

Programmer's Digest

Volume 6 1

Issue 34

10 Commandments

Of A Great PD

An EXCLUSIVE



By Dave Robbins

Through the years, the subject has been discussed countless times by General Managers and radio group executives.

"What does it take to make a great Program Director?"

Throughout America, and around the world, the *great* Program Director has always been in demand — and always will be in demand.

But how do you define *greatness* in a Program Director? How do you

find the Program Director who will rise above all others and create that special sound on a radio station that will lead to victory?

In the age of consolidation and Y2K looming on the horizon, what are

(Continued — See 10 Commandments on page 4)

April Fool!!

April Fool's Day is one of the very best promotional days of the year to showcase your station's creativity — and your ability to think "outside the box" (and occasionally make fun of yourself). Every now and then, even in supposedly "somber" formats (like News/Talk), it's good to show listeners you have the ability to lighten up and have some fun (though I'm still looking for the right April Fool's prank for a Classical station! — any ideas?)

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Continuing Education For The Dedicated Radio Programmer

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Programmer's Digest Publisher/Editor **Todd Wallace** continues to maintain his Phoenix-based programming consultation firm, **Todd Wallace/Associates**. He has provided programming consultation services to over 100 radio stations in the U.S., Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the Philippines. Believing that "good logic, solid strategy, and cunning tactics know no boundaries", his clients have included formats of all types in markets of all sizes. Reach TW at (602) 443-3500 or e-mail: TW3tw3@aol.com

PDQ&A

Station Mascots

Darren Stevens of B-101/Barrie, Ontario asks:
"What are the pros and cons of station mascots as a marketing tool — and how effective are they in various formats?"

Q:

A: Some programmers today view mascots as being too "old hat" to be appealing to the consumer mentality of the new millennium. The more hip-conscious the format, the less inclined a PD seems to be toward using a station sidekick as a marketing vehicle.

Tell that to the management team of WMMS/Cleveland, who tried to do away with their legendary "Buzzard" identity only to be met with grassroots "Save The Buzzard" crusades. "As planned", some say — that this was a calculated ploy to make Cleveland listeners revive their appreciation for the old Buzzard, much like the New Coke "mistake" gave Coke drinkers a renewed affection for Classic Coke. If it was a diabolical plan, hats off to Jacor — it had much the same impact on the jaded senses of Cleveland radio consumers that the Coca Cola 80's corporate mistake/strategy (you decide!) did in boosting national cola sales for the collective Coke brands — WMMS's 12+ Arbitron share has increased from a 4.1% in the Spring '98 book to the latest Phase One Winter '99 Arbitrend of 5.9% since announcing that the Buzzard symbol would continue to be a part of 'MMS!

Tell that to the professional sports teams (or practically any school, for that matter) that use a mascot as part of their "show" and marketing. Often a mascot becomes very much a part of the entertainment content (and value) of every home game.

Tell that to Disney, whose park revenues and character merchandising sales continue to grow year after year. Disney believes so much in the integrity of its characters that they won't allow any

"I've always programmed Top 40 stations that were really Hot AC stations in drag".

— Scott Shannon
PD, WPLJ/New York

TW Tip #7200

cast members at Disneyland or Walt Disney World to take off a costume in public. And they'll never allow a Disney character to be photographed with another mascot — even Smokie The Bear!

The 1999 reality is: A mascot is like any other marketing tool. There are effective ones and not-so-effective ones. But the *right* mascot, with the right attitude or image, striking the right responsive chord with a well-defined target audience, in just the right way, *can* be one of the many positive things that listeners perceive about a station. Probably not a major enough ingredient in your composite stationality to affect TSL, but it could arguably affect cume and become part of what forms P1 partisanship in a listener's mind. As in the case of WMMS. You could make a reasonable case that if 'MMS had turned their back on the Buzzard's heritage

If your music's wrong, your morning show sucks, and you're being out-marketed both on-the-air and off, don't expect Honk The Wonder Goose to lead you out of the mess.

and whacked him, they might have suffered the consequence of being put in "the penalty box" of not just a few diarykeepers' minds — and diaries.)

But in a normal competitive situation, don't expect a mascot to be the driving force behind major audience increases. (Or losses, for that matter, unless the person inside your suit turns out to be an ax murderer.) In most cases, mascots simply become part of your "total package".

If your music's wrong, your morning show sucks, and you're being out-marketed both on-the-air and off, don't expect Honk The Wonder Goose to lead you out of the mess.

By the same token, not all mascots are created equal.

Targeted Appeal. First of all, your mascot has to be appropriate for your demographic and psychographic target or it may weaken the effectiveness

(Continued — see PDQ&A on page 6)

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But be forewarned (and forearmed) — April Fool's Day stunts often carry with them risks not associated with "normal" promotions, which could endanger a station's image (and your personal job security at the same time). As a result, some PDs just aren't willing to take that chance. This can put you at a competitive advantage, if you're willing to take such a calculated risk.

To help you navigate your way past the April Fool's speed-bumps, see the handy-dandy little checklist in the sidebar.

Plan Early

If you don't have your April Fool's Day stunt in the planning stage by March 15th, you may be running uphill to get it done. That could be hazardous, because it limits your time to *think through all possible ramifications*. This is no time for half-baked ideas — and certainly no time to be "winging it". While advance planning is wise, many times a great topical stunt will drop in your lap, which you need to be fully prepared to recognize.

Don't be afraid to seize the moment, as long as you make the time and take the time to plan it out *completely*.

Todd Matthews of the Todd, Bob, & Kerri morning team on WIKX/Ft. Myers gives a good example of one where the advance work really paid off.

X109's Very Own Fan Fair. Scout out ordinary local folk with famous artist names. Bribe them with station stuff to come out to a special appearance on the morning of 4/1. Todd reported they even had a Willie Nelson look-alike. Then it's just a matter of inviting listeners to a prime location with their autograph books and cameras. Make sure your "stars" have ID handy when the inevitable challenge comes from the audience. Gets everyone laughing. Make sure you give away lots of station trinkets to keep the mood upbeat.

Brainstorm with your staff

Maybe stage an in-house contest with a \$100 prize (or dinner for two at a restaurant trade) for the best stunt. You'll be amazed at the great ideas that will flow from a 90-minute brainstorming meeting with your most creative people. Once you've decided on a stunt, schedule one more big brainstorming meeting to develop the complete creative concept and put the "icing" on the cake.

April Fool's Day Stunt Planning Checklist

- Plan early
- Brainstorm with your staff
- Have a purpose/Accomplish an objective
- Involve a celebrity
- Real listeners make it more believable
- Think through *all* of the chess-moves
- Use the theater of the listener's mind
- Generate *positive* word-of-mouth
- Hit listener hot-buttons
- Avoid stunts that will chase listeners, impede TSL, or damage your image
- Mother the millions of details
- Flag any news reports
- Make an "April Fool" announcement
- Alert The Media

Have a purpose or Accomplish a goal

While it's easy to think up pointless pranks to pull (some of which may indeed be humorous or memorable), you may ultimately get more long-term mileage from a stunt that in some way reinforces an element of your station's overall image. A good stunt helps it stick in listeners minds.

Your goal, for example, could be as straightforward as "improving Bubba & Booby's top-of-mind awareness" (which simply requires that they or their names be somehow involved or that it happens during their show).

One of the very best name-equity boosters occurred eons ago in Brisbane (Australia).

Buy The Station. 4BC breakfast jock Wayne "The Poo" Roberts announced that he had just won the lottery and was buying the station, renaming it 4POO. All stationality elements were re-done, even jingles, along with a promo encouraging listeners to "listen this morning at 9:30 for a major announcement" (which, of course, was "April Fool!").

Walk Naked. Handsome Television New Zealand star (and Mai-FM breakfast jock) Robert Rakete promised to walk naked along Auckland's Takapuna Beach if his favorite sports team lost (which it did). His dog was wearing a sweater that said "Hi I'm Naked".

(Continued — see April Fool on page 8)

10 Commandments Of A Great PD

(Continued — from page 1)

the keys for success in today's Program Director?

Years ago, when searching for a PD, GMs and group execs could issue a questionnaire of, say, 200 questions that when answered by the prospective PD would yield a go/no-go response (based upon how many stopsets or weather breaks the candidate felt was proper in a standard broadcast hour). It was fairly simplistic, and yet, GMs always knew that something was missing in the equation. Many GMs have had a difficult time selecting a standout PD, someone who could put that spark back into the station, and raise the station to new and unprecedented levels of success.

The realities of business today dictate a new and different approach. With station groups consolidated within markets, and PDs now commanding several stations in a market, or in regional market clusters, the new "Super PD" is emerging. It is a time of great opportunity for those in programming. Never before in the history of our business has there been such a premium placed upon great talent, and Program Directors are no exception. To be "good" is no longer good enough. But to be *great* is so much more valuable than it has ever been!

There are thousands of qualities of great PDs. And PDs, unfortunately, are not modular. One who has outstanding qualities in one area might exhibit unacceptable weaknesses in other areas. The key is to identify those qualities

that are most aligned with your present programming challenge. Excellent programming consultants like Todd Wallace always recognize programming talent and are always prepared by keeping a list of those talented programmers for future reference.

Listed on the pull-out page to the right (suitable for framing) are the *Ten Commandments For A Great Program Director*. Add your own ideas to the list. In

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He started a bootleg radio station in the basement of his home at age 14, going on to become a successful on-air personality, PD, Group Program Director, and General Manager in Phoenix, St. Louis, and Chicago.

He is currently VP/GM of the three-station group for CBS Radio in Columbus.

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the end, you'll find there are hundreds of points — and many more commandments. Here are a few to start your thinking process.

- 1 A Great PD will always find a way to win**
- 2 A Great PD will love the sales staff**
- 3 A Great PD will balance the use of tools**
- 4 A Great PD will have exceptional people skills**
- 5 A Great PD will understand recruitment**
- 6 A Great PD will be a multi-tasking individual**
- 7 A Great PD loves what he/she does**
- 8 A Great PD will take responsibility**
- 9 A Great PD will produce results**
- 10 A Great PD will always be legendary among staff as a teacher**

Never before in the history of our business has there been such a premium placed upon great talent, and Program Directors are no exception.

Great PD's are not easy to find, but they are easy to identify and recognize. Having great music and promotional skills is a no-brainer. That is a given and a must. By keeping a checklist, and looking

beyond the resume and call-letters, you will be able to hire or become not just a PD, but *A Great PD*. And the difference it will make in your organization will astound you.

Thoughts? I'd love to hear yours. I love to learn from you. Just e-mail me at DaveRobbins@worldnet.att.net and teach me.

TW Tip #7198, #6196, #8152, #12019, and #17043

On "What It Takes"

"Try not. Do, or do not. There is no try."

— Yoda, *The Empire Strikes Back*, 1985

Special thanks to Steve Jones, PD, Mix 96/K-Rock in Edmonton for this reminder of Yoda wisdom

TW Tip #7199 and #8153

Continued —
from Page 2

of your composite image. (*Hiss The Wonder Snake* won't win many converts if your format is Contemporary Christian).

A 'Scot With 'Tude. A lot of what endears a mascot to the public is how well the person inside the suit is able to convey a "personality". The more electrifying the better. Two classic examples are *The Famous Chicken* and *The Phoenix Suns Gorilla*.



The Chicken.

"The KGB Chicken", later known as "The San Diego Chicken" was the brainchild of **Ron Jacobs** when he was PD at KGB.

Ted Giannoulas was hired to dress up in the chicken suit. Soon his unique sense of humor and entertaining style transformed your

ordinary "person in a chicken suit" into a true character with major audience appeal. The chicken achieved fame by doing such antics as mocking sports officials, break-dancing, and giving the "dreaded whammy". (I still clearly remember, to this day, watching the Chicken's appearance on *The Tonight Show* with Johnny

Carson, where it spent two full minutes prancing around the studio to the beat of the music, whipping the audience into a frenzy, and getting a standing ovation as it left!) A legal battle ensued when Giannoulas wanted to "spread his wings" and take-on out-of-town gigs. The court ruled that Giannoulas could continue to be a chicken character, but must use a new suit and identity. Hence, "The Famous Chicken" was born. Now there is even a line of Famous Chicken merchandise (including stuffed animals, coin-banks, and a comedy video).

Let this be a lesson to any station: make sure you clearly spell out, contractually, who owns the "personality" of your mascot — in fact, many stations utilize a tag-team of people inside their suit for this very reason.

The Phoenix Suns Gorilla is one of the most instantly recognizable and likeable characters in Arizona.



His trademark is his unbelievable athletic prowess, which seems to go beyond human bounds (as you can see in the above picture of his flying slam dunk). The Suns website features a spotlight link to Gorilla.com. (Check it out at www.phoenixsuns.com) He's center-stage during every break in the action at America West Arena

(Continued — see PDQ&A on page 7)

Programming Note

This week, page 5 is an 11x17 "lift-out" (with no page number). The backside has been intentionally left blank to provide a clearer image for those wishing to frame the "10 Commandments". (You're welcome!)

Leadership Cliff's Notes | Leading By Example & Making It Personal

Danny Ainge, Head Coach of the Phoenix Suns, had a reputation during his playing days of being one of the feistiest competitors in the NBA. Something he tries to instill in his players today. And he's not afraid to put his money where his mouth is. As an incentive to get Suns players to give their all on defense, he devised what he calls the Take-Charge Plan, whereby he gives \$100 to any player who takes a charge (stands his ground as an offensive shooter drives toward the basket and draws a charging foul). Who pays? **He does, personally.** Much more meaningful than a reward that just gets entered as a line-item "business expense" in the Suns budget.

What this has to do with Radio: Can you think of any situations where putting \$100 of your own money on the line would make a symbolic statement to your staff about an issue that's very important to you?

TW Tip #6198, #7201, and #8154

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(including professionally choreographed dance routines with the Phoenix Suns Dance Team, as well as Gorilla-Cam mischief).

All that having been said, let's examine some of the reasons why the right mascot can help you make friends and influence listeners in 1999 — and beyond.

Reasons To Consider A Mascot In Y2K

What's old is new. All around the world, we're seeing a renaissance of old promotions with retreads for '99 (Cash Call, Beat The Bomb, Secret Sound, etc.). Many programmers are finding that some of these older promotions were logically sound and conceptually strong, requiring very little "updating". The fact that many stations still report continued success stories with their mascots suggests that this vehicle, too, is not outdated. It is a fact that some of the most effective mascots were simply "killed off" when stations evolved into new branding identifications. This may have left the incorrect perception in some PD's minds that "mascots are old fashioned or aren't hip". (Not so — it's just that when you evolve or change a brand, you usually don't want *anything* remaining that reminds listeners of the discarded brand).

So I've searched the "PD" archives to bring back some of the more memorable furry friends to have graced station affairs over the years.

Hope you enjoy this time-tunnel trip (and I hope it sparks a few "new for '99" ideas in your head).

Listener expectations. It seems that for all the changes Radio has undergone, listener expectations haven't really changed all that much. Most listeners still have the same motivations for choosing their favorite P1 station, and listening lifestyle patterns, that they did 25 years ago. Don't get trapped into thinking that because the internal operations of most radio stations have been revolutionized, that radio listeners are now somehow "different". The few differences are more like subtle nuances. And consumers still like to be amused.

A mascot's "inner personality" radiates. Certainly you can "script" many of the antics you'd like your mascot to perform, but the person inside the suit should have an innate sense for how to work a crowd.

Prerequisites: an effervescent personality and physical abilities. Some stations hire gymnasts, even acrobats, to tap into performing arts that "normal" mascots can't touch. Again, the gold standards are: The Famous Chicken and The Phoenix Suns Gorilla.

Anyone who watches the Gorilla go through his paces would swear he's not human! A typical response from fans in the crowd is, "How does he do that???"

Deliver 25-54's by doing good things for their kids. If your mascot is kid-friendly, your station may be seen by many listeners as doing good things for their kids, which will endear you to them (and them to you). This is particularly effective for family-oriented, G-rated stations.



even featured a one-hour *The KayZed Koala Club*, which rated surprisingly well. (*The Koala Club* also served as an effective back-end listener-database, which was regularly massaged.)

STICK UP EVERYTHING
WITH KZ KOALA STICKERS
AND STICK AROUND FOR
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Mascots are great sales vehicles. Many consumers (especially those with kids) are still drawn to events which feature traffic-stoppers and attention-getters. The right mascot (with the right "inner personality") who knows how to work a crowd can regularly meet this expectation — and push it.

Extended remote capability. When I owned KZKZ/Flagstaff, KayZee the Crazy Teddy generated a great amount of weekend revenue and helped to expand the on-location reach of our small staff. We could have a jock doing a remote at one location and put a uni-student in a bear suit for a client on the other side of town. On most Saturdays, we'd schedule two or three Teddy remotes from 9am til 6pm. Plus annual big events, like The Teddy Bear's Picnic, which brought together many sponsors (premium \$\$\$) at a local park.

TW Tip #1092, #3189, #11016, and #17044

Next Week: More Mascot Visibility

- ✓ Short-Term Mascots
- ✓ Mascots Reinforcing Brands
- ✓ Hip Mascots
- ✓ Human Mascots and **MORE!**

The 10 Commandments Of A Great Program Director

by **Dave Robbins**

As featured in the March 1, 1999 issue of Todd Wallace's **Programmer's Digest**

Commandment #1 — A great PD will always find a way to win

Just like a highly tuned athlete, a great PD hates to lose. Not that great PDs are poor losers — far from it. A great PD handles himself or herself with dignity at all times, and understands that he/she is setting the example for future generations of radio people. A great PD shakes hands with the opposing team after the big game. A great PD understands that everything is tied to victory on the battlefield. That extra hour invested with talent, those extra few minutes brainstorming promotions, that extra time spent in the Sales Manager's office, the extra attention to detail — it all adds up to the victory and the great PD sees and understands this. Further, great PDs turn lemons to lemonade as a natural response to any challenge facing them. They will find a way to emerge victorious regardless of circumstance.

Commandment #2 — A great PD will love the sales staff

And the sales staff will love a great PD. Why? Great PDs are inspirational individuals. And the one thing that sales departments understand is inspiration. A great PD understands what the sales staff is facing on the street and works with the sales staff to creatively answer client objections and challenges. A great PD will always act in the best interest of the entire team, and sales is a big part of the team, just as programming is. Great PDs do not build walls between departments — they *tear down walls* and collectively rally the *entire* team in the process. Great PDs understand that everything in life is about **selling** — whether it be selling spots to clients, or selling promotions and music to listeners.

Commandment #3 — A Great PD will balance the use of tools

Great PDs understand that we live in an awesome age of incredible tools at our disposal. One of those tools is the computer. Whether it be music testing, song rotation, or listener data-basing, a great PD will use all of these tools in a balanced fashion. Great PDs see a tool for how it will benefit the station at the moment and on the horizon, and then apply the tool properly for maximum impact and effectiveness. Great PD's understand that certain tools can be relied upon too heavily and can cause an imbalanced Programming department. All programming tools *working in sync* is the way to *maximize* firepower.

Commandment #4 — A Great PD will have exceptional people skills

Quite possibly the most important trait a PD can possess is understanding what makes different personalities respond differently. The only way to successfully lead a talented staff into battle every day is to know each person, inside and out, and manage each differently. A great PD conducts the operations of his or her staff like a conductor would lead a great symphony orchestra. A great PD will assign duties based upon each members particular personality style. The result is pure magic that can be felt around the building and throughout the hallways, transferring to the on-air product. High levels of station morale is a key hallmark of a great PD, and the way to high morale is through the personality structure. A great PD is fair with rewards and punishments in equilibrium.

Commandment #5 — A Great PD will understand recruitment

station performance. A great PD will attract the best. First class PDs attract first class talent, while second class PDs attract third class talent. Once a period of success is attained, a great PD uses this success as a snowball effect, recruiting only the best future players in the process.

Commandment #6 — A Great PD will be a multi-tasking individual

Understanding that being a new millennial PD means multiple operational duties, a great PD will handle multiple stations and markets with ease, making it look "easy" in the process. A great PD understands that in order to grow, horizons must expand. Only the best PDs will leap at the opportunity to handle several markets or stations simultaneously, and enjoy the expanded duties. This ability to think across multi levels of strategy and positioning will come natural for the great PD, who will yearn for the opportunity to be of greater service to the operation.

Commandment #7 — A Great PD loves what he/she does

Great PDs have a working knowledge of all universal laws, one of which is doing what they love and loving what they do. Given the intense level of day to day activity, the great PD will feel right at home among the accelerated timetable of success. Since this is what they love to do, they will have a natural talent for multi leveled operations. They will understand that in any competitive endeavor, it is the concentration of force that creates the victory. They will love to concentrate their force against a targeted objective.

Commandment #8 — A Great PD will take responsibility

Great PDs are comprised of equal doses of humility and confidence. Given this, it will be second nature for a great PD to accept current responsibility, no matter what the scenario. The great PD will want to accept current responsibility, as well as future responsibility for outcomes in which they play a key role. Great PDs long for more and greater responsibility. This makes for a great role model among all staff, not just the Programming department.

Commandment #9 — A Great PD will produce results

Great PD's produce great things and it is no surprise that success follows a great PD. Success is a byproduct of doing things right, and the great PD knows what to do and when to do it. A great PD understands that maximum evolution occurs at the border of chaos and order. So while they may seem chaotic in their approach, great PDs have many things in common with their artistic counterparts, which will propel them to their ultimate success.

Commandment #10 — A Great PD will always be legendary among staff as a teacher

Long after the great PD departs the station, and the rating books no longer reflect the PD's impact on the station, his or her legacy will live. The greatest PDs are always those that have a reputation for teaching. A great PD teaches through example, and by creating a flow of creativity through the station, making everyone he or she comes in contact with all the richer for having done so. A great PD, like a great coach, pushes players to excel when they thought they could not excel. A great PD understands the business, and helps everyone that is lucky enough to have worked with him/her. The true measure of a teaching PD is the entire staff and their outlook. Great PD's affect every part of the station positively — Sales, Programming, Engineering, Traffic, *all* departments. They give of themselves and teach everyone at all times, passing along their knowledge and helping to make the job a bit easier on everyone — in every department.

Programmer's Digest

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Curtain Coming Down On The End Of An Era

As we begin 1999, radio folks are looking at an industry that has changed so completely it's hardly recognizable. As one of the last of the inefficiently organized business sectors, radio has finally found itself in consolidation.

In most major markets it is not uncommon to have over half of all listening attributable to just two companies.

The good news: rate structures have firmed and stations are actually realizing the value of their franchises with bigger profits.

Independents who haven't yet sold find themselves at either the high or low end of the value scale, depending on whether the in-market consolidators have room for them.

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