

Announcing Techniques

The one thing special about radio is that it is a personal medium. One person, you the announcer, talks to another person, the listener. Although there may be hundreds or even thousands of listeners, that does not detract from the fact that you are still talking to each of them on a one to one basis.

Radio announcing is therefore different to public speaking, or preaching. There you are talking to the group as a whole, and as you speak, you look at the whole group. Put each of those people in front of a radio receiver and the method of communication changes. So, as you announce, imagine you are talking to an individual.

Some commercial radio stations use the slogan, 'person to person radio', and that's exactly what community radio should be.

The voice

In commercial radio there is a certain type of voice or announcing style that seem to be pre-dominated. It is very distinctive and sounds like a "Professional" radio voice. It is often not very natural.

One of the refreshing things about community radio is that the majority of broadcasters sound like ordinary everyday people, and that is what we want.

Although there is no particular voice style we want to create, there are some basic things that you need to learn.

Light and shade

All information in radio must be conveyed by sound. There are no pictures as in television, or even the advantage of being able to see the speaker as he makes gestures etc. So the voice must convey all the meaning. This means that there must be light and shade or contrast in the voice.

The speed (pace), pitch and projection (level) of the voice must be varied and changed to suit the mood of the piece being read or spoken. This can be illustrated by listening to commercials on radio or television. Some are hard sell, with the announcer racing at fever pitch, so that you too will become excited about what he is saying. Some are soft and slow, to give an intimate or soothing mood. Even in a straight piece of copy, the speed, pitch and level need to be varied to maintain interest.

The right emphasis can be achieved by using a combination of four key speaking skills — pause, pace, pitch and projection.

- **Pause** – using long or short moments of silence in your speech
- **Pace** – using slow or fast speeds during your speech

- **Pitch** – the intonation (inflection) in your voice
- **Projection** – the loudness or softness of your speech

By using these skills you can give emphasis to certain words and phrases to enhance your message.

Reading the Copy

Fluency

You should pre-read all of the material you put to air. Ad-libbing is usually only an excuse for poor or no preparation. To become proficient at ad-libbing takes many years of practice. Otherwise it sounds like verbal diarrhoea. So become proficient at reading.

When we put into spoken word what we read, the following process takes place in the brain. The eye reads the first 3 to 5 words, sends the message to the brain which then tells the vocal organs to produce the appropriate sound. Whilst the words are being spoken, the eyes are already onto the next group of words and so on. So there is always a time lag between what the eye sees and what the mouth says.

This technique needs to be developed to the point that the eyes are almost a full line ahead. This enables you to read fluently as you know what is coming up next and have already put it into context within the sentence or paragraph. If you only read and speak the same way as you go through the sentence your speaking style will sound very stilted and will not flow. Note that you have probably been putting the above process into operation without realising it. When people sound boring, often it is not what they are saying, but the way they say it. There is no light or shade in their voices.

Pitch

Most of us only ever use the top half of our voices, i.e. the pitch at which we speak normally is in the middle of our pitch range. If we get excited we invariably just increase the pitch.

It is also possible to lower the pitch. This gives us a greater pitch range and so helps us to vary our voice so it has more light and shade. Some announcers speak at the lower part of their voices all the time, like John Laws, but you need to develop that part of your voice if it has been unused.

Most public speakers and actors are aware of this, and have developed their voices in these areas. Practise this as you read.

Projecting

Although radio is a person to person medium, your voice still needs to be 'projected' at the listener. If it isn't, you can sound flat and uninteresting.

Imagine you are talking to someone who is down the other end of a medium-sized hall say 10 to 15 metres away. You would be shouting at the person, but you would be unconsciously projecting your voice towards the person. If you spoke as if you were only 1 metre away, you would have difficulty in being heard. So in a similar way, the voice needs to be projected on radio.

This can be done by imagining the listener is 2 or 3 metres away and you want everything you say to be understood. An old announcing teacher always said: 'speak on the tip of the tongue'. Although the voice is not produced there, the mental process of imagining it is seems to give the required projection.

Again, practice will help.

If the voice is too soft and not projected, then the gain of the microphone channel of the mixer will need to be increased, thereby lifting the studio background noise and increasing listener fatigue.

Body position

The ideal position for the best voice production is standing. For many years the BBC used to make their radio newsreaders, stand to read the news, they might still do.

Practically speaking, sitting is best, especially for long periods of time. It is important to be comfortable and not to "hunch" over the desk. Breathe easily and allow the body to relax and you will produce the best sound.

Understand

Know what you are going to say before you open the mic. The important thing is that it must be planned. Some announcers use bullet points, some use single-word reminders, some just think through the structure of their break and deliver it. Whatever your preferred method the rule is plan. If the talk break is not planned how can you possibly use the right technique to convey the right meaning—you will not know the meaning or the structure yourself. Structure your breaks. Think about the meaning you want to convey. Use the appropriate techniques to enhance that meaning.

Understand what you are reading. Pre-read it first, so that you have the sense of it worked out. Make a note, either by underlining or mentally, of the points that require emphasis.

Make sure that important information like names, dates etc. are clearly spoken. Pause in the appropriate spots, so that the sense of the item is maintained. If you find reading a piece that is closely written difficult, then re-write it and space it out. Often just the look of a piece of copy can determine how easy or hard it is to read.

Remember radio broadcasting is a very intimate and personal form of communication. Although many thousands of listeners could be tuned to your particular program, you are communicating with each listener on an individual basis because your broadcast means different things to different people.

Your listeners may be old age pensioners sitting quietly at home, carpenters on a construction site, truck drivers on the open road, students working on research at home, hospital patients or people at home looking after children. You are communicating with each listener on a personal basis.

To the old aged pensioner you are welcome company; to the student you are an educator.

When you are presenting a radio program always remember that you are talking to one person. In the studio alone with the microphone:

- Think of that person;
- Visualise that person;
- Communicate with that person;
- Be natural!

'It is not your vocal mechanism but your manner of speaking that determines your broadcasting value'.

Mic Technique

When using a mic there are some points to remember. If used well, a mic can enhance the other vocal techniques discussed.

1. Avoid 'popping'. When you say words with 'plosive' sounds in them like 'p' and 'b', there is a chance that the little explosion of air that expires from your mouth can hit the mic strongly and can cause it to overload, creating a popping kind of sound. To avoid popping point the mic slightly away from the direct line of fire of those 'plosives' and move it a little to the side of your mouth.

2. Avoid feedback that can occur if your headphones are too loud and you move them too close to the mic.

3. Avoid being off-mic unintentionally. Sometimes you do want to vary the sound of your voice for effect, but at other times you should keep at roughly the same distance from the mic so that you do not get that hollow 'off-mic' kind of sound.

4. Use the proximity effect to your advantage. The closer you move to a mic the deeper your voice sounds — too close and it sounds muffled and distorted, but just right and it enhances your deeper

bass tones. As you move away from the mic the bass tones decrease. Listen to your voice at various positions away from the mic and decide where your voice sounds best.

5. Sibilance is an over-pronounced 'sss' sound when you say words with an 's' in them. This is usually a teeth-and-tongue problem and voice exercises like 'Sally sells sea shells by the sea shore' can sometimes fix it. If your sibilance is too pronounced you may need to use a mic which can cut the treble frequencies and decrease the sibilance electronically.

6. Studio mics usually reject sound at the back of them, so if you use papers that rustle, put them behind the mic so that listeners do not hear them.

Remember, good mic technique cannot make up for lack of enthusiasm or poor delivery.

What makes a great presenter?

- Opinions — this is especially important for news/talk announcers.
- Wide life experiences — they make people more interesting.
- Curiosity — an awareness of the world around them.
- A range of personality styles — from serious to light.
- Emotions — the best presenters wear their hearts on their sleeves. This can make them difficult to live with at times, but they are worth it.
- A sense of humour — and a little mischievousness. Sometimes a bit of weirdness too, that helps them see things differently.
- Good listening skills.
- Good interpersonal skills.
- The ability to sell the music — to create a magical moment for the listener.
- The ability to make a connection with the music — in music stations the music and the 'jock' have to be tied together emotionally.
- A sense of excitement and fun.

General Presentation Hints & Planning Ideas

Presentation depends on good announcing skills and the ability to complete your work well and to entertain your listeners. It is about good radio practices.

1. Think of your listener as a person – one person – and talk to him/her as a friend. Be yourself, be warm, natural and friendly at all times. Try smiling as you talk. It can help your voice to sound cheerful and friendly.
2. Before you open the mic, have a clear idea of exactly what you are going to say and do. Plan it out. If necessary, write it down — many top announcers do.
3. Don't say too much – don't ramble on. Everything you say should be entertaining, interesting, informative or educational. If you have nothing interesting to say, shut up! Remember that your listener should be able to relate to everything you say.
4. Prepare and organise yourself for each shift. Plan out what you are going to do on your shift and spend time beforehand getting some interesting little topical pieces to put into your program. Use newspapers, magazines, TV, the internet and personal contact and observation to get informative bits to put into each shift. The more time you put into preparation, the better your program will be.
5. Always be enthusiastic, positive and energetic on the air. This enthusiasm will come through in your voice. If you are enthusiastic and bright, it will rub off on our listeners and they will want to keep listening to you because it makes them feel good.
6. Avoid in-house things such as a call to your own personal friends, or talking to a friend in the studio when the mic is open. This sort of thing separates you from your listener who feels neglected or excluded. Always be careful to include your listener. This is the secret of good presentation.
7. Clean up as you go. Leave the studio neat and tidy for the next announcer.
8. Treat all your equipment carefully. Be gentle with switches, buttons, faders, pickups, headphones and portable recorders. Handle records carefully by the edges and the centre label. Put them back in liners and covers after use.
9. Forget terms like "listeners", "all you people out there", etc. Radio is a personal, one to one means of communication. Each listener hears you and understands you in his or her own individual mind.

Speak to one person at all times.

For example:

- ***"I hope you're enjoying the program"***
- ***"It's good to have you with us -- welcome!" Talk to just one person, your listener.***

10. Call the time in the same way as you do in everyday life. Don't use artificial terms, or "announces", like: "it's six minutes away from two o'clock". If someone asked you the time, you would probably say "six minutes to two". Say it that way on the air.

11. Always pre-read any written material before you announce it (assuming you have time). If it is in complicated language, re-write it to make it clear. Use simple language that is easy to read and easy to understand. Use conversational language. Radio script should sound like you are talking, not reading.

12. Remember your warming up and relaxation exercises, like "W,W,W .." and "bring your voice forward to the tip of the tongue and the teeth", deep breathing, humming, and rolling your head around in a relaxed way. Do these exercises before going on air to ease tension and relax yourself. You'll sound better if you do.

13. Try ad-libbing exercises in your spare time to improve your fluency in speaking smoothly off the top of your head, without "um, er and aah".

14. When reading material, look for the key words that convey the meaning, like "king of the road." You need to stress or emphasise those words and at same time think of the sense of what you are saying as you read. It can help to mark your script by underlining the key words and by marking in pauses with this symbol /. Marking your script may help you to make it more meaningful to your listener.

15. Be sure of pronunciation particularly people's names and place names. If you're not sure, don't just guess. Ask someone who knows. If you don't pronounce names properly, your listener will lose faith in you and in the station, and will not believe what you say.

16. Keep trying to improve your announcing style. Record yourself regularly (use a tape recorder) and listen to yourself after your shift and be critical of all you say and do. Try to work out how you can do things better. Keep striving. Learn to be self-critical.

17. Avoid saying the same old phrases over and over again. It is boring and irritating for your listener. Think of other ways of saying things. Try for variety all the time. If necessary, write out a list of different phrases and use them in rotation on the air until you have broken any habitual repetitive speech patterns.

18. Find out as much as you can about your audience. Try to give them what they want. Try to meet their needs. Don't just play records that you like, just to suit yourself. You should always try to please your listener.

19. Try to balance out your program by contrasting the records you play. Mix them up so that you have a fast number followed by a slow one, an intense song followed by one that is less intense, male vocal followed by female vocal or group, vocal followed by instrumental, and so on. Try to get variety and good balance into your program at all times. Always follow your program log carefully and put all programs to air on time.

20. Call the time regularly. Identify your station, your program and yourself regularly. Remember that your audience is turning over all the time – people are tuning in and tuning out. Keep them informed all the time.

To sum up – take your job seriously. Don't let your station down. Always be reliable and punctual for your shifts. Prepare and be professional in your attitude to your work and in the way you do things. Be your own most severe critic.

Broadcasting Law and Standards

Every broadcaster must have an understanding of the law as it relates to broadcasting and to the CBAA Code of Practice. A lack of understanding in these important areas could prove very costly to you as the presenter as well as the station. The law is very complex, hence every presenter should adopt the journalists' adage that says "if in doubt, leave it out".

Defamation.

It is defamatory to publish or broadcast anything about another person, (or group or a company) which tends "to lower him or her in the eyes of right-thinking people". You must not bring others into "hatred, ridicule or contempt".

To defame someone in a statement made on radio is libel, to speak ill of another is slander. Reasonable mistake or a lack of intention to defame are, in general, no defence.

The fact that a statement is true does not prevent it from being defamatory unless it can be established that it was published for the public benefit. A retraction or an apology is not a defence against defamation.

For the purpose of the law of defamation, the Broadcasting Services Act says that broadcasts are publications in permanent form. Stations are required to keep tapes of their broadcasts for six weeks.

Disclaimer

5GTR-FM Radio disclaimer states: "5GTR-FM Radio encourages the free and open discussion of a wide range of matters in our access programming. It should be noted that the views and opinions expressed in these program are those of the individual or group bringing you the program and are not necessarily those of 5GTR-FM".

This disclaimer should be read at the beginning and end of all Access programs.

Blasphemy

Blasphemous matter may not be broadcast. It is blasphemous if it arouses outrage or substantial resentment with a religious body, but this does not prohibit reasoned argument or discussion. No religion should be dealt with so as to cause outrage or substantial resentment.

Obscenity*

A broadcaster is prohibited from broadcasting matter which is obscene or indecent. One definition of obscenity states that it is anything that tends to “deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences, and into whose hands a publication of this sort may fall”.

A broadcast will be held to be obscene, then, if it offends to a substantial degree the sexual modesty of the average man or woman in the Australian community or offends to a substantial degree the contemporary standards of decency currently accepted by the Australian community.

Because of the nature of community radio, catering as it does to minority groups, there are occasions when language not acceptable on popular commercial mass-audience radio stations maybe allowed*. There is no absolute ban on the use of particular language. Factors such as the width of the publication, the classes of likely listeners, the ages of those persons, and the time of publication and the existence of warnings as to the nature of the material and language will be relevant.

ACMA has the power to suspend from broadcasting people responsible for such blasphemous, obscene or indecent material.

*5GTR-FM has a Language Policy

Sedition

Seditious Libel is committed when material is broadcast with a deliberate intention of achieving a seditious (meaning treasonable) object by violence, and where there is a tendency in the words used to incite public disorder.

The offence of sedition embraces “all those practices, whether by word, writing or deed, which falls short of high treason but directly tend to have for their object to excite dissatisfaction or discontent... to create public disturbance, or lead to civil war... to bring into hatred or contempt the sovereign or the government, the constitution or the laws of the realm...”

Contempt of Court

Contempt of court is punishable by a fine and/or imprisonment. Contempt of court means anything mentioned on air which could obstruct the proper administration of justice. You can comment on a crime before a person has been charged, and after the court case has

finished and the appeal time has expired, but not while the case is being, or is about to be, heard by a court.

Contempt also involves the criticism of the courts or members of the judicial system in such a way as to reduce faith in the proper administration of justice.

The three main types of contempt which concern public broadcasters are:

1. Broadcasting material which may prejudice an impending trial.
2. Scandalising the court or bringing the legal system into disrepute.
3. Refusing to reveal sources of information to a court or tribunal.

Once a person is charged or summonsed over an offence, the proceedings are “subjudice”, preventing mention or comment on the facts of the case.

Contempt of Parliament

Anything regarded as exerting pressure on members of parliament, or bringing the institution itself into disrespect, or disclosing the secret proceedings of parliamentary committees could be considered contempt of parliament.

Injurious Falsehood

This is the false suggestion that a person does not own his or her property; also when the quality of a person’s goods are attacked with malice, and falsely damaging a person’s trading results. Remedies are damages and an injunction to prevent repetition.

Malicious Falsehood

This is the false suggestion that a person has died, retired or ceased to trade. Malice, falsity and damage must be proved, and remedies are an injunction, a retraction and damages.

Copyright

Copyright legislation exists to foster and protect creativity.

The following is only a brief summary of the Copyright Laws and it is recommended that all presenters read the copyright section in The CBAA Handbook (copy at the station) for details on Copyright Law and your responsibilities.

Copyright exists in any original literary, dramatic or musical works as well as in cinematic films and sound recordings. The author, subject to contractual or special circumstances, is the first owner of copyright. There is no mechanism for registration of copyright in Australia – it is assumed. Copyright ownership means that the copyright owner

has the exclusive rights to publish (including broadcast), reproduce, adapt and perform the work.

Copyright usually lasts until 50 years after the maker's death or in the case of a film and sound recordings 50 years from the first exposure to the public, after which time it is freely available to anyone wishing to make use of it. Copyright can be signed over by the owner, or licensed by the owner, and persons other than the owner (like radio stations, recording or publishing companies etc.) may hold different parts of the copyright to the same work.

You can infringe copyright by publishing, reproducing, adapting or performing a work without the authority of the person controlling the right to do so.

Copyright does not protect ideas or information, but rather it is a concrete form of expression. There is no copyright in news, for instance, only how it is expressed in a newspaper, or on a radio or television news program.

Copyright arises from the creation of the work.

The copyright law affects broadcasters in two ways:

1. The writing and broadcasting of original works by and for the station;
2. the use of CD's/records and other material already subject to copyright.

Original works includes programs that are specifically written, or prepared for 5GTR-FM. The station owns the copyright of its transmissions. It does not own the copyright of any music played. It owns the copyright on material prepared for transmission by paid staff, but the law is unclear on who owns copyright on material prepared by volunteer staff. The station will not pay any copyright fee to volunteer staff members for material it transmits. However, if the station wishes to sell the material to another organisation, or to make copies of it for distribution, the question of copyright will be discussed with those people concerned.

The most important area as far as broadcasters are concerned is that of recorded works. Radio stations require a licence* both for the performance of the music and for playing of recordings, in order to play recorded music on air. The licence fees cover the copyright payments to the writers, performers, and to the record companies and publishers.

Broadcasters will sometimes make recordings of "live" performances by groups or individual performers, but you must get the signed permission of the performer(s) and clearance from the composer/lyricist to broadcast the material on air. Sometimes this is the only material available for a particular audience.

It is illegal to copy (i.e. pirate) onto CD, music for your own collection. Songwriters, musicians and performers, as well as record companies, rely on the income from sales to

enable them to live and to produce more of their product. If you copy, or allow to be copied, records, tapes or CD's then you are depriving them of that income. You are also breaking the law.

*The administration of Copyright in Australia is controlled by the following organisations:

- The Phonographic Performance Company of Australia (PPCA) covers the rights of the record companies. The PPCA offers an agreement which allows a station to broadcast CD's, tapes and records in Australia, to archive programs which contain copyright music for more than the 12 months otherwise allowed under the Copyright Act and to pass pre-recorded programs to other stations;
- The Australian Performing Right Association (APRA) offers an agreement which allows community radio stations to broadcast copyright music in Australia. It protects the rights of songwriters, composers, music publishers and other music copyright owners;
- The Australasian Mechanical Copyright Owners Society (AMCOS) controls the rights of composers and lyricists regarding the rights to make a copy of and archive music, rather than performing it, or playing it and to use 'production' or 'library' music as backings for recorded programs, sponsorship announcements and station promos.

INTO THE MIC

The following is a series of tips and suggestions/do's and don'ts to help you on air.

Firstly some good things to keep in mind

- ✓ Be friendly sincere and sound happy, believable and real. A boring mono-tone voice is not very good to listen to.
- ✓ Prepare your show and your talk breaks. Have an idea of what you are going to play as your next 4-5 songs if not your entire show. Making notes or even writing out each of your talk breaks can be very helpful as long as you can then sound like you are not reading off a piece of paper.
- ✓ Produce your show as tightly as possible. Concentrate on what you are doing.
- ✓ Promote the *station* and other *programs* during your show.
- ✓ Community Service Announcements are not just for set times, use them during your show so that you are not just announcing songs and giving time calls. 5GTR requires a minimum of two CSA announcements to be read every hour throughout the day. You are then helping promote a community event or group, it provides you with good relevant material to read to your listeners. On This Day is also handy.
- ✓ Pre-read all material before going to air and check folders for new live reads that may have to be done during your show.
- ✓ Listen to other announcers on other stations to find out how they present themselves and their programs.
- ✓ Your headphones are not there to keep your ears warm. When going to air make sure you can hear yourself and what's going to air.
- ✓ Remember not to rush your talk breaks, keep them well paced so that listeners are able to understand what you are talking about. Listeners can't say 'sorry I didn't catch that, could you say it again'.
- ✓ Don't make fun of sponsorship announcements, CSA's, promotions or songs. Just because you don't like something doesn't mean everyone else feels the same.
- ✓ Don't admit to making a mistake; pretend it never happened, as most times no one would even notice.
- ✓ Let people know what you have coming up in your show, especially if it's something you wouldn't normal do. If you don't promote it it's not really worth doing.
- ✓ Communicate one to one, pretend you are talking to one person instead of your thousands of listeners.

- ✓ At the end of your show give the listeners a good reason to keep listening throughout the rest of the day, through saying what they can expect next.
- ✓ FINISH ON TIME. Try to finish on time that means if your show finishes at 4pm then your last song should finish at 4pm. If the previous presenter is running late don't fade out the song as this sounds bad. Try asking them to finish early or perhaps you could make your first song their last. Compromise and work together.
- ✓ ENJOY YOURSELF

MORE TIPS AND TECHNIQUES

Record your show – Then listen to it afterwards. Listen to what sounded good, what didn't and what you can improve on. Even if you have been on air for a while it's good to do this every now and then just to keep a check on yourself. Are you presenting as good as you could, the tape doesn't lie.

Equipment – Before your shift take a minute to make sure that you know how to use all the equipment in front of you and that it is set correctly to your needs. Such as the correct channels are on or off, headphones at a comfortable level for you.

Microphone – The microphone should be 10 – 15 centimetres away from your mouth, depending on the strength of your voice. Position the Mic so that you are not talking directly into it. Either put the Mic below your mouth, with the front tilted up towards your mouth or above and tilted. The above position is recommended as it gives you better line of sight to the desk and any scripted material.

Headphones and Levels – These are two of the most important tools available to you when you are going to air. Giving you both visual and audible indications of the show you are presenting. The levels on the desk show the studios output. If the levels are too high you can send out a distorted signal, too low and your listeners won't be able to hear you properly. Your levels should be peaking at 0 dB, and should not be constantly in the red.

Your Headphones are also very important and must be worn when you are going live to air as they let you hear what is happening when the Mic is on. No one is exempt from wearing headphones Alan Jones, Ray Hadley and John Laws wear their headphones when live on air. If it is good enough for Alan Jones, Ray Hadley and John Laws then it is good enough for you too. Your level, interview levels, background music etc. What you hear is what everyone else hears. Learn to listen and watch your levels closely.

If something goes wrong – as a general rule don't apologize. Most people will not realize that it is not intentional and those that do don't need to be told. Just fix the problem as quickly and smoothly as possible. Don't say 'Due to technical difficulties....' It makes the place sound like it's falling apart. Never vent your anger or frustration on air about off air problems, these are in station problems and should remain that way.

Time calls – There is no need to use unnecessary words. Don't say 5 past 3 O'clock or 17 minutes to the hour of 4 o'clock. Simply say 5 past 3, 17 to 5 or 17 away from 5. Both 4.30 and 'half past 4' are ok as is '1/4 past and 4 – 15.