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Valerie Geller, **Creating Powerful Radio**. Burlington, MA: Focal Press, 2007

Brenda K. Jaskulske^a
^a University of Texas-Arlington,

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Valerie Geller, *Creating Powerful Radio*. Burlington, MA: Focal Press, 2007.

Valerie Geller's book reminds you why you wanted to listen to the radio when you were growing up. Radio was fun. The air personalities were relevant and kept you entertained. Geller, a radio consultant for news, talk and personality radio stations, originally wrote *Creating Powerful Radio* as a workshop supplement. She bases her radio philosophy on three simple principles: "Tell the truth. Make it matter. Never be boring" (p. xv). Geller not only relies upon her own radio experiences, but also brings in help from some of the biggest names in radio.

Although the first few chapters are of particular interest to current programmers, the book is also aimed at air talent, producers, news anchors, and reporters. People wanting to break into radio will also gain insight into the business of radio programming and managing people through this book.

In chapter 2, the traits of broadcasting stars are defined—"true individuals, gifted storytellers, and good listeners, as well as articulate communicators" (p. 7). Generally, these future stars come from small to medium market radio. But, Geller says that everyone from board ops to cab drivers to talk show callers have been successfully tapped to become air personalities. Programmers have to be open to finding talent in unexpected places.

Later, she quotes George Orwell's *Animal Farm* "Some animals are more equal than others" to introduce a difficult subject—handling the egos of high-ego talent. Programmers are also targeted in chapters offering tips for talk shows, integrating news and talk, and promotions.

Air personalities and future on-air talent are offered suggestions for improving on-air performance from industry experts such as Dave Sholin, Sean Ross, and Ross Brittain. Scott Shannon and others give show prep advice in chapter 10.

Producers have their own chapter later in the book, with information on finding the right producer, being a good producer, and keeping a producer happy. Another chapter is devoted to call screening, with tips such as "Don't let all your lines jam. Screen out weak calls and keep some lines open so better calls can come in" (p. 131).

A special chapter of interest to most media professionals is "Avoiding Burnout." Geller's suggestions are geared toward helping the programmer avoid exhaustion as he helps his talent avoid energy drain. Tips include "avoid energy vampires," and "live a balanced life." The book concludes with chapters on LifeStage Demographics and research.

The book is interesting and practical, with something for everyone who likes or works in radio. It is an easy read, and not too technical. Radio theory, definitions and how transmitters and receivers work are not included here. This is an excellent

supplement for students interested in radio management or working in various on-air or production capacities and the addition of the instructor's manual offers additional instruction tools. In fact, most of the information about the practical side of the business will not be found in a text or anywhere else. This is the book that every programmer and air talent should have at their bedside table.

The strongest areas of the book draw from the personal experiences of the author and her contributors. The weakest areas are the final chapters dealing with LifeStage Demographics and a cursory explanation of research. Both of these topics are better discussed in other books. A nice bonus at the end of the book is a list of resources which includes websites and many email addresses of contributors.

Undoubtedly, music downloads, MP3 players, media mergers, web and satellite radio are taking a toll on terrestrial radio. Voice tracking and liner cards have also stolen some of the creative electricity of many local radio outlets. However, radio can still be entertaining and relevant and should be nurtured. Hopefully, this book will help. While Valerie Geller concedes that powerful radio is difficult to define, you know it when you hear it. Powerful radio is fun.

Brenda K. Jaskulske
University of Texas-Arlington