

8 Action Steps You Can Take Today for Better Time Spent Listening

By Gary Berkowitz, Berkowitz Broadcasting Consulting



In today's environment, with disappearing marketing budgets, TSL continues to be one of the most important ways to stabilize and increase ratings. Some of these tactics may seem obvious, but you would be surprised at how many stations do not pay enough attention to them.

Here is a checklist as well as ideas to help increase the time your listeners stay (or at least write down) that they stay with your station.

1. **Spend an extra half-hour a day editing and reviewing the music log.** Obvious yes, but with increasing time demands on PD's this is not always happening. Make sure each 15-minute segment of the hour is representative of the essence of the station. Specific areas to look at are:

- Keeping the music tempo on an "even wave". Careful not to inflate the tempo artificially. A smooth tempo works best here. Not to slow and sleepy. Not to intense is key.
 - Having currents in positions where they can be front or at least back sold. These are the least known songs you play.
 - Making sure you are not getting clumps of any one group of sounds. Example: Too many females, males, country type sounds etc.
 - Checking rotations to insure that songs are moving through the day parts and hours properly.
2. **Forget about "forced listening".** People are too busy and have too many choices. The days of "Listen all day cause you never know when you can win". Are long over. When it comes to contesting, today's hot tactics are:
- Tell them what they will win. Get them interested.
 - Tell them exactly when they can win. The goal here is to either get them to stay longer, or come back. *Example: "Listen for Celine Dion's Because You Loved Me this morning at 10:20 and win \$105."* Even a 9-5 wining window is better than no window at all.
 - Increase occurrences of listening by having multiple occurrences of winning. The more times a day they come to us, the higher the ratings will be. *Example: "Three chances to win today. Listen at 9:20, 1:20, and 3:30."*
 - *Avoid using the word "details" when pre-promoting a promotion. It makes it sound to complicated. Better? "We'll tell you how easy it is to win."*

Tip: INCREASING YOUR STATIONS OCCURRENCES OF LISTENING IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO INCREASE YOUR TIME SPENT LISTENING.

3. **Tie all giveaways into TSL type contests.** Revolve them around your music.

- *"When you hear Rod Stewart's Rhythm of My Heart at 11:20, call in to win tickets to see him."*

- *“Call in at 10:30. Tell us the last three songs played and win a weekend getaway in Orlando.”*
- 4. **“Be Brilliant with the Basics.”** Your listeners must always know whom they are listening to. Calls always first & last. Calls attached to all station events (The K104 Halloween Fair). Remember, Arbitron is a top of mind recall. More than anything, Arbitron asks for call letters, station name, or dial position. Make sure the talent says calls (name) slow and deliberate. Often I hear the calls delivered way too fast.
- 5. **Your morning show should always forward promote.** The greatest bit/content is wasted without effective pre-promotion. Example: *“This morning at 7:20, we’ll tell you the five worst things you can say to a woman.”* On many airchecks, I hear good content that was not promoted ahead.

On Traffic Reports: Saying *“Traffic is next”* is not as good as saying: *“There’s a problem on 275 south at Ford Road by the Best Buy store, we’ll tell you why next.”*

Each day’s morning show promo (for next day tune-in) should contain a specific time and reason for tune in. If it is generic, it will not work as well. Example: *“Join us tomorrow at 7:10 when we tell you the one song to listen for to win \$1000.00”*.

- 6. **Be famous for one thing.** Total focus works. If it is MORE MUSIC, focus on it. Do not try to sell multiple positions.
- 7. **Backsell the music.** Listeners like it and want it. Promote it as a benefit if you do it. *“We always tell you the songs we play on Magic, and in that long set we heard.”* The only people who do not like this are radio people. Pre-recorded song tags are quickly becoming the way to do this. Jump on it today, before your competitor does. Not sure what they are? Give me a call or drop and email and I’ll tell you.
- 8. **Promotion/Marketing budget cut? Use your website.** Developing loyal listener databases has never been more important. Your station website can be the starting point. Communicate with listeners. Give them an edge in contesting. Have contests just for them. Use Video and audio podcasts. An effective website is almost like having another radio station.

Gary Berkowitz, a monthly contributor to The Michigan Broadcaster is President of Detroit based Berkowitz Broadcast Consulting. Have a programming or marketing question? Ask Gary and he will answer it in the next edition of The Michigan Broadcaster. E-mail your question to Gary Berkowitz at garyberk@aol.com or reach Gary directly at (248) 737-3727.