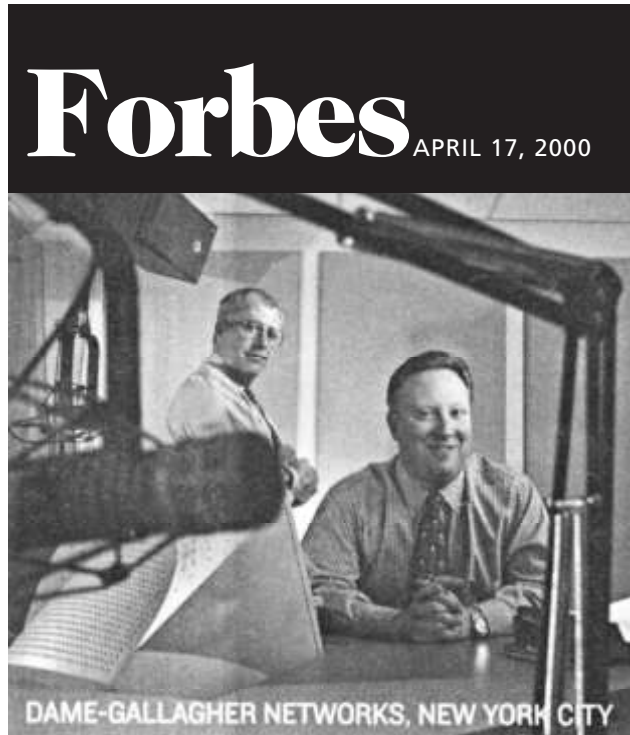


**BIG MOMENTUM 2000**

**OWNERS** John Dame, 47, and Mike Gallagher, 39.

**PROGRAM** *The Mike Gallagher Show*.

**AUDIENCE** 1.75 million.

**HISTORY** Gallagher was the top guy (and afternoon-drive deejay) in Albany, N.Y. at a station owned by Dame Media, a network of 21 stations owned by John Dame's father. Gallagher left in 1996 for what was his dream job—morning-drive time for WABC in New York. But after Dame Media sold to Clear Channel in 1998 for \$85 million, John Dame started his own company to syndicate Gallagher nationally. Dame's father and others invested \$4 million. The show launched in January 1999.

**1999 REVENUES** \$650,000; \$1.5 million hoped for in 2000.

**STATIONS** Started with 15; now 130, with 15 hours a week of original programming.

**STRATEGY** Gallagher goes after the mainstream AM talk audience dominated by Limbaugh and Dr. Laura. Avoids politics and advice overkill; his three-hour show dilates on personal issues like road rage, gas price hikes—or the time he busted his son with a porno magazine. Uses “barter-style” deals: Stations get three hours of the syndicator’s programming for free; in exchange, Dame-Gallagher gets on-air time and builds audience—the chief lures for national and regional advertisers. Gallagher has the best of both worlds: a small equity stake in Dame-Gallagher and a salary he declines to specify.

**ENTREPRENEURS**

# IT'S ALL JUST TALK

**Independent syndication companies are crying to be heard in a world of huge radio conglomerates. Is anyone listening?**

**BY DOUG DONOVAN**

**W**ANT TO SYNDICATE A TALK show? Good luck. There are only 20 independent syndicators seriously vying with giants like Westwood One, run by Infinity Broadcasting; and Premiere Radio, a unit of Clear Channel Communications.

They've made it harder than ever to build an audience among the 11,000 U.S. stations, since they're leading the consolidation charge. Today, two-thirds of the 240 million people who listen to radio every week are tuned to stations owned either by Clear Channel (874) or Infinity (200), thanks to

the 1992 law that repealed a 20-station limit on radio licenses. The exceptional little guy can still win, but usually ends up in somebody else's pocket: EFM Media, Rush Limbaugh's syndicator, sold for \$80 million in 1997 to Jacor Communications, which in turn was acquired by Clear Channel. “All this makes it extremely difficult for independent syndicators to break into bigger markets,” says Michael Harrison, editor of *Talkers* magazine. “You have to be pretty damn good.”