

**Paul Kelly, VP/GM, Kelly Music Research**

By Mark LaSpina

*For nearly twenty years, Philadelphia-based Kelly Music Research has been conducting local callout music research and library testing. Today's budgetary concerns at many radio stations have forced them to rely less and less on research, and in many cases, have lost their research altogether. So we turn to twenty-plus year radio industry vet Paul Kelly to share his opinion on the current state of research affairs, PPM, the NAB and his thoughts on the future.*



Paul Kelly

**With music research being cut by budgets, why is it important for programmers to convince their owners that they need to start doing music research again, and what is Kelly Music Research doing to make that possible?**

Consumer/listener appeal continues to change and evolve at a rapid rate. If radio expects its music to remain relevant to its audience, it needs to do music research. There are too many other audio options out there for radio to lose its listeners to. Without music research, radio is making guesses about what the listeners want. The stakes are high and radio cannot afford the consequences of wrong guesses. Because of the lack of music research being done, stations are seeing lower time spent listening, lower audience levels and lower ratings which also means lower station revenues. I haven't met an owner yet that calls that a formula for success. By doing music research, and getting back in step with what the listeners think, radio can once again increase TSL, increase ratings, and increase revenue. Making this possible, Kelly Music Research gives stations the option of paying cash, using commercial inventory for barter or a combination of both to get research projects done.

**What types of music research are programmers most interested in conducting these days?**

Coming in from a cold, winter day, you want something that's hot. It doesn't matter what it is: soup, coffee, tea, cocoa. You just want something to change how you feel. Radio is the same way. Many stations have been left out in the cold without any research data and they need to be *warmed up*. Many radio stations are happy to get whatever kind of research (traditional callout, library or online research) they can get their hands on and afford.

**Are there new and different ways of engaging the audience to participate in music research?**

Kelly Music Research has just introduced our new library testing method, **DSD---Digital Survey Delivery**. DSD costs half of what a typical library test costs. It's a random recruit that starts with a phone call screening respondents to participate in a music survey on a Kelly Music Research website. Stations using DSD appreciate that the survey sample is comprised of passive listeners, no professional test takers or station database partisans. Station owners like the pricing: 500 songs, \$11,000.

**What are the biggest challenges facing programming and sales today, and how do you advise clients to make sure these two departments are on the same page?**

Programming doesn't have the tools (music research) it used to have to help keep the station focused. Ratings have slipped and revenues have dropped. Commercial avails exist in an environment when it's not as easy for the sales departments to fill them. Kelly Music Research advises clients to get some value from these avails as barter inventory to help fund a research project.

**What are you finding are your clients' biggest concerns with PPM?**

Like any big ticket item, return on investment.

**Appointment listening has been a significant issue in the PPM world. How are you advising your clients to incorporate appointment listening strategy into their programming game plans?**

Condition the listeners to the appointment setting. Like any promotion, heavy pre-sell and heavy post-sell. Get your listeners comfortable with the idea you're keeping them in the loop on when something's happening. Philadelphia radio stations have electronic billboards displaying what time a big ticket giveaway or concert announcement may be happening. E-mail and send a text blast to your station database about what will be happening and at what time on tomorrow's morning show. The more touches, the better.



**Is there a point where PPM information and music testing intersect so the data can effectively be used together to help in the decision making process?**

We're not there yet. PPM measures listening impressions with many uncontrollable variables. If you're in line at a 7-11 wearing a PPM, while your new favorite song is on their radio, and you walk out of the store or an employee changes the station, that PPM result may look drastically different than that song's research score.

**Working with GM's as you do, are you getting any sense that they're seeing a light at the end of the tunnel in terms of advertising revenue recovery?**

There are many GMs whose markets never see the real highs or the real lows. Their staff is conditioned to sell and provide their clients with results. These are the groups we've seen having the most success.

**If you were running the NAB today, what initiatives would you focus on to help broadcasters weather this economy?**

The call for younger radio minds attending the NAB was a popular theme this year. So once they attend, do you put them on panels of how they think radio should be done? I'd take it a step further and include/invite local listeners/businesses to be on panels at these conventions. Many radio stations have never done any kind of research. It would be an eye opening experience to have a panel of radio listeners in that NAB town on a session discussing what/why/how they listen to radio. This could show radio the value of being in touch with their listeners and advertisers. The same could be applied using a panel of local business people.

**What were your thoughts about this year's NAB Radio Show in Philly? What positives did you hear people talking about?**

For many, the NAB felt like a "Come to Jesus" meeting for radio. If anything positive, we are recognizing the error of our ways and there is now hope that the economy won't get any worse. However, stations are still hurting and trying to operate with fewer people and resources. They are sorry but stuck. The recurring "We have to do something with Digital" theme sounded like an admission radio is regrettably lost after fifteen years of ignoring the Internet, and effective use of social media hasn't even made it to radio's radar screen yet.

**What does radio need to do to make 2010 the year to go from survival mode to a medium that is once again thriving?**

Radio needs to figure out the digital space and lead rather than follow.