

Attorneys on the

AIRWAVES

2 LI law firms target the Latino market via radio shows

By BERNADETTE STARZEE

To cultivate relationships with the growing Latino population on Long Island, a couple of local law firms have gotten into the radio business.

Ferro, Kuba, Mangano, Sklyar airs its show, "Alegria al Medio Dia," live from its Hauppauge offices five days a week.

With content that includes legal, entertainment and general news, the show can be heard on JVC Broadcasting's Spanish-language station, WBON La Fiesta 98.5 FM, Monday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Also on La Fiesta, Woodbury-based Fusco, Brandenstein & Rada produces a one-hour show, "Comunidad y Trabajadores Unidos" - CyTUnidos for short - which airs Sundays at 7 a.m.

The show, whose name translates to "community and workers united," features community and labor issues along with lighter segments.

Translating roughly to happiness at noon, Alegria al Medio Dia is the brainchild of attorney William Ferro, who co-founded the law firm in 1989 and began targeting the Latino market eight years ago.

"It was an underserved market, and it's a rapidly growing demographic on Long Island," said Ferro, who heads the firm's personal injury department. "We felt it was in the best interest of the firm to tap into this market."

Today, 70 percent of the firm's personal injury clients are Latino, Ferro said. Since creating its "Liga de Justicia" brand of Spanish-language legal services, the firm has also grown its immigration law practice and has specializations in real estate, criminal defense, business and family law.

In total, the radio station has more than 700,000 listeners on Long Island and in coastal Connecticut, according to John Caracciolo, president and CEO of Ronkonkoma-based JVC Broadcasting.

"The legal shows are very popular," Caracciolo said. While the station does not rate individual shows, it measures success by the volume of calls.

"The results these shows receive are extraordinary," Caracciolo said. "Our phone lines stay lit the entire time."

Ferro Kuba's foray into radio began on a small scale. Through Ferro's friendship with Caracciolo, the idea developed for the firm to broadcast a 15-minute segment featuring a legal case of the week. On behalf of the firm, bilingual paralegal Astrid Cordoba discussed the case on air, and she was such a hit that La Fiesta offered her a weekend job. The idea for a daily show developed and in May 2011, the law firm launched a one-hour show, tapping Cordoba as co-host and teaming her on air with program director Bernardino Rosario.

At first, the show aired from Ferro's L-shaped office. "I found a way to be busy and out of the way for that hour," he said. But when the show expanded to two hours and then four, the firm moved it to a dedicated space within its offices.

The show still features a case of the day that the firm successfully resolved for a client.

"The listeners feel a tremendous connection to Astrid," Ferro said. "They may call the station or call the law firm to ask questions about certain areas of the



WILLIAM FERRO and ASTRID CORDOBA: Through its radio show, Ferro, Kuba, Mangano, Sklyar has made inroads into the Latino community.

law, or they may send messages to her Facebook page."

Other than the case of the day and sponsorship announcements - featuring the firm's tagline "your lawyers to the rescue" in Spanish - the show doesn't focus on legal issues. The content breakdown is roughly 60 percent entertainment, 20 percent general news and 20 percent legal, Ferro said.

Fusco, Brandenstein & Rada launched CyTUnidos last year, with a focus on "what's going on in Latino communities, churches and unions," said Victor Fusco, a founding member of the workers' compensation and Social Security disability law firm. Program content ranges from dangers facing day laborers to interviews with salsa singers. In addition to entertainers, guests include representatives from unions, businesses and civic and community groups in areas with large Hispanic populations.

To develop the show, Fusco worked with his wife, Sara, who serves as executive producer. A board member of Long Island Jobs with Justice, she connected the firm to Christiana Perez, a community activist fluent in

Spanish and experienced in radio, who serves as the show's host.

Fusco, Brandenstein & Rada is no stranger to radio. In 1999, it launched Labor-Lines, a program focusing on labor issues that today airs on three stations on Long Island and in New York City.

As with Labor-Lines, the goal of CyTUnidos is to help the law firm "develop relationships with members of the community," Fusco said. "Relationships are what drive law firms. It's not the type of business where you get clients from the Yellow Pages. Lawyers get business when people get to know them and trust and like them."

The firm has a Spanish-speaking attorney and many Spanish-speaking staff members, which is vital to serving the market.

"People are more comfortable speaking about legal and other important matters in their own language," said Maria Morales-Prieto, president and CEO of The Hispanic Network, a business development group with more than 200 members. "They want to know they will be taken care of."

In addition to connecting to listeners over the airwaves, the radio shows further immerse the law firms in the community through sponsorships of community and charitable events throughout the year.

Not only has "Alegria al Medio Dia" helped Ferro Kuba develop relationships with Latinos, but it has allowed the firm to give a voice to organizations serving the market, Ferro said.

"The show helps our business while allowing us to help people at the same time," he said.



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