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Here's a unique perspective-Magna Global Chairman and CEO Bill Cella agreed to share some of his experiences from his early days at the other side of the desk-WXYZ-TV Detroit (ABC) and The ABC Television Network.

### **Tell us about your local sales days at WXYZ.**

I was hired to work at WXYZ when I was working for a small rep firm. I met with Lee Gannon, who was the General Sales Manager at the time. Phil Sweeney was National Sales Manager and I reported to Keith McClellan, the Local Sales Manager. The General Manager was Jim Osborne. Lee Gannon went to school with one of my uncles.

My future wife and I drove out to Detroit in her Datsun 240Z. My wife had landed a job at WB Doner. We got there in February of '79. People can get very New York-centric. We left New York never having lived anywhere else. We went to Detroit and spent two years in this wonderful environment at WXYZ. Bill Bonds was the late news anchor and "Kelly and Company" was the morning show. The late news was a real powerhouse in the market and was delivering about a 27/28 share.

At that time ABC spot expected its managers to go through "The System." You would work in a local station first to get to know that market and learn how a station works. You then moved to different markets around the country, building relationships which would eventually help solve problems when you became a manager in their various markets. I saw how Chicago spot and New York spot worked, and then became eligible for management.

WXYZ was a great local television experience. The station was on 80 acres and on Friday afternoons we'd have croquet matches with our clients. It was a family-oriented environment. We still have many friends in Detroit to this day. WXYZ was also an ABC Owned and Operated station, so the morning show, Kelly and Company, had a lot of talent stop by. You'd see Hollywood celebrities in the station all the time, which was fun. The market was not robust-in '79 the automotive industry got hit a little bit, but WXYZ was still a juggernaut. I think it was one of the highest rated stations that ABC owned.

I'll never forget this as long as I live-I was on the job a short time and was in my sales cubicle when I heard this

pounding in the hallway. It sounded kind of distant and then all of a sudden it got closer and closer, and it was booming. I look up and see from my little cubicle the Michigan State Marching Band coming down the hallway to wish Jim Osborne Happy Birthday. He was a Michigan State graduate.

His office rug was bright green. The horn on his car played the Michigan State Fight Song. It was amazing. The experience of Ann Arbor and Michigan and East Lansing and Michigan State was incredible. I'm actually still a college football fan.

### **What's different about local and national television sales today?**

Today there's so much pressure on local and national sales people to deliver the numbers. It removes part of the personal touch of what sales is all about—engaging with buyers and clients. Spending time entertaining, getting them to feel comfortable with you and developing credibility. That still happens but there's not as much quality time spent with clients. Today, the reality is that sales departments have to deliver on a lot of different platforms. There are smaller staffs, which means more work and less time to get out and get under a client's skin and learn what their company is all about.

Tomorrow: How about your move to ABC network sales?

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