

E-Tool #10 Radio Advertising for Tanning Salon Owners



Is radio advertising effective for tanning salons? You bet! Radio is among the best of advertising vehicles for cost-per-contact, demo alignment in age, gender and lifestyle. It can target specific markets, connect you with its modern social media tentacles, and help explode your brand in the community. Even with the advent of television, the Internet, and smart phones (and even the Kardashians), radio is still going strong. To make the most of this marketing medium, you have to understand how to utilize radio's unique strengths.

THE TWO SIDES OF RADIO

I've been buying radio advertising for 45 years and this has provided me with plenty of insight into this dynamic media form. One of the things I love about it is that it still provides an excellent advertising medium for tanning salon owners. I also like how radio thinks in terms of these two, key factors:

1. **Audience maintenance**, which is the responsibility of the programming staff to keep up their measured listeners. This is the cumulative number of audience members, on average, who listen to a station for a predetermined time period. The programming department works to keep these audiences engaged, and this is measured with devices such as ARB or Arbitron. Note: The higher the measured audience, the higher the cost for spots.
2. **Spot sales**. In other words, the on-air commercials you purchase in 15-, 30-, or 60-second spots.

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These two areas are managed by two different departments, each with its own objective. When setting up your radio buys, it's important to formulate a partnership with both of these sides. This helps you get and give added value.

SOCIAL MEDIA ACCESS VIA RADIO

Radio aggressively pursues social media-added services. If you work it right in negotiations, you can get your paid, on-air spots along with many free spots. You also can get free spots on the station's streaming airways, emails, and tweets, as well as its websites. Radio needs not only your ad dollars spent on them, but also use your free tans as a giveaway to bolster audience engagement, especially during peak season. If you do this right, you can cut your total on-air presence cost in half and increase your gross ad impressions significantly.

HERE ARE RADIO'S TRAPDOORS

The radio industry has gone through a compression of staff with an emphasis upon younger, cheaper workers at all levels. These young "account executives" often are under-trained and over-pressured to take on as many non-traditional clients as they can fit into a day or week. As a result, the follow-through sometimes gets dropped. Whatever agreements you establish with a radio station, be sure to set up those goals as a timing and action plan. You want everyone to know what's expected of them and when.

Now that you have a general understanding of the pluses and minuses of radio, let's take a closer look at some solid radio marketing advice. These tips are distilled from my 45+ years negotiating radio buys for my clients. The radio marketing information for tanning salon owners in this eTool is broken up into the following four sections:

1. The Best Radio Stations for tanning salon owners
2. Radio is Still King in the Digital Age
3. How to Use Radio for Branding, Call-to-Action
4. How to Write Killer Radio Ad Copy

Read on and incorporate these tips to enjoy amazing success with your radio marketing!

1. THE BEST RADIO STATIONS FOR TANNING SALON OWNERS

Are you considering buying radio advertising for a tanning or sunless salon? Be sure to zero in on the three best formats for your target demographic. Research from the Radio Advertising Bureau (RAB) has identified three formats that are best for indoor tanners. What are they? Contemporary country, hot adult contemporary, and contemporary hit radio. A 30-60-second spot on any or all of these stations will inform listeners about your salon(s), why it's different from the competition, and why they should spend their money for your UV and sunless tanning services.

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Contemporary Country: Country has come a long way since the days of Johnny Cash and Charlie Daniels. Today's country bears less resemblance to those old pickers and singers and sounds just as slick and polished as most modern hit music today. As far as the numbers go, these radio stations draw a large female audience aged 18-44. The RAB states that about 30 percent of tanners listen to contemporary country, making these stations a good investment for your advertising dollars.

Hot Adult Contemporary: Stations with this format are a good place for you to advertise your tanning salon. This format appeals to listeners aged 24-44 year, and includes soccer moms and their teenage daughters. The RAB estimates about 30 percent of tanners who listen to the radio tune in to hot adult contemporary stations.

Contemporary Hit Radio: I saved the best for last. Stations that play contemporary hit radio – what folks my age liked to call “top 40” – might be one of your best places to advertise. The RAB states that these stations account for at least 40 percent of tanners who listen to the radio. It's no surprise, considering that contemporary hit radio is popular with the pre-teen to 24-year-old crowd. It's a great way to reach the 18-24 demographic.

Some Formats to Avoid: While some formats are great advertising vehicles for tanning salons, there are those that aren't. If you want to make the most of your radio advertising dollars, avoid these following formats and/or stations:

1. Talk radio: Sorry Rush Limbaugh fans! This mostly appeals to white males 35 and older, which is not a huge indoor tanning demographic.
2. Classic rock: Even if these stations offer you excellent rates, try to avoid them. Much like talk radio, these stations appeal to older white males, many of whom don't tan.

Some Other Things to Avoid: Don't buy any five to 15-second spots, aka “McSpots.” In an attempt to expand their client base, radio stations in larger markets offer cheap prices on short-timed spots. The old saying “you get what you pay for” definitely applies here. Very few tanning or sunless salons have branding that's so established that a small spot is all it takes to drive a sales decision. These spots are better suited for large corporations with mass appeal.

Do not run the same commercial spot forever. Today's consumer audiences have the attention span of about seven seconds. If your spot is boring or repetitive, they'll lose interest rather quickly. The best commercials utilize information about the value of your salon coupled with humor. This creates a memorable spot that sticks with the listener. Just remember to change things up on a regular basis.

Good Luck with Your Radio Advertising! If you're thinking about buying radio spots, utilize the formats that reach the most amount of tanners and potential tanners. Insist on quality commercials and change them often to keep things fresh. If you take this approach – and avoid the formats and practices that discourage listeners – you can enjoy the results that help make your salon a successful and thriving one. In the meantime, check out the next installment in this series!



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2. RADIO IS STILL KING IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Digital streaming seems like a new hope for radio, but it's not a sure thing for your money. Every radio broadcast company wants to create alternative and additional revenue channels. "Streaming" their signal on the Internet is one way they hope to capture more listeners and, by extension, more of your advertising dollars. They might promise huge increases of listeners on their streaming service. At best, digital streaming can be a great addition to your overall advertising package.

Radio = Best Bang for Your Buck

Even in the digital age, good ol' fashioned radio advertising still gives you the best value. I've purchased radio advertising for clients for more than 45 years. During that time, I've done business with Clear Channel, Cumulus, Saga, Cox, CBS, Townsquare and many other radio broadcast companies. Despite what radio station reps might say, I haven't seen any station that has successfully monetized their digital services such as websites, email, texts, or even streaming.

The champ of listener impressions is still radio. It's the first media people are exposed to when they get into their cars. It's also what they hear on the way to whatever they're doing, and it's what relates to them in terms of age, gender, and other demographics. When putting your buy together, focus on radio and consider things such as digital streaming as an extra.

Research tells us that the average consumer is exposed to more than 150 ad messages a day. They bombard people through TV, email, and social media. You can go to the heart of daily consumer activity with most of your ad spend upon radio spots.

Radio is Not a "Silver Bullet"

Radio advertising doesn't work for every tanning salon in every market. If you have a single salon in Los Angeles, chances are you can't afford to purchase traditional electronic media advertising in that high-end market. But in Toledo, Ohio, Mason City, Iowa, or the hundreds of other smaller markets, radio can be an amazing advertising medium. It's an affordable way to capture the hearts, minds, and ears of many 18-44 year-olds.

One Last Thing...

Satellite broadcast is not a good way to reach tanning prospects. Chances are, you'll end up trying to sell tans to 55 year-olds, because that's who represents satellite radio's average listeners. So, what's the message here? By now, you already know – in this media-driven world, your message needs to hit as many of the ways consumers are exposed to marketing messages. When it comes to doing this, traditional radio is still the way to go!



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3. HOW TO USE RADIO FOR BRANDING, CALL-TO-ACTION

Here's a way to cash in on radio ads... make this medium your salon's branding and call-to-action champion!

Radio is a cumulative impressions ad vehicle. It creates a "top-of-mind awareness" at some of the best decision times of the day for tanning salon owners and clients. If your partnership with radio and its staff is good and mutually rewarding, you can ride this medium's huge audience to some great brand and call-to-action marketing. The difference between those two objectives is subtle but important.

Radio and Brand Advertising for Tanning Salons

Brand marketing on radio helps place the name of your salon and your message in people's minds. But it also can separate your experience from other indulgence products. For example, getting your toes done won't lead your peers to compliment your new glow, but tanning your white body will.

Along with using radio to build your specific and unique brand, it's an opportunity to build your brand as an employer. Radio ads that not only sell what you want to sell to increase revenues can also be used to establish your salon(s) as the cool place to work. (Is "cool" still cool to use?) Radio also can help connect you with the millennial generation workers who hear your message about jobs as an added message to selling tanning in 60-second-long spots and the station's social media connections.

Radio and Call-to-Action Marketing

Radio is great for call-to-action marketing. These are specific offers that get listeners energized to stop in to your salon to take advantage of a "hot deal," such as a Free Tan Week. This drives traffic and gives you opportunities for upselling. No salon can thrive without traffic, and specific offers that have "heat" get responses. If you're going to offer a call to action, then make the offer unique, hot, and for a limited time to take advantage of a sense of urgency!

Radio is Still the Way to Go!

Trust me when I say that even in the digital age, good ol' fashioned radio still gives you the best bang for your advertising bucks. I've purchased radio advertising for clients for more than 45 years. During that time, I've done business with Clear Channel, Cumulus, Saga, Cox, CBS, Townsquare and many more radio broadcast companies. I'm happy to share what I've learned with all of my Vault members. I wish you the best of success with these and other tips!

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4. HOW TO WRITE KILLER RADIO AD COPY

This week, sex and other good reasons for tanning! What does this have to do with radio ads or tanning salons? Everything!

As a tanning salon owner, you want to make the most of your radio advertising. To do that, follow this tip: Don't create boring ad copy! It's one of the biggest mistakes some salon owners make when they decide to run a radio campaign. Not only does this turn listeners away from your salon, it also encourages them to change the radio station. This doesn't help you if you've invested in some spots on that station.

Have you ever listened to some radio ads these days? They're entertaining and are designed to capture the listener's attention and hold on to it. When your spots are like this, people actually want to hear them time and time again. Don't believe me? Think about the Super Bowl. There are many people who watch the biggest football game of the year just to see the commercials. Why? Because these commercials are creative, imaginative, and reflect the times. They're also coupled with humor. Recent research states that nearly 70 percent of popular TV and radio commercials utilize humor.

This is no surprise to me at all.

I've been writing radio copy for 45 years, starting with working on scripts to introduce the big rock artists of the time. (Chicago, Santana, The Doors, The Jackson Five, etc.) Humor is something that a listener looks forward to instead of the drone of local auto sales lots. (Some of them have the imagination of an iguana!)

So, what themes should you use in your salon's radio spots? Try addressing the reasons and motivations why people tan. There are three major inspirations for augmenting your skin pigmentation:

- 1.** People want to feel better about how they look. We're not in the business of selling tanning, we're in the business of providing self-esteem. Any service or product that can help people feel better about who they are is a winner.
- 2.** There are those who tan because they want that 15-20-minute vacation from the hustle and bustle of their daily lives. It's amazing how many snores you can hear in the hallways of most tanning salons!
- 3.** Love, sex, and romance. Truth be told, many people tan because they believe it makes them more attractive. They're single and they want to mingle, or they just want to spice things up in their relationships. Either way, ads that suggest a tan can make someone sexy and seductive are bound to be successful. (Was this last point a little risqué? Not really, if you consider the simple, undeniable fact of advertising – sex sells. If you took away all your customers who tan because they believe it makes them look and feel sexy, then your salon would be out of business!)



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Use the information here to make your radio ad copy a mix of humor and the need to look good, escape, and be desired. Straight ad copy offerings that mention another lotion sale or deal on a spray tan or UV package won't motivate many people to flock through your salon's doors. Instead, think outside of the box and aim your ad content to how tanners really think. If you need an example of the kind of radio ad copy I'm talking about, take a listen to one of my ads embedded here. I'm sure these examples will help!

FINAL COMMENT: RADIO CATERS TO ITS PARTNERS

With all of these radio marketing tips in mind, remember that it's very important to establish and maintain a great relationship with your radio station representatives. These folks will consider you a partner and respect your commitment to results for your business and theirs. As a result, you might well get a lot of extra goodies that they're willing to give you. Radio is no different than any other resource – it dramatically caters to those that it considers its partner.