

National Public Radio: Recent Insights

On Spot Length

One recent creative test used three podcast messages of varying lengths -- :15, :30, :60 -- to set up a creative measurement test to determine:

- How the spots performed in terms of engagement, recall, and increase in intent to use AI tools from the brand.
- Whether certain languages resonated more strongly with NPR podcast listeners than others.
- What are the relative strengths of different message lengths

The results showed the value of a variety of spot lengths – :15s were most effective in brand recall while :60s had best intent lift – and indicating that a mix of lengths work together for an effective campaign.

A separate study of 0:15 sponsor messages by Neuro-Insight also demonstrated the value of short, focused messages on driving brand recall. These spots were more memorable than 30-60 second commercial radio messages and more effective at achieving peak memory for brand mentions than 30-60 second video ads.

On Using Immersive Sounds

Using creative from three campaigns that ran both standard mid-rolls and mid-rolls with immersive sound effects, we set up a creative measurement test to determine:

- How the spots with sound effects performed when compared to the standard podcast spots.
- Whether the spots with sound effects had higher engagement or recall, or drove higher intent.
- Whether NPR listeners said they preferred the spots with sound effects.

On Copy That Connects With The Audience

After testing over 150 NPR sponsorship messages, some key elements of the best-performing spots are:

- Clear benefits that are relevant to our audience. For example, EV auto spots that discussed ease of accessing charging stations outperformed spots that talk about sustainability in the production process. B2B product spot that conveys how the brand can simplify work tasks performed better than spots that speak more generally about brand values.
- Empathizing with the audience's challenges. One of the strongest CPG spots used immersive audio to suggest a walk in the woods as a way to relieve stress (while enjoying the brand's product).



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- Supporting causes that are important for our audience. One of the year's best performing spots emphasized how the brand supports organic farms that protect the land and the plants and animals that live there. This aligns with our audience's high concern for the environment.

Case Study: Organic Valley

A deep dive into how NPM and Organic Valley brought their custom audio campaign to life, and how that campaign delivered impact for the brand. [Read here.](#)

Best-in-Class Creative from NPR Sponsors

- Organic Valley (custom audio): [example](#)
- Announcer read: [example](#)
- Host read: [example](#)

Ad Results Media

Sound Like Content

The most engaging host reads we've heard in 2024 (and we listen to thousands of reads weekly) all have one thing in common - they sound like content or part of the show, not a commercial break. ARM works with brands and shows to create the right space for hosts to deliver a brand's message in a way that feels natural and genuine to the listeners. Instead of overloading the spot with product points or disclaimers, give room for the host(s) to naturally weave your brand into their own story.

Dial Into Niche Genres

Think smaller for bigger results - Small genres and show-specific tweaks can make a big difference to ad performance. Personalized, genre-specific messaging lets your copy resonate like it's made for each listener, and with advancements in AI ad serving and creative versioning expanding faster than ever - now is the time test!

Let Hosts Cook

Podcast hosts are the ultimate influencers - they've earned their audience's trust. Lean into that established relationship by using less scripted copy and more ad-lib prompts that the host can personalize to authentically motivate their audience. As well as you know your brand, the host knows their audience. Let them be the bridge that connects your brand to an audience that's ready to engage.

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iHeart Media

- Listening to podcasts is a choice and a commitment. Use the time wisely and effectively. Be engaging.
- Podcast fans control when they listen, and how it fits into their lives. Take advantage of this opportunity to be as targeted and contextually relevant as possible.
- Podcasts are a host-driven world where listeners trust and believe their hosts. So when opting for host reads, simple, straight scripts or talking points work better than overly-produced spots.
- Podcasts ads earn a greater share of attention, often with a surprisingly low rate of skipping. With fewer ads and more attention, you'll need to be ready to refresh your message to avoid burnout.
- Superfans are influential and listen to podcasts to learn. They're more likely to share their opinions, so keep this in mind.
- Audio is a proven conversion channel, and podcast only increases that efficacy. Podcast mobile listening makes conversion just a swipe or click away, so focus on CTAs, and ensure they're easy to remember and actionable.
- **Consider placement.**
 - Pre-roll or first in pod should be the most direct and engaging because the listener is excited to get to the content they've come to hear.
 - Mid-roll can be a bit more thoughtful, especially if your ad is able to take advantage of contextual targeting. Longer units can work well here.
 - Post-pod is all about conversion. Get right to the point and offer something and/or give the listener something to do.



Wondery

1. Ads should be non-disruptive.

- It's important to respect the listeners' experience by producing non-disruptive ads.
- Avoid loud or disruptive music and/or SFX.

2. Ad Scripts Should be Written to Reflect How People Actually Talk (Written Tone).

- The language used should be natural (vs. being "robotic" or full of jargon).
- Sentences should be relatively short and easy to understand.



3. VO Talent's Performance should Sound Natural (Delivery Tone).

- Audiences should feel like they're hearing from a trusted friend.
- VO Talent should avoid an over-polished, performative tone.

4. The Call-to-Action should be clear and easy to understand.

- Tricky brand names/words should be spelled out.
- The url should be relatively short and easy to understand.

5. Ads Should be Inclusive.

- Ads should strive to avoid the possibility of our audience feeling offended, demeaned, or harmed by the content of the ad.

SiriusXM Media

Create genuine connection with host read ads

Podcast listeners are loyal to their hosts, and a well-crafted host read deepens that relationship. By allowing hosts to let their personality and perspectives shine, these ads feel natural and authentic. Talking points can guide the content, but it's essential to trust the host's understanding of their audience and style.



Utilize announcer read ads to clarify your message

Announcer reads feature voice talent trained for the podcast medium, paired with scripts tailored to engage that attentive mindset. These spots may include subtle sound design and non-intrusive music beds, carefully balanced to complement the natural flow of the podcast. Clarity is key with announcer reads; define the goals and objectives of the campaign and keep product benefits and promotional messaging straightforward.

Be mindful of podcast listeners' leaned-in nature

Podcast listeners are diverse, but they all share a "leaned-in" mindset when tuning in. They are ready to learn, explore, or be entertained. This attentive frame of mind is golden for advertisers, but it also gives them a responsibility to craft messaging that aligns seamlessly within the podcast environment.

- Chelsea Campbell, Group Creative Director Studio Resonate, SiriusXM Media



Remember that audio ads have a special ability to resonate with consumers

Sound has shaped us, etched deeply into our very instincts after millions of years of evolutionary pressure. Sound is our brain's first language. From morning till night, sound guides us, cuts through the endless stream of content, demanding attention. In a world oversaturated with visuals, audio stands as an emotional force that goes beyond sight, connecting to something deeper. We think about what we see, but what we feel – that comes from what we hear. It's the power of audio that resonates within, embedding itself in the fabric of our lives and leaving a lasting impression.

- Shalya Forte, Head of Creative Agency Partnerships Siriusxm Media + Studio Resonate

Veritonic

Step 1: Brand Early & Often

Research from our Podcast Listener Insights Series (May 2022) revealed that the first few seconds of a podcast ad are critical in capturing listeners' attention, especially since they can skip ads that they find irrelevant.

Additionally, saying your brand name both early & often in your ad meaningfully helps to increase both recall & memorability.

Check out our [Podcast Listener Insights Series](#) to view the findings.

Step 2: Utilize Your Audio Logo



There are very few times where you'd exclude your visual logo from a piece of advertising. So why not include audio?

Your audio brand - most often represented by an audio logo - is an integral tool for both recall and brand association when it comes to an audio ad.

Be sure to include your audio logo at both the start and end of your ad to increase memorability.

Download our [Audio Logo Checklist](#) for more best practices.

Can you hear these brands' audio logos before playing them? Follow their lead and use your audio logo consistently.

[Liberty Mutual](#) / [Ace Hardware](#)



Step 3: Consider Length

If you're a well-established brand, shorter ads typically receive better responses than longer ads. Lesser-known brands get a pass here, as learning about the brand and its offering can sometimes take a bit more time, and consumers understand that.

Even though 60+ spots have been the most common length according to Veritonic Research, as a standard, creative testing shows 30-second ads perform optimally across the board.

Step 4: Make Every Word Count

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- More isn't always better. A single voiceover typically outperforms two voices
- Authenticity is key. Ads with voiceovers by the brand's founder outperform other
- Leverage the power of a female voice. While most ads are voiced by men, evidence shows that female voices perform equally - and in some cases better - than male voices
- Music. To the surprise of many, background music doesn't typically sway intent & memorability significantly (be sure to test if you plan to utilize a unique soundscape). The most important thing to remember when utilizing background music in an ad is to ensure it doesn't conflict or overpower your voiceover, other sounds in your ad, or the surrounding content.



Step 5: Write Copy That Drives Action

Don't mention your competition. What are the chances you'd deposit your ad budget into the bank account of your competitor? Slim? Then don't give their name additional airtime. Use your ad to promote what you care about most – your brand!



Podcasts are an informative channel. Utilizing statistics to promote your brand's offering typically plays well on this medium, since it's perceived by listeners as both informative and trustworthy. If you have a compelling stat or two, don't be afraid to incorporate them into your ad copy so your listeners can learn something new.

Know the context. Don't bet on the same ad creative working across all podcasts and respective audiences. The glory of the podcast landscape is the breadth and depth of content, and the unique audiences that content draws. When creating your ad, keep the tone of the top of mind, and ensure that your messaging is targeted towards that podcast's unique audience.



Step 6: Monitor Progress & Success

Measurement is the last step to ensuring a campaign's success. Understanding if your target audience responded to your ad, bought something as a result of hearing your ad, and how/why they took these actions (or not) is paramount.

We recommend that every brand collect and analyze brand lift and attribution data in unison, so they can make informed and strategic audio creative and buying decisions in future campaigns.

"Great podcast advertising is more than just crafting a message -it's about continually refining it through testing and optimization. The best campaigns evolve based on data, ensuring they resonate with listeners and drive results. Brands, marketers, and advertisers should make testing and optimization an integral part of their podcast ad creative process to maximize effectiveness and achieve the highest ROI."

- **Scott Simonelli, CEO of Veritonic**

