What is not being done at all? Is your idea unique?

2. **Narrow attack to the unique listener benefit:** Can you make one statement that positions you in the customer's mind? Have you researched whether or not that benefit is important enough to make people switch stations?
3. **The logo:** Go after a logo that is highly memorable; transmit new, different, fresh. Use colors that aren't being used.
4. **Weaken the leader:** Hire away great jocks, PD, etc. Send us tapes of their strong players.
5. **Hand grenade under the door:** Hit them with something that has impact and bigness.
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7. **Guerilla warfare:** This is where you do something that the leader can't, such as talking bad about them on the air.
8. **Innovations:** You must find new and shiny ideas. Being new is good.
9. **Gut positioning:** Established stations who have more to lose tend to use science to be safe. New stations should make statements that expose their emotions. Be ardent, be passionate, make sure you are right.
10. **Visibility:** Go for the market as if nobody knows or cares. Do anything to get noticed, but don't clutter the air.

## **B/D & A Comeback Game Plan**

1. **Strengths and weaknesses:** Determine your perceived strengths and weaknesses. Determine your competitor's greatest weakness.
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3. **Make an attention statement:** Clearly identify your product benefits. Let the statement transmit freshness.
4. **Cleanse and burn dead wood:** Eliminate stale features. Reevaluate talent. Question the attitude--"It's always been done like that." Eliminate clutter.
5. **Modernize:** The logo. Bring some old things back and make them new. Throw out old things that feel old.

6. **Add technology:** In studio fax, phone system, data base.
7. **Hand-to-hand guerilla warfare:** Invade their remotes. Build the Trojan horse.
8. **Research:** Artist loyalty studies, jock value, new image.
9. **De-remote yourself:** Eliminate useless remotes (used car dealers).
10. **Commit, plant, water:** Don't react, play out your position. Be strong, give the rebuilding time and energy.

### **B/D & A Maximizer Game Plan**

1. **Total market needs:** Examine areas you can improve to be the only station for a broader demo. What can you do to be truly great?
2. **Cume power:** The bigger the cume, the quicker reaction you get. Protect your cume--even the strongest stations lose 10% to 12% of their cume in a year.
3. **Weak/strong parts:** Do not be seduced by your success. Be critical of your legends. Where can you improve, even smaller points?
4. **Leadership role:** Don't talk about the competition. Don't say you are number one.
5. **Luxury research:** Do research that gives you a real advantage, such as attitudinal or microscopic. Research features or subjects.
6. **Repositioning:** Reposition your competition by adding value to your product benefits rather than comparisons.
7. **Cut clutter:** Most successful stations collect useless things they really don't need. Be selective about promotions and charity tie-ins. Diet now and live longer.
8. **Remodeling:** Find space for creativity.
9. **Charity:** Raise money by doing fund raisers. Get the charity organization to provide manpower and advertising.
10. **Global visibility:** Remotes in malls at Christmas, TV shows, show us your logo, live TV spots around major events.

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## Competitive Promotions--On and Off-Air

Most radio stations employ a variety of techniques to promote themselves to radio listeners. These techniques range from hiring marketing firms to designing billboards, t-shirts, bumper stickers, and television commercials that portray the station's image and heighten awareness of the radio station in the market to contests and promotional events that stimulate listener interest. Some stations have large promotional budgets to carry out these activities. Others rely on simple, but creative, methods of gaining listeners through word-of-mouth. Some PDs call this programming with "street sense." Having a large promotional budget doesn't guarantee success. It's how the station is marketed and backing up the promises made in the marketing campaigns with solid, consistent programming that build audiences and keep existing listeners tuned in.

When designing marketing campaigns and dreaming up unusual promotions that add spice to the station's programming, Program and Promotions Directors must keep their listeners' interests and lifestyles in mind. Chuck Knight says a large portion of his audience consists of singles, which is why his station created the Star 104.5 Dateline, a telephone personal ads line that hooks up singles with similar interests. "We're trying to do things that interest all aspects of our audience. We realize there is great diversity within the profile of a Star 104.5 listener. There are married people and single people. One of the big hassles for our single listeners is how do you meet people today in this busy world? How do you ensure that those people are kind of like you? How do you ensure that those people have the same likes and dislikes? Quite often a radio station with its music and entertainment elements give people a feeling that there is something in common. That can be a starting point for a relationship. So I think there is some comfort in saying--*Hey! If you're into Mariah Carey and Whitney Houston, if you're into having fun, and if you're into the types of businesses that advertise on this station and would like to meet other people like you then one of the best places to find them is here rather than on a barstool.*"

Radio promotions vary according to the goals the radio station has for the promotion and the circumstances surrounding the promotional event. Kevin Vargas cites 3 criteria he uses when looking for promotions to run on KISS. "I want entertainment value. I prefer participatory promotions, and it has to be lifestyle oriented. Target audience? What are they into? What do they want to do? Don't do anything stupid or inappropriate for your audience. We found out that the 2 biggest hooks in San Antonio are cash and concert-related trips. We did some research that told us people don't want to win one

big prize. They want their share. Occasionally, we'll have this monstrous grand prize, but, for the most part, we try to make lots of people winners. For example, this spring we're giving away a hundred dollars guaranteed twice a day for a 90 day period. This time around our grand prize is a trip to Las Vegas and a thousand bucks to gamble. A missed opportunity that radio often doesn't take advantage of is that we can offer things that we in radio take for granted. When we do fly-away trips to concerts we always try to throw in a backstage pass. In radio we know how truly boring being backstage really is. It's not the glitz and glamour people expect, but to the average person who never gets a chance to go backstage it can be the fulfillment of a dream. So we try to offer prizes that you can't buy."

Most promotions are connected to a prize of some sort. Money, cars, dinners, concert tickets, trips, appliances, compact discs, amusement park tickets and movie passes are all popular giveaways with listening audiences. These prizes are obtained in numerous ways. Record companies may provide promotional concert tickets and compact discs to radio stations for giveaway. Sometimes airfare and hotel accommodations are also thrown in if the concert is taking place in a distant city. Advertising clients on the station may provide items in return for on-air mentions. For example, several years ago, KFMG in Albuquerque, New Mexico ran a successful promotion called "Rock 108 Takes You to the Movies" in conjunction with the Albuquerque 6 Drive-In Theater. The goal of the promotion was to encourage listeners to put Rock 108 bumper stickers on their cars so that awareness of the station would be heightened in the community. The 6-week promotion was simple, but effective. The first 108 cars that showed up at the theater on a designated day with Rock 108 bumper stickers on the car got an entire car-load of listeners in for free. As the weeks passed, the promotion's popularity increased to the point where nearby roads were clogged with traffic due to the large number of listeners who participated. Rock 108 and the Albuquerque Drive-In gained additional promotional value from the event when newspapers and TV stations ran stories on the traffic problems that resulted on the days the promotion was held.

WRCX/Chicago's Jo Robinson is enthusiastic about what she calls the greatest promotion her station has ever done. A promotion, she says, that cost the station zero money. "It was called "February Four-Play." Every day of the month we featured an artist of the day. When listeners heard 4 songs in a row from that artist the 10th caller would win the coolest things in the world! We teamed up with record labels to do this. That's why it didn't cost us anything. It paid off because our Winter ratings book was huge! Some examples of prizes we gave away to the 10th caller were things like

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## Keeping Score or Having Fun

by Dwight Douglas

The human mind works best when it isolates the task at hand. I couldn't help but notice that when the Little League team I coach focuses on the score of the game, they don't play as well. The reaction of eight and nine year-olds to each inning's report card is similar to the way adults affect their performance when they are distracted by a score.

If a 'trend is one batter in an inning, a book is only one inning in a whole game. Winning the game is being successful during the entire contest. In radio, we sometimes focus on the result rather than permit ourselves the joy of being locked into a zone. That zone can lead to a better performance, and thus, greater achievement.

We've put such an emphasis on winning that sometimes we spend more time on the trophy than the training. Learning the basics and perfecting techniques aren't as much fun as pouring the Gatorade over the coach's head, but hard work has always been hard. For many, having fun is attached more to a score than to the sensation of **doing it right**.

In radio, we've become so wired to monthly statistics that we forget that our real purpose is producing **entertainment for the people**. As we all know, the weather, especially in the north, has been horrible this winter. This is all the more reason for radio to *put a smile on* and help the listeners *escape their boredom*. But really this is a good idea 365 days per year. This is how to get better ratings.

When we do score big ratings, there's nothing wrong with celebrating our victories, but we must also remember the overall goal takes more than a book to achieve. Just like my boys jumping up and down in the dugout in the third inning after going up six to three. We eventually lost the game 14 to 13. In our business, I'm concerned that some people can't balance the long and short-term enthusiasm levels. The imbalance can be a let down for the team.

Overreaction is an ailment. When the results of a 100 person sample call-out survey create an overly critical evaluation of performance, we get tight and defensive. We are guilty of chastising the batter for striking out. Pressure added to pressure begets choke. We must not lose our passion due to one trend, one survey or one fan yelling from the bleachers.

The Little Leaguers have a lot of pressure on them. They want to do well

for their parents. They want to win. They want to look good in their clean white uniforms. But all this doesn't matter unless they can execute the basics and **feel good about themselves**. Taking pressure off them will make them perform better. In practice, they're usually much better players. No pressure there.

As we watched the Buffalo Bills in the last four Super Bowls, it was clear that one or two opposing scores destroyed their hope. Many excellent teams of top players are eliminated in the playoffs because they lose mental concentration. Concentration without confidence is just as dangerous as over-focusing. It's more fun to just plunge in and enjoy the act.

I'm amazed when a sales person walks up to me at a station and points a finger in my face with, "What happened to our ratings?" If this is the approach they use with the consultant, I can't imagine what they give the PD every day. I admire the aggressiveness, but you can't do anything to change what **has happened**. You can only affect what is **about to happen**. And that's the fun part.

Adding pressure to someone's job is not motivational. Imagine if I walked up to the batter and screamed, "You've got to hit a home run!" In most cases, the batter won't. Not even a professional could handle that much pressure. Sometimes a sales person's daily water torture can add up to the same kind of pressure.

Ask yourself, "Am I keeping score or having fun?" You should be having fun. Remember, it's only baseball--I mean, **radio**.

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## Counter-Programming

Counter-programming, as is the case in any battle, requires strategic planning. Program Directors must first determine whether any type of counter-programming against a competitor's promotion or programming feature is necessary, and then decide how to counter-attack. This requires careful analysis of the competitive situation as well as a great deal of creative brainstorming to decide the best course of action for the radio station to take. The last thing a PD wants to do is make his station appear to be a copycat of his competitor in the eyes of the listening audience by enacting a similar

programming strategy.

KRXQ's Curtiss Johnson says there are a number of factors programmers need to consider to determine whether any form of counter-programming would be effective. "When you think about counter-programming you need to decide whether what the competition is doing is going to have enough of an impact on their audience and your audience that you need to counter-act it. If they give away a bunch of cars does that mean you have to give away a bunch of cars? Or do you need to make fun of them for giving away a bunch of cars by doing a parody or something like that? There are various ways you can address and attack problems when you're reacting to somebody. You can take the direct route by saying on the air that we're better than the other station. Hopefully, if you're doing a good enough job of doing that *they* may react to what you're saying and address you on the air. This is especially effective if you're the underdog in the market. Suddenly the underdog is getting credibility because the big dog just paid attention to them."

This was a strategy chosen by WAZU in Dayton, Ohio, when they went on their air as a brand new Active Rock station. It's a well-known fact that radio listeners are usually turned off by commercials--especially those listeners of the Rock formats. WAZU had decided to position themselves in the market as a radio station that played more music than their direct competitor, WTUE, a station with a 20 year heritage in the market. WAZU's Program Director at that time asked his radio personalities to closely monitor WTUE while they were on their air. Whenever WTUE began playing a commercial stop set, WAZU would play a short recorded promo that advised radio listeners that no one played more rock and roll in Dayton than WAZU. The promo ended with an invitation from the PD. *If you don't believe me, go ahead and check out WTUE right now. We'll wait.* After a few seconds, the PD's voice returned saying *See? I told you. Nobody plays more rock and roll than the Big Wazoo!* The DJ then played a song popular with WAZU's listening audience. The ploy was designed so that when listeners tuned into WTUE they heard commercials. Upon their (hopeful) return to WAZU, they heard one of their favorite songs. The premiss behind the attack was to plant in listeners' minds the idea that WTUE played a whole lot of commercials while WAZU concentrated on playing music. It is likely this strategy had some payoff for WAZU since the station did enjoy competitive numbers with WTUE in the next Arbitron book. In fact, sources say during the first year of WAZU's existence, WTUE lost one million dollars in gross revenue.

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Other PDs, like John O'Dea, the programming brains behind Marconi Award recipient WINK 104 in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, feel that paying too much attention to the competition takes the PD's focus away from his or her own radio station. Former Star 104.5 PD Chuck Knight agrees. "We have control over our own destiny, but we have no control over what anyone else does. We think we're our own worst enemy and our own best enemy at the same time so we try to attack ourselves. We certainly can't be blind to what is going on in the market, but we have to concentrate on what is right for the listener of this radio station and not get caught up in reacting to what a competitor is doing. At Star 104.5 we counter-program by figuring out who the audience of this radio station is and what their wants, needs and desires are, and then we program to that. We don't program to other radio stations. We program to listeners."

John Sebastian, whose station, KZLA, is presenting quite a challenge to other radio stations in the Los Angeles market, agrees that while PDs should put most of the focus on their own stations, they still need to be aware of what other radio stations are doing--including stations of other formats. "If you've got a significant competitor that's got a similar size station, a similar size audience, and a similar size signal then you have to be knowledgeable about what they're doing. You have to be realistic that they're out there. That doesn't mean you have to copy them or care about everything they do. You still have to have your focus, your vision, and stick to that. We have 550,000 cume. The closest Country station has 85,000 cume. They really are a non-factor, comparatively speaking. The other Country stations have far less than that. Even though they won't like to hear me say this, I really think we are the only major Country station in the market, and that's the way I'm playing it. My competition is the Oldies station. It's The WAVE. It's KOST. It's KLOS. It's K-BIG. It's the top 5 stations in the market. That's who I'm going after."

Sebastian's battle in Los Angeles is particularly interesting in light of the fact that he once programmed Smooth Jazz/NAC formatted The WAVE, one of the stations he now considers to be a direct competitor to his current station, KZLA. Sebastian made LA broadcasting history during his tenure at The WAVE by taking the station from 13th place to 1st place in 25-54 year-old adults in less than a year. Sebastian now plans to do the same with KZLA. When asked how he felt about challenging a station he had helped

to create, Sebastian admitted that he didn't think about the situation often since he considers the two stations to be quite different. "We're not going to share a lot, but I am going to take some (of their audience) from them. They're off into their own thing, and we're very different. I would feel differently if I was coming in with another NAC station, but I can pretty much divorce myself from The WAVE because of the diversity."

Sebastian adds that *attitude* is the key to winning in any ratings war. "That's pretty much my philosophy in any situation. I come into a market--even if it's a competitive situation--I come in with the attitude, at least in my own head, that they're all going to chase *me*. I'm going to do my own thing, and they're all going to react. So I don't react to what other stations do. I really don't--and haven't for some time. I let *them* do the counter-programming. It's amazing how, with that attitude, that's how it always works. They start reacting to me. They start talking about *me* on the air while we pretend like they don't even exist. If you have that attitude then you infect your staff with that attitude, and it comes out over the air. There's something magical about the chemistry of behaving that way. It seems to work every time."

Kevin Vargas, PD of heritage rocker KISS in San Antonio, agrees. "As far as I'm concerned we are our best competition. Everyday, when we step into the control room, we're competing to be better than we were yesterday. You can't really control the competition. If you sit around worrying about the competition all the time you've got a problem. My motto has always been *Losers sit around afraid of being beaten. Winners sit around thinking of ways to do the beating.*"

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## Three Possible Conditions of a Radio Station

### by Greg Gillispie

As we begin the Spring book, it's good to reexamine your game plan. Does it fit your condition?

### B/D & A Virgin Game Plan

1. **Determine the market hole:** How good is the leader? What is not being done at all? Is your idea unique?

2. **Narrow attack to the unique listener benefit:** Can you make one statement that positions you in the customer's mind? Have you researched whether or not that benefit is important enough to make people switch stations?
3. **The logo:** Go after a logo that is highly memorable; transmit new, different, fresh. Use colors that aren't being used.
4. **Weaken the leader:** Hire away great jocks, PD, etc. Send us tapes of their strong players.
5. **Hand grenade under the door:** Hit them with something that has impact and bigness.
6. **Surprise the market:** Don't tip your hand.
7. **Guerilla warfare:** This is where you do something that the leader can't, such as talking bad about them on the air.
8. **Innovations:** You must find new and shiny ideas. Being new is good.
9. **Gut positioning:** Established stations who have more to lose tend to use science to be safe. New stations should make statements that expose their emotions. Be ardent, be passionate, make sure you are right.
10. **Visibility:** Go for the market as if nobody knows or cares. Do anything to get noticed, but don't clutter the air.

## **B/D & A Comeback Game Plan**

1. **Strengths and weaknesses:** Determine your perceived strengths and weaknesses. Determine your competitor's greatest weakness.
2. **Cume power:** A lower 12+ share with a healthy cume makes the comeback easier. Avoid a "we've fixed it" marketing approach when the cume is healthy. When cume is off, do research to see if the mistakes are irreversible. Don't advertise the station until the product is right.
3. **Make an attention statement:** Clearly identify your product benefits. Let the statement transmit freshness.
4. **Cleanse and burn dead wood:** Eliminate stale features. Reevaluate talent. Question the attitude--"It's always been done like that." Eliminate clutter.
5. **Modernize:** The logo. Bring some old things back and make them new. Throw out old things that feel old.

6. **Add technology:** In studio fax, phone system, data base.
7. **Hand-to-hand guerilla warfare:** Invade their remotes. Build the Trojan horse.
8. **Research:** Artist loyalty studies, jock value, new image.
9. **De-remote yourself:** Eliminate useless remotes (used car dealers).
10. **Commit, plant, water:** Don't react, play out your position. Be strong, give the rebuilding time and energy.

### **B/D & A Maximizer Game Plan**

1. **Total market needs:** Examine areas you can improve to be the only station for a broader demo. What can you do to be truly great?
2. **Cume power:** The bigger the cume, the quicker reaction you get. Protect your cume--even the strongest stations lose 10% to 12% of their cume in a year.
3. **Weak/strong parts:** Do not be seduced by your success. Be critical of your legends. Where can you improve, even smaller points?
4. **Leadership role:** Don't talk about the competition. Don't say you are number one.
5. **Luxury research:** Do research that gives you a real advantage, such as attitudinal or microscopic. Research features or subjects.
6. **Repositioning:** Reposition your competition by adding value to your product benefits rather than comparisons.
7. **Cut clutter:** Most successful stations collect useless things they really don't need. Be selective about promotions and charity tie-ins. Diet now and live longer.
8. **Remodeling:** Find space for creativity.
9. **Charity:** Raise money by doing fund raisers. Get the charity organization to provide manpower and advertising.
10. **Global visibility:** Remotes in malls at Christmas, TV shows, show us your logo, live TV spots around major events.

*Reprinted with permission from B/D & A and McVay Media. This article appeared in The Approach, Volume VII, Issue 7/April 4, 1994.*

## Competitive Promotions--On and Off-Air

Most radio stations employ a variety of techniques to promote themselves to radio listeners. These techniques range from hiring marketing firms to designing billboards, t-shirts, bumper stickers, and television commercials that portray the station's image and heighten awareness of the radio station in the market to contests and promotional events that stimulate listener interest. Some stations have large promotional budgets to carry out these activities. Others rely on simple, but creative, methods of gaining listeners through word-of-mouth. Some PDs call this programming with "street sense." Having a large promotional budget doesn't guarantee success. It's how the station is marketed and backing up the promises made in the marketing campaigns with solid, consistent programming that build audiences and keep existing listeners tuned in.

When designing marketing campaigns and dreaming up unusual promotions that add spice to the station's programming, Program and Promotions Directors must keep their listeners' interests and lifestyles in mind. Chuck Knight says a large portion of his audience consists of singles, which is why his station created the Star 104.5 Dateline, a telephone personal ads line that hooks up singles with similar interests. "We're trying to do things that interest all aspects of our audience. We realize there is great diversity within the profile of a Star 104.5 listener. There are married people and single people. One of the big hassles for our single listeners is how do you meet people today in this busy world? How do you ensure that those people are kind of like you? How do you ensure that those people have the same likes and dislikes? Quite often a radio station with its music and entertainment elements give people a feeling that there is something in common. That can be a starting point for a relationship. So I think there is some comfort in saying--*Hey! If you're into Mariah Carey and Whitney Houston, if you're into having fun, and if you're into the types of businesses that advertise on this station and would like to meet other people like you then one of the best places to find them is here rather than on a barstool.*"

Radio promotions vary according to the goals the radio station has for the promotion and the circumstances surrounding the promotional event. Kevin Vargas cites 3 criteria he uses when looking for promotions to run on KISS. "I want entertainment value. I prefer participatory promotions, and it has to be lifestyle oriented. Target audience? What are they into? What do they want to do? Don't do anything stupid or inappropriate for your audience. We found out that the 2 biggest hooks in San Antonio are cash and concert-related trips. We did some research that told us people don't want to win one

big prize. They want their share. Occasionally, we'll have this monstrous grand prize, but, for the most part, we try to make lots of people winners. For example, this spring we're giving away a hundred dollars guaranteed twice a day for a 90 day period. This time around our grand prize is a trip to Las Vegas and a thousand bucks to gamble. A missed opportunity that radio often doesn't take advantage of is that we can offer things that we in radio take for granted. When we do fly-away trips to concerts we always try to throw in a backstage pass. In radio we know how truly boring being backstage really is. It's not the glitz and glamour people expect, but to the average person who never gets a chance to go backstage it can be the fulfillment of a dream. So we try to offer prizes that you can't buy."

Most promotions are connected to a prize of some sort. Money, cars, dinners, concert tickets, trips, appliances, compact discs, amusement park tickets and movie passes are all popular giveaways with listening audiences. These prizes are obtained in numerous ways. Record companies may provide promotional concert tickets and compact discs to radio stations for giveaway. Sometimes airfare and hotel accommodations are also thrown in if the concert is taking place in a distant city. Advertising clients on the station may provide items in return for on-air mentions. For example, several years ago, KFMG in Albuquerque, New Mexico ran a successful promotion called "Rock 108 Takes You to the Movies" in conjunction with the Albuquerque 6 Drive-In Theater. The goal of the promotion was to encourage listeners to put Rock 108 bumper stickers on their cars so that awareness of the station would be heightened in the community. The 6-week promotion was simple, but effective. The first 108 cars that showed up at the theater on a designated day with Rock 108 bumper stickers on the car got an entire car-load of listeners in for free. As the weeks passed, the promotion's popularity increased to the point where nearby roads were clogged with traffic due to the large number of listeners who participated. Rock 108 and the Albuquerque Drive-In gained additional promotional value from the event when newspapers and TV stations ran stories on the traffic problems that resulted on the days the promotion was held.

WRCX/Chicago's Jo Robinson is enthusiastic about what she calls the greatest promotion her station has ever done. A promotion, she says, that cost the station zero money. "It was called "February Four-Play." Every day of the month we featured an artist of the day. When listeners heard 4 songs in a row from that artist the 10th caller would win the coolest things in the world! We teamed up with record labels to do this. That's why it didn't cost us anything. It paid off because our Winter ratings book was huge! Some examples of prizes we gave away to the 10th caller were things like

autographed guitars from Rush--which all 3 members of that band don't sign very much of anything, Led Zeppelin sent us an autographed personalized platinum album, 7 Mary 3 came to play acoustically at the winner's house, a trip to London to get a guitar lesson from Brian May of Queen--just the coolest things in the world! Also the chance to go on stage at a Metallica concert, video tape the band and then keep the video camera, going to a sound check for Ozzy Osbourne, and then eat dinner with the band. That was a trip for 2 to anywhere in the country. Nirvana gave us an autographed framed *In Utero* gold record with Cobain's autograph on it. This all happened for 28 days. It was spectacular! We had a blast talking about it on the air! Our jocks were so into it! So were the listeners! The easier the promotion, the more people feel they can participate in it and win. Listen for 4 songs and be caller 10. What could be more of a no-brainer? How many more people would like to be involved with that rather than a promotion where they have to do 2 back-flips and pick their nose before they can pick up the phone. We think promotions should be as easy as possible so that as many people as possible can participate."

Robinson cautions that radio stations need to begin planning promotions well advance. "We started putting the promotion together about 9 months ahead of time. We asked the labels for stuff. Having a good rapport with the labels is what made it happen. We didn't have to play records the record company wanted us to add. We didn't have to "pay" them by doing things like that. It wasn't a case of *Okay, we'll give you this trip to Seattle for the Pearl Jam concert if you add our baby band Hanson*. That was very cool, too--that the labels didn't expect anything from us to make this happen. They knew we appreciated it. It helps with the relationship, but it doesn't have to be something obvious."

How audience members win prizes varies. Listeners may be invited to be a certain caller to win or they may be required to show up at a certain location or perform a task in order to claim the prize. It's amazing what radio stations can get listeners to do to win prizes --from licking whipped cream off a dog to driving to work in the nude--sometimes for something as simple as a pair of tickets to a sold-out concert.

A station in York, Pennsylvania gained a great deal of national press coverage when their "Kiss the Car" contest extended beyond expectations. Listeners were registered to compete for the car--a Geo Prizm--by being caller number X whenever they were invited to call-in by the disc jockey. Those registered were told to show up at the car dealership where the contest was being held on a certain day. At the event, registered listeners were told they had to "kiss" the car by placing their lips against a portion of the car.

Those listeners who broke lip contact were disqualified from winning the prize. The listener who kept his or her lips against the car the longest would claim the prize. What nobody anticipated when planning the contest was the extremely competitive nature that would exist between the contestants. Relatives and friends showed up to help the competitors by feeding them through straws and seeing to their other comforts. As the days passed, more and more listeners dropped out until there were only 2 contestants left. When the days stretched into nearly 2 weeks, the station finally called a halt to the contest by promising prizes for both contestants.

The size of the prize isn't always the factor that makes a promotion unusual. Sometimes stations go for shock value by staging "Bunny Shoots" and "Bowling with Leprechauns" in hopes that listeners will misinterpret what is actually taking place. The stations who have held these holiday promotions have had listeners picket the events, believing that participants were shooting rabbits instead of targets that looked like rabbits or rolling Little People down bowling lanes to win a prize. Additional press coverage was gained when other media sources reported on the resulting controversy.

Radio stations may also take an existing holiday and add an interesting twist to make it more appealing to their audience. Promotions such as "Saint Panties Day" (handing out green underwear with the station's logo on Saint Patrick's Day), "Ground Hog Day" (giving away ground pork on Ground Hog's Day), "Dinner on the Mayflower" (moving van), and a "Turkey Drop" that parodies the incident where live turkeys were dropped out of an airplane on the TV show *WKRP in Cincinnati* (these radio stations drop paper or foam turkeys--not real ones!) have been successful for numerous stations around the country.

WAZU in Dayton, Ohio, once took a less traditional approach to Valentine's Day that set the station apart from their competitors. Instead of the usual prizes of dinners for 2, boxes of chocolate and flowers, WAZU gave away a dinner for 2 at a greasy-spoon diner, overnight accommodations at the sleaziest motel in town (complete with mirrored ceilings), and a gift certificate to a local sex shop as the grand prize. Since WAZU's listening audience was primarily made up of young males between the ages of 18 and 24, the promotion appealed to their sense of humor and was a huge success.

Linking promotions with charitable events is also popular among radio stations of all formats. Not only do stations gain a great deal of press coverage, they also bask in the knowledge that they are doing something worthwhile for their community. Since radio stations exist to serve the public, these events can be beneficial for everyone involved.

TODAY'S NEW COUNTRY  
**WIRK**  
*The Country* 107.9 FM

WIN:  
 TWO Brand New Fords!  
 Thousands of Dollars!

**SONG** *of the Day*



Listen,  
 watch & win  
**\$1,000 cash**  
 instantly & a  
 Brand New  
 Ford Mustang  
 or Ford  
 Windstar

**PBF25**

**FORD**

**TWO Brand New Fords will be given away, GUARANTEED!**

SONG OF THE DAY CALENDAR

Direct mail piece that includes a contest to give away a car. *Reprinted with permission from Broadcast Direct Marketing.*

John Sebastian says he prefers to involve KZLA in promotions that involve charities because he wants the station to give something valuable back to the community it serves. "In a few weeks, we'll be doing a big Saint Jude Telethon. A "Country Cares" type of promotion. We hope to raise several hundred thousand dollars for Saint Jude's Hospital. I like to do things of that nature rather than read Public Service Announcements on the air, which I think are fairly worthless. I like to do things that you can actually tangibly see work for the community."

Jo Robinson says WRCX also supports charities. "We do the usual charity auctions and that kind of thing. Our promotions are unlike any others in the country. We've got Pete Townshend coming in to play acoustically at *The House of Blues*. That's the only show he's doing like that while he's touring with The Who this year. That's a 100% charitable event."

KISS in San Antonio became promotionally involved with Habitat for Humanity several years ago, which has scored big dividends for both the station and the community. Kevin Vargas says the project was the brain-child of morning show host John Lisle. "John always wanted to be involved in Habitat. He owns a house, and believes in home ownership. A place where people can raise a family. There are a lot of people who are trying to make it, but who are just getting by. Those are the people targeted. Habitat is "not a hand-out, but a hand up." We became the first radio station to ever do a Habitat house through all levels. We not only did the fund raising, but also build it through the actual physical labor of our listeners and staff. The second house we did was built in a staggering 8 weeks! 8 Saturdays the entire house was constructed. Our listeners rally to our cry for help. They are a very loyal and large group with members in all levels of San Antonio's socio-economic levels. We are not a fly-by-night radio station that changes format every few years. KISS has been around for 26 years. We're a part of people's lifestyle. They grew up with KISS. When people ask me what kind of radio station we are I say we're a rock and roll station that is a reflection of San Antonio's lifestyle. When John Lisle gets on and asks for help (with Habitat) these people come crawling by the hundreds to help. That's how we do so many benchmark activities. With Habitat for Humanity, our Habitat house had more upgrades than any other Habitat house in San Antonio. Not because we could afford it or wanted it, but because people made the donations. Companies threw stuff at us. They upgraded floors, cabinets, fans, tubs--everything! Just to be a part of the KISS house. We were the first station to ever do it from a to z. Our slogan, which we use every year because it's the truth, is "Doing Our Share to Make San Antonio a Better Place to Live." We live here too. This is not a very high turn-over radio

station. There are a lot of people who would love to crack into this radio station. Historically, it's always been that way. People come here and never want to leave. There's a reason for that. San Antonio's a pretty cool town. KISS is a great radio station. This company does a great job of taking care of its people."

Of course, creativity--and questionable taste--can also come into play when planning charitable events. Recently, WXTB, a rock station in Tampa, toyed with the Marine's "Toys for Tots" campaign by staging a one-day promotion called "Toys for Tits." WXTB set up a tent in the parking lot of a local strip club, and invited listeners to drive into the tent with a toy to give to charity. Participants received a dance from a topless stripper in return. Those who gave money in addition to the toys received a personal lap dance. The money that was collected was given to a local battered women's shelter.

Radio stations may also try to come up with once-in-a-lifetime experiences for their listeners to win. It's not unusual for listeners to receive backstage passes to meet a popular band after a concert as a grand prize, but those Program Directors who enjoy a good working relationship with record companies may be able to swing a deal that goes beyond the usual. When WTPA in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, did a promotion involving a Robert Plant concert, the station was able to give away a grand prize where the winner actually flew with Robert Plant and the station's Program Director in Plant's private jet to the next concert location. Other brushes of stardom for listeners have included being a roadie for a day and singing on-stage with popular bands.

Whether its giving away prizes or raising money for charity, the main idea behind any promotion is to generate excitement about the station. Station management hopes listeners will talk about what's going on, and that the buzz created will convince new listeners to tune in to see what all the fuss is about. Also, getting listeners involved helps cement listener loyalty. If listeners are entertained by what's going on, chances are they'll stick around for a while.

## **Radio Smart...Advertisers Smarter?**

**By Greg Gillispie**

Has this happened to your radio station yet? A year ago, your station was the primary and sole sponsor for a major community event (either promotional or charity). This year, the event organizers inform you one of your competitors submitted a proposal to promote the event in conjunction with one or more of their multipoly partners and that you need to submit a proposal in order to be involved in what you thought was your annual event!

When you inquire as to why the organizers have suddenly and surprisingly opened the event to other proposals, they tell you they found that some stations would air the same number of promos you did last year on each of two or more stations. Quite simply, the event organizers are going to get two or three times the bang for their buck.

When you inquire about the bucks, they tell you it's the same as last year! What was once all yours is now going to get divided among two or three stations. And your competitor does not care whether the budget is the same as last year, because last year they did not get any of it!

In years past, this event drew thousands and generated tons of publicity for your station exclusively. You don't really want your multipoly partner sharing the glory after you've worked so hard to make this a major event. And you can bet your sales manager, who was counting on the advertising budget to make his/hers, is not thrilled about getting only half or even one third of what was all yours last year! Unless you give up a disproportionate number of promo avails or bring your sister station(s) to the party, it's not your event anymore. So what do you do?

Derick Pitts, WRXK/Ft. Myers Promotion Director, said, "We take it on an event-by-event basis. Our sister station is CHR, so some events provide better opportunities than others. The Pro Beach Volleyball tour draws a wide array of people, so it's easier for us to work together. The River and Blues Festival is more music-oriented, so our pitch is to associate our sister station with the food vendors and our station with the music. We are trying to include a three-year first right of refusal for event exclusivity in every agreement we make."

Bill Knight, WRRK/Pittsburgh Program Director, said, "If anything, having to share an event with your partner can demoralize your staff because their star power is diminished."

Mike Culcotta, KOMP/Las Vegas Program Director, used his sister station KXPT to block a direct competitor from becoming involved in a concert presentation. "We were able to effectively keep all business and promotional power in our own house. While we shared with our sister station, it was better than having to battle our direct competitor on the street."

J.C. Lunceford, KDVV/Topeka Program Director, indicated, "My policy has always been not to expose my listeners to other station's call letters; however, in this changing environment, I may have to re-examine that policy. If you do end up doing a co-promotion with your sister station, make sure you super serve your listeners at the event."

The new radio landscape is presenting new challenges and problems on a daily basis. In years past, no one would have considered sharing an exclusive event with another station. Now, it appears that is becoming a fact of life.

To maximize the event opportunities and your exposure in the community, you may have to make a sacrifice in your principles. However, that sacrifice may be more beneficial than allowing a competitive group to steal your thunder. Here are some tips:

1. If your partner station(s) are in a similar format classification as your station's, try to design your event coverage so there is little or no overlap. If the event is an all-day or multi-day event, split the coverage between the stations, trying to avoid simultaneous coverage.
2. If your partner station(s) are not in a similar format classification, try to design your event coverage along audience-appeal lines. For example, if the event is music oriented, but only one station has that music image, create other elements within the event that better suit your partner's audience lifestyle.
3. Investigate the potential of bringing other, non-media sponsors to the event to help offset the individual station revenue loss incurred due to the organizer's static advertising budget now split over multiple stations.
4. Make sure you optimize your station's presence and involvement in the event with strategically placed signs, booths, and correct lifestyle mini-events. Avoid slapping up banners next to your

partner's. Also, make sure you have plenty of merchandising items to put in your listeners' hands.

5. If there are on-stage opportunities, avoid putting personalities from each station on stage at the same time. Divide the time equally.

Let's face it, while advertisers want maximum exposure for their event, you want maximum exposure for your station. The advertisers are acutely aware of the advantages they can leverage in this era of multiopoly. Your listeners are not.

Whether you promote an event alone or with your partner(s), wave your banner proudly and do all you can to make your listeners feel good about supporting the event and your station.

*Reprinted with permission from B/D & A. This article appeared in The Approach, Volume X, Issue 6/March 31, 1997.*

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## **Practical Programming Case Studies**

### **Case Study #1**

You are a Modern Country music station. Your chief competitor, WDUC--"The Duck"--is doing an "Around the World in 80 Days" promotion. They are giving away eight 10-day trips to the following locations: Japan, Greece, England, Buenos Aires, Australia, a Kenyan safari, and Tahiti. You cannot afford to counter-program with a promotion of that magnitude. What are you going to do to counter-program that will convince listeners to stay with your station instead of tuning into "The Duck?"

### **Case Study #2**

You are an attacking Active Rock radio station--meaning, among the stations with formats similar to yours, your station is behind in the ratings. The morning show of your chief competitor has been making negative comments about your station on the air, claiming that you play too many commercials and that your air talent is lousy. Do you respond? If so--how?

### **Case Study #3**

Examine the Arbitron ratings report on page 206. Which radio station gained the most listeners? Which radio station lost the most listeners? Where did those listeners go? What trends do you perceive through your study of the rolling 4-book average of these stations?



# **Programming to a Target Audience**

## **Chapter Objectives**

**At the end of this chapter students will be able to:**

1. Describe the type of information stations gather about their listening audience.
2. Explain how listeners use radio.
3. List sources programmers use to keep their station in the public's eye.
4. Demonstrate understanding of the chapter's main concepts by completing the Practical Programming Assignments at the end of the chapter.

## Chapter 8

# Glossary of Radio Terms

<b>Morning Drive:</b>	The time slot between 5:30 a.m. and 10 a.m. Generally the most listened to time slot due to the morning commute.
<b>Legal ID:</b>	Station identification that must be stated at the top of every hour as required by the Federal Communications Commission. Call letters must be said next to the city of license to make it a legal ID.
<b>Remotes:</b>	Live broadcast that occurs in a location other than the radio station.

# 8

## Programming to a Target Audience

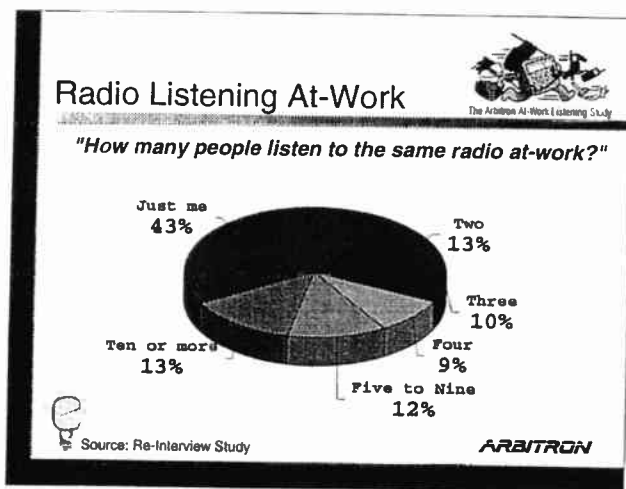
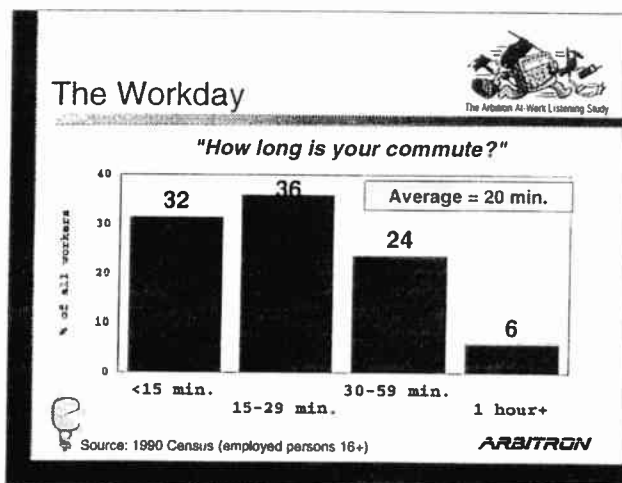
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### The Radio Listener

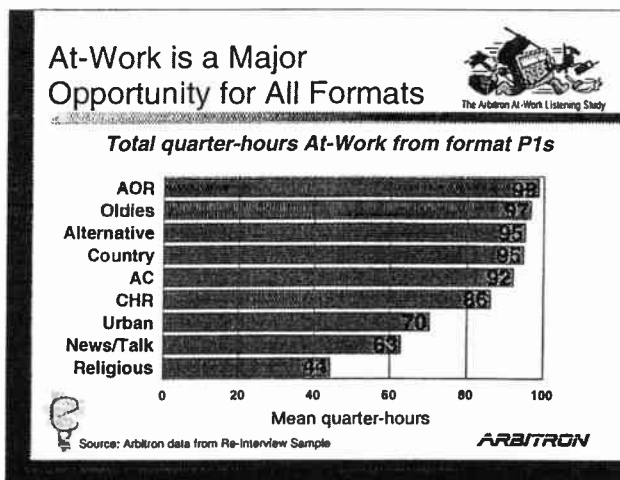
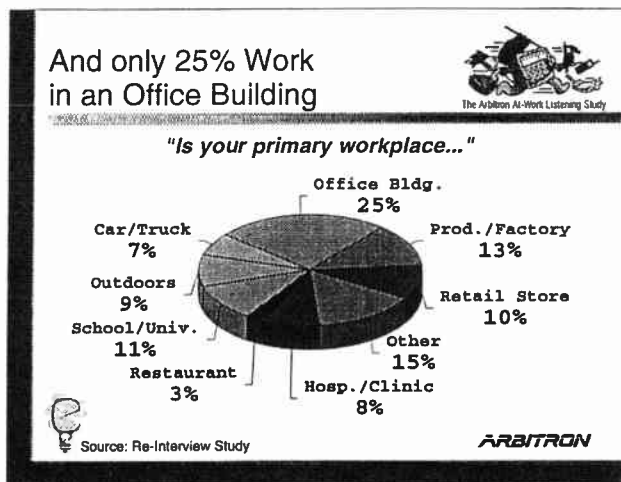
The radio listener is the final determiner in the programming process. Just like any consumer, radio listeners decide whether or not to buy into the programming philosophy of a radio station. This is evident through their listening habits--meaning station(s) selected and *Time Spent Listening*. It is important for Program Directors to keep in mind that typical radio listeners do not listen to the radio in the same way that radio staff members do. While radio employees tend to pay close attention to formatics and the overall presentation of the station's sound, radio listeners tend to use radio more as an information and entertainment source or simply as background noise.

Kevin Vargas, Program Director of KISS in San Antonio, believes many radio stations have been duped over the years by not realizing how real people use radio. "If people used radio the way we'd like to think they do then life would be tremendous. We'd all have great ratings because everybody would be listening. However, reality is that we are not the single most important thing in an average person's life. We need to be there for our listeners. We don't need to be shoving our agenda down their throats."

The challenge to PDs is to convince listeners that their station is the best choice to satisfy listener needs. Not always an easy task to accomplish according to Jo Robinson, Assistant Program Director of Chicago's Active Rock station, WRCX. "Radio is a very passive medium so it's really a challenge for programmers to try and incite passion from their listeners. People listen to the radio in the car. They rarely listen to it at home. Maybe if they're out working in the yard or something they might have it on, but even then they don't necessarily listen to it for the songs. If they want to hear a particular song they can always put on a CD."



The above graphs, taken from the Arbitron/Edison Media Research At Work Listening Study, demonstrate the power of listening on the job. *Reprinted with permission from Edison Media Research.*



The above graphs, taken from the Arbitron/Edison Media Research At Work Listening Study, demonstrate the power of listening on the job. *Reprinted with permission from Edison Media Research.*

Consultant Guy Zapoleon says another twist for PDs to consider--especially those who have been programming radio stations for a number of years--is that people's listening habits have changed over the last five or ten years. "People have more definitive tastes because they've been exposed to more different types of radio. The more defined radio stations are, the more people use them for specific mood services and specific music styles. Listeners say *When I want a dance station when I go out on Friday night I listen to WKTU* (New York). *When I'm angry I want to listen to K-Rock in New York because rock gives me a good release. When I want to relax or when I want a romantic evening I listen to Lite.* So I do think people use radio a little differently than they used to because I think their tastes are becoming more defined by exposure, which isn't always good. I think it might make them lazy about expanding their musical horizons."

Zapoleon explains that because listening habits have changed through the years radio has also undergone a metamorphosis. "Outside of Howard Stern--and you can get down on Howard for the content he uses, but at least he's creative--I don't think there are that many creative people out there. Musically, I don't think radio is adventurous anymore. 90 percent of radio is focused on trying to get 25-54 year old adults. And when you do that you really have to shave off a lot of the cutting edge sounds of radio stations."

Consultant Lee Abrams echoes Zapoleon's concerns. Abrams feels that because radio is overly concerned with appealing to the money-making demographics, radio has lost some of its show biz qualities. "It's funny, but it's become almost unfashionable. Not to listeners. They eat that stuff up. This is demonstrated by a lot of the morning shows and the few stations that still do show biz radio. Thinking beyond morning drive\* is real important. A lot of stations tend to have great morning shows. Then it's like there's an FCC law that says at 10:01 a.m. you have to get boring. Stations used to feel that every daypart was important. Now it's just *Well, we've got our morning show so everything's fine.* No, it's not fine. What about the other 20 hours? The morning show is critical, but there's more to life than mornings. People don't stop listening at 10 a.m.. Internally (in radio), it's a whole new spirit. A new attitude that is very straight-laced and very conservative. I think that's problematic."

Abrams feels part of the problem is that radio stations tend to treat their listeners as Arbitron numbers rather than fans. "People will say *No we don't! They're our listeners, and they're the greatest listeners in the world!* But really, when it gets right down to it, they really don't treat their listeners like fans. It's a spirit and an attitude that most stations don't have."

This is demonstrated, Abrams believes, by radio's conservative and

generic sound that can be heard in radio markets across the country. "There are so many things that radio stations have forgotten to do. I just did a presentation in Phoenix at a radio conference where I went through a list of things radio stations used to do. Little things like celebrating the city they're in. It's amazing! I remember when I was a kid in the sixties driving with the family from Chicago down to Florida. We'd drive through Indianapolis, Louisville, Nashville, Atlanta, and Jacksonville. All the stations played the same records, but you definitely knew which city you were in by listening to the station. You'd drive through Indianapolis and the stations there would have a certain character. You'd drive through Louisville and that station sounded different. Now, if I do that same drive, all the stations sound pretty identical. Rarely, outside of the Legal ID\* do you ever hear them mention their city or community? It's unbelievable! Radio has become very generic in that respect. Radio should really focus on their city. How to do that involves a lot of little things. Your bumper sticker? Put your city on there. When a new record comes out and you're a station in Dallas say *It's the Dallas premiere of whatever*. A lot of people live in cities who have families and they love to hear people telling them that this city is the greatest place on earth. A station in Cleveland used to do that--WMMS. If you walked into the wrong bar and bad-rapped Cleveland they'd kill you. A lot of that came from WMMS. That's why the *Rock and Roll Hall of Fame* is there. The radio station really started it. (With *Rolling Stone's* favorite radio station poll.) It became a religion. Support the WMMS Cleveland religion. Stuff the boxes! We're not going to be second to New York or LA! This is Cleveland and we are WMMS!"

KISS PD Kevin Vargas doesn't believe all radio stations follow the philosophy of turning off the creativity after the morning show, although he does agree that a lack of creativity can be a problem for some stations. However, Vargas also feels radio listeners are responsible for some of the conservatism that has crept into radio. "I think it's bad leadership and bad radio stations that turn off the personality at 10 a.m. You don't need to be zany and off-the-wall, but you do need to accept the fact that radio is an entertainment vehicle. Maybe the needs and expectations of listeners are different, but they don't just turn into unthinking zombies after 10 a.m. We've got 5 full-time people who all do things differently. Yes, maybe there is a problem with creativity in the industry as a whole. Maybe that's because of a lack of talent or a lack of leadership. We don't have that problem here at KISS. As for the magic being gone--this is a question for sociologists. What was the perception (of listeners) like years ago? People were open for new experiences. They were expanding. Free love! Express yourself!

Well, guess what! Radio is just a reflection of lifestyle. People are not that expressive anymore. They're quicker to hit the button because there are more options out there. This is the 90's. Things are different. Needs are different. People are different."

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## **Which Came First: The Hen, The Egg, Or the Chick?**

**by Greg Gillispie**

The other day a 42-year-old friend of mine asked me, "What's the deal with all the dude commercials these days?" My reply was, "What do you mean?" He said, "While I consider myself to be pretty hip, I haven't 'been there, seen it, done it' and I'm not a dude'."

It turns out that in the last six months or so more and more of the commercials he hears on his favorite station, which is Classic Rock, have the Generation X attitude. Most advertising agencies or advertisers hesitate to support any radio station targeted to any demo younger than 25-54, yet they have no problem trying to image their product with today's hippest lingo and attitude. This double standard presents a double problem.

As competition continues to force radio into serving smaller, more specific audiences, advertisers and agencies have forced radio into a "one-size-fits-all" time buy driven medium. More harm than good is being done when the copy and creative of an adult oriented product uses the dude attitude. While the ageing boomers want to feel eternally young, they want that youthful feeling on their terms, not those of today's kids. As these commercials continue to make media smart adults feel older and not as hip, the sales of the products they pitch will most likely decline with boomers. Most advertisers and agencies ignore the target with creative and blindly place the buy. Advertising styles usually run parallel with today's fads of colors, characters and communication symbols. TV tends to reflect a now-flash-bulb feeling, while radio develops the whole picture in greater detail for less cost.

There are 46 million Generation Xers that have billions of dollars to spend and loyalties to develop. Yet, most advertisers and agencies have the belief that only 25-54 year-olds make worthwhile consumer decisions. This belief is shortsighted. Agencies are ignoring a valuable consumer group and

preventing radio from fully serving them. The supply of 18-30 year radio stations is in direct proportion to advertiser demands.

As more and more boomers approach and pass 40, the less they can relate to today's youths' attitudes. And, as more and more Generation Xers have to turn away from radio for their entertainment, the less effective radio will be when Xers reach that magic 25-54 demo. If advertisers want to be more effective and think long term, they should get with it and match the 'tude with the dude!

*Reprinted with permission from B/D & A and McVay Media. This article appeared in The Approach, Volume VI, Issue 18/October 4, 1993.*

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## Getting Your Listeners Involved

Although radio listeners, for the most part, tend to be passive, it's important for radio stations to make listeners feel they are involved with the station through participation in promotional events, contests and interaction with station air personalities--whether this is at promotional events or on the request line. Not only does this help cement listener loyalty to a particular station, it also helps the station's Program Director keep in touch with listeners' perception of the radio station as well as help the PD predict future trends in his or her radio market.

Lee Abrams cites several methods Program Directors can use to increase listener involvement with their radio station. "Use the phones constantly. Not necessarily to give away things. Listeners are just happy to be on the air. Do more remotes.\* We (PDs) tend to think of remotes as something the sales department shoves down our throats, but remotes from the soundcheck of a concert are cool. Or create your own remote. Say *Hey! We need 10,000 people! We're going to be on the corner of so-and-so and Main Street broadcasting live. Come!* You'd be amazed. People will come. I think it's a lot of knowing who the audience is, and really giving them exactly what they want. An example might be The Loop in Chicago in 1979. We really had the market figured out. We knew the station's mission. We did about ten things. One, we knew the audience hated disco so we did disco demolitions in the park. We became gods to these people. Finally! Somebody stood up to the disco menace in the name of rock and roll! It was

a riot. People loved it. Also, since Chicago is kind of a tough blue-collar city we did the first graffiti logo, which looked like any underpass in the city. All the production was very Chicago. We knew that our listeners were TV junkies so we played lots of TV themes. Our audience was 18-34 year old males, and we knew that 18-34 year-old males liked girls so we had a spokeswoman named Lorali. She was a symbol of our station. She became very popular. She was on all of the TV spots and in all of the ads. As a result--and it really wasn't any one thing--the image of our station happened immediately. The relationship with the listeners was that The Loop wasn't just a radio station. It was a part of their lives. And it worked. We went from a 2 to a 7 share."

WRCX Assistant Program Director Jo Robinson says "hitting the streets" is one of the best ways to stay in touch with listeners. "We've got 20 interns here at any given time who are constantly on the streets talking to listeners. PDs need to go to shows. Read all the local rags. Stay in touch with the city and with the rest of the country. Talk to people. Don't make the job a 9 to 5 job. It's more like an 8:15 a.m. to 11 p.m. job. That's where the passion comes in. You can't get tired of your job."

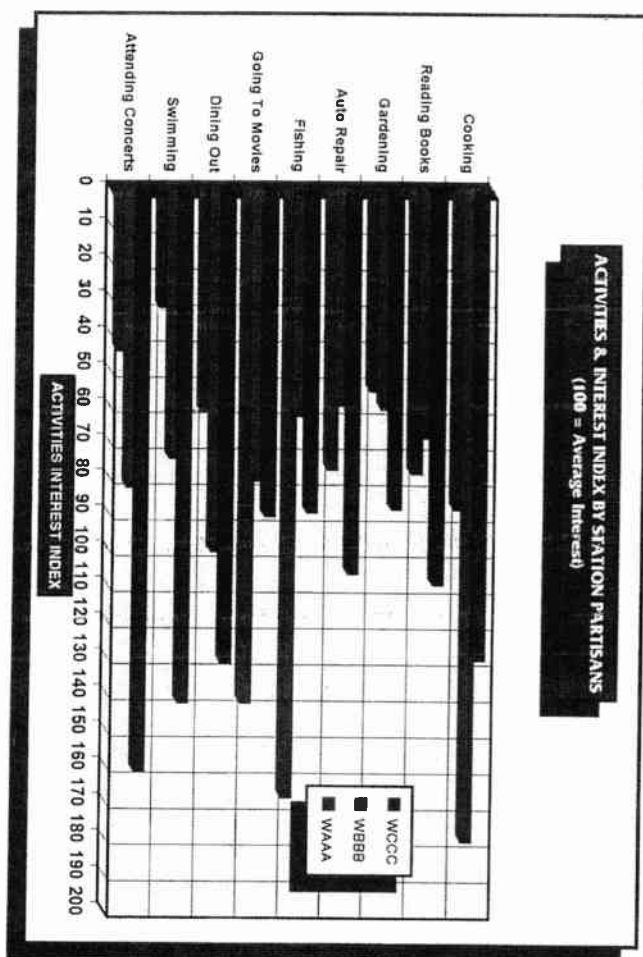
Consultant Greg Gillispie says PDs need to spend time with listeners to find out what they want from a radio station. According to Gillispie, that's an excellent way to get listeners more involved. "Ask them what they like and don't like about the station. Ask them what they would do to make the radio station better. What kind of music do they like? Get them to be a part of the radio station. You have some people who are on the leading edge of things. Then you have other people who are on the opposite end of the spectrum where something's hip for two years before they stumble on to that fact. You can't run with the people who are way out on the leading edge. You gotta go with the people who are behind them, but just ahead of the trend. They can give you an indication of what's coming. A lot of times it might just be their own personal feelings. That's why you have to look for it en mass. You can't go by what just one or two people say. It has to come from people you can count on."

Program Director Bob Lee says he actively solicits listeners' comments on KCEE's performance. "We have a listener input line. It's a message-taker. People can call in and voice opinions about the radio station. We get a lot of input that way. When we do an event we solicit comments from people there about their interests and needs."

Guy Zapoleon, who started his own consulting firm after programming stations in cities like Phoenix and Houston, insists that communicating with listeners is crucial for stations who want to remain successful. "When I was

in Phoenix I was obsessed with talking to people. I was constantly asking them to give me feedback on what they thought of the station. KZZP became a number one radio station that beat KNIX in what had been "Country heaven" for them. We tried to capture our target, which was 18-34 year-old women. We put together a radio station that, hopefully, pleased that demo in every aspect of the radio station. Bottom-line is that we didn't over-think. We had a lot of fun. We tried to do things that captured the imagination of people in Phoenix. But it was teamwork."

Teamwork, according to Zapoleon, is a key element in creating a favorable environment for success. By promoting a team-like atmosphere among staff members, Zapoleon feels this helps staff members take ownership in the success a station enjoys with its listeners. "One of the things I came up with when I was at Mix in Houston, which was the last station I programmed, is paying someone on the staff a hundred bucks for the best story of the week. When we got started, Mix was kind of like WPLJ in New York. We were new. We were kind of a pop/rock station, playing Springsteen, Mellencamp, Don Henley, and Bonnie Rait. I said to the people on the staff *Here's what I need you to do. I want you to go out into the community. I want to hear how you got listeners to convert to our radio station. I want you to go into stereo stores and get them to switch the radio station. If you hear a different radio station in an office, I want you to get them to turn it over to ours. We'll win the war by winning one listener at a time.* We had jock meetings every week so every week we paid somebody on the staff a hundred bucks. It worked. But more importantly it galvanized the staff. When you get right down to it, a radio station is really no different than any other product out there as far as creating something that's tasty, and creating a good image for it. It's like a box of cereal with Michael Jordan on it. If you've got something that's a good cereal--like Wheaties--and the box is an interesting box that makes people want to pick it up, that's product and marketing. At the same time, the basics of teamwork and spirit at a radio station are the same as in any other business. If you have no spirit and no leadership, then the radio station's not going to succeed no matter how good your opportunity is."



The above graph demonstrates research results obtained by radio stations to determine listeners' interests. *Reprinted with permission from Paragon Research.*

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## **May I Help You?**

**by Greg Gillispie**

"Hello, customer service. May I help you?"

"Yes, I have a problem."

Boy! Do I have a problem! The last eight weeks, I have had nothing but problems dealing with customer service representatives from a major furniture company and an outdoor recreation products manufacturer. My reasonable request for repair or replacement of products still under warranty have been answered with accusations of misuse, delay tactics such as being put on hold for up to 20 minutes or transfers to other divisions, and flat out denial.

After being treated so rudely and not receiving any satisfaction, I asked four customer service reps for their company president's name and address. Two told me I'm not sure who that person is. Another gave me a person's name and address that was actually a regional vice president, yet swore twice that it was the president. One even told me the president would not talk to me as a customer!

By now you can imagine my frustration. My desire to get the value of the products I purchased is genuine and before I'm done, the presidents of these companies may end up hiring me to consult them on how to better serve their customers!

Your customers are king. They are what keep you in business. They are your patrons. Research shows they will tell nine people about a negative experience, but only five about a positive one. Service is an act of helpful activity or the providing of some accommodation required by the public. It's how you take care of your patrons' needs. Good service keeps them coming back for more of what you offer.

So how's your customer service? You might be surprised how a lack of knowledge, tone of voice, or time spent servicing a customer's needs affects their perceptions of your company. Since radio can be such a disposable commodity for some and an emotional experience for others, you should review how you deal with your customers--the listener.

When a listener comes into your radio station to pick up a prize or piece of station merchandise, do you offer them a quick tour or send one of your jocks out front to say "hi?" Do you give them additional items with the

station logo? Do you thank them for listening? When you are out at a remote or station event, do your jocks sit in a corner talking amongst themselves or do they mingle throughout the crowd? Do they greet people as they come in? Do they hand out station merchandise or pick up an occasional tab?

When I visit a market, particularly for the first time, I often anonymously call the front desk and request line asking for information about a station event or feature. It's amazing how little receptionists know about what's going on at the station and how terse some jocks can be. You should ask a friend to make similar calls and then ask them what sort of service they received. Courteous and informed people on the front lines of your station can make a big difference in the success of your events and ultimately your station!

Years ago, I wrote an article for this publication about a CEO who, during a board meeting, turned the company management chart upside down, effectively putting the customer at the top and himself at the bottom. He told the board he was putting the customers in charge and that they all worked for them. This applies as much, if not more, today. Focus on your customers. Work hard to satisfy their needs and adequately address their problems. Imagine how successful you could be if they told five of their friends about your station and converted them to listeners!

*Reprinted with permission from B/D & A and McVay Media. This article appeared in The Approach, Volume X, Issue 11/June 15, 1997.*

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## **Keeping Your Station in the Public Eye in the Market and in the Industry**

Generating publicity about the radio station, whether it's through word-of-mouth, on the air or through outside media sources is of vital concern to the radio Program Director. This can be accomplished in numerous ways through marketing campaigns, zany promotional events, community service, or by being featured in newspaper/magazine articles or TV news stories.

According to Greg Gillispie, former Program Director of WXRK/Ft. Myers and current President of B/D & A, a radio consultancy firm, the first step to creating a positive image for a radio station in the community is by

hiring a good Promotions and/or Marketing Director. "Our attitude--now that we're developing more of this direct marketing approach to the listeners, which is often very quiet and not visible--is getting out and doing things. Our station could be at a grand opening or doing a remote every day if I let the sales department have their way. But to me that's clutter. We try to tie into large community events, charitable events or we try and create big events that will get media coverage."

Be communicative and available for interviews is the advice John Sebastian, Program Director of KZLA in Los Angeles, has for any PD who's trying to keep his station in the public eye. "Put a well-placed line here and there with key people in the press to keep them aware of what you're doing. They appreciate that so then they're more apt to do a story about you. I've been really lucky in getting a lot of press about this particular situation and in most of the situations I've dealt with."

Kevin Vargas adds that all marketing, news, and promotional events should be to remind people of who you are. "You remind them of what you are, but then you'd better be it," he cautions. "We're using a street approach this year. Our goal is to get out and touch all 220,000 people in our cume. It's the biggest street assault in the history of San Antonio radio."

Wink 104/Harrisburg PD John O'Dea feels it's important for a radio station to stay visible in the community it serves. "Any event that's going on in the city we want to be a part of if it makes sense for us. Sometimes there are different things that hinge on that. We try to get out there as much as possible. We have a certain amount of promotions each week that we can be involved in. Once we hit our limit--that's it. We can't do any more. And if something else comes along that would be great to be involved in we have to say no. We do a lot of parades. At Halloween time there are probably 15 or 16 parades in our metro area. We try to be in every one if we can. But typically we can only be in one a night so we end up being in about 8--which isn't too bad. We have our Boom Box there. We'll play Halloween music on it. We have a painted city bus. We have as many staff members as possible dress up and come out. We just try to be a part of the community. Every concert that comes to Hershey--if we play that artist--we definitely want to be there at the concert. And we are. We'll also be at the grand opening of The Wildcat--the new roller coaster at Hersheypark."

However, O'Dea does have some criticism for PDs whom he considers spend too much time worrying about garnering publicity for their radio station in the radio industry. "There are a lot of programmers that you see in trade magazines answering every question in every trade publication every week. I wonder how in the world they can do anything with their own

stations if they're too busy doing that. I look at that as someone who is trying to promote himself to, hopefully, try to get a better job somewhere else. I don't get into that at all. As a matter of fact, I don't even talk to any of them (trade magazines) unless it's the editor from the trade calling. Most of it is just asking for music predictions and that sort of thing. I just don't have time for that."

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## **Generating Local Publicity**

### **by Dan O'Day**

Getting mentioned in the newspaper or on TV is very good in the radio business. To get local coverage, you need to understand two things:

1. The local newspaper (or TV station) doesn't care about your radio station. Why should they? Do you care about them?
2. The local newspaper will give you free publicity only if doing so is in their self-interest...that is, by offering something the editors think is of interest to their readers.

Most radio stations do nothing to generate publicity and then complain when they don't get any. It is not the newspaper's job to call you up and ask, "Are you doing anything interesting enough for us to write about?"

If you mail a press release, you should write it in the style that you think the paper would use. "KSBJ Announces Big Summer Concert" has nothing to do with the newspaper's readers. "Free Family Concert Set for Barndall Park" does.

When is the last time you telephoned the radio columnist for your local paper? Never?

What do you say when you call the local radio columnist? The best thing is to call with genuine news tips. You're plugged into your market's radio pipeline; you probably hear about upcoming format and staff changes at other stations long before your local newspaper does. When you hear something new, pass it along. Make it clear that you don't want to be credited as the source. You're calling simply because you're a fan of the column and thought this bit of information might help.

When is the last time you invited the local radio columnist to lunch? "I've been reading your column for awhile now, and thought maybe I could pick your brains a bit, find out how you see the radio marketplace here in Houston."

What is the point of all this? Not to ask them to write about you; rather, to have them thinking good thoughts about you. If you establish and maintain that relationship, the press will come.

Here are three sure-fire ways to generate publicity:

1. Start a feud. Target a particular newspaper columnist in your market. It might be the local radio/TV writer. Or perhaps the paper has a high-profile movie critic.

An effective feud is good-natured but relentless. Perhaps the local film critic is a high-brow who hates everything. You can position yourself as the defender of "good, old-fashioned wholesome movies." When Mary Critic blasts the latest family hit for being "unrealistic," you can mention her review and add, "C'mon Mary, it's just a movie! Lighten up!"

The key is to attack her point of view without attacking her. Speak of Mary as though you have a lot of respect for her. You think she's very intelligent and well-informed; it's just that sometimes she goes off the deep end.

After you've established this concept, you can expand upon it by integrating this "feud" into your show. Upon concluding a weather forecast that predicts "a warm, sunny day with clear skies," you might add, "Of course, I guess Mary Critic wouldn't like this kind of day because 'it's been done before.'"

Pretty soon Mary's friends and co-workers will start mentioning to her that they heard you talking about her. Eventually, Mary will tune in to hear what you're saying.

If you keep it up long enough, there's a good chance she'll call you. Her call will either be friendly or angry. In either case, respond by inviting her on your show.

2. Start a community campaign based on an idea sparked by a local column or news story.

If the Daily Bugle did a seven-part series highlighting the plight of homeless animals, launch a station campaign to place those animals in good homes...with lots of credit going to the Bugle (and its columnist or reporter) for sparking the idea. Once the promotion is underway, invite the columnist (or, if it was a news story, the paper's editor) to join in the awards

ceremony/SPCS dinner/fund-raising picnic, etc.

Question: If you present the columnist or editor with a handsome plaque honoring his paper's contributions to the good cause, do you think they might run the photo?

3. Present a monthly award. Select a local columnist and arrange to announce a monthly award in his own. It might be tongue-in-cheek: "The Steve Sportswriter Award for Bonehead Sports Play of the Month." It might be boosterish: "The Connie Columnist Community Spirit of the Month Award." If you hold a press conference to confer the award and the local newspaper person is part of the ceremony, do you think you might get some coverage?

Remember, developing a relationship with your local newspaper requires persistence. You need to make those phone calls and mail those press releases continually. It might take 50 contacts before you get that ink you've been seeking. Don't get discouraged by the individual efforts that don't pay off.

Let's say that, for some reason, the local newspaper or TV station does a feature about your radio station. If you're like most radio people, what do you do now?

Nothing. You're so anxious for someone to publicize your station, and then when they give you what you want, you don't have the class to say "thank you."

When someone--anyone, from a network news program to a grade school newspaper--gives you publicity, send a nice thank-you note. Immediately. Sincerely.

Remember, it doesn't have to be a "puff piece" for you to express gratitude. "Dear M. Columnist. Thanks for the mention about my Clunker of the Day feature. You're probably right...sometimes I might go a bit too far..."

(In case it's not obvious, if you want TV coverage, simply replace "newspaper columnists" with "local TV anchors.")

*Reprinted with permission from B/D & A and McVay Media. This article appeared in The Approach, Volume X, Issue 3/February 15, 1997*

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## Classic Rock Talent Presentation Manual

### by Greg Gillispie

The Classic Rock target audience is 35-44 year-old adults, with an emphasis on men. These people grew up on some of the greatest music ever made. They were part of a large generation coming of age and to grips with itself in the late '60s and '70s. Vietnam, Watergate, and all the entertainment of the '70s created a somewhat cynical, yet irreverent attitude among these people. Even though they have many responsibilities, including job, mortgage, car payment, children and their future education needs, and their own future considerations, they do not view themselves as an adult, nor do they want to be reminded that they are grown up.

The most important era of music is 1969-82. The basic talent presentation should reflect the rock 'n roll spirit--be upbeat, lifestyle reflective, and slightly irreverent. While this is an oldies format, it needs to be presented in a contemporary style.

Putting the listener benefit first in all raps is critically important. By using the inverted triangle concept as a guideline, each talk segment should be constructed from the listeners' point of view as follows:

What's in it for me?

What do I have to do?

Is there anything else I need to know?

As an example, rather than saying *You could win a new jet ski. Just drop by Bob's Boat House to register to win*, a better way would be *Imagine yourself skimming across the lake on a brand new jet ski. A brand new Kawasaki could be yours. Just drop by Bob's Boat House to register*.

Another example of putting the listener benefit first is making the listeners feel like we are doing everything for them, rather than asking them to do something for the station. Rather than saying *Join us at Bob's Bar Friday night...*, it would be better to say *I'll join you at Bob's Bar Friday night*.

The same concept should be used when delivering the weather. Avoid technical weather terms (variably cloudy). Unless a major storm is coming, attach lifestyle elements to the weather. *Tonight, when you go to the state fair, take a jacket. It's going to be pretty cool.* Avoid giving specific predicted temperatures. Use the high-mid-low concept. *Tonight's low mid 50s; tomorrow's high in the high 70s.* Obviously, avoid typical weather

cliches such as *It's 73 degrees outside*.

The talent should be brief. Consider this--what a fair jock can say in three words, a good jock can say in two words, and a great jock can say in one word. Use words the audience uses. Don't try to be cute with Thesaurus words. Use Action, Colorful, Emotional, and Sexy words (ACES).

The talent should backsell all the artists and song titles played in the last set. This is information listeners say they want. Just avoid the before that and before that syndrome. They can occasionally mention the album title or use a piece of quick music information.

When billboarding, the talent should avoid a laundry list of artists or songs. Create anticipation by using appropriate teases or music information. Just make sure any tease set-up is given a payoff in the backsell. Going back into music, the slogan should be the last thing said.

In the morning, time checks and temperature should be delivered every break. The news should be presented in the effect/cause style--Tell me what happened, then why. Put the listener benefit in each story: *You'll start seeing the big brown trucks in your neighborhood again. The UPS strike was settled yesterday when UPS agreed to convert 10,000 part-time jobs to full-time.* Two lines per story, four stories per newscast, plus a music, entertainment, or humorous kicker story are all that's necessary. News story topics should focus on local, national/international, heart, purse, health, relaxation, and safety.

*Reprinted with permission from Greg Gillispie & B/D & A.*

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## **Practical Programming Assignments**

1. Pick a radio station in your market. Determine its target audience. Write a report on the characteristics of the audience, including psychographic and demographic characteristics. In the report include: an analysis on why the station picked that particular target audience, and what the station does to serve this target audience.
2. Go to the library and select a radio market. Research the market in terms of the demographic, economic and psychographic characteristics of the market. Determine media choices in the market. In particular, concentrate on what radio stations are in the market. How many are FM? How many are AM? What are their formats? Then, determine a format hole in the market, and devise a plan to fill that hole.



# **Music and Audience Research**

## **Chapter Objectives**

**At the end of this chapter students will be able to:**

1. Describe the importance of research in the programming process.
2. Explain how PDs use research to program a radio station.
3. List the various research methods used by radio stations, and describe appropriate situations where these research methods would be used to gather specific information.
4. Explain possible problems that could occur that would affect research results.
5. Demonstrate understanding of the chapter's main concepts by completing the Practical Programming Assignments at the end of the chapter.

## Chapter 9

# Glossary of Radio Terms

<b>Focus Groups:</b>	Small group discussions used to solicit opinions on a single topic.
<b>Listener Panels:</b>	A focus group without the anonymity of knowing who the client is.
<b>Auditorium Testing:</b>	Large group of people brought together to rate opinions on songs.
<b>Call-Out:</b>	Research conducted by telephone to solicit listener responses on current music.
<b>Perceptuals:</b>	Market-wide study conducted by telephone to solicit opinions on a wide range of subjects.
<b>Tracking Studies:</b>	Research conducted by telephone that is used to track a set number of issues over a period of time.

# 9 Music and Audience Research

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## Why Radio Uses Research

In recent years, research has become a widely used tool that helps radio stations become and stay successful. As the marketplace became more and more competitive due to format fragmentation, programmers found that it was no longer possible for a radio station to find success simply through playing the right music and throwing up a couple of billboards around town or placing a few TV commercials on several channels. Today, as listener needs change, as the marketplace changes, radio stations need to stay one step ahead in order to maintain interest in the radio station. Research provides the blueprint for radio stations to develop a game plan to satisfy changing listener demands.

According to Larry Rosin, President of Edison Media Research in Somerset, New Jersey, the primary reason why radio stations use research is to learn about their audience in various ways. "One is to merely look at the ratings, which is a measure of how many people are listening and how long they're listening for. But stations want further information like what records people like and dislike. Then there's what we call perceptual information, which is information about what people think about the radio station. What they see as its purpose and how it's doing. For instance, which station plays a lot of music so they can listen to it at work; which station plays the top hits of today; which station plays the best alternative rock. Since radio stations are a business, and they sell advertising to advertisers, radio stations use a lot of this information to put themselves in a better position to sell their advertising to clients--whether it's by saying they have a large audience or that they have an audience that is particularly good at delivering a certain type of people. The bottom line is that radio wants to be profitable and sell advertising. If it's ratings information, stations use that to show the advertiser how many people are listening and how long they're listening. If it's music information, radio uses that to play records that are popular enough to get an audience they can sell to advertisers. If it's perceptual information, that's used to put things in place to get better ratings

so stations can sell their ratings to advertisers."

Rich Meyer, President of Mediabase, a research company based in Sherman Oaks, California, that monitors radio station airplay, says record companies also use research to help them track airplay on radio stations. "Record companies use research information to see what stations are increasing airplay on songs. They can also see when these records are being played, which is also important. If a radio station is playing a song only in the middle of the night--that means a lot. It's a completely different thing than if a station is playing that song at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. Radio stations use monitored airplay to see what other successful radio stations are doing around the country."

Research is an on-going process at a radio station. It would be foolish for programmers to conduct only sporadic studies--either through an in-house research department or by hiring a research firm to conduct the research for them--because the station would be unable to evolve with ever-changing listener expectations. However, while research is important to a station's success, research in itself will not make a station successful. It's how stations use the research that is gathered to formulate their programming strategy that separates winning stations from losing stations.

Mike Henry, Managing Partner at Paragon Research in Denver, notes that the purpose of research companies is to help radio stations maintain or increase their ratings. "Our focus is to identify an opportunity, help the station fill that programming void, and then, over time, increase that station's ratings with their target audience. As the months and years go on, the target audience changes, and the competitive situation changes; therefore, the programming changes. It's our job to make sure that the radio station stays focused on the biggest opportunity in the marketplace, and make sure they gather as much ratings and revenue as they possibly can."

Henry adds that one reason why research has become so vital to radio is because marketing has become more complicated in recent years. "These days you have to have more than a good morning show and an entertaining package around the music to keep listener interest. It's really the on-air imaging and the off-air marketing that is becoming the tie-breaker. Now, a lot of lifestyle marketing has been effective for a lot of stations. Doing things besides running TV campaigns and billboards. Sponsoring events that may not have anything to do with music, but may have everything to do with your target audience's needs. I also think there's been a real re-awakening of the importance of community service by radio stations. And non-traditional forms of marketing have also come into play like telemarketing, direct mail, data base building, data base marketing. All that stuff has changed

considerably in the last decade."

## **Research Tools**

There are many methods Program Directors use to gather the information they need to program the radio station in the most effective manner. This research could be divided into Music Research and Audience Research, and the tools used to gather this information vary according to the goals of the PD. As previously stated, some stations or radio companies have an in-house research department that conducts all the research studies. Others hire a research firm that specializes in radio research. Still others use a combination of both.

The most commonly used methods to gather research are Focus Groups, Listener Panels, Auditorium Testing (Music Testing), Call-out, Perceptuals, and Tracking Studies.

### **Focus Groups**

Focus Groups are typically made up of 10 to 15 people who are gathered together to discuss a specific topic. Its purpose is to gather the opinions of a small number of people according to Larry Rosin of Edison Media Research. "They're best used to get a sense of people's feelings about things. What they like, what they dislike, and why. For instance, you could play little clips of a morning show, and ask them what they think about it. You can probe deeply into people's opinions." John O'Dea, PD of WNNK/Harrisburg, says he occasionally uses Focus Groups to get feedback on what listeners are thinking, although he also admits to having some reservations about the results gathered from using this method. "It's hard to get feedback from them because you can only bring in maybe 12 or 15 people for a question-type of session. You only get a certain amount of people's opinions, and it's hard to base something on that few of people."

Rosin believes there are several advantages to Focus Groups despite their small size. "One is that you can show a television commercial or play some radio bits. The other advantage is the ability to ask multiple follow-up questions, and follow the discussion wherever it goes. Typically, you talk to people for a couple of hours, and try to find out their more deeply-held feelings about things."

## Listener Panels

Listener Panels are somewhat similar to Focus Groups--with one key difference says Mike Henry of Paragon Research. "They're a Focus Group without the anonymity of knowing who the client is. We let them know right off the bat what station they're talking about. Listener Panels are a way to go to the core audience to find out core sensibilities. It's real important that any Program Director who wants to undertake a Listener Panel not make the mistake of confusing them with real research. They're not. It's a way to keep your finger on the pulse of your core audience as you're doing all the real world research that needs to be done on a regular basis."

## Auditorium Testing (Music Testing)

Auditorium Testing involves a large group of people who are brought into an auditorium-type setting to review 10 second clips--generally the "hooks"--of songs. Its purpose is to discover how people feel about the songs they hear on the radio. A Program Director can use this information to determine what songs are getting popular and what songs are getting burned out.

WRCX/Chicago's APD Jo Robinson says an advantage to Auditorium Testing is that a radio station could, potentially, research its entire music library. "Three times a year we test 600 library songs to about 100 males. We only test to men to determine things like *Do you want to hear Led Zeppelin's "Misty Mountain Hop" anymore or are you sick of it? Can we get away with playing The Rolling Stones when we're a hard rocking radio station?* Those responses will help us determine what we can and cannot get away with. They help us make the music sound the best that it can, the jocks sound the best they can, and the production of the radio station be the best it can be."

John Sebastian, PD of KZLA/Los Angeles, says he relies quite heavily on his Auditorium Music Test results. "I use my Call-out Research and Auditorium Tests almost exclusively for the bottom-line of whether or not we play a song, what category it's added in, and what rotation it's played in."

PARAGON RESEARCH  
AUDITORIUM MUSIC TEST

RANK ORDER BY BURN

Demo: All Respondents, 18-39

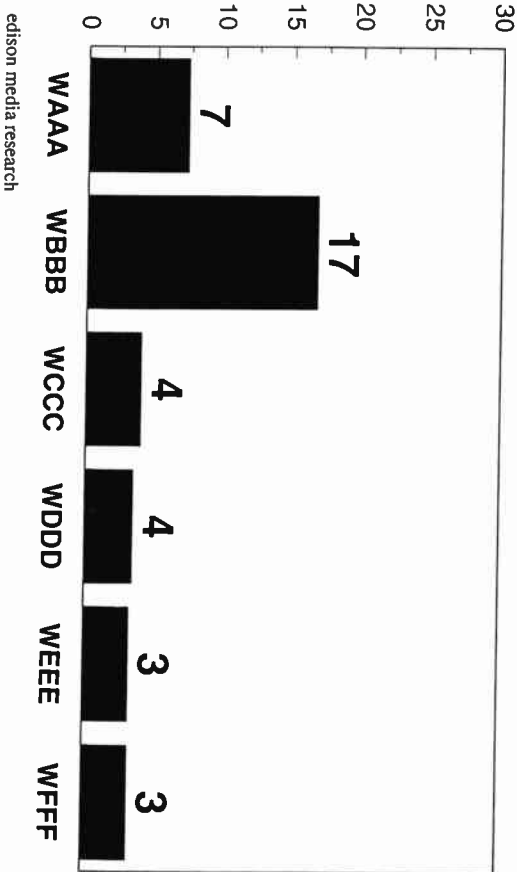
Date: January 1999

Station: Sample Study

	ARTIST	SONG	BURN%	UNFAM%	SCORE
1.	Spin Doctors	TWO PRINCES	25.97%	1.30%	64.61
2.	ZZ Top	LEGS	25.61%	0.00%	69.21
3.	Crash Test Dummies	SUPERMAN'S SONG	16.88%	0.00%	62.34
4.	INXS	DEVIL INSIDE	15.85%	0.00%	66.77
5.	R.E.M.	MAN ON THE MOON	12.99%	1.30%	69.16
6.	Counting Crows	ROUND HERE	10.39%	2.60%	67.86
7.	Etheridge, Melissa	I'M THE ONLY ONE	10.39%	0.00%	69.16
8.	Red Hot Chili Peppers	UNDER THE BRIDGE	9.09%	0.00%	82.47
9.	R.E.M.	WHAT'S THE FREQ KENNETH?	2.60%	7.79%	66.88
10.	Charlatans U.K.	WEIRDO	1.30%	63.64%	15.91
11.	Bodeans	CLOSER TO FREE	0.00%	59.76%	21.04
12.	Green Day	WHEN I COME AROUND	0.00%	12.20%	69.21

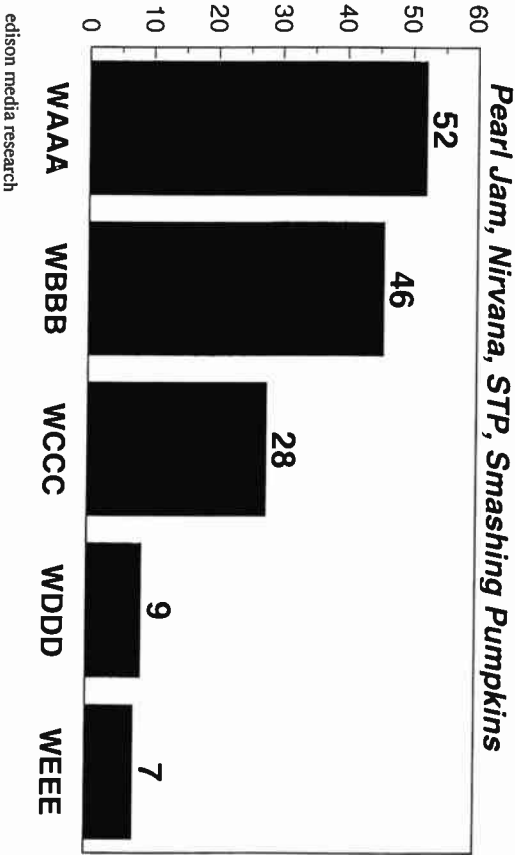
The above graph demonstrates listeners' perception of music is an Auditorium Music Test. The results show percentage of burn, meaning the percent of listeners who are tired of hearing the songs that are tested. Reprinted with permission from Paragon Research.

## Station Perceptions: Has Djs Who Talk Too Much



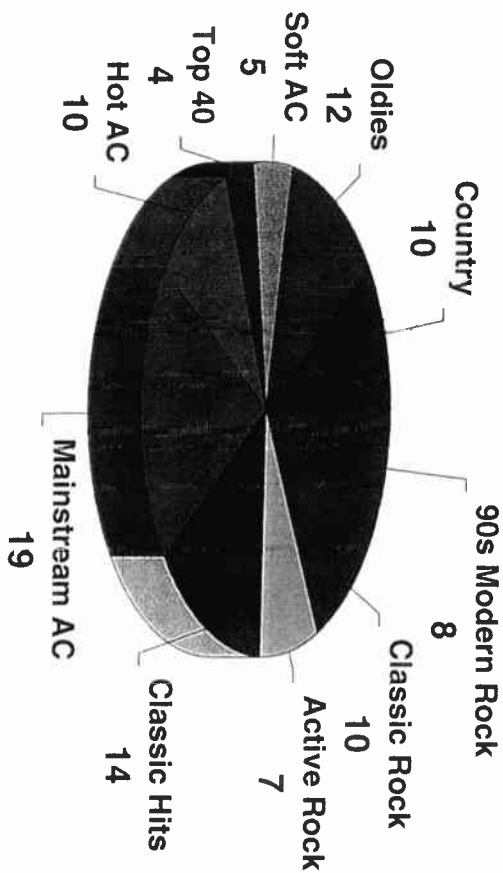
The above graph demonstrates listeners' perceptions of radio stations in the marketplace. *Reprinted with permission from Edison Media Research.*

# Who Plays 90's Modern Rock?



The above graph demonstrates listeners' perceptions of radio stations in the marketplace. *Reprinted with permission from Edison Media Research.*

## Music Type Most Preferred:



edison media research

The above graph demonstrates listeners' music preferences in a given market.  
*Reprinted with permission from Edison Media Research.*

## **Call-Out**

Call-Out research is conducted by telephone. Participants are played hooks of up to approximately 40 songs to determine listener familiarity with those songs as well as their likes and dislikes of the music they hear.

Larry Rosin says Call-Out research is generally used for current records. "It's a faster method to find out what people are thinking about newer songs. Typically, the clips are between 7 and 10 seconds long. They're the part of the song that people, if they know the song, that's the part they're most likely to recognize."

## **Perceptuals**

Perceptuals are a market-wide survey study that is conducted by telephone. The sample size is typically 400 to 500 people who are asked their opinions on a wide range of subjects. According to Larry Rosin, Perceptuals can be likened to a CNN or a Gallup Poll. "This is where we ask 15 to 20 minutes of questions about the radio station, how it's positioned, and what people like and don't like about it. We can also test various hypothesis about what the station might be able to do to raise its ratings."

Greg Gillispie says that radio stations can also look for trends as far as whether they're getting better or worse, and what people like best about the station. "During our Perceptual Study at WRXX we found out that variety is clearly our number one attribute."

## **Tracking Studies**

Tracking Studies are used to track a set number of issues over a period of time. This information is gathered by telephone. Paragon's Mike Henry says there are a number of situations where a station might want to conduct a Tracking Study. "If a station has a new morning show, before they market it, they might want to do a Tracking Study over the course of the morning show's first six months on the air to make sure that they refine the product. They need to make sure the morning show is connecting with the target audience before they market it. Tracking Studies are also used out of the box for new stations to see how the station is tracking with the audience we had determined to be the target at the very beginning. So, after we do our big Perceptual Study to find the format hole in the market, a couple of other studies to nail the format down and put it on the air, then the Tracking Studies would follow the next 3 to 6 months after the new format's been put

on the air to gauge, quickly, the reaction. We'd make adjustments on the fly so that, not too far out of the gate, you know that everything is headed in the right direction."

## How Radio Stations Use Research

As stated previously in the chapter, Program Directors use research to determine audience needs and perceptions. PDs then program the station to meet these expectations so that the radio station gathers sufficient ratings and revenue to meet the goals of the station and its owners.

Mike Henry, Managing Partner at Paragon Research says, simplistically, radio research boils down into two categories. "It's either a global, strategic, big-picture, *where are we going* kind of research that leads us into a strategic plan. Or, the second scenario is the *we know where we're going, we just need to get there* scenario. That, I call Tactical Research. The first category--Strategic Research--tends to use telephone studies and Focus Groups. Tactical Research falls under projects like Auditorium Testing, Music Call-Out, Tracking Studies, Listener Panels. Tactical Research projects get you from *a* to *z*. The strategic-type projects determine where *a* is and where *z* is. One tells us where to go. The other tells us how to get there."

Leslie Fram, Program Director of WNNX in Atlanta says she often uses research to explain to listeners and broadcasting students why 99X is programmed the way it is. "When I go and talk to a class the questions I always get asked are *Why don't you play this song? Why don't you play this band?* Then I try to explain ratings and why I do what I do. I tell them that most stations do music research. You can hire companies to help you. They will recruit people on the phone. We call a hundred people a week, and we get their opinions about the music we play. Sixty percent of the people we get on the calls say we're their favorite radio station. We want to get what are called P1s. They're the people who absolutely love our radio station. And then we'll get a mixture of our competition. We'll play them hooks of the songs over the phone. We don't live and die by this research, but it does help us develop records, and it shows us when people are getting tired of a song. While we have the people on the phone we can also ask them questions such as *What are your 3 favorite bands?* Over a 4 or 5 week period we can see a pattern like, maybe, that the number one band for 99X is Smashing Pumpkins or REM or Dave Matthews. We see what people are listening to and what they like. We can ask other questions, too, like what

time of day they listen to the radio; what they're getting tired of; what radio station plays the most commercials. That's one of the tools we use. We use a lot of tools. We look at Soundscan to see what's selling. We look at requests on the telephone. We talk to people on the street. All of that helps you. But if we look at a song in the Music Call-Out, for instance, and it's not doing well, but our gut tells us the song is a hit and we believe in the song, we're going to believe our gut first."

Curtiss Johnson, Station Manager/PD at KRXQ in Sacramento, admits he uses a little bit of everything when it comes to research. "You could say phones are a form of research--taking requests off the request line. We also use call-out research. We take 10 second hooks of songs and play them down a phone line to somebody who's been pre-screened to be a rock listener or a listener of your radio station or your competition's radio station. You get feedback that way. We also do Auditorium Tests where we bring an audience into an auditorium or hotel conference room and play them a whole lot of songs in much the same way you would in a Call-Out situation. There's also local sales. You can see what is selling in the market music-wise. Also Focus Groups. We bring in core listeners of our radio station and ask them what they like and dislike about the radio station. We may also get a group together of our competitor's audience and ask them what they like and dislike about their favorite radio station. That way we can find weaknesses within their station that we can attack, and, hopefully, gather some of their audience. And then there's what they call Perceptuals, which are generally done for a whole market. You can ask listeners musical questions, questions about morning shows and radio stations. You'll generally do 800 to a 1000 people within a given market to find out the perception of your radio station and your competition's radio station in the market. Also trends of what's going on sociologically as well as musically and that sort of thing. In a Market Perceptual you ask lifestyle questions and consumption questions. *If you're a rock listener do you consume Coca Cola or Pepsi? How many cars do you have? Are you married? How many children do you have? Do you rent or own?*"

WRCX/Chicago's Jo Robinson says her station hires a research company to conduct one Perceptual Study a year. "We ask 25 questions to 400 male respondents on what they think of everything from the morning show to how the music flows on the radio station. Also, which station is most involved in concerts and which station plays great songs next to bad ones. These puppies (research studies) cost a lot of money so we ask every question we would want to ask." Robinson adds that although the study is conducted by an outside research company, the station itself is very involved in the

research process. "We determine the parameters of the study. We'll say to the research company *We want you to recruit men ages 18-40. We want 50% of them to be our primary listeners—what we call P1 listeners or P1s. We also want 25% of P1s of Competitor A and 25% of Competitor B's P1s. These are the questions we want you to ask. Now—go crazy!*"

Larry Rosin of Edison Media Research says the strategies used to gather research are based on what the PD is trying to accomplish. "I try to match the methodology to the needs of the client. I feel a researcher's role is to figure out the best way to get the answers to the questions they may have. Each method has its place. If I'm looking to figure out grand issues about a radio station then I might want to use a Perceptual Study. If I just want to make sure the records are on target I'd do some Music Testing. If the station is looking to change its morning show or bring on a new TV commercial a Focus Group might be the most appropriate method."

When it comes to putting together a research study, Mike Henry says first and foremost, a researcher has to have a very clear understanding of the client's situation. "You can't just roll in with a plan to do something without knowing what the circumstances are; what the problems are; what goals have been set. All of these things determine what research strategy to use. It's like going to the doctor. You'd be pretty alarmed if the doctor, before asking you what was wrong, gave you a prescription. Likewise, with what we do, we spend a lot of time listening to tapes, looking at ratings analysis, doing our own secondary research behind the scenes, looking at models that may help us to understand. All kinds of things that enable us to come back to the radio station and say, with confidence, here's what you need, and this is what it's going to do for you."

Sampling, according to Larry Rosin, is the core element of any research study. Sampling involves choosing people to participate in the research project. How this sample is gathered is crucial to the results of the research findings. "The researcher wants to talk to a small number of people who will represent a large number of people. A common analogy used to understand sampling is soup. Soup is a mixture of lots of different spices and flavors. To know what the soup tastes like you don't have to drink the whole pot of soup. You mix it up, and if you're putting the ladle in the pot in the right place so that it's an accurate reading of what all the soup tastes like then you can take just a little sip of the soup to know what it tastes like. If a doctor wants to know what's wrong with you he doesn't take all the blood out of your body. He takes a small sample of your blood. And then he analyzes that little sample of blood, and says this blood represents all the blood in your body. Similarly, that's what a researcher does. A researcher

tries to find a small group of people he can talk to that represents a larger body of people. To know how many people are listening to a radio station in a market, a ratings company may interview 500 people to represent tens of thousands of people in that market. And if those 500 people are the correct people, and they're sampled in the appropriate manner, it's just like taking a small sip of soup."

Rosin says that the questions asked in the study are another important element of research. "There's a whole body of science that has grown up around the issue of how to ask questions appropriately to get the answers you're looking for. In radio, they've come up with all kinds of procedures to measure ratings; what people like and don't like about music. And then you compile that information, and you analyze it. That would be the third key step. Then you attempt to interpret and understand what the data is trying to say."

Once the research data has been gathered, Paragon's Mike Henry says that's when the real work begins for radio stations. "The presentation of the research may only take 2 hours, but the development of an action plan based on that research--focusing on what should be done with it to increase ratings--could take the rest of that day, another week or another month. So that's where the effort is. It is a strategic plan with 4 basic components. And you have to do these components in chronological order. One is understanding the target audience. Step 2 is the programming action plan. The third step is the on-air positioning of the programming. In other words, how does the station promote its product on its own airwaves? Finally, the last step of our action plan is the marketing action plan. That's what we do off the air to promote the programming and the positioning. If you do it in that order you have the thread going all the way through your on-air and off-air image. We don't tell the stations what they have to do. We tell them what their listeners are suggesting that they do, and what strategies we recommend to take advantage of that. Ultimately, it's up to the station to pull it off."

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## **Getting Your Mind Right**

**by Don Benson**

Focus Groups are useful in getting a "face-to-face" feeling for what the real radio listeners feel about the different products or services being

discussed. They often shed light on a problem by bringing to the surface objections or sentiments. They may suggest new approaches, or they may define new questions for further research. In general, the focus group process has been designed to serve as an "idea generating" vehicle. You may regard these sessions much as you would a "brainstorming" meeting among your management team.

While members of a research session are placed in a focus group environment, they can be exposed to various visual and audio stimuli: television commercials, billboard layouts, logo designs, tape recordings of various things, etc. During the process, the respondents can give you their thoughts for each tested piece both privately (by recording their feelings on a questionnaire) and publicly (in a group discussion). This serves to help clients avoid pitfalls or problems in promotional pieces.

## The Limitations of Focus Groups

Some warnings are in order with regard to focus groups:

The "results" of a focus group are not "projectable" (that is, capable of being considered representative of the universe) for two reasons. First, most group studies consist of a number of sessions containing 10 to 12 people each, for a total of 30 to 50 people in all. This small sample size yields statistical margins of error which are very large.

Another caution, most likely you asked for certain percentage of your own fans; hardly random. Only in the case of virtual **unanimity** of opinion by group members can one feel at all comfortable that the opinion is representative of the universe. Second, the sort of folks who are likely to willingly participate in a focus group discussion are an abnormally biased lot. They tend to be more active, willing to express their opinions **in public**, or some come to the sessions only for the monetary incentive.

*A focus group is better at generating questions than generating answers.*

There is no guarantee that what focus group members say they **like** will, in fact, be effective in achieving the desired effects. For example, a TV commercial designed to generate trial for a product may be assembled out of the ingredients group members say they like. The commercial may, however, be so bland and lacking in uniqueness or attention-getting properties that it is ineffective in its purpose.

*Groups make much better trouble shooters than they do "creators."*

There is a powerful temptation for observers of focus group sessions to want to react (with product or service changes) to specific comments voiced

in a group. **Logically**, the observer may understand that individual comments--even the comments of the entire group--are not necessarily representative of the universe. **Emotionally**, it is very easy to be swayed by a real flesh-and-blood person spelling out his or her "real" feelings...especially if the observer agrees with the focus group member.

*A focus group is a warm-up-practice for a perceptual study, not a study in itself.*

## Recruiting the Respondents

The ideal size for each discussion session falls somewhere between eight and fifteen people, depending on how participative each group member is. More than 15 respondents is simply difficult to handle; fewer than eight members can be good, but often fail to spark active discussion due to a lack of enough diverse viewpoints.

A number of situations can cause a lower than normal turnout of respondents: bad weather, unusually attractive television offerings, or a major concert or sporting event. Although research/recruiting firms and their clients do their best to avoid such circumstances, low turnouts are, from time to time, inevitable. If the turnout of a group sessions particularly low, the client and the moderator may decide to postpone the groups for later fielding. It is this risk that demands that you schedule at least four groups in order to beat the odds and aberrations. The information generated here must be regarded as "impressions" or "feelings." Focus groups offer only a "sense of direction" that necessitates further investigation using statistically valid methodology.

## Getting Prepared to Focus

Whenever possible, test materials should use names of products or services (radio stations, etc.) which do not actually exist in the market. For example, a billboard used in a test should not sport the client's name (or call letters) or those of competitors. The idea here is to keep the variable being tested (a billboard graphic design, in this case) separate from the **predispositions** associated with known products or firms (or stations).

When identifiable elements are used (a locally known radio station, etc.), it is best to use not just one locally identifiable name, but many to "mask" the element of prime interest with the hope of obtaining a more realistic

response. A skilled moderator always moves in and out of perspective on each issue so that participants never concludes which station is doing the group.

In testing television commercial concepts, billboards, or other promotional pieces, it is best to test a fairly good number of **different** approaches. A "winner" out of a "field of 10" is simply more meaningful than the winner out of a "field of two." More feedback should be generated concerning a large number of concepts.

**Please be sure to have all materials prepared—completely—at the agreed upon time (and place).** Tapes should be edited, VHS tapes cued to the position, and art mock-ups should be in final form.

Unless otherwise agreed upon, the form of materials is as follows:

- \* Video tape should be a VHS cassette. The cassette should be labeled.
- \* Audio (audio only) should be put on cassette. The cassette should be labeled.
- \* Print or "outdoor" testing should be put on cards large enough to be seen by everyone in the room (one foot high by one and a half feet wide is good for most things.).
- \* All labeling of cassettes should be done with care not to expose the identity of the client.
- \* TV spots can be tested either by produced spot (VHS cassette), "animatics" (VHS cassette), or by having slide materials made of story-board frames (and a sound track produced on audio cassette).
- \* All participants should have name cards, and a seating chart should be prepared for the observers.

## Observation

**All** of those who intend to observe a focus group should understand the following:

Please do not drive to the focus group facility in a "marked" car with the client identity easily visible.

Please make plans to arrive at the focus facility **20 to 25 minutes prior** to the start of each session you will be attending.

When in the observation room, please remain **very** quiet. Noise coming through the one-way mirror can easily distract group members.

Please do not light matches behind the mirror and do not turn the lights

on. Lights--of any sort--behind the mirror thwart its "one-way" aspect and distract group members.

*Reprinted with permission from B/D & A. This article appeared in The Approach, Volume VI, Issue 7/April 19, 1993.*

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## When to Use and When to Ignore Research

Some programmers feel research results have influenced Program Directors far more than they should, which has resulted in a loss of creativity in radio. While consultant Lee Abrams admits research is important, he also feels research in radio has gotten out of control. "It used to be that research was an ingredient to tell you whether you were full of it or not. It would back up your assumptions. Now it controls stations. Right from the planning of the format to the execution of it. The key is to balance technology and research with emotion and treat a radio station like a Beatle would have treated one of the great Beatle albums. Turn it into something special."

Rich Meyer agrees that radio should be a balance of science and emotion. "People are often times surprised to hear me say that since we have a research company, but I think you need to use research, certainly, but you can't be totally reliant on it. There's nothing wrong with research, but like with any recipe, you have to use the right measure of it."

Mike Henry acknowledges that the criticism has some validity, but he also calls that criticism a cop-out. "Take 99X (WNNX/Atlanta) as an example. They're a client of ours that uses research quite heavily. Yet, 99X is generally considered across the country as being one of the more creative, mind-bending radio stations in the country. Just because you do research does not mean you can't be creative. Stations who understand that you can use the research to be more creative are the ones who really understand how to use research. What happens sometimes is that stations over-use their research. They treat it too literally, and they react to it too literally. Radio is a world of contradictions, and you have to understand the contradictions to be able to move through the maze. For example, listeners say in Focus Groups that they wish a station would go deeper and play more songs on an album. But when they're in their car, their finger usually stops on a song that they know and recognize. So what listeners say and how they react, in reality, are two completely different things. If you followed what they said

you'd screw up pretty quick."

Larry Rosin calls the criticism that radio is over-researched "absurd." "If they mean by that that people are afraid to do anything without research, then, yes, I agree with those critics. Does that mean there are some managers who are not smart enough to do anything without researching it first? Yes. But does that mean research in and of itself is the cause of radio not being creative? Absolutely not! The cause is that these managers are afraid to do anything without research. That's like blaming the messenger for the bad news. There is a role for everything. And there are always those magical things that you just can't research. If you researched people about grunge music before it hit, people might have said *Oooooh! That's scary sounding. That's weird sounding. I don't like it.* But then grunge hit, and it worked."

KRXQ's Curtiss Johnson feels that a good method to use to avoid being too reliant on one form of research is to use several forms of research. "Hopefully, you have faith in the way the research is done and the company who does it, but I'm not going to make a complete decision based on one study or one group of research. I use all the pieces of research that I have at my disposal to make a decision."

John Sebastian, Program Director of KZLA in Los Angeles, warns that if the PD helps lay the groundwork of the research then he or she should not throw away the results. "I think that's one of the mistakes a lot of programmers make is that they go to all the expense to have research, and then, if the research comes back and tells them something they didn't want to hear, they say *Oh, I don't believe that. I think that's a huge mistake.* But," Sebastian chuckles, "I hope that continues because those kind of people are easy to beat. I like playing against those people."

In any case, Greg Gillispie, President of B/D & A, cautions that research should only be one of the many tools that programmers use to make programming decisions. "Radio stations who rely too much on just research sound too clinical. And maybe radio stations who don't do research at all aren't as in-tune with their audience as they ought to be. Research needs to be a part of the equation."

Jo Robinson, Assistant Program Director of WRCX/Chicago agrees. "With duopolies\* and major radio companies eating each other up like piranhas, research does have a lot of play in what radio stations do. Like it or not that's the way the trend is going because more Program Directors are less likely to alienate their new parent company so they'll rely more on their research than they will on their gut. And I will say that's unfortunate. But not all of us have to program that way."

## **Practical Programming Assignments**

1. Organize a Focus Group of 10 to 15 people to discuss the campus radio station. Select a specific topic (music, imaging, community involvement, etc.), and explore the participants feelings and attitudes of that topic. Analyze the result. Devise an action plan for the station based on your analysis.
2. Plan a mini Auditorium Test. Record 10 second hooks of approximately 50 songs played on your station. Develop a questionnaire where participants can rate their reactions to each song. Analyze the results.
3. Call a local radio station and ask if they conduct Listener Panels, Auditorium Tests, Music Call-Out Testing, or Focus Groups. Then:
  - a. Interview the PD on the effectiveness of these research methods.
  - b. Ask if you can observe one of these research methods.



# **The Future of Radio**

## **Chapter Objectives**

**At the end of this chapter students will be able to:**

1. Explain the role the FCC plays in the radio industry.
2. Describe the FCC policies that radio stations are required to follow.
3. Explain how the Telecommunications Act of 1996 has affected the radio industry.
4. Describe Virtual Radio and its possible impact on the radio industry.
5. Explain the changes consolidation has brought to the radio industry.
6. List the recent technological advancements that have impacted the radio industry.
7. Explain what changes programmers feel will occur in radio's future.
8. Demonstrate **understanding** of the chapter's main concepts by completing the Practical Programming Assignments at the end of the chapter.

# Chapter 10

## Glossary of Radio Terms

**Indecency:** Material that depicts/describes bodily functions of a sexual or excretory nature that does not rise to the level of obscenity. May not be broadcasted between 6 a.m. and 10 p. m. since children may be in the audience.

**Obscenity:** Material that depicts/describes bodily functions of a sexual or excretory nature that exceeds contemporary standards of acceptability. May never be broadcasted.

**Telecommunications Act of 1996:** Government act that changed rules for divisions under FCC control. For radio, guidelines concerning ownership changed by eliminating the national cap and increasing the number of stations that can be owned by a single company within a market. Also, license renewal procedures changed from every 5 years to every 8 years.

**Virtual Radio:** Programming presented on a radio station that seems live but is actually pre-recorded programming that is presented on the station via satellite or computer.

**Deregulation:** Reduced FCC control by allowing the marketplace to dictate what programming is acceptable based on contemporary standards of acceptability.

# 10 The Future of Radio

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## Programming and the FCC

Since radio uses public airwaves to broadcast, radio stations come under the jurisdiction the Federal Communications Commission, commonly referred to as the FCC. Part of the FCC's job, in addition to licensing radio stations and enacting laws, is policing the airwaves and making sure that radio stations operate in the public's best interest. Therefore, radio station have guidelines they must follow to ensure that this task is accomplished.

One such guideline is maintaining a public file, which must be available to listeners during business hours. This file contains information about the radio station, including license renewal applications, ownership reports and employment reports, a list of programs the station feels addresses community concerns as well as information on how members of the public can file complaints to the FCC.

The Program Director must also ensure that all contests conducted by the radio station are not lotteries since these are illegal. According to the FCC, a contest will be considered a lottery if it contains these three elements: prize, chance and consideration. A *prize* is considered to be something of value. *Chance* is described as the random act of selecting a winner. In other words, if the winner is determined based on something other than skill or knowledge it is generally concluded that the winner won by chance. *Consideration* basically means that the participant must pay to play. Paying an admission fee to an event such as a night club in order to participate in the contest is consideration if the promoter of the event, in this case, the night club owner, benefits financially due to the admission fees. If a contest only contains 2 of the three elements it is not considered a lottery, and can be legally aired on the radio station.

Perhaps the area under FCC jurisdiction that generates the most awareness from radio stations and the public concerns what the FCC calls *Indecent* and *Obscene* broadcasts. The FCC prohibits the airing of broadcasts that are considered indecent between the hours of 6 a.m. and 10

p.m. since it is reasonable to assume that children may be in the audience. The FCC defines indecency\* as *language or material that, in context, depicts or describes, in terms patently offensive as measured by contemporary standards for the broadcast medium, sexual or excretory organs or activities. Indecent programming contains sexual or excretory references that do not rise to the level of obscenity.*

Obscene speech, on the other hand, is not protected by the First Amendment, and may not be broadcast at any time. The FCC has 3 criteria that determines whether or not a broadcast is obscene. 1. *Average person, applying contemporary community standards, must find that the material, as a whole, appeals to the prurient interest.* 2. *The material must depict or describe in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct specifically defined by applicable law.* 3. *The material, taken as a whole, must lack serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value.*

Many broadcasters consider the definitions of obscenity\* and indecency to be rather nebulous, and have challenged the FCC on numerous occasions when stations have been fined for indecent or obscene broadcasts. Many of these legal actions are still pending so it is difficult to say whether or not any changes to these definitions will come in the future.

In the past, many have felt the FCC tended to operate more like "Big Brother," restricting creativity and freedom of speech. Although there are those who still believe this tight governmental control is unnecessary, many broadcasters do feel the FCC has taken more of a "hands-off" approach in recent years by allowing the marketplace to dictate what is and is not acceptable.

Susan Stone, Music Director of WRXK/Ft. Myers, is one of those broadcasters who believes society is setting the parameters of acceptable program content. "There's so much more that's accepted now that wasn't accepted 10 years ago. We started running Howard Stern 3 weeks ago. Howard does not shock me at all. He's the "King of All Media." He's *the* shock jock. What he's doing now shocked the heck out of people 10 years ago. Now I don't even find him vulgar. What he talks about is stuff we've all heard and seen--especially if you get cable. Even ads in magazines are becoming more provocative, whether it's for a perfume or jeans company. Nothing shocks anybody anymore. You see so much on television--violence, pornography, and language on cable that people getting their heads chopped off doesn't seem to faze anybody anymore. We've become so de-sensitized. We're exposed to so much by television, music and movies, and everybody's trying to push it to the next level. You still have people who are on the bandwagon to get Howard out of radio. There are some conservative people

out there, and they'll do what they have to do to try and fight things like that so there's always going to be a battle."

Consultant Guy Zapoleon agrees that community standards have dictated what is heard on radio in recent years. "Basically, when you see "ass" on television then it becomes okay to say it on the radio. In some ways, television kind of pushes the boundary for most radio stations. But the Howard Sterns of the world probably push those boundaries for television so it kind of circles around if that makes any sense."

Veteran radio programmer and consultant Lee Abrams is convinced radio stations can pretty much do what they want these days. "I think we can get away with murder with them! It's unbelievable! It's almost over unregulated. There's still a certain degree of paranoia among broadcasters who say *Oh, you can't do that. FCC.* I have not seen them (the FCC) being very aggressive and acting on many things lately."

KUPD morning talent Dave Pratt agrees. "There has been stuff I've said on the air that listeners have heard and have written in complaints to the FCC. The FCC has enquired to the radio station about those things, but as far as I know nothing has gone past that point. I've had more complaints from special interest groups than I've had from the FCC."

But, Lee Abrams does think this could change in the future. "Just like we go through musical cycles, we also go through political cycles. There will probably be a more conservative FCC in the future."

Not all broadcasters feel the FCC is doing nothing to police the airwaves. Leslie Fram, Program Director of Alternative rocker 99X in Atlanta, believes controlling obscenity on the airwaves is still an issue with the FCC. "They did back off for a while, but it's still an issue. If they (the FCC) get letters and complaints, I think they look into each one individually. There are still stations that get fined quite often for indecency issues. Some of those have been the Howard Sterns and the Mancows of the world for tasteless things that have gone out over the air. For us, we're really careful about strong language in songs because there are still parents out there who will call about their kids who listen to the station. Although we are not a kid radio station, you still have to be sensitive to that. There are songs that have blatant words in them that we try to avoid or maybe we'll edit them. I think there's a part of the audience that hopes you won't do that, but considering where we are, we just feel it's necessary."

Some broadcasters, like WRCX/Chicago's Jo Robinson, also feel deregulation has impacted the FCC's presence in radio. "Under deregulation, the FCC has lost its collective power. Certainly radio stations don't want to violate FCC rules and regs, but they're so grey now that it's far less

threatening than it used to be."

## **Radio as Corporate America**

The Telecommunications Act of 1996,\* which was signed into law on February 8th of that year, has probably brought more changes to the radio broadcasting industry than anything else in recent history. Those connected to the industry have even compared this bill to the crumbling of the Berlin Wall in terms of its affect on radio's future. Although the Telecommunications Act of 1996 influences all divisions under the jurisdiction of the Federal Communications Commission, its greatest affect on radio concentrates primarily on ownership regulations.

Before this Act was signed into law, there were limitations on the number of radio properties that could be owned by a single company both nationally and within a particular market. Now, national caps have been dropped, and the number of stations a company can own within a market has been raised. This market cap varies according to the size of the market. In large markets, no more than 8 radio stations can be owned by a single company with no more than 5 in a single service. In other words, a company may own up to 5 FM radio stations and up to 3 AM radio stations or vice versa. In smaller markets, the cap may be set at 7, 6 or 5 as the maximum number of stations owned by a single company, depending on how many signals are broadcasting in the market. Again, caps on the number of stations within a service (AM or FM) vary depending upon market size. However, the Justice Department is now getting involved by looking at some of the big purchases from an anti-trust monopoly point of view.

In addition to changes in ownership regulation, the Telecommunications Act of 1996 also increased the license term to 8 years for most radio stations. This action is expected to reduce the burden on individual radio properties by allowing the competitive marketplace to operate more efficiently since the process stations follow for license renewal will occur less frequently.

What is evident is that recent FCC rulings have already made quite an impact on radio. Jo Robinson, Assistant Program Director of WRCX/Chicago, says the dust stirred up by these changes is far from settling. "It's like gale force wind, yet the storm is still a thousand miles off shore, and it hasn't even hit us yet. It's been amazing to me to see how much of an impact this FCC deregulation has had. So many companies have allowed themselves to be bought and sold. By the year 2000 there could be five men who own all the radio stations in America. I'm not saying that it's

going to happen, but at this rate it looks that way. I talk to my peers at WLWQ in Columbus, and they tell me the GM there has just been named General Manager of all 7 radio stations their company owns in Columbus. The Program Director has been named PD of all the rock stations. You've got one person programming 3 different radio stations. One GM overseeing 7 different stations. How efficient can they be? How competitive can they be? It doesn't seem to matter because there are only 2 or 3 companies that own all the radio stations, and as long as they make x number of revenue dollars then the quality of the station doesn't even need to be brought to bear."

Rich Meyer, a former programmer and current President of Mediabase, a radio research firm, agrees that placing one PD in charge of several radio stations could have a negative impact on radio as a product. "I think it takes some of the creativity out of radio if you have one person programming several stations. It's hard for that person to get passionate about one particular station. I think what happens is that they tend to rely more on research, and it becomes more of a scientific process rather than an emotional process, which takes some of the spontaneity and creativity out of it. When I was programming KAZY in Denver there were about 5 or 6 really good rock stations. There was KAZY, KBPI, KBCO, and KTCL in Fort Collins. There were rock stations up and down the dial, and it was a fierce competitive battle. Now, if you take that same situation in Denver, Jacor owns every rock station in Denver. The guys from those radio stations are all now working down the hall from each other. While I'm sure there is still some feeling of competitiveness, they basically are directed to get the audience they're supposed to get. They have to be careful not to cross over into the other guy's territory. 20 years ago it was cut-throat. We'd do whatever we could to take whatever audience we could from any of the other rock stations. That made it fun, but that's all gone now."

Bob O'Connor, Senior Vice President of Optimum Broadcast Consulting and Research, believes some radio companies may sacrifice one station in their group so that another station can do well. If a company owns a Smooth Jazz and an Adult Contemporary station in the same market they're very careful not to cross the audiences over. They don't want to cannibalize the AC station with their Smooth Jazz station. They can't go up against each other."

However, O'Connor does feel monopolies have been good for radio consultants. "We now deal with group cluster-heads. One General Manager who's overseeing 8 stations in Chicago does not want to have 8 different consultant companies. They'd rather deal with one company who can handle

lots of formats. So a company like McVay Media is one-stop shopping. Now a radio company doesn't have to have 5 different consultants. They can all be under the McVay Media Alliance where they're just dealing with Mike McVay and his programmers. And now it's even going further with marketing companies and consulting companies joining up."

Rich Meyer also sees a positive side to multiopolies. "When you have several radio stations in a market owned by the same company you end up with more niche programming so radio stations are more super-serving their core audience. If the listener likes one particular type of radio then they know where they can go to get it."

Jim Jensen, President of Liggett Broadcasting, which owns a multiopoly cluster in Lansing, understands many programmer's apprehensions about multiopolies, including the potential for some radio groups to consolidate programming responsibilities down to one person. "In a market this size I would rather have a Program Director who we also put on the air so that he has multiple responsibilities. I would rather give him vertical responsibilities rather than horizontal responsibilities. These (radio stations) are individual brands. In a lot of cases, these brands are lifestyles. I think it's very difficult for a Program Director to do a fabulous job within a single brand--let alone 2 brands because of lifestyles."

Jensen believes consolidating responsibilities within stations has its benefits. "There are obvious advantages of consolidation. As you bring these stations together under one roof--and that's the way we're going--you have very obvious cost savings. Less phone bills, one receptionist, you can concentrate your engineering in one location. But those are one-time savings. We have really dramatically changed the way we title people, and the whole management chart. We have one General Manager overseeing our entire operation. There's now one Director of Sales. There's one sales staff. The local sales staff, in fact, has about half the number of people it did previously. We have about 15 people selling locally. They're divided into 2 sales teams. And the reason we divide them up is that there are too many people for one Sales Manager to handle. So we have 2 General Sales Managers reporting to the Director of Sales. In effect, they're really Local Sales Managers, each with a staff of 7 or 8 people. Their primary responsibility is local direct and local agency sales. There's a 3rd sales department, which is regional sales. That's made up of an individual who does business with larger agencies within the state as well as an assistant. The Director of Sales right now handles the national business. I foresee the day when we'll have a separate National Sales Manager. We also, for the first time, have created an Operations Manager who isn't a glorified Program

Director. This is an individual who has all the Program Directors reporting directly to him as well as the engineers, computer technicians, and the production departments. Although he has a programming background, he's not programming any one radio station. He's tied into the programming side, and all the issues that go on throughout that side of the company."

Mike McVay, President of McVay Media, says programmers who are responsible for programming several stations in a multipoly cluster do face some challenges. "This is a huge generalization, but let's say I'm a Program Director of station "A" and my company buys stations "B" and "C," and they put me in charge of "A," "B," and "C." Generally, the station that I was most recently attached to gets most of my attention. I protect it. I'm seeing programmers that don't allow stations "B" and "C" to compete on the same playing field as station "A." Over a period of time these programmers do evolve to really being over all three stations, but that's one problem I've seen. Another is if you have one General Manager who used to be over 2 stations or a PD who used to be over 2 stations and now they're over 5 stations, then what you're really saying is that that GM or PD's job was really just a part-time job. The amount of work to be done has absolutely quadrupled."

Another problem that has developed, according to McVay, is one that was rather unexpected. "If you have 2 radio stations, and both are Rock stations--say one is a Traditional Mainstream AOR and the other's a Classic Rock station--you'll probably start telling them they can't play the same songs. You don't want them to duplicate libraries. You want them to be completely different. One of them is going to die. I'm seeing that happen. I have some actual studies. In New Orleans, our client had a Mainstream AC station. Then they bought a Hot AC. What we did was push the Hot AC a little more Adult CHR, and took the Mainstream AC and leaned it into Soft AC. We kept telling the Adult CHR that it couldn't play Celine Dion and some of those artists because they belonged to the Soft AC. And, sure enough we killed the Hot AC. We managed to do what we could never do when we didn't own them. We were never able to beat them. Then we bought them, and we beat them. That station is now an Oldies station. A similar thing happened not long ago in Raleigh, North Carolina with 2 country stations."

Some broadcasters are concerned that killing off your own station in your multipoly is really like shooting yourself in the foot. Mike McVay agrees although he does see some exceptions, including multipoly clusters in smaller markets. "Let's say you're in Youngstown, Ohio, and there are only 2 ACs and you own them both. You might say *Well, I'm going to move one of them away from the other.* Or, for instance, in Kansas City where Entercom--a company we're working with--just purchased KUDL. They

already own K-Lite. They're going to change format on K-Lite and go AOR-which is totally different from where it was. KUDL is running commercials on the air telling people what K-Lite will be doing, and K-Lite's doing the same thing. On the K-Lite spot they're encouraging people to tune in to KUDL. They're moving the audience from one FM to the other. Their intention is, when they're done, that they'll be the only FM AC in the market. Here's the weakness in that. Kansas City is big enough that if someone else doesn't go AC against them they're crazy."

Liggett Broadcasting's Jim Jensen explains that consolidation, when done properly, can help radio as a business become more profitable. "I felt for the very first time we could begin really selling radio, and our sales people could forget about selling formats. They could sell the uniqueness of radio. The unique things about radio are, obviously, select targetability, it's mobility, and its cost efficiencies. What had gotten lost in the past 30 years are all of these things. What has ended up happening is that we go after other radio station's budgets, and we sell our own promotions and our own radio stations, but very rarely are radio people out there talking about radio versus television or radio versus newspaper. Although there have been tons of sales consultants out there pitching that idea, the reality is that when they got right down to selling it (the radio station) on the street they were always pitching it against another radio station. With 6 radio stations in the market there were 28 people all working the price down because they were competing for the same budgets. There were 3 people working the same amount of time on any one particular account. From a business stand-point, it didn't make sense having 3 people doing what one person could do. Those 3 people at the same time were driving the cost down, and everything was working backwards. So it made a lot of sense from a local and local agency situation to have one person selling all of the stations. The local advertisers love the approach. I have had nothing but kudos."

Mike McVay calls Jensen's approach to multiopolies *avant garde*. "Jim has always been on the cutting edge of where these things are going." But McVay also cites other broadcasters as leaders in the development of multiopolies. "CBS/Infinity's Mel Karmazin has been the leading guy in multiopoly and how to operate it. He's working dilligently to increase the revenue shares from 7% of a market's total advertising to get radio up into the 10% advertising range. Capstar Communications is coming at it from a different standpoint. They don't seem to have the same strategic sales plan that Mel Karmazin at CBS has. Capstar seems to be looking at it from a product side. They're looking at this Virtual Radio\* thing and pioneering it. Jacor Communications is operating on a hub and spoke system much like an

airline. Salt Lake City is their hub, and the spokes fan out to Boise, Ogden, Reno, and Colorado Springs. They're all coming off the Salt Lake City radio station."

But this new approach to radio is not without its challenges according to Jim Jensen. "It's been tough to train the sales people. We did this about 4 months ago. More than half of them are really struggling with the idea that they have to be selling radio and going out and finding and creating new budgets, and selling radio rather than going out and selling against another radio station. So it's going to take some time to work through this, but I can tell you that even now the payoff is just tremendous. In the long run, I believe it's going to be great for the product. I really think that because you control more inventory and more licenses you're more apt to take some chances from a product standpoint. I think there's going to be great benefits for the listeners."

That's because Jensen sees multiopolies taking a great deal of pressure off of individual radio stations. "If you only have one station you have to play by all the programming rules to make sure you make no mistakes. You can't afford to make the big mistake that kills your format. When you have 6 radio stations you can take some chances. If one station is down in the market, the likelihood is that one of your other stations is going to be up. From a programming standpoint, I think it's much more flexible. Much more fun."

Although consultant Lee Abrams believes the jury is still out on how multiopolies will affect radio in the long run, he does share Jensen's view that multiopolies could change radio for the better from a programming perspective. "My hope is that a company who owns 5 stations, if 2 of them are "cash cows," they'll have some fun with the other three. If that happens it could be great. It could open up a lot of opportunities for new formats. It's great for the listener, particularly, because a station might be able to do different kinds of musical mixes. If it was just owned by one guy, he'd probably do AC because he can't afford to try something new. On the other hand, it could be bad if stations don't care. *Here's a Classic Rock on one frequency and an AC on another. Let's just run them cheaply. Who's going to come after us? We control the billing in the market. Let's keep them cheap and lean, and who cares about the quality of the programming. We own the market.* That could happen, too."

That's a concern John Sebastian, PD of KZLA in Los Angeles, also shares. "Money! The number one priority. I think there could be a vast improvement, and actually cause the investors to get more for their investment, ultimately, if they put more concentration (and money) on the programming. I think they feel that once they have a facility, it's pretty much

of a "cash cow," and they can drain it for every dime it's worth. I don't think they actually get the money out of it that they could if they would devote more attention to quality programming."

News departments have also felt the pinch of consolidations says WCBS-AM news anchor Wayne Cabot. "What were once 3 news departments in one city are now one news department with far fewer people. In our case, WCBS and WINS became sister stations, and both have very large staffs producing the news. We were all wondering when they would combine staffs or if they would combine staffs. Would they have one reporter file for 2 different stations from the scene of a story? I mean, we really are competing against our own company in a sense. But the powers that be have decided *Hey! We're making a lot of money*. So as long as the cash is rolling in and the profit margin is making the owners happy then the general opinion seems to be *Let's not mess with a good thing*. Other stations that were strong for years like WNEW and WHN, they're out of business. So there are fewer jobs available. Fewer different voices out there. There may be more news than ever, but I think there are fewer voices delivering it. I find duopolies troubling to tell you the truth. I've heard arguments of *Oh, it makes the whole business healthier*. Well, maybe it makes a few people wealthier, but I don't know how much healthier it is."

Pat Rascona of Island Records says even record companies have felt the effects of radio consolidations. "Here in New York it used to be where you had Z100 and WPLJ and WNEW and so on. But now it seems all the major companies are buying up all these stations. K-Rock is now owned along side with WNEW, which used to be their competition. They also own WCBS-AM and FM. So it's more of a monopoly now in the industry. The group consultant or the group PD hurts us as far as the record side goes because some records might work in one particular market, and they might not work in another. Or you're not really getting the whole nine yards because if a group PD is holding the record off of a station in Harrisburg, but the record could work here in New York, he's not going to put it on here in New York because it's not working in Harrisburg. So it hurts us as far as that goes. I don't think radio is as independent as it used to be where you can regionally break records."

Jo Robinson says she's heard others voice Rascona's same worries. "I've heard record people say to me *Let's say I'm with Geffen Records and I'm coming to you and asking you to play the Counting Crows. You're programming a Modern AC, an Active Rock, and an Alternative station in a market. Some radio station groups will say "Well, yes, we'll play your Counting Crows record on Modern AC, but we don't want to play it on the*

*other 2 stations—even though it will fit—because we don't want to compete against ourselves."* So where record companies could have had their song exposed on 3 radio stations, now they've only got exposure on one radio station. If a PD oversees 3 stations, and they're combo-selling 2 out of the 3, then there's no competition there because he or she is not going to allow the music to cross enough or be similar enough to compete against each other. That's a shame. I can speak for us here at WRCX better than any other station in the country, but we are fiercely competitive. We want to eat up the Alternative station and the AAA station and the Classic Rock station, and spit them out. We have got a tremendous team to do that. To become a PD of more than just one station in a market the size of Chicago is mental and physical suicide if you want to be competitive and if you want to have the best sounding radio station in the market. That's what we want and that's what we have."

Other companies have also been affected by consolidations. Courtney Thomson, President of Broadcast Direct Marketing, Inc. and CEO of Optimum Broadcast Consulting and Research, Inc., says other company camps are developing in response to multipoly groups. "In the old days you separated things by format and age demographics and all of that. Starting now and in the future, the way things are being separated isn't by camp. That means if I'm working with Chancellor (as a consultant or marketing provider) chances are I'm not going to be working with CBS. That's as much of a reason why the alliance between Broadcast Direct Marketing, B/D & A, McVay Media, and Optimum has come about. It's the development of being able to provide each of our clients who are in those individually different camps the level of services they need without interruption of service or without having to have a poor quality job being done."

Mike McVay, President of McVay Media and CEO of B/D & A, adds that when support companies align themselves with each other to provide full service capabilities to a radio company it generates additional revenue to the support companies through cross-referrals. "Let's say McVay Media is consulting an Adult Contemporary station that has a sister station that plays Rock. We didn't like seeing them bring in outside consultants who would work on that side of the hallway. If we're able to have a consultant who works with our company or an affiliated company walk in the door then we're keeping it and the money all in house. We're better able to control our destiny. Also, there's the networking that comes with it. In getting in bed with a company like Courtney Thompson's Optimum, which is their New Age Jazz company, we have the ability to expand beyond the 125 stations we consultant and add another 100 stations. So it really increases the network

and helps us bring new people in. It has also been a real interesting benefit for clients in that--let's say that we're working for a station and a new station pops up across the street. If we consult that format in some other part of the world we're able to sit down and say *Well, our experience says xyz.*"

John O'Dea, PD of WNNK/Harrisburg (1996 recipient of a Marconi Award for CHR station of the year), believes radio's competitive spirit may suffer due to consolidation. "We may see a decline in radio war games because people will be fighting internally instead of with other competition. They'll be fighting within themselves--which is kind of bizarre, but that's what's probably going to happen. It takes the fun out of it, I think. It's all from within. It's always great when competition comes along. I love it. I think competition is fun. It makes everybody better."

An interesting phenomenon that has occurred with multiopolies, according to KISS PD Kevin Vargas, is that while owning more of the market can give you strength within your company, it can also be your station's biggest weakness. "Your competitor also becomes more intelligent. They're no longer those idiots down the street because suddenly they've become your own people. You're saying *Man, the bar just got raised. These guys are a better radio station.* That's what happened to us. As Virgil (KISS Operations Manager) became more involved with Magic (sister station of KISS), they became a much better radio station. Simply because it was his guidance, leadership, and intelligence pulling the strings and running the show. So they started dipping into our pool of 25-34s--not because they were marketing to them--but because they became a better radio station. They became another option. So, you share your intelligence with your sister stations. That's the biggest threat. But it's also the biggest challenge."

Another challenge to owners of multiopolies, says Liggett Broadcasting's Jim Jensen, occurs when stations who were once competitors are brought together under one roof. "The most complex problem is how this affects those individuals who are brought together. It's not that we don't try and attempt to create solutions to these changes that we're putting people through. It's those individuals having to deal with the changes that are going on. I don't know how to manage that. I think that's a problem everyone across the country in the broadcasting industry is facing right now. The biggest unknown is how do you affect individuals so that they can handle change in their lives? It is really, really rapid change. You put all these different cultures together, and every radio station with every manager has its own unique culture. When you put them all together in one room it's instant chaos. No matter how well you've prepared and planned it's a chaotic

situation. I think if you interviewed anyone across the country in this situation they will tell you that's the single biggest problem. And if they don't they're not telling you the truth."

Mike McVay agrees. "That is definitely an area where radio station owners should be more conscious and sensitive. First off, they ride into town as if they are Ceasar on his chariot. I created quite a few rumbles at the most recent Radio Only convention when I got up to speak in front of a large group of owners. I told them the first thing you've got to understand in multiopolies is that you should not ride in like you just conquered someone at war. The fact that you just bought the other radio station does not mean you're smarter or even a better broadcaster. All it means is that you're better financed. And, unfortunately, we as an industry are doing very little to assimilate one culture into the next. Especially since some radio stations are changing ownership 3 and 4 times in a year. My client in Kansas City has had 6 owners in the last 18 months. That's got to be a record! I was just in Kansas City a week ago and the Program Director told me he can't wait to do his taxes this year. He was laughing about giving his accountant all those W2s!"

Jim Jensen believes that in order for these changes to work in the most efficient and effective manner owners have to be a little daring. "If you stick with the same old *I'm going to have 6 General Managers, and I'm going to continue to compensate everyone the same way, and I'm not going to make any changes* all you're going to do is own 6 radio stations. I don't think you're maximizing the full potential of what has just happened. I understand that there are a lot of companies out there with the philosophy of *We don't want to change a lot of things right now. We're going to continue with a lot of managers and the same staff because we're so aware of the potential problems of change that we don't want to do that.* I don't feel that way. I think, ultimately, you're going to have to make those changes. These bigger companies and these public companies that are paying huge multiples to buy these radio stations, at some point, are going to have to make these changes. You've got to take the plunge at some point. And when you take that plunge, you're going to have the chaos that change creates. How do you get through it? You handle it a day at a time. You try to be as honest as you can with your people. Let them know what your intentions are. Where you're going. Let them know that you understand that change is going on. Time heals a lot of these problems. It really does. You just have to get through them. I think, when you make the commitment to make these changes, a lot of what you're doing you've already laid down on paper. It speaks for itself. It's there for the taking. In this situation here there are very few people who didn't

relocate to a new office--myself included. I took the entire corporate staff and brought them to another building. Everybody moved. A move in itself, even if you do nothing more than move someone across the aisle to another desk, is change. Nobody likes change, but change is a constant in everybody's life. Eventually, as days, weeks and months go by, pretty soon we'll have a year behind us, and things will settle down."

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## **The Duopoly Blues** **by Dwight Douglas**

When I moved to Washington, DC in 1974, I thought I was only going to be the Program Director of DC101, a new Rock FM station. At the time, the AM station WWDC was MOR/Talk/General Service and had a Program Director who was growing more and more frustrated with the new owners.

One day he turned to the receptionist and announced he was going out to lunch and wouldn't be back. She laughed. I've never heard from or seen the guy since.

At the time I had an opinion about everything and let everybody know what I thought the AM station needed. They made me the PD of both stations. The AM consultant was Kent Burkhardt and the rest is history. (Editor's note: Dwight Douglas later joined Kent Burkhardt as part of Burkhardt/Abrams Consulting firm.)

After about a year of incredible success with the FM, the AM station proved to be one of the most difficult programming nightmares. Between the FM band growing up, the population moving out of the signal coverage and dealing with mega-salaried-ego-oriented jocks, I was frustrated.

One day one of the female announcers from my FM who was very friendly with the AM staff told me the "truth." She explained that the AM people believed that I cared more about the FM than the AM. Shocked, I asked why. She said they never see those contest giveaways like you have on the FM **every** weekend.

That conversation has always stuck with me. I learned that people's perceptions are formed by what you do and don't do. Even when they don't know what you're going through, they need a certain amount of T.L.C. to feel **okay**.

In the last 500 days, we have garnered a healthy number of duopolized clients. In some situations the buyer has had their "favorite" consultant and

we've gone away. In an equal number of situations we've been asked to help with the second station in a duop'd market. I've encountered something in duopolies that reminds me very much of my AM-FM "Daddy likes you better" experience in DC.

Every company has a **corporate culture** and **involved vision** which it attempts to bring to all its divisions or properties. One of the disturbing by-products of duopoly is an apparent lack of openness as two forces come together.

I've talked to many PDs who do not receive the respect or recognition from the **new owner** because the buyer can't get beyond the old war cry of "kill the competitor." They respond as if they are being forced to sleep with the enemy.

This isn't the case at every duopoly. At one of our stations, the recently acquired staff celebrated the new owners. It was clearly a case of "the wicked witch" being dead.

But it's rather shallow not to listen to "**how we did it here**" in order to make an educated decision on which system or philosophy is better. Throwing up the wall of "Well, we won't be doing it that way anymore" extends the *us* and *them* mentality.

People generally hate change. Many duopolies are accompanied by moves. This physical displacement sends an interesting message. Good business judgement is always the driver in these moves; better location with the best rent rate determines the "where." But owners should consider the fact that when one station moves into another, both "sides" will need psychological treatment.

One PD admitted he found himself driving into the parking lot of his old building one morning. Embarrassed and disoriented he made his way back across town where the music now comes from. Some old timers will resent giving up office space to these "**foreigners**." Management is foolish not to ask what the workers want out of this new arrangement.

Mergers and changes in management are nothing new in business, but some of the GMs and PDs have not been counseled correctly. How would you feel if after having the best book of your career the new owner eliminated your bonus program? Now imagine how good you'd feel if the new owner shook your hand and said, "**Thanks** for doing such a good job. **You were a great competitor.**" Two real life reactions to the same situation.

Obviously, corporate policies and procedures must be instituted, but people are also part of the asset value of any new property. You can't eliminate everyone on day one and maintain the quality of the product. One

of the biggest complaints from GMs and PDs in new duops is that **they've never been told where they stand**. This insecurity is unnecessary. Six months into a merger somebody needs to say, "You made the cut."

For many, this is a new frontier. The duopoly blues is better than no job at all, but those who are asked to pay their duopoly dues after creating great stations have a right to be uptight. If the new company wants to keep **good people**, they'll have to treat them like **good people**.

*Reprinted with permission from B/D & A and McVay Media. This article appeared in The Approach, Volume VII, Issue 15/August 1, 1994.*

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As has been the case with Liggett Broadcasting's multipoly group in Lansing, consolidating stations can result in reducing the number of staff members in order for the multipoly group to run more efficiently. That's a particularly big fear among many in the radio industry says Leslie Fram, Program Director of WNNX/Atlanta. "The downside to multipolies has been that a lot of great radio people and programmers are edged out because of consolidation. People are without jobs."

However, Jensen points out that current technology has also been responsible for the reduction in jobs--particularly on air positions. "I think that in forcing all these radio stations into a single location it's forcing us to take a look at technology. All of this is driving the radio business into the digital and computer age. I think everybody is actually moving that way very fast. I would say that, in itself, is a downside from a performer's standpoint. It allows you to program a lot of these radio stations in off hours with the aid of these computer-driven programs. You can eliminate a lot of weak talent by doing voice-tracking on these things with your better talent. So it's going to be more and more difficult, I think, for these upstart people to find a place to begin in the business. I see that in talent and in sales. You're keeping your stronger people, and you're always finding ways to do things more efficiently. Most of us in the radio business for years felt like we had never been to work. I've been in the business for 25 years, and you often tell the story about how you've never really had to go to work. You've never really had a job because you're in radio. But I think you get a sense now that you're in a bigger industry. You're starting to take a look at the bigger scope. You're looking at better people. The opportunities for radio to go out and really pitch itself against all the other mediums is real. It's not something you

just talk about anymore. You can talk about these great advantages of radio. I'm not one who believes that an advertiser puts aside a radio budget. That there's a budget set aside for radio, one for TV, and one for newspaper. We're all competing against each other. There's no doubt about that. These changes have given us some new-found strength."

One way to capitalize on this strength, according to Jensen, is in the marketing approach to multiopolies. "The one thing you have to guard against is overlapping product. The partisan listeners to each format don't look at ownership. They look at the uniqueness of their chosen format, their chosen brand. We want to make sure we deliver a product that way. I needed to guard against like kind of promotions, overlapping contests, and the styles of delivery so I wanted somebody who really had an outside view of marketing. Someone who could clearly define marketing differences."

Jensen says he accomplished this by hiring away a marketing professional from Coca Cola of Michigan. "It was my feeling in looking at Lansing and the product mix that our company has that we were actually more like a soft drink bottler with a number of flavors. So I wanted to bring in an outside person who could look at it from that perspective, and not think of it as unique radio stations. I didn't want a radio mentality. I wanted someone with more of a marketing and branding idea. I don't want my marketing person to learn how to talk radio. The last thing I want is to find my Marketing Director talking call letters with another Marketing Director at some convention. That would be the worst possible thing I could think of."

Supporters of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 call it an initiative that will stimulate increased competition within markets and bring about decreased government regulation. One potential downside, which is a concern that has already been expressed by many within the industry, is that radio stations across the country will eventually be controlled by only a handful of ownership clusters, making it tough for small companies to compete.

It's a trend that already seems to be happening according to Jim Jensen. "When the Telecom Act was passed, all of a sudden Wall Street became very interested. Public money was available, and you could now talk in terms of hundreds of millions of dollars. Before that we were a nothing industry. Now there are a half a dozen companies that are buying up stations as fast as they can. They have the kind of resources that they can go out there and virtually pay anything for a radio station. For a private company like ours you can no longer go out there and compete dollar-wise for most of these radio stations. You have to be really selective in how you go about building your business. I feel like I'm in an entirely different world--and I am--from

these guys in the big companies. They may look at me and laugh, but I think we run a very efficient radio company. I don't know if these bigger companies have gotten around to thinking the way we do yet. All they're concerned about is buying as many radio stations as they can. I'm concerned about profitability for our ownership."

Chuck Knight, Program Director of WSNY/Columbus, sees multiopolies as going one of 2 ways. "Either you're going to have one conglomerate controlling the market, and just being pigs while they kick everybody else to the curb or it's going to allow some specialized formats that don't really drive revenue to exist. I also think that in another 7 years we could see what happened in the late '80s. This industry went through a real downturn in the late 80s when everybody had bought radio stations at high multiples of cash flow in the early '80s. When those 7 year financing packages came due in the late '80s the economy turned sour at the same time. There are a lot of companies that were built in the early '80s that didn't make it through, and so, therefore, there were some properties that were picked up at pennies on the dollar. Stations that sold for 15 million in the early '80s were sold for 5 million in the late '80s. I think we might be seeing a little bit of that right now because the rush to duopolies is creating multiples once again. When the notes come due in another 7 years there may be some companies that were built today that may have trouble coming up with the money. It may be flushed down the drain. And it might create some good opportunities for people to pick up some properties again for pennies on the dollar."

Bob O'Connor believes there is some validity to Knight's prediction. "Some of these stations may fall back to some small Mom and Pop companies because some of these stations are not going to be successful. When the (bank) notes come due they (big radio companies) may say *We can't afford to do this anymore. We've got to get rid of this station.* Then they'll spin it off for a quarter of what they paid for it. I think that will happen. At least I hope so. How would you like to be a programmer who takes over a station that was bought for 20 times its cash flow, and the first thing they say to you is that the company needs a nine share in the next ratings book or you're out of a job? There's no time for the PD to do anything. No time to develop an audience. You have to start doing manipulative marketing and all kinds of things like that. It's a different world in radio now. It changes daily instead of monthly."

Is consolidation something to fear? At this point, Mike McVay doesn't think so. "There are 9000 radio stations. I guess if 5 guys owned all 9000 radio stations then that would be a problem. I don't think that's going to happen. If you look at Cleveland you have Nationwide Communications,

Jacor Communications, and Clear Channel. There are also 3 individual smaller owners. There's a Jazz station that's owned by a neighboring newspaper. I really haven't run into a situation where there's just 2 owners and that's it. Frankly, there were too many radio stations in the United States. In Australia there are under 50 radio stations. In Canada there are 77 radio stations. The U.S. has 9000 radio stations. That's unbelievable! I think this deregulation thing came about because people were starving. I have viewed consolidation as the calling of the herd. It's really about eliminating the weak and the sick from the herd."

Still, Jim Jensen seems to understand many broadcaster's concerns about consolidation. "I've been in the business for a long time now. It was disheartening when the whole thing started--duopoly before multipoly. I think an awful lot of us got in the business because we have an entrepreneur spirit. A lot of people have never had the chance to really go out and put their own stations and companies together because of this (multipolies), and that's going to be awfully difficult to do in the future. It's very difficult to compete against these huge companies with all the dollars that are available to them. But radio is a business that was really an archaic industry. It needed to be pushed into the '90s. It's a very small industry that competes in the bigger advertising world. I think that it (multipolies) is a very healthy thing. I think, eventually, with the right people we'll get from 7 cents to 8 cents if we can start selling radio. If people start understanding that the benefit is to start selling radio. I try to tell our Sales Managers and our sales people that I see this as much the same as selling television. With television, a network rep or local sales guy will go out and really sell the idea of television. When they get to budget, they then place it on individual shows. These individual programs are targeted to various demographics and psychographics. No different than the 6 radio stations we have here. We really have to start concentrating on the uniqueness of selling radio. I don't think multipolies is a programming thing. Multipolies are good for programming, but they're very, very good for sales. And they can also be good from an efficiency standpoint on a bottom-line. We can really begin to think out of the box, and bring new people into the industry for the first time."

Jensen has one final caution to add. "Multipolies are here. This is now the industry. If there is anybody who is wishing they would go away they'd better go out and find a new career."

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## The Most Powerful Man in Radio

*In case you're one of the two people in the radio business who doesn't know who Thomas O. Hicks is, here's a brief introduction. Tom Hicks, chairman and CEO of Hicks, Muse, Tate & Furst, Inc., has been involved in the radio finance game for almost a decade. He has more than 25 years of experience in leveraged acquisitions and private investments, and has successfully raised more than \$3.5 billion of private equity funds. He has consummated more than \$24 billion worth of leveraged acquisitions.*

Tom Hicks truly loves the radio medium. As the money behind the Evergreen/Chancellor deal, Hicks is at the behind-the-scenes helm of both the largest billing group (Evergreen/Chancellor) and the group with the largest number of stations (Capstar). With the two groups, he controlled 341 stations but, with the newly acquired SFX Broadcasting, added 71 stations for a total count of 412. With the recent acquisition of Katz Radio Group, he has all the representation he needs. Everyone in radio is waiting to see what his next move will be. Read on to find out what the "Most Powerful Man in Radio" will be doing in the coming months and years. It might just affect you.

### Absolute Power

**Ink:** How does it feel to be the most important man in radio?

**Hicks:** I am not sure that I would agree with the assessment, but I do think these are very exciting times for the radio broadcasting industry and, for that matter, the television broadcasting industry as well. We are in the investment business and are driven by the ability to achieve attractive rates of returns on our money and our investors' money. This has always been a great industry but, when the government turned on the green light last year, we decided that, probably, an entrepreneurial group like ourselves could compete very effectively compared to some of the larger companies in the industry. We have really worked hard to try to be at the forefront of consolidation.

**Ink:** Are you involved in this business because of your love for radio, or because it is a good investment?

**Hicks:** You have got that in reverse order. I am doing it because it is a good investment, but it is nice that I also happen to like radio.

**Ink:** Are we still in a undervalued radio market, or are the prices starting to get out of control?

**Hicks:** I do not think they are ever going to go any higher. Over the long term, my prediction is that they will be slightly lower, but not terribly lower. Because, looking into today, with the current growth of the industry and the lack of capital, or the intensity of the free cash return on equity to investors, can be attractive if multiples are just a lot higher in manufacturing, service, financial and other companies. I do not know what the long-term multiple will be, but I think it will still be something in the 12 to 14 range, or maybe higher.

**Ink:** Some say, "These people are absolutely nuts and they are going to be out of business in five years," because they think these multiples are ridiculous. What do you say to that?

**Hicks:** When you go through a classic consolidation play, entrepreneurial companies have the opportunity to excel. So, if our vision is correct, we will truly excel and only time will tell. So far, it is looking pretty good.

### **Digging In**

**Ink:** Did you ever believe you would grow this quickly?

**Hicks:** No. However, I have been around business enough to know there is clearly a momentum factor at work. Ten or 11 years ago, we ended up consolidating most of the non-Coca-Cola and Pepsi brands. We started buying one company and then were led to buying another. Once you have a strong presence in an industry, you have advantages over other people. You have insights into business synergies and better credibility. So, I have been through this kind of phenomena somewhat before. It has moved a lot faster than we thought it would move back in February 1996. Our first acquisition with Steve Dinetz closed in January 1994. It is kind of hard to believe now, as we look at the 300 and some odd radio stations between the two groups.

**Ink:** Will you want to turn this around and sell it, or is this a long-term operations investment?

**Hicks:** Well, it is both. Again, we have a responsibility to deliver liquidity to our investors over a five- to 10-year period. What I envision is that all our radio holdings, someday, will be publicly traded. So, sometime in the next five to 10 years we will let our producer investors realize on their investment. But, I do plan to keep my investment in this industry for many

years to come.

### **The Family Way**

**Ink:** Were you and your brother exposed to radio early in life?

**Hicks:** Yes. We grew up in a nocturnal radio family in a small town. At age 42, our father, compelled by a financial backer, bought a small radio station and ended up buying three or four other small ones in Texas towns like Port Arthur, Bastrop Station, Laredo, Big Spring and Sherman. Later, he bought one in Beaumont and sold one for it.

**Ink:** Are the days of entrepreneurs like your father past, or will a manager someday be able to buy their own radio station?

**Hicks:** Sure. In the smaller markets, you will always have what I call owners/operators who will be able to put the money together with some financial backing, just like someone did for my father. I think there are still 11,000 radio stations.

### **The Numbers Game**

**Ink:** Out of the approximately 11,000 stations in the country, how many are you going to end up controlling?

**Hicks:** Well, we are not driven by absolute numbers. We are driven by trying to create efficient clusters where we can operate in markets more efficiently than during the preconsolidation radio days. I think the geographic clusters are more important to us than the absolute numbers.

**Ink:** Do you have a number in mind though? What do you think your limit will be?

**Hicks:** I am not sure. I think the chess pieces in the larger groups are starting to become fewer and very obvious. Depending on how those are played by various people, hopefully including ourselves, those numbers probably will be more clearly known. Again, what we are attempting to do is gain scale and fill in our geographic clusters to become more efficient.

### **Consolidating**

**Ink:** Based on your experiences in other industries that have consolidated, what do you think of the steps that we are going to see as an industry? What phases are we going to go through as we consolidate?

**Hicks:** You have already seen it but, at the end of the day, I think the radio industry is going to be much more competitive with other forms of media, particularly the newspaper industry at the local market level, than they ever have been before. There is a huge umbrella under which the radio industry can still compete, and that is what is going to drive the growth for many years to come.

**Ink:** **Employees are having difficulty adapting to this new consolidated environment. What advice do you have for these people?**

**Hicks:** I think the flurry of activity this past year, as well as the next one or two years, will settle down. However, clearly the number one asset radio broadcasters have, besides their licenses, are the people. People are what makes all of these things work as commercial enterprises. The opportunities are going to be better than they have ever have been before for people to rise up through their profession, either in programming, sales, or engineering.

When you cluster stations, you do not need the same number of telephone receptionists or accounting clerks, or the same number of a lot of things that are basically fixed costs to a radio station. So, unfortunately, the people that are redundant will find other jobs. Again, this is part of what makes the free market work. For good people inside the radio industry, I do think they are going to have better opportunities than they had before, particularly the general managers.

### **A Piece of the Pie**

**Ink:** **Do you see how we can really capitalize on radio's percentage of the pie, growing through coordinated efforts in our sales organizations?**

**Hicks:** Absolutely. My goal is, and as an industry radio's goal should be, 10 percent of the pie. Within the next five to 10 years it will be entirely possible. I would say, in the last 25 years, radio has moved from a 6.8 to 7.0, and that just is not good enough. Radio should be a larger share of the overall advertising pie.

**Ink:** **Advertising Age actually says it went backward, and that radio is only getting three percent of the pie. Is it?**

**Hicks:** Of course, if you start adding new forms of media like the Internet, or things like that, that may be. Who knows what the numbers are, but I believe that over the next ten years advertisers are going to want to reach people who are traveling in their cars. Radio will always be the most efficient medium to do that.

### **Legal Matters**

**Ink:** Do you have any thoughts about what the Justice Department has done up to this point?

**Hicks:** My belief is that radio competes very strongly with television, newspapers and cable TV. The Justice Department really should view the radio consolidation in that perspective. Certainly in the last 12 months they have sent some very confusing signals to the industry. We are trying our best to help them understand the competitive dynamics that are going on in the overall media marketplace.

**Ink:** Are you willing to fight the Justice Department if you felt they were restricting you too much?

**Hicks:** Sure. As a responsible industry leader, if we believe we are right and they are wrong, we need to get clarity. However, I would like to be optimistic enough to think we will be able to work things out with them, because we always have been able to in the past.

### **Survival of the Fittest**

**Ink:** You could hire one or two dozen people to do lobbying and specific research for your radio stations, instead of paying a fee. Do organizations like the NAB and the RAB have to change the way they do business to survive?

**Hicks:** People always have to change when there is a sea of change. That is part of what makes the free market system work so well. What really happens is you have 11,000 radio stations and 1,000 television stations and an archaic government policy that was set by unenlightened politicians thirty years ago, so the free market has not been allowed to function. I think, as it does, all those support activities will change to serve the market as it develops. You still have 11,000 radio stations and a huge employment, customer and vendor base, and all those types of organizations and people are going to have reason to do business with each other. It will be different.

**Ink:** Specifically, how do you think it will be different for the NAB or the RAB?

**Hicks:** You will have a smaller number of participants, but you will still have a large number of participants. It will just be smaller.

**Ink:** Are the smaller markets the ones that are not necessarily part of the larger groups?

**Hicks:** Right.

### **Looking Ahead**

**Ink:** what kind of synergies do you hope to take advantage of in the future?

**Hicks:** Capstar has gotten very large, very quickly, and it has been a pretty good laboratory to see how you can get efficiencies with some of the change. We're moving very rapidly to centralize programming, computerized programming, common group purchasing and things that, by having a larger presence in the marketplace, will allow us to deal with people on a basis that is more attractive to the group than before, when it was a bunch of small stations dealing by themselves.

The sky is the limit as to what could happen. What is really going to happen, which has happened so far, is that the real winners are the listeners. Because, people are able to program, or aggressively take more chances, to try to serve distinct niches more fully. You are starting to see, particularly in the larger markets where you have some pretty good clusters now, real programming improvements to the market. And, this is just in the early process of developing.

**Ink:** In five years, what will the landscape of the radio industry be like?

**Hicks:** It depends on whether people decide they want to be focused in a one-sized market or a broader-grouped market. We have made the decision that we like all size markets. We have a focus on clusters in small markets and are big believers in that. Other people may differ with us about that. So, the eventual numbers of large companies that will be created will probably depend on what some of the existing large companies' views are toward moving down market. My guess is that, like most industries that go through consolidation, in the lead there probably will be a handful of four, five or six large groups, then much larger groups of smaller companies.

**Ink:** Do you have any particular visions for radio?

**Hicks:** I think our actions will speak for themselves over the next few years. We have to keep our competitive advantage as best we can.

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## **Slave to the System**

**by Greg Gillispie**

Arguably, radio is in its most exciting time since perhaps its earliest days. From the creative point-of-view, multipoly is giving programmers many opportunities to specifically target an audience with programming concepts that would not have worked in the days of get-as-many-listeners-as-you-can. From the ownership point-of-view, radio is carving out a bigger piece of the total advertising pie, making the medium a more attractive marketing and investment tool.

There are, however, troubling trends developing as owners try to figure how to position each station in the cluster and maximize the revenue potentials. Much like the late '80s and very early '90s, when bankers began to control the way radio stations were operated, the business end of radio seems to be moving into the driver's seat.

In an effort to reduce the cost of operations, radio stations are experimenting with line extension marketing and research, digital automation systems, and something called virtual radio. While experimentation has always been a hallmark of radio, experimentation driven by the business side has not always yielded better quality programming concepts or more successful radio stations.

While trying to get more bang for your buck is an admirable business decision, marketing two radio stations in the same direct mail piece or billboard campaign only causes confusion. Remember, most listeners don't know how radio works, only that is an entertainment medium.

Trying to do a format search for one station in the context of a full market perceptual for another does not necessarily isolate all the opportunities that may exist. People only have so much time to spend on the phone talking about their radio listening habits.

Automating multiple dayparts by using some of the new high-tech digital systems may reduce your payroll; however, if the system cannot completely deliver creative, spontaneous, or audience-interactive programming, you may end up cutting even more positions to offset the ratings and revenue losses the technology caused.

Turning your programming elements over to a company outside your market with the hope the return product will sound as live and local as a real radio station may dash your audience's expectations. Radio has not done a

good job over the last several years developing its talent and now the bullpen has been virtually depleted. So now radio stations are ending up with virtual talent than cannot completely reflect the pulse of the market because they have not experienced it firsthand. Your listeners don't want a virtual good time--they want the real thing.

Great radio has been and always will be a product-driven medium. While we face multiple challenges as to how to operate larger numbers of radio stations, we must not become a \$lave to the \$ystem. Concentrate on making the product great and the business will follow.

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## **New Technologies**

Not too many years ago, the use of computers in radio, except for music scheduling and other business functions, was almost unheard of. But with the recent digital explosion, many radio stations are now finding computers to be a time-saving tool that also helps to improve the quality of the programming being presented on air.

Today, it's quite common to find at least one digital work station at a radio station. There are quite a few computer-driven programs available on the market that make putting together quality production pieces, commercials and programs more time efficient. How these work stations are used depends on the radio station and the goals management has for their use. Some stations with few staff members may use a digital system as a vehicle to run automated programming. Voice tracks are laid down on the computer's hard drive and are inserted in between songs and in front of commercial stop sets. The music and commercials may also be found on the computer's hard drive or the computer can be connected to outside sources such as satellites and CD players. The computer is then programmed to trigger these sources at specific times.

Along these lines, a new form of radio called Virtual Radio has crept into the radio industry. Michael Dalfonzo, Vice President of The Research Group, a Seattle-based company that is the first to offer Virtual Radio Programming to stations around the country, says Virtual Radio has

developed due to consolidation. According to Dalfonzo, a company that owns a multipoly cluster in a market can use Virtual Radio on some of their lesser performing stations in the cluster while still keeping their "cash cow" stations live to maximize profits for the company. "It's a very new concept, but the interest and growth has been almost explosive. I foresee it being in virtually every size market in the future."

But just what is Virtual Radio? Dalfonzo describes it as a delivery method much like a satellite product. "It's a way to deliver air personalities to a radio station in a market where they may not be able to get the talent they need to do a really good job or to do it at a tremendous cost savings to ownership. What we do is provide radio stations with a complete turn-key package. We schedule their music for them (the station) based on whatever their market situation dictates as far as the number of breaks per hour, number of commercial units they schedule an hour, the flavor of the format such as Classic Rock, Hard-Edged Classic Rock, Pop-Leaning Classic Rock or whatever. We provide the station with customized voice tracks. Our announcers are disc jockeys. The difference is that they're not in the station's local town. They're in Seattle or some other region."

Dalfonzo says the format is then delivered on the station through a digital automation system. "All voice tracks, the music and everything else is recorded digitally, stored on their hard drive at the local radio station, and then delivered to them via some form of high-speed network. We're typically using a wide area network frame relay."

Dalfonzo adds that his company generally recommends that stations continue with a live morning show and then use Virtual Radio Programming the rest of the day. "Mornings are a different animal. You need all those service elements that are very critical to morning drive. But we do have several markets who do Virtual Radio 24 hours a day seven days a week."

Mike McVay, President of McVay Media, says there's an advantage to Virtual Radio in addition to the obvious cost savings for station owners. "Let's say they're live in the morning but then automate with Virtual Radio mid-days, afternoons, evenings and overnights. Or they may do regionalized satellite programming and call that Virtual Radio. What regionalized satellite programming means is--say you're a morning show in Charlotte. We'll take your show and pump it into Greenville, Savannah, Augusta, Hilton Head, and Ashville. Your morning show would be a regionalized morning show. The music that is played comes out of one central location. The positive is that it allows a smaller market such as Greenville to be able to present to their audience two 100 thousand dollar disc jockeys. The negative would be that you do give up some localization. You're not

necessarily serving the community as well as you once were. It that important? I don't know. I may be one of the few consultants who says this regionalized programming is probably going to do very well. I point to Howard Stern as proof. But Howard is doing something that a lot of people can't do. If you're a morning man in Charlotte the odds are that you're not going to have Sylvester Stallone's mother on the air with you. The odds are that David Lee Roth is not going to stop by for a visit. I do agree that Howard is an unfair comparison, but I don't think we can just out of hand rule out that Virtual Radio will be a failure. I've challenged all my consultants to say *How do we make it better? How do we work with Virtual Radio and improve upon it?* Quite frankly, if we don't do that I can see consultants not being nearly as important in the future."

A big concern regarding Virtual Radio among many in the radio industry is how stations can maintain a sense of localness in the market. Michael Dalfonzo says The Research Group uses several methods to help stations keep the local attitude alive. "Every station is a little bit different depending on the market situation and the competitive environment. For instance, we have a client in Killeen, Texas that is a Rock station. They're the only Rock station in the market. Fort Hood is there. There are probably 70 or 80 thousand enlisted men and women between the ages of 18 and 30. So, in that market it's a real rock and roll radio station. In Huntsville, Alabama the demographics are a little bit older so we do a Classic Rock station there. Each of those formats are very much customized for the local marketplace. In the Killeen market we play a lot more Stevie Ray Vaughan and ZZ Top. In a Macon or Atlanta we may play more southern rock. We do hundreds of music tests and perceptual studies a year so we pretty much know what kinds of things people are looking for."

Dalfonzo says his company works with the local radio stations to determine what local additives are needed. "We work with our clients almost daily on who's listening, what promotions they're doing, what remotes they're doing--that sort of thing. All the localisms are fed to us from the station. They give us the information, we format it, and feed it back to our disc jockeys who are then putting it into the context of the programming. For instance, we get pronunciation tapes so that we know how to say the local street names. We know where people go on the weekends. We have a client in Fayetteville, North Carolina, and there's a couple of lakes there where people go on the weekends. One of them is called Beaver Lake. One of our jocks has appointed himself the mayor of Beaver Lake. He sounds really local. We get all the Chamber of Commerce stuff for the jocks to use. I mean--think about it. 90% of the jocks who are on any given station are

from somewhere else anyway, and they had to get acclimated to the local market as well. We've come up with some systems to make it real efficient to get the jocks that information to get them up to speed really quickly. They've got a book with excerpts from the local newspaper that we download off the Internet. If the jocks don't know how to pronounce something they've got somebody they can call to get the correct pronunciation and to make sure the accent is right. We've been told by some of the Program Directors and General Managers in the markets where we are that our jocks sound more local than their live morning show."

Another concern expressed by many broadcasters is that Virtual Radio is eliminating positions at radio stations. The fear is that radio will not be able to raise up a new generation of broadcasters. Mike McVay is concerned that this practice may have far-reaching consequences for future air talent. "The question becomes where do we find new talent? Where do we develop them? I have a 21 year old nephew who studied to be an accountant at college, but he also does a weekend airshift in a little town outside of Cleveland. This is a kid who would give up being an accountant in a New York second to be on the radio. He just wants to be a disc jockey. He'll work Monday through Friday as an accountant and then pull a Friday night, Saturday night, and Sunday night shift on this radio station, and then start all over again at his accounting job on Monday. I don't know how he's going to get much better than he is now because with Virtual Radio, nobody's going to need him to do overnights for them. I don't think there's a talent pool at this point. I think it's a talent puddle. I think that's going to get worse."

McVay adds that no one in the broadcasting industry seems to be addressing that problem at this point, but he does offer one consolation. "The good news is that the entire medium is not rushing into Virtual Radio yet. The majority of the world is still out there doing it the same way it's always been done."

However, The Research Group's Michael Dalfonzo believes that people who are serious about radio as a career are embracing Virtual Radio. "It's a lot more efficient. The naysayers are rapidly coming around and saying *You know what? This (Virtual Radio) is going to happen. This is an inevitable evolution of the industry in view of consolidation.* It's a natural because the multiples that these owners are paying for these radio stations. They have got to operate them as efficiently as is humanly possible. The concept of having 5 or 6 people doing the work of 2 doesn't appeal to them anymore. I think Virtual Radio is something that is going to explode over the next 2 or 3 years." Not all Program Directors are fond of this (Virtual Radio) approach to radio. KISS/San Antonio PD Kevin Vargas isn't

convinced that machines should be used to replace people—even though some stations may find them to be more cost effective. "Machines don't connect with people. They're just the vehicle in which you can communicate. Bottom-line radio is still about communication. So, the technology is good, but I still think it starts with the people who are using it. I also think there will be plenty more new technology. We have a digital editor in the production studio, which means you are hands off. You don't have to sit around editing tape. You're not panicking over time. You can flag phone calls, and go flying back to them at the push of a button instead of having to try and cue the tape up. Technology should always be there to make the job easier, but you should never lose grasp of what it is doing. It's working for you. You're not working for it. I never want to hear a jock lay down their break on a voice track and then just plug it in so they can do other things."

Some stations use computers—not as a replacement for people on the air—but rather as an enhancement to the on-air product. However, WNNX/Atlanta PD Leslie Fram says the use of digital technology at her station was not without its share of controversy among staff members in the beginning. "At first it scared all the disc jockeys because they thought *Oh, no! A computer can do my whole show!* But we've been digital for about a year now, and you have to work out all the kinks with the equipment. Now the air staff loves it because it's so much easier than pulling carts to play commercials. All the commercials are on the hard drive, and it's a touch screen system so it's easy to use. We don't have all the music in there. We like to be able to touch CDs. I don't know that you would ever want to 100% get away from having your hands on the music. We all went from playing vinyl to CDs, and I don't think we want to give that part up. But as far as everything being in the computer, it's much more efficient. It's wonderful! Editing on it is great when you're doing commercials. You don't have to splice tape with razor blades anymore. I think when people got over that initial fear of it they saw that it really wasn't all that difficult. Once they learned how to operate the equipment people loved it. Now everybody wonders how they ever managed without it because it makes everything so much easier."

Bob O'Connor of Optimum Broadcast Consulting and Research says the Internet has helped consultants better serve their clients. "You can now hear stations through your audio stream on your computer. As a consultant, that's great for me since I help program these stations. I can listen to them anytime of the day on a good sound system here through my computer rather than through an aircheck tape that I get every week that gives me one hour of the

day. Since that DJ knows he's being airchecked he's doing his very best. Now I'll say to my PD *What was that song at 4 o'clock?* And he'll say *You heard that?* So for me as a consultant, the Internet is a great tool to have."

How news is gathered and delivered has also been affected by changing technology. In addition to satellites and cellular phones that provide instant communication around the world, WCBS-AM/New York news anchor Wayne Cabot sees another trend beginning to develop. "ISDN lines, digital communications are enabling people to set up studios in their homes. It's coming to the point now that you don't necessarily need to go to work anymore to deliver the news. You can get all the information you need over a computer at your house. We have many people at our station who broadcast from their homes. And with the technology as good as it is, it sounds like they're sitting right there next to you in the studio. Curiously, it sounds like a great deal, but people who do it say after a while that it drives them nuts because they can't separate their work from their life. They feel like they're always at work. It does have its advantages. You can get a cup of coffee and then you can go do the news in your bathrobe and nobody knows. Our morning business reporter lives way out in Connecticut--I mean hours and hours out of the city (New York). He also has an ISDN line that he broadcasts from, but he doesn't bring it into his house. He brings it to his town. He took up an office about 5 minutes from his house in a store-front so that he is driving to work. He's separating his work from his home in that way. So instead of driving 3 hours into New York to go to work everyday he's driving 5 minutes."

But despite the obvious advantages technology brings to the broadcasting industry, Cabot also feels it has its disadvantages. "If anything, technology has made news less accurate because we're all pretty much following the same instant news. We don't have the time anymore to take 10 or 15 minutes to sit back and think about what's going on. We're in such a rush to get on the air immediately that the time for deliberation and thoughtful analysis is out the window. That's for later. That's for after we get in our car, go home and say *Hey! I should've said this.*"

## Future Trends

Just like nearly every other aspect of today's world, the broadcasting industry has undergone a great deal of change in recent years. Technological advancements, multiopolies, changes in FCC regulation, new marketing techniques, and more media choices have impacted how radio stations

operate. And, according to experts, change in the future will move at an even faster pace.

The varied challenges these changes will bring for radio Program Directors is a hot topic in the industry. Curtiss Johnson, Station Manager/PD at KRXQ in Sacramento, says PDs were asked for their predictions on what radio will be like in 5 or 10 years at a recent programming conference. Johnson believes most of the changes coming down the pike are going to be technology-based. "There's going to be so many different choices. I think we're going to be competing against the information super highway, which will be far different than what it is now. It's very primitive at this point in time. The information highway in the future is going to be where we'll have our entertainment center and our big screen TV with a keyboard or even verbal prompts where we'll be able to do banking, order movies to watch at home, get satellite-delivered music formats as well as TV pay-for-view type things. We may subscribe to a classical format, a hard rock format or a country format. All those things will be competing against local radio. And maybe even some of the programmers today are going to be programming some of those satellite-delivered formats. And then there's all the other media that we compete against now. Did you know that (radio) listenership has dropped in the last ten years because we're competing against 50 or 100 channels of TV as well as far more radio stations than we used to compete against? Add to that video games, CD players, computers and everything else. So it's going to be a vastly different world. But, no matter what the mode of delivery or what the media is, there's always going to be room for content providers and people to oversee content. Maybe it's audio and visual on a Web site. Whether it's one of the digitally-delivered music formats, a local radio station, or networks, there's always going to be room. Somebody will have to decide what things get played and how things are going to be done. Two books I highly recommend to read on how it's going to be in the future are the book by Bill Gates called *The Road Ahead*, and another one called *Being Digital*. We can't really fathom how quickly things are going to progress and change. People already have information overload. People in the future are going to be more focused on what they want to know and need to know. They'll specialize more in specific things rather than have the broad knowledge that they used to have. That's why doctors are specializing and media are specializing. There's so much information, so much entertainment out there that you can't know it all anymore."

Bob O'Connor believes the Internet is going to change the face of radio. "What's going to happen when the Internet explodes is that you will be able

to pick up stations around the country in cities like San Francisco and New York. I also see it as radio stations you can have out of your home. You won't need a big radio station and a broadcasting license when the Internet folds into your sound system." Greg Gillispie, President of B/D & A, sees a continuation of current trends in the future in terms of additional format fragmentation as well as more media choices for consumers. Gillispie also predicts that interest in how broadcast ownership rules are changing will continue to grow. "I think that when one owner owns 4, 5 or 6 radio stations in a market you can be very, very specific and put together an interesting combination of demos, complimentary or competing music formats or just formats in general. I think you're going to see a continued rise of talk on FM because I think people find that interesting, compelling, and engaging--especially if it's a news/talk type thing. People want to know what's going on--especially as the population ages."

Gillispie also agrees with Curtiss Johnson that, in the future, more formats will be satellite-driven. "Obviously satellite is a pretty cost-effective way to have a pretty high-powered personality on your radio station that you really couldn't afford any other way. I couldn't afford to buy Howard Stern and put him on here as my own jock, but I could get him off a satellite. A lot of it depends on what the federal government does with all the stuff they're talking about in terms of the digital band, and whether it's going to be wide open or if they're just going to replace the existing bands locally with digital. If they do that then there will be super-stations that could crop up all over the place."

In terms of technological advancements, KCEE/Tucson PD Bob Lee says not everyone believes computers will be the mainstay everyone predicts they will be. "I saw some stuff recently that said the electronic revolution that people are talking about--that everything will, ultimately, be delivered via computer--was not going to happen because too many people were just flat out not interested in it. They can get along very well without a computer, thank you very much! I'm not sure that's necessarily true. I think that, ultimately, it's going to be delivered via satellite directly to the home, but not necessarily by computer. People are becoming more discerning about sound quality. There's a whole new generation coming up that wants to hear every pop, hiss and crackle. People want more choices. Things are getting narrower and narrower and narrower in radio. You'll see a women's talk station, a women's music station, a little boy's station. You'll see more fragmentation and fewer radio station owners."

McVay Media President Mike McVay also questions some of the technological developments looming on the horizon. "I have a difficult time

believing we're going to change (radio) bands. You keep hearing that we're going to go to this new linear band. If so, we're years away from it. I would be shocked if it happens in my lifetime because you would have to get everyone to change their radios and everyone would have to change their entire delivery system. If we go to DAB, AM and FM will go away. I don't think DAB is going to happen for radio. I mean--look at AM stereo. AM stereo exists, but we can't get it. Very few AM stations have even gone to stereo. So I mention AM stereo as a validation that if we can't even get that right how are we all going to agree on DAB?"

Consultant Lee Abrams also follows the format fragmentation philosophy of many broadcasters. In addition, Abrams feels radio will be cyclical again. "Right now I think we're in the dark ages of music radio and the golden age of Talk radio. But I think that will turn around, and music radio will be back with a lot of new approaches and new sounds. I think it will get exciting and interesting again outside of mornings only."

Guy Zapoleon also sees radio looking back into the past for new ideas. "In many ways I think you're going to see things go back to the network days of the 1940's. Some of these big companies are going to use more of that. I see more and more people utilizing talent--not just in one city, but in other cities as well. Simulcasting them or even just taking something that worked in New York--something funny--and sending it to LA or San Francisco."

However, Jim Jensen, President of Liggett Broadcasting, has reservations about how successful this type of syndicated radio will be in the future. Jensen feels radio is still very much a local medium. "I don't see where many of these syndicated programs really draw huge numbers within markets. Howard Stern does okay in a few markets across the country, but you put him in a Lansing, Michigan or a Grand Rapids he may do 4, 5 or 6 shares maybe, but most of these syndicated shows don't travel all that well. It's still a local medium. I think that big companies are going to have to continue to think that way if they want to maximize big come potentials of these radio stations."

Jensen believes music will drive radio's future. "In terms of what new opportunities there are I think it will go where the music industry goes. I think radio itself is going to be very healthy because it's a very mobile world, and getting more so every day. Radio is great that way. You get in your car, and you turn on your radio station and have fun. That's not going to change."

Courtney Thompson believes an even heavier reliance on research is going to drive radio in the future. "That means understanding the qualitative and the buying patterns of your consumers. Whatever form of medium I am--if I'm Montel Williams I have a certain type of viewership so I need to know

as much about the consumers that are watching that TV show. That's the responsibility of the medium selling itself to the advertiser. Those media which do not wish to take that responsibility for themselves to know as much about their consumers and their audience as possible are going to be placed upon a playing field that will be crunched into the gross rating point of "how low can you sell it to me" as opposed to being able to walk in and say I reach as many or more consumers that buy Mercedes Benz. If I can demonstrate to an advertiser that my audience has a greater propensity to purchase that product then I'm ultimately going to be more successful. Not only selling that advertiser on purchasing my medium. I'm also going to be able to charge that advertiser more than my next closest competitor who doesn't have the level of qualitative that demonstrates it in the process. The concept of counting how many people you reach is no longer the paradigm by which any advertising will be measured. That's more and more because of the proliferation of advertising that's out there today. There are too many options for advertisers today, and technology has driven the ability to decide to pick out who you want to reach and be able to reach them. Reaching people who count as opposed to counting how many people you reach is a paradigm shift. It's a flip flop of what it used to be. Finding a universe of one in the right situation instead of trying to find, out of a universe of a million, that one who will purchase your product. Technology has allowed us to get to that point."

Thompson also believes all media is moving toward a more performance-based delivery. "Whether it is truly performance-based in the form of what infomercials do or whether it's simply that you have to prove to me that you have more of the right folks, it's going more in that direction. People have to remember that radio is a business. It's not just about the art form. It's the business of advertising. It's about getting the advertisers to part with their dollars. The way they do that is pleasing the right profile of consumers. Not just getting great ratings, but also getting qualified ratings. Then it's the sales department's job to go out and show what those ratings can do, and then convert those ratings to dollars for the station."

Some Program Directors fear that the current corporate structure of radio may diminish the progress radio stations have accomplished in recent years. Wink 104/Harrisburg PD John O'Dea says predicting radio's future is a tough question. "It's real difficult right now because deregulation\* has set in. A company can own just about every station in the market if they want. That'll pretty much put a monopoly in some markets. That may make for worse radio. More than likely it'll mean fewer jobs in radio. And maybe not as much revenue for people in radio. It depends on the company, and what

the marketplace is like. I see that as having a negative impact where there's not as many radio companies out there. Competition is always good, and when you lose that you kind of lose the momentum to do a lot of things. Weird things can happen. You just never know."

Jo Robinson, Assistant Program Director at WRCX in Chicago also has concerns about the changes she sees on the horizon. "As diverse as radio has gotten and as specialized as radio has gotten with these huge companies over-taking so many different stations, the formats may start to blend again. Which would be unfortunate, I think. I like the specialized parts of radio. I just hope radio doesn't become one big corporate screw-up."

KISS's Kevin Vargas also predicts more ownership clusters, but he doesn't see that as a bad trend. "Some will be excellent and some will be mediocre because they've been watered down. Having a lot of money does not necessarily translate into being intelligent or knowing what you're doing. But I do think there are going to be better opportunities for young talent and for programmers. I think there's going to be a re-emphasis on production. Each station will need to have its own individual sound."

Mike McVay believes consolidations will actually improve radio programming. "I think the programming, ultimately, is going to get better. Simply because in Sandusky, Ohio, they can't afford to have a hundred thousand dollar morning guy, but if they can take the hundred thousand dollar morning guy who's on the air in Cleveland, pipe it in to Sandusky, localize it by having someone do news there, it's going to be a better radio station. The product will be better. Why should someone who lives in a small market be punished because a radio station can't afford to hire a good talent for it? I see radio growing because of that. I also think we're starting to see the beginning of further ownership fragmentation. While many people are viewing that it's going to go on and build, Capstar is rumored to be going to merge with their sister company, Chancellor, and that they'll spin off their smaller and underperforming radio stations. They're sitting down and saying *Look, if we got rid of these 50 stations that make no money or are in small markets we'll have a better package for Wall Street*. I think we'll see some smaller companies pop up to handle those little groups. I don't know what impact Wall Street's going to have on all this. It's different today than it was in 1987. In '87 you had banks with venture capital involved. Today there's public money involved. I don't know if public money waits around longer (for stations to build listenership and revenue) or not."

But whatever the future brings, KZLA PD John Sebastian is convinced radio is here to stay. "There's always going to be some form of radio because it's so personal. Basically, it's the only medium that's one-on-one. Almost

everybody who listens to the radio is one individual at a time. It's not a mass thing like television. I think, because of the intimacy potential of radio--even though it's going to change technologically--the bottom line is still the fact that there's going to be someone, somewhere, playing music or talking to you. There's going to be listeners on the other end listening one at a time. That's not going to change in the distant future. Radio's the one thing that continues to grow. Television goes down every year. 96 or 97 percent of people in America listen to radio every week. Commercial television is down to something like 65%. Radio, very quietly, is the most important and the most powerful individual medium in our society. It's not going to go away. They predicted radio's demise when television came along. It just got stronger."

## **Practical Programming Assignments**

Organize a class discussion on the following topics:

1. What role do you see the Federal government playing in radio in the future?
2. How do you think consolidation will affect the future of radio? What are the benefits and negatives to consolidation?
3. What are the benefits and negatives to Virtual Radio?
4. How will radio continue to develop a talent pool if more stations are using Virtual Radio?
5. What new technologies do you see having an impact on radio's future? What are the benefits and negatives to using this new technology?



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## About the Authors

Joanna Lynch has more than 12 years' experience in radio as an on-air personality, programming assistant, Promotions Director, and news anchor/reporter. Her stations included WBSB/Baltimore, KFMG/Albuquerque, KUPD/Phoenix, WTPA/Harrisburg, and WAZU/Dayton. For the past 5 years, Lynch has taught Radio Broadcast Technology at Hunterdon Central Regional High School (Flemington, NJ), a *National Blue Ribbon School* and New Jersey's first *Star High School*. Hunterdon Central is a leading technology high school that is a model for educators around the world. Lynch's broadcasting students have also won national awards for their charitable promotional involvement with WCVH, the student-run radio station. Lynch has published articles on radio in several national magazines including *Youth!* and *Tech Directions*. Lynch has a Masters of Science in Educational Technology from Lehigh University. She is currently pursuing a PhD in Mass Communications.

Greg Gillispie has over 24 years' experience in radio. He is a veteran programmer of stations such as WDVE/Pittsburgh, KEZO/Omaha, and WRXK/Ft. Myers. Gillispie was also a major market air talent and Music Director at stations in Denver, Detroit, and Toledo. Gillispie spent 8 years as Executive Vice President/Product Development at B/D & A, a major consulting firm where he consulted more than 100 stations. He recently rejoined B/D & A as President of the company. In 1993, Gillispie was named to the Platinum Edition of *Who's Who*. He is also a Lt. Colonel/Aide de Camp for the Governor's Staff for the state of Georgia. Gillispie has a Bachelors of Arts in Communications from Ohio University.



## About the Contributors

**Lee Abrams:** Successful radio programmer and consultant since 1970. Abrams has programmed over 200 stations, including 90 in the Top 100 markets. Abrams is one of the pioneer programmers of the radio broadcasting industry. He created the Superstars format, the most successful concept in FM radio history. (It was later dubbed AOR (Album Oriented Rock) by *Radio and Records* Mike Harrison.) Abrams has also been a consultant to numerous companies including Turner Broadcasting, *Rolling Stone* magazine, MTV, Walt Disney, Capitol Records, and Island Records. He has also been a career advisor for artists such as Yes, Moody Blues, Bob Seger, Iron Maiden, Pointer Sisters, and U2. Abrams has been listed as *Radio and Records* "Most Influential Programmer," *Radio Ink's* "Top 75 All Time Leaders in Radio," and has been named to *Newsweek* magazine's "Top 100 Cultural Elite."

**Wayne Cabot:** News anchor at WCBS-AM/New York

**John Conway:** Marketing Manager for BMG Distribution

**Michael**

**Dalfonzo:** Vice President of The Research Group/Seattle, the first company to offer Virtual Radio Programming.

**Leslie Fram:** Began her radio career while in high school in Alabama. Fram was the Music Director and then later the Program Director of a CHR in Mobile. Fram also won the Bobby Poe Industry Award for "PD of the Year." Currently, Fram is the Program Director and morning show co-host at WNNX/Atlanta. Recently, the morning show won *Billboard Monitor's* "Morning Show of the Year" award.

**Mike Henry:** 6 years experience in radio as a General Manager, on-air talent, and Program Director. Henry also worked in radio sales, and was a consultant for several Adult Alternative stations. Henry has 12 years experience in media research. Currently, Henry is a Managing Partner at Paragon Research/Denver.

**Kelso Jacks:** National Director of College Radio Promotions, National Director of Video Promotions, National Director of Commercial Modern Rock Radio Promotions at Roadrunner Records.

**Jim Jensen:** President of Liggett Broadcasting

**Curtiss**

**Johnson:** More than 11 years experience as a major market programmer. Johnson was named *Billboard* magazine's "Major Market Program Director of the Year" in 1990. Nominated for the same award in 1988 and 1991. Johnson has been featured in numerous articles on radio programming in several industry trades. Johnson is currently Station Manager/Program Director of KRXQ/Sacramento.

**Chuck Knight:** Program Director for more than 13 years, including a stint at Star 104.5/Philadelphia. Knight is the current PD at WSNY/Columbus.

**Bob Lee:** Over 20 years experience in the radio and television broadcasting industry. Lee has been a News Director, Operations Manager, and Program Director at several well-respected stations around the country. Lee currently works in programming at a TV station in Tucson.

**David Levin:** Marketing Representative at BMG Distribution

**Mike McVay:** Many years of experience as an on-air personality, Program Director, and General Manager in radio. McVay has also owned radio stations in Florida, Hawaii, and Michigan. Currently, McVay is the President of McVay Media and CEO of B/D & A.

- Rich Meyer:** Former Program Director of stations such as WNCI/Columbus, WMET/Chicago, KAZY/Denver, 91X/San Diego, and KFMQ/Lincoln. Currently, Meyer is the President of Mediabase/Sherman Oaks.
- Bob O'Connor:** Programmer of stations in San Diego, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Chicago. O'Connor specializes in the Smooth Jazz/NAC format. Currently, O'Connor is the Senior Vice President of Optimum Broadcast Consulting and Research.
- John O'Dea:** CHR Program Director for more than 12 years. O'Dea's current station, WNNK/Harrisburg, recently won the Marconi Award for "Best CHR Station in the Country" from the National Association of Broadcasters--the biggest award a station can get in radio.
- Dave Pratt:** Successful morning talent at KUPD/Phoenix since 1983.
- Pat Rascona:** 15 years experience in the record industry as National Dance Director for Polygram Records, Local Promotion Manager of the East Coast Mid-Atlantic Region for Island Records as well as a local rep for other record companies including MCA Records, Virgin Records, WTG Records, and West End Records.
- Jo Robinson:** Current Assistant Program Director/Music Director at WRCX/Chicago, the biggest Active Rock station in the country. Before that, Robinson was the Assistant Program Director/Music Director at WLVQ/Columbus--a heritage radio station. Robinson also programmed WKLC/St. Albans, West Virginia.
- Larry Rosin:** Involved in radio for 17 years. Produced a syndicated show for radio stations around the country. Currently, Rosin is the President of Edison Media Research, a company that also does research for political races, TV, cable, the music industry, and sports franchises in addition to the radio industry.

- John Sebastian:** Radio broadcaster for 29 years. Sebastian was involved in some of the greatest turn-arounds in American radio history, including the fastest turn-around in the history of the AOR format at WCOZ/Boston and the fastest turn-around in the history of the NAC format at the WAVE in Los Angeles. Sebastian has programmed numerous formats including Classic Rock, CHR, AOR, New Age/NAC, and country. Sebastian is currently the Program Director at KZLA/Los Angeles.
- Tara Simon:** Promotions Representative for Bar None Records.
- Susan Stone:** Veteran broadcaster of stations including WLWQ/Columbus. Stone is currently the Music Director at WRXK/Ft. Myers.
- Courtney Thompson:** President and CEO of Broadcast Direct Marketing and Optimum Broadcast Consulting and Research, Inc.
- Kevin Vargas:** 20 years experience in broadcasting. Music Director at KWHL/Anchorage, Music Director and Promotions Director at KKLZ/Las Vegas, Assistant Program Director at WAZU/Dayton. Vargas currently programs KISS/San Antonio--the original KISS station.
- Guy Zapoleon:** Programmer since 1973, including KZZP/Phoenix. Zapoleon began his own consulting firm in 1993. Zapoleon consults stations in the United States and Australia. Zapoleon started his career as a Musicologist.



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