

# Random thoughts

## Radio Commercials

Does it seem to you that every time you are listening to the radio, and a commercial break comes on, you get commercials on all other stations as well? Does it also seem to you that commercial breaks/DJ gab fests on radio go on for way too long?

It's great that there is still so much advertising on radio, but I think that by making the commercial breaks so long radio stations risk losing their listeners. If I am listening to station, and a long commercial break comes on, I switch stations until I find one that is playing music. If these breaks were shorter, there would be less risk of alienation, IMO.

## Different name, same location

Why is it that store owners think that by changing the name of a store they will get tons of new business? I was just walking home and saw that a day spa/salon just changed their name (and to something a lot more utilitarian). I thought, well, the problem was not the name of the salon, it is the location! Hard to get to, off the beaten path, etc. I don't know if the salon was sold to another owner, but in any case, when I see too many names on the same store front I tend to think problems.

## As if we thought Iran was democratic

I am not sure why Iran bothered to hold elections. Why pretend they are a democracy? Let me point out that the actual leader of Iran is not the president but the Ayatollah, the so-called Supreme Leader. Anytime you have someone ruling a country who is not elected and calls himself the Supreme Leader you are not dealing with a democracy. The problem is that the west

wanted to believe that elections=democracy. They do not. It is not good marketing for Iran to hold elections and then repress the protests when it appears the election is a sham. Talk about a public relations fiasco!

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## A face for radio

Radio advertising has its own challenges. Pretty faces and stunning photography just don't work in radio. The spoken word is key. And the spoken word must break through tons of clutter. Just how do you differentiate your speaking voice from the radio station's on-air personalities? How do you communicate figures, facts and numbers without the benefit of a visual? In short, it takes a really good copywriter and some great voice actors to create a memorable radio commercial.

This struck home the other day as I was driving in South Florida, where one drives A LOT. Thus, one is one's car, with the radio on generally, for long stretches of time. I heard a commercial for AT&T Wireless. It was about getting a cell phone for Mother's Day, but warning kids that Moms don't always understand texting. It was funny and it struck a chord about the differences between generations. It was clever and it got my attention...a very difficult job when one can change channels in seconds. In this case, you had to remember that the advertiser was ATT (not Verizon or Sprint). Thus the commercial had to both draw you in, and repeat key information.

The other problem that radio advertising faces is ability to act (or rather inability to act). If you are home, watching TV, and you see something interesting, you can write down a phone number or a website, and immediately call or visit. In

radio, you are most likely out and about, without access to a pen or a computer. So the commercial must strike a chord and then be so memorable that when you get home you will remember the name of the advertiser and look it up. Of course, with political advertising, you just have to remember the name. In this realm, radio advertising is very effective. You can be repetitious and through frequency, make sure potential voters know your name and a few of your ideas.

The debate in radio advertising is (at least in media buying departments of ad agencies) of reach versus frequency. The answer of course is to find the best balance of both, but I think in the cluttered world of radio, you need to aim for frequency.