

RADIO INK

VOL. XXX, No. 4 MARCH 2, 2015 PUBLISHED BI-WEEKLY

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SPECIAL REPORT: SPORTS TALK RADIO

IS THERE A FUTURE?

HOW DO YOU SELL IT?

IS THE TALENT OUT THERE WEAK?

THIS SEATTLE TEAM DOESN'T CHOKER!
BONNEVILLE'S ESPN 710

THE VOICE OF PHILADELPHIA

WIP's Angelo Cataldi

STEVE CZABAN Celebrating 25 Years of Talking Sports

RADIO INK

Vol. XXX, No. 17 DECEMBER 21, 2015 PUBLISHED BI-WEEKLY WWW.RADIOINK.COM



In front: 98.5 The Sports Hub Boston morning duo Fred Toucher and Rich Shertenlieb. In back: afternoon drive team Mike Felger and Tony Massarotti.

PICTURE
PICTURE
WHO
FOR
AND DASH 3.0

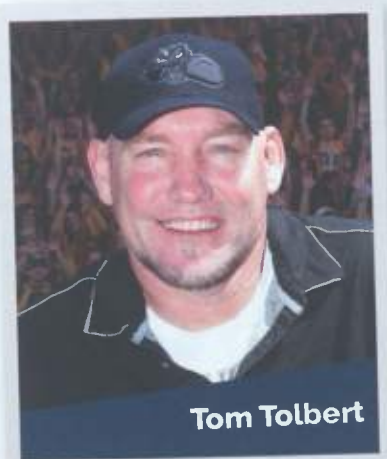
2015
TOP
TALKERS

THE TEAM
AT CBS'S WBZ,
THE SPORTS HUB
BRINGING BOSTON
THE GIFT OF GREAT
RATINGS

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out get in your way."
- Babe Ruth*

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who hit the ball out of the park every day.



Tom Tolbert

"Mr. T & Ratto"
680 KNBR, The Sports Leader
San Francisco, CA



**Brian Murphy and Paul
McCaffrey**

"Murph & Mac"
680 KNBR, The Sports Leader
San Francisco, CA



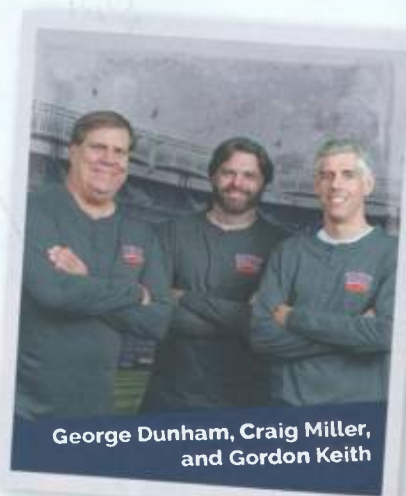
**Gary Radnich and Larry
Krueger**

"Gary & Larry"
680 KNBR, The Sports Leader
San Francisco, CA



Heath Cline

"Game Time"
"107.5 The Game, WNKT-FM
Columbia, SC



**George Dunham, Craig Miller,
and Gordon Keith**

"The Musers"
The Ticket, Sportsradio 1310 AM and 96.7 FM
Dallas, TX


CUMULUS


Westwood One

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**"AS BOOKS
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THINK WE
KNEW WE WERE
GOING TO HAVE
SUCCESS, BUT I
DON'T THINK WE
EVER IMAGINED
HOW QUICKLY
THAT SUCCESS
WOULD COME,
AND IT WAS
INCREDIBLE."**

**CBS RADIO BOSTON
MARKET MANAGER
MARK HANNON
ON THE SUCCESS OF
THE SPORTS HUB (WBZ)
IN BOSTON**



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Our Mission: Radio Ink's role is primarily to empower radio management to be more successful by providing fresh, actionable, reality-based ideas, resources and education in a quick, easy-to-read, positive, pro-radii environment.

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FEEDBACK:

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RADIO INK (ISSN 1064-5870) is published bi-monthly January, March, April, May, October, November, February, March, June, July, August, September, November & December. Subscriptions: Send address changes to Radio Ink, 1901 South Congress Avenue/Suite 118, Brynton Beach, FL 33426. Periodicals postage paid at Brynton Beach, FL, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Radio Ink, 1901 South Congress Avenue/Suite 118, Brynton Beach, FL 33426. Copying done for other than personal or internal reference without the express permission of Radio Ink is prohibited. Advertisers requests for special permission to the Managing Editor. Reprints and back issues available upon request. Printed in the United States.



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B. ERIC RHOADS
NOTES FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Can You Correct Your Blind Spots?

TO REACH ME, WRITE:

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Radio has always been an agile medium, and one of the things I always loved telling advertisers was that we could get them on the air instantly if they had a crisis, had to move some product that was about to go bad, or needed to meet a number at the end of the month. Call us, and we'll get you on the air. In that way, radio has always been advantaged.

But how agile are you when it comes to preparing for success against new competition or in a changing industry environment?

Decades ago, military strategist and U.S. Air Force Colonel John Boyd conceived the "OODA loop," describ-

addressed. These observations will be the raw information on which decisions and actions are based.

The second O, Orientation, was described by Boyd as "the repository of our genetic heritage, cultural tradition, and previous experiences." It's the most important part of the loop because, as Boyd noted, "It shapes the way we observe, the way we decide, the way we act." In other words, we tend to filter information based on our own situation, personal experience, traditions, or culture.

It is when it comes to that second "O" that decisions tend to get stuck — and when you're stuck, you're not winning. To win, you need to respond to situations rapidly and take advantage of opportunity that may never return.

I certainly can't articulate a man's lifetime of study in this brief note, but as an industry we must understand that our biggest potential pitfalls are the situations we find ourselves in and the culture we allow ourselves to be governed by.

Think for a moment about the "second O" and radio. What traditions do we hold on to that hold us back? Where are others launching new competitive threats, and where are we stuck because our "second O" thinking prevents us from seeing the damage those that threaten us can do just by doing things differently? The standards people hold on to are a result of our built-in filters and cultural traditions. What are those traditions in radio, and how will others use them to crush us? Or will we crush ourselves by clinging to our traditions?

The OODA loop is important because it forces us to not only understand the process our competitors are using against us, it helps us see where we are being locked in and held back by our own "second O" thinking. For Kodak, that "second O" was the belief that film and printed photographs would never go away, so that even though they had the digital camera first, they were not able to see that most consumers were going to prefer digital photography. There are thousands of examples of this in business.

Sit with your team and ask, "What are our 'second O' traditions that get in the way of our seeing and adapting to the future?" By understanding the OODA loop, you can gain new agility and transform your business. Your success will affect your own stations and the industry as a whole. If you can see and understand your own blind spots, it will change everything. **INK**

B. Eric Rhoads
B. ERIC RHOADS, CHAIRMAN



ing the decision cycle of "Observe, Orient, Decide, and Act." The concept became standard in military operations worldwide and a major part of American military strategy. Though Boyd is long gone, his OODA loop concept is now being applied to business strategy and operations — and it's a perfect concept for those of us in radio.

Understanding and using the OODA loop allows you to process information and adapt quickly in the kind of high-speed environment where change gives you an edge. Clearly that matters in the midst of war, but it also matters in the rapidly changing environment of business. By processing, observing, and reacting to unfolding events more quickly than your opponents (competitors or market influences), you can better understand the opponents' decision cycle and gain an advantage.

The first O, Observe, indicates that all decisions should be based on observations of an evolving situation, with specific filtering for the particular problem being



SAVE THE DATE



FORECAST 2017

NOVEMBER 16, 2016 • HARVARD CLUB, NYC

IF YOU MISSED FORECAST 2016, YOU MISSED A LOT!

Here's what your industry peers are saying about Forecast — and why attendance will help grow their business in the coming year.



"Forecast is always a great opportunity to hear members of the investment, advertising, and media communities exchange opinions about where we are and what to expect in the coming year. I look forward to attending every year. It has become the 'must-attend gathering' for the radio industry."

PETER SMYTH, CHAIRMAN/CEO, GREATER MEDIA



"The Radio Ink Forecast conference is a great opportunity to do a deep dive into the future of audio. The day has valuable panels and networking opportunities. Subjects discussed include growth trends, deal trends, the regulatory environment, valuation parameters, and the impact of technology. It is time well spent."

DREW MARCUS, MANAGING PARTNER, SUGARLOAF ROCK CAPITAL



"I look forward to Forecast every year. It's a fun day, and I always learn new things about the industry. I also enjoy the chance to catch up with people I don't often see during the rest of the year."

JEFF SMULYAN, CHAIRMAN/CEO, EMMIS COMMUNICATIONS



"I find Forecast to be one of the most important professional events of the year for Neuhoff Communications. Timed perfectly with the wrap of budgeting, Forecast helps me articulate our strategy and focus for the coming year while giving me the opportunity to compare notes with the leading CEOs, CFOs, and financial minds in our business."

BETH NEUHOFF, PRESIDENT/CEO, NEUHOFF COMMUNICATIONS



"With so many great conferences around the country, it's hard to find time to attend them all. Radio Ink Forecast, however, is always a must! The panels are loaded with information you don't hear at other events, the speakers are always some of the most respected in the business, and the amount of one-on-one time spent with colleagues is refreshing. Forecast truly is a wonderfully intimate event where business gets done!"

JASON BAILEY, CEO, SUN BROADCAST GROUP



"Great job, Radio Ink! Thanks for your hard work in making this year's Forecast fabulous! The panels were optimistic and engaging. Champions in the industry have been successfully telling the compelling story of radio's effectiveness, and the result is a powerful and positive energy about the 2016 forecast for our industry!"

JINNY LADERER, PRESIDENT, VCREATIVE



"I enjoyed the day and found the panels attuned to where the business is going and the importance of thinking beyond the base business. The reinforcement of being local, relevant, and connected was key. It was a good day."

DICK KALT, EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, CRN INTERNATIONAL

If you run a major radio group or a small independent, if you have a financial stake in the radio industry as an investor, analyst, or service provider — if you missed Forecast 2016, you may never know what you missed!

Don't make the same mistake again. Budget now for Forecast 2017. Better yet, register by December 31, 2015, and we'll give you a \$100 discount off the early-bird registration price. Go to radioinkforecast.com for details NOW!

Images From Forecast 16

Radio Ink's Forecast 16 was held November 17, 2015, as always at the beautiful Harvard Club in New York. The event is a no-reporters-allowed day of panels and keynotes, focusing on radio's finances and its future. Here are some images from the day and from the reception for Radio Ink's 40 Most Powerful People in Radio, which follows each year's Forecast conference.



Radio Ink Chairman Eric Rhoads with Greater Media Chairman/CEO Peter Smyth (who served as co-chair of Forecast 2016) and respected political consultant Dick Morris.



Steve Wexler, VP/radio for E.W. Scripps, is delighted at his debut as one of *Radio Ink's* 40 Most Powerful People in Radio.



Radio Ink Publisher Eric Rhoads (l) in lively conversation with Katz Media Group CEO Mark Rosenthal.



CBS Radio President Andre Fernandez chats with iHeartMedia CEO Bob Pittman. That's *Radio Ink's* Eric Rhoads gesturing at right.



A high-powered lineup: (l-r) Sugarloaf Rock Capital Managing Partner Drew Marcus (Forecast co-chair), Emmis Communications Chairman/CEO Jeff Smulyan, Connoisseur Media CEO Jeff Warshaw, and Townsquare Media CEO Steven Price.



Red Apple CEO John Catsimatidis (l), New York business legend and host of *Cats Roundtable* on WNYM (970 The Answer)/New York, is interviewed onstage by Answer morning personality Joe Piscopo.



Greater Media Detroit Market Manager Steve Chesare and Accuradio CEO Kurt Hanson chat during the Forecast lunch break.



Hubbard Radio Chair Ginny Morris and Eric Rhoads pose with her "Top 40" plaque.



Sharing a laugh are (l-r): Benztown Radio President Dave "Chachi" Denes, NuVoodoo Media Services President/CEO Carolyn Gilbert, Dollinger Strategic Communications CEO Lisa Dollinger, and Benztown Business Manager Bonnie Nordling Denes.



vCreative CEO Jinny Laderer chats with fellow Forecast attendees at the "Top 40" reception and cocktail party.



Sun Broadcast Group SVP/Programming & Affiliate Relations Ron Rivlin (l) poses with Compass Media Networks VP/Affiliate Sales & Content Nancy Abramson and AdLarge Media President Cathy Csukas.



Radio Ink Chairman Eric Rhoads with Sun Broadcast Group COO Julio Aponte.



(L-r): Radio Ink's Eric Rhoads, TV and radio personality Rita Cosby, actress Connie Sellecca, singer/producer Tomaczek Bednarek, John Tesh, and Radio Ink Publisher Deborah Parenti.



At the "Top 40" reception: (l-r) RAB President/CEO Erica Farber, Cox Media Group Atlanta Sr. Director/Digital Tim Clarke, CMG Orlando and Jacksonville VP/GM Susan Larkin, CMG Tampa VP/GM Keith Lawless, CMG EVP/Radio Bill Hendrich, and NAB EVP/Radio John David.



Jeff Warshaw of Connoisseur Media and Emmis chief Jeff Smulyan are at center in this scene from the "Top 40" reception.



CBS Radio President Andre Fernandez and iHeartRadio CEO Bob Pittman display their "Top 40" awards with Radio Ink Chairman Eric Rhoads.



Katz Radio Group President Mark Gray and Katz Media Group CEO Mark Rosenthal with Radio Ink Publisher Deborah Parenti.



Attendees enjoy the luncheon program.



USRN Chairman Len Verbitsky (center) enjoys a chat at the cocktail reception.



Premiere Networks President Julie Talbott with Radio Ink's Eric Rhoads.

Images From DASH 2015

Radio Ink and Jacobs Media presented the third annual DASH conference on radio and automotive in Detroit on November 4-5. Below are some highlights from the event.



Adam Carolla (l) talked with PodcastOne CEO Norm Pattiz (r) in a conversation moderated by Jacobs Media President Fred Jacobs.



Holding the Bill Burton "Be Fabulous" awards presented at the conference: Jacobs Media/JacAPPS President Paul Jacobs, Greater Media SVP/Interactive Tom Bender, CBS Radio/Detroit VP/DOS Pete Kowalski, Greater Media Director/Digital Strategy Steve Meyers, and Radio Ink Publisher Deborah Parenti. The awards showcase how stations creatively and collaboratively market, brand, and sell cars.



Radio Ink Chairman Eric Rhoads takes the lectern to open day two of DASH.

Hubbard
Radio Chair
Ginny Morris
chats with
NAB EVP/
Radio John
David.



Peter Smyth, chairman and CEO of Greater Media, gives a talk on "Radio's Long-Term Relationship With the Car."



Paul Jacobs, president of Jacobs Media's jacAPPS, talked with Ford Direct Director/Connected Car Innovations David DiMeo on the topic of "How Ford Is Shifting Dealer Co-op Dollars to Digital."



Cromwell Group President Bud Walters at DASH.



Paul Brenner, president of NextRadio and the Broadcasters Traffic Consortium, takes part in the panel titled "The Latest & Greatest in the Car."



Amplifi Media CEO Steve Goldstein moderates the "In the Car/On Demand" panel.



Mark LaNeve, VP for U.S. marketing, sales, and service for Ford, talks to the DASH crowd about "Digital Marketing: Its Rapid Growth and How It's Transforming the Way We Go to Market."



What Millennials Expect From Your Station

They're hard-wired into their phones. Hyper aware of bullshit. They bore easily. They are millennials. And according to Nielsen, the millennials are the largest group of radio listeners. Radio's future may well depend on its ability to appeal to this group. But how? What do they want?

Based on a conversation with a small group of millennials, here's what we found:

Get social. Millennials are most likely to choose Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Reddit to get their news rather than going directly to radio. According to *The Atlantic*, 80 percent of these young "accidental news junkies" get their news from online sources.

The key is to offer value. Evan Penderson, digital market manager for Object 9, a marketing communications and advertising agency, says to "consider downloadable PDFs on finances and insider scoops and freebies from pop culture" on your stations' websites.

Personalize the news. Give them a behind-the-scenes glimpse of your station. Penderson advises, "Include pics of the person who is actually posting. Sign off with your personal name. Send direct messages to let them know what you're up to." On Facebook, post only content that millennials can personally relate to. (No cat videos and pandering for "likes.")

Offer millennials the ability to opt in to the news to find what they are most interested in. Send them e-mail newsletters, similar to daily newsletter *theSkimm*, that give them a choice of a variety of news topics to click on to get to your station's streaming news stories.

Pick up the pace. The show has to move fast. Change the topics constantly. One millennial who actually worked in radio says, "It has to be able to move. Like, it can't sit on a topic for three hours. My biggest turn-off is something that seems too slow." Use the PPM-friendly techniques of offering only one topic per segment, resetting, and teasing ahead to continually transport the listener forward. Treat each segment as a standalone show.

Be on their schedule. Improve your on-demand options. They want what they want, when they want it. Seventy-one percent of students in Generation Y say they will primarily listen to streaming radio versus traditional AM/FM radio by 2018, according to a Stitcher survey. Ivey Evans, digital marketing manager for insurance company AFLAC, says, "Millennials need a variety of choices of where they get their content, and if their mood changes or they don't like a song, they can easily skip."

Run fewer ads. Across the board, each millennial interviewed harped on commercials, calling them repetitive, intrusive, and distracting. One radio associate producer



and call screener says ads are overkill because "you have about 27 minutes of commercials an hour in the middle of the day because they know it's a prime time that people are listening." Follow the model of podcasts that use only sponsorships. Millennials often rely on the wisdom of the crowd and peers, rather than traditional advertising, to inform purchasing decisions. People will find you if you're not constantly in their face.

Fight the hype. Millennials don't like big, chest-beating personalities. They want to see eye-to-eye with them. Titania Jordan, founder of social media app Privet, says, "Nobody in my generation likes shock jocks. They're just not authentic. Our generation craves authenticity."

Keep it local. Brian Diggelmann, director of digital for SweetWater Brewing Company, says, "Have a strong connection to the local community by sponsoring those local festivals, by sponsoring the local shows." It's election season, so produce the debates locally. If you can afford it, skip syndication and hire home-grown talent — in the end you'll make more money because you control the inventory and its market value.

Radio can still be relevant to millennials. It's free, which appeals to this cash-strapped generation. And they have a desire to connect to the news. They want to be heard. To win the heart of this generation, be innovative and keep it real. **INK**

Renee Bakos is a consultant at Bakos Media. Reach her at renee.bakos@gmail.com.



ROY WILLIAMS
THE WIZARD OF ADS

How I Learned To Cheat

QUICKREAD

- A business owner can grow their business only to the length of their own shadow.
- Some clients can't handle the rapid growth that comes with a successful ad campaign, and will do their best to make the business small again.
- "Measure the shadow" of every business owner before agreeing to work with them.

I began selling advertising when I was in my early 20s. My employers gave me a lot of training on how to sell ads to the client, but no training at all on how to make those ads deliver what I was promising.

So I decided to figure it out myself by running a series of experiments.

Day after day, I would make contact with a small-business owner, explain my idea, then ask if they would be willing to be my partner in an advertising experiment. More often than you might expect, the business owner would be intrigued with my idea and agree to fund the experiment. Looking back, I think the reason they decided to work with me is that they were tired of hearing the worn-out hype and statistics that were barked at them each day by the long lines of ad reps at their doors.

Although I didn't realize it at the time, I think what gave them confidence was the fact that I openly confessed that my ideas were untested and unproven. What I suggested made a lot of sense and they'd never heard anything like it before, so I sold a lot of advertising.

They bought from me because they were curious and hopeful that my ad strategies would work. What I discovered during these years of experimentation was that successful ads are counterintuitive.

I should probably add this very important detail: I worked for the number 23 radio station in a city of 23 radio stations, so I never had to worry about whether or not I was going to get credit for my success. My clients couldn't afford to buy any other media. The money they gave me was their entire ad budget — the whole enchilada — so I never had a "media mix" with whom I had to share the credit for success.

Likewise, there was no one else with whom I could share the blame. This caused me to focus all my energy on creating ads that would deliver customers through their doors. Within a couple of years, the people I was helping began telling their business friends about me, and the selling of ads got really easy.

That's when the wheels fell off.

The owner of a gym was only days away from having to close his doors forever, so he had no money to pay me up front. He needed \$35,000 a month to break even, and the previous month he had brought in just \$1,200. I had a fascinating idea for how we might revolutionize gym memberships, so I agreed to do the work up front and be paid only after my plan began delivering results. Within 30 days, my bizarre direct-mail ad strategy was bringing him a recurrent \$120,000 a month, 12 months a year. But when I asked for my money, he refused to pay me. His argument was that he didn't feel he should have to pay me the agreed-upon \$5,000 a month for something that cost me only a few minutes of my time.

I never received a penny from the bastard, but I did get some satisfaction out of watching from a distance as he overspent, overpromised, and foolishly overexpanded

his business. Within 24 months, he lost it all and was forced to file business and personal bankruptcy.

I learned that a business owner can grow his business only to the length of his own shadow. I had given a little man a big business, and he had made it small again.

Not long after that (1985) I began working with the owner of a fertilizer company. Within six months, the strategy, the ad copy, and the radio schedule I had put together for him were so incredibly successful that he called me and growled through gritted teeth, "I've been trying to call my office for the past two hours and I can't get an open line. The girls who answer my phones are ready to quit, and I don't have enough technicians to do the work. I told you my plan was to grow 15 percent a year. I never asked for this shit."

I suggested that perhaps he needed more than just two phone lines.

"But then I'd have to hire another girl to answer the phones."

I pointed out that he currently had three times more money coming in each month than he had ever seen before, so perhaps he could afford another girl and maybe hire a few more technicians.

"I said I wanted to grow 15 percent a year. You're fired."

A penetrating lesson was beginning to soak in: I had given a little man a big business, and he was determined to make it small again.

A business owner can grow their business only to the length of their own shadow.

These days I measure the shadow of every client before I agree to become their ad guy. Life has never been better.

Here are two things for you to consider:

1. Good advertising creates as many problems as it solves. It sounds insane, I know, but the problems that come with rapid growth will completely destroy a marginally competent business owner. Good advertising doesn't lengthen a person's shadow.
2. The only business owner that deserves better advertising is the one who is capable of running a much bigger business than the one he or she currently owns.

I have a track record of success because I cheat. I spend an entire day measuring the shadow of the business owner before I agree to touch their advertising. If they have any business deficiencies at all, I run like hell.

The people I help would have succeeded without my help. I merely help them go a little higher, a little faster. Good advertising doesn't cure incompetence. Be careful who you sell. **✖**

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5 Things Every Market Manager Should Do To Avoid A Slow Q1

It's that time of year. It's that lull in business that hits the last two weeks of December and often carries into the first week of January. This is the time of year you find yourself losing sleep because you want to do all you can to make sure you don't have a slow first quarter. An expression that's typically heard this time of year is, "So goes first quarter, so goes the rest of the year." To make sure that you have a successful first quarter and you don't suffer any longer, here are five things you can do to avoid a slow Q1.

Measure activity, not just outcome. This is important, and here's why. The head coach that simply tells the team to win is not much of a head coach. Let's face it, the team knows they need to win, just like each salesperson and sales manager knows they need to hit budget and get the year off to a good start. The real focus needs to be on activity — and not any old activity, but the right activity.

As the market manager, you're the manager of sales managers, so it's crucial that you send a clear message about what's important. Fundamentally, you want your sales managers growing and developing their people. So the two activities you should focus your sales managers on are, first, **individualized focus meetings**, sometimes referred to as the "one-on-one." This is the weekly meeting where the sales manager gives her undivided attention to the sales rep and helps her think about the best next steps for each of her best prospects (targets) and best accounts (keys).

Second, there is the **in-field day**, where the purpose is to provide coaching. An in-field day takes a commitment; it is not a sales manager meeting a seller at an appointment and just popping in and popping out again. On an in-field day, the manager commits to spending a day in the field with a seller, providing coaching that will help grow and develop that salesperson.

Ten-minute sales manager meetings or a huddle every morning at 8. First quarter tends to make people move slowly for some reason. Perhaps it's the holiday hangover, maybe it's the fact that it feels like the middle of the night when in fact it's 8 o'clock in the morning, or maybe it's because it's cold and rainy or even snowing outside. Whatever it is, it seems like the days tend to start later and more slowly in the first quarter.

One of the best ways to solve this problem is for managers to lead by example. Every morning you should do a quick 10-minute sales manager meeting to review the activity of the day and make sure everyone's on the same page. When the sellers see the managers are there and working, it will speed up the pace. Leading by example is a great best practice.



Keep things fun. Celebrate every win. Here's an idea that will seem like an absolute no-brainer to many reading this, but it's too important not to mention. Celebrate every win! Enthusiasm is contagious, and so is activity in the sales department. If nobody is making sales, then nobody is making sales — but when one person starts to heat up, it's amazing what a jolt of enthusiasm will do. All of a sudden everybody starts to increase activity, and before you know it, sales are picking up.

Hire the very best sales managers and salespeople. Obviously, for this best practice to help in the first quarter, you would have to have committed to it about six to nine months ago. That being said, it doesn't mean it's any less important. The fact is, the most talented sales departments, time and time again, produce the very best results. In order to find and retain top talent, you have to be constantly on the lookout and always have a full talent bank.

There are many ways to make sure you have a successful first quarter. Be the first manager who doesn't accept the first-quarter letdown. Now's the time to have your ideas in place and set them in motion. Get your reps thinking about first quarter as they head into and back from the holiday break. Local businesses don't close in the first quarter; in fact, they need your ears more than ever. Make sure your reps are ready to deliver those ears so your clients can convert them at the cash register. **INK**

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QUICKREAD

- The traditional late-year sales lull can easily linger into the first quarter.
- To help prevent that, market managers should keep focused on activity, not just outcome, and lead by example in keeping the energy up.
- And remember to keep celebrating every win!



PAUL WEYLAND
SALES MANAGEMENT

How To Deal With Predatory Advertising Agencies

QUICKREAD

- Don't let small local ad agencies snap up your direct clients.
- Agencies only behave badly because stations permit it.
- If an agency tells a client they can get better rates than your sellers, fire the agency and go to the client directly.

Haven't you had it with sneaky little advertising agencies snapping up your local direct accounts? You know, those people who used to work for your station, but now they have their own "advertising agency"? The ones who go to your clients and tell them they can buy commercials on your station for less than the client would pay if they dealt with you directly?

How about the ones who say, "My client wants to keep his current low rate with your station. So when you send the invoice to me, just 'gross it up' first"? You know, those same people who take your long-standing business away from you and then use your budget on your competitor's stations. Do you know somebody like this? They're jealous and defensive, and they strongly advise you to terminate all communications with the client you've known for years and still see at church every week. Can you think of an agency that wants your lowest unit rate and "added value"?

You know, the agency that "negotiates" with you so savagely that you feel like you need to take a shower by the time it's over? The agency that sandbags commercials on your station and then cancels two days before the campaign is supposed to start because they suddenly got a better deal from a competitor? The kind of agency that runs a schedule, collects immediately from the client, and then doesn't pay you for 90 days? You know, the ones that write the crappiest cliché-riddled copy you've ever seen?

I've even had an agency to which I directed business win the account and then abruptly cancel my stations and move the budget to another medium. That only happened once, by the way. I've had agencies that wouldn't buy us for any of their accounts and who wouldn't return my calls, e-mails, and text messages. I've had agencies that ran enough business for a client to qualify for a station trip but never told the client about it, instead keeping the trip for themselves.

You know why these parasites get away with this crap? Because we let them. Unfortunately, the station rep doesn't have as strong a relationship with the client as he thought. Usually, the station rep "never saw this coming." Why?

We allow these agencies to do these things to us. We capitulate on one buy and then the hounding and the pounding never stops. And we take it! It's like when you have a sore tooth — but you can't stop touching it. "Ouch. Owwww! OWWWWWWWW!"

Fight back against the hijackers. Refuse to capitulate



on a buy or two. If the agency is telling your clients they can negotiate better rates than your own sales team, fire the agency. Then go to the client directly and tell them that although you no longer recognize the agency, you wish to continue working directly. Give the client good reasons to stick with you.

Sell your local direct clients on long-term, non-cancelable agreements. That way, you protect your relationship and budget not only from vultures in other media, but from little advertising agencies.

Warn your clients at the beginning of the relationship. Here's what I'd say when I felt my relationship was strong enough with my client: "Let me warn you. As soon as this schedule begins, you're going to get a lot of phone calls and visits — not only from other media reps, but also from small advertising agencies. Most of them hope to pick up your business and at the same time put a wall up between you and me, because they don't want the two of us to communicate or associate any longer. If you'd like, you can direct all media calls to me and I'll deal with them. And if you ever do think you need the services of an ad agency, please contact me first so I can steer you toward one of the more creative and ethical shops."

If the agency never buys you for anything anyway and doesn't even respond to your e-mails or phone calls, go around them, directly to the decisionmaker, and let her know why you deserve to be in the buy. Make your best case to be included. What do you have to lose?

I have agency principals who hate me to this day because my clients hired them but insisted that my business would continue as direct. Agencies have cursed me and have even tried to bribe me to let them buy our station. By the way, the reason the client kept me direct was because I came up with better, more out-of-the-box advertising strategies than their agency. And because I developed very strong client relationships.

We've got to stick up for ourselves, lest we continue to be victims of agency stick-up artists. We pay the salaries and the bills at the station and do everything necessary to keep the station legal on the air, and then we let some two-bit agency dictate what we can charge. Stop hitting yourself. Ouch. Stop hitting yourself. Ouch. Ow! OWWWWWWWW! **INK**

Paul Weyland is the go-to person for expertise in increasing long-term local direct broadcast business. Reach him at paulweyland.com or at 512.236.1222.



5 Ways To Guarantee Your Ads Connect With Consumers

A.H. Maslow was an American psychologist who developed what he called the "Theory of Human Motivation." Maslow held that people must satisfy their needs in a certain order, the first being our physiological needs. To oversimplify, it's very difficult to be motivated about buying a new car if you are thirsty, hungry, weak, or ill.

Maslow's "hierarchy of needs" holds that human beings must satisfy their needs in the following order: physiological, safety, love/belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. This hierarchy is most often illustrated as a pyramid, with the largest, most fundamental levels at the bottom. Our physiological needs are the most important to us, and that's why there is so much advertising for clean water, healthy foods, and medicines of all kinds.

Our safety and the safety of our family come next. That's where we hear advertising for home security, personal security, home improvement, and insurance.

The next level, the need for love and belonging, is used when advertising the restaurant category; for example, the Olive Garden tagline "When you're here, you're family."

The fourth level is the need for esteem, the need to feel respected, accepted, and valued by others. This is a dominant theme for a wide range of products, promising that if customers use the product, they'll be instantly happier, better-looking, and the envy of all their peers.

The final need is self-actualization. Maslow describes this level as the desire to accomplish everything that one can. The U.S. Army captured this emotion in the "Be all that you can be in the Army" campaign.

Building an emotional connection with the consumer is the goal of successful branding. It's not enough just to achieve top-of-mind awareness.

New research by consumer intelligence firm Motista indicates that an emotionally connected consumer — someone who is satisfied with the brand, able to perceive brand differentiation, and fully connected — is 52 percent more valuable than the baseline consumer who is highly satisfied with the brand but not fully connected.

The research describes how much more valuable a customer becomes as the customer travels along the "emotional connection pathway," going from 1) being unconnected to 2) being highly satisfied to 3) perceiving brand differentiation to 4) being fully connected.

A customer is fully connected to a brand when the brand aligns with the customer's motivations and helps them fulfill deep, often unconscious desires, including "stand out from the crowd," "have confidence in the future," and "enjoy a sense of well-being."

After eight years of research with anthropologists and



social scientists, the Motista project identified more than 300 emotional motivators. Using big-data analytics, they were able to link the emotional motivators to specific profitable behaviors.

Emotional motivators can vary among product categories and demographics, but there are some that can significantly affect customer value across all categories. These high-impact motivators coincide directly with the five levels of Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

Here are five high-impact motivators and how to write them into your next script.

1. To connect with a consumer who desires a sense of well-being, write commercials describing the feeling of a balanced, stress-free life without conflicts and threats.
2. To connect with a consumer who wants to feel secure, write a message describing the consumer growing, pursuing goals and dreams without worry.
3. To connect with the consumer who wants love and belonging, write a commercial for your advertiser that creates a sense of affiliation with people the listener relates to or aspires to be.
4. To connect with a consumer about their self-esteem, write a commercial that describes the customer leading a meaningful life, conveying that their worth is more than financial or socioeconomic measures.
5. To connect with a consumer about self-actualization, your script should illustrate that your advertiser can help the consumer fulfill their desire for self-improvement and live up to their ideal self-image.

As you study the psychology of consumer behavior and high-impact motivators, start choosing your words more carefully; stop writing spots, and start writing short, emotionally engaging stories about the needs and aspirations of the consumers.

That's building a brand. **INK**

QUICKREAD

- A.H. Maslow's "hierarchy of needs" correlates with emotional motivators that are effective in ads in various categories.
- Building an emotional connection with the consumer is the goal of successful branding.
- Copy that addresses the hierarchy of needs helps make that emotional connection.

Reach Spike Santee at spike@spikesantee.com.



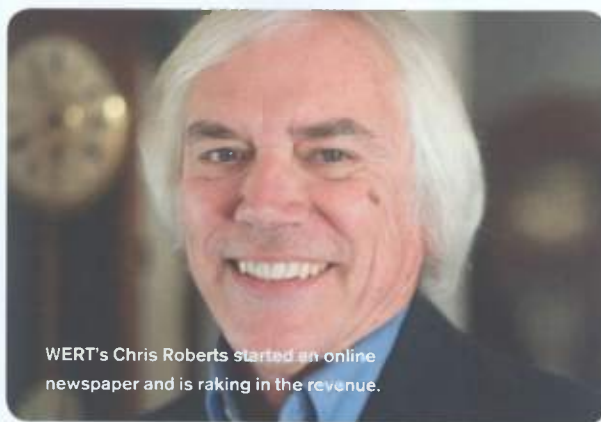
RYAN WRECKER
PROGRAMMING

New Digital Ideas For 2016

QUICKREAD

- The start of a new year is a great time to add something new to your digital strategy.
- Stations can go beyond what they do on the air, offering programming of special interest to the market online.
- Strong Web initiatives fill a market need, and also provide valuable statistics to present to clients.

This past year we've seen major investments from iHeartMedia (iHeartRadio) and CBS Radio (Play. It) to further development of their streaming app platforms, while Hubbard Radio and E.W. Scripps bought into large podcasting companies PodcastOne and Midroll, respectively. Their enthusiasm for digital audio and content consumption looks like a sign that they expect growth in the upcoming years. Now it's your turn to adjust your digital strategy to include something new in 2016.



WERT's Chris Roberts started an online newspaper and is raking in the revenue.



Does your station make New Year's resolutions? Maybe this year your resolution should be to become part of the group of great broadcasters who invest time and resources in new digital initiatives. Ultimately your goal will be to build your ratings and revenue — a win-win for programming and sales.

One of the great talk stations in the country, Milwaukee's heritage WTMJ-AM, is already extending its coverage beyond on-air. "You can't call Friday-night football if the [NBA] Bucks are on the radio," says J. Pat Miller, WTMJ's director of marketing and promotion. "We needed to find a

way we could do high school sports as well as professional, so we created a brand called 'Preps Live,' where we have play-by-play teams go out and call local high school games exclusively on the Web."

Large stations usually dismiss the idea of high school sports because they can't commit on-air resources to that level of athletics. But others have found an online solution that connects an audience with the content they're looking for, and they're rewarded with a successful Web property that clients also love.

The "Preps Live" games are unique to WTMJ.com, but the promotion crosses over with on-air mentions. It's a professional broadcast designed to increase engagement with high school sports fans, as well as to offer all the sponsorship opportunities you would expect with a regular broadcast. "The clients are buying in to support their local communities," Miller says. "It's not only a football or sports play, it's also a being a good neighbor and a good community member."

Digital ideas can open the door to new revenue, without the tradeoff to meet on-air requirements. Miller notes, "We're running off of a 4G card; we don't need a landline. All we need is a power plug and we're ready to go. We could do it out of the back of our vehicle if we had to."

Other stations have developed specialized websites that fill a specific niche. It could be sports, food, entertainment — or even news.

"We started an online newspaper and really took a page from television websites," says Chris Roberts, owner and manager of WERT and WKSD in Van Wert, OH. "It's a real nice bundle package." The revenue is proof: The news website alone is doing about 30 percent of what the radio station is doing. Let that be a wakeup call for those who are looking for something new to sell in their markets.

You can go to www.thewwindependent.com to see it for yourself. "It has everything a local paper would have," Roberts points out. "Nothing is missing from it at all." That includes the Web hits: Roberts says he's getting up to 25,000 visits a day. That's in a community with only 28,000 people, and it goes to show that you'll get results by filling a need. And Roberts is able to go to potential clients with confidence because, as he says, "We know exactly how many people are looking at that paper each day." When you're in an unrated market, having numbers to bring a client can be very valuable.

We're close to a new year, and a new beginning when it comes to digital revenue. Find what fits for you, and make the resolution to be a part of this new generation of broadcast stations. **INK**

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2016: Something To Talk About

Heading into the 2016 election year, many ears will be turning to talk radio. And in Philadelphia, election talk will be keeping Chris Stigall's morning show phone lines ringing at WPHT. I asked the popular host to share his reflections on the format and its powerful connection with listeners.

What brought you to make the transition from music to a talk show format?

As clichéd as this may sound, it's true: It was September 11, 2001. Not so much the tragic day itself, but the day after, and the days and weeks after that. I'll never forget feeling, "I have this microphone. I have real questions. Everyone is afraid, and angry, and sad. I want to talk to people about it."

Does talk radio reflect the conversation, or direct it, especially in terms of political?

It reflects the majority of the audience, in my opinion. But it often forces the direction of media coverage that ignores certain points of view. Talk radio listeners are often branded as monolithic. I call our audience "the smartest audience in all of radio." There is not an issue I could raise on any day that someone in our audience doesn't know more about than me.

Talk radio audiences don't want lectures. They sense smugness, bias, and inauthenticity. Talk radio audiences want to be entertained and informed. Talk radio gives serious, thoughtful people a place to share their points of view, but they also like to have fun and laugh.

How do you keep a daily talk show relevant, especially in a 24/7 news environment?

As long as there's Twitter, I'll never worry. Every week, if not every day, some athlete, celebrity, or politician or business will stoke the "outrage factory" into production. They're often silly stories, but sometimes they swallow days and weeks of news cycles. Social media is the best gift talk radio ever received. Politically, our nation has never been in more tumult. I'm actually anxious for a "slow day." Can't remember the last one.

How has social media changed your relationship with listeners?

I do love Twitter. I don't like using it as a texting feature with listeners. I love retweeting listeners' pithy, biting, funny comments and observations about the show or the news of the day.



Chris Stigall



Twitter allows the show to continue all day if I want.

But a caution: We, and our advertisers, often make the mistake of assuming one or two or even a dozen negative tweets requires panic or "corrective action" of some kind. That is a terrible mistake. The instant nature of tweeting rattles a lot of people on the receiving end. As an industry, we must resist the temptation to give in to Twitter mobs who want to harass us into silence. For some reason, if our phones are blowing up with angry, emotional callers, we'd call that a great day, yet if we or our advertisers and management get two nasty tweets, it somehow feels more personal.

We must change our reaction to Twitter. Think of it as nothing different than a listener's phone call, without a call screener between you and them.

Does radio have assets that you think could be better managed to drive more listening?

Talk radio needs the industry to remind the audience we're there. Whether it's your favorite sports team's loss or win or a big news day, folks need to be reminded that there are hosts who want to talk with them right now, in their car or streaming on their desktop or phone. We're our own asset, but in an increasingly mobile-device-driven culture, we need our broadcast partners to remind folks why what we do is special and unique. There's a whole generation coming up that won't have radio at the top of its mind unless told we're here.

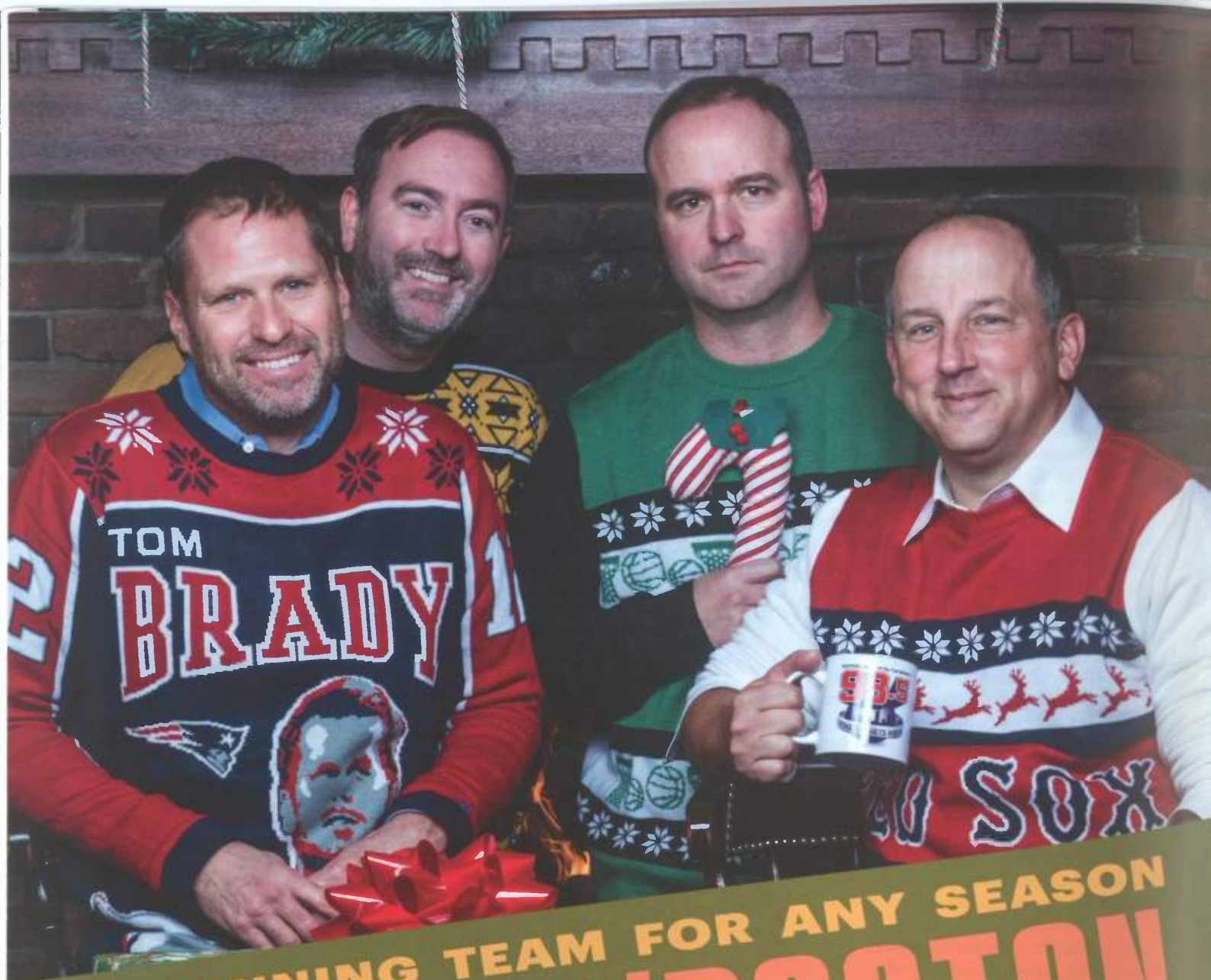
Is there a particular interview you have done that stands out?

Hands down, the greatest thrill was interviewing Rush Limbaugh. I had the opportunity to talk to him via ISDN in 2013, and it was all I'd hoped it would be. It had almost nothing to do with politics. We talked about our industry, golf, his family, and Philadelphia. To get the chance to talk to the man that quite literally created the venue from which I earn my living was mind-blowing. He's the gold standard. The rest of us are just doing our best to maintain it. **INK**

In this season of holidays and reflection, wishing all peace on earth. Thank you for reading *Radio Ink*!

— Deborah Parenti, Publisher

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A WINNING TEAM FOR ANY SEASON

WBZ-FM/BOSTON. THE SPORTS HUB

BY EDITOR-IN-CHIEF ED BYAN

In front: WBZ (98.5 The Sports Hub)/Boston afternoon personalities Mike Felger and Tony Massarotti. In back: Morning duo Fred Toucher and Rich Shertenlieb.

WBZ-FM (98.5 The Sports Hub) in Boston was the brainchild of CBS Radio Boston Market Manager Mark Hannon. Hannon saw the ratings handwriting on the wall for longtime rocker (42 years) WBCN and made the pitch to CBS Radio President/CEO Dan Mason to blow up the rocker and turn to sports talk. That was in 2009, and at the time Entercom's WEEI owned that space, so both Hannon and PD Mike Vincent just wanted the station to do better than the fading WBCN. Looking back now, it's clear they set their expectations too low. The Sports Hub has been a tremendous success and a ratings bonanza for CBS in Boston.

Mason, now retired from CBS, was a huge supporter of sports radio, and CBS was racking up success stories in the format all over the country. He tells *Radio Ink*, looking back, that there

were several forces at work that made it a perfect storm. "First and foremost, Mark's passion and excitement for the format, coupled with the company's success and track record around the country," Mason says. "We were on a hot streak not only in that place in time, but with many years of consistency. We also had a terrific morning show with Toucher and Rich that we all felt 100 percent confident would easily fit into the sports format. And to top it all off, we had the New England Patriots. All in all, that was a good bet. I'd take those odds any day."

Hannon has been with CBS for nearly three decades, the last eight as a market manager. Being a Boston native and a rabid Boston sports fan, it was a dream of his to someday have a sports station in his stable. When Howard Stern left radio for satellite and rock music not what it once was, Hannon saw his opportunity. Needless to say, it was a home run.

RI: Take us back to when you were contemplating making the switch from rock to sports.

Hannon: It was actually a pretty daunting decision, given the fact that BCN was a heritage, great radio station for 42 years in the market. The years leading up to the decision were not so great for the station. There were a lot of changes with talent. There were a lot of changes in morning drive — obviously, we lost Howard Stern, and the station wasn't performing so well. There were many discussions, I would say, about the possibility of doing something prior to 2009, but nothing came to fruition.

It wasn't until April of 2009 that Mike Thomas and I made a presentation to Dan Mason and the brass at CBS and presented the concept of going sports. We basically got the green light to build the radio station following that meeting. The rest is history. We launched in August of that same year.

RI: How much work went into getting that meeting with Dan?

Hannon: It was a ton of work. On the other hand, it had been a dream of mine for a lot of years. Over time, there were different iterations of presentations I had done and not only worked out in my head, but had actually presented to different leadership of the company. By the time it came to that meeting, there was a lot of it that was already thought through, and it was just a question of putting it on paper and working out the logical steps of why it made sense to do, probably over a six-week period.

RI: Why was it a dream of yours?

Hannon: I'm a Boston-born and -bred guy, a huge sports fan, and I just have a passion for not only the format, but for the teams here in the city. And to be lucky enough to grow up here and

have the possibility of launching a sports station in your hometown, it was just a great potential prospect for me. Going through the process, trying to determine whether it made sense, whether there was room for it — our sense was that while EEI was enormously successful, there were enough sports fanatics here in the city for two sports stations.

RI: CBS is known for its sports stations. Do you think it would've flown if you had to present that to a different company?

Hannon: That's a good question. I definitely had the benefit of CBS and the likes of Chris Oliviero and Mark Chernoff, who were very much a part of our strategy and helping us launch the station. In many respects, it was a little bit of a warm blanket, talking to guys like that in this company, and maybe it wouldn't be so much that way had it been another company, without sports radio experience.

RI: Why did you think it was a good idea to bring WBCN morning hosts Toucher and Rich over to the sports format?

Hannon: When we brought Toucher and Rich here, they first did afternoons, and we eventually moved them to mornings. It was my feeling, and I think Mike Thomas shared that feeling, that there was no one in the market that was relating to young male audiences the way Toucher and Rich were. They just had a very unique approach. They had great, unique content that was just hysterically funny and on target with this particular demo. If anything, I felt like they were lacking the bully pulpit to give them some market notoriety. The feeling was that they could take that same content and maybe tweak it a little bit for sports.

On top of that, they both have a passion for sports in their own right. Fred and Rich

are both very knowledgeable. I just felt like we could sit with them and talk to them about what we were thinking and felt very confident that they could transition and become a cornerstone morning show for this radio station, and ultimately they did.

RI: What is it about your morning and afternoon shows that make them work in that market?

Hannon: Two different approaches. Toucher and Rich are not just sports. It's very much a holistic approach to topics and things that are in touch with the lifestyles of their listeners. You get your sports fill in the morning, and there is some element of X's and O's and interviews and following up games, topics like that.

But you also have just great, funny content that they create, whether it is the "98-Mile Rap Battle" or it's "Ask a Pink Hat," the different things they do with their features that are hysterically funny and make them very unique. They never take themselves too seriously. It's a show that is highly entertaining, and you pretty much laugh from 6 to 10 every day.

As far as Felger and Massarotti go, it's a totally different approach. Even launching the station, there was a sense that Mike Felger, at least in my opinion, was the quintessential sports guy in the market. He was a tremendous talent that also didn't have a showcase that matched up with what his talent was. Ultimately, it was a goal to get Mike to come to do afternoons. We teamed him with Tony Massarotti, and to me, that is the tune-in show for following any game, any sporting event, any sports issue topic that might be out there. You always want to know what Mike and Tony think. It is a more 100 percent sports-focused show. They also poke fun at themselves, but it is a much more hardcore X's and O's sports show.

RI: As far as having relationships with teams and having shows that you want to push the line, you're the boss. Where's the balance?

Hannon: It's always delicate. First of all, when we launched the station, we had partnerships with both the Patriots and the Bruins. They have been tremendous partners of ours that predate the existence of the sports station. The Bruins were on WBZ-AM and the Patriots on BCN. They were obviously part of our launch – which, by the way, in no small measure was part of our success, having those two play-by-play assets. Since then, we have added the Celtics and the New England Revolution [soccer team], and that's been really helpful to the overall product.

As it relates to your question specifically, it's a delicate balance at all times. I think our teams in Boston are very thick-skinned and they understand that the sports talk radio environment is such that these guys need to be able to critique the teams and what happens to them on the field or on the ice or on the court. They need to be able to talk about that, and they need to be honest about their opinions. And sometimes those opinions are critical. I think our teams recognize that, and I think as long as our guys don't take it to levels that are outside of those boundaries, that everything remains copacetic.

RI: When you launched the station, you just wanted to do better than WBCN was doing. When the ratings start rolling in and you see what's going on, what's going through your mind?

Hannon: Absolute euphoria. Intuitively, we knew there was room for both radio stations. We launched with the idea that we wanted to take the best of what BCN was, kind of a rock radio, edgy approach, great imaging, using current music coming in and out of breaks, having very hip talent, and using social media to the nth degree – all those things were going to be critically important in building the brand. We thought we would be a very formidable alternative to what existed.

So, as books rolled, I think we knew we were going to have success, but I don't think we ever imagined how quickly that success would come, and it was incredible. The first two years in particular were just incredible, to see what went from basically a seed to a really formidable radio station.

RI: How do you make sure the teams are constantly getting better?

Hannon: First and foremost, the commitment to what the brand is, never losing sight of what our intentions were when we launched, and trying to make sure that we're still appealing to the demo

in that way. Number two, I've always said this to everyone at the station, that I would hope we would approach our business with humility and never take ourselves too seriously. Never get in a position where we were arrogant or had too much bravado, because when you get into those spaces, you lose sight of the prize and you lose sight that we're trying to entertain people working and grinding each day in the city, and this is a place where they go for some relief from the grinds of the day.

RI: It doesn't hurt that you are in a city that's crazy for sports.

Hannon: It's amazing. It's not just X's and O's. It's not just the games and the aftermath of the games. There have been some stories that have breathed a lot of life into the format, Deflategate being one of them, and the unfortunate circumstances around Aaron Hernandez and some of the things that went on with him. There are these off-the-sports-spectrum stories that happen as well that drive a lot of listening and they drive a lot of content. In a town like Boston, it makes it a 365-day-a-year compelling format.

RI: What would you say to other market managers who are reading this and have a seed in their minds that they want to do something like this?

Hannon: You just need to have that vision and have an idea about what the brand should be, and obviously hope it has some differentiations with other brands, if they already exist in your market, and know what the angle would be. Having play-by-play partners is really important to the success of a radio station like this, so where that's possible, I would encourage them to get those relationships.

Just create a strategy, and be true to the brand and execute that strategy. It's a format that not only does great over the air with its content, but from a revenue perspective – because of the content, you can really drive a lot of revenue and you can have successes there as well.

MIKE THOMAS

(VP/Programming, CBS Radio Boston, and VP/Sports Programming, CBS Radio)

Mike Thomas has been with CBS Radio in Boston for 10 years. He started in 2005, programming classic rocker WCLX. He eventually got involved in programming rock WBCN and was a big part of the launch of WBZ (The Sports Hub) in 2009.

RI: What was the reaction from listeners when you dumped rock music for sports?

Thomas: WBCN was around for 42 years.

Unfortunately, a lot of the passion that was there for that radio station in the '70s, '80s, and '90s just wasn't there anymore. There was a group of diehards that obviously were upset, but it wasn't an upheaval like you might think it would be.

RI: What was the competition for sports talk in 2009?

Thomas: WEEI was the only sports station in Boston. There was a little AM doing ESPN at the time, but the signal was so small you couldn't hear it in several areas of the metro. It was really just EEI. It had been at the top of the hill for 20 years and was on AM only at the time. A lot of people thought WEEI would never be beat because it is such a great sports town and they were the only game in town for such a long time.

RI: How did you go about finding talent at the beginning?

Thomas: We knew we wanted to keep Toucher with Rich. That was the very first piece of the puzzle. Mark Hannon and I met with them and said, "We love what you do. You're extremely talented. How would you feel if you did your show on a sports station?"

Once we had those guys on board, we went after afternoon drive. That developed into Mike Felger and Tony Massarotti. We have a midday show that's always been Scott Zolak, former QB for the Patriots. He's had a couple of different partners throughout the six years, but Scott has been consistent in middays. Scott was already working for us doing Patriots game-day stuff for us on BCN. WBCN carried Patriots games for a long time – even though we were a rock station, we had the Patriots.

RI: Why has it worked for Toucher and Rich, going from rock to sports?

Thomas: It comes down to entertainment value, and Fred and Rich are extremely creative. When they were on BCN, the audience just wasn't there. They were fighting a losing battle. They go onto this new platform, sports radio, the first FM sports station in Boston, and all of a sudden they've got all these new ears checking them out, realizing, "Wow, these guys are incredibly entertaining."

We wanted to make sure from the beginning that the show was a combination of guy talk and sports, and also had kind of a rock feel. The station still has a rock feel to it because of where we came from. It goes back to entertaining men and targeting men. Those guys took the ball and ran with it and have done an incredible job with a combination of guy-talk topics, funny creative bits, and straight-ahead sports segments.



Fred Toucher (l) and Rich Shertenlieb (r) with listeners who agreed to toss their TVs off the station roof in return for AFC Championship tickets for the Patriots. These listeners all got tickets.

RI: What was it like in the early months and years when you first made the switch? Did it automatically kick in and work, or was it a slow build?

Thomas: It was actually really fast with the younger demos, I think because we were on FM, because we came from a rock station that had a younger audience, and those people transitioned over. Within several months, we were beating EEI with men 18-34 and men 18-49. That's where our first victories came from.

RI: Did you and Mark find yourselves saying, "Why didn't we do this years earlier?"

Thomas: Well, it's funny. We joke now. Initially, when the station signed on and we got approval from corporate, it was like, you know what, we just want to be better than BCN. Now we look back and think that was a pretty low goal. It's been incredible. It really has. The way Boston has embraced this radio station and embraced these personalities, we never imagined this.

RI: What is your formula for making a sports station successful?

Thomas: It comes back to the personalities. They are the stars. They have to know what's going to get their listeners engaged and what's going to keep them coming back. It all comes back to the talent. You can have a good game plan and say, "Here are the basics of the radio station, here's our sound." Then you add the talent, and they take it and run with it, build their audience, not only on-air, but online, social media, and it all comes together. And it certainly came together here in a big way.

RI: Do you find that you have to mix pop culture and guy talk with sports talk?

Thomas: Absolutely.

RI: Why?

Thomas: You cannot just be talking heads, breaking down games, straight X's and O's. That's not fun. If you have that entertainment element, that fun element of, "Hey, I've got to find out what these guys are talking about, and I feel like if I'm not listening to them I'm going to miss out on something." It's got to be more than just the sports headlines.

RI: So now you're holding that number one spot. That's different from when you're chasing the number one station. What keeps you constantly on your toes to make sure you stay on top?

Thomas: We said from the beginning we weren't going to let our egos get out of control. We've done a pretty good job of that — staying humble and realizing this all happened really fast, but it can also go away really fast. We try to keep our feet on the ground and stay planted and realize we are very, very fortunate. We have to keep working hard. The competition has gotten better, and that's better for everybody. When there's competition, everybody seems to rise. Overall, sports radio in Boston has really improved. It's a pretty exciting time.

RI: How helpful is it that you live in one of the most sports-crazy cities in America?

Thomas: When you have 30 shares of listening in today's radio world going to sports radio,

that's unheard of in any other market. When the two sports station are bringing in 30 shares of listening in afternoon drive, it just shows you how crazy the fans are here.

RI: When "Deflategate" came about, you had to be salivating at that kind of topic and what it could do for your station. It's like a sports talker's gift.

Thomas: It is. It was so polarizing that if you critiqued the team or you critiqued Tom Brady or the ownership or whatever the case might be, the reaction to it was unbelievable. Yes. It was that type of topic. It carried us for the past nine months.

RI: Do you ever get into situations where you're letting your guys do their thing and it rubs a team or player the wrong way and you can't get them as a guest anymore? Does that come up?

Thomas: Yes. I think that's something you always have to be conscious of. You have these partnerships, and we always have to be aware of the partnership. But at the same time, you've got to be able to go on the radio and be real, be honest, and give an opinion. If you are just a fanboy or a homer and say there's no way the Patriots did anything wrong, then the listeners are going to sniff that out.

RI: Have you had the situation come up where you've had to deal directly with a team and try to put the fire out?

Thomas: It's always a balancing act. You have to make sure your partners are happy and that we have a good relationship. That's ongoing, no matter what the topic is.

RI: I live in Florida, but I am a Yankees fan, I am a Mets fan and a Rangers fan. But when that whole Deflategate thing happened, I was listening to your station on the Web to see what's going on, what the guys are saying. I imagine that happens a lot. Did you see a spike?

Thomas: Yes. Absolutely. There were certain days, like when [Patriots head coach Bill] Belichick gave that press conference right before the Super Bowl, and when Brady gave his press conference, and then when [Patriots owner] Robert Kraft spoke in May, you saw huge spikes in the streaming numbers. We had 20,000 to 30,000 people that were streaming.

RI: Why are your morning and afternoon teams so good?

Thomas: Toucher and Rich are probably the biggest success on the radio station, just because they had no previous sports experience. For them to do what they've been able to do, in this



Fred Toucher and Rich Shertenlieb

format for the first time and building the audience they have and climbing to number one, not only with men, but with persons, it's incredible. They are by far the most creative show, not just morning show, I have ever worked with. Some of the stuff they come up with, the segments, I've never worked with any show that's done some of the stuff I hear these guys do on a weekly basis. They are extremely talented, and they deserve all the recognition they get.

As far as Felger and Mazz, those guys had a radio presence prior to the Sports Hub launching — they were doing stuff over at the competition, but they weren't full-time. They were part of different shows from time to time, and they both are writers. They both have written for the Globe and the Herald. What they've done together is amazing. They're getting 20 shares in afternoon drive. They know exactly how to take a topic and spin it, and they can do an entire show on something and you think, how did they come up with this? They are extremely talented and engaging with the audience.

Also, they are not afraid to make fun of themselves. I think that goes a long way, too. They will say, "Hey, we were wrong," or, "We were off base with this." It's one of those shows where we see a spike in the streaming numbers at 2 p.m., where it's like, "What's their take on this topic going to be?" Whether it is Deflategate or a Pats loss or the Bruins trading Sagan, whatever it might be. It is like people are tuning in thinking, "What are they going to say about it?"

RI: What's it like when you sit down and have a meeting with all four talents?

Thomas: We all get along. Again, we have said from the beginning that we want to keep egos in check. They're given the autonomy to be creative and to do what they are great at doing. We try to keep it within the guidelines of the radio station and the FCC. Otherwise, when they're doing their show, when they're putting their show together, they have the freedom to create it.

TOUCHER & RICH

(Fred Toucher and Rich Shertenlieb)

Toucher and Rich are out-of-towners, and that rubs some people the wrong way in sports-crazed Boston, where everybody loves their hometown sports teams. They came to Boston from 99X in Atlanta, where Rich was working for the morning show and Toucher was doing nights. They were the youngest people at the station and thought they shared a pretty good sense of humor. They soon developed a friendship.

And Rich says his friend did radio completely wrong. "He would make fun of the bands he was interviewing to their faces, if they deserved it. He flat-out refused to play Limp Bizkit in the heyday of Limp Bizkit because he hated that band, which I thought was fantastic. He just sounded like nobody else that the market had. He's probably one of the only guys who played music that became must-hear radio. You didn't want to hear the

music. You just wished that they would stop playing music and he would just speak. I was a big fan."

When Howard Stern moved to satellite radio, Rich says the duo seized the opportunity: "Fred and I knew that a bunch of different shows were going to open up. We knew that was our window to start a show. We made friends with some people at CBS. They flew us out to Phoenix to do a couple of overnight shows together. After we made that demo, we got a call a couple of weeks later saying, 'How would you like to work in Boston?'"

They started in afternoons at WBCN, and after the crash and burn of David Lee Roth, who followed Stern, and a short run from Opie & Anthony, they were moved to mornings in 2007. Two years later, Mark Hannon hatched his plan to flip to sports and to keep Toucher & Rich in mornings, where they are very successful doing a rock/sports morning show on an all-sports station.

RI: Coming over from the rock station, how knowledgeable were you about sports?

Toucher: We were sports fans. The fandom here is intense. It took a while to realize there's a lot more to this than we thought.

Rich: I hated it. When they told me that we were going to go to sports talk, I almost wanted to quit. I hated it. I don't think there was a format in radio I hated more than sports talk radio.

RI: Why?

Rich: Because everything I had heard was like the station across the street, where everyone was pissed off, angry. The Red Sox would win the World Series and the next day they're pissed off they didn't score more runs and there would be all these false conspiracy theories that people would come up with. It was just angry radio, and you had to be an angry person to listen to it. And I was not an angry person. I didn't ever want to do that kind of radio, where I came in and screamed for hours.

It was kind of cool, because we told Mark Hannon, our GM, that, and he said, "Well, that's why I want to keep you guys, because I think you guys would do a show unlike anything else out there. We want you to do your type of show." That had a lot to do with our early success and why we took off so fast, because we didn't sound like anybody — how dare we make jokes and find humor and enjoy things like sports? It's supposed to be held in this reverence. We found this niche, and it created itself almost on accident, just from our pure disdain of the sports talk format.

RI: Now you're doing sports, coming from rock. How did you prepare for that?

Toucher: It took a month to find a balance. We worked with Mike Thomas on finding a balance, because we don't do a traditional sports show. We don't do topics. We don't take a lot of calls. We do different content from break to break, different content every quarter hour. We don't generally let things linger on.

It was finding a balance of how much would be sports and how much would be other stuff. It took us a while to figure out, because we do a lot of things that revolve around sports, but aren't breaking down matchups and games. We'll find audio of someone and have fun with it or play games on the air involving things that are going on in sports, like making fun of broadcasters and stuff like that.

Rich: It was a weird time for us, because you have to understand sports talk radio, and the radio wars, in Boston are a big deal. The Globe writes about it. The Herald writes about it. Every article that came out said our show was a placeholder "until they get a real sports show." Everyone was expecting us to be gone in six months.

As a matter of fact, that even went on in our own hallways. We would walk into our PD's office and there would be stacks of letters starting with, "When you finally get rid of the morning show...." It was just a given that we were going to fail. It was the best possible inspiration, because Fred and I knew that if we were going to fail, we were going to fail on our own terms, doing it the way that we want to do a sports talk show. It was the ultimate motivator. It really put a fire under all of our asses.

To be honest, we didn't know if it was working at first, because people didn't know what to think. We did this bit — there are these people around here called "pink hats." People who became Red Sox fans just because it was the fun place to go, but they know nothing about the game. So we had [show member] Adolfo go out and ask simple questions about baseball. They didn't know any of the answers. It became a hit. That was on our first day. We asked the higher-ups here, "What did you think of the bit?" They said, "It was a bit." They didn't really know what to think at the time. The disrespect, I think, was a great motivator for Fred and I.

Toucher: The animosity toward our show locally, and with the media, is that all these guys grew up wanting to do this. They wanted to talk sports in Boston, and we didn't. So, who are we — out-of-towners, shock jocks, assholes — who are we to come in and get this job? It turned out to be an advantage for us, because we are outsiders, and the media here is very incestuous. I think it

was, "You didn't pay your dues," and, "Who do you guys think you are?" We weren't getting that from the audience. We were getting that from guys in sports media.

RI: What is the right balance between sports and other topics?

Rich: The key is to talk about sports topics when they're worth talking about, and don't make up false controversies. The perfect example of that was the Tom Brady situation and Deflategate. Other shows in town were talking about it for four hours straight, for months at a time. Fred and I made a decision that we were only going to talk about it when news breaks and when one of us has an opinion on it. Then we are going to talk about something else we are passionate about, whether it's sports, movies, or something bugging us.

We are obviously sports fans, but we are also human beings who know that in most people's lives, there are other things to talk about that are way more interesting than what happens to be going on in any given day in the sports world.

Toucher: Or there's an angle on sports, not necessarily X's and O's or a controversy. Athletes are always doing something ridiculous, people in the media are always doing something ridiculous. Satirizing that is a lot of fun. Technically, we're doing stuff revolving around sports, we are not debating it. It's a comedy bit about sports.

RI: What kind of feedback do you get from your audience?

Rich: I think we had the best ratings we've ever had over the summer, and we were a show that made the conscious decision to only talk about Tom Brady when it was worth talking about. When we did talk about it, people were thirsty for it, but you can give them too much. And it sounds insincere after a while. It sounds like you're repeating yourself.

The good thing about our show is that most people know what to expect when they tune in. If you want a hard-core X's and O's show, you're never going to get that on our show because, to be quite honest, that bores us. But if you want a different angle, one that's humorous or maybe one that you didn't think of, or one that makes Fred angry, then maybe we're the show for you.

RI: Do you still have people saying, "When are you going to get a real sports show in there?"

Rich: They never go away.

Toucher: It will always be here. But I kind of like it, though, because it keeps you hungry. There's always going to be someone younger and better and smarter and more clever. I like getting

a good insult every now and then to maybe put the fire under my ass.

RI: Now that you are in front, how do you keep yourselves fresh and always trying to improve your game?

Toucher: It's way more stressful. The expectations for the station weren't that high when it first started. There's a lot of competition in Boston with morning shows. There are heritage shows, at least three, that have been around for 20 years.

Rich: That's the thing, the competition that we went up against were these guys that for years have been number one. We are going up against Matty [on Kiss 108], who is a pillar here and has been around since the '70s. And Hill-man [on WAAF] has been around for 25 years. We're going up against heritage shows, so it's not like we're coasting.

You know how ratings are. You're one meter away from not getting your bonus. We spend a lot of time working on the show. It might sound ridiculous, but away from the show, I know Fred works his ass off, and I know our staff works their ass off. It's all I think about. They never have to question the work ethic of Fred, and I know Fred never has to question my work ethic. None of us have gotten fat and happy — as a matter of fact, I think it's the complete opposite. Fred will call me sometimes, or I will call him and I will be paranoid. Our rating will go up a half a point or down....

Toucher: I am the paranoid one. I call up Rich, and then Rich has to make me feel better.

Rich: But I like that. I like that we've been number one for all this time and that Fred still gets worried about staying number one and I get worried about staying number one. It's a good thing, and I hope we never lose that.

Toucher: I see a shrink now to put things into perspective and compartmentalize things. I'm not joking. I'm seeing a shrink today at noon, and it is entirely because I was driving everyone crazy with my fretting about everything about radio and things that I can't control. I literally talk to a psychiatrist about compartmentalizing, because I find I can get obsessive about things I can't control.

RI: When you talk to the psychiatrist, do you talk sports?

Toucher: No. I'm paying him.

RI: When you guys get off the air, how do you know when you did a great show?

Rich: It's deceptive. The thing we use as the best

judge is Fred's and my gut. Just how we feel. I think it's just maybe looking at the support staff and whether or not they are laughing. You just know.

Toucher: Ideally, if we had a good time and were laughing — I guess you can't really beat yourself up too much about it, because you had a good time and you enjoyed yourself. That's a sense of satisfaction. If you get a really big guest and you have a good interview, I suppose you come out of there going, "Wow, that was cool." There is no real barometer. If you go by social media, you're going to hate yourself. You just try to have a good time, and hopefully that translates with the audience.

RI: What is it about radio that you guys love?

Toucher: The immediacy of it, that it's not scripted, that you can speak your mind. People feel like they know you. When you do meet people, it's like you are friends with them because they know so much about you, and if they enjoy the show, that's a good thing.

Rich: I don't know what I would do without some sort of creative outlet. I love looking at a topic and trying to figure out how I can approach it in a way no one else has. It may be in an absurd way, or maybe in a way that uses some sort of production. I'm obsessed with that kind of stuff. We have somebody who helps out a lot with production, but I am here every morning. There are certain things that I have to be the one that produces them, and I've got to be the one to listen to it, because I get a rush out of it. I love that. I love having something done and produced two seconds before we go on the air. On top of that, I get paid to BS with a couple of guys that I probably would normally BS with, that are good friends of mine.

RI: How do you balance when you want to be critical of a player or team with the relationships your station has with them?

Toucher: We are critical of teams, very much. It has never been a big issue.

Rich: Not to say that we haven't gotten calls from certain owners of certain teams before. Personal phone calls.

It's not like the owners have never heard criticism before. Especially here in Boston, it's the most opinionated market for sports fans. Whatever we say, they've got to be ready for that. To be quite honest, no one has really told us not to, which I like. Mike and Mark have been really good about never telling us to not speak our minds when it comes to the local teams.

RI: It's got to be nice to have that kind of backing.

Rich: I can't say this enough, and I know I'm going to sound like I'm brown-nosing, but I swear to you, we work for two of the best people in the business. From the moment they sat us down and said we were going to be in a sports talk format, "but you do it your way," Mark Hannon and Mike Thomas have been nothing but supportive.

Honestly, if somebody told Mike we were doing something wrong, he would probably break a chair and go after the guy. He's so hardcore for us, which I love. It's good having the backing like that, because it makes you more confident when you crack the mic.

RI: Social media — how do you deal with that?

Toucher: Rich runs the Toucher & Rich Twitter because I wouldn't be able to handle that responsibility. I've taken Twitter off my phone and my iPad. I use it for information now, because you can get into the habit of constantly wanting to be validated. It's an addictive thing, and that's something that I had to consciously stop doing, looking for validation from strangers, which is unhealthy.

Rich: I use it in a different way. The Toucher & Rich account has about 104,000 followers. So when we are about to have a guest, Twitter is invaluable. Everyone is on their phones these days. I'm basically running commercials without us having to run commercials. It's effective.

Somebody tweeted to us the other day and said, "Hey, are you going to have Bill Simmons on about his new podcast?" Bill Simmons was copied, and I just responded back and said, "I love Bill Simmons. It would be great to have him on." And I get a direct message five minutes later from Bill Simmons saying he's been waiting for five years to come on our show and let's hook it up. Sure enough, he did an hour with us on the air. It was great, and it was because somebody happened to copy him when he contacted us, he saw it, and it blew up. That part of it is really nice, the publicity and connection with potential guests and listeners.

RI: So you can use it to build your brand, as long as you stay focused and away from how people can anonymously go crazy with the criticism?

Rich: I don't let that get to me. If the opinions of people affected ratings, then it probably would get to me a little bit. But the one thing I've learned is that we have never stopped getting negative criticism from some people, and things seem to be going pretty well. It's easy to look at it and laugh and not let it get to you as long as

things are going well on the radio side of it.

RI: Where else do you guys want to take the show?

Toucher: We are simulcast on Comcast Sports in New England now, and obviously we would like to grow the brand as much as possible.

Rich: I want to be the biggest sports talk radio show in the country. Or radio show in the country. I do. That's something Fred and I have no bones about, wanting to expand. It's something I know management knows about as well. We want to talk to the biggest audience that we can. I don't want to slow down.

RI: That means you'd like to be syndicated at some point?

Toucher: Absolutely. One thousand percent.

RI: You live in a city that's like no other as far as sports goes. The people are crazy in that city. What is that like, living there and being part of that?

Toucher: It is great because people listen to sports talk radio a lot, and it helps in that sense. People are passionate and they tune in, and that's great. They are very passionate, and that's been good for us.

Rich: They are also pretty witty people. Some of the best one-liners we get when we are talking about something — we have some pretty genius people on text and Twitter amongst all the other stuff. They're witty, and they are loyal too, which is good.

RI: What advice do you have for younger readers who want to be successful sports talk hosts?

Rich: Work with your friends. If you have an opportunity like Fred and I did, form your own show with your friends. That way the conversation never stops; there's no animosity. Fred and I will get into fights on the air, but you hear radio shows where they get into legit fights, where they won't talk to each other. After we get into a fight, we both have the attitude that it's just radio. You're going to be with these people a long time. If you want to have a long career, pick people you don't mind spending a hell of a lot of your life with.

RI: When you guys flipped the mic on for the first time after you turned the music off, did you ever think it would be where it is right now?

Both: No.

Toucher: I remember our agent at the time said, "You know you are going to get bonuses based

on 25-54." And he said, "You might as well make it a \$2 million bonus, because that's never going to happen." Because our audience at BCN tended to skew so young. So, no, absolutely not. Not anything like this.

Rich: I knew Fred and I put on a great show, but I didn't think on a sports talk format that it would ever work.

Toucher: No. We never would have imagined that this would happen.

RI: Any final thoughts about the show?

Toucher: Offer us more money, and we will go anywhere.

Rich: I would say that's pretty much it.

FELGER & MAZZ

(Mike Felger and Tony Massarotti)

In 2009 Mike Felger was contacted by Hannon and Thomas. They were putting together the station and searching for talent. Mike Felger says Tony Massarotti was one of the first guys he mentioned: "Tony and I had known each other for 10 years. We were both on the intern desk at the Boston Herald in the late '80s. We worked at the Boston Herald together for 15 years, on different beats, in the same sports department. We had also worked together on the other station in town for a while. It was sort of natural." Felger & Mazz have been with the station since its launch and produce incredible ratings.

RI: What were your thoughts back then when you heard Mark and Mike talk about adding a second major sports station to the city?

Felger: I was all for it. I think anyone who wasn't a full-time radio guy who wanted to be a radio guy was all for it. Absolutely. There was a real desire for it in the market for a while, among listeners — obviously, given the success this station has had, people wanted a second station. For those of us in the business, there wasn't going to be any movement unless there was a second station.

Mazz: I felt the same way. There had been attempts at sports stations in the past, but this one felt different for a lot of reasons. It was CBS. They already had some sports programming on the air. So there were a lot of elements there that made it appealing.

RI: Not to mention CBS's background in sports radio all over the country.

Felger: Yes. It wasn't that, necessarily, because



Mike Felger and Tony Massarotti

I had worked for that ESPN radio station, which failed, ultimately. ESPN is a huge brand with stations all over the country. It wasn't just the backing of CBS, it was the fact they had local play-by-play. They had the Patriots. They had the Bruins. It was going to be on the FM dial. And the people they had already employed and had been talking to were good, quality people. Mark and Mike obviously knew what they were doing. I was part of one of the failed attempts to take on EEI on the AM dial, and I can just tell you firsthand, having been at that place and talking to the people from day one, it was different and more legitimate.

RI: Could you instantly tell that it was going to be different on the FM dial?

Felger: No, not really. I don't think it was a guarantee, if that's what you're saying, not by a long stretch. We caught up to the competition a lot faster than anyone thought. That was great. The first couple of weeks and months, you had no idea what it was going to be.

RI: Why do you guys think you connect with the audience in Boston?

Felger: We're lucky we live in such a great sports market that isn't just passionate about sports, but there's an appetite here for our show. There are a lot of fans out there that want not just pom-pom waving and rah-rah sports commentary. They want to challenge their team. They want to second-guess their team. They want to

talk critically of their team when it's time to do it and make fun of their team when it's time to do it and have that back-and-forth.

I don't know if we would work in a lot of markets. We wouldn't work in Happy Valley. We wouldn't work in places like that, where you come on and are just not critical of your team. But in Boston, it's a credit to your fans that they're not like that. Enough of them don't want the pom-pom waving and the bootlicking of the teams that they connect.

Mazz: Mike started in radio about five years before I started doing this. He obviously had more background than I did. I would also say that, prior to that, we both benefited from good exposure around good teams. Mike had covered the Patriots. I covered the Red Sox. During that period of time, basically, the Red Sox and the Patriots won five championships and vied for several others. We also got lucky. We were around the right teams at the right times. Then we came here, and before the end of our second full year here, the Bruins won the Cup. Again, a lot of it was right place, right time, with the right teams. We've had some exposure to the fan base through the teams we covered, and that probably made the transition a little easier.

Felger: The luck factor. In the course of this interview, with our answers, if it ever sounds like we have the answers, please do not make us sound like that, for the love of God, because



WBZ and Toucher & Rich's annual Cuts for a Cause event, with the NHL Boston Bruins.

we don't. We do certain things that work for us, and so God bless and knock on wood. It's the luck factor.

We are incredibly fortunate. We are incredibly fortunate that CBS Radio flipped this station when they did. We are incredibly fortunate that Mike Thomas and Mark Hannon thought of us. We are incredibly fortunate that the fan base does connect with us, or at least enough of them do, because we tend to be very critical of the teams and hard on the teams, and there's an appetite for that.

I used to cover the Bruins. I used to cover the NHL. I got in trouble with the owner because I wrote something about him a long time ago that got me in trouble, and as a solution, my paper switched me to the Patriots. That was in 1999. The next year, they hired Bill Belichick and drafted Tom Brady. The next thing you know, they are winning three Super Bowls in four years and I'm writing about the most popular team in all of pro sports. That's just blind luck. That's the number one reason.

RI: I hear you. You've had great teams there and still do. You still have to do a good show every day. That's a lot of great content.

Felger: When they were putting the show together, they wanted a baseball guy. That was only part of it. The other part, and a much bigger part, is just sort of the way Tony thinks and I sort of think. We both came from the Herald, the feisty tabloid. The Boston Globe is more conservative, established. We wrote for the feisty tabloid. Tony brings that sensibility to the show,

and so do I. Again, critical when we have to be, and we don't pull punches. We try not to play favorites and try not to be beholden to rights agreements and things like that. That's why the mix works, when it works.

RI: When do you know you really did a great show?

Mazz: I don't know that we are always looking for the same thing. Some days it might just be the mood you're in. Generally speaking, there's a level of — and, again, I don't want to come off the wrong way — but there's a level of intensity to the show or a conviction and opinions and things you believe in so that you really do sound like you believe in what you're arguing.

To believe it and to sound like you believe it are two different things. I'm not saying you should sound like it without actually believing it, but making that translate can be tricky. Some of it depends on the elements, on the particular stories going on. Other times it's in the delivery. A good show probably has all kinds of elements. There's humor in there, some intensity, some anger, some news judgment. To me, I like the shows on the big stories. The ones you know that people are absolutely listening, so it is easier to get focused.

Felger: I would say a good show is when we've all sort of argued but not walked away. You've got a good passionate debate or conversation about something and had some laughs and haven't turned anyone off. That I can challenge a fan of a team or they can yell back at me on the

phone and we can get into an argument, but at the end of it, we are either laughing or, "Thanks again. Talk to you next time." We are all sort of still in the arena.

To me, a bad argument is when you have to walk away or turn it off or hang up the phone. A good, fun one is when you engage in it and have the back-and-forth and you are passionate about it and you all punch the clock and go home and do it again tomorrow. That, to me, is a good show, or a good argument or a good segment.

RI: What's the balance between you knowing you have to be critical of a player or team to be taken seriously and the fact that the station has close relationships with the teams?

Felger: I don't care about the individual interviews. We don't do a lot of interviews on our show, because there are so few people that speak candidly in the world of sports. I don't care about the risk of losing an interview. We only really interview one person a week anyway. Cam Neely, the Bruins president. We don't talk to anybody else.

So I don't worry about the interview, but the thing about the rights agreements with team ownerships and our management is very real, and a real factor. There is no question about it. Because the teams are sensitive. They are too sensitive. The teams, unfortunately, put pressure on management, whether it's radio or TV or whatever. There is pressure put at the high levels about things that are being said, and that filters down to us, and so that, to me, is the real

challenge between “telling it like it is” and getting a call from upstairs that says you’ve pissed somebody off and you’ve got to be careful. Walking that line. That, to me, is the most challenging part.

RI: What’s the right way to come up with something that you feel comfortable with?

Felger: Usually what’s happened is we’ve pissed somebody off and we get called into the office. We get told to knock it off, and we knock it off. When my boss gives me the stop sign, I stop. I try not to get called into the office, but when I do, I do as I’m told.

Mazz: It’s a balance. In some ways, having covered a beat in the past, there’s a line you have to walk when you cover a beat. So there’s some training there. But radio is very different. I would just say that if someone thinks we went too far, we try to take our medicine when it’s given.

Overall, I think we’ve done a good job of that, both in terms of people inside the building and also the listeners. We try to laugh at ourselves and we try to accept our humanity, for lack of a better word, and that means making mistakes and maybe sometimes going too far and sometimes not going far enough. So again, if somebody calls you in and says, “You guys need to back off here,” then we do that. When someone calls up and tells us that we’re stupid, we laugh. Overall, I think we’re pretty good at that, but that doesn’t mean we don’t make mistakes, because we do. No matter what you do in this business, when you’re dealing with teams and people, there’s always some sort of balance, and negotiating it can be tricky sometimes.

RI: What are you doing to keep yourselves in front, at number one? How do you keep honing the skills?

Felger: I don’t know. Again, you make it sound like we have all the answers. I hate it when these guys come off like they invented radio. We just do things that work for us. Keep it simple. Get in, get out. Be topical and well-paced. Try not to waste people’s time. That has just sort of been our philosophy. We are almost all sports. We don’t do pop culture or politics or things of that nature. That’s just us. Other shows do it, and they have a lot of success doing it. I’m not criticizing shows that do that.

Our morning show is different, and they have had a ton of success doing it their way. No one is right and no one is wrong. I think for us, the best thing we can do is be on point, well-paced, and opinionated, and stick to that.

RI: How big was Deflategate for you?

Felger: [Laughs] We didn’t talk about it at all.

Mazz: As it turned out, the timing in a lot of ways was really good. The Bruins had a bad finish to the year and missed the playoffs. The Celtics got wiped out by the Cavaliers. The Red Sox got off to a bad start and vanished from the landscape quickly. Again, there was some good fortune there. The timing was good, and it doesn’t get bigger than the Patriots up here anyway. So when you have that type of story surrounding that type of franchise and that type of athlete, it can carry you for a while.

Felger: It was a huge, dominating story. Anyone who talked about it here or wrote about it locally, it helped everyone.

Mazz: It really was the kind of story that appeals to everybody on the planet, or at least in this city. When you’re talking about Tom Brady, no matter where you’re going, everybody was talking about it. Because of the magnitude of the persona and the idea of someone that good potentially cheating, all that stuff — it really brought everybody in. Everybody.

RI: What was your take, and how did it go over with the fan base?

Felger: I think that was a good example of walking the line with the listenership, because this town rallied around the Patriots so dramatically on that story. Almost everyone in town supported the team and attacked the league. We were sort of on the other side of it.

I think the Patriots were doing something there. I think Tony feels the same way. I think some of what happened to the team was justified, because at the end of the day, I believe they were doing it. You express that in the middle of this firestorm and you just get the pushback.

It’s one thing to have people call up and argue with you on the phone, but the letters to my boss: “I’m turning you off.” Then you sort of sweat it out until the ratings come out three weeks later to see if people really turned us off. Knock on wood, we’re lucky, we and the station set records through that time. That’s a credit to Boston sports fans, that this isn’t Happy Valley and this isn’t some podunk college town where they just want us waving the pom-poms. There’s an appetite for dissenting opinions and challenging talk. And we are incredibly lucky that there is. That was an interesting one.

RI: What is it about radio that you guys love?

Tony: To me, there’s a lot. Obviously you get a daily forum, and there’s a certain amount of energy and passion on a daily basis, particularly in this market, with the sports teams. If you like Boston sports, there’s no better job to talk about it on a daily basis than what we do. This market

is different than a lot of others; people tend to be personal about their teams. There aren’t that many cities anymore that have a team in all four sports. There’s a lot of reasons to do what we do. I enjoyed the writing part of it, but this is far more intense than that was.

Felger: I love it. I love my job. Outside of just the sports angle, it’s great to be able to come on the air, express yourself, express an opinion, back people up, challenge them, whatever it is you’re doing on that given day, and have it thrown back at you with the callers and people reacting to the show. That’s a blast. Just going back and forth and being able to argue and pontificate about something you’re passionate about is tremendous.

RI: Give your best advice to young hosts reading this who want to get to a major market.

Felger: I’d say, “Work your ass off, and don’t have the expectation that you are going to be Bill Simmons or Mike Francesa overnight.” I’m 46. Tony is 48. This thing didn’t start until I was in my 40s. I started interning at the Boston Herald when I was 19 years old. Tony was the same. We were both 19 years old when we started in this business, and it took over 20 years.

I talk to a lot of kids who call us or e-mail us or ask us for advice, I feel like there’s that expectation for younger people that they’re going to wake up one day and be Chris “Mad Dog” Russo. It just doesn’t work like that. You’ve got to work your ass off and pay your dues and grind it out.

Mazz: Mike was still in college when he was interning at the Herald. I had graduated, so I was 21. I was basically a graduate intern. But it takes a while. Being patient with yourself is one of the harder parts, more challenging than anything. The other thing is, and I learned this from Mike during the Marathon bombing, because I was totally out of my element there — sports are what I do. Sports are what I know. Politics are not my strength. And that was obviously more than a political story. That was a real-life story. But I remember one night when I was sort of at a loss for words and Mike said, “Just say what you feel.” I think there’s a certain amount of simplicity in that, that works. Obviously, you have to harness your emotions and things like that. But, generally speaking, if you are saying what you feel and you say it with some level of passion or conviction, people seem to respond to it, because they know you are serious and it’s coming from your heart. I always thought that was a good piece of advice that he gave me that has worked.

TOP 30 LOCAL SPORTS TALKERS

It was a year filled with talk about deflated footballs. And no matter what market you were in, that was the biggest topic — for a very long time — for sports talk radio hosts. The question they all faced, depending on what part of the country they were in (outside of New England), was how to make that topic compelling for their local audiences. But that's a challenge sports talkers face every day they crack the mic, in every market. It's not every day a subject as juicy as "Deflategate" falls in their laps, and there's no music between the talk topics to give them a break.

Compelling, local content that keeps (mostly male) listeners tuned in is the daily goal. Consultants will tell you that to win, you have to mix pop culture in with sports to keep listeners engaged and perhaps pull in some women. And for some on our list, that is

exactly what they do. But for others, the winning comes from their deep knowledge of all sports, especially their local sports teams.

This is the third year we're publishing a list of the Best Local Sports Talkers in America. We start the process by taking nominations three months before the issue goes to print. Then we reach out to the nominees and ask them to answer a few questions. We also closely examine who nominated each host or show, and why. How long have the hosts been in a particular market? How are the ratings — are the numbers consistently strong? How active are the hosts in the community? Are they getting local press from other media?

We also ask dozens of sports radio PDs, consultants, and managers for their honest, off-the-record feedback on who they believe are the top sports talkers in the country. While we believe they are all being honest, understand-

ably there's also a lot of lobbying for their people. Hosts have even lobbied for themselves, hoping for a high placement.

Despite all the research and help and feedback we receive from PDs, GMs, and experts in sports radio, this is admittedly not an exact science. There is no clear way to determine how or why a host in Philadelphia is better than a host in San Francisco or Dallas.

There are many veteran sports talkers on this list who continue to dominate in their markets. There are also quite a few youngsters making a name for themselves and just waiting for an opportunity to move up, honing their skills and getting ready to make it to the big time. We've done our very best to bring you the Top 30 Local Sports Talkers for 2015, and added in some of their compelling comments on what makes them the very best at what they do.



1

MIKE FRANCESA
WFAN
New York (Market 1)
CBS Radio
1-6:30 p.m.
28 years on WFAN

CBS Radio President and CEO Andre Fernandez tells Radio Ink, "Mike Francesa's stature in the industry is undeniable, and his presence on WFAN has made a lasting impact on all of sports radio. He has achieved the highest levels of success, with many accomplishments. Over more than two decades, Mike has shown an enduring commitment to delivering a dynamic show for his audience, and earned much respect in the process. He has proven time and again why he's the best in the business."

While there seemed to be more speculation about Mike Francesa retiring over the past year than ever before, he's still rolling along, now approaching his 29th year as one of the most listened-to local sports talkers in America. And he continues to do it in New

York City, the number one U.S. radio market. In addition, Francesa has spent his entire radio career on WFAN.

New York City newspapers often write about Francesa's show — not always positively. But it's the kind of attention only a top radio talent can garner and that most radio hosts can only dream of. Francesa continues to produce great ratings for the CBS Radio station in his afternoon drive shift — a shift that consists of more than five daily hours of local sports talk that entertains (and sometimes irritates) listeners, local sports teams, and thousands of sports fans.

Earlier this year, Bob Raissman of the New York Daily News wrote, "Listening carefully while he is on vacation, and knowing he is contemplating an exit strategy, we heard the future of local sports talk radio. Without Francesa, it sucks. The ultimate conclusion: If Francesa leaves, we will miss him. His departure would be equivalent to the day the music died." In our communication with sports radio experts across the country, we found that it's nearly unanimous: As long as he's on the air, Mike Francesa should be ranked number one.

CBS RADIO

THE STRONGEST LINEUP IN SPORTS RADIO

WFAN
SPORTS RADIO
66AM 101.9FM

**THE 670
SCORE**
WISN 1240AM

**105.3
FAN**

**CBS SPORTS
RADIO**

**Sports 610
Radio**

**106.7
FAN**

94WIP
SportsRadio

**THE GAME
92.9**
ASAP SportsRadio

**97.1
TICKET**

98.5
THE SPORTS HUB

**SPORTS RADIO
105.7 THE FAN
BALTIMORE**

560WQAM
SPORTS RADIO

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FAN**
all sports. all the time.

**SPORTS
1140**

**SPORTS RADIO
92.3 THE FAN
CLEVELAND**



2

BOOMER ESIASON & CRAIG CARTON
WFAN
New York (Market 1)
CBS Radio
6-10 a.m.
Eight years on WFAN

Ever since they began doing the morning show at WFAN, Boomer & Carton have been ratings leaders, with their show usually finishing first or second in WFAN's target demo of men 25-54. In morning radio, where listeners rarely change their loyalties, they almost immediately cut through the clutter to bring in a large audience. Boomer Esiason is a former NFL MVP quarterback (who played in a Super Bowl), and he also runs the Boomer Esiason Foundation, which has raised tens of millions of dollars for cystic fibrosis research and for helping the victims of the disease (Boomer's own son has the illness). Craig Carton is founder and president of TicTocStop, which raises funds for research into Tourette Syndrome and works to improve the quality of life for people with the disorder. Carton has Tourette Syndrome, as do two of his children.



3

ANGELO CATALDI
WIP-AM
Philadelphia (Market 9)
CBS Radio
5:30-10 a.m.
25 years in radio and on WIP

Angelo Cataldi is a ratings and revenue juggernaut, especially among men; his sold-out show perennially finishes in the top two with men 25-54. Twenty-four years ago, Cataldi and sidekick Al Morganti created the Wing Bowl, and today it's among the biggest annual radio promotions anywhere. Without the benefit of big-name musical acts, Wing Bowl annually sells out the 20,000-seat Wells Fargo Center. The event, best described as Mardi Gras meets a chicken-wing-eating contest, is an unofficial holiday in Philadelphia, with thousands of people taking the day off work.

Cataldi does considerable philanthropic work, raising thousands of dollars for a local police survivors' fund that benefits the families of fallen officers. In 2015, proceeds from sales of Angelo Cataldi bobbleheads and Wing Bowl tickets were donated to the fund.

4



TOUCHER & RICH
Fred Toucher and Rich Shertenlieb
WBZ-FM (98.5 The Sports Hub)
Boston (Market 10)
CBS Radio
6-10 a.m.
8 years in radio, 10 years on WBCN/WBZ
See cover story, page 18



5

THE MUSERS
Craig Miller, George Dunham, and Gordon Keith
KTCK-FM (The Ticket)
Dallas-Fort Worth (Market 5)
5:30-10 a.m.
21 years in morning drive on The Ticket

6

MIKE VALENTI & TERRY FOSTER
WXYZ (97.1 The Ticket)
Detroit (Market 12)
CBS Radio
2-6 p.m.

Together as a show for 13 years, first on AM and since the inception of WXYZ-FM in 2007.



7

MIKE FELGER & TONY MASSAROTTI
WBZ-FM (98.5 The Sports Hub)
Boston (Market 10)
CBS Radio
2-6 p.m.
On the air since 2009
See cover story, page 18





8

GARY RADNICH & LARRY KRUEGER

KNBR-AM

San Francisco (Market 4)

Cumulus Media

9 a.m.-noon

Radnich has 23 years on the air, Krueger 12

The San Jose Mercury News has called Gary Radnich "the biggest name in Bay Area broadcasting," and KNBR is the only station he's ever worked for. "I always strive to relate to the audience," Radnich says. "Watch, read, and listen to everything possible. You have to have your own style and not be afraid to admit you don't know everything. When you are real, the audience believes in you. With all of today's media options, you can make it if you have credibility."



9

MULLY & HANLEY

Mike Mulligan and Brian Hanley

WSCR (670 The Score)

Chicago (Market 3)

5-9 a.m.

Hanley has 24 years on the air, Mulligan 12.

They've been a team for 10 years.



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(99.3 FM)



Mark Miller and David Moulton
Miller & Moulton



Adam Gold And Joe Ovies
Adam & Joe

99.9 THE FAN
ESPN

WGR 550
sports radio



Mike Schopp and Chris "The Bulldog" Parker
Schopp & The Bulldog

ESPN
CHICAGO
(1000 AM)



Marc Silverman and Tom Waddle
Waddle & Silvy



Michael Kay & Don Lagreca
The Michael Kay Show

98.7 FM
ESPN

104.5 FM
ESPN
BATON ROUGE



Matt Moscona
After Further Review



Tony Kornheiser
The Tony Kornheiser Show

ESPN 980
92.1w 980am 94.3w • COM



10

TOM WADDLE & MARC "SILVY" SILVERMAN
WMVP (ESPN 1000)
Chicago (Market 3)
2-6 p.m.

Tom Waddle has 15 years in radio, 8 of those with ESPN 1000. Silvy has 20-plus years on Chicago radio, 17 at ESPN 1000.

Tom Waddle tells Radio Ink that success is all about hard work. "It was the same formula on the field during my playing days," says the former NFL wide receiver. "Hard work can't completely erase a talent deficiency, but it will close the gap and give you a chance. I don't pretend to have all the answers, so we consistently have high-profile, entertaining guests. And finally, this is supposed to be fun and entertainment, so we approach it as such."

Waddle advises aspiring sports talkers, "Consume as much sports info as possible to have as much knowledge on as many subjects as possible. Ultimately, it's about reps — the more you do it, the better you are at it. I've been in the industry now for 20 years. My approach has always been to have an opinion, but understand that we aren't the story, we are just commenting about the actions, accomplishments, etc., of others. Make your presentation strong and compelling, but know that people are coming to you to be entertained, to get away from the grind of work, so make sure you can laugh about something over the course of a four-hour show."



12

TERRY BOERS & DAN BERNSTEIN
WSCR-AM (The Score)
Chicago (Market 3)
CBS Radio
1-6 p.m.
On the air together for 17 years

To anyone interested in this profession, Terry Boers advises you to just be yourself: "No false front, no feigned outrage, no idiotic rants that are done simply for effect. I do plead guilty to some idiotic rants on many occasions, but I think the listeners know it comes from the heart, not from Acting 101. And never, ever do we take some insipid argument that really doesn't have a counterpoint and try to create one. Thankfully, that will never happen."

Dan Bernstein says the most important aspect of the job today is the ability to receive and filter information in real time, both during the show and beyond. "The news cycle has been redefined completely," he says, "with stories analyzed instantly, and often without needed context and perspective. The show never really ends when we go off the air anymore, as connected listeners expect news and opinion as things happen. So the actual time on the air allows the discussion to breathe a bit, giving us time to talk things through in a form beyond 140-character bursts. Navigating the new media landscape pursuant to the show is now critical."



11

THE SPORTS JUNKIES
J.P. Flaim, Eric Bickel, Jason Bishop,
John Auville
WJFK-FM (106.7 The Fan)
Washington, DC (Market 7)
CBS Radio
5-10 a.m.
On the air 19 years in DC, 17 at WJFK

From the Sports Junkies team, who have now been together in DC for nearly two decades: "We have been able to connect with our audience. The first description of our show, way back in 1996 — WJFK weekends — was 'four regular guys talking sports.' That's what we've been for all these years. Although the show has evolved and often ventures into anything from pop culture to politics, we're just four buddies talking on the airwaves as if we were sitting in a sports bar. We were friends long before we embarked on a career in radio, and that natural chemistry is what separates us from other shows. When we are out and about, listeners often come up to us and say we remind them of their friends."

"To be successful, it's less about knowing the nuts and bolts about sports and more about being interesting. Our show comes at sports from the average fan's perspective. Hopefully our audience appreciates that and finds our opinions interesting and compelling."



13

MICHAEL KAY & DON LAGRECA
WEPN (98.7 FM ESPN)
New York (Market 1)
3-7 p.m.
25 years in radio and 14 years at the station

14

TOM TOLBERT
KNBR
San Francisco (Market 4)
Cumulus Media
3-7 p.m.
19 years at KNBR





15

MURPH & MAC
Brian Murphy and Paul McCaffrey
KNBR
San Francisco (Market 4) ✓
Cumulus Media
5-9 a.m.
On the air together 10 years

Brian Murphy says success is all relative: "To us, success is enjoying each other's company, treating the listeners with respect, trying to laugh with them every day, trying to experience Bay Area sports on a communal basis, to maximize and enrich everyone's — including our own — enjoyment. Improving skills means constantly informing oneself, constantly searching for content, for sound, for interesting angles on the sports issues of the day, particularly here in the Bay Area. Never stop soaking up information! These days, it's a 24/7/365 job, and one we enjoy. Certainly today it's important to understand the power of social media and to embrace it. But the fundamentals remain the same, whatever the year — have fun, show up to work, be as prepared as you can be."

Mac adds, "Nothing between us is fabricated, so what the audience hears from us represents exactly who we are as people. I also think the fact that we both care about and make connections with our local communities goes a long way with our audience. Lastly, we combine daily sports reporting with pop-culture riffing, which works well for us and our audience."



*Shot
Not to
Buzz*

17

MIKE MISSANELLI
WPEN (97.5 The Fanatic)
Philadelphia (Market 9)
Greater Media
2-6 p.m.
7 years at The Fanatic

Missanelli says preparation is the key to being a successful sports talker: Know what's going on. Focus on what people most want to hear. Play the hits. "I think my honesty and willingness to take stands on various subjects, from sports to life, have made me connect with the honest people of Philadelphia," he says. "This is a hard-nosed city that has a pretty good BS meter and can sense phoniness. I have also put great effort into defending the great fans here as they continue to get beaten down by national pundits and fans who don't understand the sports climate of this city. We haven't won a lot in Philadelphia. It is a major market. The fans here deserve better and get frustrated when they don't get it."



16

JOSH INNES
WIP-AM
Philadelphia (Market 9) NO
CBS Radio
2-6 p.m.
On radio 12 years, on WIP for 2

Josh Innes says you need to be different if you want to win at this game. "There are so many people who sound the exact same," he points out. "Nothing stands out. It's as if they rolled off the Syracuse assembly line. Very few people have guts. Don't play it safe. Take chances. Buck conventions. You can be stale, safe, and boring, or you can be a game-changer. Anyone can talk; it takes special talents to be game-changers."

"As Happy Harry said in 'Pump Up the Volume,' 'Talk hard. Steal the air.' The key to being a successful local talker is to find what makes the local listener go. You have to have an understanding of the audience. Be in the community. Drink beers with listeners. Go to the games as a fan. Don't be above anyone."



18

MITCH LEVY
KJR
Seattle (Market 13) ✓
iHeartMedia
6-9 a.m.
20-plus years at KJR

19

**JOHN DENNIS
& GERRY
CALLAHAN**
WEEI
Boston (Market 10)
Entercom
5:30-10 a.m.
On the air 18 years

NO



20 *(NO)*

TONY KORNHEISER
WTEM (ESPN 980)
Washington, DC (Market 7)
Red Zebra Broadcasting
10 a.m.-noon
On the air 6 years

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21

SCHOPP & THE BULLDOG
Mike Schopp and Chris Parker
WGR (Sports Radio 550)
Buffalo (Market 59)
Entercom
3-7 p.m.
On the air together for 12 years

22

GARY SHARP & DAMON BENNING
KOZN (1620 The Zone)
Omaha (Market 75)
NRG Media
7-11 a.m.
On the air together for 4 years



23

ADAM GOLD & JOE OVIES
WCMC-FM
Raleigh (Market 40)
Capitol Broadcasting
3-7 p.m.
On the air together for 7 years



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Omaha's

1620 am
the zone



Gary Sharp



Damon Benning

NRG
MEDIA
GREAT LOCAL RADIO



Nick Bahe

25

HEATH CLINE
WNKT-FM (1075 The Game)
Columbia, SC (Market 88)
Cumulus Media
4-7 p.m.
In radio for 21 years, at 1075 The Game all eight years of its existence



24

DAN SILEO
The Mighty 1090
San Diego (Market 17)
BCA (operator)
6-9 a.m.
In radio 24 years, 2 years at The Mighty 1090



26

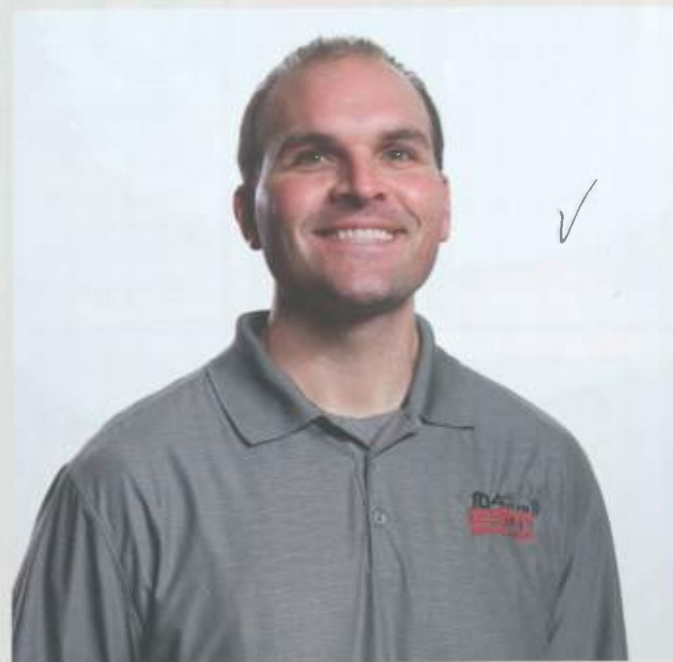
MARK MILLER & DAVID MOULTON
WWCN (ESPN 99.3)
Ft. Myers, FL (Market 60)
Beasley Broadcasting
2-6 p.m.
On the air 12 years

NO



27

MATT MOSCONA
WNXX & KNXX (104.5/104.9 ESPN)
Baton Rouge (Market 80)
Guaranty Media
3-6 p.m.
12 years in radio, 5 years on 104.5/104.9 ESPN Baton Rouge



28

JOHN CANZANO
KXTG (750 The Game)
 Portland, OR (Market 23)
 Alpha Media
 Noon-3 p.m.
 On the air 9 years



29

BILL MICHAELS
WSSP
 Milwaukee (Market 38)
 Entercom
 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
 23 years in radio, 4 years on WSSP

30

NICK BAHE
KOZN (1620 The Zone)
 Omaha (Market 75)
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BLAST FROM THE PAST >>



"CALL FOR OLD BLUE EYES!"

Frank Sinatra visits WEEU/Reading, PA to promote his newest records. This pic dates from the early '50s, and WEEU was a heritage station even then: It's been serving the Reading and Berks County area since January 1, 1932, first as a daytimer and going 24/7 in 1947. Does anybody recognize the WEEU personality on the phone? Photo courtesy of WEEU Radio President Dave Kline.

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