



**NCRA Idea Thursdays - 4 December 2014 - Dave Del Rizzo
Programmer Peer Reviews**

I know that many stations (if not all) do what is called air-checking. As I understand it, one person, or a committee of people occasionally listen to shows and make notes regarding quality, content, etc... Those notes are either stored, or perhaps even shared with programmers. This is something that we understand to be useful to the process of ensuring good program quality, pointing out tips and tricks for improvement, identifying potential trouble spots, you name it. A useful and a valuable exercise.

But what do you do when you don't have a Program Coordinator, or Committee who play that role for you professionally?

At Peach City Radio, we've developed a Program Peer Review system. Twice annually, all current programmers - that is, programmers who are currently making podcasts on a semi-regular or regular basis - are asked to listen to 2 specific, recent episodes of another show (assigned pseudo-randomly). There's even a web page with a form that each programmer fills out during the review, to make it just that much easier.

There are 2 parts to the review, the objective part, where reviewers can review and comment on audio levels, editing, extraneous noise, etc... The second part is more subjective, and we ask reviewers to comment on some of the more intangible qualities that go into making a program; flow, connection, relevance, etc... We ask that people set aside their musical tastes and try to be as fair and constructive with their critiques as possible. (we used to allow them to be anonymous, but we turfed that after the first go-round). The reviews are all submitted to the coordinator, and they send the completed reviews to the programmers who were reviewed.

Why do we do this?

First off, we don't have a huge listener base, and our programmers crave feedback. So this is a way to help our programmers get the feedback they need to make better shows. We've always been told, and we've always felt that listening to radio, makes for better programmers. I personally believe that this is not only true of high production value podcasts or radio shows - it applies to listening to anything and everything. Good and perhaps not-so-good. You either glean things that you would like to incorporate, or you learn about pitfalls to avoid in making your own show. Then, it's easier to listen to your own work with a more critical ear, and as a result, likely make your own show that much better - there's always room for improvement.

This is also a great way to get our programmers to listen to the other shows on the station, and not just become absorbed in their own shows and what they are doing. Programmers who are

up on the complete breadth of our schedule have a better context to describe the programs on our station to their friends when they are talking up our station.

Our programming committee is pretty stretched, what with all the policy writing and putting things into place, we don't have time to do air checks. Not to mention the fact that none of us are pros, or even have a ton of experience behind us - we're all learning together. So twice a year, this is the equivalent of our air check. It helps us to create a community of programmers. We ensure that everyone gets a different program to review each time, and that programmer preferences for genre are NOT taken into account. It keeps our programmers engaged, knowing that they are part of the process.

Oh yeah, did I mention that it's mandatory? At present, it's part of the requirements of having a show. It takes about 10 minutes (outside of listening to the shows) and we don't think it's too much of an imposition, what with all the benefits.

So that's that. I'd be curious to know if anyone else out there is doing something similar, and perhaps comparing notes. Maybe a Peer Reviewed Peer Review system?