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## WOMC adds new general manager

Some fear the oldies format is on the way out, but owner Infinity says that it's safe for now.

By Susan Whitall / The Detroit News

To most radio types, ranking No. 2 in a market as competitive as Detroit's would be a cause for celebration.

Although oldies WOMC-FM (104.3) had a No. 2 overall ranking during the winter Arbitron ratings period, with an increase in audience share of .3 percent, owner Infinity Broadcasting wanted more. To that end, on Wednesday it replaced the station's vice president/general manager Steve Schram with Kevin Murphy, an Infinity manager from Rochester, N.Y.

Conspiracy theorists are opining that it's just the first step toward changing WOMC's oldies format to "Jack," the new iPod shufflelike format with a huge playlist and no disc jockeys.



Schram

"Jack"-type stations, which include WDRQ-FM (93.1) in Detroit, play thousands of different songs, from the '70s to the '90s, the thought being that it mimics the variety of an iPod, thus attracting a younger audience.

On June 3, Infinity dumped the oldies format at WCBS-FM, its 33-year-old oldies station in New York. Infinity also flipped its longtime oldies station in Chicago, WJMK-FM, to "Jack." But Infinity insists WOMC is safe from being "jacked" -- for the moment.

"The ratings are pretty good, which is why we're not doing a format change," says Scott Herman, executive vice president of Infinity Broadcasting's Eastern region. He says WOMC's ad sales were disappointing to the radio giant.

Because Infinity wanted to have a separate general manager running each music station, Herman says, Schram still manages country WYCD-FM (99.5), and Debbie Kenyon runs smooth jazz WVMV-FM (98.7).

Herman admits that while WOMC does well in the 25-54 age group, "there's less business coming out of that demographic today than several years ago." He says they're responsible for 40 percent of dollars spent today, as opposed to 43 percent several years ago.

"Clearly you need to participate in the younger end of that demographic," Herman says. And WOMC has moved its oldies format younger. Instead of playing hits from the early '60s, now the station plays more hits from the late '60s and early '70s.

But the Infinity executive, like so many of his peers, is clearly enamored of the Jack format, calling it oldies for a younger demographic.

And yet, there are some industry observers like Sean Ross, vice president of music and programming for Edison Media Research, who caution that cutting off loyal oldies listeners in exchange for somewhat more fickle "Jack" listeners may not necessarily pay off in the long run.

Infinity hasn't given up on oldies, Herman insists. The company still runs oldies stations in Boston, Philadelphia, Tampa and Detroit. "People love hits, they love to hear songs they know. They like to sing to the music.

"Plus," he says with chuckle, "We have Dick Purtan."

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