

Radio Finds “Lost” Audience

Objective

Create buzz for ABC Network and the premiere of its new series, *Lost*.

Media Strategy

Employ an unorthodox strategy to create mystery and get people talking, beginning three weeks prior to the premiere of *Lost*.

Radio Plan

:15 spots “interrupted” regularly scheduled Radio programming. After the spot, station programming continued as if nothing had happened. Intriguing information was added to the message in the second and third weeks of the campaign.

Results

The ads were so real, stations were inundated with listener phone calls. The campaign effectively cut through media clutter, heightened dramatic effect and produced an emotional reaction. The debut of *Lost* was the highest-rated ABC drama premiere in nine years.

Entering the 2004-2005 programming season in fourth place, ABC was under a lot of pressure to come up with something that could create buzz for the network and for the premiere of *Lost*, a new series that defied conventional descriptions.

“As we watched the pilots for *Lost*, we realized it wasn’t just another TV show,” explained Susie Vye, Client Communications Director at OMD, the agency on the project. “It was an emotional experience and we needed to tap into that.”

“By being organic, and making the Radio ads part of the show, we reinvented our media strategy.”

“We wanted to get people engaged,” stated Mike Benson, Senior Vice President, Marketing for ABC Entertainment.

ABC and OMD turned to Radio. Employing an unorthodox strategy to create mystery and get people talking, they developed an \$8.2 million Radio campaign that ran on five Top 40 stations in the top five markets.

For three weeks prior to the show’s network premiere, regularly scheduled Radio programming was interrupted with what sounded like a distress signal from survivors of a plane crash. The message, sounding like it came from a Ham Radio, broke into either the sports report or promotional content every hour in morning drive. Preceded by static, the 15-second, authentic-sounding message was voiced by a desperate, unrecognizable male voice, who repeated short, choppy phrases in a dramatic plea for help. “Hello...Hello... Can anyone hear me...? We’re lost....”



After the message, the Radio station programming continued as if nothing had happened. For the second week, more information was added to the spot, leading up to the tune-in information in the third week: “We’re survivors of a plane crash...We need help...We will send you a signal, Wednesday, September 22nd....”

The ads were so real that stations were inundated with phone calls from listeners. “The more things we could do to get the audience to ask questions, the more effective we could be,” said Benson. “It had to be organic to the show.”

“There is a personal relationship people have with their Radio that helped the credibility of this campaign,” Vye added.

The Radio campaign effectively cut through media clutter, heightened dramatic effect and produced an emotional reaction. The debut of *Lost* was the highest-rated ABC drama premiere in nine years and its largest audience in the Wednesday, 8 p.m. time period in four years.

“By being organic, and making the Radio ads part of the show, we reinvented our media strategy,” Benson concluded.

Excerpted from *Mediaweek’s Media Plan of the Year* issue, June 20, 2005. The campaign won the 2005 *Mediaweek* Media Plan of the Year for “Best Use Of Radio,” for “All Media,” and also received *MediaPost’s* Creative Media Award for “Best Radio Media Plan” and “Best in Show.”



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