

# Radio is losing its intelligence (part II)

By [Anthony Duke](#)

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In [part I](#), I stated that "radio has lost its intelligence", with commercial music radio being the main culprit and also because there's a general dearth of quality management to develop the talent pool. I've written and taught a lot on some of the finer aspects of engaging the listener so, in part II here, indulge me as I mention a few.

- **Preparation**

I can hear that 99% of all shows has absolutely no preparation. It should start the moment a presenter gets up from the last show to when she or he starts the next one. Stretch, have a cup of coffee and start observing life as your target market understands it. Then give us an interesting, sensible and nimble report back tomorrow. We don't expect cerebral pontifications, just enough to get the picture.

Prep is vital to give yourself a framework for each hour, so that all the other spontaneous ad libs *sound* spontaneous or spur-of-the-moment. To me, lack of preparation is an insult to the listener and the boss.

- **Engaging the brain before the microphone**

This used to be a fundamental so that *you* are aware of what you are going to say. Even the best have had to be reminded of that from time to time. Nowadays, the red light goes on and it's a time to *start* thinking. NO, people... do that on your time.

- **Economy of words**

KISS - Keep It Simple Stupid. The listener has a multitude of stuff competing for his attention so, if you wander off all over the place, he will remember nothing. If it's compact, in normal everyday speech (not DJ speak), and easy to imagine, he will hear it all. Make it easy for him to take a piece of you with him, as opposed to wondering what the hell you were talking about.

At the various stations I have run or consulted for, I have tried to get across a simple fact when I'm engaging a presenter: the less sh\*t you talk, the better. If you can cut 10 or 20 seconds off your average speech link, let's multiply that by six links per hour by three hours a day by five days a week by fifty-two weeks a year - you can get in extra classic songs or some intelligent thought.

- **Being yourself**

Just be who you are without adopting a new persona because it's YOUR finger that presses the microphone button. Admire a presenter who you like but don't copy them! Discover what it is that you may respect or think highly of, but interpret it in your own way. If a friend ever tells you that you don't sound anything like you do on air, then you are in big trouble.

- **Becoming a friend**

Find out what the listener is all about. This can be located in the multitude of demographic, psychographic and qualitative research available to you. Problem is you weren't listening or taking notes at the last research presentation

or felt "that doesn't apply to me...!"

- **Mutual companionship**

The radio station in its wisdom has appointed you to speak to its market. Go out of your way to establish a relationship with your listener so that she can call you a pal. A relationship with the news reader is not quite the same thing. In the clutter of everything else, you could be the only friend she has.

There are many more essential tips, some scientific and some gut feel, in The Book. But The Book has been lost!

You have to wonder if programme managers actually listen to their on-air presenters before they tell us how good they are. If they do and they all sound so uninspiring, they should be worried.

Why am I bringing this up? Because right now it is critical to get back to the basics.

### **Slept through the real issues**

With every new audio invention, radio has been put on a death notice. But, at this time of media development and diversity, radio is once again under threat because the "media owners" have slept through the real issues.

I was there when they totally overacted to new media in the first place. The excitement and bewilderment of the web and other stuff led to confusion and the ball, which was the core business of communicating "now", was dropped. Get used to the idea that Time Spent Listening will never be as big again as it was; loyalty will depend on consistency so arrest the declines by making every second count.

Radio is now a part of the entertainment experience and not the be-all and end-all, as it was way back when. Better make it extra special and entertaining *so that the listener gets it and feels it in the larger mix*.

Almost everything else available in modern media has been recorded and placed in a schedule for you to download and listen at your pleasure. But radio is right there for you, anytime, anywhere and in real time. You don't have to find a USB port to plug in anywhere; you just switch on.

### **Biggest selling point**

It's about time to return to the biggest selling point radio will always have - immediacy. I have my doubts, however, that our radio whiz kids know exactly what an advantage that is!

**For more:**

- Bizcommunity: [Radio is losing its intelligence \(part I\)](#) by Anthony Duke

## ABOUT ANTHONY DUKE

Anthony Duke co-founded Capital Radio in 1979, managed 5FM, Good Hope FM and did strategies for all SABC Radio stations as manager of radio training at the corporation. Today he is retired but still consults. Email him at [anthonyduke@vodamail.co.za](mailto:anthonyduke@vodamail.co.za) and connect on LinkedIn.  
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