

## From The Traffic Directors' Guild of America (TDGA)

### Spotlight On Traffic Software: SMARTS SECGEN

By Jan Schad, SMARTS Broadcast Systems, Emmetsburg IA

Mar 1, 2008, 08:08

# SMARTS—The Company With A Face

***TDGA Members, in our recent survey of members indicated they'd like to hear more about the various Traffic Software Systems, their product and customer support. We've issued an invitation to all traffic vendors to submit such articles to keep traffic professionals up-to-date on what's happening with the various tools we use in our daily craft.***

***We're delighted to present the first such article from TDGA Charter member Jan Schad at SMARTS Broadcast Systems in Emmetsburg IA, certainly one of the first to enter this most competitive and unique software community. Jan's most appreciated article follows:***



Smarts is one of the small companies that grew into the software business after owning a radio station. Smarts came into being when John and I (Jan Schad) owned KEMB radio in Emmetsburg IA, and saw the need for computerization in our station.

Six months later we showed our efforts at Iowa Broadcasters, and a fellow broadcaster wanted to buy one. So we were launched into the software vendor business. We later converted to IBM Dos, and still later to MS Dos. In 1994 we started work on Smarts—the Second Generation Windows program, and this summer we will begin planning our Web based traffic system.

We are located in Emmetsburg IA, with an office in Dallas TX. A surprising number of you have come to our spring and fall training classes.

What makes us stand out from other traffic vendors? We're the *Company With A Face*, and we place a high value on you, the individual customer. We are not a mega-corporation, nor do we want to be.

We hired Debbie and Connie, two former Smarts customers, to do tech support, and let me tell you, they are the best in the business. They have both been traffic operators, and they know most customers by their first names.

Connie, Debbie and I have a great empathy with traffic operators because we have all done traffic in small to medium sized radio stations. We know the feeling of being caught in the middle of management that doesn't understand traffic, sales people who want preferential treatment for their accounts, engineers that don't want you near the equipment, and production people who don't understand the meaning of "do it!"

With all these thoughts in mind, we have designed traffic and billing software that allows you to operate the way radio is run. You can tie scheduling to billing, or enter them separately. You can re-run the log or reports if necessary, without repercussion. You have total control over the order in which your breaks fill. You can reconcile with your digital automation. If you forget to enter an order as Co op, you can change it easily after the fact. You can put limits on individual pieces of copy as to days it can run, start and stop dates. And you can bill agencies through EDI.



TDGA's Larry Keene checks out SMARTS newest features at a recent NAB Show

A Special Events section is like a mini-log that super imposes over the regular program log. It is perfect for ball games, remotes, or other special programming. It can be tied to billing, or scheduled separately and package billed.

The trend is to acquire more stations. The logical management practice is to sell multi-station packages. We designed our Order Entry to display all stations, and you have only to click on the correct stations and enter one order to cover all needed stations. This saves a lot of operator time.

You can rank your orders—those with Priority 99 get placed first in Log Generation. “Must Run” spots can be ranked 99 and will be sure to be placed.

**There is debate on whether a Pigeon Hole log or a Dynamic Log is better**—you can do either in SecGen. If you elect to do a Pigeon Hole type of log, you can generate logs as far in advance as you want. Incoming Orders can be added to the log as they come in. If you choose to do a Dynamic Log, you can generate it one day in advance, and all advertisers get equal spot placement.

Reconciliation of the log with the reality of what ran in the digital system is an important part of the daily process. You can catch errors at that point, and if something was played in the studio, and you haven’t yet received paperwork, the reconciliation will alert you.

What we appreciate in a customer is a willingness to learn, and accountability for actions. Hardware must be kept up to date and properly maintained. We give you many tips along the way and ask that you record them in a spiral notebook. We provide very complete training CD-roms, with Debbie explaining each menu option as you watch on the screen.

Most of all we like customer ideas. We make note of every one offered, and if we feel it is good for the majority of customers, the idea is implemented into the program.

John (Schad) doesn’t work directly with traffic, but part of his job is to watch for technology that will improve traffic. John says the Internet is only the beginning in saving time and effort for traffic, and for radio in general. It is very easy to do logs and billing from a remote office or from home, which is an attractive option to women who may want to work from home.

Many of you are dealing with web streaming—and an easy solution is to add an extra site license to your existing programs. There is a fee, but it makes use of your already established account information.

What’s ahead for traffic? We feel a web based traffic program is in order to accommodate the growing number of people working from remote locations. You will be able to do traffic just like you check your bank account or email—on line and from anywhere.

**And what’s ahead for traffic operators?** Hopefully, it’s the realization that the traffic director is at the center of stations operation and has the ability to make things flow smoothly. We have observed that well run stations are those where the traffic operator has a reasonable amount of authority and respect.

Learn more about the SMARTS Traffic System at:  
<http://www.smartsbroadcast.com/smarts.htm>; or contact Jan @ [janschad@smartsbroadcast.com](mailto:janschad@smartsbroadcast.com)