



MANAGING YOUR STATION

Managing community radio

Staff and volunteers

Roles and responsibilities

Managerial qualities

Human resources management

Motivation and stress

Marketing

Making friends



MANAGING YOUR STATION

Congratulations. Ofcom have recognised the brilliance of your license application. You've got your key partners in place and you are ready to replicate the thrill of your RSL broadcasts for up to 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

You may be in for a surprise. Running an RSL tends to be a very intense experience. You run around like a headless chicken before your broadcast, run even faster while you are on air, and then you probably have a long period to recover and review your experiences. Permanent broadcasting is an entirely different matter – like switching from running a sprint to a marathon.

VOXBOX 5.01

“You can spot the few dozen folk who have been involved in running the pilot Access Radio stations. They generally have a happy grin, and still retain traces of a charismatic demeanour. But spend a bit more time in their company and you spot the red rims to their eyes, the occasional tic that betrays too little sleep and too much caffeine. But it's the thousand yard stare that's the real give away – these people have been places and seen things that no human being should ever have to see. And still they smile.”

Anon

You must maintain a steady pace, and to do that you must be aware of what your limitations are. There may be a strong temptation to attempt to do more than your resources will allow. In this chapter we will explain how to get the most from your volunteers and staff without anyone exhausting themselves or burning out. We will show how you can get the most value from your limited resources. We will look at how the relationships within your station – between volunteers, staff and directors – can be made to work for you rather than becoming problematic. And we will discuss how you can market and publicise your station with your listeners and your community.

Many of these topics are covered in great length in specialist textbooks. If you are new to voluntary sector management, your reading should stretch

well beyond this Toolkit. But for now, this chapter should offer you a useful overview of the range of expertise a station manager is likely to need.

Key principles

Be part of your community

A community radio station should be managed by the community, from the community and for the community. In practice this usually means a broad-based community partnership will form the board of directors and/or steering group. But you can't run a community radio station purely by committee. So turning the values and vision of the committee into efficient and effective day-to-day management is the key role of the station's manager or management team. It is essential that the manager knows as much as possible about the community culturally, demographically and with regard to local issues. This is an important point to consider when appointing (or applying for) community radio management positions (see p152).

There are also situations where community radio is brought to a community by an outside agency. All the 'community' criteria apply but they might evolve differently. If you are from an outside agency in that role, growing the community links might not be your most pressing operational priority but that does not lessen its importance. The task ahead of you in sowing the seeds for grassroots support, and ultimately management, is all the more important for the fact that you are not of that community.

You are not running a radio station

You are actually running a community centre, a training college, a refuge, a day-care unit, a debating hall and a social club – albeit one which just happens to make radio. You should be pleased to be serving all of those functions – they add up to the reason you exist. Your management team needs to have or gain all the expertise required to fulfil your role as a community radio station.

Broadcasting is only one part of the equation, and the quality or popularity of that broadcasting may be much less important than the quality and extent of your service to the community. Having said that, with your station serving so many functions, always keep in mind your core functions – what it is you are there to do. If activities are not funded, or not in keeping with your basic objectives, you should ask yourself why you are doing them (see p132).

Get your training right

Of all the tasks undertaken by a community radio manager, establishing and maintaining successful training schemes, whether formal or informal, will probably be the most important. The formal training you offer is likely to form a significant source of income for your station, and a good partner college may offer wider benefits of advice, support and resources. The training you offer should fit the needs of your volunteers and offer progression and personal development to whatever level their abilities and ambition allow (see Chapter 13).

Be firm and fair with your volunteers

The biggest difference between volunteer management and other types is that volunteers are there because they want to be involved, not because you are paying them. They didn't volunteer to be abused, exploited or shouted at. On the other hand, they must be aware of their duties and responsibilities. Be utterly transparent about the relationship between the station and its volunteers. They must know what they can expect from you, and the station must be clear what standard of commitment and behaviour is expected. Both parties must know what will happen if such agreements are breached (see p68-69).

Let community radio be your passion, not your obsession

If community radio is not your passion, you probably shouldn't be involved at all. Typically community radio staff and key workers are driven by their love of the medium and inspired by the potential to change lives and whole communities. But in the desire to achieve so much, it is all too easy to do too much. Staff and key volunteers will soon find themselves invited to meetings and events every night of the week. It is impossible to do it all. Community radio

stations around the country – including ours – have discovered to their enormous cost that exhaustion and burn-out are real risks, and can lose you the very people who have the most to offer (see p66-68).

Know when to talk, when to listen, and when to act

Community radio is by its nature democratic. In practice this doesn't mean people electing the steering group at the AGM then forgetting about it for a year, it generally means people standing up simultaneously and shouting at each other (or you) about the 'wheres, whats and whys' of station strategy and policy. Those voices need to be heard and considered and then, if necessary, acted upon. That does not mean that every opinion is equally informed or that every idea is equally realistic, and many will be incompatible with each other. The management need to know when to mediate, when to think, and when to stop listening and start acting. Your management structures need to allow someone the authority to take the final decisions and to be clear about what happens to community ideas when they are presented to the station. It's not enough to say 'thanks for your input' and file the letter (see p98).

Bureaucracy matters

It is dull, but filling in forms to apply for funding and monitor your activities, taking minutes at meetings and distributing them, logging volunteer activities and community contacts, filling in inland revenue returns, and performing all the other bureaucratic and administrative tasks involved in running a community radio station is absolutely vital. The temptation to not bother is always strong, and always devastatingly destructive (see Chapter 6).

CRIB SHEET

Community radio managers need:

- To be part of their community
- A wide range of management and community skills
- A firm hand and a calm head
- Good communication and diplomacy skills
- To be willing to do the dull stuff



Mixing staff and volunteers

While there are large variations within the sector, most community radio stations are run by a combination of paid staff and volunteers. Typically a group may begin as a purely voluntary project, but by the time it is receiving significant funding for training or community projects, it will feel the need to employ an administrator or project manager.

There is no official reason why a community radio station couldn't be run entirely by unpaid volunteers, but our experience suggests it is impractical.

Applicants for full-time community radio licences typically propose a staff of around three or four full time positions. That's three or four people who between them may need to be project manager, administrator, trainer, accountant, secretary, community worker, youth worker, technician, publicist, producer, diplomat, fund-raiser, social worker, counsellor, painter, decorator, carpenter, tea-maker, cleaner and, oh yes, broadcaster.

Management and administrative roles are not always especially appealing to volunteers. They are often selfless, thankless tasks. The staff are there to enable the volunteers to train, to broadcast and to serve their community, and get little of the glory themselves. With perhaps somewhere between 50 and 100 volunteers, that is a lot of human resources if used properly, and an awful lot of headaches if not. The managers of a community radio station may sometimes feel like the chauffeurs of a finely tuned limousine, but more often they will feel like they are herding hyperactive cats – an endlessly demanding and sometimes wildly frustrating experience. This is a lot to ask of an unpaid volunteer – especially if they have other career or family commitments. For a sustainable long-term future, professional management should be considered essential – although this is not to say that volunteers shouldn't be encouraged to be part of the management team.

The chemistry which develops between paid staff and unpaid volunteers is a key component in the success or failure of a community radio station. The relationship requires mutual respect, mutual awareness of responsibilities, needs and duties, and perhaps most importantly, mutual trust. All of these factors require your internal communications to be working well.

If the respect, understanding and trust between volunteers and staff break down, the station is in deep trouble. It is vital that neither staff members nor volunteers feel that one is 'outranked' by the other. The role of each is different, and equally important. Volunteers are the lifeblood of your station, without them your existence is meaningless. Volunteers become involved to help and support your station, not to be bossed around (see p68).

It's a common mistake to undervalue the range of skills, abilities, contacts and general usefulness of your volunteers. If you have a hundred volunteers, then you can be sure they will include people with professional experience in everything from plumbing to PR. There might be an accountancy graduate and an untrained, unemployed artistic genius who would love to draw some pictures for your flyers and posters. Often you won't know unless you ask, whether individually at point of first contact or through your internal communications such as a newsletter or notice board.

Managing a station is a 24/7 activity. You can't pay people to cover all that time, so you will be dependent on volunteers to some extent to keep the station running. This is also good for the culture at the station. If the volunteers feel that the station is theirs, a microphone is much less likely to walk out the door, and if it still does, everybody takes it personally, and there is outrage across the board. When you are struggling with few resources it is vital to have that goodwill. If you can build that family sense of everyone working together, when you can't do everything or something goes wrong your volunteers are likely to be forgiving. If everything is very policy led and hierarchical, as soon as anything goes wrong, they are very likely to blame you and your structures.

CRIB SHEET

The staff and volunteer mix should be:

- A healthy balance
- Based on mutual trust, respect and understanding
- A valuable mix of experiences and abilities
- Lubricated by good communication

Staff roles and responsibilities

Generally the less appealing tasks involved in community radio are the ones you have to pay people to do. Top of the list is usually administrative work – paying invoices and keeping track of budgets, maintaining output monitoring systems, and so on. Many community groups (not just radio stations) will employ a part-time administrator long before they employ a full-time project manager. Once up and running, full-time community radio stations will typically employ staff with responsibilities broadly as follows:

- Station manager;
- Administrator; Finance officer;
- Radio trainer; Radio producer;
- Community participation worker;
- Volunteer support worker;
- Technician; IT manager and trainer;
- Business development worker.

Usually those roles will be combined into a smaller number of positions, so one person might be employed as technician and volunteer support worker. Alternatively two or three part-time employees with different roles could replace one full-time specialist. You should also consider using freelancers for roles such as training that are more 'seasonal' (see p167).

Mixing the staff and the board

You need to be completely clear about the appropriate levels of involvement of the board. The board's functions should be:

- Representation of the community;
- Supporting staff/volunteers;
- Ensuring due diligence.

The role of a director is not to crawl all over the day-to-day activities at the station, which is likely to cause problems with authority and morale. And yet the responsibility of a director to ensure due diligence does entitle him or her to full access to the station's activities. It is a fine balance, but eventually returns to mutual respect and trust. The board are all-powerful, but should always remember that the secret of wielding power is knowing when not to use it.

What a manager needs**A clear basis of engagement**

Managers (even unpaid ones) need absolute clarity about how they are expected to perform their function. This should be broadly and clearly set out in the terms and conditions agreed when an employment contract is signed, although the finer details may be agreed as a matter of ongoing management policies. It must be totally transparent to each member of the management chain exactly what they have authority and responsibility for, and to whom they are accountable. A good manager needs all three, and needs to be able to distinguish between them.

Authority

As a manager you need authority to take decisions – in other words you need to have been given the power or right to undertake the activities necessary to do your job. You can't run a station properly if you need to approach the board for permission to buy a packet of paper clips or give a colleague a day off. This also works in reverse, decisions should not be taken by those who do not have the authority. Remember that the person who speaks with most authority is not always the person who has most authority. Be wary of the strident volunteers or ambitious junior staff members who take it upon themselves to act beyond their authority. If authority is undermined or exercised badly, so too are responsibility and accountability. Of course there will also be times when station staff do need to refer decisions up to board level. It is up to board and management to clearly establish the appropriate limits to authority, which will often depend on the relative experience and capabilities at each level. It is up to each station to decide where those limits lie.

Responsibility

If you are responsible for something, you are obliged or expected to do it. This is different to authority because it does not necessarily involve freedom to decide what is or is not done. A member of staff may be responsible for training volunteers, but not have the authority to decide the curriculum for the course. So the authority over training might reside with the station manager and the partner college, while the responsibility for it lies with the member of staff.

Accountability

You are accountable if you are obliged to answer, explain or justify yourself to those who delegate authority and responsibility to you. In any voluntary organisation, everyone from the newest volunteer to the most senior member of the board should be accountable to someone and know who that someone is. In the case of the board, legally speaking, that someone is Companies House and/or the Charity Commission, and Ofcom for sticking to the promises made in your licence. In a broader sense the board and the station as a whole are responsible to the community they serve, and your 'promise of performance' to Ofcom makes it clear that this is not just some 'good thing' to be given a token nod in passing but must be a structurally clear part of how your radio station runs.

The great community radio manager will also have:**Leadership**

Most management is based upon structures, ensuring that the group or station is organised in a way that helps ensure efficient and effective activities. Leadership ability is above and beyond such formal structures. A good leader can inspire others, bring out the best in their colleagues and volunteers, and create a positive, creative, happy working environment. A manager with poor leadership skills might perform their tasks efficiently enough, but will soon find it difficult to maintain the interest of volunteers and staff, who may drift away or under-perform at work. A great leader with poor management skills may gather a dynamic team around him, but the station is liable to be pulled in many different directions or find



itself focussed to an unhealthy extent on that one charismatic individual, which is obviously unsustainable (see p24-25).

Control

You are in control of your station if you are aware of everything that happens in your station, and have agreed to (or sometimes dictated) the activities of all your colleagues. It is possible to manage a project – sometimes for a surprising length of time – without really being in control of it. You can find yourself, by luck or judgement, overseeing a team who all have shared objectives and do their own jobs well, leaving you looking great. But if as manager you are not aware of how your colleagues work, how they are making their decisions and the processes they use, you could find yourself in deep trouble when something goes wrong or one or two colleagues are suddenly taken ill or leave their job. You generally only find out how well controlled a station is when something goes wrong. A good station manager is in control of their station without becoming a 'controlling influence' or 'control freak.' This is obviously a fine balancing act.

Maintaining control requires a wide range of skills, including the ability to organise time, personnel and resources, prioritise tasks, keep accurate records, communicate well with colleagues and maintain a cool head when all around you are losing theirs.

CRIB SHEET**A manager needs:**

- Authority
- Responsibility
- Accountability
- Leadership
- Control

Line management

People involved in community radio often tend to be quite egalitarian types. For the most part they don't like to pull rank and order other people around. That is probably a very healthy attitude. The atmosphere around most stations is of everyone mucking in together, and staff will often do bits and pieces of each other's jobs on any given day. In those circumstances it is easy to lose sight of who has responsibility for what. Every buck has to stop somewhere. The classic management chain (see Figure 5.01) has the senior manager employed by the governing body, or board. The board are legally obliged to ensure good management and the manager's job is at risk if he/she doesn't provide it. There should then be a clear chain of responsibility, if not command, all the way down to volunteers. Everyone should be clear about what – and who – they have responsibility for.

Human resources management

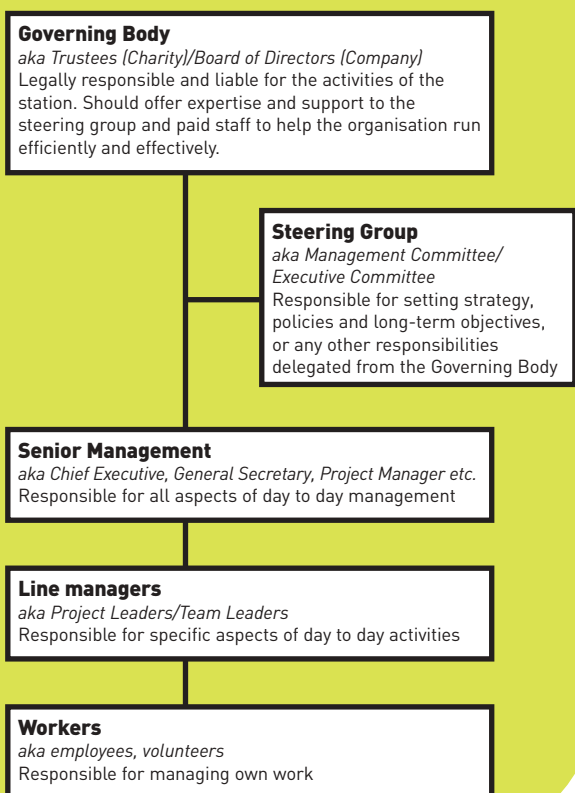
It's very easy for the management to become so wrapped up in the progress and problems of volunteers or hitting the next targets for funders that they forget about their staff. But to be a good community radio station, a project also needs to be a good employer, a factor with even greater importance if your lack of resources requires a greater call on the goodwill of your station team. Larger community radio stations might think about employing a human resources (HR) manager, or investing in the services of an HR consultancy firm of which there are many specialising in the not-for-profit sector (your local voluntary sector umbrella group should have a list). Another source of HR support for your staff could be a local business who might allow their HR team to help you as part of a 'corporate social responsibility' partnership (see p187). At the very least, station managers need to make themselves aware of all the issues involved in this important part of management. Human resources management skills include:

- Recruiting the best staff;
- Fulfilling your obligations under employment laws;
- Drawing up binding, fair and effective employment contracts;
- Ensuring the health and safety of employees;
- Ensuring good systems of staff support, supervision and appraisal;
- Drafting and enforcing equal opportunities policies;
- Establishing and enforcing staff disciplinary and grievance procedures;
- Overseeing entitlements, benefits, pensions etc.

The practice of human resources management at a community radio station should be no different to any other voluntary sector organisation, and you should look at specialist resources for detailed guidance (see references at end of chapter).

FIGURE 5.01

The classic management chain



CRIB SHEET

Human resources management

- Is just as important in Community radio as anywhere else
- Should be considered in much more detail than we can provide here

Motivation and stress

It shouldn't be difficult to motivate your workers and key volunteers. Community radio changes people's lives for the better, and you can see it with your own eyes and hear it with your own ears. Nevertheless there will be times when things have been running less than smoothly, tempers are getting frayed, workloads spiral out of control and morale begins to dip. With anything up to five years of radio looming ahead of you, there are very few end points in a community radio project – moments you can sit back and applaud yourselves for a job well done, evaluate your performance and plan it better for next time. Typically a community radio station might have several dozen projects running simultaneously, consecutively or overlapping, and inevitably it will often feel as if everyone is playing 'catch-up' for most of the time.

People can react to stressful workloads in several ways. Some will do as much as they can, accept their own limitations, and sleep soundly at night. Others will look at their in-tray and think 'I'll never do all this, so what's the point of doing anything?' In such cases it is crucial that their line manager intervenes, either with an inspiring motivational pep talk (or more effectively, lots of little ones) stressing the employee's skills and talents and underlining how valuable they are to the station. More practically, re-negotiate their workload, or break it into smaller chunks with attainable targets, so it looks less intimidating. Many people work harder when they have less to do. Of course, it is preferable to give people compliments, encouragement and manageable workloads before they begin to despair, not after.

The other response someone may have to a large workload is perhaps even more dangerous: to try and do it all. Many community radio workers and even volunteers will be so motivated and enthused by the project that they never leave work. Or when they do, their thoughts (and radio) remain tuned to it (see Voxbox 5.02). This is simply unsustainable – the demands a community station can make upon you are literally endless. The result is stress, exhaustion, illness and eventually a letter of resignation. We have learnt to our cost the harm which burn-out can cause to individuals and stations.

VOXBOX 5.02

“Don't tune into the station all the time. It was an addiction I fell foul of when I first got into community radio. It made me very anti-social, because even if I was at home and had friends round, I would have the radio on, and wouldn't be engaged in the conversation. I'd be talking to a friend with one ear on the radio and suddenly – 'Hang on! What did he just say?' Eventually my partner threatened to throw the radio out the window.”

Phil Korbel, Director, Radio Regen

CRIB SHEET

Motivation:

- Is essential to run a community radio station
- Can lead to exhaustion, stress and burn-out

Spotting stress and burn-out

Preventing stress and burn out is in your own interest if you want to sustain a good staff team, but it is also your legal obligation under Health and Safety at Work laws. Stress affects different people in different ways, and there are no hard and fast rules for how people will react, but keep an eye out for the following clues in your colleagues and yourself:

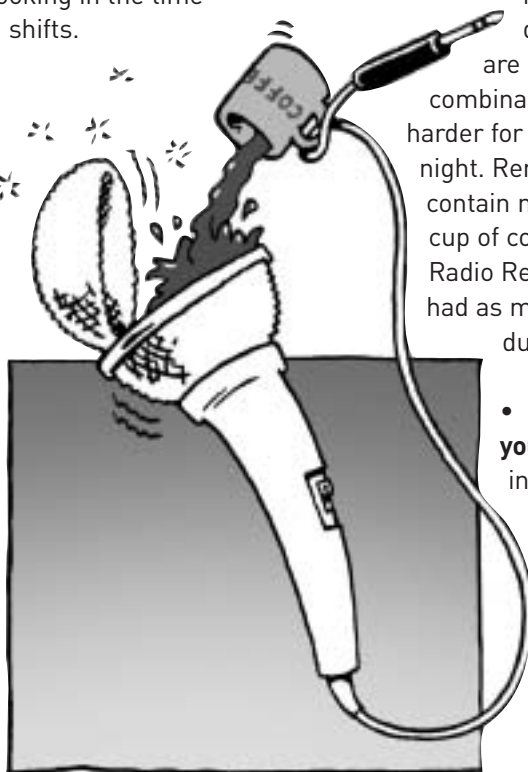
- Illness and absenteeism. Stressed people get ill more often as their immune system is weakened. Especially look out for regular headaches, back or muscular pain, palpitations or chest pains and stomach upsets, all of which are commonly (although far from exclusively) stress-related;
- Sleep problems. If you can't sleep at night for worrying about the Myriad automation system, alarm bells should be ringing;
- Anxiety, depression, panic attacks, or (less seriously) irritability and a changing attitude or demeanour;
- Low energy levels and tiredness;
- Conflicts in personal life and relationships;
- Changing drinking habits or intake of recreational or prescription drugs;

- Adrenaline addiction. People can get hooked on the buzz which accompanies stress. If someone seems to be deliberately seeking out demanding projects and extra workload, ask yourself why.

Avoiding stress and burn-out

Just as different people react to stress differently, so different people need different strategies to keep their stress levels down. Here are some useful pointers:

- **Avoid a stress culture at work.** It is easy for a pattern to develop at a station where the staff work 12 hour days, come in at weekends, and spend their evenings at community meetings. If one or two employees act like this (especially management) it can easily become seen as the norm, rather than the exception, and others will feel obliged to match up. Senior management should set a good example by going home during daylight hours. Occasionally.
- **Take time back.** If you know there's going to be a series of late nights or weekend work sessions for a specific project, put a limit on them and take back the time owed before you forget why you did the extra hours – by booking in the time off when you book in the extra shifts.
- **Watch your flexi-time and holiday records.** If a member of staff has built up 90 days of flexi-time or has only taken two days holiday in six months, their line manager should really intervene and send them home. The term for this addiction to being at work is 'present-eeism'.
- **Have a laugh.** Laughter relieves tension which in turn reduces stress. Make sure your workplace is a fun place to come in to each day. Within limits, obviously (and nervous laughter or laughing at nothing doesn't count).
- **Make the station as neat and comfortable as possible.** Not necessarily sofas in every room, but try to reduce clutter and chaos, which is a significant contributing factor to a stressful environment.
- **Manage your time.** Time management is crucial to a relaxed working environment. Make sure your deadlines, targets and projects are spread as evenly as possible through the year, and learn to organise your days and weeks.
- **Manage your money.** If you can keep on top of your budgets, cash flows and accounting, everything will be much, much easier.
- **Deal quickly and effectively with personal disputes** and arguments that develop between staff or volunteers.
- **Have a quiet space** where staff can retreat to work in peace or catch their breath over a cup of tea or coffee. But...
- **Reduce your caffeine.** High caffeine consumption increases the heart rate, as does stress. The two together are an unhealthy and unhelpful combination. Caffeine also makes it harder for you to unwind and sleep at night. Remember many fizzy drinks contain more caffeine than a strong cup of coffee. Some smug staffers at Radio Regen swear blind they've never had as much energy since they dumped caffeine.
- **Leave work at work when you leave.** Maintain other interests and find time to do whatever makes you happy – so long as it has nothing to do with radio. Leave plenty of time for a long soak in the bath at the end of the day.



- **Compartmentalise.** Do what you can in the time you have to do it in – prioritising and planning your work to maximise your efficiency. However motivated and efficient you are, there is only so much you can do, and if you start to lose sleep as a result of that inevitably overflowing in-tray, you'll only get less work done. So put your work in a mental compartment and make sure that there are other compartments in your life that are important to you – they might be the ones that keep you sane.
- **Never give out your home or personal mobile number.** If you have an emergency staff contact procedure, get a dedicated phone and have a formal rota for shifts on-call. Make sure they understand that emergencies do not include such disasters as running out of sugar.

CRIB SHEET

Stress and burn-out:

- can be seen coming
- can be eased or avoided

Managing volunteers

In Chapter 10 we will go into detail about how to support, supervise and help volunteers. Much of this work will be conducted by support workers, trainers, producers etc. But volunteers are so central to community radio that their role, their needs and their position needs to be firmly built into your management structures.

In one fundamental respect volunteer management in community radio is different to other areas of the voluntary sector. Community groups generally have management (including the board and paid staff), volunteers and the clients who use the services they provide. In most cases – think of a community crèche or older persons' centre – attracting volunteers to serve tea or babysit toddlers is a difficult task. Volunteer management textbooks often work on the assumption that volunteers are rare and valuable creatures who must be cosseted and treasured, while there will probably be an excess of potential clients/users desperate to access the services the group provides.

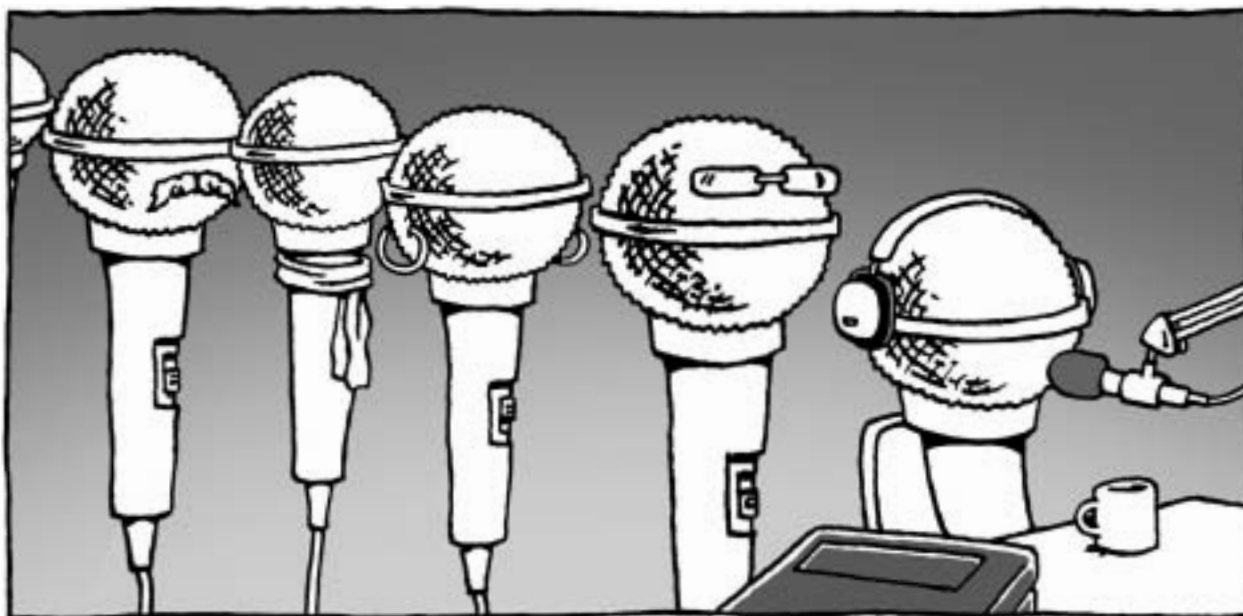
The nature of community radio is that the benefits to the volunteers – the experience, training, thrill and fun of making radio – in some ways outweigh the benefits to the 'clients', who in our case are the listeners (important though they are). The result is, hopefully, a long waiting list of would-be volunteers. Which is not to say that you can 'use and abuse' your volunteers because there'll be another one along in a minute. Volunteers ARE the heart of your operation: no volunteers = no radio (unless you are over-enamoured with the output of your automation software). Treat your volunteers well, nurture them and allow them to fulfil their aspirations – but cotton wool need not be part of your toolkit in doing so.

The driving ethos of community radio is that access to the airwaves is a human right. But when there is a queue, every volunteer who exercises his or her right to the airwaves is preventing someone else from exercising theirs. It's also worth bearing in mind that running a community radio station may cost around £50 per hour. If someone is availing themselves of such a valuable resource they should be expected to act responsibly and behave decently. If a volunteer is causing trouble on or off air, obstructing the progress of the station and other volunteers, or otherwise behaving inappropriately, you must have systems to deal with this.

The best starting point for the relationship between management and volunteers is a clear, extensive, mutually-agreed set of rules and responsibilities, ideally gathered into a signed volunteer agreement.

Rules and agreements

Creativity, self-expression and the airing of alternative and unheard voices are all crucial to successful community radio. Your volunteers need to be able to express themselves in their own way on air and off, but you do need to set boundaries. A volunteer might make brilliant radio, represent alternative sections of your community, draw in large numbers of listeners, attend every volunteer meeting and always wash her coffee cup, but if she routinely swears on air or fails to lock the front door when leaving the station she is a liability.



Your DJs should remember that there's a queue of volunteers waiting to take their slot.

One way to think of this is that the station provides the volunteer with a blank canvas upon which they can paint – but that canvas, even if it's really huge, is already bound by a frame. They can paint whatever they like, providing they do not exceed the limits. The frame itself has a lot of detail. Some of it is behavioural – the standards of behaviour which everyone at the station is expected to adhere to. Other details are procedural – what the volunteer should do if they can't make their show or there is a technical failure in the studio, for example. Much of it will be about what happens on air, with basic explanations of broadcast regulations and legislation around libel, obscenity etc. and station policy on those standards, which may well be more strict than the legislation requires (see p109). The volunteer should commit themselves to a certain amount of time and activity, for example two hours broadcasting activities and two hours of non-broadcast support activities each week. You may also wish to include an agreement about the content of whatever radio the volunteer is making. You need some recourse if you offer someone a show to present issues relating to the elderly, and the volunteer decides to play 60 minutes of heavy metal instead.

You do not want your station to feel like a prison or a school. You don't want to treat your volunteers as

criminals or children – even if they are! So it is not enough to say 'here are the rules. Obey them or you're in trouble.' Your volunteer agreement needs to spell out the rules, but just as importantly it needs to spell out why the rule is in place and what will happen if it is breached. Clarity is the key and consideration for others the touch-stone. Some breaches of the volunteer agreement – such as physical assault or vandalism – should probably carry an instant ban from the station. Other breaches – such as failing to turn up for a scheduled show – might be best dealt with a 'three strikes and you're out' type of policy. Minor offences such as use of offensive or inappropriate language might best be dealt with through a firm but friendly chat.

CRIB SHEET

The volunteer agreement:

- Should be extensive, clear and formal
- Should specify the limits to volunteers' autonomy and creative freedom
- Should explain what the rule is
- Should explain why the rule is there
- Should explain what will happen if it is breached

Volunteer induction

If you're busy and recruiting a lot of new volunteers at once, you might be tempted to print out half a dozen pages of rules and regulations, thrust them into the hand of a new volunteer and send them on their way. But the volunteer may be reluctant to admit to literacy, language or comprehension problems, or more commonly just never get around to reading them. So an induction session is vital – this would normally encompass not only a line-by-line reading of the volunteer handbook, but if necessary also a tour of the station, introductions to members of staff and so on. The induction should be formally organised and offer an opportunity for the new volunteer to ask any questions about the station and its policies. By the end of it the volunteers should feel like they have joined a team, if not a family.

Besides the rules concerning behaviour and broadcasting requirements, the induction should also explain:

- What the volunteer can expect from you in terms of support and training;
- An overview of community radio;
- An overview of your station and your stated aims;
- Equal opportunities policies;
- Health and safety policies;
- Details of any expenses or benefits available.

The induction is also a very good time to conduct your 'skills and needs' assessment – where you find out what the volunteer has to offer the station and what they need from it (see p138).

Consistent policies

No sane person likes having to discipline volunteers. They are not being paid, they are generally nice people, maybe you even socialise with them after work. The prospect of calling them into the office and giving them a dressing down or informing them that they have been barred from the station is not a pleasant one. The temptation to let lapses and breaches of the rules slip past is often very strong. It is also very dangerous.

Community radio stations are like ants' nests at times, with volunteers bustling around each other and working in close proximity. They talk, they

gossip, and they know more about what is going on than many managers would care to imagine. One consequence of that is that they know when someone gets away with mischief and when they don't. If volunteers think they might get away with swearing on air without reproach or consequence, of course they are more likely to do it. And if one volunteer breaks a rule or policy, others will soon do likewise and station discipline begins to dissolve along with your authority. It becomes much harder for you as a manager to then clamp down once the rot has taken hold. It should be clear that disciplinary proceedings are hard and fast, not made up on the spot by the station manager. If they even sense that the latter is the case, they may become angry and confused about any disciplinary action.

As a general rule, a community radio station needs to balance the rights of the individual volunteer with those of the group and the station as a whole. A well laid-out set of policies and grievance procedures should go most of the way to ensuring this balance. Just be careful not to allow yourself to become involved in a protracted quasi-legal dispute with one disgruntled individual.

CRIB SHEET

Your disciplinary policies should be

- Consistent
- Consistent
- Consistent

Supporting the sinner

Having established a culture of good behaviour, it's important to remember that your duty to support, care for and improve the lives of your volunteers extends even to those who are in breach of the rules. In extreme circumstances (violent behaviour, theft, criminal damage to station property) you may need to ban a volunteer for life, but this will be very unusual. For most disciplinary lapses the appropriate sanction should also include scope for rehabilitation. To take a hypothetical example, a volunteer may fail to turn up for her show on three occasions in close succession, without letting anyone know that she was going to do so. She has



been given a first and second warning on the previous occasions, and the station policy is that she should lose her show until the next round of schedule allocation in three months' time. While those three months are passing, it would be very healthy if the volunteer can be given not less but more supervision and training. Then when she re-applies for her show she has a better grasp of routine, a better understanding of the problems caused by non-attendance, and because her skills have improved, she will enjoy making radio more and so be more motivated to attend.

Many breaches of station rules, on air and off, will be the result of ignorance, which is a product of insufficient training. This may be particularly true with regards to your equal opportunities policy and offensive language. The classic argument about whether a comment is a harmless joke or a gross insult is revisited on a regular basis in every community radio station (and probably every other work and social space). If someone exceeds what you consider to be acceptable limits, explain to them clearly where the boundaries lie – they may genuinely not understand why offence has been caused.

There may be more serious cases too. It is probably the case that the volunteers who are most likely to break the rules of their agreement are also those most likely to have a chaotic or abusive home life, physical or mental health issues, substance abuse problems, or other social or personal issues. If such problems are interfering with their ability to make radio, then you should help them to access the help they need from specialist agencies or services (see p135).

In this area, like so many others, you have to find a balance you can live with. You want to offer a patient, understanding and supportive attitude to one

individual, but you also need to run a safe, secure, successful community radio station for everyone else. You could offer opportunities for a wayward volunteer to improve their behaviour but they might simply refuse to change their ways. You have to know when to admit defeat, recognising the point where however much you want to help you simply cannot.

CRIB SHEET

Supporting wayward volunteers:

- Is as important a part of your job as supporting model volunteers
- May often come down to education and training
- Can only do so much and for so long

Marketing

Marketing is yet another task that you think can be put off until the mythical day when there is money and time to spare. Of course that day never comes, and in the meantime your station is going unnoticed by many of your potential volunteers, partners and listeners.

You need to market your station to maximise the benefits it can offer your community. Marketing can soak up as much energy and money as you have available, but it can be effective even with very limited resources. It takes many forms:

- **Word of mouth.** This is the most powerful tool a community radio station has at its disposal. Encourage your volunteers and listeners to tell their friends. Network at local events. If you attend a meeting, make sure everyone knows who you are, where you are from and what it is you do – wear the T-shirt!
- **Publicity materials.** There is a reason why every radio station from the smallest commercial operator to Radio 1 gives away window stickers, T-shirts, balloons etc. – it works. Every car with a sticker is a little moving billboard for your station, every T-shirt is a walking advertisement. And the cherry on top is that the people to whom you give such freebies are even grateful for the privilege. If costs are tight, look for a reciprocal deal with a

local print shop who may give you a discount or gratis rate in return for on-air advertising or having their logo displayed on the materials. Alternatively one of your partners or funders may be willing to sponsor promotional materials in return for a 'supported by...' mention.

- **Piggybacking.** Talk to your partner organisations, local businesses, agencies etc. about ways in which you could get yourself mentioned on their publicity materials. If an agency does a regular show, make sure they mention it in their own publicity. If you have specialist DJs on your station who also play clubs and bars, persuade them to get your station name and logo on the flyers. For example, any school class on air brings with it the families, friends and other carers of each pupil in it – possibly another few hundred listeners.
- **Advertising.** While it may feel painful to pay for newspaper ads, billboards or other commercial advertising, sometimes it is a worthwhile investment. In particular if a station is new and needs a sudden influx of listeners or volunteers, a well-placed, well-designed advertisement can be highly effective.
- **Outside events.** If there is a local community festival happening, you should be there – ideally with a full road show, but if that is not viable, host a small tent with your DJs or at the very least set up a stall with publicity and information about your station. Hosting special events in bars or clubs – whether that's a nightclub or a Darby and Joan club – can help you reach different audiences, and may even earn you some money.
- **Branding.** We will discuss on air branding in the Programming chapter (p128) but it is equally important in the material world. Your station should have a recognisable logo and 'house style' on every piece of stationery, letterhead, web page, promotional item, newsletter, banner, poster or whatever. This will help people to recognise and remember your name. This includes having some control over the hand printed flyers of self-publicising shows – one of our 'regulars' thought he was doing us a favour by printing off a few thousand flyers for his club night with many mentions for his radio show. But the inevitable picture of a scantily clad young woman did little for our equal opportunities policy.
- **Media relations.** Be on good terms with the local media. You might be unlikely to get much support from other radio stations (however sympathetic they might be – see below) but local newspapers and magazines are different. Build up friendly relationships with local journalists. Often they are over-worked and under-resourced, and if you can present them with an interesting story for minimal effort they will be only too happy to print it. If you can provide them with a good quality, hi-resolution photograph to accompany it they may well bite your hand off. With smaller local papers especially, you should always offer a human face for every story. They won't be interested in your social gain statistics (however impressive you might think they are) but they will be interested in the local volunteer who has overcome a disability to complete an accredited training course, or the missing cat which was found after its heartbroken owner rang your phone-in show. Such human interest stories – which community radio stations generate on a daily basis – are a fantastic source of free publicity. If your local newspaper seems particularly supportive and enthusiastic, try to persuade them to carry your weekly schedule on their radio and TV page, perhaps in exchange for you plugging them. Many papers buy their schedules in directly from an agency, but others have some flexibility.
- **Website.** Your website may be the closest thing you have to a public face, so try to make sure it is attractive, informative and easy to use (see p57).
- **Your message.** It's worth having a snappy phrase or two which you can use at every opportunity on air and off to sum up who you are and what you do. Ideally you want something that captures the essence of community radio and your station in particular – 'making a better town by making a better sound' or something similarly cheesy.



Out to launch: Wythenshawe FM takes to the air.

Launching

Be sure of your output before you have a launch event, after all, why market a sound that doesn't show your true potential. Give yourself time to iron out the wrinkles before you invite the town to tune in. No one's going to mind if you 'launch' a month after actually going live. That said, don't wait until everything's perfect – it never will be.

CRIB SHEET

Marketing:

- Is crucial to help you find listeners, volunteers and partners
- Is not necessarily expensive
- Can take many different forms
- Is not something to do once everything else is sorted out

Relationships with other radio stations

Few organisations can be as useful to you as other radio stations, whatever their size or nature. You should have excellent relationships with other community radio stations – at least those far enough away that you will never be competing for the same licence or advertisers. The Community Media Association is the hub of the network, and if you actively involve yourself in the CMA you will be able to meet and share experiences with a large number of colleagues in the community sector.

Relationships with the BBC and (especially) commercial stations may be more delicate. On the one hand you are competing with them for listeners, and to a small extent possibly even for advertising revenue (despite Ofcom's best efforts – see p35). On the other – you have much to offer them. Let's consider each in turn.

The BBC is a public service broadcaster and its remit goes beyond broadcasting to the public. The

BBC's current Charter places a demand upon the corporation to involve itself in local community development work. There are few easier ways for BBC station directors to do this than by involving themselves in community radio groups, to which they could offer training, supervision, resources and endless wisdom. Radio Regen is currently negotiating a formal mentoring system with the BBC for our senior managers, which could offer enormous value to our staff. As we go to print, the BBC nationally is talking to the CMA about exploring the many ways BBC local stations and community radio stations can enjoy many happy collaborations (see Voxbox 5.03). This goodwill might even outlast the renewal of the BBC's Charter.

Community radio stations are a great potential source of new talent in all areas of radio production. Commercial and BBC stations often struggle to find recruits who aren't identikit white, middle class, media studies graduates. Community stations also offer a route to grassroots community news – providing stories which can otherwise pass under the radar of large media outlets who are accustomed to working to press releases from government, big business, the PR industry and large non-governmental organisations (NGOs). So there is not only a strong ethical argument for the mainstream radio sector to work with you, it also delivers tangible benefits to them – it's right and it works!

At present it seems that whilst BBC stations are already involving themselves in community radio groups across the country, many commercial stations are proving much more difficult to persuade – particularly if the community station is carrying advertising. Good networking, gentle diplomacy and a growing awareness of the nature of community radio should hopefully mean that this will change in the not-so-distant future. Make yourself known to larger local commercials, stress your social gain achievements and the fact that you are not trying to put them out of business, and you may well find the reaction is: 'That sounds great. Is there anything we can do?' Even the smaller stations might come on board once they get used to you and realise that your different sound isn't going to empty their share-holders' coffers.



Finally, even in the belly of the most corporate beast of a huge mainstream radio station, you are linked to them by the little word 'radio'. Small radio is where a lot of their staff came from and all but the most jaded cynic amongst them will feel an empathy with a broadcaster trying to get by on two bits of string and a used phone card. Even if the station policy might not endorse helping you out, don't be surprised if the staff will do so under their own steam.

VOXBOX 5.03

"Radio Scotland has been one of our partners from the start – they've given us training and support and we've worked with them on a number of outside broadcasts and so on. But now they have commissioned us to produce a weekly 30 minute programme that focuses on blind issues. For the first time blind people in Scotland will have their own programme they can tune in to, which is a wonderful opportunity to raise awareness of the issues for the rest of the population, and to encourage equality, and of course it's an incredible opportunity for our volunteers to make radio on a national platform. It's a very equal partnership, they haven't been patronising at all. They have been a wonderful resource for us and we have provided them with talent and good programming. This brings community radio to a national audience, and hopefully other BBC stations will take this up as well."

Kerryn Krige, VIP On Air, Glasgow

Presenter Jill Daley will be fronting VIP on Air's programming on BBC Radio Scotland.

CRIB SHEET

other radio stations:

- May be nervous of you, especially smaller commercial stations
- Can be extremely useful to you
- May decide you are extremely useful to them

Further reading and links

General management

Just About Managing? Effective management for voluntary organisations and community groups (4th edition). Sandy Adirondack (London Voluntary Service Council, 2005)

Managing Without Profit: The art of managing third-sector organisations. Mike Hudson (Directory of Social Change, 2004)

The Good Governance Action Plan for Voluntary Organisations. Sandy Adirondack (National Council for Voluntary Organisations, 2002)

Managing Recruitment and Selection. Gill Taylor (Directory of Social Change, 1997)

Planning Together: The art of effective teamwork. George Gawlinski and Lois Graessle (Planning Together Press, 1988)

www.commedia.org.uk/library/training/html/rmp/contents.htm

Managing Volunteers

www.volunteering.org.uk
www.vde.org.uk

Marketing

www.mediaguide.org.uk
www.volresource.org.uk/briefs/market.htm