



# Check, Please!

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*Can you imagine a movie like Star Wars without a script? Did those Harry Potter books make it to stores without any editing? Ever hear of The Rolling Stones launching a world tour without rehearsing? Do you think The Sopranos cast nails it in one take?  
Of course not.*

Why not? Because the creative minds behind these entertainments want them to look great, sound great and come off just the way they envisioned them before they reach you, the audience. Why, then, doesn't radio take a cue from the rest of the entertainment industry and make sure performers get it right before it goes out over the airways?

## **Voicetracking As A Tool For Good**

Most programmers have some form of airchecking system in place for their airstaff. A good PD knows the importance of hearing how the announcers are presenting the station. The problem is, the PD almost always hears the finished product after it has already been broadcast. If there is an issue with the performance, it's too late to correct it. How can this problem be avoided? Surprisingly, the answer is one of the oft-cited evils of consolidation — voicetracking. The very tool that companies have implemented to reduce programming payroll and turn talent into multitaskers can actually aid in making your station's airshifts sound better. Consider the potential: Most PDs we know would consider weekend jocks among the usual suspects for tossing off poorly executed breaks. Talent with only occasional shifts can easily get off course. Whatever the reasons, the part-time airstaff at many stations often comes under fire for "I can't believe I heard that" performances.

Sure, PDs can review airchecks and correct mistakes after the fact, but then the audience has already been subjected to a performance that you'd like to have

back. What if, instead of reviewing shifts with jocks after their shows have aired, the enlightened PD pre-checked these shows? Obvious mistakes could be corrected on the spot, illconceived comments rerecorded immediately, and misinterpretations of the station's positioning eliminated. Consider night jocks, and even midday announcers, who wear several hats in your building and already voicetrack their shows. If they're going to spend time in the production studio anyway, and if you're going to devote time to reviewing their work, why not check their presentations **beforehand** instead of reviewing them afterward?

## **Immediate Feedback**

Think of the possibilities: You can't get a do-over for bad breaks that have already happened, but you can turn back time and modify the trivia question that was worded awkwardly. Or rerecord a specific break that would have otherwise lacked the sponsor mention. Or eliminate that mispronunciation of the name of the hot new band. Breaks with no call letters or those with improper image usage would, at least theoretically, never hit the air. Your station might sound ... perfect. Too perfect. Which is why prechecking isn't a viable option for every element of the station — or for every jock on your roster. It would be out of the question for any listener-interaction-driven dayparts (mornings, most obviously) to prerecord their work to be screened by a PD before airing. But pre-checking does give the PD a tool to help a developing talent get immediate feedback on his or her performance with less risk for the radio station. For every PD who's gone home at night fuming after a frustrating aircheck experience or hearing a blown break, consider how many of those risks might be eliminated by pre-checking your talent. Whether used as a tool for rehearsal or the prerecording of actual breaks to be used on the air, pre-checking can be a useful weapon to add to your programming arsenal.



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