
Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

On Hosting a Poetry Show on the Radio

Daphne Stanford · Wednesday, October 12th, 2016

For the last four years, I've been lucky enough to host a weekly community radio show all about poetry. It's been an interesting adventure, and I've learned a great deal about public persona versus private self, how to conduct myself in a public role, and what *not* to say. I've also experienced a number of entertaining reactions after telling people I host my own radio show about poetry—especially when people know I write poetry, myself. The most entertaining question I've fielded is, "So, do you read your own poetry on your show?" I always respond with, "Of course not! That would be akin to Brett Netson playing nothing but Built To Spill and Caustic Resin on his show, 'High, Wild, and Free,' or Thomas Paul playing a bunch of tracks by The Thomas Paul Band on his show, '[The V3](#),' which he co-hosts with comedian Gabe Dunn.



Source: [Radio Boise](#)

One thing I do hear from listeners on a regular basis, however, is how refreshing it is to hear someone on the mic who knows how to read a poem and also knows how to have fun and be herself. It also takes a bit of courage to be real with my listeners when I'm having a bad day because one of my favorite writers just died, for example, or someone close to me is having health problems. Like any good writer, I take advantage of this extra dose of melancholy by leaning into it, selecting appropriate poems for, say, the transition from fall to winter. Also, twice a year during our eight-day pledge drive, we programmers come to our listeners and ask for their financial support.

There's something arresting about vulnerability: It forces us to stop and contemplate our assumptions about someone. When the entity that acts frankly is a company or organization, it's an even more unexpected, but welcome, surprise. It may be scary, at first, to be honest and admit to wrongdoing or bad judgment, if you fall short of your mission statement or ideal level of customer service. [However, telling the truth is always a good idea](#), for several reasons. First, you will avoid legal actions being taken against you. Second, your reputation will remain intact. And lastly, you can try your hand at creative methods of communicating your company's vision and mission statement.

Legal consequences are always a possibility, for companies and trademark or copyright matters. All it

takes is for one person to take issue with someone in your office or dining facilities, or a downtown business neighbor may decide to give you a hard time about some aspect of your marketing campaign in the windows. The key here is that all publicity is good publicity—unless it’s bad publicity, in which case, it’s best to try to rectify the situation by reaching out to unsatisfied customers via social networks like Facebook or Twitter, local review boards like Yelp!, etc., until you’ve cleared up the misunderstanding. If it’s a local posting board or weekly paper, for example, it may be relatively easy to clear up.

According to Maryville University, “The pervasiveness of consumers giving feedback regarding products through digital channels has given rise to relationship marketing.” This is the purpose of location-based marketing, in a nutshell: sales discounts, relevant information and valuable resources come together to offer customers the opportunity to become part of a community, rather than another number for the books. Companies that embrace product feedback, suggestions, and co-creation are on the right track, since their customer base will ideally develop its own culture and philosophy, embracing a philosophy and way of life—rather than merely embracing a brand.

To use Radio Boise as an example of community outreach in action, listeners & members feel connected to the station because they have a stake in the programming due to the community-funded, people-powered nature of the station. Because all of our underwriting is local, there’s a sense of connection among business owners, radio listeners, and programmers, as well as volunteers and other community members. Similar to company calls for customer feedback via online social media channels, twice a year during Radiothon, programmers ask listeners and community members for requests, audience participation, and for their pledges of financial support.

It’s important to note that all this listener support isn’t purely financial. Rather, it ends up translating to a symbiotic relationship that is mutually supportive: while the radio station provides impressive content such as esoteric and interesting musical selections, insightful and independent news coverage, and other types of arts-related coverage such as that featured on “The Poetry Show!” or “Stray Theatre.”

According to Business News Daily, this kind of relationship-building is entirely feasible via social media channels, which provide vibrant platforms for community and customer feedback. Specifically, the article lists four methods of creating an engaged network that are recommended: know your audience well; ask—and listen to—what people want; put fans at the center of your strategy; and embrace authenticity. This approach puts people first, placing a premium on individuals over corporations. In recognizing the value of good communication and genuine interaction with clientele, we all stand to become better community members.

We can raise the standards for good stewardship, then, by looking beyond simple ‘customer service’ standards and striving toward building real relationships, so as to improve the world around us, as a whole, rather than merely our ‘bottom lines.’ Stronger customer loyalty comes as a natural result of this kind of authenticity, making it easy for us to want to reach out to our clients or patrons, rather than a duty required of marketing departments or PR releases.

It’s up to each of us to support independent media sources like community radio stations, because if this presidential race has demonstrated anything, it has shown many of us just how easily impressionable and swayed major news outlets can become, losing sight of important news and issues too easily at the behest of large corporate interests. If only because of the continued importance of the arts—artists, writers, and musicians—we must keep our eyes focused on the things that matter: those around us, and real-life events, rather than what we are told to pay attention to by major cable networks and people who pay hefty sums to distract us away from reality.

That’s how I see my role at the station: as an ambassador for the values of community radio. This includes giving a voice to people in “Boise and beyond,” as we like to say—such as those listening online from out-of-state or tuning in from neighboring towns like Weiser or McCall. Our values include an investment in independent media and broadcast communications, local news coverage, carefully

curated arts coverage, and a privileging of little-known artists over mainstream, top-forty-style artists beholden to major music labels whose production and PR teams are big enough to fill a football stadium. Community radio DJs, by contrast, sift through local and national new (and old) album releases, books, and media: we glean quartz and gold from piles of river rocks that, from a distance, resemble non-descript boulders or shale.

Or, in the words of Ian Curtis: “Radio, live transmission.”

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