

RADIO CONNECTS

Elmer Hilderbrand on Community Radio

Local radio is the lifeblood of many of Canada's small communities, especially in Western Canada.

Without local radio, many small communities get little or no coverage of area news. At best, there is a weekly newspaper. The rest of residents 'service' comes from distant, often metro-market, radio stations.

Metro market stations broadcast only major news events from small-markets – fires, accidents or the like. By contrast, small market radio stations get involved in every aspect of their community – from reporting on local concerts, school and community activities and initiatives, sports events, church and charitable organizations.

On-air radio personalities in small-market Canada are connected. They generally know most members of the community, taking listener loyalty to a new level! They actively help out in their home community by way of promotion, emceeing community events, and creating positive talk and interest about all that's going on.

In my experience, the flavour of local radio is truly "like a friend" – down-home, personal, accessible and there when you need it. Does that seem dated? I'd venture not. In today's world of internet and satellite communications, local radio continues to be the glue that holds communities together, reflecting what is 'real' and 'genuine'. After all is said and done, people don't live on the internet, they live in communities.

Many of Canada's leading corporations are experiencing the value of connecting at a grass roots level to Canadians in rural and small markets. Their advertising results are tangible, and they know that they are differentiating their brands from competitors' that have a less-accessible presence with the consumers.

It's true that the majority of Canada's population resides in cities and mid-size markets, but I would contend that the brand loyalty that can be built in small communities, is deeper, faster to acquire, and offers a higher return on investment than in large, highly-competitive markets.

On behalf of Golden West Advertising and all of Canada's small market radio broadcasters, I invite you to explore the individual communities that make up your business' geography. You may be surprised at how attached you become.

Elmer Hilderbrand is the Chief Executive Officer at Golden West Radio