

USA
University Station Alliance
Mid-Year Report

January 1 – July 31
2010

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University Station Alliance

A grassroots initiative for
university-licensed stations

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2010 Mid-Year Report

The USA is a grassroots non-profit 501(c)(3) representing noncommercial public radio stations licensed to universities, colleges, school districts, and state agencies. One hundred and thirty (130) of these across the country are affiliated or actively involved with the USA.

Some of USA's initiatives include training managers, building strategic alliances, sharing resources, guarding editorial integrity, benchmarking performance, and reviewing governance. Receiving USA's services and resources does not require travel since the USA is an Internet/Web-based national resource. As a virtual interactive resource the USA offers tools to assist media managers in a university, college, school district or state agency environment. In addition to virtual training, presentations are made at established national and regional meetings. Combining with existing national and regional meetings eliminates additional travel expenses, preserving station resources.

The USA will continue to develop tools and training to help stations during these tough economic times. A summary of the USA services and survey results for the mid-year of fiscal year 2010 are presented below.

USA Board:

Full-board meets quarterly and the Executive Group meets monthly.
The USA financial resources are maintained by Weidenbach & Co., P.A.

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Regina Dean
WUOT
University of Tennessee
Knoxville, TN

Vice President

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University of LA-Lafayette
Lafayette, LA

Member

Dave Edwards
WUWM
University of
Wisconsin - Milwaukee
Milwaukee, WI

Executive Director

Craig Beeby
Stillwater, OK

USA Works Well with All Organizations

The USA has worked on collaborative projects, provided feedback, and provided training and survey information to the following national and regional public broadcasting entities: CPB, NETA, DEI, NPR, PBMA, PRDMC, PRIMA, ERPM, WSPR, NPR, & CPR. Also, the USA has many active AAPRS station affiliates.

DEI/USA Joint Webinar & Survey

In a joint effort to better serve the public radio system, DEI and USA sought benchmarks regarding stations' efforts to establish friends groups and leadership structures. Through a survey sent to the public radio system, the USA and DEI gathered information about the types of groups assisting or advising university-licensed stations. Managers indicated whether they had a station friends/leadership structure. In February 2010, the USA and DEI conducted a joint Webinar on the topic with 66 participants.

Summation

The message seems to be that managers who have station friends/leadership structures have mixed reviews on their actual helpfulness, but generally speaking, they do not want to eliminate them.

One-third of station managers do not have a friends/leadership structure.

Four-out-of-ten managers do not have plans to create or add a friends/leadership structure. This may be because their existing friends/leadership structure (if they have one) is enough. In some settings, a board, a friends/leadership structure, or even an advisory group is restricted by the licensee or by statute from engaging in some activities such as fiduciary control, fundraising, or oversight.

Approximately 60% of the station managers said they have plans to create or are in the process of adding some form of friends/leadership structure.

Managers' comments ranged from "I think the CPB and Congressional mandate is anachronistic ... It doesn't make sense to have another board (*FCC licenses are typically issued to the university governing body*), especially for small organizations with limited staff and very limited funding for organizing and conducting meetings," to "The friends group has provided significant funding to the station, especially during the economic downturn," to "...Generally, we spend more time planning for their meeting than we do having any useful activities accomplished. The CAB part has been somewhat of a joke wherever I've

been...” to “Great to have a group of important people who care about the station in the manager's back pocket to pull out if needed...”

Surveys

Public Radio Local Economic Impact – An Update

USA station surveys in 2008 and 2009 gave the public radio system a first and second look at the potential economic effects on their operations. This is the third annual look that will give managers understanding of the economic impact on stations.

JUNE 2010

Here are the results of the June, 2010 USA Local Economic Impact Survey with 147 stations responding. Like the first two surveys, this was sent to multiple listservs and all licensee types.

NEW QUESTION FOR 2010: *The station and/or licensee are considering a new governance/ownership structure including: (check all that are being considered)*

Stations could respond with more than one answer to this new question. Therefore, some of the responses reflect multiple considerations by individual stations.

82% of the stations are **not** considering a new governance/ownership structure.

7% are considering consolidating with another public media entity.

4% are considering the sale of the station.

7% are considering a license management agreement (LMA).

7% are considering other options like shared service agreements, staff reorganization, increasing partnerships, transferring more control to the foundation, purchase of a second FM station, and surrendering the broadcast license. One station manager stated, “With the current economic situation everything is on the table.”

Black = 2010 Responses ** Blue = 2009 *Red = 2008

SURVEY – (147, **164, *160) STATIONS RESPONDING

COMPARING SURVEYS

46% (**46%, *42%) of station managers anticipate and/or already have received notification of cash support reductions from their university, college, school system, or state licensees. **54%** (**54%, *58%) of the stations said they

Black = 2010 Responses ** Blue = 2009 *Red = 2008

have not received notification or this question was not applicable to their licensees.

5% (**7%, *<1%) of the stations are experiencing significant licensee cash support reductions at levels of \$200,000 and over. Other cash support reduction amounts are similar among the 2010, 2009, and 2008 surveys. **24%** (**26%, *28%) say their cash support will be reduced by their licensee by up to \$49,999, and **12%** (**12%, *10%) say their anticipated cash support reduction would range from \$50,000 to \$199,999. Another **6%** (**6%, *6%) do not know what the reductions, if any, will be.

In regards to imposed service fees or administration overhead charges paid by the station to the licensee, **58%** (**75%, *73%) anticipate no change, **18%** (**18%, *19%) anticipate an increase and/or new charges, and about **6%** (**7%, *8%) are “waiting to see” what new charges may be imposed upon the station. For **18%** of the stations responding this question was not relevant.

When managers were asked to project changes in audience support, business support, and/or foundation support, a variety of responses were given. For this question, multiple choices were allowed. **22%** (**15%, *27%) expect no changes. **25%** (**29%, *33%) anticipate less audience support. **36%** (**64%, *49%) anticipate reductions in business support, and **18%** (**36%, *23%) anticipate reductions in foundation support.

On the positive side, **36%** (**28%, *18%) of stations are anticipating an increase in audience support, **32%** (**13%, *11%) in business support, and **8%** (**5%, *5%) in foundation support.

Stability seems to be coming back into some of the projections. When asked to project changes in cash support excluding cash support from the CSG, university, college, school system, and/or state but including support from listeners, business and foundations, about **42%** (**28%, *31%) of station managers anticipate no change or an increase in support, **31%** (**51%, *57%) foresee a reduction of up to \$139,999, and **5%** (**13%, *6%) expect a cash support reduction of over \$200,000.

This survey will be repeated again in 2011. Thanks to all the stations that participated.

USA 2010 Affiliate Services Survey

48% of our active affiliates responded. When commenting on the USA a manager wrote, *"I'm sure that as I continue in public radio management I will become more aware of ways in which USA can help. When Craig made a get-acquainted call in July '08, I was three weeks into the job and grateful to hear him say 'You are not alone!' It is a valuable alliance."* Another manager wrote, *"I have used the Quantitative Worth Calculator successfully during our annual university budget negotiation. It has saved our general fund allocation (\$700K) from reduction or elimination."*

Why Become a USA Affiliate?

Affiliates could have more than one response.

73% said they joined the USA to access the affiliation benefits (listserve, eNews letter, 20-Second Manager, website, Quantitative Worth Calculator, etc.).

63% joined to support the work and services.

59% connected with the USA due to the importance of the USA for the public radio system.

33% said the reason was networking opportunities.

USA Affiliation Satisfaction

74% of the affiliates are somewhat to **very satisfied with their USA affiliation**. 9 affiliates were neutral about the question. 4 stations had no response and only one affiliate expressed that they were somewhat dissatisfied.

All the USA services received positive feedback even though some affiliates were not aware of some services.

Services & Resources

The 20-Second Manager

This is an interactive training series developed by the USA. The series is based upon the USA Executive Director Craig Beeby's four-decades of media management experiences and two degrees in Radio/TV/Film Sales and

Management and Mass Communications. The materials were distributed through the USA listserv and training presentations at the NETA and PRDMC national meetings, and the PRIMA Winter regional meeting. This fall the training series will be made available to ERPM and WSPR.

Peer Review Assessment Tool

This USA developed assessment tool continues to be a resource for public radio stations.

How does a station prepare to face the economic challenges and questions raised in difficult times? Changes in university public radio stations continue to loom and the assessment tool assists in the planning process for such challenges and changes.

This also can be used as a self-assessment tool. The peer review process is familiar to university administrators, who are accustomed to outside evaluations of their academic programs. The result of using this tool and going through a peer review process could be greater licensee buy-in to a station's future plans.

The tool draws from best practices in the field. The process can also provide the station's staff, board, and university-licensees with ideas for addressing current challenges and identifying resources to aid in that effort.

University Tenets Of Public Radio Station Ownership & Operations

The USA board, the PRIMA Board, and the ERPM board endorsed the **Tenets** as an ongoing working document and gave the E.D. approval to make modifications as needed. The purpose of the tenets is to educate university administrators about the appropriate role of a university in its administrative interaction with the station in order to reduce interference in FCC-licensed broadcast facilities' operation. It is considered to be another much needed USA-generated resource. The feedback from stations has been very favorable.

eNews and Listserv

Constant Contact named the USA eNews an **Email Marketing All Star** for delivering engaging information that USA Affiliates were eager to receive, open, and read. The communication tool continues to offer sophisticated methods of providing professional resources for stations as well as gathering important

information for stations through surveys. Several surveys that were developed and distributed offered important information for the system's use.

Representation Regional & National

The E.D. attended the NETA meeting in January, PRIMA Conference in February. Along with USA VP Madison Hodges, the E.D. trained station managers at the June PBMA conference in Tampa, Florida. In July the USA participated in two PRDMC sessions in Fort Worth, Texas. Other Fall 2010 regional meetings the E.D. will attend and present training sessions and information sharing include PRIMA, ERPM, and WSPR. The USA eNews continues to improve the lines of communication with regional heads and national leaders.

Executive Director Contacts

In mid-year 2010, as a result of USA consultations, training, and regional presentations, the number of contacts made by the USA E.D. totaled 231 (compared to 148 at this time in 2009) and the USA Affiliates total 130. In the past three years under Craig Beeby's leadership USA Affiliate stations have more than doubled and he has helped with over 1,037 station consultations and training initiatives.

Website usage "Update"

Total visits January through December 2009 – 12,981, averaging 1,854 per month

Quantitative Worth Worksheets "Update"

Worksheets for nine (9) stations were developed in 2010. Since the Quantitative Worth Worksheets were developed by the USA as part of the Cost of Doing Business studies funded by the CPB, forty-one (41) stations have used this powerful tool to demonstrate to university-licensees the annual public service and public relations value equivalents they are receiving from their public radio stations with ranges from \$1.9 to \$59.3 million. All the information about the USA Cost of Doing Business studies can be found on the USA Website at:

www.us-alliance.org/costofdoingbusiness/index.html

Benefits of USA Affiliation

The USA was established in 2001 as the only national not-for-profit 501(c)(3) support resource for University-Licensed* public radio stations.

Tools

Quantitative Worth Calculator	University Ownership Best Practices
Professional Surveys	Strategic Planning Models
Governance Examples & Guidelines	Marketing & Programming Advice
Personnel Performance Enhancement	Ideas for Improving Management Oversight

Services

Free Telephone Consultancy	National Representation
Fundraising Strategies Training	Community Volunteers Training
Internet-Based Services	Fee-Reduced Peer Reviews
On-Site Training	Management Training

Resources

Listserv & eNews Letters – Instant access to 270+ Managers and Leaders
20-Second Manager – Monthly Management Training
24/7 access to Website resources at www.us-alliance.org

Results: 231 Station Consultations and/or Training Jan – July 2010

Increased Listener Support	Reduced Overhead Costs
Improved University/Station Relations	Improved Personnel Performance
Editorial Integrity Protected	Governance Protocol Established
Strategic Planning Resulted in Efficient Operations & New Income	

USA Goals

- to strengthen the public broadcasting system through improving the relationship between broadcasters and universities;
- to focus on commonalities of purpose between a station and its university licensee; to integrate university/station missions and strategic plans so that stations have a place at the university table;
- to assist stations in managing licensee relations on a day-to-day basis;
- to establish “firewall” standards of editorial integrity;
- to test the assumption that it is in the best interest of all university stations to continue to be owned and operated by universities; and if not,
- to explore available options and help the station/licensee facilitate the transition

Executive Director

Craig Beeby became the founding President of the USA in 2001 and the USA E.D. in 2007. He has been involved in commercial and public broadcasting for four decades. Under Beeby's leadership as Director/GM, KOSU, a university-owned station, won 276 awards for news excellence and expanded into a statewide network. A broadcast consultant and trainer on the international and national levels, he has two degrees in Radio-TV-Film Sales and Management and Mass Communications.