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## The Fall Election-No, The Other One

The time is ticking. Can you feel it getting away from you? This fall there will be winners and losers. Some people believe that the winners will-for the most part-always win. You can bet that the presidential candidates and political parties are not among this group of people. They will have the best research and do the most detailed marketing of any election in the history of Earth.

How about you

When I programmed some of the best Country stations in America-KRMD AM & FM, WSSL AM & FM, WBEE-FM-I was constantly motivated by the simple fact that underdogs always have opportunity to win if you are not paying attention. In other words, I focused on NOT taking the other guy for granted. Deadly mistakes are made just that way. And if you are programming an underdog, you want the other guy to underestimate you. Let him think he has the world on a leash and no one breathing down his neck.

Great programming, attention to detail and sharp marketing against the old winners can create new winners. While some are talking about how much the radio industry has changed, new program directors, new general managers and new promotions and marketing directors are taking the reins and writing new chapters with some of the same ways of winning from the past. They just don't know any better. No one can tell them that you can't win by marketing strong programming and paying attention to the little things. They are the *new winners*.

How about you?

These next level thinkers have already scouted out fall. They know that television will be a battleground with clutter and political rhetoric that turns people off and shuts them down. It will also create a lot of bumped spots for radio. That will be a problem for radio stations that must win this fall. They can't buy enough points under normal conditions, and this fall will create anything but normal conditions.

Some broadcast companies have decided to believe less in their marketing and coast off the brands. These brands often see attrition in ratings because a great radio station can support itself long after the marketing leaves, but it won't often create listener growth. Many times it is unhealthy for a station to face long periods of time without support. Unless they are truly unimportant to cluster strategy, stations should have regular support in terms regeneration. This keeps a station moving forward and improves its life cycle.

At least one major broadcast company avoided marketing for a period of time because they felt they could cross-pollinate and avoid the cost of marketing their stations. Many PDs across town from them have been surprised to see that same company return to marketing- especially stealth marketing - this spring with a vengeance. You can bet marketing plans are being worked on to continue in fall and create more pressure for the competition because this company realizes that radio must reinvent and reinvest in itself. They realize they must market to win with consistency.

What if we took the word radio out of things and replaced it with a company in another industry? We'll keep the same theories some radio folks are working from now, but we will shift industries so you can see what is real a lot more clearly. Consider this: A new CEO is brought on board at Procter and Gamble. The new guy says that P & G is a great company with a lot of great brands. He has studied things and he knows how to save P & G untold millions almost immediately and make P & G more profitable for the stockholders. He says P & G is to suspend all research and development and all marketing other than cross-promotion on their actual brands. After all, how many millions of people see these brands daily? Can you just see the great cross-promotion of toothpaste on detergent? Will that really work? Would Procter & Gamble really hire a CEO that would think that way? Uh, no. Will it work with radio?

Fall is coming. There will be winners and losers this fall. The winners will market.

Have you seen the marketing for Bush and Kerry? There are inexpensive ways you can market your product right now with powerful results this fall. A lot of times PDs or GMs will not make that move because they think a real campaign with teeth will cost too much. I encourage you to call and talk to people who do different kinds of marketing for radio. Don't just call one person. Call several. I promise you I will take your call and tell you if I can work with you.

I am lucky to work for a company that does the kind of marketing that works with radio's speed and utility. We can-like radio-make things happen quickly. Oftentimes the competition does not know it until it's too late. I have PDs who call me and talk about problems in their market. Brainstorming is a great PDs friend. That is where solutions can present themselves through the power of more than inside the box thinking. How can you be helped this fall? Do you know? Have you asked someone outside of the station? Is there someone you can call?

I am looking forward to the fall. How about you? Take action now and seek solutions this fall that your competition has not even thought about. Think ahead of your own company. Think ahead of radio. There are people watching you who will reward your thinking. Future movers and shakers are thinking about how to get this done in today's radio environment.

There is going to be a tough election this fall. Now is the time to put your battle plans together and think about options that can work to create new division to the competition and help you achieve victory that will have them scratching their heads. You don't just want to talk to your CUME. You want to bring new people to the party and focus their goodwill toward your station. Good luck. I hope you win.