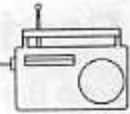


Local or Remote?

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As you look at the title, do you immediately think of remote broadcasts? Or maybe remote control? How about local phone calls? Well, the reality is that this is about none of the above, except maybe local phone calls.

When you need something for your radio station, who do you call. If you are like most people I know in this business, you probably immediately think of one of the major broadcast suppliers. I won't mention any names here, but you probably have your favorite. While there is nothing wrong with any of these suppliers, I would like to suggest a few alternatives.

First of all, if you need specialized broadcast equipment, your choices are somewhat limited. Just remember that there is more than one supplier of broadcast equipment in the country. While it may take a few phone calls, check around with a number of suppliers. Many of them work on a discount system and will give you a price that is less than list. Some will give better prices than others, due to a number of factors.

Just because you got a good price from supplier A for the last thing you bought, call around anyway. If the brand of equipment you want this time is different from last time, you may find that supplier B has better prices on this brand. Some suppliers seem to have a higher volume on some brands than others, which may lead to larger discounts on that brand from that supplier.

If you are really looking for the best price, assume nothing. I once heard of a person who worked for a well-known manufacturer of computer accessories. As an employee he was entitled to a substantial discount on his company's products. One day he was checking out prices in a local computer dealer and guess what he found? Their selling price (available to anyone) for his company's products was actually less than his price with his discount. A little research saved him quite a bit of money.

This same idea applies to broadcast equipment. Ask lots of questions and you may get some answers you like.

Audio Gear

Most radio stations use equipment that is not specifically broadcast in nature. Much of the audio gear in a radio station is similar to that used in the recording studio business. This opens up a whole new world of suppliers. There are a number of small suppliers (read LOCAL) of professional and semi-professional audio equipment. Even some hi-fi stores carry some of this gear. There are even stores that sell nothing but "music" equipment. While it

is called music equipment, much of it is familiar to the broadcaster. You will find cassette machines, DAT machines, speakers, amplifiers, microphones, cables, and lots of accessories in these stores.

A local supplier may be able to give you a better price. In comparing prices, don't forget local taxes and shipping charges. The local supplier can save you shipping if you pick it up. Another possibility is that the local store may be willing to work a trade. Check this all out with your manager or sales manager, but it is a good way to help with cash flow. Again, shop around and ask questions.

Tower Riggers

Thinking local can even help with some of the really odd things in the broadcast world. If you are doing some tower work, for instance, some local companies might be able to help. If you are in an area where there are oil wells, you might be in luck. The main difference between tower riggers and oil riggers is the type of tower they work on. Both are used to climbing and working with ropes and such.

Check around and you may be able to find someone who does excellent work and is local. He might even be cheaper than some of the riggers you have used before. One thing for sure, he can probably save travel charges for you. Remember, he is local and doesn't need to travel 500 miles to get to your tower. Of course, be sure to check his references and make sure he carries adequate insurance, but you may be able to save some money.

By the way, if you need pulleys, ropes, chains, or other things for some heavy lifting, check with some local industries. Most factories have this type of stuff on hand for their normal use. If they aren't using it, you may be able to borrow or rent it from them. This would be especially true if your station has a lot of community involvement. If you are a part of your local community, then other businesses are likely to be willing to help you out. Of course, if you are using any sort of heavy equipment they may want you to sign some waivers of liability, but if you bought that stuff you wouldn't have any recourse anyway, and you'd be out all that money.

Studio Furniture

Another place you should think local is studio furniture. "Studio furniture" you ask? Sure!

If you need studio furniture, check around. There is a wide range of suppliers of studio furniture out there, but chances are none of them are near you. If you are replacing

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a whole control room, for instance, you could end up paying a tidy chunk of change to ship the new furniture to you. How about a local supplier?

You probably are laughing about now, since the closest supplier of studio furniture is 500 miles away. Try a local kitchen cabinet supplier. If they do the work themselves, as opposed to just selling pre-made cabinets, they can probably make exactly what you need. Talk to them, and show them your old cabinets. I tried this recently and the response I got from the kitchen cabinet guy was "This is easier than what I normally do — No drawers!" You may be able to get better furniture, that is built exactly to your specifications, for less money than a regular studio furniture supplier. It may take a bit more of your time to make sure it is done right, but you could save some money. Again, your biggest saving may be in shipping charges!



Keep Your Eyes Open

Now, before I really alienate the broadcast suppliers out there, let me explain a few things. I use broadcast suppliers regularly. I need them as much as they need me. They sell things that I just can't get anywhere else. Yes, I shop around for the best prices, but who doesn't? I think they know that, or at least suspect it.

You definitely can't get everything you need for your station locally, even if you live in a major metropolitan area (the broadcast suppliers don't seem to be located in those cities).

These suggestions are not meant to imply that the broadcast suppliers are expensive. You may find that they have the best prices. The main idea here is to just keep your eyes open and ask questions. Do your homework and it will pay off.