

ESSENTIALS OF AN EFFECTIVE RADIO COMMERCIAL

1. IDENTIFY YOUR CORE MESSAGE

The main thing is to keep the main thing "the main thing"! The more sales messages you have, the less effective your commercial is. Narrow down your sales message to a very basic thought. Put it in one sentence, then resist the temptation of throwing in other stuff just because you have 30 seconds. Instead, spend the time you have incorporating the following elements to get a response from your listener. Make sure your core message isn't without substance. ie: The best prices, better quality, better service. Why are you better? What's your marketing advantage? What do you do better or what do you offer that no one else does? Why should people give you their money? Then prove it with a tangible statement!

2. TOUCH EMOTIONS

Find out what the emotional state of your target audience is, and tap into it. Why can Grandma relate a story to you that happened 70 years ago, but she can't remember what the old folks home served her for lunch? Simple: The story stirs up emotions embedded in her memory, whereas lunch was just plain boring. No one will remember your sales message six months from now, which is when they may be ready to buy your product, unless it is embedded in their emotional psyche.

3. PAINT A PICTURE

Radio is a visual medium. I remember when I was a kid growing up on the farm. It was a blistering hot day on the bald prairies. The sky was clear blue and you could see the heat waves floating on the horizon. Out comes mom with a tall glass of ice cold lemonade. Beads of condensation had formed around the outside of the glass... lemonade never tasted so good. I just painted a picture in your mind. Did you picture the blue sky? Did you see the heat waves in the distance? Did you imagine the beads of moisture on the outside of the glass? That's the power of radio. Step 3 and 4 go hand in hand. Telling a story is painting a picture in the listeners' mind using emotional experiences they can relate to. This is such a vital point that one thing needs to be made clear. Telling a story does not necessarily mean every commercial needs to start with "Once upon a time...". It can be as simple as the sound of a car that won't start, howling wind in the background, and the chattering of teeth. Anyone with an unreliable car will relate to that scenario and think about how annoying it is to have that happen. Then, tie in the sales message: "A tune-up at Al's Auto will prevent..." etc.

4. DON'T SELL YOUR PRODUCT OR SERVICE, SELL RESULTS

This is as old as advertising itself. The listener has a problem. You have a solution. Demonstrate the product. What are the results of them paying you money? While your product or service is dear to your heart, the listener doesn't care about it. Put yourself in the shoes of your target audience and ask yourself the question "what's in it for me?" Michelin doesn't sell tires - it sells safety for your baby. Crest doesn't sell toothpaste - it sells cavity free kids. Gatorade doesn't sell colored liquid in a bottle, it sells thirst quenching energy!

5. TALK ABOUT THE LISTENER, NOT YOUR BUSINESS

This is similar to the previous point, and it's also a tough one to swallow for many business owners, but the fact remains... people don't care about your business. They only care about themselves and the ones they love. Therefore, to captivate their attention, you need to talk about them. Where is their "headspace". What

are their problems? What do they value in life?" Once you've reached them "where they live" you are better prepared to have them answer this question: "Why would I pay my hard earned money to this business?"

6. MAKE A SPECIFIC OFFER

Not every ad needs an offer to be effective, but it's one more bullet in your arsenal. This point is mainly for retail outlets looking for high traffic in a short amount of time. ie: Clothing stores, audio video stores, jewelry stores. Even if it's a larger purchase like a computer or a car, once people have shopped around and made up their mind, they will respond to an instant sales message. Don't be afraid to price the offer, but stick to one appealing example of savings. Use the rest of the time to incorporate the necessary points for effectiveness.

7. A CALL FOR ACTION

What is it you want the listener to do? Since we've discussed making your commercial about "one main core message". There will also be one thing you want them to do? Why not tell them to do it? It's the "nail" of the commercial... driving home the message. Does the new listener need to call a restaurant to make reservations? Do they need to buy tickets? Do they need to drive to your store to buy a product before it's gone? A call for action generates the need to respond.

COMMON PITFALLS

Clutter

- Too much information.
- Too many details.
- Too many prices.
- More than one idea or theme.

Clichés

- Statements that have become meaningless because people have heard them over and over and over. The brain no longer registers them.

Questions with obvious answers.

- Do you like saving money? This insults the listener's intelligence.

Obvious Yes or No Questions

- Do you need new tires? If they don't, they may tune out and you won't have the opportunity to plant the seed of your sales message for when they do require tires. On the other hand, questions that inspire the listener to think are good: "How young do you want to be when you retire? 60? 50?"

Unnecessary Phone numbers.

- If the phone number is not the focus of your "call for action", there's no need to mention it. People will look in the phone book if they want to call you. If you're motivating people to come to a store, don't waste precious time putting the phone number in.

Hard to grasp addresses.

- "Visit us at 10004 - 104th Street. Instead, put your location in easy to understand terms. "Visit us south of London Drugs in the Gateway Power Center" or "Calgary Trail South at 34th Avenue".

Meaningless percentages of savings.

- 20 percent off - 20 percent off what? Fishing rods, \$129.99 - is that a good price? Instead, prove the

savings. Bushnell fishing rods, normally 1 hundred and 65 dollars, reduced to \$99 dollars! You save over 60 dollars!

You work hard for your money! Let's not waste it on an ineffective commercial. Get results!