

USER REPORTS

Omnia-6 at Work for Cumulus

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ATLANTA Two hundred sixty eight radio stations. Fifty-seven radio markets. That's one set of call letters every business day. What this means is that I'm in two or three markets every week ... if I could redeem my frequent flyer miles for time off for a vacation, this would be a perfect world.



Having charge of so many stations, formats and markets may seem overwhelming, but a number of factors help make possible the effective technical management of these diverse facilities, among the most important of which are talented market engineers and useful, efficient technology.

In the radio business, winning means creating compelling content and delivering it clearly. As director of engineering, the delivery of that content is my job and that of our market engineers. Getting it right is important enough that I'm usually addressing some aspect of audio quality and effective delivery as part of each market visit.

I've found that getting a station's audio to sound "right" involves a number of factors and considerations; you really can't pin down any one aspect of a station's audio chain as being the most important. However, the target audience influences audio and processing decisions, as does the station's signal reach.

To get a station sounding its best, I analyze the entire air chain, from music dubbing technique to the transmitting antenna. Items like digital audio storage methods, console setup and condition, STL medium and FM exciter and transmitter are scrutinized. D/A and A/D conversions are kept to a bare minimum; there are no analog distribution amps in the Program feed.

I try to keep a digital, linear air chain from start to finish; a weak link anywhere between the source material and the lis-

teners' radios can put a real crimp on the station's audio. When it comes to creating a competitive advantage for programming and management, probably the most important tool in my audio toolbox is the Omnia-6 FM processor.

Adjusting audio

The Omnia-6 is flexible in what it can do for a station's sound and dial impact. A few situations call for one of our stations literally to dominate the dial with a loud, in-your-face attitude. Other stations need to have an airy transparency — an "open" sound — without getting lost on the dial. The audio presentation, and as a result, the processing setup, needs to be appropriate for both the format and the other factors and considerations mentioned.

When I think about using the Omnia-6 FM to help win a market, one particular station in a fiercely competitive top 10

market comes to mind. All the other major radio groups had a presence in this market; their stations had clean audio chains, competent engineers and audio processing purchased within the past couple of years.

After first getting the air chain up to our standards, we installed two Omnia-

6 FM processors, one on the main system and the other on the backup air chain. Due to the quality of the competitors' audio, getting this station dialed in was a little more challenging than usual; we had to reach higher and spend extra time and effort in the listen/adjust cycle. The effort was worth it, however, and with help and comments from the PD and market engineers, we achieved the clean, powerful,

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Omnia

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competitive sound we were after.

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Omnia-6 doesn't require an infinite amount of tweaking. If you listen a lot, adjust a little, listen a lot more and adjust a little more, you'll quickly get to the point where you're proud of how your station sounds.

If you need some help or ideas for getting the particular sound you want, Omnia's support team and Web site can be useful. Several good presets are available for download on the Web. Another major benefit of the Omnia-6 is the ease with which you can control the unit remotely. I use dial-up quite often, but more of our sites are getting IP connections, and I find myself using the

Internet to check on or adjust my Omnias.

The remote control software is free and lets me store connection setups for dozens of stations. I can also easily grab a great preset from one facility and load it onto an Omnia-6 at another station. This ability alone has saved my staff and I a lot of time; it lets us get happy fast with a station's on-air sound, then share that effort with our stations in similar competitive situations.

Over the past two years I've become quite familiar with the Omnia-6 FM. The support and R&D staffs at Telos/Omnia have responded positively to our suggestions and needs, and the Omnia-6 processor is now one of my most important tools for delivering the competitive on-air sound that my program directors and market managers need to excel. We've gotten to the point where there's competition within Cumulus as to which stations are next in line for an Omnia-6 upgrade.

For more information, including pricing, contact the company in Ohio at (216) 241-7225 or visit www.omniaaudio.com.