

THE RADIO WAVE
"Keeping Radio People in Touch"

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Issue #37

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By subscription only! Welcome to the thirty-seventh issue of
THE RADIO WAVE
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This is the third anniversary issue of The Radio Wave. It
launched on April 7th, 2002. Which is a darn good reason to
make an all-out push to increase our subscriber base.

So, I'm asking for your help, loyal reader, to make that
happen. Please forward this issue to anyone you know that
may appreciate the bounteous free content YOU get every
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WE HAVE MAIL

Hi Ian. Just a couple of quick thoughts. Still can't work out
why stations shorten their playlists. I know its all about
playing only the best of the best songs but, as an announcer
7 years in the game , people get sick of hearing the same
old songs 3 times a day ... People don't like it... What's
up with playing a lot of great songs not just the same 300.

Re. iPods...I listen to a lot of cd's in my car but after
a while I want to hear what's happening in the real world
so the radio goes back on. Make it local that's what sets
you apart from the other stations as well.

Less commercials ?...as my mentor Dan O'Day says make the

commercials fun and entertaining and they will listen.
Simple as that.

We've all heard the same old ads time and time again ..."you don't need the run around " friendly staff" "its the sale you've been waiting for"... those pathetic sounding 2 voice adds.

Copywriters pull your fingers out. Invest in a good copywriting course and you'll get people listening to the ads. I'm sure the clients will be happy as well that someone is actually listening to what they have to offer.

See ya.
Pete Brandtman 2ST Nowra

COMMENT: Stations that are sticking to short playlists are still in the old mindset that when listeners come to their station they want to hear the most recent hits. As average listening time to one station is around 40 mins they figure if they bring the big hits around in tight rotation the listener is more likely to hear the songs he/she's looking for.

This may have worked in the days when the only place the hits were found was the Top 40 but doubtful if it's relevant today with so many different music formats and categories available.

You're right about "make it local". The best survival route terrestrial radio can take.

More creative copy? Absolutely. Trouble is the pressure is usually on for station copywriters to churn out so much stuff in such a short space of time they have no chance of sitting around staring at the ceiling dreaming up creative and entertaining ads. Pity because, long-run, radio is shooting itself in the foot as the revenue dwindles.

Anybody got any other thoughts on these issues? Email link: ian@allaboutradio.net

THE MARCH OF TECHNOLOGY

Once a year I update my on-line e-book "The Beginner's Guide to Becoming a Radio Star". Weblink: www.allaboutradio.net

Having just completed that task I realised that I'm now going to have to do an update more often. Perhaps every six months. Reason being that the broadcasting technology chapters, after only 12 months, are hopelessly out of date.

For example: in the 2004 edition there's no mention of iPods or podcasting because they were barely on the horizon. Audio files on the internet are nothing new but the recent development of portable appliances for recording and playing MP3 files has now attracted thousands of fans around the

world who like their music mobile.

Already many radio networks have realised the potential and are making some of their programs available for podcasting.

And, it had to happen, entrepreneurs are looking at ways they can make money out of the phenomenon. Whether they will or not remains to be seen. The internet has a history of financial disasters by people betting on the success of some new Web concept or other.

None-the-less, mobile music is a happening thing and I'm willing to bet we're not far off having iPods combined with mobile phone capabilities.

Then I'll have to update the e-book again!

ANY REQUESTS?

In the UK, radio programming on BBC1 was put in the hands of listeners for 10 hours during a recent holiday.

It was called the "Ten Hour Takeover" where listeners could SMS their requests and the beeb would play them regardless of the type of music. If they had it and enough people were requesting it they'd play it.

The BBC interactive team developed software to retrieve, parse and tally the incoming SMS messages into a coherent playlist that the DJs would then broadcast.

That was not a simple task -- especially via SMS where people use abbreviations for even the most common words. However the initial project was so successful that it has been repeated on two other holidays.

It was interesting that, at first, listeners requested music that the BBC would normally play but once they understood there were no restrictions the requests became very different from the usual playlist.

Now the ratings should show whether the old saying: "The Customer is Always Right" applies in this case.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Responding to the very real challenge of listeners deserting music radio to downloading their own choice of music on their iPods, stations across the US are switching to a free-form format with huge playlists. These are more like a packed MP3 player in shuffle mode than the traditional format with fewer tunes, frequently repeated. (see mail section above)

To go with this trend stations are renaming themselves with bloke's names. Hence we now have numerous JACK outlets bragging about "playing what we want", DOUG-FM Detroit "we play everything", and BEN-FM in Philadelphia "playing anything we feel like".

My first thought was...wouldn't it be a better selling proposition for a station to say "playing anything YOU feel like." Then, obviously, WPLJ New York had the same thought. They're now running a sweeper saying: "PLJ... we play what YOU want. Isn't that a good idea?"

Yes it is.

BILLBOARDS THAT TUNE IN TO YOUR CAR RADIO

Imagine. There's a big Billboard promoting a local caryard. Past this billboard every day go thousands of cars. In those cars people are listening to their radios. But...which stations are they tuned to? And at what particular time of the day?

If that information could be gathered then the car yard could then cross-check with profiles of listeners provided by local radio stations. For instance where they shop, TV viewing habits, income levels and whether they intend to buy another car in the near future.

With this information the car yard now knows who is potentially looking at the sign and can analyse its effectiveness at reaching their target market. It can also place radio advertising where it's going to be most effective.

Well, the technology to do this is now here and is on trial in the USA. It's owned by MobilTrak Inc. of Phoenix.

How does it work? As cars pass by, sensors, about the size of a shoe box attached to towers, pick up on electrical radiation emitted by each car radio. Because radios emit a unique level of radiation to translate each frequency MobilTrak is able to distinguish what station is playing.

Once a signal is picked up, it's routed to servers in Phoenix. Subscribers can then access all the data via the Web.

What about privacy laws? Well, MobilTrak points out that it does not collect any identifiable data about a car or the person driving it. Nor can it see or eavesdrop on people in the car.

The next step is for billboards to communicate with each other so that units at one location can relay data to billboards further down the highway which can then display the most appropriate ads to oncoming traffic on massive LED screens.

Meantime concerns have been raised about the potential of combining this with other technologies thus creating more intrusive marketing techniques.

Gotta say it all sounds a bit scary. But then I believe so did the wheel when word got out about Ogg's new invention.

CURTAIN CALL

A teenager in Year 10, who was doing work experience in the newsroom at top-rating 3AW Melbourne, scored big-time when a busy period had the regular news staff tied up and he was given the job of covering a St. Kilda Football Club press conference.

That conference resulted in one of the biggest sports stories of the week which, apparently, he handled very competently, much to the approval of the news director Rob Curtain. The young guy's name? JOE CURTAIN.

HOLIDAY DIAL SURFING

During the summer, listeners switch radio stations more often than other times of the year.

This is the interesting finding of a study undertaken by Strategic Media Solutions. It reveals, in part, that over summer more than 50% of radio listeners aged 10-49yrs chose to switch stations more often and listen to a radio station that they would not normally have listened to.

"These figures are amazing and confirms other qualitative work we have undertaken in the past year" said SMS Managing Director, DAVID ROGERSON. "People are in a more relaxed, less regimented mode over summer. Their listening preferences change. Their entertainment and information needs also change."

"What's more of an eye opener for radio station management is that a significant number (56%) of those who listened to another station over the summer period, that they would not have normally tuned into, claim they are very likely to listen to that new station again in the coming year."

The survey period was from December 4th. to January 5th., the very time that stations often give their stars a holiday and bring in the B team. Perhaps that's not such a good move after all.

IT'S NOT ALWAYS WHAT YOU THINK

Live reporting of major news events always carries with it certain dangers of what can be picked up by open microphones.

A good example of this was during the coverage by Newsradio WTMJ in Brookfield, Wisconsin of a massacre at the Sheraton Hotel where a gunman walked into a church service being held in one of the meeting rooms and started firing, killing eight people eventually including himself.

A live cross was made to the news crew in the helicopter above the scene where, unaware that they were on the air, somebody on board uttered what sounded like a religious slur referring to "the Jesus nut."

However, this actually had nothing to do with the carnage below but was a common aviation term for the all-important piece that keeps the main rotor blades attached to the helicopter.

WTMJ General Manager JON SCHWEITZER said: "It was just a terribly unfortunate coincidence."

In fact, a group of chopper veterans, the Rattler Firebird Association, gives out an annual "Jesus Nut Award" to the member who travels the longest distance to its reunions. And if you go to the web site of another group of veterans they offer the wish that you: "Enjoy the site and may the Jesus Nut stay tight."

www.25thaviation.org

A SLAP IN THE FACE

If it's true any publicity is good publicity then it's been a good three months for WQHT-FM otherwise known as New York's number one hip-hop & R&B station HOT 97.

They got a whole lot of bad press and three protest rallies by airing a parody song which mocked the victims of the Asian tsunami. Not long after that came a shooting outside its building in Greenwich Village between the crews of two rival rap artists.

Now their SMACKFEST promotion has been shut down by the New York State Attorney. This was a regular feature on the station where two female participants take turns slapping each other in the face to settle a dispute and for prizes.

Previously the Athletic Commission had said the SMACKFEST events appear to be illegal boxing matches which are a misdemeanour in NEW YORK. The Commission had warned that the station could face fines of up to \$10,000 if the SMACKFEST events were to continue.

POSTSCRIPT:

Following the shoot-'em-up HOT 97's truly upset landlord, which happens to be the carpenters union that owns the building, said from now on artists will be allowed to only bring one person into the radio station with them.

The union also wants to know who is appearing on Hot 97 a week in advance so it can call in the cops, hire extra security or rent a metal detector if necessary.

DJ BREAKS MOVIE WATCHING RECORD

A movie marathon that started as an impromptu wager between a morning show producer who claimed he could sit and watch movies all weekend and one of the jocks ended after 73 hours

with a good shot at breaking a Guinness Book world record.

The station, X203.9FM in San Bernadino, arranged a showdown between the producer, Cisco and DJ Steve Inman at a local theatre.

Theatre Manager PETER LEHMAN said he had hoped to be able to show the DJs current films, but that the time needed to set up 35mm films on projectors exceeded the five minutes between films allowed by the rules of the contest so they set up two projectors that showed DVD's.

The station followed rules set out by Guinness World Records. Neither of the contestants could sleep during the event. The station was required to provide a third-party witness for each of the two contestants, and that witness had to change every four hours. An emergency medical technician was also required for the entire event.

Cisco watched movies for just over 73 hours. Inman chucked it in after 18 hours of viewing.

"It was about 7 o'clock in the morning and we were watching Die Hard: With a Vengeance," said Inman of the last movie he watched during the marathon. "Samuel L. Jackson's voice was about the only thing keeping me up at that point."

"I had taken a little too much No-Doz (a caffeine pill) and that started to get me really weak. I was thinking, I can't have this stomach ache 'til Thursday.'"

The boys had company during the marathon. Station listeners were invited to watch movies with the DJs. In order to gain admittance to the theatre visitors had to bring in a non-perishable food item or item of clothing to be donated to the Oasis Resource Center of San Bernardino who look after homeless people in the area.

SLIP OF THE TONGUE

"Happy Birthday to CONNIE LINGUS," said BBC RADIO LEICESTER presenter CHRIS HIGHTON without realising the double-meaning packed in the name.

And he still didn't tumble to the fake name when he got to the end of the message and announced the message was from IVAN R DON.

However some offended listeners were onto it and rang to complain.

Seemed Chris was tricked into the message by a fellow DJ who received a bit of a dressing down by his bosses for his trouble.

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