

The Business Case for VoxPro

How VoxPro empowers radio stations to win PPM
rating points and more memorable station branding

By Josh Gordon

Wheatstone Corporation
August 2016

Table of contents

1. Introduction
2. How radio changed when Arbitron introduced PPM
3. As the pendulum swung cautiously back, VoxPro played an increasing business role
4. Digital competition raises the importance of the time between songs
5. Specific examples of VoxPro advancing station branding in limited air time
6. In summary

Introduction

VoxPro is best known as an efficiency tool for audio editing, enabling on-air talent to quickly prepare phone calls and other audio material for live radio broadcast.

VoxPro was invented by radio personality Charlie Brown, best known for his successful morning stints on KJR 95 and KUBE 93 FM in Seattle. He created VoxPro as a way to rapidly edit down phone calls and other audio material and get it to air fast. Today, users report they can edit audio material far faster with VoxPro than using other software editing solutions, enabling near real-time use of audio source material.

Since the introduction of Arbitron's Portable People Meter (PPM), VoxPro has also become an essential business tool, enabling radio stations to strategically satisfy the often conflicting demands of winning Arbitron (now Nielsen Audio) PPM rating points while building a strong competitive brand in their community.



Charlie Brown - VoxPro inventor

How radio changed when Arbitron introduced PPM

In 2007, Arbitron introduced the Portable People Meter (PPM) rating system, replacing the previous system of handwritten logs with automatic electronic monitoring. This new system brought more accurate, minute-by-minute measurement, and with it a disturbing discovery: Arbitron found that many listeners started to channel hop as soon as the music stopped and the DJ came on.

At the National Association of Broadcasters conference that followed PPM's introduction, radio marketing guru Mark Ramsey described this listener behavior as "Mic Flight." He shared the slide below, showing that listeners from a significant number of stations were 2½ to 3½ times more likely to channel hop when the music stopped and DJs began talking. Ouch! In the wake of this revelation, many stations aggressively cut back DJ talk time, telling them to talk a lot less and play more music.



Read more about the PPM conundrum facing radio stations in 2007 on the Jacobs Media website [HERE](#)

As the pendulum swung cautiously back, VoxPro found a business role

In the years following the PPM introduction, many stations that had drastically cut back DJ participation realized the difficulty of differentiating programming with little or no presence of on-air talent. After all, if two top 40 stations in the same market play similar songs, brand differentiation can only come during the time between songs.

Programmers needed to find middle ground, a balance between having DJs talk long enough to establish a unique voice for the station, but not so long as to encourage the channel hopping which PPM could now measure.

VoxPro played an important strategic role in this effort, enabling on-air talent to condense more of the content that differentiates a station into the limited air time between songs or talk segments.



Support for the return of more DJ talk time came from the famous Coleman Image Pyramid, which graphically illustrates the hierarchy of programming elements which motivate listeners to tune to one station over another.

According to Coleman Insights, “It has been our experience that the most successful radio stations have images that exist in a very specific hierarchy, with their base music, news or talk position being far and away the most important.” After the music or talk position comes the personality layer, “which is delivered to listeners between songs or talk sessions where on-air talent takes center stage.”

Left is the Coleman Image Pyramid where “Base Music or Talk Position” and “Personality,” delivered primarily by on air talent, make up almost half of the most significant portion of the pyramid. Stations with little or no on-air talent will miss out on the second most important layer.

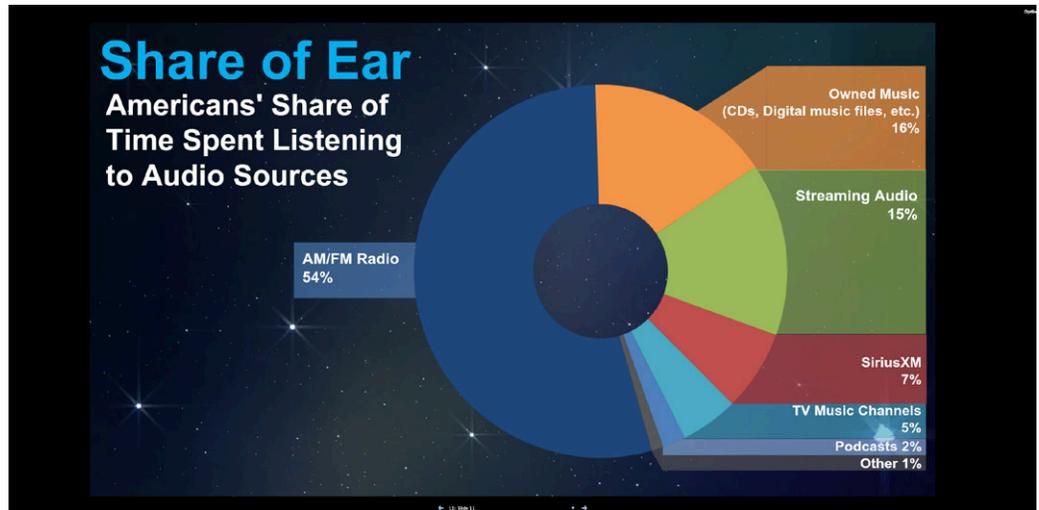
Read a detailed explanation of the Image Pyramid on the Coleman Insights website [HERE](#)

New digital competition again raises the importance of the time between songs

Over the past five years, radio stations have faced increased competition for listeners, not just from other stations, but from new digital audio sources as well. Music streaming services like Pandora are very efficient at creating customized listener playlists, putting stations with minimal DJ participation at greater risk.

Now, even if you manage the only country station in your market, listeners can create their own country playlist through a variety of digital audio platforms. More than ever, it is the entertainment value between songs that helps establish your station’s unique branding and personality.

How far have these new digital audio services penetrated the radio market? The chart below, from the 2016 “Share of Ear” study by Edison Research, shows that almost half of US consumer listening to audio sources now occurs outside of traditional AM/FM radio.



Download a presentation of the entire 2016 Share of Ear study [HERE](#)

KADEN



Kaden, afternoon drive at KISS 104.7, Phoenix AZ



Andrea Jaxson, host of the syndicated show "Night Light™"

Specific examples of how VoxPro advances radio business

Using VoxPro, DJs can pack more entertainment value, emotional connection, and individual personality into every second. If your station can condense more compelling content into the time between songs or talk segments it can help your station both grow PPM rating points and establish a differentiating voice in your community. Here are some specific examples of how DJs are doing this:

Pack more DJ personality into every minute

Says J.J. Kaden, afternoon host at KISS 104.7 in Phoenix: "During a 5-hour shift in Top 40 Radio I'll take about 30 listener calls. Most calls that come in are not that exciting—the conversations last about 2-3 minutes and have a lot of silence and gaps in them. Using VoxPro I cut out all the fat and get them down to a maximum of 15 seconds."

But Kaden does more than just pick up the pace of the conversations; he also adds more personality into them. Says Kaden, "Using VoxPro I can replace parts of my side of a conversation with better comments. When a recorded conversation is on VoxPro I know how my listener responds to my side of the conversation. Knowing this, I can go back and replace parts of my conversation with far funnier comments. Being able to re-record my side of the conversation gives me a chance to be way more entertaining and better showcase my personality."

Create more emotional connections with listeners

Last Mother's Day, Andrea Jaxson, host of the syndicated show "Night Light™ with Andrea," asked her listeners to call in and answer the question, "What was the most amazing thing your mother ever told you?" Using VoxPro, Andrea was able to quickly edit the responses into a short montage of heartfelt comments that created a very emotional connection with her listeners.

Introduce extra promos or testimonials without adding a second

Many music recordings have a seven second instrumental lead-in before the lyrics begin. Says Kaden, "Using VoxPro I can edit down a station promo, listener testimonial, or even announce the winner of a contest before the first word of the lyrics kick in." This is just another example of how you can squeeze more of your station's branding or personality into limited time.



Shotgun Jeff Jaxon, afternoon host of 106.5, *The Wolf*, in Kansas City, MO



Mark Morris, afternoon announcer at 92.1 CITI

Add more fun by having callers do something crazy, even if it takes a few tries

Says “Shotgun” Jeff Jaxon, afternoon host on 106.5 “The Wolf” in Kansas City: “We have a contest every couple of hours and I use VoxPro to edit down the contest phone conversations. Because our station is “The Wolf,” I ask my contest winners to howl like a wolf. Sometimes it takes a little coaching and a few tries to get a really great howl! A few super quick edits on VoxPro assures only the best howl makes it to air, making the contest more fluid and fun.”

Getting just the right howl to air is both great entertainment value and station branding, but not if your listeners have to hear all the outtakes. This is just another example of how VoxPro empowers DJs to deliver great entertainment inside short time segments.

Insert quick surprises

Says Mark Morris, host at QX104 in Winnipeg: “Using the insert function on VoxPro I can quickly drop in a sound clip that relates to a caller conversation. Recently a caller mentioned the old TV series “The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air.” I quickly inserted a sound clip from the show. When the conversation played on air, the insert was an unexpected surprise for my listeners. When I meet listeners they always ask, how did you get that in there so fast? A quick audio clip doesn’t take up much time, but the surprise it generates lifts listener attention.”

Create the impression that your station is so important artists stick around for an entire show

Shotgun Jaxon uses VoxPro to extend artist interviews and give the perception that his station is incredibly important. Explains Jaxon, “When I conduct an interview with a visiting artist, I record it straight to VoxPro. Then I edit it into segments which I drop in throughout my show. Spacing the segments keeps the interest of my listeners high and makes it seem like the artist is sticking around with us for whole show. This is huge.”

The Preceding Examples Only Scratch the Surface

When DJs understand your station’s positioning and use VoxPro, they will come up with creative ways to pack more entertainment into the limited time they have and advance the image of your station in your market.

In summary

Radio is at a unique time in its evolution, when the air time between songs or talk segments is being subjected to conflicting demands. A station can lose Nielsen rating points if DJs talk too long and encourage channel hopping. But with rising competition from digital audio services which can customize playlists, programming differentiation is needed more than ever before from the air time between songs. The pressure is on for DJs to create more compelling entertainment and put more personality into the limited time available to them.

Putting a VoxPro into the hands of your on-air talent empowers them to create more compelling content for that time between songs. This can enable your station to win the conflicting demands of gaining more PPM rating points while also establishing a unique brand and voice in your market.