

A CONSIDERATION OF VARIOUS RADIO PROGRAM PROBLEMS
FACING WTC

Each radio station in every market of the United States faces a combination of general and unique problems. The Minneapolis/St. Paul market offers, perhaps, the most unique problem of all.

WCCO enjoys a dominance that is unduplicated. While other 50,000 watt clear channel stations in different parts of the country have been very strong, no station has quite the influence of WCCO. This is due to a number of factors:

1. The signal vastly outdistances any competitor's.
2. The geographical location of Minneapolis/St. Paul, falling as it does in the metropolitan center of a vast rural empire, has made the extraordinarily well signaled WCCO the home town station for thousands of miles.

While WCCO's metro coverage has enjoyed population growth (immediate Minneapolis/St. Paul area), it is also true that a good part of that growth has come from the "hinterlands" around the area. Thus, countless new residents of the Minneapolis/St. Paul area are from Fargo or Duluth or similar satellite areas of the WCCO hub. In our experience there is no other major city in the United States that draws so heavily from its immediate satellite area. This means many newcomers already have the WCCO habit.

The result of all this has been that WCCO can draw on the home town feeling even among many newcomers. No other radio station can make that statement.

3. WCCO's consistency of programming is also unique. In many ways, it's as though the last 25 years never happened. Because of the above mentioned advantages, WCCO has not found it necessary to react to or even notice competition. It is important to understand that the result of the vast majority of radio programming techniques is to bring a station to a point where it best serves a well defined minority. Radio programming art is the child of competition. By definition, it means you win some and you lose some. WCCO is untainted by this business necessity. It appeals to the broadest

possible group. While other stations fight among themselves for smaller and smaller pieces. WCCO has its cake and eats it too. This has resulted in the latest ARB report, which makes WCCO number 1 with a 28 share, while the second place station has little more than a 6.

4. The above mentioned items serve as a backdrop to a remarkable situation. Because WCCO is virtually untouched by modern program thinking, it now finds itself in a position of being "ahead of its time". Recent developments in AM radio have forced competitors to become "more old-fashioned" because the modern trend towards music and well defined music listening cells has taken away that area from them. Thus, AM radio stations across the country are offering more news, talk and interview programs, sports and other things previously thought to be inferior to music. But this is precisely the area in which WCCO has specialized unswervingly. They thus enjoy an incredibly ingrained image (because of the unique geographical situation), the time in grade, the signal strength and no taint from the wars of the last twenty years. They have stayed so far at the back of the parade they are now in the front.

For all of these reasons, other Minneapolis/St. Paul radio stations on the AM band find themselves headed off at the pass in taking advantage of modern AM program theory. As in the case of other markets, the FM band has essentially preempted the music role. Unlike other markets, all music, talk, sports and other service issues are completely served by WCCO and have been for generations. On AM, in Minneapolis/St. Paul, you are caught between a rock and a hard place.

This unique competitive situation has resulted in the Minneapolis/St. Paul radio market's becoming one of the most extraordinarily dull scenes in the radio business. The emphasis has been towards the internal, the minds of radio programmers have focused on avoiding irritants. The radio stations seem anxious to not drive away as many people as possible. There is very little effort to attract.

This creates a situation of apparent opposites for WWTC. This report will explore these areas in depth. Nevertheless, the three key statements that come out of our investigation are:

1. WWTC cannot make it as a news/talk/information station because the area is completely filled by WCCO AM.
2. WWTC needs every listener it can get. Therefore, whatever its programs needs to be aimed at the widest possible number of people.
3. WWTC needs to be unique. There has to be a reason to tune WWTC. This could be an apparent contradiction to point 2. It is very hard to be unique and all encompassing.

Let us turn now to a consideration of the competition. You will note little time is spent describing WCCO AM. It is a news/talk/sports/personality/weather/a little music, etc., station. We have also eliminated from consideration the various country stations. Country is more than well served in Minneapolis/St. Paul. It would definitely have been an alternative a couple of years ago, except that a sensitive observer would ask, "What will happen when WDCY goes country?" They now have and there is no opportunity for WTC here.

Similarly, we have eliminated from consideration the world of beautiful music. There are very, very few successful AM beautiful music stations left in this country. Some of their functions may still be available to an AM outlet, but the music is not.

We also eliminate the more modern music trends, such as album oriented rock and disco. These are children of FM and require FM stereo and sound quality.

KSTP-AM

Musically, KSTP-AM leans in the direction of an adult contemporary radio station. Generally speaking, they place more emphasis on oldies than they do on current hits. Even so, they do not seem consistent with their oldie play mix...the age and number of oldies heard within the hour varies from hour to hour, rather than daypart to daypart. This consistency creates a cloudy musical image. There is virtually no flow because there appears to be no control of the music mix. Each hour, sometimes even each quarter hour, can be so different from what preceded or follows that it's difficult to determine exactly what audience they are trying to reach. Some musical segments sound as though they were constructed for 18 to 24 year olds, while others for the 25 to 34 demographic. This "cloudy" musical image is particularly detrimental in their situation as they play a lot of music in any given hour...the whole thrust of the radio station is music.

KSTP-FM

The music on KSTP-FM is difficult to define. A loose definition might place it somewhere in the area of mellow rock. The music heard on the station runs the gamut...from "Take Five" by Dave Brubeck (1961) to "Strange Way" by Firefall (1979) to obscure album cuts recorded by artists not readily recognized by a general audience. In listening to KSTP-FM, one has to assume that they are looking for a musical "sound", rather than the "hit" status or potential "hit" status of any given song. Familiarity of the artist appears to play a small part in the selection of music. Therefore, they often play tunes that would be familiar to a 45 year old, but would not be familiar to a 25 year old, and vice versa. Everybody's musical tastes are blended in, but there is not enough emphasis on any one element to know which demographic they are seeking.

The announcer approach of KSTP-FM is very natural in delivery. They give call letters, time, temperature and back announce artists. This represents the typical AOR approach to announcer involvement. If they do make any side

comments, they are music or artist related. They do not sound enthusiastic, to say the least, and do not show any relationship to the Minneapolis/St. Paul market.

WCCO-FM

Of all the stations in this market, WCCO-FM is by far the youngest sounding. Most of the music they play is current and much of it is brand new. The oldest "oldie" heard played was a hit record of 1976. We perceive them as a young sounding, mellow rock station. They seem to care little about the "hit" status of any given song, but, rather, are concerned about the light, mellow sound. If it were a little more finely tuned, it could run them into being what they seem to be trying to accomplish....being strictly a background music service.

The announcers on WCCO-FM are very natural sounding and relate very well to the Minneapolis/St. Paul market. They give the station's call letters, the time, record information and their names. The announcer role at this station is much more foreground than most of the stations in the market.

KEEY-AM

Musically, KEEY-AM can be broadly defined as an oldies radio station. The music segments are approximately 15 minutes in length and consist of four selections of music. During the course of these music segments, two of the four selections are oldies, which were hits from about 1965 to 1978. The other two selections are current hit singles or selected album cuts by such artists as Wayne Newton and England Dan and John Ford Coley.

Basically, the music, which is "hit" oriented, is familiar to a broad based audience. Their weakness lies in the distribution of songs during any given 15 minute segment. All too often the two "oldies" are hits of the same age and all the songs are of similar, if not the same, texture. This tends to create a boring and uneventful musical experience.

The announcer role on KEEY-AM is minimal....they give call letters and dial position. Information is delivered in "one liner" form (i.e. "You're listening to the natural sounds of KEEY-Key 14.1"). If they are not automated, they certainly sound as if they were. No song titles are given and, needless to say, there is no community involvement.

KDWB

KDWB is a top forty station which bends slightly in the direction of adult contemporary. What is meant by that is they play only a few selections which would not be heard on an adult contemporary station.

They play a lot of music with very little announcer interruption. Even though "oldies" comprise 50% of the music heard on KDWB, the age emphasis is 1970 to 1978. This makes for a very young sounding radio station.

The announcers on KDWB are very oriented towards one liners. They play a very background role due to the heavy emphasis on music. The giving of call letters, time and the announcing of records seems to be their total role. It is hard to identify them as personalities, not only because of their background role, but because they seldom identify themselves.

KFMX

Apparently, KFMX is patterning its all disco format after the musical success experienced by WKTU in New York City. They are all disco and make little, if any attempt at fudging with the music by inserting an occasional top forty type hit. At this point in time, they seem dedicated to their position....at least in the area of music. If they continue to fine tune their sound, they should do well.

The announcers of KFMX are competent and seem to be involved in the music played on the station. Because of the disco format of KFMX, the music and beat are the important commodities. The announcer is there simply to give call letters, time and announce records. They do this well, but that's about all they do. If one was not familiar with the station, one would be hard pressed to tell that it is in the Minneapolis/St. Paul market. This could possibly be intentional on the part of the management of KFMX.

KQRS

KQRS is an "easy to listen to" AOR radio station. They have a familiar, comfortable sound. This sound is achieved by playing "hit" songs and "hit" artists. There are almost no surprises to shock or irritate the 18 to 34 year old audience that their format is designed to reach. It is a very consistent sounding radio station.

The announcers on KQRS have a good AOR approach. They are very involved in the music, give their names and the station's call letters....all the basic ingredients. The main difference between the announcers on KSTP-FM and KQRS lies in the fact that the KQRS announcers sound like they enjoy being on the radio.

WWTC

In listening to WWTC, one gets the impression that it is a very efficient and professionally run radio station. The morning news block indeed reports on the news, but the news they report can be heard, completely, in 15 minutes. There is no reason to listen to it any longer than that. This is just the opposite of WCCO-AM....they entertain as they give news.

What our morning announcers need to do is to quit taking themselves so seriously. Not all of the news should be so heavy. They should pad with some lighter material. KABC, in Los Angeles, is the classic example of the lighter approach to morning news/talk. They have a two man news/talk team that allows one individual to do news only and the other to handle the

lighter, entertaining material. This accomplishes a longer listening span for the audience. When you stop and analyze it, this is what WCCO-AM does, to a certain extent, in the morning.

During the midday, WWTG has a talk host who does an adequate job. His main problem seems to be that he also takes himself too seriously....not all of his material (topics) should be heavy in nature. One day during our monitoring he had three hours of two professors discussing the new Chinese-American relationship. This is too long for any topic. When you use three hours of any one type of material, you will probably get questions in the second and third hours that were already answered during the first hour of the show. One hour of any topic is plenty. If you have one serious discussion, it is usually effective to follow it with a lighter one. For instance, the above mentioned discussion (limited to one hour) might be followed by an interview with a representative of a microwave firm discussing how to use your new oven.

The evening sports show is one of the best things heard on the station. The host seems knowledgeable, but sometimes sounds rather pompous. It sounds as if he's talking down to the audience, probably because he also takes himself too seriously.

News/talk in many markets is very viable. Unfortunately, Minneapolis/St. Paul doesn't appear to be one of them.

Generally speaking, all of the radio stations in the Minneapolis/St. Paul market are heavily music oriented. The only notable exceptions are WWTG and WCCO-AM.

The music oriented stations are just that....all music, with virtually no announcer role. Their jobs seem to be to announce and segue records and give the station call letters. The great majority of them seldom give their names. There is very little, if any, community involvement. The only time they mention Minneapolis is on the I.D. and, occasionally, when doing the weather. Although the morning shows do weather, time and news, very little regard is shown as to how these things affect the residents of Minneapolis/St. Paul. For the most part, traffic reports are non-existent.

The only obvious exception to the above comments is WCCO-AM. This station is, unlike the rest, very community oriented. The best way to describe WCCO-AM might be to say that "it has Minneapolis/St. Paul people in mind." The announcer role is quite obvious. They are very foreground and definitely add to the over-all content of their radio station. This combination of ingredients tends to explain why WCCO-AM has dominated the ratings.

Thus we have seen that the Minneapolis/St. Paul Market is characterized by the excessive dominance of WCCO-AM, the unique but overcrowded country music world of WDMY, et al, and a series of unaggressive, unexciting, contemporary radio stations whose main goal seems to be a carving out of a little piece of god's earth while attempting not to irritate anyone.

At this point we must consider, at least in passing, the possibility that WWTC could become an aggressive AM top forty station. By this we mean, announcers, the latest hits, contests, etc. This seems inadvisable for the following reasons:

1. There is no case in recent memory of a new, major market AM top forty station succeeding. The function appears to be increasingly an FM one.
2. Any AM potential for such a station would appear to be more than filled by KDWB AM and KSTP AM.

We have, for previously described reasons, eliminated country as an alternative... there are too many in the market. Similarly, various of the youth/music formats are preempted by FM. It is virtually certain that a continuation of news/talk is totally unaccepted from a cost and rating point of view.

You remember we discarded beautiful music because of FM dominance. We said at that time that there were other elements in beautiful music that could be retained. Those are:

1. Total familiarity to a large variety of people. Beautiful music stations are characterized by playing songs that everyone knows in a beautiful music version. This assures a wide potential appeal.
2. Background capability. Beautiful music stations are listened to for long periods of time. A person can listen closely if he wants to, but he doesn't have to. This is a function of the warmth given by familiarity.
3. Emotional impact. The very word "beautiful" is an emotional one. Beautiful music programmers have known for sometime that their stations have an emotional/reverie building quality.

We can take advantage of these three elements in styling a new look for WWTC. Keep in mind also the two seemingly contradictory elements mentioned earlier. Our station needs to be highly identifiable and unique and at the same time appeal to the widest possible number of persons.

Finally, we would be wise to impose a requirement for a timely demographic. An examination of the ARBs, in light of current and future buying qualifications would indicate that 25 to 49 is the best one for WWTC. Note below the top five stations in adults 25 to 49, according to the new ARB for Monday through Sunday, 6 a.m. to midnight, metro area.

WCCO-AM
KEYE-AM
KSTP-FM
WCCO-FM
WDGY

The top five stations in this category are, in order, an old line news/talk/information/semi-music station, a beautiful music FM station, two soft rock FM stations and a country AM. We have eliminated country and news/talk. Beautiful music and soft rock FM stations offer no alternative for an AM. They belong to the new generation of FM listeners, regardless of age. In our view, we need to do the following:

1. Establish a music policy with the widest possible familiarity to 25 to 49 year olds that has not been preempted by FM.
2. Establish a music policy that is unique in its identity in the market.
3. Establish a music policy that is listened to for long periods of time.
4. Establish a music and non-music philosophy that treats with the emotional elements of the largest number of 25 to 49 year olds.

Clearly, the familiarity....the total familiarity....can only be achieved by radically limiting currency and stressing proven hits.

We propose a policy of classics....solid gold from the last ten years primarily, with meaningful reaches slightly earlier.

While other stations, indeed all stations (including beautiful music stations), use gold, our station needs to concentrate on it as a unique selling point. The problem of currency can be treated by playing, where other stations play currents, the gold of a few months ago, thus retaining familiarity.

A typical eleven record sequence would include the following age groups:

1960-1967	one cut per hour
1968-1972	three cuts per hour
1973-1976	three cuts per hour
1977-1978	two cuts per hour
1978-1979	two cuts per hour

Essentially, the music should be clustered in the beautiful music style.

This provides us with many advantages:

1. It is unique.
2. It provides long listening because of familiarity.
3. It treats the emotional values of a younger group, just as beautiful music does with an older one.
4. It is not preempted by FM.

The non-musical elements are extremely important here. They must take into consideration the following things:

1. AM morning drive requires more information, weather and other service than FM.
2. The station must verbally reinforce the unique emotional impact of the music in order to treat with the mood of the demographic target.
 - (a) Memories
 - (b) Increased interest in feelings and surroundings
 - (c) Decreased interest in the new
3. Provide the opportunity for sales merchandising and for non-musical programming.
 - (a) Sports talk
 - (b) Adult oriented promotions, i.e. community involvement, editorials, fund raising, etc.

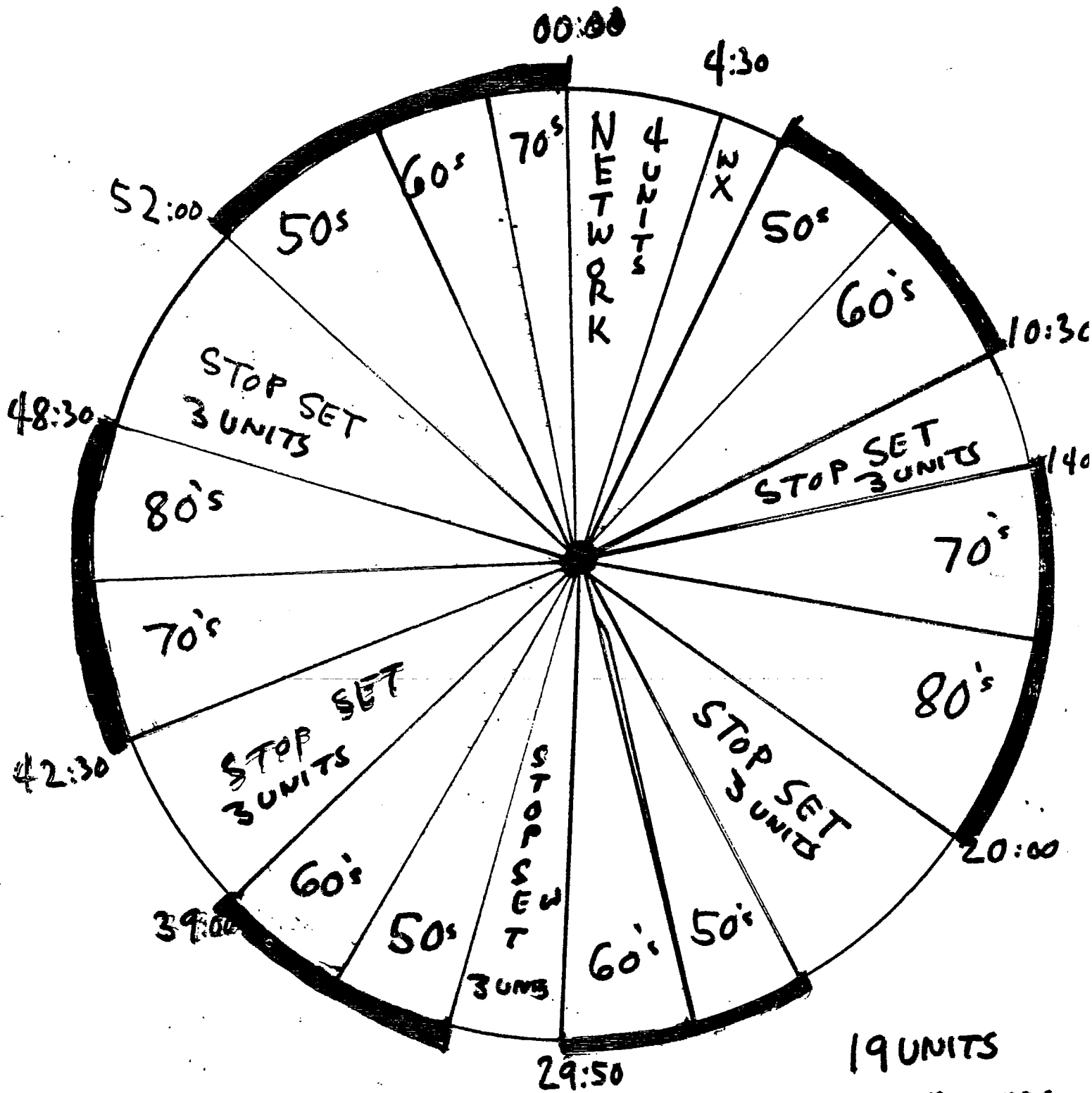
We recommend that the station provide a constant flow of mood oriented vignettes, both local and national, as well as nostalgic and current to the thinking of the target group.

- (a) Sports, business and male health issues
- (b) Memories of fashions, romance, female health issues, children, etc.

There are other advantages.

1. No requirement for expensive staff
2. More self promoting than any other format
3. Concept easy to understand
4. Highly merchandiseable

In our view WWTC, if programmed as we recommend, stands a very good chance of reaching the top five in the 25 to 49 group by the fall 1979 ARB. Such a station would draw its audience from virtually every other station's cume. It goes head to head against no one, but its uniqueness makes it at least a potential alternative for nearly everyone under the age of 45.



19 UNITS
12-13 RECORDS