

Observations & Suggestions

By

Cross Training Advisory

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Facts about Cross Training:

- One of four regular broadcasts by ACN, (The others being 1st Wednesday, Adventist Worship Hour and Special Events.
- Produced for ACN on a contract with Advent Source by Paul Richardson
- Distributed by satellite live the second Sabbath afternoon of the month
- The last 27 programs have been 2 hours in length
- At least eight programs have been produced each year.
- Style has usually been a host interviewing a presenter at a news desk in a small studio at University of Nebraska.
- Topics are selected based on NAD Needs Assessment surveys, ministry leaders desires, suggestions by pastors and other informal contacts with the producer.
- All Advisory members see a need for improvement but are reminded that the present format and production team have stabilized costs and brought consistency.

Observations were wide-ranging and untrammled by artificial constraints but might be categorized in four general areas: **Product, Price, Place and Promotion**. Of those four categories the pastors appealed for the development team to first consider "Place."

Visualize life in the local church. What place does this product have? Where can it be used in the real world of crowded schedules and low attendance at most special events?

Pastors want:

- "turn-key" simplicity in use
- excellence in production
- suggestions of possible uses
- ready-to-use information so it can be easily handed off to bulletin secretaries and ministry leaders.

Pastors who are supportive and want to be team players do not want to have to "reengineer" the product or create a special place where it can be used. The Product should be designed to fit a place that already exists—filling a need—and doing so with a minimum of time and effort.

Places suggested for Cross Training:

- A 3 to 5 minute clip could be used for the whole church if totally appropriate for the worship hour or adult Sabbath School.
- The church board.
- Occasionally immediately following the church service.
- At a team meeting with pizza and a relational pay back.
- Viewed by individuals at home.

Product

Pastors spend leadership capital when they endorse a program. They cannot afford to invite members to a program that is boring or perceived to be of little value. Most will not promote a product they have not personally seen. At present ACN must work at establishing a reputation for quality. Trust must be built over time through consistent high quality programming. However pastors will always need and always be given the right to choose the materials that complement the individual church life.

Desirable program features:

- Fast paced—TV quality—(suggested max 18 seconds on a single shot).
- Host with skills in bringing out the best from expert witnesses
- Expert Presenters (recognized authorities in their field—tout their credentials if unknown)
- Three-dimensional illustrations (document camera, dolls, red long johns etc.)
- B roll footage apropos
- Inspirational, entertaining, educational
- Tells a story—reveals an experience
- Live audience
- Interactive
- Set that contributes to telling the story—building identity
- Hand out materials—from web or fax.
- Timely—(Paulsen interview was good. Great to have something on public violence after a week like Littleton CO.)
- A suggested matrix might include several message points developed in segments. Those segments would be very short for the broadest audience and increase in length and detail as the audience narrows to those who are responsible for the target ministry in the local church. It might look like this:
 - 4 to 5 minute segment shown in the worship hour.
 - 10 minute experience shown in Sabbath School
 - 15 minute information to church board
 - 20 minute education and standards aimed at a narrow ministry team
 - 25 minute Q & A
 - 30 minute sermon – philosophy and rationale to be viewed at home individually

(Note: A creative committee will work through each broadcast and customize the segments to fit that topic. Not every topic will lend itself to all of the suggested segments above.)

These segments will cover the same message points. Inspiration and entertainment values would be greatest in the segments aimed at the widest audience. Entertainment value might decline and instructional value increase as the target audience narrows to those who actually do the work. The segments will not be repetitive but will cover the same message points from different angles. The final 30-minute segment could carry the label **“Warning: Do not show this segment to the church.”**

What do we need to do to get that type programming? One thing is staff adequately. Presently we have too many functions clustered in too few people. There are ten functions that occur in good program production. Ideally a different person should handle each function and even though the ideal is not practical in this production the functions should be separately identified preserved. Those functions were identified as:

1. Executive Producer (controls content)
2. Producer (makes sure that what ever is done looks like TV)
3. Resources Producer
4. Talent Coordinator
5. Enrichment Coordinator
6. Audience coordinator
7. Phone Coordinator
8. Tech Support
9. Evaluation and Follow-up
10. Promotion and Advertising

Content will be chosen intentionally with local church life in mind as seen through the eyes of pastors and local leaders. It will also include consideration of the focus of ministry leaders on the division level to take advantage of economies of scale and promotion. Some topics will be supported by ministries with well-defined structure on all levels like Pathfinders and Community Services. Others will have little or no structured support but will be highly useful because of need and broad like "How to be a friendly church," prayer ministry, conflict resolution, etc. Content will continue to be planned far enough in advance to coordinate with ministry leaders where support is available and to generate adequate ad hoc support where the structure is not in place.

Price

Mediocre production costs too much for NAD or ACN to allow any poor quality productions on its network at any time. Lost credibility, lost audience, and lost trust in division competence is too high a price to pay for low value, ineffective productions regardless of budget.

Cross Training should not try to produce training events for all needs. It should focus on enhancing a few training events by providing those elements conveyed most easily through video. Inspiration, entertainment, information, news and quality assurance are areas of highest value to the end user and consequently to the sponsors.

While the financial budget will always be a controlling factor fiscal management must limit quantity and support excellent quality. Quality will be measured by the value to the end user and impact on the shared mission of the church.

Promotion and Advertising:

Research data available would suggest that the greatest use of Cross Training participation is achieved when at least one of two influences are operative. 1) A ministry structure promoting the event, 2) The event fills a widely expressed need from the grass roots. ACN will take advantage of networking by producing segments that have one or both of these features.

ACN bulletin material needs to be more user friendly to the pastor. Specific short promotional paragraphs sent on e-mail and segmented so the pastor can simply forward to the appropriate person is desirable.

Rather than attempting to build equity in a “name plate” like Cross Training advertising should stress the individual event, its value, special appeal and/or credentials of the presenters or storytellers. General ads for 1st Wednesday, or Cross Training are less valuable than specific information about the people and content.

Recognize that the target audience for most Cross Training events is not the entire church. But rather the leaders within the local church responsible for that area of church life. Success will be measured not on the number in the audience but by the value delivered to the target audience.

Achieving Pastoral Buy-in

ACN comes from the viewpoint that Pastors want to be supportive. Since no conscientious pastor goes to bed with his work done ACN will make all of its programming as easy for the pastor to unwrap, delegate or use as possible. To accomplish this ACN will work really hard at understanding pastoral needs. We will

1. Go to pastors meetings and listen to the whole group
2. Take 8 to 12 out to dinner to dialogue in depth about their needs
3. Use a standing focus group of pastors
4. Use e-mail to maintain an electronic focus group of pastors
5. Use a promoter for every program (letter or comment from a pastor about the value and use of this program)
6. Create very clear paths on ways to use each program
7. Don't trust our own instincts without confirmation or affirmation from those currently in a pastorate
8. Use pastoral testimonials
9. Invite feed back and evaluation of every program
10. Create posters or art work that is easy to transmit electronically to the church bulletin secretary or other appropriate people

Random Ideas:

- Experiment with other forms of marketing and promotion—like audiocassettes for pastors to use as they jog or drive—this might be to acquaint them with the content prior to an event or after market product to expand its usefulness
- Expand the usefulness by after market sales and support materials
- Create a database from which searches can be made of programs that are in the can. Promote these when some event raises them to the national consciousness.
- No segment should be more than 30 minutes in length

Conclusions:

Cross Training events have had some good content, filled an important role in equipping leaders, but CT has not achieved its full potential. By including more

inspiration and tailoring segments to a more focused audience, and shortening the events significantly the program can take a leap forward. In its redesign pastoral input is vital.