



A Sense of Urgency

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While driving for quite some time to and from a client of mine last weekend, I had the opportunity to pass through 3 major markets as well as about a dozen medium and small markets. It was a weekend located between the end of one month and the beginning of the next.

I was shocked to hear a number of commercials that were running out-of-date. They were out-of-date based on the change of month or an event that took place the previous month, AND IT WASN'T ISOLATED TO A PARTICULAR STATION OR MARKET, IT WAS ALL OF THEM.

Here's 3 examples...

Friday May 30th...I heard commercials that said "Sale ends May 31st!"

Saturday May 31st after 7PM...I heard commercials that "Sale ends at 5pm today!"

Sunday June 1st... I heard commercials that said "Memorial Day sale ends May 31st!"

This is the lack of attention to detail I'd expect from the newspaper, but not radio. Radio is supposed to be the last voice you hear before making a major purchase, how does it sound to the consumer/listener if the message is out-of-date? Is this truly serving your clients? Where is the sense of urgency? Where is the attention to detail by the account executive, production and traffic departments? Have we left our product (and rest assured commercials are a very important part of our product) in the hands of under-trained, amateur copywriters?

When I started in this business, every station had at least one copywriter. The copywriter was a person who usually had some sort of English degree and knew how to write well. Account executives weren't expected, nor were they equipped, to write commercials. Their time was better spent on the street selling. Also when I began, the jock had the power to kill and not play a commercial that was out-of-date that would make both the station and the client look silly if it aired.

I haven't seen a professional copywriter in years and because it was the weekend, there were probably no jocks in the building to stop the outdated copy from airing (even if they had that authority).

Many times the production director has taken over copywriting duties and that is if the sales department doesn't provide this service (most are expected to, with little or no training). Many commercials are generated off of poorly written, client scripts. The clients may be brilliant businessmen, but have no business writing or voicing their commercials.

Unfortunately, that seems to be more of the norm now, rather than the exception.

There are basics that need to be followed when writing commercials. We can go over those at another time...but let's address the sense of urgency point now, because this is the most glaring, unprofessional mistake in any commercial and it is so easily spotted by a listener. It is also VERY easily corrected BEFORE it happens.

If you are writing a spot that has a sale end date in it...write it with a sense of urgency - For example...

"Sale ends Saturday May 31st!" would be one line, which would be replaced on the Monday before with...

"Sale ends Saturday!"

To be replaced on the Friday before with "Sale ends tomorrow!".

And finally a spot that reads "Sale ends today!" that would run that Saturday only.

It's simple really, and since it's probably only in one or two lines in the copy, shouldn't take much more effort to produce.

Lack of attention to the little details like when the spot is scheduled to run, can also be a glaring mistake, as in the second two examples from above. Sales, production and traffic need to know what the copy says so the commercial isn't ran out-of-date. Most traffic departments can provide sales with a "dates and times" or contract confirmation report before the schedule ends to avoid these mistakes. BUT production needs to be vigilant as well and alert sales and traffic to this mistake BEFORE it happens.

Trust me, it will make your station sound better, it will push your listeners to your client's product, AND it will show how professional you are as you service your clients because apparently, as this past weekend showed, your competitors aren't.

Bob believes that everything on your air, including the commercials, can enhance and improve the sound, ratings and revenue of your station. Find out how. Call him today at 706-358-9103.