

Make The Listener E-mail Connection

By Craig Zimmerman

So you've started your online database (MMS, 1/16), and you've asked your listeners to provide you with their e-mail addresses so you can send them great things. Now you need to determine what those great things are going to be.

1. Extend your brand. Your online presence is an extension of your on-air brand, so you need to communicate relevant and interesting information to your station's e-mail club, just as your air talents do for your listeners every day. Top local and national stories, the weather, artist news — whatever it is, take the information and create a newsletter or bulletin to send to your database.

News/Talkers can send a quick midday news update with three or four story summaries (a headline plus one or two sentences) and end each story with a link to the full story on the station website. An AC station can e-mail club members artist-related news, including concert updates, new CD releases or timely news or gossip about a core artist.

2. Get more information on what your listeners want in an e-mail. There are several ways to do this, but all of them center on asking your listeners. If your station does callout research, perceptual studies or focus groups, you should use at least a few of the questions to inquire whether participants are members of the e-mail club and what kinds of information they'd like to receive, whether it's artist info, school closings, discount coupons, etc. Of course, you can also ask your listeners to pick a few categories of interest on your website's sign-up page or in the member-preferences section.

Another way to harvest information is to pick five listeners from your database and start e-mail conversations with them. Send them a message asking them to tell you what they would like to receive in future e-mail correspondence. I know it sounds simple, but, remarkably, most people overlook this step. By contacting a small group, you can connect with some active listeners for much less than the cost of a formal focus group.

Also not to be overlooked is a brief e-mail survey. Your e-mail provider may offer an easy-to-use survey feature, but if that's not available, you can simply ask listeners to respond to your e-mail with their thoughts or create a form on your website that listeners can fill out with their opinions. While the results may be a little more difficult to tally, doing this should help accomplish your overall goal.

3. Test and measure. One of the best things about e-mailing listeners is that there is no reason all your listeners have to receive the same message. You can test and measure responses to different e-mails. Randomly divide your database (figuratively, not physically) into two or four parts and send out different e-mails.

Whether the messages are entirely different or cover similar content with changes only in the semantics, you'll begin to sense how your communication shapes the feedback. That will help you determine what your listeners are looking for and what they are most likely to react to, giving you guidance on the most effective writing styles.

Less Is More

Because your listeners provided you with permission to reach out to them, they are going to look forward to receiving your e-mails. That said, you still need to grab their attention with your subject line or headline, then get to the point. Don't add a lot of fluff or unnecessary information. The reader is only going to give your e-mail a limited amount of time, and you want to take full advantage of each opportunity to get in — then get out.

Coupons & Advertisements

You need to be careful with ads and coupons, because your listeners signed up to receive interesting and useful information. Stations that send out ads without any useful content are likely to alienate their community and drive up the unsubscribe rates.

Obviously, your e-mail club can be used to generate nontraditional revenue, but you must find creative ways to include sponsor information or ads in your messages. One trick some of our clients use is creating station-specific or artist-specific content on behalf of advertisers. This can be as simple as promoting a station contest or appearance in the body of an advertiser message.

If your e-mail content is strong enough, sending an ad or two in the body of the e-mail is acceptable. But if your e-mail is light on content but heavy on advertising, you probably won't have your listeners' attention for long. Even if they don't spam you back or opt out altogether, they won't pay as much attention to you.

Bottom line: Respect your e-mail audience and they'll reward you with information, insight and maybe even some good old-fashioned word-of-mouth growth.

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Top Sales Promotion Planning Tips

By John Lund

How good your sales promotions are depends on how well they work for your client, your listeners and your station. Covering everything from creation to execution, here's a 40-point questionnaire to qualify each sales promotion and ensure the best possible results.



Preparation

1. What is the promotion or contest called?
2. What does the client want the promotion to accomplish?
3. What should it accomplish for the station?
4. Is it appropriate for both the target audience and the station's image?
5. Does the station have exclusivity on the promotion?
6. How can the promotion be improved from its raw concept?
7. Is the promotion in conflict with any other station activity, client or promotion?
8. Will the station always look good, in terms of crowd size, level of participation, significant registration, multiple winners and meaningful goodwill?
9. Is this promotion easy — easy to understand, easy to play and easy to win?

Client Information

10. Has the client done business with your station before?
11. How much is the account currently spending with your station?
12. How much more will be spent per week, month or year with this promotional opportunity?
13. How will the client support the promotion? Will there be an additional on-air schedule, outside advertising, an in-store promotional campaign, a remote broadcast, etc.?
14. How will the station promote the promotion (promos, website, other media)?
15. How many promos or mentions, if any, are promised or necessary in addition to the client's commercials? At what value? Will it sound like the client owns the radio station when this promotion is on the air (that is, are there too many promos)?
16. What stations has the client done promotions with before? Did the sales promotions run smoothly, or were there problems due to the client or station?
17. Is the promotion fundamentally a good value for the client and the station?
18. Can the value of the prize be leveraged? Can you turn a \$1,500 trip into a \$15,000 sales package?
19. Will the client provide another promotional opportunity or ad schedule if this one is successful?

On-Air Setup

20. Will the promotion sound great on the air?
21. Who will write, produce, schedule and update the promos? Consider rules, contest forms, winners' sheets, prize releases and bookkeeping procedures.
22. Does the contest constitute an illegal lottery, with a prize, chance and consideration?
23. Can the rules be changed midway through the promotion? Can the time frame be extended?
24. Should the station's legal counsel be apprised of the promotion?
25. Are the complete rules simple enough to convey in 30 seconds?
26. Is the contest fun to play even for those not calling in to win?

Remote Details

27. Will personality appearances be necessary? If so, assign a value to the time and determine who will pay for it.
28. Will remote equipment, line charges and security be necessary? If so, indicate the costs and who will be responsible for them.
29. Doing a promotion on location requires signage, additional liners, the station van, contest registration, entry boxes, etc. Does the client's budget justify (or cover) the expense?
30. What are the odds for success? (A registration program for a remote at a low-traffic business may end up looking like a failure.)

Prize Pointers

31. Will the prizes coincide with your listeners' interests? How valuable are they to the target audience?
32. Will the client supply promotional items, gifts and prizes? List the prizes and indicate their value.
33. How will the prizes be distributed? Will certificates or prizes be mailed, or will winners pick them up at the station, the client's location or a remote?
34. When the prize is to be picked up, is the prize value enough to justify the driving distance for winners? Be sure to provide directions.
35. Are the promotion and prize topical? Do they relate to what everyone's talking about?
36. What do qualifiers win? Is there instant gratification for them and the listeners?
37. Are the prizes really worth the hoops listeners jump through to get them?

Post-Promotion Review

38. How will the station and the client gauge success?
39. How well did the contest work? Prepare a followup report for the client, including documentation of on-air mentions and the money spent by the station on promotion. Complete a station file with all promotional particulars, liners, rules, promos, winners and a results evaluation.
40. Would you recommend doing this promotion next year?

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