



Taking it to the streets

Street teams are often the first step in a broadcaster's career. These positions offer the opportunity to learn about the radio business on the front line, face to face with the audience. They allow new talent to try out their skills and benefit from the guidance of more experienced station staff.

Why is it then that street teams sometimes stumble over their own feet when it comes to remote broadcasts?

I recently visited a home centre where the local rock station was on location. As you might expect, there was a table placed just inside the front door with a banner overhead emblazoned with the station's ID. A boom box was cranking out the tunes. Two young ladies were seated behind the table, totally immersed in their own conversation. The air talent was sitting on one of the garden swings the store had on display, his back turned to the front door. It sounded like he was speaking to one of his buddies on his cell phone.

A steady stream of customers was entering the store and passing right by the remote location

but there was no attempt by the street team to interact with them. If it wasn't for the station banner nobody would know what was going on... at least not unless they happened to hear about it on their car radio.

The message the customers received from this team was loud and clear: "We're not interested in meeting you right now."

With curious looks the people went into the store and likely wouldn't remember the call letters by the time they passed the cashier.

What disturbs me is that I've seen this all too often. Instead of embracing the opportunity to meet the community and introduce them to the station's product, the street team seems to be doing everything it can to ignore the people coming in the door. Although the team is physically present, mentally they're on the beach!

There was a time when the average passerby would have been impressed with a remote broadcast. There was a lot of complicated equipment and an opportunity to see a real live DJ. If you're



BY MURRAY JOHNSON

picturing hula hoops, sock hops and Dick Clark you're on the right track. Things have changed a lot since then.

Even in the '70s it was hard to make an impression on the public by just showing up in a vehicle with call letter decals. At one station I worked for back then, we had a motor home all painted up with the call letters and the A&W logo (they sponsored the Sunshine Patrol, as we called it). I distinctly remember driving along in a parade one day with the station audio playing over outdoor speakers when I heard a young lady sarcastically call out from the crowd "Oooh! I'm SO impressed! Not."

After thinking about it for a while, I understood her reaction. The Sunshine Patrol really didn't have the desired impact until the station hired someone to wear an A&W Root Bear suit and walk along beside the motorhome clowning with the jocks. Instead of hiding inside the vehicle, we were now out with the people and that ended up working much better. (It also gave the fellow who wore the bear suit his start on a successful radio career.)

Today we certainly can't rely on music and technology to make an impact all on their own. It's likely that any person walking into a store with earbuds on has more music loaded on their iPod than a typical radio station has on its playlist! The radio dial can't touch the musical variety available on Internet streams from virtually everywhere, and most anyone with a computer can set up an online station and be broadcasting to the world without spending a lot of money. This stuff just doesn't impress the general public anymore.

Not only that, but the idea of radio broadcasting as a one-way medium is totally outdated. It has been replaced by a new, more interactive concept. Social media has made a huge impact on our society and broadcasters have begun including it in their day-to-day operations as a feedback path. It's much more effective than the old request lines, which were usually off the hook anyway.

Today's broadcast consumer expects to interact with radio stations, which is why we should no longer consider them to be "listeners" or "the audience". Instead they

are consumers of our product—and demanding ones at that. They want to participate in a community of their choosing, and it's up to us to convince them to join ours.

Which gets me back to my original point—unless the street team is fully engaged interacting with those taking the time to attend the event all efforts are wasted. Even if we make things sound exciting on the air the people will doubt our sincerity if they arrive to find out the event is actually a dud. It's like attending a party where everyone's keeping to themselves—the potential's there but it's just not happening.

To make magic in broadcasting we have to be prepared. Every seasoned broadcaster knows this, and this extends from the studio to the street. Promotion managers should ensure that street rookies are given the benefit of a solid orientation, covering station branding, code of conduct, dress code and most importantly—HOW to interact with the public.

Team members should be familiar with the station personalities and when they're on the air. They should also know the names of station management and how to contact them should the need arise. It would be a good idea to have a senior staff member accompany a new team for the first few events to provide some coaching and make sure they know how to set up an effective remote.

With a multitude of entertainment choices available to the community we have some stiff competition. To be relevant, we need to be out there and participating. If you've ever been on a cruise ship you may well wonder where the staff gets their endless energy and enthusiasm as they keep the passengers entertained around the clock for the duration of the cruise. Something's always happening and the staff will be on top of it. That's what radio is supposed to be like—magic!

The truth is, something IS always happening on the street. Radio is well placed to be part of the action and to help draw the audience together. Local presence is a key strength that we can weave into the community fabric; good entertainment value will keep the people coming back and help us grow the brand. Effective street teams maintain contact by being seen as well as heard, making sure they stay on top of the action.

Today, technology allows us to participate in ways unimaginable in the sock

www.hammondmfg.com • 1-877-535-3282
Communication Racks & Cabinets
Electrical & Electronic Enclosures
Electronic Transformers
Power Outlet Strips

Introducing Q-Assembly, a new web-based assembly service from HAMMOND MANUFACTURING.

Q-Assembly enables you to quickly and easily build your preferred rack or cabinet configuration and then submit it for quotation. There are hundreds of options to choose from and no minimum quantities required.

When you require a quick turnaround, look for the *24-Hour symbol for products that can be assembled within 24-hours.

Your **QUICK & EASY** configuration tool is just a click away.

Q **Assemble**
ONLINE CONFIGURATION

Start building your assembly at: www.q-assembly.com

hop days. We now have mobile device apps that fit a remote broadcast facility into the palm of your hand.

These new apps turn an iPhone or Android mobile phone into a self-contained production tool. Broadcast quality audio can be sent live with mix-minus cue feed/IFB back from the station. Some products even allow you to package material complete with sound bites and transmit it via FTP to be ingested into the line-up as needed, all over 3G or Wi-Fi.

Because we're no longer tethered to a piece of copper wire, we're free to be creative and quickly go where the action is.

This opens up some new possibilities for street teams to cover an event. There is no technical reason why a team member can't roam the venue to get some interesting comments from customers and edit them on a laptop for inclusion in the next bit. Actually, there's nothing stopping us from doing remote hits from every department in the store. A little imagination is all it takes. Play it up—make it interesting within the brand guidelines and appropriate for the target demographic.

Video podcasting offers new possibilities as well. Short items can be assembled at the venue and uploaded to the station website—live on location! Remember, it's about being seen as well as heard and the right tools are now affordable and readily available.

Imagination is what makes radio different from CDs and mp3 players.

Radio is supposed to be a live art form (no, really). It takes skill to connect with people on an emotional level and generate excitement. Consider what a difference it would make to portray the remote as a spectacular event—something that nobody will want to miss. "Everyone's having a great time here. You'd better get right down here and join in the fun!" Then follow through by making it so.

When people respond we need to welcome them and thank them for coming (Walmart figured this one out a long time ago). If we put together a small package of listener discount coupons or offer them a chance to win a prize, so much the better. We want to make them feel special for attending our event.

This is the time to convince customers to give us a try and to begin building brand loyalty. We want them to punch up our station when they get back to the

car. When they get home on their computers we want them to "friend" us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter... we want them to give us a spot on their mobile device... we want them to tell their friends to check us out.

So there's the real value of the street team—it's guerrilla marketing for the station, building new listener relationships one community member at a time. It's taking advantage of new technologies to better connect with the audience, and it's vital for our future that we do it very, very well.

Murray Johnson's radio career spanned more than three decades both on the air and behind the scenes, most recently designing broadcast facilities for the CBC. He may be reached by e-mail at murray.j@bell.net.

The Novanet Advantage

Satellite • Broadcast • Microwave/Wireless • Multimedia

Think Novanet to deliver or broadcast your data, audio, video or multimedia information. Our customized design and implementation, along with leading industry manufacturers provides superior, reliable solutions to all your communication needs.

We understand the importance of your network and will provide technologically advanced services that are worthy of your investment today, and capable of handling your needs tomorrow.

- apt
- ADVENT
- LARON
- ANDREW
- MRC
- envivio:
- EDDYSTONE BROADCAST
- ERI
- ORTEL A DIVISION OF ENCORE
- LINK
- audemat
- PROCELIN
- Tieline

Satellite • Broadcast • Microwave/Wireless • Multimedia

4-725 Westney Rd. South Ajax, ON L1S 7J7
 Tel: 905-686-6666 Fax: 905-619-1053
www.novanetcomm.com

West 800-663-0842	Ontario/Maritimes 800-268-6851	Quebec 800-361-0768
----------------------	-----------------------------------	------------------------