



THE ART OF THE PPM INTERVIEW

A compelling and effective interview segment on a PPM-measured station can be a masterpiece, but perfecting the craft is still something of a work in progress for air personalities. During CRS in March, a session titled “Compelling On-Air Interviews,” moderated by Country Aircheck’s Lon Helton, helped paint a vivid picture of what does and doesn’t work when trying to hold listeners attention. Deeply compelling and vital for anyone doing radio interviews, we thought the information rated retelling in this abridged transcript.

The panelists are talent coach Tommy Kramer, WUBE/Cincinnati morning host Chris Carr, Renegade Radio Nashville partner and former WKMK/Monmouth PD/afternoon host “Captain” Jack Aponte and Media Monitors’ Philippe Generali.

Generali started by showing several graphs comparing a specific event with a weekly average – data that allows programmers to track how station benchmarks, events and interviews perform. But it gets even more granular, as Generali explained: “You can also look at a little bit of what’s happening on a minute-by-minute basis. Any bar which is red is a minute when the station is losing one listener. If it’s a big red bar, they lose two or three or four listeners. If it’s a big green bar, they gain a listener. Green is good.”

Generali’s first clip was an interview with Top 40 KIIS/Los Angeles morning host **Ryan Seacrest** talking with TV and movie star **Ashton Kutcher**:

RS: (Backsell, intro Ashton Kutcher) What’s happening? Do you think it’s weird that I texted you from bed last night watching your movie?

AK: I didn’t think it was weird, I appreciated that. It was actually a good place for you to be watching that movie.

RS: *No Strings Attached* with Natalie Portman is the movie, it’s really cute. When you work so much with another woman like Natalie, what chemistry has to happen, did you know her before?

AK: We’d met three times before but you’re in that situation doing really sexy stuff and you have like 40 dudes watching you and you’re getting all this direction.

RS: Was she pregnant when you made this movie?

AK: No she wasn’t, it would’ve been really weird. I would have been afraid that I’d hurt the baby.

RS: Where are you right now, are you working?

AK: I’m in New York ... have a bunch of technology people I’m meeting for a company I’m involved with

CC: We can stop it right there because it’s a commercial.

TK: He gets a reaction out of him he didn’t expect by saying, “What do you think of my texting you from my bed while I’m watching your movie?” So, when you ask something unusual like that, it causes them to respond emotionally. Then Kutcher goes into the part where he does a commercial for the technology thing he’s going to do. And that’s where we cut it off. But I think what works for Seacrest is he gets responses like that for out-of-the-box types of questions and he always resets every 30 seconds. That’s so important because somebody’s tuning in right now for the first time and they don’t know what went on one second before now.



Chris Carr

Generali pointed out that Seacrest gained three meters during the Kutcher interview because a competitor had started a song with a poor M score, driving them to KIIS-FM. It was a key factor in that morning’s individual segment performing so well against the weekly average for that time.

Next up, **WSOC/Charlotte’s Tanner In the Morning**:

Tanner: We just played Brooks & Dunn. Ronnie Dunn has new music out and we had a chance to talk to him. We’ll let you hear what he has to say when I asked him a question that kind of threw him. I don’t know why, but it did ... that’s on the way in less than seven, 103-7, WSOC.

<break>

Tanner: Ronnie Dunn, Brooks & Dunn, that’s all done ... he’s got a new song out called “Bleed Red” and we were talking with Ronnie and the question I think threw him, I thought for sure he’d heard it before. I asked if he’d ever team up with anyone else.

RD: No. No.

Tanner: If you did, who would it be? If somebody said, Ronnie Dunn, you have to team up with somebody.

Co-Host: I think that Kenny Chesney kid needs some help.

RD: Good question. Maybe Clapton would do a country record.

Tanner: I think Ronnie has had enough of having a partner.

RD: I’ve been married and the divorce is barely over.

Tanner: I suppose Clay Aiken is out of the question.

RD: Probably.

Tanner: Congrats, the new record is fantastic.

RD: Thanks for putting up with me.

Tanner: You can hear the entire interview on WSOC.com. (Intros next song)

TK: I mean, this is a really good interview. First of all,



Tommy Kramer

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it gets a response out of Ronnie right off the bat. So you're off and running, right? And then, "Who would you team up with?" Ronnie Dunn thinks about Eric Clapton? Anybody tuning in right this second and hearing two guys laughing like that and something being said that's interesting, they're going to stay with you.

CC: Notice he plays "Boot Scootin' Boogie" and then he plays Blake Shelton and [the graph] goes down. The interview comes back and it goes back up. Now, he did everything great, he's ahead of the game. But had he played "Boot Scootin' Boogie," the set-up and then gone into the interview, he would have had more than five minutes of a complete, way above average graph.

JA: The set-up, to me, was great. He sparked the interest early on.

PG: We took the average for the week so this (showing graph) is what the audience usually does on his show for that week. You can see the audience pops, a significant pop in the morning probably because of this interview. So that day he's gaining more listeners than he normally has during the week.

LR: Obviously I've had to approach what happened and ... (interview is cut).

JA: I notice that particular dip there at that time in the morning, every morning. The interview wasn't bad, but there's something going on at that quarter-hour. You have to look at the numbers and I guess any PD is going to do that [to find out] why are we dipping at that particular point in time?

CC: Where I got a little lost, is unless it happened before - I didn't know who they were talking to. I didn't know if it was Lee Ann Womack or LeAnn Rimes.

TK: Because she didn't say her last name.

CC: And they didn't bring it up.

And I know that they move fast and they're a great morning show ... very off the cuff and they kind of slid into it. I kind of felt a little in the dark at the beginning.

TK: That's a real important point. Somebody's just joining you right now and they didn't hear you tease that you're going to talk to LeAnn Rimes. Plus, the sound quality is not good on the phone call. You could do one of two things. You can say, "Let me call you back from another phone." Or you can get editing software. I'm not blaming LeAnn or the guys, I thought



Jack Aponte

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Generali next played an interview conducted by **KNIX/Phoenix** morning team **Ben & Matt**. He set up the clip by pointing out there was no increase or "pop" as he calls it in listening during this segment:

Matt: (Backsells Rascal Flatts.) We are 15 minutes away from your shot at \$1,000. Good morning, it's Ben & Matt, who's this?



Philippe Generali

LeAnn Rimes: Good morning, it's LeAnn.

Matt: Congratulations on your engagement. You tweet so much it's almost like we know you like a friend.

LR: It's the one way to keep in touch with my fans; I love doing it and it's the only

reason I do, actually.

Matt: Have you set a date for the wedding?

LR: Not yet, but we're figuring out what to do.

Matt: All the women want to know, did he do it right?

LR: Yeah, he did it right. It's actually something I'm going to keep to myself. He designed my ring with a friend. We've been talking about it for a while. I knew it was going to happen.

Ben: How sick are you of having to take a defensive stance on this whole thing?

they did as well as they could. But you just can't understand it very well. This is one of the greatest things about this technology because you can get down to the word of what happened and why people went away. Bad sound quality will chase people away. Just call her back on another line.

LH: I'm not talking about her in particular, but do you think in a PPM world, do you have to be more judicious, more careful about who you put on the air?

TK: Yes, it's just like the music. There's always that balance of how much new product can get in, given that people want to hear their favorite songs over and over again. It's hard to put interviews on with all but the biggest stars. We all struggle with that. But what you can do is a series of things that are all related to one concert and get a little bit of a lesser artist in and concentrate on the major artist for most of the time.

CC: Yes, if the lesser artist is really entertaining and funny and eye-opening then man, I'd put it on. That's the beauty of taping it, too.

CAC

To download this entire session for \$8, go to crb.org and click on archives.

INTERVIEW TIPS & TRICKS

Consistently resetting during an interview will hold listeners' attention. Asking "the big question" right away guarantees a payoff answer. Live interviews should only be done when the artist is in the studio. The personality should control the environment and everyone should abide by the "one question, one answer" per segment rule. Break six-minute satellite tours into segments that could be carried over to the next day. These suggestions were consensus favorites during the CRS panel, and here are some additional ideas, lifted straight from the session:

CC: Play a game with them or something that's within the identity of your show. People listen to you for a reason. You're a personality, incorporate that with the guest and make it fun.

JA: I like to find a spot in a song. You can get this out of research where something personal happened as a result of one of the lines. They will always be able to respond to you with something funny that happened in their life.

TK: If it's good, it's good. If it's live and sucks, it isn't good.

CC: Try to give them something that the Internet can't give them because you're up against that, your competition and everything else.

JA: Interviews should never last longer than a song.

TK: Nobody wants to hear about when the album is coming out anymore, or when the tour starts. No one cares. The purpose for being on is for people to know them.

JA: That Ronnie Dunn interview is a great way to do it. Chop it up in sentences and just throw a line here and there and let him be your punch line. If you want to add humor to it, that makes it entertaining.

PG: The difference between PPM and diary is that technically, you just need five minutes. All you need is two minutes of interview and a song that's acceptable to your listener to hang around for those five minutes. So after an interview, throw in a good song every quarter hour. You don't need a 15 minutes interview to get 15 minutes.

BROTHER TROUBLE

Thank you for continuing to play "Summer's Little Angel!" We're excited to be working with Michael Knox on our forthcoming debut album.



BLASTER RECORDS

NEAL MCCOY

Be on the lookout for a new single from Neal McCoy this fall!

