



On the air

A "how-to" guide for use of radio in communications in the Caribbean

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Using radio to get your message out

"Speaking" with the public is a big challenge for persons involved in forestry management, as it is for anyone involved in activities that require significant public buy-in. Even more of a challenge is knowing whether the "conversation" is finding fertile soil, or is slamming into a brick wall!

When you are planning to communicate with your audience, you want to ensure that your investment of time and other resources is going to achieve desired results: that your audience is listening and your audience is responding to what you are sharing. How do you know when your audience is listening and how do you measure its response?

This "how-to" guide in using the medium of radio for your communication will provide some guidance and simple tips to make your communication effective.



Introduction

In the Caribbean region, people still love radio...and quite a lot. Tapping into this popular form of media for communication will guarantee you a reach that is wider than a meeting, press release or even television.

Advertisers use radio in their selection of communication choices as they know that radio has penetration in both urban and rural settings, where there can be regular, irregular or no electricity supply and a range of demographics of age, gender and employment status.

You can use this medium to get your message out, and, by following a few steps, you can learn how to use radio in a variety of ways to effectively deliver your message and evaluate its impact.

*"Radio gets results"
- tagline of Music Radio 97,
Trinidad and Tobago*

Doing a background check



Before you begin communication using the medium of radio, you should ensure that you are clear on what the medium provides and whether it meets the needs of your communication plan. Simple steps are provided to give some guidance on doing a necessary background check.

➤ Surfing the frequencies¹

Everybody likes a different type of radio station. You probably have your own preference. The type of radio station you use for your communication should match the type of audience you are trying to reach. How can you find out which station to use? Here are some quick tips:

- **Step 1: Scan the radio station frequencies in your country.** Check the radio station's website, contact the radio station by phone or review the programme schedule that is printed in the newspaper or on the station's website. These are places where you can get information on the segment of the population that is targeted by the radio station frequency; for example, you may find that a talk radio station frequently has call-ins by males over the age of 40 years, or a music radio station may primarily target young people.
- **Step 2: Review the information on the station's schedule.** Are there talk shows on the schedule? Are there government airtime slots? Are there programmes for students/children? Does the station target the demographic you want to target? This information will provide you with a guide on the types and times of programme slots that are available for communicating with particular audiences which may suit your communication plan.

Data gathering from "Surfing the frequencies"

Name of radio station and frequency	Main target audience		Types of programmes and time of broadcast				
	Young adults	Decision makers	Pre-recorded series	Talk shows and interviews	Call-in programmes and interviews	Government programmes	Sponsored programmes

¹ A radio station *frequency* refers to the radio band assigned to a radio station and is the numeric code you 'tune in' to when you want to listen to a particular radio station.

➤ Scanning the terrain

Having come up with a checklist of what *may* work for you, it is important to spend some time getting to know the station better, especially if you are unfamiliar with the station. Does it really meet the audience you are targeting and are there opportunities to learn more about this medium to be effective in your communication? Here are the steps that help you to find out more about the mechanism for engagement.

- **Step 3: Spend some time listening to the radio.** Don't just go by what is printed in the schedule. Tune in to the radio station for at least two weeks and listen to what is actually taking place on the station during the programme time that may be of interest to you. Is the information pre-recorded? Does the programme feature interviews or panel discussions? Are there opportunities for public interaction, such as call-in segments? Who is actually calling in? Are there any segments presented as a series from different agencies (government or otherwise)? Are the programmes sponsored? Are there opportunities for community notices?
- **Step 4: Communicate with the station management.** Get in touch with the broadcast house to find out more after you have done some initial (remote) research. This is the start of relationship-building. Learn about the station's programmes first hand and what is involved in terms of "getting on air". Indicate to the management the ways in which you would like to put your messages on air, based on what you have determined are available options and to which you are able to commit. Find out about the station's coverage of events as there may be other opportunities not identified in your initial research that are useful to your work. For example, news coverage, broadcasting of an event in a community, sponsorship interests of clients of the radio station, etc.

Data gathering from "Scanning the terrain"

Name of radio station and frequency	Programme types				
Considerations: Suitability (s) and Opportunities (o)	Pre-recorded series	Talk shows and interviews	Call-in programmes and interviews	Government programmes	Sponsored programmes
Time slot that is available					
Available human resource					
Available budget					

➤ Strategising with practicality in mind

Gathering the background information outlined above gives you a better picture of the possibilities that exist and may provide you with some ideas that you may not have had before in terms of communication via the radio. You may have even gathered some suggestions on funding opportunities using this medium. It is important to review your communication plan or to develop one based on the information that you have now gained.

- **Step 5: Developing a communication plan.** The basic steps should be followed in development of your communication plan (Objective, Message, Audience, Channel, Timeframe, Evaluation method, Evaluation implementation). Already you would have selected the medium for communication - radio - however the way you use that medium will have to be selected based on various factors such as the resources available - Time, Budget, Personnel. Do you have a budget for communication via radio that allows you to engage in production of pre-taped radio programmes? Do you have personnel available to take part in live interviews during early morning 'drive time' talk radio segments?
- **Step 6: Keep credibility uppermost in your strategy.** Your credibility is a valuable asset which you do not want to compromise. The range of pathways for use of radio includes those which require real-time communication and specific deadlines: these are features of 'live' radio, and are to be considered as critical elements in your decisions as they have implications for your credibility if they are not well-managed. Are the people selected to take part in live radio interviews fully knowledgeable about the issues being discussed?

Elements of the communication plan

Objective	
Message(s)	
Audience	
Channel	
Timeframe for execution (preparation, implementation)	
Means of evaluation	
Budget	
Personnel involved	

Live or pre-recorded

Now that you have some idea of what you would like to do on radio, it is time to familiarise yourself with the type of preparations you need to make so that you can get your message out.

If you choose to undertake a live product it is critical that you select the best person for the job: someone who is completely familiar with the subject matter and is prepared to answer questions posed on the topic. This person should also be able to relate to the target audience: perhaps by fitting the same description of the target audience in age and interest, or by being the most experienced person on your team with the subject. The time slot for the interview should not prove to be a challenge for your representative.

A pre-recorded product has different concerns, but also requires selection of the best person or persons for the job as this product may require more personnel, technical input, and finance than the first type of product.

The following are descriptions and examples of live and pre-recorded products for your guidance.

Interviews



Sometimes your group may be invited to or may offer to talk about your work on radio, via pre-scheduled interviews or call-in programmes, or an interview which fits into a news broadcast.

Interviews allow face-to-face communication with the interviewer, unless the interview is occurring via telephone link-up to the studio. In-studio interviews should however be seen as your preferred option, as these provide an opportunity for the host to do sound checks to ensure that you come over very clearly in the interviews before the interview begins. Whether you are in studio or linked via telephone, some talk show programme interviews may also feature a call-in segment where the public is allowed to pose questions and offer comments, raising the level of interactivity and allowing you to get a sense of your audience's reaction to your message.

CANARI Senior Technical Officer, Neila Bobb-Prescott took part in a live radio interview² to promote a participatory three-dimensional model construction of the island of Tobago in 2012.

In this interview, information was shared about the project's purpose and the public was encouraged to participate in the project activity, mobilising community members to contribute to the development of the model.

² An audio recording of the interview is available at: <http://www.canari.org/Monday1stOctober2012.mp3>



Photo credit: CANARI

In this example the programme was live, however, radio interviews do not necessarily need to be live but can be pre-recorded. Interviewees were representatives of:

- Caribbean Natural Resources Institute
- Partners with Melanesians
- Sustainable Grenadines Inc.

Radio host: Radio Tambrin, 92.7 FM

Live interviews are useful opportunities to project your message, but your preparation for this type of activity is critical. Here are some important tips for communication when being interviewed, that were adapted from the CANARI-developed toolkit: *Communicating for conservation: a communication toolkit for Caribbean civil society organisations working in biodiversity conservation* (2012)³.

Interview checklist

<p><i>Understand the context of the journalist.</i> A journalist is often operating under time pressures and in radio, there is restricted time for broadcast (e.g. duration of the programme, news editing and the timeframe in which the report has to go on air).</p>	
<p><i>Ensure that the information you plan to share is credible and accurate.</i> It would be best to prepare for your questions, to be accessible at the scheduled time of your interview, as well as be accessible for further clarification.</p>	
<p><i>Before an interview: consider the audience and the media person and find out the story context.</i> This is particularly important if the interview is not initiated by you and it is solicited by the radio station in response to a current issue.</p>	

³ Toolkit available at: <http://www.canari.org/documents/CANARICommunicatingforConservation-toolkit2012.pdf>

<p><i>Provide, if possible, in advance of the interview, a written summary of the information, the main points or statistics.</i> This will be helpful to the interviewer and by having this information in writing, there is less chance of the wrong information being relayed. Keep a copy to use yourself!</p>	
<p><i>During the interview: find out how much the reporter knows, be clear on the message, keep your responses brief, and mention the subject by name several times.</i> The audience goes away with points that have been repeated several times in the interview. Keep in mind that the audience itself changes every 10-15 minutes from people tuning in at different times.</p>	
<p><i>Make your most important points at the start of the interview and restate them at the end.</i> The audience is impacted by its first impression, so make your points clear, dynamic and compelling at the start of the interview. Make your final comment clear and precise as this may be the last thing the listener recalls.</p>	
<p><i>Be clear on the facts.</i> Identify anything you say as fact or opinion and avoid hypothetical discussions. Be friendly, but not complacent.</p>	
<p><i>After the interview:</i> Thank the host and provide contact information so that the interviewer can contact you for clarification or provide listeners with opportunity for follow-up contact.</p>	

Pre-recorded programmes

Pre-recorded programmes allow you the freedom and flexibility of determining the content of your programme and planning the 'script' used when speaking with the public. However, they have the drawback of not providing for instant feedback, and they may require financial input unlike radio interviews.

Some stakeholders in your field may already be undertaking the production of pre-recorded radio programmes, while corporate bodies may be offering sponsorship to stakeholders with your shared interest; this is why your initial research survey is important, as it may uncover opportunities for collaboration and creative partnerships.

- **Radio Magazine**

A radio magazine has a number of different pieces (i.e. like a magazine) and follows an entertainment education format. In developing this type of product, you should aim at making a programme which is very interactive and engages the audience; dynamic with different interactive sessions; and which has a trusted host. The radio magazine should initiate dialogue among members of your audience.

A radio magazine might include:

- Music, drama, humor, animated language

- Analysis, issues, information, services (e.g. via taped interviews)
- Stories

The following is an example of a four-part radio magazine programme which was developed in St. Vincent and the Grenadines as part of a project supported by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (UN-FAO) to test new communication products.

<p>The radio magazine "Bush Talk" focussed on forest management issues. The content of this series was developed in a participatory manner at a workshop facilitated by CANARI and PCI Media Impact, in which all the stakeholders listed below were participants.</p> <p>Forest stakeholders from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • community based organisations, • non-governmental organisations, and • Government agencies in St. Vincent and the Grenadines <p>PCI Media impact was contracted to produce and facilitate stakeholder workshop in developing radio magazines. They used a local drama group in the development of the radio drama and the programme aired on NBC Radio St. Vincent and the Grenadines.</p>	 <p>Features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pre-recorded programme • hosted by a popular radio personality • included a 4-part 'soap opera' type series ("Bush Melee") developed by forest stakeholders • songs on the theme of nature • interviews with forest stakeholders • 'vox populi' - interviews to capture the attitudes of the public towards forests
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When a radio drama forms part of a radio magazine, as was done in "Bush Talk", the magazine can provide the listener with information on the 'real people' they can contact for more information on the issue. Though instant feedback is still not provided by this product, you can supply contact information including website and e-mail addresses and telephone numbers for follow-up.

Components to incorporate in the radio magazine

Components	Description
Issue(s)	Identify the specific issues from a values grid (*see box, on next page) that you can address in the radio magazine (issue prioritization)
Segments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One third Entertainment: music, hosts, contests, language, humor, stories • One third Information: guests, guides • One third Audience: vox pop, interviews • You must plan the segments – how they work together
Participation	Need to be able to encourage and engage interaction with the audience and community. This could include call-in shows, vox pops, e-mail, text

	messages, twitter, etc.	
Action	It isn't just about putting a magazine out there but to be able to inspire change and calls to action	
Listening	Listen to your audience and gather their feedback	

A *values grid* is a compiled list of statements that defines the collective values of a community towards particular issues. For instance, one issue may be "People do not observe the rules and regulations governing forest management" a positive value is expressed by the statement "People *choose to* observe the rules governing forest management" while a negative value is expressed by the statement "People *choose not to* observe the rules governing forest management". By developing a values grid, you can identify very clearly the positive values you wish to encourage and the negative values you wish to negate through your communication



- **Radio Drama**

Using the creative storytelling style of the soap opera setting, radio drama is an effective means of presenting issues to general audiences and eliciting social change. This tool is already in use in some Caribbean countries, championed by the organisation, PCI Media Impact, which is producing the current *Callaloo*⁴ series broadcasting in fifteen Caribbean countries. *Callaloo* is part of a wider media and communications programme entitled "My Island, My Community" which has dealt with a range of issues from HIV/AIDS, to climate change, to biodiversity conservation.

In the radio magazine "Bush Talk" mentioned earlier, the four-part miniseries "Bush Melee" was developed by a team of forest stakeholders, through a participatory workshop⁵ process.



Your radio drama product is developed through first drawing up a values grid which presents stereotype negative and positive attitudes to issues in society (see Annex A of the CANARI participatory workshop mentioned above). From this grid, you then create matching character profiles, as well as transitional characters - those who are neither negative or positive characters at the start of the drama; your storyline is developed to guide the movement of

⁴ More information on the *Callaloo* series can be found at <http://mediainpact.org/production/callaloo/>

⁵ The workshop report is available at: <http://www.canari.org/documents/201110-CANARI-FAO-Workshop-WORKSHOP-REPORT.pdf>

transitional characters to attain positive attitudes by the time you have arrived at the end of the drama.

The entertainment value of the drama also provides a platform for engagement. It elicits an emotional response from the listener which can lead to positive behaviour change.

Considerations for developing radio dramas

<p><i>The advantage of engaging multiple stakeholders in the development of the product</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A networking opportunity is provided which enriches the content of the product • The range of characters developed for the drama will reflect various attitudes in society 	
<p><i>The cost of the production</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you have no experience in this process, a team with experience will need to be contracted to facilitate the development of the product • If a government communication agency or a non-governmental organisation (NGO) with audio recording and editing capability is involved in the production, collaborations or permitted use of these facilities may reduce cost • Local theatre groups may need to be hired to produce a high standard of the dramatic content, unless they are also involved in the team producing the product • Airtime cost would need to be covered through partnership arrangements with existing programme producers, the radio station or sponsorship needs to be sought 	
<p><i>The lifespan of the production</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You need to consider the type of content you would like to put into the production so as to keep the issues current and utilizable over a long period of time 	

• **Government programmes and sponsored programmes**

If you are a forest stakeholder from a government agency or department, you should try to capitalise on government programme spots on state owned and privately owned radio stations. These spots are of varying length and at various hours during the station's schedule and may offer opportunities to reach different demographics. For instance, in Trinidad and Tobago, government spots on one radio station (Inspirational Radio, 730AM) are found at specific times including a fifteen-minute schools broadcast programme produced by the Ministry of Education in the early afternoon and five- and fifteen-minute programmes which outline services of Government in the 'rush hour' period.

Sometimes NGOs may partner with government, capitalising on already existing relationships, such as when the non-state partner is part of a committee working with government on a specific topic. In some islands, there are NGOs, such as farmers groups that have radio programmes and can perhaps be considered as groups to partner with you to share your messages on a common theme.

To take advantage of existing programmes, you will need to clarify the input you would like to have. Follow these steps to do so:

- *Draft a summary/concept for the proposed programme component.* This should be a simple, clearly written document describing the purpose, a brief background, identifying the beneficiaries, partners and the anticipated results.
- *Ensure that your credibility will not be compromised through this partnership.* Your agency/organisation has its own mandate and perspective and so joining with a partner should not cause a departure from these nor compromise your agency's value system. This is particularly important for non-governmental organisations who should partner only with those organisations with which there are shared views.
- *Be prepared to work with your partner.* To create a seamless programme, the input of all partners should be merged early in the production process. Working with the team of production professionals at the radio station that will broadcast the programme from the start of the programme's development will ensure that the content flows and that quality is consistent with the rest of the programme.
- *Review the pre-recorded programme.* You will have a mandate to ensure clarity, comprehensiveness and correctness of your product and the message it delivers, no matter how little or large it is in comparison to the overall product. If contributing to a series, ensure that all episodes of the series are taped and reviewed in advance of going on air, to guarantee a consistent quality and a common thread among episodes that make up the series.

Evaluating the product's effectiveness

Whichever format of radio communication you use, you should agree on a plan for the product's evaluation. It is important to build opportunities for feedback from your listeners into the programme and to determine whether your message achieved its desired outcome. An internal evaluation of the programme among partners is also important to generate a checklist of recommendations for improvement and for noting which components worked well for future programmes.

Evaluation tips

<p><i>Try to obtain an audio recording of the radio production or interview.</i> Having a copy of the product allows you the opportunity to review the content and delivery and also use the product at a future date (it can be used as an example of a good production, for archiving etc.)</p>	
<p><i>Write down the types of questions asked by your audience.</i> Listing the questions posed by the audience gives you feedback on the type of information that is of interest to the public, and what the public wants to know more about or get clarification on. This can also provide you with information on areas of public education that need to be addressed.</p>	
<p><i>Make a note of who is looking for information.</i> Whether you took part in a live call-in programme or you received a phone call or e-mail message, requests for information or</p>	

<p>follow-up contact after your programme can come from various members of your audience. Note whether these persons fall into the category of persons targeted by your programme and gather feedback from them on the clarity and impact of your message.</p>	
<p><i>Measure success in various ways.</i> Note contact made with / feedback received from the target audience; numbers reached; interest shown in the production; partnerships made through the process of making the production; requests made for follow-up interviews from the station/listeners, etc., to measure the impact of your product.</p>	

Signing off

In closing, remember that radio gives you a wide reach and your communication via this medium gets you into the homes, workplaces and leisure spots of a large audience. The content of your message and the dynamism with which it is presented will help you to capture and keep the attention of your target audience. Explore the opportunities of radio with enthusiasm as you go on the airwaves to share your messages, keeping an open ear to receive feedback from your listening audience.