

PROGRAMMING TO WIN

by Jeff Murphy

12 Steps To A One-Share: Uncovering The Clutter

Many of you may recall a popular series of articles we at DeMers authored a few years ago entitled *12 Steps To A One Share*. These articles highlighted some common ways programmers and air talent may possibly be sabotaging their quest for ratings. As part of our ongoing efforts to shed further light on the industry's issue with clutter, here is our latest effort in that series, designed to illustrate (with tongue planted firmly in cheek) how various departments of a radio station could send their station to ratings extinction by driving listeners straight to satellite, Internet radio and iPods.

12. "Our Award-Winning Newsperson Does In-Depth News Twice an Hour - On The Alternative Station.

Listeners who tune in each morning to hear **Nirvana** and **Godsmack** can also enjoy five minutes of city council and school board reports. Sure, the AM station in our cluster is where everyone tunes for that info. But these listeners need to know! And that PD better not come to me again asking for "headline" versions of the news to match his format. Why would he even consider compromising our news integrity?"

11. "The Traffic Reporter Is Really Good At Bantering With The Morning Team. She can hold off with the traffic information for a minute or so while joining us for the recap of last night's 'Hysterical Househusbands.' On days when there are no accidents or delays or closed roads, I still tell her to stretch the full sixty-seconds. The same goes for **Meteorologist Mike** from the 'Temperature Channel.' Even though this time of year it's pretty much

always 'sunny and 75,' it would just be rude to ask them to talk less."

10. "Clients Love It When Our Midday Guy Does All Their Commercials Live.

I don't say too much when he runs a little over 60-seconds. One day he talked for two-minutes about the new sports car he drives. In the next break, he did 90-seconds on his lasik surgery. For the third break that hour, he got a clinical psychologist on the air with him for, like, four-minutes to discuss his weight loss program. At the end of the lunch show, he talked a caller into buying a Vermont Teddy Bear for every woman at his office. It was cute how they named each of the bears. We did have to drop a couple of songs that hour - but boy, was it worth it...to those clients."

9. "Just Back From Some Radio Boot Camp, And Boy Do I Have Stories To Tell.

Those 9-5ers that listen to me and haven't taken a family vacation in years, and have relatives fighting in Iraq, and had to decide between a tank of gas or a movie last weekend, love it when I tell them about my paid vacation to New Orleans/L.A./Vegas. I got on such a roll that I had to drop the '\$1000 Song Of The Day' contest that we had promoted all morning. The PD was pissed, but man - it was great radio!"

8. "Some Mornings I Get Up So Late That I Don't Have Time For Breakfast.

No worries. Listeners love to take turns rushing to **Krispy Kreme** or **Waffle House** to pick up some donuts or biscuits for my

posse and me. All I have to do is take a contest prize that would normally go to a member of the WorkForce and give it to the groupie who gets breakfast here the fastest. It's the same three-four people every day, so listeners are getting to know them as great characters on the show."

7. "When I Do The Monday Night Foosball Remotes, I Put On A Show!

On one break last week, I asked everyone in the bar whether they wore boxers or briefs. I did a little play-by-play of the game on air, and I had **Bob The Barkeep** explain to listeners how he mixes a Harvey Wallbanger. Next day, the PD hammered me about all the music we had to drop 'cause my breaks went long. But hey - I'm an entertainer and I know what MY audience wants!"

6. "The Crossover Breaks At The End Of My Show? Magic!

The overnight dude comes in the studio about an hour before he goes on the air, and we talk every break about his day and his old lady and how we're both tired of playing the **Green Day** song. Sometimes, when one of the AEs is still there, they come in and we talk about stuff too for about ten minutes. We don't have enough mics for three people, but it's cool - everybody just leans in. Just hope the MD doesn't notice that we dropped that **Metallica** block last night."

5. "I Got Bored With 10-In-A-Row Every Hour, So I Started Doing Bits In The Speed Breaks. I'm only talk-

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ing about top-shelf stuff. "This Date In History" is really big at night...did you know **Fatty Arbuckle** was born on this day in 1892? My Grandma loved him! I did a whole thing about the running of the Bulls in Pamplona the other night. Bummer though, I wasn't paying attention to the clock and I had to drop a song to hit *LoveLines* on time – and that violated some '10 in a row or \$10,000' guarantee I guess we're doing, so the PD was pretty mad."

4. **"Wanna Hear A Great Promo? It's A Minute-45, But It Kicks Ass!** I started with the theme from *The Simpsons*, then I had our voice guy do our call letters, except that I looped them for 10 seconds, then I had a **Homer 'DOH!'** drop and a couple of explosions and then I put this awesome **Nine Inch Nails** music bed behind my voice guy when he was doing the 'tickets for **Skynyrd** go on sale Saturday blah blah...' whatever. Everybody knows that part so I tried to bury it. The freakin' PD told me I had to play some Skynyrd hooks in the promo...man, everybody knows

their stuff – so I picked a coupla really deep guitar jams and added them in, with another Homer 'DOH!' and another explosion – then get this, man — **Donald Trump** saying 'You're Fired!' Get it? An explosion and 'you're fired?' Awesome!"

3. **"I'm Confident In The Sound Of Our Station - Let Sales Add A Few More Spots.** Whenever the traffic manager comes to me with that 'sold out' look in her eyes, I sit down with the GSM and figure out what programming elements we can cut back on for extra spots. Last week, I decided running six promos instead of 12 for the Cash Contest was plenty. So I turned those avails into 'Sales Promos.' I have a meeting in a minute with our new AE. She thinks the 'Nothing But Socks' store will spend \$200 a month, if we give them a daily feature. I'm thinking of having their manager call in a song for his wife everyday at 3:00. Maybe they'll throw in a pair of socks to give away!"
2. **"Our New Morning Team Wants Lots Of Syndicated Show Prep.** We signed them up for every one of the sixteen available comedy services. They probably use a couple of bits

per week...total...from all of the services. Hey – the stuff is there if they need it. Now, if you'll excuse me – we're sold out in morning drive this week and I have to get 32 barter spots, plus four for the weather and traffic services, on the log somehow. I think I'll just add an extra stop-set in the 9 a.m. hour."

1. **"I Counter My Competition's Benchmark Features.** My concepts might not research as well as the Zeppelin and Floyd blocks on the Classic Rocker or '80s @ 8' on the Alternative, but we'll generate buzz. Up against their 100-Minute Music Sweep, I program the 'Instrumental Hour.' I counter '70s At 7' with 'Seven Straight Stiffs.' No one cares about their 'All Request Drive Home,' but the music critic for the college paper raves about my 'All Underground' Hour."



Jeff Murphy is a consultant at DeMers Programming Media Consultants, and can be reached at (512) 407-9299, email: jeff@demersprogramming.com.

