

Consolidation Means ...

... Nothing's Changed!

An **EXCLUSIVE**

Special Report

By **Walter Sabo**

You go to rent a car from Thrifty. You have always been happy with Thrifty and you hate Budget. You'd *never* rent from Budget! But actually, you did! They are owned by the same company.

Consolidation. Internally, it's changed many industries from rental cars to wall-to-wall carpeting to VCR manufacturers. But it hasn't changed the way you buy. You'll still go to your favorite rental car counter because of your *experience*,

not because of whose logo is on the stationery.

Radio is consumed the same way it was 10 years ago: one person tunes to one station at a time. When that person hears something they like, they listen. If they really like it, they might
(Continued — see Nothing's Changed on page 2)

How To **Avoid** Noticeably Repetitive Harmonic Cycles

(The "PD" Music Science series continues)

Some stations are better than others at making their computerized music-scheduling software "sing" (or at least "hum"). Most of the more advanced programs (like RCS and PowerPlay) enable users to, among many other things, protect against
(Continued — see How To Avoid on page 5)

Continuing Education For The Dedicated Radio Programmer

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Programmer's Digest Publisher/Editor **Todd Wallace** is a 30-year programming veteran — as a #1 jock, PD, GM, and station owner. Over the past 24 years, he has provided programming consultation services to over 100 radio stations. Internationally recognized as the "founding father" of the "callout" research concept, over 200 stations have used his systems of "in-house" music, tracking, and perceptual research. Reach TW at (602) 443-3500 or e-mail: TW3tw3@aol.com

... Nothing's Changed

(Continued . . . from Page 1)

remember the name of the station long enough to write it down in an Arbitron diary so you can get your bonus.

While the financial superstructure of our business has changed, the relationship between our end-user and our product has *not* changed. Smart broadcasters are not allowing experimental financing to put the successful relationship with our end-user at risk.

Today, the strategic radio executive's job is to **protect the product**. Protect it from budget cuts, weak talent performance, pressure from community groups, and from all those well meaning folks at your office door.

As always, a truly pragmatic Program Director doesn't really think his/her job is to "get along with Sales" or to try to "be the kind of PD the GM wants". Instead, he/she knows **the job is to grow audience**. Our leading General Managers build on the fact that all profits start with the relationship between one listener and a sliver of sound. The positive results of their efforts is indeed good for sales – and for the owner.

**The best show
with the best
marketing
wins.**

"Because of its emotional impact, radio is more than just theater of the mind. It's *theater of the gut*."

— Radio/Marketing legend **Chuck Blore**

TW Tip #1073, #9141, and #18016

New Media* Will Have Few Listeners

. . . if Radio maintains and creates quality shows. The marketplace repeatedly proves that almost no one buys new technology to get a shiny box.

People embraced Radio, TV, Cable, and VCRs to be *entertained* — by Milton Berle, Ed Sullivan, the Beatles, or to let their kids watch cartoons, or to freeze-frame on "adult" flicks. The best show with the best marketing *wins*.

* CD Radio, XM, and The Internet

This is hardly the time to be skimping on product. We have the money. Revenues are plentiful in our hot economy. More importantly, competing technologies on the horizon are backed by unprecedented dollars to offer viable entertainment options (as evidenced the \$1 Billion, with a B, war chest so far for CD Radio). Radio's growth will be commensurate with its rate of investment in on-air talent development, work environments, research, and marketing. The more creativity and funds invested in the product, the more secure radio's near- and long-term bottom-line will be.

(Continued — See **Nothing's Changed** on page 3)

Continuing Education — Or — Continuing *Entertainment*

"The age we're living in is the most extraordinary the world has ever seen. There are whole new concepts of things, and we now have the tools to change these concepts into *realities*. We're moving forward. In terms of my work, I believe people want to know about this universe that keeps unfolding before them. But let's be clear about one thing — I'm not trying to teach anything to anybody. I want to *entertain* the public." — **Walt Disney**, Visionary (circa 1958)

TW Tip #1075, #7168, and #21027

Cool Math This Is The Only Year This Will Ever Work!

This will only take a few seconds. Follow these 6 steps and prepare to be amazed . . .

- Pick the number of days a week you would like to go out (or eat pizza, whatever)
- Multiply this number by 2
- Add 5
- Multiply it by 50
- If you have already had your birthday this year, add 1,748. If you haven't add 1,747.
- Last step: subtract the four-digit year that you were born

See

RESULTS

on page 4

Consolidation Means ... Nothing's Changed

(Continued . . . from Page 2)

The Future Is In The Numbers

Not the future of six years out, but six *months* out. That requires research and perspective. Top operators are investing a fraction of their station's value in research. They don't view it as a luxury — they know that research is the insurance chip. It covers the bet.

While each TV network spends over \$100,000,000 a year on research and development to protect their programming investment, too many radio stations are still forced to beg for it. Often the same owner who studies the electric bill to save pennies will put the entire programming budget at risk by failing to seek objective measurement of the appeal of their product. That's not prudence.

**You now own your competitor.
You still don't own the audience.**

Thanks to consolidation, my business has never been stronger and our staff keeps growing to meet demand. Our numerous clients release that the key value of an outside programming or marketing consultant is that they are *outside*.

The PD who has to deal with the day-to-day of running four stations instead of one has no thinking time. No freedom to look ahead, to anticipate the needs of his/her listeners. Remember, just because you now own your former competitor, you don't own your audience. It's your station's *ability to appeal* to an audience, not competitive factors, that make or break your business. The outside

consultant's point of view should bring you fresh information vital to serving the ever-changing tastes of your audience.

One owner said it best:

"Time and time again — without exception — successful broadcast operators have proved that in order to survive and prosper financially, any radio station must provide a programming service of utility to a meaningful segment of the potential listening audience. Neither Sales nor General Administration nor Engineering comes first. Programming does."

— Gordon McLendon (circa 1960)

Ask your team a question they haven't heard in awhile — How can we make the very *best* show? How can we double *and triple* the appeal of our product?

TW Tip #7165, #1072, #13001, and #19054

Walter Sabo is President of Sabo Media.



For 15 years, his international consulting firm has worked with major radio and TV groups.

He has revolutionized talkradio programming by creating the first successful 24/7 format for younger adults on the FM band.

Before launching Sabo Media, his background included stints as VP/GM of ABC Radio Networks and Exec VP of NBC O&Os.

You may reach Walter by phone at (212) 808-3005 or by e-mail: sabomedia@compuserve.com

Promotional Art & Science™

Last 98 Winners Of '98

Here's an effective contest I've used in various formats to add some year-end pizzazz — inviting listeners to **Be One Of The Last 98 Winners Of '98 — And The First 99 Winners Of '99**

Often, stations run promotionally "naked" toward the end of the year

- because promotion budgets are shot and new one's don't take effect until after the new calendar or fiscal year — and/or —
- because there are no diaries to influence, most stations prefer not to "waste" their ammo if no one's "keeping score" (an approach I usually support, but humor me as I put forward this devil's advocate argument which I think makes good sense).

(Continued — See Last 98 Winners Of '98 on page 8)

Stretching Your Promotion Budget "Advertiser Roulette"

In this day of strict cost controls, here's a little trick I've recommended for years that can accomplish two objectives for both Programming and Sales:

- Fund, in whole or in part, a cash contest (especially useful for a jackpotting prize)
- Help your Sales Department generate "new" local-direct business

When I owned KZKZ in Flagstaff, AZ a few years ago, I used this to stretch our contest budget without making it sound like we'd "sold" our promotional integrity up the river to do it.

How It Works:

- ✓ **Target 25-30 new-to-Radio or new-to-station prospective advertisers.**
- ✓ **Tell them you will give them a "free" commercial adjacency to your major cash contest, every 25-30 hours** (in rotation with the other participating "roulette" advertisers).
- ✓ **The catch? The provision is: if your contest is "won" in the hour their spot runs, they have to fund the prize, for which they will also receive that amount in ROS/BTA commercials** (at your top-of-card rate). So, for example, the advertiser might end up paying your Cash Call jackpot of \$1,111.11, but, they'll also receive \$1111 worth of spots.
- ✓ **Since there are 25 or 30 advertisers, the odds favor very few of them having to pay anything, hence the term "advertiser roulette" (in fact, most of them will think this is the greatest scam going!)**
- ✓ **Meanwhile, you've accomplished something for your sales department: getting non-advertisers comfortable with hearing their message on your station** (in a high-profile stopset position: your contest slot).

Legalities:

- Put a 30-, 60-, or 90-day term limit on this arrangement. Then target 25 or 30 "new" non-advertisers for the next round of advertiser roulette.
- Check with your FCC attorney to see if any other legalities apply.
- And, in an election year, double-check to make sure this doesn't affect your unit rate (it shouldn't, because of all the provisos attached, but better to be double-safe than double-sorry, especially if any state statutes apply).

Format Police: This should *NOT* be a "sponsorship" ("Cash Call, brought to you by". It's a phantom adjacency "free spot" for "new" prime-prospects.

Whoring Possibilities: This could *become* a sponsorship, if push comes to shove, especially in smaller markets (where practicality often dictates that you hold your nose and do a few things you wouldn't think of doing in the ideal world). Or it could become a value-added sponsorship, or phantom adjacency, for a treasured advertiser.

Wallace Wisdom: Many sales reps don't fully appreciate the true revenue-generating potential of cultivating relationships with new-to-Radio or new-to-station advertisers (they prefer to spend their time working on accounts that will make money for them this month). But there are usually two or three reps on each staff who see how this can turn into a commission for them in two or three months, with an even larger marginal-net-worth payoff further down the line. To get the ball rolling may require that the PD accompany these reps on a few sales calls. That way, you can help them sell the concept to the prospective advertiser (who will be impressed with how well Sales and Programming work together), while at the same time opening a few minds on the sales staff to the promise of what this concept holds for everyone on the sales staff.

TW Tip #17034, #3158, and #4083

Cool Math Results

(Continued – from page 2) You should now have a three-digit number.

- The first digit of this is your original number (how many times you want to x)
 - The second two digits are your age
- 1998 is the only year this will ever work. Your Morning Team can have fun with this!

TW Tip #5103 and #19056

Programmer's Digest

The Insert

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The Next Phase Of Consolidation

As the radio industry rapidly consolidates, the first phase appears to be pretty well over. Most markets are now controlled by a handful of players.

The next move: for those consolidators to begin to build regional clusters around their larger markets. These spokes involve the addition of smaller stations in immediately adjacent marketing areas.

The old limits on numbers of stations owned kept this logical development from occurring. Now radio operators are extending their reach in the same way newspapers have done for years with regional editions.

It all adds up to *new ways to increase revenue.*

As the industry continues to redefine growth, it looks to professional advisors to help chart this process. That's why smart owners call on America's leading independent broker:

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More Useful Products & Services On Back

Programmer's Digest

The Insert

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Turn Over To See *More* Useful Products & Services

Do you know the answers to these questions about your next music test?

- 1** Will the participants in my music test come from all my Hot Zips, which give me 80% of my AQH? Or, will they just come from the neighborhood around the test site?
- 2** Will the participants in my music test be recruited randomly from my entire metro, the way Arbitron samples listeners?
- 3** How can I be assured that the participants in my test are not “professional” test takers (people who participate in surveys for money all the time), or “referrals” (participants are asked to recommend a friend or bring a group of friends)?
- 4** How will participant fatigue be prevented from effecting the scores of songs in the second half of the test?

***You deserve excellent results from your
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E-QUESTS

Chancellor CHR WJMN in Boston (Jam'n 94.5) has one of the coolest websites in Radio (www.jamn.com).

In addition to taking phone requests, websurfers can submit "e-quests".

TW Tip #4084, #2126, #15047, #16051

Clear Channel's WSSR (Star 95.7) invites listeners to join the "Star 957 E-Mail Club" via their website (www.star957.com).

The e-database enables the station to notify listeners quickly about station promotions and contests, birthday greetings, and all the usual database-marketing exercises.

TW Tip # 4085, #2127, #15048, #16052

Austereo's B105 in Brisbane (Australia) promotes "The B105 Community Switch", a 7 day a week telephone switchboard service which helps listeners find out information ranging from local community events to lost pets. Their website gives listeners all the necessary details at (www.b105.co.au).

TW Tip # 4086, #2128, #15049, and #16053

How To Avoid (Continued— from page 1)

Noticeably Repetitive Harmonic Cycles

repeat-plays of the same library song in the same hour (or half-hour) for a designated number of days in a row. However, since many stations don't take full advantage of all the bells and whistles available to them, and still others don't have sophisticated enough software to properly plot or anticipate these noticeably repetitive repeat-cycles, you may find this brief drill will help you help your software function more smoothly.

Help Your Software Help Itself

If you plan your basic hot-clock structure in a way that the math isn't required to constantly "work against itself", you'll be more likely to achieve the true balance, texture, and shading that you desire.

As we noted last week (see page 4 of "PB" issue #28 for "The 5-hour curse"), if the wrong "math" is applied to the deployment of your music categories, certain hourly "harmonics" (repeat cycles) can become repetitively *predictable*. Not only can this contribute to a perception of increased burn-out (and subsequently lead to tune-out), it can also narrow the range of your total cume that is serviced by each song (if a song seems to be "stuck" in a narrow hour-range, a smaller percentage of your cume will be hearing these impressions).

Intersecting Harmonics

If one of your rotational tiers has 24 songs that get played once an hour, the natural mathematical repeat ("harmonic") will intersect on the time continuum at 24 hours, 48, 72, 96, 120, 144, 168, 192, and 216 hours (and so on). This means that if this rotational category were to allowed to track-out, unfettered, any song in

this category would be played at the same time every day. When you program your scheduling-software to avoid same-hour repeats for the next day or two (or more) on a 24-hour rotation, you're asking your computer to commit an "unnatural" act. It's constantly having to plod "uphill".

Much better to help it by adjusting your rotations to take into account *naturally-smooth intersections*. So your objective should be - to try to plot-out rotational harmonics that will result in the natural intersecting of "category rotations" with "number of hours" as far down the timeline as possible - while at the same time trying to avoid "close" repeats ("near-misses"). Let's look at some examples. Remember, the timeline hours we want to *avoid* are: 24, 48, 72, 96, 120, 144, 168, 192, 216, 240 (that's 10 days worth).

A 23-hour rotation naturally repeats at 23, 46, 69, 92, 115, 138, 161, 184, 207, 230, 253, and so on. The closest "near miss" is within one-hour the next day, within two-hours the day after. But you can do better than that.

22-hour tiers repeat at 22, 44, 66, 88, 110, 132, 154, 176, 198, 220, 242.

21-hour tiers repeat at 42, 63, 84, 105, 126, 147, and aha! 168! This means that, without artificial stimulation, a 21-hour rotation song would naturally get played, for example, every Monday in the 3pm hour. Not desirable.

Do you see what we're trying to do here? This week, we're just splitting hairs to give you some examples. Next week, we'll split atoms. And the week after that: world peace! (Or is that: whirled peas?)

TW Tip #2127 and #16054

Next Week

Another "PB" Stealable Template to help you plot the natural intersection of your rotations on a 2-week timeline

News & Surveillance Ingredients

Breaking News

On a breaking news day — or a historic one (like the unprecedented combination of the House impeachment debate coinciding with coverage of the Operation Desert Fox in Iraq) — News/Talk radio stations are thrust into the proverbial crisis/opportunity point. They will either:

- Enhance their image — and stand tall as “the station to turn to first in times of emergency”
- Or — drop the ball (due to commercial pressures or other extenuating circumstances) which can cause them to suffer perhaps irreparable perceptual damage.

I'm happy to report that the two News/Talk stations in Phoenix (Pulitzer's KTAR and Chancellor's KFYL, both faced this challenge decisively this week — and set a very good example for other Full Service and News/Talk programmers worldwide.

Both stations suspended their regular programming, *including commercials*, to carry continuous coverage of the debate (alongside Desert Fox updates plus short local news and surveillance capsules during drivetimes).

Beyond the fact that wall-to-wall coverage represents no small loss in revenue (at a time of year when inventory pressures are pushed to the max), both stations faced *additional* pressures that had to be factored into their decision-making process:

- KTAR had to postpone an 18-year holiday tradition — a live on-air theater production for charity of *A Christmas Carol* featuring *The KTAR Players* (a rag-tag cast comprised of local media hotshots, sports celebrities, politicians, and rock stars). (See “PD” issue #22, page 8 for deep background). KTAR PD **Laurie Parsons** made the right choice. Yes, “the show must go on” — and it did, live at the Herberger Theatre where it was *taped* for later re-broadcast (on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day). On-the-air, KTAR stayed with wall-to-wall debate. Had the station cut away from its impeachment coverage to broadcast “a play”, no matter how steeped in station heritage, it might have planted the wrong seed in many core listeners' minds (that “I can no longer count on this station to give me the news I really need”).
- KFYL's coverage of impeachment debate meant interrupting the popular syndicated programs of **Rush Limbaugh** (a strong #1 in his timeslot, and

a show with many rabid fans who are, shall we say, “vociferous” anytime their hero is bumped for any reason) and **Dr. Laura Schlessinger**. KFYL PD **Ed Walsh** also made the right choice. Tape-delayed Rush aired immediately after the House debate recessed on Friday night and Dr. Laura was rescheduled over the weekend.

Wallace Wisdom: Oftentimes on a Full Service or News/Talk station, the number of services you'd like to provide to listeners will present scheduling conflicts. It's very difficult to do two things at once on one frequency, juggle as you might. That's when you need to weigh all the factors and make the tough decision(s) **based on the long-term implications for your station's image**. That's exactly what PDs Parsons and Walsh did.

Two tidbits of free advice:

- ✓ In the hierarchy of principles, **always choose the higher principle** (no matter how painful or difficult the short-term dilemma may be). Once the image toothpaste is out of the tube, you can't get it back in. And one major *misstep*, seemingly innocent at the time, can undo *years* of image building. (How many years did it take NBC Sports to recover, perceptually, from allowing the preemption of an overtime NFL game so the network could air *Heidi* in its entirety?)
- ✓ **Be fully prepared.** Try to anticipate every possible contingency you will face like this and roleplay with yourself (and/or your staff) about what your likely, and most responsible, response will be. Actually develop a strategy, a gameplan, for this type of event. This would be an interesting “war games” exercise to conduct with your management team or programming staff in anticipation of the next conflict-crisis (like the Senate impeachment debate which is coming soon!). A no-holds-barred brainstorming session that looks at *all* of the options and issues that could come into play will better equip you for “next time”.

Most of all, place all this in your mental file of “what to do when” for the next time a crucial crunch-decision presents itself.

TW Tip #1074, #10048, #13002

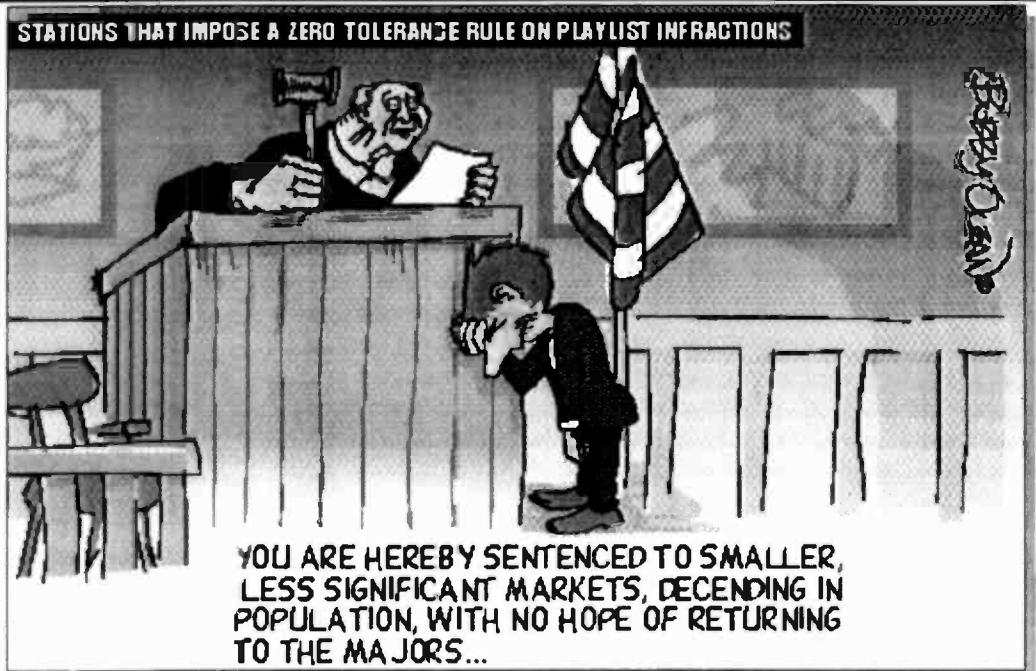
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Jeff Young's Radio 411 (www.radio411.com) is the cyber-home of Ocean Toons and the Bobby Ocean Cartoon Gallery.



Global Snap!

As programmers go, there are visionaries and there are followers. This week's *Snap!* salutee, Ian Grace, is internationally renowned as both a forward-thinker (not afraid to take risks and blaze new trails) and a good technician (well aware of how a solid basic structure strengthens a creatively-programmed station).

His background influences are global in scope — from entertainment moguls like Virgin's Richard Branson and Australian Glenn Wheatley, to legendary radio figures like Aussie Rod Muir and Americans Jeff Pollack and the late Rick Carroll (who was the guiding force behind World Famous KROQ).

Gracie, as he is affectionately known to his mates, is one of the few Australian programmers to have served as a major market PD in America, working for Jake Karger in Hartford in the mid-80's (before his "green card" expired). He also served as both consultant and PD for Virgin Radio in London during their launch.

The Grace track-record is full of many firsts — and lots of big wins, especially in his homeland Down Under. Under his guidance as National Programme Manager, and later Group General Manager, the Triple M Network was created across Australia, which enabled the consolidation of national promotions, marketing, sales initiatives, and the networking of on-air talent. (Mind you, this was several years before any consolida-

tion model had been developed in the U.S.) During this period, Triple M in Sydney reached the zenith of its success, with a string of 22 straight #1 ratings wins (10+).

He is widely regarded as one of the best talent scouts in the business, having discovered and/or developed numerous major personalities (The D-Generation, Martin/Molloy, Richard Stubbs, Club Veg, Mobbs & Fletch, and Doug Mulray, among many others).

As an "all-rounder" (the Cricket term for someone with exceptional skill in all areas of the game), Gracie has a unique knack for combining quantified research with *large-sample* focus groups to give him clearer insight into how listeners really think and perceive radio product, right down to the songs they crave.

His promotion and marketing skills are second to none. The "Triple M Rocks" sticker was the biggest production-run in the world. Triple M's TV creative was hailed as being years ahead of its time. And another little known fact: the "collective contesting" concept (recently made famous in the U.S. by Jacor's "Mix" format stations) was being done 8 years ago by the Triple M network.

Gracie resides in Sydney, but spends a good portion of every month jet-setting to visit his consulting clients around the world (like Virgin Radio's properties in London, Paris, and Greece, the Primedia and Highveld Stereo stations in South Africa, and various consulting projects in Asia, Ireland, and other parts of Europe).

TW Tip #7166, #6084, and #19055

Programmer's Digest

(Continued — from page 3)

Because so few stations are promotionally active around New Year's Eve/Day, it represents an opportunity for your station to *dominate* the "share of mind" of contest-influenced "players". The good news is: it needn't be an expensive exercise — since you're "the only game in town", you win by default by virtue of your very "activity". Another point to consider: a good contest carries a certain "afterglow" which can enable you to start your ratings sweep on an upward beat. (The forthcoming Arbitron Winter '99 sweep starts on January 7th, not that far removed from New Year's Day).

A few variations on the theme —

- ✓ Run a countdown on New Year's Eve, counting down the Top 98 of 98, giving away every CD you play. "Every time you hear a song start, be caller 7 and you win! So easy, any idiot can do it!" (This, of course, could be traded out or, with some spade-work, arranged through record companies). Then give away \$100 bills (or movie passes, concert tickets, etc.) every hour (6am-9pm inclusive) for the next week (starting 6am, January 1). 14 hours of daily contest activity over 7 consecutive days gives you 98 hours of prize coverage (add one more hour to get 99).

Last 98 Winners Of '98

- ✓ Or, instead of a countdown, highlight "a winner an hour for the rest of the year" (starting Christmas Day) using smaller prizes (movie passes, concert tix), then upping the ante in the new year (leaving the impression in listeners' minds that your station is *getting better, going into the new year stronger*).

- ✓ Suggested copy to slug:

"If you think it sounds like all the other stations in Podunk Valley have run out of money to giveaway, you're right! But *not* X-109! You can be one of the last 98 winners of '98 — and — one of the first 99 winners of '99 as X-109 starts the new year off the right way by cash-blasting hundred dollar bills *every hour!*"

Not a bad to lead into your major "book" promotional activity.

Wallace Wisdom:

Here's one to file away for next year —

**Be One Of The Last 99 Winners Of The Century
And One Of The First 2000 Winners
Of The New Millennium**

Has a nice ring to it.

TW Tip #3157, #4082, and #7064

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