

The promotions are based on the station's own problems. If your station is already well established, naturally you do not need promotion so badly. If you take a station that is near the bottom, then promotion is terribly important to let people know about you."

In Minneapolis, for example, Storz took over WDGY in January of 1956. In order to sign up fall business time, it was necessary to show results by spring, when buying is at its height. This called for the spectacular approach.

Not all Storz promotions are spectacular. Most, in fact, are little more than variations of minor give-away contests that have been around for years.

One day's monitoring in Minneapolis turned up the following promotions:

1. *The Auto Cash Contest*: In this the listener writes for a registration card which he sticks on the rear window of his car; a station spotter on the road phones a license number of a car bearing a sticker—the listener then calls the station, he wins the money.

2. *Lucky House*: The station broadcasts a street address; if the occupant calls within a minute he gets the jackpot, which continues to mount at the rate of \$10 a day until won. Copyrighted by Storz, this idea has earned him over \$600 a week from other stations he has licensed to use it.

3. *Dinner with the Disk Jockey*: The listener is asked to write a letter, limited to 25 words, telling what he likes best about the "new WDGY"; four winners get a music album and are invited to have dinner on Saturday with the disk jockey.

4. *Mystery Voice*: A guess-who routine.

5. *The Parakeet Contest*: If the listener can train a parakeet to say "This is WDGY, Minneapolis-St. Paul," he wins cash. On the day monitored, the winner was interviewed and the parakeet was heard giving the call letters. The interview was repeated throughout the day.

6. *A Breakfast Menu Contest*.

There is a continuous parade of such gimmicks on the Storz stations, which are always trying to think up new ones. They are considered an integral part of station operation in today's TV-dominated scene, where radio must fight hard to call attention to itself and to generate excitement.

Promotion is not the whole answer

But promotion has its limits, a realization which few credit Storz with. Yet here is what he says on this point:

"Fast results are easy to get. It's easy to get a rating. If the promotion is good enough, people will be willing to try your product. After that, it's up to the product to keep them coming back."

Perhaps the most significant recent development which sheds light on the degree to which the give-away affects a station's position is the rise of the Plough Inc. stations. This concern, which now runs four stations, is proud that it permits no gimmicks. It has patterned itself after Storz, but has developed one facet of his approach to its logical extreme. Although it is still too soon to know with certainty, Plough appears to be making considerable headway in most of its markets.

A Plough station is the nearest thing to a "juke-box operation" in radio today. It revolves around the Top 40,

plus extras. Programming is rigorously controlled. Announcers are required to stick to standard formats, allowed no deviation. The theory is that the audience wants to hear the hit tunes, the weather, time signals and get a fast news wrap-up; it does not want to hear disk jockey "dribble."

The programming is viewed as a service of music and useful information available to the listener at any time of day. Information proceeds at a fixed sequence. The announcer also tells the listener what he is going to hear: "In just sixty seconds you will hear so-and-so sing—" Newscasts are staccato and crowded beyond anything that Storz does. There are the usual musical themes, sound effects intros and sign-offs.

The organization believes its stations have a smooth, pleasant, likable sound. Since it is the music, rather than the personalities, the listener tunes in to hear, the announcer is discouraged from becoming a personality, though the show is called by his name. This allows the station to change disk jockeys at will, without the public's being aware that a change has occurred.

This working out of his own logic causes Storz to shudder. The fact is, however, that the Plough station in Memphis has been first in Hooper ratings since last fall; that its Baltimore station, WCAO, holds the lead in the afternoon; that in Boston, against strong independent competition, its WCOP has moved from sixth to fourth place—and for a period was ahead of the field in the afternoon.

And all this, the company claims, with no gimmicks!

McLendon on influence of give-aways

One of the most interesting denials that ratings depend on give-aways comes from Storz's staunch supporter, Gordon McLendon, himself proud of the intensity and originality of his own promotions. Here is what he told an RTES luncheon discussion session recently.

Referring to a \$50,000 give-away contest he conducted in Dallas—and he had actually given the money away to a plasterer who found the buried treasure—he declared:

"I point out to you that in the midst of the biggest single station give-away in the history of radio, our station dropped .8 of one percentage point in the morning. We think we can prove without any question that give-aways no longer have any appreciable short-run effect on local station ratings.

"Let me say that promotions, in our estimation, are not short-run hypos of ratings, but are instead, if anything, long-run jobs. Contests and give-aways are but one part of them.

"Over-all sound programming is the one thing that will hypo a station's audience. We further submit that stations should not be cast into disgrace by anyone in television simply because they are alert and sound producers. To do so would be a reactionary and unfortunate trend of thinking in the radio industry, because promotion is one of the things which has made show business."

McLendon adheres to a Top 40 music philosophy, which he developed quite independently of Storz, as have other stations managements, but has expended most of his efforts on developing an outstanding local news operation. His Dallas station, criticized as has been Storz's, employs eight full-time newsmen and has three mobile units. ▶