



COOKEPICTURES



It's Fall. Time to Re-Think Your Media Ministry!

This fall, what better time to take a quick look at your church media ministry, station or broadcast outreach, and transform your weak spots into gleaming examples of effectiveness!

by
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If you're not taking a hard, critical look at your church, station or ministry at least once a year, then you're way behind the curve. Technology changes, culture changes, trends change, people change, taste changes, and if you're not keeping up, then the effectiveness of your outreach is suffering. Someone once said, "*the message never changes, but the methods do.*" Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever, but I can't say the same thing about our camera and sound equipment, our staff members, or our program ideas.

Therefore, here's a good checklist (*suitable for framing, of course*) that I suggest you start with as you begin your yearly examination:



1) **Take a new look at technology.**

When was the last time you attended the *Inspiration Conference*, the *National Association of Broadcasters Convention*, or a *Biola Media Conference*? These are places to see all the emerging technologies and talk with company officials, sales representatives and experienced producers. Sure you can't afford all the bells and whistles, but you need to have a clear view of

what the possibilities are and what's right for your particular situation. Also, I highly recommend you attend with both a producer and engineer who understand your church, station, or ministry. You need both perspectives before you can really make accurate and effective decisions on equipment. Sales representatives are helpful, but before you make a major purchase get opinions and perspectives from a number of qualified sources.

Reference – www.nrb.org



2) **Take a management skills review.**

Take an objective look at your relationship with the people you manage. Sadly, one of the most serious problems in media ministries across the country is poor management skills. Don't let your frustration with a lack of finances or equipment translate into a poor relationship with your staff. Remember, your people will do their best and most inspired work when you can clearly articulate your vision and encourage them to step out and take creative risks and chances. When times get tough, managers tend to take responsibility away from people, but good management practice suggests just the opposite. Stop criticizing people and start patting them on the back - you'll be amazed at the difference it will make!

Reference - **John Maxwell's Leadership Resources** - <http://www.injoy.com>



3) **How "with it" are you?**

I recently watched a Christian television program that was designed to reach inner city gang members. The problem? The evangelist who hosted the program wore a designer suit, sported teased and blow dried hair, carried what looked like a 30 pound Bible, had no concept of "street lingo," and stayed in a studio the entire production (*apparently he was afraid to actually "mingle" with gang members*). He was about as far out of touch with the subject as you could imagine. If you want to reach a specific audience, learn their likes and dislikes, understand their styles, aspirations, hopes, and dreams. In the last few years, secular networks have learned the power of producing gritty, realistic programs that deal with real, honest issues. *That's a lesson we could all learn.* Begin producing programs that provide *real answers to real questions*, and do it in a way that *real people can relate to*.

Reference: **Read current magazines, television, and radio programs, and study the cultural trends of your target audience. Read: "Finding Common Ground: How to Communicate with Those Outside the Christian Community... While We Still Can". By Tim Downs.**



4) **Develop relationships with other Christian media professionals.**

No one is an expert at everything. One station does fantastic telethons, another does great news programs. One ministry does powerful musical programs, another does fascinating interviews and documentaries. One church has an effective follow-up program, another has developed a great crew training curriculum. Don't re-invent the wheel - if you really want to grow and expand your outreach, learn from others who are already doing it. The two best arenas for this are the annual "Inspiration Conference" and the convention of the "National Religious Broadcasters". I'm always amazed at who I meet in the workshops or just walking through the exhibit hall. And the rest of the year? Pick up the phone and call! Watch other Christian programs and find out who does what you need, and don't be afraid to call and ask for advice.

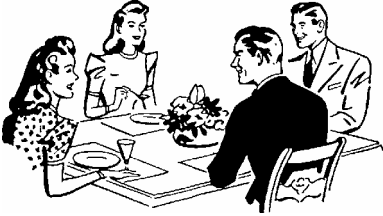
Reference - *The National Religious Broadcasters Convention* - 703-330-7000 for information.



5) **Be different!**

If you've ever attended one of my workshops or seminars, you're already familiar with my personal crusade against producing programs in front of fireplaces, plants, or couches, using openings with flying boxes, and a host of other over-used program elements. Audiences are tired of worn-out set pieces, the same boring video effects, and trite phrases that litter typical Christian programs. In advertising, we have a phrase "*cutting through the clutter*". Today, you need to *cut through the clutter* and make your program different from all the other programs out there if you're going to find an audience.

Reference - **Watch network programs and niche programming like MTV or Nickelodeon** - not for the content, but for the techniques, styles, and how they relate to the audience.



6) **Never forget your core values.**

In an article in the *Harvard Business Review*, researchers James Collins and Jerry Porras noted that companies who held their core values through periods of change and transition outperformed the general stock market by a factor of 12 since 1925. What are core values? The 3-6 values you believe in that will stand the test of time. In other words, what would your company or ministry stand for, even if it became unpopular and you were actually penalized for holding that belief? It goes without saying that core values are especially critical for us as religious broadcasters.

Reference - Want to find out about core values? Check the book of **Proverbs!**



7) **Make a new commitment to creativity.**

A famous advertising executive once said, "*Creativity is like shaving - if you don't do it everyday, you're a bum.*" Stop trying to copy other programs and try something bold and daring. Start exercising your creative muscles and look at new options, ideas, and program segments. You don't have to re-vamp every aspect of your broadcast outreach overnight, but at least start experimenting in small steps. Bring in writers and other creative people to give you a different perspective on things. And don't forget the power of focus groups - groups of people from your target audience that come in and give you honest, direct, critiques of your program.

Reference - **Watch television infomercials** - sure you hate them - I do too, but the best infomercial marketers are really tuned in to their audience.



8) **Get plugged into the best resources.**

No one can do it alone, and there are some outstanding resources available to Christian stations, churches, and ministries across America. There are certainly too many to mention in one article, but I would suggest you start with the following:

The Inspiration Conference - You're already reading this magazine, so you know about this important conference. Particularly if you work in a church media setting, this is the one conference each year I wouldn't miss.

The Biola Media Conferences - Co-Sponsored by Biola University and Regent University, these unusual events are held throughout the year in cities across America. They bring major talents from Hollywood to teach workshops on all aspects of producing, directing, writing, and acting. If you've ever dreamed of creating a relevant movie or major television program, then this is the best networking spot in the country! For more information e-mail: "cam@biola.edu" or call: 1-86-MEDIA-CON.

The National Religious Broadcasters Directory of Religious Media - This is the ultimate directory of Christian broadcasters, and a great resource for networking and information. I would also recommend the NRB internet web site: www.nrb.org.

Samuel French Bookshop (818)-762-0535 - Studio City, CA. Samuel French has the most complete catalog of radio, television, and film books of any store in the country. Call and get on their catalog mailing list and begin to build a library of media-related books for your staff and crew.

The Cooke Pictures Web Site - sure it's shameless self promotion, but if you have access to the internet, then dial up www.cookepictures.com, then click on the "Production Resources" page and you'll find a wealth of downloadable articles and references on various aspects of Christian broadcasting. The site also has a great list of fascinating internet links for Christian broadcasters. And while you're at it, take a look at my book: *Successful Christian Television*, also available through the web site or your local bookstore. It's the single most comprehensive book ever produced on nearly every aspect of producing effective Christian television and radio programming, and don't forget our teaching library on audio CD.

This checklist won't transform your media outreach overnight, but if you begin following each step, it won't be long before you see a significant change in the quality of your programming and the effectiveness of your media ministry. And remember - the key is to review this checklist every 6-12 months, to stay in top creative, production, and management form.

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