

RADIO & RECORDS MANAGEMENT / MARKETING / SALES

In a chapter from her latest book, the author shares her thoughts on what to look for and what to do when it comes to burnout.

Creating Powerful Radio: Avoiding Burnout

By Valerie Geller

In a book called ***Creating Powerful Radio, Getting, Keeping and Growing Audiences***, about content, finding, developing and managing talent, aircheck techniques, ratings, morning shows, news and talk shows, show prep, producers, call screening, promotions, sales, commercials, and LifeStage Demographics, why include Burnout? Here's why. While it's important to look at what moves radio forward, it is also vital to understand what can hold Powerful Radio *back*.

Burnout is an occupational hazard happens under the daily demand of public scrutiny and constant pressure for ratings, making budget and the pressure of consistently original output. And burnout is different from genuine clinical depression.

How do you know people are burning out?

Their attitude changes. They complain, call in sick, they are late for work. Ideas don't come to them as easily. They watch the clock, counting the minutes until the end of their day. They begin to rely on other people's ideas more than their own. They want more "easy" stuff. Their shows or other work isn't as good as it used to be, and they just don't seem too excited anymore.

Overloaded

For managers, simple exhaustion and frustration can lead to burnout. Since many broadcast resources have been stretched thin, it's now necessary for managers to take on more and more responsibility. Even with improved time-management skills, many have too much to do in a day.

Solutions to Battling Burnout

Lower your expectations

No one is at his or her best all the time. Now may be the time to tap into the creativity of those around you. If your "fire" is burning low, rekindle at the fires of others.

Are you doing the right work for you, right now?

Determine what you enjoy about what you do. If the list is short, it may be time to rethink your job and find something else. As scary as change can be, it's better to move on rather than burn out in a job that's not right for you.

Artists, on the radio or elsewhere, need the right environment to grow. Managers need to understand that creative people are sensitive, introspective, and insecure. Talent doesn't come with a list of "care and feeding" instructions, so open communication with management is critical. Supervisors who don't take this into account will contribute to burnout.

Live a balanced life

It is easy to become driven to accomplish in this career and lose perspective on the rest of your life. Remember, you can love radio, but radio will not love you back.

Do not become your work. Do other things that make you feel good and give you a sense of accomplishment. Burnout occurs when you can no longer grow as a person. Don't let that happen. Challenge yourself to do new things outside of work.

Avoid energy vampires

Avoid those who seem to suck the life right out of you by overwhelming you with their problems. Surround yourself with people who nourish you, who give, not just take.

Nourish your brain

Look at art. Go to a movie or attend the theater. Read. Talk to your kids. Play or make art. Listen to music. Try gardening. Do something, *anything*, that will stimulate your own creativity and sustain you, even if you are not "in the mood right now."

Be inspired by reading

Take advantage of books that inspire creativity.

Do what you want

Whenever possible delegate assignments that you don't particularly care about. Stick to what interests you. Take on what makes you energized and passionate about your work.

Remember why you came

Rediscover what motivated you at the beginning of your career. Why did you want to be in radio? Why was it fun? Remember what led you down this long and winding road.

Take a break

The root of the word *vacation* is "vacate," to leave. Take time off. You may just need a brief change of pace to have new input, experiences, meet new people. Break the monotony of your daily routine. That may put things back in perspective.

Focus on the positive

Avoid complaining to management or coworkers. Don't get involved in station gossip or politics. You increase your chances of being spared through ratings dips and managerial changes if you keep your mouth shut and your nose clean.

Be selective about the battles you want to fight, then fight them with the highest level of dignity, professionalism, and maturity possible.

One manager says: "I could easily be consumed by budget constraints, destructive corporate directives, any number of distractions, and the ever-decreasing amount of decision-making latitude I have as a PD. But I try to stay focused on the positive elements of my job: I have the rare luxury of a large and talented staff to work with and we are still the number one station in this community. The way to survive is to stay focused on the positive."

Managing against Burnout

Radio Sales Analyst published the following “Principles of Motivation”:

- ı The employee’s behavior is functionally related to the way you treat them.
- ı People don’t resist their own ideas.
- ı People will live up (or down) to your expectations of them.
- ı You must know the individuals you are trying to motivate.
- ı People will change only when they think they have to.
- ı Productive activity that is ignored will tend to decrease over time.
- ı Achievement and recognition are the top motivators at all levels.

The Radio Life Can Be “Rootless”

Former broadcast journalist and program director Sheri Inglis adds that radio’s lack of stability can lead to anxiety and burnout. So be prepared. New opportunities can arise on short notice. Have your résumé ready at all times, no matter how happy you are in your present gig. She suggests,

Diversify

To survive the long haul in radio, it pays to have another skill to fall back on. I don’t know of a single radio veteran who hasn’t nursed a bruised ego at least a few times following an ownership change, budget cut, format shift, or political fall from grace.

Have a backup plan. By not putting all of your “eggs in one basket,” you also empower yourself to move on and, often, up in your radio career rather than simply accepting a bad or unchallenging situation out of fear of unemployment.

Valerie Geller is a broadcast consultant working with stations and talent to get, keep and grow audiences. *Creating Powerful Radio* is her third book.

For more: www.creatingpowerfulradio.com

Or www.gellermedia.com

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