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Radio Interviews

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INTRODUCTION

The author is not a trained journalist, merely a farmer given the opportunity to get behind a microphone twice a week and produce a live show that runs an hour over lunchtime each Tuesday and Thursday, which is then replayed the following morning between 6 to 7am. The show is called '*The Cockies Hour*' and is on Central FM, which broadcasts from Woodville to Hastings. The station is a commercial station, which has a few constraints and differences from a non-commercial station such as the state broadcaster, National Radio. However, both have many similarities.

DISCUSSION

When set this task, the author noticed a huge difference between how a scientist's brain functions and how many in the media work. In this instance, authors were set a deadline to write a paper or guidelines. The media is well used to deadlines. Our whole existence revolves around a never-ending series of pressing deadlines. But we were set a deadline that was four months before the conference! The author's deadline for his media commitments is drastically shorter than that and he suspects it is similar for most other journalists in whatever field they represent.

Scientists may be involved in a particular research project for several years but the author will think about what guests could be on the show only a few days or only a few hours beforehand. Radio's strengths are topicality and immediacy.

The owners and station managers of commercial radio are forever chasing advertising spending. Advertising is a radio station's sole form of income. They spread the advertisements apart with music, chat and interviews. So from their point of view it is the advertisements that are important and the editorial content is there just to flesh out the day. However, they need the editorial and if there is an interviewee who has an interesting subject and delivers information well, then listeners will stay tuned and will still be there when the advertisements play.

Agricultural scientists have plenty of interesting things going on so there is an opportunity to disseminate this through radio. The number of rural shows is low, but as well as my own they include Hokonui Gold's *Farming Show*, the rural part of National Radio and IRN's rural slot. If the presenters and producers know of individual scientists and their work, it is likely they will be more than happy to interview them.

Radio as a medium is good because of its immediacy. Even when it's pre-recorded, listeners usually think it's live. Radio interviews also allow the people being interviewed to get their message directly to a widespread audience without that message being filtered or misconstrued by an intermediate party. (Such as print journalists!).

Radio interviews can either be live or pre-recorded, conducted in the studio face-to-face, out in the field with a portable tape recorder or down the phone line with the interviewer in the studio and the interviewee on either a landline or cellular telephone. Studio face-to-face interviews work well but are used the least, merely because of the logistics of getting the subject there in the flesh. Tape recording in the field at a field day or someone's workplace is good for background noise, which, as long as it isn't too loud, gives the interview the stamp of authenticity and sets the scene. The telephone is the least trouble for both parties and interviewees are often more at ease in their own surroundings.

Some Do's and Don'ts

This may sound fairly basic, but if a time for an interview has been arranged, particularly if it is live, be at the other end of the telephone at the prearranged time. Make sure the telephone is on and if anyone else calls beforehand, kick them off promptly.

You will know your subject well but the interviewer a lot less so. However, if they are any good they should give you plenty of leads into the subject and keep it rolling along.

Again this is fairly basic, but speak clearly and unless it is already deeply ingrained into your speech patterns, try to avoid 'ums' and 'arhhs'.

If talking on a telephone, just speak into it as usual. If talking into a microphone, most are directional microphones, so speak straight at it rather than from the side. You should be fairly close to the microphone as well.

The interviewer should give you a prompt before time is up, allowing you to wrap up. The slot will likely have a time constraint, so when you are told, "We only have a minute left before the news" they will cut you off in midstream if you haven't wound up by that time.