



By J. Frank Beatty

# Building

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THE ENTRANCE of uhf television into a market sets up difficult and brand new management problems that broadcasters have met with perseverance and ingenuity—plus, of course, some innovations in technical instruction that startle professional educators and molders of public opinion.

Since the first commercial uhf station, KPTV (TV) Portland, Ore., approached its debut a little over a year ago, telecasters have been confronted with one of the most difficult problems facing a new industry. It is actually a three-ply problem: (1) preparing the public to accept another television service; (2) explaining the special qualities of uhf, and (3) stimulating the purchase of new uhf receivers or conversion gear.

These are promotional problems, aside from the array of management problems that harass any new television project, particularly the embryo uhf station.

The situation facing the new uhf station is different in each case. Each market, too, offers its special conditions.

Numerous techniques and devices have been used to launch uhf enterprises around the nation. The results have been astonishingly successful in some cases, disappointing in others. There are areas that have achieved from 90% to practically 100% uhf saturation in television homes. Then there are markets that have responded poorly to intensive promotion of uhf service.

A number of uhf stations have supplied B•T with summaries of its uhf promotion techniques. The cumulative package represents an extensive array of methods and planning. It is not submitted as a cross-section of the best—or the worst—in uhf operation. Rather it is designed to show what has been done in a number of cities in scattered parts of the nation. In some of the cases only a portion of the campaign is outlined. In others the promotions are completely reviewed.

The uhf campaigns, as received by B•T, follow in summary form:

WCAN-TV Milwaukee felt the announcement of its uhf ch. 25 grant last February was received with "reserved enthusiasm" but Lou Poller, general manager and largest

stockholder, had cracked major markets before with radio ventures.

Within 24 hours he had full-page ads in both local papers plus eight others in neighboring cities. A week later a goodwill luncheon was held for servicemen, dealers and civic leaders. Ben Adler, president of Adler Communications Lab., gave a 3½-hour talk about uhf. Then followed what Mr. Poller and his associates called "Operation Go It Alone." Every conceivable method of keeping Milwaukee posted on progress was utilized. When new sets were sold they carried a WCAN-TV promotion card. Airplane streamers, billboards, car cards, newspaper ads and radio announcements were used but still there wasn't any mad rush towards conversions. Complicating factor to viewers was the vhf station's channel switch.

## Dealers Push Uhf

Dealers finally began to mention uhf in their advertising. The first conversion survey showed 10% already equipped for uhf. In another month the figure was 16% of sets. It was somewhere around 20% or more when the station took the air and now American Research Bureau shows over 29% uhf saturation in late October. The figure is now placed at one out of every three tv homes after two months on the air. WCAN-TV ran a newspaper ad in August showing cost to equip each of the 21 most popular sets for ch. 25 reception. A primary CBS-TV affiliation pact was signed Aug. 24.

A strong supporter of the theory that good programs bring uhf conversions is J. L. Bowden, station director of WKBN-AM-TV Youngstown, Ohio. Shortly after taking the air last winter on ch. 27, WKBN-TV carried the Presidential inauguration, an event that was thoroughly promoted and thus served to draw wide interest.

With the nearest vhf stations in Cleveland and Pittsburgh, each 65 miles away, Youngstown was a logical location for uhf. With WFMJ-TV going on the air in early March, the city has gone for uhf in a big way and the uhf count as of mid-November is placed at 105,000 sets.

Mr. Bowden cites WKBN-TV special events in listing programming techniques that bring uhf installations. He said WKBN-TV has two camera chains, two slide turrets, three cameras and much other equipment not in the original plans.

Warren F. Williamson Jr., WKBN-AM-TV president and general manager, said the tv programming follows the 27-year-old radio policy. He observed that manufacturers are rapidly overcoming conversion problems and the public is kept informed of progress. Power increases are promised for 1954. The new WKBN radio-tv home is a two-story plant housing equipment, studios and offices, with 31,500 square feet of floor space including 131 rooms. It is located on a 60-acre site, with a 540-ft. tv antenna and four-tower radio array.

Leonard E. Nasman, commercial manager of WFMJ-TV Youngstown, is planning an intensive promotion for the 1,000-foot tower now being erected for the ch. 73 operation. It will be promoted as "the highest structure in Ohio" and surrounding towns will be kept informed as construction progresses. They will be told, too, of the improved service to be provided by the tower.

Mr. Nasman said WFMJ-TV has heavily promoted its NBC-TV programming and such events as the All-Star baseball game, World Series and NBC-TV-NCAA football games. It has run newspaper advertising discussing uhf problems such as ways of installing antennas and need of tubular lead-ins. It has promoted, too, the solution of tube trouble in converters through development of new types.

WFMJ-TV takes the air at 7 a.m., he added, a service that has brought favorable comment from the industrial populace because of night-shift schedules in the mills.

Last September KTVQ (TV) Oklahoma City, approached its opening in an established vhf market with this theme—the station would be "a friendly, sales-minded, hard-hitting operation." A piece of showmanship centered around the antenna—a tower located atop the 35-story First Na-