
THE RADIO WAVE
"Keeping Radio People in Touch"
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Even the most experienced radio presenters can get into a rut. And radio beginners are always looking for ways to improve their performance but rarely are able to get the advice and direction they need.

The answer? THE AIR-CHECK DOCTOR.

Find out more at <http://www.radioschool.org> and click on the link on the right-hand bar.

WELCOME TO ISSUE TWO.

As I pointed out in the first edition of this e-letter I want you to regard this regular communication to be yours as well as mine.

If there's anything you read in it now or in the future that you want to comment on...feel free.

Anything that's really "getting up your snout" about radio... tell us.

Anything you need help or advice with...ask.

Anything you want to market or promote (even yourself)... go ahead.

If you'd like to contribute and article...do it.

Through THE RADIO WAVE we can keep in touch with each

other regardless of where we are in the world.

You can reach me at radiowave@allaboutradio.net

FEATURE ARTICLE

Radio Myths - Law or Lore?

By David Rogerson

The laws of programming have become lore, passed orally from one generation to the next. Along the way, some of the facts have become indistinguishable from fiction. Taken as gospel, this tradition has helped perpetuate a number of radio myths.

As a consultant, I often talk shop with GMs and PDs, admittedly more so at the end of the year when we review the goals set for the station's 12 month performance. These discussions are mutually thought provoking and educational.

When we talk about how decisions are made or what works and what doesn't, I occasionally hear one of these radio myths, like the one's that give rise to spirited conversation in the office lunch room or around the station corridors. They're often quoted as if it was gospel.

Here are some of radio's most widely held myths. I'm sure there are even more you could add to the list. Regardless of whether you're new to the industry or have been around for a while, some of these have elements of truth, which explains why some people continue to believe them!

In fact, these convictions are false assumptions, bad deductions, misinterpretations or sweeping generalisations.

The Visibility Myth:

"Everybody knows our station and its on-air talent."

Radio is free - and often taken for granted. You only need to look at radio diaries to see how diarykeepers, who tend to be radio fans, fill in diaries and the comments section. Now imagine how little the average radio listener is concerned with such details.

Listeners who surf around the dial are far less concerned with knowing the name of the station they are turned to than we'd like to think. This is a major issue for stations that share similar programming with competitors.

A station should never take its identity for granted. To get the credit your station deserves, its name and position must be aggressively promoted - both on-air and off-air - to cut through the clutter and take on brand equity.

Personalities, now for some disturbing news for you: Listener recognition of most air talent is often next to nonexistent.

It usually takes a personality two years to

achieve familiarity with most of a station's cume. The marketability of the average radio personality for appearances is, in reality, not as strong as we might think.

Research Reliance Myth:

"It's true because the research told us so."

Research can be given both too much credit and too much blame in our industry. Some stations treat research as the ultimate panacea. Research is a valuable tool that can help you interpret the past, but it cannot provide all the answers.

If you use research, know its limitations so you can use it without becoming too reliant on it.

Repetition Myth:

"If I am hearing this song too often, the audience must be too."

There are not too many in the audience who listen as heavily as station employees. Ninety-nine percent of core/heavy users listen less than we do. The average listener probably hears a song we hear every few days once or twice a month.

The next time your airstaff complains about songs that they are tired of, use your ratings data and song rotations to compute reach and frequency statistics for your library.

Sledgehammer Syndrome Myth:

"If we say it enough times, the audience will believe it."

You can only fool some people some of the time with this approach. Repeated use of a slogan or positioning statement will enable the audience to consider it, but not necessarily believe it.

Before a claim can be perceived as reality, it must be credible. Because there is so much hype on the radio, convincing listeners of legitimate claims has become increasingly difficult.

They Don't Do It In The Dark Myth:

"Adults do not listen to the radio at night."

Many adults do listen at night - just not as much as during the day. Some may only tune in occasionally. But others listen for long periods while working a second job or taking a long drive, or even up at night looking after young children.

Yes, the available audience in evenings skews younger. To target younger listeners, some stations alter their programming when the clock strikes 7pm. But if you are chasing younger demos at night, be careful not to ignore the dislikes of older listeners.

Programming that is too much of a departure from the norm, especially on a new station, can cause a lot of tune out. There is a strong argument for consistency from one daypart to the next.

They Don't Make Good Songs Any More Myth:

"Listeners over the age of 25 do not care about new music."

A more correct statement would be, "As listeners grow older, they tend to be less interested in the music being made for younger listeners". As we age, we have less time to pursue more interests.

Most CD purchases are by teens and younger adults. But this does not mean new artists and new releases can't connect with older consumers. For example, there are substantial numbers of 25-44 men who are bored with Classic Rock and are hungry for new music on the radio.

Phones And Record Stores Myth:

"Requests and CD sales are good indicators of a songs' popularity."

Radio should attach some significance to CDs that sell and get heavy requests, but this information is only part of the story.

Sales and requests do not always correlate with how popular the song or CD is with your station's target. In fact, some of the best-selling or most requested songs can be a problem with significant portions of the audience. Anybody remember "Achy Breaky Heart?")

Only a small fraction of a station's cume ever calls with a request. Callers do not represent the core audience. It is unfortunate that more time and energy is spent on taking one request after another than on preparing a break that will be heard by tens of thousands.

Less Talk Myth :

"Listeners always want less talk and more music, so keep talk to a bare minimum."

There is no research question more loaded than "How much would you listen to a station that plays a lot of music with very little talk?" It is more important to determine whether listeners perceive your station as having a lot more talk than its competitors.

Talk comprises a small fraction of music radio programming; the music is more important. Nobody wants to hear long-winded, boring disc jockeys. But all too often, the "more music, less talk" position has turned some radio stations into boring jukeboxes.

Only recently have managers begun to rediscover the importance of radio talent.

The competitive edge is gained by stations that develop talent who inspire listener loyalty by making emotional connections with the audience through heartfelt, insightful, entertaining comments. Not just at breakfast, but in all dayparts.

Progress, Don't Regress

By studying history, we can prevent ourselves from repeating its mistakes. But following only what has worked in the past is what keeps outmoded philosophies in vogue, halting the creative development of radio. Simple principles no longer address the nature of radio today.

Radio myths continue because we do not normally question what we already believe.

Maybe here I have helped put a few out of circulation ... well, at least for another month!

David Rogerson is Managing Director of Strategic Media Solutions. A media and communications consulting company which provides program, marketing and research solutions to clients in the Asia Pacific rim. David's more than 25 years experience in the industry includes on air announcer, group marketing manager and Group Program Director.

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This article re-printed by courtesy of Jocks Journal.

-----HOT TIP-----

DAN O'DAY'S AIR PERSONALITY TEN COMMANDMENTS

Legend has it that many years ago a very holy disc jockey ascended a mystical mountain. At the top of this mountain, the jock found a fearsome burning bush.

Just as the jock was about to flee, the bush spoke unto him, saying, "Do not be afraid."

"Do you mean," the flustered personality stammered, "You're... You're...?"

"Yes," the bush replied, "I am the all powerful, all knowing. I am...a consultant! Now, take these commandments with you back down the mountain. You'll be receiving a bill for my services."

- I. THOU SHALT ANSWER THY REQUEST LINE
- II. THOU SHALT MAKE IT CLEAR TO EVERYONE THAT THY STUDIO IS NOT FOR SOCIALIZING
- III. THOU SHALT READ A DAILY NEWSPAPER TO KEEP INFORMED ON WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THY COMMUNITY AND IN THY WORLD
- IV. THOU SHALT MAKE AN EFFORT TO ESTABLISH RAPPORT WITH

THY CO-WORKERS

- V. THOU SHALT THINK ABOUT THY CAREER
- VI. THOU SHALT MEET THY PUBLIC WHENEVER POSSIBLE
- VII. THOU SHALT WORK THY TAIL OFF TO DO THE BEST JOB POSSIBLE
- VIII. THOU SHALT TREAT PEOPLE THE WAY THOU WOULDST LIKE TO
BE TREATED
- IX. THOU SHALT BE PREPARED FOR THE WORST
- X. THOU SHALT NEVER BE SATISFIED WITH THY SHOW

Courtesy Dan O'Day. <http://www.danoday.com>

-----HOT TIP-----

TOP RADIO PREP SITES

The Interprep site bill themselves as "the country specialists." There's artist information for country radio, but also something for every format and show style. This is one of the leading prep sites for radio with lots of free stuff.

<http://www.interprep.com>

COMING UP

The age of technology is ushering in something new that could prove to be a lot better and a more reliable measurement of listening habits than the "listeners filling in the diary" method we've had up to now.

In the next edition of THE RADIO WAVE we'll look at the Portable People Meter and its potential to change the future.

A FINAL NOTE FROM THE EDITOR.

The plan is to grow the list of people taking this e-letter, increase the content and encourage interactivity from our readers.

To do this I need your help.

If there is anyone you know either in or outside the radio industry who would like to receive THE RADIO WAVE please direct them to <http://www.allaboutradio.net> where they can subscribe for free.

(You don't have to buy the book. There again, if you want to.....)

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