



In-House Creative Vs Out-House Commercials

As a radio creative services director, I excel. As a sale rep, I was reprehensible. I don't possess the skills and mindset needed to be an account executive. Every cold call was a Xanax moment, collections were a nightmare, and after two years in sales, if I had to attend one more weekly sales meeting, my head would explode.

Being good at creative does not imply proficiency in sales. And logically, the opposite is just as true: A stellar salesperson is not necessarily a good person to write commercials.

That said, I hope all my radio station management readers won't be insulted when I implore them: Stop letting your account executives, imaging directors, and production people write your station's spots! Hire a professional creative services director, someone with a reel of proven, effective radio commercials. Doing so will grow your business by growing your clients' businesses.

Radio copywriting is a subset of generic copywriting. It has rules and guidelines that differentiate the process from print ads, billboards, and brochures. It requires an ear for dialogue. We do not communicate verbally the same way we do in writing, so writers for radio need to be mindful of that. Radio copy must sound *credible*. As I used to tell my radio copywriting students, "Sincerity is the true benchmark of effective radio copy. Once you can fake that ..."

If we hold these truths to be self evident, why don't all radio stations have a creative services department and director? There was a time, not long ago, when in-house copywriters were to radio stations what garlic is to vampires. That's because so much of a station's revenue stream came from advertising agencies and the station did not want to seem like a competitive threat to the hand that fed them.

Times change. So do business models.

Here's the bottom line: 21st-century radio stations must do a better job at helping their direct local clients get their creative message crafted in a way to maximize the clients' growth and grow their own listenership. That's where having a radio copywriting specialist on board becomes hyper-crucial. After all, a likely time for a listener to switch stations is during a commercial break. But if your commercial breaks are entertaining, informative, and easy



on the eardrums, average quarter-hour TSL doesn't go down, it goes up.

Radio copywriters get it. They know how to elicit the needed information from clients, either directly or through interaction with the account staff, that will provide the benefit-driven material for a successful spot or campaign. Radio-writer specialists understand the nuances of verbal communication, and can deliver sincere, credible messages that listeners and potential customers will use to make informed buying decisions.


Radio creative directors not only create directly, but direct creativity, so that listeners are entertained in the process of being informed. It does take a specialist to create those effective, entertaining minutes of gold. Radio guru Paul

Weyland has a very descriptive term for copy laden with stultified writing, clichés, and hackneyed dialogue no two real people have ever uttered: The Craposphere. Having a creative services professional on staff will keep your station's commercials from entering that awful domain, and prevent listeners from giving your station "the finger" — the one that pushes the button to change the frequency.

Radio stations or groups that have gone "in house" with a creative services department — which includes a writer who understands the nuances of the format — already know how beneficial it can be to their own bottom line. Stations that rely on production whizzes or their own sales staff to make their commercials are likely turning out a product relegated to the dreaded Craposphere.

Outhouse material.

I've received many e-mails since I began writing this column last year, from station owners, GMs, operations directors, program directors, and GSMs echoing this very sentiment: When you make creative services an integral department in your own operations, you will grow your customers' businesses and move your own agendas — sales and ratings — forward nicely.

In-house or out-house. It's a simple choice. 

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