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Recap Of Meeting

By

Anura Goonasekera
Recap of meeting on 6-12-93
Dr Anura Goonasekera

In the opening addresses, both Mr Menon and Mr Graffe emphasised the growing importance of radio as a communication medium in the contemporary world. Mr Menon emphasised the phenomenal growth of radio in Asia—for instance in China, the number of radio sets has grown from 6 million in 1965 to 46 million in 1982 and over 262 million by 1991. Mr Graffe said that the purpose of the meeting was not to provide recipes or rules for better management of radio. There were no clear-cut rules or recipes. The purpose of the meeting was to facilitate meaningful discussions which could, hopefully, generate new ideas or visions.

Ms Barbara Skerath in her initial address spoke of the workshop programme as being flexible. Nothing is cast in concrete, she said. The meeting will move according to the interests of the participants. Hopefully by Thursday, the meeting will be able to workout its main recommendations.

Mr Christophe Przybilka explained the meta-plan technique which will be used in this meeting. It was a visualization of the contributions of the members by using cards. These cards were a flexible tool which will document what was being talked about. He outlined the basic rules in writing the cards such as one idea per card. The card will help in clarification of issues, and will be weighed and prioritized on the basis of their importance to the participants.
After these introductory remarks by the resource persons, the country representatives made country presentations.

The country papers were rich in ideas and brought in issues that were central for programme production and training in each of the countries. There were similarities as well as divergences. For instance, in countries such as Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Nepal, Malaysia, Laos and Vietnam, radio remained a monopoly of the government. To this extent, the issues and priorities were tied up with government policies. The Malaysian participant mentioned the effort by professionals to cooperatize radio broadcast services in Malaysia to keep in line with privatization in telecoms and power. However, the government did not agree. They looked on broadcasting as a public service under government control. The immediate issues central to each broadcasting station however differed. In Bangladesh the pressing issues were education, combating population growth and providing social harmony. In China it was to create more audience oriented programmes and the opening up of new stations for new target audiences. Commercial interests were becoming important in China. Chinese broadcasters needed strategies to survive in the market place. In India there were numerous issues. These included emphasis on local radio, promotion of local initiative, promotion of social justice, and changes in values and attitudes. In Laos, the emphasis was on the upgrading of the services and to provide more entertainment. Training of trainers was another area of interest for Laos. Nepal spoke of radio's role in the
march towards democracy; in the establishment of multi-party systems and programme innovations towards this end such as parliamentrary phone-in programmes. Pakistan emphasised the need for rural broadcasting. Radio was a low cost medium in the context of Pakistan but yet funding to run the stations remained a crucial issue. Singapore is a unique case. Two main radio networks - NTUC Radio Heart and SBC radio cater to a multi-ethnic society living in highly concentrated space. The two networks saw themselves as being complimentary and not rivals. They have attempted to segment the market among themselves so that each would cater to an identified need of their special audiences. In a highly competitive set-up, Singapore emphasise the need for continuing research that could give the stations an advantage in seeking and expanding their market potential. Radio Broadcasting in Sri Lanka began as early as 1924 and is one of the oldest station in Asia. In recent years, it launched a community radio service which is considered a success story in local radio broadcasting. Sri Lanka Radio seeks to support the rich cultural heritage of that country and also encourages the building of a learning society.

In Vietnam, radio is considered as one of the most important mass media in the country because of its extensive penetration and affordability. The country's policy-makers believe that each medium has its own strengths. Therefore different media cannot replace each other but should compliment each other.
Using meta-plan technique, Ms Skerath and Mr Przybilka grouped the various points made in the country presentations into a series of programme and training categories. These categories included subjects such as Role and Responsibility of Radio, Advantages of Radio, selection criteria, local radio and etc. Finally, the participants identified the most important categories or criteria for future development of radio in their respective countries. The top 5 criteria were as follows:

1. Needs and challenges of radio - 15
2. Changing audiences for radio - 12
3. New technologies and radio broadcasting - 12
4. Local radio - 12
5. Innovative approaches for radio - 11
The meeting began with the recap of the first day's proceeding presented by Dr Anura Goonasekera. This was followed by some general remarks from Ms Skerath based on her observation of the proceedings of the meeting on Day 1. She said that the discussion so far pointed to the fact that radio in the contemporary world finds itself in a healthy unrest. There was a reawakening of the innovative spirit among broadcasters, no doubt spurred by the fight for audiences and fight for commercial viability. She said that radio was at crossroads. It was like a bicycle - in order to be functional you have to be in perpetual motion. You cannot stand still. This makes it necessary for radio to rediscover its potential and uniqueness. It has to compete through innovation not through imitation of other media such as TV or print.

One way of discovering the strength of radio is through local radio. Ms Skerath brought the example of commercial radio in Westphalia as an instance of the successful use of local radio in a competitive market situation in Germany.

Local radio is participatory radio or access radio. This is communication in the true sense - which is receiving and sending. What is needed is a demystification of radio. Radio has to step down from its high pedestal. It should talk to the people and allow the people to talk back.
The meeting next examined approaches and solutions to the problems faced by radio. A variety of possible solutions were considered by the participants. The need to get away from orthodoxy in broadcasting and the use of such methods as cartooning was considered. The need to go out of the studio into the street was emphasised as one possible approach. New forms of presentation, and the need to exploit the imaginative potential of radio was considered at some length by the group. The lack of funds, aging equipment, lack of spares, competition from video and CDs, lower remuneration for radio producers were some of the problems that were discussed. It was also felt that the need for high tech should be considered carefully. We should not try to emulate each new technology.

After this general discussion the participants were divided into two groups - A and B. Group A considered the approaches broadcasters should take to produce more audience oriented programmes and Group B considered approaches for identifying present and future needs of audience. Group A pointed out that it was essential to have continuous listener research in order to build effective audience profiles. It was also felt that such research should look at the suitability of different time slots. The group considered different styles of presentation such as informal, conversational, intimate, friendly etc, different programme formats such as help line, docudramas, talkback, roving mike, quizzes, games etc and different kinds of content, such as health tips, weather, market information, legal advice etc.
Group B, in order to consider approaches for identifying audience needs, began by classifying the audience into urban and rural and these again into men, women, youth and children. They came up with a list of audience needs for each of these categories. These included market information, health, sports, aids education etc which the group agreed would be of special interest to these separate audiences.

It was quite interesting to find that the groups came up with similar needs and approaches to meet the challenges faced by radio. So, the next question was: what is preventing radio from doing these activities identifies by the two groups? The bottlenecks were many. They included attitudes, lack of emphasis on research, lack of skills, lack of funds and lack of initiative. Among these numerous bottlenecks the participants felt that they, as broadcasters, could help solve some of these problem, particularly those relating to lack of skills, management of human resources, lack of credibility and lack of audience research.

From the question of producing audience oriented programmes and the problems of identifying needs of radio audiences, the group next moved on to look at local radio. Many participants described their experiences in local radio broadcasting in their respective countries. It was quite obvious that there was not one type of local radio. In China, Vietnam and Laos for instance, the smallest unit of local radio was a wired system which reached every house in a village and which was activated by a central office in the community. The size of the community was
about 2000 persons. The listeners could talk back on this system. In Singapore on the other hand, the national radio and local radio was the same because of the small size of the country and high radio penetration. There were other levels such as regional and local level radio stations in India. In Sri Lanka there were special community radio stations catering to new settlers under its vast colonization schemes.

The next question was to what extent were these stations autonomous. Here again the picture varied. In India and Bangladesh for instance, local radio was autonomous in that the production of programmes did not need any clearance from the centre. In Laos, local and central radio stations were equal. There was no control but they were answerable under the law. In many countries local radio stations hooked on to the national radio for important programmes such as the national news.

After this discussion on the experiences that various participants in the meeting had with local radio, the participants divided themselves into 2 groups. Group A's task was to identify the major benefits and constraints of local radio. Group B's task was to workout a programme schedule for an urban local radio station. This group was required to clarify broadcast times and the target audience.

Group A listed a series of advantages such as catering to local needs, community participation, promotion of local talent, pro-
jection of local culture, sense of belonging, pluralism, and reinforcement of democratic process. Compared to the advantages, the disadvantages were few. These included fear of localism, government control, constriction of the level of information, problems of recruitment, dilution of quality and lack of facilities.

Group B drew up a programme schedule for local urban radio with 3 hours of transmission in the morning commencing at 6 a.m. and 3 hours in the evening commencing at 5 p.m. They devised a flexible programme schedule which had a variety of entertainment music as its dominant programme content combined with news, devotional songs, docu-drama, phone-ins and public service announcements.

Finally the meeting considered the future role of radio broadcaster - beginning in the year 2000. The participants wrote 3 views each on cards which were later analysed into several groups. From an enumeration of the cards it appeared that the participants expected the future role of radio broadcaster to be an amalgam of many characteristics. He or she was to be a social worker combining the skills of a salesman. A broadcaster was also to be a catalyst for change. He or she had other roles too which were comparatively less dominant. They were a friend, educator, provider of information and an innovator.
A member of the meeting raised the point that in most of these qualities, the broadcaster is looked upon as a giver of something to an audience. It was however felt that in his role as a social worker, which was the dominant one, he may be less of a giver, but a professional advisor or a friend.
The day began with a recap of the previous day's proceedings. Originally the subject of problem analyses and problem solving was scheduled for this day. But it was considered useful to postpone this for Day 4 and advance the topics of personnel recruitment, training, leadership and management from Day 4 to Day 3. Accordingly the day began with a consideration of personnel recruitment policies and practices among the 12 countries present at the seminar. More specifically the meeting examined recruitment in terms of A from where, B through whom and C which criteria.

There were many similarities in the process of recruitment among these countries. For instance, recruitment in almost all the countries was done through public advertisement, open competitive exams, voice tests and interviews. The selection criteria included formal academic qualifications, experience and aptitude for the job. However there were significant differences too which were the result of the unique historical and socio-economic situation of some of these countries. For instance, in Singapore there were walk-in interviews, and overseas recruitment for Tamil and Mandarin radio. Singapore combined the posts of producers and presenter into one which was not the case in many other countries such as Sri Lanka, India and Pakistan. Regarding academic qualifications, the levels of such qualification varied among the countries. In Singapore it was GCE advanced level or
above whereas in Pakistan it was post graduate masters degree, and in Vietnam, recruitment was from among graduates of Journalism Departments of the universities.

Regarding the authorities responsible for recruitment, there was again diversity among the countries. For instance India followed a three-tier system. Recruitment of local artists such as musicians was the responsibility of the local station manager. In the regions recruitment was the responsibility of Staff Selection Commission, at the federal or central level, senior executives were recruited by Union Public Service Commission.

In countries such as Malaysia, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, several agencies, in addition to the broadcasting organization, collectively comprised a selection panel which screened the candidates. These panels usually had representation from the Ministry of Information, from public service commission, specialists from agencies such as universities, and station representatives. In Laos, there were 3 types of recruitment. Overseas graduates (10%), local trainees or peoples' correspondent (30%), semi professional (60%).

While most delegates expressed satisfaction with the machinery set-up for recruitment and the selection criteria, they were also critical of interference in selections generally due to political pressure or sentimental pressure. Indonesia pointed out the bureaucratic machinery that results in delays and frustrations in
recruitment.
Among the problems of recruiting the right kind of person was the high turnover of new recruits after a few months on the job. This was specially the case on Singapore and Malaysia where alternate jobs were easily available. Low salaries of the radio broadcasters was another problem mentioned by Pakistan.

In general it was clear that the recruitment criteria among countries emphasised on aptitudes as measured through exams or experience. The question then arose as to what kind of attitude is being looked for in the candidates. Among the attitudinal criteria mentioned by the participants were devotion to the job (China), creativity (Pakistan), dedication and love for radio (Sri Lanka), good listener (India), courageous and innovativeness (Laos).

The participants also recognised that it was difficult to assess attitudes at an interview. Ms Skerath mentioned some techniques such as use of questionnaire, quizzes, body language. In most countries the new recruits have a period of probation ranging from 3 months to one year. They are also given in-service training. If the new recruits are found to be wanting in attitudes, they can be discontinued during the probation period.

After the discussion of the recruitment criteria among their respective countries, the group looked at the main problems of recruitment, the desired attitudes among broadcasters and the desired change in recruitment problems that are needed to correct
the problems of recruitment. Regarding the problems, the group recognised sentimental pressure, political pressure, bureaucratic pressures and low status of programme staff (4th class). The desired changes were numerous. They included autonomy in recruitment, hire and fire policies, link-up between universities and radio, less emphasis on paper qualifications and a raise in salary. The desired attitudes of the candidates included closeness to society, dedication, devotion to radio, objectivity and creativity.

After this discussion the participants formed two groups to consider training priorities from the point of view of trainers. Each group looked at the issues on the basis of various categories such as managers, news editors, programme producers, trainers, technical staff, and administrators. Each group came up with a long list of criteria which will be copied and given to the participants separately. Here I will only mention a few.

The Programme Group or Group A considered that managers would require training in resource management, crisis management, marketing, human resource development. The trainers would need to update knowledge in their respective training fields, interactive skills and leadership qualities. Producers would need skills in production techniques, presentation techniques, programme planning, interview skills, knowledge of audience. Technical staff would require programme orientation, cooperative skills and crisis management. Administrators will need skills in time management, service orientation, organizational skills and
cooperative skills.

While Group A gave the training expectation from the point of view of management, Group B gave the expectation and experiences of training personnel in training programme for personnel and managers. It was felt that manager, particularly senior managers were not willing to undergo training, other categories of professionals such as news editors wanted to stick to the old dogmatic styles. Sometimes the training syllabuses were outdated. There were repetitions of courses. Coupled with this was the negative attitude among professionals for in-country training. They prefer training abroad. Trainers too get frustrated. They begin to lack interest. Lack of theory and research also hamper the skills and abilities. Technical staff sometimes could not get practical training. It was theoretical. There was little access to modern technology. Administrators in particular did not consider training as important because they had job security. Even after training they have to return to old ways of doing things because the system was not in step with the training and skills received by trainers.

In the discussion that followed the two group presentations, Christophe pointed out that mere training cannot change the whole system. Organizational development should be the strategy. The whole organization has to learn. Ms Skerath spoke of DWRTC's experience in this respect. She said that they had four problems in training. First is that the right person is not always nominated by the participating organization. Second, after training,
the trainers do not get an opportunity to practise their newly learned skills. They are put down by their colleagues and bosses. Third, sometimes they are transferred to totally unrelated departments. Finally, the trainees leave the organization and join another company after returning to the country.

As part of management strategies, the group next considered styles of leadership. The participants broke into 3 groups and each group tried to draw up the characteristics of a good manager. All three groups came up with long lists of characteristics which were classified in terms of personality, attitudes and abilities. The groups had identified many common characteristics. Some of which were honesty, being humane, organizational ability, understanding, being physically and mentally healthy, knowledge of the job, patience, and creativity. The full list will be given later to the participants.

Overall there was a mixture of large number of qualities and one participant described this ideal type of manager as a "demigod". It was also seen that most of the qualities enumerated referred to attitudes of manager, not technique of "good" management.

Next Mr Przybilka introduced two theoretical Styles of Management based on two concepts of man. He called these, following Douglas M. McGregor, Theory X and Theory Y. Theory X was based on a negative, pessimistic, unhappy concept of man. Theory Y was
based on an optimistic, positive and happy concept of man.

The group then examined 4 descriptions of human nature and human behaviour based on these negative and positive concepts. The participants rated these descriptions based on their own concept of human nature. The crux of the exercise was to drive home the point that ideas create perceptions and generate interaction. If you begin with a belief in pessimistic nature of human beings then you will create such pessimistic human nature. The same process will work in the exact opposite direction for the optimistic concept of man. Your ideas of human nature become self-fulfilling prophesies. They create what you anticipate.

Next the groups considered 3 different styles of leadership viz autocratic, cooperative and laissezfaire. Each group considered the advantages and disadvantages of one style of leadership and give their preference for the best style. As expected all three groups found cooperative style to be most preferable and laissez style to be least preferable. However it was also pointed out that in certain situations, such as in a crisis, autocratic style may be more useful to achieve results. It was said by one participant that it is not cooperative style that is relevant but the ability to think rationally. All three styles should be open to a manager and the manager should select the most appropriate style. It is dependent upon the situation and the subordinate with whom the manager deals with. There is no single effective style. For management and leadership is not a technique. When interacting with human beings one cannot use techniques. Issues
cannot be put into mathematical formula. Human interaction require tact, flexibility and empathy. There are no recipes in management. The principle is to always see with whom you are dealing and deal with him or her as an individual.

Finally the participants were given 5 choices to decide on the characteristics of a good manager in the year 2000. The following characteristics came on top:

- Innovative (have vision) - 13
- Humane - 11
- Creative - 11
- Devoted - 10
- Inspiring/Motivating - 8

It is interesting that characteristics such as objective, cool, well mannered got zero points and sense of humour, cooperative, patient, knowledgeable, diplomatic, dictatorial (when necessary) got only 1 point.

It was pointed out that perhaps all these characteristics, with low points are included in the qualities of being humane which receive 11 points.
WORKSHOP ON RADIO BROADCAST MANAGEMENT 2000

Recap of meeting on Day 4, 9-12-93
Dr Anura Goonasekera

The day began with a recap of the previous day's proceedings. The main agenda for the day was a discussion on problem analysis and problem solving. Christoph introduced the subject by describing the 6-step method of problem analysis and problem solving in a team (pro-team). The objective was better output in a cooperative manner. It was a methodology for identification and motivation through transparency (openness) and participation. The aim was to improve methodological skills of problem solving. There were 3 types of skills.

1. Technical
2. Methodological
3. Personal-social skills

6-step method was on methodological skills. It was on how to guide a group by the application of moderation and by visualization. The 6 steps in relations to a problem are:

1. Description of situation. What are the facts?
2. Problem analysis and definition. What are the problems?
3. Formulation of target. What do we want to achieve?
4. Development of solution. What are the alternatives?
5. Decision upon solution. Which alternative is best?
6. Plan of action. Who does what by when?

This method will ensure higher degree of acceptance and identifi-
cation. It catches the synergy effect of the group.

At the subject level there is task orientation in the group through the leadership of a moderator. Everyone in the group must aim at quality and acceptance.

At personal level, there is interaction. It is concerned with the interests and relations among the participants.

The main tool of the moderator are the core questions given above. It is guidance through questions. The meeting should everytime end with a plan of action.

Next the group considered the problem of staff motivation in a 10 year old local broadcasting station of 100 employees, where average age of employees was 40 years.

It was emphasised that in problem analysis, the problem should be framed as a negative condition. Each participant wrote on cards, one problem in motivation. These then were analysed by the group on the basis of cause and effect. This generated a problem tree. Next each participant gave 3 reasons for the problems mentioned.

In formulation of target, a target window was used which had 4 frames with quality (what), quantity (how much), time (when), location (where).
The group agreed that the core problem was weak management. This was analysed in terms of the problem window.

Next the group considered alternative solution which was a brainstorming session. After this, the group decided on the best solution on criteria. The process was one of weighing, selection and combination. Finally a plan of action was designed.

In the discussion that followed the 2 group presentations, Christoph pointed out that often persons focus on money as the central problem. But the strategy of pro-team is to operate within the given constraints. You need to accept what you cannot realistically change and try to do the best even in a bad situation.