RADIO'S PREMIER MANAGEMENT & MARKETING MAGAZINE℠

RADIO INK

VOL. XXXVI, NO. 10 10•4•2021 WWW.RAD

THE UNSUNG HEROES OF RADIO

MEET THE 2021 RADIO WAYNE FINALISTS

ROY: BRANDED VERSUS UNBRANDED KEYWORDS

PLUS: RESULTS FROM OUR 3RD ANNUAL SALES COMPENSATION STUDY

TAKING OVER THE NAB

INCOMING CEO CURTIS LEGEYT

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RADIO INK (ISSN 1064-587X) is published monthly January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November, and December. Twelve issues each year for $199 per year, Canadian and European subscribers $249 per year, by Streamline Publishing, Inc., 331 SE Mizner Blvd., Boca Raton, FL 33432. Periodicals postage paid at Boca Raton, FL, and additional mailing offices.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Radio Ink, 331 SE Mizner Blvd., Boca Raton, FL 33432. All subscriptions, renewals, and changes of address should include address label from most recent issue and be sent to the Circulation Department, *Radio Ink*, 331 SE Mizner Blvd., Boca Raton, FL 33432. Copying done for other than personal or internal reference without the express permission of *Radio Ink* is prohibited. Address requests for special permission to the Managing Editor. Reprints and back issues available upon request. Printed in the United States.

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TAKING CHARGE

Incoming NAB President/CEO CURTIS LEGEYT

By Editor in Chief Ed Ryan

Back in April, National Association of Broadcasters President and CEO Gordon Smith announced his plans to step down as CEO and transition to an advisory and advocacy role at the end of 2021. Smith joined the NAB as CEO in November 2009 after serving two terms as a U.S. senator from Oregon.

Smith worked closely with the NAB Board leadership on a succession plan, and, also in April, it was announced that NAB COO Curtis LeGeyt will become president and CEO on January 1, 2022.

LeGeyt has been with the NAB for nearly a decade. Before assuming his current role as COO, LeGeyt served for five years as NAB's executive vice president for government relations.

Here's what the retiring CEO had to say about the incoming CEO: "Anybody who knows Curtis knows he is incredibly competent and very collaborative. Since he came to NAB from Capitol Hill 10 years ago, he has demonstrated remarkable skill, tact, and effectiveness. He has deep contacts on Capitol Hill and a lengthy track record of successfully advocating for broadcasters. As COO, Curtis has skillfully helped lead the organization through the challenges posed by the pandemic. He is exactly the right leader at the right time to lead NAB into the future."

Radio Ink: Please tell our readers about your background.

LeGeyt: Like a lot of others, I came to Washington, D.C., after law school with a passion for the law and politics – a desire to do something that matters for the American people. When you are young, there's no better place to do that than Capitol Hill.

I was fortunate career-wise to have done a few other things in the nexus of politics, but most significantly, working for Sen. Patrick Leahy during his chairmanship of the Senate Judiciary Committee. That gave me the opportunity to roll up my sleeves and craft some meaningful legislation from all different sides – drafting bills, interfacing with stakeholders, including the broadcasters, working with every office on Capitol Hill to take an idea from concept into law, holding hearings. The same things that have drawn me to NAB drew me to Capitol Hill, and I gained that experience there.

Additionally, I am a dad of three kids. I have an amazing wife who is an incredible partner professionally as well as in helping to navigate the craziness that is a household with three kids under the age of 9.

Radio Ink: You mentioned Sen. Leahy. How important are relationships on The Hill when leading the NAB?

LeGeyt: Knowing Capitol Hill and knowing any number of senators and members of Congress is extremely important. Yes, on a personal level, but more so just in terms of having been on the other side of the table with an understanding of what members of Congress need to hear from stakeholders. Policy arguments are important, but more than that is being able to relate to these members who care about their constituents back at home, understanding that when you make a policy argument, it needs to translate to their home states.

For the broadcast industry, we are in such a strong position because we have a presence in every congressional district in the country and our members are truly serving constituents through free and local services. We start every conversation on Capitol Hill through that lens. I would put that experience as the more important element, more so than any sort of unique personal relationship. The reality is the people on Capitol Hill change, the parties in power change, but one dynamic that doesn't change is that members of Congress need to serve their local constituents.

They always say you never want to be the leader that comes in after a "great leader." Indeed, Gordon Smith has been a great leader, but if anyone can come in and successfully fill those shoes, it's Curtis LeGeyt. Curtis' past experience on Capitol Hill, combined with his intimate understanding of the issues facing our industry and the diplomacy he exhibits in every instance, have already provided an invaluable service to the NAB, its members, and to broadcasters at large. I know in his new role as CEO, it will only be that much better.

David Santrella
NAB Executive Committee Chair
President/Broadcast Media
Salem Media Group

Radio Ink: Tell us how and when you came to the NAB.

LeGeyt: I came at the end of 2011; this was earlier in Gordon Smith's tenure as CEO. I came to the NAB for many of the same reasons I came to Capitol Hill. I saw an industry that is rooted in service to the American people. I was someone growing up who wasn't sure if I wanted to go into law or journalism. The NAB gave me the best of both worlds. I could take the experience I had in policy and politics and leverage it to help an industry that is indispensable to the American people in terms of its local service.

Radio Ink: And the EVP for government relations does what?

LeGeyt: That position is managing a bipartisan team responsible for crafting policy and executing boots-on-the-ground lobbying on Capitol Hill. That is coupled with putting together a strategy that leverages our grassroots local stations across the country and liaising with them, partnering with our legal department that is managing the day-to-day in terms of our advocacy at the FCC and the administration.

It's really playing air traffic control on all the various tools the industry has in its toolbox to advocate. From policy, to lobbying, to grassroots, to public affairs and messaging. You are putting all those pieces together to put your best foot forward for the industry.

Radio Ink: Tell us about your relationships now with members of Congress and how that might be an advantage to you and the radio and TV stations you represent.

LeGeyt: The relationships that both myself and our bipartisan team at NAB have, led by Gordon, are extremely strong. They are strong because under Gordon's leadership we have taken the approach of wanting to dialogue with members of Congress and understanding the best way to shape policy and legislation is not to be the "Party of No" on everything but to be a partner to members of Congress. They are ultimately up there trying to get a job done and help steer them in a direction that is mutually beneficial to their agendas and to the broadcast industry.

What we've shown over my time as EVP of government relations is that we have a strong advocacy strategy regardless of which party is in power. That's something that matters a great deal in this particular climate in Washington, where you have a 50/50 Senate and a very narrow Democratic majority in the House. Engagement with both parties means a lot. For the broadcast industry, one thing I say consistently to our members is we don't register Democrat or Republican, we register local. We register with those members of Congress who appreciate the unique service we provide in their communities.

Radio Ink: You're coming in during COVID, which has affected the Vegas show. Tell us what you are thinking about the COVID challenge.

LeGeyt: I think the impact of COVID on this country and the industry puts a real urgency behind the work we do from an advocacy perspective. We've obviously been successful over the course of the last year in securing significant wins that have helped our members manage through COVID. Expanding radio station eligibility for the PPP, pushing for federal dollars to educate on vaccines flowing through broadcast stations, and continuing to keep costs at bay, the performance tax fight. What we have done to push back on an increase in regulatory fees at the FCC.

The second piece is our workforce. As COO I'm navigating the same challenge all of our members are navigating, which is ensuring our team is safe. That when they are coming into the office, we have an environment that's as healthy and safe as possible. That folks have the flexibility to navigate their own personal challenges when it comes to health care, child care. The mental health toll is substantial.

Our business is no different than yours or our members'. Everyone has been impacted by COVID in a unique way. I'm focused on making sure our team has the flexibility and the space they need to navigate these challenges while also executing at a higher level than they have before on behalf of our members. Our members need us operating at a very, very high level right now.

In a period of massive change and significant opportunity, Curtis is uniquely suited to lead the NAB. Curtis has a deep understanding of the workings of NAB and Congress, the legacy and critical importance of the broadcasting industry, and the challenges that our industry faces. Curtis approaches these challenges with a collaborative spirit, keen intellect, and a focus on finding long-lasting solutions that will set out our industry up for a new era of success.

Bill Wilson
NAB Radio Board Chair
Chief Executive Officer
Townsquare Media Group

L-r: Curtis LeGeyt, Grisella Martinez, former VP of Government Relations at NAB; Shawn Donilon, NAB EVP/Government Relations; and NAB SVP/Government Relations Jack Smedile

Radio Ink: We've seen a few radio companies mandate the vaccine. Is there a policy on the vaccine for employees at the NAB? Do you have any thoughts on radio companies mandating it?

LeGeyt: With regard to NAB, we don't have a policy in place at this time because we don't need to. Our workforce is 90% vaccinated. That number is higher among those employees coming into the office. Our focus is on strongly encouraging the remaining employees to get the vaccine. Educating them, ensuring that we understand what hesitancy may still exist in our workforce. We are extremely pleased that our vaccination numbers are so high as to not have to confront those questions in the same way some of our member companies have.

As it relates to companies who've made that decision, it's a very individualized choice for each of those companies. Every company is going to know their workforce, the markets they operate in, and they're taking steps needed to promote health and safety among their employees. Our service as an industry has never been more important. That can require extreme measures that when employees are coming into their workplace, they feel safe, so they aren't distracted from executing on their mission.

I fully support each of our member companies making the decision that is best for them to get these numbers up, in terms of numbers of employees who are vaccinated. The only way to get through this as a country is for more individuals to be vaccinated. There are different approaches to get there. These companies know their workforce better than any of us.

Radio Ink: NAB had to cancel the big show this year. What went into that painful decision and how will it impact the association going forward?

LeGeyt: We worked very hard to try to deliver an event that offered significant return on investment for our exhibitors and attendees – an event that the entire industry could be proud of. In the end, there were too many factors outside of our control that prevented us from hosting the type of NAB Show and Radio Show that our community has come to expect.

It was an immensely difficult decision, but a necessary one given health and safety concerns and our desire to meet the expectations of our exhibitors and attendees. We are now focusing our attention on the 2022 NAB Show in April.

NAB remains strong and fortunate to have sound options in place for sustaining the association financially in the short term, while remaining healthy and well-positioned to serve our members over the long term. Since the cancellation of the 2020 NAB Show, we have worked closely with the board to lay the grounds for a financial plan that ensures NAB remains effective for our industry.

Radio Ink: Do you think the hybrid model for conferences will be around for a while?

LeGeyt: I do. This was already a direction we were going prior to COVID. We realized we need to reach our audiences wherever and however they want. We can broaden our tent by being available in a hybrid way. There is a personal benefit if you're there in person as it relates to commerce and networking. We don't think that the in-person element will ever go away.

The NAB is a broad tent, when you think about radio, TV, large and small markets. We want to have a presence whether our audience can make it physically to our

Curtis has been an amazing advocate for the broadcast industry! While Gordon is a tough act to follow, Curtis will be tremendously successful given his intellect, passion, problem-solving abilities, and amazing character. I've been lucky to work with Curtis on projects over the years and will continue to support his and the NAB's efforts as we continue to fight for local broadcasters and the invaluable role we play in our communities.

Trila Bumstead
NAB Radio Board Member
Owner
Ohana Media Group

Although Curtis LeGeyt does not have the name recognition of former Senator Gordon Smith, he has as much administrative skill and political know-how and will be an exceptional NAB president.

Amador Bustos
NAB Radio Board Member
President
Bustos Media

shows or not. The hybrid model has been accelerated by COVID, and I see us continuing to build it out. At the same time, with Radio Show in particular, it's incumbent on us to make sure there's a unique value to being there in person.

Radio Ink: When you sit in the big chair after Gordon Smith retires, what are the big radio issues you plan to tackle?

LeGeyt: The one that's top-of-mind for me right now is the tremendous impact the tech platforms are having on the radio industry and what role Washington can play in ensuring that when the tech platforms are serving as gatekeepers to our audiences, we have the right rules of the road in place to ensure we can capture fair values for our content. There are a lot of different threats in this for the radio industry – whether for traditional radio, its smart speakers, all of the work being done as radio stations are working to reach their audiences through streaming. We need to ensure we can do that on a level playing field with these tech platforms that have so much scale.

Top-of-mind for our team here is crafting an advocacy strategy that puts the industry in the best possible position to be successful in delivering our locally focused content and unique listener experience in a way that's unencumbered.

The second piece: the performance tax continues to be a threat the radio industry needs to deal with. It's existential, one that we can't lose. I'm focused on ensuring we take the leverage and support we clearly have on that issue, with 200-plus members of Congress supporting the Local Radio Freedom Act, and working with those members on other areas of music licensing that are so important to our members. The current high cost of streaming. Simplifying the music licensing framework in a way that avoids the next performing rights organization popping up and hitting our members with another fee.

The radio industry is in a place where we can't absorb more costs. Our trade association is going to be laser-focused on working for policies in Washington that simplify life for our members rather than making it more complicated.

Radio Ink: Regarding the tech platforms, are the right rules in place right now?

LeGeyt: I would like to see the rules changed. On one hand Washington is very focused on regulating the tech platforms, but for the broadcast industry, absent some major reforms that suppress the market power of these tech platforms, we need more scale to compete on a level playing field. Both for advertising dollars and when we are at the negotiating table with them, in terms of ensuring we have the ability to directly reach our listeners.

There are a lot of different ways to get there. In the wake of the Supreme Court's decision on media ownership, they are making a renewed case for some modifications to the media ownership rules. There are other ways – currently there's a proposal under consideration in both the House and Senate, the Journalism Conservation Preservation Act, that would provide broadcasters with an antitrust exemption to negotiate with additional scale against the tech platforms. Those are the types of proposals that recognize the competitive imbalance that exists between the tech platforms and broadcasters. I think you will see more of it in the coming years.

Radio Ink: On the performance tax issue, do you think radio should pay anything for airplay? Should there be some kind of deal?

LeGeyt: Radio does pay for airplay. We're paying ASCAP, BMI, SESAC for rights to play the underlying written work. We're writing checks to SoundExchange when our broadcasts are simulcast. If you're just looking at the performance tax issue as a standalone, no, I don't think there's a policy justification for pulling out the rug from underneath local radio stations and imposing a new fee when the current cost structure has been so mutually beneficial for decades to both the recording artists as well as the broadcast industry.

That having been said, there's a larger discussion that needs to take place around how all of this is interconnected.

Curtis and Gordon approach advocacy from different directions, but there's no doubt we will continue to win our battles on Capitol Hill. He and Gordon are from the political side and both understand exactly what needs to be done to serve the needs of broadcasters. It may be hard to visualize how two CEOs with such different styles will be equally effective in telling our story to regulators, but even with the differences, they are both gifted when it comes to knowing how Congress and the FCC work. There's no question; Curtis knows The Hill and how broadcasters fit into the legislative mix.

Ben Downs
NAB Radio Board Member
Vice President and General Manager
KNDE-FM/Bryan-College Station, Texas

We have attempted to engage the recording industry for the last several years on whether there might be a solution to this that's larger than any one specific issue but simplifies the cost structure for broadcasters across all their music licensing fees while also addressing concerns the recording industry has. We would welcome further conversations around that.

Radio Ink: What would you like radio CEOs and managers to know about how you will lead the NAB for the next X number of years?

LeGeyt: With my background in politics and law, and over the last 10 years working in senior-level positions across NAB, I've truly adopted the spirit of a broadcaster. I've spent significant amounts of time traveling the country getting to know radio groups —large and small groups, large and small markets. I've done that because it's important to have an understanding of what our local stations are feeling on the ground and ensuring our advocacy matches the business needs.

Additionally, in my current role as COO, I've been navigating the same operational challenges posed by COVID as our members are facing around the country. That's given me greater appreciation for the nuts-and-bolts realities of the financial stresses, as well as the personal stresses our member companies are feeling across the country. I want to emphasize to the industry that I'm in this fight with them and for them. I'm very proud to be the voice of the radio industry in the halls of Washington.

Radio Ink: After a dozen years as CEO, Gordon Smith is retiring. What thoughts do you have on how he has run the organization?

LeGeyt: While Gordon is going to take some well-deserved time with his family, we're not going to let him go too far. He will be working as an ongoing adviser to NAB and me personally. That's a role where I'll be leveraging his intimate knowledge of the inner workings of Washington, D.C., to ensure the radio industry doesn't miss a beat as a result of his departure. I know he's excited and eager to remain part of the NAB family and broadcast industry.

In terms of Gordon's legacy, there are three things I would point to that are imperative for NAB to continue to build upon. The first is unity. Gordon has demonstrated the broadcast industry is strongest when we are together. That means finding commonality among our large and small groups, between TV and radio, between large and small markets. What we've demonstrated is that by keeping broadcasters of all shapes and sizes in the tent — and you can see this legacy when you look at the composition of NAB today, which includes every major player in the broadcast industry relative to when Gordon started — this has led to a real recipe of advocacy success on Capitol Hill.

The second is understanding the importance of our grass roots. At the end of the day, members of Congress are responsible to their constituents. If our advocacy isn't tethered to the needs of our local stations (back in their districts), we are not going to be successful. We've really emphasized, under Gordon's leadership, a continual communication with our local stations, with the state broadcast associations who are an incredible partner of the NAB in our advocacy. That's ensured that our issues become local ones, and ultimately that's what local members of Congress will respond to.

Finally, Gordon's approach to understanding we are going to be our strongest when we are partners with members of Congress and not the "Party of No." There have been times when we disagreed with proposed legislation or regulations and Gordon has led that, ensuring that top to bottom in this organization, we're working to shape those areas of law where we disagree, rather than being obstructionist. Ultimately it gets you to the right place, especially when you're representing a constituency like local broadcast stations which, at the end of the day, most of these members of Congress want to help.

Radio Ink: What would you like to say about NAB membership?

LeGeyt: Everything we just spoke about only works if every broadcaster is willing to step up and invest in this trade association. My hope is my leadership style, the tremendous talent of the team — whether it's those on our membership interfacing with the industry day in and out or what you're seeing from an advocacy perspective in D.C. — ensures our work matches the needs of the industry. That we're hearing what the industry is telling us in terms of needs, what we can be doing better and where we're really serving.

I want to say thank you for the support to those who are already members, and for those who have been reluctant to join our membership, I hope you will consider it.

Curtis LeGeyt replacing Senator Smith as the head of the NAB will make this a very smooth transition. Curtis's current role of COO, combined with his government relations work on behalf of broadcasters and experience on Capitol Hill, will serve the industry well as we navigate the challenges ahead. I look forward to working closely with him not only for the great broadcasters in District 9, Alabama, and Georgia, but for everyone in the industry.

Nick Martin
NAB Radio Board Member
General Manager
Big River Broadcasting

LeGeyt with outgoing NAB President/CEO Gordon Smith

Curtis is a true Washington insider. He understands the battles that broadcasters must fight and win on the Hill. NAB will be well-served by his steady hand and deep understanding of how to best play our hand before Congress.

Larry Patrick
NAB Radio Board Member
Managing Partner
Patrick Communications

Curtis has the skills, experience, tenacity, and personality to navigate through the complicated issues that face the broadcast industry. He is comfortable testifying on Capitol Hill and meeting with a group of small-market broadcasters. He understands the issues, is willing to listen, and genuinely wants to help. He is the right choice at the right time to lead the NAB.

Mike Tarter
CEO
Forcht Broadcasting