

Practical Ideas for Involving Women in Radio

Guidelines for setting up radio courses for women:

1. What are the barriers to training for women ?
2. how can you plan strategies to involve more women in community radio training?
3. ideas for course content and organisation

1. Think about barriers to training for women

Lack of:

Childcare

Transport

Time

Money

Having caring responsibilities

Lack of information

Can't see the point

Worry that they could lose benefits

Lack of role models

Not confident about hearing own voice

Feeling that they haven't got anything to say

Fear of technical equipment

No training opportunities

Fear of jargon

Worried about meeting strange new people in an unfamiliar setting.

How can you plan courses that overcome some of these barriers?

2. Strategies for involving more women in community radio courses

- Consciously plan to involve more women in radio
- Have women only courses
- Make contacts with partners who already work with groups of women
- Find out what women want-ask them!
- Provide short 'taster' courses

3. Ideas for course content and organisation

- Involve participants in the planning process
- Make the sessions as participative and hands-on as possible
- Provide support for students
- Consider the role of community tutors: women who have already done a training course who can pass on skills and develop confidence
- Avoid jargon

Case study 1

Community tutors - using recent trainees as role models

This example involves two taster days partially planned and delivered by a group of women who had themselves recently experienced radio training at a university. In this case study these women will be called the 'community tutors'.

With support from university tutors the community tutors planned, designed and delivered two introductory taster days.

The overall aim of the 2-day course was to provide a group of women with an introduction and insight into what it might be like to take part in a longer radio training course for women. (The longer training course was actually part of the Permanent Waves project funded by the European Social Fund New Opportunities for Women programme.)

More specifically the aims of the two-day course were:

- ◆ to introduce the idea of setting up a women's station
- ◆ to show that you can learn radio skills in a supportive environment
- ◆ to provide an opportunity for women recently trained in radio skills to pass on experience
- ◆ to discuss programmes and audiences for a women's station
- ◆ to provide information about future courses

Other broader aims were:

- ◆ to demystify the process of programme making and to emphasize 'you could do this'
- ◆ to alleviate any fears or reservations that the participants may have about undertaking training within a university environment
- ◆ to encourage women to draw on their own life experience as potential material for radio programmes.

Prior to the two day training course the community tutors spent three twohour sessions planning the taster days. The community tutors were supported by the university staff.

Planning sessions

There were two advantages of using recent women trainees to plan and design the introductory course:

- Until a short time ago they had been complete novices themselves. This meant that they were ideally placed to remember the hopes and fears they had themselves when first starting their own radio training.
- The process of designing the training day was a useful way for the community tutors to reflect on their own learning. Planning the taster days allowed them to realise that skills that they had learned on the radio course, planning, thinking about the intended running order for programmes, could be used in other ways, in this case planning a short training programme.

Structure and content of planning session

The aim of the planning session was to help the community tutors to design the content of a taster course on radio.

Objectives

By the end of the session the community tutors should be able to:

- list the topics they think should be included in the taster course
- plan sessions based on reflection of their own experience

The university tutor outlined the purpose of the training days that were planned.

Some of the women had themselves been on a taster course prior to a longer more structured course. There was a brief discussion about what that had been like. The community tutors were asked to think back to their very first radio training session and to remember how they had felt.

The tutor then introduced a range of topics that could possibly be part of a two-day introduction to radio. The community tutors were divided into two groups of four and asked to come up with an outline using either the headings provided or their own ideas.

The suggested headings were as follows:

- Introduction to day
- Introduction - students
- Radio programming for and by women
- Introduction to doing a vox pop
- The idea of Bridge FM
- Digital editing
- Women as DJs
- Women on Wearside (a programme the community tutors had made)
- Interviewing skills
- Setting up a women's radio station
- Radio Venus (a women' radio station in Bradford)
- Likes and dislikes about radio

After about 20 minutes' discussion one person from each group presented the outline, giving reasons. Following this an outline for the course was prepared.

They came up with the following outline:

1. Introduction to course
2. Participants' introductions
3. Radio programming for and by women
4. The community tutors' own experience
5. Interviewing skills
6. Digital editing

The initial idea had been to get the community tutors to design the content. What happened was that they were so enthused that they wanted to play an active part in delivering the training.

Two more sessions took place where the university tutors and community tutors spent time planning the detail of the taster days.

The details to be discussed included the following:

Who would do what and when?

What resources would be needed - and who would be responsible for these?

Where would the training take place? The longer course would be held partly at a women's community-based training organisation.

A more detailed outline of the day can be found in Appendix I.

Recruitment

The women's training organisation was very well-used by local women. Users of the centre range from 16-80 +. As the centre was so well-used it was possible to recruit women to the taster days by posters around the building and by word of mouth.

Comments from participants

When asked about the best part of the day some of the comments were:

"Enthusiasm that came across by people who had tackled the course."

"Every single thing."

The use of community tutors was very popular with the participants.

Comments included:

"Excellent, they gave the information and really helped build the confidence of the 'new women'."

"They were relaxed, friendly and informal. Made us feel at ease and they knew what they were talking about"

"Excellent idea - they were very easy to talk to and to ask questions about the course."

What were the key factors in making the taster day a success?

The first training day was observed by an experienced trainer from community radio. She made a number of observations as to why the day was successful. These are summarised here to give ideas and food for thought for other people who want to try running similar workshops.

Location

Locating the training day in the women's centre itself meant that the participants were in an already supportive and familiar environment. It also ensured ease of transport and access for the local women. It also provided a stepping stone, in that once the women were introduced to the type of training and had experienced the approach of learning they were more likely to attend the second taster day to be held in the university.

Learning Environment

A welcoming environment was created in the centre. On arrival, each of the women had the opportunity to settle themselves, have a coffee and listen to the tape of a programme made by the community tutors. There was also a display with photos showing the community tutors on air, editing etc. The layout of the room was important, in that the chairs were in a circle, which immediately created a more informal feeling and lends itself better to participation and discussion.

Using community tutors

Involving the community tutors in the planning and delivery of the training, in its own way served to demystify working in radio which very often is seen as an area of working which is beyond the scope of ordinary people. The community tutors involvement and personal stories around how and why they became involved in radio was a powerful way of encouraging other women. By describing their initial fears and anxieties, as well as their subsequent progress and sense of achievement, they were powerful source of motivation and encouragement to other women. What was most noticeable was not that they were just present to recount their experience of the radio training on offer, but rather that they had a central role in both the planning and delivery of the training. This was further highlighted by the fact that it

was the community tutors who facilitated the small group work, while the university staff stood back during this part of the day.

What made the training successful was the attitude and atmosphere created by the community tutors. They talked very positively about their own personal experience of the course they had attended. Their enthusiasm came over very well to the women on the taster course. "If we can do this - then so can you" was the message they gave. This was further re-inforced by playing tapes of some of the programmes they made.

Teaching methods

Ice-breaker

The session began with a welcome from the tutor to all participants and each then had the opportunity to introduce herself and briefly mention what radio she listened to.

Discussion/small group work

Audio clips from programmes made by women were used to illustrate the discussion. The discussion then continued in smaller groups facilitated by the community tutors. Breaking into small groups created variety and increased the sense of participation. (See Appendix I, page 34 for an outline of the programme.) The small group discussion raised a number of really interesting ideas.

The community tutors facilitating each group fed all of these points back to the main group and this information was recorded on the flipchart. This was a useful way of provoking further discussion as well as acknowledging the ideas generated in the small groups.

Role play

Interviewing skills were introduced using role play as a method. Two of the community tutors acted out an interview. Their presentation emphasised that "everyone has a story" which supported a lot of the earlier discussion around the relevance of personal experience. The interview technique was done in a light-hearted way and it also gave the chance to see that it was okay to make mistakes as well as emphasising how informal and personal an interview

can be.

The role play interview was followed up with more small group work where the women practiced doing an interview. A key point was that the interviews were not actually recorded - only the microphone was used. This was important because it allowed the participants to tackle one element of the technology at a time and to feel safe using the microphone, knowing that they could make mistakes without having to listen to them.

The small group work was particularly important because it meant that the participants were able to talk about their own experiences and attitudes to radio programming. The university tutors stayed very much in the background, but were able to provide support if needed. As it happened the community tutors did extremely well and they themselves gained more confidence from the experience.

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