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1145 Kensington Road
Kensington, CT 06037

voice 860.828.8815
fax 860.828.3088
pathfinder@danhayden.com



danhayden@danhayden.com

BE TRUE TO YOUR BRAND

Branding a radio station is a matter of aligning programming and marketing to a unique vision. It is knowing what your station stands for and stands against, and communicating those core values in all internal and external activities. It's unflinchingly *living* the brand everyday in both good and bad times. Brand strategies have as their goal the creation of strong and enduring relationships with target listeners.

Staying true to what a brand stands for is tricky business for radio because radio is so easy to change, and - as a result - so easy to screw up. Song lists are easily changed, as are liners, promotions and advertising. With each change comes the risk of breaking the brand promise. That is a big deal because it causes listeners to reexamine how they feel about the radio station. Just as a disappointing meal at your favorite restaurant would cause you to reassess its *favorite-restaurant* status, a radio station that disappoints by failing to live-up to its brand promise risks its *favorite-station* status. And favorite-station (P1) status translates to more *reported* listening when Arbitron diaries are filled-out while listening to secondary stations is almost always underreported.

Recommendations for executing an effective brand strategy:

- *Get everybody on the same page.* Programming, promotions, and sales departments – along with your website developer and ad agency play vital roles in building your radio brand. Too often they have different ideas about what the brand means and how to execute against it. Bring them together to create a shared understanding of what the brand is and is not.
- *Decide who has decision-making authority for resolving brand-related conflicts.* In most cases, the program director is the best choice for this role since he/she has a clear understanding of programming and the attitudes of target listeners.
- *Be disciplined and consistent in enforcing brand-related guidelines* – even when it hurts to do so. Staying true to what a brand stands for builds trust and brand integrity among target listeners. Remind yourself of the proven connection between strong brands and successful businesses.
- *Discuss how brand strategy translates to the performance of daily job activities.* It is particularly important for the sales department to understand how certain types of advertising conflict with the brand expectations of target listeners. Ads for condoms and sexual performance drugs on Country, N/T and AC radio are examples of advertising that diminish brand strength among core listeners of those formats.

