Talk radio in danger

By Tali Munzhedzi

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South Africa is gifted with a number of really good talk show hosts. The likes of Redi Thlabi, Xolani Gwala, Jeremy Maggs and John Perlman can compete with their international peers. The experience and skills that they possesses is enormous and one needs to applaud them for the time they have taken to perfect their craft.



Having said that, this does not mean the future is bright for South African talk radio. I am yet to see young and upcoming talk show hosts being given an opportunity by major talk stations in this country. Most radio stations tend to rely on roping in celebrities who have no broadcasting experience or journalistic background, to be part of the line-up with the sole aim of increasing the figures to suit advertisers. Being well known nowadays is becoming a ticket to get into broadcasting. What then, are the up-and-coming journalists who want to do talk radio to do?

I have been privileged to work for SAfm for about five years and monitored various talk radio station in terms of the quality of presenters. Though stations go out of their way to attract the best talent there is, what we also see now is a recycling of the same presenters. They move from one station to another doing more or less the same thing, with money being the only difference.

New talent needs to be attracted, groomed

Stations are failing dismally to groom young journalists and young broadcasters to learn the craft of talk radio. Although young people seem to be more interested in music than hard news, radio stations have a role to play to attract new talent.

One cannot put the blame at radio stations only. Universities and colleges teaching journalism and media studies should make the course interesting and harvest the talent that is there. Rhodes University has an excellent focused journalism curriculum and many well-known journalists were groomed there. This cannot be done without supporting student institutions such us campus radio stations and newspapers.

It's time to talk - or the talk-show format is in trouble

Unisa Radio has recently been launched, one of the few if not only campus radio stations that offers talk radio format for students. Many have come to the radio station wanting to be music presenters and DJs rather than producers and talk show hosts. The traditional talk show format is in trouble unless we start attracting interest amongst young radio broadcasters.

The time for South African prime talk show hosts will soon be over, young South Africans will have to take the button.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tali Munzhedzi is a deputy station manager at UNISA Radio. The radio station strives to be amongst the few if not only campus radio stations to provide the talk radio format to students and staff. To listen to UNISA Radio go to [[http://radio.unisa.ac.za]], to contact Tali Munzhedzi email [[Munzhta@unisa.ac.za]].

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