This session is out of date.

From the moment I submitted the idea to the conference committee to the last minute changes I made this morning, this session is old news.

That's true of every session here at PROMAX/BDA. It's not a slam. It's a recognition of a unique phenomenon of our business.

On-air promotion—and to an extent off air marketing**—changes faster than any form of television communication.** News might be the exception, but within our world of selling via electronic media nothing changes faster.

Think about that. Television is the most immediate form of aural and visual communication the world has ever known. It is practically instantaneous. And within that world of lightning-fast change, we change faster than anyone.

More than 5,000 shows will air this week.
Approximately 6 hours and 35 minutes of promos will air in the next hour.
NBC will create more than 17,000 promos this year.
Then start all over next year.

I honestly don't believe we have any idea how all this affects us, our messages, or our viewers.

The PROMAX conference brochure pitches Roberta Mel talking about the success of Joe Millionaire. Joe Millionaire? Sure that was important 3 months ago when they printed the brochure. Hell, I want to hear her talk about the success of American Idol!

Everything in our business changes in promo time.

When I look back at tapes of my last two years of PROMAX sessions, I realize how out-of-date they are. Sure the observations still hold true, but the examples feel ancient.

If you can remember back that far, you might recall that I talked about the 15 Variables of on-Air Promotion. It was information I had taken from an academic study that attempted to qualify and quantify the factors that contribute to the success and failure of promos.

The academics first conclusion, one that any promo person worth his or her salt could have told them, was that **"Measuring the effectiveness of promos is elusive."**

That always struck me… If our measures of success are difficult to determine, then the converse must also be true.

"Effective strategies are hard to come by."

And yet, we've been doing it with I believe a reasonable degree of success for quite some time.

How is that?

Well, the first answer has to be intuition. Television has always been a medium of gut instinct. There's certainly no science that can explain the success of "Sponge Bob Square Pants" or "Mr. Personality." And I do believe at the end of the day good instinct is what makes a great promo person. Definitely on the creative side. And up to a point on the strategic side.

But as competition continues to fragment audiences, it also fragments strategic options. To the point where success and failure in our business is based on minutiae. Minutiae that instinct can't keep up with.

Minutiae that is in a constant state of change.

So that's what we are going to focus on today. Minutiae—sweating the details—and how those details are affected by a constant state of change—time.

I believe that time—and its consequences—separates on-air promotion from all other forms of advertising. And one of the biggest problems of our industry is that we don't make allowances for that.

The reality is that most of us make too many promos, of the wrong length, then air them at the wrong time. Such a waste.

Today, we're going to figure out how to raise your ratings by changing one variable—time.

And to that end, we're going to try to answer five of the most important day-to-day questions of our business:

1. **What's the best promo length?**
2. **How long should a promo run?**
3. **How many hours of programming can you promote?**
4. **How many minutes of promos should you schedule in an hour?**
5. **When does a promo stop being effective?**

Believe it or not there is one answer for all of these questions.

It depends. That's not a cop out. But I want you to understand there will be no concrete answers today. Everyone's situation in this room is different and changing. We can however determine the questions you need to ask yourself to come up with your own answers.

First, let's take a step back. A big step back.

What is a promo?

Didn't know we were going that far back did you?
A promo is a television spot that sells a network or channel or station's programming & image. Obviously, there are lots of different kinds of promos:

Brand promos, Program Generics, Program Episodics, Line-Ups, Multiples, Topicals, Proof of Performance

But in this session, we're just going to focus on the meat and potatoes—program promos.

Like this:

(play NBC Thursday promo)

Even though promos have been around since the 70s, it's surprising how little we know about their effectiveness. I believe that's due to two reasons: first, since promos were always thought of as "free" air time, they never given the respect and therefore the attention they deserve. It's a battle we still face, particularly with ad sales always muscling in on promo time. Second, promos are more complicated than their closest cousins, the advertising commercial and the movie trailer.

That's ironic, because the only strategic tools and research we have are based on scientific analysis those crafts. And the reality is they may or may not be relevant to us.

I believe there are four factors that differentiate what we do, and should impact how we do it.

Experiences. Ephemery. Proximity. & Affinity.

What the hell is he talking about?

Let's explain it by example: the difference between a commercial and a promo.

A commercial sells a product or service.

(play Isuzu clip)

A promo sells something far less tangible—an experience captured in moments of time, or to borrow from an old A&E line, "time well spent." It offers a sampling opportunity. You can actually "try on" the product in a promo. A commercial (except for a movie spot) has to simulate the sampling experience or talk about the product.

(play E! Nicole promo)

That's what I mean by "experiences."

A commercial sells a product or service that usually has an extended shelf life and pretty much stays the same.

(play "Diamond is Forever" clip)

A promo sells an experience that comes—then poof it’s gone—or changes day-to-day or week-to-week.

(play NBC “Jay & Katie” promo)

(slide)

That’s ephemery. Promos are short lived.

A commercial usually wants you to go somewhere and buy something.

(play Burger King & Midas clips)

A promo sells an experience that’s happening now or very soon and at exactly the place you’re at.

(play ABC Extreme Makeover promo)

That’s proximity.

A commercial hopes that someone who watches *Everybody Loves Raymond* wants to eat a better burger.

(play Lea & Perrins clip)

A promo sells a television experience to someone who just enjoyed a television experience.

(play CBS CSI promo)

That’s affinity.

Pretty significant differences. Not only structurally, but emotionally.

For example. I came to NBC to see an NBC drama. I’m much more likely to want to see a message about another NBC drama. Particularly since it may be “coming on next.” I did not come to NBC to buy a Ford Truck. And by trying to sell me a Ford Truck you are disturbing my “time well spent” because in my head **“a commercial,”** to borrow from George Carlin, **“sells me things I don’t need and can’t afford, that are overpriced, and don’t work. And they do it by exploiting my fears and insecurities.”**

Actually, we call that positioning.

And according to marketing guru Al Ries, a good commercial doesn’t sell, it <u>does</u> exploit your fears and insecurities. It position’s.

In the car world, Volvo means safety. Mercedes is prestige.

To quote Al…

“The best advertising communicates precious little about the product or service. What the best advertising does, however, is to establish and reinforce a position in the prospect's mind.”

"Better ingredients, better pizza." As a result of this positioning, Papa John's has become the third-largest pizza chain in America and one of the fastest growing.

Do you know what the better ingredients are?… Most people don't. Does it matter? Probably not. "Better ingredients, better pizza" is enough to position Papa John's a step above Pizza Hut and Domino's.

To continue with Al, “A mind is much too small a container to hold all the marketing messages that companies are trying to stuff into it. Trying to communicate more information than is necessary is self-defeating. It can actually reduce the effectiveness of a marketing program.”

I absolutely agree with that. And I also think its absolutely wrong.

For us. In program promotion.

That’s another way promos are different from commercials. The content of the message. We must never forget navigation.

All right. So we know promos are different. So what?

Let’s start with ephemery.

According to our friends at Animal Planet, the shortest-lived creature on earth is the Mayfly.

The female of the species lives about five minutes. In that time she has to find a mate, copulate, find her way back to the pond from whence she came, then lay her eggs before she dies. Not a lot of time for soul searching in that existence.

The scientific name for the mayfly is *Ephemera nadinae*.

Short-lived birth. Or perhaps more appropriately…

"Born to die."

We, as promo people, do a little better than the mayfly.
The average program promo has a shelf life of 3 days to a week. It sits in an inventory with dozens of other promos—some with a longer shelf life, some with a shorter shelf life. All the promos are constantly being made, played, then rotated out only to be replaced by more promos day after day, week after week.

The truth is we work in a factory. And at a certain point it's easy to fall into the assembly line mentality of Henry Ford. "You can have it in any color you want as long as its black."

Our promos get stale. When you are churning out spots day in and day out, the first thing to suffer is time: thinking time. Inspiration time. Writing time. Design time. Production time. Post time. Review time.

Our creative process is constantly being shrunk.

The truth is in our business…inevitably…at a certain point…burn out hits.

If you've ever judged PROMAX or BDA you know, you've seen it. Too much of what we do sucks.

Where am I going with all this? The question is, does it really have to be this way? Are we slaves to ephemery?

I honestly don't think so. At least to a point. And that brings me back to my original premise. We've built a system based on the commercial advertising model. But promo making is a completely different beast.

How do we decide what promos to make?

Usually, sitting down with programming and marketing, we make a list of priorities for a given week, a month and sometimes a quarter.

Obviously, we can't promote 24 hours a day of programming, though of course the programming department would like us to. And God bless them if my job was contingent on the success or failure of those shows I'd want them promoted too.

We make our priority lists. "A" priorities, "B" priorities, "C" priorities. Everyone does it differently, but the results are the same. We build a hierarchy of messages. Then we start making stuff. Often we do different versions; a 30, a 20, a 15, maybe a 10 and a 5. If it's really important sometimes even a 60.

And after we've made all the promos for all these shows, we pass them to scheduling to place them.

This makes sense in a commercial world where you buy your airtime to match the most effective creative. But in our world, it doesn't work that way. We have a fixed number of spots that we are going to fill. We back into a schedule.

And that should be our starting point.

But it's not. And that's why it's so easy for ad sales to take our time away. We'll come back to that.

Imagine you're a chef in a restaurant. You look around and say, "we just got in a really nice deliver of meat, chicken and fish. So tonight we're going to cook 39 filet mignon dinners, 42 chicken kievs, 27 trout almandines." And you hope that the number of customers who come in matches the number of entrees you've made.

Obviously, you'd be out of the restaurant business and back into promos pretty quickly. Because you're either making too many plates of food, or not making enough of the right kind of entrees to satisfy the customers coming in the door.

Real chefs have an idea of what customers are going to want based on historical experience, and they try to keep the right amount of ingredients available to satisfy the projected demand. But they cook to order.

We should be making promos to order. Because like the restaurant we end up making more than we need or not enough of the right kind.

Here we are breaking our necks creating spots, and some versions are never aired, or aired with such low reach and frequency levels they are inconsequential.

We throw away our precious airtime, our promo production time and probably more importantly, a significant little chunk of our lives.

Most of us have a minimum of 2 minutes an hour of promo time spread over 4-6 breaks.

We break that time into a combination of promo lengths.

Our two minutes may consist of two 30’s, two 15’s, and three 10’s. We sometimes lose some of that time to an oversold situation. Sometimes we get unsold avails. Sometimes a movie runs short and we pick up some more promo time. But overall, on a week-to-week basis we have a pretty good idea of what’s available to us.

But do we use it correctly? Do we devise a scheduling plan, then make promos to match it?   Does anyone here look at the avails for the week or for the month, break them into promo lengths, then create a promo production schedule against it?

That’s what I want you to start doing. But first you have to know how to build the plan. A plan will tell you how many shows you can promote, how many promos to make, what lengths to make them.

Now how many of you assign GRPs—gross rating points—to your promos?

How many of you have a good understanding GRPs and reach and frequency?

If you do, I don’t know how you got it. Most promo people learn how to write, produce, and edit, by doing it. Reach and frequency is something someone has to teach you.

It's all part of **on-air media planning.** Which is the least understood, least utilized aspect of our business. Which is puzzling. As promo people we control billions of dollars worth of airtime. In fact, I'd wager that within this room, we control more media dollars than the largest media planning company in the world.

Commercial media planning is a $10 billion dollar a year business. That's how much advertising agencies and their clients will spend on television advertising this year. And you can be sure they want the right consumers to see their messages at the right time.

You think they do it by instinct? How many agencies would have the nerve to tell their clients, "we have a pretty good idea where these spots should go. We're going to spend your entire budget on our best guess." But that's what a lot of us... No most of us do. For the real world, media planning is a highly detailed, labor-intensive necessity. Why should it be different for us?

In our business on-air media planning is still a young, and I'd even say infantile business. There are some networks that employ sophisticated on-air promo media planning. There is a company called Effective Media Services that sells a promo optimizer program that squeezes every minute of efficiency out of a promo schedule. In fact, they're hosting a session tomorrow morning at 11 on audience targeting, entitled "Ready, Fire, Aim," and I'd recommend you go see it.

Essentially, on-air media planning is an incredibly complicated process that begins with a very simple idea.

Everyday with your on-air promo time you reach a certain number of viewers.

The key word here is **reach**.

Reach is defined as the number of individual viewers or households you are able to talk to in a given period of time, say one week. (Now just to simplify this, I'm not going to talk about households, only viewers.)

Everyday you air promos multiple times.

Frequency is the number of times a viewer sees one of your spots in a week.

Why a week? We could measure in days, dayparts, seasons. But a week is the normal purchase cycle of television programming.

Now we get to the math.

You multiply your reach—the number of people who see your spots—by your average frequency to determine your GRP = gross rating points.

R x F = GRP

GRPs are the currency of on-air planning.

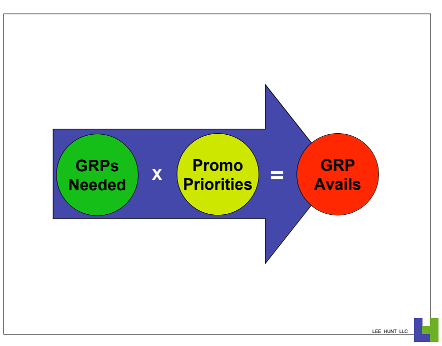
Now a few brave cable networks gave me their GRP schedules.

One assigns…
75-100 GRPS (A25-54) during a one to two week schedule.
Another…
200-250 GRPS (A25-54) over 3 to 4 weeks.
A third…
90 GRPs every 2 weeks.
And a fourth…
75 GRPs for "A" priority shows, 40 for "B," etc…

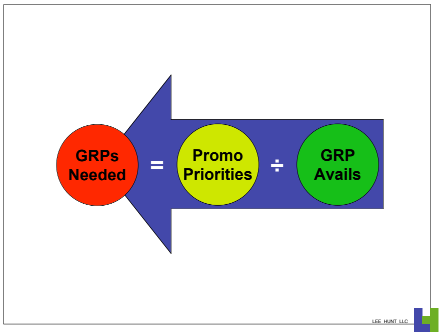
How did they come with these numbers?

How do you know how many GRPs to assign?

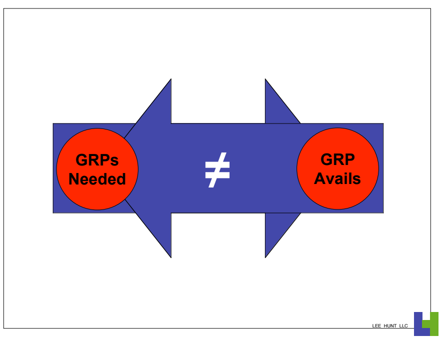
Well, there are two ways of figuring that out.



One, how many GRPs do you need to effectively communicate your message? Once you have that answer, you multiply it by your priority list and you end up with the number of GRPs you need in your promo schedule for the week.



Or working backwards, how many GRPs do you have available to you? You calculate that number, divide it by the number priorities you have and that should give you the number of GRPs you need for your campaigns.



The two approaches should yield the same answers. But guess what. They won't. Because 99% of the time you're going to have more shows to promote than you have effective promo time to use.

And what happens most of the time is that we over promote our primary priorities, and under promote everything else.

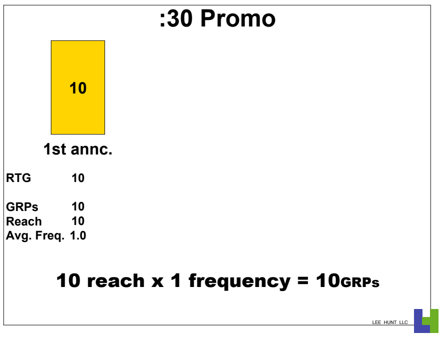
We're losing on both fronts.

So let's figure this out.

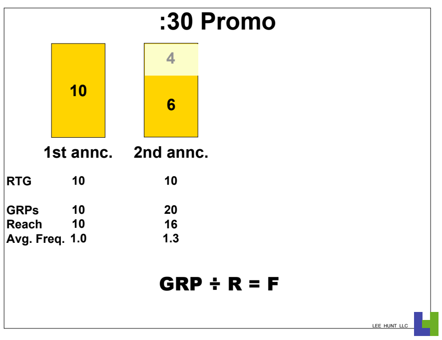
Let's start back with how many GRPs you need.

Ideally you would like half the audience that your promo schedule reaches to see your spot 3 or more times.

Let me give you an example.



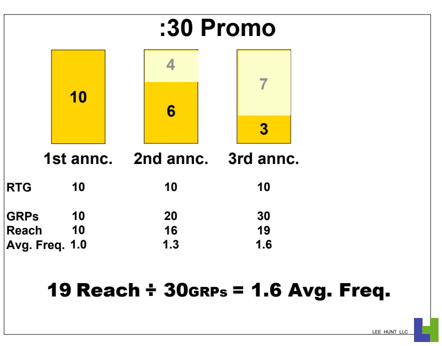
You air a 30 second spot in a show with a 10 rating. That spot has 10 GRPs because you've reached 10% of the audience who could see your promo. And they've seen it one time. 10 reach x 1 frequency =10grps



The second airing of your spot is also in a show with a 10 rating. (Lucky you.) That gives you 20 GRPs. 10 GRPs for the first airing, 10 GRPs for the second airing.

In this example, 40% of your audience saw the spot the first time it aired. 60% are seeing it now for the first time. Your reach is now 16%. Because you're adding the 10% from the first airing—the people who saw the spot for the first time + the 6% of the second airing—the people who saw the spot for the first time—or the unduplicated audience.

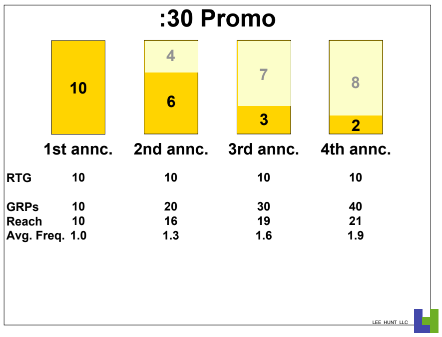
Your average frequency is now 1.3. How did we get that? We've divided 16 into 20. Because if R x F = GRP, then GRP/R=F.



The third airing of your promo occurs in another show with a 10 rating. (You're on a roll here.) This time, only 30% are seeing the promo for the first time. The other 70% saw it the first time, the second time or both times it aired.

We've got 30 GRPs now. 10 + 10 + 10.

And our reach is 19%. 10 + 6 + 3. Divide those and you get an average frequency of 1.6.



The fourth time we air our spot in another 10 rated show, we're up to 40 GRPs.
10 + 10 + 10 + 10. This time only 20% of the viewers are seeing the spot for the first time. So our reach has added up to 21. 10 + 6 + 3 + 2.

Divide that into 40 and our average frequency is 1.9.

Now you can see in this example that we're going to exhaust our reach pretty soon. In other words, we're not going to find any new viewers to see our promo. We're just going to show the same promo to the same people over and over. Up to a point that's a good thing. Remember we want a *minimum* of 3 viewings. But at some point, we're going to reach burn out.

That's why scheduling the right promo to the right audience at the right time is so important. And that means knowing who's watching what breaks when.

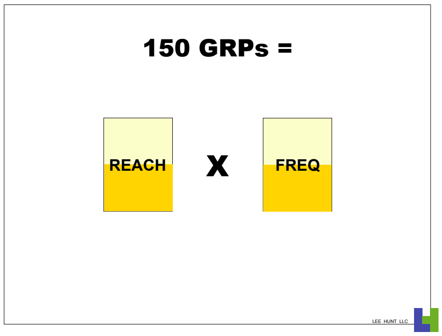
In other words, get the right message to the right people the right number of times.

In every break, in every show, in every daypart, every day, 365 days a year.

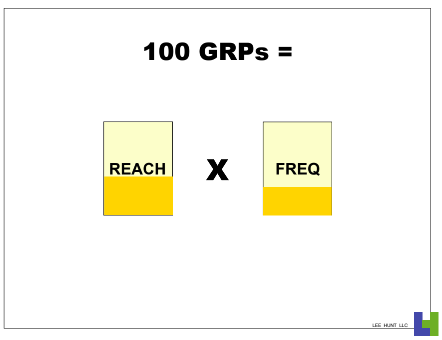
Okay, now remember, reach means how many viewers saw my spot at least one time. But, we want a minimum of 3 viewings of my spot. There is another term for that, called **effective reach**, or, alternatively, reach at 3+ frequency—the number of viewers who saw my spot 3 or more times. So now we have four terms: **GRPs, Reach, Effective Reach, and Average Frequency.**

Overwhelmed? Just remember what Benjamin Disraeli said, **"There are 3 kinds of lies: lies, damn lies, and statistics."**

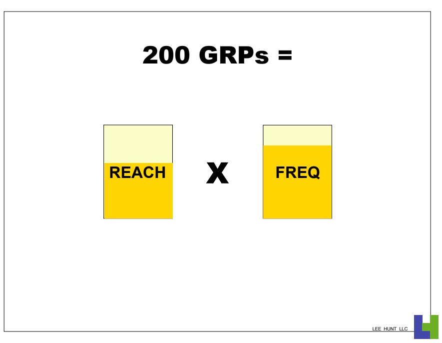
This is statistics. Okay, back to the board.



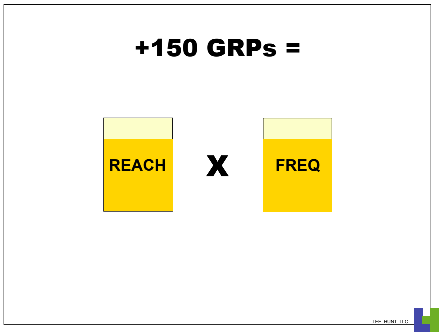
Suppose you run a schedule of 150 GRPs for a promo. You will probably get about a 50 reach, and an effective reach of about 25 (half of your overall reach is what you want to shoot for) reached 3 or more times. But, every channel has different audience levels, and builds reach differently. You’re going to have to work with your research department to develop your own GRP guidelines.



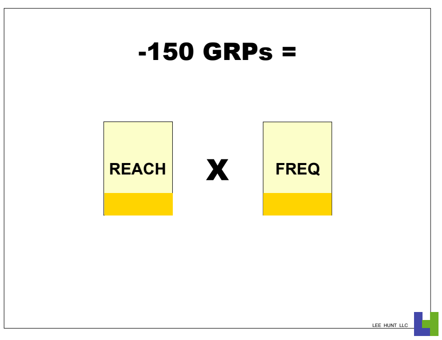
But of course, the balance will continually shift, and the size of the schedule should be adjusted accordingly to meet your needs. If you’ve got a well publicized event—let’s say Michael Jackson’s Private Home Movies—you may be looking for a lot of reach and don’t need a lot of frequency. It’s not going to take a lot of repetition for that message to sink in.



Other times, we need a lot of prodding to bring people to a show. In those cases you need lots of frequency and you’ll need to raise our GRP levels to get it.



The irony here is that intuitively we probably give more GRP weight to shows that need less—they're bigger, more important shows—to us and our viewers—therefore they stand out more.



Then we give less "weight" to shows whose "borderline performance" desperately need to be supported. And research confirms these are the shows that benefit most from promos.

My guess is that this is where our instincts fail us.

But going back to the balance. We've got 150 ratings points to spend. But over what period of time? That depends on our **"sell cycle."**

it's a weekly series, it's probably one week. If it's a nightly story, we're talking one day. If it's an event, we might be talking two weeks.

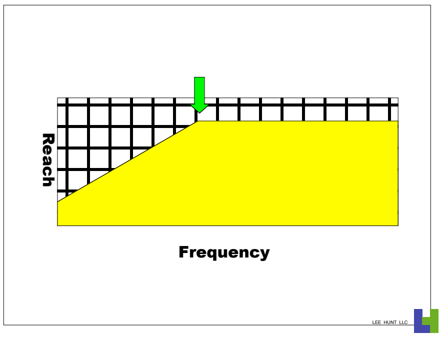
Which brings us to the first question.

How long should a promo run?

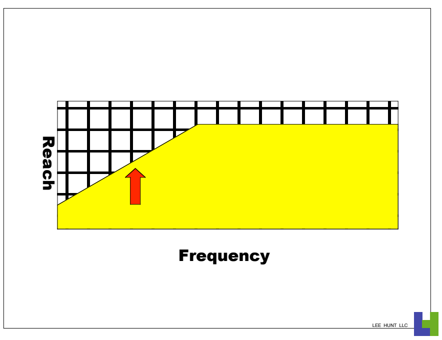
As long as it takes for you to reach your GRP target. No more. No less.

To determine that target, you have to answer these questions: What is your sell cycle? How many GRPs will it take to effectively sell your show?

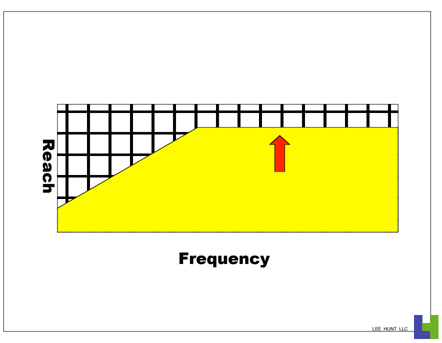
In other words, based on your audience profile, where can you find the inflection of optimal reach with suitable effective frequency?



When you know that you schedule so you can hit here…



Not here where you're ineffective…

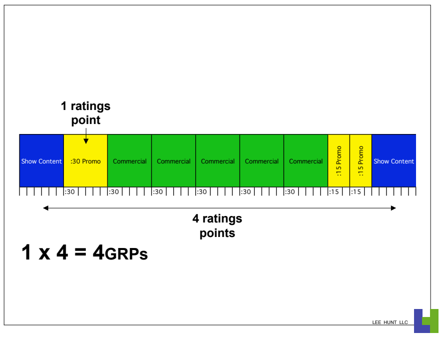


Or here where you're on the road to burn out and have wasted inventory.

This isn't easy to figure out: not every show gets consistent ratings. (Not to mention, do viewers even watch the breaks?) Duplicated and unduplicated audiences fluctuate. You need your research department to answer these questions for you.

And not all promos are created equal. That we can deal with without a research department. Let's tackle it since it leads to our second question.

What's the best promo length?



In the example I used before, I assumed a 30 second promo was worth 1 rating point. In other words, if I run a 30 seconds promo in a show that's getting a 4 rating, that promo would be worth 4 ratings point.

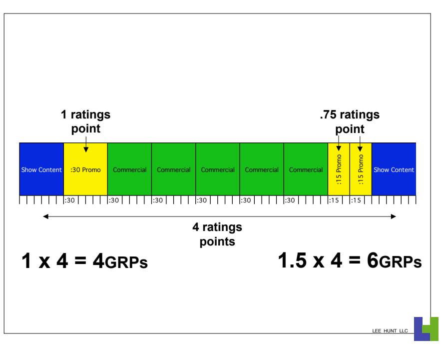
Most people believe that 15s and 20s are worth between 75-85% of a ratings point.

So cost per second, they are in some ways more valuable than a 30.

You can think of it this way.

:30 = 1 ratings point
:20 = .85 ratings point
:15 = .75 ratings point
:10 = .50 ratings point

But let me point out that this is VERY subjective, and many planners don't believe you can assign these kinds of values.



But if I say a 15 is worth 75% of a ratings point, and I air two 15's in that 4 rated show, I come out with two 3 rated promos. Or 6 GRPs in 30 seconds compared to 4 GRPs.

So should I make all 15s? Or 10's or 5's? If the formula holds true, I can get a hell of a lot of ratings points by just making 5 second promos. But of course, I can't sell much of anything in 5 seconds. Also, breaking inventory into too many short spots exacerbates clutter problems.

Last year in the 15 variables we learned what 30s, 20s, 15s, & 10s are best for.

30's are great for introducing something new: a new series, with unknown talent, an unfamiliar storyline, an unknown title. Or something complicated: usually a dramatic storyline. But many times 20s can do that job as well.

(play WB Everwood promo)

30's are also great for multiples. Selling a line-up, a theme promo.

(play HGTV promo)

10's are best for known quantities: a returning series, a big star, a hit movie. Or for simple messages: usually something light, like a comedy.

(play ABC Funny promo)

So how do you determine best promo length? You have to balance your creative strategy (how long you need to sell the story) with the number of GRPs needed to make an impact, and plot that against the needs of the rest of your promo schedule. As one promo executive told me, it's like golf clubs in a bag - you have to know how to use them all.

I had a client whose staff made spectacular 30s, then did the 15 & 10-second cut downs that were so-so. But to reach their GRP goals, and to accommodate ad sales, only the 15's and 10s usually aired. They spent a lot of time and effort making great creative that was rarely seen, while the brunt of what their viewers were exposed to was mediocre.

They wasted their time and their viewer's time.

My point here is that effective planning is hard, really hard, but it should be the corner stone of your <u>creative</u> strategy and the determining factor in deciding how many promos to make and of which length.

Let's take a closer look at **frequency**. Because this is where most people blow it.

But first, are you getting this? I know it's hard. If you're having a difficult time with this do not despair. There's no way you're are going to absorb all this the first time you're exposed to it. You have to hear it several times before it sinks in.

And that brings is to the **"Rule of 3."**

The "Rule of 3" says that it takes 3 impressions or viewings for a viewer to be affected by a spot. They see it the first time. They hear it the second time. They "get it" the third time. But in this world of over saturation and clutter, many people in the advertising world believe that number should be pushed to 5. Well, what works for promos?

We're all susceptible to clutter, but remember we've got some things that make us different. And this time three of them are working for us. Proximity, affinity, & experiences.

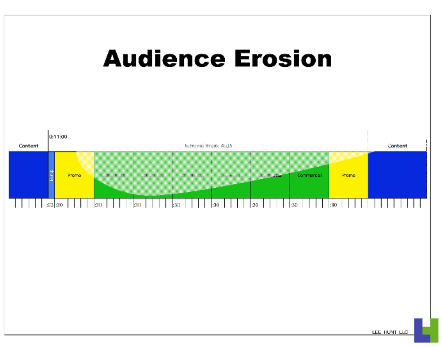
In preparing for this session I sent a survey out to the top 20 broadcast and cable networks. One question I asked was "how many times does a promo need to be seen to be effective." One promo director told me "once, if it's a good one."

Media planners would tell you that's wrong. But let's think about that for a second.

John Miller of NBC points out that TV viewers generally view "previews" as entertaining and informative. In a TiVo world it is one of the things they say they miss.

He also noted that at times NBC has had short shows where they filled with a 5 min promo block. During that time the ratings went up a half a rating point with their target audience.

People like promos. Well, at least relative to commercials. They are an experience, they're selling something we're interested in (affinity) at a time we're interested (proximity).



Does that mean we should lower the Rule of Three? I don't think so. A big problem in all this math is the assumption that people watch breaks as much as they watch shows. If you remember from last year, that's just not true.

All the more reason to own that first position!

So for now, I'm going to stick with the advertising rule of a minimum of 3+ viewings for optimal average frequency.

Now remember a few minutes ago I said we could answer the question of "how many GRPs to assign" forwards or backwards? Let's try it backwards by answering this question.

How many GRPs do I have to work with?

For simplicity's sake, let's say my 24-hour rating is a 2. So each hour averages a 2 rating. Now I have 2 minutes an hour of promo time. I break that into…let's say… 2 x 30s, 2 x 15s and 3 x 10s. That gives me 6 spots. The 30s are each worth 1 rating point. The 15s 75% of a ratings point, the 10s I'm calling halves. Add them all up and one hour gives me 5-promo ratings point.

I multiply those 5 points against the 2 rating. So I have 10 GRPs an hour. Multiply that by the number of hours in a week, 168, and that gives me 1,680 GRPs a week to work with.

Now if you've been paying attention, you immediately see my problem. I'm assuming all my airtime is equal. That my primetime and overnight are the same. I'm assuming every day of the week is equal. I'm assuming I always have the same number of promos and same amount of promo time.

Here's time playing havoc with us again.

To make this work, I have to go granular. I need to calculate ratings by the daypart, by the program. I need to look at every show's clock to see how much promo time is available and how it should be structured. I need to check against ad sales inventory to see where I'm gaining or losing promo time. And to be effective I have to do this every day 7 days a week 365 days a year.

This is not humanly possible. Only a sophisticated computer model can make this work.

So for the sake of argument, let's say after calculating all this granularity, my promo time is 2,000 GRPs a week. And let's say I have 20 hours of programming I want to promote in a week. Which is low. Very low.

Because I have a mix of half hour and hour-long shows, let’s say that’s 5 shows a night. Now I’ve determined that I want each show to get 150 GRPs, that’s 5 shows a night x 5 nights a week x 150 GRPs. So I need 3,750 GRPs. But I only have 2,000. That’s a shortfall of 1,750 GRPs—nearly half. Now of course, I have made no allowance for promotion priorities or balancing reach and frequency based on my needs or the realities of the audience composition. I haven’t gotten to near the granularity I need.

But even using this grossly generalized example I can almost guarantee if you ran this exercise at your own network or station, you’d have a shortfall as well.

But wait, it gets worse.

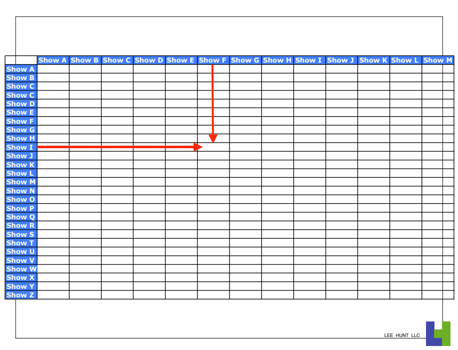
I’ve made a fatal flaw in my thinking. I’ve made no allowance for two of the most powerful elements of promos, affinity and proximity.

In running my numbers, I’ve assumed a run of schedule for all my promos. In other words, my promos appear in all dayparts and in a variety of shows.

But we wouldn’t promote *Touched by an Angel* in the middle of a *Die Hard* movie, or promote a 2pm show to an audience of people who are away at work from 9 to 5. Or would we? The reality is unless we add a whole other filter to our thinking, our work is ineffective.

That filter is **targeting**.

Most of us do this intuitively. Apples to apples. Oranges to oranges. But in reality its tangerines to tangelos, Macintosh apples to Granny’ Smiths. It becomes very nuanced. And at that level of affinity our promos can have the most impact. There is a science to that gets at that detail. The people at Effective Media showed me their program matrix. It works like this.



They line up every show on the schedule horizontally and vertically. Then they run Nielsen numbers to find out where audiences overlap. Some are obvious, some are surprises. You might find that the audience for your home improvement show is also watching your sports show—or not. You never know till you run the numbers.

We know affinity is what makes promos more effective than commercials. We also know that promoting the wrong show to the wrong audience doesn't just give us a zero sum. It can actually have a negative impact that triggers our greatest weakness. The remote control.

The second layer of targeting is proximity. The closer a promo is to the show it's promoting, the more powerful it becomes.

Can you quantify that with numbers? Not proportionally, but you can assume there is a direct correlation between time/distance and effectiveness.

Inadvertently, we've laid the groundwork for answering our other questions.

How many hours of programming can be promoted?

That question needs to be restated:

How many hours of programming can be *effectively* promoted?

To answer that question you have know how many GRPs you need to sell your show. Then how many GRPs you have available to you in correctly targeted programs. Divide the first number into the latter for each show in order of promo priority and you begin to build a running total that will give you a rough idea of how many shows, and thus how many hours of programs you can effectively promote.

How many minutes of promos should you schedule in an hour?
We already know that we don't have enough promo time to effectively promote all our priorities. We need to continually push the limits of our promo time.

2 minutes is the absolute minimum. I ran a quick check of promo time during May sweeps. In my sampling I found an average of 4 to 5 minutes an hour. Obviously, someone somewhere believes promos make a difference in building an audience—at least long enough to sell some ad time. We need to keep that momentum up the rest of the year.

That means no more poaching by ad sales. Working with your research department you should be able to build a strong case with real numbers to back up your conclusions about how much time you need to do your job effectively.

Well, we're still stuck with our final question:

When does a promo stop being effective?

Once you pass the inflection of optimal reach and frequency, you start building up frequency. And at some point, a certain segment of your audience is going to get over exposed. Unfortunately, that segment is your most loyal viewers. If you're a niche cable network, you know that often 5% of your audience is responsible for 95% of your viewing. In that case, frequency is a real problem. Burn out can come quicker than you'd like.

But there are smart creative solutions. Many networks realize that they can use creative targeting to help grow their reach and keep frequency in check. Let's say you've got a big special. Something everyone in the family will love. You segment your creative accordingly. You create a guy promo to run in guy programming. A female promo for female programming. You look at your opportunities and build you creative accordingly.

Here's an example from A&E.

They made a guy promo for Napoleon.

(play A&E #1)

Then a non-guy promo for Napoleon.

(play A&E #2)

Different spots to run in different shows for different audiences. Time consuming? Sure. Effective. Absolutely.

But here's a neat trick I don't think I've ever seen a network do.

Last month I was watching a week's worth of prime time breaks for a client. Usually I skim through the commercials at double or triple speed. But something caught my attention.

In the spots for the premiere of the movie "Bruce Almighty" I noticed differences in the creative. So I slowed down and watched the pattern. Within a two-hour block of primetime programming, they ran 4 spots. Not unusual placement. But each spot had a new and different scene added.

While they were building reach & frequency, they were also building “experiences” -—teasing with me with more and more tidbits of the movie. Letting me sample the product. The result was great. The movie looked funny, And then funnier. And then even funnier. And as you probably know, Bruce Almighty took a big chunk of ticket dollars on opening weekend. Here are four of the Bruce spots I saw, in the order I saw them from 8-10pm on a Tuesday night.

(play 4 Bruce Almighty spots)

There’s actually a lot more we can learn from our cousins the theatrical promo and trailer. That’s the other side of our family tree we haven’t had time to explore. Maybe next time. But for now our time is just about up.

I’m sure I’ve fogged your brain today. But let’s review what we’ve learned.

- **We have to realize that in our business instinct is no longer enough.** We’ve got to understand and exploit every detail.
- **We must realize that promos and commercials are different and take advantage of those differences.**
- **We need to rethink our approach to making promos, being more efficient by “creating to the schedule”, rather than “scheduling to the creative.”** That probably means making fewer and hopefully better and more effective promos.
- **We need to concentrate on making promos of the right length.**
- **We need to protect and grow our fixed promo time and use it as effectively as possible.**
- **We need to understand reach and frequency and build our promo schedules to utilize them by assigning GRPs to our campaigns.**
- **We need to use our GRPs wisely avoiding under promoting and over promoting.** We need to run a promo just long enough to meet our GRP targets.
- **We need to keep ad sales away from our airtime.**
- **We need to target every promo—the right message to the person at the right time.**
- **We need to make sure we don’t try to promote more than we can.**
- **We need to work on creative ways to avoid too much frequency or burn out.**
- **We need to never forget what a promo is…**

On my survey I asked executives to define the difference between a commercial and a promo. This definition of a promo came from Kim Rosenblum at TV Land. I think it’s best definition I’ve heard.

“On-air promotion continues an existing relationship—reminding your audience why they're there in the first place, and keep them coming back for more.”

We did all this in 45 minutes. Looking at the size of the crowd, I’d say our reach was pretty good today, but our frequency sucks. So send me an email and I will send you a complete text of this session with all these charts and graphics.

To close, I wanted to show something that metaphorically brought all the pieces together. All at once.

Andy Verderame at Court TV alerted me to an amazing spot for Honda in the UK. Not a promo. This spot—one 2 minute piece of film—took more than 600 takes over three days. When you see it you’ll understand why. It’s a great example of how amazing something can be when you take the time to get everything working together.

I’ll leave you with Honda’s “Cog.” Thanks.