

Bigger, faster, better!

If your station is writing and producing commercials for direct advertisers, in the last 12 to 14 months you've written and produced even more than the year before. And you're doing it with the same or fewer resources.

The nature of the business has changed in all market sizes. Buys are shorter in nature, come with smaller lead time and bigger expectations. Advertisers demand instant gratification from their investment, so we find ourselves striving for enhanced effectiveness while creating more commercials, more quickly.

The key to success in today's environment is more efficient management of resources. Here are a few ideas to help you with that.

Simplify. Minimize the complexity of the scripts you write by relying less on

high production values and more on clever word-smithing. Complex production adds to already-taxed production resources and creates a bottleneck in the provision of top drawer client service. Highly demanding, anxious clients won't tolerate anything less than stellar service.

Radio has always been sold on the basis of its immediacy and as such we must deliver it. Let that be your guiding principle in the creation of well-crafted scripts.

There are two writing styles that lend themselves to better, faster customer service. They are the narrative writing style, and the storytelling style.

Write a narrative as though you were writing a letter to a friend, or speaking to someone on the telephone. Economize with your words, and write the way people talk. People don't talk in complete sentences, and they do use slang. This will help you fit the entire thought in to the allotted 30- or 60-second time period.

Another key to a good narrative is to know the skills and personality of your voice talent. If you write with a particular voice talent in mind, it becomes easier to develop the script to make it sound like something they would actually say.

Commercials that fit your programming style are much more effective. If your station is high-energy, fast-paced radio, a properly written narrative can mirror that programming without becoming tune-out. Think about how your listener would tell a story to another listener. Check out the classic Ortho Fire Ant Killer from the 1999 Mercury Awards. Or something more current at www.bearmountain.com/snowboard/2010/01/07/funny-radio-ad/.

Storytelling is a form of narrative with a little more depth. It can be done with one voice; modest, well-placed sound effects and cleverly chosen music. It is one of the most powerful writing techniques because it gives us the opportunity to convey the story, and have the listener develop their own images about its details. Because listeners play an active role in completing the storyline, they tend to remember it longer. They may also be able



to relate personally to the story, or know someone who can. This allows us to verbalize fewer details because the listener can contribute them on their own.

When you work on your storytelling skills, edit thoughts to two words instead of four. Then look for thoughts or ideas you can establish or convey with the sound effects or music. Even the voice reading your commercial will add to the story's overall texture. Work with the script until it is within the 30- or 60-second time limit. Be sure to allow the talent time to tell the story at the appropriate pace. Asking them to rush through the commercial to include all the copy defeats the purpose of telling the story.

Better writing requires better concentration.

Minimize interruptions by creating a list of answers to FAQs about commercials from listeners. You know the types of commercials that will stimulate calls for more details, so create it on the go and share it with your receptionist.

Recycle good, unsold ideas and modify them for use with a different advertiser.

Track your volume by knowing how much you are writing and producing. You can assign a numeric value to their complexity: "one" representing a simple narrative commercial and "five" representing a complex, production-intensive piece. Know how long each style takes to execute and work backwards, based on available time and resources, to know and understand your overall capacity.

Anyone can be bigger and faster. To be bigger, faster and better is, well, better!

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