

Deejays Enticed to Shed Light on Shedding Pounds

[San Diego County Edition]

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No, not all deejays are fat. It just seems that way, ever since 44 million of them decided to tell the world about their efforts to take off a few pounds.

Most of them didn't even seem to be overweight a few months ago. Now they're tripping over themselves to pose for before and after photos, advertising Nutra-System or the Jenny Craig weight loss programs. Hallelujah! I've lost 2 ounces! Praise Nutra-System!

Nutra-System and Jenny Craig have managed to persuade dozens of deejays and other assorted radio employees to publicly go on their diet programs. The radio people get the program and the special food for free, but they're not paid for their participation. If it works out, they do testimonials for the system and the station gets a great advertiser.

Nutra-System's San Diego spokesman was out of town and unavailable for comment, but Linell Killus, director of regional marketing for Jenny Craig, said her company is working with six San Diego radio stations, most with on-air personalities using the program. They started the program in January.

"It's been very successful," Killus said. "It makes our phone ring and that's our objective."

Nutra-System and Jenny Craig are signing up virtually every deejay who can afford to lose a few pounds. The deejays are easily convinced to participate. Even if they are not grossly overweight, most want to take off a few pounds, so the offer of a free program is alluring. And a little pressure from the station's advertising department doesn't hurt.

"I jumped at the chance," said one deejay, echoing the sentiments of others.

The companies carefully screen participants. They only want those who seriously want to lose weight, which may explain why none of the participants can really be described as fat, and why few drop out.

It appears to be a win-win situation for all involved-except listeners, who have to put up with a non-stop stream of whiny testimonials to the joys of weight loss.

Let's just hope foot spray companies don't adopt the same marketing techniques. Nobody wants to hear a bunch of deejays talk about their problems with athlete's foot.

The folks at XTRA-AM (690) are fuming over an internal KSDO-AM (1130) memo, which mysteriously found its way to the XTRA newsroom. Dated Aug. 19-before XTRA switched to news-talk to challenge KSDO-the memo authored by KSDO program director Jack Merker is entitled "Bandito Radio Update Number One," which XTRA program director Michael Packer called an ethnic slur against XTRA general manager Tom Jimenez. Merker said "bandito radio" is simply a commonly used reference to Mexican-based radio stations.

The memo is clearly intended to inform KSDO staffers about the changes at XTRA. But one section is headed "Dirty Tricks" and an unattributed quote calls new XTRA morning announcer Mark Williams the "Donald Segretti of Talk Radio," a reference to one of Richard Nixon's convicted tricksters. Williams is "prone to having his people call one of the announced guests on the day before a promoted appearance" on a rival station to tell them not to show up, the memo says. Merker quotes an unidentified source from Phoenix, where Williams last worked, as saying, "Williams is not extraordinarily bright or talented and capable only of going for the jugular," and he "has a very big ego which gets in the way of good taste and judgment on the air."

Bob Christopher, program director of KTAR-AM, the top news-talk station in Phoenix, is quoted in the memo as saying, "I'm amazed Williams was able to get a job," and many of the other quotes appear to come from him. Contacted on Friday, Christopher said he recalls talking to Merker only about "shock radio" in general. "I'm not that familiar with Mark or his work," he said.

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XTRA's Packer was noticeably angry about the memo. "I am shocked that the (KSDO) program director would be so insecure about a challenge that he would stoop to racial slurs and slanderous remarks about Mark," he said.

"This is nothing more than an internal staff memo designed to alert (staff) about areas they should watch over," said Merker, adding that the quotes came from several sources in Phoenix. "I was just updating the staff on the type of things that went on in the (Phoenix) market."

This month's edition of KNSD-TV's (Channel 39) "Third Thursday" show will take place this Thursday, the fourth Thursday of the month. The baseball playoffs forced the change. Growth is the subject of the show, scheduled to air from 6:30-8 p.m. . . .

Russ T. Nailz made the recent edition of Rolling Stone magazine-he was mentioned in an article about upcoming comedians because of his funny name-but the new XTRA-FM (91X) morning deejay seems a little out of step with reality. Yes, some people find the continual sounds of a Ping Pong game annoying in the morning. Of course, maybe annoying is the new trend in morning radio. The Rich Brothers devoted one morning last week to tuba music. . . .

Ranch and Coast magazine is due out on the stands today or tomorrow, a little later than expected. Staff changes at the corporate level accounted for the delay, according to a magazine spokeswoman. Partly due to the delay, the next issue, scheduled for mid-November, will be a special two-month issue. . . .

The North County Entertainer is switching from monthly to twice monthly in November.

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