



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

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What Type of Morning Show Are You?

Character based shows are not only the new breed of morning shows today, they are the hallmark of shows that build a strong bond with listeners and move the ratings needle. Every successful entertainment effort begins with clearly defined characters and the roles those characters play. Strong characters are core to the success of every great radio show, TV show and film.

There are four types of character based morning shows and each type has its own potentials. Which one are you?

1. **Category One:** Unfamiliar Characters doing unpredictable things
2. **Category Two:** Unfamiliar Characters doing predictable things
3. **Category Three:** Familiar Characters doing predictable things
4. **Category Four:** Familiar Characters going unpredictable things

Category One and Two

Most new morning shows by nature fall into one of these categories. Shows that are working on new content or content updated with their own unique twist are in Category One. Shows that do tried and true benchmarks like "Today in History", "Today's Birthdays", and "Battle of the Sexes" are in Category Two.

Categories One and Two often have a tough time generating strong TSL. The characters on these shows are unfamiliar to most of the audience. There are no loyalties and no rhythms established for listening to one of these shows. Category Two is more likely to perform better initially since they have a built in element of familiarity, but shows in Category One have the most potential for growth when the content they choose clicks with the audience.

It is imperative for shows at these first two stages to develop their individual characters through content designed to contrast and showcase the characters on the show. The time needed to turn unfamiliar characters into familiar ones for most of a station's listeners can be years. Keeping a large percentage of content aimed at revealing character traits will speed the process of becoming familiar characters in the market.

Morning shows in these categories can be running character based imaging 2-3 times per hour or more in their show to cut the time needed to become familiar from years to months.

In addition, strong character based imaging should be running outside the morning show to help develop the personalities with station listeners that don't use the morning show.

Category Three

Category Three shows are frequently shows that have had some success over time. Their characters are well known, as are their benchmark features. Shows in this category can grow by introducing new content that puts the show's characters into unpredictable settings and situations.

In addition, a facelift on shows in this category could include new bumpers and stagers that maintain the familiarity of the show while giving it a 'new coat of paint'. Shows that stay in this category are the most vulnerable to new competitors that build familiarity quickly and do things the audience has never heard before that create buzz. Even though they are familiar characters, the pitfall is their predictability.

Category Four

Most consistently successful character based morning shows, TV shows, and movies are in this category: ***Familiar characters doing unpredictable things***. Character based shows stay interesting in part from having the characters grow, but more from putting the familiar characters in unpredictable settings or having the characters attempt things with unpredictable outcomes.

This category is where you will find long term successful radio shows like Ryan Seacrest, Kidd Kraddick and Howard Stern, TV shows like *Friends* and movies series like *The Matrix* and *Harry Potter*. For radio shows it's a three step process:

1. Be interesting and colorful characters.
2. Develop the character's familiarity.
3. Have the characters do unpredictable things.

Content Tip: Guest Interviews

Many successful major market morning shows become the "Celebrity Interview show" simply because of the market size and their numbers, not due to any intentions or strategy on their part. Being the show that does celebrity interviews and emphasizes pop culture and entertainment information certainly is a position in most markets. Even if that's your unique point of difference and what you're known for doesn't mean you want to air all or even most of the celebrity interviews available to your show.

Many celebrities and their publicists are all about being on shows to push their latest project, tour, etc. and often are not captivating interviews. You can certainly get around to the latest CD, show, movie or book yet you'll want the main focus to be on stimulating and memorable conversation. As with all great content you'll want to go into the interview with a goal or a clear picture of what you want listener response to be.

Be selective of the guests the show books to get the best results – ask the following four questions. Answer yes to at least one of them.

1. Are they a big star with universal or high target appeal?
2. Does one of the show players have high interest in the guest?
3. Are they a great interview even if they're not a huge name
4. Will they set up one of the players on the show in some way?

Try these techniques to make boring guests more entertaining:

- Recruit or stage callers when necessary to ask the embarrassing question the hosts don't want to ask.
- Bring the audience into the loop on a running gag that will happen during the interview
GIVE AN EXAMPLE.
- Make the guest a part of the show and have them play or participate in some of the shows benchmarks and other content.
- Mystery Caller: When the show has a has been TV star or other formerly well known celebrity, have them call in and a couple of listeners compete to see who can identify the show the celebrity was on/what they were famous for and or who the celebrity is.

Programming Nugget:

Why Is Structure Necessary In The Morning?

The way people get through that first hour and a half in the morning is by following consistent patterns and rituals that make them comfortable. Brains are not engaged yet, no one wants to make decisions, or have to *work* in the mornings – people crave structure at this time of day because it makes things easier.

Listeners lack patience in the morning --- it's irritating if, even in the slightest way, they have to work to figure out what the show is doing. This is particularly true during the process of getting ready for the day.

This is just one of the reasons we recommend that you produce intros to benchmarks, features, entertainment reports, etc. We also recommend short produced intros for information benchmarks such as traffic, news, sports and weather with the talent's name doing them included to make it clear what you're doing and to build name association with the feature (i.e. "Mikey Show Sports with Eddie on 92 KSJO").



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