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

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
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

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

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

Break Down Your Clocks

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.
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.

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…

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

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.
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)…

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Daypart</th>
<th>Total Avails</th>
<th>Underwriting</th>
<th>Promos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M-F 5a-10a</td>
<td>675</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M-F 10a-3p</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M-F 3p-8p</td>
<td>580</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M-F 8p-12a</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M-F 12a-5a</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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
- Stationality
- Marketing/Events
- Membership/Development
- News/New Content
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.

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.

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

Getting Started

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

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.

Thank You!