



CREATING POWERFUL RADIO - NEVER LOSE A LISTENER!

Adapted from: Creating Powerful Radio by Valerie Geller



If your very life depended on keeping a listener, say, you're on a pirate ship, walking the plank, sword at your back, hungry sharks in the water below...now, if you lose a listener, you're off that plank, facing sharks...If your very life depended on keeping a listener: Would you still put THAT on the radio THAT way? Think about it. How do you KEEP that person glued to the radio, listening to YOU? What happens when what goes on inside the mind of a listener gets better or more interesting or engaging than what is coming out of the speaker? What do you do?

Exactly how do you, "Never Lose A Listener?" This is a KEY issue all over our planet. And the answers for keeping your audience, and getting them to listen longer, are pretty similar all over this earth, including client stations I've worked all over the world in the United States, in Canada, England, Australia, Europe and Africa. The answer is always: NEVER BE BORING. Listeners leave when they are BORED.

ELVIS HAS LEFT THE BUILDING

To Create Powerful Radio: Tell the Truth. Never Be Boring. Make it relevant. Again, if your listener is bored, it's the kiss of death, he or she either "zones out" or physically TUNES out. When that happens, your listeners either leave the station mentally, or tune out physically, their attention goes elsewhere.

WHY DO YOUR LISTENERS LEAVE? WHAT MAKES 'EM GO?

Think about it. Have you ever sat in your car, stuck in traffic waiting for the traffic report to come on? You WORK IN RADIO. You KNOW when that report is coming, so you wait. Or maybe you're waiting to hear a song title. You want to find out the CD or the artist, but somehow you zone out...the report came and went or the song title came and went, and YOU MISSED IT? WHY? Because it was boring. The person on air did NOT make it matter.

A misconception: Pace and tempo do not equate ENERGY. Energy does not equate MAKING IT MATTER. Storytelling makes it matter. A storyteller who CARES about what he or she is presenting makes it matter. This is NOT an acting job. If it MATTERS to the person on air, it'll matter more to the audience. Part of telling the truth is being authentic, and genuinely caring

about what you are talking about on air. Always focus on WHAT IS IN THIS FOR THE LISTENER?

WHAT THEY ARE NOT GETTING FROM YOU

When a listener leaves either mentally or physically and actually switches off the station, here is what is NOT happening. That listener is NOT engaged. He or she is BORED. ZONED OUT. Looking for another station or immersed in his or her own thoughts.

WHAT ELSE LOSES A LISTENER: TOO MANY COMMERCIALS or TOO MANY BAD COMMERCIALS

What else makes your listeners leave? Are your commercials causing your audience to tune out because the break is too long? Or is the offending spot simply bad - boring, noisy, off message, a bad format fit? Or all of the above?"

Then, there's been so much emphasis on developing and getting NEW listeners, don't forget that we also need to pay attention to keeping the audience we've already got onboard.

Again, with the amount of choices people have for their time and attention, listeners are easily distracted. So how do you get a listener to listen LONGER?

FIRST, WHAT DO LISTENERS WANT?

The Powerful Radio Principles excerpted from *Creating Powerful Radio – Getting, Keeping & Growing Audiences*, can help give listeners what they want and what they need.

Valerie Geller's Principles of Creating Powerful Radio:

1. Speak visually, in terms a listener can "picture."
2. Start with, your best material.
3. Tell the truth.
4. Never be boring.
5. Listen to your station.
6. Make it matter.
7. Always address the individual, use "You."
- Talk to ONE listener at a time!
8. Do engaging transitions & handoffs.
9. Promote, brag about your stuff.
10. Brag about other people's stuff
11. Be yourself, be who you are on the radio.
12. Take risks. Dare to be great!

PERSONALITY DOES NOT MEAN ALL ABOUT YOU

Some DJs get confused and think Personality radio means it's all about YOU. But the audience really cares about THEMSELVES, not necessarily about YOU. In personality radio, many personalities get confused and think if they talk about themselves it will be interesting. But powerful radio is not about YOU, it's about the listener. The personal is universal, but the private tends to be boring.

Your listeners want to be informed and entertained and have fun. They want new knowledge. If they are alone in room or alone in a car maybe they just do not want to feel alone. Listeners are hungry to feel connected in a somewhat isolated world that they find themselves in.

A listener wants to a connection to or "feel at home" with or comfortable with the person on air. They like to feel they "know" the person on air. Sometimes listeners like a little help in making up

their minds, say, they are not completely certain of what they may think about a subject or topic, here they can get enough information or opinion or viewpoints to make up their minds. And in commercial radio, when the spots are effective, listeners say they like to learn about bargains, new products or services. And if a listener is having a down or despairing black moment, he or she wants to be lifted out of that mood.

GIVE THEM TALKABLE TOPICS

We are lucky. Most people out there listening do not have exciting lives or careers. Because of this, listeners also desire "talkable topics." They want to be able to turn the radio off and have ideas and interesting new things to say to people.

SPEAKING VISUALLY

Radio has better pictures! Why? Radio is an imagination medium. Try describing things visually so the audience can "see" what you are talking about!

MAKE ME LAUGH

Listeners also want vicarious experiences. They like to be taken on journeys they cannot get to on their own. And everybody loves to laugh. If you can make a listener laugh, it's like handing them a solid chunk of gold.

TELL ME SOMETHING NEW

Listeners like to be in the know, they like learning new things. (They also appreciate help with their "show prep" for dinner, just in case they don't have anything interesting to say to the people in their lives.) It works if you can give them material THEY can talk about. Listeners also want you to get ahead and lead them and give them ideas, things to think about.

HEALTH, HEART POCKETBOOK

For years, the Frank Magid study of "health, heart, pocketbook" rules of topic selection applied. Today there is a new one. In addition to health, (personal safety) heart (touching emotion of any kind) and money stories, the newest category is Transformation. How YOUR life as a listener can be better tomorrow than it was or is today because of what you've heard on air. Radio stories and topics showing a listener what is possible. You don't have to settle for the life you have. It can get better. This RIVETS audiences. (Think Oprah, think Extreme Makeover, etc)

Radio's magic word, try USING YOU instead of "I."

Whenever you can, always try to talk to one individual. If you use YOU instead of We-I-Me or Us, listeners feel the deeper, and true connection. Think of the difference, "I have tickets to give away" or "You can win tickets."

Finally, listeners ALL want to feel good. If you can do that, you have that audience completely with you. And if you don't care, they don't care. Make it matter!

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