RADIO FOCUS

Vallie•Richards•Donovan Consulting, Inc.

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Focus Your Stations Brand with Brand Audits

If you've never been through the exercise of conducting a "Brand Audit" for your radio station or stations, it's a great way to make sure all your messages, imaging and marketing are on target.

The purpose of a brand audit is to carefully examine all aspects of the language you use on air as well as marketing messages, visuals and imaging including an examination of your stations vehicles and signage.

The goal of conducting brand audits is to come away from the audit making sure all of your stations messages and marketing efforts are focused to maximize results for ratings, sales and listener perception of the radio station.

Here are some important steps and actions important to conducting a brand audit:

- Organize your brand audit by taking inventory of everything you have on air including imaging language, contesting, promotions, air talent content guidelines, pictures of your stations vehicles, billboards, signage, all promotions and live broadcast set up materials etc.

- Discuss "filters" that everyone on the team should use once the radio stations brand is clearly defined. This step is to make sure everyone is on the same page regarding the specific brand being described whether it's for the AC, Top 40, Country or Hot AC radio station.

- Some of "filters" that reflect or describe your brand could be, for a Top 40 for example, "Fun", "Contemporary", "Energetic", "Connected", "Today", and "Now". Using some of these filters, you would want to make sure these type words are reflected in everything you communicate to listeners and potential buyers both on and off air and through social media.

  For example, it's not uncommon to see an air talent post something on Facebook that is not focused to what your brand is all about. A brand audit should help prevent this from happening because everyone should come away from the meeting with a clearer picture of how to reflect the brand more clearly.

- Inside your broadcast facility, how specifically are the Top 40, Rock, Country, AC and Hot AC stations different from each other and how are you communicating that to listeners and advertisers? And in your own staff, you may know these differences, but do they? They should.

- Get your stations programming and sales team together to discuss your target demos and who specifically your station is speaking to. What do your target demos care about? What's important to them and what are the benefits of your brand for your key target demos? This exercise is for programming and sales.

- Write out statements that describe or encompass what your brand is all about. Are your "on air" and "off air" messages and branding focused and connecting with your audience? How? Write it all out on paper so everyone on your team has a copy and is "on the same team" when discussing your brand.

- In a brand audit, you also will want to identify and correct issues where your brand "filters" are not being used effectively resulting in either messages that don't match your brand purpose or in marketing and signage that are out of step with the brand.

- Most importantly, once you believe you have a focused "Brand", listen to or record two hours of

each daypart of your station. Then transcribe the messages for each of those hours for you and your team to review.

a) Was the key brand position exposed in greater quantities than the other messages?

b) Was the Brand statement evenly distributed within the hour?

c) Was the Brand statement balanced in the various station elements of the format architecture? Liners, Live Breaks, Jingles, Product Promos, etc.

Seth Godin defines a brand this way: A brand is the set of expectations, memories, stories and relationships that, taken together, account for a consumer's decision to choose one product or service over another.

If the consumer doesn't pay a premium, make a selection or spread the word, then no brand value exists for that consumer.

A brand's value is merely the sum total of how much extra people will pay, or how often they choose, the expectations, memories, stories and relationships of one brand over the alternatives.

A brand used to be something else. It used to be a logo or a design or a wrapper. Today, that's a shadow of the brand, something that might mark the brand's existence. Design is essential but design is not brand.

Brand Image	The perception of a brand in the minds of persons. The brand image is a mirror reflection (though perhaps inaccurate) of the brand personality or product being. It is what people believe about a brand-their thoughts, feelings, and expectations.

In doing the audit you can get a sense of whether you are really delivering your brand the way you hope to. The brand is more than just the music you play or the format you are in. We've always said you have to win a position in the listeners mind, and the stronger your brand the more likely you win that position and the more likely you reposition the competitive brand(s). You have to touch those users of your brand and be in their thoughts, feelings and affect their expectations in order to have a strong brand.

There have been many times when a station believes it has a clear Brand, but it does not consistently sell that brand on the air. A Brand Audit quickly identifies if you are effectively communicating the brand message to your listener.

Secret Sound – Why It Works

We were recently called to contribute to Rich Appel's column called CHRonicler in Billboard Magazine. The column was on contesting.

Mike Donovan responded to Rick and Billboard about his questions on some older radio contests from the past that are still effective today. We wanted to share the article.

There's a clue in the name of the Secret Sound or Mystery Sound contests as to why these types of contests have been so effective in the past and still are today. The clue is the word "Secret" or "Mystery". Listeners enjoy playing along with contests related to secrets or solving mysteries and puzzles.

The Secret Sound and related contests allow the radio station to set appointment listening times vertically across the day generating more occasions of tune in's. This is an efficient contest mechanism in both diary and the PPM world.

Another advantage of contests like Secret Sound is the fact that it's fun for listeners to play along even if they are not the person who got through to the station on the phone attempting to win. You can play as a family, you can play along in the work environment and you can discuss "what it could be" with friends which draws more interest and cume. You get a lot of tune in's because you have to know the incorrect guesses in order to be able to make a correct guess if you're the listener who gets through to the station on the phone.

These kinds of contests, when done well, also generate a lot of word of mouth advertising for the station in the market. Then, there's the website

and social media aspect where you can post clues and further engage listeners.

One reason many Programmers are sold on the Secret Sound contest is because of past success and hard evidence showing audience growth. Once the contest is finished and the ratings numbers are available, you can run graphs and see data that clearly shows cume growth during the weeks the contest was aired. In the PPM world, you can see the results weekly if you subscribe to weekly data.

Other similar contests that can be successful are contests like Cash, Cars and Stars. The radio station secures a car to give away and puts "X" thousand dollars in the glove compartment. There are five imaginary celebrity "star" passengers in the car. Clues are given at appointment listening times on air until all five passengers are identified. The listener, who can name the four passengers already correctly guessed along with the final passenger, wins the car and the cash. Another way this contest is done is "Guess Who's In It To Win It" and the station may simply give away a new car.

Then, there's the $5000 dollar Mystery Celebrity Voices contest. It's executed with audio sound bites where listeners must call in to try to correctly identify all the celebrity voices in the audio montage to win the cash.

guess the dollar amount in the jackpot to win it all. IF the listener does not have a correct guess, they're told their guess is too Hi or too Low. To play along, you need to know the incorrect guesses.

The reason these kinds of contests are timeless and effective whether you're in a diary market or the PPM world is because most involve a cash prize and money still talks, you know what walks.

The second reason is simply the listener interaction and engagement the station gets from putting on something that's fun and entertaining to the masses.

Contests that do not seem to be as effective today as in the past are contests that require listeners to jump through too many hoops or take too much time to explain on air, or that take too much time from listeners.

An example would something like the "Name Game" where a station that forces listeners to go to a website and register then forces the participant to listen all day to hear their name and then call the station when they hear their name to win the prize. Radio must respect the listeners time especially in today's world where the competition for their time from other media has dramatically increased vs. five to ten years ago.

"Define what your Brand stands for, its core values and tone of voice, and then communicate consistently in those terms". - Simon Mainwaring

"Old School" contests that have stood the test of time and still drive cume in today's world are cash giveaway contests like "Beat The Bank" or "Beat The ATM Machine". The listener on the phone must say "Stop" as the voice over talent continues to increase the amount of money being given away. If the listener doesn't yell stop in time, the bank alarms go off and the listener loses. It's another contest that's fun for listeners to play along with as they imagine themselves as the person on the phone with the station.

"The Hi-Low Cash Jackpot" contest is another "mystery" game that still works today. The radio station sets up appointment listening times, takes a designated call from listeners who must correctly

On a final note, the key to a Secret Sound game type of contesting is in the presentation, sell and execution of the contest. Just because a radio station executes a Secret Sound contest doesn't mean the contest will be effective or successful. The station must put the thought, time and effort into the "Sell", "Sizzle", "Drama" and "Show Biz" of the contest and they must set five to six specific listening appointments each weekday. If they do these things well and the prize is compelling enough, it increases the opportunity the station will get Cume and Time Spent Listening growth.

The advice would be, if you're going to execute the Secret Sound or similar contest, do it BIG and do it RIGHT.

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Arbitron Is Watching What You Tweet

Most people know what to do when they come into contact with a listener that has an Arbitron's PPM or diary. They know because the repercussions of trying to influence that person are very costly. Arbitron wants stations to know there are also rules when it comes to social media and stations need to abide by those rules or face similar harsh consequences.

Yesterday, Arbitron clients sent out a list of social media guidelines on what stations can and cannot do when it comes to ratings. Arbitron said, "While these platforms create more personalized communication with listeners, social media can also lead to rating bias or rating distortion if not managed properly."

Here's what stations are told not to do:

- Don't attempt to learn the identity of Arbitron respondents. The station may be delisted, even if the attempt doesn't succeed.
- Don't address comments to panelists or diary keepers.
- Don't discuss ratings #even ratings success# on social networking sites. Doing so may prompt respondents to disclose their participation.
- Don't post comments encouraging listeners to participate as panelists or diary keepers.
- Don't offer anything of value to self-identified panelists or diary keepers.

Here's what stations should do:

- Notify Arbitron if a respondent reaches out to the station via social media #or any other means#.
- Remind station staff that social media comments are subject to same guidelines as on-air comments.
- Contact Arbitron for a confidential pre-review if you are unsure about comments you wish to post.
- Contact Arbitron if your staff sees posted comments directed to an Arbitron respondent.
- Contact Arbitron if the station learns the identity of an Arbitron respondent #by any means#.
- Review the following materials at arbitron.com.

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"Ensure your employees understand what your Brand stands for so they can be your first line of word-of-mouth advertising". - Simon Mainwaring