WIDEORBIT

Townsquare Media embraces a Wider World with automation to streamline network/barter ad management

ABOUT THE COMPANY

Townsquare is a media, entertainment, and digital marketing solutions company serving small and mid-sized markets throughout the United States. It owns and operates 317 radio stations in 67 markets, including iconic local media brands like WYRK, KLAQ, K2 and NJ101.5.

GOALS

Improve efficiency and reduce manual effort

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Improve both client satisfaction and listener experience

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Improve clearance rates to reduce outstanding accounts receivable

APPROACH

Adopt *WO Traffic – Radio Interchange* to establish API-based integrations between network/barter partners and *WO Traffic* that automate:

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Network/barter ad management

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Reconciliation and affidavit completion

RESULTS

Significant reduction in manual effort for improved efficiency and accuracy

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Increased productivity by **25-50%** with automated spot placement and competitive separation

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Reduced margin of loss to within **2-3%**, with clearance rates as high as **98%**

THE CHALLENGE

Because *WO Traffic – Radio Interchange* was still in development when Townsquare converted to *WO Traffic* in 2016, Townsquare was faced with a choice.

They could either return to manual handling of their network/barter contracts, which was a daunting prospect, or find a system to handle their barter automatically. After considering their options, Townsquare contracted to use a third-party's system to automate their barter processes, fully intending to use it as a permanent solution. Although

that system served for years as an alternative to manual dubbing, scheduling, and affidavit completion, over time Townsquare experienced challenges with some aspects of using it, especially given their high barter and cash comp volume.

One challenge was the amount of manual work that was involved on the front end of the process. Townsquare had to individually build all of their network barter and cash comp orders into *WO Traffic* as placeholder contracts, making sure to keep up with constant changes, additions, and cancellations throughout the year. They then had to create materials and manually enter dayplaced (and often dayparted) material instructions into *WO Traffic* for each network order. Finally, the material numbers for each order had to be manually transferred to the third-party's system for dubbing and affidavit completion. Townsquare estimates that the duplication of effort for the entire workflow consumed upwards of 2500 person-hours in a year, plus an additional four to six hundred hours spent every December entering new orders, or adjusting existing ones, to match the networks' contracts for the following year.

In addition to excessive manual effort, Townsquare faced an even bigger challenge with their network/barter ad management processes: lost cash comp revenue. Because the third-party's system submitted affidavits as an independent background process within each market, any number of technical issues—network communication hiccups, changes to air log paths, incorrect reconciliation settings, irretrievable air logs due to power outages, etc. — could cause spots to be reported as having missed even though they had, in fact, aired as ordered. In many cases, Townsquare wouldn't know about the false "did not air" reporting until after the affidavits had closed or, worse yet, until after a short-payment had been received from the network. The outstanding accounts receivable that resulted were significant, and Townsquare had to spend thousands of hours manually correcting affidavits (if/when the networks were willing to reopen them) to try to recoup the lost revenue.

THE SOLUTION

To address these challenges, Townsquare turned to *WO Traffic – Radio Interchange,* a licensed module that enables an API-based integration between network/barter partners and *WO Traffic.*

By automating every step of network and barter advertising, WideOrbit's solution helps Townsquare save significant time and effort while reducing errors associated with manual data entry.

Through automation, *Radio Interchange* also allows Townsquare to increase productivity, ensure contract compliance, and simplify day-to-day tasks to free-up traffic staff for higher priorities. *Radio Interchange* can also auto-import electronic orders, automatically process orders once created, automate spot placement, and auto-create material records.

Radio Interchange connects about 80% of the networks Townsquare needs to *WO Traffic*, including Premiere Networks, Westwood One, United Stations Radio Network, ESPN Radio Network, Compass Media Networks, and more.

Radio Interchange also has a dedicated integration with Counterpoint Software, the network traffic scheduling and affidavit system used by many network and barter vendors, providing Townsquare with a seamless connection between their network partners and *WO Traffic*.

> "To be honest, I don't know how we would be operating today if we did not have Radio Interchange."

BECKY DEGENER
Vice President of Traffic Operations, Townsquare Media

THE RESULTS

Townsquare converted all their stations to Radio Interchange over a six-week period in early 2020.

The COVID-19 situation led to some challenges related to staff and talent working from home and right away they saw that once they reconciled their logs, that information would populate almost immediately and translate over to the barter/network partner quickly, efficiently, and accurately.

Townsquare estimates that *Radio Interchange* provides integration with all but two or three of the barter vendors they work with, automating a significant portion of what were previously entirely manual processes.

They've noticed many other benefits as well. For example, Townsquare is now able to see competitive separation much more clearly than with their prior process. Where before they were entering orders into *WO Traffic* as placeholders, with spots identified only by the network vendor name, they now have visibility into whether an ad is for Home Depot, Walgreens, Macy's, Lowe's, etc. With this improved visibility, competitive separation is much easier to manage, making clients happy but also improving the listener experience for their radio stations, since Home Depot is no longer running next to Lowe's, for example.

In addition, because the process is automated, Townsquare has found that a traffic manager previously responsible for eight stations and their associated logs now has the capacity to manage 10 or 12, a 25-50% increase in productivity. With the system doing most spot placements automatically, based on competitive separation and rules that Townsquare has defined, the traffic manager no longer needs to manually place spots on a day-to-day basis.

Perhaps the most significant impact Townsquare has experienced with *Radio Interchange* is a dramatic improvement in clearance rates. In an analysis done in March 2020, their clearance rate was 98% for cash comp vehicles, which in prior months it had been hovering around 90-95%. But for some vehicles, that rate was as low as 70-75%, which over the course of a few years resulted in a significant financial hit. Townsquare has compiled all the necessary proof of performance for those unpaid ads, which took time and manual effort to put together, so they do expect to recover that revenue. But with *Radio Interchange*, they're confident that level of outstanding accounts receivable is a thing of the past.

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> *"Instead of trying to manually separate barter partners from one another, adding to the time spent manually placing spots, we now have the ability to better separate competitors by brand. And the system does most of the work for us."*
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> **BECKY DEGENER**
> Vice President of Traffic Operations, Townsquare Media

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> *"With WO Traffic - Radio Interchange, I believe the margin of loss will be significantly eliminated, to within two to three percent."*
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> **BECKY DEGENER**
> Vice President of Traffic Operations, Townsquare Media

Learn more about *WO Traffic - Radio Interchange*

CONTACT US
RadioSales@wideorbit.com
(415) 675-6700