

***Strategic Market Analysis***

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***KXXX RADIO, City1/City2***

***[Date]***



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## Notice

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## Introduction

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On November 22-24, 1992 we visited the City1/City2 area to conduct a Strategic Market Analysis on behalf of KXXX. In the course of that visit we used the following techniques to gather the information upon which this report is based:

- ! An extensive and intensive audit of KXXX and key competitors
- ! Trips around the market to get a feel for the promotional activity and general visibility of KXXX and other stations

It is important to bear in mind that a market audit of limited duration is very much like a statistical sample. . .and this report is in turn very much like a survey report based on such a sample.

Things which usually do not happen might occur during the audit period—and things which usually do happen might not. These distortions can influence our recommendations.

We always attempt to minimize such distortion through our pre- and post-visit conferences with station management, but inaccuracies can still creep into our written reports. If this occurs, we suggest that such inaccuracies be brought to our attention so that we may revise our recommendations accordingly.



## ***Background & Objectives***

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KXXX has been quite a successful “upstart” radio station, in the sense that it has captured a sizeable share of market advertising revenue in the face of stiff rate competition from higher-rated stations.

But it is troubling that KXXX's programming has never quite got the job done in terms of making inroads against its more established competitors. More to the point, KXXX has had difficulty establishing and maintaining its own consistent format direction through a succession of program directors and accompanying programming changes.

The objectives of the consulting project of which this report is a part:

1. Is the basic format of KXXX the most appropriate niche in which to score audience and revenue gains?
2. If not, what format approach would be more appropriate?
3. How can KXXX fine-tune its format to provide the best possible sales vehicle?
4. What suggestions might improve the performance of individual on-air people?
5. How can the music become more targeted and more consistent?
6. What marketing approaches can and should be used to maximize station exposure and consumption among both advertisers and listeners?



## Action Summary

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1. The competitive field in City2-City1 radio is mediocre at best. Most of the stations and most of the personalities sound like they think they're great, when in fact they are emphatically *not* great.
2. In terms of format coverage, most of the stations are occupying broad but well-defined niches.
3. In evaluating whether KXXX is itself in the most appropriate format niche, we find that there is a gigantic hole for a pop-music station serving 25-54 adults. This is the natural "hole" for us to fill—and realizing it should minimize the desire within the station to go after some other format niche (like WQQQ's).
4. Parenthetically, if an LMA or duopoly opportunity presents itself, there is a viable hole for Classic Rock as well.
5. KXXX's identification package is pretty good but could be better:
  - a. Add the frequency to the call letters to make for a more comprehensive station name.
  - b. Replace the "best" in the slogan with a better-testing word.
  - c. Replace the jingles with newer, brighter ones.
  - d. Replace the sweepers with a brighter, more upbeat style.
6. We should devote some attention to developing and promoting a coherent set of station benchmarks, better to position and differentiate the station.
7. KXXX's commercial policy of 12 minutes in four clusters per hour is sound. I do recommend balancing out the clusters, however.
8. Station production is okay, but tends to be a bit sloppy and a bit over-produced; the spots are over-written and the jocks rush through them.
9. I would downplay no-talk music sweeps. They serve no useful purpose, and they rob us of the opportunity to identify ourselves.



10. Musically, KXXX needs to get back to doing what it can and should do best—serve the 25-54 adult with relevant, familiar, fresh-sounding music—and stop trying to go after 99Q.
11. At night, I recommend that the station program Love Songs instead of getting more CHR still.
12. The KXXX morning program is quite good. Aside from a couple of technical points, and perhaps a tendency to want to yuk it up too much, this team is a winner—better than any of the competition, in my view.
13. The other jocks on the station have the potential to be above-average and better than the competition. But they need to work on communicating with the listener rather than doing a radio show, and on getting more in touch with what the listener feels is important.
14. All in all, I believe that KXXX has the talent and the potential to get its act very much together!



## Competing Stations

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Before we get involved with the programming and marketing of KXXX, let us take a listen around the dial to get a sense of the formats and the presentation quality of the stations with whom we compete.

The first thing that struck us during this audit was the rather mediocre level of radio being done by our competitors. The morning shows are especially telling: the personalities give the impression they think they're the best in the world—assertive and egotistical—when in fact they are not that good at all.

Here, then, are some capsule commentaries on the stations with which KXXX competes:

### ***KBBB (102.3) - Oldies***

Billing itself as “B-102,” KBBB promotes “Good Times And Great Oldies” and “The Best Music Ever Made From The Fifties, Sixties And Seventies.” Like the slogans, everything about this Oldies station is right out of the manual, if not always done that well.

The music is not very well focused, borrowing too much product from AC and AOR stations and not sticking enough to unique “Oldies” product. The music is also too scattered, not concentrating as it should on that all-important 1965-1975 era, which gave birth to the seminal musical movements which drive the tastes of the Big Chill crowd—the Beatles, the Stones, Motown, etc.

The personalities on B-102 are average for the market, mostly pukers who can execute a format but cannot establish any sort of visceral relationship with the listener.

Technically speaking, KBBB seems to have a weaker-than-average signal, at least in my listening at the hotel (Clemens) and on the road.

Mediocre as B-102 might be, it does have a unique and well-defined format niche, and doubtless has the “Oldies” image for the market. Their lack of focus will keep them from broadening their core, but their format will keep others from grabbing that image.



## **KIII (97.9) - Country**

“97-9 Kick FM” is a straightforward Country station with a spare, clean format, well-mixed music and personable jocks.

There is nothing too special about this station, from their rather prosaic positioner (“Country’s Hottest, 24 Hours A Day”) to their rather dry personalities.

The music is a good blend of mostly contemporary-sounding Country music, with occasional forays into the past. Judging from our comparative listening, KIII is more contemporary in its music, and more music-intensive, than its competitor, WGGG (see below).

The personalities on KIII are all about average for the market. They have good voices and bright acts, but they are too wordy, too hearty, too much “on the radio,” which gets in the way of effective one-to-one communication.

On a technical note, many of the elements on KIII—especially commercials—are cut off at the beginning or the end; is this a function of some automation system from hell, or bad carting? Either way, it is faintly annoying, even to the listener who won't know why.

## **WGGG (105.1) - Country**

“Country 105” is the other Country FM in the market, and from moment to moment there is not that much difference between it and its format competitor KIII. WGGG, like KIII, is pretty straightforward in every respect.

In some dayparts, WGGG's personalities are better, more natural; but in others, KIII has the edge. At some moments, WGGG's music seems livelier, but most of the time that advantage goes to KIII.

WGGG seems to be less music-intensive than KIII, taking more the full-service route and peppering its programming with agriculture features and other information elements. This probably hurts them for the most part, since FM listeners are mostly there for music.

WGGG's commercial breaks seem longer and drier and talkier, too, perhaps because many of the commercials are dry and deadly.

All in all, WGGG-FM is doing nothing to bring disrespect to the vaunted name, but the station lacks flair. Although the 'GEM name is golden in the market, and



should be good for some image brownie points, format competitor KIII is a better station.

## **WQQQ (99.5) - Adult CHR**

“99Q” is a typical CHR station that is trying to mature its approach to capture more adults—more of KXXX's audience, in this case—and achieving mixed success.

WQQQ bills itself as “The Tri-States' Music Station,” which is innocuous enough. . .but they present that slogan in an obnoxious, laser-effects-laden sweeper produced with a ponderous (and muddy) Voice-Of-Doom voice, the overall result of which is a real adult turn-off.

Musically, WQQQ does indeed try to go after KXXX during the day, and succeeds to some extent—as much because KXXX is playing some things it shouldn't as because WQQQ is playing some things it should.

If everybody were formatting true to form, WQQQ would be a current-based station playing tunes from the CHR charts and KXXX would be a recent-gold-based station playing tunes from the AC charts. It sounds like WQQQ is doing *its* part, but mellowing somewhat the energy level during the day. . .while KXXX is perhaps playing too much in 'QCY's sandbox. (More on this in our section on **Music**, Page 24.)

True to form for a CHR, WQQQ is playing its fair share of “Rhythm” (Dance, Urban, call it what you will) product. This is good for us and damaging to them, since a lot of that music is a turn-off, even for the CHR life-group listener.

Also, the station seems to be getting drawn into the alternative musical forms that are trying to break onto the charts but haven't quite done so. This tends to give 99Q a less familiar musical sound, even for its CHR core. Again, score one for us.

The personalities on 99Q are average for the market; they display that obnoxious CHR in-your-face attitude—an attitude that is fading among successful stations in the format—which tends to drive listeners away.

All in all, 99Q is not the worst CHR I've heard, but it certainly is not the best, either. They are on the one hand trying to block or react to other stations in the market, and on the other hand playing the role of musical aggressor, the hit-maker. The result is interesting but not consistently listenable.



## WZZZ (103.9) - Album Rock

This station, which goes simply by its call letters, is the market's AOR station. As seems to be the tradition in the market, WZZZ's presentation is—to borrow a phrase from a friend—“exceptionally mediocre.”

Musically, WZZZ plays it ultra-safe about half the time, playing pop hits by core album artists; and off the wall about half the time, playing depth cuts by artists nobody much cares about to begin with. The result is a poorly-programmed mish-mash that only the PD's mother of invention could love.

The announcers on WZZZ are worse than average for the market. They, like so many around here, are performing almost a parody of a radio deejay with no reality, no listener connection.

In short, WZZZ is a self-indulgent small-market approach to a format which, in other hands, would probably be a big hit in City2-City1.

## Conclusions

This is an unusual market in that the presentation quality of most stations is what you might expect to hear in a small, one-or-two-station market. . .and yet there are at least six viable competitors on the FM band alone.

Aside from the Country format, in which two stations are battling it out, there is a clear separation of formats—on paper, at least: one each of Oldies, CHR, AOR and AC. But each of those stations is sort of drooping toward the middle, playing it very conservative and very pop, so that there is a lot of musical duplication across the board.

Further, no station seems to want to get too definitive about *what it is*. The CHR is a “music station”; the Oldies station is playing “the best music ever made”; the AOR outlet doesn't really say what it is.

I suspect that this is being done—or not done—for sales purposes; I suspect that since everyone is competing for the same advertiser dollar, no one wants to be too distinctive, too different.

Obviously, listeners in the market are accustomed to the standards set by these stations, and it is a mistake to assume that the station which raises the standards will gain the advantage. Still, it is worthwhile to set a goal to be better than these other guys in terms of formatics, presentation, personalities, production, marketing focus and technical quality—a goal which should not be that hard to achieve.



## Ideal-Format Search

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Before we proceed with a critique of KXXX as it sounds today, it will be valuable to decide whether we even need to proceed with such a critique. In other words, is KXXX on the right track, given the surrounding market environment?

During our visit, the station GM and acting PD and I participated in an exercise which might be called, “Find the hole.” (In the book *Positioning: The Battle For Your Mind*, authors Ries and Trout called the exercise “Cherchez Le Creneau,” which is French for the same thing.)

If we stack up our competitors on the FM band—we're not too concerned about AM, since consumption of that band is different, and mostly by different people—not counting KXXX itself, we see that the following formats are being covered:

- Album Rock
- Contemporary
- Country
- Oldies

If we assume for the moment that the ideal thing for KXXX is to find a format hole that is not now being covered, eliminating the above covered formats gives us the following options (format definitions courtesy of *Duncan's American Radio*):

- Adult Contemporary
- Black/Urban
- Christian
- Classic Rock
- Classical
- Full Service
- Jazz/New Age
- News/Talk
- Nostalgia
- Soft AC
- Spanish

Some of these we can eliminate right away:



- ! Black/Urban—no appreciable ethnic audience; format doesn't work outside of Top 25 markets
- ! Christian—small available audience; hard to make money
- ! Classical—ditto
- ! Full Service—not proved on FM yet, though starting to be in bigger markets
- ! Jazz/New Age—*tiny* available audience; *real* hard to make money
- ! News/Talk—see Full Service
- ! Nostalgia—see Full Service
- ! Spanish—see Black/Urban

Others, however, are worth considering:

- ! Adult Contemporary—hits the 25-54 “money demo” squarely; balanced female/male appeal; foreground format; lots of promotional opportunities
- ! Classic Rock—good 25-54 male format with spillover at the bottom end; natural beer-and-pop format, and with proper presentation can score a lot of adult advertisers
- ! Soft AC—surprisingly broad demographics with balanced female/male appeal; advertisers like to listen

Of the three, by far the strongest in terms of advertiser and listener potential is Adult Contemporary. (Classic Rock would be the second choice, and might be kept in mind for any LMA or duopoly plans.)

It just so happens that KXXX is already in the AC format, so the conclusion is to keep it there. Thus for KXXX's formatic future, we are talking about refinement, not replacement—evolution, not revolution.

Let us further define our format in terms of target audience:

- ! Primary demographic 30-40
- ! Secondary demographics 25-30, 40-54



! Female/male ratio 70/30

! Psychographic profile slightly upscale, professional

Thus, we might characterize the ideal KXXX listener as a 35-year-old female with a “gray-collar” job, probably a working mother.

You may be saying, “This was a rather foregone conclusion, wasn't it? Why waste time and space on this exercise?” Yet we often find that taking the time to “reinvent” ourselves—even if we end up back where we started—is a valuable thing to do.

In the case of KXXX, as we shall see when we get into our commentary on formatics, there is some evidence that some of the programmers have been trying to move into more of a CHR format, viewing WQQQ as a primary competitor. Stepping through the foregoing exercise—as we did in our meeting at the station—makes it clear that competing with WQQQ is a very bad idea, since we are thereby abandoning the most valuable niche we could possibly have, and in so doing giving rise to the possibility that some other station could move in on top of us.

Thus, having defined KXXX's ideal market niche as Mainstream AC, we can proceed with our analysis of how to bring the station's current format more into line with that ideal.



## Format Elements

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In this section we discuss the “glue” that holds KXXX together and makes it a tight, consistent, unique, identifiable entity.

### Call Signature

Currently KXXX is using as its “call signature,” or station name, the call letters alone—the simple, unadorned “KXXX.”

Using the call letters is intelligent. After all, Arbitron reports that about three-quarters of all station diary mentions are in the form of call letters. But it is also a good idea to include the station's “address” (dial position) in the name, since research shows that most people in most markets will tend to refer to FM radio stations by the number alone.

Thus we want to incorporate the dial position into the name; but should the number we use be the digitally correct “92.9” or the rounded-off “93”? This is a matter of some dispute, especially with more and more digital radios in use; but our feeling is that the rounded-off version is cleaner and much easier to remember, and that listeners with digital radios know enough to try a couple of decimal points on either side of the whole number anyway.

Further, we have found evidence in our intercept research that announcing a digital number can give rise to misunderstanding: “92.9” can be played back as “99” or “90.9.” In other words, when you give listeners more information than they can comfortably absorb, *they'll* “round it off”—and you have no control over what they'll come up with.

Station management has been discussing the use of “Variety 93, KXXX” as the call signature, and I endorse this plan wholeheartedly. The word “variety” tests very well for the AC format, and using it in the signature allows us to define our USP (unique selling proposition) every time we say our name.

### Positioning Slogan

Currently KXXX is using as its primary slogan, “The best music of the seventies, eighties and nineties.” Parts of it I like and parts of it I don't, for the following reasons:



1. Identifying the music we play in terms of year groups is a very good idea; it defines us and differentiates us.
2. Using superlatives like “best” and “most” and “better” and “greatest” can backfire with the listener. The common response is, “I’ll decide who’s best/most/better/greatest.”

A word that tests very, very well among adults is “favorites,” and we have successfully used that word in slogans for a number of AC stations. Let’s try it on:

“Favorites of the seventies, eighties and nineties”

Notice that we do not say “*Your* favorites”; this is thought to be presumptuous—“I’ll decide what are my favorites”—while omitting the Y-word seems to sidestep that problem.

## Jingles

The jingles currently being used by KXXX are extremely old-sounding. They do nothing to reinforce an image of an upbeat, fresh, contemporary adult station.

The first recommendation, therefore, is to retire this jingle package altogether.

Jingles are important, however, for a number of reasons:

1. They provide an excellent way to identify and “sell” the radio station.
2. They can be used to supplant jock talk at times, thus preventing jock talk from becoming a listener irritant.
3. They brighten the sound and pace of the station.

So our second recommendation is to acquire a new jingle package as soon as possible.

There are several good packages available from reliable companies. We like working with JAM Creative Productions and TM Century Productions; these two companies consistently turn out the best and most useful packages.

You may want to contact each of these companies to get demo cassettes or CDs of their AC packages. . .



JAM Creative Productions—Fred Hardy, (214) 388-5454  
TM Century Productions—Janie Autz, (800) 375-1031

. . .after which we can discuss specific recommendations.

## Sweepers

In today's radio, sweepers have become a vital way to identify, promote and position. The KXXX sweepers do all that—but are they doing it properly?

The sweepers I heard seem to be symptomatic of the tendency to want to duke it out with WQQQ: they are intense and “nasty,” in the style of CHR (which is now going *out* of style, incidentally). (Technically, the sweepers are also muddy.)

It is much better for an AC station to take a brighter, more upbeat tack with its sweepers—friendly instead of nasty, happy instead of intense. They should paint a picture of KXXX as being a warm, friendly, fun place to be.

There are several voices that can give you what you're looking for. Among them:

John Driscoll  
John Driscoll Sweepers  
643 North Hollywood Way  
Burbank CA 91505  
Business (818) 841-9418  
Fax (818) 841-1209

Jim Merkle  
Voice Imaging  
Route 228, Box 29  
Mars PA 16046  
Business (412) 776-9797

Bill Ratner  
Bill Ratner Voice-Of-The-Station  
Business (213) 464-5678  
Business (818) 888-3572  
Fax (213) 666-0882



Randy Reeves  
Randy Reeves Voice At Large  
5080 Bainbridge Court  
Lilburn GA 30247  
Business (404) 925-8868  
Fax (404) 279-7653

Bill Shannon  
KIOA Radio  
5161 Maple Drive  
Des Moines IA 50317  
Business (515) 266-6060  
Fax (515) 262-9124  
Home (515) 270-3826

Our recommendation would be either Randy Reeves or Bill Shannon; I think you'll find those guys to be naturally in the ball-park, requiring less direction, less trial and error.

## ***Jock Talk***

We will address individual performances in our **Air Personalities** section (Page 28), but here are just a couple of general format points:

1. For the most part the jocks are good about doing station ID in each break. If it is not now formatted this way, you might want to make the call signature the very first thing in each break, and (in abbreviated form) the very last thing in each break.
2. As noted later in the report, it would be good for the jocks to reflect more about what is going on with the people, places and events in City2 and City1. . .rather than just talking about what is close at hand, like the records, the temperature, the time, and so on.
3. In this day and age, I'm not sure that it does a lot for us to constantly be promoting the fact that our music comes from CDs. This is either a given—or a non-issue—for most listeners, not necessarily a positive. About all it really does is take up more words on the air.



## Benchmarks

A “benchmark” can be defined as a feature or a contest or some programming event that can be used to image and position the radio station in the listener's mind. In other words, if the listener thinks of KXXX, he or she thinks of the benchmark.

Examples:

- ! “Casey's Top 40”
- ! “All Request Lunch Hour”
- ! “The Drive At Five” (uptempo set for the drive home)
- ! “Pillow Talk” (love songs—see Page 25)
- ! “Saturday Night Cruise” (oldies)

As we revamp KXXX's position, we should examine the current benchmark roster and look for others that will fit what we're doing. . .and then promote the hell out of them.

## Commercial Inventory

As I understand it, KXXX's policy is to run up to 12 minutes of commercial matter per hour, in up to four clusters.

This is a very workable and competitive policy, as long as it is controlled.

I further understand that the clusters are scheduled as follows:

- ! :17 and :47 are filled first
- ! :35 comes next
- ! :55 is filled last

I might suggest a more balanced hour, since many of the little programming beliefs which have us bunching up clusters in certain quarter-hours and sweeping music in other quarter-hours are invalid.

Here is what I would do:

- ! :52 is filled first
- ! :37 is filled next
- ! :22 is filled next
- ! :07 is filled last



## On-Air Promotion & Production

Generally speaking, the production on KXXX is pretty good, but not spectacular. Many of the spots seem to be announced rather than delivered, and sometimes the production effects detract from rather than enhance the selling message.

Some of the editing seems a bit sloppy—voice stepping on vocals, uneven levels, untidy musical trails, bad timing in jingle donuts, an so on.

Often the voice talent on the spots sound completely unconnected to the copy and the listener, just reading a string of words fast enough to fit them into the prescribed time frame.

Speaking of which, some of the copy is indeed over-written, necessitating that faster-than-natural read; I would suggest two things to correct this:

1. Under-write the commercials:
  - a. Use a Copy and Production Order form which emphasizes the fact that in a radio commercial only one fact at a time can be adequately communicated to the listener.
  - b. Use a copy writing form with conservative timing indications down the left margin, to alert the writer to how long the copy *really* is, not how short he or she can read it.
2. Give the jocks the flexibility to edit for time, so that the copy can better fit their natural, conversational reading style.

Personally I favor simple, direct messages where “creativity” is defined as attracting the listener’s attention to the message in a way that will motivate him/her to take action. Too often in our business, creativity is thought of as bells and whistles instead of focused relevance.

I know that sometimes production can be a frantic thing, but if everyone is made aware of what is acceptable and what is unacceptable—to the point of asking for re-do’s on sloppy work—the quality level of production will improve quickly.

On a technical note, some of the carts seem out of alignment, or it might be the source material—like the “City1 Mall” jingle, for example.



## Music Sweeps

I don't think it is a good idea to program as many no-talk segues as KXXX is doing right now. We should remember that every "dead segue" is another lost opportunity to identify the radio station.

No research has shown that listeners object to a quick station ID between two records in a sweep, and the upside for the station is tremendous—especially since we have reason to believe that many listeners in the market assume they are listening to 99Q when they are really listening to us.

There are many devices that can be used to insert the call letters between records:

- ! Quick jock record intro
- ! Regular jingle
- ! Whisper jingle
- ! Sweeper
- ! Promotional dry track

If the clock is set up properly, and the jocks are trained properly, there is no need for more than one or two no-talk sweeps in an hour—and we still can sound like we are playing a lot of music and not talking a lot.



## Music

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Musically, KXXX is in the AC ball-park, but as noted elsewhere, the selection and mix displays an attempt to play outside of our own sand-box.

### **Baseline Music Points**

KXXX's music spans perhaps too wide a range, covers too much ground in its attempt to be competitive with other area stations. Especially, there seems to be a Rock bias in the list, which means we end up playing lots of white male artists in a row.

Then there are some records that are one or two notches over the line, records that we shouldn't be playing—like “Get Ready” by Rare Earth, or “Riders On The Storm” by The Doors.

Inasmuch as Rock oriented music is not the taste of our mostly-female 25-54 audience target, we need to weed out inappropriate selections, and “educate” the PowerPlay system to separate different records of that same type.

Given the results of our format-search exercise (see Page 11), it would be a good idea to “reset” the KXXX music to a focused list of strong, proved records for our target audience.

Here are my recommendations with regard to selection and rotation:

1. Reduce the amount of current product played. Play a couple of “A” (chart-topping) records per hour and that's it. . .meaning we only need 9-11 titles.
2. Lean on Stay-Currents, Recurrents and Recent Gold as the workhorse categories. This is the music our 25+ listener thinks of as “current and familiar.”
3. Play selected oldies going back to the Sixties, choosing more carefully the farther back we go.

Together we can work up a clock (or set of clocks) which best accomplish these objectives within the framework of your feature and commercial load.



## Evening Programming

At this point, KXXX has chosen to become even more like WQQQ during the evening hours (7 PM-Midnight), reasoning that the available audience is younger, and that many younger people do not enjoy the over-the-edge music programmed on 99Q.

However, I would recommend going in a different direction—to a Love Songs feature. This program would feature softer AC music, interspersed with requests, dedications and “Good-night” wishes.

Suggested titles:

- ! “KXXX After Dark”
- ! “KXXX Night Light”
- ! “KXXX Pillow Talk”
- ! “KXXX Love Songs”

This move makes sense because it is much more in line with the station's format and target audience. . .and experience shows that such a program can actually *create* an evening adult audience.

In addition, a love-songs show proves to be a valuable benchmark feature by which the station becomes known in the marketplace (for more on benchmarks, see Page 20).



## Morning Show

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Ralph & Joan are really quite good. Taken individually, each one is upbeat, witty and full of life.

Together, they work smoothly and harmoniously. They bounce off one another extremely well, each adding to what the other is doing or saying, rarely stepping on one another. Each is quick on the uptake, quick to capitalize on an opening made by the other one.

These are things that some morning teams take a long time to develop, while others never do. Obviously the talent and the chemistry are here.

I think this morning package would be even better if we could improve the number of records played per hour. I understand that most of the time they get to five or six records, where the ideal would be more like eight or nine.

We may want to take a close look at the morning clock to see how we can reduce the clutter without reducing the impact of what the guys are doing, to create more time for music.

About the only thing that I could find fault with in Ralph's and Joan's performances is their tendency to chuckle uncontrollably at things that are mildly amusing. They sound like they are having fun, which is good; but they have to be sure that they don't sound artificial when they yuk it up.

Joan does a very good job when she is in the midst of a newscast. She reads smoothly and with comprehension, telling the story to the listener rather than reading it at him or her. Her sense of what is important to her local listeners seems to be good, as she balances local stories with regional and national stories of local interest.

But sometimes Joan runs words, phrases and sentences together without proper "punctuation"—pauses and inflection. It might be a good idea for her to mark her copy ahead of time to signal places where she should pause or emphasize.

Ralph's boardwork is a little bit tight, especially when he segues from a jingle into a record. He mashes them together, when a little bit more breathing room would make it sound better.

All in all, this is a fine morning package. We just need to make sure that Ralph and Joan do not get carried away, both in terms of the length of their commentary and the artificiality of their *bonhomie*.



## ***Air Personalities***

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Let us take a quick listen to the rest of the air talent on KXXX, in daypart order:

### ***Rhonda K. (Midday)***

Rhonda has a nice voice and a personable style. . .but at this point she is not using that voice of hers as well as she might. Her delivery is mechanical, devoid of emotion and connection. She is saying the words and executing the format, but she is not reaching across the table to the listener.

Rhonda drops her “T”s when she goes from one word to another, as in, “Restaurau all request lunch hour.”

Rhonda tends to speed through her breaks, which reinforces my feeling—and the listener’s impression—that Rhonda is merely saying the words rather than feeling their meaning.

However, I believe Rhonda has the potential to be a very good personality. She needs to become less mechanics-conscious and more listener-conscious, which will come more with time and practice than anything else.

In the meantime, she can accelerate the process somewhat by taking a moment before she opens the mike to settle herself and to visualize her listener (some jocks put a mirror or a picture in front of them to help the visualization process); then, when she goes on mike, she can talk to the listener she has visualized.

### ***Brian M. (Afternoon)***

Brian has a friendly and upbeat approach, bright and connected.

He sounds a little bit like he’s “on the radio,” but he has that additional element of enthusiasm and emotion and interest, which can be developed to supplant the more mechanical style. Brian is a good executer with the potential to be a lot more.

A case in point, underscoring Brian’s lack of contact with reality, is when he was introducing and outroing Joan R.’s live report from the site of the “hostage situation” in City1 on one of the days of my audit. While Brian was *saying*



“Obviously a very serious situation,” his tone of voice was the same one that he would use to introduce the new Phil Collins record. He just didn’t sound like he understood what was going on, that he was that in touch with reality.

This was understandably a tense situation for all concerned, and called for a different kind of on-air behavior than Brian was accustomed to, so he can be excused. I use the incident as an example merely to show that Brian’s “natural radio style” right now—the one most effortless, most habitual, for him—is a sort of artificial deejay act.

The good news is, he can break the habit, and fairly easily I think, by using the same exercise I suggested for Rhonda (Page 28)—visualize your listener and talk directly to that person.

### **Jamie T. (Night)**

Jamie has a good voice and an enthusiastic manner, but he is kind of over-selling everything he does. He has a natural exuberance, but it does not seem to be directed toward his listener—the connection really isn’t there. He seems more to be doing a radio show than engaging in a one-to-one relationship with his listener.

Jamie’s boardwork is a little bit tight, a little bit slam-bang. He needs to loosen up a bit, so that his segues are tight but not overlapping.

Jamie has not developed to the point where he can deliver a line in a natural, conversational way; he is still *announcing* everything. Over time, he should develop the ability to feel what he is saying, and envision a person to whom he is saying it, which will improve the connection he has with his listener. (See my advice to Rhonda on Page 28.)

Jamie tends to get wrapped up in the music he is playing, giving artists, titles, album titles and brief bits of information. All this is well and good in its place, but ideally Jamie will make more of an effort to get involved in the lives of the listeners and what they are doing and thinking, rather than requiring the listeners to get involved with what he is doing.

In short, the relationship between Jamie and his listener should be based on more than just the music he is playing.



## Conclusions

While I think the KXXX air staff has the potential to be above-average for the market, there are a few things that everyone needs to work on:

1. Breaking through to the listener rather than living in the studio:
  - a. Visualize an ideal or average listener.
  - b. Get involved in the community.
  - c. Drop lots of names on the air—*show* you're involved in what's happening with your audience.
2. Loosening up the boardwork a bit. This is not Top 40 or CHR radio—and even in that format, as for KXXX, I recommend tight but not overlapping segues.



## Conclusion

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Based on our format search exercise (Page 11) and on my listening to KXXX and the market, it is my feeling that this radio station has the potential to be very big indeed.

What we need to do to get our “unfair share”:

1. Clean up and focus the music (e.g., make it truly AC).
2. Bring all production elements into line with the musical direction (e.g., make it all adult-oriented).
3. Adopt the new call signature and positioning line.
4. Identify ourselves constantly and consistently.
5. Use a series of “commercials” for the station, on the station, to sell the station's position to the listener (e.g., let the audience know why we deserve to be their favorite station).
6. Bring the station into the community(ies) and bring the community(ies) into the station (e.g., *be* the market).

I look forward to helping you devise the game plan that will make this all happen!

