

MEDIAWEEK

Opie & Anthony

Platforms:

Web site, downloads via Audible Virally featured on MySpace and You Tube sites

XM Satellite Radio

23 radio stations, 7 in the top 10

PaITalk Internet video cameras in XM show's studio

Opie & Anthony's Traveling Virus comedy concert tour

If Opie & Anthony's groundbreaking satellite-to-terrestrial radio syndication deal demonstrates anything, it's that the days of defining radio as AM and FM are over.

In many respects, Opie [Gregg Hughes] and Anthony [Cumia] are the face of a new generation of Talk show personality, one that doesn't draw any arbitrary lines between media, just like their early-adopting young male audience that grew up with instant messaging and Web sites.

"You definitely have to keep up-to-date technology-wise and see what your audience is spending their free time doing. You can't go in thinking that stuff from five years ago is going to work," says Cumia.

New technology, starting with the Internet, adds Cumia, has rendered the traditional radio shock jock "irrelevant." "You can see [shocking] stuff in three clicks," he says. "What people want today is to have fun, they want to laugh and they want to feel who they're talking to is knowledgeable and involved."

Since 1995, the duo have been ahead of the new media curve to forge a bond with their audience. They started simply, posting pictures and video clips from the radio show on their Web site (opieandanthony.com, the same site that kept their brand alive for two years after they were fired from CBS and contractually unable to sign any new contracts). When XM Satellite Radio signed them in 2004, there was no doubt in the duo's minds they would return to terrestrial radio through syndication.

"When Howard Stern said he was leaving, I jumped on the phone with our agent and said, 'Let's try to do both,'" recalls Hughes. "It was a no-brainer to stop cursing [for terrestrial radio] and add a platform to give us a much bigger reach."

Curse-free Talk on terrestrial radio is just one of the many differences that distinguishes the radio show from the one launched in 1994. Today, Hughes and Cumia make a point to integrate new media into their radio brand, using not just their own channels, but the

channels frequented by their audience such as My Space and You Tube, where they have a strong presence.

"It isn't just our fans on the message boards. We go to them. I contribute to the photoshop; I personally get involved," says Cumia. "It makes you closer to the audience."

Through PalTalk cameras in the XM studios, listeners can watch the jocks during commercial breaks and when they're not on the air. On the flip side, Hughes and Cumia can see their listeners.

"They get a show within a show," says Hughes. "A large part of the show comes from the interactive features. It's extremely interactive—we give our listeners credit. We're developing little stars," says Hughes, who ought to know. In 1994, he invited Cumia onto his Boston show and the rest, as they say, is radio history.

"When the radio show ends, a good percentage of the listeners don't go away," explains Cumia. "It's an evolved version of our radio show. Things change, but it all plays a part in how the show grows. It's why we're able to have a show that's still relevant."

As for other platforms, Hughes and Cumia say they're taking it slowly. They've been approached about writing a book and they're trying to find time for a TV project. "We want to make sure we're firing on all cylinders in radio first," Hughes says.