

A roadmap for radio's future



This is an exciting time for the radio industry for myriad reasons—business is up, compatibility with the Internet is creating many new ways to reach listeners, mobile apps are expanding our audiences and increasing listener connectivity. These factors—coupled with declines for our media competitors—are creating new and exciting opportunities for radio.

The real challenge is how to take full advantage of these opportunities. The current media market is fuelled by technology, and technology continues to evolve at a rapid pace. In order to succeed in this new environment radio must evolve.

For the radio industry the first and most visible indication of progress must start with the development of a new association that will represent the industry on all fronts; regulatory, legislative, sales and marketing. The catalyst for the creation of a new association was the closing of the 83-year-old Canadian Association of Broadcasters due to the divisiveness of the TV sector. The closure of the Radio Marketing Bureau at the end of August provides the impetus for the creation of a new association focused on the future needs and opportunities facing the radio broadcast industry.

Ironically, the RMB was created based on the results of a CAB-commissioned study examining the value and efficiency

of national selling methods for both radio and television. The 1960 study recommended the need for an independent radio sales bureau. The recommendation became reality in 1961 when the Radio Sales Bureau was created. In the 1970s the Bureau's name changed to the Radio Bureau of Canada; a second name change occurred in the early 1990s with the introduction of the Radio Marketing Bureau.

The closure of the CAB and RMB may seem disruptive, but it opens the door for development of an association that can best represent radio in this challenging digital age. Radio broadcasters, whether past members of the CAB or RMB, must unite and work together to form a new organization that speaks to the shared concerns of operators both large and small. We have a chance to build on the foundation of learning from two well-respected associations and create a unified industry force that will speak with authority on all areas of mutual interest and growth.

This is a chance for radio broadcasters to take control of their own agenda and identify industry threats and opportunities. In order to do so it will take time and participation from all broadcasters.

The needs of both large and small broadcast groups can be diverse. However, an association is formed to accomplish a purpose and that purpose is to best represent the radio broadcast industry.

The clout of this new industry association will get attention primarily through the solidarity and participation of *all* Canadian radio broadcasters. It will benefit members by identifying and focusing on industry-wide challenges.

As the market becomes more complex, so does a radio broadcasters' job. Understanding and selling against social interactive media that can offer geodemographic targeting and developing

web content that attracts listeners are challenges that were not imagined a few years ago. Regulatory pressures will continue to be an issue; copyright, content and licensing will become more complicated as broadcasters get more involved with interactive and mobile applications.

The creation of a new association should be looked upon as an investment in our future. A single association can act as the brand steward for radio, an advocate, lobbyist and educator with the credibility to re-enforce radio's value and increase revenue opportunities for our industry.

Over the past four years that I have served as the president of the RMB I have heard from many of our members about the issues of doing business; small broadcasters rail against the "big four", while large broadcasters have been dismissive of smaller broadcasters' issues. The mutual future success of our industry must see this stop and a new sense of co-operation must prevail—all broadcasters must work together or else competitive and regulatory forces will divide and conquer the industry.

While their concerns may seem diverse, all broadcasters have one thing in common—a passion for the business. Let's corral that passion and put it to work within a new association that will ensure future success for our industry. Co-operation and commitment to a strong, authoritative, united association will bode well for radio broadcasters as we face an ever changing future.

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