

Holland Cooke Newsletter • February '19

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“Readers and viewers, no matter how much they complain about the media’s shallowness, reward it.”

New York Times Opinion Columnist Frank Bruni: “Will the Media Be Trump’s Accomplice Again in 2020?”

One change a longtime subscriber thanked me for since this newsletter went digital: If you’re reading this PDF online, you can click to open links like this:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/11/opinion/trump-2020-media.html>

If it didn’t work for you, carefully type it into your browser. It WILL be worth it.

Bruni surmises: “Democracies don’t just get the leaders they deserve. They get the leaders who make it through whatever obstacle course – and thrive in whatever atmosphere – their media has created.” And he quotes Dan Rather:

“When you cover this as spectacle, what’s lost is context, perspective and depth. And when you cover this as spectacle, he is the star.”

“He,” of course, is President Donald Trump, spectacle personified. And Bruni reckons that “He doesn’t hate the media, not at all. He uses us.” And we take the bait. “Since Trump declared his candidacy for the presidency in 2015...the number of stories about Trump in the country’s most influential newspapers and on its principal newscasts significantly exceeded what his support in polls at the time justified.” And even those numbers were juiced, as we learned from Mr. Trump’s ex-lawyer/fixer this past month.

The Times columnist urges that – should Trump be a candidate in 2020 – “we need to do something else, which is to recognize that Trump now has an actual record in office and to discuss that with as much energy as we do his damned Twitter feed.” Certainly, and objectively, what he’s suggesting would be good for America...BUT...

Rush Limbaugh affiliates: Do the opposite.

To better understand how-we-got-where-we-are, click that link above.

America will survive. Meantime, Talk Radio can prosper. For our purposes, the facts are these:

- Facts don’t matter to the rock-solid 35% that drinks Trump’s Kool-Aid through a fire hose. Anything which challenges their predisposition or their president is fake news. See page 5.
- The other 65% don’t matter, because heaps of audience measurement data tell us that the quickest way to grow ratings Share is to get people who listen to your station most, to listen more times per week.
- Offer the station as safe space for the like-minded. Be to radio what Fox News Channel is to TV.
- If you take Fox News Radio’s on-hour newscast, encourage repeat tune-ins “throughout your busy day,” by ripping-off this line we use in the on-hour ID at client stations: “You can get FAKE news anywhere else. Hear FOX news HERE...every hour.”

Question I’m asked most often: “Will Trump be impeached?”

- Selfishly I hope not, because this is THE – repeat, THE – best thing that’s ever happened to Talk Radio and cable news, and I work in both arenas.
- If I had to guess, daily bombshells suggest that he might resign, possibly citing health or some other face-saving excuse. But, however long this bonanza lasts, shame on us if we don’t milk it for every quarter hour possible.
- Sales: Limbaugh exposure gets results. Low-hanging fruit: retailers who, personally, buy-into #MAGA. Pitch any store that floodlights an over-size American flag 24/7.

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“We are fast approaching a new era in consumer technology.”

Consumer Technology Association VP/Market Research Steve Koenig at last month's mind-boggling Consumer Electronics Show

He defined three eras:

- 2000: “The Digital Age,” when devices evolved.
- 2010: “The Connected Age,” of-which he says we’re now approaching the end. “Most of us take the Internet for granted. We’re online all the time.”
- 2020: “The Data Age of Consumer Tech,” in which decisions are informed by data, “kinda like ‘The Matrix,’” he grinned. Consumer choices are one great big data mash, which looming 5G will rev-up.

What this means to radio?

- During the Digital Age – post-Consolidation – automation continued to thin station staffs. Just as iPod led a parade of new devices offering listeners an alternative to AM/FM, broadcast radio cut-back-on the local programming that differentiated us from content these new devices delivered.
- In the Connected Age, stations invited streaming use, which enabled Dittoheads to hear Rush at work, where AM radio didn’t come in well. And beyond simply streaming, smart stations used the Internet to cultivate deeper relationships with listeners. Why that was smart?
- The Data Age of Consumer Tech will reward stations which – during the Connected Age – built databases of listeners they engaged via events and Social Media and other touchpoints. Information about our listeners – whom advertisers want as customers – is gold.

What-the-heck IS “Artificial Intelligence?”

When you hear the phrase, you think “my brother in law?” But seriously...

- Ask Alexa. She is artificially-intelligent.
- “A.I.” (if you want to sound nonchalant-nerdy) finds patterns in data and can predict outcomes. Ask Siri “Starbucks near me?” She’ll give you turn-by-turn directions. Eventually A.I. will drive the robo-car. Meantime, voice control and A.I. will spare us fumbling with settings on our various devices, as our devices learn us.
- “We are on the cusp of a major shift in human behavior” in Koenig’s view. Voice control is now table stakes. “The Church of England has an Alexa app. So you can order a pizza AND get spiritual advice” he quipped.

“Alexa: Play six commercials in a row.”

A sentence likely never spoken.

- CTA research demonstrates that users are “not just doing a few things” with digital assistants. “And the things they’re doing are things we used to do with apps.” And, for radio broadcasters, THAT should hit a nerve; since – on a good day – we now play defense against apps that deliver what were previously radio staples: music, news, weather, traffic, conversation.
- Every one of these dazzling connected car dashboards I see at CES makes me fear for radio’s in-car franchise. Where’s AM/FM? Yes, voice control will make it easier for a P1 to tune-in while driving. But have you given the driver a reason to?
- Smart speakers bring stations (streaming) back in-home, along with a gazillion other on-demand audio options. So there too we need listeners to perceive that what we deliver is something they can’t get elsewhere.

And if pieces of our product (i.e., Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young) are commodities they can get elsewhere, our curation and presentation – and the relationship we’ve earned -- have to warrant them asking Alexa for us, rather than simply asking: “Alexa, Play Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young.”

Thus the way your consultant nags...er, “emphasizes” The Fundamentals.

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9 IDEAS IN 8 MINUTES

1. CES2019: What else?

I posted two videos on the home page at HollandCooke.com

2. Taking a selfie? Look at the lens, not the screen.

3. Remaining local news people: Be careful with "press release" and "press conference."

In local news copy, these are red flags.

- I often hear copy that details **process**, with the **consequence** of the story buried or missing entirely.
- If your copy says "press release" or "press conference" more than "you" and/or "your," you're probably boring people, by describing how-you-gather-information. Focus on what the information means to listeners.

4. Sales: Think Spring.

From an advertiser-voiced spot that produced results last year:

"LAST SPRING, MY COMMERCIAL SAID 'COME BUY A NEW LAWNMOWER. THIS YEAR, DON'T BUY A NEW LAWNMOWER FROM ME. WHY? YOU MIGHT NOT NEED ONE! INSTEAD, BRING ME THE LAWNMOWER YOU ALREADY HAVE."

- 'Sounds honest and approachable, the opposite of high-pressure sales tactics.
- Copy describes the off-season tune-up "THAT COULD ADD ONE, TWO, MAYBE THREE SUMMERS TO THE LAWNMOWER YOU ALREADY HAVE."
- Lots more attention-getting than "FOR ALL YOUR LAWNCARE NEEDS," eh?

5. Also for Sales: Ask existing advertisers for referrals.

Sellers who actively seek and exploit referrals earn four-to-five times more than those who don't.

91% of customers will offer them, but only 11% of sellers ask.

6. ALSO for Sales, about pizza joints...

Two tips, from someone I know who answers the phone for to-go orders:

- PITCH the pizzaman during the first week of the month, "when welfare payments are received."
- AIR spots 430-7PM.

7. WHY promos for your web site aren't producing enough clicks?

Page 42, "Holland Cooke: Greatest Hits."

Download your copy at HollandCooke.com

8. Back to Vegas! See you at the NAB convention in April?

Need more from your News/Talk station?

Let's grab a cuppa cawfee.

9. Talkers/NY2019 conference: "Telling the Story"

It's Friday, June 7.

Details at Talkers.com, where you can also read my Monday Memo each week.

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SOUND BITES

"It's OK to be White."

Spray-painted on Beta Bridge in Charlottesville.

"So you DON'T want any new customers who are Republicans?"

How station reps respond when prospects don't want to air in The Rush Limbaugh Show, based on personal preferences.

"In my new black Plymouth Barracuda, Karen had all the radio buttons set to major pop stations. She started going down the line. 'Close to You' was on two of them at the same time. I'll never forget her expression when she looked at me."

Richard Carpenter, now 72, in The Wall Street Journal.

"We see tremendous opportunities to create attractive and unique audio packages that combine our strengths — SiriusXM's in-vehicle position with Pandora's strong position out of the vehicle."

SiriusXM CEO James Meyer, announcing \$50 million in "synergies" as the Pandora deal closed. The entire Pandora management team is among the cuts. The combined company reaches 100 million listeners in North America.

Big goal: "I'd like to monetize at some level every single one of the close to 23 million SiriusXM trials we are running annually." And he says "I am thrilled to now have a complete stack of compelling offerings to offer consumers, from paid to free."

"You now have execs at major advertisers expressing concern with fraudulent airplay, ads ending up on questionable websites, and consumers paying no attention to online ads. Advertisers find none of that on broadcast radio."

New York University's Larry Miller, in "Paradigm Shift: Why Radio Must Adapt to the Rise of Digital"

"We are announcing we're exploring a run on Colbert as we giggle and hold his hand, as if we were announcing stardom in a new sitcom. Maybe we are."

Ronald Reagan's speechwriter, now Wall Street Journal columnist, Peggy Noonan

"Beware of monotony; it's the mother of all deadly sins."

Edith Wharton, American novelist, 1862-1937

"In life, you get what you tolerate."

Coach Mike Ditka

"I must be doing something right to create so much interest and backlash from the Democratic Party."

At least he said "Democratic," rather than parroting the "Democrat Party" diss that Rush Limbaugh imitators ape.

That's Starbucks' founder Howard Schultz, who is horrifying the Left by wondering-aloud about running for president as an Independent. They presume that a third-party candidate would split votes to-the-detriment-of the challenger, rather than the incumbent...though it sure didn't work out that way for Bush Senior.

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The Story of a Lifetime only gets better.

Rush Limbaugh + Fox News affiliates: Own this.

"You look at different places. They put up a wall, no problem. Look at San Antonio."

Our president, who seems not to know that San Antonio is 157 miles from the Mexican border, and has no "wall."

"The president showed real leadership this week. Only he knows what threats might have been on our airports, and he did the right thing. He chose people over politics. This is what his base knows about him – he will ALWAYS choose people over politics. Thank you, Mr. President."

Dr. Gina Loudon – frequent talking head on Fox News, and my TV show; and media advisor to the Trump 2020

"Here's me with President Trump on his jet. And at Mar a Lago for NYE. Here's me at an inaugural ball with Paul [sic] Jones and Juanita Broadrick. Follow me on Twitter to get great pics like that!"

Social media post by Boston-based regionally-syndicated talker Howie Carr

"From Trump's vantage point, it's more important to pander to his core supporters than it is to govern the country effectively."

Washington Post contributor Brian Klaas, who reckons that "the shutdown wasn't about 'the wall.' It's not about 'winning.' It's not about beating 'Chuck and Nancy.' Trump's quixotic shutdown fight is really about consolidating his political base to prevent any Republicans from impeaching him when the Mueller report comes out."

Thus my recommendation on page one: Conservative Talk Radio: [Pander to the like-minded, in a way that encourages more tune-in occasions.](#)

"a revolving door of deeply flawed individuals, amateurs, grifters, weaklings, convicted and unconvicted felons who were hustled into jobs they were never suited for, sometimes seemingly without so much as a background check via Google or Wikipedia."

Team Trump, in the estimation of former New Jersey Governor Chris Christie [R] – who led the Trump Transition until being replaced – in his book "Let Me Finish: Trump, the Kushners, Bannon, New Jersey, and the Power of In-Your-Face Politics."

"True, much of what she says may be ill-informed and naïve. But, Lord, she's 29 years old! What kind of a human being are you if you're not naïve and ill-informed at 29? Mr. Trump is 72. What's his excuse?"

Wall Street Journalist columnist Gerard Baker, referring to freshmen U.S. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY)

"Look, I'm willing to stand up and fight for the things that really matter but not for the status quo politics and not to perpetuate polarization and paralysis."

Larry Hogan, only the second Republican to earn a second term as governor in Maryland history, reportedly being nudged to challenge Donald Trump in the 2020 Republican primary, should Trump run then.

"I come from the get-to-work and get-things-done school of politics, and I'll work with anyone who wants to do the people's business."

"I think God calls all of us to fill different roles at different times and I think that he wanted Donald Trump to become president."

Sarah Huckabee Sanders