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## The right tools to get radio's attention

[Craig McGuire](#)

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Healthcare campaigns that are designed for radio can be tricky, finds Craig McGuire.

Reporting complex healthcare issues often requires timely statistics and expert analysis, which means radio stations are receptive to outside content.

But, deciding which tactics and tools work for which campaigns - ANRs, RMTs, and others - depends on more than just the issue.

For example, when Strauss Radio Strategies (SRS) launched a campaign to publicize the first UN-observed proclamation of World Diabetes Day, November 14, it opted for a national radio tour.

"If it is a complex healthcare topic with a tangible and timely news hook, an RMT with radio station news directors can be highly effective," says Richard Strauss, president and founder of SRS.

Still, there are times when an ANR may be the better choice.

"The advantage of the ANR is that it is pitched to a larger number of stations than an RMT, so it could potentially reach a very large number of people in a short amount of time," says Susan Matthews Apgood, president of News Generation.

An RMT typically is 10 to 20 interviews and allows for that interaction between reporters and spokespeople. It can also provide targeted information about a specific geographic area or demographic.

But an ANR affords the potential of a great number of people learning a limited amount about your issue.

"There is a quantitative and qualitative difference to be found there," Apgood says.

But it doesn't have to be an either/or proposition. In more and more instances, PR pros will incorporate both options, using one simple, straightforward message for the ANR and a more in-depth one for the RMT.

There are various other techniques to enhance a campaign, such as including Web presence to buoy station

outreach.

"Downloadable sound bites, podcasting, and RSS or some other form of electronic information sharing can give stations 24/7 access to stories and increase your chances for airtime," says Matthew Smith, VP of client services at News Broadcast Network.

For breaking medical stories where there is a need to reach the largest number of stations as quickly as possible, Apgood advises establishing an audio bite line.

"This method includes recording sound bites and placing them on an 800-number line, then alerting stations via e-mail and fax about the story," she explains.

Regardless of the strategy, though, there is one common denominator - especially vital when discussing healthcare issues.

"We don't often speak of magic bullets in broadcast PR, but when it comes to healthcare RMTs there really is one: local information," Smith says.

In fact, many stations have what amounts to policies against doing interviews that don't somehow tie into their designated market area (DMA).

"They don't need much - a fact, a stat, anything," Smith reveals. "Having that local data or not having it is like night and day."

Meanwhile, having the right spokesperson is always key for radio campaigns, but more challenging when they focus on healthcare.

"Having a doctor is fine, but it must be a doctor that can speak to listeners in terms they can understand and relate to, rather than medical jargon," Strauss advises.

"If a celebrity spokesperson is used, someone with proper knowledge and experience works best because they can speak passionately and credibly," he adds. This is why the tandem of Dr. Francine Kaufman and TV personality and chef B. Smith were selected for the World Diabetes Day campaign.

Kaufman is director of the Comprehensive Childhood Diabetes Center, and head of the Center for Endocrinology, Diabetes and Metabolism at Childrens Hospital LA.

Smith is known for leveraging her position as a celebrity TV chef to promote diabetes-friendly diets, as the condition afflicts several family members.

Another important thing to remember in healthcare campaigns is the fine print.

"If the pitch centers around a specific healthcare product or drug, there can be legal disclaimers required as part of PSAs or ANRs," Strauss cautions. "Be sure to coordinate with the client and their legal counsel on what type of disclaimer is required."

## **Technique Tips**

### **Do**

Break down how the issue impacts listeners on a personal level

Localize the pitch to make it relevant to listeners

Coordinate with client's legal counsel to address disclaimers

**Don't**

Speak in medical jargon that will turn listeners off

Select a celebrity that does not have a tie to the cause

Think in terms of ANR vs. RMT, when you can leverage both