

2012 BEST PROGRAM DIRECTORS IN AMERICA

The position of program director has evolved over the past several years, as has every position in radio. PDs have multiple responsibilities, multiple stations, and sometimes multiple markets. Not to mention an airshift every now and again — or every day. More results are expected with less. Less money. Less time. Fewer people.

Add all that to the stress of trying to figure out how to work the system to satisfy Arbitron's Portable People Meter panel. There are so few meters out there in any given market, with so much riding on them. Bad PPM ratings could spell the end of a format, or a career. But good ratings might mean a bonus, and a rate hike with those agencies that only buy the technicals.

This year we asked the top vice presidents of programming and major- and large-market PDs to give us their take on how to win in a PPM world; the insights they provide can help you improve your game in whatever market you're working in. Then we asked the top programmers in medium and smaller markets not rated by the PPM what a well programmed radio station should sound like, and they offered more great information you can use and ideas you can steal.

Here's how we found our 2012 Best PDs. All the programmers were nominated by our readers (we didn't just go out and make up a list). The person making the nomination was asked to provide details on why we should consider the programmer they were nominating. Our industry judges with expertise in programming were given that information — minus the names and any other information that might have identified the nominated programmer — and gave us their ranked lists. The results are on the pages that follow.

There are many, many great PDs out there running successful radio stations. Some aren't on this list, but that doesn't mean they aren't doing a fantastic job, only that they weren't nominated in 2012. But we believe we've compiled a representative list of great programmers, and they've shared some very specific details on how to improve, and win with, the product coming out of the speakers.

ANDY BLOOM

WIP-AM & FM (SportsRadio)

WPHT (Talk Radio 1210)

CBS Radio/Philadelphia



Philly was one of the original two PPM test markets, thus we've had a longer time to learn lessons. And here are some of the top lessons we've learned. One thing is certain, there are no experts yet. PPM punishes irrelevance: Listeners have unprecedented choice, and they use their choices freely and frequently. Your most loyal fans turn away in a heartbeat if you fail to be funny or relevant to their needs. PPM rewards compelling content: We see this especially in important sports play-by-play. Before opening the microphone, relevance and engagement are the name of the game. Content must consistently connect. Too often the bar is too low. Understand how your audience listens to you. Fortunately, PPM gives you unprecedented access to data. Monday is the new Thursday. Promote like television: They've been measured electronically for years, and they provide insight. Fox News Channel and ESPN are especially good at horizontal and vertical teasing and promoting. It's very difficult to make the average listener stay longer; the object is more occasions and more days listening. There is a real art to teasing and hooking listeners — that "I couldn't get out of the car" tease — and air talent who do it right are artists to admire.
