

The **PROGRAM DIRECTOR PROFILE** clarifies a “work in progress” for a responsibility that cannot be isolated to a nine to five job. Therefore, please accept the following as a “growth barometer” for Radio Programmers.

- Part I** Programming Dynamics is a baseline of the passionate commitment of a good PD.
- Part II** Program Director Transition touches on the obstacles that often faces a PD promoted from within.
- Part III** The Day-To-Day PD is a top-of-the-mind review for programmers.
- Part IV** Objectives And Goals is a summary of day-to-day specific projects.

I PROGRAMMING DYNAMICS

Programming may be the most time intensive, attention to detail responsibility in radio; perhaps overseeing the last vestige of live, spontaneous, unpredictable, unrehearsed long-form entertainment. It is a creative, talent intensive; out-of-the-box-thinking ...make it **EXPLODE** opportunity. Programming is as different from Sales as American Airlines is from Greyhound; both are in the transportation business -- airline vs. bus service -- yet, they require different business plans to be successful. Radio is no different, with talent as the pilot and formatics as the flight plan. The PD is the air traffic controller with TONS of challenging competition “on the air.” Sales is the “seating” availability. Without a good flight schedule, the user will go to another airline ... just like radio.

COMPELLING, PASSIONATE programming does not come from simply reading the daily paper or watching TV, then opening a microphone. Every quarter-hour must be structured to “hook” listeners who comprise 94% of the audience, rather than the 6% contest players and/or caller participants. Contrary to a popular myth, radio is **NOT** a First Amendment platform for listeners, but an ENTERTAINMENT BUSINESS ...nothing less!

Baby Boomer to Generation-X mindset is what builds CUME, Recycling, and TSL. Owning the “**ATTITUDE**” position and provoking a “personal emotion” is essential; from trust, disbelief, agitation, surprise, anger, to shock. Predictable programming will not deliver ratings ...or, REVENUE. Billing beyond market share is the hallmark of an appropriately positioned powerhouse, which incidentally, has nothing to do with transmitter power or pattern.

Knowing how to achieve the razors edge is an art and the responsibility of the PD

II PROGRAM DIRECTOR TRANSITION

McVAY MEDIA colleague, Jerry King, Vice President/Operations, joins me in looking at the transition from “just a fellow staffer” ...to PD ^[1].

“ ... The transition from talent to manager is one of the most delicate and complicated situations you will ever experience. For months, or years, you have been in the trenches with your co-workers as a friend, confidant, and have (probably) griped about the Program Director and other managers. You know about every little feud and grudge, and may have talked about everyone on the team yourself.”

Now that you are PD the “bull” sessions will suddenly be silent when you enter the room!

“ ... Some of your colleagues may support your promotion, however, others may be uncomfortable with you going from “one of us” to “one of them.” What to do? Start by creating an atmosphere of stability and cohesion where “interaction” is paramount. Your goal is to engage your team to “see” and “hear” your vision. However, here is the tough part, you have to be encouraging without compromising your accountability. Firm, but fair, is a critical part in moving from peer to PD.”

“ ... Achieving this conversion is about timing. Your transition period cannot last forever. Give it three to five months. If you have not won over the skeptics by then, you never will. In fact, after a certain point, the softer you are, the less effective you will become.”

“ ... As the PD you are also a salesperson selling UP and DOWN; up to your boss, while also selling down to your staff and laterally to the sales department. Most new PD's do not want to “... play the political game,” unfortunately the reality is that everybody does. In fact, it is one of the most important objectives you will accomplish. Rest assured that your staff will become very political.”

For Jerry King's complete article, [Management Advice For New Program Directors](#), go to: mcvaymedia.com

Firm But Fair

- NEVER show favoritism, no matter how close the friend!
- Be consistent and do not “blind-side” the staff.
- Be available, even when you need to protect confidential goals.
- Be cautious of your words and actions; today's inference can become tomorrows deep wound.
- Do not confuse confidence with cockiness, both yourself and staff.
- The PD's responsibility is to cultivate a sellable product.
- Remember ...the tail does not wag the dog.
- Plan in advance ...plan in advance ...plan in advance.
- **Be a coach not just a critic!**

III THE DAY-TO-DAY PD

The Day-to-Day PD is a fundamental job description of what to generally expect within corporate cultures.

- Report to Operations Director/General Manager (*specified by corporate culture*).
- Oversee FCC day-to-day non-technical license regulations; I.E., license, program content, EEO, etc.
- Oversee and maintain quarterly FCC Public Inspection File.
- Adhere to the departmental operating budgets and expenditures.
- Review and approve monthly syndicated programming affidavit declarations.
- Oversee day-to-day on-air Programming Department operations, specifically air talent, producers, board operators, and screeners.
- Is not just a programming coach ...but also a businessperson.
- Must have operating knowledge of the ARBitron process, not just daypart “numbers.”
- Understands that Programming is a vehicle to creating Sales!
- Understands that GOOD radio is not a “short-term” success, but a marathon to achieve sustainable sales.
- Is a strategic thinker, a person who “hears” good radio and knows how to “coach” it!
- Oversee new concepts to the benefit of the target P1 listener.
- Review daily programs with producers and/or talent to coach programming and promotional concepts.
- Accepts responsibility for oversight of the company's most precious resources; talent, time, and cash.
- Coach "on-air" formatics, positioning, and promotion to maximize ARBitron potential to maximize CUME and market share through increased recycling, and Time Spent Listening.
- Welcomes objective, outside opinions, and counsel because the PD is always open to new ideas.
- Keeps the station compelling, entertaining, informative, topical, relatable, and memorable every 1/4 hour.
- Critique program department's “on-air” implementation and style, through weekly airchecks.
- Supervise “on-air” promotional positioning. Make sure daily promotional “content” is prepared.
- Provide promotion director with daily show highlight clips for on and/or off-air promotion.
- Oversee program department personnel recruiting, interviewing, and scheduling.
- Oversee the visibility and positioning of “live” remotes.
- Seek new ideas and opportunities from programmers nationwide.
- Monitor competitors programming for counter-programming opportunities at least two hours weekly.

- Coordinate station communication with network suppliers.
- Maintain day-to-day relations with area special interest groups, sports teams, etc.
- Read publications and press releases to assist on-air talent prepare programs.
- Enter and maintain programming within traffic system; shifting formats, specials events.
- Buffer program department employee day-to-day problem resolution, keeping the Operations Manager and/or General Manager apprised of the situation.
- Participates in planning of television, print and outdoor advertising positioning and development.
- Attend weekly sales department meetings; be prepared to report future programming opportunities.
- Assist in sales closure calls where additional program department involvement is required.
- Administer company policies within program department; personnel forms, legal compliance's, etc.
- Knows that a plan can not be executed alone and must motivate, direct, and lead to constantly win.

IV OBJECTIVES AND GOALS

While every station responsibility and accountability is different, the following checklist is a fundamental "snapshot" of a successful day-to-day.

General Programming Benchmarks

- Supervise formatics, positioning, and promotion to maximize AQH Share and TSL growth through increased recycling to achieve a top **10** A2554 rank (short-term), and a top **5** A2554 rank (long-term); MF, 6AM-7PM and MF, 6AM-9AM.
- Focus heavily on Monday through Friday 6AM to 7PM; Saturday 7AM to 3PM, and Sunday 11AM to 3PM higher-traffic listenership periods.
- Review opportunities with a monthly department meeting including Arbitron data to support daypart needs.
- Update syndicated promos weekly.
- Commercial inventory should air within a 1-minute window of the scheduled time; this could be :30-seconds early to :30-seconds late.
- Station :30-second promos within each hour should feature the next show, or a show later in that day. The station should never promote backwards (shows that have already aired). **The exception is promoting "tomorrow" mornings show promotion during afternoon drive.**
- Weekend promos should not be aired before Thursday mid-day.
- Bullet "liners" should always forward promote.
- "Key" employee telephone list should always be up-to-date, and posted for all employees.
- Attend weekly sales meetings; be prepared to report programming/promotional opportunities.

Morning Programming Benchmarks *(Music or Talk Programming)*

- Meet each Tuesday with the morning team, news personnel included, to review a portion of programming from the previous week. **NEVER** use an aircheck from that day or the previous day, it is simply too fresh in the talent's memory. To avoid fatigue, restrict the monitor/discussion session to 15-to-30 minutes of programming, which should take 60-to-90 minutes.
- Get close to entertainment centers; theaters, arenas, bands, local entertainment publications, etc.
- Get close to local news centers; police, sheriff, fire, EMS, hospitals, daily court arraignment docket, etc.
- Listen for explosive presentation where "emotion" and "compelling" is always up front, not buried in within unnecessary words.
- Government or political information must have a listener impact. Eliminate "wordy" legislator details.
- Listen for attribution, i.e., "...according to the police department..." If the facts are on the record there is no need to "ascribe" the information.
- News writing should be short, and to the point; entertaining and creative, not just informative.
- Keep the overall pace up and entertaining. Reading should "sell," not just present ideas.

- Coach the news department on a creative writing style and presentation, I.E. FoxNEWS.
- Make sure credit is given when audio is lifted from station programming throughout the day.
- Monitor traffic reports for “real time” information that changes with each report. Make sure construction (orange barrel) & radar locations are included.
- Contact the transit company, cab services, FedEx, UPS, Airborne Express to improve of traffic coverage.
- Encourage listeners with cell phones to call with traffic information, and breaking news.
- A daily promo should be recorded and on-the-air within 60-minutes following each morning program.
- Overnight cluster board operators should make a round of news source telephone calls by 4AM.
- Even with limited staff, after news source calls should be initiated no later than 3PM, 7PM, and 10PM.

TALK Programming Benchmark

- Meet with program hosts daily three hours before airtime to review the program plan for the day.
- Talent should record a promo for air at least two hours before each day’s show.
- Meet each week with program talent to review a portion of programming from the previous week. NEVER use an aircheck from that day or a previous day. Focus on one complete hour. Avoid Monday and Friday.
- Working hard, is not necessarily working right! As you review daily sports topics do not merely fall back on “yesterday’s” conversation. Bring a “listener response” concentration to talk programming by requiring multiple hooks and a wider variety of topics.
- Caller length should ideally be 90-seconds ... 3-minutes is a death rattle! A program loaded with differing opinion is more entertaining than the comments of a select few.
- Use common sense and good ears when callers are on the air. Be alert to the dangers of extremely heavy accents, speech impediments, out of target “sounding” voices, or people who do not have their thoughts organized. The perceptual “sound” of the caller has nothing to do with chronological age.
- Fully identify a guest’s background. Never assume the guest is known, no matter who it is! Approximately halfway through the segment, repeat the guest’s name and a give short credentials review.
- If there is more than one guest participating in the program, identify the person speaking as you address them. A mixture of voices over the air is confusing.
- Always allow a minimum of :30 to :40-seconds at the end of each hour to promote the next hour. Avoid the temptation of “squeezing” in one more caller. This is an absolute recycling killer.
- It is crucial that talkradio does not evolve to “name calling.” While we should never be afraid to ask the hard question, we should always be respectful. Learn from the best ... O’Reilly or Hannity.

FINAL OBSERVATIONS

- Is the staff prepared for breaking news any time of the day or night ...any day of the week.
- Is the station PASSIONATE and having FUN on the air!

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Success Comes From...
The Courage to Create
The Confidence to Commit
The Cooperation to Complete
j-GLASS

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^[1] Management Advice For New Program Directors: Jerry King, Vice President/Operations, McVAY MEDIA, Cleveland, OH., www.mcvaymedia.com