



MARKETING

JANE TOOHEY

Making a killing on radio

AS I WRITE THIS column the tune from the 1979 song *Video Killed the Radio Star* keeps broadcasting in my head. It was such a powerful song at a time of great change in the industry that it even became the first song aired when MTV debuted in 1981.

But video didn't kill the radio star and in some ways thanks to TV, radio stars have actually had their stars brightened by TV, think Fifi Box on *Dancing with the Stars!*

So, how can radio marketing work for your business or is it best to stay away from the airwaves altogether?

According to a Nielsen Media Research Report, each week 78 per cent of Australians tune into commercial radio, listening on average for two hours 40 minutes each day... that's a lot of customers doing a lot of listening! About 21 per cent of this listening occurs in cars. And as most of us drive to the shops, radio is probably the last thing we're going to hear before we hit the trolley.

With 37 million radio sets thought to be in Australia (it's such a high number due to duplication from clock radios, car radios, boom boxes etc) it's hard to escape the 260 commercial stations which vie for listeners. This split of stations is great for marketers as it can really help you zero in on your customers. Regional radio is especially powerful. Many of the big broadcasters now also run parallel webcasts so that office workers can tune in during the day from their computers.

While TV advertising is normally out of the league of small and medium-sized business, radio advertising has much lower production costs. So that means there's less of a barrier to entry, and more of an opportunity to have your message heard.

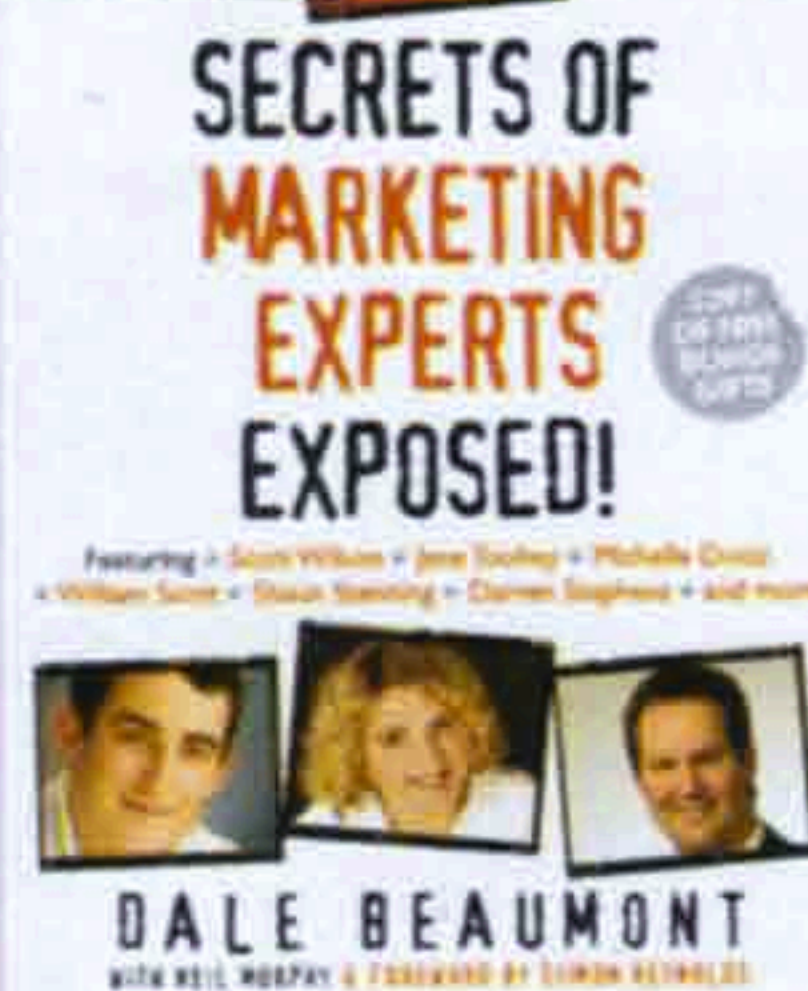
Radio stations are also able to offer more than just a straight run of your ad, they can create on-air listener competitions, send out promo vehicles with your samples and even do on site

broadcasts. There's also the possibility of the DJ reading your ad or talking about your company in a conversational way, this can add a lot of credibility to your product or service, which is why John Laws and Alan Jones get such large payments, and why there was a furore a few years ago when these 'sponsorships' weren't disclosed to listeners.

When you first start out with radio advertising, you need to spend the time to think about how your brand should sound ie you need to match a voice, jingle or sound to your brand. It's not going to be beneficial having a funky young male voice spruiking a vitamin supplement for 50-year-old women, and nor would you want classical music playing in the background if you're marketing a cutting-edge hairdressing chain.

Really think this through as you want to get the foundations right. You don't change your stationery every year and neither should you change the style or the sound of your ads. You just need to build on them.

Make your ads memorable! Not only the concept and words, but the tone, the style, the voice and the sounds need to be unique. You might remember the Yahoo!



Jane Toohey, one of our regular columnists, has written a chapter of the most recent "Secrets Exposed" book – *The Secrets of Marketing Experts Exposed!* This book has 15 chapters, each written from a different marketing

expert. Discover all their secrets. The first five readers to email mybusiness@marketingangels.com.au with their name and postal address, will receive a free book. This book normally retails at \$29.95.

Yodel or the distinctive husky female voice used in the Boost Juice radio campaigns. They added a powerful extra element to the ads.

Frequency is also key in radio advertising. You need listeners to hear your ad regularly. Without frequency, you will struggle to build awareness and more importantly, desire, for your product or service. A mistake that many people make is to opt for the cheapest campaign, when just a slight increase in budget will have a much bigger impact on sales and awareness. It's often those extra burst of ads that matter.

Unlike newspapers, radio is great in that you can select the time of day your message will appear. So if you own coffee shops, you might do bursts during the morning and again during the mid-afternoon slump. If you're a garden centre, the Friday commute home and Saturday mornings might be the best times to run your ads to catch people when they're thinking about the weekend, and actually have time to plant.

Unfortunately, unlike newspapers, radio advertising only works to deliver a very simple message. Trying to market a complicated product or service on radio just won't work. And don't waste your budget by dancing around the point: use a strong call to action or offer in your campaign to get results.

Radio is definitely not for everyone, but as part of the marketing mix, it can certainly work when you get it right. So I suppose video didn't actually kill the radio star, it just roughed it up for a few decades and now it's bounced back into the ring. ●

■ Jane Toohey is a director of Marketing Angels, a marketing advisory and consulting firm which operates in a number of locations. For more information see www.marketingangels.com.au