

PLANNING YOUR RADIO PSA - FROM PRODUCTION TO EVALUATION - A PRODUCER'S CHECKLIST

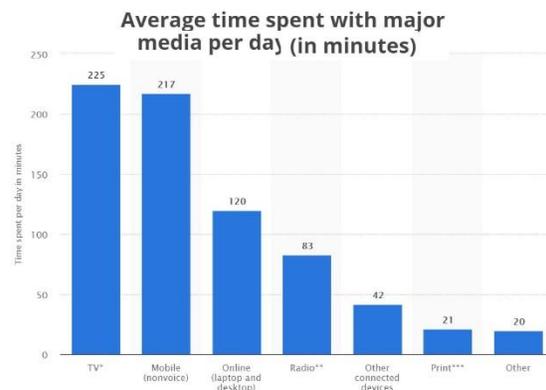
By Bill Goodwill

“The Broadcast Age began about 75 years ago when KDKA, America’s first commercial radio station signed on in Pittsburgh, PA.,” says Rick Ducey, Senior V.P. for Research at the National Association of Broadcasters. “This created a whole new experience for the audience, which began relating to people on radio as trusted friends,” he observes.

According to the Radio Advertising Bureau, Americans spend 22 percent of their time listening to the radio, listening from 14 hours to over 21 hours every week, depending upon their age. Its portability, coupled with its ability to segment listeners by their program tastes, has contributed to its long-standing popularity.

There are nearly 13,000 AM and FM radio stations in the U.S., with about two-thirds of the non-duplicating stations (where AM and FM do not use the same programming) regularly using public service announcements.

However, before mailing PSAs to stations, there are a variety of details you should consider when preparing your campaign plan. Some of these include:



- Establishing a budget for getting your radio PSA package produced, designed, replicated and mailed.
- Deciding how you intend to produce your PSAs - whether you will hire an independent producer, having them produced by your advertising agency, or producing them internally.
- Selecting an experienced radio PSA distributor. They should present a plan to target stations that reach your primary and secondary target audiences; show samples of packaging that will attract the attention of public service directors; develop a timeline for getting various packaging elements designed, printed and mailed and discuss how they intend to evaluate campaign impact.

Establishing a Budget/Selecting Material Formats

Your radio budget will depend largely upon who your producer is, the talent you use (famous names obviously cost more unless you can get them to do it pro-bono), and whether you use original or library music.

However, there are a few guidelines you can use to determine how much money you need to allocate for a professionally executed radio PSA campaign.



“Your radio production must be even better and more creative than television, because you don’t have visual images, you have to create them with words and sound effects.”

“Since radio is not a visual medium, it is important to put a lot of thought into the creative message,” points out Roger Vilsack, an award-winning producer with more than 25 years of experience in the medium. “Your radio production must be even better and more creative than television, even though you will spend a lot more on TV production. Because you don’t have visual images, you have to create them with words and sound effects,” Vilsack says.

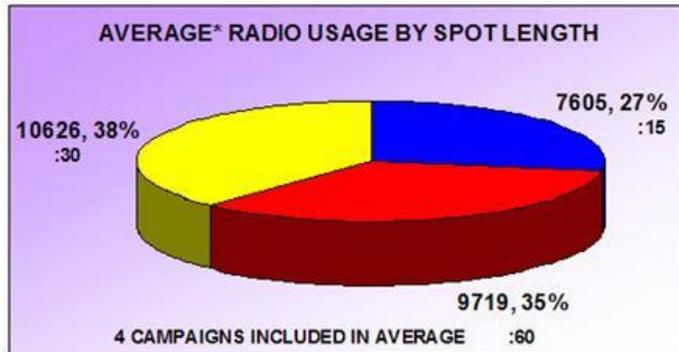
While a lift of TV sometimes works, “a good TV spot *shouldn’t* work in radio,” Vilsack points out, because they are completely different media. He also advises to get the very best talent possible for your radio production “because your radio spot

is going to depend upon people who don't just read the copy, but who can act it out."

Vilsack advises selecting talent from the major markets, especially New York, where there is a big pool of trained talent available. He also recommends budgeting from \$4,500-\$20,000 for the radio production, depending upon the number of voices, music, and sound effects. Creative fees for direction, script writing and talent selection will cost another \$2,500 - \$5,000.

Format/Length Flexibility

One of the most frequently asked questions regarding radio PSAs pertains to the lengths that should be produced.



As with all PSA messages, the more flexibility you can offer the media, the greater chance of getting your PSAs aired. Try to offer at least three different lengths - :15, :30 and :60 and make sure you provide both recorded and live copy. Also think about producing messages for different audiences, i.e. Country & Western, Middle-of-the-Road African-American and Spanish. The more that your radio PSAs match the program format of the station, the better chance they will be used.

The next decision you need to make is the type of radio packaging you want to use to send materials to stations. There is no strong evidence to suggest that one packaging concept performs better than others and it would be very difficult to measure station usage based on package design alone.

There are many factors that influence the media's decision to use a particular PSA that have nothing to do with package design, such as time of year, nature of the message, availability of time, and the number of stations to which PSAs were distributed. To a large degree the choice of radio package design is based on internal considerations (maintaining your brand image) and most importantly, your budget.

CDs have become the standard for music and radio programming, but there are a wide variety of different packaging concepts that can make a big difference in the amount you budget for radio distribution. To minimize postal costs, we



recommend packages that conform to the Postal Service's automated handling equipment.

The package we typically use is called a FlexMailer. It has a four-color printed cover and measures folded 5x7". Inside, the letter to public service director goes on the left panel (if using a vertical design) and there is a slot on the right panel to hold the CD, the evaluation response card and any other collateral literature.

There are also some guidelines to follow when producing the CD and packaging, which were provided by Bruce Dowdy, who has extensive radio operations experience.

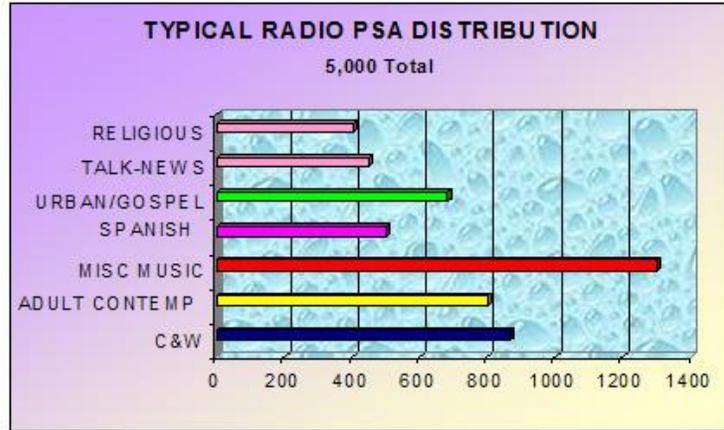


- Send both CD-audio files as well as Enhanced CDs. These include the CD-Audio tracks along with CD-ROM/MP3 files for those stations which would prefer to use this computer-friendly format. That way, it's easy for any station to play your PSAs, and if you don't make it easy, they won't bother.
- When dealing with union talent, get an unlimited usage buyout so no matter when the PSAs air, you are protected. Or, alternatively, put a kill date on all your radio PSA packaging that tells stations when your PSAs should be pulled. By doing that, you have done your due diligence in terms of adhering to union regulations.
- Provide written descriptions of the spots which are helpful when stations quickly scan your materials to determine the best "fit" for the station's demographics.

- When you create MP3 files, try to give them helpful, descriptive file names - such as: OurOrg_5kWalk_Country_30.MP3 Use a sampling frequency of 44.1kHz with a bit rate of at least 128 kb/sec, or stations may find the quality unacceptable. 192 or 390 kb/sec is even better – especially if your message contains music.

Distribution/Promotion

Our typical radio distribution plan is 5,000 stations comprised of the radio formats shown in the graph. These are selected based on several factors:



- The target audiences for the campaign
- The total number of stations for a particular format category
- Previous PSA usage practices

We also distribute to about 200 radio networks.

For radio we are still in a transition between hard copy and digital distribution, but for those stations that are willing to download radio PSAs, we must alert the media to the download platforms where the messages are posted.



To accomplish this task, we use blast emails and hard copy direct mailers such as the ones shown.

Tips to Reduce Costs

Since you can place up to an hour's worth of programming on a CD, you should try to use as much of the capacity as possible. Following are some tips to think about:

- Put all different types of PSAs on a single CD, even though they are aimed at different audiences. There are many stations on our borders with Mexico which may use both English and Spanish PSAs and African-American stations may use both those directed towards their audiences, as well as those that are "Middle-of-the-Road." However, if you use this packaging tactic, be sure to use photos of minorities in your external package design to demonstrate inclusion.
- Another idea is to put two to five-minute audio pieces - often referred to as ANRs (Audio News Releases) on the CD. You are going to pay the same amount of money to produce and distribute the package, so the more value you can create from it, the better it will serve your interests.

AS AMERICA'S VETERANS FACE CHALLENGES, DAV IS THERE.
We are veterans helping veterans to get the benefits they've earned. Every year, with the support of people like you, DAV helps more than one million veterans in life-changing ways each year. Please share these moving stories of real veterans and their victories with your listeners. Your help will be greatly appreciated. Support more Victories for Veterans.

WHAT WE DO
Every year, DAV helps more than a million veterans, of all generations, as they face and conquer their challenges — connecting them to the health care, employment, education, and financial benefits they've earned. In 2016, DAV helped veterans file more than 300,000 claims for VA benefits and secured more than \$4 billion in earned benefits for veterans, their families, and survivors.

OUR CAMPAIGN
The "Victories" Radio PSA campaign, presents America's veterans as proud and positive about the personal victories they've achieved. It highlights the victories of real veterans as it follows them through a moment in their day.

YOUR DIGITAL DOWNLOAD IS A CLICK AWAY.
You can quickly and easily download broadcast quality digital DAV Radio PSA files from any of these links below:

ExtremeReach
ExtremeReach

NAB
PUBLIC SERVICE
NAB Public Service

PSA
Digital
PSADigital

IN A VETERAN AND MY VICTORY WAS OVERCOMING BARRIERS OF BATTLE.
IN A VETERAN AND MY VICTORY WAS GETTING OFF THE STREET AND WORKING WITH MY FAMILY.
IN A VETERAN AND MY VICTORY WAS ADMITTING AND ESTABLISHING MY PAIN AND GETTING HELP.

Materials To Supply

Regardless of the packaging concept, there are several different things you need to provide your distributor. First, if you are providing camera ready artwork, then you need to provide art for all collateral pieces on a disk with all native files, including fonts, art and a printout of the artwork. You should check with your distributor to see what types of art files are acceptable by the vendor doing the packaging and replication.

If your distributor is producing the artwork, you will need to provide:

- Copy for letter to public service director on your organization's letterhead
- Logo with color breaks and PMS colors for logo
- Signature of person signing letter in black ink (felt tip pen preferred)
- Copy for live announcer scripts, as recorded scripts, and facts on client issue or organization (preferably a Word document file)

Evaluation

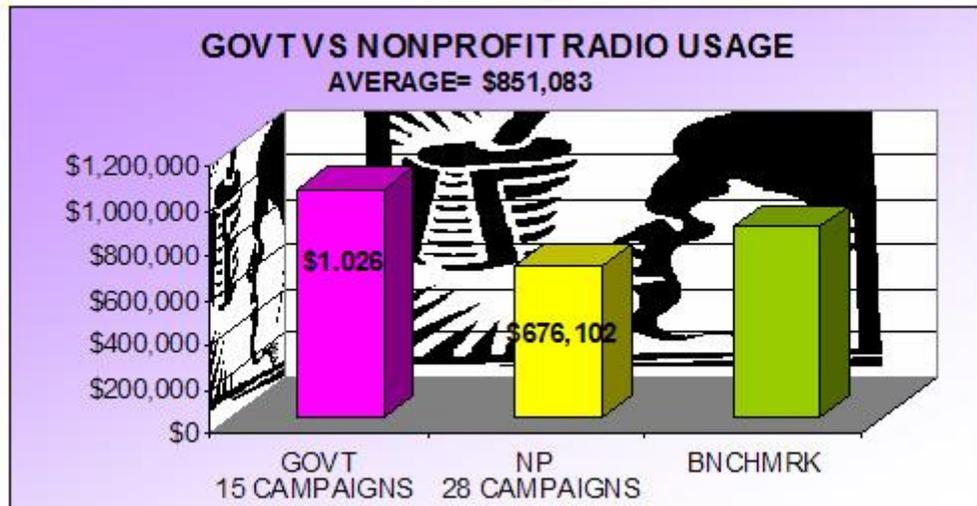
It is vitally important to evaluate the impact of your radio PSA for several reasons:

- It will help your distributor target the stations to receive your next PSA, based on those that used your previous campaign
- It helps your distributor update their data base of radio station PSA decision-makers and station PSA preferences
- It serves as feedback on where your PSAs are getting used (geographically), as well as what types of audiences you are reaching by analyzing the station formats where PSAs were aired
- It helps justify the cost for producing and distributing subsequent campaigns because management will be able to see in specific terms what they received in return for their investment

There are a variety of evaluation techniques that can be employed to provide usage data on radio PSAs, including telephone surveys, analyzing phone calls when toll-free numbers are used in the PSA, and the most commonly used technique, which is the bounce-back card. The BRC is inserted into the package with other materials mailed to stations and should include a postage-paid indicia on the reverse to maximize response rates.

The quality and response that you get will largely be determined by how well the BRC is designed. **Open ended questions where stations can provide subjective, or vague feedback, should be avoided, because the evaluator must interpret what stations mean by "TFN" (Till Further Notice), "ROS" (Run of Station) and other meaningless comments.**

To obtain fairly accurate and meaningful usage data, we design questions that ask stations to provide very specific data that is necessary to provide meaningful usage reports. The critical pieces of information that are needed include: **what spot length was used; how often** (number of times per week; and **what time frame** (number of weeks). To make it easy for stations to complete the BRC, we use a design where stations can simply circle frequency and duration of usage. In addition to usage data, other information that should be on your response card includes spaces for providing the name of public service director, station call letters and format of the station



We often are asked how did our PSA compare to others you handle? To answer the question, we have provided a benchmark radio campaign against which all others can be measured. The benchmark results from 43 radio campaigns we distributed over several years. The above chart shows typical dollar values of the benchmark, compared to campaigns distributed on behalf of federal agencies and national not profit organizations.

Given the fact that the average number of airplays for the three campaigns above is 95,244 and the average value for the two different types of campaigns is \$851,000 in free airtime, that is a fantastic return on an investment of \$40,000 in production and distribution.

Your evaluation reports should provide the standard type of feedback on usage, i.e. name of station, format, number of plays by spot length, estimated dollar value and gross impressions with a user-friendly recap of these statistics. If you have local offices, it is also useful to have your evaluation reports sorted by those offices so you can see where your coverage is strongest and weakest.

New Evaluation Methods

To supplement bounce-back cards, which everyone admits are not as accurate as electronic tracking, there is a monitoring service available from the Nielsen that can be used to track your radio PSAs. However, it currently tracks radio PSA usage on only about 2,000 stations, which is about 20% of the radio universe and is fairly expensive, which is why we are still using bounce-back cards as our primary evaluation method.

To summarize, radio PSAs can be one of the most cost-effective mass communications techniques you can employ to get your message out to both general audiences and discrete populations.

Radio PSAs offer flexibility; they permit you to reach audiences out-of-home; they are comparatively inexpensive; and they provide a good return on investment. However, to maximize your return, like any other mass communications tool, you should establish objectives and develop a thorough plan for your campaign.

Bill Goodwill is CEO of Goodwill Communications, a Virginia-based company that specializes in PSA distribution and evaluation. His firm has distributed more than 500 national radio PSA campaigns.

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