

Central Coast Radio Creative Department work flow analysis

August September 2012

*“We have the ability to do great things for the Central Coast economy –
we just don’t have the capacity.”*
Creative department employee

Executive Summary

- The Creative department is currently swamped with data entry tasks – to the point where virtually no creative scripting activity is happening at all in the Creative department.
- In fact, the personnel in the creative department are all engaging in long hours of unpaid overtime merely to complete their data entry tasks.
- In recent times, due to the volume of data entry tasks, the creative department has gone from a centre of excellence for creative work, to a department to be avoided if creative tasks are required.
- Good creative writers make very mediocre data entry personnel.
- Those former members of the creative department who were actually good at data entry tasks are no longer available – either left or on long service.
- The current situation is setting up a cycle of failure that will impact the income generation ability of the entire business unit if left unchecked.
- The proposed solution of a Traffic-Creative-Sales co-ordinator position, is minimal in cost and will enable creative to again contribute to winning new business to the station, as well as helping to service current clients to a much higher level of satisfaction.

A day in the life of a CC Radio creative

1. Answer emails from over night ¾ hr to 1hr
 - a. usually enquiries regarding on-air errors
 - b. enquiries regarding clerical errors
 - c. requests for retrievals of scripts or audio
 - d. Digital courier alerts
 - e. Print out of missing lists
 - f. Material Instructions from sales

2. Next day missing list 1 hr
 - Email reps
 - Fix and instruct what we know
 - Find material that may already exist
 - Re-instruct existing material

3. 14 day missing list – working ahead about 1 week 2 hrs
 - Emailing reps about impending problems
 - Instructing to traffic whatever is known
 - Checking in Nexgen that material exists
 - Check if scripts exist
 - Check with production for ETA of material

4. Receiving material 1 hr
 - Digital Courier – 5 or 6 a day
 - Event Cinemas
 - Other sent via email - download audio
 - apply spot number
 - Enquire re: order number
 - Create paperwork
 - Send paperwork to traffic & production
 - Create spot in Nexgen
 - Each of these takes an average of 10 minutes each

5. Late missing list ½ hr at least
 - Late Harvey Norman / Domayne
 - formatting & editing pre-written scripts
 - downloading audio
 - creating Nexgen spots
 - Liaising with reps re: missing material
 - Liaising with traffic, production re: readiness of material

6. Other miscellaneous throughout the day – 20 mins x 3 per day ... 1hr
 - Retrievals
 - receive MP3 or script
 - Search copy files for clues to recording time
 - search Nexgen back ups disks
 - load disk content onto desktop
 - find specific file and load onto Nexgen
 - General performance affidavits
 - Entering awards 1/3 hour
 - creating pdfs
 - sending instructions for 256kpbs audio
 - online forms
 - Voice direction ¼ to ½ hour
 - Voicing ads ¼ hr

Something missing?

The eagle-eyed will notice that there is something missing from the average day in the creative department – that being the writing of creative scripts.

Currently, the station's internationally awarded copywriters can go almost a week without having the time to look at a brief, write a single script or discuss the creative input of a spot with a rep. In fact, in the last week of August 2012, one writer reported that there was not even the time to even format a single client written script within office hours.

SWOT Analysis of Creative Department

Stage 1: SWOT List

| | |
|--|---|
| STRENGTHS Creative scripting Marketing / promotional knowledge Creative problem solving Marketing strategy Mentoring / teaching Team camaraderie Voice / audio direction | WEAKNESSES Close clerical work Structured tasks Short turnaround tasks Implementing instructions without input. Tasks done without alternatives considered |
| OPPORTUNITIES Awards Client liaison on creative Sales team creative seminar Training up creative interns Client creative discussion Full 'agency' type service to clients | THREATS Turnover of personnel Uneven work (type) distribution Budget cuts Communication breakdowns with sales team—especially Orange/Port Workload spill from other departments or business units |

Stage 2: SWOT Cross-reference analysis

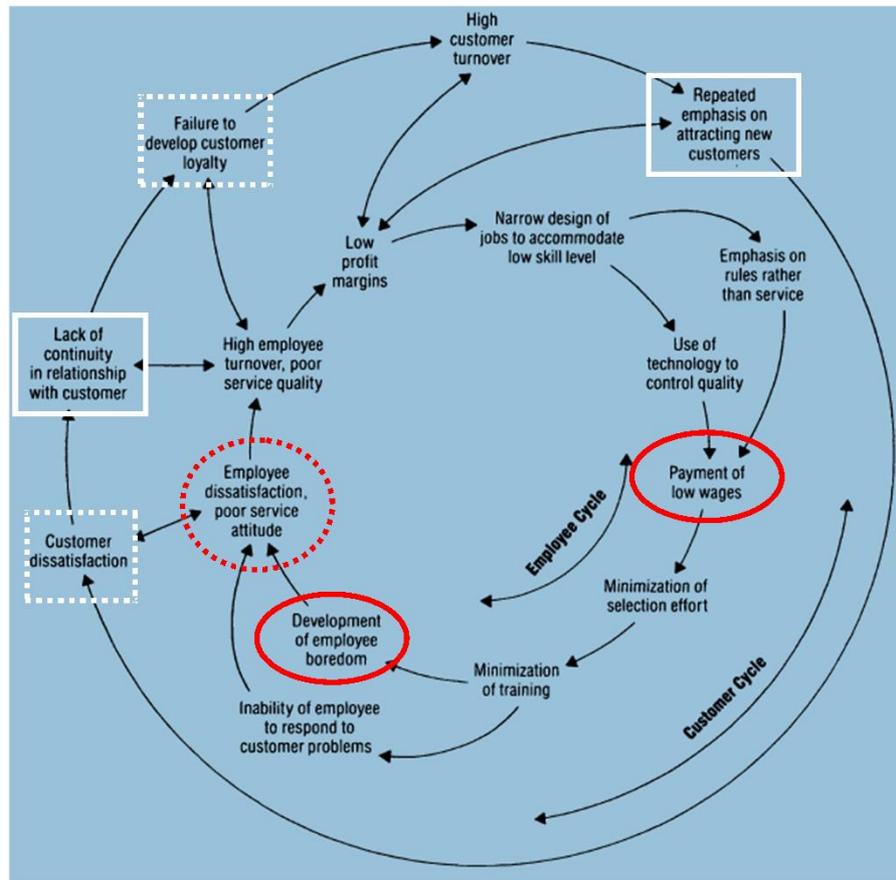
Strength/Opportunities cross referencing:

- The creative team offers massive PR opportunities for the CC radio business unit, some of which have already started to be realised. For example, the team's success in the recent ACRA nominations.
- The creative team, given the right conditions, can expand sales opportunities, especially with novice clients. Perhaps with clients who have developed a negative attitude to the business unit due to past practice.
- Other PR opportunities exist with mentoring of young interns, as has been done in production with Anna and Marc.

Weaknesses/Threats cross referencing:

- Diversion of creative team efforts away from their core strength, to activities centred on their clearest weakness is creating a downward spiral in productivity and morale within the unit. This can only set up a cycle of failure which will impact the entire business unit.
- The impending cycle of failure could increase team member exit intention to the point where critical people are lost to the business unit.
- While remuneration is a factor and is discussed in the team, it is by no means the driving motivator. Remuneration is only an underscore of other negative working conditions.

The impending cycle of failure



Schlesinger & Heskett 'Cycle of Failure' - from *Breaking the Cycle of Failure*.

Sloan Management Review 17, Spring 1991. p17.

<http://www.ikm3000.com/nederlands/pdf/Schlesinger%20Heskett%20Sloan%201991.pdf>

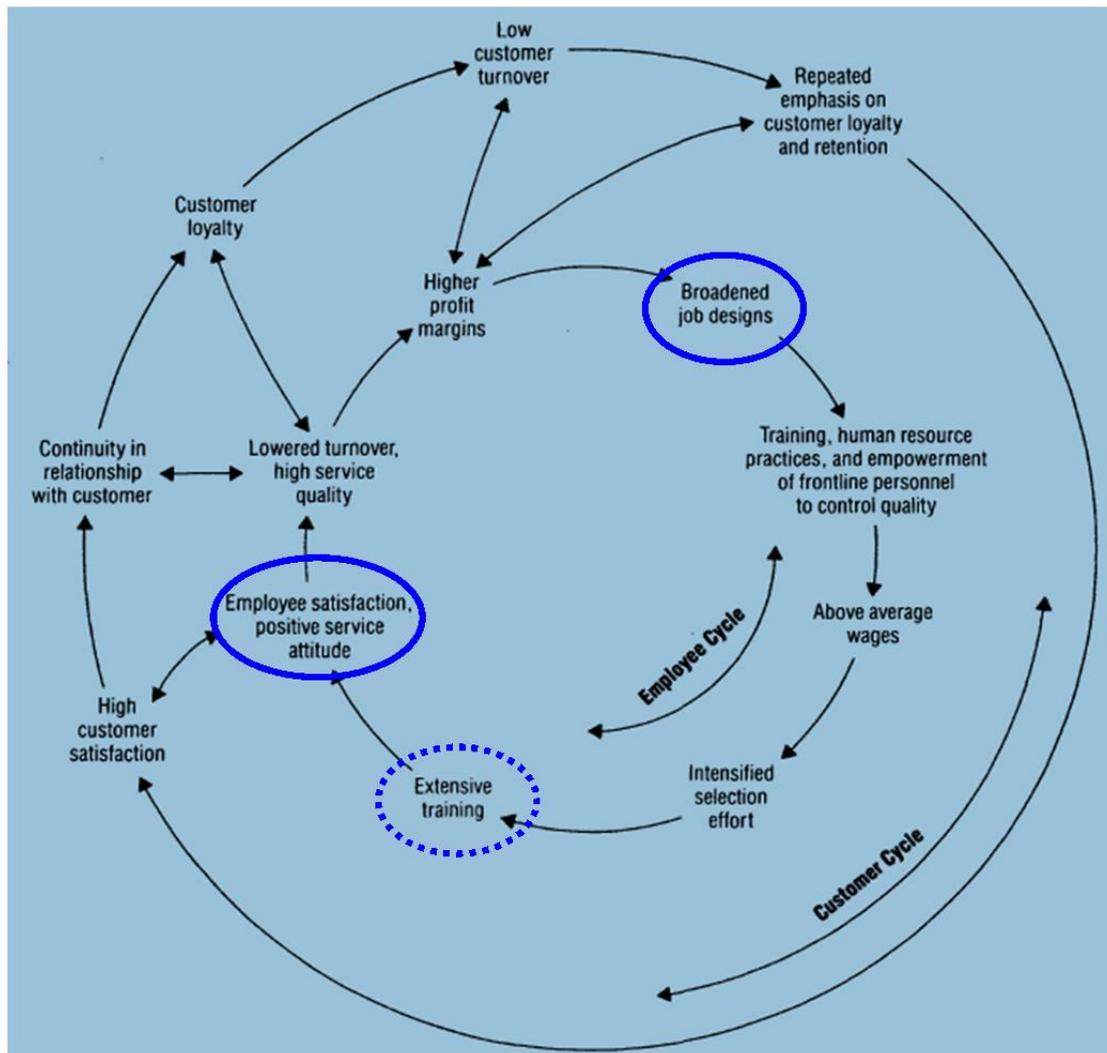
Above is Schlesinger's Cycle of Failure Model. The elements of the model of most interest to the Central Coast Radio business unit are marked. Those marked in red pertain to the creative department. Those marked in white pertain to the sales department, the income of the station, or the clients of the stations.

Those elements marked with solid lines are elements that appear to have already commenced at Central Coast Radio. Those marked with dotted lines are those that appear imminent.

A cycle of failure can take over a business unit very quickly. However, if elements to the cycle are identified and rectified early, it is far easier to turn the cycle of failure into a cycle of success. Left unattended however, the cycle of failure will gather momentum and intervention becomes increasingly more difficult and painful.

It is acknowledged that the above diagram is not entirely representative of the current situation at Central Coast radio, but is included as a catalyst for discussion. As is the following Cycle of Success diagram.

The cycle of success



Schlesinger & Heskett 'Cycle of Success' - from *Breaking the Cycle of Failure*.
Sloan Management Review 17, Spring 1991. p17.
<http://www.ikm3000.com/nederlands/pdf/Schlesinger%20Heskett%20Sloan%201991.pdf>

Again, those areas that it will now be argued, offer Central Coast Radio the greatest opportunity to convert the predicted cycle of failure into one of success, are marked in dark blue. For purposes of discussion, these are proposed as most relevant to the operation of the creative department.

The current problem in a nutshell

Historically, the traffic department at CC Radio has been absolutely overwhelmed with data entry, due mostly to the fact that the traffic department is understaffed by one. A quick-fix was found by moving a number of the traffic department's functions into the creative office, and ostensibly spreading the extra data entry tasks across the 3 individuals in the copy department. This merely masked the problem because in reality, only one, and sometimes two of the individuals in the creative department addressed the bulk of the data entry tasks. ■■■

The movement of data entry

into the Creative writers' portfolio brought short-term solutions to three problems – firstly, they became the persons who took up the excess work from the understaffed traffic department, secondly, it provided alternative work for one writer to replace creative tasks that he was no longer doing, and third, it allowed the other writers in the room to take up the creative tasks needed by the sales team but now left unfulfilled [REDACTED]

When one writer left, most of the excess data entry tasks were taken up by the creative manager, I suspect, because [REDACTED] data entry not the strong suit of the other individuals in the room. By taking up the bulk of the data entry tasks, the strengths of the other writers in the room, namely high-quality creative, would be given the opportunity to flourish.

The creative manager has effectively sacrificed his own opportunities for creative writing, in order to allow time for those around him to do what they do best. It seems he may have recognised this as an inevitable consequence of taking up the more administrative position as manager of the creative team.

The result is now that the creative manager is no longer available to continue the bulk of the data entry tasks, the personnel left in the creative department are entirely the wrong people to be doing the data entry tasks. Not only that, but the data entry tasks have grown to such an extent that they have now completely overwhelmed the core activity of the creative team. High-quality creative writers have been turned into mediocre data entry clerks, leaving a complete vacuum in the station in terms of its creative services.

Equally, with the shift in focus has come a shift in blame and a shift in culture. Creative is no longer regarded as the place to win business through excellent advertising content, but the place to dump any data entry administration. As a result an attitude has developed that the creative team are unable to generate original creative advertising material and at best can barely cope with administering copy or broadcast material which has come from elsewhere.

In short, creative output from the creative team has virtually ground to zero replaced by complete concentration on mostly data administration. In keeping with this new focus, advertising content is now reduced to mere script administration.

A proposed solution

The most obvious solution is to give to the Traffic department the resources it needs to complete its tasks, and to return to that department the data entry tasks that are currently being performed by other departments, most notably the creative department. This is the norm at other radio centres within my experience (Coast Rock, WS FM , 2CH, 2GB, MIX106.5 & ARN96.1).

In the times I have visited 2DAY FM / MMM in Sydney I have not witnessed the creative department running around performing traffic department tasks.

It is proposed that a suitable person be employed on relatively low wages, as a 'runner' or a 'go-between' co-ordinator to liaise with the Traffic, Sales, Production, Promotions, Creative, ON-Air and Community Service departments, to complete the multitude of data entry and some other tasks, that are currently swamping traffic and creative in particular.

This could be either a full time or part time position.

As a full time position, this person would be trained in all the data entry tasks being undertaken at present by the Creative Department. This person could further be trained in a number of the data entry tasks currently being done by traffic – for example, the entry of contacts coming from agency or other non-direct contracts. This person could over time, be trained up as someone who can cover for any traffic personnel who are either away sick or on leave. The position could also entail shifts as receptionist, tasks in sales coordination, doing downloads and retrievals for production and so on. The position could probably be filled for around \$600 a week.

If the position was to be part time, it could be for 3 or 4 hours a day, at \$15 or \$20 an hour, probably starting sometime between 1.30 and 2.30pm finishing sometime around 4.30pm or 5.30pm. This position would be mostly to undertake a large portion of the data entry tasks currently done by creative, as well as liaison with sales regarding material instruction, and any spill-over tasks that Traffic may see fit to give to this part-time co-ordinator role. It would be anticipated that this part time role would be covered by around \$300 a week.

The knock-on benefits of freeing up creative personnel to return to their core competencies of script writing and creative client liaison, would far outstrip the proposed cost of the new co-ordinator position.

As yet there has been no indication of an increase in voice budget – there may be an argument that a trade-off could be made to divert some portion of a voice budget increase to this new co-ord position.

However, should it prove impossible to find in the budget the money to fund the position, there could again be a trade-off from the freelance copywriter budget to this new traffic-creative go-between.

Which ever way the position may be funded, it can be guaranteed that the releasing of the creative department to do what it does best, will have a direct impact on increasing income to the station.

Alternatively, to leave things as they are, will result in inefficiencies guaranteed to wind the cycle of failure into top speed.