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Creating Powerful Radio: Never Lose a Listener

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When was the last time a total stranger came up to you and said: "Although we've never met, I feel like I know you from hearing you on the air...?"

If that's happened lately, congratulations! You're creating Powerful Radio! If a total stranger feels he or she "knows you" from hearing your show, you've done it! You've successfully let your audience "in." That's high praise from your audience!

One of the ways your listeners can get to know you is from your stories...

All listeners are story "junkies." (A lot of this work isn't that far from: "Once upon a time in a far off land, there was a princess and a monster...and then one day...") Ultimately, if you work in radio, you work in the "story" business. (Storytelling is such a part of Country radio anyway, there's no reason for the powerful storytelling to stop when the music stops.) Since audiences now have a choice - they can get their music, news and other content in OTHER places, now YOU, the storyteller matter.

Broadcasters often ask: How do I hone my storytelling skills? How can I become a more powerful storyteller?

Like everything, practice helps! But it usually works best if you can tell a story as though you would tell it to your friends or family, in the way you might tell the story OFF air... The closer your show sounds to real life, like a conversation you'd really have around the breakfast table or in the car, the better it works!

Another suggestion: Try talking about things on the radio because you care about them, things you'd talk about anyway, even if you did NOT have a radio show. Do not feel obligated to talk about things just because they are in the paper or come on a prep sheet or are on You Tube or PEOPLE magazine. But if you would never talk about this off air, think twice about it!

If it's sounds fake, and the bit sounds "manufactured to fill time on the radio" it never works as well. Keep it real. The great Louis Armstrong was once asked to describe the type of music he played. Armstrong simply replied: "What we play is life."

If your topics or subjects are starting to feel manufactured for air, try this:

What if your very life depended on NOT losing a listener, say the stakes were really that high? Imagine, you're blindfolded on a pirate ship -walking the plank with a sword at your back, sharks in the water below, and if you lose even ONE listener, you'd be off that plank... shark meat!) Ask yourself: Would I still put this on the air?

Never losing a listener is about making every minute on the air MATTER. Make certain what you're doing on air is relevant to your audience.

Think about why a listener would want to spend time with you? While listeners come to radio for lots of reasons, they want to be entertained, informed, inspired, and connected to other people and they like to feel they know you. So, at the risk of hammering home what you may already know... here's a reminder of some of the basics of Creating Powerful Radio:

1. Tell the Truth
2. Make it Matter
3. Never be Boring!

If you can do those three things, consistently, you will have an audience!

The three books I've written and all the work I do is based on those concepts, adding the "Twelve Steps" when

coaching on air talent and managers to create Powerful Radio.
Valerie Geller's PRINCIPLES OF CREATING POWERFUL RADIO:

1. Speak visually, in terms a listener can "picture."
2. Start with, your best material.
3. Be a powerful storyteller.
4. Never let anything go too long.
5. Listen to your station.
6. Ask: Why should someone want to listen to this?
7. Address each listener as an individual, use "You."
8. Do engaging transitions & handoffs.
9. Promote, brag about your stuff. (And other people's stuff.)
10. Humor is key! Stay curious, relax & allow the humor to happen.
11. Be who you are on the radio.
12. Take risks. Dare to be great!

*excerpted from Creating Powerful Radio - Getting, Keeping & Growing Audiences, By Valerie Geller, copyright 2007, reprinted with permission

If you are planning to attend the CRS, come if you can to the Creating Powerful Radio session, or the session on Morning Show Marvels. Both sessions will focus on actionable techniques to help you become a better, more powerful storyteller, and ways to find and develop original material to help get, keep and grow your audience!

VALERIE GELLER is President of Geller Media International, a full-service broadcast consulting company working with programmers and talent at more than 500 stations in 28 countries to get, keep and grow audiences. Geller's third book Creating Powerful Radio - Getting, Keeping and Growing Audiences is available from Focal Press. For more: www.creatingpowerfulradio.com or information on Geller Media's consulting services visit: www.gellermedia.com

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