

Welcoming Back Advertisers & Listeners

By **charliesislen** - June 7, 2021



(By Charlie Sislen)

This column typically focuses on sales and ways to grow your billing.

However, there is an undeniable relationship between reported audience (estimated by Nielsen) and revenue. Most will agree that more listeners should and will translate into higher revenue. While there are numerous other factors, it is hard to ignore the impact of audience size on revenue.

When COVID hit in March 2020, radio stations' revenue plummeted. While most of the decline was a result of shutdowns in restaurants, events, and retail, there was also an impact on

most stations' reported listening. From February 2020 to April 2020, the amount of radio listening in most markets declined significantly. A station's AQH share may have been maintained – or even increased – but their AQH audience and rating points often declined.

In other words, the pie of radio listening shrunk. Some, not me, questioned if it would return. I was confident that as traffic, commerce, restaurants, and events returned in full force, market radio listening would climb out of the COVID hole.

As things are opening up, we see that market radio listening is rebounding. While our industry is not back to pre-pandemic levels, in many markets the amount of radio listening is at its highest point in over a year. With that, many stations are seeing a steady rise in AQH audience and ratings.

Most smart sales reps focus on their station's and cluster's performance. Now it is important to also focus on overall market listening. While we use the term PUMM (Persons Using Measured Media) in PPM markets and PUR (Persons Using Radio) in diary markets, the overall story stays the same – radio listening is on the rebound. Many advertisers and media buyers may have been aware of the decline in market listening, but fewer realize that it is now recovering. It is important to demonstrate to advertisers that market radio listening is coming back.

There are two reasons for this. Some listeners that left radio last March and April are returning. We can see market cume increasing. In addition, in many markets, the average listener is spending longer with radio than they did a year ago. Higher cume and longer time spent listening is a clear sign of radio's rebound.

Yes, cume is coming back from its minor slip. While the pandemic did not affect cume as much as AQH, there were some minor cume declines on a market-wide basis. This gives the smart sales rep the opportunity to reiterate that few (if any) other media have the weekly reach of radio. Even in the younger demos, radio listening typically exceeds 80%. This is a great way to show an advertiser the power of radio's reach.

We need to constantly sell the value of radio, especially to those who underestimate our value. Use this rebound as a sign that radio has not lost a step and remains relevant to consumers as the world around them changes.

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