



## Branding Internationally — What is your local market?

Many say the future of television is in serving your local market and identifying with it, and there is truth to making sure you relate to your local audience.

But it does beg the question, what is my local audience? It seems like an easy enough question to answer. You may be tempted to say where you are located is your local community. That may have been the answer 20 years ago, but now local really has a new meaning. You're local to whoever is watching you. Successful broadcasters have always spoken to their audience and new technology hasn't changed that.

A great example of reinventing the notion of local is border PBS stations such as KCIS Seattle or WNED Buffalo-Toronto. That's right, Buffalo-Toronto. That's how they brand themselves. They're an international LOCAL station. It's not uncommon for someone in southern Ontario to refer to the "local PBS station", which happens to be physically based in Buffalo.

"The signal goes north just as it goes south," says Ron Santora, Vice President, Broadcasting/Station Manager, WNED. "About 12 years ago, we looked at the Canadian (ratings) we were getting in southern Ontario and we realized we were really a bi-national organization. We started identifying ourselves as just that."

It was a matter of being local to who was watching. Santora says it became quickly apparent that hanging on to the concept that they were just a Buffalo station was out of date.

"It's an old fashioned way of looking at things," he says. "You need to look at where you reach. It doesn't make any difference of where you are really. Take for example Minneapolis and St. Paul. They're right next to each other. You're not going to cut one off from the other because you

happen to be licensed in one city or the other."

But identifying yourself to a large demographic area spread over two countries does have its challenges. WNED offers some good examples of how to deal with those.

"We pay attention to the differences in the markets," says Santora. "One of the ways we do that is through our member magazine. It publishes on a monthly basis and it goes out to all members. We will look at the schedule and see what's coming up. Often we will change the cover or the feature story to reflect the two different markets. If we have a uniquely U.S. story that we want people in Western New York to be aware of, we'll do something on the cover for that. Then we'll find something that's more market appropriate for the Canadian version."

So they are cognizant, for example, of how they talk about things like finances, where in the U.S. they talk about 401ks vs. RRSPs. But for the most part, says Santora, branding and promotions are based on content that people are tuning in to watch, regardless of where they are.

When it comes to station imaging, there is no border.

"We don't brand our promos for U.S. or Canada. But the one thing we do do is

at the conclusion of every program, the first bumper that comes up at the station break is the WNED logo. If you look at our logo, we have WNED written out with Buffalo-Toronto underneath it. And you also see in animation the U.S. flag and the Canadian flag flying behind it.

"When we have our IDs, and we have varying versions, we start at our Buffalo studio, then you take a journey from that building to Ontario. Then (it cuts to a shot) looking back from Toronto, Hamilton across the lake to Buffalo. And at the very end of that animation, you have streams of light coming

out like spokes in a wheel that not only says that we reach Batavia and different areas of Western New York, but we also reach different areas of Southern Ontario like Toronto, Barrie and Hamilton."

That's their local audience.

"It's a matter of whose living room am I in," concludes Santora. "That's the mentality you have to have. You're having a conversation with someone. No matter where they live, you are with them."

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