A Programmer's Top Five Problems

According to Paul Drew, programmers in general need help in the following areas:

- Coping with not having true responsibility for programming with the ability to hire/fire as needed.
- Lack of working knowledge of budgets, their preparation, and efficient means of spending.
- Communication problems with sales.
- Hassles with engineering over equipment problems.
- Management of on-air talent.

Extra concentration on these areas alone, according to Drew, will make the programmer's job easier and make for improved efficiency at the entire radio station.

"People look for something different out of the working environment. The old 'superior/subordinate' relationship is ineffective... People want to work in an environment where they can feel good... People don't come to work to be scolded."

Showmanship

R&R: You mentioned the lack of air talent created by poor conditions at the smaller market level. What about the creativity levels of today's PD's? There's considerable consternation about this.

PD: In the past there were some great stars like Tom Storer, Gordon McLendon, and Bill Drake. Some more modern-day mavericks include Cecil Hefel and Ted Turner. One thing binds all of these people... they didn't have boards of directors to appease. They were entrepreneurs in an era of expansion. As young as this business is, that era has passed. In big markets all the way down to small markets, things are now run by corporations. Does that mean someone can't become a leader? No. It just takes a lot more work. There are people out there today that are achieving this kind of status, but it would be very subjective on my part to name them.

R&R: How does one go about setting his or her goals to be a creative leader in radio?

PD: Keep in mind that every radio station is a direct extension of a programmer's personality. No company is blessed with every station being a winner. Generally, at least one is in trouble, and all it takes is a young talented programmer who has the energy, drive, and commitment to turn the loser around. It's not going to happen by taking over a winning situation. The other important aspect of a winning PD is "showmanship."

R&R: Can you give me an example of showmanship and how it works?

PD: Over the years, the one person who showed me the most showmanship was Gerry Cagle. You just wrote about him and what showmanship he's putting into AM stereo. It was this showmanship that caused him to do such a marvelous job for me at WRKO. As I mentioned, a station is a direct reflection of the PD. Well, Gerry's type of showmanship didn't work as well at KLH, but he did fine with it at KCBQ.

When Les Garland announced he was leaving KLH called "PD" Pat Norman, who is also a great showman, and hooked the two of them up. It has obviously become a great idea. Call it a second instinct if you like, but I knew that Gerry needed to put on a good show, KFRC needed to put on a good show, and the market was ready for a good show. The greatest PD's are the ones that can put on a good show. Even if it's information radio, it's still a form of entertainment.

All too often, a PD hides his creativity because he is afraid to express what he doesn't know.

"I've seen stations change successful formats just to follow the current trends, or to try to increase already high ratings and billing. If the format falters, the PD is blamed and usually fired. What it comes down to is that it's easier to change PD's than an entire sales department."

I also think that as the FM band becomes more crowded, you'll see people returning to AM, especially with the new fascination of AM stereo. The full effects and benefits of this new technology are some time off. Today's PD's are brighter than ever. With the proper tools they will be great. I'm very encouraged by what I've seen so far in my seminar series.