

Executive Summary

Core Values: Classical Music Format Focus Groups Walrus Research (2002)

- We found that the primary benefit provided by classical music radio is stress relief. In twelve focus groups across six markets, respondents told us over and over that they use and value the classical music format because “it is soothing.”
- However, we found that stress relief alone is not a sufficient reason for classical listeners to use a music station. They told us that classical music is not only soothing but also intelligent unlike the pop music heard on smooth jazz or soft rock stations.
- The second major benefit provided by classical stations is clarity of mind. With a clear mind classical listeners can focus like Zen monks, concentrate on a task and do better work, whether on the computer, in the studio or in the shop.
- Thirdly, classical music radio provides an escape from contemporary culture, which target listeners perceive as decadent and ugly. The classical format serves as a refuge that preserves the beauty and majesty of a better time.
- Most of our respondents use classical music to escape from the problems of the world. Accordingly, they mostly avoid the NPR newsmagazines. While NPR news in depth attracts societally conscious listeners, it drives away most classical music listeners.
- We found that listeners who use commercial classical stations share the same values as classical listeners who access the format through public radio stations. They are the same kind of people.
- Classical listeners do not care whether their local station is licensed to be commercial or public. They care that it is classical. However, they object to any announcement, promo, spot or pitch break that “sounds like a commercial” and thus disrupts their serenity.
- Classical listeners use the station for gratification of their private, internal needs. Yet through the station they identify with a small community of enlightened others. Having a classical station in the market means that there is still some hope for civilization.