

In the world of radio today, a promotions director finds him or herself running a promotions department for one or two stations one day, and the next day running a Promotions Department for four or five radio stations. Managing promotions for a cluster isn't easy, but there are ways to make it less difficult than anyone would ever think it could be. There isn't any big secret to it either. It takes attention to detail, delegation, communication and cooperation.

Attention to Detail

Attention to detail is the key to every other element in this philosophy. Obviously no promotion director can micro manage every aspect of every promotion when they are responsible for the management of four or five radio stations, therefore a promotions director needs to be very organized and needs to delegate aspects of their job to other personnel.

Observe the staff every day. There are many types of people who are helping build the cluster, and the promotions director needs to find out what they're like so jobs and responsibilities that they're good at can be delegated. For example, a program director who is very conscious of his or her station's image may be very adept at creating his/her own image promotions.

In this case he or she, if not overwhelmed with other work, might be able to create the station's promotion and use you as the go-to person to make it happen. Then you may have a PD who is really in tune with the music, but not very good at creating promotions. In this case, Promotions need to take the lead in creating the concept and be responsible from the inception to its completion. Knowing the staff and utilizing their strengths is job #1!

Create A Series Of Forms

The following forms; Promotions request forms, remote-appearance forms, promotion change forms, a remote checklist form, a guide on how to utilize the forms for sales and a guide on what is expected from the talent when executing a Promotion, are essential in keeping all departments informed of all

station promotions.

The guides can be used to instruct new hires on the policies regarding promotions and teach new staff members how to fill out the forms. The guides and policies can also be used if you have a problem with a staff member not following the guidelines and policies of the department.

The forms themselves need to be structured for a specific purpose. My remote-appearance and promotions request forms are designed to explain to me what the promotion is about, what the client (or station) wishes to achieve, the dates and times of the promotion, what we've promised, what the client has promised, and what is expected from the talent.

The remote checklist is essentially a list of promotions equipment that the talent uses to check out equipment and promotional items needed for remotes. This checklist can cut down on things forgotten when they go out to remotes.

The forms also need to be routed to different management personnel who need to know about the promotions as well. Our forms go from whoever wrote up the promo, to the PD of the station it is on, to the sales manager and then to the GM before becoming back to me.

This routing allows everyone who needs to be aware of the Promotion to know about it. Plus, by having three other sets of eyes look at the request, errors and questions about the promotion can be solved before it becomes a problem. Promotion Scheduling

The original promotion request forms are kept in a binder for each station in the calendar order of the promotions. Each time a promo request reaches my desk, it's also put on that station's wipe board calendar in the hallway. Finally, each week there is a promotion schedule issued that notes each promotion, remote or appearance for each station. All this scheduling may seem like overkill -- but it cuts down on forgetfulness and fosters communication and delegation.

Learn to balance the job. It's very easy to fall into the trap of making sure the paperwork gets done and talent gets assigned without paying attention to remote execution, equipment maintenance and inventory and the actual creation of compelling remotes, appearances and promotions for the cluster.

I am not a believer that the promotions director needs to be at every remote that every station does -- that could become taxing and counter productive. And no promotions director can hear every giveaway on every station either. But the promotions director needs to hear some of them and he/she needs to be paying attention to how each staff member is executing their job when it comes to Promotions.

Delegation

To put one key person in the position of creating, executing and approving at least 2 book promotions for each radio station, taking care of all the value added promotions that the sales people need help with, approving and helping to create all the sales promotions, showing up at every remote with equipment and nowadays being the NTR Director's go-to-guy with the planning and execution of NTR events is impossible. This is why things need to be delegated to other people.

As one of my former general managers told me, "be the shit filter." Delegate to your staff, some of the tasks that they are good at. If a sales person is good at creating his/her own sales promotions, let him. If you have a PD that can create his own book or station promotions, let him or her do that and just sign off on it. Use this extra time to help those people who are not as good at executing these tasks.

Utilize The Interns

Interns can decorate those register to win boxes, interns can deliver those register to win boxes to clients. Interns can run errands like filling up the van with gas, picking up printing, sorting out those tickets for giveaways, copying prize forms, cleaning up the prize closet, typing up and double checking the weekly promotions schedule, doing legwork that's appropriate.

It's hard to determine what should be delegated. An easier list is what should not be delegated. Don't delegate the approval process. Don't let a PD or a salesperson green light a promotion without your input. Don't overlook the details of any promotion. Don't let anyone else buy remote equipment without approval. Don't let anyone else order promotional goodies, bumper stickers, banners or anything with a logo. Don't rely on others to solve complaints regarding prizes or a promotion. And the biggest no-no: Don't delegate the execution of major events.

Communication

Communication between departments is paramount to a smooth running promotions department. The promotions director needs to know what everyone's goal and agenda is with every promotion.

A promotion director cannot be part of the "us versus them" mentality that many stations have between sales and programming. He or she needs to know when to finesse the PD into the sales promotion from hell and he or she needs to know when to tell sales to keep its nose out of a promotion.

Communication with everyone will help gauge when this kind of delicate guidance is needed.

Communicate in groups and one on one. Meetings can be a good tool for group communication. Meet weekly with other managers. This would be where PD's, the sales manager, webmasters and any AE who is planning a promotion can get questions answered.

Discuss specific issues that impact the stations, such as promotional materials, giveaway goodies, remote equipment etc. Development of policies, refining of policies etc. should also be discussed here. In addition -- any major issues that programming or sales has with promotions should be discussed in these meetings.

Pop in to a sales meeting now and then. Give feedback about what promotions is doing and find out what's going on in their world. Ask the sales manager to keep you abreast of any meetings promotions need to be at.

Be available to meet with clients and AE's regarding sales promotions or sales campaigns that may involve promotions. Give AE's the support they need to close the deal by being the cheerleader that goes to the meeting and help present the promotion end of the deal. Work with the client and the AE to meet the goals the client wants to achieve with the Promotion. If an idea is bad, be honest about it, and give an alternative that will work.

Put It In Writing

There are times when writing things down can clarify a point, explain ideas better and express any one of the things needed to be communicated to someone

else. Enhance a verbal praise or reprimand with a memo. For larger promotions explain the concept, methodology and the goals in writing.

Larger promotions and events should be laid out this way because of the need for detail. Staff memos are a good way to remind staffers about upcoming events, thank them for their participation in events and keep them abreast of developments in the department that impact them. For meetings, create a written agenda of what is to be discussed.

Take the time to verbally explain the written policies to new hires and interns, yes it's all there on paper - - but the personal touch can answer questions, a personal touch can build a friendship, foster understanding and give the written word meaning.

Cooperation

Being a promotion director is to take what events, promotions, NTR projects that the sales department wants to sell and develop and execute them to the best of the department's ability. If the cooperation doesn't exist between the Promotion Director and the other individuals involved, then there is the dangerous possibility that the promotion being planned will not go very well.

Cooperation goes beyond being the liaison between sales and programming when it comes to promotion development. It's cooperating one on one between individual talents, individual sales people, program directors, the GM and the client. Cooperation, ultimately, is working together to get things done.

When attention to detail, communication, delegation and cooperation are utilized correctly, the pitfalls and problems associated with promotions, remotes and appearances will be minimized. The Promotions Director will be informed and in-tune with what is happening at his or her station, and most importantly be directing the promotions of his or her cluster.

Rob Creighton is a former promotions director and is presently the Vice President of Operations for CSR Media, LLC, and program director of WRXQ-FM in Joliet, Illinois. He can be reached at rob@csrmedia.com.