



MARKETING / OFFICE / STAFF

Returning to the Age of Radio

HOW TO USE FREE RADIO ADVERTISING TO BUILD YOUR REPUTATION AND GET NEW PATIENTS.

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Top radio shows go through a great deal of information quickly, which means they need new information and new speakers all the time. It's easy to get on local radio programs and pay absolutely nothing. All you need is a hook. You may have an innovative technique or interesting perspective on a current health-related topic. This is a great way to get on the air.

What will it do for you and your practice? The more people who hear your name and feel you are a doctor who can be trusted with their health, the greater the opportunities to grow your patient base. Let's outline how to use the (free) power of radio to your benefit.

1. Brainstorm Your Topic

I appeared once on a popular radio talk show because I had a controversial viewpoint about escalating classroom violence. I pointed out that in every instance of well-publicized schoolroom shootings, there were drugs, [such as Ritalin](#), involved. I came on as an expert in natural health care and discussed how systematic drugging in schools contributed to these events. I've been on other programs as well, discussing different topics. Sometimes I discussed a controversial point of view; other times I put a new twist on an old subject.



Do some thinking as the first step in getting on the radio: Do you have a different perspective on something about which people are talking? At any given time, the media will focus on a certain issue - if you can shed new light or have an interesting angle on it as a health care expert, they will want you as a guest.

2. Choose a Radio Station

Do your homework before you even contact a radio station. Newspaper listings can give you a list of radio talk shows. Decide what kind of show you'd like to be on by listening to the talk shows in your area. That way, you'll know what to expect from the announcer. Approach the less desirable stations first. As you become more polished, move up to stations with bigger audiences.

Once you have a topic and an interesting perspective clearly in mind, the next thing to do is write to several of the stations you've researched. Keep the letter short and let the radio station know what's in it for them. For example, say:

"I can provide riveting conversation concerning how drugs like Ritalin lead to classroom violence. I'll back it up with statistics and facts. I'm a local doctor with a background in public presentations. Please call me so we can arrange a time for the interview. I promise your phone lines will light up."

However, in most instances, you'll find that a letter alone is not enough. You'll have to follow it up with phone calls. Ask for the person in charge of setting up interviews for the announcer. These people are constantly seeking interesting guests to put on the air, and in most cases, would be delighted to have someone with a new twist on a popular topic.

3. Prepare for Your Big Day

Once you're accepted as a guest and scheduled for an air time, there are a few things to keep in mind. First, you don't necessarily have to go to the station; you could do the interview from your

home or clinic. One savvy marketing expert told me how he likes to do interviews over the phone while sitting in his hot tub at home, where he's relaxed. The choice is yours.

Personally, I like to go to the station, because I'm more aware of when I should speak. It's also nice to be in the studio because the sound quality is better. **When you're speaking** into a microphone instead of a telephone, your vocal intonations come across as richer.

If you're going to the studio, dress like a professional. While many announcers may come to work in a T-shirt and shorts, you should "suit up." The radio staff will be meeting you for the very first time, and will make assumptions about what kind of an expert you are and how they should treat you based on your appearance. In addition to dressing professionally, showing up early will also make you feel more confident.

Before the interview, you should be very familiar with your topic and have research handy to back up your point of view. It's important to rehearse a little bit, but not too much. A conversational presentation style is much more effective than a speech that is memorized or read.

Unless you've practiced for years, reading a written statement on the radio is dangerous. Listeners can quickly detect when you're reading from a script and won't respond nearly as well. They want something spontaneous and immediate.

4. Interview Do's and Don'ts

Since talking on the radio is a little different than talking face-to-face, a good announcer will show you how to properly speak into a microphone and familiarize you with the protocols of the studio. It's a good idea to keep your eyes on the announcer and look for visual cues as to when and for how long you should speak.

It's best to have a 60-second introduction and 60-second conclusion prepared; that way, you can grab listeners immediately and end on a high note. Listeners will remember the first and last things they hear a speaker say more than the body of a presentation, so start and finish strong.

Another thing to be aware of is vocal pitch. As an authority, you'll want to lower your voice. A deeper, more resonant voice has more credibility. Speaking quickly or in a very high tone tends to carry less weight.

The one thing that probably keeps people off the radio most is the fear of having to respond to leading or antagonistic questions. If you have done your homework properly, you'll know whether to expect these types of questions from the announcer. Keep in mind that since you are the expert in your field, no one is more qualified than you to support your opinions, even in the face of criticism.

If you're still concerned, you can come prepared with questions about which you'd like to be asked regarding your topic (called "seed" questions). Questions for which you already have answers are best. You can mention to the announcer that they can ask any question, but that these are "popular questions" or the ones their listeners might find interesting.

A good announcer listens carefully to how the interview is going and asks the questions they feel the listeners might be thinking. So, although the announcer may select from some of your questions, be prepared for other questions as well. Remember the old saying, "There's no such thing as bad advertising." Getting on a show, even one that requires you to answer to some leading questions, is better than not getting on the air at all.

5. Give Listeners a Way to Connect With You

Before the interview starts, ask the announcer if you can offer a free examination on the air and if the announcer can mention a number that listeners can call to schedule a visit. You can ask the announcer to read a short promo before the interview starts, such as, "As a courtesy of XYZ Radio, you can receive a free examination without obligation with (your name). Just be one of the first 10 callers at (your number) and ask for the free examination offer."

A cooperative announcer will repeat your office phone number and new-patient offer throughout the broadcast. This will bring new patients to your clinic, perhaps while you're still on the air. So have someone available to schedule new patients when they call.

Be prepared to have a great time, use a friendly, conversational approach, and don't over-rehearse. You should sound confident and fluid. Keep the program interesting for your audience; don't use words that they may not be familiar with, unless you define them. Most of all, remember that you are the expert and speak with that kind of authority. You'll find radio is enjoyable and brings you new patients and greater respect within your community.

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