

.....BULLET POINTS.....

Are your Contest Mechanics Flawed?

by
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Back in the 1980's Filmhouse popularized a great idea. It was called the "Birthday Game" TV campaign. The idea was simple enough: have a station's morning show on TV promoting that "tomorrow morning at 7:20 if your birthday is the one they call out you can win \$10,000!"

It worked beautifully in a number of ways. Stations frequently could show measured cume/TSL growth in the 7am hour because there was almost always a definite spike. To this day, that campaign is considered one of the most effective radio cume builder campaigns. So much so, that the contest mechanic of "a major announcement or chance to win at 7:20" lives on even today. However, for most radio contesting this mechanic is distinctly flawed.

Radio contests like the Birthday Game and other contesting promoted on prime time TV were and are designed to build station cume. If we accept that most people have specific times they can and cannot listen to the radio, then a flaw quickly becomes evident in the tune-in-at-one-specific-time strategy in the radio contesting and advertising.

Why pay good money to advertise on prime time TV a contest that can only be played by the people who CAN listen at 7:20 and ignore the thousands and tens of thousands of listeners who commute to work in the 6, 8 and 9am hours in morning drive?

The Birthday Game would have been the most effective if it had given listeners in those other hours of morning drive a chance to win. But then, it might not have been as obvious in the hour-by-hour ratings how much the numbers jumped and there might not be as much evidence for programmers to say, "see, it worked."

Radio stations all over the country right now are using mechanics for the Song of the Day or other contests that are designed to push TSL from morning drive into other dayparts. If your goal with a radio contest is to push listeners from morning drive to middays and PM drive, why not push all of the morning show listeners into those other dayparts instead of just the morning show listeners who can listen at 7:20? **Make your song of the day, clue or announcement in each hour of morning drive ("Listen at 6:20, 7:20, 8:20 and 9:20!") to reach the whole morning show audience.**

The reverse contest mechanics apply as well. If your goal is to recycle Midday, PM Drive and Night listeners to morning drive, give them more than just one chance. Morning drive announcements or giveaways that are promoted throughout the day are

going to play better with listeners who drive into work from 6-6:30 if they feel they have a chance to win or hear what you are promoting. If a listener can't listen to the radio at 7:20, no amount of money or TV advertising is going to get a tune in from them.

While the tune-in-at-7:20 strategy worked well for many radio stations with the Birthday Game, it's not a great strategy for any of today's come or TSL building campaigns and contests.



Twenty Writing Tips For Radio Personalities

1. **Write for the ear, not the eye.** Writing for the eye is a completely different style than newspaper or magazine writing. What reads well in the mind doesn't always speak well off the tongue. The trick is to write exactly the way you talk.
2. **Write visually.** Physiologists have found that 80% of all human motivation is optically stimulated. So we compete in a world dominated by visual media by thinking, writing, and speaking visually. Vivid, concrete descriptions create images in a listener's mind. A great example from WSJ described Alan Greenspan and his boys "beavering away over at the Fed." Beavering is not a word. The writer could have written "working hard" or "toiling away" but "beavering away" made a great visual image. And fun, too.
3. **Write sensually.** Seek out words that trigger the senses.
4. **Make the personal universal.** Every songwriter knows that this is the way to your heart. Look for stories, anecdotes, and examples that clearly underscore your point and use the ones that all people can relate to.
5. **Tell stories.** Since the dawn of time this is how humans pass along knowledge and how they best learn from each other. Stories and anecdotes make listeners see pictures. They have a beginning, middle, and end. Become an avid collector. Look for stories that feature people in universal situations. Make sure every story you use underscores a point you're trying to make.
6. **Interrupt the pattern.** Get attention by being unexpected, counter-intuitive, or unpredictable. If I say, "People who live in glass houses..." you likely want to close that sentence with "shouldn't throw stones." But if I fill in the blank first with "should probably have Allstate Homeowner's Insurance," I have your attention because I've tweaked your expectations.
7. **Use humor.** Adding the right element of humor can make a break sparkle. This can be an amusing quote, a personal anecdote or observation, a funny analogy, a

strange definition, a joke, or an unusual bumper sticker. When humor backfires, though, it can be a long moment in hell. You must be absolutely certain that your audience will respond in the way you intend. If they don't, you may never feel worse pain. The bottom line with humor: be clever but never force it. If you are naturally funny, go for it. Otherwise, don't.

8. **Write in short sentences using simple words.** Short sentences are punchier than long ones. So are short words. Don't use a fancy word when a simple one will do as well.
9. **Use analogies, metaphors, and similes.** These devices create images in peoples' minds and help them quickly visualize and compare something they don't know to something they do know. It's like shorthand. (Here's a good example referring to the pending lunar eclipse: "The sun will resemble a giant cookie from which a giant child has taken a giant bite." Who couldn't visualize that?)
10. **Alliterate.** This technique simply strings the same sound in sequence.
11. **Repetition.** Creates a rhythm and reinforces meaning. Groups of three repetitions are effective: (the few, the proud, the many; Crosby, Stills & Nash)
12. **Rhythm.** *These are the times that try men's souls.* Observe the beats. How much less power to say: "What trying times these are for men's souls." Think about the cadences you hear from speakers in church. Words have rhythm and rhythm has emotional power. Listen for it, put it to work.
13. **Be positive.** Everywhere there's a not, a don't, a shouldn't, or an anti, look for a way to rephrase in a positive way.
14. **Eliminate filler.** Clichés, jargon, technical language, obscure references, filler speech (uh, um, er, year, well, alright, ok), and qualifiers such as "I think...I believe...seems to me that...don't you think that..."
15. **Be inclusive.** Use "we" instead of "you".
16. **Edit mercilessly.** Less is more, so delete every unnecessary word. Revise and rewrite until you've used the minimum number of words required to do the job.
17. **Don't tell everything you know.** Too much detail, repetition, and explanation weaken your impact.
18. **Don't overstate.** Careful with hyperbole; not everything is absolutely fabulous. Our credibility and listeners' confidence in us are at stake.
19. **Stick with English.** Even if your pronunciation of foreign languages is impeccable, you'll sound stuffy if you parade it, particularly with foreign phrases.
20. **Steal from the best.** It's okay to borrow good lines as long as you attribute them. And there's only one rule of thumb when you adapt a quote to your purpose: steal from the best! (So this is the point where I attribute these 20 Tips – they are excerpted from John Silliman Dodge "Inside the Announcer's Studio" Talent Workshop.)

Programming Nugget: SHOW SUMMARIES

All of the major league sports broadcasts on TV use the “Game Summary” concept. At some point, approximately halfway through the game out of a commercial stopset they playback the game highlights to that point.

Morning shows can use this same concept to showcase the first half of the show’s most memorable moments. This has several benefits to listeners and the show, since the vast majority of listeners listen at exactly the same time daily based on their personal schedule.

- Show summaries expose great content to a larger percentage of the cume.
- They serve as a past tease and make listeners wish they’d heard the whole segment.
- They entice non-P1 listeners to want to continue listening and hear more engaging and entertaining content.

This idea could also be done hourly on most shows, since TSL in the morning averages under 40 minutes. Show summaries are worth the time and effort it takes to pull them off. Do them and watch your TSL grow.



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