

Running the Radio Station

Media Manager's Guide to Pakistani Broadcast Law

Media Manager's Companion Series
Internews Pakistan

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INTRODUCTION

Life is getting faster and faster with every day of technological evolution. From a digital diary to a cell phone and other gadgetries that one carries along managing personal activities have become an issue. For managing a commercial organization, one can only imagine the extent of sophistication involved in keeping up with the pace of competitors.

Good management is a requirement of organization or institution, and an FM station is no exception to it. For an FM radio station it may include devising clear policies and ensuring their effective and just implementation for smooth management. Mainly four departments of an FM station are to be the subjects of good management practice: Administration, Programme, Sales & Marketing, and News & current affairs.

FM radio is relatively a new phenomenon in Pakistan. While several FM radio stations are already on air across Pakistan, only a few are being run on professional lines with the required skilled managerial manpower. Running a radio station is not just about producing programmes, hosting talk shows, playing music, and news reporting. The activity that takes place behind the seemingly perfect transmission regimen is hectic and anxiety ridden. Without a properly qualified and experienced person at the top who guides and sets the overall direction and policy, an FM station is not likely to survive for long. In Pakistan, FM stations are faced with a lack of skilled manpower for their management posts and programme side. Station directors/managers are in the process of adapting themselves to the ground realities.

This guidebook by Internews Pakistan is the fourth in the Media Manager Series. It focuses on management issues facing the budding FM radio industry. The first guidebook focused on how to establish and operate an FM station, the second on defamation and contempt laws of Pakistan, and how to handle such cases inside courtrooms, and the third was the first of its kind in Pakistan focusing on the country's copyright laws that conform to WTO (World Trade Organization) standards and how broadcasters should comply

vis-à-vis these laws. Like the previous guidebooks the publication of the one on copyrights was widely welcomed by the broadcasters, journalists, radio licensees, and the decision makers in the government.

These guidebooks aim at building an open, diverse, and socially responsible broadcast media by enabling media practitioners to be aware of their rights and responsibilities and be able to defend themselves in the court of law. The fourth guidebook on “Running a Radio Station” is a special effort to educate the broadcast managers about the basic managerial skills.

This guidebook aims to increase awareness about best management practices in the FM radio industry that in turn can ensure fair competition and quality programming for the people in all four departments of an FM station; administration, sales and marketing, programming and news. In fact many provisions of PEMRA laws specifically require an FM licensee to maintain such management standards for the smooth running of a radio station.

The book consists of three chapters and it aims at explaining good management practices through simple and basic expressions. It does not however include discussion on marketing and sales techniques, which may become a subject of a special guidebook in future.

Chapter-1 of the guidebook focuses on the concept of radio management and traits of a good radio manager. It also explains personality and leadership factors that make a radio manager effective.

In chapter-2 the issue of filling up radio airtime with quality content is discussed. The chapter talks of various techniques that can aid in continuous provision of programme content in the light of community needs and market demands.

The 3rd and last chapter focuses on the important aspect of audience research, something completely lacking in Pakistan. This focuses on the concept, types and tools of audience research in order to determine the issues that can be raised in programmes and the manner of their debate on an FM station.

While the basic principles of good management practices are the same for every industry, this handbook will aim to serve as a general guide to radio

managers, broadcasters, and media practitioners and therefore must be read in conjunction with those provisions of PEMRA laws and code of conduct, which directly or indirectly relate to radio management.

The overall goal of the Internews Pakistan program is to ensure that skilled, independent, and financially viable media outlets exist, especially in the broadcast sector, and are able to provide the citizens of Pakistan with quality news, social, educational, and entertainment programming.

Chapter 1

Good management

Definitions

Management is the process of organizing and directing resources in order to effectively achieve business and organizational goals.

Manager is an organizational member who integrates and coordinates the work of others.

Organizational management denotes the hierarchy of management levels within an organization.

First-line managers are the lowest level of management and at radio station they are programme managers etc.

Middle managers include all levels of management between the supervisory level and the top level of the organization. At radio station, they are departmental heads like production manager, marketing manager etc.

Top managers are responsible for making organization-wide decisions and establishing the policies and strategies that affect the entire organization. They are often called as General Managers.

What is management?

To manage is to control the activity of a process and achieve desired results. Management is the process of organizing and directing resources in order to effectively achieve business and organizational goals. Those resources include people, finances, materials, and information. Organizational management refers to a distinct process that managers employ to achieve an organization's strategic and operational goals. The primary intent of the management process is to achieve greater levels of organizational efficiency and effectiveness. Management process represents the ongoing functions or primary activities engaged in by all organizational managers. Only a good leadership of good managers can effectively conduct all these functions and primary activities to achieve organizational goal.

Good leadership

Leadership means setting standards and living up to them. A dynamic and good leadership will not only see the project to the end but, in the process, it will bring out the best talent in each individual team member. As a result, the end work will be of a phenomenal caliber. For an organization to prosper and achieve greatness, a good leadership must govern it. Good leadership consists of good leaders/managers and to be a good leader, one must possess the attributes of good leadership. The specific tasks within the overall job are allocated to those best able to do them. Good leader is someone who can organize the work to be done and see it through to its completion.

Under good leadership:

- The team works as a team, not just a group of individuals;
- The team is able to understand its objectives and how these fit in with the overall organizational objectives;
- Team members support each other;
- The team is prepared to put in extra efforts when required;
- The team aims for excellence, not just “doing the job;”
- Everyone knows what the team has to do, and their own role;
- The team is motivated to do the job as effectively as possible;

The hallmarks of a good leader lie in the ability of the person in charge to bring certain key factors across to his workforce or team-mates. The primary key in achieving this revolves around the notion of "vision".

Vision: It is obvious that every successful team must have a vision. Vision thus gives a team a mission, a sense of purpose to get excited about and a reason for being charged up, enthused and motivated. Hence, great leaders and great teams are driven by a vision – a true sense of mission and purpose.

Second key factor in good leadership is the ability “to communicate” with the team.

Communication: Of course a leader with a vision but without the ability to convey this vision to his workforce is like a hot air balloon without someone to work the controls. Communication is a two-way road: talking and getting the message across, then listening to hear whether it was the correct message

that actually got across. The fact remains that the best leaders are the ones who listen, who understand that listening is a source of unrecognized information and are able to use this understanding to their advantage. Therefore, good and effective communication is the key for good leadership.

Bad leadership

On other hand, under a bad leadership:

The group is unclear what they have to do. Time and resources are wasted and the job may not be well done.

The group is not motivated. They take longer to do the task and may not even complete it.

The individuals are not working well as a team, will not perform as well as a team.

The group will probably only do enough to get the job done and will not sustain a workload under pressure.

The group members will leave more often, as they will not want to stay in such an environment.

Individuals will not develop their skills and group will be unable to deal with new situations.

Action centered leadership

To keep the team motivated and informed, individuals feeling valued and working relationship positive-as well as achieving objectives, there should be an action centered leadership. A static leadership cannot motivate the workers to put their maximum efforts in achievement of organizational targets.

Individuals can feel un-secure and less valued. Working relationship among the teammates may not be positive and constructive. A dynamic and action oriented management can keep the pace of work up through motivating and informing the team, building positive working relationships and giving due weight-age to individuals. A manager should always remind that he needs to keep all three balls in the air. He must not neglect any one of these three areas as it can weaken the balance of leadership as well as the motivation and effectiveness of team.

Leadership behavior

In pursuance of the targets, the leadership behavior has very important role.

1. The leadership must be self confident and self aware;
About its strengths and weaknesses;
About the needs and ways for improvements;
Through consistency in its operations; and
Through gaining experience and knowledge.
2. The leadership must have integrity because:
Honesty builds trust;
Match ones words with actions;
Demonstrate ones values; and
With integrity one cannot be swayed by impulses or temptations.
3. The leadership must be enthusiastic and ambitious as:
Enthusiasm provides the foundation for the team's motivation;
no one, being motivated by some one, can imagine to be less careful
about the completion of job;
It show their commitment and determination;
It makes them positive;
Good leader put energy into rising performance above the generally
accepted levels.
4. The leadership must have empathy through:
Showing genuine interest in the people they lead;
Understanding the motivations of team members;
Helping them to improve their skill level and experience;
Being approachable; and
Showing interest on what they want to achieve.
5. The leadership must Social skills of:
Building relationships with others by establishing a rapport;
Finding and developing a common approach through using "We" in
discussions, meetings and personal contacts;
Managing working relationship;
Dealing with conflict;

Finding solutions to problems together;
Influencing individuals in a positive way.

Management of radio station

Typically managers are found at three levels in an organization.

First-line managers are the lowest level of management and at radio station they are programme managers etc.

Middle managers include all levels of management between the supervisory level and the top level of the organization. At radio station, they are departmental heads like production/operational manager, marketing manager etc.

Top managers are at or near the top of the organization and are responsible for making organization-wide decisions and establishing the policies and strategies that affect the entire organization. These individuals typically have titles such as executive vice president, president, managing director, chief operating officer, chief executive officer, or chairman of the board.

Generally, an organizational structure of a radio station consists of a General Manager/Owner/Chief Executive Officer/Country Head who would have overall responsibility to manage the smooth and efficient running of the radio station. In addition to this, there may be other managers managing their respective departments like production, accounts/finance, marketing, and administration, etc. They will be responsible for managing of their respective departments as well as contributing to other departments.

For example, production department has to produce programmes in accordance with the requirements of marketing department whereas the marketing department has to generate revenue for both production and administration. The allocation of funds to different departments and their future financial projection is responsibility of account/finance department. For smooth running of operations of production and marketing, the role of administration can never be ignored. All in all, everyone works together and the managers have to create an open door policy so that any ideas, big or small, whether it's sales promotion, radio image promotion, or inter-office improvements, it could be discussed and evaluated of its beneficial effect on



the radio station. In following paragraphs, a form of organizational structure of a radio station is discussed.

Production

At a radio station, production department may consist of the Operations Manager, Production Manager, and the on air personalities/DJs, etc.

The Operations Manager oversees the smooth operations of the department.

The Production Manager ensures that all commercials and broadcasting materials are produced and ready to go on the air.

The on-air personalities/DJs provide the entertainment to the listening audience.

The Creative Department which includes copy writers and production engineers performs the task of taking the message and making it come alive on the radio.

Marketing/Sales

The sales department sells air time to advertisers. It may consist of many persons:

Sales Manager who oversees the sales department to ensure the achievement of sales quotas. Sales manager may have 2 to 3 sales men who get obtain advertisement orders form the market and responsible for recovery as well.

Traffic Manager enters the data and schedules the commercials to the air. Once sales manager receive an order, this is brought to the attention of the traffic manager.

The Creative Department, which also linked with production department, receives the production order from traffic manager or the sale and gives it to the copywriter to write a script for, if needed, then passed on to the production department.

Accounts/Finance

The accounts/finance department handles the flow of revenue and oversees all legal or financial matters relating to Security and Exchange Commission and other public departments like taxation and auditing. The department will ensure the payment of dues of public utilities at the station like electricity, telephone, gas and water, etc. The department may consist of:

- Accounts Manager who is responsible for overall financial matters of the radio station;

- Two Account Managers: one handles income/revenue and other to maintains the record of expenses.

Administration

The administrative side of the radio station may consist of Office Manager and secretary. Administration is responsible for smooth running of operations of the radio station. This includes the marketing and production operations as well. To provide safe and secure environment at the station is responsibility of administration. In addition, they are responsible for all logistic, traveling and boarding and lodging arrangements for official guests and office staff. The supporting staff like house keeper, security guards, and office boy/assistant is also part of administration.

Requisites of good managers

A good manager either he works in production, marketing, administration or accounts department doesn't require a strategic plan for the next millennium. He just needs to know what's happening next month or quarter and be able to communicate the information in a meaningful way to other people. To be good manager, you need certain skills. These skills include:

- Professional skills relating to the job;

- Must have good people skills/interpersonal relationships;

- Good leadership qualities;

- Must be able to develop plans;

- Must be in control of projects;

- Be able to inspire and motivate;

- Give regular and constructive feedback;



Work with individuals to improve their performance;
Analyze and make decisions;
Control and action implementation;
Running meetings effectively;
Delegates work to the level of competence of colleagues;
Manages time and activities effectively;
Must be action oriented;
Must be approachable;
Able to deal with ambiguity;
Have sense of humor.

The manager needs to have the ability to apply all these skills in a context of constraints, opportunities, and alternatives as well.

Key responsibilities of a manager

A manager is an organizational member who integrates and coordinates the work of others. They are directly responsible for a group of people, or it might mean supervising a single person. They are the people who perform the functions of organizing, planning, leading, controlling, communicating, asserting, and motivating others at their respective levels.

Planning: It involves the process of defining goals, establishing a strategy for achieving those goals, and developing plans to integrate and coordinate activities. Because organizations exist to achieve some purpose, managers clearly define an organization's purpose and the means for the organization's achievement.

Organizing: Managers are responsible for designing an organization's structure. It includes the process of determining what tasks are to be done, who is to do them, how the tasks are to be grouped, who reports to whom, and at what level decisions are made.

Leading: Manager's job is to integrate and coordinate the work of those people. Managers motivate employees by structuring and directing their job-task activities and selecting the most effective interpersonal and organizational

communication channels to articulate goals, decisions, receive information, resolving conflicts among employees.

Controlling is the systemic process that monitors the organization's structural and job processes. The control function detects when something may still go wrong. The control function is designed to predict potential problems before those problems occur, thus ensuring that work and machine processes perform as they are designed. Managers monitor employees' work performance. Actual performance is then compared with previously set goals. When there are any significant deviations, it is the manager's responsibility to get work performance back on track. This process of monitoring, comparing, and correcting is what is meant by the management principle of controlling.

Communicating is a two-way road: talking and getting the message across, then listening to hear whether it was the correct message that actually got across. Good managers are the ones who listen, who understand that listening is a source of unrecognized information and are able to use this understanding to their advantage.

Asserting about the performance of the staff is very important responsibility of a manager. Assertiveness means asking for what you want, saying how you feel and acting in a way that respects yourself and others. Assertiveness helps with conflict resolution and in ensuring clear communication.

Motivating the team members to do their jobs with commitment is one of the responsibilities of a manager. Good managers always motivate the colleagues/staff for achievement of the objectives. Incentives can be good option to motivate the team mates to complete the assignments with devotion and dedication.

Developing a team spirit

To achieve the optimum results, the managers must develop a team spirit among the people doing different jobs at radio station.

They should be realized as they are part of a team.

They should be trained to work as a team as much as possible.

The individuals should help each other as team members through sharing knowledge, experience and giving mutual support.



The managers should make sure that every one has a team responsibility.

The more experienced will probably be in charge of many work projects. To give due recognition to less experienced, they could be put in charge of a simple or small activity.

The manager should give the team as much information as he can.

The manager always include every in the team including secretaries, support staff, temporary workers and part-timers. Ignoring any contributor to the team at any time can lead to de-motivation.

The managers, where possible, give the team with reward even if it's only taking them all out for a drink at the end of a big project.

Always thanks them as a team as well as individuals. This will help in keeping their morale high during and after the hectic assignments.

Critical management skills

As a manager is responsible to implement the project and required to show optimum results with the assistance of other teammates, he must possess certain critical skills as well. These skills help him to judge his actions and solve the problems in the implementation of a project. These skills include:

Analytical skill: a manager should have ability to think clearly and analyze problems;

Expert: a manager should have technical knowledge relating to the job and the industry;

Action: a manager should have ability to get things done. For example, how to delegate, motivate and communicate; and

Relationship: a manager should possess critical leader behavior and social skills, building trust and effective working relationships.

Chapter 2

Good planning

Planning is preparation of a program for a definite course of action. It is an act or process of drawing up plans or layouts for some project or enterprise. A task or assignment or a project whether it is a special one or a routine work, it needs planning. The purpose of good planning is to achieve optimum results through efficient consumption of resources and timely completing of a job. Lack of sound planning can be source of many costly problems. When we don't plan, or plan effectively, we create scrap, increase rework and reduce the efficiency of even the most capable and talented staff.

Who will plan?

Planning, in general, is the responsibility of the manager who deals with the job. Senior manager like General Manager or Chief Executive Officer is responsible to plan overall strategies of an organization. Other managers like production managers or marketing managers prepare plans in accordance with the job and targets assigned to them. For example, marketing manager plans his marketing strategy to achieve revenue targets. The production manager plans about the nature of programs to be aired on different times.

Good planning is an important skill for managers

The multidimensional job of the managers makes it a very challenging one. The managers play a pivotal role in an organization, linking demands of management with day to day requirements of production. Many managers are appointed to their jobs with little formal training in the fundamental skills required to be a good supervisor. However, one of the many skills required for a manager is good planning.

How to plan?

Good planning is based on the vision of management. A good manager always plans his activities in accordance with the vision. These plans can be



daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly or annually depending upon the nature of assignment. While planning, a manager must consider certain prerequisites. In addition, he should not be afraid to get the help of experts during the development of a plan. Careful planning helps to be in control. Following is the detail of such prerequisites which a manager needs to take into account to develop good plans.

Always look at the broader picture and should not focus on personal activities only. In an organization, an individual cannot work in isolation. He has to collaborate/coordinate with others for effective and efficient implementation of his assignments. While planning his activities, he must consider activities of his colleagues which can potentially facilitate him in his project. He must also, timely and properly, inform other departments, which can be affected by his work or has direct relation with his activities.

Be clear about the job description, organizational/departmental procedures and policies for specific assignments. This will help him in determining his mandate and authority as well as determining his duties and responsibilities. He should not exceed his authority and limits while planning his activities.

Define and understand goals and objectives of the job/assignments. It is hard to produce desired results of a job/assignment without clearly defining and understanding its objectives. Before planning for an assignment, a manager must understand its objectives and goals. He must know the desired results of the project, job or assignment.

Otherwise, whole efforts can be fruitless.

Create 'mission statement' for the department's activities designed.

The 'mission statement' should:

be easily understood;

reflect the interests of your internal and external clients;

reflect the interests of top management;

not be longer than a paragraph;

realistically reflect what you can do with the resources you have;

be specific enough to lead to goal setting;

be general enough so that it will not date;
circulate the mission statement to get feedback;
modify it, if necessary, to reflect a consensus of those who will make it happen;
post the mission in a high profile place as a constant reminder to those who need to be influenced by it.

Define who, what, when, where, why and how the plan is to be carried out. If it is a large or complex job, break it into several smaller, "doable" steps and define the same points for each step. Everything should be in writing and work plan should be clearly explained. Every activity should be separately defined and explained. A proper timeframe for completion of an assignment should be each and every activity mentioned in the plan.

A plan must be developed keeping in view the financial position of the organization. It should also be considered that how much fund organization can allocate for a particular activity. A good plan always supposes to be within allocated funds for that purpose.

Assessment of the plan for its completeness and practicality is an important element for consideration of managers. A good plan is that which is practicable and result oriented. While planning, details should be added carefully so that they may not become hurdles in the way of completing the job. One must be realistic in assessing the completion of an activity/job within given time frame and with available resources.

Anticipate all possible problems that could hinder the plan.

Brainstorming about the potential failure points and awareness of where they can be is very important. A manager should always work to solve the problem and ask others to help if necessary, and refocus the plan.

Make a list of obstacles that can prevent from achieving the goals.

Prioritize the obstacles and list those which are in control and those which are not.



Focus on key controlled blocks and develop specific actions to deal with un-controlled obstacles.

Work with those people outside the department/organization whose goodwill or help you need to get rid of the obstacles.

Communication of mission or plan and its desired results to others who are part of the team is very important. A manager should ask for their input, especially with regard to areas that they are directly involved in supporting.

Prioritize the plans, and then the smaller steps necessary for getting the job done. A manager should develop a flow chart for the plans and create mileposts to measure the achievements.

Contents planning

Content of a radio station means programs to be aired on a radio including songs, entertainments, documentaries, news and views, discussion, debates and advertisements etc. Every thing said on microphone amounts to be content. To run a radio station successfully, good managers plan and develop contents for their radio on daily, weekly, monthly, and quarterly basis. These contents reflect the policy and objectives of a radio, therefore, managers should take due care while planning these content.

In fact, content planning is not an easy task. Good planning of contents depends on various factors. A manager, responsible to develop contents for a radio station, must consider these factors. In following paragraphs these factors are discussed in detail.

Local geographic approach

FM radio has limited audience and area of transmission. A manager planning contents for an FM radio should understand the organics of regional and local market. People have different choices depending upon their geographical back ground. It is possible that choice of people in mountainous areas can differ from the choice of flatten areas. Similarly, people in metropolitan cities may like fast paced program whereas people at small

villages and town may like slow paced program. A manager must consider the geographical factor of the radio station.

Linking local audience with channel objective

Every radio station must have some objectives of its establishment. It is imperative to link its objectives with its audience. Without linking its objectives with local community, a radio cannot attract the people of that community. For example, a radio in an under developed area may have objective to sensitize the community about importance of education, health, and women participation in community development etc. While planning the programs for such radio, a manager must develop links of these objectives with the programs. A 'local' touch in programs can easily develop such links.

Target audience/Audience profiling

One of the most important factors is planning content to target certain audience. This needs extensive research for audience profiling (discussed in detail in chapter 3). It is fact that every program targets different sections of community. A radio should select and air music/content according to specifically targeted block segments. To create unique contents which appeal to all sections like young and old, men and women, businessmen and workers, a radio station should undertake extensive research for its audience research. This will help its mangers to plan contents for its targeted audience. A Radio should organize its program schedule based on the audience mostly being reached at any given time. For example, morning shows may be geared to the working adults. The early evening shows may attempt to attract the younger genre. The night time programs can reach the young teenagers and require popular personalities to keep this fickle listener tuned in.

Quality control

Quality of programs/contents is an important factor. No one will listen to radio station having substandard and non-qualitative programs and, in competitive market, the listeners will switch to other radio. To maintain



quality and standard of contents managers must take into account updated information and technology while planning contents. As a way to future, one must believe in convergence. Combining text, sound and visuals for multiple broadcast channels is essential for quality contents.

Constant planning

Running a radio is not a one day job. To ensure sustainability, managers need continuous planning for contents to be aired on station. A radio must have a dynamic system for constant planning of content in order to stay ahead of the rest. A manager should always think for new contents to fill the airtime. Static nature of contents can make radio station less attractive for listeners. Therefore, a content planning should be continuous and dynamic to fill the airtime and attract the listeners.

Costs and value

One of the purposes of contents planning save resources and make the programs economical. While planning, a manager must consider the 'cost-benefit-analysis' of a program. A good manager must have reasonable knowledge and information about available resources for certain programs. He must also consider that cost of a program should be proportionate to its value.

Market

Market plays a pivotal role in running a radio station. It is the market which is one of the biggest sources of revenue for a radio station. While planning, a manager must take into account the needs and interests of market. Indifference to market interests can result in decrease of revenue. Nature of programs, timing and contents of programs should be planned to meet the requirements of market.

Content management system

To stay the market leader, a radio must have a system designed to dynamically add, edit and delete content, schedules and profiles. It is necessary to adopt all technical advancement in the equipment.

Right human resource and trainings

It is important to note that a skilled and relevant person can run a machine accurately. Irrelevant and unskilled people can damage it instead of running it appropriately. Planning is very important aspect in any organization. Only skilled and professional people can do it properly. High management of a radio must consider this factor while inducting new managers. Non-committed, unskilled and irrelevant persons may not produce desired results. For example, a person expert in marketing may not adjust in production whereas a producer may not be a good marketing manager. Expertise of people must be exhausted accordingly.

After hiring suitable staff members, it is essential to train this human resource to execute the contents. To meet the challenges of rapid development in techniques, a radio station must invest properly in training of its staff members. In addition, investment in research and development is a key factor for a radio station to staying ahead from others in the field of rapid progression.



Chapter 3

Audience research

PART-I:	Audience Research Terminologies
PART-II:	Audience Research & Community Radio
PART-III:	Objectives of Audience Research
PART-IV:	Methods of Audience Research
PART-V:	Compiling & Analyzing Results

Radio management & audience research

Call them community, listeners or consumers but ultimately they are people who react to what they see or hear on TV and radio. In this respect they are the audience, in marketing terms the target audience and as some professionals put it “the King”.

A major part of the radio management focuses on serving his majesty—the audience through better content management, producing a programme or series of programmes that satisfy and fulfill people’s needs. Now how people’s need can be determined? The process of correctly determining people’s need is called audience research. This is a continuous process that does not stop with one survey. It includes studying the life pattern, behavior, liking and disliking of the people of an area where a radio station is to operate.

A good programme manager fully understands his audience and keeps a close watch over their feedback on radio’s overall and specific programme policies.

This chapter comprises five parts. Part-1 is a list of basic terminologies that are used in describing the process of audience research for better understanding of the subsequent discussion.

Part-2 explains the relationship between a community radio and its community audience. How a national radio audience differs from that of a community radio in terms of an audience research and its impact?

Part-3 discusses in detail different objectives of a community radio station to be achieved through a proper audience research.

In part-4 an effort has been made to explain the actual process of conducting an audience research through different methods.

How to analyze and interpret the results collected from a research is another issue that faces radio stations and this has been discussed in part-5 of the chapter.

The whole chapter on audience research is aimed at educating the content managers, programme producers, writers, advertisers, new reporters and current affair programme managers. It is to keep their work in line with latest trends and demands of the public they serve.

Part-I: Audience research terminologies

Note: Please note that following terms have been explained in the context of audience research only and these may not be exactly the standard definitions.

Advertising

Advertising is basically an act of publicizing products or services of commercial enterprises with time, duration and contents of the Ad selected after careful study of customer's behavior.

Affinity group

It is a group of people with different behavior and attitudes but belonging to one club, association or a forum. This group may be invited for soliciting opinion on an issue, programme or performance of a radio station.

Audience

All those people who receive information and interpret it to their benefit, type of listeners a radio station is trying to reach—existing and prospective

Community radio

A community radio is an FM station whose programming focuses on the needs of a part of population that identifies itself to a set of cultural, ethnic, language or religious norms. A community radio focuses on such population



within a limited geographical radio signal range approved by a regulatory authority.

Consensus group

It is a method of research in which persons belonging to same community discuss an issue and then agree on a carefully worded statement on that. Unlike surveys where number of people matter, here the number remains constant and the wordings of a statement are adjusted to reach a consensus.

Content

By content we mean broadcast content—things we hear on a radio stations and their meaning. Contents also include subjects, and issues being discussed and in what manner.

Feedback

Feedback is a term used to describe the reaction of listeners—the audience—to overall policies of a radio station in general and its specific programming in particular.

Focus group

A kind of research method in which a group of people sharing same interest are brought together to give opinion on a pilot programme to be aired soon or a current programme content.

Frequency

Frequency means the airwave slot allotted to a radio station by regulatory authority to air its programmes. In research terms it also means the number of times a particular programme content goes on air from a radio station. In this context it applies to ads and promos.

Loyalty

It is the percentage time a listener spends to hear one radio station. It is normally measured over a week time.

Market

For a community radio a market means audience and potential audience of a radio station. Radio stations in a local area compete with each other to capture maximum share of the market.

Marketing

Marketing is a technique to sell space and programmes to the commercial entities, who might be interested in selling their products through sponsorship. It also includes promotion campaigns in order to attract greater audience for programmes and therefore bigger market share.

Questionnaire

It is a set of questions designed to evoke opinion of listeners on the quality of programmes and collect information on their behavior and life style. It is designed to evoke clear answers.

Rating

It is the percentage of audience share for each of the radio programme in a market at a given time. A radio programme with high rating is more attractive for entrepreneurs to advertise their products. The term is normally used for TV.

Reach

Reach means number of listeners of a radio station at a given time. For a community radio station reach might mean the distance its signal covers in a local area.

Research

By research we mean audience research that involves a set of activities leading to empirical data regarding the size and conduct of people for a radio station or any of its programme in their area.

Sample

Sample is a group of people being interviewed for audience research on the basis of their special background, interest or age group. A sample group is created from a part of population.

Share

It means total hours of listening devoted to one radio station by a sample audience.

Survey

Survey is a technique of audience research to gather some basic facts about population. It consists of a questionnaire wherein answers received from people are compiled in an empirical form to reach a conclusion.

Target audience

Target audience is marketing term used to identify a select group of consumers whom companies want to reach with their product.

Part-II: Audience research & community radio

For a national radio audience research is important for long-term survival with its audience spread across the country and even beyond national boundaries. In this case audience reaction time is flexible, delayed and even diluted. Things are different however for a community radio whose audience is restricted to a limited geographic setting and therefore audience reaction is quick, rigid and at times categorical.

A national radio therefore might get away with programmes disliked by its wide spread audience but an FM community radio might not be able to do it. Holding debates on issues close to the hearts of community is a sensitive job. A community might not react to a programme on national radio owing to distances involved but an FM radio station in a local area should always cater for the needs of its audience and their sensitivities. It is in this context that the audiences researches for a community radio becomes even more essential and hence focus of this guidebook.

As opposed to a national radio network, which has to cater to the needs of whole of the country a community radio has a special focus and greater space for the local issues. People of a community become dependent on the information from local radio in their day-to-day activities and they expect their radio station to be responsive to their needs. The reaction/feedback is instant and therefore the needs of audience might change faster than the needs of a national audience.

Research methodology for a community radio audience research obviously differs from that of a national radio. The methods become simpler and more authentic due to comparatively lesser size of population and greater focus on practical problems. This is opposed to the theoretical, academic and policy debates that are organized by the national broadcasters. This does not however mean that community radio does not hold debate on national issues. In fact such a debate is directed to develop linkages between national policy and the way it might affect people of that community at the local level. In this context an audience research by a community radio ultimately forms basis of audience research for the national broadcasters.

Part-III: Objectives of audience research

Every audience research must meet specified objectives. There is little difference between objectives to be achieved by audience research for FM radio and a national broadcast station. The ultimate goals are the same, some of which are mentioned as follows:

1. To develop a programme format:

To establish an FM station in a city or town requires detailed study of the life and culture of the people living in the area. This study is essential to determine the type of programming with which to launch your radio station. This initial research of an FM radio area will focus on the following factors:

Language

A predominant language spoken in an FM radio area will determine the proportion of local language programme. It is a fundamental issue because without a proper local language programming local population will not identify with the local FM station. Language is also an important

consideration for advertisement policies. Information/data on percentage of people speaking a particular language can be obtained from local authorities or census organizations.

Gender proportion

This again will determine the percentage of programming for women. This may include working women and housewives in an FM radio audience area and their likely radio listening time and similarly number of girl students.

Age groups

FM radio programming is designed according to the taste of different age groups in a local community. Such a division normally includes children, youth, middle age, and senior citizens. Each of the age group has its own preferences in programme, particularly the music. An FM must find out as to what programme or music to play at a time and when a particular target age group will be listening to that.

Professional groups

These professional groups and forums may include local lawyers forum like the district bar associations, doctors, students, trade bodies and unions, and community welfare organizations. FM radio programme format may consider preferences of these professional bodies and forums as well. Such professionals

Literacy rate

This is an important factor that will determine the programme content in terms of the level of language and debate because lack of literacy will require simple programme contents in easy language. FM radio must also focus on improving education standards through education programmes in such a local areas at a time and day that suits the target audience most.

Religious or Ethnic propensity

FM radio must have complete knowledge of religious propensity of a local area-predominant sect, ethnic, minority groups, their size and areas of residence, and in fact the nature of their relationship with each other. Programme content, time and duration must be responsive to their sentiments and needs.

Political propensity

It is basic information required to attract the audience towards political developments and issues that affect their day-to-day lives. This may mean knowledge about results of last general or local elections and voters' stakes.

Special cultural inclinations

Local festivities and annual cultural activities must be reflected in the FM radio programming to attract audience and create audience loyalty. Cultural sensitivities must be taken care of in the programme not just through restraint but through active programme productions.

Daily life style of people

This may include local business, office and their travel timings, their standard and style of living, their consumption pattern and choices entertainment. Such information can be collected through surveys

Predominant economic activities/needs

This again will determine the focus of news and programmes. Any major economic activity of an area has a direct impact on the lives of local people. Such an economic activity may go beyond the FM radio range but it may still be relevant to the local population, which moves out of the local radio range to earn its livelihood.

2. To improve quality of programming:

The initial programme format finalized after the above mentioned research only gives an idea about the subject areas to be focused through an FM radio's daylong programming. Once the initial programme format has been presented to the audience the next step begins. It is improving the actual contents of news, entertainment, discussion & education programmes, another objective of any audience research. Content quality-specific objectives to be achieved through audience research are listed as follows:

To judge the quality of sound & transmission range

This is the first step after test transmission. People dwelling at the boundary area of an FM radio signal reach can be approached and asked about the quality of transmission. People also normally call to complain in case of a problem in this regard. It is important to make note of their location.



To assess talent performance/presentation/popularity

This is a continuous process of audience feedback wherein listeners record their views through phone, fax, e-mail and postage about the performance of their favorite (or otherwise) anchors.

To assess & improve credibility/image of news programmes

A survey or field research about people's perception of their FM radio programmes is a must, particularly the news programme that affects their lives on daily basis. People's perception must form basis for FM station's overall policy and the news policy in particular.

To assess popularity of individual programmes

Questions can be put to people through surveys or questionnaires about the quality of a particular programme. For instance in a music programme people from different age groups can be approached to determine their preferences in music for that particular programme.

To identify burning issues for studio debates

To understand and identify real issues facing the local population is a must to stay relevant to the community and maintain its loyalty with the FM station. This is true for studio debates and discussions. People will not stay tuned to a discussion programme that does not discuss their real problems.

To change original format if needed to meet new demands

An FM programme format is rarely to be changed. But to remain relevant to the audience needs the format may under go drastic changes in the light of new developments and changing needs of the community. The change in programme format may include change in timings of the programme or introduction of new programmes.

To hunt for potential talent/experts for your station

Audience research is also important for introducing individuals on the microphone with whom the local community identifies itself. This may include visiting a local college to find a youth from a particular ethnic community for a programme targeting that community, or journalism students to work as news reporters. It also includes preparing a list of independent experts/officials from the local area on different subjects.

3. To assess market potential:

Improvement in programme quality requires more resources, which in turn come through additional revenue generation. This is possible with a special understanding of the economic forces working around people listening to your FM station. Through a specially focused research in this field such economic factors of an area can be understood well. This in turn enables an FM station to find successful partnerships with potential sponsors, in other words attract big business to advertise on your station. Assessing market potential for an FM radio station is too big a subject to be dealt with in this book, but briefly speaking market potential of an area can be determined through audience research with following objectives:

- Identify life style and consumption pattern of people
- Identify major economic activity of the area
- Measure size of population dependent on that economic activity
- Identify major stakeholders of that activity
- Identify knowledge gaps of the economic activity to educate people
- Identify type of information needed to boost that activity

4. To assess station's performances vis-à-vis other competitors:

Understanding your station's strong points and shortcomings is only be possible when you have complete knowledge of your standing in the market vis-à-vis your competitors. An audience survey or research in this regard aims at finding out the following vis-à-vis other stations:

- Station's listening vis-à-vis others
- Station's maximum outreach vis-à-vis others
- Station's reach to different communities vis-à-vis others
- Station's reach to different consumer sections & age groups
- Station's gender-specific outreach
- Station's programme-specific reach to sections of public

5. To develop and update listeners database:

As stated in the beginning audience research is a continuous process in the light of which policies, programme format and contents also change. Some



of the basic indicators to keep monitoring the changes in the state of audience are listed below:

- Local population (age groups) in an FM station area
- Literacy rate
- Economy and life style of people
- Societal role of local women

Part-IV: Methods of audience research

There are numerous ways for an FM station to collect and compile information on its audience. Such methods will largely be determined by the specified objectives of an audience research as discussed above.

There are internationally recognized methods of conducting an audience research as part of the good management practices. This book however focuses on very basics of such methods employed internationally explained in simplest of the manner.

Before discussing the methods there are three major policy options available to an FM station for an audience research:

1. Hire a professional company for audience research on all stations in an area:

Syndicated survey by a professional organization is the best way. It is relatively cheap and considered credible with all the stations in the area sharing the cost.

2. Hire a company to do research for your station only:

This would help you gather maximum information about your own FM station only to help improve programme content. But sponsors may not trust this kind of survey unless the survey company enjoys professional fame. This is also an expensive option normally chosen in the face a survey that is critical to your station.

3. Carry out audience research yourself:

This can be the cheapest way as you employ your own staff that will cut the major cost of survey. It is a difficult process that requires special understanding by your staff about objectives of the survey and questions to be

asked from select group of people. This survey will not however attract your sponsors much being of low credibility.

Before initiating audience research prior data or information already available through different sources should be examined in order to be compared with the research findings. There are many basic sources of data on audience available to an FM station:

Regular feedback

This feedback ranges from regular phone calls, letters, e-mails other than any specific questions asked by the station. This may also include personal comments by visitors or businessmen during routine interaction. Any information gathered through such medium is just a food for thought and must be crosschecked from other sources.

Official population data

Government departments like Statistical Division, National Database Registration Authority (NADRA), Survey of Pakistan, District Coordination Officers (DCOs), Nazims, Police stations etc.

Local media monitoring

Local press is another good source of information about the moods and tastes of your listeners. It also gives out some data and information on population and audience as it reports people's comments on some of FM programming content.

Personal interviews

Personal interviews of important personalities of the area, for example a local trader about usefulness of your radio's news on local trade.

Educational institutions

Local schools and colleges for girls and boys or a university are a good barometer of people's choice. Students of these institutions can be contacted in their classrooms and either asked about their comments on programmes or stations or given out some questionnaire to be filled up by their parents. There may be some incentives for the students in return for their cooperation.

General public

This means random interviews from people in the street, normally to ascertain some very basic facts like how many of them listen to the local radio stations at all.

Local social/professional organizations

Such platforms are a good forum for professional feedback about the programmes related to their areas of expertise.

The most important aspect of the research methodology is the instrument of audience research. Following are some of the important audience research tools:-

Survey

Survey is one major exercise of collecting data and facts about population and people's taste by compiling answers to a list of questions in an empirical manner. The questionnaire may focus on determining people's attitude or response towards the station or any one of its programmes.

Before preparing a questionnaire one has to be clear about specific objectives of the survey and type of information needed. If the answers are to be in writing then the language of questionnaire must be simple enough to make sense to a listener so that he is able to give simple answers.

"Which people to ask questions?" is an important question to decide beforehand. This is called Audience sampling (discussed on following pages). Questionnaires have to be either distributed to such people or read out to them for answers to be recorded by the station staff themselves.

Seven Day Dairy

It is a common method employed internationally which requires distribution of dairies among the listeners. They would record their actual responses towards the programming at a given schedule for a week. In this case the listener should be literate. These dairies provide good information about listeners' interests in a station or a programme and the duration of interest and listening habits. The listeners group has to be carefully selected.

Focus Groups

This is an alternative to survey exercise. In a focus group of about 7 to 8 people a highly trained moderator conducts the discussion. Unlike surveys where a constant number of questions are asked to a large sample of audience, a focus group has a constant number of audiences trying to reach at a consensus statement on an issue. Discussion begins with a general subject like media, politics etc., and then people start focusing on the most important aspect. Such a method is used to assess the focus of people's thinking on a general issue, like politics, media, economy etc. Focus groups are also organized to opine on a particular programme to be launched. Usually 3 to 4 groups of different age groups and interests are organized to give their input. Some organizations have their own focus groups wherein the members are paid for their daylong deliberations. Members of such focus groups can be drawn from their regular listeners group.

Consensus Groups

This is another alternative to the survey method. It slightly differs from a public meeting and a focus group. A consensus group does not aim at creating a consensus but it tries to find out if a consensus exists already among the group members on an issue. Unlike the focus group, which narrows down its focus on a specific issue, a consensus group discusses issues in a wider perspective. Under the process about three different groups are formed. At the end of the discussions the moderator of each of the three groups puts up a statement before their respective group members that he thinks is likely to be agreed to by most of the participants. Finally each of the group comes up with three consensus statements and if two of them are similar these are the outcome of the study.

Audience Sample

This is an important aspect of any audience research. Every citizen or a listener of an area cannot be interviewed and thus a small group whose members must represent all sections of society. Target audience of a station, or any of its programmes, determines audience sample. It can be a group of homes, places, or people who are likely or prospective listeners of your station

or a programme. Ideally all people living in a station's area be interviewed as part of a survey. Such an area can be divided into main city center, outer edge of a city or rural areas. In terms of living standards the divide can be of a wealthy area (posh locality), poor locality or a middle-class area. An audience can also be divided into age groups and gender for the purpose of determining their likings. The divide normally is like this: women folk, men folk, youth, aged, middle age, children etc all depending upon the objectives of the survey. Therefore, focus or consensus groups' composition can be determined on the basis of similar audience sampling.

Affinity Group

It is a different approach in the sense that it requires organizing group discussions among people with different behavior and attitudes but belonging to one neighborhood, club, association or a forum, like a group of friends, students, lawyers, and employees of an office. This group may be invited for soliciting opinion on an issue, programme or performance of a radio station. Close relationships like husband and wives shouldn't be involved at a time. If some of the group members do not listen to the radio station it wouldn't matter but if none of them listens then such a group will be of no help to research objectives.

Telephone /E-mail surveys

Such a method is devoid of audience sampling consideration because it serves only a limited purpose of survey. Not many local areas in Pakistan have access to telephone and e-mail survey, and therefore, such a survey may not be considered as credible. This may however enable the station to get some good individual suggestions to improve programming. Computer software allows telephone owners to call the station and record their views through a recording machine wherein some basic questions are fed in and callers are told to press a particular digit for a particular answer. Similarly e-mail surveys requiring listeners to write their answers in Yes or No in E-mail Subject's space enable the station to compile an answer without opening all the e-mails.

Part-V: Compiling & analyzing results

The whole process of audience research triggered by various needs and objectives and then actually conducting a research on field is highly sophisticated. But the real task lies ahead of a field survey. The next stage is compilation and analysis of the research output.

Compilation of results can be defined as empirical calculation of the answers from survey questionnaires to meet the original objectives of research. Data compilation mistakes can be harmful to the overall results. Such mistakes or human error, as we may call it, may include wrong counting of answers in Yes or No, putting in an extra zero or missing out a zero from grand total of compiled results. Compilation of such results normally mean filling up a table whose contents have been predetermined on the basis of research objectives.

(Sample table on listeners radio habits)

Age Groups	Listening timings			
	0800-1200	1200-1700	1700-2200	2200-0500
15-25				
25-40				
40-50				
50-60				
60 & above				



Once compiled the results have to be analyzed in a proper perspective. Following basic guidelines are to be followed for analyzing the results and reaching on conclusions.

- Survey results may not reflect audience behavior 100 %.
- Error margins should be acknowledged
- The survey objectives, methods, and sampling process be declared publicly
- Sudden developments overtaking or affecting the results be acknowledged
- Research results be used for objectives originally conceived
- Results might not be a strong base for legal claims against other parties
- Survey results should be updated over a period of time
- Such results may also affect public opinion swinging audience behavior either way

There are however some internationally established findings about radio audience behavior that may or may not apply to Pakistani audience. Listed below these findings do make an interesting study for any broadcaster.

- Most people do not listen to radio
- Listeners are slow in discovering about new stations
- Radio listening keeps declines during the day
- Listening increases during mealtimes
- Continuous listening can go for no more than six hour a day
- People don't read radio programme schedules
- Music attracts more audience reaction than a talk show
- Young people prefer music and old ones prefer talk shows
- Local radio listeners don't just want local news & programmes
- More radio stations means less listening time for each of them
- Late night anchors sounding intimate are successful
- Seasons have no effect on radio listening
- Listeners mostly switch off than change stations
- Peak times listening declines on weekends

- People may not mean what they say about their listening habits
- People take time to get used to a new programme or a whole format
- People do like one station from among others
- Listeners may listen to different stations at different times
- Focus more on keeping your existing listeners
- A station with slight leading margin in market share attracts bigger business
- Most listeners don't follow their favorite presenter to a new station
- Listeners are quick to leave and slow to adopt a station
- Listeners are slow to come back to their old station
- For a non-profit station small but loyal audience is better than large one
- Variation in programme format is required but not too much
- Listeners are slow to follow favorite programme to a new time slot
- Maximum attention span for a radio programme is 10 minutes
- Listeners have short memory about programme contents
- Regular listeners have greater experience than radio staff

Audience research is a continuous process and so is the changing behavior of the audience. For Fm stations with limited area range audience research should be a relatively easy task to undertake in order to develop audience loyalty. Such exercises not just provide useful information and data for programme formatting but also gives the people a sense of involvement in the radio programming. These exercises are also helpful in drawing people into radio listening through news, information and entertainment, which reflects their needs and meets their expectations.

The whole process of audience research is requires specialized skills and therefore it is always better to hire a professional organization to do it. Not every survey however requires a full-fledged survey company services, As discussed in this book small level surveys can be carried out the radio staff as well, specially when the results are to be used for internal purpose only and not for publicity.



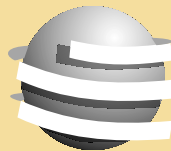
This handbook will hopefully serve as a basic concept guide for the radio managers to develop a proper relationship between the people and their stations. An FM station being locally situated has bigger stakes in the audience and the station managers will have to respond to audience needs on daily basis. This does not however mean that they keep changing the programme format on daily basis under pressure from various groups. Such surveys can become a powerful moral evidence to convince such groups about what people actually want to listen.

Conclusion

This guidebook has made an effort to create a general awareness among the radio managers about basics of the best management practices. At a time when private broadcast sector has started establishing its roots in Pakistan such a publication may serve as a good source of knowledge and know how on management matters.

The handbook aimed at introducing to the newly appointed managers some basic and handy guidelines on how to handle day-to-day managerial affairs of a radio station and develop professional relationships with working colleagues. This also included some tips on developing a team spirit and showing leadership qualities. The chapter on audience research will hopefully help the radio managers understand the need to continuously assess public demand in order to produce programmes that satisfy it.

There is a greater need for the academic institutions like the mass communication departments of universities across Pakistan to teach this subject as part of their journalism curriculum. Their present curriculum is not meeting the demands of skilled manpower coming from budding broadcast sector and are therefore already under review. Similarly, the new FM industry also has to organize itself not just for having a collective bargaining position but also to establish professional training institutions for the broadcast sector. The industry has to focus more on investment to improve content quality rather than the quantity to fill the airtime. PEMRA too has a responsibility to educate and train the new entrants in the industry, something, which is part of the authority's future planning as per its official reports. PEMRA laws relating to management of radio stations also put emphasis on smooth operations of the FM stations and streamlined relationship between radio stations and its audience.



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