

...BULLET POINTS...

Blocking New Media – Now Is The Time For Talent To Rule

It's not unusual to attend a party today and hear someone talking about how much they are enjoying their new Sirius or XM radio with tons of channels and no commercials all for the low price of \$13.00 a month. At the same party you may also find someone who spends significant time with a streaming radio station. It is only a matter of time before radio on palm pilots, cell phones and various other nationally distributed devices become more common. Just look how quickly cell phones with cameras have caught on.

Not since the 1970's, when the FM Radio "revolution" moved audiences from the AM band, has the radio audience been so poised for a major change. The days of FM radio market cume of 95 to 99 percent are over and the question is not *if* there will be a sea change of listening from FM to various other media sources, but *when*. Will it be a 5- or 20-year movement? How FM radio reacts to the challenges it faces will make a difference in how long the movement takes.

The odds are that without some fairly major restructuring of FM programming strategy, FM's average market cume will be at or below 50% within 10 years.

FM radio in most markets is programmed as though we were still living in the 1980's. Music position rules -- owning the 'most music' position and selling the benefits of the music format is where most radio stations are putting their promotional and imaging muscle. In many ways FM is following the same pattern AM radio did in the 1970's. It wasn't until AM radio dealt with the overwhelming change in usage and reinvented itself that it held on to any cume.

This emphasis on music format niches will become less and less valuable as nationally distributed music services are able to super serve ever smaller and more refined niches. This increasingly large coalition of listeners was FM's exclusive audience in the last quarter century, but not any more.

The FM Advantage

FM still has two clear strengths that most if not all of the comers on the horizon can't duplicate... **personality** and **locality**.

Now is the time for talent to rule. While the future looks murky for FM radio stations that exclusively rely on a music position for their existence, strong locally relatable hosts in the morning and other day parts is the one thing all the new competition can't duplicate.

Character based morning radio shows are FM's future. Just this past week the power of personality was demonstrated in a true shock-and-awe manner when Renan Coello "El Cucuy" switched stations and became the number one Spanish language morning show in 9 days! And stations can use the personality mornings to drive listening to other dayparts.

It is imperative that programmers and talent learn to get more TSL from what almost certainly will be shrinking come in the not too distant future. Air personalities need to be trained to deliver strong relatable content each break designed to build listener loyalty with their target and push the available audience from show segment to show segment and, more importantly, from day to day.

The Tools:

Make use of the most powerful tools at your disposal to push TSL and build come. Most cost little or no money to utilize:

- **Milk more vertical TSL:** Typically talents spend 1% or less of their on air time pushing the audience into from show segment to show segment. Talent and programmers need to become more aware of the art of focused teasing and promotional announcements and doing content designed to get more listening occasions.
- **Increase horizontal TSL:** Television has always kicked radio's butt in this area by using storyline and serial content to get viewers to tune in for a specific reason ("On this week's heart wrenching *Friends* episode, find out if Rachel flies to Paris or stays with Ross!"). Listen to the typical radio station in the US and you will find very little or no effort dedicated to bringing people back to listen the next or another day of the week. Radio can be much better at creating content that gets listeners to return day after day.
- **Content vs. Contest:** Spend more time pushing increased listening with strong content and less time ineffectively pushing increased listening through contests that 95% of a typical station's listeners don't care about and never play. Contests have their place, but far too much emphasis is currently put on them.
- **Morning Show Marketing:** The cheapest and most effective morning show marketing is often an afterthought for most morning shows. Most radio stations have 10 times the come that their morning show needs to be number one in their target demo. The marketing effort toward this station come that uses the station but not the morning show receives 5 minutes a day of rip and read production time for creative that in most markets would cost between ¼ and 3 million dollars a year to buy. Morning shows can do better creating marketing campaigns that are designed to sell their show to the station come that is using a competitor in the morning. This is potential daypart come that already use the station and likely have a button in their car already set.
- **Prep smarter not harder.** Many FM radio shows have weak preparation skills. Talent and programmers can be trained to understand the incremental power of preparation. For years FM radio hosts have had the luxury of getting 95-98% of the market to use the only choice they have had for audio. FM talent will have to be much better at coming up with content that not only attracts listeners but encourages them to come back every day.
- **Be local.** Mediocre local content won't beat stronger nationally based content, but satellite talent won't be able to focus on one market or region for long. Creating buzz based on local events is clearly one up for FM. Get out on the streets, be active in the community and have relationships with the local movers and shakers. Your nationally based competitor won't be able to.
- **Recognize good work:** Talent are STARVED for recognition. Sales people get awards, trips, vacations and free cars for performance. While some receive fair compensation, most talent and programmers, if they get any feedback at all, get "Hey good show this morning" with little or no specifics. The best way to grow talent is with a well thought out strategy of how to make their show the best it can be and then recognizing specific content the talent is doing that works toward that goal.

It is up to us to slow the new media “radio revolution.” The smarter companies already see that the future of traditional radio is talent and locally relevant content that listeners can’t get elsewhere. Consider spending less money on music research and more on developing this talent and creating engaging content that listeners feel compelled to keep sampling again today and tomorrow and the next day.

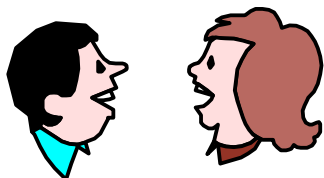
The Bottom Line: Since most music formats have become commodities, put your stock in talent and locally relevant content.

The Art of The Tease

TV has perfected the art of the tease, while radio is just giving lip service to teasing. Why do TV entertainment shows devote 25-40% of the content time to teasing? Because they not only work to increase TSL, enticing teases create anticipation for upcoming content and help instill the feeling in people that they’ll miss something if they aren’t watching. The same principle applies to TSL and content anticipation in radio.

Use the 80-20 Rule of Teasing: Always leave listeners wanting more by giving them 80% of the story --just enough specifics to make an upcoming story or feature alluring. By leaving out the 20% resolution of an intriguing story you’ve emotionally engaged listeners in your content by piquing their imaginations.

Example: “Michael Jackson becomes Jacko Wacko again at his court appearance. What did he do this time? We’ll tell you next in the Entertainment News.”



Talent Tip: Practice Deep Listening

Listen with your ears, body, mind and soul. Deep listening skills are the key to high communication. Get yourself into a state of relaxed focus while on the air. Get into the zone.

Listen with genuine interest. There is a big difference in truly listening to someone and waiting to talk. Thinking about what you’re going to say next is ‘waiting to talk’. Listening deeply to someone and responding based on what they said to you is really listening. As Larry King says, “the best questions come out of the person’s response.”



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