

## Glad to be back

I've missed this gracious opportunity to offer my opinions, my suggestions and, sometimes, my rants. I'm still never going to get on the "Be in your own commercials" train. And I'll still never understand why local TV stations think "BREAKING NEWS" is something that happened yesterday afternoon.

I look forward to contributing to *Broadcast Dialogue* again, to keep the piece of my heart that will always be in the business of broadcasting. The great mystery of broadcasting for me has always been the depth and duration of friendships and relationships it has given me. I am grateful for this forum, and I am grateful for the people who taught me so much.

That said, I have to remind the Canadian reader of how things are a little different here in the States. We have local free television, a choice of two satellite vendors and local/regional cable players. Among the locals, we have a strong tax-and-donation supported Wisconsin Public Broadcasting Network. Plenty to choose from, for the most part, but something has happened to TV here that seems so wrong.

For years, paid half-hour commercials have crept into afternoon and late night hours. I can choose from an enjoyable half hour of "making money in foreclosed real estate", or how to "start your own business" material that isn't any

real programming at all. Years ago, these ads filled a late night gap from time to time and also filled the coffers of stations that needed extra revenue to make the bottom line.

Now that many of us are paying for cable or satellite television, and those channel providers are being paid huge sums to create programming (and promise programming), why aren't consumers actually getting programs?

Mind you, I can take 30-second commercials... and plenty of them. I have been producing them for 30 years. But, when I am viewing the Travel Channel I want to see travel programming around the stinking clock! What about the guy who gets off shift work at 1 a.m., doesn't he deserve to get a full plate of TV when he gets home?

And now even worse—the half-hour commercials are being disguised as real programs when you turn to your channel listings. Names like "Make Money In Your Town" or "Revenue Frontier" slip into the line-up so it isn't obvious. I venture a lot of us would drop cable or satellite if we knew how many hours were really devoted to this creepy programming.

But wait. How can we drop it when we have become so accustomed to instantly clicking on the Weather Channel for forecasts, ESPN for sports news and CNN when there's a world crisis?

I couldn't imagine being without CNN



while the Haiti earthquake coverage was truly breaking. Do I expect that the network will break away from this to go to paid programming at midnight?

NO.

So, why do these other networks think it is okay to do this at night? The shift guy pays the same price as me and should get hours of programming he can enjoy, right?

Part of my difficulty with these paid advertisements is that they are often selling get-rich-quick schemes and promise-the-moon products that can sap life savings and ruin lives. Is there a moral or ethical rule suggesting maybe we don't want to provide venues for such advertisers?

I certainly don't want to support them with my user fees.

Neither does "shift worker guy".

I suggest a simple solution. Why not offer a double deal to advertisers and let them buy spots with a slightly higher rate but know that those same commercials would be run in a rebroadcast of the day's programming. The entire daytime line-up could be repeated at night, the spots air twice, the shows air twice and you've generated the income that allegedly supports the whole industry in the process.

Is it like this in Canada?

If not, don't let it happen.

It really sucks.

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**In case you were wondering...**

- ▢ What year did my local radio or TV station start broadcasting?
- ▢ How many stations are there in the Golden West radio station group and where are they?
- ▢ What's the difference between analogue and digital signals?
- ▢ Who were the latest broadcasters to be inducted into the CAB Hall of Fame?

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[www.broadcasting-history.ca](http://www.broadcasting-history.ca)



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