



detroit radio advertising group's **BILL BURTON**

Your Number One mantra seems to be “Don’t take ‘no’ from someone who can’t say ‘yes.’” But on the local level, how do you get to the person who can say “yes” — the decision-maker?

The local level is really no different from the national level. Whatever you’re selling, you always try to get to the “yes” person. There are millions of people out there who can say “no,” so you’re always trying to get to the decision-makers. The local level just changes from being the top people at GM, Ford, and DaimlerChrysler to being the retailer. Does he or she own the store; is he or she the manager? Now, of the 300 people selling Radio locally in Detroit, very few have ever met the owner of the dealership. They’re dealing with the general sales manager and maybe a small agency. So one day, they may walk into Ross Roy Ford, where they’ve been getting all this business, and the manager says, “Sorry, Bill, we’re not going to use Radio anymore.” The sales rep asks why, and the answer is, “Well, Roy doesn’t want it anymore.” To which the sales rep says, “Well, let me talk to Roy.” The response: “Well, Roy is in the Bahamas or Palm Springs.”

So how do you get to the decision-maker in a situation like that?

You do it before it ever gets that far — and it’s actually pretty easy. When you get the order from Ross Roy Ford, besides writing back to the person who placed the order at the agency, you drop a note to Mr. Roy. It says: “We really appreciate your business. Joe Shnook, your sales manager, is a terrific guy to work with.” You have to let Mr. Roy know you’re going to do everything humanly possible to move his product. It’s a matter of always running a bit of an investigation. The most basic element in selling anything: Talk to the person who’s the decision-maker, rather than to someone who’s just investigating your armpits before you get to the right person. You keep looking for those little things to build the stairway to the stars. You don’t

do it in 15 minutes, but over time, Ross Roy gets to know this person who cares about his business. That’s the door opener; and it doesn’t matter whether it’s Richard Wagoner at GM or Ross Roy, who might be in Palm Beach this weekend.

Should the account executive try to work directly with the dealer, or is it best to approach the market’s dealer group?

It depends on the size of the market. In the top 50 or 100 markets, there are dealer groups; and whether we like it or not, probably 75 percent of their money is spent in TV. This is largely because the car company uses TV, and it’s something they all want to be a part of because it’s “big time.” Now, in any of these markets where they have a dealer group, once you get to the group, it’s the perfect place to extend your reach and get to the decision-makers. If there are 12 dealers in the room, you now have some intimate knowledge of 12 faces. Many times, they’re the general sales manager, but many times, they’re also the ultimate decision-makers — whether it’s the president of the company or the assistant manager in the retail store.

How important is it for Radio to work with other media in the market, rather than to grab the largest share possible of the dealer’s marketing dollars?

It’s critical. Radio can make more people turn to the dealer’s TV; it can make more people open to his Yellow Pages; it can make more people refer to his newspaper ad. Radio can be the ultimate complement at a very reasonable price to hit this moving consumer target. But if an AE goes to any of these people and says that Radio will solve all the problems in the world, the meeting is probably going to be very short. They have to take a multimedia approach in order to assist them in what they’re trying to accomplish. It’s imperative for the sales rep to go in with a bigger vision.

What’s the greatest obstacle Radio must hurdle