

This week I found myself in a conversation with a Radio exec I thought was a GM. As it turns out, he's no longer the station GM, but is on-board as consultant and consults other stations around the country. We began talking about music research, and I started to get a very interesting perspective from this once GM, once VP Programming, now consultant. His words to me were:

"The biggest challenge right now is getting markets to want to spend the money for research. The return on investment is so great when you get your music right that it's hard to believe that everybody doesn't just see it as an absolute investment as opposed to an expense. I've had this discussion with people over the years many times. You're cutting 25, or 30, or 50 thousand dollars out of your research budget when a single rating point in this market, even in a small market, like the 100th market, a single rating point is typically going to be worth more than 300 thousand dollars. And in a large market, can get up into the millions range. It's absolutely amazing to me that people think they've saved money when they eliminate the one item that ensures that the radio station is on target. Even more than the personalities, with music based stations, it's the product."

After hearing this, I said, "Wow!" Can I have you start making some calls for Kelly Music Research?!" He laughed and continued:

"Before I was a GM and ran stations, I had a long background as a VP of programming for a couple of different groups, so I've always been a product guy at heart. In any of these situations, I'm a big believer that you make sure that the product is right and everything else takes care of itself beyond that. And if you don't do that, the greatest sales management in the world isn't going to fix a ratings problem. To me, signal and product targeting are the two big things that determine whether you're going to succeed financially, not just ratings-wise, but 'financially.'"

He and I are scheduled to speak again. I thought it was refreshing to hear his stance on the importance of getting the product right and the belief in music research as an investment, not an expendable line item.

I speak with many GMs and PDs each week, from all size markets. All will agree, the economy is terrible, and it's not looking better towards the end of the year. But there are those groups out there that are finding ways to get things done without the traditional funding they're accustomed to having. If there's a will, there's a way.

As always, I welcome your thoughts.