

TALKERS®

Sound Thinking

2025 Lessons for
2026 Impact in Audio

Holland Cooke

*T*ALKERS
BOOKS

Forward

By Michael Harrison, founder and Publisher, Talkers magazine

Twenty-first century digital technology is rewiring the human nervous system at a pace that challenges our collective sensibilities. Talk radio and its extended family of talk media platforms, not to forget Mother Earth herself, have become the arena in which there has been a whole lot of *spinning* going on.

Since 1990, TALKERS magazine has served the broadcast communications industry as the leading talk show business trade journal. One of its primary missions has been to guide talk media professionals as they have been making the profound transition from the analog to digital eras. During this remarkable stretch of history, Talk Radio, and its technical offspring, have collectively served as the most accurate bellwether of public opinion in the rapidly accelerating business of information.

During this stretch of dizzying change, one of our most respected and appreciated TALKERS magazine contributors, Holland Cooke, has served as a truly *wise man* of the industry in the capacities of station manager, talent director, and consultant. Over the decades, thousands of media professionals, from captains of industry to entry-level upstarts, have sought his insights covering complex theory as well as practical application.

This special E-book contains his collective contributions to TALKERS magazine during the highly transitional year of 2025. We hope you find it useful and that you will tap into our deep well of information and inspiration at www.talkers.com illuminating one of the most dynamic fields of communication to come down the pike since humans began sending smoke signals into the airwaves.

Introduction

The eldest of my parents' seven children, I have gone through life latching onto the older-brother-I-never-had characters. Michael Harrison is one of them. My friend 4+ decades, his curiosity, encouragement – and love of our craft -- mean a lot to me.



This guy sees around corners. Spotting the Talk Radio phenomenon in its seedling stage, Michael founded TALKERS magazine. Eventually, what began as a thick, slick monthly hard copy tabloid via USPS evolved into its daily online version, and did years before newspapers' tailspin to digital. Reporting what's-now and reckoning what's-next is how TALKERS, and its conferences, outlived competing publications and events.

Each week, TALKERS affords me a voice in the career conversation we all share. And here are all my "Monday Memo" columns from 2025. Some holiday weeks, when TALKERS didn't publish on Monday, I filed anyway, for Tuesday. And as you will read, I provide daily reports each year during the Consumer Electronics Show and NAB Show, both of which I have covered for decades; and often I provide additional reports on news and trends pertinent to you, my fellow story-teller.

So [RSVP any suggestions](#) for my weekly column? And bookmark HollandCooke.com. Typically, a consultant's web site is a brochure about the consultant, seldom updated. Mine is about you, and your business, updated on an ongoing basis. So help yourself to that tall stack-of-stuff, hundreds of things to read, see, hear, and download.



Again this year, I will provide FREE daily 60-second reports, Monday-Friday that week. Download for next-morning air, beginning Sunday night, January 4: [HollandCooke.com](https://www.hollandcooke.com)

01/06/25

Monday Memo: “Tomorrow’s Tech 2025”

Hello from fabulous Las Vegas, where the faded Tropicana is now a heap of rubble holding space for the Las Vegas Athletics stadium; and where SO much else here changes between visits. There is just too much do-re-mi at stake for this place not to continue to strive to surprise and satisfy, and keep ya comin’ back for more...which is also the ballgame for broadcasters and podcasters.

What began 100 years ago as the Radio Manufacturers’ Association evolved into the Consumer Electronics Association, then morphed into the Consumer Technology Association. This week’s event is still called “CES,” but what is happening here is less about electronics technology THINGS than now we EXPERIENCE our lives.

CES2025 began with its perennial research presentation, the deck you can see at <https://www.ces.tech/techtrends2025>. Even without live narration by CTA’s Brian Comiskey and Melissa Harrison, this info’ is a real whack-on-the-side-of-the-head.

Compose, offer, and deliver your work accordingly, or suffer diminishing returns.

As I have in past years, I am offering Talkers readers daily 60-second CES reports for air all this week. Simply download each report from [HollandCooke.com](https://www.hollandcooke.com) the night before. No charge, no paperwork, no national spot.

01/10/25

CES2025: It's a wrap!

At my very first “Consumer Electronics Show” they were showing-off VCRs. Back to the future. What we have witnessed this week is less about things than experiences.

No better example: The keynote by Delta Airlines CEO Ed Bastian, in the spectacular Las Vegas Sphere, a bucket-list venue. Google it. Like the Consumer Technology Association, Delta Airlines is celebrating its 100th anniversary; and neither are in business-as-usual mode.

Two days after her Golden Globes Lifetime Achievement Award, Viola Davis co-hosted Bastian’s remarkable multimedia presentation, which ended with a Lenny Kravitz set. Tom Brady was there too. He’s a Delta “strategic advisor,” and will host a new show on the airline’s inflight entertainment system; which will also feature exclusive commercial-free YouTube video.

Delta is using Artificial Intelligence to personalize passengers’ travel door-to-door; including Sky Miles points for Uber rides and Uber Eats, coming soon. Here’s more on his extraordinary presentation, and the airline’s strategy for forging relationships with – rather than merely transporting – their customers: <https://news.delta.com/delta-soars-centennial-year-game-changing-innovations-ces-2025>

What this means to broadcasters and podcasters? Be more than one of listeners’ – and advertisers’ – MANY choices. Engage them. Entertain them. Know them better and they will use you more.

01/13/25

Monday Memo: Retire a Sales kit cliché.

If it's not too late for a New Year's resolution: No more pictures of studio equipment.

Do your Sales promotion material and/or your station web site and/or social media graphics have a photo of a studio console? A microphone? Towers? Is that supposed to impress prospective advertisers?

To them, how-we-do what-we-do is much less interesting than who consumes our work. What does your prospect sell? Show them pictures of people who buy that, our listeners.



Equipment worth showing: Devices people use to consume our work. Depict the target demographic in-car, and interacting with Alexa, and using the station app, and scrolling the station's Facebook, etc. And, yes, show microphones, in studio shots of local talent, which will distinguish you from robotic competitors.

01/20/25

Monday Memo: “Your Donald Trump ‘Elevator Speech?’”

Here’s the script:

IMAGINE THIS: YOU’RE DOWNTOWN, AT [name the big hotel].

YOU STEP INTO THE ELEVATOR AT THE LOBBY LEVEL. YOU PRESS 7.

THE ELEVATOR STOPS AT 2. THE DOORS OPEN.

IN STEP FOUR TALL MEN. BLACK SUITS. CREW CUTS. EARPIECES.

AND BEHIND THEM, THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

HE’S MOVING FROM A HOLDING AREA ON THE 2ND FLOOR, TO HIS SPEECH IN THE BALLROOM ON THE 10TH FLOOR. YOU’RE GETTING OUT ON THE 7TH FLOOR.

THE PRESIDENT SMILES AND REACHES OUT TO SHAKE YOUR HAND.

WHAT WOULD YOU ASK...OR TELL...PRESIDENT TRUMP...IF YOU HAD HIS UNDIVIDED ATTENTION FOR THE TIME IT TAKES THE ELEVATOR TO GET FROM FLOOR TWO TO FLOOR SEVEN? [phone number, nice-N-slow]

Prep: Gather these SFX:

- Elevator doors open/close.
- That “ding” when you’re passing floors. You will hear the caller start talking faster!
- Scuffle (Secret Service wrestling the caller to the floor after a rude remark)



Catholic Talk network Relevant Radio host John Harper put new Pope Leo in the elevator!



The phone exploded! Some calls were poignant. [This one was a hoot.](#)

01/27/725

Monday Memo: Save the date.

Don McLean recalls the newspaper headline on February 3, 1959: “Three Rock’n’roll Stars Killed in Plane Crash.” He says “I cried,” telling AARP Magazine that, years later, “I had my tape machine on, and this song just came out of me: ‘A long, long time ago, I can still remember how that music used to make me smile...’”

Consider bumping with Buddy Holly/Richie Valens/Big Bopper hooks, and noting the occasion. If you can get away with playing it, Google “American Pie,” and script a short story cool enough to keep someone listening in a parked car: “They were en route to a ‘Winter Dance Party Tour’ concert in Fargo, North Dakota, but they never made it.” Many who have loved the song for years might figure its lyrics are just randomly nostalgic, and not know.

Listeners HEAR stuff like that; and you sound less-robotic than so much of what radio has become. You seem to actually know what day it is, especially if they heard you play “I Got You Babe” the day before (It’s Groundhog Dayyy!). Or if you bump or play “Vehicle” by The Ides of March...on The Ides of March,” the 15th.

On Mother’s Day (May 11 this year) the Intruders’ “I’ll Always Love My Mama” is sweet. On Father’s Day (June 15), The Winans’ “Color Him Father.” And scoff now and believe me later: Dads will be moved-to-tears by “[The Men in My Little Girl’s Life](#)” by Mike Douglas.

If corporate isn’t listening, sneak-in “Ode To Billy Joe” on “the third of June, another sleepy, dusty delta day.” And “do you remember the twenty-first of September?” (Earth Wind & Fire). Radio is defending against AI-in-the-cloud competitors. So seem human.

I can help. Download my Events & Occasions Calendar, and fill-in local events and occasions. It’s a free PDF at HollandCooke.com

02/03/25

Monday Memo: Promo Tip

Stations offering – and known-for -- local news, weather, traffic, and other “survival information” will continue to earn a place in the audio jungle the dashboard has become. So tell ‘em **that** you tell ‘em, **how and when** you are useful. Imaging is an owner’s manual for using the station.

Do listeners
understand
why to spend
time with you?

One caution: Often I hear service promos that include example sound bites, short clips of a newscast or weather or traffic report, either lifted from actual airchecks or mock-ups. Be careful that what’s being described in promos (“BIG backup on I-95 South at...”) can’t be misconstrued as current information.

02/10/25

Monday Memo: Interview Tip

Too often, I hear questions as long as (or longer than) replies.

Take a lesson from the late, great King of Talk. I remember Larry asking...

- Bob Hope: “Who do YOU think is funny?”
- David Duke: “Don’t you ever get tired of hating?”
- Frankie Valli: “Whose songs are on YOUR iPod?”

Short “Why...” questions, about things the listener might be wondering, are useful. “Why is _____ SO expensive?”



02/17/25

Monday Memo: Cliché Alert

Delete this phrase from commercial copy you craft for local advertisers: “In these uncertain times...”

For two reasons. First, many people are optimistic now. Second, those who are suffering get it. Rubbing their nose in it just piles-on; and clichés risk blending-into the blah-blah-blah.

Instead, simply delete the sentence. Give copy room to breathe, to avoid radio’s commercial motormouth caricature.

That next sentence probably includes The Magic Words: “YOU” and/or “YOUR.” If it doesn’t, change that too.



https://youtu.be/g8VpI5HCg_Y

02/24/25

Monday Memo: For podcasters, “The Magic Words” are even MORE magic.

Radio is an intimate, one-to-one medium; so “you” and “your” – speaking to one person – will resonate more than addressing “all of you.” There’s only one of me.

Podcasting is even more personal, because listeners choose content in a more intentional way than they push dashboard AM/FM buttons. And because many podcast topics are specialty topics, it’s high-affinity stuff.

As a sportscaster I’ve coached who really gets-it said, “we’re Fed-Exing it to their brains.” Said another way: Make eye contact.

03/03/25

Monday Memo: Pronounce “T” in the middle of words.

Often, Millennials and GenZ-ers sound like they have replaced “T” with a soft “H.”

“Putin” comes out “Pooh’in.” “Groton” becomes “Groh’en.” “Dayton?” “Dayh’en.” Cold outside? Wear your “mih’ens.” Shark attack! Who got “bih’en?”

It’s as though as the “T” was “forgoh’en.” It’s not the way the script is “wrih’en,” just the way they read it.

The biggest retail spenders are radio’s lifelong habitual users: adults. Sound grown-up.

03/10/25

Monday Memo: ChatGPT, Carefully

Observation, as a heavy CNBC viewer: Artificial Intelligence is to 2025 what Dot Com was to the late 1990s, game-changer...and shiny object.

Everyone seemed to be chanting “AI” at this year’s CES. In a previous column here, I offered, from experience, some Do’s-and-Don’ts for crafting commercial copy. And as vendors are applying AI to various other broadcast content and operational functions, I asked the app itself: “How would you caution radio broadcasters against over-reliance on ChatGPT?” SECONDS later, the robot replied:

“Here are some key points to consider:

1. **Maintain Authenticity:** Radio broadcasting thrives on the personality and authenticity of its hosts. Relying too heavily on AI-generated scripts or content can make broadcasts feel robotic, inauthentic, or detached. Listeners tune in to hear the voice, opinions, and personality of the broadcaster, not just information being read off a script. ChatGPT is great for generating ideas, but it should not replace the genuine voice of the host.
2. **Human Connection:** One of the strengths of radio is the personal connection that hosts build with their audience. This connection comes from spontaneous moments, personal anecdotes, and relatable conversations. AI can’t replicate the unique, emotional bond that a human broadcaster forms with listeners. Overusing AI could distance the host from the audience and make the show feel more like a recorded message than a live, engaging experience.
3. **Accuracy and Fact-Checking:** While ChatGPT can generate a lot of information quickly, it’s not always accurate or up-to-date. Broadcasters need to be mindful that AI-generated content might contain errors, outdated facts, or biased perspectives. Relying on AI without fact-checking could lead to broadcasting misinformation, which can seriously damage the station's credibility.

4. **Tone and Nuance:** AI like ChatGPT can struggle with tone, emotion, and subtlety in language. Radio broadcasters need to ensure that the tone of the broadcast fits the subject matter and the audience. AI might miss the mark on this, especially in more nuanced or sensitive topics. A human touch is often needed to tailor the message effectively.
5. **Audience Engagement:** ChatGPT can provide content, but it can't engage with listeners the way a broadcaster can. Over-relying on AI could take away opportunities for live interaction, audience call-ins, and real-time feedback. Broadcasting is about creating a dialogue, not just delivering information, and AI isn't capable of fostering real-time, dynamic conversations.
6. **Creativity and Innovation:** While AI can assist with generating ideas, true creativity comes from the human mind. Broadcasters should focus on bringing fresh, original ideas to the table—things AI can't easily replicate. Over-relying on ChatGPT might limit creativity, turning broadcasts into predictable, generic experiences.

In summary, while AI tools like ChatGPT can be incredibly useful for research, inspiration, and content generation, broadcasters should ensure they don't lose the human element of their shows. Maintaining authenticity, personal engagement, and creativity are key to keeping radio content fresh and compelling. AI should be a tool, not a substitute for the broadcaster's unique voice and connection with the audience."

03/17/25

Monday Memo: Matter, and money will follow.

There has never been more news. And news has never been more quotable. It costs 2+ cents to make a penny.

Events impacting everyday life are unfolding around-the-corner, around-the-world, around-the-clock. The listeners our advertisers want as customers are in "What NEXT???" mode.

There have never been more places to get news. And the broadcasters that monetize information best have evolved what we used to call "a radio station" into a multiplatform source of content pertinent to its target listener. Trusted call letters are the surname shared by digital siblings.

Being known for helpful information is key. My client stations image relentlessly as "Your Only Local News Radio." If you are too, rip me off, and burn-it-in.

But imaging merely talks-the-talk. All the promos in the world won't walk-the-walk. We become habit-forming by delivering information that is relevant and useful and enabling and easily-understood, and seems up-to-date.

Accordingly:

- When we report information-given-to-us (press releases, etc.), rewrite to succinctly convey what the story means. Typically, press releases are about the sender. Our lead sentence needs to be about how-it-matters-to the listener.
- Keep it fresh. The second and third time someone hears a story word-for-word, the little voice in his/her head says "You already told me that." Every effort we make to update copy is worth it.
- Listen to your on-hour network, for 3 reasons: Emulate their crisp copy style, which conveys the consequence of items being reported. And emulate their delivery. Note

how Fox News Radio morning anchor Dave Anthony sounds like he's talking, not reading. And listen for opportunities to localize big national/international stories.

What is being reported by national media, how does it hit-home, and who locally can comment or explain?

- How is DOGE government downsizing impacting people in your state, in your city? Most of the federal workforce does not live in Washington/Maryland/Virginia.
- We pray for ailing Pope Francis. When he passes, who from your diocese or parish can you interview? “The Conclave” won an Oscar and was nominated for 8.

Music radio is in the fight of its life with streams, and too much Talk radio is an angry caricature. Matter most, and money will follow.

03/24/25

Monday Memo: Delete “our web site.”

NOT saying delete the site. Delete the phrase “our web site” when directing attention there.

Simply say your domain name. “On our web site” is 1990s-speak that evokes sitting-still at a desktop computer. By now, they understand where your domain name takes them...likely on a smartphone.

03/31/25

Monday Memo: “Kill The Feed!”

Corporate cost cuts continue. In a recent column here, I described 18 non-radio career options for which your skill set as a broadcaster could qualify you. In just the last couple years, several longtime TV news people I know – who had-it-up-to-here with the hours – reinvented themselves accordingly.

“But radio is all I’ve ever done!” you say? No. Radio is (or was) your platform. And – as clients are accustomed to hearing me say – “Everything we do is story-telling.” So where else can you tell yours?

Tools are available, many free. To illustrate, I wrote a novella (shorter than a novel, longer than a short story). It’s the first fiction I’ve written since a high school homework assignment, and you can download it, also free. I had an idea for a John Grisham/James Patterson-style thriller.

ChatGPT and MS Copilot were my co-authors, suggesting plot twists and critiquing, chapter-by-chapter. After ChatGPT reviewed each one, I ran it through Copilot – like having a team of writers. Both AI tools also created the images you will see on the landing page. Tell either app how you want your web page to look, and it will write the HTML code! And Google Search helped with details.

Every one of those functions was completed in 5 seconds or less, free. As is Audacity, if you’d rather not spend for your own copy of the Adobe Audition you use (or used) at the radio station. And before you subscribe to Microsoft Office 365, peruse the suite of lookalike tools at OpenOffice.org. Video? Premiere Pro is pricey, but Adobe Express is free and there are shareware alternatives.

Seen those TV ads TikTok is running, to stave-off a USA ban? Storytellers share how they’re making a living there. Could you?

I hope you like my story. But even if you don't, I hope you will experiment with new ways to tell yours. I'm not saying any of us will write a best-selling novel. But if you do, you can also voice the audiobook version.

Now, grab the armrest, for chilling intrigue, and a damning narrative about the corporate consolidation that plagues broadcasting, set in the beguiling place where we live, populated by pseudonyms (including the author's) which some will find thinly-veiled: getonthenet.com/TrustedVoices.html



Next week, I'll be reporting here from The NAB Show in fabulous Las Vegas. If you're going, wear comfortable shoes! But even if you do – and you plan on walking from where shuttle busses drop you off at the Convention Center to the West Hall where most radio and podcasting sessions will be – pack a lunch. It's a hike!

Better idea: Let Elon Musk give you a free ride... UNDERGROUND, in "The Loop." He has 100 Teslas zooming through what seems like a high-tech Batcave that his Boring Company is...boring. Here's video I shot at CES: <https://youtu.be/wqqQd9vZnMo>

04/07/25

Monday Memo: NAB Show, Survive and Thrive



Hello from Las Vegas, ever-changing yet timeless. Here this week the NAB Show is “Powering the Next Era of Storytelling.” And it’s about time. While there is now a filibuster-proof U.S. Senate majority to require that cars include AM receivers, some AM stations are being shut-off. Over the weekend millions took to the streets and this morning Wall Street braced for more. So the vibe here is positively rejuvenating.

“If you’re here, you’ve already defied the odds.”

National Association of Broadcasters President & CEO Curtis LeGeyt congratulated attendees at a perennial event that – on its own – paid for the trip, the NAB Show Small and Medium Market Radio Forum. As big corporate owners make big trade press headlines in big markets, the mojo in the minor leagues is downright invigorating.

Picture speed-dating for great ideas. The room is set-up with roundtables. Each half-hour, attendees share what’s working back home, then rotate. Table topics included “The Secret to Radio’s Digital Ad Success is Being Local First,” and “Podcasting Strategies for Radio,” and “Monetizing High School Sports,” and there were heartwarming stories about “Developing Your Community with Events and Social Media.” And, yes, THE most popular table – to which participants dragged chairs from elsewhere: “AI’s Use Throughout Your Station.”

Did you know that May is National Small Business Month? And National Small Business Week is May 4 to 10? Plan now to do what these plucky broadcasters shared ideas for doing: Use your broadcast and digital assets and your local engagement to, in NAB Show speak: “Unlock the Power of the Creator Economy.”

“A connection on LinkedIn is worth a hundred on Instagram.”

As corporate cost cuts continue, I’ve been collecting and sharing opportunities. In a recent column here, I described 18 non-radio career options for which your skill set as a broadcaster could qualify you. And in last week’s column I recommended and demonstrated some valuable and FREE tools.

Now -- courtesy of ThinkTAP’s Richard Harrington – a road map for selling your services. [Here’s the deck](#) from his super-useful session “Working with Brands: How to Get Your Foot in the Door and Stay There.” And don’t let the term “brands” scare you. Think local businesses.

Sampler:

- Your prospects crave the sort of engagement that successful on-air people have accomplished. “Build your Email list!” Harrington urges.
- Then, take every opportunity to engage. Important: “Reply to people who replied” to something you have posted. “Such a small percentage do reply that this makes their day.”
- “Do what you can to pull audience into a place you can control.” Anyone working in the industry we used to call “radio” now needs to be facile with social media and podcasting and video. So use those skills and tools to “create content that can be used by the brand.”
- Especially opportune: demonstrate how to use what your client sells.

New to selling your services? Generous with his experience, Harrington’s deck will suggest lots of transactional technique.

Our industry, like ‘Vegas, is ever-changing yet timeless.

04/08/25

More Than Spots, Less Than Clutter

Radio sells advertisers our listeners' attention. For a hundred years, our inventory has largely been commercials. Now, as our wandering audience leads us to more revenue channels, are we hooked on spots?

“We’re still in the same business. What’s changed is the tool box.”

Salem Media Group EVP, Operations and Revenue Development Linnae Young was among panelists exploring “The Local Advertising Buying Landscape: What are Clients Buying, and how are Radio Sellers Succeeding or Missing Out?” Her laser-like focus is on the client’s need: “The HVAC company has two trucks and wants six.”



Ditto from session moderator Mike Hulvey, the Radio Advertising Bureau’s President & CEO. He recalled pitching a multi-store McDonald’s franchisee, who heard-him-out, then asked “Will that idea sell a hamburger?”

We sure have ideas. Researcher Gordon Borrell reckons that “the biggest mistake radio stations are making is underestimating the potential [of digital].” Many now sell video advertising. Prospects “don’t have any questions about radio, other than ‘Can you lower the price?’ They have lots of questions about digital.” Be their guide.

And obsess on outcomes. “Stop with the tactics,” urges Marketron Senior Director of Digital Strategy Dustin Wilson. “It’s all about solutions-based selling.”

“As radio has encountered increased pressure on revenue, it has often increased spot loads.”

Ad nauseam, in the view of Edison Research Co-founder + President Larry Rosin, whose Ted Talk-type session “Considering Spot Loads” was plainspoken.

Radio has violated what Larry calls “The Commercial Broadcast Bargain” -- the unspoken deal that content is worth the time spent listening to ads. “We’ve tilted the bargain in an unfair way,” he said, pointing to “fewer, but much longer breaks; and many, many [music] stations now loading all their spots into two interminable breaks per hour.”

Rosin's team has long tracked listening habits through its Infinite Dial series, and the trend is clear: Radio’s “Share of Ear” never fully recovered after the pandemic; and commercial loads went up during that time.

“The real problem” is not understanding how ‘Infinite’ today’s ‘Dial’ is, “ignoring the fact that there are other things to listen to.” Ad loads tend to be shorter in podcasts and in non-paid streams. These ad-supported competitors never run more than two spots back-to-back. And increasingly, Americans are paying for ad-free content, via SiriusXM, Spotify, YouTube Premium, and others.

Solutions? Larry was clear: “What I’m NOT saying: ‘cut the load and charge more’ in today’s low-demand environment.”

- Even if you can’t lower total inventory, consider more shorter breaks. “Listeners have, or at least had, an internal clock: song (3 minutes) -- song (3 minutes) -- song (3 minutes) -- break (3 minutes). When you ask music radio consumers, [they feel that] a break should be the length of a song. The two long breaks clock simply can’t be the best we can do for advertisers.”

- Bonus on Rating, not Share, which would “reorient radio programmers to consider ALL competitors, not just other local stations. Radio’s insular world hurts it.”
- Don’t demonize commercials – “a disservice to advertisers” -- the way we seem to when we call the stop set “a break;” or tout commercial-free hours to pump-up a daypart (then overdose the load in adjacent hours).
- Improve the quality of commercials.

04/09/25

NAB Show: Radio, One Way or Another

These conventions used to be about making-the-most-of those towers behind radio stations that played in several rooms at home and occupied two knobs and six buttons in the dashboard. Back to the future...

“Take every available opportunity to connect with audiences.”

Longtime programmer turned podcaster Buzz Knight moderated the session “Cross-Platform Content Wins – Radio and Podcast Success Stories.” And here’s one now, a radio news guy I’d like to clone, WBZ/Boston’s Matt Shearer, the next-gen’ talent whose skill set and perspective yields the sort of content that takes radio beyond those towers:

<https://youtu.be/WWQX8o9hhcQ>

Shearer told us he “had been making video from my radio pieces. Now, I’m making radio from my video.” Whereupon Alpha Media Executive VP of Content Phil Becker urged broadcasters to “focus on THAT they use you, not WHERE they use you.” And noting that – as “streaming services have divided audiences” – South Carolina Public Radio Director Sean Birch recognizes that “We have to hit a bunch of audiences all at once.”

Common thread in panelists’ remarks: Broadcast and podcast listeners “are very different audiences;” and “we have to be where people are.” Still, revenue stacks-up in two piles: broadcast bucks and digital dimes. And Hubbard Radio EVP/Programming Greg Strassell reckons: “Any engagement you do is an opportunity to promote the mothership.” Hubbard’s WTOP/Washington simulcasts its on-air programming via YouTube, and Greg says average Time Spend Listening there is 17 minutes.

“Using Social Media to Develop Community”

In this session, Beasley Media Group’s Dave Snyder recommends a Basic Success Framework:

- Understand your community. Rather than thinking-platform (“We need to be on TikTok”), limit your reach to platforms that offer the most engagement potential. “Not all platforms will be a fit for your content.”
- Set your goals. What does success look like? Gauge value by engagement counts like Comments and Likes, rather than mere Views.
- Be authentic. Build brand guidelines, and have a moderation policy, and a style/tone guide. AI is a useful tool, “but it’s not authentic.”

Develop Engagement. Social media gives broadcasters a unique potential to:

- Share a behind-the-scenes view as content is created, “how the sausage is made,” giving your community a different perspective.
- Expose the community to content creators’ personalities. Building community is only possible if people feel like they actually “know” you.
- Interact with the audience. “Community building can’t just be about pushing content. Engagement flows two ways.”

Keep it going. “Once you have your Framework and Content plan, then comes the hard part.”

- “Consistency and cadence is probably the most important part of growing a consistently engaged community.”
- “Use ‘the whole buffalo.’ Optimize your content for cross-platform use.”
- Use analytics to “build on what works and chuck what doesn’t.”

04/14/25

Monday Memo: Produce YouTube videos for phone viewing.



70%+ of views are mobile, where the screen is small and attention spans are short.

- Aspect ratio: Use 9:16 (vertical) or 1:1 (square) so it fills the phone screen.
- The first 3 seconds are critical. Use a bold visual, a teaser question, or a surprising statement.
- Because many watch without sound, add text on-screen using auto-caption tools. Bold, color-coded, animated captions keep attention.
- Use close-up shots & big graphics. Tiny text or wide shots get lost. Zoom in on faces or products. Make graphics large and clear.
- Ideal length: 15 to 90 seconds for Shorts, or under 3 minutes for mobile-friendly standard videos. Cut filler, pauses, and tangents. Every second should count.
- Keep titles short and clear, i.e., “How To...” or “You Won’t Believe...” DON’T title it “Episode # ____.”
- Focus on One Idea Per Video. Mobile users are distracted and scrolling fast. Give them one clear takeaway, message, or call-to-action.

04/21/25

Monday Memo: Podcasting in the Age of Attention Deficit

Remember how Larry King would interrupt rambling callers to ask “What’s your question?” It could sound gruff, but it was really a courtesy, to viewers or listeners. Larry feared TV clickers and dashboard radio buttons. He kept-it-moving to keep viewers and listeners from wandering.

And if you follow research on podcast consumption, you understand that attention there is an even heavier lift than for real-time broadcast programming which asks less of the consumer to acquire. Accordingly, these tips:

- Hook early, hook hard: Your first 60 seconds (max) are your billboard. Don’t waste them. Create curiosity about what listening to the episode will deliver, early-in (or before) your produced intro.
- Edit aggressively: Cut fluff and filler, avoid rabbit holes. Trim “um,” “you know,” and circular chit-chat. Each listening moment needs to earn the next moment.
- Apply proven radio techniques: teasing, resetting, production tactics.
- Be “sticky with structure:” A consistent format helps make your podcast habit-forming. If applicable to your topic, think “Problem-Story-Solution.” Note how Keith Olbermann’s podcast emulates his previous TV show format. I’m not saying do THAT format; I’m saying HAVE one.
- Speak to one person -- like radio does, but even more so -- because podcast listening is so intentional, and topics can be so specialized. Make eye contact, and don’t talk to “the audience.”
- Create “next time” anticipation: Plant seeds for the next episode.
- Make replayable moments. Your slam-dunk is having listeners share your podcast with their friends. Deliver content that somehow enables them. Or makes them laugh, or cry, or care.

Like broadcasting, podcasting competes with EVERYTHING, TikTok, text messages, EVERYTHING, and life's chaos. Make every second count.

04/28/25

Monday Memo: Write news copy the way you would tell someone the story in person.

Avoid news-speak, such as:

- “held talks...” Instead say “met.”
- “slain....” Instead say “killed.”
- “taken into custody...” Instead say “arrested.”

Visualize a listener – one person – and make eye contact. You’ll matter more.

05/05/25

Monday Memo: Make AI Your Intern, Not Your Successor

For many of us, last week's radio outrage was exposed when a blogger found "no biography, or further information about the woman who is supposedly presenting this show," forcing Australian Radio Network to acknowledge the use of Artificial Intelligence to create the voice of "[Workdays with Thy](#)" on one of its stations (CADA, available on the iHeartRadio app). "Exploring how new technology can support great content," the network statement rationalized.

If you're a music DJ, this is chilling. If you're a Talk host, don't figure you're not next. IBM's Deep Blue defeated world chess champion Garry Kasparov in 1997, when we were still dialing-up Internet access. Back to the future: Don't think souped-up AI couldn't interact with callers.

Instead, put the robot to work. Here's how, step-by-step.

1. Use Google Trends, Filtered to Your Metro Area

- Go to [Google Trends](#).
- Set the location to your city, state, or region.
- Look at:
 - Trending Searches (daily hot topics)
 - Related Queries (people often search "near me" + other urgent needs)

2. To localize, focus on "Near Me" Signals That Reflect Tension, Urgency, or Curiosity

"Near me" searches usually spike when:

- People have a problem (e.g., "urgent care near me", "cheap gas near me")
- There's a trend or event (e.g., "earthquake near me", "protest near me")
- There's fear, confusion, or excitement (e.g., "layoffs near me", "concerts near me")

These are rich veins for call-in topics because:

- They touch emotions (fear, anger, hope)

- They're localized — people love reacting to things happening in their own backyard
- They're now — you can spin them for immediate reaction

3. Translate "Near Me" Searches Into Talkable Angles

Example:

Search Trend	Possible Call-In Topic
"Layoffs near me"	"Are you worried about job security? Have you or someone you know been laid off recently?"
"Protests near me"	"What's your take on the demonstrations downtown? Are they making a difference or making things worse?"
"Gas prices near me"	"Have high gas prices changed your driving habits? Are you cutting back or just absorbing it?"
"Crime near me"	"Are you feeling less safe in our city these days? Why or why not?"

4. Bonus Tip: Cross-Reference "Near Me" with Social Media Buzz

- Use **X (Twitter) trends** and **Facebook community groups** to see if local chatter matches what Google is showing.
- If yes — that's **prime fuel** for a phone-in!

5. Create a Simple Daily Habit

- Spend **5 minutes a day** on Google Trends.
- Pull **one or two local "near me" topics**.
- Frame them into **emotionally loaded questions** for on-air teasing:
 - "We'll ask: Are you rethinking safety in our city after [crime spike]? Call me..."
 - "Have YOU been affected by the [local layoffs]? Tell your story next hour..."

The following page is a **Topic Mining Sheet** you can use daily (or even right before each show) to systematically turn Google “near me” trends into great call-in topics...

Date: _____

Location Setting on Google Trends: _____ (e.g., Providence, RI, Rhode Island, etc.)

1. Top Local "Near Me" Searches

(Write down any interesting "near me" search trends from Google Trends)

- _____
- _____
- _____

2. Emotional Angle

(What feeling does this topic trigger? Circle one or two emotions.)

- Fear
- Anger
- Hope
- Frustration
- Curiosity
- Pride
- Outrage
- Nostalgia
- Sadness
- Relief
- Other: _____

3. Draft a Call-In Question

*(Frame the topic into a **simple, emotional, and relatable** question to spark calls.)*

Sample Format:

"Are you [emotion] about [event/topic]? Why or why not?"

- _____
- _____

4. Tease Lines for On-Air

(Short, catchy lines you can use before a break to hook listeners.)

- "Coming up, are you worried about layoffs right here in [city]? Tell me your story next..."
- "They say crime is up in [city] — are you feeling less safe? I want to hear from YOU."

5. Backup Topics (Optional)

(If first topic doesn't catch fire, have a Plan B.)

- _____
- _____

Quick Reminders:

- **Keep it local:** Even if it's a national story, tie it back to "how it affects us here."
- **Tap urgency:** Listeners react faster to topics that feel "right now" — layoffs, protests, weather, closures, etc.
- **Use listener stories:** Invite personal experiences ("Were you there? Have you seen it?").

Visualize a listener — one person — and make eye contact. You'll matter more.

05/12/25

Monday Memo: Music Lessons For Talk Radio

Music radio's competitors were vinyl, then tape, then CDs -- before smartphone streaming and satellite radio offered more portability and variety.

And before Consolidation, broadcasters were under less of the revenue pressure that now commercializes many stations beyond listeners' tolerance. Talkers NAB Show coverage included Edison Research founder Larry Rosin lamenting "many, many [music] stations now loading all their spots into two interminable breaks per hour." I cringe hearing FMs struggle to remain among listeners' music appliances. And I fret that monologue-heavy Talk radio is relinquishing interactive dialogue to social media.

Before moving to All-News, and eventually News/Talk, I worked in music formats less-structured than today's. So now I hear music radio as an outsider, more like a consumer. Which got me wondering: How does my format sound to music consultants? So I asked several whose work I respect.



Beware the one-joke act.

Mike McVay reckons that "listeners want to know a little bit about a lot of things," a point other colleagues echo. Explaining that "music radio is all about variety," Adult Contemporary specialist Gary Berkowitz: "To me, listeners are tired of all this political back and forth. Sure, it has its place, but it's like if music radio only played 5 different artists!"

Jon Holiday – who customizes station playlists for a variety of formats -- asks "are Talk listeners getting what they want?" Calling some formats "very artist-heavy," he thinks

stations were right to play so much Taylor Swift in 2024, certainly her year. And 2025 sure is Trump's, but Holiday calls "banging the same drum all day, every day" the most common flaw he hears on Talk radio.

McVay says listeners like "stories that pull on their heart strings. It's why NBC Nightly News ends with a touching story. It's not fluff. It's information relief." He also recommends topics you are likely to overhear at the next table during lunch: "Discretionary Time Information" (binge-worthy shows on Apple+, Max, Netflix).

Health. And – lately more than ever – what Mike calls "Purse" stories (think: eggs). Been to Costco? On weekends it's mobbed. Ask any member and they'll recite a shopping list of Kirkland-brand bargains.

Play the hits.

When Gary Berkowitz – then an accomplished music programmer -- took over stately WJR, he "approached it like it was a music station, the only difference was my 'songs' were my personalities, news coverage and, at the time, play-by-play of all the major Detroit teams." He bought a jingle package "to 'decorate' the station;" and "got 'JR involved with everything that was happening in Detroit. All I did was put it all together and present it like my top-40 upbringing taught me."

I can relate. Before I programmed All-News WTOP/Washington, I had no news experience. I came from a music FM. The WTOP staff I inherited was impressive, and their work was solid, but the station wasn't "programmed enough." I was sent there to convert Cume to Average Quarter Hour – the blocking-and-tackling formatics fundamental to music radio. We owned "the Top news...instantly" image, and we said those very words LOTS. But research told us that traffic and weather were "the hits;" and how we presented them moved the needle.

Great talkers are great listeners.

In every transaction, consumers now expect to interact; and "listeners like to hear others' voices," Mike McVay observes: "When the audience is comfortable enough to

weigh in with an opinion, their own story, or a reaction, you've created a 'friend circle.'" Jon Holiday tells morning shows he works with to "take time going into breaks to be topical and interact with callers." And engage by texting and social media. And don't just push-TO listeners. Be quick to REPLY, and you will make them feel special.

Yet, in three decades coaching Talk hosts, the most unwelcome word I say seems to be "callers." Imitating gifted Rush Limbaugh, many hosts are prone to windy monologue, rather than inviting the busy dialogue that makes a station sound popular (something local advertisers notice). DJs deftly weaving interactivity into music shows often sound more inviting than sermonizing talkers. Holiday remembers El Rushbo as "a master at having fun, particularly in his early days as a syndicated personality."

Prescription: Local

Twenty years ago at the Talkers conference, publisher Michael Harrison's advice was elegantly simple: "Give them something they can't get anywhere else." Especially now, with so many non-local audio competitors. Regardless of format, helpful local information can increase Occasions of Tune-In per week.

Simply doing local news is a start. But does yours enable the listener by telling what an item means to him or her? On any given day, what you're overhearing at lunch is something big that's happening somewhere else. Can you explain the local impact? "National news needs to mean something to me, my community, my region or state," according to McVay.

With weather so erratic in so many places, owning that image is gold. If you're News/Talk, don't assume that you're the market's weather station. If you're music, don't assume you can't be. Noting typical News/Talk demographics, Jon Holiday surmises that, "as we get older, we seem to be more interested in weather."

And as successful music stations have always done, show up! Gary Berkowitz had WJR go all-in on Detroit's Thanksgiving Day parade, "with our people all over the parade route. It was better than the TV coverage!"

05/19/25

Monday Memo: Your Passion, Your Media Station

Talkers publisher Michael Harrison introduced the term in the 1990s, inviting us to think-beyond the real-time audio we were sending up those towers. What he described seemed conceptual, even futuristic, back then, when we were still logging-onto AOL via dial-up (screech).

The “Media Station” he reckoned we would be producing by now seemed more like a place than a show. It wouldn’t be bound by regulation or sponsor sensitivities or an on-air format. Content needn’t be 30 or 60 seconds or minutes. It won’t even have to be audio. Or governed by how long you can last between bathroom breaks or eating or sleeping, because it won’t be the live audio that radio was confined to then.

Back to the future. Among headlines from 2025 Edison Research “Infinite Dial” research:

- 248 million Americans are on social media.
- 91% (262 million) own a smartphone.
- 101 million own a smart speaker.
- 40% of vehicles now on the road have phone integration.
- Though AM/FM is still the #1 in-car audio, #2 is online audio, #3: podcasts.
- 210 million listen to online audio every week.
- “Podcast consumption is at an all-time high.” 55% of Americans listen each month.

Anyone anywhere can publish something that’s available to everyone everywhere.

Most who read this are probably content creators, many working full or part-time at radio stations, doing the station’s business. Using that same skill set, build your own, a Media Station. Most of the tools are free, including ChatGPT, which will even help you plan it.

What’s your passion? Your hobby? Your media station could include:

- Podcasts,
- Blog, inviting participation,
- Tutorial videos about a craft or skill,
- Tips-N-Tricks about _____,
- Checklists/worksheets/recipes/other documents, as PDF downloads,
- Stories about businesses or artists, traditions or customs, history, science, tech, whatever,
- DIY projects, of any sort,
- Makeover transformations,
- Fitness routines and workout tips,
- Money topics,
- Food topics of all sorts, including restaurant reviews,
- Relationship topics,
- Stress management,
- Travel,
- Product reviews/recommendations,
- Sports,
- Amazon Associate links to earn commission on related products,
- Whatever!

NOT saying: Build a media station. It will become your livelihood after the next round of cutbacks. But, hey...

06/02/25

Monday Memo: Summer! Bummer? Opportunities.

“Fewer than half of Americans plan to travel this Summer,” according to a [Bankrate survey](#), and “cost is a major concern.”

- Just 46% plan to travel, 38% domestically and 15% internationally (with some overlap between the two).
- 65% of non-travelers cite a lack of interest in traveling currently. “Not being able to take time off work and travel being too much of a hassle both came in at 16%.”
- “The expense of everyday life tops the reasons people can’t afford to travel.”
- “15% of respondents said they were worried about flight safety. That comes on the heels of several high-profile aviation incidents in the United States.”

This isn’t bad news. It’s an open door.

Programming/Promotion ideas:

- Local Day Trips vignettes (within 90 min. drive)
- Grilling tips (local chef? listener suggestions?)
- Weekend activities/events calendar
- Near the water? “Shorecast”
- Online Staycation Directory
- Listener photos (garden, patio, pool, grill-N-chill)

Any/all-of-the-above are sponsorable. Prospects:

- Outdoor furniture retailers
- Home improvement stores (paint, decking, lighting)
- Grill/smoker shops & barbecue supply
- Pest control services
- HVAC (air conditioner tune-ups)
- Pool and hot tub installers, maintenance
- Gazebo/screenhouse/awning installers
- Water parks/mini-golf/drive-in movies
- Ice cream stands, craft breweries

PS: Tomorrow's bumpers:

“Ode To Billie Joe” by Bobbie Gentry, and “Desiree” by Neil Diamond. Both begin “It was the third of June...”

06/09/25

Monday Memo: Dear Old Dad

This coming Sunday, June 15, is Father's Day. For that day – and the Friday before (hint-hint) – you might have already readied Harry Chapin's "[Cat's In The Cradle](#)" and The Wintons' "[Color Him Father](#)" and Dan Fogelberg's wistful "[Leader of the Band](#)."

Regardless of your format – yes, News/Talk stations – hear-me-now-and-believe-me-later: "[The Men in My Little Girl's Life](#)" by Mike Douglas. Guaranteed Kleenex material. Don't even intro it. Just hit it cold and play the whole thing. You'll hear about it.

GREAT call-in topic: "The best advice he ever gave you?" You will save the aircheck. Callers – some chuckling, others choking-back-tears – tell stories.

And if you still have your Dad, give the lug a hug. If he's not still around, I suspect that you will find, as my brothers and sisters and I have, that he never really leaves you.

06/16/25

Monday Memo: Stepping-Up and Sounding Solid

With so many of us taking vacation time soon, guest-hosts are often local somebodies who are not career broadcasters and don't share our second-nature performance routines.



For their benefit, these tips, based on my experience on both sides of the mic:

Get right into it. When I used to fill-in for Jim Bohannon, I figured that -- to his listeners -- who-the-heck was I? Lacking the back-story of “a name,” I simply, succinctly, told the truth, “I’m Jim’s pal, Holland Cooke.” Skip the biographical blah-blah-blah that devalues a show by emphasizing that the familiar host is absent. Just tee-up what the show is about this hour...why it matters to those listening...how they will benefit from not wandering-off...and how to join-in.

Make the phone ring. When “Fox Across America” host Jimmy Failla is off, my client Paul Gleiser – owner of affiliate KTBB/Tyler-Longview TX – often fills-in. Paul asked Jimmy for advice. Ever in-character, Failla quipped “Drive it like you stole it!” So Gleiser is all about call count, teeing-up TWO tempting propositions, one topical, the other a

softer “Bonus Question.” As new Employment numbers were announced, “The WORST job you ever had?” got callers telling great stories.

“Know what the show was about yesterday,” Paul urges, because political topics tend to change little day-to-day. Avoid this trap: The guest host’s outspoken narrative is a point that’s already been talked-to-death BUT this is HIS shot on a big show, so this is HIS turn to me-too the unison. Better approach: Come up with a new wrinkle.

Invite participation multiple ways. Many listeners would rather text than call. Do so and you’ll sound accessible and at-the-speed-of-life. Note how effectively SiriusXM’s Michael Smerconish polls listeners via social media.

Establish a relationship with the producer “BEFORE the show” Gleiser advises: “Don’t just show up.” Ascertain who-does-what. In some cases the producer will have booked guests and may suggest or assign call-in topics. Or if – in Jimmy Failla speak – you’re driving, the producer is simply call-screening and running-the-board (which you should NOT attempt if you’re unfamiliar with the station’s set-up).

Keep re-setting – succinctly, “matter-of-factly,” introducing yourself and your guest-or-topic -- going-into and coming-out-of breaks, and at the beginning of each hour. Listeners are constantly tuning-in.

Always and only announce the call-in number immediately after you tell them WHY to call. Most common mistake I hear, even from experienced hosts: They give-out the phone number at the very beginning of the hour, then (eventually) they tell you why to call, possibly minutes later (an eternity in live radio). So they’re haunted by dreaded “regulars” who already have the number memorized. Make announcing the number your punch line, whether you’re asking opinions on topic du jour or offering access to a guest they’ll want to interact with. This can make a big difference in how popular you make the station sound. Video explains: <https://youtu.be/S9hEg3VCdOc>

06/23/25

Monday Memo: On-Demand is In-Demand

If you saved back issues from when Talkers was a print tabloid, dig-down about 20 years into the stack. A couple times a year beginning then, I was reporting from conferences then called The Podcast and New Media Expo, which later evolved into NMX and BlogWorld and other incarnations.

As I was typing-as-fast-as-I-could in the back row, I was hearing a new medium take shape.

- These energized events had the mojo radio conventions used to. But radio was already struggling as consolidation eliminated many on-air jobs, cutbacks that continue today.
- But plucky podcasters were already self-publishing about high-affinity long-tail topics too narrowcast for AM/FM radio. And because it is what we then called “the World Wide Web,” they were growing a following far beyond local broadcasters’ footprints.

Remember iPod? Suddenly, EVERYONE had one. Then, just-as-suddenly, everyone didn’t. Because Apple rolled-out iPhone, which could also tote your tunes, and do thousands of other things. Yet the term “podcasting” – which first referred to the device – endures.

What’s remarkable about the podcasting phenomenon, is that users – not the device manufacturer – came up with the idea. iPod was designed as a music player. But it was We The People who reckoned that audio-is-audio and started self-publishing radio-without-radio.

“P-O-D” = “Programming On-Demand.” Think Netflix for audio.

- But unlike Netflix, stations aren’t investing aggressively in on-demand content. Short-staffed, it’s all they can do to feed multiple transmitters robotic programming.

- Meanwhile, enthused podcasters are generating content, some of which is amusing quirky boutique topics. Others are doing local news, now in shorter supply from AM/FM radio.
- Smart stations buddy-up with these DIY creators, showcasing their sponsorable stuff. They create audio, we sell audio.

06/30/25

Monday Memo: Feature the moments that matter.

Are archived shows – whole hours – your station’s only on-demand offering? It’s an easy checkbox: post the aircheck, call it a podcast.

And why not? In our on-demand culture, why expose this work – and its sponsors – only to those who happened to be listening in real-time? But few listeners will sit through an hour -- or three -- of linear audio. Most don’t when listening live. They’re busy. The only person who hears the whole show is the host (which is why I cringe when I hear “hour number three”).

Trim the fat, serve the steak.

Many more will be interested in highlights, those couple minutes of Pet Pro Dr. Donna Stone’s tips for “Helping Your Critters Keep Their Cool During a Long Hot Summer,” or whatever “money moments” aired.

- Give these excerpts a title, incorporating words someone might include in Search. Add a sharable description. Let MS Copilot or ChatGPT make you a graphic. For this example, make it a cute puppy.
- In addition to the station’s web site, these clips should be all over your social media. Think of your whole show as a movie. Hashtag-laden Tweets that include a click-to-listen link are the trailer. Script several versions and post at intervals.
- Get good at this, and your posts will get shared.
- And Dr. Donna can share her moment to her followers.

This is something music stations’ morning shows do better than Talk stations, because archiving whole songs is taboo. They’re forced to cull.

Find the time.

It’s an investment in reach, relevance, and revenue. Don’t just archive -- curate. You can find new ears, using these audio appetizers to offer people who don’t know your show to try the entrée.

07/07/25

Monday Memo: X Marks the Spot: Radio's Most Valuable Demo'

[Ipsos Generations Report 2025](#): “Right now, it’s Generation X who are the highest-earning generation in the US, surpassing both Boomers and Millennials.”



Born 1965 to 1980, they grew up with an AM/FM radio habit. And – as they are about to inherit a LOT of money from wealthy grandparent Silents and Boomer parents over the next few decades – which prospective advertisers want to meet them?

Prospect banks, financial planners, real estate agents, and wellness and eldercare consultants and Elder Law and Trust attorneys.

Recommended commercial creative: advertorial. “Tell ‘em and you’ll sell ‘em,” with spots disguised as informative features. Sample topics:

- “5 Inheritance Mistakes to Avoid”
- “How to Talk to Your Parents About Their Will”
- “Downsizing Without Downgrading”
- “Kids, Parents, and Cash”

07/14/25

Monday Memo: We're there too.

How obsolete does this sound? “Newsweek magazine.” News, gathered during most-of the week, had to be frozen by weeks-end, on deadline, to roll the presses in time for hard copy to be delivered in Monday’s snail mail. Back then -- picture people dressed like “Mad Men” characters -- enough subscribers felt informed-enough to deliver Return On Investment for the magazine’s advertisers. Seems antique.

Now, news is reported moment-to-moment, on any device. And newsweek.com is there...along with everyone else competing for attention.

Also quaint: that “clock radio” on the night stand, which accomplished two-of-many functions now on smartphones. And the “transistor radios” heard all along the beach this time of year in the 1960s? In Providence, the capital city here in The Ocean State, an AM630 signal superior to its AM1290 Top 40 competitor led WPRO to brand itself as “The Station That Reaches the Beaches.”



Now, there are smart speakers on those beach blankets. I live at the beach, and hear them playing Pandora and Spotify.

Good news...but...

Radio is still the #1 in-car audio; increasingly ported there via smartphone app, if stations have explained theirs well. And there's plenty of other audio on those phones, and on the smart speakers that brought radio back in-home...unless we ask Alexa to instead "play hotel poolside music" or ask her for the weather or some other heretofore radio content.

Repetition builds habit, and to best explain that we're there too, you should audit the user's experience consuming your stream. Does "Just say 'Alexa, play 102.3 WXXX'" or "Hey Siri, play KXXX on TuneIn" get you there? Does the smartphone app instantly play your on-air programming, or are multiple clicks required?

More important than Where and How to listen: Why

Radio's real-time nature is still its superpower, and if your station has earned a news reputation, listeners will find you – however they listen -- when the fit hits the shan. And between bombshells, diligent stations whose real-time audio seems helpful and relevant and uniquely local will be habit-forming, and keep 'em comin' back for more. Adding push notifications, breaking news alerts, and other direct engagement can bridge the gap, prompting more live listening.

Beyond that "linear" delivery, our on-demand culture favors predictable utility. Smart stations repurpose their best moments into snackable content: a daily local news roundup, your morning show's funniest bit, or the weather and event calendar for the weekend; all sponsorable. ICYMI, my recent Talkers column: Feature The Moments That Matter.

Your over-the-air signal is still the beating heart of your operation. Your call letters are a family surname, these new platforms are siblings. They're extensions, not threats; extra doors into your house. Make sure they're open wide, easy to find, and lead to something welcoming. Ideally something they can't hear anywhere else.

07/21/25

Monday Memo: The Dog Days of Summer

Ask any dog: The humans' greatest invention EVER? Ice cream. Share summer's sweetest treat with them, and listeners, during National Ice Cream Month.



Ask dog owners: “What makes YOUR dog happy?” Callers will tell stories.

And what's cooler than hot wings? Do something special on July 29 – National Chicken Wing Day – and you will seem more special than non-local and/or robotic audio competitors.

Ditto International Hot Dog Day, August 26.

Convene a meeting to brainstorm opportunities on Thursday (July 24, National Tequila Day). Or August 8, International Beer Day.

07/28/25

Monday Memo: News/Talk's New Fall Season

Why we're already seeing TV tout its coming attractions: They understand how, after Labor Day, routines settle in. Viewers will be ready to re-engage.

Radio stations that treat September as just another month are missing an opportunity, to reintroduce our relevance, refresh our programming, and remind listeners why we matter. After a summer of disrupted routines, school vacation, and scattered attention, commutes return and schedules normalize. And we want to be the soundtrack. How?



1. Make listeners feel like they're rejoining a conversation they care about. "Back to the grind? We're back with what matters."
2. Freshen your lineup or formatics. It's a great time to introduce new contributors -- analysts, columnists, or rotating guests with fresh perspectives. Debut a new segment: deeper dives, listener town halls, daily fact-checks, etc.
3. Update Imaging. Listeners tune to News/Talk for clarity. At client stations, we're refreshing IDs, show opens, transitions. Convey momentum and immediacy, and that you've got your listener's back. Adjust clocks to improve flow and appointment tune-in. Even subtle changes, well-explained and promoted, can feel significant.
4. TV has premieres. Radio can too. Launch a limited-run podcast series and promote it on-air?

5. Promote like you're running for election. Off-air marketing money may be scarce, but you have other arrows in your quiver: Daily topical on-air promos explain how listening will be helpful. Use social media to tease what's upcoming, and to post "moments that matter." Ditto E-newsletters and station app alerts and, and partner mentions via local media or civic groups.

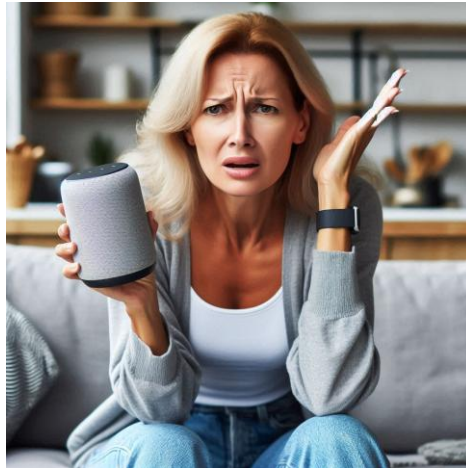
6. Sales! Help advertisers freshen their messages similarly.

Any station, any format, should reassert its role. And – as each day's events impact everyday life -- no other format can command more attention than News/Talk. So welcome back.

08/04/25

Monday Memo: How you tune-them-out?

Unintentionally, your poorly phrased comment, dated reference, weary cliché, or offhand remark can at least subtly distance you from your listener; and could undercut your credibility, offend, or even spark backlash.



Whether you're a broadcaster, podcaster, newscaster, or you are crafting commercial or promo copy, take a fresh look at these often-overlooked pitfalls.

Dated references: Nothing can disrupt your listener's day quicker than quickly-changing weather. Being thought of as a weather source can advantage any station in any format. But you risk that currency calling tomorrow "...a carbon copy of today." Few under 50 have used carbon paper. And with weather more erratic lately, implying otherwise can make your forecast sound – forgive me – "like a broken record." Also antique: "Rolodex," now that listeners' smartphones have "Contacts." Purge old-speak from "the radio dial." Listeners (and advertisers) notice when we keep-up...or don't.

Stereotyping:

- "Soccer mom in a SUV" sure is the retail super-consumer advertisers want to see pull-into the parking lot. Visualize her for Programming and Promotion planning and Sales prospecting, OFF-air stuff. But reinforcing gender roles and class assumptions ON-air paints a narrow picture of parenting and lifestyle, potentially alienating women.

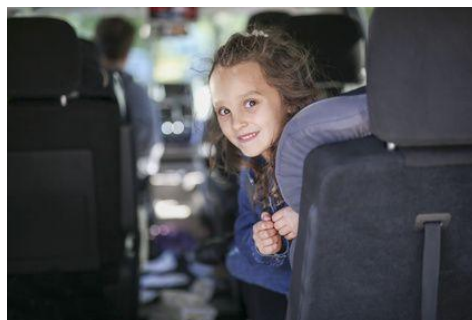
- “You know how Millennials are.” Yes, like “Generation X,” they dislike being typecast, and you sound out-of-touch and judgmental.
- Calling someone “a Karen” can alienate listeners who have felt ridiculed suffering a situation similar to what you’re describing.
- “Probably some college kid with no clue how to drive in the snow” implies incompetence based on age and background. This kind of dig can undermine younger listeners or newcomers to your market.

Stereotypes are lazy, often a shortcut to humor or imagery. Ask yourself: “Is this something I’d say to someone’s face?”

Insensitive Humor: “Looks like someone forgot their meds today!” can offend those quietly dealing with anxiety, or depression. Pandemic silver lining: Mental health is no longer a laughing matter. You may have seen TV PSAs by Howie Mandel, sharing how ADHD has impacted his life and asking that it not be a punchline.

“Potty-mouth”

Mom and Dad’s just-the-two-of-them vocabulary is different than the way they speak with kids in the car, not what they want to hear their children repeat after hearing on radio.



- “Pissed-off” has become unnecessarily familiar, particularly with recent Inflation...with which we are “annoyed,” “fed-up,” and “frustrated.”
- Even if something sounds commonplace, origins or implications may make it unsuitable for all-audience radio. “Scumbag” began as a term for condom. “Sucks” and “screwed” also have sexual roots some consider vulgar.

Taboo red flags:

- “No offense, but...” or “I’m just saying...” often precede something offensive.
- “It’s just a joke!” often follows a crack at the expense of marginalized groups.
- “Everyone thinks that...” overgeneralizes and can alienate those who disagree.
- Mocking accents or speech patterns can come across as disrespectful rather than entertaining.
- “Real [men/women] do...” Gendered assumptions can feel exclusionary or outdated.
- “This [group] is always...” Sweeping characterizations often reinforce stereotypes.

Words have weight. In a medium where tone, timing, and trust matter, what we say -- and how we say it -- can either strengthen listener connection or erode it.

08/05/25

TV Trend is Radio Wake-Up Call

South Florida viewers are confused. WPLG, which brands as “Local 10,” was an ABC-TV affiliate for 69 years...until yesterday.



Now it's more local than ever, after divorcing its network, whose programming moved to the Fox affiliate's digital channel 18.1, now branded “ABC Miami.” Among courteous FAQs about this change on WPLG's web site: “How do I rescan my TV?” to find ABC programming.

FAQ #1: Why is this happening?

WPLG GM Bert Medina explains “We made a generous offer to ABC, but it became clear the two sides were not going to agree to a new deal.”

Citing the FCC's “interest in and the authority to promote the public interest and to ensure that local broadcast TV stations retain the economic and operational independence necessary to meet their public interest obligations,” Chairman Brendan Carr is investigating what he calls networks’ “attempt to extract onerous financial and operational concessions from local broadcast TV stations.” His recent letter to Comcast CEO Brian Roberts announced an inquiry into NBC practices that will also scrutinize other networks’ affiliation agreements. He reckons that networks threatening long-held affiliations “could result in blackouts and other harms to local consumers of broadcast news and content.”

“That's why we have an FCC license.”

WPLG's GM explains that “our job is to serve this community with news and local programming.” He – and his Berkshire Hathaway ownership – determined that “if we agreed to the ABC terms, that mission would have suffered.” The last straw?

“Exclusivity, which is the core to our relationship, is disappearing. Even when ABC airs high quality programming, like the Oscars, ABC airs that same programming on other platforms. We no longer feel we are getting what we pay for.”

Proud that “a majority of our staff grew up here,” Medina announced that WPLG is staffing-up. “Instead of sending our money to New York, we will keep it in our community and use that money to finance a massive expansion in local news and other local programming. We are excited for the future of Local 10. Just watch us. We are about to serve this community in an even bigger and better way.”

Is music radio screwed?

Music has been commoditized. It’s all over the other platforms and devices increasingly siphoning-off radio listening time and ad revenue. And unlike 6-spot (or longer) stopsets now common on FM, streams’ spots are shorter and fewer. And there are NO commercials for paid subscribers who’ve had-it-up-to-here with broadcast music radio.

TV networks aren’t shy about hijacking affiliates’ viewers. NBC touts Peacock, ABC offers Disney+, CBS lures us to Paramount+. And radio network spots are plugging iHeart podcasts.

So, yuh. Make your station as smartphone-friendly as possible. But when I jump in the car, and my phone pops-up on the dashboard radio once owned, what comes out the speaker still has to compete. And what’s the ONE thing that streams and your robotic FM competitors don’t offer? “Local.”

08/11/25

Monday Memo: Topics That Tune-Them-In

Baby Boomers (born 1946–1964) are some 20% of the U.S. population, but control more than 50% of all household wealth. They hold \$70+ trillion in assets, and spend an estimated \$548 billion annually. They are lifelong AM/FM listeners, and they're redefining what life after 60 looks like. Are you into what they're up to?



Some are having the time of their lives. Others are confronting new realities. All are seeking relevance, respect, and real-world information. Consider these issues for call-in topics and guest interviews and podcasts. Possibly a sponsored series?

Lifestyle & Purpose

- “How to Make Your Bucket List Actually Happen”
- “Finding Purpose Beyond the 9 to 5”
- “Encore Careers That Start with a Volunteer Gig”

Health & Wellness

- “Sleep After 60: What Changes and What Helps”
- “The Foods That Fight Brain Fog”
- “Fitness Without the Injuries: Smarter Workouts After 50”

Financial Confidence

- “How Much is Enough? Retirement Planning Backwards”
- “Social Security Myths That Could Cost You”

- “Turning Your Home into Income” (downsizing, ADUs, Airbnb)
- “Helping Without Hurting: When Adult Kids Need Financial Help”

Freedom & Adventure

- “How to Travel More for Less”
- “National Parks Over 60: Hidden Gems and Senior Pass Tips”
- “Cool Day Trips”

Home & Relationships

- “Downsize Without Drama”
- “Living With -- or Near -- Your Kids: Pros, Cons & Boundaries”
- “Home Safety Upgrades You’ll Be Glad You Made”
- “The Second-Time-Around Marriage: Legal & Emotional Realities”
- “Grandparenting Without Overstepping”

Learning & Creativity

- “The Science of Lifelong Learning: Why Your Brain Craves It”
- “It’s Never Too Late to Learn an Instrument (or a Language)”
- “Turning Your Life Story Into a Book -- Or a Podcast”
- “Digital Detox: How to Stay Connected Without Feeling Glued”

08/18/25

Monday Memo: CeaseFire

As TV touts its perennial New Fall Season, our DVR is already set to Record Series so we can pick-up where the “Matlock” sequel left-us-hanging; and for a third season of quirky “Elsbeth” (closet reboot, a female “Columbo”). And where I live – where everyone seems to know everyone – we’re salivating for “The Real Housewives of Rhode Island.”

Enduring as its hourglass, “The Days of Our Lives” – which NBC punted to Peacock – is renewed for season #61. As Max reverts to the HBO brand, “The White Lotus” will be back for its 4th. “American Idol” will vet a 24th crop of crooners; “America’s Funniest Home Videos” will share a 36th batch of bloopers; and America’s argument will remain unresolved on every channel...except one.



Nonprofit C-SPAN – the Switzerland of cable news – presents “CeaseFire,” a weekly show where “Democrats and Republicans come together to solve problems and discuss the great challenges facing our nation...during a time when division and dysfunction dominate the national conversation.”

And who better to U-turn the “Crossfire” template that pits partisan pundits against each other than the suit who oversaw it, longtime CNN Executive VP and Washington Bureau Chief Sam Feist, now C-SPAN CEO. “In a media landscape that too often rewards outrage over understanding,” he reckons “CeaseFire stands out by showing what respectful, principled conversation looks like.”

“Like sands through the hourglass,” radio’s Talk format was an early 1990s Revolution. Now -- like the AM band it buttressed as long as possible – WHAT IF...

For 08/25/25 issue

Monday Memo: Unmet needs?

Last week's column previewed "CeaseFire," C-SPAN's antidote to the caricature cable news shouting match. Thanks to all who offered feedback when we wondered "WHAT IF...?" for Talk radio.

Recent report from Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism: People are disabling news alerts, "either because they feel they get too many or because they are not useful."

People are anxious. Even a robot can read-the-room, as I learned by asking ChatGPT: "In USA society generally, list unmet needs." Among them:

Belonging Without Division

- People crave community but are tired of being forced to choose sides.
- Unmet need: A way to feel connected and purposeful without being tribalized by politics, race, class, or ideology.

Trusted, Nuanced Information

- There's information overload, but trust is at an all-time low.
- Unmet need: Sources that feel both credible and fair-minded, without sensationalism, bias, or agenda-chasing.

Civility in Public Discourse

- Public conversation often feels like a battleground.
- Unmet need: Spaces — digital or real-world — where disagreement is safe, not destructive or humiliating.

Mental & Emotional Support

- Rising anxiety, loneliness, and burnout affect people across all ages.
- Unmet need: Accessible, non-stigmatized mental health support, including community-based emotional infrastructure (not just therapy apps).

Work That Feels Worthwhile

- Many jobs pay the bills but feel meaningless.
- Unmet need: Opportunities to do work that's valued, not just productive — where dignity and contribution matter as much as output.

Financial Security That Isn't Fragile

- Even middle-class households feel one emergency away from disaster.
- Unmet need: Stability and predictability — not just income, but housing, healthcare, and retirement that won't evaporate with one bad break.

Intergenerational Connection

- Older and younger generations increasingly live in separate realities.
- Unmet need: Meaningful contact across age lines, where wisdom flows both directions — not just tech tutoring and nursing homes.

Shared Purpose

- Many feel like they're drifting — or living someone else's script.
- Unmet need: A sense of contribution to something bigger than self, not through ideology but through everyday roles, responsibilities, and relationships.

Consider as you pose call-in topics and choose interview guests.

09/02/25

Commercial Copy for Careworn Consumers

Why I love going on Sales calls with station reps: Meeting retailers, who have SUCH a feel for their customers' (our listeners') mindset. Following-up last week's column exploring the societal angst we are living through, this week's will recommend technique for scripting in what psychologists call the Age of Outrage Fatigue.

Emotional bandwidth is down. Skepticism is up. And the old tricks -- hyperbole, urgency, shouty headlines -- are backfiring. People aren't just tuning-out content they disagree with; they're tuning-out tone. They crave calm. Clarity. Credibility.

To cut-through:

- Clear beats clever. Instead of "Don't sweat it -- we've got your ducts in a row!" Try "Get your AC fixed today, and sleep comfortably tonight."
- Ditch the drama. Instead of: "Drowning in debt?" Try: "Make a fresh start."
- Frame your offer as an upgrade, not a fix for failure. Instead of: "Will you EVER be able to retire?" Try: "Plan your next chapter, on your terms."
- Empathize, don't exaggerate. People trust what feels human. Empty hype gets filtered out fast. "There's never been a better time to buy a car!" goes in-one-ear-and-out-the-other.
- Earn attention quickly. The first sentence matters more than ever. Make it a question that includes "you" and/or "your" which describes the consumer situation that your advertiser can cure. "Is your money doing what you want it to?"
- Use Specifics, not superlatives. "Best ever!" means nothing. Numbers and proof points build confidence.
- If you're scripting with AI, rewrite to weed-out clichés. Restaurant spots that tout "a relaxing atmosphere" are verbal Styrofoam.
- Respect their time. Use short sentences. Bullet points. Clear next steps. Happy outcomes.

Today's most effective copywriting calms the reader. It offers clarity in a crowded, chaotic world.

09/08/25

Monday Memo: Water you known for?

My kitchen faucet wouldn't shut off. Died. Things start doing that when your "new" house turns 25.

With replacement hardware inbound from – where else? – Amazon, we're coping, filling pitchers from the sink in the first-floor loo. Yet, days later, we still reach for the broken kitchen faucet, force-of-habit.

WHAT IF someone pushes your station's button, or goes to download your podcast, and nothing comes out?

What are you known-for? What would be missed if you weren't still doing it?

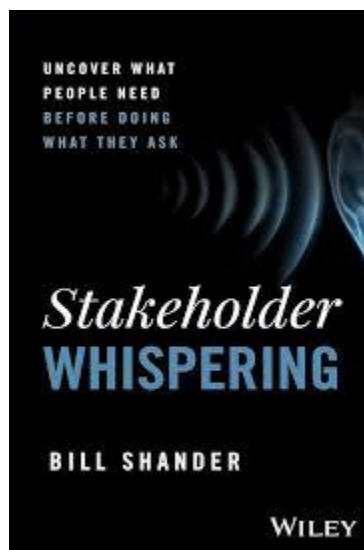
Explain that-you-do what-you-do-well, things listeners thirst for, especially things they can only get from you. And make every effort to deliver.

09/15/25

Monday Memo: Stakeholder Whispering

Radio programmers and sales managers know the drill: The GM drops an idea, a client makes a request, or a listener offers feedback — and the reflex is to jump straight into execution. But what if the real opportunity lies not in what’s asked for, but in what’s actually needed?

That’s the premise of Bill Shander’s new book, “Stakeholder Whispering: Uncover What People Need Before Doing What They Ask” (Wiley, 2025).



Though written for a broad business audience, its lessons resonate in broadcasting, where competing priorities and fast-moving decisions are the norm.

Shander reckons that traditional “stakeholder management” sounds paternal — corralling people to fit our plans. Instead, “stakeholder engagement,” gives them a seat at the table. This “Whispering” is a deeper, two-way collaboration where probing questions and active listening uncover hidden needs and surface better solutions.

For broadcasters, this can be transformative. Consider sales. If an advertiser wants “a morning drive schedule,” a reflexive seller builds a package and fires back a rate card. But a Whisperer pauses and asks: Why morning drive? Who exactly are you trying to

reach? What outcome would make this buy successful for you? The conversation shifts from spots and cost to outcomes and value.

Programming is no different. Listeners may say they “want more music” or “less negativity” from Talk radio. Whispering means listening past the literal request to the sentiment beneath. Is it about mood, pace, or trust? The host or PD who engages at that level isn’t surrendering control — they’re co-creating an experience listeners feel invested in.

The book also emphasizes “loss aversion” — the tendency to resist change for fear of losing control. Whispering reduces defensiveness by letting stakeholders feel ownership of solutions. In a station environment, that might mean involving talent in shaping format tweaks, or framing sales proposals as shared discoveries rather than dictates.

Stakeholder Whispering is a reminder to slow down, listen more deeply, and help others articulate what they really need. For radio, it may be the difference between just checking a box and creating lasting value on both sides of the mic.

09/22/25

Monday Memo: Boo!

Don't let Halloween sneak-up on you.



The only holiday Americans spend more for is Christmas. So – to seem more in-touch than your robotic and/or non-local audio competitors – plan something spook-tacular.

DJs will play all the occasion-pertinent songs, good bumpers if you're a talker. For you, the living, [this mash](#) was meant too.

- Do an event? A “safe space” parents can bring costumed kiddos? Maybe to benefit a local charity?
- Or a grown-ups-only party? 🤩 Sell a sponsorship. Try a big-box liquor store; or if your bash is at a bar, they might line-up a booze brand from the distributor.
- Costume suggestions? In years past, this has been a productive call-in topic. With family budgets tight now, those pop-up costume stores are less-affordable to some; and many funsters are imagination-challenged. Back when we “went to the movies,” Harry Potter-level characters were more obvious.
- Sell Halloween Safety Tips, PSA-sounding commercials. It's a low-price way to give new advertisers a taste, and another way for existing advertisers to show-up. Copy points:

- ✓ Make sure costume masks don't block your kids' vision.
- ✓ Go out early, stay in groups.
- ✓ Warn young boys & ghouls not to run into the street from between parked cars.
- ✓ Stick with well-lit streets in your neighborhood.
- ✓ Give young trick-or-treaters flashlights.
- ✓ Stay on sidewalks or walk facing traffic.
- ✓ Tell children not to eat anything before getting home, so you can inspect goodies.

09/29/25

Monday Memo: Replay it. Reuse it. Re-sell it.

Sure, radio's super power is that we're live. But 75% of all advertising dollars are now spent on digital. And Netflix, YouTube, and podcast platforms have conditioned consumers to expect that their content will wait for them ("on-demand"), not the other way around ("linear," meaning real-time on-air). If your best content disappears the moment it airs, you're leaking value. Think: time-shifted, searchable, and shareable.

Repackaging doesn't just mean repeating.

Is posting airchecks – whole hours – your News/Talk station's only on-demand offering? Hey, why not. It's easy, and – mathematically – no listener hears everything live. So archiving offers convenience.

But few people sit through a whole hour, even when listening live, as Nielsen's 3-minute gimmick reminds us. So do what music stations do, because music rights issues force them to: Extract chunks of what aired.

- Smart stations, in every format, are curating familiar recurring morning show bits.
- From interviews: Was there an "Aha!" moment, the-one-thing-said that was most impactful/helpful/surprising/quatable? Maybe even a few standout moments? Just one is fine. Be choosy, rather than posting for the sake of posting.
- From host monologues, excerpt the passage that makes the point in-a-nutshell. Like Sean Hannity's shortform morning bit, a lift from the previous day's live show. Give yours a title, i.e., "Mike in a Minute," "Randy's Rant," "Tell me I'm wrong," whatever. And if a caller crystallized – or challenged – the host's take, include a bite. These features are hors d'oeuvres, nibbles from those whole segments you have also posted for those interested to devour.
- If you are doing solid local news, CONGRATULATIONS. You're conspicuous, as newspapers tailspin and because TV stations' coverage tends to come later in the day. So consider repurposing the morning's top local stories into a short daily update.

Don't just clip and post. Package and brand. Give all-of-the-above your station's imaging feel. A series with a name is easier to remember, easier to sell, and more likely to be shared.

The juice is worth the squeeze.

Repackaged content does more than just fill your feeds:

- It increases time spent with your brand.
- It creates more occasions of listening, whichever way works best for the listener. BE ON PHONES.
- It opens up new monetization opportunities. Sponsors love targeted content and are buying digital. Sell them yours.

The bottom line? Yours. Future-proof your station.

10/13/25

Monday Memo: Podcasting Pitfalls (and how to avoid them)



The most common mistake podcasters make is assuming the microphone alone creates an audience. Too many would-be hosts hit Record without a clear strategy for WHY they're doing a show, WHO it's for, and what makes it DIFFERENT from millions of other podcasts.

Here's where radio people have an edge. They already understand what makes audio work, fundamentals instructive to pure-play podcasters:

- **Know your listener.** The #1 podcasting error is failing to define the audience. A show that tries to appeal to “everyone” ends up resonating with no one. In radio, you wouldn't program an AC station to please hard rock fans; the same logic applies here. Create a mental picture of your ideal listener and talk to that person...as an individual. A radio show might have thousands of listeners, but they're listening one-at-a-time. Podcasting is even more intimate. It's the opposite of “Hi everybody.”
- **Prep like it matters.** Many podcasters think conversation is enough. But even the loosest-sounding successful shows are tightly structured. Radio taught you this already: segments, clocks, and story arcs keep things moving. Format your podcast.
- **Edit ruthlessly.** The average podcast listener has thousands of options. Rambling is death. Trimming, pacing interviews, and cutting inside jokes shows respect for your listener's time. Walking-the-walk, Talkers publisher Michael Harrison takes a mere 44 seconds to explain [in this video](#).

- **Be consistent.** If your show drops sporadically, you won't build loyalty. Listeners want reliability, whether weekly, biweekly, or monthly. Radio wouldn't move a morning show around the schedule; don't do it with your podcast.
- **Think discoverability.** A podcast isn't a "Field of Dreams" (if you build it, they will come). Great audio needs marketing: social media clips, smart SEO in show notes, cross-promotion, and ideally, visibility on your broadcast platforms.
- **Make it about them, not you.** This is the big one. Too many podcasts are self-indulgent — hosts talking about what interests them. Successful shows flip the script: What does my audience care about, and how can I deliver it in a way only I can?

The bottom line: Radio has invested 100 years doing what podcasting is just learning — creating focused, disciplined, listener-first audio. Bring those habits with you, and you'll click, while others are still figuring it out.

10/20/25

Monday Memo: USA Facts

Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer retired with enough do-re-mi to indulge two passions. He bought the NBA Los Angeles Clippers (for a record \$2 billion). And he built [USAFacts](#): “a not-for-profit resource rooted in publicly available data, free from spin or politics.”

From its mission statement:

- “Find the numbers: We tap into hundreds of databases at the federal, state, and local level. If it’s tracked, we’ll find it. If it’s not, we’ll tell you that, too.”
- “Put them in context: A stat without context is no better than an opinion. We analyze trends over time so you can see the whole story.”
- “Bring them to life: We turn the numbers into insights you can actually use. No jargon, no spin. Just charts, graphics, and data.”

With so much of Talk radio and cable news and social media pandering with affirmation, actual actionable information can differentiate your show or podcast from others that merely entertain outrage. Well-worth a [bookmark](#) in your show prep routine.

10/27/25

Monday Memo: Does anybody really know what time it is?

Possibly not -- beginning Sunday -- unless you live in Hawaii and Arizona (except the Navajo Nation) or American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, or the U.S. Virgin Islands. Everywhere else, clocks will change as we “fall-back.”



It's uncanny how just that one-hour shift impacts listeners' lives. So it's a BIG topic of conversation. Plan now to empathize with their emotional and practical adjustments.

Increased Morning Light:

- Positive: With the clock set back, it becomes lighter earlier in the morning, which can help people wake up more easily and feel more alert, especially for those who need to start their day early.
- Negative: For people who start their day later, they may not notice much of a change, but the adjustment period can still be disruptive.

Shorter Evenings:

- Positive: The extra hour of light in the morning might be useful for early morning commuters, outdoor activities, or children heading to school.
- Negative: On the downside, the sun sets earlier in the evening, meaning it gets dark sooner. This can affect evening activities and make commutes home feel less pleasant or even more dangerous due to reduced visibility.

Disruption to Sleep Patterns:

- Positive: The "fall back" of the clock gives people an extra hour of sleep, which many enjoy.
- Negative: Some people experience disrupted sleep patterns and may feel temporarily groggy as their bodies adjust to the new time.

Health and Mood:

- Positive: For some, the extra morning light can improve mood and reduce symptoms of Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD).
- Negative: The early evening darkness can lead to feelings of fatigue, a drop in energy levels, or contribute to "winter blues" or SAD, especially as daylight becomes limited.

Impact on Productivity:

- Positive: People may feel more productive in the morning due to earlier sunlight.
- Negative: However, the earlier sunset could reduce motivation to engage in activities after work or school, potentially leading to a decrease in evening productivity.

Safety Considerations:

- Positive: More daylight in the morning can make commuting safer for drivers and pedestrians during rush hour.
- Negative: With darker evenings, there's an increased risk of accidents, especially for people who are walking or biking.

Energy Consumption:

- Positive: Energy usage patterns may shift as a result of less artificial light being used in the morning.
- Negative: However, people tend to use more lighting and heating in the evenings, which may counterbalance the potential energy savings.

Impact on Schedules:

- Positive: Some people enjoy having the extra hour in their day when DST ends.

- Negative: For parents and workers, adjusting children's or personal routines to the earlier darkness can be challenging.

What's a radio station to do?

- Bump with or play songs related to time (Cyndi Lauper "Time After Time," Cher's "If I Could Turn Back Time").
- Explain the history of DST.
- Ask listeners' opinions on DST. Do they love it or hate it? You'll hear both.
- "How will you spend your extra hour?"
- Give away nostalgic items (like retro vinyl records or vintage tech).
- Sleep tips from health professionals and mental health experts.
- Advertisers offer "10% off for the extra hour! Sale only valid from midnight to 1 AM."
- Coffee or breakfast gift card giveaways.
- Pertinent commercial copy hooks, i.e., "It's time for a new ____!"

And please note: It's "Daylight Saving Time," not "Daylight Savings Time."

11/03/25

Monday Memo: Costs are criminal. And you are on the case.

The number of Americans asking Google for help with debt is way up. Delinquencies are surging. Credit scores are falling at the fastest pace since the Great Recession. Consumer Confidence is down. Costco is mobbed.

Gasoline, eggs, now coffee. What DOESN'T cost more? Seen beef prices? Hamburger Helper sales are up double-digits year-over-year.

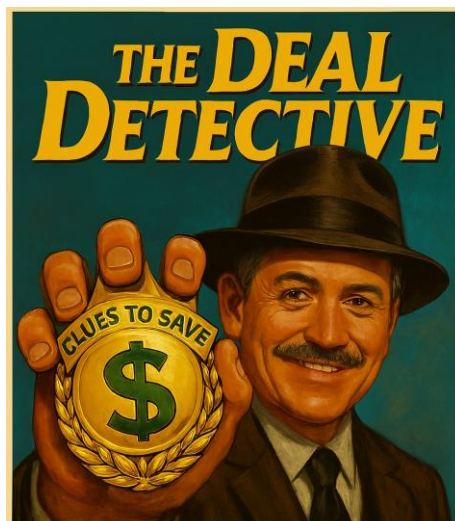
A client station asked me for something to pitch to a local credit union. So I called in "The Deal Detective." He's a frugal flatfoot, the lieutenant of low prices, a savings sleuth with a barcode scanner. He reads receipts like rap sheets. And he's a stack of 60-second features.

Special for Talkers readers: Help yourself, here:

<http://getonthenet.com/DealDetective.html>

They're FREE, no national spot. Sell a local sponsorship and keep the money. It's your license to bill.

OK to use as stream cover-up spots, or on your station web site ([help yourself to the graphic](http://getonthenet.com/DealDetective.html)). No paperwork.



11/10/25

Monday Memo: “What NEXT???” is The New Normal

If you’re a News/Talk station, be known for knowing what’s happening. My client stations routinely invite tune-in “for a quick [name of network] news update, every hour, throughout your busy day.”

If you automate syndicated shows, who will get alerts and can take the story wall-to-wall with network coverage? Got station news HR? What’s your plan for covering a major local event? Stations I work with are “news partners” with local TV stations; and radio takes them where TV otherwise isn’t, in-car. Win-win.

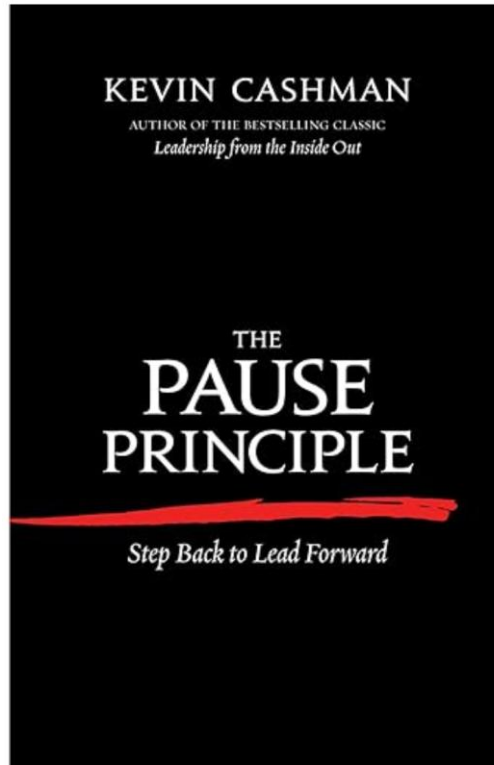
If you’re a music station with a News/Talk cluster mate, gauge whether an event warrants promoting that the brother station is on-the-story, or if you should simulcast.

Regardless of format, think car radio. People near TV will likely be watching.

11/17/25

Monday Memo: The Power of Pause in Local Radio

In an industry built on speed — breaking news, live liners, commercial deadlines — “pause” feels like a luxury radio can’t afford. But Kevin Cashman’s *The Pause Principle: Step Back to Lead Forward* (Wiley) argues the opposite: pausing isn’t weakness, it’s a competitive advantage. For local radio leaders, the message couldn’t be timelier.



Cashman defines pause as the conscious act of stepping back to gain perspective before moving forward. Leaders who constantly react miss opportunities for growth and innovation. Those who pause, he argues, engage with more clarity, creativity, and authenticity.

Think about the daily grind in local radio. The PD is juggling ratings pressure, talent issues, and a half-dozen urgent emails from corporate. The sales manager is chasing month-end, writing copy on deadline, and fielding calls from advertisers. In that swirl, it’s tempting to equate motion with progress. Yet, as Cashman warns, constant motion without reflection leads to burnout, blind spots, and missed chances to connect .

For broadcasters, pause can take many forms:

- **Programming:** Instead of cranking out another promo, take time to ask if the message really resonates with the community. What do listeners need from us right now?
- **Sales:** Before pitching another rate card, pause to explore the client's true business challenge. That deeper understanding can unlock bigger, longer-term partnerships.
- **Leadership:** In staff meetings, pause to let quieter voices contribute. The next big idea might come from someone who usually doesn't speak up.

Cashman links pause to authenticity. When leaders slow down enough to be present, they foster trust. In local radio, where credibility is everything, that authenticity builds loyalty with both audiences and advertisers.

He also reminds us that pause is not about inaction. It's about deliberate action. A well-timed pause before responding to a crisis on-air, before agreeing to a questionable promotion, or before rushing through a strategic decision can be the difference between a misstep and a breakthrough.

For local stations, the takeaway is clear: The pace isn't going to slow down. The emails will keep coming, the ratings will keep posting, and the deadlines will keep looming. But leaders who carve out moments of pause will not only preserve their sanity — they'll make better decisions, inspire their teams, and serve their communities more meaningfully.

Pause. Reflect. Then lead forward.

11/23/25

Monday Memo: Gobble Gobble

Running a successful radio station, hosting a show, or producing a podcast is a lot like hosting Thanksgiving dinner. You need a plan. You need to deliver something satisfying to a crowd with varying tastes. And most of all -- if you get it right -- you'll have leftovers you can turn into even more value long after the main event.

The Menu Is the Strategy. You don't just "wing it" on Thanksgiving. Same goes for your content. Who are you serving? What do they expect? Your content calendar is your shopping list. Your team is your kitchen crew. And if you're still deciding what's on the menu the morning of, don't expect rave reviews.

Timing Is the Secret Sauce. Get the turkey in too late, and the sides suffer. Hit "record" without a clear rundown, and the show flounders. Publish an episode at the wrong time? Lost in the noise. Stations, shows, and podcasts are all about flow and timing. Great pacing, clean execution, smart transitions. Just like the perfect meal, everything needs to hit the table hot and in the right order.

The Turkey Is Your Centerpiece. For a station, it's your format or your tentpole talent. For a show, it's the host or the day's big segment. For a podcast, it might be your story structure or your featured guest. Nail the turkey, and people forgive a few lumpy mashed potatoes. Miss it -- bland, dry, underwhelming -- and no one remembers the green bean casserole.

The Sides Are the Supporting Elements. News, weather, traffic, and imaging turn a decent meal into a memorable one. Great intros, tight sound design, and a well-timed punchline make your core content shine.

Different Tastes, One Table. Uncle Edgar wants deep-fried turkey. Your cousin's vegan. Grandma's still mad you skipped the marshmallows on the yams. Your audience is just as varied — P1 loyalists, casual browsers, podcast subscribers who never miss a

week. You can't be everything to everyone, but you *can* build a spread that makes multiple types of listeners feel seen. Know your audience segments. Serve accordingly.

Table Setting = Delivery Platform

Whether it's FM, a podcast app, a smart speaker, or a website, presentation matters. Is the user experience smooth? Is the stream clean? Is the podcast art appealing? Are your links working? A cold plate on fine china is still cold. Don't let great content get lost in clunky delivery.

Leftovers = Repurposing

You spent all that time prepping and recording. Don't just serve it once. Chop up segments for social. Turn interviews into blog posts. Republish as "Best Of" content. Archive it smartly so people can find it later.

Leftover content, when handled right, can fuel long term engagement. Don't throw away anything tasty just because the initial serving is over.

Thanksgiving reminds us that people crave connection, comfort, and a sense of occasion. So does your audience, whether they tune in live, stream on demand, or binge your podcast during a road trip.

So plan well. Deliver hot. Serve generously. And whatever you do, don't forget the gravy.

Happy Thanksgiving. Pass the ratings.

i2/01/25

Monday Memo: Subliminal Sleigh Bells

By now, a music station in your market – hopefully in your cluster – is all-Christmas-music-all-the-time, a great perennial franchise.

How other stations can sound in-tune-with this special season: Hang a strip of jingle bells in the studio. Or set up a hotkey.

Associate that sound with your weather forecast, a hook valuable to a station of any format, especially News/Talkers, which should own the market's information images. In local hours, you might ring 'em as you announce the present temperature at the end of the forecast. In non-local hours, have 'em in the background under your standard forecast intro language.



HOW special is this time of year? People are singing “I’m dreaming of a white Christmas” in every country on Earth...except one. In Panama, it’s “I’m dreaming of a wide isthmus.”

12/08/25

Monday Memo: Local News, AI Collaboration

News people I coach reckon that my epitaph will read: “Consequence, not Process.”

Too often, news copy – while factually correct -- is arcane minutes-of-the-meeting stuff, rather than emphasizing impact on the listener’s routine.

Process: “The Transit board revised its fare structure.”

Consequence: “Riding the bus will cost 50 cents more starting Monday.”

Process: “The district reallocated Title I funds.”

Consequence: “Some after-school programs could be cut.”

Process: “The committee advanced a bill on short-term rentals.”

Consequence: “Airbnb hosts may soon face new rules -- and fees.”

Process: “The planning board approved a variance...”

Consequence: “Construction can now begin on that apartment complex near the campus.”

Unwrap the package. To illustrate, here’s a video I am playing in client stations’ conference rooms -- and it’s a dang clinic in impactful local news reporting.

The back-story: If I say “Hasbro,” you might think Monopoly, Scrabble, Mr. Potato Head, Play-Doh, G.I. Joe, and Transformers. Eventually it added Star Wars and Marvel action figures to its repertoire. Hasbro became a major player in video games, TV, and movies. This 100+ year-old company has outgrown its Rhode Island roots and announced it is moving to Boston. In any-size state – let alone the smallest -- losing 700+ jobs hurts.

Here’s the video: <https://getonthenet.com/Hasbro.MP4>

After playing that, I sometimes hear “But TV has more manpower than a radio station.” Yes and no.



Management confirmed to me that this reporter was in MMJ mode that day, meaning “Multi-Media Journalist.” Translation: She worked alone, no videographer, no producer. Praising her work when I requested the video, I was told that she did a great job executing what we brainstormed in the morning meeting.

And THAT’S the advantage TV has over most radio news operations: There is more than one person in the newsroom, to have that meeting. We’re radio people. We think aloud. But with whom, when you, alone, ARE the news department?

Have that collaborative conversation with ChatGPT or MS Copilot. Brainstorm story angles and interview prospects and questions. At client stations, we have asked – and AI apps delivered – actual coverage timelines.

Try it. The interaction feels surprisingly human -- like having a sharp, tireless producer who’s always ready to riff, reframe, and help you make it matter.

My 12/15 column announced this anthology.

12/22/25

Monday Memo: AI Headlines, Local Dollars

Each January, CES -- which we-who-cover-it are under strict instructions NOT to call “the Consumer Electronics Show” -- attracts national news coverage for a week. Expect to read, see, and hear lots about Artificial Intelligence. I will be there, covering with daily reports here in TALKERS.

And again this year, I will be offering daily locally-sponsorable 60-second reports for your station, FREE, for air Monday through Friday January 5-9. I post the-night-before, in time for next-day morning drive.

Simply download from HollandCooke.com, where there is a sample report from CES2025, which Sales can use to pitch. There’s no national spot, you can sell a local sponsorship.

12/29/25

Monday Memo: Your NEWS Year Resolutions?

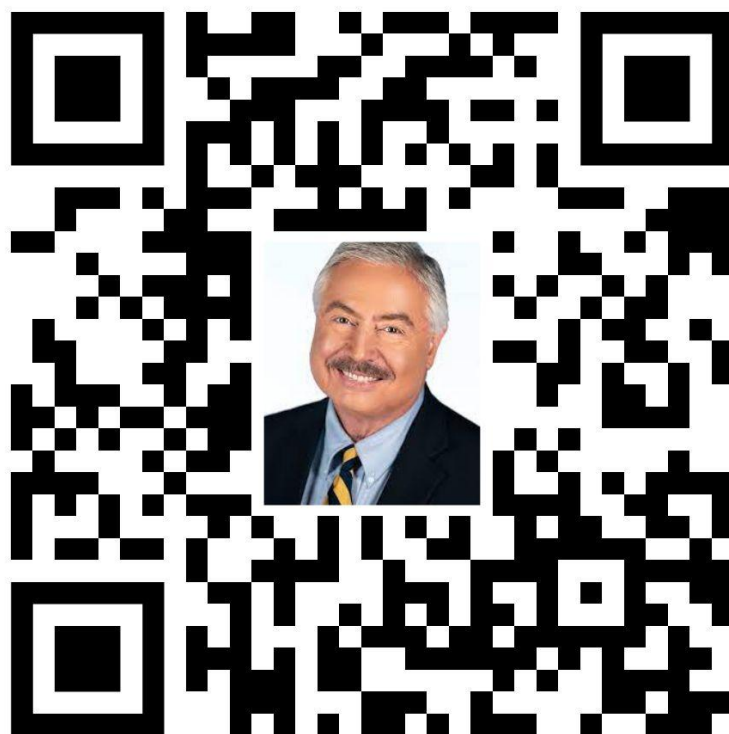
Here's a timely topic which – pitched right -- always produces calls and clicks.

With January 1 looming, ask “Your New Year’s resolutions for...”

- “...President Trump?”
- Your governor, your mayor?
- “...your spouse?”
- Who else? Get creative.

Callers tell stories.

“But wait! There’s more!”



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