

# It's All About Traffic

By Jeff Ogden

I hope Eric Rhoads' comments in the July 5 issue of *Radio Ink* ("Radio Is Adrift On Denial River") are taken as a reality check of what we need to work on in radio. As this was "The 40 Most powerful People In Radio" issue, let me say that I have read many *Radio Ink* articles over the years on what some of "the 40" perceive to be problems and solutions as they relate to ratings, expenses, revenue, cash flow, margins, inventory, acquisition and maintenance of audience and radio's share of ad dollars. What I don't hear much about is whether the industry overall (creative agencies notwithstanding) can produce a commercial that can produce store traffic.

We know that magazine readers enjoy print ads that make them laugh out loud, think, ponder or in some way react. The same goes for television production. Except for some agency-created ads, however, radio is not producing what we need in order to benefit the client. A large part of what generates the revenue, creates larger quarter-hour, keeps new and long-term radio budgets intact, and takes away potential budget from competing media, is creative production.

**“Radio has a massive delivery system, but we lack the creative advertising that penetrates and motivates listeners to go into a store.”**

Radio has a massive delivery system, but we lack the creative advertising that penetrates and motivates listeners to go into a store. How many impressions does it take to convert audience into store traffic using an agency spot? Now, what size schedule would be needed when using "rip 'n' read" copy? In markets where the local-to-agency ratio is higher, this is a problem.

Radio offers the greatest delivery system in the world for a message to get to the audience. The problem is that we lack penetration or the kind of ad that really motivates listeners to go into a store. Radio can get back to that place with creative production.

Radio goes on, day in and day out, having to wage war against an audience that comes and goes, like wind on wheat, to competing formats, air personalities, contesting, promotion, special programming and of course that "dreaded stop set" — the favorite place for audience to exit. I would love to see quality research on how much audience a station loses from the time the jock starts to back-sell from the music into a stop set to the first spot. How much audience does a station lose from the first, second or third commercial to the jingle? What percentage of audience do you think the station kept as the jingle went back into the music?

Inventory and its relation to ratings is one of the biggest topics in the business today. How can radio stop or retard this mass exit, and how will it re-cycle them back in? A great jock's ability to pre-promote the next programming element and create enough forward momentum to keep audience there is only good for so many commercials. Most important, does bad production destroy any or all of the forward momentum as listeners hit the button when turned off by the poorly produced commercial?

Maybe we wouldn't have to work so hard if we always made sure the commercials were as good as they could be, so there would be less of a reason to hit the button. Maybe it's time for a vice president of client marketing to oversee station production. Which of "the 40" will expense the test to see if it turns into more revenue? ☒

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