

# Influence In Radio

By Valerie Geller

## Never Lose a Listener Creating Powerful Radio!

Radio audiences are fickle. In today's technological climate, what can you do to keep your listeners listening longer, and also grow your audience?

I consult radio stations in places as far flung as Canada, England, Australia, Europe, Africa, and throughout the United States, and the key question I am asked wherever I go is: How do I make sure that I never lose a listener? The answer is simple: **Never be boring!** Listeners come when they are informed, entertained, and engaged, and they leave when they are bored.

The formula that I've developed for growing radio audiences, which I call *Creating Powerful Radio*, is based on these three principles:

1. Tell the truth
2. Make it matter
3. Never be boring

### WHAT MAKES 'EM GO?

To create powerful radio, your content must be relevant. If your listeners are bored, or just not engaged, it's the kiss of death. Either they zone out — leave the station mentally — or tune out, and physically change the station. Either way, their attention goes elsewhere.

Have you ever been sitting in your car, stuck in traffic, just waiting for that traffic report to come on? You work in radio, so you know the station's clock, and you know the report is coming. So you wait. But somehow you zone out...the report comes and goes, and you miss it! Or you sit through a few extra songs just to hear the title of that new release the station just played, but you aren't paying attention when it's announced. Why did you miss it? Because the person on the air didn't *make it matter*.

Pace and tempo do not equate with energy, and good energy doesn't equate with making it matter. *Storytelling* makes it matter. A storyteller who cares about what he or she is presenting always connects. If it means something to the person on the 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 the air.

### WHAT MAKES 'EM STAY?

There are 12 creating powerful radio techniques that you can use to engage your audience:

#### 1. YOU...

If there was a magic word to guarantee you could get listeners' attention, would you use it? Of course! And there is such a word; radio's magic word is: **you**.

The magic of radio — its power — is based on the feeling of intimacy, the connection between you the presenter and each individual listening. It never works as well to talk to all

those "people out there listening" or "all of you..."

#### 2. ...INSTEAD OF I

Whenever you can, talk to one individual. If you use "you" instead of "we, me, I, or us," listeners feel a deeper, true connection. Think of the difference between "I have tickets to give away" or "You can win tickets."

Replacing "we, me, I, and us" with "you" takes a little time, but it's worth the effort. According to research from Dr. Evian Gordon, a person must repeat a behavior 1,000 times before the brain can be rewired to change a habit, so keep trying. I have bright yellow sticky notes tacked up everywhere with the word "you" written on them. It helps.

Some DJs or talk hosts think personality radio means it's all about them as personalities. But audiences care about themselves, not necessarily you. In personality radio, many think if they talk about themselves, it will be interesting. But, again, powerful radio is about the listener. There's a fine line: The personal is universal, but the private tends to be boring.

#### 3. TOO MANY (BAD) COMMERCIALS

Are your commercials causing listeners to tune out because a break is too long, or is the spot simply bad — boring, noisy, off message, or just plain wrong for your format?

#### 4. KEEP YOUR CURRENT LISTENERS

While a lot of emphasis is placed on attracting new listeners, don't forget that you also need to keep the audience that's already on board. With the number of choices people have for their time and attention, listeners are easily distracted. In the case of existing listeners, how do you get them to listen longer?

#### 5. AVOID MANUFACTURED TOPICS

Listeners can sense when the topic you're discussing sounds like: And now here is another topic manufactured to fill a bit on radio! When listeners hear that, they tune out.

#### 6. WIIFM?

Listeners want to know: What's in it for me? What's in this for the listeners if they give you their time?

Listeners are hungry to feel connected in the isolated world they sometimes find themselves in — like when they're sitting alone in a car, but don't want to feel alone. Listeners want to feel at home, as if they know that person on the air. If a listener is having a down or despairing moment, he or she wants to be lifted out of that mood.

Listeners may like a little help with topics where they're not completely certain what they may think. Are you giving

