

Mississauga Business Times

Radio innovators create urban legend

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Indie operation is taking on the big players with savvy format and a super sales team

BY MIKE BEGGS

It was quite the coup when the indie radio station Z103-FM took on the Big Boys within Toronto's CHR (Contemporary Hits Radio) market and won, over the past four years – ultimately forcing them to change formats.

Z103 is part of the Etobicoke-based Evanov Radio Group, which has been more than holding its own within a Toronto radio market dominated by such corporate giants as Standard Broadcasting, CHUM, Rogers, and Corus.

They've done it by eschewing cookie-cutter formatting, in favour of savvy research, flexibility, and promotional zeal.

Driving the sales side of the equation is Mississauga's Ky Joseph, who has spent the past three years as vice president of sales for the Evanov Group (which also includes FOXY 88.5, and AM 530). She puts much of Z103's success down to, "a phenomenal programming, and music department".

"We program from the street up," she says. "We listen to the deejays, and the kids, and phone requests – we don't listen to researchers. And we're very creative in terms of doing promotions."

The Z103 demographic is 15 to 30-year-olds. And the station feels their tastes out at live concerts, dance clubs, via constant surveying on its web site, and through on-air shows like "Pump It Or Dump It" (where two songs are played back-to-back, and listeners decide which stays on its playlist).

Having spent the past six years with Z103 as an announcer/producer (handling the 7 p.m. to midnight time slot), Chris Biggs agrees that it's a different mindset — with the four people making programming decisions all under the age of 28.

"We're a station that actually heeds our listeners, instead of reading charts," says the lifelong Mississauga resident.

"You can't have 50-year-olds telling 24-year-olds what to listen to. In this environment with the Internet, you have to be fast – and big corporations aren't fast. We're more up to date. We're ahead of the game."

Veteran radio announcer/executive Bill Evanov made the jump into ownership in 1984, when he bought the tiny Brampton station CIAO AM 530. He switched its format to "Multilingual" (Ethnic), and 19 years later it's still going strong.

In the fall of 1994, he purchased CIDC-FM (Z103) and made a precipitous format change to Top 40/Dance; and in 2001, he added CKDX-FM (FOXY 88.5) to the company roster, forging a new "Unforgettable Hits" format (and hiking its audience dramatically, from 32,000 to 162,000 weekly listeners). "He's a pioneer," Joseph says, of

That said, the Evanov Group's sales numbers have almost doubled since this dynamo was appointed v.p. three years back. For the past fiscal year (ending August 31), those numbers were up by 58 per cent.

"To date we've beat every budget, and the budgets are always getting bigger," Joseph says.

The Montreal native has a track record of over achievement. After earning a degree in journalism from Concordia, she entered the airline industry in 1984, soon working her way up from flight attendant to flight director – and subsequently publishing a How-To book on, "Becoming A Flight Attendant".

She joined Z103 as a sales rep in 1995, and quickly became the company's top producer – while simultaneously exploring a second career in TV (as an on-air spokesperson for products on "The Shopping Channel", and "The Home Shopping Network").

While deeming radio, "THE most exciting business", Joseph brings a hard-nosed determination to the office.

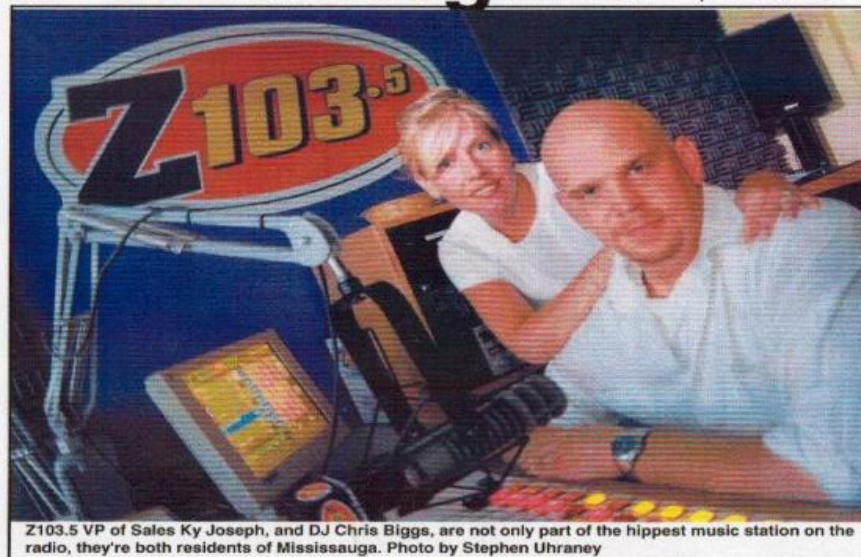
"It's tough. You have to have an attitude," she says. "I can't expect my reps to work their butts off if I don't. You definitely have to lead by example, and a lot of higher-ups don't."

"I come in so organized," she continues. "I have a hit list every day. That's our philosophy at the station: if you don't have a hit list don't come to work."

To her knowledge, she is Ontario's – and maybe Canada's – only female vice president of sales in the radio biz. Her credo for management is to be 100 per cent focused, empower others around you, and always follow your gut instinct.

The thriving Evanov Radio Group is in the process of tearing down and rebuilding its existing offices at 5302 Dundas St. W., and of applying to the CTRC for a license for a new station in Edmonton – for which Joseph (and fellow female v.p. Carmela Laurignano) have been offered a minority partnership.

While she has been head-hunter by the big companies, Joseph says,



Z103.5 VP of Sales Ky Joseph, and DJ Chris Biggs, are not only part of the hippest music station on the radio, they're both residents of Mississauga. Photo by Stephen Uhraney

Summer 2003 BBM Ratings Toronto CMA

Z103.5 FM... Breaks all-time records!

Z103 increases in every single age demographic with staggering increase in our core demo of A18-34.

- Z103.5 is the only Top 40 & Dance Music Station with no "direct" competition in the market.
- Z103 increases an outstanding 33% in audience share
- Z103 delivers 437,300 listeners 12+ in Toronto CMA (Highest to Date) with a 3.6 share
- Z103.5 delivers additional audience in key spill markets including Hamilton, Kitchener-Waterloo & Barrie