



## **You're Fired? Timing is Everything.**

*By Holland Cooke, reprinted from Talkers magazine December 10, 2012*

If you haven't already noticed, you've got to see this. Grab a copy of USA Today. Any day will do, but it has to be the newsstand hard copy. No digital version will work.

Radio is reeling from another Clear Channel bloodbath, just in time for Christmas. It wasn't the first, it won't be the last, and it's not just Clear Channel. But heartless timing. The nerve of 'em.

### **In the words of Eric Stratton, Rush Chairman: "Let me tell you the story of another loser..."**

January 4, 1991: Two soon-to-be business partners and I quit our jobs, in the middle of a recession. THAT was nervy. I had been programming WTOF/Washington for 7 years, and was lured-away by techie nerds with The Big Idea.

By October, we had convinced the FAA to let us drill a one-inch hole in a \$55 million aircraft, a new Boeing 757, United 5151UA. And we bounced a digital bit stream off G-Star III, to deliver the first-ever live audio channels to Delta, Northwest, and United Airlines. Live news, sports, and talk radio – original programming customized for the domestic business traveler – via satellite, ultimately to 458 aircraft. Since we were spending Gannett's money, it was called USA Today Sky Radio.

They let me gut the 27<sup>th</sup> floor and hire 28 on-air people. Nielsen measured us, and we got on the buy for the sporty new Toyota Avalon. Ask Jim Bohannon. We had him chatting-up Willie Loman on the red-eye. Bleeding-edge stuff, back before we'd heard the words "dot com."

### **"Your position has been eliminated."**

When Gannett couldn't take the bleeding any more, they fired us all, on New Year's Eve 1994. As 1995 dawned, I became McVay Media's News/Talk consultant, retreating from too-new media back to legacy media.

If legacy media has just ejected you, your timing is better than mine was, to vault-ahead to new media.

Got that copy of USA Today? During my 3 years as VP-of-something-momentarily-cool there, I learned the architecture of The Nation's Newspaper, which they've recently re-vamped on its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary. 'Looks like they're still figuring-out that big blue dot, but that's not the page I want you to turn to.

Find USA Today's iconic TV listings page. It used to be the last page of the entire paper, the back of the Life section. Now, it's one-page-from-the-back. Remember how it used to look? For 30 years, it had been a full-page grid of network and cable listings. Not anymore, because the definition of "television" has changed.

Note that the bottom quarter of the page is now Internet video programming highlights, in a slightly larger font than the legacy listings now squeezed above. For instance, the listing for CNN – which Larry King left – has been reduced in size to accommodate the listing for Larry's new show on Hulu.

### **Netcasting Success Story-of-the-Year: Glenn Beck**

You might think he's daft, but you can't call him stupid. Forbes magazine's "World's Most Powerful Celebrities" list tells us he's making more money this year than Tom Cruise.

What Beck is doing with non-transmitter-based media is profoundly innovative, profoundly better-timed than my 1991 new media romp, and profoundly pertinent to owners of FCC-licensed transmitters.

Arguably, he's stealing from radio, since every minute spent consuming Beck's non-transmitter-based content is a minute purloined from transmitter-based programming. Because so many Beck affiliates automate, after firing the humans, and so few station managers bother to listen, it's the perfect crime. He is relentlessly, systematically re-directing listeners' attention for the 21 hours he's not broadcasting. And we're letting him. But if you've just been fired, you're probably not all that sympathetic.

Beck isn't the only one hiding in plain sight. Rush Limbaugh is actually prompting tune-out *during* his radio show, via all those contextual plugs for the Dittocam, audio-of-which is asynchronous with radio.

## **2012 Netcasting Success Story Runner-Up: Tom Leykis**

After being off-air THREE YEARS while his play-or-pay contract ran-out, Tom Leykis' do-it-himself webcast pulled a launch-week cume of 401,180 listeners, AQH 1575, TSL 30 minutes PER DAY. He auctioned-off his first spot on eBay for \$1225. And, like Pandora, The Tom Leykis Show touts MRC-accredited Triton Webcast Metrics.

And do you believe the radio-without-transmitters battle in Boston?

- On Halloween, WFNX.com – “The Evolution of Radio” -- launched, reviving the brand of a now-defunct 28-year Alternative FM. It is air-staffed with ex-WFNX DJs 9A-6P and it's an app and web site with audio/video/other in-character stuff. It's promoted by The Boston Phoenix, which sold its FM to Clear Channel.
- Format competitor RadioBDC is owned by print competitor The Boston Globe, and prominent on its Boston.com.
- And when CBS flipped legendary WBCN's 41-year format, the rock & roll moved online and to HD-2.

And in Chicago, Smooth Jazz is back, online, after being abandoned on-air by WNUA & WLFM-LP. DJ Rick O'Dell created SmoothJazzChicago.net, and veteran Chi-town Smooth Jazz air personalities Bill Cochran and Scott Adams joined him.

### **Small IS the new Big.**

One person with a \$75 Flipcam does it all for my client Neuhoff Media's Springfield IL sports station, and management says Channel1450.com became profitable in 4 months. The site is about high school sports, the-solid-gold-appeal-of-which is one reason Warren Buffett is buying small-town newspapers.

With the skill set you've honed as a broadcaster, you are a new-platform publisher waiting to happen. Several broadcast news people displaced in recent years have launched online publications, either hyper-local newspapers, or special-interest topics of worldwide appeal.

Noodle this: What are you personally, rabidly, interested in, that others who share your interest support with their attention and even-just-a-little do-re-mi?

And this: For which local retailers did your on-air work create value for the company that just fired you? ;)

Likely baby step: Create informative (ideally time-sensitive) and/or provocative shortform audio vignettes. Upload 'em to a server and Tweet the URL.

By doing so, you're on what our publisher Michael Harrison has been calling “The Media Station.” Anyone who uses Twitter online can click-to-listen. Those who Tweet on smartphones or iPad simply touch-to-listen. Voila! You're in-the-pocket, where AM/FM radio used to be.

Any ideas? The sky's the limit.

*For the step-by-step on next steps, download a free 161-page how-to manual on podcasting, at  
[www.HollandCooke.com](http://www.HollandCooke.com)*