PUBLIC RELATIONS AT WORK: A RADIO PROMOTION

An Honors Thesis (ID 499)

by

Donna J. Thompson

Dr. Melvin Sharpe

Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana
August 1987

Spring Quarter 1987
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Overview of research......................... 1
Proposal...................................... 7
Budget........................................ Appendix A
Sponsor letter............................... Appendix B
Pre-contest promo.......................... Appendix C
Sponsors...................................... Appendix D
Contest promos.............................. Appendix E
Clues.......................................... Appendix F
Post-contest promo......................... Appendix G
Thank-you letter............................. Appendix H
Sample poster............................... Appendix I
Evaluation process.......................... Appendix J
Footnotes..................................... Appendix K
Sources....................................... Appendix L
Radio, like any other business, exists primarily for the purpose of making money. Radio stations rely on their advertising in order to meet this objective. Advertisers rely on ratings to determine with which stations they should advertise. Therefore, stations live or die by their ratings. High ratings increase a station's marketablity. An advertising salesman wants to show advertisers that his station has a large share of the market, as is indicated by the ratings. The implication is clear: the more people who listen to the station, the more people hear each commercial. This translates into more potential sales for the advertiser.

The challenge then to radio stations is to attract listeners, thereby increasing their ratings, their advertising, their profits. The most obvious manner by which stations attract listeners is through the station format. WFBQ (Q 95) has an album-rock format which attracts the rock'n'roll set. Lite 99 has a soft-rock format which appeals to the more mellow listeners. However, good music does not guarantee a good audience.

Radio stations need something more than the right format. It needs promotion. To quote Jack Macdonald, "Promotion makes a station sales worthy."
Promotion is a fairly general term. It encompasses such areas as advertising, special events, public service, and contests.

Often stations in metropolitan areas will advertise on local television. An example would be Q 95's Bob and Tom commercials on WTHR 13. However, most stations use billboards and bumper stickers as their only external advertising.

Special events are a good way to promote the station to a variety of listeners, including those who listen to competing stations. KKDA in Dallas promotes a summer concert series which, in turn, promotes KKDA. Other examples of special events include the old WNAP Raft Race, fun runs, and talent contests.

Radio stations, by law, are required to devote so much air time to public service announcements. Smart promotional directors know how to use this regulation to promote their own stations. During the AAA Hoosier Motor Club's annual non-alcoholic Mix-Off, both WIBC and WTUX of Indianapolis used the Club's PSAs to promote their own involvement in the event. By their involvement with matters of public service, stations hope to show that they are working for the good of the public.
By far the most popular and highly visible form of radio promotion is the contest. Contests range from the unimaginative to the unbelievable. Stations are limited only by their budget and imagination.

Contest prizes are as unlimited as the contests themselves. WCTW in New Castle gives away a birthday cake each morning while WNEW in New York sponsored an eight-Porsche give-away. The best contests, according to William Peck, are the ones that anyone can win. WZPL (Indianapolis) ran a contest which offered $1,000 to the first listener to call the station after hearing two songs in a row by the same artist. It was promoted as "the easiest contest to win -- ever." KTKS (Dallas) sponsored a contest last summer that was so easy to win that the contestants did not even have to listen to the station to win. Each morning a representative of KTKS would pull over a car bearing a "KISS 106" bumper sticker. The driver automatically won a prize -- even if he was listening to another station.

Obviously the station thought that getting their call letters on thousands of bumpers was more important than knowing that each car sporting a sticker was tuned to KISS 106.

It is important to keep in mind that promotions of any kind should always follow the station's over-all format.
Since listeners differ from station to station, what works for a Top 40 station in Dallas might well flop if used by an adult-contemporary station in Muncie. Also, promotion needs to be an on-going process. If a station keeps a variety of promotions running at all times, these promotions become incorporated into the station's format.

The key to a successful promotion is building a campaign from the ground up, brick by brick, until you have a solid, well-organized promotion. Any idea for a promotion must be carefully planned. Generally, a promotional director will want to present the idea as a proposal to the station manager. His proposal should consist of the following elements:

1. A general introductory statement which summarizes the principal problem and proposed solution.
2. A statement which explains the plan.
3. A statement of the purpose.
4. An outline of the tasks and procedures encompassed by the plan.
5. A schedule or timetable.
6. An evaluation of the plan and execution of same.

Perhaps an easier way to summarize this procedure is to
use a system for effective promotional management: CATCH. The elements of this system -- calculating, aiming, timing, coordinating, harrowing -- should be the basic outline for any campaign.

With these concepts in mind, I have developed a promotion for a local radio station, KOKZ (KZ 105). This promotion is designed to increase the station's over-all ratings. Since signing-on in January of 1986, KZ 105 has quickly become one of Muncie's most popular stations. It's current competition comes from Indianapolis stations which include Muncie in their areas of dominate influence.

KZ 105 follows an adult-contemporary format. Their "Family Music Center Request Weekends" generally draw a lot of requests for 50's and 60's music, indicating that a majority of KZ's audience are young to middle-aged adults. Promotional Director E.Q. Kimbel hosts a "Lunch Time Oldies" program which caters to this age group.

Currently, the station runs two daily contests. One involves an "Oldie of the Day" which is announced during morning drive-time and replayed during Kimbel's program. The correct caller wins a trade-off prize, generally lunch at a local restaurant or movie passes. The other contest is played late in the afternoon. Part of a song is played backwards, and the caller who correctly identifies the
song and artist also wins a trade-off prize.

The following is a proposal to be presented to the station manager of KOKZ. Run time is approximately 30 days. A full description of the contest, and evaluation, a budget, list of sponsors, and sample sponsor letters are included in the proposal.
I propose that KOKZ sponsor a contest featuring a grand prize of a trip for two to an undisclosed destination. The object of the contest is for the contestants to guess the trip's destination.

The contest, called "KZ'z Mystery Tour", will feature the Beatles' song "Mystery Tour" as the theme. Clips from the song will be used in contest promotions.

Beginning January 12, listeners will be encouraged to register to play the game at one of ten sponsor locations or the station. Two weeks prior to registration, a letter will be sent to several businesses asking that they sponsor the contest. Sponsorship will consist of allowing a registration box and promotional sign to be placed in the establishment. In return, the business name will be mentioned on the air several times per day. (See appendixes B and D for sponsor letter and list of potential sponsors.) The registration period will last two weeks.

On January 25, the first daily clue will be announced. Each clue will be designed to reveal something about the destination of the trip, and clues will become progressively easier. One new clue will be given each day and repeated several times during the day. Twice daily (mid-morning and late-afternoon) the on-air personality will draw a name
from all the entries. He will call the person, and he or she will have one chance to guess the mysterious destination. The first correct answer will win the trip. Each incorrect answer will win a consolation prize -- lunch for two at Rax or movie passes from the Northwest Plaza Cinema. These prizes will be trade-offs (the prize in exchange for using the business name on the air).

The contest is to be co-sponsored by a travel agency, Travel Dimensions of Muncie. This will help to off-set the cost of the promotion as the station and travel agency will split the cost of the trip. (Therefore the cost of the trip, as noted in the budget, reflects only the station's half of the $950 trip.) In addition to being mentioned as co-sponsors of the contest in all promotions, the travel agency will receive two 30-second spots each day at no cost. The spots will run just before the contestant makes his guess.

The actual destination of the "Mystery Tour" will be known only by the station manager, promotional director, and travel agency manager. Each guess will have to be checked with the promotional director as even the disc jockeys will not know the correct answer.

The final destination of the "KZ Mystery Tour" will be Oranjestad, Aruba. The winner and one guest will spend seven days at the Aruba Concorde. This luxury hotel boasts
four restaurants, a casino, tennis courts, and an Olympic-size swimming pool. Winners would have to take the trip within one calendar year of winning. (Cost of the trip is estimated during peak season. If the trip is taken during the off-season, cost to the station would be reduced.)

Aruba itself is located in the Caribbean Sea, just 20 miles north of the coast of Venezuela. The island is only 20 miles long and six miles wide. Although the official language is Dutch, English is widely spoken. Temperatures range from a low of 75 in the winter to a summer high of 91.

A budget outlining the cost of the promotion, a list of clues, and several sample spots are included in this package.
BUDGET

Trip to Aruba: $475.00*
   includes round-trip airfare, hotel accommodations, transfers, taxes, gratuities, and welcome reception

Daily prizes: $0.00
   trade-off (no cost)

Registration forms: $127.00
   20 pads/100 sheets per pad
   Boyce Forms-Systems

Promotional posters: $19.00
   11 total
   Boyce Forms-Systems

Registration boxes: $11.00
   11 total
   Boxes Plus

TOTAL: $632.00

*All figures based on actual estimates
December 28, 1987

Dear Mrs. Horn,

"Sign up for the mystery tour!"

You will be hearing these words every day as KZ 105 and Travel Dimensions encourage our listeners to stop in local businesses to register for the chance to win an all-expense paid trip to a mystery location.

As a loyal advertiser with our station, we would like to offer you the opportunity to have your shop listed among our sponsor locations. Locations will be announced several times each day on KZ 105. Your commitment involves allowing a registration box and promotional sign to be placed in your place of business.

I will be contacting you by phone within the next week to further discuss these arrangements. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Donna J. Thompson, Promotional Director
WOKZ-FM
CONTEST PROMOS

CLIP: Sign up, sign up for the mystery tour. We're going to take you away, take you away.

ANNCR 1: KZ 105 and Travel Dimensions invite you to sign up for the mystery tour. You could win a luxury vacation. All you have to do is guess where we're taking you. Just stop in and register at any of our sponsor locations. Starting January 25, we will announce one clue each day and give you two chances to win. If we call you, just tell us where the KZ Mystery Tour is headed, then start packing. Stay tuned to KZ 105, and don't forget to sign up!

ANNCR 2: You can sign up for the KZ Mystery Tour at the following locations: Travel Dimensions, all Muncie area RAX, Northwest Plaza Cinema, The Bridal Outlet, G & M Pet and Garden Center, Shapers, Bill Gaddis Chrysler-Plymouth-Dodge-Mazda, and KZ 105.
MYSTERY TOUR SPONSORS

TRAVEL DIMENSIONS
1809 University Ave.
Muncie, IN 47303
284-4144
contact: Michele Reichard

RAX Restaurants
1121 W. McGallard
Muncie, IN 47304
286-8993
contact: John Morgan

NORTHWEST PLAZA CINEMA
Northwest Plaza
Muncie, IN 47304
289-7200
contact: Tina Thomas

THE BRIDAL OUTLET
25 Sarasota
Yorktown, IN 47305
759-6888
contact: Diane Horn

G & M PET AND GARDEN CENTER
2014 N. Walnut
Muncie, IN 47303
288-9133
contact: George Roll

SHAPERS
2524 W. Jackson
Muncie, IN 47303
282-5131
contact: Stephanie Collins

BILL GADDIS CHRYSLER-PLYMOUTH-DODGE AND MAZDA
1717 N. Wheeling Ave.
Muncie, IN 47306
289-2361
contact: Bill Gaddis
20-SECOND SPOTS

ANNCR: We know where you are. Now, tell us where you're going. The entries are in for the KZ Mystery Tour. Be listening each week-day as we announce a new clue. Then, if we call you, just tell us where you think you're going. You could win the vacation of a lifetime from Travel Dimensions and KZ 105.

WOMAN: Ladies and Gentlemen, please fasten your seat-belts. We will be landing soon in beautiful...

MAN: Wait! We can't tell you THAT! You have to tell us. Where do you think the KZ Mystery Tour is going? Listen for a new clue every day. And when your phone rings, be ready to make your guess. KZ 105 and Travel Dimensions are going to take you away.
CLIP:  "We're going to take you away, take you away!"

ANNCR: KZ 105 and Travel Dimensions want to take you away. It's easy. All you have to do is guess where we're taking you. Your chance to win is coming up this hour. KZ's Mystery Tour -- you could be taken away!

ANNCR: If you like a good mystery, KZ 105 and Travel Dimensions have a contest you'll love. We'll supply the clues, and when you solve this mystery your reward will be a dream vacation. Stay tuned to KZ 105 for your chance to solve the mystery -- and WIN!
CLIP: Sign up, sign up for the mystery tour.

ANNCR: RAX Restaurants remind you to sign up for the KZ Mystery Tour. Deadline for entries is January 24.

CLIP: We're going to take you away, take you away.

One spot will be done for each of the sponsors. They will air several times a day on a rotation basis.
You won't be needing snow boots.

You can get to the mystery location without crossing the International Date Line.

Goats are the most popular domestic animals.

Plan on spending 173 minutes in flight.

It is x-degrees warmer there than it is in Muncie today.

This Palm Beach is not in Florida.

The entire mystery location takes up only 69 square-miles.

The Divi-Divi tree grows here.

You may want to brush up on your Dutch.

The mystery location's neighbor to the south is Venezuela.
ANNCR: KZ 105 and Travel Dimensions would like to congratulate Betty Warner, winner of the KZ Mystery Tour. She correctly guessed the destination of the trip after only eight clues. Betty and her husband will spend seven days in beautiful Oranjestad, Aruba, courtesy of Travel Dimensions and KZ 105. Again, congratulations to Betty Warner of Muncie.

CLIP OF SONG: We're going to take you away, take you away.

WOMAN SCREAMING: Oh, my gosh! You gotta be kidding? I won?!?

ANNCR: Even Betty Warner herself couldn't believe it when she correctly guessed the destination of KZ's Mystery Tour. Betty knew that the Divi-Divi tree grows in Aruba. Congratulations and thanks to everyone who participated in the KZ 105/Travel Dimensions "Mystery Tour".

CLIP OF SONG: We're going to take you away, take you away.
February 11, 1988

Dear Mrs. Horn,

I just want to take this opportunity to thank you for helping to make KZ's Mystery Tour contest such a success. As you know, our winner, Miss Betty Warner, registered for the contest in your shop.

I hope that you found the contest to be beneficial to your business and that you will consider sponsoring future events with our station.

Once again, thank you for your participation.

Cordially,

Donna J. Thompson,
Promotional Director
WOKZ-FM
Sign up for the Mystery Tour
Register Here

could win a ticket to KZ 105}
and Travel Dimension.
The evaluation of a publicity campaign is an essential step in allowing a practitioner to assess the effectiveness of the campaign and plan for future efforts. The proposal presented to WOKZ must be evaluated both before execution (to determine its potential) and afterwards in order to assess its effectiveness.

The first step in evaluating this proposal should be a staff meeting of the station manager, promotional director, sales director, and the music director. At this meeting the idea should be presented in full, the budget needs to be considered, and any changes in the initial concept should be made.

Once the management has considered the proposal, it should be introduced at a general meeting of the staff and disc jockies. Their reactions and suggestions should be evaluated and any further changes in the promotion should be made. Following this meeting, the proposal should, in theory, be operational.

Once the proposal has been cleaned up internally, KZ 105 will want to test market the idea. Their list of past contest participants should offer a fair sampling of the station's listeners. The promotional director should present the promotion to 10 or 15 of these people as it
would be presented on the air. Each person should be asked to answer questions such as: Do you understand the rules and regulations of this contest? If not, how can we make it clearer? Do you know where you can register? Do you like the idea of winning a mystery trip? Will you enter this contest?

By reviewing the answers to these questions, the station can make whatever changes are necessary to make the promotion run smoothly. Copy can be rewritten if it is unclear, more sponsor locations can be added, more of an empathy can be placed on the excitement of a trip to a mysterious location. These listeners will be the station's guides as to how the audience will respond to the promotion.

The primary indicator as to how the promotion will be received is the response of the businesses asked to sponsor the contest. Little or no interest on the part of the sponsors might prompt the station to drop the idea. By having the contestants pre-register for the contest, the station will know what the interest level is before the main thrust of the promotion. Although it is too late to drop the contest once registration begins the station will be able to determine how much air-time the promotion is worth.

Once the promotion has run its course, the station will
Appendix K

FOOTNOTES


2 Pat Martin, "Summer is a Hot Time For Promotions," Billboard, June 14, 1986, p. 10.


6 Ibid, p. 64.

Appendix L

SOURCES


