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Smart Speakers And Radio: A Marriage Made In Audio Heaven.

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Smart speakers and other types of voice-activated technology are proving to be perfect partners for radio. First and foremost, 74% of these device owners tune into music, according to Adobe. And asked what they requested smart speakers to provide in the past week, AM/FM radio was No. 1, according to the Smart Audio Report from Edison Research and NPR. "Simply put, smart speakers bring radio back into the living room, the bedroom, the kitchen, and the office," says a new blog post from the Association of National Advertisers (ANA).

Indeed, smart devices have become "A Renaissance for Radio," says Tammy Greenberg, Senior VP of Business Development at the Radio Advertising Bureau and a partner in the ANA Thought Leadership Program. The Smart Audio Report from Edison Research and NPR notes that 53 million people 18+ in the U.S., or 21% of the population, now own at least one smart speaker. Add to that the statistic that the total number of devices in homes has increased a whopping 78% year-over-year. And now 22% own two smart speakers and 30% own three or more.

And thanks to the technology, "People use their voice to garner whatever desired response they want. There's no need for a keyboard or a button — just the sound of a person's voice and the proper audible cue or command," Greenberg writes. "Imagine hearing an ad on the radio and using just the sound of your voice to tell your vehicle to drive you there, or asking for the information to be sent to your smartphone via SMS or text."

Next step... for the industry, she stresses, "As the market evolves, radio stations and their brand partners have an obligation and a tremendous opportunity to ensure they're delivering on their consumers' voice requests, their desires, and their commands."

Already, a number of broadcasters are "using their megaphones across platforms — and it works," Greenberg says. Throughout 2018, Cumulus Media ran promotional spots across its 445 radio stations, once per hour for three-and-a-half months, educating listeners about how to enable the voice skill and request their stations. At the end of 2018, 19% of its streaming listening was occurring via smart speakers.

Bonneville Salt Lake City also heavily promoted its live skill during the holiday season when it played Christmas music. As a result, the station saw 27% of streaming sessions during the holidays coming through smart speakers. Kurt Johnson, Senior VP of programming at Townsquare Media said:

"Townsquare's 321 stations have been steadily educating listeners and vigorously refining our smart speaker invocations over the past two years. The results are significant: Our Alexa listening is up 12 times in the past year."