

TRIPLE A

The Future is Now!



The Future Is Under Construction

Using your database wisely

By Ruth Presslaff

Ruth Presslaff is President of Presslaff Interactive Revenue. PIR provides Dat-a-Base e-mail marketing software and marketing expertise to over 100 radio stations in the U.S. and Canada. Since everyone is talking about database marketing these days, and since that is Presslaff's area of expertise, I asked her to give us some insight into the subject.

Presslaff sees clear opportunities for radio in the future, but she also wants to caution stations that are currently doing database gathering and marketing that they aren't living up to the potential they have in front of them today.

The future is under construction. Everything's changing. MySpace is a social revolution. Bloggers are becoming stars and bringing down politicians. Buzz no longer has to do with how you're feel-

Database gathering, which has been around since the first Radio Shack employee asked the first caveman for his ZIP code, will become even more critical to radio's survival and evolution.

ing after a couple of glasses of wine and everything to do with how hot your product is.

Closer to home, radio's dirty little secret, that music is just the filler between commercials, is about to get dirtier. Soon on-air content will be an excuse to drive people to your station database. Database marketing is becoming that important.

Database gathering, which has been around since the first Radio Shack employee asked the first caveman for his ZIP code, will become even more critical to radio's survival and evolution. So stop messing around. Follow these five steps and greet the future.

• **Work it like you mean it.** Your database is your lifeline. Give people meaningful reasons to register and an excuse to log back in every single day. Give people a reason to participate in a relationship with you and to interact with you on an ongoing basis.

Reasons to register should transcend contests. There's nothing wrong with

contests, but they're not the long-term relationship builders you'll need to stay relevant.

Exclusive content, access and opportunities will keep you relevant as long as you deliver.

Interacting on a regular basis can be as simple as giving people a reason to log in. Post the names of contest winners every day. Pull together content that your registered listeners will appreciate. Get creative: Build a "time-wasters" section. Someone has to let listeners know there's a site called www.stuffonmycat.com. Why shouldn't it be you?

That's for today. Tomorrow, you'll need to get personal by posting blogs from your jocks or concert reviews from your listeners. You'll need to get exclusive by posting audio streams from station studio sessions or interviews with artists.

And you'll also need to get interactive by letting your listeners tell you what to post, what they like and what they're doing. Give them a hand in creating a microsite just for database members.

So get going. Talk about your station club and its members, events, advantages and perks. Work it. Sell it to your listeners. It will ultimately bring you more ratings, more revenue and more relevance than any one-off promotion.

• **Permission is paramount.** This is a badly overlooked component of database marketing. You're looking for more than just information. You're asking for permission to e-mail, text message (you are texting, aren't you?) or contact database members in some form or fashion. If database marketing is analogous to dating, this is the critical "May I see you again?" question.

Tell people why they should sign up for your e-mails. Post an example of your e-mail. Specify the benefits of getting your e-mail. Specify the benefits of reading your e-mail.

That's not to say registration without permission is worthless. You're adding to the overall profile of your listeners with information on age, gender and ZIP codes. It's also entirely likely that

these registrants will participate on their own terms. Their survey answers and continued interaction are valuable, but if there's power in passive participation, there's plutonium in permission.

One more detail: Make sure your e-mails and messages are worth opting in to.

• **The message makes the medium:** Your e-mail is a virtual on-air break. Slamming it together is like encouraging your jocks to open the mike and talk endlessly about nothing. The very people who are most interested in

what you have to say will tune you out. Keep the opt-in status you've worked so hard to attain. Send entertaining, interesting, relevant messages. Some tips:

Programmers: If you have a "From" line with the names of your station's personality, your call letters and a station logo at the top of the e-mail, don't start the e-mail with "Jocko here from WXYZ." Most of

your listeners have already figured this out. Remember, you're writing for reading, not for announcing.

And please find someone who can write. Be irreverent. Be interesting. Be remarkable. Make sure the e-mail represents the station and that it's something you'd want to read.

Sales: It's all about the offer. Client logos are fine for impressions, but if you want to move product, make a good offer. If the offer is not there, don't send the e-mail. It's not worth the harm you're doing to prized listener relationships.

KPRI/San Diego has a great example of a good offer. GSM Pat Osburn figured out how to sell cars (without selling spots, by the way) and sent an e-mail that was worth reading.

The concept of this beneficial e-mail was simply "strength in numbers." One listener doesn't have enough pull to get a great deal at a dealership. Lots of listeners buying at the same time, however, can get a break.

Osburn worked with a local luxury-car dealership to negotiate a fleet rate for listeners. An e-mail outlined the deal, and hundreds of clicks, many appointments and some car sales later, everyone's smiling.

On a grand scale, this is great. The challenge is that one man's treasure is another man's junk. It's just plain hard to provide benefit and relevance to tens of thousands of database members at once. But there is a solution.

• **Survey, segment, succeed:** While all your database members have listening to your station in common,

they have hundreds of other diverging interests. Surveying listeners is your pathway to relevance and ratings.

The answers to just about anything you've ever wondered about your station — Are the contests still fresh? What do listeners really think of the morning show? Who's buying what? — are available to you if you ask questions and analyze the results. Then be sure to act. Segment your content and offers based on the interests you've discovered.

By segmenting information geographically, Jennifer Williams, Marketing Director of WCSX/Detroit, created a great win. Using ZIP code information, WCSX invited "Workforce" database members within a 30-mile radius of a new home development to an event. An e-mail was sent to this specific segment with exclusive offers and incentives.

How successful was the campaign? Williams says, "The client ended up having five people place deposits on new homes at the event, and my understanding is they all ended up buying homes."

By segmenting content requests, WXRT/Chicago Marketing Manager Tom Lisack combined a great sales platform with a targeted invitation to listen. When listeners register to become WXRT VIPs, they're asked if they'd like bulletins about Studio X, the station's live, in-studio performances.

When Studio X performances are coming up, the station sends a brief e-mail to just that opted-in segment of the database. It consists of a short message, a picture of the band and a sponsor logo.

The targeted message with music content and advertiser support works on a few different levels. First, it works for listeners because they're reminded to listen to something they're interested in; second, it works for the station because it creates a sponsored des-

tinuation for tune-in with the exclusive Studio X content; and third, it works for the sponsor, in this case Miller beer, which receives a closer association with the station.

"The Studio X e-mail is not a Miller ad slapped across your face, it's a sponsorship that's mixed appropriately into the message," Lisack says. "If we sent an e-mail just from the client, we'd get quite a bit of pushback. The incentive for the listener would be lessened. This way we're supporting our listeners and client with a specific message to just the people who have asked for it."



Ruth Presslaff



THE POINT IS

PRESSLAFF INTERACTIVE REVENUE

"The worst thing about the miracle of modern communications is the Pavlovian pressure it places upon everyone to communicate whenever a bell rings."

— Russell Baker