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Casting call

WGN getting down to business in plans for new morning show

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BY **ROBERT FEDER** Sun-Times Columnist

When Spike O'Dell signs off Dec. 31 as morning personality at WGN-AM (720), there might not be just one person replacing him.

Sources at the Tribune Co.-owned news/talk station say it's possible he'll be succeeded by a two-person team -- or perhaps an ensemble -- on the city's top-rated morning show.

Ideally, WGN bosses hope to make their decision within the next three weeks, although it could take longer to finalize the deals, especially if they bring in anyone from outside the market.

They're said to be trying to balance their goal to make the new show "smart, hip, relevant and fun" with the need to keep it within the comfort zone of WGN.

It's no coincidence that several insiders turned up in various combinations this week filling in for O'Dell, including Steve Cochran, John Williams, Bob Sirott and Nick Digilio.

Radio master Fred Winston also appeared as a fill-in host last weekend, although he's more likely being considered for a part-time role, insiders said.

DIALING:

'Live from the Archives'

- • The 11th volume of "On XRT: Live from the Archives," a CD compilation of live performances on CBS Radio adult rock WXRT-FM (93.1), goes on sale Tuesday at Starbucks locations and online at www.93xrt.com.

Artists include **Counting Crows**, **Elvis Costello**, **John Mayer**, **Widespread Panic**, **John Mellencamp**, **Jack Johnson** and the **Grateful Dead**.

Proceeds benefit Chicago Gateway Green and Rainbows.

- • It's nice to hear our old "Page 10" cohort **Ray Hanania** on the radio again.

The former Sun-Timesman, who went on to become a free-lance columnist, consultant and stand-up comedian, has started hosting his own talk show from 8 to 9:30 a.m. weekdays on west suburban WJGG-AM (1530).

- • **Dave McBride**, the former Chicago radio newsman whose tenure here included long runs with **Robert Murphy** and **Steve Dahl**, has been named program director of news/talk WNRN-AM in Pensacola, Fla.