

Beyond "Formula"

Doing The Basics *PLUS*

An **EXCLUSIVE**

Special Report

By Steve Allen

I don't know about you, but the original reason I got into radio was to *have fun*. (Okay, so maybe it was also for the free vinyl, but I not only digress, I date myself).

Both on-the-air and in the halls, working at a radio station was a case study in prolonged adolescence. We tried to do things, we took chances, and we honed our craft — all in the name of *entertainment*.

Somewhere during the ensuring years, we have forgotten that radio is all about *show biz*. We are a form of

entertainment that about 97% of all Americans 12 and above patronize every week. Unfortunately, we have replaced fun with formula.

You know the formula. It's been drilled into you ever since you got your first "real" radio job, you see it in the trades all the time, and the consultant

(Continued — See Beyond Formula on page 2)

Targeting Tips

WHEN You Play A Promo Matters

Even a so-called generic "TFN" promo, especially if it promotes a "listening appointment" on a specific day of the week.

Case in point: Listening to a local News/Talk radio station recently, I heard a typical "appointment" promo for a Saturday morning program.

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Continuing Education For The *Dedicated* Radio Programmer

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Beyond "Formula"

(Continued — from page 1)

literati extol its virtues at every convention.

It's that simple three-step process:

- Find a music hold and fill it by playing the hits of that genre
- Build a great morning show and eliminate all negatives after 10am
- Market, market, market.

Follow this formula and success is assured.

Of course, it helps if your music niche is clearly defined in the listener's mind and not some subtle gradient of a sub-genre (see "Modern Hot AC"). The great morning show is a cinch — we all have one, don't we? And marketing? Isn't that why God invented Valpak?

In market after market, this formula gains ratings and revenue.

It continually perpetuates itself because, in the absence of any alternative, it fills the void.

According to the pundits, storm clouds are gathering on the horizon. The newest threat is either the Internet or satellite radio. These threats are real, if only because large corporations have spent millions of dollars investing in this technology. It is not a

We are more concerned about eliminating mistakes than we are in taking risks that lead to greatness.

matter of "if", but "when" — unless — we remember what got us into radio in the first place — fun.

What is "fun"? Personality, that's what.

- The people on your air who form an emotional bond with your listeners create a personality.

- The person in your production studio, who creates compelling vignettes that separate one song from another — that's personality.

- You — the Program Director — by how you set the tone for your staff, that's personality.

This is easy to say, but hard to execute. What makes it worse is that it is *our own fault* (that it is

so difficult to execute). We do not allow talent to stretch themselves beyond the confines of the liner cards and form a personal relationship with their listeners. We are more concerned about eliminating mistakes than we are in taking risks that lead to greatness.

(Continued — See **Beyond Formula** on page 3)

Country

Hot-Clock Games

As noted last week, there's no "one size fits all" music clock in Country. Everything from current/gold ratios to stopsets-per-hour is dictated by the competitive environment in a market (you do different things in a hot head-to-head battle than you do when you're the only game in town). But there are many similarities.

Current

Category	Songs	Songs-Per-Hour	Rotation	Weekly Spins
Most stations program three Current tiers — Hot, Medium, and Light . . .				
Hot	7-9	2	3:30-4:30	37-48 plays
Medium	7-15	1-2	5:30-7:30	21-31
Light	8-12	1	8-12 hours	17-21

Recurrent

Most stations in competitive battles program two to three Recurrent tiers . . .				
Stay Current	10-22	1-2	10-11 hours	15-17 plays
Power RC	50-60	1-2	25-40	6-7 plays
Regular RC	40-50	1	40-50	3-4 plays

Gold

The consensus seems to be toward two categories of old-favorites — although some stations also use a "spice" category (mostly 80's hits that still test well) sometimes known as "lunar" (since it is mostly programmed nights and overnights)				
Power Gold	60-100	3-4	20-33 hours	Continued — See Country Clock on page 6
Secondary	100-120	2-3	40-50 hours	
Spice	100-200	.5-1	100-200 hours	

Beyond "Formula" — The Basics *PLUS*

(Continued — from page 3)

We create "perfect" radio stations — perfect rotations, perfect clocks, perfectly delivered positioning statements. **Clean, sterile, and . . . soulless.**

How do we change this? I have a few suggestions:

- ✓ **Tap into your natural cynicism.** In other words, don't take what you do so seriously. If you loosen up, your staff will follow. Today, write down the first five thoughts that come into your head and make it a goal to implement one of them on your air. Make it a sweeper, a promotion, or a bit idea for your afternoon personality.
- ✓ **Remember the fun.** What is it like in your halls? Is it IBM? Or Saturday Night Live? If your people are having fun in the building, it will translate on-the-air. Today, scheduling an outing for your staff. Take them bowling, go pub-crawling — do something fun with them as a group that has nothing to do with work. You will hear it on-the-air!
- ✓ **Encourage risk taking.** The development of personalities is an inexact science. If the formula were simple (and safe!), everyone would do it. The first step towards a compelling, personality-driven radio station will likely be a *stumble*. Be there to *encourage*, not criticize. The best personalities know when they make a mistake; they don't need you to point it out. Be Pavlovian. *Reward* the behavior you desire. Help your talent grow by coaching them in the right direction. If they try and fail and you slam them for it, they will never try again.
- ✓ **Make a mistake.** Be courageous enough to expose yourself as fallible. No one bats 1000. Not even the PD. Implement one of your new ideas and be willing to have your staff point out its flaws. The radio station will be the ultimate beneficiary of this process.
- ✓ **Find young talent.** Find those kids who have the fire in their bell and no bad habits. Mold them, nurture them, coach them. Use your Sunday morning overnight shift as a proving ground for rookies. Air-check them every week. Their loyalty to you and the station will increase with their confidence. If they don't work out, find

ones that do. Locating and grooming talent is the one skill that we, as PDs, can develop that makes us invaluable. One reason we lack compelling on-air talent is that we lack great coaches.

- ✓ **Coach old talent.** Talent is *ageless*. *Great* on-air talent *loves* to perform and entertain. Take the chains off your staff and watch them respond. There is probably one personality on your staff with more radio experience than you. They've probably fallen into bad habits, encouraged by conservative management. *Remove* those barriers (and excuses) and demand great performances.
- ✓ **They are what you say.** This is subtle, but effective. Call your on-air staff "disc jockeys" or "deejays", and that's what they are — a bunch of pretty voices who know how to talk well. Call them "personalities" and you may be giving freedom before it is earned. However, if you call them "performers", you are telling them what they *are* — and what you *expect* — with a single word.

This is a time-consuming, arduous process that will require hours of close attention and high maintenance. It will consume you. Once begun, it will never end. However, it will not only set your station apart from the pack, but it will mark you as a Program Director of savvy, who possesses the intangible quality of talent development.

What a deal — a great radio station — *and* — personable marketability!

It all adds up to *entertainment*. The elements we place between the records are as important to our long-term success as any record we play. Developing individual personalities, creating a station attitude, and bonding with the listener on a personal level — *these* are the dark secrets of programming alchemy.

TW Tip #7184, #8147, and #6187



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TW's All Time Favorite TV Spot

I get asked by a lot of subscribers and clients if any one TV commercial stands out in my experience as being "most effective" or "most memorable". The answer is **yes** — a locally produced commercial about 20 years ago, done by **Wayne "The Poo" Roberts** who was the top-rated breakfast personality at 4BC in Brisbane (Australia).

The Strategy:

Find a new, effective way to call attention to a laundry-list of the station's listener-benefits and listening-appointments, while benefiting from Poo's huge appeal in the Brisbane market. And, at the same time, generate word-of-mouth. Tall order.

The Concept:

- The spot opens with a full-profile shot of Poo walking in the grass of a local (very identifiable) city park, his eye to the camera, talking straight-pitch benefit-benefit-benefit (visually reinforced with graphics, of course). You get the picture— "Win \$10,000 tomorrow morning,

more music and less commercials all day long, do-daa, do-daaaaa".

- After taking about 2 or 3 paces forward, he steps squarely in a pile of dog-shit, winces *very subtly*, but continues doing his pitch, totally straight, while subtly trying to drag his shoe in the grass to wipe the crap off it.

What Made This Spot Work:

- Largely, Poo's charismatic personality and the fact that he was always known for zany stuff.
- I cannot over-emphasize the importance of **subtlety** here. If "the step" (and reaction) was too obvious, it might have looked staged and come off looking cheesy. It takes the right kind of personality to pull this off.

The Results:

Listeners were talking about that TV spot for months! And Poo reinforced his #1 ratings. Even months later, the station was able to make indirect references when promoting something new and wild on his show ("Well, Poo's really put his foot in it again — be listening tomorrow morning as he gives you full details about ---"). And, needless to say, word of mouth spread *fast*.

TW Tip #3165, #5105, and #6188

Targeting Tips

(Continued — from page 1)

Only trouble: the promo was played at 8pm Saturday night! (What do you think the chances are that most listeners will have forgotten that message by the next Saturday morning?) Was it "wrong"? Not entirely, in the sense that "no act of salesmanship ever goes completely unrewarded" (or in this case, unpunished). But — would it have made an impression on many *more* potential listeners had it been played at, say, 3pm on Friday? (Yes!) But more importantly: it occupied the promo-slot that could have been devoted to a promotional announcement that might have re-

minded listeners of a *nearer-term* listening appointment they should be making (like later that night or first thing the next morning). So it may have stood in the way of a TSL increase (especially if lamebrain acts like this are rule rather than the exception).

Double-Check Your Rack

- ✓ Examine your promo rack (or digital promo file) for any such day-specific or time-specific promos
- ✓ Affix a notation to all day/time-specific promos, noting the window when they should be played (wouldn't hurt to put the emphasis on when it shouldn't in BIG RED LETTERS, "Do NOT play between 9am Sat & 9am Thur!").

Make this S.O.P. for every promo from now on. *TW Tip #3166, #9148, and #12014*

WHEN You Schedule TV Matters, Too

My friend **Chuck Buell** (who is the new morning personality at Jefferson-Pilot's KBZT/San Diego) reminded me of how this same philosophy applies to spot-placement for TV campaigns. He noted a recent example of a certain Soft AC station, whose avowed #1 target was "females at work 9-5". So where did they run several of their TV spots? Oprah! How many at-work females are watching Oprah? I take the point that, yeah, a small percentage of them might tape it (in which case, they'd probably zip past all the spots when they replayed it) and that it might hit other (non-working) females — but you know what I mean (their TV bucks could have been more efficiently spent, given their clearly-defined target). *TW Tip #3167*

a k a **Car Of Your Choice**

Another in the series of famous cart-rotation contests where the object of the game is to "guess/predict" what's coming up next. Guess right and win. This example ran on KIMN/Denver back in 1965 when it was owned by the late **Ken Palmer** (a great programmer in his own right). I submit that it will sound just as big and just as exciting on your station today.

How It Works:

- ✓ Basic phoner — 7th caller through gets to play.
- ✓ Staging: "Let's say good morning to (name) of (area) — in just a second, the doors of the X-109 Hundred-Car Garage will open and you could win the car of your choice. Tell me, (first name), which make and model brand new car do you want to see driving out with you name on it?" "A 1999 Lexus LS400." (Each contestant must designate a make and model). "Okay, good luck, let's see what happens."
- ✓ (Hit Cart containing 100 combinations of car-makes/models) "horn honks) with offstage announcer saying "It's a 1999 Ford Taurus (from ABC Ford)"
- ✓ Play the game til someone wins the car of their choice. Losers get a lovely parting gift and the car from a losing-contest goes back in the garage where it could still be won.

Why It Works:

- "The Hundred-Car Garage" sounds like you've got 100 cars to give away (even if you only play the game until *one* of them is won).
- A new car is a great prize, #2 behind cash. (Actually #5, behind cash, cash, cash, and cash). The car of your choice makes it an even better prize.
- "Lite" mental participation is afforded to non-contestants (though not quite as interactively as a game of skill, like answering a trivia question),

so some play-alongers will get the cheap thrill of "winning" (and you can bet they tell their friends and family, "You're not going to believe this — I would have won a brand new Lexus on X-109 today").

- Liquidation possibilities: by involving advertisers like the above example which gives a dealer name. But avoid adding too much commercial verbiage in the contest itself (support promos are better suited to that). Also make sure you include *all* 1999 car makes (the promotion will lose it's "car of your choice" appeal and credibility if you exclude all Chevys because a Ford dealer insisted on it, or because a major import dealer doesn't want domestic cars in the rotation).

"Hundred-Car-Garage"

"To Do" Checklist

- Determine contest dates
- Compile list of 100 car makes/models
- Meet with Sales re: liquidation possibilities
- Prepare budget spreadsheet (update after each winner)
- Write rules – distribute
- Write explanation memo – distribute
- Write/record pre-promotion liners/promos
- Write/record liners/promos for contest dates
- Produce stager/Background bed cart
- Produce 100 car make/model descriptions
- Schedule jock-meeting for "dry-runs"

"Guess and Win"

Other Variations:

"Jock In The Box". Guess which jock comes out of the Magic 88.8 Jock-In-The-Box, Win \$100) Best used on a station with high-profile personalities to reinforce the name-equity of an entire jock lineup.

"X-109 Karaoke Machine" (aka "The Sing Thing"). This twist lets the contestant identify which jock is singing karaoke, so there's a bit more "skill" to it than just a stab-in-the-dark total prediction-guess.

"The X-109 Slot Machine". Or for pure luck, pull the handle on the X-109 Slot Machine — win \$5 for every cherry, \$10 for every orange, or hit the jackpot (\$109) if three X's come up.

"The X-109 Zodiac Jackpot" If the mystic gypsy's horoscope matches your astrological sign, win \$100.

"X-109 Xtra Sensory Perception" aka "The X-109 Numbers Racket" or "Magic 88.8 Lucky Numbers" Focus your ESP mental-powers on your radio and tell me what number, between 1 and 10, the X-109 cash computer will say next to win \$109).

TW Tip #3168, #3169, #4091, #4092, #9149

Country

Hot-Clock Games

The following hour-clock is based on a typical "unencumbered" music hour (with no news, traffic, remotes, long personality bits or features, etc.). A typical commercial profile of 11 minutes/units is spread across three stopset islands (slotted at :20, :36, and :53). Using an average song-length of 3:20, this will yield 15 songs in the hour.

For our "base clock", we've arbitrarily chosen a current/gold ratio of 60/40, which seems to be the "mid-point" of all Country stations.

This results in 9 current/recurrents to 6 gold over the hour.

This would, of course, be adjusted as competitive factors dictate.

On this basis, here's the stack . . .

Category	Songs	Per Hour	Rotation
Current-Hot	7	2	3:30
Current-Medium	13	2	6:30
Current-Light	9	1	9:00
RC StayCurrent	11	1	11:00
Power RC	38	2	19:00
Regular RC	51	1	51:00
Power Gold	66	3	22:00
Secondary	104	2	52:00
Spice	150	1	150:00

And here's how they scatter . . .

- :00 Power RC
- :03 Hot Current
- :06 Power Gold
- :10 Medium Current
- :13 Stay Current RC
- :16 Secondary Gold
- :20 STOP (3 minutes)
- :23 Hot Current
- :26 Power Gold
- :29 Power RC
- :33 Medium Current
- :36 STOP (4 minutes)
- :40 Secondary Gold
- :43 Regular RC
- :47 Power Gold
- :50 Light Current
- :53 STOP (4 minutes)
- :57 Spice Gold

(Next week, we'll plot this on a clock-wheel)

Note that . . .

- We've tried to adjust the rotations so that the repeat-harmonic naturally avoids an intersect of golds or recurrents in the same hour (e.g., if we had decided on 102 Second Gold, the rotation would be 51 hours, which is identical to Regular Recurrents; by simply adding 2 songs to the Secondary category, we avoid that cycle).
- Additional note regarding Gold: the majority of songs in Power Gold categories tend to be from the years 1992-96, while most songs in Secondary Gold categories tended to be hits from 1989-91 (as far back as '87 at some stations).
- Remember one of the most basic rules of music programming is: **try to reflect the essence of your music strategy in each quarter-hour** (especially in the first 20 minutes of each hour, which is when many listeners tend to make their judgement of your music mix vs. your competitor's). Note that the variety from :57 to :20 represents Spice to Recurrent to Hot to Power to Current to Super-Recurrent to Gold.
- Sweeps extend from :57 to :20 (7 songs), from :23 to :36 (4 songs), and :40 to :53 (4 songs).
- Many stations tend to butt the last stopset of the hour flush to the :00 top-of-hour point. I prefer to get a "running start" on the first sweep of the hour — featuring a "spice" gold track (for variety) while the competition is knee-deep in commercial hoopla. Spice at :57 tends to add varietal depth to what otherwise might be a repetitive song-to-song transition at the top-of-the-hour (where it otherwise might seem like the same songs are always intersecting).
- There is concentric balance throughout the hour. Currents, Recurrents, and Gold are regularly mixed together. Power RC at the top and bottom-of-the-hour. Power Gold roughly 20 minutes apart. Secondary Gold roughly 30 minutes apart. Hot Currents are separated by 20 minutes, as are Medium Currents.
- Hot Current is slotted at the music re-entry point out of the :20 stopset (so you can billboard one of the hottest Country hits is "coming up next").
- The weakest songs (the Light Current, Regular RC, and Spice Gold categories) are largely slotted in the last quarter-hour (usually the least-listened-to quarter-hour of each hour between 8am and Midnight).

TW Tip #2137, #9152, and #12015

Coming Next

Oldies Hot-Clock Games x 3
Mainstream — 70's — Rhythmic

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Curtain Coming Down On The End Of An Era

As we begin 1999, radio folks are looking at an industry that has changed so completely it's hardly recognizable. As one of the last of the inefficiently organized business sectors, radio has finally found itself in consolidation.

In most major markets it is not uncommon to have over half of all listening attributable to just two companies.

The good news: rate structures have firmed and stations are actually realizing the value of their franchises with bigger profits.

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3MMM-FM in Melbourne (Australia) gets straight to the point. Their top-of-hour newscasts open with "Triple M dot com dot a u" (*triplem.com.au*) straight into the musical sig. No waffling or redundant BS copy. But the cumulative impact burns the Triple M URL into listeners' minds just as effectively (in a much more subtle and, I submit, *memorable* manner). Smart!

TW Tip #15051, #16057, #3170, #9151, and #10051

The "PD" Bookshelf

Anyone who appreciates the historical references we try to regularly provide in the pages of "PD" (which according to our 6-Month Checkup research is most of you) will find non-stop enjoyment in the new book *The Hits Just Keep On Coming: The History Of Top 40 Radio*.

Ben Fong-Torres, of *Rolling Stone* magazine and *Gavin Report* fame, has managed to capture the essence of the golden age of Top 40 Radio, a phenomenon that, as Ben points out, "has gone through 45 revolutions per minute for 45 years".

It's a fast-paced book, just like the format, rich in historical detail and anecdotes about how the Top 40 format has managed to stay "forever young". Over 272 pages, it features interviews with Dick Clark, Gary Owens, Casey Kasem, "Cousin Bruce" Morrow, Ron Jacobs, Scott Shannon, and Buzz Bennett (among dozens of others) and chronicles the achievements of Top 40 pioneers like Gordon McLendon, Todd Storz, Chuck Blore,

and Bill Drake.

You feel like you're in direct contact with the way many of Top 40's philosophical roots were formed (and why they've spilled over into other formats today).

Even Ben's book-signings in LA and San Francisco were star-studded events (featuring visits by such legendary names as Dr. Don Rose, Dave Sholin, Tommy Saunders, Russ Syracuse, and Beau Weaver) and included a "Top 40-style" promotional value-added vehicle: Bobby Ocean set up a make-shift studio to record a customized classic KFRC "And now, ladies and gentlemen . . ." ID for any radio geeks who bought the book. Cool!

Available at a 30% discount (\$19.57) from Amazon.com

TW Tip #21029 and #7185



Nasty Rock NewsTalk

- (Continued — from page 8) great phone response, but is boring as bat-shit to most of your audience (average listeners will tune-out in droves). Again, stick with things your audience has told you (through research) that they like or want to hear more of.
- Going public with your aspirations to get more younger listeners at the expense of older ones could serve to offend your 55+ audience base (no matter how euphemistically or colorfully you say it). I know of one heritage N/T station in a Top 50 U.S. market (the name withheld to protect the stupid) where the young, brash, swashbuckling PD was interviewed on

television and he openly complained that his station's audience was not comprised of "quality" listeners because there were too many "old farts". So what happened? In the course of three short months, this station managed to hemorrhage nearly half of its 55+ listeners (and consequently, 12+ and 35-64 shares) as the old farts put this station in *the penalty box* of their mind — and their diaries! -- by defecting to a competing N/T station. Older listeners are less likely to forgive a station that belittles them (and if you deliberately piss them off, you may *never* get them back).

End of rant.

TW Tip #1087, #6189, #9150, and #10050

News & Surveillance Elements

Stationality

Nasty Rock NewsTalk

News/Talk stations the world over face a common challenge (and opportunity): growing 25-54 audience while *not losing* the dedicated core of upscale 55+ listeners who drive 12+ and 35-64 numbers. Seems a lot of heritage N/T stations forget the latter half of this equation in their pursuit of the former.

"We Want Listeners Who ARE Hip, Not Who Need New Hips"

So what's the "secret" to gaining 25-54's without losing 55+? Some thoughts on things that work – and a few things that *don't*. There's no magic bullet for "improving" the audience-comp characteristics at a heritage station, but one guiding philosophy that may help is: **Don't be too hip for the room.**

What Works:

- First, be realistic about which demo-cells (of the 25-54 combo) you can really expect to influence with an AM News/Talk station. N/T stations that are successful in growing 25-54 audience know to concentrate on a wider-target of 35-54 (while zeroing in on 40-54 boomers, especially 45-54's). Think of the 25-34 cell as "out of bounds" (the things you'd need to do to attract 25-34's tend to be 40+ audience-chasers). Stations with a long heritage of sports play-by-play usually have the best shot.
- Bring your news presentation (especially news *writing-style*) into the new millennium. (See "PD" issue #6, page 1 for details on how to get 'em, grab 'em, hold 'em, keep 'em, push 'em, and please 'em). Higher story-count, shorter raps, emphasis on momentum, no redundant verbiage or lead-ins. Good examples to model: ABC radio news (their top-of-the-hour package is slicker yet very complete) or the top-rated late (10 or 11pm) newscast on any network-affiliate TV station (local TV tends to really *make words work* in their late 'casts).
- Research the boomer-target to find out their hot-button issues and topics. Then deliver them on-air.
- Encourage your hosts to choose talk-show topics that are relevant to 35-54's. Avoid topics that are only interesting to 55+ listeners (there are ample topics that appeal to *both* 35-54's and 55+).
- Screen-callers so that only "the best of the best" end up on-the-air. In particular, avoid airing callers who sound old (even if they are "young" fuddy-duddies). It's the News/Talk corollary to the "you don't get hurt by the songs you don't play" philosophy. (Even older listeners are not going to miss a 70-year-old's call if it's replaced by a cogent and concise viewpoint from a 40-year-old).
- Bench-mark bits, like "30-second sound-off", "idiot of the week award", "op-ed editorials", etc. build both interest and stationality.
- Always be on the lookout for younger personalities with a brain who may have a built-in 25-54 "fan-club" they can bring with them. (Hire the wrong one, though, and you'll chase more listeners out of the corral than you herd in.)

- Tasteful contest-marketing can hit both 35-54's and 55+'s. The key: a contest should never get in the way of a station's news credibility, reputation, or integrity. Avoid contests that sound gimmicky or cute.

What Doesn't:

- One of the biggest, most prevalent mistakes I see: a large number of N/T stations who think the way to appeal to 25-54's is to use screaming-guitar, Rock-edged bumpers and rejoinders. You should, of course, strive to find *contemporary, cool-sounding* bumper music that reflect "today", but be mindful of format-music that goes *over the edge* (and grates on the nerves of 40+ listeners). The key is in efficient formatting through the use of smooth production values — and avoiding format elements that sound "old fashioned"
 - Another errant tendency: encouraging talkshow hosts to be rude and nasty. Certainly, I take the point that "rude and nasty" works well as a style for *some* hosts — what I'm really talking about here is when established hosts are tinkered with (and encouraged to try to be someone or something they are not). The on-air emphasis should always be: make it *riveting* (not make it nasty).
 - Talking a language that most of your audience doesn't understand. It may be tempting to name a free-for-all, anything goes program or feature "the mosh pit", but if 99% of your listeners don't know what a mosh pit is, you're wasting your energy (and valuable air-time that could better be used airing something that better "connects").
 - And rude promos. The kind of in-your-face promo-with-attitude that a 26-year-old male Rocker may think is cool will often risk offending anyone over 40. (If 90% of your audience is over 40, why would you do that? Some stations do!) Older listeners also tend to feel uncomfortable when comparative advertising promo campaigns get *too crasty*. Concentrate instead on selling the listener-benefits of *stimulating positives*.
 - Talkshow topics or guests that drive phones, but not ratings. Numerology, for example, may generate
- (Continued — See Nasty Rock NewsTalk on page 7)

Ocean Toons®

Check out Bobby Ocean's creative web site at www.bobbyocean.com. Full of interesting ideas, links, quotes, production samples, and voiceover demos. E-Mail Osh at oceanvox@pacbell.net

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My New Spell-Checker

Remind you of anyone you know?

TW Tip #16058

Eye halve a spelling chequer, witch came with my pea sea
 It plane lee marques four my revue, miss steaks eye kin knot sea.
 Eye strike a key and type a word, and weight four it two say
 Weather eye am wrong oar write t shows me strait a weigh.
 As soon as a mist ache is maid, it nose bee fore two long
 And eye can put the error rite, its rare lea ever wrong.
 Eye have run this poem threw it, I aim shore your pleased two no
 Its letter perfect awl the weigh, my chukker tolled mi sew.

— Sauce Unknown

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Rock 'n Talk

Special Report by **Michael Packer**

And .. The 10 Traits
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Also ..
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Phantom-Cume Phollow-Up

Last week, we touched on various methods of addressing a station's "phantom cume" (see "PD" issue #30, page 8) and recommended including on-air format-tics as part of your arsenal (the price is right – it doesn't cost you a single penny out-of-pocket).

Certainly, using format elements that "register" in a *diarykeeper's* mind is one of the best ways. (Yes, years ago I was one of the bad boys who used the "Dear Diary, this morning I'm listening to Charlie & Harrigan from 6 til 10am on KLIF" sweepers before they were outlawed!).

But you needn't run afoul of Arbitron law to achieve mental interactivity with your constituency of *listeners* (which will, of course, include phantom-cumers and diarykeepers).

Interactive Stationality

One of the most effective procedures is to build-in verbiage or anticipated-responses that *invite* (even subliminally) some kind of listener-thought interaction – to reinforce either your call-letters or a key listener-benefit, positioning-statement, or branding-element.

For background, let's tear a page out of the Advertising 101 history book. One of the most effective subliminal, interactive campaigns ever was for the cigarette brand Salem. After establishing their catchy "You can take Salem out of the country, but you can't take the country out of Salem" slogan/jingle, their ad agency created a new campaign with an *abrupt* ending, "You can take Salem out of the country, but — ". (Viewers and listeners dutifully supplied the rest of the slogan in their minds, just like they were one of Pavlov's dogs). You can accomplish the same thing with the way you word your liners, promos, and sweepers.

Promo copy. One of my favorite ways to end a "World's Easiest Contest" promo (see "PD" issue #3, page 6) is with the line "So think about it — what radio station *ARE* you listening to right now?" Resist your natural programmer's temptation to reinforce your call-letters there. If you leave it *blank*, the *listener* will supply their own mental "X-109FM" (if they're a phantom-cumer, you've just succeeded in taking your station out of the back of their brain and putting it in the front of their mind, where it just may stay until they fill out their Arbitron/ACNielsen-McNair/BBM/RAJAR/etc. diary!).

"Omission Sweepers". Nothing is more attention getting on a radio station (or any other stage) than a pregnant . . . pause. So use this technique to your advantage to "jar" listeners into noticing your sweepers. Consider running **listener-response sweepers** like . . . "When I say (Better Music and Less Commercials), what radio station do YOU think of?" (Soundbite: "Umm, X-109FM") "How come YOU listen to the new X-109FM?"

(Listener soundbite): "Ummm, 'cause they play better music." or "Cause I wake up with Bubba and Booby in the morning".

Here's the trick: Every 19th hour* or so, *omit* the listener-response from the sweeper. Most of your listeners will mentally supply, in their own mind, one of the lines you've been brainwashing them with.

Net result: This "omission-sweeper" will penetrate much *deeper* in listeners' minds than any other sweeper-liner you can possibly devise. Note: Since sweepers are played over music, this "pause" doesn't cause you to lose any momentum (it's *not* dead-air, just a pause in the verbiage).

* To avoid unnecessary repetition of this sweeper concept, use your Harmonic Convergence Plotter (found in "PD" issue #29, page 6) to determine the farthest possible hourmarker until the sweeper will naturally repeat in rotation in the same hour. (Yes, your plotter can be used for much more than just music!). Just determine the number of liners/sweepers and plot alongside the number of hours the same style of liners/sweepers will run in a typical broadcast day (follow the instructions found on "PD" issue #30, page 6). In the above example, either a 24-hour or 19-hour liner-rotation intersects farthest down the line on a 24-hour-a-day liner-schedule (I've chosen 19-hours, since it's the larger of the two rotations and, when dealing with a "trick" sweeper, we don't want it to be heard too frequently or it could lose its punch.)

Why it works: Mnemonic devices and subliminal effects Pavlovianally condition listeners to expect certain things in a certain order. Sometimes to the point where listeners have heard things so often that they no longer notice them (the repeated-liner no longer "registers", due to excessive repetition, and in effect the listener "unlearns" the message). Like seeing the same old outdoor display with a boring message like "Drink Coke". The idea behind omission-sweepers is to *interrupt* the already-learned, *predictable*, pattern (that is being largely ignored). Using the Coke board example, you'd suddenly *notice* the board if it said "Drink oke", or was printed upside down, or had a snipe that said "now with a new lemon taste". (And any of those tactics would catch your attention and thus reinforce the "Coke" brand somewhere in your brain).

TW Tip #1086, #3164, and #9147

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