

Writing Radio Commercials for Fun and Money (Part 1)

By Steve Slaunwhite



Imagine driving in your car and listening to the radio, and a commercial comes on. And that commercial you're listening to is your script.

You're hearing the words you wrote being read over the airwaves. That's quite a moment.

That experience can be yours if you write radio ads for B2B companies.

This is Part 1 of a two-part series. Next week, I'm going to talk about the nuts and bolts of writing radio ads.

So, let's start with an overview to see how you can break into this fun and lucrative niche ...

What kinds of B2B companies use radio commercials?

First, I should tell you that radio commercials are probably the least used marketing channel for Business-to-Business companies. Most radio commercials are targeted at consumers.

Yet — although it's an underused medium, a lot of radio commercials *are* still produced for B2B companies, especially for companies that target a broad audience.

One example is companies that target small businesses. There are a lot of small business owners driving to work in the morning listening to the radio who will hear radio commercials.

Also, companies that have products or services that are geared towards professionals — perhaps training programs or career-building programs — use radio advertising.

Their products and services appeal to a broad professional audience who listen to the radio while they drive to and from work every day. So they can be a very good target audience as well for a B2B radio ad.

And, any B2B company that has products and services where the products are in wide use among many different types of companies may also produce radio ads.

For example, where I live in Toronto, there is a popular series of commercials for an industrial fastener company. Now, not every company buys industrial fasteners, but a lot of them do. And it's a commodity-type product that works well, at least for them, selling through radio ads.

So, even though B2B radio ads probably comprise fewer than 15% of all radio ads, it's still a pretty healthy market.

And here's the thing, if you are a specialist in B2B copywriting, you have an opportunity here to position yourself as someone who can write B2B radio ads because most people who write radio ads write for a consumer audience.

The reason why I titled this article *Writing Radio Commercials for Fun and Money* is because they are fun. They're short projects, they pay reasonably well, and they're fun to write.

So, how do you get this work? Let me give you a few tips ...

Who produces radio ads?

If your business is built around writing for marketing directors or writing for business owners of smaller companies, then you need to know that radio advertising is very rarely produced in-house at companies.

Companies produce many other types of marketing communications in-house — content for social media, sell sheets, and websites.

But very rarely will a company produce a radio ad in-house. They'll almost always outsource it somewhere else because radio advertising is considered a very quirky specialty.

So, if you're promoting your copywriting business by marketing to marketing directors, it's going to be very difficult to find gigs writing radio ads. You have to change your thinking and your approach a little bit.

So, where are companies outsourcing radio advertising? Well, believe it or not, the number one place they outsource the production of a radio commercial is to the radio station.

When a radio station sells advertising to clients, they'll often throw in the production of the commercial as part of the deal. So they'll sell 25 fifteen-second spots to a company, and they'll offer to produce the radio commercial as part of the deal in that advertising buy.

Radio stations have the in-house capability to produce radio ads. They already have a studio, so it's easy for them. And some larger radio stations have an in-house creative team or advertising department that produces the radio commercials.

But even some smaller stations that only have a few people will produce and write the radio ads for their clients. Sometimes the account executive that sold the ad spots to a client will also write the ads themselves.

And sometimes, for niche radio programs, the show producer or even the show host will also write the radio ads. That same person may also be involved in selling radio spots and writing radio ads.

So, radio stations often produce radio commercials for B2B companies.

How do you find companies that produce radio ads?

#1. Radio stations

If you want work writing radio ads for B2B companies, you might contact radio stations and the hosts of niche programs that you suspect B2B companies are likely to advertise on. At larger radio stations with an in-house creative department, you'll want to contact those people.

Visit the websites of radio stations, and click on the "About" tab. Try to get a listing of the personnel or team members of that radio station and find out who to talk to, and talk to those people.

Radio stations are probably your number one source of work writing radio ads.

#2. Advertising and creative marketing agencies

There are quite a few ad agencies and creative marketing agencies that write radio ads on behalf of their clients.

A great way to figure this out is to go to the website of advertising agencies or creative marketing agencies in your area and see if they do radio ads.

Because trust me, if they've produced a couple of radio ads, they're going to showcase those ads on their website.

Then you know they do radio ads and you know they're going to be receptive to someone like you approaching them and saying, "Hey, I'm a B2B copywriting expert. You do radio ads for B2B companies, I can help you with imagining and scripting

these radio ads."

#3. Marketing consultants

There are a lot of consultants that specialize in radio advertising. It's a very niche field. But there are many of them out there. And if you do a search on Google or, better still, on LinkedIn, you'll find a lot of these consultants that consult on radio advertising.

They often help radio stations sell advertising and they often consult with radio stations on producing radio ads. Sometimes they'll work directly with clients, and they can possibly bring you in on some projects as the writer.

So, find out who these marketing consultants are. Introduce yourself to them and build those relationships.

How do you get gigs writing radio ads?

Now, when it comes to getting these gigs writing radio ads for B2B companies, I have good news and bad news.

First, the good news ... The radio station world is fairly open to being contacted.

So, if you were to contact the producer or the in-house creative department of a radio station that you suspect would have B2B clients for their radio ad commercials or an ad agency that specializes in radio ads, they're fairly open to hearing from you.

You'll probably get a half-decent response, especially with the radio stations. They tend to be a friendly group of people who really like their jobs. I've always found that people who like their jobs tend to be friendly and open to other people contacting them.

Another bit of good news is that contacts are easy to find. Radio stations often post their staff members' names and emails. Advertising agencies and creative marketing firms do the same thing.

So, finding contact names and who to contact, and how to reach them, is fairly easy as well.

The bad news is you will almost certainly be asked for a sample.

When you introduce yourself and your services to someone, the very first question they're going to ask you is, "Can you send me a sample of a radio ad you have written?"

What if you don't have a sample?

Well, I have some good news for you there.

In my next article, I am going to walk you through how to write a radio ad for a B2B product or service, so you're going to know the nuts and bolts of how to put one together.

More good news is that I find radio stations and ad agencies that do radio commercials are fairly open to a spec piece — a sample that you just made up as an example.

They want to see how you approach writing a radio commercial and how you script it. They want to see if you understand timing and if you understand how to write for the ear rather than for the eye. It's a different way of writing because people listen to it, they don't read it.

Writing B2B radio commercials probably will never be your entire business unless you venture outside of B2B, but you might get a few of these gigs every year if you focus on it.

And like I said, they're a lot of fun to write and from a vanity standpoint, they're wonderful to listen to when you hear your radio commercial playing on the radio.

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