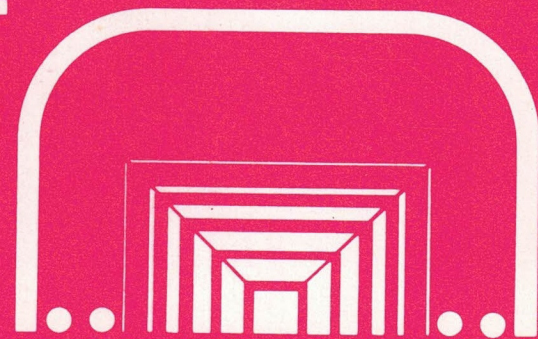




Careers In:



radio



1982 Federation of Australian Radio Broadcasters



## Careers in Radio

This booklet is published by the Federation of Australian Radio Broadcasters, the trade association of the commercial radio industry. FARB seeks to foster the development of the broadcasting arts and to promote the practices which will strengthen the industry's ability to serve the public.

## Your Future in Radio

Radio is a challenging field. It is Australia's greatest round-the-clock medium. A turn of the knob brings news, music, weather, sports and entertainment to millions of people every hour. Radio is mobile, fresh and constantly changing. People who work in radio are not mere observers, but participants in a very active way in the world. Radio needs people with ingenuity, vision and boldness who can help produce programs to meet the demands of an increasingly sophisticated audience. This booklet is designed to help you find a place in this exciting field.

## The Regulation of Radio

Radio depends on electromagnetic waves to carry its signals from the transmitting tower to the listeners. Each message that is sent over the airways requires a certain amount of spectrum space for a certain amount of time. Thus, each use of space is assigned an area of the spectrum, the armed forces, police and fire departments, transportation companies (airlines, buses, taxi cabs) and amateur operators. Without the assignment of spectrum space by a central authority, electromagnetic communications would be chaotic because of signal interference. In Australia, the Commonwealth Government is responsible for allocating the spectrum.





## Finding a Job

Most beginners start in small stations where experience requirements are not high and where salaries are moderate. Small stations offer opportunities to be involved in all aspects of broadcasting because job responsibilities often overlap. For example, a traffic manager may write commercials, or an announcer may double as a salesman. The experience acquired in a small station often leads to a job in a larger station in a larger city. Of course, many people remain at smaller or medium-sized stations, where they find satisfying careers. Salaries for some positions vary widely depending upon the size and location of the station and tend to be higher at stations in larger cities.

Persons who have an interest in radio and feel they have skills which will interest management should write to the station for which they would like to work. Applicants should include a summary which lists educational qualifications and work experience, being careful to highlight any work experience that may relate to broadcasting. Those seeking on-air positions should send along an audition tape. A personal visit to the station with arrangements made in advance is also helpful.

There are also job opportunities in fields allied to commercial radio that may lead to jobs in radio or provide satisfying careers in themselves. These organisations include program production companies, advertising agencies, station sales representative firms, broadcasting trade publications, universities and colleges which offer radio courses and various branches of the state and federal governments.



# Education

Careers in radio require certain personal aptitudes and qualities, backed up by education and training. The only branch of work on a radio station for which specific qualifications are mandatory, is the technical side. For all other departments, a good general education is the basic need, and recruitment normally takes place at the end of secondary schooling, after a Higher School Certificate or equivalent pass has been obtained. Then should follow additional study and training in the area of special interest.

Leaders in business, commerce and industry today are being drawn more and more from the ranks of those who have undertaken advanced studies in their special fields. Thus young people commencing a career in radio today and anxious to progress to the top jobs in the industry, should carefully consider the value of university education or other professional training, which will give them broader vision, a depth of understanding, and a skill at learning new concepts rapidly, as well as a specialised knowledge of their particular field.

Those who work in the capital cities will have the advantage of being able to attend a university or technical college as a part-time student. But staff on country stations can also enrol as external students with some universities, or follow correspondence courses in advertising, sales and sales management, accountancy or radio engineering with technical or private colleges. The objective of the student should be to pass the qualifying examinations for admission to the appropriate professional institute, such as the Advertising Institute of Australia, the Australian Institute of Sales Management or the Institute of Radio and Electronics Engineers (Aust).

Available training facilities differ from state to state, and the question of appropriate courses to follow for advanced training should be talked over, in the first instance, with a station manager.





## The Typical Station and its Jobs

Almost all stations, large or small, have four divisions of activity — programming, engineering, sales and general administration. Under this traditional set up, news personnel come under the programming department. An increasing number of stations have elevated news to equal status with the other four divisions. While most stations have similar jobs within the four divisions, there are substantial differences in job requirements, approach and working conditions between large and small stations.

The small radio stations employ only ten or twelve people while the largest stations have 75 employees or more. This means that in the small stations one position might consist of a combination of several jobs which would be separate at a large station. For this reason, small stations offer a beginner the opportunity to learn about many facets of broadcasting before he or she chooses a specialty.

# Programming

The efforts of all of the people who work in a radio station — sales people, engineers, continuity writers, promotion managers, administrators — are directed toward the ultimate product of the station; its program service. The planning and production of this service, however, are the responsibility of the programming department.

Radio station programming comes from three different sources. While most programming is produced by the station itself, the station may use the services of affiliated stations or purchase recorded material from independent producers.

Some radio stations in Australia are affiliated with other stations forming a broad network. Most, however, are independent operations.

The work of the programming department includes selecting music, gathering and writing news, selecting national news provided by the news services, providing coverage of local public events, planning special programs, and developing public service programs.

All elements must be integrated into a harmonious product to give the station a distinct and recognisable sound. Further, they must be keyed to various types of audiences at different times of day or on different days of the week. For example, news, weather and time reports are important pieces of information in the morning and early evening hours; programs for housewives are often scheduled for the middle of the day; programs for teenagers may be scheduled after school hours or on Friday, Saturday or Sunday nights. Traffic reports in the morning and afternoon rush hours are now a program staple in metropolitan areas. Finally, the programming department must maintain liaison with the sales department to determine the potential commercial appeal of various types of programs.





The **Program Director** is responsible for everything that is broadcast over the air at a station. In collaboration with the general manager and sales manager, the program director determines and administers the station's programming policies and plans the most effective program schedule for the station. On a daily basis, he or she supervises the activities of the program department personnel on such matters as work assignments and schedules, budgetary matters, and the problems of production. Many program managers are former announcers who have acquired experience and who have demonstrated an ability for supervision or administration. In many stations the program director may host one or more on-the-air shows.

One of the basic jobs in the program department is **Staff Announcer**. The typical staff announcer reads commercial copy, introduces programs and recordings, interviews guests, gives station identification and time signals, and makes promotional and public service announcements. In many stations the staff announcer also selects the music to be played during part of the broadcast day and often writes announcements and script material. He or she may also operate the studio controls, turntables, tape recorders, and other technical equipment.

Certain aptitudes are necessary for staff announcers. The first is a voice which conveys warmth, sincerity and integrity. Most radio stations emphasise informality, but not sloppy or careless delivery. Good diction is also important. A sound knowledge of English grammar, usage and pronunciation is essential. Fluency — the ability to say something that makes sense and say it clearly and simply — is also important in modern radio, particularly where ad lib work is required. A knowledge of music is desirable because the announcer's work involves music. Although many stations do not require university



graduates, more and more stations are requiring announcers to have, at least, a good secondary school background. A knowledge of public affairs, government and the arts is helpful to any announcer and very important to those who want to progress to news, public affairs and editorialising.

When an announcer has acquired sufficient experience, he or she could become a **Special Program Performer**, a position which usually offers a higher salary. In smaller stations, this specialised work is often handled on a part-time basis by staff announcers. In larger stations it is usually a full-time job. The special program performer is very important to modern radio. The individual's personality contributes strongly to the image of the particular station in the minds of the audience. The work requires a combination of talent, showmanship, technical knowledge and creative flair.

The usual areas of speciality are sports, news, farm, consumer affairs and music. A specialist in any one of these areas must stay informed of developments in the particular field. He or she must regularly contact interested groups and often participate in their activities by giving speeches, attending meetings, etc. The duties may also involve liaison with advertisers whose products lend themselves to the particular program.

The special program performers often handle production elements involved in their shows. For example a **Sportscaster** may secure the guests whom he or she interviews — usually collecting information, anecdotes, and other program elements from which to ad lib. If portions of the show are performed from a written script, the sportscaster may prepare the script. The **Farm Editor** or the **Consumer Affairs Editor** performs similar tasks in his or her particular field.





Several stations are now employing Community Service Coordinators who are responsible for drawing together a whole range of community projects and activities which involve the radio station. The position is usually held by someone who has been employed in the commercial radio industry for some time, since it is necessary to know exactly what the station has to offer the community, and how to put that into practice.

By far the most important feature of work is an ability to deal with, and have a liking for, people, since most of the community service co-ordinator's time is spent dealing with listeners, receiving phone calls from organisations, making phone calls to key personnel in the community.

Education standards are not specific but a Higher School Certificate, or its equivalent, would prove worthwhile, especially if it were coupled with a flair for English expression. A good personality and an awareness of both the resources of radio and the needs these resources can fill in the community are essential. An ability to type is also essential and a knowledge of shorthand desirable.

Most radio stations have a News Director who is responsible for gathering and disseminating news. He or she determines the overall news policy of the station, supervises news personnel, and also may serve as a working reporter. The Newscaster serves as a reporter, collecting local news and selecting stories from the wire services, editing and rewriting them for the local audience. With microphone and tape recorder he or she covers fires, town meetings, elections and other newsworthy happenings.

The newscaster is more than a reporter — he or she is also a performer who delivers the news on the air. For the newscaster, the ability to write copy that sounds good on the air is an essential skill.

A news “sense” — that is, a knowledge of what is important and interesting and where to find it — good investigative skills and an enthusiasm for the news are all vital to a good newscaster. Most metropolitan stations seek news reporters with a background in broadcasting or journalism. The ability to inform immediately makes radio news an exciting, rewarding career for the trained broadcast journalist.

More and more radio stations are editorialising on local and national issues, and news personnel play an important role in this activity.

Some larger stations employ Directors or Producers-Directors who have the overall responsibility for the production of a show or series of shows. This work involves planning, rehearsing and directing the on-the-air presentation. In some radio stations a Music Librarian is employed. This individual catalogues and stores the records or tapes and may select the music for shows. The most important requirement for this job is a broad knowledge of music and music formatting.

The basic job of Continuity Writer is to write commercial-announcements. Occasionally, he or she may also be asked to create program material. The first requirement for the job is an ability to write persuasive copy. A creative imagination is the difference between a flair and an excellent copywriter. A continuity writer must also be able to produce material quickly and under pressure. Elaborate rewriting is not always possible.



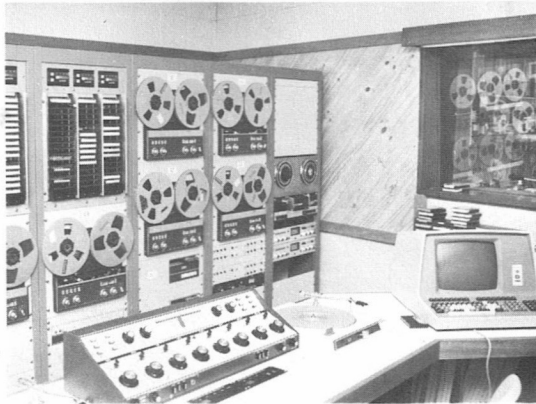


## Engineering

The engineering department is the vital link between the radio station and the public. All of the work of the program and sales departments, as well as all of the other employees of the station, depends on the strength, clarity and reliability of the signal which is sent out from the station's transmitter. The transmitter periodically must be inspected and adjusted to assure proper operation, and studio equipment must be maintained at peak performance.

The Chief Engineer is the head of the engineering department. In a large station, this person may supervise the activities of several technicians. In a small station, the chief engineer may be the only engineer on the staff. In either case, this is a person of considerable experience who normally has spent a number of years as a working technician. The chief engineer for a large station spends much time supervising technical employees and handling administrative work. In a smaller station, he or she may well spend a considerable amount of time on the control board, in production room or newsroom, and at the transmitter.

The chief engineer serves as a trouble shooter who handles all the most difficult maintenance or repair jobs. The engineer may also modify equipment for the station's use and occasionally may even design and develop special equipment or devices. It is usually the chief engineer who makes recommendations concerning the purchase of new technical equipment.



The basic engineering job is Broadcast Technician. This person controls the operation of the transmitter and makes adjustments to keep the output level and frequency of the outgoing broadcast within the limits required by the Minister for Communications. He or she also operates and maintains equipment such as the control boards in the studios, microphones, recording equipment and turntables. The technician also sets up and operates equipment for remote broadcasts.

In some stations, technicians are capable of doing all of this work. Other stations break the work into specialised responsibilities. Some people enter broadcasting through less skilled jobs and pursue courses in electronics which will enable them to handle the more complex equipment.

Technicians interested in advancement, however, will qualify themselves to operate a transmitting station by studying for the required certificate. The certificate that gives the technician this licence is issued by the Department of Communications. It is known as the Broadcast Operator's Certificate of Proficiency (BOCP). The examination for this is held in the capital cities about every three months, and includes papers on theory, regulations and an oral practical test.

The BOCP is issued to those successful candidates who have attained the age of 17 years.

Most metropolitan stations and some country stations offer employment to school leavers as trainee Technicians, and help them to undertake the necessary study for their Operator's Certificate. There are many employment opportunities for qualified Technicians, and good prospects for promotion. Education requirements include a good standard of mathematics and a grounding in physics and chemistry, preferably to Year 10 or Junior level. An enthusiasm to study the





theory and practice of radio is necessary, together with a reasonable degree of manual dexterity and a quick response to direction.

Training for radio operating may be gained at certain State Technical Colleges, some of them providing training by correspondence for the Broadcast Operator's Certificate of Proficiency. Although the majority of the training is by correspondence, there is a requirement for attendance at college for two weeks each year for practical experience.

It should be remembered that radio science is developing rapidly, and anyone making a career in this field must be prepared to undertake continuing study to advance with the science and keep abreast of technical development.

# Sales

Unlike magazines and newspapers which receive revenues from purchase or subscription, commercial radio relies on a single source of revenue to support its services — the advertiser who buys time in which to sell a product or service.

Stations receive two types of revenue: national and local.

Some advertisers do not need the simultaneous national coverage for their advertising. They prefer, often because their product is not nationally distributed or because they need to strengthen sales in a particular area, to “spot” their advertising in certain markets. For the purpose of reaching these advertisers, many stations employ a national sales representative firm on a commission basis. The “sales rep” functions as an out-of-town sales force for the station.

Sales to local merchants in the station’s coverage area are handled by its staff sales force. Technically, the sales staff is selling segments of time on the station’s facility, but actually it is selling the station’s programming and the audience for the programming.

The Sales Manager’s job in a radio station normally combines selling with management. The typical sales manager may do a certain amount of selling. He or she is also responsible for setting the sales policy of the station as well as for supervising the daily activities of the sales personnel. The sales manager develops sales plans and packages which will appeal to sponsors, and plans sales campaigns which will tie in with seasonal promotions, special programs on the station, etc. He or she sometimes works with the program director in developing saleable programs.

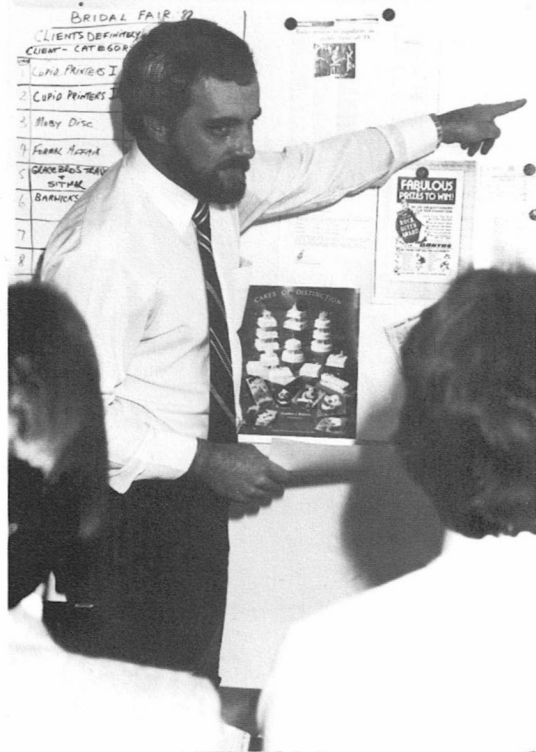


Almost all sales managers in broadcasting have had successful careers as salesmen or saleswomen, and many general managers come from the ranks of sales managers.

The Salesperson sells radio time in the form of programs, portions of programs, or commercial announcements to advertisers or their advertising agencies. He or she must be familiar with the station's program schedule and with its time availabilities. The salesperson proposes a commercial schedule to the sponsor, closes the sale when the contract is signed, and often writes commercial copy tailored to the particular sponsor's need. He or she maintains contact with sponsors and "services" his or her accounts by handling schedule changes, copy rotation, and special sales campaigns. In small market stations, selling is often combined with other jobs such as announcing.

Most radio time salespeople are high school graduates. Higher training is not mandatory, but with an advertising and broadcasting or marketing background, a salesperson is better equipped to understand the client's problems and to assist in solving them. Television, newspaper or magazine advertising sales experience or advertising agency experience is valuable. Sales experience in the particular market, especially with potential advertisers, is generally regarded as a valuable asset.

The most important aptitude in a salesperson, of course, is the ability to sell. This quality combines verbal communications, willingness to work hard, competitive drive, and pleasant personality. The really good salesperson is also enthusiastic and imaginative. He or she understands a client's business and can develop advertising approaches which will appeal to the particular client.



The job of Traffic Manager is the paperwork heart of a radio station's operation. He or she prepares daily reports of the station's program activity, using information collected from the sales, programming and engineering departments, as well as from the station's national sales representative. Nearly all information relating to the programs and commercials that is eventually broadcast over the air is given to the traffic manager. This person will collate the information and distribute it on a daily basis in the form of a broadcast event schedule called a "log".

Many traffic managers also prepare, for use by the sales department, availability sheets of unsold time. This job involves the handling of a substantial amount of detailed work and the necessity of meeting daily deadlines. Thus, an accurate and systematic individual who works well under the pressure of deadlines is normally the most successful traffic manager. Since the work involves dealing with almost all the departments of the station, an ability to work well with others is essential. Those interested in becoming a traffic manager should have a good high school background. Business school training would be an additional asset.



## General Administration

This area of a radio station's activities encompasses the business management and administrative work involved in running the station under the direction of the Station Manager. The job of Station Manager requires a unique combination of business knowledge, creativity, and the ability to supervise personnel. The manager usually has had successful experience in sales, programming, or engineering. Sometimes he or she is the owner or part owner of the station. Responsibilities include handling the daily problems of station operations in consultation with the program manager, sales manager, and chief engineer. The general manager determines the general policies of the station and supervises the implementation of these policies. Normally he or she handles the station's relations with the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal and other government bodies and participates in many community activities on behalf of the station.

In a small station this department may consist of only the manager and a secretary. These individuals handle all the record keeping, accounting, and other office work. Large stations employ one or more persons — a receptionist-secretary, a clerk typist, an office manager/business manager, an operations manager — to conduct these duties.



## Some Hints on Applying for a Job

It is usual for young people appointed as trainee announcers to have obtained some specialised training in voice production and announcing before their appointment. There are a number of private announcing schools throughout Australia, usually located in capital cities, which provide such training. The Australian Film and Television School also intends to provide training programs of this kind for those interested in taking up a career in commercial radio broadcasting.

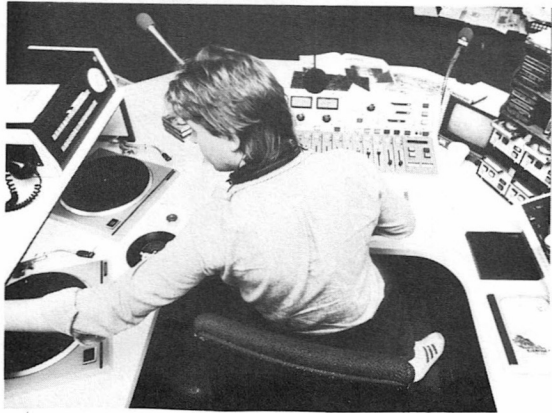
Applicants for announcing positions at radio stations should submit a tape recording of their voice, together with their written application.

The following "Do's" and "Don'ts" may be a useful guide in the preparation of an application and an audition tape.

**DO** — set out clearly in your application details of :

- name
- address
- telephone number (if any)
- age
- date of birth
- marital status
- educational standard (including passes in various subjects)
- full details of any training or radio experience
- details of previous or present employment
- earliest date on which you could commence duty
- include copies of references





also, **DO** —

- Clearly identify yourself with name and address on your audition tape and container. Remember that when a station receives a large number of applications, unidentified tapes or containers can cause confusion.
- Forward your application promptly if replying to an advertisement. Remember that stations advertising for announcers are often short-staffed and are anxious to fill the vacancy with all possible speed.
- Include with your application, a recent photograph if one is available.
- Print your name and address under your signature. Many signatures are quite unreadable by someone who doesn't know you.
- In applying for a position in person or attending an interview, dress neatly and look to your general appearance. Few managers are impressed by a sloppy, casual approach.

**DON'T —**

- Commence your audition with a breezy expression such as “Hi There!”. You wouldn’t do this if you were applying for the position in person.
- Include lengthy musical breaks in your audition tape. Station managers do not have the time to listen through long excerpts from records they’ve probably heard a hundred times before.
- Cultivate pseudo-American or other accents or affectations. Your prospective employer wants to hear your normal speaking voice and he’s more interested in hearing how effectively you can deliver a commercial or news item than in listening to you airing your knowledge of the latest “pop” record.
- Indulge in gimmicks on your tape. A good straight delivery is of more value to the Manager in assessing your suitability to his particular needs.
- Make your audition too long. Three or four wellread commercials, a couple of news items and perhaps one record introduction are usually sufficient.
- Submit auditions on overfull tape spools. Nothing is more exasperating to a station executive than to have to waste time re-rolling tape which springs in all directions immediately the container is opened.





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