



Policy - Performance Evaluation for 'On-Air' Presenters

Background

Among the important concepts featured in the Handbook of the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA) is the need for evaluation of a radio station's performance. This entails evaluation of programs and of the performance of the volunteers who present them. These concepts do no more than mirror widely accepted community practices regarding the evaluation of workers' job performance and their personal development. The following are some pertinent quotes from the CBAA Handbook:

- "It's only by review that the success or otherwise, for the station and the volunteer, can be evaluated."
- "... prudent management will put evaluation mechanisms into place to reduce the potential for conflict."
- "...to ignore the evaluation process is to invite trouble, volunteer stagnation, poor performance, burnout, conflict, and a general deterioration in the station's sound."

These principles are reflected in this Handbook, which in the section entitled "*Getting Involved*" explains ArtSound's rights which include:

- the expectation that the performance and productivity of volunteers will be of a professional standard, and
- the establishment of volunteer consultation and feedback mechanisms, a clear and open communication with volunteers, and the rights and responsibilities of volunteers, which include:
 - clear and open communication from ArtSound management;
 - appropriate training, guidance and direction in their work;
 - having their services appropriately assessed and recognised, and
 - participation in quality-assurance programs.

A number of other community radio stations (including Fine Music stations) have formal review processes which reflect CBAA standards, and are accepted as an integral part of continuous improvement for individuals and for the station.

Objectives of the Performance Evaluation Policy and Procedure

- To promote continuous improvement of ArtSound's 'on-air' quality.
- To respond to listener comment and internal feedback.
- To ensure that ArtSound's programs remain relevant and appropriate given its license parameters, changing demographic, and sponsors' needs and expectations.
- To ensure that all presenters contribute equitably in 'off-air' volunteer roles as required for effective and efficient operation of the station (a minimum requirement will be an 'off-air' contribution based on an independent assessment of the presenter's overall contribution to ArtSound's operations, or an equivalent).
- To identify the training and development needs of individuals and groups of presenters and to assist the Training Committee in prioritising and targeting training and broadcast standards.
- To provide input to annual volunteer awards, life membership bestowal, etc.

Evaluation procedure

The Training committee may use the following *assessment criteria* to evaluate presenters. Presenters will be asked to begin the procedure by rating themselves against the criteria, which then are used by the Committee in providing feedback to presenters.

- A. *Competent*: performance adequately meets 'on' and 'off-air' requirements. Certification as 'competent' will in most cases come with notes about 'on' or 'off-air' improvements agreed for implementation within the next 3 months. If substantial improvement is required, a training schedule must be agreed.
 - B. *Not yet competent*: If the presenter is not meeting one or more significant competency requirements, 'on-air' restrictions or removal from 'on-air' privileges may be applied until the presenter attains competency. The Committee will appoint a mentor and specify a time frame for further review. In cases of presenters being far from competent, the Committee will withdraw 'on-air' privileges, and the presenter may choose to undergo retraining and submit a new application to the Program Committee for 'on-air' privilege (as for new trainees).
- After assessment each presenter will be advised by the Committee of the rating, of the reasons for it, and of any recommendations.
 - Each presenter who receives a 'competent' rating will be required at the conclusion of the assessment procedure, each year, to sign an updated **Performance Contract** with ArtSound, which will be a prerequisite for allocation of 'on-air' program time and coverage under ArtSound's insurances. Presenters who are deemed 'competent' but needing skills refresher training must sign the updated Performance Contract following a satisfactory outcome from the further training.
 - Presenters who receive a 'not yet competent' rating may appeal the assessment. Appeals must be submitted to the Board in writing within one month of receipt by the presenter of the Committee's assessment. The Board will deal with appeals within 60 days from date of receipt of the appeal. The principles of natural justice are applied by the Board in dealing with any appeal. The decision of the Board, on the appeal, is final.

Criteria for Evaluation of Presenter Performance

1. *Appropriateness of Program and Content*

- Content takes account of Program Brief and type, envisaged audience, time of day, seasonality, etc.
- Mix of material, presentation, and research ensures excitement and enthusiasm amongst target audience while reflecting highest 'on-air' standards.

2. *Personal Style and 'On-Air' Standards*

- Maintains vocal variety and appeal.
- Maintains an interesting and appealing personal delivery.
- Projects a confident and professional style.
- Projects an acceptable and identifiable 'personality' consistent with ArtSound ethos.
- Accuracy of delivery including absence of ums & ahs, annoying vocal distractions, poor grammar.
- Accuracy of pronunciations including composers, titles, foreign words – seeks assistance when unsure.

- Exhibits no evidence of inappropriate language, lack of respect for likely listener sensitivities in areas of gender, race, religion, politics, age, etc.
- Follows running-sheet requirements including give-aways, draws, etc.

3. *Technical Dexterity*

- Competent panelling, including smooth transitions between sources.
- Accurate attention to audio levels and absence of popping.
- Competent studio changeover procedures.
- Appropriate and timely use of time calls, IDs, CSAs, Promos.
- Accurate playing of, and respect for, SPON and other essential on-air material including emergency announcements, 'live' reads, etc.
- Competent handling of both technical problems and failures, and emergency situations such as power failure, bomb threat, etc.

4. *Choice of Music and its Presentation*

- Choice of material conforms to station policy, Program Briefs, and licence parameters.
- Awareness of presenters' responsibilities as set out in this Handbook and, as a representative of ArtSound, the legal responsibilities under the station's licence.
- Ability to link adjacent tracks in terms of a 'story' or style.
- Avoidance of 'jarring' juxtapositions – e.g. quiet classical piece followed by up-beat blues or world.
- Providing effective ebb and flow of music across the program.

5. *Production Principles*

- Demonstrates ample preparation including previewing of music and inserted segments.
- Accepts need for program re-scheduling or cancellation as part of overall program content, scheduling and management.

6. *Attendance, Punctuality, and Observance of Protocols*

- Adequately works with, and responds to, Program Coordinator in terms of rostering, notification of impending absences, changes and last-minute replacement needs.
- Shows up when rostered.
- Arrives punctually and is ready for orderly change-over:
 - Provides smooth segue for in-coming presenters – e.g., returns panels, CD player, and other equipment to 'default' or 'normal' positions.
 - Sets up Wavecart and other program segments.
 - Points out any technical problems.
- Complies with lock-up and security procedures.
- Cross-promotes other programs.
- Willingly fills-in or presents when colleagues unavailable due to absence.

7. *Training and Development and Continuous Improvement*

- Readiness to identify and participate in informal or formal training and development for self-improvement or improvement of others.
- Readiness to take on mentoring roles to assist other presenters.

8. 'Off-Air' Participation

- Willingness to take on other roles within the station.
- Willingness to help with events such as outside broadcasts, Radiothons, external recording events, etc.
- Willingness to give at least the required 'off-air' contribution.
- Preparedness to take on less glamorous roles such as: facility maintenance, cleaning, brochure distribution, and basic admin tasks.
- Willingness to engage the audience by responding to listener content enquiries and being an 'ambassador' at public events.
- Appropriate telephone manner when dealing with members, other presenters and/or the public.
- Assists in identifying potential sponsors, members or supporters that may contribute to station success.

9. Awareness of: acknowledgement of and responsiveness to, listener and peer feedback and comments:

- Actively seeks and takes on board, feedback from listeners, peers, and the community, in terms of acknowledging the views received and responding to them as appropriate.

Implementation of this Policy and Procedure

ArtSound's Board adopted these performance evaluation arrangements as a necessary and progressive step to help 'on-air' presenters to hone their skills and advance the performance and reputation of the station. The Board is aware of the potential problems that can be associated with the implementation of formal performance evaluation procedures in a practical work environment, and has directed that this policy and procedure are to be applied with due consideration both for the station and for the rights and welfare of the volunteers concerned.