

## **For Program Directors who have no money but who still need to generate ratings**

### ***Current Conditions and a Way to Build Listening for No Cost***

Not so long ago in a land not so far away, program directors found themselves in risk-averse environments where they were told to make the most of what they already had and still generate additional ratings on which their jobs and careers depended.

Some of these program directors turned to direct marketing (thank you) to help them generate ratings at the expense of their direct competitors (is that wrong?) but others experienced something called an *additional* budget cut that sliced closer to the actual bone. This left them with no weapons except their own on-air product and resources that could be used at “no cost.”

The spring book is well underway. A lot rides on your own creativity. Maybe you are lucky and have some resources. Maybe you are unlucky and have been told to just “make it happen.”

Many of our clients have continued marketing because they know they are going to pull further ahead in ratings because others stopped doing the marketing needed to stay competitive. Some have scaled back because of understandable on-the-ground economic conditions, and others are going with “we market on the air only.” Obviously, we strongly advocate the use of direct marketing, but we also understand the realities of the economy. That’s why our team works to help our clients beyond typical direct marketing efforts. We seek to be a most useful and stealthy tool to help you be successful in all environments.

You know what is happening in this business. You know who is committed to their audience, their clients and their communities. You also know who isn’t. It’s time to benefit from their pull-back.

Everyone cannot market all the time (this is what I am told). I have programmed radio stations where I had to make the most I could out of *nothing at all*. I know your pain. If I can help you today in your budget pinch, perhaps later you will allow me to show you how to build additional real ratings value when you return to your marketing in future books.

### ***How To Build Something From Nothing***

Here is a tool you can use beginning today to supplement your weapons until you can return to the direct marketing arena. This weapon is one of many long-term weapons used successfully by many Americanist clients to draw down on an enemy while creating more impact for their own radio station. This application is called “Perceived Relationship Application.” It is usually used with a variety of direct marketing strategies we make available to our clients regularly.

Here’s how it works.

You will create online or Web-based “surveys” for use with your database and will also be gathering specific-user information on the listeners who come into your database in the future if you execute this application. You will need to talk with the people who are in control of your Web site to set this up correctly.

As a part of this survey, you will determine if listeners have access to radio at work and you will want to design a brief survey with specific work related questions. As a part of this survey, you will also want to determine what radio stations they listen to *in ADDITION to yours*. It would not hurt to add a question about how much they listen to radio in an average week. You can reach out for me if you have questions about specific survey questions you may want to include at 877-475-6864.

It is important that you seek out and find the heavy users in your database *who only listen to one or two radio stations other than yours*. *Once you find these key listeners, mark them in your database. You will want to create a special secondary database identifying these people.*

The information in this special database or list should include their name, address, phone number and e-mail address. You can do this in Excel file and it should be an “evergreen” process (constantly updated).

Now you are ready to have that staff meeting you’ve been putting off. Share with your team that you are going to begin a ratings loyalty program and that they will each play a critical role in this process of gaining advantage in ratings. Tell them the program is called “Perceived Relationship Application.”

You will split your new “Heavy User-Specific list” evenly among each staff member. Each of your on-air personalities will take a specific list of “key listeners.” They will be responsible for this group of important listeners. *They are to never tell any listener they are part of a program. This is perceived relationship building.*

Your personalities will then begin a process of regularly calling the people on this list every six to eight weeks. Supply your staff with simple prizes from your prize closet. This could be anything from movie tickets to club concert tickets, compact discs or other small prizes. *This is not a contest*. It is perceived relationship building. Tell your personalities to leave a message if they don’t get the listener directly and ask the listener to call them at the station. Give a direct line if you can, or the business office phone. The nature of this call is personal. Your personality should treat it as such.

When they get the listener live on the call, they will want to say something like, “Hey, this is (name) from (station). I had (prize) and wanted to see if you could use it. If you would like, I will have it waiting for you at the front desk here at the (station). You can pick it up anytime between now and next Friday.”

The first time this occurs, your listener is likely to tell their spouse or a close friend. They won’t know why it is happening. They don’t know they are on a list and that they “qualified” by habit. The second time or third time it happens, they will very likely think it is a big deal. After awhile, it will be highly likely they will assume you are friends.

When dealing with heavy radio users who only listen to several radio stations including yours, are survey-friendly and see themselves as your friend, who do you think they will be most

likely to listen to on the radio? Who do you think will win over this listener between you and your most likely format or closest competitor?

And the tie goes to the runner – *you*. That would be the person putting in the extra effort.

You are using your own database. You are using creativity and effort. You are using prizes in your existing prize closet. No money.

The economy has made your job more difficult. Yet almost 94% of the American population still regularly listens to the radio. At Americalist we utilize direct marketing strategies that we know are heavy lifting to take listeners of a variety of stations and *GLUE them* to your station. We can work with you to show you how to convert these listeners, and “listeners like them” to your radio station. This is true ratings growth. These are proven strategies that work. However, if you have been temporarily hit by a severe budget crunch, you have to find ways to maximize what you have to work with now.

I hope this has been helpful in jump-starting your process of thinking about what you have available to you that costs nothing but can produce results. There are so many things working against programmers in today’s environment. Perhaps this tip can help you maximize your current potential and get you ready for the kind of direct marketing you know you need to elevate your station even more in the near future.

*Loyd Ford is the ratings strategist and radio division manager for Americalist Media Marketing. Loyd has programmed successful radio stations in medium, small and large markets all across the country. Americalist Media Marketing has been helping radio stations boost ratings in all formats and all market sizes since 1987. They have worked with many of the corporate radio companies in radio today, as well as individual station owners to give their clients competitive advantage and increase ratings. Americalist uses applied strategy that includes live residential and at-work telemarketing, Neighbor Select™, strategic direct mail (including personalized direct mail) and viral e-mail attacks. Americalist has also developed The Magnet Program™ for PPM and The FastCume™ Tactic for Holiday Music Stations. Americalist is market-exclusive. You can reach Loyd directly at 877-475-6864 or [Americalist1@aol.com](mailto:Americalist1@aol.com).*