

## **...BULLET POINTS...**

### **Planting the Seeds for a Successful Fall Rating Period**

All too often, morning radio gets so focused on putting together a great show for tomorrow that future shows are neglected or ignored. Planning for major rating periods is sometimes begun just the week before the survey starts.

Now is the time to be planting the seeds for a successful Fall rating period. The next major rating period starts September 23<sup>rd</sup> which is less than 60 days away. Planning now not only avoids the common pitfall of "that's a great idea but we don't have the time to put it together", it also sets you up for far greater success on any idea you do attempt.

By dedicating time now to planning some major content items for each phase of the Fall ratings period and working on them incrementally each week leading up to Fall, shows can leverage the same power as putting regular money in savings and receiving the interest compounded over time. Think of the idea as an investment that you bank before you need to use. Each week, the work you do on the idea is the interest you earn on the original idea. The idea on the calendar 2 to 3 months in advance that is regularly reviewed in promotion, sales and programming meetings is very likely to grow in ways that won't happen with less incubation time.

#### ***Conducting The Long Term Planning Meeting***

Long range planning meetings will differ from the more traditional short term planning for tomorrow's show. Make them about creating a few ideas designed exclusively to give the show a platform during the Fall book to ask for more listening occasions. These meetings will be easiest on the participants and the most productive if the attendees are given the agenda prior to the meeting and asked to do some preliminary brainstorming prior to the start of the meeting.

Have them bring as many ideas as possible from the following categories:

- **A quest or mission idea**

Example: A Rockford, IL morning show campaigned to get the Rolling Stones to come to their town to play a concert. This was a quest that also carried over several days. They worked to get signatures on a petition, to set up a local arena, contact the Rolling Stones management, etc. Listeners were urged to tune in again and again to find out what was going on.

- **Guests/interviews**

Example: someone big...Michael Moore, John Edwards, Dick Cheney, Michael Jackson, etc.

- **Production piece (song parody, etc.)**

Example: a parody song written to the tune of Miami, substituting "Milwaukee" became a huge hit in the city and raised thousands for charity and raised local self esteem also

- **Promotion/stunt idea**

Example: A new freeway opening in one town set up the morning show to be the first ones to run out of gas and stall traffic

- **A potential continuing personal storyline**

Example: Morning show host goes to China to adopt orphan

- **Something new (TV show, movie, book, funny story, game etc.)**

Example: When 'The Apprentice' came out, one morning show held their own version with 'The Intern'; with American Idol, another show held their own 'Drunken Idol'

Having some major anchor points penciled in on a show's content calendar well in advance makes it much easier and natural to push forward momentum from show to show once the rating period starts. Incremental progress on an idea over many weeks can make a so-so idea grow to something big the show can be very excited about when it actually rolls out.

Of the above ideas, the most effective is probably creating quests, or show missions that can be accomplished in advance with a guaranteed payoff that *sounds* like it is happening at the spur of the moment on the air. For example, shows in swing states can try securing a phone call from one or more of the candidates running for President or Vice President. Present it on the air as a challenge to the audience to track down the candidate over a week or 10 days on the air. By starting the process now, working whatever local connections to the political parties, a show producer will be much more likely to accomplish getting Kerry, Nader, Bush, Edwards or Cheney on the phone a few weeks before the election.

The most effective way to push the audience from show to show is by building momentum slowly over time as an idea is germinated and nurtured day by day or week by week. Updates on upcoming and evolving content are designed to invest the listener with more reasons to come back to the show to find out about further progress.

In the Long Term Planning meeting make sure to keep the following in mind:

## ***The Rules of Brainstorming***

- 1. During the Brainstorm there must be no judgment of ideas. No evaluation. No criticism will be allowed.**
- 2. Freewheeling is allowed and encouraged. The wilder, the more outrageous the idea, the better.**

- 3. Look for quantity rather than quality. Look to end up with a long list of ideas. In Brainstorming, quantity produces quality.**
  - 4. Combine ideas. Look to make each idea better, to improve upon it. In this case, only positive building is allowed.**
  - 5. Every idea must be written down. If you choose not to write it down, you will have judged it, which violates the first rule.**
  - 6. Every person taking part in the Brainstorm is equal in rank. There are no bosses, no hierarchy.**
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## Listening: The Master Communication Skill



The art and skill of listening is central to all communication. We are in the communication business, yet radio people are among the poorest listeners around. Part of the reason is that we like to talk (mostly about ourselves) and are being paid to fill air space. The sharper your listening skills are the better you will be on the air in most all situations including talking to your partners, listeners and guests.

Noted communicators like Michael Toms and Tony Alessandra have identified four types of listening. Which type are you?

### **Non-Listeners**

These are people who are so full of themselves that they make no attempt to pay attention. They don't even hear the words others are saying. Non-listeners typically do most of the talking and are often considered egomaniacs. They are universally disliked and tolerated at best.

### **Marginal Listeners**

Marginal listeners hear the words the speaker is saying but not the meaning or intent because they are thinking about what they're going to say next or just waiting to talk. This is the most dangerous kind of listening because of the great chance of miss-communication. You often see sitcoms use this type of listening as a source of humor.

## Technical Listeners

Technical listeners make an effort to accurately hear what the speaker is saying and can repeat back the facts and content of what they heard. However, they don't listen and watch for body language, facial expression, intonation, emotion, intent or "read between the lines." Mechanical listeners hear what the speaker says yet the speaker doesn't feel understood.

## Active Listeners

The active listener not only hears the words, but they focus on understanding the speaker's message. This deeper level of listening is achieved by suspending all of your own thoughts and listening with body, mind and heart. It requires giving up any judgment of the speaker (their dress, reputation, whether they're nervous or not, etc.) and listening with empathy -- truly feeling and seeing in your mind what they are saying and intending. The end result is that the speaker feels valued, heard and understood.

Active listening will open up unforeseen opportunities for air talents with their co-hosts, callers and guests. Larry King has said, "The best questions don't come from planned questions but out of the person you're interviewing's responses." That requires active listening. Managers can much more effectively manage people, negotiate and lead by actively listening. Active listening is the key to the art of communication.

## BOOTCAMP ALERT!

We hope to see you at the Morning Show Bootcamp at the Beverly Hilton in Los Angeles, Aug. 5-7. In addition to hanging out in the Lobby Bar, we will be involved in two kick-ass sessions:

- **Living Focus Groups** (Friday at 9 a.m.) Randy is moderating this session where listeners give you the real skinny on what they like and hate about today's show content.
- **Country Format Panel** (Friday at 10:30) Randy is a special guest panelist (and there will be a big surprise country artist there also) on a terrific panel hosted by Tony and Kris of US95-7, San Diego.



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