

RADIO ADVERTISING KEYS

TOP 10 COUNTDOWN

10. Production value and voiceover talent.

Contrary to popular belief, these are not the most important element in great ads. Yet they are what clients often use to determine whether they "like" an ad. From the data we've collected through ten years of testing radio ads we've found that there is very often an inverse relationship between production value and ad performance. Yes, that's counterintuitive. Production value shouldn't "hurt" response, right? There are a number of possibilities for why this is true. Maybe good production value distracts ad developers from the right amount of focus on great copywriting. Or, perhaps good production value creates an ad that is so "slick" that it doesn't stand out.

Nonetheless, production and voice are still important. Production must enhance believability, catch attention, and ensure the message can be ingested by the audience with minimal effort. And the voice talent's read must be evaluated for its non-verbal communication, not just what the words mean as they're strung together.

9. Distinctiveness of the offering.

The greater the "me too" factor, the lower the potential for the campaign. If your product is another of the hundreds of weight loss products or diets, then you're likely going to have a difficult time coming up with something new to say to people. Distinctiveness applies not just to the product benefits, but also to the creative approach, the offer, and any other element of the campaign.

8. Effective use of the interplay between emotion and logic.

There are points in the ad where emotional appeals are appropriate, and there are other points in the ad where logical appeals are potent. Few people make a purchase decision based solely on one or the other. Quite often we're "reeled in" with emotion, and just before we buy we look for a logical reason to rationalize our emotional decision. Successful radio ads recognize this dynamic and flow accordingly.

7. Articulation.

There are a number of different ways to express your message. Anyone can get the message across. But only one is the optimum formula that presents the combination to the lock on the door of your customers' minds. Changing just one word or a few words in an ad can have an amazingly large impact on results. We've seen this over and over again - some key insight that produces a small copy change that dramatically boosts results. Or the opposite. Articulation matters. One of the biggest mistakes we've seen is using wishy-washy, non-specific language. Saying something "Product A is designed to do X" is not as strong as saying "Product A does X".

6. Simplicity.

You have sixty seconds. Packing too much into the ad overwhelms the listener, triggering the natural cognitive processes that minimize sensory overload. Leave the kitchen sink in the kitchen. If the kitchen sink is what's so impressive about your product or service, then at least test a focused approach next to it so you can learn which performs better.

5. Use of sound elements to enhance the message.

This is radio. The theatre of the mind. In TV you can just show someone. In radio, you show them with sound. It's both a burden and a benefit of radio advertising because it's both harder to do but more impactful when done well.

We've separated this from #10 because we're not talking about a slick production value, rather the use of a specific production technique to help the ad stand out. This can't be done at the last minute. Use of sound must be considered as the ad is written, and the use of sound that is irrelevant or detracts from the believability of the spot is a detriment to ad performance.

4. Authenticity.

This is hard to do because we're so conditioned to look outside our business for clues as to how to succeed. The result is inauthenticity. Me-too-ism. All things to nobody or nothing to everybody. The best radio ads flow from an authentic connection to a product or service's uniqueness, passion, and identity. Authenticity is influential, believable and enhances credibility. It is also a differentiator (unfortunately).

3. The offer.

As with nearly any direct response advertisement, there must be a call to action that is relevant, compelling and simple enough to grasp quickly. Relevant means it

matters to a potential customer - it reduces my risk, makes picking up the phone a no-brainer, or gives me a reason to go with my emotions instead of my logic. Compelling means it has a "wow" factor. As in, "wow, they must really believe in their product to do that. And simple means it's ... not complicated. It doesn't make me stop and think too much. It doesn't confuse me with language that's spun to sound like it's a great offer but really isn't. One insight is pivotal here: the business model must be built with the potential offers in mind. Think about it - you can't make an offer in an ad that you can't afford to make.

2. The opening attention grabber.

The first impression of a great radio ad must provoke a desire for further exploration. If not, the radio ad will be categorized by the brain as the same old noise it always hears. And it will be blocked out - a victim of the cognitive processes that ensure we don't experience sensory overload. The challenge of grabbing attention is huge. Don't underestimate it. This is a difficult thing to do. Why? Because we're all bombarded relentlessly by huge number of other advertisers who are trying to do it.

One way to think about this is 'don't bury the lead'. Make sure that the most impactful aspect of your ad is expressed early on. Don't wait until 20 seconds into the ad to make your first point.

1. Benefit orientation.

One of the biggest mistakes made is assuming people care *how* something works before they care what it does for them. You must only say *how* if the *what* is so incredible that you need a "reason to believe" in the ad - and then you do it in one sentence or less. Clients seem to love the *how*, but it typically doesn't sell.

The ad must answer the question: what's in it for me? How will it impact my life in a way that I think it will make my life better, happier, or easier? This requires understanding and tapping into the fundamental human beliefs around these topics. A product that prevents a problem I don't yet have? I don't care about that because I have current problems that matter more to me. Prevention doesn't sell. What does sell is something that solves my problem quickly, safely, better and more conveniently than anything else. If you use your 60 seconds in any other way, you're wasting time.