



## The Philosophy behind producing a successful Conservative radio talk show

The age of conservative talk radio was ushered in with the repeal of the Fairness Doctrine in 1987, and so a divide between inside the Beltway journalists and heartland America was born. Political dialogue on the airwaves changed for the better. Power was put back in the hands of the people. Suddenly an alternative viewpoint that was intentionally muted by the nation's editorial boards and television news department's was being articulated on conservative talk shows.

Over the years smart radio CEO's and station managers hungry for ratings success gleefully climbed aboard in the hope of increasing more revenue, and at no point in time was it more evident then during the 08' election cycle.

According to Inside Radio, the number of radio stations that carry at least some talk shows, which includes everything from political talk to garden variety talk shows, grew by a third in 2008, to 2,056 from 1,370 the year before. More importantly talk radio has been, and still is dominated almost exclusively by conservatives -- even in a year that saw Democrats capture Congress and The White House. And while terrestrial radio advertising rates continue the downward spiral, conservative talk programming continues to flourish locally and nationally.

Despite what [The Center for American Progress](#) thinks conservative talkers are not hate mongers. Indeed they are eloquent, passionate, detailed orientated people. The executive radio producer must also posses the same skill set. The stronger their research, writing and interviewing skills are the better prepared the host will be. Having an ear for good sound keeps the show's content fresh and hip. Sound in the form of sound bytes educates; music entertains. Both are a powerful combination.

A successful conservative talk show should not be limited to policy wonking or ginning up political discourse. It is the executive producer's job to weave the culture, technology, and entertainment into the mix. Content should be managed by the executive producer within the station or the syndicator's guidelines. Interns should report directly to the executive producer. They should be assigned rudimentary tasks including the recording, and editing of studio sessions and interviews as well as call screening during shows. It is the executive producers job to pass any relevant information they might compile on to the host.

I believe the executive producer should have a clear speaking voice, as they sometimes have to speak on air. If they sound monotone the host should help he or she develop a conversational, radio voice. After all who wants to open a mic and sound like someone over at NPR?

Good communication skills are vital because it is we who deal with the public. Sure technical skills are mandatory, but maintaining customer service is always of the utmost importance.

Producers like me understand how to reach the next generation. Pay attention station managers, one day the 18-34 demo will have disposable income. Republican strategists and pollsters: understand many of them already vote. It is incumbent upon us here in talk radio land to facilitate conservatism to a group taught by the public schools and universities to reject it. Embracing technology in the form of podcasting means our message can be sustained long after radio's traditional programming clock ends. The next generation demands this method of delivery!

Our current audience is activist by nature. They understand public policy can be changed at the grassroots level, and conservative talk radio has become the ultimate megaphone of choice. Two prime examples were conservatives rising up to defeat the Harriet Miers nomination by President Bush; the other coming in the wake of some Republican's push for amnesty.

Naysayers will quickly point out the President's Supreme Court nomination was a Republican issue, and that is true. But it did show that we can disagree publicly with a Republican president, and elements of the Republican Party.

Like the ongoing AIG mess, the amnesty fiasco of 07' inspired Americans from both parties to flood the phone lines and e-mail inboxes of county supervisors, and local legislators. Suddenly blue dog Democrats and Republicans were exuding bi-partisanship. As this phenomenon was taking place Republican Senator Lindsey Graham was shouting down his own people calling them 'Loud Folks'.

That sound byte single-handily placed nationally syndicated shows like Rush, Hannity, Laura Ingraham, and Savage at the local rather than national level. That is the true power of conservative talk radio.

Yet there are some politicians, and bureaucrats who view conservative talk radio as a sinister, partisan way of debating the issues. But many conservative talk shows do an excellent job of inviting all kinds of callers on the show. In fact good producers know it makes for lively debate when someone with a completely opposite viewpoint calls in. Make no mistake about it some politicians in power want the fairness doctrine reenacted. So in a time where music radio is scrambling to reinvent itself conservative talk programming needs the industry's support.

Why?

Because radio may never become the growth business it once was. Radio cannot break new music as it did in past decades. Technology has compromised radio. The 25-54 year old demo is tuning out radio, and the 35-64 year old demo is not far behind. These groups own iPods. Some already participate in social networks. They are all online. Radio lost them in their supreme arrogance during corporate consolidation. The CEOs thought they would always be listening and now they're not.

But radio is not alone. Ad rates are down for everyone who sells advertising for television and newspapers -- most of these organizations continue to cling to the liberal orthodoxy -- including magazines and cable networks...and let's not forget taxpayer funded PBS. Simply put, we live in an age

of podcasting, internet radio, satellite radio, and mobile phones. These mediums have changed the way people access their information, and the hierarchy has been way too slow to react.

Meanwhile cat calls continue to disseminate from Washington when it comes to silencing conservative talk radio, but to my knowledge no one is demanding to break up Time Warner, CNN, GE, the NY Times company, or the Tribune Company.

Of course conservatives are perfectly capable of making a cogent argument as to why their programming remains relevant. The ratings prove it is embraced by a huge swath of Americans. After all someone has to fill in the parentheses between the liberal enclaves of Manhattan and Hollywood.

Today's radio executives must rethink their strategy. Talk on FM is a step in the right direction. Voice tracking is not. Clearly the next generation of radio programming is destined for mobile phones. But not in AOL radio form, which lets individuals stream live stations; instead content will be condensed into podcasts. It will be the producer's job to isolate the most compelling parts of their programming thus turning into a mobile broadcast. The era of personalization has arrived, and we need make content available to an audience hungry for information and entertainment when they want it.