

"THE QUALITY OF A PERSON'S LIFE IS IN DIRECT PROPORTION TO THEIR COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE, REGARDLESS OF THEIR CHOSEN FIELD OF ENDEAVOUR" ... VINCE LOMBARDI



BROADCAST PROGRAMMING & RESEARCH

B P & R E - N E W S L E T T E R

A P R I L 2 0 0 7

## SNAPSHOTS

Some of the broadcasting events you may want to put in your diary this year include:

- June 13, Radio Day, Cologne Germany
- June 19-22, Broadcast Asia, Singapore
- September 7-9, International Broadcasting Convention, Amsterdam
- September 26-28 NAB Radio Show, Charlotte, North Carolina.
- October 30 to November 3, Broadcast India, Mumbai
- November 4-7 NAB Europe, Barcelona.

**IF YOU HAVE AN INDUSTRY EVENT YOU WOULD BP&R TO HIGHLIGHT SIMPLY EMAIL US**

*In our next Newsletter:  
"Adapting to New Realities"*

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## Sharing The Research

By Andy Beaubien

A typical research study yields a tremendous amount of data. When we consider all the possible question/cross-tab/answer possibilities in a standard perceptual and tracking study, the amount of information produced can generate hundreds of tables and charts. However, the greater part of these potential tables and charts may have little or no strategic value. In some cases, certain question/cross-tab/answer combinations produce results based on unacceptably low sample sizes. Sample sizes below 30 should almost always be dismissed.

Beyond sample size, we must consider the signifi-

cance of the information produced by a given question/cross-tab/answer combination. For example, 14 year olds are not known to be big consumers of long-form news interview programmes. Therefore, the opinion of a 14 year old Hip Hop fan as to the quality of a news interview programme on a station whose audience is mostly 45+ is of no real significance.

First some background comments before tackling the specifics of the who, when, what and why of sharing research data...It is often the case that of all of the data collected in a standard perceptual and tracking study, only a small portion of it yields

information that is truly insightful and strategically relevant. The job of the research analyst is to separate this important and incisive information from the remainder of the data. This allows the radio station decision makers to focus on the results that point the way to future growth in terms of audience size, listening share and market image. This analysis is also used to identify aspects of the product (format) which may be holding back the station's growth or possibly turning listeners away. The manner in which the results of a study are presented can also be critical in delivering the full benefit of the information acquired in the survey.

**"...the manner in which the results of a study are presented can also be critical..."**

At BPR, we have a long-standing policy of supporting our observations and conclusions with specific statistical data usually presented in graph or table form. In many cases, the numbers "speak for themselves." On other occasions, a statistical result may be open to more than

one interpretation. It is the job of the research consultant to point out these various interpretations and to indicate which are most likely to be correct. However, the management of some stations also like to disseminate portions of the research results to a broader cross-

section of the staff. Many believe that this helps the staff to better understand the station's goals and challenges. In any event sharing information on a "need to know basis" is the best policy. On the next page I will list some of the considerations you should have...

Do you have some news, a tip, suggestion or question?

Email [wayne-clouten@compuserve.com](mailto:wayne-clouten@compuserve.com)

## “A single piece of negative information...may be enough to throw people into a panic”

Along with the advantages of sharing research information with the staff, there are accompanying pitfalls. Some individuals may not have sufficient experience to recognise the natural ebb and flow of radio listening patterns and the changing perceptions of their audience.

A single piece of negative information which may be un-associated with or contrary to long-term trends may be enough to throw people into a panic.

Some of the basic rules to follow in sharing research information with the

general staff are as follows:

(a) Don't be afraid to edit the results. Keep them simple, straightforward and easy to digest.

(b) Information that is all good is just as suspect as information that is all bad. Every release of information should be reasonably balanced.

(c) Negative news such as a downtrend in listening share for a specific day part should always be placed in the context of the longer term trend and ideally accompa-

nied with suggestions for remedying the situation. Never give a staff member a piece of bad news out of context or leave them alone to figure out a solution.

(d) Consider to whom you are presenting the information. Presenters, programme directors, sales people, promotional staff and journalists all have different perspectives and levels of experience. Most rank and file staff members usually have one over-riding concern: How is this going to affect me personally?

(e) Keep the amount of statistical data to a minimum. Otherwise you will probably create more confusion and doubt than existed prior to your meeting. Most people can read numbers but what they want to know from us is what those numbers mean.

(f) Loose lips sink ships and the loosest of lips are in the radio industry. Keep in mind that any information you share, particularly with a DJ or a sales person may very well find its way to the opposition. Any truly critical information to the success/failure of the business should be held in confidence and not dissemi-

nated amongst the general staff.

(g) Remind the staff that the information that you are imparting to them is not your opinion or something that a computer made up but rather that this data represents the responses of real listeners, the people who listen to your station every day.

(h) Even positive news should be accompanied by suggestions for improvement or further growth. For example, it is helpful to say, "This trend is looking good but if you did (x) as well your rate of increase could actually be accelerated."

*Andy Beaubien has been a research and programming consultant with BP&R for more than 10 years. This follows a distinguished career in US radio. From Rock to Classical, Andy has a comprehensive knowledge of radio broadcasting in Europe, particularly Eastern Europe.*

## “Even positive news should be accompanied by suggestions for improvement”

(i) Never get into the blame game ("your ratings are bad and it's your fault.") A radio station's success or lack of it is usually the product of a collective process and not just one individual. If a specific result can be associated with a single person or team of persons, use the occasion as an opportunity to point out what they may have been doing wrong and show them how they can fix it.

(j) Finally, it is good to remind staff members that their radio station does not exist in a vacuum. A radio station is like a ship at sea that is constantly being buffeted by external

forces. In our case, those external forces include not only competing stations in the market but other factors such as weather crises, major political upheavals, high profile sporting events, labour strikes and so forth.

Research is wonderful tool that allows us to get closer to our listeners and to better understanding their motivations and tastes. However, it is best used to complement the decision making process, not replace the combined talent, experience and skills of a highly motivated station team.

