



## NCRA Idea Thursdays - 18 December 2014 - Dave Del Rizzo A Protocol for Sharing

For our last Idea Thursday, I wanted to bring forward an idea that I personally am currently working on for the (near term) future of Peach City Radio. This is still very much in development, but it's a promise - this IS going to happen, and happen soon.

First, some background. At Peach City Radio, a large part of what dictates how we develop policies, and operating procedures is the fact that we don't really plan to hire staff until a little later in our development. What does this mean? Well, aside from saving us a bunch of money in the short term, it means that we are in for a hell of a lot of work as volunteers (don't worry, we're wading into this pool willingly with eyes wide open).

Getting in to observe as many other stations as possible, doing our research, and figuring out how they operate day-to-day has been a huge education (see Idea Thursdays Nov 26: Networking). The result of this effort is now to take as many of those functions as possible, determine how they apply to our working model, and automating them. The result - have a station that operates at maximum efficiency with minimal manpower. Idealistic? Maybe. But when you're building something from the ground up, the luxury of having that carrot to reach for *before* having to satisfy operational pressures is huge.

One set of functions in particular has piqued my interest (I'm the lead software programmer here, by the way). It usually falls under the jurisdiction of the Program Manager/Director: logging, charting and compliance. So I'm developing a logging system that will work for us, and allow our Program Director to make weekly calculations on compliance, assemble charts, even produce sponsor ID and ad playout statistics, all with the press of a button. But that's not this week's great idea.

The idea for this week comes as a result of all of this software development, but more than that, it's the foundation upon which it is built - a 'protocol' or 'standard' for logs (or playsheets to some of you). This kind of thinking doesn't require everyone to drop what they currently use and make a change, it's meant to be an add-on, and it can most likely be adapted to any software that any of you are using. The idea is that it may make sharing programs between stations much easier in terms of making sure that compliance is met, and absorbing logs from those programs into whatever system is being used to track that information.

Imagine going to the NCRA Program Exchange, and downloading a show you're syndicating, and with it will come a log file that can be instantly slurped up into whatever software you use (SAM, Airtime, your own DIY software, etc...) to calculate your weekly compliance.

Currently, I have version Beta of this protocol. It's written in XML (that's eXtensible Markup Language). It's not finalized, but the key is that it's extensible, it can be added to and customized as users see fit. The best part about this is that it will be able to be used with whatever software you're using at the moment, no need to overhaul anything - perhaps just a small bit of translation code - something that Brad Winter (CITR) and I have been talking about since NCRC Victoria. It's also mostly readable by humans too - you can see at a glance what you're dealing with (if you need to).

Now, this may be slightly pie-in-the-sky, and many of you may tell us it's unnecessary, too complicated, etc. etc... It's meant to be looked at as a tool for sharing between stations, to make that task easier for both parties. We all use hammers to pound nails, but occasionally a more efficient hammer comes along... The one thing that I've heard talked about above all else since I've joined the NCRA is *compliance*, so this is what we're doing internally to help us make sure we're compliant when we hit the airwaves. For us, it means that our programmers will never have to see a paper log sheet, further to that, it means that our Program Director will never have to cobble together bits and pieces of paper, emails, and randomly formatted text files comprising log/playout information to do their job. For the rest of you, maybe it's a seed to start thinking about how we all can share data much more readily, and easily, to make tasks such as sharing programs, or assembling national charts, a bit easier... ? I'll leave it there... please email me directly if you want to learn more, or if you want to lend a hand.

Well, this is our last Idea Thursday (for now) from Peach City Radio. We've shared some of our best mojo with you over the past 3 weeks, but what we've given back here in this forum pales in comparison to what we've received from this amazing group of NCRA'ers. I know it only gets better from here. Thanks for reading!