

THE 7 FIXES EVERY SMALL-MARKET STATION MUST MAKE BEFORE RATINGS SEASON

**A HITWM Guide for PDs & GMs Who Are
Doing the Work of Three People**

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INTRODUCTION: A WARM NOTE FOR SMALL-MARKET OPERATORS

Most small-market stations aren't struggling because people don't care. They're struggling because everyone is doing the work of three people, the budget is tight, and the clock never stops. You're trying to keep the station sounding good, keep the staff motivated, keep ownership happy, and somehow still prepare for ratings season — all at the same time. If you've ever looked at your clocks, your logs, your imaging, or your talent and thought, "We'll fix that when things slow down," you're not alone. Every small-market operator feels that way. The truth is, you're doing the best you can with the time and resources you have.

These seven fixes aren't about perfection. They're about giving you a clearer, calmer path into the book — one that makes your station sound bigger, more consistent, and more confident without adding more pressure to your plate.

You don't need a full rebuild. You just need a few focused adjustments that make everything else easier.



1. Fix Your Clocks So They Match How Listeners Actually Use Your Station

A lot of stations are running clocks that were built years ago and never really updated. Not because anyone's ignoring them — but because you're juggling a hundred things at once. When clocks drift, listeners feel it. Cleaning them up gives you a station that feels intentional again and takes pressure off your daily workflow.

2. Fix Your Music Logs So They Stop Fighting Your Brand

Most PDs know their music instinctively. What's hard is finding the time to keep categories tight and rotations clean. When logs get messy, the station loses its shape. Tightening them isn't about being perfect — it's about giving your brand a fair shot in the book.

3. Fix Your Imaging So It Sounds Like One Station Instead of a Timeline

Small-market imaging often reflects the history of the building: old voices, old tones, old slogans. None of that is your fault — it's what you inherited. But when the imaging finally lines up, the whole station suddenly feels bigger, cleaner, and more confident.

4. Fix Your Talent Coaching So Your People Have a Clear Path

Most talent isn't unmotivated – they're just uncoached. They want to sound great, but they don't always know what "great" looks like day to day. A simple weekly rhythm gives them direction without overwhelming them and helps them feel supported instead of judged.

5. Fix Your Stopsets So They Don't Punish Your Listeners

Long, uneven stopsets aren't a programming failure — they're usually a staffing and workflow issue. But listeners don't know that. Cleaning up stopsets is one of the easiest ways to protect TSL without asking sales to change a thing.

6. Fix Your Ratings Prep So It Doesn't Start in a Panic

Most stations don't wait until the last minute because they don't care — they wait because they're stretched thin. But the 30 days before the book are where the real wins happen. A simple prep plan takes the pressure off and keeps you from scrambling in April.

7. Fix PD/GM Alignment So the Station Stops Pulling in Two Directions

Misalignment isn't about conflict — it's usually about two people trying to solve different problems at the same time. A weekly check-in keeps everyone rowing the same direction and removes the quiet tension that slows stations down.

CLOSING: A WARM, EMPATHETIC SEND-OFF

You don't have to fix all seven things at once. You don't have to overhaul your station. You don't have to pretend you're not stretched thin. Every small-market operator is carrying more than anyone on the outside realizes, and most days you're just trying to keep the wheels turning. These fixes aren't about perfection — they're about relief. They're about giving you a station that feels steadier, cleaner, and easier to manage as the book gets closer. You deserve a station that sounds as good as the effort you're putting into it. And you don't have to do it alone.

Limited barter available for qualifying stations.



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