

BEA - Journal of Radio Studies

REVIEW- THE POWERFUL RADIO WORKBOOK: The Prep, Performance & Post Production Planning By Valerie Geller (M Street, 2000)

In what broadcast consultant Valerie Geller describes as a pivotal missing chapter from her first book *Creating Powerful Radio*, this publication that deals primarily with the benefits of show preparation and airchecking has taken on a life of its own. The *Powerful Radio Workbook* is a collection of practical pointers contributed by well-known and respected professionals such as Mackie Morris and the NewsLab's Deborah Potter and useful worksheets designed to organize the time-starved radio program director or air talent.

The workbook is meant for "managers, programmers and talent" (p.xxviii). But while its written with the professional in mind, there are valuable lessons for aspiring radio talent in college and university broadcast programs around the globe. Geller's resume' includes consulting work and speaking engagements in Germany, Sweden and other parts of Europe. Throughout the book she attempts to illustrate to readers the advantages of show prep and airchecking. In fact, the opening pages includes a glossary of terms to assist professionals outside of North America understand the foundational principles of her work.

Geller opens with a discussion of finding and developing talent for radio. She believes "talent is inborn, but broadcasting can be taught" (p.4). The fundamental tool for developing those top-notch personalities is airchecking. Later the author provides a detailed discussion of how to aircheck and ways for feedback-starved talent to not only prepare for a review, but to self-analyze their shows in an effort to improve and enhance their performance and perhaps further their careers.

Sandwiched in-between the chapters on airchecking are two sections that outline ways for a talented air personality to reach their potential. The first deals with "powerful show prep." Geller points out "Creative talent, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, are engaged in show prep. Everything in their lives 24-7 all goes into their show" (p.32). The chapter on prep explains how to convert life experiences into engaging or entertaining radio. Prep also covers how to develop and maintain one's voice.

The follow-up chapter to Prep is Performance. This short section looks at formatics for both music and talk radio. Its focus is on the essentials of hammering home call letters, positioning statements and other fundamentals that many college broadcasters tend to overlook. These pages might be just what that faculty manager of a college radio station is looking for in terms of emphasizing the importance of what is said on the air by student air talent. Keeping with the "powerful" theme, the book closes out with chapters titled *Powerful News* and *Powerful Promos*. At the conclusion of each of these chapters, the author provides worksheets that are helpful in the task of generating good copy in a time efficient fashion. Concise instructions like "go global" or "think local" (pp.232-233) may help a struggling rookie radio journalist grasp the focus to a story that he or she is struggling to find. Promo formulas and parody guidelines included in the worksheets on promos again can help an inexperienced station employ Author Valerie Geller has assembled a resume' of various radio experiences in a journey to various stations and markets that has culminated in the formation of her consulting firm. She provides a set of tools and guidelines she hopes will help others avoid the several failures she had in her on-air career. She believes "everyone is capable of moments of brilliance" and her job is "to help make those moments more plentiful" (p.260). The *Powerful Radio Workbook* is full of bullet points and checklists that when fully utilized can help make those moments shine brighter and more often.

This publication provides a wealth of material that would make it good reading for a broadcast performance or radio production course. It is easy to read and digest and would probably receive many good reviews from today's college students. The Powerful Radio Workbook also deserves a place on the office bookshelves of many radio station program directors. The difficult challenge will be to help them find the time to pick it up and read it.

- Edward T. Arke
Messiah College,
Grantham, PA