



## 7.

# Audience Volunteers Support

Public radio's increasing dependence on listener support demands a concomitant rise in public service, and that keeps us true to public radio's founding vision.

Nearly 30 years ago, industry pioneer Bill Siemering imagined programming that "enriches and gives meaning to the human spirit...[and will] result in a service to listeners which makes them more responsive...responsible citizens of their communities and the world."

When our service achieves these ideals, listeners readily reach for their wallets. Government and institutional support can cloud our vision by mandating service to **their** interests – which may not always coincide with the best interests of the listening public.

Serving the public is public radio's reason to be. That listeners help finance us, of their own free will, is remarkable in many ways. Having to earn that support keeps us focused on Bill Siemering's early vision, and rivets us to the right goals.

In this next chapter, AUDIENCE 98 reconfirms that programming not only causes audience, it also inspires our audience to volunteer support.



# Givers

## What Turns A Listener Into A Giver?

You do.

You turn listeners into givers by your programming choices.

That includes **every** programming element, from the content and presentation of your national and local shows, to your positioning statement and promos, right down to the attitudes of your on-air drives. Everything a listener hears determines his decision to give.

Virtually every facet of turning a listener into a giver is under your control.

Fact is, we've known this since 1985. AUDIENCE 98 confirms with clarity what was first discovered by the "Cheap 90" study, enhanced by AUDIENCE 88, and built into the Giving Path. And like any good study, it deepens our understanding even more.

## What Did We Verify?

To become a giver a person has to listen first.

Obvious? Not necessarily. You don't have to be a disaster victim to give to the Red Cross.

Next, that listener must rely on your service.

Speaking consistently to his interests and attitudes creates loyalty. He depends on your station for its news and entertainment. It validates his values and resonates with his cultural references. It's part of the soundtrack of his existence.

Your station becomes integral to that listener's life.

The more years spent listening, the greater the likelihood that listener is to give. But more im-

portant is whom he thinks pays your bills.

If he believes listeners pay the bills, he's more likely to contribute. If she thinks government grants are limited, she's more apt to give too.

If they perceive both realities – that listeners have a prime responsibility and that government support is minor – they move up yet another step in the giving path.

(The previous point is a refinement on AUDIENCE 88.)

And yes, those listeners must have money to spare.

But this is **not** rich people's radio. Most gifts come from people whose annual income is modest to moderately upper middle class.

If you get to this point with a listener, what's left is providing an opportunity to pledge. Here's where the catalyst – the on-air pitch or direct mail piece – kicks in.

If you don't get to this point, no fundraising technique on the planet can pick his pocket or her pocketbook.

## What Did We Discover?

We learned most of this in 1985 and again in 1988. So what else is new in AUDIENCE 98?

We have a far better sense of what does not cause giving.

When predicting a listener's decision to give, or when explaining a station's fund drive success, elimination of what doesn't matter clears the field of confusion over what does.

We also gained fresh insight into what makes a station "personally important" to a listener.

The relationship between a giver and a station may be rooted, in part, in a “sense of community.” This concept – ripe for further study – reminds us that public service is our greatest

strength and key to a financially stable future.

– Leslie Peters  
– David Giovannoni

## Givers

# The Stairway to Given

Each step identified in this analysis lifts a listener closer to giving. However, some steps are bigger than others.

The steps in this graphic represent the partial correlation coefficients of the independent variables (e.g. household income) with the dependent variable (current giver status) in a probit analysis that differentiates givers from non-givers.

- “Listens to the station” means “in the weekly cume.”
- “Relies on the programming” is the combination of a listener’s loyalty and years spent listening to the station.
- A factor (from factor analysis), interpreted as a listener’s “sense of community,” accounts for roughly one-third for the belief that the station is “personally important.”
- “Funding beliefs” are measured by agreement that listeners support public radio and that government support is minimal.
- “Ability to afford” is an interpretation of household income.

The first step is the most important.

A person **must** listen.

This step alone is bigger than the remaining steps combined.

The second step is the second largest.

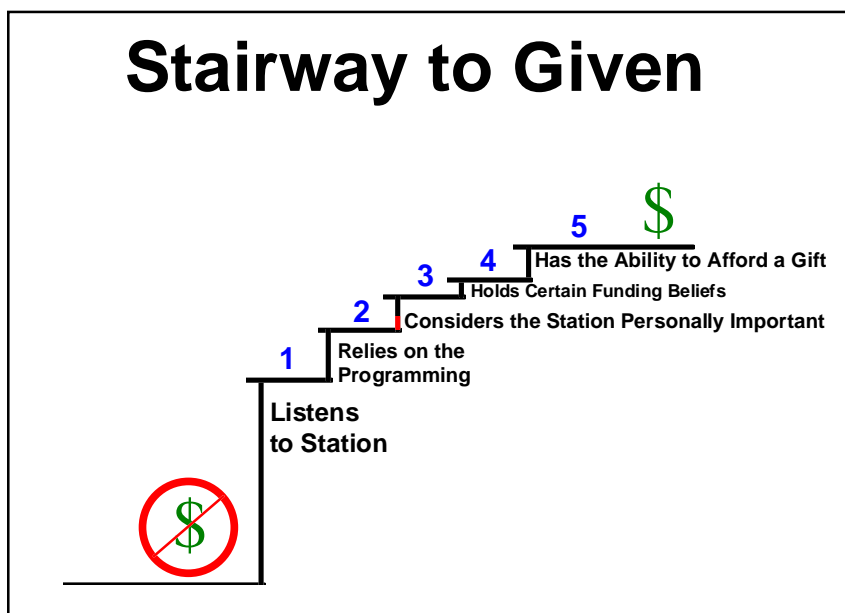
The listener must **rely on the programming**.

AUDIENCE 98 finds several indicators of reliance: **occasions** (the number of times the station is used each week); **horizontal hold** (the number of different days per week the station is heard); and **core** (the station is the person’s favorite, used more than any other).

However, a person’s **loyalty** to public radio and the **number of years** he’s been listening to the station are, in combination, the best indicators of his current reliance on the programming.

The third step is the third largest.

Personal importance is the listener’s belief that the station is important in his life, and that he would miss it if it went off the air.



AUDIENCE 98’s “sense of community” concept is part-and-parcel of personal importance. Mathematically it accounts for one-third of the personal importance step.

The fourth step is the smallest.

This is the belief that listeners support public radio, and that government support is minimal.

Once a listener has climbed these four steps, only then does his **ability to afford** (as measured by gross household income) come into play – and even then, only in the wealthiest of households.

This is a fine but important point. Most public radio givers do not live in the wealthiest of households. Their willingness to give doesn't differ much from one another until their annual household incomes surpass \$100,000 – after which their income does positively influence their willingness to give.

## Another Way To Look At It

Although movement from a listener to a giver is a process, some steps are more important for some listeners than others. We used our model of listening to ask the question,

If we could just influence one thing, how much would we have to influence it to turn a listener into a giver?

The answer lies in the “probability of giving.” The chance that a non-listener is a giver is essentially nil. Indeed, among the sample of listeners interviewed in the Recontact Survey upon which AUDIENCE 98 is based, the chance that a listener lives in a giving household is about 30 percent. That likelihood can be raised above 50 percent by effecting any one of these changes.

**Reliance:** Your programming would have to increase a person's loyalty from 40 percent to 70 percent. In essence, if you can make your station a person's favorite, he is much more likely to support it.

**Personal Importance:** You can turn a listener into a likely giver by getting him to “definitely agree” that your station is an important part in his life, and that he would miss it if it went off the air. How to do this? By demonstrating to him, in positioning messages and appeals in pledge drives, that he is in fact reliant on the station,

that it does add to his daily existence, and so forth.

**Funding Beliefs:** If you can convince one listener in a household that public radio is listener supported **and** not significantly supported by government dollars, you will likely have a giving household.

**Ability to Afford:** For income to have the same effect, the household would need a nearly \$50,000 increase in its annual income. **This is something over which you have no control.** Wealthier households are simply an easier touch.

## No Step Stands Alone

As can be seen, no single factor will easily turn the average listening household into a giving household. But relatively modest changes across some or all of these factors will.

For instance, increase a person's **loyalty** by 10% and his acknowledgement of **personal importance** by just a little, and he'll be a giver more often than not. If you then make him aware that public radio is **listener supported** and **not funded solely by government monies** he is extremely likely to become a giver, regardless of his ability to afford.

## Teamwork

Raising people up to the level of givers requires a team effort at stations.

AUDIENCE 98's model estimates that program directors get people literally two-thirds of the way to becoming givers by getting them into the audience and making the program service as reliable and important in their lives as possible.

Funding messages delivered in positioning statements or pledge appeals take listeners most, but not all, of the remaining distance. Raise a person this far and it simply becomes a matter of convincing him the gift is affordable.

– David Giovannoni

# A Sense of Community

As the key to giving, the “personal importance” of one’s public radio station has locked in like a deadbolt three times – in the “Cheap 90” study, AUDIENCE 88, and now in AUDIENCE 98 .

When it came to the top again for this report we began to wonder whether personal importance has a deeper meaning for listeners.

Could this idea of personal importance incorporate “a sense of community”? A community bound by shared interests and values rather than by city limits or county lines? A virtual community so real and meaningful that its citizens are willing to support it voluntarily?

As public radio’s career-oriented, college-educated adults relocate repeatedly for advancement, they may not stay long enough in one place to put down roots. But their basic human need to bond with others like themselves is still strong.

Could public radio provide a portable community that travels with them?

That was our theory.

Though listeners weren’t surveyed specifically about this idea, we explored it using information from AUDIENCE 98’s database.

Seeking out public radio when they travel or move residence; valuing news and music programming for its uniqueness; gravitating to it because it resonates with their “social and cultural values”.... We believed that listeners’ agreement with these questions should be highly reflective of their “sense of community,” and we posited that those deeply imbued with this sense would be more likely to give.

We were right.

Some fancy statistical footwork convinces us that a listener’s “sense of community” is a significant component of “personal importance.”

The outlines of a virtual community map are emerging, and they may offer a better route to the listener’s sensibilities.

If givers think of public radio as a community, then a fund drive is a barn raising, not the Home Shopping Network. On-air pitching is passing the hat, not selling Beanie Babies. Shirts and mugs – still the most popular premiums – are emblems of membership and pride in the community, not merchandise exchanged for cash.

“Sense of community” may add dimension to the seminal concept of personal importance, and thereby help public radio professionals to influence giving, focus fundraising messages, and schedule programming.

Communication technologies let us choose our neighbors based on their sympathies rather than their proximities. Being connected to other people by psychological rather than geographical space isn’t so alien anymore.

Larry Josephson talks about public radio as a secular church. E. B. White called it “our Lyceum, our Chautauqua, our Minsky’s, and our Camelot.” Our exploration gives credence to these metaphors. For public radio, “a sense of community” is an idea that merits moving from poetic rhetoric to further, serious research.

– Leslie Peters  
– David Giovannoni

### The Sign of a Giver

*"When you have eliminated the impossible,  
whatever remains, however improbable,  
must be the truth."*

– Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Finding clues to what makes a giver is one of public radio's most popular pastimes. Nearly everyone has a theory or two.

AUDIENCE 98 helps solve this mystery by investigating a number of possible theories. We rounded up the usual suspects in our Holmesian hunt for the truth – a wide range of listener attributes that, some speculate, weigh significantly in the decision to give.

For instance, more than a few armchair detectives assume that the characteristics that prompt people to listen also predict giving.

Watch out – that line of inquiry is a dead end.

Most people in public radio's audience are better educated than most and share certain interests and values that attract them to listen in the first place.

So once in the audience, does one degree – more or less – make a difference? Are men, with more disposal income than women, more disposed to give? Do nest eggs and empty nests make it more likely for older people to pledge? Does the color of skin correlate to the color of money?

In AUDIENCE 98's analysis, neither age, gender, race, nor level of education offer meaningful clues to giving.

If these descriptors fail to prove important, what about behavior? If the basis of giving is programming, does listening to any particular program or format forecast a gift?

Some speculate that a news/talk format is potentially more lucrative than music. We're all familiar with the claim that classical listeners, with fatter wallets, are more apt to give than jazz users.

AUDIENCE 98 tests – and rejects – all evidence that a person's listening to certain programs or formats plays any role in the decision to give.

By eliminating program choices and these personal characteristics from the list of speculation, we solidify the case for what is true:

If a person listens to public radio, tunes in regularly, values what he hears, believes he needs to do his share, and has money to give, that person is likely to give some to you.

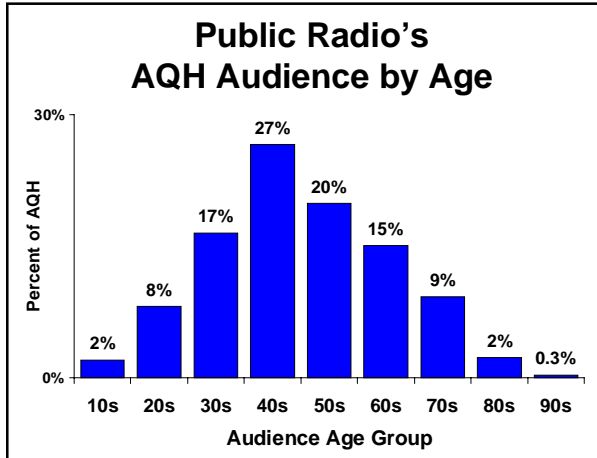
This is the evidence that holds up under the closest statistical scrutiny. It's compelling, yet still...elementary.

– Leslie Peters  
– David Giovannoni

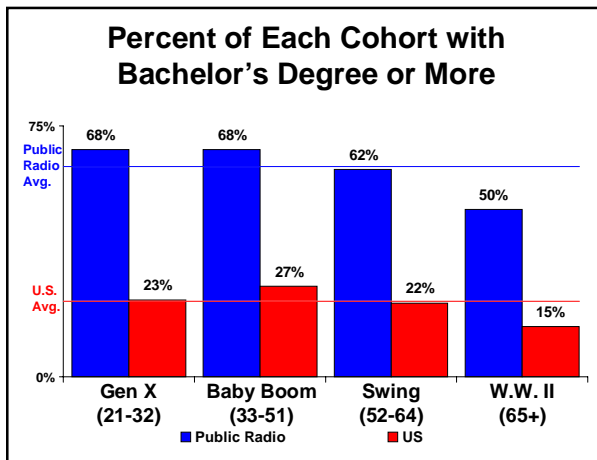


## Four Generations of Givers

People of all ages listen to public radio.

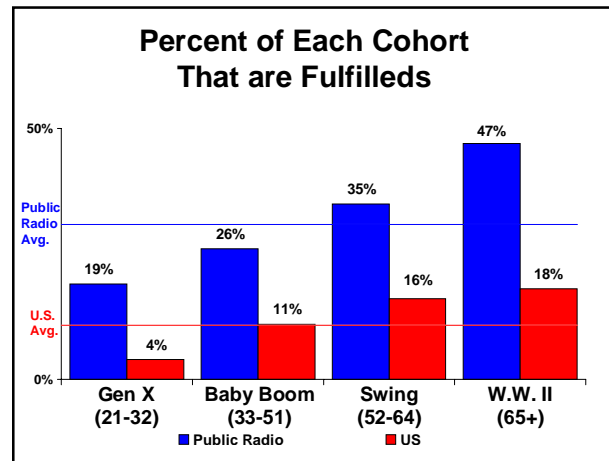
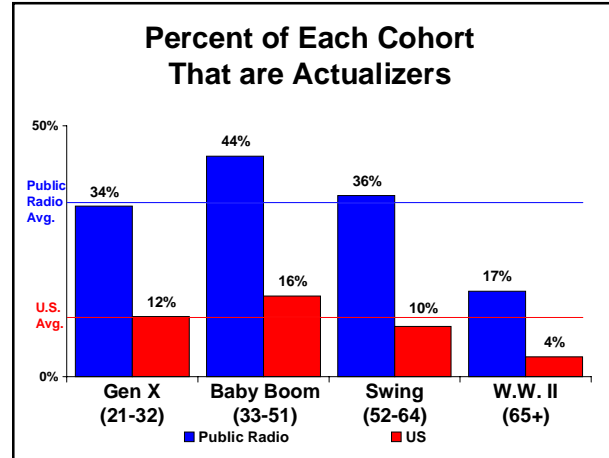


Public radio's appeal – the magnet that attracts certain types of people closely to it and repels others – is best reflected in the highly educated nature of its audience.

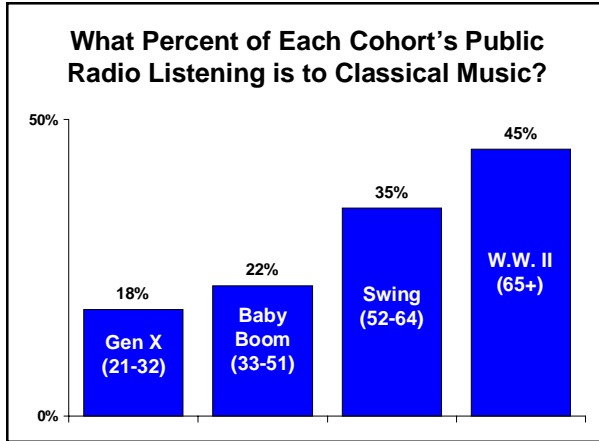


Education and the resources, values, and lifestyles it engenders are strongly associated with VALS's Actualizers and Fulfilleds.

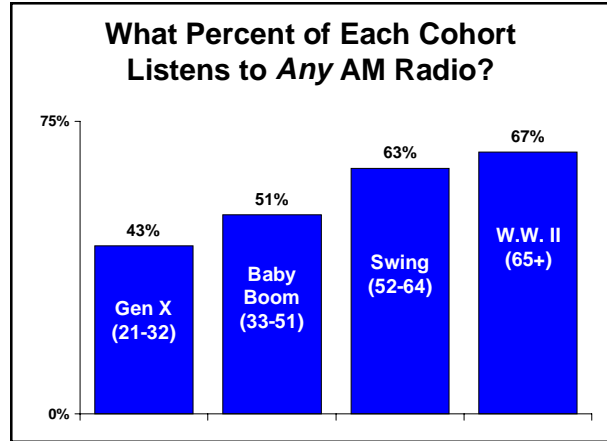
The intellectually peripatetic, socially liberal Actualizers and the more conservative, principle-centered Fulfilleds distinguish public radio listeners from their generational cohorts.



Some things, like listening to music, are tied quite closely to age. For instance, the older our listeners are, the more likely they are to be listening to classical music.



Public radio broadcasts primarily on the FM band, which is where most listening by **all** generational cohorts happens today. As the AM medium ages it imposes an ever-finer filter on listening; younger listeners are effectively screened out of the audience.



Lifetimes of experience explain this. During the second world war AM **was** radio; there was no FM band to speak of until Viet Nam – the Baby Boomer's war. The Swing generation swung to an AM groove; FM was built on the Baby Boomer's rock & roll.

Generational differences are also apparent in listeners' climb up the Stairway to Given.

– Jay Youngclaus  
 – Leslie Peters  
 – David Giovannoni

**Note:** *The Stairway to Given is explained in detail on pages 115-116.*

## Stairway to Given

(For most-listened-to Public Radio Station)

	Gen X	Baby Boom	Swing Gen	WWII Gen
Percent of Listeners	16	45	22	17
Percent of Listening	12	45	24	20
Percent of Givers	9	47	23	21
Percent of Giving	8	49	23	20
<b>Steps 1&amp;2 Reliance on Public Radio</b>				
Percent in Core	38	46	47	46
Loyalty	29	36	38	40
Years Listening to Station	5	9	12	14
Percent with "Strong" Reliance on Public Radio	37	48	49	51
Percent who listen both Weekdays and Weekends	42	50	58	61
Occasions (per week)	6	7	8	7
TSL (HR:MN per week)	6:18	8:28	9:17	9:47
<b>Step 3 Personal Importance</b>				
Percent who agree Public Radio Station is Personally Important	87	90	91	90
Percent with "Strong" Sense of Community	50	56	60	59
<b>Step 4 Funding Beliefs</b>				
Percent who have Beliefs Associated with Giving to Public Radio	35	35	38	35
<b>Step 5 Ability to Afford</b>				
Average Annual Household Income	\$42,000	\$76,000	\$75,000	\$49,000

# Catalyst and Cause: Turning Listeners into Givers

*"Two mugs and a pound of coffee for 60 bucks? You'd have to love the radio station to go for that deal."*

– Focus group comment from a public radio fringe listener.

Programming causes audience. And programming causes listeners to give.

People give because the programming is important in their lives; they would miss it if it went away.

This basic principle was revealed by the "Cheap 90" study and confirmed by AUDIENCE 88 and NPR's First-Time Giver's study. It was confirmed during NPR's financial crisis. It was confirmed when federal funding was threatened.

The decision to give is based on a listener's use of and satisfaction with the station's programming over time.

During the course of listening, the person is exposed to numerous fundraising appeals. At some point, the fundraising appeals begin to resonate. Only when messages about the programming's significance ring true with people's perceptions of the station will they be converted into givers.

Fundraising efforts offer the catalyst; but the listener's relationship with the programming is the cause.

This is a critical point. On-air drives, direct mail, telemarketing, special events – any one of these may induce the act of giving, but none of these are the **reason** listeners give.

We can lead ourselves astray by forgetting this – for instance, when we judge programs by the number of pledges they generate during fundraising week. Phone calls don't measure the importance of a program; they do measure a lot of other things, though – everything from at-home listening to the number of minutes available for pitching.

The On-Air Fundraising Partnership research shows that most pledge calls are made from listeners' homes. It is no coincidence that the programs that generate the greatest number of pledges have the highest levels of at home listening.

The best pitchers, premiums, and challenge grants tend to be scheduled during the programs with the greatest opportunity for success. Some program formats simply lend themselves to on-air fundraising more than others. All of these factors affect the number of calls generated during a program. **It is a disservice to the program, the station, and the audience to judge a program by its pledge calls.**

Converting listeners into givers begins with understanding the difference between the catalyst for giving (fundraising methods) and the cause of giving (satisfaction with programming).

Your listeners understand this already. One of the most well educated media audiences knows better than to buy a sweatshirt for \$150. They'd really have to love the radio station to go for that deal. And those who give do.

– John Sutton

# The Giving Path

Leading listeners to giving is the trip mapped out by this body of pitches originally developed for the On-Air Fundraising Partnership.

Messages for Steps One through Four are about the **cause** (programming) for giving to public radio.

Messages for Step Five are about the **catalyst** (fundraising) that stimulates giving.

All fundraising messages should address at least one of these steps.

### **Step One: The station must be important in the listener's life.**

This new language reflects the significance of personal importance to the giving process, as reaffirmed by AUDIENCE 98.

These messages remind the listener about the value of public radio – the programs, reports, features and music that resonate with his values.

In addition to regular pitching, they use program excerpts, testimonials, and interviews with public radio personalities to tap into the listener's values.

### **Step Two: The listener must be aware of our need for support.**

These messages emphasize that listeners are our most important and reliable source of income.

They provide context by communicating how much money comes from listeners, business, and the government.

### **Step Three: The listener must agree that our need is valid.**

These messages demonstrate how listener support results in the programming the listener values.

They show how public radio funding works with money going from the listener to stations to program producers. They explain, in meaningful ways, why programming is expensive.

### **Step Four: The listener must accept responsibility for helping us meet our needs.**

These messages evoke the listener's sense of personal and social responsibility. They build on the intellectual and emotional value the listener places on the station, and his understanding of public radio funding.

### **Step Five: The listener must act.**

These messages facilitate the act of giving, helping the listener decide how much to give, when to call, and how and when to pay.

Descriptions of pledge levels, premiums, challenge grants, and installment programs are all Step Five message.

– John Sutton

# Why Stations Succeed and Other Myths

Myths are amazing things. They can offer satisfying explanations of the underlying forces that cause a phenomenon, and yet be dead wrong about these forces or how they work.

It's no myth – it's **fact** – that some stations are better than others at turning listeners into givers. But many commonly held explanations of this ability are unproven – theories at best, myths at worst. This analysis tested five groups of theories, and none survived the rigorous reality checks that would have raised them above the level of myths.

Although AUDIENCE 98 identifies certain listener characteristics related to giving, it finds no **station** characteristics that explain why some are better able to convert listeners into givers.

**Myth 1: Location, location, location.** This cardinal rule of retailing suggests that stations in the largest markets, or in markets with the highest concentrations of potential listeners, have an easier time generating givers. Certainly location affects the size of their audiences. But when it comes to getting givers much more is at work.

**Fact:** Market characteristics do not explain a station's ability to turn listeners into givers.

**Myth 2: It's the format, stupid.** Some kinds of programming attract listeners with more education and therefore more money. The theory states that stations offering news or classical music have got it made. Those serving less educated, poorer people face a greater struggle for listener support.

**Fact:** Format alone does not explain a station's ability to turn listeners into givers. Givers have a wide income range.

**Myth 3: The rich get richer.** This theory holds that the stations with the most money have the resources to generate more givers. They probably have bigger development staffs; they probably have more fundraising techniques available. More resources, more givers, more money – it's an inevitable upward spiral of success.

**Fact:** A station's operating budget does not explain its ability to turn listeners into givers.

**Myth 4: The drive to survive.** Some stations have cushions of support from universities or other institutions. Others, like community licensees, depend more heavily on listeners and are forced to focus on listener support. Although the need to turn listeners into givers may be more keenly felt at these stations,

**Fact:** Neither the type of licensee, nor the extent to which a station relies on listener support, explains its ability to turn listeners into givers.

**Myth 5: Pictures help.** Don't radio operations that share development staffs with public television stations have a competitive edge over other radio stations?

**Fact:** Radio stations held as joint licensees are no better or worse at turning listeners into givers.

There's one important theory that AUDIENCE 98 does not have the data to test:

Successful stations' development staffs may simply be smarter, more ambitious, and more in touch with the values and lifestyles of their listeners than the rest.

Myth-in-the-making? Maybe. Only further research will tell.

– Leslie Peters  
– David Giovannoni

**Note:** None of these station-specific variables is in the Public Radio Recontact Survey database. We thank Tom Thomas of the Station Resource Group for helping us work out these ideas, and CPB for the data needed to test them with statistical rigor.

Analyzed simply, in purely descriptive terms, many joint licensees **do** have higher than average listener-to-giver conversion rates. So do many stations in large or “dream” markets (Madison, Chapel Hill,

Boston, Washington). So do many news and classical stations. So do many community stations.

But once the underlying causes of giving are taken into account, **none of these station characteristics matter**. The stations that are best at generating givers are heavily relied upon by their listeners, are more important in listeners’ lives, engender a greater sense of community, and better communicate their reliance on (and the importance of) listener support.

# Giving

How do givers decide how much to give? And how can we get them to give more? Those are the two questions that follow once we know what turns listeners into givers.

As AUDIENCE 98 sees it, giving and gift size are the intertwined products of a person's **motivation, mindset, and means**.

Most of the factors that determine a listener's decision to give also influence the amount given.

## Motivations and Mindsets

Before deciding **how much** to give, a listener must be **ready** to give. The Stairway to Given, created in the Givers report, leads a person to a **giving state of mind**:

- To become a giver a person must first listen to our station.
- The person relies on our program service.
- The person considers our service important in his or her life.
- The person believes that listeners pay the bills and that government grants are limited.

The first three steps are **motivations** rooted in the appeal of public radio's programming. **The only way to encourage listeners to climb these three steps is through programming.**

Funding beliefs are **mindsets** that we can influence with messages that convey the need for listener support, particularly in light of diminishing government subsidies.

Although sequential steps are implied, only the first step – listening – has a critical place in the order. These **motivations and mindsets** can develop at any time and accumulate until a listener is ready to give.

## Means

The decision to give is made a little sooner among persons with annual household incomes

above \$100,000. But for most listeners, their **means** are at best a minor consideration in the decision of whether or not to give.

That said, AUDIENCE 98 validates an observation most of us make:

People who have more money can give more money.

Hardly a startling revelation, but its implications run deep. If a person's ability to afford a gift doesn't cause him or her to give, yet the size of the gift is influenced by the financial means available, then

the motivations and mindsets that cause giving are independent of a person's means. **All listeners, regardless of their incomes, can be motivated and educated to give to public radio.**

## Gift Size

No model can include **all** of the listener characteristics that influence **the size of a particular listener's gift**. But for every \$10 AUDIENCE 98's model can explain,

- four dollars are influenced by listeners' household incomes (means);
- three dollars are influenced by their reliance on the service (motivation);
- two dollars are influenced by the importance of the service in their lives (motivation);
- and if they're Actualizers, they'll give you an extra buck (mindset).

What does this tell us?

Reliance and personal importance – two programming-centered motivations in the decision to give – are so powerful that they also pervade the decision of how much to give.

In fact, half of AUDIENCE 98's ability to predict gift size is based on these two motivations. Together they weigh more heavily in the



determination of gift size than a person's financial means.

In sum:

While a good public service can get a listener to give, a better public service can increase the size of his gift.

Although VALS 2 is a good predictor of whom from the general population may listen to public radio's programming, **it is not a predictor of who will give. Nor does VALS type predict the amount of money a giver will give.**

AUDIENCE 98 does find that Actualizers come with a 10 percent premium built in. And knowing that Actualizers are over-represented in both listening and giving helps us shape more effective messages that resonate with their values and beliefs.

### Applying This Knowledge

Understanding the most basic motivations, means, and mindsets that cause giving and influence gift size can help us shape and hone messages that encourage **every** type of listener **to give** – and to **give more**.

- Well-targeted pitches, both on-air and off, can convince a listener to contribute now.

But pitches work only for listeners in a giving state of mind.

- Well-chosen premiums and other inducements can offer an opportunity to give more. But up-selling works only for listeners who value the program service at a higher level than previously requested or given.

In other words, appeals, gifts, and other techniques can **trigger** a gift; but our program service is the indisputable **cause** of that gift.

The largest part of every listener dollar is payment for a person's use, reliance, and appraisal of your program service.

And that's good news because, unlike a listener's income or VALS type, the program service is under our control.

But control can cut both ways, reducing as well as boosting giving and gift size. Interrupt their program service, or send messages that clash with their reasons for listening, and listeners will have another reason not to give – or another reason to give less.

– David Giovannoni

– Leslie Peters

**Note:** *Statistical details of AUDIENCE 98's Giving Model can be found on pages 172-175.*

## Giving

### Comparing Givers By Size of Gift

The differences among those who give and those who don't are in sharp focus when viewed through the lens of our Stairway to Given.

Those who are the most generous to public ra-

dio know the route up the Stairway the best.

– Jay Youngclaus

**Note:** *The Stairway to Given is explained in detail on pages 115-116.*

### Stairway to Given

(For most-listened-to Public Radio Station)

		Current Givers			Not Current Givers	
		\$100+	\$50 to \$99	\$1 to \$49	Don't Give	
	Percent of Listeners	6	10	11	19	54
	Percent of Listening	11	16	15	19	39
	Percent of Givers	23	37	41	0	0
	Percent of Giving	49	32	19	0	0
Steps 1&2 Reliance on Public Radio	Percent in Core	76	71	63	48	37
	Loyalty	62	59	51	39	29
	Years Listening to Station	13	12	12	13	7
	Percent with "Strong" Reliance on Public Radio	79	74	67	50	37
Step 3 Personal Importance	Percent who listen both Weekdays and Weekends	78	72	66	56	41
	Occasions (per week)	13	12	10	8	6
	TSL (HR:MN per week)	15:47	14:16	12:32	9:24	6:39
Step 4 Funding Beliefs	Percent who agree Public Radio Station is Personally Important	99	95	96	92	81
	Percent with "Strong" Sense of Community	77	77	71	60	45
Step 5 Ability to Afford	Percent who have Beliefs Associated with Giving to Public Radio	43	44	39	38	32
	Average Annual Household Income	\$103,000	\$89,000	\$67,000	\$64,000	\$58,000

## Giving

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### On the Occasion of Giving

Public radio listeners earn more money than those without their high levels of education. Their household incomes suggest that many can well afford to give more than \$40 to \$60 a year.

But when it comes time to write a check or pick up the phone, listeners probably gauge all aspects of their immediate financial situation and give what they feel they can afford at that moment.

Income is certainly a big part of that, but so is their current checkbook balance and the bills on the table. Listeners with the wherewithal to give \$200 may only give \$50 because that's all they feel they can afford when they're asked.

Fortunately,

no law states that listeners can give only once per year.

Every station has listeners who give two, three, even four times per year. Many stations also have installment plan givers who contribute **affordable** amounts every month.

In this sense giving parallels listening. People become core listeners not by listening longer each tune-in, but by tuning in **more frequently**. Similarly, listeners' **giving frequency** can determine whether their annual contributions are large or small.

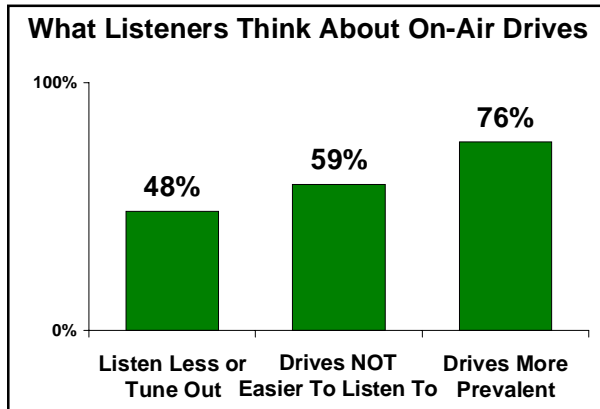
It may be tough to increase the amount a person perceives he can afford. But by asking several times per year or by automating regular payments, we might get a step closer to **reconciling affordability with means** and **increasing the size of the average annual gift**.

– David Giovannoni

– John Sutton

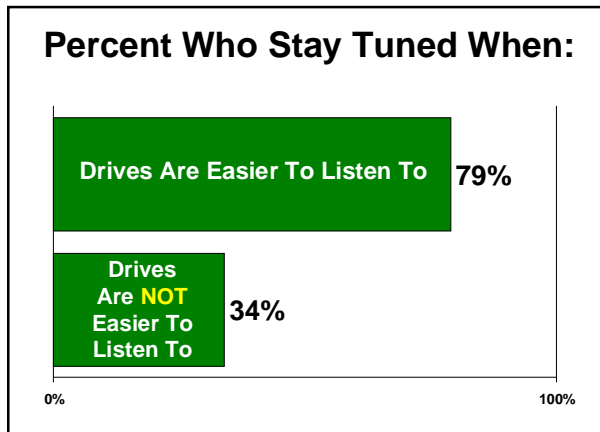
# The Effect of On-Air Pledge Drives

Make no mistake: listeners do not like on-air fund drives.



But a new and encouraging fact has emerged amid criticism of public radio's on-air fund drives. According to AUDIENCE 98,

Listeners who perceive that drives are getting easier to listen to are very likely to keep listening during drives.



This is good news, as it strongly suggests that improvements we make in our drives will further encourage people to listen to them.

But since most listeners say that fund drives are not getting easier to listen to, we have our work cut out for us.

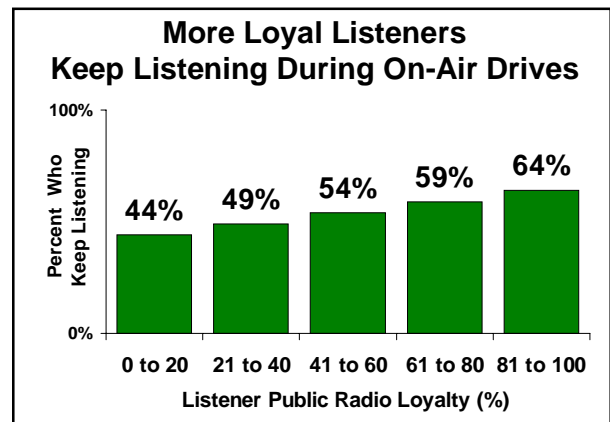
To get this work done we should understand the links between listeners and their attitudes toward on-air drives.

## The More Loyal Listeners Are To Public Radio, The More Likely They Are To Keep Listening

Just over half of the public radio audience continues to listen during on-air drives. However,

The stronger listeners' connections to public radio, the more likely they are to continue to listen during on-air drives.

A greater proportion of the core (six-in-10) continues to listen than the fringe (less than five-in-10). Likewise, six-in-10 current givers and four-in-10 non-givers continue to listen.



## Listeners Think On-Air Drives Are Becoming More Prevalent

We do have to contend with the fact that

three-fourths of our listeners perceive on-air drives to be more prevalent than in the past.

Even among those who keep listening during drives, **eight-in-10 think drives are more prevalent.**

Listeners with greater financial means are more likely than others to believe drives are getting more prevalent. They are also more likely to tune out or listen less during drives. Perhaps their intolerance of on-air drives can be traced to the additional media options that their greater incomes afford them.

## On-Air “Advertising” Is Perceived As More Prevalent

In an interesting convergence of opinions,

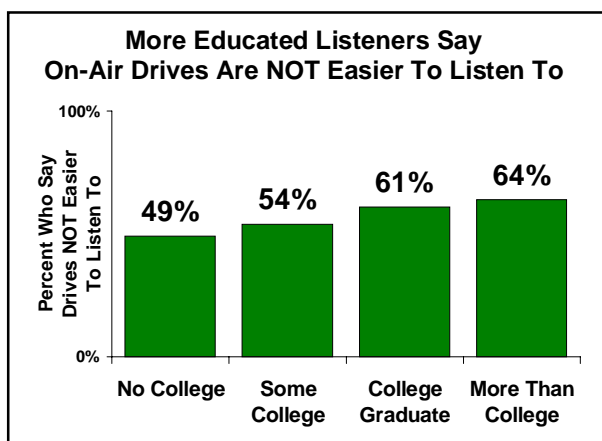
almost two-thirds of the respondents perceive both that on-air fund drives and on-air mentions of business support are more prevalent than in the past.

Public radio’s differentiation from commercial stations may be at risk in the minds of listeners who do not distinguish between the prevalence of public radio’s form of “advertising” and the prevalence of advertising on commercial radio stations.

If differentiation from commercial radio is important, our ability to turn listeners into givers could be jeopardized.

## Pledge Drives Are Not Easier To Listen To

While four-in-10 public radio listeners think pledge drives are getting easier to listen to, **six-in-10 don’t**. Those with higher levels of education and higher incomes are less accepting of



drives than those with lesser education or financial means.

**Almost half think drives are more prevalent and no easier to listen to than in the past.** Even among those who continue to listen during drives, the programming of these drives is critical.

## Are Fund Drives Jeopardizing Giving?

It could be that changes in sound and content during drives may be altering public radio’s appeal to its educated audience.

Listeners with the most years of formal education are the most likely to say drives are getting harder to listen to.

This means our drives must better maintain the level of intelligence and standards as the programming people hear every day.

Listeners with higher incomes are also more likely to say that fund drives are getting more prevalent and that they are getting harder to listen to.

We know that household income does not significantly predict listeners’ willingness to give or the size of their gifts. However, could these prevalent attitudes among higher income listeners be the reason we can’t connect higher income to giving?

## How Public Radio Might Use These Findings

The best and most useful news about on-air fundraising is that those who perceive that drives have become easier to listen to will keep listening.

It’s also heartening to note that six-in-10 of our more committed listeners – our core and current givers – say they don’t tune out or listen less during drives. They are listening to our drives, and that offers us the opportunity to request additional and/or larger gifts.

Making drives shorter could be key to minimiz-

ing tune-out during drives, if we make an explicit deal with listeners to give early in exchange for fewer days of fundraising. Remember that each time a person is driven away by a fund drive, we create an opportunity for that listener to find another station that's more likeable and listenable.

No matter how listenable we make on-air pitches, there will still be listeners who tune

away. For them, solicitations for renewals and additional gifts will need to travel through other media such as mail or phone.

We have the talent to create intelligent, appealing programming most of the year; can we not apply this talent to improving drives?

– Vicki Staudte  
Director of Market Research,  
Minnesota Public Radio

## The Effect of On-Air Pledge Drives

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### Triangulating on the Effects of On-Air Drives

We have three points of reference regarding people's behavior and attitudes about on-air fund drives:

1. In **focus groups** listeners are openly hostile. Many claim to tune away during drives. Yet they admit that they can't stay away for long; the programming is simply too unique and too important.

2. **Half of our listeners tell AUDIENCE 98 that they listen less or tune out during their station's on-air fund drives.** The question, as posed in the Public Radio Recontact Survey, probably measures listeners' attitudes toward drives better than their actual behavior. But negative attitudes clearly abound.

3. **Arbitron diaries** offer an independent means of verifying these negative responses – especially when it comes to actual listening behavior during drives. But with their 15-minute granularity, are diaries sensitive enough to report changes in listening?

To help us find out, nearly 50 licensees operating more than 80 stations offered information about their on-air drives during the 1997 calendar year. Over 24,000 Arbitron diaries from the spring and fall sweeps are included in this analysis.

Audience Research Analysis (ARA) merged these two sets of data into a single database that had the "person-day" as its unit of measurement. In other words, the data reports how much each diary keeper in a station's weekly cume listened to the radio each of seven days; whether or not s/he listened to public radio that day; how much; and so forth.

This inquiry is designed to determine the effects

of drives on the **average day's listening**. Unfortunately, this analysis of the Arbitron diaries – in fact, Arbitron's methodology itself – cannot rule out that people leave the cume for whole weeks at a time (although it is **highly unlikely** that they do).

We imposed rigorous statistical controls on the day of the week to eliminate any effects of systematic day-to-day bias in the diaries themselves. And while we found weak evidence that people are less likely to listen (and more likely to listen less) when stations are conducting their on-air drives, we also found that

the Arbitron diaries are **not** sensitive enough to show significant listening effects caused by on-air drives.

How do we square this finding with the other two points in our triangle?

- Because it's a 15 minute measurement, the Arbitron diaries may simply be too coarse to capture five or 10 minute flights away from a station in a drive. If people are indeed leaving for short periods – for example, the length of a pitch break – and then returning for the regularly scheduled programming, Arbitron's methodology does not capture and report it.
- Listeners may be likely to report using a station in their diaries even while being fund-driven to other stations or to "off". After all, how often do they get to "vote" for their public radio station in the context of an important ratings survey? They may be masking their own behavior for the "greater good" of their public station.
- The attitudes that drives engender among people may not affect their listening substantially.

The key finding is that

large scale or extended shifts in listener behavior do not seem to accompany the resentment caused by on-air drives.

We cannot directly observe the effects of five or 10 minute flights away from the station in a drive, but that doesn't mean they aren't

happening.

By triangulating on the question from several techniques, we are confident that **listeners are telling us, in very strong terms, that our drives are extracting a significant hidden toll** in terms of public service, public image, and opportunity loss.

– David Giovannoni

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**Note:** *Many thanks to the stations responding with information about their on-air pledge drives in calendar 1997. These Arbitron subscribers and their repeaters had sufficient diaries to include in the analysis:* KBAQ-FM, KCFR-FM, KJZZ-FM, KLCC-FM, KNAU-FM, KPBS-FM, KPFA-FM, KPLU-FM, KQED-FM, KUCV-FM, KUNR-FM, KUOP-FM, KUOW-FM, KUT-FM, KVNO-FM, WAMU-

FM, WBUR-FM, WDET-FM, WEKU-FM, WFCR-FM, WGUC-FM, WHYI-FM, WJHU-FM, WKSU-FM, WLRN-FM, WMEA-FM, WMEH-FM, WMEW-FM, WMRA-FM, WMUB-FM, WNIJ-FM, WNIU-FM, WNKU-FM, WNYC-AM, WNYC-FM, WOI-AM, WOI-FM, WOSU-FM, WPKT-FM, WRVO-FM, WSHU-FM, WUNC-FM, WUOT-FM, WUWF-FM, WUWM-FM, WVPE-FM, WVPR-FM, WVPS-FM, WVTF-FM, WWNO-FM, WXPB-FM, and WYEP-FM.



## The Effect of On-Air Pledge Drives

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### How Many Listeners Are Givers?

At this very moment, **one in three persons listening to public radio is a giver**. That's 33 percent of the people listening right now.

One-in-five persons who listens to public radio during the week is a giver. That's 20 percent of the people who listen to us in an average week.

Although these numbers vary from station to station, they strongly indicate the importance of **defining the target audience before crafting an on-air drive**.

Drives to elicit first-time givers can be designed quite differently than drives to elicit additional gifts from existing givers.

The key is to treat these messages like spots in an advertising campaign. Reach and/or frequency into one segment **or** the other – givers or non-givers – can be optimized through intelligent, purposeful scheduling.

#### What Does This Tell Us?

**Our own air is a great way to reach givers.** Not only can we reach many of them quickly, we can reach them with a frequency far exceeding that with which we can reach non-givers.

**Our own air is also the best way to reach non-givers.** However, non-givers hear messages with only half the frequency of givers.

One of the inherent drawbacks to on-air drives as typically implemented is that they reach givers with a much greater frequency than they reach non-givers. This is undoubtedly a source of resentment among givers.

However, skillful scheduling of on-air messages can focus delivery to one group **or** the other.

- Short drives with a high concentration of spots can blast their message into the giving community quite quickly.

- Longer drives are needed to reach the non-giving audience. A lower concentration of spots may minimize the perceived intensity (but not necessarily the frequency) of **programmatic interruptus** among givers.

The precise strategic balance of reach and frequency into giving and non-giving segments, as well as the intensity and the resulting salience of the campaign among each giving segment, seem to offer a promising area of additional research.

#### Doing the Numbers

Divide the number of memberships to a station into its weekly cume and you typically get a number between 10 and 20 percent. Say 15 percent for round figures.

This number isn't too meaningful, though, as most gifts are given at the household level. The Public Radio Recontact Survey's database tells us:

One-in-two people in public radio's weekly cume lives with at least one other public radio listener.

Assuming that two listeners live in each multi-listener household, the math says that public radio is heard in three households for every four listeners in its weekly cume. Put another way, an average of **one and one-third listeners live in a public radio household**. Do the math, and that 15 percent turns into 20 percent. Hence this statement:

One-in-five persons (20%) who listens to public radio during the week lives in a household currently giving to public radio.

AUDIENCE 98 reports that givers listen twice as much as non-givers (because they listen twice as often). Therefore, a giver is much more likely

than a non-giver to be listening at any time. Again, math determines that:

One-in-three persons (33%) listening to public radio right now is a giver.

For every giver who hears **anything** when you open the microphone – a time check, an underwriting credit, a pledge break – two non-givers are also listening.

– David Giovannoni

## The Effect of On-Air Pledge Drives

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### Driving Home the Numbers

How does your station compare to others when it comes to time spent pitching?

When AUDIENCE 98 asked subscribers to its listserv for on-air fund drive information, people at more than 80 stations responded. Although this may not be a representative sample of the public radio system, these statistics offer an instructive overview of on-air drives.

**Eight-in-10 stations conducted two or three on-air drives in 1997.** Some ran only one. One station did **five** separate drives.

The average drive on a station was eight days long. **The average station broadcast pleas for fees 15 hours a day averaging 19 minutes of pitching each hour.** These totals translate into per station averages of about 21 days, 300 hours, or 5,700 minutes of on-air

fundraising in 1997.

What does this mean? Let's put it in context.

Stations in our survey are doing fund drives roughly one out of every 29 hours that they are on the air.

The annual extremes range from

- A low of eight to a high of 42 days of on-air fundraising.
- A low of 112 hours to a high of 555.
- As few as 1,400 minutes to as many as 13,700 minutes of actual pitching per year.

The high – 13,700 minutes – is equal to **nearly an hour for every day** the average American commutes to work. Gives a new meaning to the phrase “pledge **drive**”, doesn't it?

– Jay Youngclaus

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**Behind the Numbers:** *Stations heading networks were counted only once so as not to unduly influence the findings. For example, while Peach State Public Radio has 13 stations, Peach State is counted once, not 13 times.*

*In each case, respondents reported: (1) dates of all on-air drives in 1997; (2) the length in days of each drive; (3) the average number of hours in active fundraising per day; and (4) the average number of minutes pitching per hour.*

## The Effect of On-Air Pledge Drives

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### Formats and Fund Drives

Does a public station's format influence its listeners' perceptions of fund drives?

One problem with on-air fundraising – and potentially a reason half of all listeners say they listen less during drives – is that a station's **sound** generally changes.

In fact, aural alterations can be dramatic for some stations and formats. Listeners tuning in for Mozart or Miles might be jarred by a sudden switch to pitching and premiums.

But for news/talk stations, the segue is essentially from talk about one thing to talk about another. To a listener's ear the change in sound may be less abrupt, particularly if the switch is made by the on-air host of the moment.

With less "audio whiplash," news/talk listeners may be more inclined to listening through an on-air drive than those tuned in to a music format.

That was our theory.

To test it, AUDIENCE 98 looked at two questions about fund drives on the Public Radio Recontact Survey. We posited that news/talk listen-

ers differ significantly from music listeners in their perceptions of whether fund drives are getting easier to listen to, and that they are more likely to keep listening during a drive.

We were wrong – at least about the "significant" part.

Listeners to classical music are **slightly** less likely to say they keep listening during fund drives, but in this sense they really don't differ from news/talk listeners to any practical degree. In fact, news/talk listeners are **a bit more likely** to think drives are getting harder to listen to (but again, the difference is practically insignificant).

The conclusion:

A station's format is not a predictor of listeners' attitudes or behavior during fund drives.

So now we know. Answers to public radio's fund drive dilemma are not to be found in formats that are less alienating to the listener's ear.

– Steve Martin  
Program Director, WAMU

## The Effect of On-Air Pledge Drives

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### It Don't Mean A Thing If Those Pledge Phones Don't Ring

Some bad habits are harder to break than others.

One of the most persistent among public radio professionals is counting pledges as “votes” for the program on the air when the calls are made.

Even smart people who know better fall into this trap.

Maybe it's the endless boredom and fatigue of a fund drive that makes us forget the facts. Maybe it's coffee nerves or sugar overload. Maybe there's a “Twinkie Defense” in there somewhere.

Maybe it's because membership software encourages this kind of specious thinking by building in reports that count the “votes.”

Whatever this habit's cause, it's time to exercise some self control. AUDIENCE 98 and common sense remind us why pledge counting shouldn't count in assessing the value of your programming to listeners.

**Listeners become givers, in great part, because they rely on your service.** That means multiple tune-in occasions.

On average, givers tune in 11 times a week and listen to some part of six network programs and/or local formats. **But most people pledge only once during a drive – they don't “vote” six times.**

**People call when it's convenient.** Remember, these are highly educated people with busy lives. The idea that they plan those lives around pledging during their favorite public radio program

believes everything VALS2 tells us about them.

Though lifestyle selects the time of the call, it's the combination of reliance, personal importance, funding beliefs and ability to give – reflecting overall attitudes toward public radio and the station – that brings listeners to the phone.

Lifestyle permitting, a good pitch can stimulate a response. But remember that it's **always the catalyst, never the cause.** When even the best pitches (and pitchers) fail it may be because

one-third of the listeners hearing any particular pitch have given already.

If your phones aren't ringing it may be because you're preaching to the choir. And as the drive wears on, the choir gets bigger...leaving fewer potential givers to convert.

The collateral damage that drives inflict on listeners also increases with each passing day. Because this damage is hidden, the point of diminishing returns is passed more quickly than many may acknowledge.

Put it all together and you have a mathematical argument for shorter drives.

The big problem with counting pledges is that it's **not** a harmless parlor game. Decisions based on the ringing of telephones or the unscientific polling of callers can undermine your station's **real** value to listeners by focusing on the catalyst and ignoring the true cause.

That's not just a bad habit, it's a downright danger to public service.

– Leslie Peters

## The Effect of On-Air Pledge Drives

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### Point: Bull's Eye

*This guy goes to a psychiatrist and says, "Doc, my brother's crazy, he thinks he's a chicken." The doctor says, "Why don't you turn him in?" The guy says, "I would, but I need the eggs."  
—Woody Allen, "Annie Hall"*

On-air pledge drives work. And they work fabulously.

On-air drives work because our own air is indisputably the best medium through which to reach potential givers. Our pleas for fees are aimed at those who listen to our stations, and by definition, the programming that creates an audience offers the best way to reach that audience.

We are captives to the efficiency of our own medium. **And as we increase our reliance on the financial support of listeners, on-air drives will become an increasingly important part of what we do.**

#### Potential Givers

On-air drives reach listeners who have completed the climb up the Stairway to Given. They rely on the station and consider it important in their lives. They believe listeners support it and that the government and other institutions are playing lesser roles. They may never have given before, but now they're ready to walk the Giving Path.

At most stations a primary objective of on-air drives is to turn these listeners into first-time givers.

Two-thirds of those listening anytime we open the microphone are not givers. With strategic scheduling, we can reach a maximum number of non-givers within a relatively small number of hours.

Similarly, the frequency with which a significant percentage of non-givers may be reached can

be calculated easily with Arbitron scheduling software available from the Radio Research Consortium.

As the idea of annual membership fades into the past, some strategists are experimenting with drives to get additional gifts from listeners who have already given.

One-third of the listeners who hear any pitch are current givers. With smart break scheduling we can pitch additional gifts to an optimal number of givers in a minimal number of hours.

#### What About Other Media?

We can use the information in our databases to reach givers through direct mail and telemarketing. Each medium extracts its own costs, and neither is inexpensive.

Reaching non-givers through these means is far trickier – as any medium besides our own is hit-and-miss, with the emphasis on the latter.

On the other hand, a station's air is a "free" medium – the operating costs of a drive don't seem to exceed by much the regular costs of running the station. Both givers and non-givers are always within earshot.

#### The Inescapable Fact

On-air drives work because they deliver their messages to the right people. **They reach their targets so well that they can be done poorly and still make money.**

Sure, on-air drives offer much to be concerned about. We can and should do them better.

But there's no doubt they're with us to stay.

We can't abandon them now. We need the eggs.

— David Giovannoni

## The Effect of On-Air Pledge Drives

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### Counterpoint: Collateral Damage

*Conducting on-air drives is like trimming toenails with a shotgun — the method is effective, but not without its side effects.*

—Anonymous

On-air pledge drives work because they deliver their payloads to their target audiences with strategic precision.

Unfortunately, on-air drives hit more than their targets. They hit every listener – giver and non-giver alike. The disruption in programming causes significant **collateral damage**, the extent of which is neither well known nor widely acknowledged by most public broadcasters.

Phones ring and blink in our sights. But each score wounds literally hundreds.

Ask them what they think about our campaigns and they can barely contain their emotions. In focus groups listeners rail against our drives without provocation.

Why shouldn't they? Drives make our programming unreliable. They interrupt its service and undermine its quality, both real and perceived.

Even our core listeners and givers – people who support public radio with their loyalty and money – can't understand why we're bombing our service in order to save it.

In the Public Radio Recontact Survey half of our listeners say they listen less or tune out during drives. These good citizens have no reason to lie. Pitch breaks send them scurrying to the shelter of silence or other stations five to ten minutes at a time until the campaign ceases.

Fortunately, our regular programming brings them back. And why shouldn't it? It's what they tune in to hear. It's what they pay to maintain.

If they return, why should we be concerned?

### Resentment

For now, the negative effect of drives on behavior is short-term. But the more significant, long-term collateral damage is in attitude. And the attitude is resentment.

Our link to listeners – particularly givers and those in the core – is through shared values, interests, and beliefs. Our programming creates a **psychological community** built on trust.

We bomb that community when we blow up the sound, quality, and appeal of our service.

Resentment is the unavoidable fallout.

And the greatest casualty of all is opportunity loss.

### Unnecessary Casualties

Numerous findings suggest the price we pay for firing upon our own:

- Many listeners are **not** listening to on-air drives; public service plunges.
- People who can afford to select their media alternatives are **not** as tolerant or forgiving.
- Resentment of drives makes public radio **not** as important in listeners' lives.
- And resentment is strongly linked to **not** giving to public radio.

A growing number of field experiments suggest that collateral resentment is **not** an inescapable cost of doing business.

- They demonstrate that on-air drives can be shortened successfully.
- They offer proof that effective fundraising from established givers can occur off-air.
- And they show that in style, content, and attitude, breaks can be made more like the programming in which they appear.

People join our community voluntarily and they support it voluntarily. Common sense says we ourselves become better community members when we adopt strategies that decrease collateral damage.

The drive that minimizes resentment among members of our community may also return the greatest financial dividends. That would offer victory on two fronts – each a worthy objective.

– David Giovannoni



## The Effect of On-Air Pledge Drives

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### Caveat Venditor

The “sense of community” concept suggests an underlying motivation for giving by listeners who take their “public radio citizenship” seriously. It implies a kind of **civic giving** that is closely related to what attracts them to your programming in the first place.

Civic giving aims to preserve the values and lifestyles that public radio validates for most listeners.

This should not be confused with altruistic giving – the notion that people contribute to public radio solely because it’s a public good. AUDIENCE 88 tested and disposed of that idea a decade ago.

If on-air pitches work best when they resonate with listeners’ beliefs, then civic giving has great potential as a catalyst for public radio support. VALS can help shape these pitches, since our listeners’ values and lifestyles strongly reflect what it means to be a citizen of public radio.

Remember: People’s VALS types do not cause them to give. But their VALS characteristics do help explain why they listen.

VALS tells us who’s hearing our fund drives, and this is powerful information.

Two-in-three public radio listeners are Actualizers or Fulfilleds. **These people are motivated by principles, and for them possessions have little intrinsic importance.** They view related premiums – objects with your call letters, or logos of their favorite programs – as emblems of their public radio citizenship. Similarly, their subscription to your station symbolizes their use and shared ideals.

Actualizers and Fulfilleds listen to your station for the sound and attitude that’s expressed through your editorial and aesthetic sensibilities.

They are drawn to your noncommercial nature. They trust that they will find these qualities every time they tune in.

Turning your station into the Home Shopping Network betrays that trust.

Everything we know about Actualizers and Fulfilleds tells us that they are repulsed by status-oriented consumerism.

A parade of unrelated premiums – restaurant vouchers, day spa certificates, balloon rides – may cause the phones to ring, but the calls are probably not coming from the listeners who have the deepest relationship with your station.

Suddenly you’ve turned their community of deeply held values into an infomercial. This would explain why half of them tune out or listen less during fund drives.

Listeners who remain give because they’re getting a deal on unrelated goods – not because your station is personally important to them. Perhaps this is why so many new givers are increasingly expensive to get and difficult to keep.

Treating public radio support as a sales transaction may temporarily bolster gross revenues, but appealing to your listeners’ hearts and minds is probably where lasting commitment and real financial stability lie.

The problem with **any** on-air pitch is that it works for someone. But what are the hidden long-term costs of this short-term fix?

The biggest hidden cost may be the Actualizers and Fulfilleds – the potential civic givers – your merchandising repels.

Let the seller beware.

– Leslie Peters

## The Effect of On-Air Pledge Drives

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### Where Do We Go From Here?

Half of our listeners say they listen less during fund drives. Whether they do or not, their **resentment of on-air drives** is not good news, and it supports what we've heard anecdotally and suspected for years.

We would do well to accept this finding as a ringing wake up call, and **respond as we did a few years ago when Congress threatened to eliminate funding for public broadcasting**. That crisis unleashed enormous creative energy throughout the public radio system. This new information from AUDIENCE 98 can do the same.

Can we expect to eliminate fund drives? Not likely. But as we look at more off air strategies, we also need to improve profoundly what we do on the air.

Because on-air fundraising is programming, the principle responsibility for improving its quality lies with the program director. **When listeners tune to our stations they expect great radio, consistent in appeal to the programming they've come to value any other time of the year.**

When we disappoint them, they get resentful. When we please them, they get generous.

AUDIENCE 98's best news about on-air fundraising encourages us to focus on higher quality content and better production values during drives.

Listeners who think that fund drives are getting easier to listen to are far more likely than others to keep listening.

If we make on-air campaigns more listenable, we can offset some of the damage that on-air drives are certainly causing.

How do we do that? Let's consider the obvious.

- Make your drives sound more like your regular programming by using your station's on-air personalities for pitches. As NPR's First-Time Givers Study confirms, listeners respond best to familiar voices.
- Aircheck regularly during the drive and give feedback to everyone. Use the same quality standards for drives as any other programming.
- Keep the audience tuned through a pitch through effective forward promotion of regularly scheduled programming.
- Make your pitch breaks entertaining.
- Keep the pace and overall sound of your station as consistent as possible during a drive. Watch for that audio whiplash!
- Use all the tools available to you. There is much to learn about listeners and their motivation for giving in AUDIENCE 98 and other free research. Read, re-read and internalize it. Use VALS to create the language of your messages, geared to the listeners in your audience.
- Coordinate more effectively with your development department. Support your development staff's efforts to raise more money off air.
- Be open to new ideas and prepared to jettison old ones.
- Watch for what's working at other stations and adopt it. People are already doing dramatic things with short drives. That may be one answer; there may also be others.

Most of all, take AUDIENCE 98's news about fund drives seriously and start planning to take action today.

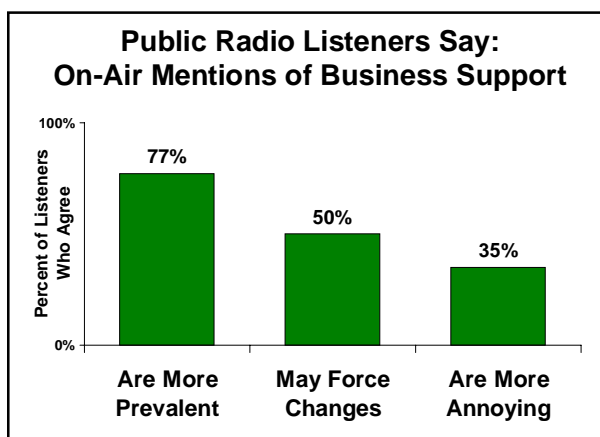
– Steve Martin

## Low Anxiety

Public radio listeners may not resent underwriting credits as much as on-air fund drives, but nearly half are somewhat “anxious” about them.

- Three-in-four (77%) think that “the on-air mentions of business support are getting more prevalent than in the past.”
- One-in-three (35%) perceive that “the on-air mentions of business support are getting more annoying than in the past.”
- Half (50%) say “I am concerned that businesses which support public radio may eventually force changes in the programming.”

Separately, these responses convey listener attitudes about individual aspects of underwriting on public radio.



But synergistically, as three facets of a single sense, agreement with these statements adds up to “underwriting anxiety” – and nearly half (44%) of all listeners are afflicted.

Does Underwriting Anxiety influence giving to public radio?

Not yet.

Right now, listeners with it are just as likely to give to public radio as those without it.

But in the future this low-grade fever may bloom.

Listeners with Underwriting Anxiety are twice as likely to say that “I personally would be less likely to contribute to public radio if more businesses supported it.”

**Underwriting Anxiety is a condition that public radio professionals would do well to monitor.** An additional irritation – whether it’s more spots, more messages that annoy, or a perception that business support is affecting programming – could compound the problem.

Given widespread resentment of on-air fund drives listeners may be less forgiving if their nerves are further frayed.

– Leslie Peters  
– David Giovannoni  
– Jay Youngclaus

## Low Anxiety

### It's Got them Under Their Skins

Underwriting Anxiety is endemic. That's the diagnosis from AUDIENCE 98 .

No characteristic, behavior or attitude can predict the nervousness induced when a listener has the combined perception that business support has become more prevalent and annoying and may force programming changes.

Givers and non-givers have it. So do the core and the fringe. It indiscriminately cuts across age, race, sex, income, education and VALS categories. **No type of listener is immune.**

Listeners with and without anxiety agree somewhat that underwriting spots have increased. They share less the view that underwriters may

influence programming.

The greatest difference – and the driving force behind Underwriting Anxiety – is annoyance.

Listeners with Underwriting Anxiety are **12 times more likely to be annoyed** by on-air mentions of business support than listeners without it.

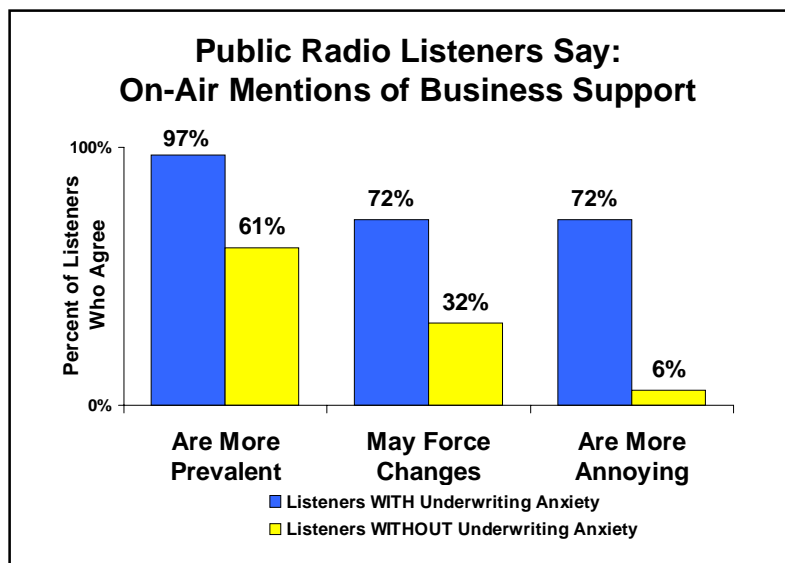
Like prevalence and influence, we can control the attributes that lead to annoyance. Annoyance is also the perception we can alter with the greatest benefit and the least financial sacrifice.

Close attention paid to presentation – length, language, production, repetition and voice tone – may maximize underwriting's return and minimize listener irritation.

On the other hand, some listeners simply may be biased against businesses supporting public radio. It may conflict with their ideal of public radio as a noncommercial medium. For this pre-existing condition there may be no cure.

More research is needed to determine the best medicine. The healthiest practice is preventive care.

– John Sutton  
– Peter Dominowski  
– Leslie Peters



## Low Anxiety

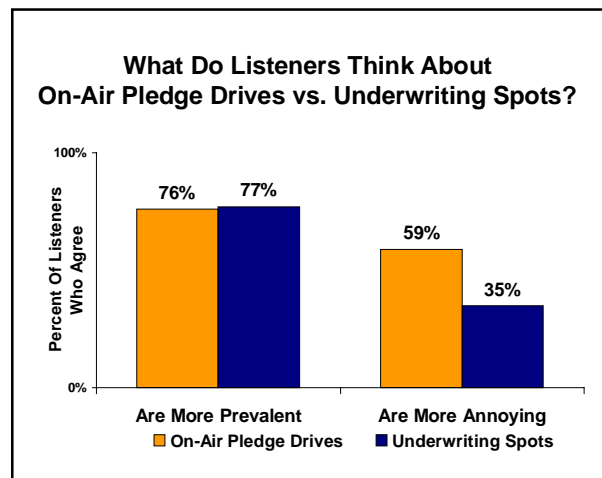
# Coping with Underwriting Anxiety

*What, me worry?*  
—Alfred E. Neuman

Nearly half of public radio's listeners are “anxious” about underwriting.

Does that mean you should be worried too?

Everything a public radio station broadcasts irritates someone. Even the most popular programs have their detractors. While responsive stations strive to please most of their listeners most of the time, some percentage of listener disapproval is unavoidable.



Recent findings by AUDIENCE 98 demonstrate that a significant percentage of listeners harbor some resentment towards on-air pledge drives. Should this be a cause for concern and a call to action?

Absolutely. Individual givers are essential to public radio.

But should stations react to this information by severely curtailing on-air fundraising goals or eliminating pledge drives all together? Absolutely not.

Such is also the case for business support and Underwriting Anxiety.

The listener's consternation is not so difficult to understand. He hears us say we've reached our pledge drive goal, but in the next hour we ask for more. We describe ourselves as non-commercial, yet underwriting credits often sound like advertising.

Pledge drive resentment and Underwriting Anxiety are problems but they are also opportunities.

First, we can research and adopt the most effective underwriting tactics while maintaining public radio's values.

Second, we can position underwriting as the necessary and beneficial source of income it is.

## Effective Underwriting

While AUDIENCE 98 cannot specify the exact causes of Underwriting Anxiety, the likely candidates are some combination of:

**Placement:** Where in the programming the announcement is heard.

**Length:** How long the underwriting credit is perceived to be.

**Repetition:** How often listeners perceive that they are hearing the same credit and/or messages by the same underwriter.

**Content:** The actual words and/or production used in the credit.

**Delivery:** The sound and style of the announcer in reading the credit.

**Category:** The type of product or service mentioned in the credit.

Each of these elements can be researched for its positive and negative attributes. The results can be actionable for both local and national credits.

In an ideal world, networks, stations and producers would work with each other to present underwriting effectively.

## Positioning

Public radio has a unique relationship with listeners, and particularly with givers. They have high expectations for the product and its presentation.

In turn, we expect them to accept our fundraising needs and techniques on faith. We believe they should acquiesce – without explanation – to announcements in and around their favorite programming from a myriad of national and local businesses.

Should we really be surprised that a high percentage of listeners have Underwriting Anxiety when most do not understand the financial necessity of business support?

How many managers have taken any time to explain the differences between underwriting and commercials? To position underwriting as a valuable service that, when combined with dollars from listeners, makes the purchase of their favorite programs possible?

We attempt to explain the rationale for individual

giving during pledge drives. It's time to take the same step for underwriting.

Here are just a few of the positive messages that could be communicated:

- Business support helps shorten on-air fund drives.
- Underwriting doesn't "cover" programming; it occupies built-in cutaways.
- Stations and producers need and seek underwriters, but maintain inviolate polices against editorial interference.
- Listener and business support together provide the most stable, viable and independent funding option for public radio.

Research is needed to identify the most effective messages. But even absent such tests it's good business to explain to listeners that, in this era of scaled back subsidies, underwriters are public radio's allies. And that makes them listeners' allies too.

A little knowledge and understanding can go a long way towards reducing Underwriting Anxiety.

– Peter Dominowski  
– John Sutton

## Low Anxiety

# Doing Business on the Air

When it comes to raising significant amounts of money, most stations use their airtime two ways: On-air pledge drives and underwriting credits.

To many listeners' ears, underwriting credits are a more tolerable way to raise money than on-air pledge drives. According to AUDIENCE 98

a third (35%) find underwriting credits more annoying than in the past, but six-in-10 (59%) say fund drives are getting harder to listen to.

How can public radio professionals use these two pieces of information to maximize listener-sensitive income while minimizing damage to listener relations?

At many stations, underwriting generates more income per minute of airtime than on-air fundraising. You can calculate this for yourself (see below).

There's no doubt that on-air drives are the most effective means of recruiting new givers to a station, and that on-air drives make money. But a thoughtful plan that considers listener sensitivities **and** the rate of return on the two major sources of revenue could yield a more successful, long-term fundraising strategy for the future.

– John Sutton

**Note:** *Definitions used in the formulas are found on page 171.*

### Calculating Income per Minute

#### On-Air Pledge Drives:

Total Dollars Raised = Total Dollars Pledged x Fulfillment Rate

Income per Minute = Total Dollars Raised / Total Minutes Spent Pitching

#### Underwriting:

True Average Rate = Total Dollars Collected / Total Credits Broadcast

Be sure to include all bonus spots.

Income per Minute = True Average Rate x Credit Length Factor<sup>2</sup>

For 10 second credits multiply True Average Rate by 6.

For 15 second credits multiply True Average Rate by 4.

For 20 second credits multiply True Average Rate by 3.

For 30 second credits multiply True Average Rate by 2.



# Yield Not to Temptation

Here's a fact that should tempt any joint licensee: For every two public radio givers, there is another listener who does **not** give to public radio but who **does** give to public television.

About 17 percent of all public radio listeners support public TV but not public radio. And it's very tempting – and relatively easy for any joint licensee – to pitch our tent in the land of TV supporters and evangelize public radio support.

But friends, yield not to this temptation, as **public television's audience is no place to seek these souls, for they do not walk in that place.**

## Stairway to Heaven

Why would public radio's **own** listeners give to public television and **not** to public radio?

Simple. They haven't climbed public radio's Stairway to Given.

**Public radio listeners who give to public TV but not to public radio look like any other public radio non-giver. In other words,**

these listeners don't rely as much on public radio as do givers; they don't consider it as important in their lives; and they are less apt to believe that their support is essential and government support is minimal.

The only step they have ascended is the first step of listening. **In no other way do they distinguish themselves from other public radio non-givers.**

AUDIENCE 98 can't explain **why** public radio listeners give to public TV, but other studies suggest an ethic of giving. (For instance, during the same sample period as AUDIENCE 98, Simmons cites charitable giving by public radio listeners as well above the national average.)

**If this ethic exists, however, it does not extend to public radio.** As AUDIENCE 98 and previous research tell us,

public radio is paid for by appreciative users – not givers of charity.

Perhaps public radio givers pledge to public TV for the same reasons they give to public radio. Perhaps public TV has its own Stairway to Given. We don't know for sure.

We **do** know that public television's giving audience is not a place from which public radio givers can be any more efficiently redeemed than anywhere else.

– David Giovannoni  
– Leslie Peters  
– Jay Youngclaus



## Yield Not to Temptation

# Why Do Some Listeners Support Public TV But Not Public Radio?

The reason some listeners contribute to public television but not to public radio is simple: they haven't climbed public radio's Stairway to Given – AUDIENCE 98's metaphorical pathway to support.

The table below traces the steps for four types of listeners. The Stairway to Given is explained in detail on pages 115-116.

The key point is this:

Public radio listeners who give to public television – but not to public radio – match closely the profile of listeners who give to neither.

– Jay Youngclaus  
– Leslie Peters  
– David Giovannoni.

## Stairway to Given

(For most-listened-to Public Radio Station)

		Give to BOTH	Give Only to RADIO	Give to TV Only	Give to NEITHER
	Percent of Listeners	30	5	17	48
	Percent of Listening	45	7	13	36
	Percent of Givers	86	14	0	0
	Percent of Giving	86	14	0	0
Steps 1&2 Reliance on Public Radio	Percent in Core	70	63	39	37
	Loyalty	57	53	31	29
	Years Listening to Station	12	9	10	8
	Percent with "Strong" Reliance on Public Radio	71	65	39	34
	Percent who listen both Weekdays and Weekends	71	62	50	42
	Occasions (per week)	11	10	7	6
	TSL (HR:MN per week)	13:45	12:45	7:00	6:45
Step 3 Personal Importance	Percent who agree Public Radio Station is Personally Important	97	95	90	84
	Percent with "Strong" Sense of Community	75	70	55	44
Step 4 Funding Beliefs	Percent who have Beliefs Associated with Giving to Public Radio	43	39	34	33
Step 5 Ability to Afford	Average Annual Household Income	\$84,000	\$67,000	\$70,000	\$54,000

## Yield Not to Temptation

### A Tale of Two Audiences

Public radio and public television audiences overlap but they're hardly a hand-in-glove fit.

First, public television's glove is far too big.

Each week, more than four times as many Americans watch public television as listen to public radio.

The math is clear.

Most public television viewers don't listen to public radio.

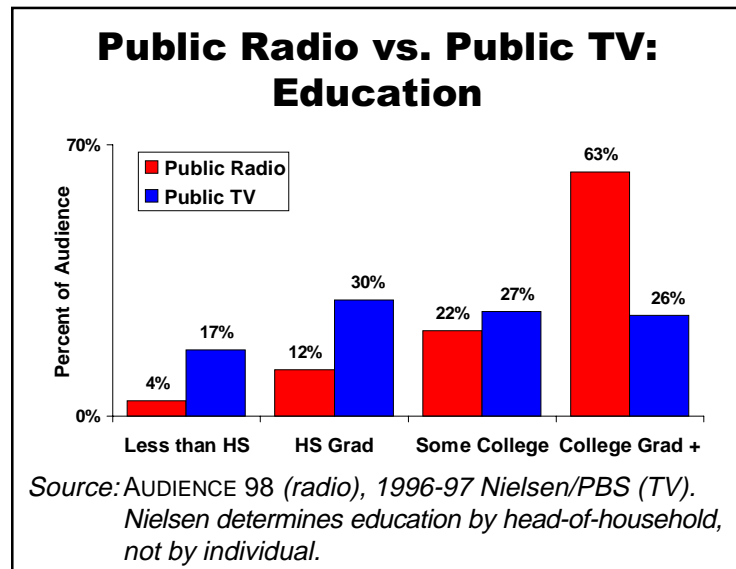
It's not because they haven't heard of us or can't get a signal. They

#### Public Radio vs. Public TV

	Public Radio	Public TV
Reach of U.S. Population	91%	99%
Weekly Cume	10% of age 12+	38% of age 2+
Listening/Viewing per week	More than 8 hours	Nearly 3 hours

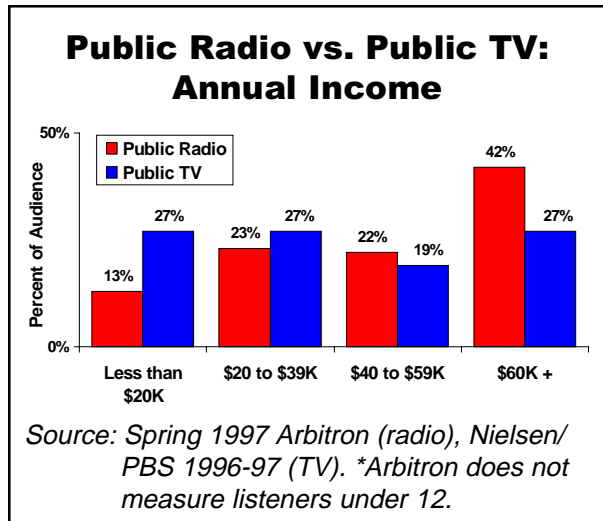
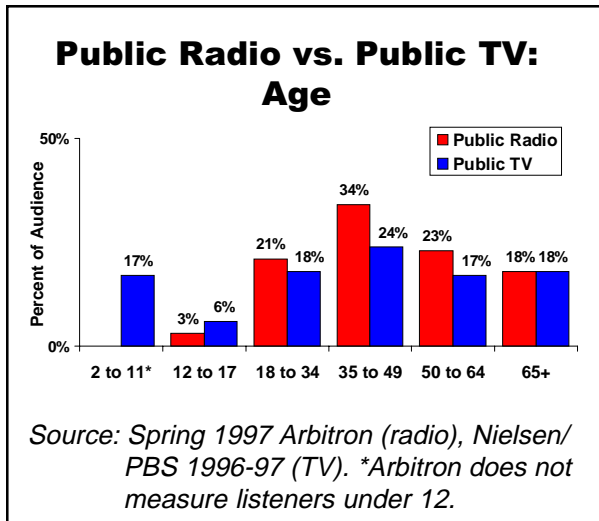
Source: Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

simply choose not to listen because they aren't the type of people to whom our programming appeals.



As a group, public radio listeners have far more education than public TV viewers, and so – unsurprisingly – they earn more money.

The best educated groups of Americans are baby boomers and Gen Xers. Again, no surprise that public radio serves them in much higher concentrations than public television (note that this difference diminishes during television's evening prime time hours).



Public TV viewers may be better educated than most Americans, but they do not approach the educational attainment of public radio’s listeners. Because of this disparity,

public radio’s programming just doesn’t appeal to most public television viewers.

Both media may be “public,” but the two publics they serve are significantly different.

– Leslie Peters  
 – Jay Youngclaus  
 – David Giovannoni

## Yield Not to Temptation

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### Reality Check

Reality can be a drag. Especially when research findings get in the way of your intuition.

For instance, we at KERA once thought that public radio listeners who give to public television – but not to public radio – would be a good target for public radio giving messages.

Our logic was simple. These public TV givers/public radio non-givers obviously watch public TV. And they already “buy” the notion of supporting public broadcasting. That should place them one step ahead of those who listen to public radio but don’t give to either public radio or television.

Our plan was simple too. Using KERA’s shared radio and TV resources, we’d put some messages on our TV station asking these folks for public radio support. We’d develop special messages for them to be used in on-air pledge appeals and direct mail appeals, too. Our public TV giver database would help the cause.

Now AUDIENCE 98 tells us that public radio listeners who give to public television but not to public radio are no different than any non-supporter of public radio.

Promoting public radio on public television can’t change this fact, however clever the copy, frequent the spots, or “free” the TV air time.

So much for Plan A. On to Plan B.

It’s not so much a matter of what we do with this new information – it’s what we **don’t** do. **First and foremost, we don’t use limited station resources to target this group.**

- We **don’t** put spots on public television looking for this group.
- We **don’t** promote the radio pledge drive, or special programs associated with it, on the public television station.
- We **don’t** target mailings to this group.

- We **don’t** create special messages for this group.

What do we do? **Return to the programming basics: make our public radio service more reliable and personally important to more of our listeners.**

If we focus on making the programming decisions necessary to influence the larger segment of public radio non-givers, we **will** push them up the Stairway to Given – and public television givers/public radio non-givers will be swept along.

KERA has used our public television member list to solicit new radio givers – with a 1.2% return rate that’s considered pretty good by direct mail standards. But we realize there’s nothing special about the public TV file – because other lists can return the same rate.

Our radio station manager, justly proud of the strong relationship between the two stations, initially felt that we had the perfect opportunity to experiment with public television on-air promotion and messages that might reach the public radio non-giver/public television giver.

After thinking about AUDIENCE 98’s findings, he concluded that

time would be better spent crafting messages for public radio non-givers of any stripe.

Reality **is** a drag – but wasted effort means precious time and resources lost. Intuition isn’t always correct. Reoriented by this new knowledge, KERA is back on the giving path.

– Jeff Hansen  
Station Manager, KERA-FM  
– Ellen Burch

Director of Market Research, KERA/KDTN