Small Market. Big Advantage.

10 Fundamentals for More Listening and Better Advertiser Results

Holland Cooke

If you are a small market radio owner, you know how to do more with less. Your advantage is knowing the place you serve…and responding to what people (and retail advertisers) there need.

Here are ten fundamentals my clients will recognize as familiar HC lore. Putting them to work is more about focus than funding.

1. **Local is your advantage -- but useful local is your product.**

   Reading the minutes of last night's City Council meeting isn't enough. Explain what changes for the listener: roads to avoid, decisions to make, money to save.

   Your recurring qualification is that local content must be relevant, helpful, and habit-forming. Think of what you provide as day-to-day "survival information."

2. **Make it about the listener.**

   "Catch up when you wake up" is more inviting than claiming to be "The News Leader," because it tells listeners when to tune in and what they'll gain.

   "You" and "your" are magic words.

3. **Earn another occasion of listening.**

   Offer specific reasons to check back throughout the day (i.e., "for a quick Fox News update, every half-hour"). Predictable features, useful updates, and clear appointments can turn occasional listening into a routine.

   Invite evening play-by-play listeners to "catch up when you wake up."

   And tease what listeners will find useful same-time-tomorrow.

4. **Someone JUST got into the car.**

   So get 'em up-to-speed, at-the-speed-of-life.

   Identify yourself, establish what's happening, and explain what's coming next. Announce frequency, website address, and instructions for other ways to listen.

5. **Protect the attention you sell.**

   Unhelpful repetition, commercial copy clichés, rambling, and excessive clutter

weaken the product advertisers are buying. Content must reward the time listeners give you; so tiring spot loads can undermine that bargain.

6. **Sell the advertiser's desired outcome.**

   Ask your prospect what success would look like: More service appointments? More weekday lunch customers? More kitchen-remodeling inquiries? Build your proposal around that goal.

7. **Make commercials useful and believable.**

   Start with the consumer's need, then introduce the advertiser's solution. Favor clear language, specific benefits, and an understanding of the consumer's situation. Empty hype and false urgency can squander credibility.

8. **Make good programming work more than once.**

   Extract the strongest interview answers, familiar show bits, and useful news updates. Name and package them for replay, podcasts, email, and social media -- and sell sponsorships.

9. **Follow listeners onto their other devices.**

   Your app, smart-speaker presence, website, and social feeds extend the station's usefulness. Promote them on-air and apply programming discipline to that content. Give advertisers coordinated campaigns and evidence of response.

10. **Use your size to build relationships and move resourcefully.**

    Work with local experts, independent journalists, and community businesses. Plan ahead around local events and seasonal needs.

The Big Idea

Treat Programming and Sales as interdependent:

- Useful content earns habitual attention;
- Effective advertising turns that attention into customer activity;
- Advertiser success sustains the station.

“But wait! There’s more!”

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