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# Advertising on radio

Should you advertise on the radio? And, if so, how, where and when?

**W**e'll answer those questions in due course but, first, a little bit of background.

Radio has been part of the New Zealand way of life for as long as most of us can remember (if you heard Professor Robert Jack's first fledgling broadcasts in Dunedin in November 1921, congratulations on your longevity, your telegram from the Queen can't be far away). NZ's first permanent radio station, Radio DN, began broadcasting in October 1922 (five weeks before the BBC spluttered into life over in the mother country), so we've been polluting the ether for some time.

As you'd expect, radio's role has evolved over the years and our perceptions have changed along the way. Your view of radio very much depends on your age.

If you're a member of our older generations (65-plus), you're likely to have fond memories of radio in the pre-television era, when soap operas such as 'Doctor Paul' and 'Portia Faces Life' ruled the airwaves, when Aunt Daisy told Kiwis where to shop and what to buy and "The Goon Show" left you laughing helplessly on the floor. When you listen to radio today, you probably hang out on Radio New Zealand National or the Concert Programme; or (if your tastes are more commercial) Newstalk ZB or Coast FM.

If you're a Kiwi baby boomer, you probably grew up with the drone of Saturday sports and racing commentaries echoing around your neighbourhood – and rejoiced when Radio Hauraki and other private stations arrived in the late sixties, breaking the state broadcasting monopoly of the time and actually playing music that wasn't created by centuries-old German or Russian composers. For you, radio delivered rock and roll and freedom (with a smidgen of sports on the side). Today, that translates into Classic Hits, Solid Gold, a bit of a Breeze or a dose of Hauraki – and occasional Radio Sport or Live Sport, especially over summer.

For Generation Xers, radio was already segregated by the time they were old enough to care – go here for news and sport, over this way to choose a musical style and find a station format to match. Tastes shaped in the seventies and eighties govern Gen X choices today – Radio Live or Newstalk ZB if you like opinion with your news, The Edge or The Rock for radio with an attitude, Easy Mix or More FM if you're more middle-of-the-road.

Generation Y turned up just in time to succumb to the cult of the white earbuds. Get your music on-line, take it (all!) with you on your iPod. Radio bosses around

the world panicked for a while (some still are today) until they realised that new music had to come from somewhere and that radio was in the best position to break new artists and styles. Gen Yers today look to stations such as Mai, Flava, ZM, George and b.net (not to mention their Facebook friends) to uncover tomorrow's hits.

Why the history lesson? Because, if you're in one generation and your target audience is in another, don't expect their listening habits to mirror yours.

In New Zealand we now have some 25 different national radio networks (and more than 350 commercial radio stations beaming those network brands around the country). Many regions also boast their own local station

brands – but, more often than not, the network brands are the most popular in a given region.

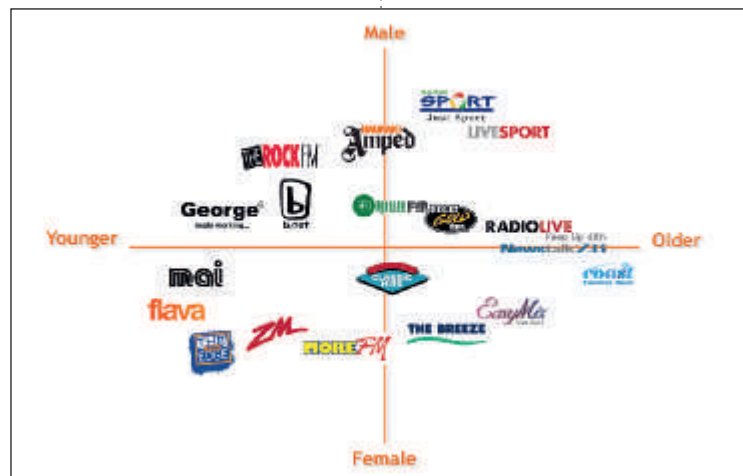
And that leads us to the first principle of advertising on radio:

- **Choose stations that reach your target audience**

One of the key benefits of radio is that it's segmented – you can use the medium to communicate with relatively discrete audience clusters, rather than try to say all things to all people. Of course, you need to ensure that the stations you choose do indeed appeal to your particular target audience.

Fortunately, data does exist to help with your selection process. Here's an approximate guide (courtesy of the Radio Bureau) illustrating which stations attract which audience demographics.

Don't just rely on this rough



indicator, though – track down some serious numbers as well. Once you've done the initial station selection process – and, as we'll see in a minute, you need to choose at least three stations in most markets – ask sales reps from each station what survey information is available for your audience on their station (Research International carries out annual and bi-annual surveys in major markets around the country).

• **What information should you ask for?**

The average quarter-hour audience (in thousands) for your demographic, by weekday time zone: Breakfast (6-9 a.m.), Mornings (9 a.m.-noon), Afternoons (noon-4 p.m.), Drive (4 p.m.-7 p.m.). Also ask for Saturday morning average quarter-hour audience numbers if weekend trading is big for you.

Station Shares (the percentage of your demographic who listen to each station) by the same time zones.

And, of course, advertising rates for the station for each time zone (and details of any affordable packages they offer). We'll discuss what to do with that information shortly. Before we get to that, let's deal with the point we raised earlier:

• **You'll need to advertise on more than one station**

Why is that necessary?

Because any individual radio station only reaches a portion of your target audience.

Let's use Manawatu as an example (drawing on data from *Research International's* October 2010 survey of radio listening in the Manawatu). There are, according to Research International, 14,700 Household Shoppers with Children in the Manawatu region.

The most popular station in that region with that target is More FM. And yet, if you placed one advertisement every hour on More FM Manawatu between 6 a.m. and midnight every day, Monday to Sunday, those 126 spots would be heard by no

more than 4,300 of your target audience (29.3% of the total in the region) – although some would hear your messages a great many times indeed.

The graph above shows the total or cumulative audience that each Manawatu radio station delivers in terms of Household Shoppers with Children.

You can't just add those

numbers together to get a combined reach – for example, using More FM, The Edge and ZM won't collectively deliver you 71.4% of your audience, because some of your target listen to more than one station. However, once you've chosen your stations, you can determine the total potential audience through the Research International database.

That's your potential reach. Outside the five main centres, three stations will typically deliver

a potential maximum of no more than fifty per cent of your target audience; within the major centres, expect closer to thirty per cent to be listening to the top three stations in your demographic.

Unless you are rich beyond the dreams of avarice, with an ad budget to match, restrict your advertising efforts to three

stations, at least at the start. To choose that audience, review the Station Share figures we asked you to collect, and pick the stations which deliver the greatest audience shares. Review that selection, however, based on the types of products you sell (for example, if you sell particularly traditional products you may want to avoid stations whose style is more quirky).

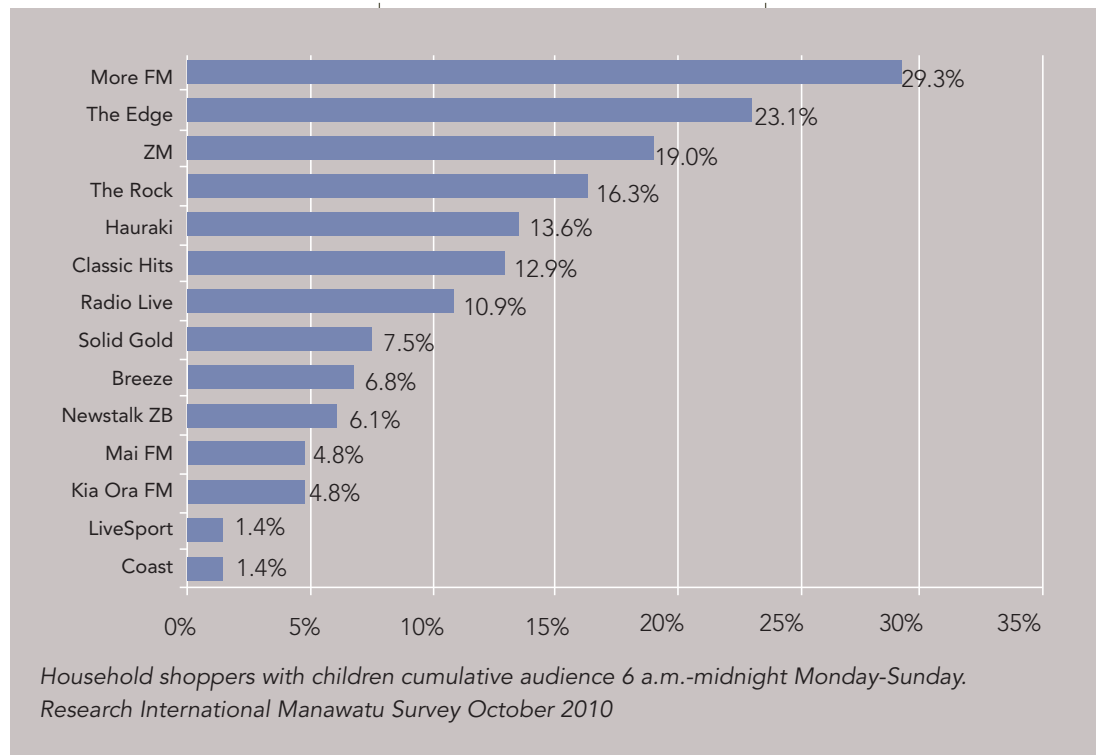
Choosing three stations typically means that you'll be

dealing with both of the major radio groups (*The Radio Network* and *MediaWorks Radio* control most of the national radio networks in New Zealand). Resist any enticement to spend all your money exclusively with one group (unless their stations match perfectly with your target audience listening habits), at least until you've determined which stations deliver the audiences most responsive to your sales messages.

• **When should you advertise?**

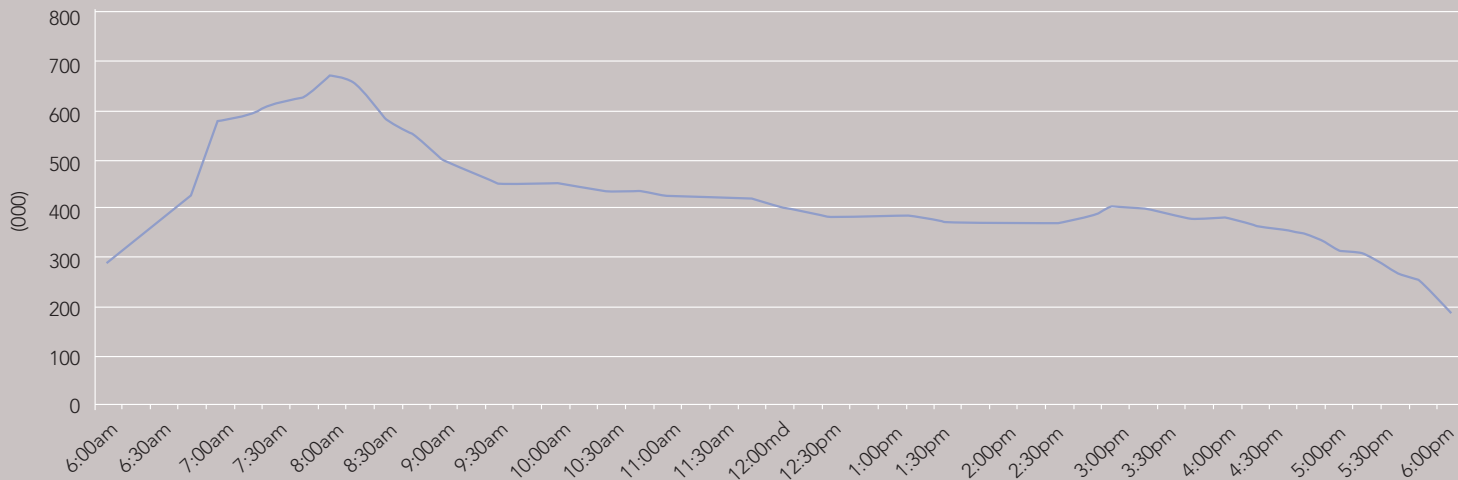
We suggested earlier that you should ask for Average Audience information by time zone. That's because audience numbers peak early, between 7 and 9 a.m., and then drop away as the day goes on.

Advertising rates are usually tiered to reflect these audience patterns – but sometimes there are bargains to be had, if the listening habits of your own target audience are different. To look for opportunities, take the advertising rates for each time zone and divide by the thousands of listeners for each zone. You'll end up with a cost per thousand listeners for each time zone (and for each station), so you can determine which zones and



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Average audience AP10+ weekday listenership all commercial radio



stations represent the most cost-effective methods of reaching your target. You'll also be able to use this information for negotiating purposes where some stations have priced themselves out of the market.

**• How often should you advertise on radio?**

The answer to this question depends on the compelling nature (or otherwise) of your offer. If you're selling \$100 bills for \$1, then advertising once is usually enough – word-of-mouth will do the rest. If your offer is more typical, however, then you should aim to have your messages heard by an average member of your target audience around five or six times in an average week. The first and second times that your target customers hear the message, they will be assimilating the information it contains (*who you are and what you are offering*); subsequent exposure is needed to get prospects to take action. One word of advice: if you are running a radio campaign that features a large number of spots, have mercy on heavy listeners and arrange for at least two or three different radio commercials to be made (even if they're telling different versions of the same

story). It's very easy to wear out your welcome through over-exposure of the same ad.

**• What should you include in your advertising message?**

1. Make your message RELEVANT to YOUR TARGET LISTENER;
2. Make your message INTERESTING and HARD TO IGNORE;
3. Make your message SIMPLE and CLEAR; *and*
4. Close with a CALL TO ACTION.

Most radio stations have their own copywriting teams, to take your information and convert it into one or more radio commercials. Expect them to understand their medium, but don't expect them to understand your business. To brief the copywriters properly, you need to tell them:

- ≡ Who your prospects are (age, gender, interests);
- ≡ Which of their needs and wants your products/ services might fulfil;
- ≡ What is unique about your product/service;
- ≡ What the specific offer is (and why it will be interesting, relevant and appealing to your prospects);
- ≡ Why prospects need to act

now rather than later;

- ≡ What action you want prospects to take;
- ≡ Any terms, conditions, restrictions, time limits that need to be communicated;
- ≡ What tone or personality best matches your brand/product (e.g. serious, fun, helpful); *and*
- ≡ What single message you want your prospect to come away with after hearing your commercial.

**• How long should your message be?**

The average radio commercial is 30 seconds in length. Work with that duration unless your message (a) is particularly short ('sale now on') or (b) requires more time to explain properly.

**• And, finally, why should you advertise on radio?**

- Radio is a great medium to use if you need to:
- ≡ Communicate locally. Radio stations serve most of our towns and cities (and many cover rural areas as well).
  - ≡ Get the news out fast. Radio offers immediacy – a message this morning can drive store traffic right away, if the offer is urgent or particularly enticing. And it's

portable – consumers listen to radio in their cars, via their mobile phones and even via their portable music devices. If your news is hot, customers will come right over.

- ≡ Focus on an audience segment. Radio is clustered, which can minimise advertising wastage.
- ≡ Sell a story. Radio may be without pictures but it can be fantastic at creating theatre of the mind. Google 'Stan Freberg' for some outstanding examples of radio storytelling.
- ≡ Promote cost-effectively. Radio can offer a relatively inexpensive means of getting your messages in front of your prospects.

For more information on radio, head over to:

- The Radio Bureau: [www.trb.co.nz](http://www.trb.co.nz)
- The Radio Network: [www.radionet.co.nz](http://www.radionet.co.nz)
- MediaWorks Radio: [www.radioworks.co.nz](http://www.radioworks.co.nz) ■

□ Marketing matters is written by **Michael Carney**, owner and operator of Netmarketing Services Limited. Go to: [www.netmarketingservices.co.nz](http://www.netmarketingservices.co.nz) to find out more.