

Excerpted from

# Holland Cooke Monthly Newsletter

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## ON-AIR TALENT: YOUR SURVIVE-AND-PROSPER REPERTOIRE

Do a better show. Be more-engaging, more-listener-friendly, more-useful. Tips:

### Prep better:

- Distill a specific call-in proposition BEFORE your show. Don't just think-aloud on-air until you come up with one.
- Script your opening. If it's lean and inviting, listeners won't wander-off after their news-and-weather fix.
- Avoid reading from the newspaper. It's yesterday's news. **Be today**, the first place listeners hear something.
- Talk less about politics, more about things people care about. Picture Wal-Mart shoppers. Talk to THEM on-air.
- Listen better...when you're **not** on-the-air. Not to Radio. Listen to **people**. Eavesdrop on everyday life.

### Speak second-person singular:

- Never say "THOSE OF YOU" or "ALL OF YOU." There's only one of me. Say "YOU." Lots.
- Hosts: Also say "YOUR" and "YOU'RE" more. If you can't find a way to, your topic is probably boring.

### Listen better...when you're on-the-air.

- One reason Larry became The King of Talk? He picks-up on things his subjects say that other interviewers miss.
- Talk less than callers and guests.
- That's another reason Larry was King: His probing, thoughtful **short questions** force people to open-up.

### Don't talk like a dummy:

- Don't say "I COULD CARE LESS" when you mean the opposite.
- Say "NUCLEAR," not "NUCULUR;" and "JEWELRY," not "JEWLERY."
- Pronounce "SCHLESSINGER" the same way Dr. Laura does.
- Say "DOUBLE-YOU," not "DUBBA-DEW."

### Don't talk like a radio guy.

- Say "LIVE BROACAST" instead of "REMOTE" (which is what real people call the TV clicker).
- Don't announce the call-in number at the beginning of your show open. First, set your topic and give people a reason to call-in.
- As you listen to your aircheck, ask yourself "WOULD I WANT THIS PERSON SITTING NEXT TO ME ON A PLANE?"

### Don't waste listeners' time:

- "LET ME ASK YA THIS..." accomplishes nothing and sounds inexperienced. Ask the dang question.
- Don't thank callers for waiting on Hold. You'll scare-off would-be callers who are too busy to wait on Hold.
- Leave "IS" out of timechecks. "WXXX NEWSTIME, 702" sounds more authoritative.
- Also leave out of timechecks: "MINUTES BEFORE/PAST THE HOUR OF." Do digital timechecks.

### Seduce listeners into giving you MORE of their time:

- The way Arbitron ratings are calculated – diaries or PPM -- keeping listeners even just five more minutes each time they tune-in could as much as DOUBLE your ratings. I can recommend specific tactics that produce dramatic results.
- Here's one: Really tease. "SPORTS NEXT" is not a tease. "WE NOW KNOW 3 OF 'THE FINAL FOUR'" is.
- Most-under-exploited way to maximize TSL from your existing cume: Get someone to listen same-time-tomorrow.

### Hosts: Avoid monologues, which can make you sound "lonely." Instead: air as many good callers as possible.

- Which means you'll need lots of callers. One way to make the phone ring: Keep calls short. Many listeners think that, while a caller is on-the-air, it's that other person's turn, and the line will be busy.
- Another way to make the phone ring: Announce your call-in number S-L-O-W-E-R. You know it by heart, they don't.
- Yet-another way to pull calls: Don't ask listeners "WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT..." Instead, ask "HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT..." the topic. Think it's just semantic? Try it. Why this works: Talk radio is about **opinions**, feelings.
- Yet-another way to pull calls: ASK listeners to call. "HOW DO YOU FEEL? CALL ME RIGHT NOW."
- Yet-another way: Do first-time-caller-only segments.