



# Steinberg On Creative

By Steven J. Steinberg

## No Hablas Espanol? No Problemo

How Your English-Language Station Can Help Clients Reach Hispanic Consumers

Recently a former student of mine e-mailed to thank me for something I'd said over 20 years ago in a radio scripting class at The Portfolio Center in Atlanta, a maxim that has stood her in good stead all these years: *Not every marketing problem has a creative solution.* I didn't see any benefit in letting her know I had absolutely no recollection of ever saying that. The student has, indeed, become the teacher, because that was my gut reaction when my editors at *Radio Ink* suggested a column on how creative services should address the booming Hispanic market and its influences across the country.

In a previous article on niche marketing (June 12, 2006), I advised the outsourcing of Hispanic copy to Spanish-speaking writers, due to the idiosyncrasies of language. (*Lost In Translation* isn't merely a Bill Murray movie hardly anyone went to see.) Further, this didn't seem to be an issue I would have to confront, since none of our stations are Hispanic.

But my editors, as they are wont to do, pressed on, not letting me off the hook so easily. To wit: "Hispanics are one of the largest consumers of **Country** music. Ads now have to be multi-cultural. How are you as a creative services director going to meet the challenge? What can creative service directors do to learn more about the audience?"

### WHO'S IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT?

It's a complex question that requires a nuanced answer. At the core of the challenge is this tenet of our business: Primarily, we are a vehicle that delivers marketing strategies, but it's the client who is in the driver's seat. However, we are also marketing partners with our customers, and creative services is a value-added resource to help them meet and exceed their goals.

Working in the Great North Woods of Maine, the rapidly growing Hispanic boom isn't something we've encountered as yet. Demographic trends indicate, perhaps, it's only a matter of time until that's no longer the case. So I sat down with my friend and colleague, the senior vice president and marketing manager



for our group, Patrick Collins, to consider how we might deal with a client interested in reaching Hispanic listeners.

If, for example, an auto dealership came to us and said they wanted to grab a larger slice of the Hispanic market, we would not deal with cultural issues, since we don't operate any Spanish-speaking stations. What we would do is ask our client about their firsthand experience or industry-provided research with regard to their Hispanic target. We'd want to know if the decision makers are the same or different,

compared to the general populace. That's where cultural influences may come into play. We would want to know if there were brand preferences or loyalties among the Hispanic consumers that were different than the mainstream marketplace.

### AIM FOR THE RIGHT TARGET

So we wouldn't be creating ads aimed at Hispanic buyers, per se, but traditional male/female consumers in targeted age groups. In other words, a slice-of-life John and Mary spot wouldn't become a separate Juan and Maria script, and the typical warm, uptempo underscore music wouldn't morph into a ranchera riff or salsa selection. The assumption would be that Hispanics listening to our "products" — in this case, English-speaking radio stations — would respond to traditional marketing/creative strategies for their respective demographic, vs. cultural niches.

I think I bring a unique perspective, because I'm a practitioner who works in the trenches for a large radio station company. Almost all of my previous articles are based on 40 years experience as a creative director, so "verdad in advertising" dictates this confession: The burgeoning Hispanic demographic is not something I've had to deal with heretofore — other than, as I've mentioned, utilizing fluent Spanish-speaking copywriters on the few occasions I've been tasked with ads going into Hispanic media. It's a whole new ball game. So perhaps that will require new paradigms down the road. But for now, that's how an actual radio station group will deal with this challenge.

The bottom line is this. It will be a client-driven, not a culturally driven process. ☑



### QUICKREAD™

- How will creative services address the booming Hispanic market and its influences across the country?
- Target specific demographics — not cultural niches.
- Ask the client for firsthand experience or industry-provided research with regard to their Hispanic consumers.

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