
COMMERCIALS AND SHORT SPOTS

Introduction



What a great challenge! You have a few seconds to get your message across in the most compelling way you can – whether that message is the benefits of a new shaving gel.. or a Christian truth and value. (the ridiculous to the sublime perhaps!)

A “Short Spot” or commercial will have a creative element and a factual element.

The **creative element** grabs attention.. it could involve sound effects, playing out a short sketch or scenario, music, sound effects, or merely the impact of a creative script narrated to mic.

The **factual element** is the essential information relating to what you want the listener to do after hearing your piece.

What’s the difference?

Commercials

- are scheduled in ad-breaks
- Are usually paid for by clients
- Usually need approving by the RACC (radio advertising clearance body)

Short Spots

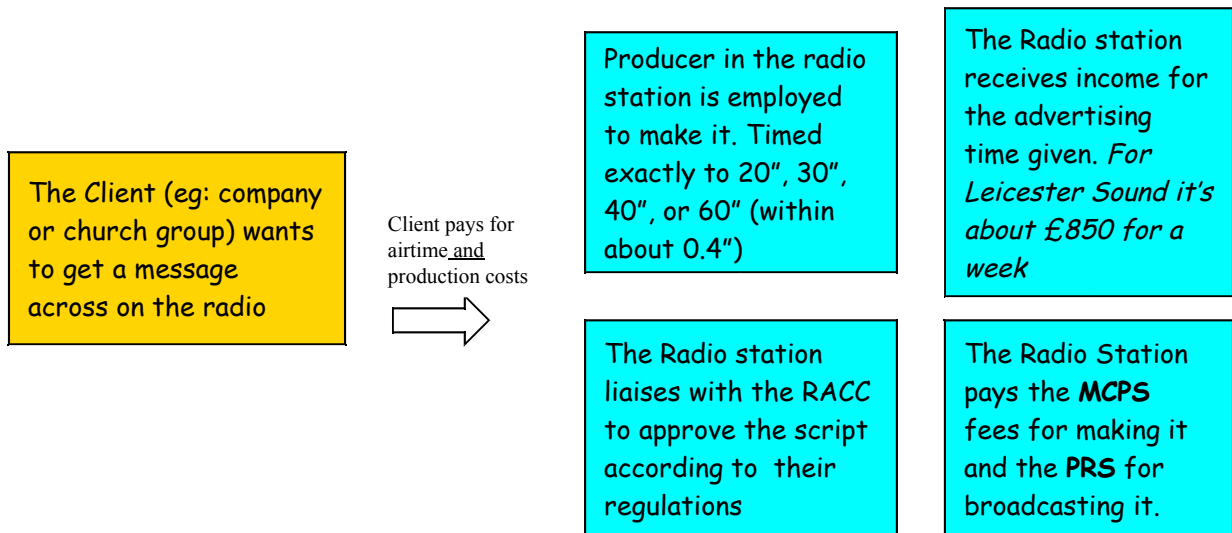
- are in programming time.
- are not usually paid for by clients
- Don’t need RACC approval

COMMERCIALS

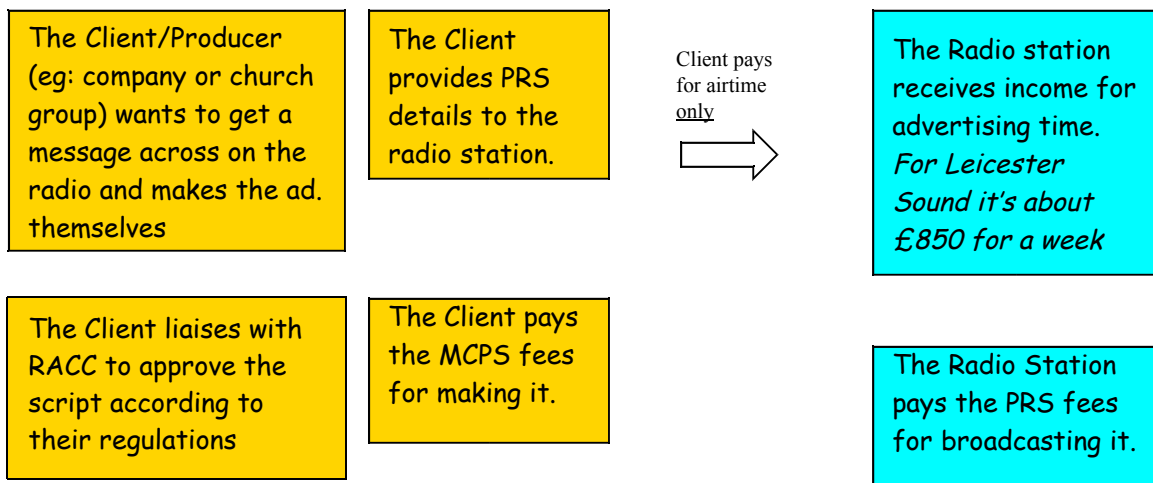
Who makes them.. and for whom?

These are usually created for paying clients by the radio stations. It’s how commercial radio stations get most of their money! But sometimes the paying clients make their own commercials or get them made independently of the radio station.

Example1 – The Radio Station makes the Commercial



Example2 – The Client makes the Commercial



“Opportunities to Hear”

A key factor for a commercial is how many times an average listener will have an opportunity to hear the commercial. An OTH (Opportunity to Hear) of 4 is considered good since it's felt a listener needs to hear an ad four times or more for it to register properly! The OTH figure can be calculated using audience research.

Legal restrictions for Commercials

There are quite a few! For those who make commercials, this can seem bothersome... but for those who consume commercials...(let's face it – everyone).. we're grateful for the safeguards in place! Here's a few things to watch for in making a commercial:

- 1) The need to be able to physically prove anything you're claiming.
- 2) The need to avoid commercial music unless “pre-cleared”.
- 3) The need to state who is advertising.



Top Advertising Tips from Leicester Sound's Copywriter, Lee Price

- 1 Get a **good brief**. A brief is a series of questions you need answering before making the commercial. For instance.. What's the advertisers specific objective for your commercial? Who are they targeting? (the young?, the old?.. etc). Find out all you can about the client.
- 2 **Target audience** – who are we talking to? Be specific? A commercial asking a nineteen year old not to drink and drive will have to be very different in style/music/voiceover to a commercial selling washing powder to a housewife.
- 3 **Call to Action**. What do we want the listener to do? Usually it's a web address, a street address... or a value-change! (for instance "Be aware that smoking is bad for your health").
- 4 **Unique Selling Points or "USPs"**. This is the WHY? For example, why should someone visit your store? Dig for GOOD USPs. Avoiding phrases like 'family business' and 'quality goods'. A monetary incentive is always good. So is time-limited offers (for example "used-cars are half-price this weekend only").
- 5 **Don't kill a strong message... *with too much creativity!***
- 6 **If a client has NO USPs....** use lots of creativity! Example – Coldseal Windows had no USPs.. so Lee made an ad for them using singing pigs!
- 7 **Don't cram** ...multiple messages into one commercial. Split the messages over multiple commercials and link those commercials together with a consumer identity (the brand).

SHORT SPOTS

The radio station takes greater ownership of short spots than commercials... whether the station makes them itself, or obtains them from someone else. They're part of the stations "programming time" – it's own creative output.

The exact length of a short spot may not need to be as precisely constrained as it would be for a commercial.

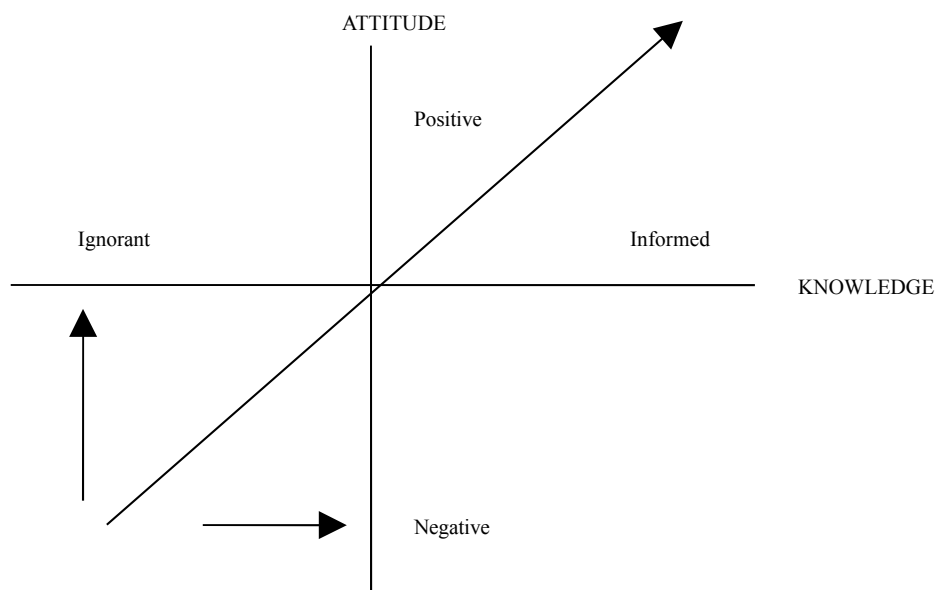


Christian Commercials and Short Spots

What can they achieve?

In Christian terms, what should we be aiming to do with our short spot or commercial? There is a danger.. BEING TOO AMBITIOUS.

Here' a graph of where you might be wanting to move your listener from.. and to...



But be realistic!! You shouldn't aim to move someone from the bottom left to the top right of this diagram with one 30second short spot! Radio is good at nudging people.. changing perceptions.. moving them towards God in stages. If your short spot does not convert someone it doesn't mean it's a failure! It is a step in a larger process.



Things to Remember for both Commercials and Short Spots

- 1) How can you put it across in the most **compelling** way?
- 2) **Clarify** - what's the thing you're "selling" or wanting to get across?
- 3) **Does it fit** on the radio station it'll be broadcast on?
- 4) Is your **script** wooden.... or vibrant and rich with emotion and imagery?
- 5) Will **music** enrich your tale or not?
- 6) **It's for the listener!** Is your target Listener for the commercial or short spot alienated by any part of your product? *What floats your boat may or may not be what floats your Listeners boat. For instance, you may think dance music is the most captivating thing in the world, but if your target listener is over 50, they're likely to be repelled.*
- 7) **Twists?** How about a few surprises. An unexpected sound effect, stopdowns.... Silence even.... or humour?
- 8) Are the start and end **robust** enough to be surrounded by music or other adverts?
- 9) There are **no real rules** in the creative process!
- 10) **Complexity isn't always the best thing.**