

Audience Research Analysis

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Checklist for the Ideal Positioning Statement

From the original Public Radio Program Directors Handbook
adapted from a chapter by Dr. George Bailey, Walrus Research Inc.

You must continually remind listeners what it is they are hearing, so that they associate your programming with the articulated benefit. The next tune-in comes from listeners seeking that benefit for which you are positioned in their minds. These criteria are the basis of the ideal on-air statement:

- Accuracy.** Does the format honestly fulfill the promise made in the slogan? Do you really deliver, for example, "quality news" or "the most music"?
- Benefit.** Are you selling the benefit *and* the feature? "News" is the feature. "Keeping you informed" is the benefit.
- Vernacular.** Are the words in the slogan the kind of words your listeners use?
- Uniqueness.** Is the station's unique selling point stated in the slogan? If you are the only classical station in the market, say so.
- Call letters/ID:** Does the slogan include your call letters or frequency?
- Announcing.** Is the slogan easy to say on the air? Can you easily work it into regular continuity?
- Meaning.** Does the slogan convey an understandable message to your listeners?
- Appeal.** Does it make the station's programming sound interesting to your target audience? For example, saying only that you are "public" or "listener-supported" radio or "a service of X University" does not convey a specific **programming** meaning to listeners.

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Use this checklist as a check against the words you choose for your positioning statement.

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Choosing the Right Words

A clear understanding of your target audience is obviously the place to start before choosing anything for air, including your positioning statement.

Your Arbitron audience data offers demographics information: age, sex, and race.

The VALS™ consumer segmentation system, used in three of public radio's landmark audience studies, provides psychographic information – that is, the general life values, interests, and self-concepts of public radio's two dominant types of listeners. You can access it at ARA's free public service online Research Library. (<http://www.aranet.com>, key search word VALS. Be sure to read George Bailey's "The Psychographic Consequences of Format" from AUDIENCE 98.)

More specifically, PRPD's Core Values Project reports reflects the language listeners' themselves use to describe the "qualities of heart and mind" they seek and appreciate from classical, jazz, and news programming. They are available to PRPD members at <http://www.pripd.org>. Read the full reports as well as the focus group verbatims.

When crafting your statement remember that clarity and brevity beat out cleverness alone every time.

And since most listening to your station comes from people scanning around frequencies (rather than from seeing billboards or bus cards), don't forget the **sound** of your statement. What looks good in print may not fall effectively on their ears.

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