

Holland Cooke Media Baseball Stations' February To-Do List

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“America has rolled by like an army of steamrollers. It's been erased like a blackboard, rebuilt, and erased again. But baseball has marked the time.”

James Earl Jones' character in “Field of Dreams”

Or, as The Beatles sang, “It's been a long, cold, lonely winter.” Baseball – even Spring Training while it's still chilly in March – says “Here Comes The Sun.” That's what baseball means...to **listeners**.

To local **advertisers**? In the words of one GM – who has made a PILE of money selling baseball – “It's ego and envy.”

Sales: It's a thing, not a number.

The sponsorship package cannot be quantified on a-cost-per-ANYTHING basis. It's not “efficient” in agency terms, but baseball is powerful “reputation appropriation.” Translation: Advertisers can tell the world they're big-enough for baseball.

The rapid-response plumber, the roofing repair guy, and the lumber yard or hardware store or any other independent local retailer slugging-it-out against big box competitors can be part of the Astros' or the Braves' or the Cardinals' or the Dodgers' or the Rangers' or the Giants' brand.

- Low-hanging fruit: Prospects who are, personally, fans. For decades, we've been telling reps at conservative Talk stations to pitch businesses that fly big American flags. So which local retailers do you know to be baseball fanatics?
- Milk the value-added stuff affiliates get. Include some tickets in the package. Take 'em to a game and bring 'em up to the broadcast booth for a selfie with the radio team. Can you rent a sky box for a game and throw a client party?
- Make a list of guys-who-own-guy-stuff businesses. Home improvement and auto repair have always been opportune.
- Second and third-generation retailers might family-feud about other things. But grandfather AND father AND son can agree on this expenditure lots quicker than you can get consensus about a ROS spot package on Kiss or Lite or Magic.
- Baseball is a high-affinity branding opportunity. I don't know **when** I will need to buy a tire...because nails lurk. But I already know **where** I'll buy it, because they advertise in Red Sox games. And get this! All year long, that particular advertiser says, in all his commercials, in a thick Boston accent, “You go, Red Saux!”
- Warm list: Who's advertising on stadium signage? That's an ego clue. But it's just branding. Tell 'em “Radio can add-value to that expense by telling your story,” and adding a call-to-action.
- Baseball = beer, so prospect sports bars, DUI defense attorneys, and auto body shops.
- Reps: You're not calling from KXXX. You're calling from Padres Radio. The team logo is in your Email and Sales material.



Timothy Burke @b... · 9m

Listening to the Royals radio broadcast and they managed to sell sponsorship for the MLB "express written consent" disclaimer, what a hustle

- Way-back-when: As Mickey Mantle launched one into the cheap seats, Mel Allen would proclaim it “a Ballentine Blast!” Back to the future: I've been at games where everyone there got a free something because the team did such-and-such. Can you invent a cool feature for local sponsorship? Every listener who says they heard ____ gets free ____ the next day.
- IMPORTANT: Update copy as the season progresses. This is a franchise, not plug-N-play programming that babysits nights and weekends. NOTHING says the station is on auto-pilot and disserves clients like spots and promos that crow “Baseball is BACK” in July.

I was the Motor-Mouth Manager

War story: I programmed WTOP/Washington in the 1980s, long before there were Washington Nationals. We were your Orioles Baseball Station; and I was managing a union shop...BUT I ended up joining AFTRA because our announcers were newscasters who couldn't say "Mid-Atlantic Milk Marketing Association" as rapidly as I, an ex-1970s Top 40 DJ.

- So – believe it or not – the company paid my Initiation fee. And every time there was a change in that 65 seconds-of-copy-crammed-into-60 opening billboard that rattled-off all the sponsors, I got 'em all in, and I got \$10-something in my union Pension & Welfare Fund. Sweet. But I digress...
- To OUR ear, that whole word salad sounds hellishly rushed. But to ADVERTISERS, it's like having your picture on the wall at the see-and-be-seen steak house. Everyone there is a someone, associated with everyone else there. They're part of a local Twins or Mariners or Mets or Pirates Baseball Who's Who. And everyone who isn't isn't.
- I've been on calls with reps closing baseball packages because "It's worth it just for the promos!" So include rotated sponsor mentions in ROS promos. Doing so tells your whole cume – even non-fans – that the advertiser is big. That said...
- Sell enough in-game frequency to be heard. 2 or 3 spots per game won't be.

Plan now to OWN the franchise.

Every game is on SiriusXM, where you can decide which team's feed you want to hear. And "The [MLB](#) is back on TuneIn, and this year TuneIn Premium is THE destination for all things baseball. With a Premium plan, listeners get access to live play-by-play of every single game — with no blackouts." Here in New England the NESN 360 app, "in partnership with the Boston Red Sox, the Boston Bruins and Major League Baseball," is \$30 per month, "with a first-month promotional price of \$1."

So what's a AM/FM affiliate to do?

- Goal: Be KNOWN FOR having-the-games, by embracing the team. Waving the flag conspicuously, regardless of where fans actually hear the game, can score you extra diary credit. 😊 Don't quote me.
- During Spring Training, I'm wary of airing games Mon-Fri 6A-7P. But nights and weekends, why not? It's conspicuous, also useful in diary markets, where ratings measure what's NOTICED. And, hey, in March, every team is in first place.
- Can you cover, in Arizona or Florida? Admittedly not-inexpensive, but ask your team network about Spring Training packages and arrangements. Some stations bring advertisers who commit early, hosted by the rep who sold the most.
- As Opening Day approaches, count-it-down in your on-hour ID. Then...

Avoid the banana syndrome.

Use baseball to recycle audience in and out of games.



Dumbest-thing-I-hear-most-often on baseball stations: During the game, when the network calls for a station ID, the station announces that it's "your [name-of-team] station." Duh. Isn't that like writing "banana" on the peel?

Your station's on-hour ID – in any hour -- is beachfront property. It's where you sign your name, where you explain yourself to listeners you've trained to "check-in for a quick Fox News update, every hour, throughout your busy day." Games invite listeners who might not otherwise come your station, so use those 10 seconds to tell them why/when to come back for something else useful.

Example:

"CATCH-up when you WAKE-up, with a quick morning update and your AccuWeather forecast, on your ONLY local news radio, [dial positions, call letters, city of license]."

Opportune, since the game might be the last radio they use at night.

Then in NON-game hours, use top-of-hour to wave the flag. Plug team-and-time of the next game you'll air.