

Holland Cooke Newsletter • April 2020

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“This was not an easy decision.”

NAB President/CEO Gordon Smith announcing that this month’s convention would be among numerous canceled Las Vegas events.

“We want to keep our people working.”

Commercial copy point we’re using at client stations, in spots for local service retailers.

“When we recover from this it’s not going to be the same world we left.”

Michael Bloomberg

RIGHT NOW, every radio station is setting an expectation that will outlive the Coronavirus pandemic. What you do – and don’t – RIGHT NOW is a tattoo, and will forever define your position in listeners’ crowded audio menu.

How? Page 2...

Like Wal-Mart, radio is looking over its shoulder at Amazon.

MUST-read: The Edison Research “Infinite Dial 2020” report. Help yourself to it – and the recording of its debut webinar – on their web site. LOTS of information, including a chart on in-car listening station sales reps should tote.

Somewhat buried in all the data you’ll see, IMHO, is Alexa’s already-formidable presence on the audio landscape...which the Coronavirus new normal will likely expand...A LOT.

Page 4...

There is no joy in Mudville.

No St. Patrick’s Day parade in Ireland? IRELAND? The only thing more-unthinkable is no parade in Boston!

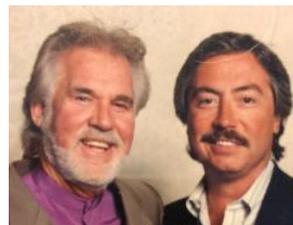
March was a rough month for sports fans there. IF EVER New Englanders needed a drink it was ON St. Patrick’s Day, when we learned that Tom Brady had left the Patriots.

Red Sox Nation was already bumming over Mookie Betts and David Price going to the Dodgers. Then we heard that Tommy John surgery will sideline ace starter Chris Sale “for the entire season, if there IS one.”

As this month’s newsletter drops, Major League Baseball has yet to determine when/if we’ll hear “Play ball!” but THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU for “Classic Games on YouTube!” BoSox fans can relive 10/27/04, and continue to wince over 10/25/86: <https://www.mlb.com/news/watch-classic-mlb-games-for-free>

RIP Kenny Rogers

The Gambler was 81.



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Right now, you are being tattooed.

One hundred New Englanders died during The Great Blizzard of '78. Those of us who survived all have stories, many sad, others amusing, even wistful. And, yes, nine months later, there was a baby boom. We who covered that week are feeling déjà vu as the Coronavirus pandemic story unfolds.

With normalcy upended, it's human nature to take comfort hearing how others are faring. It's less misery-loves-company than we're-all-in-this-together.

1978 was twenty years before mainstream Internet chat. So radio was the Social Medium by which listeners shared cabin fever anecdotes and, literally, survival information. WPRO-AM/Providence was still a Top 40 station, but music was mere garnish to the callers who buzzed my 7-midnight show.

If you're expecting a consultant buzzword, here ya go: "Community."

Public health officials are warning against "Community Transmission." Taken literally, that's our goal; and it has never been more important to sound like you're part of listeners' community.

Music stations:

- If you typecast this Coronavirus phenomenon story as "Talk Radio," and fail to acknowledge listeners' lives-interrupted, you will sound oblivious, even if your strategy is to be an oasis away-from outbreak anxiety.
- I'm NOT saying stop the music and open-up the phone lines for "What are YOU up to?" in the manner Talk stations must. But a music station that, for instance, culls succinct sound bites from off-air request line conversation can seem like the soundtrack of self-quarantine chill time. Be flattered that the cabin-fevered reach-out to you, a perceived friend. Thus the value of local talent which corporate radio is deemphasizing.



Recently on my TV show, I interviewed a psychotherapist, something I recommend stations do.

ICYMI: <https://youtu.be/d-GGD3Bs1O0>

Questions:

- *How have routine changes upset those you counsel?*
- *How can parents talk about this with their children?*
- *Games and concerts and political rallies are canceled. And places of worship are closed. How hurtful is it not-to-assemble?*
- *As we self-quarantine, we hoard **things**. How can we prepare **emotionally** to be holed-up at home?*
- *Coronavirus coverage is relentless. Is there emotional value in taking an occasional "news sabbatical?"*

Media habits are fragile.

By automating, radio has lowered listener expectations. Admittedly I will sound like a disapproving long-ago night time DJ recalling this, but when Michael Jackson died in a daypart voicetracked by many stations that played his music, those stations sounded unaware. It was a lesson NOT-learned several years later when

Whitney Houston also passed during robo-radio hours. Monkee Davey Jones left us – too young – during afternoon drive, so radio at least sounded aware.

When this pandemic interruption has passed, a New Normal will emerge, like post-9/11.

When the 1978 snow drift melted, routines resumed. But the local TV news landscape was forever changed. During the crisis, Rhode Islanders were comforted seeing Governor Joe Garrahy, wearing a plaid shirt that now hangs in a museum, live from his State House command center. The feed was provided by WJAR-TV, whose competitors didn't then have the same liveness capability. From that moment on, NBC10 has consistently been Southern New England's local news ratings goliath. As Woody Allen mused, "80% of success is showing-up."

How will your station be remembered for what you are doing right now?

If you're a talker, here's hoping that the information and interaction you're serving-up now will be remembered more than the careless political denial radio righties were parroting earlier.

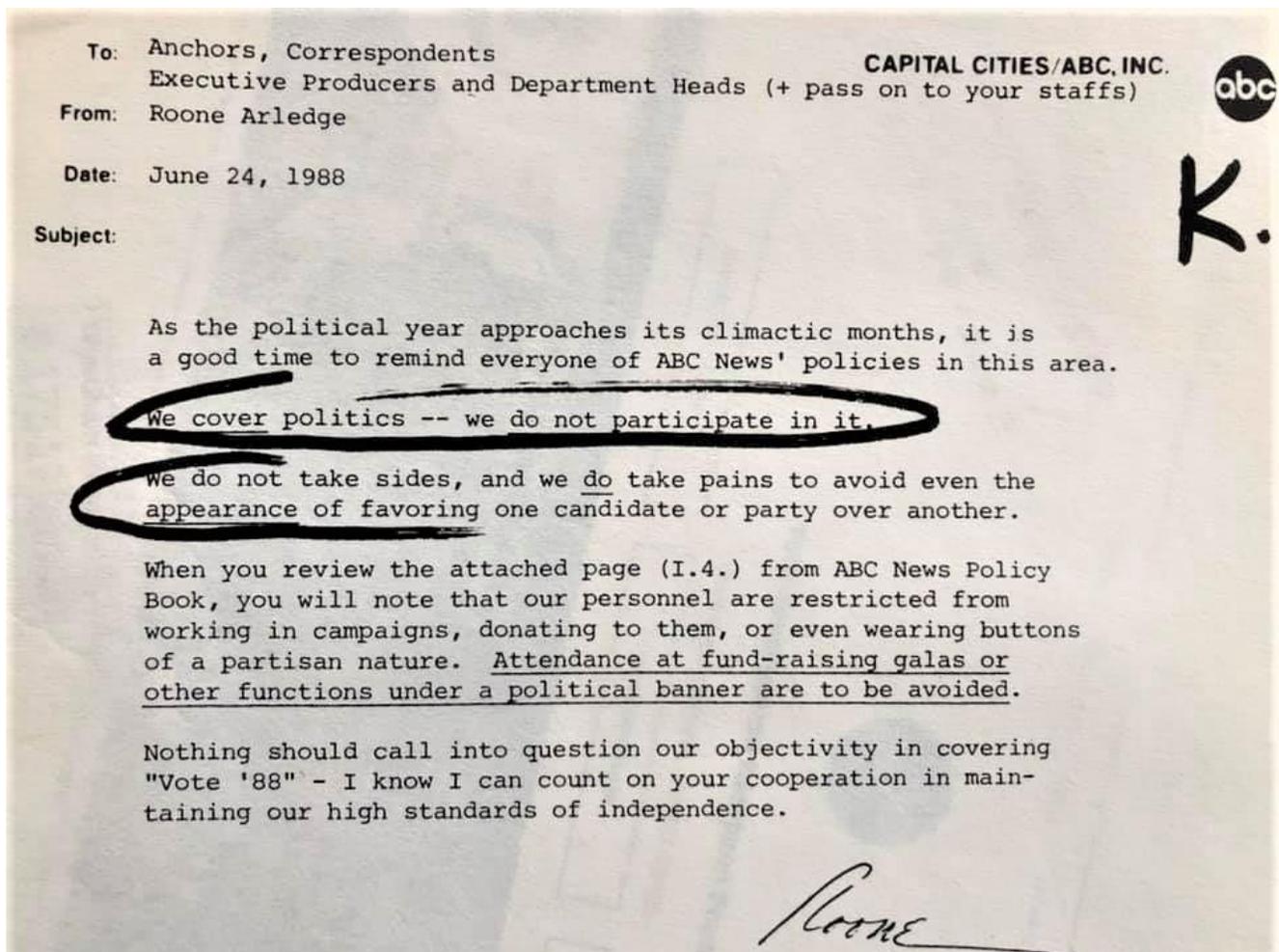
"I'm dead right on this. The coronavirus is the common cold, folks."

Rush Limbaugh

"How can these shills face their followers after all the lies and deceit?"

Author, Conservative radio talker, and early Trump supporter Michael Savage

In my work with Limbaugh/Hannity/Fox News stations, our strategy has been – for lack of a more-demure term – to "pander" to Trump supporters who guzzle his Kool-Aid through a fire hose. Since reality has shifted him into a more presidential posture, local righty talkers are well-advised to play it straighter, like media used to...



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Edison Research "Infinite Dial 2020:" First Wal-Mart, Now Radio

This 23rd annual survey of who's-listening-to-what-and-how was derived from a telephone survey of 1502 Americans age 12+, weighted to the USA population, and – important to note – conducted in January, before the Coronavirus pandemic disrupted habitual listening habits. More on that in a minute.

Like yours truly, webinar presenters Tom Webster of Edison Research and John Rosso from co-sponsor Triton Digital were self-quarantined at home. If you missed it, a recording is available at EdisonResearch.com.

"Headlines," from my notes:

- Smartphone ownership: Growth has leveled-off. 85% of us, some 240 million tote one.
- Tablet Ownership: 53%, 149M. Only Apple and Lenovo grew, others are down.
- Smartwatch Ownership: Flat year-to-year at 17%, 48M
- Smart Speaker Ownership: 27%, 76M...and here comes what I consider The Big Idea...

Like Wal-Mart, radio is now looking over its shoulder at Amazon.

First mover Amazon Echo is the T-Rex of smart speakers. 21% surveyed own (at least) one; more than double Google Home's 11% penetration, and Apple HomePod's 1%. See what's coming?

- Clue #2, and bear in mind this survey was BEFORE pandemic hoarding: 42% surveyed, 118 million of us, are Amazon Prime subscribers; a number sure to mushroom with bare store shelves and the stay-home new normal. I love the free shipping, AND hundreds of movies and TV shows and great original Amazon video content...AND...
- What else comes with an Amazon Prime membership? 14 thousand SONGS. Just say "Alexa, play 'Back in The USSR' by The Beatles," and she does. And if you say, "Alexa, please play 6 commercials back-to-back," you may be the first to ever ask. If you asked for a song not-among those 14 thousand, Alexa will pitch you a free 30-day trial of the 2 million song tier.

Cling, if you will, to Infinite Dial survey data that 58% of us have one-to-three AM/FM radios in-home. But note, at the end of the presentation: "More than six in ten Americans use some form of voice assistant technology. It is incumbent upon content producers to ensure their content is easily retrievable through voice." Thus the importance of station smart speaker "skills" (and the opportunity to sell the sponsored pre-roll, as my clients have).

What else competes for broadcast listeners' attention?

- "Social Media usage has essentially stalled" over the past 4 years. Facebook is still #1, with biggest growth 35-54. For 12-34s, Instagram is a strong #2.
- Online Audio (including station streams) "is now mainstream media." 68% (192M) listen monthly; 60% (169M) stream weekly. Among weekly users, Spotify is #1, Pandora #2; and when you peruse that chart note Amazon growth.
- In-car, AM/FM radio remains "Used Most Often," though it's down to 50% (steadily, from 52% last year, 56% year-before, and 57% in 2017). IMHO: As we move into new cars, new-tech dashboards will likely continue that trend...although the looming recession will likely chill new car sales. 45% already listen to music in-car via phone.
- Podcasting? "Fairly significant growth" in monthly consumption: 37% = 104M (48% among 12-34, people growing up without their elders' AM/FM habit). Average weekly TSL: 6 hours 39 minutes. Weekly podcasters average 6 per week.

That's my short version. Check-out the whole thing. If you're cooped-up at home, you probably have time.

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6 IDEAS IN 5 MINUTES

1. **Sales: Opportune copy point for nimble advertisers.**

While nervous sales reps are REACTING to cancellations as the economy dives, smart sellers are PROACTIVELY turning-lemons-into-lemonade.

In a single stopset on WPRO/Providence, I heard these spots back-to-back-to-back:

- “Manville Palace Pizza, offering free touch-free delivery.” You order with a credit card, and they’ll ring your doorbell and leave the pizza there as you come to the door.
- Next ad: Nursing home inviting children to make cheery greeting cards for residents.
- Next ad: 52-week roofing/siding/remodeling company offers “safe” survey. Keeping social distance, they’ll come to meet/measure/etc. then deliver online here’s-how-it’ll-look etc.

That third spot emphasized something many local service retailers should project: “We want to keep our people working.” ;)

2. **YouTube tip: Doing an interview? Ask your subject to look at you, not the camera.**

That way it will look more like a conversation and less like an infomercial.

3. **Another YouTube tip: Create “an off-site call-to-action.”**

Is your video inviting engagement? In the Description field, include a hyperlink to your blog or web page.

- Make it self-explanatory, i.e., “Download 7 Spring Cleaning Tips That Save You Money,” followed by the link.
- Be sure to include the full URL, i.e., <http://www.example.com/7Tips.pdf>. Otherwise the link won’t work.
- Post the link EARLY in the Description, so it appears above the “Read More” bar, and viewers will see it without having to scroll.

Source: Quick Study YouTube Marketing

4. **Weekend Ask-the-Expert show hosts: Avoid lingo and acronyms.**

And percentages. Instead of “36%,” say “a little over a third.”

Remember, YOU are the expert, making-the-complicated-simple.

5. **Also for weekend warriors: Best source of calls for your next show?**

Those you didn’t have time for THIS week. If you end-up with more callers than airtime, well done!

If you can, stick-around and pre-record their calls. If you cannot, make an appointment to call them next week.

6. **Need MORE calls? Use voicemail.**

Call-in shows that only field callers in real-time are making a fundamental mistake, for 4 reasons:

- We live in an on-demand culture. SO, in addition to its live airtime, your show needs a podcast afterlife, which can also invite calls to a 24/7 number.
- And by using voicemail, can offer that number elsewhere in your marketing.
- AND because some callers might be too shy to call while you’re on-air live.
- Before each live weekend show, you can cull cream-of-the-crop voicemails, then sound darn popular on-air.

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SOUND BITES

“What do I like in an interview? I like it when the host asks a question and then listens to the guest’s answer and then reacts to that answer with an amplification through the next question.”

Great advice for radio talkers -- echoing Larry King 101 -- from Dennis Miller, now my RT America colleague. His new interview show “Dennis Miller +1” drops new episodes Mondays and Wednesdays at 9 PM ET, and is on-demand at our SUPER-cool new Portable.TV app.

“If your vehicle needs service, don’t stress out. We’ll be happy to come to you, pick up your vehicle, leave you with a rental and return your vehicle fully serviced & sanitized. You can call, or schedule a service appointment on tasca.com.”

Email from Tasca Ford, where I bought my last car and will buy my next one, and get serviced in-between. It’s one of those companies that is a pleasure to do business with, because they consistently live-up to their motto “You WILL be satisfied.”

Smart station sales reps are working with advertisers to project the “we’ve got your back” that this message conveys.

“Can’t-get-it-anywhere-else information makes people feel connected to their neighborhoods, and they’ll go to great lengths to get it.”

PR Week, advising publicity-seekers to refocus their efforts “as major media shrinks and gets out of the business of local.” As I rant...er, “surmise,” on page 2, stations that cover this pandemic crisis with local-local-local news-you-can-use will be conspicuous now, and remembered later.

“Fox News and Fox Business are winning the information war at the worst time, all by embracing the worst in us. They’ll tell you that nothing is wrong when there clearly is — and then imply that if you get sick, blame the Chinese.”

Rolling Stone

“No, I don’t take responsibility at all.”

The President of the United States, asked about the Coronavirus testing logjam.

“Trump’s main opponent isn’t Joe Biden. It’s the Coronavirus.”

Wall Street Journal editorial

“Who cares if it’s 10 times more lethal than the flu?”

Rush Limbaugh

“People you know will get sick; some may die.”

Fox News host Tucker Carlson

“Yet another attempt to impeach the president.”

Fox Business Channel anchor Trish Regan, accusing Democrats of creating “mass hysteria to encourage a market sell-off...to demonize and destroy the president.”

“on hiatus until further notice”

Fox Business News statement announcing that Regan’s show is on hiatus, attributing the change to “the demands of the evolving pandemic crisis coverage.”

“You can’t be a country getting stupider and stupider without a day of reckoning.”

Bill Maher