

## **Programming philosophy**

**By Evan Elrod**

The job of a program director is one of the few positions in a radio station where you make your life harder, to make others easier. I know what you're thinking... "Sure, it makes the other jocks jobs just a little easier... but life?" Of course it does! Let me explain. You're a PD, correct? One part of your job is to rule from above over your jocks, make sure they sound good enough to keep the ratings up, keep things organized for everyone, write liner cards and do imagining so your staff knows what's going on, and so the station sounds good, even when they don't. Basically take all the high responsibilities that you have as a program director, and this is the first step as to how you help your jocks. This in turn gives them experience, ideas, wisdom, and hopefully some constructive criticism along the way. Then guess what, if they respond to you, they will hopefully get promotions, more remotes, more fans, and ultimately, a better and easier life. I know that seems far fetched, but think about it logically.

You don't just do this for your employees either... you do it every day with your listeners. Your programming ideas have a chance to make your listeners lives just a little easier. Why do you think they tune in? They need a little break from their everyday routine. So they dial into your station, which is also your programming, and the first reason you have a job. Make things as interesting as possible, and make them listen because it's so good they can't turn away.

Many people say radio is in the business of selling listeners. I think this is misstated. Radio, technically is in the business of selling advertising. This is where our money comes from the majority of the time. This is why radio exists today in its current form. If we were in the business of selling listeners... we'd just be Satellite radio.

Instead, programmers are in the business of selling listeners... actually, getting and keeping them to be exact. Much like an on air talent, and a music director, the program director has to find a way to get the audience listening, and making them think that tuning in to the station was a good idea. This seems like a very simple idea. But what is the first thing you do when you hear a really dumb liner or something? If you're in radio, you might listen a litter more to make fun of it... but if the average listener thinks what they hear is dumb... they're changing channels. So your job first and foremost is to create a great product. Your second concern should be management. And this isn't just with your fellow employees, but also with your product. Manage your product so it doesn't become out of shape and tiresome. Once you've established your position, and your product, maintenance can become your main focus.

Some keys to being a great programmer;

- Become a good listener and a better communicator. This will help you do your job better for obvious reasons. You will be a better boss as well as a better employee.
- Never stop learning! Radio is ever changing, and you should be too. Try and surround yourself with leading professionals, not just in programming, but in management, talent, engineering, everything you can to find out more about your trade that may help you do your job better in the end.
- Know what's going on in every aspect if possible. You're the person that has to put sales and promotion ideas on the air, so know what they're doing around you so you'll

never be surprised or side swiped either. Same goes with upper management, engineering, and all those other parts of radio you might not want to get in.

- You are the last frontier behind the scenes that makes the station run smoother for employees and your audience... so go the extra mile whenever possible. Do air checks with your staff and have meetings so they don't feel left in the dark. Instead of doing paid remotes only... try a psa remote to make sure you're out in the community? Whether anyone will out right notice, you'll gain more from everyone else in return.
- Lastly, know your listener. You've got a format, so that means you've got a demo. You don't have to be in, or even close to that demo to know them. Cater to your audiences... they'll be responsive if you put out a good product that they can enjoy.

These are just some ideas of how to improve or become a good or great PD... do I have all the answers? No, but neither do you. Every situation is different. But we can all have ideas, and we can listen to all of them, much like a good PD would do as a matter of fact... Because after all, some of the best ideas in the world, were dumb ones.