



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

4-22-03

### **LISTENER PANELS**

How is your morning show doing? Has the audience noticed your music changes?

If you're not budgeted for a perceptual or focus groups, there are ways your station can get reliable information from the audience at little cost to the station. Listener panels are one way to get information that is actionable from the active audience.

Listener panels are most frequently are comprised mainly of the P-1s, as well as some non-partisan cume listeners of your direct competitors. Remember with this strategy that you're generally talking to people who love your station; they will have a bias toward the station. This concept can help keep existing P1's happy, and help convert new ones.

You can also have a listener panel made up of P-1s of your prime competition and talk to them about what your station can do to change their favorite station preferences.

Here is a suggested way of going about setting up the Listener Panels:

1. Using your current call-out system, take the respondents who name your station as their favorite and put them in a separate file. If you're not using call-out, you can still accomplish this by performing random phone calls to specific counties and zip codes to find core listeners and listener's cuming the station. The Arbitron Programmer's Package can help you key in on some of your hot zip codes from which to recruit. You can also recruit these listeners from contest winners, office fax and email promotions, database, etc. Just be sure to screen their listening habits so you have who you think you have.
2. These people should be set aside by demo, keeping in mind the station's demo, using Arbitron demos (Women 18-34, Women 25-34, Teens 12-17, etc.).
3. About 10 days prior to the date you want the groups to be conducted, a call-back to these listeners should take place to once again verify that they cume your station or and what station they prefer listening to this week. Also be conscious to talk to

'heavy' users of radio by asking how much time on a typical day they listen and recruit those that say an hour or better a day.

4. Tell them how important their opinions are and ask if they would be willing to participate in an informal session at the radio station or nearby traded hotel banquet room to discuss radio in the market. (Since we are not going to pay the participants, the idea of going up to the radio station will add more excitement to the idea of participating.) Again, the reason we would like them to come by is to get their opinions of the station.
5. Have the dates you are planning available so when they agree to participate, there will be a few dates for them to choose from. This will make it even more convenient for the listener.
6. After they agree to a date and time, be sure to follow up with a letter, postcard or email thanking them and confirming the day and time they agree to participate. Let them know how excited you are about getting their opinions. (Also, provide directions to the station and a parking voucher if needed.)
7. Give them a cool prize, station Tshirt, movie passes, hot CD's, etc. to thank them for their time after the group is over. It should be something to let them know they are advisors to the station...something they'll be proud to tell a friend.
8. Keep the groups separated by sex and age. Women 18-24 in one group, Men 24-34 in another, your station partisans, your competition's partisans etc. It will take pressure off the participants to perform and help to eliminate any peer pressure.
9. On the night of the groups (limited to 10-12 per group, 6-8 is enough, more is not always better with focus or advisory groups, recruit 25 to get 8-12), a brief tour of the station and a quick explanation of how things work would enhance their experience. Prior to the actual session, have a questionnaire for them to fill out that includes questions about your station, the market in general and any specific concerns you have about the current competitive situation.
10. Prior to the groups taking place, get key station personnel together and decide what specific subjects you want to talk to the listeners about.
11. Station managers, sales managers can attend, but have one point person who is in charge. Note also that if your station targets women and your management team is all men, it can send a message to the listeners. Be sure to drag in a couple females execs if you want to have management present.
12. Be sure everyone attends all the groups taking place, not just one or two. You want everyone to hear the same thing, not someone else's opinion of what happened.
13. Audio tape or videotape the Listener Panels.

## BASIC GUIDELINES FOR THE MODERATOR

- Introduction and Purpose:

“There are no right or wrong answers, just your feelings and opinions. We’ll be talking about this city’s radio and W\_\_\_ in particular. We’re going to be recording the session to help us remember specific things said...” Maybe start with a story or humor to loosen up the room.

- Warmup: Go around the table for introductions...where you live, what you do for a job, where you listen to the radio, what’s the funniest thing that ever happened to you...
- Keep your opinions to yourself, and be sure not to ask leading questions. .By ‘playing dumb’ you’ll be able to draw out more specific answers from the panels.
- Don’t defend the station if a listener is attacking something he/she doesn’t like.
- Be respectful and avoid talking down to any of the participants.
- Listen to the people in the group and let them talk. The moderator’s job is to facilitate discussion and draw people out...not to talk a lot him/herself or to explain how radio works, etc.
- Ask open-ended questions. Probe participants when they give generic-type answers. The follow-up will be key in getting the maximum information from the panels.
- Ask how, why, under what circumstances... Ask people to describe their experiences. Think back and remember...
- Summarize and verify responses.
- Try not to do more than two groups in one night. If you stretch it any further, the later groups won’t be as informative.
- Most importantly, stress that there are no wrong answers and that you value everyone’s opinion. Don’t let one or two people dominate the room, do this by having names of participants displayed and call specifically on listeners who aren’t being heard.

## POINTS TO REMEMBER ABOUT FOCUS GROUPS

1. **Remember that focus groups are qualitative, not quantitative research.** We are looking for ideas, concepts, opinions, feelings, thoughts and attitudes, rather than numbers. We don't have a large enough sample to quantify the findings.
2. **Some of what respondents say may be inaccurate.** Don't focus on how they are wrong, or how "dumb" they are. Rather, keep in mind that this is what they think and perceive. Your job is do deal with it, not to laugh at them. Remember, they get diaries; you don't.
3. **Listen for what a respondent's point is.** Even if some of their details are wrong, they may still be making a valuable point.
4. **If respondents don't know something, that's an important finding.** Maybe you haven't 'sold' it well enough on the air. Maybe it just doesn't matter to them.
5. **Pay attention to what topics or points come up spontaneously** – what things the respondents bring up without prompting from the moderator.
6. **Pick up on respondents' language** – what words they use. Focus groups are a good opportunity to learn the "language of the listener."
7. **Pick up on respondents' level of passion or commitment to a particular idea.** Pay attention to body language, tone of voice, and rate of speech.
8. **Don't form conclusions based on just one group.** The first group is no more significant or correct than the last group.
9. **Pick up on major/obvious ideas.** Some of the best ideas that come out of these groups are so obvious, they may have been ignored or passed off as undoable. The payoff in this type of research is frequently one big idea/promotion that moves the audience perception of your station.

## ***Programming Nugget:***

### **The Argument For Recycling Your Best Content**

Why should you repeat your best content more than once a day or week? Logically if you only play a 15 minute great piece of content one time on any radio station in any market only 1.25% of your weekly Morning Show audience is going to hear it.

How is this determined? There are 80 15 minute segments in each week for a morning show (4 per hour times 4 hours times 5 days). If you air a 15 minute piece of content during just one of those 80 segments, 1/80<sup>th</sup> is 1.25%.

With Arbitron the numbers aren't as stark since the number of people who sample your show vary from day to day and hour to hour and CUME audience travels from quarter hour to quarter hour. But on the average very popular show (looking at the top 100 markets) if you air a 15 minute piece of content one time, somewhere between 65 and 80% of your show's weekly audience will never know about it.\* If your show is new, or your show isn't performing well, even more of your audience is missing your priceless moments if they only air one time.

If you air the hot story of the morning one time only at 7:15 Monday, the 65-80% of your audience that listens only in the 6am, 8am, 9am or 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 7am hours or who never listens on Monday will not hear it.

If you fear you will be offending fans of your show by repeating content, know that advertising agencies on the typical radio buy (really ball park numbers here) figure that they need to run a commercial or song 13 times before half of the show's audience has heard it 3 times.\*

We're not suggesting you run your bits 13 times each week, but to only run your best material one time is not getting the mileage from your stuff you deserve. Put this down as a great example of working smarter, not harder.

- using a high performing show where the AQH is approximately 25-33% of the weekly CUME.



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