



The Challenge—Planning in a Rapidly Changing Public Radio Environment

What did the future hold for WFAE 90.7 fm, Charlotte's NPR news station? Station managers were concerned about the rapid technological changes in their industry and what those changes might mean for the non-profit National Public Radio affiliate.

Satellite radio services could take away listeners and contributors. The new HD radio technology might also draw listeners away to new HD channels. As a major media outlet for the region, WFAE needed to have a robust web site for daily news, but that expensive proposition had to pay for itself. What did the station need to do to stay relevant to its well-educated audience?

The Process

WFAE hired The Daniel Group to help the board and staff develop a strategic plan. "Many plans get to be such a bureaucratic exercise that the participants discount it. They lose faith in it," says WFAE Station Manager Roger Sarow. "Lynn Daniel advocated a short plan - ours is about 12 pages long. He believed in the idea of focus. The idea was to try to get down to a half dozen priorities, something that would help the organization make tough choices, instead of dozens of priorities."

Daniel served as facilitator and group leader. The group spent time revising WFAE's mission statement and talked about the values of the institution that drive the priorities. "That was a rich discussion," says Sarow. "Lynn teased out the concepts. He'd hear the commonalities and the big themes. He does a masterful job with that."

What Has Happened

In the year since the plan was adopted, the station has made significant progress on all but three of 46 tactics that required action in the plan's first year. Realizing that streaming audio on WFAE.org would be a key way to offer new services to younger listeners and those across the nation, WFAE accelerated a rebuild of its web site based on priorities established in the plan.



"Lynn helped focus the group on the issue of growth as a fundamental value to enhance our mission," says Sarow. "He was able to bring to the process energy, good humor, a positive attitude, and a healthy dose of professional detachment, allowing us to get away from our fixed positions of what we can or can't do."