



Holland Cooke Media

www.SolidGoldWeekend.com

Confidential:
Negotiation Checklist for weekend Talk Radio

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What radio stations want to sell you isn't necessarily your best dollar value.

What to ask for instead.

Sounds pretty ominous, eh? It's not a hype! What you're about to read sure *is* insider stuff, and can S-T-R-E-T-C-H the marketing dollars you invest in Talk Radio. But I assure you that the stations I work with aren't coughing-up blood. They already know what you're about to read; because what follows explains how smart stations help people like you get results, by using Talk Radio the smart way.

When you invest in weekend Talk Radio, stations want to sell you three things:

1. **Weekend show:** "Longform" is the radio lingo. And -- properly-exploited -- pay-for-play call-in hours can be a superb referral generator for professional services providers and other "how-to" experts. Many on-air attorneys drum-up business by offering that "the lawyer is in, the meter is off." And it's common to hear callers themselves ask "May I call you at the office on Monday?"

So about that hour you're buying:

- How many minutes = "an hour?" It's seldom 60, because there's probably news at the top of the hour. And those commercials that air within your hour(s): Are they yours? Other advertisers'?
 - And how will listeners -- other than those who happen-upon it in real-time -- know that your weekend show exists? Without promos that air at other times, your show is a well-kept secret. Ask about "ROS promos" ("Run Of Schedule," meaning that they air throughout the week).
 - How will the station help you do a good show? Rhetorical question. They probably won't. Many station managers don't even listen on the weekend. Which is why I'm so busy coaching folks like you.
2. **Commercials:** As-opposed-to those ROS *promos*, which invite listening to your show. Expect the station to recommend that you also purchase *commercials* -- which pitch your product or service -- and also air throughout the week.
 3. **What they call "Digital."** Station management is under immense pressure to monetize Internet accoutrements, but few stations do this well. You'll need to be directive and specific, and this report will outline specific recommendations.

Your best bet?

You want all three of the above, and then some...

Fundamentally, Radio is a “Reach + Frequency” machine.

- “Reach” is how many people hear your message; “Frequency” is how many times they hear it. Research demonstrates that listeners don’t absorb your message until they hear it 3 times.
- Compared to other media, Radio has broad Reach, so you can afford to expose your message with the Frequency sufficient for it to sink-in. Accordingly, it makes sense to re-think marketing dollars you’re presently spending elsewhere. You’re better-off concentrating on fewer media, rather than diluting Frequency by dissipating your resources over too many media. For instance: If you can figure out how to get-out-of your Yellow Pages contract, you’ll get lots more bang-for-the-buck using Radio smartly.
- Ample Frequency can slam-dunk a marketing slogan, your mantra. For decades, as the rest of his commercial copy changes week to week, a car dealer might have consistently closed by warning, “DON’T MAKE THE EIGHT HUNDRED DOLLAR MISTAKE!” Repetition has drilled-in that line, associating it with that particular advertiser.

Based on my experience...

Negotiation Checklist

Weekend Longform

How many minutes comprise the “hour” you’re buying?

- Minus the aforementioned top-and-bottom-of-the-hour news breaks, and weather forecasts and other station information elements and station promo announcements, it’s fewer than 60. Then subtract commercial time and you’re really buying about 40 minutes of content.
- So if the station charges, say, \$600 for the hour, don’t think $\$600 / 60 \text{ minutes} = \$10/\text{minute}$. It’s more like $\$600 / 40 = \$15/\text{minute}$. Which is why we want to make every...single...minute...count.

About those commercials within your show. Expect one of three arrangements:

1. The station retains all commercial time, so you only net some 40 minutes of content time.
2. The station retains no time within your show to run its other advertisers’ commercials, and you pretty-much fill the hour between newscasts, etc.
3. Some of the in-show commercial avails are the station’s, and some are yours.

One at a time:

Situation #1 (you get no in-show spots) is common.

- Really smart stations will realize that your program is a friendly environment for advertising products and services related to your topic. Example: If you’re a Realtor, your show would be a good place to advertise remodelers, landscapers, plumbers, etc.

- More typically, station spots that get plugged-in are ROS commercials that aren't pertinent to your topic, which isn't making-the-most-of that airtime. Sure, someone interested in real estate *might* also be shopping for a new car, but it's more likely they shopping for (or trying to shop) a home, or shopping for the \$60,000+ in various related purchases that accompany each home sale.
- Just between us? The show itself is your "commercial." And you will appreciate the commercial time-outs, to catch your breath, plan the next segment, screen callers, or run-down-the-hall. So you could probably live with having no in-show commercials.
- That said: If the station's proposal includes no in-show spots, seem unpleasantly surprised that you're not getting-all-60-minutes, and use that to lever ROS show promos.
- Important: Cap the total number of commercials, to ensure adequate time for your show content. Stipulate 10 minutes total, and negotiate-back-to 12 if necessary. 'Might not be. Money talks.

Situation #2 (the station places none of its commercials in your show):

- THAT station is asleep-at-the-wheel...and you can work their neglect to your advantage. As you make your deal, ascertain that you can sell commercials within your show.
- Goal: Self-liquidate your airtime expense.
- Back to the real estate example: If you're an agent, your sponsorship prospects include your punch list vendors (plumbers, landscapers, other home-related products and services). It's O.P.M. ("Other Peoples' Money") that may be right under your nose.

Situation #3 (you and the station share commercial inventory within your show):

- Like situation #1, this is more common than situation #2.
- Seek to keep half of the in-show commercial inventory, and let the station run their spots in the other half. And...
- Stipulate which products and services each party may not sell within your show. Obviously your competitors are unwelcome. Ditto direct competitors of the sponsors you plug-into your avails. If, for instance, you bring-in a bank you deal with as a sponsor, you'll want to avoid other banks also airing in your show. So you'll want to reserve the bank category as yours. Stations are accustomed to this practice. Baseball and football play-by-play deals often reserve beer and other categories for network sale only.

You also want to negotiate production issues. What manpower does the station provide?

- Some weekend warriors solo. I work with a real estate agent who was previously a broadcaster. And some non-career-broadcasters take-to radio so well that they run their own control board. But you should NOT plan to if you're new to radio.
- Ascertain that the station will provide what they call "a board-op" ("board operator," more lingo that'll make you sound savvy when negotiating). If not, consider this a deal-breaker.

- Ideally, you'll also have a call screener. In major market stations, the union contract may require the station to staff a screener. Elsewhere it's iffy, but worth asking for. If the station won't provide a screener, bring your own. Teenagers can handle this job just fine, if properly trained; and you'll find my Screener Tips among the handouts you can download at www.SolidGoldWeekend.com
- Smart Talk Radio stations make a pile of money with brokered weekend shows. And really smart stations will have a staff announcer on-duty as your in-studio co-host -- possibly doubling as board-op -- so you can concentrate on the show, and not about all that hardware you're sitting in the middle of.

Commercials

- Try to keep your eyes from glazing-over as station reps quote ratings and talk about "Average Quarter Hour Share" (radio's ratings scoreboard) and "Cume" (what newspapers call "circulation").

Should they quote a Reach figure, ask: "Is that 'Net Reach?' Or 'Effective Reach?'"

That'll get 'em sitting-up straight. (Net Reach is how many people hear your ad once. Effective Reach is how many people hear it three times.)

Ask to see the station's coverage map. If the station is FM, you'll see fairly round concentric circles. If it's an AM station, the concentric patterns could be amoeba-shaped. In either case, you should only count on being heard loud-and-clear in the innermost pattern. Is that where your prospective customers live?

- The rep may use "ROS" and "TAP" ("Total Audience Plan") interchangeably. Translation: 24/7 exposure, much of which isn't mathematically useful for your purposes. Few advertisers want to air at 3AM; but even some of what-the-station-regards-as prime time hours are less-valuable to you than other hours the station might consider off-peak. Example: If you're that real estate agent, and you're doing an Open House on the weekend, Saturday/Sunday mornings/middays are prime time to invite in-car listeners to drop-by.
- Lingo opportunity: A diligent rep might beat-you-to-the-punch. But if not, ask if the rep's proposal is based on "OES" ("Optimum Effective Scheduling," which, mathematically, attains Frequency of 3 by distributing commercials evenly Monday through Sunday 6AM-Midnight). Note their reaction when "OES" trips-off-your-tongue, oh-so nonchalantly.
- Tactical lingo: Tell 'em you want "BTA" ("Best Time Available") at the ROS/TAP rate, and let the arm-wrestling begin.
- More lingo that'll help when you're negotiating rate: "Monday Verticals" and "Front-loading." At many radio stations, commercial inventory is plentiful on Monday and gets scarce by Friday. So consider working supply-and-demand in your favor. The radio station can't monetize an unsold Monday commercial "avail" on Tuesday. So front-loading your spots early in the week could:
 - a) help solve the station's use-it-or-lose-it problem; and
 - b) pump-up your Frequency on those days, making your message more conspicuous then.

- Still arm-wrestling? Good! Yet-more lingo: “Pulsing.” Discuss scheduling high-Frequency bursts, i.e., airing your spots one-week-on-one-week-off.
- To maintain rate integrity on the Talk station you want to be on, expect the rep to offer bonus spots on sister stations. Some may be music FMs. Though not as effective as Talk Radio, these other stations can boost Reach. And – used properly – they can drive traffic to your weekend show and Internet assets.

About “Digital”

Every element of exposure you acquire in your deal with the Radio station is a call to action. You’re inviting prospects to:

- Phone-in their questions; OR...
- Call you off-air; OR...
- Drop by your office or store; OR...
- Read/See/Hear your various Internet-based assets, and possibly interact with you via Email.

One way or another, Radio is herding listeners into your Sales Funnel.

Good news: Research demonstrates that no – repeat, no -- other companion medium complements the Internet better than Radio. Yes, you should display your domain name everywhere you can. But putting it on a billboard over the Interstate doesn’t tend to produce the web traffic you’ll enjoy by using Radio to give listeners a reason to go there.

So as you negotiate with the Radio station, be mindful of how your exposure – both *on-air* longform (your show) and shortform (your commercials and promos), and *online* on the station’s web site -- can drive traffic to your web-based assets.

Stations are under hellish pressure from ownership to monetize the Internet, and they’re still figuring out how to do so.

- Expect your rep to show you various packages, i.e., ad banners and tiles on the station site.
- Assume that these packages are negotiable. The value stations attach to their Internet inventory is softer than the value they attach to on-air commercial inventory. So they will massage the numbers – allocating X% of your investment to on-air and Y% to digital – to show the boss they’re selling both.
- On-air remains “the dog,” and digital is still “the tail,” so it will probably be easier to negotiate value-added digital items than to negotiate rate for spots that air during the hours you want your spots to be heard.

Digital exposure you should seek includes:

- Banners: Admittedly people who visit web sites are becoming “banner blind.” Still, the radio station is (or should be) giving listeners dozens of reasons to visit its site, and that benefits your-being-there. Being-there *where* is worth discussing. Will your banner be displayed

above-the-fold (visible without scrolling)? In a rotation with other advertisers' banners? On which pages of the station site? Ask to see server stats.

- **Links:** When someone clicks on that banner, what happens next? They go to a page within the station's site that's about your show? To the home page of your own web site? "Deep-linked" to specific content within your web site?

If you and the station can keep-up with the copy changes, one real effective tactic would be for on-air commercials which air outside your weekend show to be voiced by you, perhaps you-being-interviewed-by a station host, offering an informative tip, and inviting listeners to have a virtual-look-see online (deep-linked to detail on that topic on your web site). This technique has clicked for auto dealers whose commercials tout a Deal-of-the-Day creampuff in the used car inventory, of which listeners can virtually kick-the-tires online.

- **Advertorial:** If you do a weekend radio show, it's ask-the-expert, FAQs answered/explained/demystified by approachable you, right? You could also re-iterate helpful factoids as online text, possibly a weekly "Ask [your first name]" column, 200 words or so. And listeners will know it's there, because you'll get the station to commit to...
- **On-air support:** Ask that the station's web site promos mention your content.

And note this distinction: You want promos that mention your *content*, not just your name.

Candidly, typical station-scripted web site promos are poorly written. Station-centric invitations to "CHECK OUT OUR WEB SITE" presume that busy people are sitting that still. The station's idea of mentioning you in web promos is "CHECK OUT OUR WEB SITE, SPONSORED BY [your name]." Ugh.

It would benefit the station and you lots more if the station's web site promo offered more take-home pay, i.e., "SELLING YOUR HOME? BARRY O'BRIEN EXPLAINS HOW TWO INEXPENSIVE LANDSCAPING TOUCHES CAN ATTRACT MORE PROSPECTIVE BUYERS."

Offering benefit-laden online content in this fashion can increase site traffic dramatically.

- **Production support issues:**
 1. Who produces web banners?
 2. CAN the station accommodate the copy changes described above?
 3. Airchecks (lingo for recording-of-your-show):
 - a) The station should provide routinely, for you to repurpose as-you-see-fit, i.e., podcasts.
 - b) Will the station archive your shows on its web site? Doing so exposes your work to listeners who didn't hear your show in real-time; and on-air promos can allude to show content.
 - c) Unlikely but worth asking for: Could a station production person extract aircheck segments, for online archiving as snack-size single-topic tips? Example:

“SELLING YOUR HOME? BARRY O’BRIEN EXPLAINS HOW TWO INEXPENSIVE LANDSCAPING TOUCHES CAN ATTRACT MORE PROSPECTIVE BUYERS.”

Doing this could result in lots more consumption than the station simply archiving entire hours. Busy people don’t have time to sit-through or skim-through an entire hour for that one moment.

As I say, it’s a longshot that the station can support you on this level of detail, but it’s worth asking. It’s also worth you spiffing the production person – or someone else – out of your own pocket.

Then comes “The Columbo Close...”

Admittedly, it’s a dated reference. But as a negotiating tactic, it never gets old. Lieutenant Columbo was the 1970s TV super cop, the LAPD detective in the rumpled trench coat who always trapped the murderer in a confession.

His instincts were uncanny. Early in each episode, he figured out whodunit, and often it was someone who seemed to have an alibi. Typically, the second time he questioned the suspect, the suspect was getting nervous and testy. Then, to the suspect’s momentary relief, Columbo would apologize for the intrusion, and exit...only to return moments later with “One more thing...”

When (the radio rep thinks) you have negotiated your deal, here are some last-minute concessions you might ask him or her to toss-in:

ROS promos for your weekend show:

- “How will anyone know I’m doing a show, unless you tell the station’s whole audience?”
- Expect non-specific assurances that “we promote all our weekend shows,” and that you’ll get “some promos.” Ask how many, per week; and if your rep can’t commit to a couple dozen weekday promos without checking with someone at the station, hold-off signing the deal.
- And get it in writing.

Weekday Shortform:

- Commercials I craft for weekend broadcasters I coach are less “selling messages” than “telling messages,” commercials disguised as informative features, 60-second FAQ-type vignettes that differentiate you from competitors’ sound-alike pitch messages.
- Informative “telling messages” are best use of bonus spots the rep may offer on music FM sister stations. Copy we write includes a promo for the weekend show.

One final tip: In addition to whatever out-of-show on-air promotion you can get *the radio station* to commit, swap in-show promos with the station’s *other weekend hosts*. Are attorneys, foodies, veterinarians, and other professionals brokering airtime? Offer to swap listeners, by swapping promos for-each-others’-shows in-each-others’-shows.

About YOUR show...

Every great player has a coach.

May I offer you the direction you're not getting from your station?

Call me to arrange for personal aircheck review, and specific direction that can multiply your R.O.I. **401-330-6868.**

(Unavailable in some markets.)