Public Radio in the New Network Age
Wider Use, Deeper Value, Compelling Change

Conversations on Draft Recommendations

grow the audience for public radio

Corporation for Public Broadcasting
GROW THE AUDIENCE is a broad-based effort to shape shared strategies, compelling goals, and results-oriented plans that will widen the use and deepen the value of public radio. The project has published research reports, essays, and Public Radio in the New Network Age, a draft of recommendations for local and national action.

Reports, essays, and other project materials can be found at the GROW THE AUDIENCE website:

www.srg.org/GTA

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The Station Resource Group, a membership organization of leading public radio stations that focuses on strategy, analysis, policy, and innovation, provides leadership for the GROW THE AUDIENCE initiative.

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Introduction

In spring 2009 GROW THE AUDIENCE published findings and draft recommendations of the Public Radio Audience Growth Task Force. The report, Public Radio in the New Network Age, challenged public radio to adopt ambitious goals to increase public radio’s use, value, and diversity and mapped strategic and tactical recommendations across broad areas of content, delivery platforms, and station operations. The Task Force invited comments and critiques on its draft from organizations and individuals throughout public radio, presenting findings and encouraging feedback at meetings and conferences, in sessions with network executives and board members, and through postings on web sites and discussion lists.

To probe deeper for reactions and suggestions, GROW THE AUDIENCE organized in-depth, one-to-one conversations with a score of local public media leaders, mostly top station executives and program directors. Many of these local leaders have also been tapped for national and regional service as board members of National Public Radio, Public Radio international, Public Radio Program Directors, DEI, and regional membership organizations.

The results of these conversations, summarized and presented in this report, are energizing and thought-provoking for those who are invested in the success and significance of the public radio enterprise. Comments include both high praise and helpful criticisms of GROW THE AUDIENCE work to date, with calls for further work, exploration, and action.

Taken together, these individual conversations merge into a virtual “executive forum” on the current state and future directions for public radio. It is an intense read – and very much worth the effort, especially for those who now enjoy or aspire to leadership of the field.

Quentin Hope, Great Plains Strategies, Denver, conducted these conversations. He has previously worked as an organizational change consultant with McKinsey & Co. and was founder, Executive Director, and currently serves on the board of High Plains Public Radio.

Terry Clifford
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Key Points

Each conversation about the draft Public Radio Audience Task Force report was thoughtful and nuanced. The full summaries and extended quotes, which follow this section, deserve to be read in their entirety. Here we review key points with reference to the report’s major recommendations.

Ambitious goals
Most everyone sees the Task Force’s proposed goals for significant growth in the use, reach, and diversity of public radio’s audience service as “challenging” and “a stretch.” Nobody suggested they are too modest and a few question whether they are achievable.

Several people called for more “analytic rigor” regarding audience service targets. Some would like to see the growth goals for public radio placed in a larger framework of media use and demographic change. Others would like to see more explicit links between the action recommendations and audience growth.

“It would be good for every section to really drop back to the principle goal and explain how is this recommendation going to achieve growing the audience to 50 million by 2020? How is it going to achieve increased AQH? How is this going to attract more people of color?”

Others urged GROW THE AUDIENCE TO complement the focus on quantitative goals with a much stronger and more explicit focus on growing the value of the service to the communities we serve and building deeper relationships with the audiences we already have.

“The biggest grants that we are getting these days are . . . around community engagement and the content that we are making that is specifically addressing the issues that are unique to our community and the roles we can play as a public information partner.”

“There’s a huge opportunity in deepening our existing audience relationships -- while broadening the audience is way more problematic and much more challenging, expensive and risky.”

“There has to be a strong vision and I think the vision is the piece that we’re missing here.”
**Journalism**

“News is where public radio has made its greatest past gains and has its largest future opportunity.”

Journalism is universally acknowledged to be at the center of public radio’s current success and future prospects and there was greater consensus around recommendations for journalism than any other area of the draft Task Force report. Strengthening core national programs gets both a broad nod – “nobody can be against that” – and some pointed emphasis:

“Even among our existing core programs there are weaknesses. We have really got to get a grip with the quality of some of our national programs.”

But it was the prospect of stepping up local journalism that especially inspired these station leaders.

“Local reporting and the presence of local reports is the key to endearing local audiences and increasing their listening and support.”

“Boots on the ground is the way to go.”

Proposals for an integrated online news presence for public media attracted favorable comment from many:

“A backbone is needed that allows us to be integrated, searchable and easily accessible.”

“[This is] essential for owning the journalistic landscape and the way that all of the system’s resources can meet together – large and small markets, radio and TV, state and national networks.”

“It’s an audience growth area where public radio has a competitive advantage that it should exercise . . . I think we could be un-matched by any other source.”

But others were cautious – about the potentially high cost of a major effort, the uncertainty of revenue, the changing dynamics between national producers and stations, and the difficulties of achieving needed partnerships:

“An undercurrent of worry remains among stations that they will be left behind in the dust as program producers and networks use more and more ways to by-pass them. This dynamic of suspicion will complicate and could potentially impede audience growth efforts that require station and network cooperation.”
Diversity
The importance of increasing the inclusiveness of public radio – within our organizations and in our programming – is broadly supported and many hailed the prominence of this issue among the recommendations. There is wide agreement about the critical step of making our own organizations and workforce more diverse.

“Becoming truly inclusive requires developing overall organizational competencies for inclusiveness.”

“Expectations for inclusiveness in our station organizations need to be made as clear and core as our standards for journalism.”

“Adding diversity to editorial and production staff is critical.”

“We can come up with designs and formulas and the whole nine yards [for inclusiveness]. But, what we are really looking for is the authentic voice, the authentic sound, and you are not going to find that with formulas. You are going to find that from the people that live it and come in and present their voice. So you are going to need it within the organization in order to reflect it out.”

Several people believe the recommendations for inclusiveness narrow too quickly to race and ethnicity, and that an audience growth plan should take a broader view, in which other dimensions of diversity also play a role – perhaps an even more important role in some communities.

“If you limit it to just this or that, you’ve chopped off a lot that may be more valid or troublesome in some communities.”

“Who to serve and how to prioritize who to serve to diversify the audience should be based on solid marketing approaches that identify unserved segments, develop understandings of the needs of each segment, assess what public radio might be able to offer each, prioritize which can best be served by public radio – and then develop formats to serve them.”

There are important differences of view on the most effective programming strategies to achieve a more diverse and inclusive audience. One approach centers on an evolution in the mainstream service that will be driven in part by greater diversity among producers and editors and in part by greater diversity in the educated and professional segments of the population to which public radio most strongly appeals.
“I think we are all interested, whether I am from this culture, and you are from that culture, whatever. We are all curious people. That is why we go to public radio. We want to be exposed to the thinking of other cultures, story-telling, ideas.”

Many believe major strides in inclusiveness will require new formats and services, perhaps also requiring a framing of new “core values” to reach new audiences.

“We are all curious people. That is why we go to public radio. We want to be exposed to the thinking of other cultures, story-telling, ideas.”

“Reaching significant audiences of color with the same level of connectedness as public radio has with its current audiences will require developing new services on new platforms along with a whole new generation of producers.”

“Can significant new audiences of people of color be reached through programming that falls within public radio’s existing core values? Conversely, is public radio willing to program to a different set of core values that do attract significant new audiences of people of color?”

“The core values are a cultural expression of a very particular subset of American culture and I think the core values right now are highly suspect. I just think that whole paradigm is very suspect.”

**Marketing**

Marketing – in the broadest and most strategic sense – is seen as fundamental to growing public radio’s audience. A number of comments suggested that marketing should have more emphasis and prominence among the many recommendations.

“The emphasis on strategic, audience-focused marketing is right and essential.”

“We resist real marketing because it suggests we are not brilliant inventors and creative people. This doesn’t mean we should be completely led by marketing gurus. But it does mean we should develop the art and science of targeting audiences and developing content for them that meets the standard of what’s been accomplished in news – a unique offering with high public service value and significant audience appeal.”

“An important area and we have to push it so much further than what is articulated here.”

There is also strong support for more nuts-and-bolts marketing tactics centered on awareness building.

“This is a tough issue. The lack of awareness of public radio continues to amaze me.”
**The Network**
This group of station leaders sees delivery of content online, on mobile devices, and on other platforms as natural extensions of their broadcasting work.

“We are committed to being on all platforms as a matter of offering choices to customers.”

But, like local reporting in the journalism area, it is the prospect of using the evolving networked environment to create new roles, services, and relationships that stimulates the most comment. Some believe the recommendations, especially with respect to community engagement and social media, did not go far enough.

“Building the role of stations as hubs in their communities is what ‘network’ is about.”

“We need to create the day when web traffic isn’t driven by what people hear on the air, but by web-based content and services themselves.”

“Growing audience is about growing the donor base, which means being important in people’s lives and engaging them more. The recommendations related to the community-building aspects of The Network are particularly important in this regard.”

“Social media is under-addressed. In the future we are all, like it or not, going to be dealing with social media and social networking . . . I think they missed it.”

**Music**
The role of public radio music stations and programming divided these station leaders. Some were pleased to see the inclusion of recommendations for increasing the availability of public radio’s principal music formats.

“We often lose sight of the fact that a large portion of our audience is coming to us because of our music and cultural programming – it is not always the news.”

But others see a limited future for public radio music broadcasting and point instead to other delivery channels.

“May not be the most enduring way to build audience, particularly minority audiences.”

“Rather than focusing on developing more music broadcast stations, more attention should be given to the robust development of internet radio.”
“There’s also a public service question as to the need to be ‘the savior of AAA music in America,’ particularly in light of other recommendation areas such as investigative journalism. It’s a matter of prioritization.”

Another suggestion is to rethink the role of station personnel in music formats.

“Stations should move away from simply presenting music (spinning CDs) and focus their staff on reporting on music, arts and cultural life in their communities. This local content can then be integrated into the format. National program services (e.g. C-24) can handle the music presentation, freeing local staff to do the reporting. There’s little value in replicating music announcing all over the country. There is value in having local music, arts and cultural reporting across the country.”

And at least one observer thought GROW THE AUDIENCE simply did not give the subject enough thought.

“It felt as though it was there because someone said, ‘Oh you forgot music’.”

**Market strategies, station solutions**

The Task Force recommended work in the top 50 markets to improve public radio’s overall performance and foster new services through such steps as realigning the way formats are organized and presented across different stations, developing new services on existing stations, and creating opportunities for new services through acquisitions, operating agreements, and upgrading underperforming signals.

Some conversations on this point essentially urged “full speed ahead.” But there were also multiple notes of caution:

“Raises many questions about . . . investment choices and returns and who decides.”

“More opportunity and return on investment may exist in web and wireless access streams than in broadcast property investments.”

“Community ascertainment and community leadership are particularly central to this recommendation, both as a matter of proper course and as the key to funding.”

“Lurking in the background is the issue of consolidation.”

“It’s not clear who can take the leadership role in underperforming markets.”
Support for stronger service
Task force recommendations for organizational and professional development and research elicited mixed reactions. Most people think this is a good thing.

“Renewed support for organizational and individual professional development particularly resonates.”

“Considerable organizational development is needed at stations, particularly in business sensibilities and decision-making, and our overall on-air fundraising model.”

Some thought we should have gone further in highlighting opportunities and the need for change.

“Inadequate emphasis given to several of the recommendations in this area.”

“The governance issues mentioned pose a significant challenge for growing the audience – it’s a huge issue for the system and bigger than referenced or addressed in the report.”

Several conversations raised concerns about a bias against university licensees in the prescriptions for organizational development.

“In places an ‘anti-university’ bias or tone appears. It should be recognized that some universities are very good homes for stations and their values and missions are very well aligned with those of public radio. There may be specific exceptions and situations where a university is susceptible to selling its station, but the baby should not go out with the bath water.”

“It doesn’t matter what the type of licensee is in terms of performance.”

Missing elements in the plan
Many of the conversations called out areas that GROW THE AUDIENCE appeared to have missed. One common complaint was the absence of a financial plan or business model to go with the recommendations.

“Hanging around the fringes of the entire report is the question of how we will garner the resources to do it.”

“If the report is intended to be a strategic plan, it is missing the financial section you would expect to see.”
“Where is a workable economy for national program production?”

All the conversations with leaders form joint radio/tv licensees (and a few from other stations) raised questions about the intersection of public radio and public television.

“Where’s television? The relationship with public television for growing the audience seems underplayed, undefined or confined.”

“One of the most valuable partnerships for public radio is with their public TV station, whether a joint-licensee or not.”

“Should we be running away screaming from public television or should we be thinking about opportunities there?”

Some other missing issues:

“Where does a focus on growth leave rural stations and the vital service they provide to rural America?”

“We need metrics that assess social impact, not just audience size and reach.”

“Metrics that track value, not just time spent with the services.”

“There’s great opportunity in terms of producing entertainment for smart people.”

“While the report does make references to community engagement, it’s really just lip service compared to the power and importance of the subject.”

“The most important networks to be built are the ‘shoe leather’ civic networks rather than electronic-based networks.”

“The relationship between stations and national producers has changed. We need to address it. National and local are stronger if each is respectively stronger in terms of overall ‘brand’, but how the pieces work out is not resolved.”

**Public radio’s need – and capacity – to change**

Finally, a number of the conversation reflected on public radio’s ability to make the changes needed to realize the goals and recommendations presented for audience growth.
“The entire report is about . . . ‘the innovator’s dilemma.’ How do we move into these new areas while sustaining and growing our existing service? I think that the innovation is really going to be a challenge for us. To what degree are we going to feel free to innovate as we continue to solidify our position in this market?”

“We, ourselves, can keep it from happening because of limited viewpoints, limited vision, history and attitudes, and inability to create effective compromises that will still accomplish the task.”

“The biggest hurdle/challenge – still thinking that media can be controlled.”

“I believe that were public radio, with its intense and very real belief in the power of mission, to swing around and get serious, get tangible and measureable about the change in our culture . . . we could really be the vanguard for what the country says it wants.”
Key points

- The cycle for getting new programming on the air to attract new audiences needs to start with stations opening up their schedules by committing to the equivalent of a “must carry” schedule block.

- The opportunities for public radio and TV to jointly build local audiences and serve their communities are significant but unaddressed in the report.

- Complacency and risk aversion may be public radio’s biggest barriers to taking the actions needed to grow its audience.

Points by question area (and detail on key points)

0. Overall reactions

- I’m “very, very impressed” and “appreciate the incredible work that went into the report.”

1. Recommendations resonating most strongly for public radio as a whole

   *Note: Don responded to this question in terms of WNED and his market (see below).*

2. Recommendations resonating most strongly for their station and market

   - 2 Journalism – Local/Regional Reporting: Local reporting and the presence of local reporters are key to “endearing” local audiences and increasing their listening and support.
     
     - For WNED this means adding reporters in Toronto and increasing their Toronto area reporting. Seventy percent of their membership base already comes from Canada on the strength of their carriage of U.S. network news programs. Local coverage is the next step needed to further “endear” and grow their Canadian audience.

     - It would make sense to develop this coverage in partnership with other border stations (e.g. MPR) to share the staff costs.

   - 5 Market Strategies, Station Solutions: A major issue in dealing with licensees with limited commitment to public radio and underperforming stations is helping them
overcome the “fear factor” over the institutional and community politics and backlash involved in making changes. What is needed is “a team” that could come in and help them work through their anxieties and craft a win-win situation.

- Such a team would give the licensees someone to consult with on a confidential basis that isn’t seen as representing the interests of another player in the market.
- The team could also provide the licensee with the endorsement or sanctioning it needs to feel confident in taking action, particularly if the team operated under the sponsorship of a credible national organization (CPB?).

5 Market Strategies, Station Solutions: Stations should think in terms of all the bandwidth they have available themselves or could access in their market in order to provide multiple formats through multiple platforms to their markets.

- WNED has extended this idea across the border to Canada where they are already using bandwidth on the Toronto cable system of Rogers Communications to carry their signals. This is in anticipation of also being able to use bandwidth on Rogers’ commercial broadcast stations once they go digital.
- WNED is already using its own FM HD bandwidth to extend the coverage of its AM news station and is considering other HD programming.

3. Important recommendations or perspectives missing from the report

- Opening schedules for new programming. The stumbling block for getting new programming on the air that could attract new audiences is stations’ unwillingness to open up their schedules.
  - Producers need but can’t get the carriage guarantees needed to convince funders to make large financial commitments to program production and marketing. Don has personally experienced and been highly frustrated by this in developing national production ideas at WNED. Funders of award-winning local productions are very excited about supporting a national version of the program but when they ask if he can guarantee carriage and time slots he can only say, “I can’t.”
  - What’s needed is a radio equivalent of PBS’s “must carry” arrangement (though voluntary) where stations would agree to set aside a block of their schedule to provide the needed carriage guarantee for perhaps a half-dozen new high-profile programs.
    - The time block might be evenings after drive time and before 10 pm or periods on the weekend.
    - The commitment might initially be for a period of time -- six months or a year (?) The commitment would also involve an expectation that the programs might
grow the audience  
Conversations with Public Media Leaders

change after six months and not become an ongoing part of the schedule. The programs might also take a topical or thematic focus with shifts in topics after three or six months.

- This carriage commitment would make major funding by corporations and foundations much more likely – and that sort of major funding will be required to produce the quality of programs needed to attract new audiences. The carriage guarantee is also needed to plan and coordinate national marketing efforts.

- Don recognizes that radio and TV are different but believes the “theory of must-carry” should be explored and some experiments made, even if it’s only a six month or one year trial. Growing the audience will require taking some risks and making some new types of investments (e.g. schedule time) to which the public radio system is unaccustomed.

- Joint radio-TV opportunities. The opportunities to grow the radio audience through joint radio-TV action are not explored or developed, particularly in how the two media can work together in serving the community and reaching new audiences.

  - WNED has been very successful with two radio and two TV stations not just in cross promotion but in using them in combination for joint productions to address issues in the community (e.g. wellness) and provide “more rich experiences” for listeners and viewers. Such topical programming has helped WNED “reach deeper into the community where we didn’t have relationships on an ongoing basis.” It’s also been very effective in attracting the interest of funders and the revenue growth has been “phenomenal.” The same thing can be done even in markets with different licensees.

  - The same sort of market-wide service thinking reflected in the recommendations of the “Market Strategies, Station Solutions” section should be extended to include the public TV stations in the market as well. In this case the focus would not be of format availability but on collaborative efforts to identify and address community issues and needs.

  - Research of the same sort the report provides in other areas should be done on public radio and TV collaboration in regard to audiences, strategies and collaboration models.

  - Joint efforts in local markets could also benefit from national radio-TV collaborations on topics that could then be explored from the local perspective as follow-on to the national coverage.

- More on the HD potential. Don sees more potential in utilizing the FM bandwidth and wonders why that isn’t discussed more.

  - As mentioned, WNED has already extended the service area of their AM news station by putting it on their FM HD2 and is considering adding other services.
• Models need to be developed for creating a selection of HD program formats that can serve more diverse interests and reach new audiences and can be cross-promoted on the main channel as new listening opportunities (much as PTV has done with creating identities for its HD channels around audiences such as children).

4. Biggest challenge or hurdle to reaching the report’s objectives

► Complacency and risk aversion. Stations may be over complacent and unwilling to take risks with their schedules to try anything new. Don notes: “I get a feeling sometimes that stations are thinking, ‘Well, things are fine right now. I mean, okay, we’re having a little bit of a slippage, but do I really want go out on a limb and take a risk on something new? Can I trust this sort of investment that will pay dividends down the road?’”

► Without real commitments “we’ll be selling ourselves short” on our ability to grow audiences. It’s a matter of enough stations taking a stand on new programming, on their agreeing that, ‘Okay, for the right thing, we’re going to take a chance across the system, or across a percentage of the markets, to give it the airtime it needs.’

“The trust needed to make such investments requires confidence that the system (national producers and stations collectively) will make long term commitments and be effective in developing new programming and that a station won’t be “left alone” after a period of time.
Key points

- Diversifying staffs at stations is essential to increasing public radio’s inclusiveness but significant direct financial incentives will be required to get stations’ attention and commitment.

- Supporting jazz stations is essential to increasing Afro-American audiences -- and there is much more jazz stations can do as “jazz presenters” in their community to reach and serve larger audiences.

- Resources and skill development are greatly needed for both station awareness marketing through community outreach and strategic marketing for service development.

Points by question area (and detail on key points)

0. Overall reactions

- The goal of a 50 million person audience by 2020 is very ambitious but “something we should shoot for.”

1. Recommendations resonating most strongly for public radio as a whole

- 1 Inclusiveness: Programming won’t diversify until there are more people of color in positions of decision making authority and that won’t happen until CPB provides direct financial incentives for their hiring.
  - In the 28 years he’s been in the system “we’ve got what we’ve got” and it isn’t going to get better until governing bodies have strong financial incentives to seriously pursue minority hiring. Trust me, there would be a discussion at stations if there were cash incentives of 50% of salary for 3 years to a maximum of $50,000 per year total.”
  - The focus must be on positions with decision-making authority.
  - An opportunity to attract college-aged listeners of color is being lost by the notable lack of diversity on the staffs of university licensees. “Students of color who are going to school look at the station and it’s like there’s nobody here who looks like
me, there’s no content that I can relate to, so why should I support public radio? Those are sad statements.”

- **4 The Network:** Significant training is needed across staff on using web capabilities and producing for multiple platforms.
  - Training in general at stations is being cut-back given budget problems.
  - Existing staff that is web-versed is stretched very thin by the demands of their job plus the expectations that they will provide the web-training to others.
  - The needed training extends to producing across multiple platforms (broadcast, syndication, streaming, podcast, live performance).
  - The training needs to come from those who are well-versed in the technology and platforms – new dogs for new tricks.

- **3 Music:** Nourishment of jazz stations is essential for growing Afro-American audiences.
  - The research supports the importance of jazz stations in bringing in Afro-American audiences and makes the case for increased support.
  - While news is paramount for public radio, African-American audiences aren’t going to be attracted by the national news hosts. They will be attracted by jazz because “there’s content and equality presentation that is appealing to them.”

- **6 Marketing:** Station staff needs to be taught how to become more engaged in the community and participate in non-station activities as a way of increasing awareness of the station in the community, with an emphasis on station awareness marketing through community involvement.

- **2 Journalism:** More collaboration and resource sharing is needed among stations for local/state news coverage.
  - WBGO has had good experience with this in sharing a state capital reporter. It’s a way of adding content more efficiently, with each party contributing what they can best provide (dollars, facilities, or management).

*Note: In addition to the recommendations discussed in the interview, Cephas sent an email prior to the call with a longer list of recommendations that resonated from a national perspective.*

- Invest money in public radio (including local station) activities ($350mm) including music-dominant stations
• Strengthen the audience diversity of public radio’s news
• Increase the number of stations controlled by people of color
• Continue financial and programmatic investments in stations of color
• Create multiple stations with different formats in same market
• Continue and expand greater system development of journalistic content both online and on air remembering, however, that on-air is the lead dog
• Strengthen existing and develop new program content that will serve current and future audiences
• Maintain a baseline level of new media capacity and fluency
• Develop and/or enhance current system and individual station investments in marketing
• Incentivize stations to develop new formats and services for current and prospective audiences; develop strategic partnerships with organizations external to the station

2. Recommendations resonating most strongly for their station and market

Note: Cephas responded to this question in terms of what WBGO is doing and is planning on doing to grow its audience – it’s fair to say these are the recommendation areas he sees as most important to WBGO (along with those he listed by email which are included below).

Cephas sees significant audience growth opportunity for WBGO (~50%) and believes it must commit itself to stretch targets in this regard. He emphasized action in three areas to realize the potential:

► Awareness marketing: Lack of any awareness of WBGO is “the thing that drives me nuts the most.” Marketing is very important and WBGO doesn’t do it well, though the station recently hired a new marketing person charged with getting the WBGO name in front of likely listeners wherever they are. WBGO is also investing in marketing research and consultation to be more strategic in their service development.

► Signal improvement: WBGO is working to move its transmitter to Manhattan to significantly improve NYC reception while not significantly impairing existing NJ coverage. Funding remains an issue.

► Presentation improvement: Work is being done to “tighten up the format” and the PD is providing training to hosts and producers on “the types of performance we expect from them.”

Other initiatives were also cited related to WBGO’s commitment to growing its audience and its approaches for doing so:

► New content development and distribution forms. WBGO is developing new programs focused on jazz artists and compositions that go beyond their “traditional” or “classic”
broadcast programming. The programs cross platforms, including broadcast, syndication, streaming, podcasts and live, non-broadcast concert series.

- A larger public service vision: On multiple fronts WBGO is working to position itself as the “jazz presenter” to many audiences, through many forums in the community -- rather than being just a jazz broadcaster on the dial.

- Board commitment to diversity: Though WBGO is already diverse in its staff and trustee membership, the board recently formally affirmed its commitment to diversity and communicated it’s expectation to management for a diverse operation.

Note: By earlier email, Cephas listed these recommendations as resonating for WBGO.

- The entire music section
- WBGO must break out of the box of modest audience expectations and set measurable, stretch goals for itself
- Create a stronger, strategically-derived presence online
- Continue to develop new content for both current and prospective audiences
- Develop strategic partnerships with organizations external to WBGO
- Enhance marketing goals and practices
- Continue diversity efforts relative to content, staffing and governance
- Develop higher quality in news content
- “Best practices” for audience growth program and the listening collaborations (WBGO would want to work with those with jazz music experience to do this)

3. Important recommendations or perspectives missing from the report

- Direct financial incentives need to be provided to stations to diversify their staff.

Note: In Cephas’ advance email he included these items under this question, some of which are covered by recommendations, others of which are questions related to implementation issues.

- CPB must invest in music stations and incent stations to increase diversity.
- We must bring new, diverse management and skill-position people into public radio.
- We must enhance skill levels of current managers of color and incent large market stations to add senior managers and key decision-makers of color.
- Public broadcasters must reach out to platform holders of color (e.g. magazines, radio networks, newspapers) to tell its story.
How do we determine system-wide and individually which audiences to serve?

How does the local station provide unique online content in a digital world where all public radio stations (that are easily accessed by surfers worldwide) will feature (more or less) the same content?

How do we pay for our expansion and development plans? What’s the new model?

4. Biggest challenge or hurdle to reaching the report’s objectives

- The needed new talent has higher salary expectations than public radio can currently afford. New funding will be needed to “take advantage of the availability of better players” who can build the audience.

- Recent experience at WBGO shows that talent that is interested in them and that they would like to hire will walk away when their salary expectations are not met. WBGO just doesn’t have the operating margin to get close enough to an acceptable figure.

- The new talent coming into public radio may bring “commercial” attitudes, expectations and ideas that may not match the idealism, vision and vitality that created and built-up the existing service.
LYNNE CLENDENIN
Vice President for Radio Programming, Oregon Public Broadcasting, Portland, Oregon
Board of Directors, Public Radio Program Directors Association

Key points

Adding diversity to editorial and production staff is critical.

- Greater audience inclusiveness should be achieved by integrating new content, perspectives and sensibilities into both existing and new programs and services. Inclusiveness is critical.
- Experimentation is a core capability needed to grow audience but the system is highly averse to it; training and leadership are needed to quell fears and develop the capability.

Points by question area (and detail on key points)

0. Overall reactions

- “It is an excellent report and very much needed.”

1. Recommendations resonating most strongly for public radio as a whole

- 1 Inclusiveness: Diversity within editorial and production staff is a “critical, critical, critical factor.”
  - “We can come up with designs and formulas and the whole nine yards (for inclusiveness). But, what we are really looking for is the authentic voice, the authentic sound, and we are not going to find that with formulas. We are going to find that from the producers, the talent that are a part of the cultures we are so anxious to reflect. Organizations have to place the formulas aside and welcome in the breadth of talent not heard widely in public radio. We need the authentic voice within the organization in order to reflect it out.”

- 2.2 Journalism – Local Reporting: There is “quite a large opportunity” in news for stations given the decline of newspapers and other commercial news media in their markets. Investment and action are needed now across the system to realize this opportunity.
  - Lynne absolutely supports the idea of creating a group of high-profile reporting centers across the country for both broadcast and online reporting. She also believes there are stations around the country that could do it without too much difficulty.
At the same time, it’s vitally important to develop approaches that work for small stations and for reporting and distributing news on a regional basis to reflect the full diversity of the nation. It’s all part of further developing the synergies that give strength and uniqueness to the public radio system.

- “Yes, we need to hyper-serve our local communities. We also need to think about the regions and support our communities with what is going on regionally. We also need to support them with what is going on nationally. And the nation needs to know what is going on in the different communities/regions throughout the country. It’s a symbiotic relationship. One we can support by working together.”

7 Support for Stronger Service: Training is lacking overall in public radio. So much so that there is the impression “we don’t recognize the need.” Lynne highlights two areas in particular:

- Experimentation. Experimentation is a component of innovation which is a necessary part in growing the audience. But it appears that we in public radio are averse to innovation and unskilled in its practice (see further discussion under Section 4 on barriers).

- Training is needed from those practiced in experimentation on a variety of subjects: risk identification and assessment, investment setting and modeling, evaluation, course correction, etc.

- On-air hosting and announcing. This is a good example of a core area for building audience that is overlooked and underdeveloped due to a lack of training and training resources.

  - “We work on the quality of our craft really well in most areas, but where do we work on the quality of the host or the announcer? Program directors are very busy people, they want to air check the staff, but, number one, they don’t have a lot of time and number two, the PDs need to have the training themselves so they can “smartly” provide guidance and direction.”

  - The need is both for training staff that support and inform the content and for training the trainers. Public radio currently has too few trainers. As an example she cites David Candow who’s earned a reputation as the “host whisperer.” He’s wonderful but there’s only one Candow. Imagine the impact on the quality of stations’ air sound if there were more.

7 Support for Stronger Service: As our audience spends more time with a greater range of media we will “absolutely” need to measure things differently. But the issues go beyond tracking usage across public radio platforms and services. Measures are needed that track the value of the services used, not just the time spent with the services.
“Right now, we are looking at time spent listening. We assume when our listeners spend time elsewhere, we are failing our mission. But does that mean we are failing our listeners? It may not. Listener loyalty is critical, but as we move forward we need to base our analysis on what is pertinent to today and how our listeners use our services. What I’m saying is we need to understand the “new loyalty” to know how to serve today’s listeners.”

Not resonating:

1. **Inclusiveness**: Though it may be a misinterpretation, Lynne is concerned that the report at least infers that distinct programming on separate channels is needed to reach expanded audiences of color. She believes content of interest to such audiences should remain integrated into existing programs and services.

   “Maybe it was the way it was written or maybe it’s the way I interpreted the report, but I got the idea it was saying, ‘Let’s bring in new audiences but let’s put them on separate channels’.”

   Lynne looks at it differently. “I think we are interested in one another. We are curious people. This is why we go to public radio. We want to be exposed to other cultures, their perspectives, story-telling and ideas.” For her it is a matter of figuring out how to blend it in, not segregating it by channel by audience. “That removes us, the collective us, from what we are living today.”

   She also does not believe in segregating programming related to people of color within the schedule of existing services. “As example, for so many years I’ve heard people say, ‘Oh, it’s black history month. Put all your African American programs in February.’ But African Americans exist in our nation every day of the year. We can add programming during black history month but why wouldn’t we want to have this hue in our programming every day of the year? The current discomfort in public radio creates a sound that borders on contrived. There is an awkwardness I believe a lot of us feel and some of us sense. We need to move beyond this discomfort and move toward the authentic and present voice. Public radio shouldn’t be on the tail end of reflecting change.”

2. **Recommendations resonating most strongly for their station and market**

   1. **Community**: Lynne’s perspectives and priorities all center on knowing, serving and caring for the health of OPB’s community. This perspective, in turn, drives content and platform development priorities.

   2. **Inclusiveness**: As with the system, diversity is a “big one” for OPB. While Oregon is not highly diverse it does have different populations that it recognizes are underserved.
OPB is already well on its way to providing multiple formats to its market to reach more diverse audiences. In addition to OPB’s news and information service, it has just acquired a jazz service. There is also a classical station in the market. To Lynne, this combination will provide Portland with the “triple-ahhh” of public radio. And, on the AAA side, OPB is continuing to experiment with online based services to support the local alternative music community and scene.

The issue now is developing and cross-promoting these services so they not only build audience in themselves but also build audience through increased cross-service listening.

- **2.2 Journalism – Local Reporting**: As discussed in Section 2, increased high-quality, local and regional news coverage is essential for OPB to remain and continue to grow as a vital entity in its communities.

- **6 Marketing**: This is the third leg of service for OPB. After creating content and providing delivery channels, we must tell listeners of their availability. It’s also an area of known weakness in public radio. In order to grow the audience we need to reach out to our listeners, but also to those not yet listening. I’m always surprised to hear of involved individual’s who haven’t heard of public radio.

### 4. Biggest challenge or hurdle to reaching the report’s objectives

- **Aversion to experimentation.**
  
  Different areas of the report kept surfacing the need for innovation. When Lynne thinks of innovation she thinks of experimentation, which is very difficult for the system – “the single biggest stumbling block for those in public radio today.” She believes it’s aversion to the risk of upsetting what’s been successful to date. But, “learning how to experiment without jeopardizing one’s main service is critical because if we cannot feel comfortable experimenting, then we will not move forward. This could prove dangerous. Our inaction could make us obsolete."

  This risk aversion to experimentation is particularly real for public radio because of the “obligation of the trust” that’s been established with listeners. It leads stations to believe they cannot make changes for fear of breaking audience trust. To counter this, station management must learn how to communicate change with its audience (and its staff). “It is very, very important. We must dispel the fears (through communication). Then we can embrace the new ideas and the new audiences.”

  The ability of an organization to experiment begins with its top leadership. “The organization’s head has to feel comfortable with experimentation, with stepping out on something that may not have a firm foundation. Organizations need those leaders that say it’s okay to test new ground.”

LYNNE CLENDENIN 22
Across the system, it may be that some stations won’t have appropriate resources to experiment. Inevitably this places a spotlight on those who can.

- Over-reliance on national entities.
  - Stations can’t rely just on national program producers to generate audience growth through new and improved programs and services. Increasing use of by-pass technologies and services by listeners will strip away much if not all of the gains a local station might have expected to see. Stations must generate their own audience growth based on their service to their communities.

- Cumbersome ways.
  - Current system processes are too cumbersome for the work required to grow the audience in today’s media climate. “Basically the idea is followed by a lengthy process, a process that may be several years old before a show emerges. I come from this world, it’s what I know, but it’s too cumbersome for today.” “We cannot afford to do it that way any longer. We’ve got to find ways to move forward and we’ve got to find swift, cost effective structures that can allow us to do so.”
REGINA DEAN
Executive Director, WUOT-FM, Knoxville, Tennessee
Chair, Board of Directors, University:Station Alliance

Key points

► The report has an unfounded and unsupported bias against institutional licensees.
► Sections 5 Market Strategies, Stations Solutions and 7 Support for Stronger Stations raise many troubling issues.
► Priorities for growing the audience should be set at the local level.

Points by question area (and detail on key points)

0. Overall reactions

► Much of the report is very positive and easy to support but it raises hairs in places.
  ▪ “I think that the effort to increase audience and service is surely something that we all have in mind. It’s kind of a no-brainer. There’s a lot here that really is very positive. And a lot of it is thought-provoking and we probably need to have those discussions.”

  “There are many things here that most of us could find general agreement on but I think the report does get off-track in places -- that’s where the hair at the back of my neck started standing up. I think that there are two or three sections that could just be put on the back burner or buried and it wouldn’t hurt.”

► The report sometimes loses sight of radio’s strength as a local medium.
  ▪ “One thing that we shouldn’t have to explain to each other after 20, 30, 40 years in the business is that radio is a local medium. One of the reasons the commercial people are in as much trouble as they are, and are as irrelevant as they are, is that they forgot that.”

  “The whole discussion about ways to improve our service and to grow our audience needs to circle back to the fact that while a lot of the national programs are the engine driving the train, it’s the local high-touch that a lot of our stations have with their individual communities that matters. We’re out and about. People recognize us, we recognize them, and they feel a strong personal tie to their radio station. I think there are places in that report that kind of forgot that.”
Priorities will need to be set at the local level.

- The report covers a multitude of recommendations to which the obvious response is “absolutely” -- grow the audience, do more web based things, make sure that your local journalists’ endeavors meet the expectations of our audiences, be more interactive, be more inclusive. “But we have to place priorities and I think that the only place to really set those priorities, to where we will be serving our local markets, is at the local level.”

- This is particularly true in these economic times when stations have to make choices about how to protect existing core service, yet still need to figure out where and how to invest in future audience service.

The report may catch a lot of stations “asleep at the switch.”

- As Regina did initially, stations may gather from the title that the report is just programming related and not realize the breadth and depth of its perspective and recommendations. Having some sort of “big, bold notice” at the front of the report stating what it is and isn’t would be helpful in providing context that Regina only picked up through related conversations.

1. Recommendations resonating most strongly for public radio as a whole

- 1 Inclusiveness: “Absolutely” but the potential dimensions of inclusiveness need to be broadened and the determination made at the local market level.
  
  - Beyond ethnicity and age, other dimensions to consider are gender, rural vs. urban, and distinct geographic regions and sub-regions.
  
  - The report speaks broadly of inclusiveness at times (e.g. “deepen the value by strengthening the diversity of voices”) but the recommendations narrow down to just ethnicity.
  
  - Across the system there are many differences across markets and different dimensions of “inclusiveness” that may need to be addressed. “If you limit it to just this or that, you’ve chopped off a lot that may be more valid or troublesome in some communities.”
  
  - For WUOT and its market, the relevant inclusiveness dimensions to address in its news and public affairs programming are generational and big city vs. small communities.

- 2 Journalism (overall). Overall, this entire section excites and resonates most with Regina. But whatever is done in this space must maintain and extend the existing values.

REGINA DEAN 25
The possibilities described in the report are fascinating and the opportunity is clear based on where this country and world are right now and the state of the overall media environment.

“But as we move forward we’ve got to be very careful that we don’t lose sight of what has made us as good as we are. So when we start doing journalism that’s more web-based or more interactive or includes video, whatever we do has got to hold to those core values. If it does not look and sound like us in terms of having that respect for our audience then I think we stand to lose more than we stand to gain because we will have built up an expectation that is so huge and if we fall flat we risk an awful lot.”

2.2 Journalism – Local Reporting: Regina takes exception to the implication that large local news staffs are necessarily required to provide good local service.

“One of the things that kind of irritated me when I read it was talking about the fact that only a dozen or more stations in the system had adequate resources in terms of the number of people in their news department. We only started doing news in 2003 because that’s when we first got the talent that could actually produce compelling, network-quality local news. This year, our news director won the Edward R. Murrow award for writing. WUOT’s three-staff news department has won dozens of regional, state and local awards for journalistic excellence. Quality public service journalism is taking place at the local level, even with a small staff.

While she’d be very happy to have a news staff two, three, or four times its current size, the issue is that the report implies that significant service can’t be provided on a smaller scale.

2.3 Journalism – Integrated Online News: Rather than pursuing “grand scale” visions we should work from existing models for creating an integrated user experience.

“What world are these people living in” by considering creating a new web-first journalistic entity with initial staffing of 200 or more. “Now you can take every dime the system has and come up with this one thing and you may or may not hit it. But I think the issue is, you might not have to go for broke with the national, collaborative, on-high version to be doing things that are significant and relevant and compelling at the local level.” And it’s important that we don’t end up “robbing Peter to pay Paul” in pursuit of such grand ideas.

What’s already been accomplished on NPR.org is “excellent” and their plans for integrating national and local content in the model of Morning Edition are promising. And it’s worth remembering that the process of creating a seamless national/local listening experience on Morning Edition has taken time and trials. This was certainly WUOT’s experience in moving from airing the program with just weather and IDs to including significant local content. There were two or three attempts that fell flat.
before it became seamless to the point that listeners can’t tell the difference between national and local content. That experience now exists at many stations and can be applied to the online space.

- **3 Music:** While not “top of list,” it is important that we not abandon non-news content, though the best opportunities may not be in broadcast formats.

  - The quote that “if news is the brain then music is the soul” is good and captures the importance and role of music in public radio.

  - What NPR is doing through NPR music, the web, iPhone applications, and other initiatives is already leading the way and showing the potential. It may be that such “centralized” and non-broadcast services hold the greatest potential for expansion of public radio’s music audience.

  - If there are good opportunities for adding broadcast music formats in markets, it should be driven by local market needs, preferences and decisions rather than any centralized push to ensure the availability of certain formats across markets.

- **5 Market Strategies, Station Solutions:** The section raises many questions about inclusiveness, market differences, investment choices and returns, and “who decides.”

  - Focusing on major markets to grow the audience makes logical sense from a purely numbers-driven perspective but every market should be considered from the perspectives of public service and strength in diversity.

    - Even from a numbers-driven perspective, it’s important to assess the opportunity across more than the top 25 or 50 markets. More collective audience growth opportunity may be found to exist in the bottom 50 of the top 100 than in the top 50.

    - From a public service perspective it is important to assess the opportunity in every market. “I think there is a caveat here that says that each market needs to figure out how it needs to grow its audience and that growing an audience in a small to mid-size market is critical to public service.”

    - We also need to remember that the system’s strength is in its diversity of market sizes. When there were struggles or fights to be fought, it wasn’t the major market senators and congressmen that “made the most noise.” It was the medium to small market stations where “public radio stands out more because there’s so little to be had.” In going forward with this initiative “we need to remember that collectively our strength is the diversity and when you talk about making major investments in just a few, I think it needs a lot more study.”

  - Many questions of “who decides” and “who pays” are raised by the recommendations. “When I read words like ‘align existing stations, gain control of
stations’, the notes I put in the margin are ‘ok, who determines this and who pays for this?’"  

- The potential from investing in more broadcast real estate looks dubious, particularly relative to the potential audience gains through other investments (see below).
  - The figures about Public Radio Capital’s 38 projects representing 15 percent of audience growth between 2001 and 2008 were interesting. "It sounded like it was a real bragging point and I looked at the math and it seemed low to me.” It’s not clear that the rate of audience return on the investment is worth it; particularly given the total costs and other investment opportunities.

- More opportunity and return on investment may exist in web and wireless access streams than in broadcast property investments. This is particularly true in major markets where the station costs are still so high and the opportunities limited. But it may also be true for markets of all sizes.
  - Citing the 6/8/09 edition of the Radio and the Internet Newsletter (RAIN) she notes that Clear Channel reports that the online audience adds an extra 15% of listenership to some terrestrial stations. “Now, if every one of us came up with 15 or 20% more audience because people are listening to us on the internet, then wouldn’t that move the needle?”
  - She also notes WKSU’s folk music channel as an indication that a station in a less-than-major market can be “wildly successful” with an internet stream.

- The section on HD radio is right but doesn’t go far enough in its assessment. Regina doesn’t see getting anything out of HD beyond feeding other streams. And given its very slow adoption rate to date, it’s likely to be by-passed by the rapid adoption of iPhones and other wireless devices.
  - Regina was an early adopter of HD and because of WUOT’s unique transmitter, she spent significantly more than most stations in converting. The only real benefit she’s realized is from streaming the HD2 programming on the web where access isn’t a problem. If she’d known then what she knows now, she would have put the money into putting more streams on the internet.

6 Marketing: This section and the concepts discussed are “really good” (though Regina did not go into any detail in this area).

7 Support for Stronger Service: This section raises multiple concerns and objections about the handling of underperforming stations, the treatment of university and other institutional licensees and the implied future of CPB funding to stations. (“This section is probably what concerns me the most.”)
Regina recognizes the “500 pound gorilla in the room” of underperforming and financially struggling stations, as well as the need for all stations to perform better. But she believes the issue can and should be dealt with through existing mechanisms.

- CPB has always had yardsticks and criteria for station performance as well as dislists of stations not meeting criteria. And it has the existing ability to deal with problem stations on an as-needed basis. If there are enforcement questions or issues, they should be dealt with as such rather than questioning the underlying policies.

- With this new emphasis on growing the audience, Regina warns, “Don’t make new rules for the exceptions or throw the baby out with the bath water.” There are and always have been audience performance issues with some stations but they should be dealt with on a case-by-case, exceptions basis within existing policy. “I think sometimes we make up new rules to deal with exceptions. I feel strongly that we need to figure out a way to handle stations which do not meet already established criteria and not necessarily redo everything and start over because there are a few problem children.”

- The current economy is likely to add impetus to the view that we have too many stations and we shouldn’t throw good money after bad. But amid that rush and push we should avoid any sort of formulaic approaches or solutions (e.g. funding one operation per state, etc.) Different models have been developed and work well in different geographies. State networks work wonderfully in some states but in others there are distinct, established sub-regions to serve (e.g. Tennessee with West Tennessee, Middle Tennessee and East Tennessee. The regions are so distinct that there are even three stars in the state flag to acknowledge the “three states of Tennessee”).

- In making these comments, Regina emphasizes that she fully recognizes that there “are some stations which maybe are no longer qualified for CPB funding and should not be there”, but she objects to taking actions that are based on structural criteria (i.e. licensee and governance type).

The data does not support assumptions or assertions correlating audience service with station structure (licensee type).

- “I can show you community licensed stations that are pretty cruddy and I can show you university stations that are pretty cruddy. Likewise, there are outstanding university stations as well as outstanding community-licensed stations. CPB has already funded studies conducted by economists, PhDs, others which reflect that there are no inherent barriers to a station’s ability to provide quality public service because of its licensee type. The data does not support some of the report’s assertions about structure.
- “I have been governed in two or three different ways and you can get in trouble in any of them. And you can fly and soar in any of them. And again, the data will show that the basic governance of the license holder does not impede a station from being a significant public service entity. There’s no difference. The report states ‘too many licensees with agendas other than public radio that have not fully realized the full potential of their facilities’ -- well prove it.”

- “I hate to sound paranoid but I really think that university stations sometimes get a black eye. Maybe we’ve done it to ourselves because we like to complain about the chancellor or the president or this or the other. But I think if you look at the system as to who is adequately and perhaps sometimes heroically serving their community – you’ll find university-licensed stations.

- The report’s statements and assertions about university licensees being increasingly likely to sell off stations are unfounded by the underlying economics and their overall history of support.

- CPB has already funded the studies and developed the tools that quantify the public service value to universities of supporting public radio stations (“Cost of doing business”). In the case of WUOT, the university is putting in less than $500,000 in support -- mere “budget dust” to them -- while receiving more than $5 million in public service value, according to the CPB formula using financial reporting and Arbitron data. And the university’s appreciation of this value has been tested and affirmed. “Four years ago, we started something here that would have allowed the University of Tennessee to walk away from this radio station with bragging rights about all of the wonderful things that they’ve done to give birth to public radio. But they weren’t interested in that. UT continues to support WUOT and the station is celebrating its 60th anniversary this year.”

- It should be remembered that through the years universities have provided more financial assistance to the birth, nurturing and maintenance of public radio than CPB or anything else combined.

- Without that support, stations would need to go out into their communities and raise even more money to offset the loss. And since they would be drawing from the same donor base as other not for profits and the arts community in particular, “something would be taken away from somebody” to the detriment of the overall community.

- Overall, there is an apparent bias in the report against institutional licensees. Regina is not sure where it comes from other than “we surely complain and gripe a lot and maybe we’ve done ourselves in by talking about having to go to one more committee meeting.” But these same sorts of “crosses to bear” exist with
community licensees. “The care and feeding of their boards (plural) are every bit as challenging as having to deal with one boss or two at the university.”

- The section’s use of terms like “coalitions of the committed” raises many questions of who judges this commitment and the implications for those not judged as committed.
  
  - “My question is: who determines this? Who determines which stations are committed and ready to act in meaningful ways? Who determines whether what we are doing here in Knoxville or what somebody else is doing in North Carolina is meaningful to that market? And what is the metric you are going to use for that?

  - References to governance are similarly troubling. “Who defines this and how? And what does ... in their totality, signal the stature public radio seeks as significant community institutions ... actually mean? There are both pros/cons to every governance structure. It is not a “one size fits all” issue. So again, when they start to talk about governance, I’m nervous.”

- Despite assurances, she still wonders whether the report logically implies changes in CPB funding priorities and its existing funding to stations.
  
  - “I understand that Tom and Terry now have said they have no intentions of trying to sneak in something on our CSG and if they had put that on page 1 with an asterisk it would have saved me a lot of highlighting here.”

  - Still she wonders when she thinks about the large funding needs of many of the recommendations and reads phrases like “not everyone will participate.” “This sounds so, so, so, so familiar to a 2006 report where [CPB] was not going to take any money away, but in order to go after these new pools of money a station would have to this, that and the other. Now, technically speaking, maybe a station wouldn’t lose a dime. However, if a station’s structure prohibits it from doing something then is it not being discriminated against because it’s not looked at as a station that is ‘ready to act in a meaningful way’ because it can’t do X? This all sounds familiar.......we’ve been around this block a time or two.”

  - “Talk about the camel’s nose under the tent. If this (the report) is what we as a system should be doing and we all agree that this is the direction we need to go in, doesn’t it beg the question, then why aren’t we doing it? And then that starts getting stations’ CSGs. And that’s when you start raising some eyebrows because Congressmen fight hard for their individual station(s) who serve their constituents.”
8 Follow-up and Accountability: It’s not clear that there’s a need for additional accountability reporting or that the effort and expense involved would bring any benefits.

- Stations already do a tremendous amount of reporting. CPB’s reporting requirements have been a big help in being able to say we are purer than the driven snow because we have to do all this stuff for the audit. It keeps us transparently clean and it’s great. But the report’s recommendations regarding multi-year follow-ups, annual reviews, reporting results, assessments with multiple constituencies, organizations, individuals, etc......That’s a tremendous amount of work with a pretty sizeable price tag. But where rubber meets the road is where public stations are serving their audiences with excellent quality programming that is relevant and compelling. Spending additional money on more reporting does not produce additional programming or public service to our listeners.’

- “I think that we are accountable in so many ways that are tangible that I kind of resent the fact that it makes us sound like we have to follow up and be more accountable. I think that the accountability structures are already in place.”

2. Recommendations resonating most strongly for their station and market

Note: Regina’s general perspectives for her station and market are reflected in the notes above. She did not speak specifically to the resonance of certain recommendations to WUOT and its approaches to growing its audience.

3. Important recommendations or perspectives missing from the report

- “I couldn’t imagine anything that could not have been covered in the 90 pages.”

4. Biggest challenge or hurdle to reaching the report’s objectives

- Resources. Obviously.

- The inherent uncertainty and riskiness of having to place bets in an uncertain environment.

  - “There was a good line in here that says, particularly with the web-based stuff, that we’ve got to be really careful because there’s a lot of opportunity to misstep and spend a lot more than we really need to. One of the barriers is trying to figure out the moving target. What seems like a good idea today might be pure folly tomorrow. The technology is changing so fast that it’s easy to be seduced and sink a whole lot of money into it and then find out you bet on the wrong horse. I don’t have any advice on how to avoid that, but I’m saying that’s a real challenge and barrier.”
TIM EBY
General Manager, KWMU, St. Louis, Missouri

Key points

- The governance issues mentioned briefly in the report pose a significant challenge for growing the audience.
- Metrics on social impact, not just audience size and reach, are needed and will become increasingly important.

Points by question area (and detail on key points)

0. Overall reactions

- Overall the report is “terrific” and provides a good roadmap for growing the audience
- “Hanging around the fringes” of the entire report is the question of how we will garner the resources to do it, of the business model behind the plan. This is a major challenge that’s not addressed by the report.

1. Recommendations resonating most strongly for public radio as a whole

- 2.3 Journalism – Integrated Online News: This topic is very much on Tim’s mind and has been for some time, going back to the days of New Realities at NPR, so he appreciates the report’s “drill-down” on the subject. For him it’s an area where “we have got to find a way to put it together.”
  - It’s an audience growth area where public radio has a competitive advantage that it should exercise. “No other institution has the grassroots of stations in communities coupled with the national institution that we have to really bring together an online news presence. I think it could be un-matched by any other source.” We also have the advantage of being from the non-profit sector which is a more favorable position.
  - He has no concerns about KWMU losing its identity or brand by being part of an integrated site. “I think the web is to a point now that folks can take your content and put it wherever they want to anyway, so we might as well try to get it distributed out as much as possible.”
- 4 The Network: Tim associates this area closely with 2.3 Integrated Online News in terms of the same high importance, the interrelated elements and the benefits of collective
action. In both areas “we are not going to be able to do them individually so the more we can do them together the better.”

- **6 Marketing:** This is an important area, though Tim believes “effective marketing is going to happen more on a local level than it will on a national level.” To be effective locally, stations will need to:
  - Put significant resources behind it (first and foremost)
  - Be creative in using networking technology and applications to market themselves in ways not thought of or even possible before
  - View it more as relationship building than advertising and promotion
  - Deepen their understanding of their audience by using existing databases of donors and creating new databases of nondonors.

- **7 Support for Stronger Service:** Tim underscores the importance and, in some cases, the inadequate emphasis given to several of the recommendations in this section.
  - Overall talent and organizational development is essential for moving the recommendations forward. This includes diversity of talent “in all its forms” within stations and the retention of talent by stations. Retention will require providing adequate compensation and a supportive culture, including one that is open to giving talent opportunities to try new things and take risks.
  - The structural issues are huge and will require support beyond individual stations to address. (See Section 3 below for details.)
  - The integrated cross platform metrics begins to get at very important issues of measuring stations’ impact and not just audience numbers. But it doesn’t go far enough.

### 2. Recommendations resonating most strongly for their station and market

- **1 Inclusiveness:** This is a “big issue” for KWMU in regard to increasing and improving its local programming to better serve the St. Louis community. Diversification of news and production staff is a priority.

- **2.2 Journalism – Local Reporting:** The decline of print journalism, which has been the “connector to the community in a lot of ways” is creating an “incredible opening” for KWMU to grow its audience and assume that role. This will require both creating greater awareness of its current local programming and bolstering its local offerings “so that when listeners do come to us, we are delivering important local content to go with the national content.” System support for building local reporting capacity and capability is very important in this regard.
2.3 Journalism – Integrated Online News: The idea of an integrated national online news site plays-out locally as well. KWMU is looking at having conversations with St. Louis’ online start-up newspaper since “we share the same mission from a public standpoint and are both non-profits providing the service.” What they might be able to do locally would naturally feed into what might be done nationally in terms of providing St. Louis-centered coverage. And the same organizational and technical work to “find the secrets of integrating” would also apply locally as well as nationally.

- In this case Tim does have some concerns about losing local brand identity and potential competition for a limited local funding base but he still sees an overall need to try to find a way to work together from a community service perspective.

4 The Network: Creating and delivering more digital content will be an important dimension of KWMU developing more local programming to fill the gap left by other media’s decline. This includes making better use of what’s being made available by NPR and other national providers as well as collaborating on a “Midwest Network” for regional content development or a network of providers from communities dealing with similar economic and social issues as St. Louis.

6 Marketing: Tim sees a “huge opportunity” for growing KWMU’s audience by building community awareness of its local programming during this time of decline of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. As with local news programming (above), support for improving the station’s marketing capabilities and capacity is important and timely.

- In keeping with viewing this marketing work more as relationship building than promotion, Tim anticipates creating a “community manager” position in the next 18 months who would focus on building KWMU’s relationships with the community while also pushing targeted content out to those communities. (The position itself is a good example of how functions are blending within stations as it would be involved in content production, content distribution, marketing and relationship management.)

- In terms of resource commitments at the station level, KWMU is currently spending about eight percent of it budgeting on marketing. Tim can foresee this increasing to 15-20 percent given the opportunity in the market to increase audience through increased awareness. (The figure is based on a broad definition of “marketing,” including positions and activities such as that of the new community manager job.)

3. Important recommendations or perspectives missing from the report

- Governance. This is a huge issues for the system and bigger than referenced or addressed in the report.
The GTA initiative really brings the existing governance issues to the forefront because it emphasizes the distinction between stations where the licensee’s interests are “focused strictly on the institution of Public Radio as opposed to an institution of a higher ed, or some other type of organization, or even a joint licensees in some ways.”

Addressing it will require leadership beyond the station level, yet it will probably need to be station-driven through some national organization or coalition that pushes the issue. Such a group might not constitute a majority of licensees but could still be large enough to make others see it as the “right thing” and be able to “move the train forward.”

CPB would be the “ideal organization” to address the issue through its policies and funding criteria. But it’s unlikely to play a lead role. “CPB sometimes has the tendency to be the last, to not be out in front leading a charge. It almost waits for permission to do things and continues to wait and the permission never comes from enough constituents to move it forward.”

Service and impact metrics. Metrics are needed that “really tell our story as to what impact we are having in the lives of the people who are touched by our service.”

“As philanthropic support becomes a bigger part of public radio’s business model such metrics will be essential in making our case for support. Gross counts of eyes and ears won’t suffice. We need to be able to show the actual roles and importance public radio plays in people’s lives – how we help people understand issues, what they do with that information, how they become more civically involved as a result, etc.”

These are the sorts of measures social service agencies have traditionally developed and that public television is starting to employ. For example, Tim has talked with General Manager Jack Galmiche at KETC-TV in St. Louis about how they used a couple of social scientists from the University of Wisconsin to measure the impact of the stations’ community engagement initiative on the mortgage crisis.

A “social science” approach is needed to develop the criteria, survey methodology, etc.

As noted above, the cross-platform metrics recommendation begins to get at the issue but doesn’t go far enough.

4. Biggest challenge or hurdle to reaching the report’s objectives

Existing online mindsets. To make progress on the online related strategies there will need to be “very significant” changes in prevailing station mindsets about how the web works, the investment levels required, and traditional boundaries. “We will need to
break down the walls that exist from station to station, from networks to stations, and from network to network.”

- Governance structures. As discussed earlier, misaligned governance interests will impede progress, particularly at the market level where multiple misaligned licensees may be involved.

- Lack of carrots. Clear incentives will be needed to move some stations to take the actions needed to grow the audience but in today’s system there’s really only the “CPB carrot” and they can be reluctant and slow to offer it.
Mikel Ellcessor
General Manager, WDET Radio, Detroit, Michigan

Key points

► More humility is needed to really understand how to become more relevant to a larger audience and to avoid just doing more of the same.

► To grow a more inclusive audience we need to create ongoing, dynamic and open conversations and relationships with audiences rather than promulgate a set of core values.

► The “priesthood” of NPR journalism is a barrier to growing a more inclusive audience. It will also cause real rubs in building an integrated news site that is inclusive of other sources.

► Real carrots and sticks are needed for stations to address audience service underperformance and the system needs to begin addressing major market underperformance as a national issue.

► “Going from the center of the universe to the third moon of Saturn” has helped me sharpen my thinking on many of these issues.

Points by question area (and detail on key points)

0. Overall reactions

► Our efforts to grow the audience would benefit from more humility.

  ▪ “We will benefit greatly if some more humility were showing up more clearly in more of our process. We have a consistent tendency, in a language that shows up in here, to overstate our importance.”

  ▪ It should be remembered that the majority of Americans get along fine without public radio in their lives. “And it’s not like people don’t know that public radio exists – they do. People really do know there’s that option out there called public radio and lots of them have had interactions with it and said yes, this doesn’t work for me.”

  ▪ We need to operate less from a position that’s so centered on what we believe and move to a position of understanding what other people really need and basing our response on having authentic conversations with them. “A lot more listening and less of what we are going to do and what we say, we think, and we believe, I think would be very good for us.”
grow the audience
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- The risk of this lack of humility is that we just end up doing more and better of what we already know and do – and that is not going to grow the audience. It won’t make us relevant in the lives of a wider swath of Americans.

- The broad concept and objective of growing the audience is “absolutely fine.” It stakes out a good “mindshare position” and provides a good marketing term and a “no-kidding bottom line” objective for the project.
  - “Grow the audience, that’s the bottom line, that’s an output of us being relevant in their lives, really reflecting their lives, and being a voice to their kind of aspirations. But that is going to be predicated on us having a whole lot more of who they are in our operations, in our system, in our ecosystem, rather than more of us in them.”

- The outline of the report itself provides an “excellent checklist” of actions – “it hit the major keys.” It also has a subtle thread running through it of needed carrots and sticks, which is right. “We really need to be much more awake about having economic incentives to spur performance and disincentives in place for inaction.”

- I have been appreciative of the work that’s been done for the report, I’ve been watching its development closely and I want this thing to work.

1. Recommendations resonating most strongly for public radio as a whole

Note: Mikel’s comments highlight several areas of the report that connected with him strongly, particularly his thoughts on what seems missing or unsaid.

- 1 Inclusiveness: To become more inclusive “everything needs to be on the table” and mindsets need to shift from core values to dynamic conversations with audiences.
  - Everything needs to be on the table. “Diversity has been defined along the same axis for way too long. Ethnicity has been the principal line and that has delivered almost no discernable impact; almost nothing has happened in this space forever. The frame has to shift really dramatically so it’s diversity of approach and tone and in the makers and the participants. Really tangible, meaningful action needs to be on the table here.”
  - Let go of the core values. Becoming more inclusive isn’t a matter of extending the existing core values to new audiences or adapting them to fit with new audiences. The whole idea of core values is misguided.
    - “The core values are a cultural expression of a very particular subset of American culture and I think the core values right now are highly suspect. I think that whole paradigm is very suspect.”
There is little to be gained in revisiting the core values or developing a 2.0 version. It would just play into the whole “priesthood thing” of “I want a card that I can put in my wallet and I can pull it out and can show people what the truth is.” The world just doesn’t work like that.

- Move to active, dynamic conversations and relationships with audiences.

  - “I think the world lives in an active conversation between people -- like you and I are having right now. And I think we need to always refresh that relationship. We cannot become fixed about it. Look, we can’t become fixed about it in the way we raise our children, we can’t become fixed about it in the way we maintain our education system, about our marriages, about our relationships with our parents. We don’t become fixed in every other key area in our lives.”

  - “It’s a dynamic relationship – there’s a real world, real face relationships. And I think it has to have all of that texture and the vitality. People need to be able to disagree and agree – to have fun in a space together even though there are differences of opinion and perspective.”

  “I’m just really excited. Here’s the thing, I started to experience it in New York after 9/11 when at WNYC we saw that we needed to have all these conversations with all of these people that we couldn’t touch before 9/11. For us to be relevant in New York City after 9/11 we had to substantially rethink what we were doing. We had to have all these new relationships. So I watched it start there.”

  “Now here in Detroit, everyday I’m interacting with black middle and upper middle class people who have every reason why they should be listening to public radio. But one way or the other they just keep coming back to me and saying, ‘I don’t know anybody that talks like that. I mean, maybe you do but I don’t. You don’t sound like anybody I know. And nobody that I know is on the air. And you’re not talking about anything that we are talking about. You are a utility to me, like the screwdriver in the drawer in my kitchen. You are very useful when I need to know that thing and it’s delivered in a way that’s really, really good. But I have no love for you.’”

  “Day after day after day, that’s what people say to me. And for 15 years National Public Radio has heard that coming back to them in focus groups and they’ve put it in a three-ring binder and put in on a shelf in their office and done nothing about it.”

  ▶ 2.1 Journalism – National Programs: Increasingly sophisticated audiences are already moving past NPR’s current approach to journalism and the “priesthood” of NPR editors is constraining our reach and relevance.
grow the audience
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- “We have this very kind of J-school, it’s-good-for-you approach to journalism and the audience has really shot past us in a lot of ways. They are very sophisticated about the way they receive their information, the way they dissect it, interpret it, and categorize it. You know – what box do I put it into, how I trust this source or don’t.”

- “There’s a priesthood of the news editor that has to evolve and our overall aesthetic has got to incorporate more of our living vernacular. Think about it – are we really speaking like the people around us speak? We are not. They’ve told us this over and over again. We are speaking like a very specific sub-section of the American public. We are holding very, very tightly on to a worldview that says we know what’s right and what people need to know.”

- NPR’s senior management is not the issue. CEOs can come and go without making any real difference. “Let’s just be honest. NPR is run by the editors – that’s just what it is. If Jay Kernis, who is as much a product of that building as anybody in the world, could only drive so much change through the building, that to me tells the story of how much NPR really is the editors. And so when you talk about our ability to grow or not to grow the audience, to be relevant or not relevant in people’s lives, when I’m talking about this priesthood of journalism, that’s what I’m looking at.”

2.3 Journalism – Integrated Online News: Creating an integrated news site is a direction that will serve audiences in the ways they now seek to be served. But there will be real rubs with the journalism “priesthood” if we are serious about expanding and integrating our online journalism to include content from various sources.

- “If you look at the amount of consumption that the average person had during the presidential election of online sources, and you look at the power of some of these news aggregation sites, and you look at the influence of it, it shows that people are willing to go there. Especially when we start to talk in the online recommendations about how we would gather together content that is from outside our sphere.”

- “Some of the most influential places (to include) are going to be things that are going to make the (NPR) news editors climb right out of their skin. I’ve seen people say, in writing and in person, that they just couldn’t ever link to those places. (For example) a very respected person in the public radio sphere said to me, ‘We could never link to Talking Points Memo because that’s outside of our value set.’ Meanwhile, Talking Points Memo won a Polk award for the investigative work that they did to help to bring down Attorney General Alberto Gonzalez. So they are doing and living and providing the investigative work that public radio can no longer do but we declare them off-limits because of all of these other criteria.”

- “If we are going to fulfill some of the aspirations that people have put into this document, these are the real ‘no-kidding’ places where the journalism and the
audience are going to rub up against each other. And we are going to have to figure that out.

**4 The Network:** Mikel is “very supportive of all of the impulses in the digital spaces.” There is no question of their value or importance in growing audience service. They can help in making stations “more porous” to their communities. But this is also an area where more humility, less walling-off behavior and more nuanced approaches are needed.

- “When you look at the phrase ‘we’re going to create publics around issues around interests and communities,’ there is hubris in there that is profound. There are communities that exist in America that are very vibrant, that are getting things done, that are having a huge influence in the world around us, that if we would go out and make relationships with them so many of these overlapping goals that we’ve laid out would be rapidly advanced. But it is this idea that we are going to go out and create publics. The public is perfectly fine, they don’t need us.”

- This relates back to his earlier points about the existing journalism paradigm and its counter-posing practice of the editorial meeting where professionals determine the news agenda for the day and tell people what they need to know. “There’s a real rub there. I think a more nuanced relationship in all this is needed.” In this regard Mikel was very happy to see the discussion and recommendations about developing new editorial frameworks in regard to local journalism. He found them “very, very strong” and important. “We need to go out and do more with that.”

- In working in the “network” space it’s important to think not just in terms of the role of new electronic platforms and applications but also what is being done “face to face, real-time, in the community, sitting across the table from people” as well as through traditional media. The “experiential quality” of an online community, a town-hall meeting and man-on-the-street interviewing is different for each. One can’t be a substitute for the other and all need to co-exit.

**5 Market Strategies, Station Solutions:** It is time for the system to stop subsidizing stations that “assiduously refuse” to take proven actions to improve their audience service. And he believes this from the perspective of being at one of the system’s “great” underperforming stations and in a city “where the rest of the country is ready to vote in a very cold Darwinian way on our future and our lives.”

- “I think it’s time for us to start seeing some public radio stations go away. If public radio stations cannot adjust their operations and become market compatible, develop market responsive operations, figure out how to articulate their brand, figure out how to market themselves effectively, figure out how to use decade-long proven practices on on-air promotions and scheduling -- if people are still at the state..."
now in 2009 where they are assiduously refusing to put the things that have been learned into place, why do we have to keep subsidizing them? Why?”

“If we are going to get serious about this stuff we just have to stop accepting these things. And I’m looking at this with my station WDET. It was perfectly fine for the public radio system to have the main channel in Detroit, the number 11 market in the country, slide right into the abyss. At the same time people were saying we need to serve different audiences and all of these other absolutely right agenda items, the station that serves one of the largest black cities in America was disappearing. And there wasn’t a cognitive dissonance to that because it’s a matter of local governance and everything else. But if we are at the same time going to say we have this national impulse, we have to create some kind of a rub there.”

- Mikel believes that treating station underperformance as a national issue, creating a real “rub” around it, and instituting financial pressures would ultimately benefit the constituents of the stations and their licensees (communities, audiences, advisory boards, etc.).

- **6 Marketing**: This is an important area and “we have to push it so much further than what is articulated here.” The two specific recommendations made are of the sort that has been done for years with no measurable impact.

- **8 Follow-up and Accountability**: As detailed earlier, it is time for there to be real “carrots and sticks” for increasing audience service, including use of CPB CSG funding.

2. **Recommendations resonating most strongly for their station and market**

- **2.1 Journalism – National Programs**: The “priesthood” of NPR journalism that is an issue nationally also has a negative downstream effect on building an authentic local voice for WDET.

  - “I’m now in an organization where I’m looking at the downstream effects of that. I look at the way that the thinking and the approach to news and everything has been shaped in my building right now and it is so much the influence of these folks’ interactions with the national voice. The way that the bar has been set for professional development is ‘how many pieces did you land in the national’. So that means you’ve got to put yourself into the system. People learn how to conform to that and speak in that voice.”

  - Striving to create an authentic and relevant voice for WDET is a “really complicated thing” given that it serves both suburban Oakland County, one of the wealthiest counties in America, and Wayne County, which includes the city of Detroit. “Reconciling the tonality between Oakland county and Wayne county and looking at the impact then of the National Public Radio voice, this is exactly what I’m talking
about.” But despite the differences, people in both counties have “shot way past where NPR is.”

4. The Network: For Mikel at WDET, the most important networks to be built are the “shoe leather” civic networks rather than electronic-based networks.

- Building them is essential to revitalizing WDET. “That’s what I’m living with on a daily basis right now. The way I’m approaching revitalizing this radio station is very much a matter of local politics; it’s shoe leather politics. I have to get out and ask for somebody’s vote pretty much every day ... I have to be shaking hands, to be in their offices. Or we have to be in their neighborhoods, in their church basements, meeting them where they live and getting with them on the issues that they care about.”

- Building these direct networks is also key to several other recommendation areas of the report, most notably 1 Inclusiveness, 2 Journalism and 6 Marketing, though it’s good that the report highlights “networks’ as a critical dimension in itself.

3. Important recommendations or perspectives missing from the report

(See the comments above.)

4. Biggest challenge or hurdle to reaching the report’s objectives

- More humility and less hubris.

- A willingness to have change-making conversations. “It just keeps coming back to our willingness to have change-making conversations with people who are not currently engaged in what we are doing -- and then having that change us. You can’t just have the conversation; you then have to actually change what you do. And I think the people who have led our diversity activity for all of this time, they need to be changed too because clearly we are not making a difference there.

Additional notes:

- Mikel makes a point of noting that his current perspectives have been shaped by his recent changes in locale. “Going from the hub to the fringe – from WNYC and New York City to WDET and Detroit – and watching the conversations through these different lenses, that’s what helped to sharpen my thinking on this.”

- Being in Detroit has particularly pushed his thinking, given the city’s current place in the national scene. “Take the checklist of the major issues that are confronting the United States right now and Detroit pretty much has all of them. So a lot of people in United States in many different sectors – education, governmental reform, corporate structures, not for profit reform, all these different areas – are all targeting Detroit right now as the
place to launch their incubator projects because they see that if they make impact here, then it is utterly transportable to other places in the country.”

He’s passionate that public radio can be a part of this transformation if it takes an activist role. “I believe that were public radio, with its intense and very real belief in the power of mission, to swing around and get serious, get tangible and measurable about the change in our culture -- not just observe and report on our culture but actually get in there and get real about playing a role -- then I believe that we could really be the vanguard for what the country says it wants. We could tap the zeitgeist and do something with it.”
Kit Jensen
Chief Operating Officer, ideastream®, Cleveland, Ohio
Board of Directors, Public Radio International

Key points

- The report focuses on tactics and quantitative goals rather than setting a compelling vision.
- The report is too narrowly and traditionally framed both in its view of the role public media can play in the U.S and its conception of media itself.
- This sort of effort needs to start with local community ascertainment and drive content and platform priorities from there.
- The report also contains many “absolutely wonderful” ideas and recommendations and Kit is enthused.

Points by question area (and detail on key points)

Prefacing remarks:
Kit made a point of beginning the interview with an explanation of the background and biases she brings to her remarks:

- She and her organization have “bit hard” at truly transformational change.
- She has a clear viewpoint on multimedia: “In today’s world we cannot think narrowly about the use of media. Any medium’s success is going to be based on its relationship to all media.”
- She runs an organization “where we made radio and television essentially just disappear other than as services.” All staff works in all streams.

She also frames her thinking from a starting point of community/market ascertainment, which defines needs for which you then develop strategy, which then defines content, for which you then determine distribution.

For ideastream this orientation and process is reflected in the four goals of its strategic plan:

1. Foster appreciation, context and understanding of the region’s assets and challenges through content acquisition and creation for distribution through radio, T.V., cable, fixed media, and the web.
2. Establish regional awareness of our branded multiple channels and distribution streams.

3. Increase the number of formal partnerships to leverage assets over time.

4. Maintain service reliability and financial stability by investing in and realigning program administrative and development resources as necessary.

Given this orientation, Kit found it difficult to respond to the questions in terms of the report’s sections and recommendations. Consequently, most of her comments are included in the “Overall reactions” section below. Cross-references to the report’s sections and recommendations are provided where possible.

0. Overall reactions:

- The greater vision is missing. The report focuses on tactics and quantitative goals rather than setting a compelling vision.
  
  - “There has to be a strong vision and I think the vision is the piece that we’re missing here.”
  
  - The preface of the report starts with the quote from Jon McTaggert: "We need a big idea, a vision, a coalescing imperative . . . something aspirational." Rather than providing such a vision, the report provides a collection of “tactical responses” and a quantitative goal.
  
  - This focus on tactics reflects how the system learned to work over the years to improve to a point of quantifiable outcomes – but “we got caught up in belief systems about what (tactics) made it work or not work and we thought that was really the end result. Kit emphasized that tactics are not an end result. We also learned “you’ve got to quantify it.”
  
  - Kit loves the Mark Ramsey quote “You are dream makers.” To her mind the vision needs to be framed accordingly: “Ultimately a vision has to be about service and creating a better life. And I would define better life as more satisfying, more thoughtful, more connected, more useful. It is bold and audacious to think that a tiny industry could in fact create a better life for the bulk of the US population. But I believe that public broadcasting has that ability.”

- The report is too narrowly and traditionally framed both in its view of the role public media can play in the U.S and its conception of media itself.
  
  - Our conception of the role we should play is understated. “I think that if we believe in the mission of public service media -- public broadcasting, public radio and public television, all that mix -- I think that what we have to do is serve people and we have to do so in ways which are consistent with their values and believe that our role is: first, public service and second, education. This report hints at that, sometimes it is even
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referential to it, but it misses a big bet by not loudly proclaiming it and saying, ‘we are it for the US’. And I don’t mean just public radio.”

- Our audiences already see us playing this vital role. “I think the audience is actually very consistent about their viewpoint about public broadcasting. They value it. They see it as informational, as educational, and as public service. But that means in their head that we are as much about culture and arts as we are about news. It is as much about education, it is as much about protecting the environment – it’s as much about lots of different things.”

- Moreover, funders have this same “service” expectation of public media that is not at all bounded by medium. “I am being asked today by corporations, by major foundations, ‘When newspapers go away, what is your role going to be? Are you going to step up to the plate?’ And what they don’t mean is only in radio and television. They mean any way and in any form that the audience wants it in. Which could include print, could include text, could include messaging, and could include more static web deliveries, the way most newspapers are delivering today.”

- Defining the goal in terms of the growth of the public radio audience is “benign.” “There is nothing wrong with it.” But it is limiting and misses the full potential. “As wonderful as public radio is, in today’s world, it doesn’t touch the audience that public television has.” The problem is that there are “so many belief systems around the industry in radio, television, and the web that are attitudinal rather than data based. They limit the thinking within the system and overlook the possibilities that exist when you look from the local community outward. From that audience-centered perspective you can then consider the relationships and strengths and weakness of any delivery system.”

- Too many tactics. The report covers many tactics without discerning what’s really important and its very traditional framing doesn’t get to the essence of what’s unique or provide something memorable.

  - “When you have too many tactics it’s very hard to make any of them work very well. And I saw too many tactics. I also would say that I would be very concerned if my staff came to me with this kind of strategic plan. I would say, good start, now tell me what’s really critically important.”

  - “What you really have here, no matter what the words are, is a five-point plan which is very traditional. It’s not un-traditional. It’s about audiences, it’s about content, it’s about delivery systems, it’s about marketing and promotion and it’s about development. It works like any business plan. It actually hasn’t honed in on what is unique ... what we would want to make sure we included if we were going to build it again.”
Along with a compelling vision, Kit believes “it is really important to not have more than five memorable things that you are actually going to do ... If you’re really going to be effective; it’s got to be narrowed down.”

Regardless of these critiques, Kit also sees the report as containing many “absolutely wonderful” ideas and recommendations. “I found myself marking a lot of places with exclamation points and saying yes, yes. I just wish I had another 50 years left in my work life because it’s fascinating.” She is also very appreciative and complimentary of the terrific amount of effort and time that people have devoted to developing it – and appreciates being asked for her viewpoint. She looks forward to participating further.

1. **Recommendations resonating most strongly for public radio as a whole**

Kit did not generally identify particular recommendations in the report that resonate with her. She did, however, identify the topics or themes that do resonate with her and cross-referenced some of the GTA report recommendation to them.

- **Audience and community ascertainment.** The framing for this sort of initiative (GTA) should start with local community leadership and their view of the community’s needs and their vision of how to serve those needs. From there the needed content focus and platforms of delivery can be determined.
  
  - “The most important thing is polling our current audiences and the public at large -- what their needs and interests really are.” It is hinted at in various places in the report but is hard to find consistently or centrally. “While it didn’t come out as a recommendation, I would say that really, really resonates.”
  
  - “This kind of goes back to the old fashion ascertainment stuff. If you can get your customers or your audiences to tell you what they want and then you do it, then you’re aligned. It is interesting, we say that we want to know a lot about our audiences and we want them to be interactive. But we -- our journalists – actually resist and we infrequently ask what they’re interested in and then act to be responsive.”

- Community ascertainment and community leadership are particularly central to the recommendations in section 5 Market Strategies, Station Solutions, both as a matter of proper course and as the key to funding.

  - “Once we understand what audiences want, then we can actually start to take a look at the licensees and ownership structures in order to say how we can, through collaboration, merger or any other device, be more cost-effective and have more impact.”

  - “I think the big miss in this whole ‘audience thing’ is the piece that actually will provide the funding -- nowhere in here is there any discussion about the role of
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community leadership, vis-à-vis service. That’s how funding comes in. How can you leave out the most important constituencies in your discussions? People who are good at creating vision understand that first you get buy-in to the vision and then the money comes. But it cannot be among only professionals. It has got to include audience and it has got to include community leaders.”

▶ Content: Strengthening content across the board is “terrifically important,” though the areas of particular emphasis should flow from the ascertainment of what the market needs and wants. (Kit bundles all the recommendations under 1 Inclusiveness, 2 Journalism, and 3 Music under “content” and says “yes, good.”)

- She singles out local reporting capacity as a content area of particular importance. “I think absolutely that anything we can do to continue to increase the ability to gather information and do stories which can be regional, state-wide or national is going to pay off for us and I’m very supportive of it. I have some skepticism about some of the techniques, but I don’t think it’s worth going into it necessarily because there’s not any one way of doing it and it’s all going to depend on how much money there is”

▶ Delivery systems. This an area where we must “absolutely focus,” though Kit found it somewhat hard to follow and link to specific recommendations given the way delivery systems are separated out in the report.

- Metadata across platforms: “One of the most important things we need to do is focus on the systems work that needs to be done to create metadata archiving, the ability to network and be able to move things easily among the stations, producers, networks and audiences – and across platforms and beyond just the web.

- Thinking in terms of platforms. “I think that what we’ve been doing is seizing on the specific technology and device rather than understanding how platforms evolve and where we get on and get off. We already know that the wireless cloud is the next huge development area, but then there’ll be something after that.”

- Experimenting, learning and acting. “I think we’ve done a pretty good job of experimenting both as a system and as individual stations. But the problem is it that we have too many tiny experiments and not enough movement. It’s just amazing how much we do not use the knowledge that is gained in any other industry in these areas. I have a web developer who after 3 years of going to IMA and talking to people cannot believe how little public radio manages to get done. Too much talk and not enough doing is the way he puts it. You know, when the answers are obvious and you all know it, what’s getting in the way?”

- Staying agnostic and thinking inclusively about platforms. It’s important to base platform choices on audience and content rather than familiarity and past practice (“be agnostic”). It’s also important not to slot platforms to specific applications. “For some reason the language in the report, which may simply reflect the viewpoint of the
majority of the industry, only sees the web as an alternate or supplemental medium. I think that’s incredibly limiting and it gets confused about the web as a content maker/provider, versus the web as an aggregator, versus the web as a delivery system.

2. Recommendations resonating most strongly for their station and market

▶ **5 Market Strategies, Station Solutions**: Kit sees Cleveland as an underperforming market, in aggregate. “The combined impact of the public stations – radio & TV – and commercial classical radio station has not yet been organized for the best potential service for the region. Community leadership is acutely aware of this and constantly say there has got to be a better way to do this. They are looking at cost, but they’re also looking at actual impact and potential impact. Perhaps with more dialogue and lots of patience, it can be sorted out satisfactorily.” So, while there is work to be done, she believes that community leadership is engaged in the ways she sees as vital.

▶ **6 Marketing**: This is the second area where Kit sees the most pay-off for ideastream in their market.

3. Important recommendations or perspectives missing from the report

▶ Educational service. An integral part of public media “service” must be education.

  • “If public media is not a player in the educational arena, we are completely missing the value, the need, and the identification. And our history.” Education in this regard includes K-12 resources and curriculum as well as more formalized lifelong learning. For instance, ideastream is using *Pulse of the Planet* produced content and re-versioning it into an online resource organized by topic, grade, pacing and statewide curriculum requirements. (*Pulse of the Planet* is an independent production unit focused on the world of science, distributed on noncommercial stations, the Armed Forces Network, and Voice of America, and supported by the National Science Foundation.)

  • The availability of multiple channels through HD and online opens up many opportunities for distributing educational content and even creating educationally oriented channels. For instance, Kit is working on a huge initiative right now in the health arena to do ongoing programming and looking at whether or not there should be an entire health channel. (On TV for now but the content could end up on multiple platforms.)

▶ Very basic public service. Public media needs to consider and determine our public service roles in public safety and security, ranging from traditional emergency broadcast information to others that we may not have defined yet.

  • “What is our role in emergency broadcast? This gets down to real traditional roles of local media and local radio particularly. What is our role today and what should it be if
most radio is now delivered from someplace else and there’s very little local intervention? What is our role in our community?”

- “One of the things that I talk about is, ‘what happens to us when the power goes away?’ What is our role? By that, I mean both short term and long-term. Short term a tornado, hurricane or whatever it is, but also long-term. As energy and access to power becomes limited, which frankly it is already is if you look at the grid and at the demand on the grid, what’s going to happen to what we’re building?”

4. Biggest challenge or hurdle to reaching the report’s objectives

- Ourselves. “We, ourselves, can keep it from happening because of limited viewpoints, limited vision, history and attitudes, and inability to create effective compromises that will still accomplish the task. These self-limitations can be overcome with a strong enough vision, but I think the vision is the piece that we’re missing here.”

- Capital. Lack of capital will make it harder, though, “I don’t know if it will keep us from succeeding.”
**Key points**

- More specific strategies and tactics are needed in the report – something beyond the normal academic public radio rhetoric.
- Journalism, particularly local journalism, is the way to go and the place to start.
- Public TV is a valuable partner for growing the audience.
- Stations don’t need to wait for an infusion of capital to start taking actions to grow the audience.

**Points by question area** (and detail on key points)

0. Overall reactions

- The report is “very well thought out” with “good stuff in the right direction.” But a lot of it felt like “normal academic public radio rhetoric.” This isn’t meant negatively but by way of saying we are at a point where more specificity and practicality is needed.
  - “It has been my experience in public broadcasting that we say all these things -- that we need to acquire more diverse audiences, we need to use multiple platforms, we need to have collaborations and partnerships -- yet I think we are now at a point where stations and leaders of stations and boards need to have specific tactics and strategies to do that.” -Tom

1. Recommendations resonating most strongly for public radio as a whole

- *1 Inclusiveness:* Just as news and information is our greatest opportunity for growing the audience overall, it’s also our best and most enduring strategy for growing more diverse audiences.
“I firmly believe that our most obvious opportunity in diversity is through news and information. Now the challenge there is that information in and of itself isn’t diverse, it’s the perspectives on that information which is diverse and therein lays the challenge. Playing jazz music is different than somehow trying to attract the black audience around news and information. It’s a different kettle of fish but it’s a kettle of fish that we have got in front of us versus trying to launch music programming which is not as enduring a strategy.” - John

2 Journalism (overall): “This is the place to start. There is a lot of room for growth here, independent of all the other initiatives that are spelled out in this report.”

2.2 Journalism – Local Reporting: “Boots on the ground is the way to go” given the decline in local commercial journalism and the opportunity for public radio to step in, particularly in markets where it already has an established brand and reputation for national news. The recommendations in this section are “spot-on.”

3 Music: Music may not be the most enduring way to build audience, particularly minority audiences.

- “One of the realities is that when it comes to music or when it comes to serving minority audiences with non-news programming, anybody could do it. If we identify music formats as an entrée to more diverse audiences, let’s not forget that those things are easily replicable. They really are. Yeah, commercial does it different than public radio, but still.” - John

- Moreover, with the commercial radio model broken and the economy creating additional pressures, commercial stations will be seeking and willing to try new formats and approaches – including formats serving more niche audiences. If public radio comes up with what looks like a viable format, it might well be adopted and adapted by commercial stations.

5 Market Strategies, Station Solutions: In thinking about market service and options for providing multiple services, it would be helpful for the system – and this report – to have a real point of view on the future of HD.

- Tom and John’s own perspective is that HD growth will remain slow without an FCC mandate or some other major external push for adoption. Short of that, growth will depend on the gradual availability of HD in car radios and other devices.

- At present there seem to be more opportunities in the IP-based digital space (WIFI, iPhone, etc.)

- There may also be resurgence in analog FM. As commercial radio station profits continue to decline and station values fall, John anticipates there may be a coming wave of real innovation, “just because stations don’t have anything to do or are so desperate they will try practically anything.” It won’t likely come from Clear Channel
and may come from middle and small markets where the stakes are lower. If and as this happens, the value of public radio’s core distribution channel may rise.

7 Support for Stronger Service: Two particular structural issues need to be addressed to help spur audience growth:

- Permission to innovate. John sees a “huge sticking point” in the relationship between the stations and the network in regard to innovation.
  - “Let’s face it, a lot of the innovation is going to have to happen at the network level and some, if not most of the new media stuff is going to necessarily happen without the local stations involved (or involved only in part). It’s a long, storied history between member stations and the networks and we just need to get over that.”
  - “The network should be allowed to more freely innovate in ways to meet its public and to develop relationships with this public. It just feels like it’s now the tail wagging the dog. I just wonder if it isn’t time to think a little bit more openly and broadly about how we allow the networks, and stations for that matter, to innovate in order to capture new audiences, more diverse audiences, whatever the case is.” - John

Note: John does not extend these relationship changes to national fundraising.

- While this point may play out in structural ways, it’s really a generational cultural issue. “There is a generation of public radio people who worked very, very hard to build this network and they did it from the ground up. They did it through local stations and NPR was a product of that. NPR in turn grew so that it could serve the local stations. We need to perhaps think a bit differently about that relationship and how we move forward.” - John

- Brand clarity and ownership. If you take the perspective that much of the audience growth will come from stations filling the local journalism vacuum and evolving into true public service media institutions for their communities, they need the ability to brand themselves locally and singularly.
  - “I mean we have so many brands that I think we confuse our audience. I mean, what are we? Are we NPR? PRI? APM? PBS? KPBS? I think that the real future of local public broadcasting is serving the local community and using the national content to supplement that. I would like to see less of the network brands to allow the local stations to establish their own brand because I think that will work. To me it’s a great opportunity to take another look at the branding struggle we’ve had. I am really thinking outside the box, but I would prefer that all I do here is build the KPBS brand and not have to send so many different images to our viewers and our customers.” – Tom
- For John, this fits in with one of his programming “dreams” of using NPR and other networks as news services from which they draw content to integrate with their local content. To accompany this with strong local branding, NPR would have to back off on its own branding or at least allow stations to back them off locally.

2. Recommendations resonating most strongly for their station and market

- **1 Inclusiveness**: Tom agrees with the report’s direction and emphasis in this area but struggles with how to do it at the station level.
  - “I struggle with this whole thing of repeating constantly to us that ‘we have to be more diverse, we have to reach more diverse audiences, we have to ….’ It gets back to what I was saying about the public radio academic rhetoric. What I need is specific examples and strategies of how we do these kinds of things. I am looking for strong recommendations on how to do it. The report would better serve us by giving best practices and showing what people are doing, what is working, how they do it.”

- **2.2 Journalism – Local Reporting**: Though already the top news station in the market, KPBS sees large opportunities to grow its news service and audience across platforms.
  - The market is primed. To start, San Diego is demographically a “public broadcasting town.” It’s also seen a precipitous decline in its commercial journalism. “We have one major daily newspaper which is just declining rapidly, we have a complete market of commercial radio that basically surrendered the news and information format, and we are seeing a real change in the way local commercial television affiliates are producing news in a more sensational ‘if it bleeds it leads’ way.”
  - KPBS is organizationally well positioned. “As these things continue to happen, we have an opportunity to be the leading source of news and information in this town across all of our distribution platforms which include television, radio, the web, social networking, and digital media. Our audience is going to grow across all of those things through the collaboration and partnerships within our own organization.”
  - The scale required is reasonable. KPBS currently has seven reporters. With 10 full time reporters covering the city John believes they could increase their coverage “exponentially.” He also notes there is a limit to the number of on-the-street reporters than can be productively added in a given time period. You also need to think about adding capacity for wider distribution across platforms. (By contrast the Union Tribune after large job cuts still has 150 people in the newsroom and about 800 total employees.)
  - Re-purposing and leveraging content is key. Despite the cross-platform integration that already exists at KPBS, they are currently missing out on opportunities to further
reuse existing content across platforms. Hand-in-hand with increasing reporting capacity is increasing packaging and distribution capacity, whether that capacity is part of reporters’ time or some other positions.

- Imperatives for national news also apply locally. In reading the section on strengthening national news programming, Tom flagged three items that KPBS also needs to address locally.
  - “Enterprise and investigative reporting is a huge area that we need to start to tackle.”
  - “Multiple uses of the content is big on our radar screen.”
  - “Diverse voices need to be very much a part of all we do.”

- Growth will happen as the business model plays out. Tom sees their existing business model as viable and the real driver of how far and fast they will expand their news service and audience.
  - “To add to what John was saying about the ideal news staff size, I really don’t have a number in mind. Current reporting staff has been built up over the last fifteen years from when we had basically no reporters in the field. It’s been based on us improving our content and growing our audience, which in turn grew membership and corporate support. So the value of our service and how we are able to gather support from the community will be a direct correlation defined by how big our staff gets. To me there is no magic number. If we continue to give a valuable service and people continue to support us in growing numbers, we will continue to grow and expand the type of content that we are doing.”

4 The Network: While broadcasting remains its core, KPBS is committed to being on all platforms as a matter of offering choices to customers.

- “One of the things that the report said is that we have to remember radio is still our core. We believe that strongly. And as a joint licensee even TV is still our core. But we have to be available on all digital platforms. I don’t think that we are going to see in the near future the web or mobile phones take over completely but it will be complementary for us – everything builds together.” - Tom

- With his staff, Tom uses the analogy of the introduction of ATMs circa 1980. There was talk then that it would revolutionize banking and spell the end of the branch bank. Instead it became another customer choice for banking along with tellers, the web, 800 numbers and cell phones. It’s useful for certain people at certain times for certain tasks. “The banking industry had to become very diverse in how they provide their services and I think as public broadcasters we are in the same boat.”
Given the slow adoption of HD and without adding analog stations, John sees most platform-related audience growth coming from offering additional content streams through IP-based access (fixed line, WIFI, cell wireless, etc.). Over the next three to five years he can see the possibility of monetizing these services by having aggregated enough users for the traditional business model of underwriting and membership to work.

5 Market Strategies, Station Solutions: The second best way to grow the audience in San Diego (after more news) is by adding a full-time music service on analog FM. But that poses some challenges for KPBS.

Outside of existing competencies. “Adding a music service is a competency that really falls outside this building. It is just something that we don’t do and haven’t done over the years. This makes that particular growth opportunity a bit of challenge for stations like KPBS.” John suspects that the same would be true for other news and information stations.

- The exception could be starting a classical format station. They already air classical music overnight (C24) and, very importantly, there’s content that they can readily leverage from across the system.

Need for a partner. If starting a music service, John would look for a partner, particularly one who could really innovate in creating the new service in terms of bring in a younger, more diverse audience and developing relationships with that audience.

Continuously monitoring for the right opportunity. KPBS has already done the analysis and worked with Public Radio Capital to determine that they could cover the debt service for an $8-10 million station purchase based on a classical format. At the time, the asking price was $40 million. Recently it’s dropped to $20 million and they’ve had inquiries about LMAs. Given the trend, an acquisition may become a real possibility.

Need for available financing (nationwide). Based on what they are seeing in San Diego, Tom imagines there is a large span of emerging opportunities across the country to acquire stations at far more feasible prices. Increasing the pool of available funding through CPB or other sources is “a real important thing to talk about.”

3. Important recommendations or perspectives missing from the report

PTV partnership. One of the most valuable partnerships for public radio is with their public TV station, whether a joint-licensee or not. KPBS sees this as an obvious way to grow radio listening.
“Strong collaborations with your public TV station will in fact do the old ‘rising tide raises all boats’. For me as the General Manager I think the way that we could grow our radio audience is to expand our radio product to our web and our TV station and in turn really make all of the areas grow.” (Tom)

Public TV still has a far larger cume audience than public radio – 3 times that of radio in the case of KPBS.

Radio promotion can be targeted and timely. KPBS use evening primetime TV breaks to promote what they are doing on radio the next day. “We are constantly saying join this story on the border on KPBS radio tomorrow, join this discussion on our top show . . . we are constantly reminding people.”

Radio journalism provides the “backbone” for TV’s public affairs programs, which gives the journalists heard on the radio wider exposure and builds their credibility.

Filling the gap – and seizing the opportunity – left by the decline of commercial journalism in the market requires effectively using all available resources, given that new resources are limited. Combining the reach of both public radio and TV through cross-promotion and content reuse does just that.

4. Biggest challenge or hurdle to reaching the report’s objectives

▶ The innovator’s dilemma. Will public radio’s success and business models keep it from taking the risks for needed innovations?

▶ We are in this interesting place now, aren’t we? KPBS is the number two station in San Diego so there is a certain amount of responsibility and expectation on the part of the audience. To what degree are we going to feel free to innovate as we continue to solidify our position in this market?”

“If you read between the lines in this entire ninety-one page report that’s what it’s about -- it’s the innovator’s dilemma. How do we move into these new areas while sustaining and growing our existing service? I think that the innovation is really going to be a challenge for us – being willing to take risks, cut our losses and move on. And to shift resources because it’s going to be a few salaries here and there to make this stuff happen.” - John

▶ “Old school” people and thinking. “I think some of the biggest challenges and hurdles are old school people who are still thinking of public broadcasting where it was ten, fifteen, twenty years ago.” - Tom

Their stalling and stopping effect is likely to appear in multiple ways.
grow the audience
Conversations with Public Media Leaders

- Preventing needed consolidation. Fixed mindsets and vested personal interests in existing stations will create a major hurdle to the consolidation of operations and licensees needed to drive both operating efficiency and audience service improvement.

- Sticking narrowly to public radio. “There is that old school of ‘no, we are the purest of radio’ even though we are in a totally different ballgame than we were twenty, twenty five years ago.”

- Limiting collaboration. “When you talk about collaboration you have got to look at really changing ideas.” Tom doesn't see that happening in significant ways (for example, why aren't there ongoing collaborations between PBS and NPR?).

“Sometimes I think we could be our own biggest challenge and hurdle over the next eleven years to get to 2020.” - Tom

Additional notes:

- There’s no need to wait for an infusion of capital to get started on growing the audience. Both Tom and John make a point of noting that they believe that KPBS has been pursuing many of the recommendations in the report for years now and without new funding. They’ve done it by “rearranging the deck chairs” – by redoing functions, redoing jobs, being more efficient, becoming more “converged” and having a strategic plan that’s very focused on certain areas.

“It’s not been an easy process sometimes for people in the organization but we’ve done it in order to position ourselves to grow our audience without sitting back and saying, ‘well we can’t do this until we have an infusion of money’.”

As an example, John cites changes they’ve made to propel their online presence:

“In 2005 we had one person working on kpbs.org and our website was a marketing tool. We came up with a plan of handpicking seven people from around the organization in different disciplines and in one day we had eight people working full time on kpbs.org with a new digital department to create content, re-purpose content, and turn our website from a marketing tool into a full news channel. We did that without hiring one extra body. We just haven’t been afraid to rearrange the deck chairs.”

Since then they have moved further to converge roles by having reporters post their own work on the website, freeing a staff person to do other online work.

“Let’s face it. No one has a big check that’s going to finance this whole thing. The changes need to get started at home and there are things that stations can do themselves, now, to grow the audience.”
Christina Kuzmych
Station Manager, WFIU, Bloomington, Indiana
President, Public Radio in Mid-America

Key points

▶ An integrated online news presence is essential for public broadcasting to own the journalistic landscape. It’s a way for all of the system’s resources to work together – large and small markets, radio and TV, state and national networks.
▶ National brand and awareness marketing is essential for increasing both the size and inclusiveness of the audience.
▶ Music formats could be enhanced by shifting local staff from hosting recorded music to reporting on music, arts and culture in local communities.
▶ WFIU’s largest source of future audience growth may be through its original online only content.

Points by question area (and detail on key points)

0. Overall reactions

▶ The report is “very comprehensive” and all of the recommendation areas resonated “strongly.” It covers the topics discussed at the regional (SRG’s GTA presentation at PRIMA) and of most concern to WFIU.

1. Recommendations resonating most strongly for public radio as a whole

▶ 2.3 Journalism – Integrated Online News: “Online news is the area in which we can truly own the journalistic landscape as broadcasters and online is the key. It is the one place where we can all meet -- large markets, small markets, radio, and television -- and that resonated very strongly.”
  ▪ Content needs to be integrated at all levels, from bottom to top: local market radio and TV, state network, and national.
  ▪ “A backbone” is needed that allows us to all to be integrated, searchable and easily accessible.” This could extend to having a single point of entry.
grow the audience
Conversations with Public Media Leaders

- While there is considerable dissension (“or I should say diverse thinking”) as to whether we should be investing in legacy broadcasting, digital broadcasting, online, etc., – “online is the one place where we can all meet, and accept.”

- 6 Marketing: The section and recommendations generally resonate, including helping stations to improve their marketing techniques. But a major component is missing – a national branding campaign.

- 3 Music: The section is “well handled” and appreciated. “Very often we lose sight of the fact that a large portion of our audience is coming to us because of our music and our cultural programming. It is not always the news.”

However, the recommendation area related to the presentation of music needs more emphasis and perhaps a particular direction. Stations should move away from simply presenting music (“spinning CDs”) and focus their staff on reporting on music, arts and cultural life in their communities. This local content can then be integrated into the format. National program services (e.g. C-24) can handle the CD music presentation, freeing local staff to do the reporting. There’s little value in replicating music announcing all over the country. There is value in having local music, arts and cultural reporting from across the country.

- These comments were made in the context of classical music programming but could be extended to other music formats as well.

- 5 Market Strategies, Station Solutions: The emphasis on major market stations is “good common sense” as a means for building broadcast audience quickly, but the situation may be different when building online audience. Stations such as hers may be strong content providers and online audience builders through original content based on resources and partnerships they have available in their markets (see 4 The Network below). So be careful not to relegate small markets to second-class status in the online realm.

2. Recommendations resonating most strongly for their station and market

- 3 Music: As noted above, WFIU is looking at how to effectively use their music staff, whether to allocate them to announcing or reporting.

- 2.2 Journalism – Local Reporting: Building stronger news content at both the local and state levels resonates “very strongly” for WFIU. As joint licensee they have recently integrated TV, radio and online news production under one “news bureau” with one bureau chief to improve their local news coverage.

- In terms of the number of “feet on the street” needed to adequately cover their market, WFIU’s news staffing of four full-time reporters plus part-timers and interns from the journalism school is “luxurious” compared to stations in similar markets.
that may not have even a news director. Nonetheless, they’d need two more fulltime reporters (a 50% increase) to begin to adequately cover the various communities in their market. But Christina does not know how this would be funded. “We have created the framework and we have the vision. We know where we are going. What is lacking is the funding.”

4 The Network: WFIU’s greatest audience building opportunity may be a global audience for its original online content created in partnership with internationally acclaimed centers at Indiana University.

- They are in a market where there is little if any broadcast coverage growth opportunity. They are using HD2 for a counter-programmed version of their main channel service but “it is going very slowly.” They anticipate an HD3 service but don’t expect much growth from it. The main reason for HD2 and HD3 is in the streaming potential, where unique content may attract a broader audience. Christina imagines that many stations share their situation.

- Expectations of a global online audience come from the work they are doing to create modules and short podcasts in partnership with five or six centers at the university that have international stature (e.g. the Kinsey Institute, Center for Global Studies with a focus on Islam and Muslim traditions, the Jacobs School of Music.) They are now extending these productions into “discrete programs” for radio use, but all are produced as original material for online. (An anticipated partnership with the Jacobs School of Music may also generate content for an HD3 service.)

- This partnership-based content production and distribution model is expected to continue and extend to other partners and content areas, all “outside of legacy and traditional radio.”

- At present, their online audience is “slowly building” but is not yet substantial or contributing to the bottom line.

3. Important recommendations or perspectives missing from the report

- A national awareness campaign. The major item missing from the Marketing section is a recommendation for a “national branding campaign.” This is essential for there to be any expectation that public radio can “own the journalistic landscape.” To do that the “NPR brand should resonate as strongly as the CNN brand with the average American.” And to do this requires a national marketing campaign. “It’s been talked about for years but rarely pursued and pursued with consistency.”

- Such awareness marketing might also be the most effective way of increasing the diversity and inclusiveness of public radio’s audience through targeting of Latinos.
and African-Americans where awareness is particularly low. There could be large audience increases among these groups without any changes in existing content. “Content is content, if it is good content everyone wants to hear it, regardless of background. This is not to say, of course, that you may not want to package something differently if you are really being that laser precise in your targeting, but content is content. And good content is good content regardless of who is listening to it.”

- Funding/business models. There is little in the report on solid funding models or creating a business model for the system as a whole, nationally and locally, radio, TV, and online. “I can’t even articulate how one would do that, but I wish that somebody would fund a study on good business models that we could all look at and approach from a national perspective.”

4. Biggest challenge or hurdle to reaching the report’s objectives

- Awareness. For people to listen to and view us they first need to know we exist. We are currently too far down the list of recognized news sources. We are only known among a certain demographic. That’s why national brand and awareness marketing is needed.

- Fragmentation of the existing audience. This is the front-door, back-door problem. While we are working to bring new audiences in the on-air front door we need to keep in mind that our legacy audience is seeping out the backdoor to new platforms. So we need to be on all platforms and we need to measure our audience across all platforms.

- Funding. “The challenge is to establish and grow multiple platforms simultaneously, maintain them effectively, and all with scant funding. If there is anything I am sad about it, it is the fact that we, perhaps more than any other broadcast entity, are positioned to truly make a difference – but we are under-funded.”
Key points

- Social media is under-addressed in the report and deserves its own section.
- Multimedia production and multiplatform distribution need more emphasis as ways of diversifying as well as engaging the audience.
- Stations and program directors in particular need to put radio operations on autopilot and put some real muscle behind multimedia production and multiplatform distribution.

Points by question area (and detail on key points)

0. Overall reactions

- Everything the report covers is “right on” and the thinking is “in the right direction” but the importance of social media was under-addressed. It deserves an entire section of its own. “My biggest beef is the social media stuff.”

(See notes under Section 3.)

1. Recommendations resonating most strongly for public radio as a whole

- **1 Inclusiveness:** Multimedia and social media is the route to more inclusiveness.
  - “I personally think that the more public radio embraces all forms of media, the more inclusive it will become just because they have expanded their net so much. Each medium in itself helps diversify the audience.”
  - “I read from somebody in the report that ‘public radio needs a big idea’. Well this is the big idea. If you build it, the people will come.”

- **3 Music:** There’s an important role for public radio to play in playing and promoting local music.
  - People can readily hear commercial musicians and artists with access to national media on many sources. What they are missing is local musicians and music. “If public radio can make itself a place where local people who are just trying to break in can be heard and seen, I think that would go a long way.” And it’s part of what Al
sees as public radio’s role “to open doorways for people to hear things and experience things they never have before.”

- Featurring local music is also a powerful counter to the homogenization of local communities. “There is a huge service in finding that local sound. I find when I travel that every area has its own local sound.”

- There’s also the possibility and benefit of helping an artist succeed, nationally or just locally. “If you make a dent locally, then you make a dent nationally. So if you start playing unsigned bands that are pretty good on your local station, who knows where that goes because media isn’t controlled in one little space anymore and people don’t need a record company to become big. They can do it on their own. I think that support is incredibly important even if those bands don’t ever get big.”

2. **Recommendations resonating most strongly for their station and market**

Not applicable for Al.

3. **Important recommendations or perspectives missing from the report**

- The importance and impact of social media.
  “In the future we are all, like it or not, going to be dealing with social media and social networking to the extent that I feel it should have a complete section to itself. That’s what is going to drive our content in the future and I think they missed it.”

In such a section, Al imagines highlighting three current applications to illustrate the role of social media in building audience:

- Twitter for engaging in people’s immediate lives (not just sending them messages).
  “It doesn’t seem to me that they (NPR, station staff, and public radio users) engage in other people’s Twitter posts unless it’s specifically to them. If you are trying to engage people through Twitter the goal is not to just write your own comments but also comment on other people’s stuff. Because when you comment on other peoples stuff, the people that are following them see you and they get turned on to it and that’s how you grow a network on Twitter – by being an active participant on it.”

  “If you are a show or whatever and people tweet you and they hear a response from you, when you engage in their lives they feel like “oh wow, this person like is watching me, this person cares” – and that gives a level of communication like we’ve never had before. I think it’s huge.”

- FaceBook for showing your stuff and building your own community.
“FaceBook is a great way to connect with people and really show them what you are about. It’s also a great way to show off if you have multimedia aspects to your show. And you can basically create your own community.”

- Ning or other tools for creating whole social networks.

  Ning or such tools are useful when you are trying to create a new community (social network) around a certain topic, issue or event and really want them to engage in discussion, dialogue and debate among themselves – as PRX did with Talent Quest. “They had a great theme and it brought people around it.”

  (For his program, State of the Re:Union, Al doesn’t plan on using Ning or otherwise creating a social network at least for now. He’ll rely more on Twitter and FaceBook to create awareness, engagement and community around the show itself.)

- The power and necessity of full multimedia production and multi-platform delivery (versus just add-ons to radio).

  - Al doesn’t see public radio (or the report) fully recognizing the importance and power of operating in a mode of true multi-media production and multi-platform delivery.

    “They look at a show as a radio show. Yeah, they will put a couple of pictures on flicker and maybe add-on some small video clips here and there. But they don’t look at it as all one big pie and you have to tackle it that way. Because now people want access to all the information and all the stuff you have. And they want it when they want it. They don’t want to wait for you to give it to them.”

    “As a producer you have to recognize that in order to survive you have to go where the people are. People are at their computers and they are getting entertained by a laughing cat on YouTube and you’ve got to figure how to compete with that.”

    “We (State of the Re:Union) are always thinking about how the multimedia plays into the picture and sometimes we think in terms that multimedia is the thing. We don’t look at ourselves as a radio show, we look at ourselves as a multimedia show and radio is one of the aspects within multimedia.”

- To illustrate what full multimedia and multiplatform production means, Al outlines the planned elements of State of the Re:Union:
  - documentary shorts (audio and video)
  - highly stylized and integrated graphics
  - animation, including complete animation pieces
  - still pictures and slide shows
  - podcasts (audio and video)
  - music videos (online and podcast)
- Social media:
  - FaceBook page
  - Blogs (for everyone on staff, as part of their job)
  - Twitter (with updates and responses by everyone on staff, as part of their job)

  “I think it is very different from if you walk into NPR and see what most of the people are doing there. I know some of the producers have little accounts but we are looking for something that’s more substantial from the people that work with us. We need to make the public feel like they can reach out and touch anybody.”

- A true multimedia production and multiplatform environment also requires different staffing roles and patterns. In particular there’s a need for a “Creative Director” to make sure it all works together. (Al has created such a position for State of the Union.)

  - The role is akin to a traditional public radio program producer but focuses on multiple dimensions and their integration rather than just a single dimension (audio).
  - For State of the Re:Union, Al sees the position’s roles and requirements as:
    - look over all sides of the puzzle to make sure that everything matches up, connects, works together and fits with the brand of State of the Re:Union
    - know enough about web design, social media, video productions, audio production, etc. to be able to speak the language to everybody (including those with deep skills in certain areas)
    - act as a liaison and translator between myself and the rest of staff to bring the “imagination thing” down into real world specifics
    - help refine the program’s voice and make sure that we are always speaking in that language
    - keep an eye on things and make sure we are all working together
    - maintain production standards
    - push us to get out there as much as possible in every way possible.

4. Biggest challenge or hurdle to reaching the report’s objectives

  - Still thinking that media can be controlled.
    - “There are so many people in public radio who, just like the record industry and the movie industry, do not get that you can’t control media anymore. The more that people understand that you can’t control it and you just got to go with it, the better
off they are going to be. If they start looking at it from that place -- that no, I can't control this, I can make it, put it out there, and go with it -- then public radio is going to be fine.”

- Al sees less of a problem with national program producers than with stations and station program directors. At least some program producers have “got with it” and are moving into more multimedia and multi-platform approaches. And there are also examples like *This American Life* that have “changed the way people think about how you could do a radio story.”

But stations and program directors in particular seem to be keeping their energy and focus on radio as usual – maintaining their broadcast schedules and overseeing their programs as is – while they should be working and reaching into whole new areas.

“I would let the radio stuff kind of go on autopilot because you have been doing it for so long you should be able to be on autopilot. I mean the radio is going to be fine. If you keep giving to your customers the same thing you have given them they will be fine. But I would shift some muscle and look at what you could do on the other end.”

- When pressed for details on what’s the “other end,” Al admits, “This isn’t my job so I don’t know how they would do it, but I think that program directors need to figure out a new model for how they are going to provide services (multimedia production, multiplatform distribution, audience engagement, and social networking).” And he does offer some top-of-mind “little ideas”:
  - Engaging those who are already passionate in the community to engage others.
    “Once a week I would have a bloggers roundtable where bloggers from the local area come in and they talk about what’s going on in the city. And I would make it a call in show and have an online blog where people could comment on it. Bloggers are people that are passionate and involved in whatever area they are in. So I would use those people to help connect me with other people.”
  - Cross-training, cross-equipping and cross-tasking producers to do multimedia production. Adding multimedia talent as positions.
  - Shifting their roles to something akin to the “creative director” position described above, but at the whole station level.

- Lack of personal use, understanding and appreciation of new media.
  “We are talking about a whole bunch of different forms of media that most people in public radio don’t use. If you don’t use a Twitter account you probably don’t understand how it works. If you don’t have a FaceBook page you don’t understand how crazy addictive it can become.”
“If you have not personally invested in it, or if you don’t personally understand it, you are not going to be able to understand when somebody comes to you and says look we got this many responses off of this Twitter post and so that means like this is the way the country is thinking, so that means this is what we need to do in a boardroom. If you don’t understand the power of it, why would you take it seriously? That’s probably going to be the number one issue.”

“If I hope for anything it is that public radio people tend to be people with open minds that are willing to go into uncharted territory. So that may be the thing that saves us – that people get curious. But it feels to me like public radio has always done things certain ways and so maybe they will always continue to do them certain ways.”
WILL LEWIS
Management consultant, KCRW, Santa Monica, California

Key points

- The web should remain decentralized, just like stations.
- Growing audiences of color comes naturally from increased levels of education and income; trying to attract greater audiences of color by changing the sensibilities of existing programs is misguided.
- No analysis is provided to show how the audience goal is achievable.

Points by question area (and detail on key points)

0. Overall reactions

- The report is “extremely comprehensive.”
- The audience goal isn’t achievable without watering down formats.
  - “The thing I have to tell you right off -- the 20 million more people who will use public radio every week in the next ten years so we get to the 50 million -- I just don’t buy that. And if it does become that, it is going to be because of watering down the music stations and adding music stations.”
  - There will still be some growth from news and information programming but not at the rate seen recently due to a news cycle with two wars and a “transformational” election.

1. Recommendations resonating most strongly for public radio as a whole

- 2.1 Journalism – National Programs: The idea of strengthening the core NPR news programs resonated “really highly.” “Nobody can be against that.”

Not resonating:

- 1 Inclusiveness: Will is concerned with “how the people of color concept would be executed.” Thinking that audiences of color can be increased by changing the sensibilities and tone of existing programming is mistaken.
  - The audiences of color for our existing programs “will grow as they become upwardly mobile; with more professional people of color there will be more listeners to our
programs.” He believes this is happening with KCRW. “Here at KCRW, at our events, we are getting more people of color.” And the station’s audiences of color are already under-reported since Arbitron doesn’t measure Asian Americans.

- But changing the sensibilities of existing programming will not make a difference. It is “deluded.” If you want to reach significant audiences of color, beyond those who come naturally with upward mobility (as above), “you have got to do it all the way.” It requires distinct programming and formats truly programmed for that community which means developing entirely separate programming services. (In making these points Will recalls his experience at WBUR around 1968 in developing a program called The Drum for the black community where they worked with black media professionals and “in effect turned the station over to representatives of the black community” for that time block.)

- HD radio at one time held the promise of providing channels for such services. “That would have been the great opportunity but that seems to be dead in the water from what I can see.”

- But Will also notes that he does not believe in “balkanizing stations” in terms of separate stations for different ethnic groups. “It’s self-defeating” even if the approach was practicable and effective in actually attracting audiences of color, which is doubtful.

- Investments are better made in strengthening existing stations and programming, especially in hiring new talent, including talent of color, into stations. But creating separate formats and stations seeking to attract new audiences is mistaken.

   - “Public radio developed in my opinion because of those of us who wanted to hear the programs. The people who produced them wanted to hear the programs and felt a real desire to produce them. And then the audience came. Our target demo became 25 to 54 not because we targeted that but because they came. They were self selecting. But to go out and say we want this audience, to target an audience, is mistaken.”

   - Vocalo is an example of this mistaken thinking – “great intentions but the wrong idea. If you have talented people, bring them into your newsroom and bring them onto your air. Don’t segregate them. Combine the signal and you have better coverage. And any of those elements that would have produced good programming can be shared by everybody, including the groups that you were trying to attract.”

2.3 Journalism – Integrated Online News: Will’s “largest concern” with the report is the idea of a central public radio portal for online news and information.
- “My biggest concern is that I don’t see an online audience. I see listeners who identify themselves as public radio listeners because we are telling them this is public radio. But I don’t see the same people who listen to us looking for similar content online. I mean they are looking for content based on their interest at the moment, at the second, rather than a repository of all the great stuffs that we do all over the country. I don’t think there is a there, there. That’s my problem.”

- It’s also an idea that’s “after the fact” by now. And the internet continues to grow in unpredictable ways so there’s no knowing what the next generation is going to be. And there’s also the issue of it being a potential sinkhole for scarce dollars.

- However, each station should be online “in a meaningful way in their community” using the same model as their broadcast operations. “The web should be just like the stations; it should be decentralized. NPR.org should simply be a place we bounce off of, not a destination in competition with the affiliates. I mean every time they drive people to NPR.org, they are not driving people to KCRW.com. And they certainly have the technology to allow us to have the kind of material that they post on their website.”

- Any investments in projects to build audiences through stronger web service should similarly be decentralized, that is, based on areas of common interest to stations and resulting in content or services that appear on station websites.

Note: Will’s concern goes back a long ways, to about 10 years ago when he had an “unpleasant verbal altercation with the Executive Vice President of NPR at the time, who wanted to borrow $50 million dollars to set up something so that NPR could compete with CNN as a news portal.”

- 3 Music: The “public service” value of stations that simply play music needs to be questioned.

- “We (KCRW) believe in music but we also believe in being a holistic station that has music, news, information, and cultural programming. But I am not sure of the public service of just adding a AAA station to the mix in a market. What are the qualities of the station that would make them mission driven – that would make them different from the Bonneville station here that’s AAA?”

- Will adds, “If we were a full time AAA music station, I certainly wouldn’t work here.”

Note: This same question plays into his concerns with 5 Market Strategies, Station Solutions.

- 5 Market Strategies, Station Solutions: This area of the report is problematic both in terms of what qualifies as “public radio” service in a market and the feasibility of “rationalizing” formats across a market.
“There is a question that I have to ask, and I’m kind of serious about this one, though it may sound frivolous. It seems to me that we have defined our kind of radio programming as ‘public radio’ – but the only thing that we seem to have in common is that we are all supported by the CPB. In other words, I don’t know what relationship I have with the jazz station here in town. They don’t to do anything that’s really core public radio other than playing music without commercials.”

Moreover, a commercial company that owns commercial radio stations in the city programs the station. But it is CPB funded because the licensee is CPB qualified. “On the other hand, I have a great affinity to a classical music station here in town because they really try to do other things, culturally.”

Will also doesn’t see how formats can be rationalized within a market given how public radio is locally organized as stations across the country. Though “anarchic,” it’s also one of our strengths as a system. It provides independence and individuality. “If you don’t like what’s being produced nationally, you go out and produce something yourself.”

2. Recommendations resonating most strongly for their station and market

- **Inclusiveness**: Getting more people of color on station staff is important and an area where KCRW has had mixed results and could use support. (Unlike other aspects of the Inclusiveness section, Will is very supportive of these recommendations).

  - KCRW has been “very successful” in adding people of color to the music side of its operation but not on the news programming side. “I think the reason for that is basically financial/economic. We have a hell of a time competing, especially in Los Angeles, for talented program creators in the market place because we can’t offer them the kinds of salaries that they can get elsewhere.”

  - The sort of program that CPB once had for subsidizing salaries of newly hired talent of color should be considered again. “That kind of structure certainly would be helpful to attract people of color.”

3. Important recommendations or perspectives missing from the report

- The demographics and analysis behind the audience goals. The lack of any background or analysis about how the goals of the report can be reached is a “serious flaw.”

  - The audience growth objective needs to be placed in the context of overall demographic shifts and trends for the coming years (e.g. aging and its effect on audience). Most importantly, it needs to be compared to expected growth rates for the college educated, given the close correlation to public radio listening (i.e., will it grow by 5% a year?)
The objective also needs to be analyzed in terms of which strategies and recommendations would contribute what pieces of audience growth, as well as account for the potential overlap in those sources of growth. “Without seeing numbers that support it (the goal), it doesn’t make sense to me.”

4. Biggest challenge or hurdle to reaching the report’s objectives

This question was not addressed in the interview.

Additional notes:

- Will notes that he believes KCRW has done a “pretty good job” of growing its audience through its music programming that draws a “slightly younger” audience that’s also attracted to its news and information programs. But it’s not an audience that is remarkably different from public radio’s audience as a whole. It may just be a matter of getting their public radio listening started earlier. “Instead of discovering it ten years later they discovered it ten years earlier.”

- What effect will streaming public radio content will have on growing the audience? In music, KCRW has over 2 million views on YouTube and nearly 1 million on Sia that aren’t counted as part of our audience. At KCRW.com we have 1.2 million downloads of 26 podcasts each month. None of that is included in Arbitron’s PPM metrics because we will not go to the expense of encoding them. Also, the PPM metrics seem to be missing the 1.6 million streaming hours we clock monthly. And that does not include our mobile iPhone service.

How will this initiative handle streaming by station outside of their market? And what effect will the PPM undercount of the public radio audience in some markets have on growth based on past diary numbers?
HUGO MORALES
Executive Director, Radio Bilingüe, Fresno, California
Board member, Latino Public Radio Consortium

Key points

- Reaching significant audiences of color with the same level of “connectedness” as public radio has with its current audiences will require developing new services on new platforms along with a whole new generation of producers.
- Becoming truly inclusive requires developing an overall organizational “competency.” Insight into what’s required to develop this competency can be found in recent work within the philanthropic foundation community and some public radio stations (KQED).
- Serving more inclusive audiences through new platforms and technologies will require the same sorts of special subsidies that have been provided for traditional broadcast services.

Points by question area (and detail on key points)

0. Overall reactions

- Hugo is impressed with the report in several regards:
  - It is “challenging to the system in moving us forward in terms of being inclusive, being multimedia, having goals for innovation and connecting with our communities.”
  - The language is good; it is very readable and communicates well. It should be “digestible” by the mainstream of public radio.
  - The list of people involved is effective in showing that it has been a very deep consultation that has engaged important segments within the field – and some outsiders and younger people as well.
- He finds it hard to prioritize among the recommendations “because all of these are really important as part an overall future of public radio.” However, the “inclusiveness” and “multimedia” sections resonated very strongly (with some additions on missing aspects).
1. Recommendations resonating most strongly for public radio as a whole

- **1 Inclusiveness**: The report is “courageous” for highlighting this dimension of public radio service and bold in setting an objective, but certain aspects of the issue are missing or under addressed.

  - The best opportunities for reaching significant audiences of color are likely to be through new program services on new platforms given the degree of “connectedness” required to really attract and hold an audience. An entire new generation of producers will be needed to create these services.

  - Hugo basis this view on noting how deeply NPR connects with its existing audience and how well aligned it is to their sensibilities. This really struck him 12 years ago at his Harvard class reunion where he found that everyone listened to NPR and the person elected class marshal (most popular) was someone few knew in school but was then familiar as an NPR correspondent. It was great to see just how strongly NPR connected with his class demographic. “And who is that demographic? It’s white. It’s middle-class and upper-class. And it’s intellectual. And it’s one that appreciates intellectual rigor, intellectual questioning, education, and the arts. And that's great, you know. I think it’s wonderful that we connect in that community.”

  “But if we’re going to be moving to creating a community where it includes people of color, with some of the same elements, in other words, with people with some education, with people who want to be challenged intellectually, have an appreciation for the arts, have an appreciation for questioning what’s going on, and have an appreciation for music that they can identify with and challenges them and enriches their lives -- then you are talking about a new generation of producers on the radio and the new media end.” That aspect is missing from the report.

  - When asked if this audience can be reached through existing programs and formats by being more inclusive in their sensibilities and content, Hugo responds, “Overall, the greater opportunity may lay in new services and platforms.” Reaching the same level of “connectedness” with audiences of color that NPR now has with Harvard grads can’t be done simply with incremental programming changes or the addition of a few staff of color. It is more fundamental than that, given the strong Euro-centricity of most current public radio programming.

  - None of this is to say that existing programming should not be more inclusive in its sensibilities and content or that anyone should be “let off the hook.” There are some opportunities to increase audiences of color through such approaches and diversifying staff at all levels is essential for doing that. Moreover it’s important to reflect the “new American demography” within existing
programming as a matter of reality. But it takes “a great producer who can make that transformation.” Similarly, there are some markets where current mainstream stations and institutions may be able to make the overall “transformation.” San Francisco and Boston come immediately to mind. But they are likely to be the exceptions.

- From an organizational perspective, it’s helpful to frame the issues as developing “competencies for inclusiveness” rather than providing “opportunities for minorities.” Hugo’s own view has shifted to this “new language” as a result of his participation in recent years on foundation boards and with efforts to increase diversity in philanthropy (sees more details below). This “competency” involves several dimensions:

  - It’s about more than ethnicity and race and includes age, gender, disability and other underserved populations (just as the GTA report recognizes). It also includes language, even within English when it comes to bilingual, non-Euro-centric populations.

  - It’s about developing and having a deep “connectedness” to these new populations, to the same degree that NPR news has with its core audience. “You have people at NPR now, and have for the past 20 years, thinking about what connects in terms of news and information and cultural programming with their demographic. In other words what are the experiences? What are the nuances? What really touches people? But I cannot say that is true for them knowing what touches Afro-Americans and Latinos.”

  - It’s derived largely from having people within the organization who have direct, personal connections and experiences with the audience (whether they be people of color or another dimension of diversity). This includes having such people at all levels – staff, management and board. It also involves the organization itself, starting with the leadership, making this “competency” a strategic priority for the organization that is driven internally and promoted externally.

- A small but committed leadership group can drive change through the system. Hugo acknowledges that increasing the inclusiveness of public radio’s audience will require real leadership by CPB. But he also notes the need to drive the change through leadership from within the system.

  - “I think it is going to take leadership by a few – it can be just a handful, like three or four of our leaders from mainstream public radio, from large markets, from small markets – who actually become very active in advancing this idea and being role models for the rest of the system.”
As an example of this sort of leadership and modeling, he thinks of KQED. “It is already happening in KQED.” They have reached out and built partnerships with other institutions that have competencies for including people of color. They have a good mix of ethnic minorities on their board and “it is not a token, it is real engagement.” (This is particularly true with the Asian populations, though not so much with Latinos.) And this engagement and connection is recognized in the community.

- “I know my Asian friends, who are very much outstanding leaders in San Francisco, are really loyal to KQED because they see a connection with it. And when there is a new board member from the Asian community, they actually call a big party for that person celebrating that because they recognize the influence that member can have on such an important institution.”

- As Hugo views it, KQED hasn’t done this because they’ve been required to. But they’ve recognized they must do it given the demography of the Bay Area. “They saw where the future was and they needed to be connected to that community.” And they haven’t had problems bringing along their large financial supporters -- they applaud what KQED is doing. While they haven’t been totally successful on all fronts and are still struggling in some areas (e.g. among the Latino community) their efforts and progress are real and "authentic" and provide a good role model for what can be done in the system.

Lessons can be taken from the foundation community. In recent years there has been a major push within the philanthropic foundation community to seriously address issues of diversity and inclusiveness. Hugo mentions several approaches and initiatives that could be relevant for public radio if it wants to address the issue meaningfully.

- Open and frank discussion and debate. Plenary sessions at conferences and special workshops have been held at national and state levels to discuss the issue, air views and counter views, define what diversity means and identify action steps. These discussions have not been without resistance and controversy (e.g. around issues of merit and objectivity in philanthropy). But they have put and kept the issue in front of people.

- Efforts to clearly define the desired state. At least one group has taken the step of developing a definition of a “great foundation” that includes a high weighting for ethnic diversity. This also provoked controversy, with some foundations withdrawing their support. But it helped draw a clearer picture and sharpen the discussion.

- Statements of commitment. Some foundations have taken the step of developing and signing “statements of commitment to diversity” that specify what they are
conversations with public media leaders

grow the audience

striving to achieve. They include both very large general foundations (e.g. Ford) and community foundations.

- Websites focus. Hugo is part of an organization which hosts a website (http://www.diversityinphilanthropy.org/) that offers case studies, models, toolkits, discussions, debates, opinions, interviews and other material all related to increasing diversity in the foundation community. Individual foundations are also using their websites to post their own “grade cards” on diversity within their organizations and in their grant making.

- Research. Research has been commissioned and conducted on a variety of topics in order to draw a picture of the current state, including: ethnic composition of boards, presidents and staffs; giving rates to ethnic organizations and services; and definitions of ethnic organizations and ethnic services.

- Core, committed leadership from the mainstream. These initiatives have been driven from within, and in large part by, white leaders of prestigious foundations who have stepped forward, self-organized, and led with a vision of what can be achieved.

- Promotion of positive, voluntary action. The positioning of this movement has been around “responsive philanthropy, which is the best philanthropy” and making better, more strategic investments based on developing an organizational competency (see above) in diversity. No one is out to “kick people over the head.” It is more in the spirit of, “Folks, this is what we can strive for.”

Note: Hugo does note that at least part of the impetus for this movement grows out of well-publicized abuses in philanthropy in recent years and the interests of some in Congress to regulate foundations further. As one Congresswoman told a conference, “If you don’t diversify, we’ll diversify you.” There’s clearly a strong interest in the foundation community in avoiding having quotas or other requirements imposed on them.

- 4 The Network: Hugo thinks of this area as “multimedia” which he fully embraces but notes the same need for subsidies as exists in the broadcast realm.

  - “From our position we believe that some of these services, these platforms, are not viable unless there are subsidies from the rest of the system – and support for doing that. What I mean is that safe stations like KCRW and others, they don’t have to give us money, but they have to appreciate what we’re going. That gives room for CPB and key foundations to support the efforts to serve underserved audiences that they (the stations) are not serving.”
2. Recommendations resonating most strongly for their station and market

▶ For Radio Bilingüe, “It’s all aligned . . . it’s what we had been working on.” The same areas of emphasis cited from a national perspective also apply. Of particular importance is the multimedia or platforms area. As part of its strategic planning a couple of years ago Radio Bilingue conducted a technology assessment which resulted in shifts, including entering into “publishing” (based on recommendations from Jake Shapiro).

3. Important recommendations or perspectives missing from the report

Covered under the notes in Section 1.

4. Biggest challenge or hurdle to reaching the report’s objectives

▶ Changing governance. Of the three areas where public radio organizations need to diversify to be more inclusive – governance, upper management and staff – governance will be the hardest. In large part this is because so many licensees are not community based NPOs, which can take more direct action.
JEFF RAMIREZ
Vice President, Radio, KERA, Dallas, Texas

Key points

- Each recommendation needs to be linked back the three main goals. Without this connecting narrative the report is hard to get through.
- Local news capacity is a leading opportunity but also a major challenge given the gap between current and needed staffing levels.
- Where we are and where we can be in converting “significant audiences” into “significant support” needs to be addressed and understood.
- “Naming names” can be an effective way of spurring accountability for audience growth across the system.

Points by question area (and detail on key points)

0. Overall reactions

- The report is hard to read and “stay tuned into” because there isn’t a consistent enough narrative line that links each recommendation area back to the three main goals.
  - The linkage is needed to help a reader evaluate and test the recommendations against the objectives. “It would be good for every section to really drop back to the principle goal and explain how is this recommendation going to achieve growing the audience to 50 million by 2020? How is it going to achieve increased AQH? How is this going to attract more people of color?”
  - Adding this narrative linkage would compel attention to the individual recommendations and propel attention for reading through the entire report.
  - Jeff was surprised at having this reaction to reading the report because he “loves to read this sort of stuff” and usually looks forward to the provocative material that comes from SRG. It took some reflection to realize what was missing and why it felt like such a slog to get through the 81 pages.

1. Recommendations resonating most strongly for public radio as a whole

- 2 Journalism – Overall: The report is right in recognizing that news is where public radio has made its greatest past gains and has its largest future opportunity, given what is
happening in the broader media landscape. The Bill Buzenburg quotes are “spot-on” in summarizing the situation.

- “There is nothing in there that I wouldn’t support.”
- Section 2.1 (national news) is “self-evident.” We need to constantly pay attention to strengthening those programs, given that they drive the audience.
- Section 2.2 (local reporting) holds the greatest opportunity and is of greatest importance to KERA (see further notes below).
- Section 2.3 (Online) is hard to understand but KERA has already moved to integrate its local news coverage and management across platforms (see further notes below).

### 2.2 Journalism – Local Reporting: The recommendations in this sub-section make the most sense both from a system and KERA perspective, including the emphasis on building capacity in major markets given the wide gaps that now exist.

- The opportunity for local news coverage is growing far faster than stations’ capacity to seize it, given the rate of local commercial journalism lay-offs. The only thing that’s getting better is the ratio between local newspaper and public radio reporting staff levels. It used to be 100:1, now it’s closer to 25:1 and may be on its way to 12:1.
- Even among top 25 markets, current local news capacity varies greatly by station and doesn’t necessarily correspond to market rank (e.g. KPBS vs. WAMU)

### 3 Music: There is opportunity for growing audience by making public radio’s three established music formats more widely available in major markets – but the public service vision of those services needs to be well-defined for them to stand out in the market.

- All three of public radio’s formats also have commercial versions and, though they may be in decline now, they may come back in various forms (e.g. Dallas has a new commercial AAA station positioning itself as “quality rock.”) The qualitative distinctiveness of public radio’s approach to the formats needs to be apparent. If it is, the presence of a commercial version in the market will actually help in making the public radio difference and value clearer.
- The public service aspirations of public radio’s music formats should be in their education and enrichment experience for both the audience and the artists. And they should be seen as “public radio’s contribution to American culture by exposing and encouraging the work of artists.”
- The arc of experience in listening to satellite radio points to the need that public radio music formats can fulfill. “You start listening and then you get to a point where
it seems so distant because they are just playing songs. It’s just not very rewarding to listen to.”

- The recommendation for increasing the number of markets with all three of public radio’s main music formats by various means makes sense, provided there is the “willingness and capacity and ability of a station to orient itself to a music service that can achieve some audience gain.”

5 Market Strategies, Station Solutions: The logic and value of focusing on the top 25 markets is clear. Public Radio Capital’s role in this area is important. “They do what they do very well.”

Not resonating:

- 4 The Network and 2.3 Integrated Online News: Both of these sections were hard to connect with, though not for lack of interest. “It was hard to know what the stuff actually means … what to make of all that stuff.” The Network section was particularly hard to read through. Part of the problem was the lack of linkage back to the audience service goals (see comments above in Section 0). If those connections were there, Jeff could say “okay, now I see it.”

2. Recommendations resonating most strongly for their station and market

- 2.2 Journalism – Local Reporting: This is Jeff’s “priority focus” for the reasons outlined above. The issue is whether they can grow their capacity fast enough to fill the growing gap.

- 4 The Network: Wireless/broadband access is likely to be of increasing importance and necessity for audience growth and retention.

- Collaborations such as the Public Radio Tuner for the iPhone have been sensible and helpful. More will be needed to ensure access across the range of mobile devices that are and will be proliferating.

5 Market Strategies, Station Solutions: For the north Texas metropolitan area significant audience growth depends on acquiring or accessing new channels and that’s a matter of continually monitoring the market situation. In recent years KERA and PRC have looked at every opportunity and “taken them as far as we could go, as far as they went.” Unfortunately, none have gone far for one reason or another. But they will keep monitoring.

- Within KERA’s existing broadcast channel and format Jeff doesn’t see large potential gains. “I think we are a pretty good NPR brand steward. So, I do not think there is much else we could do with our program service to capture more of the existing public radio affinity audience.”
He sees little current potential in HD, just as the report notes. The much-anticipated driver of penetration, HD radios in news cars, seems very distant for now given the turmoil in the auto industry and the sharp decline in new car sales. Any improvement in the situation will be a long time coming. But “KERA is ready to act when and if the equation changes.”

3. Important recommendations or perspectives missing from the report

- The conversion rate for “significant support.” This GROW THE AUDIENCE recommendation will require significant funding. The question of where it will come from, in turn, leads Jeff back to the ARA Audience 98 equation of significant programming leading to significant listening and significant listening leading to significant support. For him there are questions of whether public radio has yet fully monetized the service it already provides and whether it can monetize additional services that grow the audience. These are questions that need to be explored and addressed.

4. Biggest challenge or hurdle to reaching the report’s objectives

- Collecting dust. There’s the risk that the report is so overwhelming that it will sit on the shelf and collect dust. This is particularly true if it doesn’t include approaches or insights to help local leadership sort through the recommendations and determine which ones will have the highest impact at the lowest costs to achieve their local share of growing the audience. It also needs to provide guidance on tapping unexploited capacities and generating revenue to be able to do their piece.

- Speed vs. inclusiveness. Given how fast and uncertainly the media environment is changing, there is a question of whether a decentralized system of mixed licensees will be able to act quickly or decisively enough. It may be that action is best planned and taken by small groups of stations with like interests, market situations and strategies – without worrying that they be inclusive of others or bring the system along.

Additional note:

- Naming names. In regard to accountability, there is real value in “naming names” as a way of creating a dynamic of accountability across the system. As an example, Jeff recalls a presentation by David Giovannoni at a PRPD conference that classified stations as “movers, coasters and toasters.” The first year they didn’t show names on the charts, but promised to do so the next year and did. It was very helpful. There is great power in giving a manager a comparative analysis.
Marita Rivero
General Manager for Radio and Television, WGBH, Boston, Massachusetts
Board member, National Public Radio

Key points

- Greater inclusiveness is fundamental and essential for GTA to have any real purpose.
- Expectations for inclusiveness in our station organizations need to be made as clear and core as our standards for journalism. Concrete commitments and approaches for tracking progress must be established to make and keep the issue visible.
- The “network” that is essential for growing the audience and our future is the local station as a hub in its community for a variety of partnerships and activities.

Points by question area (and detail on key points)

0. Overall reactions

- Marita sees the document as a big “omnibus report” that “lays out a big vision, under which one can begin to tackle some very specific things.” She’s glad it’s been done. Besides, “I love thinking about the future.”
- There’s nothing in the report that she thinks will leave stations saying “what?” or “we’re not doing that.” So, in that sense it is non-controversial.

1. Recommendations resonating most strongly for public radio as a whole

- 1 Inclusiveness: Inclusiveness is fundamental and essential for “growing the audience” to have any purpose.
  - “I am at the end of being comfortable with a system that can’t seem to figure out how to include people of color. If we don’t get that right, I don’t know what the heck we are talking about.”
  - Inclusiveness includes our largest ethnic blocks (Latino and Afro-American) but might be anything. Class is another “big one” to address.
  - Inclusiveness “undercuts” everything that is done in regard to content and that requires having people of color represented at all levels of the organization, whether it’s executive producers, producers, managers, or boards. “So there’s a basic hiring piece that needs to happen.”
• Having people of color at all levels in the organization is what will make the content-related recommendations work — “it will drive tone of voice and sensibilities to what stories are important.” But, “If the inclusiveness isn’t there, I don’t care what wonderful content things have been done. It doesn’t mean anything to me anymore. I’m through with it.”

† 1 Inclusiveness: We need to articulate, communicate, and affirm the expectations of inclusiveness in advisory and governing boards as strongly as we have embraced the journalism standards of our news programs.

• “We’re very good in making known what we expect in terms of the quality of our journalism, right? Everybody gets that. And the reason they get it is because we told them and we act on it. There’s no reason why we can’t make clear to anybody that there are also standards that are important when it comes to governing public radio stations that are operating in the public trust and using public airwaves. We are just not strong enough in making those expectations as clear as we are able to make our news content expectations.”

† 1 Inclusiveness: Research is needed on what it will take to create the “economy” to develop and sustain national programming for audiences of color. Adding stations will help some. So will supporting individual stations serving people of color. But this will not be sufficient to create a viable economy. Other stations, particularly larger stations, need to be included through some crossover of common interests and commitments. There may be other pieces to be considered as well.

• “The economy of how programs are created, sustained, and delivered needs to be examined. Is there a there there, or not? What would it take to crack that nut? There is probably more than one way that one could crack it, but this is an issue we haven’t actually taken a good, long, analytical look at.”

• The Tavis Smiley show is an example of how the needed economy has not yet developed.

• Understanding this needed national economy is an important part of the whole package of determining how we can best support individual stations’ programming to audiences of color.

† 3 Music: It is good that music is included, but the section seems underdeveloped and needs more attention. Opportunities in internet radio and online applications need to be weighed against broadcast expansion. Music formats may also be a way to get more humanities content into public radio. “It felt as though it was there because someone said, ‘Oh you forgot music’.”

• Rather than a singular focus on developing more music broadcast stations, more attention should be given to the robust development of internet radio. Combined
with increasing levels of mobile access, the research seems to indicate that internet radio is the “most aggressive” of the new technologies for audience growth. It’s also a realm in which many stations can play and may be a far cheaper and a more feasible path for stations of color to expand their service and audience.

- Music may be a way of bringing more of the humanities to public radio. “I think the humanities are important in general and an important piece of what we do. But they seem to be a shrinking part of what we do.” While the humanities are, of course, broader than music, music formats might be a way of incorporating them into our programming formats in order to “explore the human experience in more dimensions than news.” This, in turn, would further music’s role in public radio’s service vision.

  - Though within a news program, the “Global Hits” segment of The World is a good example of using music to draw on many humanities disciplines to “learn a lot about what was happening in the country that’s in the news through an exploration of how a musician got to do what he or she does.”

- Use of new technology should be considered as part of the experimentation in how music is presented. For example, accompanying podcasts might be a way of bringing a lot more of what our hosts actually know but just don’t broadcast to listeners who are interested. There may be other approaches and technologies to consider as well.

- **4 The Network:** Building the role of stations as hubs in their communities is what “network” is about. Leveraging stations’ existing positions in their community, building new station skills and establishing common standards are necessary to do that.

  - “The notion that the station, a local station, can be a hub in its community for a variety of partnerships and activities is essential to our future. Maybe I am reading between the lines of some of the recommendations but part of the GROW THE AUDIENCE imperative, I think, presumes that we are going to use the strength of our position in our communities in ways that bring audiences to our stations and grows the number of people who are around us.” The use of new delivery methods, along with inclusiveness, content and marketing, are all areas where we need to “tighten up” to grow the station audience and the station community.

  - Training on the new skills related to new technology and media is at the heart of bringing stations “up to some minimum space to be able to engage their communities.” Building these skills is “just essential to how we can imagine our stations.”

  - Agreement on at least a partial set of standards, shared with public television, is also critical for building station-level capabilities, “to avoid having to do it 200 times when we could do it once or twice.”
grow the **audience**

**Conversations with Public Media Leaders**

- Marita also noted that she found The Network section “phrased a little oddly” for her taste. “‘Use ubiquitous networked (sic) to follow’ – I’m not sure what the hell they were talking about.”

- **6 Marketing:** “If people don’t know about you, they don’t know about you” so marketing needs to be included in the list of important recommendation areas. But the key is in knowing how to use our existing networks and relationships better – to reach out further.

- **8 Follow-up and Accountability:** Accountability must go beyond just growing the audience; it must include how the audience is grown (i.e. through greater inclusiveness). Otherwise we’re just growing within our own “little tribe.”

- “We are very good at talking about inclusiveness. We are not so good at measuring how far we get, except for, ‘Oh we grew the audience’. We grew the audience, ‘yeal’ We doubled the audience, ‘hooray!’ We are not good at setting up the system to ask ‘did you in fact change?’ Did you include people by changing the composition of your staff? We don’t do that. We just smile and pass over that. If we don’t change the composition but still double the audience, we are just as happy as clams.”

- With regard to being inclusive of people of color, public radio lives too much in “some kind of odd bubble.” It’s as though it were some small tribe that wages big campaigns within its own tribal world and then has its members give each other awards for their feats. But the rest of the world looks on and says, “Isn’t that quaint, the way they give each other those awards?”

- “If we don’t step out of that bubble, what the heck are we doing? That’s where I am. I’m all about accountable. I’m about: So what did we say we were going to do? Did we say we were going to do research to bring in more people? What happened with that? What happened to those things you said we were going to do? Did we do any of those things? No, we didn’t do any of them? Okay, we should know that.”

- The *Commonwealth Compact* in Massachusetts provides a model for developing the sort of accountability for inclusiveness needed in public radio. It has defined the organizational actions for developing diversity as well as the measures for tracking progress. Member organizations agree to provide the needed data for the tracking measures. A large and growing database has been created by which benchmarks can be established and organizations can see where they stand versus others in their sector (e.g., science, health care) and their geographic market. (The data on individual organization is kept confidential to encourage participation.)

2. **Recommendations resonating most strongly for their station and market**

- For WGBH they are the same areas as those cited above.
3. Important recommendations or perspectives missing from the report

- Where’s television? Though there is some passing reference to public television in the report, the relationship with PTV for growing the audience seems underplayed, undefined or confined (e.g. “We don’t mind finding common cause if it’s limited to online).

- Marita does not expect public television to be big part of the report. But the lack of overall mention and inclusion seems “odd” given that public television is “so close to us in ambition, tone, sensibility and public service.” There must be more areas of “common cause” and more audience building opportunities to explore beyond the collaborations that have been done (e.g. big verticals like the 2008 election).

- While her integrated perspective is natural given that she oversees local television, local online content, and radio, Marita qualifies it noting: “I’m not one of those people who think that radio and television have to merge. Or that everything we do needs to be done together. We have very different crafts. It’s a different rhythm of production.”

4. Biggest challenge or hurdle to reaching the report’s objectives

- Discipline to focus. Any interpretation that all the recommendations need to be taken on all at once and as a whole would, in itself, be perceived as a big challenge and hurdle. To preclude this, the key recommendations with the greatest potential impact need to made the focus. Doing this will require “disciplining ourselves.”

- Alignment with current efforts. “We’re all running so hard right now trying to do some of this on our own that we’re afraid to stop because of the economic pressures around us. So focusing on those things that are most in line with what we are actually doing right now would be helpful.” (Assuming those things would also have significant impact on growing the audience.)

- Getting the “small handful” of key players committed. There are a limited handful of drivers in the system (the can-do people and organizations). They are the place to start in terms of getting them committed to building selected recommendations into their priorities and plans for the coming quarters and years.
FLO ROGERS
General Manager, Nevada Public Radio, Las Vegas, Nevada

Key points

► The greatest opportunity exists in underperforming stations in major markets and the time has come to deal with the underlying structural issues.

► For KNPR it’s not just about growing the audience — it’s about their service and impact in the community regardless of whether or not that involves people listening to the station.

Points by question area (and detail on key points)

0. Overall reactions

► “It’s a very well organized and very well written report. So, absolute kudos to everybody who put their sense into it. It’s forward looking but it doesn’t ignore what we have already done. And I think it’s realistic as well. This is just a great document.”

► The goal, as put forth and noted in the report, is a “stretch” but realistic.

► As noted above, for Flo and KNPR it’s not just about growing the audience — it’s about their service and impact in the community regardless of whether or not that involves people listening to the station.

  ▪ “One of the things that I’m finding most interesting is the idea that Nevada Public Radio has come far enough along as a community institution that the work that we are doing for people that don’t listen to us is as meaningful as the work we do for people who do listen.”

  ▪ A current example is the work they’ve done with the Facing the Foreclosure Crisis project, which has involved outreach and venues beyond their airwaves and website (e.g. a partnership with the AAA baseball club that hardly serves KNPR’s demographic). The result has been a higher level of awareness and perceived relevance and importance in the community for KNPR. “Even if somebody doesn’t listen to us they are going to know that we are independent and we are not-for-profit and we have the people’s interest at heart and not a commercial sponsor’s.”

  ▪ In this and other projects KNPR is developing a role in the community as “a public information partner in ways that we at KNPR didn’t even know we could be.” Those ways may involve the station’s airwaves and website to some degree, but they may
They’ve also discovered that projects “start in the community – not in the newsroom and not in the program director’s office.”

- A reflection of the value of this service is in the funding it attracts. “The biggest grants that we are getting these days are not from ‘oh, we love public radio’ sentiments. They are around community engagement and the content that we are making that is specifically addressing the issues that are unique to our community and the roles we can play as a public information partner.” This work and these roles are also what pique the interest of their Congresswoman.

- Flo realizes that having a significant audience feeds the ability to be a significant community institution. “Obviously, if we don’t have any audience then we have no oomph in any of these areas anyway.” She also recognizes that this point may be beyond the scope of a report focused on growing the radio audience but she feels it’s important to note. While the report does make references to “community engagement,” it’s really just “lip service” compared to the power and importance of the subject.

1. Recommendations resonating most strongly for public radio as a whole
   - 1 Inclusiveness: College educated Hispanics and Asians should be prime targets.
     - Flo believes there’s a large and very important opportunity in developing the audience among college educated Hispanics and Asians in particular.
     - It needs to be addressed from a “whole station” perspective rather than through isolated, targeted day-parts.
     - In news it needs to be done through new sensibilities about story selection and perspective – as a crass example, what if for every time NPR did a story on global warming, they also did one on family issues?
     - Understanding how to appeal to these demographic segments needs to start with going into the VALS research to see how their VALS segments align with those of public radio’s traditional core audience.
     - Flo is closely following the development of the new English language service targeted to Hispanics in the LA market to see how well it works and what it reveals.

   - 2.1 Journalism – National Programs: This is Flo’s second most important area (after 7 Support for Stronger Service) and her program director’s top pick. “The journalism part – I absolutely agree with it and it’s obviously a sensitive spot right now because NPR is having to contract its resources, which is tragic.” Despite the current economic situation, core issues about the current state of national news production need to be kept in mind and addressed.
• The system needs a full schedule of strong news programs to be a truly lead player in news. “We kind of think that NPR is playing with the big dogs but we are not even filling the broadcast day. We probably make less than 8 hours a day of slam-dunk first class products from all sources. Say what you will about CNBC and MSNBC but they are knocking it out of the park 24/7 -- it’s just a machine that keeps going.”

• Even among our existing core programs there are weaknesses.
  - “We have really got to get a grip with the quality of some of our national programs. They are too hit and miss.” (She cites Fresh Air and Science Friday in particular.)
  - Weekends remain a “disaster” – e.g., Weekend Edition not starting at 5 a.m. and having different hosts each day.

• We need to get over the hump of centralized reporting.
  - We have never really gotten how to get good coverage of nationally significant stories from communities across the country, especially non-coastal communities, other than by “sending a centralized gang of reporters out to the sticks.” And that model doesn’t lead to the sort of nuanced reporting that you would get from someone stationed there.
  - KNPR itself has had mixed experience to date on this issue. While within the news universe Las Vegas is akin to a “top 10” market, they’ve never been able to get up to say, “priority number five” for the next place for NPR to put a reporter. They’ve had their local reporters feed the network and “for whatever reason it’s been a bit bumpy.” And they’ve had “mixed experience when reporters have come here and tried to do stuff.” For example, reporting on City Center in Las Vegas, the largest construction project in North America, is not a story that you can do justice to by flying somebody in for two days.
  - A solution may exist in KNPR’s plan to hire and pay for its own network reporter with no other job than to cover Las Vegas for a national audience.
    • It can tap local funding sources that neither a local station nor NPR could tap alone. “We all have funders who come to us from time to time and say ‘when you’ve got something really hot, come and talk to me’. Alright, you want to be the person that gets those stories told? Ooohh, let’s talk.” In return, NPR could offer national underwriting from available inventory.
    • It might also be a way to retain reporting talent and expand opportunities. “If fifteen to twenty stations could do that they could place fifteen of those displaced really high quality people and they could retain that brain trust of experienced reporters.”
5 Market Strategies, Station Solutions and 7 Support for Stronger Service: “It’s all about the organization, the structure of the institution,” and its commitment to operating a station to its potential. That’s where the greatest opportunity for growing the audience exists (perhaps two-thirds of the total objective).

- Flo very much agrees with the report’s assessment that there are a significant number of stations that are not living up to the potential of their assets and licensees with priorities other than public radio service. She also believes it is time to stop tolerating this underperformance and get serious about addressing the issue.

  - The solutions are already well known and the methods well understood for improving performance – everything from having a strong news and information station in the market to tactics for on-air scheduling and cross-promotion. “I feel like we know how to do this – it’s just not getting done.”

  - The opportunity costs are now too high. “We have a lot of goodwill and we obviously have the trust of our users and our funders. And you have somebody like Fast Company magazine writing ‘wow, maybe this is the model that works’. We have a space in the popular imagination all of a sudden and you almost want to say to some of these folks at underperforming stations, okay, we are not playing around now. Whatever the landscape was where we could afford to be a rag tag mob is over. It’s serious now.”

  - It’s an opportunity we have in hand that should be addressed before having to invest large amounts of capital in buying new stations – the capital spent on purchases seem like “an awful lot of cost per listener.”

- Focusing on underperforming stations in the top 25 or 50 markets makes sense. It’s a logical matter of focusing where the likely opportunity exists.

  - The situation reminds her of the system spending 10 years trying to improve weekend listening and then realizing there is far more opportunity in increasing listening during to the single time slot and program of Morning Edition (hence the ME grad school initiative).

- Several actions are need to spur audience growth in this area:

  - Do the analysis to size up the opportunity in the top 25/50 markets. It could make a “compelling case“ for the next big step for public radio’s growth and provide the documentation for a “very powerful case message to take to institutions that hold licenses and, for the very best intentions, are still not doing anything.”

  - Create clear and compelling incentives for action. Some sort of mechanism through CPB or some other organization is needed to either compel or strongly
incentivize underperforming stations to live up to their potential. “That to me is the way to get two-thirds of the way towards that goal.”

- Identify or create the right advocate. Finding someone or an entity that can credibly make the case to underperforming licensees is a real issue. Flo doubts if any of the existing players are good candidates:
  - CPB? – “They have some clout but rarely use it.”
  - NPR? -- “It’s not really their business.”
  - SRG?
  - PRC? – “They are great advocates for public broadcasting but they are primarily deal makers who want to lend you money.”

It needs to be some group, coalition or “super duper blue ribbon panel” with credibility, conviction and stature who can make the case convincingly at the highest levels of the licensee – for example a college president – by saying, “Here’s how not living up to your potential is holding your organization back, is under-serving your community and is actually holding the system back.”

Flo has attempted to engage others in these conversations herself, but it’s hard to do as the general manager from another station. “I’m sure every state has the legacy issues between university and community licensees with sometimes compatible, sometimes incompatible missions. Trying to begin a dialog can at best get bogged down politics and at worst be interpreted as a power grab that closes the communication until administrations change years down the road.”

Not resonating:

- **3 Music:** Not the best investment?
  - Flo absolutely agrees with the premise that our audience will use public media in a curatorial function to discover new music – as NPR is doing-- but she doesn’t buy the idea that we have to run music radio stations. It’s already known what will certainly grow the audience – news and information – and she doubts the capacity is there to also try and grow the audience by investing in the less certain area of music.

Surprisingly to her, KNPR’s program director agrees. His first reaction upon reading the report’s executive summary was “well, they are not going to grow the audience by investing in music.”

2. Recommendations resonating most strongly for their station and market

- **KNPR’s priorities generally track with those mentioned above and are reflected in those comments.**
Addressing the structural issues under 7 Support for Stronger Service, as well as recommendations under 5 Market Strategies, Stations Solutions would help them pursue opportunities within the Los Vegas market and across the state.

3. Important recommendations or perspectives missing from the report

- The real value of community engagement and service, even when it doesn’t build listening by the audience immediately . . . since a more engaged community would surely increase the conditions for more public media usage in the longer term.
  - Flo has questions regarding partnering with public television and is concerned that it may be a distraction. Flo takes note of the line in the report that says: *radio is well on its way to becoming something all together new, a medium called audio.* “I love that. I totally believe that. And I totally believe that public television is on its way to being a medium called educational distance learning.”

4. Biggest challenge or hurdle to reaching the report’s objectives

- The lack of strong incentives, support and consequences to compel underperforming stations to make the needed changes to grow their audience.
JON SCHWARTZ
General Manager, Wyoming Public Radio, Laramie, Wyoming
Board member, Western States Public Radio

Key points

- The report is “very ambitious” and elements of it are on target and laudable, but it is “hobbled” by ideological and “non-broadcast 101” assumptions and a lack of true strategic marketing focus, analytic rigor behind the 2020 growth objectives, prioritization across recommendations, and financial and economic analysis.

- The report does point to several key areas for growing the audience, particularly in the areas of strategic marketing and building on the success of the existing local-national partnership to develop new broadcast news formats and an integrated online presence.

Points by question area (and detail on key points)

0. Overall reactions

- Increasing the size and diversity of public radio’s audience should be approached comprehensively and from a true strategic marketing perspective (in terms of first considering all unserved audiences and aspects of diversity, and then making considered, researched decisions about identifying one or possibly two quite specific and well-defined population segments to serve). Instead the report takes a more ideological approach by singling out “triple the number of people of color in the average audience” as one of the three top objectives.

  - It sounds like a very “liberal fuzzy” way to look at the question of diversity (from a Wyoming perspective, lumping ALL “people of color” together is practically demeaning, as if they are a homogenous group distinguished from all Americans only by the color of their skin – we’re better than this way of thinking)

  - It would be better to start by saying, “we need to serve more Americans” or “we should move beyond the ten percent niche that we have now without undermining that.” From there, many unserved segments can be considered.

  - The same thinking reflected in the Marketing section should lead and drive the GROW THE AUDIENCE effort.
The 2020 audience goal feels “picked out of thin air” given that there is no connection or build-up between the recommendations in the report and the goal (e.g. “What would tripling the audience of people of color contribute? What would improving the top 25 markets contribute?”)

The lack of economic, financial or funding analysis behind the recommendations makes the report read like some of the early TARP bailout programs did (as a somewhat exaggerated comparison). If the report is intended to be a strategic plan, it is missing the financial section you would expect to see.

Prioritization of the many recommendations is not provided, nor is any cost-benefit analysis or other methodology for considering or setting priorities. This is particularly troubling given the large number of recommendations. One gets tongue-tied talking in favor of one recommendation that costs a pile of money while then remembering another favored recommendation that costs another (likely) non-existent) pile.

The next level of analysis and synthesis is needed to give the report a clear form it is missing (it’s like an unfinished sculpture). There is no “underpinning or superstructure” on which to hang the individual recommendations, no “knitting together” of the strategies.

At times the report reflects a “program mentality” in its recommendations for increasing audience diversity. This goes against longstanding “broadcast 101” experience that creating discrete programs aimed at increasing audience diversity does not work. The focus should be on formats throughout.

The emphasis on top markets in several of the recommendations may not thrill mid- and rural-market stations, but it is realistic. It makes sense in terms of impacting audience service and it does prioritize. “You’re just not going to get much bang out of Wyoming, in moving national audience numbers.”

In places an “anti-university” bias or tone appears. It should be recognized that some universities are very good homes for stations and their values and missions are very well aligned with those of public radio. There may be specific exceptions and situations where a university is susceptible to selling its station, but the baby should not go out with the bath water. Moreover, there isn’t going to be any massive shift in this aspect of the system structure any time soon, so we should plan to act within this context.

1. Recommendations resonating most strongly for public radio as a whole

6 Marketing: The emphasis on strategic, audience focused marketing is right and essential. We should “really embrace what is in the marketing section, embrace the diversity of Americans first and then develop plans based on that.” And it’s where we should begin.
grow the audience
Conversations with Public Media Leaders

- Public radio has a long history of “self-focused” marketing – where we have an ice cream store with just one flavor, strawberry, to offer and are going to figure out how to make it popular and important. “That is not honoring or recognizing diversity. And it is not marketing.”

- We resist real marketing because “it suggests we are not brilliant inventors and creative people.” This doesn’t mean we should be completely led by marketing gurus. But it does mean we should develop the art and science of first identifying, then targeting audiences, and then developing content for them that meets the standard of what’s been accomplished in news (i.e. a unique offering with high public service value and significant audience appeal).

- The recommendation should have higher priority and earlier placement in the report.

► 2.1 Journalism – National Programs: Public radio’s strength in news is the result of a local-national/station-NPR partnership that has integrated content and aggregated audiences. This strength needs to be remembered and built on.

- Improving communications and dialogue between network news executives and station leadership is very important. The sorts of advisory panels and task forces that existed in the past were effective and important in this regard, as was the experience of creating Morning Edition.

- Station-based national reporting centers are a good idea and are part of filling the void being left by commercial journalism. It addresses a clear public service need and provides a laudable goal for funders (more so than other recommendations such as supporting AAA music – it is not clearly established that AAA should be a national priority for public funds or policy, other than that some of us do it and our older demographic in public radio likes that music).

► 2.1 Journalism – National Programs: Investigative reporting is the “crown jewel of journalism” and newspapers have been its owner. There may be many bad things associated with the death of newspapers, but the loss of investigative journalism may be the worst of them for the nation. Public radio does little of it now and must do more. It may not be the lynchpin for growing the audience, but it’s a public service responsibility - - and a failure on our part if we don’t do it.

► 2.1 Journalism – National Programs: Any new news programs need to be developed as part of an overall strategic marketing strategy and not developed as one-off efforts. Moreover, what are needed are not new one-hour programs but multiple news formats that will appeal to different audiences with different interests.
If consideration is being given to creating new integrated, collaborative online news sites, why not give the same consideration to creating new broadcast news formats, whether produced by NPR, PRI or some third party?

2.3 Journalism – Integrated Online News: An integrated online presence is essential. We should remember that our success has been based on aggregating and integrating audiences and apply the same approach to an integrated online service with NPR branding.

- We are currently “nowhere” with our collective web presence and won’t grow further without an integrated approach.

- We should remember that we have a model and a real strength in our existing network-station approach to integrating content and aggregating audience (Morning Edition) – and there’s no reason that the same strength shouldn’t be extended to online.

- The report’s overall “12-step program” to addressing the issue is lofty, utopian -- and hopeless. It is most realistic to create the presence under NPR’s brand and leadership. They are the brand in the public’s mind and have the most extensive news relationships with stations.
  - “Good luck” trying to create any sort of new web-based journalism entity. None of the existing, competing producers will want to be subsumed under such a site. PRI might not want to be subsumed under an NPR site but neither would NPR want to be under a new site. If “sites” lose their importance in people’s mind in the future maybe it will be different. I would suggest though that newer technologies for disaggregating NPR news content online may leapfrog the question. NPR’s digital leadership view appears to be that even the idea of “sites” is rapidly evolving and should not be viewed as permanent.

- Station concerns about losing their identity and giving control to NPR through an integrated web presence are misplaced. They are already giving over most of their prime airtime to NPR with heavy NPR branding – and it’s successful. And believing your station’s identity comes from your website isn’t credible.

- The costs to create the presence imagined will be enormous, which is all the more reason to stay focused in initially creating the presence (e.g. build on NPR’s brand and the existing station-NPR news relationships).

5 Market Strategies, Station Solutions: Alignment of formats in the top markets makes sense. “It’s one of the Radio Broadcasting 101 concepts that we flunked forever because it didn’t fit into whatever the culture and ideologies are.” It is recognition of “yeah, get your house in order.” It’s also likely to have a better cost-benefit ratio than other recommendations.
Not resonating:

1 Inclusiveness: Inclusiveness should be driven by strategic marketing and should include consideration of segments that aren’t just racially or ethnically defined

- The report seems narrowly ideological in singling out “triple the amount of listening by people of color to public radio” as one of its three high-level objectives. More specific and sophisticated audience methods may well result in significant increases in diversity of the overall audience for all of public radio.

- The approximately 50% of college graduates not now served by public radio provide a very large segment from which to identify new audiences to serve and increase public radio’s inclusiveness. “There are a lot of people out there who are college educated who don’t like the tone of what we do.”

  - An example would be conservatives who are intelligent, curious and interested in the world but have some different sensibilities and subject interests. “We’ve surrendered them to Rush Limbaugh and that’s a crime. Some of them would prefer a public radio perspective.”

- Who to serve, how to prioritize, who to serve to diversify the audience – this should be based on solid marketing approaches that identify unserved segments, develop understandings of the needs of each segment, assess what public radio might be able to offer each, prioritize which can best be served by public radio – and then develop formats to serve them.

3 Music: The entire section lacked substance and analysis to make clear that significant audience growth can be achieved by supporting existing music formats. There’s also a public service/public policy question as to the need to be “the savior of AAA music in America,” particularly in light of other recommendation areas such as investigative journalism. It’s a matter of prioritization. Money and time could be thrown away in this area that could be better spent elsewhere – the opportunity costs need to be recognized.

2. Recommendations resonating most strongly for their station and market

4 The Network: In Wyoming Public Radio’s recent five-year planning process every department had internet related issues and goals at the top of their list. Working within a local-national partnership (just as with news) is essential. WPR can’t build a significant web presence in a vacuum and neither can any station. “We just can’t have 300 different little internet station websites that they think are going to make any national difference, no matter whether you are in New York or Laramie.”

2.1 Journalism – National Programs: The investigative reporting responsibilities cited before apply to WPR as well. Again, it may not be a main driver of audience growth but it’s an increasing need that is unlikely to be filled by any other broadcast media.
The challenge is in the scale of resources that may be required to fill the void being left by the decline and withdrawal of commercial media. It’s a scale that is unknown to public radio, even in major markets. This underscores the importance of newsgathering partnerships and collaborations.

5 Market Strategies, Station Solutions (rural version): Though nowhere near a top market (are we market 226?), WPR benefits from multi-format service. It has added stations and formats at a marginal cost that is much cheaper than the initial network. “And people are thrilled because, ‘Oh! My God! We have three or four public radio stations, different formats here in the mighty metropolis of Laramie.’” The key is having national partners/providers to develop and supply the formats that WPR can broadcast. This is how WPR can benefit from a focus on the top 25 markets and national producers – if they develop formats – not programs – that appeal to new interests and new audiences. It’s the same theme of building audience through local-national partnerships.

3. Important recommendations or perspectives missing from the report

- Covered above under the general observations.

4. Biggest challenge or hurdle to reaching the report’s objectives

- The sheer number of un-prioritized recommendations brings a real risk of nothing substantive getting done because of scattered resources and management attention. And the few actions that really matter, which may also be the hardest and most expensive to do, will not happen at all because of the distractions of other less consequential actions.

  “I would love to be wrong on this.”

- The public radio system, despite having many people who are very smart, capable, experienced and successful within it, has several cultural characteristics that will impede action on GROW THE AUDIENCE unless clearly recognized, kept in mind and somehow circumvented:
  - Ideology and assumptions from our youth
  - Slowness and reluctance to make decisions, set priorities, exclude or say no
  - Lack of analytic rigor
  - Lack of urgency (due to success to date and subsidized operations)
  - Lack of consequences
JOANN UROFSKY
General Manager, WUSF TV-Radio, Tampa, Florida
Board member, National Public Radio

Key points

- Combined public television and public radio models need to be included for joint licensees (and others) who are thinking in terms of total public media service to their communities.
- WUSF sees large opportunities for multiple public radio formats in the Tampa market but feels locked-in to its current service and stymied as to how to proceed.
- WUSF could increase its share of listening by the college educated just by marketing to USF alumni.
- Education is an overlooked role and opportunity for public radio.

Points by question area (and detail on key points)

0. Overall reactions

- “This is a great time for a report like this to come out because we really are trying to make sure we are inventing ourselves for the future.”

1. Recommendations resonating most strongly for public radio as a whole

   2.1 Journalism – National Programs: Developing the working relationship between stations and NPR to report more news from across the country is worth pursuing but it needs to be serious news.

   - “I don’t know how vital it is to have lots of light reports from the provinces. When I listen to NPR I want to hear really serious news about the really serious issues happening all over the world. When I hear something from the middle of the country that’s an interesting story and well done, but not about serious issues that face this country right now, I am not really interested.”

   - “The hope that we all had for so long that stations would contribute to NPR – I am not sure that’s where we should be going unless it’s something of serious impact.”

   4 The Network: Most stations face a real challenge in figuring out how to use the internet in truly innovative and collaborative ways. We need to create the day when web traffic isn’t driven by what people hear on the air but by web-based content and services
grow the audience
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themselves. We also need to find ways to track and measure the value created by these services.

2. Recommendations resonating most strongly for their station and market

► 1 Inclusiveness: If we don’t become more inclusive and reach beyond the audience we already have, we are “doomed.” For WUSF, JoAnn thinks of that in terms of reaching the large share of college graduates they are not now serving.

- Fifty percent of University of South Florida graduates live in the area served by WUSF with another 5,400 having graduated this past spring. They are the most obvious and easily identified audience for WUSF to target.

- No comprehensive effort has been made to date to create awareness among this group. It hasn’t been for lack of wanting to do it. It’s just remained a matter of time, money and other priorities. Nonetheless, JoAnn sees the opportunity as real and significant, particularly if alumni five to ten years out from graduation are targeted. The natural partner for developing a comprehensive strategy and campaign would be the USF Alumni Association. They are very interested, but don’t have the resources to make it happen. This relates also to 6 Marketing.

► 5 Market Strategies, Station Solutions: This is an area of prime concern given that Tampa is a large market but they are the only “public radio” station and have a mixed news-classical format. At present, they are in something of a “dilemma” as to what to do. They feel locked-in to their existing news and classical format and don’t foresee having the resources to acquire another station or a way to work with other stations in the market.

- “Studies we have done indicate that changing our format will put us basically in the red for three years. We can’t afford to do that.”

- “Major gifts are predicated for most people on the fact that we have news and music. They like what we do. You know, we have trained them pretty well.”

- Making even incremental schedule changes poses risks and repercussions. “We know that if we erode more music programming there will be a backlash. People will be very unhappy. And as we contemplate these things we also know that it’s not just WUSF that takes the heat in the newspaper, it’s the university. And they are in the middle of a capital campaign.”

- The addition of a complete news and information service on HD2 has had only limited benefit. “Even though I was certainly an early and enthusiastic believer – our HD channel is there, it’s accessed online, and we know people listen on HD radios – we also know the penetration of the HD radio is not great.”

- While acquiring a second station would provide the answer it would be very difficult financially in a market of Tampa’s size. “I think that we could develop some
enthusiasm at the university for doing that but you know it’s a state university. Their financial position is no better than ours. So permission is one thing, funds to make a station purchase is another. “

- While there is another high-power community station in WUSF’s market, its format is special interest programs including Democracy News, Alternative Radio and genre-based music and WUSF doesn’t consider them when they do strategy work. (Though JoAnn notes, “I am glad they are here because they serve a different part of the public radio community.”)

- **6 Marketing:** See above for thoughts on marketing to alumni to increase share of the college educated.

### 3. Important recommendations or perspectives missing from the report

- Joint public radio/public TV market strategies. As a joint-licensee it is “critical” for WUSF to think of audience growth in terms of a combined radio-TV strategy and it needs strategies and models for doing that. Such models are also needed by the 80 other joint-licensee stations, as well as stations in markets with separate licensees that are thinking in terms of total public media service to their communities.

- While well aware of what it takes for each medium to succeed separately, it’s important for WUSF (and others) to consider them together when thinking in terms of community service and total community impact (vs. just growing the audience of one medium).

- Operationally, a convergence is already happening. Thirty-four of seventy employees at WUSF are joint radio and TV now and no one new is being hired without combined video and audio skills. At the same time there’s a lack of overall models for how to make the combination work most effectively and efficiently. (IdeaStream is one, but more explorations and options are needed.)

- While obviously pertinent for joint-licensees, the same considerations exist for markets with separate radio and TV licenses if they are really thinking in terms of how public media can best serve the community and do it most efficiently.

- **Public radio’s role and opportunity in education.** This is an overlooked area where public radio ought to be focusing.

  - Radio’s opportunity in education is in its journalism. “When do we start to look at our journalism at stations as the archive of our communities?” “At the Newseum there is this quote that says ‘today’s journalism is tomorrow’s history.’ Our reporters don’t think about that when they go out to cover a story. They go out, they cover a story, they come back, edit and create a report, it goes on the air -- and they don’t much think about the impact in the community.”
However, if repackaged with multimedia content, developed into curriculum and lesson plans, and made available in easily searchable databases our journalism archives could provide a tremendous and enduring community resource.

“The (NPR) board has talked recently about education as an issue for us. But I will tell you that it’s mostly the joint licensee folks in the room who have seen how TV stations have really capitalized on how programs such as “Ready to Learn” are positioned in the market. Their position creates a much different sense of value to the community.”

Fundraising innovation. Along with innovations for audience growth we need true innovations in fundraising – not just incremental improvements in what we currently do. These should go hand in hand with experimentation and innovation in using new platforms, applications and social networking approaches. And they should be in terms of entirely different models of giving – like donating five or ten dollars on a whim from your iPhone versus the traditional pledge.

4. Biggest challenge or hurdle to reaching the report’s objectives

JoAnn remembers another era when “conventional wisdom” was challenged and there was openness to fact-based learning.

“Back in the day when we first heard about Audience 88 there was a lot of skepticism. My boss at the time gathered the staff together and told us what was in the report and we just kind of looked at each other and said, ‘Oh right, how did they find that stuff out?’ Disbelief hung throughout the room and it was genuine disbelief. We just couldn’t figure out why this all made sense. Then Tom and Terry started doing the workshops and it did start to make sense and it was very much clarified for us. We understood where the data came from, and why we could buy into it, and what we could do to make the changes we needed to get our stations to sound like one place.”

“Now when we present research at the station some people will say, ‘Well I just don’t believe that.’ It seemed that in the late eighties and early nineties we knew our option wasn’t to not believe the research. I ask people who are involved in doing workshops for stations, ‘Do you find that this is happening?’ There is a tremendous amount of disbelief. ‘Research is nice, but I am still going to do this.’ So we still have people making choices that are not research based and who reject, simply reject information.”

She is uncertain of the roots of these attitudes. It may be generational. She’s also uncertain whether a “re-education” campaign would work. She finds very different attitudes among some staff in their mid-to-late 20’s and 30’s. “They just don’t get
why we do things certain ways, even after you walk them through and explain this is because of this, and show them the research, they just don’t believe it.”

“Audience 88 was supposed to break down the conventional wisdom because that wisdom was conventional, but it wasn’t accurate. So now we’ve moved forward to times where we have mostly mature businesses, yet immature approaches to managing.”

► Lack of programming management talent that “gets it.”

▪ JoAnn doubts that the system has the “qualified staff who understand the real basics of our core business and who can innovate and implement in the digital world.” It’s a concern that’s been growing and is shared by others she’s talked with.

WUSF spent a year-and-a-half searching for a new program director. They heard from candidates who would outright say they didn’t believe established best practices or research findings. They would tell us how they believe in doing things and provide their own logic. Most of the candidates had their own “conventional wisdom.”

Additional notes:

► The effort needs to be about community service, not just growing the audience.

▪ “I think it’s a good idea, increasing the audience. I think we need to do for more reasons than that we could make more membership money. It has to be about public service. If we are not doing more public service I think our traditional funding sources are pretty doomed. And I think that our public service has to do not just with listening and online listening, but with really creating outreach in the community, which has typically been a public TV thing. But I think it’s time for radio to take stands on issues. There are things that are wrong or right that we need to make the community aware of.”
CONNIE WALKER
General Manager, WUNC, Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Key points

▶ Whatever we do, we need to be sure it does not get us away from the brand that listeners have come to value and that makes us special to them.

▶ Growing the audience is also about deepening relationships with our audience. This is important to keep in mind around certain recommendation areas, particularly The Network recommendations. It’s also essential for growing the funding base needed to grow and sustain new audiences.

Points by question area (and detail on key points)

0. Overall reactions

▶ The report is “great” – really good. While Connie’s already thought about most of what’s covered, it’s nice to have it all laid out in one document. It will hopefully help provide a common reference for the system, which has “so many players and so many people already going in a bunch of different directions.”

▶ The report will be very helpful for the strategic planning now underway at WUNC as they sort through questions of, “should we do a blog, do we have to do this, should we do that.” She just hopes she can get her staff to read through it all.

1. Recommendations resonating most strongly for public radio as a whole

▶ 1 Inclusiveness: The emphasis on including a diversity of people within public radio is important and the right approach to increase the diversity of public radio’s content without straying too far from its core mission.

▪ “I appreciated the fact that the conversation in the report seems to be about not just trying to create programs for diverse people, but about having diverse people working in public radio and being part of that process. I think we get too far off of our core mission if we worry too much about ‘let’s try to create something specifically for this diverse audience’. It is more important to have diverse people involved in public radio, people who have that sensibility that naturally turns their editorial orientation to things that may be more appealing to different people.”
2.1 Journalism: National Programs: Improving the dialogue between stations and national producers (NPR, PRI, APM) is really important. “I would say it’s better than it used to be – and not nearly as good as it should be.” There is still the tendency to get caught up in fiefdoms.

2.2 Journalism: Local Reporting: The idea of “regional hubs” is very appealing and widely applicable across the country. Though WUNC has a strong, though not large news department, it could benefit from ongoing collaborations with other stations in the region. The focus might be on special series or ongoing reporting.

- The idea and value doesn’t need to be confined to journalism. It could include other types of shared program interest (e.g. talk-shows) as well as online projects.

2.3 Journalism: Integrated Online News: We do need to provide a “one stop shopping” online presence for public broadcasting or public radio. The first time she heard Mark Fuerst advocate the Major League Baseball idea she thought, “Oh my god, he’s crazy” but then thought more about it and realized, “No, he’s right, we should.” We currently make it very hard for users to navigate within our own sites and between sites, even when they know exactly what they’re seeking.

- Supporting stations by developing a common “backbone” is also important given how under-resourced stations are in the online realm. It would be an important part of enabling stations to do and contribute more on line, even if in the context of an integrated site.

4 The Network: Growing the audience is also about growing the donor base. That requires becoming increasingly important in people’s lives and engaging them more. The recommendations related to the community-building aspects of the “network” are particularly important in this regard. This extends to using the network to enable in-person gatherings, such as meet-ups for conversation about a story or a series on a national program.

5 Market Strategies, Station Solutions: Lurking behind these recommendations is the issue of “consolidation.” The existing barriers to consolidation need to be broken down so new kinds of relationships can develop. The issue needs to be opened up through national dialogue and system thinking for the benefit of all the potential players, including:

- Providing a wider, national context for community leaders and groups advocating action in their local market
- Developing models and approaches for maintaining localism
- Showing struggling stations a pathway out
- Helping “acquiring” stations absorb stations without draining their own budgets
5 Market Strategies, Station Solutions: Focusing efforts on the top 50 markets is “probably the way to go.” Connie is surprised at how many listeners talk to her about listening in major markets while traveling and that they note the variations in service. Nonetheless, she has “mixed feelings” about the prioritization and “hates to see more rural areas left in the dust.”

6 Marketing: This is a tough issue for the system. The level of non-awareness of public radio continues to amaze Connie. Yet very, very few in the system or at stations are trained as marketers. And in normal times of tight budgets, little funding is allocated to marketing by stations. Then what little is budgeted gets cut first in times like these.

2. Recommendations resonating most strongly for their station and market

Overall, the recommendations resonating for WUNC are the same as those for the system. Connie did provide some particular situations and applications for WUNC:

1 Inclusiveness: WUNC is currently thinking of diversifying its audience in terms of younger listeners and families with children.
   - Adding a AAA format would be a natural for their market and, hopefully, a way to attract younger listeners who eventually would become news listeners.
   - Children’s programming, on air or online, is also being discussed as a way of reaching not only children but their parents as well.

1 Inclusiveness: WUNC is “pretty good” at staff diversity at the producer level, but it has not “trickled-up” into management positions. Connie imagines this is a common situation across stations. Help is needed to create ways to more proactively “grow such staff into managers.”

5 Market Strategies, Station Solutions: WUNC is looking at a struggling station in an adjacent market but is still trying to figure out how to reach out to them and help them in a way that doesn’t drain its own budget.

6 Marketing: Increasing the capacity of organizations such as DEI and PRPD to provide training to stations is important and would be very valuable. But that’s a matter of increased funding for both the organizations and for stations to participate. Part of the answer may be in developing the capacity around approaches that don’t require travel (e.g., webinars, mentoring programs).

3. Important recommendations or perspectives missing from the report

The economy for national program production. WUNC has found that funding production and distribution of national programming is a “quandary” based on their experience with The People’s Pharmacy and The Story (especially, given its costs). This is particularly true.
past the start-up funding phase. There are limits built into the system for what stations will pay in carriage fees, foundation and underwriting support can be hard to sustain, and a station’s listeners can’t be expected to support a program indefinitely. If new programs are part of growing the audience, the “whole model” of funding for creating, developing and sustaining new national productions needs to be addressed.

- While Connie sees the issue from the perspective of a station-based producer, she can see that it’s just as great of challenge and issue for NPR.

- Public television and joint licensees. There is very little in the report about audience strategies vis-à-vis PTV and joint licensee relationships. “Should we be running away screaming from public television or should we be thinking about opportunities there?”

4. Biggest challenge or hurdle to reaching the report’s objectives

- Existing mindsets and identities. Because stations have such strong existing self-identities, it will be hard to pursue opportunities that are outside of those perceived bounds. For example, while there is huge potential for WUNC to provide an AAA service in their market it will be a “struggle” for them because “our whole identity is about news programming.” It will take a “different mindset” for the staff to pursue and the community advisory board to support this diversification of service, even when the opportunity and value is clear.

- “Market” leadership. It’s not clear who can take the leadership role in underperforming markets. Who can credibly say, “We’re here to make you a better station.” Who can decide a station has the wrong format? Or convince a station that believes it is doing just fine that it really isn’t? There are many stakeholders but no natural or obvious authoritative leaders. Perhaps the leadership could come from major donors or advisory boards. While the situation will be somewhat different in each market, leadership is likely to be a challenge in every one.

- For those stations that are ready to change, whatever the stimulation or motivation that prompts them, there will need to be strong support to help them make the case and manage the pain with stakeholders and existing audiences.

- Unified direction. So many people are already moving in so many directions. And everyone’s wondering what the cutting edge is and how close to be to it. It may be hard in this environment to “turn the battleships around and get everyone on board to do some of these things.”

- Retirement windows. Given that “change is scary,” there are managers in the system close enough to retirement who will prefer to coast through for the remaining years. And there may be very able and willing staff below them who will be stymied. Connie knows of one very good PD who told her, “I’m not changing the format until the GM retires.”
The economy. Much of the report was developed before the current economic downturn and doesn’t reflect that reality. You have to be realistic about that, even as you hope it won’t last much longer. Stations are very preoccupied now with “getting out from under the economic cloud.”

Additional notes:

- The economic downturn might actually be of benefit in making the case to “grow the audience.” “Listeners are saving us right now – they are coming through where underwriting and other sources aren’t.” It may remind people that “having a bigger audience is a really, really good idea” if you are looking for more revenue you can rely on.

- Amid all that’s changing in the media environment and the history of past relations, an undercurrent of worry remains among stations that they will be “left behind in the dust” as program producers and networks use more and more ways to by-pass them. While stations need to face the challenge of increasing their local value and deepening their local relationships as a counter to this trend, this dynamic of suspicion will complicate and could potentially impede audience growth efforts that require station and network cooperation.
CARL WATANABE
Station Manager, Capital Public Radio, Sacramento, California

Key points

- “Content is king” and recommendations should focus on improving the quality, diversity and inclusiveness of content (within the formats and channels we have)
- Costs and funding must be addressed for the report to gain traction

Points by question area (and detail on key points)

0. Overall reactions

- The report is a “great effort” but too amorphous – “like a loose ball of gas” that needs to be shaped and given a more defined form.
- Content is the key to growing audience and must be the focus. Given that competition for audience time and attention continues to increase, we must have content that warrants attention, that’s truly compelling. The Buzenberg quote really resonates.
- The costs and potential funding sources and models need to be addressed in the plan. Otherwise readers can’t engage on the objective and you risk their reverting to “we’ve heard all this before” and even becoming irritated and angry.

1. Recommendations resonating most strongly for public radio as a whole

- 2 Journalism: This is where content must be king and local content must be as good as national.
  - Local will turn people off if it is “local” in the pejorative sense of being “small time” and we currently aren’t that far advanced from perceptions of local stories “interrupting” the national content. Local content must be as substantive and worldly as national stories.
  - Training for local news and feature production is sorely lacking in all areas, from recognizing good stories to writing, producing and packaging them.
  - Standards, expectations and sensibilities need to be developed within and across stations for what constitutes relevant and compelling news content. Staff must
grow the audience
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develop sophisticated understandings of concepts such as “sense of place” (as an example of one that has been explored).

» 1 Inclusiveness: Diversifying your staff comes first; improved inclusiveness and authenticity of programming will follow as you involve them in its planning, development and creation.

» 7 Support for Stronger Service: Considerable organizational development is needed at stations, particularly in:
  - “Business sensibility” and decision making.
  - Much more effective fundraising, including on-air.
    - On-air fundraising is here to stay. It’s even likely that other, traditionally commercial media will adopt some version of the public radio model of direct-to-user appeal, as this is an approach that may be viable in the new media environment.
    - Yet we remain “pathetic” at on-air fundraising and continue to use approaches and tactics from the 1990’s, even the 1980’s. It needs to become “cool” and “compelling,” not simply transactional. The appeals need to not only be to listeners’ desire for premiums (greed) but also to the “greater good,” to impulse as well as deliberation.

Not resonating:

» 5 Market Strategies, Station Solutions: We have the channels and formats to grow the audience. The key is improving the quality and inclusiveness of the content on those channels.

2. Recommendations resonating most strongly for their station and market

» The same as for the system (see above).

3. Important recommendations or perspectives missing from the report

» Costs. The costs of growing the audience must be addressed, particularly since the costs of attracting new audiences will likely be higher than with current audiences.
  - Many of those we are seeking to attract will be media savvy – sophisticated in their media use and expectant of high quality. And more diverse audiences will have new expectations that will require new talent and resources to serve. Overall, expectations will rise and the cost of service will rise with them.
Fundraising. The higher costs of service to grow the audience will need funding; increased fundraising capacity and capabilities must be addressed comprehensively as part of “growing the audience.”

4. Biggest challenges or hurdles to reaching the report’s objectives

- Can we retain while growing – is the stretch too wide? It will be a challenge to continue to appeal to the interests and sensibilities of our existing audience, and even deepen that appeal to keep them from migrating elsewhere, while also appealing to more diverse interests and sensibilities to attract new audiences. The spanning is possible but will require new talent and new practices.

- Can a funding plan be defined for GROW THE AUDIENCE to give the initiative traction and overcome the inertia of “we’ve heard this all before”? 
How We Did the Conversations

We created an initial pool of thirty-five potential interviewees, from which we completed 21 conversations. While individuals were selected in part because of their leadership roles in public radio’s networks and national and regional organizations, we asked each person to speak from the perspective of their primary professional position.

We asked each person to respond to the following four questions.

1. As you read the draft GROW THE AUDIENCE report, what recommendations resonated most strongly with you as a direction for public radio as a whole?

2. What recommendations resonated most strongly in terms of a direction that will influence your station and market?

3. Is there something missing from the activities outlined in this report that would make a real difference in the success of public radio?

4. When you think about public radio’s role in the media landscape five to ten years out, what’s the biggest challenge or hurdle you see ahead? When you think about the objectives laid out in the report for the year 2020, what do you see as the biggest challenge or hurdle to reaching them?

The conversations were held by telephone and were recorded and transcribed.

Quentin Hope, who conducted the conversations, prepared summaries of each conversation and mapped comments to specific recommendations in the draft of Public Radio in the New Network Age. SRG co-CEOs Terry Clifford and Tom Thomas, who are leading the GROW THE AUDIENCE project, further edited and condensed the material for this report and prepared the review of key points.

Participants were given an opportunity to review and revise the summary of their conversation.