



Practical Guide for Community Radio Presentation

Prepared by :
Dave Mason & Julia Hayball

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Introduction

Radio is a craft and artform, rather than a science, which can take time to master. This is not a rulebook, but a guide for beginners and a reminder for seasoned presenters on how to get the best out of you, your voice, desk, studio, guests and music.

Know Your Audience

- **Understand Your Listener:** The primary audience for daytime shows is residents aged 40+ in Bath and West Wiltshire. Tailor your tone and language to make your content relatable and engaging.
- **Speak Directly:** Radio is a one-to-one medium. Avoid terms like "listeners" or "our listeners" and instead use "you" or "listener" to create a personal connection. Treat your listener like a friend.
- **Be Curious About Your Audience:**
 - Who are they? What are they doing?
 - Where and how are they listening? Why are they listening?
- **Find and Love Your Tribe:** Connect with your audience by making them feel understood and appreciated.

Content and Storytelling

- **Start Strong:**
 - Capture attention immediately with a compelling headline, an engaging story, or a strong track.
 - Use memorable hooks, such as a clip from an interview or a standout piece of gossip.
 - Avoid starting with a slow or dirge-like song.
- **Tap Into the Zeitgeist:**
 - Discuss what people are talking about locally, whether it's in the pub, around the town, or on relevant social channels.
 - Use local references, such as streets, landmarks, and neighbourhood hotspots, to anchor your content.
- **Tell Stories:**
 - Share personal experiences and reactions to foster a connection with your audience.
 - Use descriptive, vivid language to create "theatre of the mind" for your listeners.
 - Borrow and adapt ideas you've encountered elsewhere, adding your unique spin.
- **Furniture and Fixtures**
 - Create features and fixed slots in your show that happen at the same time – and always do them, (*until you decide to freshen things up*).
- **Keep It Simple:**
 - Avoid overcrowding links with information. Stick to **one thought per link**. It's a common mistake where presenters start one story or thread, and veer off into another whole area of chat, lasting minutes, expecting the listener to follow an aimless stream of consciousness. As a guide, think how you want to end your link and work backwards.
 - Plan and test new ideas, especially for features like quizzes, by running pilot versions with friends or family.

Talking About Music

- **Be Passionate and Personal:**
 - Share your connection to the music, such as memories or stories tied to a song or a concert.
 - If you choose your own music, consider the following: the lyrical content of the first song out of the news; the balance between male and female artists, and in areas like 80's hours, balancing genres, e.g., rock, new wave, soul, reggae.
 - Forge a relationship with your audience through authentic enthusiasm.
- **Never Criticise the Playlist:**
 - Show enthusiasm for all tracks. If you're curating music for a specialist show, help listeners discover new favourites.
- **Effective Segues:**
 - Play two or more songs back-to-back for smooth transitions, often with a station ID/sweeper.
 - Use music talk-over beds, jingles, or stingers creatively to link content.

Discussing Topical Issues

- **Stay Relevant:**
 - Focus on local issues that resonate with your community. Mention upcoming events and address local developments objectively.
 - Avoid bias or overly personal critiques, particularly about political topics.
 - On local issues, it would be reasonable to criticise the impact of a council decision on local services from your own personal experience or the experiences reported to you by others, i.e., LTN's (low-traffic neighbourhoods), roads being closed for extended periods causing inconvenience and issues which you know affect people directly. It would not be reasonable to launch into a personal tirade about a particular Councillor involved.
- **Be Well-Informed:**
 - Only discuss issues you've researched thoroughly or know well.
 - Avoid discussing complex or divisive global topics unless you have a clear understanding. For example, the Israel-Gaza-Lebanon conflict is best avoided, unless you are well-informed about the issues and arguments. There's nothing worse than hearing a presenter say, "I don't know much about this, but..." then continuing down a rabbit hole. Stay within your knowledge base to maintain credibility.
 - Follow the solid broadcasting maxim: "If in doubt, leave it out."

Interviews

Definition: A controlled, professional conversation between a questioner and an expert on an interesting topic – for the benefit of a third party.

Lots of community radio stations operate a music and speech format which is more of a casual listen. Unlike talk radio and podcasts - where people are choosing to download or listen to extended chunks of conversation on a specific topic, live music-based radio tends to involve the listener dropping in and out of the station.

Imagine how you listen: you're often doing something else while you're tuned in and you may listen to a certain show/timeslot, rather than the station 24/7.

Community radio serves its audiences by having interesting people, (hopefully!), on to talk about topics of local interest alongside relevant community updates and information. People want to be informed and entertained, but don't hang on every word.

So it's worth bearing in mind that the pop record was designed to be around 3 minutes and 30 seconds for a good reason: people's attention spans, which scientists believe to now sit between seven and nine seconds!

- Think of your interview as a professional conversation: avoid in-jokes that exclude the listener and chat as naturally as you would with a friend.
- Try to keep your chunks of speech to around the length of a pop record - 3 to 4 minutes before playing another track. Plot a simple structure of the conversation with your guest: tease the next bit of chat, especially if your guest has expert tips or a significant conclusion/call to action to their story, after the next song.
- When you come back to your guest after some music, remind the audience who they are and what they are on your show to discuss. Your keen listener may have only just joined your show mid-track.

Prepare Thoroughly:

- Research your guest's background, work, or relevant content to show respect and get more out of the conversation.
- Write questions in conversational language, keeping them simple and natural. Read them aloud before airtime.

Ask Open Questions:

- Use the 5 W's and H, (Who, Why, What, When, Where, and How) to avoid yes/no answers. One of the best approaches is the phrase; 'describe when...'
- If the guest makes outlandish claims, promises, libellous or defamatory comments about individuals or products, you must challenge them.

Let Guests Speak:

- Avoid interrupting with unnecessary noises like "yes," "uh-huh," or "I see."
- Use non-verbal cues like nodding and smiling to encourage them to open up. Leave a pause for them to continue, it's a way to get more out of them.
- Use 'active listening' skills – this enables you to fully tune into what the guest is saying and use what they tell you to form the next question.

Planning Your Show

Structure and Timing:

Two things seasoned presenters continually have an eye on in the studio: audio levels and the clock!

- Structure your content around the clock hour, with clear segments and flexibility for adjustments.
- Back time your show to align with scheduled elements, such as news bulletins, which often start at 59:49.
- Start considering timings early in the hour to ensure smooth transitions, especially when you have live guests.

Tease Upcoming Content:

- Let listeners know what's coming up to keep them engaged, but avoid throwing forward more than 20 minutes, unless it's highly relevant.

Production

- Think about how features, guest interviews or sequences might sound. For example, is there a piece of music that identifies with your guest? If it's an actor, perhaps the theme tune of a TV show they were in. It's all part of 'producing' items and lifting the production values of what people will hear to engage them, by painting an audio picture to illustrate your features, guests, or point.

Promote Station Continuity:

- Avoid treating your show like an island. Hand-off to the next presenter smoothly and highlight station-wide programming.

Your Voice and How to Use It

Find Your Authentic Voice:

- Speak at a natural pace, like you're having a conversation with a friend.
- Add 10% more energy to your delivery for animation and engagement, but that doesn't mean shouting.
- Try to use more inflection in the tone of your voice when asking questions or making a point than you might usually, so that YOU sound interested in what you're saying. A monotone delivery will soon switch the audience off.

Technical Tips

Master Microphone Technique:

- Take levels BEFORE you begin your show. Speak directly into the mic, and adjust levels for clarity. Ensure guest mics are balanced as well.

Monitor Audio Levels:

- Ensure all sources, including your voice and music, peak at no more than 6 on the two PPL meters on the desk in front of you. 5.5 is optimal, as shown below;



- Test levels for external audio clips before airing, and adjust channel 'trim' knobs at the tops of the channels as necessary. This becomes especially important for phone calls, Zooms etc, as shown;



- When talking over music beds, travel, weather, song intro's, remember to fade them underneath your voice, so that you're not shouting over them and distorting the levels.

Manage Open Mics:

- Reduce unused mic levels to minimise echo and feedback.
- When not speaking, fade your mic down / or use the ON-OFF button to switch them off, to reduce studio echo or feedback.
- Avoid fading up all mics simultaneously, which can cause a hollow or echoey sound.

Disaster recovery / when it goes wrong:

- By now, we've probably all experienced a computer glitch or software crash in the system. It's good practice at the start of your show to have a track or two ready to go in Spotify and the CD player. A compilation CD and Spotify can buy you ages until things get rebooted.

Voice-Tracking

- This is a notoriously tricky art to perfect: sounding convincingly ‘live’ and current, when you have recorded links maybe days ahead. Crucial is the art of getting your head into the moment: place yourself in the time when the show will be broadcast, not what’s going on now. This is especially important for our changeable weather, so check the forecast or leave out.
Keep the links generic or about the music - research events that you know are happening, to reference. Remain connected to your material and try to tell yourself you cannot re-record the link: it’s live, warts and all, otherwise you can find yourself going over and over a link, trying to get it right.

Editorial

Ofcom regulations require that there is a distinction between commercials / sponsorship, news and programming. This is why you shouldn’t go straight from a music track into an ad break without saying something, or playing a station sweeper/jingle. You’ll notice these sit as bumpers during automation. As mentioned before, use your link before the commercial break to tease ahead in order to carry the listener across, *(most people will say they don’t like the ads, making this especially important)*.

Adjust On-the-Fly:

- Keep a mix of short and long songs ready to fill gaps or manage overruns.
- Use short songs to fill time or back time effectively.

Double Acts

Collaborate Effectively:

- Use hand signals to coordinate who’s speaking next during the show.
- Share lines and setup moments to build natural chemistry.
- Avoid speaking over each other and plan your links during music breaks.
- Avoid rabbit-holes in topics by working out how you end a segment.
- Ask yourself: would I find this segment interesting or relevant to my life?!

Branding and Promotion

Stay Loyal to the Station:

- Use the correct station name and strapline, e.g., “Radio Bath, online, on your smart-speaker, and on DAB.” A voice for Bath etc.
- Mention/use social media for engagement where appropriate.
- Avoid mentioning other stations.

Promote Effectively:

- Tease your show and others on the station with specific timings and calls to action.

Final Advice

Engage and Enjoy:

- Have fun on-air and let your personality shine.
- Let the music do its thing.
- One thought: one link.
- Clock + levels.
- Aim to connect with your audience in an authentic and meaningful way.

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