

BULLET POINTS

The Morning Mental Game

You are responsible for your own success or failure, and it starts in your mind. Contrary to popular belief, you are not what you *eat*; you are what you *think* – ‘as a man thinketh, so is he.’ Buddha teaches, “All that we are is the result of what we have thought.’ We create our own reality.

As in sports, the game is won first in your mind, then on the air. So often in sports competition we see a team start to score, they get momentum (“they’re on a roll”) and after a few successes they start to believe they’re going to win before the game starts. Even when they fall behind, they still have confidence and believe they’ll win -- and usually do.

Visualization is an effective technique for peak performance athletes. This technique is used by almost all peak performers, whether they’re conscious of it or not. It’s simply seeing the pitch or the throw or the shot going perfectly beforehand. The most successful radio programmers first hear the sound of their station in their head before the magic makes it through the speaker.

Five Ways to Sharpen Your Mental Game

1. Vision

Have a vision for your show on a broad level and be clear on what you are going for in each segment of the show. Hear and see the exact kind of show you want to do in your mind. Spend some daily quiet time with your eyes closed. See it. Hear it. Feel it. Taste it. Smell it.

Your on-air performance will improve by listening back to tapes of your best moments and forgetting the poor ones. Vince Lombardi, one of football’s biggest winners, applied the theory when he observed that after most football games were over, the errors on game films were highlighted instead of the successes. One day he proclaimed, “From now on, we only replay the winning plays.”

Lombardi theorized that individuals are always stronger when they have their successes and strengths clearly in mind. Performance will always be better when you re-live and visualize your highest performances rather than your failures. The idea is to carry a high standard of performance in your mind and always expect the highest potential from yourself individually and from the team.

2. Set Goals

It’s amazing how powerful simply writing down goals can be. On New Year’s Day this year my teenage daughter wrote down her top 10 resolutions for 2003 and promptly put the piece of

paper in a drawer. She looked at them for the first time since last week and to her astonishment she had accomplished 7 of those 10 goals.

President John F. Kennedy is credited with inventing modern strategic planning and goal setting when he dedicated the United States to putting a man on the moon within ten years in 1960. No one knew how we were going to meet that goal at the time, but NASA put two men on the moon, in nine years. In the book Built to Last, these are called 'Big Hairy Audacious Goals'. B-HAGS are the mark of highly successful companies AND morning shows.

Here's a goal setting process devised by researcher-consultant-futurist John Parikhal:

- **Negotiate the time frame first.** The entire group must agree on the date the goal will be reached.
- **Negotiate the outcome.** Agree on specifics of the outcome statement (Eg. "This show will be the funniest smartass blue collar morning show in America. It will be the most quoted. It is a perfect blending of *Sex in the City* and *The Sopranos*.) Every person must agree on the specific definition of each word in the statement.
- **Agree on what you have to do differently to get to your winning outcome.** Categorize these and then meet in teams to discuss each one. Create "first step" timetables and set deadlines. This results in lots of meetings, but each with very specific focus.

Visualize a party celebrating the outcome. Who's there? (And more importantly, who isn't there when you visualize it?) What are the people saying? What do you hear? How do you feel? Make sure you actually have that party once you get there.

- **Follow through.** A "Keeper of the Process" makes sure that the group is kept on track.

3. *Focus and Concentration*

Concentration is defined by Websters as, "to fix one's attention." Concentration is said to be the master art because all other arts depend on it. Progress in this, as in any art, is achieved only through practice. Hence the adage, "Practice makes the master." Focused attention on the present moment equals high performance in business, sports and as an air personality.

Timothy Gallwey writes in his books Inner Tennis and Inner Golf that the secret to mastering any performance skill is not trying too hard. Trying too hard usually means thinking too much about what you're doing during performance. Thinking too much and trying too hard produce tension. The time to think is when you're planning the show before you go on the air and during songs and commercials.

While you're on the air is the time to be totally alert in the moment, which allows spontaneity and to be a great listener without thinking about your performance (what you're going to say or do next). Athletes know their best performances never come when they're thinking about it (e.g. When a baseball pitcher starts thinking about the no hitter he has going is usually when he gives up a hit).

Concentration is the key to flawless execution on the air. There's a simple exercise you can try to improve concentration:

Pick any object (a picture, a candle, a tree, etc.) and focus your attention on it with a pad of paper in front of you. Make a mark for every time your attention strays from that object with

another thought in a three-minute period. The first time you try this you may have 75 marks. Do the exercise consistently for a month and watch your concentration improve to only 15-20 marks.

4. *Body, Mind, Soul*

There's an excellent book called *The Power of Full Engagement* that makes a strong point that peak performance in all areas of your life is best achieved by learning to manage your energy rather than your time. Most morning show people (and consequently their show) suffer from too little rest. Bob Rivers at KZOK Seattle credits getting eight hours sleep every night with making a dramatic improvement in his show.

It is just as important to create more energy in your life by balancing activity and rest as it is to do show prep. Daily exercise and some quiet time for yourself will help your show and your spirit more than thinking about and working on your show 24-7. The creative process is fed by the alternation of rest and activity, thinking and not thinking. That's why when we get stuck on completing a concept or idea the answer often comes when we stop thinking about it.

5. Core Values

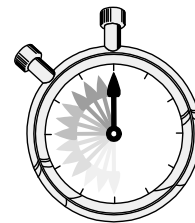
Today's most successful products and services such as Starbucks and Intel provide customers with an experience beyond the product or service itself. We use a character definition process that encourages shows and their individuals to define their core values and exactly what their morning show experience is for listeners. Living and performing by your core values gives the show a larger sense of purpose beyond simple mission statements.

Another way of looking at this is to think of the morning show in terms of a TV show or movie. The writers and directors have a clear vision of what they want people to feel, think, say and experience when watching the film or TV show. You can tell those shows and movies that fail to do this...and they are often flops.

The holidays are a great time of year to reflect on your life and performance. It's an excellent time to evaluate what's working and what could work better for next year. Use this time to sharpen your mental game.

Programming Nugget:

Flexible Format Clocks



The format clock is designed to give your station a consistent sound and to make the weakest members of the airstaff sound better. The problem is, by not allowing the best members of the staff to buck those guidelines at appropriate times, the clock can interfere with or kill great content, especially in the morning show or other dayparts that feature high profile talent.

Here's what you want to do – create clocks that are flexible enough to get the commercial and promo content in the hours they need to be played and at the same time give the talent breathing room not to kill a great or developing piece of content.

Sometimes talent can use forced breaks to build suspense and tension into a show, but sometimes a forced break just kills the content. Not permitting a strong talent enough time to do content of any substance can be another problem of overly restrictive format clocks.

Research is frequently cited as a source of strict formatting with talk breaks. The fear of being perceived as number two in the “plays the most music” research tally is overblown.

Research measures the aggregate audience, and ratings are built more from P1s and fans who identify with a station or talent, coming back day after day to get what they can’t get anywhere else. Your personalities are exclusive -- your music position probably isn’t. Not all personalities have the power to attract listeners every day. If you are one of the lucky ones that have talent that make a difference, let them shine.

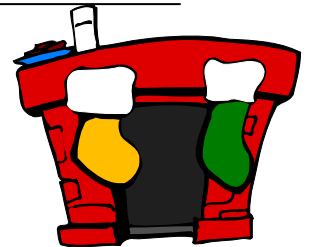
Formats should be designed to fit the talents they saddle, instead of talent being designed to fit format clocks. Program *Directors* will serve talent and their stations better by less ‘programming’ of dayparts and more ‘directing’ of individuals.

One star is worth a million magic “formulas”. A staff of stars is worth more than just about any music position (which can be copied easily). Talent in different dayparts also have different missions, some of which require more time flexibility. A talent that is less distracting for midday “at work” listeners can be complemented with a more present and informative afternoon drive show.

Insist that each of your talent be as different as they are similar. Talent who deliver the station message(s) in their own words and style make for a much more relatable and entertaining radio station. Let format clocks be a guideline for consistency, but not a mandate.

CHRISTMAS STUNT IDEA

Breaking and Entering Christmas



Instead of the usual humdrum “Christmas Wish” which has been successful for many stations, look for nominees of families in your town who are down on their luck. The nominators must know the family well, know when they come and go and have a key to their house. Pick one (or more) families and bring all the necessities for a great holiday and set the house up while the nominators have the winners out. Record the audio reaction. Supplement the audio as needed for good radio.

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