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ZAPOLEON MEDIA STRATEGIES PD QUESTIONNAIRE

PROGRAMMER PROFILE

- What is the most important skill required as a Program Director?
If I had to single out the most important skill for a Program Director, it would be the ability to lead and to lead well.
- Rank in order and elaborate on the most important elements of a successful radio station
1. Music. 2. Mornings 3. Marketing. Basics, basics, basics. You must play the correct music, have a compelling morning show, and lead the market with memorable, lifestyle promotions.
- What stations do you consider “great” and what characteristics make a great station?
Stations that I consider great are 93/3 FLZ in Tampa and G-105 in Raleigh. What makes a station great is a very distinctive vibe. These stations create the feeling that if you are not listening to the station you are going to miss something.
- Who are your station's biggest competitors? What do they do well and what can we learn from them?
In my current situation, our biggest competitor is WEZL. It is a 20 year old heritage Country Station. WEZL’s greatest strength is their legendary morning show. Familiarity breeds comfort and listeners like to feel they know their morning show. It’s a program that is recognized and revered in the market. I have learned from them that nothing can replace time and consistency.
- What stations are the best in the country in your format? What makes them great?



If I may, I am going to answer this question as a Top 40 PD. I feel the best CHR's are Z-100, 93-3 FLZ, G-105, and Channel 955. What each of these stations has in common is the fact that they lead the day with a great morning show. All of them are on top of pop culture, their music is right, and they are constantly setting the bar for compelling and memorable promotions.

- Describe the typical "customer" of the format.
It's a 26 year old female. She's just starting out in her career and likes to hang with her girlfriends and have fun. Our customer is either in a relationship or may be looking for the next one, but is not ready for marriage or kids. We'll call her the "American" Pippa.
- What challenges face your format in the next several years?
What challenges the format is staying relevant. Programmers need to make sure the younger audience continues to listen and of course how to be entertaining and have compelling content.
- What are the biggest challenges facing radio in the next several years?
The challenge will be to embrace the fact that radio is the last form of intimate traditional media. We can win, thrive and survive by staying focused on creating and delivering compelling content.
- What steps does radio need to be making to adjust and remain a successful medium?
Re-invest in personalities and continue to create compelling content. The Music Machine / No talk mentality will be the death of radio.
- What are the greatest challenges facing the radio station you are being interviewed for? (only answer if applicable)
- What tools do you feel are essential to your success as a program director?
The tools I feel are essential are the ability to effect change, have a live and local staff, plus a marketing and/or promotions budget and research tools.
- What role do you think a Group PD or consultant should play?

A Group PD or Consultant is a great sounding board and often the voice of reason. It is someone who can see the situation from a different angle and bring insight.

- What do you feel you will get in this job that you can't get anyplace else?

My true love is CHR radio. I am a fan of great talent. I want to be able to coach a great morning show and/or help create a great morning show. I also work with the next generation of talent that will one day man these morning shows. I will also be able to create fun radio. I know I will be given the opportunity to do it at this station.

- Who has had the most influence on your programming philosophy and why?

I grew up in Massachusetts in the late 80's early 90's listening to radio stations in Boston and Hartford. Steve Rivers was my first influence as a great PD. Then, when I was hired at WRTS/Erie as PD, I had the fortune to work directly with Dan Vallie. We together launched Star 104. I learned so much about programming from Dan and to this day he has to be what I consider the biggest influence on my career.

MECHANICS

- How do you ensure a great morning show every day?
Preparation, planning and then execute it. Of course like Captain "Sully", one must be ready to react to whatever may "fly" their way.
- How do you critique your current air staff, and manage their strengths and weaknesses?

I manage every personality differently. It's important to know what motivates talent on your team. I work very closely with my morning shows and gain their trust and respect. I work daily with them to help them reach their goals. They realize that we are in this together. I do the same with all talent outside of morning drive. I enjoy the challenge of figuring out what makes them tick and how to motivate them to grow.

- Should announcers have the ability to change minor elements on the clock to improve flow, accent a promotion, etc.?
I feel that a morning show on a roll should be given some flexibility to make minor changes during the show, however the rest of the day should sound similar and formatic clock changes should not happen unless it is a major breaking news story, weather alert, or something that is totally out of the norm.
- Do you utilize a station voice? Who is it?
Currently I use Scott Fisher for WIWF; we use him for our young country Station. At Z-104 in Madison, we used Dave Foxx from Z-100. Dave was our station voice for 5 years. We used him in a way where he was not just a random voice. Dave actually became part of the fabric of the station and was ultimately an additional personality. With creative and compelling promotional copy, a voice-talent can be another star on the station.
- What is important to a station's technical sound?
Stations need to pop on the dial, sound crisp and have a good balance between highs and lows. I have a hard time explaining this on paper. I just know when I hear it.
- How often do you update imaging liners.
Primary imaging in usually updated quarterly. I have new imaging added each week for station events, contesting, and major promotions. Music promos are updated weekly as well.
- How often should a program director monitor his radio station, what system do you consider best to do that.
Your station should be monitored each and everyday. I monitor the morning show each morning. I listen to my stations all day at work. How could I not? The only way to know how your station really sounds is to listen, a lot. Plus, I love it.
- Describe your relationship with the music industry and philosophy on music adds and rotations.
I think I have a good relationship with the music industry. This is how you can maximize partnerships. However, the most important thing is

**to only play the right songs and not becoming a slave to the labels.
Play the hits and partner up with the labels on OH WOW type
promotions that money can't buy.**

MANAGEMENT

- In regards to the programming position that you are being interviewed for, what do you think you can bring to this situation that makes you the uniquely qualified person for the job?
I bring a life long passion for radio and the ability to create compelling and MEMORABLE radio stations.
- What type of leader are you and how do you define leadership?
I am a strong leader with a set plan. The plan is executed and everyone always knows exactly what is expected of them and what they can expect from me. I do everything in my power to make everyone on the staff a contributor and a successful member of the team.
- What are the things you do best?
Coach talent. Create promotions.
- Take your time and sort out your talents.
At Z-104 in Madison I had a heritage Morning show with big personalities and egos and was able to develop a relationship with them and build their trust and help them grow their show with new ideas and concepts. I also had younger talents in Midday's and Nights. I hired Katie Sommers from an internship to part-time and later Midday's at Z and under my coaching she developed into a strong on air personality and went from Z-104 in Madison to WFLZ in Tampa. I also coached an intern with no on-air experience to Nights. He recently left Z-104 for a Morning Show in PM Drive at WJJS in Roanoke, VA.
- List your greatest weakness as a Program Director.
I think too big sometimes.

- Keeping an airstaff motivated can be difficult. Discuss how you motivate your air staff.

I try and motivate the staff by constant communication and keeping everyone involved with the process. No one likes to feel left out. It's everyone's station and I listen to their opinions and ideas. Ultimately, the decision will be mine, but it would be wrong not to hear what people had to say. It takes a village.

- What would members of your staff say about you?
They would say, "Jon is a great leader. He is very organized and a fan of great talent."
- What would your boss say about you?
He would say, "Jon is a strategic thinker. He is very organized and is a great manager of people and talent."
- What would your sales manager say about you?
He would say, "Jon is a great team member. He is easy to work with and creative problem solver."
- What are the greatest frustrations you experience on a regular basis in your current position?
At WIWF, it would be the lack of staff and marketing budget.
- What's been your biggest management challenge?
I would say it was how to deal with a highly successful morning show where the members hated each other.
- Describe the best person who ever worked for you or with you?
I would say it's Beth Ann McBride. She did the morning show for me at WRTS/Erie. Beth Ann was a great on-air personality that always stayed relevant and was so passionate about the brand. Beth Ann constantly gave me ideas. Her enthusiasm was infectious.
- If you could make improvements in your current job, what would they be?
I would first hire a live staff or at least a live midday personality. I would also add a promotions/web person to the team.
- What's your relationship with the biggest ego on the staff?

In Madison, I had a big morning show big personalities and egos. With Connie & Fish, and I was able to gain their trust and become a trusted advisor to their show. They each knew that I was not out to “get them” but that I cared about them and their success. This made it a lot easier to be real with them and know what was important and what was just BS.

- Describe when you tried to help someone else change.
I try and help people that work for me on a daily basis, which is my job as a Program Director/Coach.
- Describe a mistake you've made with a person and the outcome.
Early in my career, I was guilty of becoming too close of friends with my employees. It's good to have close working relationship with your talent, but not too close. When that happens, sometimes boundary lines can be blurred. A purely business decision can become personal.
- Who is the most disagreeable person you've worked with and how did you handle the relationship?
I had a General Manager at a pervious station that was just a very angry individual and honestly there was no way to work in the situation, so I decided to find another job and left.
- When you get really angry with someone, what do you do?
I usually don't get really angry. I have been disappointed in someone's behavior and/or work. I normally call them on it and try and figure out what happened. I want to fix it together so it does not happen again.
- What kind of people would you rather not work with? What annoys you? What are your pet peeves?
I want to work with passionate people that love radio and the business of radio. The kind of people that are just as excited about the small wins as the big ones. I do not like negative people or people that always are making excuses for why something cannot be done.
- From time to time, it's natural to have a disagreement with the General Manager or another department head. What is a recent example of a disagreement you have had and how did it resolve itself?

In my current position, I have been working on re-branding the radio station. I wanted to create a new vibe for it, and one of the things that I wanted was to produce a new station logo. The go ahead was given by my GM to start the project. Various versions of a new logo were created and then after we decided on one, my Corporate President did not like the logo and shelved the project. I was really disappointed. It seemed like a waste of time and sadly, resources. But in the end, it was their decision and I support that. Plus, if I ever need a new logo, I have one ready to go!

RESEARCH

- What forms of marketing research are most effective? Offer comment on each of the following:
Weekly or Bi-Weekly Call Out Research on Currents, and annual Perceptual studies.
 - Focus groups - **can be effective when you are looking to reinforce the brand of a station or morning show.**
 - Strategic studies

MARKETING

- What skills do you possess that will enhance the promotional development of the radio station?
I have created and executed hundreds of successful promotions that have added to the overall stationality by creating compelling on-air content and made money for the station at the same time.
- What forms of marketing and advertising are most important? Offer comment on each of the following:
 - Direct mail – **only useful for a specific promotional plan**
 - TV – **TV that is targeted and placed during big events like awards shows, and big events is effective. Unless you have a huge TV budget I am not a fan of using TV.**

- Telemarketing –**useful for the launch of a new promotion or a new morning show**
 - Billboards –**most effective way to get the message out to the cume**
 - On-air contests - **On Air contesting is very important, not necessarily for the quantity of prizes given away buy for how the prize is given away and how it adds to the energy and excitement of the station.**
 - Database marketing - **very effective tool in 2011 and beyond. It's important to give listeners a reason to become part of your database and continue to make it part of there reason for listening**
 - Radio Station Website – **great way to be all things to all people and use the web site as the ultimate face of the station.**
 - Social Media – **social media is the new marketing tool, more people can be accessed and influenced though well maintained face book and twitter accounts that they can be by the actual station web sites.**
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- What is the most effective promotion you have been involved with? Why was it effective?
Z-104's Bridal Survival! We played our own version of Survivor with brides competing for a 20K wedding package. We received unbelievable TV exposure from this yearly event. It was held in a high traffic location and became a very strong NTR event as well. Typically, the station would make 20 to 30K in revenue along with securing all of the prizes. The last year I was at Z-104 we also incorporated web cams, and twitter updates and created a brides Face book page.
 - Discuss the most effective promotion a competitor conducted against your station? Why was it effective?

I cannot really remember a promotion a competitor did that ever really wowed me.

- What are your considerations when sales approaches you with a client that "needs" a promotion?

I try and create a promotion that makes sense for both Sales and Programming. It's not always the case, but in this day and age we do our best to make the client happy without sacrificing the integrity of the Programming philosophies of the station.

- The competition launches a big money promotion, how would you respond?

If I had an unlimited promotional budget where I could match or increase the giveaway I would try and neutralize the promotion with giving away more money and create confusion. If I had no money, I would try and focus on creating a promotion that would be on a different level...a promotion that regardless of how much money you had...you could not buy it! Access to celebrities, artists, etc.

ORGANIZATION

- How does a typical day for you start?

My day starts at home. I watch the Today Show for about 30 minutes and then monitor my morning show and/or a competitor's show and see what they are talking about. Then, I get going and usually hit the station around 9ish. I take care of urgent emails and phone calls...then meet with the morning show daily after the show.

- What systems do you use to stay on top of things?

I am very organized. I have a planner, both electronic and paper. This way I have access to anything I did in the past with information on what worked and what did not work. This way I can plan accordingly for the future.

- How do you keep up with industry changes?

I am constantly learning as much as possible, researching trends,

- Describe a big decision you've made and your process in making the decision.

Hiring a competitors morning show for our new start up Country station. We had the chance to hire away the heritage Country Morning show in Madison , WI from Q106 to WMAD and we went through a long process and decided that it was the best move to put the station on the map and give it instant legitimacy.

ABOUT YOU:

- What motivates you?
Competition, winning, great talent, creative promotions and a desire to get things done.
- What kind of music comprises your home collection?
I love all kinds of music. Bruno Mars, The Fray, Sugarland and Journey to name a few.
- What's the craziest thing you've ever done professionally? Personally?
Moved to Charleston, SC
- What's the best educational course you've taken? The worst?
PD Grad School at Arbitron
- What TV shows do you watch? What newspapers, magazines and books do you read?
I watch Grey's Anatomy, Big Brother, Survivor, The Voice, West Wing, Flipping Out, Weeds, House Hunters and more. I usually read USA today daily.
- What do you read?
Motivational Books, I do not read that, many fictional books.
- How do your friends describe you?
Funny, Sarcastic.
- Who is the most interesting person you've ever met?
Rick Rambaldo.
- Describe your family?
My family is very unique, but I love them.

- Of what achievement are you most proud and why?
I am proud of being a teacher and coach.
- What do you do in your spare time?
When I can I like to travel and enjoy time with friends
- What has been your most elusive goal?
The balance of work and home.