

# SELLER'S VIEWPOINT

By  
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## I'm the new Todd Storz!

A dozen years or so ago a new name burst like *Gang-Busters* on the radio horizon. (In case you've forgotten, *Gang-Busters* was one of radio's more popular weekly dramatic series—a non-color, non-moving *Untouchables*.) The name was Todd Storz and as quick as you could say *Joyce Jordan*, *Girl Interne* (a daytime dramatic series or “soap opera” of the '40s) everyone in radio was cheering him or damning him, depending on whether or not one of his stations was in your market. Todd Storz brought “showmanship” back to radio, along with a lot of other things, and for that alone those of us who call ourselves radio broadcasters should be grateful.

But the years have now gone by and no new expert has emerged to lead us broadcasters from the wilderness of “formula” radio, so I'd like to toss my hat in the ring and suggest that I'm the expert you're all looking for. Follow me, fellows, because I'm the new Todd Storz.

Let's get down to the serious problems of radio. They may be more serious than you think. During the past half-dozen years, despite radio's great advances, despite the great growth in radio's

dollar volume, radio has been steadily losing audience. We're all so busy trying to mastermind our stations from a 12% or 16% share of audience to a 35% or 40% share that we simply haven't taken the trouble to notice that all we're really trying to do is get a larger slice of a continually decreasing pie.

In many markets we've lost almost as many regular radio listeners as the No. 1 station in the market now has. A Pulse four-year study underlines this fact. Pittsburgh, for example, showed a drop of 2 rating points in the morning, and a 5.1 decrease in the afternoon, a rating almost as big as any station will have in that market.

Figure it out this way: if the bottom-rated station in the market could get all the ex-radio listeners, it would probably become the top rated station. And before you put the blame on the “big eye,” as we radio guys often like to do, let me point out that daytime tv audiences are declining as well. Nielsen figures for '58 and '61 reveal the following: weekly viewing on Monday through Friday, 6 a.m. to noon, dropped from 61.7% in '58 to 60.3% in '61. From noon to 6 p.m., the decrease was even great-

er: 83.9% in '58 as compared with 81.9% in '61. So what they're tuning us out for must be magazines or paperback books or do-it-yourself projects or sex. Thank God we know it isn't newspapers!

I don't think we're going to get the audience back to radio unless we offer something positive. By positive I mean a specific program at a specific time and of a nature that will compel people to listen.

I'm not sure yet just what kind of programs will have positive appeal to potential radio listeners during the next few years. But I do know the kind of programs and schedules that housewives found compelling a dozen years ago, so maybe that's a good place to start. For one, there was the daytime dramatic serial. For another, the mike dropped out the window for a “Man on the Street” program. Then there was the “Woman's Service” program (Mary Margaret McBride, where are you?).

I am not suggesting we go back to old-time radio. I don't think that eight soap operas in a row hold or build an audience nor do I believe that a Vox Pop done circa 1940 will have appeal. But I'm rash enough or foolish enough or maybe just old enough to believe that some of those older ingredients, done in a more modern manner and mixed into a good formula of music and local news, could start enticing some of those lost listeners back.

Whether or not it will work, this is the road we're beginning to take at WKAZ. We are concentrating on the development of program ideas in news and special events and are looking for suitable dramatic material, particularly soap operas which don't sound like they're from the 1920s and '30s. We are moving in the direction of programs that will invite audience participation. Also included in our plans is a woman's feature program, which is nothing new but has virtually ceased to exist in the medium-sized market.

It will be months before we know what the public thinks and they're the ones with the ultimate answer. If this succeeds, Todd Storz can move over. If it fails . . . well, you can't be an expert without trying.



*Hartley L. Samuels, president of WKAZ, is well acquainted with many facets of radio. He is presently owner of WDLB, Marshfield, Wis., and previously owned several stations in the Midwest. He gained his sales experience with IVOR, New York, and WABC, New York, and was general manager at the latter. Early in his career, he worked in program promotion at CBS and NBC.*