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"Personalities INSIDE RADIO"

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BEING LASER-FOCUSED IS A-OKAY

by Mike Kinoshian, Personality Editor

Genuine warmth, sincerity and perhaps most of all a palpable smile in the voice are among elements a programmer endeavors to illicit from an on-air talent.

All these qualities are readily apparent in *Kay Olin* whose livelihood isn't made behind the microphone although the Local Focus President would be such a natural at it.

Challenge Of Change

Slightly more than a year ago, Focus 360 and Interep structured a joint marketing agreement in which operations of small- and medium-market rep firm Local Focus would fall within Interep's purview.

In wake of Interep's bankruptcy however, highly-cordial Olin and her team returned to their Focus 360 roots in a rapidly-moving chain-of-events transpiring approximately around Thanksgiving. "I've always felt change is an opportunity," she remarks. "You can blow something up and do it better. We've had so many great conversations and ideas. Interesting things are coming out of this so we're very excited. We're [also] energized and motivated by our clients. They've been amazing and supportive – we're very lucky."

Even so, owing to Olin's more than a quarter of a century association with rep firm Interep, it was extremely difficult on a personal level for her to witness its fate. "Sellers and members of the family have been part of a culture we all believed in," she states. "It began to dawn on us we weren't going to see each other anymore on a daily basis. We had many tenured people here. They were all very committed to the service culture we had."

That's something Olin intends to continue because as she asserts, "Being service-oriented and not treating radio like a commodity is what differentiates us. Part of the family though went across the street and the rest of us are committed to growing and continuing opportunities for [those] who want to have an independent voice and be represented as such."

Possibility of Interep's dissolution was never strongly considered among its staff since it was widely-felt Chapter 11 would work. "It's a function of the economy hitting our

investors at the last minute," remarks Olin, named by Atlanta Women Magazine as one of 2007's Top 25 Women in Atlanta. "[Interep CEO/Vice Chairman] Dave Kennedy and [Interep President/COO] Mike Walsh worked very hard with everyone to put us in a position to stay together as a group. They couldn't have had more creative ideas [but] the timing with the economy did not help at all."

Equally as difficult to grapple with or imagine was the concept of having one enormous rep firm (Katz) basically going unopposed. "Let's face it, competition breeds excellence and raises us all," Olin opines. "When we came in with our specialized sales in small- and mid-sized markets, we elevated other independent rep firms and [vice versa]. I couldn't accept the fact there was going to be one big box. That was a motivating element for me to take this team and move it back to within Focus 360 where we originated from before the marketing agreement with Interep."

Adept Puzzle-Solver

Native north Floridian Olin grew up around government and majored in Political Science at Atlanta's Agnes Scott College. "I thought I wanted to teach but ended up in radio by way of television," she recounts. "When I came along in the late-1970s, women were not hired in sales. I couldn't be a sales assistant because I couldn't type [very well]. Women were just being hired into sales at that point and I got a job at a television rep firm."

WIVY/Jacksonville proved to be Olin's first radio sales job before she relocated to WANM/Tallahassee. "I worked at a great combo there [which] had over a 50-share of the market," she proudly recounts of the Tallahassee experience, which included her being one of the youngest (28 years old) GMs in the country. "I began at the FM and decided I wanted to sell for the [urban-formatted] AM. I had the most fun in local radio. I found national by way of trying to [locate] representation for our station. I was probably one of the first to pitch putting the AM and FM together as a combo to take advantage of shares."

Intrigued with the concept, she went to work for a rep firm (Torbet) thus allowing her to evolve from local to national.

"I loved the variety of formats, markets and people," Olin declares. "Everyday is a potpourri and I really and truly enjoy that. [While at Torbet], I was doing a good job of taking money off the table from McGavren Guild."

As soon as Olin discovered the competition was receptive to the thought of bringing her onboard, she called. "There wasn't a position at the time but I was hired anyway," she points out. "I went from being an AE at McGavren to the manager."

All of this took place when McGavren had regional sales executives: Olin oversaw Philadelphia-Washington-Atlanta. "That was a fun position because we were selling radio at the upper-levels of the agencies," she explains. "My job was to work across all the rep firms to make sure we were in-tandem and serving our customers."

Exceptionally proficient at developing and elevating strengths of individual salespeople Olin relishes her position as a catalyst. "It's important to have salespeople [who] remember how to sell radio," she comments. "[Our medium] needs to take advantage of this opportunity we have. By all studies, radio listening is up and other media are fragmenting. It's time for us to become better salespeople for radio and get focused on making ourselves heard. It's all about putting together a jigsaw puzzle of the best talent you can find. That's probably why I enjoy this team so much. I have a great quilt of talent."

Back To Basics

Sharing and selling to advertisers local radio's true value has been Olin's mantra and, as she points out, it's why, "We more than doubled our markets and stations last year. We're in over 100 markets and have more than 300 stations. We are in conversation with many others. As we expand, I will [enlarge] my sales force to match the quality of service because what we do is very work-intensive."

Word-of-mouth fueled a considerable portion of Local Focus' expansion. "So many good customers would say they were happy with us," Olin explains. "We've had great partnerships

with people who've gone out of their way to share our success story with their compatriots."

Developmental anecdotes are often told by Olin who maintains small and medium markets will be less hurt by the faltering economy. "If we find retailers who aren't getting their fair share of ad dollars, we'll take [their case] to the national level to make sure they're in the right zip codes and hitting the suburbs that need to be hit," she notes.

By keeping such a local approach, each market's uniqueness is presented and that's the way Olin sells it. "It's one reason small and medium markets have - and continue - to do so well," she emphasizes. "They've stayed focused on the basics and what keeps them endeared to their customers. People are more accountable than ever for results."

Especially since we're coming off a political season that was, in Olin's estimation, "just gangbusters," she acknowledges this won't be an easy year for our industry. "We're going to take a hit," she predicts. "The economy has driven [many] good spot radio advertisers into network advertising. The more we can do as an industry to show results to advertisers and build connectivity to local marketing [the more effective we'll be]. Our stations consider us their partners and extended members of their local sales staff. They know we can't build stories just from [ratings] - we have to [do it] from results."

Road To One's Soul

First and foremost among Olin's role models is her grandfather who represented Florida in the State Senate and House of Representatives. "I grow from so many people I'm around," notes Olin whose father was a political lobbyist for more than 30 years. "I surround myself with a board of professional directors."

Given her political science background and influences of her father and grandfather, Olin took delight in seeing so many young people again engaged in the past year's presidential contest. "I didn't care who voted for who but [it was fun] to see people reading about how candidates felt on the issues,"

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she comments. "The energy around it was just dynamic to me. It was so needed and critical to have that kind of accountability and engagement back into the system. This generation is awake, engaged and is going to make a difference. There's nothing better to lift you up than the youth."

Typically on the road three times a month Olin looks forward to meeting with clients scattered around the country. "Going through the Atlanta airport isn't the most fun thing in the world [but] visibility [in our business] is so important," she stresses. "If I talk to someone on the phone for [any length of time] my eyes hurt because I want to look at [that person]. I love eye contact. You know if you're getting your point across or making a difference. I love building relationships - the eyes are the soul."

Mentoring and being involved with organizations is one of her highest priorities. "I've had fun working with the RAB and building out their programming the last couple of years," explains Olin, active with American Women in Radio & Television on the national level and founding member/immediate past-President of Atlanta's AWRT chapter. "We're working on a great educational summit in March. As I've been able to grow and get involved with these organizations, I'm exposed to some of the most incredible professionals and friendships. It continues to be a great education for me. It's very important that we never quit learning and teaching."

Self-described "huge" country music partisan Olin fittingly lists the CRS as one of her favorite conventions. "It goes back to what I love about local radio," she remarks. "To a person, every artist at the CMA Awards stood up and thanked radio. I'm a big radio fan [though] and have to stay broad [which is why] I hit the radio button as often as I can. When you have a format where people are passionate about their music, it really makes a difference. Every format from Rock to Country to multicultural has a different relationship with [its] listeners. Understanding lifestyles and marketplaces [make] selling radio on a national level fun."

Cooking is the outlet Olin turns to when she wants to think. "I really do love to cook," she confides. "We have a cabin about an hour north of Atlanta and that's where I go to be creative. I have a wonderful husband and am blessed with many good friends. I like to golf but don't have time for it; I wish I did."

Happy Place Keeps Her Exhilarated

Since she experiences local selling every day, there's no yearning on Olin's part to return to a station-level job. "You have to talk to every customer one at a time," Atlanta Broadcast Advertising Club's 2008 Lifetime Achievement Award winner states. "Each is unique and has different needs. You won't be successful at national if you're thinking about the 60 stations you have up for an avail. You must address each opportunity

and each station. The same is true when you're speaking to their customers at the agencies. You can't go in and pitch five markets. You have to tell the story and share the value of what's going on in that marketplace."

A great deal of what Olin brings to her profession is the result of watching her family lobby. "It's our job at Local Focus to be educators," she comments. "Buyers these days deal with many markets and many stations. If we don't differentiate and help them understand how they need to effectively tackle the market, we're not good national salespeople. A good national salesperson has to be a good local salesperson so I feel local every day."

Notwithstanding the fact this tremendous sales talent never thought of herself as being in that particular arena, she's come to love it. "Sales isn't about doing a 'dog and pony show,'" Olin comments. "It's building relationships and listening to people. Everyone who works with me knows not to say there's a 'problem' but there's an 'opportunity.' I love the relationships I've been able to develop over the years. My team has really come together and worked well."

Individuals from that team didn't want to separate from each other so Local Focus is a continuum of service and Olin proclaims, "This is my happy place. Having the opportunity to step off the cliff into the abyss with a known wonderful group of salespeople was absolutely exhilarating. We feel strongly about keeping radio growing and focused on that local story which really differentiates us. I get lifted every day from the people I work with. That's what keeps me ticking."



WHO: Kay Olin
WHAT: President
WHERE: Local Focus

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