



The

Broadcasters' Desktop Resource

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... edited by Barry Mishkind – the Eclectic Engineer

Broadcast Operations

Streaming is EASY



By Dana Puopolo

[March 2019] In recent years, many broadcasters have struggled to adapt to a changing marketplace. The main over-the-air signal is now competing with podcasts and streaming audio. Yet, some stations hesitate, over costs or worries about how to do it. Dana is here to help.

Streaming is easy – if you know how.

Streaming audio is not a frill for a radio station anymore – it is a necessity. The fact is, off-air listening is dropping while streaming, especially to smart speakers, is increasing astronomically.

Still, many stations do not stream because they do not know and are afraid of what is involved.

THAT SIMPLE

However, usually everything can be done with one phone call.

There are many commercial streaming services, and most can also take song title and artist information from your automation too. Companies like securenetsystems.net can provide one stop shopping for radio stations to stream.

Unfortunately they are not cheap. So the question is: can a station do it on their own? The answer is: “It depends.” Therefore, let us take a look.

THE BIG ISSUE

One of the big issues with streaming is music licensing. For streaming, not only do you have to have separate ASCAP, BMI and SESAC licenses for your stream, but you also have to deal with SoundExchange.

SoundExchange is the agency that deals with streaming, but to say their rules are strange is an understatement! For example, SoundExchange’s programming rules ban request shows on the Internet. They ban more than two songs in a row by the same artist nor more than three songs in an hour by the same artist, period!

Why do they do this: paranoia! The record industry is paranoid that your listeners will capture your 64 kbps (or usually lower) stream because it provides “perfect sounds forever” (not!), so they have all these dumb rules that we all must follow.

YES, THERE IS AN EASY WAY

Despite how messy licensing can be, streaming really can be easy. Let me explain how.

The best way to stream and not worry about any of the licensing issues is to sign up with Live 365 or Radionomy.

Both will handle virtually all your streaming headaches Live 365 is about \$99 a month while Radionomy is free – although they do take inventory. (Live 365 also gives you the option for them to take inventory or not – it costs \$35 a month more if they do not.)

AN ALTERNATIVE FOR LPFM

There is one exception to this rule – Low Power, non-commercial licensed FM station streamers.

It turns out that if you are running a Low Power (100 Watts or less) FM station, it can be cheaper to roll your own. You see, SoundExchange has what is called the ‘statutory license’ which costs \$500 *a year*, Even when combined with the publishing rights (ASCAP, BMI and SESAC) for streaming, the cost is only about \$1100.00 per year in total.

If they still offer it you will also want to pay an extra \$100 a year for the “Reporting Waiver,” so you are not required to give them the artist and song title information in spreadsheet form for every song that you stream.

Now so you see why hiring a commercial service is the best way to go?

OTHER ITEMS TO NOTE

Another item stations need to be aware of regarding streaming is the union situation.

Years back, the talent unions SAG and AFTRA sued streamers claiming their members had only agreed to do their spots on radio, so stations streaming the commercials required extra payments for them. The broadcast industry respond-

ed by blocking their commercials on their streams – covering them with other programming. That is why if you listen to iHeart that sometimes the abrupt content changes – the spots on radio are being covered up with a feature on the stream.

The problem with this is it cascades another problem: PPM encoding.

In the past Nielsen considered any change in a stream to be reason to give that stream its own watermark – meaning it had its own PPM encoder. Recently they changed those rules from 100% down to 95%, which greatly simplifies things (and saves them money too because they do not have to provide all those extra PPM encoders).

TALK RADIO

If you only air the spoken word things can be a lot easier because all you have to do is find a company that offers Shoutcast or Icecast streaming.



Personally, I use listen2myradio.com), set up a free software encoder (like BUTT or Edcast or MB Recaster) and begin streaming online. I use them as an STL to my FM transmitter and they have been quite reliable.

List-en2 my radio is free if you use their web portal to receive the stream and five dollars per month if you do not.

SOME ADDITIONAL POINTERS

Originally, I had planned to make this a more

technical article but decided that since the legal waters concerning streaming are murky that a head's up is warranted. I hope that this has been useful to you.

Stay tuned. A future article will delve more into the technical side.

Dana Puopolo is the Chief Engineer at Rowan University's WGLS in Glassboro, NJ. You can reach Dana at dpuopolo@usa.net

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