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# How To Keep Current Clients On The Air And Approach New Ad Categories.

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With the coronavirus pandemic upending American lifestyles, broadcast sales consultant Paul Weyland offered ways to keep current clients on the air and how to approach new businesses and ad categories that aren't regular radio users. "This could be our finest hour if we make it so. We should

be the heartbeat of our communities,” Weyland said Monday on a conference call for managers and sales professionals sponsored by the Alabama Broadcasters Association. “We can change the way people see and hear what’s going on around them in the next six months.”

To remain relevant in a world of social distancing, widespread school and business closures and virtually no live sports or entertainment, advertisers need to pivot their on-air messaging to how their product or service can make the lives of consumers safer, less complicated, more convenient and more luxurious, Weyland stressed. Spots need to sound more like PSAs than blatant product pitches. Banks, for example, could flip their script to relaying stories about how they solve problems for everyday people. “These banks have stories of the way they help people every day but we never hear those stories because we’re stuck in the old way of doing commercials,” he said.

Although many advertisers are cancelling or delaying their campaigns, emergencies almost always introduce a new wave of categories to the airwaves. Janitorial services are in demand for people looking to clean and sanitize their home or business. Investment advisors are needed for millions of Americans worried about their 401Ks. And white collar workers suddenly working from home may need a new laptop or PC or office equipment.

Most restaurants no longer have dine-in service but many have ramped up their takeout and home delivery options. Yet many customers are in the dark about which of their local eateries are still open and how to place an order.

Weyland urged Alabama radio and TV sellers to think beyond merely selling a spot schedule and work with local business owners to help communicate valuable info to their consumers. That could mean putting local grocery store managers on the air to talk about when toilet paper and paper towels will be back in stock. “How can we make their lives better in an unprecedented crisis like we’re going through now,” Weyland asked. “Can we give them more reasons to tune in, so they talk about us when they’re home with their families?”

For local businesses trying to adapt to a radically altered consumer landscape, the human touch is crucial, now more than ever. “Make phone calls like you’ve never made in your life,” Weyland suggested. To get callbacks, leave concise headline-style voicemails with such enticements as, “I have the kind of commercial that will keep your business afloat.” Or “I have found a hole in your competitor’s strategy.”

While many news and news/talk stations have moved into wall-to-wall coverage of the health crisis, music stations should also be breaking in with critical local info and messages from health officials about how they can help flatten the growth curve of the COVID-19 virus. “Be a mirror of what’s happening in the community at large,” Weyland said.