ED SHANE

CUTTING THROUGH

STRATEGIES AND TACTICS FOR RADIO

CUTTING THROUGH

Also by Ed Shane:

Programming Dynamics: Radio's Management Guide

Also from Shane Media:

Up Your Profile: Publicity Tactics For Radio

Power Selling Tactics

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Reading an author's acknowledgments is like listening to the winners at the Oscars or the Grammy Awards as they thank people behind the scenes. The fact is, as you undertake any endeavor, you learn it can't be done alone; and the people who contribute should be recognized. The format of my first book, <u>Programming</u> <u>Dynamics</u>, did not allow an opportunity to credit people who offered inspiration or encouragement. Because of that experience, I fought for this space on behalf of those who have helped to push this book towards reality.

The project might have been completed without my wife Pam as its editor, but not so quickly and certainly not so carefully. Her intelligence and creativity help protect readers from unnecessary rambling on my part. Her major contribution to this book, however, has been 20 years of allowing me to test philosophy and theory on her before it was written or spoken to less sympathetic outsiders.

Some of Alan Furst's contributions receive attribution in the text. Others do not because they came in brainstorm sessions about Shane Media Services' clients. He tends to ask "What if?" questions that shed light on problems and speed us toward solutions. There are lots of team contributions in the case studies I use in this book.

Speaking of case studies, the ones that discuss even minor details of research for or by our client stations have been approved by the companies involved. Shane Media advertises

that "notes from the boardroom don't show up in trade magazines," and confidentiality is important to us. My thanks to the stations that gave the OK.

An acknowledgment that should have been made in the previous book involves George Burns. I had the opportunity to compete with him in Atlanta, work for him as a PD in Los Angeles, use his consulting advice in Houston, then work as a consultant for Burns Media. George inspired volumes of original research that (finally) yielded "Perceptual Filters." I'm happy to say there's even more to come.

While computers certainly make our lives easier, they create their own brand of complexity. Ask any of the Shane Media support staff who had to sift through disk after disk to organize my original drafts and material from our client newsletter, Tactics. Final shaping and nurturing of the text was done by Laura English. Her depth of understanding of both radio and TV was a great contribution.

Several chapters are continuations of ideas originally expressed in a variety of trade publications. Attribution is given to some on the "official" copyright page. Others, like Radio Business Report and the program book of the Country Radio Seminar, offered a forum for my ideas and stimulation for additional thinking.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION THREE: PACKAGING

SECTION FOUR: DETAIL

SECTION FIVE: REALITY

CUTTING THROUGH

INTRODUCTION
THE PRICE IS RIGHT

H ow can you listen to that much radio? I was asked at a party in London. It was the same week in 1988 that the British government released a White Paper recommending additional radio and TV services. Debate filled the talk shows and the cocktail receptions. Questions began to fly when I was introduced as a broadcast consultant from the States.

The answer about "that much radio" was easy. I assured my hosts that no one was expected to listen to all the 10,400 radio stations then on the air in the U.S. However, I described the comfort and the convenience of tuning in a station that plays nothing but Country and, when the mood strikes, turning to a rock station or an all-news stations.

The British had a difficult time understanding that concept when faced with only 78 radio stations in the entire United Kingdom. The BBC served most needs, but it required being at the right place at the right time to have programming match your mood. Commercial broadcasting in the U.K. had begun to provide some vertical programming like all-news and all-rock, but it didn't compare to what we have in the U.S.

In Britain, they pay for their radio listening. The price is the annual license fee that's as regular as income tax or auto registration. It makes citizens in the U.K. very sensitive about their broadcasting, and very proud of it. Because Britons pay for

radio, they feel they "own" it.

The people I talked to called British broadcasting "the best in the world." They were echoing descriptions that were in the government White Paper, but it rang true.

The biggest fear I heard expressed: "If Britain adds more radio and TV channels, the quality will go down, just like it has in the U.S." There's a prevailing feeling over there that our radio and TV is still the "vast wasteland" described in the 60s.

When I returned home, I reflected on the <u>value</u> of what we do, especially in radio, and I constructed a fantasy:

PRODUCED WITH DIGITAL EFFECT:	*"Another T-T-T-T-Ten dollar music sweep from FM 99."*
LIVE ANNOUNCER OVER SYNTHESIZER BURSTS:	*"The Judds, Randy Travis, and Highway 101, wrapping up another Ten-Dollar-Ten-In-A-Row on FM 99. That's just Ten dollars added to your FM 99 monthly billing for a full 35 minutes of Country Favorites."*
JINGLE OUT:	*"It's a Ten-Dollar-Ten-In-A-Row Weekend! . . . FM 99."*

Ten dollars is a good price, a bargain, thanks to the weekend special. Usually, Ten-In-A-Row costs between \$35 and \$45, or a dollar a minute. At average usage (about $8^1/_2$ quarter hours per week), that's \$207.00 a week or \$428.00 a month per listener. Special weekend rates and off-peak charges for late night and overnight bring the monthly billing to approximately \$500.00 per listener. Not bad when you consider a cume of 78,600!

Sure, it's fantasy to think about paying for radio listening. Yet those same listeners pay five-to-seven dollars for a ticket to a current movie. A concert costs \$20.00 or more, especially if travel to a nearby city is involved. A CD is \$10 - \$12 with the average discount.

What would happen if listeners <u>did</u> have to pay?

- They would ask for a complete demonstration before they agreed to your price.

- They'd ask for a money-back guarantee.

- They'd haggle, hondle, and bargain.

- They'd ask for barter. ("Can I trade for this bass boat?")

- They'd insist on hearing records you'd never play.

- They'd demand to speak to the manager.

- They'd threaten to take their business elsewhere.

In other words, they'd act like <u>customers,</u> just like they do at Wal-Mart, at McDonald's, or at Kroger.

Let's take a look at the potential radio consumer: We know that he or she does not <u>mind</u> using radio because Arbitron weekly cume figures hold firm at 93 percent or better. We also know that radio listeners perceive enough value in their stations to tell friends about them and to ask the boss to let them listen at work.

We know that radio maintains consistent listenership even with fragmentation. Since 1976, the national quarter hour averages have increased from a 15.6 share to as high as 17.1. At the same time, network and local TV shares are sagging. In the face of fragmentation, radio increases, TV decreases. That's a victory for radio.

So here's the big question: Would <u>your</u> station's listeners continue to listen if they had to pay for the privilege?

The answer's not easy. If you say "No," then you admit your station has little value. Your job is to develop tactics that make every day worth paying for.

That's what this book is all about.

1
STRATEGY
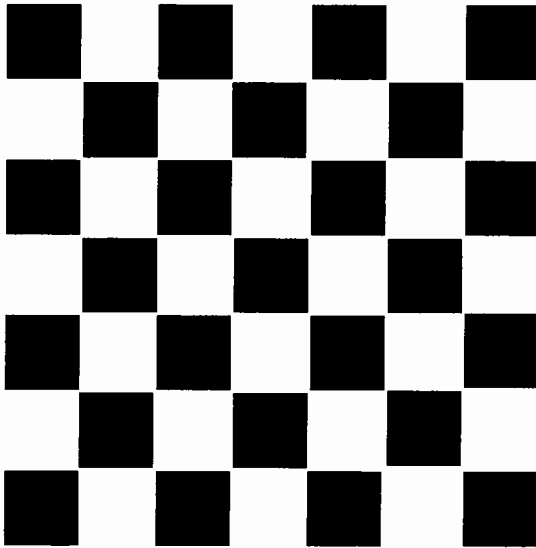
CHAPTER 1
THE POLAROID NATION

Welcome to the Polaroid nation. Instant pictures, instant replay, instant gratification, instant polls, and instant analysis.

It seems there's a new poll every day. In fact, there are hundreds of research polls each month. For example: "Roper Reports" showed that 42 percent of Americans use less salt to control their weight, that 95 percent approve of radio and TV PSA's, that 41 percent fear snakes, and that 26 percent are afraid of public speaking. Roper publishes data weekly.

A national study by American Banker magazine reported 61 percent "very satisfied" with their principal bank while a third of Americans called the financial system "unhealthy." That's from the 1990 study; there's one each year. The U.S. Travel Data Center reports three quarters of American Express cardholders take weekend trips, and that 30 percent do their shopping on weekends. Those studies are not regularly scheduled.

University of Toronto research found women who call themselves "Ms." are perceived to be motivated and career-oriented. That was a one-time research project. A Gallup Poll indicated that half of American adults displayed yellow ribbons and U.S. flags during the Persian Gulf War. Gallup polls weekly.

You get the idea. There are lots of research studies going on all the time. The newsletter research alert reviews approximately 30 new ones every two weeks! If they're not called

polls, they're "surveys" or "studies." Politicians watch them.
Reporters analyze them. Businesses live by them.

Every radio station has made some decision based on
research, whether they conducted it themselves, subscribed to
syndicated surveys like Arbitron and Birch, or reacted to a trend
reported by a trade magazine.

Polling is a way of life, a means to intelligence about our
audience. It's instant feedback from our marketplace. Using the
word "polling" seems to diminish the idea of research. That's
because polling conjures some binary answer: Smith or Jones
for Governor; yes or no to the President's proposal; approval or
disapproval of the bank resolution.

While there's no reason to believe it's true, the word
"polling" conjures "fad," while "research" indicates "trend."
What's the difference between fads and trends? Fads get all the
press. Fads are fashion. Fads are on MTV, in People magazine,
on "Entertainment Tonight." They are short term.

Trends, on the other hand, take place slowly, over months
or even years. The variation from measurement to measurement
is often so slight that it's perceived as no variation at all. Trends
take time, and they have long term impact.

Pet rocks were fads. So were digital watches, hula hoops
(twice, now) and pens with clocks. Trends are not products or
services in themselves. Trends create products or services. The
trend towards convenience yielded the microwave oven. The
trend toward instant communication put a fax machine in every
office.

The demand for quality is a trend. Quality, by its nature,
equates to time and a sense of permanence. The return to
basics, to traditional values, is a trend. It's a reaction to the
greed decade.

In the 1960s, people called it a fad when unmarried
couples lived together. ("They're just going through a phase,"
parents sighed.) Today, however, the nontraditional family is a
reality, far beyond trend. Marriage rates are down. Couples
living together have increased by one million since 1980. The
traditional family (husband, wife, and two kids under 18 at

home) is only 26 percent of the total, according to 1990 Census figures. That's down from 40 percent in 1970.

The new descriptions of households include live-alone singles; live together singles divided into romantics and non-romantics; opposite sex and same sex; single parents; refilled nests (adult "kids" moving home); and blended families (his plus hers).

TRENDS

The return to family values. This is not a contradiction to the change in the makeup of the American family. People living together (whatever the relationship) schedule group outings; they eat together; they attend church and practice religion. Old traditions are being applied to new situations in "thirtysomething" style. There's a new breed of warm-hearted, sentimental men.

Nostalgia is big: Classic Rock and Oldies radio, electric trains, psychedelic colors, baseball cards and the Mazda Miata conjure landmarks along memory lane.

Romance is back. Paralleling the wave of nostalgia is a desire to restore life's romanticism, mystery, and adventure. It's the basis of the move toward "reality" vacations — walking on the Great Wall of China, standing in Red Square, circling the world on the Concorde.

New experiences count, too: climbing the riggings of a sailing ship as part of the crew, hiking through what's left of the rain forests, scaling sheer cliffs in the Rocky Mountains. The more danger in the experience, the better. Mountain climbing counts. So does driving race cars. There are business "schools" that end their sessions with fire-walking. Conquering the odds adds to self-image.

Local pride. Every city has at least one big annual celebration. Houston International Festival. San Antonio's Fiesta. Atlanta's Dogwood Trail. Des Moines' "Seniom Sed" (that's "Des Moines" spelled backwards — Iowans need amusement). Brierfield, Alabama, stages a "Bluegrass and

Heritage Music Festival." Naples, Florida, has its "Tropicool Fest." Madisonville, Kentucky, holds "Mule Day" at the Fairgrounds each May.

Smallish towns are funding arts organizations just like the big cities. Consider the Greenwich Symphony, just 60 miles up I-95 from the diverse classical music offered in New York City. There's a symphony orchestra in Evansville, Indiana. During the 1991 Mozart bicentennial, the "OK Mozart Festival" was organized in Bartlesville, Oklahoma.

The aging of America. Baby boomers between 35 and 44 are a huge population bulge. Each day of the 1990s, 10,000 people will turn 45 years of age.

The median age of the U.S. is increasing, but very slowly (so slowly it must be a trend!). Between 1950 and 1990, the median increased by only two years — from 30 to 32. In 1970 it had actually declined — to 28 — because of baby boom births.

America's graying doesn't mean the end of youth culture. The baby boom is causing a boom of its own with four million births a year. Kids have tremendous impact on buying decisions. Group outings by the 90s family mean group decisions at the grocery store, at restaurants, even in auto showrooms.

On the other hand, the new configuration of households means that there will be sizeable numbers of people who grow old without children. These people will want to feel young and think young. Advertising is expected to take a fantasized view of aging, shaving off 10 to 15 years where possible.

TREND WATCHING

Part of our job at Shane Media is tracking public attitudes and sorting the data into fads and trends. We study consumer research and polls. We read speeches by trend-trackers like John Naisbitt, Daniel Yankelovich, Faith Popcorn, Reis and Trout, and others. We clip newspapers and magazines for a sense of what people are thinking. The lead articles help, but there's a wealth of intelligence in the features and the business sections.

If I'm in a new town I go to magazine racks in grocery

stores and pharmacies. You can tell a lot about the people in the neighborhood by what magazines are stocked. If there are more copies of <u>Modern</u> <u>Bride</u> than of <u>First</u> or <u>Working</u> <u>Woman</u>, there's an insight on the age and attitude of the people nearby.

When I first went into Fayetteville, N.C., to work with Beasley's WKML, I was surprised to find the newsstand at Cross Creek Mall overloaded with raunchy explicit men's magazine. Then I discovered how close the mall is to Fort Bragg.

When it comes to trend-watching, we're fortunate to be able to conduct lots of research for our client stations. Perceptual research yields information on attitudes beyond which stations hold the rock or Country images. We've been able to track the development of concerns about the environment, the change of attitude from 80s greed to 90s decency, and the growing pride in local events and involvement in local issues.

You don't have to have piles of statistics from research interviews to detect trends. Just talk to real people. Ask questions and listen to the answers. That's all research is.

<u>Los</u> <u>Angeles</u> <u>Times</u> syndicated columnist Jane Applegate told the story of Barbara Rodstein of Harden Industries, a decorative bathroom fixture business:

> *Like most small-business owners, Barbara Rodstein listens to the news and reads the business pages. But when she really wants to figure out how the economy will affect her business, she pulls up to the drive-up window at Randy's Donuts in Inglewood, Calif., for a cup of coffee and an earful of news.*
>
> *"I guess I don't believe the government indicators," said Rodstein. "I want a more immediate response to what's happening in the world."*

Applegate advises, "Instead of hiding under a pile of paperwork and worrying about whether we really are in a recession or not, try visiting a truck stop or coffee shop. What you pick up in an hour will be more valuable than reading 10 business magazines."

She's right. Watch how people are spending their income. Peek in grocery carts to see what people are buying. Ask the

lunch truck drivers whether business is up or down: you'll know things are turning down when drivers tell you their customers are buying fewer items. In order to serve your audience and manage your station better, you've got to be in touch with the news you can really use.

Applegate recommends getting out of your office once a day to visit another business. Talk to as many people as possible wherever you go. Note the number of "For Rent" or "For Lease" signs.

USING TRENDS

What do we do with all this information once it's collected? Just as Domino's Pizza developed its 30-minute delivery tactic based on customer information, we are looking for direct applications.

When Shane Media's Alan Furst read a focus group report and discovered that working women have a high level of anxiety about what to cook each night, he advised stations to adjust at-work promotions, gearing the prizes to dinnertime, not lunchtime.

Through focused reading and personal interviews, we were able to predict the public impact of the Persian Gulf War while it was still pending. As early as November 1990, we were giving stations step-by-step contingency plans for coverage they finally put into play January 16, 1991. By tracking the same attitudes, we could judge how much war news a music station needed and how long to continue coverage after the war wound down.

Boomers are used to instant gratification. That translates to a "quick-fix" mentality. They're looking for easy answers like oat bran, Omega oil, and Dr. Atkins' all-meat diet. While radio can't offer magic health potions, we must recognize that our industry's disdain for Nutri/System advertising is not a feeling the public shares. They may hate the commercials, but they embrace the idea of losing weight and looking good.

The idea of instant gratification applied to radio means presentation of prizes <u>when</u> <u>they're</u> <u>won</u>, not weeks later. Hire a

delivery service to get the check to a winner in 30 minutes, "faster than Domino's!"

RADIO'S ROLE

What else can radio learn from everyday trends? There's an enormous amount of stress in American life, and there's no sign of its easing. Everybody thinks there's too much to do and no time to do it. Technological speedup hasn't helped. The computer offers instant calculation and instant analysis. The fax machine transmits instant written communication at unheard of speed.

Radio is part of the relaxation function, because it's a distraction from work, traffic, kids, noisy neighbors, and personal strife. Prizes should attack stress by making life more convenient, less complicated.

The surge in local pride is significant for radio because radio is the most local of media. Signal limitations create radio's geographic niche. The proliferation of signals has forced radio to serve narrow demographic and lifestyle groups, adding to localism in a non-geographic way. That's why stations in the same format are not interchangeable. One CHR might be a funky, dance oriented station, while another is sultry and rhythmic. A CHR in Des Moines should be mainstream. In Salt Lake City, it needs a rock edge.

We work with a lot of Country stations and none is like any of the others. KILT in Houston has a sound that wouldn't play at all in St. Louis. More to the point, it wouldn't even play in Dallas or Waco.

Trend watchers know how to gather and how to apply this kind of information.

CHAPTER 2
DEVELOPING A MISSION STATEMENT

When Akio Morita and his partner founded the Sony Corporation in a bombed-out Tokyo department store in 1946, they had a mission. The articles of incorporation called for their company "to do what others have not done," and to "keep the entire world in sight."

It was Morita in 1979 who thought that people might enjoy carrying tape recordings with them. He asked his engineers to develop a cassette player with light, comfortable headphones. Today the Sony Walkman is all-pervasive. It certainly fits the mission.

Developing a mission statement begins with the now-famous question, "What business are you in?" The classic study from Harvard uses railroads as the example: Had the railroads identified themselves as in the "transportation business," they would not be trapped on the ground while airlines preempt them today. Railroad magnates with broadstroke statements about their position in the transportation process would have been truly visionary. It's important to note that these goals, these missions, are most often visions.

In <u>Re-inventing the Corporation</u>, John Naisbitt and Patricia Aburdene set the same tone: "We believe the first ingredient in re-inventing the corporation is a <u>powerful</u> <u>vision</u> (emphasis added) — a whole new sense of where a company is

going and how to get there....The company's vision becomes a catalytic force, an organizing principle for everything that the people in the corporation do."

Sports figures take the idea of visualization literally, and research shows that athletes can improve performance if the visualization is accompanied by practice. Visualization has entered the domain of business. CEO's are forming new images of their business and where they ought to be going and are bringing those visions into reality. We do the same thing when we ask stations to visualize their typical, or average, listener. You'll learn how in Chapter 10.

DEVELOPING A VISION

Vision starts at the top with a mission statement from a company's leader. Steve Jobs founded Apple Computer "to bring technology to everyday people." Arbitron's parent company, Control Data, was founded by William Norris "to address society's major unmet needs as profitable business opportunities."

"Vision," as Naisbitt describes it, "is the link between dream and action." That link is also termed "alignment" by MIT's Peter Senge, a member of a team who worked with Naisbitt and Aburdene in seminars before publication of Re-inventing the Corporation. Alignment means synchronization with co-workers, an unplanned synergy that "surpasses expectations based on past performance," says Senge. In other words, get the vision into the mind of the employee and make the vision a guiding force in the company's day to day business.

Let me put this into perspective for radio. To develop an actionable vision, there are three steps in the process: examination, description, and application. The process cannot be taken casually if you wish your vision to pervade your operation. It requires a careful balance of soul searching and brainstorming. With each step I have listed typical questions. None is satisfied with a "yes" or "no."

1. EXAMINATION

- Describe the market. Is it mature?

- What are the station's assets to its listeners <u>now</u>?

- What new assets does the station hope to bring to the listener?

- Will bringing this new set of assets disrupt old listening patterns? If so, what? Who? Is it costly in terms of audience erosion?

- What are the station's liabilities in management's eyes?

- Do these liabilities also affect the listener?

- Who are our competitors? What are their strengths and weaknesses?

2. DESCRIPTION

- What are the key factors for success?

- What selling target do we <u>need</u> for the station?

- What demographic target gives us the proper mix to achieve our selling target?

- What lifestyle attributes do we fit as a station? How long will it take us to implement strategy?

- What percentage of the company's resources will be devoted to each market segment?

3. APPLICATION

- What conclusions do you draw from the answers so far?

- Write a statement of goals, based on the brainstorming done so far. Put down each thought as a complete

sentence, such as, "Our target audience is...." "Our average listener is...."

- Develop this statement in fits and starts, because that's the way it works. You'll write a line, scratch a phrase, add a word, etc.

- Edit ruthlessly. Cut sentences to phrases.

- Trim the statement to <u>five</u> <u>lines</u>.

The final number of lines is arbitrary, but it forces an editing job that provides a well-hewn mission statement. My questions reduce the statement to a narrow definition that applies to radio programming and marketing. You can draw it however you want; the steps and the questions are basically the same.

Radio stations have missions, sometimes stated, more often not. The basic radio mission is "to make money." Without a formal statement that defines <u>how</u> the station will make money, the mission might fail. Why? Some employees may think the mission is "to make jokes on the morning show" or "to transmit the stereo signal" or "to break the newest records."

While every business should have a mission statement, radio needs it even more. Almost everybody in the average radio station changes jobs several times a day. An account executive moves from retail expert to agency numbers-cruncher simply by driving from one appointment to the next. The on-air program director is comedian/entertainer for four hours a day, and manager/motivator the rest of the day. The GM is a salesman, psychologist, cheerleader, and public relations expert, depending upon the demands of the minute.

Development of a mission statement can help each staff member keep an overall goal in mind, regardless of what role is being fulfilled at the moment. That begins another topic, <u>communication</u> of the vision to all employees, regardless of rank or position. The station manager, the sales manager, the all-night jock, the receptionist — everybody — must understand the mission. Marketing guru Regis McKenna expressed it best in his

book, The Regis Touch: "It is critical each member of the management team understands his or her own role in the company, and that they all share a common vision of the company's plans and goals."

Marketing texts give us three rules of the trade: set goals clearly; communicate goals broadly; and create a business environment for achievement. The mission statement translates ultimately to the familiar "goal" described in marketing. "Mission" and "strategy" are often coupled because one is of little use without the other. In the case of the early days of Sony, Morita's mission came first, then the strategy to follow the mission. With each new idea or product came a new strategy designed to fulfill the original mission.

DEFINING THE MISSION

Here's another way your station can arrive at a mission statement if you don't have one: First, write down verbs that describe what your station should be doing. Verbs are important because they connote action. You'll come up with words like "sell," "entertain," "inform," "enrich," and (hopefully) a long list of others. Then do the same exercise in a management group, combining the individual lists of verbs, making note of duplications. The more people who use similar words, the more likely that the word applies to the perceived mission.

Second, decide what your priorities are. The process can be the same, listed first individually then in the group. Each member of the management team will have different priorities, based on experience or an area of responsibility. The final list must, however, reflect the sense of the group.

Finally, describe the essence of what your station is all about. Use verbs, because they convey the sense of action we talked about earlier. To get you started, here's Shane Media's mission statement:

> *Shane Media Services is in business to increase market share and revenue potential for our customers. We provide strategic management consultation, programming*

direction and custom perceptual research.

Don't copy our statement. Your mission statement must reflect your organization, your vision, your goals. Only the owner, corporate officers, or management team can construct a mission statement that fits. Specifics are always helpful for internal communication and motivation. I remember one that read: "Our mission is to attract listeners with bank accounts." When we launched KBFM in McAllen, Texas, for Dick Oppenheimer, the original mission statement said, "We will present a station that sounds like a new car smells."

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Once the mission statement is articulated, the next step is developing a strategic plan — a roadmap to goals that spring from the mission. Leaders of the company — again, ownership, corporate people, or the management team — must be responsible for outlining goals. Time management specialist Charles Hobbs put it this way:

> *"Company goals work better when developed from the top of the organizational hierarchy down. After the mission of the company has been clearly defined in writing and the company philosophy clearly set forth, the executive officers would be the first to write company goals."*

Goal-setting is the strategic planning process. Using strategic planning allows management to review past perform-ance, assess current status, then project the future. Effective strategic planning provides a roadmap to a destination — your company's goals. A definition of strategic planning from the National Association of Broadcasters:

> *"...a process for clarifying the basic purpose of an organization and devising long range plans for making that vision a reality."*

Coupled with accurate, on-going data collection, strategic

planning enables an organization to adapt and grow. The planning process is usually a group undertaking. Several members of corporate or station management staff take part. (It sounds like the process I described for developing a mission, doesn't it?) The team uses group discussion for brainstorming and analysis.

David J. Rogers, author of <u>Waging</u> <u>Business</u> <u>Warfare</u> and a frequent speaker at broadcast conventions, outlines the expectations of the process. His feeling is that strategic planning:

- Focuses the attention of staff on what is truly important and what must be accomplished
- Makes staff keenly aware of the need to adapt to environmental changes — competitors' challenges, listeners' lifestyles, and advertisers' priorities
- Sets priorities for action
- Helps to facilitate those actions
- Prepares management and staff to deal with unforeseen opportunities

I don't think David would mind my adding two more: (1) Strategic planning minimizes stupid decisions; (2) it allows managers to <u>act</u> rather than react.

Shane Media is often called on to facilitate strategic planning meetings, to lead sessions and to ask questions as the process unfolds. Some stations call us in to offer input after their own brainstorming sessions. Whichever the case, I find myself with a copy of our client's strategic plan close at hand. If I'm traveling to a station, their strategic plan goes in my Dayrunner notebook. It gives me the opportunity to check the strategy during any discussions. For instance, if an idea comes up about a new promotion, clients often hear me ask, "How does it fit the strategy?" It's my job to make sure everything the station does aims at the goals. If an idea or promotion doesn't support the strategy, it shouldn't be undertaken. Checking the plan tells me if it's right or not.

THE BENEFITS OF PLANNNING

A PD in a medium market in the southeast overheard me explaining my habit of carrying strategic plans in my briefcase. His response about his station was, "Strategy? My company doesn't even have an agenda." It was a joke; but when I examined the situation, I found him to be 100 percent correct. His manager did not have a plan of <u>any</u> kind. Further, the station's ownership had no plan. (The outward manifestation was a constant change of format and staff.) Because a strategic plan must be developed from the top, my friend could do little more than provide direction for his own department. If the owner and the manager are not involved in the planning, no one can expect them to become involved in the execution.

Too often I hear, "There's no time to plan." That's true. There's also no time to sell or to write or to fish or to drink or to procreate. Somehow we get it all done, because we create blocks of time in our schedules to do what we feel is important. Strategic planning needs to be put on the schedule.

Another reaction: "There's no way to know what the future will bring." That's good news. If we knew the future it would be much more frightening than our speculation about it. Not knowing is a motive for planning. It offers a chance to take hold of the future and to shape it to our own ends. Planning provides a framework that's already in place when the future arrives. It should be an active, changeable process. Like a roadmap, the strategic plan shows the most direct route to our destination; it also outlines alternate routes. Who knows when competition or other elements will flood our roads or cause them to ice over?

A manager said, "What do you mean, a three year plan? I'm trying to get through third quarter!" The day-to-day, quarter-to-quarter pressures won't get any easier if there's a strategic plan in place. However, each day and each quarter fit into an overall context — your longer-range goals. The question is, "How will my performance in the third quarter affect the strategy? Does it put me ahead or behind?" The strategic plan is a running scorecard on whether the station is achieving its goals.

A LONG VIEW

I was Radio Editor of <u>Broadcast</u> <u>Communications</u> magazine in the early 1980s, . Several articles I wrote were about radio and cable joining forces. Because of these, I was contacted in 1984 by Richard Wade, Chief Assistant to the Managing Director of BBC Radio. He was researching U.S. broadcasting to write the BBC's strategic plan addressing the year 1990. "The Nineties Study Group Report" outlined the British government's need for local and national radio in addition to the four existing BBC channels. Richard shared the confidential report with me. It was fascinating to read how his office projected local service, regional stations, Direct Broadcast Satellites, and other "innovations." U.S. radio outlets were far ahead of British facilities in terms of usage of FM and fragmentation of audience. At that time, cable had not been considered in Britain.

By 1988, the British government's White Paper on local broadcasting was released, prompting the question in the Introduction to this book: "How can you listen to that much radio?" The White Paper expanded on Richard's March, 1984, document. The vision was still there: the ideas, the possibilities, the innovations. The process is a case study in strategic planning: analysis of environmental conditions and a formulation of purpose. Unlike the BBC study, few strategic plans ever become the genesis for government policy.

The best reason for strategic planning is explained in this exchange from <u>Alice</u> <u>in</u> <u>Wonderland</u>:

"Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?"

"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat. "I don't much care where..." said Alice.

"Then it doesn't matter which way you go," said the Cat.

CHAPTER 3
THE BATTLE OF SPRING CITY

For two hours on a Saturday afternoon, I was the consultant to KSCC-FM, the number one radio station in mythical Spring City, USA, the 42nd Arbitron Metro with a population of 908,350. There are 27 stations in Spring City, including KSCC-FM and AM. The two are the market's top biller.

Spring City was concocted for the 1991 Country Radio Seminar and its "Case Study: Programming War Games" session. The session pitted two "stations" against each other — KSCC and a new challenger, WNGR-FM, also a mythical station. WNGR had been an also-ran AC, 13th in the market according to Spring City's Fall 1990 Arbitron. The decision was made to take WNGR Country and challenge KSCC's lead in the market and in the format.

The Country Seminar Agenda Committee assembled two teams to map strategy for each of the stations: the General Manager for KSCC was Fred Schumacher of KMPS, Seattle; PD was Kevin King of WKXC, Augusta, GA; and I was the consultant. At WNGR, the GM was J.D. Freeman of KMLE, Phoenix; Jim Robertson of KIKK, Houston, was PD; and Jay Allbright was consultant.

To enhance the sense of reality, there was a pre-recorded "presentation" about the Spring City market, describing the retail atmosphere (balanced), the business base

(light industry), and recreation areas (boating, water skiing, and golf). Annual revenues were described as $41,950,225.

Our team's job, of course, was to play defense and protect the six and a half million dollars in KSCC-AM-FM billings. We relied on two elements for our strategy: (1) We must be doing something right already; (2) we had a loyal core listenership. We also had several preemptive franchises: KSCC-FM had been Spring City's "12-in-a-Row station" for almost five years. The "in-a-row" battle had flared previously when another competitor waged an unsuccessful attack. In addition to "12-in-a-Row," the station positioned with "Continuous Country 105 FM." Our morning team had been in the market for some years and had great audience acceptance.

The new guys planned their attack as "New Country 92." They aimed for a younger audience with newer music and with a more aggressive morning show.

Moderator Dan Halyburton of KPLX in Dallas divided the Seminar meeting room into two groups, one to support each station team with questions, comments, and suggestions. The participants joined in the battle with a competitive spirit and with tactics for "their" team to employ.

The first step for the incumbent KSCC was self-analysis. The management team's first duty was to examine vulnerabilities in the KSCC product. Immediately, we decided to let KSCC-AM continue its course and concentrate on the FM, because that's where the new challenger was aiming.

Self-analysis includes perceptual research, close monitoring of station formatics, complete analysis of music — both titles and rotations. The key to self-analysis is questioning everything. This is the phase when a consultant is particularly helpful because the outside perspective keeps the forest in view, not just the trees. A thorough consultant will ask tough questions and facilitate answers.

Beyond self-analysis is gathering intelligence about the attackers. What's the ownership company's style? Do they have deep pockets? Who are the management team? What's their track record in similar situations? What do we know about their

consultant and the advice they'll get? How much of that advice are they likely to implement?

Both teams stressed that execution was going to be an important element in the battle for Spring City listeners. KSCC-FM talent had to execute better because they were confronted with head-on competition. WNGR had no choice but perfect execution. They knew they wouldn't get a second chance to make a first impression. The biggest win in this mythical battle, however, was that people attending the session were exposed to the ideas behind plotting a strategy.

A STUDY IN STRATEGY

When Shane Media worked with KFKF in Kansas City, that station faced a very real attack from a Country FM station in suburban Independence. In this case, the examination began with engineering data to measure the potential impact of the challenger. Then we studied Arbitron to see which Metro counties KFKF "owned" and which ones were owned by WDAF-AM, the existing Country competitor. Our reasoning was that if we dominated the listening in a county the new station could reach, we'd be at greater risk than WDAF, since the new station was on the FM band.

PRIME QUESTIONS

The first brainstorming session included Randy Odeneal, General Partner in Sconnix Broadcasting, KFKF GM Dan Wastler, and PD Jim Murphy. To collect as much information as possible, there were additional meetings with the programming staff and the sales department. Running lists were made of the answers to the following questions:

> Why are they doing this?
> What do we know already?
> How do we learn more?
> What do we want to have happen?
> How do we make it happen?

ANSWERING WHY?

The answers to "Why are they doing this?" were all speculative, but it was a fruitful brainstorm session. Among the answers we came up with:

- There's more than a 20 share of Country. The suburban station wanted a piece.

- The majority of profitable stations were Country.

- WDAF was successful in the new station's home county. An FM should have an advantage.

- Country is the strongest format in their home county.

- We felt Country shares hadn't hit their maximum in the market.

- There was a possibility of network compensation.

- Even though they were suburban, they could sell the facility as a "Kansas City" outlet if they play with the big guys.

- It could be ego-driven.

We still have no idea what the real motive was, but the exercise made us take the challenge seriously. We felt any encroachment of KFKF's turf was serious enough to try to repel. That's what the rest of the questions and the staff's answers were aimed at.

GETTING HARD FACTS

To answer "What do we know already?" we had a head start: The challenger was so proud of the new station they sought "free publicity" in local newspaper interviews. We read the press clippings line by line and plotted the possibilities. In the newspaper articles, we noticed a recurring phrase that sounded like a positioning statement, "Great Country Favorites," so we adopted it ourselves and went on the air with it the next day. The staff added valuable information because several of them had friends who had

been hired by the station.

The answers to "How do we learn more?" should be used to gain intelligence about any competitor:

- Day one: Log all liners.

- Monitor: Log the entire station. Track all clocks.

- The second week, track the music. (Choose the second week on the air so there's time for rotations to settle in.) Learn power and secondary gold plus all current rotations by logging all week.

- Thirty days out, monitor for music again. Once again, log a full week.

- Test any title we're not playing.

- Have part timers apply for jobs and report back.

- Talk to clients to collect media kits.

- Go to all early promotions.

- Call the request line. Ask questions.

- Call outdoor companies and TV stations to find out about media plans.

- Try to hire their personnel.

- Have lunch with their people.

- Do focus groups to ascertain impact.

- Add questions to callout.

EXAMINING RESULTS

To the question "What do we want to have happen?" our answers were easy. We wanted to minimize the new station's impact on KFKF. We wanted to maintain listener levels and

maintain revenue. We wished them no better than a struggling existence. How did we bring this about? We examined talk elements on KFKF and streamlined where we could in an effort to play more music. We made plans to step up visibility in the new station's home county. We vowed to steal any viable idea, anything that made them unique. For instance, any liner that felt right would quickly become a KFKF liner.

Remember the "Great Country Favorites" phrase? That was indeed their positioning statement. KFKF had it on the air before the new station launched its format. Their key language was preempted, thanks to the newspaper article.

The lesson in a real life self-examination is the chance to rid your station of vulnerabilities. The best time for such an exercise is before there's a challenger. Do it often enough and your station will be so strong no one will dare attack.

2
PERCEPTION
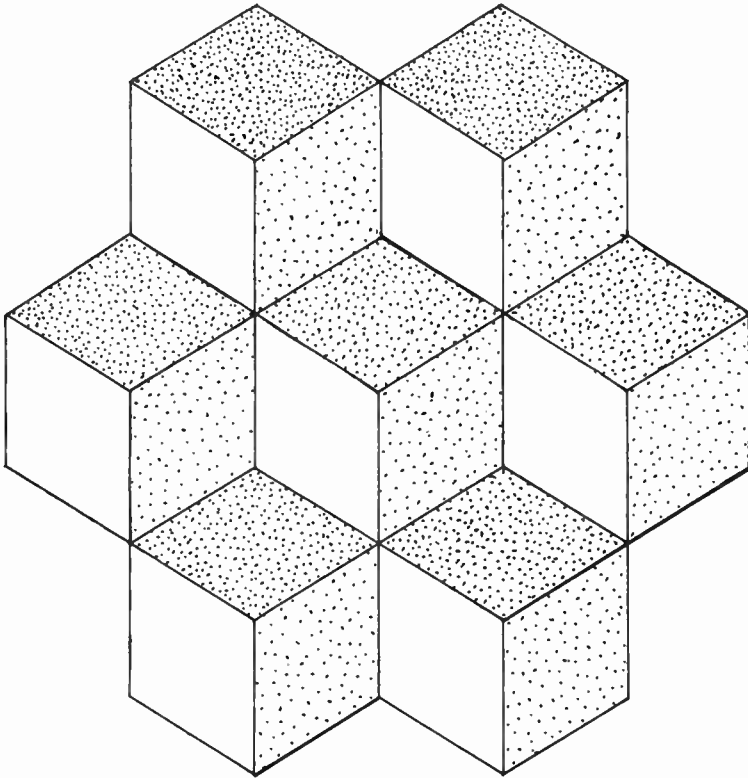
CHAPTER 4
THE FOUR P'S

An article in <u>Radio</u> <u>and</u> <u>Records</u> offered a guarantee that sounds too good to be true:

> Dominant numbers
>
> Favorable public perception
>
> Happy and motivated staff
>
> Money in the bank
>
> A successful radio station

Sounds more like an advertising come-on than an article, doesn't it? The text went on: "To cash in on the guarantee, your station must succeed in only four areas." I can stand behind the promise because I wrote that article for <u>R</u> & <u>R</u>. It was inspired by Peter McLane of Stoner Broadcasting who invited me to speak at his company's program director meetings in Annapolis. "Give my guys a 'win system,' Peter said when he outlined the agenda. "Maybe you can base it on the Four P's." The classic Four P's are the core of marketing theory — Product, Price, Place and Promotion. I wanted to use them as they stood and adapt the meanings for the programmers, but I changed my mind.

So many people had developed their own acronyms and mnemonic devices that I knew I wasn't limited to those four letters. Employment consultant Robert Half invented the

H.I.R.E. system for interviewing — "Half's Interviewing Record
and Evaluation." Motivation consultant Dennis Waitley
introduced WW — the Double Win. A professor at the University
of North Carolina had preempted marketing's Four P's with Four
C's — Consumer, Cost, Convenience, Communication. So I
proposed my own programming Four P's: Personality,
Performance, Promotion, and Perception.

PERSONALITY

I look at Personality from two perspectives. First is the
overall feeling or attitude the station conveys, the on-air image
that is a product of all the elements on the air. To me, that's the
station's personality, or "stationality." Second is the traditional
use of the word "personality," the people who make up the
station, primarily the on-air performers. Let's treat each
definition separately.

I often ask listeners to name stations that fit certain
attributes; for example, "Which station has the best news?" After
collecting responses to basic programming elements, I lead
listeners into further questions: "Which station has the most
fun?" and "Which station is the most serious?" (Often I receive
the same answer to both questions!) This perceptual research
lets me define, in the listeners' terms, exactly what each station
is. Can you identify your station's personality? Happy? sad?
fun? serious? informative? The question has nothing to do with
whether you want it to be that way — is it? You may have a
large news department, but what is your station's product?
News? Music? Both? The way you approach contesting or
community service will also influence your stationality.

Individual station personalities — the people — also
influence the overall station personality. The more your air
talent relates to your town and what the people of your town are
thinking, the stronger your station personality will be. Winning
personalities use landmarks to connect listeners visually. "You're
calling from under the bell tower" makes the listener know a
deejay is a citizen of the city.

To win at personality, the program director must pay constant attention to the air staff. You might say, "I'm not running a broadcast school. I shouldn't have to tell my jocks how to perform." Remember that a football team practices every day. They watch game films, develop strategy, then they scrimmage. Radio people have to play the game every day. I think we should be just as intense in our practice and training. Even the old pros need the benefit of aircheck critique and performance evaluation.

Don't forget the personalities who are <u>not</u> on the air. From sales staff to the receptionist, your employees project your station's image or "personality" every day.

PERFORMANCE

High-performance cars. High-performance audio equipment. High-performance people. Like any other field, in radio "high performance" means quality. Using a popular word, it means "excellence." Performance is measured by quality of the strategic plan, quality of talent, quality of news coverage, quality of <u>execution</u>. Have you noticed how an average talent at one station becomes a superstar at another? The talent doesn't change, but the execution does. The environment does. The direction does. Average talents become remarkable under remarkable circumstances: A motivating boss. A renewed will to succeed. A focus of attention upon performance.

Nowhere is there greater demand for excellence than in the morning show. Mornings set the pace for the day and help the station command top dollar. Because of the importance of mornings, the position of "producer" has been revived at many stations — an effort to free morning talent from some of the day-to-day burdens. The producer keeps the show on track; the talent keeps the creative juices flowing. Each inspires excellence in the other.

But great performance cannot stop at 10 a.m. Even if the rest of the broadcast day is "one thousand in a row with less talk," exacting execution is necessary. The records must be balanced for style, tempo, texture, and artist. Whatever is said to

introduce the thousand songs must be said in the language of the listener and delivered with conviction and believability. Like station personality, performance includes more than the on-air staff. When the telephone operator answers promptly, speaks with warmth and enthusiasm, and connects the caller correctly, station performance is reflected. When a sales representative provides good counsel on an advertising campaign, station performance is measured. When air talent is positive and friendly to listeners at a station promotion, station performance is measured.

Put in these terms, performance begins to sound like "station personality," doesn't it? They are necessarily intertwined. Winning performance equals a winning stationality.

PROMOTION

Have you ever been to a city where everything that goes on has the same radio station involved? At the airport is a sign, "WXXX welcomes you." On the front page of the local newspaper is a newsmaker with a WXXX mike flag stuck in front of him. The Rotary Club starts its meeting with the day's news and stocks read by the WXXX general manager. The major concerts are presented by WXXX, and when you buy your tickets, the WXXX call letters are on the envelope. Every place you drive you see WXXX bumper stickers and billboards. There are WXXX commercials on TV, but they're in "Cheers," not in the 2:00 a.m. movie. And the morning man does a feature on "Good Morning, Heartland," the number one local TV show.

There's more. The WXXX mascot is at all the high school pep rallies. A WXXX personality cuts the ribbon to open a new McDonald's, and another air talent offers free prizes to anyone who comes by the stereo store where she is "broadcasting live." During the ceremonies to kick off the building fund for the local children's hospital, "Granny Getwell" offers the first donation because she's been visiting with sick kids every day, sponsored by WXXX.

Can one station do all that? Yes, if it's committed and

organized. It takes both. The commitment motivates everybody on the staff; the organization keeps them coordinated. Winning at promotion means plugging the station in wherever possible, even where the station is not directly involved. Although advertising is vital, advertising alone is not enough to win at promotion. Constant contesting is important, too; but it's not enough by itself. To win at promotion, it takes a pervasive marketing plan that makes the station seem totally interactive with its audience.

PERCEPTION

Even though it's the last of the Four P's in my list, it's the most important. It's last because Perception is a product of Personality, Performance, and Promotion.

The first three are controlled and directed by your station. Perception is not. It rests solely in the mind of the listener. Fortunately, perception can be influenced, but only if you understand the perceiver — your listener. Earlier I used examples of perceptual questioning like "the station with the best news." It's important to know as much as possible about your listeners' reactions to your station and your competition. You must know what they think of you, whether they listen or not.

But knowing that is not enough. Winning broadcasters take steps to learn the basis for perception — the filters through which our commercials and our performances must pass before they have an impact. The filters I'm talking about are attention span, environment, language, culture, stress, family, prejudices, peer pressure, religion, physical limitations, and scores of other influences.

Your excellent execution in the first three P's — Personality, Performance and Promotion — must wriggle through a psychological maze in order to be a) received and b) perceived. Whether it's perceived as "excellent" is up to the listener perceiving it.

CHAPTER 5
PERCEPTUAL FILTERS

Is a loaf of bread light or heavy? The average loaf weighs just under a pound. It's compact in size and, therefore, easy to carry. Packaging adds little to the weight. So the easy answer is that a loaf of bread is light.

Consider the wide range of occupational, physical, and psychological elements involved in evaluating bread, and the answer's not so simple. Jewelers might call a loaf of bread heavy, because their reference point is the delicate inner workings of watches. Construction workers who manipulate steel girders into position are more likely to call a loaf light, because the materials they handle are heavy.

Each situation has a different reference, a different way of looking at the same question. Psychologists call the reference the "anchor point." It's an unconscious imposition of values that allows us to sort out what we see, hear, taste, and touch. The anchor point is much more important to perception than the thing perceived. No one has ever defined perception in a satisfactory way. One theory says the world doesn't exist, it's only in our minds. Other theories allow the mind's view of the world and the world itself to coexist peacefully. I like the definition constructed by W.H. Ittelson and F.P. Kilpatrick in <u>Scientific American</u> back in 1951:

"What we see is a prediction — our own personal

construction designed to give us the best possible bet for
carrying out our purposes in action. We make these bets
on the basis of our past experience."
The authors assure us that perception is "never a sure thing."

In The Third Wave, Alvin Toffler described perceptions as "a warehouse of images" that each of us "creates in our skulls." The images "are formed, in ways we do not understand, out of the signals or information reaching us from the environment." That environment, of course, is filled with the sounds and sights of daily life plus hundreds of thousands of commercial messages. Toffler described it as an "information bomb...exploding in our midst."

TWISTS OF LEMON

A few years ago, a Maryland poison center treated 33 adults and 45 children who felt ill after drinking iced tea. The diagnosis? They had put dishwashing detergent into their tea. Lever Brothers had mailed samples of a new product to households in the mid-Atlantic states. The label clearly stated "Sunlight dishwashing liquid with lemon juice for extra cleaning power."

A doctor at the poison center told the Associated Press, "People see 'Sunlight' and see 'with lemon juice' and it smells like lemons and they don't read any further. Apparently it's not frothing up when it's put in iced tea." When consumers received the sample bottles in the mail, they saw only the words "lemon juice" and put the product in the refrigerator. Their anchor point was bottled lemon juice. Call it inattention, but it's an example of the perceptual filter at work.

Think of the filters your station's message has to pass through to be understood. What if the room is too noisy? Your words may never be heard. What if the phone rings just as your TV spot comes on the air? What if there's an argument between two of your listeners every time your jingle plays? Those are simple examples. Now consider the complex perceptual filters: language, culture, religion. There are a host of subconscious

triggers waiting to divert perception.

If I ask you to choose which one of the figures below is "Takete" and which is "Maluma," what would you say?
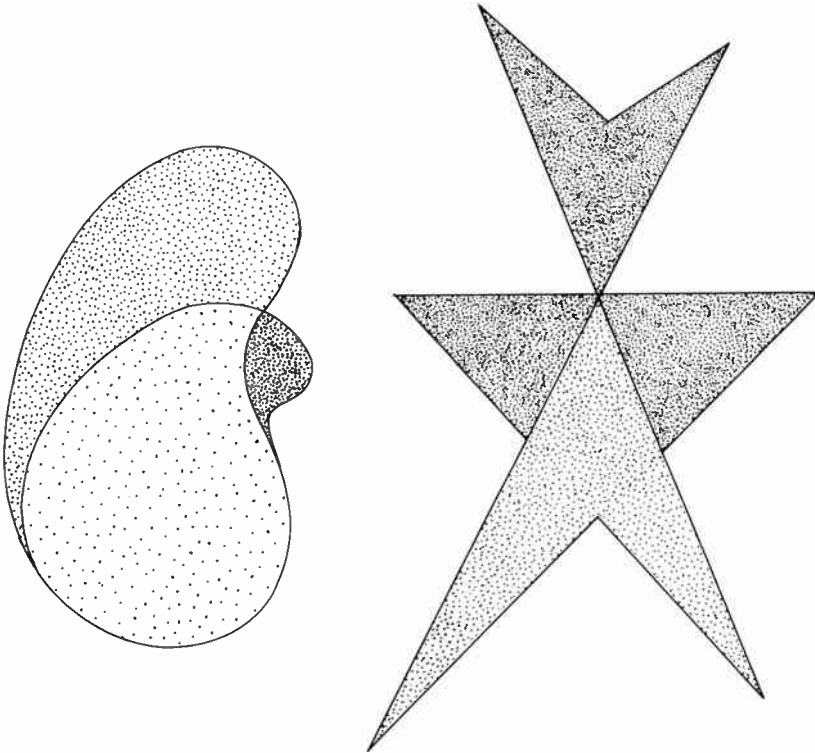
Psychologists have received overwhelming identification of the rounded figure on the left as "Maluma" and the hard-edged figure on the right as "Takete." "Takete" and "Maluma" are words devoid of meaning in any known language. They are simple sounds, which either roll like the rounded drawing, or break into sharp edges like the pointed drawing. Even totally meaningless sounds and shapes can "mean" the same thing to all of us. At work is an unconscious relationship between expectation and the object perceived.

It's rare that symbols or sounds can mean the same thing in all cultures. Think of the contrasting reaction to serpents in Western and Asian cultures. Westerners react to the Biblical

depiction of the serpent as evil. Asians relate more to dragons as
powerful and positive.

SOUND AND SENSE

The meanings of sounds are just as diverse. A kid in the
Bronx might say "Ma" to call his mother. A kid in the rural
South would do the same. In China, however, the syllable "ma"
changes meaning with inflection, confounding the western ear.
Said with one tone, "ma" means "horse." Said another way, it
means "rope." Yet another intonation means "speak to a group."
Oh, yes, it also means "mother."

How do I know which "ma" a Chinese intends? Frankly, I
don't. A very patient man from Radio Beijing gave me a lesson in
inflection. Honestly, I couldn't tell them apart on first hearing.
Fortunately, the explanation was done on tape (for a 1984 radio
show), so I was able to listen to the four sounds time and again. I
still didn't get it. The nuances are just too subtle.

Japanese use "ma" to mean a "sense of interval." Ma is in
evidence in Japanese gardens, with regular and extraordinary
spacing of trees, shrubs, rocks and fountains. There is an
emotional response to being overcome by the rigid order of
extreme simplicity. Only a Japanese understanding of ma can
achieve that. It puts man in relationship to nature and
underscores the harmony inherent in the relationship.

Asian languages are difficult for westerners. There is
absolutely no relationship between their languages and ours.
French, Spanish and Italian have Latin roots, so there are hints
of meaning. Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, and other Asian
languages are — using a cliche — Greek to us.

TWISTS OF MEANING

I don't know if this story is true. If not, I'm sure something
similar has happened. It's set in Hong Kong. A 60-ish gentleman
from the Philippines checked into a hotel. The concierge was
dumbfounded when the man called and said, "Send me girl." The
concierge explained that the hotel had a policy against providing

such services, and, please is there anything else that would make his stay more pleasant?

A few minutes later, the same gentleman called room service and once again said, "Send me girl." Room service referred him to the concierge desk or to Hong Kong's red light district. Finally, he called the front desk and asked for the manager on duty. "Send me girl!" he demanded, this time sounding frustrated. The manager checked the folio and, realizing the man was from Manila, called for a housekeeping maid, also from the Philippines. The maid was sent to see what the trouble was.

"Very simple," the man said (in his own language), "I asked for a beer." The most popular beer in the Philippines is San Miguel.

There's another language story, this one about a group of Americans traveling in Japan. The tourists had heard of a theater district in Tokyo that featured art films. When they reached the area, they were happy to find the marquees in both Japanese and English. They all agreed that the film "Violins on the Ceiling" had to be a classic study in the stately art of Japanese film making. So "Violins on the Ceiling" it was, and they exchanged yen for tickets. Not five minutes later, the entire group came out of the theater laughing uproariously. The English title had been a broken translation of "Fiddler on the Roof"!

Before Braniff Airways ceased operations they touted their Latin American routes with advertising in Hispanic newspapers. The copy invited travelers to fly "en cueros." Some understood the reference to leather seats, but other Latin readers snickered at the thought of flying "in the nude." The airline failed to take into account cultural differences in word usage. A tobacco agency accidentally advertised "low asphalt" cigarettes in an Hispanic-targeted magazine. For years there have been stories of the Chevrolet Nova and its introduction into Mexico. The problem? "No va" means "no go."

Coca Cola's introduction into the Peoples Republic of China met with early language snafus. The first characters chosen for

the Coke can were designed to convey the message "Can Happy." Because of the myriad dialects in China, some of the translations of the characters were as bizarre as "It brings your ancestors back to life" and "Bite the wax tadpole."

The Coca Cola story is only one example of the language traps between English and Chinese. There are so many dialects in mainland China that Chinese from some areas cannot understand Chinese from other parts of the country. I remember a situation in China when my interpreter threw up his hands during an exchange because my interviewee was "speaking Southern."

PRIVATE CODES

Because the language differences are so enormous, the Orient provides us with most of our "failure to communicate" humor. My late father-in-law carried a small card in his wallet with a story about a frustrated Asian man whose luggage had been lost on a British train. The punch line came when the man shouted, "You no more fit to baggage master than for crying out loud. That's all I hope!" As a professor of English literature, my father-in-law told the story with great relish because he, more than many, knew the foibles of language.

For years, anyone in our family who encountered a communication problem referred to it as a "baggage master" problem. In other words, we made up a personal code that quickly communicated what we meant — there had been a failure to understand. Further, the phrase "baggage master" reminded us of Jack's funny story. Now that he's gone, it adds another dimension — a reminder of Jack himself. Our multi-level communication code became a perceptual filter for others to penetrate.

The problem with language is that it takes too many words to describe it. While we may be certain of the meaning of an individual word, are we ever quite certain of the meaning of the communication that uses that word? I had difficulty discerning the differences in the syllable "ma," but we all have equal

difficulties with our own language. Just as our family made up the code phrase "baggage master," everyone creates a code that has to be translated before simple conversation can be effective.

You've probably had a teenager tell you that something is "rad." It means the same as "cool," "right-on," "hip," "far out," or "groovy." By the time this is in print, "rad" will be as passe as the other slang terms.

It goes beyond slang. Geographic location changes the code, too. In Beaufort, South Carolina, they pronounce it "BEW-fert." A few miles north, in Beaufort, North Carolina, it's pronounced "BOW-fert." Residents of each town take offense at the other town's "mispronunciation." Cairo, Illinois, is pronounced "KYE-row" like Cairo in Egypt. Cairo, Georgia, however, is pronounced "KAY-row," easily mistaken for a brand of syrup.

The most difficult codes to decipher are imposed by family, friends, church, school and business environments.

Families have pet names or nicknames that seldom leave the family circle. Business associates of my wife's "Uncle Joe" call him "George." I had an uncle whose given name I didn't know until he died. I was a child at the time and what I remember was a eulogy about how fine a man "Arthur" had been. I asked my mother, "When's the man going to talk about Uncle Pug?"

JARGON RULES

Business codes are the most pervasive. Radio people talk for hours about "quarter hour maintenance," "cume," "turnover," and "Gross Rating Points." An ophthalmologist overhearing a broadcaster's conversation would think the broadcaster is speaking a foreign language. In fact, it's true. Each industry has its own jargon. To a member of another industry, it might as well be Chinese. At a restaurant in Peoria I overheard people at the next table:

People sometimes include Camban as part of J.I.T. J.I.T. and M.R.T. are not the same. M.R.T. is a system, J.I.T. is a philosophy.

This is a problem we face every day in radio. Our listeners have their own codes, their own jargon.

During a focus group for WWL in New Orleans, a woman told me how confused she had been when she heard a news story about a shooting on "the West Bank." The story was from the Middle East, but Gretna and other communities across the Mississippi from New Orleans are also called "the West Bank." She wanted to know if the shooting was near her home.

CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

"People from different cultures not only speak different languages; but, what is possibly more important, they inhabit different sensory worlds," says Edward T. Hall. His pioneering studies of culture covered usage of language, measurement of time, and the impact of buildings on man's behavior.

In The Hidden Dimension, Hall addresses culture and perception in a way that's meaningful for us in radio: "Selective screening of sensory data admits some things while filtering out others, so that experience as it is perceived through one set of culturally patterned screens is quite different from experiences perceived through another."

Studying the distances used in interpersonal communication, Hall invented "proxemics," defined as "the consideration of distances at which members of various cultures interact." Arabs, for example, engage in the "kiss of peace," even if they don't know each other. Italians are prone to hugging. Americans shake hands, but maintain 18-24 inches between themselves. The English are called "standoff-ish" because their distances are even greater.

Here are Hall's measurements:

- *Intimate Distance* - 0 to $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet.
  For Americans, only the most personal communication. Family, lovers, etc.

- *Personal Distance*- $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 4 feet.
  Handshake distance.

- ***Social or Consultative*** - 4 to 10 feet.
  Offices, meetings, etc.

- ***Public Distance***- 10 feet or more.
  Shopping malls, addressing an audience, etc.

I've applied proxemics to radio, studying the distance between the announcer and the microphone then comparing that to the distance between the receiver and the listener. U.S. radio is very intimate. The announcer is close to the microphone, and many formats encourage a soft-spoken presentation. The U.S. listener generally has the radio within personal distance — three or four feet. That makes our radio <u>very</u> conversational.

Mexican radio uses echo to lengthen the proxemic distance. The listener is often across the room from the radio and listening with a group. In China, microphones are placed across the desk from the announcer, almost four feet away. There are two reasons. First, the language itself is shrill and loud. Second, the listeners are often in very large groups. Farms and factories have loudspeakers that blast the radio to hundreds of workers at once. In proxemic terms, the Chinese truly use the public distance.

<u>New</u> <u>York</u> magazine quoted Frank Sinatra as saying, "The microphone is the singer's basic instrument, not the voice. You have to learn to play it like it was a saxophone." Sinatra clearly understands proxemics. He proves it time and again in concert by making every member of a huge audience think those songs are intimate communication. On stage, Sinatra judges the audience every minute, making sure his communication achieves the intimacy he wants.

Radio doesn't have the immediate visual feedback, but we are able to get this kind of feedback by careful observation. I'm always amazed at how few radio announcers have ever watched their audiences listening to the radio! Disc jockeys who shout at their audiences miss the understanding of proxemic distances. I ask them to visualize the radio as a real person sitting on the edge of a desk or on the counter in the kitchen. Would that person shout? Probably not.

Top 40 radio demanded shouting. "High energy" disc jockeys thought they were matching the energy of the music. They were actually making up for the limitations of AM signal delivery. When Top 40 shifted to FM in the mid-70s, the style had to change to accommodate the improved delivery of signal. In some cases, there was no change. AOR and AC stations had more intimate presentations and won easily.

These are subtle points that are seldom studied in research. Accepting Arbitron's count of "At home, in the car, or other place" is as close to proxemics as most stations get.

CUTTING THROUGH

When used properly, research is the road map through the perceptual filters. It will even help you use perceptual blocks in your favor. Dr. Jim Fletcher, a professor at the University of Georgia and a radio and TV researcher, finds American radio listeners with loads of commercial lyrics and catch phrases in their image warehouses. A message like Campbell's "M-M-M Good" is imbued with "intangible commercial equity," according to Dr. Fletcher. He suggests tapping those memories by weaving triggers into musical ID's. "Make the guys on the other stations sing your jingle," he urged a research session at the 1991 NAB Convention in Las Vegas.

WDAF in Kansas City had made good use of that concept. They used the opening notes of the second movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony as their news sounder. Those six notes have been imprinted on the collected subconscious of western man for nearly 200 years. More specifically, the same notes were the NBC-TV news theme during the Huntley-Brinkley era. WDAF's audience heard a familiar sound that already meant "news." Today, the people who will recognize a Huntley-Brinkley connection are moving to the upper end of radio's target demos; so the tactic won't work as well. Nonetheless, there are plenty of audio and video triggers waiting to entice baby boomer listeners.

Some perceptual filters are more difficult than others, and

there was a remarkable example during research for KFRG in San Bernardino. "K-Frog" is a case study in creating a brand for a radio station. Everything about that launch was in perfect alignment. The logo was the face of a benign little frog. On the air were names like Cathy "Tadpole" Parrish and "Hopalong" Cassidy. The traffic reporter was named "Commander Kermit." The music was matched perfectly to the market. A direct mail campaign blitzed Riverside and San Bernardino with pictures of the frog on bumper stickers. The mailings also introduced a cash contest.

Researcher George Burns was conducting one-on-one interviews among K-Frog listeners; I and people from the station were watching on a video hookup. The respondents offered great information about the impact of the station, their change of habits when KFRG went on the air, and insights into their own lifestyles. One man had obviously been drinking right before his interview. In fact, he seemed so dazed he must have been drinking steadily for some years.

George was apprehensive, but he decided to go ahead. The first question probed listenership, and the man knew about K-Frog and listened regularly. How did he find out about the station? "Something happened," he slurred, "that had a sticker."

George's report to KFRG management was that the station had done an excellent job of positioning if the message had penetrated that man's dense alcoholic haze.

CHAPTER 6
TURNING SEEKERS
INTO FINDERS

M arlene was the listener every radio station hopes to find — absolutely loyal. She was just under 40, lived in a suburb of Orlando, and she listened to <u>only</u> <u>one</u> radio station.

Only one? "I'm too lazy to change it," she told me as part of a research interview.   She had listened to the station even through a change of format. I didn't believe what she said about laziness. Personally, I've found working the radio a fairly simple task, requiring little effort. I assumed she could master it, too. <u>Something</u> about that station made her feel good. The change of format must have come at a time when her own tastes were changing. That's why she continued listening.

She certainly had plenty of options. Orlando's geographic location provides the radio listener with a great many stations. In addition to the city and its suburbs, there is easy access to signals from Daytona, Melbourne, Cocoa Beach and other coastal communities. Signals from across the state — from Tampa or St. Petersburg — are easy to tune. Marlene had ample options, she simply chose <u>not</u> to take them.

She's in the minority. Arbitron shows three-and-a-fraction stations as the national average. New technology is making even those figures seem conservative. We've had listeners in all parts of the country tell us that their radio listening is done with the "scan" button engaged. They listen to ten-second bites of every

station on the dial! Others are impressed with the precise digital readout on the car radios so they dial each channel one by one. These people, mostly male, are also a minority, but their numbers are growing.

The average multi-station listener is a button-pusher. Fortunately, the typical button-pusher ultimately settles on <u>some</u> station, usually because of a song that satisfies the mood of the moment. Occasionally, when the song is over, so is the relationship with that station. Off they go again. Because these people are constantly searching for satisfaction, we call them "Seekers." A city with very little duplication of formats has a fairly low "Seeker" percentage — 30 percent or less. We've seen it even lower in some very stable midwestern markets where there has not been a recent change of formats. However, in St. Louis, traditionally a stronghold of "Loyals," we're beginning to find more Seekers. New formats, new duplication, new signals being moved into the market — they beckon the most loyal listener.

In contrast, there was a time when the whole El Paso, Texas, market was made up of Seekers. So many radio stations had changed hands or adjusted format in the mid-80s that there was no way to insure loyalty.

In the period of one Arbitron book, four stations changed format and another one went dark! With that background, it's not surprising that the listeners were about 80 percent Seekers. These people spent their time in movement from station to station, searching for an outlet playing their favorite song. Button-pushing was a favorite pasttime. We identify this attitude by asking respondents to classify their relationship to the radio:

> *"When it comes to listening to the radio, which*
> *of these descriptions fits you best?"*

- You call in for requests, play contests,
  and listen for everything the deejay says.

- You listen only for the music, and you'll search for a
  station that plays your favorite song.

- You use the radio for background. You turn it
  on and leave it on the same station and don't
  pay close attention.

Respondents who identify with the first description are "Loyals"; with the second, "Seekers"; with the third, "Passives." Crosstabulating these categories with the station listened to most showed that most El Paso stations had Seekers as their constituents, some as high as 100 percent. By 1990, the situation in El Paso had settled down, but it was an ominous predictor for other markets where changes of ownership caused changes of format.

CREATING HABIT

Radio's objective, of course, is to create habit. We'd like all our listeners to be like Marlene in Orlando — secure with one station and unwilling to leave it, regardless of the programming.

Picking a radio station is not a decision like buying a new car or choosing a spouse. Finding a radio station is most often the same as adjusting a rheostat to soften the light. Once the adjustment is made, there's not much more to be done, including (as I take this analogy further) noticing what brand the light bulb is.

As a listener stops on a dial position more and more often, a habit begins. Maybe — and it's only <u>maybe</u> — the call letters will penetrate. Maybe the name of the disc jockey will be remembered. In the majority of cases, all radio can hope for is a memory of the experience that triggers the right call letters.

This sounds like a job for advertising — good, solid, consistent, compelling advertising that appears outside the station and offers the Seeker a source of satisfaction. It's also a job for branding and well-executed stationality. We want the Seeker to make <u>only</u> <u>one</u> <u>decision</u> — to become a "lazy" Loyal like Marlene.

There's another challenge beyond advertising and branding. That's knowing how to tell the Loyals from the

Seekers. The Loyal is your core listener, the listener who is about 20 percent of your cume but listens long enough to contribute 80 percent of your quarter hours.

Every research supplier seems to call Loyals something different: "Preference Group"; "P1" (for "parallel one" or "priority one") listeners; "MLT" (for the people who say a station is their "Most Listened To"); "Heavy Users." They hope to put a new buzzword into circulation and add mystery and magic to the research function.

I've spent a lot of time trying to demystify research. I tend to over-explain the process and offer more data about the advantages and disadvantages of certain methodologies. If you're buying methodology, you're wasting money. Methodology in itself will not tell you whether Marlene is a core listener or a person who has never heard of your station. Methodology is only a tool to get to the answers. There are three requisites for effective research:

1. The right questions
2. The right sample
3. The right interpretation

THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

Consider your reason for doing the project at all. In Programming Dynamics, I called the reason the "research objective," and suggested that the one basic question you'd like answered should be written on a 3 x 5 card. It's gratifying to see how many researchers have repeated that idea since it was printed in 1984.

If you can boil down your project to a few lines on a 3 x 5 card, you have focused on the real issue. Then everything else can flow from the original. Here are some examples:

For WBZ in Boston, our research objective was "What is WBZ?" Our 1988 project for them was the first they had conducted in several years, so they needed a complete analysis of what the station stood for in its listeners' minds. All other

questions about news topics, talk shows, and personalities started with the basic premise.

In another study, two companies shared the cost. One owned a station, the other wanted to buy it, but not without knowing what the programming options were. The research objective for that project: "Is there a clear format niche for a new entrant in the Kansas City market?"

When Keymarket Communications bought WWL in New Orleans, they had a very straightforward research objective: "Why are some people not tuning in?" Everything else — listening habits, reliability of information, and an analysis of Saints' football — was secondary to the original question.

The research objective is like having a mission statement for your research.

"The right questions" also means a thorough, custom-designed questionnaire that addresses those questions and gets answers. That might mean a 150-question series for a long, probing telephone interview or a short outline for the facilitator of focus groups or personal interviews (one-on-ones).

THE RIGHT SAMPLE

The second requisite means the people who are asked the questions. The people you probe must be representative of the audience you're trying to reach. You may want to reflect the whole market, the segment of the market that's 25-54, only your station's listeners, or any combination of demographics and usage.

The best research maintains strict quotas on age, sex, race, county of residence, and other parameters to assure that the data is projectable across the population. Your goal should be to say that the data you collect represents the thinking of your town, your listeners, or your target group within some small percentage tolerance. All of this is discussed in the next chapter.

THE RIGHT INTERPRETATION

Research is like the Bible. Interpretation inspires faith. If ten people read your statistical data, you'll have between five and ten interpretations. To make decisions, you need clear analysis of the data from someone who knows your station and its situation, but has the objectivity of an outsider.

Our staff approaches research as curious programmers. We combine data from research with study of the station situation and with years of radio experience and perceptual trend watching. We add psychology to the original questionnaire to go beyond face value answers. If that sounds like a sales pitch, it's not. It's common sense.

See. All that and not one word about methodology. Choosing the right questions drives the methodology.

CHAPTER 7
HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT METHODOLOGY

Wear your swimsuit to Fargo in the dead of winter and you'll freeze. Wear it to Acapulco in June and the match is just right. The swimsuit is not at fault in Fargo, it's the application of the swimsuit. What seems simple enough when the subject is proper clothing is not so simple if the subject is research. Some people get frosted by research that is applied to the wrong situation.

For instance, I've heard broadcasters say they'll "never do focus research again" because the groups didn't answer their questions. In almost every instance, the broadcaster conducted focus groups for the wrong reason. The same thing happened with "one-on-ones," individual research interviews. For a while they were being done because they were trendy, not because they're right for the situation. "One-on-ones" pushed focus research out of fashion.

Fashion is the worst reason to choose research. Your questions — nothing else — should guide the choice:

- How many people are listening? A telephone survey is best and most efficient.

- What are the differences between my station and its competition? The dynamics of focus research will offer insight.

- Do women on the east side listen to my morning man? A shopping mall intercept will get to the women you're after.

- What do contestants like about the prizes we offer? Send them a questionnaire by mail.

- What message do my listeners get from my TV spots? Play it for them in a personal interview.

That is just a beginning of the applications of the types of research available to radio. Like a swimsuit in the wrong climate, the wrong research will leave you in the cold.

Here are explanations of today's radio research. I've included what each <u>can</u> do and what it should not be asked to do.

CALLOUT

Telephone sampling, or "callout," is the perfect vehicle for answers to questions by a large number of respondents: quantitative research. A group of operators can ask the same question of 500 people in a reasonably short amount of time. The answers can be collected quickly, and that's the greatest strength of telephone methodology. Anonymity helps telephone interviewing. The respondent cannot see the interviewer; each knows they will never meet. That prompts greater honesty than is possible in focus groups or in personal interviews.

The greatest asset of telephone sampling is the flexibility of the territory covered. You can concentrate on an area of town, cover the entire county, add all metro counties, even call nationwide. It would be very difficult to produce that flexibility with any other methodology.

All of these benefits make telephone sampling the right method for analysis of product awareness — "What radio stations have you listened to during the past seven days?" That question posed to a large number of respondents can give evidence of cume strength. "Of all those stations you mentioned, which one have you listened to <u>most</u> in the past seven days?" gives a picture of preferred, repeated listening.

Telephone sampling allows for screening without wasted

time. The first questions in a telephone survey usually qualify the respondent by age, sex, amount of listening, and type of radio station. For instance, you might limit the questions to adults 25-54 who listen to rock radio for a minimum of 30 minutes in a typical day. For a full market sample, however, you'd want to include all radio listeners, regardless of format. The large numbers you can reach by telephone make this methodology excellent for measuring perceptions. What is the value of music, announcers, or news coverage? You can probe almost any programming or marketing element as long as questions can be stated succinctly. We ask respondents to give us their feelings on a 10-scale or by telling us whether they agree or disagree with statements about stations.

For a station in suburban Chicago we studied the common feelings among Chicago suburbs. The station wanted to know if there was an identifiable market within their signal that covered only DuPage, Kane, and western Cook Counties. Yes, there was. It was a market the size of the city of Indianapolis! With our telephone study the station knew which suburbs to talk to and what to say. The study yielded language that gave the station its marketing slogan — "Y-108, Doin' it in the Burbs."

It's not uncommon to keep a respondent on the phone for 20 minutes or more with a long questionnaire. That length requires real skill on the part of an interviewer, which leads me to an important point: Hire an experienced firm to handle your projects. The more experience and the more supervision the interviewers have, the more reliable the results.

One of radio's favorite uses of telephone sampling is often conducted "in house" by station personnel: Music familiarity research. Some programmers claim they can increase their station's share by as much as 20 percent with regular music callout. Those who do it in-house use either paid interviewers or unpaid interns. Others hire research companies to conduct weekly music studies.

Music callouts answer three questions: How familiar has a record become? How popular is it? Has the record become burned out? To get answers, researchers play the most familiar,

repetitive section of the record, the hook, down the phone line for evaluation. Obviously, if the respondent has never heard the song, an evaluation cannot be made. So music callout cannot effectively test new music. Familiarity is linked to at least moderate airplay, so callouts are most valuable for testing gold libraries and recent recurrents.

Because the methodology is so flexible, the cost of telephone sampling is low compared to other research. That means a lot of people use the telephone for research, and some abuse it. The combination of telemarketing and legitimate research has made some people reluctant to spend time on the phone. I discuss the telemarketing backlash later.

To create a comfort level with the respondent, state your intentions plainly at the beginning. Don't ask personal questions until the end of the questionnaire. We add the line, "I'm not trying to sell anything," to underscore that we want only honest opinions about our subject — radio listening.

AUDITORIUM

The methodology is not new. In fact, the Marx Brothers tested bits for their movies by staging them in front of theater audiences. Television has been using auditorium tests for years to evaluate new ideas for programming. Advertisers run new commercials before large groups of viewers to examine effectiveness and product recall. It's quick and efficient. There's been a wave of popularity for auditorium tests among radio operators, so it seems like a "new" idea. The same song segments that might be tested in a telephone callout program can be tested all at once in an auditorium setting. The sound is much better than over the telephone. Several hundred people can hear the hooks and evaluate them.

Respondents are contacted by phone and asked about their radio listening. If they qualify according to the parameters of the research, they're invited to the auditorium session. A station's entire oldies library can be tested in one or two nights. Listeners evaluate the hooks according to familiarity and appeal, usually

by marking their answers in pencil on score sheets that are scanned by machine. The process is very much like an SAT or other educational test.

Some testing companies use electronic data entry devices that eliminate the need for paper and pencil. Respondents punch buttons on a hand-held device or turn a dial to a point on a scale that represents their feeling. These electronic substitutes for pencils should not be confused with methodology. They are ways to record data.

The best researchers conduct auditorium tests like scholastic testing. Silence is requested. Assistance is available so a question can be asked or a pencil replaced without disturbing other respondents. Breaks are controlled so that everyone pays attention to the test, then to the break. Late-comers are often turned away. It's important to maintain discipline at auditorium tests, because distractions are caused by the situation itself. So many short segments of songs are played during the session — up to 400 — that fatigue sets in rapidly. A beautiful woman may create diversion. Harsh colors in the decor or unusual odors in the room may draw attention away from the test. It doesn't take much. The hook to a popular song takes no more than 10 seconds.

A final concern is the person who conducts the test. The presenter's body language may influence the test. Favorable comments about records and artists, and subtle signals like foot-tapping may lead respondents to write down an answer that does not reflect their opinion.

Even though music testing is the most popular use of auditorium methodology, anything that needs quantitative measurement can be done in an auditorium setting. We've shown TV commercials and played segments of disc jockey shows. The moderator can ask questions from the podium or distribute a questionnaire. The benefit is that all questionnaires will be completed at one sitting.

Just because auditorium testing is quick and efficient doesn't mean it's cheap. The cost of screening, paying fees to respondents, and hiring a hotel or other meeting room adds to

the costs of supervision and tabulation.

The day is coming when auditorium testing won't be practical. It's difficult to get everybody together in one place at one time. To maintain sufficient sample, music test companies find themselves assembling "make goods" because people don't show up the first time scheduled. Two tests are twice as expensive as one because of hotel ballroom rentals, re-screening costs and respondent fees. I predict future music tests in which your listeners will participate on their own. They'll show up on their schedule, not a test company's. They'll sit at a modified PC, listen to hooks from a recordable CD, and answer questions by touching the screen. If they go faster than average, they'll finish quickly. If not, they can come back after work to complete the test. The advantage is that music testing could be conducted all the time. New data is added, old data is averaged in or deleted.

FOCUS GROUPS

Frankly, there's nothing I like better than conducting focus groups. It gives me a firm picture of the listeners to a station, and it helps me understand how radio affects its users. I also get a feeling for the people of a town, whether they're conservative, open-minded, or well-mannered. This is pure qualitative information.

Quickly defined, the focus group is an intimate conversation between carefully chosen members of the public and a researcher called a "facilitator." The word for the researcher is well chosen. The person who conducts focus research has a delicate job that falls somewhere between passive observation and active leadership. Group participants are users of the product or service being researched. In the case of radio, they're chosen based on their listenership to a particular station or a particular format.

There's a false notion that this form of research can answer questions. No, focus only asks questions. That puzzles people who think that expenditures of research money must result in neat packages of statistics. Answers cannot be quantified

because the focus sample is too small. I generally use between nine and eleven people in a group. Even with four groups in a project, this is still a sample of 44! No conclusion should be based on that small a sample.

What can you expect from focus research? Feelings. Attitudes. Perceptions. Somehow I always get back to that word "feelings," because the audience members have personal and deep-seated responses to their relationship with radio. Probe their feelings about your station, your personalities, or your marketing program, and you've entered a realm that transcends a simple count of who listens to what.

The key to focus research is shared experience. Each of the participants already shares something with the others: listenership, for example. During the focus sessions, they are asked to respond to some further experience that is part of the group meeting. In the case of radio, they listen to tapes of music, disc jockeys, or some other auditory experience. The groups "focus" on the subject at hand, hence the name for this type of research. The facilitator monitors reactions to the shared experience. Voice response, facial expression, body language, and answers to written questionnaires are all combined to achieve a "sense of the group."

Focus groups are criticized for exerting peer pressure. That's like criticizing the NFL for letting those 11 guys stand between the ball carrier and the goal line. Focus groups are designed to get dynamic discussion from individuals of like circumstance — peers. As long as the facilitator exerts no pressure to lead the group, you get spontaneous expression of feelings about your subject. That's exactly what you want from your focus group.

Focus research is expensive. First, the members of the group have to be screened by telephone. They qualify to participate if they fit the parameters you set: age, income, lifestyle characteristic, or listening to a certain station. Each person is paid for participation. A good facilitator is absolutely essential. That costs money. The facilitator will provide a written interpretation of what the groups say.

Don't expect what you hear from focus research to hold true for the entire marketplace. That will take verification through a telephone sample or some other research means. Focus cannot be projected. On the other hand, focus groups are great for ideas. I was the facilitator for groups discussing WWL in New Orleans when a respondent compared the legendary station to Louisiana traditions. That prompted WWL Operations Manager Bob Christopher to develop an idea: "As much a part of New Orleans as red beans and rice." That became a promo campaign that coupled WWL with New Orleans traditions like jazz, beignets, the river, the French Quarter.

Casual comments from focus group participants have given us insights into the size of cash prizes, the color of cars to give away, and when to announce state lottery scores.

ONE-ON-ONE

In research terms, this is the "Individual Personal Interview." Some researchers consider one-on-one to be a step up from focus research. In reality, the personal interview is a separate and distinct methodology. It is related to focus in that it's strictly qualitative unless you conduct enough interviews to equal a reliable sample.

One-on-ones are discussions of a topic conducted by a researcher with one listener at a time. The interview might last a few minutes, but a complete probe of feelings and experiences might take an hour or more. The listener shares feelings about the station or its personalities. The concentration on feelings and emotions is another similarity with focus research. In addition, the discussion may center around a tape of programming, which the listener evaluates. The interviewer directs a conversation about news, contests, dial switching, and other elements.

The advantage to one-on-one is the flexibility to probe for answers. An odd perception held by the listener can be fully explored in conversation. Probing allows reactions to become clear. One-on-ones allow the interviewer to learn more about the psyche of the listener than any other method.

During speaking engagements or staff meetings at our client stations, I often tell the story of Teresa, a woman I met in a one-on-one interview. She was part of a project for WBZ in Boston. We were re-interviewing people who had answered our questions in telephone sampling, looking for qualitative additions to the quantitative data already collected. Teresa was a tall redhead who would rather be at the beach than at work. She personified everything we've all heard about radio not meaning as much to the listener as it does to those of us in the industry.

I asked Teresa my typical opening questions. She had listened to the radio that morning, but couldn't remember what station. Then I probed her about usage during the day, how she felt about radio, and what it meant to her. Nothing. No perceptions about stations, no positioning statements, no recollection of anything on the air.

I was ready to give up, to send Teresa to the beach. Yet I was frustrated at not having extracted any useable information. So I gave it one more try. I asked her about Boston personalities, reading a list of names. Still nothing. That is until I got to WBZ's Dave Maynard. Her eyes brightened in recognition of a familiar name. Finally!

So I asked her what radio station Dave Maynard's on. "The one in the kitchen," she said. That's information that wouldn't show up in other methodologies.

One-on-one is the most expensive research technique there is. Like focus research, there are costs incurred in screening for specific predetermined parameters. Also, there is a fee paid to the respondent. But the real cost comes in time. The interviewer spends many hours with respondents. By the end of the day only six or eight discussions may be completed. It's only worth the cost if you're looking for the type of information that personal interviews can yield.

Reactions to commercials or advertising campaigns are good examples. Does the listener get the message? The one-on-one interviewer can probe to make sure. Is the message the right one for the radio station involved? The next question is "Why?" or "Why not?"

The hazard of one-on-one is that the listener may feel inhibited by the extraordinary attention the interviewer gives. Conversely, the listener may feel obligated to construct an answer that doesn't adequately reflect feelings, only the obligation. In a one-on-one, the interviewer takes on a dominant role, especially when compared to the facilitator of a focus group, who simply keeps dynamic interaction alive. The one-on-one interviewer conceivably could add his or her own prejudices to what the listener says.

The results of personal interviews should not be viewed as statistics. One-on-ones give qualitative answers. If your intention is to conduct 200 personal interviews so you'll have a large enough sample, then you're misapplying an otherwise valuable methodology. For a statistically sound sample, use the telephone.

INTERCEPT

This is another form of personal interview, done spontaneously at a mall or other public area. A researcher stops a shopper, asks a few qualifying questions, then asks the shopper to view a film, use a product, or answer questions at a location nearby. The researcher uses "eyeball judgment" to choose the respondent, guessing at age and socio-economic status until questions are asked. Intercept is an effective way to collect information quickly, especially if the questionnaire is short. In less than two minutes, a questionnaire about radio listening can be administered, as long as no qualitative information is needed.

Except at lunchtime and holiday seasons, shoppers are often willing to spend 15 or 20 minutes discussing topics in a testing area. That's where ad agencies do eye-tracking studies of new commercials or taste tests among soft drinks. Many testing centers have kitchens where consumers are asked to add ingredients to a dish being cooked or to choose a detergent appropriate for clothing stains.

Radio can use testing areas for evaluation of commercials or sampling of favorite stations. For instance, have your listener

locate your station on the dial. When we worked with WXTU in Philadelphia, the station was interested in a series of TV spots that had run in Los Angeles. The question: Were the commercials on target for Philadelphia? We prepared a reel of the test commercials and added a few others that the station was also interested in. We screened mall shoppers for use of the station or for proclivity toward Country music. Qualifiers were invited to watch the commercials while our interviewer asked questions. The result: A locally produced spot was found to be more suited to WXTU, and the station learned about listener attitudes.

A Dallas station needed quick answers on public perceptions of a proposed logo change. They had an opportunity but not much time. Mall intercept was a way to get to lots of people quickly, so we developed a study that was conducted at several Metroplex area malls. Interviewers listed artist groups that conjured radio station formats, then had respondents match the artists with identifier words. "Star" offered the greatest flexibility. "Mix" was also strong, and that's been shown in market after market.

Intercept is also a cost-efficient way of screening people for other types of research.   A shopper may be willing to spend the evening in a focus group, if listening and lifestyle qualifications are met. Intercept cannot get everyone because everyone doesn't go to public places. Know the make-up of the mall traffic before you decide to use intercept methodology.

DIRECT MAIL

There are times when a questionnaire mailed to a select group of respondents can provide useful results. If your station has developed a database of contest winners, cardholders, or other listeners, a mail questionnaire could prove very effective. This methodology is often overlooked because it has a tremendous drawback — small return percentages. In addition, mail was over-used by people who didn't know how to use the methodology well, and it has fallen out of favor.

The more homogeneous the respondent group, the better the return, because members of the group feel a kinship with the station. I saw an instance of a questionnaire mailed to a station's contest players. Completed questionnaires which were returned became entries in another contest open only to the survey sample. The response was enormous. The benefits of filling out the questionnaire should always be demonstrated, even if it's as simple as "making radio better." Make the questionnaire look like it's fun to do, with a minimum of work.

You cannot get a statistically pure sample by mail, because you never know the reason for non-returns. Of course, you could undertake an extensive — and expensive — follow-up procedure. If you had the money for that, you could put it into other methodology. That's the real benefit of mailing. It's cheap. Yet if you're not prudent, you get only what you pay for.

SAMPLING

If you could reach 100 percent of the people who listen to your radio station with a questionnaire, there would be no need for sampling. You'd just ask each of them the questions, tally it up, and draw your conclusions. Since every listener is not available, the next best thing is to find some listeners and let them answer for everybody. If you get enough of them and watch the age, sex and demographic makeup of this smaller group, you'll have a representative segment of your listenership — a sample.

The composition of the sample varies with the goals of the research. In focus research, you want to be highly specific, so the members of the group will have as much as possible in common. For a full-market telephone sampling, you want broader parameters that take in the peculiar makeup of the entire marketplace. The ideal is to guarantee that every group in your universe (researcher's jargon for "area to be studied") will have an equal opportunity to be chosen, or sampled.

What's a good sample size? That depends upon whether your project aims for qualitative or quantitative answers.

Personal interviews or focus groups do not rely upon sample size, but on the quality of the answers. For quantitative projects, like telephone sampling or auditorium testing, the best sample size is the one that gives you precise answers. Remember, the smaller the group, the greater the margin for error, and the greater the need for caution. Even if the total sample in a project is 700, an individual crosstabulation might show only 25 or 30 people in a cell (males aged 35-39, for example). The smaller number raises the margin.

Margin for error says there's a range of possible answers that starts lower than the percentage shown and goes higher by the same figure. Here's an example: A sample of 300 has margin of error of plus or minus 5.66. That means half could be as low as 44.44 percent or as high as 56.66 percent. That will happen 95 out of 100 times, so it has a "95 percent confidence level." The margin is calculated mathematically:

$$\text{MARGIN OF ERROR} = \frac{.5}{\sqrt{\text{sample} - 1}} \times 1.96$$

To reduce the margin of error to within plus or minus <u>one percent</u>, your sample would have to be 9,600! No one can afford to interview that many people just to shave a few percentage points. Further, there may not be that many people available to answer your questions. That's the advantage of sampling: getting actionable answers from a smaller number.

MAKING A CHOICE

Don't believe anyone who tells you that one methodology is better than another. It all depends on the question you're trying to answer. Before you undertake <u>any</u> research, determine what you're trying to learn. What problem or concern motivated you to investigate research in the first place? The answer to that question is the <u>research objective.</u> The best data is collected from a combination of the methodologies I've described.

It's not unusual to begin a research process with a finding from a ratings company: for example, your women 25-34

numbers have decreased. You schedule a series of focus groups
with women in that age group who have listened to your station.
The sense of the group is that the morning show isn't funny any
more, so the women have tuned to a competitor. This is an
interesting insight, but it's not conclusive. Why? Because it's
from just a few respondents. To make it statistically valid, many
more listeners would have to say the same thing. The next step
is a telephone sample of 300 radio listeners in town. The
quantitative telephone study can be relied upon as conclusive,
given a margin of error.

In a telephone study I always find something that I would
like to know more about.   For instance, when our company
finished a study of Columbus, Ohio, listeners, one of the findings
was that hunting season changed radio listening. The problem
is, I don't know if hunters listened more or less during hunting
season, only that they changed their habits. The way to find out
would be through several focus groups or a series of one-on-ones
with hunters. If you're curious, research is a never-ending
process. In fact, I think the definition of research is "a
management system for the satisfaction of curiosity."

There are two important rules for research. Rule One is to
know what question you want to ask and match the methodology
to that question. You cannot get the right answers from the
wrong questions; you cannot get actionable data from the wrong
methodology. Rule Two is to not take research literally. Research
is a guide for your decisions — it cannot make the decisions.

CHAPTER 8
TELEMARKETING BACKLASH

About every ten days, the Houston Chronicle calls to offer a free upgrade from my weekend subscription. It's impossible to convince them that I want the paper at home only Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Other days, I'll get it at the office or read the paper in whatever town I'm in that week.

Of course, the Chronicle's calls aren't the only ones:

- The Peace Officer's Association calls to sell me tickets to the charity circus.

- There's always a roofing company or a housepainter making calls.

- Then there's the automatic dialer that tells me I've won if I'll call a local number quickly.

- During political season the activity increases to cover the mayor's race, several City Council seats, and a school board candidate or two.

- Not to be outdone by the Chronicle, the Houston Post also calls to offer full-week subscriptions, but not as often.

Mine isn't the only phone ringing. The mushrooming of

telemarketing is making consumers more reticent about answering the telephone.   It takes only a few interruptions at dinner or during quality time with family for a householder to reject unsolicited phone calls.

In some cases, consumers resort to unlisted phone numbers, but random digit dialing can circumvent that. In other cases, answering devices screen calls.

Telephone engineers are testing systems that display the caller's number. The call's recipient doesn't answer if the number's not familiar. With "selective call waiting," the phone itself can reject originating numbers that aren't pre-programmed to ring through. More than ever, consumers are reluctant to answer the telephone. The number of households using answering machines has grown from 25 percent in 1988 to 37 percent in 1990. Another 40 percent intended to buy an answering machine. Half of the answering machines already in use are an attempt to insulate the owner from unwanted interruption.

A 1990 Roper Poll found 83 percent of the public did not like telephone sales calls. Two out of three cut them short. There's additional research that offers corroboration about response to unwanted calls. The study is significant because it was conducted among a national sample by Walker Research of Indianapolis. Walker does both telemarketing and consumer research so they are sensitive to all aspects of telephone interruption.

Some significant findings:
- The average person reported receiving 25 calls during the past year (1990).

- 61 percent stopped incoming calls before the caller finished the purpose of the call.

- More than half (55 percent) believe they have been misled by a call at some point in the past.

These figures show an escalating difficulty for researchers to get at consumers in the most cost-effective way — by

telephone. They also indicate increasing burnout on unsolicited
sales calls by telephone. Telemarketing was fueled by the need to
get in closer touch with people who actually use products. Radio
research has relied on telephone interruption for some time. Our
industry, however, came late to telemarketing as a means to
stimulate sampling. By entering telemarketing, radio
unwittingly cluttered the telephone environment.

The Walker study says that radio researchers and
telemarketers will face chilly reception. For instance, 70 percent
of those answering the phone will consider the call an invasion of
privacy. Almost that many (69 percent) feel participation is "a
waste of time."   Sixty percent think that using the telephone for
these calls is "too personal."

The public is evenly split about whether the last call
received was positive or negative. (44 percent pleasant; 42
percent unpleasant; 14 percent didn't know.) The most frequent
reason given for a pleasant experience was a "non-pushy" caller.
"Impersonal calls" (including computer-generated voices) caused
negative reaction along with "inconvenient time."

On the positive side, there's some feeling that the calls
provide an opportunity to give feedback to the sponsoring
company (57 percent) because that will help the company provide
better products or services (40 percent). Respondents under 35
years of age are more comfortable with telemarketing and
telephone research calls. They are somewhat less likely to feel
the invasion of privacy, and somewhat more likely to say the calls
"serve a useful purpose."

I believe strongly in the benefits of telemarketing for radio,
but the window is closing. The increase in telemarketing activity
is forcing the consumer to retreat. Bogus or misleading calls that
start with a "prize" or a "survey" and turn into sales pitches make
the public especially suspicious.

Nationally, 27 percent of telephone users keep their
numbers unlisted. Some cities, however, have even higher
percentages of unlisted telephones. Here's the "Unlisted Top 10,"
according to Survey Sampling, one of the leading suppliers of
computer-generated calling lists:

Las Vegas	60.3
Los Angeles-Long Beach	56.0
Oakland	53.6
Fresno	52.6
Jersey City	51.7
San Jose	50.6
Sacramento	49.6
Riverside-San Bernardino	48.7
Bakersfield	48.6
San Francisco	47.7

Young adults are most likely to have unlisted phone numbers. Almost half (49 percent) of households with unlisted numbers are aged 18-34.

The most-surveyed market in America is Des Moines, Iowa. According to Survey Sampling, nearly half of the available random digit residence telephone numbers in Des Moines had been used by early 1989. After Des Moines, the most-surveyed markets are Milwaukee, Indianapolis, Boulder, Spokane, Fort Collins (CO), Pittsfield (MA), Seattle, Sioux Falls, and Denver.

The barrage of calls and the upcoming technical blockade will not bode well for market research. The growing privacy movement will create a backlash. The job of getting good information about our listeners will be difficult or, perhaps, impossible. Any telephone calling your station does should have a descriptive, honest introduction. The data about "non-pushy" callers is significant. Operators must know how to establish rapport in the first few seconds of the call. Mature-sounding females get the best response.

Traditional research methods may have only a few years before our publics render themselves inaccessible. Having an

active, accurate database will be the only answer. Expect to find yourself needing a list of <u>every</u> listener's name, address, buying profile, and degree of usage of your station.

CHAPTER 9
THE FIFTH MEDIUM

Every year, a few days before May 28, Pam Shane gets a card from Video Row. It wishes her happy birthday and offers free video rentals. The kids next door get cards from Baskin-Robbins on their birthdays. There's free ice cream waiting for them if they bring in the enclosed certificate.

During one of my visits to WIL in St. Louis, I found the disc jockeys in the conference room signing birthday cards. Those personalized cards would go out that month to congratulate listeners in the WIL database.

Each of these organizations is using a database to strengthen the bond with its customer. In the case of Video Row, they'd like to see Pam come in the store for more than her free movie. They want her to succumb to the array of titles. They can search her history to know that she seldom rents new releases. Rather, she chooses titles that offer insight into the sociology or psychology of pop culture so we can serve our clients better. Or she opts for sheer entertainment — classic movies, dancing and singing, or both.

WIL, of course, hopes that the birthday card will reinforce to listeners just how warm and friendly their favorite radio station is. Needless to say, they also hope the card will be a reminder of the call letters at vital times like an Arbitron sweep or a Birch survey call.

Listener databases are real treasures, especially if they are coupled with information about usage of your station. How involved is the listener? Is the person a core user or a peripheral who samples your station only when the mood strikes?

PINPOINT TARGETING

These questions are the most rudimentary approaches to database management. Retailers have a head start on using consumer information effectively. Chain stores develop databases of their own customers and their competitors' customers. They include age, income, the areas where each customer lives, how much they are likely to spend, where they'll buy most often. By overlaying this information on a computer-generated Zip Code map, the store decides where its next location will be.

The Houston Metropolitan Transit Authority (Metro) targets companies with 100 or more employees and asks for each employee's Zip Code. Then a map is generated of each Zip with bus routes, bus stops, and park-and-ride lots marked. The companies distribute the maps to their staffs. Metro says the program added 16,000 new bus riders. There have been benefits to the participating companies, too. Because the maps show where employees live, companies can make decisions about off-site meetings or the locations of new offices.

Mapping systems are available that define consumers nationally, by state, by county, by Zip Code, or by Zip + 4 codes. That kind of definition offers chain stores and direct mail marketers the opportunity to focus on as few as ten households.

National Decision Systems — one of the companies that sells mapping software — uses a headline in their advertising, "You'll Never Get Closer to Your Best Customers." They're right. Some software defies pre-existing boundaries like county lines or postal codes. CACI Marketing Systems overlays data with trade areas, sales territories, or marketing divisions of major companies. That sounds like the kind of specific geography radio can use, doesn't it? Signal area, the part of town where the format works best, ethnic pockets, etc.

Generally, the base of any database is the Zip Code. There are 36,000 of them in the U.S., and their function has gone far beyond mail delivery. Zip Codes help to identify who we are as consumers and voters. In his 1988 book, The Clustering of America, Michael Weiss demonstrated the value of Zip Codes on a broad scale. He told a human interest story rather than describing Zip Codes in statistical terms. His work turned marketers on to age, education, and buying clusters originally developed by Claritas Corporation for the PRIZM database. There are 40 PRIZM clusters, offering distinctions that demographics cannot offer. Satellite Music Network has been very successful in applying PRIZM clusters to selling radio. Clustering is the idea behind Arbitron's Fingerprint service — discovering which Zip Codes have proclivity toward which radio formats, then targeting those Zip Codes with outdoor advertising, direct mail, or personal appearances.

MORE THAN A LIST

Names and addresses are only the beginning. Database marketing works best when the data involves attitudes, habits, and lifestyle definitions. Think of having a listener/consumer file that includes career information, computer literacy, parenting status, insurance proclivity. Now you've got more than a list, you've got a marketable commodity. Here's how to use it:

- For a Saturday remote, the Zip Codes around the retailer get a mailing with news about the live broadcast and a special discount.

- A restaurant buy is closed because of the value-added mailing to Zip Codes where sit-down restaurants are preferred over fast food outlets.

- A personal improvement seminar places a buy because the station could reinforce the on-air message with a mailing to career women.

The possibilities of database marketing are endless. The

first step is database management. The second is effective manipulation of the database for maximum impact. For instance, I foresee a sales call where your account executive offers mailings instead of promos.

Further into the future, the database will be interactive. You download credit coupons to the PCs of listeners who fit your advertiser's profile. The first of these coupons are printed as UPC bars with your station's coding. Later the credit is applied electronically when the consumer logs on for a purchase. The station gets a cut, too, in what becomes the electronic equivalent of a P.I.!

INTERACTIVE FUTURE

Using on-line interactive media for marketing has been termed "the fifth medium" by American Demographics magazine. (Media one through four are newspaper, magazines, radio, and television.) Ultimately the fifth medium promises to combine the phone, the fax, the television, and the computer into one system.

Glimpses of the future are available now in Videotex systems as far removed as France and Fort Worth. The Mintel System, based in Paris, links five million French households. Star Text, operated by the Fort Worth Star-Telegram, has only 4,200 subscribers, but is a profit-maker. In the middle are systems like Compu-Serve, Dow Jones News Retrieval, GEnie, and Prodigy.

Interactive shopping, reading, messaging, and data-retrieval services are most popular among men aged 24 to 38 who make more than $30,000 a year. Mediamark Research calls these people "electronic innovators." The segment makes up about 13 percent of the U.S. population. The use of interactive systems will increase. There's an organization that promotes computer and telecommunications usage by older adults. It's called SeniorNet, and it's designed to reduce techno-fear among older Americans who didn't grow up with technology at their fingertips.

Supporters of electronic marketing feel that the fifth medium will continue to change the advertiser's forum from the lecture (the mass market), to a partyline (today's niche market), to a one-on-one conversation (the individual).

By describing the interactive future, I'm trying to demonstrate that database marketing is not just a list. Anyone in radio who stops at the names and addresses of contest entrants will be left behind. Far behind.

As you can see, it's vital to collect every useful piece of information you can. Ask format preferences, time-of-day usage, station perceptions, expectations of prizes. Combine your own information with syndicated data from the Census Bureau, Donnelley's Cluster-Plus, Claritas' PRIZM or Impact Resources' MA*RT.

Soon the telemarketing backlash I described in the last chapter will shut the door on research. Telephone access to our public will be denied because of continued telemarketing abuse. That's when your station can turn to its database to recruit music tests or perceptual studies. Ultimately, you'll conduct all your research on-line through the fifth medium. After all, your programming will be on-line, too.

CHAPTER 10

VISUALIZING YOUR
AVERAGE LISTENER

In the 1960s Bob Dylan told us that the times, they were
a-changing; that most likely he'd go his way and we'd go ours;
and that the answer was blowin' in the wind. In the 70s he said
there's no such thing as an average American. He wasn't singing
at the time; he was responding to interviewers in <u>New</u> <u>Times</u>
magazine. Dylan had been doing his research, traveling the U.S.
on concert tour, experiencing Americans firsthand and
interpreting his findings. The "average American" revelation
seemed consistent with his earlier conclusions.

Americans of the 90s prove Dylan's comments prophetic.
Today there are more separate and definable segments of the
population than ever before. The more marketers try to focus on
the individual, the more subsegments they discover. As I
mentioned before, there are 40 clusters in Claritas' PRIZM
database. Donnelley's Cluster-Plus shows 10 lifestyle groupings.
An <u>American</u> <u>Demographics</u> seminar defined 25 "particle
markets." Expect more.

As markets become more diverse, the concept of the
"average" consumer comes back into play to help us focus better.
Broad demographic targets, like 35-44, encompass so many
people, that defining one age in the middle — 39 — helps us
understand <u>all</u> these people. Similarly, any subsegment —
fathers, single mothers, fitness enthusiasts — is still too broad to

grasp.

According to the <u>Almanac of the American People</u> by Tom and Nancy Biracree, there actually <u>is</u> an "average American":

- She's 32, but she thinks she looks younger than she is.
- She's 5'4", has brown hair, and wears corrective lenses.
- She weighs 143 pounds and is trying to lose weight.
- She was born Protestant, but hasn't been to church recently. (She believes in God, however.)
- She owns an eight year old car, a blue sedan.

The authors collected all the research they could find to develop the profile. They give her complete detail in their book: the cost to operate her car; the cost of raising her child; the size of her shoe ($7\frac{1}{2}$ B); and on and on.

All the data together makes this person come alive. You can visualize her in her suburban home, getting into her car, driving to work — all the things a typical American would do. It wouldn't be hard to find a real person of the same age, height, weight, and description. However, since Bob Dylan was right, we also know we'd find 32-year-old females who are heavier, lighter, taller, blonder, richer and poorer. All the trappings of "typical" or "average" are abandoned when we talk about real people — individuals.

Nonetheless, I find that visualizing the average American helps to target her better. Using visualization, we can target other segments equally well. Specifics like age, hair color, and life patterns help us focus communication. I recommend to our client stations that they assemble all the research they have available to develop a mythical "typical listener," then train announcers to focus on that visualization as they speak.

Choosing one individual creates a focus of attention that helps a skilled on-air performer utilize radio's power as a one-to-one medium. The idea of using this type of attention focus is to create a <u>metaphor</u> for the entire audience. Since there are no pictures, no illustrations, no printed words, radio relies upon the private link between what is broadcast and the listener's

imagination and interpretation. We ask announcers to visualize their typical listener as if that person were sitting right there in the control room. When the image is clear, we tell them, <u>talk</u> to that person in a natural, conversational way.

Defining <u>one</u> listener helps the staff identify a set of parameters within which to work. For instance:

- Visualizing an 18-year-old means the use of certain slang phrases, familiarity with lifestyle traits, and response to trendy clothing, music and attitudes.

- Visualizing a 70-year-old requires another set of phrases, understanding of tremendous life experiences, and an appreciation of fears that may be unfounded but real enough.

The one person chosen is representative of the psychographic group or target audience, but that one person is <u>not</u> the target. "Psychographic" in its true meaning refers to "a graph indicating the relative strength of the personality traits of an individual." In behavioral psychology, advertising, and broadcasting, the word "psychographic" has become interchangeable with "lifestyle" or "personality trait." In this sense, psychographic applies not to age or to sex or to race or to physical ability, but to a common denominator among those classifications. An 18-year-old male who loves rock and roll has a psychographic commonality with a 42-year-old female who loves the same rock and roll. So it's in context with lifestyle and psychographics to select only one representative listener.

Advertising agencies often use the individual as representative of millions of users of product. How often have you seen a television commercial for a product that represented the user as a suburban housewife or a big city executive? The advertising conveys an example of who uses the product but doesn't pretend to demonstrate the diversity of the user base. In most cases, the representative chosen as the focus of the ad has been drawn from research among consumers who would tend to use it if motivated.

DEFINING YOUR "AVERAGE"

When Shane Media worked with KNBR in San Francisco we were fortunate to have enormous amounts of research information. NBC owned the station then, and they had fielded a comprehensive perceptual analysis in the ten-county Metro area. In addition, the station used Scarborough qualitative data generated for Giants' baseball.

We combined what we actually had with the target we wanted for the station. Here's the resulting profile:

- Male, 41 years old, married
- Lives in San Jose
- Manager of quality control for a small electronics firm
- Three years of college
- Family income $38,000.00; wife has a part-time job
- Daughter lives at home; she's 16

The description went on into more detail, but you get the idea. By defining the target to the announce staff, more efficient communication resulted. An entire KNBR programming philosophy was constructed around the station's typical listener profile.

In Pittsburgh, WMXP (MIX JAMZ) calls its typical listener "Katie." She's 28; she's single; she works at Alcoa. When the profile was developed, the station's dance-CHR format was new, so there was no listener information available. All the depth came from Pittsburgh area Chambers of Commerce, qualitative data, and brainstorming with MIX JAMZ' GM Chris Wegmann. Katie is the best-defined visualization I've ever been associated with. We constructed a typical monthly budget for her, outlining how she spent her income, where she shopped for clothes, and what grocery store she preferred.

We've staged photographs of typical listeners and posted the results in the control room so air talent can constantly remind themselves of the visualization. Better than staged photographs are real examples from real situations. If your

typical listener is a 37-year-old female who is slightly overweight, find a match at a station promotion. By using a real person with a real name, the focus is much tighter. One note about using real people: the supporting data should be assembled from the research information. The personal information should reflect the average, not the specific.

   Just don't tell Bob Dylan.

3 PACKAGING
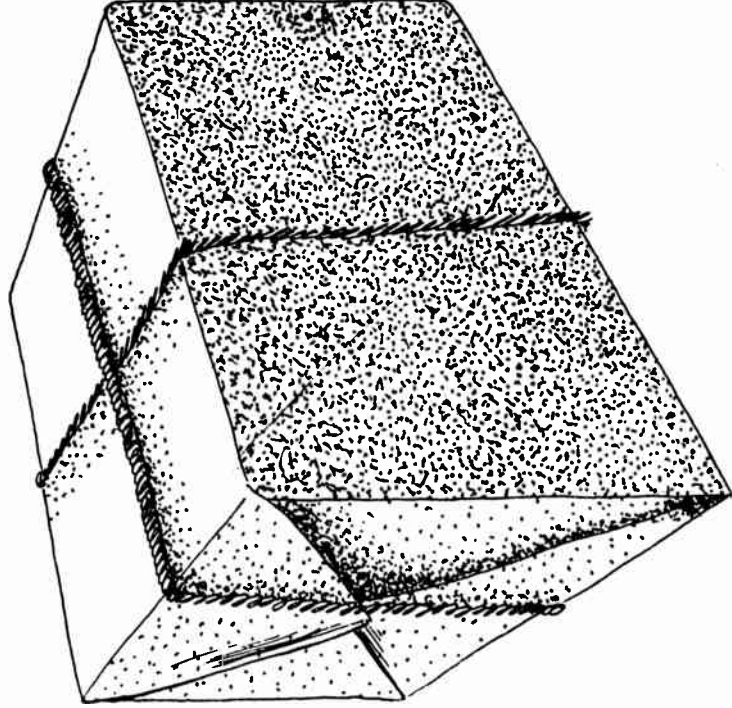
CHAPTER 11
PLAYING THE LOCAL SONG

Ray Benson, leader of the Country group Asleep at the Wheel, was driving down Interstate 35 in his hometown of Austin, Texas. He was listening to Country station KASE. When the station broke for a Pepsi commercial featuring the Fabulous Thunderbirds, Benson changed to Austin rocker KLBJ-FM. But KLBJ was playing another Pepsi commercial, this one featuring Benson's own band.

For Pepsi, it was a departure from the national campaigns with Michael Jackson, Madonna, and Michael J. Fox. For Benson, "It felt just like home. Only in Texas can you play rockers on a Country station and Country bands on a rock station." That's the way Pepsi's bottlers want Texas listeners to feel — just like home. The radio campaign used the slogan "Today's Texas Taste." It was designed to broaden Pepsi demographics in the state.

The Pepsi campaign is part of a growing movement using radio to market national products locally. In Baltimore, Pabst Blue Ribbon beer uses groups like Sha-Na-Na and Three Dog Night to add an oldies twist to its Blue Ribbon beer anthem, "What'll you have?" The commercials fit right in with AC, Oldies, and Classic Rock formats, offering nostalgia in the commercials as well as the music.

Roy Rogers Family Restaurants in Pittsburgh use 60s

tunes like Arthur Conley's "Sweet Soul Music" and James Brown's "I Feel Good." Rogers is a national chain, yet their local slogan is "The Best Burgers in Pittsburgh."

Radio's strong community appeal has always depended on local personalities, local news, and the emotional power of music. Now national advertisers are discovering what local retailers have known all along: the diversity of radio stations and formats means efficient consumer targeting, especially when advertisers link their radio ads to print advertising, in-store promotions, and special events.

A product, a radio station, and an event can yield spectacular results when used correctly. In Minneapolis and St. Paul, KDWB listeners received invitations to an exclusive movie premiere "sponsored by" Nestle's Raisinets. KDWB disc jockeys gave away passes to the movie, and the first 101 KDWB listeners carrying Raisinets wrappers to the theater got in free. (101 is the station's dial position.) There's more: Each of the movie-goers received a numbered ticket good for station tee-shirts and suntan kits with the Raisinets slogan "Catch Some Rays." A grand prize drawing sent two listeners on vacation to "Catch Some Rays" in person.

"What drives a radio station is localization," says Charlie Colombo, President of Banner Radio. "Local personalities and local promotion make a station win in its market. The same thing makes an advertiser successful." Colombo's firm links national advertisers to local station promotions. While his firm develops promotional ideas, he generally defers to the stations because " they know their format and their audience." The Raisinets movie premiere was KDWB's adaptation of suggestions made by Banner.

Often local stations take completely different approaches. Over a Labor Day weekend, WBAP and sister station KSCS in Dallas solicited barbeque recipes from their listeners, then held a cook-off at a local retailer as a promotion for Campbell's Ranch Style Beans. Winners received grocery shopping sprees.

But in Amarillo, Texas, just 360 miles away, stations KIXZ and KMML took a different approach: They gave away Ranch

Style Beans at live broadcasts prior to the Labor Day holiday. The stations worked with Amarillo supermarkets to develop in-store displays so that people who had sampled the beans knew where to find them. In addition, the stations supplied prizes to reward grocers who created the best displays. The Amarillo promotions were different but the end result was the same — local attention for the national brand.

That kind of tie-in also attracts Pepsi, which often uses radio as an adjunct to point-of-purchase. "Pepsi's promotional strategy simply asks for the order at the point of sale," said Pepsi's Michael Weinstock in the RAB's <u>Sound</u> <u>Management</u> magazine. "Pepsi is a local business. The bottler system is the heart and soul of the company," he said. "Radio and point-of-purchase are the most effective media combination."

No radio advertising could be more localized than that for the Nutri/System weight loss program. Turn on the radio in any major city and you'll hear disc jockeys testifying to Nutri/System's effectiveness. In most campaigns, a station personality joins the weight loss program and offers progress reports as the pounds melt away. On KFKF in Kansas City, behind-the-scenes personnel were interviewed by members of the station's "Country Club" morning show. Houston's long-time morning team, Hudson and Harrigan of KILT, are already thin, so they interview listeners who had success with Nutri/System. The commercials are adapted to each participating station's style. For Nutri/System the result is emotional bonding with an audience stimulated by personal endorsements and success stories.

LOCALIZING

Radio is geographically and demographically targeted; but the medium's real power comes from emotional, psychographic targeting. The ability to target specifically has allowed radio to develop formats that, while they have similarities, are actually different from city to city. In Salt Lake City for example, a CHR station plays music that's on today's Top 40 chart, but only those

songs with a rock edge. By contrast, a CHR station serving the
Rio Grande Valley of Texas plays rhythm-oriented hits, often
ignoring hard rock songs that make the national Top 40 charts.
The difference? Texas's lower valley — the McAllen-Brownsville
market — has a huge population of Mexican-Americans whose
taste is oriented toward dance rhythms and love ballads. Salt
Lake City's population is young and Anglo, prime candidates for
rock.

 That's why a station from Salt Lake City couldn't be
transplanted to McAllen or Brownsville. The same is true for
KBFM ("B-104") in McAllen. Listeners in Salt Lake City
wouldn't know what to make of it. Its sultry rhythms come from
artists like Pajama Party, Cynthia and Johnny O, and Cover
Girls, seldom played in other markets.

 Just as stations of the same format differ from region to
region, so do the preferences for various formats. In Houston,
Kansas City, Oklahoma City, Tulsa, and Phoenix, for example,
Country music is a preferred format. The same is true for cities
in the southeast like Winston-Salem, Greenville-Spartanburg,
Charlotte, Birmingham, Montgomery, and Mobile.

 On the other hand, in Dover, New Hampshire, Country-
formatted WOKQ had a policy to avoid the word "Country" and to
trade on local news and information services. Other eastern
cities have Country stations; while successful, they do not (and
cannot) achieve dominance. The target audience just isn't large
enough.

 To illustrate the dramatic differences in response to
Country: In Houston, George Strait received the only 100
percent positive score I've ever seen on a music test. We did an
artist study in Boston and fewer than six in 100 had even heard
of George Strait!

 Many towns find an industrial heritage goes hand in hand
with a rock 'n' roll heritage. In Pittsburgh, Toledo, and Detroit,
for example, Rock stations have traditionally fared well.
Cleveland's claim to the title "Rock 'n' Roll Capital of the World"
is backed up by the reign of rockers. WMMS was at the top of the
city's ratings for years.

Nationally, three formats account for almost half of radio programming: Adult Contemporary (including "Lite" and "Soft Rock"), Country, and CHR, according to McGavren-Guild Radio. Arbitron figures show that 96 percent of Americans 12 years of age and older listen to radio at some time during a week. At any given time, 17.1 percent of Americans are listening to the radio. This figure has remained stable for years in marked contrast to network television's declining shares.

On the surface, radio seems like a tool for niche marketing because it focuses demographically and psychographically. In reality, radio is mass marketing on a local level. "Listeners like to say, 'That's my station,'" says Banner's Colombo. "Everybody gets involved with radio. It's the pulse of the market."

CHAPTER 12

YOU MAY ALREADY
BE A WINNER

In cities of all sizes, consumers find tremendous choices available at lunchtime: sandwich shops, pizza, Mexican food, fish, burgers. To fight the encroaching competition, the beef chains are augmenting menus to woo the health-conscious younger diners who want greater choice. Salad bars, chicken, and seafood are popular expansion items.

The same thing happens in music stores. Record buyers are able to select a cassette single, longer cuts on CD, a collection on cassette, a dance mix — even a softer version in some cases. In each case, it's the same song, but designed to satisfy different needs.

Cable TV markets itself as "the medium of choice" in its national campaign. Additional channels — as many as five hundred by the year 2000 — promise a wide selection not bound by traditional networks. The options are working to the advantage of USA Network, MTV, CNN and Headline News, HBO and Showtime, pay-per-view sports services, and for Home Shopping Network, which transcends cable to UHF channels in a variety of markets.

The first comprehensive analysis of the impact of choice came from Alvin Toffler, who examined the "demassification of media" in The Third Wave. In Megatrends, John Naisbitt described how personal choices for Americans have moved in the

space of a few years from a simple "either/or" to multiple options.

> *Admittedly, we sometimes got a third choice:*
> *NBC, CBS or ABC. Look, Life, or the Post.*
> *Strawberry ice cream. But it was still*
> *either/or, a society of mass markets and mass*
> *market advertising, where homogenized tastes*
> *were easily satisfied with few product choices.*
>
> *Not anymore. The social upheavals of the late*
> *1960s, and the quieter changes of the 1970s,*
> *which spread 1960s values throughout much*
> *of traditional society, paved the way for the*
> *1980s — a decade of unprecedented diversity.*
> *In a relatively short time, the unified mass*
> *society has fractionalized into many diverse*
> *groups of people with a wide array of differing*
> *tastes and values, what advertisers call a*
> *market-segmented, market-decentralized society.*
>
> *Remember when bathtubs were white, telephones*
> *were black, and checks were green?*
>
> *In today's Baskin-Robbins society, everything*
> *comes in at least 31 flavors.*

Radio has dealt with choice for some time. We've given it a name — "fragmentation" — and we've given it a value — negative. "Fragmentation ruined the business." "Fragmentation costs us money." "With fragmentation, radio's just not what it used to be."

Well, radio's not the way it used to be, and radio consumers love it. Arbitron reports that today's listener listens to an average of 3.2 radio stations. In an earlier chapter, I described listeners, especially males, who scan as many stations as they can program on their receivers. "Put it on scan and let it go," is typical of responses by at least one male in every focus group.

EXERCISING OPTIONS

Choice is an important concept for today's radio consumer, especially the baby boomer who grew up in the age of alternatives, the Sixties. It's the boomer who has been the target of advertising like "Have it your way." It's the boomer who responds positively to "variety" in radio. According to our studies, a favorite radio station is the one that is usually referred to as having "the best variety."

The meaning of the word "variety" changes with format. Sometimes variety means "no repetition." Other times it means a change of musical texture. (See Chapter 17 for a further discussion of variety.) To add to the concept of choice, Shane Media has recommended adding a twist to station giveaways: actually give the listener a choice. Instead of giving away a CD, offer "Your choice of CDs" or "Your choice of the CD or the cassette." It can be as elaborate as "Your choice of any top 20 CD" or as simple as a choice between two. "For being the tenth caller, you get a choice: Would you like R.E.M. or Simple Minds?"

How far can you take the idea? One station offered a choice of vacations. Another presented "Pick a Ticket" weekends. Listeners got two tickets to any current movie at any theater at any time. No restrictions.

The idea of choice adds to the perception that your station is the one that's responsive to the listener's self image. For the boomer, self image means individuality. That's why choice is so important. Other prizes also reinforce a sense of individuality: Trips, sports, and involvement with celebrities.

ADVENTURES AND EXPERIMENTS

The new word is "experience." In 100 Predictions for the Baby Boom, Cheryl Russell anticipated a new occupation — the "experience broker," who specializes in matching people's fantasies to real experience. The first indications are already with us: hang-gliding, sailing, white-water rafting, ballooning. Education and prosperity move today's consumer to want more. Like what? Russell suggested adventure vacations: "Join a

scientific expedition, conduct a symphony orchestra, live with a poor family, travel to the North Pole, solve a murder mystery."

At the time of her predictions, Russell was editor of American Demographics magazine. In the years since her book, information from the travel industry shows reservations for "adventure" vacations much higher than before. Example: Even though the U.S. has a lot of ballooning activity, Americans are traveling to France for hot air balloon experience. There is a huge number of people ready to try almost anything once.

How does this apply to radio? Creativity is the operative word. It's not "a trip to L.A.," but "a shopping spree on Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills." It's not "a vacation to Mexico," but "Take part in an archaelogical excavation in Chichen Itza."

A brainstorming session at Shane Media yielded these additional ideas for experiential prizes:

- A week on the road with a band
- A part in a movie, TV show, or video
- Drive in a NASCAR race

From an article in Adweek: There's a company in L.A. that puts ordinary people into the play by play of sporting events, thanks to audio tape. For instance:

> *"The Lakers need a hoop to survive.*
> *Kareem is in traffic. He looks. The pass is to Ed*
> *Shane who's at the top of the key and goes*
> *in for two!"*

The company is called "Sports Fantasies." They recreate the final minutes of a game on tape and add the name of the person including a description of family and friends in the stands. They have a tennis tape with John McEnroe and are working on getting baseball rights. The basketball tape is exciting and fun.

STATUS SURROGATES

Fantasy and reality combine each year as major league baseball teams conduct "fantasy camps." Fans sign up (and pay up) for a weekend of workouts, batting practice, and fielding instruction. The climax is a real game with the campers matched

against retired players.

At the Radio Luncheon at the NAB's 1991 convention, sports marketing authority and author Mark McCormack cited the increase in requests for sports celebrities for customer entertainment. Companies want to provide a golf game with Jack Nickalus or Arnold Palmer as sales incentives.

He described a Philadelphia radio station's tennis exhibition that became so popular it was added to the annual Virginia Slims tour. The station hosts a luncheon in connection with the exhibition so sponsors can meet the likes of Steffi Graff and Zina Garrison.

Jell-O did a national promotion to introduce its sugar-free dessert, offering the opportunity to win a day playing tennis with Martina Navratilova. General Foods claimed the promotion doubled the usual coupon redemption.

When CBS-TV introduced the late night "Pat Sajak Show," they invited viewers to meet Sajak on the set. The number of entries topped 350,000. Too bad all those people didn't watch the show!

Telephone lines in Chicago and Newark were blown out when MTV gave away Jon Bon Jovi's boyhood home. In two hours, the network received 850,000 calls, and phone companies estimate another million-and-a-half calls were lost in the meltdown.

"People like to rub up against greatness, because they hope some of that will rub off on them," said psychologist Carlo Moog in Adweek's Promote magazine. "It's an internal prize," said Moog, "much different from a car or a trip."

Your station might not be able to launch a celebrity promotion, but I urge you to tie in if one becomes available. Don't just go for any celebrity. Make sure the person fits the promotion, the sponsoring product, and your station.

The earliest celebrity prize was golf with Arnold Palmer. Mark McCormack was (and still is) Palmer's manager and that association launched the sports marketing industry. Arnold Palmer won't fit if your audience is young, female, or both. It's not a matter of age; it's a difference in lifestyle. Palmer isn't

trendy. On the other hand, a day with Jaques Cousteau is a topical prize because of sensitivity to the environment. Arsenio Hall is hot. Mary Tyler Moore is not.

EASY MONEY

Radio is more likely to use cash as a prize because money is so easy to use. Shane Media has tested cash amounts of all sizes in markets of all sizes, and one hundred dollars seems to be the minimum prize that compels regular contestants to enter.

To increase participation, you'll have to up the ante. The person who doesn't play contests regularly might be motivated by one thousand dollars. I say "might be" because there are some people who won't play regardless of the prize. They rely more on the entertainment value of the contest when it's played. Their satisfaction comes in knowing someone has won.

Large cash amounts — $10,000.00, $20,000.00, $50,000.00, etc. — create excitement, but they also diminish the expectation of winning. "I don't have a chance," is typical of comments I've heard in research interviews. That means that high-dollar contests must have intrinsic entertainment value in addition to prize value.

That's not to say people won't respond to high dollars. However, the difference between the appeal of $25,000.00 and $10,000.00 is just a few percentage points.

The scores are almost equal when you compare ten thousand dollars, a sports car, and bills paid for a month. In fact, we've had excellent success with the "bills paid" promotion, including a "Live Free for a Year" prize — all bills paid. What's more individual than that?

The only downside to the "bills paid" idea is that it can be perceived as boringly practical. I like fantasy and experiential prizes much better.

CHAPTER 13
RADIO WORTH PAYING FOR

I magine that we had to pay for radio time the way our advertisers do. What would it cost to present two commercials an hour on your station, 24 hours a day, seven days a week?

It would be worth running the numbers with your sales manager to get a real figure. If we had to spend that kind of money to promote a station — its contests, its benefits, its position, its personalities — we'd probably do a better job producing promos.

Radio station promotions should enhance one of three things: Cume, TSL, or Image.

Contests can build cume if they are based on fixed-time play ("Tune in tomorrow at 7:13 a.m.") or if they involve huge prizes, like a car or major money. That generates word of mouth. Sales and merchandising promotions can contribute to cume if they give the station the opportunity to put its message in front of potential listeners who will sample the station.

TSL promotions are generated by the station: on-air contests that reward forced listening with cash or prizes; "silent contesting" off the air with members of a database.

Image promotions do not translate directly to listening. These are the community-oriented activities — sponsoring a fun run or raft race, a booth at the rodeo, a blood drive. They show your station is an active member of its city. If you're trying to

decide if an event promotion fits your station goals, ask if your typical listener would attend.

STATION PROMOTIONS are for cume-building or TSL and are always described as being sponsored by the station. Sponsors can be involved, but they are secondary. It's not the "Timmers Chevrolet Money Song on WXXX." Instead it's the "WXXX Money Song with a grand prize GEO from Timmers Chevrolet." Station promotions are top priority and get full support in recorded promo positions and station liners.

MERCHANDISING PROMOTIONS are advertiser-oriented promotions in which your station participates in creative, point-of-purchase, and on-air activity. On-air participation must fit one or more of the promotional criteria: Cume-building, TSL enhancement or image enhancement. Since station promotions have priority status, merchandising promotions must have lower priority — fewer mentions compared to station promotions. Here's a test to help you determine if a promotion is "station" or "merchandising": Ask "Would we do this promotion if there weren't a buy attached?" If the answer is "no," then it's a merchandising promotion.

When it's time to write a new promo or to freshen your liners, use these tactics:

1. **Know your goal.** What is the purpose of the liners or the promo?

   • To **persuade** your audience that you're the best radio station they'll ever hear.

   • To **motivate** them to write your call letters in their diaries.

   • To **excite** them about your contest or promotion.

2. **Analyze what you're selling.**

   • List the benefits of the promotion in detail so you'll know what points stand out.

- Know what your competitors are saying so you can demonstrate how your station is different, how it's better.

3. Be sure the attitude you project and the language you use fit the audience.

- Americans are "over-hyped." Everything is presented as awesome, whether it's a bomber or facial tissue. Be sure your copy creates excitement, not a cynical response. Let <u>them</u> say, "Hey, that's awesome!"

- Creativity can carry you away sometimes. Make sure that the message shines through.

4. Be specific.

- This is critical in putting together contests, but don't lose sight of it when writing simpler pieces. If you mean "10 in a row" say so. Listeners can understand (and buy into) specific benefit statements consistently presented.

5. Write for the ear.

- Keep it simple and repeat key elements.

- Aim for clarity and involvement.

- Promote events, not programs. Instead of "Tomorrow on the morning show, lots of fun," use "George Strait is the subject of trivia tomorrow at 7:40 a.m."

- In liners, say it once. Get rid of wasted words like "Now, don't forget, that's Sunday night."

- Schedule promos like commercials. They should not be preemptable because "the log is full."

- Play promos <u>first</u> in the stopset they appear in.

- Go for lots of impressions. You wouldn't sell an

advertiser <u>one</u> commercial. Take advantage of your audience flow.

- Schedule a 3.5 frequency against 50 percent of your cume.

4
DETAIL
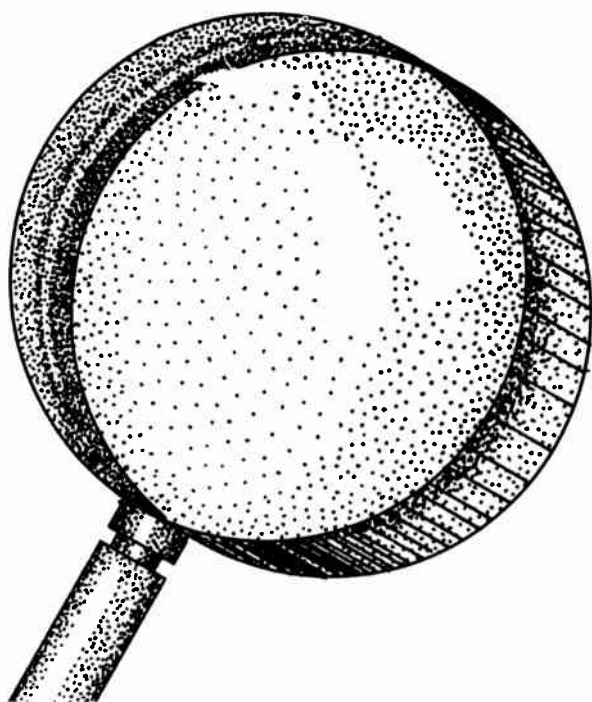
CHAPTER 14
SUBLIMINAL TIMEKEEPERS

Call John T. Jones a pillar of the Houston community. A descendant of one of the city's early builders, he was at one time owner of Houston's Channel 13 and publisher of the <u>Houston Chronicle</u>. When Shane Media worked with Houston's news station in the late 70s and early 80s, he was its owner.

Those were the days of the oil and gas boom, and I had added a daily energy report to the station's schedule. To my surprise, Mr. Jones called me to thank me for arranging to get the show on the air. The call made me feel my programming skills were particularly astute if this bastion of Houston society was calling me about it. For a moment, I mentally reviewed the way the program had been shaped with a local advertiser and a former TV anchorman. A good combination. A good programming decision, I thought.

I responded to Mr. Jones the way I do to all listeners; I asked questions: "What do you like most about the energy report?" "It's on every morning at 6:54," he said. "If the energy report comes on and I'm not off the toilet, I know I'll be late for my 7:30 meetings!"

His comment was another vote for benchmarks, audio triggers that keep listeners on time in the morning. Respondents in focus groups often say, "I leave for work when the news comes on" or "I get up right after I hear 'The Joke of the Day.'" Whether

they hear a timecheck or not, they can tell time by fixed features on their favorite station. Features that are locked in at the same time day after day create a comfort level for listeners. They are subliminal timekeepers and a reliable part of their day.

KILT, our Houston client since 1985, has several time benchmarks on the Hudson and Harrigan morning show. One of them, "The Story Guy" (an old joke updated with topical names and delivered by a character with a Cajun accent) has been on the air at KILT since the early 70s, locked in at 8:10 a.m. The time benchmark is the audio equivalent of a landmark. "Turn left at the first street after the Burger King," somebody might say. If you're following the directions, you don't care about the name of the street, just that it's the first one after the landmark, the Burger King.

That's why we work with morning shows on establishing features or "bits" that run every day. Ideas like "Tabloid Trash" and "Dreaded Morning Oldie" are easy to lock in to a regular schedule. Many of the morning talents in our client group have character voices that can be developed into daily features. Others rely on comedy services like American Comedy Network. Some comedy services do not have continuing features, but even non-similar bits can be pulled together under an umbrella title like "Morning Funnies" and locked in to a specific place on the clock each day.

It's the same approach CNN takes with their "Viewer's Guide to Headline News." The network highlights points on the clock where news, weather, sports, "Dollars and Sense," and "The Hollywood Minute" will be seen every hour. They introduce their format by explaining the benchmarks.

News stations use the same philosophy selling their services "Sports at :15 and :45" or "Traffic at :10, :20, :30, :40 and :50." There's no reason a music station shouldn't do the same thing with services ("News at the top and bottom of every hour") or comedy bits ("Debbie does birthdays every morning at 7:40").

Benchmarks can be tied to days as well as positions on the clock. "Talent Tuesday" offers listener "auditions" all morning. "Toilet Tuesday" lets listeners flush their pet peeves. "Friday

Funnies" collects bad jokes. There are ideas for every day of the week, but use benchmark days with caution. They become less "special" (and their benchmark quality diminishes) the more of them there are.

CHAPTER 15
KEYS TO SHOW PREP

Notre Dame coach Lou Holtz said there are two keys to winning: Preparation and concentration. For a football team, preparation means workouts, game films, scrimmage, and curfews. No football team would hit the field without practicing all week and warming up before the game. Nolan Ryan didn't pitch no-hitter number seven by running onto the field at game time with no workout, no warmup.

Every successful performance demands preparation and concentration:

- Baseball players are in the batting cages long before game time.

- Symphony orchestras go through rigorous rehearsal, sometimes working for hours on a single passage.

- Rock bands spend 4-6 weeks on a soundstage or in a warehouse rehearsing before each tour.

Before his death in 1989 Vladimir Horowitz was considered the greatest pianist in the world. In his eighties he practiced eight hours a day. Why? Preparation and concentration. Preparation increases concentration. Think for a moment about the successful stage actor. The play demands the same exact line night after night, week after week, two

performances on Saturday. Actors have to rehearse more than lines. They have to add inflection, movement, and character to their performance.

Tom Hanks was already a big name before his film PUNCHLINE with Sally Field. After rehearsing a comedy act before live audiences, he said, "For the first time in my life, I've discovered concentration and discipline. I realize that it takes more than gut instinct to do a job well."

If it works for football and baseball teams, for actors and musicians, it should work for air talent. However, many disc jockeys bolt into the studio minutes before airtime with no forethought, much less preparation. During a visit to one of our client stations, I complimented the nighttime talent for the job she had done on the weekly countdown show. She sounded very natural, developing real contact with her audience. "I put a lot of time into it," she told me, "several hours each week." Then I wondered aloud why her regular show did not have the same comfortable feeling. I asked, "How much time do your spend on a regular day?" "None, it's just the same thing over and over," she said.

With that attitude, disc jockeys end up sounding like bored sackers at the grocery store. You may be the 1000th person who's gotten the question that day: "Paper or plastic?" but the sacker who asks it with genuine concern and interest is rare. That's also the kid who gets all the big tips!

Even the most structured liner-card presentation is not the same thing over and over. It's a constant conversation with new people. Tonight's listener comes back tomorrow night having experienced another day and its challenges. That means each returning listener brings new attitudes and new depth to interaction with the radio.

The air talent's job is to match the attitude and enhance the experience. That requires preparation and concentration. Show prep is the most important time an air talent can spend. When the mike is open, talent must be ready to perform.

REACHING OUT

Each deejay should collect local items — bumper stickers, street signs, graffiti — and have them ready to use as mentions on the air: "Here's a great bumper sticker I saw at 3rd and Main...."

After local material is collected, then look for items from the local papers and <u>USA</u> <u>Today</u>. The criteria: What are people talking about? What would they repeat to friends?

Mention local names. When jocks meet someone, they should ask for a business card and say "hello" on the air. Check the local papers for anniversaries or people promoted at work. Community newspapers are great for awards and citations. Namedropping makes great relatability.

It's so important to find the benefit for the listener, the way to relate whatever is said to the listeners' experience, not the disc jockey's. Otherwise, jocks become "inside," as if they have a secret they don't want to share. In focus groups listeners tell me they feel like they're "eavesdropping" when a talent does "backstage" material that's not directed toward the audience.

Examine the differences, actually heard on the air:

1. "Jan's back from vacation and he knows what it's like to be working again."

   BETTER: "Jan's back from vacation and he saw Jim and Laura Jones from (suburb) at Disney World."

2. "We need to have another party like Gordy's."

   BETTER: "Everybody at Sullivan's knew it was Gordy's birthday because there was so much noise coming from the private room."

The rewrites turn the material outside the radio station to give the listener a chance for involvement. They also mention local names in addition to the names of the jocks.

Put the listener first in everything that's said on the air. Involve the listener directly or paint a picture the listener can

visualize. Use people. Use landmarks. Use relatability.

SHOW PREP QUESTIONS

What local event is coming soon?

What is everybody in town talking about?

What's today's big news story?

What kind of day is it?

What is my audience doing right now?

What's the hottest new movie?

What TV show is hot?

What has a listener said to me recently?

What concert has been to town lately?

TACTIC FOR AIR TALENT:

Plan what you do; don't do more than
you've planned for.

CHAPTER 16
SOMEWHERE OUT THERE

When Programming Dynamics was published, one of the ideas quoted most often was, "The listener is the center of the relationship with the radio, not the radio station." In the years since publication of that book, the stations that have nurtured their listener-orientation have won big. Yet we still hear stations who undermine their listener focus, even subtly, with language that concentrates on the station's location, not the listener's.

Here are examples:

"That's opening in the next few days out at the Zoo."

"Up in Marin County, there's a problem at City Hall."

"Saturday, we'll all be down at the All Star Chevrolet."

How often have you heard similar phrases? Think of "lots of traffic out there" and "76 degrees out at the airport."

Where is "out there"?
Or "up there"?
Or "down there"?

It's obviously some place other than the radio station (better known as "here"). When a listener thinks of "here," that means "here at home," "here at work" — specifically "here where I can

hear the radio." The listener who lives across the street from the Zoo doesn't think of the facility as being "out" anywhere.

Marin County is "up" from San Francisco. But Marin County is "down" from Sonoma. Would a Sonoma listener think the map had changed? (This particular example has all types of pitfalls: For instance, to a Contra Costa County resident, Marin is "over there" because San Francisco Bay is between them.)

Sometimes there's a logical explanation for the language that separates the station from its listeners. We've seen stations in such hard-to-access buildings that their cities are truly "out there." In our client group, there's a station with no windows, so the air talent has to imagine the outdoors (and send a runner to the front of the building to check the weather). There's also a station on a dead-end street behind a strip shopping center. A Dallas station had its studios in Reunion Tower, 58 stories above the city. Those situations require creative visualization by the announce staff.

An Orlando station originally had its studio location in the town of Cape Canaveral. That was great for NASA launches, but the language on the air was riddled with "over in Orlando," even though the target listener lived in Orlando. We recommended photographs for the control room wall — photos of real listeners in real settings, placing them on a map to show the range of the signal and the reality of where the radio is. We posted pictures of Orlando landmarks, the skyline, and the lakes.

Work with your air talent to eliminate location phrases. Nothing's "out there." Make "here" where the radio is.

AIRCHECK 10-SCALE

Here's an effective aircheck evaluation system.

Establish criteria based on a scale of ten, with **10** meaning EXCELLENT and **1** meaning POOR. Then establish understandable, verbal descriptions of the rankings of one and ten. For instance:

WINGING IT...PREPARED

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

STUMBLING...SMOOTH

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

RAMBLING..MOVING FROM
POINT A TO POINT B

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

CLUTTERED.........................ONE THOUGHT PER BREAK

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

TOO LONG...WELL EDITED

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

SAYING IT.. SELLING IT

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

MISSED CUES...................................TIGHT PRODUCTION

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

STUPID...FUNNY

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

Every format requires different criteria, so make sure your 10-scale reflects what you really want to examine in each air talent.

CHAPTER 17
HOW DOES IT SOUND?

Every station talks about variety. So much so that it seems like radio does nothing but play "follow the leader." However, on the subject of <u>variety</u>, the public is the leader. In every personal interview and focus group we've encountered, respondents have given "variety" as one of the reasons they tune a station, regardless of format. Some say they like "the mix." Others say they like the "different things" a station plays.

What do they mean? They are describing noticeable changes from record to record: slow to fast, thin texture to full, oldie to current, rhythm to ballad, traditional country to pop style.

In most of our research sessions, we play music tapes for our respondents. A typical tape contains four or five recognizable segments of songs edited together to represent a style of radio. In such a test, the respondent evaluates the tapes by choosing which he or she would listen to "most often," "sometimes," or "not at all."

Using tapes eliminates any ambiguity that might be caused by simply using artists' names, song titles, or even descriptions of radio stations (i.e., "Lite Rock"). The only description heard is "Tape One" or "Station Number One." This method prevents prejudice and eliminates the chance of our accidentally leading a listener towards a response.

During one test, we used the exact same music sequence three times, changing only the announcer pattern in each play. In one, the announcer talked over the intro of every record. In another, two songs played back to back, the announcer talked, then the other two songs played back to back. Yet another played all four songs with no talk, with the announcer only at the end.

We were surprised to find respondents using the word "variety" to tell us what they liked about the all-talkover tape. That tape received twice as many mentions of "variety" as the others. In none of the tapes did the announcer use the word "variety," and respondents were asked only, "What did you like most about that tape?" They were not led by any choice of terms. The announcer's approach created variety.

The conclusion: "Variety" is such an important attribute that listeners perceive it even when it's not there.

TACTICS:

1. Examine music rotations to insure that many tempos and textures are represented in your system.

2. Force movement from tempo to tempo and from style to style.

3. Code records properly so that the computer and your disc jockeys know where to move (and where not to move) music.

The call for variety is not a call for a large number of titles. More often than not, stations that are perceived to have good variety play fewer titles than their competitors, not more. Instead they play different sounds back to back and meticulously avoid sameness. How do they win with fewer records? By making sure every record is right. That requires music testing and careful attention to rotation and flow.

Four times a year, you should schedule a complete inspection of your station's music system. First, compile a complete play date history on all categories to insure that all songs rotate correctly.

Answer these questions:

- Are songs repeating in the same daypart?

- Are songs repeating in the same <u>hour</u> of the daypart?

- What's the average turnover time of the category? Of the individual songs?

Compare the actual rotations to the rotations you <u>intended</u> when you set the categories up in the first place. (You did save your original notes, didn't you?) How close are you? Each category will have a "natural" rotation, based on the number of songs in the category, the number of artists, and the flexibility of the coding. Make sure there are enough titles to accomplish what you want.

Some artists dominate certain types of stations. For instance:

- George Strait, Ricky Van Shelton, and Garth Brooks take a huge percentage of Country.

- Gloria Estefan is in every category on a soft AC station.

- Mariah Carey and Paula Abdul dominate CHR.

A current by the same artist distorts rotations and creates a real scheduling problem.

Recheck all coding and play restrictions. Do tempo rules work? Are there protections between plays of similar sound? Are hard elements (rock, twang, rap, etc., depending on format) forced apart? By how much?

Don't expect your computer system to give you "walk away" time. Somebody — the program director or the music director — needs to spend about an hour and a half on each day's log. After all, the computer can't hear the songs.

Look at the screen for each hour and sing each song in your head. It's the only way to check flow. It <u>cannot</u> be done while on the phone or while distracted. If you're interrupted,

start again, from the top.

Most important: Monitor your station with a copy of the music log by your side. After all, it may <u>look</u> right. How does it sound?

CHAPTER 18
SORTING REALITIES

Auditorium music testing is a sure way of maximizing your library and your rotations, especially Power Gold. Since each testing company has a different approach to displaying the test scores, we get to observe lots of statistical technique.

Most companies provide a ranking of test scores by some overall measurement, and each uses a formula for computation that is its own. It is difficult to compare two tests conducted by two different companies.

Several of the formulas, however, treat all positive scores as equals. (That is, 51 percent is as positive as 100 percent simply because it's positive.) Negative elements like burnout or unfamiliarity are subtracted from the positives. The result is something called "Net Positive," "Comprehensive," or "Acceptance."

I've got no quarrel with any music research supplier, nor do I question any of the computation formulas. However, I do urge users of music testing to examine scores beyond the broad-stroke values assumed by the "Net" approach. For instance, look at the scores given to the most positive answer possible. Whatever the highest number on the rating scale, how large is the percentage for "Favorite" or "Like a Lot" ? That data tells more than computations based on the total. A song that achieves a high "net" score could have zero percent for the "most

positive" answer. On the other hand, we find very high "most positive" scores and low "net" scores because of burnout or unfamiliarity. Twelve percent burnout against a high "most positive" is a lot less worrisome than the same burnout against mid-range scores that are "only OK."

For best results from an auditorium test, review all of the most positive scores among the total sample and get a sense of where they fall. (Every test is different, even separate tests by the same supplier for the same station on the same day.)

Once you have a range of scores, establish parameters for each category, i.e., "Powers are 50 percent or more among the total," "Secondaries 38-49 percent," etc. The numbers are arbitrary, and you'll find they change throughout this process. Nonetheless, the first numbers are important because they give you an overall "sense" of your test.

The next step is to actually develop a Power rotation based on the numbers you chose. This is done most easily when each song has statistical tables on an individual sheet of paper. To begin, pull apart the books the research supplier sends so you'll have one sheet per song. If the supplier prints more than one table on a page, cut the pages. Using the arbitrary number you've established (our example of Powers at 50 percent or higher), sort out all the songs with a score of 50 percent or more on the most positive score in the total group. Be tough: 49.9 percent doesn't count. Take the scores literally as long as they're over 50 percent. Don't make judgments like "too pop" or "too old" or "too geeky." That comes later.

Your next tactic is to look at burnout, unfamiliar, or other negative indications ("never liked," "tired of," "hate it") and establish a similar cutoff point among the Power songs you've just culled. Often when the most positive score is high, the negatives are low.

Step four: Look at the crosstabs. If your station targets 25-34, use that as a guide. If you skew more towards men or women, let sex guide you. Look again at the most positive. Did the scores match the total in the crosstab you're after? Did one cell or another throw the score off — whether high or low? If

your target cell brought scores down, the song may not qualify.

If there are not enough songs to fill out your usual Power rotation, start again. Lower the required cutoff score (i.e., drop the arbitrary 50 percent to 45 percent) and do the same process again. Add the new "lower-standard Powers" to your original group. You may have to "lower the standards" several times to achieve a workable number of Power rotation records. Repeat the process for secondaries, tertiaries, or whatever library depth you seek. If you've lowered the scores to add more Powers, you'll automatically have to lower the arbitrary Secondary score just to get started.

Only after you've sorted the songs strictly by the numbers should you impose judgments, because only then do you know the value of each song. Novelties that test Power might be protected in a lower category. Older records might be pulled out and gathered into a classic category. In a CHR library, rock material might be protected. In a Country library, protect twangy traditional.

Don't move songs into higher categories than their test scores dictate. Yet don't hesitate to move songs downward. Better to have a very safe song in Secondary than a risk in Power.

This is a long, time consuming task. It can be done by computer, but I don't recommend it. By doing it by hand and reading every score, you'll find you know your test inside and out. That means you know your library intimately.

WHAT DO I TEST?

There are some basics that should always come first. Test these records regardless:

1. Everything in Power Gold rotations. Check for burnout and changing tastes.

2. Everything in Secondary Gold.

3. Anything that has achieved Power Current status but has never been tested. Whether it made your Recurrent category or not.

4. Re-test all "Burnouts" from previous tests.

5. Monitor your key competition. Test anything they're playing that you're not.

6. Look for records that have never been tested. Oldies you've heard elsewhere. Requests. Songs from your format that have been used in recent TV commercials or movies.

If you do regular music testing, track <u>all</u> of your tests. Keep score on each song. Then you'll see trends that give you seasonal peculiarities. (For instance, at our Country stations, we see higher scores for Elvis in August because of the anniversary of his death.)

CHAPTER 19
STRIKING THE RIGHT NOTE

Nothing brings a station to life better than tight production enhanced by crisp, exciting jingles. Not every format accommodates jingles well, but it sure is fun to hear a good package on the air in the right setting.

Stations often ask someone from Shane Media to attend jingle sessions in their behalf because our Houston headquarters is just an hour's shuttle flight to Dallas, where the major producers are located. Because Dallas has been a jingle center for so long, there's a tight-knit group of instrumentalists and singers who do most of the sessions, regardless of the company doing the production. What each company has to set itself apart from the next one is an exclusive writer and producer who offer a "sound" that is their own. That unique "sound" becomes the company's sound.

To some in radio, all jingles are the same. Then there are other people who can name the production company, and even the year of production from just hearing the tapes.

There are two types of jingles — custom and syndicated. Custom packages are written "from scratch" for one station. Because the first station to use the jingles uses them exclusively for a time, the cost is high. It involves writing new melodies, new lyrics, and often, a new sound or concept. Syndicated jingles are designed to be used by several stations, so the basic instrumental

tracks are cut once. The vocals are recorded again for each new station that buys the package. Because the cost is distributed among many users, it's generally lower.

Most stations opt for syndicated product because of cost and because it's easier to know how the package will sound. Except for the call letters and logo lines, the sound on the demo tape is the sound you'll get for your station. Custom jingles, on the other hand, are more difficult to "hear in your head" because there's no final sound until all the recording is completed.

PLANNING

Writing must be done <u>before</u> the session. If you get to the studio and decide to change your logo from 94Q to Q94, you're wasting time and money: You're going to pay for the session whether you do it or not.

Enhancing in the studio is okay, as long as you're enhancing something that's already planned. During sessions for KFRG in San Bernardino, the singers had creative ideas on how to add to the "Frog" logo with "Ribbit" sounds. Some of the "Ribbits," however, had already been "written" in before the session. The enhancements made the effect fun on the air.

The time for writing is when you decide on the package in the first place. You should listen to demos from each company, trying to sing <u>your</u> logo or your call letters with whatever's on the demo. That's difficult. If the station on the demo has crammed "You're in the middle of a thirty minute non-stop, laser-hot music marathon" into the jingle and all you want to say is "FM 99," you'll need assistance from the writer at the jingle firm. I find them very accommodating. I've even asked them to sing my lyrics on the phone so I'm sure how they'll play.

I had particular difficulty with a package for a News-Talk station in Houston in the early 80s. I liked the music on a demo I heard for WCCO, but I couldn't get past the lyrics. WCCO had built the campaign around a statement by the late Vice President Hubert Humphrey.

Humphrey had described hearing the announcement of his

political victory on WCCO and then exclaimed, "That's real radio!" The lyrics reinforced that statement and the music fit the Humphrey tape.

I couldn't listen to the instrumental beds without hearing the phrase "real radio," it had become so imbedded in the package. So the supplier helped me. One Saturday morning my home phone rang. When I answered, a piano played and a singer sang the new lyric — "Your life, your world." From that point on "Real radio" was displaced and I heard only the new theme.

THE SESSION

When you attend a jingle session on behalf of your station, you're not there to produce or to direct. The staff of the jingle company is trained to do that for you. You're there to listen. You know how your call letters sound. You know about idiosyncracies in saying them. WIL, for instance, can attract an accidental "y" sound and become "Double-you-wye-ell" instead of "Double-you-eye-ell." That's the sort of thing you're listening for.

Yet don't hesitate to act if you hear something odd. Ask to hear it again. Ask for another take. You'll find that the singers will catch problems long before you do. They'll even catch problems you wouldn't have thought about.

I like to meet with the singers and the engineer before the session and to tell them about the project in a sentence or two:

> This is a new station in Columbia, South Carolina. It's the first Oldies station in the market.

> You're part of a big challenge here. This station is going Country against a station with a 15 share. Every element has to be 100 percent or better.

At sessions for KILT in Houston, I outlined some of the research that had led to the decision to use jingles:

> We found that when people are asked where on the dial to find Country music, they say "FM 100." We have to overcome a call letter retention problem, so that's why the

jingles have been written with the FM 100 tied to KILT. That's why the "KILT" is repeated at the end.

The singing is done in "parts" or harmonies. Any individual part may sound odd because each is designed to mesh with all the others to create the final sound. It is possible that the melody may not be represented in any one part but is a product of all the parts together. So until all are sung you might think your jingle sounds awful. Usually the engineer will alert you beforehand.

The singers will appear to pay no attention to the project at all. Suddenly the music starts, and they fall into perfect balance. It's not lack of care. It's just that they're professionals. They make it look easy. I've been at sessions where the singers are busily engaged in conversation. For instance, comparing prices on used cars, paging through papers for auto listings:

Singer #1: Do you know anything about the '83s?

Singer #2: My brother had a...

Group: (Singing) "FM 100-Twelve in a Row!"

Singer #2: He had an '83 Olds Delta.

Singer #1: What kind of mileage?

The singers are not distracted by what looks (and sounds) to us like distraction.

The final mix may or may not be done the same day as the singing. If not, you can hear a rough mix that will reflect the final product but will not be the final product.

Take advantage of the advice offered by the writers, producers, and client service reps at the firm you've chosen. They know their business and they've done lots of jingle sessions for lots of stations. It's a good bet that if they tell you something can't be done it can't be done. Believe me, it doesn't happen often. If they make a suggestion of a change, they're not trying to take over the creative reins. They're sharing valuable experience.
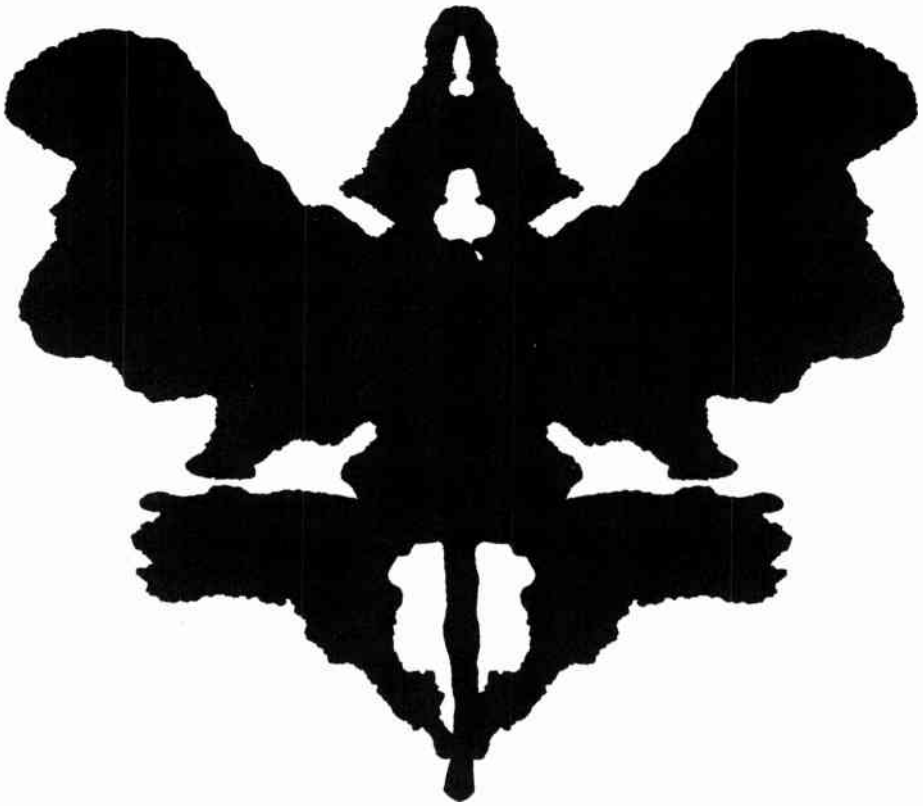
OWNERSHIP

Bob Shannon at TM Century reminds me that when you put your jingles on the air, they're not yours. For the most part, jingles are leased, not sold. This means a renewal fee after a year or two of use. Using jingles without the renewal fee or lifting jingles from demo packages is a violation of licensing agreements and copyright laws.

5
REALITY

CHAPTER 20
SUCCESS BY THE NUMBERS

The more complex our lives, the more attracted we are to easy answers. That's why self-help books work so well. Business books have borrowed the "easy answer" idea with short, punchy sets of trends to expect, or rules to live by. Easy answers seem to come with numbers attached.

John Naisbitt and Patricia Aburdene subtitled <u>Megatrends 2000</u> "Ten New Directions For The 1990s." That was a spin-off of the highly successful annual publication from the Naisbitt Group, called <u>The Year Ahead</u>. Each year their reports featured "ten powerful trends shaping your future." The 1986 edition included "the ten best places in America to start a business."

In Henry Rogers' book <u>Rogers' Rules For Success</u>, the public relations expert closes each chapter with "Rogers Rules" for every conceivable situation. With as few as three and as many as 12 rules, Rogers guides the reader through offering criticism, accepting criticism, making decisions and other business activities.

Harvey Mackay's best-seller, <u>Swim With The Sharks Without Being Eaten Alive</u>, listed "lessons 1-69" in addition to chapters. It also included Mackay's "66-Question Customer Profile," his "12-P's Competitive Profile," and a set of "Quickies" numbered 1-19.

<u>Radio Only</u> magazine has made a comfortable living with

numbered lists of tactics and strategies. They combine the numbers with headlines starting with "How to...." That's the other major component of the easy answer: a sentence beginning with "How to..." (<u>Swim</u> <u>With</u> <u>The</u> <u>Sharks</u> <u>Without</u> <u>Being</u> <u>Eaten</u> <u>Alive</u> was originally titled <u>How</u> <u>To</u> <u>Swim</u> <u>With</u> <u>The</u> <u>Sharks</u> <u>Without</u> <u>Being</u> <u>Eaten</u> <u>Alive</u>.)

Hey, I'm not proud. Shane Media's <u>Power</u> <u>Selling</u> <u>Tactics</u> used lots of numbered lists, because they help readers to digest ideas quickly. We've also used the numbered list in presentations to conventions. At Radio '85, there were "Ten Must Win Rules For AM Radio." At a Texas Association of Broadcasters Convention there were "Ten Must Win Rules For AC Radio." At a Country Radio Seminar, "Twelve Tactics For Country Success."

Alert readers know what's coming. Given the success of numbered lists, this book wouldn't be complete without one. People leafing through this volume at the NAB Store during a convention will turn to this section immediately and decide to buy. A review in a trade magazine will describe the earlier chapters about strategy, perception, and subliminal time keepers, then say, "The book also includes nine important tactics for success."

Here they are:

1.   Play offense or defense.
2.   Orchestrate your team.
3. Value the medium.
4. Expand your core audience.
5. Be local and relatable.
6. Offer easy access by listeners.
7. State instructions clearly.
8. Pay attention to technical operations.
9. Expose your secrets.

1. PLAY OFFENSE OR DEFENSE

If your station is new, you're the challenger. Your job is

offense. You must find the leader's vulnerability and focus on only that as you attack. A new AC challenger cannot worry about the Country leader until the AC leader is beaten.

Lots of strategy sessions use terms of warfare as metaphors. Since the Persian Gulf War, phrases like "surgical bombing" and "Patriot warhead" have entered radio's strategic jargon. While the warfare metaphor is a bit heavy-handed, the concept is similar. Someone holds territory (i.e., the leader has the audience) and someone else wants to take over that territory (i.e., the challenger wants that same audience).

Leaders, on the other hand, have to defend their positions. A station at the top must remain vigilant, keeping vulnerabilities to a minimum. The moment an upstart station tries to wage an attack, the leader must act. The format leader should preempt a challenger's key language. The perception most often goes to the leader. At worst, the perceptions become muddied. That helps the leader and hurts the challenger.

WIL-FM in St. Louis adopted "Ten in a Row" positioning to capture the "more music image." The perception belonged to WIL until KIX 104 upped its power to cover much of the St. Louis Metro from suburban Jerseyville, Illinois. The new KIX positioning was "Twelve in a Row." The morning they launched their attack, WIL PD Ray Massie shifted his station to "Twelve in a Row." The counterattack was on the air within two hours of the KIX move, effectively stifling any challenge to WIL's music position.

No station can play both offense and defense. Choose sides based on where you are in format preference and station life cycle.

2. ORCHESTRATE YOUR TEAM

To me, radio stations resemble baseball teams. Individual performance is so important (the disc jockey and the batter are analogous), but the whole team is measured as one (ratings and stats).

Depending on the people you assemble for your staff and

on your personal management style, you'll see similarities with some type of sports team. Maybe your station is a football team, with a coordinated effort by all members who follow signals from one "quarterback." Maybe yours is a basketball team with all players breaking at once, coached from the sidelines, not from the field. Some stations can be compared to another well-managed system: the orchestra. The various musicians are not there as prima donnas or to play loudly and attract attention. The players in an orchestra support each other. Sometimes you can see an entire section sitting quietly, counting and watching. It looks like they're doing nothing, but they're supporting the other sections. (Team evaluation, page 137)

It's a cliche, but the team is like a chain -- only as strong as its weakest link. Being a good team player doesn't always bring recognition. Being a good team **does**!

3. VALUE THE MEDIUM

Newspaper circulation goes down, but newspaper rates go up. Radio has never learned this lesson. Stations that are number one in their markets will keep rates low because they are afraid of losing business. That's why radio's slice of the total advertising pie is so small (only 6.8 percent in 1990). I've seen stations with elaborate grid systems that exist only in print, never in practice. When they're sold out, the next higher pricing grid should prevail. Does it? No. The station increases its commercial load or junks up its inventory with split 60's or multiple tags. The result is diminished TSL because of clutter.

What if major television events were sold like radio? Can you imagine Budweiser paying a half-million dollars for a Superbowl commercial then counting promos and tags and ticket giveaways? Or how about MCI buying ABC-TV news and asking if Peter Jennings can record promos? Or Proctor and Gamble asking for liners from soap opera characters before each commercial break?

HERE'S HOW TO RATE YOUR TEAM'S MOTIVATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Circle the appropriate number: 1 means the statement doesn't apply; 5 means it's most true.

Each member feels that genuine efforts are being made to...

1. Encourage and direct the personal growth of each team member.

<div align="center">1   2   3   4   5</div>

2. Provide the resources necessary to get every phase of the job done as requested.

<div align="center">1   2   3   4   5</div>

3. Know each team member well, and understand his or her needs and aspirations.

<div align="center">1   2   3   4   5</div>

4. Make sure each team member knows exactly how performance is measured.

<div align="center">1   2   3   4   5</div>

5. Reward good performance and constructively correct below-average performance.

<div align="center">1   2   3   4   5</div>

6. Give each team member the training and supervision necessary to meet expectations.

<div align="center">1   2   3   4   5</div>

How to score: Count the total points. 28-30 means you've got an excellent work environment. Everyone feels motivated. 22-27 is okay, but could use invigoration. 14-21 is marginal. Your team needs support. 13 or less indicates a need for team building.

Apply this test by administering to department heads and their employees. Total and average all the scores of the managers; then do the same with the staff's scores. The comparison will be interesting.

4. EXPAND YOUR CORE AUDIENCE

When Church's Fried Chicken opens a new restaurant,they do no advertising. Instead, they let the facility stand for up to six weeks and interview people who are naturally drawn to it. They find out what brought those first customers.

Was it the spicy recipe? Was it the proximity to their home or work? Was it something wrong with Kentucky Fried Chicken, with Popeye's, or with other fast food in the neighborhood? Before a marketing plan is finalized, Church's knows all about its natural core audience. Their aim with advertising is to duplicate the interest shown by the very first customers. That's the basis of psychographic core expansion. Whoever is in your station's loyal audience can help you expand that audience. The more you know about your core, the easier it is to duplicate them.

An essential, of course, is to be able to judge whether there are others in the general audience. A jazz or new age station, for example, may have not only a loyal core, but also may have all the jazz or new age devotees in the market. More than one station has been bitterly disappointed to discover that there was no growth beyond their initial impact.

The core group for a mass-appeal format is easy to identify even if there's no format to serve them. While there are no sizeable markets that remain without at least one station in major formats, Shane Media has been researching long enough to have discovered format holes and filled them (or waited for others to fill them if our station was secure). For example, we saw the Oldies niche wide open in both Kansas City and Cleveland long before anyone set out to fill them. Our stations were solid in their formats, so it was not to their benefit to move to another position.

Core expansion requires telling your most loyal listeners who you are, what you do, and how it benefits them. Don't let anyone on your staff say, "They know who they're listening to, we don't have to say it so much." That's tunnel vision. If you don't tell 'em who you are, they'll hear another station that <u>does</u>.

Advertise where your audience is likely to see your

message. After males 18-49? Use Fox TV. After teens? Use MTV and school promotions. After women? Use coupon mailers. It's a moving target, but your aim is sharpened by constant perceptual research. Don't overlook your own air as an advertising vehicle. If the core already listens, what better way to reach them? Ask them to listen longer. Ask them to listen again.

Watch TV sports for an excellent lesson: Monday Night Football always has promos for next week's game and for others ABC sports broadcasts. ABC knows that sports attracts a psychographic they want to tap!

5. BE LOCAL AND RELATABLE

A common thread among successful morning shows is the extent to which they are local. If I go into a market, listen to a station's morning show, and don't understand what they're talking about, I assume they're doing it right.

Before NewMarket Communications effected their leveraged buyout of Summit stations WTQR and KXXY, they sent me to both Winston-Salem and Oklahoma City to assess vulnerabilities of the stations, even though each was the market leader.

My first morning in Oklahoma City I turned on Dave and Dan, KXXY's long-time morning team and felt they were speaking some sort of code that left me out entirely. Fortunately I know a radio station cannot be evaluated from a hotel room; so I hit the streets, talking to people in shops, in malls, in theater lobbies. The next morning I had a completely different response to Dave and Dan: I felt they were totally in touch with the people of the market. What I had called "a code" was the language and attitude of Oklahoma City. No wonder they were number one!

Morning shows have the best opportunity to be local and relatable because they have more time for it. Relatability cannot stop at 9:00 a.m., however. Successful stations reflect their communities all day every day by sounding local. It doesn't require a lot of time, nor does it take extraneous words. Here are

typical generic remarks compared to localizations I've heard on
the air:

GENERIC: "This morning's paper says..."
LOCAL: "Today's <u>Sun-Times</u> says..."

GENERIC: "I was in the check-out line and..."
LOCAL: "I was in the check-out line at Foodland..."

GENERIC: "... and it's 76 degrees."
LOCAL: "... and it's 76 degrees in Chesterfield where
                   Myra Jones is celebrating her birthday."

You may have seen the Shane Media "Relatables Test." It
has been distributed at conventions and printed in several trade
magazines. It was developed to help air talent find the "best" in
several categories. It makes for stimulating staff meetings. It
also insures that on-air performers know the city they are
serving. The Relatables Test makes sure that performers think
about ways to add one word or phrase to make an otherwise
generic remark become local.

Shane Media Relatables Test

Name the best local example in each category:

MEDIA

TV Station _____

Radio Station_____

    AM _____

    FM _____

    Talk Show _____

TV Anchor - Male _____

TV Anchor - Female_____

Newspaper Columnist _____

Disc Jockey _____

Sportscaster _____

Weatherman _____

Ad Agency _____

Local Advertisement_____

Ad Campaign_____

Magazine _____

GOODS/SERVICES

Department Store_____

Furniture Store _____

Health/Athletic _____

Men's/Ladies' Shop _____

Car Dealer _____

Newsstand _____

Drug Store _____

Alterations/Cleaner _____

Travel Agency _____

Hotel _____

FOOD/DRINK

Restaurant (overall) _____

Restaurant Atmosphere _____

Restaurant Service _____

Burger_____

Mexican _____

Cuban _____

Pizza _____

Seafood _____

Ribs _____

Italian _____

French_____

Chinese _____

Steak _____

Raw Bar _____

Salad Bar _____

Bar _____

Happy Hour _____

ENTERTAINMENT

Attraction _____

Place to Dance _____

Arts Event _____

Beach/Lake _____

Best Thing to Happen

    to (town) _____

Best Place to Watch

    People_____

Best Place to Meet

    People_____

Best Freebie _____

PEOPLE

Local Hero _____

Local Politician _____

Best Looking Male _____

Best Looking Female _____

MISCELLANEOUS

Suburb_____

New building _____

Bargain _____

Romantic Spot _____

Weekend Getaway _____

6. OFFER EASY ACCESS TO LISTENERS

Members of focus groups often report that their favorite stations' phones are "always busy" or that "you never can get in." While a busy signal is preferable to no answer at all, I urge you to check your station's accessability.

- Are phones answered promptly and pleasantly?

- Do the operators (whether disc jockeys or receptionists) know how to find answers?

- Are your phone numbers easy to remember?

- Are the numbers easy to dial?

- Do voice mail systems have easy-to-follow instructions?

- Is there human intervention in the voice mail system?

While technology is wonderful, its downside is alienation. I've called companies with such complicated voice-mail menus that I must have touched every office electronically, but didn't speak to anyone who could assist.

A more simple, surface note: If your request line or studio input line spells your call letters, it's more memorable than if it doesn't. A study of "800" numbers that use either catchy or meaningful words shows that people are up to ten times more likely to remember a telephone number if it spells something. Your phone company can analyze word possibilities by computer. If your call letters aren't available in the right combination, try words compatible with your format:

390-H-I-T-S

52-P-O-W-E-R

1-800-C-O-U-N-T-R-Y

7. STATE INSTRUCTIONS CLEARLY

Be as clear as you can in everything – whether the instruction is for your listener or for your staff.   Contest rules must be clear; staff instructions explicit.

The worst instruction I've ever encountered was posted on the control board at a station: "Ad lib word-for-word verbatim." It's an absolute contradiction that no staff could take seriously. The cost of ambiguity is misunderstanding.

8. PAY ATTENTION TO TECHNICAL OPERATIONS

You don't have to be an engineer to judge whether your technical sound is up to par. Face it, there's better-sounding equipment in the average family room than in the average radio station. The audience is learning fast what sounds good and what sounds like goo.

Having been born in Atlanta, my early exposure was to rhythm and blues and later to Southern Rock that found its roots in black music. Recently I've relived those early days by listening to the same songs remastered on CD. What a difference in Sam and Dave's Muscle Shoals sessions! Duane Allman's guitar sounded great on vinyl, but it soars to the sky on CD. Our neighbors in the real world are having the same experiences, no matter what their musical tastes. The impulse display at Drug Emporium is full of CDs of Doc Severinson and Placido Domingo – at $3.99 each! Yes, they are cut-outs from lost masters; but they will train consumer ears at low cost. When those folks start to compare their cheap CDs to radio, what will sound better? The CDs.

But your music is on CD, you say. That means the quality is the same. Not when your music is squeezed through antiquated or abused processing. Stations that play music from CD must be especially sensitive to worn cartridge tape. Jingles, production sweepers and commercials sound awful on old, worn carts.

At some point in the near future everything will be digital. Between now and then I worry about radio's perceived quality.

9. EXPOSE YOUR SECRETS

Any time one of the trade magazines does an article comparing station music policies or rotations, I remember experiences I had at <u>Music</u> <u>Programmers</u> <u>Guide</u>. MPG, as it was affectionately known, was published weekly in Chicago and gained some stature as a tip sheet in its two year life.

As an MPG editor and columnist, I often asked about rotations. Most of the time I received answers that seemed ludicrous. PDs and Music Directors offered such outrageous distortions of reality that I could never write a serious article about how music rotations actually affected TSL. Each of the programmers who was quizzed about rotations tried to hide secrets.

Today when trade articles are printed about rotations, I call a few of the programmers and ask them, "Did you tell the truth?" Most say, "No, why should I give that information away?" What the station people don't realize is that all I have to do to learn their music rotation is to listen to their station! If their hottest record repeats in two hours and ten minutes, that's how long it would take me to discover the fact. Skimmer machines and computer tracking make it even easier. Any competitor worth being on the dial knows your rotations (or how to get them). The only way to keep a secret from a competitor is to keep it from your listeners.

Sure, there are secrets behind the scenes. The morning man's not as funny as he sounds. His sidekick is not as pretty as the guy on the street thinks. The contest budget isn't as big as the promos make it sound. The satellite jocks really come from Dallas or L.A. Those secrets are okay. The best secret in radio, however, is the one that's not kept. It's on the air all the time.

TRUST

A final rule should be "Develop confidence and loyalty among listeners." That cannot be mandated in a neat set of rules. Trust is earned.

I hope every station can develop the success and alignment that KFRG has in the Riverside-San Bernardino, CA, market. "K-Frog" became the buzz of the radio industry when it hopped to the top of the ratings in one book and <u>stayed</u> there.

During California's controversial spraying against a med-fly invasion, there was a call to K-Frog. "Are they going to spray Malathion?" the listener asked. "They haven't called us," replied Richard McIntosh, GM at KFRG, "but I'd prepare for it just in case." The caller then said, "Well I called KCKC and they said 'no.' I wanted to check with K-Frog because I trust you more." Richard's advice was solid. The state sprayed that night. The caller's faith in KFRG was well-placed.

CHAPTER 21
MAKING USE OF CONSULTANTS
THE PAINLESS WAY

I began consulting radio stations at age 12. I called the request lines of stations in Atlanta and asked for my favorite songs. It was exciting to feel that the stations took my advice so readily. Now Shane Media Services has become one of the longtime radio consulting firms. We've been helping stations solve management, programming, and research problems since 1977. Only Kent Burkhart, Lee Abrams, George Burns, Mike Joseph, and Bob Hennaberry got a head start on us. Rick Sklar and Jeff Pollack seem like latecomers!

Today, however, there are lots of firms offering radio consulting. The R&R Directory for Spring 1991 listed 255! The number will rise, not fall. When Danny Flamberg worked with the Radio Advertising Bureau, he wrote in Sound Management magazine, "Consultants in radio today are a lot like pajamas: everybody has them but not everybody uses them."

Consultants are a fact of life, yet some PDs can hope for no more than an uneasy truce. The consultant comes to town amid comparisons to Godzilla and Darth Vader. There's another side to the same myth. I remember a drawing in a 1982 issue of the Harvard Business Review, in which the consultant was depicted as a genie drifting up from a magic lantern, juggling a set of broken, uneven balls. Neither extreme is true, fortunately. I know I've scared some clients, and I've also been told

(secondhand) that I was regarded as a "genie." Again, neither perception is quite true, although I'd certainly prefer the latter!

Do you need a consultant? Yes. Consultants can bring special expertise, new ideas, and objectivity to a radio station's management team. These attributes prompt neither fear nor worship. Simply stated, the consultant is an additional member of the staff brought in to handle a project or to provide what I call a "second set of ears."

From the article in <u>Harvard</u> <u>Business</u> <u>Review</u>, here are consulting's eight fundamental objectives:

1. Providing information to a client.

2. Solving a client's problems.

3. Making a diagnosis, which may necessitate redefinition of the problem.

4. Making recommendations based on the diagnosis.

5. Assisting with implementation of recommended solutions.

6. Building a consensus and commitment around corrective action.

7. Facilitating client learning — that is, teaching clients how to resolve similar problems in the future.

8. Permanently improving organizational effectiveness.

An NAB "Research and Planning" paper outlined when to hire a consultant:

>*Eroding ratings and plummeting billings demand quick and often dramatic changes in station operation. New owners may have significantly different objectives for the station to achieve. Rivalry with other stations, cable, home video and other competitors may dictate re-evaluating your selling and promotion strategies. These challenges often conflict with current ways of doing*

business. Usually only an outside person has the objectivity needed to analyze these situations and recommend new directions.

Station management should avoid the "consultant-as-guru" syndrome. The greater the understanding of the abilities of the station, the greater the results from the consulting relationship. The station must define the problem before outside expertise can be called in. The consultant will likely offer a new perspective on the problem. He may even re-define it. However, it cannot be re-defined by an outsider until those inside are convinced that the problem exists and needs solution. Clients should not expect a consultant to do all their work for them. The ideal station-consultant relationship stems from a clear concept of what needs to be done and why the client cannot do it without help.

The fear factor clouds a consulting relationship. It indicates a lack of open communication among members of the station's management team. When the General Manager stops the PD in the hallway and says, "Here's your consultant," the relationship is likely to be a stormy one. Sensitive managers understand that human resources are the competitive edge. A manager who acts as "facilitator" for his subordinates creates an atmosphere of shared commitment and growth. If the Program Director is brought into the decision making process when a consultant's services are being sought, the client-consultant relationship will be much more productive.

One of the most impressive screening processes I've seen was conducted by a station whose management decided that a series of problems could be resolved best by using outside help. First, they conducted a massive research project that helped them define the problem further. Next, they solicited presentations from programming consultants. The General Manager of the station narrowed the field to several of us who could do the job. Then the Program Director was asked to make the final decision based on personal interviews and any other research he deemed necessary.

I was proud that Shane Media Services was chosen.

Further, I was confident that all of the members of the client's project team where ready to work toward a common goal. After all, they <u>each</u> had a hand in the selection of my company's services. The process also let me know that internal disputes at the station had been resolved <u>before</u> I got involved. What a comfort not to have to fight the internal politics that could derail the attempt to complete the project. One of the jobs a consultant should <u>not</u> be assigned is referee!

Here are six rules to enforce when it's time to hire a consultant:

1. DEFINE THE PROBLEM. Accept that there's a problem the station cannot solve internally. Specific training is needed by the staff. An objective, outside ear is needed.

2. RESOLVE INTERNAL CONFLICT. Get all the philosophical differences out of your system before an outside expert is brought in. Make sure a goal has been established and that the management staff all buy in.

3. INVOLVE EVERYBODY. Whoever will be working with the consultant should be a partner in the decision process.

4. PROVIDE PROGRESS REPORTS. Everybody likes to know how they're doing. Let the consultant know how the job is progressing. Demand that the consultant provide evaluations of station progress. Keep communications open.

5. WORK ON A PROJECT BASIS. Have a time frame for each step of the plan. When the project is completed, examine whether the consultant is still needed. If there's additional work to be done, strike up a new deal.

6. BE WARY OF GUARANTEES. No professional consultant
     will unconditionally guarantee results. If you hear
     promises that your station will be number one or that
     there will be a certain increase in revenues, be
     careful. Reputable consultants sell their time and
     their knowledge. They don't control your staff and its
     ability to get results.

The issue of <u>Harvard</u> <u>Business</u> <u>Review</u> I mentioned earlier
contains a meaningful comparison of the perceptions of
consulting relationships: "To executives, consultants may seem
concerned mainly with prolonging their assignments and unable
to appreciate the practicalities of managerial issues. Conversely,
consultants may see their clients as shortsighted and lacking the
backbone necessary to make important decisions."
     An open understanding of the problems to be solved and
clear communication of the paths to solutions will avoid
misconceptions. Consider the consultant a member of your staff
like your morning man or your news director. The consultant
brings skills to the station that management may not have.
     From the NAB paper quoted earlier:

> *The temptation may arise to use
> consultants as window-dressing when there is no
> actual commitment to do anything, or for a quick
> fix when it's already too late. Most reputable
> consultants won't work in these situations since
> these strategies can backfire easily. We
> recommend facing up to the problems instead of
> hiding behind a consultant's report.*

Amen!

CHAPTER 22
COMPETITION IN THE FOREGROUND

The Eagles were on the sound system as I tried to decide between blackened redfish and Shrimp Toulouse. After the Eagles, a Motown classic. Then Chicago, Billy Joel, Creedence, Phil Collins, Michael Bolton, the Turtles.

I ordered the redfish and asked about the music source. It was a tape, a targeted sound developed by a local supplier. Hardly background music, yet it wasn't intrusive. It created the perfect ambiance for the restaurant, a baby boomer fantasyland.

Foreground music is the new wave in environmental stimulation. After all, an audience weaned on rock or funk seeks an environment of rock or funk. Boomers just won't sit still for Muzak. That is, until now. In the mid-80s, Muzak began satellite delivery of Foreground Music One — "FM-1." Muzak met the challenge of the rock revolution of the sixties and seventies in order to preempt moves from its traditional "background" service to other suppliers. A new Madonna or Luther Vandross record will be on the FM-1 playlist as fast as it hits the charts.

A Gallup Poll showed that retailers are strongly in favor of foreground music as a marketing tool. In fashion outlets, 91 percent of shoppers believed music had influenced their buying. Almost 80 percent of store managers said music set the mood, and 70 percent believed shoppers were more relaxed and stayed

in the store longer because of foreground music.

How does the rise of foreground music affect radio? Several ways, beginning with street-level measurement: Long before Arbitron or Birch report on station performance, there's another, less sophisticated survey taken. I call it "Retail Ratings."

When I ask clients how they feel their station is doing, they invariably respond with a retail count. "I heard us on in six stores at the mall" or "We got the Burger King and the McDonald's this weekend." It's hardly quantitative research, but it indicates acceptance at some level. I recall my feeling of pride as I walked through the airport at Baton Rouge and heard our client's station on the sound system. "We won them back," the manager told me.

Tangential promotion in the retail area is of enormous value. Shoppers are exposed to a station they might not know. If they trust the retailer, the endorsement of the station is enough to create value. It's as powerful as word of mouth. The benefits of in-store play are such that station personnel will furtively change the dial if they find a retailer listening to the competition. Many actually pay a retailer to change the dial; others create contest incentives. If these same retailers were to sign with foreground services, radio would lose.

One of the disadvantages of foreground services is that they are usually more costly to the retailer than radio. For example, a retailer who plays radio and has no more than three speakers in the store pays ASCAP $104.00 per year. If this same retailer subscribes to Muzak's FM-1 service, he pays on the average about $45.00 per month.

But foreground music also has advantages since it erases what some perceive as "negatives." In many cases there's no talk, no commercials, just music. Research already shows a high percentage of complaints about commercials and "too much talk" on the radio. Foreground music resolves those complaints. There's no chance for an annoying pitch or an inane deejay remark to break a carefully woven musical spell. Just as CDs are creating a new standard of audio excellence, programming

without talk may prompt development of listeners who believe no talk to be the acceptable standard.

For instance, what happens to your station's best retail client who gets so used to hearing foreground music that commercials become out of context? Can your sales staff be convincing about commercials to a client who never hears any?

What if repeated exposure to foreground music sources were to create further disdain for commercials among those already dissatisfied? Would they choose to abandon radio in favor of cassettes or a home audio downlink? An answer would be no more than speculation, but even speculation about listeners leaving the medium should get radio's attention.

The fact that Muzak's in the foreground business will make that business grow rapidly. Muzak knows how to merchandise.

CHAPTER 23
FORMATS AND THE FUTURE

John Naisbitt warned us about the 90s. He said things wouldn't be better or worse, they'd be different. As radio fully grasps its position in the marketing dimension, stations in all markets realize that's true. The old rules don't serve us any more.

The easy predictions have been "more stations, smaller niches." That's reality now in so many markets where three stations cluster at the top of the ratings and absorb the lion's share of advertising dollars. Shane Media used to get requests for "format searches." Now operators call for "niche searches" because they realize the razor-thin slice they must carve from their market to be efficient and effective.

According to statistics compiled annually by Broadcasting magazine, the fastest growing format in the U.S. is Classic Rock. Driven by the same baby boomer target, the second fastest growing format is Oldies. The growth started in the late 80s and continued strong into 1991. The population has aged and it's looking back on its own history. Oldies and Classic Rock provide the soundtracks to events 20 years ago, so revivals of the music create comfort against unsettled times.

The dominant format in the U.S., according to Broadcasting, is Country, with almost 2500 stations carrying some variation. The same baby boomers that are driving the

Oldies and Classic Rock growth are fueling Country growth, too.
Newer Country music attracts disenfranchised rockers with
lyrics that speak to the experience of being 40 years old.

COUNTRY

Country is one of the last formats to splinter because the
Country core has traditionally demanded a sampling of all styles
and many eras. Now, mainstream Country splits into male-
edged, female-rounded components. Baby boomers access
Country and demand a hipper, younger, rock-derivative sound
like The Desert Rose Band, Baillie and the Boys, Southern
Pacific. That's not fragmentation; it's simply a difference in
sound among competing stations.

The best indicator for the dramatic changes in Country
came from the 1990 Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. The
Rodeo likes a blockbuster for its opening show. That gets the
locals buzzing and builds momentum for the rest of the two-week
run of the biggest stock show and rodeo in the U.S. It's also one
of the best collections of Country shows anywhere.

For opening day they aim for a sellout crowd in the
Astrodome (55,000 seats). George Strait had been the opening
act for several years, but for 1990, the Rodeo booked Clint Black.
The booking came just a year after Black's first album was
released. In fact, it was at the 1989 Country Radio Seminar that
Gaylen Adams, then with RCA Records, was shouting in the
hallways at the Opryland Hotel saying, "You gotta see this guy —
tonight!" Three singles and 12 months later, Clint Black had the
top two records of 1989, and he was the "hot act" to kick off the
Houston Rodeo, based on the Rodeo's ongoing consumer research.

Clint Black is a metaphor for where Country is in the 90s:
Fresh faces and fresh sounds will shape the Country charts from
now until the end of the decade. Today's Country is derivative of
two distinct sounds: New Traditional Country (Randy Travis,
George Strait, Reba McEntire, and, yes, Clint Black) and
Seventies rock.

If Restless Heart's "Fast Moving Train" had been released

in the 70s it would have been an Eagles' record. Baillie and the Boys' "I Can't Turn The Tide" is a song Stevie Nicks might have sung with Fleetwood Mac. These sounds provide the "comfort level" for new Country listeners, along with the excitement of new styles from singers like Alan Jackson, Garth Brooks, and Joe Diffie.

The "Oldies" (Willie, Merle, even Kenny Rogers and Crystal Gayle) sound much older next to the fresh new sounds. That's not to say the "Oldies" aren't valid. They are, however, being repositioned. The differences in competing Country stations will not be in music, rather in branding and in usage patterns. Memorable brand names like K-FROG in San Bernardino will prompt sampling. Dayparted presentations will reflect the way the customer uses the station as the day progresses.

Country is a format that will benefit most from personalized database marketing. The emotional content of the music already creates a solid bond with the listener. Country artists survive through high-touch bonding with their fans. Country radio should be the most interactive format there is.

CONTEMPORARY HITS

Trade publications called it the "death of CHR" because the format was in a ratings struggle. Once-dominant mass appeal stations have begun to settle into the middle of the ratings pack. CHR is being squeezed. Demographically, the top end is lured away by soft AC, Oldies, and Country. Since Country is the only format featuring new music written for adult consumption, it's very powerful.

Hot AC is challenging CHR's middle demos. The basis for the Hot AC format was the staple of CHR back in 1988 and early 1990 — Rick Astley, Michael Bolton, Phil Collins. CHR's heaviest pressure is at the demographic bottom. First, there are fewer kids, the foundation of the format in its early days. The 70s and 80s "baby bust" left so few teenagers, especially compared to the bloated 35-44 cell.

In addition, the kids who are available are much more interested in Bart Simpson, MTV and other video icons. Radio holds little for their imaginations. There's another culprit, too: today's music. Except for veterans like Madonna and Paula Abdul, there are few artists on the charts with staying power.

Think of the 1990s big pop flash — Sinead O'Connor. A cute girl with one haunting record and an indelible image. But that image is a visual image: The haircut. She has the sound to be a big star, but she may be dismissed as another disposable entry in a list that's as permanent as a Kleenex. She could be tossed aside with Kool Moe Dee, Monie Love, and 2NU and all the others who hip-hop onto the charts once, maybe twice, pushed by record companies who sign them for short term deals, then abandon them. That only proves their disposability to a public that's fickle enough as it is. With no heritage artists, CHR will lose its staying power.

Advertising Age asked me to imagine the radio dial of the year 2000. My answer was "No CHR." In 2010, another scenario entirely, because today's baby boomlet will be of age.

ADULT CONTEMPORARY

The "Hot" side of AC is another version of CHR, defined more by what it doesn't play than what it does (no rock, no rap, etc.). Hot AC is the fastest growing format of the 90s because it's the maturation of CHR.

AC is the most demassified format because the Baby Boom demo has grown up with unprecedented choice. That diversity is reflected in this soft, easy, all-vocal, all-hit, all-splintered format. The greatest growth potential will come from Soft Hits, because that format is usage-based. The demise of instrumental Easy Listening gives Soft Hits a niche. Its "background" nature gives it long listening. Oldies-based AC offers the widest variety and the potential for high cume, especially in medium and smaller markets. A contemporary-sounding AC sprinkled with well-tested oldies is a perfect move for a CHR that's losing share.

The most important thing to be said about AC: It's the

format investors love. The demographics fit their profile. There are no negatives in selling. There's enough proof that AC works. Bankers love safety.

The future? Even more fragmentation with mixes of oldies and pop-sounding Country; soft hits and melodic new age; black soft hits; Hispanic soft hits mixed with Anglo soft hits.

URBAN

Fusion/funk will drive Urban radio. It's one of the flavors even now. The future? Option one: Pure street. It's what whites call "rap," but in reality it's more the newspaper of the inner city. (Like Public Enemy's "911 is a Joke.")

Option two: mellow vocals. Black easy listening for older listeners who don't like thunka-thunka-funk junk. White listeners will sample it, too, because the music mix includes "Dusties" — Oldies.

ROCK

We used to call it "AOR," but CDs have made "Album-oriented" passe. Right now, there's Kid Rock, Mainstream Rock, and Classic Rock. The future? Techno-Rock, Adult Rock, Classic Rock, Mellow Rock. Yes, more fragmentation.

Classic Rock, like Oldies, will find "newer" music (from the 80s), but must still be a trip down memory lane to be effectively positioned.

"Beat," "Alternative," "Post Modern" and "Industrial" are words people use today for Techno-Rock. At some point in the future, the right word will emerge and a format will emerge based on Depeche Mode, Fine Young Cannibals, Love & Rockets, B-52's, The Cure, Jesus Jones, and others. Kid Rock will mix Anthrax, Suicidal Tendencies, and other metal derivatives for limited appeal, but powerful response. (Anxious thought: What will Z-Rock sound like in 2005?)

TALK

Another format ready to splinter. Look for three separate

and distinct styles: Probing, intellectual talk (à la NPR); visceral, opinion-flaunting (à la Rush Limbaugh); and Boomer-oriented lifestyle triggers (Howard Stern without the shock quality). Rock radio morning shows are talk radio of the future.

News-Talk stations are stuck in a time warp. Their production values are old; their content doesn't relate to anyone under 50. The day after the Grammy Awards, I heard a list of winners on a News-Talk station followed by the anchor's question, "Who are these people?" If the anchor doesn't know, the station's credibility is lost. News and Talk anchors don't have to like pop artists, but they need to know they exist. Many news stations are still doing 1970s radio.

OLDIES

Fifties oldies replace the Big Bands. Sixties oldies replace the Hop. Seventies oldies replace psychedelia. Eighties oldies replace the album experience. When broadcasters say "There are no new oldies being recorded," they give up on the format. If oldies (in any variation) are presented as yesterday's music in today's presentation, there's lots of life. There's no law that says an Oldies station shouldn't have a high-profile morning show or major contesting.

There are new oldies being recorded every day. The future? In 2005 we'll hear "The Humpty Dance" on an Oldies station and say, "I wish it were the good ol' easy-going 90s again!"

CLASSICAL

This format is beginning to disappear from commercial radio. In many cities it's relegated to educational or public facilities. The reason is the economic environment of commercial broadcasting: Classical formats can't support high debt service.

The broad spectrum of music available makes specific programming difficult. If the classical station plays Vivaldi and the listener is in the mood for Bruckner, there's an impasse. The solution is a personal CD library, which will be the major source of classical music for future listeners. Second will be cable audio

or direct satellite audio services designed for taping or recordable CDs.

ETHNIC

Hispanic radio is splintering into Easy, Tejano, Conjunto, Cubano, International, Spoken Word, and others, just like Anglo radio. On the horizon, the same dramatic impact and narrow splintering of what we now call "Asian" programming. One sure way to make America's new immigrants feel at home is to provide the sounds of home — radio in their own language.

FUTURE SHOCKS

All formats will be affected by aggressive programming at night, interactive innovations designed to wean video burnouts back to audio stimulus. Satellite networks will become more successful because digital technology will allow greater localization. Local stations will program local weather, hometown relatability, even up-to-the-minute traffic reports by sampling the voice of the network announcer on duty.

Radio's biggest threat will be recordable CDs. Consumers will erase and record with digital quality from cable, TV, or other CDs. The second biggest threat will come from audio tape, whether digital or analog. Spoken word tapes with audio books, informational seminars, and motivational material will compete for listeners' time. Some will consider motivation more valuable than entertainment.

As I said in Chapter 9, radio's biggest ally will be database marketing. Not just a list of addresses, but complete profiles of consumer listeners with buying habits, purchase potential, and psychographic values. Media buyers won't ask for your Arbitron, they'll ask for your Zip Code map.

EPILOGUE

K ey trends facing radio are the decline of stick value, the shift of programming to baby boomer ages, and the difficulty in finding new talent. Let me address the third of those points. We're constantly being asked to find talent at all levels, from management to on-air performers. The searches take longer each time we're called, because the talent pool is diminishing.

Why? First, there's TV. It's more pervasive, and therefore has a "top of mind" factor when kids start thinking about careers in media. Second, radio is called an "industry," but it's not. Radio is a loose collection of entrepreneurships and family businesses. Even large operators like Group W are tiny compared to the aerospace industry or the auto industry. (On the Group W organizational chart, the broadcast-related businesses — cable, TV, radio — have a tiny corner while military and electrical dominate the diagram.) Third, the economic climate of the 80s consolidated so many jobs that radio squeezed some of its best out of the business. Worse, there were others who hadn't had the opportunity to achieve their best who were left on the sidelines because of mergers, massive debt, and fear of the future.

High debt service dampens risk-taking. There's risk involved in developing talent: the person may or may not respond to training. There's risk involved in choosing new format

options: they may stimulate innovation or invite disaster.

Who wants to take those risks on new people, and new ideas? In a small way, we do. In 1988, Shane Media Services established the annual Shane Media Scholarship, administered by the Broadcast Education Association. Each year the scholarship is awarded to a college junior or senior who is studying radio. Stacks of applications are judged by a panel of communications professors selected by BEA. In addition to the Shane Media Scholarship, the BEA offers scholarships honoring Harold E. Fellows, James Lawrence Fly, Walter Patterson, Broadcast Pioneers, and Vincent T. Wasilewski. The organization also administers broadcast-related research grants.

Pam and I decided to establish the Shane Media Scholarship because it fits our philosophy. She comes from an academic background. Her father was a professor of English and a researcher of Victorian novels. Pam taught at both high school and college levels early in her career. Our approach at Shane Media has always been tutorial. We hope that among the services we provide is stimulation for thinking. From thinking comes learning. From learning comes growth.

If you know of a deserving college student who could benefit from the Shane Media Scholarship or from any of the Broadcast Education Association programs, contact the chair of any communication department or:

Broadcast Education Association
1771 N St. NW
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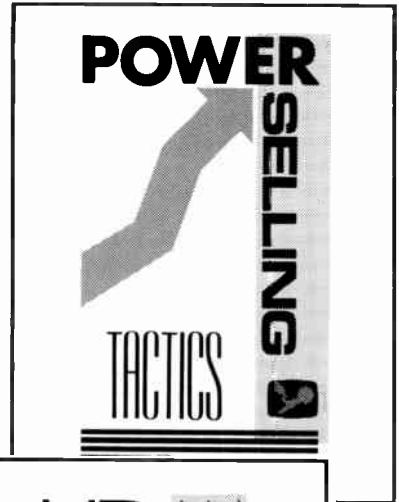
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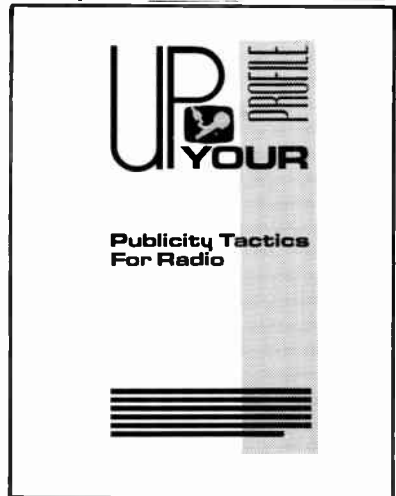
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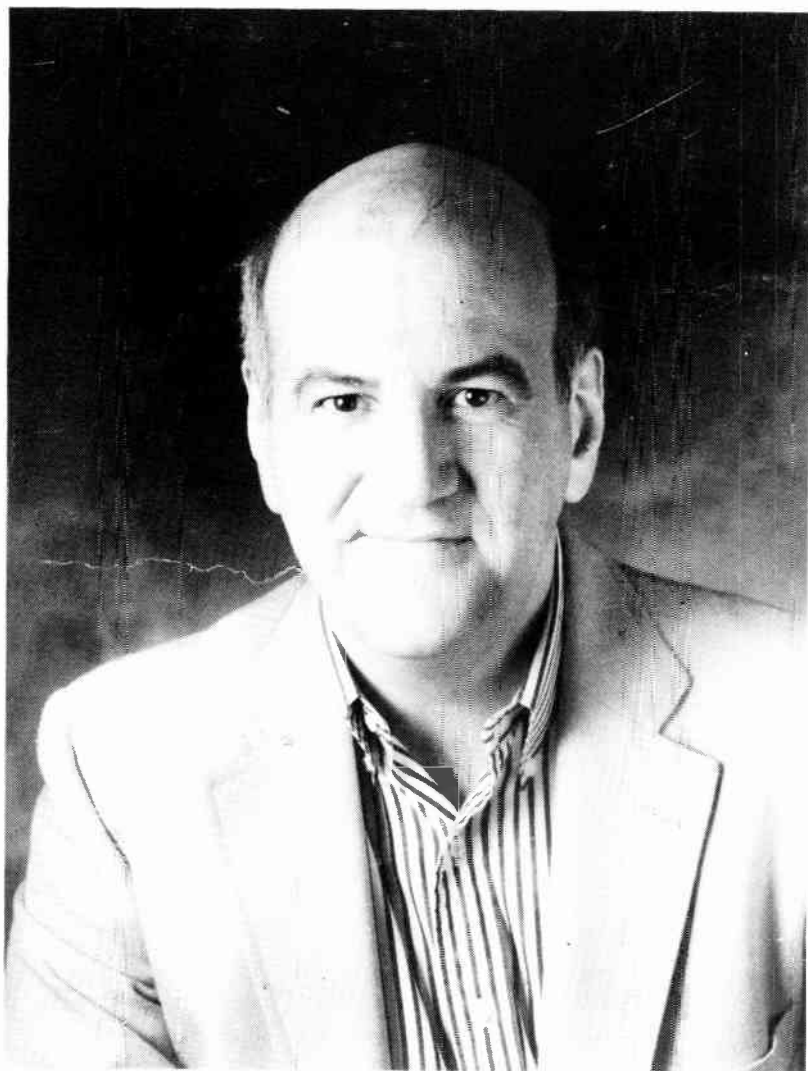Address _____

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1977 he has helped broadcast companies, both large
and small, achieve success for their stations in a variety
of formats. A trendwatcher, Shane combines insights on
the world at large with research conducted specifically
for radio. His writing has been published in both
consumer and trade press. His first radio book,
Programming Dynamics, was an industry bestseller.