



Radio newsletter n°13

11 May 2009

### Radio's silver lining



You may have heard the expression: **"Every dark cloud has a silver lining?"**. And there is a dark cloud over radio. These are challenging days. With our quickly changing technology, along with the current global economic situation, broadcasters are facing leaner times and working even harder to create compelling radio. And then there are those disturbing rumours of radio's imminent demise. But do you really care if the radio comes out of traditional terrestrial black box, your computer, phone or even the fillings in your teeth, if the content is compelling and relevant?

That's the power of radio. And if you understand the power of this magical medium, what the radio can mean to someone who is alone in a room, or in a car... and how with a touch of a button, that person never has to feel alone...you understand that radio is still one of the most powerful ways to connect with an audience.

### THE POWER OF RADIO

While the new technologies can now offer consumers a lot of what radio uniquely offered in the last twenty years; immediacy, breaking news stories, and of course new music - radio's power of the imagination, along with the intimacy of the one-on-one connection with a personality through storytelling, still has the power to offer listeners unique experiences and journeys. And according to the USA's Federal Emergency Management report: next to bottled water, a flashlight, a candle and matches, a battery operated *radio* is the number one item advised to place in a household emergency kit.

**"...next to bottled water, a flashlight, a candle and matches, a battery operated *radio* is the number one item advised to place in a household emergency kit"**

### BETTER MEASUREMENT SHOWS BIGGER AUDIENCES

With new electronic audience measurement systems, broadcasters formerly working with only recall diaries or call out research have been delighted to find that there are actually larger numbers of people listening to radio. Traditionally radio has always done well during hard economic times. In past recessions, when money was dear, radio was looked at as "free" entertainment. More people may find they're listening to radio (or the radio's audio on the internet) because they're not spending as much on other, "outside" entertainment, like live concerts, sporting events, films, theatre, etc.

### CREATIVITY COSTS NOTHING

When there's little money around, the blank canvas can become a place where creativity can thrive. Creativity costs nothing. And now is the time to explore new ideas, take risks and experiment, using the three rules of Creating Powerful Radio:

1. Tell the Truth
2. Make it Matter
3. NEVER be boring

I work all over the world and while radio revenues may be down in parts of the world – that's not the whole story, and in many places radio is very healthy.

**"When there's little money around, the blank canvas can become a place where creativity can thrive. Creativity costs nothing".**

Stefan Moeller, Head of RadioMedia in Finland, just announced that Finnish commercial broadcasters enjoyed record profits from radio this year. Radio is up in Finland by 7.4% and growing. Moeller predicts it will be up by 10% in 2009, based on the January/February/March results. Radio is also booming in Ireland, where public radio's RTE is enjoying record numbers of listeners. 48%, nearly half of the population of Ireland checks in daily with RTE's morning show.

### SELL FOR SUCCESS

In Mexico, another success story: There are 20 million people in Mexico City alone. And most are listening to radio. Grupo Radio

Centro announced they had a healthy increase in profits in the final quarter of this year, they were up by 15%. What are they doing? The company attributes it's rise in profits to "higher advertising expenditures by clients, who purchased more air time." In a "highly competitive environment... the company sought to gain market share by offering attractive sales packages." To get more of the ad buys, they were willing to deal on rates and Radio Centro also says they're "increasing the size of the sales force." Bottom line, their net income grew nearly 27%.

#### **INSPIRE WITH PROGRAMMING – FIND SOLUTIONS, NOT JUST PROBLEMS**

If it's all bad news on the air, only problems without presenting solutions, we may lose listeners. Audiences tend to move on if it's all bad news, they actually can't take it. It's too much. To keep audiences coming back for more, many stations in North America, are using the opportunity to inspire and entertain their listeners by presenting "Good news segments," stories focusing on solutions on how people are coping, with the emphasis on powerful storytelling and concentrating on the positive.

#### **DO WELL AND DO GOOD!**

Top rated KGO radio in San Francisco, California, USA, has added regularly scheduled daily "positive - solution based good news features," and in Kentucky, one popular presenter is broadcasting want ads on her radio show – to help unemployed people get jobs. Because of her humour, storytelling and personality, she's growing her audience AND at the same time helping people.

#### **WHAT ELSE ARE STATIONS DOING RIGHT?**

Most successful stations have begun working effectively across multiple platforms, and branding their product. But mostly they are working hard to create relevant content for listeners, no matter what the medium.

#### **REMEMBER, IT'S WHAT COMES OUT OF THE SPEAKERS THAT MATTERS! AND WE NEED HUMOUR NOW MORE THAN EVER**

When times are tough, humour becomes an essential survival tool. Nothing helps a listener get through a bad day like a good laugh. Genuine humour attracts listeners, so it will help you grow your audience.

Recently, I walked into the office of a station manager, and noticed an empty clear box prominently placed on his desk. I asked him: "Why is this here? I mentioned he'd have more room on the desk if it was gone. He looked at me incredulously and said: "Valerie, this is NOT an empty box. This is filled with AIR. It's what we make and sell here!"

Radio has magic. And that magic has withstood global recessions and depressions through time. Radio is not really about radio. It's about life, the struggle to be a human being and getting through the day. Radio connects people to life.

No matter what the economic situation, radio is at core, a public service. If you serve your public: Inform, entertain, inspire, persuade and connect, listeners will stick with you. Don't miss any opportunity to make the world in which your station operates a better place.

Broadcast Consultant VALERIE GELLER is the author of - *Creating Powerful Radio - Getting, Keeping & Growing Audiences* - ([www.creatingpowerfulradio.com](http://www.creatingpowerfulradio.com)) and is President Geller Media International, working with more than 500 stations in 30 countries to train, motivate and help programmers, on-air personalities, journalists, sales teams and managers learn techniques to strengthen the content of the on air programming and grow audiences!



For more information: [www.gellermedia.com](http://www.gellermedia.com) to learn about the book: [www.creatingpowerfulradio.com](http://www.creatingpowerfulradio.com)  
Email [Valerie@gellermedia.com](mailto:Valerie@gellermedia.com)  
SKYPE: valerie.gelle  
Phone +1 212 580 3385