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Seven Things To Concentrate On Now To Give New Life To Spring '05

The hustle of the modern-day broadcast cluster can be captivating. Everyone moves along with the speed and the emotion of trying to grow their station in the cluster by keeping their nose clean and using the resources they have been given to contribute to shareholder value in 2005.

Did you hear the trends are here early someone says. Better get to the market manager's office. Explain these new numbers.

How did it happen to us someone else says.

I don't know, but we better figure out how to fix it right now! says another.

How many program directors will be in the market manager's office when you arrive? What are the strategies that are working for other programmers in your chain or even in your building?

Let's talk about time. Time is the only thing you cannot get back once it is gone. Right now we are in Winter '05 according to Arbitron, but soon this will give way to the all-important Spring '05 Arbitron. Here are the seven most important things you can do to make sure your spring is set up correctly and give your station a pathway to success.

1. Make sure you are playing the right music... About once a month you can actually review the exact most played titles in your library. You should also take a look at the most played artists on the station. This should reflect the highest testing songs and the artists that have the most power with the people you are most trying to attract to the station. When is the last time you reviewed the entire music library and put each song you are playing to a test to see which songs survive and which should be rested? The harder you are on the music, the better songs you'll be playing this spring. Don't wait until the last moment. Get a check up right now.

2. Make sure your morning show has direction... This seems somewhat more simple than it actually is. Every morning show is different. The people on these shows have different talents and talent levels. If you are a parent, you know that all children are not the same. The same is true for morning show talents. The most important thing you can do for a morning show is to make sure the talents understand you believe in them and their talent. Share with them everything you can about how the station is being programmed and why. Morning show talents are often the spiritual cheerleaders of any station. If you're their PD, you should show up face-to-face often and share specific thoughts about the development of specific parts of their program. Being specific helps them understand that you really do care about what is happening. Make suggestions to give them focused direction, but don't forget to listen for the opening in conversation where you can help them with frustrations they may be having in feeling good about their morning show. Always try to be positive. Great program directors hire morning talents for their gifts. Make sure you let your talents use their gifts without artificial judgment (let them be themselves and encourage it).

3. Make sure you have a marketing plan... If you believe in your product, you should be in front of the market manager talking about cluster strategy and the role of your station. In that conversation, you are the station cheerleader for specific marketing plans to make your station successful. After all, you don't see Procter & Gamble sending products out into the market with no plans for marketing. And Procter & Gamble has more than six or seven radio stations. Hold your market manager accountable within reason. Ask questions about the goals and talk about specific and well thought out marketing solutions to support the station and cluster goals.

4. Share with all of your talents ways to win with setting appointments. and being local for listeners. Your mother told you when you were young that there is no one like you on Earth. Challenge your talents in all day parts to prove it on the radio. It does not matter if the big broadcast company voice tracks with major talent from St. Louis. No one can be as unique as your talents and your radio station. Coach your talents to focus on what's local and treat their radio shows like television news programs. Ask them what they would like to hear going into a six or seven minute stop-set. What is coming up? What will listeners miss if they tune away? What makes your station and their show unique? Can you get your talent to focus on the listeners world (not just their own)? Challenge them to constantly ask what is important now to the listener.

5. Give your listeners something to look forward to often... Life and work are hard enough. Tell your listeners what they can do when they get off work or with their kids this weekend. Give listeners opportunity to think about why they work so hard: the weekend. This can be in everything from station talent breaks to remotes and promos.

6. Listen to the station. Make sure you spend time listening to the station. Schedule several hours a week out of the station where you don't have to return calls or go to a meeting. Use this time to drive the market and listen. Listeners do this all the time.

7. Celebrate what is right. People who work on radio stations are emotional creatures. As a programmer, you must sometimes lead by being a psychologist. One of the best ways to help encourage talent is to catch them doing something right.? Be specific and make it face-to-face.

If you focus your time, you will continue to grow your station. The problem becomes that program directors are pulled in a thousand directions. Find people you can approach to brainstorm with and gain new knowledge. Develop marketing strategies and learn the things behind the scenes that make great radio stations great. Time is ticking. Check this list of seven. How is your time serving you in early 2005? Put these seven things to work for your radio station and concentrate on the basics. As a PD said to me last week, "It's amazing how good the basics can be at making you win."