

Radio innovation: is it only technological or something else?

 Bylssa Sikiti da Silva: [@sikitimedia](#)

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In today's world where innovation is being equated with technology, the impression is that the secret to implementing a successful innovation across all sectors is to apply the best technology money can buy. However, speaking at the 2011 [Joburg Radio Days](#) on Wednesday, 27 July 2011, Kagiso Media executive director [Omar Essack](#) said innovation is not only about technology, but about doing things differently.



"If there is something very important I have learned in the 20 years I have been in this industry, [it] is that nothing is impossible in radio," Essack told delegates.

Simple things

According to Essack, doing this differently entails turning the simple things happening in your community into a 'magic' content on air.

He accused some radio stations of being uncharacteristic and irrelevant when dealing with their audiences by, for instance, not responding in an efficient manner to what is happening in the communities they serve.

"Radio stations exist because of the audiences, and therefore every radio strategy and tactic must be audience-based. The simple truth is that some radio stations have been losing audiences because they don't want to work hard and have not been responding well to the needs of their communities."

Radio must save lives and not ignore its communities' problems, and that is innovation, he said.

"Listeners have become smarter"

Kaya FM breakfast host [Bob Mabena](#) said: "We don't stay in line with innovation in radio because we get so comfortable in our positions. Radio has become a very powerful medium of expression and listeners have become smarter, so the time for faking it is over."

"Be as original as you can; innovation from a content point of view is everywhere, but sometimes in radio we tend to ignore very simple things and fail to turn them into gold on radio."

BBC director of radio and audio Tim Davie said: "We love what we are doing, but radio has been very slow to innovate, and we have been sluggish in this area."

He cited quality programme ideas and editorial as other forms of innovation. "Do what you and other media have never done before. There are a lot of new ideas out there; think big and creatively, not only in financial terms."

Form partnerships

Davie said forming partnerships with other broadcasters and other institutions, such as prisons and museums, is also another form of innovation.

"You must always have an innovative plan. As radio, sometimes we feel small and are very worried. Let's me tell you that many thought the medium [would] disappear with the advent of digital. But we are still in good shape, so you must feel confident that radio will hold extremely well.

"But don't be complacent; there are threats that we need to crack because we are under pressure."

For more:

- Official site: www.journalism.co.za/radio-days-2011
- Twitter: [@JHB_RadioDays](https://twitter.com/JHB_RadioDays)
- Twitter Search: ["Joburg Radio days" OR #radiodays](#)
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ABOUT ISSA SIKITI DA SILVA: @SIKITIMEDIA

Issa Sikiti da Silva is a winner of the 2010 SADC Media Awards (print category). He freelances for various media outlets, local and foreign, and has travelled extensively across Africa. His work has been published both in French and English. He used to contribute to Bizcommunity.com as a senior news writer.

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