



AL PETERSON

Give Your Show A Power Boost

Longtime Talk radio programmer and consultant **Valerie Geller** has been preaching the gospel of “powerful radio” for years. President of Geller Media International, she’s also the author of three books including her latest, *Creating Powerful Radio: Getting, Keeping and Growing Audiences* (Focal Press). With endorsements throughout the book from some of the most powerful and successful people in American radio, Geller also draws praise from a cross-section of international clients who she says have helped shape her point-of-view on what makes great Talk radio. -- *Al Peterson*

AP: *What is the essence of this book?*

VG: It’s really a cookbook for how to do Talk radio. We even give you the recipe: *focus, engage, opinion, position, storytelling*. We tell you how to do a monologue, how to take calls, how to produce a show, how to integrate news and talk. We talk about guest-prep and how to do an interview. So a lot of the book is about the nuts and bolts and basics of how to do a good talk show. And, from working with stations around the world, I’ve learned that wherever they live, people are people and listeners are listeners. There are certainly cultural differences but mostly, as an American, I notice the longer attention span of the international audience. Europeans tend to stick with something longer before they tune out or zone out. They are not as rushed as Americans. And I’ve also learned politics



VALERIE GELLER

is a blood sport in such countries as England and France. They care about politics the way Americans care about the Super Bowl.

AP: *What’s the best way to prep for a show?*

VG: What you want to avoid is the old “and now another topic we’ve manufactured to fill up time on the radio” approach. Listeners can smell that kind of prep a mile away. I advocate what we call the prism method. Take the topic you want to talk about and put it through a virtual prism to find different angles. For example, a Halloween show a station was planning was about haunted places around town. OK, not bad, but when we put it through the prism the host and producer came up with the idea of, “If you were a ghost, what place would you like to haunt?” The first caller said she wanted to haunt her old house where her ex-husband was living with his new wife. Now that’s a more powerful show and the kind of conversation you’d have with a friend.

AP: *You’ve always said powerful talk shows come from powerful producers. Why?*

VG: They are the unsung heroes of great talk shows. I believe in pairing generators with reactors. Most talk hosts are reactive and naturally need a strong, generative producer. Take **Howard Stern**, for example. Alone in a room he may not have much to say, but put him in a room with producers, Robin and all sorts of generators around him, and suddenly he comes alive. An important thing to remember is that a good producer is someone who wants to direct, not someone who wants to be one of the actors. The worst

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NETWORK/SYNDICATION AIRCHECK

USA Biker Nation Radio Network, distributed by Jones Radio Networks and hosted by Peter Boyles, adds KOLE/Beaumont, TX and KTNF/Minneapolis ... Talk Shows USA-distributed The Money Pit, with Tom Kraeutler and Leslie Segrete, inks KTBB/Tyler, TX; KDXE/Little Rock, AR; WEIR/Weirton, WV; and WMOV/Ravenswood, WV ... Signing on as affiliates of Premiere Radio Networks-distributed FOX Sports Radio this month are: WSAR/Fall River, MA; WREL/Lexington, VA; WMLP/Milton, PA; WKOK/Sunbury, PA; WSBM/Florence, AL; WHOS/Decatur, AL; and WBHP/Huntsville, AL ... Wilbur Entertainment picks up independent syndication duties for This Is America With Jon Elliott. The show also airs nightly as part of Air America Radio's daily lineup.

SATCASTER NEWS

Sirius Satellite Radio obtained a \$250 million loan from Morgan Stanley Senior Funding this week, to be applied to general corporate purposes ... According to a recently released study by Bridge Ratings, satellite radio now reaches just under 5% of Americans nationwide ... Deana Martin, daughter of famed singer Dean Martin, will host a new show for XM Radio beginning June 27. Described as (what else?) a "swinging Vegas show," Deana will co-host The Strip with Ken Smith.

AIRCHECKLETS

WBT/Charlotte afternoon driver Jeff Katz has signed on to write a column for the Rhino Times, a weekly conservative newspaper that serves the Greater Charlotte area ... KIRO/Seattle hires former WRVA/Richmond, VA PD Jim Ziegler as Promotions Director for the Bonneville Emerald City News/Talker ... KABC/Los Angeles will present the station's third annual "Clean Air Car Showcase" on Saturday (6/9) featuring test drives of all the latest clean air vehicles from Toyota, Subaru, GM, Mitsubishi and Nissan ... Twenty-eight-year KYW/Philadelphia news anchor Bill Shusta has announced he will retire after nearly three decades on the air in the City of Brotherly Love.

Hot Air: Word out of Dallas is that outgoing ABC Radio President John Hare received a standing ovation from the entire staff as he exited the company's DFW headquarters this week following a four-decade career at ABC. Just how often do you see a company head applauded by employees these days?

Condolences: All of us at NTS AIRCHECK offer our hearts and prayers to longtime industry researcher Jon Coleman and his wife Linda on the death of their 14-year-old daughter Chloe earlier this week. Donations may be made in Chloe's memory to Holt International, an international adoption organization dedicated to placing orphaned, abandoned and vulnerable children with permanent, loving families.

GIG ALERTS

WPHT/Philadelphia is still in the hunt for a PD to replace Grace Blazer, who recently exited to join WTKK/Boston. Contact VP/GM David Yadgaroff with your best pitch ... Metro Networks is looking for an operations manager for its Richmond, VA bureau. Email your cover letter and resume to Jeff_Brown@metronetworks.com ... WQXR/New York seeks an afternoon news anchor with a Bachelor's degree or equivalent experience. Email your package to teresa.smith@wqxr.com ... CBS Radio News is still searching for a "rock solid journalist." Rush your audio and resume to VP Harvey Nagler, 524 West 57th St., New York, NY 10019.

MARCH OF THE PENGUINS



Puttin' on the Ritz and posing for this shot at one of those fancy DC soirees where important guys do that sort of thing are (l-r) Salem Radio Network VP Tom Tradup and former U.S. drug czar General

Barry McCaffrey. No word yet on whether the pair returned their tux rentals on time.

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thing you can do is hire a producer who's really hungry to be on the air.

AP: What topics are most effective at getting, keeping and growing an audience?

VG: It always goes back to the basics -- health, heart, pocketbook and, more recently, transformative topics. Those are things that can literally transform your life -- make it better tomorrow than today -- based on something you heard on the radio. Transformative topics are one of the big keys to the success of *Oprah*, for example. The number one thing you can use, that always gets listeners, is humor. But you can't prep humor; you just have to be comfortable and relaxed enough as a host that those funny moments happen naturally.

AP: Any "improve your show now" tips you can offer?

VG: Make everyone on the show come in with at least one unusual thing they saw or overheard that day. Recently, a producer at one of my client stations told us she'd been standing in line at Starbucks listening to a woman at the front of the line order her non-fat, triple-shot latte while also loudly breaking up with her boyfriend on her cell phone for all to hear. That turned into an on-air discussion of "What was the most excruciating conversation you've been forced to overhear from someone talking on a cell phone?" One guy called in about sitting next to a guy on the bus on the way to work that morning who was getting fired over the phone. Remember, powerful Talk radio is all about observing life and then using the word "you" instead of "I."

Contact **Valerie Geller** with your questions or comments at vgeller@aol.com.

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NTS Aircheck
 1102 17th Ave. South Suite 205
 Nashville, TN 37212
Al Peterson: 858-486-7559
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