

# JUST FOR PROGRAMMERS

May 11, 2014

## 3 Things Radio Can Learn from Fathers – aka \$#%! My Dad Says

Making In honor of Mother's Day last month we looked at lessons radio could learn from the woman who brought us into this world. Now, as Father's Day approaches let's take a few moments to consider what your station can learn from the person who threatened to take us back out of it.

1) Do Your Homework: I can't speak for your dad but mine (an ex-principal!) was laser-focused on making sure I got good grades in school, and that meant doing my homework. It certainly wasn't fun, nor something I looked forward to, but like many things that you only realize later in life, it taught me some very valuable lessons.

In today's fast-paced industry where we are all wearing a lot of hats, many shrug off doing meaningful ratings analysis with the excuse that it's not a top priority; or they don't make the time for it; or (in the case of PPM markets) there is so much information flowing at them all the time that it's all about the next ratings report card coming down the pike.

However, doing your homework or in this case ratings analysis -- much like your dad insisted -- can help you succeed. To make the task less tedious, attack it like you did in school. Don't write down everything 'Professor Nielsen' says because you'll run out of brain space pretty quickly.

Instead, focus on the material that will be on final exam or in this case the metrics that are likely to move the ratings needle for you station. Figure out the three most important things to look at each book, and start there. You can find inspiration in past columns [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

2) Learn How to Change a Tire: My father was also always trying to teach me practical skills that could help me get through life and small emergencies such as a flat tire. A similar approach to working at a station will benefit your ratings and, quite possibly your career.

Due to budget cutbacks many stations no longer can afford specialists in every department so having at least a working knowledge of how to do anything and everything can help your station run smoother on a day-to-day basis and weather a crisis when one occurs.

And yes, this goes beyond just the programming end of the building. Understanding what goes on in the sales department is just as important. Many successful PDs make it a point to sit in on at least one sales meeting a month to understand what's going on from that perspective. You may find it enlightening, too.

3) Mow the Lawn: When I was young I never really understood dad's obsession with interest in having a neatly-trimmed lawn. It seemed like a lot of work for not a lot of return, particularly for yours truly as I grumbled my way around the yard doing countless hours of mowing and mulching. Now that I'm older I realize that part of being a good member of the community is making sure you keep your property looking tidy.

Well, being a good member of the community is part of being a radio station, too. There's nothing wrong with throwing a few loud parties at your house – my folks did occasionally – so long as you also mow your metaphorical lawn by being an upstanding member of the neighborhood. While your format might call for the occasional racy or controversial bit, balance that by being a conduit for information about what is happening in your town and working with charities to help people in your area. If you keep your lawn looking nice, the curb appeal of your house goes up significantly and so will your ratings.

Finally, one extra thought from my dad: work hard but play hard too. We always took at least one family vacation each summer, and those were some of the most memorable experiences I had growing up. Unplugging from work and getting away is more valuable to your station and your career in the long run than insisting you are just too busy to leave. Make the time and try to keep a balanced lifestyle because in the end you probably won't be remembering all of those hours you spent planning remotes or tinkering with the playlist.

