

Radio Roles and Responsibilities

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The fact sheet below explores the roles commonly found in radio. Some are unique to SYN Radio, while others are exclusive to commercial stations.

Radio Programming Manager

This role holds responsibility for all content broadcast by the station. The position changes annually at SYN due to its policy of providing opportunities to as many young people as possible. In most cases at other community and commercial stations, this is a permanent position. Their responsibility is to oversee all programs and presenters, ensuring the smooth operating of the station.

Within SYN, this position also liaises with the Radio Programming Committee at the turn of each radio season to select new programs from the collection of applicants, supporting the programs throughout the season.

In commercial stations, the duties of this role fall within the title of Content Coordinator or Program Director - making decisions on programming, music, and reviewing demos of new talent.

SYN Radio Programming Committee

Members of the Committee (usually numbered between 4-7) work alongside the Radio Programming Manager in programming new radio seasons from the applications submitted, as well as receiving a group of programs to support more closely.

Music Director

This prominent role at SYN is also found at particular stations with a strong music focus e.g. Triple J. The role is the main interface between radio stations and the music industry, overseeing the musical direction the station takes, as well as providing programs access to the music they require. The recognisable “sound” of a station’s music can be attributed to the Music Director and their team.

Talks Manager

Responsible for organising all guests, interviews and live on-air performances on SYN Radio, the Talks Manager and their team establish and maintain music, entertainment, arts and external industry relationships on behalf of SYN. This busy role acts as a central point between publicists, artists, music labels and SYN presenters and producers.

While some commercial networks may have a liaison for interviewees, the role is predominantly unique to SYN to coordinating the high volume of interviews between the various programs to prevent duplicate interviews.

Producer

This role is responsible for the output and direction of the program. In many SYN radio programs, a show is able to be prepared and go to air without the assistance of a producer that is separate from the presenters. In this instance, a presenter often adopts the duties of the producer.

- In commercial settings however, and those SYN programs with a producer, the role requires:
- Screening the suitability of any callers
- Recruiting hosts for the show
- preparing run sheets
- Keeping the show and segments to time
- Editing show audio and pre-recorded segments
- Providing and organising content material for presenters to draw from
- Providing music and show media
- Identifying and monitoring the direction for the presenters to take over the course of a talk break, singular show and entire run of the program
- Organising and managing guests

For some programs, the producer may also operate the control panel for broadcast - though in commercial settings particularly, this role is held by a separate individual. In a commercial setting, the producer is usually situated in an adjoining room to the presenters connected by window. A good producer has a clear idea of the objectives of the program, and the actions necessary to get there in development with their on-air talent.

Executive Producer

This role (unique to SYN's flagship brands) oversees all content areas - inclusive of radio, as well as any screen or online output - coordinating the entirety of the brand. For some brands, where unique screen or online content is minimal, the EP will often focus on the direction and daily operation of the radio program. At other radio stations, the definition of a Producer is often incorporated into the role of Executive Producer who has an Assistant Producer working under them. The roles of EP and Producer are fluid and are generally responsible for everything that needs to be done to make the show happen.

Daily Producers

At SYN, this role is often a delegated role of the EP, performing the function of producer for those flagship programs broadcast every weekday (e.g. Get Cereal, The Hoist). As such, they are responsible for that day's program.

Radio presenter

Within SYN, the role of radio presenter encapsulates many of all the roles listed below - particularly relevant to stand-alone programs with one or two people involved in the program. In a smaller community station such as SYN, presenters generally act as producer as well.

This role:

- Introduces and concludes the program to listeners
- Hosts talk breaks on either side of songs
- Front and back-announces songs
- Takes calls from listeners in programs with a talkback component (an uncommon feature at SYN)
- Maintains on-air direction of segments within a talk break.

A good radio presenter is informative, well-prepared and original, with a clear idea of how to engage with the listener as an individual.

Panel operator

This role - where separate from the function occasionally performed by presenters/producers - operates the control panel, which manages:

- Volume levels
- Broadcast output
- Any recording software used
- Phone switchboard
- SMS log
- Playing of music from music player (CD player, iPod, etc.) or media management system (e.g. SYN's media system Flywire)
- Faders to smoothly bring songs in and out
- Usage of the delay or "dump" button
- Cueing of any audio to be played to ensure it is prepared to play

Segment contributors

Some programs fill segments with a regular weekly guest for a talk break. Segment contributors usually bring a specific topic or on-air activity which are suited to the short-form presentation of this topic - sometimes for no more than 5-10 minutes. As such, their topic is often required to be particularly original. This segment may also take the form of a pre-record.

Audio producer

Also known as production director, this role creates audio content to be played on-air (show IDs, promos, etc.). Most, if not all pre-recorded material played on-air has been produced by the audio director. Within some commercial stations, the audio director is responsible for the station's online audio content i.e. podcasts, edited interviews, skits and segments from a show.

Within SYN, it would be rare for a program to have a separate role performing these functions, and these tasks are usually carried out by a program's presenter/producer, or from SYN's production team.

Online producer

The role is responsible for the online presence of the program. This includes maintaining the program's website, and potentially creating unique content for it - photos and video footage, for instance. Again, a separate individual for this role would be unusual for most SYN programs, where presenters/producers - in addition to the above-mentioned tasks - would usually manage the uploading of podcasts to the SYN website and maintain social network pages (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) and linking these to their SYN program page.

Sales/Creative Coordinator

Within commercial stations, the roles of the sales team and a creative coordinator are closely intertwined. The sales team will often contain the largest amount of the station's staff, as they are responsible for selling the airtime to advertisers.

The creative coordinator is responsible for all advertisements featured on the station, managing the copywriting team (writers for promotional advertisements), production team, as well as coordinating with the sales team.

As SYN is a community station, it does not rely on revenue from advertisers to continue its operations. SYN does generate sponsorship from businesses, however, and radio presenters will often be required to play a sponsorship announcement during their program.

To find out more about radio at SYN, please contact the Radio Programming Manager at radio@syn.org.au, or visit syn.org.au to find out how you can host your own show.

About the writer

Dominic Billings is a 25-year-old who began at SYN Media presenting a standalone comedy radio program, Soup du Jour, going on to become Executive Producer and host of Naughty Rude, SYN's sex and relationships flagship; additionally featuring as a cast member in the television show of this brand. Dom has also been host and assistant producer of Get Cereal TV; assistant producer and supporting cast member for SYN TV series Postcodes; SYN Radio Programming Manager and Programming Committee member and host of In Joke, SYN's comedy flagship.