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## Measuring Community Radio Audiences

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### Abstract:

For a number of reasons, professional audience measurement as carried out by Public Service and commercial radio broadcasters is inappropriate for Community Radio services. Not only is there the issue of the high costs involved, but more fundamentally, there is also the problem that such approaches are rather 'granular' (with a tendency towards inaccuracy when measuring smaller specialist services). Moreover, professional audience surveys tend to focus only on the quantitative measurement of audience size, rather than on the qualitative elements of audience satisfaction.

This paper will use the example of the approach taken by UK Community Radio station, 'Future Radio' to obtain both quantitative data primarily through street surveys and qualitative data through on-line questionnaires, exploring why the station felt such research to be both necessary and beneficial. Showing how reasonably accurate data can be obtained on a cost-effective basis, issues of accuracy and practical difficulties will also be explored.

Finally, the paper will examine some of the opportunities and challenges raised by the changing nature of radio listening and interaction brought about by new methods of consumption such as Internet streaming and mobile 'smart-phone' applications.

**Keywords:** radio; audiences; community radio

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### Introduction

In part, this paper draws upon a forthcoming book chapter which was written in conjunction with Future Radio's Station Manager, Tom Buckham and independent researcher, Dr Emma Ward. I gratefully acknowledge their underlying contributions to this paper. Future Radio is the Community Radio station serving the City of Norwich in the East of England which began operation in 2004, and which has been broadcasting continuously since August 2007 (Future Radio Website, 2011).

Although some voices within the Community Radio sector question the need for audience research, often viewing an interest in such information as being inextricably linked to a focus on commercial advertising and sponsorship, this article argues that the needs for such information are in fact a great deal more diverse, going far beyond such narrow direct economic concerns. Indeed, this article argues that appropriate audience research allows Community Radio services to obtain an improved understanding of their listenership which can be used to improve and better target the provision of relevant services.

### Approaches To Audience Research

Commercial radio stations use quantitative audience research in order to provide evidence for advertisers and sponsors about the size of their audience, whilst Public Service Broadcasters (PSBs) use such figures in order to

demonstrate that their audience is of sufficient size to justify the use of license fee income or public funding. For Community Radio services, the reasons for making use of audience research are both more complex and perhaps less obvious. By their very nature, Community Radio services produce outputs which have other objectives than maximising absolute audience numbers and neither is their primary purpose the maximisation of profit through the sale of on air spot-advertising and commercial sponsorship opportunities. However, many Community Radio services do nevertheless obtain part of their income from such commercial activities and an even greater number obtain funding from a diverse range of public, third-sector and charitable sources. The primary reason why commercial organisations purchase air time or sponsorship opportunities on Community Radio services is not because such spending maximises the absolute number of listeners that will hear their commercial message. As Henry Loeser points out:

Advertisers spend money on community radio because they believe it's an investment in their community, an investment that will improve the quality of life for their customers and employees, thereby improving the opportunities for business success in the long term. ... They spend money on community radio to improve the community first, and improve sales second. (Loeser, 2011: 2)

However, such spending, justified by the reasons quoted immediately above, still includes a commercial element (as stated above, improving sales remains part of the equation). In other words a critical element of the decision to buy air time is still the fact that the commercial message will reach an audience of some sort. The same basic principle applies to various public, third sector and charitable investments in Community Radio. These would include, for example, service level agreements (SLAs) to promote particular local council services and on air promotions designed to raise the awareness of local charitable activities. Even though the size of the total audience is not of primary importance in such cases, some information about the nature of the audience remains important, because those responsible for spending budgets, be they for advertising, social responsibility or SLAs, have to justify their spending decisions. The underlying ethos of those with the power to make buying decisions is still, at least in part, therefore concerned with numbers. Very little such spending on Community Radio would still be made if no one listened and it therefore follows that being able to demonstrate a knowledge of listenership is still important for Community Radio operators.

With the above in mind, traditional numerical audience surveys, such as that carried out every quarter by the Radio Joint Advertising Research Limited (RAJAR) are unlikely to be the most appropriate option, dealing as they typically do with counting the absolute size of a station's audience on a weekly and monthly basis. Community Radio services instead seek a broader and deeper understanding of their listenership, not only of its scale, but also of its scope, including detailed demographics of minority groups and of their listening likes and dislikes at a much more detailed level than commercial services are generally concerned with. There are various specific practical reasons why traditional audience research is unlikely to be particularly useful to community services, which are discussed in more detail below. However, the fundamental point, as Henry Loeser also correctly points out, is that:

Community radios aren't designed for mass appeal, and likely won't make much of a showing in a survey that doesn't drill down to reveal hyper-local and / or qualitative data. (*ibid.*)

In the same article, Henry Loeser also warns that "Audience surveys can often be a negative influence on radio broadcasters, confusing the market process and ultimately subverting the buyers' priorities." (*ibid.*). Whilst this will almost always be the case in relation to mainstream approaches to commercial forms of revenue generation, there are, of course, a variety of other forms which audience research can take beyond the standard format used by the commercial and PSB sectors. In addition, because of its different structure and objectives, for the Community Radio sector, there are numerous other reasons for obtaining various forms of audience data (including numerical audience data) and a variety of other ways in which such information can be used for non-commercial purposes.

### Mainstream (Quantitative) Audience Measurement

If audience research is deemed necessary, the first obvious question is why not make use of established industry audience measurement services? In the United Kingdom today, the country's PSB radio provider, the BBC, already collaborates with the majority of commercial radio stations to obtain a single set of quantitative audience data, designed to provide information about who is listening, to which output, when, how often and for how long. Quarterly audience measurement surveys are carried out on behalf of the major industry players by RAJAR. If such an approach to audience research works for PSB radio, might it also work for Community Radio services? Might RAJAR, or its equivalent, at least be a place to start, to get basic numerical information upon which to build by the addition of further more focused research?

Whilst it might indeed be possible for a Community Radio service to take part in a RAJAR or equivalent survey, there are a number of practical reasons why this is unlikely to be a sensible approach. Beyond the issues highlighted above, there is the fundamental issue of scale. In most jurisdictions, and for perfectly sensible reasons concerning the nature of communities of place in particular, the vast majority of Community Radio services tend to broadcast to geographically small areas. Traditional audience measurement systems, such as RAJAR, are designed for mainstream stations with large coverage areas and are typically diary-based. As a result they have a tendency towards reduced accuracy when it comes to measuring the listenership of stations providing smaller-scale geographical coverage. As RAJAR itself states:

The sampling structure of RAJAR is designed to provide data for stations regardless of ownership, genre or regionality. However, it is unlikely to be able to provide sufficient sample for stations with TSAs (total survey areas) below 30,000. (RAJAR web-site: FAQs).

In practice, the smallest station being surveyed has a potential audience of 50,000 adults (RAJAR web-site: Key Facts) and for all smaller stations the number of diaries used is rather low, at a minimum of just 125 per quarter. Because of such sample size limitations, for smaller stations taking part in RAJAR, the company draws upon four consecutive sets of quarterly survey data to produce its results:

The smallest sample for a station on RAJAR is 500 adults over 12 months, for stations with a TSA (Total Survey Area) under 300,000. (*ibid.*)

Other Community Radio services which focus on communities of interest may serve larger geographical areas and therefore broadcast to potential audiences of well above the RAJAR minimum size. However, because they are only interested in broadcasting to minority audiences within the wider population there, delivering niche rather than genre-based output, for example, to minority ethnic groups, there are still likely to be statistical difficulties with the placement of survey diaries.

Because a combined listening diary for all participating stations in the survey is used, this annual sample size for smaller stations is limited, particularly when compared to "a quarterly sample of approximately 26,000 adults" (*ibid.*) from which national station listening figures are derived. For Community Radio services, and indeed for small commercial radio stations, issues of limited sample size and the inevitable time-lag caused by taking measurements over four consecutive quarters are compounded by the costs involved and the lack of an obvious return on such operational investment.

With its different funding model and focus on carefully targeted 'narrow-cast' outputs, which are rarely of any interest to mainstream media buyers, Community Radio has only a limited interest in overall numerical data and so, typically finds the recurrent cost of involvement in such surveys difficult to justify. From a Community Radio perspective, a further particular flaw with commercial audience measurement surveys is the fact that they are not designed to capture listening to specific programmes. Whilst such output is typically central to effective community broadcasting, RAJAR describes its measurement as follows: "For most parties this was a nice-to-have ...

secondary consideration." (RAJAR, 2005: 3). Because such research "does not produce listening figures for a particular programme on a particular day" (Lister et al 2010: 67) it cannot provide detailed qualitative data concerning how satisfied individuals are with the specific content of particular programming. More broadly, its generic audience sample is not best suited to surveying niche listening, such as, for example, to minority language outputs.

### **Justifying Alternative Audience Research For Community Radio**

Quantitative (numerical) data, akin to that traditionally gathered by commercial broadcasters, is only part of the picture, and qualitative data, concerning how community members may benefit from broadcast output is likely to be at least as important, if not more so. As it has often been said, 'information is power' and without the best possible understanding of how Community Radio interacts with its target communities, the sector and individual stations within it may well be 'flying blind' and, as a result, not delivering services to best effect. That said, gathering data is only part of the issue; how such data is interpreted and used both internally and externally to the organisation is equally important. Clearly, at best, it is usually unwise for Community Radio to attempt to compete directly with its commercial rivals, but that does not mean that the sector cannot subvert and modify some of the audience measurement techniques developed for the commercial sector to its own advantage and for other purposes that those for which they were originally intended.

There is also an important macro-level reason for at least some degree of audience research. Since Community Radio works within the wider radio sector, just like its larger non-commercial PSB competitors, it has to justify its access to scarce broadcast frequency resources. As with PSB radio broadcasters (at least to an extent), and unlike commercial stations, Community Radio services should be focused on quality rather than quantity; on relevant targeted outputs rather than maximum audience numbers. That said, there has to be some justification for occupying a broadcasting frequency! Politicians and broadcast regulators, such as Ofcom (The Office of Communications) in the UK are consistently faced with further demand for additional commercial radio stations and consequently have to justify why some frequency resources are being used for Community Radio services instead. Although in many parts of the world politicians are increasingly recognising the importance of a diverse radio broadcasting sector, embracing community-based and PSB services alongside commercial stations, such demands from the commercial sector, which often sees itself as a monopoly in waiting, should not be ignored.

For individual stations, the justifications for carrying out audience research can be many and various. This remains the case even if the particular Community Radio service in question does not carry and has no intention of carrying any on air spot advertising or commercial sponsorship. The specific nature of the research methodologies used will, of course, depend on the reasons why the data is being sought, who it is intended for and how it is to be used. For example, in the UK, the broadcast regulator asks applicant Community Radio groups to explain how the proposed service will "cater for the tastes and interests of members of the target community" and provide "evidence of demand and support for the proposed service" (Ofcom, 2011: 7,8). Clearly, answering such questions requires a deep understanding of the particular target community involved and an understanding of how that community will interact with its proposed Community Radio service. Requests for such information are linked to the regulatory requirement to justify access to scarce broadcasting frequency resources and often to a competitive licence award process within which multiple groups may be competing for a smaller number of available frequencies. Under such circumstances the importance of understanding a potential target community in as great a detail as possible is obvious and will almost certainly include an explanation of how particular proposed programme formats have been arrived at, as well as some estimation of potential listening figures.

### **The Future Radio (Norwich) Example**

Once a station has been granted a licence and has started broadcasting, various other justifications for audience research can arise. Taking Norwich Community Radio station, Future Radio, as an example, the Station Manager there, Tom Buckham, who has worked at the station since its first short-term trial broadcast in 2003, has various justifications for the station's approach to audience measurement and analysis which has developed gradually over the intervening years.

Future Radio began life as part of a community development organisation originally known as the NR5 Project, named after the local postcode area in West Norwich where it was based. Originally licensed to serve the West Norwich area, the station has more recently been awarded a new licence to serve the whole of Norwich. The prime objective of Future Radio is to provide a relevant Community Radio service for Norwich, and in particular for the West Norwich area from where the station still operates today. In this district of high socio-economic deprivation, where a lack of community engagement and poor communications are cited as key problems, Future Radio fulfils an important role in disseminating local information, providing specific work experience and volunteering opportunities, and, more generally, helping improve the profile of the West Norwich area, countering negative perceptions of it which are often prevalent elsewhere in the city.

During its first few months of full-time operation in late 2007, the subject of listenership became an increasingly important issue at Future Radio. Initially, interaction and feedback developed, via texts, messages through the station's web-site, face-to-face meetings, phone calls and e-mail correspondence. However, although useful in providing some evidence of public engagement with the station's output, because such individual feedback was only indicative and could not be correlated to broader listening habits, it provided no measurable indication of the scale of engagement from within the community as a whole. In effect, whilst such feedback can be considered as providing limited, specific, qualitative data, it cannot be statistically linked to the number of individuals listening to the service provided.

As the station settled into full-time broadcasting, important questions such as "are we reaching our target communities?" and "are there other demographics in Norwich listening to us?" were raised with increasing frequency. In light of the management decision to open up editorial and volunteering opportunities to the whole of Norwich, it was important to gauge the degree to which the station was engaging with its original core NR5 audience, and to understand the degree to which the programming policy was succeeding in engaging other parts of the wider Norwich community. In essence, the core question was one of balance; was the station managing to remain true to its original roots and build links with the rest of the city for the benefit of that core area?

Other requests for audience research data came from within Future Radio's volunteer base. After the initial euphoria of the 2007 full-time launch and as Future Radio moved into its second year of full-time broadcasting, direct questions about levels of listenership began to be raised. With some programmes enjoying greater levels of audience response than others, some volunteers began to assume a direct correlation between such interactions and overall listening levels. Explaining that there is, of course, no direct or accurately measurable link was not enough. In the context of community media, where stations rely on the unpaid commitment of their volunteers, maintaining good morale is vital for the smooth ongoing operation the service. Thus, the provision of audience data to help maintain volunteer enthusiasm, and provide encouragement is therefore another important factor to consider when assessing the approach to take in relation to audience research.

A final justification for the gathering of listening information, but by no means the most important, was a commercial one. Despite having a potential audience large enough to be of interest to local commercial advertisers, early efforts to engage with the local business community and attract commercial revenues proved problematic. The station was successful at engaging with those businesses that clearly recognised the benefits of supporting, and being seen to support, a local 'community cause', (in effect buying into the ethos of community

radio for other than purely economic reasons). Selling air time by building a "relationship with the seller, one that allows for special consideration of social values beyond the numbers" (*ibid.*) as Henry Loeser puts it is central to Future Radio's approach here. However, there was still a financial need to expand income from other, less philanthropic, commercial sources, those that wanted to make sure the relationship with the station was a two-way street with some tangible benefits flowing both ways. Station management soon realised that the key problem was an inability to provide reasonably accurate answers to the inevitable questions about levels of actual listenership, and that it needed to develop practices which would provide reassurance as to the number of people that advertising messages carried by the station would be likely to reach.

The drivers summarised above provided a significant impetus for Future Radio to investigate what sort of audience measurement it could successfully carry out. For the reasons previously discussed, the possibility of taking part in the established RAJAR commercial / PSB quarterly quantitative survey was ruled out and instead the station engaged a local research company, which agreed to work closely with the station to develop an alternative approach. The resultant partnership proved a useful learning curve for both parties and, since 2008, various on-line surveys collecting demographic and qualitative data as well as quantitative, face-to-face, street surveys have been undertaken. The various techniques used have been tested and gradually improved, allowing the station to develop an increasingly clear understanding of the scale and diversity of the audience within its target community.

### **On-line (Qualitative) Surveys**

In many ways the availability of the Internet has changed the way in which many voluntary and third-sector organisations interact with their target groups and Community Radio is no exception. Indeed, by their very nature, Community Radio services are, through their broadcast output, able to encourage listeners to make contact with them via the Internet more easily than is typically the case for other voluntary sector organisations. From its early days as a short-term Restricted Service Licence (RSL) operator, Future Radio has run a number of qualitative on-line surveys asking for listener opinions about the outputs which the station broadcasts. Specific questions are asked about individual programmes, about speech content, the music format and scheduling. Open ended questions are also posed, asking for ideas about how the station should develop in future and inviting broader comments about the service provided. Although it should always be remembered that those individuals contributing to such surveys are a self-selecting group which may not be representative of the wider station listenership, information gathered through such surveys, coupled with other listener feedback and increasingly with the analysis of on-line listening to specific elements of the station's output as well as the consumption of listen-again and pod-cast materials, can provide useful insights into the relative popularity of individual programmes and the station's overall output. On-line surveys are relatively easy to construct and, if kept reasonably short, can result in quite high levels of completion. Most Future Radio on-line surveys are, according to the station completed by around 300 individuals.

### **Street-Based (Quantitative) Surveys**

The Future Radio Listener Numbers Survey (Ward 2010), was intended to provide a statistically justifiable indication of station awareness within its target community. It also sought to compare listenership to other stations, and to provide an estimate of total listening figures. At the time of the survey, Future Radio was licensed to broadcast to the West Norwich area; which, working from population data, the station defined as providing it with coverage of a Total Survey Area (TSA) containing 97,000 people of all ages.

A street survey, described by Gordon (2006) as an affordable and manageable method for Community Radio stations to adopt, was used to gather the required raw data. A team of researchers was recruited by Future Radio from its volunteer base to survey members of the public in Norwich city centre over a two-day period. Prior

to the research being carried out, volunteers completed a short practical training session with the research consultant, which included role play and tips as to how best to approach members of the public.

In order to reduce inconvenience for participants and increase the number of interviews completed in the time available, it was essential that the survey was kept brief. Questioning was constructed to ensure that respondents provided unprompted information about their knowledge of which stations could be received in the West Norwich area. Participants were then asked which of the stations identified they had ever listened to and which they had listened to within the previous month and within the preceding seven days. It was, of course, essential to ensure that participants were not initially prompted about the existence of Future Radio (or of other stations), in order to obtain genuine data concerning public awareness of the station's existence and of listening to it in comparison to other available stations. Such an approach helped ensure the accuracy of the raw data gathered and allowed for a robust subsequent assessment of Future Radio's impact on local radio broadcasting in Norwich. Participants who failed to identify Future Radio when asked unprompted were then asked directly if they had heard of and listened to the station, and whether they would listen in the future if they did not do so already. Basic demographic information (gender, age and postcode area) was also collected.

The sampling approach was 'opportunistic', in that people were approached by researchers because they were available in the city centre location at the time of the survey. The sample was not restricted to those living in the station's TSA. Instead, a 'best-fit' model was used after the data had been collected to code respondents as living in the TSA or outside of the TSA using postcode mapping as a guide. Participants listening outside the TSA were still of interest because, as well as being available locally on FM, Future Radio can also be received on-line. In total, 283 people (an even spread of men and women) were surveyed, of which 189 (70 per cent) were based within the TSA.

Key results from the street survey provided an estimated weekly audience for Future Radio of some 15,000 people (approximately 16% of the estimated available audience). However, of much greater importance to the station was the information the survey provided about audience demographics and overall awareness levels, which were perhaps not surprisingly lower for it than for other more established stations broadcasting to the Norwich area. The station is now more aware than it previously was about the nature of its actual audience and the work it needs to do to raise awareness of its existence within specific demographic groups. Although it is outside the scope of this paper to assess the results of this survey in detail, it should be noted that various techniques, concerning unprompted awareness, sample size and sample make-up were used to ensure a reasonable degree of statistical accuracy in the results.

### **Practical Uses of Research**

Future Radio has been able to put the audience data gathered from its various research work to effective use; with the extrapolated figures being disseminated to volunteer programme makers eager to know the reach of the station and referenced in relation to advertising queries. The provision of audience data to advertisers allowed Future Radio to develop substantive commercial discussions with elements of the local business community that had previously been reluctant to engage with it in the absence of such data. Significantly, as these relationships developed, some businesses began to see the effectiveness of community radio for themselves through effective on-air promotional campaigns.

Having a weekly audience figure to use for advertising had an immediate and obvious commercial benefit, although commercially generated advertising and sponsorship revenues remain a minor part of the station's overall income. Occasional dismissive comments were still received about the figures, because they were not produced by RAJAR, but the majority of businesses were responsive to the information, especially when it was combined with other audience data collected by the station (on-line listening data, website statistics, messaging

and email interaction figures as well as social networking data), all of which can offer useful, albeit ancillary, audience data for community stations.

Future Radio's editorial policy has always been to deliver a mixed schedule, with a music focus that deliberately prioritises genres which are under-represented on other local radio stations in the area and which eschews predominant current chart releases. Whilst this approach was deliberately designed to engage with niche audiences, as opposed to directly competing with other commercial operators, audience programme interaction aside, without statistical audience data there was little to prove that the station was being successful reaching these distinct, and often younger groups within the wider community. Now however, as the various research has consistently shown, Future Radio does appear to have established a reasonable listener base albeit with a bias towards a younger adult demographic.

One of the most important findings to be drawn from the research, and something which would be of use to any community station, was the level of unprompted awareness evidenced by the findings. Whilst 'awareness data' isn't necessarily something comparable to audience figures in terms of its usefulness to potential commercial partners (who are more interested in actual listeners), for station management, it is a strong indication of the effectiveness of any marketing activity, and also indicates how much work there is to do to increase awareness of the station within its target community.

One of the limitations of the research carried out by Future Radio to date, is its inability to deliver specific audience data on a 'single show' basis. Whilst data about general levels of audience size and reach satisfy the majority of potential commercial partners, the station still receives various requests for more specific data linked to distinct times and to specialist programmes within the schedule. Here, the use of on-line listening statistics, for those stations that can collate them, offers a more targeted approach to specific audience measurement. There remains a need for further development to ensure that such data can be accurately collated and appropriately linked to other forms of audience research, but it would certainly have a value to programme makers and station management alike.

In Tom Buckham's view, measuring audience engagement within a station's target community should be a high priority for station management as it can offer valuable findings to help the development of output and ensure that this remains relevant to its target community. Since producing the research findings outlined here, Future Radio has made use of the acquired data in a number of other ways, for example, by incorporating aspects of the research into funding applications as a means of strengthening the credentials of the service and providing evidence that broadcast projects (in particular) will be delivered to an audience of some scale.

The economic downturn which hit the world economy in 2008 / 2009 has undoubtedly damaged various income streams available to the fledgling UK Community Radio sector. Reductions in operational budgets may make some community-based stations feel that audience research is an expensive luxury that cannot be justified. However, if the experience of the station upon which this case-study is based is anything to go by, any such negative approach is likely to constitute a false economy. Future Radio has proved that quantitative and qualitative audience measurement with reasonably robust statistical parameters can be achieved on a limited budget, by using a combination of professional and volunteer inputs.

Providing that appropriate techniques are employed and that volunteers are properly trained such research can be organised relatively quickly and then repeated with increasing ease as systems and techniques are developed and improved. As previously mentioned, the approach used by Future Radio is by no means perfect and there are certainly further improvements that can be made to data collection techniques, to ensure larger samples and less risk of bias within results. Nevertheless the statistical limits of the data gathered have been reasonably well defined such that an acceptable margin of error can be claimed.

Community radio stations that are unable to successfully network with local research companies might alternatively consider forming partnerships with nearby higher education establishments such as universities and



see if their research needs can be linked to student projects or coursework. For example, since the completion of this research, Future Radio has been able to work with the University of East Anglia and conduct additional research within the local business community to gauge levels of commercial interest towards the station.

It must, of course, be noted when looking at the significance of audience data for community radio, that a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data is generally considered the ideal. In practice, the approach taken by Future Radio has been to carry out Internet-based qualitative research every two years, with a street-based face-to-face quantitative survey carried out during each intervening year. A particular advantage of developing a regular system of broad audience research is that each stand-alone set of results can be used both individually as a 'snapshot' of current listening habits and combined with earlier data to form part of longitudinal trend-data providing information about how the station is changing and developing over time.

Community radio should primarily be judged by the level of engagement a service has with its audience and other factors such as the training and volunteer opportunities it provides to the local area it serves, along with the levels of social gain it can provide through programming. Although there is not scope within this paper to explain qualitative methods in detail, it is important to highlight that this type of research can provide useful insights into such issues (Mytton 1999). For example, an open ended on-line survey of listeners explored why people tuned in to Future Radio and what they liked and did not like about the station (Ward 2010). Additionally, interviews with volunteers as part of an impact evaluation explored the reasons why they volunteered at the station and the ways in which they considered such involvement was of benefit to them (McDaid 2009). It is important to stress that, albeit in different ways, this information was just as valuable to the station as quantitative numerical estimates of listenership. Crucially, such qualitative research is valuable because it is able to highlight areas of potential improvement and demonstrate to funders that the station is able to deliver concrete, positive, impacts for members of its target community.

A fundamental aspect of community stations such as Future Radio is the way in which, unlike the generally passive audience relationships created by commercial radio, they pro-actively engage with their target community on an interactive basis. Whereas a more formatted commercial music broadcaster may draw upon a larger passive audience, a community station, by its very nature, will engage with an audience which interacts and questions – indeed, in the case of Future Radio, and in numerous other community-based stations, there are many instances where listeners have become engaged to the point that they become volunteer programme makers themselves, highlighting the two-way nature of Community Radio in comparison to more 'closed' one-way approach of commercial broadcasting. If appropriate audience research, both qualitative and quantitative, can be used to enhance such relationships, so much the better for all concerned.

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