

MTN Radio Awards CEO responds to Graeme Joffe



By [Lance Rothschild](#)

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I am a little taken aback at [Graeme Joffe's opinion piece](#) on the [MTN Radio Awards](#). This is the third year of the awards and the programme has shown significant growth over the three years. Winning an MTN Radio Award is an achievement of which most winners (with the possible exception of Joffers) are extremely proud.



In fact, many winners include their achievement on their CV and (as stated by the managing editor in the piece) on their email signatures.

The MTN Radio Awards is the brainchild of [Jeremy Maggs \(@maggsonmedia\)](#) and [Richard Lendrum](#) of [Future Group](#). It was their initiative to involve MTN in these awards as title sponsor. That MTN gets media value out of these awards is not unprecedented and should not come as a surprise to Joffers.

Return on investment

Most sponsors seek a return on investment (as Joffers well knows). For the record, MTN had no influence over the submission of entries, nor does it have any sway over the judges (of which there were 22 on the panel for this year's awards).

The 2012 MTN Radio Awards attracted 866 entries (more than 100% growth on the 2011 Awards). With each audio submission totalling six minutes, this equated to some 86 hours of audio. I think that the adjudication panel did an excellent job of listening to their specific allotted entries and they are to be commended for sharing their expertise with the broader radio industry.

So, let me address Joffers' article element by element:

Several elements to sponsorship

MTN's sponsorship encompasses the entire running and presentation of the awards and there are several elements to its

sponsorship. One needs to take into account that the MTN Radio Awards is not just a single event on a particular evening, but that the MTN Radio Awards is a year-round programme, which ultimately culminates in an awards evening.

Stations and nominees did not have to pay to enter the awards, but they were required to pay to attend the awards gala banquet. With awards programmes such as the Loeries, entrants have to pay to enter the competition, as well as pay to attend the awards event.

The corporate sponsorship packages included tables at the banquet and advertising in [On Air magazine](#). The aim in securing corporate sponsorships was to get businesses that use radio to attend the event and interact with the stations and with the radio industry.

Tickets comparable to other award events

While it is noted that the tickets were deemed expensive, they are comparable in price to those of events such as the Loeries and other award events. One needs to take into account that the Sandton Convention Centre is a premier venue (and that we were complimented on the venue by several attendees, despite the problems that Joffers referenced in his piece).

In addition, the production of the awards ceremony has to meet certain expectations and has to be a quality production - it is also a celebration of the radio industry and a gathering of the radio 'clan'.

With regards to Joffers' comments on the categories and the programme:

A living and developing programme

The MTN Radio Awards is a living and developing programme and there were many awards because the programme included awards for each sector (Commercial, PBS, Community and Campus), and was expanded based on feedback from the industry over the previous awards presentation. We are, after all, recognising achievements and talent in the entire broadcast radio industry.

We also introduced some new categories this year and each year we critically review the entire event with a view to making improvements in the programme in the next year.

Joffers questions whether entrants should be self-nominating for a category, suggesting nomination by peers instead.

Accountability for - and pride in

Just as ad agencies submit entries for the Loeries, I think that the methodology used for the MTN Radio Awards is the fairest way to get entries in. It also encourages accountability for - and pride in - one's work, an ethic that we are trying to instil in broadcasters.

Peer nomination is not excluded and is even central to certain categories; however, in radio, the personality doing the work generally knows when something is good and works well, and will then earmark this as a possible submission.

Joffers asks: "Would it not be more professional and special if five independent judges went around the country for a month to sample the various radio stations and they then nominate excellence?"

Impractical

This is impractical. It is physically impossible to implement when one considers the complexity of more than 180 stations broadcasting 24 hours a day, seven days a week (4320 broadcast hours per day). With the multitude of languages broadcast across these stations, this suggestion becomes even less practical. Then factor into account the aspect of

topicality and/or seasonality and, in the case of drama and actuality, the issue of timing - will the travelling judges get to hear the broadcast - and you will understand why the programme is structured in the manner it is.

Additionally, what happens if, during the time that the adjudicators are listening to a particular programme or station, the regular host/team is on leave?

Joffers also comments on there being winners in every category despite nominees varying from as little as one to seven. I believe that Joffers is confusing nominees with finalists. In some categories we did not present awards; we presented merit awards and this was announced on the evening.

Deserved acknowledgement

The finalists were determined by scores submitted from the judges. In some categories, the score differentials were extremely small and these entries deserved acknowledgement as finalists.

Joffers writes that some commercial stations enter so many categories that it's not surprising they win. This is incorrect and an insult to the judges. In some categories, stations that submitted a single entry were nominated as finalists or even won that particular category. Each entry is evaluated on its particular merit and scored accordingly. The judges were looking for quality, and quantity was of no significance whatsoever.

Joffers also raised a point regarding a judge who is presently employed at a radio station.

Adjudication system

Indeed, several of the judges are presently employed at stations that entered the awards. The adjudication system is set up to preclude these judges from scoring any stations within their category - either their own or their competitors. In other words, judges from Commercial Stations were excluded from scoring any entries in Commercial Categories, and the same principle applied to judges from Community Stations.

In addition to this, judges are entitled to not score a particular entry, particularly where they feel that there may be a conflict of interest accusation levelled against them. The adjudication system averages out the scores based on the number of scores submitted. This ensures fairness throughout the process.

With the 2012 MTN Radio Awards, not only did we ask for suggestions for people to include on the adjudication panel, but we also ensure that there is no question of conflict of interest and/or compromising of interests within the judging panel.

[[Anthony Duke](#) withdrew from being a judge this year immediately after he decided to mention 5FM by name in [Radio is losing its intelligence \(part I\)](#) here on Bizcommunity.com but forgot to tell Biz this at the time - managing ed]

MCs

With respect to the comment regarding having an MC who was also a nominee:

- [Anele Mdoda](#) (@anele) did an excellent job last year and was contracted ahead of the submission of entries.
- In rehearsals and in the lead-up to the event, Mdoda was not told that she would be a winner. (In fact the producers had made a "Red Herring" slide for all the rehearsals and so Mdoda was totally taken by surprise by her win.)
- In the Oscars, nominees are frequently used as presenters throughout the entire show.

While I acknowledge Joffers' opinion on this matter, I don't agree with it. It did not detract from the show, or from the event. Mdoda did an awesome job and worked exceptionally well with [Jeremy Mansfield](#) on the night.

General consensus has been that the MCs were excellent and that they made the MTN Radio Awards a huge success.

Joffers should have seen the number of positive comments made about Mdoda and Mansfield on Twitter and on Facebook.

Not resting on our laurels

Having said all of this, we have, on the whole, been complimented on the overall programme. That doesn't mean that we have any laurels on which to rest, but that we need to ensure that we constantly and consistently deliver a relevant and meaningful awards programme

One of the leading trainers and speakers in radio, [Dan O'Day](#), believes in positive affirmation and states that, when someone does something well and is then rewarded or recognised for this, it motivates the person to strive towards higher standards. I'd like to think that this will frame the background for constant improvement in the output of radio into the future.

For more:

- Bizcommunity: [MTN Radio Awards: rewarding excellence or exercise in self-promotion?](#) by Graeme Joffe
- Bizcommunity Search: [MTN Radio Awards](#)
- Official website: www.mtnradioawards.com
- Official e-zine: [On Air magazine](#)
- Facebook: [Photo album of 2012 winners](#)
- Twitter: [@MTNRadioAwards](#)

ABOUT LANCE ROTHSCILD

Lance Rothschild was 5FM station manager from December 1986 to April 1994. During this time, the station grew audience and revenues considerably and achieved many firsts. After leaving, he gained exposure in television, print, online and mobile media. He owns and runs a PR, marketing and communications consultancy in Gauteng. He has remained passionate about - and involved in - radio and he is currently MTN Radio Awards CEO. Tel +27 (0)11 803 2040, email lance@mtnradiowards.com and follow [@lancerza](#).
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