



A Great Idea

communications

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Produce a weekly radio series on kids' issues.

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In 1999, Indiana Youth Institute (IYI), an Associate Member of Voices for America's Children, began producing half-hour radio shows entitled, "The KIDS COUNT Radio Show," and broadcast the programs on a network of 13 stations in the state. The show targets adults but focuses on children's issues, covering a variety of topics, from kids' online safety to youth nutrition. Currently in its 5th year, the series attracts an extensive audience.

Background:

IYI's President and CEO, who formerly had worked in the radio industry, knew that a successful pitch to the major radio consortium in Indiana would land the show on several stations. In 1999, IYI planned and presented the idea, showing not only how the project would help IYI by educating people about children's issues, but also how the radio station could build its public interest track record, part of the federal licensing requirement for the industry. The radio collective was very interested in the project and even agreed to help create the shows. For only \$400 per month, it offered IYI three hours of studio time and three hours of a producer's time, enough to create four half-hour segments.

"Through this new radio show, the Indiana Youth Institute is presenting exciting stories, useful information and practical ideas to citizens, policymakers and youth service providers throughout Indiana." - Bill Stanczykiewicz, President and CEO, Indiana Youth Institute

Key Elements

- *Finding the right outlet:* IYI decided that radio's Network Indiana would be the right media outlet for a number of reasons: 1) the organization could lean on the president's prior experience in radio; 2) IYI was able to reach a large scope of people, as the network has approximately one million listeners; and 3) Network Indiana proved to be an accommodating partner, and a great company with which to work.
- *Finding the financial resources:* Besides the costs associated with production, IYI has to assign only one staff person to spend 10-15% of her time identifying topics and locating guests. The President also spends approximately 2-3 hours per month as the show's host.

The expenses associated with creating the show are paid largely by corporate and private sponsorships developed by IYI.

- *Identifying topics:* The show focuses not only on child advocacy, but on all issues that pertain to youth. The topics are chosen by the show's producer from the radio station based on how the topics mesh with the mission of IYI--to promote positive youth development.
- *Locating guests:* IYI has found scheduling guests for the show to be quite easy, with the producer handling most of the logistics. Authors, academics, representatives from government agencies and direct service organizations, state and local legislators -- as well as parents and kids -- have appeared. People are usually delighted to be on the show and willingly share their knowledge and perspective.

Results

- The show has provided great publicity for IYI, as evidenced by the number of listeners who contact it to learn more about the services the organization provides.
- IYI has been able to generate a steady and substantial amount of revenue by offering companies the opportunity to sponsor a show.

IYI continues to develop innovative and informative shows, with enthusiastic feedback from listeners:

- > *"I love the KIDS COUNT Radio Show and would listen to it online if it were available."*
- > *"The radio broadcasts sound great."*
- > *"I woke up early and couldn't sleep, so I turned on WIBC and guess who I heard? I am VERY impressed."*

Lessons Learned

- Figure out how a show will be as beneficial to the media outlet as it will be for your organization. IYI focused on the company's desire for a higher public interest profile, which would seem to be a workable tactic in most states.
- Get funds from advertising. A tangible, highly visible product like a radio show is a great opportunity to develop relationships with corporate funders. In return for financial contributions, IYI publicizes companies at the beginning of each radio show and in its other forms of promotion.

