

# Radio for the Facebook Generation

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*James Cridland, Nick Piggott - September 2008*

*This is an adaptation of the script for the RadioDays conferences. For the full visual experience, contact [james@cridland.net](mailto:james@cridland.net) or [nick@piggott.name](mailto:nick@piggott.name)*

Have you poked anyone, or been poked, on Facebook today? Or have you Twittered today?

This session is about the evolution of radio in a world of social networking, personalised music and instant messaging. What are we going to do with radio for people who think that SMS is pretty normal now, think nothing of using a webcam to chat to friends around the world, and have more music in their pockets than most radio stations have on their playout systems.

So, you might wonder why someone from the BBC, a public service broadcaster, is sharing this stage with someone from Global, a commercial radio operator.

In the world of digital media, it's important that we are consistent in how we develop new services. Neither the BBC nor commercial radio is big enough to go alone, so we've developed a simple principle: **agree on technology, compete on content.**

This allows us to create new services that are consistent for listeners, and really importantly, consistent for manufacturers of consumer electronic devices. Where it's appropriate, we work together to agree a common technology approach, and then we compete on the content and experience that listeners get from it.

Some of the things we'll show you today we've collaborated on, some we're competing on. But the idea behind this has worked well for nearly 10 years now.

So let's start with some of the benefits of new media.

We all know that our audience are closer to their favourite radio station than they are to almost any other media. And we also all know that the internet allows us to get closer still.

The BBC wants to get closer to its young audience - and Radio 1's Big Weekend is one way that we can do that. This is Europe's biggest free ticketed event, with over 30,000 free tickets available over the weekend. You got a ticket by visiting the Radio 1 website. So far, so good. The problem was that while we had 30,000 tickets to give away... we had 518,000 people

wanting one.

So, there would have been 488,000 people who were unhappy because they didn't get a ticket. So we decided to email them a different ticket instead. One that, when they printed it out and showed it in front of their webcam, gave them an exclusive session from one of the bands played. How cool is that? By getting closer to our audience by using the internet, we've given unique content to every one of those listeners who missed out on the Big Weekend. Making them closer to us. So they'll listen longer.

Young audiences still spend longer with radio than they do with any other media - TV, their iPods, instant messaging or the web. Overall, people spend 25 minutes a week using MySpace for example, yet over 10 hours a week tuning in to BBC Radio 1. *[Source: RAJAR]*

But it's how they're tuning in that's changing. In terms of hours, the total time people spend tuned-in, nearly 18% is now on a new platform: digital television, the internet, or DAB *[Rajar]*. Which do you think is the most popular - which is listened-to for longest? If you think you know the answer, think again.

Most people think that the internet is the most popular way. It's not. It accounts for just 2%. It's still very important for us, because it offers interactivity and time-shifting which is difficult on other platforms. But if you think that the internet also means that people tune in to Argentinian jazz stations rather than their local or national station, only 13% of that 2% of internet listening is to out of area radio. Most people tune in to the stations they know and love.

3.3% of total hours are listening to radio on the television. It's an important, and growing, amount of audience to us. It enables additional trial, particularly in environments without a radio - a front room, for example.

But in the UK, 11% of total hours - nearly six times as much as the internet - is done on DAB. Radio does best when it's free at the point of the consumption, when it's low-power and when it's mobile. DAB is closest to the old analogue world, but is capable of doing all of that; and it's great for things that enhance the radio experience too.

But we also want radio to be on all the amazing media devices that people own now. Mobile phones, MP3 players, cars, home media systems, streaming on the internet - they all have screens on them, and when you're listening to music, the screen has useful information for you - artist, title, pictures. So shouldn't radio give useful information visually too?

Of course, finding out the current song has always, and probably will always, be an important thing for listeners. See if you can identify songs - and then see if it's easier with the answers written up in front of you.

Adding visuals like this isn't "cheap TV" - it's giving you useful information through a complimentary communication path. If you put a screen on a radio - or indeed, put a radio inside a screen like a digital photo frame or something, then you've got something people can glance at and find out more. And more than just music information.

GWR FM ran an experiment with a strange radio which had a screen on it - with just text information. We dropped it into peoples' houses, replacing their existing radio, to see what would happen. Very very quickly they all developed a habit of glancing at the screen to see what was on it. This is a new, complimentary, communication path for radio. Something that people could glance at during breakfast time, whilst they're working, or whilst they're on the move in a car.

And text is unexpectedly valuable, even on small displays. We can send news, weather, travel, sports results, programme information, station promotions, competitions, as well as music information. We can even include listeners' SMS texts to the studio. The BBC's research shows that 25% of DAB users use livetext every day.

Commercial radio uses it to also advertise on - and it works well; research seems to show that people read livetext when they're ready to engage with an advertiser's message. And according to the UK's Radio Advertising Bureau, 76% of people regularly use the scrolling text.

When you start putting radio into more advanced devices, you get an even lovelier screen to play with. Everyone else puts lovely colour pictures up there, so we should too. Otherwise it just looks a poor comparison.

You can make radio look amazing with some visualisation: station logos, sporting information, traffic cameras, ways to connect with the studio, and a whole heap more... including advertising that works much more effectively.

Now, earlier we said that visual radio is more effective radio. How can we say that? Helpfully, there's been proper academic research into the effect of combining audio and still visuals. That's still visuals, not video. The conclusion is that the right combination of the spoken word, combined with the right visual support can increase understanding and recall by 30%. Actually, if you include video, the effectiveness goes down, so take that TV. But can you see the value of doing something that increases the effectiveness of radio as a medium by 30%. Generally it's great, but commercially its amazing.

And producing this content isn't difficult or expensive - it's mainly repurposing what we already produce for on-line, but giving it context against what's on-air now.

But now that we've got some amazing new radio for people to listen to, and look at, how we going to drag them away from their iPods and their Facebook?

What technology can we use to help people discover radio? It used to be called Electronic Programme Guide - EPG. And it normally looks something like an electronic version of a printed television guide. It shows you what's on when, so you can plan what you're going to watch. Maybe even set a reminder. You can do the same thing on a radio, although it's a bit hard to use on a small display. It might first appear to be more useful for radio stations that have programmes, like the public service broadcasters, rather than stations that play lots of music, but that's not quite true.

More devices can record off the radio, so an EPG allows listeners to find programmes they might otherwise miss - maybe specialist music programmes - and turn them into their very own podcasts. Podcasts of the complete show, that they record themselves and listen to when they want. Podcasts that we don't need to pay licences or royalties for. As James will show you shortly, letting people timeshift their radio listening, or find radio programmes they'd never even thought of listening to, can really increase the audience numbers.

But the data behind a programme schedule is really really useful, even for a commercial music station.

Global wrote an application for Facebook for Capital Radio. It's got the usual things, like being able to listen to the radio station, but here's where we wanted to do something special. We look into your music interests - the ones you put into Facebook yourself - and cross match them against the music schedule for Capital. If we spot an artist you like coming up in the next couple of hours, we tell you here. It's using our schedule data to provide a much more specific reason for someone to listen to Capital. And when they do, it writes that into their newsfeed so that all their friends can see that they started listening, so maybe they'll listen too to find out why.

And that's probably a different way of looking at EPG. For a programme based station, it's about advertising the programmes. For a music based station it's about advertising the music. On your MP3 player, you can look at your music collection in lots of different ways - by artist, title, genre, album - which helps you navigate your way round it more easily - although it's probably not ideal.

But what happens if you organise radio stations in the same way - or even blend in the music that a radio station plays into your music collection. A music collection that now includes references

to songs coming up soon on the radio. Now that's a way to sneak radio back into people's listening habits.

Of course, how you categorise music is very important. The BBC's new music website is now listing information for almost every single music artist there is; and it links this with programmes on the EPG, and the play information for each and every artist we play. This enables people to find new programmes and stations that they weren't aware of before. So, if you're a fan of x, you should be listening to y; or if you're a fan of a, you should tune in to b.

And Moose 6 is another project we're working on - it'll go live before the end of the year. As you listen live to BBC 6music, you have to type in words that describe the music you're listening to - tags, if you like. You're playing against someone else, who also has to do this. And the better your tags match, the higher your score. Of course, we then get a tremendous amount of data from this game: a wealth of useful words that describe every single song we play, and therefore every single programme we broadcast.

This kind of data is important to help people find the programmes they want. Because it's very clear that people are consuming media in different ways these days. And for proof, we only need to look at the BBC iPlayer.

Let's talk television for a minute. Already, 2% of people watch EastEnders, the BBC's regular soap opera, on the iPlayer. It's one of our most watched programmes. It's available on two of the BBC's television channels, one of which, BBC1, is in every home in the land. Yet 2% of the audience are watching this on their computer.

CBBC broadcasts a programme called MI High - and 20% of the audience watches the programme on iPlayer. One out of every five is watching online.

And The Mighty Boosh, a cult comedy programme aired on BBC2, is even higher. 40% of the audience watches that programme on iPlayer. That's an incredible figure.

This is not just confined to television. BBC Radio added the ability to listen-again to radio way back in 2002, and we've seen programmes like Radio 1's Essential Mix seeing virtually equal audience figures on the radio and again online. So, 50% of the audience now enjoy that programme on iPlayer. And that iPlayer audience is growing, too. In total, we're seeing 22 million hours of radio consumed online.

Podcasts, as well, allow people to enjoy our radio programming in a new way - particularly relevant to mobile audiences. The BBC has around 16 million downloads of our podcasts every month, and as we add new programmes, that number is increasing.

Now, iPlayer and podcasts are fine, but those are programmes that have already been broadcast.

Both Pandora and last.fm have promised experiences that are better than traditional radio - a limitless supply of music that's perfect for you, without commercials and interruptions from presenters. A personalised experience.

Both work in a similar kind of way - looking to work out what songs you like by using the judgement of others. It works sometimes, and other times, well, it doesn't. But if last.fm and Pandora can make a personalised music experience, then why not a radio station?

XFM is Global's alternative music station, which is a hell of a tricky job to do. By definition, a station that's "the alternative" has very diverse audience expectations. We wanted to put together a personalised experience that played the music and artists that people wanted, but still stay very clearly an XFM experience - something way closer to listening to the radio than listening to a CD.

So we made mi-XFM. It's personalised \*radio\*, not personalised music. It's different because it includes the expert input of XFM's music team, combined with your own music preferences. As the XFM playlist changes each week, mi-XFM changes too, but always keeping your preferences. So if you don't like Oasis - say goodbye to Oasis, and you won't get them again. If you like The White Stripes, give them a boost, and you'll hear them more. And of course, unlike real radio, when you don't want to hear a song - just skip it...

It really is a personalised version of XFM - not a CD collection of indie and alternative music tracks.

Critically, we make it sound like a radio station. It has station production in it, it has advertisements in it (which you can't skip), and at some stage we're going to bring presenter voicetracks in to blend in current information. You could choose to have news bulletins in your mi-XFM, or not. Or travel. Or anything else from the main station. It's like giving the listener their own copy of the playout system in the studio.

Of course, we're learning lots from what our listeners are doing in mi-XFM, because we can see in almost real-time their reactions to songs. That's pretty helpful too.

mi-XFM was so popular that we followed it up with personalised radio for another demanding audience - My Classic FM, where you decide how much opera, baroque or modern symphonic music you hear...

In our personalised music service, people can feed back their music preferences with a click of a few buttons. But what about interaction with live radio?

Probably every radio station in the world gets SMSs - text messages - from listeners. It's a simple and popular way of interacting with the radio. But radio is the passive medium - the medium you can listen to while you do something else. What happens when you hear something interesting on the radio? Unless you're in a position to write it down, you'll probably forget about it pretty

quickly. That news report at breakfast time, the song you heard on the way to the bus stop, the advertisement you heard in the car.

It's impractical to expect people to use radio as a background medium - a very powerful position in a world of media that demand engagement - and then suddenly start interacting with you when they hear something interesting. What we need is something really simple that lets people timeshift their interactions with radio - and that something is Tagging.

It's the simplest idea in the world, and it has to be to make it work. You just press one button on your radio when you hear something interesting, and that's it. Your interest in interaction has been saved, as a tag, ready for you to pick it up later on when you've got more time.

So you go through your day pressing tag - tag on your radio, tag on your mobile, press Tag on your handsfree headphones - and it builds up your list of tags. And your favourite radio station keeps a list of everything you've tagged.

Here's the clever bit. It's up to each radio station to decide what information to surface from each Tag. It can depend on who you are, what you're interested in, and what you tagged. Tag a news item, get more information on that story. Tag a show, get offered the podcast, or contact the show or find out more about the host. Tag a song... well, yes, of course, you can buy it. Or look at it on YouTube. Or find out more about the artist.

That's about using the power of radio to create interest, and then holding it until people can do something about it.

A bit earlier, I talked about combining radio with visuals making communication 30% more effective, and the potential revenue effects. Now let's imagine what might happen when you can tag radio commercials. This is where, commercially, it's really interesting - direct response radio. Measurable response to radio advertising.

PURE recently launched their Evoke Flow, which is a combined FM/DAB/WiFi Radio, and they have announced they will support Tagging on Flow.

Tagging helps the listener find things they found interesting on the radio. But they can also share their tags and, much like in mi-XFM, the things they tag can help them find people who like listening to the same things they do. And that's our next subject - radio at the centre of social networking...

Last.fm. It lets me share my favourite music with my friends. And of course, many radio stations are on Last.fm, too.

But what would happen if you could not just share your favourite music... but your favourite radio programmes instead?

This is what Radio Pop is. It's a prototype from my team, where my friends get to know what radio programmes I enjoy. So this is my colleague Tristan's page, and you can see he's enjoying Radio 4, and a bit of Radio 1. And this is what everyone's doing. Radio 1 appears to be doing well. The "pop" bit of radio pop is our name for tagging, and was what Nick was talking about earlier.

It's early days for this; but we can see a tremendous future in using social data for radio in this way. But of course, it only works when you listen to radio on the internet. Doesn't it.

What we need is a radio, that connects to the internet, to tell me what my friends are enjoying on the radio, and to tell RadioPop what I'm tuning into as well. We need that radio to make this kind of work really fly.

So we've built one. I'd have loved to have brought it here today, but unfortunately, I was advised that taking a prototype radio with funny-looking wiring through airline security possibly wasn't the cleverest thing to do, so you'll have to make do, I'm afraid, with these pictures and this video.

This is one of only four in the world. It's a prototype, so we're not making any more. But all the ideas in here are free to anyone that wants to take them further, under a simple, free, attribution licence.

Three things I want to show you...

First, this radio comes apart. It's built so that people can add bits and take bits away, and so that people can build new modules. One idea is a big colour screen. Another idea is a children's tear-off radio, which would record all our children's programming and store them on an MP3 player. Or maybe a now-playing projector. Or a remote control, or an iPod Dock. The module I've brought here today is the social radio module.

Second, the tuning knob is interesting. It's got a big bit and a little bit. The smaller bit is your favourite stations, which your radio automatically learns. Just turn through here, and you'll find all your favourites. The bigger bit tunes through all of them.

So this is how it works. These spots are for my friends. When the light goes on, they're tuning in to the radio. I can press their light... and find out what they're listening to... and even join them.

All these ideas are free. And you can download this pamphlet, which goes into it in loads more detail, at this website address - or just look at the BBC Radio Labs Blog.

All these ideas will work best if we all work together. That's been the reasons behind DAB's success in the UK, and the driving force behind much that you've seen today.

We're working hard to ensure that we agree on technology, but compete on content.

All of us in this room can keep radio relevant for the Facebook generation if we work together.

Thank you for your time today.