

# Understanding Your Inventory: Doing a Local Airtime Audit

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Thank you to Abby, Christina, and PRPD for this opportunity to present today. My name is Douglas Bell and I am the On-Air Operations Manager at WAMU; really I'm sort of a de facto Assistant PD, with a particular focus on managing the processes for how content gets on our air.

## Why Do an Audit of Your Local Airtime?

- Your local airtime is a valuable resource
- Quantifying your airtime helps you manage it and maximize its use
- Educate key stakeholders at your station
- Develop a model for understanding and working with your local airtime

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About two-and-a-half years ago, I was asked to develop a model for managing how we schedule our local breaks on WAMU. At the time we were growing rapidly - launching multiple podcasts, community events, reporting initiatives, digital initiatives - and our corporate sponsorship team was selling underwriting credit placements like hotcakes. Everyone wanted to promote everything in our local breaks and didn't understand why we told them there wasn't enough time for all of it.

## Our Process

1. Define how much local airtime we have
2. Clarify frequency of underwriting credits
3. Articulate our program promo strategy
4. Divvy up unclaimed avails for promos
5. Understand the caveats

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## Develop a Model

- WAMU's local underwriting credits are represented in our broadcast log with a length of 15 seconds each (1 avail)
- Underwriting inventory limits already defined
- Max 3 underwriting credits per break (if the break is long enough to contain that many)
- Any unfilled underwriting time is available for other promos, or left open for host presence/stationality

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The first step was to develop a model to help conceptualize the fact that our local airtime was a scarce resource. I realized that we already had a model for managing an inventory of airtime - the way that we manage underwriting.

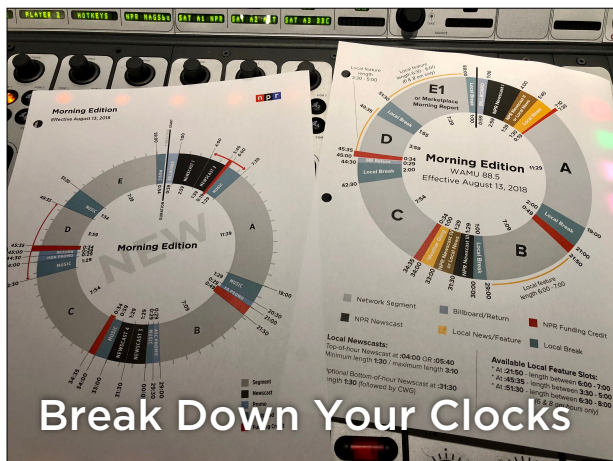
## Develop a Model

1 avail = 15 seconds

- Each hour has a set number of underwriting avails and promo avails
- 15-sec promos use 1 avail, 30-sec promos use 2
- Assume that underwriting is fully sold-out

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So for our model, we extend the “avails” concept to cover promos as well.



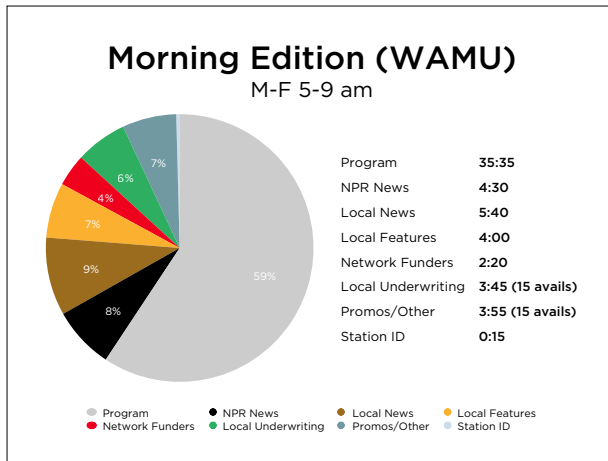
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The usual way that we figure out how much time we have during a show is to look at the show's clock. However, a clock is really only useful for telling us *when* things happen, not *how much* of the hour is dedicated to different things.

So, go through your clocks and start adding up how much time is spent on everything - particularly your local breaks.

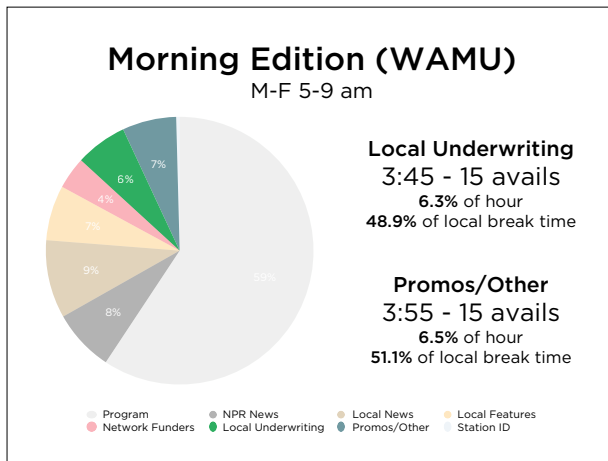
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Here's an example from Morning Edition - and here we make some assumptions about the elements we typically insert at WAMU; this may add up differently for your station.



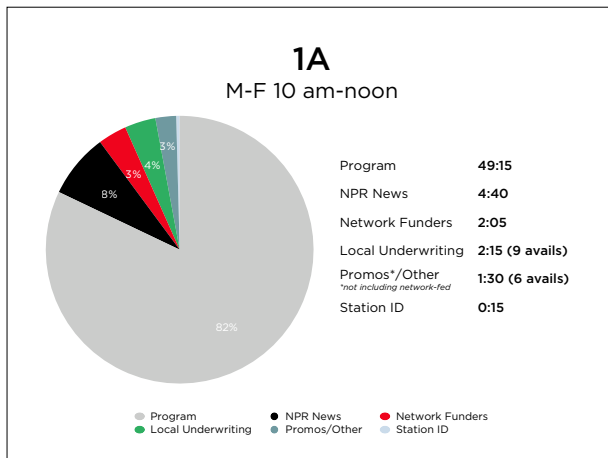
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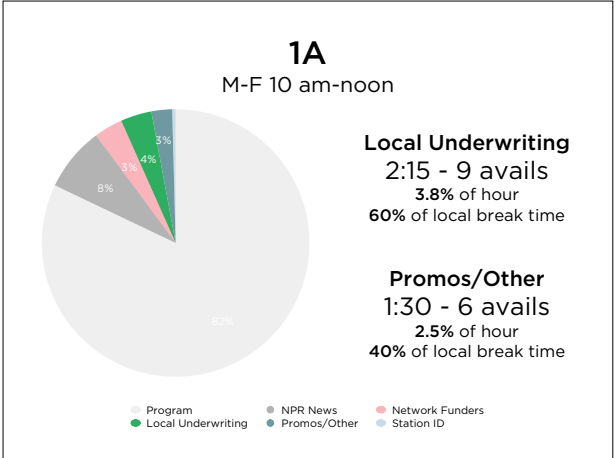
It's educational for your staff to see that the amount of local time available to us in the hour is not *that* much. And *Morning Edition* is probably the most generous on local time...



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... Here's a show we know very well at WAMU, and it's much more typical of most shows.





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Again, not that much time to work with.

These visual charts are useful for demonstrating these principles to your staff. For working on your actual audit, however...

Start a Spreadsheet

Time	Show	Program Content	Network News	Local News	Local Features	Network Funders	Local UW	Promos/Other	Station ID
5:00 AM	Morning Edition/Marketplace Morning	2080	270	340	240	195	225	235	15
6:00 AM	Morning Edition	2135	270	340	240	140	225	235	15
7:00 AM	Morning Edition/Marketplace Morning	2080	270	340	240	195	225	235	15
8:00 AM	Morning Edition	2135	270	340	240	140	225	235	15
9:00 AM	BBC Newshour	2850	370	60	0	80	165	60	15
10:00 AM	1A	2955	280	0	0	125	135	90	15
11:00 AM	1A	2955	280	0	0	125	135	90	15
12:00 PM	The Takeaway (Mon-Thur)	2640	280	0	270	20	225	150	15
12:00 PM	The Politics Hour (Fri)	3090	280	0	0	20	90	105	15
1:00 PM	Fresh Air (Mon-Thur)	2880	280	0	0	140	180	105	15
1:00 PM	WAMU Presents (Fri)*	3090	280	0	0	20	90	55	65
2:00 PM	Here & Now	2665	400	0	0	175	225	120	15
3:00 PM	Here & Now / The Daily	2690	340	0	0	150	180	225	15
4:00 PM	All Things Considered	2280	300	280	240	140	180	165	15
5:00 PM	All Things Considered	2280	300	280	240	140	180	165	15
6:00 PM	Marketplace / ATC	2600	120	150	240	175	180	120	15
7:00 PM	All Things Considered	2280	300	280	240	140	180	165	15
8:00 PM	The World	3090	280	0	0	20	150	45	15
9:00 PM	On Point	2925	280	0	0	125	105	145	20
10:00 PM	Strip Programming*	2955	280	0	0	125	105	115	20
11:00 PM	As It Happens	3180	280	0	0	20	75	25	20
12:00 AM	BBC World Service	3060	400	0	0	50	30	40	20
1:00 AM	BBC World Service	3060	400	0	0	50	30	40	20
2:00 AM	BBC World Service	3060	400	0	0	50	30	40	20
3:00 AM	BBC World Service	3060	400	0	0	50	30	40	20
4:00 AM	BBC World Service	3060	400	0	0	50	30	40	20

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... start a spreadsheet. In this case, I just add up the number of seconds per hour for everything. A little tedious, but it gives you a good starting point to generate more manageable data.

Start a Spreadsheet

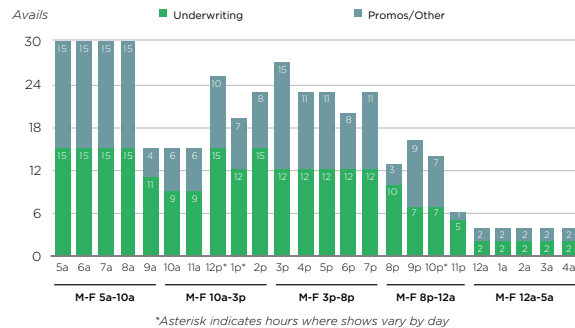
Time	Show	Underwriting	Promos/Other
5:00 AM	Morning Edition/Marketplace Morning	15	15
6:00 AM	Morning Edition	15	15
7:00 AM	Morning Edition/Marketplace Morning	15	15
8:00 AM	Morning Edition	15	15
9:00 AM	BBC Newshour	11	4
10:00 AM	1A	9	6
11:00 AM	1A	9	6
12:00 PM	The Takeaway (Mon-Thur)	15	10
12:00 PM	The Politics Hour (Fri)	6	7
1:00 PM	Fresh Air (Mon-Thur)	12	7
1:00 PM	WAMU Presents (Fri)*	6	3
2:00 PM	Here & Now	15	8
3:00 PM	Here & Now / The Daily	12	15
4:00 PM	All Things Considered	12	11
5:00 PM	All Things Considered	12	11
6:00 PM	Marketplace / ATC	12	8
7:00 PM	All Things Considered	12	11
8:00 PM	The World	10	5
9:00 PM	On Point	7	9
10:00 PM	Strip Programming*	7	7
11:00 PM	As It Happens	5	1
12:00 AM	BBC World Service	2	2
1:00 AM	BBC World Service	2	2
2:00 AM	BBC World Service	2	2
3:00 AM	BBC World Service	2	2
4:00 AM	BBC World Service	2	2

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For the columns on underwriting & promos, I create another sheet, divide everything by 15 seconds, round down, and get the number of avails in each hour.

## Local Underwriting & Promos

### Hour-by-Hour Overview



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Here's what that hourly distribution of avails looks like over the course of the day.

Because there's so much variation during the day - we combine these into manageable dayparts. Then multiply times 5 weekdays per week, make a couple of adjustments when you may have different shows on Fridays (for instance)...

## Avails by Daypart per Week

Daypart	Total Avails	Underwriting	Promos
M-F 5a-10a	675	355	320
M-F 10a-3p	470	285	185
M-F 3p-8p	580	300	280
M-F 8p-12a	245	145	100
M-F 12a-5a	100	50	50

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... and here is our accounting of the number of avails we have to work with.

## Promo Categories

- Program Promos
- Stationality
- Marketing/Events
- Membership/Development
- News/New Content

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So the next question is, how do you divvy up those promo avails? I recommend coming up with a few categories that you can work with. Here are some suggestions.

## Program Promos

- **Next Spring Training Webinar - Wednesday 4/28 at 10 am PT / 1 pm ET**
- Sketch out your strategy for program promos
- Calculate the number of avails you need to reserve at a minimum for program promos
- It's okay for this to be a high number!

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A quick word about program promos. This will be discussed much more at the next Spring Training Webinar on the 28th, but I recommend taking the opportunity to stake your claim for program promos while you're doing this audit. Program promos are your most effective way to build AQH listening for your station. Sketch out a plan for program promos you want to prioritize, calculate the minimum number of avails that you need for your plan, and factor that in.

## Sample Budget of Avails Assignments (per week)

Daypart	U/W	Program Promos	Webix	Sponsored Promos	Marketing/ Events	Membership/ Development	News/New Content
M-F 5a-10a	355	234	5	0	45	18	18
M-F 10a-3p	285	83	15	10	43	17	17
M-F 3p-8p	300	203	10	10	35	11	11
M-F 8p-12a	145	65	0	0	15	10	10
M-F 12a-5a	50	40	0	0	0	10	0

*Assumes sold-out underwriting. Avails are 15-seconds each.*

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This is WAMU's current "budget" of avails. The lion's share goes to underwriting and program promos. The others become more of a guide of the *minimum* that other teams can expect, but in practice this varies depending on what the station's priorities are at a given time.

## Sample Budget of Avails Assignments (per day avg.)

Daypart	U/W	Program Promos	Webix	Sponsored Promos	Marketing/ Events	Membership/ Development	News/New Content
M-F 5a-10a	71	46-47	1	0	9	3-4	3-4
M-F 10a-3p	57	16-17	3	2	8-9	3-4	3-4
M-F 3p-8p	60	40-41	2	2	7	2-3	2-3
M-F 8p-12a	29	13	0	0	3	2	2
M-F 12a-5a	10	8	0	0	0	2	0

*Assumes sold-out underwriting. Avails are 15-seconds each.*

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One way to make this easier to grasp for internal stakeholders is to show, on average, how many avails are available on a given day - just divide the previous chart by 5.

One way of thinking about this is that each of these categories are like buckets. If you want to add more to one bucket, you have to take something out of another bucket.

## Caveats

- Underwriting is not always sold out
- Unfilled time allows hosts to establish station presence
- Subject to change to accommodate breaking news, local news coverage, special programming, etc.
- How we schedule avails can vary throughout the year depending on station priorities
- Not applicable during membership campaign
- May not match clocks exactly due to rounding

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It is important to remember that this is just a model. There are several assumptions and caveats to keep top of mind when working with this approach.

## Getting Started

- Start doing the math!
- Identify your promotional priorities
- Engage your internal stakeholders
- Show your work
- Develop a ongoing process for managing your promo inventory

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## Thank You!

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