COLEMAN INSIGHTS
MEDIA RESEARCH

Podcast Content Testing
How iHeartMedia Collected Feedback to Shape Two Hit Shows

Executive Summary

iHeartMedia set out to fine-tune the performance of two popular podcasts—Almost Famous With Ben And Ashley I and Business Unusual With Barbara Corcoran. Through Coleman Insights' mediaEKG™ content testing, the company gained second-by-second feedback from listeners, revealing what resonated, what didn't, and how to tailor future content by audience segment. These insights helped sharpen each show's focus and were later presented at the Podcast Movement conference.

Key Outcomes

Clear understanding of which topics and guests delivered the highest engagement

Data-backed direction for refining tone and format

Enhanced content strategy aligned with listener preferences

The Challenge

iHeartMedia wanted to improve the performance of two established podcasts—Almost Famous and Business Unusual. The challenge wasn't about starting from scratch, but fine-tuning for growth. Their questions included:

For Almost Famous:

✓ How far can the show stretch beyond The Bachelor universe without losing its audience?

✓ Which types of guests and conversations hold listener attention?

✓ What are the optimal topics, treatment, and tone?

For Business Unusual:

✓ Which topics resonate best with different audience segments?

✓ Are there content themes that perform better with younger vs. older listeners?

Despite existing success, iHeart was interested in deeper, data-backed insights to optimize future episodes.

Our Approach

Coleman Insights conducted mediaEKG™ content testing on both podcasts, allowing us to capture second-by-second reactions from real listeners. Our approach included:

- ✓ Selecting key audio segments for testing - ranging from interviews and commentary to tone and pacing.

- ✓ Tracking continuous emotional engagement and attention levels throughout each segment.

- ✓ Segmenting feedback by demographics (age, gender) to reveal differences in response.

- ✓ Delivering detailed engagement maps to highlight peaks, dips, and opportunities for improvement.

This methodology uncovered the precise moments that resonated - or didn't - with each target audience.

The Results

The content testing revealed clear and valuable patterns. Almost Famous found that listener engagement peaked when the show stayed close to The Bachelor universe, while content that veered off-topic led to declines in attention. Business Unusual uncovered distinct content preferences across age and gender groups, helping the team fine-tune themes and storytelling approaches for maximum appeal. These insights not only informed editorial strategy but were also showcased by Coleman Insights at the Podcast Movement conference.

Have questions or want to explore how research can work for you? Get in touch with us!

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