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# Media companies look forward to exciting 2008

By **RANDY WRIGHT**

As the year comes to a close and everyone takes a look back at 2007, I thought we might look ahead and see what intriguing challenges and opportunities might develop next year.

## Advertising

It's been interesting to watch the evolution of advertising agencies over the past few years and the birth of so-called "buying agencies," groups of advertising specialists that concentrate on placing clients' marketing budgets with various media outlets throughout the region but are not responsible for the creative elements of marketing. Agencies such as **Bucket Media, True Media** and **Word Marketing** have made an impact buying ad space and time for clients, and some clients have found this to be helpful.

"As media planning and placement are becoming a more vital part of the advertising mix, inevitably more media buying agencies will open throughout the area," **Bucket Media** President **Keri Tipton** wrote in an e-mail. "Making sure these agencies have invested in the information needed will be the key to their success as well as their clients' success."

**True Media** was formed as a



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stand-alone entity out of longtime Columbia agency **Woodruff Sweitzer**, and **Word Marketing** was created by former **Zimmer Radio Group** market Manager **Tony Richards** and his wife, **Ann Marie Quermous**, who was an account executive at **KOMU**.

## Radio

High-definition radio is gaining some steam in larger markets across the country, but most people in Central Missouri still don't

know what it is, what it means, how it works or whether the commercial stations in the region will take the plunge and begin broadcasting via this method in the future.

Locally, only **KBIA-FM**, the University of Missouri's NPR station, broadcasts in HD and offers a secondary channel of programming available only through the "multicasting" technology that digital radio makes possible. **Cumulus Media** built out a Jefferson City FM station digitally but has no current plans to upgrade any of the central Missouri stations to HD, at least until there's a critical mass of HD receivers in the marketplace.

The concept is pretty interesting, very similar to what digital television stations have been doing for five-





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plus years in multicasting multiple channels through a single transmitter. Radio's digital infrastructure offers the same technological advancement but doesn't mandate a turnoff date for analog transmitters and receivers, which is a major deterrent toward acceptance of the new technology.

#### Cable/satellite TV

Increased competition in high-definition television will be the story of 2008. There will be an increase in HD channel offerings, and there will be new entrants into the market, such as **CenturyTel**, which is offering still another option for receiving television programming, Internet and telephone/long distance service.

The winner likely will be Columbia consumers, who will enjoy new choices and aggressive pricing from the likes of **Mediacom**, **DISH Network** and **DirecTV**.

Bryan Gann, director of area operations for Mediacom, the region's leading video distributor, said 2008 will see a citywide upgrade of the Mediacom system to add capacity to, in part, increase channel offerings. Gann said Mediacom will be adding Fox Sports Midwest in HD after the first of the year, and some HD premium channels including ESPN-HD will be moved "down" to the digital package, thereby allowing digital subscribers the opportunity to watch them without purchasing the HD premium package.

Additionally, Mediacom will be moving toward the next generation of data over cable service interface

specifications in the near future, and that will allow for much higher capacity, improving video and Internet quality.

#### Internet

**Socket** continues to grow and become an even bigger part of our universe, not only offering Internet bandwidth but also business telephone service. Socket co-founder George Pfenenger says 2008 will see some interesting developments in the communications business with the further development of business telephone systems, which now allow even the smallest companies an equal footing with their large competitors.

On the consumer side, rapidly growing companies such as Socket will continue to work with and serve smaller Internet service providers to ensure the continued expansion of, and need for, Internet bandwidth is met. As more and more Web sites featuring streaming video and rich content eat up bandwidth, the engineering models on which the Net is designed will continually evolve.

In the next Media Matters, we'll examine what the next year will bring for the newspaper, Web and magazine industries as well as get caught up on some of the latest happenings in the central Missouri media scene. Have a safe and happy New Year holiday.

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