



THE LUND CONSULTANTS

TO BROADCAST MANAGEMENT, INC.

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Lund Top Ten Vol. 6 – Newscasts That Work

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...Deliver What Listeners Want!

Radio news has changed over recent years, and the product delivered is often not in sync with what listeners actually want. Researching listener desires is part of what the Lund Media Research/Lund Consultants team does, and these ten tips are designed to focus on what listeners really desire most. One note: we mention 9/11 several times in this article. It remains the single most defining moment in how listeners describe what they want in radio news.

- 1 **Morning News matters most.** Five-minute news at the top of each hour is only for AM news/talk stations. For FMs, morning news is most important. Noon and afternoon news is not as essential as breaking news of important stories. Needed are brand new stories that touch people in important ways. Examples are 9/11, a Presidential candidate being rushed to hospital, etc.
- 2 **Just when does morning begin?** America gets up earlier than it did 20 years ago. Morning drive begins before 6AM in most markets, and news should begin by 5AM or 5:30AM in most markets. There are exceptions. Resort markets are later. Markets with a long commute are earlier. And if you're in Phoenix in the summer, outdoor jobs may begin at 5AM! Check with your local water department for the time of the first flush. That's when your station must also be awake.



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- 3 **News you can use.** How do people like their news packaged? Most people don't want lengthy hard news and events. Rather, they desire the top stories in headline form, providing more detail when a story warrants. They also want news that affects their lifestyle, money or family issues, as well as interesting and fun stories. And news should be arranged in order of importance to your listeners, not by geography. Local will often be the most desired story.
- 4 **On-scene coverage is a plus.** If your news staff size permits, on-scene coverage is a big plus. This is especially true for news/talk stations. When disaster strikes, listeners choose a particular station based on how that station performed in the last emergency, and as a result of promotion of its coverage.
- 5 **Sound connected.** Have an arrangement with a radio network or TV network affiliate to provide strong national and international coverage for events like 9/11 or the breakout of the Iraq war.
- 6 **News never sleeps.** A 24-hour newsroom is still a plus for news/talk stations, but it's not realistic for most station budgets. Network news for overnights can fill this void. Even more essential is having the top news on your website for anytime access. 24/7 accessibility is more important than 24/7 staffing. Perception of availability is of greater consequence than the live bodies!
- 7 **Avoid repeating the local paper.** Radio listeners are smart enough to figure out this trick. If you must use newspaper info, rewrite it in "forward style" rather than recapping yesterday's news. For example, instead of talking about yesterday's fire that damaged a business, tell listeners about the business's doors opening this morning, but only for the cleanup crew. Put events in the present, not the past. With government meetings, talk about the effects of last night's meetings as a way to make the story more current.
- 8 **Dependability is a key selling feature.** Big news/talk groups have used this positioning for decades, and it works! It's easily the most listener-beneficial theme in news promotion. News positioners like "Depend on it" are very strong with listeners.



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- 9 **Plan interview segments.** They provide depth for a news-intensive station and allow an informed morning host to provide info without a long newscast. A tight 30-60 second length is best. A "live" interview can be edited to fit a certain time length and still cover the most important issues.

- 10 **Traffic is important news.** We've seen the growth of traffic problems in towns of all sizes. Travelers are more concerned with tie-ups and backups than ever before. People want to know about delays, including road construction. Update this info immediately and repeat it often. Use listener cell-phone reports to add extra "eyes and ears" for your listeners.

For more information, see The Lund Consultant's *News Stylebook*, available in the Radio Shopping Cart. It's designed to improve the writing, scheduling, delivery, and overall produced sound of radio news at local stations in this age of Instant Information.