Are we losing radio too?

Advertising dollars

It doesn’t make it into the news too often, but radio is hurting from the same causes as the newspaper industry is: advertising losses. In radio’s case, it has a lot do with Ipod and MP3 players. But it has a lot to do with the recession too.

Format change! That’s the solution!

I was just reading this *Washington Post* article about a classic rock station here in Washington that is (AGAIN) changing formats to adult/pop contemporary. The station’s owners seem to think this will attract a younger, female audience. It might, if it weren’t for the fact that nearly every other radio station in the market plays Pop and AC. It seems inane/insane to switch formats in this economy. The article says that they station had good numbers, yet it was not enough.

You can’t (and shouldn’t) please everybody

It seems to me this has something to do with what brought Wall Street down: GREED. The idea that you have to have the most, and by a large margin, to be the absolute leader. It does not serve the listener, and it certainly will not accomplish it in the end. People become fiercely loyal to a radio station and its DJs. Whenever there is a format change there will be upheaval and resentment. And frankly, in this market, this particular change causes a homogenization that is truly unbearable.

What about segmentation and target audiences?

When all radio stations play the same music, you can assume they all have the same audience, right? So, if you are trying

to reach older people, where are you supposed to advertise in Washington? My point is that a variety of formats allows media buyers to reach different target audiences. Not everybody is seeking for women, 18 plus. Some may want adults, 40 plus or another segment. In a sense, format changes affect the entire market.

Losing sight of what you are

It seems to me that when you aim for the mass, you actually end up losing what makes you special. This particular radio station has gone through several format changes and I predict will either change again or go off the air. In the era of the Ipod/MP3 player and declining revenue, the solution is to offer something that can NOT be found elsewhere. That is how you find an audience, and more importantly, how you build a LOYAL following.