Radio

Radio was originally seen as an improved means of point-to-point communications for business and industry. It was more flexible than existing methods, such as telephone and telegraph, primarily because it did not require a fixed, wired location for reception. As a result, it was quickly adopted by industries that required a great deal of mobility, for example, shipping.

As radio equipment became better and more reliable, and the cost of a receiver came down, people discovered that it was invaluable as a medium for receiving information and entertainment more effectively and immediately.

In its heyday, until about 1960, radio was primarily nationally oriented, presenting soap operas, comedies and other original programming over the airwaves. However, when television became the more popular choice, national radio programming, except for newscasts, ceased. In the years since, radio has become more localized in focus, serving the listeners of their region only. Even so, listeners in a region can have a choice of as many as a dozen radio stations, each trying to keep their own part of the audience.

The most popular way that stations try to reach a “target” audience is by formatting their programming. For example, one station may play jazz, another would present talk shows, a third would play classical music, and so on.

Why Advertise on the Radio?

There are several advantages to advertising on the radio. First, “targeting” your audience allows you to selectively find the consumers you want most to reach with your campaign with a minimum of time and money. Since radio is a verbal medium you can connect with the listener in a variety of ways that can’t be done with television.

Radio is a companion for busy people who listen to it while they are working, driving, or otherwise occupied. And, because of its immediacy and credibility, it can be used to greater effect when trying to reach consumers who might otherwise not need or be interested in the product.

Most important of all is the fact that radio air time is much less expensive than an equal amount of time on television. Overall, then, radio advertising can be very effective because of the ability to reach a larger audience than television at a fraction of the cost of television.

How do I Sell my Product on the Radio?

There are basically two types of commercial “sells”: “Hard Sell” and “Soft Sell.”

*Hard Sell:* When a commercial appeals directly to the listener’s senses it is called a hard sell. Since most people are unable to control their senses, it is easy to persuade them to do something. Therefore, if a commercial appeals directly to their emotions, they will be much more receptive to the product that is being sold.
Soft Sell: When the advertiser takes a more indirect approach to selling a product it is called a “soft sell.” This kind of approach relies more on appealing to the listener’s mind and imagination than emotions.

Either approach or both can be used on the same sales campaign. To determine which “sell” would work best for a campaign depends mainly on the five W’s: Who, What, When, Where, and Why.

Who are you trying to sell your product to? What is your product and what is its use? When is the best time of day or year to sell your product? Where can you most effectively reach your target audience? Why should somebody buy your product?

Once these questions have been answered, you should have the answer to the most important question: HOW?

Regardless of which “sell” you choose, remember that these three major things should always be included in a radio advertisement: Name, Location, and Unique Selling Point.

Tips on Writing Radio Copy - Harold B. Swanson
Your success in getting your copy used by radio stations depends on many things – the importance, newsworthiness, and uniqueness of what you say; your personal relationships with the radio stations; and how well you prepare your copy.

Putting Copy on Paper
- Compose all copy on standard-size 8.5 x 11 inch paper.
- Type only on one side of the paper.
- Double or triple space.
- Indent paragraphs five spaces.
- Set your margins at 1 inch on all sides. Fifteen or sixteen lines of this will approximate one minute of airtime.
- Identify the sender in the upper left or right-hand corner of the page. Include name, address, telephone number, description of the ad content, date and page number.
- Place individual advertisements on separate pages.
- Avoid splitting words or hyphenating phrases from one line to the next.
- Place an end sign (--30--, # # #, --rr--) at the end of the body copy to indicate to the announcer that the message is over.

Radio Script - Writing Rules

Abbreviations:
Don’t use abbreviations unless you want the announcer to read the material as abbreviated copy. Usually people won’t recognize any but well known abbreviations. If you do abbreviate in radio copy, hyphenate, such as C-I-A or Y-W-C-A. Often you may want to use the full name of an organization the
first time, then repeat with the abbreviation on second reference; for example, the United States Department of Agriculture today reported...then, U-S-D-A officials said...

**Contractions:**
Use contractions whenever possible. They make your body copy sound more like talking. There is one word of caution, however. Don’t use contractions if - for some reason - you want to emphasize words. For example, you may want to write “will not” instead of “won’t” because the two words carry more emphasis.

**Names and Titles:**
Never begin body copy with an unfamiliar name. The listener will often miss it. Delay specific information until you have the listener’s attention. If a person’s title is easily recognized, begin with it. Radio and TV have a tendency to omit initials of middle names unless they are widely recognized as part of the entire name. Avoid first name initials. Media sources want the correct, complete name as the person or company uses it.
One-hundred years ago, the Grand Hotel opened on Mackinaw Island.

Now you can experience the charm and grace of the Grand Hotel during our spectacular centennial celebration. Join us May 10-th through the 12-th, and spend the weekend at the Grand Hotel for just one-hundred-37 dollars per couple. You’ll enjoy a clambake, live jazz festival, cocktail parties, fireworks and the grand buffet. Join us for the centennial celebration at the Grand Hotel - our friendly porters will be waiting at the dock to greet YOU!

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Writing Public Service Announcements (PSA)

1. Whenever possible, PSA's should include the five W's: Who, What, When, Where, Why. Who is sponsoring the event, or who is the PSA targeting; what are you publicizing; when is it; where will it be, or where can people get more information; and why is this important. The information does not have to be in this precise order. Proofread the PSA before you send it to the media to make sure all your information is correct. Double-check all dates, phone numbers, and other numbers.

2. Remember, you are writing for the ear, not the eye. The public will be hearing this message, not reading it, so it has to make sense when it is read aloud. Use a conversational, casual style when writing the PSA to make it "flow" better for the ear. Before sending the PSA to the media, read it out loud. If the sentences sound awkward or unnatural to your ear, or if they are difficult for you to read, re-write the PSA. Use simple, short sentences and be very concise.

3. The preferred PSA length is generally 30 seconds or 15 seconds. As you read your PSA out loud at a conversational pace, time it to make sure the announcement is the correct length. A general rule-of-thumb is that about 90 words will take approximately 30 seconds to read, so use this as a guideline.

4. At the top of the page, include the name and phone number of a contact person in case the station wants more information. Also indicate when the PSA should be aired.

5. Consider sending a fact sheet rather than a PSA. The fact sheet includes an outline of the pertinent information: who, what, when, where and why. The radio or TV station can use the fact sheet to write their PSA, for inclusion in a community calendar format, or as filler material for the on-air personality to use. The fact sheet may be easier to write than a PSA, while conveying the same information as a written PSA.
A PSA Radio Spot Example

Contact: Julie Hagstrom, Community Education Coordinator, CADA
(517) 372-5976
or Tracy Mick, Craft Fair Coordinator
(517) 484-9964

For Immediate Release

:30
Calling all artists and craft persons! Spaces are still available for the annual
Riverfest Arts and Crafts Fair, September 4, 5 and 6, 2008. The $60 fee for a 10-
by-8 foot display space will benefit the Council Against Domestic Assault, which
serves battered women and their children in the greater Lansing area. Show off
your hand-crafted items and help the Council Against Domestic Assault by calling
Craft Fair coordinator Tracy Mick at (517) 484-9964.

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:15
The Council Against Domestic Assault is seeking artists and crafts people for the
Riverfest Arts and Crafts Fair September 4, 5 and 6. The fee for your display space
will benefit the Council Against Domestic Assault. For more information, call (517)
484-9964.

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Tips for Radio Announcing

The good announcer can read aloud without stumbling. To become a proficient sight-reader, put aside fifteen minutes per day and then read aloud during that scheduled time. The subject matter is not as important as reading aloud. The easiest way is to read aloud material you would normally read to yourself. While reading this material, glance ahead a line or so while you are saying the lines behind your glance. This way you can see problem material before you start to speak it.

The good announcer can read and speak with enthusiasm and conviction. There is nothing worse for a station than an announcer who sounds bored with her or his work. Radio announcements or commercials will create little listener interest if they are boring. Practice sounding enthusiastic by being enthusiastic.

The good announcer tapes his or her work and replays it at a later time. Listening to the tape after an interval of time allows the announcer to focus on vocal weak points in the delivery of the message. Early recording followed by pre-production playback also allows the announcer to practice new techniques before they are incorporated into the message to be aired.

The good announcer is a communicator and not an imitator. She or he takes ideas or written words and conveys them to the public. The listener has nothing to gauge except what the announcer says. The listener depends on the announcer to act as a channel for effective communication.

The good announcer can take the spoken word and mix it correctly with other program elements (sound effects [sfx], musical bridges) to create the mood required to effectively communicate with the listening audience.

Radio Glossary

- **Arbitron Rating**: Each station is rated quarterly by an independent rating company called Arbitron. The stations are ranked by their ability to reach specific target audiences. Ask for Arbitron ratings for your target group when selecting stations for a campaign.
  

- **Cost Per Point (CPP)**: The out-of-pocket expense divided by the Gross Rating Point will give the cost to reach one percent of a given target audience reached by this station. A good guide to use when comparing the efficiency of radio station reach.

- **Day-Part**: There are four primary day-parts when purchasing air-time.
  - Morning Drive  (6 a.m. - 10 a.m.)
  - Mid-Day       (10 a.m. - 3 p.m.)
  - PM Drive      (3 p.m. - 8 p.m.)
  - Evening       (8 p.m. - Midnight)
  - An overnight buy is also available (Midnight-6a.m.) but is usually not marketed.

- **Gross Rating Point**: The calculation used to determine the sum of ratings for a target audience. A 100 GRP purchase of adults 18-24 on a specific station means the commercial would reach all listeners of this station in that target group. A 75 GRP means that only 75 percent of that target
group would be reached. You can always buy more than the minimum GRPs to ensure the maximum exposure of an ad. A GRP of 100 to 125 combined time purchase per market is recommended for most communication projects.

- **Run of Schedule (ROS):** The least expensive way to purchase air time. The Run of Schedule only guarantees an agreed upon number of airings of a commercial. Placement is left up to the radio station.

- **Total Audience Plan (TAP):** A less expensive way to purchase air time than by specific day-part. The Total Audience Plan guarantees equal distribution of a commercial in each of the four primary day parts.

### Radio Advertising Costs

The cost of advertising on any radio station is usually determined by that station’s rate card. This card includes information on the purchase price according to the number and/or type of ads being bought. Also printed on the rate card are various other charges, conditions, and discounts that may affect the final cost.

Radio stations determine their advertising rates based on a number of factors including: size of audience delivered, competitors’ rates, and time of day. For example, most stations will charge more for advertising during hours when they know the audience is larger or they present a popular program. They do this because they know that advertisers want their commercials aired then.

In general, rate cards are usually laid out in one of three ways: **Fixed Rate, Quantity Discount Rates, or Grid Rates**, but many stations actually use various combinations of the three basic rates.

- **Fixed Rate:** This is a standard rate for a type of commercial, such as a 30-second spot. The cost per spot will always be the same, whether the advertiser buys one or 1,000.

- **Quantity Discount Rates:** This is similar to the fixed rate, except that the station will allow a discount for multiple spots. Therefore, the more spots bought, the bigger the discount and the lower the per-spot cost.

- **Grid Rates:** The station’s rate card includes more than one price for each number and type of ad. The per-spot ad cost charged is determined primarily by the supply and demand of the station’s available ad time.

- **Best Time Available:** weekly rates are charged against those air times which offer a more random placement of the message or advertisement. The radio station guarantees the spot will air at the most favorable slot after fixed positions have been scheduled.
**Fixed Position** weekly rates guarantee specific times for airing the message or advertisement. The charges are assessed against specific hours of the day with certain hours carrying premium prices. The hours are designated AAA, AA, A.

| AAA: These hours are premium drive times | Monday-Friday | 6 am - 10 am |
|                                         |              | 3 pm - 7 pm  |
|                                         | Saturday     | 10 am - 7 pm |
| AA: These hours have reduced audience    | Monday-Friday| 10 am - 7 pm |
|                                         | Saturday     | 6 am - 10 pm |
|                                         | Sunday       | 10 am - 7 pm |
| A: These hours have smallest audience    | Monday-Sunday| 7 pm - 12 M  |
|                                         | Sunday       | 6 am - 10 am |

**Bulk Contract** rates are based on a semi-annual plan which discounts the air time premiums in order to establish a more long term contractual arrangement. These rates are assessed against BTA weekly rates and are worth considering if the radio spots will be aired throughout a long period of time.

**Tips for Getting the Best Radio Buy in Your Market**

- Know your target audience. Do you want to reach younger people (teens to 24)? Or do you want to reach working adults (24-55)? The more information you have about the group you want to reach the better you will be able to pick the right station.
- Do surveys to determine which stations reach your target audience? Call the stations and ask them to supply you with data. If a station reaches several different audiences, ask which the primary audience is.
- If there are several stations in your area that reach your audience, ask the station for its Arbitron ranking and choose the one with the largest audience. The highest ranked stations generally charge higher ad rates because they reach more listeners.
- When is the best time to reach your target group? Morning or evening drive time is good for 9 to 5 workers but evening shift workers would have different listening times for their commutes. If you’re promoting an organizing drive, find out what station is played in the office or plant.
- Call around to get costs for placing a 60-second and a 30-second ad at several stations serving your target audience. Remember, price is always negotiable. Ask for the costs for the times of day that you want because they will vary. Once you get these prices you are prepared to negotiate with the station that best suits your needs.
- A radio station’s commercial time inventory can be compared to seats on an airplane. “Drive-time-“ is considered “first class-“ and is, therefore, the most expensive. “Run of schedule” is the least expensive but will include some drive time as well as some less attractive timeslots. Ask exactly what the percentage of drive time is in a run of schedule buy to see if this might better fit your budget.
- Check out the possibility of purchasing special commercial packages. An example would be time during a local school sports event or coverage of a community activity. See what the cost is for sponsoring newsbreaks, weather or traffic reports. A few spots regularly aired on one of these special features can generate substantial exposure.
Radio Spot Practice Exercises

Imagine you have gathered the facts below and need to write a radio spot based on them. Each spot should be 30 seconds.

Radio Spot #1: Sparty’s Flowers

1. Sparty’s flowers will host a holiday open house in conjunction with the Crop and Soil Green Houses on Thursday, December 10, from 1 p.m. until 8 p.m.
2. Santa Claus is scheduled to attend!
3. Sparty’s will have a 20% discount sale for all MSU faculty, staff and students.
4. Sparty’s is located in the rear of the Crop and Soil Sciences Building.
5. Sparty’s offers the lowest rates in town on flowers and arrangements!
6. Sparty’s also sells MSU Horticulture souvenirs, arts-and-crafts, and nature literature.
7. Sparty’s is one of two University operated, retail flower stores in the country.

Radio Spot #2: B & C Construction

1. B & C is a new Lansing firm specializing in gas station and fast food construction and renovation.
2. B & C focuses on quality construction and uses only the best materials.
3. B & C has worked for over 20 years in the Detroit area.
4. B & C has worked on Burger King, Taco Bell, KFC and Pizza Hut franchises in addition to Mobile Gas Stations.
5. B & C is family owned and operated.
6. For more information about B & C you can contact Brian Jones at 555-6543.
7. Offices are located at Mt. Hope and Washington in Lansing.

Radio Spot #3: MSU Environmental Club

1. MSU Environmental Club is looking for members.
2. First meeting is Tuesday, in room 228 Natural Resources.
3. DEQ officials will be present to talk about state jobs in the environment.
4. All majors are welcome.
5. Group is planning a park clean up; a hiking trip and a camping trip.
6. Leadership positions are available.
7. For more information, contact Michelle Smith at 355-9023.