

# Radio: You don't care about your listeners

 By [Chris Jordan](#)

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I see this write-up not going down too well with you already...



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But give me a chance to extend on the title of this blog post, and hopefully come to see the highlights of asking ourselves this important question: does your radio station care about me?

## Are you keeping the listener in mind?

“Care” about you. This a free public service that has one job. To keep you happy. For the 20 or so minutes you might have to yourself in the morning before your day goes full throttle. Maybe it’s as your daily passive companion while you kill time at the gym or while you’re in public transport. Perhaps it’s your provider of information and insight on current affairs and diverse conversations around thoughts and opinions, that is your day’s private indulgence?

That sounds wonderful, right? The perfect fit for the perfect medium.

But. This means you ACTUALLY work for them. The listener. You should be working for them. An obvious statement. But do

you?

Are stations around the world keeping the listener in mind? All the time? That's actually very difficult for any station to answer. Even for the best of the best, of the best.

I watched the conference that hosted Coleman Insights last year in Hollywood, where they highlighted [“Outside Thinking: Flip The Script On How You Think About Your Radio Station”](#). The insight of their presentation was around how much we overestimate the loyalty we get from listeners. Just because we are here doing great radio, we assume we have an actively involved audience that is ready to do quite a lot for their radio station. This isn't true though.

We are, however in fact, still important. To the listeners *lifestyle*, that is. Coleman Insights stand by the statement that radio stations are forgetting about modern age technological living and mass diverse changes in people's lives. And even still. How we manage, construct, create and converse radio today – is still very important. So what do we do?

Let me repeat. To their *lifestyle*. Not to their lives. We have to adjust to their incredibly dynamic lifestyles.

It's a big deal. With massive duty.

## **Trial, test, doom, and unknown**

We are in a very “trial, test, doom, and unknown” phase in radio. We are starting to only get a real grasp on what fits where, how much it is of what needs to be out there and where it should be, where the onslaught of social media has REALLY robbed us of a market's attention, and of course, the constantly changing ways we have to accommodate listeners' lives in a consistently changing lifestyle landscape.

I know stations out there are trying their best. In South Africa, some have opened “off air” channels that supply you with a 12-24 hour music service, some podcasts and even some prerecorded presenter links to personalise the experience. It's cool in theory. But I can't expect that this is a reason why your numbers will be going up. It sounds like a costly, and ineffective way to remain relevant.

Here in South Africa, we are definitely not close to that type of devotion yet. Does it mean we don't have to start somewhere? Absolutely not. We need to, however, not risk losing focus on what needs to happen right now and stop chasing ten different goals like chickens without heads.

We had 702 currently release digital transmission with the Amazon Alexa. This is again, very impressive and pretty bad-ass – but no one cares. They really don't. There are stations that are jumping several guns here, while the rest of the industry is struggling to stay on air, period.

## **Keep the focus on core fundamentals**

Then there are some stations that are doing great things by keeping their focus on core fundamentals and expanding opportunities to strengthen listener loyalty.

East Coast Radio did well with their 24-hour user playlist promotion, giving the listeners free reign over their music choice for a full day. Simple. But the listeners are there and they love it. Reaching the “Top 10 most listened to” stations in South Africa comes with giving your listener what they need, which conveniently turns into what they want.

Kaya FM's remodelled approach to how they objectively offer current affairs and diversity in their listeners' lives has definitely grown their listenership loyalty. And their YouTube views and podcast plays are proof of that. Being a necessary choice to what their listener wants to be a part of in a lifestyle decision.

iKwekwezi FM's Pastor Maria Jacobs chose to visit inmates in Witbank for a revival ceremony recently (which you might be

rolling your eyes over) – but they are a PBS station that is committing to servicing their public on a “touch, feel and see” basis. Which station can say that their listeners are tuned in for an average of 3 and a half hours? iKwekwezi can.

So what are you doing wrong when all the TSL you can hone in for is an average of 15 – 25 min?

We are quick to judge the simpler approaches to regaining and regrowing a listenership in basic and “nonintellectual” ways. But it works. Give people what they need, and it will be what they want.

## ABOUT CHRIS JORDAN

Chris Christou Jordan is a multifaceted South African Author and Radio Industry Specialist.

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