

By Wayne Ens

Ens On Sales



Marketing Audits Uncover Seven Radio Sales Sins

In any profession, prescription without diagnosis is considered malpractice, and that applies to radio sales as well. No professional radio account executive would consider making proposals to clients without first utilizing the diagnostic tools available.

When consulting radio station sales departments, we take a similar investigative approach: We utilize a marketing audit that includes, among other things, mystery shoppers who solicit presentations from our clients and their competitors, an advertiser perceptual survey, and an internal SWOT analysis.

Here are the seven sins we've uncovered during our market audits.

1. RATE-CUTTING IS NOT AS RAMPANT AS YOU THINK — Our mystery shoppers are trained to negotiate deep discounts and concessions. We have learned it is highly unlikely that your competitors are pricing themselves as low as your clients or your salespeople would have you believe.

Clients have a vested interest in telling stations they can buy the competition cheaper. It's a negotiating tactic. It also appears some sales executives find it easier to sell the sales manager on a low rate than it is to sell the client on the right rate.

Virtually every station has at least one stinky deal, so we assume all of their deals are stinky — but it's just not true.

2. FAILURE TO REACH DECISION MAKERS — When asking for presentations from our stations and their competitors, our mystery shopper team makes it clear they are agents for the decision maker, collecting information in order to make media-buying recommendations. In virtually every market, more than 80 percent of the media we audit — radio, print, billboards, TV, coupon envelopes, and transit — never try to reach the decision maker. It is imperative that you find a valid business reason to contact the decision maker if you want to increase your closing ratios.

3. SALESPEOPLE ARE NOT LISTENING — In fact, our mystery shoppers don't just tell media reps what their objectives are, they provide a written outline of what they are hoping to achieve. Less than 20 percent of the resulting media proposals we see have creative

ideas that address any of our objectives or marketing problems. Most of the "proposals" are off-the-shelf packages, or worse yet, generic media kits with a schedule and investment attached.

4. YOUR MARKET IS NOT COVERED — At least 70 percent of the known advertisers we call during our advertiser perceptual surveys can't recall talking to a radio rep in the past 12 months. It seems we all keep approaching the same known radio advertisers and picking the low-hanging fruit, rather than preaching the radio gospel to the heavy advertisers in other media.

5. ADVERTISERS DO NOT TRUST MOST ADVERTISING SALESPEOPLE — Advertisers report that most media salespeople are merely spot or space brokers, unqualified to address their marketing or advertising problems intelligently or creatively.


Here is the irony: These same advertisers tell us they would welcome and place larger advertising investments with sincere, competent advertising professionals.

Do you have a lot of alleged or boutique advertising agencies in your market? It's because your clients can't find a media rep they trust!

6. MEDIA SALESPEOPLE CANNIBALIZE THEIR OWN INDUSTRY — The daily newspaper bashes the weekly newspaper, the country station bashes the rocker, the TV rep bashes cable, and the billboard sales rep bashes bus advertising. Advertisers become so confused by the rhetoric that they don't trust or believe any of us.

Instead of radio salespeople working to persuade advertisers about radio's power, they destroy each medium's credibility and watch advertisers flock to the only daily in town by default.

7. ADVERTISERS WANT MORE RADIO THAN WE SELL! — This one really hurts. We interview the top 100 local advertisers in each market to capture their perceptions of the reach and effectiveness of the various media. In every market, these top local spenders tell us that based upon reach, influence, and time spent with media, they believe they should invest 15 to 20 percent of their budgets on radio. In these same markets, advertisers actually invest only 5 to 8 percent on radio. When asked about the disparity, the answer is loud and clear: They have not found a knowledgeable professional they can trust to show them how to get an acceptable radio ROI.

Does your sales plan attack these seven deadly sins? 

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QUICKREAD™

- Although advertisers report they should be spending 15-20 percent of their budgets on radio, they only spend 5-8 percent!
- Get out of the groove! Stop pursuing the same radio advertisers and go after the heavy hitters in other media.

