There has been a resurgence of radio in the life style of Indians. The radio industry experienced transformation due to the entrance of various private players after the government allowed foreign investments into the segment and opened the licenses to private players. The first mover advantage in the field of media can be tremendous. Consider Radio Mirchi 98.3 FM which was Mumbai’s first private FM Radio station, launched by Entertainment Network India Limited (ENIL). Radio Mirchi today continues to remain Mumbai’s No 1 inspite of all the emerging competitors, and has become synonymous with private FM Radio in Mumbai.

Thus to minimize the first mover advantages of a rival or to maintain its own first mover advantage, a radio station must use the following tools of promotion that have been discussed in this article.

**Marketing Plan:**
A company needs to know exactly where it’s going. A ‘Marketing Plan’ is like a road map that helps a company in reaching its destination. Marketing plan should also provide alternative options and be flexible in nature.

**The four elements of a marketing plan are:**

- Objective.
- Strategy.
- Tactics.
- Creativity.

**Objective** is the answer to the question, “What do you want to accomplish?”
An objective is the starting point for any Marketing plan. A station needs to know the desired outcome when a plan is implemented. Without the objective being clear, the efforts towards marketing are rendered useless.

Once the objectives are clearly defined, a station can then determine the **Strategy**. The strategy is like the foundation of the pyramid, on which everything else is built upon. A strategy helps the company to know “**How to accomplish the objectives**” and make a list of the possible scenarios that may arise in the market, in order to reduce uncertainty and losses.

The next step is to select **Tactics** based on the strategy and the market conditions previously identified. These tactics help a company get closer to achieving the objectives and effectively implement the strategy.

The last step, and perhaps the most difficult one, is to insert the **Creativity**. This means “**How is the company going to make the tactics come alive?**”

When a company develops its plan, it can start with:
1. The company itself: Its product(s)/service(s), resources, capabilities, budgets;
2. Competitor(s)
3. The Target: Who is going to buy the product/service?
4. Market Conditions: The existing and anticipated conditions, the changes that have occurred in the past with respect to the product/service and how it has affected demand, factors that are local and specific to the intended market.
5. A company needs to understand that every department looks at its own function as being primary and indispensable—therefore managing human resources should be prioritized.

**Marketing Tools used in Radio promotions:**
In radio promotions, these are the kinds of tools that are available:

**Research:** provides the direction and helps to define the strategy. This step helps a company to realize the feasibility of the idea, as every strategic problem does not have the outcome that is desired at first. Research is the place where the customer’s voice is heard. In radio there are strategic studies, music tests, focus groups, and sometimes slogans, commercials, and logos are tested. The highlight is **Attitude, Awareness and Usage Study**.

**Product Development:** provides the product which the customers desire. There also has to be a market suitable for the product. Another point to remember here is that the target customers already listen to a radio station, and the company wants to substitute its product for the product they already use. This battle involves high expenses. Consider an example of Radio City Bangalore, which is India’s first private FM radio station. It remained at the top until a few years, but later began losing popularity with the launch of newer stations in Bangalore. This means that the listeners substituted the product.
Advertising: There are two different kinds of advertising. One kind is called Image Advertising. Image Advertising is intended to create a point about view for the product or the manufacturer or the source of the product. The other kind of advertising is what is referred to as Sales Promotion Advertising - which is anything that is intended to create a sale. In radio, that can mean getting somebody to listen or to buy a client’s product.

Promotion:
2. Continuity and Skill Games: These require a skill, so it’s not a lottery, and a promoter can require a purchase. They generate repeat product purchases or visits. Continuity games are TSL (Time Spent Listening) builders. A typical radio example: “Listen for the product name. When you hear it, you’ll have five minutes to call.”
3. Premiums: A special item offered to consumers, usually for a limited time period. They may be free, or they may be for purchase. The purpose is to stimulate sales and/or awareness and to stimulate product sampling. A radio example: “Buy one, get one free”
4. Special Packaging: This could be a special size package, a special package itself, but the product is essentially the same. The purpose is to stimulate sales and to stimulate product sampling. Typical special packaging on radio: “Love Songs”.
5. Coupons: Certificates that are redeemed at point of purchase for a discount. Purpose: To stimulate sales, to seize market share, and to stimulate sampling. For a retailer, this is the most dangerous sales promotion tool available. The competitive response for this is easy, and the company should be highly proactive.

Employee Training and Internal incentive programs:
A radio station can train employees with a description of all the promotions running on the air and the shifts of the people on the air. Having this knowledge can boost confidence in employees and promote smooth functioning. Internal incentive programs, something else used in big companies but rarely used in radio, is another tool that can be considered.

Public Relations and Publicity
A radio company needs to establish its presence and make good relations in the industry in order to become successful. They must send TV channels an effective press release, and treat them like professionals. This can be done by understanding what their expectations are, which is the visual element and human interest.

Event Marketing.
To cover live events makes more listeners tune in to the company’s station, and therefore help in achieving the objectives. The purpose of Event Marketing is to:
- Produce exposure
- Produce awareness
- Produce publicity
- Provide opportunities for product sampling
- Provide opportunities for client tie-ins
- Provide opportunities for revenue generation.

**Direct Marketing**

Radio consumption can be clustered like any other product. Stations can consider which clusters are most likely to consume a particular genre of music. Direct Mail, Telemarketing, Personalized Marketing Tactics using the internet can also be used. Customers can also be sent newsletters, birthday cards, and holiday cards. Two other examples of Direct Marketing are e-mail and fax networks to at-work listeners.

Things to remember:
1. The List - Send mails only to people who would want to hear what the station has to say.
2. The Offer - The better the prize and the more chances they have to win, the more likely people will participate.
3. The Mail Piece - A personalized letter or email makes a customer feel important and must therefore be implemented.

**Conclusion:**

Every radio station must be aware of the common errors that occur in implementing these tools:

- Selecting the Wrong Tactic
- Selecting the Wrong Media
- Insufficient Budget
- Poor Research and/or poor interpretation of the results.
- Bad Product

The most important lesson to be learnt is that “Successful promotions intersect existing
consumer behaviour.” A radio station must realize that it is possible to not just rise to the top, but also stay at the top with continuous efforts.

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