RADIO'S PREMIER MANAGEMENT & MARKETING MAGAZINE<sup>®</sup>



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## RANDY Michaels "It was ea or be eaten

RADIO'S FANTASTIC FACILITIES

> BELIEVE UR EVES

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YOUR DIGITAL Strategy Should Look Like

THE INDUSTRY Salutes Bob Fuller

LEARN HOW JOHN TESH & CONNIE SELLECCA CREATED A WILDLY SUCCESSFUL BRAND FROM SCRATCH



John Tesh and Connie Sellecca

ohn Tesh started in radio at North Carolina State, where he went to study physics and chemistry. He was bit by the bug as a junior, when he took a TV and radio course to raise his GPA, and later got a part-time job reading the news for Rick Dees at WKIX-AM/ Raleigh in 1974. As everyone knows, Tesh went on to have a very successful career co-hosting Entertainment Tonight with Mary Hart, then toured as a musician. When Tesh and his wife, Connie Sellecca, a successful actress, had their second child, Tesh decided to stop traveling and get back into radio. This was during Howard Stern's broadcast heyday, and Tesh wanted to be different. So he picked up a copy of Jack Trout's Differentiate or Die, and he and Sellecca started talking about what they could come up with that would be different.

"We were getting ready to close down for the night," Tesh says, "and we were in our sleep chamber and Connie looked over at my side of the bed and saw all of this AVD stuff — wires, pieces of keyboards and stuff. And she said, 'What is that?' I looked at her side of the bed, and it was stacks of magazines with little sticky notes on them, and I said, 'What is all that mess?' And she said, 'These are all the articles that I am going to get to but I haven't had time yet.'"

And Tesh says that's when the light bulb went on for a radio show. "We said, 'What if the show was this?' For women who are looking for intelligence for their lives?' That's where the title came from. And we couldn't find anybody that was really interested in syndicating it because it was way too expensive. It required 10 researchers, the way we put together the business plan. So we did it ourselves.

"Of course, with a big help from [TeshMedia Group EVP/Entertainment & Syndication] Scott Meyers, who was a song player for me at the time. I just said, 'Hey, we are going to syndicate this radio show, and you're the head of syndication.' And he said, 'What's that?' I said, 'You'll figure it out.'" That was back in 2003.

Intelligence for Your Life, with Tesh as host,

started as a weekend show in 2000 and expanded into a daily show in 2003. The first station to take a chance on it was Clear Channel's KKDJ-FM/Bakersfield. KKDJ's PD at the time was Kenn McCloud, who is now iHeartMedia's regional programming manager for Fresno-Bakersfield-Monterey. "I loved the idea, and felt it would do well and compete head-to-head with *Delilah*," McCloud says. "We had created K-Lite with a 'Mom-Safe' position, and *Intelligence for Your Life* fit perfectly in our plans. When Scotty Meyers sent me the contract, we signed that day. Response was immediate. We cross-promoted the show with highlights on our *Kenn and Barbie* morning show. Within a couple of books, the show was beating *Delilah* with women 25-54 in our market."

The daily show is now heard on nearly 300 radio stations. It's led to the spinoff of a daily "Intelligence for Your Life Minute" vignette, as well as the threehour weekend show Intelligence for Your Health, launched in 2010 with Sellecca as the host. Their son Gib Gerard is a regular on Intelligence for Your Life with Tesh, and has his own show in development as well. The family also uses content from the radio shows in their Emmy-nominated syndicated television show, also titled Intelligence for Your Life and now seen on 174 stations. There are thousands of video clips online, mainly viewed through the Intelligence for Your Life Facebook fan page, which has over 760,000 followers. Video on demand is available at www.ifylondemand. com, and listeners can hear samples of the content via iHeartRadio.

McCloud says the concept for the show is very solid: "The writing and information that John and Connie share is so user-friendly in our short-attentionspan lives that rarely a show goes by that doesn't have at least one takeaway. When we launched the show, the digital side of our stations was in its infancy. Now, the digital component of the Tesh brand and the information have made it a perfect portal for the busy family. I'm proud to have been a part of it at the beginning." "Look at what the big guys are going through right now, how overleveraged they are, and people are **losing their** jobs based not on their performance or their ability, but based on somebody buying too many radio stations, not to name any names. We keep it lean and we perform at our own level." – John Tesh



#### RI: The radio business can be unfriendly at times. When you decided you were going to launch your own show with a new format that nobody had ever done before, what was that like?

**Tesh:** First of all, I grew up in the television business. I started at local news stations in Raleigh, Orlando, Nashville, and WCBS-TV in New York, for 12 years. The television business makes the radio business look like the friendliest people you've ever met in your life.

Sellecca: I can vouch for that.

Tesh: That's just a rough, rough business. What I love about radio is the station in Omaha and the station in Tallahassee don't really care about each other. They really only care about their market. I know that sounds simplistic, but what Scott Meyers taught me and Connie was that every single market is a separate business. I think us calling general managers personally....

Sellecca: Superserving them.

**Tesh:** We're calling general managers and program directors and offering them work charts of the show, partnering with them, doing conference calls with their sales departments, and doing commercials for them. The other thing that made a big change for us was that I didn't really know anything about the radio business. I just did radio and listened to it.

But when Scott said, "Hey, listen. We just got cancelled in Dallas because the station flipped to Spanish," I said, "Why can't you go someplace else with the show?" He said, "Because we're an Adult Contemporary show and there's no other AC station in the market that needs a syndicated show." I said, "Why do we have to send it out with music? Why don't we just send our voice tracks and the station can do their own music?" He said, "Well, that's never been done before."

So we had somebody write software and promise us that stations could download from an FTP server. That was really the big difference for us, where we could end up crossing over into all formats. As you know, we are now in all dayparts now, and in all formats.

**Sellecca:** Non-Christian stations, Country stations, AC stations.

**Tesh:** That's made the difference for us, being able to differentiate that way.

## RI: You decide from your messy bedroom that you're going to do a show. You make the call to that first station. What station did you start on? Or was it a big group?

**Tesh:** It wasn't a big group — that's also key to this whole thing. We've had some offers over the years from the big guys to make an investment in the show and actually purchase the show, both shows. The reason we resist is that we sell to everyone. We started in a small market. We did a really strong demo and a couple of guys said, "We'll take a chance, let's try it out."

Remember, it was a weekend show, so a lot of stations just sort of buried it early on a Sunday morning. But what happened was, it started to catch on with fans, and they would call the station and say, "There was this thing, 'Intelligence for something,' and there were five tips and I missed the last two. Can you give them to me?" That's really what started happening.

## RI: Then you started to grow the show.

**Sellecca:** Then *Intelligence for Your Life* grew from a weekend show to a daily. *Intelligence for Your Health* is a weekend show. We are on 85 stations, and we started *Intelligence for Your Health* in 2010, so we are in our sixth year.

**Tesh:** We have to give a lot of credit to Mike McVay, too. When we were doing the weekend show, Mike came to us and said, "There's some weakness, some opportunity, in the 7-to-midnight time period. Would you guys consider doing a daily show?"

And when we did the business plan for it, we realized there was a tremendous amount of work. It was five hours a day, six days a week of programming. We had a staff, and we, as a family, financed that for a couple of years before we were able to even break even. It was really McVay that said there was some opening here

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from 7 to midnight. Our biggest push in the last eight years or so is getting out of 7-to-midnight and getting on afternoons and mornings and middays. Because we've always believed that these tidbits, whether it's health and fitness, lifestyle stuff, relationship content, is all best served in prime time.

## RI: So you started to aggressively market the show for other dayparts.

**Tesh:** That was a real growth spurt for us, where if a station decided that, hey, we're going to buy some Premiere Networks product and replace our show – and that always happens in this world – Scotty would say, "That's fine. But understand that we're probably going to go across the street and compete against you." And that has happened in a handful of markets.

It's also been a great negotiating move because a station has to consider, having built an audience in that market, if they want to make that decision. He's very, very loyal, though. So there's maybe a station across the street that says, "Hey, we would like to take the show away from our competition and put you in mornings," which of course is a better time period for us. But Scotty will go to the station that we are on and give them an opportunity to match that offer before he does anything. In some cases, if it's somebody who has been with us from the very beginning, we wouldn't even make the move. That's very different from television. Television is just - you find out in the newspaper.

#### RI: When did you guys know that this show you started 13 years ago was really starting to work?

Sellecca: It didn't take that long. It caught on pretty quickly. I believe it kept growing because advertisers felt safe with the show. They feel safe with our family. And they feel safe with the content of the show. We have made a decision to not accept advertising from advertisers who go against our message. For instance, sodas, soft drinks, and cured meats and tanning beds – we turn them down. Because it goes against the message we give on our show.

## RI: They feel safe with the show? Explain that.

**Tesh:** You know the real buzzwords now in the advertising world are "native content" and "branded content." For example, a *Fortune* 500 advertiser like the Home Depot has been with us almost from the very beginning. They are one of our largest advertisers. We have a deal with them where we not only do our radio spots, but we do them as a family. I will read some, Connie will read some, Gib will read some. We represent their core demo. Actually, the Home Depot's core demo is women right now, and millennials like Gib, who is 34.

**Sellecca:** It makes sense because in our household, I am the plumber, I am the fixer.

**Tesh:** It's true. They said, "You guys have all kinds of home improvement tips. Is there a way for us to wrap our brand around what your messaging is with *Intelligence*?" So we not only do endorsements for them on the radio, but since we launched the TV show a few years ago, we do the same thing, where we will, as a family, animate how to do certain do-it-yourself projects and then we will reference the Home Depot.

Now our Facebook page has become a bigger television program than most television programs, basically, because we have taken all the videos that we've produced – and in the last year and a half, we've produced 2,700 unique videos that we use for our TV program. We will make videos for our key advertisers, whether it is Farmers Insurance or the Home Depot or Hershey's. People share those. That's really a large area of growth, where we are not just a TV show and a radio show, we really are a brand that broadcasts on all different platforms – I know that sounds like advertiser-speak.

Snapchat, Instagram, and Pinterest, they're not big for us. But with nearly 800,000 people on our Facebook page and a reach that's between 30 million and 60 million times per week, that's a big hammer for us in the industry.

## RI: What are you trying to build here?

Sellecca: One of the areas of growth is to

"Traditionally, evenings on an AC can be difficult as the vast afternoon audience goes home, gets out of their collective vehicles. and does something else for the night. The answer for that smaller, but still viable, evening audience is content and John Tesh delivers. while still allowing for plenty of music. John Tesh is the king of the tease. As he kicks off a music sweep he leaves you hanging with a juicy tidbit of information that demands you keep listening for the payoff. This has been a winning formula for me in Providence, with consistent top three finishes with adults 25-54 at night. John is extremely easy to work with, and is quick to send updated copy when needed. The goal is to make the John Tesh radio show sound local. and I'm able to do that with his daily promos and specially produced liners and handoffs."

Brian Demay Program Director WWLI (Lite Rock)/Providence Cumulus Media

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**"We have made** a decision to not accept advertising from advertisers who go against our message. For instance, sodas, soft drinks, and cured meats and tanning beds. We turn them down. Because it goes against the message we give on our show."

## **– Connie** Sellecca



expand into television, to take the content from both shows and bring it to television with animation. Our son Gib is the third host of the television show. That's one of the ways we're expanding. He's on the daily show with John for about 15 minutes a show. One of things we're developing now is a radio show for him. That's in development.

We also know from our audience that pets are huge. They are a big part of our show. I do health tips for pets on the health show, and *Intelligence for Your Life* has a lot on pets. We get a lot of questions about what's the best thing to do for this or that, or what's the best thing to feed them. So we became, just as we are curators of information on the radio show, we became curators for pet products. We have just recently launched a pet subscription box.

## RI: Talk about your son a little more. How is the radio show coming along, and what's the goal for that addition?

**Tesh:** We started experimenting with having Gib come in once a day on my show, and I would bring something up – for example, "Here's the latest trends, and what do you think?" Gib graduated college with a degree in theoretical math, but he's a real study when it comes to pop culture, even in the 1940s or 1950s. He has such a broad knowledge of that, like a lot of millennials. So he brings that approach. I would bring up content that we would normally have on the show and include him. He's developed a following.

We started with one appearance a day. Then it became two appearances a day. Now it's six appearances per day. Programmers started to tell us that they really love Gib and would like to have more of that, just like they told us they wanted a spinoff and wanted to line-extend the radio show into *Intelligence for Your Health*. That's sort of the natural progression. We test things out. We made some mistakes; for example, some of the pieces are too long and sometimes he picked on me too much and people would bristle at that. But we got it. We figur out what the formula was, and that formula also translated to television. So now the next step is to have him have his own weekly radio show. Sorry for the use of this phrase, but it's happened organically.

## RI: Tell us more about how you are expanding into television.

Tesh: That's a great question.

Sellecca: We thought putting cameras on talking heads from the radio show would be boring. We have a produced weekend TV show that the three of us host in front of the camera. The fourth host is actually a green screen and animation behind us. We launched it last year. We are syndicated on 174 stations.

**Tesh:** In the television business, it's not television anymore, it's video. When you go into an advertiser meeting in New York, and we do plenty of those, they don't even sell it as radio anymore – they sell it as, "What's your audio budget?" Same for television. We shoot the television show, and there are 15 distinct and unique pieces in a half-hour show. That's the syndicated TV show that's on weekends. But those pieces exist as separate pieces that we can promote on Facebook.

**Sellecca:** And they are pieces that we pull from the radio show. It is the same writers' and researchers' information we're using on the TV show. So we get to talk about them as a family and we have the three different perspectives. It's fun.

## RI: How gis your staff noc

**ac ca:** There's a staff of 35. We have offices and a little studio where we shoot the TV show.

## **RI:** What are you doing with animation?

**Tesh:** Again, it's a differentiation thing. We didn't want to be another family doing a couch show, sitting around talking about the topic of the day. We said, "How can we differentiate this?" So we started experimenting, the three of us, with our different perspectives, and you can figure out our different perspectives very easily, but we do it in front of the green screen so that our artists, we have these really funny guys – they're comedians and they're also talented



motion-graphics artists — they illustrate what we're talking about. You've seen some of this on MTV probably, but when you see it you will say, "I totally get this." It's a way of having a conversation and making conversation.

The real key for us was we didn't want to be us telling people, "Hey, do this, do that and you'll live longer," like the Dr. Oz thing – and he's been very successful, but we wanted to have a little whimsy in it too, a fun way to have a serious conversation.

Sellecca: And we are not experts. We don't pretend to be experts. We are just like a security system. We are bringing the expert information to our viewers, and then we have opinions on it. I have been accused of having a contrarian opinion. For example, we talk about the issue of taking photos at weddings. Gib, being the millennial, said, "These are the times." You just get to take pictures and share them when you're at a wedding, and the bride just has to deal with it. And my opinion is, not at all – the bride should be the one who decides which pictures get sent out and used by others. It's her wedding. We get to have that fight.

**Tesh:** One of the best compliments we've had as we shop the show is about the chemistry. It is difficult to engineer chemistry. So the big comment that we get is, "You guys have been together for 25 years as a family. It's obvious you have a language and that there's chemistry there, and we love to have that chemistry on our stations." That's really a great selling point for us.

#### **RI: Do you get listener feedback?**

**Tesh:** They tell us how they use the intelligence.

Sellecca: They thank you for the information. Like the woman who thanked us for this tidbit: If you're having a heart attack and you're driving a car, to cough and it will stimulate the heart. She said that saved her life. That kind of stuff is rewarding.

**Tesh:** We will also have women who say, "Thanks for these tips. I tried them on my husband." Then we will have someone else say, "Thanks for the tips on parenting. I tried to try it on my kid." Even as a musician or as an actress, when somebody comes to you and says, "Oh my gosh, I love you on that show," that's one thing. But when they say, "Hey, you inspired me," that's a real compliment.

Rick Warren from Saddleback Church owns *The Purpose Driven Life* — that very popular book. But we are always thinking about, "What is the purpose of this piece? How's this going to move somebody forward?" One of our battle cries is that we are here to move you from the place you are right now in your life to the place you were meant to be. I guess another title would be "Purpose Driven Radio."

#### RI: Why have you decided to keep this all in-house and not try to get some help – or take an offer – from a bigger company? Tesh: That's a really good question.

Sellecca: We are all control freaks.

Tesh: Connie and I both evolved in very different careers. We both worked for "The Man," quote unquote, and you're always in that mode of, "Oh my gosh. Is my show going to be cancelled? What am I going to do after that?" With a syndicated show, you have control. It is much, much more work, but being able to actually have these conversations as a family business - look at what the big guys are going through right now, how overleveraged they are, and people are losing their jobs based not on their performance or their ability, but based on somebody buying too many radio stations, not to name any names. We keep it lean, and we perform at our own level. There's a great analogy for me musically, which is when you are playing your own music, you are writing music that you can actually play, as opposed to something by Rachmaninoff. That's where we are. We are living in our comfort zone, not getting overleveraged.

## RI: Where do you want this growing empire to be in five years?

Sellecca: Adding kids to the daily radio show is

"The John Tesh radio show offers something very unique in our market, and very different from the competition. I think of each bit of intelligence as a 'tweet' on the radio. It's quick, it's interesting, you learn something, and then another great song plays. Plus, John's a local guy he grew up in Garden City. So when Long Islanders hear his voice on K-98.3, there's also an appreciation that he's one of us -a 'local guy done good.'"

Jon Daniels Program Director WKJY (K-98.3)/Long Island Connoisseur Media "One of the big problems that I faced when we launched the show was a lot of people thought, 'Here's the guy from Entertainment Tonight. He decided to do radio now.' I think that we have proved over the years that we have a commitment to enriching people's lives." — John Tesh



Executive Producer Betsy Chase (right) leads the morning producer's meeting.

part of that cutting edge. We are just growing with our TV show. It's a big project.

**Tesh:** We consider ourselves content generators. Every voice track that Connie and I do, every single one of the videos we produce, they are all archived and searchable. As you can imagine, there are thousands and thousands of these.

We are not interested in being in the software business. Delivery systems are now at a growth rate and a maturity where there are different ways, of course, to deliver audio. Every time you go to NAB, there's a new thing. There are many, many new ways to deliver video. I'm talking about taking all of our health information, audio and video, and putting it into doctors' offices. So those deals are all there as the delivery systems mature.

But we really try to stay focused on what we are best at and use our connections - our connections are Harvard, the Mayo Clinic, Johns Hopkins, Cleveland Clinic, hospitals, and all the publishers and PhDs and MDs. That's one of the things we have to be very careful about; we cannot grab a piece off the Internet and say, "Here's your latest thing," because it might not have any support. It's the beauty of being a mature brand that we call Intelligence For, to touch their life or their health. On Connie's show, for example, we can get any MD or PhD on her show because they know that they are going to reach 3 or 4 million people and they know they're going to be asked the right questions. We continue to focus on the content and ways to harvest that, and we're growing naturally with software that is being developed to distribute that.

#### RI: What do you want GMs and PDs to know about the shows they may not know? Why should they consider picking them up? Tesh: We are very, very nice people. Friendly.

Sellecca: The content is so different and familyfriendly and most of all, just usable content. News you can use. That's the thing. It's just full of great information. I love learning little things that I use in my life. A lot of people know now that you carry aspirin around with you in your purse or pocket or around your neck if you have heart disease in your family, and anyone around you, at the sign of a heart attack, can take an aspirin. Most of us know that. But one of the things I learned from the show is to carry Alka-Seltzer instead of an aspirin, because Alka-Seltzer gets into your bloodstream much faster. Did you know that?

## RI: I did not know that.

Sellecca: See? There you go.

**Tesh:** I think that the message we like to send, and if you were to interview any of our loyal general managers and program directors, is that we are here for the long haul. One of the big problems that I faced when we launched the show was a lot of people thought, "Here's the guy from *Entertainment Tonight*. He decided to do radio now." You know, I won't mention it, but there are two or three people out there who said, "Now I want to do radio. I want that to be part of my empire."

I think that we have proved over the years that we have a commitment to enriching people's lives. The other thing we've spent so much time on, and we agonize over this -1 watch Connie, she's a big *Today Show* fan, and when they tease something and they don't have enough time to get to it, we have to hide all the sharp objects because she will start throwing them at the TV.

**Sellecca:** If they don't have the content to back up their opinions....

**Tesh:** I learned it from a guy named David Michaels when I worked for CBS Sports for the Olympic Games about how important teases are, especially in this day and time when we're all thinking about TSL and hanging on to people. If you listen to our show, you will hear that we put a lot of effort into teasing the next piece.

Our program directors, they love this. We don't ever do a piece without teasing what's going to happen on the other side of a song. As a morning show, a lot of times you don't get to do that because you don't know what's going to happen next. But that's a big thing for us. It's one of the reasons our TSL is really hard to beat.

## **SIDELINES**

## **CONNIE SELLECCA**

## What are your hobbies (outside of radio)? Painting.

Who is/was your role model, and why? This week it is Nancy Reagan – because I can't get over those adoring stares. I wish I could figure out how to do that!

#### What are you reading right now? Hamilton by Ron Chernow.

Favorite movie? Don't have one.

Favorite TV Show? I Love Lucy.

Twitter handle? @ConnieSellecca

#### Who is the most interesting person you know (outside your family)? Dr. Alfedo Trento, a heart transplant sur-

Dr. Alfedo Trento, a heart transplant surgeon. He holds life in his hands.

## If you had 30 minutes, a tape recorder, and your choice, who would you interview, and why?

Kris Jenner. I want to know what she knew, what she accepted, what she expected, what hurt, and what hurts now.

## Name three stations you listened to as a kid and three you listen to now.

As a kid, WMCA Good Guys. Now, CNN, F News, and KABC.

## What three apps do you have on your phone that would surprise people?

(to communicate with my 21-year-old).

#### **Do you listen to Pandora or Spotify ever?** No.

**Biggest pet peeve with radio?** Teases that don't pay off.

Your most embarrassing career moment? Every talk show I have ever done.

#### What one goal has eluded you? There are two: learning another languag and learning how to sing.

Most proud career achievement? Golden Globe nomination.

## When you die, what will people say about you? It's either "She tried hard" or "She should

## **JOHN TESH**

What are your hobbies (outside of radio)? Kettle-bell swings, pull-ups, looking at my wife.

#### Who is/was your role model, and why? Rick Wakeman (the virtuoso keyboardist for Yes) and Jim McKay (best Olympic storyteller of all time).

What are you reading right now? 4-Hour Body by Tim Ferris, Keto Clarity b Eric Westman, MD.

**Favorite movie?** *Gladiator*.

## **Favorite TV show?** 24.

Twitter handle? aJohnTesh

Who is the most interesting person you know (outside your family)? Lin-Manuel Miranda.

## If you had 30 minutes, a tape recorder, and your choice, who would you interview, and why?

lack Nicholson. He just seems like he's havng such a good time, and I want to know why.

#### Name three stations you listened to as a kid and three you listen to now. WABC, WNEW, WINS. Now I rotate between about 20 of our affiliates online.

about 20 of our affiliates online. What three apps do you have on your

## phone that would surprise people? RoundTimer (boxing timer) Genius (lyrics app), KetoDietBasic.

**Do you listen to Pandora or Spotify ever?** Yes.

## Biggest pet peeve with radio.

We don't work together to project the united front we deserve as a media force of nature.

## Your most embarrassing career moment?

Announcing the World Horse Jumping Championship live for CBS Sports. I sounded like Fred Willard in *Best in Show*.

#### What one goal has eluded you? Writing a Broadway musical.

Most proud career achievement? Live at Red Rocks music special for PBS.

## When you die, what will people say about you?

"Oh, right, the guy who wrote that basketball theme, right? Da-da-da-da." "John Tesh is an integral part of the CHFI-FM/ Toronto family, and he continues to deliver compelling content that our audiences love! The success is in the ratings, recently coming in at 16.1 amongst adults 25-54 PPM."

Wendy Duff National Format Director/AC Program Director, CHFI-FM/Toronto Rogers Media